

LOL (“Laughing Out Loud”)

By Lewis Routh (lewisrouth@cox.net)

CHARACTERS:

Rugby Richards, a computer systems engineer/web site designer who is also a gay man. Rugby is much better looking than he believes himself to be.

Winnfield Parish, Rugby’s roommate and best friend. Winn works as a waiter at a local New Orleans restaurant. Winn wears his gayness like a bright color.

Sam Pistal, the person Rugby met online in a gay chat-room, who happens to be a woman and straight. She’s quirky, with a unique laugh and a perky personality. She laughs often, her manic laughter masks a secret she is reluctant to share.

A typical historical apartment in New Orleans, near the French Quarter. The front door, at down left, leads directly outside. On the upstage side of the front door is a tall, shuttered window so often found in the antiquated rentals in New Orleans. Upstage of this window is a nice, art deco cabinet/bar – easily the nicest piece in the room; though it looks out of place in this room filled with thrift-store finds. Art canvases and framed family pictures make the apartment appear lived in. There is a small hall up right of center which leads to an unseen kitchen and beyond that to the two unseen bedrooms. There is a bathroom door at downright. The apartment is furnished with well-worn furniture, probably purchased at the local thrift store. The apartment would look neat and orderly if it weren’t for the computer work station. Rugby Richards, a twenty-something gay man is dusting the end tables using a Swiffer Duster.

Rugby

(he cleans up the apartment as he sings Call Me Irresponsible by Cahn/Van Heusen which is actually the commercial jingle for Swiffer Duster)

Call me irresponsible - call me unreliable

Throw in undependable too

(he grabs the Café du Monde sack from the dining table and disappears down the hall with it. He would continue singing off stage.)

Do my foolish alibis bore you

Well I'm not too clever - I just adore you

(he dances downstage to the end table and begins dusting)

Call me unpredictable - tell me I'm impractical

Rainbows I'm inclined to pursue

(Rugby finds the Popeye's sack, looks in it, finds a biscuit, smells it, dusts it with the Swiffer Duster, smells it again, takes a bite of it – makes a sour face and spits the bite of biscuit back into the sack – he crosses up to the hall and tosses the sack into the kitchen. He crosses – like Fred Astaire – to the bookcase and begins to Swiffer its contents.)

Call me irresponsible - yes I'm unreliable

But it's undeniably true –

(Rugby opens the door to the bathroom – makes a sour face, and a disagreeable “eww” musically extends the “true.”. Rugby closes the bathroom door, dances his way across the room to the deco bar cabinet and begins to Swiffer the cabinet, too.)

I'm irresponsibly mad for you.

(The song completed, Rugby looks at his watch, makes a sour face, and says aloud.)

Where are you when I need you?

(The front door opens and Winn enters carrying the mail. Rugby runs to greet him, Winn seems a little overwhelmed by Rugby's urgency.)

Oh, God, Winn! I am so glad to see you!

Winn

Thanks, but you don't have to call me God.

(hands Rugby the mail.)

Here's the mail. The top one is the water bill.

(sighs deeply, crosses around and collapses onto the sofa)

I am beat!

Rugby

(Rugby takes the water bill, sets the rest of the mail on the top of a pile, inserts the unopened water bill into another pile on the dining table computer work station, and crosses to pull Winn up to stand again.)

Winn! Winn! Get up. You've got to help me, this is an emergency!

Winn

(again plopping down on the couch)

Do you mind if I relax first? I just got off work, Rugby and I am pooped. I had the most aggravating bitch of a customer at the Copper Bottom today, and she...

Rugby

(dismissive)

Oh – that's too bad – listen, Winn, I need you to clean the guest bathroom. Right now.

Winn

(sits up, feigning the urgency)

Really? Oh!

(lie back)
No.

Rugby

Winn... please! You know you're going to end up cleaning the bathroom anyway.

Winn

(sits up, speaks as if Rugby were a small child)
Let me explain how reality works, Rugby. Just because you can imagine me cleaning the guest bath; doesn't mean that I actually WILL clean the guest bath. Those pictures inside your head? We call that "fantasy, Cinderella." Okay? Okay then.

(lies back down)

Rugby

No, this is the way it works, Ugly Step-Mother, I ask you to do something, you say "No." I say "Please," you continue to say, "No." Then I get sort-a angry – and you get excessively mad, we have a huge fight, I end up in tears, and you end up cleaning the bathroom anyway. So, why don't we save ourselves some time and trouble and you can just get your little Nellie-butt in there and get busy?

Winn

Why is it YOU only get "sort-a angry" but I get "excessively mad?"

Rugby

Damnit! Winn! You are the most exasperating roommate I've ever had!

Winn

That's because I'm the ONLY roommate you've ever had!

Rugby

And it's shit like that – that makes you so exasperating! Get in there and clean up that bathroom!

Winn

(Calmly.)

Listen, Rugby... let me put it in a way I hope you'll understand... I had a bad day waiting tables at the Copper Bottom Cafe. There was this bitch in a bad wig that ran me ragged – [imitating her whiney voice] “could I get a CLEAN menu? -- this one’s got something sticky on it;” “can I get some more water?” “some more ice?” “some more bread?” “could I get a monkey-dish of corn with that?” “Could I trouble you for a larger napkin?” Then she asked me to my face if I was gay and when I said I WAS – she says, “I knew it!” and leaves me a whole dollar – she put it right in my hand and says, “gay people are usually more fun.” More fun?!? What the fuck is THAT supposed to mean? And you know what I said, me the “Reigning Queen of the Comeback?” “I’m sorry you were disappointed!” So, my answer to your COMMAND that I clean the bathroom -- is a polite -- but firm, “go fuck yourself.”

Rugby

Winn, I’m sorry you had a bad day. I’m certain waiting tables can be a real headache; but you HAVE to do this for me!

Winn

You know, that really pisses me off.

Rugby

What?

Winn

The way you dismiss my problems – AND my job – as if they don’t matter!

Rugby

I don’t do that!

Winn

You just did! And that’s what makes it so terrible; you’re not even aware that you’re an asshole!

Rugby

I am, too! I mean I am... positive I’m... I think waiting tables is a pretty... necessary – somewhat important ... job.

Winn

A “somewhat important job?” But not as important as being a computer consultant like you!

Rugby

(first Rugby laughs at the ridiculousness of this statement, then makes the mistake of trying to affirm it.)

