

Eli: Hello and welcome to Queer as Fact! My name is Eli.

Alice: I'm Alice.

Irene: I'm Irene.

E: We are a queer history podcast coming out on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month, talking about queer history from all around the world. Today we are talking about Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay politicians to be elected in America.

[intro music plays]

E: So we have a some content warnings for this episode. The biggest, the most prominent I guess is period-typical homophobia. Sometimes we say that and what we mean is like, the person's family has some like, discomfort with them being queer in the background, and that's not overall too much of a big deal. That's not the case in this episode. It's really the focus of the episode, how bad mid-20th-century America was about gay people. That's gonna include talking about police intimidation and brutality, it's gonna include death threats, and gay bashings, we're gonna talk about assassination, gun violence, and we're gonna use some homophobic slurs.

I: Okay.

A: Okay.

I: We're still here.

E: We're still here, okay. I'm not done.

I: Okay.

A: That was part one.

E: That was part one. We're always gonna discuss someone being outed to the press against their will, there's several suicides, there's mentions of alcoholism, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and concentration camps, war, underage sex, and drugs. And also I think I swear a couple of times in quotes. I can't remember what made it in.

So if any of that sounds like something that you don't want to listen to, we fully understand. We have plenty of other content and some of it has barely any content warnings, so if you'd rather not, we'll see you in two weeks.

So we are gonna go through the first 40 years of Harvey's life very very quickly. So he's born May 22<sup>nd</sup> in 1930 in New Jersey, and he goes to school and then he goes off to a liberal arts teaching college. Then he joins the navy, and after that he becomes a businessman for quite a while.

Harvey really just drifts around for the first 40 years of his life. He's always very average in terms of like, his grades, and his success at athletics, and things like that. He does advance quite quickly through the navy – he becomes an officer pretty quickly.

A: Mm! Well done Harvey.

E: He's also quite well liked, though - so he's very funny, and he's very friendly, and from a young age he very much demonstrates the charisma that's gonna be very useful to him as a politician. He is ostracised a little bit because he's Jewish.

A: Mm.

I: Yeah.

E: And he's also just very theatrical and flamboyant. He's a big fan on the opera. From quite a young age...

A: Aw...

E: He'd stand in front of the radio and like, conduct...

A: Awww!

E: ...the opera. Mm.

A: [laughs]

E: He's aware that he's gay from quite a young age, so by the time he's 14 he has an active sex life, and he's, you know, essentially figures out how to cruise and all of that in parks. He spends a lot of time and energy making sure that his family and his community don't know he's gay. Although, as I said, he's quite well liked, he never really has anyone who's close to him, so when he like, graduates high-school or college or gets discharged from the navy, you know, everyone liked him but then he leaves and no-one ever hears from him again.

A: Do you think this is a deliberate thing that he's kinda keeping people at a distance to hide that he's gay, or is this just, happens to happen?

E: No, I... it's... in the things that I read it was very much framed as the former.

A: Mmkay.

E: Mm. And a lot of what we have – information we have about Harvey – is very much from like, interviews with people who knew him, and like, his lovers who he talked to about his childhood and stuff like that, so...

A: So we have a good idea...

E: Yeah.

A: ...of what he was actually thinking.

E: Yeah, we have a pretty good idea. Harvey's really no activist at this point. He's very dedicated to being in the closet, and it's because he's living in very hard time to be gay.

A: Yep.

E: Of course. There's the constant threat of police intimidation and brutality, and this often led to exposure. That could mean people were ostracised by their communities, and it was very common for this to lead to suicide.

A: Mmhm.

E: Harvey has a string of boyfriends for his whole life, and I was at a loss of how to tell you about all of them. It's the whole Anne Lister situation all over again...

I: Yep.

E: ...where I just had to cut a bunch of them, and I felt bad. I'm sorry. It's happened. He definitely has like, a type, where they're always much younger than him – they're in their like, late teens or early 20s. He seems like he wants to play this role of like, the educator, and the protector. So what he does is he'll like, take them to the opera, and to museums, and to the ballet, and introduce them to all these new foods.

I: Aww.

E: And really enjoy kinda like, helping them kind of become more cultured and experience society and things like that, and also he just generally kinda looks after them. They tend to be to some degree financially dependent on him, and things like that.

A: Mmhm.

I: Do you feel like that's a weird power dynamic when he does it? Like, how does it feel?

E: I mean, the fact that he ends up being like, 40, and he's dating a 20-year-old is like, alright, that's... that feels a little weird to me. But it didn't feel like it was deliberately...

I: ...exploitative.

E: ...predatory or anything like that. He tends to stay close to, or be like well regarded by his lovers after he breaks up with them for quite a while, and also he gets together with these men, and then like, you know, it's not like he dates them when they're 19 and then it's like, "Well you're 20, so you're too old now," like, I'm about to introduce one and they get together when he's 19 and then they stay together for seven years, you know, so it's clearly not a like, "I'm only in this for the youth " thing.

I: Yeah, okay.

E: There definitely are times when he's kind of like, a bit callous and a bit careless of people's feelings, and so forth, and maybe that has like, more of an impact than if you had two like, 35-year-old men who have independent careers, as opposed to like, you got into a relationship with an older man when you'd just run away from your small town and then you showed up here and started living with him very quickly. Like I think there is an inherent power dynamic there.

I: But you don't think he's sort of intentionally exploiting that.

E: Yeah.

I: Okay. Okay.

E: Mm. In 1955 he meets his first significant lover, which is a man named Joe Campbell. So Harvey's 26 at this time. Joe's 19.

A: Mm.

E: And the relationship goes for seven years. Harvey is, like a fairly dramatic lover. He writes all of these like, really gushy love poems and things like that, and leaves all these little gifts.

I: Aww!

E: And they're like, fairly hilarious, frankly. They contain kind of like, written baby talk.

I: [laughs]

E: Like kind of nonsense syllables, and also, perhaps my favourite thing in this entire episode, the like, honorific *san* attached to people

I: [laughs] Harvey Milk is a weeaboo!

E: Yes!

[laughter]

E: [sighs] Harvey Milk was a weeb. You heard it here first.

[laughter]

I: Oh my God!

E: So...

A: Where did he pick this up?!

E: He was a businessman, and I...

A: Ohhh.

E: ...read this letter and I was like, "What? What is that? That can't be the Japanese honorific. Harvey Milk *can't* be a weeb!" and then it did mention like, he was a businessman and he went on business trips to Japan, and I was like, "Oh my God! He is! That's totally what this is!"

[laughter]

I: Oh my God! I don't know what to think about this.

A: Oh my God!

I: That's amazing.

E: I know.

I: It's like...

A: Are you gonna read us one of these poems?

E: I am.

A: Good. I'm so ready.

E: Oh, not a poem, but I'm gonna read you the love letter than he wrote Joe for their second anniversary.

A: Okay.

E: Are you ready for this?

A: I'm so ready. [laughs]

E: I don't mean to make fun. Like, it's a very sweet letter.

I: Yeah.

E: But it's just, I think anyone's like, intimate silly notes to their partners just look ludicrous...

I: Yeah.

E: ...from the outside. So it begins:

*To my Joesan...*

[laughter]

E:

*To me you are my warrior—*

*You are my knight—*

*You are my day—*

*May the many many days and years pass pleasantly, happy and rewarding, for we have many years to spend together—the first two have swept by and with each I have found I love you 365 days more and 365 times harderuminiums.*

[laughter]

A: How is that spelt?

E: So the word "harder"...

A: Yes.

E: U-M-I-N-I-U-M-N-U-N-S. I don't know how this was intended to be pronounced. I'm sorry, Harvey, for not representing your thoughts accurately. I tried.

A: I think you did a pretty good job.

I: Harderuminiumnuns. Yeah.

A: Uminiumnuns.

E: Yeah. And then he signs it:

*Your dollbabysan,*

*Harveysan.*

[laughter]

I: Dollbabysan! Oh God!

E: Dollbabysan is one word.

[laughter]

E: Joe and Harvey, as I said, they're together for several years, and they're quite well accepted into each other's families. No-one really speaks about the fact that they're in a gay relationship, but they like, go to family dinners and things like that, as each other's partner.

A: Yeah.

E: Essentially.

A: That's nice.

E: They also get a pet toucan, called Bill.

A: Oh my God, really?

E: Yep. As I said, Harvey's in no way an activist at this point, but he still reacts very very strongly to bigotry. So one time a man passing Joe and Harvey on the street calls them faggots, and Harvey grabs him by the collar and shakes him and yells insults at him. He's even more militant about anti-Semitism, so Joe has this German friend who he has round for dinner, and he'd lived in Germany during World War II, and Harvey hears this and like, turns the conversation over dinner around the concentration camps.

A: Just to see what this guy like...

E: Yeah! Because...

A: ...thinks of it.

