

## Waiting for Margot

by Barry R. Taylor

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**Characters:** *Dave, a young man*  
*Stanley, Dave's best friend*  
*Jessica, a waitress*

**Setting:** *A small café, late evening, winter. An exit to the kitchen, upstage right, and an exit to the street, upstage left. Three or four tables, unoccupied, in the room. At one table, centre stage, sits Dave, sipping coffee. His cell phone lies on the table beside him.*

[**Cue 1:** *Stage black*]

[**Cue 2:** *Lights up, interior, night*]

[*Enter Stanley, from the Street. He is wearing a ski jacket. He looks around the empty café, spots Dave, and hurries over to join him.*]

Stanley: Hey Dave, thought I'd never find you.

Dave [*rising to shake hands*]: Stan! Good to see you man. Sorry for dragging you out this time of night. Come on, sit down.

[*Stanley takes off his jacket and hangs it on the back of the chair across from Dave*]

Stanley: Cold out there.

Dave: I know. I almost froze my ears walking here. Forgot my hat.

[*Stanley sits down*]

Stanley: Good lord, you didn't walk here from the University! That must be five k!

Dave: Of course not. I took the bus. Nearest stop is about two blocks from here. Cold walk.

Stanley: You took the bus? Dave, in case you haven't noticed, this is 2009. Nobody takes the bus anymore.

Dave: I'm glad nobody took mine, because I needed it. How did you get here?

Stanley: I took a cab, like any sane person would do. [*checking his watch*] It's almost midnight!

*[Enter Jessica, from the kitchen. She is wearing a waitress's uniform that shows her legs, and flats, a name tag. She is carrying a pot of coffee.]*

Dave: *[looks at his cell phone]* 11:38, to be exact. I'm really nervous.

Stanley: How nervous?

Dave: As nervous as a stray cat walking by a dogpound.

Stanley: That's not very nervous.

Dave: There's a hole in the fence.

Stanley: OK, that's nervous.

Jessica *[to Dave]*: Looks like your friend found you. *[to Stanley]* Hi! What can I get you?

Stanley: I don't suppose there's any chance of a hot rum toddy on a cold winter night?

Jessica: Sorry, bar's closed. For hot drinks, you have a choice of coffee, coffee or coffee.

Stanley: I'll have coffee.

Jessica: Good decision. *[He holds up his cup and she pours]*

Stanley: Do you have anything to eat?

Jessica: I'll see what I can find, but there isn't much left. We're closing in a little while. I'll have to toss you out into that cold winter night. *[to Dave]*: More coffee for you?

Dave: Oh no, no more coffee. I'm already as jumpy as a frog with the hiccups.

Jessica: I'll see if there's anything in the kitchen.

*[Exit Jessica]*

Stanley *[watching Jessica recede]*: Cute!

Dave: I knew you would mention that.

Stanley: I wonder if I can get her phone number.

Dave: You're more likely to get arrested.

Stanley: Come on, it's the witching hour. Anything can happen. Even me getting a date. *[looking around]* So, this is the place?

Dave: This is it.

Stanley: Right here?

Dave: This is where she said. I checked the address about a dozen times.

Stanley: Well, nice decor anyway. [*He gets up and looks at the walls. Dave looks at his phone again*] These are all pictures of stage productions, at the theatres. Cool. [*excited*] Did you know that Milton Hedges ate here?

Dave: Who's Milton Hedges?

Stanley: You've never heard of Milton Hedges, the legendary stage actor?

Dave: No.

Stanley: Neither have I. But his picture is on the wall. [*He sits down.*] Why are you meeting here, anyway? It's way out. Why not a bar or a restaurant downtown? Someplace where there are actual people.

Dave: What difference would that make?

Stanley: Don't you know anything? You should always meet a blind date in a crowded public place. It can save you from a horribly awkward conversation. You check her out from a distance, and if she gives you bad vibes you fade away into the crowd, silent and unnoticed, like a passing fog. [*Looks around*] Rather hard to be inconspicuous here.

Dave: Margot isn't a blind date. Well she is, I suppose, but – she isn't. Oh, you know what I mean. Anyway she said this diner is close to where she works. Near the theatres.

Stanley: Does she work in theatre? A sexy actress maybe?

