

CAFÉ VARIATIONS – Revised 6-14-13

MOVEMENT 1

HENRY, the waiter listens to the radio and sets up the café. A woman, TILLY, sits at a table reading.

HENRY

Pardon me, is there anyone sitting here?

TILLY

Not exactly at the moment, but...

HENRY

You are waiting for someone?

TILLY

Yes.

HENRY moves away but stops midway and looks back at TILLY, the rhapsody begins. A Café is born. During the following scenes, there are new arrivals in the Café as well as exits, and people passing through.

YAYA

Is this chair taken?

HAROLD

Oh, no!

YAYA

May I join you?

HAROLD

Yes, yes, of course. Yes, please. Of course.

HERBERT

Okay, what's your problem

NANETTE

What's my problem

YAYA

What are you doing here?

HAROLD

Well, I'm...
I'm having a cup of coffee

HERBERT

Basically, you're not giving me the time of day.
You came on to me at first...

NANETTE

Came on to you?

HERBERT

Invited me to join you for a coffee...

NANETTE

That was not coming on to you,
that was being polite.

YAYA

That's all?

HAROLD

Yes, I think so

HERBERT

Oh, there's where I went wrong.
See, I thought you kind of liked me
and then, I don't know,
you turned into some kind of prick teaser or something.

NANETTE

Prick teaser?

YAYA

And then you have plans?

HAROLD

Well, no

HERBERT

Or, I don't know,
you didn't trust me for,
as far as I could see,
no reason at all.

NANETTE

No reason at all?
Where should I begin?

YAYA

You're meeting someone?

HAROLD

No.

YAYA

You're going somewhere?

HAROLD

No.

YAYA

You'll be getting together with someone later on.

HAROLD

No.

No, not that I know of.

HERBERT

I think I was being moderately okay
just making conversation
that could have led just to a cup of coffee or something
although I have to admit I was hoping it might lead beyond that
because, frankly, I fell for you.

NANETTE

You fell for me?
You fell for my what?
You don't know me.
You don't know anything about me.
I'm a total stranger.
You know how I look, that's it.

HERBERT

I fell for your kindness.

NANETTE

Oh.

HERBERT

And then I thought you got scared.

NANETTE

Oh.

HERBERT

But I see now that I was wrong.

YAYA

You remind me of George Washington

HAROLD

I'm sorry?

YAYA

Or Genghis Khan

HAROLD

Genghis Khan?

YAYA

The kind of guy who steps into the world
Had no idea where he was going
Or what might happen next
Or what would become of it
Or where it all would end

HAROLD

Oh

YAYA

And so, to me,
That's what it is to be a hero

HAROLD

A hero

HAROLD

(calling out after her)
Wait! Miss! Miss! Wait!

HENRY moves to another part of the Café
and hears

NANETTE

You're a stranger to me Herbert.

HERBERT

Sure. I know.
I take it back
because I don't want to like
make you uncomfortable.

NANETTE

Where I come from
I couldn't trust anyone.
Especially men.
Because they would always come on to me.

HERBERT

That's the problem for beautiful women.

Suddenly, YAYA gets up and leaves

NANETTE

Maybe.
Anyhow, that's what they did.
So, you come on to me
like some kind of moron
and I find it hard to get past that
even to see if you might not be a total fool.

HERBERT

Yes.
So you're saying:
a cup of coffee would be out of the question.

NANETTE

If you were just a little less pushy
I might do it.

HERBERT

Still, the thing you do know about me
is I respond well to kindness.
And a person might think, well,
there's a place to start,
there's the groundwork
maybe it's worth seeing what could be built up from there.

Silence

I guess there used to be a time
if a guy would see someone like you
where he could come up to you
and ask
do you want to dance?

Emboldened by the preceding, HENRY
again approaches TILLY

HENRY
Pardon me, is there anyone sitting here?

TILLY
Not exactly at the moment, but...

HENRY
You are waiting for someone?

TILLY
Yes.

HENRY
And you are expecting this person soon?

TILLY
Well, I don't know, do I? It could be fifteen minutes.
It could be five years.

HENRY
Five years?

TILLY
Possibly. Who knows?

HENRY
And you are planning to hold onto this table for five years?

TILLY
If necessary: yes.

HENRY moves, the constellation of the
Café changes

EDMOND
Gee, Peter,
you seem to talk a lot.

PETER
I talk too much.
I'm sorry.

EDMOND

Sometimes it seems to me
men get all caught up
in what they're doing
and they forget to take a moment
and look around
and see what effect they're having
on other people.

PETER

That's true.

EDMOND

They get on a roll.

PETER

I do that sometimes.

Silence.

I wish I didn't.
But I get started on a sentence,
and that leads to another sentence,
and then, the first thing I know,
I'm just trying to work it through,
the logic of it,
follow it through to the end
because I think,
if I stop,
or if I don't get through to the end
before someone interrupts me
they won't understand what I'm saying
and what I'm saying isn't necessarily wrong
it might be, but not necessarily,
and if it is, I'll be glad to be corrected,
or change my mind
but if I get stopped along the way
I get confused
I don't remember where I was
or how to get back to the end of what I was saying.

EDMOND

I understand.

PETER

And I think sometimes I scare people
because of it
they think I'm so, like determined

just barging ahead not
really a sensitive person,
whereas, in truth,
I am.

EDMOND

I know.
I'm getting a cup of coffee, Peter.

PETER

Now?

He puts a hand reassuringly on his arm--
he's genuinely friendly and warm towards
him

HENRY moves and the constellation of the
Café changes. He arrives at another table
and hears

EDMOND

I'll be right back.

HENRY approaches YAYA who is sitting
alone

HENRY

What will you have?

