

The Automat Where Boys Meet Boys

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The Automat Where Boys Meet Boys

by [ficdis](#)

Summary

Theater-inspired one shot: An anonymous hookup in the approaching future skids off the rails, once feelings begin to flicker.

Notes

Inspired by the opening scene at the automat in playwright Douglas Carter Beane's *The Nance*, a play set in 1930s New York that played on Broadway in 2013. Also inspired by realist painter Edward Hopper's *Automat*, first displayed on Valentine's Day 1927 in New York.

(Each fic in this series is inspired by a play or musical and may be read standalone. Unbetaed.)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Sometime in the Approaching Future

It's Tuesday, it's late, and it's cold. Timmy saunters into the twenty-four-hour automat at the intersection of west fourth and west eleventh streets in Greenwich Village. This automat is a

curious place. On the surface, it looks like a café from an Edward Hopper painting, but around the perimeter, it's as modern as can be—contactless, cashless and employee-less. Behind the scenes, machines continuously churn out a never-ending supply of drinks, savory foods, and decadent sweets for hungry New Yorkers. At the end of the day however, this automat confuses many; it's like the place doesn't quite know what dawn it wants to belong—yesterday, today or tomorrow.

Timmy scopes out the automat, sees that the place is empty, and he's disappointed. He had a rough day at the theater, and, at this late hour, was hoping that he could rely on the place to run into someone interesting, preferably a hot heteroflexible out of town, who he can mess around with for the next few hours. He claims a Carrera marble table in the center of the automat and drapes his backpack on the accompanying oak café chair. He saunters over to the drink center, pulls out his mobile assistant from his back pocket and requests a double decaffeinated cortado. Seconds later, a glass tray emerges from the wall with freshly made coffee. He picks it up, saunters back to his table, and sets the coffee down. He doesn't bother taking off his jacket before he flops down. Annoyed, he removes his bag, plops it down on the empty chair next to him, looks around the automat once again, and lets out a frustrated sigh.

I guess you're going home alone tonight, he thinks to himself. *Oh well.*

Timmy picks up the cortado; he inhales it deeply and takes a sip, letting out an appreciative *aaah*. He pulls out his mobile assistant again, and it's not long before he's immersed in a litany of messages, pouring through them rapidly and firing off responses. He barely notices when the automat's front door opens and slowly closes with a tired creak. And it's not until he feels the brief nip of the chilly night air on his neck that he finally looks up to see a man standing at the door, staring at him, wide-eyed.

Timmy beholds the man like he's an apparition; there is an endlessness and timelessness about him that entrances Timmy for an unstable minute. When the man clears his throat, Timmy returns to himself and realizes that the man is very real and they're alone at the automat, the one where four intersects eleven, the one where boys are known to go and meet other boys at this hour.

Mighty Aphrodite! Timmy thinks to himself, unable to pull his eyes away. *Oh my.*

The man glances down at Timmy's coffee. Timmy sits back, watches as he makes his way over to the drink center and requests an espresso for himself. The man spins around. Timmy cocks his head and readily meets the man's eyes in a steady gaze. The man is quintessentially and undeniably handsome—perfect features, bright eyes and naturally elegant. Without breaking eye contact, Timmy reaches over, picks up his backpack, and lets it free fall unceremoniously to the floor with a *clunk*.

The man walks over to Timmy. "May I sit with you?" he asks.

"You know you can," Timmy points out with a clipped nod.

"Okay then." The man puts down his cup, opens up his trench coat, tugs the empty chair out and sits down. He proffers his hand and begins to introduce himself. "I'm—."

But Timmy cuts him off. "Ah, passport," Timmy demands. This is the moment when care must be exercised; Timmy can't lose himself...just yet.

These are not those days, he reminds himself.

"Yes, of course."

Timmy holds up his mobile assistant. The man leans his face to the device so that Timmy can scan his iris. After the man pulls away, Timmy looks at the screen and smiles. He picks up the cortado, gulps what's left of it with a loud swallow, flings the backpack over his shoulder and leaps up.

