

Him & Her & Gay Men In General
by Aaron Ricciardi

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PLAYERS:

Him, twenty-eight, a mess, “in charge.”

Her, an adult, alluring, an intruder.

Gay Men In General, twenties/thirties, sweet and hot, along for the ride.

SPACE:

A mostly bare stage. There's a door, and there's also a dog puppet waiting to be used.

RULES:

A forward slash (/) indicates that the next line should begin.

Him comes on.

Him:

(*To audience.*) Hey. Okay, you guys wanna hear the craziest story? It's legitimately a mind-blowing story. It's not like one of those stories where the person's like, Oh my god the craziest thing happened, and then it's just a story of them having to return something at Macy's. This is like one of those stories where long-lost identical twins find each other in their fifties or something. I swear it's good. It's about time. The epicness of it, and the smallness of it. Time.

Her appears, unnoticed by Him.

Him:

Okay. Here we go. We begin with me at twenty-eight—

Him notices Her.

A long silence as Him takes Her in.

Him looks out at the audience, curious if they can see Her.

Her:

Hi.

Him:

Hi. What are you doing here?

Her:

You can't do this without me, silly.

(*To audience.*) I was his teacher. His drama teacher. I taught him how to do all this.

Him:

(*To audience.*) Sorry. What was I saying? Oh, I'm twenty-eight. In the story I'm twenty-eight. I'm also twenty-eight now, but that's beside the point 'cause I'm telling a story and in the story I'm twenty-eight years old, and, one morning, I'm on Grindr! You all know what Grindr is? For the...um...the un...Shit I'm forgetting my line. What's the word I wanted to use? It starts with "un." Like "uninformed" but not "uninformed."

Her:

You can do it.

(*To audience.*) He really is the most amazing. In all my time teaching, he's the most talented student I ever taught. He's just nervous.

Him:

(*To Her.*) Please go. I don't want you to be here for this. Come back later.

Silence.

Him:

GET OUT OF HERE I DON'T WANT YOU HERE PLEASE!!!

Her stands still.

She simpers.

Silence.

Him:

UNINITIATED! That's the word. For the *uninitiated*, Grindr is kind of like one of those apps for your phone where you order food for delivery, except what you order on Grindr is gay sex. You see which guys are geographically close to you and you can send them messages, you send each other pictures of your junk, and sometimes you meet up—

Gay Men In General peeks his head out.

Gay Men In General:

Hey do you still need me, or—?

Him:

YES, I'M JUST GETTING TO YOU, HOLD ON!

Gay Men In General:

Sorry, I just thought you said I was gonna come on right at the beginning but it's been a minute and then you started screaming / so I wasn't sure—

Him:

Just—I'm about to—

Gay Men In General:

No worries, I'll just wait in the offstage part.

Him:

It's called the wings.

Gay Men In General:

Sorry I've never done anything like theatre-y before.

Him:

It's fine. Just stay on the stage.

Gay Men In General:

(*Re: Her.*) Who's she?

Her:

(*To Gay Men In General.*) Hiii.

Him:

OKAY COOL so I'm on Grindr, you know, living my best life, and I start talking to this guy... That's your line.

Gay Men In General:

Me?

Him:

Yes, you! Oh my god.

Gay Men In General:

You're kind of adorable when you get flustered.

Him:

Just say your line.

Gay Men In General:

(His line.) Hey.

Him:

You know what? We can skip this part. That woman just started reading her program.

Gay Men In General:

You want me to go?

Him:

NO!

(An attempt at flirting.) You're so dumb, just skip ahead to the part where you send me pictures.

Gay Men In General:

So I shouldn't say the next line?

Her laughs.

Him laughs with Her.

They share a moment.

Him is uncomfortable.

Him:

(To audience.) I'm sorry this is all going so badly. I don't know how I thought this would go well.

Her:

You're doing amazing.

Him:

(To Her.) GO AWAY!

Him:

(*To Gay Men In General.*) Skip to the pictures.

(*To audience.*) Okay. I'm talking to this guy on Grindr, and he sends me pictures of himself.

Gay Men In General strikes distinct poses, on loop.

