

“THE FIELD GUIDE TO MATING”

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 40 MINUTES

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## **SUMMARY**

Paul, a male homosapien experiencing a dry spell, receives assistance from the Field Guide to increase chances of mating.

## **CHARACTERS (2M, 2F)**

PAUL, male, early 30s

FIELD GUIDE, male

KELSEY, female, early 30s

IRENE, female, late 20s

## **TIME**

Now.

## **SETTING**

A podium exists on which the physical field guide book rests. This is an ‘always on’ area, as if a referendum for the sexually-charged subconscious.

The rest of the stage is open, no permanent set required.

## **FIRST PERFORMANCE**

*The Field Guide to Mating* received its world premiere at the Venus/Adonis festival, Hudson Guild Theater, NYC, on January 19, 2016 as directed by Vincent Scott, and with the following cast: PAUL – Christopher Kloko; FIELD GUIDE – Augustus Kelley; KELSEY – Bethel Caram; IRENE – Chelsea Clark.

*The Field Guide to Mating* received its Minneapolis premiere on May 19, 2017 at The Phoenix Theater in Minneapolis, MN, with the full run of *Love, Tonight*, with Jenna Papke as producing director, stage managed by Meesh Morris, and directed by Mason Tyer, with the following cast: PAUL — Ryan Weldon; FIELD GUIDE — Andy Rakerd; KELSEY — Cate Jackson; IRENE — Heather Owens.

## **THE PLAY**

*From darkness.*

VOICE

Yes, it's the dawn of a bright, sunny day. Which can only mean one thing!  
Prepare for another scintillating episode of...The Field Guide to Mating!

*We hear a theme song as FIELD GUIDE  
appears.*

FIELD GUIDE

Good morning! Welcome! Let's meet the subject of today's installment!

*PAUL enters, waking up.*

FIELD GUIDE

Hello subject of today's installment!

PAUL

What.

FIELD GUIDE

Great to see you as well! Are you ready?

PAUL

What is this?

FIELD GUIDE

You're today's installment.

PAUL

Of what.

FIELD GUIDE

Mating.

PAUL

Is this a joke?

FIELD GUIDE

Mating is no joke. Because you're man! Welcome, man!

PAUL

Yeah, hi.

FIELD GUIDE

Aren't we chipper? And what's your name?

PAUL

Paul.

FIELD GUIDE

Well, Paul, it's great to be helping you today.

PAUL

Helping with what? What's going on?

FIELD GUIDE

What's going on is that the male Homosapien has many needs and the biggest of them all is...

PAUL

Ah.

FIELD GUIDE

Yes.

PAUL

That.

FIELD GUIDE

That. So. You ready to start today's journey?

PAUL

Right. Um. I just woke up, but...I can go into the bathroom if you want to //wait out—

FIELD GUIDE

//No-no-no. I'm talking about *that* with another person.

PAUL

Ohhh.

FIELD GUIDE

It's go time, Paul! But before we inject rocket fuel into your mojo, Paul, are you a man that likes boys or girls?

PAUL

Girls.

FIELD GUIDE

Damn.

PAUL

What’s wrong with that?

FIELD GUIDE

Mating with girls is now more complicated. Since Republicans took office in the 80’s. Ironically, mating with men has become much easier. But fear not, Paul, because we’re going to be using...

*Introduction of the Field Guide, a big book, garish adornments.*

FIELD GUIDE

‘The Heterosexual Homosapien’s Field Guide To Mating – Male Edition!’

PAUL

Whoa, that’s huge.

FIELD GUIDE

And that’s what she’ll be saying by the time you’ve mastered this baby.

PAUL

You’re kidding.

FIELD GUIDE

Not at all.

PAUL

Look, really, I don’t know how you got my name—

FIELD GUIDE

You gave it to me.

PAUL

Right. Um, I appreciate your intent but I’m doing fine.

FIELD GUIDE

You are.

PAUL

Sure.

FIELD GUIDE

Really.

*Beat.*

PAUL

No.

FIELD GUIDE

No, Paul.

PAUL

I've tried the online matchups, the offline speed dates, the linked-ins, the swipe outs, but no matter what I do every first date seems to end with...

FIELD GUIDE

You in the bathroom.

PAUL

It's gotten kind of depressing.

FIELD GUIDE

All that modern gizmatic techno-chicanery might put you in touch but it doesn't put you *in touch*. Am I right?

PAUL

I guess I'm missing out on the new rules of attraction.

FIELD GUIDE

That's why I'm here, Paul. [The book] Flipping to the back, to get you mentally lubed for action, you can see the ultimate goal of your conquest. Eh?

PAUL

Whoa.

FIELD GUIDE

Pictures require no sex-planation.

PAUL

Are you for real?

