COFFEE & INSPIRATION

By

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EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - DREAM

GABE, 28, walks through a crowd of people. He wears a nice suit and walks along with confidence. He shuffles past a few people standing in his way before he stops, his gaze fixed up ahead.

In the distance, staring directly back at him is CAM, 26, and wearing an eye patch. He cocks his head slightly to the side and raises a menacing eyebrow, peering at Gabe with his good eye.

Gabe takes a deep breath as a look of determination crosses his face. He takes two steps toward Cam, but stops suddenly at the sound of a hard stopping car.

Gabe turns his attention to the street just in time to see JILL, 27, get creamed by a speeding car.

INT. GABE’S APARTMENT - DAY - REALITY

Gabe quickly sits up from his kitchen table, a piece of notebook paper stuck to the side of his face. He screams briefly in terror.

He comes to his senses and snatches the paper from his face. He looks over to see Cam, standing at the counter and sipping from a cup of coffee. The eye patch is gone, but the menacing eyebrow remains.

CAM
Another late night?

GABE
Yep.

CAM
Didn’t get much done either I take it.

GABE
How can you tell?

CAM
That paper you just tore off your face was blank.

Gabe taps a finger against the side of his head.

GABE
I just don’t get it. I got ideas up here, but I can’t get anything down.
CAM
I know what your problem is.

GABE
What?

CAM
Seems to me that every time you get a little flow going, you think about Jill dying some horrible death. It happened again didn’t it?

GABE
Huh? No.

CAM
Don’t bullshit a bullshitter, Gabe. I saw you snap to a minute ago.

GABE
Ok, fine. It did, alright?

CAM
And how did the fair maiden meet her untimely doom this time around?

GABE
Hit by a car.

CAM
Damn, that’s cold. I think your problem can only mean one of three things.

GABE
I’m listening.

CAM
One, you’ve got the weirdest case of writers block I’ve ever seen. Two, you’re a shitty writer...

Gabe opens his mouth to speak, but Cam raises a hand to stop him.

CAM
...now now, hear me out. Or three, you’re completely obsessed. Now since we’ve been friends for quite some time and I know you make a
CAM
decent living with your writing,
I’d have to go with the last
one. Obsession.

GABE
I guess it’s possible.

CAM
In which case I have one simple
piece of advice for you.

GABE
Being?

CAM
Snap the fuck out of it! She’s
gone, man. She’s gone and we live
here now, and the reason we live
here now is so you could get away
from all of that shit and work on
your book.

GABE
I’ve been working on the book. I’m
just not getting anywhere. And it
certainly doesn’t help when I can’t
think of any characters besides me
and you.

Cam places a hand over his eye.

CAM
What about the eye patch? Did you
use the eye patch like I told you?

GABE
Yeah.

CAM
Fuck. I thought that would be
badass.

GABE
Sorry to disappoint you.

CAM
Ah, screw it. What you need to do
is get out of this place. You’ve
been locked away in this hole since
we got here.

Gabe nods his head in agreement.
GABE
I suppose I could head down to that coffee shop we saw.

CAM
A capital idea! There’s all kinds of nut jobs in places like that.

GABE
Then I guess that’s where I’m going.

CAM
You, uh, think you can give me a ride to work on your way down?

GABE
Are you serious?

CAM
Hey, I think it’s the least you can do after I helped you out like that.

GABE
Where am I going to park?

Cam stares at Gabe in awe.

CAM
You’re shitting me right? I tell you what, I’ll drive.

Gabe grabs his notebook and pen off the table and stands up.

GABE
Let’s just go.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - DREAM

Cam and Gabe sit on a motorcycle at a red light. Another motorcycle pulls up alongside them.

The RIDER looks over to Cam, flips up the face mask of his helmet, points at Cam, then at the light.

Cam revs the engine of the motorcycle.

CAM
Oh yeah!
The light turns green and the other motorcycle takes off, barreling right into Jill, who stands in the middle of the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - REALITY

Gabe snaps to. Cam jumps a little bit from the sudden jolt, but continues pedaling the bicycle that they’re riding.

Gabe stands on a set of pegs mounted to the back wheel and there’s a basket mounted to the handlebars.

CAM
What the hell, man. We almost wiped out.

GABE
Sorry. My foot slipped.

Cam pulls the bike up to a building entrance and gets off.

CAM
Thanks for the ride.

GABE
Shouldn’t I be saying that to you?

CAM
No need to stress the technicalities. I’ll swing by the coffee shop when I’m done.

GABE
What if I’m not there?

CAM
Your ass better be there. I need a ride home. I’ll see ya.

Cam gives Gabe a sly wink and heads inside his building. Gabe takes a seat on the bike and pedals off.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Gabe pulls up next to a lamppost. He chains the bike up and looks to a sign in the window of coffee shop that says OPEN 24 HOURS.

Gabe cracks a small smile and heads inside, notebook in hand.
INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Gabe stands in the doorway of the coffee shop. There's a cook, DEL, 35 in the kitchen area, a waitress, BARB, 48, standing at the counter, and a man and woman, KEITH and VALERIE, both 23, sitting in a booth on the far side.

Barb waves a hand in the air, scanning the entire diner.

    BARB
    Anywhere you want is fine, hon.

Gabe nods and looks to his left before moving to a booth near the back. He takes a seat and from his viewpoint can see the entire diner. He sets the notebook down in front of him.

He stares briefly at the young couple before Barb comes over, setting down a glass of water and a menu in front of him.

    BARB
    We got meatloaf on special today.

    GABE
    Just coffee thanks.

Barb walks back behind the counter, retrieving a pot of coffee and a mug. She returns and pours Gabe a cup. She gives him a once over look.

    BARB
    You new around here?

    GABE
    Yeah, how’d you guess?

    BARB
    Never seen you in here before, and you don’t really look like you’re from around here. Maybe the city.

    GABE
    Hey, that’s pretty good. I am from the city.

    BARB
    You work here long enough and you start to get a knack for it.

    GABE
    I’d say so. Is this the usual crowd this time of day?
We get regulars popping in and out, but it’s generally not too busy. It usually works out better that way when we got stuff like that going on.

She motions to Keith and Valerie seated at the booth. Gabe turns his attention to them briefly, looking at Keith who’s facing him. Gabe watches him stare longingly at Valerie for a moment before turning back to Barb.

Two people in love doesn’t seem like such a bad thing.

Just hold on a second.

Keith leans in toward Valerie, the look of longing still in his eyes.

I’m sorry, Keith. I just can’t do it.

But why?

How many times do we have to go over this? I just don’t want to be tied down right now.

You suddenly realize this after four years?

Well, yeah.

Then why did you keep getting on me about proposing?

Because I thought that’s what I wanted, but I guess things change.

I don’t know about things, but you’ve certainly changed.
VALERIE
That’s not true.

KEITH
Of course it’s true. One minute you want to spend the rest of your life with me, and the next you can’t be tied down.

VALERIE
What am I supposed to say?

KEITH
Say anything. I’m an asshole, I’m ugly, you feel the sudden urge to go out and get railed by seventeen guys over the course of two weeks. Whatever, just give me something.

Valerie tears up.

VALERIE
Is that what you think this is about? That I want to sleep with other men?

KEITH
I don’t know what it is, Val. I’m just trying to make sense of it all. If I know the problem, maybe I can fix it.

VALERIE
You wanna know the truth?

KEITH
Isn’t that what I’ve been saying? I think I’m entitled to it.

VALERIE
You don’t respect me.

KEITH
What are you talking about? Of course I respect you.

VALERIE
It’s those little comments you make all the time, like the one you just said. Like I’m a whore or something.
KEITH
I don’t think you’re a whore.

VALERIE
I’m sorry, I just don’t believe you. I have to go.

KEITH
Wait. I thought we were going to talk this out.

Gabe still watches Keith from afar, and sees his look of longing suddenly transform into one of sadness and frustration.

GABE
What just happened there?

BARB
Hon, you just witnessed one person profess their love to another, only to have the other person not reciprocate.

GABE
You can tell all that just by looking at them?

BARB
Sure. They got the right body language, they’re speaking in hushed tones so nobody, or rather I, can’t hear them. Classic heartbreak story.

Valerie quickly gets up from the booth and makes her way to the exit.

KEITH
Wait, don’t go. Please!

Valerie leaves without ever turning back. Barb and Gabe stare at Keith as he rests his face in his hands. He looks up to see the two staring.

KEITH
What’s the matter? Never saw someone get dumped before? Can I get some more coffee please?

Barb turns back to Gabe with a smirk on her face.
GABE
Well, uh...

Gabe looks for a name tag.

BARB
It’s Barb.

GABE
...well you certainly know your stuff, Barb.

BARB
I quit wearing the name tag cause it kept stabbing me in the tit.

Gabe chuckles a little.

GABE
Sorry to hear that.

BARB
It’s a job hazard. You let me know if you need anything else, alright?

GABE
Will do.

Barb heads over to Keith and refills his coffee. Gabe opens up his notebook, flipping through various pages that are loaded with small notes written in various colors of ink.

He finds a blank page and writes briefly before looking upward and tapping his chin with his pen.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT - DREAM

Gabe stands in the middle of the nearly empty parking lot, holding a briefcase and looking around.

After a moment, Barb appears dressed in a brown overcoat and cautiously looking around.

BARB
So, you want info. Is that right?

Gabe nods in agreement.

BARB
You got the cash?

Gabe hands Barb the briefcase. She looks around again, before opening it up. It’s filled with money.
BARB
Ok, this will do.

She closes the case.

BARB
It isn’t easy to know the source of one’s writers block, especially in a case as unusual as yours. Luckily, you’ve come to the right person.

GABE
Go on.

BARB
It took me a little while to figure things out, but I can say with the utmost certainty that your block is being caused by...

Gabe rubs his hands together in anticipation.

GABE
Yes, yes. What is it?

Barb pulls a .38 from her jacket, firing it right next to Gabe’s head. Gabe turns around to see Jill falling to the ground, a bullet hole in her forehead.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - REALITY

Gabe shakes his head, snapping out of his daydream. Barb stands next to the table, coffee pot in hand.

BARB
You alright?

GABE
Uh, yeah. Just a little thing I have when I’m working. You see, I’m a writer...

BARB
I know.

GABE
...but I’ve had this weird block lately where every time I get into thinking about a story it ends with my ex dying a terrible death.
BARB
Oh a romance novelist.

Gabe laughs.

BARB
Do you always just zone out like that?

GABE
Only when I get an idea, and talking to you kinda gave me one.

BARB
It did?

GABE
Sure.

BARB
And here I thought I was just a crummy waitress.

