

SCENE 1

CASUAL BAR/GRILL EATERY, MO'S. JOE IS SEATED ALONE AT THE TABLE, AND FOOD HAS JUST ARRIVED. WATER GLASSES ON THE TABLE, BUT NO ALCOHOLIC DRINKS. HAMBURGER AND FRIES FOR JOE, A SALAD FOR BRITT.

Joe digs in. Britt emerges from the bathroom.

BRITT

Works every time. You want your food to arrive, go to the bathroom.

JOE

(caught mid-bite)

Sorry I didn't wait.

BRITT

I told the boys that. Big mistake. Now they test it every time.

(beat, taking her seat)

How many restrooms do you think you've used in your lifetime?

JOE

(WTF)

I don't know.

BRITT

(starts to eat)

No, really. If you think about all the places you've been, and all the restrooms you've used.

JOE

If you're counting actual restrooms, it's going to be more for women.

BRITT

What do--

JOE

Trees, back alleys, snowbanks--

BRITT

(puts fork down, food still on it)

Stop.

JOE

Who cares?

BRITT

It just popped into my head. Is it more than a thousand, do you think?

JOE

Too many to count.

BRITT

I wasn't looking for an exact number.

JOE

(shrugs, holds out burger)

You want a bite?

BRITT

Why would I want a bite of that?

JOE

It's good. Mo's has good burgers.

BRITT

No meat. Remember?

JOE

You're not over that yet?

BRITT

Over-- never mind. But no thanks.

JOE

(taking a bite)

You don't know what you're missing.

BRITT

You're right. I haven't been here in two years and I can see that so much has changed.

JOE

I like it here.

BRITT

No really. Didn't they used to use pink chalk for the specials? Look, now it's blue.

JOE

It's comfortable.

BRITT

They got rid of the pool table.

JOE

Maybe they got sick of you hustling their customers away.

BRITT

I haven't been here. And even when I was, I never hustled anybody.

JOE

They bring in live music now. They needed room for that.

BRITT

Is it any good? The music?

JOE

It's no Springsteen.

BRITT

What is?

JOE

(beat)

The last tour was weird without you.

BRITT

Tickets and sitters. It adds up.

JOE

He played "Independence Day" last show.

BRITT

Aargh. That hurts. Why would you tell me that?

JOE

Because I thought of you. Wished you were there to hear it.

BRITT

Next time.

JOE

If there is a next time. You never know--that's what I think at every show.

BRITT

And how many shows was that?

JOE

I don't know.

BRITT

Really. You've suddenly lost count? How many?

JOE

Just twenty or so.

BRITT

Must be nice to have all that freedom.

JOE

So the music's not bad sometimes. Cover bands. They had Meatloaf once.

BRITT  
He's still around?

JOE  
Very round.

BRITT  
You should've told me. That would've been fun.

JOE  
No meat, remember?

BRITT  
[Ha ha]  
(beat)  
With the pool table, I never had to pay for drinks. It was the best thing about this place.

JOE  
I thought meeting me was the best thing about this place.

BRITT  
I might have even made you a bet for old time's sake.

JOE  
What would we bet?

BRITT  
It doesn't matter. I wouldn't let you win this time.

JOE  
Let me win.

BRITT  
You know I did. And you let me be a woman of my word instead of a woman of loose morals.

JOE  
I'm a good guy.

BRITT  
A neat trick: Being the good guy and still scoring.

JOE  
It wasn't a bad bet, was it? I mean if me and you--

BRITT  
You and I.

JOE  
If you and me hadn't met and gotten together, we wouldn't have the kids. They're great kids.

They are. BRITT

The best. JOE

I'm not arguing with you. BRITT

I know. JOE

Thank you? BRITT

I'm not fishing. JOE

But you want something. BRITT

I miss 'em, B. Wednesday nights and every other weekend,  
that's nothing. It's less than nothing. And Professor  
Jermaine/ JOE

Gerald. BRITT

/gets to see them all the time, and they're not even his  
kids. JOE

He's hardly a bad influence. BRITT

Does the guy even know how to throw a football? JOE

That isn't nice. BRITT

Boys like sports. JOE

You like sports. BRITT

Yes, and a father should enjoy sports with his sons. More  
often. JOE

BRITT

(deep breath)

You're right. You should see them more.

JOE

That was too easy.

BRITT

I've been thinking, you know, that maybe you should spend more time at the house, in their own environment. Seeing you in that apartment makes them sad.

JOE

They like the bunkbeds.

BRITT

But you've got nothing in the refrigerator. If you want them to spend more time with you, you're going to have to learn to feed them something more substantial than boiled hot dogs and cheese doodles.

JOE

They like that stuff.

BRITT

They need good nutrition, Joe. Milk. Fruit. Vegetables.

JOE

I--

BRITT

Ketchup and potato chips don't count.

JOE

I don't really cook.

BRITT

You don't really want to cook.

JOE

Will they even eat those things?

BRITT

Not if you never put those things in front of them. Not if every visit to dad's is a junk food holiday.

