

THE JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER

A ten minute play

Characters

SUSPICIOUS PERSON, 18 – 30, a man of color
AUTHORITY FIGURE, plays all other roles

Time

This afternoon

Place

In front of the Cinnabon at the Joyce Kilmer Service Center on the New Jersey Turnpike,
Brunswick, New Jersey

Synopsis: A Suspicious Person attracts the attention of an Employee of the Cinnabon, a Security Office and a Police Officer. He wants to change the name of the Joyce Kilmer Service Center so that it honors a figure he deems more worthy. Responses to his request escalate, resulting in an act of violence.

Style Note: The Suspicious Person has a mild speech impediment when speaking in prose which involves the insertion of a hard “g” sound into some multisyllable words.

Rich Espey

410-812-4181

richespey@gmail.com

www.richespey.com

The Joyce Kilmer Service Center

Characters

SUSPICIOUS PERSON, 18 – 30, a man of color
AUTHORITY FIGURE, plays all other roles

*Sound of highway traffic, truck brakes, etc.
 Lights up on a SUSPICIOUS PERSON, a male of color, 18 – 30. He is dressed casually, carries an iPod-type device and is wearing earbuds. He carries an electronic tablet as well. He paces and is muttering to himself.*

The AUTHORITY FIGURE is there. S/he can be of any race or age, but is probably lighter-skinned than the SUSPICIOUS PERSON. At first, the AUTHORITY FIGURE assumes the role of EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

At first I saw him bothering people in the Food Court. I was praying that he would go away. Or go to Sbarro. But then he got in my line.

Welcome to Cinnabon at the New Jersey Turnpike’s Joyce Kilmer Service Center may I take your order.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

(speaking clearly now) “In a wood they call Rouge Bouquet
 There is a new-made grave today,
 Built by never a spade nor pick
 Yet covered with earth ten metres thick.
 There lie many fighting men,
 Dead in their youthful prime,
 Never to laugh or love again
 Nor taste the Summertime.”
 For Death came flying through the air
 And stopped his flight at the dugout stair.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Welcome to Cinnabon at the New Jersey Turnpike’s Joyce Kilmer Service Center may I take your order.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

I’d like a regegular Cinnabon.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Did you say a regular?

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Yes. A regeular.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Not a problem. Anything else?

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Yeah. What did you think of that poem?

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Not a problem. Two fifty-six please.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Here's two fuhgifty six.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Not a problem.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Let me ask you a quegestion. Do you know who Joyce Kilmer was?

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Do you want a super combo with coffee and a cookie for an extra seventy-four cents.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Joyce Kilmer wrote that poem.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Thank you for choosing Cinnabon.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Joyce Kilmer is most famous for "Trees". "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree."

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Your order will be up shortly may I help the next customer.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

What do you think of Joyce Kilmer?

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

May I help the next customer.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

I invite you to read some of Joyce Kilmer's other works. And then ask yourself. "Is this poet worthy of a Service Cegenter on the New Jegersey Tuhgernpike."

*SUSPICIOUS PERSON hands tablet to
EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON, who refuses to
look at it.*

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Oh look here is your Cinnabon have a nice day and have safe travels as you leave the Joyce Kilmer Service -

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

"Poems are made by fools like me but only God can make a tree." I ask you – should that kind of crap writing be honored with a Service Cegenter?

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

Forks and napkins are located in the Food Court.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

I think not. So I ask you to sign my puhgetition demanding that this Service Cegenter be renamed. You've got no other customers right now. Read this poem and then tell me if you want to sign my puhgetition.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

I am sorry if your experience at Cinnabon was not what you wished for here are two Cinnabucks you may use at any other Cinnabon in the Continental United –

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Just read the damn poem!

EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON

And that's when I called the Security Officer.

*The EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON transforms
into the JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER
SECURITY OFFICER as the SUSPICIOUS
PERSON recites.*

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

“For Death came flying through the air
 And stopped his flight at the dugout stair,
 Touched his prey and left them there,
 Clay to clay.
 He hid their bodies stealthily
 In the soil of the land they fought to free
 And fled away.”

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Sir is there a problem here at the Joyce Kilmer Service Center?

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Yeah, Joyce Kilmer was an overly sentimental copycat clown who doesn't deserve a Cinnabon much less a whole Service Cegenter on the New Jegersey Tuhgurnpike.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Remove the earbuds.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON does not remove the earbuds.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

I know Joyce Kilmer was a war hero, vuhgolunteered for hazardous duty, fuhgather of five.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

I said “Remove the earbuds.”

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

But come on, man. ABAB rhyme scheme almost excludusively, simplistic sentimental verses about stars and his wife and Jegesus.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Where are you heading today sir?

