

Café Play

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Characters:

Annabel – *café waitress*

Nigel – *café patron*

Jed – *café patron*

Katie – *café patron*

One other café patron (*could be the backstage person – this number could be increased if the backstage people want to watch part of the production from onstage*)

All named characters are probably relatively young.

Setting:

In a café – at least three tables. There are two exits: one to the café kitchen, and one to the street/men's room.

Katie, Nigel and Jed are seated at different tables. Katie has a mug of coffee. Jed has no cup. Katie is reading a book. Music. There is a silent routine of inquisitive body language going on between the three. Annabel enters from kitchen. Music fades.

Annabel: *(nonchalantly dumping mug of coffee on Nigel's table)* Here!

Annabel exits to kitchen. Nigel realises that there is no sugar on his table. He gets up and goes to Jed's table.

Nigel: Can I borrow that?

Jed: Yeah.

Nigel puts sugar into his coffee and returns it to Jed's table.

Nigel: Thanks.

He returns to his own table, having left his teaspoon in the sugar bowl. He realises and gets up again.

Nigel: Excuse me.

He takes the spoon, returns to his own table and stirs the coffee. He does not know where to put the teaspoon. Annabel enters from kitchen.

Nigel: *(handing Annabel the teaspoon)* Here.

Annabel: *(to Jed)* Everything all right?

Jed: Fine.

Annabel: Good. *(Pause)*. Nothing to eat?

Jed: Look, if I wanted to drink any more of your camel piss I'd ask.

Annabel: Oh.

Annabel exits to kitchen.

Katie: *(across to Nigel)* Bit of a prick.

Jed: What?

Katie: You.

Jed: Why?

Pause.

Katie: *(to Nigel)* Bit of a prick.

Nigel: Who?

Katie: Him.

Nigel: Why?

Pause. Annabel enters from kitchen.

Annabel: *(to Katie)* Everything all right?

Katie: Fine thanks. Bit of a prick.

Annabel: Who?

Katie: Him.

Annabel: You picked that up?

Jed: Picked up what?

Annabel: Nothing.

Jed: Picked up what?

Annabel: *(to Nigel)* Everything all right?

Nigel: Yeah. Fine. Fine. Might have another cup.

Annabel takes his mug.

Annabel: You haven't finished.

Nigel: Latte.

Annabel: I can see that from the mug, drongo.

Annabel exits to kitchen. Pause.

Nigel: *(to Jed)* What's she on about?

Jed: Who?

Nigel: The waitress.

Jed: Her? Didn't notice.

Nigel: *(shifting to Jed's table)* "Everything all right?"

Jed: *(not observing that Nigel is imitating Annabel)* Why?

Nigel: No. The waitress.

Jed: Waitress? What?

Nigel: Nothing. Shit.

Pause.

Katie: You notice sweet all.

Jed: Sweet all what?

Katie: You insult the waitress and don't even notice.

Jed: Notice what?

Katie: The waitress.

Jed: What? She got leprosy?

Katie: Ooh...

Jed: Shit.

Nigel: *(embarrassed)* Sooo ...

Pause.

Jed: *(to Nigel)* You from these parts?

Nigel: Yeah.

Annabel enters from kitchen with Nigel's cup.

Annabel: Which one is it?

Nigel: Me.

Annabel: There.

Annabel goes to exit.

Nigel: Wrong stuff. I said latte.

Annabel: You had cappuccino first time.

Nigel: I said latte.

Jed: Look. If I said I wanted two budgies to the pet shop man, doesn't mean I want two blue ones.

Katie: Stuff your budgies.

Nigel: I said latte. You mightn't've heard.

Katie: You might've mumbled.

Jed: *(to Katie)* Stick to your table.

Katie: And yours.

Annabel: *(taking cup)* The customer's always right, but in your case I'll make an exception.

Annabel exits to kitchen.

Nigel: *(to Jed)* I'm Nigel.

Jed: What?