Sure! To some people it is! The hospitality industry would be lost without ... you people! I mean, you people ARE the service industry! Where would we be without serv... without people like you... waiters?

Winn

You were going to say “servants;” weren’t you?

Rugby

“SerVERS” – I was not going to say “Servants!” – I said “waiters” but; I was going to say “servants” – I mean “serVERS.”

Winn

You did it again!

Rugby

(digging himself in a little deeper)

A server is a servant – in a... server-kind-of-“I’ll be your waiter today” kind-of way. Okay, look, I’m sorry if I hurt your feelings. It’s not my fault you think waiting tables is such a noble profession!

(Though we see Winn bristle at this; before he can respond, Rugby rushes on with...)

It’s your mess in that bathroom anyway!

Winn

My mess? That’s the guest bathroom! Tell your guests to clean it!

(an exaggerated shocked surprise)

Oh, that’s right! You don’t have any guests. You know what your problem is, Rugby? You never get laid!

Rugby

That’s your mess in there! You mess it up every time you put on that drag make-up to go out; but it’s a mess because I never get laid?

Winn

Right!

(Levels his gun-sights at Rugby.)

First-off, it’s NOT “drag make-up,” – secondly, I don’t wear it EVERY time I go out; thirdly the mirror is larger in the guest bathroom; fourthly, the light is better in there; fifthly, I am not the only person who uses that bathroom in this apartment, And --- Sixthly... sixthly? Thounds like I’m lithping. Get threwed!

Rugby

Ah, but you see, that’s make-up in there. And you’re the only person who puts on make-up! Do I put on make-up to go out? No, I don’t ...

Winn

That's because you never go out! You wanna focus on a real mess? Try this mess up here all around your computer!

Rugby

Don't touch that! That's my filing system!

Winn

Filing system? Rugby, these are piles!

Rugby

They are not! Those are organized stacks!

Winn

There's no way you can find anything in this mess!

Rugby

I'll have you know, I can put my finger on ANY single needed object in there!

Winn

Ha!

Rugby

I can!

Winn

Show me the... paid rent receipt from last month and I'll clean the guest bathroom!

Rugby

(Marches grandly up to the desk, hands Winn the Swiffer Duster.)

Hold this!

(Winn takes the Swiffer and tosses it onto the sofa. Rugby deliberately "walks" his fingers down the largest pile of files, folders and papers, stops at a particular place, "walks" his fingers down counting "one-two-three" – reaches into the pile and extracts the proper rent receipt, presenting it with a flourish to Winn.)

Pay particular attention to the toilet lid.

Winn

Fix me a drink.

(Crosses to the bathroom door, looks in – performs his best Bette Davis impression.)

What a dump!

(Rugby crosses to behind Winn, looking into the bathroom, too)

Rugby

How could you possibly get make-up on the toilet lid?

Winn

That's not make-up... it's concealer.

Rugby

I don't care if it's Crayola ® "flesh-colored" Crayon – it's all over the lid!

Winn

Crayola ® doesn't make "flesh" any longer, to be politically-correct it's called "Peach".

Rugby

(Frustrated, wailing.)

I don't care if it's called "honky-white" – it looks nasty!

Winn

(calmly)

Fix me a drink while I get started.

(Rugby goes to the bar-cabinet, opens it to reveal the liquor and the glasses. Winn exits to the bathroom. His next line is off stage.)

What's the big hurry? Is the landlord coming over?

Rugby

No, it's worse than that! What do you want, Scotch or Vodka?

(Rugby holds up a Scotch bottle in one hand and a Vodka bottle in the other.)

Winn

I don't care! Where are the rubber gloves?

Rugby

Under the sink – and use that new Scrubbing Bubbles – it supposed to clean and disinfect your bathroom in one simple step!

(chooses the Scotch bottle)

Scotch!

(Rugby puts the Vodka bottle away, picks up a glass.)

Winn

I think I'll take... Vodka.

Rugby

Make up your mind!

Winn

I did. I said, "I'll take vodka." Jesus Christ! Is it supposed to be foamy?
(Rugby gives the open bathroom door a dirty look, sets the Scotch bottle back down, picks up the Vodka bottle, and pours Vodka into a glass)

Rugby

Yes, the foaming action easily removes soap scum, hard-water stains and dirt!

(an "ah ha moment.")

Ice! Do you want ice?

Winn

(off stage)

Yes, please!

(Rugby exits to the kitchen with the glass to put ice cubes in the glass – he does not hear Winn's next line.)

You sound like a damn TV commercial.

(Imitating Rugby.)

"The foaming action easily removes soap scum, and dirt!" You need to get out more. Oh, No! Rugby, please! Please don't tell me your homophobic parents are driving in from Houston again!

(There is no answer – just silence)

Rugby?

(A beat passes, the stage is empty and silent, Winn appears in the bathroom doorway, wearing rubber gloves, and holding an aerosol can of Scrubbing Bubbles in one hand and a sponge in the other.)

Rugby?

(Winn is terrified that he is going to find Rugby's corpse on the other side of that sofa, he approaches it with caution.)

Rugby

(enters, happily with ice in the glass, his question gives Winn a start)

Finished already?

Winn

(He jumps and squirts Scrubbing Bubbles all over the floor behind the sofa.)

Jesus, Rugby! You scared the crap out me! Where were you?

Rugby

Getting ice for your vodka. Look what you did! What a mess!

Winn

(Wiping it up with the sponge.)

It's not a mess, it's a cleaner – how can a cleaner be a mess?

Rugby

It's deodorizing and leaving a pleasant scent, too!

(Winn grabs the vodka/ice glass from Rugby and downs it as Rugby crosses to look into the bathroom. Rugby looks in the bathroom door.)

You're not done in there!

Winn

I know that! I asked you a question and you didn't answer me. Then I came out here and...

Rugby

And squirted Scrubbing Bubbles all over the floor!

Winn

(Sarcastically.)

I figured, "Why should the bathroom be the only room with a clean and pleasant scent?"

(Give Rugby the glass.)

Fix me another drink! And make it a double, soap-scum and hard-water stains make me thirsty.

(Winn exits to the bathroom, Rugby returns to the bar cabinet and makes another drink.)

Rugby

What's the question?

Winn

(from off)

What?

Rugby

You said you came out here to ask me a question; I said, "what was the question you wanted to ask me?"

Winn

(off-stage)

Oh. Uh. I was wondering what was happening that makes it so urgent to clean everything?

