

10,000 MILES
by
Michael Flood

CHARACTERS:

MITCH – 30s, single. A nice looking, intelligent man who has not had good luck in love but is, at least, somewhat optimistic about it.

LILY – 30s, single. Likewise, a nice looking, intelligent woman who has not been terribly lucky in love either.

SETTING:

A bisected stage that is empty except for two café chairs facing the house—one STAGE RIGHT, the other STAGE LEFT.

NOTE: They do not look at each other. Otherwise, they freely utilize their respective acting spaces.

Individual shafts of LIGHT up on MITCH. Each character has a dedicated acting area that contains a café chair.

MITCH

Okay. So. I was in this airport in Baltimore in July. *(beat)* Vacation. Y'know? *(beat)* I know, I know. Who goes to Baltimore in the Summer, right? Well, every year I just choose a different– and new–place to go for vacation. Love to experience new places. And Baltimore, well, they have this festival every year called Artscape. It's only three days or so, but, according to Wikipedia, it is just *loaded* with stuff to do and see. Lots of theatre. Music. All that kind of stuff. *(beat)* So, I'm standing there waiting at the... that... whatchamacallit... the carousel? Where you get your luggage. And there she was.

(Lights up on LILY.)

I saw her out of the corner of my eye. She was watching the... uh... the... conveyor? Whatever. I don't think she saw me.

LILY

Oh, he was looking. No question about it. I was in no mood, though. I had plans and only a few days' vacation. So, I'm waiting for my bag, and this guy is watching me, so I...

MITCH

... walked away. She flashed me this look that said, you know, something like, "Hey, buddy! I'm just fine on my own. Okay, pal?" So, she walks away... but not out of sight! A sign! *(beat)* Right? A sign? *(beat)* A sign.

LILY

Okay, so the fact that I am fine alone does not change the fact that a guy looking is not necessarily a bad thing. Not the guys who stare holes through you, though. You know, not the greaseball-type or, God forbid, some wannabe eurotrash who thinks you should run over and jump him in public, but some decent looking guy who is actually trying to look like he's not looking. Believe me, more times than not... OK, *almost* all the time, they still turn out to be cheap, unbelievably rude, jerks.

MITCH

She knew. She *definitely* knew. Whether she was looking for any reason other than being able to describe me to a police sketch artist, can't say. *(pause)* Anyway, so we're both waiting for our luggage, I'm watching her act like she's not watching me and the stuff starts to drop out of the ceiling. Plain black. Plain black. Ah! Pink floral! No mistaking my classy luggage. No way to confuse it with others', right? I'm gonna be the only one reaching for that gaudy thing. *(beat)* Anyway, I start to reach for it when she comes running right at me! See! Take your eyes off her for *one* second! Well, she damn near tackles me reaching for this bag! I'm like, "Excuse me! That's *my* manly bag, missy!" *(beat)* Well, sort of. You don't really have the time to say all that when the chips are down and you're being mugged for a tacky pink rollaway filled with your entire travel wardrobe: jeans, shorts, t-shirts, and the usual assortment of under... *things*. *(beat)* Boxer-briefs... one with a leg shorter than the other.

(MORE)

MITCH (cont'd)

(beat) They came that way. I knew you'd want to know. *(beat)* Anyway, so, I hip-check her and grab my bag before she can get away with it.

LILY

He grabs my bag! Right off the carousel! See, what I think is that he was not watching me for... well, me. No. He was watching me to see which bag I recognized and then, SNATCH! GRAB! And he's gone!

MITCH

I just wanted my outta whack underwear.

LILY

So, I clocked him!

MITCH

She hit me!

(Pointing at the back of his neck.)

Right here! HERE! Who the hell hits a guy here?!

LILY

I missed.

MITCH

I understand the face or the stomach. God! I'd even give her a good kidney shot or a knee to the groin if she took one of those classes. But, rabbit punch?! That's just fighting dirty!

LILY

So, I'm standing there, he's holding his neck with this look on his face like... well, I don't know what like. The luggage just keeps sliding down the ramp to the carousel when I see it... Another ugly pink, flowery suitcase. So, I look at it. Then back at him. And I realize what I've done.

MITCH

She hit me in the NECK!

LILY

It was mine. *(beat)* The one that just came out, not the first one and I'm standing there holding this bag... his bag. All I can do is offer to help.

MITCH

"I think you've helped enough."

LILY

"Dinner?"

MITCH

She offers to take me to dinner. My neck is still throbbing from her sucker punch... I probably can't even swallow and she offers to buy me some...

