

Agnes Palfi

Human, right?

One-Act play in which a bench tries tragically hard to become identical with itself

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CHARACTERS

Katie:	Richard's bride, in her 20s
Charlotte:	Katie's friend, in her 20s
Richard:	man, in his 40s
Margareth:	woman, in her 30s
Chunky Man:	pedestrian,
Football Fan:	guy, in his 20s,
Another Football Fan:	guy, in his 20s or 30s
Young Girl:	19-23-year-old girl,

FOOTBALL FAN as Barman

YOUNG GIRL as CHARLOTTE's girlfriend

CHUNKY MAN as Security Man

MARGARETH, as Margareth, the waitress

*Time: Now
Place: Anywhere*

Act One

Scene One

A small park nestled between houses on a hot summer evening. The scene can include a few trees or a bush, but a single bench is sufficient as a prop. The bench in this scene is rainbow-colored. (Since the bench color changes from scene to scene, it's best to use lighting or projections to achieve this effect.) KATIE enters, followed by CHARLOTTE, with a bottle of wine in each of their hands. KATIE is crying hysterically.

KATIE, wait!

CHARLOTTE

NO!

KATIE

KATIE drops herself onto the rainbow-coloured bench.

CHARLOTTE

Don't do this to yourself!

KATIE

I can't bear it!

KATIE drinks.

CHARLOTTE

KATIE, you drank too much!

KATIE lays down, closes her eyes. Pause.

CHARLOTTE

KATIE. You can talk to me. I'm here.

KATIE doesn't answer.

CHARLOTTE

KATIE, are you asleep?

KATIE

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

Tell me. What happened?

KATIE

Richard... he cancelled the wedding.

CHARLOTTE
WHAT?

KATIE
He cancelled everything including me.

CHARLOTTE
No! He can't be!

KATIE
He did. Just like that. What'll I do now?

CHARLOTTE
Oh, no, my poor KATIE, come here.

They hug each other for a few moments.

CHARLOTTE
It's incredible!

KATIE
Just think, we've already sent out all the invitations! Everyone'll be asking me what happened. And I'll have to explain...

KATIE cries in desperation.

CHARLOTTE
The jerk! Katie, Shh...

KATIE drinks and bends her head onto CHARLOTTE's shoulder.

KATIE
He never loved me, Charlotte! I was a simple substitute... for his ex.

CHARLOTTE
Shh...he did love you. But not enough.

KATIE starts sobbing again. Charlotte drinks and rubs Katie's back.

KATIE
I spent months organizing our wedding! I also bought that pink and white dress... already invited my friends from London...

CHARLOTTE
(aside)
I never understood why a woman's sole purpose in life should be getting married.

(to Katie)

Try not to think about that, darling.

KATIE

How could I not?

CHARLOTTE

Lean on me...

KATIE

I feel like I'm dead. But I have a lot to do: I'll have to cancel the restaurant... and...and my appointments at the hairdresser and the beautician... oh, my... what will *everybody* think?

CHARLOTTE

Who cares?! I'll cancel everything for you. Be glad, you avoided a bad marriage!

KATIE

Please, help me with this. I want to sleep all day.

CHARLOTTE

Of course.

CHARLOTTE sighs, they drink again.

KATIE

What a shame!

CHARLOTTE

On him, yes!

KATIE

(imitates people)

'Have you heard the news? Katie was left eight days before her wedding hahaha... *The Jilted Bride.*' Hahaha...

CHARLOTTE

That sounded like someone said it in a soap opera.

KATIE continues playing.

KATIE

'Oh, REALLY? But they looked so great together! Why would he leave such a nice girl?'

CHARLOTTE

Hey, stop it!

KATIE

'He said he was not ready...' Not ready for what, CHARLOTTE? Not ready for life? 'How old is he now? *Forty-three.*' How can he not know what he wants at the age of forty-three, CHARLOTTE, tell me?

CHARLOTTE

He doesn't know because he is still an immature son of a...

KATIE

Immature?

CHARLOTTE

Absolutely. Age is just a number, they say. Now, it's practically shouting.

CHARLOTTE drinks.

KATIE

I can't be drunk enough to ease this pain.

CHARLOTTE sighs, they drink again.

CHARLOTTE

I've always thought you were too young for him.

KATIE

Too young?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. You are only twenty-eight.

KATIE

Yet, you've just said age is just a number...

CHARLOTTE

Shh...You'll be fine. You'll find another guy in about...eight minutes.

