

DOUBLE DATE

by Albi Gorn

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOAN
PAUL
RANDY
MICHAEL

(A bar or café. JOAN sits at a table. RANDY sits at same table, bent over asleep on table. PAUL enters and looks around)

JOAN: Paul?

PAUL: Uh, yes. Joan?

JOAN: Uh-huh. Ummm, hi.

PAUL: *(Looking quizzically at RANDY, then to JOAN)* Hi.

JOAN: Have a seat.

PAUL: *(Tentatively)* Okay. Thanks. *(He sits)*

JOAN: I almost didn't recognize you. Michael said you wore glasses.

PAUL: *(Still distracted)* What? Oh, yeah. He's so self-absorbed. I had that eye surgery.

JOAN: *(A bit disappointed)* Oh.

PAUL: Is there a problem? Are you like a Christian Scientist?

JOAN: No. *(Beat)* It's silly.

PAUL: What?

JOAN: No, no, it's silly. I — it's silly.

PAUL: Okay.

JOAN: See, I wear glasses —

PAUL: Right, I see them.

JOAN: And I thought, well, at least we'll have that to talk about.

PAUL: Ah.

JOAN: I told you it was silly.

PAUL: Well, I did wear glasses for twenty years.

JOAN: *(Showing great interest)* Really? What was that like?

PAUL: Umm, well — no big deal. There's not really much to say about —
(JOAN bends down asleep on the table and RANDY gets up. The "switch.")

RANDY: It sucked, right? Come on, be honest. It sucked, that's why you got the surgery.

PAUL: Wait, who —

RANDY: You just didn't want to hurt my feelings.

PAUL: *(To JOAN)* Are you all right?

RANDY: She's fine. Don't worry about her. I can't picture you with glasses. You have such classic features, it would be a shame to cover them up.

PAUL: Wait. Who are you?

RANDY: Joan. But folks that know me well, really well, call me Randy.

PAUL: I thought she was Joan.

RANDY: Her? She's just a Joan wannabe. I hope you're not going to be too distracted by her, because I'm really a pretty complicated person and if you don't pay close attention, you're going to miss some of my best stuff.

PAUL: But I was supposed to be coming here to meet a Joan. I don't think it would be very nice if —

(JOAN and RANDY do the switch)

JOAN: Oh, that's sweet. But to be fair, we're both Joan.

PAUL: Now what happened to her?

JOAN: You hate this, I know. You want to leave, it's too weird. It's okay, it's fine. I knew this wouldn't work.

PAUL: Just tell me what's going on.

JOAN: Well, I don't get out much and —

PAUL: No, neither do I.

JOAN: Yeah, that's what Michael said. I guess that's why he thought that you and I, you know, might, um —

PAUL: Right. But — *(pointing to Randy)*

JOAN: Right. So the reason I don't get out much is there's a part of me that's kinda scared about meeting people, men — not that I think you would take advantage of me —

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Although if you feel inclined, I say go for it.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: — or anything, but I'm kinda naïve and vulnerable *(gulps)*. Anyhow, then there's this other part of me —

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: — who wants to boogie, brown eyes.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: And we just can't seem to get together on this. My therapist says I have an unintegrated personality. So I guess this is how it manifests itself. *(Beat)* So, moving right along, there's a concert of music from the Mid-Baroque tonight, if you like Buxtehude —

PAUL: Let me see if I have this. *(Pointing at both of them)* These are both you.

JOAN: Yes...sort of...

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: No. I'm me, she's everything about me that I don't like and don't need, particularly if you and I are going to have fun tonight. You do want to have fun, don't you?

PAUL: Well, sure, within limits.

RANDY: Limits?

PAUL: Yeah, like I don't think I can afford dinner for three.

RANDY: Then why don't we skip dinner. We can always eat after.

PAUL: After what?

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: You don't have to pay for me — us.

PAUL: After what?

JOAN: I thought we might just get to know each other.

PAUL: After what?

JOAN: If you don't care for Buxtehude, his music tends to be a bit exuberant, there's a poetry reading, if you like Auden —

PAUL: Can I talk to her again?

JOAN: Um, well —

PAUL: No offense.