Dave: I doubt that. She's never mentioned acting.

Stanley: Just as well. Actors tend to be loopy. Maybe she works behind the scenes then? You know, stage manager or props director or I don't know, assistant curtain-puller or something.

Dave: I haven't the slightest idea.

Stanley: Oh. You mean – you don't know what she does for a living?

Dave: Nope.

Stanley: But – but – you said you've been chatting on-line with her for weeks!

Dave: I have. Three weeks tomorrow, I think.

Stanley: And you've never talked about her job? It's never come up?

Dave: Look, she works part time, she goes to classes part time, that's all I know.

*[Enter Jessica, bearing a plate of cookies]*

Stanley: How could you –

Jessica: Sorry boys, this is all there is left. *[She sets the plate on the table]*

Stanley: What are they?

Jessica: Cookies, of course. Chocolate chip. Homemade. Try one.

*[Stanley and Dave take a cookie. They each take a bite]*

Dave: Mmmm, those are good. Is that . . . apricot?

Jessica: That's right. And a bit of cardamom, for spice.

Stanley: Hey, these are really good *[To Jessica]* The second sweet thing I've seen since I got here.

Jessica *[gestures toward the cookies]* Oh, try another one, right away!

Stanley: Why?

Jessica: It'll keep you from talking.

*[Dave laughs. Jessica returns to the kitchen]*

Stanley: She's still cute.

Dave: I don't think she's going to fall for your lame pick-up lines.

Stanley: Exactly. Which means she is a woman of intelligence and discernment. And therefore worthy of my attention. Besides, it passes the time. *[meaningfully]* It's not like we have anyone else to talk to.

Dave: Margot will be here! She said a little before midnight. Tonight.

Stanley: Of course she did. *[picks up the cookie tray]* And I'll bet you this plate of excellent cookies that she won't show up.

Dave: You're going to lose that bet. She will show up and you will go hungry for being such a pessimist. [*He moves the cookie plate to his side of the table.*]

Stanley: I'm not a pessimist. I've merely been in your shoes too many times. Besides, this feels . . . weird.

Dave: Why weird?

Stanley: This is your romantic, midnight liaison. Why am I even here?

Dave: You're my wingman. My moral support. I'm as nervous as a patient for a jittery dentist.

Stanley: Ah! That means you don't think she'll show.

Dave: No it doesn't!

Stanley: Yes it does.

Dave: I didn't mean –

Stanley: Look, if you really believed that Ms Margot Mysterious was going to show up, you wouldn't *need* any moral support. You would have come by yourself, and told me about it the next morning – with a big grin on your face.

Dave: I asked you here to help bide the time while I wait.

Stanley: Stuff. Nobody invites a friend along on a romantic rendezvous. I'm really here to give you a shoulder to cry on when she stands you up. Glad to be of service, by the way. [*He reclaims the cookie plate, nibbles one.*] These cookies are delicious.

Dave: Don't count your cookies before they're baked. I still say she'll be here. [*takes the plate back*]

Stanley: So . . . where is she then? [*makes a show of looking around*] It's not like we can't see her for the crowd.

Dave: I don't know. Maybe's she's stuck in traffic. Maybe she has to help her grandmother get to bed.

Stanley: At midnight?

Dave: They were watching a late movie.

Stanley: I'm really going to enjoy these cookies. [*takes the plate back*]

Dave: Maybe she couldn't find a cab.

Stanley: I found one. It can't be that hard.

Dave: Maybe you got the last one.

Stanley: I know, maybe she's hiding. Under one of the tables? In the washroom?

Dave: She'll be here! [*checks his phone*] We still have a few minutes before midnight.

Stanley: Good thing. I wouldn't want her coach to turn into a pumpkin.

Dave: Look, Margot sent me a text a few minutes ago. She told me she had to work late.

Stanley: At what?

[*Enter Jessica. She begins sweeping the floor.*]

Dave: You know, you might get more dates if you weren't so cynical.

Stanley: I'm not a cynic, I'm a realist. And I've been stood up enough times to know that someone who arrives late isn't going to arrive at all. [*He admires Jessica.*]

Jessica: Better drink up fellas, I have to close in a few minutes.

Stanley: I'm a tad surprised to find this place open at all, this late. It doesn't seem to be drawing much business.

