

LATE IN THE GAME

By Y York

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Characters

Melissa. Female, 50s, a teacher, scholarly, attractive, austere.

Flo. Female, 50s, homemaker, a former beauty, a bit scattered.

Tim. Male, 50s, a DA, urban clever.

Harvey. Male, a cop, 50s, urban clever.

When: Some present. Where: A town hall meeting, hospital,
office, three apartments, all in New York City; each looks like
the other except for an item or two, the sound, the lights. No
blackouts between scenes.

(Scene 1. A community meeting in a big hall. Melissa, 50s, attractive, formal. She enters to address the dais. Harvey, 50s, rugged sexy, stands further back, watching the dais, watches her after "the number." They aren't together.)

Melissa

Excuse me, excuse me, I have to interrupt here. Your number has exploded like an I.E.D., yes, I am made brain dead by your number, Mister Brier. Wait! I'm sensing something, yes, there is a malady sucking your senses and impeding your ability to serve the borough. That number you introduced, that figure you quote from the tax rolls reveals dyslexia. Do not feel shame, you are in exalted company—Bush junior and senior, among whom you sit quite naturally. (fake whisper) You have inverted, the one and nine, and it is not one million nine hundred thousand seventy two, it is nine million one hundred thousand seventy two, and the question to put to the commissioners is not where are we going to make up the short fall, but where are the eight million dollars? Perhaps some dyslexic typing of numbers has sent those eight millions to some untaxed foreign shore. A shame for the citizens of our borough.

(Melissa sighs, deflates. Harvey exits. Melissa leaves the meeting, breathes heavily. Changes into a hospital gown and enters a hospital room for Scene 2.)

Borough, Borough, borough. An odd word with odd spelling. Let us all dig deeper and hide in our burrow burrow burrow, little rodents that we are. Everybody hunkering down in his own burrow, too busy to see what a Borough President is up to. Or too tired.

(Melissa sleeps. Enter Flo, 50s, flashy, funny.)

Flo

Lissa? Hey, hey, you awake?

Melissa

What time is it?

Flo

Five fifteen.

Melissa

Five Fifteen?

Flo

In the morning, yeah. I'm waking you up.

Melissa

Flo-!

Flo

I came last night. You weren't here.

Melissa

I was at a meeting.

Flo

(sarcasm) Oh, how silly of me. Of course you were at a meeting, the night before you have surgery! I brought a sharpie.

Melissa

Did I ask for a sharpie?

Flo

I want to write "wrong one" on the wrong one.

Melissa

The doctor knows her left from her right.

Flo

But does she know her left from your right? ...Which one is the good one?

Melissa

How did you get in?

Flo

Walked. There are severe security lapses in this hospital.

Melissa

It's still dark-

Flo

I walked right past the guard. I waved. (looking in her purse.)

Melissa

Maybe Brier will get in and murder me and save me a lot of money.

Flo

You have insurance.

Melissa

Insurance doesn't work when you get sick.

Flo

Don't start.

Melissa

You started. You said insurance.

Flo

(still in her purse) No politics. It's my new rule. It's made dinner taste better.

Melissa

You quit smoking.

Flo

No, it's the conversation. Tim's aura is lighter. When he slips I hold up a mirror so he can see it darken

Melissa

Tim cannot see his aura. Only you can see his aura.

Flo

Tim is very concerned about his aura. Here we go. Pull down your thingie. (Melissa exposes the top of her gown) Which one?

Melissa

This is the good one.

Flo

They both look pretty good.

Melissa

No commentary, please.

Flo

(writes) Tim and I no longer discuss the horrible state of the city at dinner, we gossip--which new lawyer can't cut it, his new young secretary with a skirt up to here. Nice tits.

Melissa

The secretary's?

Flo

Yours.

Melissa

Shut up.

Flo

Nicer than mine. You should be the one showing the cleavage, but no, you cover it up with one of your schuptas.

Melissa

Shmaatas.

Flo

Is it still cleavage if there's only one? Maybe it's cleave.

Melissa

Definitely cleave.

