Verona

(A Short Love Story)

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**Synopsis**

Love blossoms on the I-90.

A woman yearns for life outside the tollbooth – and believes that her knight in rusting armour is somewhere in that line of oncoming cars, slowing down.

**Cast**

Theresa - 30

Nick - 30

Cory – 30

**Set/Location**

On the I-90, east of Buffalo. The set only needs to be a rectangular barrier that extends to Theresa’s chest. She stands behind this. At the restaurant that barrier can convert to a stand-up counter with condiments etc.

**Time**

Just now, before jobs like Theresa’s are made obsolete.

**Production History**

Verona (A Short Love Story) was first produced at the Public House Theatre, Chicago in 2015

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**Scene 1 – The Tollbooth**

THERESA is wearing a phone headset and talks to her friend Lauren. All the time she’s talking she’s (miming) handing out toll tickets to approaching cars. It’s a rhythmic movement, almost ballet. It shouldn’t be instantly apparently what the motion is – so any programme description of the locale should be limited to ‘The I-90, west of Buffalo.’

THERESA:No, you don’t have to come. I’m just telling you in case he turns out to be a serial killer, *then* you should call the cops. OK OK, you can sit on the other side of the restaurant and watch but I thought you had to baby-sit your niece. You can’t bring her! She’ll see me and run over. Lauren – seriously, there’s nothing to worry about! Just write this down: his licence is XB457 New York. He’s driving a 2000 Camry, silver. I know I know *(Makes snoring* *sound.)* but a Camry means he’s reliable. Nick. I don’t know his last name. Nick, at least that’s what he said on the phone. Just a sec.

*(Leaning sideways, speaking to a car.)* You pay when you exit, or at the Pennsylvania border.

*(Back.)* Like hello. Tourists. Actually I know a lot about Nick. He comes by every weekday at about 5:10, which means he works in Buffalo. He has an old briefcase on the seat beside him so I’m guessing an office job but not President. White shirt, no tie or jacket. A shirt like those religious guys wear but he’s not. Cuz there’s no Bible in the car and no cross on the dashboard. And he drinks beer - three times he’s had a case in the backseat. But he doesn’t drink a lot cuz it’s just a 12 pack and it’s lite. And a basketball, he’s always got a basketball, that’s good eh. I mean, a hockey stick would suggest aggression. Another question, hold on.

*(To a car.)* The next rest stop is at Verona. Twenty-three miles. Yeah, there’s a McDonalds and a Denny’s. The washrooms are super clean. They just renovated. You’re welcome.

*(Back.)* They always want to know how clean the cans are, like I’m the one checking. So: Nick’s got a nice, sorta shy smile. He always says thanks, I mean, he never completely stops but he always smiles and says thanks as he’s rolling through. So either he’s really well brought up or he’s a total psychopath. But you could say that about me too, cuz I’m the one stalking him.

It was easy. I just handed him his toll ticket and I’d attached a sheet of paper, with my cell number and “Meet me in Verona?” I don’t even think he knew he got the extra paper at first cuz he drove off like usual, then about a hundred yards down the I-90 his brake lights came on a sec then he kept driving so I’m thinking that’s when he realized I handed him a little something extra…

He called that night and we talked a bit. He was pretty guarded. So was I. You have to be careful. I wouldn’t do this if he wasn’t a regular.

So yeah, we’re meeting right after I get off, *don’t worry*. I’m going insane here, Lauren. In-sane. My brain is getting repetitive stress. This is the most interesting thing that has happened to me this whole year. We’re just meeting for coffee. Then go to his car, have wild sex right in the Verona parking lot, get married, have babies, live happily ever after. Or not.

I’ll call you afterwards.

# Scene 2 – Verona rest stop

*NICK is standing with a coffee. He is looking in one direction and making a small warning gesture with his head or hand. THERESA walks up to him from the other direction.*

THERESA: Nick?

NICK: Hi. Hi.

THERESA: I feel like I should do this. *(Hands him a toll ticket.)*

*(They laugh, a bit too much.)*

NICK: OK see ya. *(Pretends to drive off.)*

*(They laugh some more. Things are going well.)*

THERESA: You’re taller than I thought. I’ve only ever seen you sitting down.

NICK: You’re shorter. Usually I’m reaching up to you.

THERESA: Yeah, the booths are built high. We’re supposed to be able to see into cars.

NICK: Are you going to – can I get you a coffee?

THERESA: Thanks, yeah, I need one, thanks. I hardly drink all day because of the peeing issue so yeah/

NICK: What’s the peeing issue?

THERESA: You have to do it in a bottle, while you’re you know, handing out tickets.

NICK: You mean – at the same time?

THERESA: I’ve never done it with you!

NICK: Just coffee – anything else?

THERESA: Naw, coffee’s fine. Thanks.

*(NICK exits. THERESA speed dials Lauren.)*

THERESA: *(Really fast.)* OK we’ve met he’s getting me coffee he’s really tall Lauren and he’s funny but I had to open my big mouth about peeing, I’ll explain later, anyway it’s all fine, now that I’ve met him face to face he’s nice, I mean, he’s not going to set the world on fire but he’s nice. You wouldn’t wake up in the morning and go *(horrified sound).* And yeah, definitely not psychotic, you don’t need to worry if I don’t phone again till tomorrow okay he’s coming back he’s a fast one bye.

