

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...

*Music playing lightly in the background  
(Radio static)*

**NARRATOR**

512 is not just where Genet and Byron and now Steven live in 1993.

It's also where I lived. (radio static) And my dream in 1993 well it wasn't even a dream it was like I felt like I had a calling, I believed it was my destiny to become a pop star and I spent the better part of the year making my debut pop album – which I called “YOU”. (YOU YOU YOU)

*Radio static and then the channel changes*

**GENET**

What's your confession?

**STEVEN**

I've been following you.

**GENET**

Following me.

I know you come to Wonder Bar on Sunday nights to have a couple drinks before you head over to Limelight.

*Radio static and channel changes again*

**NARRATOR**

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.

*Radio static and channel changes one last time*

♪ 1993 ♪

*(Theme Music Plays)*

Hey, ah Finkle here. So I have a story to tell you. Well it's really two stories.

**Both** are about *Steven*.

I spent *two* nights with Steven in the year 1993. This episode is about the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night... the first night...

Ok, the first night we spent together was *completely* by accident.  
It was in late June...

Oh before we get to that though I just for some context want to say, I know that in episode one I talked about making my pop album and spending the whole year making it, but umm to be truthful, by uh late June I hadn't really gotten very far with it. I- I don't think I had actually recorded any real songs. I- I was you know... I was basically going through a semi-secret gay adolescence at this time so there was just a lot of other things preoccupying me. but I think the truth was that i just didn't have a subject yet.

uhh I had been working the night shift at the Royalton Hotel um I had been there since early Spring, I think like the very beginning of March or something.

The Royalton hired through a casting director. A friend of mine worked there and recommended me and the first interview I had was basically like a go-see. I had to stand against a white wall and an intern took a polaroid of me and they said they'd call me. I wasn't confident I'd get a call but I did. They said they felt I'd be "perfect for the night shift". Which basically tells you and me where I stood on the attractiveness scale (chuckles) - just cute enough that at 2 in the morning I'll look pretty good.

On my first night Jerry, the Night Manager and now my boss told me two things: he was like, *girl...* for every month you work on the night shift you are going to lose a year of your life. These are like totally terrifying words to hear but as I worked on the night shift I started to realize that I think he was telling the truth. Uh, Second, he said, on my nights off I should keep the night shift schedule otherwise it's going to be too hard to come back to it. So that's what I did and that's how I ended up spending my first night with Steven.

It was a Sunday night - around 10pm and I was heading out to the deli to get my "*breakfast*" which was - egg sandwich on a toasted everything bagel with salmon cream cheese, tomato and bacon. I used to have this *every* night before work. Then in the middle of the night I would go to the 24-hour deli on 42<sup>nd</sup> street and get pastrami on rye with pickles, um *two* butterfingers and a large cherry coke.

In case it's not implied I was starting to get more than a little- like- *soft* around the middle which I was self-conscious about but also not connecting at all to what I was eating.

In my own way I was totally spiraling.

Like I said earlier I was going through this sort of like this semi-secret gay adolescence. Um it was more than totally semi-secret like I had just really come out in 1993 so um... like in high school and all through college I had hooked up with guys but never *officially*. Ugh, that's like a long story but most of my sex life with men, up to this point, was in adult book store booths or

in parks or cars- that's how I first experienced my sexual desire through places of shame. The last semester of school I semi came out to a couple friends who I told I was exploring my bisexuality?!?!? (*chuckling*) uhh.. Why did I think that was better than telling the truth?

I had one friend Joe, who was in a similar position.

We would go out together to Boy Bar and between drinks and dancing and cruising would talk about when we were going to come out to our family and friends. I would say to Joe like - "I'm just waiting for the right time to tell everyone" and I remember very clearly he said back to me - "there's never a right time. I think we just have to do it."

Okay so I want to get back to the first night I spent with Steven... but before I get back to that, I have a confession I need to make. (deep sigh) Okay, By 1993 I had already been obsessed with Steven for four years of my life. Hmm, obsessed is too big a word I *think*. I don't know maybe not. I'm going to let you decide. Ok so here's my story.

