

HURRICANE COFFEE/ SOUTH CAROLINA  
*S1E1 There's coffee and there's Coffee-Coffee*

Written by  
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Based on a true story

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**TEASER:**

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - MORNING

A mismatched sandwich/coffee shop with an apothecary cabinet and a tiny stage. A chalkboard menu and coffee equipment behind the counter. Comfy tables and couches spread around.

JAMIE (8), creative, energetic, lip synchs on the stage. A pickle for a microphone. Bows to an imaginary audience. Takes a bite of her 'microphone'. Begins making faces into the camera on her laptop.

Across the room, MISTINA (38ish), queen of the chaos, coffee driven, bleeding heart, works on her espresso machine. The side is off.

MISTINA

If it's the compressor, I'm  
screwed.

EDDIE (post 40's), overthinker, conspiracy theorist, working on a manuscript, looks up from a nearby table.

EDDIE

This isn't random. It's a perfect  
example of Corporate Greed making  
faulty equipment to keep you coming  
back.

MISTINA

Eddie, Corporate Greed doesn't care  
about me. They...

A loud 'POP'. Mistina jumps back with a squeal. The overhead lights blink.

DEREK (43ish), dry humor, ex-military, walks with a cane, leans on the counter watching her.

DEREK

Definitely electrical.

MISTINA

Thanks, Captain Obvious. Maybe it's  
a loose wire.

EDDIE

Call an electrician.

MISTINA

That takes money.

She rips electrical tape with her teeth.

DEREK  
Clearly qualified.

MISTINA  
You the safety inspector?

DEREK  
(leering)  
Do I get to pick what I inspect?

Mistina rolls her eyes.

RILEY (late 30's), tattoos, intense, mixes syrups down the counter. She holds up a container.

RILEY  
Inspect this...Maple-bacon vanilla.  
Today's flavor experience. I should  
work here.

MISTINA  
I can't even pay myself.

RILEY  
Making your own syrups saves a  
bundle. And a signature drink could  
bring in customers.

EDDIE  
I like it. Breakfast in a cup.

DEREK  
Is nothing sacred from pig being  
added to it?

RILEY  
You want boring? Head down the  
street.

DEREK  
No. No. I'm saving myself for steak  
a la mocha.

TRAVIS (40ish), cowboy, resume of a hundred jobs-master of none, kicks back at Eddie's table, twirling drumsticks.

TRAVIS  
We can always turn this place into  
a rock venue.

MISTINA

The object is to make the coffee shop work and provide resources for the community. Also...do you even have a job right now?

TRAVIS

I'm freelancing.

Derek settles himself at the guy's table.

DEREK

Freelancing what? Napping?

TRAVIS

That's mean. I happen to have an interview today for a back-up drummer. In the meantime...

Travis joins her behind the counter, bowing deeply.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

...allow my extensive resume to let me shine.

MISTINA

(grin)

Great. Where in your resume does 'freelancer' and 'drummer' help this situation?

TRAVIS

(mock offended)

Excuse me? I once worked a week as an electrician's helper...besides, I can't break what's already broken.

MISTINA

Joking aside--I'm pretty good at repairs. Worst case--I'll bring my home machine tomorrow.

RILEY

Great. Nothing says quality like a two-dollar machine from Salvation Army.

TRAVIS

What happened to the days when a woman thought it was sexy to have a handyman around...

DEREK  
...because nothing says, 'back in  
the game', like three bachelors  
living together.

TRAVIS  
Speak for yourself. I've still got  
my best moves.  
(drum roll on the counter)  
Wanna come over and see my...drums?

DEREK  
That's not a pickup line. That's a  
'noise complaint'.

Mistina pushes Travis out of her space.

MISTINA  
Let's move all that talent to the  
other side of the counter.

KAREN, corporate dress, walks in, carrying a clipboard.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Karen, are you here to try out our  
new coffee flavor?

KAREN  
Sorry. No. I'm here to  
discuss...oops.

A piece of paper floats to the floor. Mistina picks it up.

MISTINA  
Toilet paper, cold medicine,  
avocados?

KAREN  
I'm the worst at this. And the  
thing is...I love what you're doing  
here.

She swaps papers with Mistina.

KAREN (CONT'D)  
An eviction notice. The complex was  
just bought out.

Silence. Mistina clenches her fists.

MISTINA  
I don't get it. I pay monthly...

KAREN  
 Paying at the end of the month  
 is...irregular. You're technically  
 a full month behind.

Mistina gapes. Her friends exchange wide eyed shock.

KAREN (CONT'D)  
 ...plus CAM charges.

MISTINA  
 What? But you told me I could--

KAREN  
 The new owner wants the books in  
 order and the payments...on time.

EDDIE  
 Typical. Big Corporate squeezing  
 the little guy.

MISTINA  
 Eddie. Not helping.

Karen backs to the door. Uncomfortable.

KAREN  
 I'm just the property management. I  
 have to follow the owner's rules.

MISTINA  
 Five days? I've only got five days  
 to pay rent again? Otherwise...

KAREN  
 ...You'll have two weeks to vacate  
 the premise.

**END TEASER**

ACT ONE

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - MORNING

Mistina flings herself on a chair. The friends group around.

MISTINA

They're throwing me out. I'm losing  
my shop.

Jamie runs to put her arms around her. Silence. Absorbing her words. Riley begins pacing.

RILEY

Breathe. Do they even know how much  
this place means to people?--It  
doesn't matter. We'll figure this  
out.

JAMIE

Mom. Do we have to go back to the  
coffee truck?

Mistina gives Jamie a reassuring hug.

MISTINA

We'll figure it out, Jamie. Can you  
put the pickles away?

Jamie takes her laptop with her. Eddie studies the notice.

EDDIE

Look at this font. All capital  
letters. Complete intimidation.

Riley looks over his shoulder. Her mouth opens. Astonished.

RILEY

That's a lot for CAM charges.

DEREK

CAM charges?

EDDIE

Common area maintenance. Basically  
it's a scam.

RILEY

So, haul away your own garbage.

MISTINA

CAM charges are a lot more than  
alley cleanup.

DEREK

Increase your insurance, you know,  
in case...there's a fire?

EDDIE

All joking aside, I could make a  
power point presentation. *"Why  
Hurricane Coffee is Important to  
this Community"*

DEREK

Nothing like a power point to have  
them lining up at the door.

EDDIE

For the landlord. Maybe it would  
encourage him to work with Mistina.

RILEY

I could make syrups and we could  
sell them.

MISTINA

I appreciate that everyone's trying  
to cheer me up, but none of that is  
going to make a difference before  
the deadline. I have five days and  
then...

She looks around the shop. Her chin trembles.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

I've lost so much to make this  
work...

She leans sadly on the counter, staring at her espresso  
machine. A weary sigh.

Derek puts his hand on her shoulder. The friends look from  
one to the others. All concerned.

Travis jumps into action.

TRAVIS

You just need an advertising  
campaign.

He taps his drumsticks on a nearby table.



TRAVIS (CONT'D)  
Pickles, lattes...uh...machines  
that pop. Get your caffeine from  
the hurricane shop.

Mistina gives him a misty smile. Jamie giggles. She turns her laptop toward Travis.

Travis slides behind the counter. Taps his sticks.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)  
Piggy flavors, feeling low? Get  
your caffeine shot to go.

RILEY  
Hey. I said 'maple-bacon'. Don't be  
downsizing my syrup skills.

Travis expands his drumming, sliding up and down the counter.

TRAVIS  
Maple. Bacon. My mistake. Bring  
your money in here...uh....

He makes a face at Jamie, plinks along the top of the espresso machine and twirls.

JAMIE  
(shouting)  
We'll give you cake.

Jamie moves in front of him as he gets into his rhythm, adding the bean grinder and glasses to his solo.

