

NO LAUGHING MATTER

A play in two acts

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS
(In order of appearance)

SPECIAL AGENT WILLIAM (BILL) WILLIAMS	New to the FBI, this is his first case right out of the academy. He’s a linguist, and a bit neurotic when it comes to incorrect grammar. Actually, he is fastidious about correcting any and every mistake he identifies. He’s not too comfortable around women, and recently developed severe anatidaephobia.
SPECIAL AGENT JAMES (JIM) HUMPHREY	Jim has been an agent for many years. He likes to do things the easy way whenever possible. He likes to make up new words, and believes that a life worth living is one that involves ordering unheard-of meals. He’s a competent and dedicated agent.
BRIT	Actually an FBI agent himself (spoiler alert), he speaks with a strong cockney accent, and is short of patience. He is the secret arm of the mysterious and never-appearing Director McLoughlin.
ALEXEI DMITRY KONSTANTIN NIKOLAY SERGEI STEPANOVICH	Alexei is a simple immigrant from Russia who is trying to start a new life in America. A comedian in his former life, he is kind-hearted and a deep thinker, although he struggles with the peculiarities of English. He always sees the good in people.
SPY	A bit character, he is the “bad guy” who Williams and Humphrey think Alexei is. If it makes you feel any better, after the play is over and he is relaxing on a beach on the Russian Riviera, he gets bitten by a frog.
ANGEL MAGLIONI	Angel is a waitress at “The Egg Plant”, the restaurant where most of the play transpires. Somewhere in her 20’s, but she will be turning 190 next year. Cynical, unendingly exhausted, and apathetic she is karmic justice against anyone who ever stiffed a server at a restaurant. She is obsessed with Glenn Frey, and much of her verbal communication comes in the form of quoted lyrics. Her one endearing quality is that she is aggressively protective of her friends.

- RICHARD FRILLMAN** Richard is the owner of “The Egg Plant”, as well as the cook (in the early part of the play). He’s a good chap, who cares deeply about his employees. He started the restaurant years ago with his wife because they thought it would be a good idea, and then reality hit. She left, taking the busboy with her, and now he is stuck. He gets postcards from her and Marcus, which really messes with his head. He’d sell the place if only he could a) find a buyer, and b) figure out what else to do with his life. Oh, wait – he does!
- MARGARET (MAGGIE) BEECHER-SIMS** Maggie is a waitress at “The Egg Plant”. With a son whose father is persona-non-grata, she is trying to put herself through night school to get a degree in English in hopes of landing a truly lucrative job (clearly she has some lapses in common sense). She’s beaten down by the world, but refuses to stay down with an undying optimism. She’s hoping to find a better life, and when she dares to dream of it, a father for Timmy.
- ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ** A regular at the Egg Plant, Alejandro fancies himself an intellectual, but his libido sees things differently. He refuses to eat anything that he thinks contains dairy, which includes things made of milk, made near milk, or have a texture or hue that resembles milk. It also includes eggs and egg products. Basically, if it gives milk, lives around something that gives milk, or once looked at a glass of milk, Alejandro wants nothing to do with it. Fortunately, he seems to be able to live just on coffee, which is a good fit for his non-employment lifestyle.
- SPECIAL AGENT TARA BUTLER** Tara is one of the FBI’s top agents. She is shrewd, intelligent, and disarmingly sexy. She has a solid, professional shell, but with a few little windows that occasionally let a softer inner core shine through. Frustrated by the curse of beauty, she is very appreciative of those rare males who are able to look past her appearance and see her for her inner nerd.

Note: Many of Angel’s lines are quotes from Eagles songs. As a convenience, these lines are noted by using a *Monotype Corsiva* font. It is left to the director to decide which should be sung, but recommended ones are set off between ♪ symbols.

SETTING

The play is set in New York City, primarily in a restaurant called “The Egg Plant” and a nearby city park.

TIME

This play occurs the present day.

ACT I

Scene 1	A city park
Scene 2	The Egg Plant
Scene 3	The Egg Plant
Scene 4	The Egg Plant
Scene 5	A city park

ACT II

Scene 1	A city park
Scene 2	The Egg Plant
Scene 3	The Egg Plant
Scene 4	A city park
Scene 5	The Egg Plant
Scene 6	The Egg Plant
Scene 7	The Egg Plant

ACT I

SCENE 1

(A park. There is an empty park bench. Two men – FBI agents, but dressed like casual park-goers – are standing on one side of the stage.)

WILLIAMS

When?

HUMPHREY

Any minute now.

WILLIAMS

Any minute now. Is that the same kind of “any minute now” that you said twenty minutes ago?

HUMPHREY

This is espionage, Bill, not chronography. If you wanted to know exactly when things were going to happen, you should have gone into baking.

WILLIAMS

That’s not a word.

HUMPHREY

It’s absolutely a word. ‘She was *baking* cookies’. It means—

WILLIAMS

No, *chronography*’s not a word, Jim.

HUMPHREY

It’s a word. It’s the art of making watches.

