



Check Please, West Columbus High School, Cerro Gordo, North Carolina (2003).

CHECK PLEASE by Jonathan Rand

Scene 1

LOUIS. Hi.

GIRL. Hi there.

LOUIS. It's great to meet you.

GIRL. You, too.

LOUIS. So how long have you lived in the city?

GIRL. Almost a year. Feels longer, though.

LOUIS. Three years for me. It's a great city.

GIRL. Definitely. What do you like most about it?

LOUIS. What do you like most about living here?

(Pause, as GIRL is only slightly noticeably confused.)

GIRL. Well... I love walking my dog in the park. Especially on a pretty day.

LOUIS. Oh yeah? I'm a little different, I guess. I'm more the kinda guy who likes walking my dog in the park on a pretty day.

(He chuckles.)

GIRL. Same here.

LOUIS. Oh and also—and this may just be me—but I have this thing for walking my dog in the park on a pretty day.

GIRL. No, I like that, too. I just said so.

LOUIS. So do you like watching TV?

GIRL. No.

LOUIS. Me, too! I love it!

(Pause.)

GIRL. Are you listening to me at all?

LOUIS. Sometimes I like to curl up with a bag of popcorn and get my Leno on. You like Leno?

GIRL. You really aren't listening.

LOUIS. Me, too! Jay Leno just cracks—me—up.

GIRL. This is ridiculous...

(Throughout the monologue below, GIRL gradually tries out different tactics to see how self-centered and non-reactive LOUIS truly is. She tries saying things to him like "excuse me" and "hello"; she tries whistling at him; she might try touching his nose with her index finger or a spoon for a few seconds; she could try walking over to him and temporarily turning his chair in the opposite direction. No matter what she does, LOUIS just keeps on trucking, as if she wasn't there.)

LOUIS. I mean, his comedy is a gift from the gods. You know what I'm talking about? I just get blown away every time I see his show, or one of his movies. Did you see *Ice Age 2*? You haven't? Stop what you're doing and rent it *now*. I'm telling you, Leno is the funniest guy on television, no doubt about it. He reminds me of me, actually. We have the same sense of humor. My roommate, Bill? He says I'm the funniest person he's ever met. I mean, he's entitled to his opinion, right? Anyway, sure I'm funny, but I've got my personality flaws. For example, sometimes I'm *too* funny. People don't realize it when I'm being serious!! Do you believe that?! But hey, enough about me. I'm talking up a storm here! Tell me about you.

GIRL. Or I could just leave now, since you're a self-centered tool.

(A pause; we assume he is going to break.)

LOUIS. I'm a Capricorn myself.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

GUY. Hi.

MELANIE. Hi.

GUY. It's so great to finally meet you.

MELANIE. Same here!

GUY. So where are you fr—

MELANIE. Wait, before you— Sorry. *(Meekly.)* This is so rude, but the Bears game is on right now? You don't mind if I check the score...

GUY. Oh, not at all. Totally.

MELANIE. *(As she pulls out her cell phone to check her web-browser.)* Thanks. I know this is such an awful thing to do on a first date, but it's late in the fourth quarter in a playoff game.

GUY. No worries.

MELANIE. Is it all right with you if I wear this earpiece? I promise it won't be distracting.

GUY. What's the score?

MELANIE. Packers by seven.

GUY. Uh-oh.

MELANIE. Nah, it's no big deal. It's just a game, right? So c'mon—enough about football. Let's hear about "Mister Mystery." Harriet's told me tons about you.

GUY. Man... The pressure's on now.

(They laugh together, genuinely. MELANIE's laugh then fades directly into her next line, which is suddenly serious.)

MELANIE. I'm just gonna check one more time.

(She digs into her purse.)

GUY. *(Smiling.)* No worries.

MELANIE. Is it all right with you if I put on this little earpiece thingy? It won't be distracting, I promise.

GUY. Sure.

MELANIE. *(As she puts the earpiece in her ear.)* I'm making the worst first impression, aren't I...

GUY. Not at all.

MELANIE. It's just because it's the playoffs. I'm usually normal.

GUY. It's really no—

MELANIE. Come on!!

GUY. What?

MELANIE. Oh, nothing—the line only gives Forte this huge running lane, but he fumbles the handoff. Sure, Pace recovered, but come on—this is the playoffs. You don't just cough up the ball like that. Now you're staring at third and long, and the whole season is riding on one play.

GUY. I hope ev—

MELANIE. WHAT?!

GUY. What?

MELANIE. PASS THE BALL!!

GUY. What's wrong?

MELANIE. It's third and long— Who runs it on third and long? Did Cutler suddenly FORGET that he has an ARM?!

(GUY looks around subtly at the other patrons.)

Oh my God. I'm being loud, aren't I.

GUY. *(Trying hard to be convincing.)* No...

MELANIE. Oh, I am. I'm so sorry. Look, how about this: I'll make it up to you. After dinner I'll buy you dessert at this tiny little bistro on 11th that nobody knows about. I think you'll just—PASS THE BALL!! Jesus, people! It's FOURTH DOWN! Pass the FRIGGING BALL!

GUY. Listen—we could go to a bar with a TV or something.

MELANIE. Oh please, no. I wouldn't do you that to you. The game's pretty much over anyway. *(She takes a deep breath, and is now very calm.)* Okay. I'm done. I got a little carried away there, didn't I? Let's order.

(They peruse for a moment, as if nothing has happened.)

GUY. *(Indicating the menu.)* Oh. Harriet said we should definitely try the—

(MELANIE suddenly lets out a bloodcurdling shriek and rips the menu in half.)

GUY. Or we could order something else.

MELANIE. *(Downtrodden.)* They lost...

GUY. Oh. I'm sorry.

MELANIE. *(Starting to tear up.)* They lost. The season's over..

GUY. Well—

(MELANIE breaks down, bawling. GUY thinks for a moment, then takes out a handkerchief and offers it to MELANIE. She uses it to blow her nose.)

GUY. I'm so sorry. Is there anything I can do?

MELANIE. *(Still weepy.)* The Bears suck...

GUY. Aww, no. They don't suck.

MELANIE. They do... They suck.

GUY. They're probably just having a bad season—

(MELANIE grabs his collar, pulls him extremely close, and speaks in a horrifying, monstrous, deep voice.)

MELANIE. THE BEARS SUCK.

GUY. *(Weakly.)* The Bears suck.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

GIRL. Hi.

KEN. Hello.

(He kisses her hand, lingering there a second too long.)

GIRL. It's great to meet you.

KEN. The pleasure...is all mine.

GIRL. So...where are you from? I can't place the accent.

KEN. I was raised in the mountains of Guam...and was born...on the shore of New Jersey.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Do you want to order some appetizers?

KEN. Anything...which will ensure happiness for your beautiful lips.

(He looks at menu, unaware of her subtle look of disbelief. She finally looks down at her menu.)

GIRL. Ooh! The shrimp cocktail looks good.

KEN. Shrimp... A creature of the ocean. The ocean...which is not nearly as lovely as the ocean of your eyes.

GIRL. Listen, can I ask you sort of a...blunt question?

KEN. Anything which your heart desires will be—

GIRL. Yeah yeah. Are you going to be like this for the rest of dinner?

KEN. Whatever do you mean?

GIRL. You know, all creepy and nauseating?

(Pause.)

KEN. Yes.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

GUY. Hi.

MARY. Hi.

GUY. It's so great to finally meet you.

MARY. Same here! Listen: I was wondering if you were free next Friday.

GUY. Uh, I think so. Why?

MARY. Well, if dinner goes well tonight, I wanted to go ahead and schedule a second date.

GUY. Oh. Okay, sure.

MARY. See, 'cause here's the thing: My parents are having a housewarming party at their new place on August 2nd, and if you and I hit it off tonight and end up getting serious, that party would be the perfect opportunity for you to meet them, so I'd like to squeeze in six dates beforehand, because if we don't, my parents might be skeptical of our relationship, which, after you pop the question, could make everyone uncomfortable during the ceremony, which could then carry over during our three-week honeymoon in Cozumel, and most important than anything else, it could really take a toll on little Madison.

(Pause.)

GUY. Wow...

MARY. What? What is it? You don't like the name Madison? We could change it. My second, third, and fourth choices are Fiona, Riley, and Apple.

GUY. No, all of those are...great names...

MARY. Something's on your mind. You know can always tell your little bunny rabbit *anything*.

GUY. The problem is: you seem to have our whole relationship figured out—and we just met thirty seconds ago. I mean, you've got everything pinned down but the wedding dress.

MARY. Does that make you uncomfortable?

(Beat.)

(As she withdraws several boxes:) Because if it does, we can pick it out now.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(Lights up to MARK dressed in nothing but a burlap sack. He's looking at the menu, as if nothing is out of the ordinary. GIRL is looking at him, expressionless. After several moments, he folds the menu, his dinner decision made. He looks up. Pause.)

MARK. (Innocent:) What?

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

GUY. Hi.

PEARL. Hi.

GUY. It's so nice to meet you.

PEARL. Same here. Julia's told me a lot about you.

GUY. She's a great girl.

(The moment GUY begins speaking the above line, PEARL quickly and slickly steals a fork. GUY thinks he saw wrong. PEARL continues on as if nothing has happened.)

PEARL. Yeah. So much fun to be around. We've been friends for something like...six years, I think?

GUY. (As PEARL quickly steals the rest of the utensils:) Where'd you meet? In school?

PEARL. Yeah. We played soccer. Both second-stringers, keeping the bench nice and warm for everyone else.

(They laugh together. During their laugh, PEARL swipes her napkin.)

Seriously, Julia is one of my favorites. And she's got great taste, so when she told me about you, I was definitely on board.

(The moment GUY begins speaking the next line, PEARL swiftly and deftly removes the flower from the vase, pours the contents of her glass into the vase, pockets the glass, and replaces the flower in the vase.)

GUY. That's very — sweet...

PEARL. No, really — I've been looking forward to this for a while.

GUY. *(As PEARL takes the flower.)* I'm flattered.

PEARL. So... You hungry? I'm about ready.

(PEARL picks up her menu; GUY does likewise. The moment GUY begins speaking, PEARL slides the menu into her jacket.)

GUY. I'm pretty hungry, too — you know, I can see that you're stealing. You don't have to play it off like you're not.

PEARL. What? What are you talking about?

GUY. *(As PEARL steals a plate.)* I'm sitting right here — See? There. You just stole a plate.

PEARL. Wow...that's a cruel accusation...

GUY. *(As PEARL steals sugar holder.)* Accusation?! I'm watching you steal those sugar packets right now? How can you honestly believe I don't notice.

PEARL. *(Starting to leave.)* Look, I don't know what your problem is with me as a person, but this is really insulting. I'd better go.

