

AN ORDINARY BUS STOP

A One-Act Romantic Comedy Play

By

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CHARACTERS - in order of appearance:

MIA MAYER A woman in her late 20's, down-to-earth, bright eyes, bubbly, assertive/strong voice (similarity: Gillian Jacobs' voice)

ROMEO ROY A man in his late 20's, charming, nerdy, polite

Extras:

WOMAN AND MAN a couple, middle-aged, well dressed, going to a wedding
the WOMAN has a short speaking part, MAN, no voice

TIME: Present day, morning

PLACE: A bus shelter with a long bench at the back wall (seat)
A bus stop sign in front.
The stage right (SR) wall of the shelter is plexiglass
and has a bus route map displayed on it.
The stage left (SL) wall of the shelter is clear plexiglass.
All other walls of the bus shelter are open.

PROPS

Bus A scaled-down, shortened cutout of a public transport bus, just tall enough and short enough to cover three people walking behind it as it moves across the stage.
There are two different bus route signs on the bus clearly visible to audience: the first one is 69, used Monday through Friday. The route sign on Saturday is 39.

SOUND EFFECTS: A loud buzzer of an alarm clock
Slapping sounds of someone trying to stop an alarm clock
Shower running
Bus approaching and stopping
Bus taking off and driving away
Distant sounds of emergency vehicles

DEFINITIONS USED:

SL - stage left, SR - stage right, CS - center stage
DS - downstage

DARK

OFF STAGE

[We hear a loud buzzer of an alarm clock.]

MIA (O.S.)

Shut up... Shut up, I said... Stop annoying me...

[We hear the sounds of MIA banging her hand on the alarm clock buttons, several attempts, to stop the alarm. Finally, the alarm stops.]

OK, OK, I am getting up. Today is Monday, the first day of the workweek..

[We hear the sound of the shower running for a few seconds. Then it fades out.]

BACK TO STAGE

LIGHT ON - CENTER STAGE

[We see an empty bus stop/shelter at the center stage (CS).]

We hear clicking of heels. Entering from the stage right (SR), MIA walks towards the bus stop. She is wearing casual office attire. She is now waiting for the bus, standing.

Entering from the stage left (SL), ROMEO, walks toward the bus stop, walks carefully, almost like trying to avoid stepping on any ants that might be on the ground, his attire suitable for a high-tech workplace, round neck T-shirt, jeans.

MIA looks over her shoulder, worried, to see who is approaching. She relaxes after realizing that she has seen him here before. They exchange cordial looks.

MIA suddenly notices what looks like a swastika graffiti on the lower part of the SL wall of the bus shelter. She gasps in horror, points to it. ROMEO turns to look at where MIA is pointing at, and sees the same swastika. He starts walking towards it, MIA grabs her cell phone from her purse, we hear the tone of three beeps, she is calling 911.]

MIA

(into phone)

Hi, 911, I like to report a hate crime... OK, I hold...

(to audience)

If I called my Grampa in heaven, God rest his soul, even he would answer immediately.

[MIA observes ROMEO. ROMEO walks close to the outside wall of the bus shelter (at SL), where the graffiti is, kneels down in front of it, he feels it with his hand, realizing it is made with black duck tape.

He starts peeling back the long vertical and horizontal parts of the cross. He then sticks them back onto the plexiglass in a V-shape. He peels back, one-by-one, two of the four shorter ends of the remaining swastika, and sticks them patiently, at the left tip of the V, towards the center of the "V", like an "accent circumflex". He then removes the remaining two of the shorter ends of the swastika and attaches them to the other tip of the V. Now the ugly swastika looks -almost- like a beautiful heart.]

MIA

(happy, giggling, into phone)

Never mind. This guy turned hate... into love...

[She hangs up her phone and puts it back to her purse. She checks herself, smoothens her clothes down.]

Hey, what is your name?

[Romeo walks around the bus shelter and sits down on the bench. MIA approaches him and sits down at the other end of the bench.]

ROMEO

ROMEO. You?

MIA

I'd like to say "Juliet". But you're not that lucky. MIA.

ROMEO

Nice to... MIA. I saw you here before.

MIA

I take this bus to work every day.

ROMEO

And you get off one stop before me.

MIA

I remember you too.

[pointing to graffiti]

You sure know how to turn hate into love.

ROMEO

You wish.

[MIA gives ROMEO a questioning look while gesturing with her arms "what do you mean?"]

ROMEO

(embarrassed, hesitating)

Ahh...

(blurts out, rapid fire)

My girlfriend dumped me on the weekend.

MIA

What did you do? I mean, that's terrible. What happened?

ROMEO

She always likes to go out... **All** the time. I like staying home, watch movies, read stuff, cook. I guess she got fed up with my gourmet cooking, barfed me out for good.

MIA

Could be worse. My boyfriend, excuse me, my **ex**-boyfriend, hated talking. No conversations, just sex... Yeah..

(blurts out, rapid fire)

I kicked him out yesterday.

ROMEO

(to himself)

Good.

MIA

What did you say?

ROMEO

Terrible.

MIA

It's OK, I am over it.

ROMEO

Maybe next time you meet someone, try the 36 questions first.

MIA

What? What's that?