WILLIAMS

No, that’s called horology. Chronography is, well... nothing.

HUMPHREY

Horology? Who in the world knows words like that?

WILLIAMS

I'm a linguist, Jim.

HUMPHREY

You're a pain in the ass, that's what you are.

WILLIAMS

That's really hurtful. Do you always treat new agents this way?

HUMPHREY

Don't be so sensitive, Bill. You aren't going to make a month at the Bureau if you take everything personally.

WILLIAMS

You just called me a pain in the ass. Sounds kind of personal.

HUMPHREY

If the shoe fits...

WILLIAMS

You're no delight to work with yourself, you know.

HUMPHREY

Do you see this? This is how much I care. Anyway, the Brit should be here soon. When he gets—

WILLIAMS

Yeah, yeah. You've said it a millions times. Maintain eyes-on surveillance of the Russian. Stay undetected. I still think someone should watch the Brit.

HUMPHREY

If we had a dozen agents, sure. But it's just the two of us, Bill, and it'll be hard enough trailing him as it is. One person can't maintain a trail.

WILLIAMS

Then let's call in for backup.

HUMPHREY

No way. McLoughlin told us to drop it.

WILLIAMS

Wait, what?! McLoughlin said to drop it? When did he say that?

HUMPHREY

Never mind, Bill. That's not what's important right now.

WILLIAMS

The division chief told you to drop the case, and you don't think that's important?

HUMPHREY

Something's going down, Bill. I can feel it in my pancreas...

WILLIAMS

The pancreas doesn't have sensory nerves. You can't feel anything in your pa—

HUMPHREY

Something's going down. Maybe McLoughlin doesn't see it yet, but—

WILLIAMS

Maybe McLoughlin knows something you don't know. He's plugged into a lot more—

HUMPHREY

And maybe he's distracted by all that plugging. I don't know. But what I *do* know is that until we've got something definite, it's just us.

WILLIAMS

Great. My first official case isn't even an official case.

HUMPHREY

Yet.

WILLIAMS

Are you even sure this Russian works for the KGB?

HUMPHREY

KGB? Jesus, Bill, you work for the FBI now. You need to keep up on these things. The KGB hasn't been around for like 20 years. Their Foreign Intelligence Service is called the SVR.

WILLIAMS

SVR? Is that part of the FSB?

HUMPHREY

No. The FSB is their secret police. The SVR is all their spies.

WILLIAMS

And you're sure the Russian wor—

HUMPHREY

Yes. Both the Russian and the Brit work for the SVR.

WILLIAMS

I thought the Brit's spies were MI6.

HUMPHREY

The *guy's* a Brit! He doesn't *work* for the Brits!

WILLIAMS

Why would the Russians hire someone who wasn't even—

HUMPHREY

Da da da da! How the *hell* did you even get into the FBI?

WILLIAMS

I'm pretty goo—

HUMPHREY

Why did you join!? Didn't you ever watch a spy movie growing up? Do you even know what FBI stands for?!

WILLIAMS

Federal Bureau of—

HUMPHREY

Idiots. Federal Bureau of Idiots, because that's who they partnered me with. The greenest idiot to ever carry a gun. Or in your case, lose a gun.

WILLIAMS

That was not my fault. It—

HUMPHREY

Don't. Just... don't. Just thinking about it makes me want to retire. (*See's the Brit approaching...*) Alright, I think we're on. Gray coat. Red backpack. That's our Brit. Now stay out of sight and act casual.

WILLIAMS

What does it matter how I act if I'm out of sight?

HUMPHREY

Not now, Bill.

(The agents become scarce, or perhaps exit if it is a small stage – they are observing, but should obviously not be able to hear what is being said. The Brit enters, and moves to and sits on the park bench. He takes out a slice of bread and tears it into a few pieces, which he then throws onto the ground like he is feeding the birds. Except there aren't any birds. After a few moments he realizes that he has nothing to do, so he picks up the 3-4 pieces of bread, and starts tearing them into smaller pieces to throw out for the birds. Which never show up. After a moment, Alexei enters, and comes to sit on the bench next to him. He checks a watch, and then starts to read an "Introduction to English" book.)

BRIT

(In a thick Cockney accent...)

Looks like it might rain, dudinit, mate?

ALEXEI

(Looks up to a clear sky, and then at the Brit like he's insane)

I would not be holding onto your breathing.

BRIT

I said (*and now with deliberateness, repeating the passcode*) looks like it might rain, dudinit, mate?

ALEXEI

Yes. I heard you. But is very refreshing day, with nice breeze, and no clouds. Not... not likely to rain.

(The Brit is expecting the response “A little rain would be a breath of fresh air”, and decides that maybe it was just a problem in translation.)

BRIT

I ‘ear it rains a lot in Moscow.

ALEXEI

Some. Not more than here, I think.

BRIT

(Realizing this is not the right guy...)

Get ou’ o’ here.

ALEXEI

No, really. Is about same.

BRIT

Beat it!

ALEXEI

Beat... it... I am not... Please... (*holds up a finger to say “please wait” and starts to page through his book, looking for a translation*) bean... bear... beat... beat...