Another twirl. His sticks hit the stack of glasses. They fall - shattering. He stops. Eyes wide in apology.

RILEY  
Before we break?

MISTINA  
Mistina's patience is at stake?

TRAVIS  
Sorry, Mistina.

Travis picks up glass pieces. Jamie skips away. Mistina grabs the garbage can for him. An understanding smile.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)  
Just trying to cheer you up.

MISTINA  
I know. You keep me real.

Travis bows deeply to Mistina. She's distracted by Jamie holding a massive handful of pickles.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Whoa, Jamie. What if I get a sandwich order?

JAMIE  
Oh...

Jamie looks guilty. She dumps half back into the pickle jar.

MISTINA  
Not after you've handled them...just take the whole jar. We have another.

DEREK  
To think I escaped the joys of child rearing.

MISTINA  
Child rearing is a cake walk compared to...

Two TEENAGE GIRLS enter, holding phones. They see Travis.

FIRST TEENAGER  
Look, it's the drummer.

SECOND TEENAGER  
Ohhh. He's older than he looked like on my phone.

Travis stops. Indignant. Jamie rushes to her mom. Excited.

JAMIE  
Mom. We're famous. They saw the TIKTOK video I just posted.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - MID-MORNING

No customers.

Mistina sits with her laptop, staring at the screen. Eddie works on his manuscript at another table. Cafe music plays softly in the background.

Riley brings Mistina a sandwich and plops down beside her with a fresh jar of pickles.

Jamie runs in with a cell phone.

JAMIE

Mom. There's a lady on Facebook who has two baby squirrels. She needs someone to help her.

MISTINA

Why do you have my cellphone?

JAMIE

I found it. She's afraid they might die. She needs help.

MISTINA

You found it...in my purse?

JAMIE

Mom. They're dying. They fell out of a tree and she took them inside. Now they won't eat.

MISTINA

Put my cellphone back. We have a long day at the shop.

JAMIE

But the squirrels...

MISTINA

We'll talk about the squirrels tomorrow.

JAMIE

They could be dead by then.

MISTINA

You got a kitten to cuddle with when your dad and I divorced. That's your quota of wildlife this year.

JAMIE (O.S.)

That's not the same.

Jamie slouches sadly to a couch.

MISTINA

She has a bleeding heart.

RILEY

Says the woman who fills the homeless pantry before she buys food for herself. But yeah, she's the bleeding heart.

MISTINA  
I'm not sure I want a mini-me.

Mistina looks at Jamie's expression. She sighs.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Jamie. Bring me the phone. I'll  
contact the woman.

Jamie shoots off the couch.

JAMIE  
Whooley!

MISTINA  
Just contact--No promises.

JAMIE  
Can I name them? One could be  
Peanut and the other could be  
Acorn. Or, I know--one could be...

MISTINA  
No promises means 'don't get ahead  
of yourself'.

JAMIE  
Okay. But if we do--oh, I  
know...One could be Peanut and the  
other could be Butter. Get it, Mom?

MISTINA  
She may not have them anymore.  
Let's start with a call.

JAMIE  
(grinning)  
That's not a no.

She scuttles gleefully toward the back.

RILEY  
Congratulations push-over. You've  
got a new family of squirrels.

MISTINA  
The divorce has been hard on her.  
Squirrels are easy.

Mistina returns to her screen. Riley peers over her shoulder.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Website looks good. I can post a  
coffee drink of the day.  
(MORE)

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Let people know where we're at--Now we need a button that explains what our mission is.

RILEY

I thought staying caffeinated is our mission.

MISTINA

That's our reality. What if we used our word...COFFEE-COFFEE?

RILEY

No one will get it.

MISTINA

That's why we put it on Jamie's chalkboard. Eventually, I'll get a sign made.

Riley savors a pickle. Mistina types. Eddie joins them.

EDDIE

I'm stuck on my manuscript.

MISTINA

Plenty of sci-fi here. If we're not careful, we'll be doing a disappearing trick.

EDDIE

Still working on rent? What about a gag menu item? Like Pickles a la mode. Something everyone will talk about.

MISTINA

The way Riley eats pickles we'd never keep it in stock.

RILEY

Don't knock my pickle thing when you also have a pickle thing. Pickles helped me lose a hundred pounds.

EDDIE

I'd credit it with laying off the chocolate and chips.

RILEY

Easy to say when you're six inches taller and have testosterone.

MISTINA

Okay you two. I have a website now but I need a plan--I don't want to be living out of the homeless closet myself.

EDDIE

What about Karaoke? You could call it 'Espresso Yourself' and sell tickets.

MISTINA

Best voice gets a coffee drink and biggest catastrophe has to pass the hat for the homeless? That's good but I don't have a Karaoke machine.

RILEY

But you can host events. You have a nice space.

EDDIE

Jamie's video has people talking. Find a way to build on that.

MISTINA

Advertise and events. That gives me an idea.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - LATER

A few CUSTOMERS sip coffee at various areas of the shop. Eddie and Derek play a hand of cards at a nearby table.

Jamie, dressed like a ninja, plays with KARMA, a dog, tied to a chair leg in the back corner.

Mistina turns from a cell phone conversation. A relieved smile on her face.

MISTINA

A blogger. I've got a blogger coming in to interview me tonight.

EDDIE

A blogger? That's...great. One good post and the algorithms will have you trending.

Riley bursts in the shop. Carrying a grocery bag.

RILEY

We hit the jackpot.

MISTINA

We?

Riley begins unpacking her bag.

RILEY

First...I'm replacing all the sandwich makings we ate earlier, including...

She holds up a jar of pickles with a grin.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Second...I was in line and this guy was whining about not having a place for his Dungeons and Dragons group to meet tonight. Guess what? They're coming here. Six P.M.

DEREK

You're not even open at six.

MISTINA

What? We can't have people here at six. THE GAZETTE is sending a blogger over to interview me.

RILEY

Well they're coming now.

Mistina begins to clean fiercely...thinking.

MISTINA

This blogger could make or break us. Think of the exposure...I could do the D&D group tomorrow.

RILEY

I didn't get a contact number, so...they're coming. Sorry. But the D&D group is cash flow.

DEREK

Unless they don't order anything.

Mistina straightens her shoulders.

MISTINA

I'll do it. Two promotional ideas under one roof. This might be my blessing.

DEREK

Fantasy and a blogger. What could go wrong?

MISTINA

I don't have a choice. I'm five days away from a career change.

RILEY

We'll all give you a hand.

MISTINA

No. This is my problem.

Derek touches her arm softly.

DEREK

Nonsense. We're coming for the free coffee.

RILEY

Mistina, you can't do this alone.

MISTINA

Friendships tend to break if too much is expected of them.

EDDIE

It's not friendship if you do everything for everyone and don't get anything back.

Mistina pushes a tray of cups onto the overhead shelf.

MISTINA

You're all welcome to stop by, but I really can handle this.

The cups tip. Mistina juggles to catch them. They fall, bouncing off the counter and Mistina's head. The coffee sign slides forward and falls in the floor.

**END ACT ONE**



ACT TWO

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - AFTERNOON

Derek and Eddie watch Mistina hang a sign behind the counter. It reads COFFEE-COFFEE, followed by the shops mission written on it. Teeth gritted, she tries to get it on the hook.

DEREK

You know we're happy to help.

MISTINA

Shhhh. Carpenter at work.

She drops several nails. Straightens the sign ferociously.

Travis walks from the back. Hair spiked, chains, eighties rock-n-roll personified. The room goes quiet.

Travis rotates. Derek nudges Eddie. They both grin.

DEREK

Halloween, already?

TRAVIS

They say to dress the part.

DEREK

Part of what? Mad Max?

EDDIE

Is this a disguise?

TRAVIS

This is what drummers look like. Do you think I should put make-up on?

Mistina levels her sign. Smiling in spite of herself.

