

ACCIDENTAL TOMATOES

By

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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

LESTER, 34, exceedingly average, cuts up vegetables for a salad. He is dressed in athletic shorts and an old t-shirt. He methodically slices a cucumber, adds the slices to a small bowl. A small end stub remains.

He opens a can of sliced black olives, dumps a few into the bowl. Next comes some cubed ham chunks and a few mozzarella pearls.

He pulls out a package of grape tomatoes from the refrigerator; the label shows large, bright red, plump tomatoes. He opens the container to pick out a few, which look just like the label; oversized, vibrant, plump: designer tomatoes.

He washes and slices them, adds them to the bowl.

He tops it off with some leafy greens and Italian dressing. He covers the bowl and begins to shake to mix it all up.

His phone dings with a notification; a Hinge notification of a new match.

He places the salad down and checks the match. It's an attractive young woman, CALLIE, 30. Her pictures show her as tall and thin, with red hair. She is an adventurous type, showing vacation pictures in all sorts of foreign locations as he swipes through.

He sighs, sets his phone down, and glances at the remaining grape tomatoes in the container. A few are shriveled and leaking.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Lester exits his back door into his backyard. It is private, tranquil, tree lined. He has the tomato container in hand, along with a few remaining leafy greens and the cucumber stub.

He walks toward a back corner of the yard, where a makeshift compost pile sits, disheveled with more than a few weeds growing out of it. He winces.

He picks up a nearby shovel and digs a small hole into the middle of the pile, crushing some weeds along the way.

He dumps the few sad tomatoes, greens, and cucumber stub into the hole and covers it up with the shovel.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lester opens up the Hinge app again. At the landing page, the first suitor is GERALDINE, 32. She is cute, modest, with short brown hair, glasses, and a polite smile.

As he swipes through, he sees books, a dog, an amateur painting. She seems innocent, down to Earth, low key...real. In a conventional sense anyway.

Only two pictures actually have herself in them: one a blurry selfie of only half of her face, and one full shot of her in the distance in full winter gear.

LESTER

Cute?

He ponders, hovering his thumb over her profile. He touches the picture, holding his thumb there...

LESTER (CONT'D)

Eh, punt for now.

...before releasing. No swipe yet.

He returns to Callie's page, looking over the suggested prompts for initiating a conversation.

"If you could wake up anywhere in the world tomorrow morning, where would it be?"

He shrugs to himself before hitting send.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Lester sits at a patio table; across from him is his good friend, TAYLOR, 36, bigger, balder, more comfortable. Taylor has a wedding ring. They play Rummy.

TAYLOR

You keep batting out of your...league? Average? I don't know baseball.

LESTER

Why do I have to settle?

TAYLOR

I absolutely would not call anything "settling."

(CONTINUED)

Lester scoffs. He lays down three 4's, puts a 6 on Taylor's other three 6's, and drops a King on his own three Kings, holding two left.

LESTER  
Ah shit.

TAYLOR  
Screwed again, my friend.

LESTER  
Weeding through the garbage and  
flames is exhausting.

He discards one of his cards.

LESTER (CONT'D)  
Uno.

TAYLOR  
Eh, close enough.

Taylor draws, puts down a Queen on Lester's three Queens, a 7 on his own three 3's, and discards.

TAYLOR  
One day it'll just hit. You might  
not even realize it.

Lester tosses his cards on the table.

LESTER  
I started a garden.

TAYLOR  
A garden?

They get up, Taylor follows Lester around to the compost pile.

EXT. BACKYARD, COMPOST PILE - CONTINUOUS

The pile is hilariously unkempt: weeds, no walls, just a total mishmash.

LESTER  
Well, a compost pile.

TAYLOR  
I feel like that's a little  
different.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER

It'll make good soil, according to my mom.

TAYLOR

First time, eh?

LESTER

At least it's, like, recycling.

TAYLOR

Which is good. Not sure I'd call it a garden though.