Charlotte strokes her hair and kisses her forehead. CHUNKY MAN appears on the corner watches them. The girls notice him.

CHARLOTTE

Ugh. Not him. He looks like a pervert.

KATIE

I'll be fine. Not just yet.

CHARLOTTE

In about three months you'll be more like yourself.

KATIE

Right now, I just want to kill myself...

CHARLOTTE

Shh... I know. All the energy you directed towards him came back onto you. It's a heavy burden. You feel that now.

KATIE

I want to cut myself and bleed. He was my life.

CHARLOTTE

Past tense, correct. Even though it's too early to say.

KATIE

How could he do this to me when he knew how much I loved him?

CHARLOTTE

To put it simply: because he doesn't give a shit. Sorry.

Chunky Man comes near, pasts the bench. He says something in a foreign language.

CHARLOTTE

What? What is he saying, Katie? Do you understand? It sounded rude. I don't speak a word of this lingo.

CHUNKY MAN turns back and kicks the bench they are sitting on.

CHARLOTTE

HEY! What on earth do you think you are doing?

KATIE

He's saying men should throw away this bench—along with the people sitting on it! How can he say such a thing?

CHARLOTTE

(to the man)

Hey, idiot, leave us alone! I'll call the police...

KATIE

Just don't make him angry! He's saying horrible things like we are garbage people and simple trash! And that we just need to be properly screwed.

CHARLOTTE

Pervert swine! Why do you think he's saying such things out of the blue?

KATIE

Dunno.

CHARLOTTE

Racist!

KATIE

I've got a headache. This is too much for me. You, go back to the party, leave me here.

CHARLOTTE

No, KATIE, I'll stay. The offensive bully's leaving. What do you think was that all about?

KATIE

Not sure. The bench is rainbow coloured and he said it's for gay people or something like that.

CHARLOTTE is offended.

CHARLOTTE

On the contrary, this bench is for EVERYONE. Ignorant snob...

KATIE

Hahaha...

CHARLOTTE

What's so funny?

KATIE

I think he thought we were lesbians.

CHARLOTTE

Humans are fool and too prejudiced to realize they should learn something. They can only think in extremes and are incapable of moderate thought and action.

KATIE

Oh, RICHARD... how I wish I was gay right now!

CHARLOTTE

You don't say... How I wish I *was not*!

KATIE

You are only... half-gay. Aren't you?

CHARLOTTE

Beg your pardon?

KATIE

You like men and women, too.

CHARLOTTE

It is called bisexual.

KATIE

We've been friends for so long, yet, we've never talked about these things. You can be attracted to anyone.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, or pretty much attracted to *no one*.

KATIE

When a man leaves you, you can go to a woman...

CHARLOTTE

When a man leaves you, you can go to several others, too.

KATIE

It's not the same.

CHARLOTTE

It is.

KATIE

I want to be loved by a real man.

CHARLOTTE

I know.

KATIE

It seems I wanted RICHARD too much. I even forgave him when he didn't greet me on my birthday. And I waited for him a lot. There were times when he didn't reply, and I had to initiate contact to find out what was going on when we were apart.

CHARLOTTE

These things are called *red flags*, honey.

KATIE

Funny thing is: Richard wanted to get married first. This whole thing was *his* idea.

CHARLOTTE

He only wanted to get back his ex. You were his rebound. Anyway, he's good riddance. Eventually, you'd have had to divorce him anyway. Now, you don't have to carry that burden. You're free.

KATIE

It just hurts too much.

CHARLOTTE

You're *single* now. Get a life.

KATIE

I still feel gobsmacked and dumb. My left leg is still there at the gates of my

married life and I'm still standing in front of our dream house and imagine our children playing...

CHARLOTTE

Too bad. You'll not be able to get over this while daydreaming. Open a new chapter.

KATIE

I could lean on him when I was stressed. Oh, how could he do this to me? I miss him so much now! I want to be in his arms. I loved when he comforted me...

CHARLOTTE

We're back to where we started. This is how it works: we keep repeating the same things over and over until we finally move on.

KATIE

You are so experienced!

CHARLOTTE

I wish I wasn't!

KATIE

You never talk about your affairs. Have you disappointed a lot?

CHARLOTTE

Just a few times, but that was enough for me to avoid anything like that since then.

KATIE

How many women've you had in your bed?

CHARLOTTE

Erm... seven?

KATIE

Wow. And men?

CHARLOTTE

Just two.

They pause.

KATIE

He seemed safe.

CHARLOTTE

Safe for what?

