

TURNING POINTS  
A TEN-MINUTE PLAY  
BY  
ADA CHENG

BREAKDOWN OF CHARACTERS:

YASMIN	Female, 20s/30s/40s, any race/ethnicity
DELAN	Male, 20s/30s/40s, any race/ethnicity
ANIL	Male, 20s/30s/40s, any race/ethnicity
PLAYWRIGHT	20s/30s/40s, any gender, any race/ethnicity

Setting: Chicago Amtrak Waiting Room

Time: Present

*(DELAN stands in the middle of the waiting room at the Chicago Amtrak station. He appears to be waiting for someone when Yasmin's voice talking in the background.)*

YASMIN

*(Distressed voice in the background)* How long have you been waiting? .. Wait!...Wait!

*(After a few seconds of silence, YASMIN appears from the backstage and walks toward DELAN. They embrace when they see each other.)*

DELAN

Finally.

YASMIN

Finally.

DELAN

I feel like I've known you forever.

YASMIN

I almost didn't recognize you.

DELAN

You're beautiful.... The photos you sent me didn't do you justice.

YASMIN

Thank you.

DELAN

Really.

YASMIN

I'm flattered.

DELAN

Being virtual didn't help.

YASMIN

I've had a tough time recognizing people in person.

DELAN

Seriously.... You didn't want to impress me?

YASMIN

What do you mean?

DELAN

Why those photos without makeup? In workout clothing?

YASMIN

They were appropriate when I first came to you for training.... I didn't know what I wanted.

DELAN

Now you do?

*(DELAN leads YASMIN to the chairs at the corner of the waiting room and they sit side by side each other.)*

You want more?

YASMIN

I guess.... After two years.... You aren't just a trainer to me anymore.

DELAN

I'm ready to explore.... Any possibilities.... Anything.

YASMIN

I see.

DELAN

Aren't you ready?

YASMIN

I'm not as adventurous. *(Sigh)* Unfinished business.

DELAN

You got to start somewhere.

YASMIN

Too fast.

DELAN

To leave the past or to move forward with the future?

YASMIN

Maybe both.

DELAN

I'm not slowing down.... It's been too long.

YASMIN

I love your optimism.

DELAN

I know what I want.... YOU.

YASMIN

I'm not like that.... Don't you need to talk it over with someone?

*(YASMIN moves to the opposite side and faces DELAN.)*

DELAN

We're talking.... so let's talk.

YASMIN

Given the circumstances.

DELAN

*(Visibly hurt)* Given the circumstances, I only want to go forward.... Don't you?

YASMIN

I'm not sure yet.... It's the timing.

DELAN

Arh.... You still can't make up your mind after two years ... What's the problem?

YASMIN

It's not just about us. There're other things to consider.

DELAN

Who cares. I know what's between us is good.

YASMIN

Nothing is holding you back?

DELAN

What's holding you back anyway? *(Silence)* Or WHO?

YASMIN

No one.... Everyone.

DELAN

C'mon. You know the answer to your future.... Our future.

YASMIN

You can't just pick up and go.... How do you know the future?

DELAN

I don't. Neither do you. There's no guarantee.... That's the optimist in me.

YASMIN

I'm not brave like you.

DELAN

The future is how you make it.... Give yourself some credit. You've done it.

YASMIN

I wish I could just jump.

DELAN

What's the worst that can happen? .. Getting stuck where you're at. That's the worst.... You've done it before, moving to this city.

YASMIN

The grass is always greener on the other side.... You might regret about us later.

DELAN

The point is: you're never going to have anything better if you stay put. As simple as that.

YASMIN

What if we aren't happy? What if-

DELAN

So what? You got to take risks.

YASMIN

I admire that. I'm always more pragmatic.

DELAN

Once you take that first step, you'll be fine.... Bravery is a practice. You already know how to do it.

YASMIN

Obligations pull me back.

DELAN

I'm on the same boat. But I want to pack up and leave.... With you.

YASMIN

People gossip. I have a huge family.

DELAN

You need to stop worrying about what other people say.

YASMIN

It'll bring so much shame to them if I choose to move with you. I'll be too embarrassed to see them again.

DELAN

Those feelings are temporary. They come and go. Trust me.

YASMIN

What if they don't want to see me again?

DELAN

They'll forgive you.... Eventually.

YASMIN

They're going to hate me. I don't like it when people hate me.

DELAN

Either they'll hate you or you'll hate yourself. Which one is worse?

YASMIN

You're right.... I'm already hating myself.

DELAN

You're going to have a different family. We'll make a good family. A better one.... In another place where you can be free and start fresh.

YASMIN

They call me almost every day. Guilt trip. Sayin I abandoned them by moving here. I feel like I'll be abandoning them again.

DELAN

We're in this together.... We'll get through this together.

YASMIN

I can tell this is not your first time.

DELAN

It's not. I give people the benefit of the doubt. I decide on the relationship after a year or two. I move on most of the time. Used to it now.

