

STELLA'S LAST J-DATE

By Andy Rooster Bloch

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STELLA'S LAST J-DATE

For Amy, Ava, Mom, Dad, Harriet, and Gary

STELLA'S LAST J-DATE

Stella's Last J-Date was originally produced at the Whitefire Theatre in Los Angeles, CA, produced by Scott Disharoon, directed by Bryan Rasmussen, featuring the following cast:

Stella Amy Smallman-Winston

Isaac Barry Livingston

Don Elvis Nolasco

Cast: 1 Woman/2 Men

STELLA WEINSTOCK 40s, neurotic, vulnerable

ISAAC TARSKY 50s, wise, cautious

DON 30s, slick, menacing

TIME: Current day

PLACE: A bar in New York City (Manhattan)

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A BAR IN MANHATTAN. 7 pm or so. Suspension of disbelief puts us in a secluded room away from the main action of a busy Friday Happy Hour.

TWO TABLES. Down Center. TWO CHAIRS at each table. Far Stage Right there are DOUBLE DOORS. Above them, a lighted red sign reads EXIT. A conspicuous tall FAKE TREE graces the exit.

Far Stage Left there is an opened door leading to a dark corridor. There we find some plants, a few nondescript paintings and an artsy sign marked "Restrooms." The room's decor is minimal: some neon beer signs, a NY Giants banner, a poster of Sinatra, and lots of miscellaneous bar room tchotchkes.

ISAAC TARSKY sits at one of the tables, alone, sipping a Club Soda evident by the bottle in clear view. He wears a white button down, dark blue blazer, and nice slacks. His shoes are Italian loafers. His kind, radiant eyes make for a warmly approachable fellow.

He drums his fingers on the table. Suddenly, he stands, thinks it would be better to sit in the other seat (at the same table). He does. A beat later, he re-thinks it and returns to his previous seat. After changing back to his original seat, he takes out his cell phone and takes a selfie. That's when -

From Stage Left, in walks STELLA WEINSTOCK. She is a bundle of nerves. She's in a black cocktail dress and black high heels with high straps, a designer purse in tow. Most of her body is concealed in a long, black leather jacket.

She stops at the tall bistro table (UC) with her back trying to "hide." Isaac examines his selfie, looking disappointed. At that point Stella hides again behind a plant Up Right. A few beats later - she moves quickly and insecurely to Isaac.

STELLA. Are you Isaac?

ISAAS. Yes.

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STELLA. *(She stomps her foot!)* Goddammit! *(This startles Isaac.)* Goddamn me and my silly insecurities. I'm like, is that him? *(She grunts!)* So Goddamn frustrating, you know what I mean?

ISAAC. It's –

STELLA. No no NO! To waffle at the onset, to not be like, Hey sailor what's shaking in this one-horse town? Order me a Sarsaparilla. Call the fire department it's gonna be a hot one! Damn this pesky uncertainty that's plagued me my whole life from doing great things like making a great entrance. I've never made a great entrance, not once. Maybe, just maybe if I was groomed by sane parents to embrace a -- a -- a trace of confidence, a trace! Is that asking too much? A sliver? A crumb? A taste of assuredness? To own one's self, REALLY own it, own it like you own your own blood without relentless attention to shortcomings. How many times can an eight-year-old girl clean her Goddamn closet? What is in there I ask you! I ask you! Filthy pink blouses? Decapitated dollies? I feel you looking at me: call FEMA. This date is an unmitigated, fucking disaster!

ISAAC. *(Bold, matter-of-factly.)* I'm an alcoholic.

STELLA. I should go, this is... this is just not working - *(She turns and walks away.)*

ISAAC. If you go you'll never hear my compliment. *(She turns, oddly, yet somehow gracefully.)*

STELLA. Oh?

ISAAC. Yes. *(A beat.)* That in failing to make a great entrance you made a great entrance.

STELLA. *(Changes to upbeat.)* Hey. You know what? You're right. What do you know about that!

ISAAC. You want to sit?