ROMEO

I was just reading about it. It is based on an article in a scientific journal.

MIA

What is it all about?

ROMEO

It was written by some smart people. The writer was Arthur Aron , or something like that, and his psychology friends.

MIA

What is it called?

ROMEO

It has a long name.

MIA

I like long... names.

[She motions to him "tell me" gesture]

ROMEO

(reads from his phone)

"The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness: A Procedure and Some Preliminary Findings"... Long Enough?

MIA

Just about right. Maybe, could be a bit shorter. Go on.

ROMEO

And this smart lady in Vancouver wrote an article about it in New York Times. She won many awards for her writings.

(reads from phone)

Look her up, Mandy Catron, Mandy **Len** Catron, great writer.

MIA

What are you? Marriage counsellor?

ROMEO

No, no. Exact opposite. Data analyst.

MIA

What happened to that lady?

ROMEO

I don't know. I read somewhere she ditched her husband as soon as she got her citizenship, maybe even before.

MIA

Did she ever find love again?

ROMEO

Maybe. Maybe not... I don't know. Maybe she eventually trimmed her expectations. I dunno.

MIA

I hope she did. Where are these 36 questions?

[We hear the sound of a bus approaching. They both stand up, look to their left and both move towards the bus stop sign. They line up, MIA in front, Romeo behind MIA.]

ROMEO

(louder to cover the noise of the approaching
bus, which is not yet visible)

Download the app. Just search for “36 questions”.

*[The #69 bus enters from the SL, moving towards the
SR.]*

MIA

(loud)

Why is this bus so short?

ROMEO

(loud)

This is a small stage... They can't fit a real bus here...

MIA

(chuckles)

*[The bus stops for a second, then takes off. ROMEO and
MIA exit SR behind the moving bus.]*

DARK

OFF STAGE

*[Next morning . We hear a loud buzzer of an alarm clock.
Seconds later, much quicker than yesterday morning, MIA
stops the alarm. We hear the sound of the shower
running.]*

MIA (O.S.)

(talking over the sound of the shower)

A beautiful Tuesday morning... I wonder if Romeo will show up...

[The sound of the shower fades out.]

BACK TO STAGE

LIGHT ON - CENTER STAGE

[We see ROMEO already sitting in the middle of the bench, looking at his phone. He hears the rapid footsteps, sees MIA, entering from the SR. MIA walks towards the bus stop.]

MIA
(cheerful)
Morning.

ROMEO
(little grumpy)
Morning.

MIA
I downloaded the app.

ROMEO
Good. Now you can swipe away all the misfits you meet.

MIA
I have a couple questions.

ROMEO
A couple?

MIA
Only thirty six.

[Mia approaches the bench to sit down. ROMEO tries to move over to give her space.]

Stay! Don't slide away!

ROMEO

I was just--

MIA

--I know, stay.

(pointing to her phone)

it says here, these thirty six questions are not only for people who are just meeting--

ROMEO

-- yeah. Supposed to be good for all relationships, especially the stale ones... parents, grandparents.

MIA

Right.

ROMEO

There is only one requirement. No cheating, honest answers only--

MIA

--absolutely. No cheating... Here is the thing. I want to practice this with you.

ROMEO

With me? Am I your lab rat?

MIA

Yes.

ROMEO

Oh, I don't know about that.

MIA

What's there not to know?

ROMEO

I like my mornings quiet. And peaceful.

MIA

This is peaceful. Maybe not as quiet.

ROMEO

(first, shakes his head in disagreement. Then
he changes his mind and nods)

First, we need to make a plan--

MIA

--plan is ready. Each morning, right here. We read questions from our phones. No skipping. We both must answer each one. When the bus comes, we continue next day.

ROMEO

No calling in sick?

MIA

Absolutely not. You don't show up, I'll fire you.

ROMEO

I am the only one here, early, every morning. I don't see any other applicants stampeding? Who else are you going to hire?

MIA

Come on, we'll finish it by the weekend.

ROMEO

What are you talking about? That's nine questions each day. Impossible.

MIA

Don't be scared. Are you in or are you out?

ROMEO

Shit, OK, let's try.

MIA

Open the app. Start reading. Go.

[from here on, MIA and ROMEO read all questions from their phones]

ROMEO

First question.

Question 1: Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?

MIA

Hmm... my dinner guest... Judd Apatow. You probably have no idea, who --

ROMEO

--he wrote the LOVE series on Netflix... You.

MIA

Me, your guest, that is nice, thank you.

ROMEO

Your welcome.

MIA

I love eggs benedict, with two well-cooked sausages on the side.

ROMEO

With a glass of Champaign?

MIA

Thanks. I don't drink. My turn.

Question 2: Would you like to be famous? In what way?

ROMEO

No, not famous. I like to live in my own world, quietly. You?

MIA

Yes, famous, a talk show host. I like talking.. Next question.

Question 3: Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?

I am gonna answer this first.. I don't rehearse.. Why? Before I dial, I know everything I want to say. And everything I don't want to say. Done, go.

ROMEO

Yes, I rehearse. I wanna make sure I don't waste time with unnecessary details. I like precision. Next quest--

MIA

--question 4.

ROMEO

Question 4: What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?