JOAN: Of course not. Why would you want to talk to me when she's so —

PAUL: No, look, I'm sorry.

JOAN: No need to apologize. I understand. But it's not something I can control.

PAUL: What's not?

JOAN: Which part of me is responding to you.

PAUL: Huh. Look, you seem like a nice person, I'm just having trouble getting my arms around all this.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: I can help there.

PAUL: Um —

RANDY: *(As her fingers slowly walk up his arm)* Let's start one arm at a time.

Oooh, you must work out.

PAUL: Well, no, but I do a lot of typing.

RANDY: You must be really pounding those keys.

PAUL: Well, I can type pretty fast, I —

RANDY: Not too fast, I hope.

PAUL: I have to submit these lists of protocols for —

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: Oh, that's so interesting. I have to do that too. We do — I'm a chemist — we do these experiments and I —

PAUL: *(Poking RANDY)* Hello, hello?

JOAN: — prepare the — that won't work — protocols.

PAUL: We need a time out here.

JOAN: Oh, sorry.

PAUL: Does Michael know about this?

JOAN: No.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Yes.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: He doesn't. She thinks because she talked to him once or twice —

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: We did a lot more than talking.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: Oh, hush. That's silly and you know it.

PAUL: You slept with Michael?

JOAN: No.

PAUL: *(Beat)* She slept with Michael.

JOAN: No. It's the same thing. We're the same person.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: In case you haven't figured it out, she's not the kiss and tell type. But why? Does it matter?

PAUL: Well, I suppose not, but —

RANDY: You're worried about whether you'll match up?

PAUL: No. It just feels like leftovers.

RANDY: That's why God put that microwave between your legs.

PAUL: *(Embarrassed)* Excuse me?

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: There's a new Swedish restaurant we could —

PAUL: Stop. Let me just — I mean, I think I may have forgotten to breathe for the last few minutes, just give me a second. *(Beat)* Look, Joan, I feel like I need to be open with you —

(JOAN/RANDY start to switch but go into reverse after PAUL's next line)

PAUL: *(Rapidly, to prevent the switching)* — about where I'm coming from.

JOAN: Oh? Good, I'd like to hear that.

PAUL: Obviously, when I came here I didn't expect this.

JOAN: Of course not.

PAUL: And yet — I can't speak for all men, but most I'd bet, certainly me — I do have certain fantasies.

JOAN: Of course.

PAUL: I mean, sex is kind of overrated, but still —

JOAN: When it's jumping in your lap.

PAUL: Right, it's hard to —

JOAN: Keep an even keel.

PAUL: Right.

JOAN: *(Sad beat)* Yeah, I understand. But like I said, it's not like I really have any control over ...*(gestures nondescriptly indicating RANDY and herself)*.

PAUL: No, apparently not.

JOAN: So I'm sorry to disappoint you. *(Looking at RANDY)* Maybe if we ordered oysters —

PAUL: No, you misunderstand me. I mean, sure, it's hard not to respond. But, see, that's the thing, despite the, the —

JOAN: Sex?

PAUL: Right, the sex thing, I'm actually finding myself more interested in you.

(JOAN looks at him, a mixture of surprise and anxiety. JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Oooh, wouldn't that be kinky; you could fantasize about her while you're doing me.

PAUL: Stop that!

RANDY: I can be very, very submissive.

PAUL: *(Exasperated)* What was there about my telling her I was interested in her that made you pop up?

RANDY: *(Looking at his crotch)* What was there about my popping up that made you pop up?

PAUL: *(In an effort to get them to switch again)* Buxtehude. Auden. Actuarial tables. Dead puppies.

RANDY: I love your energy. I'll bet you can last all night long.

PAUL: *(Somewhat dismissive)* Actually, I'm a morning person.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: Me too.

(PAUL looks very perplexed)

JOAN: You don't have to stay, I really understand.

PAUL: No, no, I'm here. I wouldn't walk out on you.

JOAN: Wouldn't walk out on me or her?

PAUL: I thought you said you were just one person.

JOAN: I am. But obviously you might perceive me and her as me and her.

