



CHARLES HAMILTON, A LOVING HUSBAND

By

Lee Lawing

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes...One of the many aspects that tickles my fancy about being on the team here at FOTD is getting to dive into pools of knowledge I have yet discovered. And in the world of “female husbands” in England during the 17th and 18th centuries Charles Hamilton, A Loving Husband sent me on a deep dive because I knew squat (and no, Albert Nobbs is a totally different thing). Richly historic, cheekily humored, Lee Lawing’s scene will tickle your brain and your ribs while pulling you in from the get-go. Despite being a quick read, I fully believe this idea could be developed into an intriguing full-length piece.*

Charles Hamilton, a Loving Husband

Charles Hamilton, one of the first documented female husbands in England is thrown into jail after their wife, Mary, had them arrested. The other men in the jail learn that you're never too old to learn new tricks.

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Cast of Characters

CHARLES HAMILTON they/them, male identifying, 20s

WILLIAM ROGERS he/him, male, 20s

WILLIAM WEEKS he/him, male, 20s
THOMAS REYNOLDS he/him, male 20s

It is a modern retelling of this hero so contemporary dress is OK

SET: Bare stage representative of a jail.

PLACE: Wells, England

TIME: September 1746.

SETTING: Bare stage representing of the jail. It is a holding jail where all the prisoners share the same room.

AT RISE: Lights come on the jail where WILLIAM WEEKS, WILLIAM ROGERS and THOMAS REYNOLDS are sitting or lying on the ground They wear pants and shirts. CHARLES is pushed from off stage as if being pushed into the jail. CHARLES trips but does not fall. CHARLES wears a pair of pants and

a shirt and a baggy jacket. CHARLES starts to walk around the stage looking for a spot to claim.

WILLIAM W

Not here.

(CHARLES continues his search.)

WILLIAM R

Not here, either.

THOMAS

Or here.

(CHARLES finds a place to sit and does so.)

THOMAS

What are you in for?

CHARLES

For being a good husband.

(The others think this is a joke and when CHARLES says nothing else to back it up or refute the statement, they all break into laughter.)

WILLIAM R

You had us boy! A good husband. You won't catch us claiming that we're in here for the same thing.

WILLIAM W

I don't even want to be a husband.

WILLIAM R

You've got a bastard child, you might as well go ahead marry the

WILLIAM W

Watch what you're about to say.

WILLIAM R

Sweet fine thing was all it was.

WILLIAM W

As if you have any room to talk

THOMAS

None of us do.

CHARLES

What are you all in for?

THOMAS

Me? I abandoned my family

CHARLES

Really?

THOMAS

You should count your lucky days that you are here. You may be good now, but I promise that over time you'll be locked up here for the same reasons we have been. For not being good.

CHARLES

It's really a shame.

WILLIAM R

If you're so good, why did your wife get you thrown into here?

WILLIAM W

This place doesn't exactly scream good.

THOMAS

Why did

CHARLES

Mary.

THOMAS

Why did Mary have you arrested? Surely you beat her.

CHARLES

Never.

WILLIAM R

Not even a slap?

CHARLES

Not even a slap.

WILLIAM W

How long have you been married?

CHARLES

Only a few months.

WILLIAM R

And you never beat her?

THOMAS

Most women need some sort of . . . shall we saydiscipline.

CHARLES

Mary didn't seem to need any.

WILLIAM W

Count yourself lucky then. I've never met

THOMAS

What is your name?

CHARLES

Charles. Charles Hamilton.

THOMAS

Please to meet you ,Charles. Mr. Loving Husband.

WILLIAM W

The guard left this for you, Mr. Hamilton.

(WILLIAM W pulls out a dress from near where
he's sitting and throws it to CHARLES.)

WILLIAM W (continued)

Is that what all loving husbands get to put on?

CHARLES

Only the unlucky ones.

WILLIAM W

Why did the guards leave it for you?

CHARLES

They think this is what I should be wearing.

THOMAS

Why on earth for?

(WILLIAM W and WILLIAM R and THOMAS all look confused.)

CHARLES

The look at me as a woman.

(CHARLES throws the dress back between the middle of the men and they all scatter from it as if it had the plague.)

WILLIAM R

You don't say.

WILLIAM W

He just said. But you don't

THOMAS

Was that the reason Mary had you thrown into here?

CHARLES

Mary just didn't understand.

WILLIAM W

Looks like the guards didn't understand either.

WILLIAM R

You're really a woman?

A Beat.