Jessica: Oh, we get the after-theatre crowd most nights. They like to linger over drinks and discuss the productions. There's no show tonight so it's pretty quiet.

Stanley: I wouldn't say that. I'm enjoying just watching you sweep. You move like a dancer.

Jessica: Why thank you. I have a lot of practice sweeping away crumbs.

[*She returns to her work.*]

Dave [*laughing*]: Score another one for the waitress.

Stanley: At least I'm talking to a real person. Instead of waiting for someone to crystalize out of the winter air.

Dave: Ah, but it's the witching hour, remember? Anything can happen. And when Margot gets here we are not going to share the cookies. [*he reclaims the plate*]

[*Jessica begins clearing plates and cutlery off the other tables.*]

Stanley: Dave, people bail on first dates all the time. Whoever heard of a first date at midnight anyway? I'm here to tell you, your Margot No-go is going to leave you hanging like a flag on a windless day.

Dave: She won't do that. I know her. I know the kind of person she is. And Margot wouldn't make a date and not keep it. She has too much integrity.

Stanley: How can you possibly know someone you have never met?

Dave: But you see, I have met her, in a way. I mean, we've talked for hours. How do we get to know anybody? By spending time with them. By hanging out together. By discovering shared interests and attitudes. I think you can do those things as easily in cyberspace as anywhere.

Stanley: That's where you're wrong. Exchanging witticisms at the keyboard isn't like meeting someone in the flesh. You can't tell tone, eye contact, gesticulations, body language. We use all those signals in real life. Without them, on the internet, it's far too easy to disguise your real personality.

Dave: Doesn't everything we do reveal our personality? Including the way we talk – or write, in this case.

Stanley: Come on, we all try to look clever and appealing when we're chatting up a stranger. All the more so when we're talking on-line because we can't judge by looks.

Dave: So you're saying she puts on her best face . . . because I can't see her face?

Stanley: I'm saying, you can't really know someone you have only "encountered" by texting. She's not a whole person, she's lines of type on a computer screen. Anybody can write anything. You can't *know* someone that way.

Dave: But I do know her. I know her by her choice of words, her turns of phrase, her response to my jokes.

Stanley: She responds to your jokes? Now I know she's faking it.

Dave: We've been talking almost every night for three weeks. That's maybe thousands of words, about all manner of subjects. Don't tell me that doesn't reveal personality. Otherwise you couldn't tell a letter from your grandmother from a suicide note.

Stanley: Dave, anyone can disguise her personality in print. It's easy! That's why chat rooms are so popular. You can be anybody you want and nobody can tell the difference. [*pause*] Hey . . . wait a minute.

Dave: What?

Stanley: You said you met – sorry, you *encountered* – Margot on-line. Where exactly did you meet her? You’ve never said.

Dave: [*too casually*] We met in . . . a chat room.

Stanley: Did you now. What kind of chat room?

Dave: I’d . . . rather not say.

Stanley: I’m sure you wouldn’t. Come on, out with it. Where did you start chatting with Margot the Mesmerizing?

Dave: You’ll just laugh.

Stanley: Almost certainly. Come on.

Dave: It was a chat room for . . . baking.

Stanley: BAKING?

Dave: Baking. There’s a recipe exchange site I visit sometimes, and it has a chat room where you can talk to other people who like to bake. Margot likes to make bread. So do I. That’s where it all started.

Stanley: Baking. She bakes bread. You know what I have to ask.

Dave: What?

Stanley: Does she have nice buns?

Dave: I should never have told you.

Stanley: Maybe she drives a Rolls?

Dave: Any way you slice it, these jokes are stale.

Stanley: It’s the yeast I can do.

Dave: Now you’re trying to get a rise out of me.

Stanley: Well, levity is the swell of wheat.

Dave: What this conversation needs isn’t levity but gravity.

Stanley: Fine then, what exactly made you gravitate toward Margot the Muffin-Maker?

Dave: Her warmth, I think. And her excitement about life. Her chats are always quick and lively. She's keen on so many things, not just baking.

Stanley: You mean she's a smart cookie?

Dave: Will you stop it?

Stanley: I can't. This is too easy. Can you guess what's different about Margot's recipe for fruit cake?

Dave: What?