When I was a freshman in college Steven and I lived on the same floor in the dorm. He lived at the opposite end of the hall. I remember seeing him at like a floor meeting the first week we were in school and that very first time I saw him I was like - *overwhelmed*. I guess I had a crush on him but I didn't know that was what I was feeling. I remember that I became so obsessed with him that I sat in the hallway at night just to see him come home or go out. I was hoping he'd want to talk to me but he didn't see me. He like... he *never* saw me. The entire time we were in school together, even at parties which Steven was often at, he was like in a totally different sphere. He wasn't in any particular circle but like everyone knew who he was and there were all these like stories about him, kinda like folklore. There were like, there was this story of him painting a mural on his wall in his dorm room and that's how he got kicked out of the dorms. The biggest story was really though about this affair he allegedly had with the dance teacher Paul, which then got Paul fired and Steven kicked out of school. And then there were all these stories about what he was doing when he was out of school. People said they had seen him shooting up heroin in the lower east side. Others said he was a high-end escort in the Upper East Side. I don't really know what happened to him. I never like really found out, but I will never forget my first impression of him at our dorm floor meeting. He was sitting crossed legged kind of diagonal to me and he was picking at a scab just below his knee. He was wearing jean shorts and a striped t-shirt and his hair was kind of parted to the side and hung over a side of his face like flock of seagulls- new wavey. And he kept like flipping his hair back. (sigh) and it was just... He didn't say a word that night. In fact I don't remember him speak at all until I run into him in 1993 in the hallway of our building. Ok ok ok ok ok but back to the story.

So I'm coming out of my apartment to go get my breakfast which was an egg sandwich on a toasted everything bagel with salmon cream cheese, tomato and bacon. And I see Steven outside Loreena's apartment. Loreena is on the floor and he's trying to like pick her up. Um I had not met or seen Loreena until this night though I could hear her often over like especially over like the last few months in her apartment crying a lot. I had never actually seen her.

She's lying on the floor in our hallway, right in front of her apartment and she's like completely just like a messy drunk. and the thing I remember most is her hair which is like this kind of wild old mane that was clearly at some point this super vibrant blonde but is now faded and had specks of grey in it and um just felt very mousy and unkempt. We eventually get her into the apartment and um get her into bed and afterwards, Steven thanks me and introduces himself I remind him that we know each other from school. He tells me he doesn't remember me - which uhhh completely rips my heart out and I fucking love it. (*chuckles*) We are about to part ways and suddenly the idea of not spending more time with Steven is just like killing me. So impulsively I invite him to come out with me to the Limelight.

I had been invited to the Limelight by Jerry, my boss at work who was going there on his night off with some friends. And um I had originally not planned to go. I'm not a club person and I don't like the night life. I was just planning on having my breakfast and coming back and watching some movies but I know Steven loves the night life and I thought maybe this would be a way to get him to you know spend more time with me.

An hour later Steven is at my door wearing combat boots, cut-off jeans- he really loves those cut-off jeans, and an ACT UP t-shirt that he's fashioned into like a midriff tank top. Between the time I saw him in Loreena's and this moment he shaved his head. I'm wearing cargo shorts and a gap t-shirt.

Steven is like – *Is that what you're wearing?*

(*laughing*)

In the cab over,

Steven, and I remember this so clearly... he's looks out the window of the cab.

He's kind of slumped over, he seems depressed.

And I remember him running a finger over the upholstery because it made this kind of squeaky sound.

He lets out a sigh at least twice. He's like ... (*sighs repeat and fade over and over*)

I want to say something like... you know I want to say like "Penny for your thoughts". Or um, "wanna talk about it?" (*chuckles*) But I don't. I don't say anything.

Instead I listen to the cabbie who's switching channels trying to find something they like.

*Sighs continue to echo in the background as we flip through radio channels, songs, broadcasts, landing on pop versions of songs.*

## **NARRATOR**

At the door at the Limelight, Steven asks me to pay for him.

He says, and I remember this very clearly because I've used this phrase a million times since then, he says "I'm cash light at the moment".

He tells me it's his birthday so it'd be a present. I actually know it's not his birthday.

Don't ask me how I know that. Well okay whatever you're not going to ask me but i'm going to tell you. So the thing was, I had worked when I was an undergrad, a work study job in the

administration office and I-uh- looked up his file – so I know his birthday is not in June but in July, it's July 24<sup>th</sup>.

But I wish him a happy birthday anyway.

I pay for him and me and then I give him 80 extra dollars.

