

If at First You Don't Succeed...

A 10-minute play

Jake Lewis
282 Pleasant St.
Marlborough, MA 01752
JDustinL@gmail.com

If at First You Don't Succeed...

By Jake Lewis

CAST

Miles - any age

Rose - any age

Waiter - any age

Setting

A restaurant

Now

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*A restaurant. A table is DSC, and **Miles** waits at it. He appears anxious. Finally, **Rose** enters. She looks around briefly, then spots him. She waves as she hurries over to the table.*

Miles: Rose?

Rose: Yes, that's me! You must be Miles.

Miles: Miles? Oh, right! It's hard to keep track of who I am each day.

Rose: Pardon?

Miles: Nothing. Just a joke.

Miles comes around the table and pulls out seat for her. She sits.

Rose: Thank you. It's hard to find a gentleman these days.

Miles: I know.

Rose: Have you been waiting long?

Miles: Just a week, actually.

There's an awkward pause.

Rose: Oh, another joke?

Miles: I apologize. My sense of humor takes some getting used to.

Rose: That's fine. I'm sorry, I'm just a bit on edge. I am starving!

Miles: I love a woman with a big appetite!

Rose: Oh. Um. Thanks, I guess?

Miles: I didn't mean that as an insult. I'm not calling you fat or anything.

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Rose: I get what you mean. I will tell you up front I'm not too optimistic about this date. My last few dates have not really been my type.

Miles: *(trying not to look offended)* What was so bad about them?

Rose: Oh, you don't want to hear about it.

Miles: I do! It lets me know what I've been doing wrong.

Rose: You haven't done anything wrong yet. But the night is still young!

Beat.

Miles: Now you're the one who is joking!

Rose: Only slightly. You'd be surprised at how quickly my dates have left a sour taste in my mouth.

Miles: They couldn't be that awful...could they?

Rose: Well...the last guy must've known I love horses, so he tried to impress me with his encyclopedic knowledge of manure.

Miles: *(uncomfortably)* No crap?

Rose: And then there was Henry, who said he could do an impression of anyone I could think of! But they all sounded like Nicolas Cage with a lobotomy. So, like Nicolas Cage in other words.

Miles: No impressions. Got it.

Rose: *(on a roll)* And let's not forget John.

Miles: *(not enjoying what he got himself into)* Seems you haven't.

Rose: John was in love with himself. Nothing against skinny guys, but...I like meat on my men's bones.

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Miles: *(mildly annoyed)* Sure, tell me that now.

Rose: *(Beat.)* But this is the first time we've met.

Miles: Yes, of course, I just mean ...it's too bad we didn't meet sooner.

Rose: Uh huh. Anyway. Where is that waiter? If I don't get some bread soon, I'm going to start eating this table!

Miles: Well. Wood is a good source of fiber.

Rose: Anyway, enough about me! I must sound pretty pathetic.

Miles: Not at all! I think you're perfect! That's why I'm here with you again.

Rose: Again?

Miles: Sorry, bad grammar. Here again, comma, with you.

Rose: I have no idea why people seem to think this is a hot spot. Takes forever to get served, apparently.

Waiter enters.

Miles: Waiter!

Waiter: *(Annoyed.)* Good evening. *(noticing Rose)* Oh, hello again! Another gentleman, I see! *(whispers to her)* You sure do have an active social life!

Rose looks away uncomfortably.

Miles: I think we'd like to order. I'll have the swordfish, and she'll have the house steak. As bloody as you can make it without it crawling off the plate.

Rose looks up, shocked.

Rose: Wow, you're good. How did you know my order?

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Miles: Lucky guess?

Waiter: Excellent selections. (*Turns back and gives thumbs up, and then speaks in stage whisper*) Lookin' good! (*exits*)

Rose: I think the waiter was just hitting on you.

Miles: Was he? But you look lovely yourself, if I may say so.

Rose: Why, thank you. As do you. Handsome, I mean. I especially like your tie. It's my favorite color, actually.

