

A script from



“Love Accelerated”

by

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SYNOPSIS

It's Valentine's Day! And if 90 minutes + 12 marriage candidates = 1 perfect match, Gabrielle and Jack have a date with destiny... unless Love is patient.

God has a plan for the future, but He also has a plan for the present. Don't miss today because you're too focused on hoping for tomorrow.

A fast-paced play (20-25 min) in three acts. Designed with dessert and/or discussion breaks in mind, this is perfect for a youth group or church "date-night" event.

CAST

Gabrielle: Female; driven and precise

Jack: Male; laid back, accommodating, and mildly sarcastic

Marilynn: Female, 40's; head of BlinkMingle. Event coordinator

Elliot: Male; charming British professor

Florence: Female, 70's – 80's; family-centered

Archie: Male; Nervous and awkward

Juniper: Female; eccentric, a stereotypical "Flower child"

Rhonda: Female; therapist with repressed emotions

Trent: Male; avid hunter/woodsman

Lenny: Male; unmotivated, lives "at home" with parents

Jill: Female; paranoid and on the defense

Eric: Male; self-absorbed and fast-talking

Allie: Female; raw-garlic-eater who is oblivious to its effect on others

SET

Should be minimal.

4 chairs,

2 small tables for conversations

1 registration table

Podium

Bell

Clipboard or tablet for event coordinator (Marilynn)

Several notepads, pens and pencils (to be laid out on table)

Several nametags (or labels with names pre-written)

Folder (for Gabrielle)

Pre-written list (for Gabrielle)

Index card (recipe—for Florence)

Wallet with tri-fold photo holder (should be as long as possible)

Cell phone

Tissues (pocket-sized)

"Garlic"- we recommend using a peeled apple cut in the approximate shape/size of garlic cloves.

HOW

This is a fast-paced script, and the parenthetical "beat" is used frequently. Here, the word "(beat)", particularly in the middle of a line, refers to an immediate change in the actor's motivation or objective.

WHEN

Present Day, Valentine's Night

AT

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Act 1

Gabrielle enters and stands by what appears to be a registration table. She is wearing a dress, carrying a folder, and appears to be looking for someone. Suddenly she notices **Jack** in blue jeans and an old t-shirt.

Gabrielle: Oh, great, you made it!

Jack: Wow. You look nice.

Gabrielle: Thank you. You look...umm, ready. Hey, thanks again for doing this for me.

Jack: Happy to help. I think.

Gabrielle: Can you believe the parking lot? Unbelievable. You'd think they would have realized, a room full of singles means twice the cars. I'll mention that if they have one of those surveys at the end. So, you looking forward to this?

Jack: Sure. Twelve setups with twelve strangers in a stuffy church fellowship hall-- what better way to spend Valentine's Day?

Gabrielle: Oh, come on! This is going to be great. Seriously. They've got this down to a science. Most people leave with three or more matches. That means at LEAST twenty-five percent of these "setups" are going to be positive encounters, and possible marriage candidates.

*Picks up her name tag and **Jack's** name tag from the registration table. She also picks up a notepad.*

Gabrielle: Here, have a name tag.

Jack: *(Hands up in defense)* Whoa, slow down there. I'm just here to "even the numbers", remember? Because Mark dropped out?

Gabrielle: I know. I can't believe he bailed on me. The minute I find something my brother and I can do together, he goes and meets someone.

Jack: The nerve.

Gabrielle: The point is, just because you're here as a favor to ME doesn't mean it's going to be a wasted night for YOU. Three matches, Jack. Three matches.

Jack: One of which is guaranteed to be the love of my life.

Gabrielle: *(Missing the sarcasm)* No guarantees. Just statistics.

Enter **Marilynn**, the event facilitator, with clipboard or tablet; other participants have entered during the previous few lines.

Marilynn: (*Brightly*) Are we all signed in and ready to start? (*Checking her information and their name tags*) Then I am delighted to welcome you to "Christian BlinkMingle"! Right this way!

Jack: Did she just say "Blink-Mingle?" As in, don't blink or you'll miss your future spouse?

Gabrielle: As in, get the whole dating hassle done within a blink and stop wasting your time.

Jack: How is a date wasted time? As in, a real date. The kind with food. I'm starving.