STELLA. Thank you, yes. *(She's now all smiles. They shake hands.)* Let's try this again. Hi. I'm Stella.

ISAAC. I sure hope so.

STELLA. I'm not on medication –

ISAAC. Mmm.

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STELLA. - not that it would do me any good. I have ADHD and low self-esteem - (*She sits.*) - which means I put myself down but quickly forget why. TMI, right? (*Nervous laugh.*) Haha! Blurt and blab, that's me! If only I could find a muzzle to match my shoes. (*The joke goes over like a lead balloon.*)

ISAAC. So. You're Stella Rox.

STELLA. Yes. A friend of mine suggested the rox part in my headline. (*She spells it out.*) "R.O.X." ... She says it'll make men think I'm - (*Pinches her leather jacket for effect.*) - into leather.

ISAAC. I thought you were a geologist.

STELLA. Well that's disappointing. (*A beat.*) This is not my first blind date you know.

ISAAC. Mine either.

STELLA. But my first in a while.

ISAAC. Mm.

STELLA. The last one, not so good.

ISAAC. Join the club.

STELLA. It was high time to re-start the engine. Know what I mean?

ISAAC. I do.

STELLA. The possibilities of this pressure cooker.

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. It's a rare level of cruelty, you ask me.

ISAAC. That's not your imagination.

STELLA. Can you fathom the potential?

ISAAC. I know.

STELLA. Astronomical.

ISAAC. At the very least.

STELLA. Of what is now and what could be. From: "Pleasure to meet you" to: perhaps our final breath in a nursing home. It's overwhelming; all I could think about on the way over. Which degenerate du jour's going to paw at my womanhood this time? (*A quick odd look between them, then, upbeat!*) So, a boozer, huh? How about that?

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ISAAC. The only time I don't think about drinking is when I'm drinking. (*Stella squints, doesn't quite get the joke.*) Anyway, just keep the Glenlivet away –

STELLA. Glen(livet) - ?

ISAAC. Glenlivet. A whiskey. Single malt. Have you tasted it?

STELLA. I'm not sure.

ISAAC. It's extraordinary, also a bit of trouble.

STELLA. I see.

ISAAC. I have a strict routine of what I allow myself to... *enjoy*. Like a major leaguer on a pitch count. Are you a baseball fan?

STELLA. Two years ago I would've said yes to get you in bed and fuck your brains out. Things change.

ISAAC. Okay, good to know. (*A beat. Awkward silence.*)

STELLA. You said you're a schoolteacher.

ISAAC. Yes. Fifth grade.

STELLA. Ahh.

ISAAC. My last official year of pulling on a boy's ear before getting my ass kicked.

STELLA. You must like kids.

ISAAC. I do, just... not this particular batch. (*A beat.*) You look thirsty.

STELLA. I do? I look thirsty? Why do I look thirsty? What makes me look thirsty?

ISAAC. I -- I don't know, it just sorta came out... Would you like a drink?

STELLA. Yes! (*She calms.*) I mean, of course. To wet the whistle, you know.

ISAAC. She'll come around. I think they forgot about us in this back room.

STELLA. It's a tough job, I've done it. "Welcome to Chili's." (*She cups her hand over her mouth, loud whispers.*) I never meant it.

ISAAC. You said you're an animal trainer.

STELLA. You remembered. Yes. Mostly dogs. Have you ever been bitten by a dog?

ISAAC. No.

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STELLA. I have. Look! *(She removes her jacket just enough to slip a spaghetti-strap off her naked shoulder and reveal a small scar. Against her intention it's a sexy moment not lost on Isaac.)* A lab-collie mix named Skipper. He had a psychosomatic aversion to fingers snapping. *(She snaps her fingers over and over.)* Like this...

ISAAC. I get it.

STELLA. These rescue dogs, you have no idea the awful things done to them, tsk tsk. Lucky for me I had a tetanus shot. Have you had a tetanus shot lately?

