



VARIED LIVES

By Patrick Thomas McCarthy

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Characters 6 men

Modell 'Moddy' Tyrone Smith – 20's

Mr. Teddy Turner – the butler – 40's

Satchel Jefferson – 20's

Mr. Fenton Philip Ford – 40s/50's

Mr. Princeton Percival Page – 40s/50's

Mr. Donald John Falstaff – a brewer from Milwaukee – 40s/50's

Off stage characters – Cook, Gardener, Knockers, Pullman, Poolman, Nickels, Knuckles, Mr. Chimbley, Del... the farmer in the....

SETTING: The kitchen of an estate in the American Heartland, single set with projections for one outdoor scene

TIME FRAME: Autumn 1930

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME: 100 minutes [78 pages]

VARIED LIVES synopsis

Mr. Donald John Falstaff, a brewer from Milwaukee, striving for more than just a quiet weekend in the country, throws Mr. Fenton Philip Ford's estate, Ford Farms, and its all male cast of characters into chaos. Set in a time when gay marriage wasn't even a topic for discussion and adoption the only legal recourse, **VARIED LIVES** examines the relationships of 6 men who opt for the only solutions available to them. "Modelled" upon Shakespeare's MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, **VARIED LIVES** is set in the 1930s American Midwest and suggested by the life & times of American philanthropist Robert Allerton and Allerton Park.

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ACT 1: Morning

SETTING: The entire play takes place on a single set in the kitchen of an estate with a suggested wall of windows downstage where the 4th wall would be, entrance portals on either side of larder cabinets, a hallway runs between the 2 portals behind the cabinet wall, A large work table with drawers is center stage in front of the cabinets. At least one shelf underneath the table for storage of pots pans & anything else needed for the action of the play. Two high stools next to the table, one at each end. A large kitchen hamper for soiled linens is stage left. Cook is off right at an unseen stove or kitchen work area, thrown or projected objects come from stage right. Natatorium, farm gardens and greenhouse are stage left off a corridor from the kitchen. Dining room and front of house are through the stage right portal.

[Turner, wearing a full length apron over his butler's clothes, enters carrying many pieces of silver for polishing & frames himself in the stage right portal as he sees Gardener off stage left]

TURNER: Gardener? ***[No response]*** Gardener. The rhododendron spray goes in the dining room not the natatorium. What? ***[There is muffled response from off left, he goes to the stage left portal]*** What? ***[There is muffled response from off left again]*** I can't understand you. Just put the rhododendron spray, that you do so well, in the dining room not the natatorium, and remember, you'll be in the house this weekend. ***[Muffled response]*** Yes, Mister Ford and his guests will be in residence this weekend, so we need you in the main house, not in the greenhouse. ***[Muffled response]*** Yes, your uniform is in my room. You can go there to change. Just let me know when you'll be changing if you need any assistance or if you need a scrub down before you get dressed. We don't want you oozing potting soil like last time ***[Muffled response]*** And remember Gardener, you were chosen to serve here not only for your adequate green thumb but for your exquisite good looks. Make sure the latter is primarily on display this weekend. Oh, and Gardener. ***[Muffled response]*** Speak as little as possible. Try to maintain a sense of mystery. ***[Loud muffled response]*** Hmm. No mystery there. ***[He enters the kitchen to unload the silver he is carrying onto the work table, he sees Cook offstage right]*** Oh, Cook already here? Working like a busy beaver, I see? Don't throw that. Do not throw that. I was merely astonished that you would be here so early to start the weekend's preparations. ***[Muffled response from off right]*** Cook, you don't mean that. Don't throw that either. Do not. Really Cook, as the only female in service

here, one would think that you would have gotten used to the company of men by now. If you are unhappy here, you could always apply for the position at Ten Chimneys. I've heard through the grapevine there is a quite vacant vacancy there now. **[Loud unintelligible response]** Don't cry Cook. Do not weep. That would be the least auspicious start to our weekend here in the country. **[Moddy's voice is heard from off left]**

MODDY: Turner! Turner! **[Turner turns to see Modell T. Smith appear in the the SL portal completely naked, soaking wet and carrying a load of dripping clothes that is the only thing that covers his nakedness]** Why aren't there any towels in the natatorium?

TURNER: The indoor pool was filled yesterday so I hadn't stocked the towels yet. Moddy, were you in there with Pullman the poolman?

MODDY: Yes, I was.

TURNER: Swimming, I hope?

MODDY: I fell in.

TURNER: Of course, you did.

MODDY: He jumped in to save me.

TURNER: Of course, he did. Did you require mouth to mouth?

MODDY: Course, I did.

TURNER: Did he supply it?

MODDY: He did. He's quite the supplier. Do you have a towel?

TURNER: You're dripping.

MODDY: I am.

TURNER: Whose clothes are those?

MODDY: Pullman the poolman's. Can you dry them out so he can leave?