YAYA

What will I have? I don't know.

HENRY

You're not hungry?

YAYA

I'm sorry?

EDITH

Shove up.

ANDREW

Awakened from sleeping, stretched out over
several chairs – still half asleep,
disorientated

What?

EDITH

Shove up I said shove up.

ANDREW

What what?

EDITH

I want to sit down here.

ANDREW

Goddam it to hell, this is my God Damn place.
Can't you see I am sleeping here?

EDITH

This is not your God Damn place.
This is a common place
and I said:
shove up!!!

ANDREW

Can't you see
I am trying to sleep in peace?

EDITH

You want peace?
You want peace?
Go someplace else.

ANDREW

I did go someplace else.
This is where I went.

EDITH

I am going to explain this to you:
I am not the sort of person who looks at a man and thinks
oh, I could take him on
make a project out of him
fix him up
he looks okay to me
not too disgusting
I am going to reason with the sonofabitch.
No.
This is not who I am.
I am the sort of person who says shove up
or
I will kick you black and blue,
because I am tired of walking around!

ANDREW

Okay, okay, sit.

EDITH

Thank you.

RAYMOND

Excuse me.

Excuse me.

LUCIA

Yes?

RAYMOND

I wonder if I might
take your photograph?

LUCIA

What?

RAYMOND

May I take your picture?

LUCIA

What?

RAYMOND

Could I take your picture?

LUCIA

I don't think so.

ANDREW

Do we know each other?

EDITH

No. No, we do not.

Sherry?

ANDREW

What?

EDITH

Are you hard of hearing?

ANDREW

What?

EDITH

Can't you hear too well?

ANDREW

What does that have to do with it?

I don't enjoy the opera any more, if that's what you mean.

Silence.

Or the symphony.

I used to go to Ravinia.

Do you know Ravinia?

EDITH

Ravinia.

ANDREW

Outdoors, in the summertime

every Friday night.

Fritz Reiner conducting.

You remember Fritz Reiner?

EDITH

Of course I remember Fritz Reiner.

ANDREW

That was lovely.

You know, lying out on the lawn listening to the music.

Mozart, all those fellows.

A complete breakthrough of the divine

or whatever, you know,

if you believe in that sort of thing.

EDITH

I don't.

ANDREW

Well, then, a breakthrough of the human.

But that's all gone

now that I can't hear a thing

you know there's a lot you can't enjoy any more.

When you get down to it, at my age,

I don't see so well either.

EDITH

Would you like a little nip of sherry?

ANDREW

Well.

HENRY returns to the first table with trepidation

HENRY

Pardon me, is there anyone sitting here?

TILLY

Not exactly at the moment, but...

HENRY

You are waiting for someone?

TILLY

Yes.

HENRY

And you are expecting this person soon?

TILLY

Well, I don't know, do I? It could be fifteen minutes.
It could be five years.

HENRY

Five years?

TILLY

Possibly. Who knows?

HENRY

And you are planning to hold onto this table for five years?

TILLY

If necessary: yes.

HENRY

This must be an extraordinary person
to wait for this person for five years.

TILLY

Yes, it could be.

HENRY

In fact, this person must be the great love of your life, what else?

TILLY
Possibly.

HENRY
Possibly! What do you mean possibly?

TILLY
We have not met yet.

HENRY
So you sit here day after day...

TILLY
At the same table...

HENRY
At the same table
holding onto an empty chair
in the hope that the great love of your life will pass by
happen to glance at you sitting here alone,
notice perhaps the striking color of your eyes
ask to join you for a coffee
engage you in conversation
so that all your hopes and desires are suddenly
miraculously fulfilled
you fall deeply in love in an instant
you leave the cafe together
and from that moment on
you are never without this person?

TILLY
Yes.

HENRY
I see.

Prelude 2, chair duets

PETER
There are many kinds of men and women.
Every one of the kinds of them has a fundamental nature
common to each one of the many millions of that kind of them
a fundamental nature that has with it a certain way of thinking,
a way of loving,
a way of having or not having pride inside them,
a way of suffering,
a way of eating,

a way of drinking,
a way of ending.
There are many kinds of them
but everywhere in all living
any one who keeps on looking can find all the kinds of them.

There are many kinds of them then
many kinds of fundamental nature in men and in women.
Sometimes it takes long to know it in them
which kind of fundamental nature is inside them.
Sometimes it takes long to know it in them,
always there is mixed up with them other kinds of nature
with the kind of fundamental nature of them,
giving a flavor to them,
sometimes giving many flavors to them,
sometimes giving many contradictions to them,
sometimes keeping a confusion in them
and some of them never make it come right inside them.

Mostly all of them in their later living
come to the repeating that old age gives almost always to every one
and then the fundamental nature of them comes out
more and more in them
and more and more we get to know it in them
the fundamental nature in each one of them.
Going on living
is what any one is doing.
In going on living
any one is doing that thing is going on living.
One in going on living is doing that thing
and in doing that thing
is one remembering
that any one is going on living and is doing that thing.
Each day is every day,
that is to say, any day is that day.
In each day being a day
and in every day being a day
any one being one going on being living in each day being a day
any one being one is being one doing that thing
being one having been one going on being living.
in each day any one coming to be one continuing being living
is one having been one being living,
having been one going on being living.

HENRY

I was once in love with a woman.

I met her in the summer
a married woman.
As she walked toward me
the sun was behind her
her dress was translucent
Her eyes were sky blue
Sky blue
I don't understand it
I fell in love with her at once
so fragile she seemed.
I said to her:
we should have a summer love affair.
She didn't say no,
she said: you're outrageous.
I said: no, it's you who are outrageous.
We met the next day--
and we made love every day the whole summer.
And still
I think of her.
Have you ever felt this way?