FIELD GUIDE

Time-honored methods for successful mating. Needed now more than ever because today's male heterosexual homosapien hunt is doubly doubled in difficulty. Like the hilarious comedy Dances With Wolves, in which a young and husky Kevin Costner tracks the tatanka buffalo, you must apply keen trapping skills to ensnare today's woman in the vast wilderness of lust.

PAUL

I think you've got the wrong guy here.

FIELD GUIDE

I've got a guy, don't I? A man? A man interested in mating?

PAUL

...fine.

FIELD GUIDE

Clear your mind of everything you think you know. Today's woman no longer needs man for turbo-charged, lightning-round sex. They can go sexually dormant in the wild for up to three weeks.

PAUL

Three weeks, I'd be so lucky.

FIELD GUIDE

What do you mean?

PAUL

More like three years.

FIELD GUIDE

Three years.

PAUL

Yeah.

FIELD GUIDE

You've gone sexless for three years.

PAUL

Pretty much.

FIELD GUIDE

Yikes.

PAUL

I was engaged to a woman who broke it off so she could get engaged to someone else. That was three years ago. Haven't had much in the way of anything since. At this point I feel like someone who women don't find attractive anymore. I wonder if I have what it takes.

FIELD GUIDE

Well, that's why I'm here! [The book] Expert guidance to get you back *in touch*. C'mon, Paul. Whaddya say?

PAUL

Maybe one chapter.

FIELD GUIDE

Atta boy! [Reading from the book] “Chapter 1: Preparation. There are key, precautionary steps every male must complete prior to embarking on his odyssey to raucous intercourse. First, the aura. Today's male must exhibit a multi-dimensional flytrap of intrigue. Today's male must be meek yet swaggish.”

PAUL

[Reading along] ‘Translucent yet opaque.’

FIELD GUIDE

“Delete all online pictures and replace with only those of you volunteering at the local fire department and giving your grandmother a pedicure.”

PAUL

This is already getting kind of complicated.

FIELD GUIDE

Of course. Sex is the most simple, straightforward and natural act that people make complicated. Now: what's your aura?

PAUL

My aura is...I make things with tiny tools.

FIELD GUIDE

That may not come across the way you want it to.



PAUL

It’s my job.

FIELD GUIDE

Never mention occupation. Kills aura at this stage. Unless...you’re rich.

PAUL

Enough.

FIELD GUIDE

Why didn’t you say so! We can skip right ahead to Chapter 2: Determine Your Standards.

PAUL

At this point something that won’t run away when I talk.

FIELD GUIDE

That could be a tree.

PAUL

Sunshine smile. Reassuring voice. Doesn’t confuse silence with argument. Doesn’t mind guys who drive rebuilt Chevy Astro vans.

FIELD GUIDE

Well, let’s see what we can do with that, Paul, because here we go! “Chapter 3: Launching The Hunt.”

PAUL

Back to bars and nightclubs, huh?

FIELD GUIDE

Ah, my new friend, today’s hunt traverses a different kind of club.

PAUL

Sam’s Club.

*IRENE enters, pushing a shopping cart.*

FIELD GUIDE

“Yes, the discount retail warehouses are rife with gorgeous geldings prancing the aisles with blown-dry hair, their slender hands ever so tenderly groping the free samples.”

PAUL

You alright?

FIELD GUIDE

I am now.

PAUL

She’s nice.

FIELD GUIDE

She’s more than nice. Stand near checkout and accidentally ram shopping carts. Then pull out your insurance card and swap information.

PAUL

Uh...

*IRENE goes off.*

FIELD GUIDE

What were you waiting for?

PAUL

I’m not feeling this place.

FIELD GUIDE

For someone freezing up the sideline for three years there’s only one way to thaw out. The hot seat. And these warehouses are full of women, high turnover, new target acquisition by the minute.

PAUL

This seems a bit obvious. Maybe we could do this somewhere less pronounced.

FIELD GUIDE

Alright, look, you want to ease back in, prowl an attack grid more subdued? You need...Chapter 4: The Library.

*IRENE reenters, holding a book.*

FIELD GUIDE

Now, puff out what’s left of your machismo and get in there.

PAUL

The truth is, three years, talking to women now feels like my tongue arguing with my throat.

FIELD GUIDE

“Chapter 5: Direct verbal assault. In the absence of innate physical appeal, cast the lure of dialect.”

PAUL

[Reviewing the Field Guide] Library pickup lines.

FIELD GUIDE

Tried and true chestnuts.

*PAUL moves to IRENE.*

PAUL

Hi.

IRENE

*[Didn't I see you at the...?] ...Hi...*

PAUL

Want to read some David Mamet and have sex?

IRENE

Excuse me?

PAUL

Um...if I could rearrange the letters in that book, I'd put U and I together.

IRENE

What?

