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DATING GAMES

by Garth Wingfield

Mary Just Broke Up With This Guy 5

MARY, 20s or 30s.

HER DATE, Roughly the same age as Mary.

The Lunch Date 21

ALICE

HOLLY

Cha-Cha-Cha..... 31

HENRY, late thirties. Nice looking, snappily dressed.

SHEILA, late thirties. Attractive, much more so than she realizes.

Daniel on a Thursday 41

DANIEL, early thirties. Very neatly dressed.

KEVIN, early thirties. Not so pulled together.

Run 57

SCOUT'S OWNER, Male. 30s.

STEVEN'S OWNER, Female. Also 30s.

HELEN, A little older. A lot more pissed.

**MARY JUST BROKE UP
WITH THIS GUY**

Cast of Characters

MARY, 20s or 30s.

HER DATE, Roughly the same age as Mary.

Time

Current day.

Place

A coffeehouse.

Production Notes

The man should use no costumes or props (hats, glasses, etc.) to distinguish between each of the various characters. They should all be realized as simply and theatrically as possible.

Acknowledgments

Mary Just Broke Up With This Guy was originally produced as part of *Dating Games (an evening of one-act plays)* by Winged Angel Productions at Theatre Row Studio Theatre in New York City on June 10, 2003. It was directed by Laura Josepher. The set design was by Sarah Lambert. The lighting design was by Susan Hamburger. Sierra Marcks was the stage manager. The cast was as follows:

MARY Karin Sibrava
HER DATE Michael Anderson

The play was subsequently performed as part of *Dating Games* in Los Angeles, CA, at the Lilian Theatre in October, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the same cast.

“De do do do, de da da da, is all I want to say to you.”

—The Police

MARY JUST BROKE UP WITH THIS GUY

(A woman sitting alone on a chair in a coffeehouse. She glances around occasionally, fidgets, sips from a latte. On a table in front of her is a buzzer like you'd find on a game show.)

(A man enters, looks around, then approaches her.)

DATE #1. Are you Mary?

MARY. I am. It's nice to meet you...Alex.

DATE #1. Likewise.

MARY. You want a coffee?

DATE #1. I grabbed the waitress when I came in. She's getting me a latte.

MARY. *(Smiles:)* Oh, that's what I'm having.

DATE #1. *(Smiles, sits:)* Oh. *(A little awkward.)* So. Here we are.

MARY. Uh-huh. *(A little beat.)* I've got to admit I'm a little nervous.

DATE #1. Actually, me too.

MARY. I just broke up with this guy I'd been seeing for a while. Tony. Was his name. But you don't want to hear about him. I'm kind of rusty at the whole dating thing is all.

DATE #1. Yeah, Sally mentioned something about that when she called. So you and this guy were together for what...?

MARY. Six years.

DATE #1. Wow.

MARY. Yeah.

DATE #1. That's a long time.

MARY. I know. But enough about him. He's ancient history. You know Sally from Cornell?

DATE #1. Yep, we met the first day of freshman year, if you can believe that. She's great, isn't she?

MARY. The best. Everyone at work adores her. And it's kind of funny, actually, because she'd mentioned you a while ago, months ago, I think. She announced at lunch that she had this great single friend named Alex she was just *dying* to fix someone up with. Of course, I was with Tony at the time so I didn't pay much attention. But now...here we are.

DATE #1. Life's weird like that, isn't it?

MARY. It is.

DATE #1. So how long ago did you and Tony break up?

MARY. Tuesday. *(A little beat.)*

DATE #1. Sorry?

MARY. This past Tuesday. But it's okay, it's not like I'm on the rebound or anything.

(He shoots her a strange look.)

MARY. That must sound insane. I mean, yes, on some level, I probably am on the rebound, but... *(Trying to sound very sincere:)* It was over for a very long time before we actually ended it.

(He starts to laugh.)

MARY. What?

DATE #1. I appreciate your attempt to...you're adorable.

MARY. Well, okay...thanks. *(Then:)* Y'know, this is so much easier than I thought it would be.

DATE #1. What do you mean?

MARY. You just seem so...normal.

DATE #1. I guess that's a good thing.

MARY. Are you kidding? You hear these stories. And I *am* sort of picky. *(Faux serious:)* Please tell me you don't smoke.

DATE #1. I don't smoke.

MARY. Thank God. Because I could never date a smoker. I mean, *I* smoked. For years. Never gonna go there again.

DATE #1. Good for you.

MARY. *(Winces, expectantly:)* And I'm hoping...you like dogs...because I have one.

DATE #1. I haven't petted a dog in weeks. I can't wait to meet yours.

MARY. And I really like going to the theater. Mostly Off-Broadway stuff.

DATE #1. Oh, then you should see the new John Patrick Shanley.

MARY. I saw it! I loved it!

DATE #1. Oh my God, so did I!

MARY. You're kidding?!

DATE #1. I'm not!

MARY. What a coincidence!

DATE #1. *(Blurts, almost over her last line:)* I'm gay! *(Beat.)*

MARY. I'm sorry...?

DATE #1. *(All in one breath:)* Sally has no idea—it would kill her if she knew. She was completely in love with me in college, before she met George and he became an orthodontist and they fell into their loveless marriage in Hackensack. Promise me you won't say a word.

MARY. Uh-huh...

DATE #1. But you seem really fun. We should go to the theater!

(A beat, then MARY reaches over and presses the buzzer: BUUUUUUUZZZZZ! The man stands.)

DATE #2. *(More assertive:)* You must be Mary!

MARY. I am. It's nice to meet you...Tom.

DATE #2. Yeah.

MARY. You want a coffee?

DATE #2. I just grabbed the waitress. She's whipping me up a chai.

MARY. A what?

DATE #2. A chai. It's like this infused tea thing.

MARY. *(Not as comfortable with this:)* Oh...I'm having a latte.

DATE #2. *(Equally unsettled, sits:)* Oh... *(A little beat. She relaxes a bit.)*

MARY. *(Less nervous than last time:)* I've got to admit I'm a little nervous. I just broke up with this guy I'd been seeing for a while. Tony. Was his name. But you don't want to hear about him.

DATE #2. Yeah, you mentioned something about that when you answered my personal ad. So you and this guy were together for what...?

MARY. Six years.

DATE #2. Wow, that's significant.

MARY. I know.

DATE #2. And when did you break up?

MARY. Like...a while ago...

DATE #2. Gimme a ballpark.

MARY. Um...three months?

DATE #2. *(Fast:)* Damn, so you're totally on the rebound.

(A little beat.)

MARY. No, I'm not. At all. And maybe it was more like four or five months, it's hard to remember.

DATE #2. Wait, you can't remember when you broke up?

MARY. Not specifically.

DATE #2. And you were together six years?

MARY. That's right.

DATE #2. Something's not tracking here.

MARY. You asked me to give you a ballpark...

DATE #2. I remember *exactly* when I broke up with my last girlfriend, Tanya, and we were only together for like—

MARY. (*Overlapping, embarrassed:*) It was last Tuesday, okay? Two Tuesdays ago. And I'm really...gonna go kill myself or something now.

(*BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!*)

DATE #3. (*More smooth:*) I'm guessing you're Mary.

MARY. That's me. It's nice to meet you...Darren?

DATE #3. Yep.

MARY. You want a coffee?

DATE #3. I just grabbed the waitress. She's whipping me up some pasta.

MARY. (*Not understanding his order:*) I'm having a latte.

DATE #3. That works for me.

(*A little beat. He sits.*)

MARY. (*Bored, slow, as if saying a script for the zillionth time; not nervous at all:*) I've got to admit I'm a little nervous. I just broke up with this guy I'd been seeing. Tony was his name, and *blah, blah, blah...*

DATE #3. (*Eyes her askance:*) You don't seem nervous.

MARY. (*Snaps out of it:*) What?

DATE #3. At all.

MARY. (*Covers:*) Well, I... hide it well, I guess.

DATE #3. Apparently. (*Then:*) So yeah, you mentioned your ex on the phone. You and this guy were together for what, six years?

MARY. Right.

DATE #3. And when did you break up?

MARY. (*Without missing a beat:*) Months ago. I could give you a specific date, if you want. October 18th—there. I'm *so* not on the rebound.