End of Movement 1

MOVEMENT 2

NANETTE

when you think
the progress we've made

HERBERT

right

NANETTE

undeniable

LUCIA

well: science

HERBERT

physics
particle physics

NANETTE

sanitation alone

HERBERT

when you think, too,
it's been said
we have fewer diseases today
not so much because of advances in medicine
although, of course,
there have been advances in medicine

NANETTE

for sure

HERBERT

but what has really reduced disease is simply better sanitation

NANETTE

sewers

HERBERT

street cleaning

LUCIA

clean water

NANETTE

clean water

TILLY

if there was once a time that we were animals
before we had evolved from amoebas and tree slugs
into human beings
we lived in the wild without central heating or plumbing
we have made progress

EDMOND

there are imperfections, of course,

NANETTE

or even still, dreadful things

LUCIA

things we want to change

NANETTE

but in general I think it's undeniable
there've been immense improvements

HERBERT

and even human beings themselves

NANETTE

human nature itself evolves
the sense of social responsibility
tolerance, openness to others

LUCIA

human rights

HERBERT

women

NANETTE

compassion
of a sort there never was before...

HERBERT

we're just
really

far more advanced than people used to be

NANETTE

I think you can't argue with that

LUCIA

better

NANETTE

better

EDMOND

of course sometimes people behave badly
we know this

HERBERT

but, in general,

NANETTE

there is progress—

TILLY

and beautiful things

NANETTE

things human beings are capable of

LUCIA

music

NANETTE

beautiful music

HERBERT

buildings

TILLY

I don't even mention the novel!

Everyone speaks. Cacophony then silence.

HENRY

There needs to be more love in the world.

HERBERT

Oh, yes.

Yes.

There does.
And where does that start?
I don't know.
I've come to feel very close to you.

NANETTE

I feel it, too.

LUCIA

I feel such warmth and
comfort.

EDMOND

I feel so at ease
we have become such good friends

LUCIA

I feel it in my entire body.
I feel so at peace, and so light.

EDMOND

Such a sense of wellbeing.

LUCIA

Such happiness.

EDMOND

I would call it
even
joy.

TILLY

Have you ever felt this way before?

EDMOND

Yes, I have. In the past.
I've felt this way.

NANETTE

What makes us start singing, do you think
if it isn't making love?

HERBERT

Well, yes.
And why do we make wine?
Indeed, why do we set sail on the high seas?

These are the mysteries of life.

NANETTE

Among the mysteries.

EDMOND

Among the mysteries.

To be sure.

NANETTE

Have you ever felt this way

HERBERT

Yes, I have. In the past.

I've felt this way.

EDMOND

You've never felt that way?

LUCIA

Oh, yes. Very often.

EDMOND

I feel that.

TILLY

You feel that?

ALL

Yes.

EDMOND

I feel that.

The denizens of the Café begin to dance together to *Promenade (Walking The Dog)*, joining in together to form a line that snakes around the Café.

PETER

And it's not that I thought I fell in love with you at the time or that I've been like a stalker or something in the background

EDMOND

No, I never...

PETER

I've thought back from time to time

how good it felt just to be around you.

EDMOND

Oh.

PETER

And so I thought: well, maybe this is an okay way
to have a marriage

EDMOND

A marriage.

PETER

to start out
not in a romantic way, but
as a friendship

EDMOND

Friendship.

PETER

because I admire you
and I thought perhaps this might grow
into something deeper
and longer lasting

EDMOND

Oh.

PETER

but maybe this isn't quite the thing you want
and really I don't want to force myself on you
you should be free to choose
I mean: obviously.

EDMOND

Thank you.

PETER

Although I think I should say
what began as friendship for me
and a sort of distant, even inattentive regard
has grown into a passion already

EDMOND

A passion.

PETER

I don't know how
or where it came from, or when
but somehow the more I felt this admiration
and, well, pleasure in you

EDMOND

Pleasure.

PETER

seeing you become the person that you are
I think a thoughtful person and smart
and it seems to me funny and warm

EDMOND

Funny.

PETER

and passionate
And I myself don't want to have a relationship
that's cool or distant
I want a love really that's all-consuming
that consumes my whole life

EDMOND

Your whole life.

PETER

and the longer the sense of you has lived with me
the more it has grown into a longing for you
so I wish you'd consider
maybe not marriage
because it's true you hardly know me
but a kind of courtship

EDMOND

A courtship.

PETER

or, maybe you'd just I don't know
go sailing with me or see a movie

NANETTE

You know I like to cook

HERBET

Yes

NANETTE

And I like to make apricot comfiture

HERBET

Yes

NANETTE

And I straighten up
but not right away
and usually I live in a mess
but then I straighten up later on
only it's not always straightened up.

HERBET

Right.

NANETTE

I do dishes, and I do laundry,
but I'm not good at really cleaning.

HERBET

Unh-huh.

NANETTE

So that's how it is if you live with me
that's how it will be
that's all.
I just wanted, if we're going to be together, you know,
for everything to be clear.

HERBET

Right.

NANETTE

That's how it is for me.

HERBET

That's it?

NANETTE

Yes.

HERBET

That's all.

NANETTE

Yes. I don't think there's anything else. I think that's everything.

HENRY is serving TILLY an espresso

HENRY

Here you are.

TILLY

I miss postcards.

You know.

Postcards are unique, and no one sends them any more.

It just isn't done.

And I often wonder: why not?

Has someone taken a moral position?

With a novel or a book you always come to the end,

but you can just keep reading or writing one postcard after another and never come to the end.

Each one of them unique--and never an end

This is a kind of pleasure we simply don't know any more,
though it seems harmless enough when you think about it.

