

Setting:

A greasy spoon diner that could be anywhere in the U.S. All action takes place at a single table.

Scenic:

Formica diner table with two chairs.
Standing Sign by entrance that says "PLEASE WAIT TO BE SEATED"

Props:

Two coffee mugs
Two saucers
Two sets of silverware
Two laminated diner menus with illegible writing
Commercial Coffee Pot with Coffee (or colored liquid)
Order Pad
Pencil

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Joseph.....late 30's male

Waitress.....any age, any race, female

Manager...an elderly diner manager, any race, any gender

ACT ISCENE ONE: ARRIVAL

There are sounds of silverware clanging, flatware being stacked, and the sounds of a commercial griddle. It is a space abuzz. A busy diner.

A door chime is heard.

A man in his late 30's/early 40's, JOSEPH, enters the space and stops at a standalone sign that reads 'PLEASE WAIT TO BE SEATED'.

A WAITRESS in a diner uniform walks up to greet him.

WAITRESS

Right this way, hon.

WAITRESS grabs a single menu and walks toward a table.

JOSEPH follows her to the table. It is the only table in the space.

He sits down.

WAITRESS starts removing a second set of silverware and a second overturned coffee cup on a saucer.

JOSEPH

(abruptly)

Oh! No. My dad will be here soon. Thanks.

WAITRESS returns the silverware and places the second coffee cup, upright, on its saucer.

WAITRESS

Sure thing, sweetie. Coffee?

JOSEPH

Oh. Yes please.

WAITRESS turns his coffee cup upright and fills it.

She gestures about filling the second cup.

JOSEPH

Um, we can wait on that one. Don't want it to get cold.

WAITRESS

Of course. I'll come back in a minute.

WAITRESS walks away toward the kitchen.

JOSEPH fusses with things on the table, straightening them out, rearranging them, etc. and takes tiny sips of coffee.

SCENE TWO: READY?

A moment later, WAITRESS returns to the table with a notepad and pencil in hand.

She stands at the table expectantly.

She and JOSEPH take turns looking toward the door for the imminent arrival. They look at the door, the table, the door, each other. No one arrives.

WAITRESS

(breaking the routine)

You ready, hon?

JOSEPH is caught off guard.

JOSEPH

(absentmindedly)

I thought I was. Really. You know, you always think you'll be ready and you're not. But, hey...that's just kind of a fact of life, isn't it? Never really knowing if/

WAITRESS

To order, hon. Food.

JOSEPH

Oh my goodness. Right. Food.

(beat)

Sorry. One more minute?

WAITRESS puts her pen in her updo
and pad in her apron.

WAITRESS

Sure thing.

JOSEPH

Thanks.

(mouths inaudibly)

Sorry.

WAITRESS disappears back to the
kitchen.

SCENE THREE: MORE COFFEE?

WAITRESS returns to the table with
a pot of coffee.

She holds it up like a humble
offering and smiles.

WAITRESS

More coffee, sugar?

JOSEPH looks up at the coffee pot.
Then looks at WAITRESS in the face.
He smiles kindly.

JOSEPH

Oh. Yes, please. Thank you.

WAITRESS smiles back at JOSEPH.

She nods at his hand. His hand is
partially covering the rim of the
cup.

JOSEPH

Oh!

JOSEPH moves his hand immediately.

WAITRESS smiles again and fills the
cup.

WAITRESS

There you go, sweetie.

JOSEPH

Thank you kindly.

JOSEPH stirs the coffee, but did not mix anything into it.

WAITRESS notices the strange behavior.

WAITRESS

You okay? Have you heard anything yet? If he's almost here?
(beat)

Know what? You look like you could use something to eat, hon. How about I get you all squared away and you can maybe let me know what your old man might want. And we'll have it ready for you both to enjoy when he gets here.

(beat)

How's that sound?

JOSEPH

Wow. That is, just, so nice of you. My goodness. Wow.

(beat)

I...just realized that I haven't even looked at this menu yet.

JOSEPH picks up the large, laminated menu and studies it, turning it over and upside down to decipher it.

The writing on the menu looks like squiggly, blotchy hieroglyphics.

WAITRESS smiles again, and gently taps her pencil on her pad.

JOSEPH

You know, I come here all the time. You'd think I'd know what the menu is already. I mean, how many breakfast options could there be? Like 7?

(beat)

Do you have any specials today?

WAITRESS shifts her weight and is about to speak, but is interrupted by the entrance of an older man entering the space and approaching the table.

JOSEPH perks up when he sees the man approaching.

SCENE FOUR: IS EVERYTHING OK HERE?