MISTINA

No-no. I'm sure you'll make enough impression with what you've got going on.

Travis glances at the mission board.

TRAVIS

You wrote coffee twice?

Mistina's board misses the hook and tips sideways. The guys surge forward. She stops its topple.

MISTINA  
Coffee-Coffee is my mission.

DEREK  
Because just saying 'coffee' once,  
isn't enough?

MISTINA  
'Coffee' meant sitting down with  
friends and flirting with the wait  
staff.

She steps back from the sign with a smile.

DEREK  
So 'Coffee-Coffee' is double the  
caffeine, double the fun?

MISTINA  
Coffee-Coffee meant the storm was  
brewing, the world was ending, and  
we felt like we couldn't breathe.  
It meant...help.

Quiet. Eddie nods somberly.

EDDIE  
I get it. It's when 'the man' is  
trying to take you out and you  
don't know where to turn.

MISTINA  
Exactly. People need a safe space  
and resources. Coffee-Coffee.

EDDIE  
I like it. Big Corporate will be  
completely confused.

MISTINA  
I want this business to succeed,  
and I want to help people.

The sign falls to the counter. Mistina closes her eyes,  
clenches her hands, and takes a frustrated breath. She props  
the sign against the wall. Smiles brightly.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
All good. The perfect place for it--  
Travis, why are you still here? Go  
to your interview.

TRAVIS  
(slightly embarrassed)  
I only know a couple of songs.

MISTINA  
I don't know any. You've got this.

TRAVIS  
What if I'm not good enough?

MISTINA  
What if you are? Last time I  
looked, you weren't a pansy. Get  
going.

Travis straightens.

TRAVIS  
Hey. Drummers aren't pansies.

HANK (38ish), earnest, clumsy, in police uniform, enters. He  
leans on the counter.

EVERYONE  
Hank.

MISTINA  
We missed you this morning.

Hank nods. His elbow knocks over business cards.

HANK  
Oh...sorry.

Everyone scrambles to pick up cards.

RILEY  
Appreciate the honor, Hank.

MISTINA  
You weren't here when we opened.  
Everything okay?

HANK  
(downcast)  
She's gone.

DEREK  
Gone? You're a doormat. You buy her  
coffee before she even wakes up.  
What could go wrong?

HANK

I made her dinner. It... went badly.

MISTINA

Hank, did you burn her?

HANK

For your information, I took a course on gourmet cooking--I made a great meal.

DEREK

So, you put cheese on her scrambled eggs?

HANK

I made cheddar biscuits with my special ground nut flour. I just... didn't realize she had an allergy to nuts.

MISTINA

Oh, my god.

TRAVIS

I'm allergic to...well...you wouldn't believe how many things. It's not your fault.

HANK

It felt like it. She never met anyone who used specialty flours.

EDDIE

Move on, Hank. It could have happened to any of us.

HANK

You think?

DEREK

No. That's all you, buddy.

HANK

(sadly)

She had to use her epi pen before the paramedics arrived. I'm lousy at relationships.

Mistina hands Hank his drink.

MISTINA

No, you're not. You're amazing when we go down into the encampments to take supplies. You connect with people in ways that really matter.

HANK

Dating is different. It's like walking a tightrope in the dark-- I'm terrified of taking a wrong step.

MISTINA

You don't think I'm terrified that I won't make it? It's up to all of us to get back in the game...every day.

Travis heads for the door.

TRAVIS

Guess I'll just...check out that interview. Heck, I may find out that I'm not interested in being a backup.

MISTINA

Don't be a dork. You drum on everything you touch. This is your thing.

TRAVIS

(ginning)  
It kinda is.

He squares his shoulders and marches out, pausing to mouth 'thank-you' as he goes.

Eddie still holds some of the spilled cards. He holds one up thoughtfully.

EDDIE

Hey, Mistina. You want advertising? Get these cards on the streets.

MISTINA

Sure. I'll drive along and Jamie can toss them from the window. Litter just screams high-class.

Eddie grabs the stack of cards.

EDDIE

So, follow me. We learn a cool  
dance routine...  
    (he demonstrates a few  
    steps)  
...go downtown in costumes and  
breakdance in the street. When we  
have everyone's attention...  
    (he stops suddenly)  
...the music stops...  
    (mimes handing cards to)  
    (the others)

RILEY

Terrorizing the locals helps  
us...how?

EDDIE

Everyone's got a phone. Hurricane  
Coffee will go viral. Build on  
Jamie's idea.

MISTINA

Except--I'm here twelve hours a day  
and I'm raising a kid, who  
needs...a lot of my time. When did  
you want to practice these dances?

DEREK

I can't break dance on a bum  
leg, but I could help out with the  
kiddo or pick up supplies.

MISTINA

Thanks, no. I don't need emotional  
debt.

DEREK

You won't make your deadline if you  
don't accept help.

MISTINA

I'll work harder.

A stylish woman, PAIGE (young 60's), type A personality,  
flings herself into the shop and stops. Everyone turns to  
look at her.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Paige.

PAIGE

    (chants)  
I attract smart men.  
    (MORE)

PAIGE (CONT'D)  
(to Mistina)  
I need something sweet. You know  
me. You choose.

RILEY  
There's only a couple here and I'm  
not sure how smart or sweet they  
are.

DEREK  
Hey. I resent that.

PAIGE  
That's my mantra today. You have to  
say it out loud for the universe to  
hear it.

MISTINA  
We can only do spritzers right now.

Paige nods. Leaves Mistina to it and plops in a chair.

PAIGE  
I swear. I doubt there are anymore  
idiots in this town. I seem to have  
gone out with them all.

DEREK  
Ahh. Mr. Right crashed and burned?

PAIGE  
More like Mr. Clean with a foot  
fetish.

EDDIE  
We all have bad dates.

DEREK  
Did you bail on him when he went to  
the bathroom?

EDDIE  
Wait. You're one of those women?

PAIGE  
Hey. I only did that one time.  
If I ever find a normal guy in this  
town, I'll buy everyone's coffee  
for a month.

DEREK  
So don't expect a round...ever?

HANK

The trick is casual dating. Without strings.

Paige notices Hank. Appreciation. He turns away embarrassed.

HANK (CONT'D)

That's what everyone tells me.

Paige's eyes pause on his butt, in uniform.

PAIGE

I don't want strings. I just want an evening with someone who's not a complete trainwreck.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - AFTERNOON - LATER

The shop bustles with activity. CUSTOMERS examine consignment items. The hum of conversations. The jingle of the door as people enter or leave. Mistina moves at full speed.

Jamie tries to feed a tiny squirrel with a bottle. A second squirrel lies in a shoebox nearby.

Riley leans on the counter while Mistina fixes a drink for elderly EDNA, well-meaning busybody. The lights flicker. She looks up and then smacks the espresso machine.

MISTINA

Come on, Sir Beansalot. Stay with us.

EDNA

Trouble with your machine?

MISTINA

I thought I had it fixed but it's acting a little snarky.

Derek and Eddie sit at a table nearby.

DEREK

Great grandma's ghost, at it again?

MISTINA

God, I hope not. I don't need a poltergeist tainting my review.

EDNA

Review?



MISTINA

I have a blogger coming in later.  
One positive post and we could go  
from surviving to thriving  
overnight.

EDNA

You look pretty busy now.

MISTINA

Not even close. I've got an  
eviction notice staring me in the  
face.

Mistina hands Edna her drink. She begins cleaning the area.  
Agitated.

RILEY

We have a D&D group tonight. It  
won't solve her problems but it  
will help.

EDNA

There are lots of other groups in  
town.

RILEY

Yeah? Like who?

EDNA

I don't know. Google them. Service  
clubs. 4-H. Churches. Everyone  
needs a place to meet. How did you  
get the Dungeons and Dragons  
players to come in?

