

Is Love Allowed?

A play by Ori Inbar



Characters:

Gal

Leah Goldberg the poet

Yotam

Marcelle

Photos from the production of the play at Cameri Cafe Theater; directed by the playwright, 2024. Cast: Nadav Blumenberg (Gal), Yoav Serfati (Yotam), Inbal Erez (Leah), Yuval Munk (Marcelle), Photography: Eliad Sudai / Aviva Rosen

Scene One

[Gal at center and Leah at some distance from him]

Gal: Is love allowed? They say yes. Even for us, the homosexuals, it's allowed. We can display our love anywhere, almost.

Leah: But what does someone do who has no one to love? What does someone do who year after year after year tries and tries and slams into a wall?

Gal: That's what they don't talk about. They don't talk about those who scour the dating sites and constantly get "I'm sorry cutie but my taste is different." Those who at parties try to catch a glance and smile and meet a complete turning away of the head that says 'you don't interest me.'

Leah: Those who meet people and try to take things in a romantic direction and receive the answer – I'd be happy to meet as friends.

Gal: They don't talk about you. They don't talk about the girlfriends who try to set you up, and you don't have the privilege to say "what, just because we're both gay you want to matchmake?" You simply say – introduce me, please. So they show a picture of a potential guy and you get excited and say yes, and think - here I've found my promised land.

Leah: But then time passes...

Gal: And they say nothing about it and you understand they showed him your picture and he said no.

Leah: And so one drags humiliation upon humiliation,

Gal: And again not the taste and again the averted glance and again as a friend. And sometimes the unbelievable happens and you manage to get one date, and it's even nice and goes well, but when you try to keep talking to him, in the best case he tells you he doesn't want to continue meeting,

Leah: And in the worst case simply vanishes, and you're left wondering – where did I go wrong.

Gal: And on Facebook pictures of gay couples in love, and you're already grown so they're starting to get married around you too.

Leah: And you just keep moving further from it.

Gal: And you're sick of everyone saying - "you're such a catch, whoever's with you will win the lottery," because apparently gay men don't think so. And deep inside you know you're worthy and you deserve it

Leah: But the universe thinks otherwise.

Gal: So when you say that love is allowed, remember also those who were left behind and never got their chance.



Nadav Blumenberg, Inbal Erez

Scene Two

Yotam: Summer 2001. The Second Intifada is gaining momentum. Terrorist attacks everywhere. In two months the Twin Towers will fall. I'm finishing eighth grade.

One day in the middle of vacation, Mom and Dad come and ask me: "Do you want to go to a week-long summer camp for Jews and Arabs?" I understand where this is coming from:

1) I was a good little leftist until recently, but since the Intifada started and a kid from my class was almost in a terror attack, I started making comments at Friday dinners that horrified Grandma. 2) I spent the vacation reading Lord of the Rings for the third time and becoming a certified Pokémon trainer in Pokémon Gold on my Game Boy. 3) My only friend went abroad for the whole vacation.

So to prevent me from becoming a complete isolated weirdo and right-winger, it was decided to ship me off to re-education camp.

The day before the trip they give me a long article to read about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "Even in these difficult days when the flames of conflict return and intensify, it's

important to fight for and insist on coexistence." What coexistence? What coexistence can you have with people who blow themselves up on you? Why don't my parents understand? And why are they sending me to spend a week with kids I don't know who surely won't want to know me and I'll be there alone?

My brother drives me to camp. On the way we're listening to the radio, and suddenly he turns up the music and starts singing "It's raining men, hallelujah it's raining men." He explains it's a song from the 80s that Geri from the Spice Girls just covered. I don't understand much about music, but the song is nice.

We arrive. He helps me get my bag from the car and puts it on my back. "You okay?" I want to tell him to get back in the car and take me home, but instead I say "Yeah, sure." He hugs me and drives off, leaving me alone with a huge bag on the grass.

Lots of kids and lots of counselors running around between them. Lots of conversations in Arabic. [looks in bag] Did I forget my Game Boy? [searches again] I'm not staying here.

[starts walking toward the exit and suddenly stops]

I notice someone. Tall, with spiky hair, torn baggy jeans and a tank top, eyebrow piercing, walking around like he owns the world. I think about going up to him, saying hi, why not actually? [about to approach but stops] He's not waiting for me and starts talking to kids around him, shaking hands and fist-bumping.

The counselors tell us to put our bags in a pile and arrange us all in an introduction circle. So many faces. How can you tell who's Arab and who's Jewish? The one with the blonde curls is called Nasreen. I wonder if the tall guy with the jeans will suddenly say he's Ahmed. But no, his name is Kfir. It suits him. Such a strong name.

