

A LOT IN COMMON

A Serious Comedy or a Comedic Drama
by Robin Caroline

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Cast of Characters

LAURA: over 40, divorced four years ago, deciding to brave the dating scene again for the first time

TOM: 50ish, has a gut, recently divorced, started dating immediately

Place

Laura's apartment

Time

The present

SETTING: Laura's bachelorette pad should give off a strong feminine vibe.
Action takes place in her living room and kitchen.

AT RISE: Lights come up on LAURA's living fussing nervously, waiting for her dinner guest to arrive.

(The doorbell rings. LAURA answers the door. TOM enters with a bottle of wine as a gift.)

LAURA

Welcome! You found it.

TOM

It was easy. I have a GPS. This is for you.

(TOM hands LAURA the bottle of wine.)

LAURA

Thank you. Let me take your coat (realizes she can't take it with the bottle in her hand) or the coat rack's right there.

TOM

Fine.

(LAURA moves toward the kitchen. TOM follows after hanging up his coat.)

LAURA

Would you open the wine for me?

TOM

Sure. It smells wonderful. What's for dinner?

LAURA

Pot Roast. I didn't want to have to fuss when you got here. Do you cook?

(LAURA hands TOM the bottle opener and gets glasses from a cupboard.)

TOM

I manage. You just have to look at me to know I'm not starving. (rubs his tummy)

LAURA

I'm not a great cook, I warn you, but I can follow a recipe. I made a plate of cheese and crackers. I'll put it on the coffee table. We can sit on the couch.

(When TOM has poured them each a glass, he brings both glasses to the living room and sits down next to LAURA on the couch.)

LAURA (cont'd)

I'm new at this dating thing. It's been awhile. How long have you been divorced?

TOM

9 months.

LAURA

And you're already dating?

TOM

I felt ready.

LAURA

Am I your first date?

TOM

No. And you? How long's it been?

LAURA

Four years.

TOM

That long? You've dated before me, right?

LAURA

No, actually.

TOM

Oh. I don't like being alone.

LAURA

I read that I needed to be happy alone before trying to find someone else. The person to control your own happiness is you.

TOM

I bore me. (pause) Four years.

LAURA

I think I needed time—

TOM

--That's a lot of—

LAURA

--to get the bitterness out of my system, I think.

TOM

Ah, he left you.

LAURA

No. I left him. But we shouldn't be talking about our exes. I had such a nice time talking with you over Mary and Bill's. My girlfriends think I was crazy to invite you over to dinner so soon.

TOM

Really?

LAURA

Apparently there's an order—movies, dinner out—

TOM

I hate rules like that.

LAURA

You're right. I get too caught up in following the rules sometimes.

TOM

Who makes the rules?

LAURA

I always think everybody knows them but me—

TOM

I get that. Mary and Bill seem to have gotten it right.

LAURA

And they were right about us. We do have a lot in common.

TOM

You teach chemistry. I work in a lab. And then there's our kids.

LAURA

Let's play a game. Let's try to find 7 things we have in common.

TOM

Okay. One. Our kids are about the same age.

LAURA

No, let's make it about us and our hobbies. Like, who's your favorite author?

TOM

I don't really read books. I read the newspaper.

LAURA

Movies?

TOM

I don't know the last time I went to the movies.

LAURA

Television shows

TOM

I watch sports.

LAURA

Do you play a sport?

TOM

Does it look like I play a sport?

LAURA

I run.

TOM

I used to run in high school. I did the hurdles.

LAURA

I never did any of that in high school. You should really pick up a sport. It's good for you.

TOM

I know.

LAURA

I also do yoga. It helps with flexibility, strength, and balance.

TOM

All good things.

LAURA

How about travel?

TOM

I haven't done as much traveling as I'd like.

LAURA
Me, too. Where would you like to go?

TOM
The Great--

LAURA
--Barrier Reef. Another thing in common!

TOM
I was going to say the Great Wall of China.

LAURA
Would you say you're more of a homebody or you like to go out?

TOM
Both. But if I love whom I'm with, I don't need anyone else.

LAURA
Does this feel like an interview?

TOM
A little bit, but it's okay.

LAURA
I'll try to calm down.

TOM
It's okay. These things are important to you.

LAURA
I just don't want to make the same mistake again.

TOM
What was your husband's name?

LAURA
Bill

TOM
You and Bill didn't have a lot in common?

LAURA
We shouldn't be talking about this.

TOM

There are no rules, Laura. Eventually we'll say it to each other.

LAURA

Eventually. Okay. I think that was one of the factors--

TOM

--that led up to the divorce.

