

COFFEE AND A CUPCAKE

by

Steve Cross

Steve Cross
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901
(870) 273-7712
Writecrosswords@aol.com

FADE IN

INT. MALL -- DAY

The mall is lively and bright with the exception of one small shop located in the middle of several glamorous and glitzy clothing stores.

Piped in music, MUFFLED and mostly too soft to be heard, fills the mall.

The shop is dull and drab, not much bigger than a good-sized living room. It consists of one counter, a yellowed linoleum floor and six tables.

The counter is also a glass display case with several miniature glass unicorns, fairies, elves, and other magical creatures.

JOE MCDONOHUGH, about 60 with white, unkempt hair sits in a wooden rocker and reads a newspaper.

He wears a stained, once-white apron, that has seen its better days and leans back into his chair rocking back and forth.

Outside the store is a slate placard sitting on an easel. "Joe's Java and Cupcakes."

RYAN COULTER and MARIE MCINTOSH walk into the scene and peer at the shop. They are both in their late 20's early 30's.

RYAN

I can't believe this place is still here.

He stares at the slate placard like it's some holy relic and touches it, moving his finger over its slightly pocked surface.

MARIE

This dump does not help your chances, Ryan.

RYAN

It's a little run-down.

MARIE

A little? This place is Tokyo after Godzilla.

RYAN

The best coffee in town. Desserts to die for, Marie.

MARIE

You brought me here on purpose?

RYAN

It's a special place.

MARIE

Did you bring her here?

RYAN

It was ten years ago. A lot has happened ... I did find you again.

Ryan takes her hand and looks at her.

MARIE

I don't think so.

She starts to pull away but Ryan holds on to her.

RYAN

Come on.

She relents, and he leads her into the shop.

Joe looks at them warily.

From his chair.

JOE

You want something?

RYAN

Go ahead and order, Marie.

MARIE

I'm afraid I'll catch something.

RYAN

The French silk pie. The Amoretto Mocha. You can't go wrong with them.

MARIE

I'll have the Amoretto Mocha.

JOE

This is Joe's, not Starbucks.

Joe returns to his paper.

Ryan and Marie exchange glasses. Ryan shrugs.

MARIE

I'll try some of the French silk pie.

Without looking up ...

JOE

Ding. Wrong again.

RYAN

What do you have, Joe?

Joe glowers at Ryan.

JOE

Do I know you?

RYAN

I don't--

JOE

Are you my friend?

RYAN

Not really.

JOE

Then don't call me Joe.

RYAN

You're not as friendly as the woman who used to work here.

JOE

My wife is dead.

RYAN

I'm sorry.

Joe returns to his paper.

JOE

Why? Was she your friend too?

RYAN

I ... Um ...

JOE

We got coffee, cocoa, hot tea, and cupcakes. If you don't want them, you're wasting my time.

MARIE

Maybe we should go.

Marie starts to go, but Ryan takes her arm.

RYAN
Please, Marie.

He turns back to Joe.

RYAN (CONT'D)
You might not remember me --

JOE
Kid, if it didn't happen yesterday
or this morning ... Are you going
to order?

Marie walks up to Joe and stands in front of him while he basically pretends as if she doesn't exist.

She looks at Ryan, who shrugs again.

Marie yanks the paper out of Joe's hands. Ryan flinches.

MARIE
You need to treat your customers
with a little more respect.

JOE
You need to treat my paper with a
little more respect.

Over a LOUD SPEAKER a woman's voice.

BEVERLY
Welcome, shoppers. The food court
is now open for breakfast. Head on
over to Bev's Brew and Bakery for
fresh coffee and delicious
desserts.

RYAN
Is that --

He tries to think of her name.

JOE
Beverly, the witch ... With a
capital B.

RYAN
I thought *she* was your wife.

JOE
It didn't happen that way.

Joe finally stands and moves behind the counter.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm about to get busy, so place
your order or place yourselves
outside my shop.

RYAN

I'll take a mug of coffee, black. A
cupcake too.

JOE

What kind?

Ryan doesn't know what to say.

JOE (CONT'D)

We got 21 flavors.

He hands Ryan a half-mangled piece of cardboard about the
size of a 4X6 index card.

RYAN

I'll take the strawberry cream --

JOE

We're out of that.

RYAN

Okay then. I'll take the caramel
praline --

JOE

We're out of that too.

RYAN

Then I'll take the peanut butter --

JOE

We're out of it.

RYAN

Which one should I order then?