Him:

So I'm looking at these photos he sends me, and sure he's handsome, but my first thought isn't He's Cute, my first thought is, This Guy Looks Very Familiar, but I can't figure out why. He tells me his name is Tom.

Gay Men In General:

My name is Tom.

Him:

And I think, Tom, hmmm. Also familiar. He tells me that he's visiting town for work.

Gay Men In General:

I'm visiting town for work.

Him:

And that he's from New York.

Gay Men In General:

I'm from New York.

Him:

And that he plays the bassoon.

Gay Men In General:

I play the bassoon.

Him:

And that's when it all comes together.

Gay Men In General stops his poses.

Him:

Holy shit. Tom. The bassoon. New York. That face. I know this guy. When I was in my late teens and early twenties—read: when I was in the closet slash just fresh out of the closet—I spent a lot of time on this gay sex chat room called Men Chats Dot Com, where I made all these quote unquote Friends I would quote unquote Talk To regularly. A-k-a we would jerk off together on webcams. Which, like: thank god for that chat room. Thank god. Remember that this was at the tail-end of the Bush administration. The *W.* Bush administration. *Now* that time doesn't seem so bad, but, back then, gay boys were relegated to our bedrooms to watch Judi Dench movies and write bad poetry and hide from a world that was out to obliterate us.

*By now, Gay Men In General is standing around,
clearly unsure of what he should be doing and a bit uncomfortable.*

Her:

You're rambling.

Him:

ANYWAY, Tom—the bassoonist—he was one of those guys! We talked all the time! Like, multiple times a week! And now we've randomly found each other on Grindr, years later. (*To Gay Men In General.*) Tom. You're gonna think I'm crazy, but we used to talk online all the time, like six or seven years ago.

Gay Men In General:

Yeah that kinda rings a bell.

Him:

Rings a bell? You don't remember me? We talked and had cyber sex all the time, and I am a very memorable person! I didn't say that, I played it cool, I was like, We have to hang out before you leave town. This is crazy. And forty-five minutes later he's at my door.

Gay Men In General knocks on the door.

Him:

My dog started barking—

Her:

His dog started barking, which she always does when someone's at his door.

*Her gets down on hands and knees
and becomes Him's dog Sally.
Her barks barks barks.
This was not part of Him's plan.
Him is pissed at Her
but decides to just keep going.*

Him:

I peek at him through the peephole and he looks like someone I once knew, but all grown up, which makes sense, because the last time I saw him was on my computer screen, when he was probably seventeen, eighteen? A boy.

Her:

And you were too.

Him opens the door.

Him:

Hey!

Gay Men In General:

Wait, she's playing Sally? We're not using the dog puppet?

Him:

Just go with it.

Hey!

Gay Men In General:

Hey! Aw, your dog is like so cute!

Her goes crazy, jumps on Gay Men In General's leg, barks wildly.

Him:

SALLY! STOP IT! NO!

Him grabs Her's hair and tugs it back.

Her whimpers, and kind of enjoys this.

Him lets Her go and points a finger at Her.

Him:

Sit like a good girl.

Siiiiit.

Sally. Siiiiiiiiiiit.

Her sits like a good girl.

Him and Gay Men In General chuckle and make eye contact.

Gay Men In General moves toward Him,

Him moves toward Gay Men In General,

and they kiss.

Her watches, head cocked.

Him:

Long time no see.

Gay Men In General:

You're mean to Sally!

Him:

Oh, it doesn't hurt her. This dog training book said to tug them on their neck skin like that because it's what their moms do to them when they're puppies and they misbehave.

Gay Men In General:

You guys could have like a reality show.

Him:

Is "like a reality show" similar to "a reality show?"

Gay Men In General:

Whatever, I say like a lot. Where'd you come up with her name?

*Gay Men In General bends down
and pets/scratches/rub/kisses/receives licks from Her.*

Him:

Her full name is Sally Albright.

Gay Men In General:

Is that like a reference to something?

Him:

Sally Albright! Her on-screen counterpart is Harry Burns?

Gay Men In General:

I got nothin'.

Him:

Oh my god, heartbreak. It's *like* a reference to When Harry Met Sally.