BRIT

Get lost!!

ALEXEI

Lost? No, no. I am just wait until restaurant opens—

BRIT

Move along, mate, before I do somefin dat you're gonna regret.

ALEXEI

(Finally understanding...)

Is free country. I can sit if—

BRIT

(Putting a knife to his ribs...)

See dis? If you don't go sit in some uhfer part of dis free country...

ALEXEI

Okay, yes, yes! I am... I... I leave.

BRIT

I knew we'd see eye ta' eye.

ALEXEI

(As he is leaving, he turns back to the Brit to say...)

There are no birds here right now. You know this, yes?

BRIT

Bugger off!

(Alexei leaves, followed by Humphrey and Williams. Williams glances back, clearly still thinking that someone should be following the Brit. The Brit picks up all his bread. He looks around cautiously, and then starts to throw the bread down again. A moment later, the real agent enters and sits on the bench next to the Brit.)

BRIT

Looks like it might rain, dudinit, mate?

SPY

A little rain would be a breath of fresh air.

BRIT

I 'ear it rains a lot in Moscow.

SPY

Not as much as in London.

BRIT

I bet you don't have birds like... *(suddenly keenly aware that the next part of the passphrase is conspicuously stupid)* these in Moscow.

SPY

(Looking around for birds)

I should say not. Now, you have something for me?

BRIT

Right. The files are all in a locker at Arleigh Station. Number four-four-seven. Here's da key. Once you 'ave 'em out of da country, I'll make it look like a professional break in to cover 'is tracks. When's your flight?

SPY

Late next week.

BRIT

Next week?!

SPY

This is my first time in New York. I wanted to see the Statue of Liberty, Rockefeller Center... *(Suddenly bright and cheery)* I have tickets to see Hamilton.

BRIT

You what!?! Wait. Tickets? Plural?

SPY

Oh, comrade. You think I would forget about you?

(Lights out.)

ACT I

SCENE 2

(The Egg Plant has just opened for the day. Richard is at the register, writing numbers in a book, and Angel is setting up tables. Alexei walks in. Angel stops what she is doing and stares at him, not unkindly, just like he is an excuse to not work. Alexei looks at her like he is expecting her to say something. She doesn't. It gets awkward. Richard doesn't notice any of this.

(Angel's song of the day is Hotel California.)

HELLO?
ALEXEI

UH HUH.
ANGEL

I CAN COME IN?
ALEXEI

ANGEL
But you can never leave. (Alexei stares at her in total confusion) Yeah, hon. You can come in.

THANK YOU.
ALEXEI

ANGEL
But you can never leave.

NEVER... LEAVE...
ALEXEI

MAGGIE
(From offstage)
SO IT'S HOTEL CALIFORNIA TODAY?

RICHARD

It was Hotel California on Thursday.

MAGGIE

(Entering just into the doorway)

Right... But I can't think of another—

ANGEL

♪ There she stood in the doorway ♪.

MAGGIE

That cinches it. *(Exits, singing...)* “On a dark desert highway...”

ALEXEI

So it is okay? I can...

RICHARD

Of course, of course. Sit anywhere you like.

ALEXEI

I saw sign in window. Help wanted.

RICHARD

Yes, yes. Hi. I'm Richard.

ALEXEI

Ah. Pleasure. I am Alexei.

RICHARD

Alex. Alex. Let me get my book.

ALEXEI

Is Alexei.

(Richard leads Alexei to a table, and motions for him to sit.)

RICHARD

So, Alex. *(Opening the books, and getting a pencil ready)*

ALEXEI

Alexei.

RICHARD

What is your full name?

ALEXEI

Alexei Dmitry Konstantin Nikolay Sergei Stepanovich.

(Maggie pokes her head in, whistles in a “wow, that’s quite a name” fashion. Richard looks at her, and she ducks back away.)

ANGEL

Your driver’s license must be the size of-- *(Sees Richard staring at her, clearly displeased)* ♪Such a lovely face♪.

RICHARD

Don’t mind her. Now, what was that again. Alex...

ALEXEI

Alexei... A. L. E. X. E. I.

RICHARD

Alexei...

ALEXEI

Dmitry Knostantin Nikolay Sergei Stepanovich.

RICHARD

Alex Step... vich.

ALEXEI

Step. An. Oh. Vich.

RICHARD

Stepanovich. That’s quite a lot of name you’ve got there. Does everyone in... *(fading off, questing...)*

ALEXEI

(Slowly, helping...) Russia.

RICHARD

Does everyone in Russia have so many names?

ALEXEI

Noo. My... uh... well. You see, my father wanted big family. Many sons. But when I was born, doctor says that my mother cannot have more children. So, my father just gave me all the names.

RICHARD

Well, Alex—

ALEXEI

Alexei.

RICHARD

What?

ALEXEI

You can call me... (*giving up and switching to another...*) Nikolay.

RICHARD

Nicky.

ALEXEI

(*Clearly not pleased, but resigned*)

Yes. Fine. Nicky.