GUY. Wait. Listen: if you'll stop stealing things, I won't get on your case. Okay?

(Pause.)

PEARL. Okay...

GUY. Yeah?

PEARL. Yeah...

GUY. Great. So where are you from — ?

(She whips the tablecloth off the table and starts stuffing it down her pants.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

(GIRL is sitting across from TOD, a little boy — regardless of the age of the actor portraying this role, it should be immediately and abundantly clear that TOD is far too young for GIRL. A long pause.)

GIRL. This may sound insensitive, but...how old are you?

TOD. What's yer favorite animal?

GIRL. No, I'm serious. I really want to know your age.

TOD. I like elephants.

GIRL. I think there's been a misunderstanding. See, when your profile said you were still in school, I assumed you meant college —

(She is suddenly interrupted by TOD's elephant impression. Beat.)

GIRL. That's very lifelike.

TOD. Do you have a scar? I have a scar! Do you want to see it?

GIRL. No, that's all right.

(Before she can finish her thought, TOD throws his leg up on the table, rolls up his pant leg, and shows the scar on his knee.)

TOD. I got it from kickball. Do you see it?

GIRL. Honestly, how old are you?

TOD. *(A quick display on his fingers.)* This many. Will you be my girlfriend?

GIRL. Your girlfriend.

TOD. 'Cause Katie Johnson always brings boring lunch to school and Courtney Shuler smells like horses.

GIRL. You've got a lot of girlfriends.

TOD. Yeah will you be my girlfriend?

GIRL. *(Sarcastically giving in.)* Sure... But only if you pay for dinner.

TOD. Okay.

(He produces a huge piggy bank and begins emptying change. Blackout.)

Scene 8

(SOPHIE enters the restaurant. She is a very old woman, edging toward the table in a walker. GUY just stares. Blackout.)

Scene 9

(BRANDON and GIRL are in mid-laugh.)

BRANDON. I didn't even—

GIRL. —I know, I know—

BRANDON. —I mean, seriously!

GIRL. —I know, right?

(They settle down from the laughter.)

BRANDON. So listen— all joking aside... this is fun! I'm really having a good time.

GIRL. Me, too! This has been great.

BRANDON. Hasn't it?

GIRL. Ugh! There's a fly in my water.

BRANDON. Gross. Here, take mine. (To offstage.) Waiter? Can we get another water?

GIRL. You are so sweet.

BRANDON. Ah, c'mon.

GIRL. No really.

BRANDON. Anyone would do that.

GIRL. Actually, you'd be surprised. With the luck I've been having on dates...

BRANDON. Really? But you're so fun. And beautiful.

GIRL. Oh please.

BRANDON. No. I mean it.

GIRL. You are just too good to be true.

BRANDON. C'mon, Robin.

(Pause.)

GIRL. What?

BRANDON. What?

GIRL. Who?

BRANDON. What?

GIRL. Who's Robin?

BRANDON. What do you mean?

GIRL. You just called me Robin. Who's Robin?

(BRANDON fidgets.)

GIRL. Is it your girlfriend?

BRANDON. No.

GIRL. Who is she?

BRANDON. He.

GIRL. He?

BRANDON. He.

GIRL. You're gay?

BRANDON. No! Well, yes. But Robin's my agent. I'm an actor.

GIRL. You're gay.

BRANDON. Yeah.

(Pause.)

GIRL. And why am I on a date with you?

BRANDON. Okay... I'm sorry I didn't tell you this sooner, but it would've totally backfired if I did. Here's the deal: I'll be playing Stanley in a local production of Streetcar, and since I'm a method-actor, I won't be able to get the part down until I method-act straight.

GIRL. Method-act.

BRANDON. Yes. I can't be Stanley Kowalski until I truly experience what it feels like to woo a woman.

(Pause.)

GIRL. So let me see if I can follow: you had me get dressed up for dinner, drive all the way downtown, and get my hopes destroyed after thinking I'd finally met a halfway decent guy— all so you could get a better feel for being straight?

(Beat.)

BRANDON. You don't mind, do you?

(Pause. She takes her glass of water and douses his face. Pause.)

BRANDON. Oh my god. That was perfect! The ultimate heterosexual dating moment! I've got it! I'm in! I'm straight! STELLAAAAA—

(She grabs the other glass of water and douses his face again.)

(Blackout.)

(Note: The character of Brandon should NOT be played as flamboyantly gay—the audience should only be made aware of that fact when he explains it during the date. The actor should play the part completely straight throughout.)

Scene 10

LINDA. Hi.

GUY. Hi.

LINDA. I've been looking forward to this for a while.

GUY. Me, too. Sorry about all the rescheduling.

LINDA. Pssh, whatever, it's cool. Oh, shoot. Hold on. I forgot to—

(She starts rummaging through her purse, and after a couple of seconds, dumps it on the table and starts looking through the items.)

GUY. What's up? What's wrong?

LINDA. Oh, it's this silly thing. I've got this pill I need to take or else I get all weird. *(Back to her purse:)* I know I brought them. They've gotta be— You know, whatever. I'll be fine.

GUY. You sure? We could go to a pharmacy or something.

LINDA. Nah it's no big deal. It's just a precautionary drug, you know? It won't kill me if I don't take it for one night. I just may be a little out of whack. You probably won't even be able to tell. Whatever. So— anyway.

GUY. *(Smiling:)* Anyway.

LINDA. It's nice to finally meet you.

GUY. The feeling's mutual.

LINDA. *(Suddenly sarcastic, morose, in a monotone voice:)* Oh yes. It's so awesome to finally put a name with a face.

GUY. Heh. Yeah. Seriously.

LINDA. *(Giggly/bubbly:)* You're funny; you're cute.

(Gruff:) He's not cute. You just haven't been out in a while.

(Snobby:) That is NOT—TRUE. He is GOOD—LOOKING.

(Jittery:) Shhhhhhhh... You're embarrassing yourself...

(Aggressive:) Quit freaking out.

(Easily offended:) What? Why are you jumping all over me?

(Little girl:) She started it!

(Motherly:) Girls, don't fight. What would your father say.

(Fatherly:) Oh, let 'em fight.

GUY. Are you okay?

LINDA. *(Aggressive, to GUY:)* You stay out of this!

(Reasonable:) Hey, leave him alone. You just met him.

(Gruff:) Oh, he can take care of himself.

(Monkey:) Ooh ooh, ah! ah! ah!

(Snobby:) All right, who brought the monkey?

(Assertive:) Not me.

(Little girl:) Not me.

(Gruff:) Not me.

(Pushover:) I did. I'm so sorry.

(Aggressive:) A monkey? Come on!

(Motherly:) You'd better behave yourself young lady, or you're grounded.

(Fatherly:) Get off her case, woman!

(Monkey:) Ooh ooh. AHH AAHHH!

(GUY notices a bottle and shows it to LINDA.)

GUY. Hey, are these the pills?

LINDA. *(Cheery:)* There they are!

(Gruff:) Yeah, took long enough.

(LINDA swallows the pill.)

GUY. Is everything all right?

LINDA. (Mostly back to normal, but woozy.) Okay. Okay. It's starting to kick in.

GUY. Great.

LINDA. In a couple of seconds, I'll settle into a single personality. But don't worry — nine times out ten it's one of the normal ones.

GUY. But with my luck—

(LINDA suddenly lets out a monkey shriek, grabs some bread from the table, sniffs it voraciously, stuffs it in her mouth, and lumbers offstage.)

(Pause.)

GUY. She was nice.

(Blackout.)

(Note: Linda's personality switches should be fast. Each personality should be a different level — her voice and demeanor should be changing dramatically throughout.)

Scene 11

GIRL. Hello.

MANNY. Hi.

GIRL. It's nice to meet you.

MANNY. Same.

GIRL. Let's order. I'm starved.

MANNY. Me, too.

GIRL. Wow, this menu's huge!

MANNY. I can never decide when the menu's so big. I can be picky.

GIRL. Ooh! I'm definitely getting the pork chops. What about you?

MANNY. I don't know. Nothing really leaps out.

GIRL. Really? Why don't you tryyy — the pot roast.

MANNY. Nooo — too moist.

GIRL. Okay. How about...the shrimp scampi.

MANNY. Too moist.

GIRL. Oh.

MANNY. I actually have a tiny bit of hygrophobia.

GIRL. Hygrophobia?

MANNY. It's the fear of dampness or moisture.

GIRL. Oh, okay. How about the eggplant parmesan?

MANNY. Porphyrophobia.

GIRL. What's that?

MANNY. Fear of purple.

GIRL. You could get the cheese plate.

MANNY. Coprastasophobia.

GIRL. Fear of...?

MANNY. Constipation.

GIRL. What about the sushi?

MANNY. Japanophobia. (Beat.) It's the fear of—

GIRL. No, I got it. What about this Hawaiian fish? Let's see if I can pronounce it right: Humuhumunukunukuapua'a'.

MANNY. That actually sounds delicious.

GIRL. Great!

MANNY. But I suffer from a rare case of hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia.

GIRL. Which is?

MANNY. Fear of long words.

GIRL. Okay! How about this: peanut butter and jelly.

MANNY. Sorry.

GIRL. What could possibly be wrong with peanut butter and jelly?

MANNY. I recently developed arachibutyrophobia.

GIRL. Fear of sandwiches?

MANNY. Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of my mouth.

GIRL. So what can you eat?

MANNY. NNot much. I do have sitiophobia.

GIRL. Fear of...?

MANNY. Food.

GIRL. Right. So if you have all of these dietary issues, why did you ask me to *dinner*?

MANNY. Good question.

GIRL. Look, how about we just skip this and go to a hockey game or something.

MANNY. Oooh, can't. Pacifist.

GIRL. Mini-golf.

MANNY. Asthma.

GIRL. See a musical.

MANNY. Dependson the musical; I have ailurophobia.

GIRL. Fear of...?

MANNY. Cats.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Well, what would you like to do?

MANNY. Well, I have one or two ideas.

GIRL. Great.

MANNY. But I have decidophobia.

GIRL. Okay, I'll decide for you. How about we call it a night?

MANNY. I can't.

GIRL. Why not?

MANNY. Anuptaphobia?

GIRL. *(Sarcastic:)* What's that? Fear of staying single for the rest of your life?

MANNY. Actually, yes.

GIRL. Oh.

MANNY. On the other hand, it's probably best we end the date now, on account of my deipnophobia..

GIRL. Fear of...?

MANNY. Dinner conversations.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Okay, well in that case, have a good night.

(She extends her hand for a friendly handshake.)

MANNY. You, too! One second.