There's no point to it, and yet it's such a pleasure.

It's not what you would call goal-oriented,

that's the pleasure of it, I suppose,

you just take it for its own sake.

And I like that you can never tell

which is the front and which is the back of a postcard.

HENRY

No.

Is this how you are

TILLY

How do you mean?

HENRY

Is this how you are all the time
or just with me?

TILLY

How am I?

HENRY

Oh. Fine. Good. Excellent.

Odd.

A little odd.

TILLY

Good.

HENRY crosses the room changing the constellation of the Café

YAYA

What would you like to do with me?

HAROLD

I'd like to kiss you.

YAYA

Kiss you? But I don't even know you.

HAROLD

Well, if you'd kiss me, then you'd know me.

RAYMOND

The truth is
I can do the laundry, too, and I do dishes.

NANETTE

Oh.

RAYMOND

So, I think everything's going to be OK.

NANETTE

Oh. Good. Good. That's good then.

RAYMOND

Right.
Plus, I cook, too.

NANETTE

You cook, too.

RAYMOND

Right.

NANETTE

Oh.

RAYMOND

Plus, I love you like crazy.

NANETTE

Oh,

you do.
Oh, good.
Good.
That's good then.
I can accept that.

YA-YA
tortoise

HAROLD
hare

YA-YA
owl

HAROLD
winter

YA-YA
spring

HAROLD
green

YA-YA
grape

HAROLD
Tendrils

YA-YA
sweet

HAROLD
mild

YA-YA
pleasure

HAROLD
heaven

YA-YA
stars

HAROLD
Night

YA-YA
dawn

HAROLD
sea

YA-YA
waves

HAROLD
life

YA-YA
tears

HAROLD
pain

YA-YA
delight

HAROLD
desire

YA-YA
dance

HAROLD
sing

YA-YA
flower

HAROLD
garden

YA-YA
Fountain

HAROLD
furrow

YA-YA
plow

HAROLD

earth

YA-YA

eager

HAROLD

hard

YA-YA

alive

HAROLD

moment

YA-YA

eyes

HAROLD

lightning

YA-YA

love

EDITH and ANDREW are left playing
cards.

HENRY is cleaning up the Café and TILLY,
as usual, is watching

EDITH

The fact is:

I've never been in love before

I thought I was

but I never felt like this

ANDREW

Things happen so suddenly sometimes.

EDITH

Do you believe in love at first sight?

ANDREW

No.

EDITH

Neither do I.

And yet there it is: I'd just like to kiss you.

ANDREW

Oh.

EDITH

I think for me it took so long to be able to love another person
such a long time to grow up
get rid of all my self-involvement
all my worrying whether or not I measured up.

ANDREW

Right.

EDITH

Or I thought
I need to postpone gratification
and so I did
and I got so good at it
I forgot how to seize the moment

ANDREW

you know damn well you're not going to find the perfect mate
someone you always agree with or even like

EDITH

you should be able to get along with someone who's in the same ball park

ANDREW

a human being

EDITH

another human being

ANDREW

because we are lonely people

EDITH

we like a little companionship

ANDREW

just a cup of tea with another person
what's the big deal

EDITH

you don't need a lot

ANDREW

you'd settle for very little

EDITH

very very little when it comes down to it

ANDREW

very little
and that would feel good

EDITH

a little hello, good morning, how are you today.

ANDREW

I'm going to the park
OK, have a nice time
I'll see you there for lunch

EDITH

can I bring you anything

ANDREW

a sandwich in a bag?

EDITH

no problem
I'll have lunch with you in the park

ANDREW

we'll have a picnic
and afterwards
I tell you a few lines of poetry I remember from when I was a kid in school ‘

EDITH

and after that a nap or godknows whatall

ANDREW

and to bed

EDITH

you don't even have to touch each other

ANDREW

you don't have to be Don Juan
have some perfect technique

EDITH

just a touch, simple as that

ANDREW

an intimate touch?

EDITH

fine. nice. so much the better.

ANDREW

that's all: just a touch

that feels good

EDITH

OK, goodnight, that's all

ANDREW

Just a touch. I'd go for that.

EDITH

I'd like that

ANDREW

I'd like that just fine.

EDITH

I'd call that a happy life

ANDREW

as happy as it needs to get for me

HENRY

It's such a mysterious thing.

People try to make a connection

but why is it one person is attracted to another person in particular?

TILLY

I know what you mean.

HENRY

You can say

well, it's where she comes from

or how she was brought up

TILLY

her relationship with her mother or her father

HENRY

but, as it turns out, that explains nothing.

TILLY

No.

HENRY

that a person wears her hair in a certain way
or puts her hand to her cheek in a certain way
and you find it irresistible
otherwise in every other way she could be an numbskull
or you could be an numbskull
but you can't resist her
and she can't resist you
where does this come from?
These are mysteries buried so deep inside a person
you can never understand them.
And then,
you put two people together
each with these idiosyncrasies
that are so particular

TILLY

so odd

HENRY

so pointless

TILLY

and yet so crucial
because these are the connections people have
to one another's strangest aspects

HENRY

what seems hot to them

TILLY

the reason they make a particular choice
and not just a general one

HENRY

not any man or woman
but this unique person

TILLY

responding to something unfathomable

HENRY

the particularity of it

TILLY

the mystery of two people finding their way to the same particularity

HENRY

it seems hard enough all the neurons working in one brain
but then all the neurons in two brains together getting along
plus the hormones and whatnot.

TILLY

It is so fragile.

HENRY

And so strong.

TILLY

And so fragile.

HENRY

This is what it is to love another person.