“Let's go!”

The man throws back his espresso and scrambles to his feet. “Wait,” he says, holding up *his* mobile assistant. In a flurry, Timmy snatches the device from the man's hands, scans his own iris, tosses the device back to the man, heads to the door, and exits the automat. The man scrambles after Timmy until they finally stop at an e-moped station, a block away from the automat. Timmy unlocks an electric moped using his mobile assistant and clicks the ultraviolet rapid scan button on the helmet case at the rear of the moped.

“I can request an auto, you know,” the man says.

“No autos allowed where we're going; it's a semi-green zone.”

“And where are we going, might I ask?” The man is obviously tickled by Timmy but doesn't hide the snark in his voice.

“Well, the exclusive Hell's Kitchen section of Manhattan, of course.” Timmy smirks as he says this out loud.

“I see...”

A beep goes off signaling that the scan is complete. Timmy pops open the helmet case, tosses the first one to the man and places the second one over his head. He drops his backpack in the case and then jumps on the moped and fires it up.

“And how are we both supposed to fit on that thing together. Have you seen me?” the man asks, but despite the question, the man has already begun to place the helmet over his dusty blond hair.

“I guess you're going to have to get close, handsome,” Timmy says. And that's exactly what the man does; he mounts the moped and nestles to its driver.

“I knew that you would be something else,” the man whispers.

They head west on the moped. When they arrive on tenth avenue, they wait in silence at a red light. When the light changes to green, Timmy plunges the moped forward. The man slams into Timmy's back, Timmy laughs wickedly, and the man shakes his head. The green lights are perfectly timed from this moment on; for the next fifteen minutes, they zip through the chilly night and do not stop again until they arrive at the e-moped station in Timmy's neighborhood. Timmy checks the moped in with his mobile assistant. He retrieves his backpack and returns the helmets to their case.

“Follow me,” Timmy commands and struts away.

“Bossy,” the man jabs back, but scrambles to keep up with him.

A quick stroll later, they arrive at Timmy's building, an old pre-war brick low rise, a dying breed in a modern city.

“A walk-up,” the man observes, looking up at the metal fire escapes lining the front of the building.

“Yeah, one of the few remaining, they haven't demolished it yet but it's just a matter of time,” Timmy says, then he looks up at the man, quirks a brow and wryly asks, “Something wrong with your legs?”

“There's nothing wrong with my damn legs, smart aleck,” the man says playfully.

“Good, because you're going to be working those knees tonight.” Timmy smirks. “By the way, you talk to your mother with that sassy mouth?”

“Don't worry about my knees and why don't we wait and see what you have to say after you feel what this mouth can do to you.” It's the man's turn to smirk.

They enter the pre war. At the bottom of the elaborate wooden staircase, Timmy holds on to the newel post and waves the man ahead with a theatrical flourish of his hand.

“Up to the top floor handsome.”

They quickly head up the stairs, the man easily leaping over two and three steps at a time, with Timmy bouncing in the rear. As they approach the second landing, Timmy can't resist any longer and playfully slaps the man's backside.

“Hey!” the man exclaims, scurrying forward.

When they reach the apartment, Timmy opens the door and flips the lights on. He helps the man out of his trench coat and hangs it up along with his own on a coat rack near the entrance. The man is dressed in a grey pinstripe suit, blue shirt, aubergine colored tie, and freshly polished shoes. He wears the business suit well and looks amazing in it. Timmy is dressed casually in a hoodie, t-shirt and fitted black jeans. They scan and cleanse their hands using a lamp next to the coat rack, kick off their shoes and move into the cozy but loft-like apartment.

“So, you're a suit,” Timmy observes. How had he not noticed before?

“What, you have something against corporate types?” the man asks.

“Nah, but I would prefer to see you out of that thing.”