E: ...I think it's fairly reasonable to assume some level of like, accountability there, frankly.

A: Yeah, yeah.

I: Yeah, I feel like you'd at least want to know what he thought.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah.

E: And the guy claims that he had no idea that concentration camps existed in Germany until after the war, and Harvey flies into a rage and says, "How could you have lived in Germany and not known what was going on? How could you have not been aware of the carnage? Huh? Were you deaf? Dumb? Blind?"

Joe regarded Harvey as having a persecution complex, as being really over-focused on the possibility of being oppressed.

I: This is a thing that people say about Jewish people, like, constantly.

E: That's true actually, yeah. He also says that about Harvey's reaction to homophobia, and just kind of like, anything like that.

I: Okay, yeah.

E: Harvey, in return, accuses Joe of just being anti-Semitic.

A: Okay.

E: I kinda just wanted to mention like, how being Jewish affected his life early on, because he's never religious, or anything like that...

I: Mmhm.

E: ...in his life, and part of that specifically is like, he has a problem with organised religion because of how it deals with homosexuality, which is perfectly reasonable. But I feel like maybe just because people don't get how Jewish-ness works, I don't know, I feel like Christianity works differently, that they then kind of say, so like, Harvey wasn't really Jewish, and that's completely unimportant and incidental, and I don't agree. I think it's like, quite obvious that it's a shaping force when he's a younger man, in how he kind of sees the world and social justice and things like that.

A: Mmhm.

E: I think it's the thing because a lot of our kind of historical figures who are both queer in some way and Jewish, often aren't religious, and I think then kind of like, mainstream... I don't know, like queer studies people, whatever, tend to be like, so like, they're... they don't really count as like a Jewish historical figure for the queer community, and it really bothers me.

I: Yes.

A: Mm.

E: You know?

A: Mmhm.

E: Like I've seen people say this about like, Magnus Hirschfeld, who was not religious but I think it's ludicrous to say that Judaism plays not part in these people lives.

A: Mmhm.

I: Yeah.

E: You know?

I: Yeah.

E: The relationship between Joe and Harvey is the longest relationship of either of their lives. It does start to break down eventually, in 1962, and one day Harvey says, "Have you thought about moving out?"

A: Ooh!

E: And Joe goes, "Yeah, but I don't want to," and Harvey replies, "Well, maybe you better think about it some more." And a few weeks later he does. So that's how Harvey Milk ends the longest relationship of his life.

I: That was an unkind break-up.

E: It was. Yeah. He is a bit kind of, as I said, a bit like, careless with people's feelings and a bit unkind at times. He does immediately regret it, and he writes these long letters imploring him to come back, but like, the relationship's done. I did wanna mention one last thing about Joe – he's not really in this story from this point onwards...

I: Mhm.

E: So they hung out kind of on the fringes of this theatrical artistic crowd – they were in the Greenwich Village, in New York...

A: Okay! Yep, yep.

E: And Joe, after he and Harvey break up, ends up being on the fringes of Andy Warhol's group.

A: Ah!

E: And he knows Lou Reed, and is mentioned in Lou Reed's song *Walk on the Wild Side*. He's the sugar-plum fairy.

A: Oh!

I: Really!

[laughter]

E: Mm.

I: Really!

E: Yep.

A: There you go!

I: I was listening to that song in my car the other day!

E: Oh, really?

A: Ah!

E: It was a preview and you didn't even know it.

I: It was!

E: Yeah.

A: I have an important question before we continue.

E: Mm.

A: You're not going to be able to answer but I need to ask. Who gets custody of Bill?

E: I don't know.

A: Okay.

E: Maybe Bill's dead by this point. I don't know how long toucans live.

A: No, 'coz like, parrots live for a really long time.

E: Yeah, I dunno. Maybe they got a very old toucan.

A: Maybe they did. Maybe they freed him, and he flew home.

E: That sounds like a terrible idea! He'd die!

A: [laughs]

E: You would free a toucan in New York?!

I: [laughs]

A: Okay.

E: After they break up, he starts dating a man name Craig Rodwell. Craig is very very critical of homophobia. One day he's walking through Central Park, and a police officer passes him, and says, "Keep moving, faggot," and he goes back, "That is harassment of homosexuals."

A: Yep.

E: And you know, it's 1958, the policeman's like, "Alright, I'm arresting you now." And so he arrests him, and he's in a cell for a night, and all of these police keep coming past, to see this like, defiant homosexual they've managed to find.

A: [scoffs]

E: Because they can't imagine that, and they're all saying to him like, "Oh, what's the matter? Have you lost your purse? Have you lost your dress?" and all of this stuff, and he keeps going, you know, in reply, "Oh, what's the matter, have you never seen a faggot before?"

I: [laughs]

E: Craig really criticised Harvey's satisfaction with living life in the closet. Harvey said, "No, look I have to stay in the closet because if I came out it'd kill my parents," and Craig goes, "Well, you know, America would really be in short supply of living parents if that was true, wouldn't it."

I: Yep.

E: [laughs]

I: [laughs]

E: And then the 1960s come, and all of the cultural and political shifts that that implies come too. And Harvey's conservatism start to be eroded. So he's been very politically conservative, as well as just wanting to kind of like, stay in the closet, and not...

A: Mmhm.

E: ...make any waves as well. He's very very unsatisfied with like, being a businessman. He's working in an insurance company at one point, and he just gets up at lunch-time and walks out, and never comes back.

[laughter]

I: That's... intensely relatable.

E: [laughs]

A: I feel like we've all felt this at some stage. [laughs]

E: Mm, mm. He starts growing his hair longer, and he starts going to anti-war marches. When the US announces the invasion of Cambodia, he blames that in part on like, big businesses fostering conflict, and...

I: Mmhm.

E: ...he gets up in front of the demonstration and burns his bank-card in front of the crowd.

I: Nice.

E: He ends up living in San Francisco, but he goes back to New York because he has friends there, and one



time when he's in New York at the Christopher Street subway station on his 41<sup>st</sup> birthday, he meets Scott Smith.

A: Okay.

E: Scott's 22.

I: Yep.

[laughter]

E: And Harvey ends up taking him back to San Francisco with him. They spend what sounds like a really wonderful year just kind of living off of unemployment cheques and driving around. They have a dog from the pound call The Kid, and yeah, they just drive all over California, and they sleep in sleeping bags under the redwoods in whatever national park they happen to be in.

I: Aww.

A: That sounds very pleasant!

E: In 1972 they run out of money...

I: Mmhm.

E: ...so they have to figure out something to do, so they move to Castro Street, where there's cheap apartments; there's like, a couple of gay bars. So obviously Castro Street becomes like, the centre of gay life in San Francisco.

A: Yes. I was playing the like, earliest gay computer game the other day...

E: Yeah!

A: ...which is set in Castro Street.

E: Is that the *Caper in the...*

A: Yeah!

E: ...*Castro*? Something like that? Yeah.

A: Yeah.

I: What's happens in this computer game?

A: It's like, do you remember when we used to have that like, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* computer game?

I: Yeah.

A: Kinda like that, like you just click around to different locations and find like, different clues and you have to solve this crime.

I: But it's gay?

A: But it's gay, and yeah. 'Coz it's in Castro Street.

I: Cool!

E: Yeah.

A: Yeah!

E: So there's not really this massive community hub there yet, though. Like, as I said there's a couple of gay bars, but it's about to like, boom. They decide that they're gonna open up a camera store, even though

neither of them really knows anything about cameras.

A: Why?

E: I dunno.

A: If I was like, "Hey, we're kinda broke, let's open a camera store," would you be like, "Yeah," or be like, "No, we know nothing about cameras"? Like... it doesn't make sense. [laughs]

E: They spend their last grand opening it.

A: [laughs]

E: So they need this to succeed.

A: [laughs] Okay.

E: Harvey's getting madder and madder about politics as well. There's this real growing awareness of the time that like, gay people are a coherent minority that could become politically organised and achieve things.

A: Okay.

E: So that's not to say that there hasn't been like, gay activism and a push for gay rights before the 70s...

I: Mmhm.

E: ....but there really is, like, there's a boom with the gay community forming around Castro Street in the 70s. There's this real boom of the gay rights movement...

A: Mmhm.

E: .... as well. So there's a lot of gay liberation groups emerging in San Francisco on different parts of the political spectrum, and like utilising tactics that they've learnt from other groups who've been having successful rights movements in the 60s like the African-American civil rights movement, and women's liberation, and things like that.

A: Mmhm!

I: Yep.

