

HURRICANE COFFEE

Written by

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Based on a true story

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INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - DAY

A mismatched sandwich/coffee shop with herbs and teas, and a tiny stage.

MISTINA (38ish), quirky braids, coffee driven, and bleeding heart, struggles to fix the latte machine.

DEREK (43ish), stoic, dry humor, walks with a cane, and EDDIE (35ish), imaginative, overly helpful but annoying, hover nearby.

MISTINA

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

EDDIE

You won't have many customers today.

MISTINA

Lucky me. No one knows where I'm at.

Mistina shrieks and jumps back.

DEREK

Definitely electrical.

MISTINA

Wow, thanks, Einstein.

EDDIE

Maybe unplug it.

MISTINA

I just plugged it back in.

DEREK

How's that working for you?

EDDIE

Maybe call an electrician.

MISTINA

I can't afford an electrician. I can't afford anything!

She unplugs the machine. Looks it over.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Hah. There's a wire touching metal.

She grabs electrical tape. Rips it with her teeth.

DEREK
Clearly qualified.

MISTINA
You the safety inspector?

DEREK
Do I get to pick what I inspect?

Riley (36ish), intense, covered in tattoos, bursts in the shop. Carrying a grocery bag.

RILEY
We hit the jackpot.

She begins unpacking groceries.

RILEY (CONT'D)
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. I figured we could open for the evening and make drinks and sandwiches for them.

MISTINA
I can't do a serious interview with a group of grown nerds playing wizard games. This blogger could be huge. Think of the exposure...We could do the D&D group tomorrow.

RILEY
I didn't get a contact number, so...they're coming. But the D&D group is a sure thing. Real paying customers.

DEREK
Unless they don't order anything.

MISTINA

I wanted the blogger to have special after-hours treatment.

DEREK

She'll get a treat now. Mistina's fantasy cafe.

RILEY

Think of it as interactive marketing. Two promotional ideas under one roof.

EDDIE

If the D&D thing works out, you could make groups a regular thing. Pokey-man on Tuesdays. Quilting on Fridays.

RILEY

Oh. And tarot reading.

MISTINA

I hope the blogger doesn't get pushed to the side by Sir Wizardpants and his magical dragon. I could get a bad review.

Riley begins mixing syrups.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

I've got my kid tonight. The blogger. The D&D group. And one set of hands. What could go wrong?

RILEY

I'll be here. This can be a regular thing if it works.

DEREK

I'll help. But no dragon costume.

RILEY

In the meantime, making our own syrups saves a bundle. We'll be the only shop with specialty flavors.

MISTINA

She's figured out how to duplicate all our flavors and even created some new ones.

RILEY

Today's flavor experience...maple,
bacon...and vanilla.

EDDIE

I like it. Breakfast waffle 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.

HANK (38ish), earnest, dedicated, clumsy, picks up a mug.

HANK

(to Mistina)

In honor of you being out of the
coffee truck...

He knocks over a stack of business cards.

HANK (CONT'D)

Oh...sorry.

Everyone scrambles to pick up the cards.

RILEY

Appreciate the honor Hank.

HANK

I just meant I was drinking it
here. Not taking it to go.

RILEY

You weren't here when we opened.
Now you want a single order? What's
going on?

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.

RILEY

You can't cook?

MISTINA

Hank, did you burn her?

HANK

She pushed me to cook Brussel sprouts for dinner, even though I'm allergic to them...so I did. I just agreed with her. About everything.

Everyone looks confused.

HANK (CONT'D)

She doesn't think I have a backbone. It was a test.

RILEY

I'm assuming you ate them.

HANK

I had to use my epi pen before I completely stopped breathing.

Everyone mumbles awkward condolences.

EDDIE

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

HANK

You think?

DEREK

No. Quit being a doormat.

HANK

(sighs)

So... what are you guys doing?

MISTINA

What we're always doing. Repairing equipment and figuring out how to bring in customers.

EDDIE

(building a business card tower)

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You need to think outside the box.
Get these cards on the streets.

MISTINA

I wouldn't have to think outside
the box if they'd give me my sign
permit.

Riley pulls a home latte machine from under the counter.

RILEY

Hank is still waiting for his
drink. Time for the backup plan.

MISTINA

I almost have it.

RILEY

First week in the new shop and
nothing shouts quality like using
the home espresso machine from
Salvation Army.

MISTINA

Wait...It's fixed. Give this
machine a try, Riley.

RILEY

You're up, Hank. 'Christmas in a
cup?'

HANK

Everyday.

DEREK

It ain't even close to Christmas.

MISTINA

It's a signature drink.

Derek hands his coffee container to Mistina.

DEREK

Refill. Black
(to the others)
Flavor is like putting ketchup on a
choice cut of beef.

Mistina grabs a coffee carafe and fills Derek's container.

MISTINA

You just hate waiting for your
drink.

DEREK

There's that.

HANK

Dessert in a cup? All day, any day,
any time of year.

RILEY

I'm with Hank. Something hot and
sweet. Caramel macchiato with my
new maple, bacon, vanilla and a
glob of whipcreme. That's an
experience.

EDDIE

You're both wrong. Coffee is about
the temperature. Iced in the summer
and hot in the winter. I don't
pretend to be trendy.

MISTINA

Actually, it's about the beans.
Dark beans gives you the burnt
taste and white beans showcases the
flavor.

Riley hands Hank his drink. Eddie holds up one of the cards,
thinking out loud.

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.

MISTINA

I just opened a coffee shop that
isn't paying wages.

(MORE)

MISTINA (CONT'D)

I supplement with work in a bar,
and I'm raising a kid, who
needs...a lot of my time. When did
you want to practice these dances?

