

14 min

Queen's Mate

The Scene: 1940's; a small town; the 2 room efficiency apartment of Leo M.

Characters: Leo: 40ish; Transvestite, asexual; Somewhat feminine in speech and gesture but not overdone.  
Elise: 40ish; Cross-dresser, asexual; Short hair with 'sideburns'; Dressed as a man including fedora and tie; No makeup; Men's shoes.  
Two offstage voices; boys preferably

Scene 1:

Leo: (He is dressed in a T-shirt and slacks. He is shoeless) "Now where are you? Come on kit kat! Here's your dinner! Oh, come on out, you bad boy!" ( He wanders with a bowl of cat food)

Voice: "Hey! You! Whyn't you dress like yer supposed to? What are you tryin' to be...a man?"

2<sup>nd</sup> Voice: "C'mere Elise! We ain't gonna hurt you! We just wanna see somethin'!"

Elise: "You get away from me! I'll tell your mother on you, Bobby! And you too, Eddie! You two better stop botherin' me!"

Leo: (He is peering out his window by pulling the curtain open a bit) "Oh, my! Those bullies are after poor Ellis, again! What should I do, kit kat? If I go out and say something, they 'll come after me!" (He sits at the kitchen table. He is clearly shaken.)

Voice: "If you tell my mother, I'll break yer face, Elise! (He stresses the pronunciation)

Elise: "Why are you doing this? I never bothered you! You're just a bastard punk, is what you are!"

Voice 2: "I always wanted to see what Elise looks like under that shirt!"

Elise: "You stay away, you hear? Or I'll...I'll kick you! Stay away from me!"

Voice: "Oh, I'm so scared! Elise has got balls after all! She's so tough!"

Leo: (He has gotten up and opened his door a crack) "Elise! Elise!... I mean Eliss! You can come in here! Come on...hurry!"

Voice2: "Jeez! It's Leo the queer! He's comin' to the recue! Stand back! He's dangerous!"

Leo: "Ellis...come on in here! Please come on before they..."

Voice: "Yeah, ya better get inside there with him! Youse two freaks should stick together!"

Elise: (She pushes door open and stands in doorway) "I can handle these two, Leo! But...uh... maybe I'll just step in for a minute! Thanks! Not that I'm afraid of those two!"

Leo: "Just come in, please! I'm not saying...well, you can stay... until they go!" (He backs up into room)

Voice 2: " Ah, go on , ya fag! We wasn't gonna hurt youse!

Voice: "Nah! Leo's the fag! I don't know what ya call Elise! Just a freak, I guess! Come on, lets go!"

Elise: (She enters, with a bit of a swagger) "See, the little bastards are going! I told you I could handle them. Uh...thanks again. These neighborhood kids! They're getting worse all the time! Well...maybe I should be going."  
(She turns toward the still open door)

Leo: "Maybe you better stay for a few minutes. They could be hiding down the block...in the bushes, or something!"

Elise: "I don't think so. But, if it'll make you feel better, I'll wait...just for a few minutes?"

Leo: "I'll just close the door." (He does) "Why don't you sit down? I could get you some iced tea. It's so hot today!"  
(He goes for the tea)

Elise: "These digs aren't bad! Real homey! You been here a while, Leo?"

Leo: "I'm here about twenty years. I left my folks' house when I was nineteen. They...uh...didn't like my friends."  
(He puts tea on table)

Elise: "Thanks! It is pretty hot out today! It's not so bad in here, though! You got a nice cross ventilation. And the trees help keep it cool, too!" (She sips tea) "This is pretty good. Thanks!"

Leo: "Oh, my God! Look at me! You must think I'm such a slob!" (He exits into next room) "I'll just be a minute! Now, where's my robe? Oh, here it is!" (He enters closing a very feminine robe)

Elise: "That's some robe!" (pause) "Well...I don't hear anything from those kids! I guess I better be going!" (She pushes tea away and starts to rise)

Leo: "Wait! You didn't finish your tea! And those bullies could still be out there! Is there something...Oh! It's the robe, isn't it?"

Elise: "Look, I don't give a damn what you wear inside or outside your house. It's none of my business! I just better get going!"

Leo: "I'll take it off, if it bothers you! But, please...stay a little while, O.K.?" (He opens robe)

Elise: "O.K.! O.K.! Jesus! I'll stay for a few minutes! And you can leave the damn thing on! It don't bother me! Leave it on!"

Leo: "It's just that, well, for years I see you walking to work in the morning and walking home at night, and I always thought you looked like a nice person, and we never said more than a 'hello' in all that time. I just thought it might be nice...friendly even to talk...you know?"

