

TEN MINUTES TO CLOSE

A 10-minute play

December 21, 2019

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
REGAN	cute, perky, hopeful, though with a protective cynicism to her	late 20s	F
GUYLE	worldly with a small-town mentality, seeking comfort	early 30s	Ms

Synopsis:

Guyle returns to his hometown after five years of traveling the world to see if he can rekindle things with his ex-flame Regan.

TEN MINUTES TO CLOSE

MILLIE'S TOP SHELF DINER. 9:47 p.m. on a Wednesday. It's a diner-style restaurant with a counter to the right of the front door separated from the dining room by a hostess stand. A 4-level dessert display case revolves directly in front of the stand. REGAN, late 20s, kind eyes with lines forming around them, buzzes around the restaurant with an overtired energy snagging discarded napkins and scraps from tables with one hand and using a sanitized rag to wipe them clean with the other, almost instinctually. She resets place settings as an afterthought.

GUYLE, early 30s, ENTERS, clean shaven, an attempt at upscale dress with a sport coat, tie, and khakis underneath a corduroy GAP jacket, stops in the doorway. Regan turns to greet him then freezes, her breath stuck in her throat. A long beat.

GUYLE

Hi.

REGAN

(indicates the counter, returns to her activity)

Menu's over there. We close in ten minutes.

GUYLE

I know what I want.

REGAN

You're welcome to have a seat at the counter.

He stands a moment, then reluctantly takes a seat at the counter.

GUYLE

I hear the pie here is pretty good. Do you have a slice of the strawberry rhubarb?

REGAN

(looks at the dessert case)

There's one slice left.

GUYLE

I'll have that... if you'll join me.

Regan stands a moment, eyeing him. She crosses away toward a booth, pulls the vacuum out from behind.

REGAN

(sets up plug, drags vacuum stage left)

I've got to clean up before I go home. We had a party of twelve in here celebrating a birthday. Kids running all over the place, throwing food. I've been sweeping up crumbs all night. And there's some food stain on the carpet I've got to put the vacuum to. At least, I really hope it's food.

She steps on the power and begins anger-vacuuming.

GUYLE

(yells over the noise)

I just got back to town this afternoon!... Dropped my stuff off... at my parents' ... I would have come right from the airport... I wanted to... Regan! Can you please...?

Regan kicks off the power, angrily puts the vacuum in the upright position. She stands as upright as the machine.

REGAN

It's been five years, Guyle.

GUYLE

Technically, only four and a half.

REGAN

So let's pick this up again in six months.

GUYLE

I came to see you... and talk.

REGAN

What's there to talk about?

GUYLE

Oh, I don't know. "Hi." "How are you?" "Crazy weather we're having." "How about 'dem Cowboys, huh?"

REGAN

Same Guyle. Still thinking humor is going to get you everything you want.

GUYLE

Right now, I'm hoping for the pie.

REGAN

Are you sure you don't want something "more exotic," like baklava, or wasp crackers, or flan, whatever that is.

GUYLE

It's a Spanish egg custard.

He smiles. Regan is not amused.

REGAN

Just tell me... Did you find what you're looking for?

GUYLE

Uh... what I was looking for?

REGAN

You left to "find what the world has to offer." So what did it have to offer?

GUYLE

(he considers this)

I dunno. I made some memories... Ran with the bulls in Pamplona, swam with sea life through the Great Barrier Reef, did the safari in Botswana I talked about, made it to base camp at Mount Everest, before I lost my nerve...

REGAN

Wow.

GUYLE

...I spent a few days on South Beach in Florida, though truthfully I only remember the nights and I don't even really remember those... I did make it to Machu Picchu.

REGAN

Bless you.

GUYLE

"Machu Picchu?" The ancient trail of the Incans in Peru?

REGAN

I would know that if -- *IF!*-- we traveled *together* instead of you just taking off after three years of dating to go to Moana and Great Flabbier Beach and Macho Pikachu.

GUYLE

I know. I know.

REGAN

People come to visit Omaha, too y'know, thanks to our tourist slogan --

(air quotes)

"Visit Omaha". . . dot com -- We have the Mormon Trail Center, the Durham Museum, the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. Some even take the three-hour drive over the South Dakota border to visit the Corn Palace.

GUYLE

I was younger. And started to feel closed in. My whole life passed before my eyes and it was all here in Omaha. I know now how stupid that was and... I'm sorry.

REGAN

(those last words stop her)

Yeah. Well, I kinda know how that feels, I guess... But it's not the worst thing.

GUYLE

True. I musta caught the wanderlust, or something. I saw a quote that said, "We regret the things we don't do" and then the one, "If you love someone, set them free." I didn't want you to be with some bitter, angry, regretful guy for the rest of your life, so I set you free.

REGAN

You could have talked to me about it.

GUYLE

Look, I've done it... I saw the world... Now I'm over it. I've been in the car too long. My back's acting up on me, I've got an inner ear thing from so much airplane cabin pressure, and all that weird, spicy Asian foods gave me reflux. I'm only thirty, I can't have reflux.

REGAN

(more pointedly)

You could have talked to me about it... instead, you bought a plane ticket and said, see ya later.

GUYLE

If we're gonna talk, can I have a slice of pie, please?

REGAN

You don't want pie.

GUYLE

I do.

REGAN

There's a new all-night deli -- Loman's -- down the street. Their dessert menu alone is the size of all of ours. They have cakes, brownies, Whoopie pies, seven-layer bars... Go, try them all until you can't fit into your pants. You don't want to regret missing out.

