

Reservations

A short play

by

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CHARACTERS

MAE: A woman in her mid-seventies. Edgar's wife of many years.

EDGAR: A man in his late seventies. Mae's husband of many years.

SET

Edgar and Mae's kitchen.

A simple set is preferred. A kitchenette set with a table and two chairs, a stove, a sink; perhaps a refrigerator.

(Mid-morning.

LIGHTS UP on EDGAR and MAE.

MAE stands at a kitchen sink washing and drying morning dishes. EDGAR sits at a kitchen table, reading a newspaper.)

EDGAR

Good breakfast, Mae.

(MAE turns to him.)

MAE

Thank you, Edgar.

(Slight pause.)

EDGAR

Damn good breakfast.

(Beat.)

MAE

The secret's in the skillet.

EDGAR

How so?

MAE

That's my secret, not yours.

EDGAR

That's right, that's right. Your secret, not mine.

(Pause. EDGAR returns to reading his newspaper. MAE picks up a skillet. She looks it over. She gently runs the skillet under the kitchen faucet, and gingerly dries it with a paper towel. She looks toward EDGAR.)

MAE

You don't wash it.

EDGAR

What?

MAE

The skillet. You don't wash it. With soap. You don't scrub it.

EDGAR

Why not?

MAE

It ruins the seasoning.

EDGAR

The what?

MAE

The seasoning. *(Beat.)* The flavor.

EDGAR

What flavor?

MAE

Maintaining the seasoning improves the taste and flavor of the foods you cook in it.

EDGAR

Where'd'ya learn that?

MAE

Cookbook.

(Slight pause.)

EDGAR

(Smiling at MAE.)

You and your cookbooks.

(MAE smiles back at him. Pause.)

MAE

What do you want for dinner?

EDGAR

Dinner?

MAE

Dinner.

EDGAR

I'm still digesting my breakfast, Mae.

I need to defrost something. MAE

(Slight pause.)

What about lunch? EDGAR

Liverwurst sandwich, Edgar. MAE

Right, right. Of course. EDGAR

And I have bologna. MAE

Right, right. EDGAR

Edgar. We decided lunch years ago. MAE
(Tenderly.)

Right, right. Of course. EDGAR

(Pause.)

What about dinner? MAE

I'm thinking. *(Slight pause.)* What are my options? EDGAR

Chicken, chop meat, pork. MAE
(Exasperated.)

Is that all? EDGAR

All what? MAE

All my options. EDGAR

MAE
(*Confused.*)

That's what we got, Edgar.

(*Pause.*)

EDGAR
What if I wanted, say, I dunno ... fish?

MAE
Fish?

EDGAR
Fish.

(*Beat.*)
MAE
We never have fish.

EDGAR
But what if I wanted fish?

MAE
You hate fish.

EDGAR
Do I?

MAE
If memory serves me right, Edgar, you do hate fish.

(*Beat.*)

EDGAR
But what if I did want fish?

MAE
Why would you want fish?

EDGAR
Humor me, Mae.

(*Pause.*)

MAE
I suppose I would go to the market.

Today? EDGAR

Yes, today. MAE

Not Thursday? EDGAR

No. Today. MAE
(Smiling.)

*(EDGAR smiles back at MAE. He returns to reading the newspaper.
Pause.)*

Should I...? MAE (CONT'D)

What? EDGAR
(Looking up from his newspaper.)

Go to the market.... MAE

(EDGAR looks at her inquisitively.)

For fish. MAE (CONT'D)

I hate fish, Mae. EDGAR

Of course you do. MAE

(EDGAR returns to his newspaper. Pause.)

Chicken, chop or pork? MAE (CONT'D)

What was in that breakfast? EDGAR
(Looking up from his newspaper.)

Same thing as always. MAE

EDGAR

Something was different.

MAE

Three sunny-sides, two American bacons, two links, slice of toast, orange juice.

EDGAR

What did you have?

MAE

My breakfast, Edgar. *(Beat.)* Scramble.

EDGAR

Right, right. *(Slight pause.)* Something was different.

MAE

(Emphatically.)

Nothing was different, Edgar. Chicken, chop or pork.

(Pause.)

EDGAR

What if we went out?

MAE

Out?

EDGAR

Out.

(Slight pause.)

MAE

Out where?

EDGAR

For dinner.

(Beat.)

MAE

Why would we do that?

EDGAR

Something different.

(MAE crosses to the table. She sits. Pause.)

Where would we go, Edgar?

MAE

Anywhere we want to.

EDGAR

(Putting down the newspaper; with emphasis.)

