

Black Friday

by

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Setting

A diner.

Time

The day after Thanksgiving, 4 a.m.

Cast

MOTHER - A woman in her 40s-50s.

DAUGHTER - A woman in her 20s-30s.

WAITRESS - A woman in her 30s-60s.

Around an empty table sit four chairs. A sign downstage reads, "Yes, We're Open!" MOTHER and DAUGHTER enter, each carrying a purse and clutching a sheaf of flyers and newspaper ads. They talk like two Marines on a mission as they walk to the table and sit down.

DAUGHTER

...okay, so if we get to Wal-Mart at five, how long do you think we'll be there?

MOTHER

We need to get in and out. Can't afford to get bogged down. Just the fifty-inch plasma and the two blenders.

DAUGHTER

Right. Then it's straight to Target for their microwave doorbuster! But that's all the way across town!

MOTHER

Then we split up at Wal-Mart, you grab the TV, I get the blenders, then I'll meet you in line.

DAUGHTER

(pulls out her phone)

Let me check alternate routes to Target. We don't want to get stuck in traffic.

MOTHER

Good call. Okay, let's check our other flyers.

The two women get down to research, poring over flyers like they're looking at a newly found book of the Bible. A WAITRESS enters with two cups and a pot of coffee. Glasses hang from a chain around her neck, and she shuffles towards the table like a sleep-walking zombie. She puts the cups down and pours coffee, the women barely noticing her until both cups are filled.

DAUGHTER

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't want coffee. Could I get...?

The WAITRESS wanders off and exits. MOTHER bangs her index finger down on an ad.

MOTHER

I've got a reflector telescope, \$79.99. Keep it or lose it?

DAUGHTER gets back to business, going over flyers.

DAUGHTER

Keep it. I've got a quesadilla maker, \$9.99.

MOTHER

Definitely keep.

(pages are turned)

10-foot kayak, 0% financing, buy two, get one free.

DAUGHTER

That's a maybe.

(pages are turned)

Metal detector, in-store only, \$79.99--

MOTHER

Oh my God, look at this! It's a camouflage recliner!

DAUGHTER

Let me see!

MOTHER turns the flyer towards her.

DAUGHTER

Regularly \$599, but only \$299 on Black Friday before six a.m. at Cabela's! Oh my God, do you think we can get there?

The WAITRESS returns and flips two menus on the table.

WAITRESS

You gals ready to order?

MOTHER and DAUGHTER pick up the menus.

MOTHER

We're going to need a minute.

The WAITRESS slumps into one of the chairs as MOTHER and DAUGHTER look at the menus. With her chin resting on her hand, the WAITRESS is instantly asleep.

DAUGHTER

Okay, I'll just have the Denver omelet with some hash browns and...oh my God, is she sleeping?

MOTHER

Miss? Ma'am? Hello?

MOTHER touches the WAITRESS's elbow and she jolts awake.

WAITRESS

There's no oysters in the goddamned stuffing!
 (she puts her glasses on to
 look at MOTHER)
 You're not Uncle Bob.

MOTHER

No.

WAITRESS

Every year it's the same thing with him. Seventeen people, none of them likes oyster stuffing, but he always asks for oyster stuffing. Well, he'll be dead soon...that'll solve that problem.

(noticing the flyers)

You ladies out for some Black Friday shopping?

MOTHER

It's our little mother-daughter tradition! We like to have some breakfast and map out our plan of attack before we hit the stores.

(showing the recliner ad)

Look at this! A camouflage recliner for only \$299!

WAITRESS

Where?

MOTHER

Here. This one.

WAITRESS

I don't see anything.

MOTHER

The picture that my finger is on.

The WAITRESS gets the sleep-deprived giggles.

MOTHER

What?

WAITRESS

That's my little joke. Get it? I can't see the camouflaged recliner because it's camouflaged! Oh God. You know, I see these guys in the grocery store sometimes, standing in the cereal aisle wearing their camo jackets and hats and whatnot. What are they thinking? They're blending in with the cornflakes and Cheerios? Anyway, how was breakfast?

DAUGHTER

We haven't actually ordered any food yet.

WAITRESS

Oh. Are you ready for your check? Just the coffees?

MOTHER

No, we did want to order food--

DAUGHTER

And I didn't want coffee!

WAITRESS

Thank God for that.

The WAITRESS pulls the cup of coffee towards her and starts loading it with cream and sugar. She glances at a flyer.

WAITRESS

Karaoke machine, \$49.99. That's a bargain.

MOTHER

You think so?

WAITRESS

Sure. Nothing says "I love you" on Christmas more than a pile of cheap crap built by suicidal Chinamen.

(looking at another flyer)

Jumper cables...\$2.99. How the hell can you make jumper cables for \$2.99? There's definitely something wrong there, although everybody needs jumper cables...well, except my Aunt Agnes. She doesn't drive. No jumper cables for her, which is too bad, because that's a helluva deal.

The WAITRESS can't contain a massive yawn.

MOTHER

You seem a little tired.

WAITRESS

Me? No. Nope. Not at all. Let's see, I was up yesterday, Thanksgiving morning at six to get the whole food thing going...you know, potatoes, stuffing, yams, turkey, the whole shot. Fed everybody, seventeen people, including goddamned Uncle Bob and his oyster fetish, then I was up until two in the morning cleaning and doing dishes. So, I got...forty-seven minutes of sleep before I had to get here for my Black Friday shift at four a.m. So, I am golden. Not just plain golden, I am honey pie golden.

(sips her coffee and laughs at a memory, then stands up)

Hey, you know what I used do when I was a kid? You gals will enjoy this. We had three dogs, and they're dogs, right? So, most of the time, they're sleeping or licking themselves.