MISTINA

Riley invited them in when they  
lost their place to play.

EDNA

Nice. Space rental.

MISTINA

Nope. We're just hoping they buy  
coffee drinks and food.

EDNA

Ouch. Bad choice for a starving  
business. Pretty good for a 'try  
before you buy' campaign.

MISTINA  
We have to start somewhere. This  
month we gave away...

She pauses to read off a paper tacked to the side of the  
fridge.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
...twenty-six meals, handed out  
four bags of resources, and dropped  
off blankets at two encampments.

Mistina returns to her cleaning.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
All I need to do is pay my bills to  
keep it going.

The door jingles and several more PEOPLE walk in. Mistina  
grins at them.

RILEY  
Want me to help them?

MISTINA  
No. I've got it.

Edna meanders to a lounge chair to sip her drink while  
Mistina takes a coffee order.

MONTAGE

Series of quick shots showing building chaos.

--A CURIOUS WOMAN reads the mission sign. Mistina notices her  
but keeps making drinks for several CUSTOMERS.

--A stressed MOM enters. Carrying a screaming BABY.

MOM  
Coffee. Coffee. Whatever your daily  
special is.

MISTINA  
On it.

She finishes ringing several customers who leave. Starts  
another drink, working fast.

RILEY  
(aside to Mistina)  
Coffee-Coffee. Here's your chance  
to wear a superhero costume.

MISTINA  
Mom doesn't need a safe space. She  
needs caffeine to cope.

--Jamie waves a baby bottle.

JAMIE  
Mom. I can't get the boy to drink.

MISTINA  
I'll be there in a minute, Jamie.

--A HOMELESS WOMAN shuffles in the door. Hesitates near the  
counter. Mistina nods briefly while pouring coffee.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
I'll be right with you.

--Three BUSINESS MEN walk in. Mistina nods and smiles at  
them. Keeps working. They look at their watches.

--Mom struggles to get her wallet out. She thrusts her  
screaming baby at Riley.

MOM  
I can't get my wallet out...can you  
hold the baby?

Riley backs away from the baby.

RILEY  
Whoa...no way. I don't do babies.  
They scream and leak.

Mistina puts Mom's drink up. Mom starts crying.

MOM  
Please...I need some help.

Riley scrambles behind the counter, eyes on the crying baby.

RILEY  
For god's sake. Let me do the  
coffee. You handle the emotional  
stuff.

Mistina rushes around the counter and hands the drink to Mom.  
She takes the baby.

MISTINA

Sit down and relax. No charge.

Mom falls into a chair, wiping her eyes.

--The Business Men fidget. Look at their watches. Mumble to each other.

--Jamie smacks her hand on the table.

JAMIE

Mom.

--The Curious Woman, reading the sign, starts crying. Mistina pauses.

MISTINA

Uhhh...is there something I can do to help you?

The Curious Woman sniffs.

CURIOUS WOMAN

It's your sign. I lost my sister to an abusive situation. Seeing this sign...it just touches me.

MISTINA

(softly)

Thank you. It's personal to me too.

--Jamie stands and stomps her foot.

JAMIE

Mom. Are you listening?

RILEY

Jamie. Does your mom look like she's got a sec? Give it a rest.

Derek heads for Jamie.

--Riley sidles up to Mistina.

RILEY (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I can take an order.

MISTINA

(quiet but short)

No. I have this.

She smiles at the frustrated Business Men.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
It'll be just another minute.

--Mistina turns to Homeless Woman.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
What can I get you?

Homeless Woman gestures toward the door.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Your sign out there--'*COMMUNITY MEALS AVAILABLE*'. I can get something to eat and drink?

MISTINA  
Of course.

BUSINESS MAN  
Oh for god's sake. We're going to miss our entire lunch break.

All three Business Men walk out the door.

Mistina pauses to watch them go. Consternation. Quickly returns to the task at hand--puts a sandwich, from the fridge, on the counter. Adds a cup of coffee to go. Still juggling the baby.

Homeless Woman holds an energy drink and snacks. She starts to tuck everything in her backpack.

MISTINA  
Sorry. Just the sandwich and coffee.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
I thought I could get food and drink.

MISTINA  
We don't give away energy drinks or snacks. That's where my profit comes from.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Oh...I get it. Y'all just give bologna sandwiches and coffee to us hungry people and save the good stuff for yourselves.

MISTINA

(guilty)

I'm buying what I can out of my profits. It's all I can afford.

Homeless Woman smiles as she opens the door.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I'm just messin' with ya. I get it. This is the first thing I've had all day.

She sends Mistina a genuine smile and wave as she leaves.

HOMELESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Mistina sighs. She puts the snacks away.

MISTINA

Everything is just...I can't pay for...

--Curious Woman hugs Mistina fiercely. Squeezes her hand.

CURIOUS WOMAN

You're amazing. Exactly what I needed today.

She exits with a warm smile. Mom takes her baby from Mistina and leaves with a new attitude. Mistina leans on the counter.

MISTINA

(wry)

That was fun.

She exchanges looks with Riley.

RILEY

What? I'm not a superhero. Or a bleeding heart. You know that. But I make good coffee. Use me.

END MONTAGE

Eddie grabs a coffee container from the stack.

EDDIE

You have your hands full with rent. It's time for the community to help pay for each other.

MISTINA  
You can't tell the difference  
between that cup and the tip cup--  
which is all I have to live off.

Riley pulls a marker from the drawer and scrawls on each cup.

RILEY  
There you go. *'Tips'* on one cup,  
and *'Donations To Feed The  
Community'* on the other.

MISTINA  
(touched)  
Thanks. Every bit helps...oh...

Mistina changes the number on her paper on the fridge.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
...twenty-seven meals.

RILEY  
Impressive. If you want this place  
to succeed, you need to start  
excepting help.

MISTINA  
(a weary sigh)  
I'll be okay.

RILEY  
Okay doesn't mean run yourself into  
the ground. You lost customers  
today.

Mistina picks up her own coffee, fiddling with it. Looks  
around the almost empty shop. Fatigue etched on her face.

MISTINA  
I know. I just have to get through  
five days. I've got sheer panic  
pushing me now.

RILEY  
Panic doesn't save customers. Extra  
staff does.

Mistina notices Derek squatted beside Jamie. They feed the  
baby squirrel together. Her face softens.

MISTINA  
Now there's the real hero. Helping  
my kid took a world of pressure  
off.

Derek catches Mistina's eye. He's drawn over by her smile. They stand, watching Jamie.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
(low voice)  
You have a soft side after all.

DEREK  
(shrugs)  
I've been on the other side of the world...it's hard not to be a little cynical.

He smiles as Jamie rocks her bundle.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
Kids are different. They remind you that there's still some innocence worth protecting.

Derek and Mistina exchange a look of understanding.

The door opens and Travis, still wearing his drummer clothing, enters. Not his happy-go-lucky self.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
Bad day at the office?

TRAVIS  
(glum)  
Bad day for a drummer.

MISTINA  
Your gig was a no go?

Travis nods in discouragement. He notices Karma, watching him, wagging her tail.

TRAVIS  
That's what I need. Dog therapy.

He wanders to pet Karma. Jamie begins blowing up balloons.

DEREK  
Great. Even female dogs love him.

MISTINA  
He just slipped her a treat.

DEREK  
That's the problem with my dating life. I don't carry treats.



MISTINA

Milk bones aren't the way to a woman's heart.

DEREK

So for the purposes of research--  
filet mignon or chocolate?

MISTINA

My dates are underwear-movie parties with my daughter. You're on your own with the ladies.

DEREK

Sexy. Snore on the couch while your kid watches cartoons' sort of gal.

MISTINA

Just got divorced and don't want any bullshit' sort of gal.

DEREK

Same thing.

Travis wanders over to Jamie.

TRAVIS

You got a puppy in there, kiddo?