TILLY

I think this is why there is music
and painting
because there was love first
and music is how it feels:
weightless in outer space
with nothing but feeling you want to cry
this is probably why people invented dancing
and talking
not so they could say: look out, there's a bear
OK take this stick and we'll kill that tiger
but so they could talk to each other
and feel how it is to be with the person they love
feeling they really exist with the planets and the stars
and so they already have eternal life in the present moment
even if they know they are going to die,
they feel already that they are living forever.
I think of the earth flying through the universe.

End of Movement 2

Movement 3

NANETTE

Do you want to know how you score on your sensuality?

TILLY

Sure.

NANETTE

OK

Imagine you have four squares
arranged in the shape of a cross.
Then you put different colors in each square—
violet, blue, brown, green, red, whatever.

TILLY

Right.

NANETTE

Did you do it?

TILLY

Right.

Just a minute.

Right.

NANETTE

OK

Here are the three kinds of person you can be

1) an intellectual

2) a hedonist

3 a voluptueuse

TILLY

Yeah.

NANETTE

So, let's say you put brown in the left-most square
then you'd be a controlling sort of person.

Did you put brown there?

TILLY

No.

NANETTE

Good. That's good.
What did you put?

TILLY

I put violet.

NANETTE

Oh! Oh, that's good. That's the best.
You're a voluptueuse.

TILLY

What if I had put yellow?

NANETTE

You'd be anxious.

TILLY

Unh-huh.

NANETTE

Red would be overworked.
Green would be impossible to satisfy.
Blue would be passive.
I think violet's the best.
And then I think—
given the choices here
probably you're the sort of person who would choose
Gerard Depardieu.

TILLY

Yeah, well, yes, sure.
I would.

HERBERT

How could you just suddenly: disappear?

NANETTE

I didn't.

HERBERT

I thought you did.
And I thought you loved me

NANETTE

Well, I do love you.

HERBERT

Oh, yes, you love me,
but you don't love me in that way.

NANETTE

I never pretended to love you in that way.

HERBERT

I can't go on in life
without being loved in that way.

NANETTE

A lot of people are never loved in that way.

HERBERT

How can you tell
if you are really alive
if you're never loved in that way?

NANETTE

What do you mean: in that way?

HERBERT

Unless I thought you were crazy for me
so crazy for me you couldn't stand it
you just had to kiss me
you just had to knock me down and kiss me
because you couldn't stand it
that you laughed at my jokes
or thought I was so cool

NANETTE

I'm sorry.

HERBERT

Why did you live with me, then?

NANETTE

I thought I loved you
but I guess I didn't know what love was.
I liked you in a way
not much
but in some ways
or at least in the ways I thought guys could be likeable.

HERBERT

It's not your fault.

NANETTE

No, it's not.

HERBERT

Or maybe it is
that you weren't thinking very clearly
or being very focused when you made your choice

NANETTE

I know.
I'm sorry.

HERBERT

Being sorry doesn't cut it somehow.
I know people always say they're sorry
and probably they are
and I don't think it means nothing
I'm sure it means something
and it's essential for people to feel it
and to say it
in order for life to go on at all
and yet
the truth is
it doesn't cut it.
I'm sorry: but it doesn't.

NANETTE

I'm sorry.

HERBERT

You're sorry?
You're sorry!?!?!?!?!?!?

HENRY

Here you are.

HERBERT

What is this?

HENRY

Your tea

HERBERT

My tea
Do you never listen?

HENRY
What

HERBERT
I asked you for milk in my tea.

HENRY
Milk?

PETER
if you love someone
you don't leave them.
You hold onto them for dear life
you hold onto them forever
unless you are a stupid person
which I don't think you are
so
what else can I think
except you never really loved me
I was just another one of your flings along the way
whereas I loved you
I knew
if you love someone
you don't let them go

EDMOND
And yet you did.

PETER
I never did.

EDMOND
You said:
if one day you are going to leave me
then go now
don't just keep tormenting me.

PETER
And so?

EDMOND
And so.
It's not that I left you.

PETER

Excuse me.
I didn't leave you.
And yet, you are not with me.
What else happened?

EDMOND

It turned out
we were at different points in our lives
we couldn't go on.

PETER

I could have gone on.

EDMOND

Shall we talk about something else?

PETER

I see
in the world
people have wars and they die
entire countries come to an end
And one day I will die
and so will you.
And yet
you could leave me.
I don't understand.
I will never understand
how it is if you have only one life to live
and you find your own true love
the person all your life you were meant to find
and your only job then was to cherish that person
and care for that person
and never let go
but it turns out
you can still think
for some reason
because this or that
you end it
you end it forever
you end it for the only life you will ever live on earth.
Maybe if you would be reincarnated
and you could come back to life again and again a dozen times
then this would make sense
to throw away your only chance for love in this life

because you would have another chance in another life
but when this is your only chance
how can this make sense?
Do you think
there will ever be a time
when we could get back together?

EDMOND

No.

PETER

Not ever?

EDMOND

No.

PETER

Not ever at all
even ever?

EDMOND

No.

HENRY approaches EDITH

HENRY

Here you are.

EDITH

What is this?

HENRY

Your tea.

EDITH

My tea?
Do you never listen?

HENRY

What?

EDITH

I asked you for milk in my tea.

HENRY

Milk?

EDITH

Do you never pay attention?

HENRY

I'm sorry.

I'll get it for you right away.

EDITH

Never mind.

HENRY

No, no, I'll be right back.

EDITH

Never mind, it doesn't matter any more.

HENRY

I said I'll get it!

EDITH

Fuck it!

I don't want it!

HENRY

I said I'd get it goddammit!

And I will goddam get it!

LUCIA

What are you,
some kind of stalker?

