

ALLEGORY OF A CAFÉ

a ten-minute play

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CHARACTERS

(1m,1f)

GUY - a young guy, in his 20s

And one actress to play the following:

INTERVIEWER, ASSISTANT, FIRST CUSTOMER, BETTY, MINISTER,
PHOTOGRAPHER, DAUGHTER

SCENE

A café.

TIME

The present.

ALLEGORY OF A CAFE

A café. A guy, let's call him GUY, is being interviewed. He is holding a journal. The INTERVIEWER (female) is inspecting his resume.

INTERVIEWER

You have no experience.

GUY

Well, I —

INTERVIEWER

That wasn't a question.

GUY

Sorry.

INTERVIEWER

You have no work experience, you have no life experience, you have no hobbies, you have no interests, you have no friends, you have no skills, you have no anecdotes, you have no party jokes, you have no qualities whatsoever to indicate that you are a suitable candidate for this position.

(Pause.)

That *was* a question.

GUY

Well, I —

INTERVIEWER

Suppose a customer came up to you complaining that the coffee was too hot.

(Pause.)

Are you available to work weekends? Evenings? Dawn?

GUY

Well —

INTERVIEWER

When can you start? How about tomorrow? No, wait, tomorrow's no good. How about right now?

Pause.

GUY

All right.

INTERVIEWER

Welcome to the team. I'll turn you over now to my assistant.

The INTERVIEWER becomes the ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT

Some definitions. You might want to write this down in your, uh ... what is that?

GUY

Oh. It's my journal.

ASSISTANT

Like a diary?

GUY

No. I write, um ... poetry.

ASSISTANT

Oh.

(Pause.)

Ready? A latte is espresso with steamed milk. A cappuccino is espresso with steamed milk. A macchiato is espresso with steamed milk. A mocha is espresso with steamed milk and chocolate. An espresso is espresso without steamed milk. A café au lait is coffee with steamed milk. A chai is chai with steamed milk. Coffee is coffee with hot water poured over it. The pastries are two days old. Any questions? Oh look, here comes a customer! Want to try taking this one?

The ASSISTANT becomes the FIRST CUSTOMER. She stares at the board.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Hi, yes, I think I'll have a decaf...

(Slightly long pause.)

...coffee. I haven't seen you before. Are you new?

GUY

Actually, it's my first day.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Well, congratulations! I'm easy to remember, I always order the same thing. What made you decide to work here?

GUY

It's only temporary.

FIRST CUSTOMER

I didn't expect you to say it was your life's ambition.

GUY

I write poetry. This is just a way to just, you know, pay the bills.

FIRST CUSTOMER

I do spoken word. Do you speak?

GUY

Do I...?

FIRST CUSTOMER

What's this?

GUY

This is my journal.

FIRST CUSTOMER

You can speak your journal. You can speak anything. You can speak the dictionary. I'm already up to the B's. B. BABBLE. TO UTTER MEANINGLESS WORDS OR
—

*Becomes the second customer,
named BETTY.*

BETTY

Excuse me, I'm in a rush. Hi. I'll have an espresso. Make it a triple. No, make it a double. Make it a double triple. Or a triple double, whichever costs less. I'm trying to cut down. My friends tell me I have too much anxiety. I haven't seen you here before. Are you new?

GUY

I've been here six months. I wait on you every day.

BETTY

You seem like a really nice guy. You want to get a cup of coffee sometime? Did you hear what I just said? I said do you want to get a cup of coffee and you work in a café! Boy, *someone* hasn't had their second cup yet. So? What do you say?

GUY

Um... all right.

BETTY

Great!

(GUY and BETTY take a seat.)

I can't remember the last time I was out on a real date. My name's Betty, by the way. Look at me, all I do is talk about myself and I don't know a thing about you.

GUY

There isn't much to say. I write poetry.

BETTY

I'm six foot one and weigh a hundred and eight pounds. And I'm a movie buff. Do you like movies?

GUY

Um, sure, who doesn't?

BETTY

Do you like Platoon?

GUY

Platoon? Yeah, that's a good movie.

BETTY

I love the ending when Willem Defoe spreads his arms out like Jesus while the sad music is playing. Did you just make a pass?

GUY

Did I...? No, I...

BETTY

I thought I felt a vibe. I want to take things slowly, okay? I'm in a fragile state right now.

GUY

That... that's fine...

*BETTY mounts him aggressively.
She groans loudly.*

BETTY

Sorry about that. I have a little premature ejaculation problem.

GUY

It's fine.

BETTY

Oh shit.

GUY

What's the matter?

BETTY

I'm pregnant.

GUY

How can you tell?

BETTY

My water broke.

(BETTY goes into labor. She begins breathing fast.)

Do something, you idiot!

GUY

Okay, hold on!

