

CAFFEINATED

LOVE

By Tom Smith

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(575) 635-5194
tom@tomsmithplaywright.com

Cast of Characters

SAM Male or Female, 20s-40s

HARLEY Male or Female, same age

Author's note: Since either character may be played by either gender, please feel free to change the pronouns to the appropriate ones.

Time/Location

Today

A funky coffee house

CAFFEINATED LOVE

(A funky coffee house in a large city. SAM sits drinking a latte while periodically editing a manuscript with a red pen. After a few moments, HARLEY approaches, cappuccino in hand, and looks around tentatively. After a moment, s/he pokes her/his head in front of SAM.)

HARLEY

I'm sorry to bother you. All the other chairs are—

SAM

Oh, sure, no problem.

HARLEY

And, unfortunately, all the other tables—

SAM

Knock yourself out.

HARLEY

(Sitting down.)

Thanks!

(Extending hand.)

I'm Harley.

SAM

I'm Sam.

HARLEY

I haven't seen you here before.

SAM

I just moved into the neighborhood.

HARLEY

Ah, that would be why...

(SAM gets back to work. Beat.)

What are you working on?

SAM

A short story.

HARLEY

You're a writer?

SAM

Editor.

HARLEY

Oh. That's kinda like being a lawyer, isn't it?

SAM

What do you mean?

HARLEY

Well, you know, everyone hates lawyers! I'm sure all writers hate editors. Cutting their words. Forcing re-writes. Thinking they know it all. That kinda stuff.

SAM

Writers don't hate editors; that's just a cliché. Actually, a stereotype.

HARLEY

Hey, you just edited yourself! I guess it's in your blood, hunh?

SAM

A table just opened up by the window...

HARLEY

Oh, Jesus, I'm sorry! I'm coming off like a total ass, aren't I? It's just that I think you're incredibly attractive and you're making me really nervous.

SAM

Oh. Well, thank you...I guess.

HARLEY

You see, I have this thing for guys (girls) the rest of the world doesn't find good-looking. They have something wrong with them: like a big nose, or eyes that are too close together, or bad hair, or something. I hate people who are traditionally good-looking: there's no substance there, you know?

(SAM looks stunned.)

Oh, God, I did it again, didn't I? I always say the wrong thing! I mean, it's the right thing but people just take it the wrong way.

SAM

I need to get back to work.

HARLEY

Right. Got it.

(Beat.)

You're one of those A-types, aren't you? You have no interest in someone like me: you think I'm beneath you...

SAM

I never said you were beneath me!

HARLEY

Well, I could be if you play your cards right! Ok, that was just a joke. I'm not suggesting that we actually go back to my place and do it or anything. Unless you want to. It's been a while for me. I'm not that picky.

SAM

Unfortunately, I am: I like my dates sane.

HARLEY

This isn't a date! Oh, God, were you thinking this is a date? I just wanted a cappuccino and a little conversation. Jeez, you're putting an awful lot of pressure on me alluva sudden! What are your intentions, anyway?

SAM

What are you talking about? I don't have any intentions!

HARLEY

Thank God! Now let's just enjoy our coffee and not think about what will or will not happen at the end of our date.

SAM

This isn't a date! You said so yourself!

HARLEY

(Loudly, to others nearby.)

That's right. It isn't a date!

(Whispering.)

So s/he's here?

SAM

Who?

HARLEY

Your girl/boyfriend?

SAM

I don't have a girl/boyfriend.

HARLEY

Shhh! S/he'll hear you! Look, it's cool. We go out, and your girl/boyfriend just happens to show up. I'll play it cool. Just keep on pretending that we don't really know each other.

SAM

We don't!

HARLEY

You're blaming me for that, too? That is so like you! I mean, that's the whole problem with our relationship: I do all the talking. You think I don't notice that? At first, I thought you were just reserved. "S/he's so quiet," I'd say. "S/he just needs someone special, someone s/he'll feel comfortable opening up to." But it's more than that. You're keeping secrets from me; I don't know why, but you are. Just tell me what I've done to make you hate me so much!

SAM

I don't hate you!

HARLEY

You don't? Truly?

SAM

I don't know you enough to hate you. You're just...incredibly annoying. And a little scary. Look, I wish you'd just go away and leave me alone.

HARLEY

Oh, you'd like that, wouldn't you? You'd love it if I just disappeared! But what would our friends say? Can you imagine the gossip?

SAM

We don't have any friends!

HARLEY

Well, whose fault is that? How can we, with you treating me like this? And in public, no less! It's embarrassing! Our friends don't want to be seen with us...

SAM

Ok, what's this all about? Are we on some kind of prank show or something?

HARLEY

Oh, you remembered!

SAM

Remembered what?

HARLEY

How much I like television! I don't think I've told that to anyone else in the world except you. You remembered! You do still love me!

SAM

Ok, now you're officially freaking me out!

HARLEY

(Grabbing SAM's hand.)

Shhhh! It's all right. I was scared of my feelings too, at first. But now we're back where we used to be, aren't we? Just the two of us, out on the town, happy. This is always how I imagined

it would be! Is it the same for you? Did you picture us here like this?

SAM

I never in a million years pictured us here like this.

(Pulls his/her hand away.)

HARLEY

That's because you have no imagination! That's the reason you couldn't cut it as a writer!

SAM

Hey, now!

HARLEY

(Sarcastically.)

Oh, I'm sorry. We're not supposed to discuss that, are we? The career you should have had.

SAM

I have the career I wanted!

HARLEY

Of course you do!

SAM

I've always wanted to be an editor!

HARLEY

No one wants to be an editor. It's like teaching. You do it because you have no talent.

SAM

I have talent.

HARLEY

Talent for avoiding the truth! Talent for living a lie!

SAM

Will you stop being so patronizing? Why are you doing this?

HARLEY

Doing what?

SAM

This. Talking to me with this condescending attitude. It's insulting!

HARLEY

I'm not condescending!

SAM

Taking potshots at my work? My looks? Glance in a mirror once in a while, because you aren't much to write home about either.

HARLEY

How dare you!

SAM

You wanna know why I'm so quiet? Why I don't want to talk to you?

HARLEY

I'm on the edge of my seat!

SAM

Because you remind me of my last relationship. You're just like her/him: domineering, abrasive, can't shut up!

HARLEY

(Turning away sharply.)

How dare you compare me to her/him! How dare you!

SAM

And on top of that, you're a drama queen!

HARLEY

A—? I've tried. God knows I've tried. But that's it! That—is—it!

(Rising.)

SAM

Where are you going?

HARLEY

Like you care!

(Storms off a few steps.)

SAM

Get back here. I'm not through!

HARLEY

I think you are!

SAM

(Rising.)

SIT DOWN!

HARLEY

What are you going to do? You gonna hit me? Well, go ahead! HIT ME!

*(SAM slowly sits back down, aware s/he's
drawn attention to her/himself.)*

You've never had any guts...

SAM

Just...go away...

HARLEY

Gladly.

(HARLEY starts to exit.)

But just remember one thing: what we had here was special—something great, something that people dream about having all their lives. And you let it slip through your fingers because you're too scared to open your heart to...possibility. Love lives in possibility.

(HARLEY exits.)

SAM

*(Tries to get back to work. Gets distracted
and throws down her/his pen. Rising and
calling after HARLEY.)*

Wait! Harley? I don't want it to end this way... Come back! Please?

END OF PLAY