

Bartender: Deconstructed

by
Chris Zell

czell@comcast.net

FADE IN:

INT. BAR - DAY

A dark, empty bar

SND FX Door opening

Shaft of light starts small, becomes larger before shrinking and disappearing.

SND FX Alarm

VALERIE walks in putting her keys away and walks to the alarm panel and punches in a code. The alarm goes off and she continues to head behind the bar. She turns on all of the lights, TV and does a little prep work before the first customer comes in. We hear the door open but no one comes in. Valerie looks up from her work and smiles.

VALERIE

Hey. What are you doing here? How'd you find me?

Valerie pauses and it is obvious that the audience is this customer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Oh.

(Uncomfortable pause)

She always was the one to go to for information

(Uncomfortable pause)

So, what can I get for you?

Valerie pauses and the first sign of her working persona is shown.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Okay, a Henderbeer it is.

Valerie pours the beer and places it on the bar. Valerie comes back and the working persona is now in full effect.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

So, what have you been up to?

Valerie's expression changes to one of embarrassment and exhaustion. She doesn't want to get into this conversation but she knows it inevitable.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Hey, come on, that was over three years ago. What can I say? I'm sorry I split like that and never called to explain but isn't it time to let it go?

(Pause)

It's just that Alex and I had been going together for so long, well, it was getting a little stale and I thought it was time for. . .I don't know. . .it was time for something. But when I put myself in the position to actually do something, I got cold feet.

(Pause)

Yes, we're still together.

(Pause)

Whoa, keep your enthusiasm down.

(Pause)

I can understand you being pissed but, come on, look how long it's been? And let's be honest, nothing happened anyway.

(Pause)

All right, almost nothing happened but you can't read all kinds of shit into it. Alex and I had a fight the night before and I used you to play get back. I'm sorry. Okay? I feel like more of a shit now than when I ran out.

(Pause)

I really am sorry, you know. I'm just whacked in the head. You know? And the worst part is everyone thinks I have it all together. And I do for the

(Pause)

well, sure, except when you're half naked. But seriously, think about it, I'm always the shoulder. If it's not customers it's Alex if it's not Alex it's friends. I'm the one who solves problems and picks up the pieces. My life's like a country western song and I hate country western music.

(Pause)

Can I get you another?

(Pause)

Come on, it's on me.

Valerie begins pouring.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
It's the least I can do. Another of
the same?

Valerie's expression changes to surprise for a brief moment
and then back to the facade.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Well, no, we don't have that exact
selection here. I can make you a
screaming orgasm but to actually
give you one. . .well, I'm on duty
now And besides, we don't want to
scare the roaches, do we?
(Valerie pauses and
laughs)
So, that's your insidious plan, is
it? It's the exterminator. One
flash of genitals and roaches go
running. But ha, I cannot be
tempted by your mere mortal
advances. Because I have at my
disposal, twenty-four hours a day,
the super strength, never fail
vibra-gasm. It's the super soaker
of vibrators, you know. So ha. Try
to top that you. . .you, human.

RON walks in carrying a computer.

Valerie looks up at him and nods hello. He walks to the far
end of the bar and opens his computer and begins working.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Well, let the festivities begin.
(Pause)
All kidding aside, you are going to
hang out a while, aren't you? I
mean, we probably won't be able to
talk too much but maybe we can
catch up a little. So, you're going
to stay, right?
(Valerie pauses and
smiles)
Great.

Valerie walks towards Ron while reaching into a beer chest.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
The usual, Ron?

He looks up, smiles and nods as Valerie proffers the beer. She turns her attention back to the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Ron comes in here every day at this time. He's working on a novel and he says his roommates start getting up at this time and begin their band practice.

Valerie reaches Ron and address him before going back to the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I've read some of his stuff, it's not too bad really.

Valerie walks back to the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You wouldn't believe some of the crap I hear in this job. There was this one guy who said he could sing. Oh my. I said that was good, you know, who am I to screw up someones fantasy? But, I guess I wasn't convincing enough because he jumped up and banged out a tune.

(Pause)

And when I use the words out and tune in the same sentence, I'm not joking. The worst part is he asked me for my opinion. Now I may not understand the intricacies of pitch control and the nuances of phrasing but I sure as hell know when my ears start bleeding. But I didn't want to bust his bubble so I said his voice was like an unearthly mingling of the unique vocal stylings of Bob Dylan and Yoko Ono.

(Pause)

Now most people would probably consider that a veiled insult, don't you think?

Valerie turns to Ron and he nods.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Me too, but not this guy. Valerie turns her attention back to the audience. Now he comes in every day to serenade me. It's bad enough to have to smile and listen but it really bites when he sings his own songs. I didn't know there was a rhyme for orange until this guy.

Valerie turns and begins to walk towards Ron.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You know this guy. He's the one who always wears the pork pie hat. . .

Ron nods in recognition.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

. . .and, when he's not singing his own compositions, sings the songs of Diamanda Galas.

(Pause)

Or at least I think it was her. It's tough to tell. So, how's it going?

RON

A crisis of faith, I guess you'd say.

VALERIE

Didn't you have one of those last week?

ROGER enters and sits at the video game as Ron laughs.

RON

No, it's the same one.

Valerie and Ron laugh and she goes back to her other customer and he begins to type in earnest. She address the audience again as she pours a beer and then gets a roll of quarters out of the register.

VALERIE

I once asked him why he came here to write. I mean, I can't even concentrate on a movie in this place. I couldn't even imagine writing. But he said he likes the distractions. And, besides, he said the librarians get pissed when you pop open a frosty.

Valerie walks and gives Roger the beer and roll of quarters and then walks back to the tap.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

So, Roger, how's it going today?

ROGER

Yeah.

He bangs the roll open and starts popping them into the video game with one hand and chugging the beer with the other. Valerie is already pouring the second one as she talks to the audience.

VALERIE

And Alex calls me predictable. I could set my watch by this guy. He comes in at the exact time, puts away two quick beers, nurses a third and attacks the video game as like some spastic typist.

Valerie watches the Roger play.

CHUCK walks in and gets a prime seat near the back right TV. Chuck is 40-44 years old with either blonde or black hair.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

One day I had a friend of mine come in with a ton of quarters and hog up the machine. Sure it was mean, but, it was fun to watch Roger circle around in a apoplectic frenzy.

Valerie pauses as the Roger continues to play.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Hey, he deserves it. In the three years I've been here he's never tipped me. Jerk.

(Pause)

That's the kind of petty attitude that helps you blow off steam on this job.

(Pause)

I don't know if it's all that healthy but it gets you through the day.

Valerie finishes what she's doing and walks over to Chuck.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

And how are you doing today, Chuck?

CHUCK

I'd be better if my pecker was as big as my brain.

VALERIE

They make things that small?

Chuck laughs as Valerie goes to get a beer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

The usual?

CHUCK

You kill me, Valerie. Yeah, the usual. And speaking of usual. . .

Valerie comes back with the beer.

VALERIE

. . .oh come on, not today.

CHUCK

Oh yes, today.

VALERIE

Don't you ever get tired of it?

Chuck feigns indignation.

CHUCK

How can you say that? Tired of my moment of fame. Please. Some people live their entire life without even a modicum of fame. Of course I'm going to revel in it. To the tape, my lady.

VALERIE

Okay, okay, you win. I'll get the tape.

Valerie walks over and retrieves a video tape and speaks to the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Just so you know, he comes in and we recite the same lines, to the exact inflection, every single day. At first it was kind of cute, but now. . .

Valerie puts the tape in the VCR and pushes play only on the back right TV.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

. . .it's getting a little old. So it fits perfectly with my life.

The beginning of the movie 'Slap Shot' begins to play.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Kind of like waking up to this job every day.

Valerie smiles at Chuck as the tape begins.

BOB walks in and heads right over to Valerie.

BOB

Okay, Valerie, I'm going to ask you one last time. . .

Bob looks at the empty chair where the audience sits and addresses it.

BOB (CONT'D)

. . .excuse me I'll only be a minute.

Bob looks back at Valerie.

BOB (CONT'D)
So, like I was saying yesterday, if
you don't say yes today, I'm going
to kill myself.

Bob pauses while Valerie smiles a little exasperated.

BOB (CONT'D)
Will you marry me?

Valerie smiles and laughs.

VALERIE
I've told you before, Bob, your
wife would kill me if I married
you.

BOB
All right, that's it.

Bob begins to walk towards the men's room.

BOB (CONT'D)
If you won't marry me at least get
the condemned man a beer.

Valerie laughs, gets him his beer and addresses the audience.

VALERIE
This guy? He's a riot. He's come in
here every day for, well, it has to
be two years now, and asks me to
marry him. He even does it when his
wife's with him. One time she took
off her ring and gave it to me.

Valerie walks over to Roger.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Can I get you another?

Roger nods yes while draining his beer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
She's funny. He's nice too. But it
comes back to what I was saying
about the sameness of my life. It's
all so much. . .

SND FX A gun shot rings out from the bathroom
Everyone startles.

Ron rushes towards the bathroom as Valerie picks up the phone and begins to dial.

Chuck and Roger stop what they're doing but remain in their respective positions.

Just before he gets to the bathroom Bob stumbles out holding his ears with the gun still in one hand.

BOB
Holy shit. Holy shit.

Ron takes the gun and puts it behind the bar as he looks Bob over. Not a mark. Well, externally.

Valerie puts down the phone and heads towards him. Chuck and Roger go back to their own worlds.

VALERIE
What the hell did you do?

BOB
What? Holy shit. I want to tell you that if you ever think of doing a joke that includes a starters pistol and a tiled room think again.

VALERIE
You shot off a starters pistol in the men's room?

BOB
What? No, I shot off a starters pistol in the men's room.

VALERIE
Why did you do that?

BOB
What? Holy shit. I can't hear a damn thing. What did you say?

VALERIE
Bob, are you the dumbest person in this room or what?

Valerie looks around.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
And, that's going some looking at this crowd.

BOB
Of course it was loud.

VALERIE
Do you want to go to the hospital?

BOB
What? No, I don't need a towel. I
didn't piss myself.

Bob tries to stealthily check out his pants.

BOB (CONT'D)
Did I?

VALERIE
Just sit down Bob.

Valerie address the audience while pouring Bob a beer.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
I wouldn't worry much, he's got a
ringing in his head so it'll soon
die of loneliness.

Bob stands there bewildered for a moment. He looks up at
Valerie.

BOB
It sounds like that emergency
broadcast signal in my head.

VALERIE
Why don't you sit down and have a
beer.

BOB
What? You want to split a beer? No
way. Get out of my way, I deserve a
whole beer.

Valerie looks at the ringing head of Bob while he sits down.

VALERIE
The things people do for love.

Valerie wipes down the bar and then wants to amend that line.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Wait. Let me amend that. The stupid things people do for love.

(Pause)

I've been doing this since I was eighteen. It's funny how you originally envision working in this industry. At first you think it's going to be a world 'o fun. And for the first few years it pretty much is. That is until you wake up one morning and squint to see what's in bed with you and you realize just fucked your liver.

Valerie pauses to get a real tough stain.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But, yeah, the fantasy of fun fades soon after you realize how much whining and wiping is involved. It's amazing actually. There isn't a gripe I haven't heard and I've wiped up more slobber than at a baby's first birthday. Between you and me I'm much less frightened of a year olds slobber.

WAYNE enters in a flurry and begins performing right away.

