

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A small, neighborhood cafe. ERICA, a cafe worker in her early 20s, is working with THEO, a sweet, rather shy guy also in his early 20s. They are in the process of closing the store.

ERICA

There has to be more, do you know what I mean?

THEO

More?

ERICA

Yes, more than making sure people get their exact perfect coffee drink every day, more than sitting at home watching British television with my mother, more than - actually, that's it, that's my entire life! And it's time for me to do something about it. To take action.

THEO

Like what?

ERICA

To begin with - Nicole and I are getting our own place together. I've been saving up all year. And I'm going back to school to do something really big, something really important.

THEO

What are you going to do?

ERICA

I don't know yet. But when I do it's going to change the world. But before anything else ... You want to get a beer tonight?

THEO

Um ... okay.

They continue to clean, etc.

SCENE TWO

ERICA is working by herself. A CUSTOMER enters, possibly homeless, sets an old coffee cup on the counter.

CUSTOMER/HOMELESS

Refill.

ERICA

I'm sorry, but you have to buy your coffee on the same day in order to receive a refill.

CUSTOMER/HOMELESS

I did ... buy it today.

ERICA

Okay, because I've been here all day and I haven't seen you, so ...

CUSTOMER/HOMELESS

You were on a break.

ERICA stares at the CUSTOMER, who stares back. After a moment, ERICA gives in and refills the cup. NICOLE, Erica's co-worker, also early 20s, enters the store.

NICOLE

Sorry I'm late. My fucking car wouldn't start ...

The CUSTOMER takes the coffee to the condiment counter without a word. NICOLE continues through the cafe to the back room. A few moments later, she returns, putting on an apron.

Has it been busy?

ERICA

Not really.

NICOLE helps herself to a cup of coffee.

NICOLE

How was closing last night?

Oh, um ...

ERICA

What? What happened?

NICOLE

ERICA grimaces.

Just spit it out.

Theo and I ... We, um ...

ERICA

What? Seriously?!

NICOLE

Yeah.

ERICA

Erica!

NICOLE

I know.

ERICA

But ... why?! I don't mean 'why,' but ... why?!

NICOLE

Because ... he's sweet. And ... I don't know ...

ERICA

He's so quiet. I can never get three words out of him.

NICOLE

I got him to talk a little.

ERICA

I just ... I can't picture it.

NICOLE

ERICA

I just needed something to happen, even if it turned out to be a mistake. By the way, I think I found us a place.

NICOLE
You did?

ERICA shows NICOLE photos of an apartment on her phone.

ERICA
It's a little out of our price range but you're going to love it.

NICOLE
How much is it? I have to get my car fixed ...

ERICA
Don't worry about it. I can pay the larger share. Anyway, we don't have to commit to anything - Oh! Guess who we saw at the Pig and Whistle?

NICOLE
Who?

ERICA
Ed.

NICOLE
Of course, he works there.

ERICA
I thought you'd be interested. He bought us a round of beers.

NICOLE
Did he ask about me?

ERICA
No.

NICOLE reacts, disappointed.

NICOLE
Where's David? Isn't he supposed to be here?

ERICA shrugs. A CUSTOMER enters.

ERICA
Hi, what can I get for you?

CUSTOMER/BONE DRY
I'd like a bone dry cappuccino.

ERICA
Dry cappuccino, sure thing.

CUSTOMER/BONE DRY
Bone dry.

ERICA
Okay, just follow the instructions on the screen.

CUSTOMER/BONE DRY
(to Nicole)
Please make sure it's bone dry.

NICOLE flashes the CUSTOMER an annoyed look, then returns her focus to Erica.

NICOLE
So then what happened?

ERICA
After that we finished our beers and we went back to my apartment and we, we, um ...

NICOLE
You can say it.

ERICA
... had sex.

NICOLE
Ew.

ERICA
I know, it's weird, isn't it?

NICOLE
Was it weird? Like weird weird?

ERICA
No. I mean ... it was nice, actually.