KATIE

For life. I thought RICHARD was my... other half. My soulmate.

CHARLOTTE

Tough. You were his lovely toy for a while.

KATIE

I thought he loved me.

CHARLOTTE

I told you that I saw him flirting with a waitress some months ago but you weren't listening.

KATIE

But I thought that *I was someone special*.

CHARLOTTE

You thought it well. Listen... it's much better to cancel a wedding than to get divorced. And *you ARE* special to a lot of people. Forget about RICHARD. He is a rat.

CHARLOTTE kissed her on the forehead. KATIE leans in and kisses CHARLOTTE. CHARLOTTE is surprised, but they prolong the kiss. In the distance, CHUNKY MAN and two football fans notice them, and talk about them. They use body language that expresses their disapproval.

CHARLOTTE

You're drunk and hurt.

KATIE

Never tried this before. I might be a lesbian subconsciously. At least it'd seem to be the right explanation of my wrong choices of men.

CHARLOTTE laughs.

CHARLOTTE

The right explanation is to be found among your romantic books. You're disappointed and simply want to get laid right now.

KATIE drinks.

KATIE

You know me too well.

CHARLOTTE

If you're having any doubts, just to be clear: you're not a lesbian. Not even a bisexual.

KATIE

How can you know?

CHARLOTTE

Had I been a Mr. TallDarkAndHandsome, you'd have jumped on me offering a wedding ring.
(Tears well up in Katie's eyes again.) Oh, no, sorry darling!

KATIE

I seem ridiculous.

CHARLOTTE

No, I pretty much used the wrong words.

KATIE

You did.

CHARLOTTE

I just wanted to say: you are too delicate, romantic, and overly sensitive. And quickly make bad decisions.

KATIE

And you're the only person I trust because of your bluntness. Anyway, you're right, I'll survive. I want him to be happy with that bitch. Or a new one.

CHARLOTTE

There you go.

KATIE

I should have slapped him in the face.

CHARLOTTE

(agrees)

Second stage of grief: anger.

KATIE

I need to get laid.

CHARLOTTE

Me too. Particularly when I am half-drunk and had read too much about psychology.

Two Football fans and CHUNKY MAN come closer in green and white t-shirts, holding brushes and paint.

CHARLOTTE

It seems we'll have to leave.

KATIE

(to the men)

Hi there!

CHARLOTTE

Ah, KATIE...

The men are approaching closer, clearly intending to paint the bench.

KATIE

(to the FOOTBALL FAN)

Why're you staring at me?

FOOTBALL FAN

I think I'm staring at my next woman. Come, my love, don't be lonely and sad tonight! A beauty like you deserves much better than pain.

KATIE

Oh!

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

(to CHARLOTTE)

Leave this place, lesbians! We've business here.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not moving an inch.

FOOTBALL FAN

(to his mate)

I'm going to hook up with this girl now. Or both of them, who knows.

KATIE

I'd love to move... if you'd lift me off this bench!

FOOTBALL FAN

What'd I just say? I've got the girl. I always know what to say to them.

CHARLOTTE

(to KATIE)

Be careful. I don't think this is a good idea...

FOOTBALL FAN steps up and lifts KATIE with vigor.

KATIE

Oh, wow, could you carry me over *your own* threshold like this?

FOOTBALL FAN

Any time, my little ...bride!

KATIE

Oh...!

CHARLOTTE

KATIE, you remember what I just said about red flags and bad decisions?

KATIE

Yeah, I'll think it over tomorrow. See you. *(to the football fan, stroking his hair and kissing his*

cheek) take me away from here..

FOOTBALL FAN

As you wish!

(to his mate)

Finish this without me! *(he shows at the paint and the bench)* or get the other girl as fast as you can. Hahaha...

He takes KATIE away. KATIE leans on his shoulder.

CHARLOTTE

(to the ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN, who tries to grab her waist)

Don't touch me! No! What do you think you're doing?

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

(shrugs)

Alright, woman, go and screw yourself instead of lecturing me here. You look like you need one.

CHARLOTTE stormed off. ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN and CHUNKY MAN starts painting the bench. The stage goes dark.

Scene Two

Lights come up, same place. The bench is now painted to green and white, the colours of the football team in the district. RICHARD arrives with a flower. MARGARETH comes in with her phone in her hand.

MARGARETH

RICHARD!

RICHARD

MARGARETH!

MARGARETH

Let's sit down here...hey, wasn't this bench rainbow coloured yesterday?

RICHARD

It was, but luckily it's now wearing the best football team's colour in the world...