RICHARD

Okay, Nick. Have you ever worked in a restaurant before, Nick?

ALEXEI

Ah, no. But I... But I learn quackly.

RICHARD

Quickly?

ALEXEI

Yes. Quickly. See? I am already learn quickly.

RICHARD

Learning.

ALEXEI

Da. I learning quickly.

RICHARD

Well, Nicky, I was kind of hoping to find someone with a little experience.

ANGEL

It's bussing tables, Dickie, not rocket science. Hey Alexei. Bring me that bottle of ketchup?

ALEXEI

This? *(He holds it up, and then starts walking it to her when she nods)*

ANGEL

Well, look at that. Now he's got experience.

MAGGIE

(From offstage)

Come on, Rich. We need a busboy.

RICHARD

Do you have a social security number?

ALEXEI

Uhh, what is this social number?

ANGEL

That would be a 'no'.

RICHARD

What about a work visa?

ALEXEI

(Excited that he recognizes the term)

Ahh, work visa. Yes. No, I do not have visa.

RICHARD

No visa.

ALEXEI

No visa *yet!*

RICHARD

I can't hire you without a work visa.

ANGEL

Last November you had Shoeless Jack washing dishes in exchange for sleeping in the men's room, and now...

RICHARD

That was completely different.

ANGEL

Uh huh.

RICHARD

He was homeless. He needed a place to stay.

ALEXEI

Oh, wa-wa-wa-wait! *I* need place to stay.

MAGGIE

(Entering again to stand in doorway)

Sounds like a perfect match.

RICHARD

Room and board for labor? *(Alexei isn't familiar, and starts to flip through his translation dictionary)* You can stay here, and you can have whatever food would have to get thrown out, and in exchange you'll bus tables.

ALEXEI

I work, I sleep here, and eat food. Yes?

RICHARD

Right.

ALEXEI

Is perfect.

RICHARD

Don't make me regret this.

ALEXEI

Nooo.

ANGEL

Plenty of room at the Hotel California... (she turns back to her work)

ALEXEI

Hotel...

MAGGIE

Don't mind her. She has a thing for Glenn Frey.

ALEXEI

Glenn Frey. Fry... *(Making a connection)* Fries! This is food?

MAGGIE
No.

ALEXEI
Not food.

MAGGIE
Glenn Frey.

ALEXEI
Ah. *(Laughs in understanding)* Is her... *(makes a gesture/motion implying intimacy)*

MAGGIE
No. The Eagles.

ALEXEI
She like eagles?

MAGGIE
No, no, no. Glenn Frey. He was the lead singer in a musical group called the Eagles.

ALEXEI
Ah. And this Glenn is her husband.

(Angel moans in longing)

MAGGIE
Only in her dreams.

ALEXEI
Well, maybe someday, da?

MAGGIE
Not likely. He's dead.

ALEXEI
Ah. Sorry. Yes, that makes marriage very difficult.

ANGEL
You mean there's still a chance!? I'd move to Russia!

MAGGIE
Come on, Alexei. I'll show you where you can put your things.

(Lights out)

ACT I

SCENE 3

(It is just after the lunch rush a few days later. Alexei has gotten the hang of the busboy job, and is straightening up. Richard is getting ready to run some errands, and Angel is ready for a break. She's not getting one, at least not officially, but she's ready for one. Alejandro is making the most of the unlimited refills of coffee.)

(Angel's song of the day is Desperado)

RICHARD

You're sure you don't mind?

MAGGIE

Just go, Rich. It's not rocket science.

RICHARD

I left the soup on the back bur—

ANGEL

Get out of here, Dickie. I can't take a nap until you leave.

RICHARD

The soup is—

MAGGIE

If we can't find a pot of soup on our own...

RICHARD

(Hesitates, then...)

And the—

EVERYONE BUT RICHARD

Go!

(Richard picks up his things and leaves.)

ALEJANDRO

I haf seen thees phenomenon before. Eet eez textbook separation anxiety.

ANGEL

♪ Alejandro, why don't you come to your senses? ♪

ALEJANDRO

No, I am telling you, he cannot bear to leave.

MAGGIE

Rich? Are you kidding? Rich hates this place.

ALEXEI

I thought Richard owned the restaurant.

MAGGIE

Oh, he does. He just hates it.

ALEXEI

Then why stay? He could sell and find other job.

ANGEL

Freedom, oh freedom. That's just some people talkin'.

MAGGIE

(Appreciatively, to Angel...)

Nice one. *(To Alexei)* It's not that easy. The Egg Plant isn't exactly raking in the bucks—

ALEJANDRO

Which eez why he has separation anxiety. *(To Angel, who is sitting right next to the pot, and doing nothing)* More coffee?

ANGEL

When I'm finished.

ALEJANDRO

You are not doing anytheeng.

ANGEL

♪ You only want the coffee you can't get. ♪

MAGGIE
(*To Angel*)

Stretching it.

ALEJANDRO

Coffee, please.