LILY

“Chesapeake crab cakes! I hear they’re wonderful! This is my first time in Maryland, after all, so I need to try them, right?”

MITCH

She goes off on some tangent about it being her first time in Maryland and how she needs crab cakes. For, like, ten minutes! If this is how tourists come off to locals, we probably deserve the dirty looks and nasty attitude. Blathering on about crab cakes this, crab cakes that while her bag is riding the carousel thingy like its’ an amusement park ride! Then, get this, some kid runs up and grabs it! Takes off!

LILY

He just takes off! Shoves me aside and runs away from me! Then, I realize that he is chasing some kid running off with my suitcase! All I can think is, *Great! Drinks, too... if he gets it back!*

MITCH

Chased the little punk through this crowded airport until he tripped. Suitcase goes flying! Cracked open when it hit the floor and... BAM! The secret is out, if ya know what I mean.

LILY

He brings the bag back to me with my clothes hanging out the side! Underwear... *everywhere!* Stupid zipper!

MITCH

(Laughing)
No exaggeration, hot pink tiger-striped!

LILY

Soooo embarrassing. These pink things my friend snuck into my bag were hanging out. *In case you get lucky!* Yeah, *real* lucky!

MITCH

I looked at the tiger, then back at her. Couldn’t tell which was brighter!

LILY

Embarrassing. There is no way I can eat with this guy.

MITCH

(Sitting.)
We still went to dinner.

LILY

(Sitting.)
Still. Went. To dinner.

MITCH

"By the way... Mitch."

LILY

"The underwear was a joke from a friend." I don't think he bought it so I tried a different approach. "Just because you saw my underwear doesn't mean you're getting into them."

MITCH

"Uh... don't think they'd fit me. Not really my style, either."

LILY

"No! I mean... you know... you know what I mean!"

MITCH

"Joke. I had no intention as, clearly, you're nuts."

LILY

"That's mean."

MITCH

"Mere honesty."

LILY

(Getting up.)

"I think I'm going to go."

MITCH

"Nononono... I'm sorry. I was joking."

(She sits. They fall into silence.)

"How long did you work on that line?"

LILY

"All the way here in the cab. Oh, by the way, Lily."

MITCH

"Nice to meet you... finally."

(Silence. Then she hums a few bars of Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore by the Walker Brothers. He starts to sing softly.)

"Sun ain't gonna shine anymore..."

LILY

(Amazed someone else knows the song.)

"Oh, my God! How do you know that song?"

MITCH

"I love that song!"

LILY
 "So do I. It was in a movie I..."

MITCH
 "TRULY MADLY DEEPLY!"

LILY
 "Yes!"

MITCH
 "I love that movie!"

LILY
 "I love that movie!"

Beat and they smile in unison.

MITCH
 That's not when it happened.

LILY
 Not quite then.

MITCH
 "I'm not from here."

LILY
 "Me either... obviously. Country or city?"

MITCH
 "Excuse me?"

LILY
 "Do you live in the country or a city?"

MITCH
 "City. You?"

LILY
 "Same. But I *love* trips to the country."

MITCH
 "So do i!" I noticed that...

LILY
 ... we were...

MITCH
 Waaaaay clicking.

LILY
 Waaaaay clicking.

MITCH
 "This year was city, though."

LILY

"You switch each year, too? You know, you do something and think that you can be the *only* person who does it and then... Next year will probably be something remote..."

MITCH

"Let me know where so I can go somewhere else or get a new suitcase."

LILY

(Pretending to look about the room.)

"I like this place."

MITCH

(Catching her looking.)

"It's nice."

LILY

(beat)

"To be honest, I don't have much luck with things like this."

MITCH

(beat)

"Truth be told, I don't have much luck with things like this."

They stop, stare at each other. She breaks it.

LILY

"My last one ended nasty. Broken dishes and missing CDs."

MITCH

She stopped there and I think I know what she was thinking.

(They pause, smile.)

"Things like what?"

LILY

"Huh?"

MITCH

"Things like *what*?"

LILY

"Like... well... never mind."

MITCH

"I know."

(beat)

LILY

This was different.

MITCH

This was different.

MITCH

(*beat*)

We talked for hours, then I walked her to her hotel. (*beat*) *My* hotel.

LILY

The *same* hotel! Can you believe it?

MITCH

I told her I was staying the whole week.

LILY

"So am I!"

MITCH

"I would love to see you again."