GABE
Nah, you’re not a crummy waitress.

Keith walks up to Barb and hands her the check and a ten dollar bill.

KEITH
Yeah she is. I’ve been waiting for her to grab that for twenty minutes.

BARB
Sorry about that.

KEITH
No worries. Keep the change, and thanks for the advice. Have a good day.

BARB
You too.

Keith smiles and exits the diner. Gabe watches him walk down the street with a spring in his step. He looks back to Barb once he’s out of sight.

GABE
Advice?
BARB
Just the usual. There’s many fish in the sea, someone for everyone. You know.

Barb slides into the booth across from Gabe.

BARB
So, what kind of writer are you?

GABE
I make my money writing freelance for magazines, but what I’m working on here is the great American novel.

BARB
What’s it about?

GABE
Honestly, I don’t know. At this point all I have are a bunch of notes and no story structure at all. All of my ideas and dreams seem to revolve around a spy or detective type character.

BARB
I suppose that could be interesting. I’m curious about something though.

GABE
What’s that?

BARB
Why come here? You said you’re from the city, and I’d think there’d be more to draw from there than here.

GABE
It would seem that way, but I literally hit a wall when my ex took off.

BARB
Oh, that’s too bad. Well, good luck with it. I’m sure you’ll come around.
GABE
Thanks.

A knock at the window causes Gabe and Barb to turn their attention.

Outside the window, waving and smiling at Barb is JACK AMSTERDAM, 28, and sharply dressed in a black tuxedo.

Gabe follows him with his eyes as he makes his way toward the door.

BARB
This just might be your lucky day.

Gabe cocks his brow in curiosity as Jack enters the coffee shop. He stands in the doorway with his arms outstretched as Barb walks over and gives him a hug.

Jack pulls back, but still embraces Barb’s arms.

JACK
How ya been, Babs?

BARB
Been good, Jack, real good. Where have you been?

JACK
You know how it goes. Little of this, little of that. I’ve been around.

BARB
Well it sure as hell ain’t been the same around here without you. Good to have you back.

JACK
Good to be back. How bout a cup of the old java?

BARB
You got it.

Barb walks over to Gabe’s table, grabs the coffee pot, and turns around. She nods her head at Gabe.

BARB
I was just talking to Gabe here about his book.
JACK
Ah, a wordsmith. I bet you make some good bread doing that.

GABE
If I get ideas.

BARB
Yeah, he’s got a bit of a block lately.

Barb sheepishly smiles.

BARB
Sorry.

GABE
Hey, it’s the truth.

Barb goes behind the counter, grabs a mug, and places it in front of Jack who takes a seat at one of the stools.

She fills the mug, and snaps her fingers, her eyes lit up in revelation.

BARB
You always have interesting stories, Jack. Maybe Gabe can use something.

JACK
Nah, who wants to read about some guy’s adventures on the road?

GABE
It worked for Kerouac.

Jack smiles and nods in agreement.

JACK
Good point.

Jack grabs his coffee cup and stands up, he peeks into the kitchen area to see Del, chopping up some onions.

JACK
Hey Del, you don’t say hello to your best customer anymore?

Del looks out into the dining area, and cracks a huge smile. He walks out, wiping his hands on his apron, and shakes Jack’s hand. Del wipes away a tear.
JACK
No need to cry about it.

DEL
Nah, it’s just the damn onions again.

JACK
So how’s things?

DEL
Same shit, different day. You know how it is. You?

JACK
The same. Just got back into town.

DEL
Where’d you go?

JACK
Wherever the money was.

DEL
That a boy. Can I get you something?

Jack raises his coffee cup.

JACK
Nah, just the coffee for now. Maybe later.

DEL
Alright, well I better go finish up with those onions. Good seeing ya, Jack.

JACK
Same here. I’ll be around.

Del heads back to the kitchen. Jack walks over to Gabe’s booth and takes a seat across from him, extending his hand.

JACK

Gabe shakes his hand.

GABE
Gabe.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment.
JACK
So, how does this work?

Gabe shrugs his shoulders.

GABE
I don’t know really. I never interviewed anyone like this before. Uh, what do you do?

JACK
For a living?

GABE
Yeah.

JACK
I’m a lounge singer.

GABE
Really? Like night clubs and things like that?

JACK
Night clubs, hotel bars, weddings, bar mitzvahs. Anywhere I can get paid.

GABE
Is there a big call for that?

JACK
Sure. Not too many people do what I do anymore.

GABE
What do you mean?

JACK
I keep it old school. Dino, Old Blue Eyes, Nat King Cole. I’m a throwback.

Gabe stares at his coffee cup in front of him, Jack’s last statement echoing through his head.

JACK (V.O)
I’m a throwback. A throwback...throwback.
INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM

Cam, in his villainous eye patch mode, stands over Barb who is tied to a chair. A large glass box hangs overhead, with a small silver globe attached to its ceiling.

Cam laughs maniacally as he walks in circles around the chair.

CAM
Did you really think that by selling the secret of the writer’s block, it would actually be able to stop it. You fool!

The sound of a zippo opening causes Cam to divert his attention away from Barb. The zippo lights a cigarette in the darkness, and the tiny orange glow moves into the light to reveal Jack.

JACK
Looks like you missed the memo, one eye. There’s a new sheriff in town.

Cam looks at Jack in wonder.

CAM
Who are you?

Jack strikes a heroic pose and takes a drag from his cigarette.

JACK
The name’s Amsterdam.

Jack exhales and the smoke lingers above his head as he keeps his gaze fixed on Cam.

JACK
Jack...Amsterdam.

CAM
The singing secret agent?

JACK
You got it.

CAM
You’ll never stop me! I have an eye patch!

Cam runs over to a lever on the wall. He pulls it down and the glass case above Barb slowly makes its way down.
Jack crouches down slightly and looks up at the case.

Barb struggles in the chair.

    BARB
    Help me, Jack, help me.

Cam laughs maniacally.

    CAM
    When the case lowers over her, the
    orb will open and poisonous gas
    will soon start to fill it, and
    soon after...she will die.

Cam laughs even louder now. Jack looks to the ground, spotting a large rock. He picks it up and throws it at Cam, hitting him in the head and knocking him out instantly.

Jack quickly rushes over and unties Barb. The two of them grab Cam and slide him under the glass case just before it hits the ground with a loud thud.

The thud awakens Cam, and he presses his face and hands up against the glass in desperation as green gas fills the case. He coughs and slowly sulks to the ground.

Barb looks to Jack.

    BARB
    Well, that was kinda easy.

Jack points toward the sky.

    JACK
    Yeah. I think our writer up there
    needs to come up with a better
    villain.

Cam pops up and bangs against the glass, standing just enough to point out that Jill is also in the case with him. He laughs maniacally once again, and goes back into his dramatic death pose and sinking toward the ground.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jack sits at the table, snapping his fingers at Gabe who is still in his daze.

    JACK
    Hey. Hey buddy.

Jack nudges him on the shoulder and Gabe snaps out of it.
JACK
You okay?

GABE
Yeah, I was just thinking about something.

JACK
You know that guy?

Jack motions to the window. Gabe looks over to see Cam with his face and hands pressed up against the glass just like in his daydream.

GABE
Yeah. He’s my villain.

JACK
Your what?

GABE
Nevermind.

Gabe knocks on the glass at Cam’s face. Cam laughs and heads inside. He takes a seat next to Gabe in the booth.

CAM
Well if this ain’t a hot bed of excitement, I don’t know what is.

GABE
What? I’m making progress.

CAM
Really? What have you got?

GABE
I don’t really know yet, but I think I’m on to something here. I actually got a resolution to one of my daydreams before Jill died this time.

JACK
Who’s Jill?

GABE
Long story.

CAM
Basically, she’s the reason we’re here and not the city.
JACK
I hear ya.

CAM
Yeah, and don’t take this the wrong way, but I don’t see how he can possibly find more interesting things to write about here than in the city.

JACK
You’d be surprised what a change of venue can do. I’ve done shows for ten people that had more life than four hundred.

CAM
Shows?

GABE
He’s a lounge singer.

CAM
Sweet. You get a lot of ass doing that?

JACK
What’s a lot?

CAM
Like two chicks at the same time?

JACK
A gentleman never tells.

Gabe laughs as Jack looks at his watch.

JACK
I better get out of here. I tell you what, if you guys got nothing better going on tonight, why don’t you swing on by. I’m at the hotel just on the edge of town. I’ll be on around nine.

GABE
We might have to take you up on that.

JACK
I’ll tell the bartender you’re coming. Should be good for a free drink anyway.
CAM
Thanks, man.

JACK
Not a problem. You fellas take care.

Jack gets up from the booth. He walks over to Barb and gives her a peck on the cheek.

JACK
I’ll see you later, Barb.

BARB
Ok, Jack. See you around.

Jack exits the diner, stopping just outside the door to talk to three men dressed in sharp suits. They are HILL, 55, SHANE, 31, and MARK, 34.

CAM
That guy seemed pretty cool.

Gabe watches as Jack and the three men talk. Cam turns to look as well. Jack is rather animated while the other three laugh.

After a moment, Jack shakes their hands and heads off down the street. The three men enter the coffee shop.

BARB
Sit wherever you like. Coffee?

The three men nod yes and look at Cam and Gabe. Hill motions to the opposite side of the coffee shop. They move there and sit in a booth.

Cam watches them until they sit, and quickly turns around to Gabe.

CAM
Dude, you see that?

GABE
What?

CAM
Those guys are mafia.

Gabe looks at them. Barb pours them coffee and makes her way to Cam and Gabe’s booth.
GABE
No way.

CAM
Yes way. It’s so obvious.

Barb tops off Gabe’s coffee.

BARB
What are you guys talking about?

CAM
Those guys over there.

GABE
Work your magic, Barb. What’s their story?

Barb looks over at them for a second, studying them.

BARB
At first glance I’d say they’re businessmen, but upon closer look they’re dressed too nice. I’m gonna say they’re gangsters.

Cam claps his hands together.

CAM
See? I told you.

GABE
Gangsters? Here?

BARB
Just call them like I see them. You want coffee?

Barb looks to Cam.

CAM
No thanks.

BARB
Well if you need anything, just holler.

Barb walks back behind the counter and starts flipping through a magazine.

CAM
So, you’re making some progress?
GABE
A little, but my villain is still weak.

CAM
Hey!

GABE
Sorry, but even my characters are telling me that.

CAM
Characters? You got more than me and you now?

GABE
Yeah.

CAM
Nice.

GABE
But still no villain.

Cam smacks himself in the forehead.

CAM
Shit! I’m so fucking stupid.