GUY panics, uses his apron to cover her. BETTY moans as she gives birth.

BETTY (*cont'd*)

I hate you!

GUY puts his head under the apron and removes a baby. BETTY grabs the baby from him. She makes baby crying noises.

BETTY (*cont'd*)

Isn't she beautiful? *Yes she is. Yes you are. Yes she is.* You will marry me, won't you?

GUY

Um ...

BETTY glares at him. She then becomes the minister.

MINISTER

We are gathered here today to celebrate the union of two perfect people in holy matrimony. Do you have the ring?

GUY

The, the...

MINISTER

The ring. Do you have the *ring*?

Becomes BETTY.

BETTY

You idiot! Hurry up!

GUY

I've got it! Here...

GUY places the ring on her finger. She becomes a PHOTOGRAPHER...

PHOTOGRAPHER

Smile!

...and snaps a picture. Becomes the MINISTER.

MINISTER

I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride.

GUY goes to kiss her, but time has passed before he is able to.

BETTY

I *asked* you, are you having an affair?

GUY

What? No!

BETTY

Don't lie. I've seen you with that... that *spoken word girl*.

GUY

Okay, yes, we had a fling, but—

BETTY

A fling? I've know about it for *three years*.

GUY

Then why... why didn't you say anything?

BETTY

Because... I've been sleeping with the au pair.

GUY

All right. I'll break it off.

*BETTY becomes FIRST
CUSTOMER.*

FIRST CUSTOMER

M. MONOTONOUS. UNVARYING IN PITCH OR— Oh hi.

GUY

Hi. Take a break for a minute, okay?

FIRST CUSTOMER

What's up?

GUY

We have to stop seeing each other. She knows about us.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Oh. Okay. I can still get my coffee, right?

GUY

Yeah. Of course.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Listen, whatever happens, don't give up on your dream.

GUY

What dream?

FIRST CUSTOMER

To be a famous spoken word artist.

GUY

That's your dream.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Just don't give up. Promise me.

GUY

I promise.

*FIRST CUSTOMER becomes
BETTY.*

BETTY

I want a divorce.

GUY

But... but I broke it off like you wanted.

BETTY

I don't like you anymore. You're boring. You smell like coffee. Oh, I forgot to tell you. You need to ask for another raise. Our daughter got into Yale.

GUY

College?

BETTY

It goes quickly, doesn't it?

GUY

I guess... I can work double shifts.

BETTY

I'll bring the papers by tomorrow. You want to hear something funny? I never loved you.

BETTY becomes DAUGHTER.

DAUGHTER

Hi, Dad.

GUY

Sweetheart, look at you. All grown up. How about a cup of coffee?

DAUGHTER

Sure.

GUY

You know, they made me Assistant Manager.

DAUGHTER

I heard. Congratulations.

GUY

But look at you! Going to Yale!

DAUGHTER

Uh, I graduated last year. I married an anarchist. We live on his parents' farm.

GUY

Oh. You do?

DAUGHTER

I came to hear your reading.

GUY

Reading?

DAUGHTER

Your poetry reading. Remember?

GUY

It's going too fast.

DAUGHTER

Oh! It's starting!

(to audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, the poetry reading will now begin!

GUY

Wait! I'm not ready!

(SPOTLIGHT on Guy; to audience)

Hello. Thank you — everyone — thank you for coming. If you'll just give me a moment, I'll...

(flips through journal)

I wanted to start tonight with a poem I wrote many years ago... when I first... when I first started working here...

(pages fall out; he drops journal)

...if you'll just bear with me a moment, I'll find it... I'll find it in a second. This poem is very important to me, it symbolizes... it symbolizes... I had it here earlier... If I could just have your attention, the reading will begin in a...

(SOUND OF VOICES, PEOPLE CHATTING)

Excuse me, if I could have your attention... Thank you. As I was saying, this poem is very close to my heart. It symbolizes a feeling of... a feeling of... as a young man I... before I started working here...

(VOICES RISE)

if you'll just be patient... Please. Could I have your attention? Could I please have your attention? Could everyone please...? If I could just have... for a moment.

(VOICES DIE DOWN)

Thank you. Thank you... You know, sometimes it feels... it feels as though... as though my whole life... has been spent... right here... in this café... serving...

(VOICES RISE AGAIN)

Please! If I could just have one minute!

DAUGHTER

Bye, dad! I have to go! I love you...

*DAUGHTER exits. VOICES
CONTINUE TO RISE.*

GUY

Wait! Wait! It's going too fast! Could everyone please stop for a minute? Please! I'm asking you! I'm begging you! I just need to get back... to get back... to where I started... Please, I'm asking you... I'm begging you... Could everyone please just stop! Please! Just stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop!

BLACKOUT.

End of play