Pause.

Nigel: You got budgies?

Jed: No. Why?

Katie: Oh for shit sake.

Nigel: Who pressed your button?

Pause. Annabel enters from kitchen without cup.

Annabel: *(to Katie)* Nothing else?

Katie: Fine.

Jed: My mate's coffee.

Annabel: It's coming. They're making it.

Jed: Bit slow.

Katie: Fast enough.

Annabel: Look, I've got enough on my plate without...

Jed: He's got nothing on his.

Annabel: I've got varsity exams. I've got two papers to finish. I'm up to here with work and I have to...

Jed: Up to where? Eyes or tits?

Katie: *(standing and coming over)* For shit sake. Why are you doing this? What's the big deal about...

Jed: *(standing)* Keep out of this.

Katie: Misogynist.

Jed: Miss who, nosy bitch?

Katie: I know you?

Nigel: She can fight her own battles.

Jed: Who?

Annabel: I'll win when he's fat and bald.

Jed: Who?

Annabel: He'll get fat and bald.

Nigel: Oh yeah.

Jed: Bull shit.

Katie: Ha! So you do care?

Jed: I don't give a stuff.

Long pause. Katie returns to her own table. Jed sits. Annabel exits to kitchen.

Katie: Look, I came in for a quiet cup of coffee.

Jed: Well shut up then.

Pause.

Jed: Go to the library if you want to read.

Katie: *(to Nigel)* He likes me. That's his trouble. He likes me.

Jed: Phah.

Pause.

Katie: I don't even know your name.

Jed: Jed.

Katie: Did I ask?

Pause.

Nigel: Is that short for Gerard?

Katie snaps her book shut.

Katie: *(standing)* I'm off.

Jed: Why?

Katie: I'm just off, that's all.

Jed: Why?

Katie: *(annoyed)* I'm just off.

She exits to street, leaving her book on the table. Nigel moves to Jed's table.

Nigel: Sooo ...

Pause.

Jed: She left her book.

Pause.

Jed: Wonder what it is?

He reaches over and takes book.

Nigel: Who cares?

Jed: She was a bit of all right.

Annabel enters from kitchen with Nigel's cappuccino.

Annabel: There.

Jed: Might return it.

Annabel: The coffee? That's typical.

Jed: The book. Her book.

Annabel exits to kitchen, not having heard.

Nigel: You know where she lives?

Jed: Not yet.

Jed rises.

Nigel: You off?

Jed: Yeah.

Nigel: Oh... See you.

Jed exits to street. Nigel continues to sit. Pause. Annabel enters from kitchen.

Annabel: Okay?

Nigel: *(who has been thinking)* Did you know that when you put the coffee down you sometimes say "Here" and sometimes you say "There"?

Annabel: Yep.

Nigel: Why?

Annabel: Could be a game eh? It could mean something.

Nigel: Mean something what?

Annabel: It's private.

Nigel: What?

Annabel: Here and there.

Annabel exits to kitchen. Pause. Annabel enters from kitchen as Katie enters from street.

Katie: Have you seen my book?

Annabel: *(to Nigel)* You seen her book?

Nigel: He took it.

Katie: Who?

Nigel: That joker before.

Annabel: Him?

Nigel: Jed.

Annabel: You know him.

Nigel: No.

Katie: Can't have taken it. I just passed him.

Nigel: Can't've seen you.

Katie: I did. We talked.

Nigel: Can't've. He would've given it to you.

Katie: I did.

Nigel: What?

Katie: Talk to him.

Nigel: Well bullshit for you.

Katie: If you really want to know...

Nigel: What?

Katie: He asked about you.

Nigel: *(interested)* Did he? What did he say?

Katie: He said, "Is that guy gay?"

Annabel snorts.

Nigel: *(embarrassed)* What?

Annabel exits to kitchen as Katie exits to street.

Katie: *(exiting)* Funny he didn't give it to me.