DATE #3. I didn't say you were...

MARY. I've moved beyond him. Completely.

DATE #3. Great. So... you wanna fuck?

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #4. *(More intense:)* Your personal ad. What you wrote was really cool.

MARY. You thought so?

DATE #4. Yeah, especially the part about rats.

MARY. Aren't they somehow repellent and exhilarating at the same time?

DATE #4. Totally. *(Very fast and dark:)* This one time I had a rat in my apartment -- and it was a big fucker too—and it tormented me, man, landing with a *boom* on the floor in the middle of the night and making me do somersaults of fear off my futon at two a.m. So what I did was, I cornered it and trapped it and called my friend Edgar, and I was all, "You've gotta come over here, man." And he was all, "But why?" And I was all, "Just get your ass *over* here." So he did, and I doused the little furrball in gasoline, and we kicked back and drank beers and watched that motherfucker *BUUUUUUUUUUUUUURN!* *(Then, completely normal:)* So your ad said you liked sushi.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #5. *(More earnest:)* I've seen your personal ad on Nerve.com for *weeks* now, and I've always meant to respond.

MARY. It hasn't been there *that* many weeks...

DATE #5. You wrote some nice things.

MARY. Oh. Thanks.

DATE #5. Especially the part about God.

MARY. Um...I didn't write about God.

DATE #5. And I think that's a problem, don't you?

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #6. (*More bookish:*) So how many times have you gone to Date Bait?

MARY. That was my first time. I've never done *anything* like that before.

DATE #6. They all say that.

MARY. No, really, it's true.

DATE #6. (*Not believing her:*) Uh-huh...

MARY. Standing up in front of all those people. It was horrifying.

DATE #6. It gets easier. And why did you write down my number?

MARY. I don't know... I thought you were cute. You've got great eyes. A very piercing green.

DATE #6. Yeah? I thought you were cute too.

MARY. (*Smiles:*) Thanks. (*Then:*) Also, you said you like dogs.

DATE #6. Right.

MARY. I love dogs.

DATE #6. Oh, I was just saying that.

MARY. What?

DATE #6. Gets 'em every time. Women love guys who love dogs. I mean, it's not like I *hate* dogs or anything. I'm just more of a cat person. (*Then, afraid he's offended her:*) Do you have a dog?

MARY. (*Covers:*) No... (*Then:*) Do you have a cat?

DATE #6. A couple. Well, seventeen. Mind if I smoke? (*As he pulls out a pack of cigarettes:*) I really hate when people give other people shit for smoking in public. If I wanna smoke, I'll smoke. Besides, it's sexy!

MARY. I feel like I should be giving you the benefit of the doubt here, but...

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #7. (*More suave, off the cigarettes:*) Would this bother you?

MARY. Well, a little...

DATE #7. Oh, then I don't have to. I'm trying to quit anyway. It's such a disgusting habit.

MARY. *Isn't it?*

(Before he puts away the cigarettes, he pulls a Ziploc bag from his jacket pocket—it's filled with something we can't quite make out.)

DATE #7. Quick question: How do you feel about that?

MARY. What's that?

DATE #7. My own hair. I've been collecting it since 1986. I have 67 jars. Is *that* a disgusting habit too?

(BUZZZZZZ!)

DATE #8. *(Picks up the cigarettes again:)* Oh my God, you hate I'm a smoker!

MARY. That's okay.

DATE #8. No, seriously...

MARY. It's really okay... *(He puts away the cigarettes.)*

DATE #8. I smoke. It's so gross. Is that a deal-breaker?

MARY. *(Weak smile:)* No...

DATE #8. Thank God. So tell me what you do.

MARY. I'm an editor. At Time Out.

DATE #8. Fun.

MARY. Yeah, but it pays nothing. And you?

DATE #8. *(Sexy leer:)* Certified public accountant.

MARY. *(To herself:)* Ooh, that's a deal-breaker.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #9. *(More upbeat:)* Wow, you're an editor at Time Out!

MARY. It's okay. It pays nothing, but I get to go to a lot of free screenings and stuff.

DATE #9. That's a nice perk.

MARY. And what do you do?

DATE #9. I'm a sex worker. (*Off her look:*) I'm kidding.

MARY. (*Hugely relieved:*) Oh, thank God!

DATE #9. Come on, look at me, like I could be a 'ho! (*Then, fast:*) Well, I *am* sort of in the industry. I'm in marketing. Sales and marketing. Of videos. Mostly girl-on-girl. Girl-on-guy. Girl-on-just-about-anything-*human*. (*Then, considers:*) Actually, *that's* not entirely true.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #10. (*Overly bright:*) I'm a kindergarten teacher—you should see my kids!

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #11. I'm a massage therapist for birds and reptiles.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #12. I'm a lawyer.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #13. Lawyer.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #14. Lawyer.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #15. Entertainment lawyer.

MARY. Oh, that sounds interesting. What kind of stuff?

DATE #15. Making deals. Negotiating contracts. Alec Baldwin's a client.

MARY. (*Very fast, babbles:*) Oh my God, I met him at a party once! He seemed like *such a nice guy!* I went to this screening of a movie. He wasn't in the movie, but he was there. So at the party afterwards—at Chelsea Piers—he was about to eat this gloppy curry shrimp-ball thing, and I just *walked into him!* *Splat!* All over my blouse. And

he made this huge deal, calling over the waiter and getting seltzer and apologizing profusely even though it wasn't his fault *at all!*

(Silence.)

(More awkward.)

MARY. And then, um...he went back to Kim Basinger. And I went back to my friends. From work. And it...it didn't stain...in case you were wondering... *(A beat.)*

(Re: the buzzer:)

MARY. So, um...like, I don't know, if you wanna...?

(He presses the buzzer: BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #15. *(With a British accent:)* And I really just adore the Upper West Side.

MARY. *(A little unsettled:)* It's nice up there...

DATE #15. The stores, the park, the well-scrubbed young couples pushing babies in their prams.

MARY. I lived up there for a while when I first moved to the city...

DATE #15. And you should come back and visit us again, Mary. We'd welcome you with open arms!

MARY. Um, Gordon...

DATE #15. Yes?

MARY. It's...the thing is...all those times we chatted online, I had no idea you were British.

DATE #15. Really?

MARY. No, you never mentioned it.

DATE #15. Well, I was born in London but came stateside when I was a child.

MARY. Okay, see, I thought you said you were from New Jersey.

DATE #15. Well, we moved to New Jersey when I was twelve. Then I went to university here.

MARY. Really. *(Smiles:)* It's such a funny thing. I had this, this...image of you after our chats. A very specific image. And I never once thought of you as having an accent.

DATE #15. *(Drops the accent:)* That's probably because I don't have one. *(A little beat.)*

MARY. Sorry?

DATE #15. I was just putting you on.

MARY. You were...?

DATE #15. You got it.

MARY. Why?

DATE #15. Because I'm just really good at accents is the thing.

MARY. Uh-huh...

DATE #15. And you believed me, didn't you? I love that you believed me. God, you're so great!

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ! MARY pulls out a pack of cigarettes. She's got more of an edge now.)

MARY. Christ, am I dying for a cigarette! I would *kill* for cigarette, actually—I *would!*

DATE #17. I really liked your web site.

MARY. Uh-huh. So what's your story?

DATE #17. I'm a carpenter.

MARY. What's that supposed to mean?

DATE #17. That I build stuff. Like cabinets and benches. Recently, I've been working on this chair with hard-carved legs. It's pine, and it's...beautiful...it's a total labor of—

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

MARY. Talk to me.

DATE #18. What can I say? I'm just a regular guy. I love holding hands, and spooning in bed at night, and waking up and having sex before breakfast...

MARY. Could you speak in anything *but* clichés?

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #19. I'm very spiritual. Do you know Maryanne Williamson?

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #20. I can bench press my body weight.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #21. I knit.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #22. I...uh...

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #22. Jesus, lady, I haven't even *said* anything yet!

MARY. You're right, I'm sorry. Go on.

(She places her hand inches above the buzzer, her eyes trained on her hand, ready to buzz away.)

DATE #22. *(Hesitates, then:)* I...like children...?