Stanley: No dates. [*He takes back the cookie plate.*]

Dave: Okay, maybe that's enough of the half-baked humour. Why are *you* so convinced that Margot *isn't* going to come?

Stanley: I'm convinced that she knows better. Haven't you ever heard the expression, 'On the internet, no one knows you're a dog'?

Dave: No.

Stanley: You are hopeless. Look, if you can't see someone, you have no idea what she looks like. So you create an image to suit the words on the screen. That image is going to fit your standard model of what an attractive woman looks like. Then when you finally meet the woman in the flesh – not that I see that happening, by the way – you have got to be disappointed.

Dave: How can you say that? Maybe she's gorgeous, maybe she's plain. They're about equally likely.

Stanley: But either way she'll disappoint you! Even if she looked like a supermodel you would still be disappointed because she can't possibly look like the fantasy image in your head. She'll be shorter, or taller, or thinner, or stouter or her hair will be the wrong colour and she'll be wearing glasses. You two haven't even exchanged pictures! It's probably just as well that Margot No-Show hasn't made an appearance. You're setting yourself up for a colossal disappointment here my friend.

Jessica: More coffee? Or maybe you'd like me to referee?

Dave: I'm sorry you had to hear all this. Stanley tends to be . . . disputatious.

Stanley: I don't even know what that means.

Jessica: It means disagreeable; inclined to start arguments. And then lose them.

Stanley: How unfair. I can be very agreeable. You just need to spend more time with me to see how agreeable I can be.

Jessica [*smiling*]: How about we agree to disagree on that. Agreed?

[*Exit Jessica*]

Stanley: [*watching her leave*] I'm not making a lot of headway here.

Dave: I think she's too smart for you, Stan.

Stanley: Her smarts are certainly making me smart.

Dave: Wait, I just got a text from Margot. [*Picks up his phone, reads*] Sorry, work keeping me late. Be there soon. M. [*To Stanley*]. Don't eat all my cookies. [*He reclaims the plate.*]

Stanley: Don't believe it. She's teasing you.

Dave: She's been held up, that's all.

Stanley: What, by gangsters?

Dave: I mean she's running late.

Stanley: You mean she's running away. If Miss Margot Mind-Games was going to be here she would be here already. She's just making excuses. Unless . . . [*He pauses to think.*] Wait a minute. Working late. Of course! She *is* here already. She's the waitress!

Dave: What?

Stanley: Your mystery girl, Margot. She's our wise and witty waitress.

Dave: What – why ever would you say that?

Stanley: Think about it! She's clever, she's working late, she works around baked goods. It all fits. Besides that, she's the only woman here. Therefore she must be your date.

Dave: I just now got a text from Margot.

Stanley: Which she sent from the kitchen.

Dave: Why would she do that?

Stanley: Exactly what I would do. She's checking you out from a safe distance before she decides whether to meet you for real.

Dave: No, I don't think –

Stanley: [*toward kitchen*] Excuse me! Cute waitress person! Could you come out here for a second?

[*Enter Jessica*]

Jessica: What? What's the matter?

Stanley: Come here sweetie. Let me introduce my good friend Dave. I think you may know him already.

Dave: Wait, Stan, no –

Stanley: [*stands up, turns Jessica toward Dave*] Dave, may I present: Margot!

Jessica: [*bewildered*] What? Who?

Dave: [*to Jessica*] I'm sorry. He's always like this. There is no cure, but research continues.

Jessica: Let me try something. [*to Stan, pointing at her name tag*] See this? It says Jessica. It's easy if you sound it out. Jess-i-ca.

Stanley: Oh. Sorry. I thought – oh, never mind.

Jessica: [*to Dave*] Excuse me, but who is Margot?

Dave: My . . . late night date. We're waiting for her. Stan thought she was you.

Jessica. Ah, I see. [*points to her name tag*] The menu must pose a real challenge.

[*Exit Jessica*]

Stanley [*sitting down again*]: I thought it might be her.

Dave: Stan, I never got a chance to tell you. Margot said she would be wearing something red. So I would recognize her.

Stanley: Oh. Well, the only thing red around her is my face. [*pause*] What time is it?

Dave: [*looks at his phone*] Two minutes to midnight.

Stanley: Time to go home, man. She's not going to show.