GUYLE

Pie is all I want.

REGAN

I'm not going to give it to you, how do you like that? It's got whipped cream on it. You're lactose intolerant. I don't want to feel responsible for your... gastric discomfort.

GUYLE

I have a Lactaid pill. I can eat all the dairy I want.

Regan keeps her eyes on Guyle, but remains in her tracks. Then, after a long beat, she attends to the vacuum.

REGAN

I have to finish up.

Kicking the vacuum on, she resumes sliding it indiscriminately across the rug, her back to him.

GUYLE

(yells over the vacuum)

Regan?... REGAN?!... I know you have to close, but I just need to say what I need to say... Can you stop vacuuming, please?

(REGAN stops, turns toward Guyle sharply)

Thank you... I spent five years driving and flying and zipping around on mopeds, always focused on what I was gonna do next, and I realized that eventually, you run out of gas... Yeah, I made a lot of memories, but as the days went by, I started thinking more and more of the times spent with you. Like the night on the highway overpass waiting to see if anyone would stop to help that motorist underneath us.

Or your friend Katie's engagement party where that dog would not stop humping my leg.

(chuckles)

Or your twenty-first birthday... at the traveling carnival.

REGAN

(lets down her guard a moment)

We couldn't find our car in the dirt lot and had to wait so long for everyone to leave that it wasn't my birthday anymore.

GUYLE

I won you that little bear.

REGAN

(smiles)

Yeah, it cost you forty dollars for something that probably cost fifty cents.

GUYLE

I swear the damn softball had springs in it. I couldn't get it to land in the basket.

REGAN

The guy behind the counter had no trouble with it. That was your problem, Guyle. You always made things harder than they had to be.

GUYLE

I really botched it, didn't I?

REGAN

(a long beat)

I went back to the carnival when it was in town again a few months ago... with Eli.

GUYLE

Oh. Eli?... Who is--?

REGAN

My son.

GUYLE

(sits up, but it lands on him)

You have a son?

REGAN

Three years old.

GUYLE

Wow... And is there a...?

REGAN

He left.

(pauses to gauge a reaction)

I wanted to keep him though.

GUYLE

(pause)

Men always seem to leave.

(a beat)

Can I see a picture? Of Eli?

Regan takes a moment, then crosses to the hostess stand and retrieves her purse from underneath. She takes out her phone and places it on the counter, a few feet from Guyle. He stretches from his seat to get it. Regan stands a few feet from him as he looks at it.

GUYLE

(laughs)

My God! Those teeth!

REGAN

This was after he stole Grandma's dentures out of her jar while she was sleeping. It was wrong, but too funny not to take a photo.

Guyle replaces the phone on the counter. Regan retrieves it from him and returns it to her purse.

GUYLE

I bet you're a great mother.

(REGAN shrugs)

One of the things I've been picturing lately is me as a dad.

(he chuckles, then lets his mind drift a moment; snaps back)

I couldn't imagine doing it alone. It's not really about the memories so much as it's about sharing them.

(looks up at the clock)

GUYLE

Almost time to close. Can I have my pie?

REGAN

(re-considers a moment, then)

We usually give any leftovers to the homeless shelter down the street at the end of the day. They deserve it.

GUYLE

I want to take back what I said before, that men always seem to leave. It's only the *stupid* men who leave.

(beat, sincere)

Regan, I'm sorry. If I could turn back time, I would. But... we could still travel together.

REGAN

I have Eli.

GUYLE

I saw plenty of people traveling with their young kids.

REGAN

He gets bored just going up to the center of town in the car.

GUYLE

I'll say two words to him: EuroDisney!

REGAN

Pie is not good for you. "A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips."

GUYLE

I'll find a good diet plan on-line.

Regan is still by her purse, a few feet from Guyle equidistant between him and the pie display case. She turns until she's squared off with him.

REGAN

Did you find what you were looking for, Guyle?

GUYLE

(really considers this)

You know what? I went all around the world searching for everything that was outside those doors. I found that Europe is too cramped; Australia too boring -- all that I found interesting was how the water flushes down the toilet backwards; South American drivers are so bad, I'm sure I would literally be run over if I gave it enough time; and every cool city like Dubai or Monte Carlo requires a small fortune to take advantage of it. I found that the place I'm best suited for, the place I feel *most comfortable* is Omaha. I like it here. And I like Millie's pie. So yeah, I *did* find what I was looking for.

(REGAN doesn't move as she considers this;

Guyle reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a small stuffed bear -- a no frills, Made-in-China, amusement park bear.)

The truth is, *he* wanted to come back to see you more than I did.

(This hits Regan who tries not to let on, doesn't move)

GUYLE

(after a long beat)

Well... I guess I should go. Looks like it'll be store-bought pie for me tonight.

He places the bear on the counter, then stands, and turns to go. Regan walks to the dessert display, opens it to remove the last slice of strawberry rhubarb as Guyle watches her. She brings it behind the counter, pulls out a dessert plate, and uses the serving fork to transfer it from tray to plate. Guyle sits back down. Then, she picks up another two forks and places them on the plate.

GUYLE

Three forks?

REGAN

One for all of us.

She turns the bear to face the pie, puts a fork in his lap.
Guyle laughs, picks up his fork, and takes a bite.

REGAN

What do you think?

GUYLE

Mmmm. A little different than I remember it.

REGAN

New crust. Gluten free. Different, but still pretty good.

They share a smile as Guyle enjoys another bite of pie.

END OF PLAY