Gabrielle: The kind *with food* is not efficient. Case in point: If I was going to go out with twelve different men on twelve different Fridays, assuming three hours per night, that's thirty-six hours, compared to the ninety minutes we'll be spending tonight... (*as if doing the math in her head*) That's 'x' over 100 divided by-

Jack: Solve for X and the answer is pizza. Why isn't there food here? Every date should include food.

Gabrielle: With BlinkMingle, we are spending *one twenty-fourth* of the amount of time we'd be spending in the conventional dating model. That's four percent, Jack. Four percent.

Jack: Well, when you put it THAT way--

Gabrielle: It's simple math.

Jack: I mean, seriously. They ought to have a sign above the door: "Clearance! All wives 96% off!"

Gabrielle: Funny. Real funny. Let's see who's laughing at the end of the night.

Marilynn: All right! Let's start with a quick review: Here's how it works. Ladies, you'll be seated on this side of the table. Gentlemen, you'll be, of course, on the other side. You will have six minutes with each conversation partner. Each time you hear this bell--(*she rings a cowbell*) gentlemen will rotate one seat to the right.

Jack: (*To Gabrielle*) At least when I'm on a date "*with food*", I'm EATING meat, not BEING meat.

Gabrielle: (To **Jack**) Um, vegetarian here. Can you spare me the mental picture?

Marilynn: There are notepads and pens on the registration table, but let's use some discretion out of respect for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We recommend recording your impressions when you are no longer seated in front of the other person.

Jack: (To **Gabrielle**) That needs to be said?

Marilynn: At the end of the night, you'll review your notes and write down the names of the "dates" you would like to see again. If you have questions or concerns, any member of the BlinkMingle team will be happy to help - but for now, go ahead and find your seats so we can get this party started!

Gabrielle sits at her station, removes a paper from her folder, and immediately secures the paper to the back of her notepad. **Jack**, who is taking his time getting to his seat, notices and looks over her shoulder.

Jack: What are you doing?

Gabrielle: Making sure my list is accessible.

Jack: You have a list?

Gabrielle: Of course I have a list. Studies consistently prove that when you have written goals, you're much more likely to reach them.

Jack: What's on there? "Must love fractal geometry"?

Gabrielle: That's ridiculous! (Then speaking quickly, a little sheepish) Okay, so it's number 22. But it's under "preferences", not "nonnegotiable". I didn't say "must".

Florence, an elderly woman, enters and sits across from Jack's seat; **Jack** lingers, not wanting to sit down. No one is seated across from **Gabrielle**.

Marilynn: All right, let's start the clocks... now! Enjoy!

Florence and **Jack** freeze.

Elliot enters hurriedly and takes the seat across from Gabrielle. He is sincere, charming, and speaks with a slight British accent.

Elliot: Hi, Gabrielle? I'm Elliott, so nice to meet you.

Gabrielle: (A little dazed) Hi. Hi, I'm Gabrielle.

Elliot: Parking was a mess, wasn't it? Had to leave the car a quarter mile back and make a dash for it! Your commute was kinder, I hope.

Gabrielle: *(Stumbling over her words)* Oh! Yes. Yes, it was. I like to be early for things like this-- you know-- just in case.

Elliot: Naturally, yes! If only it were that easy. I'm forever in trouble at the University for being late to my own classes.

Gabrielle: The University? You're a professor?

Gabrielle and Elliot freeze.

Jack hesitantly sits down across from Florence.

Florence: It's lovely to meet you. I'm Florence.

Jack: Hi. Florence. I'm not sure I'm at the right table.

Florence: Not exactly what you had in mind, am I, Sonny?

Jack: Well...

Florence: I can explain. The senior center always has lots of activities, but I wanted to try something new. I called the number because I thought I was signing up for BAKE-mingle, the recipe exchange. This was last month, before I got my hearing aid fixed. *(Removes an index card from her purse)* And it's too bad, because I brought my mother's secret Black Forest Cake recipe.

Jack: Well, there's no need for THAT to go to waste.

Jack and Florence freeze.

Elliot: Professor of applied mathematics. My doctorate is in Systems and Control Theory, although currently they have me teaching Game Theory, which is fascinating in its own right.

Gabrielle: You're a professor of mathematics. Oh wow. Um... *(excitedly fumbling for her list)* See, that's great, because I teach AP Statistics and Calculus!

