

Swipe

By Mikki Gillette

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

Mikki Gillette's play Swipe Right is a fresh and honest take on the contemporary dating scene. The smart multi-layered writing and realistic dialogue allows for a living and breathing interaction between twenty-somethings MANDY and DERRICK - sparked by Tinder - to jump off the page and onto the stage. As if meeting somebody on a dating App isn't hard enough, it's further complicated when that somebody (DERRICK) neglected to read the profile and didn't realize that his date (MANDY) is trans. The conversation that ensues goes past preliminary ice-breaking and cringe-worthy awkwardness right into that rarest of sweet spots where the characters are given the opportunity to grow, and the audience along with them. Watch out for this playwright. She's going to change the world.

DERRICK

It's OK. People are crazy online.

(laughs)

For a minute there, I thought you might be
one of those . . . what are they called? . . . You
know like misogynists, only men?

(Spacing is playwright's own.)

SWIPE RIGHT

by

Mikki Gillette

mikkigillette@gmail.com
(503) 317-6932
mikkigillette.com

CHARACTERS:

MANDY – a trans woman in her early 20s
DERRICK – a cis man in his early 20s

LOCATION:

A Thai restaurant in a U.S. city.

TIME:

Present day.

MANDY and DERRICK, both in their early 20s, sit at a restaurant table. Mandy appears a little tense and suspicious. Derrick is confident, open, and guileless.

DERRICK
How long have you been on Tinder?

MANDY
Just a few weeks . . . and you?

DERRICK
A while. I only use it off and on, though . . . Have guys been cool to you on there?

MANDY
(defensive)
What does that mean?

DERRICK
(surprised, cautious)
I just meant, like, when you message, or
text . . . are they nice, or, like, douche-y, or
something . . . you know, like dick pics, that
sort of thing?

Mandy stares angrily a moment. Her brow then knits in doubt. She sighs, frowning.

MANDY
Fuck . . . you know, maybe I'm not up for this.
You seem . . . average, I guess, but -

DERRICK
(incredulous)
Did you just call me "average"?

MANDY
We've been here, like, a minute, and you've
already asked me how "guys treat me," and
made a genital reference, and I'm just . . .

DERRICK
Huh? . . . You mean "dick pic"?

MANDY
Yes, I mean "dick pic."

Pause.

DERRICK
I think I'm just making, like, standard first
date conversation, Mandy, but if you want to
talk about it, or make suggestions, or something,
we can do that.

MANDY
(shakes head wearily)
Have you dated a trans woman before, Derrick?

DERRICK
(confused)

Um, no . . . but I think my cousin's trans. I mean, he, or she, or, um, I don't know - they live back east and -

MANDY

You do know I'm trans, right?

(pause)

It was on my profile. Like, prominently.

DERRICK

Um . . . yeah, of course. It's, you know . . .

MANDY

You didn't know I'm trans.

DERRICK

I mean, if you're asking, like, did I know before you just said it, then . . . um, no . . . I didn't know . . . I'm glad you mentioned it, though, and that we're getting to know each other.

As Derrick's talked, Mandy's brought out her phone and searched on it.

MANDY

It's, like, the *second thing*. "24" "trans."

DERRICK

(uncomfortable)

I'm not sure why you're making it such a big thing Mandy. It's not a crime to not read someone's profile . . . some people do that purposely in order to not build up unrealistic expectations about people.

MANDY

(sighs)

Maybe you're right. Should we talk about -

DERRICK

Oh! Dick pic! Now I see! Right, I couldn't figure out why that was bothering you, but . . . sure, yeah, that might have seemed rude.

Mandy stares insulted. An awkward pause follows.

MANDY

(annoyed)
Maybe we should talk about something else.

DERRICK
Sure. How did you choose this restaurant?

MANDY
Oh, someone I knew introduced me to it.
They have good Thai food.

DERRICK
(coyly)
Was it a date?

