

Expiration Date

A short comedy by

William Missouri Downs

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CAST OF CHARACTER

Allen & Diane

(A young couple in love)

SETTING

A table at a sidewalk cafe

Synopsis: A comedy about how everything comes to an end, even love

Bio: William Missouri Downs has won two Rolling Premieres from the National New Play Network (NNPN), won numerous playwriting awards and has been a finalist at the Eugene O'Neill twice. Samuel French, Playscripts and Heuer Publishing have published eleven of plays.

Expiration Date

(Lights up on ALLEN and DIANE, a young couple in love. They've just finished a romantic dinner at a sidewalk café.)

ALLEN
(Paying the bill)

That was delicious.

DIANE

Sure was.

ALLEN

...So, what shall we do next?

DIANE

What if we pick up a New York Times, go to my place and watch a baseball movie.

ALLEN

Really?

DIANE

Yes. Come on.

(She starts to get up.)

ALLEN
(Amazed)

Wait. Do you realize what just happened?

DIANE

No.

ALLEN

Just now, right here at this little Italian sidewalk café in SoHo, we became... a couple.

DIANE
(Dawning on her)

My God, you're right.

ALLEN

A minute ago we were just two people on their fourth date.
But now we're...

DIANE
(Amazed)

Like, official.

ALLEN

For the first time in my life, I got it right. On our first
Match-dot-com-meet-and-greet//

DIANE

We played it cool.

ALLEN

On our second date//

DIANE

We both swiped right.

ALLEN

And on our third date//

DIANE

We screwed like bunnies on crack. Just like you're supposed
to.

ALLEN

And then, just now, when you said...

DIANE

"What if we pick up a New York Times, go to my place and
watch a baseball movie."

ALLEN

It seemed so... so...

DIANE

Natural.

ALLEN

And if it works out//

DIANE

Which I'm sure it will//

ALLEN

Tomorrow we'll announce on Facebook and Instagram//

DIANE

That we're a couple//

ALLEN

And move in together//

DIANE

And start eating off each other's plates//

ALLEN

And start//

DIANE

Finishing each other's sentences.

ALLEN

And have long conversations//

DIANE

About breaking up//

ALLEN

And... Wait, what?

DIANE

Huh?

ALLEN

What did you say?

DIANE

Me? I was just following your train of thought.

ALLEN

No, you said something different.

DIANE

We'll announce that we're a couple.

ALLEN

And start eating off each other's plates - But you said something else.

DIANE
Oh, we'll break up.

ALLEN
What?

DIANE
Oh darling, if we're going to be honest with each other, we have to admit that at some point 'we' will come to an end.

ALLEN
We will?

DIANE
Yes. We'll break up or go through a messy divorce, if not, one of us will drop dead or shoot the other.

ALLEN
...Diane, this is kind of a romantic moment.

DIANE
(Tender)
It sure is.

ALLEN
And if it's all right I'd rather not talk about//

DIANE
Death?

ALLEN
Or divorce or//

DIANE
Dismemberment?

ALLEN
My god, why did you say that?

DIANE
You mentioned death and divorce - the next logical step would be dismemberment. They all start with Ds.

ALLEN
(Getting frustrated)
I'm trying to say that I love you.

DIANE

And I love you too. So let's set a date.

ALLEN

(Confused)

...To get married?

DIANE

No, to end it.

ALLEN

Why?

DIANE

(Optimistic)

Darling, this is the most wonderful moment of my life. I finally met a great guy who's a Mets fan, who - unlike most Mets fans - knows how to put the toilet seat down, so let's set an expiration date. How about one year from today?

ALLEN

You give 'us' only twelve months? Your expectations are that low?

DIANE

The key to happiness is to set really low expectations.
(Kindly) That's what I did when I met you.

ALLEN

Excuse me?

DIANE

I've had numerous relationships that I thought would last and I was always disappointed. But with you I set my expectations nice and low and was pleasantly surprised.

ALLEN

(Hurt)

How low did you set them?

DIANE

Did it ever occur to you how unnecessary we are in the grand scheme of things?

ALLEN

Don't change the subject, how low did you set them?

