

RELATIONSHIP EXPERT  
A play in one act  
By Craig Houk

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Cast of Characters

**Bobby** 33 years old. He is thin and pale. A bit of a nerd. Might be considered a bore. He has a heavy Midwestern accent.

Place  
Chicago

Time  
Present

**Bobby:** *(He is sitting on a barstool, drinking bottled water and moving to club music. He notices a man sitting next to him on his left. He smiles at the man. No response. He continues moving to the music. After a moment, he winks at the man. No response. He turns front, disappointed, drinking his bottled water. He begins moving again to the club music, slowly at first and then moving faster and faster until he inadvertently spills water onto the man's lap. He reaches for the man's lap, but decides it may be better not to touch him. He looks at the man and waves his hand in front of his face to see if he is responsive. No response. He turns front, drinking his water. After a moment.)* Now, I don't have any books published and I'm not a licensed therapist. But after watching you over the past thirty minutes, I think I know what your problem is. *(He turns front. Moment.)* Now, I realize that we've only just met, so I'm going to put this as delicately as I know how. You have no idea what relationships are really about. *(Beat.)* I mean, you just can't walk into some nightclub, toss back a few drinks, take some mood-altering drug, and then find the man of your dreams. Do you really think you'll find love in a sea of plastic tank tops and rubber hot pants? You can't. And I know all too well how rubber and plastic do not breathe. And relationships that are cultivated in bars can be as suffocating as the clothes you wear.

*(He turns front again, drinking his bottled water. A moment.)* Now, quite frankly, I'm too shallow to be angry. But, if I did have feelings, I'd be outraged by what I see going on around me. *(He becomes angrier as he speaks.)* Men using men and then tossing them aside like remnants of hair left on the salon floor after a cut and style. With absolutely no regard to the devastation that is left behind after a week of passionate lovemaking, candlelit dinners and being introduced to his friends and family. A lifetime of getting to know one another. All accomplished in the blink of an eye. And for what? Your new lover has discovered your birthmark which bears a striking resemblance to his last boyfriend and decides you should seek laser treatment to have it removed or he'll just have to move on without you. So, at that point, you have to decide between costly, noninvasive surgery or loneliness and depression. And let me note, loneliness and depression will not cost you a dime. Unless, of course, you're seeking therapy. In which case, I recommend the surgery. *(He notices a man waving in his direction. He waves back before realizing that the gesture isn't for him. He sits, dejected.)*

*(Back to the man.)* Relationships are a snap really. If you know how to manage one. And I do consider myself an expert since I've had nine or ten. Oh, they've been long term all right. All of them six months plus. Very complex and very loving... by all appearances. But, quite

frankly, at this point in my life, relationships are just too much work. I mean, they can also be exhausting. You really need to stay focused and ahead of the game at all times. Never wavering. Believe me, if I ever decide that I want to be in another relationship - which I know I won't - I'll know exactly what to do. It's like learning to rollerblade all over again after those dreary winter months. You know what I mean?

*(He turns front, drinking his bottled water.)* You don't mind that I'm talking to you, do you? Because, quite frankly, I don't think anyone's looked your way all night. Well, not since I've been sitting next to you anyway. So, if you're interested, I might be persuaded to share with you the secrets to a successful relationship. *(No response.)* Now, I don't share this information with just anyone. So, it's very important that you don't pass this on. Use it wisely, however. And consider yourself privileged that I'm actually speaking to you. *(He waits for a response. No response.)*

Okay! The first necessary ingredient in any relationship is, of course, love. Now, if you don't know how to love, you either need to stay completely out of people's lives or, if you're really good at faking it, you should try and stay in the relationship for at least six months so that people won't think less of you when you move on to the next victim - I mean, person. The important thing is sincerity. Feigned or real. You can't just go around recklessly breaking hearts. I mean some men - and I am not referring to myself - tend to take having a relationship seriously. So, if you're capable of recognizing another man's feelings, you should try to avoid stomping all over them. It just doesn't look good. Now, if I had feelings, I might be crying right now. Because, quite frankly, this is a very sad topic that we're discussing here.

