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Name of School : ST. MARK'S SCHOOL
學校名稱 : 聖馬可中學
Name of Play 劇名 : The End of the World
Script writer 劇作者 : LAM Wing See, OR On Ki, CHOY Chin Ting, TSANG Hui Wan, LAU Sum Kiu, YANG Man Kin, XIAN Yunlin, LEUNG Hoi Yee

Synopsis 故事大綱 :

Joe started The End of the World cafe with a mission: to help people communicate with their loved ones. But can he help Mr. Lee, a regular customer, find common ground with his grandson, when their interests are so different? What can he do about the Wong family, whose thin veneer of polite conversation is built on a foundation of lies? And what is driving Joe to focus on helping all these people instead of just selling coffee?

As they go about their lives, a virus is starting to spread, threatening to isolate them even further from each other. By the time they understand the importance of communication, will it be too late?



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At rise, we see Joe, setting tables in his Cafe. It's just before opening.

Joe suddenly notices the audience and talks directly to them, shielding his eyes from the stage lights.

JOE: Oh, hi. I didn't see you there, it's a bit dark. Welcome to the End of the World.

He smiles. Beat. Pretends to notice a shocked audience reaction.

JOE: Wait, there's no need to panic! That's just the name of the cafe. It's called 'The End of the World.'
(Beat) My name's Joe. I'm the owner. Now, I'm sure you're thinking "He's the owner? How come the owner's wiping tables himself?" Well. I'm also the head waiter. In fact I'm the only waiter.

A bell rings, the door opens and the first customer, Mr. Lee, comes in. Joe turns away from the audience and addresses him casually.

JOE: Morning, Mr. Lee. The usual?

MR. LEE: Thanks, Joe.

Mr. Lee goes to sit down, while Joe goes to make him coffee while, again, addressing the audience.

JOE: See, I'm the barista as well. (Pours the coffee) Of course, once this place starts making money I'll hire someone to help, but for now... (sighs) well, maybe the concept is just ahead of its time.

A young man, Gary, enters.

JOE: Morning, Gary.

Gary doesn't answer or acknowledge Joe, but goes reluctantly to sit with Mr. Lee. Joe watches him, then turns back to the audience.

JOE: (Excitedly) The concept is this: communication. It's not just about the food, or the coffee. It's about the atmosphere. It's about creating an environment where people can have a real, human, interaction /



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MR. LEE: Hey, Joe, put the TV on, would you?

Joe sighs heavily, defeated. He flips the TV on, shaking his head, and takes the coffee over to Mr. Lee.

The TV is playing a news programme - the announcer and Dr. Wong both appear on the TV.

ANNOUNCER: ...The extent of the outbreak is as yet unknown. One hundred and nine cases were confirmed as of yesterday, but leading microbiologist Dr. Wong says that while that number may go up, there is as yet no cause for alarm.

DR. WONG: What we are seeing is typical of this kind of virus. Risk is limited to the elderly and immunocompromised: average people really have nothing to worry about if we just stay calm and practise good hygiene / (volume fades down suddenly when Mr. Lee interrupts, but carry on improvising quietly until Joe turns the TV off.)

MR. LEE: Pah! Turn that nonsense off. Sorry, Joe. Average people, indeed!

Joe turns the TV off, and gets out a pad and pencil to take their orders

JOE: What'll it be? We've got carrot cake, lemon drizzle cake, pumpkin pie...

MR. LEE: What do you want, Gary? Carrot cake sounds good, I remember you used to love / carrot cake...

GARY: Anything but carrot cake. MR. LEE: Perhaps lemon drizzle...

GARY: (To Joe) Haven't you got any normal food?

MR. LEE: Gary, behave /

JOE: (To Gary) Maybe you'd like a drink while you think about it?

GARY: I'll have coke.

MR. LEE: Well I'd like some carrot cake. Perhaps you could bring us an extra spoon?

Joe goes off to get the carrot cake, but our focus stays with Gary and Mr. Lee.

GARY: I'm not eating it.

Beat. Gary leans back and folds his arms stubbornly. Silence. Mr. Lee searches for a topic to talk about.



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MR. LEE: So... how's school?

GARY: Ugh. I don't want to talk about school. Why do you always ask me that?
You and mum and dad all ask me the same thing. It's exhausting.

MR. LEE: Um... right, well... Have you been on holiday recently?

GARY: Granddad, you know I haven't. We live together, you see me every day after school.

MR. LEE: True, true... (pause) Read any good books lately?

GARY: Seriously? Who has time for that? I have to read so much for school, why would I choose to read anything for fun?

MR. LEE: Good music then?

GARY: I'm in the school orchestra, all I listen to is out of tune Beethoven.

MR. LEE: Seems like you don't have much to talk about except school...

GARY: I do! (pause) Nothing you'd care about though.

MR. LEE: Go on.

GARY: I was in a tournament last night / and I did...

MR. LEE: What? Gary, I had no idea you played sports. You never mentioned / anything about...

GARY: Not sports. Well, kinda. E-sports. It's a gaming thing...

MR. LEE: Gaming? (suddenly realising, disappointed) Oh, you mean on the computer.

GARY: On the computer. See, I knew you wouldn't get it.

MR. LEE: I just think it's unhealthy how much time you spend...

GARY: (Rolling his eyes; he's heard this before) Here we go...

MR. LEE: In my day, we played our sports outside with real people...

GARY: Granddad, the people are real, it's on the internet...

MR. LEE: They must be unhealthy too then...

GARY: And what about you? You think going out to eat cake during a pandemic is healthy?

MR. LEE: Eh, I've survived worse. A bit of cake's good for you in moderation.

GARY: And what about the virus? They say the elderly / are most vulnerable

MR. LEE: Who are you calling elderly? I'm not even 70...

Both become increasingly agitated, and maybe begin to stand up.

GARY: It's me, and mum and dad who'll have to take care of you...

MR. LEE: They're always exaggerating on the news, it's probably / not even real



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The following lines are spoken at the same time. While they speak, Joe approaches the table and puts down the carrot cake, two forks, and coke.

GARY: / You're such a hypocrite, telling me about being healthy, while ignoring reality /

MR. LEE: / Kids nowadays! If you'd lived as long as I have you'd know from experience that it's /

Both continue until interrupted by Joe clicking his fingers, or SFX: 'ding' or something. They both freeze in position, half standing. Joe breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience directly. As he talks, he repositions Gary and Mr. Lee so they are seated, forks in hands, as if about to eat the cake.

JOE: Mr. Lee comes in here at least once a week. Gary? Maybe twice a year. But I feel like I know Gary better. You see, Gary is all Mr. Lee ever talks about. Whether his latest achievement is a good maths score, performing with the orchestra, or simply remembering to take the rubbish out, Mr. Lee loves to boast about what a good kid his grandson is turning out to be. He tells me, weeks in advance, if Gary is coming to eat breakfast with him.

Joe clicks his fingers, and/or SFX: 'ding.' The world unfreezes.

JOE: Your carrot cake and coke, enjoy.

Joe leaves. Mr. Lee and Gary seem confused for a moment, but each takes a bite of carrot cake.

Beat. They chew the cake.

MR. LEE: How is it?

GARY: Tastes like carrot cake.

MR. LEE: Yup.

They both take another bite.