ISAAC. No –

STELLA. Oh you should. Every five years. But I say three. You step on an old nail you could lose your foot, I've read. You need your foot. You can't argue with that.

ISAAC. No you cer(tainly) –

STELLA. You know the first symptom of tetanus?

ISAAC. I'd guess it (would) –

STELLA. Mild spasms in the jaw muscles. Serious stuff that lockjaw. Four stitches on my shoulder then of course the emotional backlash added to the financial stress. I had to close my doors for two months because no one trusted me with their dog. Or cat. Or turtle. It's not a good reputation, you know? To be an animal trainer and have dogs bite you. It's like a pyromaniac working at a gas station.... You look just like your profile picture. Do I?

ISAAC. Your hair's shorter.

STELLA. And my face is less round. Sometimes soft lighting makes you look like a two-ton fatty. *(A beat. Silence. Too much of it.)* Aren't you just terrified of uncomfortable silences?

ISAAC. I never gave it (much) –

STELLA. Like if I stopped talking right now... then you stopped talking I'd have to blabber incessantly to fill a canyon of deafening introspection.

ISAAC. No one expects you to fill every moment of silence –

STELLA. Besides my mother? Yeah, okay. I don't know about that. You may see it as some quirky interlude. I see it as a pregnant pause where you've begun to plot my murder.

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ISAAC. I've never met anyone like you before.

STELLA. Yeah, I get that a lot. (*A beat.*) I've been taking guilt control classes at the Jewish Center. Can you imagine? Trying to kill stress in a room full of single Jews? It's like going to an A.A. meeting at a liquor store. (*Hold, off Isaac.*) No offense.

ISAAC. I'm gonna get you that drink now. (*He stands.*)

STELLA. I'm feeling like I don't want you to leave. Sit.... Sit. (*She pats his seat, forceful.*) Sit!

ISAAC. (*He points stage left.*) The bar's right through there.

STELLA. I'll wait for the girl. (*A beat.*) I apologize for being so uneasy and ambiguous.... Please don't report me to J-Date.

ISAAC. I wouldn't even know how to do that. (*He returns to his seat.*)

STELLA. There's a tab..... on the menu bar between "Help" and "Site Map." I shouldn't have told you that.

ISAAC. I wouldn't worry it.

STELLA. This is it for me, end of the line, you know? After this it's Asian Singles or prostitution.

ISAAC. Forget it.

STELLA. Ugh! This is such a mad process.

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. So subjective –

ISAAC. And tricky.

STELLA. God yes! Well put, Isaac.

ISAAC. And completely awkward.

STELLA. And let's not forget frightening!

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. Strangers –

ISAAC. Exactly.

STELLA. - you and I. Auditioning for each other's heart.

ISAAC. Yes –

STELLA. And at the end of the night, we'll either move onto the Bonus Round or go home with parting gifts because people, like things, can be great... but not good together, you know what I mean?

ISAAC. (*Agreeing, nodding.*) Mmm –

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STELLA. Like oysters and marshmallows. (*A beat*). I think I'd like that drink now: a white wine, nothing too buttery. Butter belongs on a waffle not in a liver. Waffle. That's a funny word. Waffle... Waffle. (*A beat*.) Wafflewaffle.

ISAAC. (*He stands.*) I'll be back.

STELLA. On second thought make it a double "Skinny Bitch" top shelf vodka Splenda rim with four limes easy ice.... Isaac?

ISAAC. Yes?

STELLA. I think this is going swell so far. Don't you? (*They look at each other. There is a pause. Lights Dim – just enough to know we've moved on in the evening. As we dim: Isaac will go Off Stage to get Stella's drink -- He returns, drink in hand, sets it down in front of her. Stella begins to stab her straw into a full fresh drink. Lights Up.*)

STELLA. ... My brother calls me a drink stabber, says I'm on edge, which is true. Want to hear how he met his wife? It's a funny story.