GABE
No argument here.

CAM
I’ve got a villain for you.

GABE
Who?

CAM
I don’t know who he is, but he looked...villainous.

GABE
And how exactly does someone who looks villainous look? Did he have an eye patch?

CAM
No, this guy was far beyond the simple eye patch villain.
GABE
Okay, so what did he look like?

CAM
Well, I was out on my lunch break right, and I’m just walking down the street to the deli when I saw him.

GABE
Saw who!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Cam casually walks along until he spots YAGO, 33, leaning against the front of a building.

He has long, slicked back hair, a two day stubble beard, and wears an ill fitting suit with a half unbuttoned shirt that exposes a slew of gold chains.

Cam slows down, walking a little more gingerly as he passes Yago, who removes a switchblade comb from his pocket and runs it through his greasy hair.

Yago eyes him as he passes by, and he decides to pick up the pace a little. He turns his eyes forward just as LILY, 22 and beautiful, passes by.

Cam’s eyes follow her, his full attention on her behind, not seeing Yago duck out of sight.

CAM
Oh, I so wanna fuck that.

Suddenly Yago jumps out and grabs Lily by the arm, surprising her. He pulls her close to him, pressing his nose against hers and speaking through clenched teeth.

YAGO
Where do you think you’re going?

Lily struggles to get away.

YAGO
Answer me!

Cam turns and runs away, missing Lily kneeling Yago in the crotch and running away herself in the opposite direction.
INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - REALITY

CAM
And that’s about it.

GABE
You ran away? You didn’t try to help her or anything?

CAM
Did you listen to what I said? The guy had a switchblade comb. A switchblade comb!

GABE
So?

CAM
So anyone who’s crazy enough to use a switchblade comb, in public no less, is definitely a couple sandwiches short of a picnic.

GABE
That’s ridiculous.

Gabe opens his notebook, writes "Greasy Villain" in it, and closes it. Cam throws his hands up.

CAM
That’s it? Greasy villain? I tell you that whole story and all you come up with is greasy villain?

GABE
Yeah. I’ll remember the rest of it.

CAM
That’s all you got in that book. A bunch of characters with no story surrounding them.

GABE
Hey, I’ve got some observations and anecdotes in here too.

CAM
That’s it! That’s your book!

GABE
Observations and anecdotes?
CAM
No. You got all those characters in there, right? Why don’t you take them all, shuffle them around a bit, you know? Put them in groups or something.

Gabe sits back and folds his arms across his chest.

GABE
Wow, Cam, wow. Take a bunch of characters, put them together, and write a story around it. That’s fucking brilliant. I can’t believe nobody ever thought of that before.

CAM
Would you quit being a smartass and let me finish?

Gabe waves a hand at him.

CAM
Each group of people would have their own story and chapter. Everything would be different.

GABE
Can I respond now?

CAM
No, because you’ll just give me shit about it being a collective of short stories. Here’s the kicker.

GABE
I’m all ears.

CAM
Each story has the same thing in common. Say...a comb.

Gabe unfolds his arms and places his hands on the table.

GABE
A comb? Why the fuck would a bunch of people have a comb in common? And what’s with you and combs today anyway?
CAM
Okay, the comb is a bad example, but you get the idea. How about a watch or something?

GABE
Okay, a watch.

CAM
So all the stories revolve around this one watch, right? And in the last chapter you tie it all together.

GABE
So what you’re saying is that all of these people have this watch at the exact same time, but they’re never around each other?

CAM
Exactly.

GABE
That makes no sense at all.

CAM
Why not?

GABE
Because you can’t have people with an article in common all have the article at the same time without having them be around each other.

Cam stares at Gabe for a second in deep thought.

CAM
Shit, you’re right.

GABE
Here’s what I would do.

Laughter from the three men on the other side of the coffee shop causes Gabe to look in that direction momentarily. Hill sits in the booth across from Mark and Shane.

HILL
Now, all kidding aside, I’m gonna tell you boys something right now. In this business, you gotta be ruthless, you gotta leave your
HILL
heart at the door, no mercy. You
do whatever it takes to get the job
done. Think you boys can handle
that?

Shane and Mark nod yes.

SHANE
Sure.

MARK
No problem, boss.

HILL
You’re gonna come across a lot of
people who are gonna try to screw
you over. They’re gonna try to
take what’s yours, but you gotta
give them a big fuck you and let
them know they ain’t getting shit.

MARK
I’ll do whatever it takes.

Hill looks to Shane.

HILL
And you?

SHANE
Whatever it takes.

HILL
Wonderful. I think we can do
business.

Mark and Shane look at each other with ear to ear grins.

Cam looks at Gabe in awe.

GABE
And that’s what I’d do.

CAM
Holy shit, that’s crazy.

GABE
Not really. It’s still the same
story. I just tweaked it a little.
CAM
I don’t know how you do it.

GABE
It’s my talent I guess.

CAM
So how come you can come up with a story like that on the fly, but you can’t write your book?

GABE
I don’t know. To be honest I didn’t even put that much thought into that story I just told you.

CAM
Maybe that’s your problem. Maybe you’re thinking too much.

GABE
Yeah, but I’m not trying to write just anything here. I’m trying to write something great. Something that people will remember.

CAM
Just because you write something great doesn’t mean that people are gonna remember it. If I were you I’d just focus on the writing and let the chips fall where they may.

GABE
If I keep going the way I’m going, I might have to.

CAM
Alright, that’s enough lessons for today. Let’s get out of here.

GABE
I’m still working.

CAM
You’re sitting in a coffee shop. That’s not work.

GABE
Trust me, I’m working.
CAM
Come on, we’ll stop by the house so I can take a shit, and then we’ll go over to the bar. There’s bound to be stuff to write about there.

GABE
I can’t work in a bar, it’s too noisy, and I’d rather not accompany you home so you can take a shit.

Cam clutches his stomach and dramatically bounces up and down.

CAM
But I really gotta go.

GABE
Well, good luck with that. You can take the bike if you want. Just make sure you don’t hit any bumps that’ll cause you to shit all over yourself.

Gabe tosses the key for the bike lock to Cam.

CAM
Gee, thanks.

GABE
Don’t mention it.

CAM
Alright, you wanna sit here with the Reservoir Dogs you go right ahead. Just don’t call me when you end up on the back of a milk carton.

GABE
I think me being able to make a phone call would be enough to warrant not being on a milk carton.

CAM
I hate you.

Cam exits the coffee shop as Del comes out from the kitchen. He wipes the sweat from his brow with a towel and sighs heavily.
DEL
Pretty hot back there considering I haven’t cooked a damn thing all day.

Gabe looks at Del with wonder.

GABE
Really? Not a thing?

DEL
Nothing. All everybody wants is coffee.

Del looks at Gabe’s coffee cup, which is nearly empty.

DEL
And my waitress can’t even keep up with that.

Barb pops up from her magazine.

BARB
Huh?

Del points at the two tables containing people.

DEL
Toppers.

Barb grabs the pot of coffee, and heads over to fill up Gabe’s cup.

Hill slams his fist on the table with a loud thud and points his finger back and forth in Mark and Shane’s faces.

HILL
What the fuck is wrong with you two? You know what you get if you pull that shit? You blow the whole thing and fuck up the deal!

Del quickly walks over to their table, followed by Barb.

DEL
Sir, can I ask you to tone it down just a little?

HILL
Why? There ain’t nobody in here.

Del motions his head toward Gabe. Hill turns and looks at him, alternating between looking back at him and writing in his notebook. Hill waves him over.
HILL
You. Come here.

Gabe points to himself.

GABE
Me?

HILL
There’s six people in this place. Five of which are on the opposite side of where I’m pointing. Who do you think I’m talking to?

Gabe slowly gets up and walks over to the booth. Barb is filling up the men’s cups.

GABE
What can I do for you?

HILL
Am I bothering you?

GABE
No, not really.

HILL
Good, cause we kinda got our own work going on here...

He points to Shane and Mark, who are wide-eyed with fear.

HILL
...and I’d hate to think that we were getting our job done, but interrupting you in the process.

GABE
No, it’s okay. Really.

HILL
Okay then. You can go.

Gabe turns away and takes a step back toward his booth, but turns back around to face Hill.

GABE
Actually, while I’m here, can I ask you a favor?
HILL
Depends on the favor.

GABE
Could you maybe just keep it down a little? It’s not that the noise bothers me or anything. I just don’t want to hear something I shouldn’t and possibly end up as a rat or something.

Barb casually walks away, leaving Del and the three men puzzled.

HILL
A rat? What the hell are you talking about?

GABE
Listen, I just don’t wanna have the law on my ass asking me what I know about you guys, okay?

HILL
Kid, you’re not making a bit of sense. What are you talking about?

GABE
All I’m saying is I saw Goodfellas. I don’t wanna end up like that.

DEL
Oh shit.

Del darts for the kitchen. The three men look at each other and break into hysterics.

HILL
You hear that, boys? The kid here thinks we’re mobbed up.

GABE
You’re not?

HILL
No, we ain’t mafia. We’re car salesmen.

Gabe looks over to Barb, who shrugs her shoulders.
BARB
Hey, I can’t always be right.

HILL
You thought so too?

Barb nods yes and the three men laugh even harder as they get up from the table. Hill throws a fifty down and nods at Barb.

HILL
You keep the change. That’s the best thing I’ve heard in awhile.

Hill puts a hand on Gabe’s shoulder, and quickly brings his other hand up near his face, shaped like a gun.

HILL
Bang! You’re dead!

Gabe jumps a little, and the three men leave in uproarious laughter. Hill turns back right in front of the door.

HILL
I coulda been somebody. I coulda been a contender.

Hill exits and the three men continue laughing as they look in the window and walk down the street.

Barb walks over to the table and picks up the fifty and the coffee mugs.

GABE
Sorry.

BARB
For what? That guy just left me like a forty five dollar tip.

GABE
Yeah, but I assumed they were something that they’re not.

BARB
What makes you think they’re not?

GABE
Cause they’re car salesmen.

BARB
No, no, no. They said they’re car salesmen. That doesn’t necessarily make it so.
GABE
You think?

Barb holds up the fifty dollar bill.

BARB
Gabe, I’ve been working here a long time, and let me tell you that no car salesman ever left me a forty five dollar tip.

GABE
But what about Jack? I saw him talking to them when he was walking out.

BARB
Jack’s Jack. He knows everybody.

GABE
You think he’s in with them?

BARB
I don’t think he’s in in, but it wouldn’t surprise me if they owed him a favor or two, or vice versa.

GABE
But why did you say you were wrong about it then?

BARB
You kidding? You ask the wrong person if they’re in the mob, and you’ll get your answer right between the eyes.