MARY. Look, pal, I don't know what you mean by that, but I'm sure it's totally icky.

(BUUUUUUUZZZZZ!)

DATE #23. I thought your web site was really great.

MARY. What about it?

DATE #23. I don't know, the way it was designed. All the photos.

MARY. *(Jumps on him:)* And I *look* like my photos. They're *recent* photos.

DATE #23. *(Recoils a bit:)* You look just like your photos...

MARY. I hate it when people email you their photos, and then you meet them at Sbarro's, and it turns out the photos were from fucking 1991!

DATE #23. You've done a good job with the photos...

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THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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THE LUNCH DATE

Cast of Characters

ALICE

HOLLY

Acknowledgments

The Lunch Date was first produced as part of *Dating Games* at Theatre Row Studio Theatres in June, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

ALICE Cynthia Babak
HOLLY..... Karin Sibrava

The play was subsequently performed as part of *Dating Games* in Los Angeles, CA, at the Lilian Theatre in October, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

ALICE Alysia Reiner
HOLLY..... Karin Sibrava

THE LUNCH DATE

(A posh bar in New York City. ALICE and HOLLY are sipping Cosmopolitans. At lights up, ALICE's cosmo is poised inches from her lips, frozen in mid-air.)

ALICE. Oh my God...

HOLLY. It's true.

ALICE. *(More stunned:)* Oh my God!

HOLLY. You're shocked.

ALICE. *(It sinks in:)* Oh—my God!

HOLLY. This is the response most people have had.

ALICE. You've told other people?!

HOLLY. A few people. A person or two. Well, you know... my therapist.

ALICE. This is a stunning revelation.

HOLLY. It's not *that* stunning.

ALICE. Holly, please; it is.

HOLLY. We had lunch together.

ALICE. Uh-huh...

HOLLY. It was a lunch. That's all.

ALICE. It was more than a lunch and you know it.

HOLLY. I don't know; maybe.

ALICE. What do you mean, "maybe?" You just said this was—

HOLLY. Fine.

ALICE. That this was a date.

HOLLY. Yes.

ALICE. That this was, without question, a date.

HOLLY. That's right.

ALICE. That this was a date you went on with a *woman!*

(A little beat.)

HOLLY. You maybe... you maybe wouldn't want to say that so loud.

ALICE. God, I'm sorry.

HOLLY. This is all very new to me.

ALICE. Sure.

HOLLY. I'm still trying to figure this out.

ALICE. Of course.

HOLLY. Just... do something... sip your cosmo or something.

ALICE. I can do that.

(A beat. ALICE sips her cosmo.)

ALICE. I've got to tell you, I'm a little thrown for a loop here.

HOLLY. I'm sensing that.

ALICE. And I'm not saying this is a bad thing! I'm not! I think this is wonderful! *Really.* It's just...

HOLLY. What?

ALICE. Well, I'm sort of having a hard time picturing you as a lesbian.

HOLLY. Look...

ALICE. It's just, you were with Matthew for so long.

HOLLY. Four years.

ALICE. It never even crossed my mind that you might be into women.

HOLLY. It didn't cross my mind either!

ALICE. You've got to admit it's a little surprising.

HOLLY. I suppose it is.

ALICE. Does he know?

HOLLY. Who?

ALICE. Matthew. Have you told him?

HOLLY. About the lunch date?

ALICE. Yeah.

HOLLY. No. I don't talk to Matthew. I haven't talked to Matthew since he left.

ALICE. Are you serious? I didn't realize that.

HOLLY. Matthew and I didn't end on good terms.

ALICE. But I thought you said... no, I *remember* you telling me that it wasn't so terrible, really, and that you email sometimes.

HOLLY. I guess I lied then.

ALICE. What?

HOLLY. It was horrible. It ended horribly with Matthew. I told everyone otherwise.

ALICE. I don't believe this!

HOLLY. It was just so embarrassing. It was mortifying, actually, the way it all ended.

ALICE. Okay, so... what really happened?

HOLLY. Basically, it was just... basically, we woke up one morning, one Sunday, and he said, "I'm not attracted to you anymore, Holly, and frankly, I'm not sure if I ever was." I mean, it was a little more complicated than that, but you get the idea.

ALICE. Jesus, that is so shitty...

HOLLY. But this isn't about him!

ALICE. What isn't?

HOLLY. This isn't some... this isn't in *response* to him is what I'm saying.

ALICE. Okay.

HOLLY. This was just a lunch. This was just a lunch I had with this really beautiful woman named Julia.

(A beat.)

ALICE. So how'd you meet her?

HOLLY. Please, you don't even want to know.

ALICE. I do.

HOLLY. It's kind of weird how we met.

ALICE. I'm intrigued now.

HOLLY. It's silly.

ALICE. God, tell me, okay?

HOLLY. *(Hesitates, then:)* We met in therapy.

ALICE. No way!

HOLLY. In group therapy.

ALICE. That's insane.

HOLLY. Isn't it? I'd just joined this group about six months ago... in *addition* to my private therapy. Could I be in *more* therapy? Anyway, Julia would talk about the girls she was dating. I would talk about Matthew. And sometimes... I don't know, sometimes we would sort of catch one another's eye for like a second too long.

And then, it was just... Matthew and I broke up. I was a mess for a few weeks. And one night after therapy, she gives me her card and says we should have lunch. I wasn't at all sure what she wanted.

ALICE. But you called her.

HOLLY. A few days later, yeah.

ALICE. And you two met up.

HOLLY. We did.

ALICE. That is so adventurous of you!

HOLLY. I guess so.

ALICE. You were in a sorority in college. You're a lesbian now. I just needed to say that. Go on.

HOLLY. Alice!

ALICE. No, really, I think this is all just great! One little thingie: What does she look like?

HOLLY. Oh my God, she's gorgeous. You remember Meryl Streep in "Kramer vs. Kramer?"

ALICE. Sure.

HOLLY. That's Julia. Long hair, sort of tentative. This very quiet beauty.

ALICE. I hated Meryl Streep in that movie. Her character was just despicable.

(Then:)

My stuff. Keep going.

HOLLY. I don't know what else to tell you. She's great. She's runs this wonderful little gallery down in Tribeca. She's showing this new kid right now who she *swears* is the next Keith Haring.

ALICE. And you like her.

HOLLY. Alice...

ALICE. I think you like her.

HOLLY. I had lunch with her. One lunch.

ALICE. Where'd you go?

HOLLY. We went... now don't get all... but we went to Montrachet.

ALICE. Are you serious? Oh my God, Holly!

HOLLY. She suggested it. It's right by her gallery.

ALICE. What a fabulous choice! Who paid?

HOLLY. Alice!

ALICE. That was tacky, sorry.

HOLLY. Come on!

ALICE. Never should've asked that.

HOLLY. (*Hesitates, then:*) She paid.

ALICE. We love her!

HOLLY. Wasn't that nice of her?

ALICE. So nice!

HOLLY. So she shows up—looking amazing, I might add. And we sit down and have a couple of glasses of wine—I know, in the middle of the day, totally decadent. And as we're eating our salads—Caesar for me, mixed greens for her; not sure why I just told you that—she just... she puts her hand on my knee. Under the table. And I positively... I swoon. I do! Right there in Montrachet.

ALICE. I'm dying right now. I just need to inform you that I am absolutely dying. Go on.

HOLLY. And I also just... *know*. In that moment, it becomes very clear. *This is it*: Julia and me, the two of us until we grow old. My heart is fluttering, and I don't know when I've been happier... I don't know when I've ever felt more alive, more... *right* with everything.

ALICE. Dying. Dying. So dying.

HOLLY. And that's when it hit me: I'm a lesbian! This is who I am now. Hold on, and *if* I'm a lesbian, then just... fuck it.

(Fast:)

I cancel the tuna steak and order the t-bone.

ALICE. You did not...

HOLLY. I did! With french fries and slaw. And red wine. And lots of bread. Now that I've got the waiter's attention, I pre-order a chocolate mousse for dessert.

ALICE. They serve slaw at Montrachet?

HOLLY. I mean, if I'm gonna be a lesbian, then the world can kiss my fat ass—I'm gonna be a beer-bellied, big-titted BULL DYKE!

