THE POWDER ROOM
An Original One Act

by
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Directed by Kip Hustace

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by SAM TOH

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEVE, twenties, whose occasional suaveness is purely the result of arrogant youth.
JESSE, slightly older than Steve, and damn serious.
MIKE, slightly older than Jesse, a little out of shape and very annoying.

SETTING: A rather posh lavatory in the middle of a golf club. A single urinal stands stage right. Left of the toilet area, a powder room. It has sofas, lounge chairs and mirrors that convey the poshness of it all.
(Lights up. JESSE, clad in golfing gear, is pissing into a urinal. We hear a steady stream until STEVE enters. STEVE is decked very formally, in shirt sleeves, dark pants and a tie. He sits on a lounge chair stage left, removing his tie slowly. JESSE’S rhythm of pissing grows awkward.)

That’s a long piss you’ve got there.

(Choking.) Hngh.

Having some difficulty?

No, no…I…I’m just thinking.

(JESSE zips up, washes his hands, dries them. All this time, STEVE follows him with his eyes, somewhat ominously.)

Thinking, eh?

Life…job…you know.

(Unsympathetically.) Must be hard.

Yeah.

Juggling so many things…

Yeah…

…like how you juggle…people.
JESSE
What?

STEVE
Nothing.

JESSE
You just said…

STEVE
(Innocently.) What?

JESSE
Nothing.

(Beat.)

JESSE
…I should go.

(Beat.)

JESSE
It’s three p.m.

STEVE
(Nervously.) Is it?

JESSE
As far as I recall, you don’t quite have to leave yet.

STEVE
(Predatorily). I picked golf day for a reason.

JESSE
Mmhm.

STEVE
To speak to you about a certain issue. And…because it’s here. We can talk as equals here. I want to talk as equals.
I'd like to talk as equals.

Good…

(Twitchily.) You said…an issue. Anything wrong?

Hm.

What?

Maybe. I've just been...thinking.

What a coincidence.

I've been thinking...about many things, really. But one of the things I've been thinking about is, really, what the fuck is this?

(STEVE gestures in the air. Pause.)

It’s a…a room?

I know that. I mean, specifically.

A sofa.

Strike two.

(Silence.)

What is…this?

It’s a powder room for men, Jesse. Who the fuck builds a powder room for men?
JESSE
The golf...course...

STEVE
Exactly. (He stands.) *Exactly.* Good job, Jesse. *Good* job again. Good job like how you do such a great, fantastic, wild job with your priorities. Getting here, your success, your money, your membership to the most exclusive golf course in town that makes powder rooms for their men –

JESSE
(Weakly.) I’d call it a rest area...

STEVE
The point is, you are one pretty picture of success.

JESSE
Nah...I wouldn’t say that...

STEVE
Not actually disagreeing with me now, are you? Why, Jesse, aren’t you the most celebrated man of the century? (Imitating.) “Rich, responsible, a *rad* body to boot - ” Those magazines love this “clean-cut executive” because you, my friend, have a fuck-up-less life. That’s what you have. A fuck-up-less, shining perfect life of perfectly juggled houses, cars, powder rooms, *women*...

(Beat.)

STEVE
*A woman*... (Softly.) Now, aren’t I right?

JESSE
Steve...

(JESSE is silenced by a cold stare. Beat.)

JESSE
I –

STEVE
Or not as fuck-up-less as we think?

JESSE
No, I –

STEVE
Got one or two fuck ups, maybe.
(Beat.)

STEVE

Or should we say, *fucks*.

(Silence. JESSE knows he’s in quite a bit of shit. STEVE sits, misleadingly relaxed.)

(Calmly.) Have a cigarette?

I don’t smoke.

Oh, yes. I know this too.

You…you know a lot.

(Affirmative.) Mm. Except one thing…just one thing I don’t know yet.

What is it?

(Offhandedly.) When did you last fuck Marla?

What?

You know, Jesse, you’re not as good at juggling people as you think.