RILEY

He's got a point. If people don't
know you're here, you won't be for
long.

DEREK

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

MISTINA

Accepting help always comes with an
emotional invoice. I can't afford
to get caught up in relationship
debt.

DEREK

You can't do everything alone. How
sad is that?

RILEY

Hello? What am I? I do all the
things I do--so that Mistina can do
all the things she does.

DEREK

Then you won't mind if a few
volunteers do all the things they
could do to help you do all the
things you do, so that Mistina can
do all the things she does...No
strings attached.

EDDIE

Ohhhhh...Derek has a thing for
Mistina.

DEREK

You should invest in tea leaves.

EDDIE

You can't tell me I'm wrong.

DEREK

I can't tell you anything. You know
it all. Besides...she knows.

MISTINA

And she...is not going there again.
One divorce is enough.

Mistina moves behind the counter and catches her flip flop on the cabinet, tearing the strap off. She holds it up.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Great. I broke my flip-flop.

RILEY

Best day ever. You got your excuse to go barefoot.

DEREK

Let me look at it. Maybe it can be fixed.

MISTINA

It's just a shoe. Not my life or my dignity. And you can't fix either.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - DAY - LATER

No customers. Just Riley, making a sandwich with a few dozen pickles on it.

Mistina flings through the door, carrying several bags. She dumps them on the counter.

MISTINA
(visibly upset)
Coffee.

RILEY
Coffee...or COFFEE COFFEE.

MISTINA
COFFEE COFFEE. While it's quiet.

RILEY
Me too. Sit down.

Riley hands Mistina the sandwich plate. Grabs the pot of coffee and cups. They settle at a table.

RILEY (CONT'D)
What now?

Mistina takes a bite of her sandwich.

MISTINA
Mmmmm. Pickles. I needed a pick me up...The landlord met me in the parking lot.

RILEY
I thought you made the rent.

MISTINA
I did. But last month we were doing the build out. And I haven't made enough this month to pay the cam charges.

RILEY
So, we haul away our own garbage.

MISTINA
He gave me two weeks to get caught up.

RILEY

We also give him free coffee and muffins for a month.

MISTINA

More like my first born child.

RILEY

Give him your ex. Save the kid until she get's mouthy.

MISTINA

I'll figure it out. You wanted COFFEE COFFEE too?

RILEY

Yeah. Home stress. I can't keep helping you out and leaving all the bills for my boyfriend. Love the dude but he's not ready to take care of a soccer team.

MISTINA

Three is not a soccer team. It's more like a makeup party.--Don't worry about me. You're not my employee. Take care of your family.

RILEY

You are my family. You get me. But my kids are like a pack of wolves. They eat us out of house and home. Thank goodness they're in high school now.

MISTINA

Because high schoolers are so easy to take care of. No drama there.

RILEY

Not as long as they have wi-fi and a fridge full of snacks. They practically raise themselves.

Eddie enters.

EDDIE

I ran out of inspiration on my manuscript. Thought I'd come hang out.

MISTINA

Plenty of sci-fi here. You're fixing to see us do a disappearing trick real soon.

EDDIE

Still looking for ways to advertise? Why don't you create a gag menu item. Like Pickles a la mode. Something no one will order but everyone will talk about.

MISTINA

Don't kid yourself. The way Riley eats pickles we'd be out of that item all the time.

RILEY

Don't knock my pickle thing when you also have a pickle thing. I've lost a hundred pounds and I credit pickles with dissolving my appetite.

EDDIE

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

MISTINA

She's worked her ass off, literally, to get to this point.

RILEY

Yeah. Says the man who's got six inches of height and testosterone. You don't need pickles.

MISTINA

Bottom line. We both need to start making money or we'll be living out of the homeless closet ourselves. One D&D group is not going to carry us.

EDDIE

But Riley's idea to bring in groups was smart. 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 need a Karaoke machine.

EDDIE

Everyone keeps coming up with ideas. But you have to advertise them. Do you have a website? Facebook?

The girls look startled. Mistina jumps up and drops a kiss on the top of Eddie's head. He grins.

MISTINA

That's right. I could do a coffee drink of the day. Tell people about events coming up. I've been so busy I didn't think of it.

(to Riley)

Can you close up? I have to pick up my kid.

RILEY

Yep. I'm coming to your house. I'll help you get a website going.

Mistina scurries out the door. Riley starts closing the shop up.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Sorry, Eddie. Gotta go. We'll be open again this evening. Before the blogger and the D&D group gets here.

Eddie slouches toward the door.

EDDIE

There's also twitter. And you could make a reel. That's worth...I don't know...another little kiss?

RILEY

Go. Now.

INT. MISTINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mistina and Riley sit the table. Open laptop, papers spread around.

Mistina's daughter, JAMIE (8), energetic, curious, mischievous, 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 and now they won't eat.

MISTINA

Put my cellphone back and get yourself ready. We have to be back to the shop this evening.

JAMIE

But the squirrels...

MISTINA

I don't have a blogger coming tomorrow. We'll talk about the squirrels then.

JAMIE

They could be dead by then. You'll be a squirrel killer.

MISTINA

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

Jamie slams herself from the room.

JAMIE (O.S.)

That's not the same. You help everybody else but let a baby squirrel die.

RILEY

Sounds like you have a porcupine,
too.

MISTINA

She has a bleeding heart.

RILEY

Says the woman who fills the
homeless pantry before she buys
food for herself.

MISTINA

(raising her voice)

If you're ready in time, we'll talk
about the squirrels.

JAMIE (O.S.)

Whooley!

RILEY

Exclamation point.

MISTINA

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

Mistina sips her coffee and looks at the screen in front of
her.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

The homepage looks good, but now we
need a button that helps explain
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. People
will know they can get help from
us.

