IT’S JUST DINNER

A play in several servings

John Shanahan

PARTIAL PERUSAL SCRIPT

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CHARACTERS

Waiters:
Jules Intaglio: a career waiter and strugglng novelist. Often seen as grumpy.
Alex Dugan: working their last day. Avoiding talking about why. In a relationship with Jordan.
Jordan Knoepper: bit of a wayward slacker. Keeping Alex's secret.
Robin Shea: former film student. Flighty but genuine. Quietly crushing on Jules.

The waiters may be any age; the author pictures them late 20s–early 30s.
In any scene where a character is identified solely as "Waiter," you can use any of the above roles, or bring in non-role-specific waiters.

Customers, A–D

AUTHOR'S NOTE Relationships and the issues that come with them are universal. Customers in each scene are noted by a letter rather than a name and have no built-in specifics; they can be cast as you see fit and may represent any gender, age, sexuality, or ethnicity. What matters is the relationship. A brief description of the relationship of the customers in each scene is given, but the director and actors can create their characters' larger aspects and their backstories as desired.

This play is meant to be modular. You can use all or some of the vignettes. You can put them in an order that makes sense to you. You could use them separately as standalone short pieces. You can leave in the waiter scenes, which were written to be a central tent pole with a through line, or take them out and let the waiters just be ancillary characters in the scene. If you keep all the waiter scenes, their order should not be changed.

SCENES
Dossiers
When You Wish Upon a Cake
Table for One
[Plus 5 additional scenes, and waiter scenes between each vignette]

SCENE A restaurant, or as much of one as you care to build. The set can focus on just one table, or you can use several and have the dining characters come and go. (For example, if you're doubling-or-more on those roles.) One side of the stage is dedicated as the waiter station.

WAITER SCENE Before the Rush

AT RISE It's just before opening. JULES *is at the waiter station, prepping.* ROBIN *enters, changing out their coat for an apron as they talk.*

JULES Hey.

ROBIN Hey, Jules. How goes?

JULES All good.

ROBIN Cool cool. Who else is on today?

JULES Jordan and Alex. I wasn't scheduled, but I wanted to be here. Wouldn't miss Alex's last day.

ROBIN Last day?

JULES You didn't hear? Yeah, they're gone after today.

ROBIN Fired?

JULES You don't work your last day when you're fired, Robin.

ROBIN Oh yeah. So what are they doing?

JULES Not sure. They're not really saying. I guess people have asked.

ROBIN Have you? *(*JULES *shrugs dismissively.)* Not interested?

JULES I try to stay out of other peoples' stuff wherever possible. But...they'll probably just land another waiter job, poor sucker. This gig's like a black hole.

ROBIN "Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!"

JULES Huh?

ROBIN Godfather 3? Pacino?

JULES You say so.

ROBIN You've never seen Godfather 3?

JULES Clearly not.

ROBIN How have you never seen Godather 3? Have you seen any of them?

JULES Nope.

ROBIN How? How is that possible?

JULES Because I'm the one who wasn't a film student?

ROBIN Not a great excuse. You're a writer!

JULES Barely. And not a scriptwriter at all.

ROBIN Fair. Wow, though—Alex. How's Jordan doing with it?

JULES What am I, their social secretary? How would I know?

ROBIN You two might have talked, I don't know.

JULES I told you, I don't get into other peoples' stuff--and especially not other peoples' relationships. It's dark and yucky in there.

ROBIN You ever date someone on waitstaff?

JULES Here? No.

ROBIN Anywhere?

JULES No. Waiters are either crazy or needy.

ROBIN Really. So which are you?

JULES You'll never know without dating me.

ROBIN Sounds like an invitation.

JULES Most certainly is not.

ROBIN Wow. Pause first next time!

ALEX *enters.*

JULES Ladies and gentlemen, for the very last time, Alex Dugan!

JULES *and* ROBIN *clap politely.*

ALEX Hold your applause until the end of the shift. Let's see if I make it.

JULES Nothing stopping you from walking out.

ROBIN Where's your buddy?

ALEX Jordan? On their way, I guess. You know their rule if you're less than fifteen minutes late, you're ten minutes early.

JULES I have no idea how they keep a job.