MARGARETH
(grimaced)

I dunno, I am not a fan and I prefer more colours... Anyway...RICHARD, I've heard the news and I'm so excited!

RICHARD

I thought you would. You might think I am a jerk...

MARGARETH

Are you kidding? Why would I think that?

RICHARD

Because...because you know... because I'm not getting married after all.

MARGARETH

You *aren't*?

RICHARD

The wedding is off. Have you **not** heard that?

MARGARETH

No!

RICHARD

Then what news did you hear about me?

MARGARETH

That you finally settled down and'll get married in a couple of days...

RICHARD

Well, no, not at all. We broke up yesterday, KATIE and I.

MARGARETH

What happened?

RICHARD

You.

Margareth jumps up.

MARGARETH

Me? No. No, I can't believe it!

Margareth notices the flowers in the man's hand.

MARGARETH

Don't you dare give me those! You do the same thing with everybody in the office?

RICHARD

I've just realized...

MARGARETH

Forget that! That was long ago! Now why exactly did you want to see me?

RICHARD

I made a huge mistake leaving you.

MARGARETH

Yes, you did. But it is all over now...water under the bridge.

RICHARD

You're over me by now? I'm not over you.

MARGARETH

That's your problem, and that's all I have to say about it. Look, I really don't have time for this—it's petty. I came here to congratulate you personally on finally finding someone, and KATIE's a great girl. Honestly, she's too good for you.

RICHARD

You were too good for me, MARGARETH... and I am still...

MARGARETH

Go back to her and beg for forgiveness.

RICHARD

I am begging for *yours*.

Margareth sighs.

RICHARD

I've heard you are divorced.

MARGARETH

So that's what it's about! I am divorced, yes, it's over. It didn't work.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

MARGARETH

No, you are not. And now that I am free doesn't mean I'm going back to you. You know, me and my husband *decided* to separate, he didn't leave me out of the blue, as **you** did. It was a thoughtful, mature decision on both parts. Because we're adults and we've children to take care of...

RICHARD

I just left you. I'm a loser.

MARGARETH

You know, I can't imagine how you were able to do the same thing to such a young, nice girl, like KATIE. Don't make the same mistake with her as you did with me.

RICHARD is offended.

RICHARD

I left her because I realized I'm still very much in love with you...

MARGARETH laughs.

RICHARD

You can't imagine how hard it is to lead such a big company!

MARGARETH

I bet.

RICHARD

And making money all the time! Katie was fun but...

Margareth rolls her eyes.

RICHARD

I've a lot of business meetings, late nights...

MARGARETH

Hahaha, you are telling me the same things you did years ago. You've not improved an inch. I feel sorry for you. You turn the tables again when your plan isn't working as you'd imagined. Why am I listening to this? I've no business

with you at all.

Richard grabs her hand, when she wants to leave.

RICHARD

You came because you still care for me.

MARGARETH

No, and don't touch me!

RICHARD

I want you to understand me!

MARGARETH

You are too understood, I am afraid. You just cannot see that at all, because your emotional skills are below unicellulars.

RICHARD

What? Stay here! Come up to my apartment, MARGARETH! I fulfil your desires...I promise...

MARGARETH

Sex, promises! Huh! This is the best you can do.

RICHARD

I know you want me and you know what I can do to you...

MARGARETH

Yes, I know that very well... Poor KATIE knows it now, too. I just hope she was quick to find solace.

RICHARD

I'm not going to hurt you this time, no. Give me a second chance. Let me prove myself...

He touches her everywhere. They struggle.

RICHARD

You see, you aren't indifferent to me.

MARGARETH

What do you think you're doing? You are miserable. I hate that you feel no shame using anything against me.

RICHARD

Will you forgive me? Please! MARGARETH, please forgive me...

MARGARETH

I...

RICHARD kisses her hard. MARGARETH leans back, she lets him kiss her neck too. Next moment the CHUNKY MAN walks pasts near them whistling and mocking. RICHARD was about to take MARGARETH away. MARGARETH stops him.

MARGARETH

Years ago I was daydreaming constantly about this meeting: you coming back to me, begging me, apologizing, giving me flowers, kissing like mad. I'd have needed that very much. But you missed the boat. I've already forgiven me for trusting you too much. You'll always remain a perpetual narcissistic, aggressive child. Bye.

MARGARETH leaves him standing there. He shouts after her.

RICHARD

I'll talk to your boss and you'll be fired!