GABE
Damn, I didn’t even think about that.

BARB
I wouldn’t worry about it now. It’s done.

GABE
Yeah, but I could have died!

BARB
Relax, hon. I highly doubt that.

Gabe sighs in frustration as he places his hands on top of his head.
GABE
This throws my storyline all out of whack.

Barb shrugs her shoulders nonchalantly.

BARB
Sorry.

Barb walks behind the counter as Gabe still stands in awe.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT - DREAM

Jack stands on stage, with a microphone in his hand and a three piece band jamming behind him.

The drummer goes into a quick snare drum solo and Jack dances, throwing his arms out to the side as the drummer hits a final rim shot.

Jack takes a bow as the crowd in attendance applauds.

JACK
Thank you for coming out tonight, ladies and gentlemen. This is Jack Amsterdam, the singing mobster, signing off.

Jack quickly spins around, and when he’s facing the crowd again he has a tommy gun in his hands. He opens fire on all of them as he laughs maniacally.

After the crowd has been gunned down, Jack ceases fire and lowers the gun. He looks to a small table in the back where Hill, Mark, and Shane sit. They stand up and applaud loudly.

HILL
That’s just good shooting.

They continue to applaud as Jill enters the scene, dressed as a cigarette girl and holding a tray.

JILL
Cigars...cigarettes. Cigars...cigarettes.

Jack raises the gun again, opening fire on Jill. Jack guns her down, and raises the barrel of the gun to his lips. He blows a small billow of smoke away from it.
JACK
Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - REALITY

Gabe still stands there, placing a hand over his mouth and looking like he’s about to throw up.

He quickly looks to Barb, who points to one end of the diner.

BARB
The john’s that way.

Gabe quickly shuffles off to the bathroom. Barb grabs a nearby towel and wipes off the counter, shaking her head.

BARB
Kids.

Barb works her way down the counter with the towel as FRANKLIN, 44, enters the diner. He has a moist towelette in his hand to prevent it from touching the door.

FRANKLIN
Excuse me. Where’s the restroom?

Barb points toward the restroom.

BARB
That way.

FRANKLIN
Thank you. Could you dispose of this for me, please?

Franklin approaches Barb, and hands her the moist towelette. She holds it up with two fingers, looking at it.

BARB
Uh, sure.

Franklin nods and heads toward the bathroom. Barb gingerly places the towelette in a nearby garbage can and goes back to wiping off the counter.
INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Gabe stands at the sink, splashing water on his face. He looks at himself in the mirror.

GABE
Way to go, Gabe. You finally get something to work with, and you go and screw it all up by putting crazy ideas in your head.

He sighs and walks over to a urinal as Franklin enters, holding another moist towelette in his hand that he tosses in the garbage.

He moves to the urinal next to Gabe. Gabe nods and Franklin returns the gesture.

GABE
How’s it going?

FRANKLIN
Fine, fine.

Franklin looks toward the ceiling. Gabe finishes up and goes back to the sink, turning on the faucet and washing his hands.

Franklin soon follows suit, moving to the sink next to Gabe. He takes out another moist towelette, and uses it to turn on the faucet.

He tosses the towelette in the garbage and takes a small box out of his pocket. He opens it up and takes a bar of soap from it.

Gabe stops washing his hands and watches Franklin go through his routine.

GABE
You alright?

FRANKLIN
Me? Oh yeah, I’m fine.

GABE
I mean with the towelettes and the soap. Is there something wrong with the soap that’s provided?

FRANKLIN
It’s loaded with bacteria. That’s all there is in these public
restrooms. The faucets, the soap
dispenser, the paper towel
dispenser. All of them just loaded
with filthy bacteria.

Yeah, but it says right there on
the soap dispenser that it’s
anti-bacterial.

The soap might be, but what about
when you’re done washing your hands
and you go to grab the door handle
when you leave?

That’s a good point.

You never know who’s been in here
before you, and I’m willing to bet
that forty percent of the time you
get somebody who takes a leak in
here and doesn’t wash their
hands. You know what that means?

What?

There’s pee on the handle.

Can’t argue with that logic.

Gabe finishes washing his hands and walks to the door. He
stares at it momentarily and looks back to Franklin.

Franklin reaches into his pocket and retrieves a moist
towelette, handing it to Gabe.

Thanks.

Don’t mention it.

Gabe uses the towelette on the door and exits. Franklin
finishes washing up, returns the soap to its box and uses a
towelette to turn off the water.
He walks over to the door and reaches into his pocket. His eyes open wide as he searches his other pocket. Nothing.

He freezes, staring at the door handle in nervousness.

FRANKLIN

Damn.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Gabe sits at the counter with a coffee cup in front of him that Barb fills up.

He grabs a nearby sugar shaker and pours a little bit of the sugar into his coffee.

GABE

I think you have a germophobe in the bathroom.

BARB

The guy with the towelettes?

GABE

Yeah.

BARB

It takes all kinds I guess. This is definitely your lucky day though.

GABE

Why do you say that?

BARB

There’s gotta be something you can use with a guy like that.

GABE

Yeah, maybe.

Gabe stares into his coffee cup. Barb looks toward the bathroom.

BARB

I wonder if he fell in.
INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Franklin frantically paces back and forth, still staring at the door.

FRANKLIN
Somebody please come in. Please, God, just let somebody open the door. Just this one thing and I promise I’ll never ask for anything else ever again. Why did I have to give that guy a towelette?

Franklin stops. He stares at the door with determination as he untucks his shirt.

He holds one of the tails over his hand and approaches the door, his hand now inches away from it. He stops, and slowly takes a few steps back.

FRANKLIN
If I do it, I’ll get out of here, but then I’d have to burn this shirt.

Franklin looks at himself in the mirror.

FRANKLIN
I can’t do it. I really like this shirt.

Franklin goes back to his frantic pacing.

FRANKLIN
Please open the door. Please.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

GABE
He’s probably disinfecting everything.

BARB
I don’t know. It all seems a bit weird if you ask me.

GABE
True, but when he started talking about all the bacteria that’s in a public restroom, he got me thinking.
BARB
Oh c’mon. You don’t really buy into all of that do you?

Gabe reaches into his pocket and takes out the towelette he used to exit the bathroom. He places it on the counter. Barb laughs.

Del enters from the kitchen and pours himself a cup of coffee.

DEL
May as well sit out here for a bit and join the crowd that only seems to want coffee.

BARB
Del, you really need to let it go.

DEL
Let it go? Do you know how hard it is to keep a place in business when all I can sell is coffee?

GABE
Is it really that slow?

DEL
Yep.

BARB
But what he fails to mention is that it’s always like this. A few people pop in during the day, and then we get a bigger crowd at night after the bars close.

DEL
I could be open from midnight to noon and not lose much business.

BARB
I know I wouldn’t mind it. Maybe I’d get a break for once.

DEL
Hey, I can’t help it if she calls in all the time. Would you wanna work like this everyday?

BARB
I practically do anyway. Round the clock, day in and day out.
DEL
You get no sympathy from me. I’m here just as much.

BARB
But you own the place. I shouldn’t be here for thirty six hours at a time three days a week.

GABE
Thirty six hours?

BARB
My shift is from midnight to noon, and there’s another waitress that’s supposed to go from noon to midnight, but she calls in and I get stuck working her shift.

GABE
Well that really sucks.

DEL
Especially when noon to midnight is like a ghost town.

BARB
Well at least Jack’s back. Makes things a little more interesting.

DEL
Yeah, when he pops in for his coffee. I cook up good food, I have decent lunch specials, and what does everyone do? Order coffee.

BARB
Okay, this is going nowhere.

Barb tops off Gabe’s coffee, and he goes back into staring into the cup.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - DREAM

Jack and Del walk alongside a large conference table, loaded with state of the art weapons.

Del picks up a small jewelry box and opens it, showing a pair of cuff links to Jack.
JACK
Thanks, Del, but I’m already covered in the cuff link department.

DEL
Ah, but these are special. Each one contains a small projectile that when fired will leave your enemy incapacitated for upwards of fifteen minutes, allowing ample time to get away.

JACK
Could prove useful.

Del waves a hand over the table, showcasing all the high tech weapons.

DEL
Everything on this table will prove useful.

Franklin walks up.

FRANKLIN
And they’ve all been washed and sterilized with the utmost care to ensure you won’t fall victim to filthy bacteria.

Jack stares at Franklin.

FRANKLIN
Hey, bacteria can be just as lethal as a bullet.

DEL
I must say I’ve really outdone myself here, Jack. This is really some good stuff.

Jack looks over the weapons on the table as Del smiles proudly.

JACK
I think I’ll go with the nine millimeters.

Del’s smile quickly disappears.
DEL
What?

JACK
The nines. I’ll go with them.

DEL
You mean to tell me that I spent all this time making these great weapons for you, just so you can go out in the field with a pair of nines?

JACK
That’s right.

Del takes one of the cuff links from its box and shows it to Jack.

DEL
But these are cool.

JACK
Sure, Del, sure.

DEL
Oh, goddammit.

Del presses a small mechanism on the cuff link and a small projectile shoots out hitting Jill, who’s suddenly in the room, in the neck.

A hand quickly goes up to her neck where the projectile hit, and she falls to the ground convulsing.

DEL
See?

Jack holds a hand up and shakes it back and forth as to say that it’s so-so.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Del takes a sip from his coffee as he watches Gabe stare off into space.

Gabe snaps out of his stare and looks at Del.

GABE
Huh?
DEL
I didn’t say anything.

GABE
Oh.

DEL
What were you just doing there?

GABE
Just an idea for my book.

DEL
Oh, you’re a writer?

GABE
Not so much lately. Just a thinker mainly.

DEL
Well, you’re certainly good at it. I just watched you stare off into space for about fortyfive minutes.

GABE
That long?

Del points outside. Gabe turns to see that it’s dark out.

DEL
Yep.

Barb looks up from the magazine she’s reading.

BARB
Not sure what’s worse in that case. The fact that you zoned out for fortyfive minutes, or that he stared at you zoned out for fortyfive minutes.

DEL
Gotta do something. It’s not like anybody’s coming in here.

Lily rushes into the coffee shop.

LILY
Are you open?
DEL
May not look like it, but yes.

Lily takes a seat a few stools away from Gabe. Barb walks over and places a menu down in front of her.

LILY
Just coffee please.

Del rolls his eyes.

DEL
Figures.

Barb grabs a mug and pours coffee for Lily.

BARB
You need some, Gabe?

GABE
Nah, I’m alright.

LILY
Sure is quiet in here.