DIANE

We're thrown into existence without our permission. We live on an insignificant planet, full of earthquakes and viruses - obviously we're unwelcome. And then we're too quickly snuffed out without knowing why we came into existence in the first place. In such a situation high expectations only lead to depression and defeatism and//

ALLEN

Please don't say dismemberment.

DIANE

Allen, sweetie, don't you see, if we set an endpoint everyday'll be special, every moment magnificent, every Mets game sublime because we know it's not going to last.

ALLEN

Diane, I want to introduce you to my mother - How do I do that? "Hi Mom, here's the woman I love, and oh, by the way, it's going to end badly."

DIANE

No, you say, this is the woman I love and we're not going to pretend it's going to last forever, because mom, the woman I love is terminally ill.

ALLEN

...What? Are you...?

DIANE

Yes.

ALLEN

Really?

DIANE

Yes.

ALLEN

I mean, really?! Oh my God.

DIANE

Yes. In the sense that we're *all* terminally ill.

ALLEN

I think I'm having chest pains.

DIANE

Honey, look at me. Are you ready for the best year you've ever had? I mean the very very very best? That's three verys. That's a lot of verys.

ALLEN

But... I... need more.

DIANE

(Disappointed)

Oh, you need illusion. Okay, we'll pretend it lasts forever. We'll go to my place, skim the New York Times and mindlessly watch a movie that we'll forget two days later. *(Upbeat)*...Or we could go to my place and really read the New York Times, really enjoy a baseball movie, and make the evening a mind-blowing awesome experience that'll last forever!

ALLEN

Forever?

DIANE

Yes, forever! Or until we die and dump memory.

ALLEN

Stop! Just stop it!

DIANE

I have Ebola.

ALLEN

What??

DIANE

Yes, Ebola.

ALLEN

Isn't that highly contagious?

DIANE

That's how we should live our lives! As if we have a deadly contagious disease and could drop at any moment.

ALLEN

Oh my God.

DIANE

Consider the lilies of the field.

ALLEN

Screw lilies! I'm not in love with a lily, I'm in love with you and I want it to last.

DIANE

The sooner you admit you're terminal, the sooner you can enjoy 'us.' Say it, "I'm terminal." Say it.

ALLEN

(This isn't easy)

...I'm... I'm...

DIANE

You can do it.

ALLEN

I'm...

DIANE

Come on.

ALLEN

...Terminal.

DIANE

Say it like you mean it.

ALLEN

I'm terminal.

DIANE

With conviction!

ALLEN

(Distraught)

I'm going to die! You're going to die! *(Pointing at air)* See that mosquito? It's going to die! *(Pointing to a flower on the table)* That flower is going to die!

DIANE

That's a plastic flower.

ALLEN

Look an ant! It's going to die!

(He stomps on the ant.)

ALLEN

What do you know, sooner than it thought!

DIANE

(Joyful)

And someday the Sun will consume all its hydrogen fuel and expand into a red giant turning earth into a molten glob!

ALLEN

(Anxiety attack)

Oh my God, you're right it all ends in death, divorce and dismemberment.

DIANE

Isn't life wonderful!

ALLEN

No!

DIANE

Come on, let's go have a great evening before we disappear into nothingness!

(She helps him to his feet.)

ALLEN

(Distraught)

But... but...

DIANE

Oh, almost forgot, I gotta stop at the drug store. I have to pick up my medication.

ALLEN

Medication?

DIANE

Techlaliezeen.

ALLEN

What's it for? And please don't say Ebola.

Oh darling.

DIANE

(She plants an infectious kiss on him.)

Why else would someone be taking Techlaliezeen?

DIANE

(He wipes his mouth.)

Oh, there's a newsstand, let's pick up a New York Times.

DIANE

(Looking off)

(She takes him by the hand, they start off. She stops.)

Oh! The moon! Isn't it romantic and... *(Hinting)* And...?

DIANE

(Looking up)

And... And...

ALLEN

(Distraught)

You can do it. *(Hinting)* And...

DIANE

Temporary.

ALLEN

But for the time being... It's our moon!

DIANE

(Looking up at the moon, she leads him - he wiping his mouth - into the street.)

THE END

(Optional Ending: A moment later a car horn, screeching brakes and a horrible crash as their bodies are dismembered.)