JOE

I don't want to waste time arguing about vegetables. If I spent more time with them--

BRITT

Next week, I have to go away for a few days, and you could stay at the house--

JOE

Oh! You and lover boy want some time away, and then it's okay for me to spend more time with the kids. The rest of the time, it's "you know it's not your day." But when you need a babysitter--

BRITT

It's not babysitting when it's--

JOE

I know, I know.

BRITT

Well, it's not.

JOE

Okay then, when you have something you want to do, then it's okay to let me have more time.

BRITT

You didn't let me finish.

JOE

[Go ahead.]

BRITT

If you spent your time with them at the house, you could get used to their routine. That would make it easier for you to be together, because it wouldn't be so disruptive.

JOE

I'm sorry, but last time I checked, you asked me to move out.

BRITT

I don't want to go there, Joe. They're in second and third grade now; they have lives. You could take an interest. A close-up interest.

JOE

What's in it for you?

BRITT

Nothing.

JOE

Are you and Jerko eloping?

BRITT

It's... business. Gerald isn't coming.

JOE

Trouble in the garden?

BRITT  
We... broke up.

JOE  
Whoa!

BRITT  
You don't have to sound so excited.

JOE  
I'm just surprised. I thought he was "the one."

BRITT  
I thought so, too.

JOE  
Because he was so perfect for you, and you shared so many interests, and he understood you.

BRITT  
Stop it.

JOE  
And he's so good with the kids, and he teaches them so many things, and he reads, and he's everything I'm not.

BRITT  
I was wrong.

JOE  
(softening)  
What did he do?

BRITT  
Nothing.

JOE  
Did he hurt you?

BRITT  
No.

JOE  
Because if he hurt you--

BRITT  
He didn't hurt me. I hurt him.

JOE  
Why would you do that?

BRITT  
Because... He wanted-- Because of you.

JOE

Come on. I have not given you any grief about him for a long time. That football comment I made before--

BRITT

Not like that. We were at the place. Where you need to either go forward or-- When I said-- When I said maybe you should spend more time at the house, I meant... I was thinking... maybe we should go back to counseling.

JOE

I could not have heard that right.

BRITT

The more time goes by, the older the boys get... I started to wonder if I hadn't given it enough of a chance, if I threw in the towel too quickly. If there's a chance to be a family again... I broke up with him, so that I could ask you... to try.

JOE

Whoa.

BRITT

There you go again.

JOE

You caught me off guard.

BRITT

And...

JOE

And I don't like you thinking that it didn't work out, so you can just ask me to "try" again.

BRITT

I broke up with him.

JOE

After what, like a year and a half? Just like that. Why?

BRITT

This is why.

JOE

(beat)

B, I've spent the past two years living without you, getting used to the idea of living without you, convincing myself that I had to live without you. But it's been a while since I've reached across the bed in my sleep.

BRITT

...I waited too long.

JOE

No. I just-- It's like a dream or something.

BRITT

A good dream.

JOE searches Britt's face for signs  
that this is a joke.

JOE

You're serious.

BRITT

You need time to think about it. But--

JOE

No. I still-- Yeah. Hell yeah. I'll go back to counseling.

JOE reaches across the table for  
BRITT's hand. Transition: BRITT and JOE  
stand, BRITT pulls a scarf from her  
purse and puts it on. They take their  
plates and exchange them for drinks  
from the stage manager, and return to  
the table, sitting on opposite sides.

SCENE 2

SAME RESTAURANT, TWO WEEKS LATER. JOE AND BRITT ARE SEATED WITH DRINKS. HE HAS A BEER, SHE RED WINE.

JOE

I thought you didn't like this place.

BRITT

It's not dislike, really. It's just that it's always the same. Same menu. Same tablecloths. Same bartenders. Same people. Look, Mark and Miranda just walked in.

(she waves)

Look at her face. She can't figure out why we're here together.

JOE

I can't either.

BRITT

Because it's date night.

JOE

No, I mean here. In this place. You got first pick, why did you pick here, if it's always the same?

BRITT

It just seemed like if we were starting over, this would be a good beginning, the place we met.

JOE

But we were just here two weeks ago.

BRITT

But that wasn't a date. It was a meeting.

JOE

I don't see the difference.

BRITT

You like it here. I thought you'd be happy.

JOE

You're trying to put coins in my love bank.

BRITT

I am not trying to put coins in your love bank.

JOE

Yes, you are. You're trying to do something nice so that I'll ch-ching... ring it up in the love bank.

BRITT

Okay, next time I won't bother.

JOE

No, I appreciate it. I just don't like this whole date night idea.

BRITT

A lot of my friends have date nights. And the counselor said it works well for a lot of couples, especially if they have trouble finding time to spend together.

JOE

They should just call it what it is: Sex night.

BRITT

This is so not sex night.

JOE

I thought we were getting back together.

BRITT

And that means sex?

JOE

Usually.

BRITT

Okay, it's a process.

JOE

That sex is usually part of. One of the best parts.

BRITT

And it will be.

JOE

When?

BRITT

When it's--

JOE

You don't trust me. You're not going to let me in your bed because you don't trust me.

BRITT

I just don't want to rush.

JOE

So we have dates and they're just... dates?

BRITT

That's it. This is a date. We're starting over, Joe, not picking up where we left off. If we pick up where we left off, we're going to end up in the same place.