WAYNE

I've gathered you all here today because I know one of you knows where it is.

Wayne starts looking under chairs, over the bar, in people's jackets, everywhere. Valerie watches him as she places four shots down the length of the bar.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Come on, you know you can't hide the truth from me.

Wayne grabs Roger.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I can look into your soul and read the truth that is etched inside.

Wayne stares at a annoyed/frightened Roger. Wayne stares into Roger's soul for a moment before releasing him with a flourish. Then grabs a shot and downs it.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

This man's soul is ravaged by the insidious grip of technology. His soul is evaporating as we speak.

Wayne leans in to Roger.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

And you should really get your upper bowels cleansed.

Wayne turns to Valerie.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Whoa, blocked like a bill through congress.

Wayne looks around the bar and sees Chuck enraptured by the movie and rushes over. He stares at Chuck but Chuck never takes his eyes off the TV.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Ah ha, maybe it is you, the silent, all knowing one. Maybe you are the owner of the information that leads to the discovery of my beloved lost item.

Chuck is perturbed by Wayne but, being the same old Wayne, is tolerated by all.

VALERIE

Wayne, what exactly are you looking for? Maybe it's in lost and found.

Wayne slowly pulls his gaze from Chuck and begins to stare down Valerie while picking up his second shot.

WAYNE

Hmmmmmm, as the immoral Willie the Shakes once said. . .

(Pause)

'Moe, Larry, the cheese.'

Wayne gets a confused expression on his face.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

No, no, no. That wasn't what he said. Big Willie said,

Wayne pauses and then begins singing to the tune 'Feelings.'.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Felix, no one else but Felix.

Wayne is, once again, exasperated with himself.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
No, that was the Oscar Madison.

Wayne pauses and comes back with an investigative reporters voice.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
The Odd Couple.

Wayne pauses dramatically.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Were they? We'll find out right
after this word from Proctologist
and Ramble.

Wayne pauses, grabs a coaster from the bar and goes into advertisement voice.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
When you're alone in the shower you
want to do more than just get
clean. You want to get lustfully
clean. Lust sends it's soothing
tingles to the outer reaches of
your most personal desires. So,
next time your all lathered up, get
really lathered up.

Wayne holds the soap up and smiles.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Lust for when you want to do more
in the shower than just get clean.

Wayne tosses the coaster on the bar and returns his attention to Chuck.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
So, what's up Chuck?

Wayne cracks himself up.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Up Chuck. I never get tired of that
joke. So, what's up Chuck?

Wayne laughs again.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. That's like this joke to me. Hey, Chuck, what's that?

Wayne points to Chuck's shirt. Chuck looks down and Wayne flicks his nose.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It's a sickness it really is.

Wayne shoots down his third shot.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

All right, seriously now. Have you seen it, Chuck?

Chuck ignores him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Come on, Chuck. You know everything that goes on here. Have you seen it? I mean, you are the type of guy who would have seen it.

Chuck snaps exasperated.

CHUCK

What? Have I seen what?

Wayne starts checking himself.

WAYNE

My virginity. I'm sure I had it when I. . .

Wayne looks down his pants.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

. . .whoops. There it is. Isn't it always in the last place you look. Wayne sticks a hand down his pants. That's okay, baby. Daddy was worried, that's all.

CHUCK

Get away from me. You're crazy. And don't even think about touching me.

WAYNE

I can't believe that's the way you talk to me after all we've been through.

Wayne looks down his pants again.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
We'll find another friend for you,
don't worry.

Wayne looks at Chuck.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
So, what's uh. . .happening, Chuck?

Chuck ignores him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Watching a little movie here,
buddy?

Chuck ignores him. Roger begins to collect his things to leave. Wayne sees him so Roger moves quicker towards the exit.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Don't think I didn't see you, Rog,
old boy.

Wayne moves to the door.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
No one escapes my wraith.
Hahahahahaha. We'll meet again my
worthy nemesis, mark my words.
Hahahahaha.

Roger exits.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Ha.

Wayne looks at the rest of the people in the bar.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
I think I showed him who's the
boss.

Wayne walks back towards Chuck.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Don't you, Chuck? You saw the fear
in his step, didn't you, Chuck?

Chuck continues to ignore him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Hey, come on, don't be like that.
All right, I'll do something you
like.

Chuck looks at the movie.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Slap Shot, huh? Haven't seen this
in, oh, twenty-four hours.

Chuck glares at Wayne.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Hey, not that that's a problem. I
love this movie. So, have they put
on the foil yet?

Chuck brightens.

CHUCK
Not yet but soon. Don't you like
when the Hanson's start yelling and
screaming? Isn't that. . .

WAYNE
. . .what are you talking about? I
was talking about the guys from the
nut house putting the foil on your
head so those aliens can't keep
sending you those messages.

Wayne adopts an alien voice.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Chuck
(Pause)
Chuck, it's us.
(Pause)
Your alien buddies. Listen, why
don't you go down to Charles Street
and bug everyone in the bar by
watching the same movie for the
eight billionth time. Go ahead,
Chuck, they won't mind. Trust us.

Wayne goes back to his voice and puts a friendly arm on
Chuck.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Don't you think this is just your
alien friends version of this.

Wayne points to Chuck's shirt. Chuck, inevitably, looks down and Wayne flicks his nose. Wayne jumps back as Chuck swings ineffectually at him.

CHUCK

Why don't you leave me alone. At least I had my fifteen minutes of fame. You never been.

Wayne goes into full injured mode.

WAYNE

Oh. . .no. . .I've. . .been. . .
hit. . .with. . .his. . .rapist. .
.like. . .wit. I. . .may. . . not.
. .survive.

VALERIE

Wayne, leave Chuck alone.

Wayne snaps back to himself.

WAYNE

Well, I didn't want to play with you anymore anyway.

Wayne sticks his tongue out at Chuck.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's time to change my colostomy bag. And I was going to share with you this time. Nah, nah, na, na, nah. Your loss.

Wayne moves towards Bob.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, Bob?

BOB

Holy shit, you're right I have to get back to my job.

Bob jumps up.

BOB (CONT'D)

Thanks, Wayne.

Bob exits.

WAYNE

Happy to be of service, Bob.

Wayne, a little surprised, drags himself to the men's room. He picks up his last shot and pounds it as he walks. He passes Ron.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Hi, Ron.

Ron nods and continues to type.

A couple, TONY and LISA, walk in. They are both mid-20's. This is obviously their first date. Once they are seated Valerie wanders over.

VALERIE

Hi, what can I do for you two on this fine day?

The couple grin and chuckle because they really do believe it is a fine day.

TONY

Hi, ummm, what can I get you, Lisa?

Lisa ponders for a moment before coming to the answer she feels isn't too feminine, you want him to think your an action packed girl, but you also don't want him to think you could kick the shit out of him. But, you also don't want to order something that will clue your date in that you frequent bars. The first drink is crucial. After a few difficult seconds she makes her first big date decision.

LISA

A margarita.

Simple and non-threatening. Tony seizes upon this and sucks up to the best of his testosterone laden ability.

TONY

That sounds great, I haven't had one of those in years.

Tony ponders thoughtfully for a moment.

TONY (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah, that's what I'll have also. Thank you.

Valerie smiles at the adoring couple - 'Look, we like the same things, oooowwwwwwww.' - and asks a simple question.

VALERIE

What type of margarita? We have
Madori, Chambord, Grand Gold, Gold,
Cadillac, Blue, the Valerie Special
and the old reliable house.

Tony and Lisa now have fear on their faces. The first obstacle. Someone has to make a decision. Who is it going to be? Who will risk making the first division of oneness? Who will risk taking control? Another tough first date moment. After what seems like an eternity to the happy couple, Tony asks a question to help ease themselves into the correct decision.

TONY

What's the Valerie special?

VALERIE

You go somewhere else and get it.

They don't know if she's serious or not so they chuckle nervously. After a while, Valerie laughs along with them. When they are sure it was a joke they continue to laugh.

Tony a little bit too hard. But they still have to make a decision and now Lisa feels obligated to make a choice because, after all, Tony did ask the question. Guys are so devious about stuff like this.

LISA

I think I'll have a house
margarita.

Tony quickly seizes the moment and makes a good save. By that I mean he lies.

TONY

Whoa, that's amazing. That's
exactly what I was going to say.

They gaze into each others eyes as Valerie begins to move away.

VALERIE

Okay, that'll be two house
margaritas. I'll be right back.

Silently Valerie walks over to the blender. Just before she begins the blender she speaks.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I know that was a little mean, but I hate people on a first date. All that perfection and artifice. It's just plain crap.

Valerie looks over and smiles at the happy couple. Wait till he sees her tampon for the first time. Valerie starts the blender. It's loud at first but quickly fades into the background.

LISA

I loved this movie when I was a kid. It made me cry so much. I can't believe I can't remember the name of it. Urragh. I saw it about six months ago and it still made me cry.

TONY

Well, what was the plot? I watch a lot of movies, maybe I can help you figure it out.

LISA

Well, these women, southern women, they were all neighbors, were planning this wedding and the bride dies. But, that didn't happen until after she had the baby. The brides father kept shooting this bleeding armadillo cake. No, that's not what he did. But he was shooting something. Urah, if I could only think of the brides name. You know who she is? She's the one with the lips?

Tony is trying but nothing's coming to him. He's not the dying bride type of movie goer. He's more likely to judge a movie by the time of the first breast shot. If that doesn't happen he will, if the mood is there, settle for the first dismemberment. Now, a naked dismemberment, boy, do you have a flick now or what?

TONY

Lips? Lips? Lips?

The only names that are coming to mind are porn stars and he's pretty certain none of them were in a movie with a dying bride.

GENE enters and Valerie goes over to serve him.

TONY (CONT'D)
Damn, it's on the tip of my tongue.

Lisa has a small revelation that may finally solve this mystery.

Wayne comes back from the men's room and starts animatedly talking to Ron and orders another drink.

LISA
I got it. No, wait. That country singer was in it.

TONY
Alison Krauss?

LISA
No, no, it's an older one. You know, the one with the. . .

Lisa's demurely gesturing.

LISA (CONT'D)
. . .you know, the big. . .you knows.

Tony has a flash of knowledge but he's not sure if he should scream the words because then she'll know he was thinking about.

LISA (CONT'D)
. . .well, you knows.

But Lisa bales him out of the situation.

LISA (CONT'D)
Dolly Parton.

Tony is visibly relieved.

TONY
Oh yeah, she's a great singer.

LISA
And that actor who was in that sweat shop movie.

Lisa thinks for a moment.

LISA (CONT'D)
We really like her, we really like
her.
(Lisa pauses and bangs her
answer home)
Sally Field.

Tony and Lisa are deliriously happy that they are about to solve their first problem together.

LISA (CONT'D)
And the name of the movie is. . .
something. . .something.

They sit silently for a moment before Lisa has another piece of the puzzle.

LISA (CONT'D)
Something metal. Metal something.

Tony now has the answer. Lisa is puffed with pride that Tony can understand her. He can really understand her.

TONY
I've got it.

Tony is so proud of himself. Lisa is agog with future revelations.

TONY (CONT'D)
Full Metal Jacket.

Valerie arrives and puts the drinks in front of the lovely couple and sees that the mood has shifted a bit so she leaves wordlessly. Lisa gets involved with her drink. Tony wonders what went wrong.

RON
So really, Wayne, no bits, how are
things?

WAYNE
Fanfuckingtastic.