*Loud club music intensifies*

*WARNING BELLS (club mix)*

♪♪ THIS SONG IS A WARNING  
LISTEN UP  
DON'T GO TO THAT HAUNTED PLACE  
LISTEN TO MY SOLID CASE HERE, NOW  
YOU THINK DANGER IS YOUR KIND OF RACE  
BUT FEAR SHINES UPON YOUR FACE CLEAR NOW  
OH LOVE YOU'RE WARNED WITH THOSE WORDS FROM ME  
YOU BETTER WATCH YOUR BACK BETWEEN SHEETS  
SO IF THESE WORDS REVERBERATE  
DON'T BE STAYING OUT TOO LATE  
WHEN YOU FALL IN LUST NOW BABE  
YOU GOTTA KEEP YOURSELF ON LAND  
WINDS WILL BLOW YOUR HEART AROUND  
AND YOU WILL NOT KNOW WHERE YOU STAND (WHERE YOU STAND)  
SO IF THESE WORDS REVERBERATE  
DON'T BE STAYING OUT TOO LATE.  
IF THESE WORDS REVERBERATE  
DON'T BE STAYING OUT TOO LATE  
DON'T BE STAYING OUT TOO LATE. ♪♪

#### **NARRATOR**

We find Jerry in the center of a *gaygle* dancing with their shirts off and doing bumps of coke.

Jerry grabs me and gives me a huge hug, which totally surprises me.

He pulls away, he looks me over and then hugs me again for a little longer.

Is he high or is he into me?

I hadn't even considered Jerry this way.

But now that I'm looking at him in the light of the club, with his shirt off, and... he's kind of hot.

A lot of the nights at the Royalton he makes me laugh.

For the first time in my life I consider the possibility that maybe attraction could be this simple.

I never thought of actually dating a guy.

Jerry slides coke under my nose.

I've never done it before

I don't really want to do it but I'm feeling pressured.

*(Snorts echo)*

He yells at me like - "Take your shirt off! Everyone thinks something's wrong with your body if you don't take your shirt off!"

I pretend I don't hear Jerry.

But then Steven sidles up.

He puts his arm around my waist.

He's like - I'm Steven I'm friends with...him

Second heartbreak of the night.

Steven does not know my name.

*(sigh)*

He does a bump of coke.

Then he does another.

And then he tells us he's going to look for his boyfriend. Or Ex-boyfriend. Or something like that. He says it's hard to explain and Jerry says like "what's your boyfriend's name?" Steven is like "Jean" and Jerry is like "John?" (laughing) and Steven is like "No! Jean." and Jerry's like "JOHN??" and then Steven doesn't respond again, he just disappears into the club.

Jerry is talking my ear off and he has his hand on my back.

He's definitely into me but I'm like not paying attention now, I'm just thinking about Steven – I'm like wait... he has a boyfriend? And his boyfriend is here? Who is this person? Who is this Jean?

Now just to be clear like I actually didn't know who Jean Wayne Genet was at this point either. It was like I didn't really know anybody in my building. It was like, you know, I only knew that Steven lived there so I didn't know at all who he was talking about or that this was all happening.

I start to have a panic attack.

I ask Jerry for another bump.

*(Snorts echo in and out)*

Then things speed up.

Everything is so bright and loud.

Everything is so shiny and fast.

*Club music grows and reverbs loudly then fades*

Then Steven is back.

He asks Jerry for more coke.

He begins to dance very aggressively.

I get closer, put myself in front of him but he's sort of in his own world.

Then some guy comes up to him and tries to talk to him.

It seems like they know each other but Steven ignores him.

I'm close enough that I can hear just a little bit of what they are saying.

**GUY**

HEY! Don't ignore me man! Give it back!  
HEY!

**STEVEN**

What the *fuck!*?

**GUY**

GIVE ME BACK MY WALLET!

**STEVEN**

I don't have your wallet!  
I'm not a fucking pickpocket!

Sound of the two pushing each other.  
And then mayhem, a fight breaking out.  
What does a fight sound like in the middle of a crowded club?

**NARRATOR**

Their fight bleeds out into the circle around them infecting us.  
Soon it seems like we are all part of the fight.  
Steven at the center raging with a joy that like shines so bright it blinds me. Security shows up  
and somewhere in the melee I'm kicked in the face  
*(harsh kick)*  
...and hit the floor.

The next thing I remember I'm on the roof of a tenement building on the Upper East Side. I  
remember *this* because the sun was just starting to rise. and I remember *that* because Steven  
was sitting on the edge of the building, about 15 feet away, his back to me, and he was like a  
black outline against the sun. The other guys are splayed on the roof, talking and giggling. Jerry  
is sitting close to me and he's doing coke. My face *hurts*. I can tell I'm going to have a black eye.  
Jerry lets me see myself in the mirror he's using to snort off and it's indeed it's coming in all  
blue and black and green and yellow. Then, Jerry kisses me.

Is it embarrassing to tell you that this is my first real kiss?  
Up until now I'd kissed men but never a man that I knew.