PAUL

[To FIELD GUIDE] These are terrible. The field guide really says to do this?

FIELD GUIDE

[Flipping] Chapter 6: Mastering The Suave. When the verbal assault fails a finely nuanced Suave shall prevail.

*PAUL moves back to IRENE.*

PAUL

Hi.

IRENE

Hi.

PAUL

I’m really sorry. To bother you. I...um...

FIELD GUIDE

Suave, Paul.

PAUL

...was just needing that book. That you’re carrying.

IRENE

This book.

PAUL

Yes. Of all the books in this incredibly immense place of literateness I just happen need that very book on...

IRENE

‘Livestock of Latin America.’

PAUL

Wow.

IRENE

You need a book on livestock in Latin America.

*FIELD GUIDE hands PAUL a book.*

PAUL

Here. Let me trade to make it right.

IRENE

[Taking, reading] ‘Ancient Poems of Ecstasy and Longing.’

PAUL

[Shocked] What?

IRENE

No, thanks.

PAUL

That’s not mine. I didn’t choose that.

IRENE

Goodbye.

PAUL

Wait, please, I’m not some—

IRENE

Weirdmonger who picks up women at the library?

PAUL

Okay, maybe I am that guy, yes, but...you’re the one reading ‘Livestock in Latin America.’

IRENE

Because I’m going on a two-year stint to Uruguay for an ecological mission.

PAUL

Aha.

IRENE

But. Still struggling to make it past the first couple chapters.

PAUL

I know just how you feel.

IRENE

So I’ll need that back. Please.

PAUL

I’m Paul.

IRENE

I’m leaving.

PAUL

Do they drink coffee in Uruguay?

IRENE

I’m sure they do.

PAUL

Because I know, for a fact, without undertaking any research, they have coffee down the street.

IRENE

Okay, really?

PAUL

Served in ecologically-friendly recycled fiber.

FIELD GUIDE

Nice.

*Beat.*

IRENE

What the hell.

PAUL

Really?

IRENE

I'm Irene.

*PAUL silently looks to FIELD GUIDE, 'Awesome! ', exchanges a high-five.*

*Lights shift.*

FIELD GUIDE

“Chapter 7: Coffee. Yes, this cheap mixture of water and bean dirt is a fantastic concoction for superficial exchange of identity and values in crowded environments with multiple escape routes for both parties.”

IRENE

I moved here six months ago. A new city to discover. I got set up with a nanny job. The kids are great but totally all-encompassing. It's hard to get away for myself. So a friend got me a second job at a café counter to meet people. Grown-ups. Anyway, it's all temporary until the volunteer mission starts. Still not sure if I'm going to help heal the world or just continuing my life series of scurrying to the unknown. I guess whenever I feel like I've conquered the next place, memorized the street and road signs, whenever I start to feel too sure of myself, the need for adventure outweighs the sense of stability.

FIELD GUIDE

You're not listening to her, are you?

PAUL

What?

FIELD GUIDE

Are you listening to her?

PAUL

Yes, she's talking.

FIELD GUIDE

Pretend to listen to everything she says, nodding and smiling. Meanwhile, recall all illustrations from the back of the Guide and envision how many will be performed with the half box of condoms you got in your glove compartment.

PAUL

C'mon, you're distracting me. She's talking and I haven't been listening.

IRENE

You know what I mean?

PAUL

...

FIELD GUIDE

Quick, ask about her family.

PAUL

Tell me about your parents.

FIELD GUIDE

Asking about family makes you appear trustworthy and dependable. It's a trick used by porn stars.

IRENE

My Dad passed away a couple years ago.

PAUL

Oh.

IRENE

He was a college professor, historian actually, specialized in curating presidential libraries. At least my father died before he got called to do a library for someone like Donald Trump.

FIELD GUIDE

Warning! As any discussion grows longer, the probability of someone mentioning Donald Trump reaches one. Trump is the anti-sex.

IRENE

Can you imagine this guy as President?

PAUL

[To FIELD GUIDE] Mayday.

FIELD GUIDE

Say anything to get off Trump and back on track.

PAUL

[To IRENE] Well. You know. Maybe he's just someone trying to find himself after years of rejection.

IRENE

That's...surprisingly sweet. Listen, it's been okay talking with you. I actually kind of enjoyed it. See you around.

*IRENE shakes PAUL's hand.*

*IRENE exits.*

*PAUL and FIELD GUIDE take this in.*

FIELD GUIDE

You got a handshake.

PAUL

I know.

FIELD GUIDE

You got a handshake.

PAUL

I was there.



FIELD GUIDE

A handshake is not sex.

PAUL

Obviously.

FIELD GUIDE

Preparation, Standards, Launch, Library, Verbal, Suave, Coffee...and you got a handshake.

