

Check Please: Take 2

a play by Jonathan Rand

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Cast of Characters

GIRL

GUY

KIM

HANK

DONNA

LYLE

JULIA

DEWEY

JACKIE

ALEX

CLEO

PAUL

Setting

A restaurant or café: two tables and four chairs. Also briefly in a couple of suggested apartments.

Author's Note

If any technology or pop culture reference becomes dated, please replace with a more modern reference. And feel free to be flexible with gender.

Acknowledgments

Lake Braddock Theatre of Burke, Virginia presented the first staged reading of *Check Please: Take 2* on June 23, 2006 at the International Thespian Festival in Lincoln, Nebraska. The cast was as follows:

GIRL.....Jenny Fornoff
GUY Nathan Black
KIM.....Stephanie Ramsey
HANK..... Matt Tiemann
DONNA Alison Stein
LYLE Chris Deter
JULIA Casey Stein
DEWEY..... Will Noguchi
JACKIE Danielle Schender
ALEX..... Jason Wolf
CLEO Izzy Salhani
PAUL Andrew Bare
Director..... R. L. Mirabal
Stage Manager..... Tami Grossman

Special thanks to the Lake Braddock Thespians and the Educational Theatre Association for their unwavering support.

Prologue

(Split scene: GIRL and KIM are playing Scrabble; GUY and HANK are playing the latest Madden on Xbox. The guys are situated in the general vicinity of the girls, but in reality they are in different apartments in different parts of the city. The scene needs to move fairly quickly for the separate conversations to sound natural.)

GIRL/GUY. We broke up.

KIM. Oh no!

HANK. Oh man.

GIRL. It's okay.

GUY. We both saw it coming.

KIM. What happened?

HANK. How'd you screw it up?

GIRL. *(Simultaneous:)* Maybe he got a little distant.

GUY. *(Simultaneous:)* Maybe she got a little needy.

KIM. I'm so sorry.

GIRL. It's fine.

HANK. Yeah but you know what's worse than a breakup?

GUY. What?

HANK. This 40-yard touchdown. BAM! *(Beat.)* Sorry.

HANK/KIM. What are you gonna do?

GIRL. I think I'll take a break.

GUY. What do *you* think I should do?

KIM. No you have to—

HANK/KIM. —get back in the game

GUY. It's not too soon?

HANK. It's *never* too soon.

GIRL. Are you sure that's a good idea?

KIM. *(As she lays down her Scrabble tiles:)* What's a good idea is a "Q" on Triple-Letter Score. BAM! *(Beat.)* You were saying...

GUY. You really think I should start dating again.

HANK. Absolutely.

GIRL. You're sure?

KIM. Rebounding is tough, but you'll pull through it.

HANK. Rebounding is *awesome*.

GUY. All right—

GIRL/GUY. —I'll do it.

KIM. Nice!

HANK. Sweet!

KIM. And no matter what, at least we learned a valuable lesson.

HANK. And at least we learned a valuable lesson.

GUY/GIRL. What?

KIM. Three times "Q" is 30.

HANK. Scoring 62 points really strains your thumbs.

GIRL. Thanks.

GUY. Thanks.

KIM/HANK. Rematch?

(Blackout.)

Scene 1

(DONNA is terse and serious throughout – even on her personal calls.)

GUY. So on your profile it said you're an E.R. doctor?

DONNA. Yes. Trauma surgeon.

GUY. That's amazing.

DONNA. Thank you for saying so. It is rewarding work. What do you do?

GUY. Well it's gonna sound trivial in comparison, but...

(Donna's cell rings.)

DONNA. One moment.

(DONNA looks at her phone.)

This is rather important. *(Answers:)* Dr. Johnson. ... Yes. ... Yes. ... Yes. ... Who's there? Mel Gibson who. ... That is a relatively amusing knock-knock joke. Also quite offensive. ... We will speak later. ... Thank you. ... Good evening. *(Hangs up.)* Where did we leave off? Ah yes, trauma surgery. It was my aspiration from a young age and it remains a genuine passion.