RICHARD sits down onto the bench. He twirls the flower in his hand, thinking. After a minute, a girl comes in, eyes him.

RICHARD

Hey there, where're you going, beauty?

YOUNG GIRL

To the pub, over there.

RICHARD

Your butt looks amazing! Are you with friends?

YOUNG GIRL

Yeah. You want to join us?

RICHARD

Sure.

RICHARD takes the girl's hip, gives her the flower, she accepts that, giggles and they walk away.

Scene Three

Same place, next day. Half of the bench is now rainbow-colored, while the other side remains green and white. On the green-and-white side, ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN is passed out, clearly hungover. CHARLOTTE enters.

CHARLOTTE

Where are you, KATIE? I shouldn't have let her go with that guy the other night, but I knew she was looking for a good time.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

(waking up)

Well, well, it's you. What're you doing here?

CHARLOTTE

I'm waiting for someone.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Your Prince Charming, huh?

CHARLOTTE

None of your business.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

You know, you look good. Sit here. This is *your* color. Some idiot tried to repaint it last night, but I stopped them in time. Hey, nice tits.

CHARLOTTE

(aside)

Stupid ass.

(aloud)

I don't have a colour. And I don't like men.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Are you as stupid a lesbian as one of my ex-girlfriends?

CHARLOTTE

Totally.

(Aside)

At least you'll leave me alone.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

I don't see what's so great for you about not having a cock anywhere around.

CHARLOTTE doesn't answer.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

I'll never understand you people. And I don't want to. Oh, my buddy said your girlfriend was unbelievable in bed. He enjoyed it. Screwed her all night.

CHARLOTTE

Cool.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Let me sleep. And just so you know: you're *not* sitting here. Consider that this lame color's already been repainted.

CHARLOTTE

Just keep sleeping.

(Aside)

You idiot.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN lies down with his back turned.

In some moments, KATIE arrives.

CHARLOTTE

KATIE, where on earth've you been?

KATIE

Oh, CHARLOTTE, I'm so sorry I left you... That guy has such incredible muscles... I was groping them all night...

CHARLOTTE

I was informed of that. *(points the guy lying on the bench)* Was it at least worth it?

KATIE

Of course!

CHARLOTTE

You didn't ask him his name, did you?

KATIE

I didn't have the time.

CHARLOTTE

Good.

KATIE

You might judge me for that.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not your mum, KATIE. Just be careful: you never know which psychopath you might run into.

KATIE

(points the guy on the bench)

Like this guy is weird, isn't he?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, he is. I suppose he's the one who keeps painting these benches, stirring up all these weird thoughts in people.

KATIE

It's kind of unsettling, isn't it? After all, it's just a bench, right? It shouldn't matter what color it is. It could be rainbow, purple-red, light-yellow-green, polka-dotted, or striped for all I care.

(KATIE plops down on the colorful part of the bench.)

CHARLOTTE

I've canceled everything in your name. And I've spoken to all the people you invited to the wedding.

KATIE

I've already forgotten about the whole thing... thank you so much, CHARLOTTE. I'm going to my parents' place in two days.

CHARLOTTE

That's a good idea.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN turns.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Get off this bench, you leftie¹.

CHARLOTTE

Look, pal, we...

KATIE

It's okay, come on, CHARLOTTE, just leave him here...

(The girls leave)

¹ derogatory slang in Hungarian, used to describe someone perceived as a leftist, or liberal, often in a negative contest.

Scene Four

Same place, next day, the bench is now fully rainbow coloured again. RICHARD comes in with the young girl.

YOUNG GIRL

Let's stop here, I'll smoke. Will you take me out to dinner tonight, sweetheart?

(the YOUNG GIRL plops down on the bench, lights her cigarette)

RICHARD

(bored, on the phone)

Of course, darling. I'll take you wherever you wanna go.

YOUNG GIRL

I didn't think I'd meet such a handsome guy like you this summer.

RICHARD

Come here.

(They kiss)

YOUNG GIRL

Will you take me to Paris next Saturday?

RICHARD

I've other things to do now...

(He looks at the bench but doesn't sit down)

YOUNG GIRL

But you promised you'd take me... you said you have a lot of money...

(The girl sits on the backrest of the bench, legs wide apart)

RICHARD

I'll take you, but I can't this weekend. You know I run a company and...

*He sees MARGARETH walking by.
MARGARETH approaches, sees the young woman with RICHARD. She smiles.*

MARGARETH

Good morning!

RICHARD

MARGARETH!

He wants to run after her, but the girl clings to him.

