

Idl _____ in _____ g

By Samuel __ Emerson _____ Krapels

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes...*

Playwright Samuel Emerson Krapels says that gender is irrelevant in this play as long as it's a queer couple. "NIK might be a little goth. MAX might wear glasses." I picture two guys, but maybe that's a me thing. Whatever the case, this short play is a near-perfect slice of life in a world where love and pizza can both be elusive. The landscape of the play is now - with a backdrop of the pandemic as NIK and MAX wait for their pizza in the car, NIK in the driver's seat. There is no mention of COVID, but its presence is as tangible as an aerosol mist of a third character driving the conversation and the play. We've all been on this ride, which makes the dialogue snap with a startling intimacy that gets right into the heart of the matter; what are we waiting for - besides pizza?

Here's MAX's report on the timing of the takeout:

MAX

I showed up and told her
Her name was Jackie

NIK

Hi Jackie

MAX

Hi Jackie
That I was here to pick up our pizza.
She told me that they still needed 10 minutes.

NIK

Oh. Really?
I thought we had it this time.

I love these characters and I love this play.

Five stars.

Idling

An exploration of small-town queerness through the mundane act of waiting for your takeout. These two are all they have in the world and have settled into an incredibly codependent relationship. Even in their frustration with each other, there is an implicit trust. And then circumstances change.

The relationship is written so that gender is irrelevant, but it still needs to be a queer couple. NIK might be a little goth. MAX might wear glasses.

Feel free to just use two chairs to connote the front seats of the car. There absolutely does not have to be an entire automobile onstage.

START OF PLAY

*Lights up on NIK's 1998 Charcoal Grey Toyota Corolla, the engine running.
We find NIK sitting in the driver's seat with their arms folded tightly. Their shoulders are up to their ears. After a moment they look outside and pull out their phone. They got some news.*

They breathe deeply as their eyes widen.

The next moment, MAX clambers into the passengers' seat while NIK quietly puts their phone away

NIK

What's the story?

MAX says something unintelligible.

What?

MAX takes off their mask.

MAX

10-15 minutes.

NIK

You're kidding.

Even after we made a point to be late.

MAX

Yup.
I was livid.

NIK

You didn't make a scene, did you?

MAX

What? No
Well

NIK

There's no turn off like being a dick to service.

MAX

Let it be known
Even when I am being utterly humiliated, I do the smile and the please and the thank you

NIK

Not humiliated.

MAX

Yes. Humiliated.

NIK

Oh no
What happened?

MAX

I told the nice lady at the checkout about the equation.

NIK

Oh, sweetie

MAX

It was bad.

NIK

I can imagine.
Alright
Tell me how it happened.

MAX

I showed up and told her

Her name was Jackie

NIK

Hi Jackie

MAX

Hi Jackie
That I was here to pick up our pizza.
She told me that they still needed 10 minutes.

NIK

This is where I would have walked out.

MAX

Right.
So I told her that that was interesting
Considering the equation.

NIK

Another moment to say thank you and leave

MAX

Right.
But no.
She,
An all-around good person, says,
“Equation?”

NIK

She walked right into that one.

MAX

And that was when I told her how me and my partner came up with a takeout equation.
Depending on the popularity of the restaurant, complexity of the dish, and the day of the week,
we were able to figure out how long it would take until the meal would be ready. How burgers
are faster than thai which is faster than pizza which is faster than brick oven specialty pizza

NIK

We sound cool

MAX

I could have stopped there and walked out with my dignity.

NIK

But no. You must go deeper

MAX

And so, I did.

I then told her that since we got a meat lovers pizza at a popular restaurant on a Thursday night, we were going to budget a solid hour before it was ready.

NIK

We're getting good at that. Didn't even need the whiteboard

MAX

It was right around when I was showing her pictures of old modules I had on my phone, The crusty old dude in the back of the line turns to his wife and says, quote, Will someone shut that chatty faggot up.

Breath.

What?

Breath. NIK is holding back laughter.

Are you laughing?

NIK

Nope.

MAX

It was awful Nik I was humiliated

NIK

I know

It's just

I'm changing my twitter name to chattyfaggot the moment we get home.

Breath. MAX is not having it.

Oh come on that's funny.

Max

What if it happened to me?

MAX

It would be hilarious.

NIK

Ta da!

MAX

But it happened to me.

I know.
I'm sorry babe.
You wanna go home?

NIK

No I want this pizza.

MAX

Gotcha.

NIK

Breath.

So I gotta tell you something

Oh did you talk to that real estate agent?

MAX

No
Well we emailed but

NIK

She helped our old neighbors find a place with renter's insurance after they got evicted.
She's exactly what we need.

MAX

Yeah, but

NIK

I'm serious. I'm sick of pretending to be roommates, Nik

MAX

Max

NIK

I know it's expensive, but think about it

MAX

I have. A lot.

NIK

We'd get to be out West! We could walk to the ocean.
Doesn't that sound amazing?

MAX

It does. Yeah. NIK

Nik I need a little enthusiasm. MAX

No, it's cool. NIK

Do you not like the plan anymore? MAX

It's a great plan. NIK

It's THE plan. MAX

I know. It is. It was. NIK

So what? MAX

I don't know. NIK
I feel like all of the plans I've ever made in life
Like they don't actually follow through.
Whenever I try to plan out what will happen, usually the opposite occurs.
I just wish something in my life didn't culminate in a disaster.

Hmm. MAX
Is this Hangry Nik?

What? NIK

Hangry Nik. MAX
Is this who I'm dealing with?