Rugby

Guess!

Winn

(off-stage)

Your homophobic parents are driving down from Houston?

Rugby

No! And my parents aren't "homophobic," they're just... "confirmed heterosexuals."

Winn

(Appears in the bathroom door.)

Honey, they named you "Rugby Richards." That's beyond heterosexual, "R.R."

Rugby

What can I say? My mother was from England and liked sports.

Winn

(off-stage)

Just think, if she drove a pink Cadillac, your name would have been Mary Kay! Mary Kay Richards! Actually, that kind-a fits!

(Only Winn laughs at this.)

Rugby

My whole life's a sit-com! The point is my folks are not homophobic.

Winn

(Reappears in bathroom doorway.)

Oh, please! Your mother said New Orleans is a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah and that's why God sent hurricane Katrina.

Rugby

My mother also thought it was a sin to eat fast food. Until she tried the chicken from Popeye's! The funniest thing my mom ever said was...

Rugby & Winn

(together)

"Popeye's breasts are bigger than Colonel Sanders'!"

Winn

You're right! Your life's a sit-com! Complete with the outrageous mother!

(Winn disappears into the bathroom again.)

Rugby

And the outrageously gay roommate.

Winn

(off-stage)

Who loves you so much, he'd work all day and come home to clean your bathroom.

Rugby

Of the mess HE made two days ago!

Winn

(off-stage)

So, what's the big emergency, Mary Kay?

Rugby

(Proudly, saying each word independently)

I have a date.

(The sound of a toilet flushing punctuates this admission. Time momentarily stands still! A stupefied Winn appears in the doorway of the bathroom, holding onto the frame for support. Winn is shaking a toilet brush at Rugby; but not saying anything. Winn is stunned, silently staring at Rugby, gesturing at Rugby with the toilet brush.)

What?

Winn

You have a what?

Rugby

A date. I'm going out on a date.

Winn

With a real person? Or is this someone I'm going to have to help you inflate?

Rugby

Of course with a real person! And don't look so surprised, I've dated before.

Winn

Oh, that's right – we've lived here for – what? Three years?

Rugby

And two months.

Winn

Three years and two months! And in three years and two months you've had how many dates?

Rugby

(A little too quickly. He doesn't want to go here.)

I don't remember. Get in there and finish that bathroom!

Winn

You've had two dates – one with me which was easily the best sex you've ever had – and you're welcome -- and one with someone you threw-up on.

Rugby

I was nervous.

Winn

Oh, well, that's a relief, I thought you were bulimic.

Rugby

You know, you could be happy for me.

Winn

That you threw-up?

Rugby

No, asshole! That I have a date!

Winn

I'm thrilled. Whom are you planning to throw-up on this time? Anyone I know?

Rugby

No.

Winn

Is it anyone YOU know?

Rugby

Yes, asshole!

(Proudly, relishing the masculinity of the name.)

His name is Sam Pistil and he's a doctor... or will be... he's studying... er... "interning" at Tulane Hospital.

(Rugby has picked up a sheet of paper and is reading the Profile.)

He's a Sagittarius, a natural blonde –

(smiles broadly)

Which you know I like...

(returning to the Profile again)

He... uh... doesn't smoke, drinks socially, likes children but doesn't want any right away, enjoys exercising, ...

(his emphasis on this tells us it is a genuine plus.)

Loves quiet nights watching television – especially –

(another big broad smile to Winn)

Get this! Reruns of *Will and Grace*!...

(Winn makes a "clapping gesture" to mock Rugby. Rugby returns to his Profile.)

He also likes... Going to movies, sharing a big bowl of popcorn. Doesn't like bars, excessively loud commercials or music. He hates people who talk at the movie theater, and people who lie.

Winn

What did he do, send you a resume?

It's a profile. There's your drink.

Rugby

(Getting his vodka.)
What do you mean, "a profile?"

Winn

It's the information the member fills-out when they join.

Rugby

Join? What the fuck are you talking about?

Winn

NOLA-OUT-MAN-dot-com.

Rugby

Is this something on the Internet again?

Winn

Yes, it's something on the Internet again! It's NOLA-OUT-MAN-dot-com.
The local online gay chat-room.

Rugby

A porn site.

Winn

It is not! It's a... it's a place where like-minded, intelligent gay men can meet and "hook-up."

Rugby

Are you telling me you met a total stranger ONLINE in some pervert-producing chat-room and you've invited them here?

Winn

Yes.

Rugby

You actually gave him our address?

Winn

Yes and directions.

Rugby

To a total stranger?

Winn

Rugby

Sam is hardly a stranger! Sam and I have had an entire MONTH of “private messages” and e-mails to get to know each other... he wanted it that way! Sam wanted to make certain that I wasn’t “a closet-case” or worse...

(checks another sheaf of papers to find just the right quote.)

A “homoerotically challenged breeder.”

Rugby and Winn

(Look at each other and react simultaneously.)

What is that supposed to mean? What does that mean exactly?

Winn

So, have you and Sam ever met face-to-face ANYWHERE?

Rugby

Not yet.

Winn

That’s what I thought! And you invited him here? Rugby! Do you realize what you’ve done? You’re cleaning the bathroom for a serial killer?

Rugby

No, YOU’re cleaning the bathroom for a... He’s not a “serial killer,” he’s an “INTERN”...

(Pointing to a place on the paper he is holding.)

It says so, right there. See? Intern at Tulane Hospital!

Winn

Maybe Sam is a LYING serial killer! What did you think he was going to do? Put a list of the people he’s hacked to pieces and tossed into Lake Ponchartrain?

Rugby

What are you so paranoid about? I didn’t ask you to go out with Sam.

Winn

Rugby, use your head. This guy is a total stranger...

Rugby

(Waving the papers at Winn)

I know all about him!

Winn

Only what he’s told you about himself. What does this guy look like?

Rugby

I don’t know. He didn’t post a picture.

Winn

Ah ha!

Rugby

What do you mean, "Ah ha?"

Winn

Why WOULDNT he post a picture?

Rugby

Maybe he didn't have a good one.

Winn

That didn't have a number across the bottom of it! Don't you think it's "telling" that he chose NOT to include a picture?

Rugby

No. Not if you're more concerned about WHO a person is INSIDE than what he looks like OUTSIDE. I didn't post a picture, either!

Winn

Oh, please, that is so lame! Why didn't YOU post a picture?