YOUNG GIRL

Who is this woman, darling?

RICHARD

Just... nobody. Not important.

MARGARETH heard what RICHARD answered to the girl, chuckles to herself, shakes her head, and leaves quickly and happily.

YOUNG GIRL

Wasn't this bench green and white yesterday?

RICHARD

Yeah.

(still looking after MARGARETH, then shrugs)

Yes, it was, but now it's this silly color. Suitable for kids and gays. Never go among them. Although, if you've a girlfriend, feel free to bring her to my place. A sweet threesome is good for everyone.

*He picks up his phone and starts using it.
KATIE approaches.*

YOUNG GIRL

I've a girlfriend who might interest you, and she'd be up for a sweet threesome with us.

KATIE hearing this, walks up to RICHARD, who gets flustered but then collects himself.

KATIE

My resignation is on your desk. I'm leaving soon.

YOUNG GIRL

Who is SHE?

RICHARD

My former colleague, dear.

KATIE

You scumbag!

Richard

(to the YOUNG GIRL)

Let's go before she makes an unnecessary scene.

KATIE walks up to him and slaps him hard in the face. With her head held high, she walks away. The young girl moans and caresses RICHARD's face as he groans.

Scene Five

Same place, next evening. The bench is now painted entirely green and white, with a STOP LGBTQ logo plastered on it. ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN is slumped on the bench, half-asleep and hungover. CHARLOTTE enters and notices the bench.

CHARLOTTE

Tomorrow I'll leave this place, so I'll not have to witness this nonsense anymore.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

You here, again? Came to insult me?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I want to insult the hell out of you. I'm waiting for someone if you want to know.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

You can sit, if you like.

CHARLOTTE

No, thank you. I prefer standing.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

You see these lovely colours? I created them.

CHARLOTTE

Wow.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

I'm very proud of myself.

CHARLOTTE
(to herself)

I bet.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

You've a great figure. You can even be my wife. I can make you babies.

CHARLOTTE coughs.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

It's a shame about you. You're a hot girl. It's a pity that all of you are so messed up. That's how humanity's going to die out.

CHARLOTTE shuts her eyes.

CHARLOTTE

That's right, we're all on the brink of extinction—just all eight billion of us.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Actually, your kind should be wiped out, all of you, just as you are, though it'd be a real shame to lose you. Every time I see you, I imagine I could do all sorts of things with you.

CHARLOTTE
to herself

Good thing I meditate regularly. But its effect will wear off quickly if I have to listen to this idiot much longer.

A loud horn sounds in the background.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN
looking into the distance

Look at that guy, he doesn't even know how to drive, or what's he doing? He almost crashed. People like that should be wiped out too, no loss there. There's a lot that should be banned in this world. Man, I got so drunk again last night that I am still hungover!

*CHARLOTTE slowly exhales.
RICHARD enters, drunk.*

RICHARD

What're you doing here? Didn't you go after your friend to comfort her? Or are you more upset that you can't even sit down here because you're just a stupid faggot?

CHARLOTTE looks at RICHARD with contempt.

RICHARD

You want to hit me? Go ahead!

CHARLOTTE

I've learned too much about narcissistic people for that, so no thanks. Find someone else to provoke.

RICHARD

You're arrogant. You know, when I picked up KATIE, I thought I'd have gone for you instead because you're much hotter than she is. But then I saw what you're like, so it was better to just screw KATIE. At least she always let me.

CHARLOTTE

You're even more disgusting than I thought.

(aside)

How much longer do I have to listen to this? Come on, KATIE...

RICHARD

Yeah, you're really hot, and if... if you weren't so attached to your things... we could actually have a good time. You and me.

CHARLOTTE

(aside)

When the attack didn't work, you resort to insults, and now you're trying to seduce me just to impose your will on me. Transparent worm!

(Aloud)

You're too drunk!

RICHARD

With boobs like that, you shouldn't be running around alone!

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN props himself up on the bench.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

That's what I told her! But you can say whatever you want to these lunatics, it's all in vain.

CHARLOTTE looks nervously at the road.

RICHARD

If you're waiting for your friend, it's pointless. She's long gone. Left you behind. Stupid bitch.

CHARLOTTE is about to leave when RICHARD grabs her. They struggle. RICHARD tries to kiss her, and ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN helps RICHARD hold CHARLOTTE down.

RICHARD

Nobody comes around here. Now you're finally gonna get what you deserve, MARGARETH...

CHARLOTTE

I am not...

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN

Let's take her behind the bench. Finally, I'll have my pleasure.