NICK: Phone call?

THERESA: Yeah. Oh thanks. Confession, confession, my friend thought you might be a serial interstate killer so I phoned her up to say you probably weren’t. But it’s good to be cautious. I mean, I know a lot about you, what you drink and you like McDonalds shakes cuz they’re in your backseat floor and now that I see you I understand the basketball.

NICK: You know all that from me just driving up?

THERESA: Plus my friend Lauren works for the state cops and ran your licence.

NICK: It’s my Mom’s car.

THERESA: I know.

NICK: How’s my Mom’s driving?

THERESA: There’s an outstanding fine.

NICK: I’ll warn her. So, I uh – I’m cautious too.

THERESA: That’s good. There’s a lot of deeply crazy women out there.

NICK: Theresa, there’s something I have to tell you.

THERESA: Oh?

NICK: My friend Cory -

THERESA: Friend?

NICK: He’s on my team.

THERESA: Team?

NICK: Yeah.

THERESA: OK well damn

NICK: Basketball. He’s over there.

THERESA: The fat guy?

NICK: No, tall guy with the red baseball cap.

THERESA: That’s pretty funny.

NICK: What is.

THERESA: I told Lauren to stay home and you brought a guard. I uh – you can tell Cory he doesn’t really need to stick around.

NICK: He drove me here. My mom needed her car.

THERESA: You live at home?

NICK: Yeah. Is that a problem –

THERESA: *(It is, somewhat.)* No no no a bit

*(Pause.)*

How old are you not that it matters.

NICK: 30. I know. But I lost my job, my benefits ran out, I only just got the job with the city seven months ago

THERESA: You work with Cory?

NICK: Naw he’s a lawyer.

THERESA: Lawyer?

NICK: Paralegal.

THERESA: That’s better.

NICK: It is?

THERESA: They’re more honest than lawyers.

*(Pause. Something isn’t quite working – probably the revelation NICK lives at home.)*

THERESA: It seems kind of dumb I mean, it’s a bit weird having Cory stand over there watching us.

NICK: You don’t mind?

THERESA: Call him over. More the merrier.

*(Rest stop sounds up and move to next scene.)*

# Scene 3 – The Tollbooth

THERESA initially appears to be alone, and is handing out the tickets with the same rhythm.

THERESA: I could lose my job for this. Or not. I mean, we’re union but I’d get a reprimand for sure. Or they’d move me to roadside cleanup, which would be OK in the summer but hot and you have to empty garbage cans at the rest stops and I’m allergic to wasps.

CORY: *(Maybe hand reaches up with bottle.)* Is this what I think it is?

THERESA: It ain’t Gatorade.

CORY: Some of your co-workers saw me coming in here – they won’t report you?

THERESA: No no, my friend Lauren visits sometimes, everyone does it. One women has her kid with her the days she can’t get a sitter. The kid sits on the floor and plays. It’s a short kid and likes small spaces. It’s just the managers that you have to worry about.

CORY: Have you had lots of guys in here?

THERESA: No no, you’re the first.

CORY Can I stand up now?

THERESA: It’s better if you don’t.

CORY: I’m getting a cramp.

THERESA: OK then, but if I see a supervisor coming…

*(CORY stands. The first thing visible is, of course, the red ball cap.)*

CORY: Just give me the word, I’ll hit the floor.

THERESA: Cory.

CORY: Yeah.

THERESA: Nick wasn’t hurt yesterday, was he?

CORY: No. He’s pretty shy actually.

THERESA: He lives with his mother.

CORY: I had to really push him to call you after you gave him that note. I had to stand over him. Actually I had to dial.

THERESA: He might like my friend Lauren. She’s super cautious too. Thing is, you come across more – in command. Which I find attractive in a man.

CORY: Really?

THERESA: So where are we going after my shift?

CORY: You hungry?

THERESA: Starving.

CORY: What do you like?

THERESA: Chinese?

CORY: Sure.

THERESA: That wasn’t a strong ‘sure’. Mexican?

CORY: I love Mexican. Do any of these guys ever hit on you?

THERESA: Naw. They just want their little piece of paper and off they go

CORY: So why’d you pick Nick out of all them?

THERESA: He seemed trustworthy. Why don’t we just go to Verona, grab a burger, go to your place damn I bet you live with your mother too.

CORY: Brother.

THERESA: Uh – I guess that’s OK.

CORY: My brother’s a pig.

THERESA: Then my place. But it’s a dump.

CORY: Can’t be worse than mine.

THERESA: Maybe we should just go to Verona, grab a burger, then keep driving to someplace far far away at the very farthest end of the I-90 or whatever the next one interstate is after that or/

CORY: Actually, I like the sound of your dump.

THERESA: It’s your funeral.

CORY: Can we kiss on that.

THERESA: You want to kiss here?

CORY: Yeah, I do. Do you?

THERESA: Yeah. Yeah, I do.

(They turn and kiss. A beat – then, as they stay kissing, THERESA begins handing out toll vouchers again. The lights fade.)

**The End.**