Annabel: *(exiting)* He will later – that's the idea.

Nigel sits.

Nigel: Shit.

Nigel rises and exits to street. Brief empty stage. Annabel enters from kitchen and begins cleaning tables. Jed enters from street. They sit at a table.

Jed: *(laughing)* Did she tell him?

Annabel: (*demonstrating*) She stood here and said, “Are you gay?”

Jed: Straight out?

Annabel: Yep.

Jed: Shit. Where she gone now?

Annabel: She’s left.

Jed: Did she say where?

Annabel: No.

Pause.

Jed: Hey, I liked the varsity bit.

Annabel: (*suddenly annoyed*) Look, why you playing these games? Why you following me around? Why can’t you let sleeping dogs lie?

Jed: Well, I...

Annabel: We went out. That’s all.

Jed: But I...

Annabel: We used to play these restaurant “I-hate-your-guts” games when we were going out. But it’s over now. We don’t play them any more. Stop following me around.

Jed: But it’s not over. I still love...

Annabel: You don’t! It’s over. I don’t love you, Jed. I never have. We just went out. That’s all.

Jed: But it’s not, Annabel. I still...

Annabel: Don’t give me that crap. Don’t come in here all the time and carry on with the same games we played when we were friends.

Jed: So we’re not even friends now?

Annabel: Well, yes – we can be friends if you’d stop owning me. We’re not lovers. Okay?

Jed: (*close to tears*) Shit!

Pause.

Annabel: I thought I made it clear. I said before, we're finished. I say it again for the last time: we can be friends, but it's over.

Pause. Backstage person-patron enters from street and sits at a table.

Annabel: *(still flustered, to backstage patron-person)* Yes?

Patron: Coffee please.

Annabel: Isn't the door locked?

Patron: I got in didn't I?

Annabel: What sort then? Short black? Long black? Espresso? Cappuccino? Latte? Decaffeinated latte?...

Patron: I don't know the fancy names. The stuff with the fluff on.

Annabel: A teddy bear? I'll get it, sir (madam). It'll be cappuccino.

Annabel exits to kitchen. Pause.

Jed: Fluffy stuff.

Annabel enters from kitchen.

Annabel: *(passing backstage patron-person)* It's on the way.

Annabel goes over to Jed.

Annabel: Um. I was a bit hard. I'm sorry. Um. What you doing tonight? Around seven?

Jed: Nothing.

Annabel: What about coming around here eh?

Jed: After work?

Annabel: Just for a chat.

Jed: *(rising)* Okay.

Annabel: Just for a chat.

Jed: Okay. I'll be off then.

Annabel: About seven.

Jed: See you.

Jed exits to street. Annabel continues to clean up, exiting to kitchen with dishes and then entering with backstage patron-person's coffee.

Annabel: *(dumping coffee on table)* There.

She exits to kitchen again, then reappears and continues wiping the tables. Katie enters from street.

Katie: Has he gone?

Annabel: Yep.

Katie: Is that the guy?

Annabel: A good game eh?

Katie: Excellent!

Pause.

Katie: He didn't know I was in on it?

Annabel: No.

Katie: But he's got my book.

Annabel: I'll get it back. I'll see him again.

Katie: Who was that other fellow?

Annabel: Him? Dunno.

Katie: Nigel someone.

Annabel: God he was embarrassed.

Katie: He must be really gay. He froze.

Annabel: Why?

Katie: If he wasn't he would've reacted.

Annabel: So what you doing tonight?

Katie: Nothing.

Annabel: Well come round here after work. About seven. We'll plan the next move.

Katie: Excellent! See you.

Katie exits to street. Annabel finishes wiping tables. Backstage patron-person rises.

Annabel: You finished?

Patron exits to street. Annabel wipes patron's table and exits to kitchen with cup. Nigel enters from street.

Nigel: *(looking around)* Hey.

Annabel enters from kitchen.

Annabel: You? What?

Nigel: I forgot to pay.

