

To the Zoom and Back

A Fifteen-Minute Play

by

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Two lonely, lively, senior citizens meet on *The Forever Young Dating Site* during the COVID-19 pandemic and decide to try a virtual date via Zoom.

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To the Zoom and Back**Cast of Characters**

AVA LUCELLO: A woman in her early 70s.
THOMAS CHATON: A man in his early 70s.
OFFSTAGE VOICE OF ROBIN: A woman in her early 30s.

Scene

The play takes place in two separate Long Island locations simultaneously during a Zoom virtual date.

Time

The present, Evening

To the Zoom and Back

SETTING: AVA and THOMAS each in a room
in their respective homes.

AT RISE: AVA's hair is well-coiffed,
and she is neatly yet
conservatively dressed. She's
fumbling with her cell phone
setting up for her Zoom
virtual date. It's obvious
she has never Zoomed before.

THOMAS is still handsome,
albeit balding, and dressed
in a suit and tie. He's
sitting calmly in front of
his computer ready to Zoom.

The audience and THOMAS see
some pretty unattractive
angles of AVA's face; for
instance: the camera is under
her chin, then up her nose,
and then her video image
turns upside down.

AVA
Robin! Now the video's upside down.

ROBIN
(off)
Auntie Ava, just do what I showed you before. Turn the
Portrait Orientation lock off.

(AVA fumbles, then uprights
the video. She puts her mask on
and starts gloving up.)

It's a virtual date. You don't need PPE.

AVA
Oh ... Oh ... OK. I'm just worried I could be a super-
spreader.

**(Music Cue: The second movement
of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony
begins playing.)**

AVA

Oh ... Oh ... I ... I didn't know you was already here. Hi there, Mr. Chaton ... um ... Tom.

(Seeing herself in the video,
she begins futzing with her hair.)

THOMAS

Thomas. I prefer Thomas.

AVA

Well, Thomas, it's 6:45 pm on the dot. You're very prompt. That's a good trait, right? My sister, Concetta, *riposi in pace*, always claimed it was. All my life, she hounded me about my tardiness. "Ava, when you're not dilly-dallying, you're lollygagging!" Speaking of my dearly departed big sister, that music you're playing, makes me feel like I'm in Maloney's funeral parlor viewing an open casket.

THOMAS

It's *Allegretto* from Beethoven's Seventh. Richard Wagner felt this Symphony was "the apotheosis of dance."

AVA

Well ... Ava Lucello thinks it sounds like something the priest is gonna play while he's giving me Last Rites.

THOMAS

I thought we could use a little mood music.

AVA

If you're in the mood for the morgue, then that burial hymn hits a home run. To set the right tone for a first date - not so much.

**(Music Cue: Thomas shuts
off the music.)**

THOMAS

Your dating profile said that you love listening to good music.

AVA

Oh, my ... my niece, Robin, wrote that up. I'm not too good with computers. Yes ...yes, she's right, though. I like good music. I like *The Voice*.

THOMAS

The what?

AVA

The Voice. A reality TV show, you know, a singing competition. It's got Blake Shelton on it. I really like him.

(There's an awkward pause.)

You seem very relaxed. I guess you've done this kind of thing before.

THOMAS

Virtual dating? I don't think anyone in the history of humankind has done this kind of thing before. My son, the self-anointed matchmaker, signed me up on the *Forever Young Dating Site*. He says, "To find love in the time of Corona, you've got to think outside the lockdown."

AVA

So, what made you tap the match button on me?

THOMAS

You have the same first name as my wife.

AVA

You're still married? Your profile said you was widowed! I don't remember you mentioning nothing about your wife making a miraculous resurrection from the grave.

THOMAS

Oh, no! She didn't do that. Ava's still dead. I mean, she died ... my wife ... five years ago ... breast cancer.

AVA

Please accept my sincerest condolences to you and your family.

THOMAS

Thank you. And how about you? What made you want to match up with me?

AVA

I thought you had ... in your picture ... very kind eyes.

THOMAS

Your profile says you're into cooking.

AVA

I don't know if I'm *into* cooking. I cook. You know, the basic stuff ... meat and potatoes ... pasta and sauce. Your profile said ... you enjoy gourmet dining and travel.

THOMAS

Yes, Ava and I, my Ava, we traveled around the world dining in some of the finest restaurants ... *Osteria Francescana* in Italy, the *Arzak* in Spain, and even *Le Chateaubriand* in France. According to your profile, you like to travel as well.

AVA

Oh, I do. Last year, me and Robin took the Greyhound to Atlantic City. We stayed three days and two nights at the Tropicana. And the year before that, we spent a few days at Disney World.

THOMAS

Your profile also mentioned that you enjoy the theatre. I was over the moon to have secured tickets to *The Cherry Orchard*, at New York City Center, but it canceled. You know, COVID-19 strikes again.

AVA

In March, right before the whole world slammed shut, me and my niece drove over to Miller Place High School to see *Mamma Mia!* The whole audience was singing along with the kids. It was great!

(Singing)

"So when you're near me, darling, can't you hear me, S.O.S."

THOMAS

(A long pause)

Your profile said you were single.

AVA

It sounded better than spinster. That's what my sister always called me, but I kept telling her, "That's not a

AVA (Cont.)

politically correct thing to say no more," but on her deathbed, the last thing she said to me was, "Addio, Spinster."

