

PERSONAL SPACE

a 10-minute play in reverse
by Laylah Muran de Assereto

PERSONAL SPACE

PERSONAL SPACE

CHARACTER LIST

PORTIA: Young professional woman. Smart, sarcastic.
Restless.

JAKE: Portia's boyfriend. Certain.

TODD: A bar patron. On the make, not that bright.

SETTING

The street outside a bar. Inside the bar.

PERSONAL SPACE

SCENE 1

The stage is relatively bare, but has three playing areas: the street outside a popular bar and two separate areas within the bar. On lights up, PORTIA has just come out of the bar and is adjusting something in her purse and doesn't see Jake. JAKE is off to the side (leaning against a wall? A light post? in a doorway?). He is watching her. She notices him and hesitates, then continues to the edge of the stage and looks offstage right and/or left.

JAKE

Not many cabs out tonight. *[pause]* Might need to call one.
[pause, steps forward] I said you might need to call one.

PORTIA

Yeah. They called one for me.

JAKE

Oh. Sorry. *[pause]* Just trying to be helpful. You know some people appreciate that.

PORTIA

Look, I just want to get the cab and go home. I don't feel like talking.

JAKE

Sooorry. I'll just leave you alone then.

He backs off. There's a long pause. She looks down the street again. He looks down the street. She takes a few steps to get a little bit away from him.

JAKE cont'd

I was leaving you alone. Can't I just stand here?

PORTIA

You can do whatever the hell you want to do.

JAKE mumbles something. Moves away from, and then approaches her again.

JAKE

You know what? No. I was here first. I should be telling you to leave me alone.

PORTIA

I did leave you alone.

He takes another step toward her. She stands her ground.[beat] He takes another step, at first intentionally trying to antagonize her then asking an unspoken question. For a moment she looks like she might say something then doesn't.

JAKE cont'd

Whatever.

He goes back to where he was at first. TODD comes out of the club, looking for PORTIA. He doesn't notice Jake.

TODD

Portia! There you are.

PORTIA

Oh, great.

TODD

I've been looking for you in there forever.

He stands next to her, not noticing that he's in her space. She edges away to reclaim the personal space.

TODD cont'd

What are you doing? Are you going home? C'mon. Don't go yet.

He moves closer to her, maybe almost nuzzling against her.

TODD cont'd

Unless I can come too.

She firmly pushes him away.

PORTIA

No. Really, I just want to go home.

TODD

Aw, c'mon.

Jake steps forward.

JAKE

She said no.

PORTIA

You know what? If I wanted help from you I'd ask.

TODD

Hey. What's it to you?

TODD moves around Portia ready to confront
JAKE

PORTIA

Oh for fuck's sake.

The two men confront each other but FREEZE
in an aggressive pose before making any
contact.

--There is a time break--

PORTIA immediately moves into position in
one of the bar areas. [beat] TODD and JAKE
break their freeze and JAKE exits. TODD
joins Portia and sits next to her. He leans
in and says something to her. He touches
her. She shifts slightly away from him and
uses her line to cover by reaching for her
beer.

PORTIA

Right? It's like I keep ordering Rum Raisin or... no, Jackfruit
or Spiced Mexican Chocolate ice-cream but I keep getting
Vanilla.

TODD

I have no idea what you just said.

PORTIA

You know, like what you were saying? How the universe is
mixing up the order?... I think I'm getting something new and
interesting or exciting, but I just keep ending up with bland
and boring.

TODD

Oh, I get it. You're saying you'd like to try something a little spicy?

PORTIA

Um...I guess.

TODD

Well I'm pretty spicy.

PORTIA

Really, allspice or cayenne?

TODD

What?

PORTIA

Nothing, never mind.

TODD

So do you have a boyfriend?

PORTIA

Yes. He's around here somewhere.

TODD

He is?

PORTIA

Yeah, he's probably off pouting or something.

TODD

Oooh, you're fighting?

PORTIA

Nope, Jake doesn't fight.

TODD

You know, he really shouldn't leave you all alone. By yourself.

PORTIA

Yeah, ok Mr. Spiceman. I think I'm going to go to the restroom.

Portia stands up and, taking her purse with her, walks away on his line.

TODD

Right. Sure. Hey, do you want another beer? I'll get you another one.

PORTIA gives him a thumbs-up over her shoulder as she walks. They FREEZE.

--time break--

JAKE enters and he and PORTIA move to the second bar area. TODD shifts position into one that's open and relaxed; on the make, checking out the "scene". He doesn't see JAKE and PORTIA, who are staring each other down.

JAKE

So that's it?

PORTIA

I don't know what you want me to say Jake. I don't want to do this.

JAKE

This?

PORTIA

This. *[gesturing around her at the bar scene]* This. *[gesturing to indicate the two of them]*

They stare at each other for a moment.

PORTIA

We're just not a good fit ... anymore.

JAKE

Bullshit.

PORTIA

Bullshit?

JAKE

You're doing the same thing you always do. You're pushing me away, because I got too close.

PORTIA

If that's what you need to tell yourself, Jake.

JAKE

I don't need to tell myself anything. It's what you do, Portia.

PORTIA

Are you sure about that?

JAKE

Fine. Push me away all you want, but be careful, one of these days it will work.

PORTIA

Like today maybe?

They stare at each other again and this time JAKE backs down, turns around and exits. PORTIA watches him leave, turns and starts to walk the other way. TODD approaches her, she sizes him up and accepts a beer from him. PORTIA and TODD FREEZE.

--Time Break--

JAKE enters wearing a different shirt and crosses to the bar area that Todd and Portia had been occupying in the second scene. TODD exits. PORTIA also adjusts her appearance somehow to suggest a different day (pulls a cardigan out of her purse, or takes a cardigan off, puts her hair up, takes it down, whatever). PORTIA crosses to and sits next to JAKE. PORTIA looks bored and indifferent to her surroundings. JAKE is looking at his phone.

PORTIA

Have you ever been sky diving?

JAKE

No.

PORTIA

I saw this place that kind of simulates skydiving, but it's indoors and uses giant fans or something. I was thinking I might want to do that for my birthday.

JAKE

Yeah, I've seen those. You don't want to do that.

PORTIA

Excuse me?

JAKE

You wouldn't like it.

She watches him for a minute, he doesn't notice - continuing to look at his phone.

PORTIA

I think I'm going to get another beer. Do you want one?

JAKE

I'll get it.

PORTIA

You said that five minutes ago. You're busy, I'll get it.

JAKE

I'll get it, there's a lot of people crowded up there right now.

She watches him. He doesn't notice, continues to do whatever on his phone. She makes a decision, picks up her purse, gets up and walks toward the exit. He looks up, finally noticing. He follows her and stops her.

Lights fade.

END SCENE

Synopsis

A young woman appears to be harassed by two different men outside a bar while trying to get a cab. We see her inside the bar with one of the men flirting and then giving him the slip. We realize the first man is her boyfriend as we see her break up with him.

In chronological order: Jake and Portia break up while out on a date at a local bar. She flirts with, but realizes that she doesn't really like Todd and gives him the slip. Outside she runs into Jake who has been skulking. Todd comes out and the two men end up confronting each other.