HBO’s ’Looking’ Now Stars a Bear With a ’House in Virginia’

January 15, 2015 By Trent Straube

As I started watching the season two premiere of HBO’s gay series *Looking*, I suddenly remembered what I thought all during last year’s episodes: “Oh right, I never liked any of these mopey characters. Too self-involved. This glacial pacing bores me. What’s with the washed-out palette, don’t bright colors exist in San Francisco ... Why, exactly, am I watching this show anyway?”

But I stuck with the new episode, and guess what? It wasn’t that bad. In fact, I actually liked it. A highlight for me was--SPOILER ALERTS!--when the show’s main characters attend a Radical Faerie-ish party in a forest and Agustin (Frankie Alvarez) meets an intriguing guy named Eddie (Daniel Franzese of *Mean Girls* fame, pictured above).

Eddie is a bear who works at a shelter for trans youth and describes himself as “Saint Eddie, the hairy-ass mother of the Mission.” I noticed what looked like a plus-sign tattoo on his arm and wondered what that could mean.

All was answered in a scene the next morning, when Agustin replayed the night’s shenanigans to his friends, saying that Eddie is “a big bear who cares about trans people and has a house in Virginia.” When a friend asked about the house, it’s explained that the phrase is slang for being HIV positive.

And then something miraculous happened: No one freaked out! All the characters took the information in stride and then conversation about the party continued. I found that refreshing, especially in light of news that Eddie will be a recurring character, as will issues of HIV.

Frankie Alvarez, in an interview with Queerty, said this when asked about the “house in Virginia” plot point and another character who has “AIDS hysteria”:

All I will say is it’s a big plot point. It’s so perceptive of you that you picked up on that in the first couple of

episodes because the writers are setting that up for later. That's all I should say. We very much continue to be on the forefront of what it means to be a gay man or woman in today's modern world. Obviously, issues of PrEP and Truvada certainly do come up multiple times throughout the season.

Hmmm. I wonder if Agustin will start dating Eddie and go on PrEP as a precaution? And I'm very curious to see how the show presents the PrEP/Truvada debate, which is so polarizing among gays in the real world.

Looks like I'll be watching another season of *Looking*. In the meantime, I got to thinking about that "House in Virginia" phrase. I had never heard it before. But it did come up on Urban Dictionary, along with a shockingly rude and stigmatizing example of "polite" dinner conversation:

Really, Shannon finds out someone has a house in Virginia, and her response is "remind me to keep my distance from him"?!?? If you can think of a better reply you'd like her to utter, why not email it to Urban Dictionary at this link?

On the bright side, I guess this Urban Dictionary entry illustrates exactly how enlightened the *Looking* episode was. Anyway... Were you, our POZ readers, familiar with the phrase "House in Virginia"? And do you know of any other, perhaps more modern, slang that's used in place of saying "I have HIV"? Have you come across a clever phrase for disclosing your status? I'd like to know. Comment on this blog, or send me a direct email at trents@poz.com. I'll be Looking for your answers.

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