Timmy licks his lips; he truly wants nothing more than to see the man out of the suit. He's waited long enough. He slides over to him, removes his tie, unbuttons his shirt, and lets them slide carelessly to the hardwood floor along with the jacket. When he's about to slide the man's undershirt up, Timmy's mobile assistant begins to buzz, and each second that Timmy does not answer the incoming call, the buzz progressively loudens.

“Sound urgent,” the man says.

Timmy reluctantly pulls out the device but straightens up when he sees who's calling. “Sorry, I have to take this,” he says. Timmy points the man to the sofa in the living area. “Please make yourself comfortable,” he politely tells the man, who scoops up his clothing off the floor, makes his way over to the sofa, and relaxes into its plush cushions. He watches, as Timmy moves about the apartment on his call.

“Chauncey, tell me you've taken care of everything,” Timmy says excitedly as he places and adjusts a bud in his right ear and makes his way to the kitchen. “So, he's committed, are you certain?” He says as he opens up the refrigerator and pulls out a bottle of water. “And when can we resume rehearsals?” He asks as he walks over to the sofa and hands the glassed bottle to the man. “You're the best Chauncey. Thank you!” Timmy removes the ear bud and rests it along with his

mobile assistant on the coffee table. He twirls around and falls into the sofa next to the man and hisses out an excited *yes*.

“Sounds like something just worked out well for you,” the man turns to Timmy and says.

“Yeah, my play is back on track,” Timmy shares, before he can stop himself.

“Play?”

Timmy hesitates for a beat but then goes on to say, “Yes, I’m adapting and directing a play about the story of Damon and Pythias.”

The man looks even more charmed with Timmy by this bit of news. “Damon and Pythias, the Greek tale of friendship, one of my favorites.” He pauses and then asks, “What made you write about them...today?”

Timmy shrugs. “That’s what I do, adapt classics, unearth forgotten plays from yesteryear, and try vehemently to reintroduce them to today’s dying audience.” He shrugs again and adds softly, “I love it, plus this town can use more stories of friendship these days.” He pauses, then asks, “Wait a sec, how do *you* know the story of Damon and Pythias?” Timmy knows that he shouldn’t get too personal with the man, that he shouldn’t risk any sort of attachment. But before he knows it, he’s asking the question.

“What, suits don’t read literature?” The man chuckles and then adds proudly, “I’ll have you know that my undergraduate degree is in the Classics. Thank you very much.”

“Then how did you become a suit?” The man has piqued Timmy’s interest way too much.

“Went on to law school after undergrad, to pretty much please my father, he made it clear that he worked too hard and he wanted a *have*, not a *have-not* son.”

Timmy furrows his brow. He can’t imagine spending his life doing something he doesn’t love. This forces him to ask, “And you practice law now; do you like it?”

“I didn’t like it for a long while, but I’ve finally found an area that’s...well, fulfilling. That’s why I’m relocating here, from upstate, from the Buffalo area. I’m joining a firm, specializing in human rights and civil liberties such as free speech. I went through pre-employment screening and filled out the paperwork earlier today. I start in a couple of weeks, and I’m staying over at the hotel in Nomad until I move into my new place.”

Timmy is sorry he asked; this is way more than he wants to know about the man.

He leaps up from the sofa and flails his long toned arms about. “*STOP! I don’t want to hear any more.*”

The man places the bottle of water on the coffee table; he looks at Timmy confused. “What’s wrong? What did I do?” he asks.

“Too much information. I can’t get involved with a straight guy, especially someone local, been through that before, can’t do it again.”

Timmy drops to his knees and hurriedly begins to undo the man’s belt. “Let’s have some fun,” he says, as he fusses with the belt’s buckle.

But the man grips both of Timmy’s wrists firmly, preventing him from fiddling with the belt any

longer. “What makes you think I’m straight?” he asks.

“Isn’t that why you were at the automat? You’re probably married and trying to figure *things* out. Don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talking about. If not, you would be using AI or VR like everyone else.”

“I’m getting a divorce, the proceedings are almost done,” the man confesses, as he releases Timmy’s wrists from his grip. “But I’m not trying to figure anything out. Not anymore. I know *exactly* what I like and want.”