E: And Harvey's very angry that there's no like, gay voices in government to speak for the community. He's also just angry about like, all of these kind of problems that are facing the like, local area. So a schoolteacher comes in one day asking if she can borrow a slide projector, because the schools are really really poor and underfunded, and after she requests one, it's like a month wait, and she can't really teach effectively in that time. And he's angry that local things like that aren't having money put into them but the government. There's this real focus on like, developing big kind of like, downtown corporations, and like free ways to access those corporations, which often go through poor neighbourhoods, or immigrant neighbourhoods, neighbourhoods with a high proportion of black people in them, and so forth, and having devastating affect on those neighbourhoods. And then there's just like a whole bunch of local issues. He doesn't like the people who manage the public transport system, for example. Just like, a bunch of stuff.

In 1973, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors comes up for election, so that's like, the city council.

A: Okay. Yep.

E: Essentially. There's five seats up for election, and Harvey decides that he's gonna run, so he literally gets a crate, paints the word "soap" on it, and goes down to the plaza on Castro Street to announce his intent to run. So he literally gets a soapbox...

[laughter]

E: ...and goes and stands on it.

A: You didn't lie, he is flamboyant.

E: He is. I love him so much. He's a real born politician, he's very charismatic, as I said. He's very good at kind of like, creating good theatre around the campaign and in the media.

I: Mmhm.

E: But he's also an aging gay Jewish hippy.

I: Yep.

E: So, you know...

[laughter]

E: ...a bit of a mixed bag as a candidate at the time.

I: [laughs]

E: And he really builds himself on that kind of platform of like, the little guy against like, big business and things like that.

A: Okay, I think that's a pretty successful like, platform to run on, usually.

E: Especially if you're an aging gay Jewish hippy.

I: I was gonna say yeah, that's like he's best option.

E: Mm, yeah.

I: Being himself.

E: Yeah. He tries to get support from local prominent gay activists and they're just quite annoyed by the fact that he's not been involved for a very long time, and he's decided he's gonna run for office.

A: Mmkay.

E: Jim Foster, who's one of them, tells him "There's an old saying in the Democratic Party. You don't get to dance unless you put up the chairs. I've never seen you put up the chairs."

A: Okay.

E: Jim Foster is quite a prominent gay activist at the time, and he's one of a lot of like, for the purposes of our story, fairly interchangeable men like him, who have this very moderate take on things, where they plan on like, being publicly respectable, not emphasising that they're gay too much...

I: Mmhm.

E: ...trying to make connections with the Democrats, and just gradually claim power that way.

A: And that's not Harvey's goal.

E: No. They're hoping to eventually achieve legal reform by demonstrating that they're not really all that different from straight people...

A: Oh yeah.

E: .... "except there's some stuff we do in the bedroom that we'll never talk about, don't worry," kinda thing.

A: Mmhm.

I: Is Harvey out at this time?

E: So out.

I: So out? The outest?

E: Like he's very much running as like an openly gay candidate.

A: Mmhm, yep.

I: Yep.

E: Mm. Yep. So according to these more moderate activists it wasn't yet time for a gay candidate to seek a supervisory seat, because that might alienate the public from their cause, and Harvey fundamentally disagrees with this approach to politics. He thought that if we think that way then it'll never be time.

I: Yep.

A: Mmhm, yeah. I think I agree with Harvey here. I mean, people are basically like, still think at this point, like, today.

E: Yeah. Well...

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah, and I also think if you're gonna like, maybe it will happen if you just play this very respectable role that someone like these men could then get in, but that really doesn't leave any room for you to include the people who are part of your community who aren't like, fairly respectable, you know, middle-class white gay men.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, no, that's very true. Yeah.

E: So like Harvey, because he doesn't agree with that kind of thought, for example, often gets a lot of support from drag queens, and...

A: Mmhm.

E: ...very effeminate gay men, because they fundamentally have nowhere to go in that line of thought.

A: Yep.

I: Mm.

A: Yep.

E: To Harvey, gay candidates in office seem like the absolute best way to advance the gay movement. He says to the *Bay Area Reporter* which is a local newspaper:

*Masturbation can be fun, but it does not take the place of the real thing. It is about time that the gay community stopped playing with itself, and got down to the real thing. There are people who are satisfied with crumbs because that is all they think they can get when in reality, if they demand the real thing, they'll find that they indeed can get it.*

I: I love that metaphor.

[laughter]

E: So the 1973 election happens, and there's 32 candidates going for five seats, and he comes in tenth.

A: That's not too bad.

E: Yeah, he gets 17,000 votes which isn't a win, but it is genuinely quite impressive, given like, who he is.

A: Yeah.

E: Two weeks after the election he cuts his hair – so he still had like, a long ponytail, 'coz he's a hippy – and also makes two vows to himself, that he will never smoke weed again...

A: Okay.

E: ...and that he will never go to a bathhouse again.

I: Is bathhouses where you go to be gay?

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah, they're for cruising.

I: Alright, cool.

E: You go there and you have sex with other men.

I: Yep.

E: They're not for baths.

[laughter]

I: Alright.

E: Yes.

A: So is he doing this to look more respectable so he'll get voted in? Or is he doing this to like, like the not smoking weed, to more like, focus his...

E: [laughs]

A: I'm trying to think how to frame this question.

E: Are you saying, was he too stoned to run a good campaign?

A: Like, not yes, but not no.

[laughter]

A: I'm saying, is he more leaning towards what Jim Foster was saying about kinda being...

I: ...respectable.

A: ...like more about assimilation and being respectable, or is this just him focussing his life more about politics and less about being a gay hippy.

E: I think it is like, trying to create a respectable public image. He's still supports, like, marijuana legal reform publicly.

A: Mmhm.

E: But he says that he like, doesn't want this all to get screwed up in the press at a crucial moment because he is found with a joint or like, you know, in a compromising situation in a bathhouse or whatever.

A: Yep, yep. Okay that makes sense. I see.

E: Yeah. I also like, I get that it is fostering public respectability, but I don't know how comparable that really is to Jim Foster, because he doesn't compromise his politics at all.

A: Ah, yeah, no. That's true, that's true. That makes sense. Mm.

E: He just makes like, superficial changes...

A: Yeah. Okay.

E: ...to his lifestyle and hair.

[laughter]

I: I'm just picturing him with kind of like a sort of symbolic hair-cutting moment like in Mulan where he looks at like the election results and he like slices his hair off with a sword and is like, "I'm going to get in to this government!"

E: [laughs] Around this time Harvey also starts telling reporters that quote unquote "some people" called him the unofficial mayor of Castro Street.

[laughter]

A: Did anyone ever call him the unofficial mayor of Castro Street?

E: Not that we have documented before this point. No-one's really sure who these people are, but it sounds good so the press starts saying that people call him that, and then I imagine that people do start calling him that, but that might have been Harvey being like, "You know what would sound great?"

[laughter]

A: Cunning. I like it.

E: Mm. He also goes about making connections and just becomes more prominent as a community leader over the next few years.

I: Mmhm.

E: So a man named Allan Baird goes to see Harvey Milk. He is a representative of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which is a labour union, and they're organising this beer boycott, so they have this proposed contract with all of these beer distributors about like, you know, what conditions and so forth their workers would distribute this beer under.

A: Mmhm.

I: Yeah.

E: And a bunch of them are refusing to sign it. Allan Baird comes to Harvey Milk as like, a prominent person in the gay community to try to get him to get the gay bars to not serve those beers...

A: Ohh yeah!

I: Yeah.

E: ...until they sign the contracts. And it goes pretty well.

A: Good.

E: And almost all of the beers sign, and the beers that don't sign just don't get drunk in Castro Street any more.

A: Good job.

E: So he has union contacts now. In terms of becoming a community leader, his camera store is kind of less of a camera business, and more a place for Harvey to kind of like, hold court in the neighbourhood, so young gay men know that they can come past there for advice on like, where to find work or where to find

somewhere to live if they're new in San Francisco, and local business owners come by asking for advice if they're having a problem, so like...

A: Mm!

E: ...if someone robs their store, and they feel like the police aren't doing anything, they go to Harvey, and Harvey can give them advice on like, which reporter to call or who to call at City Hall.

I: If he's not really running like, the camera business, where does the money come it?

E: So like, it exists there, but they're not really that focussed on like, making this the best possible camera business.

I: Alright.

E: Like they are developing pictures and stuff.

I: Alright.

E: But they are very kind of hand to mouth with it this whole time.

I: Yeah, okay.

E: Yeah, like, the cameras were never the point.

1975 comes and decides he's gonna run again, this time he wears three-piece suits instead of like, bell-bottom jeans or whatever.

[laughter]

E: He's one of only two candidates who backs labour unions in any way, and unionists are generally quite skeptical about backing a gay man.

I: Yeah....

E: But then they meet him and they're very impressed with him. He's very charismatic, he clearly cares about their issues, and he's gone and he's done a lot of homework about like, what they actually need.

A: Mmhm!

E: So they back the gay candidate.

I: Nice.

E: Mm.

A: Good good good.