I’m…(Turning against STEVE slightly.)…Steve, I’m not sure why [this matters]…

(Overstating each word.) When did you last fuck Marla?

I…(Giving up.)…last Tuesday.
Nice…

Steve.

How many times, again?

Twice. (Steve looks at him.) A few times.

(Knowing.) So eleven or twelve?

She was a little frustrated…sexually frustrated…

So you haven’t called it quits.

We did…briefly. Before. But she was frustrated – she needed…you know all this.

Mmmhm.

She didn’t have enough willpower to stay away.

Neither do you, apparently.

(Beat.)

(Slowly.) I smelled you in the car.

What?

…on her…that’s how I knew. Strange smell, you.

Oh.
...And of course, the walls are fairly porous. I hear everything that goes on in the kitchen.

(Embarrassed.) Oh.

How was that? Enjoyable?

You should know.

I don’t, actually.

I didn’t like it very much. (A strangled sob.) She made me dress up as a pastry chef.

What?!

…I had to knead her dough…

(Taken aback.) Oh.

(Beat.)

I’m sorry.

Yeah, I didn’t hear that part.

It hurt…

Hurt?!

There were rolling pins…

Gahh!
JESSE
(Half-covering his face.)…whipped cream in all the wrong places –

STEVE

Gahh!

JESSE
And then…she brought out the blender.

(An awkward, horrified pause.)

STEVE
Well, apparently, Marla still likes you a lot.

JESSE
I gathered as much.

STEVE
And she doesn’t like me.

JESSE
Mm.

STEVE
At all.

JESSE
Nope.

STEVE
And I can’t do anything about that.

JESSE
…neither can I, I’ve told you –

(Enter MIKE, in a golfing outfit, carrying ritzy golf gear. STEVE’S posture changes immediately, almost receding into the background as MIKE spots JESSE, and is terrifyingly hearty in his delight.)

MIKE
Jesse, my man! It’s been ages since I last saw you! Haven’t been taking the old sport up in a while, have you? Working on that swing does kill your knees…and fancy seeing you in the powder room –
STEVE
(Tight-lipped, if politely.) Resting area.

MIKE
Oh. (He notices Steve for the first time.) Hello, Steven. Nice day out, eh?

STEVE
Quite, sir.

MIKE
Still wearing that uniform on a hot day like this?

STEVE
I’m supposed to, sir.

MIKE
Well good thing, that. Hope old Jesse’s treating you well...he oughta.

(MIKE elbows JESSE, chuckling. He’s annoying.)

Yes, sir.

MIKE
Hum. Ho...(In an exaggerated whisper to Jesse.) He allowed in here?

JESSE
I think so.

MIKE
Geez, son. Wasn't too long ago that this room here was restricted, you know? RESTRICTED. Don't let anybody but us posh old members hang around in here. Socialise and stuff. Kinda weird place to socialise, eh? Powder room, pshhh. Oughta be for ladies.

JESSE
Not unless – well, sometimes I call it the rest area.

MIKE
Taking a break from that life of yours, eh? Nice...Hey, boy. Might as well help me with all this stuff. Put 'em in the cubbies all neat, eh? Thanks.

(STEVE takes some of the golf gear and begins arranging. He can still hear all that goes on and should react to the conversation, albeit subtly and to himself. MIKE crosses stage right to the
MIKE
Hell, I gotta take a piss. Only reason why I'm here, eh? Only reason why anyone would come here...an urgent piss! So fuckin’ out of the way, geez.

JESSE
(Hurriedly.) Well, we're only here by chance...you know...got some emergency phone call from Marla this morning. She wanted Steve here to pick her up at one in the afternoon, not three. I mean, Steve here...he can wait, you know? But Marla can't. (Pause.) Ha...Marla.

MIKE
What a gem, that lady.

JESSE
...yeah.

(MIKE zips up, crosses back stage left.)

MIKE
Been what, five years now, almost?

JESSE
Four and a half, yeah...