NICOLE
Are you going to see him again?

ERICA
We're going to the Lionetti festival tonight.

NICOLE
Am I supposed to know who that is?

ERICA
He's a great filmmaker. He directed ...

NICOLE
It's okay, I don't care. Shit.

ERICA
What? What is it?

NICOLE
It's nothing. It's stupid. It's just ... if you've found someone that might mean there's hope for me, too, and I don't think I could handle that.

ERICA
Nicole, don't you get it? Things are starting to happen. For both of us.

A CUSTOMER enters.

Hi, Alex. Large coffee?

CUSTOMER/ALEX
Yes, please.

ERICA
You got it.

NICOLE sees something outside the cafe.

NICOLE
Oh fuck.

ERICA
What is it?

ERICA turns to NICOLE, but NICOLE has disappeared under the counter. ERICA glances around, confused, then takes over the espresso machine. ED enters. He's an easy-going guy in his late 20s.

Hey, Ed!

ED

What's going on, Erica?

ERICA

Are you working today?

ED

I'm always working.

ERICA

The usual?

ED

You bet.

ERICA pours ED a cup of coffee, which he takes to the condiment counter.

ERICA

Thanks for the beers last night.

ED waves her away, as if to say, "It was nothing."

ED

So. You and that guy you were with ...

ERICA

Theo.

ED

I've seen him in here. He doesn't say too much, does he?

ERICA

Yeah, he's pretty quiet.

ED
So is this a serious ... ?

ERICA
It was just one date.

ED
You two look good together.

ERICA
Thanks.

ED
Are you on your own today?

ERICA
Um, no, Nicole's here. She's around ... somewhere.

ED
Tell her I said hi.

ERICA
Okay. Oh! How's Noelle?

ED
Oh man. Fantastic. She just started preschool.

ERICA
Oh yeah?

ED
You should see her in the sandbox. She's building entire cities. I think she's gonna be an engineer.

ERICA
That's great.
(calls out order)
Dry cappuccino!

The CUSTOMER picks up their drink, feeling the weight of it, putting the cup to their ear, as if listening to it. ED starts to exit.

ED
Take it easy.

You too, Ed.

ERICA

ED exits. Instantly, NICOLE reappears, from the back.

NICOLE

What did he say? Did he talk about me?

ERICA

Um, yeah, he said to say hi.

NICOLE

Shut up.

(realizes that Erica is serious)

Did he really?

ERICA

Yeah.

NICOLE

Oh fuck.

ERICA

Nicole.

NICOLE

What?

ERICA

I mean ... he's married. With a kid.

A CUSTOMER steps up to the counter.

NICOLE

No, they're separated.

ERICA

How do you know?

NICOLE

Deb at the Pig and Whistle told me.

CUSTOMER/NOT PRESENT

Excuse me.

Hi. Sorry. How's it going?

ERICA

Oh, um ... I'm not sure. I'm having a little trouble being present today.

CUSTOMER/NOT PRESENT

Okay. Are you present now?

ERICA

I mean, kind of.

CUSTOMER/NOT PRESENT

Do you know what you'd like?

ERICA

I'll have a matcha tea latte with soy.

CUSTOMER/NOT PRESENT

Just fill out the screen in front of you.

ERICA

DAVID enters. He's the manager, about 30.

Hi, David.

ERICA

Hey, David!

NICOLE

Hey.

DAVID

We were starting to worry.

NICOLE

It's nothing. Everything's fine. My life is over but it doesn't matter. Nothing matters. Can I get a triple espresso?

DAVID

I'll make it.

ERICA

ERICA makes the drink for DAVID.

What's wrong? Did something happen?

NICOLE

DAVID

We just found out that Sophie's pregnant.

NICOLE

Oh! Well, that's good news, isn't it?

DAVID

I was excited for about five minutes until the reality sank in.

NICOLE

What are you going to do?

DAVID

What could I do? I asked her to marry me.

NICOLE

But that's ... I mean, if you love her ...

