

*Let's Not Confuse
the Situation*



A SHORT PLAY



David - Matthew
Barnes

Let's Not Confuse the Situation

A Short Play by David-Matthew Barnes

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The Story

Having been burned by bad relationships in the past, Janessa Martin battles over her decision to give her new boyfriend, Colby Varner, a key to her apartment. As past issues begin to surface for both, Janessa and Colby are forced to address the fact they don't fully trust each other and why.

Cast of Characters

JANESSA MARTIN, 28. Quick-thinking, witty, energetic, genuine.

COLBY VARNER, 30. Professional, sensual, conservative, uppity.

Place

A two-bedroom apartment in Philadelphia.

Time

A Wednesday night in October. Present year.

Acknowledgements

Let's Not Confuse the Situation received a world premiere on July 10, 2005 at The Makor Theatre 10-Minute Play Festival in New York. This production was directed by Will Trice and starred Traci Godfrey as Janessa and Frank Blocker as Colby.

"Maybe January light will consume My heart with its cruel
Ray, stealing my key to true calm.
In this part of the story I am the one who
Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,
Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood."

from "I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You" by Pablo Neruda

(When the play begins, we are in a modest apartment in the heart of Philadelphia. Near the front door are a coat rack and an umbrella stand. Stage right there is a sofa, coffee table, and lamp table. Stage left is a café-styled dining table with two chairs. On the lamp table near the sofa is a lamp, a telephone, and a framed photograph of an exceptionally attractive man.)

The telephone rings four times. Flustered, JANESEA MARTIN enters the room from stage left, the kitchen. She has a dish towel flung over her left shoulder. She is in a state of confusion. This is evident not only in her nervous energy, but also in her clothes. She is wearing a beautiful cashmere sweater that hangs loosely and suggestively from her shoulders. She is also wearing a pair of jean cut-off shorts, frayed, and old. On her feet are two different shoes: on her left foot is a glamorous heel, on the other is a boring flat. Half of her head of hair has been curled, but not brushed out or styled. The other half of her head of hair is filled with steam rollers.

Janessa checks her watch, realizes the battery has died, then answers the phone.)

JANESEA. *(Into the phone:)* Hello? *(Beat.)* This is she. *(Beat.)* Oh, hello, Mrs. Varner. What a surprise. *(Beat.)* How very kind of you. I appreciate that. *(Beat.)* I would love to meet you in person, too. Perhaps Colby and I can come for a visit soon. *(Beat.)* Married? Well, we haven't really talked about that. We've only been on five dates, Mrs. Varner. *(Beat.)* He is a wonderful man. I agree with you. *(Beat.)* No, I didn't know that. He hasn't mentioned the divorce. I'm sure he was young and - . *(Beat.)* Mrs. Varner, I hope you will excuse me. I have a million things to do and Colby is going to be here in a half an hour. *(The doorbell rings. Janessa looks at the door with dread and panic.)* You say he likes to be early? I think you're right. I think he's here now. *(Beat.)* Thank you, Mrs. Varner. You have a wonderful evening. *(Hangs up. She reaches into the front pocket of her shorts and pulls out a single key. Quickly, she shoves the key back into her pocket. She goes to the front door, opens it.)*

COLBY. *(He is standing in the doorway. He presents Janessa with a bouquet of yellow roses. Although casual, Colby is extremely well-dressed.)* Hello, beautiful.

JANESEA. You're early, sweetheart. *(She goes to kiss him but this is awkward as they struggle to get the kiss right; his head moves left then right. Finally, they kiss.)*

COLBY. I was anxious to see you. Will you forgive me?

JANESEA. Do I have a choice? The flowers...they're gorgeous. Thank you.

COLBY. It's a celebration.

JANESEA. What are we celebrating?

COLBY. Our one-month anniversary.

JANESEA. That's very romantic but we actually met five weeks ago. The Friday before Labor Day, remember?

COLBY. I think you're wrong. We met on the second Wednesday in September.

JANESEA. *(Conceding:)* I lost my day planner last week. I can't remember a thing without it.

COLBY. Interesting outfit you're wearing.

JANESEA. I thought I had enough time.

COLBY. I should've called first, to let you know.

JANESEA. You just missed your mother.

COLBY. She was here?

JANESEA. No, she phoned me. To introduce herself. *(Beat.)* I didn't realize you'd given her my home number.

COLBY. Are you upset?

JANESSA. No. Of course not. She's your mother.

COLBY. I hope she went easy on you.

JANESSA. It was a lovely conversation. *(She smells the flowers.)* I should put these in some water. Will you excuse me for a moment?

COLBY. Take your time.

JANESSA. Make yourself at home. Dinner should be ready soon.

COLBY. What's on the menu?

JANESSA. Lasagna.

COLBY. What's in it?

JANESSA. The usual stuff. It's my sister's recipe.

COLBY. What type of meat did you use?

JANESSA. *(Puzzled.)* Some Italian sausage, ground beef. Is that okay?

COLBY. I'm just happy you decided to cook.

JANESSA. I'm not very good at it, I'm afraid. My sister got all the domestic genes in the family.

COLBY. Doesn't she own a restaurant?

JANESSA. Three of them, actually. *(Beat.)* I'll be right back. *(She exits, stage left to the kitchen, her bedroom.)*

(Alone on stage, the photograph on the lamp table catches Colby's eye. He goes to it, picks it up, and takes a closer look at it. He then notices how dusty the lamp table is. It is obvious he's disgusted. He moves and sits down on the sofa. Immediately, he pops back up to his feet. He pulls one of the sofa cushions out. Below it, he discovers an empty bag of potato chips and a bra. He cringes.)

JANESSA. *(Returning from the kitchen and bedroom, she is now wearing a skirt and matching shoes. Her hair is still not styled. Her left hand is closed shut, as she is carrying something in her palm. Seeing Colby has discovered the items under the sofa cushion, she is mortified. She grabs both items from him.)* I'll take those. *(She shoves the bra into the potato chip bag and hurls them off stage left, into the kitchen.)* Now, where were we?

COLBY. How was work today?

JANESSA. Oh, the same as it is every day.

COLBY. But working in an advertising agency, that's got to be exciting.

JANESSA. Hardly. Answering phones all day isn't exactly glamorous.

COLBY. Answering phones? Your assistant doesn't take calls for you?

JANESSA. She would if I had one. *(Beat.)* I'm a receptionist, Colby. I thought I told you that.

COLBY. *(A little stunned:)* No. You said you worked in advertising. I just assumed - .

JANESSA. I'm at the bottom of the food chain. I need to go back to school and get my degree if I ever want to have a real job.

COLBY. You don't have a degree? Honey, I'm confused. You said you went to college.

JANESSA. Oh, I did. I went to a community college right after high school for two years.

COLBY. I see. *(Trying to hide his disappointment with heavy optimism:)* I think that's just great.

JANESSA. You do?

COLBY. You're a hard working woman with professional goals.

END OF PREVIEW