(He takes out a pair of rubber gloves and starts to put them on.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 12

(GUY is sitting across the table from a fully outfitted mime, MIMI, who, throughout the scene, is extremely over-the-top and exuberant, as stereotypical mimes are. The scene begins with MIMI "leaning" on "something." Mimed actions in this scene will be indicated with brackets. A few moments pass, as we get a feel for the absurdity of the scenario.)

GUY. So what do you do for a living...?

(Beat.)

MIMI. [Pulling something heavy with a rope.]

GUY. You pull rope. *(Pause.)* Look... I respect your profession. I think it's noble what you do... The world needs more people who... climb invisible ladders. But I really don't see how it's appropriate to bring your work to a date.

MIMI. [Battling against harsh winds.]

GUY. Oh yeah, quite a storm in here.

(GUY opens his menu and reads. MIMI mimes picking up an imaginary menu, and peruses it page after page. GUY looks up and watches MIMI do her thing.)

GUY. Okay, I'm gonna go...use the restroom.

(GUY gets up, takes his jacket from the back of the chair.)

MIMI. [You're leaving? Driving away? Far? Bye bye?]

GUY. No, I'm not leaving. I'm taking my jacket with me because...it might get cold in the men's room.

MIMI. [Cold like me in this wild blizzard?]

GUY. Yeah, cold like that.

(GUY starts to leave. MIMI follows close behind, maybe as an airplane pilot, or a bus driver.)

GUY. No, you stay here. You —

MIMI. [Let me feed some chickens. Awww, those chicks are adorable. I love petting these lovely animals.]

GUY. I don't know what that is... Look I have to...

(An idea dawns on GUY has an idea. The following is an extremely loud and animated sequence of events – very frantic for MIMI; sarcastically frantic for GUY.)

GUY. Oh, okay... *(Looking up:)* Oh my God! A BOX!

MIMI. [Where? Where?]

GUY. A huge, glass box, falling from the sky!!

MIMI. [Oh no! Oh no! I can't see it! What in heavens name will I do? Help me!]

GUY. Nooooooo!

(GUY follows "the box" with his finger as it plops directly on the frantic MIMI, who is now very much "trapped" inside the box. Blackout.)

Scene 13

(Lights up to MARK in his burlap sack. He is reading the menu. Long pause.)

GIRL. I give up.

MARK. If you've got a problem with me, why don't you just say it to my face?

GIRL. Okay. You're wearing a burlap sack.

(Beat.)

MARK. It's Versace..

(Beat.)

GIRL. *(As she stands to leave:)* I need to go powder my nose.

(GIRL exits toward GUY's table. The lights on GIRL's table remain up as lights come up on GUY's table. MIMI is still in her box, but she doesn't distract from the main action. GIRL and GUY bump into each other.)

GIRL. Oh, sorry.

GUY. No, no. My fault.

(A short moment of instant chemistry. Then GUY shakes it off, as does GIRL.)

GUY. Well, goodnight.

GIRL. Goodnight.

(They start to go their separate ways.)

GUY. Hold on a second. *(Pause.)* This may seem random, but... do you like football?

GIRL. A little. *(Beat.)* Do you own any burlap?

GUY. No.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Should we go get some ice cream?

GUY. Yes.

(They exit together. A few moments pass. MIMI finally finds a "key" in her "pocket," unlocks the "door" to the "box" and exits. She moves to MARK, "spits" in her hand exuberantly, and extends it to him for a handshake. MARK looks up and notices what is going on in front of him.)

MARK. *(Deadpan:)* Check please.

End of Play



Check Please: Take 2, Golden West High School, Visalia, California (2006).

CHECK PLEASE: TAKE 2 by Jonathan Rand

Prologue

(Split scene: GIRL and KIM are playing Scrabble; GUY and HANK are playing the latest Madden on Xbox. The guys are situated directly next to the girls, but in reality they are in different apartments in different parts of the city.)

(GUY and GIRL are only mildly focused on their respective games. KIM and HANK are a little more focused on their respective games, but try to pay a respectful amount of attention to the important conversation.)

(The scene – while occurring in two different locations – should move as quickly as it would if both pairs were in the same room.)

GIRL/GUY. We broke up.

KIM. Oh no!

GUY. Yeah.

HANK. That really sucks.

GIRL. It's okay.

GUY. We both sort of saw it coming.

KIM. So what happened?

HANK. How'd you screw it up?

GIRL/GUY. I don't know.

HANK/KIM. It had to be something

HANK. , man.

KIM. There's always something.

GUY. I don't know.

GIRL. I'm not sure.

GUY. *(Simultaneous:)* Maybe she got a little needy.

GIRL. *(Simultaneous:)* Maybe he got a little distant.

KIM. I am so sorry.

HANK. But you know what *really* sucks?

GUY. What?

HANK. The fact that you're pouring your heart out and then I go and make it worse by throwing this 40-yard play-action pass. Annnnd, touchdown.

(Beat. He clears his throat.)

Sorry.

GUY. It's all right. I should stop moping anyway.

HANK. What are you gonna do?

GIRL. I think I'll take a break.

GUY. What do you think I should do?

KIM. No no no. I think you should

HANK/KIM. get back in the game.

GUY. It's not too soon for that?

HANK. It's never too soon for that.

GIRL. Are you sure that's a good idea?

KIM. *(As she lays down her Scrabble tiles.)* What's a good idea is "quiz" with the "Q" on triple-letter score. A really, really good idea.

(Beat.)

(Innocently:) You were saying?

GUY. You seriously think I should start dating again.

HANK. Yes.

GIRL. Right away?

KIM. Rebounding is a crucial part of social health.

HANK. There's no other option. You've got to find someone to distract you from her.

(Pause.)

GUY. All right.

GIRL/GUY. I'll do it.

KIM. Excellent!

HANK. Sweet!

KIM. And even if it doesn't work out, we learned a valuable lesson today.

GUY. What's that?

KIM. Three times "Q" is 30.

HANK. After you obliterate someone 62 to 7, you lose the feeling in your thumbs.

GIRL. Thanks.

GUY. You're a real pal.

(Beat.)

KIM/HANK. Rematch?

(Blackout.)

Scene 1

GUY. Hi!

DONNA. Hi!

GUY. It's good to meet you.

DONNA. It's good to meet you, too!

GUY. So on your listing it said you're a doctor?

DONNA. Yes.

GUY. That's really fantastic.

DONNA. *(Modestly:)* Thank you. It's rewarding work. A lot of work, actually, but I feel like I'm making a difference, as cliché as that sounds. How about you? I'm sorry, I forget what you do.

GUY. I work at a—

(Donna's cell phone starts ringing immediately after GUY begins to speak. It should be a distracting ring — preferably a well-known pop song.¹)

DONNA. Hold on one second.

(DONNA takes out her phone and opens it.)

Oh, I gotta take this. I'll be really quick.

GUY. No problem.

DONNA. Thanks.

¹ In this play's first staged reading in 2006, the chorus from Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone" was the obvious choice.

(She hits the button to answer the call.)

Stac-ayyyy! What's up, girl? ... Yeah. ... You're kidding ... Yeah. Yeah!! ... No no, tell me. *(She is being told a knock-knock joke.)* Who's there: Mexican busboy who. *(She yelps.)* That is funny. Offensive, but funny. Anyway, I can't talk, but call me later, K? ... Nighty nighty!!

(She puts the phone down.)

Sorry, I hate her.

GUY. You do?

DONNA. Yeah, but it was important. So what were we talking about... Right! Doctor. Which was my dream job ever since I was four. I love the hospital staff, the interaction with patients—truly everything about it.

GUY. That's great!

DONNA. What about you?

GUY. W—

(Donna's phone rings.)

DONNA. Ugghhh, is that me again? I think it is. One sec.

(DONNA takes out her phone and opens it.)

Ohhh! *(To GUY, as if he would have any clue:)* It's Gina!! Hold on hold on hold on.

(She hits the button to answer the call.)

Gina Bina Fo Fina!! What's goin' on, woman? ... Noooo! ... What?? That's ridiculous ... Me? Oh I'm on a date. ... Yeah, it's going all right. He's decent-looking, I guess. ... Ehhh, kinda boring. I'm doing all the talking, he's barely said anything. ... Yeah! Seriously, right? ... I know, I know. ... All right I'll call you back when it's over, *(Obviously saying nearly the same thing as Gina and finding it amusing with her:)* which should hopefully be soon! Exactly! ... Okay lata!!

(Beat.)

GUY. You know I could hear you, right?

DONNA. What? Were you listening in on my conversation?

GUY. Uh, yes, but um—

DONNA. I don't mean to be rude...but that's really rude.

GUY. You were talking right in front of me.

DONNA. We're getting nowhere with this argument. Let's move on.

GUY. Okay.

DONNA. Why don't we order our food! I love the roast duck here. I get it delivered to the hospital all the time.

GUY. That sou—

(Donna's phone rings.)

DONNA. Gosh, I should really turn that off!

GUY. *(Jovially chuckling:)* Yeah!

DONNA. *(Laughing with him:)* Right?

(DONNA takes out her phone and opens it.)

Oooooooh.

(She holds up one finger to GUY as she answers it.)

Hi, Richie baby. ... I'm goooood. Even *better* now that *you* called. ... *(She giggles flirtatiously.)* Well you'll just have to wait and find out, won't you? ... Fine, then. Okay, how about later tonight. ... Sounds *delicious*. You better be ready for me. ... Oh I'm *definitely* ready for you. ... Ciao, sexy.

(She hangs up.)

So the roast duck...

GUY. Who's Richard?

DONNA. My my, are we nosy.

GUY. No, I— I just figured since we're on a date that you wouldn't—

DONNA. Oh, I didn't know I was dining with Miss Manners!

GUY. All right—

DONNA. *(To the unseen patrons:)* Hey everybody! I'm on a date with a celebrity!!

(Donna's phone rings.)

DONNA. Uhp!, I think my phone's at it again.

(She takes it out, opens it, and listens.)

GUY. Okay, can you please hang up the phone? We're on a date and you've spent half the time shrieking with your friends and the other half setting up rendezvous—es. I have to say it's really disrespectful.

(She hangs up.)

DONNA. (*Quietly grave:*) That was the hospital.

GUY. What?

DONNA. A ten-year-old girl needs a heart transplant.

(*Pause.*)

GUY. Oh no.

DONNA. So thank you. Thank you for completely disrespecting a child's life.

GUY. I had no idea —

DONNA. No. No you didn't have any idea.

GUY. I am so sorry. I feel terrible.

DONNA. AHHHH! Just kidding!! It's Gina again. (*To the phone:*)

GINNAAAAAAA!

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 2

GIRL. Hi!

LYLE. Hi!

GIRL. It's nice to meet you.

LYLE. Likewise.

GIRL. All right — I have to ask right off the bat. Is it true what Cheryl told me — that you're fluent in a bunch of different languages?