MIA

Are we dating already? OK... Going to Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake and watch three plays on the same day. Crazy hey?

ROMEO

Not crazy at all. My answer... My parents used to take me to the zoo when I was little. I have not been there since. My perfect day would be going there. Ready for next one?

MIA

What would be an ultimate, ultimate trip for you. In your bucket list?

ROMEO

I don't really like travelling much except for work. But there is one place, Gallipoli, a war site. Two hundred and fifty thousand casualties on each side.

MIA

So sad.

ROMEO

My mother was born nearby. She took me there when I was little. I'd like to visit it again... Moving on.

Question 5: When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?

MIA

I hate my voice. I just hum the lyrics.

ROMEO

(sarcastic)

And I have a great voice. Sure.

(normal voice)

Just kidding. I sing only in the shower. Question 6: --

MIA

--Wait, wait--

ROMEO

--Wait what?

MIA

Let sing together.

ROMEO

Are you kidding? Sing what? Mamma mia?

MIA

Yes. Follow me. From the middle.

MIA AND ROMEO

(singing together, out of tune, bad pitch)

Mamma mia, here I go again.

My my, how can I resist you?

Mamma mia...

[The bus enters from the SL moving towards the SR. It stops for a second, then takes off. ROMEO and MIA exit SR behind the moving bus.]

DARK

OFF STAGE

[Next morning . We hear a loud buzzer of an alarm clock. MIA stops it immediately. We hear the sound of the shower running.]

MIA (O.S)

(talking over the sound of the shower)

Ahh, Wednesday... I have **thirty-one** questions more to ask... I wonder how long **he'll** last.

[The sound of the shower fades out.]

BACK TO STAGE

LIGHT ON - CENTER STAGE

[ROMEO is already sitting in the middle of the bench. He hears MIA's rapid-pace footsteps.

Entering from the SR, MIA walks towards the bus stop.]

MIA

I remember, Mr. Data Analyst. My answer is easy, breezy. My mind. I need it for all my questions.

ROMEO

What do you do?

MIA

I work at a talent agency. Next question, stay focused.

Question 7: Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?

No, no secret hunch. Wait, maybe from **asking** too many questions. You?

ROMEO

Yes, I have a hunch. **Answering** too many questions. Ready for the next one?

MIA

Yes.

ROMEO

Question 8: Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.

MIA

We are both optimistic. That's one. Two, we are both kind... Three, we both enjoy this inquisition.

ROMEO

First, sense of humor. Next, we both want to finish this by the weekend. One more...
hmm... **worst** singers.

MIA

Absolutely worst, ever... Next.

Question 9: For what in your life do you feel most grateful?

ROMEO

Talking about my entire life, I am most grateful for my great parents. Talking about this week only, I met this girl--

MIA

--who?

ROMEO

She is smart, she is funny, she is beautiful. Her name is MIA--

MIA

--keep going--

ROMEO

--she is bubblicious, she is strong, she is loud--

MIA

--stop, that will do it.

ROMEO

Do you know her?

MIA

I am somewhat familiar... But can't say I know her entirely. She still surprises me every now and then.

(she stretches her hand out to ROMEO)

MIA MAYER, happy to meet you...

[They shake hands. A moment of connection.]

ROMEO

ROMEO ROY, happy to meet you too.

MIA

OK, my turn. What do I feel most grateful about? My parents sent me to great schools. I am grateful to my parents. I visit them as much as I can.

ROMEO

Yeah, when you have great parents, it is easy to figure what you **want** and what you **don't** want in your life.

MIA

If you don't have great parents, you can only see what you **don't want** in your life... A much tougher trip.

ROMEO

Do they live nearby?

MIA

Twenty-minute drive from here, Mount Cedar. Yours?

ROMEO

Forty-minute drive from here, Mount Cedar... Do you always drive fast?

MIA

Only on weekends. I take the bus to work during the week.

ROMEO

Good for the environment.

MIA

Listen, I am gonna lay down one important rule here.

ROMEO

What?

MIA

Thou shall not criticize MIA's driving.

ROMEO

How about occasionally?

MIA

Never.

ROMEO

(nodding)

Do you have life insurance?

MIA

(to audience)

Ignore it.

(to ROMEO)

My turn.

Question 10: If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?...

My answer: Maybe less time in school, learning performing arts... You know what, scratch that, I would not be at this stage without it... Yeah... I would have changed nothing. You?

ROMEO

Ditto.

MIA

You went to art school too? I thought you were a data nerd.

ROMEO

That's not what I meant. I went to engineering--

MIA

--that is what I thought. Your acting doesn't strike me as great--

ROMEO

--I meant, I wouldn't change anything... Like you. But in my teenage years, sometimes, I wasn't sure if I'd make it till next day. Moving on.

Question 11: Take four minutes and tell your partner your life story in as much detail as possible.

Go.

MIA

I was born in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania... Oh, the bus is coming. I'll tell you the rest in the bus.

[The bus comes from the SL moving towards the SR. It stops for a second, then takes off. ROMEO and MIA exit SR behind the moving bus.]

DARK

OFF STAGE

[Next morning . We hear the sound of the shower running. Note: starting today, we don't hear the alarm clock's buzzer anymore. Mia does not need it anymore to wake up.]