JOE

They're all good.

Marie turns away from them, chuckles.

RYAN

Surprise me, Mr. McDonohugh. Give
me your best

Joe smiles.

JOE
That would be the vanilla,
creamsickle cheesecake.

Some customers begin to gather at the sign.

JOE (CONT'D)
\$6.50. You want anything, lady?

MARIE
The same.

As Joe moves toward the refrigerator, Ryan looks up to see that several people now mill about.

He pokes Marie and points.

RYAN
My dad always told me that when you
go into a new town, always eat
dinner at the place where most of
the cars are no matter what it
looks like on the outside.

Joe returns with two mugs of steaming coffee and two huge cupcakes.

JOE
\$13.75. Enjoy.

Ryan hands him a \$20.

RYAN
Keep the change, Mr. McDonohugh.

JOE
My name's Joe.

The kid next in line is a college student. He steps up to the counter and smiles a huge smile as Ryan moves away.

COLLEGE STUDENT
What's up, Joe?

JOE
Do I know you?

Ryan chuckles as he moves toward one of the six tables.

The LOUD SPEAKER POPS on.

BEVERLY
Attention all you decadent dessert
divas.

(MORE)

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

Beverly's brew and bakery is now featuring cupcakes for the very first time ... To die for. For a limited time you can get one cupcake and a mug of one of our specialty coffees for 5.50. You won't find anything half as delicious for this price anywhere in the mall.

Joe looks up, snarls, turns back to the college student.

JOE

What do you want?

COLLEGE STUDENT

Cupcake and coffee.

Joe turns and walks toward the display case.

The students in line begin to leave.

The college student waiting for his order turns slowly around.

MARIE

I wouldn't try to sneak out if I were you.

Joe turns back toward the counter; in one hand he has a coffee and in the other a cupcake.

JOE

\$6.50.

The kid digs into his pocket, gets out his wallet. He hands Joe a five and two ones.

Joe takes the money, waits for a second, and then shakes his head slightly.

He opens his cash drawer, and counts out ten nickels.

JOE (CONT'D)

Out of quarters.

The kid starts to say something, but thinks better of it. He drops the nickels into his pocket and walks away, the change JINGLING.

JOE (CONT'D)

Punk.

Ryan takes a sip of his coffee and frowns. Marie takes a drink of hers and spits it back out.

MARIE
This is disgusting.

JOE
Take a bite of the cupcake. It'll
taste better.

Marie glares at him.

JOE (CONT'D)
Or don't. I don't care.

Ryan bites into his cupcake, chews.

MARIE
How do you stay in business? I
can't believe --

RYAN
Take a bite of the cupcake.

MARIE
I don't want to --

JOE
Listen to your boyfriend, sweetie.

MARIE
I'm not a sweetie and this is my ex-
boyfriend.

Joe looks at them both and smiles.

RYAN
Take a bite of the cupcake.

Marie reluctantly takes a bite. Her face twists in anger. Then she chews ... Slowly. She takes another bite and chews again.

MARIE
These are the best things I have
ever tasted.
(to Joe)
You're a jerk.

JOE
If you want good manners, go to
Beverly's. If you want good
cupcakes, stay here.

Marie sips her coffee.

MARIE
It doesn't help the coffee.

She takes another bite.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Yum. These are so delicious. What's
your website?

JOE
What?

MARIE
Your website? So I can order these
online.

JOE
I don't do that.

MARIE
That's just stupid, Joe.

JOE
Who are you to be telling me --

MARIE
I'm a marketing manager.

JOE
I'm busy.

MARIE
You ran your customers off.

Joe glares at her.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I could help. Or not. I don't care.

Joe studies her.

JOE
I'm listening.

LOUD SPEAKER CRACKLES:

BEVERLY
Hello, there, mall masters. Right
now, Beverly's Brew and Bakery is
having a one half off giant cookie
sale. For a limited time only.

JOE
Giant cookies, my --

MARIE
Why don't you make announcements?

JOE
Cause I ain't going to pay money to
tell people where I am and what I
got when they can get here
themselves in five minutes.

MARIE
Joe, sit down.

Ryan glances at her, slightly shakes his head.

MARIE (CONT'D)
(to Joe)
I would get you a cup of coffee,
but I wouldn't give this sludge to
my worst enemy. Cupcake or not.

Joe strides over to her.

JOE
I think you should leave my store.

MARIE
I think you should cool your jets
and sit down.

Joe looks at Ryan.

JOE
I know why she's your ex.