Wayne sees that Ron doesn't believe him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Really.

Ron continues to look at him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Seriously.

Ron continues to look at him.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Sure it could be better. I mean, last night I got bumped from my eleven because TV boy, Andre, wanted to try out some new material.

Wayne finishes his drink and orders another.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

The shit sucked. He hasn't written anything good in five years and they still treat him like a king.

RON

He does put asses in the seats, Wayne. As you told me, that's the name of the game.

WAYNE

No, man, you know it's more than that. I'm out there every day working on material. Pushing. Experimenting. And this ass comes in and because he's TV boy I get bumped. And you want to know what the worst part is? His new stuff is horrible. Real crap.

RON

Did the audience laugh?

Chuck screams with glee.

CHUCK

It's the Hanson's. Come on, it's the Hanson's.

Chuck happily goes back to watching the movie.

WAYNE

What does that have to do with it?

RON

Bottom line, Wayne. Bottom line. It might be an art for you but it's a night out with chuckles for the audience.

WAYNE

Man, you sound like the club owners. I'm sorry Wayne, you're funny and all, but we think you're too uncontrollable to book.

(Pause)

Too uncontrollable. What does that mean?

RON

Well, remember the time you took out your dick and pissed on the first row?

WAYNE

I reached the fifth row, buddy. And don't you forget it.

RON

I stand corrected. Wayne, your routine is solid but. . .

WAYNE

. . .but what? What do you want to say, Ron?

RON

You piss off too many people. Okay? The only reason they haven't locked you out yet is because you are truly gifted. One of a kind. But, man, you've got to chill a bit.

WAYNE

No man, this is how I'm known. The wild man, you know? It's my hook.

Wayne orders another drink and pats Ron on the arm.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, my good man, it's just a matter of time. I can feel it.

Valerie puts the drink down and exits.

RON

When was the last time you slept?

WAYNE

When was the last time you kissed your mother?

Ron is exasperated. Tony and Lisa exit.

RON
Wayne, you know my mother died when
I was a kid.

WAYNE
Exactly my point. As that great
philosopher. . .

Wayne stops because he can't remember what great philosopher.

RON
. . .Socrates?

Wayne nods no.

RON (CONT'D)
Plato?

Wayne nods no.

RON (CONT'D)
Deputy Dawg?

Wayne angrily nods no.

WAYNE
No. What? Hey, I'm the comedian
here, buddy. Do I try to muscle in
on the tortured writer thing you
got going? No, I. . .

Wayne pauses as he comes up with his answer.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
. . .Warren Zevon. The late, great
Warren Zevon, said. . .

RON
. . .ah, Wayne, Zevon's not dead. I
saw him at the Paradise last year.

WAYNE
I know that. His concerts just
never start on time.

RON
Well, what did Warren say?

Wayne pauses for a moment. Finishes the last of his drink,
tosses some money in Valerie's direction and begins moving
out just as fast as he came in.

WAYNE

He said, 'I'll sleep when I'm dead.'

Wayne has a revelation and starts to take over the bar again.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Oh, I've got to tell you what happened this morning. I was in the car with Andre. . .

RON

. . .wait a second, I thought you hated TV boy?

WAYNE

It's a complicated world we live in, isn't it Ron? We've all got to make sacrifices and kiss a ton 'o ass. But I guess I did a good job because he said he'd get me a middle spot in New York next weekend.

Ron just shakes his head and laughs.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

So, he went into a store and I was waiting in his car. I sat back and put on my sunglasses

Wayne puts on his sunglasses.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Then I leaned back to chill to the CD. All of a sudden this cop raps on the door and says, in his most threatening tone, 'You're in a bus stop. Move this vehicle.' Damn, spoil a nice buzz or what? So I said, 'The guy'll be back in a minute, he's in the store.' Obviously he didn't care because he said, 'I don't care, move this vehicle.' The guy was really starting to piss me off. I mean, why wasn't he across the street hounding the guy pissing on the mailbox? Probably didn't want to get his feet wet. So I told him that the guy was almost done and he'd be right out.

(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

But he wasn't going to cut me any slack so he told me to move it or he'd give me a ticket. I laughed and told him I didn't care. It's not my car. Now he's pissed so he said that he'd warn me one more time and start writing the ticket. So I told him I couldn't move the car. He said, 'What do you mean you can't? The keys are right in the ignition.' Thank you officer obvious. I guess this is the kind of thing you learn in cop school. I told him I just couldn't and he barks out, 'Why?' And I said, 'Because I'm blind.'

BRAD enters and sits at the bar.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

The cop stood there perplexed as Andre got in the car. I told Andre the story and he laughed.

(Wayne pauses and becomes agitated)

Shit. I'm such an asshole.

RON

What's the matter?

WAYNE

Shit. I know that bastard will rip off that bit. I've got to go call him and tell him I'm putting it in the act tonight. He'd better not have beaten me to it.

Wayne starts exiting.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

See ya, Ron. Valerie. And thank you everyone, I've been Wayne and you've been exfoliated.

With that, Wayne exits the bar, Rod nods and goes back to typing as Valerie explains what beers the bar has to Brad.

VALERIE

We have Bud, Bud Lite, Michelob, Michelob Light, Molson, Molson Light, Heineken, Heineken Dark, Red Hook, Red Wolf, Red Stripe, Miller, Miller Lite, Naraganset, Beck's, Sam Adam's and Rolling Rock.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

And on draft we have Bud, Bud Lite,
Michelob, Michelob Light, Cider
Jack, Guinness, Bass, Henderbeer,
Henderbeer Dark, Henderbeer Extra
Dark and Henderbeer DFK.

BRAD

Henderbeer?

VALERIE

Our own special beer from our brew
master, the intrepid Fred
Henderson.

BRAD

There's no Henderbeer light?

VALERIE

No, Fred doesn't believe in light
beers. It's his belief that light
beers are the cause of the
popularity of John Tesh's music.
Along with many other evil things I
just don't have time to go into.
But, if you want to subscribe to
the newsletter. . .

TABITHA enters.

BRAD

. . .okay, okay, thank you but
that's okay. Ummmm, what's the
Henderbeer DFK? Is that like an
IPA?

VALERIE

Not exactly. DFK is kind of the
grappa of Fred's brewing process.

BRAD

I don't understand. What does DFK
stand for?

VALERIE

Don't Fucking Know.

BRAD

I'll stick with a Bud.

VALERIE

Good choice.

Valerie gets Brad's beer and then goes over to serve Tabitha.

Three guys, two mid-20's, MATTHEW, DOM and Dom's tough looking, no shit taking uncle, BUTCH, enter the bar and take up residence next to Ron. Matthew looks over Ron like he's so much shit on his shoes. Dom and Butch nod at Ron in a friendly manner but it is not at all invasive. Dom is kind of embarrassed of Matthew's behavior in front of his uncle and Butch just ignores Matthew to the best of his ability. Butch sits next to Ron.

MATTHEW

That was a great restaurant,
Butchy. Thanks for introducing me
to it. That waitress was one little
hot piece, wouldn't you say?
Matthew shoulders Dom and reaches
over and pats Butch who barely
acknowledges. Matthew's beeper goes
off. He makes a big deal about
checking it out. Yeah, one fine
little piece of meat. I wouldn't
mind. . .

BUTCH

. . .that's my goddaughter you're
talking about there, kid.

Matthew retreats.

MATTHEW

Hey, I didn't mean anything by it,
Butchy. I was just saying. And you
do have to admit. . .

Dom taps Matthew on the shoulder to try and shut him up as
Valerie arrives at the end of the bar.

DOM

. . .why don't you just sit down
and get a drink.

VALERIE

Hi Butch, how are you today?

Butch gives her a look that says 'could be better look at the
company I keep'. Valerie knows. So, what'll it be, guys?
Matthew jumps right in. Dom is embarrassed and Butch is
amazed at Matthew's temerity.

MATTHEW

What do I want? What do I want?
What do I want?

Matthew ponders in silence. After a properly polite amount of time Butch speaks.

BUTCH
I'll have. . .

MATTHEW
. . .I know. I'll have a sea
breeze.

Butch's expression is one that says if this asshole wasn't my nephews friend he'd be breathing from the back of his head by now. Not only that but he orders a drink that is a personal affront to a man like Butch. Through clinched teeth Butch orders.

BUTCH
Henderbeer, please.

VALERIE
Okay. And you, Dom?

DOM
Henderbeer DFK.

VALERIE
Feeling adventurous, are we?

Butch and Dom laugh politely. Matthew, of course, laughs a second after them and a decibel too loud. Just as it looks like Valerie and going to get their drinks Butch asks a question.

BUTCH
Valerie, by the way, have you seen
David today? Valerie thinks for a
moment.

VALERIE
No. Hasn't been in.

Butch nods as Valerie goes to get the drinks. Matthew's beeper goes off. He makes a big deal about checking it out.

MATTHEW
So, hey, Butchy, thanks for picking
up the tab for lunch. Are you sure
you don't want me to pitch in? I've
got more than enough to cover it.

Matthew pulls some cash out of his pocket and puts in on the bar.

DOM

Matthew, Butch got it. Just say
thanks and leave it at that.

MATTHEW

I said thanks. Didn't I, Butchy? I
said thanks, right?

Butch stares straight ahead and nods.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Because I don't want you to think
I'm ungrateful or anything. I can
pay my own way, you know?

Matthew moves over and squeezes in between Ron and Butch. Ron
slides down as much as he can and continues typing.

BUTCH

My pleasure, kid. Glad you enjoyed
it.

MATTHEW

That was really a great place. I'll
have to go back there with my
girlfriend for dinner one night.
Should I mention your name, Butchy?

Butch doesn't react but he slowly looks at Dom who knows he's
in for some shit at home tonight.

DOM

Hey, Matthew, let's just sit down
and have a quiet beer.

Valerie arrives with the drinks and places them in front of
the trio.

VALERIE

Here you go.

BUTCH

Thank you.

DOM

Thanks.

MATTHEW

I've got this. This round's on me.
Take my money. Matthew shoves money
towards Valerie.

BUTCH

Don't worry about it, kid.

MATTHEW

No, I'm not worried about it I just wanted to get this round. You know, you bought lunch so this is the least I can do.

Matthew keeps waving money at Valerie who finally takes it before someone gets their eye poked out. Valerie goes to the register as Matthew takes a very self-satisfied sip. Matthew's beeper goes off. He makes a big deal about checking it out.

VALERIE

Enjoy your drinks, guys.

Valerie comes back and puts Matthew's change in front of him and Ron's beer in front of him.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Thanks, guys.

Valerie walks away.

MATTHEW

All right, this is the life, isn't it, Butchy?

BUTCH

Why don't you sit down and take a break?

Matthew is visibly taken aback by this affront and walks over to Dom.

MATTHEW

What's up with Butchy? I'm just trying to show my respect here by buying him a beer and he's on my case. What the fuck is that?

DOM

Matthew, just relax. We're just here to have a couple of drinks and hang out.

MATTHEW

I know.

DOM

Well, let's sit down, be quiet for a few minutes and let Butch drink his beer in peace.

MATTHEW

I just wanted to let Butchy know I appreciated the lunch, is all. I just wanted to show him I can pay my own way.

DOM

He knows. By now, I'm certain he knows. And, one other thing, don't call him Butchy. No one does and it really annoys him. Like when people call you Matt.

MATTHEW

Shit, I'd smack anyone who called me Matt. I fucking hate that. Why didn't he say something? Hey, I didn't mean anything by it.