MIKE
Man, you guys are going to stay married till bloody forever! Wish I could say the same for Ellora and I. We've got some problems here and there...(Lewdly.) She isn't adventurous enough...if you know what I mean....

JESSE
Oh...yeah.

MIKE
Women...just so bloody stingy.

JESSE
Yeah.

MIKE
Hum...by the way, you don't hear anything I say, Steven, do you?

STEVE
No I don't, sir.
MIKE
Keep it that way. If that gets back to Ellora...geez. But hell, Jesse, you and Marla, goin’ strong!

JESSE
Yeah...

MIKE
All that pecky-poo nonsense at the annual dinner last week. Made all the ladies jealous of what she has, you know? You. Damn I have a job to keep what with Ellora all over you!

JESSE
(Embarrassed.) Oh...

MIKE
And your job too! You gonna make our company all a-glow, son. I'm glad you're taking over. Only took you, what, less than a decade?

JESSE
Just about.

STEVE
(Interrupting, to Jesse.) Do you want a drink before we leave, sir, or should I just go get the car?

JESSE
A...a drink. That'd be good.

The usual?

STEVE

JESSE
Yes...don't forget the -

- the extra lemon. I know.

STEVE

(STEVE removes his loosened tie off the sofa as he leaves. Exit STEVE.)

MIKE
That boy's shady, don't you think, now? Jolly shady...you know, I know what's odd, that boy! Educated. E-DU-CA-TED. What's a smart lad doing shit like driving people around, now?.
JESSE
I don't know...Maybe he was tired of working at fancy jobs. He needed…freedom? I don't know. People need freedom sometimes.

MIKE
Humph, freedom. You being too kind as usual, Jesse-boy.

JESSE
He’s been nothing but helpful all these years.

MIKE
Nothing but helpful! Suspicious, that...you do a background check on him?

No.

JESSE

MIKE
You oughta now. I hear Marla doesn’t like him. Betcha she’s suspicious too.

I’m sure she is.

JESSE

MIKE
What, you sure? Then hey! What! Background check, son. BACK-GROUND CHECK.

I trust him.

MIKE
(He snorts.) Trust. Freedom! Trust! Geez...well the idealists’re always the successful ones, hey? Changing the world and all that? Oughta be quite familiar with that …How'd you hire him anyway?

JESSE
...I met him on the Internet.

MIKE
Fuck! The Internet! Fuck me!

JESSE

What -

MIKE
Don't get any fucking thing from the Internet! Bought me a Ferrari off Ebay once…fuckin’ died on me after a month.
I’m sorry.

Don’t be. Just…just don’t get anything off the Internet. Even people. Don’t trust people. If you don't take note, he could steal all your money.

Well.

What, now?

I don’t know, I just think he could steal a lot more than that.

(Beat. MIKE is considering his words.)

Hey now, that’s true. (He considers further for a second.) Like your fuckin' identity, eh? Lots of identity theft shit going on now…’specially on the Internet. Now you are smart you are, Jesse. You just need to be careful of that little CHAUF-FEUR boy there. Now I'm done pissin', I'll be off. Give that boy a dollar or two for his help. I’ll send a servant down to collect that shit next time.

(He gestures to the cubbies, where his gear has been arranged. Exit MIKE. JESSE sits, looking obviously troubled. Enter STEVE, tie on, a glass of water with a lemon in hand.)

Oh, he’s gone?

Yeah.

I know, I waited till he left.

…Sure.

But before I forget, your drink…sir.
JESSE
Stop it, Steve.

STEVE
What? Stop what?

JESSE
Don't.

STEVE
Sir? What, sir? No “sir”?

JESSE
It's tiring.

STEVE
Tiring?

JESSE
It’s always tiring.

STEVE
Is it?

JESSE
Yeah.

STEVE
(A scoff). You mean you fucking that woman?

JESSE
Yeah.

STEVE
(Evidently surprised.) What?

JESSE
(Slowly.) Me *fucking* that woman.

(A shocked pause.)