Annabel: Oh. We'll fix that.

They exit to kitchen.

Annabel: *(exiting)* Um. What you doing to night? Around seven?

Empty stage. Music, or clock ticks frantically. Lights fade.

Lights rise. Music and/or clock fades. Annabel is sitting at a table with a mug of coffee. Katie enters from street.

Annabel: Oh. Hi.

Katie: Hi.

Annabel: *(getting up)* Do you want a coffee?

Katie: Yeah, just an ordinary one thanks.

Annabel exits to kitchen. Jed enters from street.

Jed: What you doing here?

Katie: I dunno. What you doing here?

Jed: I dunno.

Jed sits at same table as Katie in Annabel's chair.

Katie: Annabel was sitting there.

Jed: Well bully for you.

Katie: Where's my book?
Jed: What book?
Katie: My book. You took it.
Jed: What book?
Katie: My bloody book!
Jed: Why would I want your book?
Katie: They said you took it. I left it here earlier.
Jed: I can't help it if you're forgetful.

Getting more intense.

Katie: Look. I left my book here. They said you took it.
Jed: Well they're wrong. Whoever "they" is.
Katie: Are.
Jed: Are what?
Katie: They ARE.
Jed: Are what? (*Amused*) Shit! (*Slight giggle*).

Pause.

Katie: Now I'll never know if they got it off.
Jed: Who?
Katie: In the book.
Jed: They did.
Katie: So you read it. You've got it.
Jed: No. They always do. Get it off. In a book. Even if the author doesn't tell you, they get it off.
Katie: You've got balls in your head.
Jed: Join the human race.

Pause. Annabel enters from kitchen with Katie's coffee.

Annabel: *(dumping mug on table)* There! *(To Jed)* You're in my chair.

She stands and waits.

Jed: There's four chairs.

Katie: Three for the three bears and one for Goldilocks.

Jed: What?

Katie: What what?

Jed: Three bears or something.

Katie: It's a literary reference you probably wouldn't get.

Annabel: *(still standing)* Well?

Pause.

Annabel: Are you going to give the lady her chair?

Jed: No.

Annabel: That's my coffee there in front of the chair.

Jed: So?

Pause.

Annabel: I'm waiting.

Pause.

Jed: Just sit somewhere else.

Annabel: No.

Katie: Oh for shit's sake.

Pause. Stand off. Nigel enters from street.

Nigel: *(to Jed and Katie)* What are you doing here?

Annabel: Hi.

Katie: What are you doing here?

Jed: The faggot's back.

Nigel: I'm going.

Annabel: No. Don't go. Don't go.

Jed: He had no intention of going. He likes me.

Nigel: Oh yeah.

Katie: *(to Jed)* Perhaps you're...

Jed: What?

Katie: ...that way inclined.

Pause.

Katie: *(to Nigel)* Sit.

Nigel sits.

Jed: *(to Annabel)* I wouldn't mind a coffee.

Annabel: Well get one.

Jed: Latte.

Annabel: Instant or nothing. Go get it.

Jed: *(getting up)* Shit. What are women for?

Jed exits to kitchen.

Annabel: *(sitting in chair)* Triumph.

Nigel: *(to Katie)* So what you doing here?

Katie: I'm allowed to.

Jed: *(from café kitchen door)* Where's the instant?

Annabel: In the cupboard above the sink.

Jed: Which sink? It's not there.

Annabel: *(getting up)* Ah.

Annabel exits to kitchen.

Katie: *(to Nigel)* You've got to be more aggressive.

Nigel: With what?

Katie: You've got to really insult me and shock them.

Nigel: It's against my nature.

Katie: Then the game don't work.

Annabel enters from kitchen and sits.

Annabel: Dumb arse.

Pause.

Nigel: Soooo... Why did you invite me here?

Katie: She didn't. I was.

Jed enters from kitchen and puts coffee on table.

Jed: Gotta pee.