LESTER

Fine. Screw you too.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Lester sits at a bar stool. He is dressed up, with colored jeans, a button down shirt partially tucked in, wing tip shoes with no show socks, and his hair at least somewhat combed; perfectly imperfect.

Geraldine walks in and picks a seat at the opposite end of the bar from Lester. She is timid, but pretty in person, with a light dress and flats on.

She pulls out a book to read as the bartender approaches. Lester doesn't notice her as he waits for Callie.

Geraldine orders. She is genuine, sweet, innocent, and caring.

GERALDINE

Hi! Can I do the Two-Hearted please?

The bartender nods and fetches the drink.

Callie walks in and scans the place before finding Lester. She approaches confidently.

CALLIE

Lester! Great name, by the way.

LESTER

Callie! Thank you. Your name is, ah, also great.

She chuckles, sets down her clutch and her phone on the bar, takes a seat, and immediately checks the phone again.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER (CONT'D)  
What's uh, your poison?

CALLIE  
You won't shame me?

LESTER  
Probably not?

CALLIE  
Vodka Red Bull.

LESTER  
Ok maybe a little.

They chuckle together as she checks her phone again.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Lester walks out to the compost pile. He begins picking weeds out before noticing a longer stem, a vine.

He grabs it, feels it, studies it. He places it down.

Pensive, he smells his hand...and is even more intrigued.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lester's phone buzzes with a text message. He checks it, it's from Callie.

*"Hey! Thanks again for the drinks, I think we might not be on the same vibe though :( It was nice meeting you!"*

LESTER  
Well, thanks for doing the dirty work I guess.

He sighs...opens his refrigerator, and pulls out a beer. He retrieves a pint glass and pours.

After settling in, he opens the Hinge app back up.

He checks his own profile. Looking through his own pictures:

Making a catch playing flag football...at least somewhat athletic.

Strumming a guitar...at least it looks like he can play.

On top of a modest mountain after a hike...outdoorsy.

(CONTINUED)

At a wedding, full suit with a pocket square matching the tie...so fashionable.

He looks down at himself. The same grungy gym shorts and a t-shirt from high school.

He returns to the matching page. Scrolling through, mostly rejections.

LESTER

Where are you?

Left swipe, left swipe.

DESIREE shows up, she is Instagram hot and looks almost plastic. He scrolls through the pictures. Each one is clearly staged and professionally done. No way.

LESTER

No way.

He reads her profile:

*"I'm tired of the games, looking for someone real, the true love!"*

He scoffs...

...and swipes right.

It's a match.

No way.

He laughs.

LESTER (CONT'D)

Goddammit.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Lester sits in a lounge chair, sunglasses on.

He opens up the hinge app, finds his match with Desiree.

He picks his prompt. Stick with the old faithful:

*"If you could wake up anywhere in the world tomorrow morning, where would it be?"*

He closes the app and leans back, enjoying the summer breeze.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

Quite relaxed, with music playing, Lester hears his phone buzz.

It's a response from Desiree.

No way.

LESTER

No way.

*"Monaco! Or Saint Tropez! Or maybe anywhere with you :\*)"*

He throws his head back in disbelief, chuckling to himself.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Lester and Taylor sit at the table, holding cards again.

TAYLOR

Get lucky yet?

LESTER

Wouldn't you like to know.

Taylor chuckles as he throws cards down.

LESTER (CONT'D)

It smells like a pepper. Like, like a hot pepper or something.

TAYLOR

(sarcastically)

You're still talking about the vine, right?

Lester throws down cards and gives side-eye.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Sometimes spice can be interesting.

LESTER

I sweat too much.

TAYLOR

So take a break every once in a while.

LESTER

(sarcastically)

You're still talking about the vine, right?

(CONTINUED)

Taylor makes his plays to win the game again.

TAYLOR  
Yes and?

LESTER  
This isn't improv. Here, I'll show  
you my shit pile.

TAYLOR  
That probably sounded better in  
your head.

They get up from the table and walk toward the compost pile  
in the back of Lester's yard.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR  
Still swinging for the fences? I  
looked that one up.

