

# *Smartass I*

**This is a job for Captain Smartass!**

*Jerry Falwell was right; we are strange*

Stand aside...

**This is a job for Captain Smartass!**

and his trusted aide

*The Quick Comeback Kid*

*“I realize I use the word fuck a lot, and I'd  
apologize for that, but I don't give a shit.”*

**Lewis Black, *The White Album***

**1. Gotta start somewhere....**

**2. Is Ann Coulter a drag queen?**

**3. A Night Out/Closing time/After hours**

**4. Six Flags Over Jesus**

**5. They shoot drag queens, don't they?**

**6. When Divas collide**

**7. Life goes on**

**8. And Now, For Something Completely**

**Different....**

*“Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in*

*Kansas anymore”*

*The Wizard of Oz*

## **Gotta start somewhere....**

People working in gay bars tend to form these weird family-like relationships (more dysfunctional than most, perhaps, with more than its fair share of “funny uncles”) because in many cases, they’ve lost the “traditional” family. A very divisive argument revolves around “born gay” and “choose gay” (“nature versus nurture,” heredity versus environment, fate versus predetermination). The “choose gay” argument is really pretty laughable and doesn’t hold a lot of water. You can pretty much get your answer by looking at a busy gay disco at midnight on a Saturday. Would you voluntarily choose to be a part of that? As if it’s some Kevin Meany routine come to life; “I couldn’t bel-i-e-ve it!” (Like someone was sitting around the breakfast table reading the paper one morning, then suddenly stopped and announced, “*You know, I have this really overwhelming desire to be a part of an oppressed minority. Who knows? Maybe they’ll use pretty sounding words to amend the Constitution [words like “No Child Left Behind,” “clear skies,” “healthy forest,” “Child Protection*

Custody Act” or “USA Patriot” that really are just nifty titles but have nothing to do with what they do actually do – like PDQ Bach’s *Theme and Variations*, they’re variations on some other, different theme]) or the Pentagon will put homosexuality on an equal par with mental retardation to make it all the more difficult.”

Before “Don’t ask. Don’t tell,” the scare tactic was that hordes of queers (in matching outfits) would be breaking down recruiting station doors in order to enlist. Didn’t happen, though.

Working in a gay bar is no place for the thin-skinned or easily offended. There is probably no other place on earth where more soon-forgotten, “not-meant-mean” things are said. For one, the speaker will be sober the next day. There’s a whole lot of, “Ooh,” “Fabulous,” “Girlfriend,” “Mary,” “Oh, girl,” “Bless her heart” and “God love her.” Whenever a statement is prefaced with, “Bless her heart,” watch out; a verbal slam is on its way. You could say the meanest thing in the world but as long as it starts out, “Bless her heart”, it’s all right. (“Bless her heart; she ain’t been right in the head since she lost the Presidency of the Adrian Zmed Fan Club.”)

(And then there's the whole him/her, he/she business. Talk about confusing.

"Let's see, it's a guy."

"Right"

"But you call him her?"

"Right"

"So, if you say, 'She is over there', it could be a woman?"

"Right"

"Or it could be a man?"

"Right"

"Or it could be a man in drag?"

"Right"

"Or it could be a man out of drag?"

"Right"

"Or it could be guy with no drag ambitions?"

"Right"

"But you won't know until you actually see the person?"

"Right"

"And even then you can't be sure?"

“Right”

“All you say is ‘Right’, right?”

“Right”

“This is like the whole *Saturday Night Live*/Pat thing, isn’t it?”

“Right”

“O-kay.”)

*“It's better to be black than gay because when  
you're black you don't have to tell your mother.”*

*Charles Pierce*

*"I'm Liza One-note*

*When I start singin'*

*Your ears will be ringin'*

*In pain.*

*That's why all my friends*

*Snort cocaine."*

**Forbidden Broadway, *Liza***

## When Divas Collide

*"You'll be stiff. You'll be dead. You'll have six feet of dirt on your head.*

*Starting here, starting now, baby,*

*Ethel is pushing up roses."*

Mark Halpin, 1984

Barbra Streisand is a god(dess) in the gay world. Accept it. It's something like a proof problem in geometry: Reflexive Property ( $a = a$ ), Symmetric Property (If  $a = b$ , then  $b = a$ ) and the Transitive Property (If  $a = b$  and  $b = c$ , then  $a = c$ ). It's not gonna change. Some things are just a given. Doesn't matter a tinker's damn your feelings yea or nay; it's the way of the world. *"Get over it."*

A bunch of us arrived at a bar one night, kinda early, the show was just starting. Unplanned, they say; one performer lip-synched to Barbra Streisand, one to Bette Midler, one to Cher and one to Judy Garland; it was like a true stereotype Hell. And one did Salt-n-Pepper (pe-pah'). She must have felt like a bastard at a family reunion.

In the early 1980s, female impersonation was “discovered” even though shows had existed for quite some time prior to that. Every bar tried to outdo their competitors with bigger, more outlandish shows; the kind people would talk about for years. Oh, they talked about one particular show but not for the right reason. To start the show, there was some strange disco version of “’65 Love Affair” that morphed into “Physical” that was blaring over the speakers. A performer, an Olivia Newton-John look-alike, would (in theory) enter via a trap door in the ceiling, grab a trapeze, float down to the stage and perform a “Physical” production number. That’s the theory. Reality was a bit different. Apparently, one of the trapeze’s guide wires was messed up, she hit everything possible – walls, light towers, air vents, set pieces – on the way down. By the time she hit the stage, she looked like Olivia on major drugs but, bless her heart (as they say), she never missed a beat, despite some barely-on, really weird-ass looking wig, and finished the number. That went so well, they decided to shoot for redemption and “do it right” at show’s end. “’65 Love Affair” kicked in, Olivia got in place. This time, both guide wires fucked up. It dropped about six feet and stopped, wouldn’t

budge. So an Olivia Drag Queen was left hanging about 14 feet in the air.

*"Goddamn Son of a bitch!"*

At least the follow spot operator had a sense of humor; he put in a blue gel.

And then it got weird....

Third times a charm and all that; the very next night, the "Physical" production number was up for another go. The show director/choreographer decided to do away with the trapeze completely, go super low-tech and just use a big old rope Olivia could slide down for an entrance. Once again, "'65 Love Affair" started, Olivia grabbed the rope, started her entrance, and about halfway down, the rope became untied from its anchor in the ceiling; a flailing, screaming Olivia hit the stage like a sack of wet cement, then went dead to the world. (Thank goodness the DJ wasn't playing "It's Raining Men.") The two Olivia assistants in the ceiling saw the rope disappear, exchanged a panicked "Oh shit!" and didn't even

want to look through the hole. But the show must go on! Two of the flexible prop “boy toys” picked her up and made her a true drag queen as they dragged her limp body from spot to spot.

The “Physical” production number was considered cursed and never tried again (well, that and nobody else would do it).