Jed departs out street exit. Nigel takes Jed's coffee and piles sugar in it and stirs it.

Annabel: He doesn't take sugar.

Nigel: How you know that?

Annabel: Just do. Just noticed. How do you know he doesn't?

Nigel: He's too sour to take sugar.

Jed returns from men's room.

Katie: *(blowing air)* Phehhhh.

Backstage person-patron enters from street.

Patron: Are you open?

Jed: Are we open?

Patron: Well?

Annabel: No, I'm sorry we're closed.

Patron: Oh. Well. Thanks. You should lock the door or something.

Patron exits to street.

Katie: (to Nigel) Do you want a coffee?

Jed: (tasting his coffee) What the... who did that? (To Annabel) Did you sugar my coffee?

Annabel: No.

Jed: (to Katie) Did you?

Katie: No.

Jed: (to Nigel) Did...

Nigel: (getting up) I'm innocent. (To Katie) You know where the coffee's kept?

Katie: We'll find it.

Katie and Nigel exit to the café kitchen. Their dialogue at first is a muffled conversation of incomprehensibility to the audience: unless they call out, in which case the audience can hear it. Eventually the entire argument can be heard by the audience.

Nigel: Where did she say the coffee was? Was it under the sink?

Katie: No, I think it was above the sink.

Nigel: In a cupboard or somewhere.

Katie: Here.

Nigel: (calling out) Annabel, where did you say the coffee was? Was it under the sink?

Katie: I've found it.

Annabel: (calling back) Above the sink.

Nigel: Which sink?

Katie: I've found it.

Nigel: (calling out) Where's the hot water?

Annabel: (calling back) Above the sink.

Katie: (calling back) That's where the coffee is.

Annabel: The other sink.

Nigel: I don't see it.

Annabel: It hasn't moved.

Katie: Got it.

Jed: Good God.

All dialogue is now clearly heard as it grows into a shouting match.

Katie: I didn't say you were gay.

Nigel: Someone did. Someone told them I was gay.

Katie: It wasn't me.

Nigel: Bullshit.

Katie: It wasn't me.

Jed: *(to Annabel)* It was.

Nigel: You're just a bare-faced liar. You know it's not true.

Katie: Don't go accusing me of things you know nothing about.

Nigel: Bullshit. You told them.

Katie: Don't bullshit me, you still-in-the-closet peacock. You're not being honest with yourself.

Nigel: Not being honest? What do you mean by that? Don't go telling me what I am. I know what I am.

Katie: You're in denial.

Nigel: Don't tell me how I feel. I know how I feel. I hate people telling me how I feel. *(It is now extremely loud)*. I know how I feel. I'll tell you if I'm being honest or not with myself. You're not...

Katie: Oh shut up.

Sounds of pots or cups thrown.

Katie: Don't chuck things at me you slimy bastard.

Nigel: Don't slimy-bastard me. I hate being told how I feel.

Katie: I've enough of your sexist nose-in-the-air better than thou...

Nigel: Look who's talking.

Sound of a huge gunshot.

Jed: Holy shit.

Annabel: It was a gun.

Jed: Well fuck me. *(Standing)* I'm going.

Annabel: What'll we do? Call the police.

Jed: Holy shit.

Annabel: The phone's in there *(gesturing towards café kitchen)*. Go and get it.

Jed: I'm not going no where. I'm off. I'm off. Holy Moses.

Annabel: We've got to do something. We can't leave it.

Jed: Bugger that. *(Going to street exit and returning)* Bugger me.

Annabel: God.

Jed: *(sitting)* I'm going.

Annabel: What'll we do? What'll we do?

Katie and Nigel enter from the kitchen and cross the room arm in arm towards the street exit.

Nigel: Have a nice day.

Katie: Don't forget my book, asshole.

They exit to street.

Jed: Shitty death.

Pause.

Jed: Bloody hell.

Pause.

Jed: Holy shit.

Lights fade.