

Census
by Joan Lipkin

Cast

DR DAVINA ATTENBOROUGH, an anthropologist
ALEX, a bartender at a gay bar
CAMERON, a gay customer
VAGINA, Dr Attenborough's assistant

[DAVINA enters, with VAGINA. She speaks like a well-known TV presenter. To CAMERA:]

DAVINA: Welcome to "We've Got You Taped". Bringing you all the fun of the Census – live. Following a review of the 2021 Census and its results it was clear that [a] Nobody was going to answer the personal questions if left to their own devices; and [b] that the personal questions were not nearly intrusive enough. How would it be possible to provide services for homosexuals if we did not know what they did, especially in bed, or what had made them that way. So it was decided by the Not-at-all Racist Ministry of Minorities that the census would need to be carried out by responsible anthropologists, such as Yours Truly. I feel that my unique position as a National Treasure qualifies me to say what I bloody well like, and everyone will take it seriously. So here we go...

[She enters the gay bar. ALEX is busy eyeing up the trade as he polishes glasses. She tries ineffectually to get his attention several times, but she doesn't register because she's a woman.]

DAVINA: Why isn't he seeing me?

[VAGINA whispers in her ear. DAVINA nods.]

DAVINA: *[Loud]* WILL YOU LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THE BASKET ON THAT!

[ALEX immediately turns round, interested.]

DAVINA: Delighted to have your attention. Can you tell me, is this a gay bar?

ALEX: I beg your pardon?

DAVINA: I wasn't sure. With all these men, the signals are not entirely clear. It could be the bar for Arsenal Football Club, for example. Or perhaps for the Parliamentary Conservative Party.

ALEX: Didn't you see the rainbow flag?

DAVINA: I did not think that a reliable guide, since so many like to make shallow meaningless gestures these days. But of course, since it's in a really terrible railway arch with archaic plumbing and a leaky roof, and attracts an exclusively male clientele, I suppose we may infer that this is what we in the scientific community have termed 'a gay bar'.

ALEX: Got it in one.

DAVINA: Excellent. The clipboard, Vagina. And the tape measure.

ALEX: Tape measure? *[He automatically crosses his legs.]*

DAVINA: Since this is, as you admit, a gay bar, would I be correct then in saying that these are homosexuals?

ALEX: What's going on here? We run a nice, clean respectable club here. No drugs, no fights. Are you from the Police? Cos we paid off the Met last week.

DAVINA: The police, in no wise. I am Dr Davina Attenborough. You may have seen me on television worrying penguins. And I am now tasked with conducting in depth, in person, intrusive interviews with homosexuals on behalf of the Census.

ALEX: I don't know anything about that. I just work here.

[He returns to washing glasses. Davina approaches CAMERON.]

DAVINA: Excuse me, may I speak to you as a miserable homosexual?

CAMERON: I'm sorry to hear that. Did you break up with your girlfriend?

ALEX: I'm not surprised, with that dress sense.

DAVINA: I am not the miserable homosexual, you are.

CAMERON: I am? That's news to me.

DAVINA: Yes, you are. And I have to gather data on the social and sexual habits of the YUG. For the Census.

CAMERON: What?

DAVINA: The young urban gay. Mind if we take a few measurements?

[VAGINA pulls CAMERON into the centre and gets out her tape measure. She measures his bicep.]

VAGINA: Bicep – 43. *[To CAMERON]* Is that higher or lower than your IQ?

ALEX: What a bitch!

VAGINA: *[To ALEX]* Higher than yours, for sure.

CAMERON: I have a home gym.

ALEX: And it shows. Nice.

DAVINA: Age, please?

CAMERON: 26.

DAVINA: Homosexuals always lie about their age. Put down 34. Height?

CAMERON: Five feet eleven inches.

DAVINA: Please. We've left the EU. *[To VAGINA]* 180cm. Weight?

CAMERON: 12 stone – er – 76 kilos.

DAVINA: *[To Camera]* You will notice the slight cut on the homosexual jaw, here...

CAMERON: I cut myself shaving.

DAVINA: ... indicating the preference for sado-masochistic practices. *[She reaches into CAMERON's back pocket. Produces a ring.]*

DAVINA: This is confirmed by the cockring. The small cockring,

CAMERON: It's a key ring!

DAVINA: No need to be offended. Nothing wrong with being small. *[To VAGINA]* Make a note.

VAGINA: *[Writes]* Obsessed with penis size...

DAVINA: *[Producing hankie]* The handkerchief in the back pocket indicates sexual proclivities.

CAMERON: Or hay fever. *[Sneezes]*

ALEX: Bless you.

DAVINA: A debit card. Debit, note. To prevent the subject running up the extravagant debts attendant on a homosexual lifestyle, the frequent wardrobe changes,

the opera tickets, the jet-setting to exotic homosexual holiday locations.

ALEX: In lockdown?

CAMERON: It's true, Alex. I escaped to colourful Clapham Common!

DAVINA: Now, as you know, the Census is completely anonymous.

[She hands the debit card to VAGINA. VAGINA checks the name on it. Writes on her clipboard:]

VAGINA: Cameron... Mackintosh... *[To CAMERON]* Not the - ?

CAMERON: A – Cameron –

DAVINA: Tell me – purely for the purpose of the Census, of course - were you indoctrinated into deviant sexuality by an abusive father?

[This section accelerates.]

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Mother?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Uncle?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Teacher?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Priest?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Scoutmaster?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Park attendant?

CAMERON: No.

DAVINA: Lollipop man?

CAMERON: No!

DAVINA: *[Shouting.]* You're lying. There must be something.

CAMERON: Maybe my mother was frightened by a ballet dancer when pregnant?

DAVINA: That's ridiculous! What about a gym teacher?

VAGINA: *[Whispers]* That's lesbians...

DAVINA: Oh, sorry, wrong page.

[VAGINA turns the page. DAVINA checks it.]

DAVINA: Number of sexual partners in your lifetime. According to well-known homosexual expert – by which I mean an expert on deviance and not an expert homosexual, you understand – according to Dr. David Reuben in *'Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex But Were Afraid to Ask'*, it should be somewhere between 1500 and 5,000.

CAMERON: Five Thousand?

DAVINA: Depending on age and proximity to Hampstead Heath or similar.

CAMERON: Let me see... *[He does mental arithmetic]* Seven, including the present man.

DAVINA: This week? We're talking lifetime experience, young man.

VAGINA: Maybe he means today! *[She giggles]*

CAMERON: I mean seven in the last eight years.

DAVINA: *[To VAGINA]* OK, tear that form up. This man is obviously not a homosexual.

CAMERON: I am! Honestly!

DAVINA: Excuse me. I am the expert here. And however much you may delude yourself, you are certainly not homosexual. You have none of the relevant life experience.

CAMERON: I like men! I like cock!

DAVINA: You only think you like cock. My advice is that you find yourself a nice girl and get married. It will save you a lot of confusion in the long run. *[To VAGINA]* We'd better find somewhere else. We've obviously come to the wrong place.

[To CAMERA] As you can see, the fundamental problem with the census arises when people simply don't tell the truth.

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