DOM

I know and so does he.

Matthew turns around and grabs Butch's shoulders. Oh shit.

MATTHEW

Hey, Butchy, I didn't mean to insult you or anything by calling you Butchy. I was just trying to be friendly, okay?

BUTCH

I know. No problem, kid.

Matthew finishes off his beer and ostentatiously calls for another round. Matthew's beeper goes off. He makes a big deal about checking it out.

MATTHEW

Let me get you another brew, Butchy.

(Pause)

I mean, Butch.

Valerie arrives to take Matthew's order.

VALERIE

Another round?

MATTHEW

On me, it's on me. This rounds on me.

BUTCH

No.

DOM

Matthew, let Butch get it.

MATTHEW

No, it's my pleasure. I mean, after that lunch and everything it's the least I can do.

BUTCH

Or so you're said, but, no. This round is on my tab, Valerie.

Matthew being overly friendly pats Butch's shoulders.

MATTHEW

Is this a great guy or what? What do you say, Dom? Is your uncle the best or what?

DOM

He's a good guy.

MATTHEW

Not just good, buddy, this guy is great.

Matthew claps his hands together and starts looking around the bar. Matthew's beeper goes off. He makes a big deal about checking it out.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

I feel like getting into something, don't you Dom? Dom steers Matthew away from Butch.

DOM

Not really. Don't you think it's a little early to get into anything now?

Matthew spins away.

DOM (CONT'D)

Why do you always want to get into a beef? Why can't you just go out and have a good time?

MATTHEW

Because I like to get into beefs.
That's fun to me.

Matthew polishes off his drink with a flourish.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

I'm going to the bathroom. I'll be
right back.

Matthew slaps Butch and Dom on their shoulders and struts to the bathroom. Dom and Butch are silent for a while. It's a silence that comes from knowing what the other person is thinking and also knowing that it's not good. Finally, Butch speaks.

BUTCH

We'll be going after this.

Dom doesn't answer, he just nods his head. Another silence arrives and is soon busted up by the arrival of Matthew.

MATTHEW

All right, so what's up?

No one answers him as he pushes between Ron and Butch again. This time his expression is one of concern. He looks at Ron and then all over the bar. Matthew's beeper goes off. He makes a big deal about checking it out.

BRAD

Man, I guess somebodies glasses are
ready.

Matthew glares at Brad for a moment and then looks back at Ron.

DOM

What's the matter, Matthew?

Matthew steps over to Dom and pulls him behind Butch all the while not taking his eyes off Ron.

MATTHEW

My fucking money.

DOM

What about it?

MATTHEW

It's gone. I put a twenty on the
bar, bought a round and now it's
all gone.

Matthew glares at Ron.

Brad exits.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
I think that fucker took it.

DOM
What are you talking about? He's
been sitting there typing. You're
crazy, Matthew.

Dom immediately realizes this may not have been the best phrase and this could get ugly quickly. So he grabs Matthew's shoulder and turns him back to face him.

MATTHEW
He didn't take your money. Trust
me.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Oh, so what are you saying? Butchy
took it? Is that what you're
saying? Your uncle took it?

DOM
I'm not saying anything like that.
Shit, Matthew, are you sure it was
a twenty?

MATTHEW
What are you saying that I'm lying?

DOM
Oh please.

Matthew steps back and grabs Ron's shoulder and pulls him out of his chair.

RON
What is your problem?

Ron shakes him off and pulls away.

MATTHEW
Did you take my money off the
fucking bar?

RON
What? Just what I need. First Wayne
is more insane than usual and now
you. What do you want?

MATTHEW

Excuse me? What the fuck kind of talk is that?

BUTCH

What's the problem here?

MATTHEW

This fuck took my money off the bar.

RON

Yeah, right.

Ron sits back down and Matthew starts towards him again. Butch puts his hand out and stops Matthew cold. Ron positions himself in front of his computer but he does not begin to type.

BUTCH

First, watch your language. There are ladies here and second, his hands haven't moved from that computer except to sip his beer since I got here. I would have noticed him grabbing your cash, wouldn't I, Matt?

A flash of anger over being called Matt stops Matthew for a second but it passes. Wisely. Valerie arrives.

MATTHEW

You could have missed it.

Matthew and Butch look at each other for a second and Matthew goes for Ron again. This time Ron pulls the starters pistol from behind the bar and Matthew stops cold.

CHUCK

They're putting on the foil. Come on, that's comedy.

Chuck chuckles to himself.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Putting on the foil. Classic.

MATTHEW

What the fu. . .

Matthew pauses and looks sheepishly at Butch. Between the gun and Butch he's more concerned with Butch.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
. . .sorry.

Matthew backs behind Butch.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Do you know who this guy is?
Pulling a gun on this guy. What are
you nuts?

RON
I'm not aiming the gun at him.

MATTHEW
Oh sure, but you're pulling it on a
friend of his. That's just as bad.

RON
I'm not so sure he'd object.

MATTHEW
You little. . .

Ron stands up and Matthew steps back further. Ron looks at Butch, smiles and hands him the starters pistol. Matthew regains his bravado and scoffs at Ron's action.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
. . .now you're dead you stupid
punk.

Butch and Ron ignore Matthew.

RON
Do you know that I didn't take his
money?

Butch nods and puts the starters pistol on the bar. He motions Valerie towards him.

BUTCH
How much did he put on the bar?

VALERIE
A ten.

MATTHEW
It wasn't. . .

Butch puts his hands in Matthew's face.

BUTCH

. . .if Valerie says it was a ten,
it was a ten. You just made a
mistake, a couple of them actually.
Apologize to this man.

Matthew is not enjoying being scolded like this. When it
becomes evident that Matthew, of course, isn't going to
apologize Ron speaks.

RON

No problem. Shit happens.

Ron begins to sit down and Matthew quickly lunges for the
gun. Butch's hand comes down and grabs Matthew hard. Matthew
tries to pull away but can't.

BUTCH

That was dumb.

MATTHEW

I don't like anyone sticking a
piece in my face.

Butch pulls Matthew to his face.

BUTCH

It's a starters pistol, you idiot.

Butch looks at Ron.

BUTCH (CONT'D)

It looks like our guest here isn't
going to apologize so I will. I'm
sorry, Ron.

RON

No problem, Butch. Shit happens.

MATTHEW

You know him?

BUTCH

He grew up in the neighborhood,
Matt. He used to be my paperboy. He
and Dom played baseball together.
Known him all his life.

Butch looks at Valerie and points at Ron.

BUTCH (CONT'D)

Put his bill on my tab.

RON
That's not necessary, Butch.

Butch pats Ron's shoulder.

BUTCH
Just mention me in your book.

RON
So, do you want to be a hero or
villain?

Butch laughs.

BUTCH
I think you already know the answer
to that.

Butch and Ron shake hands and Butch guides Matthew out of the bar as Ron goes back to typing. Once they are gone Valerie walks over with a beer.

VALERIE
This is on Butch.
(Pause)
Just think, all this excitement and
later I get to hose down the men's
room.

RON
Oooooooooowwwwwww, you're my hero.

DOC enters the bar nodding his greetings along the way. Doc is a psychologist who gets melancholy after a couple of wine's and tells demented stories about past clients. Always a source of enjoyment to the patrons. Valerie has his wine waiting for him at his usual place a few seats from Ron. Doc sits and positions his paper and glass just so. Then looks up at Ron and nods. Ron nods back.

VALERIE
Good afternoon, Doc. How's your day
been?

DOC
If one more patient bitches about
not getting enough of his mother's
attention I'm going to take a
hostage.

Doc takes a sip of wine and places the glass back in the exact same location after each time he speaks.

DOC (CONT'D)

Today this patient spent the session having me read into his pornography collection.

VALERIE

Anything good?

DOC

No, just the normal rubber and constraints. But his main delight is urinating women.

VALERIE

Yuck. And that's normal?

DOC

Considering.

Valerie leans in to Doc.

VALERIE

Considering what? This place?

A customer, NORM, walks into the bar and, as the cliché would have it, everyone call out.

REGULARS

NORM!!!!!!!!!!

Valerie waves for Doc to hold his thought and gets Norm's beer. Norm doesn't acknowledge the call, he sits down. Valerie arrives at Norm.

NORM

I hate that show. Before that show I could go anywhere, quietly sit down and have my beer. Now wherever I go there's this big pronouncement. It really sucks.

Valerie puts his drink in front of him.

NORM (CONT'D)

How would you like it if wherever you went people screamed out your name?

VALERIE

That usually only happens at night, Norm.

Valerie heads back to Doc and they resume.

DOC

There was a guy who was into cock and ball torture; which is a necessary form of release for many people, but this man was too nervous to order the proper equipment for the job so he'd go into his tool box and hit himself with a ball peen hammer.

VALERIE

Yikes. I don't even have one but thinking about it makes my ovaries ache. Come on, Doc, tell me. I know, Billy T's the pee guy and the hammer guy is. . .

Valerie thinks.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

. . .Geez, that could be anyone from here. So, come on, just this once, who are they?

DOC

Valerie, we've been over this before.

VALERIE

Oh, I know, but just this once. If it's not Billy T it has to be Sean. It's Sean isn't it? Sean with all of his warm drinks. I know it's him.

Valerie goes and gets the wine bottle and pours Doc another drink.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You know, Doc, we're sort of in the same business. Listening to people bitch for cash and watching them deconstruct in front of us.

DOC

Yes, but with me it took years of proper schooling and then years of intense therapy to get to the core of their problem. For you it's a six pack and a couple of beef jerky's and everything is solved. Sitcom psychology.

Valerie leaves as Doc arranges his area. Valerie goes to the audience as she watches over the momentarily quiet over the bar.

VALERIE

I don't know what it is but I've
real been anxious lately. I'm good
at my job but it doesn't do
anything for me anymore. The
problem is I don't know what else
to do. I tried a nine to five thing
but I only lasted a week. Not
enough attention, I guess. I mean,
I might have to clean up drunk
leavings constantly but I sure
don't think I could cut into
people's heads like my friend the
brain surgeon, Lydia.

(Pause)

Well, I did split one guys head
open once.

(Pause)

What an asshole. Stole my live
Mission of Burma CD.

Valerie comes back from her journey down memory lane.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Oh well, life is full of mistakes.
I just wished I'd missed a few.
Don't get me wrong, this is a
pretty good job.

Valerie looks around.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Well, not here particularly. But,
all in all, it's not too bad. But
it is stultifying. Your entire
world is contained in a three by
twelve area.

Valerie chuckles.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Reminds me of the time a friend of
mine came in and he was teasing me
like Frank Burns was teasing
Hawkeye in that Mash episode. He'd
walk to the door and say, 'I can go
in, I can go out, I can go in.' He
thought he was a laugh riot.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Well, until I said, 'I can take your beer, I can give you beer, I can take your beer.'

(Pause)

Sometimes I think people forget I'm a person and they seem to talk at me instead of to me. I've had more people interrupt my opinions on a subject. Especially sports. And then there are the people who see me doing something or talking to someone and find nothing rude about screaming for me. I've actually gone to the effort of marking down the times I've been interrupted in a day. The records forty-seven. And I wasn't even working a double.

(Pause)

But even if I changed jobs I don't know what I'd do. I'd like to help people but I'm pretty sure a career as a politician is out. Way too many incriminating photos. Way too many. Maybe I'll just change my location. I've actually had a offer from this group of people I know. They have a bar in Bonaire and asked me to come down and. . .

