Coffee: The Sophisticated Woman

An original theatrical work by Michele Fritz

Jessica has turned a forthcoming coffee date into a full theatrical rehearsal. An ensemble actor stands in for the boy. The real boy is not present: Jessica is directing her own lines and his, stopping and restarting whenever anything feels wrong. Scout observes from nearby.

REHEARSAL THREE: THE SOPHISTICATED WOMAN. At Jessica's cue, the IMAGINARY BOY resets his chair and assumes his next assigned role. The ensemble supplies sunglasses, a scarf and ridiculously flattering light. Jessica drapes herself across her chair, directing the tableau until it looks suitably continental.

JESSICA: I've been thinking about going abroad.

IMAGINARY BOY: Where?

JESSICA: Europe.

IMAGINARY BOY: Where in Europe?

JESSICA: The European part.

Jessica tears off the sunglasses and wrestles with the scarf. The IMAGINARY BOY freezes where he sits, his next rehearsed line interrupted. He waits for Jessica to tell him what to do.

JESSICA: Stop. I hate this woman.

SCOUT: You invented her.

JESSICA: I'm aware of that.

SAMANTHA enters this imagined rehearsal from another corner of the play. She has not yet had her own scene. She clocks the waiting IMAGINARY BOY, then expertly rearranges the scarf on Jessica. The actor remains seated, visibly on standby while the women talk.

SAMANTHA: She's not entirely hopeless.

JESSICA: Does this make me look like I've been to Europe?

SAMANTHA: Which part?

JESSICA: Does it matter?

SAMANTHA: If he asks.

Jessica removes the scarf.

JESSICA: How do you do it?

SAMANTHA: Do what?

JESSICA: Get men to find you interesting.

SAMANTHA: Tell me something you know about this boy.

JESSICA: He has wonderful hair.

SAMANTHA: That's his hair. What about the boy?

JESSICA: He asked me to coffee.

SAMANTHA: So far, we've established he has a head and enjoys beverages.

JESSICA: I just want him to like me.

SAMANTHA: What if you don't like him?

Jessica stops.

JESSICA: That's not one of my scenarios.

SAMANTHA: You might want to add it.

Samantha retrieves her scarf. She notices that the IMAGINARY BOY is still sitting attentively, waiting for Jessica to supply his next move.

JESSICA: Have you ever rehearsed for a date?

SAMANTHA: Of course. But I only rehearsed my part.

Samantha gestures toward the IMAGINARY BOY. He straightens, assuming for a moment that his cue has arrived. It has not.

JESSICA: Well, somebody has to play him.

SAMANTHA: That’s the part you’re supposed to find out over coffee.

Jessica looks at her actor. He tentatively opens his mouth; she holds up a finger to stop him.

JESSICA: What if I don’t like his part?

SAMANTHA: Then you can leave at intermission.

Samantha exits with the scarf. Jessica looks at the IMAGINARY BOY, who relaxes, thinking the rehearsal might finally be over. Jessica studies him for another beat. The urge to prepare wins.

JESSICA: All right. Let’s try mysterious.