

Welcome to Hear/Now, a season of audio theater from Keen Company!

We're an award-winning nonprofit theater in New York City, championing identification and connection through stories about the decisive moments that change us.

I'm Jonathan Silverstein, the Artistic Director, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to *1993 by finkle*, the 1st production in our season of audio theater.

Join us in embracing the virtual Off-Broadway experience. Take a moment to find your seat, silence any distractions, and lower your house lights.

It's time to settle in for a night at the theater, and enjoy *1993*...

NARRATOR

Previously on 1993...

Sound of static, like radio switching stations.

GENET

I'm gonna slide your wallet out of your back-pocket now, swift. *(cutting through air noise)*
See ya.

Radio static. A tech funk style beat.

finkle (singing)

JEAN WAYNE GENET

IS HIS NAME

HE'S GOTTA A SORTA NEIGHBORHOOD FAME

Radio static. Music beat continues through-out.

BYRON

What are your dreams Steven? What is it that you want?

STEVEN

I'm not sure. I think I'll know when I see it.

Radio static.

BYRON

Jean, Steven.

Jean is my downstairs neighbor.

And a vegan.

GENET

Charmed I'm sure.

BYRON

Steven lost his wallet last night at the Boy Bar.

Radio static. Unlocking several locks. The door swings open.

STEVEN

Oh! Hey!

GENET

I think this is yours.

Sound of Genet quickly walking down the stairs.

STEVEN

My wallet.

He brought me back my wallet.

Previous music beat ends. Pause.

♪1993♪

♪1993♪

♪1993♪

Theme song morphs and fades out.

NARRATOR

And now Episode Three

LOW ROMANCE – SWIPE

Heavy rain falling.

Footsteps scurrying across the street

A door squeaks open and the sound of people talking and glasses clinking fill the room while faint club music plays in the background

STEVEN

Hey, can I get a Bud Lite?

Bottle opens and the cap falls

STEVEN

Thanks.

Keep the change.

Drinking the beer.

Burp.

Footsteps approach

STEVEN

Fancy meeting you here!

GENET

Do I know you?

STEVEN

...I'm Steven.

We --- you---- I'm Byron's ---

GENET

Oh yea, the twink with the twinkly eyes.
Nice eye shadow.

STEVEN

Thanks. It's from the Jacquelyn Smith collection.

GENET

I'm Genet.
Jean Wayne Genet.

STEVEN

I know your name.

(Pause)

Happy Vernal Equinox.

It's *Spring!* Even if it doesn't feel like it.

Do you come to the Wonder Bar often?

I've like never been here which is crazy because it's just around the corner but-
Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for giving me back my wallet.

GENET

Where's Byron?

STEVEN

Out of town. Working the door in Philly at some club. He's been going every Sunday night for the last couple weeks. He lost his Sunday night gig in the city after - the *debacle* at the Gender Fuck Ball. Did you see it?

GENET

Yea.

(Pause)

STEVEN

It was *really* bad.

He comes back in the afternoon tomorrow.

GENET

So you're free for the night.

STEVEN

I'm free whenever I want to be.

GENET

I thought you two were –

STEVEN

I don't want to talk about Byron.
He told me to stay away from you, you know.
He said you're trouble.
Are you *trouble*?

GENET

Are you flirting with me kid?

STEVEN

Maybe I am *Daddy*.

GENET

Don't call me *Daddy*, kid.

STEVEN

(obstantly) Don't call me *kid*, **Daddy**.

GENET inhales deeply STEVEN's scent.

STEVEN

Did you just – smell me?

GENET

I have a thing for scents.

STEVEN

That's *hot*
What's my scent?

GENET inhales again.

GENET

Sweat. Soap. Fruit. Post sex funk.
Where you coming from kid?

STEVEN

I don't kiss and tell.

-
(Pause)

Have you ever been in the backroom here?

GENET

What do you think?

STEVEN

I'm thinking about going.
What's a backroom like?

GENET

Don't play innocent with me kid.

STEVEN

I'm *not*.
I've really never been in a backroom.
Why don't you *believe* me?

