

YOU DON'T KNOW ME

By Albi Gorn

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DOREEN, in her mid to late thirties.

JOSH, the same age as DOREEN.

(JOSH sits at a restaurant table. DOREEN comes in)

DOREEN: God, am I late? *(Looking at watch; shaking it)* Well, this is useless. Am I late? Sorry. I had my sister on my cell and my mother on the cordless and Blake on call-waiting, and I got everybody mixed up.

JOSH: Excuse me?

DOREEN: You look great, by the way. I love this place. You didn't get menus yet?

JOSH: Excuse me. Do I know you?

DOREEN: Oh, you're so cute. Do you like it, though *(indicating her haircut)*? I mean, it's so what I would have done ten years ago if I had the guts then. But now that I have the guts, I'm not sure I still have the face, you know what I'm saying? Anyhow, thanks.

JOSH: Actually, the hair is nice, but could you please tell me who you are?

DOREEN: *(Looks at him with an "I don't get the joke" look)* O-kay. Blake almost came to meet us, by the way, but I told her I didn't know where this was going and maybe she'd be a third wheel. I hope that's okay. Oh, you'll get a kick out of this. I finally read the last Hunger Games thing. I mean is there some reason why I have to go through 400 pages of teenage angst. Wasn't I there? And believe me, it's a good thing nobody put a bow and arrow in my hands back then, because –

JOSH: Look, lady, you may be mistaking me for someone else.

DOREEN: Okay, Roger, whatever point you're making, I'm just not getting it. My brain doesn't actually turn on until —

JOSH: Roger? Who's Roger?

DOREEN: So why don't you tell me what's going on using simple words for my simple mind.

JOSH: (*Slowly*) I don't know who you are.

DOREEN: Because of the hair?

JOSH: I don't know you at all.

DOREEN: Jeez, Roger, could you lighten up. Is this why you asked me to lunch, is there like some issue? You always do this, Roger, you —

JOSH: Stop. Stopstopstop. My name isn't Roger. I didn't ask you to lunch. I am supposed to meet my friend Doreen here, who is late, like always, and you obviously have mistaken me for somebody else.

DOREEN: (*Beat*) I'm sorry that Leila left you. Although, to be frank, I never really got it. I can see how you might find that kind of intellectual, neurotic obsessiveness kind of kinky, and maybe I said the wrong thing to her, but Roger, honey, she was leaving you —

JOSH: How do you know Leila?

DOREEN: — anyway. But whatever, I don't think you should be taking it out on me.

JOSH: How do you know Leila? Did Doreen put you up to this?

DOREEN: It's getting old, Roger, drop it.

JOSH: I'm not Roger. My name is Josh.

DOREEN: (*Beat of deep hurt*) Very funny. Even for you, Roger, that was — you wanna know why Leila left, Roger, it's that kind of insensitivity. Leila might have come across as a cold bitch, which in my humble opinion she was in spades, but she still —

JOSH: Wait a minute wait a minute. Look, Doreen may think this is cute, but frankly, I'm still licking my wounds. And why she had to send an assassin is totally beyond me.

DOREEN: Okay, Roger, what's the magic word? How do we turn this off and move on?

JOSH: With her tongue she can certainly fight her own battles.

DOREEN: You want to hear I'm sorry, okay, Roger, I'm sorry. But I have to say this: You can certainly do better than Leila. Someday you'll thank me.

JOSH: (*Looking around*) Where is she? Is she watching this?

DOREEN: Who, Leila?

JOSH: Doreen!

DOREEN: What?

JOSH: What what?

DOREEN: What do you mean "what what?" You just said my name, I'm asking you what.

JOSH: (*A beat of processing; then facetiously*) Oh, I see. You're Doreen.

DOREEN: Roger, let's turn the page on this.

JOSH: (*In the same vein*) And I'm Roger and — and — and then what? This is like girl humor, right, or —

DOREEN: I'm like getting lost, Roger.

JOSH: Josh, not Roger, Josh.

