

Hard Truths

By David Meyers

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CHARACTERS

SALLY SUE MAPLE, 50s and bubbly; a big Southern personality

CASEY MAPLE, 17, an all-American teenager

SETTING

A dressing room in a department store. Calhoun County, Mississippi.

HARD TRUTHS

A dressing room in a department store. Calhoun County, Mississippi.

Clothes are scattered everywhere: on hangers, off hangers, the floor, the benches. The colors are vibrant: pinks, yellows, reds.

SALLY SUE MAPLE, 50s and bubbly, stands in the middle of the dressing room, talking on her cellphone.

SALLY

I can whip up some snicker doodles. Or some hot buns. Everyone just loves my buns.

She laughs at her joke.

SALLY

I wouldn't miss it for the world! Your barbecues are just about the best darn thing in Calhoun County!

(pause)

No - I'm out shopping with Casey. Back to school clothes. You should just see this adorable pink top I picked out for-

(pause)

High school, schmy school! Casey's always gonna be my little baby. I still remember when -

(pause)

Oh, no - it's fine. You have to cut me off or I'll just keep jabbering on.

(pause)

Buh-bye now!

Sally puts away the phone, and starts looking at the colorful clothes she's picked out.

After a few beats, a voice calls out from offstage:

CASEY

(tepidly)

Mom...

SALLY

Come in, honey. Let me see how it fits.

A pregnant pause. Then:

CASEY, 17, enters. *He's* an average teenage *boy*; he wears a t-shirt and jeans.

Sally looks at him, surprised.

Casey?
SALLY

Hi mom.
CASEY

What are you wearing?
SALLY

Clothes.
CASEY

SALLY
But what about that pink shirt I picked out for you? With all the frills-

I-
CASEY

SALLY
Is something wrong? Don't you like it?

Casey looks at her, stands his ground.

We need to talk, mom.
CASEY

Slight pause. Sally tenses up.

About what?
SALLY

I...I have to tell you something.
CASEY

Sally looks at him, confused.

Pause.

CASEY

I know who you think I am. I mean, the kind of person you want me to be. And I know how much it means to you. But...

SALLY

What, Casey?

CASEY

I just... I'm starting high school now, and I can't lie about who I am anymore.

SALLY

What are you talking about, honey?

CASEY

I just... I know you think I'm...

(pauses, tries again)

I know you think I like wearing these clothes - the cut offs, the v-necks -- the capris. That I like being flamboyant. But I...

He gestures to his t-shirt and jeans.

CASEY

This is who I am.

Pause. Sally's hurt.

CASEY

I'm sorry, mom. I know you want me to be-

SALLY

I don't want you to be anything, Casey. But you shouldn't be ashamed of who you are.

CASEY

I'm not. I just think that-

Sally takes a bright yellow shirt, tries to give it to him.

SALLY

What about this one? It makes your eyes pop-

CASEY

Mom - you're not listening. I don't want to wear this stuff anymore.

Why not?

SALLY

Because I'm not a girl.

CASEY

I know you're not a girl, but-

SALLY

And I'm not gay.

CASEY

I'm... I'm ... straight. (nervous, finding his courage)

Sally stops in her tracks, almost has a heart attack.

You're what?

SALLY

I'm straight. Heterosexual.

CASEY

No-

SALLY

I know how much you wanted a gay, bi, or transgender son - and I tried to go along. But I just can't / anymore.

CASEY

No, no, no. I don't want anything. But you can't let them do this to you-

CASEY

Do what to me?

SALLY

I mean, yes, I *am* happy that you're gay. I always knew I was a progressive type. And then when I had a gay son, I got to show everyone in Calhoun County just how tolerant I was.

(pause)

But what's most important is that you can be yourself.

CASEY

But I'm not gay.

SALLY

Yes, you are! It's okay / honey-

CASEY

No - I'm not. Really.

(pause)

I'm straight. I like girls.

Sally finally starts to question herself.

SALLY

...since when?