RILEY

COFFEE COFFEE is us. When my home
life is in the toilet, I know when
I ask for COFFEE COFFEE you'll drop
everything and sit down and listen.
To everyone else it sounds like
someone who missed their fix.

(holding her throat)

"COFFEE. COFFEE. I need coffee."

MISTINA

That's like...the point. I want people who are abused, or homeless...or just choking on life, to be able to get help. A hand up. COFFEE COFFEE.

RILEY

Everyone orders coffee differently.
(excited voice)
"I need Coffee. Coffee." That's pretty much everyone we serve.

MISTINA

Our code word has to be subtle. What if someone is being human trafficked? They say "COFFEE COFFEE" and...BAM. We alert authorities.

RILEY

So like super heroes...but caffeinated.
(batman voice)
"I am the Coffee-bat. I am here to save the day."

MISTINA

Right? This can really make a difference but...it would be a disaster if someone really does just want coffee and we send SWAT after them.

RILEY

We'll train all the coffee girls to pay attention. People in distress act completely different than coffee addicts.

MISTINA

Really? You think people can tell the difference? Because I look pretty distressed without a cup of coffee in my hand.

RILEY

And that only works if you have baristas. Everyone who said they'd help with this project seems to have disappeared. Coffee crew. Down to two. We should make t-shirts.

MISTINA

Maybe we could ask them a question if they order COFFEE COFFEE. Like, "Do you take your coffee with...counseling?"

RILEY

Genius. Now you're really subtle. What if they say both?

MISTINA

(deadpan)

"Welcome to Hurricane Coffee. Would you like counseling with your caffeination today?"

RILEY

I'm only qualified to talk coffee. Counseling is beyond my pay grade. And how are they supposed to know our code word? Do we scribble it in the bathroom?

MISTINA

Maybe COFFEE COFFEE is more than our code word. Maybe it's the title of our mission board. Are you homeless? What can we do to help? Are you a victim of human trafficking? We are a safe space. Give us a wink.

Mistina watches Riley's face fall.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Are you going through some things and just need to be around someone? Your mental health is important. Do you need resources?...

RILEY

...If you want a friendly face that won't judge you, we got you. Yeah. Yeah. You're right...all that should be posted but...

Mistina holds up her cup. Riley slowly clinks hers against it.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I kinda wanted a coffee-bat costume. Or at least a tattoo.

MISTINA

(raising her voice)

Jamie. When you're dressed, bring me your chalkboard.

(to Riley)

We'll write our COFFEE COFFEE mission in chalk until I can afford to get one made.

INT. DEREK'S HOUSE - DAY

TRAVIS (36ish), laid back, sarcastic, and perpetually broke, is tapping out some rhythm on drums set up in the corner of the room. Derek is setting up a new phone. Eddie types on his laptop.

TRAVIS

(drumming)

Really? You bought a phone for a homeless man. That's taking 'impressing a girl' to a new level.

DEREK

I'm capable of helping someone without an agenda.

(holds up the phone)

But if women think it's sexy to have a man around who's helpful...

EDDIE

Is this about Mistina?

TRAVIS

(hits the snare)

The owner of the new coffee shop? Hah. I knew it. You're back in the game.

DEREK

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

TRAVIS

Speak for yourself. I never did the divorce bit. I've still got my best moves.

(drum roll)

Wanna come over and see my...drums?

EDDIE

No wonder you never made it to the alter. That's not a pickup line. That's a 'noise complaint'.

TRAVIS

And yet they still flock to the music.

EDDIE

Women might notice a set of biceps on a drum set...at first. But in the end, they want intelligent conversation. The other night I had a very stimulating conversation with a woman about my manuscript. When she heard I was studying dating apps and the possibility of the government controlling...

DEREK

Oh, my god. You led with your manuscript?

EDDIE

It's very fascinating. It's changed the whole way I meet women.

TRAVIS

Oh yeah. I bet she was dying to come over and plumb your psychy.
(mocking)
"Oh Eddie. On our second date, can I read your diary?"

EDDIE

Hey. Not everyone's into bad drumming and a set of biceps. Some women want to connect on a deeper level. And I'm not so lame that I have to buy a cellphone for a homeless man, to wow a girl.

DEREK

I'm sure the homeless dude is going to be very impressed by my offering.

TRAVIS

True statement. If the shop owner is impressed as well, that's just a bonus for your backstory.

Derek heads for the door with his phone.

DEREK

And if you two have nothing better to do than discuss how to meet women, you can stop by and lend a hand.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - DAY

Several CUSTOMERS sip coffee drinks, either sitting at various tables or looking at the consignment area.

Riley leans on the counter, watching Derek. He stands outside, instructing a HOMELESS MAN on how to use the cellphone.

RILEY

At least we're getting a few customers in. Maybe we should think about staying open later, everyday.

Mistina and Jamie sit at a table. Jamie is wearing a ninja costume. Mistina helps Jamie support a tiny squirrel, wrapped in a baby blanket. They give it milk from a tiny bottle. A second squirrel lays wrapped in a small box nearby.

MISTINA

Take your time. He's really weak. He may not make it.

Jamie nods, her concentration on the squirrel. Mistina leaves her and joins Riley.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

I don't know why people think it's okay to take a baby animal inside instead of leaving it for the mother to take care of.

Riley nods, her concentration still on Derek.

RILEY

He's laying it on pretty thick with the "I'm just a guy who helps the homeless" routine. He's got the hots for you.

MISTINA

I already had the, "I'm not interested talk with him". But I'm not going to turn down help for someone who needs it.

Mistina takes up a rag and wipes down the espresso area.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

He's just...a nice guy, doing a nice thing.

(pauses)

You don't think he got the message?