MIA (O.S)

(talking over the sound of the shower)

We have **twenty-five** more questions... I better move faster.

[The sound of the shower fades out.]

BACK TO STAGE

LIGHT ON - CENTER STAGE

[ROMEO enters from the SL. He looks at the bus stop, does not see MIA. He knows he must not be here before MIA. He turns around and exits the stage quietly.]

A few seconds later, MIA enters from SR and walks towards the bus stop. ROMEO is not there. MIA walks downstage (DS), facing the audience.]

MIA

(to audience)

Good Morning. And thank you for being such a good audience. By the way, if you want to follow these 36 question, just download the app and follow us along. But make sure to mute your phones. We have an inquisition to perform here and we don't want any distractions until the verdict is reached.

[ROMEO enters the SL quietly, walks to the bench in the bus stop and sits down in the middle of the bench. MIA continues addressing the audience, unaware of ROMEO's arrival. ROMEO is busy with his phone as if he does not see MIA.]

Today is Thursday, a **beautiful** Thursday, I might add... Yesterday, in the bus, we told each other our life stories. ROMEO was born in Rochester, New York. His father was an accountant, his mother taught economics at the university... I think I like where this is going.

[MIA turns around, sees ROMEO. Turns right back towards audience.]

(to audience)

I hope he did not hear that.

[MIA turns towards the bus stop, waves at ROMEO, walks toward him and sits right next to him.]

MIA

Good Morning!

ROMEO

Good Morning!

MIA

You promised yesterday you won't come before me!

ROMEO

I came after you, you were there, talking.

(lower volume)

And no, I did not hear anything you said there...

MIA

Good. Question 12. Your turn. Read.

ROMEO

Question 12: If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?

MIA

An improved ability for asking more questions. I am only joking.. My answer is finding love, real love, deep love...

ROMEO

Finding love?

MIA

Yes, love. You want me to spell it for you?

ROMEO

(smiles at her)

MIA

Listen to me. All you need is love. It overrides everything.. First, love creates respect. If you love, then you can respect, not only the other person--

ROMEO

--but also yourself.

MIA

Right. Next, respect creates trust. Yeah, you can trust only if you have love and respect. And you might ask, what does trust do?

ROMEO

What does trust do?

MIA

Thank you for asking. Trust creates honesty. You can be honest with each other **and** with yourself, only if you love **and** respect **and** trust. Everything else falls out of these.

ROMEO

Wow...

MIA

I am glad you agree--

ROMEO

--and love is in the heart, respect is in the brain, trust is in your guts, honesty is--

MIA

--in the breath you take... So, your lungs.

ROMEO

(ROMEO gently reaches for MIA's hand. As they hold hands and stare into each other's eyes)

It seems we covered all essential body parts.

MIA

(to ROMEO)

Most, not all body parts. This is not an X-Rated show, you know... OK, OK, save staring for later.

(to audience)

The last part of this inquisition is to stare into each others eyes for four minutes.

(to audience, lower volume)

Or longer if you like.

(to ROMEO, back to normal voice)

Stop staring **now**.

[They can't help but stare at each other for another second before they let go, reluctantly.]

ROMEO

If I could wake up tomorrow having gained one quality or ability,, I'd like to be better at flirting.

MIA

I can see that. Read next--

ROMEO

Question 13: If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?

MIA

Hmm. The truth about myself... Why is our bus so late this morning?

ROMEO

Bus is not late, **we** are early... Answer?

MIA

You go first.

ROMEO

Will I find what I need?

MIA

Of course you'll find, of course... My answer is a little more complicated--

ROMEO

--complicated, so surprised.

MIA

Don't interrupt. You know how couples call each other "my better half this" and "my better half that". I don't like that. Each person in a relationship should be always striving to be the better half. Total bull--

ROMEO

-- shit. A "designated better half", like a designated driver. I keep drinking and you keep driving. Not fair. Sorry interrupted--

MIA

--that was a good interrupt. Yeah... Time to scry... crystal ball, tell me please, is there anyone out there willing to fiercely compete with me to **be** the better half? Please say yes.

ROMEO

Yes.

MIA

Not you. I was talking to the crystal ball.

ROMEO

You were looking at me.

Question 14: Is there something that you have dreamed of doing for a long time?

Why haven't you done it?

I'll answer it: Watching the entire "Before" Trilogy by Richard Linklater.

MIA

Why didn't you do it?

ROMEO

By myself?... Watch it by myself? That would be a crime... Who'd call 911 then?

MIA

My turn. Go to Shaw Festival and watch three plays on the same day. Next question. You know, we are halfway now. Question 15: What --

ROMEO

No, we are not.

MIA

Why not?

ROMEO

Half of 36 is 18.

MIA

Don't be so picky.

Question 15: What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?

ROMEO

I teach math of data analysis. They can then go and fly to their own great heights. You?

MIA

I stayed away from bad stuff all my life... alcohol, smoke of any kind, bad friends--

ROMEO

-- and yet so upbeat. What pills are you on?

MIA

Nothing... Never...

ROMEO

Wow, amazed...

MIA

You should be...

