

Young Love

By Camille Knight

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Characters

Alice: 50's to mid-70's

Larry: 50's to mid-70's

The waiter, Dennis: Young looking, but mid-forties, and handsome

Dr. Fionnula Hycroft: Same age as Alice and Larry, gorgeous.

Setting

The play takes place in a restaurant, a hospital room, and a hospital waiting room.

Note

Alice, Larry and Fionnula should all be around the same age. If the actors cast are slightly younger, or slightly older than the text may indicate, the lines which make specific reference to age should be changed accordingly.

Act 1

Scene 1

A restaurant. The table is nicely set, with a fancy bud vase and candle, and silverware and water goblets. A woman, Alice, sits at the table. Clearly not expecting anyone else, she has a book and is reading as she sips her wine and nibbles breadsticks. She is alone in the light, none of the rest of the restaurant can be seen. After a time a gentleman, Larry, enters. He hesitates, looking around, then goes to Alice's table.

Larry: Hello? Excuse me, are you... Fion...Feenoo... Fuloon... Fionnula? (he has trouble pronouncing the name)

Alice: No.

Larry: Oh.

Pause

Alice: Is that a name, or an affliction?

Larry: A name. I hope.

Alice: Ah.

Larry: But you're not.... Maybe I'm pronouncing it wrong?

Alice: I certainly hope you are. But no, I'm not. My name is Alice.

Larry: Oh.

Alice: If I see a Fion...feenoo... fuloon... shall I point you out to her?

Larry: *(to himself, adjusting his trousers)* Maybe I should just go home. This seems like a bad idea.

Alice: Well, I won't interfere.

She goes back to her book and breadsticks. Larry fidgets away, peering into the darkness all around. There is a sound of a door opening. Larry looks toward the entrance, does a double take, recoils, and flings himself at Alice's table.

Larry: Can I sit down?

Alice: You seem to be doing so already.

Larry: Just for a minute.

Alice: As long as you don't eat my breadsticks.

Larry: I'm not interested in your breadsticks.

Alice: What happened to your quest for Fee- whoever?

Larry: She just walked in.

Alice raises an eyebrow. This is all very odd, but she's not going to ask. She returns to her book. Larry is sweating.

Larry: It's a blind date. A blind date set up online.

Alice refuses to engage. She gets more interested in the book.

Larry: But I don't think I want to do it. I can't. I'm too old for this.

Alice snorts.

Larry: Don't you think?

Alice: I don't think your age has anything to do with it.

Larry: Well, I might be able to do it if she weren't so gorgeous.

Alice: How do you know it's her? You thought *I* was her.

Larry: I hoped you were her. You seemed suitable. And I couldn't see your shoes.

Alice: What has that got to do with it?

Larry: She said she'd be wearing orange shoes.

Alice: (*Looking toward the entrance*) Ah. And so she is. She *is* quite beautiful. And she's waiting.

Larry: I can't do it.

Alice: She'll be hurt.

Larry: *I'll* be hurt.

Alice: You?

Larry: Look at her. She'll be polite, then avoid me after tonight. If I'm lucky. If I'm not lucky, she'll laugh in my face.

Alice: Or maybe she'll like you.

Larry: Not a chance. I'm an ordinary man. Just ordinary. Maybe a little ugly, even. And with that debilitating fact in mind, I specifically stipulated that I was looking for women of my own age. Most men are looking for someone ten years younger, but not me. So I said someone my age. But look at her.

Alice: (*Peering speculatively toward the door*) She looks our age.

Larry: But gorgeous. Stunning. Someone like her can have anyone. Anyone. Not me. She'd laugh at me.

Alice: She's probably desperately hoping that you will find her attractive. Probably spent all day getting ready. Don't be an idiot. Go and talk to her.

Larry: I can't.

Alice: She's looking at her watch.

Larry: She'll leave soon.

Alice: Your loss.

Larry: I can't lose what I never had a chance to have.

Alice: She's making a call.

Larry gasps, and paws desperately at his coat. His phone gives a partial half-ring and he answers, hunching quietly over the phone.

Larry: Hello?... Oh, hi. Yes, actually.... I was just picking up the phone to call you. I can't make it.... So sorry.... I, no, well.....maybe.....maybe.... can I call you back later? (He hangs up gingerly)

Alice: Coward.

Larry: It's my defining characteristic.

Alice: She looks shattered. I'll bet she goes home to cry.

Larry: (guilt-ridden) It wouldn't have worked out.