RILEY

Oh, he got a message. That cell phone is like handing a business card to the homeless guy that says, "Smile and show the lady inside that I'm single, available, and amazing"

MISTINA

As long as he teaches our homeless friend how to use it.

RILEY

Seriously, Mistina. You were right. He's a nice guy.

MISTINA

My husband was a nice guy. Men just don't understand my drive. I want this business to succeed and I want to be able to help people.

RILEY

Maybe Derek will back both.

MISTINA

Maybe pigs will fly. I need time to figure out who I am. I don't want the pressure of someone who wants something in return or helps around here out of pity.

RILEY

Oh, pity is the last thing that boy is thinking of when he looks at you.

A CURIOUS WOMAN meanders up and starts reading the COFFEE COFFEE mission, proudly displayed behind the counter.

A STRESSED MOM shoulders through the door carrying a screaming baby.

STRESSED MOM

Coffee. Coffee. Whatever your daily special is.

Riley starts a hot drink.

RILEY

We're missing an opportunity to wear coffee bat costumes.

Mistina looks at the screaming baby.

MISTINA

Mom doesn't need a code. She needs caffeine to cope.

The Curious Woman, reading the sign, starts crying.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

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

JAMIE

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

The Stressed Mom shuffles both purse and baby. Riley puts the drink on the ledge.

STRESSED MOM

I can't...do this...can you hold him a sec.

Riley raises her hands, backing away from the baby thrust at her.

RILEY

Whoa...no way. I don't do babies. They scream and leak. It's like a holding a grenade that someone took the pin out of.

JAMIE

Mom. Are you listening?

Derek meanders back in the shop.

MISTINA

Jamie. I'll be with you in a minute.

The Curious Woman sobs louder.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Seriously. I'll try and help if you can tell me what you need.

STRESSED MOM

I just need my wallet. Please.

RILEY

Sorry. Can't help you with that.

CURIOUS WOMAN

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

Stressed Mom bursts into tears also. Mistina grabs tissues.

RILEY

Hey. Nothing personal. I don't hold anyone's baby.

STRESSED MOM

I'm just so...overwhelmed.

JAMIE

Mom.

RILEY

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

Mistina swaps tissues for the baby.

MISTINA

See? We care? Sit down and enjoy a little coffee therapy and I'll hold the baby.

Stressed mom snuggles into a lounge chair and snuffles.

STRESSED MOM

Thank you.

CURIOUS WOMAN

(grabbing Riley in a hug)
That is so beautiful. You two are exactly what I needed today.

Riley peels away from the Woman like she's a leper.

RILEY

No. No. No babies. No hugs.

The Curious Woman turns to Mistina. Wounded.

MISTINA

(hugging her)
I do hugs and babies.

The Curious Woman dabs her eyes. Wanders to look at the consignments.

MISTINA (CONT'D)
 (undertone to Riley)
 We should have gone with the
 counseling idea.

RILEY
 Which comes in all forms.

Mistina follows Riley's gaze to Jamie. Derek squats beside her. They feed the baby squirrel together.

MISTINA
 (smiling)
 Maybe.

Mistina turns on the stereo. Dances with the baby.

MISTINA (CONT'D)
 Let's get this baby some music to
 quiet him.

RILEY
 That country crap you listen to
 won't quiet him. It'll make him
 scream louder.

Mistina ignores Riley. Sings offkey with the music.

RILEY (CONT'D)
 Keep that squawking up and I'll
 scream louder than the baby.

The door opens and Travis, paint splatters across clothing that does nothing to hide his nice chest, enters.

DEREK
 Been sitting under a flock of
 birds?

TRAVIS
 Got called for a paint touch-up.

KARMA, a dog tied in the corner, whines.

MISTINA
 Karma. No.

TRAVIS
 (to Riley)
 Hey, pretty girl. I need my
 caffeine fix.

RILEY
 Triple shot. Espresso.

TRAVIS
Keys to my heart.

Derek joins Eddie at his table.

DEREK
(to Travis)
Thata boy. Keep it simple.

EDDIE
That's a lot of caffeine. You
should alternate your shots with
decaf. Easier on your system.

TRAVIS
Don't even go there. Decaf is
flavored mud.

Travis wanders over to pet Karma, who seems to love the
attention.

DEREK
Great. Even female dogs love him.

MISTINA
A. She knows him. And B. He just
gave 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
Duly noted. So for the purposes of
research...filet mignon or
chocolate?

MISTINA
Don't ask me. My dates are
underwear-movie parties with my
daughter. You're on your own with
the ladies.

DEREK
Sexy. You're one of those 'snore on
the couch while your kid watches
cartoons' sort of gals. I get it.

MISTINA

I'm one of those 'just got out of a divorce and don't want to listen to the bullshit' sort of gals.

DEREK

Same thing.

Travis wanders over to Jamie.

TRAVIS

You got a puppy in there, kiddo?

He pulls back the edge of the baby blanket. Staggered back holding his nose.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Whoa...those are rodents.

JAMIE

They're not rodents.

Travis backpedals. Grabs a napkin from the counter. Blows his nose.

TRAVIS

Same difference. I'm allergic. Those things are only good for cat bait.

Jamie sucks in her breath and pulls the squirrels closer.

JAMIE

This isn't cat bait. Mom.

MISTINA

They're wild animals, Travis. They're probably more in danger of catching something from you, than you are of them.

TRAVIS

Are you kidding? Rodents carry rabies. Rabies!

DEREK

Oh Ohh. I see a flaw in the attraction gene.

TRAVIS

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

DEREK
You look pretty red.

MISTINA
You're fine, Travis. You didn't
touch them.

RILEY
(grinning)
Squirrel germs could be airborne.
I'm pretty sure you're compromised.