Rugby

Well, the truth is I don't take a good picture! I always look heavy. And my head always looks big and round – like a pumpkin!

Winn

You know WHY you don't take a good picture? Because you wish you looked thinner! You're not heavy, Rugby, but you THINK you look heavy, so when someone takes out a camera, you always look miserable and unhappy – because you ARE miserable and unhappy. You wear "fat clothes" – clothes that fat people wear to camouflage their fatness. But you're not fat, so it doesn't make you look thinner, it makes it look like you're wearing "fat clothes" to hide the fat that – even though you aren't fat -- it makes you look fat! Fat, miserable and unhappy.

Rugby

Oh, I hope you'll save that for my eulogy, it was so touching.

Winn

I can tell you this because I'm your friend. And your head doesn't look like a pumpkin...

Rugby

Yes, it does!

Winn

How could it? You have all your teeth.

Rugby

Thank you for that confidence building pep-talk.

Winn

You end-up looking fat because you think of yourself as fat. And I'm so tall and thin, it probably makes you feel even fatter.

(Rugby stares, open-mouthed at Winn, shocked that he's continuing this slanderous attack.)

Close your mouth, Rugby, you look like you're missing a chromosome!

Rugby

Okay, Winfield! I get the idea. I'm no prize. What you don't understand is I KNOW I'm no prize and THAT is why I didn't post a picture.

Winn

But you ARE a prize, Rugby! You're a good looking man! It's just that you don't think you're good looking, so you've convinced yourself you're fat and ugly.

Rugby

I didn't say "fat and ugly" – I said "heavy and pumpkin head." You think I'm fat and ugly?

Winn

I think you're mentally fucked-up.

Rugby

Are you TRYING to piss me off?

Winn

What? You think Sam didn't post a picture because he's an Adonis? What if Sam didn't post a picture for the same reasons you didn't? You'd be dating someone that's just as mentally fucked-up as you are!

Rugby

Looks are not as important to me as they are to you. I don't care what he looks like.

Winn

Yeah, and his cock-size isn't important either!

Rugby

No importance what so ever!

(Grabbing up a transcript)

THIS – this is what's important to me. Listen to this!

(it takes him a moment to find it, reading with much passion and emotion)

“What matters most to me is friendship. Real friendship. I don’t care what you look like, Rugby! It is your aura that I find attractive – the golden, glowing aura of a true friend. A friend you can turn to when your life goes sour on you and you’ve got no place else to go. Your friend smiles and says come here, I’ll help you.” Does that sound like a serial killer?

Winn

No, it sounds like someone about to hit you up for a loan!

Rugby

Why don’t you take your negativity down to the bar and spread it around down there? You’re fucking-up my golden-glowing aura!

Winn

What if he’s obese, and sweaty, and is missing teeth?

Rugby

It won’t matter!

Winn

Ha! I know your type, Rugby!

Rugby

I don’t have a “type.”

Winn

Yes you do. Everybody has a type! Yours is: he has to be masculine, fit, tall, handsome, athletic and wealthy.

Rugby

He doesn’t have to be wealthy.

Winn

What about David?

Rugby

David who?

Winn

You’ve had two dates, Rugby! I was one of them; David was the other one! “David!” The one that wasn’t me! The guy you puked all over?

Rugby

Oh, that David. What about him? David wasn’t wealthy.

Winn

I know and that's why you broke up with him.

Rugby

I broke up with David because he wasn't working... ever. In the two years we dated, he didn't work one day! He lived off his parents... and ME!

Winn

And it took you two years to realize he wasn't "Mr. Right?"

Rugby

Well, I felt obligated...

Winn

Obligated? Are you kidding me?

Rugby

Hey, when you puke in somebody's lap, it makes you feel like you owe them something.

Winn

Admit it, Rugby, you stayed with David because he was good looking and had a big dick.

Rugby

That is not true.

Winn

That's all you ever talked about!

(Imitating Rugby talking about David.)

"Oh, my God it is huge... it's like enormous... no it's even bigger than that! It's humongous... no it's bigger than that! It's mammoth!" That's all you ever talked about!

Rugby

I promise you it won't matter a BIT what Sam looks like!

Winn

Ha!

Rugby

I mean it! He could look like... Quasimodo for all I care! I'll still be his dancing gypsy Esmeralda and you can be the trained goat.

Winn

You know what? I hope Sam IS a serial killer! It'd serve you right!

Rugby

That's a terrible thing to say! And how is it any different than you meeting someone at a gay bar on Bourbon Street? You bring home total strangers all the time!

Winn

I'll tell you exactly how it's different! I know what my guy looks like... and by talking to him in person, I can get a little inkling that he's not going to remove my testicles while I'm sleeping.

Rugby

You can't TALK to someone at a bar! It's too loud to hear what they're saying! Name one person that you met at the bar, and had sex with, that's still your friend!

Winn

You.

Rugby

And you called me "Ruby" for three days!

Winn

I thought that's what you said your name was, "Ruby."

Rugby

That's because the music was so loud! That's one of the things Sam and I have in common – we both dislike loud bars. Oh, you are a piece of work. You can meet a total stranger at a bar, bring him home – the same night – have wild, unprotected sex with him – and ask him in the morning "what was your name again?"

Winn

Well... I just thought "Ruby" was an odd name for a guy.

Rugby

I don't mean ME, you idiot! We had protected sex!

Winn

Yes, if I remember correctly, you wore two condoms.

Rugby

I wanted to make certain I was protected! I always do that.

Winn

Always?

Rugby

Yes, every time I've had sex... two condoms!

Winn

Every time?

Rugby

Yes! Didn't I just say that? I've worn two condoms both times!

Winn

Both times? Is that it? Two times? Hey, don't come crying to me if you wake-up in the morning with your double-wrapped cock in his Coco-Puffs!

Rugby

Listen to this... just listen to this, Winn, and tell me this sounds like a serial killer...

Winn

Rugby, Sam can say anything he wants in there... if you're gullible enough to believe everything you READ... hey it's your cock, maybe it'll taste good with Coco-Puffs!

Rugby

(Slowly, quietly, with distinction.)

As Judge Judy says to the idiot in her court room, "You need to put on your listening ears."

(Winn gives him "a look" which is lost on Rugby as he is focusing his attention on finding the part of the transcript that contains the passage he wants to read, madly turning pages and scanning the text.)

Winn

What is all that?