Miles: See? I listen!

Rose: What do you mean?

Miles: Oh. Umm. Your online profile must have said this is your favorite color, so that's why I chose to wear it!

Rose: I don't remember writing that on there....

Miles: Oh you did. I assure you.

Rose: Well, I created that thing so long ago...but I still don't know anything about you, really. Your profile said that you work in the music industry? I must admit, that was the main reason I agreed to this date. It's probably a little silly, but I've always dreamed that a guy would write a song for me one day.

Miles: (*proudly*) Yes, I'm the assistant manager at the record store in the mall.

Rose: (*masking disappointment*) Assistant, huh?

Miles: Yep! I'm hoping to work my way up the corporate ladder and be a manager in the next few years! I've got goals, you know.

Rose: (*slightly uplifted*) That's more than I can say about Rick.

Miles: Another dud?

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Rose: Yep. He said, and I quote, *(in a hippie voice)* "having a job just makes you another cog in the machine of the society that oppresses us."

Miles: I think Rick sounds like a real free-thinker.

Rose: He was. And a free eater, too. He stuck me with the bill, but insisted it's because he's a feminist. You remind me of him, a little bit.

Miles: *(horrified)* I do?

Rose: Don't worry, it's not because of anything you've said or done. I'll figure it out...

Waiter brings out food and places it down in front of them.

Waiter: How about some wine to loosen things up?

Rose and Miles: *(stands up so fast she spills her water)* No!

Waiter: *(to Miles)* Sorry. I'll get you more napkins. *(Exits)*

Rose: Sorry about that, it's just that I'm--

Miles: Allergic to grapes.

Rose: Yup. Sucks, huh? You don't want to see me when--Wait a minute, back up. How'd you know that?

Miles: Would you believe it if I said it was another lucky guess?

Rose: Not at all.

Miles: I didn't think so.

Rose: 'fess up, Tie Guy, or the date ends right now. Have you been...*(aghast)* watching me or something? *(grabs knife off plate and sticks it out at him as she backs up)* Are you...what do they call it...a cyber-stalker? I knew online dating was a bad idea. But Nicole said it was completely safe and everyone on the service had a background check conducted on them, but maybe I'm just destined to be alone--

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Miles: No, no, no! Stop! It's nothing like that.

Waiter re-enters with napkins.

Waiter: Uh oh. Not going well, I see. I'll get your check. *(exits)*

Rose: How do you know so much about me? And all these little things you've been saying, like we have been here together before, and you looking familiar....I'm a little creeped out, to be honest.

Miles: Ok, full disclosure--we have met before.

Rose: I knew it! Where?

Miles: Right here. Last Thursday.

Rose: We did? Were you dining here when I was on my date with...what was his name...?

Miles: Chuck.

Rose: Yeah! Chuck! How'd you know that?

Miles: Because I am Chuck.

Rose: I thought you were Miles?

Miles: I am. I'm both.

Rose: But Chuck was....taller. Like, much taller. Nothing against...short guys...

Miles: It's hard to explain.

Rose: Try me.

Miles: Ok. Here goes. I'm a shape-shifter.

Beat.

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Rose: And I thought I'd heard it all.

Miles: Surprise!

Rose: Why me, Lord? Why can't I meet a normal guy? I'd even settle for sorta weird! I'm a good person. I pay my taxes on time, I stop at yellow lights. Sure, I could do some things differently, like have a reusable mug at Starbucks, or turn off the front light in the mornings, but, C'MON!

Miles: It's not really anything to be scared of. It was just something I was born with. Kinda like how you were born with a sixth toe.

Rose: Oh my God, I told you that too?

Miles: Well, you told Peter. So, yeah, basically.

Rose: Peter. I almost forgot him. He -- you -- kept running to the bathroom all night. Then you left without so much as a goodbye.

Miles: Yeah, sorry about that. His shape wasn't "sticking" to me. You do not want to see what happens if it comes off, trust me. Not pretty.