E: He has a lot of volunteers working on his campaign, and he will take like, literally anyone regardless of skills. A writer who comes in sometimes to pet his dog...

[laughter]

I: Aww....

E: ...ends up being his speech writer.

I: [laughter]

A: Good.

I: Is he just like, chatting to this guy while he's petting the dog...?

E: Yeah!

I: And being like, "Hey, while you're here, Mike, do you wanna write me some speeches?"

E: Yeah, well he very much has people come in and be like, "Hey, so I wanted to get involved in some way, and I don't have any experience," and he'll be like, "Cool, you can have this, like, very senior position in my campaign." Like he just casually just like, brings people into the fold. He's very interested in getting a lot of like, young gay people from the neighbourhood who don't really have a lot of experience with activism into his campaign, so they can, by helping him, directly get skills, and then just take that to like, generally being in the movement.

A: That's good!

E: He gets support from an 11-year-old girl called Medora Payne who comes in one day and asks to volunteer.

I: Awww!

E: His campaign is like, very very disorganised, though. He has a supporter roster and it's literally a box full of scraps of paper, bar napkins and matchbooks' covers with people's names written on them.

I: [laughs]

A: Well I'm not surprised, given he's getting people with no experience, and an 11-year-old.

E: He's just also like, not very organised, or very invested in organisation, like...

A: Yep, yep.

E: There's no budgeting. They just take whatever they need from the till. If someone comes in and gets their like, holiday photos developed, and they get a bunch of money, that means they can put that extra like, 200 bucks into fliers that week.

A: Okay, yeah.

E: He pushes his volunteers very very hard, but himself much harder, so at one point he ends up having 17-hour days campaigning.

I: Harvey, chill out!

A: Go to bed, Harvey.

E: I don't think that's how being a politician works unfortunately.

A and I: No.

E: During this time the local people still keep coming in as they had before, and asking him about minor local issues. So a middle-aged woman comes in because she's worried that there's no stop sign near the grade school near her house, and he like, sees to it for her.

I: Aww!

E: Because to him, this is what politics is for.

A: What a good man!

E: The election happens, again. There are six spots up, and there are six incumbents, and then a bunch of like, other people, and Harvey finishes seventh.

A and I: Awww!

A: Harvey!

E: Yes.



I: So close Harvey!

E: A man named George Moscone becomes the mayor. He's a proponent of neighbourhood power, and he decries like big development and is trying to reach minority voters and things like that, and he very publicly after the election seeks Harvey out to speak with, and like shakes his hand in front of the cameras. So Harvey is like, pretty well established as being someone not insignificant in local politics, despite never having been successfully elected at this point. Now we're gonna diverge a little bit, and come back.

A: Okay.

E: So, remember Joe Campbell, Harvey's original lover?

A: Yes.

E: After they had broken up, he'd been in a relationship with a man called Bill Sipple, and then they'd broken up as well, and Bill Sipple is from San Francisco, and one day he is walking along the street, and he sees this massive crowd outside a hotel, and he goes to see what's what.

A: Yep.

E: And he's there, and it's very tightly packed, he's pressed up against this random middle aged woman, and he realises it's because President Ford is at that hotel. So they wait around for a while, and eventually that middle aged woman raises a gun, and...

A: Oh!

E: ...shoots at the president. He pushes her arm, and wrestles with her for the gun. And it's taken it away, and she's taken into the hotel and arrested. She ends up going to prison for over 30 years.

A: Okay.

I: That was dramatic.

E: Bill is gay, and the police question him at a lot of length, and he's like, "Look, I don't want my name released to the press, I just want this to stay really quiet," and they're very confused by this, they're like, "You're a hero! Everyone else would want to like, make a huge deal out of this." And Harvey views this as like, too good an opportunity, and he leaks to the press that Bill is gay.

A: Oh.

I: Harvey!

E: It very much negatively impacts Bill's life. His mother won't speak to him anymore, his mother won't leave her house. Harvey is like, "Nope, I'm gonna do it, because it's this big opportunity to show the world that gay people are heroes." That was a very unambiguously an unethical thing to do to someone.

I and A: Yes.

E: I don't think that's something that we need to discuss a lot like, like I think it's a fairly clear cut situation.

I: Yeah.

E: Like, he did something bad for what he saw as a good purpose.

I: Yep.

E: Yeah, so that's a side of Harvey Milk.

A: Okay.

E: Returning to our main story, he's just lost the election, but the mayor quite likes him, and the mayor puts him on the Board of Permit Appeals.

A: [laughs] That sounds so tedious.

I: [laughs]

E: It's actually quite a like significant position in local politics.

A: Okay.

E: It's like, anything that needs a permit, they get the last say on.

A: Is that like, building permits, or just like any permits?

E: Like, any permits.

A: Okay.

E: But yes, building permits as well.

A: Mmhm.

E: And he's been on it for I think literally like a few weeks, and decides that he wants to run for a spot on the California State Assembly, and he can't have the job at the same time.

A: Yep.

E: And he gets kicked off it, so he runs this other campaign to try to get into the State Assembly, and he loses by just a few thousand votes. So this is the third election that he's lost.

A: Yep.

E: And they've been working very very hard, and this just has an enormously dispiriting effect on him and all of his friends, like more than normal. And the campaigns are also just taking their toll on their lives. He's put his – literally, like his entire life into this campaign. Like all of his money has gone into it, and he owns this business with his partner, so all of his partner's money has had to go into it, really. He also becomes very quick to anger, particularly with Scott, because of you know, that unfortunate thing where you can kind of get away with venting on your family, but then, they have to deal with you venting on them.

A: Yep, yep.

E: So if Scott makes the slightest mistake, he'll yell at him that he's like, screwed the whole thing up and like, ruined everything, and Scott just kind of takes it, because he knows that Harvey needs someone to...

I and A: Yeah...

E: But it takes its toll on their relationship, and also the passion just eventually goes, and they end up breaking up.

A: Mmhm.

E: They do stay important to each other for the rest of their lives, and they still have a business together, but now they have broken up.

A: Okay.

I: I'm glad they managed to like, continue the business together.

E: Yep.

A: Hmm...

E: I mean, I think it like, remains kind of stressful, and not the best situation, because the business is still funding campaigns. [laughs]

I: Yep.

E: He also gets death threats in the mail, pretty routinely. The first one he ever got read

*Harvey Milk will have a dream journey, a nightmare to hell, a night of horror. You will be stabbed and have your genitals, cock, balls, prick cut off.*

I: [laughs] They listed way more words for genitals than was strictly necessary.

E: No. This was very like, it was, I think, long and meandering and written in very like, child-like handwriting.

I: Yeah.

E: So that person probably had some stuff going on. But yeah, that just like – getting death threats becomes like an everyday part of their background to their life now.

A: Yeah, that would take its toll on you.

E: And now, a rather important figure to our episode enters the picture. John Briggs. He was a Republican assembly man and then a senator in California. He was very anti-Democrat. He referred to them as “the party of the three Gs: gays, grass and godlessness”.

I and A: [laugh] Yup.

A: That’s good, I like that.

E: It is good. There really isn’t a organised political movement against gay rights at this time. Like, there’s homophobia, obviously, but there isn’t an organised group of people in government who are really like, “No, this is an issue that we need to combat”, and the gay rights movement has been doing pretty well. Like they’ve got in quick succession, a bunch of legislation about like, discrimination and so forth, through. And he sees this lack of like, organised opposition as like, an opportunity. He finds allies in a group called “Save Our Children”.

I: Of course.

E: Yup. A woman involved in Save Our Children is a woman called Anita Bryant. In 1977 Dade County, which is in Florida, passes an ordinance banning discrimination against gay people, and she announces that she is going to lead a campaign against this. She had been a Miss America runner up.

A: Oh!

E: She was a mediocre pop singer.

A: [laughs] I didn’t know any of these facts about her!

E: She was also an orange juice promoter.

I: So she’s like a...third-rate celebrity.

E: Mm, she’s like a D-list celebrity. She’s also conventionally attractive, and says a lot of outrageous things, so the press is very willing to let her just like, come on the news and talk about gay people a bunch.

A: [disappointed] Hmm...

E: Within five weeks of her announcing this campaign, she collects 65,000 signatures calling for the law’s repeal, and eventually the country does repeal its gay rights law.

A: Okay.

E: And Briggs is really excited by this, he thinks this is great, and he decides he’s going to go back to California and introduce a measure to the state’s senate to ban gay people from teaching in public schools.

I: Okay...

A: Is this just on the like, gay people are pedophiles line, or...?

E: Basically, the whole kind of like, if young people see gay people in leadership roles, they'll become gay, and the kind of like, oh, gay people can't reproduce, so they have to recruit, and they're gonna recruit our children, and all that garbage.

A: Ah, yep, yep, okay, yep.

I: Yep, okay.

