

In The Meantime

written by
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In The Meantime

Cast of Characters

Gretchen

Woman, thirties, pretty.

Edgar

Man, thirties, attractive. Dating Gretchen.

Astor

Woman, thirties, sexy.

PLACE

A bar.

TIME

A Sunday night. The meantime.

SYNOPSIS

In a bar on a Sunday night, the last seconds of a football game play out on television. Sitting in the bar watching the game are Gretchen, her boyfriend Edgar, and Astor, a woman sitting by herself at the bar, sipping her martini. Before the game ends, time stops, and the three of them have the ability to play out new reality after new reality until they choose one that fits (if they ever do). As the variations play on, the three begin to learn too much about each other, and are forced to make a decision whether to be free of the past or to hold on to what is theirs.

"NICK: You're going to regret this.

GEORGE: Probably, I regret everything."

-Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf - Edward Albee

A bar. A MAN and a WOMAN, EDGAR and GRETCHEN, are sitting at a table SR, empty beer glass in front of EDGAR, empty liquor glass in front of GRETCHEN. At the bar SL sits a woman, ASTOR, empty martini glass in front of HER. General bar noise, a football game on in the background. EDGAR takes HIS glass in hand and points to GRETCHEN's glass.

GRETCHEN

Yes, please.

(EDGAR takes HER glass in hand as well. HE gets up and goes to a spot at the bar next to ASTOR. As HE makes it to the bar, HE accidentally bumps HER.)

EDGAR

Excuse me.

(ASTOR is unruffled, and gets a look at HIM.)

ASTOR

No problem.

(GRETCHEN turns and looks at the two of THEM looking at each other. The bar noise rises, getting louder and louder, until the sound of the FOOTBALL ANNOUNCER is heard over it all.)

FOOTBALL ANNOUNCER (ON T.V.)

With just seconds remaining, they--

(But even that gets lost in the noise. Suddenly all the noise disappears. Keeping THEIR current positions, EDGAR, GRETCHEN, and ASTOR speak aloud, not addressing each other.)

EDGAR

Nothing has happened before now.

GRETCHEN

A regular day, a regular evening, a regular bar.

EDGAR

An after-dinner drink.

ASTOR

Drinking just to drink. No alcoholism, not a hint of it.
Just a drink without need of context. The game, maybe.

GRETCHEN

Football on the television. A Sunday night, obviously.

(EDGAR turns and addresses HER.)

EDGAR

Could be a Monday night.

(GRETCHEN turns and addresses HIM.)

GRETCHEN

They have football on Monday nights?

(ASTOR turns and addresses HER.)

ASTOR

Yes. It's called Monday Night Football. Catchy, no?

(GRETCHEN does not turn to ASTOR.
SHE puts HER chin down.)

GRETCHEN

I don't know the game.

(Chin up)

But I did narrow it down. Sunday *or* Monday. Right?

EDGAR

Yes.

GRETCHEN

Good.

ASTOR

Or, if we're later in the season, Thursday.

(EDGAR turns and addresses HER.)

EDGAR

Please.

(ASTOR turns and addresses HIM.)

ASTOR

During the playoffs, Saturdays too. True, also, if we're
talking about college. Plus, when it's bowl season--

EDGAR
Will you please? Please?

ASTOR
I *do* know the game.

(THEY go back to THEIR original positions.)

EDGAR
Sunday, by the calendars. Night, by the watches.

GRETCHEN
A late dinner, a later drink.

ASTOR
The last ten seconds of a game, a game I do know. Martini in front of me.

GRETCHEN
Amaretto sour in front of me.

EDGAR
Harp in front of me.

ASTOR, EDGAR & GRETCHEN
Empty.

EDGAR
But nothing has happened before now. Save six words,

GRETCHEN
Yes, please.

EDGAR
Excuse me.

ASTOR
No problem.

EDGAR
Nothing.
(Pause. Hold for two seconds.)

ASTOR
Commence.

(The sound returns, much lower now. THEY all proceed as THEY were before the sound stopped. EDGAR puts the glasses on the bar.)

EDGAR

(To an unseen bartender)

One amaretto sour, one Harp.

(HE puts some money on the bar.)

ASTOR

Ever had it straight?

EDGAR

It's not for me.

ASTOR

That's not what I'm asking.

EDGAR

Straight amaretto?

ASTOR

Yes.

EDGAR

No.

ASTOR

Sickly sweet. Cloying even. Makes you wonder what people did before they had sour.

EDGAR

Gritted their teeth, I suppose.

ASTOR

Hard to drink that way, *I'd* suppose.

EDGAR

Figuratively gritted their teeth. Literally opened their mouths, literally drank, figuratively gritted their teeth.

