

A FABLE

Characters:

Asap. Male. Mid twenties, average looking, thin, wan. Slight stammer.

Lol. Female. Also mid twenties. Wild hair dyed blue or green. Lots of energy.

Generic coffee house. All we need to see is a small table or booth for two. As the lights come up, **Asap** is sitting at the table. **Lol** comes rushing in and plops herself down in the other chair.

Lol: Hey – I'm Lol. Are you waiting for me?

Asap: Oh, oh yes. Nice to meet you. (Pause) I was just going to get myself something to drink. What can I get you?

Lol: Thanks. A mocha latte venti or whatever they call the big ones here. And a banana muffin. (She reaches into her pocket for her wallet.)

Asap: No. This is on me. (He goes to the counter and returns with the orders.)

Lol: So, Asap, you're the famous writer of fables. I'm honored to meet you.

Asap: Uh, no. I'm afraid that's my brother Aesop. I'm Asap (pronounced long a and "sap")

Lol: Oh, I'm so sorry,

Asap: It's OK. Everyone makes that mistake. We're identical twins but he's the smarter and better looking one.

Lol: How can he be better looking if you're identical?

Asap: (Shrugs) I don't know. My folks just always say that so I guess they're right.
(Pause) He's the popular one too.

Lol: Doesn't make any sense to me.

Asap: (Changing the subject) You look even better than your photo on the, uh, dating site.

Lol: Thanks. You look exactly like your picture.

Asap: (Looking embarrassed) Actually, the guy in the picture is my brother. Aesop photographs better than I do. I'm really really sorry for the deception.

Lol: Oh please! Like I could tell....

Asap: (Changing the subject again). Lol's an unusual name. Is that short for something?

Lol: Yeah. My parents dubbed me Lola, after my great grand, but it sounds like a French streetwalker. And I giggle a lot, so Lol seemed a good fit. (Proves this by giggling, ending in a loud snort) You're Greek, huh?

Asap: Yeah. Both sides.

Lol: Do you speak Greek?

Asap: Sure. Souvlaki, moussaka, baklava, feta....

Lol: Gee, I guess that means I speak Greek too.

Asap: (Long pause. Searching for a topic) What do you do? I mean, for a job.

Lol: (Rolling her eyes) I work part time at everyone's least favorite place, the DMV. It should stand for "Department of Mean Vipers." I check IDs to make sure they're eligible for a license. Just about everyone comes in angry and leaves angrier. Lucky I have a sunny disposition. (Pause) And also I meet guys at coffee houses. They always insist on paying, and a banana muffin goes a long way.

Asap: You can't live on banana muffins.

Lol: Sometimes we meet at a deli. Matzoh ball soup is very filling and a Reuben can keep me going for days. (Takes a small bite out of the muffin.)

Asap: I'm surprised you work for a government bureaucracy ... uh, sorry, government agency. You don't seem like the, uh, rule-following type.

Lol: I'm not. I'm, shall we say, a bit creative in my job.

Asap: How can anyone be creative at the DMV?

Lol: You're not a government agent, are you?

Asap: Me? I don't even vote.

Lol: Well, being creative is actually pretty easy. To get a driver's license you need all sorts of proof of identity, residency, date of birth, yada yada yada. Sometimes people don't have the right papers so I help them. (Pause) Like a couple weeks ago this guy came in. He just got out of prison and he needed a non-driver's license to rent this apartment he saw. I guess his parents were illiterate and they misspelled his name on his birth certificate: they spelled Arnold with two "r"s. After teachers kept correcting him,

the guy started spelling it the usual way. But when he showed up at the DMV, that prick Fred refused to accept his stuff because the spellings were different on his birth certificate and his prison release papers. The poor guy had no idea what to do.

Asap: That's tough.

Lol: Anyway, the other guys at the shelter told him to try again and he lucked out by getting me the second time around. (Preens and laughs) The internet and a laser printer are great things. I can do birth certificates from nine states and I can do baptismal certificates for (all in one breath) Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians and even Eastern Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventists.

Asap: Wow! But, I mean, isn't that illegal?

Lol: What's your point? (Pause) Anyway, this guy didn't come from a state I had and he seemed attached to his birthplace, so I christened him a Methodist on the spot, gave him a baptismal certificate, and he got his license. You gotta be inside to cut the red tape. (Loud giggle) (Pause) So how do you survive?

Asap: I do animal testing.

Lol: (Looking very alarmed and starting to rise) I'm not usually judgmental, but if you blind bunnies with mascara, I'm out of here.

Asap: (Looking equally alarmed) Oh, oh no! I don't do laboratory stuff or anything like that. I, um, observe animal behavior. (Sigh) I work for my brother Aesop.

Lol: Doing what?

Asap: I'm the researcher. I'm the one who has to find out if a mouse is brave enough to bell a cat or if a crow can figure out how to drink out of a pitcher.

Lol: Sounds like fun.

Asap: Not hardly. I was the one who had to pacify the fox that was angry because he couldn't reach the lousy grapes. Guess who played the beekeeper who got stung by all the bees because they mistakenly thought he trashed their hive? Don't bite the hand that feeds you? I was on antihistamines for a month. (Deep breath) And two travelers and the bear! I had to find a bear and then figure out if he'd eat a prone man. I was lying on the ground wondering what the moral of *that* story was gonna be.

Lol: Jeez Louise.

Asap: And Aesop is really impatient: "Asap, where's the research results?" "Asap, hurry up." "Asap, now!" It gets so bad that all he has to do is yell "Asap!" and I jump.

Lol: That's horrible! Why don't you quit?

Asap: I thought about it but, uh, my job skills aren't exactly transferable. Seen any ads lately looking for guys with experience dangling grapes before foxes? Introducing mice to lions? (Smiling slyly) But sometimes I do get my revenge. It's just against my brother, not the government though.

Lol: Tell!

Asap: Well, you know how proud he is of "The Tortoise and the Hare"? That's his most famous fable, and boy does he love the glory.

Lol: You fixed the race?

Asap: Not exactly. But I thought a tortoise and a turtle were the same thing, so I got a turtle 'cause they're much easier to lift. I did have a nice fat white hare, but he hopped off when I turned away for a minute. I knew Aesop would be yelling "Asap" real soon, so I got a baby bunny from a pet shop and set the two of them to competing. So...the fable my esteemed brother is so proud of should really be called "The Turtle and the Rabbit." (Lowers his voice) And by the way, that tiny bunny could barely hop. He never had a chance.

Lol: (Giving him a high five and giggling loudly) Way to go Asap! I knew I saw something cool when I looked at your picture on eHarmony.

Asap: (Shrugging his shoulders) Too bad the picture was my brother.

Lol: Oh come on. You're a closet subversive, just like me. You could even work at the DMV.

Asap: Really? You think?

Lol: I *know*. Hell, the government needs people like you. (Rises and starts to pull Asap up) C'mon. Think what we could do if we put our heads together! Baptized rabbits. Foxes with driver's licenses. Polar bears with Florida birth certificates....

Asap: Cool. But where are we going? (Sigh) Aesop wants me to see if a camel can dance with a monkey. Do you have any idea how hard it is to find a camel in this neighborhood? The guy at PetSmart thought I was nuts.

Lol: Let Aesop find his own damned dromedary. We have work to do. And I know a pastrami on rye that's got your name on it. (Giggle) Maybe I'll even pay.

(The two exit arm in arm as the lights go down.)

The end