

Beginning

by
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DRAFT 1.0

CAST OF CHARACTERS

R

S

+ dancers

The play on a bench, maybe in a park or on a sidewalk near a bus stop.

Up left a few doorways to represent a Café or Diner, and a couple of other shops.

At least two or three dancers are present during the performance. The dance is choreographed as an absurd counterpart to the dialogue and sometimes the dancers approach the two on the bench and engage with them. The choreography does not directly illustrate or represent the dialogue.

SCENE 0:

(Lights up front left. R and S sit together on the bench. When one speaks, they usually look directly at one another.)

R

Thank you so much for saying that and please forgive me for being the cause of making things so awkward. I feel very insecure and vulnerable and I regret the effects it has on the people around me.

It is being worked on.

S

There is nothing to forgive.

R

Oh yes, in spite of my unsettled state I can recognize the effect I am having. And despite how it might seem, I am happy for you two to be friends.

S

No, really. There is nothing to forgive. I have been extremely awkward and unsettled myself, and quite plagued by self-recrimination. I am very glad and very relieved. It is I should be thanking you.

(S smiles shyly and R smiles shyly back.)

R

You know, uh, having only met a few times we don't really know each other at all, but knowing T, I am certain I should like you very well if ever we took the time.

S

Oh yes! Me too. So if um you should uh ever want to talk again and um, like maybe have coffee, or lunch? Or we could go for a walk, together, or whatever, I'd um, I would be very happy to do that.

R

Yes. Okay. I would like that too. And thank you for the conversation, it means a lot to me.

S

Thank you! I really was worried that this is unfair and hurtful to you and am so relieved and glad that is not the case, truly the last thing i want is to add to your troubles... and I do hope we will be good friends.

(S hugs R. R tenses up some but hugs back, stiffly.)

R

Okay. So then maybe you would like to join us for breakfast this Saturday? At the diner, here...

S

Oh, uh -

R

If you don't want to I'd understand and its fine. Really.

S

No, I'd like that. Really I would. It's just I, I have to see my ex on Saturday. We're supposed to go over our lists. I'd really rather not. It's just a bunch of crap anyway. I don't really want any of it but I said I would do it. Can I have a raincheck?

(Very long pause while R bites lip and looks at ground.)

(S clears throat.)

R

Oh yeah sure

uh
 but I uh
 something gives me the feeling
 that there is something that I don't
 understand
 and it begs the question
 the question of uh
 if uh
 if the friendship between you
 if it includes sexual friendship as well?
 Is that why you say you are plagued by
 self-recrimination?

S

Oh, um well, i am very sorry this
 conversation has gone in this direction.
 I really never wanted to be unfair or
 hurtful to you but that is not, uh, I
 mean that is a question it would be much
 better if you asked T becau-

R

So I am correct then.

(S wrings hands and looks down at lap.)

R

Otherwise what could it be that is unfair
 and hurtful to me? Because I don't
 understand what else you can be referring
 to.

Please.

Sometimes I need protection but now, now
 I need to know the truth.

(Long long long pause during which both S and R watch the
 dancers.)

S

Don't you think that is a question it
 would be much better for T to answer?

(Silence from R. R watches the dancers.)

S

I really do think it more uh, more
 appropriate that you should be asking T
 that, not me- after all, that is who your
 relationship is with, not with me.

(another lengthy pause)

Sigh. Nonetheless, it is not really me to shy away from answering direct questions - I sometimes do try but it's a bit of a compulsion I have trouble quelling, so uh, uh, the answer is yes, yes. At one time, at one time it did include sexual friendship. And actually, you know I rather had the impression that you already knew. So the guilt I've been feeling was not because I thought you were unaware but rather because whenever I have seen you, you seemed terribly unhappy. And yes, although I know there are real reasons for that which have nothing whatsoever to do with me, I could not but feel that my friendship with T was contributing to that unhappiness and it made me very very unhappy to feel that I was in any way hurting you. I am so sorry if that is now the case. And I'm sorry to be answering your question at all. I was trying to think of any other way to respond, some way that would lead to you having this discussion with T rather than with me, but I cannot find any words that feel right which would do that.

And,
perhaps foolishly
(and I am a fool),
I had always hoped you and I might be friends and it seems to me that if the first time you ask me a difficult question I were to avoid answering, there would probably not be much chance of friendship, if there is at all.

I do hope that this will not lead to conflict or trouble of any sort between the two of you, the last thing I want is to cause problems.

And my head hurts terribly with thinking that may be the case.

R

Your head hurts? *Your* head hurts!?

S

Oh yeah, absolutely. But listen, I know this may sound like hypocrisy given the guilt I have been feeling, and I am conflicted and confused about all sorts of things, but does that really matter ?

The sex, I mean. Is it really important who someone does or doesn't have a sexual

S (CONT'D)

involvement with? Aren't the other aspects of one's relationships what really count... caring, trust, loyalty, respect, etc. ?

(S looks at R. R watches the dancers.)

S (CONT'D)

Again, we don't know each other and it is really not my place to say or ask such things, but nor is it my place to be answering this question-

sigh

Am I, am I making things worse by responding so directly?

Perhaps I should be just putting you off, speaking in euphemisms and half truths. Insist you just speak to T.

But no, then i would not sleep.

And maybe you also would not sleep. No, it would not feel right to put off answering you. I hope you agree. And I hope T will agree because I do blunder badly sometimes.

Yes, I blunder forward with nothing but honesty and hope and now I hope I am not heading for mire and muck and dragging you two there with me.

(R and S sit looking at one another. Finally, after a lengthy pause, R speaks.)

R

I was hoping that you would be as straightforward as you were; thank you for that. There is a lot in what you say that I could reply to, but for now I would like to leave it. I have felt very lost for quite a while now and instead of causing conflict this has finally quieted down my troubled heart and mind and now I can see again. And one of the things that I can finally see again is that T's happiness is important to me. We are old friends and I love T with my whole heart. I hope that both of you will continue to enjoy your friendship. A big thank you again for this conversation. To me this feels like a beginning. And I really wish you well.

S

Oh wow.

I wish you well too, I always have.

Thank you for your answer and your directness. I am so very relieved and happy that the result of our conversation has been positive.

You know I've been quite anxious and conflicted for some time (for lots of reasons) and only now see to what extent.

I feel much better now

and it feels like a beginning to me too.

(S and R hug, lights fade to black.)