ROMEO

Do your friends sometimes tell you “have a glass of wine, it won’t hurt you!”

MIA

I just ignore them.

ROMEO

Must be hard. Good for you. Great of you.

MIA

Thank you.

Question 16: What do you value most in a friendship?

As I said before, Love, respect, trust and honesty.

ROMEO

I’ll add to it the two p’s, perseverance, patience.

[They hear the bus approaching.]

MIA AND ROMEO

Tomorrow? Yes.

[The bus enters from the SL moving towards the SR. It stops for a second, then takes off. ROMEO and MIA exit SR behind the moving bus.]

DARK

OFF STAGE

[Next morning. We hear the sound of the shower running.]

MIA (O.S.)

Today is Friday. I have a big sleep deficiency. Tomorrow, I will sleep in... I want to tell him about my problem this morning.

[The sound of the shower starts.]

(talking over the sound of the shower)

I want to tell him about my paranoia for being late. I can never be late to anything. He **better** be supportive.

[The sound of the shower fades out.]

BACK TO STAGE

LIGHT ON- CENTER STAGE

[MIA enters from SR. She sees ROMEO sitting patiently in the middle of the bench. She throws up her arms in the air with a “what the heck” gesture.]

MIA walks DS, facing the audience.]

MIA

(to audience)

What the heck, he is already here, before me. Again... Good Morning. We have only **twenty** more questions. I told him yesterday that we were halfway. And he corrected me
(imitating ROMEO's voice)

Half of 36 is 18!

(back to her own voice)

Let me tell you something: for me, the halfway was question five, when we sang “Mamma Mia”... so horribly.

[Pointing to ROMEO]

I assure you, **my** math is much better than his.

[Turns towards the bus stop, waves at ROMEO, walks toward him and sits right next to him.]

MIA
Good Morning

ROMEO
Good morning

MIA
Before we start, I wanted to tell you something about myself... By the way, how long have you been sitting here?

ROMEO
A few minutes... Well... Hmm...

MIA
Hmm what? Come on Rom Rom, you can tell me everything.

ROMEO
Everything?

MIA
At this point, you **must** tell me everything!

ROMEO
Well, I fly all over the country to teach about data analysis methods. I am paranoid about being late. I have never been late to anything, **anything**, all my life...

MIA

That's interesting. No need to worry. I met people like that before.

ROMEO

I am usually two hours too early. Once I was only one hour early to one of my talks. That was excruciating. That is the way I am.

MIA

That is perfect--ly OK.

ROMEO

Besides the sunrise was beautiful this morning. Enough about me. What were you going to tell me ?

MIA

Oh, nothing important. I just wanted to tell you, I saw the sunrise from my bathroom window. And, it **was** beautiful.

ROMEO

I am glad we agree on the benefits of witnessing the beautiful sunrise.
Question 17: What is your most treasured memory?

MIA

My mother taking me to many, many plays. You?

ROMEO

My treasured memory... I was five years old. I was walking between my mom and dad along a beautiful beach. As the sun went down, thousands of tiny little crabs appeared on the sand, scurrying around. I was scared, I started crying. My dad and mom lifted me up by my arms. They carried me like that, flying, all the way back home... This is my most treasured memory. I play it over and over when sit at the dentists chair.

MIA

I can picture it...

Question 18: What is your most terrible memory?

Death of my Grampa. You?

ROMEO

A few years ago, I was at the airport, waiting at the gate just before boarding a plane. There was this good-looking woman. Everyone was staring at her. I noticed that she had pulled one leg of her pantyhose over her skirt. Or maybe part of her skirt was tucked in the pantyhose. I can't even describe it--

MIA

--I am well aware of how that can happen. Go on.

ROMEO

Everyone was staring at her. In the early-morning rush, maybe she didn't notice it.

MIA

I can just imagine.

ROMEO

No one was saying anything. They were just staring at her. So I decided to be the hero to tell her about her situation--

MIA

--you moron. Did she slap your face?

ROMEO

No, but it was very embarrassing. She said "None of your effing business". I slowly crawled back to end of line... Moving on, question 19.

[We hear sounds of emergency vehicles from the direction of SL. The distant flashing lights are barely visible on the SL wall.]

ROMEO stands up on the bench. He stretches his hands out to MIA to help her stand up on the bench. They are turned towards SL, trying to see what is going on, while holding each others hands, both left and right, supporting each other.]

I don't see much, do you?

MIA

Just some flashing lights at the intersection.

ROMEO

Solid traffic jam, looks like a big accident.

[Holding hands, they help each other come down the bench. They sit down exactly where they were sitting before.]

Let's move on.

Question 19: If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?

MIA

(pointing towards SL)

I hope nobody died there.

ROMEO

Do you think MIA would want my books and DVDs?

MIA

She would appreciate it very much.

ROMEO

Then, here is my answer: I would give all my books and DVDs to MIA. I would buy myself a beautiful, blue urn for my ashes. And prepay my funeral expenses.

MIA

(upset)

I don't like this question. I don't want any of us die in a year.

ROMEO

So, when do you want me to die?

MIA

Shut up! Don't make me more upset. That's all.

ROMEO

No answer?

MIA

Don't make it worse, or else--

ROMEO

Or else what?

