

The Gay Century

# **1988: Eric Lives With Martin and Jenny**

A chamber opera in one act

Music by Robert Ely

Libretto by Peter Scott-Presland

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## Cast

Eric	A gay man in his early 30s. Smart casual – check shirt, jeans, wispy moustache
Dame Jill Knight	A formidable MP, perm like a helmet, twinset and pearls, around 60.
Speaker	Voice off; spoken

## Setting

Bare stage with one wooden chair; and a screen on which to project a slide show. ERIC will talk directly to the audience, DAME JILL in a spotlight at the rear of the stage will grandstand as if addressing a large meeting.

The slides and the order in which they appear is so important that I have introduced them into the text where they are referred to.

## Orchestration

This is the most intimate opera of the sequence, essentially a monologue, and might benefit from solo piano accompaniment

## The Script

*[Bare stage]*

VOICE OFF: *[spoken]* The Honorable Member for Birmingham Edgbaston

DAME JILL: *[over hubbub of cheers and boos]*  
Thank you Mister Speaker  
Many parents are concerned  
About the books in schools  
So-called sex education books  
Which may corrupt our children  
There is shocking evidence in abundance  
That children are being encouraged  
To be gay and lesbian  
Some as young as five years old  
This is paid for out of the rates  
Against the wishes of the parents.

There is a book called *The Milkman's on his Way*.  
I will not shock the House by quoting from it  
It shows intercourse in sordid detail  
Between an adolescent boy  
And his adult male lover.

Haringey Council made a video,  
*How to become a lesbian in thirty five minutes*.  
It was shown to mentally handicapped girls

There has been a great deal of protest  
About *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*,  
It shows a little girl of six  
In bed with her father and his male lover  
Both of whom are naked

INSERT SLIDE:



They all live happily together  
It is terrifying to me  
That local councils have been promoting  
That kind of stuff  
There is a pile of filth  
All paid for by the rates

*[Spotlight fades. Lights more generally on ERIC]*

ERIC:  
There I am on the right in the photo  
Martin on the left with the skinny arms  
I hate that photo.  
It makes me look a porker  
With that double chin

You can tell we're Danish  
We eat crispbread in bed;  
And Jenny wants some jam.  
She's always wanting something

She's a pain in the butt  
I hate that girl  
It's all her fault  
We're in this mess now

I was an average young gay man  
In Copenhagen  
Cruising round the bars  
The Intime, and the Centralhjørnet  
The Cozy Bar and the Masken

I didn't have a moustache in those days  
I was young and cute  
And everyone wanted a piece of me  
I never went home alone

Then I met Martin  
Who looked deep in my eyes  
And talked of love

INSERT SLIDE:



He was so squeaky clean and certain  
He offered calm where I had known  
Only adrenalin and inconstancy.

At first he didn't tell me he was married  
But when I found out, that was cool  
I was content to be the other man  
In a triangle with a bisexual  
That was very hip, that was Danish.  
It left me time to pick up other men  
And go to backrooms

I loved the bushes in the Orstedsparken  
The playroom and the darkroom  
At the SLM  
The voices whispering dirty in your ear  
The smell of sweat and cum and baby oil  
Hard, hard bodies you could only feel, not see,  
Then back to Martin

But Karen threw a spanner in the works,  
The bitch, by spawning.

INSERT SLIDE:



I think she came off the pill  
Without telling him  
To get herself pregnant  
It's what some women do  
To get what they want

That isn't Karen in the picture  
She's played by some model  
By the time we took the pictures for the book  
The real Karen had done a bunk

I couldn't meet with Martin any more  
Not the way I had before  
He had to babysit  
He had to go to clinics  
He had to look for kindergartens  
Always something  
For the stupid brat

Still I saw him of course  
Cos no-one gave him blow jobs like I did  
He wasn't going to give up fun completely  
For the sake of any child

INSERT SLIDE:



We jogged along  
I accommodated

I have always been accommodating  
In bed and out of it

But Karen hadn't wrecked my life enough  
She had to want a divorce  
And no, she didn't want the wretched girl

Jenny  
Did I say her name was Jenny?  
Cutsie-wootsie Jenny  
It makes me sick

Why Karen couldn't take the girl  
Is quite beyond me  
That's what women do, isn't it?  
Bring up children  
Juggle with a home and a career  
And everyone admires how they cope

But no, Karen had to get a job

Designing Lego bricks  
And move to Billund.

She took him to the cleaners  
In the settlement  
The house and everything  
Which she sold  
Selfishly she wouldn't take the girl  
Left Martin with the baby  
Literally.

He asked if he could move in  
He had no place of his own.  
And me, I'm soft as shit, so I said yes  
That was fine for a year or two  
I still got out to the lake and the forest  
At Charlottenlund  
Where there's a lot of action;  
The sauna at the Copenhagen Gay Centre

I have a high sex drive,  
I can't help it.  
So what?