Elise: "I'll stay and finish my tea. But I don't have many...friends! People I work with, we just talk about Goddamn work, you know! I mean, they go their way, and I go mine!"

Leo: (pause) "You curse a lot!"

Elise: "What? What the Hell do you mean by that?"

Leo: "Well, that's what I mean! You use a lot of strong language. You don't have to! It doesn't make you more..."  
(He hesitates)

Elise: "More what? What were you going to say? Come on, spit it out!...Goddamn it!"

Leo: "Well, you do work hard at looking like a man. I'm sorry! Don't get mad!"

Elise: "Well, at least you had the guts to say what you're thinking! I'll say that for you! But, from where I'm sitting you shouldn't be talking. Kinda like the pot calling the kettle black!"

Leo: "Oh, that's rich! That's a good one! You're right, of course! Except I only dress up here in my house! I'd never dare go outside! I mean, I'd like to, but I'd be afraid! But you! You do it every day of your life! I think you are very brave!"

Elise: "In the beginning, it was a little...tough! But I just had to do it! It feels right! My mother used to cry! She'd buy me these frilly dresses and heels, and my God! The underwear! You wouldn't believe what women..."

Leo: "Oh, I know! Believe me! But I think the underwear is the best part! I mean...well, from what I see in catalogues and such..."

Elise: "How did you know to call me Ellis?"

Leo: "I don't know where I heard it! I don't think I overheard you saying it. But it's such a small world, and everybody knows everybody...you know what I mean?"

Elise: "That was the first thing to go! Before the clothes, I mean! I couldn't stand the name Elise! It was so girlish! Ugh! So I just started saying my name is Ellis! And I started wearing some of my Dad's clothes. He was a small man, and they fit pretty good. The people at work stared, but they kept their distance. They let me alone and I felt...right! I felt normal! Not like when I was a 'girl'! Goddamn, that felt weird!"

Leo: "Language."

Elise: "What? Oh, yeah! Sorry! So, what do you do? I mean around the house? Do you wear...a dress? Or is the robe it? God, I have to tell you, that robe looks like something my mother would wear!"

Leo: "Oh, this thing is just for cleaning up and cooking and such! Actually, it was my mother's!" (They both laugh) "But sometimes, I like to dress up, you know! Like I was going out. I have a few dresses, and I like a low heel. I have a...Oh, you must think I'm crazy!"

Elise: "No! No! I swear! I don't think anything is wrong in it! If it helps you to feel...like you ought to feel! I guess I'm glad to know that I'm not the only one, you know?"

Leo: "I started to say that I have a wig! My hair's too short, so I bought this wig!" (Pause) "Maybe sometime, I'd show it to you! But...you'd probably laugh!"

Elise: "No! No I wouldn't! I'd like to see it, Leo! I wouldn't laugh to see you dressed up as you...the real you! But, what do you call yourself? I mean your real self! Leo's O.K., but not for an elegant woman!"

Leo: "When I'm dressed up, my name is Leah! I saw it in a book and I always thought it was a pretty name! Oh, and Ellis! I would like that very much! I'd dress up for you! But you have to promise that you wouldn't think I was..."

Elise: "Jeez, Leo! I said I think it's O.K., didn't I? I won't laugh...I won't think anything about it! But look, I gotta go home now. Maybe Friday, if you want, I'll come over and we can go out and have a drink!"

Leo: "Go out? Oh, no! I don't think so, Elise! I never...I couldn't!"

Elise: "You think about it, Leo! Now, I gotta go!"

Blackout

Scene 2: A few days later

Leo: (He is wearing his robe and lipstick. He is about to powder his face) "Oh, oh, oh! I hope this isn't a mistake! Maybe I should..." (knock at door) "Oh, my! Is that Ellis already?" (Goes to door peers through curtain) "It's Ellis! I don't think I can do this!" (more knocking)

Ellis: (off) "Hey Leo! Open up! It's me, Ellis!"

Leo: "Oh, my Gosh! He's yelling out there! (Opens door) Ellis! Come in! I...didn't hear you! Come in!"

Ellis: "Yeah, sure! Hey, your lipstick is a little crooked!" (points to one side of Leo's mouth)

Leo: "Here? Is that better?" (Leo wipes at mouth with tissue)

Ellis: "No! Here, let me see that tissue." (Ellis takes tissue and attempts to fix Leo's mouth) "Sit down, you're too tall for me to do this!" (Leo sits) "Where's that lipstick? Oh, here it is! Now, sit still!" (Works on Leo's mouth)

Leo: "Ellis, I don't think..."

Ellis: "Quiet! Don't move your mouth! I'm almost done!"

Leo: "I'm sorry!" (He talks without moving his lips) "But Ellis! I don't think I can do this!"

