

UNCOMMON GROUNDS
(The Short Version)

written by

Mitch Bechtold

Los Angeles, CA
MitchBech@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. UNCOMMON GROUND COFFEE - DAY

An exposed brick cafe, fans spin lazily above. A low murmur fills the room as patrons chat amongst themselves. TING - The cafe door swings open and-

POV BEHIND THE COUNTER: A young woman 30's, enters. Her dark curls hang just above the collar of her blue blazer with its sleeves tastefully rolled up. While still approaching the counter, she orders-

BLACK COFFEE

Medium coffee, black, no room please.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS

You're a minimalist. You just need enough coffee to get you through the day. You can't function without it, but you don't require all the bells and whistles.

A paper coffee cup is placed beneath a dispenser.

BEEP - The machine hums softly, spits out steaming coffee, a lid is popped on top.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

You're polite and professional. Your work excites you, your friends sustain you, and life seems to be right on track.

Digging through her pocket, Black Coffee hands the barista three dollars.

BLACK COFFEE

Thanks.

The woman takes her coffee and walks right back out the door.
- TING

GABBY'S THOUGHTS

You can tell a lot about someone based on what they drink.

Taking in the room we land on ESPRESSO, an older gentleman reading a book by the window. He looks content, relaxed, and without looking he grabs a small cup of espresso perched on the table beside him.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

You, Señor Espresso, actually enjoy the taste of coffee, and similarly in life you enjoy those few things that you've narrowed down as *favorites*, you keep them close. You know what you want, you're friendly but selective, and you don't keep anyone in your circle that will waste your time or energy...
Whereas you-

Shifting her gaze, we see, TRIPLE ESPRESSO, seated just behind the gentleman.

A young hipster CLICKS rapidly on his laptop. His phone, on the table beside him, flashes constantly with notifications. He is the opposite of relaxed.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

-already on your third cup, you're afraid to miss out on the world. The only way you sleep is when you succumb to the overwhelming and inevitable crash of stress, excitement, and of course...caffeine.

TING - The door swings open and in walks tall, dark, and unassuming. He pauses upon entering, takes in the room, and once satisfied, approaches the counter with a half cocked grin. This is JOE AMERICANO, late 20's.

JOE AMERICANO

Perhaps you can help me?

FINALLY, we see standing behind the counter- GABBY MAZAGRAN, 30's, sun-kissed skin, your modern Portland pixie. She wears a sundress on top of her black t-shirt, and her dark, voluminous, locks float gently atop the shaved sides of her head.

Her name-tag reads: Gabby.

GABBY

P...p-erhaps? It D...d-depends on what you need.

She shies away, embarrassed *HE* witnessed her stutter. He gestures towards the door.

JOE AMERICANO

I didn't see hours posted outside.
What time do you close tonight?

GABBY'S THOUGHTS

You're calm, smart, and not in a rush. You don't need caffeine, but you enjoy it. My guess... maybe an Americano.

Gabby playfully points to a sign on the counter that reads: "WE CLOSE WHEN WE NEED A BREAK FROM YOU". Joe, almost shy, smiles back at her.

JOE AMERICANO

Hopefully I don't wear you down too quickly.

GABBY

That remains to be seen.

JOE AMERICANO

In that case, I'd like an iced americano.

Gabby nods and starts making the drink. Joe waits patiently.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS

It's cool outside and yet you still order over ice. You don't just enjoy caffeine, it's the equivalent of a day at the park for you, and you plan on spending the whole afternoon just sipping this one drink while you take in the atmosphere of the shop, it's patrons-

She glances at him, he smiles back politely.

GABBY'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

-oh... me? Alright Mr. Iced Americano, what else do you take in?

Gabby places the mason jar, filled to the brim, down beside him.

GABBY

Just p...p-ay before you leave.

JOE AMERICANO

Or until you run me out?

GABBY

Now why do I feel like that w...w-on't happen?

Joe sips from his drink before walking towards an empty table. He glances back as Gabby tends to a MOM and her young daughter.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Ok Gabby. I can wait for you.

JOE'S TABLE - EVENING

The sun has set, the cafe has cleared out, and Joe sits quietly reading *Dangerous Liaison*. His iced americano sits in a small pool of condensation, unfinished.

As Gabby approaches, he sets down his book.

JOE AMERICANO
Seems like you're running me out after all.

GABBY
Unless you're going to b...b-uy something else, I'm all out of customers.

Joe finishes the last of his drink and stands.

JOE AMERICANO
In that case, let me settle up, and then... maybe I could get you dinner?

GABBY'S THOUGHTS
That's a bit forward, don't you think? I don't even know your name.

JOE AMERICANO
I'm Joe by the way.

He smiles. She pauses, taking him in.

GABBY
Ok Joe, I'm Gabby. I need to carry some b...b-boxes upstairs and then I'll be ready to go.

JOE AMERICANO
If you need... I could help?

He steps towards her. His vibe is non-threatening, but it's definitely weird.

GABBY
You're not some sort of serial
killer are you?

He holds up his hands innocently.

JOE AMERICANO
Last I checked... No.

GABBY
Alright then, they're over here.

She gestures towards the back wall. He follows her-

INT. UPSTAIRS LOFT - LATER

A door swings open and Gabby emerges juggles her boxes and the keys, Joe appears behind her. As Gabby sets her boxes down, Joe takes in the room the room realizing:

JOE AMERICANO
Do you live here?

GABBY
I do indeed.

She sets her boxes down against the wall and he does the same.

GABBY (CONT'D)
Just hang out for a second w...w-
while I change.

Joe nods as she disappears into the next room.

JOE'S THOUGHTS
You can't just let strangers into
your home Gabby... but we can have
that talk later. For now, let's
figure out who you are.

He studies her apartment, it's cute.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)
You're clean, as a person, but also
as a host. You live alone, given
the size of this place and the
neighborhood you live in, there's
no way you could afford this on a
barista's salary. I have to assume
you're close with your parents.

He moves to a record player.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

You've really embraced the Portland image, but judging by how tidy you are, you're not really committed to the lifestyle. *The Virgin Suicides*. Sounds punk, but we both know it's actually relaxing. It's nice, that we already have something in common.

He notices a watch nearby.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

A man's watch? Now Gabby, I don't want to have to fight anybody for you. I really can't get into anything complicated right now...

He turns it over and notices the inside is still wet with blood.

JOE'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Well this definitely can't be good...

JOE AMERICANO

Hey, on second thought, maybe we should take a raincheck. I just remembered I need to-

He spins towards the door to find Gabby swinging a rolling pin at his head.

CRACK - it connects with his temple and Joe goes down hard.

His eyes filled with tears and his vision blurry, he tries to focus. Gabby steps over him wearing only a white plastic apron.

GABBY

But I already all got dolled up for you-

Her voice is clear, playful, devoid of a stutter.

GABBY (CONT'D)

-and we have so many fun activities planned together.

CUT TO BLACK.