Rugby

It's a transcript of our "private messages" and e-mails I printed them out so I could read them.

Winn

(To an imaginary Judge.)

Judge Judy, I tried to warn him, but he foolishly got himself eaten by the plaintiff. Yes, m'am, eaten – in a bowl of Coco-Puffs. I'd like to present this transcript as evidence that the plaintiff, Sam... uh... what's his last name?

Rugby

Pistal.

Winn

Sam Pistal, did premeditatedly, entice my roommate into the meeting that left my roommate ... scarred. Yes, M'am "scarred."

(To Rugby.)

Judge Judy wants to see your vagina.

Rugby

Here it is! Listen to this, we were talking about “gay rights” and “activists” and the “religious right” and their views on homosexuality. Look what Sam said...

(Reading.)

“My daddy used to say “It’s smarter to fight FOR something than against something.”

(To Winn.)

That is so great! “It is smarter to fight for something than against something.” God, that’s great. And look at this...

(Reading)

“My daddy used to say, “The future lies ahead of you, like a pathway of pure white snow. You have to be careful where you walk, not because it’s slippery; but because every step you take will tell everyone where you’ve been.”

(To Winn.)

Does that sound like a serial killer?

Winn

No, it sounds like someone with a book of Bartlett’s Quotations and a “daddy-fixation!”

Rugby

(exiting to the kitchen.)

You are impossible.

Winn

(goes to the end tables to stack the magazines – neatly)

I’m worried about you, Rugby. I care about you. I think it’s great that you’re finally getting out of the house. You should get out more – it’s not healthy staying home all the time – cooped-up in here all alone on that computer.

Rugby

It’s my job, Winn. I design web sites and provide computer support. That’s what I do. That’s what pays the bills.

Winn

Yeah... well... I know that; but I TRY to get you out of the house and you just won’t go. You’d rather stay here and watch old reruns of *Will and Grace* than go out with me.

Rugby

(re-enters – stands in doorway of hall)

If I go out with you, you’ll meet someone else that’s more handsome than me and leave me standing at the bar.

Winn

God, one time! That happened one-time! Are you ever going to forgive me?

Rugby

No. It was humiliating. You said, "I'm going to the toilet." And I didn't see you until the next afternoon!

Winn

I did go to the toilet, that's where I met Calvin.

Rugby

Who's Calvin?

Winn

The guy I met in the toilet.

Rugby

His name was Mark.

Winn

I thought his name was Calvin.

Rugby

No, his name was Mark. I met him the next afternoon, when you both stumbled out of the bedroom. His name was Mark Klein.

Winn

Oh, yeah! "Mark." He was hot! I still have his underwear.

Rugby

No, those belong to someone named Rocky.

Winn

They've got his name in 'em!

Rugby

Don't make me explain that, no one is that stupid! What time is it?

Winn

Three fifty-three.

Rugby

That's what I thought, Judge Judy's on at four. Sam said it's a rerun; but it's a good one.

Winn

So, Sam likes to spend endless hours in front of the TV, too? Well, that's great! You two have so much in common!

Rugby

We DO! Sam loves *Will and Grace* reruns – believe it or not – even MORE than I do!

Winn

What time is “the Ripper” planning to drop by?

Rugby

I don’t know, he said when he got off work.

(Re-enters, crossing to the computer desk, and riffling through the pages.)

I don’t think he ever said what time he gets off work.

(Finds a particular paper.)

Yeah, here it is. This is when he talked about working at Tulane. Let’s see... no... no... he doesn’t say what time he gets off. Oh, wait a minute... what day is it?

Winn

Uh... red beans and rice... so it’s Monday.

Rugby

His day off! Sam’s day off! He could be here at any moment! Look, it says right here, “I’m off on Monday, I’d like to have you over for dinner sometime.” I need to change!

(Rugby drops the transcript on the pile at the work station and exits down the hall, removing his shirt. Winn, crosses over, picks up the transcript and reads it. Winn is shouting to Rugby who is off-stage.)

Winn

Rugby?

Rugby

(off-stage)

What?

Winn

This transcript, -- you read it wrong.

Rugby

(off-stage)

Oh, I did; hunh?

Winn

Yes, you did! You read, “I’m off on Monday, I’d like to have you OVER for dinner sometime.” There’s no “over” in that sentence!

Rugby

(stands in doorway of hall as he puts on his shirt)
There isn't?

Winn

No. It says, "I'm off on Monday, I'd like to HAVE YOU for dinner sometime."

Rugby

That's the same thing.

Winn

Yeah! To Hannibal Lecter!

Rugby

You are not going to suck me into another argument!

Winn

You're really going to go through with this aren't you? You're going to let Hannibal Lecter into our apartment – even though you hate Chianti [hiss]!

Rugby

Stop that! His name isn't "Hannibal" it's "Sam" and he's a nice, respectable, young intern who is looking to meet a gay man.

Winn

You're making a huge mistake.

Rugby

But I know him...

(grabs up the printed transcript again, using it to gesture with)
With this! I know him inside! And I like the person that lives here! He's a sensitive, caring, compassionate, shy, and loving individual who is...
(There is a knock at the door.)

Winn

(crossing to look out the window)
At the door.

Rugby

Oh, God, please tell me that's not him.

Winn

(Looks out the window.)
It's not him.

Rugby

How do you know?

Winn

I don't, I'm just doing what you told me; but it's definitely not a... him. In fact, I think it's...oh-boy!

Rugby

Oh, you're impossible.

(Opens the door, momentarily stunned to see Sam, a perky, smiling female.)

Sam

(Brightly, with an oddly inhuman giggle.)

Rugby Richards! [laughs]

(Shuts the door in Sam's face.)

Winn

Told you it wasn't him.

Rugby

It's not him. It's...

(Staggering to the sofa to sit in stunned surprise.)

...it's a... it's a...wo-wo-wo-wo

(he can't say the word "woman" no matter how hard he tries.)

Winn

(Opens the door on a less smiling Sam.)

Sam Pital?

Sam

In the flesh!

Winn

(For Rugby's benefit)

"In the flesh!" Look, Esmeralda, it's Sam – in the flesh!

(Rugby runs to the bathroom to throw-up.)

Sam

Hi!

Winn

I'm just the roommate; "Rugby's" indisposed. Come on in!

(Sam enters. There is an effervescence about her that borders manic, what she feels is her perky, cheerful, self-assuredness others mistake for a mild mental disorder and she is given to laugh oddly and at inappropriate times.)