They ask us to split into pairs. Kfir already has a partner. Everyone finds a partner quickly, only I'm left alone? Everyone's staring at me. One of the counselors points to two girls and tells me to be with them. One of them is Nasreen with the blonde curls, and the other is called Adi. They mostly talk to each other. When I try to say something they nod politely and continue with their own thing. Coexistence is working great without me.

In the evening there's a disco. Kfir arrives with some of his new friends. They look like they've been best friends for years, they don't care at all who's Arab and who's Jewish. They start jumping in the middle of the courtyard and shouting "Mafia! Mafia!" Nasreen and Adi are dancing together. Maybe I'll join them? I'll keep dancing alone.

I notice someone dancing next to me. Curly hair and black eyes. Burning ones. He smiles at me. I keep dancing. He keeps dancing in front of me. But it's also weird. I've never danced like this alone with a boy. Maybe with Arabs it's acceptable?

When the music stops he runs away and disappears.

The next day at breakfast Nasreen approaches me. This time she's nice. "Hi." "Hi." "You danced yesterday with Rabie." So that's his name. Later I learned that Rabie in Arabic means Spring. "He's my cousin. He's very shy." Okay. At the end of the meal I see Rabie from afar. He smiles at me.

Pool time. Everyone runs excitedly and I walk behind a little less excitedly. I don't really like the pool. Suddenly I see – Kfir? Without the Mafia? Picking up trash from the grass? "Need help?" "Go to the pool." He turns his back to me. I start picking up popsicle wrappers from the grass, approach him again and throw them in his bag. He stops, looks at me, and a smile comes up. "Thanks bro."

We keep collecting. While we're at it we talk. He tells me he surfs and is active in the national student council. In return I don't tell him I love Lord of the Rings and Pokémon. When he asks me what music I like, I throw out names of various bands I heard kids in my class talking about. "What a man." I passed the test.

When we finish, I dare to ask him why he actually had to clean instead of going to the pool. "They caught me smoking." [takes out a cigarette] "Don't worry bro, all the counselors are at the pool now." He inhales from the cigarette and blows the smoke in circles. "Want some?" "No, no, no way." "So what... do you have a girlfriend?" "Yes." Even though I don't and never have. The farthest I've gotten is a slow dance at a bar mitzvah party. "What's her name?" My head is empty. There are so many girls' names and I can't find a single name. Suddenly, of all the names in the world, Rabie's name comes up. "Rab—" "Rab?" "Rebecca." "Hot?" "Very." "You're alright, bro."



Yoav Serfaty

Scene Three

[Parking lot of an event venue. Marcelle, in a white dress, throws a cigarette butt on the ground and crushes it. Gal arrives running, searching for something with his eyes]

Marcelle: What'd you lose, sweetheart?

Gal: Have you seen the minibus driver?

Marcelle: Yeah, he bummed a cigarette off me a few minutes ago and drove off.

Gal: What do you mean drove off?

Marcelle: Drove off for a loop. There's tons of time before he needs to drive people back, this thing just started.

Gal: Shit.

Marcelle: What, were you planning to escape?

Gal: No.

Marcelle: Wait.

Gal: What?

Marcelle: You're not the groom, right?

Gal: No.

Marcelle: That would've been funny.

Gal: Nothing about this is funny. [starts to walk away]

Marcelle: Wait, hold on! You! What's your name!

Gal: Gal.

Marcelle: Nice to meet you, I'm Marcelle. Where are you going?

Gal: Somewhere.

Marcelle: You'll get lost here in the forest. The wolves will devour you.

Gal: Let them devour me. Maybe that's how we'll end this farce.

Marcelle: What do you mean?

Gal: Farce. It's from French. [in French accent] Farce. It means a ridiculous, exaggerated joke.

Marcelle: Don't condescend to me, sweetheart, I was speaking French before you were born.

Gal: Sorry.

Marcelle: I meant, what farce are you talking about?

Gal: My life.

Marcelle: Your life is a farce?

Gal: Yes.

Marcelle: Everyone's is, honey.

Gal: Mine more.

Marcelle: Should we have a competition?

Gal: What do you want from me?

Marcelle: I'm bored, that's all.

Gal: Why aren't you at the wedding?

Marcelle: Why aren't you?

Gal: None of your business.

Marcelle: Then it's also none of your business.

Gal: Fine.

Marcelle: Fine.

Marcelle: Want a cigarette?

