

THE COOKING GENE

A ten-minute play

By Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

THOMAS "THUMPER" MCCARDLE, 18, gay high school senior, baseball star

KEENAN ANDERSON, same age, his boyfriend

A high school home economics classroom. About 10 minutes before school. THOMAS "THUMPER" MCCARDLE (18), holds a sauté pan in his hand. KEENAN ANDERSON, same age and more than just his best friend, looks on.

THUMPER
I'd like to take this pot.

KEENAN
Pan.

THUMPER
This kitchen implement.

KEENAN
It's a sauté pan.

THUMPER
(getting in a baseball
batter's stance)
Here's the pitch--

KEENAN
You're kidding, right?

THUMPER
I'd only need one swing.

KEENAN
You're not talking about--

THUMPER
Splat. Stainless steel, and the league's number three hitter
sprays her hateful--

KEENAN
She's not--

THUMPER
Hateful little head all over her precious have-you-wiped-me-
down-today stove.
(as if he's talking to her)
I'm sorry, Mrs. Follwin. I don't think the stove is living
up to the standards of cleanliness to which we aspire in Room
105B. Maybe it's because your gray matter is dripping down
the burners.

KEENAN
She's not--

THUMPER

Yeah, she's fine with us one at a time. She *loves* you. But two of us together sends her into overload.

KEENAN

She's just not big on PDA.

THUMPER

If I so much as look at you, the hairs on her neck go all redwood.

KEENAN

She's gonna walk in here any second--

THUMPER

She'll be feeding at the coffee trough until a minute before the bell.

Thumper swings with the pan.

THUMPER (CONT'D)

(beat)

It would feel so delicious.

KEENAN

Somebody could come in.

THUMPER

Like licking the perfect, smooth dark chocolate frosting off a cupcake.

(licking his lips)

Mmm...

KEENAN

Not fair. You know I'm defenseless against chocolate frosted cupcakes.

THUMPER

With fudge sprinkles.

KEENAN

(can't control his chocolate bliss)

Mmm...

They lick their lips.

KEENAN (CONT'D)

You're evil.

(beat)

Promise you're not gonna, Thump.

(beat)

Promise.

THUMPER

(lifts his pan-holding hand)

I, Thomas "Thumper" McCardle, do solemnly swear that I will not attempt to splatter, squash, smash, slice, dice, decapitate, batter, kill, maim, purée or assault in any way said home economics teacher, using any means either currently at my disposal or that I may acquire in the future.

Keenan walks around him, as if inspecting.

THUMPER (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

KEENAN

Checking for crossed fingers.

THUMPER

I'd check for toes.

As Keenan tries to check, Thumper keeps shifting so he can't get a good look. For a moment, they forget themselves and have fun. Keenan tries to grab Thumper to hold him still, but Thumper is much stronger and gets the upper hand.

KEENAN

Come on--somebody could walk in.

THUMPER

If I brained her with the skillet--

KEENAN

Sauté pan--

THUMPER

I don't think they'd be worrying about my grade.

KEENAN

Stop messing around--we're supposed to come in with--

Thumper lets Keenan go.

THUMPER

Chill--we just need our partner picked for today.

(beat)

Aren't we...?

KEENAN

It's gotta be guy-girl.

Thumper pulls out a sheet of paper. He reads from it.

THUMPER

"Each couple will be responsible for creating a family budget, including rent, food, clothing, transportation, medical, etc." It does not say "each male-female couple."

KEENAN

I know, but--

THUMPER

What?

KEENAN

Come on. It's not even legal.

THUMPER

(beat)

I'm not planning on marrying a woman. Are you?

KEENAN

I don't think so.

THUMPER

You don't think so.

KEENAN

(beat)

No. I'm not.

THUMPER

Who knows--maybe after a few weeks of shock therapy, you'll be good as new.

KEENAN

That's not funny.

THUMPER

Or maybe you just have to click your heels three times.

KEENAN

It's not worth flunking over. That's all I'm saying.

THUMPER

Is it?

KEENAN

What?

THUMPER

All you're saying.

(beat)

THUMPER (CONT'D)

I'm gay. I have a built-in cooking gene. Why do I even need home ec?

KEENAN

Latent.

THUMPER

What?

KEENAN

Your cooking gene. Latent. No sign of it so far.

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