LYLE. Yes.

GIRL. That's so cool.

LYLE. Thanks.

GIRL. Seriously?, everybody I know just knows English and maybe, like, eight words of Spanish or French.

LYLE. Really.

GIRL. Including me. Honestly, I basically forgot everything I learned in school. If I went to Mexico right now, I'd only be able to find a bathroom and a library.

LYLE. I'm sure you know more than you think. I get rusty all the time.

GIRL. So how many do you know?

LYLE. Oh. I'm not sure. I lost count a while back.

GIRL. Are you serious?

(*LYLE nods modestly.*)

I'm... genuinely impressed. Wait, so would it be strange on a date to ask you to speak in some different languages?

LYLE. I'd rather not.

GIRL. Aww, come on, please?

LYLE. I just — I don't want it to look like I'm showing off.

GIRL. No-no-no-no-no-no! Just a few?

(*Pause.*)

LYLE. All right, I'll give you a sampler.

(*GIRL claps with delight.*)

Let's see... If I wanted to say "It's a pleasure to meet you" in Latin, I would say: *A post mortem in carpe diem ad summa cum laude.*

GIRL. (*Slightly quizzical:*) Really? That sounds familiar.

LYLE. It's a fairly common expression. I studied in Athens for three years.

GIRL. (*Genuine:*) Hey — you'd definitely know better than me. What else?

LYLE. Well there's Italian. For instance, if I wanted to tell you, "You look beautiful in the color red," I would say: *Mille grazie Deniro e DiCaprio calzone.*

(*Beat.*)

GIRL. Did you say "DiCaprio"?

LYLE. Yes. It means "color" or "hue."

GIRL. Oh.

LYLE. Then in German, if I wanted to say, "Excuse me, waiter, my soup is cold," I would say: *Aufwiedersehen bratwurst lederhosen.*

GIRL. Hold on a second.

LYLE. In French, "hold on a second" would be loosely translated as *La louvre de beret à la baguette.*

GIRL. Wait —

(*Beat.*)

LYLE. In Hebrew that's *dreidel dreidel dreidel*.

GIRL. Stop! This is insulting. I mean if you were kidding that would be one thing, but it sounds like you're honestly trying to convince me that you know all of those languages. Do you even know a single foreign language, or are you just a terrible liar?

(Pause. He is mortally offended. He says the following as if he were saying "How could you...")

LYLE. ¡Taco!

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(At the moment the scene begins, JULIA is in the middle of a hearty, uncontrollable laugh, and continues laughing for a good amount of time. It is quite an intricate string of boisterous sounds. She eventually lets the laughing subside.)

(Pause.)

GUY. (Serious:) No, my dog really died.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

GIRL. Hi!

DEWEY. Hi!

GIRL. It's good to meet you.

DEWEY. Yeah. Same here.

GIRL. So—tell me about yourself.

DEWEY. Well, I can sum it up easy: My greatest passion is doing anything and everything that lets me live on the edge. Life for me is all about intensity, going for broke, taking chances.

GIRL. That's a good outlook.

DEWEY. It's all about living to the Extreme. There's a saying that I made up:

If it's not Extreme
It's not worth dream—ing about.

GIRL. I like it.

DEWEY. Yeah it took me a few months to get the rhyming perfect.

GIRL. Sure.

DEWEY. You know that Billy Joel song "Why Do I Go to Extremes"? It's like he wrote that song for me. That's how much I love to be Extreme.

GIRL. It's a good song.

DEWEY. It's my favorite word.

GIRL. Extreme?

DEWEY. Extreme!!

GIRL. So are you a snowboarder, or an off-road biker, or—?

DEWEY. Oh, no no. I'm way too busy with work to do anything like that.

GIRL. What do you do?

DEWEY. I'm an accountant.

GIRL. An accountant...

DEWEY. I know it doesn't *sound* Extreme, but trust me, it gets *pret-ty* Extreme.

GIRL. Really.

DEWEY. Oh yeah. Just look at tax returns. The W-9? The 1099? Talk about intense. And sure, we all know the Form 1040 is crazy, but the Form 1040-ES? Off the hizook.

GIRL. I didn't know that.

DEWEY. I started this joke around the office that the "ES" in "1040-ES" stands for "Extreme Standard-Accounting-Procedure."

GIRL. (Forcing something like a laugh.) Ahh.

DEWEY. I'm sort of known for my puns.

GIRL. That's not really a pun.

DEWEY. (Barreling on:) But beyond accounting, I still like to stay Extreme in my spare time. Like, something that's normal for most people? I like to take it up a notch.

GIRL. Really.

DEWEY. Yeah. Wanna see what I mean?

GIRL. Uh—

DEWEY. Here here, watch. *(He gets up.)* Now when most people walk, they go like this:

(He walks normally.)

But *this* is how I walk.

(He walks – to the Extreme!)

Or when most people read a menu, they read like this:

(He reads the menu normally.)

This is how I read a menu.

(He reads the menu – to the Extreme!)

Or when normal people floss, they do this.

(He takes out dental floss, and flosses normally.)

I floss like *this*.

(He flosses – to the Extreme!)

Kinda blows your mind, right?

(Pause.)

GIRL. Did you just floss on a date?

DEWEY. Oh man, that's so rude of me. I wasn't thinking. Here.

(He offers her his used floss.)

(Blackout.)

Midlogue

(Split scene: GIRL and GUY are each talking on the phone. KIM and HANK are sitting center stage, talking on the phone to GIRL and GUY, respectively.)

GIRL/GUY. I give up.

KIM. No you don't.

GUY. It's hopeless out there.

HANK. I'm sure it's not that bad.

GIRL. I have zero optimism for the human race.

GUY. What if any of these people give birth?

KIM. You just have to keep trying.

HANK. Rebounding is important,

KIM. But the success rate is always low.

HANK. Everyone knows that if you wanna make an omelet, you gotta shoot for the moon.

(KIM turns to HANK. We now realize they're in the same room.)

KIM. I think you got that wrong.

GUY. Wait a second... Is that Kim?

GIRL. Are you with my ex-boyfriend's best friend?!

HANK. *(Overlapping:)* Ahhhhh gotta go! I'll talk to you later!

KIM. *(Overlapping:)* Oh look, I've got a call coming in!

HANK/KIM. KEEP TRYING!!

(They hang up.)

GIRL. *(Overlapping:)* Kim?

GUY. *(Overlapping:)* Hank?

(KIM and HANK drop their phones.)

HANK. Think they'll be okay?

KIM. Yeah, they're fine.

(They peck each other briefly on the lips.)

(They pick up their Xbox controllers. HANK hits unpause and they proceed with the game. They stare at the screen.)

HANK. All right Scrabble Queen— you just sit back and watch while I run back this kickoff for the game-winner...

(After a quick amount of button-pressing for them both, a whistle blows on the game.)

KIM. *(Dripping with sarcasm, as if she's serious:)* Oh. What happened? So when I tackle you at your own ten-yard line, do you get points for that? I wasn't aware you got points for that. That's weird.

HANK. Shut up.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(Acronyms in this scene are displayed in all caps for ease of understanding. They should not necessarily be yelled or emphasized.)

GUY. Hi!

JACKIE. Hi!

GUY. Nice to meet you.

JACKIE. Same here!

GUY. So right off the bat, I have to be honest with you—this is the first time I've ever gone out with someone I met online.

JACKIE. Really? Oh, I do it all the time.

GUY. Yeah?

JACKIE. Sure. It's the only way to date, IMHO.

(Beat.)

GUY. I'm sorry?

JACKIE. IMO, it's the only way to date.

GUY. IMO?

JACKIE. Ahhhh, I didn't realize! So if you're a noob, then you don't understand online lingo!! LOL!

GUY. Right, so I don't—

JACKIE. That is so cute! LOL, ROFLMAO!

GUY. I'm—

JACKIE. OMG, you must be so lost right now. OMFG!

GUY. I really don't follow you.

JACKIE. Anyway, anyway—gimme the 411 about yourself, shyguy626! What do you do in your free time?

GUY. Well, ah... actually, I just started taking windsurfing lessons.

JACKIE. w00t?²

GUY. If you don't mind me being honest, I've had a lot more free time for starting new hobbies after my ex-girlfriend and I broke up.

JACKIE. Uhhh, TMI!

² If this expression is too obscure, feel to use "Kewl!" instead.

GUY. What?

JACKIE. JK! JK! JK!

GUY. What's "TMI"?

JACKIE. TMI! *(She lays it out for him in plain English:)* "T" ... Okay? Then "M." And then you finish it off with "I." TMI.

(GUY decides to leave that confusing response behind.)

GUY. So—what about you? What do you like to do?

JACKIE. Oh, gosh... So many things. Well, I'd say I spend about half of my workday on MySpace, and the rest split between Facebook, LiveJournal, and Friendster.³ And when I'm lookin' for luuuuv—JK, LOL—I spend my time on, you know, the usual places: Match.com, E-Harmony, J-Date.

GUY. J-Date?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Isn't that where Jewish singles meet other Jewish singles?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Didn't your profile say you were Catholic?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Then why are you on J-Date?

JACKIE. Why are *you* on J-Date?

GUY. I'm *not* on J-Date.

JACKIE. Well, agree to disagree.

GUY. What?

JACKIE. Okay, so I have a few more FAQs for you, shyguy626. E.G.: Where do you see yourself in five years?

GUY. I'm sorry, I have to ask: Why are you calling me shyguy626?

JACKIE. It's your SN. Why wouldn't I call you shyguy626?

GUY. My—Ohh, my screen name. I don't know... You wouldn't want me to call you—uh...

JACKIE. CutiePatootie5!

GUY. Right, CutiePatootie5.

³ If any websites in this scene are out of date, please replace with current equivalent.

JACKIE. OMG, yes I would!

GUY. All right...

JACKIE. BTW, it is soooo adorable that you don't understand what I'm saying. You are TCFW. It's like I speak English and you speak Canadian.

GUY. Th—

JACKIE. I like it. You make me laugh. Winky face.

GUY. W—

JACKIE. OMG, you must be so confused; you're like G2G, TTYL.

GUY. Okay stop for a second. I've gotta ask—because I've honestly never heard anyone use screen names... or those internet abbreviations... out loud: Is it normal for a person to do that?

(Pause. She is blindsided.)

GUY. What?

JACKIE. Frowny face.

GUY. Oh. I didn't mean to offend you—

JACKIE. Frowny face with tears.

GUY. Look, could we just—

JACKIE. WTF.

GUY. I'm sorry? I don't under—

JACKIE. W ... T ... F-ing ... F!

GUY. I honestly have no idea what that means.

(JACKIE turns away, offended.)

GUY. What? What's wrong?