LESTER  
Why shouldn't I?

TAYLOR  
Do you actually have anything in  
common with any of these women? Or  
are you lusting?

LESTER  
I'm not lusting, I'm--

TAYLOR  
If all you want is a conventionally  
beautiful woman on your arm to show  
off to people, you can just, like,  
pay for that.

LESTER  
Why not beautiful AND interesting?

TAYLOR  
Interesting IS beautiful.

They arrive at the compost pile. Lester points out the vine.  
It is longer, thicker, developing further stems and leaves.

LESTER  
Thar she blows.

(CONTINUED)

TAYLOR

That also probably sounded better  
in your head.

Taylor bends down, feels the vine a bit, smells his fingers.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

It is kind of spicy. What have you  
thrown in here?

LESTER

Just about everything. Coffee  
grinds, old vegetables, egg shells.  
Maybe it's an egg vine.

Taylor gives him a very hard side-eye.

TAYLOR

I'm not...no. Do better.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Lester sits at the bar, same spot. He wears tapered golf  
slacks, his wing tips, and a designer polo shirt.

Geraldine walks in. She wears leggings with a t-shirt and  
running shoes. She sits only a couple seats away from him  
this time, unintentionally.

He glances over, notices her, thinks...doesn't quite put the  
pieces together yet.

The bartender approaches her again.

GERALDINE

Hi! Can I do a-

BARTENDER

(stepping on her line)  
Two-Hearted?

GERALDINE

Oh no.

She chuckles nervously, trying to hide herself. The  
bartender laughs as well.

BARTENDER

I can't blame you, it's a good one.

(CONTINUED)

GERALDINE

Thank you, I'm so sorry.

Lester smiles. What a genuine interaction.

Lester speaks lowly, to himself.

LESTER

It's an excellent choice indeed.

Geraldine glances over.

They meet eyes quickly, before he turns away.

Desiree enters the bar and sits next to Lester. She wears an over-sized designer sweatshirt on top of loose jeans and platform sneakers.

DESIREE

Hi!

LESTER

Hiya.

Desiree glances around the interior decoration, unimpressed.

DESIREE

Cool place.

LESTER

It's not the south of France, but it has a quaint charm.

She opens a menu.

DESIREE

Quaint indeed. Gotta start somewhere though.

He nods, unconvincingly.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

So you work in finance?

LESTER

I do. It sucks.

DESIREE

Really?

INT. BAR - LATER

The glasses of both Desiree and Lester are empty.

DESIREE

This was fun, thanks Les!

She gets up and leaves.

LESTER

(to no one in particular)

Yeah it's cool I'll go ahead and  
settle up here.

The bartender walks by.

LESTER

I hate being called 'Les'.

Geraldine stifles laughter. The bartender chuckles.

BARTENDER

Anything else?

LESTER

I'll do a Two-Hearted this time.

He glances over at Geraldine, nose in her book, glass empty,  
her paid tab on the bar, "not eavesdropping at all."

GERALDINE

Excellent choice.

She closes her book and leaves. Lester manages a sly smile.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lester cuts up his vegetables for his salad. Once finished,  
he sits at his counter, forks around the salad, and looks at  
the Hinge app, not opening it.

He looks at it, thinks.

Thinks.

Takes a bite.

Turns off his phone.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

Lester walks toward his compost pile. He sees the vine, it is quite full now.

He examines the leaves.

He sees little yellow flowers.

LESTER

Are you good or are you crap?

Beat.

LESTER (CONT'D)

I guess I could Google you.

Beat.

LESTER (CONT'D)

Who am I talking to?

INT. BAR - EVENING

Lester sits at his usual bar stool, sipping on a beer. More patrons this time. He's dressed down, normal this time. Shorts, three-quarter baseball shirt, colorful tennis shoes.

Geraldine is a few seats down again. Still looking comfortable. A few people are between them, ordering.

As the other patrons leave, he glances over to catch eyes with Geraldine again.

GERALDINE

No first date this time?