Alice: Not with your attitude.

Larry: Another of my flaws.

Pause. What else is there to say? Alice sips her wine, the book abandoned. Larry crumples in his chair.

Larry: Can I have a breadstick?

Alice: I said you could sit as long as...

Larry: Sorry. God. Sorry.

Alice: Don't get too upset about it.

Larry: Maybe I should go and talk to her after all. I don't want her to feel rejected.

Alice: Too late. She's crying.

Larry: I should go talk to her.

Alice: That would only make things worse. She's leaving, anyways.

Larry: I'm a jerk. Oh God. Such a jerk.

He buries his face in his hands, miserable.

Alice contemplates the wreck with growing sympathy.

Alice: Have a breadstick.

Larry: No, no. I can't.

*Alice: Is there anything you *can* do?*

Larry: Actually, I would like a breadstick. (He takes one, but doesn't eat. He begins shredding it)

Alice: Sometimes it's all I eat here. The service is atrociously slow.

Larry: But you come back?

Alice: I have time.

Larry: I shouldn't take your breadsticks.

Alice: They're complimentary.

Pause.

Alice: Which is what you should have been to your date.

He crumples again.

Larry: That was low. That was kicking me while I was down.

Alice: Sorry. I couldn't resist.

Larry: She'd have been disappointed if she'd seen me.

Alice: Possibly.

A waiter comes over. He is scatterbrained and restless.

Dennis: Hello. My name is Dennis, can I take your order.

Alice: I'll have the usual.

Dennis is baffled. He shifts from foot to foot, chews his pencil, and knits his brow. Alice smiles. She's enjoying this.

Larry: I don't even know if I'm eating.

Alice: You aren't.

She gently relieves him of his mangled breadstick.

Larry: Should I go?

Alice: It's up to you.

Dennis: I don't know what your usual is.

Larry: I haven't got one. I've never been here before.

Dennis: O...kay. What can I get you. (*He doesn't get what's happening, doesn't want to try*)

Larry: I don't even have a menu.

Alice: Take mine. (*She slides it across*) I'll have the linguine with clams.

Dennis: Is that your usual?

Alice: Sure.

Larry: (*Looking at the menu*) Is the beef grain-fed?

Alice: It's better if it's grass fed.

Dennis: It's dead.

Larry: What?

Dennis: The beef is dead.

Alice: There you go. Are you going to order?

Larry: He didn't answer my question.

Alice: That's as close as you'll get.

Dennis: Do you want me to get the chef?

Larry: Does he know what the beef has been fed?

Alice: He'll have the prime rib, salad, no fries.

Dennis: Okay. *(He wanders off, relieved)*

Larry: Did you just order for me?

Alice: I told you the service was slow. No need to drag it out.

Larry: I wasn't going to eat.

Alice: Then why ask about the beef?

Larry: I was hungry.

Alice: Then you're eating.

Larry: Do you want me to go to a different table?

Alice: It would confuse Dennis too much. You'd never get your meal.

She smiles. He tries a laugh. Silence falls. Then:

Larry: Good book?

Alice: Readable. Not great.

Larry: I've never liked her stuff.

Alice: I've always loved her stuff. This one is a little disappointing in its mediocrity.

Larry: I'm sorry.

Alice: For what? Her mediocrity?

Larry: No, for saying...*(his arms wave ineffectually. He is embarrassed, cornered)*

Alice: That you've never liked her stuff? It's your opinion, don't be sorry about it.

Larry blushes. Silence once again takes over.

His phone rings. He fumbles, answers.

Larry: Hello? (*Deep breath*) No. I can't. (*uncharacteristically firm*) If I have to tell you why, then you should probably start looking for another job. (*Gaining strength*) It's not okay. I trusted you with this. You came to me full of bluster and ego and asked for a raise, and I gave you one. Now you can't even handle the slightest task? (*Fed up*) Fair? I have been nothing but fair to you, and I'm being fair now. It wouldn't be fair if I paid you to do a job you couldn't handle. (*listens briefly*) I'm out right now, having dinner. We'll discuss this on Monday morning.

He hangs up, still in charge, but wilts as he notices Alice watching.

Larry: Sorry. I'll turn it off. How rude. (*Fumbles with the phone*)

Alice: Not at all. You were masterful. And yet you can't have dinner with an attractive woman?

Larry: (*Rallying*) I'm just about to, aren't I?