PAUL

What do you want me to do?

FIELD GUIDE

Figure out what went wrong.

PAUL

Maybe nothing went wrong. Maybe she just didn't want to have sex.

FIELD GUIDE

Somebody screwed up here and it's not me.

PAUL

I'm out here doing the dirty work while you're back there flipping pages.

FIELD GUIDE

Maybe if you'd relax she wouldn't see you as a walking hard-on with a bad haircut.

PAUL

Exactly. She saw right through your book of tricks and nailed me as nothing more than an asexual loser.

FIELD GUIDE

Well...

PAUL

When was the last time *you* had sex, anyway?

*Beat.*

FIELD GUIDE

Don't question my expertise.

PAUL

How long *has* it been for you?

FIELD GUIDE

You know, I’m starting to get tired of your whiny, woe-is-me sad crap.

*They continue to spar as KELSEY enters, beautiful, in yoga outfit.*

PAUL

Here’s you: Chapter Do This!

FIELD GUIDE

Here’s you: Chapter I’m Unloved!

PAUL

Chapter Pedicure!

FIELD GUIDE

Chapter Three Years!

*The sight of KELSEY instantly arrests PAUL and FIELD GUIDE.*

FIELD GUIDE

Oh.

PAUL

My.

PAUL & FIELD GUIDE [TOGETHER]

God.

PAUL

Quick. What do we do?

FIELD GUIDE

Hold on.

PAUL

What do we do?

FIELD GUIDE

Skimming.

*They both reference the Field Guide.*

PAUL & FIELD GUIDE [TOGETHER]

Yoga!

*KELSEY dresses the stage as a workout studio.*

*PAUL changes into exercise clothes.*

FIELD GUIDE

“Chapter 8: Yoga has affixed its undeniable presence in modern American society as foreplay masquerading as exercise.”

PAUL

Are these pants?

FIELD GUIDE

“Low lights. Erotic poses. The paradox of sexual freedom. And the new mixed-singles destination.” Perfect for the hunt.

PAUL

What does the guide say about entering the studio? I don’t want to be the guy who’s obviously showing up to hawk.

FIELD GUIDE

Arrive a couple minutes late. Sneak into the back row. Entering any earlier allows a room full of serious yogis to assign you a high creep rating.

PAUL

This whole thing is a high creep rating.

FIELD GUIDE

Wait, I’ve got it. Maybe you show up for class and happen to be the only one there. Yes, you’re the only one, alone with the instructor.

PAUL

That is so inspired.

FIELD GUIDE

A steamy, happenstance tryst with a yoga instructor.

PAUL

This is big game hunting.

FIELD GUIDE

“Because of the misperceived effeminate nature of yoga, today’s male must exude a serious metrosexual quality.”

PAUL

What’s a metrosexual?

FIELD GUIDE

Someone who can talk equal parts NASCAR and Tony Kushner.

PAUL

Look at her. She’s stunning. There’s no way.

FIELD GUIDE

Remember, I’m here to help you.

PAUL

How is this ever going to happen?

FIELD GUIDE

“It is imperative to establish a striking and unforgettable first impression by unleashing an unshakeable net of allure towards the unsuspecting prey.”

PAUL

Is your name Wi-Fi? ‘Cause I’m feeling a connection.

FIELD GUIDE

No, that’s the kind of thing we don’t do anymore, remember? We passed that chapter. You are now Paul the Magnificent. Paul the Strong.

PAUL

Paul the Strong.

FIELD GUIDE

You excite with your presence. You slay with a look. You are the Sherpa of the K-spot.

PAUL

What happened to the G-spot?

FIELD GUIDE

Don't worry about that now. Just focus on whimsical and charming.

PAUL

Whimsical and charming.

FIELD GUIDE

And so it begins.

*PAUL moves into the yoga space.*

*PAUL and KELSEY stare at each other.*

KELSEY

Can I help you?

PAUL

I'm whimsical and charming.

KELSEY

Uh-huh. Are you here for Advanced Heated Warrior Sculpt?

PAUL

Is anything you just said yoga?

KELSEY

A challenging form of yoga for experienced practitioners, yes.

PAUL

My pleasure consultant suggested I take this up.

KELSEY

Fine but it's a higher-level class.

PAUL

I'm the only one here.

KELSEY

And I make it a rule to cancel class when students fail to outnumber the instructor.

PAUL

Don't whimsical and charming count as two things?

FIELD GUIDE

Nice.

PAUL

Besides, I’d probably get advanced learning from such a stellar instructor.

KELSEY

You haven’t even taken my class yet.

PAUL

Well, your voice is very...

FIELD GUIDE

Hot and wet.

PAUL

Reassuring.

*Beat.*

KELSEY

Fine. Since we both came all this way. We’ll do an introductory session.