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.

The espresso machine sparks. Stops for a second. Comes back
on. Then stops again.

The two girls look at each other. They both sigh.

EDDIE
Think it's possessed?

MISTINA
I need it for the Dungeons and
Dragons crowd coming in tonight.
But for now...

Mistina plugs in the home espresso machine.

MISTINA (CONT'D)
Jamie. Keep all the animals in the
back corner. I don't want anymore
allergy issues.

DEREK
Or the health department.

Jamie takes her box of squirrels to a back table.

MISTINA
Riley. Can you grab some anti-
allergy herbs, from the apothecary
cabinet, and make Travis some tea?

She takes the quiet baby back to his smiling mama.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - LATER

Jamie blows up balloons at a side table, in the back corner. The squirrels sleep, tucked in their box nearby.

Travis steps back from the espresso machine. Drums his hands on the counter and presents the fixed machine.

TRAVIS

There you go, pretty girl. It's the least I could do for almost dying in your shop.

MISTINA

You were probably fine. The tea was just a back up plan.

RILEY

I offered to make you take off your shirt so that I could apply salve to your chest, but Mistina didn't seem to think you needed it.

TRAVIS

Well, I'm happy to return the favor.

RILEY

You want to apply salve to my chest? You know I have a boyfriend.

TRAVIS

For the tea. Glad I had tools in my truck.

MISTINA

You're a godsend.

TRAVIS

Thank you. Want to come over and listen to my...drums?

MISTINA

Uh. No. Want a free sandwich for your trouble?

TRAVIS

Sure.

Derek play cards at a table near the counter.

DEREK

It's a wonder you're still single.

Eddie, still working on his manuscript, smiles.

EDDIE

Talk to me when you're ready for a more sophisticated approach.

Mistina makes a test drink at the smoothly humming espresso machine.

Elderly EDNA, well-meaning busybody, sits in a nearby armchair, sipping her latte as she people watches.

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 reserve a table?

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

My dream was live entertainment. The kind where customers flock in, and I sit back and make coffee drinks for everyone...and pay all my bills on time.

EDDIE

I have that same dream. Only it's a fantasy and the customers are all women.

MISTINA

With the website and Facebook up,
we need to pick an idea and go with
it. We could start by advertising
your YOGA, Riley.

EDDIE

Even better. Caffeine and a stage
of women.

DEREK

Because that's not creepy.

RILEY

We'll do the YOGA mid-afternoon,
when we're closed to the public.

A balloon floats away. Jamie jumps on a chair and then into
the air, karate chopping the balloon.

KARMA lunges to the end of her leash. Barks.

MISTINA

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.

Karma barks again.

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

MISTINA

Help me out, Riley.

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.

(to Riley)

I'll be right back.

Mistina heads outside where she can be seen talking to the homeless man. Jamie plays with the dog.

Travis plops down at the table with Derek and Eddie.

TRAVIS

Let Jamie jump all she wants. Kids need to be able to move. The worst she can do is break something.

RILEY

Her leg? Or someone's consignment? Jamie. There's a tablet under the counter. Sit down and find something to watch.

Jamie rummages under the counter.

DEREK

Don't give her technology. She needs to be building forts and riding bikes. Kids now days are too dependent on that stuff.

RILEY

That's exactly what we need. Blankets draped over the tables and an eight year old crawling around in the floor.

Jamie snuggles on the couch with the laptop.

EDDIE

Give her a book or something. Force her to be creative.

EDNA

I read that you can give kids caffeine and they will settle down.

Riley sets a sandwich in front of Travis.

A woman in dress clothes, PAIGE (mid 30's), type A personality, rediscovering her identity, flings herself into the shop.

RILEY

Uhhh. Aren't you supposed to be on a date?

Paige stops.

PAIGE

(chants)

I attract smart men.

(to Riley)

I really need something sweet. You choose, Riley.

RILEY

There's only a couple here and I'm not sure how smart 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.

Paige drops her purse on the table. Plops herself next to him.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

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.

Derek waves toward the others.

DEREK

Eddie. And Travis. My roommates.

(to the roommates)

Paige is in psychology with me.

TRAVIS

Hey, pretty girl.

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. And that guys house was so...
(shudders)
...dirty that I had to get out of there.

RILEY

(from behind the counter)
You stayed longer than fifteen minutes this time?

Travis plays a drum tempo on the table, with his fingers.

TRAVIS

Paige went looking for Mr. Right. Saw his feet and then took flight.

Paige makes a face.

PAIGE

It was bad enough that he wanted to talk about fetishes all night but then he insisted on showing me his pedicure.

DEREK

Like...in the restaurant?

PAIGE

Right? I made it through the salad but then he suggested I take off my shoe and "sliiiiide my foot across his". I couldn't handle it. I just...left.

DEREK

So maybe Mr. Slightly Less Worst than the last guy.

PAIGE

I don't see you doing any better with your dating life.

Derek watches Mistina pull Rusty, the homeless man, toward the door. He sighs.

DEREK

I think I live in the crash and burn zone with you. The women I like...never know I'm there.

The lights flicker and everyone looks up for a moment. Riley hands Paige her drink.

PAIGE

(sipping)

Oh, yum. Christmas in a cup.

DEREK

Seriously. Does anyone know how to drink plain old coffee anymore?

RILEY

Don't get Derek started.

EDNA

You know we're not even close to the holidays.

DEREK

See? Edna gets it.

PAIGE

Mocha is good anytime of year.

Jamie runs by, pulling a handful of floating balloons. They smash Edna in the face as she passes.

EDNA

Jamie.

Mistina enters with Rusty.

PAIGE

Give her a muffin or a cookie. Kids are only still when they're eating.

MISTINA

Don't give her sweets. Jamie. Sit down.