GENET

Go and find out.

STEVEN

You trying to get rid of me?

GENET

I'm not trying anything right now.

STEVEN

I'm *going* to go in.

GENET

Just keep your wallet in a safe place.
Wouldn't want someone to *swipe* it.

STEVEN

(Chuckles)
I don't carry a wallet anymore.
I just stuffed some cash into my bikini bottom.
Don't believe me?

GENET

I *believe* you.

STEVEN

Don't follow me.

GENET

Hey.

Any chance, you're hungry?

♪1993♪

NARRATOR

finkle here, popping in for a sec to highlight the Wonder Bar before we move on

The Wonder Bar was at 505 East 6th Street between avenues A and B

For a while it was called Eastern Bloc and in the last couple years it's been know as Club Cumming. It was bought by the actor Alan Cumming and he named it after himself, which I want to hate because –Well, I hate Alan Cumming.

Which is probably somewhat of a controversial statement and some of you are going to *turn off right now* and that's ok I guess its ok don't turn off just stay um,

It's not that I don't think he's a talented actor because I actually do. His performance in Cabaret and he's done a million others things that have been super moving to me over the years

Uh but um

I once saw him do something really *ugly*, or rather it was a series of small things that added up to something really ugly.

And I should also say that I uh to be totally fair I was partly culpable in it.

Like I may have enabled the event and its hard to also say um what I really saw because you know our lens are all... I don't know what lens I was looking at it at the time

But that basic thing is, I saw something I thought was wrong,

I should have said something but I didn't.

But enough about uh – Alan Cumming.

What I wanted to get to is that the Wonder Bar is one of my favorite places to go in 1993 and that was for three reasons:

The First was that it was super close. It was just a block over from where I was living and um I just like things that are convenient and I'm lazy and that was awesome about it. The second thing I loved uh about the Wonder Bar in 1993 is that as um Steven said it had a backroom and um, I'm just gonna read the definition of a backroom or *darkroom* as Wikipedia calls it.

Uh, "dark rooms were common features of North American gay bars and clubs in the 60s and 70s and 80s even and can still be found in some bars", um I don't really know if there are any backrooms in bars anymore I wanna say like you know the Cock at like past 11pm pre-pandemic or past 1 p, 1am rather um pre-pandemic maybe it could count as a dark room uh uh

“a back room in a gay bar is typically a small, very dark or dimly lit room at the back of the club where customers could go to have sex. Usually without undressing”.

Yea, I think that’s like, that’s exactly it.

The...the backroom at the Wonder Bar is, *was*, where now if you go to Club Cumming or if Club Cumming is still open where the DJ booth is, so if you’ve ever been there you know how small that space is, I mean it may be six feet by six feet at the most.

In 1993 though it have been quite possible for um like upwards of 20 guys to be squeezed in back there and it was all squishy and sexy and wet – um,

I always say I met all my favorite STD’s there.

Which is meant to be funny..

The third reason I loved going to the Wonder Bar was because, well I used to see Steven in the Wonder Bar all the time.

One night I gathered my courage and I followed him into the back room. And I tried to get his attention. But he didn’t see me. Or didn’t *choose* to see me.

It’d be another three months or so before Steven and I would actually talk.

Alright we’re gonna um jump ahead now about 10 minutes in the story.

Genet and Steven have left Wonder Bar and gone to Leshko’s Coffee Shop.

Which was on the corner of 7th and Avenue A.

Distant relative to Veselka and the Kiev, for those who remember the Kiev.

Leshko’s was a Ukranian Diner. Um, It’d been there since the early 50’s. Some time in the late 90’s it was bought and turned into a cool brunch place for gays I don’t think it was just for the gays, it felt like a gay place it felt like a Chelsea place but it didn’t take. Pre pandemic it was some random latin themed restaurant, um I’ll be curious to see what it becomes when all this is over.

But in 1993 thought, it was still wonderful run down Leshkos, where the food was cheap and someone always seemed to have locked themselves in the bathroom doing drugs.