DOREEN: Again with the Josh? You're not the only one with feelings here, Roger. I know you think I'm like this impassive —

JOSH: What's wrong with Josh? That's my name.

DOREEN: Oh, please, you know perfectly well that the guy Adam left me for is named Josh. Talk about still licking one's wounds.

JOSH: (*Beat*) What? That guy Adam is with is named Jordan, not Josh. Jordan Simmons or Timmons or something.

DOREEN: Oh, yeah. Jordan. You're right. Where did I get Josh from?

JOSH: You better tell Doreen to tighten up her briefing.

DOREEN: Stop it! Now you're gaslighting me. I'm Doreen and you know it and —

JOSH: Doreen Adler?

DOREEN: Yes, Doreen Adler. Jeez, Roger, you —

JOSH: Then tell me, Doreen, what happened to your green eyes, your freckles and your red hair —

DOREEN: I knew it. I knew it. This is about the hair, I knew it. How hard is it to just say: Doreen I don't like your haircut? How hard is that, Roger?

JOSH: (*JOSH pulls out his wallet and throws his driver's license on the table*) Josh. Josh Edward Richman. Josh.

DOREEN: (*DOREEN pulls a credit card out and throws it on the table*) Doreen Florence — wait, that's my mother's (*DOREEN puts back the credit card, and pulls out her driver's license*) Doreen Florence Adler. Doreen. (*Of picture*) Okay, the hair was different, but —

(*They both look at the other's driver's license, then at each other*)

JOSH: Look, I've been the butt of enough of Doreen's (*air quotes*) practical jokes — for which I think we can safely substitute hostility — to be too much surprised by this, but you can tell her that altering a driver's license is like a federal crime or something.

DOREEN: Please, Roger, you wouldn't know a practical joke if it sat on you, which is why (*similarly pointing a finger at his license*) this is so lame. You have no sense of humor, Roger, as Leila pointed out to me over and over again. And would you do me a

favor; could you make the next girl you go out with a little less whiney. Can we order now?

JOSH: You can order whenever you want. I'm not paying for it.

DOREEN: You said this was on you. This was a birthday present for my birthday, which was six weeks ago, I might add.

JOSH: A birthday present for Doreen.

DOREEN: (*Waving license*) I am Doreen, Roger.

JOSH: And I am not Roger, whatever your name is.

(*They stew in silence*)

DOREEN: What do you mean, hostility?

JOSH: What?

DOREEN: My practical jokes. What do you mean "for which we can substitute hostility?"

JOSH: You think when Doreen humiliates people, that's not hostile?

DOREEN: Humiliation? What are you talking about?

JOSH: Look, you don't know. One time she snuck some kinky underwear in my laundry and —

DOREEN: And who saw it except that senile old Korean lady that lives above you.

JOSH: God, she told you everything.

DOREEN: Roger, you're scaring me now. Please stop. (*Beat*) Maybe I just don't understand your sense of humor since this is the first time I'm seeing it since high school.

JOSH: Whatever; clearly I don't understand Doreen's.

DOREEN: Is that what this is all about?

JOSH: I mean, why does she do all this stuff, what's the point.

DOREEN: This is like some therapy exercise, some psychodrama thing?

JOSH: After twenty years, instead of just coming to me and telling me what's on her mind, I get this ridiculous charade. That's what she always does. And you better watch your step, missy, 'cause she's using you right now, just like she's used me all these years, as a playground for her warped sense of humor and, yes, and hostility.

(Long beat as DOREEN takes it all in)

DOREEN: Well, now you've told me.

JOSH: And you can tell her. I mean whatever happened with Leila, I was prepared to talk about it. I know it wasn't her fault. But to her everything's a joke. Forget it. She can't be reached.

DOREEN: How would you know?

JOSH: Oh, please.

DOREEN: How would you know, Roger? I'm not saying there isn't something in what you're saying, but that I can't be reached? Maybe if you weren't always hiding, Roger, maybe if you weren't always hiding behind your "issues" you would see the person you're talking to.