ANGEL

♪ Now it seems to me some fine things have been laid upon your table, but you only want the ones that you can't ♪—

ALEJANDRO

Coffee. I need the caffeine.

ANGEL

♪ Your losing all your highs and ♪—

ALEJANDRO

Weell you just pour the coffee!

ANGEL
(*Harrumphs*)

Fine. (*Proceeds to deliberately not get him more coffee, but he has turned to talk to Maggie.*)

ALEJANDRO

And how eez your class going?

MAGGIE

Oh, fine I guess. I have a paper due at the end of the week that I've barely started.

ALEXEI

You are taking class. This I did not know.

MAGGIE

Comparative American Literature.

ALEJANDRO

She weell be a famous writer someday.

ALEXEI

You have read what she writes?

ALEJANDRO
Oh, yes.

ALEXEI
And it is good?

ALEJANDRO
Oh, no.

MAGGIE
Alejandro!

ALEXEI
But you say—

ALEJANDRO
There eez famous, and then there eez... famous.

ALEXEI
I am sure is very good. You write about America?

MAGGIE
No, that's just the class. I like to write fiction.

ALEXEI
Fiction. (*Starts to look the word up in his dictionary.*)

MAGGIE
I write about things that aren't real.

ALEXEI
Ah. You are like Dostoyevsky with no beard.

ALEJANDRO
Yes, because the beard eez the only difference.

ALEXEI
(*Ignoring Alejandro*)
I would like to read. This is okay?

MAGGIE
Sure, I guess. One of these days.

ALEXEI

(Picking up tub of dishes...)

I am forward looking to this.

(Alexei exits.)

ANGEL

I think I smell a little flirting.

MAGGIE

I think you're imagining things.

ANGEL

Don't you draw the queen of diamonds.

MAGGIE

That doesn't even make sense, Angel.

ANGEL

The queen of hearts is always—

MAGGIE

You're going to be wearing this in a second *(threatens with a dirty plate or cup)*.

ANGEL

Back me up, Al. Wasn't he flirting with her?

ALEJANDRO

I think he may be flirting a little.

MAGGIE

He wasn't flirting. *(Beat)* Was he?

ANGEL

Oh, hon.

MAGGIE

(Thinking about it...)

No. He wasn't flirting. He was just being nice.

ANGEL

He's flirting, Maggie. Big time.

MAGGIE

He's not. And it doesn't matter anyway. Between Timmy and school and work...

(Agents Williams and Humphrey enter, heading to a table. They are dressed casually.)

ANGEL

(As she wanders off, seemingly to attend to the new guests...)

♪ You better let somebody love you ♪... (But she doesn't go to the patrons; she just hangs out behind the counter.)

ALEJANDRO

You cannot hide from your life, Maggie. *(Goes to drink his coffee and realizes that it was never refilled.)* Hey. Where's my coffee. *(Angel points to the pot.)* Richard told me to stop going behind the counter. *(Maggie finally gets it for him.)* Thank you. *(Then to Angel...)* Do you see what she did there? That eez called 'being a waitress'.

(If the show is being performed on the edgier side, Angel gives Alejandro the finger. Otherwise she just ignores him.)

HUMPHREY

Can we sit anywhere?

ANGEL

That depends.

HUMPHREY

On what?

ANGEL

On how flexible you are.

HUMPHREY

What?

ANGEL

Didn't you ask if you can sit anywhere?

HUMPHREY

Yes.

ANGEL

I think at your age you should know your limitations without having to ask strangers.

HUMPHREY

Don't you work here?

ALEJANDRO

Not as I far as I can tell.

ANGEL

No.

HUMPHREY

No. You don't work here?

ANGEL

No, you can't sit anywhere.

HUMPHREY

Oh? (*Hoping for some direction as to where to sit*)

ANGEL

Outer space.

HUMPHREY

What about it?

ANGEL

You can't sit there.

HUMPHREY

In outer space.

ANGEL

Uh huh.

WILLIAMS

She's right, actually.

HUMPHREY

Bill...

WILLIAMS

Since there's no gravity, you can't actually *sit* in outer space.

HUMPHREY

Bill...

WILLIAMS

The best you can do is just bend yourself into a chair-like shape and float next to it.

HUMPHREY

Shut up, Bill.

ANGEL

(To Maggie, indicating Williams)

I like that one.

MAGGIE

(Finally having had enough...)

Sit anywhere you like.

(They go towards the closest table.)

ANGEL

Not there.

MAGGIE

There's *fine*. Angel will show you a menu. *(Turns to do other things)*

(Angel picks up a menu and displays it to them, Vanna White-style, from a distance. Maggie takes it from her, grabs another, and brings them over to the pair.)

HUMPHREY

Quite a character, that one. I suppose you get used to her after a while.

MAGGIE

You'd be the first.

HUMPHREY

So what's good here?

ANGEL

The ambience!

ALEJANDRO

Definitely not the service. *(Maggie glares at him.)* Or the writing. *(She glares harder.)*

MAGGIE

We get a lot of compliments on the eggs benedict.

HUMPHREY

Sure. Why not? The eggs benedict it is.