Gay Men In General:

Oh sick.

Him:

Yeah, *sick*.

Gay Men In General stops playing with Her.

Gay Men In General:

Listen dude, are you gonna make fun of like everything I say?

Him:

I'm just kidding.

Gay Men In General:

Well it's not funny.

Her:

This guy's an idiot. And you're spectacular. He's not worthy of you. My Harry. You sparkle. You shimmer. You really are the most amazing and the most talented and the most handsome and the most everything!

(To audience, re: Him.) Look at how handsome he is! And smart! And wise beyond his years! Like a man in a boy's body!

Him:

Sorry, I think I'm nervous. I kind of can't believe I'm here with you. I even remember what your bedroom looked like. It had forest green wallpaper.

Gay Men In General:

How do you remember that?

Him:

I have a really good memory.

Her:

He has a really good memory.

Gay Men In General:

Aw, Sally. That's so cute how she cries. How old is she?

*Gay Men In General goes back to playing with Her.
He plays with Her as Him talks.*

Him:

She's...four.

(*To audience.*) I pause for a second before saying her age, because I haven't thought in a long time about how old Sally is. In dog years, she's twenty-eight. Same age as me.

She's...Four, I tell this boy, this man whom I feel I know, but I also don't know him at all. I've never met him before. I think, I've Had Sally For Almost Four Years, Where Has All That Time Gone? I got Sally right after everything went down with Her, right after I cut Her out of my life. Sally was like a kind of stopgap, four years ago, and I can't differentiate those years in my head. Four years. It all feels like one long evening. It feels like I'm still in high school and I'm out with Her, past my curfew, at a show or at a casino or at an IHOP or in her car, and my mom is waiting at her desk in our kitchen in a cotton nightgown, waiting for me to return home with my drama teacher who I'm out with but I shouldn't be and my poor mother doesn't know how to stop Her—how to stop *me*—how to stop us.

*By now, Her is cuddled up on Gay Men In General's lap,
and he's stroking her.*

Him:

And now it's over a decade since high school, and I have a dog I named after her and my favorite movie.

Her:

I love you Harry.

Him:

I love you Sally.

Gay Men In General:

(*To Her.*) You're so cute, yes you are.

(*To Him.*) You're cute too. Come play with us.

*Him gets down on the floor
and pets Her with Gay Men In General.
Gay Men In General touches Him's face.*

Gay Men In General:

There's nothing to be nervous about.

Gay Men In General kisses Him's cheek.

Him:

And here he is, here's Tom, so sweet, looking different but also the same. The last time I spoke to him he was a boy, but now he's a man, and I'm a man too, we're both men. And I'm balding. I look at him rubbing Sally's belly, and I see that he too is starting to bald, but not as much as me, I have a whole patch missing at the back of my head. My reverse yarmulke, I call it. I'm starting to look old. Soon, people will stop mistaking me for a young person, I'll stop getting carded, which I've kind of been waiting for forever, but now I'm dreading it, and I think, Time.

I feel Time. I feel Time the way you smell rain. I'm smelling Time. Time is thick in the air between me and Tom like pudding. It's been six or seven years since I last talked to this man, four years since I got Sally, and four years since I last talked to (*gestures at:*) Her. In a second Tom and I will have sex in my bed and I'll spend most of the time thinking about what she did to me when my mother was waiting for me to come home, and it'll be great and also terrible, and then Tom will go, and I'll never hear from him again—and then we'll be dead. You, me, Tom, all of us, we'll all be dead. It starts with getting touched by your teacher and then you get a dog and then you're balding and then you're dead. I can't believe how much time has passed. And how little.

(*To Gay Men In General.*) Shall we go to the bedroom?

*Gay Men In General goes through the door.
Him follows after, but stops when Her follows after too.*

Him:

NO, SALLY! NO!

Sit like a good girl.

Siiiiit.

Siiiiiiiiiiiit.

Her sits like a good girl.

Him:

Stay.

*Him walks backward through the doorway,
his finger pointed at Her.
Him shuts the door,
leaving Her behind,
sitting like a good girl,
staring at the closed door,
waiting for Him to return.*

The End.