PAUL: Well, jeez, you're so different. I guess it would be easier if I just could figure out what it is that I'm saying that triggers the, umm, your —

JOAN: Yeah. I can't figure it either. *(Beat)* You know, sometimes —

PAUL: Yeah?

JOAN: This is a little hard to say, but sometimes I kinda wish I was more, you know, more —

PAUL: Randy? I mean, like Randy?

JOAN: Yeah. I'm always so afraid of everything. I can't believe I'm saying this to you.

PAUL: Why?

(JOAN doesn't answer)

PAUL: I mean, we all have hidden desires.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

PAUL: Oy. I should have known.

RANDY: I'm really good at finding hidden things.

PAUL: I'll bet you are.

RANDY: You just have to let me look — in all your private places.

PAUL: Does anybody ever really respond to this?

RANDY: With the right stimulation, you can —

PAUL: Whoa, stop. It was exciting at first. It quickly became gross. I mean, listen to yourself, it's pathetic. You think desperation is sexy? I have a —

(RANDY gets teary)

PAUL: Oh, man, I'm sorry. Look, I didn't —

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: Ooooh, poor thing.

PAUL: Maybe I better leave.

JOAN: I understand.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: I'll go with you.

PAUL: Oh, look, I am sorry that I —

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

(PAUL looks quizzically at them)

JOAN: Yes?

PAUL: I'm just trying to get a handle on what makes each of you — what would you call that that you're doing?

JOAN: Respond?

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Respond?

PAUL: I guess.

RANDY: Well, it starts with —

PAUL: No, I don't think I need to hear this from you.

RANDY: What would you like to hear from me, and where would you like to hear it?

PAUL: *(Beat; an idea)* Look, about before. I really am sorry —

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

PAUL: Ha, I got it.

JOAN: Excuse me?

PAUL: I got it. I know how to get rid of her.

JOAN: Oh. Is that good?

PAUL: Well, I think if I can figure out how to *(indicates with his hands JOAN being up and then RANDY being up)* this evening has really intriguing possibilities.

JOAN: Oh. Just this evening?

PAUL: Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I'm getting carried away.

JOAN: It's understandable.

PAUL: No, but — see, the reason I don't go out much, is that I really don't know how to handle these situations —

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Then maybe I should handle it for you.

PAUL: (Without looking at RANDY, perfunctorily just to get her to go back down) About what happened before, the child in me —

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

PAUL: (Back to JOAN) Situations like this really overwhelm me and —

JOAN: Of course. Who wouldn't be —

PAUL: No, not this particularly. Just being with a woman. I always get carried away, fall in love too quickly, and either I get hurt or lost or — I don't know, it just always ends up in heartache.

JOAN: Yeah. That's the risk you have to take. I'm like you, I never really feel comfortable putting myself on the line.

PAUL: Right. (Beat) We're a good fit.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

PAUL: Don't even think about going there.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

PAUL: And maybe, since we're on the same page ...

JOAN: I'm thinking the same thing. I feel like I'm getting to you know you, and this is just the first date, and it's making me feel like I can open up too and —

(PAUL goes to sleep on table. MICHAEL enters)

MICHAEL: Oh, here you are.

JOAN: Michael?

MICHAEL: I am so sorry I'm late.

JOAN: Michael? What are you doing here?

MICHAEL: I mean, it's not really my fault. Sometimes, it is so hard to get out of that closet.

JOAN: (Poking PAUL) Paul? Paul, are you —

MICHAEL: That's not going to work. Of course, I don't mind spending some time with my clothes, but really.

JOAN: Paul? (Beat) You mean you — you're (indicating MICHAEL and PAUL)?

MICHAEL: Uh huh. You look surprised.

JOAN: Well, I really had no idea. Why didn't he say something?

MICHAEL: He is in such denial. So where are we going?

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: As in your place or mine?

MICHAEL: Evening, Randy.

RANDY: Wanna walk on the wild side tonight?

(MICHAEL/PAUL switch)

PAUL: Oh, God. Did she see him? (Did JOAN see MICHAEL)

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: Yes. You should have said something. I mean here I am, totally humiliated at having to drag my nympho doppelganger around with me, and you keep yours locked in a closet.

(PAUL/MICHAEL switch)

MICHAEL: Yeah. Let him have it.

