

KAFKA WILL ONLY GET YOU SO FAR

Cast of Characters

Brad's Alter Ego

Brad, late 30s

Jill's Alter Ego

Jill, early 30s

The play takes place in an urban restaurant at lunch hour. Brad is seated at a table looking at a menu and watching for his blind date, Jill, to arrive. Seated behind Brad is Brad's Alter Ego. Brad will converse with Jill in traditional first date fashion (whatever that is) and Brad's AE will voice what Brad is really thinking. The same will apply to Jill and Jill's AE when she/they arrive at the restaurant. The AEs are only heard by the audience initially. Throughout, Brad's AE wears a mask of the image of Brad's face and Jill's AE does the same with a mask of Jill's face. In the alternative, the AEs can hold life-size photos of Brad and Jill's faces over their own faces. Brad and Jill's Alter Egos can be played by actors of different ages than their counterparts as their real faces are never seen.

Brad's AE: Is that her? No. She said she would be blonde but wearing a light blue dress. Too bad 'cause she's hot. She described herself on the phone as a 7 1/2. Which meets the Brad Lester minimum daily adult attractiveness requirement. Given that I'm not exactly a 9 or 10 myself, that's only fair. Well, she's already seven minutes late. Fifteen minutes is my limit. After that, I'm outta here. You can tell a lot about someone just by whether they show up on time. And it looks like we're already at strike one. Not a good sign. Well, I guess I'll look at the menu. Maybe a sammich this time. (Jill and Jill's AE enter.)

Jill's AE: Uh oh. That's not how he described himself. Shit. I can't believe it.

Jill: Brad?

Brad: Jill?

Brad's AE: Oh my God, she's a 9 at least!

Jill AE: He's already undressing me with his eyes!

Jill: Yes. Sorry I'm late. Traffic. (Jill shakes Brad's hand. Jill and Jill's AE sit, Jill's AE

behind Jill).

Brad: Late? Oh, you're not late. I just got here myself.

Brad's AE: You are definitely forgiven for "late."

Brad: It's really nice to meet you.

Jill: Yeah...you too.

Jill's AE: Here we go again. Another blind date fiasco in the making. That's how many in a row now? All right. Let's just get through this.

Brad: Did you have any trouble finding the place?

Jill: No, your directions were good.

Jill's AE: Sad to say.

Brad: That's good. (Pause.)

Jill's AE: Scintillating conversationalist.

Brad: Hope you're hungry.

Jill: Not especially.

Brad: Oh. (Pause.) Have you ever eaten at one of these places?

Jill: Never.

Brad: Well, the sandwiches are good. The pasta dishes are really good too.

Brad's AE: She is CUUUTE.

Brad: Right!?

Jill: Well, I don't know. I've never eaten here before. I'll take your word for it.

Brad's AE: Come on. You're with a hot babe. Don't be a doofus and verbalize what you're really thinking. Let me do that.

Brad: Right. (Jill gives Brad an odd look.)

Jill's AE: I think I'll just order a small salad so I can get out of here pronto.

Jill: So what did you say you do again?

Jill's AE: I really couldn't care less, but I guess we have to talk about something.

Brad: Oh, I'm at attorney.

Brad's AE: I told her on the phone what I do. She seemed impressed then.

Jill: Oh yeah? What firm?

Brad: Plame and Utterbock.

Jill's AE: Don't you mean Plain and Utterbore?

Brad's AE: We're a very prestigious firm. She has to have heard of us.

Brad: Ever hear of us?

Jill: Don't think so.

Brad: It was recently rated one of the top 100 firms in the country.

Brad's AE: That should get her attention.

Jill: Top 100? Wow.

Brad's AE: What did she mean by "Wow?"

Jill's AE: Uh huh. Fascinating. (Jill is not fascinated.)

Jill: What kind of law do you practice?

Jill's AE: I think that's what you're supposed to ask a lawyer you just met. Not that it could remotely matter, of course.

Brad: Oh, litigation. I'm a litigator.

Jill: Oh, so you basically sue people for a living?

Jill's AE: That may have come off a bit harsh. But, hey, what the hell? This is our last date anyway.

Brad: Well, I don't know if that's...

Brad's AE: Okay, so she's not into the legal profession, apparently. New approach needed. Change the subject.

Brad: And you said you're a teacher?

Jill: Yes...Yes, I am.

Brad: What do you teach?

Jill: I teach high school English.

Jill's AE: Not up to your standards, I suppose, Mr. Top 100 Law Firm Drone?

Brad: Like Blanche DuBois.

Jill: Excuse me.

Brad: Blanche DuBois...from Streetcar Named...

Jill: Oh, of course. Yes. Blanche. She taught high school English. That's right.

Jill's AE: Nice literary reference.

Brad: So what's your favorite novel?

Jill: The Great Gatsby. (Pause.) Are you familiar with it?

Brad's AE: Am I familiar with it? Well, let's see what she does with this.

Brad: "...so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly to the past."

Brad's AE: That should be a ringer.

Jill: Wow. The last line from the book. Impressive.

Jill's AE: Well, there's something here.

Brad: Some books are famous for their first lines and their last lines.

Jill: That's true.

Jill's AE: Okay. Tell me more.

Brad: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Jill: Ah, Dickens.

Jill's AE: Of course, everyone knows that one.

Brad's AE: Let's go for the knockout punch.

Brad: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin."

Jill: Oh my God, that's my favorite novella!

Jill's AE: He knows Kafka too. Whoa.

Brad: Kafka is great, but for my money, the premiere novella of the 20th century is Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground.