Gal: No, it gives me lumps in my throat.

Marcelle: That's how cigarettes are, but it passes.

Gal: Not for me. I can take one drag and stay stuck with a lump in my throat for a whole week.

Marcelle: You've killed my appetite for it.

Gal: That way you'll live longer.

Marcelle: So what do you think about all this?

Gal: About what?

Marcelle: About this. [points toward the wedding] A man marrying a man.

Gal: I hate it.

Marcelle: Oh, finally. I thought I was the only normal one here.

Gal: Why do they have to shove their love in our faces?

Marcelle: Exactly! You know, I'm a very liberal person, love thy neighbor and all. But why wave it around? Some things are better kept modest.

Gal: So why did you come?

Marcelle: What can you do, family.

Gal: Me too.

Marcelle: So you're from Groom B's side, I understand.

Gal: Who's A and who's B?

Marcelle: My side is A and your side is B.

Gal: Why?

Marcelle: Because you're the Ashkenazim and we're the Sephardim, so you need to let us be A. Don't think we forgot about the transit camps and the DDT.

Gal: You know they also sprayed the European immigrants with DDT?

Marcelle: I don't believe you.

Gal: Both my grandmothers can testify.

Marcelle: Should we go ask them?

Gal: I'm not going back there.

Marcelle: You know, it's a shame, such beautiful boys could've gotten themselves some real nice girls.

Gal: He had a girlfriend once. I was sure he was straight.

Marcelle: What are you to him?

Gal: Doesn't matter.

Marcelle: Come on.

Gal: What are you to him?

Marcelle: His mother's aunt.

Gal: Cool.

Marcelle: And you?

Gal: Also.

Marcelle: Also his mother's aunt?

Gal: Ah... yes.

Marcelle: I don't think so.

Gal: What can I tell you.

Marcelle: Come on?

Gal: Brother.

Marcelle: You're the older one?

Gal: Yes.

Marcelle: I knew it.

Gal: Great, you win a million dollars.

Marcelle: From your mouth to God's ears.

Gal: Why did you come in a white dress?

Marcelle: If there's no bride here, at least someone should be in white.

Gal: Nice thought.

Marcelle: And what's with the pink? So they won't think you're gay too?

Gal: But that's what I am.

Marcelle: What do you mean?

Gal: I'm gay.

Marcelle: Seriously?

Gal: Yes.

Marcelle: Two gay brothers?

Gal: Yes.

Marcelle: And do you have other siblings?

Gal: No.

Marcelle: God help us.

Gal: That's how it is.

Marcelle: So why did you say you're against this wedding?

Gal: Because it should have been my wedding.

Marcelle: Ooh! Where's the popcorn? [takes out another cigarette]

Gal: That'll kill you.

Marcelle: We're talking about you now.

Gal: Who said we're talking about me?

Marcelle: Because you can't talk about this with anyone in your family. That's why you ran away from there. Right?

Gal: Right.

Marcelle: So you can tell Marcelle.

Gal: It was my thing in the family.

Marcelle: What?

Gal: Being gay. He took it from me. And not just that, he also dares to be better at it than me.

Marcelle: Better than you?

Gal: He found a partner.

Marcelle: And you never had one?

Gal: I had one. Ten years ago. It ended. He has a new sweet boyfriend and they've been married for three years already.

Marcelle: Not pleasant.

Gal: And since then I keep trying and failing. And my brother – comes out of the closet and poof – boyfriend. Poof – another boyfriend. Poof – another boyfriend. And a wedding. And he's not even thirty yet! I'm almost thirty-five.

Marcelle: Thirty-five is still young.

Gal: It doesn't feel that way after you try so hard and nothing works.

Marcelle: It can still happen.

Gal: And even if it does happen, he beat me to it. The first gay wedding in the family. Mine will only be second.

Marcelle: I understand. [silence]

Gal: Even though you hate homosexuals?

Marcelle: I never said such a thing.

Gal: Oh, no?

Marcelle: I just think it's not natural.

Gal: Why am I even talking to you?

Marcelle: Nobody's forcing you.

Gal: You forced me.

Marcelle: I'm not forcing you to do anything, honey.

Gal: Fine.

Marcelle: It'll be okay, you'll see.

Gal: I don't know.

Marcelle: Have faith.

Gal: Sometimes I think the universe decided I'm not allowed to love.

Marcelle: What nonsense, don't say things like that. It's allowed, you're allowed.



Yuval Munk, Nadav Blumenberg

To receive the full text of the play, please contact the playwright by email:
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