



TLC SHOWCASE

James Robert Moore

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Introduction to *Not Good Enough*

Not Good Enough began as a deeply personal exploration of shame, self-worth, and the pressure to perform in a world that constantly demands more. At its core, the novel asks: what happens when the voice inside you - telling you you're not good enough - won't shut up, especially at a time in your life where you're going through a huge change - a break up!

More than anything though, I wrote this book because I wanted to read something that made me feel joy - specifically, queer joy. I'm passionate about queer stories that don't centre around trauma or tragedy, but instead celebrate love, messiness, humour, friendship, chosen family and the absurd beauty of it all. I craved a romcom that didn't erase queerness or sanitise it, but embraced it fully - with all the awkwardness and yearning that comes with falling in love again when you're still trying to figure out how to love yourself.

In 2023, I was incredibly fortunate to be selected for The Literary Consultancy's Free Reads Scheme - a huge turning point in the novel's journey. As part of the scheme, I received detailed feedback from a professional editor, whose insights were invaluable. They helped me see what was working, what wasn't, and - most importantly - what the heart of the story truly was. Their encouragement and constructive critique gave me the clarity and confidence I needed to shape the book into its final form, which the brilliant Muswell Press then wanted to publish!

The result is *Not Good Enough* - a queer romantic comedy that's raw, funny, honest, and full of heart. It's a story about trying (and failing) to keep it all together, about letting people in even when you're scared, and about learning that joy isn't something you have to earn - it's something that every queer person deserves! This is the book I needed to read - and I'm so proud it now exists in the world.

Extract from *Not Good Enough*

George Crawford is the most perfect man on the planet. He's insanely attractive, but not in a way that makes anyone feel inadequate about their own looks. He has a wonderful relationship with his Mum and Dad. He works hard, and has goals and dreams that he actually achieves. He writes his daily pages, and gives to charity and volunteers his own time to teach young people from low economic backgrounds about how to get into business. His jawline is solid, his hairline thick and strong, he's a good mover and knows all the words to *Rappers Delight*. His storytelling is charismatic, his jokes never too wordy and always with a killer punchline. He knows how to do first aid and he once saved a colleague from choking on a piece of roast chicken. On weekends you'll find him in the gym, where the sweat he produces makes him glisten rather than redden - he can play tennis, and chess, and always knows that one niche answer in a pub quiz. He's unflappable in the kitchen, where he bakes and creates delicious, hearty dishes that lie on beds of jus or that come with a parmesan tuile. He's earnest and doesn't show off about his salary, which is above average for someone his age working in an office in the City of London. He loves animals and the environment and once nursed a baby bird back to health after it flew into the patio doors. Mothers love him. Straight men are in awe but unthreatened by him. Women wish he was interested in them, or at the very least that he had some bisexual tendencies - but sadly for them he doesn't, because George Crawford is my boyfriend, and I fucking hate him. / The doorbell chimes. I push George off of me - a little more forcefully than I intend. He doesn't stir. Downstairs is a mess. Empty seven quid bottles of Prosecco decorate every surface. My mouth tastes fuzzy. The doorbell peels again. Niamh, my best friend, housemate and unpaid therapist sticks her head out of her bedroom doorway, last night's heavy mascara forcing her eyelids to remain firmly closed. "If that's Ocado or something I'll kill you. It's my half term. Choose the afternoon slot." She recedes back into her pit with a loud grunt. As if I could afford Ocado. I can make out the silhouette behind the glass. It's Mum. My-working-class-bull-in-a-china-shop-Mum. I specifically said Farewell to her last week. At the small Costa in the station. We had one latte each, shared a slice of almond Bakewell and she was back on the next train twenty minutes later. We do this once every three months. Twice if there's a birthday or a Bank Holiday. But of course she's decided to turn up at the house, in person, on the day my life is completely over. "Where is he then?!" "Mum, what are you doing?" "Well I couldn't let you go without saying goodbye to Gorgeous George - your better half - could I?" She barges past me, uninvited, revealing Leanne in the doorway. Hair

down to her calves, like she's been styled by Cousin It. "Hi Fuck-Face!" Leanne holds up a very obviously home-made sign that says 'GoOdbYe gorGoeus gEorGe'. Usually I'd take delight in pointing out that she's put the E and the O the wrong way round in the word 'gorgeous' but I just can't muster the energy. "Jesus, Leanne, did a five-year-old make that?" "Fuck off." "Why isn't my name on there?" "It is." She points to a small amendment in the bottom right hand corner which says 'and bye Fuck-Face'. My nineteen-year-old half-sister is baffling to me. I don't understand how we came from the same womb. In fact I've often wondered if I was adopted - prayed for it even. "Mum, is that Granny in the car?" "Oh yes, there's no point in letting her come in, she'll only settle," Mum says as she frumps down on the living room chair. "So, what, you're just going to leave her there?" "Calm down, I left a window open." I wave to my eighty-five-year-old Granny. She doesn't wave back. Leanne is trying to stick the sign up on the wall with tape. "Don't do that, it'll mark the walls. Mum, can you tell her." She tears a large piece with an obnoxious ripping sound. Mum coos at her, then catches my expression of horror. "Oh, don't give me that look. We're here because I thought you might want some help packing." Post-sixteen, Mum has never helped me with anything; I took myself on the train to college open days, booked my own driving lessons, moved myself into halls. I Had To Fend For Myself At Sixteen, she'd repeatedly say, And It Never Did Me Any Harm. Her response to any of my protests was that she'd spent enough money on me over the years, and on top of this my Dad hadn't paid her any maintenance all through my childhood. I assumed this was primarily because she had no idea who my Dad actually was, therefore it was quite hard to send him a letter demanding money for my upkeep. "I've done all the packing already, obviously, because...well...it is today that we're supposed to be leaving." "What do you mean 'supposed'. What's happened? What have you done?" My stomach does a single somersault.

About the Writer

James Robert Moore is a theatre director, actor & writer from Essex. He's worked on stage productions including *The Hunger Games*, *Shirley Valentine*, *2:22 A Ghost Story*, *Greatest Days*, *The Full Monty* and the *Calendar Girls* musical. *NOT GOOD ENOUGH* was shortlisted for the Penguin RandomHouse Write Now competition, and won the Literary Consultancy Free Reads Scheme. It is his debut novel.
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