

...for the wrong one
a ten-minute play
by dawson moore

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...for the wrong one

CHARACTERS

Thomas Male, 41. English professor. Casually dressy.
Charlotte Female, 32. Administrative assistant. Still dressed from work.
Autumn Female, 20. Waitress.

SETTING

A small café.
There are two tables with two chairs apiece.
One side of the stage leads outside.
The other goes to the staff area.

TIME

Late afternoon.
Late summer.
The present.

Lights rise on Thomas arriving. He scans the room, then takes a seat. He cranes his neck to look at the front door, then rises and switches seats so he can stare at it. Autumn enters from behind him, bringing a menu.

AUTUMN

Sorry, didn't see you. Have you been waiting long?

THOMAS

Not at all.

AUTUMN

I was doing prep for dinner. On the night side, we have to roll... you don't care about that.

THOMAS

I get it. I was in food service.

AUTUMN

Waiter?

THOMAS

I waited.

AUTUMN

Just you today?

THOMAS

I'm meeting someone. I don't need anything to drink right now. I'll wait to order

AUTUMN

Those were the questions I was going to ask. I'll come back.

THOMAS

Thanks.

She walks away. He watches her, then returns his attention to the front door. He pulls out his phone, checks the time, looks for messages... nothing. He puts his phone away and scans the menu. Charlotte enters. They notice each other.

CHARLOTTE

Thomas?

THOMAS

Charlotte?

She goes to him.

CHARLOTTE

Great to see you.

THOMAS

Two years?

CHARLOTTE

Little more than that... I left the U in 2013.

THOMAS

It's been forever. Facebook doesn't count.

CHARLOTTE

It doesn't. You look great.

He gets up and they hug, a little awkwardly.

THOMAS

I keep track of you. I mean, I don't stalk you, but I sometimes see what you're up to.

CHARLOTTE

Same. You're still there, right?

THOMAS

Yep. Becoming an adult.

CHARLOTTE

Say it isn't so.

THOMAS

I can imagine being old now. I think about retirement planning.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not there yet, but I know what you mean.

THOMAS

I'm only twenty-three years away from retirement!

CHARLOTTE

Blink of an eye!

They smile. Autumn returns with another menu.

Can I get you something to drink?
AUTUMN

Tea.
CHARLOTTE

Great. You?
AUTUMN

Oh... uh, no. I'm sorry. This isn't whom I'm meeting.
THOMAS

Oh, sorry. I just saw you talking—
AUTUMN

No problem.
CHARLOTTE

We're just talking. That's okay?
THOMAS

Um... yeah! You're the only ones here. You can dance in the aisles if you want to.
AUTUMN

She exits. Thomas watches her go.

Did I offend her?
THOMAS

I don't think so.
CHARLOTTE

Waitresses scare me. I was one, and they still scare me.
THOMAS

You were a waitress?
CHARLOTTE

THOMAS
There are plenty of jobs where masculinity is inherent in the job title. I think "waitress" is a better word than "waiter," and I therefore prefer to think that's what I was. Okay, that's not true. I lie to try to cover up when I say stupid things, but then I feel guilty and over-explain myself.

They smile.

You're meeting someone. CHARLOTTE

Yeah. She's late. THOMAS

Ah. CHARLOTTE

Autumn reenters with the tea.

Should I put this... AUTUMN

Over there. I don't want to interrupt— CHARLOTTE

Oh... uh... thanks. THOMAS

Over there, thanks. CHARLOTTE

Uh... okay. AUTUMN

(to Charlotte as she drops off the tea)

You're sure you don't just want to...

It's okay. CHARLOTTE

You could join us. THOMAS

No, that's okay. CHARLOTTE

(ignoring Thomas)
Are you meeting anyone? AUTUMN

CHARLOTTE

Just me!

AUTUMN

Okay, just let me know if you need anything.
(leaning in and whispering to Charlotte)
His loss.

Autumn exits. They watch her go.

THOMAS

So... John isn't meeting you here?

CHARLOTTE

Who?

THOMAS

Your husband?

CHARLOTTE

Oh. George.

THOMAS

Right.

CHARLOTTE

We're divorced. Happened a few months after I got away from the college.

THOMAS

I guess I wasn't following you as closely as I thought. I'm so sorry.

CHARLOTTE

We're still friendly. We just stopped having any fun under the pressure of our wedding vows. We still share a lot of the same friends, and we show up in each other's feeds, so if you didn't know we were divorced. And I'm not into posting stuff like "fuck my ex" or "I'm so sad."