MIA

I won't leave you anything in my will.

ROMEO

Shit. I feel so poor already. MIA, for the record, I don't want you to die either. Next question.

Question 20: What does friendship mean to you?

MIA

Be there for each other, for anything. Don't run away even if I yell at you.

ROMEO

Yell? I tell you what. You are very lucky.

MIA

What? Why?

ROMEO

I will print a yelling license especially for you.

MIA

What is a yelling license?

ROMEO

Similar to a driver's license. It says "Yelling License" on it. It has a picture of you. With this license, you are allowed to yell at me anytime...

MIA

Wow, very handy... I'll use it.. I mean occasionally.

ROMEO

But there is one catch.

MIA

What is it?

ROMEO

After yelling, you must give me a hug within 30 seconds.

MIA

I suppose I can force myself. What is it with you and hugging?

ROMEO

It is the only sexual experience with a partner, fully clothed.

MIA

I see... What if you are driving?

ROMEO

You yell while driving?

MIA

Most of the time. Sometimes. How do you think I get to my parents in 20 minutes.

ROMEO

OK... In that case... Well...

MIA

Well what?

ROMEO

You have to hold--

MIA

--hold what?

ROMEO

My hand.

MIA

And what is your answer? What does friendship mean to you? Wait a minute. Let me see what is happening.

[MIA climbs up the bench, standing, looks at SL wall to see the flashing lights. She climbs down holding the helping hand of ROMEO. She motions ROMEO to continue.]

ROMEO

Friendship means to me to be supportive to each other... Question 21--

MIA

--Wait. The street is blocked, bus is not coming. I have to call work. Tell them I'll be late.

[They both call their offices.]

ROMEO

(into phone)

Hi Michael. I'll be a little late. There was an accident. The bus stopped running. I'll get there as soon as I can.

MIA

(into phone)

Hi Rita. I'll be a little late. There was an accident. The bus stopped running. I'll get there as soon as I can.

[They both hang up.]

MIA

Great, now we have more time. And fifteen more questions. Read.

ROMEO

Question 21: What roles do love and affection play in your life?
Do I have to answer now?

MIA

Well, the bus is not coming so fast. I go first?

ROMEO

Sure.

MIA

Love and affection play a big role in my life. Trust me we solved this problem already.

ROMEO

What problem?

MIA

Affection.

ROMEO

How?

MIA

Yelling license, you promised. A hug after each yell. Many hugs a day. That's my answer to affection.

ROMEO

I see. It plays a big role in my life too. Yeah, this problem is solved. Next question.

MIA

Wow, we are going fast, really fast.

Question 22: Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.

I'll start. One: You know how to turn hate into love. Your turn.

ROMEO

One: You hate to be late.

MIA

Two: You hate to be late,. Worse than I. Three--

ROMEO

My turn. Three: you are quick-witted.

MIA

Three: You are smart, even for an engineer. But you need additional math lessons from me, you know.

ROMEO

Four: you like your parents.

MIA

I **love** my parents. Four: You like movies that I like.

ROMEO

Last one: You **are** beautiful

[They stare at each other for a few seconds.]

MIA

(lower voice, clears her throat)

Thank you. Five: You **are** handsome.

ROMEO

Question 23: How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?

My answer: close to my family, and yes, they are warm. I realize it more and more, my childhood was great. You?

MIA

Very close. Yes, my parents are warm. Especially my mom. I was a happy child, except my dad was away a lot. But, my mother made up for it, much more than I can ask for.

ROMEO

Question 24: How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?

Good.

MIA

Good. I wouldn't have it any other way.

[Both realize that the reflection of distant flashing lights stopped. Both unhappy.]

Flashing lights stopped. Bus should be coming soon.

ROMEO

Hurry up.

Question 25: Make three true "we" statements each. For instance "We are both in this room feeling.."

You go first.

MIA

First: "We are unhappy that the bus will show up soon". Next, "We will do well together, in the zoo".

ROMEO

Zoo?

MIA

Checking if you are listening to me, you passed. The last one, "We like each other".

[They hear the bus approaching.]

ROMEO

Tomorrow, same time?

MIA

Don't be late... Opps, I am talking to the wrong one.

[The bus enters from the SL moving towards the SR. It stops for a second, then takes off. ROMEO and MIA exit SR behind the moving bus.]

DARK

OFF STAGE

MIA (O.S)

(shouting)

But tomorrow is Saturday.

[Next morning . We hear the sound of MIA taking a shower.]

MIA (O.S)

(talking over the sound of the shower)

He texted me last night. He wants to sleep an extra hour. I agreed.

*[The sounds of the shower fade out.]**BACK TO STAGE**LIGHT - CENTER STAGE**[MIA enters from SR and sees ROMEO sitting in the middle of the bench.**MIA walks DS, facing the audience.]*

MIA

(to audience)

Good morning. I hope you are enjoying this beautiful Saturday morning. My sleep deficiency is worse, a lot worse. Our inquisition is now almost finished. We have only eleven more questions.

[Turns towards the bus stop, waves at ROMEO, walks toward him and sits right next to him.]

MIA

Good Morning.

ROMEO

Good morning.