I wish I could say that I appreciated this in the moment.  
But my lips were dead to him.  
Instead, I'm watching Steven who has just stood up and taken all his clothes off. He raises his  
arms up to the sky.  
And screams to the heavens -



FUCK YOU!  
    FUCK YOU!  
        FUCK YOU!  
FUCK YOU!!!!  
    FUCK YOU!!!!  
        FUCK YOU!!!!  
FUUUUUUCK YO0000U!!!!!!!!!!  
    YO0000U!!!  
        YO0000000000UUUUUUUUUUUU!!!  
            *(the phrase continues to echo)*

It's like a catharsis, a manifesto, a call to arms.  
And then another guy gets up and starts screaming too and then another.  
And then they begin dancing and laughing and touching each other's bodies and they're pouring wine over themselves.  
At some point Jerry leaves me and joins them.

**VOICES**

Can I touch your chest?	Can I touch your chest?
Can I touch your lips?	Can I touch your lips?
Can I touch your back?	Can I touch your back?
Can I touch your thigh?	Can I touch your thigh?
Can I touch your -	

**NARRATOR**

Steven is at the center of the group, Dionysus.  
I don't know if something is really changed or maybe it's just the coke and the night and the hit in the face and the confusions between love and desire but he looks different to me.  
Like something has changed.  
He's harder angles.  
Sinewy where once he seemed lanky.  
The sweetness of his face, or whatever was left of it has gone.  
His eyes look more *predatory*.  
The others worship and devour him – hungry ghosts, disciples.  
All I want is to find the courage to join them to be that free to touch Steven to *be* with Steven.  
But something about Steven both terrifies me and attracts me in such a deep way I'm overwhelmed.

I get up and leave.  
No one seems to notice.  
I walk home from the upper east straight down 1<sup>st</sup> avenue to 5th.

The city is so beautiful in the mornings before the world wakes up. It's so much quieter than it seems could be possible.  
It's like a silent witness.  
Have you ever had that experience?

Back at 512 I find our apartment to be empty.  
I look into Brooke's room and her bed is still made.  
She didn't come home last night either.  
My mind circles back to Steven as if it hadn't been circling anything the whole time. I suddenly I'm completely overwhelmed by yearning and I feel this need like I need to create something.  
So I pull out the keyboard and start to write music and sing.  
For the first time!  
And I decide right then that I'm dedicating my album to Steven.  
That every song will be about him.  
That I'll call the album YOU and **he** would be the YOU in question  
And then when I'm done with the album I'll put it on a master tape and I'll give it to him and I'll share it with him and he'll love it and he'll really know me and he'll fall in love.

♪♪ Heart Deep ♪♪

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME

♪♪ WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME THAT ALL I WANT IS **PAIN**  
WHAT PART OF ME AM I TRYING TO KILL  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE JUST NOT RIGHT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP AT NIGHT  
FEELING SO LITTLE MAKES ME WANT TO CRY  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE

YOU STABBED ME, HEART DEEP  
FEELS LIKE I WANT TO DIE  
AM BLEEDING HEART DEEP OH  
FOREVER HEART DEEP  
THE WOUND WILL SCAR AND SCAR  
FOREVER HEART DEEP OH

MAYBE I'VE GONE CRAZY  
MAKE ITS JUST GOTTEN TOO HAZY

OR MAYBE I SEE RIGHT THROUGH MY SMOKE AND MIRROR SHOW  
OH NO OH NO OH NO  
MAYBE I'M MEANT TO BE NOBODY  
MAYBE I'M NOT SMARTER THAN ANYBODY  
MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING RIGHT ABOUT ME  
WE'LL SEE

YOU STABBED ME HEART DEEP  
FEELS LIKE I WILL DIE  
AM BLEEDING HEART DEEP OH  
FOREVER HEART DEEP  
THE WOUND WILL SCAR AND SCAR  
FOREVER HEART DEEP OH



SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE'S JUST NOT RIGHT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP AT NIGHT  
FEELING SO LITTLE MAKES ME WANT TO CRY  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
NIGHT  
FEELING SO LITTLE MAKES ME WANT TO CRY  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE JUST NOT RIGHT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP AT

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
NIGHT  
FEELING SO LITTLE MAKES ME WANT TO CRY  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE JUST NOT RIGHT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP AT

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME

SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE JUST NOT RIGHT  
SOMETHING IN MY MIDDLE WAKES ME UP AT NIGHT



This has been Episode 5 of 1993 by finkle.

Directed by Jonathan Silverstein.

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

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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.

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