MAGGIE

Ahh... (*Remembering...*) Actually, you can't get that right now.

WILLIAMS

Only served at breakfast?

MAGGIE

No, the place is called the Egg Plant. We serve eggs all day long.

HUMPHREY

Then why can't we get them.

MAGGIE

The cook stepped out.

HUMPHREY

The cook...

MAGGIE

Stepped out.

HUMPHREY

Sooo...

MAGGIE

You could get some pie.

HUMPHREY

I'm diabetic.

WILLIAMS

I'll have some pie.

MAGGIE

What kind?

WILLIAMS

Surprise me.

MAGGIE

Okay. One mystery pie. And for you?

HUMPHREY

Well, since you don't have a cook, and I'm guessing you don't serve diet pie...

MAGGIE

Well, actually... No. No diet pie.

HUMPHREY

I guess I'll just have some coffee.

ALEJANDRO

Don't hold your breath.

(Maggie exits to get their order)

ANGEL

So, space boy... *(Williams makes a "who, me" motion)* Yeah, you. What do you do for a living.

WILLIAMS

I... *(glances at Humphrey, who groans in disappointment)* I'm a... translator. *(Humphrey groans a little more.)*

ANGEL

Uh huh. And what do you translate?

WILLIAMS

You know. Books. Speeches.

ANGEL

Like those guys at the United Nations.

WILLIAMS

Yeah. I guess.

ANGEL

Do you sing?

WILLIAMS

(Looking at Humphrey again)

Sing?

ANGEL

Why do you keep looking at him? Are you only allowed so many words a day or something?

WILLIAMS

(He looks at Humphrey again, who throws his hands up in disgust)

I guess I sing a little. When I'm alone, usually.

ANGEL

What do you sing?

ALEJANDRO

Thees eez your moment. Don't screw eet up.

WILLIAMS

What?

ANGEL

What kind of music? No, don't look at him. Just answer the question.

WILLIAMS

Some country. Some rock. The older stuff, though.

ANGEL

(Getting hopeful)

Like?

WILLIAMS

Jackson Browne. Steve Miller Band. But I'd have to say...

ANGEL

Yes...

WILLIAMS

My favorite band is probably...

ANGEL

Yes yes?

(Maggie enters again with the pie and a cup of coffee...)

WILLIAMS

The Eagles.

ANGEL

You don't say! *(She intercepts Maggie, taking the pie and coffee from her, and brings them over to the table. She puts the pie in front of Williams.)*

HUMPHREY

Cream?

ANGEL

No, thanks. *(She takes a sip of the coffee.)* So, the Eagles...

WILLIAMS

My parents used to listen to them all the time. I guess I just got hooked.

HUMPHREY

(Recovering from his disbelief)

That's my coffee.

ANGEL

Uh huh. Favorite song?

WILLIAMS

Oh, that's tough. There are a lot.

ANGEL

Tell me about it.

WILLIAMS

If I had to pick one, though...

HUMPHREY

Why don't you just si—

ANGEL

Thanks. *(Sits, pushing Agent Humphrey out of the way.)* You were saying?

(Humphrey gets up from the table, amazed at Angel's behavior.)

WILLIAMS

Tequilla Sunrise. No, maybe Take It To the Limit. No, Tequilla Sunrise.

ANGEL

Interesting. You know who wrote both of those, don't you?

WILLIAMS
Only the best songwriter of all time.

ANGEL
Yes?

ALEJANDRO
Please don't... please don't...

WILLIAMS
Don Henley.

(Maggie and Alejandro make the pained faces of people who are witnessing a terrible car accident.)

MAGGIE
Oh dear God.

ALEJANDRO
So close.

ANGEL
(There is a long painful pause. She puts down the coffee cup hard.)
What?

ALEJANDRO
(Walking away, taking Maggie with him)
I can't watch.

WILLIAMS
Don He—

ANGEL
(A cold, terrifying anger)
You think Henley is better than Frey?

WILLIAMS
I—

ANGEL
You think Henley has even a fraction of the talent that Glenn had in his little pinky?

WILLIAMS
I—

ANGEL

Are you going to *sit* here at *my* table, eating—Give me that. (*She grabs the pie away from him.*) You don't deserve pie. (*Takes a bite.*) And it's good pie too. But you don't get any. (*She stands up, taking the pie and coffee. She mutters in disgust...*) Don Henley. (*She storms back to her spot behind the counter, and glares at Williams as she eats his pie and drinks Humphrey's coffee. Then to herself*) Might as well like Justin Bieber.

WILLIAMS

What... What just happened?

HUMPHREY

(*Sitting down again.*)

Whatever it was, you lost.

WILLIAMS:

I did *not* lose. (*Humphrey looks over at Angel, then back at Williams. Williams looks at Angel, who is fiercely eating his pie, then back to Humphrey.*) I'm not saying that I won.

HUMPHREY:

How was the pie?

WILLIAMS:

I don't know. I never got a chance to have any. She looks like she's enjoying it, though. (*Angel has finished the pie...*) Correction. Enjoyed it. (*Angel writes something on a piece of paper, and starts heading over.*)

HUMPHREY:

She's coming back. Here's your chance.

