

Consent and Other C-words

by

Mikey Jackson

One-act play

(Running time: approx 75 - 80 minutes)

www.mikeyjackson.com

SCENE ONE: THE INTRO

Pitch-black darkness throughout. Here, we present a brief PRE-RECORDED DIALOGUE SEQUENCE with TIA and JADEN, both early twenties. We'll meet them properly in a moment, but this intro sets the tone and theme.

An ominous building chord grows louder throughout as –

TIA: In the club, you got me so worked up. You were all over me.

JADEN: Tia, my drink got spiked. From that moment on, I was strictly off-limits. "Fragile. Do not touch."

A stricken sigh, he can't get his head around it.

JADEN: I can't believe you took advantage of me. I mean, Jesus fucking Christ. This is sexual assault territory.

TIA: A woman sexually assaulting a man? In your dreams.

JADEN: I just caught you red-handed.

TIA: I thought it was what you wanted.

JADEN: You violated me.

As the chord grows louder and louder, let's repeat the line "You violated me" three more times. And then –

– a sudden ice-cold silence engulfs the theatre.

SCENE TWO: THE PUB

Let there be LIGHT.

Centre-stage, we present a circular pub table, two chairs.

Meet JADEN MAY. He has a kind face, you know, the type of guy a mother wishes her daughter would bring home.

He's alone, shy, a tad awkward, surveying the locality. The lad has never before visited this pub. Pint of lager in hand, he spots the vacant table. Walks over. Sits down.

Introducing **TIA ANDERSON**. Bouncing with life, this girl is dressed for clubbing; sparkly dress, matching handbag, killer heels, a bottle of WKD Blue in each hand.

As she passes JADEN, a flicker of recognition dances a merry jig upon her face. She halts. Doubles back. Takes a closer look. Actually, it's more of an open-mouthed gawp.

TIA: O, M and G. Jaden? Is that really you?

JADEN looks up, not knowing what to make of who he sees as a lip-glossed intruder invading his personal space.

JADEN: How do you know my name?

TIA: Like, W, T and F? Don't you recognise me?

He shakes his head, unsure. Should he know her?

TIA: It's me. Tia Anderson. I was in your year at school.

It takes a moment or two for JADEN to unstranger this person. And when he does, his eyes shine –

JADEN: Oh. Yes. I remember you now.

But the shine soon dulls when he recalls –

JADEN: You and your friends were always mean to me.

Without invitation, TIA plonks herself down on the spare chair, the duo of drinks placed upon the table.

TIA: Oh, God, yes, I'd forgotten about that. I am well soz about my yesteryear behaviour. I was a right cow in my younger days. But in my defence, you were kind of an easy target.

JADEN: In what way?

TIA: You being so... shy. Reserved. A bit of a loner. Well, quite a bit of a loner. Oh, and your "old man" haircut didn't exactly help matters. What was that all about?

JADEN: You think that gave you the right to call me names?

TIA: Oh, Jaden, are we seriously having this conversation? We left school six years ago. Quit living in the past.

JADEN: I'm not. It's just –

TIA: I was young and foolish. But believe me, I've changed. You are looking at a responsible grown-up.

She points off-stage to an unseen group of people.

TIA: I'm here with my friends from work. See the girl in the blue dress? Her name's Amy. She finally took our advice and ditched her arsewank boyfriend. And tonight we are celebrating her newfound freedom by getting totally out of our monkeys.

JADEN: I thought I was looking at a responsible grown-up.

TIA, somewhat thrown by JADEN's poker-faced manner. But then a cheeky grin sprouts upon his face.

JADEN: Relax. I'm joking.

She smiles and mock slaps his shoulder.

TIA: Oi, you. For a moment there, I thought you were turning all "stern father to wayward daughter."

JADEN now seems more relaxed and comfortable with his female company.

TIA: Does this mean I'm forgiven for my historical crimes?

JADEN: Hmm, depends.

TIA: On what?

JADEN: On how friendly you are to me from now on.

TIA: That... doesn't sound creepy at all.

They both chuckle.

JADEN: What's with the matching pair of drinks?

TIA: I always order two at a time. Saves me another trip to the bar when the first one runs dry, especially when it's heaving. I seriously advise you to do the same. It gets busy in here.

