

Cup of Joe

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Setting

Small coffee shop – two tables with two chairs each

Characters

Delia – woman around fifty, modestly dressed, almost nun like

Walter – mid to late fifties, rumpled suit, loosened tie – loud talker

Stephen – late twenties

Zoe- late twenties

Lauren – server– early twenties, very pretty

Maria– server – between mid-twenties and mid-thirties

The scene opens with Stephen and Zoe are at other table, mugs and empty plates in front of them. Delia sitting at one of the tables, sipping tea from an oversized mug while reading a book. No light on her.

Zoe

I'm really glad that you called me, Stephen. Lynn's been telling me all about you.

Stephen

Me, too. That picture of the both of you skydiving was awesome!

Zoe

Thanks. It was one of the most thrilling moments of my life. I'm not usually a risk taker.

Stephen

I know what you mean. I've decided to stop playing it safe. It was time to meet new people.

Zoe

I couldn't agree more!

Stephen

Say have you ever...

Zoe

What do you think about...

Stephen

You go ahead. *(sips his coffee)*

Zoe

Thanks. What do you think about marriage?

Stephen chokes on his coffee

Stephen

Marriage in general? Well, um, I think it a fine idea. Why?

Zoe

I was just curious.

Stephen

Gotcha. How about you? What do you think about marriage?

Zoe

I guess you could say that I have hope. You know what I mean?

Stephen nods, sipping coffee. Lights down on them, up on Delia. Walter is talking on a cell phone as he enters.

Walter

Look, I've explained this to you twice. I made the appointment last week. *(brief pause as he listens)* No, damn it, I will not hold. Wait, wait! Don't transfer me...

Walter slams his phone down on the table in front of Delia. Delia puts her book down and looks up at him.

Delia

What's wrong, dear?

Walter

It's that damned sales manager. He still hasn't shown up even though they told me it would be today. I can't hang around all day waiting. I'm a busy man!

(He hangs his suit coat on the back of his chair and sits down heavily in chair opposite Delia)

Delia

Maybe they made a mistake at the...

Walter

(interrupting) This trip's been a complete waste of time. If they had told me that I couldn't see the guy, I would've stayed home. Wait a minute. Are you taking their side?

Delia

I'm not but maybe you're being a teensy bit impatient.

Walter

Me? Impatient? I'm the most patient man you know.

Delia

Yes, I guess you're right. I'm sorry.

Walter

Oh my God! Stop apologizing all the time. Grow a spine!

Delia puts her hand over her eyes. Walter looks around then pats her on the hand

Walter

There, there, Delia. Is it some hormonal thing again? I thought we were done with that.

As light comes up on Stephen & Zoe, Stephen turns to look at them.

Stephen

(stage whisper) What a jerk.

Zoe

I know. Neanderthal. Reminds me of my dad.

Delia

(turns away from him) Oh, Walter. We're in public! Please use some discretion.

Walter

(embarrassed) You women. It's always something. I never know what will set you off.
(Delia glares at him but quickly looks down when she turns back)

Walter

(Clears throat and looks away, notices Stephen and Zoe looking at him) You got something to say, kid?

Stephen

Huh? What's your problem, dude?

Walter

People like you are my problem dude.

Zoe

Stephen, don't even bother.

Stephen

(turning away) Jesus. I didn't know guys like him still existed.

Zoe

That's what I'm afraid of.

Delia

It's okay, dear. You've been under so much stress at work. *(gives a brave little smile)*

Walter

I don't know why you like it here. *(Looks around for a server, see no one and shouts)* Can I get some service?

Delia

My sister and I stop here every time we come downtown shopping. I thought that it would be a nice place to wait for you.

Lauren enters from stage right and quickly approaches table

Lauren

(Slightly out of breath) My name is Lauren. I'm so sorry. I hope you weren't waiting long. It's my first day and I'm still trying to figure things out. What can I get you?

Walter

(gives her the once over, slightly flirtatious) What I'd like is one thing. What I'll have is coffee with cream, no sugar.

Lauren

(ignores his tone) I just put on a fresh pot. It'll only take a few minutes. Would you like pastry?