MANAGER

Good morning. Is everything going ok here?

WAITRESS half looks over her
shoulder to answer the question.

WAITRESS

We're doing super here. Everything is great.

(beat)

I was just about to run through our specials this morning,
and you almost broke my concentration.

WAITRESS turns to face MANAGER.

MANAGER

(quietly to WAITRESS)

But, we don't have any specials this morning.

WAITRESS

(quietly to MANAGER)

Well, I'll just make something up then. You just don't know
how to be around people, do you?

(beat)

Lord, it ain't that hard.

MANAGER huffs away off to the
kitchen.

WAITRESS turns back to the table
where JOSEPH is attempting to look
like he wasn't paying attention.

MANAGER

(yelling back)

There are other tables too, you know!

JOSEPH and WAITRESS look around the
otherwise empty space.

WAITRESS

So sorry about that, shug.

JOSEPH

I hope I didn't get you in any kind of trouble with/

WAITRESS

Who? Him? HA! He's wound so tight, you could pull his pin
and he'd be going for weeks!

JOSEPH laughs politely, but is overshadowed by WAITRESS'S gut laugh.

JOSEPH
But really. I hope that I didn't/

WAITRESS
Really. Don't worry about it.
(beat)
Between you and me, he likes to think he runs this place,
but we all know who really keeps things moving around here.

WAITRESS makes a gesture with her thumb to indicate she and the other wait staff.

JOSEPH
Of course! That makes sense.

WAITRESS
Look. Take all the time you need. I'll be back in a bit with more coffee.

WAITRESS winks at JOSEPH and starts toward the kitchen yet again.

JOSEPH takes another sip from his coffee and sets the cup down.

SCENE FIVE: I JUST DON'T KNOW

JOSEPH
(to WAITRESS)
I don't know if he's gonna show up!

WAITRESS stops and turns to look at JOSEPH straight on.

The sounds of the diner fade out. The illusion is broken.

JOSEPH
I mean, sometimes he does. But other times, he doesn't. And I...I don't know.

WAITRESS starts walking slowly back to the table.

WAITRESS
And you can't/ (call him)

JOSEPH

Even when he was/

WAITRESS reaches the table and sits
down in the other chair. She looks
right at JOSEPH, truly seeing him.

WAITRESS

Oh. I see. And you/

JOSEPH

We weren't that close when I was growing up, and it really
wasn't even until I was an adult that we even felt like we
could be in the same room together, alone, for more than
five minutes.

(beat)

We would get breakfast. That's what it was. That's what we
did.

WAITRESS

That's sweet.

JOSEPH

I hate mornings. Early mornings were just never for me. It's
so hard for me to...But I would drag myself out of bed and
drive here to meet him, and we'd...we'd have breakfast
together.

(beat)

I couldn't even tell you what we would talk about, but we'd
be there, alone, for far more than five minutes, and it
always made me wonder if, had either of us been more willing
to put in that extra bit of effort before, would things have
been/

WAITRESS

Honey. You can't think of life in what if's or had I's. We
all do exactly as we do, and we all did exactly what we did.

JOSEPH

And I can't do any of it again.

(beat)

I can't.

WAITRESS

But you come here all the time, you said so yourself. Why
else would you/

JOSEPH

I come here because I hope that the memory will be enough to
get him here.

(beat)

To sit right there, across the table. Where you are now. Sip
black coffee, and order his eggs over-medium, and look out

(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)
that window there to make sure no one is messing with his truck. Ha.

WAITRESS chortles at this.

MANAGER re-enters carrying the coffee pot and heads for the table.

JOSEPH
And sometimes...he does.
(beat)
And sometimes, he shows up somewhere else completely different. But I try. I try here. Because/

MANAGER reaches the table, and offers to refill JOSEPH'S cup. JOSEPH nods and MANAGER pours.

JOSEPH
Thank you.

MANAGER nods to WAITRESS with the other cup.

WAITRESS
Thanks, but this one isn't mine.

JOSEPH
No, it's fine. Really. Please have/

WAITRESS
Honey, there is absolutely no world where I would dream of getting in the way of you and who you're waiting for.

WAITRESS stands up and places her hand on MANAGER'S bent elbow to escort him back to the kitchen.

MANAGER
You stay as long as you like.

WAITRESS
You stay as long as you need.

WAITRESS and MANAGER head back to the kitchen.

Sounds of a busy diner pick back up.

A door chime is heard.

JOSEPH looks in the direction of
the door chime.

He smiles slowly, overwhelmed with
emotion.

JOSEPH
(toward the door)

You came.

End Of Play.

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