ISAAC. (Sure) -

STELLA. (*She cuts him off.*) He's on a plane, right? Pilot comes on the intercom, says things are about to get choppy. Fasten your seat belts. Then it gets worse. They think they're going down. My brother: he says to this girl he'd just met, the one sitting next to him, jokingly, that he never had the chance to propose. All this as the plane is falling from the sky. The plane starts to level out. Of course. Soon all is calm. The girl stands and SCREAMS at the top of her lungs WE'RE GETTING MARRIED! Applause shoots through the cabin! Eleven years to this day my brother never had the guts to tell her he was only kidding! One kid: Turby Weinstock, short for "Turbulence." True story. My whole family's nuts. My dad, the racist. "Next they'll take over hockey" he'd say.

ISAAC. Where's he now?

STELLA. In an urn.

ISAAC. Wow, that's so specific.

STELLA. (*She blurts out a nervous laugh.*) That's the first time I've laughed since Tuesday.

ISAAC. You have a nice laugh.

STELLA. Thank you.

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ISAAC. *(A beat. Isaac rolls his eyes over her entire body.)* I like your outfit. It's, um, it's good on you.

STELLA. *(She pulls on the dress.)* It won't stretch. See? I do that on purpose so it's not okay to gain weight. Might as well put on a mumu and shower with bacon grease. *(Then quickly.)* I'm ... really not even sure what that means.

ISAAC. Okay.

STELLA. *(Serious, reflective.)* Boy I miss shopping.

ISAAC. What do you mean? *(A beat.)*

STELLA. Mean? *(She plays it off.)* Oh... nothing. *(A beat.)* I'm sorry about your alcoholism. That must be intrusive.

ISAAC. It's not an egregious case.

STELLA. Ah –

ISAAC. I mean, it's not like I'm out there kicking over trash cans, robbing the elderly. I'm not a pillager.

STELLA. You do seem upbeat all things considered.

ISAAC. Everyone has a vice, it's just, I -- I guess a matter of control and culpability.

STELLA. Yes.

ISAAC. I had a professor. Mr. Van Kloss. He used to lick wet paint. *(He scoots in closer.)* Can I ask you a personal question?

STELLA. Okay.

ISAAC. Are you happy?

STELLA. Well. It's not like I'm leading a kick line. *(A beat.)*

ISAAC. Hey, I have an idea, this'll be fun, break the ice a little.

STELLA. Alright.

ISAAC. What I want you to do -- is to slap me in the face and when - *(Whack! Stella immediately cracks him hard across the face!)*

ISAAC. Ow! Jesus!

STELLA. You said –

ISAAC. I know what I said! There's a build to this. Jesus!

STELLA. I'm –

ISAAC. It's a story. There's a buildup.

STELLA. I'm so sorry.

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ISAAC. IT'S CALLED FOREPLAY, LADY! THERE ARE WORDS!

STELLA. You said –

ISAAC. I know what I said because I said it!

STELLA. I thought that was the game.

ISAAC. (*Hand on his face.*) No. Not the game... Ow. Fuck.

STELLA. Otherwise I wouldn't (have) - (*A beat, she stands.*) I should go.

ISAAC. Stop it.

STELLA. I've fallen out of contention, I (should) –

ISAAC. Sit down, please –

STELLA. No! I've gone from contender to punch line!

ISAAC. Don't go.

STELLA. Why? What's the point?

ISAAC. Because I'm asking! Okay? (*A beat, calms.*) Good God, I feel sorry for you, that this ... civil, non-neurotic line of thinking puts you so deep into uncharted territory.

STELLA. You know what? Go fuck yourself. (*Stella quickly leans in and plants a LONG, PASSIONATE KISS on Isaac's lips! She pulls back.*) Apologies for punching you off cue. Have a nice night.

(*Stella exits, Stage Left. Isaac can only watch in confusion. He sits. All is calm. SEVERAL BEATS LATER, Stella returns.*)

STELLA (CONT'D). Did I leave too fast? I felt like I left too fast, that we were getting somewhere. Or is that my imagination? (*A beat.*) For God's sake... say something.

