

BACK IN TOWN

by

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Back in Town

CHARACTERS

DONNY: M 30s-40s

MIKKI: F 30s-40s

SETTING: *Interior of a small bookstore.*

AT RISE: *DONNY is DSR shelving and inspecting books.*

MIKKI enters from SL and approaches DONNY who is facing SR.

MIKKI

Excuse me, do you have the latest-- (*DONNY turns to face MIKKI*)
Don? Donny Foster? Is that you?

DONNY

Mikki? (*playfully*) Or should I say Michelle Juliet? What are you doing back in town?

MIKKI

I should ask you the same thing, last I heard you were still in the city. What are you doing here?

DONNY

"Here" here or "back in town" here?

MIKKI

Either, I guess. Both.

DONNY

Well (*DONNY gestures at his name tag*) for "here" here, I work here. (*MIKKI starts to speak but DONNY continues*) It's a long story. As for "back in town" here, well, that's a longer story. But, the bigger question is what is Oscar-nominated Hollywood star Michelle Juliet doing "here" here and "back in town" here?

MIKKI

I'm "here" here because I'm looking for the most recent... never mind, that's not important. I'm "back in town" here because of my grand-dad.

DONNY

Jimmy-Pop-Pop?

MIKKI

Yeah. (*lightly chuckling*) Jimmy-Pop-Pop. He, um, well he passed away on Thursday and the service is tomorrow.

DONNY (*surprised*)

Jimmy-Pop-Pop was still alive? (*beat*) Wait, that came out wrong. What I mean is, of course, I'm sorry. But, how old was he?

MIKKI

Ninety-seven.

DONNY whistles

DONNY

Wow. Well. He had a good run.

MIKKI

He did. And, you know, it wasn't entirely unexpected. I mean, it was sudden, he wasn't sick or in hospice or anything. He was still living on his own. You know the leading cause of death for ninety-seven-year-olds?

DONNY

Being ninety-seven?

MIKKI (*chuckling*)

Exactly. Only you'd get that, Donny.

DONNY

Awww, Jimmy-Pop-Pop. He had a good life tho, really. A long, happy, life filled with meaning and purpose. (*long beat while MIKKI just stares at DONNY*) What? (*beat*) Ok, well he had a long life. (*MIKKI nods "yes"*) A long happy-- (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*) A long, pleasant-- (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*)
(cont.)

DONNY (cont.)

A long reasonably content-- (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*) Fine, a long somewhat-- (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*) Marginally content-- (*MIKKI nods "yes"*) not entirely unpleasant life.

MIKKI

Consisting of a few moments of what one could characterize as "not quite joy."

DONNY

But not exactly complete abject despair either.

MIKKI

A kind of existential purgatorial middle ground between "meh" and "aw Christ."

DONNY

I mean, he wasn't an entirely miserable old bastard. He has his good moments. (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*) His ok moments when he was a loving-- (*MIKKI shakes her head "no"*) his OK moments when he was a kind-of attentive grandfather to you?

MIKKI

He did teach us how to fish.

DONNY

Well, he taught us how to sit in a boat and drink beer.

MIKKI

When we were in Tenth Grade.

DONNY

Ninth.

MIKKI

Right. I remember you asked him why he always brought beer when we went fishing, and he said: "It keeps the polar bears away." That had high-school-freshman-you in fits trying to refute his logic.

DONNY

Still does. We never saw a single polar bear while fishing.

MIKKI

Notwithstanding the fact we were in Connecticut.

DONNY

Notwithstanding. There was *always* beer and there were *never* polar bears.

MIKKI

Or rattlesnakes. That was the other talismanic ability of a case of Labatt's in stubby brown bottles as I recall.

DONNY

To Jimmy-Pop-Pop, a long-lived, semi-attentive, not entirely unpleasant man who fished-- (*MIKKI shakes her head no*) who sat in boats and drank crappy Canadian beer.

MIKKI

And did magic tricks.

DONNY

Dude, "pull my finger" is not a magic trick.

MIKKI

It is when you're thirteen.

DONNY

Fair. When was the last time you saw him? (*beat*) Alive, I mean. Obviously.

MIKKI

A few years ago at my dad's house. He'd come over for dinner, I was on location in Rhode Island shooting that... doesn't matter. I drove over and by the time I got there dinner was over, the TV was on, and Jimmy-Pop-Pop was snoring in the Barc-A-Lounger. Caught up with dad for a bit then had to leave. 4am call.

DONNY

Saw your dad the other day, he came in the store.

MIKKI

How'd that go?

DONNY

Running into the guy who broke his little girl's heart? About as you'd expect.

MIKKI

You didn't break my heart, Donny.

DONNY

That's not Phil's read.

MIKKI

If anything, I broke yours.

DONNY

I was broken anyway. Still am. Not your fault. Besides, you were starting to get work and you went to L.A. to take your shot. What were you supposed to do, stay in New York with your struggling-playwright-high-school-sweetheart? I was afraid, you weren't. You made the right call. I never blamed you.

MIKKI

Still.

DONNY

Still.

MIKKI

You ever see any of the old crew?

DONNY

Not really, no. I think George is still running the black box in Alphabet City, and last I heard Spence was in Chicago. And then (*gesturing at MIKKI*) the one who made it. Michelle Juliet. Why did you change your name anyway?

MIKKI

I thought Michelle was more--

DONNY

No, I get that Mick, I mean your last name.

MIKKI

Oh, SAG thing. There was already a Michelle Fox, believe it or not.

DONNY

Why not use your middle initial instead of making your middle name your last... oh, never mind, I get it.

DONNY & MIKKI

Michelle J. Fox.

DONNY

Right.

MIKKI

Right. *(beat)* You never answered my question.

DONNY

What?

MIKKI gestures around the store

DONNY

Oh, right. Well, rehab is cheaper here. And rent. And, you know, it never happened. I never had anything catch.

MIKKI

Wow. Donny. I didn't know. Are you, uh, ok?

DONNY

One day at a time for 473 days. You know the story.

MIKKI

Yeah. *(beat)* I never stopped... you know. I still think about you Donny.

DONNY

You're sweet, Mick.

MIKKI

Ok, this is going to sound crazy, but, um, I'm free until tomorrow, and I've got a suite, and, well, whaddya think. For old time's sake?

DONNY *(smiling)*

Excuse me for a second while I cross "propositioned by famous Hollywood actress" off my bucket list. *(beat)* I'm flattered, Mikki, I really really am but--

MIKKI

Oh, no, Donny, you're seeing someone, or your married, or, oh my God I'm such an idiot.

DONNY

No, no it's not that. I'm single. It's just... I don't think it's a great idea.

MIKKI

What are you afraid of? *(beat)* No, of course. I'm sorry, I didn't mean... OK, that was awkward. So, are you still writing? You're talented, Donny, I mean that. *(cont.)*

MIKKI (cont.)

If you have something, something you like, let me know. I can show it to some people.

DONNY

Well, now that you mention it, I am working on something.

MIKKI

Really? What's it about?

DONNY

It's about a boy, and a girl, and a bookstore.

MIKKI (smiling)

I can't wait to read it and see how it ends. Bye, Donny.

MIKKI pecks Donny sweetly on the cheek and exits SL.

END OF PLAY