Valerie pauses like someone has asked her a question.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

. . .what? Bonaire? Oh, it's part of the Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean about five hundred miles off the Venezu. . .

CHUCK

Hey, I'm dusting up here.

Valerie pauses and shows off her best 'I told you so' look.

VALERIE

. . .what? Oh, yeah, another beer?
Of course. Anything for you.

Valerie takes a couple of steps to get a couple of beers. Stops. Turns her head and chuckles. She picks up a pen and marks on a pad. Gets the beer and puts it on the bar.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

That's twenty-four today. But, like I was saying, these people have a bar there called the Puma. They laugh and say Puma stands for Persnickety Urbanites Money Accepted. But they could be kidding because they've also said it stands for Pick Up My Ass and Pretty Useless Morons Allowed. I think that last one really applies to the staff. I've met them, I know. Besides the place in Bonaire they're thinking about opening Puma's in Belize, Bimini, Bermuda and Belmont. I told you they were a little strange.

Valerie notices Gene waving for another drink and gets it.

Norm exits.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But maybe that's what I need. A change of scenery. As awe inspiring as this spectacle is, maybe a nice tropical island would be nice.

Valerie puts the beer on the bar.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But, with my luck. I'd probably get stuck in Belmont.

Tabitha, who has obviously been checking out Gene finally makes her move. She walks over and sits next to Gene who is a little startled by this approach.

TABITHA

Oh, I'm sorry, did I frighten you?

GENE

Oh no, jumping like a frightened bunny is a family trait.

TABITHA

Oh good.

Tabitha pauses and is oblivious to Gene's sarcasm.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

I'm Tabitha.

She holds out her hand daintily. Gene reaches up and the handshake doesn't impress him.

GENE

I'm Gene.

Gene looks back at his beer and takes a sip.

TABITHA

Mind if I sit down and buy you a drink?

Gene puts the glass back on the bar and smiles at her.

GENE

Sure, why not.

Tabitha sits down as Gene finishes his new drink.

TABITHA

Could we have another round here?
Thanks.

Valerie nods and goes to get the drinks. Gene and Tabitha sit in silence for a moment. Tabitha fidgets.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

So, are you from around here?

GENE

No, I work down the street. I stop
in every now and then after work.

Gene takes the final sip of his drink. Another awkward silence. Valerie finally arrives with the drinks.

VALERIE

Here you go. Is there anything else
I can get for you?

Tabitha nods her head no as she takes a sip.

TABITHA

No, no, I'm just going to get to
know my new friend here.

Valerie smiles and backs away.

VALERIE

Well, I know when I'm not needed.
Have fun you two.

Doc is now well into his buzz as Valerie wanders over and fills his glass.

DOC

Valerie, thank you. I have to tell you that the wine is very tasty today.

VALERIE

Thanks. I stomped it myself just this morning.

Doc rearranges his area and leans back. Valerie knows this signifies a story so she takes a leaning position.

DOC

And a fine job you did.

Doc takes a sip of wine and follows his procedure.

DOC (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you about the time I was in intern at a hospital in Illinois and my best friend at the time, who was a wonder clinician but had a tendency to over medicate.

Doc pauses and takes a sip of wine. During his monologue he takes periodic sips of wine.

DOC (CONT'D)

But a wonderful doctor. However, we were working in this hospital that was very elite. Like McLean's was decades ago. Very upscale. Well, my friend had a manic depressive who'd been in and out of there for years. My friend thought he was doing a great job with her and went to the staff with a request that she had. It seems she felt one of her problems stemmed from always being waited on. The family had a stable of service people at their estate and she'd never even done a dish. So, the patients idea was to go to the house during Thanksgiving and prepare the entire meal. My friend thought this would be wonderful for her recovery. At first, the staff didn't see it that way.

(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)

Her history really didn't point to this so they had a point. But my friend kept at them by showing them her new found clarity. She was obsessed by this event. But it did seem to give her focus in her recovery. Finally, a few weeks before Thanksgiving they relented. Well, you should have seen the change in this patient. It was remarkable. She was a different person. Happy, helpful, efficient. She spent her days making calls to get the food and preparations. For the first time in probably years she talked to her parents every day. Everything was flowing perfectly. The hospital gave her a forty-eight hour pass and off she went. She'd told her family she wanted them to stay out of the kitchen and dining room until they heard her ring a bell and then come and see the improvements she'd made to her psyche. And have the most unforgettable Thanksgiving ever. Well, the family gathered in the anteroom and waited for the bell. They could hear her arranging the table and singing. Everyone was pleasantly surprised at this change in her behavior. After quite a wait the bell finally rang, her father opened the door and they saw a beautiful table decked out with all the trimmings. A real Norman Rockwell moment. The only flaw was that the patient was hanging from the chandelier in the middle of the table.

Valerie and Ron try as hard as they can but, finally, burst out laughing.

DOC (CONT'D)

Oh no, this is not funny. The anger this woman had towards her family. Oh, it was just terrible.

But, despite Doc's urging, they continue to laugh.

RON

Could you see if they had some non-family member guests. They might think this was a family tradition. I could hear someone say, 'Well, this is unique. In my family we just get a cornucopia.'

Valerie and Ron continue laughing while Doc is mortified.

VALERIE

And could you see when the EMT's got there. Come on, it's been a long day, this is a great spread so they cut her down and tear off a leg in the process.

RON

Oh, what if when she's hanging there. She's looking over her handy work and notices that when she stepped on the table she moved some silverware out of place.

Valerie continues laughing and starts reenacting the hanging.

VALERIE

That would be a riot. She'd be like, 'Here's my perfect moment. Pay back to all of the assholes who. . . hey.' She sees the fork out of place and stretches for it.

RON

She probably didn't die of asphyxiation.

VALERIE

Yeah, she died of embarrassment.

RON

Yeah, improper table settings is probably a big offense with those people.

VALERIE

Probably as big a social screw-up as wearing white shoes after labor day.

RON

I thought it was arbor day.

VALERIE

No, no, no, you don't know
anything. It's no white hoods after
arbor day.

Valerie and Ron continue to laugh as Doc stands up to go to
the men's room.

DOC

You two are not grasping the
gravity of this situation. This
woman was pained.

Well, that comment sends them into a further fit of laughter.

DOC (CONT'D)

I hope you both will have regained
your composure by the time I come
back.

Doc exits and Valerie and Ron watch him for a moment and then
look at each other and laugh.

RON

Man, that was a keeper.

VALERIE

He's got a million of them.

RON

That he does.

(Pause)

Oh yeah, you were asking about the
rubber guy.

VALERIE

Yeah? Do you know?

Ron nods his head yes.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Who is it?

RON

Do you really want to know?

VALERIE

Yeah.

RON

Are you sure?

Valerie is a little apprehensive but curiosity gets the best of her.

VALERIE

Yeah.

RON

It's Wayne.

VALERIE

Get out of here.

RON

No shit. We were hanging at his house one night, he got ripped and showed me his collection. Scary, I've got to tell you. He actually pays women to squirt into jars for him. It's all stored in a back room of his apartment. Like the museum de pee pee.

VALERIE

Get out of here. You're pulling my leg.

RON

Honest.

VALERIE

Scary. Okay, mister know all the proclivities of my customers, who's the hammer guy?

Ron nods his head no.

Chuck is growing ever increasingly loud and uncentered.

CHUCK

Nailed him, Coach. Nailed him right in the head.

Chuck laughs during the remainder of this scene.

RON

No, I'm not giving up that one. No way.

VALERIE

Oh sure, you'll tell me that Wayne gets off in boxes of urine soaked rubber bands but you won't tell me who takes the term beat the meat literally.

RON

No, I found out as an accident a long time ago and haven't told anyone in all this time.

VALERIE

Come on, I'll buy you a beer.

Ron pauses.

RON

Okay.

Valerie gets a beer, brings it back and stands in anticipation. Ron leans in which makes Valerie lean in.

RON (CONT'D)

Butch.

Valerie bolts up straight.

VALERIE

No way.

Ron just continues to nod his head yes.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

No. . .not. . .you're joking.

(Pause)

How do you know it's him? It could be someone else.

RON

Nope, I saw him smack himself when I was delivering papers years ago and, as a corroborating witness, about a year ago when Doc told me the ball peen hammer story he screwed up and used Butch's name.

VALERIE

Oh my.

RON

That's why I come here. I never really have to write anything I just report what happens in the neighborhood.

Doc comes back from the bathroom and Valerie cleans anything and Ron goes back to typing.

DOC

Well, I think I've given you two enough frivolity today. I will see you both tomorrow.

Doc begins to leave.

RON

Hey, Doc, I've got one question.

Doc stops and turns to face Ron.

RON (CONT'D)

So, after she was cut down, did they eat the meal?

Valerie laughs and Doc shakes his head in admonishment.

DOC

Ronald, Ronald, Ronald, maybe you should make an appointment and let's see if we can get rid of some of this latent hostility.

RON

No way, buddy. My head's shrunk just fine, thank you very much. Besides, I don't have any porn for you.

Doc looks at Ron and then Valerie and smiles.

DOC

You two are quite a pair. Unique. Yes, I'd have to say unique. Have a wonderful evening.

Doc starts to really leave this time.

VALERIE

See you tomorrow, Doc.

Ron and Valerie wait until Doc leaves, they look at each other and laugh.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Too good.

Valerie goes to get Chuck a drink and Ron goes back to typing. Gene and Tabitha are now leaning in towards each other and it looks like Gene's original trepidation has evaporated. Tabitha is rubbing her foot up and down Gene's shin.

GENE

Yeah and then I had to get a second job to pay for it. But it's been worth it. Two more payments and the land is mine. After that, weekends in Bar Harbor and, if things work out the way I hope, at least two months a year. One in the winter and one in the summer. I just love it up there. It's so. . .

Gene take a sip of his drink and realizes that he's been monopolizing the conversation.

GENE (CONT'D)

. . .oh, Tabitha, I'm sorry. I've been talking and talking and haven't let you get a word in edge wise. I'm sorry.

Tabitha smiles and leans in closer.

TABITHA

That's all right. I love to listen to you talk.

Tabitha pauses and fixes Gene with a gaze that makes him look away. She enjoys the moment and leans in closer.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

I'm very attracted to you, Gene.

Gene continues to play the shy card.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

You know, Gene. . .

Gene looks up at her with a look of anticipation as she leans real close.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

. . .I could kill you in bed.

Gene jerks back.

GENE

What?

Gene leans back even further. He's trying to play it back to see if that really was her statement. I can't believe you said that. Gene gets off his chair and begins to collect his change and tip Valerie.

GENE (CONT'D)

Lady, do you know what century you're in? That's the worst pick-up line I've ever heard.

Gene nods good-bye to Tabitha and exits.

DAVID, a truly unhinged character, bursts into the bar shoving Gene to the side.

DAVID

Valerie, hey, Valerie, can I get a drink here?

Valerie ambles over bringing a bottle and a glass.

VALERIE

What's all the noise over here, David?

DAVID

Oh shit. . .

David finishes his first and signals for another.

DAVID (CONT'D)

. . .oh shit. I screwed up good this time.

VALERIE

Oh come on, you're always so over dramatic. Remember the time you went to the hospital because you had scarlet fever?

David signals for another.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Or the time you. . .

DAVID

. . .hey, I was really hot and red. Put two and two together and what have you got?

