

An excerpt from

**I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD COOK** (from **INCREDIBLE SEX**)

a comedy in one act

by Rich Orloff

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*Place:* The kitchen of a modest urban apartment.  
*Time:* Dinner time.  
*Characters:* JEROME, mid-20's, paraplegic, uses a wheelchair  
MARK, his older brother

*(As the play begins, JEROME and MARK are at the kitchen table in Jerome's apartment finishing dinner. JEROME is in a wheelchair, a regular part of his life. JEROME has gone to some effort to make the meal setting look classy.)*

MARK: Anyway, so he pulls up to the stoplight, and he begins revving up his little Corvette engine, and I think, give me a break.

JEROME: Uh-huh.

MARK: I didn't get my Porsche to be macho or anything. I just like how it feels.

JEROME: Uh-huh.

MARK: But he keeps revving his engine, rhhm, rhhm, rhhmmmm, so, so right before the light changes, I roll down my window—

JEROME: Yeah.

MARK: And I say, "I think you've done a wonderful job of compensating for having a small penis."

JEROME: You didn't.

MARK: Light changed; I took off; left him in the dust.

JEROME: Wow, it's so cool they gave you a Porsche as a bonus.

MARK: Hey, if you ever want to get into sales...

JEROME: I think I'll stick with teaching.

MARK: Well, if you ever want me to help. After all, what's a brother for?

JEROME: Thanks. Not that I could drive one, anyway.

MARK: I'm sure they could adjust it.

JEROME: Bucket seats? Low to the ground? I think I'll stick with my Ford.

MARK: I'm sure they could adjust anything, if you pay them enough.

JEROME: I'll stick with my Ford. We've developed a very intimate and trusting relationship.

MARK: You know, in a just world, they'd give teachers cars as bonuses.

JEROME: That'll be the day.

MARK: Well, you work hard enough for it.

JEROME: I'm just glad they finally put all the ramps up.

MARK: I thought they had to do that years ago.

JEROME: They did.

MARK: Then why didn't they?

JEROME: They hadn't run out of excuses yet.

MARK: (*Finishing eating:*) This was delicious, Jerome. Absolutely delicious.

JEROME: I'm glad you liked it.

MARK: I'm really impressed. I didn't know you could cook.

JEROME: Millions of people can cook, Mark. Maybe billions.

MARK: Not me. I tried making pasta once; a couple of pieces are still stuck to my wall.

JEROME: Would you like some dessert?

MARK: Oh, no, I'm stuffed.

JEROME: It's chocolate mousse pie. Made it from scratch.

MARK: Sorry. No room.

JEROME: You don't need room for chocolate mousse pie. It just fills the crevices around the food you've already eaten.

MARK: Can't do it. I've already met my caloric maximum for the day.

JEROME: I forgot how disciplined you are.

MARK: Even a small paunch can negatively impact a woman's first response to you.

JEROME: I'll remember that.

MARK: Besides, I, I probably should be heading back to the hotel.

JEROME: It's early.

MARK: I know, but I have another meeting first thing—

JEROME: (*Overlapping with the above:*) But we've hardly—

MARK: (*Overlapping with the above:*) They didn't fly me this far so I could—

JEROME: (*Overlapping with the above:*) I just hoped we could—

MARK: (*Overlapping with the above:*) Next time I'm in town—

JEROME: Right. Sure.

MARK: Hey.

JEROME: You know—you know how long it's been since we've spent any real time together?

MARK: Six months?

JEROME: Five years.

MARK: What do you mean? I saw you at Mom's birthday thing, and Uncle Ted and Aunt Lisa's fiftieth anniversary, and at Daniel's wedding.

JEROME: Those are family things. Nobody really talks at them.

MARK: Sure, they do.

JEROME: Mark, the reason they're called family functions is because that's about all you can do at them.

MARK: Well, we've talked the last hour, haven't we?

JEROME: Yeah. I guess.

(*JEROME starts taking the dishes to the kitchen sink.*)

MARK: Can I help with the—

JEROME: I got it. Would you like some coffee?

MARK: Caffeine after seven? Never.

JEROME: I have decaf.

MARK: I really can't stay—

JEROME: Right.

MARK: Hey, Mom sent me that article about you in the paper.

JEROME: About the disabled schoolteacher all the third graders adore?

MARK: It was a good article.

JEROME: It was your generic "Let's admire the handicapped" piece. They just filled in the blanks with my name.

MARK: Nobody writes about me.

JEROME: Look, it was a fine article; I, I just don't like being written up because I can do what people *assume* I can't do. If they were honest, the piece would have been titled, "Local Crip Transcends Expectations."

MARK: Well, I liked the piece.

JEROME: I'm glad.

MARK: And even if this isn't...correct, I'm really impressed by how well you've learned to manage on your own.

JEROME: And I'm impressed by how well you've learned to manage on your own, too, Mark.

MARK: All I mean is, well, I never thought you'd move out and live on your own. I mean, I knew you could. I knew you could do anything you put your mind to.

JEROME: I think professional ski jumping is out.

MARK: Well, anything practical.