ALEX Must be the winning personality.

JULES How are you feeling about your last day?.

ALEX Oh. Uh, good? Weird but good.

ROBIN How long have you been here?

ALEX Little over a year, almost a year and a half.

JULES Ah, that's nothing!

ROBIN Says the lifer. What have you got here?

JULES Six. That's why I make the big bucks. *(They all chuckle.)* Well, we'll miss you. But first we need to get through this shift. Hey, if you two want to finish doing setups I'll talk to chef about the specials.

ALEX Heard.

JULES *exits.*

ROBIN Jules thinks waiters are either crazy or needy. Would you agree?

ALEX Depends on the waiter, I guess. Mostly crazy.

JORDAN *enters.*

ALEX Right on cue.

JORDAN Talking about me?

ALEX Sometimes you're a worthwhile topic.

ROBIN Jordan, are waiters crazy or needy?

ALEX You're not going to let this go.

ROBIN I want to know!

JORDAN Is there a third option?

ROBIN Like what?

JORDAN Like, out of shits to give about what people think? Because, sign me up.

ROBIN I like to think I'm kind of normal.

JORDAN Do ya, though?

ALEX Sure, work with that.

ROBIN You're going to miss this, I bet.

ALEX The witty repartee?

ROBIN The job. All of it.

ALEX Don't know about that.

JORDAN You will.

ALEX Oh, will I?

JORDAN Maybe not all of it, but I know what you'll miss. We've talked about this.

ALEX The stories.

JORDAN The stories.

ROBIN The stories?

ALEX Yeah. Every table is a new story, right? A whole new scene with every turn. Sometimes we're part of the story and sometimes we're just there to...witness the story. Or even make it up in our heads.

JORDAN That's my favorite.

ALEX But yeah, there's always a story.

Lights fade.

Dossiers

Two diners on their first date. They're placing their appetizer order with the WAITER. A *has a manilla folder on their lap.* B *has a small binder on the floor next to them. Both the folder and the binder have a number of sheets of paper in them. The binder has noticeably more than the folder.*

A I think we'll get the crabcakes to start. Does that sound good?

B Yes, definitely. And can we also get the fried pickles?

A I was looking at those too!

WAITER Great choices. I love the crabcakes. The remoulade is to die for. Did you want to put in your entree or wait a little bit on that?

B Let's wait until the apps come. Is that okay?

A Works for me. Thank you. *(The waiter nods and exits.)* Let me say that this was a great choice. I had no idea this restaurant was here.

B Well, first date, didn't want to go too fancy but didn't want anything divey either.

A You know some good dives?

B Oh, I know some good dives. And some good dives where I may or may not be welcome anymore.

A Okay, we will get to that story before night's out.

B *(with a smile)* That remains to be seen.

Pause.

A Should we...

B Yeah, yeah sure, unless you want to wait until later?

A No, I think it makes sense to...to...

B Get it out of the way?

A Yeah. Yes. Just to, you know...

B In case we need to cut the night short?

A No! Not that. After all, it's just dinner, right? But just so we know. So we kind of know, anyway.

B And I'm not missing out on those crabcakes.

A Nooooo. The remoulade is apparently to die for.

B Okay. Let's do this.

They pull out the folder and the binder and place them on the table.

A Ooh, a binder! Someone's fancy!

B I like to be organized. Do you not...have that?

A flips through their folder, stops on a sheet.

A Umm... Hang on... Let me see... I've got a meme you posted in, it looks like, July of last year, that, yeah, maybe suggests a little bit of that.

B Which one?

A Looks like Courtney Cox from Friends saying —

B "I have won awards for my organizational skills." I love that one. Yes, that is me.

A Type A personality, duly noted.

B I'm guessing you're not also a Type A.

A A hunch, or do you have something to back that up?

B Well... *(Flipping through the binder)* A few months back there was a post... “If I leave the dirty dishes long enough, will they wash themselves?”

A That sounds so bad in someone else’s voice.

B Definitely not a type A kind of thing.

A No dishes in your sink?

B Rarely.

A In my defense, I was sick that week. Bad cold.

B Fair enough.

A I have a question. How deep do we want to go on this? Like, how far back?

B You already have your folder compiled.

