

GUINNESS®

by Chris Van Strander

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CHARACTERS

ACTOR Pretty much any age, playing a speed dater

ACTRESS Pretty much any age, playing a speed dater

SETTING

A play set in a bar.

NOTES

Dialogue in brackets [] indicates where ACTOR or ACTRESS breaks their speed dater character and—*sotto voce*—speaks either to him/herself or the other performer.

Don't play a commercial. Straight—no winking.

Lights up. Speed dating event in a bar. ACTOR seated at a numbered table. A bell rings. ACTRESS, holding a pint, cycles over to ACTOR's table. Each wears a name tag: she "NESS", he "GUI."

ACTRESS

Hi I'm—Vanessa [*where's—?*]

ACTOR realizes he's missing his prop. Awkward moment. ACTRESS goes, comes back with a second pint, hands it to ACTOR, goes. At some point during this, lights down, awkwardly. Beat. Lights up. ACTOR as before, now nursing his pint. Bell. ACTRESS, holding her pint, cycles over to ACTOR's table.

ACTRESS

Hi I'm Vanessa. My friends call me 'Ness.

ACTOR

Gui. As in -do. How old're you?

ACTRESS

(Age of person playing ACTRESS, minus 7 years).

ACTOR

This ain't gonna work.

ACTRESS

How old're you?

ACTOR

(Age of person playing ACTOR, plus 3 years).

ACTRESS

You're right. You're ten years too young for me.

Silence, awkwardness.

ACTRESS

How long 'til the uh—?

ACTOR

Five minutes.

Silence, awkwardness.

ACTRESS

(*prompting him*) [*Can't believe I'm doing this.*]

ACTOR

[...You can't?...]

ACTRESS

[No—] (*beat*) No, I've never done anything like this either. I'm only here 'cause my friends forced me. I'm so completely not the speed-dating type. How can anyone sum themself up in five minutes?

ACTOR

Ten inches, Harvard Law, heir to a copper fortune.

ACTRESS

You've done these before.

ACTOR

First time.

Silence, awkwardness. ACTOR sits there shaking his head.

ACTRESS

[*It's you.*]

ACTOR

[...*Jesus this's hacky...*]

ACTRESS

So! What'd you just...?

ACTOR

Yeah, so I, uh, I just got out of a long-term relationship.

ACTRESS

Congratulations!

ACTOR

Back on the market. Look out!

ACTRESS

Market's right; this place's a meat parade. When I do meet Mr. Right? Not gonna be in a joint like this, tell ya that.

ACTOR

Lemme guess. Gonna be like a movie.

ACTRESS

Ugh, movies.

ACTOR

See each other 'cross a crowded room?

ACTRESS

What's wrong with crowded rooms?

ACTOR

Nothin'. I am totally sure that's gonna happen, just exactly like you envision.

ACTRESS

Well you should know 'bout love at first sight. Outfit like that, prob'ly beat 'em off with a stick.

ACTOR

If they're lucky. I'd pay to see some of the horror shows in your closet, hon.

ACTRESS

I make everything look fabulous, *hon*, thanks.

ACTOR

Right. 'Cept this, you mean, right?

Silence, awkwardness. ACTOR sits there shaking his head again.

ACTRESS

[What's your—?]

ACTOR

[Speed dating? This's the best he...?]

ACTRESS

[Please.] So. Wanna know what I do for a living?

ACTOR

[What?] Hey, what do you do you do for a living?

ACTRESS

I'm a fine artist.

ACTOR makes a noise of contemptuous disgust.

ACTRESS

Well what do you do?

ACTOR

Wall Street hon Wall Street.

ACTRESS makes a noise of contemptuous disgust.

ACTRESS

I shudder even to ask, but, what's the last book you read?

ACTOR

Books? Please. Movies.

ACTRESS

Ugh, how can you watch those things? It's *such* an *ordeal!* Hafta get there three hours before the thing even starts just to get a seat, then you're forced to sit through this just parade of *cloying, moronic, ridiculous* ads! Even the art house! Can't I expect to just enjoy the re-release of *Fanny and Alexander* without fifty spots for freaking SunChips? Isn't this why God invented TiVo?

ACTOR

Hit the opera then, crybaby. Five hours of shrieking fatties and rampant adlessness.

ACTRESS

They'd find a way. Trust me.

ACTOR

Guess we won't be going to any flicks together anytime soon.

ACTRESS

Or the opera.

ACTOR

Or a bookstore. *(beat)* One—. *(sighs)* One thing we—. *(sighs)*

Silence, awkwardness.

ACTRESS

[There's industry here.]

ACTOR

One thing we do agree on.

ACTRESS

's that?

ACTOR

(indicates their pints) Guinness.

ACTRESS

Actually I've never tried it.

ACTOR

What's that? Prop?

ACTRESS

I usually drink—

Bell rings as she says the brand name, obscuring it.

ACTRESS

—but they don't have it on tap.

ACTOR

So why'd you get Guinness?

ACTRESS

(looks at her pint) The harp. It's... lyric.

ACTOR

That's The Harp of Brian Boru.

ACTRESS

Brian Boru?

ACTOR

Fourteenth century. Guinness made it their logo in 1862. Next time you're in Dublin? Swing by Trinity College. They got it right out there.

ACTRESS

Wow.

ACTOR

Yup.

ACTRESS

Go on.

ACTOR

That's it.

ACTRESS

Oh. So yeah. That's why. *(beat)* Plus the head. Like a nice creamy head.

ACTOR

Nitrogen.

ACTRESS

'Scuse me?

ACTOR

They use nitrogen. During the double pour.

ACTRESS

You know a fair amount about this stuff, don'tcha? *(beat)* I do appreciate the contrast. Light head, black body.

ACTOR

It's actually dark ruby.

ACTRESS

(scrutinizes her pint intently) Probably easier to see once ya

BOTH

got a couple in you.

BOTH chuckle. ACTRESS sips.

ACTRESS

Wow! Didn't expect that!

ACTOR

Connoisseur's libation there, boy.

ACTRESS

(sip) It's so complex! *(sip)* First it's malty?, caramel-y? *(sip)* But it finishes with this like... dry bitterness. Very mature. I love it!

**To read the rest of this play, please contact me at:
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