[ROMEO gives MIA her a laminated yelling license]

ROMEO

This is for you.

MIA

My yelling license!

(after looking at it closer)

Let's use this license now.

ROMEO

We have an entire audience here . Maybe later? Alone?

MIA

Now!

[MIA stands up first. ROMEO follows her, facing each other.]

(loud, pointing to the yelling license)

Where did you find this ugly picture?

ROMEO

Online, in your university yearbook.

MIA

(loud)

You need to make a new one, with a nicer picture.

ROMEO

(nods)

MIA

(back to normal voice)

OK, this drill is successfully completed. Time for an airtight hug.

[MIA opens her arms first, ROMEO opens his arms next, they hug until she gasps for air. They let go, sit down.]

Where were we last time?

ROMEO

In the bus, going to work, yesterday.

MIA

I mean, question number?

ROMEO

Question 25: Make three true "we" statements each. For instance "We are both in this room feeling.."

You already answered this yesterday, my turn.

MIA

Go.

ROMEO

One: "We both showed up an hour early today"

MIA

You think it is bad?

ROMEO

No. No. It is very good.

[He holds MIA's hand for a second.]

It is good. Two: "We both like eggs benedict for breakfast".

MIA

I am getting hungry. Don't forget the two well-cooked sausages on the side.

ROMEO

Never. Three: "We both survived this inquisition".

MIA

So far.

ROMEO

Next.

Question 26: Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."

MIA

I wish I had someone with whom I could share my dreams. You?

ROMEO

Only dreams? How 'bout nightmares?

MIA

I don't have nightmares when I am happy. You?

ROMEO

I get them when I am happy too.

MIA

I meant, your answer.

ROMEO

I wish I had someone with whom I could share the dinners that only I can prepare.

MIA

(to audience)

Am I dreaming here?

(to ROMEO)

I think I can live with that. Next.

Question number 27: If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for him or her to know?

How much close? Let me think... What I am gonna tell you, you **cannot** tell anyone.

ROMEO

I promise.

MIA

I am only telling this to you because you said you like cooking.

ROMEO

Say it, please.

MIA

I like beans, cabbage, broccoli... Just so you know ahead of time, my farts are not stinky.

[ROMEO gets up. Starts walking away towards SL, slightly holding his crotch with both hands.]

MIA

Where are you running now? Ok, I can make'm stinky.

ROMEO

(Shouts while walking away)

Not that, I have to pee, I forgot to pee in the morning rush. Back in a minute.

[He exits SL.]

MIA
(shouting after him)

Lift the seat...

(to audience)

He is not getting a hug for this yelling.

[ROMEO enters from SL.]

All done?

ROMEO

Yes. This morning, I didn't want to be late, I forgot to pee... Moving on, the question was, what is important for you to know... Well, I sometimes forget important things.

MIA

No worries, I can remind you everything, all the time. I am good at that... Phew, did you forget to brush your teeth?

ROMEO

What?

MIA

Fine.

ROMEO

Fine what?

MIA

Just so you know, when I say fine, I mean I know I am right and you need to zip up.

*[ROMEO checks his pants to see if his zipper is still open.
MIA makes a "zip up your mouth" gesture.]*

MIA

Question #28: Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.

ROMEO

What I like about you? Let me think... hard to pick...the list is too long.. It is getting longer as I think. We don't have all day here, you know--

(pointing to audience)

--these people need to go home sooner or later.

MIA

Good enough. I like it.

ROMEO

What about you? Is there **anything** you like about me?

MIA

(sarcastic voice)

Your tardiness...

(back to normal voice)

In general, I like you so far.

ROMEO

Question 29: Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life. Go.

MIA

Ok. Put your seat belt on. We are flying.

ROMEO

Flying where?

MIA

I don't remember. Was a few years ago.

ROMEO

Click, fastened.

MIA

Move your feet. I am going to spit out my chewing gum there. Step on it.

ROMEO

What are you doing?

MIA

I want to make sure your foot sticks to it. You can't run away so fast.

ROMEO

My seatbelt is fastened. I can't run anywhere.

MIA

Good. It was early in the morning. I was in a big rush to get to the airport. As usual, I got there too early. I was waiting right at the gate, first in line, as always. After a while, a long while, other people started lining up, behind me. Then I noticed everyone was staring at me for some reason. Maybe my make-up was off, who knows.

*[ROMEO slowly brings his hands to his face, places them on both sides of his cheek, then tries to cover his face.
MIA notices ROMEO's body language.]*

Thank you. I appreciate your empathy. You don't need to feel embarrassed for me, it was a long time ago... And then this **idiot** comes over and says something about a run in my pantyhose... He is pointing to my ass, then goes around me, pointing to my ass again. We are going round and round, like dancing a bad polka. I notice everyone staring. I have no idea what the heck he is talking about. Who on earth would do something like that? I was embarrassed and pissed off at the same time. So, finally, I told him off. Maybe not that polite exactly. OK, phew. Next.

Question number 30: When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself? Last Sunday, after I kicked out my boyfriend. **Ex-boyfriend**. First I cried when we were arguing, then showed him the door, then I cried some more. How about you? When did you last cry in front of another person?

ROMEO

[ROMEO slowly removes his hands off his face.]