GUY. That's great.

DONNA. You were saying what you do.

(Donna's phone rings.)

One moment. *(Answers.)* Dr. Johnson ... Yes ... Yes ... I'm unavailable at present. ... A virtual date ... It's going fine. ... 4 out of 10. ... Moderately attractive. ... He's contributed nothing to the conversation. ... Good evening.

GUY. You know I could hear you.

DONNA. That is a flagrant breach of doctor-patient confidentiality.

(Her phone rings.)

Dr. Johnson. David, yes. ... I concur that we never should have terminated our relationship. Will gladly resume. Regroup in one hour. ... I love you, too.

(She hangs up.)

GUY. Who's David?

(Her phone rings.)

DONNA. One moment. *(Answers.)* Dr. Johnson...

GUY. Okay, can you please turn off your phone? It's just rude.

DONNA. It's the hospital. A ten-year-old needs a heart transplant.

GUY. Oh no...

DONNA. Try and have a least some respect for a child's life.

GUY. I am so sorry.

DONNA. In actuality, I just punked you. It's David again. *(To the phone:)* Marry me tonight.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

GIRL. So your profile said you're fluent in a bunch of languages?

LYLE. Yes.

GIRL. That's awesome.

LYLE. Thanks.

GIRL. I forgot everything from school except *biblioteca* and *baño*.

LYLE. I'm sure you know more than you think. I get rusty all the time.

GIRL. How many languages do you know?

LYLE. (*Sheepish:*) Oh I sorta lost count.

GIRL. Really? Wow. Can you give me a few samples?

LYLE. I'd hate to seem like I'm showing off.

GIRL. Just a few?

LYLE. Okay, fine... All right, so... Let's see... If I wanted to say "It's a pleasure to meet you" in Latin, I would say: *Pro bono habeas corpus magnum opus*.

GIRL. That sounds familiar.

LYLE. It's a fairly common expression.

GIRL. Okay. What else?

LYLE. Well if I wanted to tell you in Italian, "You look beautiful in the color red," I would say: *Mille grazie DiCaprio al dente*.

GIRL. Did you say "DiCaprio"?

LYLE. DiCaprio means "color" or "hue." Then in German, if I wanted to say, "Looks like rain tomorrow," that would be *Schadenfreude lederhosen bratwurst*.

GIRL. Hold on a second.

LYLE. In French, "hold on a second" is *Bonjour, baguette* or in Hebrew *dreidel dreidel dreidel*.

GIRL. Okay, stop. I'm not an idiot. Do you know *any* foreign languages, or are you just a total fraud?

(LYLE is disgusted, scoffing at this rude accusation. He delivers the following as if it means "You're a jerk.")

LYLE. Chorizo taco...

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(At the moment the scene begins, JULIA is in the middle of a hearty, uncontrollable laugh, and continues laughing for a good amount of time. It is quite an intricate string of boisterous sounds. She eventually lets the laughing subside.)

(Pause.)

GUY. *(Serious:)* No, my dog really died.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4

GIRL. Good to meet you.

DEWEY. Yeah. Same here.

GIRL. So tell me about yourself.

DEWEY. Well, I'm all about doing anything and everything that lets me live on the edge. Life for me is nothing but intensity, going for broke, taking chances.

GIRL. That's a good outlook.

DEWEY. It's all about living to the Extreme. In fact, I wrote a poem about being Extreme. Ready?

It's my dream

To be extreme.

(Beat.)

GIRL. Oh. You were done?

DEWEY. It took me a few months to get the rhyming perfect. You know that song “Why Do I Go to Extremes”? I’m pretty sure Billy Joel wrote that song about me. That’s how much I love to be Extreme.

GIRL. It’s a good song.

DEWEY. It’s my favorite word.