Walter

If I wanted anything else, I would have asked for it. Did I say I wanted pastry? I tell you, Delia, that's the problem with our country. No one pays attention. We're going to hell in a handbasket.
(Lauren exits)

Delia

I listen to you, Walter. I've been listening for thirty long years.

Walter

Of course you do. It's your job as a woman. Where would you be without me?

Delia

Gee, I don't know. Alone?

Walter

You'd never make it on your own. Too weak and indecisive. Your father understood that. I'll never forget how he took me aside at the church and told me to take care of his little girl and I've done it. *(He puffs his chest out and starts looking at his phone, ignoring Delia)*

Delia

(Sarcastically) Yes, dear. You certainly have.

Walter

When I finally kick the bucket, you'll have nothing to worry about.

Delia

That does give me great comfort, dear.

Walter

(ignoring her) Do you know why? Because I'm the man of the family and no wife of mine ever had to work.

Delia

I would have like to have worked once the children were in school.

Walter

Nonsense! What could be better than caring for your husband and family? Not to mention you're just not suited for the business world. No woman is.

Delia

I did go to college, you may recall.

Walter

Sure but that was just until you hooked yourself a husband. Got that MRS Degree, right?

Delia

Yes, you've expressed that many times over the years. *(looks around)* I wonder what happened to Maria. She was the one who waited on me the last time we were in town. Lovely woman.

Walter

(looks up) What? Who cares? You know how it is with those people; always taking jobs from legal citizens.

Delia

Perhaps but she seemed nice.

Walter

That's the trouble with you. You think everyone is nice.

Delia

(under her breath) Not anymore.

Walter

What was that?

Delia

Nothing, dear. Just thinking out loud.

Walter

Well, stop it. You'll end up like your mother, talking to empty chairs. Plus it's annoying as hell. *(His phone rings)* Hello? Um, I can't talk right now. Meet you tonight? Yes, I can manage that. Uh huh. Uh huh. Okay. See you later.

Lauren enters with a mug of coffee. She places it on the table in front of Walter

Lauren

Here you are! Enjoy!

Walter smiles at her and takes a sip

Walter

Jesus Christ, this is awful! Are you sure it's fresh?

Lauren

Yes, I just made it. I'm so sorry, sir. *(She reaches to take the cup)* Do you want a fresh cup?

Walter

(waving Lauren back) No, I don't have time. Just bring me more cream.

Lauren exits. Walter picks up his phone again, ignoring Delia. Lauren returns with cream.

Lauren

Your cream, sir (*places a small pitcher in front of Walter who ignores her*)

Delia

Thank you ever so much

Stephen

Excuse me. Can I get a refill?

Lauren

Of course. (*turns to Zoe*) Would you like some, also?

Zoe

No, thanks

Lauren exits

Stephen

Lynn told me we have a lot in common.

Zoe

So she said. Want to play a little game?

Stephen

Um, what sort of game?

Zoe

A getting acquainted game. I read about it in Cosmopolitan.

Stephen

Sure, why not?

Zoe

Awesome! I'll start. (*beaming at him*) What's your favorite world cuisine?

Stephen

Oh, Thai for sure.

Zoe

Me, too! Okay, How about your favorite kind of movies?

Stephen

I really like foreign films but will see sci fi if I think the storylines thoroughly address the fragility of the human condition.

Zoe

(*leaning in*) Ooh, me, too. We do have a lot in common. Your turn to ask a question.

Stephen

(a little desperately) Um, what's your favorite book?

Zoe

I love anything by Jane Austen. *(sighs)* Life was better back then.

Stephen

Not for everyone. It was if you had money. Otherwise life could be short and very hard.

Zoe

What? I don't agree with you. Big houses, parties, servants...

Stephen

Oh brother. Money, it all took money.

Zoe

A girl can dream, can't she?

Stephen

(aside) Not with my money.

Walter

What? Did you say something? Oh, the cream. It took her long enough. *(He pours cream into his coffee and takes a sip)* Well, that's a little better.

Delia

I'm glad. What are we doing for dinner tonight? Something special, I hope.

Walter

Dinner? I have to see a client tonight. That was the call I just got. Gotta wine and dine em. I don't know why you wanted to stay downtown. I told you I'd be busy.