They grab CHARLOTTE and drag her behind the bench, starting to tear off her clothes.

CHARLOTTE

(screaming)

HEELP! Katie...

They cover her mouth, and only the girl's moans can be heard. The scene goes dark.

Scene Six

Scene is the same; the bench is now simple brown. KATIE is sleeping on it. CHARLOTTE comes in, sits next to her, gently stroking her forehead.

CHARLOTTE

KATIE! Can you hear me? KATIE! Are you feeling better? Wake up!

KATIE groans, then pushes CHARLOTTE's hand away and suddenly sits up.

KATIE

What? What happened? CHARLOTTE? CHARLOTTE, are you okay?

CHARLOTTE

I'm the one asking YOU that! KATIE, you scared me! You got so depressed! Are you feeling better?

KATIE

Why? I... What happened? I've got a headache... Was I... *sleeping here?*

CHARLOTTE

You got totally wasted. I did tell you, that you should have a drink, but I didn't think you needed to mix everything so recklessly. Well, it was a pretty wild party. We all got drunk, but you got really sick, fell onto the floor, and we'd to bring you outside for some fresh air. You talked about your anxieties.

KATIE

And I fell asleep? I don't remember. I can't decide what I dreamed and what really happened. CHARLOTTE, did we kiss?

CHARLOTTE

Wow, Katie, your dreams are totally normal these days, aren't they? Erm...yes, you tried to kiss me but I avoided it.

KATIE

Are you bisexual?

CHARLOTTE laughs.

CHARLOTTE

I told you one or two things during the night. No, I'm not bisexual. I'm a lesbian. Completely. That's just how it is. By the way, RICHARD was looking everywhere for you when we told him you're unwell.

KATIE

RICHARD?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, RICHARD, your fiancé. Sorry, I never liked him too much. But after this night, I've to admit that you two're well-suited for each other.

KATIE

What? REALLY?

FOOTBALL FAN comes in as the BARMAN.

FOOTBALL FAN AS BARMAN

So, how're you feeling?

CHARLOTTE
(TO KATIE)

Remember him? He was the one who picked you up off the dance floor when you fell.

KATIE

Oh... but I didn't sleep with him, did I?

BARMAN smiles and winks.

BARMAN

Unfortunately not, miss.

CHARLOTTE

Let's put it this way: you were farther from sex last night than you've ever been.

KATIE

Oh my God, I can imagine! How must I look right now? What else did I do? No, please don't tell me. I'm so sorry! I dreamed all sorts of nonsense.

(To the Barman)

Thank you for your kind help.

Chunky Man comes in as Security Man.

BARMAN

Oh, it's nothing! I'll bring you a drink. No, not that kind! I have a nice refreshment for occasions like this.

BARMAN leaves.

CHUNKY MAN as SECURITY MAN

How's she? Better now?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I think so. Thanks.

CHUNKY MAN as SECURITY MAN nods and leaves.

KATIE

to Charlotte

Jeez...I remember him too! He *can* speak English! He just has a very strong accent.

CHARLOTTE

I hope accents don't bother you. What are you, a racist or something?

KATIE

No just... Did I throw up in front of everyone?

CHARLOTTE

Erm... no, a waitress helped you out in time.

KATIE

I never drink. I hope you won't judge me for that.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not your mum, Katie. Just be careful: you never know which psychopath you might run into.

KATIE

Oh my God, Charlotte, you already said this in my dream... and I dreamed that Richard cancelled the wedding and... and they dragged you behind this bench, and... it felt so real... You weren't hurt, were you?

CHARLOTTE

Who would've hurt me and why? Of course not! But you did fall down at one point, maybe you mistook that for pain.

RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

Sweetheart!

KATIE pulls away.

RICHARD

You shouldn't have drunk so much, you never could handle alcohol, my darling. I was so scared. You said you'd changed your mind about the wedding.

KATIE

Richard, I think we need to talk.

CHARLOTTE

I'll go in to get a cup of hot drink.

CHARLOTTE leaves.

RICHARD

Are you having pre-wedding jitters? Are you freaking out?

KATIE

Yes, I think so. Did you have a woman named MARGARETH?

RICHARD

Yes, but I told you about her once.

KATIE

Is she divorced now?

RICHARD

I don't know, maybe. She has a bunch of kids, and she was recently transferred to another department at work... But what does that have to do with anything?

KATIE

Do you still think about her?