LAURA

Right. We didn't have enough in common. He liked to have me around, but he didn't pay attention to me. You know what I mean?

TOM

I guess.

LAURA

For instance, he liked me to sit with him on the couch while he watched sports—

TOM

Or while he read. He just liked to have you near. That's nice.

LAURA

Well, my point was, why did he need me close if he was going to ignore me? I'll never understand that.

TOM

If he worked, maybe he was tired and just wanted to rest, to not have to talk.

LAURA

Ever?!

TOM

I just know that there are some days, you just long for peace and quiet when you get home, you're talked out.

LAURA

Using up your words at work.

TOM

What?

LAURA

It's a theory. Men only have so many words that they'll use in a day and then they're spent. The theory goes that some men use up their words at work, and don't have any left for their family when they get home.

TOM

I never heard that. I guess it makes sense.

LAURA

It made me feel invisible.

TOM

I see you. Denise left me by the way.

LAURA

Oh, I'm sorry. Do you know why?

TOM

Well—

LAURA

No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't ask. It's too soon. Too personal. I'm prying.

TOM

No, again, you'll find out eventually, if we...

LAURA

If we...

TOM

I don't think it's ever one thing. I think it's 1000 things over the years that are like bricks. Stack them together, and they become like a wall.

LAURA

I like how you put that.

TOM

Mind you, she built the wall. I was happy for the most part. But nothing was ever good enough for her, and she just held onto things, never let them go.

LAURA

Resentful.

TOM

Yeah. And it's not fair to bring things up that happened 20 years ago—

LAURA

You were married 20 years?

TOM

Wow.

LAURA

You?

TOM

19. I couldn't stand the idea of celebrating our 20th.

LAURA

That's what she said about our 25th. I started talking about a party, and she hemmed and hawed until she finally asked me to leave. (Laura holds his hand. Pause.) She wants a divorce, but I have to leave.

TOM

We ended up having to sell. Neither of us could afford it. (pause) And I realized that staying there was like... If walls could talk.

LAURA

She said the most hurtful thing after I left.

TOM

What?

LAURA

She said the house felt less lonely.

TOM

(startled)

LAURA

What?

TOM

(Takes back her hand.) I understand. I understand how she felt.

LAURA

You do?

TOM

Perfectly. I can't do this again.

LAURA

What?

TOM

You. LAURA

Me? How? TOM

I want you to leave. LAURA

What?! TOM

I want you to leave. You're like an old sweater. LAURA

I don't understand. TOM

You're comfortable because I've worn you before. Not again. I can't do this again. LAURA

(angry) You've got to be kidding me?! One moment I'm baring my soul— TOM

--I'm sorry. LAURA

(angry with raised voice) Which is not easy for me! TOM

And there it is. LAURA

What? TOM

The temper. LAURA

Who are we talking about? TOM

Me. Making the same mistake-- LAURA

I am not your ex-husband.

TOM

Am I like her?

LAURA

Who?

TOM

Denise.

LAURA

Right at this moment? Exactly.

TOM

I can't do this. I don't want to become invisible again.

LAURA

So irrational. Women are so irrational. (Gets up to leave) It was nice knowing you. (moves to leave, comes back) One second we're talking, we're laughing, it gets serious, I open up to you, and you reject me?!

TOM

Are all men like this?

LAURA

You have no idea who I am.

TOM

You touched a nerve.

LAURA

I am not Bill.

TOM

Your poor wife.

LAURA

You need help.

TOM

(laughs) I need you to leave.

LAURA

That's it?!

TOM

LAURA

Goodbye, Tom.

TOM

You mean, goodbye, Bill.

LAURA

Goodbye Cloak of Invisibility. (stands on coffee table, hands on hips, legs spread apart like Wonder Woman) Hello, World! I am Laura who loves to hold hands, and go to the movies, and who *will* travel to Paris this summer and will sip wine at a sidewalk café after spending hours in the Louvre. I will bring my portable watercolor set and spend the afternoon sitting on a bench--

TOM

Who bought you the watercolor set?

LAURA

What?

TOM

Who bought you the watercolor set?

LAURA

Bill did. For my birthday. How did--

TOM

--Goodbye, Laura. Four years! Forty years and you'll still be bitter. (Puts on coat and moves to the door.)

LAURA

Wait.

TOM

No, this time I'm leaving. I want out. I'm leaving you. See how it feels! (opens door and leaves, slamming the door behind him.)

LAURA

Wait! Who are you...? (gets down off table) I guess it doesn't matter.

(Blackout. End of play.)