## SMALL TALK

by

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It's pouring outside. Gripping the lapels of her windbreaker together, RIVICKA (20s) sprints through the rain into...

## 2 INT. MAXWELL CALL CENTER - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

...the lobby. The elevator door is sliding closed but at the last minute, a hand jerks out, allowing Rivicka to slide in. TODD (Mid 20s), dry and perfectly pressed, looks at Rivicka in all her drowned-rat glory.

TODD

Hot enough out there for you?

RIVICKA

(wringing water from hair)

Funny.

(off of Todd's dryness)

How do you do it?

Todd smiles.

## 3 INT. MAXWELL CALL CENTER - CUBICLE VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator opens to reveal a floor with row after row of cubicles. Todd makes a sharp left and disappears into the cubicle maze. Rivicka continues down a narrow aisle, making her way to the offices in the back. She pauses as SHIRLEY (40s) blocks her path, a steaming cup of coffee in hand.

SHIRLEY

Cup of joe? I can't stomach it today.

RIVICKA

Shirley, you're a star.

Rivicka takes the cup, drinking as she enters her office.

## 4 INT. MAXWELL CALL CENTER - RIVICKA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A small room with two work terminals. ARLENE (20s) sits at the far one, talking softly into her headset.

ARLENE

...can offer it to you for \$49.99--

She looks up as Rivicka enters.

ARLENE (CONT'D)

Hot enough out there for you?

Rivicka strips off her wet windbreaker, her soaked scarf.

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RIVICKA

Everyone's a comic...

She throws both at Arlene. The soaked clothes hit the other woman with a THWACK before sliding down wetly into her lap.

...till it happens to you.

Rivicka sits down, SNAPS on her headset and dials in:

RIVICKA (CONT'D)

ARLENE

Hi! Our records show that ...to you for \$49.99... you've recently had a baby...

RIVICKA (CONT'D)

ARLENE

So I wanted to tell you about ...f-f-for \$49.99... the ElekPac.

RIVICKA (CONT'D)

ARLENE

The new electronic pacifier ...f-fourty-nine, niiinety-that experienced mothers niiine-everywhere love---

There is a SPARK then a BANG. Rivicka jumps, ripping off her headset as Arlene slowly slumps over in her seat.

RIVICKA (CONT'D)

(getting up)

Arlene? Arlene, are you okay?

Nothing. Rivicka touches the other woman's arm, shaking her slightly. Arlene turns. Rivicka GASPS.

ARLENE

(like a warped recording)

I...can...offer...it...to...you...

The other woman's eyes are black. Not dark. Black. No pupils, iris or cornea to be found. Just a black absence. There are SPARKS then something SHORT CIRCUITS. Arlene's head explodes.

RIVICKA

Oh my goodness!

As Rivicka jumps back in shock, Arlene's entire arm comes off in her hand.

RIVICKA (CONT'D)

Holy sugar! Holy flipping sug--(The door BANGS open. Todd rushes in.)

Oh my goodness, Todd! Oh my goodness!

(Showing him Arlene's arm.) It...it just came off in my hand. "Small Talk" Odimegwu 3.

TODD

What? That's bananas! Just bananas! We should get someone. This is too <a href="BANANAS">BANANAS</a> to deal with on our own. Come with me, Rivicka. Let us go to higher authority.

She starts to follow Todd out of the room. Then she stops.

RIVICKA

Wait...wait a minute, how did you..how did you know to come in here?

TODD

What?

RIVICKA

How did you know to come in here? You never stop by but suddenly today you show up just when Arlene--

TODD

Rivicka, we don't have time for small talk, let us go to higher authority--

RIVICKA

Our entire relationship is small talk, Todd. Every morning, you stop the elevator doors from closing just in time and we make small talk and... (realizing)

Every. Single. Morning. You stop the elevator door just in time. How is

that possible?

Todd takes a step towards her. She takes a step back.

TODD

Rivicka, please, come with me. We'll go get help from higher authority.

He steps closer still. Rivicka swings Arlene's arm at him.

RIVICKA

Stay the heck away from me, you r-robot wierdo!

TODD

Rivicka, you are acting irrational.

She swings HARD again.

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RIVICKA

Irrational? I'm seeing rationally for the first time in...Shirley! Shirley always offers me a cup of coffee in the morning. **Every** morning. She gives me **her** cup of coffee. And then she brings me another one later on and I don't...I don't think I've ever seen Shirley drink...I don't think I ever saw **Arlene** drink or eat or--

TODD

You sound bananas! Please let us...

Rivicka <u>swings</u> Arlene's arm again. This time, she makes contact, hitting Todd's head hard. With a spark and a fizzle, <u>his entire head pops off</u> and rolls to the side of the room.

RIVICKA

TODD'S HEAD

I DON'T THINK I ACTUALLY BELIEVED IT UNTIL **NOW!** 

...go to hig..her auth...ori...ty.

Todd's voice warps then blinks out as his head powers down. Shirley rushes into the room, a cup of joe in hand.

SHIRLEY

Mid-morning top up?

(takes in Arlene & Todd)

Oh WHAT?! This is BANANAS! What is HAPPENING here? We should get someone. Come with me, let us go to--

RIVICKA

Let me guess: higher authority?!

SHIRLEY

Yes! But first: Cup of joe?

Wielding Arlene's arm menacingly:

RIVICKA

You take one step closer with that cup of coffee and I sweat... I swell...

(shaking her head)

I mean...I-I swerve. I sw--, I sw--

Shirley gives Rivicka a pitying smile.

SHIRLEY

Oh no, you're going to want to drink the joe soon, Rivicka.

RIVICKA

W-what is happily to me? W-why can't I-

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SHIRLEY

You're one of our most advanced Call Center Units. You can withstand water. You can digest organic matter. But because of all your labor-intensive operating capabilities, you do need several cups of J.O.E, AKA: Joule Optimization Extract, to function.

Shirley tips the cup. Rivicka sees: the "coffee" is BRIGHT BLUE.

RIVICKA

No. I-imposs--impos...Why?

SHIRLEY

We found that our Rivickas are better stock movers in the Maternity Product-Line if one: they're incapable of utilizing profanity, and two: they believe themselves to be human.

RIVICKA

I don't fu--, I don't fu--, I don't ff-f-flipping believe you!

SHIRLEY

Fine. What is your last name, Rivicka? Where did you grow up? Or you know what, let's make it simpler: Where did you come from this morning?

RIVICKA

I...I came from...my...my house.

SHIRLEY

No, Rivicka. You came from our docking facility across the street at 7:02AM. Same as you do every morning. One of our Todds held the elevator open for you, same as <u>he</u> does every morning.

Rivicka looks at Shirley in horror as the truth of her existence finally sinks in.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

It's all right. Drink your JOE & we'll walk over to Higher Authority where we can erase this entire episode and you can go back to being who you are.

A pause. Then Arlene's arm CLATTERS to the floor as Rivicka takes the cup of J.O.E. and drinks.