JAMIE

I'm bored. I want to do something.

MISTINA

Pet your dog. Or sit down. Those are your options. Have you finished your homework?

JAMIE

Kinda...

MISTINA

Kinda doesn't work. So sit down is the option you're taking. Let me know if you need help.

Jamie skulks away.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(to everyone)

This is Rusty.

(to Riley)

Can you get him a sandwich and a cup of coffee?

RUSTY

I don't mean to get in your way.

MISTINA

You're fine. I'll show you our cabinet.

Mistina pulls Rusty into the backroom.

TRAVIS

He looked single. Step up or step down?

PAIGE

Be nice. 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?

TRAVIS

You're trying too hard. Dating is about enjoying a ladies company with no strings attached.

The lights flicker again.

PAIGE

I don't want strings. I want someone who's not a trainwreck.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - BACKROOM - NIGHT

A couch with blankets on it. A small TV. Shelves lining the walls with stacks of clothing, and necessities.

Mistina packs an overflowing bag.

MISTINA

Toothbrush, soap...oh, and a contact list of services to call if you need help. Or if you're bored and just want to prank call.

RUSTY

(nodding, overwhelmed)
You're treating me like royalty.

MISTINA

If you don't mind self serve.
(gestures to opposite wall)
And in this kingdom your 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 (CONT'D)

There's a bathroom through the door where you can wash up and change, my lord.

Mistina leaves Rusty with a warm smile and rejoins the coffee shop.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - LATER

Hank walks in dressed in his police uniform. Paige looks him up and down. He catches her smiling. She looks away.

Hank joins Riley at the counter.

RILEY

Back again?

HANK

I saw you were open. My usual. I have to go to work in an hour.

The lights flicker again.

HANK (CONT'D)
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 bag of supplies.

RUSTY
(holding up his guitar)
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
Just what I need. A coffee can band
and a howling dog. Are you trying
to run off my few customers?

JAMIE
But, mom.

The lights flicker again. Mistina sighs.

MISTINA
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. Stop your dog from chewing
the leg off the couch. And then
feed your squirrels again. Every
two hours. Remember? Go. Now.

(MORE)

MISTINA (CONT'D)

(to Rusty)

Rusty, if you find a seat, we'll bring you a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

Jamie skulks away. Rusty heads for a table. The lights flicker again.

Hank watches Jamie plop sadly on a couch.

HANK

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

TRAVIS

I'm a bit of a drummer, myself. We could build on this thing.

MISTINA

Define drummer.

RILEY

Yeah. How long did that stint last?

TRAVIS

Well...we never actually played anywhere. But we rocked it in my friends garage for a few months.

DEREK

Three months? And no gigs? That sounds like your resume.

TRAVIS

Working a variety of jobs just makes me...uber talented. I'm the Travis of all trades.

RILEY

Uh huh. Here's your drink, Hank.

Hank turns toward the counter. His elbow knocks the drink over, sloshing the muffins displayed on the counter.

RILEY (CONT'D)

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

HANK

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

RILEY
Relax. I love cleaning up your
messes.

She pulls the muffins off the counter while Mistina rushes to mop up the area.

MISTINA
It's okay. It's okay. We're
just...trying to get ready for a
blogger to stop by.

MASON, a chunky man wearing a wizard hat, enters. A large group of people follow him in.

Karma barks.

MISTINA (CONT'D)
Jamie.

Jamie runs over and tugs at Karma's collar.

JAMIE
Karma. Stop.

MASON
We reserved a table to play
Dungeons and Dragons.

MISTINA
Of course. Why don't we have Riley
start you some drinks and
I'll..uh...get things ready for
you.

Mistina smiles cheerfully at the group. Turns to Riley, her face a mass of anxiety.

Riley also turns her back to the group. Her eyes wide.

RILEY
(silent mouthing)
You forgot?

Mistina nods and rushes out, pulling tables together. Hank helps her.

Riley turns a sparkling smile on the D&D group.

RILEY (CONT'D)
What can I make for you?

Mason trails after Mistina.

MASON

You aren't ready? Your coffee gal
said we would be welcome at six.

MISTINA

We had a few...issues this morning.
I'll add a couple more chairs from
the back and you'll be good to go.

Karma keeps barking.

MASON

Is that dog going to bark the whole
night?

MISTINA

Of course not.

Jamie done with feeding, tucks the squirrels back in the box.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Jamie. Sit on the floor. Pet the
dog.

(to Mason)

He's not used to being in the shop
yet and he has a thing about people
in...wizard hats.

Rusty comes from the bathroom in clean clothes. He squats
down beside Jamie and pets the dog. Karma quiets.

JAMIE

(undertone)

I don't think she likes that man
very much.

Rusty glances at Mason and moves to block Karma's view.

RUSTY

Dogs are quirky. Just like people.

JAMIE

We have squirrels too. Wanna see
them?

Mason slides off his hat. Disgruntled.

MASON

It's part of my persona.

He rejoins his group. Edna sidles over to Mistina.

EDNA
 (low voice)
 You sure you want that man in here?
 I could smell him when he came in.

Mistina notes Edna is staring at Rusty and Jamie. Rusty is gently holding a baby squirrel, his head close to Jamie's as she shows him how to hold a bottle. Both are smiling.

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
 If I'm okay with my kid hanging next to a homeless man, you should be able to handle sitting across the room. No one's asking you to bunk with him.

EDNA
 But...

MISTINA
 Excuse me, Edna. I have to grab some chairs from the back before the D&D players make me the wicked witch. And I have a blogger coming in any minute.

Mistina takes Edna's hand and squeezes it. A warm smile.

MISTINA (CONT'D)
 I love that you are concerned but I want everyone to feel welcome. Maybe we can all work together to make this a safe place.