JACKIE. NOYB.

GUY. Can we talk about what's wrong?

JACKIE. No. EOD.

GUY. I wish I knew what you were saying.

JACKIE. You know what? You are being so inappropriate?—I'm going to file a complaint to the website where we met, and then do everything in my power to get you blacklisted from online dating.

GUY. What? That's not fair!

JACKIE. And that will prevent you from dating anyone like me EVER AGAIN!

(She runs off.)

(Pause.)

(He says matter-of-factly, without sarcasm:)

GUY. That's upsetting. Sarcastic winky face.

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

(ALEX is dressed like a pirate. Some time elapses as GIRL doesn't know what to say.)

GIRL. See, when the paper said you were into Living History, I thought that maybe meant you occasionally did Civil War reenactments. Not that you'd come to a date pretending to be a pirate.

ALEX. Pretendin'?!?

GIRL. Yes. Pretending.

ALEX. I be as real a sea-dog as you'll ever meet!!

(Beat.)

GIRL. And do all real pirates shop at J. Crew?

(ALEX looks down at his jeans.)

ALEX. *(Dejectedly.)* Aarrrrr...

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

GUY. Hi!

CLEO. Hi!

GUY. So on your listing it said that you're a psychiatrist. Do you like it?

CLEO. Oh no. That was a typo.

GUY. Oh. You're a psychologist?

CLEO. Psychic.

GUY. Ah.

CLEO. Yeah, I wanted to call the paper to fix that, but I forgot the phone number.

(Beat.)

GUY. So what's it like?

CLEO. Oh man. The premonitory field can be rough. Like last week I read in the stars that I'm going to get a sunburn on July 8th?, so I had to cancel my trip to Cancun.

GUY. Oh.

CLEO. I know what you're thinking: Sunburns are the worst!

GUY. Right.

CLEO. See how I knew what you were thinking?

GUY. So how did you first decide you'd become a psychic?

CLEO. I remember exactly when it hit me. I was a freshman in college, and I envisioned that I was going to fail a math exam. Then I took the exam, and I *failed*. Isn't that amazing??

(Beat.)

GUY. Yes?

CLEO. That was the moment I knew I'd become a psychic. And then four years later? I became a psychic! There's *another* prediction come true!

GUY. But all of those are actions you can control.

CLEO. How about I give you a free reading?!

(Over the next couple of lines, CLEO retrieves a few tools from her bag and places them on the table: tarot cards, chakra beads, and a Magic 8-Ball.)

GUY. Oh, that's okay. I'm not interested.

CLEO. I insist! Hand me your right foot.

GUY. I'm sorry?

CLEO. Hand me your right foot. I read feet.

GUY. Don't psychics—?

CLEO. I know in the *movies* everyone sees psychics read palms, but the *real* psychics read *feet*. Take off your shoe.

GUY. I don't know if I feel comfortable with this.

(CLEO picks up the Magic 8-Ball and speaks to it.)

CLEO. Does he feel comfortable with this?

(She shakes the Magic 8-Ball and looks at the bottom for the answer.)

CLEO. "It is decidedly so."

GUY. *(Reluctantly.)* All right...

(He begins to remove his shoe.)

CLEO. The feet have a spiritual connection to the earth. Because the feet touch the ground so frequently, they have the— *(Instructing GUY:)* your sock too — they have the closest and most powerful bond to the paranormal ether.

(GUY is ready.)

Okay.

(CLEO holds out her hand. GUY reluctantly moves his foot across the table. CLEO takes it without hesitation, and begins examining the sole of his foot with her fingers, looking very closely at its details. GUY is uncomfortable about the situation, but not ticklish. The audience's focus should be on the interaction between CLEO and foot.)

Interesting. Verrry interesting. This crease between your heel and midsole tells me that you like sports. Is it true that you like sports?

GUY. I like sports.

CLEO. Yes. I see that right here. Sports...

(She moves her fingers to a different spot on the sole of his foot.)

Let's see... Your history line here is right here below the lateral plantar nerves. Let's have a look.

(She looks closely.)

Sometimes you have to—

(She presses her ear against the bottom of his foot.)

Okay, there we go. When you were a teenager did you attend a high school?

GUY. Yes.

CLEO. That sounds about right.

(She continues to examine his foot with her hands, working her way up to the toes.)

GUY. Listen, can I have my foot back? You haven't really told me anything that's not obvious.

CLEO. Oh, but here comes the big finale.

GUY. That's okay, I'm fine.

CLEO. The main line is located in the middle of the big toe, but your line is remarkably faint.

(She lightly taps on it.)

I'm having trouble getting a read.

(She lightly touches the toe with the tip of her tongue. She leans back and tastes her lips slightly, with a serious, analytical look on her face. This is business as usual. After a few moments, she perks up.)

Ahhh, there we go. Are you ready? *(Beat.)* You have two sisters—one redhead and one blonde—you're five-foot-eight⁴, you love movies, you consider yourself politically independent, and you're a Virgo rising.

(She lets go of his foot.)

Okay! All done.

(GUY is flabbergasted.)

GUY. But— That's amazing! Every last one of those things was completely true!! How did you know all of that?!

CLEO. Knowledge is feet.

GUY. Wow! What else do you know? Can you tell my future?

CLEO. But of course... When you die you will donate your organs, and after May 1st you can no longer purchase two large one-topping pizzas for the price of one.

(Pause.)

GUY. Can I have my wallet back?

(Beat.)

(CLEO looks at the bottom of her Magic 8-Ball.)

CLEO. "All signs point to No."

(Blackout.)

Scene 8

GIRL. Hi!

PAUL. Hi!

GIRL. So... tell me about yourself.

PAUL. Well, I work in hedge funds—

GIRL. Cool! That's where you buy stocks at a low value and then sell it to banks? Wait, no. I have that completely wrong.

PAUL. Don't worry about it.

GIRL. Sorry. I actually do know more about the market, it's just that—honestly—I'm nervous. I'm so terrible at these things.

PAUL. What—dates?

GIRL. Yeah.

PAUL. Ahh, don't worry about it. I try not to be too judgmental on dates. They're set up to be so high-pressure.

GIRL. True.

PAUL. And it's a wasteland out there, so maybe it's easier to handle because I'm less optimistic than I used to be.

GIRL. That's so refreshing to hear. I thought it was just me.

PAUL. No, it's pretty awful.

GIRL. But you don't seem the least bit flustered. How do you stay so calm?

PAUL. It helps to have a lot of first-hand experience with relationships.

GIRL. You've done a lot of dating?

PAUL. Yeah. Dating, marriage, blah blah blah.

GIRL. You're divorced?

PAUL. No, no.

GIRL. It's totally okay if you are. I dated a guy once who had multiple ex-wives.

⁴ Use the actor's actual height.

PAUL. Oh, don't worry about that. I don't have any ex-wives—

GIRL. Okay.

PAUL. —I have wives.

(Pause.)

GIRL. I'm sorry, I thought I heard you say—

PAUL. I have wives.

GIRL. Oh.

PAUL. Two of 'em.

GIRL. Two wives.

PAUL. Yeah... I can tell you're kind of disappointed about it...

GIRL. (Not terribly convincing:) Nooo...

PAUL. It's okay to be disappointed! I'm disappointed with *myself!*

GIRL. Are you...

PAUL. I am. I mean, two wives is such a tiny number of wives.

GIRL. Excuse me?

PAUL. I know! It's unbelievable. All my buddies are always making fun of me at the gym:

(He recounts each of the jabs with frustrated disdain.)

"Hey, look over there—it's the guy with only two wives!"

"Maybe he wants a bite of my TWO-nafish sandwich."

"He's like a ballerina with his TWO-tu."

"I'll bet he likes the U.S. government, what with their *bicameral legislature.*"

"Hey everybody! Get your camera! It's TWO-pac Shakur!"

or, y'know,

"Peace."

(He does an irritated impression of someone giving him the two-finger peace sign.)

I mean, *two* wives? *Two*? You gotta admit, that pretty pathetic. I'm embarrassed to show my face in public.

GIRL. Uh huh.

PAUL. And y'know, I'm thinking that you... (Pause for effect.) ... you... might just be the perfect candidate for Numero Tres.

GIRL. I am...

PAUL. Absolutely!

GIRL. So you're Mormon?

PAUL. Mormon? No... Not Mormon.

GIRL. So why do you have two wives?

PAUL. Why? Why *not??*

GIRL. Well isn't polygamy illegal?

PAUL. What? Is it? I guess. (Jovially dismissive:) "Law"!

GIRL. Yes. Law.

PAUL. I mean, if everyone followed every itty bitty law, then you or I couldn't—I dunno—commit credit card identity theft.

GIRL. YES!

PAUL. What I'm saying is, everyone breaks the speed limit, right? I'm just breaking the speed limit with a bunch of different cars, simultaneously.

GIRL. That doesn't make any sense.

PAUL. Does the "Constitution" make sense?

GIRL. YES!

PAUL. So what do you think of my proposal? Be honest.

GIRL. Be honest?

PAUL. You wouldn't have a lot of responsibilities! Harriet is in charge of the cooking and cleaning, and Naomi takes the kids to soccer games and drama⁵ practice, so all I'd need from you is to Tivo my favorite shows for me while I'm at work, and then when I get home, occasionally shave my back.

GIRL. ...

PAUL. (Inviting:) So...?

(Pause. GIRL decides to try a special angle.)

GIRL. All right, this is sounding like something I'd be interested in.

⁵ Rhymes with *gamma*.

PAUL. Really?

GIRL. Yeah.

PAUL. For a second there I got the vibe there like you were freaked out.

GIRL. No no. Please. How could anyone be freaked out by anything you've said so far?

PAUL. That's what I'm saying!

GIRL. But there's one little thing you should know before we do this.

PAUL. Fire away!

GIRL. I have four husbands.

(PAUL is expressionless.)

(Pause.)

(Pause.)

(Pause.)

PAUL. See that's just messed up.

(Blackout.)

Scene 9

(ALEX is back, still in his pirate outfit. He is perusing the menu.)

GUY. You sort of have the wrong idea. (Beat.) On multiple levels.

ALEX. These prices be outrageous.

(Beat.)

GUY. Look, I'm not interested in male companionship. Or...pirate companionship.

ALEX. Companionship?! Yer skull be hollow. Narr, what I require is a scurvy crew of buccaneers to join me quest for the hidden treasure of Crossbones Cove.

(GUY is speechless for a moment.)

GUY. Listen, I've gotta run. My...ship...is double-parked.

ALEX. Yarr, I hate that.

(GUY turns to leave.)

Epilogue

(GUY and GIRL run into each other. ALEX and PAUL are still seated, but not aware of this interaction.)

GIRL. Déjà vu all over again.