A And your binder. But, like, not everything has to be...you know?

B So how far back did you go?

A Year. Little more. Maybe two. You?

B *(Pats the binder)* I was maybe a little more thorough.

A I kind of hesitate to ask, but...example?

B Okay, um. *(Paging back a ways)* Back about five years ago—

A Oh, wow.

B —you changed a relationship status to “It’s complicated.”

A I did. That was a bad choice, I admit. Raises a lot of questions. Ever notice no one does that anymore?

B Kind of a giveaway to your partner.

A And potential partners.

B Oh?

A Like, what does “complicated” mean to that person? Are they okay with something being complicated or are they aggravated about their situation and just airing it out in front of everyone they know?

B And some strangers.

A Right? And if they’re the kind of person who airs that stuff out, well...that just shouts drama queen to me.

B Not big on drama, then?

A Is anyone?

B You’d be surprised.

A Are you?

B Big on drama? No, but I’ve been, let’s say, peripheral to it too many times.

A So you’ve been in relationships that actually are...

A and B Complicated.

B Yes, but I no longer feel the need to advertise it.

A Such growth!

B Thank you.

A Five years, though, huh?

B Is that too much?

A A little? I’d like to think I’m not exactly who I was five years ago, so some of what you’ve got there...

B Not so germane?

A Not as, certainly. There could be a lot of “Objection, your honor!”

B Sustained. I won’t go that far back, then. Fair?

A Fair. That being said, and that boundary being set for now, there is one thing I wanted to touch on... *(Noting a page)* In a random sampling of one hundred social media posts, roughly thirty-two percent of them were cat-related.

B Okay.

A It does make me wonder if you might be predisposed to becoming a...let me just put this right out there...a crazy cat person.

B I can see where you might think that. I do like cats. In fact, I have cats.

A And how many?

B Three.

A In what size home, may I ask?

B You may. It's a four-room apartment. Does that seem like a lot of cats?

A Borderline, if I'm being honest. Let me ask you this: how many cats is too many?

B Full disclosure, I'm eventually shooting for about a dozen.

A Wow.

B Deal breaker?

A It's a little early to be ruling anything out. Everything's on the table right now, right?

B Fair enough, but for the record, how many cats is too many for you?

A I'd say three might be pushing it. I'm not really sure. And how does having three cats work with the whole Type A thing? Seems messy.

B I keep a very tight litterbox schedule, self-contained food and water dispensers, and a Roomba. Two.

A Color me impressed!

B Are you not a pet person?

A I have two beta fish.

B You know, I never really considered fish pets. They're more like set dressing.

A Don’t let Gary hear you say that.

B Gary?

A One of the fish. The other one is called Jaws.

B Of course. So what else? Any other points of concern?

A Maybe? But this is more about me. I’m...I’m realizing that, depending on what you’ve got there, I might come off as too meme-focused.

B Meme focused.

A Yeah. I do post a lot of memes. Or I think I do. Kind of.

B This bothers you.

A More than it should, maybe. I mean...they’re easy.

B True.

A And universal. Some of them, anyway. Right?

B Seems to be the point of them, yes.

A And I don’t want...I would hate to give the impression that I can always sum up my world view in, you know, a pithy quote and a picture of Morgan Freeman.

B When I was a kid, my dad had a poster in his study. A kitten, hanging off a tree branch. And under it, it said, “Hang in there, baby. Friday’s coming.”

A I’ve seen those online! That’s like the grandfather of memes.

B One meme to rule them all!

A What?

B *(mild surprise)* Oh.

Pause. B *takes a pen and makes a note in their files.*

A “Oh” what? What are you writing?

B Ever read Lord of the Rings?

A No?

B Seen the movies?

A Not my thing.

B *just taps the file.*

A That goes in there?

B I'm thorough. I love the books. *(Puts the pen away, flips some pages.)* But I didn't ding you on memes. It's just how people communicate. I do it, too.

A *(checking folder)* I didn't see a lot on your end. Beyond, you know, Courtney.

B I don't do it much. Sometimes, though, you see one and you're like, yeah, that's my whole mood right now. Gotta share that.

A True. I'm trying to cut back. *(Pause.)* You, uh, don't want to get that down?