RAYMOND

No. No.

All this happened totally by chance

by pure chance.

Stalker!

LUCIA

We might have been...

I mean, you can't tell what you might have interrupted...

RAYMOND

I know.

I'm sorry.

Well, in fact, of course,

I don't mean to presume,

but I also thought that perhaps you felt...

that is to say,
we met, and frankly I felt something right away,
and I even thought perhaps you might have felt something, too.

LUCIA
Felt something?
For you?

RAYMOND
Yes, for me.
I thought I sensed something special possibly.

HENRY approaches RAYMOND
interrupting his dialogue with LUCIA.

HENRY
Now then, who was having the raspberry tart?

RAYMOND
I was having a lemon tart.

HENRY
The lemon tart is finished.

RAYMOND
Oh.

HENRY
So you are having the raspberry tart.

RAYMOND
No, thank you. Perhaps I will have the cookies.

HENRY
I have brought you the raspberry tart.

RAYMOND
I think I'd rather have the cookies.

HENRY
You can have the cookies tomorrow.

RAYMOND
No. I'd like the cookies today.

HENRY
You can't have cookies every day.

RAYMOND

I'll have something else tomorrow.

HENRY

What will you have tomorrow?

RAYMOND

Well, I don't know. Perhaps I'll have the chocolate cake tomorrow.

HENRY

We don't have the chocolate cake tomorrow

RAYMOND

Well, look, then today I'll have the--what? What was I having?

HENRY

The raspberry tart.

RAYMOND

I don't want the goddamn raspberry tart.

HENRY

Look at yourself. Sitting in a café, not a care in the world. Other people are dying everywhere or starving, sick and starving and you are in a snit over a raspberry tart. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

RAYMOND

Yes. Yes, I am. Give me the tart and I just won't eat it.

HENRY

You're going to let it go to waste?

RAYMOND

Okay, I'll eat it. I'll eat it.

HENRY

Sometimes in life you have to be happy with what you get.

HENRY crosses the Café and notices

YAYA

So.

It's over.

For me.

It's over.

HAROLD

I understand.

YAYA

Do you?

HAROLD

Yes, of course.

YAYA

we've had a good time together.
This has been a nice little romance after all.

HAROLD

Yes. Yes, it certainly has.

YAYA

And because you are still a little boring.

HAROLD

I know.

YAYA

And you have some ways of being I don't know

HAROLD

Yes.

YAYA

The things I think are fun
you think are silly
and what you find interesting
to me is just incredibly tedious

HAROLD

That could be.

YAYA

So finally you would bore me to tears
I wouldn't be able to stand it

HAROLD

No.

Silence.

Yes.

HENRY

Do you think this can never happen?
That two people can never really know one another?
Or really feel the same?
This is just a romantic wish
no one ever feels it
it's just not possible
that's the tragedy of life
we are all alone.

TILLY

I don't know.

HENRY

No. Neither do I.

ANDREW

I hope we're not going to argue
and then you're going to try to cajole me,
you don't let me leave, you don't leave,
I begin to feel cornered.

EDITH

This is crazy talk.

ANDREW

And then when you fall asleep
I'll look at you
and I'll see how ugly you are when you're relaxed.

EDITH

What?

ANDREW

Probably that's when you're at your ugliest,
when you're asleep so that I can't stand it.

EDITH

When I'm asleep I'm ugly, that's what you're saying?
How can you say such a thing?

ANDREW

Or really anytime after twelve o' clock: old and ugly

EDITH

Every night? Are you saying every night?

ANDREW

Almost every night probably.
Ugly and repulsive.
Trying to hypnotize me while I sleep,
setting my nerves on edge
so I would have to hit you in the face
to get you to stop.

EDITH

You crazy sonofabitch!

ANDREW

What are you saying?
What are you saying to me?

EDITH

What does it matter? You never hear a word I say.

ANDREW

I hang on every stupid word you ever say!

EDITH

Every stupid word I say!
You are stupid.
Stupider than ever.
And black and venomous.
Poisonous poisonous,
more poisonous now than ever.

ANDREW

Ever before when?
Before you would seek some intimacy with me,
force yourself on me,
demanding I make love to you...

EDITH

Excuse me, would this be after you turned your back on me?

ANDREW

Excuse me, I think it was you who turned your back on me.

EDITH

No. No, I don't think so.
If I remember correctly
it is you who turned your back on me,

as probably you always would,
always.
So that I am supposed to pursue you,
put my arms around you
so that I am always in the position of the suitor.

EDITH

Would you ever pursue me the way I pursued you?
No.

ANDREW

I have pursued you.
It's you who have never pursued me.

EDITH

When did you?
When did you ever?

Silence

ANDREW

I don't remember.
But it seems to me I did.
Just fucking leave me alone!

EDITH

Right! Right! Leave you alone!
I am leaving you alone, you nutcake!
No wonder your family won't speak to you
and every woman you've ever been with has gone crazy.
Did you ever think about that?
It's not them, it's you!
You're like a baby with a switchblade.
So fucking needy
and when you get everything just the way you want it
you attack who ever gives in to you
for being weak and pathetic and worthless.

She exits

ANDREW

Who told you this?
You don't know this about me.

She enters

EDITH

Nobody needs to tell me.
It's written all over you, you crazy fucker!
You make me crazy.
You drive me down into the pit of my own craziness
till I'm begging for mercy

you hunt me down
you throw me down the stairs
you rip off all my hinges
till my ears are flying in every direction
I can't understand a thought I'm having
my mind is a million bits of shattered glass on the kitchen floor
and you stand there calmly yelling at me
go ahead and die, go ahead and die
you don't think I have inside me a capacity for misery?
I'm off the edge of the world here!
I'm into the abyss
where is your helping hand?
are you a human being?
You are making me crazy!
I'm begging you!
Who could live with you?
Who needs you?
Now that a person sees how you are,
Who would want you?