Mistina rushes away. The lights flicker again and then the shop is plunged into darkness.

MISTINA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Everyone stay where you are.

A flashlight comes on in the darkness. Hank holds it up to his face producing a gruesome scowl.

HANK

My version of 'Nightmare on College
Park Road'.

He grins and hands the flashlight to Mistina.

HANK (CONT'D)

Just trying to keep things 'light'.
I always have one in my belt.

MASON

Yea, well, Mr. One Light only. We
can't set up here. None of us have
night vision.

MISTINA

Wait.

Mistina rushes to the consignment area.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Riley. Let's get some of these
candles on the tables. We'll have a
medieval tavern thing going.

Hank and Jamie join her.

JAMIE

I can help, Mom.

MISTINA

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

RILEY

Any profit you make will have to
pay for the consignment candles.
And homemade ain't cheap.

MISTINA

Neither is finding new customers.
Good reviews ain't cheap either.
The blogger could be here anytime.

Hank and Riley scramble to put candles out. Jamie lights
them.

EDNA

The power might be out for hours.

She stands up and puts her coat on. The lights flash on
again. Everyone looks around. The lights go off again.

EDNA (CONT'D)

Yeah. I'm not into rustic. I'm going home.

MASON

This isn't going to work for us either.

The D&D crowd follow Edna toward the door.

Eddie moves tables to the side.

EDDIE

You're D&D players. Where's your sense of adventure? Let's pull back the furniture and add to the aura. You can sit on the floor, surrounded by dragons in the shadows.

Travis makes his way to Mistina, holding a tool box.

TRAVIS

My tools are still here. Maybe I could look at your panel.

Mistina nods gratefully.

MISTINA

The panel is in the back room. I'll go with you and grab the chairs.

Travis and Mistina disappear into the blackness of the back.

MASON

I can't sit on the ground. I'll never get up.

RILEY

Tell you what...

MASON

We need the tables. We have to be able to roll our initiative properly or our characters could die.

DEREK

Whoa. Tragedy. The imaginary horseman falls off the table.

MASON

Look. We didn't have to come here.

Eddie pushes tables next to each other.

EDDIE

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. We have to have structure, plans, and a solid surface to play on. Wing it.

Mistina sets extra chairs up.

MISTINA

You have candlelight 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 strum comes from the stage. Everyone looks over at the shadowy form of Rusty. Mistina sighs.

MISTINA

Great. One more thing.
(to Rusty)
(MORE)

MISTINA (CONT'D)

Look. If you just sit down and give us a minute to help the D&D players...

The guitar becomes individual notes and then softly...deeply...movingly...from the darkness of the stage corner...

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 begins making sandwiches.

Mistina gently touches the arms of several D&D players. She pulls out chairs for them. They settle around the tables.

Eddie also helps seat people. Quietly. No one daring to interrupt the haunting words pulling them together.

Derek offers his arm to Edna. Escorts her back into her lounge chair.

Mistina grabs Jamie and pulls her behind the counter. She pulls water bottles from the fridge and loads Jamie's arms. Touches her mouth to signal 'quietly'. Motions to the room.

Jamie silently sets a bottle of water next to each person.

Mistina and Riley work quickly making sandwiches.

The sounds of the haunting music swells. Rusty's voice vibrates with passion, enveloping the room.

Hank, Eddie, and Derek begin passing sandwiches out.

The song ends. Mistina takes Rusty a bottle of water. She smiles at him.

He nods and smiles back. Begins strumming a few cords of another song.

Mistina stops by the D&D table.

MISTINA (CONT'D)

We'll get more sandwiches over here
and start your coffee orders as
soon as things are up and running
again.

MASON

I like it.
(to his group)
Let's get started.

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - LATER

Paige dries dishes. Hank, uniform sleeves rolled up, washes.

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?

A plate slips from Hank's hand and he almost drops it. The
water sprayer showers the front of him and the floor. He gets
it under control.

HANK

Well it's dark...and 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. Pretty soon I
won't have any left.

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 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 ship go down. Those apps are rigged.

PAIGE

Like you would know. When's the last time you dated?

EDDIE

When I date, I go old school. Those apps are designed to pair you with the worst of the worst. That way you keep paying and coming back.

Derek joins them.

DEREK

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

EDDIE

That's how you date. I only operate on the dark web.

PAIGE

Nothing says turn on like a stalker or serial killer from the dark web.

EDDIE

The government monitors all the social media and apps. I'm writing my manuscript on it. They pair us with people who will implode the relationship. Keeps our minds off what they're up to.

Eddie opens the sandwich table and puts on a pair of gloves. He starts making himself something to eat.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Nah. You have to meet people away from prying eyes. Stick to the dark web. Or places technology can't go. Like water.

DEREK

No wonder I'm single. I need to be on my computer at the swimming pool.

EDDIE

You laugh now...

PAIGE

Well that's not weird. Can't I just wear a tin hat when I'm on my dating app? Nothing says 'I'm normal' like a girl who's into conspiracy theory.

EDDIE

...think about how bad your dating life is. There's a reason it's not working.

DEREK

And the stunning woman you're dating is...where?

EDDIE

Well. I'm not done with my research yet. Just...be careful.

Eddie takes a satisfying bite of his sandwich.

Paige meets Hank's eyes. Both of them try not to burst into laughter.

Hank dries his hands and turns away. He slips on the wet floor and falls flat on his back.

Mistina rushes over. Drops to the floor beside him.

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. I need to know if anything hurts.

Nothing seems to hurt. Derek and Mistina get Hank on his feet. He shakes everything.

HANK

See. I'm fine. I have to get to work anyway.

He looks around at all the D&D players who have jumped up to see what happened.