MANDY
No, just a friend. Do you date often?

DERRICK
(stares)
So you were, like, a boy. That's crazy! I would
never -

MANDY
What the fuck?! Do I just start scrutinizing
you and blurting out shit?

DERRICK
No, it's cool. I was appreciating, like, you know,
who you are.

MANDY
God, I wish I was a lesbian. Do you know what
it's like to be forcibly socialized male, transition
and realize what a sexist asshole society made
you, and then try to date men? It's like a cruel
social experiment, or something.

DERRICK
(offended)
That's kind of rude, Mandy. I'm not judging
you for who you are. It's mean to say I'm a
jerk just because I'm male.

Mandy cries.

MANDY

You asked how guys treat me on Tinder? A lot of them are just really transphobic. Like, "I thought you were cute, but then I read your profile. Sorry, I'm not into dudes," you know? It's probably made me a little jaded.

(sincerely)

Sorry.

DERRICK

Wow. That's shitty, Mandy. I'm sorry.

(frowns)

Yeah, some guys are dicks.

MANDY

Thanks.

DERRICK

I have this one friend, and, like, all he does is post shit to this fat-shaming subreddit, and then brag about it on twitter.

MANDY

(slightly disturbed)

Oh, um -

DERRICK

And he's funny, so sometimes I'll retweet, or whatever, but other times I'll think, "Why are -"

MANDY

What the fuck are you talking about Derrick?!

DERRICK

Huh?

MANDY

You retweet your fat shaming shithead friend's online harassment? That's what you're telling me after I talk about being harassed by transphobic dude-bros on Tinder?

DERRICK

(thinking)

Oh, yeah . . . I mean, the story was about how, you know . . . I don't approve -

MANDY

You just said you retweet him.

DERRICK

Um, well -

MANDY

There's, like, literally no more direct way you could approve of what you're saying you disapprove of.

DERRICK

You're being a little hostile, Mandy. Like, I'm open to talking about this.

MANDY

(warily)

Okay.

DERRICK

I don't think people should go to those sites. And then some people find those women's social media accounts and harass them there. That's totally fucked up.

MANDY

I agree.

DERRICK

See? I read Buzzfeed and stuff.

MANDY

Someone put my friend's info on a trans shaming forum like that, too.

DERRICK

Oh, that's awful.

MANDY

The dickheads who went to that site emailed her and contacted her work. They called her mentally ill -

(pause, chokes up)

They told her family she was a porn actress -

DERRICK

I'm sorry -

MANDY

They tried to get her fired. She didn't kill herself, but . . . she talked about it.

DERRICK

That's so fucked up. Trolls like that are -

MANDY

And why?! You know? She's fucking transgender. That's it. She's not transgender Hitler or something. Why are people--people who are all white guys--so hateful?

DERRICK

I don't know.

(pause, cautious and annoyed)

You know, not *all* white guys are like that. I mean, I've never tried to get someone fired for being trans, or fat, or something.

MANDY

(annoyed, distant)

I guess . . .

DERRICK

It's true.

MANDY

You said two minutes ago you retweet your friend's crap, Derrick.

DERRICK

Yeah . . . but I don't think I'd do that now, after, like, hearing what you said.

MANDY

(warily)

Okay . . . but how did you feel when I said I was trans?

DERRICK

(nervous)

What do you mean?

MANDY

After scrupulously avoiding my profile, in
order to not build up expectations, and then
learning I'm trans and not cis, did it change
how you feel about me?

DERRICK

(pause, thinks hard)

Well . . . I know I still thought you were cute
. . . I had a thousand questions, and I didn't
blurt them out, because I know that's rude -
See? I told you I read shit about this stuff!

MANDY

(laughs, then serious)

But did you think other stuff? Like you didn't
want to date me, or thought I was -

(looks down)

Gross, or something.

DERRICK

No, I mean . . . you're the first trans person
I've met, but I definitely didn't think you
were . . . you know . . .