Rugby, Sam is here.

(To Sam)

He's nervous. This is his first time.

Sam

Mine, too. [laughs]

Rugby

(the sound of a toilet flushing, Rugby enters, stands in doorway, forced smile as if pretending that everything is fine.)

You're a... you're a... wo-wo-wo-wo...

Sam

A woman? Yeah, I knew that; [laughs] but thanks for noticing! [laughs]

Winn

He's very observant when it comes to things like those... er... that. Do I know you? You look familiar.

Sam

(this is really a "hint" to Winn how he knows her)

Can I have a glass of water?

Winn

Sure.

Sam

With some extra ice.

Rugby

(Sam laughs her odd laugh; Rugby's forced smile instantly disappears.)

Winn, can I see you in the kitchen?

Winn

Rugby, you stay here with your date. I'll get her the glass of water.

Rugby

(simultaneously with below)

That is not my date.

Sam

(simultaneously with above)

And some more bread.

Winn

Is your name Sam?

Sam

Un hunh! And a clean menu, this one is all sticky! [laughs]

Winn

No, Honey, that is your date. The one you said, "It doesn't matter to me what my date looks like..."

Sam

And a monkey dish of corn.

Winn

And a monkey...

(Winn just realizes what Sam has said.)

You're... you're...

Sam

His date? Oh, I'm not his date! [laughs] Gawd, didn't you know? He's gay. [laughs]

Winn

You're that... that... she's the... the...

Rugby

Stop that!

Winn

But she's the... the...

Rugby

Stop acting like that.

Sam

I'm the "wo-wo the-the!" [laughs]

Rugby

Winn's my roommate. He's gay, too. He's gayer than I am.

Winn

Rugby, remember what I told you when I came home?

Sam

Rugby told me all about you, "Winifred!" [laughs]

Winn

Well, she's the... the...

Rugby

I told her that you were my best friend... who would come to my aid if I needed it!

Winn

(To Sam.)

What were you doing where I work?

Sam

Eating! Isn't that why people go to the Copper Bottom Café? Or do they just go there so the wait-staff can abuse them? [laughs]

Rugby

(more forcefully)

You're my best friend... who would come to my aid if I needed it! Well, I need it.

Sam

You're his best friend, you're witty, you're campy, you're a surly waiter at the Copper Bottom Café, a very funny homosexual...

Winn

So, you decided to come down to where I work and make my life a living hell?

Sam

Un hunh! [laughs] And Rugby told me that you and he have been roommates for several years; but you've been best friends for longer than that...

Rugby

See? You're my best friend, and I need you... best friends help their best friends... it's what best friends do!

Sam

And he told me you're someone who will sleep with anything in pants! [laughs]

Rugby

We have that in common. Winn and me. I'm the same way! I love the men! Boy! I have the WORST reputation. "Rugby-the-big-whore" that's what they call me down in the Quarter. "Rugby-the-really-big-whore."

Winn

(Who is now scared of Sam, turns to Rugby)

If you really ARE my best friend – you'll get rid of her.

Sam

My Daddy used to say, "real friends have everything in common."

Rugby

Boy, that's the truth now. Truer words were never spoken. Well, listen, it was really NICE to finally see you; but we've decided to become a couple. Haven't we, Winn?

Winn

What?

(Catching on to the ruse)

Oh! Yes. We're a couple!

Rugby

And I didn't know it until today!

Winn

I didn't realize it until this very moment!

Rugby

And I suddenly realized, "Gosh, I love Winn! I don't need anyone else, I have Winn." End of story.

Winn

I love him...

Rugby

And I love Winn.

Winn

It's a win-win situation!

Sam

(Her "THAT" startles both of them)

THAT's what I was waiting for! [laughs]

Rugby

So, uh... I know you just got here... but can you go? We want to be alone.

Winn

I don't necessarily sleep with anything in pants, just anything in HIS pants!

Sam

[laughs] Lordy, that's not what I heard! [laughs]

Winn

(To Rugby)

I thought you loved me!

Rugby

I do love you.

Winn

Then why did you tell her that I'd sleep with anything in pants?

Rugby

(feigned shock)

I didn't!

Sam

Yes, you did. [laughs] He said you were promiscuous!

Winn

Promiscuous. Promiscuous?

Sam

It means, "having sexual relations with a number of partners on a casual basis."

Winn

(To Sam)

I KNOW what "promiscuous" means.

(To Rugby)

You think I'm promiscuous? And you told her where I work?

Rugby

Well, yeah... I mean... kind of...

Sam

Compared to him, you probably are! [laughs] My daddy used to say, "a promiscuous person is anybody that's getting more sex than you are!" [laughs]

(Winn begins to laugh, too; then Rugby joins in. As they are all laughing, Sam says to Rugby.)

That means, compared to Rugby, everyone is promiscuous! [laughs]

Winn

Boy, that's the truth.

(Sam and Winn are the only ones laughing now. Winn shares some information with Sam.)

He never has sex.

Rugby

(Getting them to stop laughing.)

Hey, hey hey!

(They both quiet their laughter.)

I have sex.

Winn

(he knows a lie when he hears it)
Ha!

Rugby

I had sex with YOU!

Sam

You two can be a couple if you want to, I have no desire to be another notch in your bed post!

Winn

Me either!
(More laughter again.)

Rugby

(Winn and Sam look at each other and bust-out laughing again.)
Hey hey hey! Stop laughing at me.

Sam

Oh, Rugby I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing with him...[laughs]
(Points at Winn.)

Winn

And I'm laughing at you.
(Sam and Winn laugh like crazy.)

Sam

This is so perfect. This is just what I hoped it would be.

Winn

What is?

Sam

Gay life. I pictured it being just like this.
(Indicates Rugby.)
The really really kind and considerate gay guy.
(Indicates Winn)
And his really really campy, extremely gay friend.
(Sam and Rugby are now the only ones laughing.)

Winn

You don't think I could pass for straight?

(Rugby and Sam exchange looks and bust-out laughing.)

Sam

See, that's what I love about this. You're so funny! [laughs] This is so perfect! I want to thank you for letting me into your life. I needed it, right now. I needed to be around gay guys. [laughs]

Rugby

Why did you pretend to be a gay man?

Winn

And you showed-up where I work... that's just creepy.

