



THE POWDER ROOM

An Original One Act

by

SAMANTHA TOH

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Directed by Kip Hustace

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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.

STEVE

(Choking.) Hngh.

JESSE

Having some difficulty?

STEVE

No, no...I...I'm just thinking.

JESSE

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

Thinking, eh?

STEVE

Life...job...you know.

JESSE

(Unsympathetically.) Must be hard.

STEVE

Yeah.

JESSE

Juggling so many things...

STEVE

Yeah...

JESSE

...like how you juggle...*people*.

STEVE

What? JESSE

Nothing. STEVE

You just said... JESSE

(Innocently.) What? STEVE

Nothing. JESSE

(Beat.)

...I should go. JESSE

(JESSE tries to leave, but STEVE blocks him at the door.)

It's three p.m. STEVE

(Nervously.) Is it? JESSE

STEVE
As far as I recall, you don't quite have to leave yet.

(A tense moment. JESSE frantically decides whether or not to protest. Instead, he retreats to the couch stage left. A beat.)

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

Mmhm. JESSE

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.

JESSE

Good...

STEVE

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

JESSE

Hm.

STEVE

What?

JESSE

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

STEVE

What a coincidence.

JESSE

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

(STEVE gestures in the air. Pause.)

JESSE

It's a...a room?

STEVE

I know that. I mean, specifically.

JESSE

A sofa.

STEVE

Strike two.

(Silence.)

JESSE

What is...this?

STEVE

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-upless 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.)

STEVE

(Calmly.) Have a cigarette?

JESSE

I don't smoke.

STEVE

Oh, yes. I know this too.

JESSE

You...you know a lot.

STEVE

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

JESSE

What is it?

STEVE

(Offhandedly.) When did you last fuck Marla?

JESSE

What?

STEVE

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

JESSE

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

STEVE

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

JESSE

I...(Giving up)...last Tuesday.

Nice... STEVE

Steve. JESSE

How many times, again? STEVE

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

(Knowingly). So eleven or twelve? STEVE

She was a little frustrated...sexually frustrated... JESSE

So you haven't called it quits. STEVE

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

Mmmhm. STEVE

She didn't have enough willpower to stay away. JESSE

Neither do you, apparently. STEVE

(Beat.)

(Slowly.) I smelled you in the car. STEVE

What? JESSE

...on her...that's how I knew. Strange smell, you. STEVE

Oh. JESSE

STEVE

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

JESSE

(Embarrassed.) Oh.

STEVE

How was that? Enjoyable?

JESSE

You should know.

STEVE

I don't, actually.

JESSE

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

STEVE

What?!

JESSE

...I had to knead her dough...

STEVE

(Taken aback.) Oh.

(Beat.)

JESSE

I'm sorry.

STEVE

Yeah, I didn't hear that part.

JESSE

It hurt...

STEVE

Hurt?!

JESSE

There were rolling pins...

STEVE

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.)

STEVE

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

urinal.)

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.

STEVE

The usual?

JESSE

Yes...don't forget the -

STEVE

- the extra lemon. I know.

(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?

JESSE

No.

MIKE

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

JESSE

I'm sure she is.

MIKE

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

JESSE

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.

JESSE

I'm sorry.

MIKE

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.

JESSE

Well.

MIKE

What, now?

JESSE

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

(Beat. MIKE is considering his words.)

MIKE

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 CHAU-FFEUR 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.)

STEVE

Oh, he's gone?

JESSE

Yeah.

STEVE

I know, I waited till he left.

JESSE

...Sure.

STEVE

But before I forget, your drink...*sir*.

Stop it, Steve. JESSE

What? Stop what? STEVE

Don't. JESSE

Sir? What, sir? No "sir"? STEVE

It's tiring. JESSE

Tiring? STEVE

It's always tiring. JESSE

Is it? STEVE

Yeah. JESSE

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

Yeah. JESSE

(Evidently surprised.) What? STEVE

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

(A shocked pause.)

Jesse – STEVE

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.

JESSE

Companion.

STEVE

Yes.

JESSE

You love her companionship.

STEVE

Yes.

JESSE

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

STEVE

(Silence.)

No, I guess I don't.

JESSE

...So it's tiring?

STEVE

It's tiring.

JESSE

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

STEVE

What job?

JESSE

Being your chauffeur, your - your driver.

STEVE

Oh.

JESSE

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

Yeah. JESSE

(Beat.)

Maybe I should negotiate a pay raise. STEVE

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

I should get a room upgrade. STEVE

Away from the kitchen? JESSE

She likes fucking you in there too much. STEVE

I'm sorry. JESSE

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

Yeah. JESSE

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

(Laughing.) Don't. JESSE

(A comfortable pause.)

Hmm. STEVE

So. JESSE

So. STEVE

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?

JESSE

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.

STEVE

Mmmhm.

JESSE

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.

STEVE

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

JESSE

...Maybe Mike was wrong.

STEVE

What?

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."

STEVE

(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