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CHA-CHA-CHA

Cast of Characters

HENRY, late thirties. Nice looking, snappily dressed.

SHEILA, late thirties. Attractive, much more so than she realizes.

Place

A party in a hotel ballroom.

Time

The present.

Acknowledgments

Cha-Cha-Cha was written at the invitation of Primary Stages (Casey Childs, Artistic Director) for a series of short plays about “A Moment of Bliss,” in response to 9/11. It was performed as a reading at the theater on March 7, 2002. Jeremy Dobrish directed the following cast:

HENRY Robert Stanton
SHEILA Amy Hohn

The play was first produced as part of *Dating Games* at Theatre Row Studio Theatres in June, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

HENRY Michael Anderson
SHEILA Cynthia Babak

The play was subsequently performed as part of *Dating Games* in Los Angeles, CA, at the Lilian Theatre in October, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

HENRY Michael Anderson
SHEILA Alysia Reiner

“Won’t you take me to Funkytown?”
—Lipps, Inc.

CHA-CHA-CHA

(A crowded party. SHEILA stands alone, sipping wine and smiling faintly as an early 80s song plays. She's nicely dressed. After a moment, HENRY approaches. He's wearing a suit and tie.)

HENRY. *(Cautious:)* Sheila...?

SHEILA. *(Turns, caught off guard:)* I'm sorry?

HENRY. You're Sheila, right?

SHEILA. I am...

HENRY. *(Sort of overwhelmed:)* Wow...okay, this is...

It's Henry.

SHEILA. Oh...oh, okay, sure—oh my God, *hi!*

HENRY. Henry Glassman.

SHEILA. Yes, of course!

HENRY. It's so wonderful to see you.

SHEILA. Sure, you too!

HENRY. I was over there by the cash-bar getting a drink, and I saw you and thought, Wait, that's Sheila Coogan. Jesus! And I just... I figured I'd come over and say hello.

So...hello.

SHEILA. Hello!

HENRY. Can I get you...do you want a wine or anything?

SHEILA. No, I'm all set.

HENRY. You sure?

SHEILA. Yeah.

HENRY. Man, this is...

SHEILA. I know!

HENRY. I'm just...I don't know what to...ahhh! (*Collects himself a little, then:*) How are you?

SHEILA. I'm well, thanks.

HENRY. That's great. So great. I'm really pleased to hear that.

(*A beat.*)

HENRY. You have no idea who I am, do you?

SHEILA. I don't!

HENRY. I had a feeling...

SHEILA. (*Looks at his name tag:*) Henry Glassman...

HENRY. Well, I was Hank back in school.

SHEILA. Okay...

HENRY. Hank Glassman.

SHEILA. That sounds a bit more familiar...

HENRY. Um, let me... I was on the debate team in ninth grade...

SHEILA. Uh-huh...

HENRY. I was friends with your brother Kendall for about five minutes in *tenth* grade...

SHEILA. Okay...

HENRY. We were in Mrs. Lyons' A.P. English class senior year...

SHEILA. (*Realizes:*) Oh my God, you used to be fat!

(*A little beat.*)

HENRY. (*Smiles awkwardly:*) I...did...

SHEILA. You used to be *so* fat!

HENRY. I wouldn't go that far...

SHEILA. I remember now...vaguely...you were...real tubby there for a few years. You wore Husky pants from Sears. You had breasts.

HENRY. You're crossing a line now, Sheila...

SHEILA. And now here you are. My God, look at you! This is chubby little Hank Glassman. You're in such great shape now—you must be gay!

(A little beat.)

HENRY. Excuse me?

SHEILA. I'm sorry, that was the wine talking—I shouldn't have had this last glass. It's just...you're so svelte now. And defined!

HENRY. *(Awkward:)* I don't know about that...

SHEILA. Please, look around this room. You're toned. It's very clear that the men in our class have completely forgotten the meaning of the word "gym."

HENRY. Okay...

(Looks at her name tag.)

So it's Sheila *Hennessee* now...

SHEILA. It is. That's my husband over there, Ted. He's in real estate. And we've got two kids. Charlie, three; Joe, one.

HENRY. How wonderful... *(Then:)* And what about you?

SHEILA. What about me?

HENRY. Well, what do *you* do?

SHEILA. *(A little taken aback:)* Oh...well, I don't know...I carpool. I garden. I volunteer at the women's center. *(Then:)* I paint, but we don't talk about that.

HENRY. *(Smiles, pressing:)* Why don't we?

SHEILA. Because it's...*nothing*, it's...

HENRY. Like acrylics? Watercolors, or...?

SHEILA. *(Plows ahead:)* But no, no—tell me more about *you*, Henry Glassman! What are you up to these days?

HENRY. How do you mean?

SHEILA. What's your life like? What's happened to you? I'm so curious to find out!

HENRY. Well... you know...

I'm gay.

SHEILA. *(After a little beat.)* I'm sorry?

HENRY. I live in New York. I'm an architect. I go to a great gym in Chelsea and eat mostly low-fat.

I just broke up with this guy I've been seeing for five years—messy breakup, we lived together, awful, awful. He cheated; there were cats involved. I hope I'm not shocking you.

SHEILA. *(Forced smile:)* No! No, not at all. At *all!*

HENRY. All thing's considered, I'm doing okay.

(A beat.)

So, um...how much do you actually remember about me?

SHEILA. You know...this and that. I'll admit I'm sort of iffy...

HENRY. Because I remember you quite well.

SHEILA. You do?

HENRY. Sure.

SHEILA. *Me?* Oh, come on...

HENRY. Please, you were one of the great beauties of our class!

SHEILA. *(Wry:)* "Were." Exactly. Not anymore...

HENRY. What are you talking about? You look great!

SHEILA. I've had two kids. It shows.

HENRY. *(Ignores that:)* I remember in tenth grade you were a cheerleader, and at this one pep rally—it was against St. Stephen's, I think—you shouted so much you got hoarse, but you kept at it anyway, barking out the cheers like a seal. You were adorable...

SHEILA. Really? That happened? That was *ages* ago...

HENRY. And also I remember you wore fishnet hose to school one day for no reason whatsoever. Very racy.

SHEILA. *(Stunned at that:)* Oh my God...!

HENRY. And then, well, you were Bloody Mary in “South Pacific.” Ridiculous casting, but you made it work.

SHEILA. I can’t believe you remember *that*...!

HENRY. Of course I do! I’m sure everyone does.

(A little beat.)

SHEILA. I’m so sorry, Henry. I wish I remembered you better.

HENRY. That’s okay...

SHEILA. I have these hazy flashes...of you wearing very baggy clothes...

HENRY. It was a whole Mama Cass thing I was going for. Draping myself in muumuus and caftans...trying for this whole airy look...avoiding sandwiches...

SHEILA. *(Giggles:)* Oh, stop!

HENRY. Hey, it’s understandable you barely remember me. I was a different person then.

SHEILA. You were. You really were.

(A beat.)

HENRY. May, um...may I make a huge confession here?

SHEILA. *(A little uneasy:)* Okay...

HENRY. You were the first girl I ever had a major crush on.

SHEILA. I was? Are you serious?

HENRY. Oh, yeah. In ninth grade. Writing your name in my notebook, fantasizing about you endlessly, the whole deal. I had this one fantasy where we’d move to Paris and live in this all-white distressed loft space decorated very tastefully, but spare—a very spare esthetic—with Eames Chairs and a Saarinen dining table, very clean lines, maybe a chenille throw.

(Then:)

You can see why it never would’ve worked out.

SHEILA. I’m...well, I’m flattered. Did you ever tell me this?

HENRY. God, no! Come on...

SHEILA. Why not?

HENRY. Because... I don't know, because I was this Husky-wearing nerd who watched too much "Star Trek"... and you were *Sheila Coogan*, for God's sake!

SHEILA. Oh, please...

HENRY. *(Then, catches himself:)* Okay, for the record...it's not like I'm your "number-one fan" here or anything. I haven't been making crazy photo albums with your tiny picture from the yearbook all these years or collecting strands of your hair.

SHEILA. I didn't think that...