DAVID

Of course I do. Sophie's perfect. She's smart, she's beautiful, she's French, she's the best thing to ever happen to me. I just don't see why we have to get married, that's all. You two are invited to the wedding, by the way. You don't have to buy us a gift or anything, I can't stand that crap.

ERICA

Here you go.

ERICA hands DAVID his espresso. He heads towards the back room.

NICOLE

I'm sorry, David.

DAVID shrugs, as if to say, "What can you do ...?"

DAVID

Oh - there's a new employee starting today. His name's Christian. Just part-time. He's got experience so just, you know, show him the ropes, okay?

ERICA

Sure thing.

NICOLE

No problem.

DAVID goes to the back room. ERICA sets a drink on the counter.

ERICA

Matcha with soy.

The CUSTOMER approaches.

CUSTOMER/NOT PRESENT

Did I order this?

ERICA

Yes.

The CUSTOMER takes the drink. DIANE, Erica's mother, enters, carrying shopping bags. She is a caring, slightly overbearing woman with lots of energy, in her mid-40s.

DIANE

Hello, sweetheart!

ERICA

Hi, Mom.

DIANE

Hi, Nicole.

NICOLE

Hi, Diane.

DIANE

Oh no, there's something wrong, isn't there? I can sense it. It isn't that Ed person, is it?

NICOLE shrugs and nods, admitting it.

Oh, honey, we should talk.

(to Erica)

I got you some shirts.

DIANE hands a shopping bag to ERICA, who accepts it reluctantly.

ERICA

I don't need any shirts.

DIANE

You can always return them if you don't like them. They were forty percent off. Nicole, Erica showed me the photos of the apartment she found. It's cute!

NICOLE

She showed me.

ERICA

We'll go and see it tomorrow.

NICOLE

I need to find something. My roommates and I aren't even speaking to each other.

DIANE

Let's see, what should I have ... ?

ERICA

You always order the same thing.

DIANE

What the hell, give me a cappuccino and a chocolate croissant. I'll start my new diet tomorrow. By the way, your friend snuck out this morning like a thief.

ERICA

You saw him?

DIANE

I almost ran into him in the hallway. Tell him to say hello next time.

ERICA

He's just shy.

DIANE fixes Erica's hair.

DIANE

Your hair just got a little ...

ERICA pulls away, annoyed.

ERICA

I got it.

CHRISTIAN enters. He's an attractive guy in his early 20s, slightly insecure but covers it well. ERICA's jaw drops a little, she's instantly infatuated.

CHRISTIAN
Hi.

ERICA
Um, hi.

CHRISTIAN
I'm Christian. David told me to ...

ERICA
Oh right! You're the new ... yeah. David's in the ... Just go, go back there and ...

CHRISTIAN
Thanks.

CHRISTIAN heads to the back room. DIANE and NICOLE continue talking, while NICOLE makes her drink.

NICOLE
I mean, I know it isn't very practical or realistic or smart but I can't help myself. Have you ever felt that way about someone?

DIANE
Not for a long time, but I can definitely relate. I got married when I was very young - too young, really. I made a lot of mistakes when I was that age.

NICOLE
What would you have done different?

DIANE
Differently.

NICOLE
Differently.

DIANE
Well, I wouldn't have had a child for starters.

ERICA reacts, confused.

I was even younger than you are now if you can believe it. It seems so silly and naïve these days, but Erica's father is the only man I ever really knew.

A CUSTOMER enters.

CUSTOMER/FUNNY

Excuse me ... ? Do you sell ... coffee?

ERICA

(heard it before)

No, I'm sorry, we don't.

The CUSTOMER breaks into laughter at their own joke, then immediately becomes serious.

CUSTOMER/FUNNY

I'll take a cup.

ERICA gets a cup of coffee.

DIANE

I thought he was the most charming, kind, *good-looking* man I'd ever met. Married, of course. And so was I. But that didn't stop me from thinking about him constantly. He was an Ed, too, as it happens. Well, Edward.