Jesse –
JESSE
She’s my wife…so I fuck her. I tried to stop fucking her, but I’m not stopping because she’s my fucking *wife*. Don’t give me that *bullcrap*, Steve. She’s my *wife*. I come home, she’s there, she says, “I haven’t seen you a while” and what am I supposed to say, say no to her, tell her for the hundredth time that I’m tired, busy, running off to some place, that I’m not in the *mood*, that I can’t…that I *can’t*? I can’t not, Steve. *I can’t not.*

STEVE
You can’t not fuck her.

JESSE
And that word, “fuck.”

STEVE
What?

JESSE
I don’t “fuck” her.

STEVE
Don’t you?

JESSE
No. She’s a good person.

STEVE
You can still fuck a good person.

JESSE
Don’t say it like that.

STEVE
Would “making love” be better, then?

JESSE
What?

STEVE
Making love.

JESSE
I don’t –

STEVE
- don’t love her?
As a companion, maybe.

Companion.

Yes.

You love her companionship.

Yes.

And not as a woman? What, don’t you love her breasts, her ass, her small hands, her small, tiny, *womanly* waist?

(Silence.)

No, I guess I don’t.

…So it’s tiring?

It’s tiring.

(Unwillingly vulnerably.) Well, this job is tiring too.

What job?

Being your chauffeur, your - your driver.

Oh.

Long stretches of time when I’m just waiting, you know? For you. To be done.
JESSE
Yeah.

(Beat.)

STEVE
Maybe I should negotiate a pay raise.

JESSE
(A short, surprised laugh.) Not satisfied?

STEVE
I should get a room upgrade.

JESSE
Away from the kitchen?

STEVE
She likes fucking you in there too much.

JESSE
I’m sorry.

STEVE
You should be. God…that pastry chef roleplay.

JESSE
Yeah.

STEVE
I can just imagine it now. (Imitating.) Eat that icing off me, ohhh, ohhhh –

JESSE
(Laughing.) Don’t.

(A comfortable pause.)

STEVE
Hmm.

JESSE
So.

STEVE
So.
Golf days.

JESSE

I’m still good with that.

STEVE

Yeah?

JESSE

Yeah. You…golf a lot.

STEVE

On company money.

JESSE

(Stifling a laugh.) Yeah?

STEVE

Yeah. Think that might be corruption? You know…finally something imperfect. (He laughs awkwardly.) And, you know. This. This. You know? It’s something for myself too. Meeting…here.

JESSE

Mmmhm.

STEVE

Something for you too…So I guess, something for both of us. Finally. Three times a week, three p.m. in the powder room. We golf.

JESSE

No, you golf. I watch you swing…yeah…the powder room…(He looks around.)

STEVE

…Maybe Mike was wrong.

JESSE

What?

STEVE

JESSE

The powder room…it’s not for women, you know? Maybe the category was something crazy…subconscious like, “people who like men.” (Steve laughs.) Or maybe some other way, something more universal, something that everyone at that moment could feel, kind of the same…”People,” “People in Bathrooms.” “Vain People.”
(He snorts.) Don’t be stupid.

JESSE

I’m serious.

STEVE

Sure you are. (He pauses, looks around again.) Sure you are.

You know, Jesse, these powder rooms started way back...men, women, whatever, it didn’t actually matter. It served a purpose, you know? People’d get their wigs repowdered and stuff, in these rooms...they were just too embarrassed to admit it really, you know? Back then, repowdering, whatever, they were ashamed. But now, powder rooms...people build them into their houses. It’s just another random place, even some kind of...I don’t know. Just another word for a bathroom, a toilet. People just come in...take a piss. Leave. No more shame.

JESSE

...Took a few centuries, though.

STEVE

Yeah...it did.

JESSE

...You impatient?

STEVE

For the powder room?

JESSE

For the powder room.

STEVE

Hm, I think I’ll wait.

JESSE

Yeah?

STEVE

Yeah. It’ll change.

(A moment, then, blackout.)

THE END