VALERIE
All of your brain cells?

DAVID
Ha, ha, ha. You're hilarious. You
and Wayne should duo.

David signals for another.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You'll probably have a lot of jokes
when I'm dead.

Valerie seriously looks at David with a sense of deja vu.

VALERIE
All right, all right, what's
today's crisis?

DAVID
Don't patronize me. I know when
someone patronizes me.

VALERIE
You should for as often as it
happens. You should have a ton of
frequent patronize miles.

DAVID
Hey, I'm serious. I'm screwed.

David signals for another.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Have you seen Butch today?

VALERIE
Oh yeah, sorry, I forgot to tell
you, he was in earlier and asked if
you'd been in.

DAVID
That's it. I'm a dead guy.

Valerie pauses but can help but be sarcastic.

VALERIE
Again?

David is put off by this remark so Valerie leans in to
listen.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Okay, what happened this time?

DAVID
I got really ripped last night.

VALERIE
So far everything's normal.

DAVID
No, this was much worst. I ran into Wayne and we did a few lines, a few drinks and by the time he left I was seriously gone.

VALERIE
Trying to keep up with Wayne will do that to you.

David signals for another.

DAVID
Tell me about it.

David pauses as he takes a slower sip.

DAVID (CONT'D)
So, I'm just hanging out and I get this bright idea to go over to my ex's place.

VALERIE
What for?

DAVID
I don't know. I know I either wanted to fuck her or kill her. I wasn't sure. So I get there and started banging on the door and screaming all crazy like.

CHUCK
Dave's a killer.

Chuck pauses to laugh and then laughs harder as he says his next line.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Dave's a mess. He's a mess. That's funny.

Chuck continues to laugh.

Tabitha exits.

VALERIE

She didn't open the door, did she?

DAVID

What are you dense? If she'd opened the door I wouldn't be here now. David signals for another, stands up and puts money on the bar. It was screwed but it could have been worse.

David finishes his shot.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And I know Butch is going to want to have a sit down.

Valerie realizes the significance of this event.

VALERIE

That's right. You married his niece.

DAVID

You got it. It's nice to have family.

David finishes his beer.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've got to go. See you later, Valerie. Hopefully.

David exits and Valerie goes back to the audience.

VALERIE

See how strange it gets here? I could write a book.

(Valerie pauses and laughs)

But I bet every bartender says that. And I bet none do.

(Pause)

I've always found it a strange phenomenon that people will tell their bartender anything. Like there is a sanctity of the bar stool. It's always struck me as funny how quickly I become the customer's confidant.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Like during my first shift here I had this woman tell me that her ex-husband liked big breasted women so he paid for a boob job.

(Pause)

Well she went into gruesome detail of what went wrong. I guess one of them started leaking and caused a pretty bad infection so she had to have them removed. It was at this moment she pulled up her shirt and showed me her scars.

(Pause)

I guess I should have known right then that this was a strange place. That's one of the major things I've noticed standing over here. Nothing is sacred. I mean, things that I would have trouble talking over with my closest friends are exorcised here on a daily basis. And, after they've regaled me with their latest affair or catastrophe, they can't wait until the next shift comes in to revel in it all over again. Sometimes I think I could be a vending machine for all these people care. Just stick a quarter in and let the bitching begin.

(Pause)

Well, that may be a little harsh. But it's all just artifice. A false sense of friendship. I know every major and minor event in their lives. From hitting the lottery to flipping off someone in traffic but it's all one sided. They don't know anything about me. Not that I'd let them know much. But do you know how tiresome it is to stand here all day and listen to people, people who consider you their friend, go on about their life and there I am, the fixer, in the middle of my own little crisis? It's like I'm not allowed to have a bad day. Like the day I came to work after I'd had a real blow out with Alex and this guy comes in and starts telling me about the fight he'd had with his wife. He starts going off on all the really sick things he'd like to do to her.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

He was really getting into it. It was amazingly sick shit I've got to tell you. So I told him he wasn't the only person with problems and, out of reflex or a chance to vent I guess, I started to tell him about my fight with Alex. But the moment it came out of my mouth, in the immortal words of Denis Leary, a chill filled the room.

Valerie becomes contemplative.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I mean, not that they should care about me or anything. I'm here to provide a service. But, shit, I've got problems too. But I guess that's not allowed here. I've always got to be the strong one. The funny one. The one with the answers. Sometimes I think they believe my life is a Brady Bunch episode.

(Pause)

But I guess after thirteen years of holding everything in and fixing the world I really don't have anything to tell them. Sometimes I don't know when the work persona stops and the personal takes over. Maybe they've morphed into one dysfunctional personality who's just happy to make it thorough the day with all her body parts intact.

(Pause)

I don't know, maybe I'm going too deep here. Maybe it's just me. Maybe I've always been this way. I remember when I was a kid and I broke my finger. I didn't tell my mother for three days because I didn't want to bother her.

(Valerie pauses and chuckles)

Boy, was she pissed.

(Pause)

Or the time I was bit by a dog and two friends basically beat me up and carried me home because I wasn't going to go.

(Pause)

I have a lot of those moments in my life.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

(Pause)

Maybe you do find, through some cosmic error, the perfect job for you. I mean, I do like to be around the party but I really don't like to be too involved in it. That's what a bartender is. Smiling furniture. When we're needed we're right there. When we're not, well, it's time to change the urinal cakes.

(Pause)

I guess the worst part is the times I've stood in the middle of this maelstrom, noise and commotion everywhere and I've felt totally alone. Totally detached. But it's not just here. I've been out with Alex and I'm smiling and telling stories and I feel like I'm working. Like I have to be on. Kind of like Wayne but fortunately less maniacal. But if I tell Alex I just don't want to go to another party or anywhere basically, I'd rather get a video and stay at home. . .

Valerie chuckles at this unthinkable act.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

. . .please. I looked in the dictionary and under, shit hits the fan, a picture of Alex.

(Pause)

Maybe it's all my fault. I mean, I'm a nice enough person, as Nerf Herder says, I don't kill, I don't murder, I don't manufacture atomic weapons, but I think there's a fatal flaw in my relationship gene. Maybe that's why I'm here as the center of this little universe. Because one persons devotion is not enough.

(Pause)

Whoa, that's kind of deep for this early in the day. Can I get you another?

Valerie pours another drink for the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to be bending your ear like this.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

(Pause)

No, you wise ass, I'm not going to tip you.

Valerie puts the drink down.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But, I'm glad you're here. It's nice to have someone to talk to. I've missed our little talks.

(Pause)

And I'm sorry because I know it was totally my fault that we don't speak anymore. I'm sorry. I guess I haven't had that much luck in life at soul searching talks or any time of intimate contact.

(Valerie pauses and laughs)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

No, I didn't leave skid marks on the way out of your house. I'd call it more like a peel out.

(Valerie pauses and smiles)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But, again, I am sorry. When I get close to opening up something triggers in my head. Years of trying to open up and getting that 'and I thought I was fucked up' look. Or even worse, that 'you call that a problem? I'll show you a problem' look.

(Pause)

So, after years the walls went up, barbed wire replaced my tongue and now I can't, won't or just plain don't talk to anyone. And I made it easier by taking a job where I hear complaints all day. That way I feel justified in not inflicting my damages on anyone else. At the end of the day it has become a very public isolation.

(Valerie pauses and listens)

Alex, oh yeah, that's a good one. Alex believes there isn't a problem that can't be solved without a long stiff workout. And have you ever tried to have an argument on a tread mill?

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I tried once and hyperventilated so much the overload alarm went off.

(Pause)

Had to change gyms after that.

(Pause)

And, of course, Alex was pissed.

KERRY, GEORGE and JIM enter and take their seats. George and Kerry smoke during the scene. Jim checks his watch periodically during the scene. Excuse me.

Valerie smiles and walks over to the women.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Hi guys, what can I get for you?

KERRY

A new boyfriend.

VALERIE

Oh no, not again, Kerry. I hope this time you at least disposed of the body properly.

Everyone laughs.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Okay, what happened?

KERRY

You won't believe it.

VALERIE

Probably not, but let me get your drinks first. What would you like?

KERRY

Henderbeer.

George and Jim nods in agreement.

GEORGE

Yeah, make that three.

VALERIE

Three Henderbeers.

Valerie moves to get the beers.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Keep going I can hear you.

KERRY

Okay, so, last night this cute guy from work invited me over to dinner. We've had lunch together a few times and it was pretty cool so I said yes. But then I told him I'd never reciprocate because, as you all know, I don't cook.

JIM

Yeah, she thinks kitchen is a French word meaning passageway to the backyard.

Kerry pauses waiting for everyone's attention. Valerie arrives with the beers. A police siren is barely heard drift in from outside.

KERRY

So, he asks me what I want for dinner. I couldn't believe it. Here I was expecting a nice, romantic evening and I walk in and he hasn't started dinner yet. Then he makes it worse by asking me what I want. I'm like, shit. So I try to explain that I am the guest, and in Boston the guest shows up, eats, steals something, maybe gets laid and leaves. We don't make dietary plans. And, as a personal thing, I don't cook. One time I was at a party and the hostess kept asking me how long I thought things should cook. After she explained what an oven was, I said three days. It didn't matter what it was. Three days. I figure if I remain consistent, I'll be right at least once before I die. But this jerk didn't get it so he starts questioning me, 'Do you like chicken?' 'Yes.' 'Do you like steak?' 'Yes.' It was getting a little much so when he started asking again I just screamed 'Yes.' I think he started to get the hint because he chose chicken and started to try to make amends. So I lean back and figure I'm on terra firma. Sometimes I wonder how I've come this far in life.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

He asks, 'What do you want with the chicken?' Have you ever heard the sound of a marsupial being squashed by a steam roller? Me neither. I can imagine the sound I made would be close though. Even after that dreadful sound he continues to ask. I thought maybe he was just being nice. He's not from around here so maybe this is the way they do things in Arizona. Let me tell you, if that's true, you'll never find my ass there. But he kept asking so I finally snapped and screamed, 'Listen, just pretend it's a Garanimal meal. Match up two giraffes and let's eat.'

Kerry drains her beer.

KERRY (CONT'D)

It was just so annoying.

VALERIE

Another round?

They nod yes and Valerie goes to get the beers.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Did you hear that story? Man, Alex may not be the best thing on two feet but at least I'm not out dating right now. I see more despair, disillusionment, dissatisfaction now than in any time in recent memory. It's funny because I see those same emotions from people in relationships. I mean, if the best thing you can say about your lover is they didn't bitch at you today, well, maybe it's time to try a solo career for a while before something truly asinine happens. Valerie finishes opening the bottles. Maybe Warren Zevon was right when he said, 'No ones in love this year, not even you and I.'

Valerie brings the beers to the group and then goes back to the audience.

VALERIE

And I'm pretty sure I'm not in love
this year.

GEORGE

Jim, what's the deal with looking
at your watch every two minutes?

JIM

Oh, I'm supposed to meet Kim here.

KERRY

Great.

JIM

Hey, I know you don't like her but.
. .

KERRY

. . .it's not that I don't like
her. It's just, well. . .

JIM

. . .well what?

GEORGE

Well, Jim, it's not that Kim isn't.
. .well, she's probably a wonderful
woman. . .

JIM

. . .but?

KERRY

But she's dumb as broccoli.

JIM

That's not fair. You don't know
her.