NICOLE

So what did you do?

DIANE

Do? Nothing. I quit my job, eventually. It wasn't easy, though.

NICOLE

Maybe that's it, that's what I need to do.

DIANE

What's that?

NICOLE

Just quit my job. Move to another city. Get as far away from him as possible.

DIANE

That might work for awhile. But there's always a danger of running into another Ed in the next town. Or the next. Wherever you go, there will always be another Ed.

CHRISTIAN enters, from the back, not quite sure what to do.

NICOLE

Here you go, Diane.

DIANE

Thank you, Sweetheart.

DIANE raises the cup to her mouth.

Mm. Delicious.

DIANE takes a sip, AFTER her line. ERICA stares at her mother in disbelief.

NICOLE

(to Erica)

I'm going to smoke a cigarette.

ERICA nods. NICOLE and DIANE hug.

DIANE

It'll be all right. You'll see.

NICOLE

Thank you, Diane.

NICOLE steps outside to smoke, where she can still be seen. DIANE starts to exit.

DIANE

Bye, honey, I'll see you at home. Don't forget to try on those shirts!

ERICA

Bye, Mom.

DIANE

(to Christian)

Hello, I don't think we've met. I'm Diane, Erica's Mom.

CHRISTIAN

I'm Christian. It's my first day.

Oh! Well, good luck.

DIANE

Thanks.

CHRISTIAN

DIANE mouths to ERICA, "He's cute!" ERICA indicates for DIANE to leave. DIANE mimes "Okay, okay, I'm going" and exits. CHRISTIAN approaches ERICA.

Um, hi.

Hello.

ERICA

David said you would show me the ropes.

CHRISTIAN

Um, yeah, okay, sure thing. Let me see ... well, before anything, you need a ...

ERICA

ERICA rushes off to the back of the store, taking CHRISTIAN by surprise. He remains still, a bit uncomfortable, waiting for her to return. After several moments, she returns to the cafe, handing CHRISTIAN an apron.

Here you go.

ERICA

Thanks.

CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIAN puts on the apron.

It just ties ...

ERICA

ERICA reaches, as if she's going to help him tie the apron, then decides against it.

So, um, you've worked in coffee before?

I have. It's been awhile, but ...

CHRISTIAN

I'm sure it'll come back.

ERICA

Yeah.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, it's really easy.

ERICA

A slightly uncomfortable pause.

So, um, what should I be doing?

CHRISTIAN

Oh, um ... it's pretty slow right now. You can just stand there.

ERICA

Just stand here?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, you know, just ...

ERICA

Another awkward moment passes. ERICA accidentally leans back against the espresso machine and burns herself.

Ow! Fuck ...

Are you okay?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, I'm fine.

ERICA

Obviously in pain, she goes to the sink and runs her hand under the water. SOPHIE enters.

Hello, Erica.

SOPHIE

Hi, Sophie! Congratulations! David told us the news.

ERICA

SOPHIE
 Merci beaucoup.

ERICA
 What would you like? A cappuccino?

SOPHIE
 Yes, please.

ERICA
 I'll tell David you're here.

ERICA goes to the back.

CHRISTIAN
 Hi, I'm Christian.

SOPHIE
 Hello. I'm Sophie, David's fiancée.

ERICA returns, with DAVID.

DAVID
 What are you doing here?

SOPHIE
 I spoke to maman. She wants me to speak to the cathedral priest and find a good price.

DAVID
 A cathedral?

SOPHIE
 Oui. Oh! And I found the clothing store I want to use. It is based on Paris, but they also have a location here.

DAVID and SOPHIE exit to the back room. A CUSTOMER enters, talking on the phone.

CUSTOMER/GETOFFMYASS
 Get off my ass. Can't we push him back? I told him we might need to reschedule. I said no, get off my ass.

(to Erica and Christian)

Two coffees, black.

CHRISTIAN gets the coffees.