B *(tapping their temple)* I'll stash it away.

A Fair enough. I'm glad I got that off my chest. Never can tell what someone else will think is weird or excessive, or...mostly I worry about "weird."

B If it makes you feel any better, I didn't find it weird. *(Pause)* Speaking of, I worried that this would feel a litttle...

A Weird?

B Yeah, but...

A Stalker-ish?

B Yes. One hundred percent. But...everyone does it.

A They do. I do.

B Me too. You have to, right?

A I wish that wasn't the case, but people these days...

B Never can tell.

A But yeah, it's actually kind of nice to...admit it.

B Does it take some of the mystery out of it, though?

A You've got a binder. I think you know the answer to that one.

B I do. And you know, to be very honest, I can't quite decide if it's good or bad. It's just...how it is.

WAITER *enters.*

WAITER Your appetizers will be out in just a minute. Did you want to put in your entrees?

B How are you feeling about this?

A I feel like we've covered a lot of ground, revealed some potential bumps in the road to navigate, along with good points, too, so... You?

B I think most of my concerns were addressed. There's quite a bit to unpack later, but that's like any first date, right? Like you said, it's just dinner. Yeah, I think moving on to the entree is a good idea.

A Get in some conversation...

B A little free-form getting-to-know-you action. Maybe there are still some mysteries left to reveal.

A I like the sound of that.

A *closes their folder and sets it back down on the floor.* B *does the same with the binder.*

A *(To* WAITER*)* We're going to need a minute with the menus.

WAITER Take your time. *(Exits)*

B So. Hi.

A Hi. Nice to meet you.

Lights fade.

WAITER SCENE Robin Won't Let it Go.

ROBIN *and* JULES *are at the station.*

ROBIN I think I figured it out.

JULES What?

ROBIN Why you think waiters are crazy.

JULES You're not going to let this go.

ROBIN Can't. Okay, so the reason you think that is because you only see us on shift when we're like, stressed and busy and dealing with customers, so yeah, people could come off a little crazy.

JULES Especially when they're already crazy.

ROBIN You never come out with us.

JULES Wonder why...

ROBIN So you never see us when we're not *not* at our best.

JULES Double negative. Don't do that.

ROBIN I'm just saying that if you came out more you'd see people in a different light. And maybe they wouldn't seem crazy.

JULES I don't come out because--don't take this too much the wrong way--I have better things I could be doing.

ROBIN It's amazing that you think there's a right way to take that.

JULES I just mean I could be...working.

ROBIN Oh, on the novel. How's that coming?

JULES It's a work in progress.

ROBIN *(genuinely)* For how long now?

JULES Why does it matter to you that I think waiters are crazy?

ROBIN Or needy, you said.

JULES Okay.

ROBIN Mostly because I think you're wrong. And I don't want to be lumped into that group in your head. I don't like to think you see me that way. Either way.

JULES Why?

ROBIN *(a beat)* Ah. One of my tables needs me. Gotta run.

ROBIN exits.

JULES *(to themself)* Crazy.

Lights fade

When You Wish Upon A Cake
Two customers at the end of their meal. They are long-time friends.

A That was so good. Good choice.

B Thank you. I've wanted to bring you here for a while. I knew you'd like it.

A You know me so well, buddy.

B I've had some time to get used to you. *(They laugh.* B *looks at phone or watch)* We do have some time before the play starts, so if you want to walk off that massive bowl of pasta you ate...

A Oh, so we're not talking about your burrito the size of a toddler?

B It was so good. So much, but so good.

A Should we grab the check?

B Umm...one sec. *(B motions for the waiter, with a nod and a big grin)*

A What is happening?

The waitstaff enters with a large cupcake or a small cake with a lit candle in it. They sing some kind of amped-up restaurant birthday song (or just an over-the-top "Happy Birthday"), set the cake on the table, and all but one waiter exit. As they're coming in

A *(over the singing)* Oh, no! No, you didn't!

B Of course I did! It's your birthday! It's what friends do!

A Not good friends! I will get you for this, you know that, right?

B Yeah, yeah, you grump. *(Singing should be done by here.)* Blow out the candle and make a wish!

A Okay...