HANK (CONT'D)

Really. I'm fine.

The D&D players drift back to their table.

MISTINA

(pulls out phone)

Let's get a picture of everyone before you take off. I'll post it on our Facebook.

HANK

Not a chance. I'm a cop. I'll catch up with you guys tomorrow.

MISTINA

Fine. Everybody but Hank.

Everybody squishes into the selfie.

Hank rolls down his sleeves. Moves toward the door. He passes Paige, catching her eye.

HANK

(softly)

Bye...friend.

She smiles back at him.

END ACT TWO

TAG

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - NIGHT - CLOSING TIME

A splatter of laughter comes from the table where the D&D players put on their coats and prepare to leave.

Mistina and Riley lean on the counter watching.

RILEY

This was an expensive night.

MISTINA

(sighs)

I know. And another fourteen hour day. I'll close. You get going.

Derek wanders up.

DEREK

I always thought Dungeons and Dragons sounded like a grade school game. Now I'm glad I stayed.

RILEY

You know you just stayed for the free sandwiches.

DEREK

I have to admit, the sandwich was good. But fighting a horde of dragons felt pretty spectacular.

The rest of the D&D group meanders to the counter.

MASON

I thought this was going to be a disaster but I was wrong.

DEREK

Yep. Except for the lights, the cop on his back, and the espresso machine, it was a blast.

MISTINA

At least the blogger didn't show. She probably saw the shop was dark and thought I stood her up.

(to Mason)

I'm sorry this happened. A coffee shop that couldn't make coffee.

D&D PLAYER 2

Are you kidding? Best game we've had. The atmosphere added a whole new dimension.

D&D PLAYER 3

And you didn't have to make us sandwiches.

MISTINA

I'm glad you enjoyed yourselves.

MASON

(to the group)

Let's take up a collection and pay for the food we ate.

MISTINA

It's not necessary.

MASON

Yes. It is. You're a new business and we want to keep coming here.

(to his group)

Come on everyone. Empty your wallets.

Mason and Mistina smile at each other.

MISTINA

Thanks.

MASON

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

Mason hands a wad of cash to Riley.

The lights pop back on and everyone cheers.

Rusty pauses beside Mistina.

RUSTY

I need to go. Thanks for the supplies. The drama show wasn't too bad, either.

MISTINA

Our dungeon is your dungeon. Anytime. Are you going to be okay?

RUSTY

(shrugs)

For the most part.

DEREK
You're talented, Music Man. So
what's your deal?

RUSTY
PTSD. Gets me sometimes.
(nodding toward Derek's
cane)
What about you, Cane Man?

DEREK
Military. I missed the memo to
duck.

The men nod at each other. Harmony.

RUSTY
See you around.

Rusty leaves. Travis rejoins the group. He bows.

TRAVIS
And the award for 'guy who actually
fixed the lights' goes to...

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

Riley addresses the D&D group.

RILEY
Electricity is on. Who wants a
drink?

The entire group shakes their heads mumbling 'too late', 'I
need to get home', 'no caffeine before bed'. They shuffle out
telling each other their good-byes.

Edna pauses by the counter.

EDNA
I didn't expect a night like this.

MISTINA
I'm sorry...

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

MISTINA
What?...You're the blogger?...I
thought...

EDNA

I came early to see what the real deal is like. Looks like I'll be a regular around here. I've got nothing but good to say.

Edna smiles and sails out, nodding at Travis as he approaches.

TRAVIS

Mistina. I think you have an electrical problem here. And it won't be cheap to fix.

MISTINA

(sighing)

If I had a dollar for everything that needs repaired around here...I'd still be broke. Stress is my middle name.

Riley pulls on her coat. Travis takes his leave.

RILEY

Well, you broke even today. Tomorrow could be even better.

MISTINA

Who knows. They could suddenly decide to give me my sign permit.

RILEY

See? You can't keep a good girl down.

DEREK

I'm going to take off, too. Don't stress about my intentions, Mistina. I got to be part of a good cause today.

He holds up his cane.

DEREK (CONT'D)

It's been several years since I felt like I had value to anyone. Thank you.

He and Mistina exchange a smile. Derek meanders out.

MISTINA

(to Riley)

Seriously, I don't have any events tomorrow. I can handle things myself.

RILEY

Good. I'll be at the tattoo shop. But I'll stop by tomorrow night.

MISTINA

I don't like you working for free. You need to look for a job that helps your family.

RILEY

Who said anything about free? I'm going to steal all your tip money.

Riley disappears out the door with a wave. Mistina smiles again and wanders back across the shop. She enters--

INT. HURRICANE COFFEE - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--the backroom.

Jamie is asleep on the couch. Her arm wrapped around her box of squirrels. Karma snuggles on her feet.

Mistina checks the squirrels. One is lifeless. She gently wraps it in a spare shirt from the shelves. Tucks it in her bag.

The other squirrel sucks her finger. She's active and strong.

Mistina shakes Jamie gently. She sits up. Groggy.

MISTINA

Time to go home, Kiddo.

JAMIE

The lights are back on?

MISTINA

Yep. You were a lot of help tonight. Thanks.

Jamie looks at the box. Sit's up abruptly.

JAMIE

Mom. Where's my other squirrel?

MISTINA
(softly)
He didn't make it, baby. I'm so
sorry.

Jamie tears up. She holds the last squirrel to her cheek.

JAMIE
Ohhh....

MISTINA
Let's get this little girl fed
again. She seems much stronger.

JAMIE
I loved the boy squirrel, too, Mom.
It's so sad.

Mistina picks up the milk and bottle.

MISTINA
I know. Life isn't easy sometimes.
But you and me...we're fighters.
And so is this baby.

END ACT