Alice: So suitable isn't a euphemism for ugly, then?

Larry: My foot's lodged firmly down my throat, isn't it?

Alice: I'm not angry. I've been looking at myself in the mirror for the last fifty-eight years, and I know I'm no Fionu- that woman you just avoided.

Larry: But you are attractive.

Alice: As are you.

Larry: Just regular attractive. Regular, ah well, I could grow to love that face attractive. Not movie star attractive.

Alice: Not even movie stars are movie star attractive.

Larry: Elizabeth Taylor was.

Alice: Bing Crosby was.

They both sigh, youthful crushes remembered.

Alice: I had a best friend in high school. Her name was Emily Yates. She was movie star attractive. I used to envy her... Then I found out that she woke up at 4 every morning and spent two hours putting herself together. I loved my sleep too much to be gorgeous.

Larry: Emily Yates? I married an Emily Yates.

Alice: What's your name?

Larry: Larry. Baker.

Alice: (*Laughs*) I didn't go to your wedding!

Larry: (*Confused*) What?

Alice: But I was invited. I got appendicitis and wasn't able to attend. I sent a bowl I had bought in Granada and Emily sent me a terse thank-you for the *non-registry* gift, and we never spoke again.

Larry: Was it a big yellow bowl with purple flowers and cherubs?

Alice: Yes.

Larry: That was the only thing I got in the divorce.

Alice: She hated it?

Larry: What do you think?

Alice: Do you?

Larry: Hate it? No. It's a... conversation piece.

Alice: It's okay, you can say you hate it.

Larry: I've kept it for twenty years.

Alice: Have you been divorced that long?

Larry: Yup. Maybe more.

Alice: And yet you still have trouble trusting beautiful women.

Larry: It may be more than just Emily Yates holding me back.

Alice: Do tell.

Larry: You don't want to hear about my neuroses.

Alice: Actually, I do.

Larry: (*Suspicious*) Why?

Alice: Why not? Indulge an ugly old woman with only a mediocre novel as alternate entertainment.

Larry: You're not ugly.

Alice: I wasn't fishing. *(She was, sort of)*

Larry smiles. He knows when a woman is fishing for compliments, but in this case he doesn't mind. It's good natured.

Alice: So...

Larry: I'm... fairly rich. Reasonably successful....

Alice: So I guessed from your phone conversation. The second one. Not the first.

Larry: I... there are a lot of men in my position....

Alice: With trophy wives.

Larry: Yes. And maybe it's unfair to both them and their wives, but you know what people say behind their backs...

Alice: Ooh, lucky him.

Larry: Yes. Well, yes but in a derogatory way.

Alice: Why can't a beautiful woman fall in love?

Larry: Huh?

Alice: A beautiful woman can, and does, fall in love. Just like a plain one. You're saying that if you were with a plain woman, it would be more...

Larry: Socially acceptable.

Alice: No. There would be fewer whispered comments behind your back.

Larry: Yes.

Alice: But why would it be assumed that an ugly woman would love you for you, and a beautiful one would love you for your money and position?

Larry: *(He's never thought of this)* I don't know. But it is. That's the way people think.

Alice: People are idiots. You know this, right?

Larry: Yes. But then again, I am a person, too.

Alice: True.

Larry: And it's not about what they'd think of her, it's about what they'd think of me. I don't want to be just another shallow rich guy using his money to get himself a trophy wife.

Alice: So a beautiful woman can only be loved skin deep?

Larry: Um... okay, no, but...

The waiter wafts into view.

Alice: Dennis? A carafe of wine, please, and another glass.

Dennis: What kind of wine?

Alice: Red, Dennis. If you have varieties, please bring us a wine list. But last time I ordered, you gave me the somewhat limited options of 'red' and 'white' and 'pink'.

Dennis: So you want red?

Alice: Yes, Dennis. Red.

Dennis: Okay. And have you decided what you want to eat, yet?

Larry: Have we decided?! You-

Alice: Give us a minute.

Dennis: 'K.

He drifts away. Larry gives Alice an incredulous look.

Alice: Let's not confuse him.

Larry: He doesn't remember taking our order!

Alice: But he did give our order to the kitchen. I watched him to make sure. So at some point we'll get our food.

Larry: Why do you come to this place?

Alice: The food is surprisingly good. And like I said, I have time.

Dennis returns with a bottle of wine and two glasses.

Dennis: Here you go.

He pours them each a glass, oblivious to Alice's existing glass.