JADEN: I don't really drink that much. When I'm out, I sink two, maybe three pints max.

TIA: Jeez. In my universe, three is a warm-up. ... Hey, who are you out with tonight?

JADEN: I'm riding solo.

TIA: You're on your own?

JADEN: Yeah. That's what "riding solo" means.

TIA: Jaden, that is, like, well illegal.

JADEN: Why?

TIA: Because it's Saturday night.

In her chair, she jiggles her torso, waving jazz hands in the air.

TIA: Paaaaarty niight.

Hands down, jiggling spent.

TIA: So... what's the story? Girlfriend blown you out?

JADEN: I'm not actually in a relationship at the moment.

She likes this particular snippet of news.

TIA: Wow. I thought you'd be practically fighting them off.

And off JADEN'S jolted phase of bewilderment –

TIA: Oh, come on. Shine the spotlight on yourself. Totally different to how you were at school. Styled hair. Sexy shirt. Cute face.

JADEN laughs at the "cute face" remark. And then, in good humour, he says –

JADEN: What's all this? Making fun of me, version 2.0?

TIA: I'm being serious. You have so grown into your looks.

Cue JADEN'S coy blush-fest.

TIA: Oh, by the way. You should be thanking me.

JADEN: For what exactly?

TIA: Like, duh. Me sitting down at your table. Saving your arse. In more ways than one.

JADEN: Have I missed an episode?

TIA: You seriously want me to spell it out for you?

Oh, yes, it looks as though he does.

TIA: Jaden, you've wandered into a gay bar.

JADEN: What? Oh, Jesus.

TIA is most amused by his bungling faux pas.

JADEN: Oh, don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against... you know... each to their own and everything. But...

He looks right, looks left, then back at her.

JADEN ...are you sure this is a gay bar?

TIA: One hundred per cent.

JADEN: How can you tell?

TIA: See those two guys sitting over there? Report to me exactly what they're doing right now.

JADEN: Um... eating each other's faces.

TIA: Correct. Now feast your eyes on the two women standing in the far corner. Where have they parked their hands?

JADEN: Um... on each other's bum cheeks.

TIA: Full marks. How did you not notice this upon entry?

JADEN: I sort of did. But I saw it as normal life in the far more liberal twenty-first century. The golden age of tolerance. Open-mindedness. Freedom of expression.

TIA: Wow. Deep. Sounds like you've just swallowed somebody's heartfelt "end of movie" speech.

A pair of matching smiles. And then JADEN realises –

JADEN: Hang on a minute. Does this make you a lesbian?

TIA: Like, what? No chance. Way too many men in the world for me to even consider skipping across to the other side of the corridor. Why would you even think that?

JADEN: Because you are here. Right now. In, apparently, a gay bar.

TIA: Safe haven for girlkind. Means I can enjoy early evening drinks without the fear of unsolicited male wandering hands.

JADEN: Aren't you afraid of unsolicited female wandering hands?

TIA: The ladies in here won't try their luck with me.

JADEN: Do you have that in writing?

TIA: Believe me, Jaden. Lesbians can spot a strictly heterosexual girl a mile off. No point in wasting energy on those who will deffo turn down a hearty bowl of beef curtain soup.

JADEN laughs.

JADEN: The things you come out with.

TIA: I aim to please.

JADEN: I bet you do.

They share a long, lingering flirty-eyed moment.

TIA: I'm glad I bumped into you tonight.

JADEN: I'm glad too.

TIA: I'm sorry I was mean to you at school.

JADEN: Don't worry about it. No doubt I deserved it. Looking back, I was definitely nerdy dork material.

Mutual amusement. Then TIA looks him up and down.

TIA: Not any more though. The caterpillar has finally turned into the butterfly.

Ooh, she likes this guy. And JADEN seems to like her.

JADEN: So... does this mean you approve of my transformation?

TIA: I can answer your question in nine words: I. Deffo. Would. Not. Kick. You. Out. Of. Bed.

JADEN grins. And then he play-acts offence.

JADEN: Ooh, careful. These days, unwelcome sexual advances are considered very, very sexist.

TIA: Like, W, T and F?

JADEN: It's true.

TIA: I think you'll find the classic "Wouldn't kick you out of bed" line is perfectly legal when it tumbles out of the mouth of a woman.