HENRY. To be honest, the crush only lasted six months, if that. I was over you by late spring. *So* over you. And I haven't thought about any of this in forever. Until just now...

Until I saw you.

SHEILA. Right, looking a gazillion years old...

HENRY. You look great. Just great...

(A little beat.)

SHEILA. You know... I think... I might actually remember one tiny thing about you, Henry Glassman.

HENRY. You do?

SHEILA. *(Still vague:)* Were we...did we take ballroom dancing class together during, like...sophomore year?

HENRY. *(Tries to remember:)* Okay...well...yeah, I think we did. God, ballroom dancing... I haven't thought about *that* in ages.

SHEILA. I remember thinking it was so stupid at the time...

HENRY. Well, it was completely stupid. Like, what, we were gonna grow up, go to cocktail parties and be asked to do the *minuet* at the drop of a glove?

SHEILA. Wait, and who was that couple who taught the class? Lance something...

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DANIEL ON A THURSDAY

Characters

DANIEL, early thirties. Very neatly dressed.

KEVIN, early thirties. Not so pulled together.

Author's Note

A slash in the text (/) is a cue for the next actor to begin speaking, creating overlapping dialogue.

Acknowledgments

Daniel On A Thursday was originally produced by All Seasons Theatre Group (John McCormack, Artistic Director) at New York Performance Works in New York City on July 17, 2000. It was directed by Christopher Gorman. The cast was as follows:

DANIEL..... Steve Roman
KEVIN..... Tom O'Brien

The play was later produced as part of *Dating Games* at Theatre Row Studio Theatres in June, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

DANIEL..... Eric Christie
KEVIN..... Michael Anderson

The play was subsequently performed as part of *Dating Games* in Los Angeles, CA, at the Lilian Theatre in October, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

DANIEL..... David Alan Basche
KEVIN..... Michael Anderson

“Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song;
A medley of extemporanea;
And love is a thing that can never go wrong;
And I am Marie of Roumania.”

—Dorothy Parker

DANIEL ON A THURSDAY

(A crowded bar. Two guys leaning against a wall, facing out, nursing beers. KEVIN eyes DANIEL for a moment. Then DANIEL, sensing he's being cruised, turns, gives him a once-over.)

KEVIN. Hey.

DANIEL. *(Weakly, not encouraging:)* Hey.

KEVIN. I like your beer.

DANIEL. What?

KEVIN. God, that was an incredibly stupid thing / to say.

DANIEL. Did you just say you liked my beer?

KEVIN. I, um... yes... it's a very attractive... Beck's. It looks good on you.

DANIEL. Thanks?

(He gazes out again. Little beat.)

KEVIN. *(Extends his hand:)* It's Kevin.

DANIEL. Look...

KEVIN. I'm Kevin.

DANIEL. Right... Kevin... I don't mean to be rude. I'm sure you're a nice guy and all. It's just, I really don't feel like talking tonight.

KEVIN. Oh. That's fair.

(Beat.)

So that was my one chance with you, and I just blew it, right?

DANIEL. Excuse me?

KEVIN. I compliment your beer for some reason I can't fathom, and that's that.

DANIEL. Look...

KEVIN. Is it my body?

DANIEL. What?

KEVIN. Is my body this major turn-off? Or my hair?

DANIEL. Of course not! You're a perfectly nice-looking guy—not my type, as it turns out—but perfectly nice looking...

KEVIN. Huh.

DANIEL. Anyway.

Good talking with you.

(Beat. They both face out again.)

KEVIN. So let me get this straight. Even though I don't disgust you outright—and I don't actually disgust you, do I?

DANIEL. You don't disgust me!

KEVIN. Even so, you wouldn't shake my hand.

DANIEL. What are you talking about?

KEVIN. I held out my hand to introduce myself, and you wouldn't take it or tell me your name even.

DANIEL. You're reading way too much into this.

KEVIN. *(Getting really pissed:)* I don't think so. I don't think so at all. See, what I think is that actually—on the inside—you see me as this leper-person who's not even worthy of being TOUCHED! And that is just righteously shitty, okay? It's a handshake! A HANDSHAKE! FOR THE LOVE OF FUCK, WHAT KIND OF SUPERIOR ASSWIPE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!

DANIEL. Oh my God, no—NO! I didn't mean to / insult you, believe me.

KEVIN. *(Cracking up:)* Daniel! Take it easy, man! It's Kevin... Kevin Carpenter. From high school. I'm just screwing with you, buddy.

DANIEL. Kevin Carpenter?

KEVIN. From history class.

DANIEL. European history, or...?

KEVIN. Exactly, European history class. I saw you across the bar just now and said to myself, “Well, if it isn’t little Daniel Delmonico from high school in a gay bar. I haven’t seen him in years. I know what! I’m gonna go over and mess with his head.”

DANIEL. And so you did.

KEVIN. Boy, did I.

DANIEL. Right...

So. Kevin...

KEVIN. So Daniel—sew buttons! Hey, hope I didn’t freak your shit too severely or anything.

DANIEL. No, that’s...

Wow, you know... I’ve gotta be honest here. I don’t remember you at all.

KEVIN. You don’t?

DANIEL. I’m sorry.

KEVIN. No, that’s cool. It’s not like we were ever friends or anything.

DANIEL. We weren’t.

KEVIN. Not at all.

DANIEL. Were we... acquaintances even?

KEVIN. Not that I recall.

DANIEL. Well, it was a full class.

KEVIN. And an *enormous* school.

DANIEL. (*Not sure about this:*) Right...

But... it’s good to finally meet you now. After all these years.

KEVIN. (*As they shake:*) After all these years.

DANIEL. (*Little smile.*) You know, this is actually very cool because... the whole time I was in high school, I was fully convinced I was the only gay person there.

KEVIN. You may well have been. I'm straight.

DANIEL. Sorry?

KEVIN. Hundred percent hetero.

DANIEL. But this is a gay bar...

KEVIN. I know that.

DANIEL. So... what are you doing here?

KEVIN. I don't know, I just wanted a beer. I was walking down the street, wanting a beer, and I saw this place—and hey, I enjoy an old “Golden Girls” episode as much as the next guy.

DANIEL. Okay...

KEVIN. Problemo?

DANIEL. No.

KEVIN. Gay people are AOK by Kevin Carpenter.

DANIEL. Uh-huh...

KEVIN. (*Low:*) Don't worry, I won't tell the old gang your little secret.

DANIEL. What secret?

KEVIN. That I saw you here.

DANIEL. Actually, that's not a *secret* really... and... what old gang?

KEVIN. Your pals from high school. Daniel's old buds.

DANIEL. But I didn't... back then, I didn't have that many close...

(Suspicious:)

Exactly who was in my old gang?

KEVIN. You know.

DANIEL. Remind me.

KEVIN. (*Reaching:*) Like... Mary... Bill...

DANIEL. I didn't know anyone by those names, Kevin. And our high school was hardly “enormous.”

And come to think of it, I didn't *take* European history; I took American history, so I'm pretty sure you've got / the wrong guy.

KEVIN. (*Cracking up:*) GOTCHA! Two for two for the Kevinator! I totally had you going there, didn't I?

DANIEL. (*Getting angry:*) You did.

KEVIN. All the way.

DANIEL. So you didn't go to my high school...

KEVIN. Negatory. I've never even seen you before tonight. But you were buying it, the whole thing, I could tell. Right up to the Bill and Mary part.

DANIEL. Look! *Kevin!* Why don't you just leave me alone, okay? I said I didn't want to talk to anyone, and I don't know why you're doing this to me. So just... let's just say... good night.

KEVIN. Hey, I hear ya.

Nighty night.

(They both stare forward for a moment.)

DANIEL. (*Still out, low:*) How did you know my name?

KEVIN. (*Giggles:*) I knew you were gonna say that. I almost said it along with you, swear to God.

DANIEL. HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!

KEVIN. (*Getting angry himself:*) Whoa... easy there, Paco. *Someone* left his ATM card at the cash machine next door. With his *name* imprinted on it. I called out to you on the street, but you didn't hear me. *That's* why I followed you in here. I didn't want a beer. I couldn't give a flying flapjack about "The Golden Girls."

(Handing him back his ATM card:)

I was being Kevin Good Guy. Got it?