Sam

(To Rugby)

Well, of course I pretended to be a gay man, would you have invited me over if I'd told you I was a woman – with an incredible rack? [laughs]

Winn

She has a point... two of 'em!
(Sam & Winn laugh!)

Rugby

I might have!

(Winn and Sam exchange looks and offer their doubts to Rugby by laughing.)

Okay, I probably wouldn't have; but now that I know, I'm... I'm trying to figure out...

Sam

You're wondering what you're going to do with me. [laughs]

Rugby

Well, yeah.

Winn

Nothing.

(This revelation sends Sam and Winn into gales of laughter.)

Which is the same thing he'd be doing if you were a man!

(More laughter.)

His vice is versa!

(More laughter.)

Sam

You know, I imagined it would be just like this... lots of laughs. One joke after another.

Winn

Oh, you don't have any idea how funny this really is.

Rugby

Hysterical.

Sam

I know! [laughs] Today, when you were waiting on my table, I kept asking for more and more stuff -- trying to get you to be real funny... real gay; you know?... and you just didn't take the bait! [laughs]

Winn

I still don't understand why you came down to where I work – if it's Rugby you're going to meet, why show up and make my life hell?

Sam

'Cause you're the funny one. I wanted to see how funny. To see if you were funny enough. [laughs] I kept thinking, "he's going to say something funny any minute."

Winn

So, you changed clothes and put on a different wig to try to look like someone else?

Sam

Not to try to look like someone else, I had to, you spilled soup on me; remember? [laughs]

Winn

Oh, right.

Rugby

(An accusation to Winn)

You failed to tell me about the soup.

Winn

I didn't spill soup on her! We don't even sell soup at the Copper Bottom! It was gumbo.

Sam

Whatever it was, it was deliberate and delicious! [laughs]

Winn

No, it was an accident.

(explaining to Rugby)

It was for table seven – right next to her – she ordered the Monday Special, red beans and rice.

With extra bread.

Sam

And extra butter...

Winn

And more water...

Sam

And a monkey-dish of corn!

Winn

Sam
[laughs] That's when you really disappointed me -- I figured if you give a gay guy the phrase "a monkey-dish of corn" he's going to bowl you over with something hilarious [laughs] – all you did was get it for me! [laughs] I expected witty repartee and all I got was corn! [laughs]

Winn
I have to tell you something. Something I feel terrible about, too; now that I've met you... it really WAS an accident – the gumbo, I mean...

Sam
I happen to know you did it on purpose, that's why I only tipped you a dollar. [laughs]

Winn
What makes you think I would be so cruel that I'd deliberately dump a bowl – not a cup; but a bowl – of gumbo on your head?

Sam
That other waiter told me, the one you called "Miss Claude."

Winn
Miss Claude is the one who told me to do it! She said, "I'll distract her – and you can spill something on her!"

Sam
So, it was Miss Claude's idea? [laughs]

Rugby
The spilling was Miss Claude's idea – the gumbo was HIS!

Winn
Oh, that queen is pure evil. Someday, somebody's gonna drop a house on her!

Sam

(Squeals with laughter.)

Now, see? THAT's what I was waiting for all day!

Rugby

Why would Claude tell you to spill something on her and then go tell HER what you were going to do? That doesn't make sense – even for Miss Claude!

Winn

Yes it does. It makes perfect sense. When I got to work this morning, Miss Claude was wearing this perfectly hideous-looking blouse – I'd say shirt but it was definitely a girl's blouse, pink, red and brown stripes -- and she kept bragging about how much it cost, and making everybody read the label. And I just got sick of hearing her brag and I kind-a said something and everybody kind-a laughed! And then everybody was telling everybody else and laughing and Miss Claude got kind-a pissed-off.

Rugby

What did you say?

Winn

I said, "It's a new fashion designer original! The label is scratch and sniff, so blind people can smell what it looks like." That evil queen was just paying me back!

(To Sam)

But I still don't get why you came down to the Copper Bottom. If he's the one you're after.

Sam

No, I need both of you. [laughs] You don't know how long I've been trying to find you – not you in particular – but someone like you! Someone like both of you.

Winn

You lost me.

Sam

When I first joined NOLA-OUT-MALE-dot-com, I was ME – my member name was "Straight Girl" [laughs] and I was told to leave as it was just for gay men. No women – especially straight women. [laughs] So, I joined again, pretending to be a guy; but most of the gay-guys in there were just ... you know... looking for sexual partners, not friends. Rugby was the first one that said, "I'm just looking for a friend."

Winn

He would.

(Sam cackles with delight.)

Rugby

I prefer to be friends with someone before we have sex together.

Winn

That's what's wrong with that concept, Rugby; by the time you've become close enough to be friends, you don't want to have sex with him! You don't fuck your friends! I mean you can fuck people BEFORE you become friends; but not after – it's bad etiquette!

Rugby

Did you read that in Emily Post?

Winn

Oh, I've known Emily Post since she was a stump!

Sam

[laughs] So, Rugby and I started a little "private message" communication, to "get to know each other," and I just kind-a kept up the disguise that I was another gay guy. [laughs] I figured there would come a time when he'd know... and here it is! [laughs]

Winn

So, what did you expect out of this date?

Rugby

It's not a date!

Sam

We were just going to sit around here... and watch Judge Judy.

Winn

Rugby, even if Sam was a man, you wouldn't get laid with that plan!

Rugby

You know, it isn't necessary to get laid on every date!

(Sam and Winn ponder this admission for a beat then explode in laughter.)

Sam

(To Winn.)

That's almost sad; isn't it? [laughs]

Winn

Very. It makes me want to revoke his membership card. [laughs]

Rugby

We had planned to talk, too! To get to know each other. Sam even insisted that I ask you to join us... because I told him... er her... that you liked Judge Judy, too.

Winn

Why didn't you tell Rugby that his idea of a date sucked and suggest something on your own?

Sam

Oh, but it was a great plan. I love Judge Judy! [laughs] It was a perfect plan! [laughs] And besides, it wouldn't be good manners to suggest changing his plans. My daddy used to say, "Sometimes, if you want your friendships to really shine, you have to oil it up with some refined politeness."

Winn

You sure do quote your "daddy" a lot, Sam.

Sam

I know I do. He died when I was little.

Winn

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

Sam

Oh, it's okay, I was real young... just barely three I guess.

Winn

If you were barely three when he died, how do you know what your daddy used to say?

Rugby

Is everything you told me a lie?

