

Consent and Other C-words

by

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One-act play

CHARACTERS:

JADEN MAY: A shy early-twenties lad. The type of guy a mother wishes her daughter would bring home.

TIA ANDERSON: A fun-loving, bubbly early-twenties girl. Lives for the moment. Doesn't take life too seriously.

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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 exhale from JADEN, he can't get his head around it.

JADEN: I can't believe you did that. I mean, Jesus fucking Christ.

TIA: Okay, okay, my bad.

We hear the sound of TIA making a sharp exit from the bed.

TIA: I thought it was what you wanted.

And as the chord grows louder and louder –

– let's repeat the line “I THOUGHT IT WAS WHAT YOU
WANTED” three more times. Then –

– SUDDEN ICE-COLD SILENCE engulfs the theatre.

SCENE TWO: THE PUB

Let there be **LIGHT**.

At the edge of the stage, a circular pub table, two chairs.

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

He's alone, shy, awkward, a pint of lager in his hand, searching for a vacant table.

Introducing **TIA ANDERSON**, dressed for clubbing in a sparkly dress and matching handbag.

TIA grabs the table and places it centre-stage in front of **JADEN**. Then she heads back for the two chairs.

JADEN: What are you doing?

TIA places the chairs either side of the table.

TIA: I'm dressing the stage accordingly, so the audience knows this part of the play is set in a pub.

JADEN: Surely they can tell that by the way I'm literally holding a pint of lager in my hand.

TIA: Shut up, sit down and get back in character.

And as TIA marches towards the edge of the stage –

TIA: The play is about to begin.

And TIA'S gone.

JADEN seats himself at the table, back to playing it shy.

TIA returns, bouncing with life, this time holding two bottles of
WKD Blue, one in each hand.

As she passes JADEN, a flicker of recognition dances a merry
jig upon her face. She doubles back. Takes a closer look.

TIA: Oh, my God. Jaden? Is that really you?

JADEN looks up, not knowing what to make of the lip-glossed
intruder invading his personal space.

JADEN: How do you know my name?

TIA: Don't you recognise me?

He shakes his head and tips a shrug.

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

It takes a moment 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 was a total bitch in my younger days. But in my defence, you were an easy target.

JADEN: In what way?

TIA: You being so... shy and reserved. 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, okay? 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 with the red hair and the blue dress? Her name's Amy. She finally took our advice and ditched her arse-wank of a boyfriend. And tonight we are celebrating her newfound freedom by getting totally wasted.

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

TIA, thrown by JADEN's poker-faced manner –

– until a cheeky grin sprouts upon his face.

JADEN: Relax, I'm joking.

She smiles with relief, mock slapping his shoulder.

TIA: God, Jaden. For a moment there, I thought you were turning all
“stern father to wayward daughter.”

JADEN'S grin widens as he leans back in his chair, growing
comfortable with his newfound 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. I seriously advise you to do the
same. This place gets rammed with wall-to-wall bodies.

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

TIA: Jeeeeeez. 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 so illegal. It's Saturday night.

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

TIA: Paaaaarty niight.

Jiggling spent, hands down.

TIA: So what's the story? Ghosted by your hot date?

JADEN: I'm actually single at the moment.

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

And off JADEN'S jolt of bewilderment –

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

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: Me joining you at your table. Saving your arse. In more ways than one.

JADEN: Errrrm... have I missed an episode?

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

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 blundering 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: Eating each other's faces.

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

JADEN: On each other's arses.

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

JADEN: I sort of did. But I saw it as a normal way of life in the twenty-first century.

TIA: Ah, yes, the golden age of tolerance. Open-mindedness. Freedom of expression.

JADEN: But is it though? Like, truly? In retrospect, I don't think it is. It seems as though our so-called civilisation has taken a major backward step when it comes to societal acceptance. Everywhere I look, I see discrimination. Hatred. Persecution. Whether it be against race. Gender. Sexual orientation. Class. Politics. Religion. Well, everything really. It's like.... nobody is safe. Nobody at all.

He shakes his head at the absurdity of it all.

JADEN: Why can't we accept what's staring us in the face? Everybody is different. Diverse. Unique. But in the same respect, why can't we as human beings act a little more... communal?

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. You've also wandered into a gay bar.

TIA: Yeah, so?

JADEN: Does this make you a...?

TIA: No way. Far too many men in the world for me to even consider skipping across to the other side of the corridor.

JADEN: So why are you here?

TIA: Safe haven for girlkind. It means I can enjoy early evening drinks without the fear of unsolicited male attention.

JADEN: Aren't you afraid of unsolicited female attention?

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 valuable seduction energy on a strict non-believer.

JADEN chuckles.

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.