DANIEL. Well... that was very nice of you.

KEVIN. You bet it was.

DANIEL. (*Hates to say this:*) Thank you...

KEVIN. *(Still testy:)* Damn right about that.

(Then, suddenly bright:)

Say, lemme buy you a beer!

DANIEL. No, Kevin, please...

KEVIN. Come on.

DANIEL. I just want to finish this one and go home.

KEVIN. Oh, come on!

DANIEL. Besides, I mean, if anyone should be buying drinks / here it's... I guess, me.

KEVIN. What're you drinking? Beck's?

DANIEL. I... okay... fine, yes, sure.

KEVIN. I'll bet you always drinks Beck's. I bet you've been drinking Beck's for years.

DANIEL. That's... I have.

KEVIN. Well, prepare to break new ground, my friend, because tonight you are drinking a Bacardi Breezer.

DANIEL. Actually, I'd really prefer a Beck's.

KEVIN. Voila, Bacardi Breezer it is!

(He pulls bottled Bacardi Breezer from the inside pocket of the jacket he's wearing, twists off the top and hands it to DANIEL.)

DANIEL. Okay, you... so you always bring your own...?

KEVIN. *(Insulted:)* Jeez, ixnay on the udgment-jay.

DANIEL. What... udgment-jay?

KEVIN. I'll have you know I bought this legit from the bartender before I walked over here.

(Significantly:)

I knew.

DANIEL. You knew what?

KEVIN. That I could convince you to drink it. I walked in here just as you were buying your beer at the bar. And I watched as you took the change from the bartender and filed it away methodically in your wallet, making sure all the bills faced in the same direction, in order of descending denomination, and I said to myself, “That guy—Daniel Delmonico from the ATM machine—is knee-deep in some major shit and really needs my help.”

DANIEL. I don’t always do that / with my money.

KEVIN. Then I looked at you, actually studied you for the first time, and thought, “Not only has he got his pocket change under *way too much* control, he also looks like the kind of guy who only drinks Beck’s. Every single time he goes out. He’s in a rut, and I’m gonna do my part to pull him out of it. I’m gonna make him switch drinks, if only for a Breezer. It’s a baby step, but there you go.” So I bought that rum concoction *knowing* I could convince you to drink it.

DANIEL. (*A little wounded:*) I’m not in a rut.

KEVIN. Sure you are.

DANIEL. Wait, you know nothing about me...

KEVIN. Please, you’re here every Thursday!

DANIEL. (*Suspicious:*) How do you know that?

KEVIN. (*Fast:*) Ummmm—I’ll bet. I’ll bet is all I meant. You just seem like that kind of guy. If it’s Thursday night, it’s Daniel at this bar. Am I right, or am I retarded?

DANIEL. (*Hesitant:*) You’re right...

KEVIN. And why is that, Daniel? Is your life so empty that you feel you have to cling to these meaningless little rituals?

DANIEL. What? No... *No!* It’s...

(*Embarrassed to admit this:*)

“Golden Girls” night here on Thursdays.

KEVIN. Uh-huh. And if you don’t mind my asking, what did you have for lunch today?

DANIEL. Sorry?

KEVIN. Lunch, Thursday. What'd you nosh on?

DANIEL. Turkey on wheat toast...

KEVIN. And yesterday?

DANIEL. Same thing.

KEVIN. I'm gonna go out on a limb here. I'm gonna extrapolate. It's turkey on wheat toast *every* day, isn't it? Isn't it? It is. It's turkey, isn't it? Isn't it? You've been deeply committed to turkey on wheat toast for about a year now, I'm guessing.

DANIEL. It's... a couple of years. Ever since I found out how fattening tuna salad was... and this means nothing!

KEVIN. Oh, it means plenty, Daniel. It speaks volumes about you. On the subway platform each morning, where you do stand? Anywhere? Or always in the same exact spot because you know where the train doors will open?

DANIEL. *Look*, just because you bought me a drink doesn't entitle you to grill me like this!

KEVIN. Grill? Who's grilling? Am I holding a cattle prod? Am I anywhere near your nipples? I'm merely observing. And asking. Observing and asking, that's all I'm doing.

DANIEL. Well, I'm leaving...

KEVIN. And what's with this *type* thing? What's that about?

DANIEL. (*Stops at this:*) What... type thing?

KEVIN. Apparently, I'm not your type. Or so you said.

DANIEL. You're NOT GAY!

KEVIN. That's not the point. What *is* your type?

DANIEL. I'm not gonna tell you that.

KEVIN. Why not?

DANIEL. Because it's none of your business!

KEVIN. I bet I can guess it.

DANIEL. No, you can't.

KEVIN. Latin guys.

DANIEL. *(Startled:)* Why would you guess that?

KEVIN. It's Latin guys, isn't it? Isn't it? Isn't it? I'll bet it is. It's Latin guys. Isn't it? Isn't it?

DANIEL. YES! I'M INTO LATIN GUYS! SO WHAT?!

KEVIN. So what? So what? I'll tell you so what, Daniel Delmonico from the ATM machine. So what is you're losing out on a world of possibilities and, and *experiences* that have nothing whatsoever to do with Beck's beer, or turkey on wheat, or Bea Arthur and Betty White and Rue McClanahan. And Estelle Getty.

DANIEL. Really...

KEVIN. I don't mean to crawl up on a soap box here, or into your shrink's chair, but I feel it's my duty as a disinterested third party who just did a good deed on your behalf—so maybe his two cents are worth a dime—to say that you are severely limiting yourself in many aspects of your personal life.

DANIEL. *(Bemused:)* Oh, am I?

KEVIN. Very much so. In my opinion.

DANIEL. Well, in my own defense, I'd like to point out that I happen to like my life exactly as I've made it. I like knowing what I'm getting.

KEVIN. But how boring is that?

DANIEL. It's comforting.

KEVIN. *(Very loud, in his face:)* HAAA!

DANIEL. *(Over, screaming in reaction:)* HAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!

What the fuck was that?!

KEVIN. *That* was probably the last thing you thought I was gonna say.

DANIEL. Excuse me...?

KEVIN. After you said, “It’s comforting.” Of all the responses you thought that might elicit, I’m betting “HAAA!” didn’t even make the short list.

DANIEL. You’re right there...

KEVIN. See! You expect the expected! Loosen up, Dan.

DANIEL. It’s *Daniel*, Kev.

KEVIN. Right, fine. *Daniel*. Let’s take what happened with us here tonight—and let’s forget about my wife, Viveca, for the moment. And our daughter, Amber, and Helaine, our little finch bird. Let’s talk theoretically.

DANIEL. Theoretically...

KEVIN. A guy walks up to you in a bar. Me. Now you know nothing about this person standing next to you. This stranger could hold the possibility of, I don’t know, a one-night stand that registers on the Richter scale. Or a one-night stand that’s truly pathetic, but that blossoms into a deep friendship involving marathon phone calls and hilarious emails—AND I’M NOT TALKING ABOUT FORWARDED JOKES! Or. OR! This stranger could be the man you were supposed to spend the rest of your life with. The man you’ve been waiting to meet ever since you had a crush on your fifth grade math teacher.

DANIEL. I didn’t realize I was gay until high school.

KEVIN. Yeah, but think back, I’m guessing there were crushes.

DANIEL. (*Considers:*) There were misplaced... crushlets.

KEVIN. Uh-huh, and so this stranger turns to you. Me, I do that. And I say, “Hey,” and you say, “Hey,” but that’s where it *stops* in your mind because my name probably isn’t Hernando.

DANIEL. Kevin...

KEVIN. That’s no way to wander through the world, my friend. With blinders on. Choices made. Low-fat meals pre-selected months before the flight. I used to be just like you! Set in my ways at an early age, knowing exactly what my life would hold. And look at me now. I’m in a gay bar on a Thursday night, and I can tell you

this—when I woke up this morning, I never imagined for a second I'd end up here.

DANIEL. That's... I'm sure that's true.

KEVIN. But...

(Glances at his watch:)

Sheesh, I've gotta get going. It's Amber's birthday today. She turned four. She's gonna get her first Barbie in about half an hour.