E: On that note, though, Harvey Milk does, as a joke, sometimes start speeches by saying "My name is Harvey Milk and I'm here to recruit you."

I: [laughs]

E: This win of Anita Bryant's has measurable affects immediately, as does this kind of like, change in tone of the overall nationwide political situation towards gay people. So gay bashings increase sharply. In San Fransisco, gay people organise street patrols and start like carrying whistles around, because it's that common.

I: Yep.

E: There are also massive demonstrations happening, night after night, through the streets of San Francisco, and all of this massive demonstration and this very physical anger, has the more moderate gay politicians and the moderate allies, really appalled. It's this kind of attitude of "But why aren't the gays polite anymore??"

I: Oh no!

E: [laughs] Yeah... 1977 comes, and Harvey decides again, he's gonna run for supervisor. So does a man called Dan White. And he's been a cop, and a firefighter, he's very focused on like, traditional family values.

I: Oh no.

E: Oh no.

A: [laughs] Not family values!

E: Yup. Because the kind of general tone of the city has changed, for the homophobic a bit, candidates such as Moscone have planned to kind of, keep their distance publicly from the gay rights movements because of the cost in votes.

A: Mmhm.

E: But also they still expect to be supported in the voting booth by that community, and Harvey's furious about this.

A: Fair enough, yeah.

E: Yeah. He also gets a new boyfriend, er...who is called Jack Lira. He's twenty five. He has alcohol problems. And Harvey's friends really really hate Jack.

A: Why?

E: Ah, because he looks bad for the campaign, and they don't like having him around...

A: Okay.

E: ...because he has problems with alcohol.

A: Okay.

E: So for years he's been with Scott, who kind of played this role of the like, political wife.

A: Yep.

E: You know...

I: Yeah.

E: ...supporting the campaign, in every way, and being this really like, good public face, and Jack just isn't that.

A: Mmhm.

E: And so his friends are like, appalled at this change.

A: Yep, yep.

E: He also gets a new campaign manager, a young woman called Anne Kronenberg.

I: Is she...

E: She's twenty-three.

I: I was about to say, is she eleven?

E: [laughs] She's not eleven. She's 23. She is a lesbian. I mean, I thought that was fairly obvious, but let's just be clear. She's very methodical and organised, which this campaign needs. She has an eye for detail. She's been working on campaigns for the Young Democrats since she was thirteen.

I: So like, nearly eleven.

E: Yeah. [laughs] And Harvey loves her, but she actually at first feels a bit unsure about him. First of all because the campaign's a complete mess, as we've established. And also because her friends warn her not to get involved in working for a gay man, because they think that she'll just be like, used and cast aside.

I: Yeah...

E: There's not a lot of like, solidarity between gay men and lesbians at this time.

A: Mmhm.

I: Ah, yep.

E: But she works for the campaign, and she comes to respect him and what he does for the community, and she sounds like a pretty good campaign manager.

A: Good on her!

E: She must be a pretty good campaign manager, because he wins this one.

A: Ah!

I: Finally!

E: Finally, Harvey! And people are of course, overjoyed by this. The camera store is like, packed to overflowing that night. He gives a speech that he gave quite often during his campaigns. It's his kind of like, stock speech, that he takes around everywhere, and it came to be known as his Hope Speech. And I'm gonna play you an excerpt from it now.

Harvey Milk [recording]:

*Somewhere in Des Moines or San Antonio, there's a young gay person who all of a sudden*

*realises that he or she is gay, knows that if the parents find out, they'll be tossed out of the house, the classmates would taunt the child, and that Anita Bryants and John Briggs are doing their bit on TV, and that child has several options: staying in the closet, suicide, and then one day that child might open up a paper, and it says "Homosexual elected in San Francisco", and there are two new options. [laughter from listeners] The options are to go to California [laughter and applause] or stay in San Antonio and fight.*

*Two days after I was elected I got a phone call, and the voice was quite young, it was from Altoona, Pennsylvania, and the person said, "Thanks." And you've got to elect gay people, so that that young child and the thousands upon thousands like that child, know that there's hope for a better world, there's hope for a better tomorrow. Without hope, not only gays, but those blacks, and the Asians, and the disabled, the seniors, the "usses"... Without hope, the usses give up. And I know that you cannot live on hope alone, but without it, life is not worth living. And you and you and you, you've gotta give 'em hope. Thank you very much.*

I: [Laughing? Crying? It's unclear.] I feel like, quite emotional about that.

E: I'm glad you do, to be honest, because I also feel quite emotional, but I have a whole like, life backstory with this speech, and I don't know if I have the like, general human reaction to it.

[laughter]

E: When I was in high school, it is really amazing to me how impossible it was to get any kind of mention of gay people at all. So like, Harvey Milk, his Wikipedia page was um...banned in my high school.

A: Oh!

E: For being...gay...

I: Yeah...

A: Oh wow, okay.

E: Yup, that was the case for pretty much any gay person on Wikipedia. Anything to do with gay people, blocked. Ah, nothing in the library. And I somehow managed to download a copy of that speech. It was around when the Milk movie came out.

A: Uh-huh.

E: And I'd seen the trailer. I couldn't see the movie for years, I just knew that this existed. And I had that, and I used to – I listened to this probably about a hundred times, just like over and over again, and it's really upsetting to me, you know, this is in, what like, 2008?

I: Yeah...

E: That's thirty years after he's speaking here.

I: Yeah.

E: And it just felt so...

I: Yeah...

E: And I lived in a capital city... So yeah, like, Harvey Milk's very important to me... Like, I really felt like, him, and like, vaguely knowing that, I think Oscar Wilde was gay, was like, all I had.

I and A: Mm.

E: Like I had the hypothetical promise that gay people existed somewhere out there, and that they were like, alive and happy.

I and A: Yeah.

E: I didn't know that for sure.

I: But you thought maybe...

E: But I thought maybe, and I'd have like, occasionally a soap opera would have a gay episode, and then like, I had this speech that I hid on a USB. So...

I: Aww...

E: I'm very emotional about this speech. I also just wanted to mention, the young kid he mentioned from Altoona, Pennsylvania, is generally considered to be apocryphal. Ah, it's been a kid from a bunch of places before this, but it settled and it became from Altoona, Pennsylvania. He did get calls from like...

I: I mean, presumably like, the kid from Altoona, Pennsylvania, is like an amalgamation of, you know, every like person who called him and been like, "Thanks, it was good to see a gay man doing this."

E: Mm, absolutely. I mean, congratulations pour in from all over the country. A 68-year-old lesbian who had been a San Francisco school teacher since 1932 wrote to him and said "I thank god I have lived long enough to see my kind emerge from the shadows and join the human race." Dan White also gets elected, so the conservative cop firefighter man.

A: Oh yeah.

E: Harvey's friends have a very low opinion of him, they think he's too bigoted to change his opinions. But Harvey disagrees. He says, "As the years pass, the guy can be educated. That's where we disagree. Everyone can be reached. Everyone can be educated in time. You think some people are hopeless. Not me."

A: What a good man.

E: What a good man!

I: Yeah.

A: What a good man...

I: I mean, I guess he started like, fairly politically conservative himself. I remember you saying that.

E: That's true, yeah.

I: And so I guess there's that kind of part in that, where he's like, "I can see how I changed, and it's possible for this to happen to anyone."

E: Yeah. Harvey is quite theatrical, as we've established, and he refers to City Hall as his new stage. He insists on having his inauguration out of doors, so all of his supporters could fit and see, because they couldn't fit them inside.

A: Oh!

E: It starts raining, and he says, "Anita Bryant said gay people brought the drought to California. Looks to me like it's finally started raining."

I: Aww.

E: He also brings Anne with him to City Hill as his aide, and he goes pretty well at being a politician in his early months. He works really really hard to stay on top of all the different issues that he's presented with. He also keeps his good humour, so there's a lot of people who are like, constantly voting against him, and things like that, and don't agree with his politics, but they don't actually dislike him.

A: That's good!

E: Which frankly just sounds like an enormous skill as a politician.

A: Yeah, yeah.

E: He immediately starts by proposing legislation banning any form of discrimination against gay people in San Francisco. He's not just for gay interests, we've discussed how he is very against massive downtown corporations and real estate development and things like that. He pushes for a commuter tax, so the over three hundred thousand people who come in to San Francisco from suburbia every day are contributing to paying for the amenities that they're using.

I: Yeah.

E: He pushes for higher business taxes, he passes legislation to discourage real estate speculation that is rampant in San Francisco so it's resulting in these like, spiralling house prices, and he's worried that that's gonna force poor people and minorities out of the city.

A: Yep.

E: The sweeping of Castro Street increases from once a week to once a day.

I and A: [laugh]

E: He stops the neighbourhood library and the neighbourhood grade school from closing. He gets 50 new stop signs installed.

I and A: [laugh]

I: We knew they were important.