Elliot: What an amazing coincidence! My fiancé teaches Statistics as well!

Gabrielle: It's a vital field today because-- *(her expression falls dramatically)* Wait. Your WHAT?

Elliot: My fiancé. Oh, didn't they tell you?

Gabrielle: *(Weary)* Tell me what?

Elliot: I work with the BlinkMingle Team. One of the bachelors is running late. Six minutes late to be exact, so he was going to miss his first date. I'm just here to keep you company. We didn't want you to be sitting here alone. That would be a discouraging way to start the evening.

Gabrielle: Right. Cause sitting with an engaged man is much more encouraging.

Gabrielle and Elliot freeze.

Florence: Do you have any grandkids?

Jack: Nope. Not yet.

Florence: Well, that's too bad.

Jack: Still working on the whole wife and kids bit.

Florence: Oh, yes. That helps. *(Pause)* Would you like to see MY grandkids?

Pulls out a trifold wallet that flips open, hanging almost down to the ground.

Jack: Why not.

Florence: That's Susan at her prom. And here's Timmy playing baseball. And this one is Lyla taking a bath.

Jack and Florence freeze

Elliot: So, why don't you tell me about yourself. You're in mathematics... Perhaps one day we may be colleagues! *(His cell phone rings)* Oh...mind if I take this? It's Elizabeth. *(Puts the phone to his ear)* Hi there, Sweetums. How was your afternoon?

Gabrielle puts her head down on the table, defeated.

Lights Down. Characters exit.

Act 2

*Lights Up. **Gabrielle** is in the same seat with a new gentleman sitting across from her, and **Jack** is en route to his next station, which puts him back-to-back with Gabrielle. He sits down across from his new "date". As she appears occupied, writing down notes from the last suitor, he turns to address **Gabrielle**.*

Jack: *(Stage whisper, to Gabrielle)* So... how was your first match?

Gabrielle: *(Stage whisper)* You know we're not supposed to be discussing the other candidates. It's in the rules.

Jack: Ah, the ambiguous response. Do I hear wedding bells?

Gabrielle: Yup. Just not for me.

Jack: You told him you were a vegan, didn't you?

Gabrielle: I'm a vegetarian.

Jack: Whatever. You might want to save that information for the 2nd date.

Gabrielle: So, making healthy choices is unattractive now?

Jack: Only when it includes not eating meat.

Gabrielle: *(Sarcastically)* Thanks for the tip.

Jack: Hey, the night's still young. Although "young" is not necessarily the name of the game, it would seem.

Gabrielle: What? *(Ignoring him)* If you'd excuse me, I'm busy meeting someone.
(Turning to the man across the table) Hi.

Archie: Hi.

Gabrielle: I'm Gabrielle.

Archie: I'm Archie.

*Long silence. **Gabrielle** nervously laughs. **Archie** looks at her, then slowly starts to laugh. The laughing ends awkwardly, neither knowing why they're laughing.*

Gabrielle and Archie freeze.

Juniper: They're just so restricting.

Jack: Shoes?

Juniper: Yeah. Don't you ever feel like your feet are saying, "let me out! Set me free!"

Jack: I don't have too many conversations with my feet. *(Beat)* So, Jupiter...

Juniper: *Juniper.* My name is Juniper, like the flower. Jupiter's a planet, not a name.

Jack: Sorry. So, Juniper, doesn't it hurt? I mean, to walk around barefoot all the time?

Juniper: No. You develop calluses after a while. Like hobbits.

Jack: Hobbits? As in Bilbo Baggins?

Juniper: Yeah. Just like that. They do it, so why can't we humans go barefoot too?

Jack: The thing is...hobbits aren't real.

Juniper: What?

Jack and Juniper freeze.

Gabrielle: I guess it's a given that this is going to be a little awkward.

Archie: You're feeling awkward?

Gabrielle: *(Quickly)* No. I guess I just mean...

Archie: Awkward?

Gabrielle: Umm, okay, wrong choice of words-

Archie: You said awkward. Why did you say that? Now it's definitely awkward.

Bell rings.

Rhonda quickly replaces Juniper as Trent replaces Archie.

Rhonda: So, Jack, what brings you here?