GIRL. Extreme?

DEWEY. Extreme!!

GIRL. So are you a snowboarder, or an mountain biker...?

DEWEY. Oh no – I’m way too busy with work to do anything like that.

GIRL. What do you do?

DEWEY. I’m an accountant.

GIRL. Oh.

DEWEY. I know accounting doesn’t *sound* Extreme, but trust me, it gets *pret-ty* Extreme. I mean, just think about tax returns. The W-9? Right? The 1099? Talk about intense. And sure, we all know the Form 1040 is next level, but the Form 1040-ES? Off the chain.

GIRL. I didn’t know that.

DEWEY. I started this joke around the office that the “ES” in “1040-ES” stands for “Extreme Standard-Accounting-Procedure.” I’m sort of known for my puns.

GIRL. That’s not a pun.

DEWEY. But beyond accounting, I still like to stay Extreme in my spare time. Like, something that’s normal for most people? I like to take it up a notch. Like, you know how when normal people walk, they go like this?

(He walks normally.)

Well I walk, like *this*.

(He walks – to the Extreme!)

Or when most people read a menu, they read like this.

(He reads the menu normally.)

But I read a menu, like *this*.

(He reads the menu – to the Extreme!)

Or when normal people go on first dates, they're all like small-talk-small-talk, blah blah blah. But when *I* go on a first date I'm like MARRY ME IN THIS RESTAURANT RIGHT NOW BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE INSANE!!

(As a part of the above, he does some crazy move that ends with him on one knee with an engagement ring.)

GIRL. Absolutely not.

(DEWEY's tone shifts to quietly logical, wholly unlike his earlier intensity.)

DEWEY. In hindsight, that was a little extreme.

(Blackout.)

Midlogue

(Split scene: GIRL and GUY are each talking on the phone. KIM and HANK are elsewhere, in the general vicinity of each other.)

GIRL/GUY. I give up.

KIM. No you don't.

GUY. It's hopeless out there.

HANK. I'm sure it's not that bad.

GIRL. I have zero optimism for the human race.

GUY. What if any of these people *reproduce*?

KIM. You just have to keep trying.

HANK. Rebounding is important.

KIM. The chance of success is always low.

HANK. You know the old saying: if you wanna make an omelet, you gotta shoot for the moon.

(KIM turns to HANK. We now realize they're in the same room.)

KIM. That wasn't even close to right.

GUY. Wait, is that Kim?

GIRL. Are you with my ex-boyfriend's best friend?!

HANK. (*Overlapping:*) Ahhhhh I got a call coming in! Gotta go!

KIM. (*Overlapping:*) Ahhhhh my signal's really bad all of a sudden!

HANK/KIM. KEEP TRYING!!

(*They hang up.*)

GIRL. Kim?

GUY. Hank?

(*KIM and HANK drop their phones.*)

HANK. Think they'll be okay?

KIM. Yeah, they're fine.

(*They peck each other briefly on the lips.*)

(*They pick up their Xbox controllers. HANK hits unpause and they proceed with the game. They stare at the screen.*)

HANK. All right Scrabble Queen – you just sit back while I take this kickoff to the house.

(*After a quick amount of button-pressing for them both, a whistle blows on the game.*)

KIM. (*Dripping with sarcasm, as if she's serious:*) Oh. What happened? So when I tackle you at your own ten-yard line, do you get points for that? Oh, you don't? That's weird.

HANK. I hate you.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 5

GUY. Believe it or not, this is my first experience with a dating app.

JACKIE. No...

GUY. Yeah. I'm more of a – more of an *in-person* kinda person. Sort of old-fashioned.

JACKIE. Oh I'm the opposite. I only set up dates from my phone.

GUY. Really?

JACKIE. imho it's the best way tbh.

GUY. Sorry, say again?

JACKIE. imho it's the best way tbh.

GUY. tbh?