YASMIN

I stick to it.... I blame myself when things don't work out.... Like I'm not good enough. Like I haven't tried hard enough.

DELAN

The social conditioning. Women blame themselves. I see that all the time.

YASMIN

Like it's my fault Anil wasn't happy. My fault I didn't want to be a part anymore. My fault we're divorced. MY FAULT MY FAULT MY FAULT.

DELAN

So sorry... It's on them too if you don't want to be a part.... It's your choice.

YASMIN

It's not as simple.... My family and his family keep pressuring me to go back to him. They don't want me to discuss my divorce publicly. They say I embarrass them.

DELAN

Can you stop talking to them? I mean, just for a while.

YASMIN

He's still calling me.

DELAN

That's why we need to leave. You got to cut them off completely. For now.

YASMIN

I want to.... I wish they understood why I wanted a divorce. All the control.... like I'm still his property.

DELAN

At some point you need to stop explaining yourself. You need to move on and live your life.

YASMIN

It's been two years.... I still feel like I'm wedded to him, to them, to their opinions, to their feelings of shame and embarrassment.... To his insecurity and rage.

DELAN

Nobody will know us where we're going. You need that. We both need that.

YASMIN

*(Deep sigh)* I'm ready.... Next week right?

DELAN

Yes. Same day. Same time.

YASMIN

I'll be careful.... Anil used to show up at my apartment in Houston without notice. That's why I moved here.

DELAN

Be very careful, OK? I'll be here waiting. 10am train leading for Seattle and then we'll go to Vancouver from there.

YASMIN

Are you sure you can just uproot everything for me?

DELAN

I train people virtually. I can be anywhere.

YASMIN

How are we going to survive in Canada?

DELAN

We'll figure it out. I've done this before. Don't worry.

YASMIN

OK. I'll meet you here next week. That should give me enough time to take care of everything.

*(YASMIN moves to sit by DELAN.)*

DELAN

Just be careful.

YASMIN

I've been.

DELAN

Do you know where he is? Does he know where you live?

YASMIN

Back home in Houston.... My family know I'm in Chicago. I didn't share my address.



DELAN

Good. See you next week.

*(DELAN and YASMIN embrace each other and bid farewell. They both leave the stage. After a few seconds, DELAN reappears with a suitcase and again stands in the middle of the waiting room. He appears to be waiting for someone when Yasmin's voice talking in the background.)*

YASMIN

*(Distressed voice in the background)* What are you doing here?... How long have you been waiting?

ANIL

*(Angry Voice in the background)* To take you home.

YASMIN

*(Voice in the background)* I'm not going back. We're divorced. Please, this got to stop. You need to move on.

ANIL

*(Voice in the background)* Today's the day. Either you go home with me or-

YASMIN

*(Voice in the background)* Wait!.... Wait!.... Where did you get that?

ANIL

*(Voice in the background)* Sorry.... I love you.

YASMIN

*(Voice in the background)* No No.... DON'T DON'T.... *(Two loud gun shots)*

*(After a moment of silence, THE PLAYWRIGHT appears on stage and speaks to the audience.)*

PLAYWRIGHT

In playwrighting, they say you got to offer the audience some hope at the end. You don't want a tragic ending, they say. Where is the hope, they ask? I've gotten rejections because the world I depict is too grim. Yet real lives don't always have happy endings. This story, similar to the many stories about domestic violence, took place in real lives. Plays don't always mirror real lives. We make choices in playwrighting to offer some hope but sometimes real people don't end up having a second chance in life.

Justice shouldn't be resurrected solely on paper by playwrights. Yet I'll do that here. Here is another version. A sanitized one for the theater.

*(THE PLAYWRIGHT leaves the stage as YASMIN appears on stage running with a suitcase to join DELAN, who is about to leave the waiting room.)*

YASMIN

*(Huffing and puffing)* How long have you been waiting? Wait!.... Wait!....

DELAN

Finally.

YASMIN

So sorry.

DELAN

I thought you were not coming.

YASMIN

I had to travel all the way from the suburbs.

DELAN

Oh!

YASMIN

Anil left Houston to come here. My sister decided to call the police when she found out.

DELAN

He showed up this morning?

YASMIN

Yesterday.... I left my place in a hurry when she called me a couple of days ago. He brought a gun with him. I got a restraining order so they're detaining him for now.

DELAN

Your family turned around?

YASMIN

My sister did.... My parents haven't.

DELAN

I'm glad she changed her mind.

YASMIN

She knew it could be dangerous for me.... She didn't want to take any chances.

DELAN

So sorry about your parents.

YASMIN

Nothing I can do at this point. Us leaving together is the right thing to do.

DELAN

The train's here.... You got everything?

YASMIN

Let's go. I'm ready-

DELAN

For our future.

*(DELAN and YASMIN embrace each other for a moment before they turn around and walk back holding hands for the train.)*

BLACKOUT