THOMAS

I can see a time coming when children will ask their parents to explain what people used to mean by "having a private life."

CHARLOTTE

Marriage is for other people now, I'm done. So much paperwork to end it. The whole thing was like adding a huge pile of registration forms to your love life. The guy who was the love of my life became a burden. It was almost immediately after the rings went on. After we were divorced, we both admitted we hadn't wanted to go ahead with the ceremony, but weren't brave enough to call it off.

THOMAS

I don't know how to respond to divorces.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah?

THOMAS

They're sad... two people stood up in front of everyone and said they'd be together forever. In front of their friends, God, family, themselves... and then it wasn't true.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks.

THOMAS

What? Oh... No! I don't mean it like... Look, every divorce I've ever been around, including my parents', has been a great idea. Absolutely the right choice. And what, they should let some stuff they said years ago make them unhappy for the rest of their lives? So, I'm rambling. Again. What I mean is sorry, and congratulations?

CHARLOTTE

Hey, it's all good. And thank God... No kids!

She initiates a high five, which he reciprocates.

THOMAS

Do you get to do a special dance?

(singing)

You've got noooo kiiiiiddss...

They dance a little, laugh a lot. Her hand ends up on his shoulder. He notices. She pulls her hand back.

THOMAS

She did invite us to dance in the aisles.

CHARLOTTE

I haven't laughed like that... So.

THOMAS

Yeah. Um...

CHARLOTTE

So you're meeting someone?

THOMAS

Yeah... she's a late person. Perpetually. The world is divided into two kinds of people: the timely and the late.

CHARLOTTE

Actually, the world is divided into about a million different "two kinds of people." People who like country and don't like country. People who eat meat and don't eat meat.

THOMAS

The people who divide the world into two kinds of people, and the people who know better.

CHARLOTTE

Exactly.

They smile.

So... you're waiting?

THOMAS

... Yeah.

CHARLOTTE

How long have you been seeing each other?

THOMAS

Facebook would say "it's complicated."

CHARLOTTE

It often is.

THOMAS

Yeah. She moved back here about six months ago... she had started taking classes at the college three years ago, but she didn't like it. So she moved to New York. Wanted to model, ended up doing meth instead. Crazy stories. She's seen men die, she's ran from a murdering pimp.

CHARLOTTE

Jesus.

THOMAS

Right? Not many people can claim that sort of serious shit. She's trying to get it back together.

CHARLOTTE

By coming back to a place she hated so much that she had to leave.

THOMAS

Uh, yeah.

CHARLOTTE

So... you two are...

THOMAS

We're friends. I mean, she's attractive, which is why she wanted to be a model, but what I'm drawn to is helping her. She came back and surrounded herself with the people who started her on the path that she took in New York. She's smart and fun, when she shows up. And lost, and confused. I calm her down. But it's not like a romantic thing. She's too young for me.

CHARLOTTE

Which is why you're waiting for her. To grow up.

THOMAS

What?

CHARLOTTE

You're hanging out with the girl who's, what, half your age? A recovering drug addict. Are you hoping she's wild in bed, is that it?

THOMAS

She's two years older than half my age.

CHARLOTTE

And you're going to help her, like you're her Meth Anonymous sponsor. Only if you heal her with your super-powered kindness, you're kinda hoping sex shows up on the table.

THOMAS

Whoa!

CHARLOTTE

And really, if at any point she needs you to anoint her young body with your magic wand, you'll take that for the team. You're like someone who's noble, a total saint, only it's the opposite of that.

Uncomfortable pause. Autumn reenters.

Did anybody want anything? AUTUMN

Oh, no, thanks, thanks for asking. THOMAS

Autumn turns to Charlotte.

You? AUTUMN

An emotionally mature man. Gotta go. CHARLOTTE

Wait, what? THOMAS

She's gone. They stare for a moment after her, then Thomas turns to Autumn.

Uh, sorry about that... I'm not sure what just happened there.

Really? AUTUMN

THOMAS
Well... yes, I mean, we just know each other from work. From years ago. We're... well, not friends exactly, but... we weren't... You don't care about this. I'm waiting.

AUTUMN
... for the wrong one.

What? THOMAS

AUTUMN
I'll come back if your date shows up.

She exits. Thomas stares after her, then turns back. He isn't sure what he's done wrong, but he's pretty sure it's egregious. He looks at the door. Checks his phone... no messages. He sends a brief text and sets the phone on the table. He stares at it as lights fade out. End of play.