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Cafe Life (I)
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CAFE LIFE (I)

"Well my dear, even from the very next table, I couldn't help but overhear you mumbling something to yourself about 'life being difficult'—but believe me my dear it's really only doing the absolutely *impossible* that's worth bothering with!" What kind of a remark is that, what kind of a remark is that?—even at midnight, and even here in a crazy place like this, with so many lonely people looking for company but sitting around here with their chairs shyly facing the walls, and otherwise looking around in opposite directions. Is *that* any basis on which to try and start off a Meaningful Interpersonal Relationship? As far as I'm concerned, instead of a woman launching an attention-getter as peculiar as *that* for openers, at a total stranger sitting at the next table whom she'd evidently like to pick up, she might as well just step out of the back room of this picturesque little candle-lit cafe where we've been sitting, sipping our liqueurs; and just go outside into the street and pick up some rocks from the sidewalk and start *throwing* them at him! That's not a very seductive approach she's got there, I must say!—no, not a very seductive approach at all! Whatever happened to one person trying to get acquainted with another person by saying things that the other person can actually understand? "Listen," I tell her, turning in my chair to respond to her, "I've got a great idea for us! If you'd really like for us to really start to get to know each other, just as I certainly would too, why don't we begin by talking things over together like Mature Individuals? Let's be Forthright, Politic, and Specific; Careful, Objective, and Considerate! For example: would you please be so kind as to tell me, if you don't mind: just what is it that you think is so 'impossible' to do in life, but which, as far as you know, I just might think of as being far too easy?" "Well," she replies, suddenly leaning forward in her chair as if to share with me some intimate secret, and apparently finally getting into the proper mood for a pick-up: "It would be difficult, for example, to teach advanced Japanese to a kangaroo." A perfect reply! That's what I'd call normal! I nod assent. "Now," she says, obviously starting at last to truly Reach Out And Relate, "if you don't mind, would you please be so kind as to tell *me* something—just exactly what is it that you think might be far too easy?" "Here's what I

think is too easy," I reply: "—pretending that after even eight semesters in a University lecture-hall, a kangaroo will learn as much as a young student who is Japanese, after attending just a class or two." "Now what's that supposed to mean?" she says, suddenly arching her eyebrows suspiciously, and starting once again to sound cross. "Don't ask me," I say. Out of the corner of one eye I can see her reaching for her beaded purse—perhaps, alas! in preparation for her departure; but, on the other hand, perhaps to hit me with! Perhaps she's begun to care about me after all? I wonder: Should I begin to reach over now for my hand-carved ivory cane, so that she and I can perhaps further express our mutual new-found interest, by perhaps starting in earnest to mutually thrash each other to within an inch of our respective lives? Wait a minute, wait a minute!—that sounds interesting; yes, quite interesting, come to think of it! And certainly, that's a much firmer basis for a new relationship than the ones the other people sitting around here with their chairs shyly facing the walls, and otherwise looking around shyly in opposite directions, seem to have. "Waiter—bill please! Waiter! Waiter!—bill please!" "One more moment," I say to her, "and I'm going to take this twenty-dollar bill and fold it into a paper airplane and *throw* the payment at him!" "Ha ha!"—she throws back her head and, for the first time in my presence, actually laughs! Yes, I can see it all now!—now at last, she and I *are* on the way to a successful Human Relationship on a "Meaningful Interpersonal Basis," just as not only my own psychiatrist, but probably hers as well, has doubtless recommended! For every lonely man, there *is* a woman! And for every lonely woman, there *is* a man! Also, I can see that she has a really nice smile, despite the various bruises I can see covering most of the exposed parts of her body from head to foot; and also, I must admit, I sort of like something about the way that, as we leave, she limps.