DANIEL. Wow, really... tell her happy birthday for me.

KEVIN. Will do. Hey, you have a good night, Daniel Delmonico. It was cool sharing a drink with you.

DANIEL. Yeah...

Yeah, it was.

(KEVIN starts to go, then stops.)

KEVIN. May I ask you just one more little question?

DANIEL. Sure.

KEVIN. It's an ego thing.

DANIEL. Fine.

KEVIN. And again, we're in theory land, it's just... well, now that we've talked, now that you know me a little... would you give a card-carrying Caucasian guy like me a chance?

(Then:)

You would, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? You would. Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you?

DANIEL. *(Laughing, frustrated:)* CHRIST, YOU DRIVE ME TOTALLY INSANE!!

KEVIN. See, now, I think that's a very healthy start.

DANIEL. I don't know... I guess you are sort of charming. In a totally psychotic kind of way.

Sure, what the hell.

(Little beat.)

KEVIN. AND SCORE THREE FOR THE KEVINATOR!!!

DANIEL. No way... no fucking way...

KEVIN. WHOOSH! KEVIN DOESN'T CHOKE ON THE BIG ONE!!

DANIEL. Hold on, so you're actually...?

KEVIN. Yep, full-on gay. Completely queer. A great big bucket 'o nell.

DANIEL. I don't believe this...

KEVIN. I knew you were coming around! I could tell!

DANIEL. Get away from me, okay? Leave me alone forever, starting right now.

KEVIN. What are you talking about? We have a date to go on, cowboy.

DANIEL. Are you insane? No! No, we do NOT!

KEVIN. After *all that WORK?! Do you have any idea how DIFFICULT* that was, thinking on my feet like that? I totally forgot little Amber's name there for a full thirty seconds.

DANIEL. There is no way in hell I am *ever* going on a date with you, Kevin... if that is your real name.

KEVIN. It's actually Hernando, which is pretty ironic.

(Off DANIEL's look:)

THAT WAS A JOKE!!

DANIEL. See, that's why I won't go out with you. *That* is my point exactly. Aside from the fact that you're a complete freak—and that's high on the list of reasons why I won't go out with you—there's also this little problem of me having no idea who you really are! Or what you might pull!

KEVIN. Oh, come on...

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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RUN

Cast of Characters

SCOUT'S OWNER, Male. 30s.

STEVEN'S OWNER, Female. Also 30s.

HELEN, A little older. A lot more pissed.

Time

Current day. Late fall.

Place

A dog run in New York City

Production Notes

A slash in the text (/) is a cue for the next actor to begin speaking, creating overlapping dialogue.

Acknowledgments

Run was originally produced as part of *Dating Games* (an evening of one-act plays) by Winged Angel Productions at Theatre Row Studio Theatre in New York City on June 10, 2003. It was directed by Laura Josepher. The set design was by Sarah Lambert. The lighting design was by Susan Hamburger. Sierra Marcks was the stage manager. The cast was as follows:

SCOUT'S OWNER Eric Christie
STEVEN'S OWNDER Karin Sibrava
HELEN..... Cynthia Babak

The play was subsequently performed as part of *Dating Games* in Los Angeles, CA, at the Lilian Theatre in October, 2003. Laura Josepher directed the following cast:

SCOUT'S OWNERDavid Alan Basche
STEVEN'S OWNER Karin Sibrava
HELEN..... Alysia Reiner

For Martha, who's part Dachshund, part Papillon, and all lady

RUN

(A MAN and a WOMAN sit on opposite ends of a bench, gazing out. He's holding a leash. She's holding a mug; a leash is at her side. Dogs bark off. After a moment, he happens to gaze over at her.)

MAN. Careful with your coffee.

WOMAN. *(Startled that he's spoken to her:)* What?

MAN. Your coffee...

WOMAN. *(Confused:)* I don't...

MAN. Your *coffee*, you're about/to spill it.

WOMAN. Oh, God! Jeez!

(And she's done so. Coffee sloshes from her mug.)

MAN. Awww, wow. Do you need a napkin, or...?

WOMAN. No, that's... I'm okay.

MAN. You sure?

WOMAN. Yeah, I can just use my...sleeve. Really.

MAN. It was on this very questionable angle...

WOMAN. Right...

MAN. It was teetering, I just happened to see it *teetering* there out of the corner of my eye.

WOMAN. I can't believe I just did that.

MAN. It's no big deal.

WOMAN. I don't usually go around spilling *coffee* all over myself.

MAN. I'm sure.

WOMAN. Just so you know.

MAN. It's fine.

WOMAN. I never *ever* spill coffee. Or tea. Or soda or juice or milk or soup or broth even. Actually, *food*. I spill food. A lot. Ketchup,

sure. An egg salad sandwich, that's only gonna end up on my blouse, me holding it very carefully as I bring it up to my lips. Concentrating. Basically it's like this whole balancing act involving glasses of water and steel bars and human pyramids from the "Ed Sullivan Show." Horrifying. I told my friend Debra I was thinking of taking a cooking class at the New School, and she was like, "You need to learn how to *eat* before you learn how to *cook*!" (*Catches herself:*) I can't imagine why I'm telling you any of this.

MAN. (*Smiles a little:*) It's alright.

WOMAN. I'll sip my coffee now. Very carefully.

(*A long beat.*)

WOMAN. So, which... which one's yours?

MAN. What?

WOMAN. Of the dogs./Which one's...?

MAN. Oh. Of course.

WOMAN. (*Fast:*) We don't have to talk.

MAN. No. No, *no*, it's... I wasn't/sure what you were...

WOMAN. I can leave you alone. I can do that./We can just sit here.

MAN. What?

WOMAN. If you'd rather,/I mean...

MAN. Look...

WOMAN. If you'd rather just—

MAN. The thing is...

WOMAN. If you'd rather not *talk* to someone—if that's what you're thinking. It's no problem, really. Just say the word.

(*A little beat.*)

MAN. (*Careful:*) It's the Vischla. Scout.

WOMAN. Oh. That's your dog? I know that dog.

MAN. You do?

WOMAN. Sure. Everyone knows the Vischla.

MAN. Really?

WOMAN. Of course...he's a star here.

MAN. Okay...

WOMAN. I always wondered who owned the Vischla.

MAN. Well...me...

WOMAN. Isn't that interesting? Huh. So now I know.

MAN. Now you know.

WOMAN. He's a good boy, Scout.

MAN. Yeah. Yeah, he is.

(Just then, HELEN barrels in.)

HELEN. Good afternoon, dog run patrons! May I have your attention, please? ATTENTION, PEOPLE! My name's Helen, and I'm the dog run coordinator. I see there's some new folks today, so I wanted to remind everyone of a few simple rules we have here. A) If your dog "goes," *go* pick it up. 2) Close the gate behind you—actually, this one's very important. Try and use this simple mnemonic: If a dog gets out and gets hit by a car because *you* were a lazy pants and forgot to latch the gate, then *you've* got to live with the knowledge that it was all your fault forever and ever and ever and ever until you die alone in some bed from cancer. And D) Don't fuck with Fred the Pit Bull's special rawhide bone. We all remember what happened last time. That's all for now, people!

(She goes. Dogs bark faintly.)

MAN. Okay, that woman scares the hell out of me.

WOMAN. Well...you and everyone...

MAN. The first time I came here, she spent—and I'm serious—like ten minutes showing me the "right way" to use the communal pooper scooper.

WOMAN. She takes this all very seriously...

MAN. It was this whole Stalinesque, police-state kind of deal. It freaked me out.

WOMAN. She got laid off last May. She got a puppy last June. It was all downhill from there.

MAN. Huh. I wondered what her story was. So, um... which one's *yours*?

WOMAN. Oh, it's...the Jack Russell.

MAN. Okay, you're gonna need to be more specific. There are like *seventeen* Jack Russells here at any given moment.

WOMAN. (*Little smile:*) Right. The Jack Russell over there by the gate. Steven.

MAN. Your dog's name is Steven?

WOMAN. It is. It's kinda/weird, I know...

MAN. (*Laughs a little:*) Steven?

