

A Long Time Coming

A LONG TIME COMING

A: Female, mid-late 30s to early-mid 40s

B: Female, mid-late 30s to early-mid 40s

NOTE: The play, as written, has two heterosexual women in their late 30s-early 40s as the characters. However, these roles can be played by actors of any gender, race, or sexual orientation by merely tweaking the pronouns and gender-specific terms in the text. Age is a factor. It could be tweaked a bit, but they need to be old enough to have lost touch and had lives in the interim. It is also important that sexual tension not be a part of the play. That would probably make for a good play, but it's not this play.

SETTING: Non-specific.
Bare stage. Could be anywhere or nowhere at all.

AT RISE: Lights up on A standing DSR.

A

I have this friend... Had. Had. Two weeks ago... We were very close friends, but she's - she was - one of those friends where you are very close for a discrete period of your life, you know. You are both in the same place, same interests, same mind frame. You get real close real fast. Maybe it's someone you work with, or is a friend of a friend you meet when you're out with a group one night. One of those instant friendships that are more common when you are younger, in your 20s, but get more and more rare the older you get. I wonder why that is.

B enters SL and stops DSL, slightly US of A. A does not see, hear, or acknowledge B in any way throughout the entirety of the play. B, however, is always aware of A, and B addresses all of her lines to A.

B

One of those mysteries of the young I guess.

A

Just one of those "youth things" I suppose. But at the time, it's the single most important thing in the history of the universe.

B

Unique. You are the only two people to have ever had a friendship like that. The only two who have ever figured it out

A

We were in our early 20s, and we met at work. Well, sort of at work. I mean, we didn't work together, we both worked at the mall, but not in the same store. Mine sold gifts and novelties, you know, like funny keychains and silly string and stuff. I'm not sure I even remember the name, Crackers or something like that. And she sold shoes at the store right next door. Huh, I can't remember the name of that either. 8th Floor? Something with a number.

B

Nine West. You worked at Joker's Wild. And they were close but not right next to each other. You never were great with details.

A

Fifth Door? Anyway, it doesn't matter. What matters is we met. We were both managers. That's nuts isn't it? 22, 23 year old managers of retail stores. Why the hell do those companies trust people so young to run those stores? I just don't get how that's a good idea, I wouldn't hire 22 year old me to manage a store.

B

You were plenty mature enough, you're not giving yourself enough credit. You never do. You were young but you had your shit together.

A

Twenty-two year-old managers, not a good idea. We're so lucky nothing went wrong. So anyway, we met because we were both managers and both had mornings and both had to open the stores. And we pretty much had the same schedule. She'd be opening, and I'd be opening, and we see each other and say hi, that kind stuff. And we'd run into each other at lunch, you know, in the food court, and smile and nod; the occasional "how's it going." Then one day, I was walking through the food court with my tray. And I see her sitting by herself, she was always sitting by herself, so would I for that matter, but anyway, I smiled and nodded, like usual, but then I noticed the book she was reading, and it stopped me. I don't remember what I was eating, or what she was eating--

B

Taco Time. You had a salad and chowder from Ivar's.

A

--but I remember the name of that book. And not because it was "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "On the Road" or "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and we had this literary bonding moment over Hemmingway or something, but because it was a random, somewhat obscure book that I had, just the night before, finished reading.

B

"The Milagro Beanfield War" by John Nichols.

A

It was called "The Milagro Beanfield War." I mean, it wasn't totally obscure, they'd made a movie out of it like 6 or 7 years before, but it struck me as being so random at the time. So I stopped and told her that I had just finished the book the night before, and she thought that was strange too, and she asked me to sit down, and we ate, and talked, and it seemed like we had a ton in common, not just obscure novels about water disputes in New Mexico, but other stuff. So the next day, when I was going on my lunch break I popped my head in next door and asked if she'd like to join me.

B

Other way around, and, again, not next door. But it doesn't matter.

A

And from that point on we were pretty much inseparable. We liked the same things. We had similar backgrounds our parents were divorced, etc., etc. We were both single and neither of us was all that interested in being not-single at the time. So we kinda spent all of our free time together for... 6 months? 8 months? Not quite a year.

B

We met in May, so it was closer to 10 months. But time just seemed to stop.

A

It doesn't seem like that long when I say it out loud, but back then... back then it seemed like a really long time. I guess because it really felt like we'd known each other forever, and time passes differently when you're young. Time kinda stopped. Anyway, she applied for this job, kind of on a lark. (more)

A (cont.)

I encouraged her to apply, but we laughed about it because neither of us seriously thought she'd get it. But she got it. And it was a real job, not just managing retail at the mall, not that that's not a real job, but you know what I mean, this was benefits, the whole thing, a possible career. And it meant she had to leave, because that was literally the job. She'd gotten hired by a cruise line, one of the biggest, and it was a 6 month contract. So, yeah, she was *leaving* leaving. And we swore we'd keep in touch, and she promised to email from the ports she stopped in and send postcards and stuff.

B

And I did. Religiously.

A

And she did. She really did, she was really good about it. And she promised that when her 6 months was up and she had time off before her next contract that she'd come back and we'd hang out.

B

And I did, and we did, and it was great.

A

And she did, and we did, and it was really, really good, and we fell right back into our routine like nothing had changed and no time had passed. But it had, of course. Changed. And time had passed. And our lives, our lives that had been in exact parallel had begun to diverge. I didn't work at the mall any longer. I'd gotten a career-type job too. But I took a week of vacation and we spent the whole thing together, and when I went back to work we hung out after. But after two weeks she had to go. And we made the same promises. But I knew, I think we both knew--

B

I knew. Of course I knew.

A

--that this was it. That our run was over. And we emailed back and forth for a while. And then less. And then... not. And then a year went by, and then another, and... we lost touch. Really lost touch. This was pre-social media and stuff so, yeah, I totally lost touch with her. And I got married, and my life moved on, and my career moved on.

B

Mine did too. And I was happy. And you were too, you are, never forget that.

A

A few years ago, we reconnected online. She'd left the cruise business after 15 years. She'd gotten married and had a couple of kids, and I saw pictures, and she saw pictures, and we were, I don't know, I guess aware is the right word. We were aware of each other's lives. And we caught up, but we never really talked, you know. Not meaningfully, only superficially. And then, two weeks ago.... She was alone, so her kids are fine, and her husband's fine, well, not *fine*, of course, but she's.... (beat) And I realized, in those moments after I'd heard, I realized that, that I loved her as much as I have ever loved anyone in my entire life. It was pure. Innocent. True.

B

I knew. I know. I love you too.

A

And I just needed... I just want... I just wish... People say they wouldn't want to go back in time even if they could. I do. To be there with... to be *then* with her again.

B

You will. We will. We are. Right now.

END OF PLAY