RICHARD

How did that even cross your mind? I got over her a long time ago. We don't even talk. I love *you* like crazy and I want to marry you as fast as I can. I'm unbelievably lucky to be the one marrying you.

KATIE

What about CHARLOTTE?

RICHARD

I know she's not a fan of me. Do you think this will cause big problems in our future?

KATIE

Actually, I dreamed that you raped her.

RICHARD

WHAT? Are you out of your mind?

KATIE

I can't help it—I have these inexplicable fears. But just so you know, CHARLOTTE thinks more highly of you now.

RICHARD

I'm glad to hear that, although I didn't think it meant so much to you. If you're still worried about the age difference: age is just a number, they say. I'd appreciate it if you didn't see me as an aggressive beast whenever you're feeling anxious. I'm not like that at all. Come here! If these thoughts don't go away or get worse, we'll find you a reliable specialist.

He hugs her tightly. CHARLOTTE and the YOUNG GIRL enter, holding hands. YOUNG GIRL is modestly dressed, looks pretty.

KATIE

Wow!

CHARLOTTE

I didn't have a chance to introduce you yesterday because... well, you weren't feeling well. KATIE, this is my girlfriend, Susan. Susan, this is my friend, KATIE.

MARGARETH enter with the BARMAN bringing KATIE her drink. MARGARETH comes in as a waitress.

KATIE

MARGARETH?

MARGARETH shows the name tag on her uniform.

MARGARETH

Yes, I was the one who helped you out... in the bathroom. You remember?

KATIE

Thank you, I am so sorry! This is so embarrassing! You're not RICHARD's ex, are you?

MARGARETH

You asked me the same thing last night. Sorry to disappoint, but I only met him for the first time yesterday. Are you feeling better?

BARMAN hands her the drink.

BARMAN

Here you go! This is just what you need after sleeping it off. You're a good girl. Believe me, I would know.

KATIE takes a sip of the drink.

KATIE

Tastes good. The bench! It... It was all sorts of colors, green and white and rainbow. Do they usually repaint it?

BARMAN

Green-white and rainbow? What're you smoking along with your drink, miss?

CHARLOTTE

Probably everything she could dig out of her pockets—and maybe a few things that weren't in there to begin with.

RICHARD

Oh, KATIE!

RICHARD pulls KATIE back into a hug.

BARMAN

Be glad she's still here and didn't suddenly fly off to the other side of the world. Anything

can happen at a time like this—I've got tons of juicy stories. Anyway, I've got to go!

CHARLOTTE

We'll leave you here with RICHARD. You're in good hands now.

Everyone leaves. RICHARD helps KATIE up.

KATIE

I'm sorry, RICHARD! I never thought I'd be such an emotional wreck who needs a lot of support.

RICHARD

It's already a wonderful step forward that you've had the courage to admit this, my dear. Most people never even get to this far, they just whine and expect you to listen. It would've been worse if we found out after getting married that I'm just a simple projection of your fears. However, this way we have a good chance of defeating your demons as soon as possible.

They leave arm in arm.

ANOTHER FOOTBALL FAN enters a few seconds later, holding a paint bucket and a brush. Whistling, he begins to repaint the bench in green and white. The scene slowly fades to black.

END OF PLAY

Background Information

Last Thursday, Amnesty International and the Ferencváros Municipality unveiled the city's first rainbow-colored public bench on Tompa Street, to draw attention to the upcoming Budapest Pride this Saturday and to promote acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. Even then, there were doubts about how long the bench would remain untouched in a district where, a few years ago, a rainbow-colored Black Lives Matter statue was quickly boarded up. The bench didn't last long: by Saturday morning, it had already been painted green and white—apparently by members of the Aryan Greens, a group of hardcore Ferencváros football fans. Krisztina Baranyi, the mayor of District IX, commented at the time, "The Ferencváros football ultras have achieved a huge victory on Tompa Street." Amnesty International Hungary filed a complaint and repainted the bench in rainbow colors.

However, by Tuesday morning, the bench had been painted green and white again, and this time, "STOP LGBTQ" was spray-painted in large letters at its base. After this second incident, Baranyi called the situation a "never-ending story" and referred to the vandals as the "strong Aryan brigade."

By Wednesday morning, the bench was back to what it had been a week earlier: a plain brown bench. The only difference was that the unknown painters had attached a piece of paper to the bench that read: "I just want to be a bench. One that is good for everyone. For you. For him. For us."²

² Source: <https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/07/13/ujra-szivarvanyszinure-festettek-a-ferencvarosi-padot> (Access: 11.07.2024)