Amused, JADEN shakes his head in mock disbelief.

JADEN: I can't believe you are literally defending your blatant sexism... with further sexism.

TIA: Only men are sexist. It's the law of the gender-verse... which makes me, a woman, exempt.

And then it dawns on her.

TIA: Hold on. What do you mean "unwelcome sexual advances?"

Cue JADEN'S cheeky smirk. TIA isn't done with him yet.

TIA: Never have I ever had any man turn me down.

JADEN: There's always a first time.

TIA: Right, serious question coming up. Ready?

JADEN: Fire away.

TIA: And I demand an honest answer, yeah?

JADEN: Your wish is my command.

She studies his face, her grin widens, then –

TIA: Would you genuinely, genuinely kick me out of bed?

JADEN'S cheeky smirk shows no signs of ditching the party
just yet.

JADEN: I'm not ready to get serious.

TIA: That's not a proper answer.

JADEN: Sounds valid enough to me.

TIA: Deflecting my query like a guilty politician will not get you off the hook. Now, answer the bloody question.

JADEN: What question?

TIA: God, you are so hard work. Would you kick me out of bed? Yes or no?

JADEN ponders upon the question, all heightened,
exaggerated, including the obligatory scratch of the chin.

JADEN: Ummmm... that depends on how loud you snore.

TIA: Oh, so you would jump into bed with me.

JADEN: I didn't say that.

TIA: You didn't need to.

They laugh.

TIA: This is well good fun.

JADEN: Agreed.

They chink glassware.

And then TIA notices –

TIA: Oh. My friends have disappeared.

TIA scans the pub from wall to wall. No sign of them. She's not a happy bunny. Out comes her phone from her handbag.

TIA: Better not have done a runner on me.

She selects a number from her contacts, puts the phone to her ear, waits a moment or two, then –

TIA: Hey, Amy. Where the hell is everybody? ... You're all going where? ... Oh, yeah, thanks for totally abandoning me. ... Sorry, what was that? ... Oh, him. He's a guy I knew at school.

TIA grins at this Amy girl's unheard reply.

TIA: Hey, it's not like that. We're in the middle of a catch-up session, that's all. ... You what? ... Amy, you have got such a dirty mind. Quit your sordid speculation right now. I'll see you all later in the club, yeah? ... Cool. Byeeee.

She ends the call. Places the phone back in her handbag. A hefty swig of one of her two drinks. And then she clocks JADEN'S curious look.

TIA: What?

JADEN: Sordid speculation?

TIA: Apparently my friends didn't want to disturb me as they've got it into their heads that I'm chatting you up.

Smiles all round. Then comes flirty play-acting.

JADEN: Whatever gave them that idea?

TIA: Who knows what goes on in their filthy, debauched minds? Speaking of which, they also believe I've marked you down as a potential end-of-evening drag-back.

JADEN: An end-of-evening drag-back?

TIA: Yeah. As in, wanting to take you home tonight to shag your brains out.

The play-acting continues. Actually, we'd rather call it severe hammy over-acted flirting.

JADEN: Ahhh, so you have a place of your own?

TIA: As luck would have it, yes. A flat.

JADEN: And... do you live by yourself?

TIA: I certainly do.

JADEN: And... can I assume that means it'll only be the two of us?

TIA: Jaden, what part of living by myself do you not fully comprehend?

JADEN: So... all night, no disturbances?

TIA: Oh, yes. All night.

JADEN mock scratches his chin in deep thought. Then –

JADEN: Hmm. Such a pity I'm not that kind of guy.

TIA: Or maybe you are, but you don't know it yet.

JADEN: I think you'll find I'm sticking with maybe I'm not, but you don't know it yet.

They're loving this.

TIA: What exactly are you trying to tell me?

JADEN: Tia Anderson. After careful consideration... and with much regret... I'm sorry to inform you that I, Jaden May, will be the first man ever to turn you down.

TIA feigns a gasp of outrage.

TIA: You're actually rejecting the girl sitting before you?

JADEN: It certainly looks that way.

TIA: Is that even legal?

JADEN: It is in my court of law.

TIA: And may I ask exactly what is wrong...

TIA indicates to her body.

TIA: ...with my body presented to you on a plate?

Again, JADEN overly feigns thinking about it. Then –

JADEN: Sorry, that's classified.