E: Mm. The biggest complaint that City Hall receives – it's about there being too much dog poo on the sidewalks.

A: Okay.

I: [laughs]

E: And he gets a law passed that dog owners have to pick up their dogs' leavings. This isn't a thing before that apparently.

A: Okay.

E: Yeah, and he gets more fanmail and more attention for that than like, anything else he did in his early months. Dan White remains a conservative member. He's also just very stubborn, like he hates to lose in any circumstances. He's very interested in the interests of the police as well. He gets involved in stopping a local convent from being turned into a psychiatric treatment centre, because it would bring, quote, "arsonists, rapists, and other criminals" end quote, into the neighbourhood.

A: Okay.

E: And Harvey at first, when he hears about this, indicates that probably he'd vote with Dan, when it was put to the board, and then he reads up on it and he changes his mind. He's like, "Well, they have to be in someone's neighbourhood, so might as be mine, and...well, not mine – might as well be Dan's!"

I and A: [laugh]

E: And he votes against him, and Dan is furious. It permanently sours their relationship. He won't speak to Harvey for months. He won't speak to Anne.

A: Even though they have to sit on a board together?

E: Yep! Harvey has to appoint his aide to be a liaison with Dan White.



I: Oh my God.

A: What a child.

E: Dan White directs his anger towards Harvey's gay rights bill. He had been for it, but after the convent vote, votes against it, and he literally says to Harvey's aide, "Harvey voted against me, so I voted against Harvey."

A: People like that shouldn't be allowed in politics.

E: No. Despite White being opposed to it, it does get signed into law.

A: Good good.

E: Dan White continues to block anything that involves gay people, at all. He's against Harvey, and this is Harvey's pet issue, so, this is the situation.

I: Yep.

E: Briggs is still being around. He files his public school bill, finally, and it becomes Proposition 6. Harvey campaigns against this very hard. He debates Briggs a lot. I won't go into the tactics in depth, because I feel like we know the kind of nonsense that homophobic people say, but just for example, in the course of one forty five minute speech one time, he manages to equate homosexuals with adulterers, burglars, communists, murderers, rapists, Richard Nixon—

I: [laughs]

E: --child pornographers, and effeminate courtiers who had undermined the Greek and Roman civilisations.

I and A: [helpless laughter]

E: Harvey basically learns all of these rote arguments that keep coming up, and he gets his answers down to a bunch of witty retorts that he just sticks to his lectern, so he's like, "Oh, that one's come up," and then he says the joke...

I: [laughs]

E: So we touched on arguments before like, "Oh, gay people can't reproduce, so they have to recruit", and "if kids see teachers being gay, then they'll think that they can be gay too", and so Harvey would be like, "Oh, if it were true that children mimicked their teachers, we'd sure have a hell of a lot more nuns running around".

I: ...true.

E: Yeah... So he's still in a relationship with Jack, and Jack's not doing so well. He's continuing to struggle with alcoholism, and during this campaign, he commits suicide.

I: Oh...

A: Aww.

E: And Harvey gets many many many notes of sympathy, and about half are from queer people whose lovers have also killed themselves, whether it's in the past month, or whether it's ten years ago.

A: Mm.

E: I also just wanted us to keep in mind how real the consequences of this political thing that's playing out are.

I: Yeah.

A: Mm, mm.

E: The campaign continues. The law that Briggs has proposed is banning “public homosexual conduct” and it defines that as, quote, “advocating, imposing, encouraging or promoting of private or public homosexual activity directed at or likely to come to the attention of school children and/or other school employees”. So that’s incredibly broad.

A: Mm...

I: That’s super vague.

E: Yeah. It’s the sort of thing that’s like, if say, a person like, picked their friend up from in front of a gay bar, they could be fired, or any English teacher who’s like, “We’re gonna look at some of Shakespeare’s sonnets” they could be fired.

I and A: Yeah, yeah.

E: Like it’s incredibly broad. Briggs’s campaign isn’t doing very well though. He gets some momentum at first, but as it goes on the general opinion of the public becomes pretty negative.

I: I mean, I think you can probably see that when his sort of policies are so incredibly vague, like, you don’t have to be particularly astute to hear that and say, “Well, okay that’s just an excuse to attack anyone you don’t like.”

E: Yeah. Boards of education are opposing it just because practically all of the hearings it would necessitate were just not affordable.

A: Yep, yep.

E: Straight teachers were saying that they were gonna clog the system as much as possible by confessing that they had violated that clause. The time where it’s gonna be voted on comes up, and gay rights lawyers are preparing suits to challenge whether or not it’s constitutional the day it’s passed, if that happens.

A: Mmhm.

E: Ah, there’s discussions about if people are gonna riot. Harvey’s discussing the possibility of a violent backlash to a reporter, and the reporter incredulously asks, “You mean homosexuals can be violent?”

I: [laughs]

E: And it is voted, and it loses massively.

A: Good.

E: There’s a party on Castro Street until four am. Three days after it is voted down, Dan White resigns. Harvey’s thrilled. This is amazing. Apparently this is because the salary is too small for him to support his family on. Ten days after he resigns he says, “Nope, I’ve changed my mind, I want my job back.”

I: [laughs]

A: You can’t do that, right?

E: Well, Mayor Moscone has the power to appoint people to the Board of Supervisors, if someone who was elected steps down.

A: Okay.

E: And he goes, “Look, as far as I’m concerned, a man has a right to change his mind, that seat belongs to Dan White.” And Harvey does not want this to happen, and he sets up a meeting with the mayor, and he reminds him that Dan White has been the swing vote on the board that has stopped a lot of issues that Mayor Moscone is invested in from proceeding.

A: Mm.

E: He's also the only anti-gay, vocal politician in the city, which damages Moscone's chance of re-election if he puts him back on the board..

A: Oh yeah yep.

E: And Moscone like sees his point and becomes really really undecided about what he should do. And he sets Monday November 27th as the day that he's going to decide whether or not he should re-appoint him. Harvey is being very like, transparent about the fact that he thinks he should not re-appoint him.

A: Mmm.

E: November 27th comes, and everyone goes to work, and Dan White on his way to work gets his old service weapon and he gets ten bullets and he goes to City Hall.

I: [nervous laughter] Ok.

E: He gets there and he climbs in through a basement window so he doesn't have to go through the metal detector, and he goes upstairs and he says he wants to see Harvey and Mayor Moscone. So he goes in to see Moscone first, and he quickly, they start having an argument and he yells at him, and so, Mayor Moscone has a little like room off the main room where he's got a little bar. So they go in there to have a drink and calm down and Dan White when he turns around from pouring the drinks, shoots him once in the arm, once in the chest and then he falls to the floor and then he shoots him twice more in the head.

So he goes to see Harvey and he takes him into his old office and he shoots him. He raises his arm to try and protect himself and he shoots him again. He falls and again he shoots two more bullets into the head and Harvey Milk dies. Dan White walks out of the office. People have heard the gunshots and they've kind of guessed that Dan White's done something, but he very methodically just gets out of there, so they don't get him, they don't apprehend him at this time.

A: Mmhm.

E: People, various people call the police and the ambulance and there's this massive confusion when they show up where some people are like "You're here for Harvey Milk. No no no it's the Mayor whose been shot, come this way," and other people are like "No come this way." They make the announcement that they've been killed and that the suspect is Dan White. And Dan pretty much immediately hands himself in.

I: Yeah.

E: He goes to a police office where he knows the people who work there and he hands himself in and he's treated very well. He's not really upset or anything like that, he remains calm and detached throughout this entire process and will continue to do so throughout the trial.

In the Castro residents start piling out into the streets, stores were closing early and you know there's just this sense of like disbelief. They decide that they're going to do a march on Castro Street down to City Hall. 10,000 people gather with candles and they march through the city with candles. The police are worried that this is going to erupt into violence, but the crowd is very subdued and very solemn. Just after he had

been elected, one night Harvey sat down in his shop late at night and he recorded three tapes that were to be played after his death. They're all essentially the same, he's working off the same notes. So there's some difference but they're all essentially the same content.

A: Mm.

I: Yeah.

E: I'm going to play you an excerpt of one. I had to edit this down a little bit, just so it was short enough to play on this and I felt really weird about doing that. But we definitely will post as much of it as we have on social media.

I: Yeah.