Mutual amusement. Then TIA looks him up and down.

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

JADEN: So... you approve of my miraculous transformation?

TIA: I can answer your question in nine words: I. Would. Definitely.
Slide. Between. The. Sheets. With. You.

JADEN play-acts taking offence.

JADEN: Careful. Under international Gen Z law, unwelcome sexual advances are punishable by death.

TIA: I think you'll find those particular nine words are perfectly legal when they tumble 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 punishable by death behaviour with blatant sexism.

TIA: Only men are sexist... which makes me, a woman, exempt.

And then it dawns on her.

TIA: Hey, what do you mean "unwelcome sexual advances?"

Cue JADEN'S cheeky smirk.

TIA: No man has ever turned me down.

JADEN: There's always a first time.

TIA: Right, okay, serious question coming up. Ready?

JADEN: Fire away.

TIA: And I demand an honest answer, yeah?

JADEN: Your wish is my command.

TIA: Would you slide under the sheets with me?

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: Quit deflecting my query like a guilty politician and answer the bloody question. 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: Aha! That sounds like a yes to me.

JADEN: I didn't actually say the Y-word.

TIA: You didn't need to.

Both amused, they chink their glassware.

And then TIA notices –

TIA: Oh. My friends have disappeared.

TIA scans the pub from wall to wall. No sign of them. Out from
her handbag comes her phone.

TIA: Better not have bailed out on me.

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

TIA: 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 Amy's unheard reply.

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

She ends the call. Dumps 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 assumed I was too busy chatting you up.

Then comes flirty play-acting.

JADEN: Whatever gave them that idea?

TIA: Who knows what goes on in their filthy debauched minds? 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 for serious horizontal gymnastics.

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.

JADEN: And do you live by yourself?

TIA: I share a flat with my bestie. But she's away for the weekend.
Protest march. Not exactly sure what she's protesting about
this time, but I guarantee it will involve the unholy trinity of
placards, chanting and getting herself arrested.

JADEN: So... it'll only be the two of us?

TIA: Jaden, which part of the concept of "flatmate away for the
weekend" do you not fully comprehend?

JADEN mock scratches his chin in deep thought.

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 what is wrong...

TIA overly indicates to her body.

TIA: ...with what I'm offering to the table?

JADEN: Sorry, that's classified.

They laugh. And with their play-acting on cease-fire, TIA once again mock slaps his shoulder.

TIA: You are such a tease.

JADEN: I know.

They share a moment, lost in each other's gazes.

TIA: I'm really enjoying your company.

JADEN: Likewise.

TIA: So... are we swapping numbers?

JADEN: I'd like that.

Out come their phones. He hands his device to her, she hands hers to him. And as they both input their phone numbers –

TIA: You will call me, right?

JADEN: Yeah, course.

TIA: Jaden, if you even consider ghosting me, I will hunt you down with a rusty blade. And I am talking double castration.

JADEN: Double ouch.

Matching grins.

JADEN: You'll be pleased to know I come with a ghost-free guarantee.

TIA: Double castration cancelled. Both testicles intact.

Numbers swapped, they hand back each other's phones.

TIA: Hey, do you fancy moving on?

JADEN: Where?

TIA: To another pub. Then another pub. And then onto a club.

JADEN: I'm not really a "clubbing" person.

TIA stands up, takes him by the hands and pulls him to his feet.

TIA: You are now. I need a dancing partner.

JADEN: I can't dance.

TIA: Yes, you can.

JADEN: No, seriously, I can't.

TIA: Then I'll teach you.

JADEN sports the look of sheer dread.

TIA: Quit the stress-fest. It's not as bad as it sounds.

JADEN: Isn't it?

TIA: Oh, important update. We need to move the table and chairs.

JADEN: Why?

And as they shift the furniture over to the edge of the stage –

TIA: Because... two or three hours have passed since we met.

JADEN: As my dad used to say, "time flies when you're having fun."

TIA: We've visited several pubs. And between us, we have necked an impossible amount of drinks.

JADEN: I was wondering why I suddenly feel tipsy.

They head back towards centre-stage.

TIA: And now... we are in...

SCENE THREE: THE CLUB

TIA: ...the nightclub.

TIA clicks her fingers.

Cue flashing coloured lights and various dance tracks played throughout this scene. Nothing too vocal, nor too loud.

Instrumental tracks only with a steady bass and beat.

Wasting no time, TIA starts moving to the rhythm.

JADEN, clueless, awkward, doesn't know where to begin.

TIA: Dance with me.

JADEN: I told you, I don't know how.

TIA: Just watch me and learn, okay?

TIA moves her feet and wiggles her hips, both hands high in the air. This girl is lost in music.

TIA: Now it's your turn.