Jill: Oh, you like Dostoyevsky? My two favorite Russian novels are his masterpieces, The Brothers Karamazov and Crime and Punishment. Titanic pieces of fiction, don't you agree?

Brad: Without question. (Pause.) Titanic. (Pause.)

Brad's AE: Shit, I haven't read either one. Time to grab a lifeboat. Quick. Pivot again.

Brad: So high school, huh?

Jill: Yeah.

Brad: What's that like?

Brad's AE: Do the boys learn anything from you or are they too busy fantasizing about you...like I am.

Jill: What's it like? Well, you know, you have the ones that want to learn and the ones that don't want to learn and don't care.

Brad's AE: Well, that's not exactly what I was getting at, but no matter. Show interest in what she does. Chicks like that.

Brad: I guess teaching teenagers must be a real challenge.

Jill: It has its moments.

Brad: All those hormones.

Jill: Yeah.

Jill's AE: He was doing so well with literature. Why this pablum again? (Uncomfortable pause.)

Jill: Did you see the waiter?

Brad: He was just here. (He signals for a waiter, but the waiter doesn't see him.)
Oh...he disappeared.

Jill: Uh huh.

Jill's AE: Well, he reads at least. Gotta give him that. But he wasn't straight about his looks. I can't get past that. Maybe I should feign a headache or something. Nah, too obvious. Damn.

Jill: (Under her breath.) Damn.

Brad: I'm sorry.

Jill: Ham...Maybe a ham and cheese.

Brad's AE: Her body language is not good.

Brad: Duh.

Jill: Excuse me.

Brad: Oh...nothing.

Brad's AE: Will you watch it!

Jill: Maybe you'd like to order for me?

Brad: What? No. Order whatever you like.

Jill: Thank you.

Brad AE: This is heading south.

Jill's AE: Too bad this isn't a speed date. I'd be on to the next joker by now.

Brad: I'm sorry. Did I say something wrong?

Jill's AE: May as well level with him.

Jill: Look, it's not you. It's me.

Jill's AE: Way to level with him. You're a lousy liar. He's gotta see right through that.

Brad: What do you mean?

Jill: I'm sorry. I'm just a mess right now. I've just been through a bad breakup. And it's really too soon for me to be doing this.

Brad's AE: Oh, there it is. The ultimate bullshit line. Translation: "Sorry, dude, I'm just not into you, what with me being a 9 and you being a 6 on a good day." You know what? Let's just pull the plug on this.

Brad: All right. You know what. It's okay. We don't have to do this.

Jill: Do what?

Brad: This. Have lunch. Talk. Get to know each other.

Brad's AE: That's good. Stand up for myself.

Jill: I'm not trying to ditch you.

Brad: You're not?

Jill: No.

Brad: Really?

Jill: Yeah, really.

Jill's AE: Why did I say that? Why can't I just be honest with a guy I'm not attracted to?

Brad's AE: I really should wrap this up. This is obviously going nowhere. But *dammit*, she's hot.

Brad: You said it's too soon for you to be doing this.

Brad's AE: Don't get into a debate with her. You're not going to win. How many times have I heard a chick say, "It's not you. It's me.?" It always means the same thing. Face it. She's out of my league anyway.

Jill: But we can still have lunch and talk.

Jill's AE: What are you doing?

Brad: That's all I wanted to do anyway.

Brad's AE: Liar.

Jill: Oh. So you...

Brad: Yes?

Jill: Forgive me. I thought you...

Brad AE: Wanted to hook up?

Brad: Yes?

Jill's AE: Say it.

Jill: I just thought...no, never mind.

Brad's AE: DO NOT say what I'm about to say. Impulse control.

Brad: Actually, I was just hoping to find a friend, maybe just someone to hang out with, do things with. I wasn't looking for...you know.

Brad's AE: Had to do it. Had to do it. Beta.

Jill: Oh. You weren't?

Jill's AE: For real?

Brad: Give me a little credit. We're not all hounds, you know.

Brad's AE: Yeah, right.

Brad: Some of us even do semi-evolved things like read Kafka and Fitzgerald.

Jill: (Laughs.) Okay, then. Let's talk some more books. But first: Why don't we get out of here? I haven't seen a waiter since I walked in. I know a place with great food and actual waiters two blocks from here.

Brad: "Yes, let's go. They do not move."

Jill: Oh, my God! That's the ending of Waiting for Godot! That's amazing! You just thought of that? (Brad shrugs.) But unlike Vladimir and Estragon in the play, let's really go! (Brad and Jill exit. The AEs watch them go. Pause.)

Brad's AE: Can you believe those two.

Jill's AE: A couple of idiots.

Brad's AE: Yeah. You know he only reads CliffsNotes. Does it to get chicks. Kinda

pathetic. Never read a novel all the way through in his life.

Jill's AE: I'm not surprised. She can't stay in a relationship longer than a month.

Brad's AE: She does seem a bit moody.

Jill's AE: Yeah, that's an issue with her. Hot body or not, guys don't like that.

Brad's AE: Very true. So what are you doing the rest of the afternoon?

Jill's AE: Not much, obviously. Seems we've both been ditched.

Brad's AE: I guess we have. I, for one, could use the break.

Jill's AE: Me too. All that drama. Never ending.

Brad's AE: So...since we're both here...you wanna eat?

Jill's AE: What are you suggesting? (She shakes her head.) Sorry. Force of habit. Sure. Let's eat. (They both pick up menus momentarily concealing their faces/masks.)

Brad's AE: Good. (A beat.) I'm starved. (She lowers her menu and looks at him for a moment, then shakes her head as she catches herself yet again, then returns to her menu.)

CURTAIN