He pulls away the baby blanket. Staggers back.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Whoa...those are rodents.

Travis backpedals. Shaking his hands.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I touched their blanket. I'm allergic to rodents. Allergic.

**END ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - CONTINUOUS

Jamie pulls the squirrels protectively closer.

JAMIE  
They're not rodents.

TRAVIS  
Same difference. Those things are  
only good for cat bait.

JAMIE  
They aren't cat bait. Mom.

MISTINA  
Travis, you didn't even touch them.

Travis feels his face.

TRAVIS  
Do you think I inhaled any rodent  
dandruff? Is my face swelling up?

DEREK  
You look pretty red.

Mistina sends Derek a look.

RILEY  
(grinning)  
Squirrel germs could be airborne.

Travis heads for the bathroom.

TRAVIS  
Oh, my god. Y'all just think this  
is a joke. I've got to see if my  
face is swelling.

MISTINA  
Travis. There's Benadryl in the  
cabinet--Jamie. Keep all the  
animals in the back corner. I don't  
want anymore allergy issues.

DEREK  
Or the health department.

Mistina whirls on her friends.

MISTINA  
You guys need to behave. He was  
really upset.

Jamie takes her box of squirrels to a back table.

DEREK  
This is me holding back...You  
should be impressed.

Mistina grabs teas from the apothecary cabinet.

MISTINA  
I'd be a little more impressed if  
you'd be a little more human--I'll  
make Travis tea.

Jamie jumps on a chair, karate-chops an escaping balloon.  
KARMA lunges to the end of her leash. Barks.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
(sharply)  
Jamie, please don't climb on the  
furniture.

RILEY  
Or get the dog going. That's the  
last thing we need.

JAMIE  
But Mom, I'm a ninja.

RILEY  
She's got a point. Ninja's don't  
sit quietly.

Mistina notices a homeless man, RUSTY (50ish), guitar in  
hand, wandering on the sidewalk outside.

Travis returns, skirting Jamie's corner. Mistina sets him at  
a table and hands him the tea.

MISTINA  
No one's trying to kill you, honey.  
This tea has anti-allergy  
properties.

He nods sheepishly.

TRAVIS  
I was once hospitalized two days  
for touching a hamster.

Derek puts his hand on Travis's shoulder.

DEREK  
Sorry, buddy.

Travis nods. Jamie kicks a balloon. Karma barks.

RILEY  
Alright Ninja, quit jumping around.  
Your mom's got enough on her plate  
without you adding to her stress.

MISTINA  
And you know better. Karma wants  
your balloon. Get her a toy so that  
she quits barking.

Jamie does one last leap and karate chop, spiking the balloon onto a sharp edge. A loud pop resounds like a gunshot, startling everyone. Derek flinches violently, whipping his cane into defensive position.

Everyone freezes, staring at Derek. Mistina spins toward her daughter.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
(sharper than intended)  
Jamie.

Jamie's surprise flips to guilt. Derek straightens sheepishly. His hands shake. Mistina's attitude softens.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
You okay?

Derek nods, brushing it off. His hand still grips his cane with white knuckles. Riley tries to lighten the atmosphere.

RILEY  
There you go, Derek. Hogging all  
the drama.

Mistina throws up her hands.

MISTINA  
Oh my god. I am in the middle of an  
eviction. Everyone wants to help me  
and you don't even support each  
other.

Her arm sweeps the room.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
We seem to be a safe space for  
everyone...but ourselves.

Complete silence. Everyone exchanges uncomfortable glances. Shift uncomfortably. Drop their eyes.

Jamie slides down on the couch. Her chin trembles and she hugs her knees, burying face. Mistina notes their reactions.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

I'm sorry. That came out wrong. You know I love you all. It's just that...

Rusty staggers in. Only supported by the door. Mistina rushes forward to catch him.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Rusty nods. Derek and Eddie hurry to help.

DEREK

I'll call the paramedics.

RUSTY

I'm okay. Just...a little light headed.

MISTINA

When was the last time you ate?

RUSTY

I don't know. Maybe two--three days ago.

RILEY

I'll grab him a sandwich.

MISTINA

No wonder you're weak. Are you sure you don't need paramedics?

Rusty shakes his head.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Grab his pack and guitar. We'll let him rest on the sofa in the back.

RUSTY

I don't want to be a bother.

DEREK

You're here now. Might as well eat, buddy.

RILEY

You can't leave. Mistina lives for moments like this.

MISTINA

True statement. Helping the community--not seeing you fall down. Let's get you off your feet.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - BACKROOM - EVENING

A couch. A small TV. Shelves with stacks of necessities.

Mistina packs a bag. Rusty sits, eating a sandwich and holding a cup of coffee.

MISTINA

Toothbrush, soap...oh, and a contact list of services to call if you need help.

RUSTY

(nodding, overwhelmed)

I haven't had someone treat me like this...well, I remember my grandma helped others.

Mistina straightens and looks at Rusty. A warm smile between them.

MISTINA

I'm glad you're feeling better.

She gestures toward a wall lined with shelves of supplies.

MISTINA

Blankets and supplies for hurricane weather are on that wall. Take anything you need for your tent.

Mistina pauses as she starts to leave the room.

MISTINA

There's a bathroom, through the door. You can wash up and change.

Another pause and a lingering look back with a soft smile.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Rest as long as you'd like.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - EVENING

Paige enters, different clothes, and leans on the counter. Travis has the side off the espresso machine. Riley sweeps. Derek and Eddie hang the coffee sign.

TRAVIS

Another one bites the dust?

PAIGE

When I was in my twenties we talked about guys. In my forties we talked about kids. Now I have dates that want to talk about how regular they are.

She looks at Travis. Back in his cowboy hat. Still wearing chains.

TRAVIS

Don't ask.

PAIGE

Mistina?

RILEY

Helping a homeless guy. She's stretched pretty thin.

Mistina returns. Stops short.

MISTINA

Seriously?

RILEY

Seriously, sometimes it takes a village and you need to loosen up. Like...a lot.

MISTINA

You know I can't afford...

EVERYONE

(in unison)

We know.

TRAVIS

I'm just here for Sir Beansalot...

DEREK

...Latte Linda.

TRAVIS

Latte Linda. She deserves a better attitude.

MISTINA

You don't get to push me around in my own shop. I don't need help.

RILEY

We just watched you run around with your hair on fire, trying to take care of everyone. Then snap at us. It wasn't pretty.

EDDIE

This is us...supporting each other.

Mistina's eyes move from the latte machine to the D&D table.

DEREK

They're right, Mistina.

Mistina folds her arms and glares around the group.

MISTINA

This doesn't mean I don't feel guilty about everyone doing my job.

EDDIE

You can't fire us.

PAIGE

Friends help friends.

DEREK

Unless you don't want any...

They stare Mistina down.

PAIGE

(quietly)

It makes us feel good to help.

Mistina caves, her frustration fading to relief.

MISTINA

Thank you. Today has been...a lot. And...sorry.

Everyone grins and goes back to work. Paige helps Mistina spread a table cloth over the table.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

You changed your clothes?



PAIGE  
 (slightly embarrassed)  
 Part of the whole serial dating  
 thing--I've had breakfast, lunch,  
 and dinner dates with three  
 different guys in one day.

MISTINA  
 That's seriously messed up.

PAIGE  
 I'm seriously messed up. The  
 attention makes me feel...

Mistina puts her hand over Paige's. Understanding.

MISTINA  
 Your husband cheated on you.

PAIGE  
 Yeah...I only do a second date if a  
 guy fits my list.

MISTINA  
 I'm betting foot fetishes isn't on  
 your list.

PAIGE  
 Right?

Travis turns the espresso machine on and then off. It hums.  
 He addresses Mistina across the room.

TRAVIS  
 Come give this a try.