A *pauses, thinks, leans in to blow out the candle. As they lean in, the lights change, something with a slightly mystical edge. We're out of the actual moment and in the wish. They blow out the candle.*

B I thought you should know... I have always wanted you, and I can't wait any longer.

The lights change back.

WAITER *(with humor)* You waited too long to make your wish! The candle went out.

A I'm sorry.

B *(laughing)* Is it that hard to decide?

WAITER Let me get that for you.

The waiter re-lights the candle.

B Blow out the candle and make a wish!

A Okay...

Again A *pauses, thinks, leans in to blow out the candle. The lights change, and they blow out the candle.*

B I thought you should know... I'm not wearing underwear.

The lights change back.

WAITER *(with humor)* You waited too long to make your wish! The candle went out.

A I'm sorry.

B *(laughing)* Is it that hard to decide?

WAITER Let me get that for you.

The waiter re-lights the candle.

B Blow out the candle and make a wish!

A Okay...

Again A *pauses, thinks, leans in to blow out the candle. The lights change, and they blow out the candle.*

B I thought you should know... When we get back to your apartment tonight, I am going to unleash years of pent-up friendzone sexual frustration on you.

A Oh, really?

B Oh, really. You've got this coming.

A That's vaguely threatening, and I kinda like it!

B Happy. Birthday. Buddy.

The lights change back.

WAITER *(with humor)* You waited too long to make your wish! The candle went out.

A I'm sorry.

B *(laughing)* Is it that hard to decide?

WAITER Let me get that for you.

The waiter re-lights the candle.

B Blow out the candle and make a wish!

A Okay...

Again A *pauses, thinks, leans in to blow out the candle. The lights change, and they blow out the candle.*

B I thought you should know... You're probably, like, my best friend.

A Probably?

B Okay, definitely.

A Same. Been forever.

B And I just wanted to tell you...that I love you.

A Awww, I love you, too, bestie.

B No, I mean, like, I'm *in love* with you.

The lights change back.

WAITER *(with humor)* You waited too long to make your wish! The candle went out.

A I'm sorry.

B *(laughing)* Is it that hard to decide?

WAITER Let me get that for you.

The waiter re-lights the candle.

B Blow out the candle and make a wish!

A Okay...

Again A *pauses, thinks, leans in to blow out the candle. The lights change, and they blow out the candle.*

B I thought you should know... You're probably, like, my best friend.

A Probably?

B Okay, definitely.

A Same. Been forever.

B And I just wanted to tell you...that I love you.

A Awww, I love you, too, bestie.

B No, I mean, like, I'm *in love* with you.

A Oh.

B Not the reaction I might have hoped for.

A No, I don't mean oh, like, in a bad way. I'm...I've been in love with you for a long time, too.

B And here we are, never saying anything.

A We knew.

B Yeah, we knew. I just couldn't... It's hard to keep your mouth shut when your heart's screaming at you.

A I'm glad you said something.

B That sounds like there's a "but" in there...

A But. How many times have you been there for me when I screwed up another relationship? When I pulled some stupid move or said something dumb or—shit, let's be honest here, cheated on someone?

B I really hope that's a rhetorical question.

A It is and it isn't, and we both know the answer is a lot. A lot of times. And every time I do, and every time you are, I always think to myself, if we were together, I'd just end up doing it to you, too.

B You don't know—

A Yeah, I do, because I know me. I know how I am. I don't why I am how I am. I mean, I have some ideas, thank you, therapy, but I don't know how not to be how I am. If that makes sense. And I don't want to be how I am with someone I love as much as I love you. Because if I destroy this by being how I am, I'd never forgive myself. I couldn't. Because this, for all the unspoken stuff...this is the relationship I've always wanted. This is the love I wanted. The kind of love that just...sits in the room with you and doesn't need to be looked after and worried about. It's not one you can break because you just don't touch it. And that's why this, me and you telling each other how we really feel even though we already know it...it's why it's going to stay inside this wish, where it's safe. Because I can't afford to let it out and have something happen to it. Because I love you.

B And I love you. Always will.

The lights change. B *and the* WAITER *applaud like you do when someone blows out the candles.*

WAITER Nice job on the candle! I'll go grab some little plates.