TURNER: I can't dry them out. Where is he now?

MODDY: In the poolroom.

TURNER: There's a naked man in the natatorium?

MODDY: There weren't any towels.

TURNER: Tell Gardener to give him a change of clothes.

MODDY: Gardener's all wet too. Followed my lead tripped into the pool, with the rhododendron spray, then pretended to need mouth to mouth after spying mine in process. Pullman Poolman saved us both. Double duty. He's a keeper.

TURNER: They're both naked in the poolroom right now?

MODDY: Odds are.

TURNER: Cook, avert your eyes. Take my apron. *[He extends his apron to Moddy]* Modell Tyrone Smith, you will deposit the drippy clothing in the soiled linen hamper, and cover your nakedness.

[Moddy does so as Turner holds the apron to his downstage side as Moddy deposits the dripping clothing in the hamper, he puts on the apron, and turns his back to the audience, where the apron does not cover, to talk to Turner who has returned to the work table]

MODDY: I think I still need a towel.

TURNER: Cook, could you hand us some kitchen towels. Several. Many. And some aprons. Don't throw that. Nothing breakable. I'll come & get them. ***[He starts off]***

MODDY: I could go get them. ***[He starts to move, muffled scream from off right]***

TURNER: No stay where you are. Don't throw that. Do not throw that. No knives. I'm coming. Nice Cook, good Cook, genial Cook. ***[He goes off stage right]***

MODDY: They'll both need something to cover their nakedness.

TURNER: ***[Offstage]*** Aprons, have we got extra aprons?

MODDY: They might do in a pinch.

TURNER: *[Offstage]* I'll pinch you. *[Loud slap is heard]* Not you Cook, not you, never you. *[As he returns with kitchen towels & 2 aprons]* Cook, why don't you go check in the pantry on those supplies delivered just this morning. *[Loud response from off right, as soup ladle flies onto the stage just missing Turner]* I'm so sorry...for you. That's right the pantry. Go there. Now... *[She is gone]* See the torments you put me through. *[He places the 2 aprons & some towels on the table, & goes to Moddy with several towels, drying Moddy's hair with one as he speaks, gives Moddy towels to dry himself, Moddy faces the audience with Turner behind him]* Your boredom here in the manse causes me endless torment.

MODDY: Is she gone?

TURNER: I imagine so. Hope so. I must admit this is one of your better ploys.

MODDY: I thought you'd think so.

TURNER: The dripping nakedness.

MODDY: Like the David de Milo rising from the half shell.

TURNER: The appearance framed in the door.

MODDY: Needed a bold statement on my entrance.

TURNER: The continued reveal with the apron.

MODDY: Thought there needed to be a little danger involved.

TURNER: And is Gardener being serviced by the poolman as we speak?

MODDY: Most likely.

TURNER: Did you plan this with him?

MODDY: No, he's learned very quickly to take advantage of any given situation.

TURNER: He fits right in then. I thought we were going to have some troubles with him due to his over powering good looks over powering all of his other faculties.

MODDY: Perhaps my teaching.

TURNER: Perhaps.

MODDY: Could you dry my back?

TURNER: Anything else?

MODDY: As low as you want to go.

TURNER: That low? *[He is rubbing Moddy's bum with the towel]*

MODDY: It's not like you've never been there before.

TURNER: Low? Not with you, Moddy.

MODDY: And why not? Am I not good enough for you?

TURNER: When I have my pick of the help?

MODDY: True.

TURNER: And where would I end up if I were taking advantage of the gentleman farmer's son?

MODDY: I'm not yet.

TUTNER: Not yet what?

MODDY: His son.

TURNER: But soon. Why haven't you said yes yet?

MODDY: Would you?

TURNER: I would have proposed it. In fact I did.

MODDY: You counseled him?

TURNER: Had to put my start on a law degree to good use in some fashion.

MODDY: Should I call you Turner Esquire?

TURNER: You should call me brilliant. Suggesting an end around to the inheritance problem.

MODDY: What if I don't want to be his son?

TURNER: Then you'd be an idiot.

MODDY: I want to be his equal.

TURNER: And where would you get the wherewithal to be equal?

MODDY: By agreeing to the adoption?

TURNER: Exactly.

MODDY: Turner, you are frustratingly correct too much of the time.

TURNER: It's nothing, really.

MODDY: Nothing? Really?

TURNER: I live to serve you and your future father.

MODDY: Right, and to diddle the help.

TURNER: Yes, that might be the greatest perquisite of working here.

MODDY: It's not tending to my needs?

TURNER: Your needs here, are serviced more than mine are.

MODDY: And to what end? I can't make him jealous. He's too understanding. I've tried withholding affection.

TURNER: You have tried that.

MODDY: He says he'll wait for me to come around.

TURNER: You've tried open revolt.

MODDY: He says he understands my frustration.

TURNER: He must love you despite yourself.