JACKIE. Ohhhhhh... OMG, OMG, OMG. You said you're old-fashioned, so you're a noob who doesn't get how to talk online! lmao! lulz! *facepalm*

GUY. Well I've heard *some* of it, but generally not out *loud*.

JACKIE. That. is. adorbs! rofl! You're like a walking #tbt. So tell me about yourself in less than 140 characters.

GUY. Uh, well before quarantine I got into skydiving...

JACKIE. OMG, yolo, fomo.

GUY. Also my sister's pregnant.

JACKIE. Uhhh, TMI! jk jk jk...

GUY. So can I ask you something?

JACKIE. Yasss queen! AMA!

GUY. What do you do for a living?

JACKIE. Oh—well I spend about half my work day on TikTok, and the rest Gramming. And when I'm lookin' for luuuuv—jk, lol—I'm on Tinder, Bumble, J-Date—y'know, the yoozh.

GUY. Wait, J-Date?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Isn't that for Jewish singles?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Didn't your profile say you were Catholic?

JACKIE. Yep!

GUY. Then why are you on J-Date?

JACKIE. Why are *you* on J-Date?

GUY. I'm *not* on J-Date.

JACKIE. So I have a few more FAQs, e.g. What's your favorite gif?

GUY. [...]

JACKIE. Oh no I can tell you're lost again and BTDubs that's totes redonkadonk. It's like I speak English and you speak Canadian.

GUY. That doesn't make sense.

JACKIE. You make me laugh. Winky face. omg, you're so confused; you're like ttyl, #whuuut??

GUY. Listen, I just gotta be honest: That whole...dialect ...is kind of exhausting.

(JACKIE is blindsided.)

JACKIE. Frowny face.

GUY. Sorry, I'm just used to standard talking.

JACKIE. Frowny face with a single tear. #sadsselfie.

(She quickly takes a picture of herself.)

GUY. I'm not saying it's bad; maybe it's just a little unusual?

JACKIE. WTF... W. T. F-ing. F! You know what? Eff this date. EFF IT. I'm leaving. But before I do? FYI? I've already turned this whole date into a meme that just got rofl emojis from both my roommate *and* my mom. So you tell *me* who got the last laugh!

(Beat.)

GUY. lol...?

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

(ALEX is dressed like a pirate. A moment elapses as GIRL doesn't know what to say.)

GIRL. See, when you said in your posting you were into Living History, I thought that maybe meant you did Civil War reenactments. Not that you'd come to a date pretending to be a pirate.

ALEX. *Pretendin'?!*

GIRL. Yes. Pretending.

ALEX. I be as real a sea-dog as you'll ever meet!!

(Beat.)

GIRL. And do all real pirates shop at J. Crew?

(ALEX looks down at his clothes.)

ALEX. *(Dejectedly:)* Aarrrrr...

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

GUY. So your profile said you're a psychiatrist?

CLEO. No, that was a typo.

GUY. Oh, psychologist?

CLEO. Psychic. I know – obviously it's an incredible career, but there *are* drawbacks to clairvoyance. For example: last week I foresaw sunburn in my future, so I had to cancel my trip to Cancun. I know what you're thinking: Sunburns are the worst! See how I knew what you were thinking?

GUY. *(Reluctantly:)* So what made you become a psychic?

CLEO. What made me become a psychic? I anticipated that question. Here's how: Back in school I had a vision that I was going to fail a math test. Then I took the test, and *failed*. A flawless prediction. In that moment I knew I'd become a psychic. And then a week later? I became a psychic! *Another* flawless prediction.

GUY. But all of those are things you can control.

CLEO. How about a free reading?

(Over the next couple of lines, CLEO retrieves a few tools from her bag and places them in front of her: tarot cards, chakra beads, and a Magic 8-Ball.)

GUY. Oh I'm not interested.

CLEO. I insist! Show me your foot.

GUY. Sorry, what?