He looks out to see that no one is standing in line, so he
sighs and sits beside them.

JOE (CONT'D)
What does a marketing manager do?

MARIE
Clients pay us to help them sell
more of their product.

JOE
You're a salesman who helps people
sell. ... Do you see that?

He points to a poster taped to the counter.

It shows a gun and underneath it these words: We shoot every third salesman, and the second one just left.

MARIE

Let's go, Ryan.

She starts to stand. Joe LAUGHS.

JOE

Don't get your bloomers in a bunch.

MARIE

I'll do what I want to with my bloomers, but you're going to have to do something about your name.

JOE

There's nothing wrong with my name.

MARIE

The name of your shop.

JOE

Joe's Java -- it's got a ring to it.

MARIE

It's called alliteration. Joe's Java and cupcakes. I came in here expecting to get one of the best cups of coffee in the area, but it's horrible.

JOE

I've never gotten the hang of making good coffee.

MARIE

You should be focusing on the cupcakes, not the coffee.

JOE

I guess maybe if my name were Carl or Cliff that might work. Any other bright ideas, saleslady?

He gets up and walks away.

RYAN

Don't let him bother you, Marie. He's kind of a curmudgeon.

Joe whirls around.

JOE
What did you call me?

MARIE
Curmudgeon.

JOE
Son, if I ever see you outside this
mall I'm going to hit you so hard,
I'll knock the crap out of you, and
then, I'll hit you again for
crapping on the floor.

Marie LAUGHS.

MARIE
He's only telling you the truth.

JOE
What is the truth?

MARIE
A curmudgeon is a grouch.

JOE
I can't argue that point. I like
cupcakes, not people.

MARIE
You should call your place
Curmudgeon's cupcakes.

JOE
Nice ---what did you call it --
alliteration.

MARIE
It does have a nice ring to it.

JOE
But don't forget the coffee.

RYAN
I'd like to.

JOE
I'm not talking to you.

MARIE
It isn't your strong point.

JOE

When she was alive, my wife did the coffee, and I'm not giving it up no matter how bad it is.

MARIE

Okay then, how about Curmudgeon's Cupcakes (and Coffee). We put the and coffee in parenthesis. Like it's an afterthought. That way the emphasis is still on the cupcake. Could you live with that?

He sits back down.

JOE

Coffee is one of the ways I remember her. I know it's bad. I don't even drink it.

Ryan takes another bite of his cupcake.

RYAN

Don't you think your wife -- Could I ask what her name was?

JOE

Irma.

RYAN

Don't you think Irma would want you to move on with your dreams?

JOE

You've never lost someone you loved, have you?

He looks down at the table top.

Ryan glances at Marie; their eyes meet.

JOE (CONT'D)

The coffee reminds me of how important she was to me. How I'm not complete without her. How there's always going to be something missing. She's happy I moved on for sure, but she's also happy that I remember her every minute I'm in here.

He pause and then CHUCKLES softly.

JOE (CONT'D)

She probably wouldn't be happy about my coffee.

MARIE

I understand how you feel. Every time, I turn on the radio I think of my dad. He owned a station --

RYAN

I didn't know that.

JOE

No wonder she dumped you.

MARIE

He let me hang around and learn about everything. Back then, of course, we didn't use digital music.

JOE

I want to be able to touch my music, not press a button and have it pop up from nowhere.

MARIE

As I got a little older and he started going a little out of style, I told him what kids my age wanted. He changed the format. The first time he played "Baby, One More time," the phones rang off the hook.

JOE

Who did that song?

MARIE

I don't think you'd know her. Anyway, within three months his station was number one. Then, he died.

He pats her hand.

JOE

You never forget them, Sweetie.

Marie sips her coffee.

MARIE

This really is bad.

She sets the cup down.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Maybe you can't beat Beverly's
brew, but you can do better than
this.

She takes another bite of the cupcake.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Your cupcakes will carry you. Now,
you're going to run some of those
announcements.

JOE
I ain't going to --

MARIE
Do you want my help or not?

RYAN
He didn't actually say --

JOE
Stay out of this. I can't afford to
do them all day.

MARIE
If Beverly can afford them --

JOE
She's the mall manager's girlfriend
and gets a discount.

He laughs.

JOE (CONT'D)
What he doesn't know is that she's
using a dating service to find her
another boyfriend.

MARIE
And how would you know that?

Joe looks away, and Marie laughs.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Using a dating service isn't
something to be ashamed of.