KERRY

That may be true, but isn't this
the same woman who thought the
wrist band Axis put on her was in
case she was in an accident later
they'd know what hospital to take
her to?

JIM

She wouldn't have thought that if
it wasn't for you.

KERRY

True. But she still fell for it.
That's not firing on all pistons if
you ask me.

JIM

Who asked you?

KERRY

Owww, have we touched a nerve here,
spunky?

JIM

You guys should get to know her. I
know you're opinion would change.

KERRY

Yeah, but what if it changes for
the worse?

The group sits there and drinks silently for a moment.

GEORGE

Hey, Jim, when'd you start smoking
again?

JIM

A couple weeks ago. Kim hates it.

KERRY

Uh, Jim, correct me if I'm wrong,
but doesn't she smoke?

JIM

Yes.

KERRY

But she doesn't like it when you
smoke?

JIM

Right. That's why I don't do it
when she's around. She loves me
that's why she doesn't want me to
smoke.

KERRY

Oh, so it has nothing to do with
the fact that you once burned down
a house.

JIM
Not at all. She doesn't even know
about that.

KERRY
Jim, don't you realize she'll smell
the smoke on you?

Jim is alarmed.

JIM
No she won't. Will she?

George nods yes.

GEORGE
Of course.

Jim gets jittery.

KERRY
And what if she comes in and sees
you smoking. Won't she freak?

Jim turns and looks at the door. Another siren is softly
heard.

JIM
Shit.

Jim takes a big drag off of the cigarette.

KERRY
Don't worry, I'll watch the door
for you.

JIM
Thanks.

KERRY
No problem, but that doesn't solve
the smoke on your clothes and your
breath problem.

JIM
Well, I'll just go into the men's
room before. . .

KERRY
. . .there she is.

Jim leans over quickly, bangs his head on the bar and tries
to hide the cigarette.

KERRY (CONT'D)
Whoops, nope, sorry, wasn't her.
I'll be more careful next time. You
okay?

Jim nods yes and rubs his head.

KERRY (CONT'D)
So, George, how are we going to
solve Jim's smoke smell problem?

George is in intense concentration. Finally, he comes to a
solution.

GEORGE
Fruit.

KERRY
Fruit. Perfect.

GEORGE
Citrus fruit.

KERRY
Ahh, citrus fruit. Even better.

GEORGE
Yeah, that's it, fruit. Citrus.
Valerie?

George waves to Valerie who walks over.

VALERIE
Yes?

GEORGE
Could I please have a bunch of
piece of lemons, limes and orange
slices?

Valerie looks at George quizzically but halfheartedly nods
yes and gets the fruit.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Thank you, Valerie.

Valerie looks at the group, nods her head and walks away.

JIM
So I'm going to eat them?

GEORGE

Well, no, not exactly. What you
have to do is. . .

KERRY

. . .there she is.

Jim almost falls off his chair in an effort to hide the
cigarette. Kerry helps to steady Jim.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Oh, no, sorry, just someone walking
by. But it is good to stay ever
vigilant, isn't it?

JIM

Thanks. Now, back to the fruit.
What am I going to do with it?

GEORGE

Well. . .

Chuck screams out in drunken revelry as Jim dives for cover.

CHUCK

. . .I'm listening to the fucking
song. What a great line. Classic.

KERRY

Damn, that guy's taking over my
job.

Jim regains what little composure he has.

GEORGE

Like I was saying, just eating the
fruit won't get rid of the stench
on your face or clothes.

Jim nods in agreement.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So what you'll have to do is
squeeze the juice onto your face
and clothes.

KERRY

That'll do it.

JIM

Does that really work?

GEORGE

Oh sure, I used it all the time to
cover pot smoke from my parents.

Jim picks up a piece of fruit.

JIM

So what do I do exactly?

GEORGE

Squeeze it between two. . .

KERRY

. . .she's here.

Jim bangs his head into the fruit.

KERRY (CONT'D)

False alarm. It's amazing how many
people who walk by look like her.

Jim pulls the fruit off of his head.

GEORGE

I think your foreheads covered.
Let's concentrate on the rest of
your face.

Jim holds a piece of fruit between two fingers. Squeeze it.
Jim gives it a light squeeze

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No, man, you really got to squeeze
if it's going to work. But, hey, if
you don't want to do it. . .

JIM

. . .no, I do. I. . .okay, let's do
it.

Jim squeezes the fruit and it sprays all over his face. He
comes back all squinting and nodding. Kind of stings.

KERRY

It's a small price to pay for
subterfuge. I think you missed a
spot over there.

Jim continues to spray his face with fruit. I think that's
drained.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Try another.

Jim picks up another piece and follows the points of George and Kerry for the next juice hit. Valerie walks over.

VALERIE
What's going on here?

GEORGE
Scurvy.

George pauses as Valerie smiles wearily.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Just kidding. He has some small motor function problems. Valerie shakes her head in amazement and walks away. KIM walks in.

KERRY
Here's Kim.

Jim continues spraying his face.

JIM
Yeah, right. You're not going to get me this time. Have I covered everything?

George nods.

KIM
Hi honey.

Jim jumps off the chair. Cigarettes and fruit fly everywhere.

JIM
Hey, honey. How was your day?

Jim and Kim kiss. Kim pulls away and takes a step back.

KIM
Have you been smoking?

Jim looks shocked by this accusation.

JIM
No, it's from her. She's been smoking since we got here. Kerry smiles and waves her cigarette.

Kim starts wiping her face.

KIM
And why are you so sticky?

JIM
Oh, umm. . .ah. . .

George knows Jim can't extricate himself from this so he answers.

GEORGE
. . .we had a fruit salad for
lunch. And you know what a slob he
is.

Kim accepts that.

KIM
Oh good. You don't eat right.

Kim smiles at George.

KIM (CONT'D)
Thank you for steering him in the
right direction, George.

GEORGE
You're more than welcome.

KIM
Honey, why don't you go wash up?

JIM
In a minute. How come you're so
late?

Kim is full of amazement.

KIM
I can't believe what I did. I was
leaving work and totally forgot
what the name of this bar was. So,
I'm driving down and I think I see
your car in this parking lot so I
pull in there.

Kim is astonished.

KIM (CONT'D)
It was called Squire's or something
like that. So I walked in and do
you know what I saw?

Everyone pauses as Kim stands there dumbfounded. George answers like he's talking to the dumbest person on the planet.

GEORGE
Naked people?

Kim is profusely happy George said it and she didn't have to.

KIM
Yes! So, I started walking around
looking for you.

Kim adds an aside.

KIM (CONT'D)
You know, the men in there were
real friendly to me. I was walking
around wondering why you would want
to meet me here. But, I couldn't
find you and was feeling weird
because the girl on the stage she
was. . . well. . . she was. . .you
know.

George and Kerry are seriously listening to this knowing they
have a great story for later if they don't break up. Jim is
torn between interrupting Kim's story to save further
humiliation and being the nodding, dutiful boyfriend.

KERRY
What was she doing?

Kim address the Kerry like she is imparting some secret
information.

KIM
She was pushing her. . you know up
in the air.

Kerry and George fight back the grins. Jim is incredulous.
And her things were just bouncing all over the place. Now Kim
stands her ground.

KIM (CONT'D)
So, after I walked around a couple
more times. . .

KERRY
. . .just to be on the safe side,
right?

KIM
Yes.

Kim really thinks that Kerry truly understands her.

KIM (CONT'D)
Then I went out to my car and
checked my calendar and saw the
name of this place.

Kim looks around the bar.

KIM (CONT'D)
A much nicer place.

Kim thinks for a second and her expression gets serious.

KIM (CONT'D)
Honey, you've never been in a place
like that, have you?

Jim's answer is quick and deliberate.

JIM
No.

And a lie. George and Kerry laugh. Kim looks from George and
Kerry to Jim and back.

GEORGE
Oh no, he's never been in there.

KIM
You haven't, right?

JIM
What did George say?

Kim looks at George and he lays the sarcasm on strong.

GEORGE
Oh, no. Jim, to the best of my
knowledge, has never been in the
Squire. And he was definitely not
there with me last week.

George looks at Jim.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
That wasn't you who borrowed the
twenty for that blonde, was it,
Jim?

Kerry laughs and Kim looks at Jim who shakes his head and
points at George.

JIM
No. It wasn't.

Jim smiles at Kim and takes her hand.

JIM (CONT'D)
He's always kidding. You know how
he is. Jim and Kim nods.

Yes, they know how George is.

KIM
I'm glad to hear that, honey.
(Kim pauses and her
expression becomes
serious)
I don't know how those girls do
that.

Kerry stands up and starts shaking like a stripper.

KERRY
Like this.

Valerie walks over to take Kim's order.

VALERIE
And what can I get for you?

Before Kim answers, Chuck's big scene begins and he really gets into it. It's obvious he's had a few too many. His speech is slurred and demeanor has turned for the worst.

CHUCK
Hey, hey, here it is. Here's my
scene. Pay attention you worthless
wretches.

Customers look up momentarily but quickly go back to what they were doing. Kim is appalled at this.

KIM
Umm, no thank you. I think we'll be
leaving now.

Jim jumps up.

JIM
Yes, let's go, guys.

KERRY
No way, I want to see how this
turns out.

Kim is shocked that Kerry would remain here and watch this debasement.

GEORGE
I've already seen this.

George stands up.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
The butler did it. Come on, Kerry,
let's go.

KERRY
You're no fun.

Kerry gets up and starts to exit with the others.

KERRY (CONT'D)
Hey, would anyone object to
stopping by the Squire? I want to
check in and see if I'm on the
schedule.

George laughs as Jim hustles Kim out of the bar looking over his shoulder at a laughing George and Kerry. Chuck watches the group exit with obvious disdain.

CHUCK
You'd all die for a moment of glory
like mine. I've experienced a
feeling you'll never know you bunch
of sniveling. . .

Valerie has made her way over to Chuck.

VALERIE
. . .hey, hey, hey, it's a public
place, Chuck. Could you keep it
down a little?

CHUCK
These people are assholes. They'll
never know the glory of working
with a pro like Paul. A real
gentleman, you know, Valerie?

VALERIE
Or so the rumor goes.

Valerie pulls his glass away. Chuck drunkenly rises and smiles at Valerie.

CHUCK

And the director, George Roy Hill.
Brilliant. Did I ever tell you I
almost got a part in the movie he
did, 'The World According To Garp'?

VALERIE

That's what I've heard.

CHUCK

And the writer, Nancy Dowd, went on
to write. . .

VALERIE

. . . 'Coming Home' but we haven't
heard much from her recently. Yeah,
I heard something to that effect.
Why don't you go and get some rest,
Chuck? I'll see you tomorrow for
another screening.

Chuck nods at Valerie in that drunken 'you're the only one
who understands' manner.

CHUCK

You're one of the good ones, you
know Valerie? One of the good ones.
Just like Newman.

Chuck begins wobbling out.

VALERIE

Or so the rumor goes.

Valerie watches Chuck leave and address the audience.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Like I said, every day. Now where
was I?

(Pause)

Oh yeah. Alex just doesn't get it
when I come home from watching a
parade human foibles all day and
I'm totally wiped. Alex doesn't
think this is a real job. Like
sitting in an office is more of a
job then anything I could ever do.
Alex can't understand why I'd be
tired. Like all I do all day and
walk to the fridge to get people a
beer. I mean, how difficult can
that be?