CLEO. Your foot. In the *movies* psychics read palms, but *real* psychics read *feet*. Take off your shoe.

GUY. I'm don't think I'm comfortable with this.

(CLEO picks up the Magic 8-Ball and speaks to it.)

CLEO. Is he comfortable with this?

(She quickly shakes the Magic 8-Ball and looks it for the answer.)

“Signs point to Yes.”

GUY. Fine.

(He reluctantly removes his shoe.)

CLEO. The feet have a spiritual connection to the earth. Since they so often touch the ground— *(Instructing GUY:)* SOCK—the feet have the most powerful bond to the paranormal ether.

(GUY now offers up his bare foot to CLEO who scrutinizes it.)

Interesting. This crease between your heel and midsole tells me that you like sports. Is it true that you like sports?

GUY. I like sports.

CLEO. Yes. I see that right here. Sports... I knew it. And your history line is right there below the lateral plantar nerves. Let's have a look. *(To the foot:)* What? What's that? Sometimes feet *whisper*. Yes? Yes? Oh, I see... *(She seems troubled, like she's about to reveal something disturbing from his past.)* When you were a teenager... did you attend a high school?

GUY. I did.

CLEO. Yes. High school. Yes.

GUY. Listen, can we just stop? You haven't told me anything not obvious.

CLEO. Oh, but here comes the grand finale. The main line is on the big toe, but yours is faint. Closer, please. No no—*much* closer. CLOSER.

(GUY grudgingly brings his toe very close to CLEO who inspects it seriously.)

Ah yes. Ready? *(Beat.)* Your favorite music is sixties R&B, you live in a second floor apartment on Fifth Street, and your mother's name is Doris.

GUY. Wait, what?! How did you know that?

CLEO. Knowledge is feet.

GUY. That's amazing! What else can you tell me?

CLEO. Only that you wake up every morning at eight, you just binge-watched *Breaking Bad*, your fantasy team is in third place, and you've reached the Jurassic Pork level on Angry Birds.

(Beat.)

GUY. (*Simply:*) You hacked my phone, didn't you...?

(CLEO looks at the Magic 8-Ball.)

CLEO. "Signs point to Yes."

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 8

GIRL. So tell me about yourself.

PAUL. Well, I'm a hedge fund manager.

GIRL. That's where you buy stocks and sell it to banks? Wait, no. I'm way off.

PAUL. Don't worry about it.

GIRL. Sorry. I actually do know more about that field, it's just that I get so nervous at these things.

PAUL. What, dates?

GIRL. Yeah.

PAUL. Ahh, don't worry about it. You can't be too judgmental on dates. They're set up to be so high-pressure, so nobody's ever at their best.

GIRL. But *you* don't seem flustered. How do you stay so calm?

PAUL. It helps to have a lot of first-hand experience with relationships.

GIRL. You've done a lot of dating?

PAUL. Yeah. Dating, marriage, blah blah blah.

GIRL. You're divorced?

PAUL. No.

GIRL. It's okay if you are. I dated a guy once who had multiple ex-wives.

PAUL. Oh I don't have any ex-wives —

GIRL. Okay.

PAUL. —I have wives.

(*Pause.*)

GIRL. I'm sorry, I thought I heard —

PAUL. I have wives.

GIRL. Oh.

PAUL. Two of 'em.

GIRL. Two wives.

PAUL. Yeah... I can tell you're disappointed.

GIRL. (*Not terribly convincing:*) Nooo...

PAUL. It's okay to be! I'm disappointed with *myself!* I mean, two wives is such a tiny number of wives.

GIRL. Uh huh.

PAUL. But y'know, I've got a good feeling that *you...* (*Pause for effect.*) ...might just be the perfect candidate for Número Tres.

GIRL. *Am I...*

PAUL. Absolutely!

GIRL. So you're Mormon?

PAUL. Mormon? No.

GIRL. So why do you have two wives?