Jack: Honestly, I'm doing a favor for my friend. She really wanted to come to this speed dating event. I'm just here as a fill-in for her brother. He couldn't make it and the numbers had to be even and such. Yadda, yadda, yadda.

Rhonda: So, you're here as a substitute.

Jack: I guess, yeah.

Rhonda: How does that make you feel, Jack?

Jack: Umm, fine.

Rhonda: Why do you think that is, that you feel "fine" being the second choice?

Jack: Umm, I don't...are you a psychiatrist or something?

Rhonda: As a matter of fact, yes. And I'm glad you asked, because it's important to establish right away that I am *not* your mother.

Jack: You're not my mother.

Rhonda: And how does that make you feel?

Rhonda and Jack freeze.

Gabrielle: Uncomfortable. I guess, if I'm being honest. Dead animals make me uncomfortable.

Trent: That's too bad.

Gabrielle: I'm sorry if that disappoints you.

Trent: It's not *that* big of a deal...opening a taxidermist shop in the mountains is just my life-long dream. My wife and I, skinning our own meat, tanning fur, mounting antlers on our cabin walls... (*awkward silence*) Do you like to hunt?

Gabrielle: I'm a vegetarian.

Trent and Gabrielle freeze.

Jack: Rhonda, I think we've really made some progress here.

Rhonda: (*Wiping away a tear*) I had no idea I had so much pent-up emotion. I'm so embarrassed that I'm crying like this.

Jack: (*Handing her a tissue*) Why do you think you feel like that?

Rhonda: Probably because I'm a perfectionist who puts a high value on what others think of me. And I associate tears with weakness and inferiority

rather than recognizing them for the sign of strength that they really are.

Jack: Hmmm. I think this could be a breakthrough.

Rhonda: You're really not a therapist?

Jack: Engineer. Just have a lot of sisters.

Bell rings.

Lenny replaces Trent and Jill replaces Rhonda.

Lenny: It's not like I just sit on my mom and dad's couch all day and watch TV.

Gabrielle: What *do* you do, Robert?

Lenny: Lenny.

Gabrielle: Sorry?

Lenny: My friends call me Lenny.

Gabrielle: Oh. Sorry. (*checking notes*) I thought you said your name was Robert.

Lenny: It is. But my friends call me Lenny.

Gabrielle: Ok. Lenny. (*Starting again*) So what do you do?

Lenny: Well, I'm in between jobs right now. Holding out for management. Hanging out with my parents for a few decades. Sweet, right?

Gabrielle: You don't have a job?

Lenny: Yeah. I mean no. But I don't just sit on the couch. I get up and empty the dishwasher sometimes.

Gabrielle: (*Sarcastically*) I'm sure your mom appreciates that.

Lenny: She does. She really does.

Lenny and Gabrielle freeze.

Jack: I'm Jack.

Jill: I'm Jill.

Jack: No way. What are the chances?!

Jill: The chances of what?

Jack: (*Teasing*) Jack and Jill. It's destiny.

Jill: (*With growing emotion- line starts quiet and tense, and should end with loud intensity*) This is not a date, okay? You're pressuring me. You're just moving a little too fast. (*Standing up*) I know all about boundaries, and I'm feeling very overwhelmed right now. It's *not* destiny; you are being way too assertive.

Jack: Okay.

Bell rings.

Marilynn: Folks, we're a little more than halfway through. Let's take a 10 minute break to grab some refreshments and collect our thoughts.

*Jill and Lenny exit. The following is said as **Gabrielle** and **Jack** exit together:*

Gabrielle: It's official. I'm in a bad mood.

Jack: (*Giving her a brotherly jab*) Give it a minute. Your mood changes frequently.

Gabrielle: (*Not amused*) Ha. Ha. Sometimes I forget that you're my brother's best friend, and then...

Jack: I remind you how immature I really am. (*Makes fake burp or armpit noise*)

Gabrielle: Yup.

Jack: I'm actually feeling really good about myself after those last few. I mean, you think *I'm* weird.

They exit.

Act 3

Jack and **Gabrielle** are both sitting back to back. **Allie** is taking notes, sitting across from Jack.

Marilynn: Just a quick reminder that we're winding down the evening here. You'll be meeting two final "dates", and then you will each have a chance to *privately* review your notes and submit your list of names.