But Martin starts to worry  
We are two gay parents  
We have to set an example  
And if we are an example  
We must be twice as good  
As well-behaved, as patient,  
As any straights

INSERT SLIDE:



I am not a gay parent  
I did not choose this  
Did Martin ask me?  
Did Karen ask me?  
No they did not

*[ERIC brings a washing line across the stage, sets it up. He then gets a basket of clean washing – Jenny’s little clothes – and starts to peg them out.]*

INSERT SLIDE:



You see? How I'm reduced  
To being a good little housewife  
You would not believe  
How many clothes that girl gets through

Cack in her knickers  
Jam down her tank top  
Rolling in the dirt  
Unbelievable.

Then along comes Martin's friend  
Suzanne Bosche  
"Let me write a book about you,"  
She said.  
"We'll show the world  
How gay men can be as normal  
As everybody else"

I don't want to be normal!

I did not come out,  
I did not struggle for my liberation  
So I could be like all the rest

Whatever else they say

Liberation is about sex  
The more sex you can have  
The more liberated you are

But Suzanne persuaded Martin  
And we posed for stupid pictures

INSERT SLIDE:



Jenny loved to pose for pictures  
Proper little diva, a real madam  
Always the centre of attention

When me and Martin wanted sex in the morning  
- And I love sex in the morning -  
She was always pushing in.

INSERT SLIDE:



Here we are, another photo,  
Waking up, getting excited -  
And it's 'Make my breakfast Daddy'  
'Come and play with me Daddy'  
No thought for anybody else

You can't see it in the picture  
But underneath that duvet  
I have a massive erection.

But Susanne's story  
Was so boring and bourgeois  
Going to the launderette  
Mowing the lawn  
Tending the garden

She was obsessed potatoes,  
Growing them, digging them up,  
Eating them – 'Mmmm!'  
She even had us  
Giving potatoes as presents  
Dull, dull, dull, dull, dull

The most exciting thing I ever did  
Was mend a puncture in a tyre  
On my bicycle

INSERT SLIDE:



See? She can't even let us cook a meal  
Without she wants to join in  
And let me tell you, her cooking's shit!  
Martin's trying to make  
Spaghetti Bolognese  
And what does she put in it?  
Sugar sprinkles!

Talking of presents  
When it was my birthday  
All I wanted was to get wrecked  
A bit of spliff, a bottle of good wine.  
But no, we had to have  
Jellies, fairy cakes and candles  
Cocoa and fizzy drinks  
Because she was there -  
Not even a bottle of Carlsberg!

INSERT SLIDE:



It's not Jenny's birthday,  
It's mine for Christ sake!  
And if I want to get wrecked  
I bloody well will.

Of course we rowed about it,  
Martin and me,  
But thanks to Jenny  
We couldn't even row properly.  
From the pictures  
You'd think I was asking  
'One lump or two'  
And of course the little limpet  
Has to get in it as well.  
Look at her in the middle -  
Poisonous poppet

INSERT SLIDE:



*[Pause, looks at picture]*

Shame, cos Martin has a really nice arse  
Not that I've had it for months.

The trouble with that Suzanne Bosche  
Who wrote our book,  
Everything has to be sweetness and light  
Even her queerbashers are middle class.  
Real gays get skinheads  
With swastikas and tattoos  
Bricks through the windows  
DMs in the guts  
That would show young Jenny  
What it's all about.

INSERT SLIDE:



But no, we get Miss Judi Dench  
Whose worst insult is 'Oh, you gays!  
What on earth do you think you're playing at?  
Why don't you stay at home  
So the rest of us don't have to see you?'  
Obviously we're terrified - NOT!  
Look at me! I'm bloody smiling!

Whoever met a queerbasher  
Old enough to be their mother?

*[He has finished putting out the washing. He looks at it, then comes to a decision and tears the washing off the line.]*

To hell with it, I've had enough.  
I want a normal life.  
A normal gay life  
With a high disposable income  
To spend on clothes  
And going to clubs  
And fashionable restaurants  
A gym membership  
And sex toys  
A small mews house that's  
A neglected Georgian gem  
I can restore myself

In an area I will help to gentrify

I want to get bladdered on a Friday  
Dance to six A.M.  
Chill out in some calm café  
Where drugs may be available  
Through a long lazy afternoon  
With Carly Simon and Brian Eno

We were happy as we were  
Martin and me  
We had a life of our own  
Before that wretched Jenny  
Came to live with us

I have the answer  
If Jenny could come to live  
Then Jenny can go  
Jenny can go Now!

To hell with sentiment.  
Who is she to come into my life  
Uninvited  
Take it over, turn me into  
Someone I am not  
I have to destroy her  
This terrifying tot  
To save myself

*[calls offstage]*

Jenny! Where are you, darling?  
Uncle Eric's got a game for you

*[He unties the washing line, and coils it in his hand. He exits. The following lines are delivered offstage]*

Would you like a little game?  
A little bondage game?  
Perhaps a little mild asphyxiation...

*[The music rises to a climax as ERIC strangles JENNY in the washing line. The music suggests an intense struggle, with JENNY gradually getting weaker, and the struggle dying away. ERIC staggers back onto the stage]*

*with a large - very large - doll caught round the neck in the washing line. He raises it above his head suspended in the rope.]*

LIBERATION!

**BLACKOUT**