Rose: Thanks, I guess? Let me get this straight. You've been...I can't believe I'm even saying this...becoming different people in order to, what? Be my perfect date?

Miles: That's the basic idea, yeah.

Rose: I don't know if I should be pissed off or flattered. (*Beat.*) Who else have you been?

Miles: Oh...hehe...I was also Mitch, Walter, and Sarah.

At this last, they each exchange a look.

Rose: Hey, I was curious!

Miles: I'm not complaining. I've gotten seven dates with you when otherwise I would've gotten just one.

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Rose: That's kind of sweet...in a stalker-y sort of way. But that doesn't excuse the fact you've been lying to me all along!

Miles: I've always been the same person underneath all those shapes.

Rose: But you've been changing who you are so I like you better. You shouldn't ever have to be anyone other than who you are.

Miles: *(trying to do a Jack Nicholson impression, but sounding more like Nicolas Cage with a lobotomy)* You make me want to be a better man.

Rose: We said no impressions!

Miles: Oh, right. Sorry.

Rose: It's difficult to show the real you. Trust me, I know. I might look all normal and put-together on the outside, but underneath...

Miles: No need to explain. And anyway, being a shapeshifter is not as great as it sounds. It really itches at first too!

Rose: Well, don't worry. you won't need to do it again for me. As of tonight, I'm officially swearing off romance, adopting 11 cats, and going to live in the woods.

Miles: And I'm sticking with this body. If I can't get it right after 7 dates, then it's me.

Waiter re-enters but stops when he sees them.

Rose: *(cautiously flirtatious)* Well, it's a good body. Your best yet.

Miles: Another confession. This is my original body anyway.

Rose: Really?

Miles: Yes. I figured I'd tried everything else. Maybe I'd be me for once. I hope I can remember who that is.

Waiter re-enters with check and gives it to Miles.

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Waiter: You told her, huh?

Miles: Yeah. No point in hiding it anymore.

Rose: *(indicating Waiter)* He knows too?

Miles: Of course! He's a shapeshifter too. We met at a recent AASS convention.

Rose: AASS?

Miles: American Association of Shapeshifters.

Rose: Will wonders never cease. If you'll excuse me, I need to go remove my nose.

She exits.

Waiter: So. Do you think you're going to be able to...y'know?

Miles: I don't know. It doesn't really matter to me. I just feel happy that I can be open and honest with her. At least this way if she rejects me, it's for me.

Waiter: I've been seeing this girl for a few weeks, and I think it's too late to tell her now. Guess I'm stuck as *(checks nametag)* Alfredo.

Miles: Wait a second. Did she just say "remove my nose"?

Rose re-enters, only this time, she appears as an alien. Waiter runs out.

Miles: Oh my God! Rose? Is that you?

Rose: I figured that since you confessed your true self to me, I should be honest with you too. This is who I really am.

Miles: You're...an alien?

Rose: An extraterrestrial traveler, if you please. I know it might take a bit of getting used to.

Miles: A little. Can you and I even...you know. With me being a human, and you a...a...

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Rose: Zingtronian. And yes, we can. I actually have four different reproductive organs. What do you think of me now? Was I worth all that shapeshifting?

Miles: Well, umm....I don't think you're quite my type.

Rose: Oh, now I'm not your type? Mr. Changing-His-Physical-Appearance-To-Get-Another-Date-With-The-Nice-Lady Guy? It's ok for you to be a scientific freak, not to mention a big, fat liar, but when I show you my true self, suddenly I'm not your type?

Miles: I could see how that might look. So, anyway, it was great meeting you, and I wish you the best in the future!

Puts money down on the table.

Rose: Where are you going? We haven't eaten dinner yet!

Miles looks around.

Miles: I suddenly lost my appetite.

Rose walks up to Miles.

Rose: Too bad. I haven't lost mine, though.

She attacks Miles, who falls to the floor.

Rose: Finally, a good date!

She begins eating Miles as lights fade to black.

The End