JOE
I didn't say anything --

MARIE

We'll talk about giving you an online presence the next time I come in.

JOE

I don't need an online presence.

MARIE

For your business.

JOE

Oh.

MARIE

Now about the mall messages. You don't have to run many. It's when you run them that counts. I need a list of your busiest times. I also know the owner of the radio station these college kids listen to. He was my dad's partner. I'll get you a discount for some radio spots.

JOE

This is going to cost me a fortune.

MARIE

It doesn't look like you're spending much on remodeling.

She looks around.

MARIE (CONT'D)

This place is a dump. Once business picks up, you're going to have to do some work.

Joe laughs and looks at Ryan.

JOE

Your girlfriend is a bit bossy.

RYAN

Not bossy. Determined. You really ought to listen to her, Joe.

MARIE

You didn't use to think that way --

JOE

Used to don't matter, Sweetie. It's obvious this young man admires you even if you have done more with your life than he has.

MARIE

He's a playwright and a college professor. I think he's done pretty well for himself.

He smiles as Marie and Ryan look at each other.

JOE

Listen to an old man. I don't know your history, but I do know that young people make stupid mistakes, but they learn from them.

Ryan smiles.

RYAN

(to Marie)

So, what do you say?

JOE

Give him another chance. If it doesn't work out, you can dump him again.

RYAN

What makes you think she dumped me?

Joe laughs.

Ryan sips his coffee, grimaces.

JOE

Bev's an old bitty, but her coffee is better than anything I've ever tasted except for my wife's. You can't go wrong with her Amoretto Mocha.

He winks.

JOE (CONT'D)

Just don't tell her I told you so. I guess I better be writing myself some commercials.

INT. BEVERLY'S BREWS AND BAKERY - DAY

Marie and Ryan step into a sparkling clean little shop with a whole host of coffee making devices lining a counter and a display case loaded with different desserts.

In here the music is muted but you can hear it.

BEVERLY BROWN looks up from behind the counter.

BEVERLY
Could I help you?

MARIE
Mr. ... A friend recommended we try
the Amoretto Mocha.

BEVERLY
Our house specialty.

RYAN
I'll take a Caramel Latte.

BEVERLY
Also a good choice.

RYAN
We both want vanilla, creamsickle
cheesecake cupcakes.

BEVERLY
(bristling)
We don't carry that here.

MARIE
Oh, right, that's Curmudgeon's
Cupcakes.

RYAN
How about a strawberry cream?

BEVERLY
We don't carry that either.

MARIE
Oh, that must be Curmudgeon's --

JOE
(over the loudspeaker)
People can be stupid.
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

They can go other places besides
Joe's ... I mean Curmudgeon's
Cupcakes ... Oh, and coffee. Don't
be stupid. Don't settle for less
than the best. Cupcakes now on sale
for \$5.

The college student right outside the door laughs. A girl
stands right next to him.

COLLEGE STUDENT

He's kind of a jerk, but his
cupcakes are every bit as delicious
as this coffee is.

He takes his girl by the hand and leads her away.

BEVERLY

My cupcakes are just as good as his
and the dishwater he serves as
coffee --

MARIE

Which cupcake do you recommend?

BEVERLY

We have a half-price sale on
cookies.

RYAN

That sounds pretty good.

MARIE

(quickly))
But we want cupcakes.

BEVERLY

Okay then, I recommend the vanilla
swirl.

MARIE

That will do then. Make it two.

While Beverly goes behind the counter to get the cupcakes,
Marie and Ryan sit at a small table near the back of the
little spot.

RYAN

I wanted a cookie. I don't care
what she says about her cupcakes--

Marie SHUSHES him.

MARIE
I have an idea.

RYAN
Uh, oh.

Marie SHUSHES him again as Beverly comes to their table.

The cupcakes are kind of plain looking, nothing like the ones Joe makes. They are also a bit smallish.

Ryan looks at his and frowns.

MARIE
They look ... delicious.

Beverly smiles and moves away to the counter.

RYAN
They don't look that delicious to me.

He pulls the wrapper away and looks at the cupcake. While he's inspecting his, Marie rips her wrapper off and bites into it.

MARIE
They aren't. I didn't expect them to be.

RYAN
Then why did you --

MARIE
She's coming back; listen.

Beverly appears at her table.

BEVERLY
Can I get you something else?

MARIE
I want some more of that coffee. It's heavenly.

BEVERLY
Do you like the cupcakes?