Pause.

MANDY

(frowns)

Maybe I should go.

Mandy stands. Derrick does as well.

DERRICK

God, you're really hard to just talk to. Please
sit. We haven't even ordered yet.

MANDY

(rolls eyes)

What should we talk about at dinner, Derrick?
How you're unable to say I'm not gross?

DERRICK

(exasperated)

I'm sorry. No one's ever asked me that five

minutes into a first date before, so I froze a little. I swear, I don't think you're gross.

Mandy, slightly embarrassed, sits. Derrick sits, as well.

MANDY

I'm sorry. I'm probably really defensive and annoying. I see things that people say, and I guess I assume, you know, everyone thinks that way.

DERRICK

It's OK. People are crazy online.

(laughs)

For a minute there, I thought you might be one of those . . . what are they called? . . . You know like misogynists, only men?

Mandy stares in disbelief.

MANDY

Are you calling me a man?

DERRICK

(laughs)

No! Like when women hate men. There's a word, like misogynist. What's the word?

Mandy starts crying.

DERRICK

(confused, worried)

Wait. What happened? . . . Mandy? Why are you -

MANDY

I don't think I can . . . function. All I do is pick fights, and then freak out when people can't remember the word "misandrist," because I think they're misgendering me.

(upset)

And, by the way, being upset about transphobia, and the people who perpetrate it, doesn't make someone a -

She stops, annoyed at having become upset again.

DERRICK
(to self)
"Misandrist" . . . that was it.

Mandy laughs softly.

DERRICK
I don't think you're a person who hates men.
It was a dumb joke . . .
(gentle, flirty)
But maybe, just as an experiment, you could try
assuming I'm not implying mean, transphobic
things when I talk to, or about, you.

Mandy thinks, her look slightly skeptical.

MANDY
I could maybe, if you concede that neither you
nor anyone else, should make jokes about trans
women, since, for the last 2,000 years or so,
those jokes have all been uniformly shitty.

Derrick thinks a moment, nodding to himself. The two nod cautiously, picking up their menus.

DERRICK
This date reminds me of Model U.N. in high
school, where you'd create rules about how
everyone addressed each other. "Argentina
recognizes Uruguay and salutes its autonomy
..."
(worried)
I mean, like, in a good way.

Mandy laughs.

MANDY
I get it . . . "And if relations remain warm
between our states . . . maybe your ambassador
can pay our land a visit."

DERRICK
(surprised, happy, to self)
Fuck yeah.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS... *The reality of dating as a trans woman is so hard, because our culture is steeped in bias against us. I wanted to explore that, but I didn't want to create something sad sack-y, where the audience just felt bad for the protagonist. So instead of making it the subtext, I thought it would be fun to have a heroine like Mandy who wouldn't stop talking about it, in order to surface all the issues. To me she's a character like Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing," who starts out saying, "I'll never marry!" Hopefully an audience members thinks, "Why not? This is a comedy, isn't it?" and wants to know more and see if she changes. Deep down I think we all root for love, and want to see people like Mandy heal and Derrick grow.*

AUTHOR BIO: Mikki Gillette is a trans woman playwright living in Portland, OR. Her new play American Girl about transgender teen Nikki Kuhnhausen, who was murdered in a hate crime in 2019, was developed and workshopped at Artist's Rep Theatre. Mikki is part of Profile Theatre's 2021 LGBTQIA+ Community Profile Cohort. Her full length shows The Queers, They, Them, Their, Mimetic Desire and No More Candy depict the trans experience in all its juicy, dramatic richness, and have enjoyed readings at the Portland Playhouse, defunkt theatre, the Funhouse Lounge, Post5 Theatre and the Shoebox, among other venues. Her work has been featured multiple times at the OUTwright Festival. Learn more at: mikkigillette.com

Publishing Credits: Intimate Matters - selected for publication in June by Barely Seen.