THOMAS

Do you have any children?

AVA

I just toldcha, I was never married.

THOMAS

That doesn't mean you couldn't have children.

AVA

Oh, in my world, it does. I was raised in a very strict, Italian, Catholic household. You know, first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Ava with a baby carriage.

THOMAS

But I take it that you're close with your niece, Robin.

AVA

That goes without saying. She's like my own daughter. She lives upstairs, in my mother's old apartment. She's a good girl.

THOMAS

How old is she?

AVA

Thirty-three. Her birthday was yesterday. Robin's single, but that's not seen as a bad thing no more. I felt bad for her being stuck in a foxhole with me on her birthday. So I called up *Uber Eats* and got takeout from *Applebee's*, and the two of us made the best of it. It's been really hard for her ... her shop isn't deemed an essential service, so she can't even make a living right now.

THOMAS

What does she do?

AVA

Hair. She's a beautician. She's a very good one. Let me tell you. I'm lucky to be in lockdown with her. My friends

AVA (Cont.)

are all complaining about the sorry state of their hair right now.

THOMAS

I guess being bald has its upside.

AVA

Robin insists upon doing my hair, every week, just like always.

THOMAS

Your hair looks very nice.

AVA

Thank you. I'll tell her. Well, this has been -

THOMAS

- The new normal.

AVA

Tom ... I mean Thomas. Take a look-see! Over there! By your bay window! There's a Cardinal. As kids, we was always told ... when you spot a Cardinal, it's a sign from your loved ones on the Other Side.

THOMAS

I don't really believe in any of that psychic hocus-pocus, but my grandson does. Every time he sees a Cardinal, he shouts, "It's Grandma Ava coming by to say, 'Hi!'"

AVA

I guess ... sometimes it's kinda nice to think that ... maybe ... they're still around. Well, I know I'm not what you expected. I'm boring. There's not much to me. What you see is what you get. Whereas, you ... now you've been around the world! You listen to Beethoven, not because you have to, but because you want to. You've dined like a king, had a wife, and a family. The most exciting thing that ever happened to me was back in 1984 when I won five hundred dollars in a scratch-off. I just wantcha to know ... this has been fun for me, but like I said, I'm boring.

THOMAS

That is the one word I wouldn't use to describe you. We're two consenting adults, right? And we're both in agreement that this has been ... fun. Then, maybe, we should shoot for a second date?

AVA

Really?

THOMAS

Your profile said you're from South Huntington. I don't live too far from you ... Lloyd Harbor. Tomorrow, I could be the designated drive-by-food guy and swing by your house at 6:15 pm sharp to drop off dinner. We'll say a quick in-person hello, all masked and gloved up, and just in case you're a super-spreader, to be doubly safe, we'll social distance.

AVA

Like I always say, "Better six feet apart than six feet under."

THOMAS

After I drop off your food, I'll head home and join you for a virtual dinner. I just need your address.

AVA

Oh. I don't know about that. I barely know you.

ROBIN

(off)

Auntie Ava ... the man is *bringing* you food. He's not Hannibal the Cannibal. Tell him you'll message him your address later.

AVA

Sorry about the interruption. Robin insisted on chaperoning. It seems her best friend, Ashley, had a virtual date that didn't turn out so hot.

ROBIN

(off)

The guy was sitting there with no pants on with the camera angled down.

AVA

I told her, "It should only happen to me!"

THOMAS

You should have put that in your profile, "Clothes optional." You would have gotten a lot of likes. Now, Ms. Lucello, what kind of food would you like me to bring?

AVA

Oh, me. I'm not fussy. Growing up, we had two choices in the Lucello's *la cucina*: "Take it or leave it and like it or lump it. My pops was famous throughout Staten Island for screaming ... on the top of his lungs ... every suppertime like clockwork.

(Imitating a heavy
Italian accent)

"Johnny-Boy, y'wanna be eating or y'wanna beating?" Being Johnny-Boy's little sister and watching him take all them whippings, I was so scared sitting at the supper table, I swear, if my mother served shit on a shingle*, I would've swallowed it! So, if y'treating, I'm eating!

THOMAS

I'll bring plenty for Robin, too.

ROBIN

(off)

Thank you, Thomas. Just remember, I don't eat mushrooms or anything with eyes.

THOMAS

It's a date then! Tomorrow evening, at 6:45 pm on the dot, we'll dine ... separately but together.

AVA

Is this gonna be another Ten-Minute-Zoom-Speed-Date? Because if I shovel food down that fast, I'm gonna wind up with a wicked case of agita.

THOMAS

No, it's going to be a real virtual date. Light some candles, break open a bottle of wine, and pick a playlist from *The Voice*.

AVA

In that case, I'll break out my mother's good china and her mother's good silver. What am I saving them for?

ROBIN

(off)

Me! I thought you said you were saving them for *me*?

THOMAS

I'll put on my white tie and tails, and I don't want our dinner getting cold, so whatever you do, Ava, try not to lollygag.

AVA

OK, Thomas, but don't hold it against me if I dilly-dally. It's my nature. *Ciao* for now, Bello!

THOMAS

Au revoir, Mademoiselle!

CURTAIN

*If you don't want to use an expletive, then say, "...if my mother served spaghetti with slug sauce ..."