WILLIAMS:

For what?

HUMPHREY:

No idea.

(*Angel puts the paper down in front of Humphrey, who picks it up and reads it.*)

WILLIAMS:

What does it say?

HUMPHREY:

It's the check. Good news. Says the coffee's on the house. But...

WILLIAMS:

Yes?

HUMPHREY:

Looks like you owe twenty eight fifty for the pie.

(Alexei enters, and Maggie goes to him.)

MAGGIE

Babe, can you run into the kitchen and get a cup of coffee and a slice of pie for table 3?

ALEXEI

Of course. It is pleasure for me. There is only one pie?

MAGGIE

Oh, no. There are a few. Just take a slice from... *(conspiratorially...)* whichever's oldest.

ALEXEI

You will get it. *(Maggie looks at him oddly...)* This is not saying?

MAGGIE

No.

ALEXEI

I thought is saying. You get it.

MAGGIE

(Figuring it out...)

Oh. No. It's "you got it".

ALEXEI

Ah. Right. You got it.

(Alexei exits into the kitchen. Maggie walks to Humphrey and Williams.)

MAGGIE

We'll get you some more coffee and some pie. *(She looks at the check.)* I'll have to charge you for the coffee, but it will still come out less than this. You're sure you don't want something to eat?

HUMPHREY

I thought you said the cook-- Was that the cook? Did he come back?

MAGGIE

What? Oh, no. That was the busboy. But we can make you something if you want. Maybe not eggs benedict, but... The soup of the day is tomato bisque. Or maybe a sandwich?

HUMPHREY

I'd love a Monte Crispy.

MAGGIE

Sorry?

WILLIAMS

That's not a thing. Jim has a tendency to—

AGENT HUMPHREY

Sure it's a thing. It's just like a Monte Cristo, but with potato chips inside. You've heard of it, haven't you?

MAGGIE

Well...

WILLIAMS

No one's ever heard of it. You just made it up.

HUMPHREY

Can I get one?

MAGGIE

Uhh...

WILLIAMS

Jim, just get a grilled cheese.

MAGGIE

No, it's okay. We can try to make one.

HUMPHREY

Excellent.

MAGGIE

Just the pie for you?

WILLIAMS

If real food is an option, could I maybe get a sandwich instead? Or some soup would be okay.

MAGGIE

Well which is?

WILLIAMS

Surprise me.

MAGGIE

Sure. Cause that worked out so well the last time. *(She gives him a smile and a pat on the shoulder to soften the joke.)*

(Maggie starts to exit, but stops to talk to Alexei as he enters with the pie and coffee.)

Can you bring the coffee over to the fellow in blue? I'll take the pie back.

ALEXEI
Sure.

ALEJANDRO
I'll take the pie

MAGGIE
(Talking to Alejandro...)

It's banana cream.

ALEJANDRO

Never mind.

MAGGIE

I thought that might change your mind. Do you want something else?

ALEJANDRO

Do you have any pies without dairy?

MAGGIE

Not by your definition.

ALEJANDRO

Not even one?

MAGGIE

If it isn't a cream pie, then it's fruit, and we use egg whites to make the top shiny.

WILLIAMS

Eggs aren't dairy.

ALEJANDRO

Eggs are definitely dairy. And I'm allergic to dairy.

WILLIAMS

Dairy refers to things that are made from milk. Eggs are definitely *not* dairy.

ALEJANDRO

They come from a dairy farm, don't they? They're white, and come from a dairy farm. They're dairy, and I'm allerg—

WILLIAMS

They're *not* dairy. They come from chickens. Is a chicken sandwich dairy?

ALEJANDRO

Does it have cheese on it?

WILLIAMS

No—

ALEJANDRO

Does it have mayonnaise?

WILLIAMS

No.

ALEJANDRO

(Back at Maggie)

I will haf one of those.

MAGGIE

They cost seven fifty.

ALEJANDRO

Then never mind. Just some more coffee.

MAGGIE

Angel? Can you get Alejandro a refill?

ANGEL

(Uncharacteristically cheerful...)

Sure thing, Al. Coming right up. *(She doesn't bring him anything.)*

ALEXEI
(Giving the coffee to Humphrey)

Is coffee for you.

HUMPHREY

Thanks.

ALEXEI

We do not speak of it.

HUMPHREY

What?

WILLIAMS

What don't we speak of?

ANGEL

He means "don't mention it".

ALEXEI
Yes, yes. Sorry. Don't. Mention. It. *(Then muttering to himself, trying to drill it into his head...)* Don't mention it. Don't mention it. Don't ment—

HUMPHREY

So I take it you are new to the country. Where are you from?

ALEXEI

Mexico.

WILLIAMS

Really?

ALEXEI

No, not really. Is joke, is joke! I am from Russia.

HUMPHREY

When did you come to the U.S.?

ALEXEI

Few days ago.

WILLIAMS

And you already have a work visa?