(*beat*)

That's when it happened. (*beat*) Sort of.

LILY

"I would love to see you again."

(*beat*)

That's when it happened. (*beat*) Sort of.

MITCH

Now, I'm not *that* guy. You know, the one who falls instantly in love—and I'm not saying that's what was necessarily happening...

LILY

Love? *Noooo*... But, it's not just new...

MITCH

But...

LILY

Better... Comfortable.

MITCH

Better... Comfortable.

Both take a breath and stand.

LILY

My head was spinning a bit.

MITCH

When we got in the elevator I had a flash that we would both reach for the same floor button. That would be too weird but would certainly fit with everything else that has happened. (*beat*) We didn't.

LILY

I saw him reach for the number four button. The same floor! I couldn't have that happen, so I waited and pushed six. (*beat*) That was just *too* weird and I couldn't let it happen. I had a great night but the floor thing was a bit much. I guess I could have just gone with it. Part of me wanted to. (*beat*) I just wanted to give it a little more time before I dive in completely. Wade in the warm water of the shallow end. (*beat*) Okay! Fine! I panicked! Alright? Happy now?

(MORE)

LILY (cont'd)

(*beat*) Anyway, he got off the elevator and I rode it up two more floors, waited in the sixth floor lobby for twenty minutes and rode it back down.

MITCH

I sat in my room and looked out the window at the city for a half hour or so. Then, I couldn't help myself, I pulled out my iPod and speakers.

SOUND: *Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore* by the Walker Brothers. He sings along.

LILY

First I heard the song. Then I heard him! (*beat*) I listened through the wall. (*beat*) He's right next door and I am frozen!

(*She stands still for a moment, then starts swaying to the music and humming along.*)

That song! (*beat*) I am lost!

MITCH

I thought I heard humming through the wall so I turned the music down. (*beat*) Oh, my God! It's her! (*beat*) You know, when I would watch romantic movies, in my younger days, I would mock those bing-bang-boom relationships. Love has to grow. Anything instant would be lust. At least, that's what I was taught growing up. Regardless, I would have loved for something like that to be real. To happen to me. (*beat*) Never did. (*beat*) Well, hadn't... Until that night. It was... I don't know... *weird*, for lack of a better term.

(*He sits.*)

I couldn't sleep. Granted, we got to the hotel about three in the morning and I was exhausted. Still, all I could do was sit on the edge of the bed like I was waiting outside the principal's office.

Song fades out. She stops swaying and humming as it does.

LILY

(*Sitting.*)

I couldn't sleep. I could feel myself changing and it scared me. Most of my relationships had ended so horribly. What really worried me, thinking back on them, was the fact that the common denominator in all of them was me. Could they have been my fault? (*beat*) Maybe, this will be the last time I have to take a chance. The weird thing is that there is really nothing all that special about him, you know? Except that he (seems to be) a good person. Nice. Somewhat funny. But... (*beat*) You know when you see a pretty person and you think, 'Wow! I'll take that!' Then they talk. And they become ugly real fast. Does that ever happen to you? Well, what I have learned—what I learned that night, at least—is that it also works the other way. You meet someone who is okay looking and you think, 'We could be friends,' then they *speak*... Sometimes, a regular guy who doesn't quite grab you at the beginning can turn it all around after you start to talk to him and even though he doesn't become... I don't know... Brad Pitt, or, whatever... he becomes something that you could actually see having a decent time with. Maybe more. That's Mitch—intelligent, funny, charming and... sweet. In a genuine way. (*beat*) Mitch.

(MORE)

LILY (cont'd)

Yeah, we're going to have to change that name somehow. *(beat)* What is really weird about this night, though, is that I should be really scared... Petrified. But, I'm not. For the first time in my love life I am actually... excited. Hopeful.

MITCH

I went down for breakfast and she wasn't there yet. Sad. Finally give in, put myself out there... I mean *really* put myself out there and she ditches me? I was just about to leave when she appeared in the doorway.

(beat... He 'sees' her.)

I have to tell you, I like this feeling!

LILY

So, we have breakfast and then proceed to spend every waking moment together. I have never slept so little over a week in my life! *(beat)* I wasn't tired at all. We did everything we could at Artscape. A lot of theatre and some really good art. *(beat)* He is too intelligent for his own good. Or, he lied his butt off, who knows? Either way, it was a fantastic week! I could not bear the thought that it would end, but...

MITCH

Saying goodbye was the worst! I finally have found out what I have been looking for my whole life, I just didn't know it. We didn't... you know... do anything and that seemed to make it all the more, I don't know... real?