*(He quickly thinks about what he has just said and then decides it is best to plow forward.)* Now, besides love and sincerity, all relationships need trust. What I mean by trust, for example, is pledging to your lover that you're not going to run around on him... even though you will. Or out him to his entire family or to his coworkers. Or slowly drain him of his trust until you've opened your own casual dining venue, which operates covertly as a crack house. *(He pretends to order from a menu.)* I'd like the vegetarian wrap with the artichoke and carrot sauce, a side of sprouts and, for an appetizer... I'd like to try the coke, crystal and 'K' sampler. *(He closes the imaginary menu.)* Now, I realize that, by detailing the previous examples, you may think that I've had firsthand experience in those situations. But that's absolutely, unequivocally, not the case. I'm just extremely clever when it comes to spit balling realistic gay

tragedies. *(He notices a man looking in his direction. He is flattered for a moment before he realizes that the look is for the cute man on his right.)*

Respect is very important. The first assumption to make, after a one-night stand, is that neither of you will have anything in common. So, it's very important to respect one another's differences. For example... You will wake up the next day - if it lasts that long - and discover that he's married. Now, what could you possibly have in common with a married man? But, of course, he insists on seeing you again and asks you to be patient while he methodically reveals to his wife that he's gay. And it'll be a real test of your patience when the wife refuses to give him a divorce and then hires a hit man to take you out at a moment's notice. Now keep in mind that this example is not a personal example and I, in no way, have ever been through such an ordeal. Because, quite frankly, if I did have a memory, - and I don't - I'd remember only happy things. *(He can think of nothing happy.)*

*(Beat. And then he's back at it.)* Always involve yourself with a man who's less attractive than you, less intelligent, less talented, more neurotic, more obsessed, and has a significantly smaller penis than you. This, of course, immediately puts you in control of the relationship. Because the less you want to be around your partner, the less effort you have to exert to make the relationship work. However, if your partner catches on to this little scheme. Get out quickly. Because it can backfire like no one's business. If you're foolish enough to stay in the relationship beyond that point, be prepared to feel major guilt, loneliness and desperation.

Look, are you awake? *(He snaps his fingers in front of man's face.)* Did you just pass out? You know, drinking heavily does not make life any more bearable. It doesn't make me any more bearable either. And it certainly won't make me go away. Because, quite frankly, when I meet someone in need, I make it my mission to bring some comfort into their lives. A little balance and security. Because, quite... Well, because quite... Because quite honestly... I've been there myself. I know what it's like to not be enough. And what it's like to feel completely alone in a world of gay men who are continually looking for something better. Looking for something to replace the tired inadequate men that are currently in their lives. Men who are afraid to commit. Or to make sacrifices. Or to stick it out no matter what. Men who are petrified of being loved too much. Men who are destined to be lonely. Because, one day, they'll wake up and realize that they've missed out on a lifetime of genuine companionship.

I mean, let's face it. Human beings have the attention spans of a... well, of a human being. We're always looking for something fresh to resuscitate our comatose lives. But the reality is... if we hold on to the wonderful people and things that pass through our lives, and nurture them and give them our full attention, we'll get exactly what we need. And we'll also be giving something beautiful back to the world.

I know. It's shocking to find someone as frank and forward as me. But my attitude is, tell 'em the truth. The whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me... God, you're attractive. You know, I didn't realize how attractive you were until just this very moment. Of course, it could be the lighting and I am having trouble focusing, but from all indications, you look good! You know, I am feeling a little light headed right now. I've only been drinking bottled water. Well, except, of course, for that one glass of lime and soda when I was feeling a bit dangerous. But things are a little fuzzy. Wait a minute. Did you slip something into my drink? I hope it's not one of those date rape drugs... is it? Because, quite frankly, I'm not the slightest bit interested in going home with you tonight. *(He snaps his fingers in front of man's face.)* Do you hear me? I have absolutely no interest in starting a relationship with you. I mean you're attractive, well dressed, probably have a steady job, make good money, capable of taking care of me, but it'll never work. Not with me. I'm stronger than that. So, you can just go looking somewhere else. *(Beat.)* I'm sorry I wasted your time. *(Beat. The man starts off.)* Where are you going? Home? Do you need a lift? Because, quite frankly... *(Lights out. End of play.)*