Sam

Oh, it's not a lie! My daddy was real. He was about as real as you can get! [laughs] He was a very special person.

Rugby

Then how do you know what your "daddy used to say?"

Sam

My mama talked about my daddy all the time. She loved him something fierce. [laughs] She told me my daddy used to watch me so close... and once – gosh I was barely starting to walk, and I fell-down and hit my head really hard, and I let out a yelp, like I was really hurt; but my daddy didn't do nothing to help me, and my Mama says to him, "don't you think that's kind-a mean, not helping her at all? Just sitting there watching her cry?" And my daddy says, "She ain't crying – she's laughing! That there Baby-Girl is smart!" My daddy always called me "Baby-Girl" And he says, "that there Baby-Girl is smart! In fact Baby-Girl is so smart, she just taught ME something!" And my mama says to him, "What could a little baby teach a growed-up man like you?" And you know what my daddy said? He said, "Baby-Girl taught me when you're learning to walk you're always gonna fall down and get hurt! But – if you really want to walk -- you gotta get right up – laugh at your failures -- and try again – no matter how hard you hit your head!"

(She comes out of her reverie, smiles, embarrassed at both of them and laughs.)

My mama talked about my daddy all the time. [laughs] She talked about him all the time so I would always feel like he was with me; you know? It was her way of keeping him alive. [laughs]

Winn

You must have hit your head really hard.

Sam

I guess I did! [laughs]

Rugby

I'm... a... can I get you something to drink?

Sam

No, thanks I'm fine.

(There seems to be an awkward silence, now, as if no one knows exactly how to proceed.)

Winn

So, Rugby tells me you're a doctor!

Sam

Well, not really. [laughs]

Rugby

An intern. Remember, I said Sam's an intern.

Sam

Yeah, well I'm not really that either. I barely made it out of high school! [laughs]

Rugby

So, you're not at Tulane Hospital?

Sam

Yeah; but not as a student... not as an intern. Good Lord up above, do I look like a doctor to you? [laughs]

Rugby

You mean, you not only lied about being a man; but you lied about your profession, too?

Sam

Well, yeah. I mean – I wanted to meet up with a gay guy and...

Rugby

And you thought if you told me you were “a doctor” that you'd have better luck?

Sam

No, it's just that – I'm learnin' a lot of new medical stuff right now, and I...

Rugby

So, you thought you'd lie to the big stupid queer...

Sam

(Her laughs, though still inappropriately present are ghosts of their former selves.)

That's not what I thought at all! I was thinking, nobody – gay or straight – would want to be around me if they knew I was... the way I was.

Winn

Well, that certainly cleared that up!

Rugby

What do mean the way you were? You mean a woman?

Sam

No. Oh. It's nothing. It's just the way it is. [attempted laugh]

Rugby

What is? What's the way it is? You are one fucked-up girl!

Sam

I know. [laugh which fades into the next spoken line...]

(Quietly.)

I'm sick.

What? **Rugby**

She said she was sick. **Winn**

Yeah, mentally sick! **Rugby**

Rugby, shut the fuck up! **Winn**

Sam
No, physically. I got cancer. [laughs] Ovarian cancer. Ain't that a kick in the head? [laughs] They just didn't find it in time and it spread... it "metastasized" – see? See what big, medical words I've learned? "Metastasized." Don't I sound just like a doctor? [laughs] And I got it all over – my ovaries have always been generous. [laughs] But I got this plan; see? That laughing can make me better! It made my mama better – and she had cancer, too! But she lived till I was grown! Baby-Girl was twenty-three when she died. But she always said, your daddy just made me laugh that cancer right outta my body! My daddy used to tell her, "Laugh as much as you can. It's the cheapest medicine."

Winn
Well, I have to say, you sure seem happy – despite everything!

Sam
My daddy always said, "Happiness is all that people will see in you, if you're keeping yourself too busy to be miserable." And I try to keep myself busy – most of the time; but I'm not really what I think of as "happy."

Rugby
You sure seem to laugh a lot, for someone who doesn't think she's happy. If you're not happy, what are you? Crazy?

Winn
Rugby!

Sam

No, it's alright, Winn. So many people have told me that – hell, maybe they're right, maybe I AM crazy. [laughs]

(She thinks about this for a minute.)

Yep, as a bed-bug! [laughs] But I know I'm not happy. [laughs] I guess I'm...

(she searches for the best word)

... I'm cheerful. Yeah, that's it! Cheerful! See? There's a difference. A happy woman doesn't have any cares at all.

(She smiles at both men.)

A cheerful woman has cares – sometimes downright burdens -- but she knows how to deal with 'em. And, about a year ago, I met somebody who knew my daddy better than anybody. Probably better than my mama did. [laughs] I met my daddy's boyfriend -- and he told me how my daddy had helped my mama have a baby – 'cause that's what she wanted more'n anything! And he said Daddy always said, "We should-a been on Jerry Springer!" [laughs] And he said how my daddy used to make my mama laugh – she had a real funny laugh – "infectious laugh" they call it – they say I sound just like her! [laughs] and I just hoped that – maybe if I got a gay-guy for a friend, maybe he'd laugh that cancer right outta me, too! [ineffective laugh] And so, I went lookin' for a gay-guy! And I found you two. [laughs] He's the nice one – just like my daddy was nice and you're the funny one – the one that'll make me laugh. [laughs] I had to; don't ya see? It's like my daddy used to say, "If your ship don't come in, swim out to it!"

Winn

Well, welcome to the shallow-end of the gene-pool, baby girl!

Rugby

No kidding.

Sam

How about a hug?

Rugby

How about a bear-hug?

Winn

No, let's keep our clothes on, if you don't mind.

(They all hug as one big group.)

If I'd been through what you're going through, I think I'd just be angry!

Sam

My daddy used to say, "Getting your panties in a twist don't solve nothing and it just makes you walk funny!"

Winn

(the light-bulb goes off and he smilingly blurts out)

Hey! I just thought of something that always made me laugh! Rugby threw-up on this guy – on their first date!

(There is laughter and it's a release.)

Rugby

Well, I was nervous.

Sam

Nervous?! [laughs]

Rugby

No – that's not the truth.

Sam

What?! You mean you lied to me?! [LAUGH]

Rugby

That's what I've always said; but it's not the real story. See – David – that was his name, David – was kind of big... down there and -- have you ever heard of "the gag reflex?"

(more laughter as the lights begin to fade)