Flo

Do you want me to write anything on the other one?

Melissa

I didn't want you to write anything on this one.

Flo

A smiley face?

Melissa

DNR.

Flo

Okay. (writes) Whose initials are they? That cute professor? The new guy?

Melissa

He's twenty-three and cute like a little boy is cute, and no, those aren't his initials.

Flo

Are you holding out on me?

Melissa

...Yes.

Flo

You little devil. And here I am worrying about you.

Melissa

Don't worry about me, Flo. I'm quite resolved.

Flo

(taken aback, but proceeding) ..You look good in white. Sexy.

Melissa

It's really sexy with my rear end hanging out.

Flo

You have a nice rear end.

Melissa

How do you know?

Flo

It looks nice in pants. An upside down heart.

Melissa

I don't wear pants.

Flo

You should. Then everybody could see your heart-shaped butt.

Melissa

Stop trying to distract me.

Flo

I brought you the personals.

Melissa

The what-? No.

Flo

Yeah, to distract you. Wives seeking wives for nooners; young men seeking older women, like you; old men seeking anything.

Melissa

Flo. I am not looking for a nooner. Or a boyfriend.

Flo

They're not boyfriends at our age. They're *lovers*.

Melissa

Could you possibly make it sound more obscene?

Flo

Lover. He's my *lover.* Come here, lover boy. Love me, Lover Boy. (reading) Here we go. "Divorced male, 64, seeks soul mate for possible long-term relationship."

Melissa

At sixty-four how long-term could it be?

Flo

So he's an optimist. That's good, right?

Melissa

Does anybody ask for a dying woman?

Flo

Don't say dying.

Melissa

We're all dying.

Flo

It's bad luck to say it.

Melissa

It's inevitable.

Flo

But it doesn't have to be yet. A little sex would perk you up. Old people sex is all over the news now.

Melissa

Not the news I read.

Flo

Yeah, they're all getting diseases because they don't use condoms.

Melissa

Which paper is that?!

Flo

A handout, The Times doesn't have personals. There's pictures.

Melissa

I'm not interested.

Flo

God. Can you imagine taking your clothes off in front of somebody who looks like this?

Melissa

Let me see.

Flo

See, you're interested.

Melissa

He is really old. Are we that old?

Flo

I'm not. There's some younger ones.

Melissa

I'd be self-conscious.

Flo

You can go to the gym with me. Get rid of some of that fat on your back.

Melissa

My back is not fat.

Flo

You can't see that little bulge around the bra.

Melissa

When did you see my back?

Flo

Those sleeveless bags you wear-

Melissa

Flo-!

Flo

What? You don't notice my clothes?

Melissa

Everyone notices your clothes.

Flo

What's that supposed to mean?

Melissa

It means you dress for approval. I approve. I'm not criticizing. You always look nice. I'm approving.

Flo

And I'm disapproving. I'm doing the same thing you are except the opposite. It wouldn't kill you to get some weights and do arm lifts twice a day- Oh, shit, I didn't mean to say kill you.

Melissa

Tell my surgeon to excise my fat along with the cancer.

Flo

What's that buzz?

Melissa

My alarm. I'm supposed to empty my bladder so I don't pee during surgery. Go home, Flo.

Flo

Love you, Lissa. Find a boyfriend.

Melissa

Oh.

Flo

What?

Melissa

You're my pull the plug person. There isn't anybody else.

Flo

I'm your what?

Melissa

When I'm a vegetable you tell them to pull the plug.

Flo

No.

Melissa

Yes. It's all written down. The hospital has it. You just have to say that's what I want and they do it. You don't actually have to pull anything.

Flo

What is it you want?

Melissa

I don't want to be on a machine. That's what DNR means. Do not resuscitate.

Flo

I'm erasing it.

Melissa

Sharpees don't erase.

Flo

What if they need to put you on a machine? Sometimes they just...need to.

Melissa

I don't want it.

Flo

What if they need to put you on a machine for an hour?

Melissa

No.

Flo

Lissa-!