Mistina breaks away to test out the machine. It sputters and  
 then hums quietly. Success. It burps a gust of steam. The  
 lights flicker. Everyone freezes. It hums again.

MISTINA  
 What is with the lights?

She pats the machine reverently.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 All you have to do is make it  
 through the evening.

Hank strolls in. Paige looks up, catching his eye. She turns  
 her head.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 Hank. How was your shift?

HANK

Uh...good. Your machine working yet?

He glances back at Paige. She sneaks another look at him.

MISTINA

Yep. We can do coffee now. Your usual?

He nods. Paige smiles. He looks away. Mistina starts Hanks drink. The lights flicker again.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Something else is going on here. I wonder if there's a short.

HANK

Looks like you have disco lights. Are you turning this into CLUB 57?

MISTINA

Either electrical or the place is cursed. This could be morse code for 'run'.

Rusty approaches with his guitar and pack of supplies.

RUSTY

You have a stage. I'd be happy to play a bit to pay for the help.

Jamie grabs a coffee can and bangs on it a few times.

JAMIE

I could play drums for him.

MISTINA

No. A coffee can band and a howling dog. We're not going there.

JAMIE

But, mom.

MISTINA

(sighs)

Jamie, are you done with the homework?

JAMIE

I was already done...kinda.

MISTINA

I'm going to look over 'kinda' and if it's not finished, you're going to be playing the drums of restriction.

JAMIE

I want to help do something.

MISTINA

Great. When did you last feed your squirrels?

JAMIE

Can you do it, Mom? I've been doing it all day.

MISTINA

That would be a big 'NO'. You want something? You work for it.

JAMIE

Fine.

She trudges toward the squirrels.

MISTINA

And stop your dog from chewing the leg off the couch--Rusty, I appreciate your offer, but I think we're doing okay. Why don't you relax.

Rusty trails after Jamie.

HANK

Disco lights and a drummer? You're losing a sweet opportunity to make a name in this town.

Travis joins them, tapping fingers on the counter.

HANK (CONT'D)

You're a bit of a drummer, aren't you, Travis?

TRAVIS

(dejected)

A 'bit' being the key word. I crashed and burned pretty bad today at an interview.

EDDIE

You have to work at something a lot longer than three months to be...anything.

TRAVIS

(sadly)

I noticed.

RILEY

Uh-huh. Thanks Eddie. You're making Travis feel so much better.

Hank reaches for his drink, casually glancing toward Paige. His drink sloshes the muffins.

Mistina glances at the clock. Almost six. Begins wiping the spill. Frantic.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Hank, we're not running a 'spill two, get one free' offer.

Hank freezes. Mortified.

HANK

I'm sorry. If you hand me...

TRAVIS

I've got ya, Buddy.

Travis snatches the muffins. Mistina drops down to mop.

MISTINA

It's okay. I'm just trying to get things ready for...

MASON, wizard hat and a staff sporting an orb, enters. Followed by a group dressed in fantasy-themed wear...cloaks, a few pointy ears, and one princess ensemble.

Mistina looks up, startled by the display.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(bright smile)

...and here they are.

Mason bows to Mistina.

MASON

No need to get up Coffee Mistress. Point us to our chambers.

Mistina scrambles up. Karma barks.

MISTINA

Jamie.

Jamie attempts to quiet Karma.

MASON

I am the Dungeon Master and these are...

He looks back at the variety of costumes.

MASON (CONT'D)

...well, what should we call our game tonight?

D&D PLAYER THREE

Hurricane Coffee Defenders?

D&D PLAYER TWO

Knights of the Bean?

MASON

Knights of the Bean? Realm of the Bean? Done--We will be fighting through the 'Realm of the Bean'.

MISTINA

Of course. Let's get you settled.

Riley rushes to get orders.

MASON

Seriously. Is that dog going to bark the whole night?

MISTINA

Jamie. Pet the dog.

Rusty squats beside Jamie and pets the dog. Karma quiets. Mason adjusts his hat. Disgruntled.

MASON

It's part of my persona.

His group settles at the D&D table. They need more chairs.. Edna sidles over to Mistina.

EDNA

(low voice)

You sure you want that man next to your kid? I could smell him when he came in. He could be dangerous.

Mistina glances at Rusty, holding a baby squirrel, his head close to Jamie's.

MISTINA

He just washed up. If you sniff him now you'll probably smell soap de cologne...

EDNA

...you shouldn't let him close to your kid.

MISTINA

My kid's fine. No one's asking you to bunk with the homeless guy.

EDNA

But...

MISTINA

Excuse me, Edna. I have a blogger coming in any minute. I need to get some chairs from the back.

Mistina pauses. Turns back and squeezes Edna's hand.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(warm smile)

I love that you are concerned but this is a safe space. I want everyone to feel welcome.

She rushes away. Riley starts a coffee drink. The outlet sparks. The lights flicker again. The shop is plunged into darkness.

VOICE OF D&D PLAYER (V.O.)

Is this part of the D&D quest?

The sounds of shuffling. Objects crash to the ground.

MISTINA (V.O.)

Everyone stay where you are.

A flashlight comes on. Hank holds it to his face producing a gruesome scowl.

HANK

My version of 'Nightmare on College Park Road'.

He grins. Hands the flashlight to Mistina.

HANK (CONT'D)  
Just trying to keep things 'light'.  
I always have one in my belt.

MASON  
A flashlight? We can't set up here.

MISTINA  
Wait...

Mistina rushes to the consignment area.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Riley. Let's get candles on the  
tables. We'll have a medieval  
tavern thing going.

JAMIE  
I can help, Mom.

MISTINA  
Grab the matches by the register.  
You get to be the candle lighter.

RILEY  
You'll have to pay for the  
consignment candles. Homemade ain't  
cheap.

MISTINA  
Neither is finding new customers.

TRAVIS  
I'll check the breaker box.

He uses his cell phone to light his way. Hank and Riley  
scramble to put candles out. Jamie lights them.

EDNA  
The power might be out for hours.

She puts her coat on. The lights flash on and then off.

EDNA (CONT'D)  
Yeah. I'm not into rustic. I'm  
going home.

MASON  
This isn't going to work for us.

The D&D crowd follow Edna toward the door.

**END ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - CONTINUOUS

Eddie pushes table together.

EDDIE

You're D&D players. Where's your sense of adventure?

He slides the chairs in.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Think of the darkness as part of the game. Sets the mood for some dragon shit to happen. You're not going to get this chance somewhere else.

DEREK

Your whole game is make believe. Just wing it.

MASON

Wing it? You have no idea what's involved with Dungeons and Dragons.

Mistina sets extra candles on the table.

MISTINA

You have light and a surface now. Why don't you sit down and start your game. Just see how things go.

D&D PLAYER 3

We're here we might as well.

DEREK

You're plunged into darkness. The shop is cursed. Yada Yada. You just need a dragon to slay.

RILEY

Start with the espresso machine. That thing is definitely a monster.

EDNA

This evening is over. Nice try, but there's just too much falling apart.



MASON

This isn't what we...

The sounds of a guitar comes from the stage. Everyone looks at the shadowy form of Rusty.

The guitar becomes individual notes and then soft...deep...moving...from the darkness of the stage...

RUSTY

Hello darkness, my old friend...

Everyone freezes. Attention on a voice that pulls them in.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

I've come to talk with youuuu again..

Mistina grabs Riley's arm. The words of 'Sound of Silence' swells and circles the room.

MISTINA

(mouthing)

Sandwiches.

Riley nods. She and Paige begin making sandwiches.

Derek and Eddie quietly seat Edna and the D&D players.

Mistina hands Jamie an armload of water bottles.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Set one beside each person.

The music swells. Hank, Eddie, and Derek pass sandwiches out.

Jamie joins Mistina, who drapes an arm around her. Mistina looks at her friends working together. Her eyes mist.