MARIE
I've had better, but cupcake making is a fine art. It takes years to perfect it. Now, Joe --

BEVERLY
I'm not Joe.

The music stops. A commercial

JOE
(filtered)
You want the greatest cupcakes
around? Well, you'd be stupid if
you didn't. And the greatest
cupcakes around are available at
Curmudgeon's Cupcakes ... And
coffee at Midtown Mall. On sale now
for \$5.

Jingle ...

VOICE
Curmudgeon's cupcakes. You want
like Joe, but you'll love his
cupcakes.

Marie LAUGHS.

BEVERLY
He's advertising on the radio? Joe?
What a --

MARIE
Perhaps you should too. I know the
owner of the station.

Marie wraps her cupcake back up and sets it on the table.

MARIE (CONT'D)
It's a shame that you and Joe don't
work together. I'll take that
coffee now. To go, please.

BEVERLY
I don't like him much, but his
cupcakes are the best.

Beverly, SIGHS, walks away, at a slightly less bouncy gait.

RYAN
How in the world -- how did those
commercials -- it's almost like
fate.

MARIE
It's called scheduled spots, and
it's part of my plan.
(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

Grab your coffee. I have an appointment with the mall manager.

RYAN

Why do you need to talk to him?

MARIE

I'm a marketing manager. It's part of my plan.

INT. CURMUDGEON'S CUPCAKES ... AND COFFEE - DAY

Marie and Ryan come into the shop and sit down at a table.

Joe ambles slowly to their table.

JOE

What can I get you?

RYAN

We want something special. We're celebrating.

JOE

I'm glad someone is.

MARIE

We got engaged. We want cupcakes for our wedding and we thought maybe you --

RYAN

I didn't know we wanted cupcakes for our wedding.

MARIE

Of course we do, and we were wondering if you catered.

JOE

I can't help you.

MARIE

What's wrong?

Joe stares at the floor and doesn't say anything.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Sit down here.

She pulls a chair to their table while Ryan just stares.

Joe sits down quietly.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Why can't you help us?

JOE
Well, it looks like --

Beverly bursts into the shop.

BEVERLY
How dare you! You've always been a jerk, but this -- this is the worst.

JOE
I'm not in the mood to talk to you right now, you witch.

BEVERLY
You told him!

JOE
What are you talking about woman?

BEVERLY
You told the manager that ... that ...

MARIE
Maybe you should sit down, Beverly. Ryan, go get these two a cupcake.

BEVERLY
I don't want --

MARIE
Of course you do.

Joe looks up at her and starts to speak

MARIE (CONT'D)
I'll pay for them, Joe.

She looks at Ryan.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Go on now.

Ryan moves slowly and cautiously toward the counter.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Beverly, Joe here is a little down. If you two are going to fight, you should at least be human to each other.

BEVERLY
This pathetic, jerk, excuse for a --

MARIE
Don't use that tone. Maybe Joe
should talk first.

Ryan sets cupcakes in front of them.

JOE
Bitty Beverly has ruined my life --

MARIE
Stop it, Joe.

The next two lines are spoken at the same time.

JOE
She

BEVERLY
He

They stop.

MARIE
Take a bite of cupcake.

Joe does immediately. Beverly hesitates and then bites into it. Her face briefly says, OMG this is so good, but then she frowns, her brow furrowing and she puts the cupcake down.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Now, I'm getting a vibe here that
you two are mad at each other for
some reason. Let's discuss this
rationally. Ladies first.

This is okay with Joe because he's chewing on his cupcake.

BEVERLY
This man told the mall manager that
I had a profile on a ...

MARIE
Dating site?

BEVERLY
So, lock me up. A dating site. He
not only dumped me, but he raised
the rent on my shop by 25% a month.
I can't afford that. You've ruined
me, Joe.

MARIE

Your turn, Joe.

JOE

You're just saying that because you ruined me.

BEVERLY

I did no such thing.

JOE

So you didn't tell the manager to sick the health department on me?

BEVERLY

No, I didn't.

JOE

He raised my rate 25% too, and if I don't clean up my store, he's going to kick me out of the mall. You've ruined me, Beverly.

BEVERLY

I did no such thing. How dare you accuse me when you --

JOE

Liar.

BEVERLY

You're the liar, not me.

MARIE

Both of you, just shut it. Isn't it possible someone else did this to you.

JOE

I didn't do anything to her.

BEVERLY

I didn't do anything to him.

JOE

It doesn't matter. I'm ruined.

BEVERLY

Me too.