(Beat.)

I don't know.

MAE

Come on, Mae.

EDGAR

(Taking her hand.)

Where?

MAE

(Pause. EDGAR thinks.)

Toscano's.

EDGAR

(Smiling.)

(Beat.)

Toscano's?

MAE

You remember Toscano's.

EDGAR

Of course I remember Toscano's.

MAE

I proposed to you at Toscano's.

EDGAR

Of course you did.

MAE

And you accepted.

EDGAR

Of course I did.

MAE

EDGAR
Then, let's go to Toscano's.

MAE
Are you sure, Edgar?

EDGAR
Come on, Mae.

(Slight pause.)

MAE
Alright. Alright. Let's go to Toscano's.

(Pause, as they look at each other.)

EDGAR
Let's get us a reservation.

MAE
Alright. Alright. *(Beat.)* When? What time?

(Pause. EDGAR thinks.)

EDGAR
We eat dinner at five.

MAE
Five, then.

(Slight pause.)

EDGAR
(An epiphany.)
No. Make it five-thirty.

MAE
Edgar!

EDGAR
(Confidently.)
Five-thirty, Mae.

(Beat.)

MAE
Alright, Edgar. Five-thirty.

(They look at each other.)

EDGAR
You gonna make the call?

MAE
Alright, I will.

(MAE stands and crosses to a kitchen wall phone.)

EDGAR
You got the number?

(MAE leafs through an old battered address book that had been hanging on a nail on the wall next to the telephone.)

MAE
In my book.

EDGAR
You got the number in your book?

MAE
Of course I do.

(Beat.)

EDGAR
All this time?

MAE
(Locating the phone number.)
Here it is.

EDGAR
(Lower voice; almost to himself.)
All this time.

(MAE dials the phone number.)

MAE
Hello. I would like to make a reservation for tonight for two people at five-thirty... What?... Is this Toscano's?... Toscano's.... Do you have the new number, then?... What?... When?... Oh, my.... Alright, then.... You have a nice....

(She places the receiver back on the hook.)

EDGAR

What?... Well...?

(Pause, as MAE crosses to the table and sits.)

MAE

That was.... That was....

EDGAR

(He takes her hand.)

Go on, Mae.

MAE

Toscano's closed, Edgar. *(Beat.)* More than twenty years ago.

EDGAR

Who was that, then?

MAE

Some oriental lady.

EDGAR

I don't think we'd like Chinese food, Mae.

MAE

No. *(Beat.)* It wasn't a restaurant at all, Edgar. *(Beat.)* She was just an oriental lady. *(Beat.)* She's had the number for years.

EDGAR

Oh. *(Beat.)* Well, then.

MAE

Well, then.

EDGAR

Yes.

(Slight pause.)

MAE

Now what?

EDGAR

Well. *(Beat.)* We'll have dinner here.

(Pause.)

Edgar? MAE

What? EDGAR

Why Toscano's? MAE

(Beat.)

No reason. EDGAR

Why breakfast? MAE

Mae? EDGAR

Why fish? MAE

No reason. EDGAR

Edgar! MAE

(Slight pause.)

I've been to my doctor. *(Beat.)* I'm sick, Mae. EDGAR

What? MAE

Sick. EDGAR

You've been sick before. MAE

Not like this. EDGAR

(Pause.)

Oh, Edgar. MAE

Sorry, Mae. EDGAR

(Slight pause.)

Bad? MAE

(Beat.)

Bad. EDGAR

(Slight pause.)

When were you going to tell me? MAE

Yesterday. Last night. This morning. Tonight at Toscano's. *(Beat.)* Maybe never. EDGAR

(Pause. EDGAR and MAE silently look at each other. EDGAR breaks their stare to look at a wall clock. He stands and crosses towards the kitchen door.)

Where are you going? MAE

(EDGAR points at the wall clock.)

Bathroom. EDGAR

Now what, Edgar? MAE

(Slight pause. EDGAR stops at the doorway and turns to MAE.)

I don't know. EDGAR

Edgar? MAE

EDGAR

Yes?

MAE

(Smiling.)

Chicken. *(Beat.)* Chicken. We'll have chicken for dinner, Edgar.

(Slight pause.)

EDGAR

(Smiling.)

That sounds real good, Mae.

(EDGAR exits. MAE sits silently for several beats. She stands and crosses to the sink. She picks up the skillet. She turns on the water faucet and grabs a bottle of dishwashing liquid. She pauses over the sink. Holding the skillet in one hand and the dishwashing liquid in the other she begins to weep as the LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO BLACK.)

THE END.