(He basks in the memory.)

Yeah. Real. Somehow, I knew that something would come from this and I was excited for the future. Even though the present was ending, I didn't feel it, you know? Not low... sad... whatever, because I knew there was something on the horizon. Something worth my time. My emotional investment. *(beat)* Our flights were a couple of hours apart. Traded info... addresses, numbers... Could not believe that we had not discussed where we live. But, it just never came up. And if she had said L.A. I would have canceled my flight and married her right there! *(beat)* So, anyway, she was flying to Boston and I was headed back to L.A. Three thousand miles. May as well have be ten thousand.

LILY

I cried. I know! Me! *(beat)* He was so sweet about it. We stood there in the middle of the terminal and held each other. I would swear I heard him sniffle. He tried to play it off tough. It was ... God help me... *cute*.

MITCH

She whispered, '*You're lovely*' in my ear. *(beat)* Lovely. No tone of irony. Just a simple, declarative statement. And I believed it.

LILY

He didn't say anything back, but I knew there was something in there. Something he *wanted* to say.

MITCH

Before the plane took off I texted her.

(Lily reading on phone.)

"I should have said something. I should have said I have never been happier. I can't wait to see you again. I will message you when I get home and we can figure out schedules."

LILY

(Mitch reading on phone.)

"It will feel like forever. I await with baited breath. Safe travels."

(He smiles. Big. It slowly turns.)

When we took off I felt a pit forming in my stomach. I had never felt loss like I did at that moment. I wanted to get off that plane. I was almost in a panic! *(beat)* I re-read his text. Looking for something bad hidden in it. You know, 'haha, jokes on you!' *(beat)* Nothing hidden. *(beat)* This will be the longest afternoon ever. Longer, actually. I'll get home but will have to wait for him to land. *(beat)* For the first time in my life I am looking forward to something. I mean, *really*, looking forward to something. Future? I had never really thought about it before. *(beat)* Never...

(She smiles. Sits.)

MITCH

It was night and the cabin was dark, but I was awake. I can't sleep on planes. I have to be exhausted and, though I was physically spent from the week, I was so excited, invigorated, that I couldn't possibly sleep. She bought me a book on the way to the airport. She inscribed the frontispiece...

LILY

(Mitch reading the inscription.)

"Mitch, I can only tell you what is in my heart and tell you that this has been the best week of my life. I give you this book as a memory of our time together. I will carry you in my heart forever."

MITCH

Forever...

(A comforting thought.)

I was reading. The rest of the people were asleep. *(pause)* I can't describe the sound. It was almost imperceptible, this scraping sound outside the plane. I always sit at the wings, so, I assumed it was from there. Or was it the engine? Nothing for the moment, then... *(beat)* There it was again. Faint but sharp. *(beat)* It's probably nothing. Right? I go back to reading. *(beat)* A little turbulence. Now I'm worried but, as I look around the cabin, I think it best to keep it to myself.

LILY

Finally home.

(Checking phone.)

Why am I checking? He's still in the air.

(She starts typing a text.)

(MORE)

LILY (cont'd)

For when he lands. "Welcome home! Thanks for a wonderful week. I can't wait to hear from you! I wish I were there. xoxo"

(She looks out and smiles.)

Optimism. Who knew? Turn a corner and there it is—what you need, when you need it. Whether you know it or not.

MITCH

Memories from the week start to flash across my mind. Cliché, I know, but there it all was. The first time I saw her. The first meeting, complete with that cheap-shot rabbit punch and the hot pink tiger panties. Dinner. The little arm touches that show a spark. Walking, talking... Sharing a song through a wall. Her humming. Smiles. Laughs. First hand hold. Her eyes. Her hand on my cheek.

(beat) First kiss... Lips so soft...

(He is getting emotional. He knows.)

The sound grew louder, disturbing some of the other passengers. The plane pitched. Dipped. Rolled side-to-side. This is how it ends... *(beat)* All I wanted to do was hear her one more time. Talk to her. Hear her laugh. Feel her lips... one more time. The sound became deafening. I looked around at my fellow victims and I can see that they are screaming but I hear nothing but this rush of air that suddenly disappears... morphs... into her voice.

(He closes his eyes, smiles. She hums Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore until blackout.)

There was a brilliant flash...

His eyes burst open in shock as his light flashes to full intensity in concert with a deafening explosion, then out.

She is still humming, smiling, peaceful. Her light goes out.

Black. End of play.