ALEXEI

No. Is too soon. I have work Master Card. (*Beat...*) Is j—

HUMPHREY

Joke. It's a joke. I get it.

WILLIAMS

So what brought you here?

ALEXEI

Big plane.

WILLIAMS

I meant—

ALEXEI

I know. Was another joke. You are... not so good with joke, ya?

WILLIAMS

I...

ALEXEI

Ahh, I grasp on your chain.

WILLIAMS

What?

ALEXEI

Grasp on chain? No? I get it wrong again. What is phrase?

ANGEL

Yank—

ALEXEI

Yes, yes. I remember now. I *yank* your chain.

WILLIAMS

So why *did* you come to the U.S.?

(*Humphrey kicks Williams under the table.*)

ALEXEI

I just look for new start. Things do not go so well for me in Russia.

MAGGIE

(From offstage)

Damn it! Get in ther-- Oww!

ALEXEI

Excuse me. I make sure Maggie is okay.

(Alexei rushes off into the kitchen)

ANGEL

Totally has the hots for her.

ALEJANDRO

Like a big Russian jalapeño.

HUMPHREY

So they're an item, those two?

ANGEL

She's his Glenn Frey. *(And as an afterthought, spitting it out towards Agent Williams...)* Who is way more talented than Don Henley.

WILLIAMS

Fine. I take it back. Frey is better than Henley.

ANGEL

What do you think I am? Easy? You have to *mean* it, Lyin' Eyes. *That smile is a thin disguise.*

ALEJANDRO

I thought you only pecked one song each day.

ANGEL

Sometimes you have to make an exception.

ALEXEI

(From offstage...)

Just put down! You will to burn fingers again! Let me... *(fades off)*

(There is a long silence...)

HUMPHREY

So they're—

MAGGIE

(From offstage...)

The ham! Push the ham back in!

ALEXEI

(From offstage...)

I am pushing! I push! Where is swiss cheese?!

(Pause...)

HUMPHREY

So they're an—

ALEXEI

(From offstage...)

Says here that bread is *soaked* in egg!

MAGGIE

(From offstage...)

Just pour it on top!

ALEXEI

(From offstage...)

But potato chips—

MAGGIE

(From offstage...)

Not yet! Those go in at the end!

(Pause...)

HUMPHREY

So they're an it—

MAGGIE

(From offstage...)

Turn it off! Turn it off! Not that one! The left one! The other left!!

ALEXEI

(From offstage...)

AAAaaaa!

WILLIAMS

They seems to work together well.

(There is a loud crash from the kitchen. After a moment they all look to Angel.)

ANGEL

Perfectly normal. We have a noisy kitchen. *(Beat, as they all stare at her.)* You should hear what it sounds like when we bake lasagna.

(Maggie and Alexei enter, holding together a “sandwich”.)

MAGGIE

Ta da! One Monte Crispy. Just like your mother used to make.

ALEXEI

If mother worked in firehouse. Wearing mittens.

HUMPHREY

It looks... delicious.

WILLIAMS

Uh... did you forget...

MAGGIE

(Grimacing...)

Right. You wanted... *(She slide’s Humphrey’s meal over to him, and then weakly...)* Surprise! Right, no *(slides the sandwich back)*. I’ll go get you something right away.

(Maggie exits.)

ALEXEI

You like?

AGENT HUMPHREY

I haven’t tasted it yet. *(Alexei just stands there staring at him, waiting for him to take a bite. He steels himself to take a bite, but can’t do it with an audience. Eventually he just plops the sandwich back on the plate.)* Maybe later. After it’s cooled.

(Maggie enters with a bowl of soup.)

MAGGIE

Here you go.

WILLIAMS

What is it?

Soup.

MAGGIE

I meant... Never mind. Thanks.

WILLIAMS

(Maggie and Alexei back away, leaving the agents to their meal.)

WILLIAMS
(Eats a spoonful of soup, and then drops the spoon into the bowl and pushes it away from him, clearly displeased. Conspiratorially...)

We're supposed to become regulars here?

HUMPHREY
Without him leaving the building, it's the only way to keep an eye on him.

WILLIAMS
I don't think my stomach is up to the assignment.

HUMPHREY
It's in the name of duty.

WILLIAMS
Eating here every day could be the end of me. My stomach—

HUMPHREY
If you die while on assignment, you get a special medal, you know. They call it the—

WILLIAMS
Don't.

HUMPHREY
But I have a really grea—

WILLIAMS
Don't. Just don't.

HUMPHREY
It's called the purp— *(He stops because Williams is pointing a very angry finger at him).* Fine. Your loss.

(Richard enters and heads to toward the kitchen.)

ANGEL

Dickie... *Your pain and your hunger are driving you home?*

RICHARD

(Heading into the kitchen...)

No, I just forgot to...

MAGGIE

(To herself)

Uh oh.

RICHARD

(Coming back out, getting progressively louder...)

What. The hell. Did you do. To my... Kitchen!!?

MAGGIE

Oh. That. Hey! Good news! We added a new item to the menu!

(Lights out...)