ISAAC. I don't believe it's your imagination. (*He busts out laughing.*)

STELLA. Oh my God. You're laughing.

ISAAC. I provoked it. It was a dumb idea, really.

STELLA. I swatted you good.

ISAAC. You have a mean left hook.

STELLA. I never slapped anyone, not ever.

ISAAC. Then tonight's your night.

STELLA. And that kiss, that wasn't nothing.

ISAAC. Far from it. You're some kisser.

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STELLA. *(Waving it off, egging, bashfully.)* Go on.

ISAAC. I'm serious –

STELLA. I didn't hate it.

ISAAC. Me as well! The old adage: you're a damn good kisser but I have no interest in knowing how.

STELLA. I mean, I didn't hate hitting you.

ISAAC. I beg your pardon.

STELLA. Whacking you. Clocking your puss. I enjoyed it, it was fantastic! And I'll tell you what it was if you'll permit me to drop this into a psychoanalytic category. I think you took a black eye for every asshole, prior to you, who threw me to the curb like day-old muffins. *(Concerned.)* You do have control of your jaw and faculties, yes?

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. Good. Because here's the thing: *(She sits, continues.)* Whatever it's worth I got a ton off my chest to the point I'm seriously considering cancelling therapy. You should take that as a compliment.

ISAAC. *(Trying to keep up.)* Which part?

STELLA. Bailing on Rabbi Stern. He's a rather old, judgmental fellow.

ISAAC. Your therapist is a Rabbi?

STELLA. Do you find that odd?

ISAAC. Ordinarily... Not tonight. *(A beat.)*

STELLA. You should ice your cheek. And take some Motrin. I have extra in my purse if you want it - *(She reaches into her purse and pulls out a gigantic bottle of Motrin. She pulls out two pills. Isaac waves it off.)*

ISAAC. I love this calmer side to you.

STELLA. *(She swallows the pills herself.)* Me too! Forgive me. I'm not much of a drinker, or swearer. And boy, I've had a bucket of both.

ISAAC. I am not qualified to –

STELLA. To what?

ISAAC. To tell you optimism is out of your league. I mean, who am I? I'm -- I'm, what, just a man you met on your computer.

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STELLA. And isn't that something?

ISAAC. It is bizarre.

STELLA. Your profile said you were "hell-bent on happiness."

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. And that "Rooster Cogburn" is your favorite movie.

ISAAC. You're on a roll.

STELLA. And a threadbare difference, you said, between "desperate" and "determined."

ISAAC. You have some memory.

STELLA. Ask me what I had for lunch yesterday. Go on. (*A beat, forceful*). Ask!

ISAAC. What did you have for lunch yester(day) - ?

STELLA. Tuna-melt on wheat. Chicken Caesar day before.

Margherita pizza with arugula day before that. Last day of third grade, know what I wore? Navy-blue overalls and a frilly, beige blouse with light green smileys... Or my Grandpa Alvin's last words on his deathbed: (*Old man's voice.*) *This'll be one outrageous hospital bill, son. If I were you I wouldn't pay it!* (*Back to her voice.*) We all laughed, it was a moment... seconds later his spleen gave out.

ISAAC. (*A beat.*) Wow.

STELLA. Anyway, I sensed an immediate warm-ness about you. At least on paper.

ISAAC. Is that why you picked me?

STELLA. Why'd you pick me?

ISAAC. I asked you first.

STELLA. I asked you second.

ISAAC. So why'd you come back?

STELLA. I don't know. (*Off his stare.*) I don't know!

ISAAC. Why didn't you keep on walking?

STELLA. You're badgering the witness.

ISAAC. Why are you here?... What are you feeling?!

STELLA. Those are four questions.

ISAAC. Pick one!

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STELLA. *(Pressed, Stella takes a deep breath.)* I -- I feel an impressive toll of pain and trial lurking on the horizon. Okay? There. I said it.

ISAAC. Good God, lady, good God! Do you hear the words coming out of your mouth?