JADEN'S #fail attempt can only be described as "flamenco dancer with a broken ankle."

As a result, TIA giggles.

TIA: Jaden, your dancing is totally cringe.

JADEN: That's what I've been trying to tell you.

TIA: Okay, crash course. Feel the bassline. Taste the rhythm. Let
the music take over every square centimetre of your body.

A dancing TIA observes as JADEN makes his second attempt.

At first, the guy is stiff and clumsy and totally out of sync with
the music –

– but he gradually improves, swaying his shoulders, his arms,
his hips, his feet. Oh, yes, he's enjoying this.

TIA is most impressed.

TIA: Hey, are you sure haven't done this before?

JADEN: No. Never.

TIA: You are definitely a natural.

Her glowing endorsement pleases him. Loving his newfound
moves, he dances closer to TIA.

JADEN: Are your friends here yet?

Still dancing, TIA surveys the locality.

TIA: I can't see them anywhere, no.

JADEN smiles at an unseen girl on the dance floor.

TIA reaches out. Turns his face back in her direction.

TIA: Eyes on me, Casanova. I'm your hot date for this evening.

JADEN sees the funny side.

JADEN: Ooh, is this a jealous streak I see before me.

TIA: I call it protecting my investment.

JADEN: Oh, so now I'm a commodity?

TIA takes note of his wiggling hips, that gyrating groin.

TIA: The way you're making shapes right now... oh, yes.

And then she dances closer to him, her eyes locked on his, as though marking her territory.

TIA: You know... a girl can tell a lot about a guy by the way he moves on the dance floor.

JADEN: Is that a fact?

TIA: More than a fact. It's a scientific formula.

JADEN: Okaaaay. So what are my current moves saying to you?

TIA: Rough translation: Jaden May, shit hot between the sheets.

They giggle.

There follows a ringtone in her handbag. And as TIA fishes in the bag for her phone –

TIA: Time to reclaim our table and chairs.

TIA leads JADEN back to the table and chairs.

They sit down.

TIA answers her phone.

TIA: Hello? ... Amy, where are you? ... You're where? ... Oh, my God, information required. ... Shit, girl. ... Right. ... Yeah ... Uh-huh. ... Is the gang there with you? ... Okay, well, I hope you don't have to wait too long to get seen. ... What was that?

Check out TIA'S fat grin as she listens to the caller.

TIA: Yeah, he's still here with me. ... Hey, quit that smut, you sewage-minded cow. Over and out.

TIA shuts off her phone. Back in her handbag, it goes.

TIA: Amy's had to go to A&E.

JADEN: Why, what happened?

TIA: She threw up. Violently.

JADEN: And that warranted a hospital visit?

TIA: No, this is Amy we're talking about, the queen of farcical escalation. After chucking up her guts, she collapsed onto somebody else's table, drinks literally flying everywhere.

JADEN can't help but smirk.

JADEN: Oh, my God.

TIA: But that's not all.

JADEN: Okaaaay.

TIA: So far, a few cuts and bruises, nothing major. But then, after getting herself chunked out of the pub, Amy decided the time was right to trip over the nearest available kerb and break her ankle.

JADEN: Oh, Jesus.

TIA: But that's not all.

JADEN: You mean there's more?

TIA: Oh, yes. When the girls arrived at the hospital, Amy took a tumble out of the taxi. Suspected sprained wrist to add to her growing list of injuries.

JADEN: Shit, man.

TIA: But that's not all.

JADEN: What the fuck?

TIA: Actually, I'm joking. Nothing further to report.

JADEN: Thank God for that.

TIA: No prizes for guessing they won't be joining us tonight.

JADEN: No, I... don't suppose they will.

TIA: Which means... it's just the two of us. If that's okay with you.

JADEN: Yeah, course. I'm enjoying myself.

TIA: Well, like I said earlier, I aim to please.

For a moment, they gaze at each other.

And then TIA goes for it, she bends forward and attempts a
slobbery kiss with JADEN –

– who pulls away, uncomfortable, unsure –

– leaving TIA more than a tad thrown.

TIA: Oh. Am I coming on too strong?

JADEN averts his eyes, not sure what to do or say.

TIA: It kind of looked like you were waiting for me to do that.

JADEN returns his sights to the girl. Still doesn't say anything.

TIA: Okaaaaaay, awkward alert. I promise I'll reel myself in and control my urges. Not that I usually have to. By now, the guy on my wishlist is well and truly hooked.

JADEN: How many men have you had?

TIA: Enough.

Then comes a tinge of self-consciousness.

TIA: No more than any other modern girl. So what's the story? Do you find kissing me repulsive?

JADEN: No, I... look, it's not you, it's me.