BARB
Yeah, it’s normal for this time of day...or night.

LILY
Quiet is what I need right now.

DEL
You ever been in here before?

LILY
No, I’m still pretty new in town.

BARB
Where from?

LILY
Pennsylvania.

DEL
I’ve been there before, Pittsburgh to be exact.

LILY
What did you think?
DEL
Nice city, but I couldn’t navigate it to save my soul.

LILY
Yeah, the whole city is basically a series of triangles. If you’re not used to it, it can definitely throw you off.

DEL
All I know, is that I turned out of the hotel parking lot to go to a restaurant across the street, and it took me twenty minutes and a series of winding roads to get there.

GABE
Get out of here.

DEL
I shit you not. Nothing is what it seems in Pittsburgh.

Lily laughs.

LILY
You make it sound like you were in the twilight zone.

DEL
Well, I went through three different things that were all named Liberty something, so I may have been. So what brings you here?

LILY
Work.

DEL
What do you do?

LILY
I’m in the entertainment business.

GABE
That’s a pretty vague term.

LILY
It’s a pretty vague business.
GABE
True, but are you a writer, actress, producer? Something else maybe?

LILY
I’m a dancer, trying to be an actress, and I’m doing some other stuff until something hits for me.

GABE
Alright, now I’m confused.

LILY
Why?

GABE
This isn’t exactly the type of place that a dancer or aspiring actress plants themselves. You’d be better off in a city, or in L-A.

LILY
True, but I didn’t decide to come here on a whim. I was offered a job.

GABE
Doing what?

BARB
She’s a stripper.

Lily slams a hand down on the table.

LILY
I’m not a stripper!

Gabe looks over to Barb, and she mouths "stripper" to him, nodding matter of factly.

LILY
I’m not. I mean, I am, but I haven’t done it yet. I can’t go through with it.

Lily puts her head down, emitting small sobbing sounds and wiping a tear from her eye.

Del places his elbows on the counter, leaning in toward her.
DEL
Just take it easy, we’re not judging you. It’s just small talk.

Lily lifts her head.

LILY
I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to snap. I just don’t like to talk about it.

GABE
I can understand that. What’s your name?

LILY
It’s Lily. You’re Gabe, right?

GABE
Right.

DEL
I’m Del, I own the place.

BUM, 44, makes his way into the shop. He has a long, grungy beard, and wears dirty clothes.

He takes a seat at the opposite end of the counter, reaches into his pocket, and places a handful of change and lint on the counter.

Barb and Del sigh.

DEL
Hello Bum.

Bum mumbles something inaudible, as Barb pours him a cup of coffee.

GABE
His name is Bum?

DEL
I doubt it, but that’s what we call him and that’s what he answers to. He’s a regular.

Barb walks over to where Gabe, Del, and Lily are.

BARB
Well there’s one person who’s heart would be broken if you were only open nights.
Del looks over to Bum, who counts his handful of change.

DEL
Yeah, huge profit margin there.

Lily turns to Gabe.

LILY
So, you know what I do. How about you?

GABE
I’m a writer.

LILY
Books?

GABE
Working on one, but I’m not really getting anywhere.

LILY
But you’re still a writer, right?

GABE
Yeah. I do freelance to make money, therefore, I’m a writer. If my book gets published, I’ll be a novelist.

LILY
And you do things on the side until that day comes?

GABE
That’s right.

LILY
Then why are you passing judgment on me?

GABE
I’m not passing judgment.

LILY
That’s the impression I got.

GABE
Listen, if I were passing judgment on you, I would have said things quite differently I can assure you.

Lily folds her arms across her chest.
LILY
Oh really? Like what?

DEL
I’ll be in the kitchen.

Del hurries off.

GABE
Like when you told me your name’s Lily. If I wanted to be a prick, I would have asked you if that’s your stage name or your real name.

Lily fumes.

GABE
But I didn’t now, did I?

Lily calms down.

LILY
No. No you didn’t.

GABE
See? I’m not judging you. Now, I’m gonna go back to my booth over there. If you feel like talking some more, feel free to join me. If not, that’s okay too.

Gabe takes his coffee and goes back to the booth where his notebook is. He opens the notebook up and writes "the reluctant stripper" in it.

He closes it and looks out the window, just in time to see Cam pop up and scream at him. Gabe jumps back a little as Cam laughs.

Lily takes a seat at the booth across from Gabe, Cam looks at her in wonder for a moment, then points at her while jumping up and down in excitement. Lily shifts uncomfortably.

LILY
Do you know him?

GABE
My friend Cam.

LILY
Why is he pointing at me like that?
GABE
I have no idea.

Gabe knocks on the glass to get Cam’s attention and waves him in. Cam enters and takes a seat next to Gabe, still staring at Lily.

GABE
What are you staring at?

LILY
Do I know you?

CAM
It’s you. You were the girl I saw with the oily guy earlier today.

LILY
You saw me?

CAM
Yeah, I saw him grab you and start yelling in your face. Glad to see you got away.

LILY
I had to knee him in the crotch.

CAM
Yeah, that’ll do it alright.

GABE
Aren’t you a little worried that he’s looking for you?

LILY
I’m sure he is. That’s why I came in here. I figured I could only duck him on the streets for so long.

CAM
Yeah, but it’s not like you can mix in with the crowd here.

Cam points to the empty coffee shop.

LILY
Oh well, it’s still a public place.

GABE
So how was the bar?
CAM
About as crowded as this place, except there were no bums.

LILY
You shouldn’t talk about people like that. What if it were you?

CAM
If it were me I’d probably take a bath.

Bum turns around in his stool.

BUM
Sorry if my appearance has offended you.

CAM
Hey, I’m just busting your chops a little. I didn’t mean anything by it. No offense?

BUM
No, none at all. Tell you what. I’ll be sure to take a bath the minute I get that water hookup in my cardboard box, alright?

Bum turns back to his coffee, while Gabe and Lily burst into laughter. Cam sits dumbfounded.

CAM
That shit ain’t funny.

GABE
Yeah it is. You left yourself wide open and he nailed you. You got no sense of humor, I swear.

CAM
Yeah, yeah. Whatever.

Gabe looks over to Bum.

GABE
Hey man, your coffee’s on me. I haven’t had a good laugh like that in a while.

Bum raises a hand in acknowledgment.
CAM
Now you’re gonna buy his coffee for him? No loyalty whatsoever.

GABE
Loyalty to what? It was funny.

Cam looks at Lily and points at Gabe.

CAM
You sure picked the right guy to sit with. A real friend.

LILY
Beats sitting alone.

CAM
So tell me, why was that guy grabbing you like that?

LILY
He’s my boss.

CAM
Your boss? Are you a hooker?

LILY
No, I’m not a hooker.

CAM
You sure? Cause that guy definitely looked like he was about ready to commence to pimp slapping your ass.

LILY
I’m not... a hooker.

CAM
That’s too bad. I would’ve tossed a few bones your way.

GABE
That’s charming.

CAM
Girl’s gotta eat right? I’m all about strengthening the economy.

LILY
Well, you can strengthen it somewhere else.
Alright, alright. So what do you do exactly that requires him to be your boss?

I’m a dancer.

Dancer or stripper?

Jesus you’re blunt.

Yeah, I’m not one to beat around the bush.

I’m not a stripper. I’m a classically trained ballet dancer.

Hey, whatever sister. Either way you gotta be pretty damn flexible.

Cam shifts around in his seat a little. Gabe slides over toward the window

What are you doing?

Huh? Nothing.

Cam shifts around a little more.

Are you doing the fucking pee pee dance?

Cam shifts around faster now. Lily stares in wonder.

Yeah. Guess I didn’t completely empty the tank at the bar.

Then go to the bathroom!

But what about her? We’re having quite the conversation.
Cam points to Lily.

GABE
I’m sure she’ll be here when you get back, and then you can call her a stripper till your heart’s content. Without the pee pee dance.

Cam looks to Lily.

CAM
Will you?

Lily looks to Gabe, an unsure look on her face. Gabe gives Lily a look of pleading, and she shrugs.

LILY
Sure.

CAM
Nice.

Cam quickly gets up and heads for the bathroom.

GABE
Thanks. Another few seconds and he probably would have flooded the booth.

LILY
No offense, but your friend gives me the creeps.

Gabe nods in agreement, picks up his cup, and sips from it.

Cam shuffles along to the bathroom, bouncing along. He looks out the window and spots Yago as he walks across the street toward the coffee shop.

Cam turns back, waving his hand at Gabe and Lily.

CAM
Hey. Get down. Get down now.

LILY
What?

Cam nods his head toward the outside.

CAM
Oily guy.
Lily looks out the window and sees him. She quickly ducks under the table.

Cam quickly ducks into the bathroom as Yago enters the shop.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cam enters and is immediately met with a charging Franklin.

    FRANKLIN
    Hold the door!

Cam screams in horror as the door slowly closes. Cam regains his composure.

    CAM
    What the hell is wrong with you? You scared the shit out of me.

    FRANKLIN
    I’m sorry. It’s just that I’ve been trapped in here for awhile now because I couldn’t open the door.

Cam looks to the door.

    CAM
    Is it locked?

    FRANKLIN
    No, but it’s loaded with millions of filthy little germs.

    CAM
    So?

    FRANKLIN
    I’m not touching them.

    CAM
    Why didn’t you just use your shirt?

    FRANKLIN
    I was going to, but I like this shirt too much. Can you just open the door for me please?

    CAM
    Alright, man. Just let me take a piss first, okay?

Franklin breathes a sigh of relief.
FRANKLIN
Thank you.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Yago stands in front of the door, looking through the coffee shop. He looks at Barb standing behind the counter and staring back at him.

He walks over and takes a seat at the counter in front of her.

BARB
Can I help you?

YAGO
I was wondering if you might have seen someone come in here, maybe a little earlier today?

BARB
Maybe. What do they look like?

Yago reaches into his jacket and takes out a picture of Lily, showing it to Barb.

Barb looks at it, and shakes her head no.

BARB
Nope, sorry. Haven’t seen anybody like that in here.

YAGO
You sure?

BARB
Yeah. I’d remember if a girl that attractive came in here.

Yago grits his teeth. He turns to Gabe.

YAGO
What about you?

Gabe looks around uncomfortably.

GABE
Me?

YAGO
Yeah.
GABE
No. I didn’t see her.

Yago slowly gets up, and takes a few steps toward Gabe’s booth.

YAGO
I never said it was a her.

Gabe points to Barb.

GABE
She just said that she’d remember if a girl that attractive came in here.

Yago takes a seat at the booth across from Gabe. Lily slowly shuffles out of the way to avoid touching him.