CASEY

Since...ever.

Pause. Sally looks at Casey, has a realization.

SALLY

It's the kids at school, isn't it? They're picking on you - that cyber bullying.

CASEY

No, they're / not-

SALLY

That's why I sat you down and made you watch those YouTube videos.

(trying to be inspirational)

"It gets better."

CASEY

No one's bullying me, mom. I'm just not gay.

SALLY

Oh really? Then how come you played with Barbies instead of GI Joes?

CASEY

I never liked guns, you know that.

SALLY

Exactly. The other boys were setting off fireworks, and you were taking off Ken's pants.

CASEY

I told you - I spilled soda on them. I wasn't-

SALLY

You never played sports.

CASEY

So?

SALLY

What eight year old boy in Mississippi wants to tap dance? I had to pay them an extra \$200 just to let you enroll....

CASEY

I don't know. It just seemed more fun than running into someone with a helmet.

Sally refuses to accept it.

SALLY

You made me sign you up for those theatre classes. I mean, if I wasn't sure before-

CASEY

I just did that to spend more time with girls.

SALLY

Exactly!

CASEY

No. Because I started to like them...like that...

SALLY

Your name. Casey. That's a girl's name.

CASEY

I didn't choose my name - you did.

Pause. Sally considers this.

SALLY

That was your father. He always wanted a girl.

She tries to come up with more proof that Casey is gay.

SALLY

And... and... - you always liked pink!

Pause. Casey smiles.

CASEY

I guess that's true. I did always like pink.

(pause)

But I'm not gay. Or bi. Or transgendered.

Sally looks at him, still struggling to come to terms with it.

SALLY

But then, why did you...

CASEY

Let you dress me like a girl?

SALLY

Yes!

CASEY

I just knew how much it meant to you. To be so understanding. Tolerant. To have a gay son...

Sally finally begins to accept it.

SALLY

So you're not gay?

CASEY

No.

Pause.

SALLY

What did I do wrong?

CASEY

I knew I shouldn't have told you...

SALLY

No, no, no - I'm not upset. Not for me.

(pause)

It's just that... I just know how hard it's going to be for you.

Being straight?
CASEY

Yes!
SALLY

Why?
CASEY

SALLY
A straight boy who likes the arts. That's gonna be tough. And you're gonna go through life being...normal. The same as everyone else. Nothing to make you stand out. Nothing to check on the diversity box for college. Just another plain, red-blooded, steak-loving, skirt chasing boy from Mississippi.

And what's wrong with that?
CASEY

SALLY
Nothing, I guess. I just thought you were going to be different - go out and become famous. A fashion designer or something. And you looked so good in those clothes!

I'm sorry, mom.
CASEY

SALLY
No - honey, it's not your fault. My job is to support you, to love you no matter what.
(taking his hand)
And I do. I love you no matter who you are - or who you love. ... It's just gonna take me a little while to get used to it all.

Thanks, mom.
CASEY

They hug. Then they break apart, and smile at each other.

A beat.

You're sure you're not gay?
SALLY

I'm sure.
CASEY

Sally smiles, starts putting away the clothes.

SALLY

Alright. Well, I guess we can go to-

(with horror)

The Gap. They probably have the clothes you want.

CASEY

Thanks, mom.

Sally keeps putting away the clothes. After a beat:

SALLY

Oh - we're going to Nancy's for a barbecue on Sunday. I'm making my hot buns.

Casey smiles.

CASEY

Everyone just loves your buns.

Sally smiles back. She realizes things are going to be just fine.

SALLY

Come on, let's get out of here.

Sally finishes putting away the clothes, and stumbles upon a pair of pants she really loves.

SALLY

Will you at least try these skorts on? They'll really bring out your-

CASEY

Mom.

SALLY

Sorry...

They start to leave.

Just as they're about to exit, Sally has a terrible realization.

SALLY

Oh no...

(slight pause)

What are we going to tell your father?

Blackout.

END OF PLAY