ASTOR

Assuming amaretto came before sour. Could've been the other way around.

EDGAR

Could've been. The drink's for my--

ASTOR

Mustn't finish that sentence. My what? A person coming next in that sentence?

EDGAR

A title.

ASTOR
A person's title though.

EDGAR
Of course.

ASTOR
Mustn't say "my" then. Slavery's ended.

EDGAR
I read something about that.

ASTOR
Wondrous thing, reading.

EDGAR
Very.

(HE takes two full drinks from
the bar and goes back to the
table. HE sits.)

GRETCHEN
Who was that?

EDGAR
Who?

GRETCHEN
At the bar. The woman you were speaking with.

EDGAR
She was speaking to me.

GRETCHEN
Who is she?

EDGAR
Just some woman. Some woman who's had straight amaretto
before.

GRETCHEN
Oh.
(Slight pause)
I have too. Before.

EDGAR
Really? I haven't.

GRETCHEN
It's good. In small quantities. Like liquid candy. In
small quantities.

I see. EDGAR

Is that what she said? GRETCHEN

Who? EDGAR

The woman at the bar. GRETCHEN

Yes. That's what she said. EDGAR

(ASTOR turns to THEM.)

Hold. ASTOR

Lie? (THEY stop and turn to HER.)

It is. EDGAR

You would? So soon? ASTOR

I would. EDGAR

But-- ASTOR

Too much to explain. I know her. Contradiction leads to justification. EDGAR

Not necessarily. GRETCHEN

Not with men, no, but with women, yes. Yes. EDGAR

Perhaps. GRETCHEN
(Brushing it off)

She'd be drinking shots of amaretto until she got sick. Why would I want that? EDGAR

Is that true? ASTOR
(Silence.)
There's your answer. EDGAR
Do what you need to do. GRETCHEN
Fine. Resume. ASTOR
(THEY resume.)
That's what she said? GRETCHEN
That's what she said. EDGAR
(Pause)
She's pretty. GRETCHEN
(HE looks over at ASTOR.)
She's all right. EDGAR
Hold. ASTOR
(THEY stop and turn to HER.)
I'm ... well?
What else would you have me say? EDGAR
Say what you would say. ASTOR
That is. EDGAR
Fine. Resume. ASTOR
(THEY resume.)

You hadn't noticed? GRETCHEN

No. EDGAR

She's your type. GRETCHEN

So are you. EDGAR

Yes, well ... yes. GRETCHEN
 (Pause)

We can go after this drink. Or is the game--?

Game's nearly over. EDGAR

Who's winning? GRETCHEN

Who I want. EDGAR

Hold. ASTOR

 (THEY stop, but do not turn to HER.)

 ASTOR (CONT'D)

But not who I want. Resume.

 (THEY resume.)

Is it close? GRETCHEN

It's an away game. EDGAR

The score. GRETCHEN

Yes, it's close. Two point difference. EDGAR

But they'll win. Who you want. GRETCHEN

EDGAR
Depends on this kick.

GRETCHEN
A punt, right?

EDGAR
Kick. Field goal. Punts are different.

GRETCHEN
Sorry.
(Brief pause)
We can go after this drink then. Unless this kick will tie it up?

ASTOR
Hold.
(THEY stop, but do not turn to HER.)

ASTOR (CONT'D)
Are you serious? Are you for real?
(GRETCHEN turns to HER.)

GRETCHEN
What?

ASTOR
Are you? Please.

GRETCHEN
I said it wasn't my game.

ASTOR
Two point difference, he said. A field goal, he said. Field goals are three points.

GRETCHEN
I said--

ASTOR
Chess is not my game, I know how the queen moves. Blackjack isn't either, I know to split aces. You can't learn the fundamental rules? Not at least?

GRETCHEN
Why?

ASTOR
Because he enjoys it.

GRETCHEN

I'm not his slave.

EDGAR

(Not turning)

They ended slavery. I read something about that.

ASTOR

Wondrous thing, reading.

EDGAR

Very.

GRETCHEN

Then see.

ASTOR

But what does it hurt to learn?

GRETCHEN

It's a man's game. Men play it, men watch it.

ASTOR

Ah, the old ways. I watch it.

GRETCHEN

You're but one.

ASTOR

He might want one who could learn the things he likes. Might be why he--

GRETCHEN

Why he what? He hasn't done anything.

ASTOR

Not yet.

(EDGAR finally turns to HER.)

EDGAR

Nothing has happened before now.

ASTOR

I'm simply saying--

EDGAR

Excuse me. Please resume.

GRETCHEN

Yes, please.