ANDREW

Who would want you?
You crazy needy person
grabbing grabbing whatever you see
a bottomless pit of wishes and longings
a man could work and work and give you all he has
and you would be asking what's next what's more
and all the while telling him he is clumsy and ignorant
withdrawn graceless brutal insensitive confused
This is why men drive naked women into a pit with bayonets

EDITH

And this is why women want to shoot men on sight
This is why they flush boy babies down the toilet at birth

During the past scenes the Café has become increasingly segregated. The Men and the Women make separate camps in the Café. The accusations fly. From the Men's camp

RAYMOND

I'm not saying whether it is or it isn't.
I'm only saying
as man to man
you keep your eye on the goal line
you don't let yourself get caught up
in the details along the way.

ANDREW

Unless, in fact, you can easily hear in the other person's voice
that she hates you.

As I could hear when she spoke to me.

And then things are clear enough.

RAYMOND

I didn't hear that.

TILLY

You know what it is with a man?

They are there, they are there, they are there
all the time they are pursuing you
and then,

once they have you

they are gone.

You turn around

all of a sudden they are gone.

ANDREW

Did you hear the way she spoke to me?

RAYMOND

No.

TILLY

You can't count on a man

because

just when finally you decide OK I can count on him

that is the moment

he just disappears

and you never see him again.

And what you have left is just a big dearth.

ANDREW

The contempt in her voice.

RAYMOND

No.

LUCIA

The way it is now:

dogs are better than men.

NANETTE

For sure.

At least dogs miss you when you're gone.

ANDREW

The scorn.

HENRY

I didn't notice it.

RAYMOND

No.

LUCIA

Dogs look at your eyes.

And they feel guilty when they've done something wrong.

NANETTE

Dogs mean it when they kiss you.

HENRY

This jealousy and suspicion,

it's like a rising tide,

it could swamp all boats.

ANDREW

Did you hear her?

HENRY

Perhaps it was a little wild.

YAYA

Dogs understand if some of their friends can't come inside.

ANDREW

The sneering.

The derision in her voice.

EDITH

Dogs are already in touch with their inner puppies.

RAYMOND

I didn't notice it.

ANDREW

I did

EDITH

How can you tell a man's sexually excited?

YAYA

He's breathing.

EDITH

What should you give a man who has everything?

YAYA

A woman to show him how to work it.

EDITH

What do men have in common with floor tiles?

YAYA

If you lay them right the first time,
you can walk all over them forever.

LUCIA

What is a man, really?

NANETTE

A man is a vibrator with a wallet.
A man is an unresponsive lump of flesh
obsessed with screwing,
incapable of empathy,
love, friendship, affection,
or tenderness--
a half-dead isolated unit that will swim a river of snot,
wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit
if he thinks there'll be a friendly cunt waiting for him at the other end.

YAYA

A man is a creature who will fuck mud if he can.

HENRY

You know, I think, some people would say
tolerance is a good thing.

TILLY

I wouldn't.

HENRY

Maybe this is what is wrong with us.

TILLY

What's that? That you have no strong convictions?

HENRY

Exactly what I mean.

TILLY

I can't help if you have no strong conviction.

HENRY

I do have strong convictions.

TILLY

You just said you didn't.

HENRY

I didn't.

TILLY

I said what, you have no strong convictions,
and you said exactly.

HENRY

Exactly the trouble.

TILLY

That's what I said.

HENRY

No, no, exactly the trouble is that you think,
if a person is respectful of another person
then he has no strong convictions.

TILLY

That's not what I think.

HENRY

That's how you behave.

TILLY

Look. You are the one who is behaving now.

HENRY

I am not behaving. You are always behaving. This is how you are.
what?
how can anyone talk to you?

TILLY

Go ahead, say what you mean.

HENRY

What I mean is: never mind.

End of Movement 3

Movement 4

HENRY begins to dance solo to *Lily Pons*.
TILLY enters and watches him. Towards the
end of the dance she begins to speak.

TILLY

You can love someone you're incompatible with,
and many people do.

Most often,

there's no reason or explanation for why you love someone:

You just do.

People can and do love more than one person.

There is no guarantee the greatest love of your life will marry you.

Divorced people can still love each other, and yet not wish to remarry.

Not all love is constant –

many times love comes, goes, and returns like a breeze.

Most people, at one time or another,

will confuse love with emotional dependency.

Some people can be much happier single than married.

Not everyone who loves, loves well, nor ever learns how to love well.

HERBERT and NANETTE are alone on
stage.

NANETTE

You know

I've been thinking about it

and it turns out

I do love you

HERBERT

You do?

NANETTE

Yes.

HERBERT

How could that be?

NANETTE

I look at you

and I think you're sweet.

HERBERT

Oh, sweet.

NANETTE
and good-natured.

HERBERT
Good-natured.

NANETTE
Yes.

HERBERT
You do?

NANETTE
Yes, I really do.
And I think
if a person's agreeable and warmhearted
there's something there you can't explain
that gives you real
delight.

HERBERT
Oh.

NANETTE
I find
you give delight to me.

HERBERT
Oh. Well.
That's what I'd hope for more than anything.

NANETTE
So would I.

HERBERT
And you're not sorry about it?

NANETTE
How do you mean?

HERBERT
That you find delight in someone
who doesn't seem to you in any other way
desirable

who doesn't perhaps have those qualities
that you can count on
for, you know, the solid, long-term kind of thing.

NANETTE

I would just take delight long-term.

HERBERT

Oh.

So would I.