WOMAN. Yeah. I've always believed in giving human names to animals. I don't know...it's this thing from my childhood. We had a Schnauzer named Jacqueline. And these birds named Jane and Howard. And this Siamese cat named Barbara—she was named after the woman who lived across the street one house over.

MAN. And did this woman know she had a housepet named after her?

WOMAN. She had her suspicions. But we always told her the cat was named after Barbra Streisand. Luckily, she never asked about the actual spelling. Also, my younger brother is gay, so...

MAN. It's a nice name, Steven. It's sweet, actually.

WOMAN. You have just the straightest, cleanest teeth.

(A little beat.)

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I can't believe I just said that.

MAN. What did you just say?

WOMAN. Nothing; I said nothing.

MAN. “The straightest, cleanest teeth?” What does that even mean?

WOMAN. I have no idea.

MAN. I’m not sure how to respond to that...

WOMAN. You don’t have to. In fact, *please don’t*.

MAN. Okay...

WOMAN. Don’t even listen to me.

MAN. Uh-huh...

WOMAN. This is the coffee talking...

MAN. I see...

WOMAN. Why would I say something like that?

MAN. It...well, it *was* a curious thing to say...

WOMAN. Except that looking at you, looking at you and talking to you up close like we’re doing now, your teeth *do* look amazing, and I never would’ve guessed that.

(Another little beat.)

MAN. Is something wrong with you?

WOMAN. I have no idea what I’m saying *at all*.

MAN. What did you mean by that?

WOMAN. I don’t know. God, I really don’t! Let’s stop talking about your teeth immediately. Is that good with you?

MAN. Uh-huh... sure...

WOMAN. Great! I’m not even sure why I brought it up—they—your teeth—but let’s consider them dropped. Entirely. As a topic. Starting *now!* *(A beat, then:)* I have teeth issues—I feel I should explain. I hate my teeth. I’ve hated my teeth since I was an adolescent.

MAN. What...what’s wrong with your teeth...?

WOMAN. Well, nothing *now*, but... *(A confession:)* I was a very fat teenager.

(He just stares at her. HELEN enters.)

HELEN. Hi there! All eyes here, please! So someone's miniature dappled Dachshund is essentially being *raped* by a German shepherd over by the interactive climbing hill. Could the involved parties please do something?! That's all for now, people!

(And she's gone. A very long beat. They gaze out at the dogs.)

WOMAN. I like silence.

MAN. Sorry?

WOMAN. I was just... I happen to like long periods of silence. I happen to be the type of person who *enjoys* that. When two people are talking.

MAN. I see...

WOMAN. So if you wanted to have lots of *silence* right now—like between us? —I'd be okay with that. Is all I'm saying.

MAN. Uh-huh...

(A beat.)

WOMAN. Do you want that?

MAN. What?

WOMAN. Silence. Do you want that now?

MAN. I...I don't know...

WOMAN. I'll tell you what... *I'll* stop talking...and if you want to continue this conversation, then *you* just let me know. You can just say something. Anything. I'll leave it up to you.

MAN. Fine...

WOMAN. I'm not going to count that as something you might say. That was a gimme. You can continue—or not—after I finish this sentence that I'm uttering right now and that I'm just about done with. There. Done.

(They both stare forward. Silence.)

WOMAN. Your dog's about to eat a chicken bone.

MAN. What? *(Then, noticing:)* Oh my God...

WOMAN. I couldn't *not* say something!

MAN. *(Stands, calls off:)* Scout, drop that! **DROP THAT NOW! NOW!!!** *(Then, calls off:)* Good boy!

(He sits. After a moment:)

MAN. So.

WOMAN. So...

(A little beat.)

MAN. He...it's...he has this thing for chicken bones.

WOMAN. Most dogs do...

MAN. That was...that was actually very decent of you to say something.

WOMAN. Okay...

MAN. Because those bones...they're very small...

WOMAN. They could get lodged in their throats...

MAN. Yes.

WOMAN. Steven goes nuts for a wishbone. It's like LSD to him.

MAN. It's the same with Scout.

(A little beat.)

WOMAN. I, um...is it alright if I...? I like what he's wearing.

MAN. Really? Thanks.

WOMAN. That's very clever, by the way.

MAN. What?

WOMAN. Buying a cheap sweatshirt and cutting off the sleeves.

MAN. C'mon, have you seen what they charge for doggie sweat-ers?

WOMAN. It's ridiculous.

MAN. Insane. *Human* sweaters are actually cheaper. Human sweaters from Donna Karan.

WOMAN. Tell me about it!

MAN. I was *this close* to buying him a sweater at the Classy Canine for three hundred bucks when I came across that thing at the Gap near my building, right here at Union Square. Ten dollars! It was on the discount rack.

WOMAN. Wait, I thought you lived on Ninth Avenue.

(A little beat.)

MAN. I'm *sorry*?

WOMAN. Drop it. Never mind.

MAN. Do you know where I *live*?

WOMAN. I don't. I must... I think I have you confused with someone else.

MAN. Hold on...is this like a stalker situation...?

WOMAN. Oh my God, *no!*

MAN. Have you been *following* me or something?

WOMAN. I most certainly have not!

MAN. Because this is all very strange...

WOMAN. I really don't know why I'm saying these things! I don't usually act like this at all! Which is probably what somebody who acts like this would say...

MAN. Good point.

WOMAN. It's like I have Tourette's all of a sudden...some version of Tourette's that is strangely not about cursing. Fuck.

(HELEN enters again.)

HELEN. HI, ALL! I don't want to be all finger-pointy, but someone whose dog's name rhymes with *Smeven* just took a big crap by the water bowl.

WOMAN. *(Getting pissed:)* He's a little dog, it couldn't be that big.

HELEN. (*Pissed back:*) Trust me, it's tremendous.

WOMAN. Fine! Whatever! I'll go clean it up!

HELEN. For the sake of our community here, THANK YOU!

WOMAN. I HATE YOU! (*Then, normal, to the MAN:*) So, like... I'll be back.

(She goes. HELEN lingers near the MAN.)

HELEN. Beware of her.

MAN. What?

HELEN. She waited eleven months before she had her dog neutered. That's all I'm gonna say.

MAN. What is that supposed to mean?

HELEN. It means she's not the most desirable one here.

MAN. Excuse me?

HELEN. We've all noticed you. We've all sniffed you out. You think we haven't, but we have.

MAN. I'm sorry, *what?*

HELEN. You're a very handsome man. You have a very handsome dog. Are you married?

MAN. Excuse me? *No*, actually, but...

HELEN. People wondered.

MAN. What are you talking about?

HELEN. You don't wear a ring but that means nothing these days. We also wondered if you have a girlfriend. (*Fast:*) I mean, "they." They wondered. Not me.

MAN. I don't have a girlfriend. And this is none of your business!

HELEN. Do you date? Are you dating anyone? Are you seeing someone even casually?

MAN. I can't believe I'm even having this conversation! *I JUST CAME HERE TO THROW THE BALL WITH MY DOG!*

HELEN. Whoa. Peace! I hear ya. That's why we're all here, pal. But it's nice to know you're single. *I'm* single. Just putting it out there. *(Calls off suddenly:)* KING, STAY AWAY FROM THAT BITCH!

(She's gone. After a moment, the WOMAN returns.)

WOMAN. Huge relief: It wasn't his.

MAN. Uh-huh...

WOMAN. For the record, the poop wasn't Steven's. But I picked it up anyway, because I didn't want to cause a scene.

MAN. Look, I should go.

WOMAN. Oh. Really?

MAN. Yeah. It's getting late.

WOMAN. I see...

MAN. But, hey, it was nice talking with you. And kinda weird too./But whatever.

WOMAN. Right...

MAN. Anyway. Good luck with Steven...

WOMAN. It's funny, I don't even know your name.

MAN. You don't? Okay. That's good. *(Fast:)* I mean, that's New York.

WOMAN. I guess...

MAN. So. Yeah. Goodbye.

(He grabs Scout's leash and starts to go.)

WOMAN. My husband left me.

(He stops.)

WOMAN. Three months ago. After fourteen years together. I came home one night, and he was gone. Just like that. Turns out, he'd been planning this forever. He already had this other life figured out. With a loft in Tribeca. And a yoga instructor named Kassondra. It was all there in the letter.

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