(MORE)

WAITRESS (cont'd)

Well, I'm, I don't know, five...six years old, it's a cold day, rainy day, whatever, and I'm bored, so what I would do is, I would start running up and down the hall screaming at the top of my lungs...

(she demonstrates, running
back and forth screaming and
waving her hands in the air)

...and the dogs, we had three cairn terriers, they would go nuts. They would be running up and down the hall barking their fool heads off because pretty clearly, something incredible and exciting was happening. Only there wasn't anything incredible and exciting happening. Just a dopey, bored five-year-old running up and down the hall screaming.

*The WAITRESS sits back down and sips
her coffee.*

DAUGHTER

Good story.

WAITRESS

Yeah. I bring it up because...

(holds up some flyers)

...you see these flyers? These flyers are a dopey, screaming five-year-old. And all the early morning shoppers out there? They're the goofy terriers thinking something exciting is going on.

DAUGHTER

That's actually incredibly insulting.

WAITRESS

The truth is like that sometimes. I mean, why can't the stores open at ten? Same prices, same deals, same everything. Why don't they do that? Because they've got to get the terri--the shoppers all riled up for no good reason, that's why.

MOTHER

We are customers...you know that, right?

WAITRESS

What's your point?

MOTHER

That we kind of expect to be treated like customers.

WAITRESS

Oh, I get you! Sure. You want the whole, "the customer is always right" thing. Well, federal law clearly states that only kicks in after eight in the morning. You show up at four a.m., you get what you get.

DAUGHTER

That's not a federal law!

WAITRESS

It should be. And if those ass clowns in Washington ever did anything worthwhile, it would be.

(laughs to herself)

Ass clowns. That's fun to say. Have you ever said "ass clowns?" You should try it. It's fun.

MOTHER

I get the feeling you don't want us here.

WAITRESS

That's a good feeling. Run with that.

DAUGHTER

Seriously? The restaurant is open, we're your only customers, and you don't want us to be here?

WAITRESS

And why are you here?

MOTHER

Because it's Black Friday! Stores open incredibly early with incredible deals. People line up! They camp out! It's a tradition!

DAUGHTER

An American tradition!

WAITRESS

It's four o'clock in the goddamned morning! You know what the tradition is at that time? Sleeping! I should be sleeping! You should be sleeping! Everybody should be sleeping. You want to know where my boss is right now? Sleeping! And the bosses of Target and Wal-Mart, where are they? They're sleeping! They're sleeping because it's four o'clock in the goddamned morning!

(she sips the coffee and flips
open one of the menus)

So, do you think it's called a Denver omelet because it was invented in Denver, or was it named for Bob Denver? Remember that actor guy? *Gilligan's Island*? Maybe he was like some kind of omelet guru or something, like that was his hidden talent only people didn't know it because it was hidden. Did you know that Ho Chi Minh was a kick-ass pastry chef? True story.

DAUGHTER

(to MOTHER)

Who's Ho Chi Minh?

MOTHER

I'll explain later, honey.

WAITRESS

You know what it's like?

(holding up some flyers)

All this? It's like we're human anacondas.

MOTHER

I'm sorry?

WAITRESS

Anacondas. You know, those big-ass snakes in South America? That's us on Black Friday. Just unhinging our jaws and wallets and stuffing ourselves with anything and everything. Karaoke machines, camouflage recliners, capybaras...and why are we shoveling all that crap down our throats? So some asshole CEO can build another basketball court on his yacht.

(sips her coffee)

You know who should have yachts? Plumbers. They should have yachts because they actually do something worthwhile. Them and kindergarten teachers.

DAUGHTER

I'm a kindergarten teacher!

WAITRESS

Are you really? Well, God bless you. Thank you for your service to this country.

(to MOTHER)

You're not a plumber, are you?

MOTHER

No. I'm an editor for a publishing company.

WAITRESS

Well, God bless you too...keeping those words spelled right and everything. I mean, don't get me wrong. I love you gals. I do. You seem incredibly nice and sweet. I just wish you were here five hours from now.

MOTHER

Well, maybe we should do that, just stop by later.

WAITRESS

No, no, no! I am up and you are here. Two Bob Denver omelets, right? Now, what kind of meat? I say sausage. You know why? Because I watch TV sometimes and you see the most sad, horrible, disgusting things, but then, just when I think I can't take it anymore, I remember that we're the species that invented sausage. Were you ladies aware of that?

MOTHER

That would have been my guess.

DAUGHTER

Mine too.

The WAITRESS moves her head quickly, as if avoiding a projectile.

WAITRESS

Who's throwing footballs in here? Goddammit...I'm sorry ladies, what was your order? Did you say sausages?

MOTHER

We're going to need a second.

WAITRESS

Take your time.

MOTHER hands her confused DAUGHTER some flyers as the WAITRESS begins to droop. MOTHER starts swinging both hands as if she's conducting an orchestra, then looks down at the flyers and sings to the tune of "Rock-A-Bye Baby."

MOTHER

(singing)

Tablets and smart phones for \$299...

DAUGHTER

(singing)

New Christmas sweaters will make you feel fine...

MOTHER

(singing)

Offers are good as long as supplies last...

DAUGHTER

(singing)

So jump in your car and get down here real fast.

The WAITRESS is asleep. MOTHER raises her finger to her lips and DAUGHTER nods in comprehension. They get up from the table and tiptoe towards the exit. MOTHER turns the "Yes, We're Open!" sign around so that it reads, "Sorry, We're Closed." They both smile, bump fists, and exit as lights fade.

END OF PLAY.