YAGO
You think you’re smarter than me?

GABE
What?

YAGO
I said do you think you’re smarter than me? Are you a mister big brain?

GABE
Mister big brain?

YAGO
Do you enjoy making me look stupid?

Yago takes out his switchblade comb, opening it and running it through his hair.

GABE
I wasn’t trying to make you look stupid. That’s a nice comb you got there.

Yago abruptly stops running the comb through his hair.

YAGO
Are you making fun of me?

GABE
What?

Yago slams his fist on the table, causing Del to emerge from the kitchen.
YAGO
I said are you making fun of me!

GABE
What’s your problem?

YAGO
You’re my problem!

Del glances under the table to see Lily cowering in fear. He looks at Yago and motions toward the door.

DEL
You gotta go buddy.

Yago gets up, running the comb through his hair once again.

YAGO
Oh yeah? And what if I don’t? You gonna make me?

DEL
Well if I don’t, I’m sure the cops will.

Yago takes the picture and puts it on the counter.

YAGO
If Tiffany comes in, you be sure and tell her that Yago’s looking for her.

DEL
I’ll be sure to do that. You have yourself a nice night.

Yago makes his way toward the door. Before he exits, he takes a sugar shaker from one of the booths and slams it off the ground shattering it. He screams in anger as he walks off down the street.

Del takes the picture off the counter and tosses it in a nearby garbage can.

DEL
Asshole.
INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The sound of the breaking sugar shaker echoes through the bathroom.

    CAM
    What the hell was that?

Cam quickly finishes up and brushes past Franklin, knocking him to the ground, as he heads out the door.

    FRANKLIN
    Wait!

Franklin gets up as fast as he can, desperately lunging for the door. It closes before he can get to it.

He gets up from the floor and jumps up and down in frustration.

    FRANKLIN
    Shit! Shit, shit, shit! And he didn’t even wash his hands!

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Cam walks to the door where Barb is sweeping up the sugar and broken glass.

    CAM
    What happened?

    BARB
    Oily guy.

Cam looks to Gabe’s booth.

    CAM
    Where’d the girl go?

Gabe gestures under the table. Cam smiles.

    CAM
    Nice.

Lily emerges.

    LILY
    I was hiding, you fucking perv.
CAM
Can’t you just leave me be with my filthy visions?

GABE
I thought your name was Lily.

LILY
It is.

GABE
Then why did he call you Tiffany?

LILY
Cause that’s supposed to be my stage name. He says it’s more exotic.

GABE
Sounds like a valley girl or mall rat if you ask me.

CAM
That’s how those stripper names are though. Tiffany, Amber, Diamond.

GABE
Diamond?

CAM
Hey, it’s exotic isn’t it?

LILY
Yeah, so my name’s supposed to be Tiffany.

GABE
Maybe we should get out of here for awhile. I’m pretty sure he’ll be back again.

LILY
Yeah, but I don’t think it’s too safe for me to be walking the streets right now.

GABE
So come with us.

CAM
Hey, fuck that man. I don’t wanna be combed to death.
GABE
Combed to death?

CAM
The switchblade. Did you see it?

GABE
Yeah, and just like you said, it’s a comb.

CAM
Oh yeah, well we don’t have anywhere else to go anyway.

Gabe looks at his watch.

GABE
Why don’t we go see Jack? He said he started around nine.

CAM
What time is it now?

GABE
Almost ten.

CAM
And by the time we get there it’ll be almost eleven.

GABE
It won’t take that long to get there.

CAM
It will on foot, and I’m not about to go three deep on the bike.

GABE
Just c’mon. It’ll give me a chance to talk to him a bit more. Maybe I’ll get some more ideas.

Cam sighs.

CAM
Fine, but I put the safety of my hair in your hands.

Lily and Gabe exit the booth and walk to Cam by the door.
CAM
I don’t believe this. Going to see
Jack so we can hide out from the
oily guy.

The three exit the shop. Del looks over to Bum, sipping
away at his coffee.

DEL
Well Bum, you’re now my best
customer.

Bum raises his mug to Del.

BUM
I’ll drink to that.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT - DREAM
Gabe, Lily, and Cam sit across from Jack who sits behind a
large desk.

The room is quite dark, with only a small desk lamp to
illuminate it.

Jack sits with his face in the shadows until he leans
forward into the light.

JACK
I understand you three need a
favor.

GABE
Yes, Don Jack.

JACK
And what might this favor that you
require be?

LILY
We need protection from Yago.

Jack places a hand to his chin.

JACK
Ah yes...the oily guy.

CAM
Yes sir, with the switchblade comb.
JACK
This I can help you with, but there may come a time at some point where I may require a favor from you. This time may never come, but I must have your word that if your assistance is required, you’ll do what I ask.

The three nod in agreement. Jack points to Lily.

JACK
You.

LILY
Me?

JACK
Yes, you. You can repay me right now by doing a little dance on my desk.

LILY
A dance?

JACK
A little striptease.

LILY
But, I’m not a stripper.

JACK
Sure. Now c’mon or the deal’s off.

Lily looks at Gabe and Cam. Gabe shrugs his shoulders and Cam smiles at her with a wide grin.

Jack stands up, taking her by the hand and helping her on top of the desk.

Lily dances with the skill of a professional stripper, but the show abruptly ends when she kicks off a stiletto heel that whacks Jill straight in the eye, killing her instantly.

The group watches as Jill falls backward, hitting the ground with a large thud.
EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT - REALITY

Gabe looks to the sky.

    GABE
    Fuck!

He lowers his head. Lily and Cam stand on either side of him.

    CAM
    What?

    GABE
    She fucked it up again!

    CAM
    Who? Jill?

    GABE
    Yeah.

    LILY
    Who’s Jill?

    CAM
    His ex, and the source of the most fucked up case of writer’s block I’ve ever seen.

    LILY
    Oh.

    GABE
    It’s getting better though.

Cam points toward the door.

    CAM
    We going inside?

Gabe nods and the three head inside.

INT. HOTEL NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The three stand just inside the entrance to the night club. Gabe looks around, and it’s the same club he envisioned when Jack gunned down the crowd in his dream.

    GABE
    Whoa.
CAM
What?

GABE
Huh?

CAM
Whoa what?

GABE
Oh. Nothing.

The drummer goes into the solo, and hits the rimshot as Jack spreads his arms out. Loud applause from the crowd as Jack takes his bows.

JACK
Thank you for coming out tonight, ladies and gentlemen. This is Jack Amsterdam, signing off.

Gabe flinches and puts his hands over his ears.

LILY
What are you doing?

Gabe slowly lowers his hands and looks around. He looks to the table in the back. It’s empty.

GABE
Nothing. Nevermind.

CAM
Christ, you’re weird.

Jack sees Gabe standing in the back and motions for him to meet him a table off to the side.

The three make their way to the table, as the rest of the crowd moves toward the exit.

Jack hops off the stage and meets them just as they’re sitting down.

JACK
Glad you guys could make it. Enjoy the show?

GABE
We actually just got here. Only had enough time to hear you thank the crowd.
CAM
But, that. I’d say you did that
better than anyone in the business.

Jack shrugs his shoulders.

JACK
I’ll take what I can get.

Jack takes a seat next to Lily.

JACK
And who might this lovely lady be?

LILY
I’m Lily.

She extends her hand, and Jack gently grabs it.

JACK
Lily. A rose by any other
name...would be a lily.

He kisses the top of her hand. Lily giggles.

LILY
I can’t say I’ve ever heard that
one before.

JACK
It’s all about the originality,
really, and it works a lot better
when the girl’s name is actually a
type of flower. When the girl’s
named Eunice? Not so much.

CAM
What about Tiffany? Does Tiffany
work?

Cam laughs.

LILY
Fuck you.

JACK
No. Why would Tiffany work?

GABE
Nevermind. He’s just being a dick.
JACK
Alright, then. So, what are you guys drinking? Beers? The hard stuff?

CAM
I could use a brew.

Jack motions to MICKEY, the bartender.

JACK
Hey Mick, four beers.

LILY
None for me thanks.

JACK
No problem. I’ll drink yours.

Mickey places four beers on the table.

MICKEY
Good show, Jack. I think you’re finally picking up steam.

JACK
It ain’t the steam I’m worried about, it’s putting asses in the seats. Drinking asses.

CAM
Why would somebody drink with their ass?

Dead silence. Mickey walks away, and Cam looks to Gabe.

CAM
And I’m the one with no sense of humor?

Gabe turns away from Cam and toward Jack.

GABE
So, Jack, do you think you could tell me a little bit more about yourself? Maybe some stories?

JACK
Sure, just as long as you don’t go nodding off on me again. I might develop a complex.
GABE
I think I can handle that.

JACK
Then we can do business. I got a good one for you. It doesn’t deal with me so much, but I was there and I always get a kick out of it.

Gabe sits with his pen at the ready.

GABE
Go ahead.

JACK
I was working with this band, two shows a night at this little place right outside of Dallas.

CAM
Dallas?

JACK
Yeah, Dallas. So anyway, our bass player gets a case of the shingles, real bad. I’m talking ultra contagious, looking like that cat in "The Fly" when he was in the middle of his transformation...

LILY
Ew.

JACK
...trust me, it was worse to actually see. So we put out an A-P-B for a bass player to use in the interim, and the next day we auditioned this one guy.

CAM
Did he really suck?

JACK
Quite the opposite. This guy could really lay it down.

CAM
This story sucks.

JACK
Would you let me finish?
CAM
Go ahead, but this story better not suck.

JACK
So, the guy’s good, we hire him on, and we all meet up in the dressing room that night for his first show.

CAM
Boring.

Jack smacks Cam in the back of the head.

CAM
Ow! Shit, that hurt!

JACK
Zip it. So, in the dressing room, we’re all sitting there, and this new bass player is just sweating bullets and not making so much as a peep.

LILY
What was his problem?

JACK
My thought’s exactly. So I went up to ask him. I reached my hand out to put it on his shoulder, and guess what he did?

GABE
What?

Jack sits in silence as the three watch in anticipation, Gabe with his pen at the ready.

CAM
What did he do?

Jack throws his hands up toward his face, startling everyone at the table.

JACK
Don’t peel me! Please don’t peel me! No!

Gabe presses his pen against the notepad, but stops.
GABE
Wait, what is that? I got nothing.

JACK
The guy thought he was a potato!

LILY
Why would someone think he was a potato?

JACK
Apparently it had something to do with the stress of performing in front of a crowd of people. It was too much for him.

CAM
That’s pretty screwed up.

JACK
Yeah, but here’s the kicker. I was at a fancy steakhouse a few months later and I ran into him. Guess what he was doing.