I might do that right now.

MIA

Why? What is wrong? Rom Rom, you can tell me everything.

ROMEO

Your turn now, fasten your seat belt.

MIA

OK, I just did. Click.

ROMEO

Do you have more chewing gum? For both your feet? So, you can't run away.

MIA

I don't want to waste it. Go on.

ROMEO

I think it was me in your airport story.

MIA

I sort of guessed it, eleven questions ago. Don't worry, it happened a long time ago. Besides, you are probably smarter now.

ROMEO

Much more.

MIA

Hope so... Your answer now. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?

ROMEO

A while ago, watching something.

MIA

Which one? Netflix LOVE

ROMEO

That was good too. Watching One Day, Anne Hathaway.

MIA

I remember that movie, it was heavy. Next--

ROMEO

--Question 31: Tell your partner something that you like about them already.
Answer: The softness inside your shell.

MIA

Your are an optimist.

ROMEO

Why, am I wrong ?

MIA

No, it is my answer, I like that you are an optimist.
Question 32: What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?

ROMEO

Death

MIA

And religion, people's religious beliefs.

ROMEO

Yeah... How 'bout joking about sex, during sex?

MIA

Compulsory. You?

ROMEO

Only when face to face.

Question 33: If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?.. OK, I was going to wait until the bus shows up--

MIA

--it may still show up. But today is Saturday, only bus #39 runs. And we are not taking the bus today anyways.

ROMEO

Before coming here, I went grocery shopping--

MIA

--24 hour supermarket around the corner?

ROMEO

Yes.

MIA

This doesn't sound like a clandestine operation. Go on.

ROMEO

So, after this, I wanted to invite you over for the best ever eggs benedict breakfast, **with sausages** on the side?

MIA

I'd love to, invitation accepted. I am getting very hungry.

ROMEO

Your answer to question 33?

MIA

My answer is a question for you.

ROMEO

I am listening.

MIA

Do you want to go to the zoo, together, after the eggs benedict.

ROMEO

I'd love that. The #39 bus goes right to the zoo.

MIA

I am driving.

[ROMEO looks worried.]

MIA

Don't worry, I'll drive slow... this time.

[They hear the bus approaching from SL. The #39 bus enters from SL, stops at the bus stop. Then it takes off and exits SR.]

We now see a WOMAN and a MAN, looking dressed for a wedding, got off the bus. ROMEO and MIA are still sitting at the bench.]

WOMAN

(to MIA)

Hi. I need help with directions.

MIA

Hi, sure, where are you going?

WOMAN

We are looking for a party hall near a 24-hour supermarket. We are going there for a wedding. Do you know where it is?

[Both ROMEO and MIA know exactly where this place is. They see people getting married there every weekend. They both jump up immediately to give directions.]

MIA

(pointing to SL)

Go one block this way to the intersection--

ROMEO

--then turn left at the intersection, go another half a block. It will be right there. Maybe ten minutes walk, maybe twelve.

WOMAN

Thank you!

MIA AND ROMEO

Have fun!

MIA

(to audience, pointing to ROMEO)

He knows exactly where the wedding hall is.

(to ROMEO)

OK. Next question.

[They both walk back to the bench and sit down.]

Question 34: Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?

ROMEO

I would save my laptop, my life is in it. And, my box of memorabilia, journal, old pictures, a few DVDs.

MIA

One thing only!

ROMEO

My box of memorabilia, journal, old pictures in it.

MIA

What happened to your life? Your laptop?

ROMEO

I have cloud backup.

MIA

I would save my purse, the big one. Next.

ROMEO

What about your old pictures?

MIA

I have parental backup. My parents have extra prints of everything.

ROMEO

Question 35: Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?

I'd say... My parents?

MIA

No, choose one person only.

ROMEO

My mom.

MIA

The same... Here comes the last question. Just as I promised, finished by the weekend. After this, we are all done.

ROMEO

No, we are not done.

MIA

Why, do you have 36 questions about my sex life? I am getting hungry, you know.

ROMEO

No, no more questions. But are we are definitely not done--

MIA

--OK, I get it. Happy to know. Moving on.

Question 36: Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen...

Mine is very obvious, don't you think so?

ROMEO

Yes, obvious. Your crinkly nose before you yell?

MIA

Do you have to point it out?

ROMEO

Very attractive. Foretelling too. Before even **you** know it, I can tell you'll need your yelling license within ten seconds. My personal problem. I cannot be late to anything. What is your advice?

MIA

Be early! Now, the last part. We stare at each other's eye silently for four minutes.

ROMEO

Can we do that after the breakfast? I can't stay silent, my stomach is grumbling.

MIA

Yes, after the breakfast it is.

ROMEO

When are you planning to visit your parents?

MIA

Tomorrow.

ROMEO

Ride with me, I'll drop you off at your parents. Then I pick you up after.

MIA

I'll think about it.

ROMEO

You can ask more questions on the way--

MIA

--OK then, for sure.

[They both stand up, holding hands, they start walking towards SL. As they walk, they pause]

(to audience)

And this is how our love story starts... With 36 questions... This is definitely not an ordinary bus stop.

[They walk off stage, with a side-hug.]

FADE TO BLACK.