*KELSEY initiates music.*

*She moves next to PAUL.*

KELSEY

Let’s begin in a standing posture. Get your shoulders out of your ears. Get your shoulders out of your back. How about we just close our eyes.

PAUL

That I can do.

KELSEY

And close our mouths. We begin a cycle of breathing. Through the nose. Empty our bodies of mental pollution. Push our detritus to an ethereal recycling bin.

*KELSEY morphs PAUL into a yoga position.*

*FIELD GUIDE moves to inspect.*

FIELD GUIDE

Man, she is really working you over.

PAUL

[Grunting] My body hasn't done this in three years. Ahh! How long's a typical class?

FIELD GUIDE

[Referencing] Says here an hour.

PAUL

If I make it.

KELSEY

You're much better at this than you think.

PAUL

I feel like a standing laxative.

KELSEY

[Smiling] Less talk, more posture, okay?

FIELD GUIDE

You're basically having sex with clothes on.

PAUL

I didn't expect to go through all this. Times have changed, huh?

FIELD GUIDE

Guess so.

KELSEY

And as we reach the final pose of our practice, the light in me salutes the light in you. Namaste.

PAUL

Namaste.

KELSEY

Thanks for coming.

*KELSEY turns off music, starts derobing the stage decor.*

PAUL

Thanks for putting up with me.

KELSEY

It’s my job.

PAUL

It was fun to learn something new.

KELSEY

Yoga is not so much about bending the body as it is opening the mind.

PAUL

To new possibilities.

*Beat.*

KELSEY

Check the class schedule.

*KELSEY goes.*

#### FIELD GUIDE

“Typically, group fitness classmates socialize post-workout in the nearby café.”  
Continue the hunt there. Quick, before she leaves.

*Lights shifts.*

*A café counter bar.*

KELSEY

I’ll have a triple hazelnut iced latte. Medium. Small. Large. And a brownie. These things are evil, you should stop putting them out here.

*PAUL enters, changed and refreshed.*

PAUL

Here, I got it. On me.

KELSEY

No, that’s okay.



PAUL

It’s the least I can do after you ruptured my spleen.

KELSEY

I can pay for myself.

PAUL

My way of saying thank you.

KELSEY

Fine.

PAUL

I’m Paul.

KELSEY

Kelsey.

PAUL

Paul Ventnor.

KELSEY

Kelsey.

PAUL

What about thanking me back me Friday night?

KELSEY

I make it a rule not to date my students.

PAUL

Then I quit. I never liked your class anyway.

*Entering to service KELSEY’s order is  
IRENE.*

IRENE

[Calling out] Large triple hazelnut iced latte and evil brown—

*IRENE and PAUL freeze in recognition.*

*Meanwhile, KELSEY has taken out her  
smartphone, tapping the screen.*

PAUL

Irene.

IRENE

Haven't seen you at the library.

PAUL

I've been hanging around the non-livestock section.

IRENE

Alpacas must have been a one-time event.

KELSEY

You two know each other?

PAUL / IRENE

Yes / Sort of.

PAUL / IRENE

Sort of / Yes.

*IRENE hands the drink, takes PAUL's money, and is out.*

KELSEY

[The phone] Your grandmother has nice feet. Thanks for the drink.

PAUL

Um...

FIELD GUIDE

Don't give up, Paul!

PAUL

Friday night?

KELSEY

Sorry.

FIELD GUIDE

Never yield! You can do this!

PAUL

Hey! You ever partied in a rebuilt 2005 Chevy Astro van?

KELSEY

You drive a BMW like every other guy here.

PAUL

Let me surprise you.

*Beat.*

KELSEY

[Re: the phone] I added you. Add me back and we’ll set it up.

*KELSEY is out.*

FIELD GUIDE

Whoa.

PAUL

Un-real.

FIELD GUIDE

What did I tell you?

PAUL

It worked.

FIELD GUIDE

Way to hang in there.

PAUL

Friday night.

*PAUL and KELSEY are getting ready.*

FIELD GUIDE

“Chapter 9: The First Date. Crucial. The entirety of each potential mating is dependent on the success of the first date, assuming homosapiens still actually date. The primary directive, the sacrosanct rule governing the first date, is that certain subjects under any circumstance should not be discussed.”

PAUL

Trump.

FIELD GUIDE

No. Says here ball. Do not mention anything dealing with ball.

PAUL

Ball.

FIELD GUIDE

No baseball, basketball, football, fantasy football, or fantasy ball ball.

PAUL

I'm more worried about where I should take her.

*KELSEY and PAUL texting each other.*

KELSEY

[Texting] What time on Friday?

PAUL

[Texting] Pick you up at eight?

KELSEY

[Texting] Eight it is. What's the plan?