CUSTOMER/GETOFFMYASS

I just ordered. Did you not hear me just order? Get off my ass.

(to Erica)

How much do I ... ?

ERICA

That's fi -

CUSTOMER/GETOFFMYASS

(into phone)

I'm not your *wife*. No, I never said that. Will you get off my ass?

The CUSTOMER takes the coffees and exits. A moment passes.

ERICA

So, um, what do you think so far?

CHRISTIAN

Oh, um, I'm really not sure yet.

ERICA

Takes time to get to know a place.

CHRISTIAN

Uh-huh.

ERICA

What did you do before this?

CHRISTIAN

Um, I just graduated from art school.

ERICA

Oh! What did you study?

CHRISTIAN

Art.

ERICA

Yeah, but, um, what kind ... ?

CHRISTIAN

All kinds. Drawing, painting, photography, design, architecture, performance ...

ERICA

That's amazing. Like, you didn't have to pick just one?

CHRISTIAN

They pretty much let me design my own major.

DAVID enters, from the back.

DAVID

Hey, can I get a triple espresso?

ERICA

Sure.

ERICA makes David's drink.

DAVID

How's the training going?

ERICA

Um, fine. How are you guys doing?

DAVID

Not too good. Sophie wants to know my size.

ERICA

For the tuxedo?

DAVID

For the coffin. I just don't get it. If two people love each other and want to spend their lives together, why do they have to sign some piece of paper and have some big ceremony? What's with this psychotic fixation everyone has on marriage?

CHRISTIAN

I know what you mean. After my parents divorce -

DAVID

It's insane. The whole thing.

ERICA

I don't understand, David. I mean, if you both want a baby and you love each other ...

DAVID

It's probably something to do with my upbringing. I was raised Seventh Day Adventist. It really fucked me up.

ERICA

Here, David. And here's Sophie's drink, too.

CHRISTIAN hands DAVID his drinks. DAVID exits to the back room. A CUSTOMER approaches the counter.

Hi.

CUSTOMER/COLDHOTCHOCOLATE

Hi, can I get a cold hot chocolate?

ERICA

You mean chocolate milk?

CUSTOMER/COLDHOTCHOCOLATE

No. A cold hot chocolate.

ERICA

What's the difference?

CUSTOMER/COLDHOTCHOCOLATE

It's just chocolate syrup and milk and ice.

ERICA

Um, okay. Just fill out the screen.

(to Christian)

You got this?

CHRISTIAN

Uh-huh. Where's the ice?

ERICA

It's right ...

ERICA points to the ice. CHRISTIAN makes the drink.

Are you, um, familiar with Lionetti?

CHRISTIAN

The filmmaker?

ERICA

Uh-huh.

CHRISTIAN

Last Train to Sicily is one of my favorite films of all time.

ERICA

I love that film! So, there's a theater doing a retrospective ...

CHRISTIAN

I love seeing movies in the theater.

ERICA

It's, I know, it's ...

CHRISTIAN

It's how they were meant to be seen.

ERICA

Exactly. I'm going tonight. I'm not sure which films they're showing ...

CHRISTIAN

Do you think I could tag along?

ERICA

What?

CHRISTIAN

I mean, do you think they still have tickets available?

ERICA

Oh, I'm not sure ...

CHRISTIAN

I can check. Do you mind if I come with you?

ERICA

Um ... yeah, no ... Of course.

CHRISTIAN sets the drink on the counter.

CHRISTIAN

Cold hot chocolate!

The CUSTOMER picks up their drink.

CHRISTIAN
How are you getting there?

ERICA
Oh, I was just going to, I don't know ...

CHRISTIAN
Why don't I pick you up?

ERICA
Oh - you have a ... ? Um, okay ... great.

ERICA and CHRISTIAN stand there, a bit awkwardly.

Will you excuse me a minute?

CHRISTIAN
Sure.

ERICA exits the cafe, going out front. She makes a call.

ERICA
Hi, Theo? Listen, I'm so sorry to do this, but ...