TIA: Hah. Said every man since the very dawn of existence.

JADEN: I'm just so... confused.

TIA: About what? Me and you? Not that there is a me and you. But you know what I mean. Probably.

JADEN: No, it's...

TIA: It's what?

JADEN: I'm confused about... who I like.

TIA: Jaden, what exactly is bubbling under the surface here?

JADEN: It'll probably sound lame to you.

TIA: No, no, go on, I'm listening.

JADEN: Well... sometimes I find myself looking at men in the same way my mates look at women.

At first, it doesn't click. But then the penny drops. Noisily.

TIA: Are you trying to tell me you're gay?

JADEN: I don't know. That's why I can't get my head around it.

TIA: Okaaaay. And do you find yourself looking at women in the same way?

JADEN: Yes.

TIA: Mystery solved. You're bisexual.

JADEN: I guess... maybe... but isn't that considered greedy?

TIA: Hold on, is this your underhand way of letting me down gently? Rather than telling me straight that you're not interested?

JADEN: No way.

TIA: So you're not planning on escaping through the toilet window, never to be seen again?

JADEN: Believe me, I am going nowhere.

TIA: Good. Because I hate it when that happens.

TIA relaxes as they get back to the original conversation.

TIA: Right. Seeing as you're here to stay, present me with the facts. What do you think drove you to same-sex curiosity?

JADEN: No idea. That's why I decided to come into town tonight. To seek answers.

TIA: Ohhhh, plot twist. So you did know you'd wandered into a gay bar.

JADEN: Guilty as charged.

TIA: So why act all surprised when I brought up the subject?

JADEN: Embarrassment, I guess. And self-preservation. I was worried you'd make fun of me. Like you did at school.

TIA: Believe me, Jaden, that version of Tia Anderson is long gone.

JADEN: Glad to hear it.

TIA: So... back to your confused sexuality. What's the grand plan?
Hook up with a member of the same sex?

JADEN: I don't know. I mean, I don't think so. I'm not even sure if I could bring myself to... you know...

TIA: Shag a man?

JADEN: If I'm totally honest, I hadn't even considered the implications of going that far.

TIA: You must have been pretty sure when you walked into that gay bar.

JADEN: I kind of saw it more as an opportunity to do a spot of window shopping.

TIA: Well, there are plenty of goods to browse in this sordid cattle market. See anything you like?

JADEN: I like you.

TIA likes him liking her.

TIA: I guess that's a start. Anybody else?

JADEN surveys the locality. But –

JADEN: I'm just not feeling it.

TIA: So... if it turns out that your sexual preference leans further towards the female of the species... will that put me at the top of the list?

JADEN: In theory, yes.

TIA: What about in practice?

JADEN: The jury is still out on that one.

A grin from TIA, determined not to be beaten.

TIA: Know what I think? We need to let the laws of biology decide.

JADEN: And what does that entail exactly?

TIA: A kiss test.

JADEN: Careful, Tia. Kissing didn't exactly end well with us the first time.

TIA: And that is why I demand a rematch.

TIA cranes her neck forward. But first –

TIA: This time, no pulling away, okay? We're doing this in the name of science.

They draw their heads closer, their lips meet and a tender kiss is born.

TIA: Information required. Did my kiss do anything for you?

JADEN: Hmm. Best to repeat the experiment. Further research essential.

TIA likes the sound of that.

Again, they kiss, unhurried this time.

And when they eventually disconnect –

TIA: I think we need to get back on that dance floor.

JADEN: I think we do too.

They stand up and lead each other towards centre-stage.

Once there, they dance close, their eyes locked in orbit, their bodies warm to the touch, bumping and grinding, lost in music, wanting each other, needing each other, two sets of lips mere millimetres apart.

And then they snog. Heated. Fervent. Passionate. So turned on, their bodies so close, they might as well be having sex.

TIA pulls away from the snog and grins, indicating to his groin.

TIA: Jeeeeeeez, you're excited.

JADEN: How can you tell?

They giggle like children.

TIA: No way do you bat for the other side.

And then JADEN wobbles to and fro, almost stumbling over,
with TIA struggling to prop him up.

TIA: Careful. You almost bowled me over.

His eyes dart here and there, his speech slurred.

JADEN: I don't feel right. I'm all... woozy... lightheaded.

TIA: It's okay. The drink has caught up with you.

JADEN: I'm not... drunk. Feels... different.

TIA works out that something is very wrong with this guy. She
steers him back to the table and chairs.

TIA: Let's sit you down, yeah?

Swaying like a rag doll, JADEN lands upon his chair, almost
knocking over the table.

JADEN: What's... happening to me?

TIA checks his eyes.

TIA: Oh, shit. I think somebody's spiked your drink.