Timmy sits back on his knees. How did this night skid off the rails like this? He knows he needs to end it.

There can’t be any attachment.

“So, why were *you* at the automat? Do you have some sort of straight kink of something?” the man asks.

Timmy sighs. “Look, I just needed to unwind. My project was falling apart. We had issues with one of the leads. Rehearsals have been slipping, which means we probably won’t make our opening schedule. All this while I’m still trying to tighten the script. I just needed to unwind. The hotels around town send men like you to that automat all the time. As long as everyone is clean, it’s easy...no strings attached.”

Timmy looks up at the man sitting before him. Even in his plain white undershirt and tousled hair, he looks like he’s been sent by the gods. For a brief moment, Timmy wonders what it would be like to wake up next to him, but quickly shakes off the intrusive thought. He can’t go through that again.

Cruel Aphrodite!

Timmy gets up. “Listen, you should go. You can request one of those autonomous cars three blocks over near the square. It’s a straight walk east.”

“I don’t want to go,” the man says defiantly. He stands up and runs his hands through his hair. “It sounds like your project is looking up. Why can’t we have a good time, if that’s what you’re looking for.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea. It’s really late,” Timmy says and steps back, putting distance between them.

The man silently grabs his clothing from the arm of the sofa. He puts the shirt on, leaving it unbuttoned and drapes the tie around his neck. He starts to walk to the door but pauses, then spins around swiftly on his heels, and with the words tumbling from his clenched jaws says, “A doorman at The Nomad told me about that automat. I stood outside that place for over an hour waiting for someone like you. I watched men come and go. No one, not one, interested me, that is, until you turned the corner, all cocky, hair wild from the wind. I waited for *you*...”

Timmy rubs the back of his neck; he can feel the tension beginning to grow there.

Why is he so conflicted?

And who is this man?

This man from Buffalo...this man who knows the Classics...this man who wants to fight for stuff

like civil liberties...this man who says he waited for him...

Timmy tries to pull himself together. “Let me just get your coat,” he says, with a resigned pout, as he walks to the door. The man follows him. He puts on his jacket and shoes and Timmy politely helps him into his trench coat. Timmy opens the door and the man steps over the threshold while Timmy keeps the door open with the curve of his lean hips.

“It’s not just about friendship, you know, it’s about true love and devotion,” the man says.

“What?” Timmy tilts his head and asks; he’s confused by the man’s words.

“The story of Damon and Pythias, the one you’re adapting.”

Timmy looks at the man; a cloud of fuzziness begins to swell in his skull, as they stand in the doorway in charged silence.

The man stares back at Timmy, unmoving and moon-eyed. And then as if it’s now or never, he reaches out and gently touches. He tucks a stray lock of brown hair behind Timmy’s ear. “Feels even softer than I thought it would,” the man whispers. He moves his large hand to cup Timmy’s cheek. Timmy grabs the man’s wrist, but doesn’t push the hand away. He likes the tingling feel of its warmth and strength on his face.

The fuzziness begins to loosen.

Timmy licks his lips and the man drags his thumb across his lower lip, wiping it dry. “So so soft,” the man whispers again. The man leans over and kisses Timmy’s lips. He takes his time, moving the sensitive tip of his tongue over its soft plains. When Timmy whimpers and provides a small opening, the man breaches it; this is what he’s wanted all night, perhaps even longer than that. Their first kiss deepens, and when it comes to an end, they rest their heated foreheads together. Timmy’s pulse is racing, but he keeps his forehead glued to the man’s head until it stabilizes and the tension he felt before has lifted. When he finally pulls back, his head is clearer, his guard is down, and he exhales the words that are now stirring within him, “I don’t want you to go.”

End Notes

In an interview, Douglas Carter Beane said he was inspired to write *The Nance* after reading *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* by George Chauncey. Because of this, he named the main character Chauncey after the author. The Hell’s Kitchen line in this fic is from the play.

Thank you for reading!

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