

Lifequest

A short play

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AGENT
DENISE

Played by either a man or woman.
Woman in her mid twenties.

AGENT is sitting behind a desk. DENISE enters.

AGENT

Welcome to Lifequest. Let me congratulate you on taking this important step in future planning.

DENISE

Thanks. Look, they said this wouldn't take long. I've got to get back to work.

AGENT

It won't take long at all, but once we're done you may not want to go back to work. You may have decided that the path your on at you current job isn't going to lead you on the fastest route to where you'd like to end up.

DENISE

Yeah... Whatever, I have until one.

AGENT

Okay, well let's just go ahead and get started then shall we?

DENISE

Sure.

AGENT

Where are you now?

DENISE

I'm here at Lifequest.

AGENT

Of course you are, but we need to asses where you are in your life so we can asses how to plot your course to where you would like to be. It would help a lot if you could start with the basics. How much money do you earn? Do you own or rent? Are you in a healthy happy relationship? Do you have children? How old are you? What's your Body Mass Index?

DENISE

Okay wait. I'm a receptionist for Grey Ink. I make 38,000 a year with full medical and dental. I rent my apartment and lease my car. I'm 8 pounds heavier than I want to be. I'm 26 years old. I have a degree in communications from a State School. I don't have a boyfriend, but I'm kinda seeing this guy from work. He's lives Philly, but he comes into town once a month or so-

AGENT
Are you monogamous?

DENISE
No.

AGENT
Would you like to be?

DENISE
Not to him. Not now.

AGENT
Is that something you would like in the ideal relationship?

DENISE
I suppose.

AGENT
How about children?

DENISE
I guess so... No... Maybe.

AGENT
I cannot properly asses what route you need to take without the exact destination.

DENISE
Well, I mean if I have a husband who's really great and if I have a job that flexible and I can have a fulltime nanny and a housekeeper then sure I want kids. Otherwise, no.

AGENT
Good, good. Now, we're getting somewhere. Can I ask if you would like to live in a large city apartment, a large house in the suburbs, or a large house in the country?

DENISE
I'm starting to like this.

AGENT
I though you might.

DENISE
Large city apartment. With a driver, and a personal chef, and a personal trainer.

AGENT

Oh, you'll need that trainer ASAP.

PAUSE.

AGENT CONT.

Alright, give me just a minute to calibrate all of this.
(Enters info into a palm pilot.)

DENISE

Look I don't have a lot of time.

AGENT

You can say that again.

DENISE

I mean I have to get going.

AGENT

You sure do. As far as I can tell you'll need ten years to even come close to your final destination. How do you feel about adoption?

DENISE

Why would I need to adopt?

AGENT

Well, if you want healthy children and a low risk pregnancy than I'm afraid you aren't going to have time. It's that nasty biological clock. You see I've plotted a course for you and I have every Turn, Stop, and Breakdown accounted for and there's no time for a natural birth with a low risk to yourself or-

DENISE

Look, I don't need kids. What about the large city apartment with a driver?

AGENT

Oh. That we can do. Once you eliminate children things become a bit more flexible. Now, would you like the fastest route or the one with the least amount of tolls?

DENISE

I don't know.

AGENT

The difference to your destination is approximately seven years.

DENISE

What about a pleasant drive? I mean what about the view? Detours? Sightseeing?

AGENT
(Laughs.)

No, no no. You don't have time for that! If you'd come to Lifequest twenty years ago you would still have needed to put in at least 15 years of uncompromised, on the path, mileage before you could take any uncharted detours.

DENISE

But I've already been on the path. I mean I've done everything I was supposed to do. I went to college, I got good grades, I didn't fuck anybody on the first date, except that one foreign exchange guy, I don't lie, I don't steal, I work hard, I-

AGENT
(Laughs.)

All that will have to change. You'll need to sell out a bit more. You see, you should be grateful. There are lots of people out there who are just dying to sell out, but you need talent and looks to be a sell out and they don't have it. You, my dear have it.

DENISE

You're missing the point. I thought I was doing all the right things. What the hell?

AGENT

Oh sweetheart, you were on the path to mediocrity. You were headed straight for a small house, a divorce, two children you can't afford to send to private schools, an additional fifty pound in the next five years, and no retirement at all whatsoever.

DENISE

Well, fuck that.

AGENT

Exactly. Now, we can't waste any time. We'll have to start the consultation with our dating service this afternoon. In two weeks and four days you'll take the Turn onto Monogamy Road, and in six months you'll Merge habitation. Of course we'll set up an interview for a new job because the one you've got has no Upward Mobility. You'll need to-

DENISE

Wait.

AGENT

I'm sorry there's no time.

DENISE

Stop!

AGENT

You can't stop. There are no scheduled stops or breaks or breakdowns for six years, at which time you'll need a pretty major tune-up, but-

DENISE

I don't want a tune up. I want to go.

AGENT

Go where?

DENISE

I don't know.

AGENT

Then you're just going to wander aimlessly?

DENISE

I've never done that before... and actually compared to the alternatives it sounds kind of nice.

AGENT

But where will you go? What will you do when you decide you want to land somewhere?

DENISE

I'll just stop. Like now.

DENISE exits.