PAUL

[Texting] Prepare for yoga of the mind.

KELSEY

[Texting] Drugs and rock and roll?

PAUL

She's cool.

FIELD GUIDE

Notice she left out sex.

KELSEY

[Texting] I like dancing.

PAUL

She's very cool.

FIELD GUIDE

Dancing is an exceptional first date activity.

PAUL

I don't dance, though. I grind. Badly. Like Mister Rogers in a Lil' John video.

FIELD GUIDE

“While many discos have sunk into a rhetorical set list of body slam party hits, salsa music offers a more chivalrous and sophisticated dancing option.”

PAUL

Salsa dancing.

FIELD GUIDE

But start with an outdoor walk. Somewhere with oxygen. Oxygen is an aphrodisiac.

PAUL

Maybe walking the downtown lake, under the stars.

FIELD GUIDE

Brilliant! Now you’re starting to feel it!

PAUL

I don’t know.

*FIELD GUIDE warms up PAUL, adjusting his clothes, fixing his hair, pre-game pep talk.*

FIELD GUIDE

Abandon fear.

PAUL

Why am I so nervous?

FIELD GUIDE

Because you’re not trusting yourself. Forget about the last three years. This is the new you. Remember, sex is the inevitable outcome of unstoppable human force. You can do this. Now get in there.

*PAUL moves to meet KELSEY.*

PAUL

Hi.

KELSEY

Hi.

PAUL

Sorry I'm a couple minutes early.

KELSEY

It's six thirty.

PAUL

Oh.

KELSEY

You weren't kidding about the van.

PAUL

I can come back.

KELSEY

No, it's okay. Except. Whatever this is can now continue on one condition.

PAUL

I don't bring up the back seats fold down?

KELSEY

I drive.

*Lights shift.*

*KELSEY is driving.*

KELSEY

Don't look so freaked.

PAUL

You are licensed, right?

KELSEY

You have insurance, right?

PAUL

Not enough.

KELSEY

Oh c'mon, I haven't gotten in an accident. Today.

PAUL

Just when you think you’d never be an organ donor.

KELSEY

You seem tense with someone else behind the wheel of your life.

PAUL

This week I let a complete stranger morph my body into Cirque Du Pain and now letting that same person swerve my beloved van into oncoming traffic so I don’t think I have control issues, no.

KELSEY

I’m sure I’m not the only one to drive the van.

PAUL

You’re the only person I’ve ever let drive my van.

KELSEY

Well. I shall honor the privilege by learning where you keep the brake pedal.

PAUL

Thank you. It’s just that I built this myself. Been working on it for the past three years.

KELSEY

Interesting hobby.

PAUL

It’s more than a hobby. See that golf shop ahead on the corner?

KELSEY

Yeah.

PAUL

The manager needed a special swinging tool for the front display window. I built it for him.

KELSEY

That’s what you do? You build things?

PAUL

There’s not really a name for it. My main clients are medical research. They need all kinds of specialized parts, micro-extenders, pin-pinchers, especially for robotics. My big project right now is perfecting a mini-hinge for organic legs. Unfortunately, there’s a lot of wounded veterans. What.

KELSEY

Nothing.

PAUL

You’re laughing.

KELSEY

I was wrong about you.

PAUL

How’s that.

KELSEY

I was thinking you a lawyer.

PAUL

My ex.

KELSEY

Oh.

PAUL

While I spent all day poring over tiny tools she spent all day poring over tiny words and by night she wasn’t interested poring over me. Anyway, that was three years ago.

KELSEY

And since then?

PAUL

You’re driving it.

KELSEY

Oh.

PAUL

Yeah.



KELSEY

Three years.

PAUL

Pretty much.

KELSEY

Two years.

PAUL

Two years, what.

KELSEY

[Me] Two years.

PAUL

C'mon.

KELSEY

Pretty much.

PAUL

But. You're gorgeous.

KELSEY

Going without *it* isn't some affliction. It can actually be a choice. My work is walking around a dark studio, getting people to bend farther than they think they can go. But outside the studio? It's hard enough these days not faking it with yourself.

PAUL

I figure there's a place where all women have been meeting in secret. They write on little note cards: 'avoid Paul, bad kisser.'

KELSEY

Sorry to disappoint you but there's no female plutocracy.

PAUL

Ooh, Greek references on a first date.

KELSEY

I'm not so big into Greece. I'm more Uruguay. [Beat] Don't worry. You're not my friend's type. Besides, we don't kiss and tell. I like to discover for myself.

PAUL

...

KELSEY

...

*Lights shift.*

*Latin music plays, soft, an instrumental ballad.*

*PAUL and KELSEY sway.*

*They look at each other, a moment of silence.*

*Back to swaying.*

*FIELD GUIDE, frustrated, moves in behind PAUL, pokes him.*

FIELD GUIDE

Hey.