Dave: She'll be here!

Stanley: No, she won't! Don't you get it? She's not going to come because that would ruin *her* fantasy. See, you're just words on a computer monitor to her too. So she's made a great romantic fantasy about what *you* look like, about *your* face and voice and mannerisms, maybe even your car. She's imagined you according to her image of the perfect man just like you've concocted an image of her based on your perfect woman. Look, do you remember Pygmalion?

Dave: What? Pygmalion. Wait, yeah, Greek dude who carved a statue of a woman so beautiful he fell in love with it.

Stanley: That's what you've done with Margot! You've carved the image of your perfect match out of lines of text on a computer screen. Margot has probably done the same thing. Each of you is Pygmalion to the other.

Fortunately for both of you, Margot Missing-in-Action isn't about to appear in the flesh and ruin everything by being real. In fact, I'm pretty sure she never had any intention of showing up. She's figured it out, man.

Dave: I can't accept that. She has to come. I tell you I know this woman and she will keep her word. [*He stands and turns away.*] [*to himself:* ] She has to come.

Stanley: Well, I'm going to leave you to face disappointment by yourself. I gotta get home.

[*Stanley takes a cell phone out of his pocket, punches a number. He puts the phone to his ear*]

Stanley: Yes, hello, my name is Stanley, I need a taxi straight-away at Beckett's Café, on – oh, you know where it is. Great. I'll be waiting outside. [*He puts the phone in his pocket, then retrieves his jacket from the chair*]

Stanley: [*to Dave*] You all right man?

Dave: [*turning back*] Yes. Yes, I'm all right. Thanks for coming.

Stanley: How are you getting home?

Dave: The last bus is at 12:15. I'll catch it down the street.

Stanley: Good night. I'm sorry it didn't work out. Really. [*Pause*] You can have the cookies. [*He tosses a couple of bills on the table.*]

Dave: Do you remember how the Pygmalion story ends?

Stanley: No, I don't.

Dave: The gods bring the statue to life, and they life happily ever after.

Stanley: [*shaking his head*] Good night, Dave.

*[Stanley exits to the street. Dave sits back down at the table. He nibbles on a cookie.]*

*[Enter Jessica]*

Jessica: I'm sorry, but you'll have to leave now. It's midnight. I'm closing up.

Dave: That's all right. It's time for me to go home.

Jessica: Hey, I'm sorry that your date – what was her name?

Dave: Margot

Jessica: Well, I'm sorry she stood you up. It must be discouraging.

Dave: Ah, it's not so bad. I got to spend a half-hour debating philosophy with Stan.

Jessica: Have another cookie. I made them myself.

Dave: You made the cookies? They're very good.

Jessica: Thanks. It's my grandmother's recipe. *[Pause]* Well, good night.

Dave: Good night.

*[Exit Jessica to the kitchen]*

*[Dave nibbles on a cookie. He picks up his jacket off the back of his chair, puts it on as he heads reluctantly toward the street exit.]*

Jessica: *[from the kitchen]*: Wait a minute!

*[Enter Jessica, wearing a jacket]*

Jessica: Sorry. I wanted to ask you a favour. It's Dave, right?

Dave: That's right.

Jessica: *[pointing to name tag]* Jessica.

Dave: *[amused]* I remember.

Jessica: Are you walking down to the bus stop?

Dave: Yes.

Jessica: I'm walking that way too. I know it's silly, but it's late and . . . and I'd feel better if I wasn't by myself. Do you mind if I walk with you?

Dave: Not at all. I could do with the company.

Jessica: Great. Let's go. [*They walk toward the door*] Oh, I forgot my scarf in the kitchen. You go ahead, I'll catch up.

Dave: I'll wait outside.

[*Exit Dave to the street*]

[*Jessica takes a cell phone out of her pocket. She punches a number.*]

Jessica: Hi Jess! Yeah, it's me. Listen, thanks for switching shifts. I'll get your uniform back to you tomorrow. [*Pause*] Yes, I did! [*Laughs*]. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow – with a big grin on my face. Bye!

[*She puts the phone back in her pocket. She dashes into the kitchen, re-appears immediately, winding a bright red scarf around her neck. She dashes out the door to the street.*]

[**Cue 3:** *Three-second pause, then fade to black*]