Delia

I don't know. It's been so long since we've been away. I was hoping it could be like a second honeymoon. I guess I can get a glass of wine in the bar and then dinner.

Walter

Absolutely not!

Delia

What do you mean? I have to eat.

Walter

Do you know what kind of men are in hotel bars?

Delia

Yes, I have some idea.

Walter

How could you? Traveling businessmen, just looking to pick up lonely women. No, you order room service and knit or crochet or whatever it is you do.

Delia

Whatever you say, dear. You know best.

Walter

You got that right! Don't bother waiting up. I'll be late. *(Standing)* Where's the men's room? I gotta take a leak.

Delia

The restrooms are over by the kitchen.

Once Walter exits, Delia stands up and reaches into Walter's coat. She removes his wallet from the inside pocket, picks up his phone, puts them in her purse and sits back down. Lights up on both couples

Stephen

I've got to go put some more money in the meter. Be right back.

He exits. Delia smiles at Zoe.

Delia

You two make a lovely couple.

Zoe

Oh, we're not a couple. This is a blind date.

Delia

What fun! How's it going?

Zoe

It's hard to tell. He seems to have a major character flaw.

Delia

Ah, well. Men can be like that. Maybe it's something that can you overlook. *(aside)* for now.

Both Stephen and Walter return and sit back down

Zoe

(standing up) Thanks for the cup of coffee but I just don't see the point of continuing.

Stephen

What? We've hardly spent any time together and we're having such a nice time. Are you sure?

Zoe

Yes, I'm sure. Any man who doesn't understand the importance of Jane Austen to English literature could never capture my heart. *(Exits)*

Walter

I'd say you dodged the old ball and chain there, son. *(laughs)*

Delia

Walter, this is none of our business! You'll make people think you don't like being married.

Walter

Gee, Delia. Whatever gave you that idea? *(laughs)*

Stephen

(to Walter) You know, I think you may be right. She wasn't my type anyway. *(sigh of relief, exits whistling)*

Walter

Wow, I'm getting a hell of a headache. Must be those pillows at the hotel. Too soft.

Delia

Yes, they were. I may have some aspirin in my bag. Do you want a couple?

Walter

Naw, you know I don't take that crap. I'll finish my coffee. Maybe that'll help.

Delia

Shall I get the server to warm it up?

Walter

Don't bother. It has a funny taste. Must be the city water. Not like our good clean water at home.
(Walter drains his cup)

Delia

Maybe you should take a stroll to clear your head before you meet your client.

Walter

That's the first good idea you've had in twenty years. *(He stands up and puts his coat on)*

Delia

There's a lovely park by the river. You could walk there.

Walter

Maybe I will. Jesus, it feels like the top of my head is coming off. See you later. Don't wait up.
(Exits)

Delia

Goodbye, Walter.

Delia picks up her book and begins to read. Lauren enters and sits down opposite her.

Delia

(without looking up) So how long does it take?

Lauren

It depends. Usually 30 – 40 minutes. The headache is the first symptom.

Delia

Perfect. He has no identification on him. Poor Walter. It'll be a pauper's grave for him. *She pulled a small key out of her jacket pocket and slid it across the table.*

Delia

Your payment is in the locker at the bus station. You'll take care of the cup and pitcher?

Lauren

Part of the service. *(Standing up)* It's been a pleasure doing business with you. *She extends her right hand.*

Delia

No, thank you. I'd rather not.

Lauren

I understand. I get that a lot. *(She takes Walter's mug and the pitcher exits)*
Delia picks up her books and takes a sip from her mug. A young woman rushes in.

Maria

Thank you so much for watching the shop, Delia. Did anything happen?

Delia

Not a thing, Maria. Was everything okay?

Maria

Yes but it was strange. The text wasn't from the kids' school. Someone must have sent it to him by mistake. It was just my husband worrying about nothing. You know how husbands can be.

Delia

I certainly do.

Maria

Well, thanks again. I'm so glad that you were in today. It really helped.

Delia

Please don't worry about it. May I get another cup of this delicious tea?

Maria

Of course! Do you have everything you need?

Delia

(smiling broadly) Oh, yes. Everything is just perfect.

THE END