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Nineteenth cegentury style in the twentieth. No originality.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Is your vehicle in the parking lot sir?

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Rutgers. Columbia. Maxed out White Privilege.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Let me see some identification.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Homophobic to boot.

“You little poets mincing there
 With women’s hearts and women’s hair
 How sick Dan Chaucer’s ghost must be
 To hear you lisp of “Poesie”!
 Oh, cease to write, for very shame
 Ere all men spit upon our name!
 Take up your needles, drop your pen
 And leave the poet’s craft to men!”

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

I’m going to have to ask you to leave the Joyce Kilmer -

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

So I ask you – sign my puhgetition to rename this Service Cegenter –

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

Last warning! You need to leave the premises –

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Damn! You probably like all that sentimental shit. Or maybe you don’t even know who Joyce Kilmer was! Who was Joyce Kilmer? WHO WAS JOYCE KILMER?

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

She was a -

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

She? SHE?? Joyce Kilmer was a man, yo! You ain’t heard a fuckin’ word I said!!

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER grabs SUSPICIOUS PERSON and puts him in a choke hold and rips out his earbuds.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER

That’s when I called for the police officer.

JOYCE KILMER SERVICE CENTER SECURITY OFFICER transforms into the MIDDLESEX COUNTY POLICE OFFICER as the SUSPICIOUS PERSON recites. As he does so, he returns his iPod-type device to his pocket; it is now hidden.

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

“He hid their bodies stealthily
 In the soil of the land they fought to free
 And fled away.
 Now over the grave abrupt and clear
 Three volleys ring”–

*The MIDDLESEX COUNTY POLICE OFFICER
 stands with a gun drawn. SUSPICIOUS PERSON
 holds out the petition.*

SUSPICIOUS PERSON

People of color need a representer
 Just need one non-white Service Center
 Don't get me wrong; almost everyone's
 Earned their right to a Cinnabon.
 Alexander Hamilton? Secretary of the Treasury.
 Vince Lombardi? Football's our national pleasured.
 Richard Stockton? Declaration of Independence signer.
 Molly Pitcher? To a soldier water never tasted finer.
 Woodrow Wilson? To honor his presidency,
 And no brighter light than Thomas Edison, see?
 Clara Barton? Thanks for the Red Cross, sister.
 Walt Whitman – Now there's an original spitter.
 But Joyce Kilmer?
 I think that I shall never see
 A poet as bland and dull as he.
 Poems were made by fools like he
 To replace him is my nominee:
 Paul Robeson – performing and peace-making Hall of Fame
 Or Count Basie – “One O'clock Jump” puts “Trees” to shame
 Larry Doby – second black man in major league ball
 Whitney Houston – New Jersey's greatest love of all
 You don't like those? How 'bout instead
 Queen Latifah, but she ain't dead

But Joyce Kilmer?

“Dame Helen caused a grievous fray,
 For love of her brave men did fight,
 The eyes of her made sages fey
 And put their hearts in woeful plight.
 To her no rhymes will I indite,
 For her no garlands will I twine,
 Though she be made of flowers and light
 No lady is so fair as mine.”

Ready to sign?

Don't believe me, take a listen

The SUSPICIOUS PERSON reaches into his pocket. The MIDDLESEX COUNTY POLICE OFFICER shoots three times. The SUSPICIOUS PERSON falls.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY POLICE OFFICER

Suspect acted in a way that was deemed threatening.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY POLICE OFFICER transforms into EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON as SUSPICIOUS PERSON lies there. EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON moves to the body opens SUSPICIOUS PERSON's hand. In it is the iPod, which the EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON removes and listens to. As EMPLOYEE OF THE CINNABON listens to the iPod, we also hear what it is playing:

The Poems of Joyce Kilmer

Rouge Bouquet

In a wood they call Rouge Bouquet
 There is a new-made grave today,
 Built by never a spade nor pick
 Yet covered with earth ten metres thick.
 There lie many fighting men,
 Dead in their youthful prime,
 Never to laugh or love again
 Nor taste the Summertime.
 For Death came flying through the air
 And stopped his flight at the dugout stair.
 Touched his prey and left them there,
 Clay to clay.
 He hid their bodies stealthily
 In the soil of the land they fought to free
 And fled away.
 Now over the grave abrupt and clear
 Three volleys ring;
 And perhaps their brave young spirits hear
 The bugle sing:

“Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!
Slumber well where the shell screamed and fell.
Let your rifles rest on the muddy floor;
You will not need them anymore.
Danger’s past
Now at last,
Go to sleep!”

END OF PLAY