Jack: *(Over his shoulder, to Gabrielle)* They really DO think we're all socially challenged.

Gabrielle: *(To Jack)* You know, I'm beginning to think the extra precaution isn't so unnecessary.

Gabrielle freezes.

Jack turns to face **Allie**.

Allie: Hi. How's it going? I'm Allie.

She holds out her hand for a handshake.

Jack: Jack. Good to meet- *(stops and sniffs the air)* Hey, do you smell something? Are they cooking for us? I'm so hungry!

Allie: Why, what does it smell like?

Jack: I don't know, like...my Italian grandma?

Allie: Oh! That's probably me. I'm eating garlic. *(Takes a couple cloves out of her purse and bites into one)* Want some?

Jack *(Too quick)* No. *(Trying to compose himself quickly)* I don't want to spoil my dinner.

Allie: Oh, it won't spoil your dinner. In fact, it may protect things *from* spoiling. Did you know that the enzymes in garlic may actually kill E. coli and other bacteria? *(Takes another bite)*

Jack: Aren't you supposed to, uh, cook that?

Allie: Are you kidding? No way. Cooking the garlic destroys all its healing properties.

Jack: Yeah, but isn't it hard to get past the...

Allie: The what?

Jack: The... raw garlic.

Allie: Oh, you get used to that. I don't even taste it anymore.

Jack: Really? *(Makes a face)* Cause I think I'm tasting it.

Jack and Allie freeze.

Eric enters and sits across from Gabrielle.

Eric: Hey, how are you? I saw you walk in and I've been wanting to meet you all night.

Gabrielle: Really?

Eric: I'm Eric.

Gabrielle: I'm--

Eric: Eric Menninger. Actually, Eric James Menninger. It's a family name. Well, of course "Menninger" is a family name, I got THAT from my dad, but I mean "Eric James" is the name of every firstborn son on my mom's side.

Gabrielle: That sounds--

Eric: I'm the oldest in my family, as you've probably assumed. I have two brothers, Harley and Rick. And one sister, Violet. Do you have siblings?

Gabrielle: Yeah, actually my brother was supposed--

Eric: Cause it's a lot harder than I thought it would be, getting along with siblings as an adult. I mean, I'm the firstborn son, but my brother Rick lives closest to my parents, and his wife is really tight with my mom. So they make most of the family decisions. You know what I mean? I think things'll be easier once I'm married. Speaking of "married". How soon do you want to get married? Cause I was thinking soon.

Eric and Gabrielle freeze.

Allie: I haven't gotten sick in three years. Not even a cold. Garlic is an awesome boost to the immune system. *(Takes another bite)*

Jack: I think I'd rather keep my colds.

Allie: It's antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-fungal. And has all kinds of antioxidants. It's been proven to DRAMATICALLY reduce your risk for certain cancers. Looking for a cure?-- (*pops a whole "clove" into her mouth*) --well, here you go!

Jack: But how do you handle the smell?

Allie: What smell?

Jack and Allie freeze

Eric: Do you believe in love at first sight? Because I do. How do you feel about a short engagement?

Gabrielle: How short are we talking?

Eric: Two or three--

Gabrielle: --months?!

Eric: I was going to say weeks. Well, I figure if I want to take over my father's business, and I want my son to take it over for ME, I need to start reproducing sooner than later, if you know what I mean. Otherwise, I'll be working till I'm 80 and I really want to retire before then... Wait! I didn't even tell you what the business is, did I? My dad runs Menninger Machines. Now, you might be thinking of construction vehicles or something, but actually, we make pencil sharpeners.

Gabrielle: (*In a totally flat tone of voice*) Oh wow.

Eric: I know, fascinating, right? It's always a good conversation point. Get it, "POINT"? Haha! But as you can see, I'm really committed to the future of the pencil. Do you think you could be committed to the future of the pencil? Because that's important to me.

Gabrielle: Right.

Gabrielle and Eric freeze.

Allie: And did you know that it's great protection against gum disease? Sometimes I add a little pressed garlic to my toothpaste when I'm brushing. (*She looks closely at Jack*) Um, you're not looking so good. Sure you don't want any of this? I have plenty. And it'll reduce the length of a virus by, like, seventy percent.

Jack: I'm sure.

Bell rings.