Harvey Milk [recording]"

*This Harvey Milk, speaking from my camera store on the evening of Friday, November 18th. This is to be played only in the event of my death by assassination. Knowing that, uh, I could be assassinated at any moment or any time, I feel it's important that some people know my thoughts.*

*I have never considered myself a candidate. I have always considered myself part of a movement, part of a candidacy. I've considered the movement the candidate, and I think that... I wish I had time to explain that everything I did, almost everything was done in the eyes of the gay movement.*

*I'd love to see every gay doctor come out, I'd love to see every gay lawyer, every gay judge, every gay bureaucrat, every architect, stand up and let the world know. That would do more to end prejudice overnight than anybody could ever imagine. I urge them to do that, urge them. Come out. Only that way will we start to achieve our rights.*

*I ask for the movement to continue, for the movement to grow... because last week I got that phone call from Altoona, Pennsylvania and my election gave somebody else, one more person hope. After all, that's what it's about. It's not about personal gain, it's not about ego, it's not about power. It's about giving those young people out there, in the Altoona, Pennsylvanias, hope. Gotta give 'em hope.*

E: The full tape is much longer than that. He talks about, you know, how he wants the public to react to his death and who he'd like to be appointed supervisor after him and a lot of those things. One copy of the tape has what is pretty much the most famous Harvey Milk quote, which is "If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door."

A number of memorial services are held. One is held at City Hall. One is held at Temple Emmanuel, which is a local synagogue. It's the first time an openly gay rabbi officiates at that temple.

A: Mmm.

E: Scott remembers watching that memorial service and just trying to convince himself that Harvey's in the coffin. Harvey's father and brother fly in from out of state. He's not really had a great deal to do with his family for quite a while. His mother died several decades ago I think and he hasn't had that much to do with his father or brother since then. His brother Robert would say that he'd thought that his brother had been a minor official and he didn't really realise how important he was until he flew in and saw the public reaction to his death.

His funeral is held at the opera house, which he would have loved. I'm going to pause now and tell you a story that I didn't realise I'd cut that I just loved. So when he was living in Greenwich Village still, they moved into this house, he and whichever partner he was with at the time, I don't remember, and he knew that the apartment faced out to where the townhouse of I think it was an opera singer, a famous singer he loved lived. And he was really trying to catch glimpse of her all the time.

[laughter]

E: And he never did I don't think, but he'd play her arias out the window, and then when they'd finish he'd applaud out the window and yell "Bravo!"

[laughter]

I: Aww.

E: I think she'd hear it.

[laughter]

E: Before he died, for a while he'd had a quote he'd copied down from a book and pinned up to his office wall, and it was written into Harvey's memorial program. It's from Victor Hugo, it was, "All forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come."

5,000 people attend the funeral. There are another thousand crowded in the lobby listening via a loudspeaker system, and a number of eulogies are given of course. Some of them are quite traditional what you'd expect. One of his friends says

*We must never forget his smile, his courage and his sense of justice. That is why he spent so much time with us and why he gave us everything he had.*

And then there were others that were more playful, they had more levity to them. A doctor who had been friends with Harvey asked him once "What can we do for gay people in the area?" and Milk replied "Write more prescriptions for Quaaludes."

The service ends and someone tells people to take all of the like, thousands of flowers that have been brought, saying that nothing should be allowed to die here and people take them and hand them out to strangers all throughout the city and on the trams and everything.

A: Aww.

E: He's cremated and his friends and his lovers gather on a boat to scatter his ashes into the Pacific. Scott had gone to pick up his ashes and he'd been given them in a brown plastic box and he'd wrapped them up in comic book pages before he came to this event because he knew that Harvey wouldn't have wanted to be seen in public in plastic.

A and I: Aww.

E: So they have this party on this boat and Harvey's ashes are sitting there wrapped up in comic book pages. It's got a single long-stemmed rose on the top of the box and they wrote RIP on it in rhinestones.

[laughter]

E: Which is just lovely.

I: Aww.

E: Yes. And they scatter him into the Pacific.

So now we're going to discuss the aftermath of this situation and the most prominent part of that is of course what happens to Dan White. Police officers are very vocal in their support of Dan White, he was of course one of them. They're wearing and putting around the slogan 'Free Dan White'.

I: How do they justify this? Like, he literally walked into the Town Hall and shot the mayor, didn't he?

E: Yes.

I: [laughs] Like, what are they doing?

E: I don't know. They also kind of realise that they can probably get away with a bit more now and they're much harsher on the gay community than they have been in several years. So for the first time in years in San Francisco uniformed police officers are coming into gay bars for like any petty thing, like pinball licenses and, you know, beating people up and making arrests and things like that.

I: Yep.

E: Dan's trial starts. Jurors are excluded from it if they at all seem to be like, gay or sympathetic to gay rights or anything like that.

A: Mmm.

E: It ends up with a jury of mostly white working class Catholics, so like Dan White.

A and I: Mmhm.

E: Obviously his lawyer can't hope to argue that he hadn't committed the murders - he committed the murders. Instead the argument is that he was operating under diminished capacity to make rational decisions because he was dealing with depression and therefore he was incapable of premeditated murder, so it could not have been a first degree murder.

A: Okay.

E: Also they're arguing that he had been dealing with events that had so offended his values that he had killed them in a fit of rage and so also it wasn't premeditated or anything like that.

I: I mean, it has to have been - he didn't normally bring the gun into work.

E: No, exactly! The bringing the gun, the climbing in through the basement window and all that.

I: Yeah.

E: There's a lot of discussion about him protecting family and traditional values. And the defence also constantly talks about how Dan was a family man, and constantly brings up that Harvey had been gay.

I: Yup.

E: Just keeping that in the mind of the jury. They play Dan's confession that he'd recorded at the police station the day that he'd committed the murders. And there are like members of the jury who cry in sympathy for Dan because he sounded really overwhelmed on the tape. They call a bunch of psychiatrists in and they basically say "Yeah he could never have premeditated the murders." So, we pointed out he goes in through the basement window instead of going through the front doors where the metal detector is, and a psychiatrist says that that was done so as not to embarrass the police officer who was there with having to deal with the situation and he said, quote: "It seems to me he takes special consideration not to hurt other people's feelings".

A: What, because he didn't walk his gun in through the front door?

E: Yup.

A: Okay.

E: Someone else testified that the reason why Dan White shot Mayor Moscone was because he was too moral a man to punch him in the face, because you know, shooting is a much more impersonal and therefore moral means of violence.

I: One of these kills someone and the other one does not.

E: One member of the jury after the trial was done specifically said that that had impressed him and swayed his opinion.

I: Oh my God.

E: Yep.

A: I can't believe people can think like this.

E: Yes.

A: Like, that's just, illogical.

I: The fact that they're going here, "Oh he couldn't have pre-meditated it, he wasn't in his right mind. Anyway he took special care not to hurt people's feelings."

E: Yeah.

I: Like, you can't have both of these.

E: Yeah. Another psychiatrist talked about how Dan had clearly been depressed, and he mentions a bunch of different behaviours as symptoms of this. So things like not being able to sleep. And one of them, and the one that got the most reaction in the press, was he mentioned that he'd started eating a lot of junk food instead of his normal diet, which was a very healthy diet and he also mentioned that sugar could help worsen mood swings. And this is quite a famous aspect of this trial, because it was somewhat misreported as what came to be known as the 'Twinkie defence' as them defending Dan White by saying that like being on a sugar high or eating a lot of junk food could lead to you killing people and not being responsible for it.

A: I mean that's about as sensible as what they did say.

E: That's true. But yeah, you hear this a lot that like Dan White got off because he ate too many Twinkies and then had a sugar rush and killed a bunch of people. And that's not quite true. Like, it's still absolute...

I: ...garbage.

E: Yeah, but it's not quite the garbage that gets said about it.

A and I: Yeah.

E: The Dead Kennedys did a version of, you know that song *I Fought the Law* where The Clash does the most famous version of it, where they rewrote the lyrics to be about it, and I can't remember exactly what but they rewrite to be something like "I was the law, so I won" and things like that.

A: Yeah.

E: And like "Twinkies are my best friend".

[laughter]

E: And all those sorts of comments.

A: Okay, okay.

I: I'm just like, quite angry for every person I know with depression who has never killed anyone right now.

E: Yeah.

A: Mm.

I: Like, yeah. All of them.



E: Yeah. You may be wondering what the prosecutor's doing during this time.

A: Mm.

I: [laughs] Yeah.

E: And so was the press. He basically just does not seem to try very hard. He needs to paint that there's like premeditation and malice involved and we've talked about some ways that you could go about doing that. There's also the fact that there's this growing animosity between these two men that's very well publicly documented that doesn't come up.

A: Mm.

E: He doesn't really try to press the question of the motive at all. There's speculation in the press that the prosecution and the defence had some kind of arrangement.

A: Mm.

I: Yeah.

E: We don't know, he did a terrible job. The verdict comes back and he is charged with two counts of voluntary manslaughter. So he is going to go to prison for the maximum sentence for that, which is seven years eight months.

I: He literally walked in with a gun and shot two people, like, I don't know what they want here.

E: Yeah, yeah.

I: Okay, okay.

E: I mean, this is what happens when you're a like, white straight ex-cop.

I: Yeah. This is true, this continues to be a problem in America today.

E: Uh-huh.