MODDY: Don't say that. The only defense I have to his complete toleration, acceptance, and perhaps love of me is my postponement of saying yes to his proposal.

TURNER: Of adoption.

MODDY: It's marriage that I want. I want to marry well.

TURNER: Look around, 1930 in these United States of America, how many men do you see marrying their manly partners?

MODDY: How many do you see adopting their lovers?

TURNER: Any number. It's the only way, only legal way, right now.

MODDY: Lecture me about the law now.

TURNER: Not a lecture, just admission of fact.

MODDY: Facts are the enemy of truth.

TURNER: Well done. It's not just your lithesome model's body that attracts him, perhaps it's your mind as well.

MODDY: And how much of a mind does it take to run an estate when he's out of town?

TURNER: Not just anyone can successfully manage staff & supervise 5,500 acres of agricultural holdings.

MODDY: So he keeps me around to make sure the cows are milked and the eggs are gathered and Gardener doesn't drown in the pool.

TURNER: No, that's why I hired Pullman the poolman, to make sure no one drowns in the pool.

MODDY: I'm up every morning before dawn, making sure everyone is doing their job, so the estate keeps running efficiently when he isn't here.

TURNER: And you do that well. Would you rather go back to being an artist's model, freezing to death in a drafty studio, not knowing where your next meal is coming from?

MODDY: I'd rather be at his side.

TURNER: You can be if you say yes.

MODDY: Yes. Fine word that yes.

TURNER: You're just a boy who can't say yes.

MODDY: A man.

TURNER: Yes, you are, a man. An incredibly talented young man who is adored by a much older man who happens to be very talented himself. A gentleman farmer of means with a penchant for artistry, art collecting, and collecting artists. What more could you ask?

MODDY: I don't know. A house in the city?

TURNER: Then what would you do?

MODDY: Go to school. Be an artist's model again. Have a life.

TURNER: He's given you a life.

MODDY: The life of a gentleman farmer's son.

TURNER: We never turn the page in this conversation.

MODDY: And they're coming today aren't they?

TURNER: What? Page? Oh, turn the page. Mr. Page and his potential son. Very good. Yes, they are coming today.

MODDY: I knew that, just playing with you. I know you love to be played with.

TURNER: Just ask Mr. Chimbley.

MODDY: No.

TURNER: Yes. He cleans a flue with the best of them.

MODDY: Is he coming back?

TURNER: Only if the flue needs the shaft again.

MODDY: And with a fireplace in almost every room...

TURNER: He could spend a great deal of time shafting here. And do you remember who else is coming this weekend?

MODDY: Someone else is coming?

TURNER: If you'd open your own mail you'd know.

MODDY: You opened my mail?

TURNER: Yes, since you don't. It's there in the pocket of my now very wet apron.
[Moddy retrieves letter from pocket of apron, sees return address]

MODDY: It's from Don John?

TURNER: Surprise, Fen is motoring Mr. Donald John Falstaff down this weekend in his new Ford.

MODDY: Falstaff is here for the weekend?

TURNER: In the country. Just take a gander at the contents of Don John's letter addressed to you.

MODDY: Donnie John here for the weekend? ***[Opens letter & starts to read]***
Dearest Moddy, 'When I am there this weekend with you, ask me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason as his brewmaster, he uses him not for his counsellor. You are young, but no more than I am old; There'll be proximity in our extremity
On the weekends: We could be bookends.
You are merry, oh so gay & so am I; ha, ha! You love the sack, and so do I;
You desire better proof? Let it suffice, Modell Tyrone Smith,--
the love of a brewer can suffice,--but I say, love me.
I can give you more than Fenton Philip Ford can. There's more of me to give.

By me, Thine own true knight, By day or night, Or any kind of light,
With all his might For you to fight, this weekend, do not deny my right,
Nor take your flight, due to some fright, of my plight, let me alight, on you some night,
I can give you more than Fenton Philip Ford can...
There's more of me to give. DONALD JOHN FALSTAFF

MODDY: Alight on me some night? Is he mad?

TURNER: No, gay, oh so gay, says so right there.

MODDY: Did you have any idea?

TURNER: I had my suspicions.

MODDY: But motoring down with Fen and making a play for me?

TURNER: It's not so much the audacity of it, it's the bad poetry that's most offensive.

MODDY: Offensively offensive, like bad Shakespeare. He must be mad.

TURNER: Not mad, there's method there. He's in love with the idea of stealing you away from Fenton Philip Ford. He can give you more. There's more of him to give.

MODDY: As if I'd want any more of him.

TURNER: Seems like an excellent opportunity for you this weekend to let the games begin.

MODDY: Games?

TURNER: Use the situation to your advantage. I'm sure you can spin something from this.

MODDY: So we'll be spinning...

TURNER: Like mad hatters...

MODDY: Down the rabbit hole...

TURNER: For a weekend...