Melissa

No machine. My will is in my desk at home. The lawyer's name and number. Don't worry, you won't have to do anything else.

Flo

I don't want to-

Melissa

You have no choice. Go home, Flo. I need to pee and I don't want you looking at my rear end.

(Flo exits. Melissa stands and dreams.)

Melissa

"I don't want to." Don't end your sentences with prepositions. Don't end your sentences at all. A sentence once begun can last and last, the endless parenthetical phrases keeping it alive. The period marks its death. It could just end now, my sentence, with some little slip, a nick of some vessel, some flood, drowning without waking. You could save me a lot of trouble, Doctor. I'm so tired.

(Melissa exits. Scene 3. Later. Flo walks into her bedroom where her husband Tim is taking off his shoes. Tim is mid 50s, urban clever, focused, funny.)

Flo

Don't throw them on the floor.

Tim

Where do want me to throw them?

Flo

Put them in the closet.

Tim

They're afraid of the dark.

Flo

Tim...

Tim

Really, that's why I leave them on the floor.

Flo

Give me your shoe.

Tim

I must protect it.

Flo

Who's going to protect you?

Tim
Did you go to Nebraska and not tell me?

Flo
How could I do that?

Tim
You only fuss about my shoes after you visit your mother.

Flo
I was at the hospital. I was there all day.

Tim
Oh. Okay.

Flo
What okay?

Tim
Nothing. Just okay.

Flo
Aren't you going to ask how she's doing?

Tim
How's she doing?

Flo
She has fucking cancer is how she's doing.

Tim
Baby-

Flo
You make me so mad.

Tim
I didn't do anything.

Flo
As soon as somebody is sick you run away and hide.

Tim

I was at work. Prosecuting deadly criminals. I was never hiding. I was right there. At my desk. Except when I went to the bathroom. Even then I wasn't hiding. They could have found me. If you needed me.

Flo

She's my most important friend. Show some concern.

Tim

(brief pause) How's Lissa-? How is she-? Oh, my God, how's her cancer-? Is she going to live-? Who's going to get her cat-? Should I take her a casserole-? The laughing yogi has been known to stop a tumor right in its tracks-. Let's all panic and hover and worry and stop living because Lissa has cancer.

Flo

(brief pause) I'm her pull-the-plug person.

Tim

Oh, Baby. Come here.

Flo

How am I supposed to do that? I am not adequate to do that.

Tim

You're adequate.

Flo

She makes me so mad.

Tim

Oh, good.

Flo

What?

Tim

It's not my shoes, it's Lissa's damn cancer making you mad.

Flo

She's not fighting. She's all give-up and pessimism.

Tim
She'll fight when she feels better.

Flo
She doesn't have a cat.

Tim
Does she still have two tits?

Flo
Everything is not a joke.

Tim
It's my way of asking how bad it is. Humor me.

Flo
They removed just the lump.

Tim
Well, that's good, right?

Flo
It's cancer, nothing is good.

Tim
Maybe...maybe she doesn't need you to hover over her. Maybe it doesn't do her any good.

Flo
She's my friend, I have to hover.

Tim
I've lost friends, too-

Flo
Don't say lose. I'm not going to lose her. I can't lose her.

Tim
Okay.

Flo
You don't have a friend like Lissa. You don't know what we owe her. We wouldn't even be married.

Tim

Yes, we would.

Flo

You hated me.

Tim

I had love at first sight for you. You're the one it took six months.

Flo

She can't leave me. I'll be all alone.

Tim

What about me?

Flo

It's not the same.

Tim

...I didn't hate you.

Flo

You sneered at me.

Tim

You were the hottest girl in town. I wouldn't have sneered.

Flo

Was I the hottest?

Tim

Sizzle. You sizzled. I couldn't believe my luck.

Flo

And now?

Tim

Now you're my beautiful wife of two and a half decades.

Flo

Do I sizzle?

(brief pause) ...Of course.

Tim

Why did you pause?

Flo

I didn't pause. I was inhaling.

Tim

You paused.

Flo

Baby, you sizzle. You still sizzle me.

Tim

(They exit.)