

APPLE PIE

A short play

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APPLE PIE

CHARACTERS

ASSAF, a teacher, Lebanese, 30's to 40's

ABIGAIL, an office manager, 30's to 40's

SETTING

ASSAF's small apartment in a small town in Ohio

TIME

The present

APPLE PIE

ASSAF sits marking papers. The simply furnished room—a table, chairs, a small couch—is as neat and tidy as he is. The BBC World Service’s “Newshour” is on the radio. The doorbell rings. Surprised, ASSAF turns off the radio, gets up and opens the front door. ABIGAIL is standing there, smiling, with a homemade apple pie in her hand.

ASSAF

Can I help you?

ABIGAIL

Hi Assaf.

ASSAF

Gail!

ABIGAIL

Abigail.

ASSAF

Yes, yes, I’m sorry. Abigail. How are you?

ABIGAIL

We met at the Hendersons’. At the Christmas party?

ASSAF

Of course, yes. For a moment, you know...out of context.

ABIGAIL

Can I come in?

ASSAF

Please.

He shows her in, gestures to the couch, and tidies his papers.

Sit down. I’m sorry it’s a bit messy.

ABIGAIL

(Sitting down)

You should see my house. I've got dogs and cockatiels.

ASSAF

Really?

ABIGAIL

And a llama. Well, the llama doesn't come in the house, just spits at me and makes a mess on the porch.

She laughs nervously—a sort of nasal cackle. ASSAF smiles politely, not sure what to make of this.

I hope I'm not disturbing you.

ASSAF

No, no, not at all. I was just marking some papers.

ABIGAIL

Still teaching?

ASSAF

Yes, for better or worse.

ABIGAIL

Better for the students I'm sure.

ASSAF

Can I offer you some tea?

ABIGAIL

No thanks.

ASSAF

Are you sure? It's no trouble.

ABIGAIL

I'm fine. I've been meaning to come by for quite some time. To thank you.

ASSAF

Thank me?

ABIGAIL

For changing my life.

ASSAF

My goodness. How did I do that?

ABIGAIL

Do you remember the conversation we had at the Hendersons?

ASSAF

As I recall, we talked about a number of things.

ABIGAIL

You told me the secret of your apple pie crust.

ASSAF

Ah, yes.

ABIGAIL

Butter! That pie you brought—I couldn't believe how light and flaky the crust was, and you said, it's the butter. That was a revelation to me. All these years I've used Crisco, which is so gross, right, I mean God knows what's in it.....So thanks to you, I threw it all away. No more Crisco! Liberation! Now I just use butter—pure, unadulterated butter.

ASSAF

(Deadpan)

For a better class of heart attack.

ABIGAIL

(Nervously laughing)

Yes! So this is kind of a thank-you gift. Of course, I'm dying to know what you think of the crust. It won't be a patch on yours, but I'd love for you to try it and give me your professional opinion.

ASSAF

You are most kind. I am flattered. But I would rather not, if you don't mind.

ABIGAIL

But you've gotta try it.

ASSAF

I have just finished my dinner.

ABIGAIL

But you haven't had dessert, right?

ASSAF

You know what? I'll try it later.

ABIGAIL

No, see, I want to be there when you take that first taste.

ASSAF

But if I don't like it, I will hurt your feelings.

ABIGAIL

No way. I'm as thick-skinned as an elephant.

ASSAF

Hide.

ABIGAIL

What?

ASSAF

Elephants have hide, not skin.

ABIGAIL

How about that? You learn something every day. All I'm saying is, you can't offend me. It's not possible. Here, try it.

She takes a knife, a fork and a napkin from her bag and hands them to him. Beat.

ASSAF

It looks delicious.

ABIGAIL

Proof of the pudding.

Beat. He dithers.

ASSAF

I'm sorry, I can't do this.

ABIGAIL

Assaf. I've come all the way across town on a bitter cold night to bring you this. Please do me the courtesy of cutting yourself a tiny little sliver and telling me what you think. And be honest, I can handle it.

ASSAF

You think it is easy for a Lebanese immigrant to be honest in America?

ABIGAIL

About pie?

ASSAF

About anything.
(Beat.)

ABIGAIL

Fine. Have it later, or not, if you don't...

ASSAF

I'm sorry, truly, I don't mean to be rude.

ABIGAIL

(Rising to go)
I shouldn't have come, barging in on you like this, out of the blue.

ASSAF

No, no, I'm glad you came.

ABIGAIL

You are?