LILY
Eating?

JACK
Nope. He was the guy working the potato cart.

Jack laughs.

CAM
What’s a potato cart?

Jack stops laughing.

JACK
It’s the cart with the potatoes.

Dumbfounded looks from Cam, Gabe, and Lily.

JACK
You order a potato, and he comes around and asks you if you want cheese, or butter, or sour cream, or whatever on it.

CAM
Did you have a potato?
JACK
I did, but when he came around to ask me what I wanted on it, I told him I just didn’t have the stomach to eat his cousin in front of him like that.

Everyone laughs.

CAM
Now that’s a good story.

JACK
There’s plenty more where that came from. Just give me a bit to get the old hamster working.

Jack taps himself on the head.

GABE
No problem.

Lily gets up from the table.

LILY
Excuse me for a minute. I need to use the bathroom.

Jack points to the other side of the club.

JACK
It’s over there. Just be sure to put that little block of wood against the frame. If it closes and we forget about you, you could be stuck in there all night.

Cam quickly gets up.

CAM
Oh shit!

GABE
What?

CAM
Back at the coffee shop, there was this guy stuck in the bathroom cause he couldn’t touch the door handle.
GABE
That guy was still in there?

CAM
You saw him?

GABE
Yeah, he came in when I was using the restroom, but that was hours ago.

CAM
I don’t know how long he was in there, but he was in there when I was.

JACK
Why didn’t you just let the poor bastard out?

CAM
I was going to, but when I heard all the ruckus going on I rushed out and left him in there.

JACK
Maybe Del or Barb let him out.

GABE
I doubt it. Between me and Cam he was already in there a long time.

JACK
Well, I guess we should go see anyway.

LILY
You mean go back there?

JACK
Yeah. Something the matter?

LILY
Uh, no. It’s alright. I’ll be back in a minute.

Lily heads toward the bathroom. Jack takes a drink from his beer, and leans back in his chair.

JACK
You boys ready to save the day?
INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM

Franklin stands in the middle of a chain link cage. Yago stands a few feet away on the outside, running the switchblade comb through his hair.

FRANKLIN
Let me out of here. Let me out of here I say!

YAGO
Sorry, friend. That’s just not going to happen.

Yago laughs as he walks away. Moments later, Jack arrives on the scene, slowly moving along and crouching to stay out of sight.

FRANKLIN
Jack. Get me out of here.

Jack makes his way toward the cage, stopping in front of it and taking out a small black case that contains a lock picking kit.

FRANKLIN
What are you doing?

JACK
I’m going to pick the lock.

Jack looks at the gate.

FRANKLIN
There is no lock.

JACK
I see that. So what is it, electrified? Laser alarms?

FRANKLIN
No. It’s just closed.

JACK
What?

FRANKLIN
Just open the gate.

Jack lifts his hand and slowly raises the latch to the gate. He pulls it open and Franklin steps out.
FRANKLIN
Thanks, Jack.

JACK
You mean to tell me you couldn’t do that yourself?

FRANKLIN
Are you kidding? That latch is loaded with germs.

YAGO (O.S.)
And without these...

Jack and Franklin turn to see Yago holding a box of towelettes.

YAGO
...he is helpless.

Franklin reaches out.

FRANKLIN
My towelettes!

Yago laughs a sinister laugh as he throws the box on the ground and steps on it.

FRANKLIN
You fiend!

Yago laughs harder now. Jack casually walks up and punches him in the jaw, knocking him out cold. He turns to Franklin.

JACK
Man, these villains really suck.

Franklin points to the ground.

FRANKLIN
Look!

Jack looks to the ground. Yago’s body has been replaced by Jill, who lies dead on the ground, bleeding oozing from her mouth.

Jack points to her.

JACK
And that shit is getting old too.
EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - REALITY

Gabe, Jack, Cam, and Lily walk along, with Jack and Cam in front and Lily and Gabe bringing up the rear.

   GABE
   Tell me about it.

   LILY
   What?

   GABE
   Nothing. We close to the coffee shop yet?

   JACK
   Yeah, just up the street here.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Yago emerges from the darkness, grabbing Lily. Everyone stops as she struggles to get free.

   YAGO
   You think you’re gonna back out on me now? Huh? You think you can get me to pay your way here and you’re just gonna skip out on me? Answer me!

   GABE
   Hey, why don’t you just let her go?

Yago looks at Gabe with a cold stare.

   YAGO
   I remember you. The smart guy in the coffee shop.

   GABE
   Just let her go.

   YAGO
   This is none of your business, smart guy. Now why don’t you take off before you get hurt?

   JACK
   Hey...Yago.

Yago turns to face Jack. His eyes open wide.

   YAGO
   Jack Amsterdam?
JACK
You got it, chief. Now why don’t you let the lady go, and let us be on our way? She obviously doesn’t want to go with you.

Yago pushes Lily to the ground. He reaches into his pocket, pulling out the switchblade comb.

Cam points at it in fear as Yago opens it up.

CAM
It’s the comb!

Yago briefly combs his hair and puts the comb back in his pocket. He walks toward Jack and stops just inches from his face. The two stare each other down.

YAGO
You never did know how to mind your own business.

Jack takes a couple steps back.

JACK
And apparently you never learned to brush your teeth.

Yago breathes into his hand and sniffs it to check his breath.

JACK
Either that, or you’re still tossing salads down by the subway.

Yago turns red with anger and raises his fists, exposing a large ring on his left hand.

YAGO
You’re gonna pay for that.

Gabe steps forward.

GABE
Hey. Yago!

Yago turns around and punches Gabe in the forehead with his left hand. He falls to the ground like a ton of bricks, and Lily quickly attends to him.

Yago turns back around, only to be met with a punch in the eye from Jack. Yago puts his hand up to his eye and screams in pain, almost crying.
JACK
Now take a hike, jackass, before you really make me mad.

Yago points at Jack with his free hand.

YAGO
This ain’t over! I’ll get you, Jack. You and that little whore too!

JACK
Let’s just hope a house doesn’t fall on you before then, otherwise that little wicked witch of the west bit you just did wouldn’t be as funny.

Yago gives Jack the finger and storms off across the street. Cam and Jack walk over to help Lily attend to Gabe.

Yago stops on the other side of the street and turns back.

YAGO
I’ll see you later, Tiffany.

LILY
My name isn’t fucking Tiffany!

She picks up a nearby rock and throws it at him, coming close enough to make him run away.

JACK
Let’s just get him up.

They pick up Gabe, Cam throws him over his shoulder and they continue on to the coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

The group enters, and Barb quickly gets up from her seat behind the counter. Bum turns in his stool to look at them.

BARB
What happened?

CAM
Oily guy.

Bum shrugs his shoulders, unimpressed. He turns back around and Cam sets Gabe down in a nearby booth.
BARB
You saw him?

JACK
Just up the street. Caught the kid here with a nice left.

CAM
Yeah, but Jack here popped him with a good one right in the eye.

JACK
Ah, that was just a sucker punch.

CAM
Still, you did make him cry.

Jack takes a seat in the booth across from Gabe and smiles.

JACK
Yeah, I did, didn’t I?

LILY
And I for one, am thankful.

JACK
Don’t mention it. That guy’s a sleaze anyway.

CAM
You actually know him?

JACK
I know his name, and a little bit about him, but I don’t associate with him or anything. What I wanna know is what girlie here is doing with him.

LILY
I’m supposed to be working for him.

JACK
Not at the strip club.

LILY
Yeah.

JACK
Funny, you don’t really look like a stripper.
LILY
That’s because I’m not.

CAM
Which is really too bad, cause you would definitely make a good one.

LILY
For the last time, I’m not a stripper, and I’m not going to be one!

CAM
I’m just saying.

JACK
Why don’t you go see if that guy’s still in the bathroom?

CAM
Shit, I forgot all about that again.

JACK
Yeah, that’s why I’m in charge.

Cam goes to the bathroom and opens the door. Franklin flies out, almost knocking him down in the process.

He stands in the middle of the coffee shop, his arms raised in victory.

FRANKLIN
Free! I’m free!

JACK
Congratulations.

Franklin points at Gabe.

FRANKLIN
Is he drunk?

CAM
Nah, he just got lumped in the head.

Cam sits at the counter.

JACK
So Lily, what exactly is the story here with you and Yago?
LILY
He paid for me to come here, and
I’m supposed to work in the club
until I pay him back.

JACK
By dancing?

LILY
Yeah.

Jack cocks his head to the side in thought.

JACK
An indentured servant stripper. I
like that. It’s got a nice ring to
it.

LILY
Dammit, I’m not a stripper!

JACK
Whoa, lighten up there, sister. It
makes no difference to me what you
do for a living.

LILY
But everyone keeps calling me one,
and I’m not.

CAM
I still say you’d be hot as hell.

Lily glares at Cam.

JACK
Okay, so you’re a stripper who
doesn’t strip, I’m a lounge singer,
Gabe here’s a writer, Barb’s a
waitress, and Bum there, well, he’s
a bum. And I’m sure whatever these
two guys do...

He points to Cam and Franklin.

JACK
...is thoroughly
uninteresting. So, now that we
have everyone’s occupation out of
the way, how bout a couple cups of
joe, Barb?

Barb nods and grabs some mugs and a coffee pot. She passes
them out and fills each one up.
BARB
What about Gabe?

JACK
None for him. He’d just spill it on himself.

They stare at Jack in silence.

JACK
Eww, tough crowd.

Barb turns to Franklin.

BARB
Coffee?

FRANKLIN
Yes, please.

Barb places a cup in front of him and goes to fill it, but he stops her and takes a small collapsible cup from his pocket. He opens it up and places it on the table.

FRANKLIN
Put it in here, please.

Jack eyes the small cup.

JACK
For those times when you only want a shot of coffee.

FRANKLIN
Excuse me.

JACK
Oh, I was just admiring the size of your cup there. It’s quite small, kinda like what I use when I wanna Irish my coffee up a little. You know, a shot glass?

FRANKLIN
I’ll have you know that this cup is one hundred percent germ free.

JACK
Is that right?

FRANKLIN
Yeah.
Jack takes a flask from his jacket pocket. He opens it up and pours a little bit of whiskey into his coffee.

    JACK
    Now so is mine. Anyone else need a little disinfectant?

Cam holds out his cup and Jack gives him a shot. Barb grabs the flask and takes a swig. Del comes out of the kitchen.

    DEL
    I saw that, Barb.

    BARB
    What, you think I’ll get so drunk that I won’t be able to pour coffee?

Bum holds out his cup.

    BUM
    Think I can get a bit of that?