The song ends. A D&D player drops to his knees and bows.

D&D PLAYER 4

The bard has charmed us all.

Mistina takes Rusty water. Hugs him. They exchange a smile.

MISTINA

You literally saved the evening.  
This is what community is about.

D&D Player Two sneezes. He sneezes again.

D&D PLAYER TWO  
What's that smell?

Everyone looks around. Puzzled. Another sneeze.

D&D PLAYER TWO (CONT'D)  
Is that Citronella?

D&D Player Two pushes out from the table.

D&D PLAYER TWO (CONT'D)  
(panic)  
I know the smell of Citronella.  
It's making me sick.

Mistina rushes to Riley, brewing tea over candles.

MISTINA  
Riley! That's not a mood candle.  
It's a bug candle. Put it out.

Riley yanks her tea as Mistina desperately puts out the candle and slams a pan over it. She fans the air with a dishtowel.

RILEY  
I didn't know. We couldn't make  
coffee--I thought tea...

D&D player Two sneezes again.

MISTINA  
Oh, my god. One bad night and this  
place might not see next week.

D&D PLAYER TWO  
This smell...I can't...

He grabs his pack and stumbles toward the door.

D&D PLAYER TWO (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I'm out.

He slams outside. The door bangs behind him. Silence. The players swap uncomfortable looks. Mason stands.

MASON  
Citronella's meant for outdoors.  
That's way to strong in here.

Mistina rushes to prop the door.

MISTINA  
We'll get it aired out in a jiffy.

Faint coughing can be heard from outside. More players stand up. They start rounding their gear.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Wait, folks. It really is clearing  
out...a few more minutes, tops.

She sets a fan up on the counter.

D&D PLAYER THREE  
I think I'm going to call it a  
night, too.

One by one, more players stand and gather their things. Edna shakes her head.

EDNA  
This isn't safe Mistina.

MISTINA  
Please...

MASON  
Sorry, Mistina.

Everyone inches toward the door, avoiding her eyes.

MISTINA  
(pleading)  
Wait...I'll give everyone a free  
coffee coupon. Let me fix this.

Mistina watches the first few exit and then--throws her towel  
on the counter.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
Fine. I'm sorry...I'm sorry that  
nobody got to try our coffee  
because we're really good. And  
we're different. We make our coffee  
with white beans so that you get  
the flavor without the burnt taste.  
So I'm sorry that you missed that  
treat.

She looks around the crowd, stopped with mouths open.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
And I'm sorry that you didn't get  
to know me and my friends. Because  
there isn't a person here--who is  
trying to make this night work for  
you--who is taking home a paycheck.  
(MORE)

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 We're all doing this because we  
 support each other. That's what a  
 community does.

Mistina smiles mistily at her friends.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 Thank you, family.

She gazes into the crowd sadly.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 And I'm sorry that none of you  
 understand what this place is  
 about. Coffee? Yeah, it's about  
 caffeine. But under that--it's  
 about offering a safe space for  
 victims of abuse and human  
 trafficking. And the homeless. A  
 place they can grab a hot drink or  
 sandwich when they have no where  
 else. This is a place where the  
 broken can come together and feel a  
 little less broken.

Mistina straightens up and smiles proudly.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
 So I apologize to everyone for not  
 having a perfect event and I will  
 work hard to make the next one  
 better. But I won't apologize for  
 trying to do the right thing for  
 the right reason.

Mistina turns. Struggles to contain her tears. The D&D group  
 are touched.

D&D PLAYER TWO  
 Well...it is clearing out in here.

D&D PLAYER FOUR  
 She has a good cause. I don't mind  
 staying a little longer.

D&D PLAYER THREE  
 It would be nice to finish our  
 quest.

The lights blink on. A moment of silence--everyone cheers.  
 The espresso machine surges, exploding spray everywhere.

MISTINA  
 Oh...my...god.

She grabs an umbrella and fights the spray back, fiercely.

The D&D Players leap back.

MASON

The dragon hath roared.

Mistina unplugs the machine. She turns, dripping wet. The group erupts into clapping. She stares, a slow smile, a curtsy.

Mason sets his hat on Mistina's head, much to her chagrin.

MASON (CONT'D)

I dub thee, Queen Mistina.

The D&D players return to their table. Mason kisses her hand in knightly fashion and rejoins his group.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - LATER

Laughter around the D&D table. The friends quietly clean the shop.

Travis high-fives Mistina, wiping down the espresso area with Riley. Derek puts dishes away.

TRAVIS

And the award for 'guy who changed out a breaker in the dark with a knife and duct tape' goes to...

DEREK

Forty-seven temp jobs and your resume finally came in handy.

MISTINA

I'm thankful for all those jobs.

Mistina squeezes his hand.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Today...all of us together...was enough. I'm sorry your own gig didn't work out.

TRAVIS

Eddie finally made sense. I love drumming. I'm going to start practicing until people take me seriously.

Mistina looks at Paige, drying dishes. Hank washes.

MISTINA

We're all friends here. Why don't you join Rusty and bang on a few pan lids? Show us what you can do.

TRAVIS

I only know two songs.

MISTINA

That's two more than we know.

Travis shrugs. Unsure.

DEREK

You either want to be a drummer--or you don't.

Travis looks from Rusty to his friends, working nearby.

TRAVIS

I've done a lot of jobs. I'm not very good at any of them.

MISTINA

Maybe all those jobs were part of the journey--to show you what you really want.

DEREK

My journey's taught me--opportunities don't come around too often.

Travis nods. He pulls drumsticks from his back pocket, tapping them on his hands thoughtfully. The clatter of a plate draws their attention.

Hank hands Paige another plate. She smiles at him. Derek rushes to put away her growing stack of dry plates.

PAIGE

Didn't think my night would turn out like this.

HANK

Maybe the universe is giving us a sign.

PAIGE

That I need to pay more attention to cleaning my kitchen?

Hank almost drops a plate. The water sprayer showers the front of him and the floor. He gets it under control.

HANK

Well it's not dark anymore...but there's lit candles...and we're here together. I feel like that's a sign.

PAIGE

Of what? Dishwater hands? I wouldn't call this romantic if that's where you're going.

HANK

I wasn't going there...tonight. But maybe another night?

PAIGE

If you're asking me out, I don't date my friends.

HANK

I wouldn't call us friends. We just met tonight.

PAIGE

You just washed dishes with me. We might as well be living together. The guys I date are on apps. No commitment if things go wrong.

Eddie returns from the floor. Places a couple more plates in Hank's wash.

EDDIE

You're using a dating app? No wonder you're dates are like watching a car crash. Those apps are rigged. It's a scam.

HANK

Not everything's a conspiracy, Eddie. Give it a rest.

Travis glances toward Rusty. Looks at the group doing clean up. Grabs a broom and begins sweeping.

TRAVIS

Did you try putting 'owns a drum set' in your bio? Chicks dig a bad boy.

EDDIE

Women might notice a set of biceps and a drum set...at first.

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)  
But in the end, they want  
intelligent conversation.

Derek stacks espresso glasses on the shelf.

DEREK  
You're giving dating advice, Eddie?  
Hanging in bars and hitting on  
women is not dating.

EDDIE  
I'm much more sophisticated than  
that.

PAIGE  
You hand deliver your smoke  
signals?

EDDIE  
I've tried it all. It's what I'm  
researching for my manuscript.

DEREK  
I'm guessing that writing your  
number on the bathroom wall didn't  
work.

Riley and Mistina cram behind the counter with the others.  
Begin cleaning the espresso area.

EDDIE  
I meet women naturally--unexpected  
grocery collisions or conversations  
about her favorite donut in the  
bakery isle.

HANK  
Last time I banged into a lady's  
cart, she yelled at me for bruising  
her apples.

Everyone gawks at Hank. Laughter.