PAUL. *Why? Why not??*

GIRL. Well isn't polygamy illegal?

PAUL. *Is it?* I guess. (*Playfully dismissive:*) "Law"!

GIRL. Yes. Law.

PAUL. I mean, if everyone followed every little law, then you or I couldn't—I dunno—commit identity theft.

GIRL. Yes!

PAUL. What I'm saying is, everyone breaks the speed limit, right? I'm just breaking the speed limit with multiple cars, simultaneously.

GIRL. That doesn't make any sense.

PAUL. Does the "Constitution" make sense?

GIRL. YES!

PAUL. So what do you think of my proposal? You wouldn't have a lot of responsibilities. Gloria cooks and cleans, and Naomi takes the kids to soccer practice, so all you'd need to do is shave my back.

GIRL. ...

PAUL. *(Inviting:)* Sooooo...?

(Pause. GIRL decides to try a special angle.)

GIRL. All right, I've thought about it, and my answer is Yes.

PAUL. Really?

GIRL. Uh huh.

PAUL. For a second there I got the vibe there like you were freaked out.

GIRL. How could anyone be freaked out by anything you've said?

PAUL. Seriously!

GIRL. But there's one little thing you should know before we do this.

PAUL. What's that?

GIRL. I have four husbands.

(A beat as PAUL is expressionless.)

PAUL. See that's just messed up.

(Blackout.)

Scene 9

(ALEX is back, still in his pirate outfit, perusing the menu.)

GUY. You sort of have the wrong idea, on multiple levels.

ALEX. These prices be outrageous.

GUY. Look, I'm not interested in male companionship. Or, for that matter, pirate companionship.

ALEX. Companionship?! Yer skull be hollow. What I require is a scurvy crew of buccaneers to seek out the treasure of Crossbones Cove.

GUY. So I've gotta run? I double-parked my ship.

ALEX. Yarrrr, I hate that.

(GUY turns to leave and runs into GIRL. ALEX and PAUL are still seated, but unaware of this interaction.)

GIRL. Déjà vu all over again.

GUY. You can say that again.

GIRL. Déjà v – Never mind.

GUY. Right.

GUY. *(Notices PAUL:)* So you're dating?

GIRL. Yeah. *(Notices ALEX:)* You too?

GUY. Apparently.

GIRL. How's it going?

GUY. *(Slightly overlapping:)* Oh great. Really fantastic.

GIRL. *(Slightly overlapping:)* Me, too. Having a good time.

(Beat.)

GUY. All right, no, it's awful.

GIRL. Yeah, okay, fine, same.

GUY. So listen, I had an idea: I don't think we should get back together only because the dating pool sucks...

GIRL. Yeah.

GUY. It feels less like a dating pool and more like a kiddie pool. *(Beat.)* You know how the water in a kiddie pool is mostly –

GIRL. *(Please stop:)* No I get it.

GUY. Right, so I think it's unhealthy –

GIRL. *(Overlapping:)* –unhealthy to restart a relationship because we're desperate. I agree.

GUY. Good.

GIRL. Okay, how about this: We were a couple before we were ever friends. What if we start from scratch – as friends – and then take it a day at a time.

GUY. A day at a time. I like it.

GIRL. Deal?

GUY. Deal.

(They shake hands.)

GIRL. So... wanna get some ice cream?

GUY. Believe it or not, I do like ice cream.

(They begin to exit.)

GIRL. Oh, but one condition?

GUY. Yeah?

GIRL. Set your pirate Halloween costume on fire.

GUY. Good idea.

(They exit.)

ALEX. I heard that! And I curse yer very souls!

(He looks at PAUL, and puts forth another earnest proposal – not a romantic advance.)

Ahoy there. If perchance ye be a sea-rovin' scallywag, I be in need of a first mate.

(PAUL looks up from his menu, noticing ALEX for the first time.)

PAUL. *(Deadpan:)* Check please.

(Blackout.)

End of Play