No, this isn't Hangry Nik. NIK
This is Tired Nik Who Wants Pizza and Go To Bed
I actually hate it when you call me Hangry Nik.

MAX

How else do you want me to describe it?
Bitchy Nik?

NIK

When you call me that stuff it's so invalidating.
I never get to experience my frustration
It just turns into an infantile surname.

Breath.

MAX

Sorry.
I didn't mean to upset you.
I might be a little hangry.

NIK

Right.
You never get hangry.

MAX

Uh, yeah I do.

NIK

What? When?

MAX

Now?
Whenever I get hungry?

Breath.

Dinner with your cousins?

NIK

Oh God. Right.
Can we call that Hanger?

MAX

We were definitely hungry.

NIK

Yeah but I don't think the hunger was the source of the anger.

MAX

I guess not.
The low blood sugar definitely did not help.

NIK

Yeah.
What a shitshow.

MAX

Oof.

Breath.

I bet it's the meat.

NIK

Hmm?

MAX

That's making the pizza take so long.

NIK

Yeah. Maybe.

Breath.

One of those cousins is actually having a baby.

MAX

No way.

NIK

Yup. Lisa. I saw it on Facebook.

MAX

Wow. She's younger than us.

NIK

Doesn't have a job or anything.

MAX

Creating an entire organic life is a job in itself.

NIK

I guess.
She and her boyfriend are getting married faster than it takes to make a pizza on a Thursday.

MAX

But of course.

NIK

Yeah.
Whole thing kinda makes my blood boil.

MAX

It's very cyclical.

NIK

It's more than that.

MAX

How so?

NIK

Isn't it weird how like
Any two breeder idiots can just have a baby and no one's talking about it.

MAX

We're talking about it.

NIK

I know but like
Imagine if we wanted a kid.
The bureaucratic hoops we'd have to jump through to even have the thing

MAX

Then imagine after it's born.
The scrutiny. The criticism.

NIK

Exactly.
That poor kid.

MAX

I wouldn't want to raise kids in this town anyway.
I feel like you're supposed to raise kids in like white picket fence neighborhoods.

NIK

And not crumbling subdivisions?

MAX

Yeah.

NIK

I'm so hungry

MAX

White picket fences like we found on Zillow.
I really wanna move.

NIK

I know.

MAX

I don't think it's that out of our budget.

NIK

I know.

MAX

We could do it. I bet the jobs are better out there, too.

NIK

I know.

MAX

I wouldn't mind a little distance from my family.

NIK

Me too.

MAX

Can you please give me a little more info than that?

NIK

Yeah no it sounds great.

MAX

Alright. You're in a mood.

NIK

I'm not in a mood.
I hate it when you say stuff like that it's so invalidating.

MAX

Sorry?
Just saying you seem upset.

NIK

I mean yeah I want this pizza

MAX

You seem upset in a deeper sense.

NIK

Pizza is deep.

MAX

I guess.

Nik

What's wrong?

NIK

Does something always have to be wrong?

MAX

No. Not at all.

Sorry.

NIK

It's okay.

MAX

Nik I'm so sick of living in this town.

And I'm so sick of talking about how we're not going to stay here.

Let's actually do it.

Let's get out.

Be our own people. Carve our own futures.

NIK

Max I can't think about it.

There's just too much on my mind.

I'm too hangry.

Or maybe I'm just hungry I don't know anymore.

MAX

I'm sorry.

We don't have to talk about it right now.

Let's leave it for tonight.

Breath.

I, uh

I never wanted to stress you out.

I want it to be better. For us.

Breath.

NIK

I got in.

MAX

What?

NIK

I got the acceptance.
Before you came back to the car.

MAX

Oh. Wow.

NIK

Yep.

MAX

Is it good?

NIK

Full ride. My dream program.
I would start class next fall.

MAX

Fuck.
Sorry.
That's exciting. Congratulations.

NIK

This is what I meant.
A lot on my mind.

MAX

Yeah no got it.

MAX's phone beeps. They pull it out.

Pizza's ready.

NIK

Okay.

MAX exits as fast as they can.

NIK is alone.

Maybe they just sit.

MAX returns with a massive pizza. They don't look at NIK

Let's go home. MAX

Okay. NIK

I don't want to talk. MAX

Alright. NIK

Breath.

I've never loved anyone in the world as much as I love you. MAX

Me too. NIK

I wanna go home. MAX

Okay. NIK

Breath.

I
I don't want to be alone. MAX

Maybe they start to cry.

I know. NIK
What do you want?

MAX

I wanna go home and eat this pizza.
Then go to bed.

NIK

Okay.

MAX

You don't know.
You don't know anything.

NIK

I don't.

MAX

Nik,
GO.

NIK puts the car in drive.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY

THE PLATWRIGHT SPEAKS...

Nik and Max came to me after I read about the lack of nondiscrimination laws for LGBTQ folks around the country. Being a queer person in a community where your rights are not protected results in your partner being your only safe space.

My writing largely stems from an interest in what people don't acknowledge in their interactions. I've found my characters are generally honest with each other, but never seem to tell the whole truth. It's always easier to not talk about the stressful things between us. This leads me to put my characters in a container where they must address it. Something like the front seats of a car. The effect of these containers is often sad and also funny.

My biggest influences are Annie Baker and Sarah Ruhl.

Website in construction.

AUTHOR BIO: Samuel Emerson Krapels is a writer, director, world builder currently based in Vermont. Sam hopes people think a little differently after they experience his work.