ASSAF

It's very kind. A kind gesture. Please.
(He invites her to sit back down. She does.)
You know, I find it ironic, that phrase, "as American as apple pie."

ABIGAIL

Why's that?

ASSAF

It sounds like Americans invented it.

ABIGAIL

Well we did, didn't we?

ASSAF

Pies and apples have been around a long time. Today, America produces more apples than any country in the world, but the Romans grew them in Europe two thousand years ago. And if you've ever tasted a good Fuji from New Zealand, well...

ABIGAIL

But we are Number One in apples.

ASSAF

Yes, America is Number One in apples.

ABIGAIL

You must think we boast a lot.

ASSAF

America is a young country. Humility comes with age.

ABIGAIL

You don't like it here.

ASSAF

I didn't say that.

ABIGAIL

You're critical. I can feel it.

ASSAF

And that means I don't like it?

ABIGAIL

Why are you here? If you don't mind me asking.

ASSAF

No, it's a fair question. Why is a Lebanese with a PhD in philosophy teaching social studies at a community college out here in the boonies of Ohio? And how come he makes such tasty apple pies?

ABIGAIL

So what's the answer?

ASSAF

You tell me.

ABIGAIL

I've no idea.

ASSAF

Guess.

ABIGAIL

O-kay. Let's see. You're a political refugee and you needed a job. And as an Arab person, you had a hard time finding one, in academia, anyway. So you ended up here where they can't afford to be too picky.

ASSAF

And my expertise in apple pies?

ABIGAIL

In your student days, you worked at an American diner in Beirut.

(ASSAF nods)

Really?

ASSAF

Close enough.

ABIGAIL

There is an American diner in Beirut?

ASSAF

Beirut has everything. Even McDonald's.

ABIGAIL

They've got McDonald's in Beirut?

ASSAF

It's American as apple pie. Let me ask you something.

ABIGAIL

Sure.

ASSAF

Why have you come to see me?

ABIGAIL

I liked you. When we met at the party.

ASSAF

That was ten months ago.

ABIGAIL

I'm divorced now.

ASSAF

I see.

Will you go out with me?
ABIGAIL

On a date?
ASSAF

Yes.
ABIGAIL

You flatter me again.
ASSAF

Will you?
ABIGAIL

You know, if there's one thing I've learned since I came to this country, it is that Americans don't believe in foreplay.
ASSAF

Try me.
ABIGAIL

Metaphorically speaking.
ASSAF

Will you go out with me?
ABIGAIL

I don't think it's a good idea.
ASSAF

You're not married and you're not attached. I checked you out.
ABIGAIL

You and Homeland Security.
ASSAF

No expectations—just a chance to get to know each other.
ABIGAIL
(Beat.)
What do you say? There's that little Mideast restaurant on Harrison Street.

It's run by Romanians.
ASSAF

ABIGAIL

Romanians?

ASSAF

Falafel from a packet. Anyone can do it.

ABIGAIL

Then you pick. I'm easy, I like all kinds of ethnic food.

ASSAF

Abigail, it's a very nice offer. Let me think about it.

ABIGAIL

What's there to think about? Okay, I'm no brainiac, you don't need a huge IQ to manage an insurance office, but I'm well-read, I dress up good, and I laugh easy. And we'd have fun. Something tells me you could use a little fun.

ASSAF

It would not be good to get involved with me.

ABIGAIL

Involved? I'm talking about the early bird special and dessert at the Dairy Queen.

ASSAF

You know how people look at me?

ABIGAIL

Yeah, I know.

ASSAF

You haven't heard some of the messages I get on my answering machine.

ABIGAIL

I can imagine.

ASSAF

No. You can't.

ABIGAIL

You think I haven't thought about that?

ASSAF

Americans always want to try something new.

ABIGAIL

Is that what you think? That you're exotic to me? Look, you are a nice, sensitive, gentle man and I would like to get to know you. That's all.

ASSAF

I'm sorry. I need a little time.

ABIGAIL

Fine, I'm not going anywhere.

ASSAF

(Shaking her hand)

It was very nice of you to come.

ABIGAIL

I'll call you.

ASSAF

No, I will call you. Please?

ABIGAIL

Of course. Enjoy your pie. I'll let myself out.

ASSAF

Goodbye. And thank you. Thank you for coming.

She exits. ASSAF sits back and admires the pie. He picks up the knife and cuts a slice. ABIGAIL reappears at the doorway, watching. Oblivious to her presence, he takes a bite of the pie and savors it.

ABIGAIL

So what do you think?

ASSAF

(Surprised, looking round)

It's perfect.

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY.