Ellis: "Shhh! I'm almost done! Don't try to talk!"

Leo: "Ellis! Did you hear me? I said I don't..."

Ellis: "I heard you! Don't worry! It'll be a breeze! I told you, we won't go until it's dark! And where I'm going to take you, nobody will say a word! In fact, they'll love you!" (Ellis has finished Leo's mouth)

Leo: "I heard of those places! I don't belong there, believe me! Those people are...well, they're so aggressive!"

Ellis: "Leo, please trust me! I'm not going to take you to a place where they grab your ass! This place is a nice, quiet, private room where nobody will bother you! I swear! It's a little older group, and they all know each other. Jesus! I told you! I wouldn't take you someplace where you could get in trouble!"

Leo: "I know! I'm sorry! Uh...Language!... It's just...Oh, Ellis! What if they laugh at me? I'm not very pretty, even at my best! I've seen some people who look gorgeous when they're dressed! They should go out...not me! I'm just a big ugly freak!"

Ellis: "Stop that right now! If you really don't want to go, all right! But you're not going to tell me that you're ugly! You're not ugly! Jesus!" (Leo raises his hand...mouths 'Language' ) " Yeah...yeah...yeah! Now, get that idea out of your head! You are pretty! Now are you going to go, or not?"

Leo: "I'm sorry, Ellis! It's just...Uh...will you wait here while I get my dress on?"

Ellis: "Sure! Go on! I'll wait here! I'll help myself to some tea, if that's O.K.?"

Leo: "Thanks! Sure! Help yourself! I'll just be a minute!" (exits into bedroom)

Ellis: "I think you should put on some rouge! Don't you?"

Leo: (off) "Oh, my Gosh! I was about to when you knocked! You made me forget!"

Ellis: (sees compact on table with hand mirror) "It's right here! On the table!" (Takes compact and opens bedroom door) "Here you go!"

Leo: (off) "Shriek! Oh, my God! Ellis! I'm practically naked! Jesus! Don't you knock?"

Ellis: "I'm sorry...I'm sorry! Oh, and Leo...Leah! Language!" (closes door)

### Blackout

Scene 3. Later that night. Leo is sitting at the table holding an ice pack to his eye. He is wearing his robe. Elise is in the bedroom.

Elise: (from offstage) "Leo, I'll hang your dress up in the closet, all right?"

Leo: (very quietly) "Yes...allright."

Elise: "I didn't hear you! What did you say?"

Leo: "I said all right!"

Elise: (entering from bedroom) "There's a small rip near the hem. I'm pretty sure that it can be fixed."

Leo: "Sure. Thanks. Uhh...I'm pretty tired. Maybe you better go now."

Elise: "If you want. I thought maybe you'd like to talk about what happened."

Leo: "I don't want to talk about anything! I just want to be left alone!"

Elise: "Look, if you want to sit here and feel sorry for yourself, all right. But, I think you'd be better off if you let your feelings out, you know?"

Leo: "I've been trying not to let my feelings out! If I let my feelings out I'm going to say some things that I'll regret saying!"

Elise: "Like what, for instance? You don't think it was my fault what happened tonight, do you? Because if you do..."

Leo: "Then whose fault was it? I ask you! If you hadn't made me go out like that...and made me think that I could be...that I could feel like a human being! That I could have a few hours in my stinking life when I didn't feel like a freak! That I could talk to other people who weren't laughing at me behind my back!"

Elise: "Look! That guy...I don't know what got into him...I never saw him act like that! But you...you can't let every thing that other people say get to you! He was just..."

Leo: "He called you a freak! He put his hands on you...like you were a...a dog! I couldn't let him do that! And then, when I told him to stop...he pushed me! He said that we were both too ugly to be seen in public! I couldn't stand him saying that to you! Or to me!"

Elise: "I have to admit that you gave as good as you got! That shot you gave him with your purse...I think you broke his nose!"

Leo: "Yeah...well look at my eye!" (he removes the icepack to reveal a black eye) "This shiner will take a week to go down! But at least I didn't any blood on my dress!"(he begins to chuckle) "All that blood and none of it got on us!"

Elise: "I didn't do too bad myself! I kicked him where he won't forget it for a while!" (she is laughing) "You mind if I have some ice tea? I am really thirsty!"

Leo: " Oh...I'll make a pitcher! I'm awful thirsty, all of a sudden, too! You want some cookies? I baked them earlier."

Elise: "What kind?"

Leo: " Chocolate chip...they're my favorite! Oh, look! It's only ten o'clock! Whyn't you stay and talk for a while?"

Elise: "I think I'd like that...Leah. I think I'd like that."

The End