CHARLES

They think I am a woman. I mean, all they have are eyes and a narrow frame of mind, so, for them, yes, I guess I am a woman.

THOMAS

And Mary knew this?

CHARLES

Not at first.

WILLIAM W

But how did you fool her. Wouldn't she see you didn't have a ?

CHARLES

I guess you gentlemen all know that there are so many ways to . . . what shall I say. . . .to pleasure a woman other than with the penis.

(WILLIAM W, WILLIAM R and THOMAS all nod enthusiastically they do understand and then they all nod that they don't know and they all scoot closer to CHARLES.)

WILLIAM W
What other ways are there?

CHARLES
Surely you use you tongues.

WILLIAM R
Our what?

THOMAS
Tongue, William.

CHARLES
And then your fingers make for

WILLIAM W
You put your fingers inside?

CHARLES
All the time.

(WILLIAM R nearly wretches.)

WILLIAM R
Do you eat with them afterwards?

CHARLES
Oh, I lick them clean before I eat.

(WILLIAM R now fully wretches.)

THOMAS
Your fingers and your tongue.

WILLIAM W
What else could you possibly do to please a woman?

CHARLES
I would use a dildo with Mary. After I had her in the mood of course and would use it to give her the full satisfaction of achieving an orgasm

THOMAS

A what?

CHARLES

An orgasm? You may have another name for it. Men seem to love naming them something cute and obnoxious.

THOMAS

Oh, yes, my sigh of the blessing.

CHARLES

Exactly.

THOMAS

Does a woman have a sigh as well?

CHARLES

Sigh after sigh after sigh. Think of your blessing and then think that a woman's blessing is so wonderful and joyful, she feels just like she's reached the gates of Heaven time and time again.

(The Men all giggle like young children.)

CHARLES (continued)

Where was I? Oh, yes, the nice thing about a dildo.

(WILLIAM W raises his hand.)

CHARLES (continued)

Yes, William?

WILLIAM W

What is a dildo?

THOMAS

Oh, come on. Every farmer and his donkey knows that.

WILLIAM W

What is it then?

THOMAS

Isn't it just another name for a saddle?

CHARLES

No, it isn't that at all. It's a mold of a penis that fits inside a woman.

WILLIAM R

Or man, I guess.

CHARLES

Oh, I'm sure. Yes. But a dildo can provide pleasure for a woman for hours and the best thing about it and I'm looking at you William Weeks—no threat of pregnancy ever happening.

WILLIAM W

Doh!!

(WILLIAM W smacks his head.)

THOMAS

We have to help you escape!

CHARLES

Escape? Whatever for?

THOMAS

So, you can spread this news to other men who should know all of these strange and mysterious things.

CHARLES

That's awfully sweet of you Thomas, but if I escape they'll forever think I regretted the way I chose to live my life, and chose to not face the punishment that came from it. I'll find this bit of heaven somewhere else after I've served my time and taken my punishment like the man I am.

BLACKOUT

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

I saw the book Female Husbands: a Trans History by Jen Manion on Amazon while I was searching for material that I would hope would inspire me as a writer.

I still love reading hardbacks or paperbacks more than listening to audio editions.

Sadly, this book sat in my to read pile for several months until I took it with me on a trip to Illinois and I read the first half on the go trip and the second half on the return. First of all, this is one of the best books I've ever read period. To read about these trans men from the 18th and 19th century who lived their lives as bravely and openly as they did was simply astonishing. Charles Hamilton was one of those husbands that fascinated me.

It's so crazy to me that we still have so many laws against what we can't do as humans that prevent us from finding love or work or being able to just live our lives the way we want to live them live them-- as our true selves. These trans men did that then and they've done it since the start of time and will always be there. One day I hope without the threat of violence or dangers that face us all now.

I know I have not written the last piece that I have been inspired to write from reading this book.

AUTHOR BIO: Since 2018, I have had a renewed passion for writing and telling stories. I participated in the 2018 William Inge Playwright's Festival with my one act play Crashing Through Kauai and my short Play Eve Addam's Tearoom was a part of the BUA Takes 10: Stonewall Edition In Buffalo June 2019. My short play, Alien Lovers and Friends Anonymous was produced in 2020. Most recently 2023 has seen productions of Never Turn Your Back Against the Ocean, When the Chaos Started and And they Lived being done in Liverpool, Spokane and California.

My favorite type of writing usually allows for open-casting because for me that is what the theater is all about. Writing pieces that I know can be done in any theater or with any cast.