♪♪ this could be love, this could be love...♪♪

Utensils clinking, orders being taken, voices chatting in the background.

STEVEN

Why aren’t you eating any of the fries?

GENET

I don’t eat starchy things.

STEVEN

We could have ordered something else.

GENET

I'm not hungry.

STEVEN

But you're the one that wanted to go out for food.

GENET

Maybe I just wanted to get to know you better.

STEVEN

Well,

Then ask me some questions.

You're just - sitting there staring at me.

GENET

Lemme see your hand.

STEVEN

Why?

GENET

I read palms.

STEVEN

Bull.Shit.

GENET

Gimme your hand

STEVEN

Fine.

Sound of touching his hand.

GENET

Your skin is... *soft*.

Alright, look here,
this is your lifeline
Which is actually um
Well, Very *short*.

STEVEN

So you're telling me I'm going to die young.

GENET

Looks like you're going to live
Hard though.

STEVEN

I come from a long line of people who live deep into their 90's.

GENET

Not you kid.

STEVEN

How long do I have?

GENET

From the looks of this maybe one, or two- **minutes**.

Steven and Genet Laughing.

STEVEN

Can you even read palms?

GENET

No.

I wanted to feel your hands.

How much money do you come from?

STEVEN

I don't come from money.

GENET

Sure you do, you have soft hands and good teeth. You've been to a dentist and an orthodontist. Look at my teeth.

STEVEN

They're not that bad.

GENET

They're not good either.

They're poor people teeth.

STEVEN

Well I'm not like super rich.

So are you a professional pickpocket?

GENET

Amongst other things, sure.

STEVEN

What other things?

GENET

Dark things.

Not things for a kid with a mug like yours to ever worry themselves about.

-

STEVEN

Just because I have a sweet face doesn't mean that I -
I'm more than you think I am.

(Pause)

I have a confession to make.
Don't you want to hear my confession?

GENET

I'm waiting.

STEVEN

Well I didn't know, you didn't ask.

GENET

What's your confession?

STEVEN

I've been following you.

GENET

Following me.

STEVEN

Well, not following, I don't know -
Kind of...

I know your routines
I shouldn't be telling you but
For example
Mega Fitness

(speeding up) I only joined there because I know you go there
And I go at the same time as you but I stagger myself like 15 minutes so it doesn't look like
I'm there at the exact same time as you. Either fifteen minutes earlier or later than you. I

tried to get your attention at the Gender Fuck Ball but it was like you didn't even see me. I *literally* got in your way three times. Did you see me? And I know you come to Wonder Bar on Sunday nights to have a couple drinks before you head over to Limelight. You never see me. But I see you, sitting at the end of the bar, drinking your bourbon, keeping to yourself. And on Thursday nights sometimes I shadow you when you pick pockets at Boy Bar. I've tried to pick pockets too but I'm no good at it. I keep getting caught and have to run like hell. I don't think I was meant to pick pockets.
How do you do it?

GENET

I'm smooth like a surface.
The knife slice is thin. Therefore the knife must be sharp.
Swift, swipe, seize, disappear.

STEVEN

Swift, swipe, seize, disappear.
Swift, swipe, seize, disappear
(Repeats)

GENET

Try the swipe with this knife. Try the motion.

Knife cuts the air in front of them.

STEVEN

I'm not –

GENET

Your hands are too rich.

STEVEN

Maybe they are meant for something less delicate.

GENET

Maybe.

Beat.

STEVEN

I have fantasies about you.

GENET

What kind of fantasies.

STEVEN

Rough stuff.

GENET

You want me to rough you up?

STEVEN

...I want you to *break* me.

Beat.

*A door slams. someone is pushed up against it.
deep heavy breathing*

STEVEN

Should you - should we -

Sounds of hands groping and feeling each other's body

GENET

Should we - what?

A belt buckle is unclasped and falls

STEVEN

get a condom?

Deep breathing

GENET

Do you want me to?

STEVEN

Do you want to?

GENET

No.

STEVEN

Are you -

GENET

Are you?

