

FOR DETROIT

By Mary Claire Zael

Characters

TRISH

28-30 years old, black woman

ANDY

28-30 years old, white man

WAITER

Time:

A Night in Fall

Place:

Lansing Restaurant

SETTING: Habitat, a fancy restaurant. A first date.

AT RISE: Trish sits at a table for two in the restaurant. Her date, Andy, arrives and sits down.

[Ambient restaurant noises.]

ANDY

Sorry I'm late. That's a horrible first impression.

[Moving chair sound effects.]

TRISH

Don't worry about it! I'm Trish.

ANDY

I'm Andy. It's so nice to finally meet you in person.

TRISH

I know, right? Online dating is crazy, you talk to someone for months without ever actually seeing them.

ANDY

Advantages of the digital age.

TRISH

Or disadvantages.

ANDY

It's worked out for us all right.

[Pause.]

By the way, you look beautiful.

TRISH

Thank you.

[Footsteps. Waiter enters.]

WAITER

Welcome to Habitat. Can I start you off with something to drink?

TRISH

I'm all right with the water.

ANDY

Are you sure? You can order whatever you want.

TRISH

I'm not a big drinker.

ANDY

Suit yourself. I'll have a gin and tonic.

WAITER

I'll grab that and be back to take your orders.

[Footsteps as he leaves. Opening of menus.]

ANDY

Have you ever been here before?

TRISH

Never, so it'll probably take me all night to decide what to get.

ANDY

I completely understand. They've had to kick me out on various occasions.

TRISH

That's kind of impressive.

ANDY

Or embarrassing.

TRISH

Ooh, I might get the steak. But the soup special sounds amazing.

ANDY

The steak's my favorite thing to get.

TRISH

Then I think we're going to get along just fine.

(They laugh.)

So, Andy, where are you from?

ANDY

Traverse City, also known as Cherryland, USA.

TRISH

Ooh, I've never been.

ANDY

You've never vacationed at the cherry capital of the world?

TRISH

You know, I'm detecting a theme in these nicknames.

ANDY

The routine does get a little old, but we've got some other charms up our sleeves. Film festivals, beaches, that sort of thing.

TRISH

Sounds lovely.

ANDY

Oh, it is. What about you?

TRISH

I'm from Detroit.

ANDY

Like, somewhere near Detroit, or the city itself?

TRISH

Actually from Detroit. Born and raised.

ANDY

Really. So many people say they're from Detroit, but—

TRISH

But they're really from a suburb or somewhere totally different? I know. It's actually pretty frustrating.

ANDY

And confusing. I can't imagine why you'd want to say you're from Detroit if you aren't. That's kind of a downgrade.

[Restaurant sounds decrease.]

TRISH

I'm sorry, what?

ANDY

(laughing)

Don't get me wrong, I'm a devout Lions fan—

TRISH

(interrupting)

The Lions suck.

ANDY

—But it's not a surprise that Detroit isn't the best place to live. You're from there, you should know.

TRISH

And you're not from there, so you don't know.

ANDY

You know what I mean. When I say, "Traverse City," you think of cherries and sand dunes. When I say "Detroit"...

TRISH

...I think of my family, Lafayette Coney Island, and Belle Isle.

ANDY

Well, you're biased. Most people think of crime, riots, that sort of thing.

TRISH

Those are just stereotypes.

ANDY

And what's presented in the news.

TRISH

Unfortunately, that's true, but that's part of the problem. The media paints Detroit as a place full of muggers and shootings, and it has that, just like any other city. But there's beauty and strength, too. Take the DIA, for example.

ANDY

DIA?

TRISH

The Detroit Institute of Arts. It's one of the best art museums in the United States, and most people don't even know it exists.

ANDY

One museum won't change its reputation. By the way, it's kind of sexy to see you so fired up.

[Footsteps as waiter returns. Restaurant sounds increase.]

WAITER

Are you two ready to order?

TRISH

Sure. I'll have the soup.

ANDY

Are you sure a strong Detroit girl like you can't handle the steak?

TRISH

Excuse me?

ANDY

Two steaks, please.

WAITER

Right away.

[Footsteps as he leaves.]

ANDY

So tell me about your childhood. Did you ever see anybody get stabbed? Participate in a rumble?

TRISH

Um, no. Did you?

ANDY

Of course not. I'm from the second best small town in the country, and you live in Slum Village.

TRISH

What did you just say?

ANDY

What? It's true.

TRISH

You're being incredibly offensive.

ANDY

C'mon, Trish. It's just a city we're talking about.

TRISH

It's my home.

ANDY

How about we talk about something else?

TRISH

Fine.

(They both take sips of their drinks. Trish tries to salvage the date.)

What do you do?

ANDY

I'm a big finance guy. Accountant with a background in stats.

TRISH

Interesting. I'm a doctor.

ANDY

Really?

TRISH

(dryly)

You sound surprised.

ANDY

Given your background, that's impressive. I've never even heard of a black doctor.

TRISH

You know, Andy, I don't think this is going to work out.

ANDY

What do you mean? We're having a nice time!

TRISH

You don't respect me or where I'm from.

ANDY

Come on, this is Detroit we're talking about. It's the most notorious city in the world.

TRISH

Because of people like you. Have you ever even been there?

(Silence.)

Are you serious?

ANDY

Give me a break, okay? I don't want to get shot.

TRISH

That's it.

[Loud chair sounds as she pushes away from table. Restaurant sounds stop.]

ANDY

You're going to leave because I don't like where you're from? Overreacting much?

TRISH

You don't know a thing about it. The Detroit I know is friendly, and loving, and strong. The Detroit I know is not made of crime and violence that ignorant racist pricks like you absorb from the media.

ANDY

Jesus, Trish, stop getting so defensive. It's just a city.

TRISH

No, it's not. Detroit made me who I am. If you don't love and respect the city that raised me, you'll never love and respect me.

(Trish stands.)

Enjoy your steak.

(She leaves.)

END OF PLAY.