STELLA. I'm (just) –

ISAAC. I mean seriously! Who with opposable thumbs has these thoughts after knowing each other for six minutes?! You're already talking surrender and agony. You're like the French army on Xanax!

STELLA. I have a protocol.

ISAAC. Oh. A protocol.

STELLA. Yes.

ISAAC. Of what? Doom? Pessimism? Collecting anecdotes for the next Lad in line? How's that working for you?

STELLA. *(She's had enough.)* Isaac?

ISAAC. Yes.

STELLA. Go fuck yourself.

(She abruptly stands, grabs her purse and exits Stage Left. She's quickly gone into the corridor. A moment later, she returns. Moves back to the table. She looks around, plucks something off the table.)

STELLA (CONT'D). Forgot my lip gloss. *(She throws it in her purse, scowls at Isaac.)* Neimans. *(She exits, Stage Left, back through the corridor. Isaac slowly plops into his chair, sighs, exhausted.)*

Moments later: A slick, imposing man enters from Far Stage Right, the opposite end of where Stella just exited. This is DON. He wears a white shirt, yellow tie, black slacks, light-colored trench coat, and a crisp fedora. He edges towards Isaac. He is fiercely daunting and intimidating with an intensely cool, confident swagger. He stands above Isaac. Both he and his voice are pure ice.)

DON. You must be the motherfucker they call Issac.

ISAAC. Do I know you?

DON. Not yet. But it's a fair, good, motherfucking question. I mean, hell, I could bite the head off Santa Claus December twenty-fourth and why did I ruin Christmas for all those innocent children? But

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why I'm here beats that motherfucking question's ass. (*A beat, he leans in.*) Will not work, my friend. This. Will... Not. Work.

ISAAC. Who are you?

DON. Don't be ridiculous. Cancel the broad.

ISAAC. Is Stella in some kind of danger?

DON. She's on J-Date. She's not... not in danger.

ISAAC. What's your name?

DON. You're fond of her, yes?

ISAAC. That's none of your business.

DON. If you're falling for Stella it is my business. And call me Don.

ISAAC. Why are you here, Don?

DON. Must I hang over you like a motherfucking awning?

ISAAC. (*Isaac reluctantly offers a hand regarding the seat Stella was just in. Don sits.*) Are you Stella's boyfriend?

DON. No. Hell no. I wouldn't wish that on anybody.

ISAAC. That's not very nice.

DON. I'm not very nice. That's the idea. (*A beat.*) You think I want to be here? Fuck, man, I don't want to be here. I want to be at a Buffalo Wild Wings watching March Madness. And if it's not March I want to be looking at highlights of the motherfucking March I missed. But here I am. On a mission.

ISAAC. Is she in danger?

DON. You asked that. It's a gray area. (*He looks around the place, scoffs.*) She picked this place, didn't she?

ISAAC. How do you know?

DON. No ambience. The lighting. You tell me: am I at a cocktail lounge or about to get my eyes checked at Costco? I wouldn't, in my darkest days of stink, wash my balls up in this bitch but I digress. (*He cracks his knuckles, then his neck, a beat.*) So... what have we learned about the aloof yet somewhat, semi-gregarious Stella Rox?

ISAAC. She's a dog trainer.

DON. Yes! She does train dogs. But if you think that de-classified info's gonna get your dick in her drawers think again, cowboy.... She show you the scar?

ISAAC. Yes.

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DON. Do you love her?

ISAAC. I –

DON. Ah fuck it, doesn't matter. The fact is Stella Weinstock is ill-equipped to handle such a sweet square like you, Isaac Tarsky; fifth grade teacher extraordinaire. QUICK! What's the capitol of Vermont?

ISAAC. Montpelier.

DON. Square root of 256.

ISAAC. *(Thinks, unsure.)* Sixteen?

DON. First colony to secede from the Union.

ISAAC. South Carolina.

DON. In –

ISAAC. 18... 60... 60? 1860?