STEVEN

I - think I'm negative but - I don't know.

GENET

Do you trust me?

Just trust me...
 Just trust me...
 Just trust me..
 Just trust me

♪♪FOR ALL TIME ♪♪

♪ STEVEN

WAKING UP NEXT TO U
FEELS SO RIGHT
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME
U CAN JUST LAUGH ABOUT IT
SAY ITS NOT RIGHT
BUT I COULD B HERE 4 ALL TIME

MAYBE U THINK ITS QUICK
ALL MY FEELIE FEELS
BUT I KNOW WHEN A FEELING'S RIGHT

EVERYTHING ABOUT U
IS SO FINE
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME
(I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME)
B HERE 4 ALL TIME
B HERE 4 ALL TIME
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME
B HERE 4 ALL TIME
BE HERE FOR ALL TIME
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME

ON AND ON AND ON
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)
OUR LIFE CAN BE A SONG
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)

ON AND ON AND ON
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)
OUR LIFE CAN BE A SONG
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)
I'D LIKE TO B HERE 4 ALL TIME
(BE HERE FOR ALL TIME)

ON AND ON AND ON
ON AND ON AND ON
ON AND ON AND ON

ON AND ON AND ON 🎵

*Music fades to the sound of birds chirping.
GENET stretching, yawning.*

STEVEN

(sing songy) Good morning sleepy head.

GENET

Hey kid.

You're still here.

A beeper going off.

STEVEN

What's that?

GENET

My beeper. Fuck. *Fuck.*

GENET getting dressed

STEVEN

What is it?

GENET

Look I have to – this was fun but –

STEVEN

Wait. Are you kicking me out?

GENET

You can stay but – I have to go.

STEVEN

When will you be back?

GENET

Not sure.

STEVEN

So should I like- wait for you?

GENET

I'll find you later.

STEVEN
Promise?

GENET
I don't make promises.

STEVEN
You should tie me up so I'll be here like I'll be your – prisoner or something hot.

GENET
Have you ever been tied up before?

STEVEN
Maybe.... No.

GENET
It's not as hot as it sounds.

Beeper chimes again.

STEVEN
Who's beeping you?

GENET
Don't worry about it.

STEVEN
Your boyfriend?
People you work with?

GENET
Something like that.

STEVEN
Which one?

GENET
Work.

STEVEN
Do you like go to an office or something?

GENET
Do I *look* like I go to an office?

STEVEN

I don't know - I don't know where you go...

GENET

I thought you were following me.

STEVEN

Not all the time. Tell me.

GENET

Maybe another time.

STEVEN

You're so *mysterious*.

GENET

I'm not as interesting as you think.

STEVEN

Then tell me.

GENET

Maybe later. Right now I **gotta** fly.

STEVEN

Wait, aren't you going to kiss me *one* more time?

*GENET moves to kiss STEVEN.
Stops and takes a long sniffs.*

STEVEN

What is it?

GENET

The sheets. They smell...like *shit*.

STEVEN

I guess they got a little messy last night.

I can wash them today if you -

GENET

No. throw them away.

I never sleep on sheets again. once they've been *soiled*.

Footsteps walking away and door opens

See ya.

*Door closes as **GENET** exits.*

Boots fade down the stairs.

STEVEN alone screams in frustration and items around the apartment are thrown and broken. He breathes heavily.

Music grows in the background.

♪ **STEVEN**

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE IS JUST NOT RIGHT

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP NIGHT

FEELING SO LITTLE MAKES ME WANT TO CRY

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE, SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE.

UH OH ♪

This has been Episode 3 of 1993 by finkle.

Directed by Jonathan Silverstein.

All voices, music, sound, noise, and silence created and compiled by finkle.

Publishing Assistance by Garrett Schultz.

This performance is part of Keen Company's Hear/Now Season of Audio Theater, led by Artistic Director Jonathan Silverstein.

The Season's Audio Consultant is Garrett Schultz.

The Hear/Now theme is composed by Billy Recce.

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Thank you for listening. I look forward to joining you at the virtual theater again soon!