Eric: Wow, I guess we're out of time. I don't think I got your name...?

Gabrielle: You know what? Don't even worry about it.

Marilynn: All right, friends! Reminder that this next match will be your FINAL conversation of the night. Go ahead and find your final station now.

Eric and Jack switch places. **Gabrielle** is now seated across from **Jack**. **Eric** and **Allie** remain frozen until the very end of the scene.

Jack: So. How's it going?

Gabrielle: Let's see. I've met Mr. Weird, Mr. No-Job, Mr. "I Love To Hear Myself Talk", and last but not least, Mr. Engaged! *(She puts her head in her hands)* And he was a good one.

Jack: *(Mockingly)* Darn it. Did you blink and miss your spouse?

Gabrielle: Statistically, I should have met at least one decent guy. You're the best candidate I've had all night.

Jack: Jackpot. Do I win a date?

Gabrielle: *(Ignoring)* What about you? *(Referring to unseen woman offstage)* Did you give Ms. Proverbs 31 over there your number?

Jack: She wasn't my type.

Gabrielle: Too perfect? The whole looking like Barbie AND loving Jesus just wasn't doing it for you?

Jack: Jealous are we? How very non-Proverbs 31 woman of you.

Gabrielle: *(Ashamedly)* I know.

Jack: I'm kidding. You're taking this too seriously.

Gabrielle: Too seriously? Too seriously!! *(Head in hands)* I'm never going to find love.

Jack: Not to go all pastoral on you, but love isn't just about getting married.

Gabrielle: *(As if reciting to herself)* I know. You're right. His plans for my future are good. Jesus is all that I need.

Jack: *(Drily)* That was convincing.

Gabrielle: You have no idea what I'm dealing with. You love being a bachelor.

Jack: That doesn't mean I don't want to find a wife. *(Beat)* Being single can be a good thing.

Gabrielle: Oh, thank you, Apostle Paul. Don't you have a letter to go write?

Jack: All I'm saying is, don't miss what's right in front of you today.

Gabrielle: Finished yet?

Jack: No. Remember that missions trip you took last year, to Zambia? And what about the road trip with your girlfriends last summer. And all the extra time you put in at school with your students. You think that would all be possible if you were married with kids?

Gabrielle: Maybe.

Jack: Okay. Maybe. But don't you see how God is using you right now? He's got a plan for your future, but He's also got a plan for the present.

Gabrielle: What if I never get married?

Jack: Then you never get married.

Gabrielle: That doesn't even faze you?

Jack: I don't want to feel like I'm constantly chasing the wind. *(Teasing)* Or that I missed my wife because I blinked. *(Sincerely)* If God wants me to get married, then He'll give me a wife. It's a gift, not a race.

Gabrielle: You're right. *(Beat)* You think I'm crazy, don't you?

Jack: Just a little bit. *(Beat)* At least tonight wasn't a complete waste. You found one eligible bachelor.

Gabrielle: No, I didn't. Didn't you just hear me say that you're the only datable one here?

Jack: So, doesn't that mean I get a date?

Gabrielle: *(Sarcastically)* You want to go on a date with me?

Jack: Yeah.

Gabrielle: *(Shocked)* Really?

Jack: Yeah.

Gabrielle: Why? You said it yourself, I'm moody and jealous. I take everything too seriously. I come off as trying too hard. I'm not Proverbs 31 at all.

Jack: *(Teasingly)* At least you're honest about it. *(Beat)* No one's perfect. I can be arrogant and selfish and stingy. We're all works in progress. *(Admittedly)* AND I love eating meat.

Gabrielle: *(Teasingly)* Check against you.

Jack: Will you still get pizza with me if I order a meat lovers?

Gabrielle: I could possibly overlook that flaw.

Jack: *(Stands and offers his hand)* Then let's get out of here.

Gabrielle: *(Takes his hand)* Okay.

They start to exit, hand in hand.

*Meanwhile, **Eric**, in conversation with **Allie**, has just taken a bite of garlic.*

Eric: Mmmm, not bad.

Allie: ...antibacterial, antiviral, AND anti-fungal.

Eric: *(Leaning in)* How do you feel about garlic-scented... *PENCILS?*

Jack and Gabrielle look back at **Eric** and **Allie**, then walk off a little faster.

Lights down.

THE END