DON. *(Big smile.)* My man. *(A beat.)* And to answer your question, who am I? I am here to perform a job. Sure, there are other gigs. Hell. I could be a proctologist's assistant. And you thought holding for the extra point was tough. *(He stands, leans over the table, intimidating.)* In my line there is one objective: to see to it a point has been made. *(A beat.)* Cancel the broad we're done. Not?... Pursue her?... You will, I assure you, see a motherfucking side of me you wish you hadn't. *(He tips his Fedora.)* You have a swell evening, "Mr. Brown-Eyed Dreamer 2-1-2."

(Don WINKS, then exits, Stage Left. Isaac, livid, watches him leave. The MOMENT Don disappears, Isaac digs into his pocket and pulls out his cell phone.)

Lights Up: Far downstage left on Stella, cell phone in hand, standing in a dimly lighted area to appear she's outside. Stella and Isaac dial at the same exact time. In doing so, they reach each other's voicemail. Note: Stella's ringtone is a dog barking.)

ISAAC'S VOICEMAIL

You've reached Isaac. Leave a message. (BEEP!!)

STELLA'S VOICEMAIL

This is Stella. You know what to do! (BEEP!!)

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(Aggravated, they both hang up. A beat later, Isaac calls. This time, Stella answers.)

STELLA. ... Isaac?

ISAAC. You want to throw a fit, make a scene, fine! Because that's never been done! But don't send in some tailored goon to press the point you made so vividly clear (to) - !

STELLA. What are you talking (about) - ?

ISAAC. Who's Don?

STELLA. What?

ISAAC. A man! Don. He wore a hat.

STELLA. I don't know a man named Don.

ISAAC. Well he sure knew a lot about you.

STELLA. If we've been compromised by a man named Don in a hat then shoot him or call the cops! What do you want me to say?

ISAAC. So that's your reaction?

STELLA. Reaction to what?! I don't even know what you're talking about!

ISAAC. Maybe I should report you to J-Date.

STELLA. *(Nearly in tears.)* Dear God don't say that.

ISAAC. A wave of the wand, and poof! You're gone from the on-line market, relegated to meeting men at Star Trek conventions and speed dating!

STELLA. You think I'm fat.

ISAAC. What?!

STELLA. Chubby, zoftig, kind of girl that gets on a talking scale and it says "*Hey, Porky, one at a time!*"

ISAAC. You must be kid(ding) –

STELLA. That stupid avocado diet! Try it they say: it'll do wonders for your skin. Yeah? And what about the eight extra pounds? Thanks for Goddamn nothing, REDBOOK! *(A beat.)* I -- I just want to be pretty, that's all, I -- I want to be memorable, to stand out, to be unequivocally visible. My Dad used to say, "Stella, don't fall into the woodwork, you'll get eaten by anti-Semitic termites."

ISAAC. Do you want to see me again or not?

STELLA. Are you going to stop yelling at me?

STELLA'S LAST J-DATE

ISAAC. Are you going to stop telling me to go fuck myself?

STELLA. I apologize for running out, okay? The last blind date I had; he was -- he was literally blind. He read my face during dinner then threw up.

ISAAC. Chrissake, can we just... see where this goes? The pressure's off. The "Love-at-First-Sight" ship has sailed. Now we can embrace the enviable position of focusing almost exclusively on measuring our contempt.

STELLA. I don't get it. Is that supposed to be sarcastic?

ISAAC. I don't know anymore. That's a good question. Will you come back? *(A beat, forcefully.)* Will you come back?

(They both look at their phones. Dropped call. LIGHTS DOWN on STELLA. LIGHTS REMAIN FULL ON ISAAC. He looks at one of Stella's drinks left behind. A fair amount of liquid is still in the glass. He studies the glass, picks it up, and drinks it down.)

LIGHTS DOWN.

Moments later: A lighting change indicates a time-lapse between now and when Stella re-enters the bar, Stage Left. ISAAC is nowhere in sight.

Stella moves to the table where she and Isaac previously sat. She sits. A moment later: Isaac enters, Stage Left. He spots Stella, approaches with a slight stumble.)

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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