JOSH: Ha! And how am I supposed to see her if she sends some designated hitter in her place. I don't respond to that. And she's got to know I don't. And if that's one of my "issues —" (*Looking at DOREEN's driver's license and then up at DOREEN*) That haircut's a big improvement over this (*indicating driver's license*).

DOREEN: Thanks. (*Beat*) But do you really like it?

JOSH: God. Well, that was very Doreen like.

DOREEN: What?

JOSH: Any time I pay her a compliment she's not satisfied until I amplify it into a devotional hymn.

DOREEN: Compliment? (*Imitating JOSH's left-handed compliment tone*) "That haircut's an improvement over this." It's like they changed my diagnosis from cancer to the plague.

JOSH: I said *big* improvement.

DOREEN: Oh, please, Roger. Really, why bother if that's the best you can do. You don't really care, admit it.

JOSH: Josh.

DOREEN: You wanna be called Josh (*From this point on, whenever Doreen says "Josh", she says it with a sarcastic tone*), fine. Josh. (*Beat*) You know what really bothers me about all this. I've told you things I've never told anyone else, I bring you into my inner life. Because, stupid me, I think that's how close we are. That time with the diaphragm, when Blaustein said: "How long has this been in there?"

JOSH: (*Chuckles, although he tries to stifle it*) That was funny.

DOREEN: You think it's funny looking for a new gynecologist after ten years —

JOSH: She could have gone back to him, I mean — God, I can't believe Doreen told you that.

DOREEN: But as usual, you have no sense of what I'm going through.

JOSH: I'm just missing the point of all this. I'm sorry.

DOREEN: That night at Nina's house?

JOSH: Oh, please.

DOREEN: I should have realized that was a message. But stupid me, I paid no attention.

JOSH: We were seventeen. At least Doreen and I were, you probably were prepubescent.

DOREEN: (*About her hair again*) Yeah, you think it makes me look younger?

JOSH: And I was in love with Nina. I know I was supposed to take Doreen home —

DOREEN: God, Nina, talk about whiney. Is there a pattern here?

JOSH: I'm sorry for that. I told her that.

DOREEN: Right, you told me. You told me, Rog — *Josh*. You never apologized, you just told me.

JOSH: I apologized. That's what my apologies sound like. But don't go trying to parlay that into Doreen being crushed or rejected. Ridiculous. She couldn't have cared less.

DOREEN: What? Of course I cared. We were on the date I waited three years for. We leave the concert, I'm getting excited and it's "Hey, let's check out Nina's party," and the next thing I know I'm eating potato chips with Henry Schlossberg and you're in the makeout room with Nina.

JOSH: Oh, please, don't go there. She's giving you such a distorted picture. Doreen didn't go ten minutes without a new boyfriend back then. She never cared about me, she wasn't interested in me except as a foil for her weird sense of humor.

DOREEN: Oh, Roger, you're so wrong. I cared that night with Nina, and every other night with every other Nina since then. You just always took me for granted. And maybe...maybe I acted out from time to time.

JOSH: Acted out? One blue-eyed stud after another. She worked her way through the entire varsity backfield. I can just see her drooling over a nerdy little toad like me.

DOREEN: Oh god, Roger. I was just killing time waiting for you to come around.

JOSH: There is no way — she's had twenty years to say that to me. That's got to be the lamest explanation I...*(he trails off in contemplation)*.

DOREEN: Maybe that's what my explanations sound like, *Josh*.

JOSH: Just Josh. It's not italicized, it's not in quotes. Just Josh, okay?

DOREEN: Okay, *(without the sarcasm)* Josh. So, now you know. *(Silence)* Aren't you going to say anything? See, this is why it took twenty years.

JOSH: No. No, no, I have plenty to say — to Doreen.

DOREEN: Like?

JOSH: *(Beat)* Happy birthday.

DOREEN: Thanks. If I see her, I'll tell her. *(Beat; kindly)* Can we order now?

JOSH: *(Smiles at DOREEN)* Your hair looks great.

DOREEN: Thanks, but do you — thanks.

(They both look at each other's licenses again, clearly still baffled)

-end of play-