WAITER *exits.*

B What did you wish for?

A *pauses, thinks about admitting it. Then:*

A If I tell you, it won't come true.

B *(reaching across the table)* Try me.

Lights fade.

WAITER SCENE Jules Wants Info

JULES *is at the station.* ALEX *enters.*

ALEX Is something wrong with the fryer? I've had two tables now send back chicken wings because they're undercooked.

JULES That's probably just Paulo. Kind of new to the fryer.

ALEX Then get him off it. He's gonna get us sued. There's only so much botulism you can comp with a free dessert.

JULES You okay?

ALEX Just aggravated. Like usual. Getting shit for things I didn't do.

JULES That why you're leaving?

ALEX That was blunt.

JULES Just asking.

ALEX Not entirely. Certainly a consideration, though.

JULES You know, you haven't really said why you're leaving.

ALEX No. I haven't.

Pause.

JULES Okay, then. I mean, you don't owe any of us an explanation, certainly, it's just...I'm just curious. Some folks take their last day like a license to start torching the place. And the people. And the customers. Coworkers...

ALEX Maybe I'm just gonna let it end with a whimper instead of a bang. I don't want to end up on someone's social media as "crazy waiter goes out in a blaze of glory."

JULES Well, waiters are crazy.

ALEX So I've been hearing lately.

JULES I guess some relationships end for no apparent reason, even work relationships, but it doesn't mean the people in those relationships don't want to know the why. I just want to know that you're okay.

ALEX I'm promise you, I'm fine. But it's very nice of you to ask.

JULES It's almost like you're my friend.

ALEX Almost? But not quite?

JULES *(shrugging)* It's how I am.

ALEX Let's just say...it's time. Sometimes it's just time. Time to do something different.

JULES Fair enough. I'll try to leave it alone. Don't want to make you, y'know...

ALEX Crazy?

JULES Crazy.

Lights fade

Table for One

A customer (A) *enters at the side of the stage. They're a little fidgety—plainly a bit uncomfortable for some reason. A* WAITER *greets them.*

WAITER Hi, how many today?

A Just one, please.

WAITER *(checking pad)* One it is. Let me see where I can put you. Find you a good table. Ah. Follow me?

They cross the to table, which is set with two places.

WAITER How's this?

A It's fine, thank you.

WAITER I'll grab you a menu, and...let me just clear this other place—

A Actually, leave it? If you don't mind?

WAITER (*with humor)* Big eater, are ya? Need two plates?

A No, I just... um... This is my first time eating out since my [wife/husband/partner] passed away.

WAITER Oh, I'm so sorry.

A No, it's fine. They were sick for a while. It's been five months now, and... *(Heavy-ish pause)* I just now realized that I'm not used to not having the...other plate be there when we go out. When I go out. Not that I've been out. So if it's okay...

WAITER One hundred percent. I get it.

A *(kindly)* I hope you don't, actually.

WAITER Let me grab you a menu, and listen—appetizer's on me.

A That's very kind. Thank you.

WAITER *moves off briefly and returns with the menu.* A *sits and looks around, fiddles with their place setting, trying to become comfortable with the situation.*

WAITER Here we are. Just let me know when you're ready.

WAITER *exits.* A *looks at the menu, often glancing up to the empty chair. The moment is not easy for* A*. Shortly,* B *enters, sees* A *and crosses to the table, looking the place over as they do. They stop at the empty chair and stay standing. The actor should not appear "ghostly."*

B This is a pleasant surprise!

A Hello. How are you?

B I'm okay. This is... not like you at all. Table for one.

A I had a choice?

B You could've called someone.

A *(shrugs)* Wasn't sure how it'd go. Why do I want to do that to someone? You planning to sit?

B *smiles and sits.*

B So this is new. Why here?

A I didn't think I could handle, you know, any of the usuals.

B Too many ghosts?

A That was not as funny as you're thinking.

B Worth a shot.

A But yeah. Too many memories. Not sure I want to deal with that this...first time out.

B Well, I'm glad you're here.

A That makes at least half of us.

B I was worried you were just going to sit in that house eating nothing but grilled cheese sandwiches.

A I like grilled cheese sandwiches.