GUY. You can say that again.

GIRL. Déjà v— Never mind.

GUY. Right.

(GUY notices PAUL.)

GUY. So you're dating?

GIRL. Yeah. (She notices ALEX.) You too?

(GUY tries to stifle a wince; nods.)

GIRL. How's it going?

GUY. (Slightly overlapping:) Oh great. Really fantastic.

GIRL. (Slightly overlapping:) Me, too. Having a great time.

(Pause.)

GUY. All right, no, it's awful.

GIRL. Yeah, okay, fine, same.

(Pause.)

GUY. So I was thinking— I'm wondering if we should— Okay, I'm not saying we should get back together just because the dating pool sucks.

GIRL. Yeah.

GUY. It feels less like a dating pool and more like...a kiddie pool.

(Beat.)

You know how kiddie pools are mostly filled with—

GIRL. (Please stop:) No I get it.

GUY. Right. So I think it's unhealthy—

GIRL. —unhealthy to restart a relationship out of desperation. I agree.

GUY. Good.

GIRL. Okay, here's what I'm thinking: We were boyfriend/girlfriend before we were ever friends. How about we start from scratch—as friends—and then take it a day at a time.

GUY. A day at a time. I like it.

GIRL. All right?

GUY. Let's give it a shot.

(They shake hands.)

GIRL. So... wanna get some ice cream?

GUY. Believe it or not, I do like ice cream.

(They begin to exit.)

GIRL. Hey, but just one stipulation before we give this "Friend" thing a shot?

GUY. Yeah?

GIRL. We set fire to your Captain Hook Halloween costume.

GUY. Deal.

(They exit.)

(ALEX perks up.)

ALEX. I heard that! And I curse yer very souls!

(He looks at PAUL, and puts forth another earnest proposal – not a romantic advance.)

Ahoy there. Be there a chance ye be sea-rovin' scalawag? I be in dire need of a first mate.

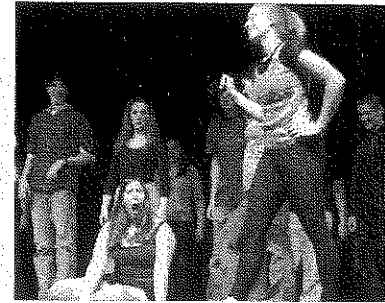
(PAUL looks up from his menu, noticing ALEX for the first time.)

PAUL. *(Deadpan.)* Check please.

(Blackout.)

End of Play

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CHECK PLEASE: TAKE 3
by Jonathan Rand

Prologue

(GIRL and GUY are leisurely folding laundry together.)

GIRL. Tonight?

GUY. Yep.

GIRL. That's exciting.

GUY. Please—a blind date is not exciting. Christmas is exciting; Bruce Willis movies are exciting; this undershirt is exciting.

GIRL. Ooh, what if we made a Christmas movie starring Bruce Willis's undershirt?

GUY. (Opens his cell phone:) I'm calling Hollywood.

GIRL. Get this, though: I have a blind date tonight, too.

GUY. Nice!

GIRL. Yeah...

GUY. So remind me why we go on these? We've had, like, comically bad luck with blind dates.

GIRL. Hey, *we* met on a blind date.

GUY. We met in the same restaurant during blind dates with *other people*. That's a blind date with an asterisk. Plus we eventually broke up. Double-asterisk. Hand me that sock.

GIRL. Without blind dates, we wouldn't be besties now.

GUY. And only my bestie would know how much I love the word "bestie."

(Beat.)

Just to make sure: It's not weird that we're talking about this?

GIRL. Not as weird as an ex-couple that folds laundry together.

GUY. True.

GIRL. Hold on a second! We are so a romantic comedy right now! Best friends...folding laundry...everything's platonic...*until*...the girl innocently passes the guy his sweatpants.

GUY. (Delivering a line as a bad actor might:) "Hey best friend, pass me those sweatpants."

GIRL. Their hands meet.

GUY/GIRL. (*Ad-libbing:*) Whoops! / Oh my! / Didn't see your hand there! / Goodness me!

GIRL. The camera zooms in as they lock eyes with hitherto unspoken passion.

(They've been goofing around, acting this out, and they really are staring at each other, touching hands, as she passes the sweatpants. At this point there is a pause that's a bit longer than expected for a pair of platonic besties.)

GUY. Cue Celine Deon.

(They break their stare.)

GIRL. Well I'd pay to see it.

GUY. (*Into the phone:*) Get me Hugh Grant!

GIRL. You would *not* be played by Hugh Grant.

GUY. (*Back into the phone:*) Get me Samuel L. Jackson!

GIRL. Hey, you're going to Kim and Hank's wedding, right?

GUY. Yeah. You?

GIRL. Yep.

GUY. I'll probably I'll bring this girl I meet tonight.

GIRL. Oh yeah?

GUY. Yeah, 'cause she's totally not going to be awful.

GIRL. Hey, when is your date?

GUY. Eight. When's yours?

GIRL. Eight. What time is it?

(GUY looks at his cell as GIRL looks at her watch. They look at each other. A moment.)

(They suddenly start to fold laundry at superhuman speed. The following is barely intelligible – just overlapping cacophony – as they begin to fold at warp speed.)

GUY. (*Simultaneously:*) SOCK SOCK SOCK SOCK SOCK!

GIRL. (*Simultaneously:*) GIMME THE BRA! THAT BRA! THAT BRA!

(Blackout.)

Scene 1

(At a restaurant table.)

CELESTE. Hi.

GUY. Hi.

CELESTE. It's nice to meet you.

GUY. Same here.

CELESTE. I love your jacket.¹

GUY. Oh, thank you.

CELESTE. This guy Frank I knew in college had the same one.

GUY. Frank's a copycat.

CELESTE. Totally. So... What's your favorite hobby?

GUY. Well my new guilty pleasure is karaoke.

CELESTE. I *love* karaoke. I used to go with this friend who'd sing Bon Jovi literally every time. Actually – coincidence – it's the same guy with the jacket.

GUY. Frank?

CELESTE. Frank.

GUY. Frank's got great taste in jackets and dumb hobbies. (*Beat.*) So how long have you lived in town?

CELESTE. About a year. I moved to be closer to my best friends: Tracy from high school, Denise from pre-school, Frank, Janine, Claire, Frank, Alison...

GUY. What about Frank?

CELESTE. Oh right! Frank! Frank is one of my closest friends.

GUY. I figured.

CELESTE. You know how it's impossible for guys and girls to be only friends? Frank and I are the one exception.

GUY. That's great.

CELESTE. I mean, we did date once, a lonnnng time ago, but just for a few weeks.

(Beat.)

¹ Or some other article of clothing the character is wearing (shirt, tie, shoes, etc.)

Or it might've been a couple of months.

(Beat.)

Eight years. But I don't want to talk about him, because it's bad form to talk about an ex. Frank taught me that.

GUY. Smart idea.

CELESTE. Frank you so much for listening to me.

GUY. Did you just say "Frank you"?

CELESTE. No. What? I said "Thank you." Anyway, what were we talking about a second ago? I'm drawing a Frank.

GUY. Okay, you *definitely* said Frank that time.

CELESTE. What? I did not! This is Franking ridiculous.

(SERVER appears.)

SERVER. May I take your order?

CELESTE. *(Feigning surprise, pretending to act normal.)* Oh! Yes! I would love to order...

(SERVER suddenly recognizes CELESTE.)

SERVER. Seriously? We broke up years ago. Quit stalking me.

(SERVER leaves. Beat.)

(CELESTE turns to GUY, trying to play it off like that wasn't Frank. She's not convincing at all.)

CELESTE. Who was *that* guy?

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(At a restaurant table. JONES is decked out like a total 80s hair band rock star. A standard guitar case is nearby. He also wears heavy eyeliner and other makeup, and might be wearing leather pants.)

GIRL. Hi.

JONES. Heyyyy!

GIRL. Nice to meet you.

JONES. Rock on!

GIRL. So your profile said you're a musician. I see now that you probably don't play cello for the Philharmonic.

JONES. *Cello?! More like, Hello!*

GIRL. *(Tries to force a slight laugh.)*

JONES. I made a joke! All riiiiight!!

(He stands up and gives a high, rock star leg-kick.)

GIRL. What was that.

JONES. What was what?!

GIRL. You kicking.

JONES. It's how I crank up a sentence with more *juice!* Sometimes you gotta add an exclamation point with your feet! *Owww!! [Kicks.]*

GIRL. Awesome... *(She lightly punches her fist across her body.)*

JONES. Heyyy! You got your *own* punctuation, baby!

GIRL. Yes. It's my way of adding a...dot-dot-dot... *(Half-hearted punch.)*

JONES. We're so alike!

GIRL. True—though you do wear more makeup.

JONES. Now before we jump on this train called Love, you gotta understand the priorities of an international rock sensation. Those priorities are... *(He counts them out.)*

the music

groupie make-outs

lady love *(Indicates GIRL.)*

Cool Ranch Doritos.

(Pause.)

Hold on, it's the music; Cool Ranch Doritos; groupie make-outs; lady love.

GIRL. I'm the same way.

JONES. Uh oh! I can see that look in your eyes. Your eyes'r'sayin' "Play me a song right now!"

GIRL. My eyes are not saying that.

JONES. Well I haven't tuned up, so I don't think I should...

GIRL. I *do not* want you to play a song in this restaurant.

JONES. Okay fine! Anything for my lady love.

(He opens the guitar case, the contents of which are unseen. JONES looks at the beauty within.)

Takes my breath away every time.

(He takes it out. It's a Guitar Hero guitar. He straps it on.)

GIRL. Guitar Hero...? Seriously...?

JONES. One, two, uh one-two-three-four!

(He rocks out on the guitar as a rock star would. Since it's not plugged in, no sound is actually heard. After some of this, JONES screams over to GIRL, as if the music is too loud for a regular speaking voice to be heard.)

JONES. Unbelievable, right!? She handles so smooth!!

GIRL. It's not plugged in.

JONES. What?! I can't hear you?! The music is overpowering!! Wah-hhhhhhh!!!

(He wails a rock star high note while shredding on the guitar and high-kicking.)

(She lightly punches her fist.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(At a restaurant table.)

GUY. Hi.

RUTH. My fellow American...good evening.

GUY. Nice to meet you.

RUTH. It is a honor and a privilege to spend this moment with a citizen of our magnificent country.

GUY. Yes, likewise. So I'm gonna take a shot in the dark and guess you're in politics.

RUTH. On the contrary. Now is the time to *abandon* partisan politics. We must bridge the divide, reach across the aisle, and at long last dispense with the same old Washington games. Politics? Not if I have anything to say about it!