PAUL

Hey.

*More music, more swaying, more FIELD GUIDE poking.*

PAUL

What?

FIELD GUIDE

You're not talking to her.

PAUL

I know. She's not afraid of silence.

FIELD GUIDE

How are you gonna do the national anthem to her back at your place if you're not talking to her?

PAUL

Can you stop?

FIELD GUIDE

Give her a compliment.

PAUL

Go away.

*Meanwhile, IRENE has entered, now in military fatigues, and is positioned behind KELSEY.*

IRENE

[To KELSEY] What are you doing?

KELSEY

What?

IRENE

What. Are. You. Doing.

KELSEY

Nothing.

IRENE

Don't give me nothing. I see what you're up to.

KELSEY

I'm enjoying myself.

IRENE

Oh, it's more than that. You're thinking about sleeping with him tonight, aren't you?

FIELD GUIDE

[Moving in closer] Women like hearing compliments.

PAUL

Will you get out of here?

IRENE

I can tell. You're thinking about doing the conjugal Copa Cabana right here on the dance floor.

FIELD GUIDE

I feel like our opportunity is slipping away.

PAUL

Let's talk about this later.

FIELD GUIDE

Later? Later is you and I sitting at Denny's at 2AM crying over burnt omelets about why you still aren't getting any.

IRENE

[Moving in closer] Do I have to remind you that you're not authorized to have sex?

KELSEY

I wasn't thinking about...that.

IRENE

Swaying to Latin rhythm, your flesh pressed against his body, skin brushing skin, libido boiling, and not thinking about...

KELSEY

I don't know what I'm thinking about.

FIELD GUIDE

Either carpe the mmm-mmm or she's gonna start thinking about—

IRENE

—how women no longer have flagrant and rampant sex on a first date with someone they barely know.

KELSEY

I understand that, but—

IRENE

No-no-no. There are no 'buts.' There's only handshakes. Don't go weak on me here.

KELSEY

It's just been a while since I've enjoyed myself.

PAUL

Can you go back to your little area?

FIELD GUIDE

Oh. Good idea. That way you can save your breath in case you need it after Denny’s for inflating your sex partner.

IRENE

You realize he could be playing you.

KELSEY

Maybe I’m playing him.

IRENE

Wow. This is worse than I thought.

FIELD GUIDE

We’re losing momentum.

KELSEY

I’m enjoying myself.

FIELD GUIDE

Slipping away.

KELSEY

For the first time in a long time.

FIELD GUIDE

Wasting the golden chance.

KELSEY

And maybe I want to keep on enjoying myself.

PAUL

Okay, fine, what do you want me to say?

IRENE

Next thing he says, whatever comes out of his mouth, you say: “I couldn’t disagree more and frankly I’m offended by your lack of awareness and sensitivity to exploitative atrocities suffered worldwide by women at the hands, minds, and pelvic areas of men.”

FIELD GUIDE

Say to her: this dance would go better horizontally.

KELSEY

I don't want to feel like I'm scripting with him.

IRENE

You just want to let it flow.

KELSEY

Well, yeah.

IRENE

Just open on up and let it flow until he sticks his virile penis in you.

FIELD GUIDE

[To IRENE] And what's wrong with that? I said: what's wrong with that?

IRENE

[To FIELD GUIDE] You talking to me?

FIELD GUIDE

Yeah, I'm talking to you.

IRENE

What's wrong with that is that my girl here ain't some pin cushion waiting for your no-go-Romeo to defile her with his diseased manhood.

FIELD GUIDE

My boy here has depth.

IRENE

Pshaw! Your boy is out to transform my girl's torso into a meat grinder for his pump-and-dumpness.

FIELD GUIDE

Now you're talking!

IRENE

Any further attempt to pervert her will be quelled by the resistance!

FIELD GUIDE

Did we miss our sexual calling 'cause we were too busy using our stuff as a power tool instead of a pleasure tool?

IRENE

[To KELSEY] I will not let him infect you with scrotal poison.

FIELD GUIDE

Step aside, we’re revving the pigskin engine!

IRENE

Raise shields! Evasive maneuvers!

FIELD GUIDE

Loading torpedo bay number one!

IRENE

Full resistance!

*FIELD GUIDE and IRENE are in each other’s face, yelling at the same time.*

FIELD GUIDE

Ayn Rand no orgasms! Ayn Rand no orgasms! Ayn Rand no orgasms!

IRENE

Scrotal poison! Scrotal poison! Scrotal poison!

*PAUL and KELSEY intercede, pulling apart the tempest.*

KELSEY

[To IRENE] Stop it! Just stop it! Go!

PAUL

[To FIELD GUIDE] Get out of here! Get out! Go!