MARIE

This is unfortunate. The city's best coffee and the city's best cupcakes. Gone forever.

RYAN
No! It can't happen.

Marie suddenly SQUEALS.

MARIE
It doesn't have to.

BEVERLY
What?

JOE
I can't stop it.

BEVERLY
Neither can I.

MARIE
Maybe you two can't stop it, but WE
can.

RYAN
What are you thinking?

MARIE
Do you guys trust me?

They just look at each other and shrug.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I have a plan.

INT. BEVERLY'S BREWS AND BAKERY - DAY

The slate sign outside of Beverly's shop says. JC's Cupcakes
and Coffee.

Marie and Ryan walk into the shop.

Beverly looks up and waves.

BEVERLY
The usual?

MARIE
We want something special.

BEVERLY
Big day?

A swinging door behind the counter opens up and Joe steps out
with a tray full of incredibly beautiful cupcakes.

JOE
Good grief, Beverly. It's their
fifth anniversary. Where's your
mind gone?

BEVERLY
Away.

Joe LAUGHS.

JOE
Is everything packed?

BEVERLY
Of course it is.

MARIE
Are you going somewhere?

She CHUCKLES.

Joe grabs a couple of cupcakes as Beverly prepares coffee and
heads for their table.

JOE
France.

BEVERLY
And Jamaica.

RYAN
What a honeymoon!

JOE
Honeymoon? Bah! It's work.

BEVERLY
Jamaica has about the best coffee
beans in the world.

RYAN
And France the best pastries.

JOE
Of course we will take some time to
enjoy ourselves. The French
Riviera.

BEVERLY
Montego bay.

Beverly looks up as a man JEFF GATES walks into the story.

Joe leans in close to Marie and whispers

JOE
That's Jeff Gates, the mall
manager. Make him pay 25% more.

BEVERLY
I've never met Mr. Gates.

RYAN
Marie --

MARIE
Ryan ... I said I have never met
Mr. Gates.

Beverly brings out a cup of coffee and slams it hard on Mr.
Gate's table, only the lid keeping it from spilling all over.

JEFF GATES
Congratulations, Bev, Joe--

She turns her back on him and walks away.

BEVERLY
We'll be going now.

JOE
If you need us --

MARIE
We can call.

JOE
Thanks you two for taking over.

BEVERLY
When we retire --

JOE
We're not retired yet.

He grabs Beverly's hand, turns, his lip curls when he sees
Gates and then walks away.

Ryan and Mari watch them go.

Then Gates and Marie LAUGH.

JEFF GATES
You should be in management, Marie.

RYAN
You said you didn't know him.

MARIE

I lied.

JEFF GATES

This cupcake and coffee are heavenly.

MARIE

It's on the house, but don't tell Joe ... or Beverly.

She sits down with Mr. Gates.

MARIE (CONT'D)

They are so good for each other.

JEFF GATES

They're good for the mall too.

RYAN

I'm confused.

He sits down at the counter.

MARIE

Mr. Gates is my ally.

RYAN

He ran Joe out of his shop. He raised Bev's rent.

JEFF GATES

Oh, don't worry. When they get back, I'm going to lower it again. My wedding present.

He finishes his cupcake and stands.

JEFF GATES (CONT'D)

Thanks for all the help, Marie.

RYAN

You helped him?

JEFF GATES

I found a girl on EZ Date. I didn't know how to break it off with Beverly. Marie helped me.

RYAN

She did?

JEFF GATES

She also got my two best shops and my two best shopkeepers together.

MARIE

They were made for each other, but someone just had to show them.

JEFF GATES

Because they were too stubborn to admit it themselves.

He picks up his coffee and sips it.

JEFF GATES (CONT'D)

Nectar of the gods.

He takes another drink.

JEFF GATES (CONT'D)

And then there's the brand new glitzy clothing store paying twice the rent Joe was. I love it when a plan works.

MARIE

Thank you for your patronage, Mr. Gates. I look forward to it for a long time.

JEFF GATES

It'll be great working with you.

He leaves.

They watch him go.

A light dawns on Ryan.

RYAN

Wait. Working with us?

MARIE

Oh, I meant to tell you. Joe and Bev would like to have us take over the shop when they retire.

RYAN

What did you tell them?

MARIE

I told them I'd have to talk to you. You are the brains in the family after all.

RYAN
Yeah right, and I'm a French pastry
chef.

She hugs him and they kiss.

FADE OUT.

(CONT'D)