B With Worcestershire sauce on the bread. I know. I never got that.

A It's an acquired taste. *(Looking at the menu)* Maybe they do grilled cheese here.

B Don't you dare.

A What are you going to do?

B Haunt you.

A What, again?

They laugh.

B This is good, though. This is a good start.

A We've had this conversation.

B And it sounds like we're having it again.

The WAITER *comes over.*

WAITER Decided on anything yet? How about that free appetizer?

A Uh, almost. I need a few minutes. But I was looking at the mozarella sticks.

B Fried cheese. Of course. *(The waiter does not acknoledge that B is there.)*

WAITER They're really good. Just wave me down when you're ready.

The WAITER *exits.*

B One small step for man...

A How's that?

B You. Getting out of the house. But I want you to be back in the world.

A I can say the same.

B Mm hmm. And one of us has a choice.

A I know you know this, but... Any time you brought it up, about...what's next? I was never comfortable.

B I know.

A It just feels like something people in movies say but that you never really say in real life. Find someone. Why? I had someone. Someone else would just be someone else. You know, we go through a lot of someone elses before we get to someone.

B That sounds like you're bragging.

A I did okay back in the day.

B You were very charming.

A Were?

B Okay, so we don't need to talk about *that*. But this? You being here? This is what I wanted. This is what I mean about getting into the world again. I didn't want you sitting there, moping.

A I feel like moping is a little light of a word for being in mourning.

B And "being in mourning" sounds like you're a coquettish little thing in a Victorian novel. I want you out here, in the sunshine, going for walks, seeing a movie, getting coffee with friends. The friends who've been messaging you to come out and get coffee. The ones you keep blowing off?

A Everybody wants to talk about it. I don't.

B Thus, dinner for one.

A A minute ago, you approved.

B I want more for you. I don't want to the be thing that keeps you from being happy.

A You were never that.

B Now. You took care of me while I was sick. You gave me everything you could. And it was so much. It's time to turn that around. Take care of you. Give yourself everything you can.

A It's so hard.

B In a way, that makes me glad. Does that sound awful? You know what I mean. But you've never been afraid of doing hard things.

A This is different.

B Until it's not. (*Pause.)* Today you got up and you decided to come here. You put on jeans instead of sweatpants. I think you might even have trimmed your nose hairs [or "plucked your eyebrows"]. You looked up this place. And you left the house for something other than groceries.

A That reminds me. I need bread and cheese.

B How are you set for Worcestershire sauce?

A I'm a little low. Thank you for the reminder.

B I never expected you to just spring back and get a new start. I know you're not like that. But maybe you need to be a little like that. In small doses and little steps.

A Mozarella stick by mozarella stick?

B If that's what it takes. Dinner for one. Dinner with a friend. Dinner with friends, plural. See where you go. Let things be things.

A You were kinda my thing.

B Lucky me. *(Rises)* I should get going.

A You don't have to.

B Maybe not. But you do. It was nice seeing you here. Nice place. I'm glad we got to talk.

A Will I see you around?

B I'm always around. You know that. *(Exits.)*

A *pauses, then takes out their phone and makes a call.*

A Hey. How are you? I'm good, I'm doing okay. Thank you. Listen, are you around right now, by any chance? I was just out grabbing some mozzarella sticks and, um...that brewery near you, they still let you bring in your own food? Because a beer and a couple orders of cheese sticks sounds really good to me right now. And... *(drawing breath)* I could really use someone to talk to. Yeah? Cool. First beer on me, okay? Fair enough. See you shortly.

The WAITER *comes over as they put the phone away.*

WAITER Couldn't help overhearing. Mozzarella sticks?

A Yeah. Two orders, please. Make it three. Just in case.

WAITER You can never have too many mozarella sticks.

A I know someone who'd say otherwise.

WAITER And as I understand it, we're getting that to go?

A *(looking the way* B *left)* Yeah. To go. Out into the world.

So...

I hope this preview has left you wanting to read more, and to get this onto a stage near you.

If so, here's what to do: pitch this idea to your local theater company. Have them reach out to me for a full perusal script at jcshanahan@hotmail.com. The play will be fully available for production in Fall 2026.

Let's get this show on its feet!