RILEY  
Yeah, Hank. You might be someone  
who sticks to the dating apps.

Travis clearly has his attention on Rusty and the stage. He  
doesn't seem to notice the conversation around him.

EDDIE  
I'm onto something here. Dating  
apps are Big Tech's way of mining  
your information.

(MORE)



EDDIE (CONT'D)

Feeding their algorithms. Your bio says you like drums? You'll be getting drum ads for the next year.

PAIGE

That might be true. I once dated a guy who only wanted to bird talk. His pigeon coos creeped me out. I'm still getting bird seed commercials.

Paige meets Hank's eyes. She winks. A shared grin. He dries his hands and turns away. He slips on the wet floor. His arms windmill. Paige tries to catch him.

He falls sideways. Bounces off the counter. Flips on his back, dragging her on top of him. Both stare. Horrified.

Mistina drops to the floor beside them. Paige scrambles off.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

HANK

Are you?

MISTINA

(to Riley)

Call the paramedics.

HANK

Don't call the paramedics. I'm fine. How embarrassing.

MISTINA

There are worse things than being embarrassed. Move your arms and legs.

Derek and Eddie get Hank on his feet. He moves his limbs.

HANK

See? I'm fine.

Everyone returns to their activity. Travis checks out the stage again. He sighs. Sets his broom down. Pulls his drumsticks back out and heads over to Rusty. Mistina smiles as she watches him go.

Hank meets Paige's eyes.

HANK (CONT'D)

It's just social situations...you know...

His shoulders slump. He turns away. Paige touches Hank's arm. Their eyes meet again.

PAIGE  
(softly)  
I don't date friends because...I'm  
terrified to get involved.

HANK  
(nods)  
I get it. You don't want to  
be...anything. At least with me.

Gentle drumming can be heard from the stage.

PAIGE  
With anyone. Courtesy of my ex.

HANK  
I'm not your ex.

PAIGE  
I know. I can tell I have walls,  
but I can't seem to tear them down.

Hank nods. He smiles softly at her. He looks around the room at the mishmash of patrons and friends.

HANK  
I'm starting to realize that we're  
all a little broken here.

PAIGE  
We don't have to figure it out in  
one night.

Travis's voice flows out: '*Baby Lock The Door And Turn The Lights Down Low*'. He sounds like Josh Turner. Rusty joins in.

Paige, excited, touches Hank's hand.

PAIGE (CONT'D)  
I love this song. This is what I  
want. Dancing. No strings.

She drags him onto the floor. He doesn't resist.

MISTINA  
I've got to find someone with a  
karaoke machine. This could save  
us.

Derek holds his arm out to Mistina.

DEREK

Why don't we do our own little spin  
and see how my dance leg holds up?

Mistina motions toward Jamie.

MISTINA

I'm on my daughter's dance card.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - CLOSING TIME

Happy chatter. The D&D players prepare to leave. Mistina and her friends gather around the counter.

DEREK

Tonight was...an eye opener.

MISTINA

Is that tongue in cheek?

RILEY

You know you just stayed for the  
free sandwiches.

Derek holds up his cane.

DEREK

I don't have a lot of opportunities  
to feel...

MISTINA

...needed?

DEREK

...less shattered.

Mistina nods her understanding.

DEREK (CONT'D)

It's not always about the money.

MISTINA

Wouldn't it be nice to have both?

The D&D group clusters at the counter.

D&D PLAYER TWO

Best game we've had. The realism...

D&D PLAYER ONE

And the 'Feast-o-Sandwiches'...

MISTINA  
I'm glad you stayed.

Mason turns to his group. Holds up his staff.

MASON  
(to the group)  
Let's take up a collection and pay  
the bard for the food we ate.

MISTINA  
It's not necessary.

MASON  
(in an aside)  
Yes. It is. You're a new business  
and we want to keep coming here.

He taps his staff on the counter.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Pay the toll, scoundrels. Lest the  
bard become destitute.

Mistina's eyes widen as cash pools on the bar. She swallows.  
Looks around her circle of friends. What is happening  
resonates in their expressions.

MISTINA  
(touched)  
Thanks.

MASON  
Just schedule us for next week.  
We'll be regulars.

The group shuffles out. Rusty and Travis approaches. Travis  
grins.

TRAVIS  
Look at me--I got two songs out and  
didn't bomb.

MISTINA  
Are you kidding? You were great.

TRAVIS  
Sometimes you just need a push from  
your friends.

MISTINA  
That sounds a lot like running a  
coffee shop.

Travis looks at his drumsticks thoughtfully.

TRAVIS

I could actually be good at something.

RUSTY

You just needed a little back-up...and maybe a few more songs under your belt.

(to Mistina)

Thanks for the supplies.

MISTINA

No...Thank you. It seems to take a village.

Mistina hugs him. He grins.

DEREK

You're talented, Music Man. What's your deal?

RUSTY

PTSD. Gets me sometimes.  
What about you, Cane Man?

DEREK

I missed the memo to duck.

The men nod at each other. Harmony. Rusty picks up his gear. Pauses to smile again at Mistina.

RUSTY

It was nice...to be seen you know.

An exchanged smile and nod, then he's out the door. Only Edna and the friends remain.

EDNA

This shop has more grit and heart than anyplace I've blogged about.

MISTINA

What?...You're the blogger? The place was dark...I was afraid you thought I stood you up.

EDNA

Oh, the candle experience was unique but...you're the real deal.

Edna squeezes Mistina's hand. She sails out with a smile.

MISTINA

Wow. Who woulda? We have money for product and a start on the CAM charges. Today was...thank you. All of you.

PAIGE

We'll get an early start tomorrow.

MISTINA

You don't need to babysit me.

Everyone exchanges looks. They burst out laughing.

DEREK

Because all of us want to stay home and nurse caffeine headaches?

MISTINA

Tomorrow...the marketing begins.

EDDIE

Counter-conspiracy. Together, we outwit Corporate Greed.

**END ACT FOUR**

**TAG**

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - BACK ROOM

Jamie sleeps, arm around her box of squirrels. Karma nearby.

Mistina peeks at the squirrels. Her face saddens. She wraps one squirrel in a shirt off the nearby shelf. Tucks it carefully in her purse. Shakes Jamie awake.

MISTINA

Time to go home, Kiddo. You were a lot of help tonight.

Jamie notices the squirrel gone.

JAMIE

Mom. Where's my other squirrel?

MISTINA

He didn't make it, baby. I wish he had.

Quiet. Jamie processes the news. She tears up. Cuddles the last squirrel to her cheek.

JAMIE

Ohhh....

Mistina sits beside her. Strokes her hair. Rocks her until the tears turn to sniffles. A shaky breath.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I fed them every two hours.

MISTINA

I know.

(heart warming pause)

You stuck with them all day.

JAMIE

What if the girl dies, too?

MISTINA

Let's make her life the best we can...right now. That's the only thing we can control.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT

Mistina shuts down the shop. Jamie takes the squirrel outside. A sharp dressed woman, FREIDA, walks in the door.

MISTINA  
Can I help you?

FREIDA  
I just bought the property. I understand you're going to be moving out.

MISTINA  
What? My notice says I have five days to get caught up.

FREIDA  
Four days now. I trust that you're going to be out on time.

MISTINA  
I barely opened. Can't you work with me?

Another disdainful look. Freida heads out the door.

FREIDA  
Sorry. I have other tenants waiting. I want to secure the premise.

Mistina's hands clench. She crumples--for a second, and then straightens with a fake smile as Jamie re-enters.

JAMIE  
Do we have to shut down, Mom?

MISTINA  
We're fighters, Jamie.

Mistina gathers her things.

MISTINA (CONT'D)  
We--are going to make TikTok videos, dance in a flash mob, and drag some events into the shop...and pray that if God wants me to help his homeless, he sends us a miracle.

**END TAG**