GUY. So, politics...²

RUTH. *(Uncomfortably chuckling.)* My record on that issue has been clearly stated.

GUY. Okay. *(Might as well continue.)* So, where you from?

RUTH. I was born in a small Missouri village called Soot. Soot is a humble town of hard-working families...rolling prairies...and oats.

The first lesson you learn as a citizen of Soot is the difference between a good oat...and a bad oat. A good oat has character; a good oat lasts for years; a good oat feeds families. A bad oat? Well... A bad oat can leave a bitter taste in a young child's mouth; a bad oat can't be trusted; a bad oat will destroy homes and steal your take-home pay.

GUY. Powerful oat.

(The SERVER has arrived.)

SERVER. Can I start you off with anything?

GUY. Sure, I'll have the goat cheese truffles.

SERVER. And for you?

RUTH. My esteemed colleague wishes to order the goat cheese truffles. I, on the other hand wish to improve our schools, reduce deficit spending, and keep the government out of the pocket of big business.

SERVER. *(Unfazed.)* Coming right up.

(SERVER leaves.)

GUY. Listen, this is getting—

RUTH. I've traveled all across this fine land and I've shaken the hands of real Americans just like you. Take the 60-year-old mill worker I met in Stoneridge, Ohio. His name was Gort. Now Gort may have a ridiculous name, but Gort does *not* have a ridiculous heart. Gort spoke to me about what we need in this country—that what we need is a leader...who leads. Not a leader who *doesn't* lead. That would be a waste of the first four letters in "leader."

GUY. Okay, let's—

RUTH. Or the young woman I met in Great Bend, Kansas. Her name was Lynn...and she was black.

GUY. Please stop. This is bizarre. You're on *date*.

² As in, "So, you mean like what I said two seconds ago..."

RUTH. A date which will live in infamy.

(Beat.)

GUY. Wow. That was offensive.

Listen, I don't mind politics. I'm actually glad you're dedicated to improving the country. I'd just rather not talk about it right now. Can we change the subject?

RUTH. It is time for a change!

GUY. No, like a new topic of conversation.

RUTH. Time for a new beginning!

GUY. No—

RUTH. A new dawn!!

(Beat.)

I'm Ruth Hayes and I approved this message.

(Pause. GUY tries a new tactic.)

GUY. You know, I just remembered something I feel I should tell you. (Beat.) I'm not registered to vote.

(Pause.)

(Suddenly RUTH's demeanor has shifted from regal to something else entirely.)

RUTH. You've got to be freaking kidding me.

(She knocks over her chair and storms out.)

GUY. Call me...!

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

(At a restaurant table.)

GIRL. Hi.

GARRETT. I lost 300 pounds.

GIRL. Oh. Wow.

GARRETT. You don't believe me, do you?

GIRL. No, I believe you.

GARRETT. Well believe this.

(He stands up with a pair of oversized pants, and holds them up to his waistline.)

Guess who used to wear these pants?

GIRL. You?

GARRETT. Me. I used to wear these pants.

(He sits, stashes pants.)

GARRETT. Some people swear by the South Beach Diet; others swear by Atkins. I swear by three words: (Listing:) Determination. Hard work. Onions.

GIRL. Onions.

GARRETT. I start off every day with an onion smoothie, then for lunch dive into an Onionwich—which is a pile of onions held together with two slabs of onion. And then at dinner? An onion.

GIRL. Does it ever get boring for you?

GARRETT. Well, once a week I splurge with a low-fat onion sorbet.

GIRL. Mm.

GARRETT. It was all worth it, 'cause look at what four years of onions can do!

(He stands up with the oversized pants and holds them up to his waistline.)

Look at that!

(He sits, stashes pants.)

Do you know where most of the weight goes when you're 300 pounds overweight?

GIRL. I don't know.

GARRETT. Hips? Thighs? Gut? Wrong, wrong, WRONG. Answer? The skull. Out of those 300 pounds, 112 lived right here.

GIRL. I didn't know that was possible.

GARRETT. Are you kidding me?

GIRL. No.

GARRETT. Are you kidding me?!

GIRL. No.

GARRETT. I should also mention that the rest of the weight went to my waist!

(He pulls out the oversized pants, stands up, and holds them up to his waistline. He sits, stashes them.)

GIRL. Do you carry those pants around with you everywhere?

GARRETT. What, these pants?

(He pulls out the oversized pants, stands up, and holds them up to his waistline. He sits, stashes them.)

No, not really. Seldom. Infrequently. Occasionally. Sometimes.

GIRL. Always?

GARRETT. Yeah, all the time.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Don't get me wrong. I'm really impressed with what you've accomplished—

GARRETT. I know; I could tell.

GIRL. —but I'd really rather you not take out your oversized pants.

GARRETT. Oh. Okay. That's fine. I won't.

GIRL. It's just not really date-appropriate.

GARRETT. No no, you're right. It's not. I'm sorry. I'll stop showing the pants.

GIRL. Thank you.

GARRETT. But check out these bad boys.

(He stands up with a pair of oversized underwear, holding them up to his waistline.)

(Blackout.)

Midlogue

(A wedding. GUY and GIRL are dancing on a dance floor. There could be others unobtrusively dancing in the background. Music is playing. GUY and GIRL are focused on each other's conversation, all the while going through the rote motions of dance moves. Perhaps it could be "YMCA" that's playing. They do the hand motions while talking. Or just standard dancing.)

(All of the following dialogue is spoken very loudly, as they are trying to be heard over the music.)

GUY. There's no way that really happened.

GIRL. You think I could make that up?

GUY. No. 300 pounds is impressive, though.

GIRL. I hate you.

(They break from their conversation to do some special dance move, again, without appearing to put much effort into it.)

GUY. So why are we putting ourselves through this again?

GIRL. Dancing at weddings isn't optional.

GUY. No, I mean horrible blind dates that lead nowhere.

GIRL. You'll strike gold soon enough. You'll find a girl you can date without having to send me "SOS" texts from the bathroom.

GUY. I know.

GIRL. And when that time comes—you have to dive in headfirst without thinking twice. My grandma always said: You can't nibble at the jalapeño; you have to eat it in one bite.

(Beat.)

My grandma was weird.

(Beat.)

GUY. Your advice would probably be a lot more effective if I could hear you.

(KIM and HANK walk up.³ They all greet each other with hugs and handshakes, while sharing the following genuine pleasantries, which bleed into each other a bit.)

KIM. Hey you guys!!

³ Kim doesn't have to wear a classic wedding dress. It can be a casual wedding.

GUY/GIRL. Hiiiiii! / Kiiiiim! / Hannnnnk!

HANK. Heyyy! Thanks for comin'!

GIRL. (To KIM:) You look beautiful.

KIM. Thank you! Thank you so much!

(Pause. Then they all start to dance without talking.)

(This goes on for a little.)

HANK. (Simultaneously:) All right, see you guys later!

KIM. (Simultaneously:) Byyye!

GUY. Congratulations!

GIRL. So good to see you!

(HANK and KIM start to walk off.)

(The music ends, but HANK and KIM are still screaming as if the music was still loud.)

HANK. Why aren't they dating again?

KIM. Because they're idiots.

(KIM and HANK are gone. Pause. GUY and GIRL have been expressionless. Nearly simultaneously.)

GUY. They didn't know we could hear them.

GIRL. No.

(The music starts up again. GIRL and GUY start to dance again.)

(Blackout.)⁴

Scene 5

(At a restaurant table.)

GUY. Hi! Brooke, right?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Really nice to meet you.

BROOKE. Yes.

⁴ If it's too difficult to perfectly time the music cut-off, don't worry about it. The scene should still work even with the music playing throughout.

GUY. (Looking around:) This place is pretty cool. Have you been here before?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Food any good, or...?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Oh. Well that's good to hear.

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Uhhhh... So you live downtown, right?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. 'Dyou like it?

BROOKE. Yes.

(Beat.)

GUY. Do you say anything other than Yes?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. You do?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Are you going to tell me?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Ah. (Beat.) You do speak English, right?

BROOKE. Yes.

(The SERVER has arrived.)

GUY. Oh great—food.

SERVER. Yes.

(Beat.)

GUY. Wait, you say more than "Yes," right?

SERVER. (Confused:) Do I say more than "Yes"?

GUY. Good, never mind. I'll get the chicken salad entrée with the gazpacho to start.

SERVER. Ma'am?

BROOKE. Yes?

SERVER. Can I get you something?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Here, allow me. Do you want an appetizer?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Soup?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Salad?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Caesar salad?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Greek salad?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Garden salad?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. Dressing?

BROOKE. Yes.

(GUY exhales. Doesn't see it on the menu.)

GUY. *(To SERVER:)* Can you help me out here?

(The following happens really fast. The SERVER, unfazed, is just going through the motions like usual.)

SERVER. Blue Cheese.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. French.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Ranch.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Reduced-fat Ranch.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Low-fat Ranch.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Fat-Free Ranch.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Balsamic Vinaigrette.

BROOKE. Yes.

SERVER. Mixed in.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. On the side.

BROOKE. Yes.

SERVER. We have 34 entrees to choose from. Would you like grilled salmon.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Roast chicken.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Spare ribs.

BROOKE. No.

SERVER. Duck L'Orange.

GUY. You know what? Why don't we just start with the salad for now.

SERVER. Very good, sir...

(The SERVER exits.)

GUY. Is everything okay?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Is that why you're answering with only Yes or No?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. I'm sorry... What's wrong?

BROOKE. Yes.

(Pause.)

GUY. Oh...

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. So your answers haven't really been corresponding with any of my questions at all.

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. What's two plus two?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. What's the capital of Oregon?

BROOKE. No.

GUY. Do you kick puppies for a living?

BROOKE. Yes.

GUY. What's your opinion of random words like triceratops dodgeball and Hannah Montana?

BROOKE. No.

(Beat.)

GUY. So I guess the real question is: Español? Français? Italiano?

BROOKE. (At machine-gun speed!) Parli Italiano! Grazie a dio! Mi rendo conto che fosse stato di brutta figura di uscire con un ragazzo senza controllando se parlasse la mia lingua, ma di solito non sono una persona di bella figura. Cosa ne pensi?⁵

(Pause.)

GUY. Sì.

(Blackout.)

(NOTE: Until her very last line, Brooke should not have an foreign accent. Throughout the scene, it should seem as though her one-word answers are realistic-sounding responses to what's being spoken to her.)

Scene 6

(At a restaurant table. DAN speaks in that deep, intense movie trailer voice. You know the one.⁶)

GIRL. Hi there.

DAN. In a world where anything can happen...one man...goes on a date...with a woman...

(Pause.)

⁵ Translation: "You speak Italian! Thank God! I realize that it may have been impolite to go out with a guy without checking if he speaks my language, but usually I'm not a very polite person. What do you think about that?"