LUCIA

how can two people then ever share the same feeling exactly

RAYMOND

and without effort

LUCIA

with comfort even

RAYMOND

easily

LUCIA

so that they can relax together

RAYMOND

and feel

there is someone in the world who really understands me

LUCIA

really knows who I am in the deepest sense

RAYMOND

where we both look at a piece of beach and say:

oh, how beautiful

LUCIA

or--at the same moment we both feel:

what an ugly place

RAYMOND

so that these two people can go arm in arm through life

knowing they have someone who will always be there for them

because they know exactly how it is for you

LUCIA

even sometimes they are there already before you've gotten there

RAYMOND

so

you face some trouble?

no problem

I know exactly how you feel

and we will come through this together.

LUCIA

Right.

EDITH

I wonder:

would you marry me

or

would you have a coffee with me

and think of having a conversation

that would lead to marriage?

ANDREW

Oh.

Well,

a coffee with you

I would have a coffee with you.

EDITH

You are free now?

ANDREW

Free now? No, well, no

right now

I am busy.

EDITH

OK then maybe later this evening?

ANDREW

Well, later this evening also I am busy.

EDITH

Or late supper.

Or breakfast tomorrow

or lunch or tea in the afternoon

or a movie

or dinner the day after
Thursday for lunch
or Friday dinner
or perhaps you would go for the weekend with me
to my parents' home
or we could stop along the way
and find a little place for ourselves
to be alone.

ANDREW

I don't think I can be alone.

EDITH

With me?
Or by yourself?
You don't like to be alone by yourself?

ANDREW

No, I mean with you this weekend

EDITH

Oh.
Or then just we could
have coffee over and over again
every day
until we get to know one another
and we have the passage of the seasons
in the cafe
You know, I have known many women and men.
I mean, I don't mean to say....

ANDREW

No.

EDITH

I mean just
you know
women and men I have known romantically
and then, too, friends,
but you know
in life
one meets many people
and it seems to me
we know so much of another person
in the first few moments we meet
not from what a person says alone

but from the way they hold their head
how they listen
what they do with their hand as they speak
or when they are silent
and years later
when these two people break up
they say
I should have known from the beginning
in truth
I just wanted to go to bed with him as fast as I could
or I was lonely
and so I pretended I didn't notice
even though I did.
I want to marry you
and grow old together
so I am begging you
just have a coffee with me.

ANDREW
OK.

EDITH
When will you do this?

ANDREW
Right now.

EDITH
Oh.
Oh, good.
Good.
Good.

PETER
You know,
maybe everybody does have a past.

Silence

And, you know,
it's like they say,
when you go to bed with someone,
you bring six people to bed with you,
each other,
and the other person's parents
and your own parents.
Well, or maybe even more people than that

because....

Silence

EDMOND

Are you trying to start a conversation with me?

PETER

Yes.

EDMOND

You should probably say something else.

PETER

Right.

I was only just saying
it's like, you know,
you were saying you have this family
and this past you can't escape
and I was only saying...

EDMOND

Right.

And I was saying,
maybe you want to talk about something else.

PETER

But what I was saying was that other people
are not just your past
they are also your future.
You can't escape that.

Silence

EDMOND

You're an American.

PETER

Yes?

EDMOND

I don't think I could like an American
or love an American
or really even have fun with an American.

PETER

Aren't you an American?

EDMOND

I'm half Italian.

PETER

So you can't love someone who is all American?

EDMOND

I don't think so.

PETER

That's crazy.

EDMOND

Why?

PETER

Because Americans are just--Americans.

EDMOND

So?

PETER

Well, they're just Americans.

EDMOND

So?

PETER

So, what is that?

EDMOND

Well, I don't know.

PETER

So, you see?

EDMOND

No, I don't see anything.

PETER

You see, you could come to love me.

I'm crazy about you Edmond,

you know, if somebody's crazy about you,

you can't resist it finally

because it feels so good to have someone be just crazy for you

and just love everything about you and everything you do

and just be delighted in you
and laugh at your jokes and feel for you
and love to do things with you
and look out for you
and all that sort of thing
I think I'm going to become irresistible to you.

EDMOND

(smiling)
You do?

PETER

I'm really pretty sure of it.

HENRY approaches TILLY again

HENRY

Pardon me, is there anyone sitting here?

TILLY

Not exactly at the moment, but...

HENRY

You are waiting for someone?

TILLY

Yes.

HENRY

And you are expecting this person soon?

TILLY

Well, I don't know, do I? It could be fifteen minutes.
It could be five years.

HENRY

Five years?

TILLY

Possibly. Who knows?

HENRY

And you are planning to hold onto this table for five years?

TILLY

If necessary: yes

HENRY

This must be an extraordinary person
to wait for this person for five years.

TILLY

Yes, it could be.

HENRY

In fact, this person must be the great love of your life, what else?

TILLY

Possibly.

HENRY

Possibly! What do you mean possibly?

TILLY

We have not met yet.

HENRY

So you sit here day after day...

TILLY

At the same table...

HENRY

At the same table
holding onto an empty chair
in the hope that the great love of your life will pass by
happen to glance at you sitting here alone,
notice perhaps the striking color of your eyes
ask to join you for a coffee
engage you in conversation
so that all your hopes and desires are suddenly
miraculously fulfilled
you fall deeply in love in an instant
you leave the cafe together
and from that moment on
you are never without this person?

TILLY

Yes.

HENRY

I see. May I join you for a coffee while you wait? Because
all the other tables seem to be full.

TILLY

Yes, I suppose it's alright. Yes. Please.

HENRY

Allow me to introduce myself.

My name is Henry

and I am the great love of your life.

End of Movement 4

End of Play