Larry: We asked for a carafe.

Dennis: Um..... I could only find bottles. Enjoy.

He slides away, and Alice raises a glass.

Alice: Cheers.

Larry: He's maddening.

Alice: Yes, but at least he's gainfully employed.

Larry: I wouldn't say gainfully.

Alice: He makes decent tips. He's handsome, and the young girls seem to like him. Look.

They both look off. Larry with growing disbelief, Alice with amusement.

Larry: That's preposterous!

Alice: He has no sexual interest in us, so he doesn't bother paying attention to us.

Larry: If I were his boss...

Alice: He's lucky you aren't.

Larry: Don't think that I like firing people, but when they're *that* incompetent...

Alice: Only occasionally incompetent.

Larry: Wilfully incompetent. Don't you and I have as much a right to good service as those perky young things?

Alice: Those perky young things may have no chance to meet and love a wonderful man, just because they're perky young things. It all balances out in the end.

Larry: (chastened) Doesn't my inability to consider new and beautiful possibilities rule out the possibility that I'm a wonderful man?

Alice: We all have our flaws. You could be worse. Much worse.

Pause.

Larry: Maybe I should call her back. Apologize. Make another date.

Alice: If you like.

Larry: I don't like. I feel obliged.

Alice: Then don't. Learn and move on.

Pause. Larry slugs back some wine.

Alice: Its funny- the food service is excruciatingly slow, but the wine always comes right away.

Larry: Alcohol is where they make their money. So what do you do?

Alice: About the service?

Larry: For a living.

Alice: I'm a restaurant critic.

Larry: Are you serious?

Alice: Yup.

He laughs. She laughs. Something happens.

Larry: I know this isn't a date, but it's the best date I've been on for a while.

Alice: Probably precisely because it isn't a date.

Larry: Probably.

Alice: It's a severely and intrinsically flawed institution, dating.

Larry: Is it an institution? Or is it just that those who partake in it ought to be institutionalized?

Alice: Both. (*Pause*) Say, don't people post photos of themselves on those online dating sites?

Larry: Not the one I belong to. It's a truly blind blind dating site.

Alice: Ah.

Larry: Meeting people is awkward. Especially at our age.

Alice: I meet people all the time.

Larry: Single people? Of the opposite sex?

Alice: People are people. Make enough friends, and eventually you find a soulmate.

Larry: Are you married?

Alice: No. Was once, am not anymore. But I have better things to do than search for love. Not to disparage those who do.

Larry: As one of the disparaged, I must object.

Alice: Sorry. I just don't think it's something that can be forced.

Larry: And if it never happens?

Alice: Then at least I've had a life full of friends.

Larry: I wish I could say even that.

Alice: How many of these blind dates have you been on?

Larry: This was supposed to be the first.

Alice: Have you ever considered living a life which involves less work and more spontaneous socializing?

Larry: How can you say that? You don't even know me! I could be out at bars every night trying to meet people.

Alice: Oh please. You're not. You have workaholic written all over you.

Larry: I do?

Alice: Yes. You do.

Larry opens his mouth to rebut but wilts before Alice's gaze.

Dennis passes by, then doubles back.

Dennis: Has your friend ordered yet?

Larry: We've both ordered.

Dennis: I know. What about the third person?

Alice: There is no third person.

Dennis: (*His intelligence insulted*) You have three glasses of wine on the table.

Larry: You brought us an extra glass.

Dennis: You asked for it.

Alice: I only asked for one extra glass.

Dennis: Yeah, and I brought it.

Alice: There's only two of us.

Dennis: Ha ha, very funny. I'll be back when your friend returns.

He stalks off.

Larry: And I was thinking that maybe it might be time for me to retire, I thought *I* was getting a little tired, a little forgetful...

Alice: He's breathtakingly inadequate, isn't he?

Larry: He's almost a caricature of himself.

Alice: Sometimes, if I'm feeling a little worn out, a little past my prime, I come here for dinner and when I leave, three and a half hours later, I feel as sharp as a tack.

Larry: I'm beginning to see the allure of the place.

Alice: You see, people like him do have a purpose in the workplace.

Larry: As long as it's not my workplace.

Alice: But if you want excellent service to go with your excellent food, I know a little place down on Rickman Plaza...

Larry: Maybe we could try it tomorrow.

Pause

Alice: Tomorrow I'm reviewing a Thai place. Maybe another night. *(Pause)* Do you like Thai food?

Larry: Love it.