⁶ In case you don't, watch the trailers for *Terminator 2* and *Fatal Attraction*, among countless others.

GIRL. It's nice to meet you too.

DAN. Once in a lifetime...one moment comes along that changes us...forever...

GIRL. (Lifts up a finger, thinking about speaking.)

DAN. She's from the mean streets of South Central...

GIRL. (Pointing to herself:) Actually, South Dakota.

DAN. ...He's a renegade cop...

GIRL. You're a renegade cop?

DAN. ...Together, they just might make...the perfect pair...

GIRL. (Cheerily trying to end the madness:) Okay, let's—

DAN. From Universal Pictures and the producers who brought you *Norbit*...

GIRL. Okay...

DAN. ...comes the conversation...forty-five seconds in the making...

GIRL. Okay, stop!

(Pause.)

Is there some *reason* you're doing an impression of that movie trailer voice?

DAN. That voice...is mine...

GIRL. (Not buying it:) That's really you? That's your job?

DAN. It is...

(Beat.)

GIRL. Okay, that's actually pretty cool... Still, it'd be less weird if you just talked in your normal speaking voice.

DAN. This is my normal speaking voice.

GIRL. It is...?

DAN. I've been the official movie preview voice for so long, I've forgotten how to speak...like a normal person...

GIRL. Uh huh.

DAN. My voice makes life...harder than you think... I've found it difficult...to show emotion... For example...here is what it sounds like when I say...something exciting...

I can't believe my team won the Super Bowl. How about that catch in the game-winning drive. What a play. I'm freaking out. Woo.

GIRL. It does lose something in the translation

DAN. Or last week...when my friend's grandmother died... It was hard to sound sincere...when I told him *this*:

I'm so sorry for your loss... Grams was a wonderful woman... My condolences to you...and your family.

GIRL. It must be hard for you.

DAN. It's made me...clinically depressed...

GIRL. Well, what if we try to fix your problem?

DAN. I'm fairly certain...it can't be fixed...

GIRL. We could try... Here—give me an example line from one of your movie trailers.

(He briefly prepares himself, putting his hand over his ear as if he were in a studio.)

DAN. *In a world* where parakeets rule, one man—

GIRL. Okay, there. Say "In a world" again.

DAN. *In a world...*

GIRL. Right. But this time, say it like I do. "In a world."

DAN. *In a world...*

GIRL. Better. (*It wasn't better.*) Try again.

DAN. *In a world...*

GIRL. Okay, try saying: "Inside this planet."

DAN. *In a world...*

GIRL. All right, forget it. I can't stay if you're gonna to talk like that the whole time.

(She gather her belongings.)

DAN. Before you go...can you do me one favor...

GIRL. What?

DAN. Could you give me...a ride home...

GIRL. You don't have a car?

DAN. I can't...afford it...

GIRL. You can't afford a car? You're a Hollywood celebrity. Shouldn't you have a lot of money?

(He puts his hand to his ear as if he's in the studio again.)

DAN. *In a world* of plastic surgery and million-dollar makeovers... one man...risky it all.

(Beat.)

(In his regular voice:) And now he's broke and lives with his mom.

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

(At a restaurant table.)

GUY. Hi.

SARAH. Hello.

GUY. It's nice to meet you.

SARAH. Give me some details about you.

GUY. Oh. Let's see. I went to college at State.

SARAH. (*Slightly overlapping:*) State, yes. Go on.

GUY. I was an English major, but I minored in—Astronomy.

SARAH. (*Overlapping:*) Astronomy. Yes, I know. All of this is obvious. Give me *details*.

GUY. I don't understand. How is this obvious?

SARAH. (*Exasperated:*) Have you ever been on a date before? (*Sighs:*) Fine. I'll show you. Ask me questions about your life.

GUY. Where am I from?

SARAH. Baltimore.

GUY. What are my parents' names?

SARAH. Steve and Joan.

GUY. What was my MCAT score?⁷

SARAH. You didn't take the MCAT.

(Beat.)

⁷ Pronounced "EM-cat."

But you got a 1250 on the GRE.

GUY. That's amazing...

SARAH. Child's play. Your family dog's name was Dexter; he was killed by an 1986 Buick Lesabre when you were ten. You got straight-A's all through middle school except when you failed Volleyball. You were second place in your ninth grade spelling bee, losing on the word "anemometer." You have a phobia of nursing homes and peacocks; you love black licorice but hate Twizzlers, and your blood-type is AB-positive but you didn't know that till I just told you 'cause you've never given blood. Ask me something hard.

(Pause.)

GUY. I'm not sure whether to be impressed or creeped out, but I think I'm just creeped out.

SARAH. All of this information is publicly available. Ever heard of the "internet"? I'll bet you only use it for email.

GUY. Actually, yeah.

SARAH. Seriously? What are you, trapped in 2007?⁸

GUY. You found all of that about me online...

SARAH. Of course. Why else do you think they invented Google, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, LinkedIn, Gawker, Bebo, Flickr, LexisNexis, CriminalSearches.com, OpenSecrets.org, PeopleScanner, and RedSox.com?

GUY. RedSox.com?

SARAH. You bought four playoff tickets last week.

(Beat.)

GUY. All right, well... (Trying to hold back the sarcasm.) Tell me about you.

SARAH. (Exasperated:) Are you kidding me? Who doesn't research their date in advance? Do your homework.

Here.

(In one simple, fluid motion she pulls out a laptop, and slides it over to GUY.)

I'll wait.

(Blackout.)

⁸ Use the year before the current year.

Scene 8

(At a restaurant table. GIRL and EDDIE are mid-conversation. They are fully engaged in their conversation.)

EDDIE. No, I absolutely agree!

GIRL. And yet somehow it's the highest-rated show on television.

EDDIE. Seriously! I thought I was the only one who was bothered by that.

GIRL. Same here.

(Beat.)

Y'know, this is great.

EDDIE. It is!

GIRL. We've got the same taste, same politics, same values...

EDDIE. ...same religion...same therapist...

GIRL. ...we're from the same part of the country.

EDDIE. Pretty unbelievable.

GIRL. That's not *bad*, right? To have too much in common?

EDDIE. No, I think that's good. Unless you also shave your beard.

GIRL. Shoot. We're so different.

EDDIE. Oh well...

GIRL. Y'know, this reminds of this one time I went on a really awesome date and then at the end he turned out to be gay.

EDDIE. Well, I'm not gay. In fact, I know that the rulebook says we should wait a few days before scheduling the next date, but—

GIRL. No, let's just schedule it now.

EDDIE. Really?

GIRL. Yeah. Definitely.

(They pull out their planners/PDAs.)

EDDIE. Cool. Well, I can't next weekend.

GIRL. Yeah, me neither. Not to be Debbie Downer, but I've got a funeral to go to.

EDDIE. Oh, me too. My whole family's in town.

GIRL. Same here. My Cousin Trudy had like a hundred cousins.

EDDIE. That's so weird! The funeral I'm going to is for my Cousin Trudy.

(Pause.)

(They look askance.)

(Pause.)

EDDIE. Wait a second, are you —?

GIRL. Is your dad —?

(Pause.)

EDDIE / GIRL. *(Simultaneously cringing:)* EW! / No!! / Ohhhh! / Seriously?! / Gross! Gross! *(etc.)*

(Blackout.)

Scene 9

(At a restaurant table. GUY and ANNIE are laughing.)

GUY. This is going great!

ANNIE. I agree! I'm having a really good time.

GUY. Y'know, this reminds of this story where my best friend went on a really awesome date and the date turned out to be her cousin.

ANNIE. No way!

GUY. Seriously!

ANNIE. That's exactly how my parents met!

(Blackout.)

Scene 10

(At a restaurant table. BARRY is all business — dressed for success.)

GIRL. Hi!

BARRY. Thanks so much for meeting up such short notice.

GIRL. No worries.

BARRY. Shall we get started?

GIRL. Sure!

BARRY. I recently underwent a failed merger with my previous client. What I'm looking for at this stage is a floor-to-ceiling overhaul of the status quo — a paradigm shift that will take us to the next level — bringing us from a relationship... to Relationship 2.0.

GIRL. Um —

BARRY. Please hold your questions till the end. Now as you'll see in these projections —

(He pulls down a slide projector and uses a pointer or laser pointer to review a PowerPoint presentation.⁹)

— my four-year plan is to hit the ground running with a strong foundation in the first three quarters, synergizing from the word Go, and by 2012¹⁰ have fully reinvented our relationship using a game-changing, scalable approach to seamless integration.

How exactly do I *plan* to accomplish this? I'll tell you:

Thinking outside-the-box.

Win-win situations.

Giving 110 percent.

Maximizing leverage.

Pushing the envelope.

Squaring the circle.

And finally...making sure we call ahead if one of us is going to be late for a movie or something.

I think you'll agree that as a disruptive innovation, this is a value-added proposition. If we run it up the flagpole and see who salutes; if we skate to where the puck is going; if we stick a fork in it to see if it's done; if we tickle the artichoke till it sings "Dancing Queen" — then I guarantee this merger will bear fruit.

And by "bear fruit" I am in no way referring to babies.

Unless you want to talk about it.

But totally cool if not.

I want four.

⁹ For low-budget groups, papers from a briefcase, or a series of posters would work.

¹⁰ Or whatever year is applicable.

(Beat.)

Any questions?

(Pause.)

GIRL. I do have one question.

BARRY. *(As if there are others in the meeting:)* Ah, yes, you.

GIRL. Can you tell me how it's possible that I've actually had worse dates than this one?

BARRY. *(Confidently:)* They didn't use pie charts, huh...?

(Beat.)

GIRL. I'm gonna hit the ladies room.

(GIRL gets up, takes out her phone, and turns to walk away. GUY is suddenly there.)

GIRL. Hey! What are you doing here? I was just texting you! *(Leans in:)* Save me.

GUY. Okay.

(He takes a breath.)

I thought for a long time about what you said at the wedding. Or what you screamed at the wedding... I realized that for years I've been texting escape plans from the bathroom, but never when I'm with you.

GIRL. Me too. Like just now all I could think about was us doing laundry, instead of listening to whatever garbage this guy was talking about. *(Indicates BARRY.)*

BARRY. How's it going.

GUY. So I think we should quit nibbling at that jalapeño. We should eat the whole thing. Which sucks 'cause I'm allergic to peppers.

What I'm asking is: Will you come with me to dinner?

GIRL. Yes.

GUY. But not just one dinner. All the dinners.

(He gets down on one knee and reveals an engagement ring.)

(There is a moment where GIRL's breath is taken away, but she doesn't telegraph her emotions.)

(A pause where it's unclear what will happen.)

BARRY. Check please.

End of Play