(JOAN/RANDY switch)

RANDY: Yeah, then he can let me have it.

MICHAEL: You know, some day, someone is going to take you seriously.

(RANDY/JOAN switch)

JOAN: I wish.
(MICHAEL/PAUL switch)
PAUL: I take you seriously.
JOAN: Then why were you pretending you didn't know me?
PAUL: I wasn't pretending.
JOAN: But if Michael knew me —
(JOAN/RANDY switch)
RANDY: And me.
(RANDY/JOAN switch)
JOAN: — you must have known who I was.
PAUL: Nope.
JOAN: Really?
PAUL: God's honest truth.
JOAN: Wow. Talk about an unintegrated personality.
(PAUL/MICHAEL switch)
MICHAEL: More like disintegrated.
JOAN: (*Sadly*) Yeah, been there.
MICHAEL: (*Beat*) Look, I hate to see you two kids so down. I really do think you'd hit it off, if you can get past these complications.
JOAN: You think so?
(MICHAEL/PAUL switch)
PAUL: I think so.
JOAN: Well, you were integrated enough to hear that.
PAUL: *A man hears what he wants to hear.*
JOAN: *And disregards the rest.*
JOAN AND PAUL: *Oooh-ah-oooh. (They smile)*
(*Author's note: The last three lines are from Paul Simon's The Boxer*)
PAUL: I actually like Auden, in moderation.
JOAN: Oh, good.
PAUL: I'll pass on the Buxtehude.
JOAN: Understood. (*Beat; they have extended eye contact*)
PAUL: I have a good feeling about this.
JOAN: Me, too.
(*Their hands slowly reach out to each other*)
(JOAN/RANDY switch as PAUL/MICHAEL switch)
RANDY: God, is there anything more boring than foreplay?
MICHAEL: You wanna know what's more boring? Sex. Talk about something being predictable.
RANDY: Sometimes it's not where you're going, but how you get there.
(MICHAEL/PAUL switch)
PAUL: Sometimes it's not how you get there, but whom you go with.
(RANDY/JOAN switch)
JOAN: Sometimes it's better to stay home and not go anywhere at all.
(PAUL/MICHAEL switch)
MICHAEL: Some —
JOAN: Wait! Don't say anything. I'm getting a concussion. (*Beat*) Look, this is about fear, isn't it?
MICHAEL: Who are you talking to?
JOAN: This is about fear, at least partly. When Paul tells Randy he's sorry for hurting her, she goes south because she's afraid of his vulnerability.
MICHAEL: I'm trying very hard to look like I'm interested. But really —

JOAN: There's a retro jukebox here, right? (*Looking around*) Yeah, there. Do you have any change?

MICHAEL: (*As he reaches into PAUL's pocket and pulls out some change*) I don't want to hear anything by Abba.

JOAN: (*Taking money and walking offstage to jukebox*) Don't worry.

MICHAEL: (*To nobody in particular*) They are like so last week. Although I liked Chess. All that black and white.

JOAN: (*Returns and sits*) How about this?

(*Change Partners and Dance sung by Fred Astaire starts to play*)

(*JOAN/RANDY switch*)

MICHAEL: Oh, that's — (*looking off*) is that Buxtehude?

RANDY: (*Getting up and pulling MICHAEL with her*) Let's dance, brown eyes.

(*They dance, somewhat wild and sensual at first, but then their eyes meet and slowly they are just about to kiss gently and romantically when there is a "switch" with MICHAEL and RANDY resting their heads on each other's shoulder and PAUL and JOAN getting up*)

JOAN: That worked.

PAUL: Big time.

JOAN: To Auden?

PAUL: To Auden.

JOAN: (*Of MICHAEL and RANDY*) I just hope that they don't —

PAUL: Yeah. Well, sometimes all we can do is just distance ourselves.

JOAN: Right.

PAUL: And hope for the best.

JOAN: Right. (*Beat as they stare at MICHAEL and RANDY*) Let's go.

(*JOAN and PAUL exit. After awhile MICHAEL and RANDY lift their heads*)

MICHAEL: God, I thought they'd never leave.

(*RANDY laughs as they start to dance*)

— end of play —