A: Mmhm.

E: He goes to prison and they do a psychiatric evaluation there and they decide that he doesn't need any therapy or any treatment because there are no signs of mental illness, so...

A: Uh-huh.

E: He ends up serving five years, and then is released for good behaviour. I guess he's out on parole, and two years after he commits suicide.

So of course the gay community in San Francisco is also very angry about this. A reporter called Cleeve Jones who was an activist in the community at that time, for his reaction to this and he tells a reporter "This means that in America, it's alright to kill faggots". He goes into his bathroom, throws up, and then goes out

to the streets to start a riot.

I: Yeah.

A: Yup.

E: Yeah. So thousands of people march on City Hall that night.

A: So is this the night that he gets his sentence?

E: Yep.

A: Yep.

E: It's a very different atmosphere from the vigil, the candlelit vigil for Harvey, there's a lot of anger...

A: Yeah.

E: ...anger in the crowd tonight. They had a sound system that had been set up on the steps for them to like, you know, yell into a bullhorn into. And the police show up and they trash it. And then they realise that the crowd's angry and the police have to retreat into City Hall.

[laughter]

E: They start throwing stones at City Hall, all of the windows are broken. A line of Harvey's friends stand in front of the building to try and prevent the riot, there's a whole bunch of different reasons for this but they all agree that they don't want it to happen. More police show up, and they're relieved because they think things are going to calm down now, and they sit to down to kind of demonstrate like, everything's calm. Police come up and start beating them, and tear-gassing them. A whole line of police cars ends up getting set on fire. After three hours, the police who are in City Hall come out and there's just a bunch of skirmishes between protesters and the police where they're just beating on each other. The police aren't really used to at this point gay people like actively fighting back in situations like this, they don't expect it.

But no-one's having it tonight, so they rip branches off of trees, they rip chrome off of city buses, they rip asphalt off the street to beat the police with.

[laughter]

I: Wow.

E: And that goes until it just kind of naturally dies out. So over in Castro Street, things are peaceful, people aren't rioting over there, and bunch of police drive over there in riot gear. They charge into bars and just beat anyone they can find. Eventually the police chief shows up and orders everyone to stop, and they reluctantly do. At least 100 gay people are hospitalised, 61 cops were also hospitalised.

I: Look, that was like, not a bad job.

[laughter]

E: It comes to be known as the White Night Riots. So, going to segue a little bit for a moment here. It's generally said about Harvey that he was the first openly gay politician to be elected to office in America.

A: Mmhm.

E: This is said in like, countless articles about him, like very well-respected news organisations print this about him, and it's not true. A woman called Kathy Kozachenko was elected to the Ann Arbor City Council in April of 1974, she was an out lesbian. Another woman, Elaine Noble, also in 1974 just a few months later was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and this received international and national press, this was a huge deal.

I: Yeah.

E: Elaine Noble, incidentally, was also Rita Mae Brown's partner. Rita Mae Brown wrote Rubyfruit Jungle, which is quite a like, famous early queer book. But it's Harvey that we remember. I looked up articles about this, and people are like, "Why on earth is this?" And you know, I think there's a number of reasons that are like, pretty obvious.

I: Yeah.

E: There's the fact that the movie says it's him, just like, blatantly says so. There's the fact that I think he's like very very theatrical, and he builds being gay into his campaign, and he's a man.

I: Yes.

A: Yep.

E: And then of course there's also the fact that he becomes a martyr for the gay community.

A: Yeah.

E: It's the tag he's known by, 'first openly gay elected politician' and-

I: It's not true.

E: It's not true. And that doesn't undermine what an important figure he is to our history, but Kathy Kozachenko and Elaine Noble are also important to our history.

I: I mean possibly they are just harder to make a movie out of.

E: Yeah.

I: They probably, you know, they don't have that kind of narrative.

E and A: Mm.

E: I think, I can't remember which one of them it was and I apologise, I was reading interviews with one of them, was talking about how you know "I was elected in spite of it not because of it" and it was just kind of...

I: Yeah.

E: ...not a very significant part of her time in office. Whereas Harvey is in the centre of gay life in American being like "I'm gay and I am here to be a politician."

A: Yeah.

E: And then he got shot.

I: Yeah.

E: The last thing I wanted to talk to you about was, the night after the White Night Riots was Harvey's 49th birthday, or it would have been.

A: Aww.

E: And there was a celebration planned for it. And the day after the White Night Riots, the press weren't sure if this was going to go ahead and they were seeking statements from the gay community and they were very surprised that everyone was very strongly stating "Yes it's going to go ahead" and no-one would in any way apologise for the riots. And it does go ahead.

A: Mm.

E: Things are very tense, there's a lot of fear that violence is going to break out. You know there are lawyers who have green arm bands just in case people are being arrested to kind of like, take names and think like that. There's covert first-aid stations kind of hidden down alleyways and things like that. But it doesn't erupt into a riot, it's a party and they dance and they celebrate Harvey Milk and 20,000 people sing *Happy Birthday* on the streets of San Francisco.

I: Aww.

E: With that, we've been Queer as Fact. Thank you very much for listening. If you would like to find out more about us, we're all over social media. We're on Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook as Queer As Fact. You can also contact us more directly at [queerasfact@gmail.com](mailto:queerasfact@gmail.com) if you have any like, strongly worded feelings after this you want to share with us, in any capacity.

[laughter]

E: We are on iTunes, which is probably the easiest place to find us, and if you do listen to use on iTunes we would really really love it if you could leave us a review and a rating out of five stars. It really really helps us reach a wider audience. And we have some reviews. So we're going to read them whilst crying to you. Which I'm sure the people who wrote them will love.

iTunes is a mysterious beast, and really rations how it reveals reviews to us for some reason, so if you do review us and we don't read it out quickly - I mean first of all that's because we record like as much in advance as possible - but also it's because maybe we haven't seen it yet. So if you review us and we don't mention it, don't think we don't love you. We love you so much.

[laughter]

E: This is like, we get paid in these reviews essentially, so... ClarissaB451 writes:

*Ever since I discovered it, this has been my favourite podcast...*

A: Aww.

E: Yeah. We're someone's favourite podcast. We're at least like three people's favourite podcast.

I: Yeah. And they're not us three.

[laughter]

E: We've memorised your URLs and we think of you with love.

*It is interesting and informative and I love the commentary that the hosts give on the different subjects. It has really made me think of what it means to be queer now and across time. It means so much to me to get to hear such diverse stories about people and subjects that history so often ignores. I love Queer as Fact and the great work they are doing!*

A and I: Aww.

E: And this, this was my favourite one.

[laughter]

So the subject is 'In-Depth LGBT History' and it's by Prairie\_Dog.

A: That's a good start.

E: Hello Prairie\_Dog.

*Queer as Fact does their research, and then brings us an in depth discussion of their chosen topic.*

A: We do.

E:

*These range from ancient Greco-Roman artefacts to more recent topics. The presenters give us a panel discussion of the topic at hand, and provide context for the modern listener. Definitely recommended for those who want to learn about LGBT+ topics in history. In addition, almost all the presenters have really cool accents, so there's that too!*

I: Almost all.

[laughter]

E: Who doesn't?!

I: What's wrong? Which one of us is missing?

E: I mean, I've thought about this, and you two have the same accent.

I and A: Yeah.

E: You grew up in the same area of this country, like there is no way that it's one of you.

A: So it's you or Hamish.

I: I mean, I feel like what's happening here like, the three of us, Hamish is the distinct one.

E: That's true. I mean, it's either me or Hamish, because I have a South Australian accent and he's got...

A: ...a Hamish accent.

I: A weird...

E: ...a Hamish accent. An upper class accent. Uhh, so write back to us and tell us whose accent you hate.

[laughter]

E: Like, I won't be offended, I just want to know.

[laughter]

E: We also wanted to just quickly mention suggestions that we've been getting for episodes from people. We love it when you give us suggestions, because it means that people actually like the podcast and want to hear more of the podcast and that's thrilling. We will just quickly note that we have about 40 suggestions now, which is like a year and a half worth of episodes. So don't stop sending them if you want to, but just know that if we don't get to them quickly, like, we're trying.

[laughter]

E: Also, most of the suggestions we get are kind of like, the last two centuries and in Europe or America, and about like...

I: ...white people.

E: ...white people. And men quite often specifically. So if you have suggestions from further back in history or about trans people or about people who are not white or just generally who are not from those places we'd really really love those too. And if you send us those suggestions we'll bump them up to the top of the queue because we really want to have more diversity in this podcast than we necessarily always manage to.

We'll be back on the 1st of March and we have a bit of a special episodes for you guys. If you listen to our Baron von Steuben episode you will have noticed that we had someone we'd never had on the podcast before, our friend Jessie. And she's going to be returning to tell us about the history of queer film in Australia.

[music plays]