*IRENE and FIELD GUIDE hiss cat-like at each other, making fists and faces.*

*IRENE sulks out.*

*FIELD GUIDE goes to the podium.*

*PAUL and KELSEY return to each other, moving to the soft music.*

PAUL

Look. We can go. Whenever you want.

*KELSEY stops moving.*

KELSEY

Can I drive the van? Back to your place?

*Lights shift.*

*PAUL's place.*

KELSEY

I had a really good time tonight.

PAUL

I had a really good time tonight.

KELSEY

It was better than I expected.

PAUL

It was better than I expected.

KELSEY

Are you just going to repeat everything I say?

PAUL

At this point I don't want to screw up my chances of anything that might happen.

KELSEY

Well. Then. Don't say anything.

*They kiss.*

*KELSEY takes from her purse a single note card of a solid color, fakes writing on it with her finger.*

KELSEY

Loose lips, no tongue.

PAUL

Ha ha.



KELSEY

I'll be right back. You'll still be here?

PAUL

I am so totally not going anywhere.

*KELSEY puts down the note card into her purse, goes off.*

*But the note card half-sticks out of her purse, visible.*

PAUL

[To FIELD GUIDE] She's amazing.

FIELD GUIDE

“Chapter 10: The Moment of Rapture and Triumph. When having sex, time your orgasm so she reaches climax and you don't miss SportsCenter.”

PAUL

Hey, seriously, put that thing down already.

FIELD GUIDE

Oh, there's something going down alright. Don't you see, Paul? It's time to spring the trap!

PAUL

Have you not been following along? It's not like that.

FIELD GUIDE

What's not like that?

PAUL

This. Her. I like her.

FIELD GUIDE

Of course you like her. Look at that ass!

PAUL

No, I don't think of this anymore as some hunter conquest thing.

FIELD GUIDE

Well, that’s been our primary objective, hasn’t it? The thrill of the kill? Ensnaring the female to the final sexual act?

PAUL

It was, at first, I guess, but now, in the end, with her, it’s different.

FIELD GUIDE

The difference is whether you notch one under the belt. That’s the only difference.

PAUL

[Confident] I’m not so sure.

FIELD GUIDE

Oh. You think you got this? Who gave you that step by step guide you so desperately needed? We started, right here, and you said ‘make it easy for me,’ right? That’s what I gave you. I gave you Mating for Dummies.

PAUL

What I needed was a technical guide.

FIELD GUIDE

You saw the field guide. You looked at the pictures. You said: that. Get me that, I want that. We progressed through the chapters. We’ve reached the back of the book. And here it is, Paul, victory formation. Prepare to mount that finish line! Or do you want to go on a loser?

PAUL

I’d rather go on not a winner. If you could understand that.

*As FIELD GUIDE continues, PAUL notices  
KELSEY’s note card sticking out from her  
purse, and reads the card.*

FIELD GUIDE

No. I won’t accept that. This is not what the people came to see. This is not what we turned on the lights for! This is not how it’s supposed to end! People want to see the final takedown!

*PAUL motions to FIELD GUIDE: ‘come  
here’.*

FIELD GUIDE

What.

*PAUL motions for FIELD GUIDE to read the card.*

*FIELD GUIDE takes, the size difference between the note card and the Field Guide book very evident.*

FIELD GUIDE

[Reading] ‘The Heterosexual Homosapien’s Field Guide to Mating – Female Edition.’

*PAUL turns the note card over to the back side.*

FIELD GUIDE

[Reading] ‘Sex is the culmination of a million things unspoken.’

*PAUL takes the card out of FIELD GUIDE’s hands, places it into the purse.*

FIELD GUIDE

Huh.

PAUL

Yeah.

FIELD GUIDE

Interesting.

PAUL

Right.

FIELD GUIDE

Kind of...

PAUL

Pretty much.

FIELD GUIDE

Well.

PAUL

There it is.

FIELD GUIDE

Okay. Eh. [Indicating exit] Guess I'll...

PAUL

I got it.

FIELD GUIDE

You do.

PAUL

I'm okay.

FIELD GUIDE

You're okay.

PAUL

I am. But, hey. Nice job.

FIELD GUIDE

Yeah. We got...

PAUL

Progress.

FIELD GUIDE

Progress was made.

PAUL

See you tomorrow?

FIELD GUIDE

Tomorrow?

PAUL

Debrief session. And bring the field guide. Just in case.

*FIELD GUIDE exits.*

*KELSEY comes back on, hair down.*

KELSEY

Promise me one thing?

PAUL

Okay.

KELSEY

Tomorrow morning. You’ll be here to pick me up at eight?

PAUL

Maybe I’ll be early.

*PAUL moves to KELSEY and as the Latin  
rhythm returns...*

*Blackout.*

**END OF PLAY.**