JEROME: The jumping I could finesse, but if there's like a moose on the hill...

MARK: I'm still proud of what you've done. I'm sorry if that bugs you, but it's true.

JEROME: I haven't done anything special.

MARK: I'm not sure I could have done what you've done.

JEROME: You just haven't been tested.

MARK: Still, to live alone when you're, well, you know—I think it's quite an accomplishment.

JEROME: Well, it's not like I'm completely alone.

MARK: Why? Is someone hiding in the bedroom or something?

JEROME: No, no, it's just, well, to quote Ringo, or was it George, anyway, to quote one of them, I get by with a little help from my friends.

MARK: Oh, does some social agency help—

JEROME: No, I mean friends. You know, *friends*.

MARK: I know, *friends*. The people you put in your palm pilot who aren't business connections.

JEROME: I also, um, well, I...there's, there's also one special friend.

MARK: No, really?

JEROME: Really.

MARK: Who?

JEROME: Oh, just...just someone special.

MARK: Who?

JEROME: Well—

MARK: What's her name?

JEROME: Louie.

MARK: Louie?

JEROME: Louie.

MARK: Well, if there can be an actress named Glenn Close, I guess there can be a woman named Louie.

JEROME: Louie's a man.

MARK: Oh, so he's just a friend.

JEROME: We're more than friends.

MARK: He's a good friend.

JEROME: We're more than good friends.

MARK: He's a good, good friend.

JEROME: We're lovers.

MARK: He's a *very* good friend.

JEROME: Mark, I'm gay.

MARK: You can't be gay.

JEROME: Why not?

MARK: Because our father isn't henpecked and our mother isn't a castrating bitch.

JEROME: I'm still gay.

MARK: What makes you think you're gay?

JEROME: Well, for one thing, I'm extremely enamored with the male form.

MARK: So you have a heightened sense of aesthetics.

JEROME: I also have a lover named Louie.

MARK: Are you sure you're not doing this to be trendy?

JEROME: Mark, I'm a homosexual.

MARK: Well, I'm stunned. I'm really stunned.

JEROME: I—

MARK: I never even knew you were sexual.

JEROME: Of course, I'm sexual.

MARK: Well, I thought, since the accident...

JEROME: Only my legs went limp; nothing in-between... I'm one of the lucky ones.

MARK: That's incredible, you really can, uh—

JEROME: Uh-huh.

MARK: Really?

JEROME: Yes.

MARK: Really?

JEROME: Well, it does take me longer to climax, but I've never gotten any complaints about that.

MARK: Well...what do you know.

JEROME: To be honest, after the accident, I wasn't sure what I'd be able to do. At the rehab center, they didn't deal with our sexuality at all. At all. Then about six months later, I—I was watching this Mel Gibson movie, and he started getting real sweaty, and inside I started getting real excited, and outside I noticed I was getting real excited, too.

MARK: Mel Gibson?

JEROME: I know you're shocked that I'm turned on by Mel Gibson. (*Lightly:*) But then, I'm shocked when I meet someone who isn't.

MARK: You're just doing this to be different, aren't you?

JEROME: No.

MARK: Isn't it enough that—

JEROME: Stop it! Look, I, I...I know you have trouble accepting things sometimes.

MARK: Like what?

JEROME: Like after the accident, when you visited from college and you offered me a hundred bucks if I took five steps.

MARK: I thought you needed encouragement.

JEROME: My spinal cord had been severed, Mark.

MARK: I know.

JEROME: It was physically impossible.

MARK: Miracles do happen, Jerome!

JEROME: That's exactly what I thought during the Mel Gibson movie.

MARK: Look, I just thought you needed a little push to get better.

JEROME: I was getting better.

MARK: Well, you know, the way the whole family was coddling you; Mom and Grandma were so glad you were alive, they weren't going to ask anything of you.

JEROME: Well, you know, c'mon, they were devastated.

MARK: I didn't want you to get too...comfortable.

JEROME: That wasn't likely.

MARK: I didn't see anybody pushing you to get better.

JEROME: You almost made me think—

MARK: Everyone always coddled you.

JEROME: Dad never coddled me.

MARK: Dad never knew either of us existed.

*(This stops the conversation for a moment.)*

JEROME: You're right.

MARK: Look, about this, this deciding to be gay thing, I...well, I just can't say I approve.

JEROME: Well then, I guess I'll just have to stop. Next time my pecker rises during a Mel Gibson movie, I'll have to say, "Stop that. Wait till Halle Berry comes on the screen."

MARK: This doesn't sit right with me, that's all. It just doesn't.

JEROME: Do you want to pretend I never said it?

MARK: This doesn't sit right, that's all. Maybe by your friends it does, but, but not by me.

JEROME: Oh.

MARK: You always get these ideas in your head and, and everyone coddles you...

JEROME: Look...

MARK: It's not healthy.

JEROME: Mark—

MARK: So I'm giving you a choice.

JEROME: What?!

MARK: I'm giving you a choice.

JEROME: What?

MARK: You can be gay or disabled, but not both.

JEROME: But I *am* both.

MARK: Why can't you be satisfied just being disabled?