Valerie pauses getting a little agitated.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But no one I've ever been with has thought this was a real job. It used to piss me off a lot. But I was talking to an older bartender at the last place I worked and he said no one will ever understand because our vocation is their avocation. When he told me that, I was like, yeah, right, move on to the old bartenders home, buddy. But the more I thought about it the more it made sense. This is my job. I'm hardly ever here if I'm not getting paid. Maybe an after shift drink, but when that's done, I'm gone. Everyone else who steps through the door is here because they choose to be. They see my job from there side. And I understand that. They don't see the times when I have to scrape the crud out of the keg room. Or listen to all of these heart wrenching problems. You know what's worse than listening to these conversations? When people want my opinion and actually do what I tell them. What's with that? What makes me any kind of authority? I mean, shit, if these people knew how truly messed up my life is they'd never ask me to pick a wine much less solve complex personal matters.

(Pause)

I don't know what it is in my personality that has to screw up relationships. It's like every relationship I've ever been in is like a hockey game. Three twenty minute periods with the rare overtime. The first period is always full of energy and anticipation. By the second period you've already found the chinks in their defense and you start finding ways to get around it. This is always the period of most annoyance. It's also the make or break period.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

By the third you may be up a goal or two up so you lie back and wait for them to get anxious and start making mistakes you can capitalize on and that leads to the end of the relationship. Relationships are also like hockey because if you make a mistake you can end up with a painful groin injury. So, using this analogy, Alex and I are in overtime and the clocks ticking down.

(Pause)

I've spent a lot of time thinking about this and I'm pretty sure even the overtime is ticking down and it's going to send up an uneventful tie.

(Valerie pauses and comes back strong)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

But I'm definitely not as bad as I was in my twenties. Shit. Every lover I had was seasonal. For fall I'd pick a real romantic. The warmth of being held on a crisp autumnal day was always appealing to me. But, that lover was usually a bore by Pearl Harbor day. The funny thing is I'd break up with them before Christmas but they'd have already purchased my gifts. So, in that respect, it worked out well. The winter lover was always the best or at least the most adventurous lover. What do you expect? I hate the cold so we wouldn't go out much, so let the experimentation begin. By the beginning of April I was pretty sore and ready to move on to spring. This was usually the ever popular tortured artist type. I'd sit and listen to how misunderstood they were and then we'd fall into emotionally distracting sex. I always seemed to get a rash from this one. And then there was the summer.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I think most fondly of the summers because, although they were usually the stupidest of the bunch, but I think I did that on purpose in direct response to the tortured soul of spring, and the sex was usually drunk and sloppy. They were usually the best looking ones.

(Pause)

And, probably because I worked tourist towns during the summers, the richest. By the end of the summer I'd at least have some nice jewelry.

(Valerie pauses and chuckles)

The funny part is most of it's tarnished over the years.

(Pause)

Now I feel I'm a little more stable. I'm not sure if that's because I've learned anything with my assorted assignations or I'm just more frightened that maybe there isn't anyone out there that will ever truly get me. I don't think I'm that complicated but I would like to feel at home in someones arms. Not like it's just a rental.

(Pause)

So when I looked at them I knew I was safe and loved and understood and desired. I've felt at least one of each with most people I've been with and a couple with a few, but never each part. If I could take the best parts of each person I've ever loved and made a lover souffle then maybe I'd be happy.

(Pause)

But then again, I'd probably just over cook it and it would fall.

(Pause)

As time goes on I feel less and less likely that there is such a thing as a perfect anything. This sure as hell isn't the perfect job but almost every day there are a few moments that make it, well, not great, but enjoyable. Like today it was you being here. And every couple of weeks I remember why I'm with Alex.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

It's fun but afterwards it makes me sad that I can live off one good moment for two weeks. What happened to the word gleeful? When was the last time you were gleeful?

(Pause)

Probably decades. But kids are gleeful dozens of times a day. Like the time I was over a friend's house and his son jumped on my lap and we were playing. I was twisting his face into a balloon. Just kid stuff and then, all of a sudden he jumped off my lap and rushed, just as urgently, to his father. I figured my allotted time was over and then the kid farted on his father and rushed back to me laughing maniacally. This was a perfect moment in his life. His father's on the other hand, well, I hope he's had better.

(Pause)

I guess I'd just like that feeling of pure joy. I honestly can't remember when I last had it.

(Pause)

Maybe that's one reason I have trouble committing to anything. The only time I come close is when something is new. A new lover, job, CD, whatever. But for as happy as that makes me in the moment it fades just as quickly.

Valerie looks around the bar and Ron is signaling for another drink.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Like some shiny jewelry that's tarnished over the years.

Valerie gets Ron's drink. Roger bursts into the bar looking pale and frantic. Everyone stares at him. This is obviously unusual behavior for Roger. He stands there silently for a few moments. Valerie regains her composure and starts to move to the cash register.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Two times in one day. This must be a special occasion.

Valerie opens the register.

ROGER

No.

Roger's bellow startles everyone. Roger is a man of few words and even fewer loud. Everyone is still for a moment.

VALERIE

Okay, no quarters. How about a beer?

Roger looks around the bar and walks towards Ron. He reaches Ron before speaking.

ROGER

Wayne's dead.

Everyone is surprised. The normal human instinct of disbelief coupled with the fact they just saw him multiplies that feeling. Although they want to speak no one can.

Everyone is riveted to Roger.

ROGER (CONT'D)

He jumped off his building and busted open his head. Roger thinks for a moment. I've never seen blood so red.

Roger looks at Ron.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Red as one of those fast sports cars.

Everyone is quiet for a moment. Roger has nothing more to add so he finishes his message.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Just thought you'd like to know.

Roger turns and exits the bar. Everyone remains silent as Roger leaves. Valerie and Ron exchange looks as Ron closes up his computer and Valerie addresses the audience.

VALERIE

Shit.

Valerie pauses. Ron stands up and collects his stuff.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I guess you never know what's truly on someone else's mind. No matter how many hours you spend talking to them you don't know what they're hiding from you.

RON

I'll talk to you later. I'm going to check on his mother.

Valerie nods and Ron exits.

VALERIE

I don't know what to say. You have all of those feelings of waste and confusion but there's another, deeper, feeling of nothingness.

(Pause)

I feel real bad about that. But, to be honest, I don't even know his last name. I mean, I know his stage name, but it's not his real name. I probably don't know the last names of more than a dozen of these people who have been my theoretical friends for the last three years. I've bound myself with all of these transitory friendships for so long I don't know how to get deeper than the surface with anyone. I'm not sure if I'm protecting them or myself. It's like if I dug deeper and cared more I may get into something I cannot control. If I didn't keep moving people would find out what an absolute fake I am. If I wasn't acting for everyone, giving them what they want, being who they want, there'd be nothing for them to like.

(Pauses)

Because I don't like me. I look at myself in the mirror and see a girlfriend, a bartender, a sister, a daughter, but I really don't see a person. Maybe I never have.

(Pause)

No, that's not true. When I was a kid, the last time I felt gleeful, I was a person. I was myself. I gave and accepted love. I trusted and was without artifice.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I guess the first time we conform to someone else's wishes is the beginning of the end of being our own person.

(Pause)

I guess that's what drove Wayne to the end. He was always his own, albeit demented, person.

(Pause)

It's funny but, everyone thought he was totally nuts, but he was the only one here that remembered my birthday every year.

(Pause)

And I didn't even know his last name.

(Pause)

I guess his mask slipped and he couldn't hide from himself any longer. I'm not making excuses or saying he's justified. Suicide is the most selfish act I can think of. But I can understand why he jumped. Who can't? I guess the reason I don't is because I want to see if this place gets better. If one day I can just be in a place where I trust that everyone is going to be kind and fair and. . .and friends.

(Pause)

I guess Wayne just got tired of waiting.

(Valerie pauses and comes back angry)

But I'm not going to wait anymore. This is a ridiculous way to live. Who says you have to wait for it to get better? Maybe that's the path to gleefulness. Kids don't wait to be happy they just are. But as an adult you always wait for something better. A lover, a job, ten new cable channels. Everything. But who says you have to?

(Valerie pauses, looks around disgusted at her surroundings)

That's it. It's time to see what's really behind this mask. It's time to make my own glee. I'm going to call my friend's at the Puma and tell them I'll be there as soon as I can.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

(Valerie pauses and
smiles)

Okay, I'll tell them I'll be there
in two days. Decisiveness. That'll
be my new motto.

(Valerie pauses and
smiles)

Well, that and pass the sun block.

(Valerie smiles then looks
sad for a moment)

Aww, you have to go? I'm sorry I
chewed your ear off. I guess there
were a few things pent up inside,
wouldn't you say? Valerie laughs.
Thank you. I'll send you a post
card from Bonaire.

(Pause)

Alex? Oh well. Our entire
relationship was like getting
psyched up for a vacation and
staring out the window as it rained
every day. Thanks again for
stopping by.

Valerie pauses and smiles watching the audience leave until
she hears the door open and close. Valerie goes back and
starts clearing the bar. After Valerie clears the bar she
writes a note.

Before she finishes KATRINA walks in and heads behind the
bar.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Hi Katrina.

Katrina stows her stuff.

KATRINA

Hi. What's going on outside?
There're cops and ambulances all
over the place. I had to circle
around and park a mile down the
street.

Valerie answers with hardly any emotion. She is already out
of this place.

VALERIE

Wayne took a dry dive.

KATRINA

Yeah? Shit. That sucks.

Katrina starts checking out the bar.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
Oh well, he was a lousy tipper
anyway.

Katrina changes the complexion of the bar. She changes the
channel and music videos begin.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
Need anything stocked?

VALERIE
No, you're pretty well set.

KATRINA
All right then, I'll see you
tomorrow.

Valerie collects her tips off the bar and puts them in her
cup and pours the entire cup into her bag.

ALEX enters the bar. Valerie looks up and smiles as she
finishes her note.

VALERIE
Be right there, Alex.

Valerie puts her coat on and looks around the bar again and
gives the note to Katrina.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Give this to Charlie, will you?

Katrina nods and puts the note in the cash register without
looking at it. Then she walks out from behind the bar and
greet's Alex a little standoffishly. Alex notices but doesn't
pursue the matter.

ALEX
What's going on down the street?

VALERIE
I'll tell you later. We have a lot
to talk about.

KATRINA
See you tomorrow, Valerie.

Valerie looks around and smiles.

VALERIE
I don't think so.

The two women exit the bar. Katrina looks around, sees that she has nothing to do, leans on the bar and starts watching the videos. The door opens and, again, no one comes in.

KATRINA
Hey, what's up?

Katrina pours a beer.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
Yeah, I guess Wayne pulled a Humpty Dumpty. Hey, he was cracked in the cranium anyway.
(Pause)
Oh, you missed it. After you left yesterday that girl who was out of her mind?
(Pause)
Well, she decided I was on crack. Yeah and she started telling everyone.
(Pause)
Yeah. I must of had five people ask to buy from me. All because I snapped at her because she kept calling my name every thirty seconds. I've got to tell you, if she comes in here again during one of my shifts I'm not going to serve her. She's a psycho. I bet she's the one who's into rubber like Doc's mentioned.

The door opens and a GROUP of people walk in. Katrina appraises the group with disdain.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
Let the malfunctions begin. Oh, wait till I tell you what Scott did last night. He's dead.

Katrina walks to the group and is now all smiles.

KATRINA (CONT'D)
Hi, what can I do for you all on this lovely day?

FADE TO BLACK.