Lester chuckles, abashedly.

LESTER

Not this time. Solo night.

GERALDINE

It's lovely, isn't it? I shall leave you alone.

LESTER

Ah thanks.

He turns away before realizing what a bone head he is.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER (CONT'D)  
I mean, no, it's, you don't have  
to...I just meant that...

She chuckles this time, abashedly.

He looks down, swirls his beer.

LESTER (CONT'D)  
Am I that much of a mark?

GERALDINE  
It's not the most difficult thing  
to decipher.

LESTER  
Friggin, Hinge.

GERALDINE  
Ah yes, I used to be on that.

LESTER  
Used to?

GERALDINE  
Yeah, I don't think I've opened  
that app in...months. So much  
garbage. It's too...weedy.

Beat.

LESTER  
You're absolutely right.

GERALDINE  
I'm Geraldine.

LESTER  
I'm Lester.

GERALDINE  
Definitely not "Les."

LESTER  
Correct. Very correct.

GERALDINE  
What about... 'Ter? or 'Ster?

He ponders, before breaking out into a full laugh. She follows suit.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER  
That is actually very hilarious.

GERALDINE  
Oh thank you.

They continue chatting across the empty bar seats.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Lester and Taylor stand around the compost pile. The vine has sprouted tomatoes; smaller, off-sized and off-shaped ones, but Lester's own.

LESTER  
They're tomatoes.

TAYLOR  
Tomatoes?

LESTER  
Tomatoes. Accidental tomatoes.

TAYLOR  
Like, spicy ones?

LESTER  
What? No, just, regular like, grape tomatoes.

TAYLOR  
It definitely smelled spicy.

LESTER  
I don't know, man.

Taylor picks one, rubs it on his shirt a bit, and pops it in his mouth.

LESTER (CONT'D)  
Something healthy out of a pile of shit. Who'd have thought?

TAYLOR  
Little shit pile tomatoes.

Taylor gives an approving nod to the taste.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
So how was...what's her name?  
Persephone?

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER  
You feel good about that one?

TAYLOR  
I can't keep all the models  
straight.

LESTER  
It was...good.

TAYLOR  
Yeah? What'd you talk about?

LESTER  
Umm...

TAYLOR  
Sounds riveting.

LESTER  
I don't know, stuff.

TAYLOR  
How many siblings does she have?

LESTER  
Good question.

TAYLOR  
Where did she grow up?

LESTER  
...planet Earth?

TAYLOR  
Are you sure this is what you want?

LESTER  
I don't know man. Maybe...maybe  
not.

TAYLOR  
Maybe?

LESTER  
I don't know, buddy!

Another beat. Taylor gives him a stern, "parent" look. Like  
"what did we learn?"

LESTER (CONT'D)  
There's been this other girl at the  
bar that reads. And is funny.

(CONTINUED)

TAYLOR  
Someone in the wild! Feels so much  
more natural, no?

Lester fidgets, avoiding eye contact.

LESTER  
I don't know! I don't think I even  
know her name yet.

TAYLOR  
You don't think?

LESTER  
What kind of interrogation is this?  
Jeez.

TAYLOR  
Did you talk to her?

LESTER  
A little bit.

TAYLOR  
Ok, Ok...what's she like?

LESTER  
Different...comfortable.

TAYLOR  
Like you don't have to try so hard.

Lester thinks.

LESTER  
Something like that.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lester opens his phone, scrolls pages, finds the Hinge app.  
He hovers his finger over it.

He ponders...

He opens it, and looks through his own pictures again. He  
sighs heavily, closes the app.

He holds his finger down on the icon. It vibrates.

Delete.

INT. BAR - DAY

Lester sits at his seat. He has a beer. He waits. The bartender comes by.

BARTENDER  
Another date?

LESTER  
Actually not this time.

The bartender smiles and moves on.

Lester twirls his beer glass. He hears the door open behind him.

He turns around...Geraldine walks in.

He smiles.

She smiles.

FADE OUT.