She pours Bum a shot and hands the flask back to Jack. He holds it up.

    JACK
    Anyone else?

    FRANKLIN
    No, thanks.

    LILY
    I’m good.

    CAM
    And yet another shining example of why she’s the hooker with the heart of gold.

    LILY
    Kiss my ass.

    JACK
    Okay, we’ve all shared in a drink, or at least had the chance to, so I’d say that makes us friends. Let’s just relax. You, bathroom guy.

    FRANKLIN
    My name’s Franklin.
JACK
How’d you get caught in the bathroom?

FRANKLIN
I ran out of towelettes and I didn’t have anything to open the door with.

CAM
Why didn’t you just use the handle?

Franklin stares at Cam.

CAM
Oh c’mon. That was funny and you all know it.

FRANKLIN
There’s nothing funny about being trapped in a bathroom for hours on end. I was a prisoner!

JACK
Hey Barb, there’s a good slogan for Del. Come for the coffee, stay for the wrongful imprisonment.

FRANKLIN
I really wish you guys would give me a break. I can’t help it that I’ve got a sickness.

JACK
Yeah, but do you really think that just because you don’t touch door handles you’re germ free?

FRANKLIN
Well, yeah.

JACK
I hate to break this to you friend, but if a germ wants to get in, it’s gonna get in. You’re probably breathing stuff in as we speak.

Franklin lifts a finger and reaches into his pocket. He takes out a dust mask and places it over his face. He nods proudly in accomplishment.

Barb searches under the counter for a moment and comes out with a handful of packaged moist towelettes. She walks over and sets them in front of Franklin.
JACK
The dust mask is a nice touch, but you’re still leaving yourself open.

Franklin thinks for a second and places his hands over his ears.

JACK
You still got one more opening.

Franklin furrows his brow.

FRANKLIN
They don’t go in there.

JACK
Sure they do, and unless you plan on sticking one of those wet wipes up your ass and walking around looking like you’re Peter Cottontail, you got germs.

BARB
Oh, leave the poor guy alone, Jack.

JACK
Oh, he knows I’m screwing with him. Right?

Franklin just sits in silence. Jack takes a swig from the flask, looks over to Gabe, and then the group.

JACK
You think he’d wake up if I gave him the St. Bernard treatment?

CAM
I doubt it. He’s out cold.

JACK
Just a thought.

BARB
You get to tell him any of your stories, Jack?

JACK
Just the one about Potato Larry, but that’s one of the better ones.

BARB
Yeah, I got a kick out of that one. Why don’t you tell them about D sharp Dave?
JACK
Gabe’s out cold.

CAM
You can tell him later.

JACK
Alright. The D sharp Dave story isn’t that involved anyway. Basically, he was a guy that couldn’t play a D sharp to save his life. Not because he wasn’t capable of it, he just had an intense fear of it.

LILY
And he was a musician?

JACK
Trumpet player to be exact. We had to switch up all the arrangements for him. It was out there.

FRANKLIN
What happened to him?

JACK
He got hooked up with some broad and skipped town. Funny thing was that she wasn’t the kinda girl you’d wanna skip town with.

CAM
Was she a fat chick?

JACK
No, but she wasn’t too trustworthy. She had a rep for hooking up with musicians and taking them for all they had before moving on to the next one.

LILY
A user.

JACK
Lemme put it to you this way. This skirt would nail Christ to the cross, and then come back and steal the nails if she had a chance.
BUM
That’s messed up.

JACK
There’s all kinds of them out there. Leeches, I call them. But, anyway, back to D sharp Dave. He seriously thought that if he played a D sharp he would die.

Cam looks to Franklin.

CAM
See? You ain’t so crazy.

FRANKLIN
Gee, thanks.

Del walks up to Jack.

DEL
Let me get a swig off of that flask, woulda Jack?

JACK
Mister Booze, at your service.

Jack hands the flask to Del.

BARB
And you’re getting on me about it?

DEL
Hey, I own the place, and you’re right anyway. Ain’t nobody coming in here for anything but coffee.

CAM
What else you got, Jack?

JACK
Actually, I’m curious to know Lily’s story.

LILY
I don’t have a story.

JACK
You end up here as an indentured servant stripper and you don’t have a story? I’m sorry, but I’m not buying it.
LILY
Like I said, I’m not a stripper. I was supposed to be, but I’m not. That’s really the gist of it, and why I’m in this whole mess.

JACK
Well, you said he paid for you to get here, right?

LILY
Yeah.

JACK
And for your passage you agreed to dance in his club until you’re square, right?

LILY
Yeah.

JACK
Then I’d say you owe him. How you pay him back is up to you, but the man’s definitely owed.

LILY
I told him I’d pay him when I find a job. He just won’t listen.

JACK
Guys like that usually don’t. They want their money and they want it now. He did seem a little bit overanxious though. I bet he owes somebody himself somewhere down the line.

LILY
You seem to know an awful lot about this stuff.

JACK
I know some people.

LILY
Are you in the mafia?

JACK
Are you a stripper?
LILY
No!

CAM
But you’re so damn hot.

BUM
Second.

Everyone looks at Bum.

BUM
What? I’m homeless, not dead.

JACK
But anyway, Lily, you just answered your own question. I’m not in the mafia. There’s no such thing as the mafia.

CAM
So how do you know these people?

JACK
What can I say, I’m a popular guy.

Gabe shifts around in the booth as he comes to. He looks around at everyone.

GABE
What’s going on?

JACK
Just shooting the breeze and waiting for you to wake up.

GABE
What happened?

CAM
You got knocked the fuck out!

Lily leans in toward Gabe.

GABE
What?

She points at his forehead.

LILY
You got a big Y in your forehead.

Gabe puts a hand to his forehead, running it over the imprint.
GABE
A Y?

JACK
He got you with his ring.

CAM
It’s like I can see your thoughts.

GABE
What are you talking about?

CAM
Like you’re asking "Why oh why did that man punch me in the forehead?".

Everyone laughs.

GABE
It’s about time you said something funny.

CAM
It’s like they say. Throw enough shit against the wall, and sooner or later something’s bound to stick.

BARB
Okay, who wants a refill?

Everyone holds out their cups. Barb looks at the pot, which is empty.

BARB
Whoops.

DEL
Good job. Run out of the only thing we sell in this place.

BARB
I’ll make some more.

Barb heads toward the coffee maker, but stops dead in her tracks, staring out the window.

Everyone turns to see Yago standing outside with a gun. He points to Jack and motions for him to come outside.
FRANKLIN
He’s got a gun!

JACK
Wow, Franklin. That’s mighty eagle-eyed of you.

LILY
What does he want?

JACK
I’m gonna go out on a limb here and say it’s either you, me, or both of us together.

Gabe quickly retrieves his notebook, opening it up and writing feverishly. Cam looks at him in wonder.

CAM
Gabe, what the fuck are you doing?

GABE
Are you kidding? This is gold! Sorry, Jack.

JACK
No bother. You just keep right on writing, and pay attention, cause this is about to get interesting.

DEL
I’m calling the cops.

JACK
No need. I’ll take care of this.

Jack gets up from his seat. Gabe watches him with a look of excitement and anticipation on his face.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM

Yago sits in a chair at the base of a makeshift stage where Lily dances. Off to the side is Franklin, trapped in his cage which is still unlocked.

Yago claps loudly.

YAGO
Dance! Dance my beautiful Tiffany!

Lily continues to dance, turning her head toward Franklin.
LILY
Are you gonna help me or what?

Franklin puts his hands up.

FRANKLIN
I’m sorry, but the germs have won this round.

JACK (O.S.)
Nobody’s won anything yet.

Yago quickly gets up from his chair. He spins around to see Jack, Bum, Del, and Barb standing in the doorway.

Barb leans in near Jack.

BARB
See? I told you he was here.

JACK
Nice work by you, Barb.

DEL
You got him right where you want him, Jack, but this is gonna take something special, and I have just the thing.

Del searches his pockets, but Jack stops him.

JACK
No need, Del. I got it covered.

Del freezes.

DEL
Got it covered? Got it covered! Then what the hell am I doing here?

JACK
You got me by the ass. It ain’t my fantasy.

Del points at Bum.

DEL
And now that I think of it, what the hell is he doing here? He didn’t do anything worthwhile.

The three look at Bum, who can do nothing but shrug.
BUM
I don’t know, moral support?

JACK
Works for me.

DEL
Oh, this is ridiculous.

JACK
Nevermind that. I got a girl to save.

Jack looks at Lily, and raises an eyebrow in wonder.

JACK
Something’s not right here.

Lily’s outfit suddenly changes from regular street clothes into a shiny, silver bikini.

Lily looks at her new outfit, and then Jack. She places her hands on her hips.

LILY
Hey!

Jack smiles.

JACK
That’s better.

Cam suddenly appears out of nowhere.

CAM
Awesome!

DEL
What the hell are you doing here?

CAM
I heard there was a chick in a bikini so I thought I’d drop in.

JACK
You guys wait here.

A look of determination crosses Jack’s face as he starts to advance toward Yago. Yago soon follows suit, and they continue toward each other until they’re about ten yards apart.

They stand in silence, like western gunfighters waiting for the draw.
Yago reaches into his pocket, pulling out a switchblade. Cam points at it.

CAM
   The comb!

Yago laughs.

YAGO
   Not this time, my friend.

Yago presses the button on the switchblade, and this time an actual blade appears.

YAGO
   I’m going to cut you good, Amsterdam.

Yago holds the knife over his head as he runs at Jack.

Jack quickly reacts, lifting his arm and shooting Yago in the forehead with one of Del’s special cuff links.

Yago falls to the ground. Jack slaps his hands together, and turns to Del.

JACK
   Not bad, Del, not bad at all.

DEL
   Well, son of a bitch. You finally used something.

JACK
   Yep, and I must say that they work quite well.

They all laugh, not noticing that Yago is slowly sitting up. When he’s finally up he raises the knife over his head.

Lily throws her hands up.

LILY
   Jack, look out!

Jack turns as Yago throws the knife at his head. Jack ducks out of the way as the knife flies by, headed right toward Jill.

She quickly throws her hand up, catching the knife and avoiding yet another gruesome death.

Yago’s desperate throw appears to have taken everything out of him, and he slumps back to the ground, convulsing.
Jill casually tosses the knife on the ground and looks to Jack.

JILL
Thank, God. Now maybe I can finally get out of here.

Everyone looks at Jill as she slowly fades away. She pumps her fist in celebration.

JILL
Yes!

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - REALITY
Gabe pumps his fist in celebration.

GABE
Yes!

Everyone stares in silence for a moment.

CAM
Another daydream?

GABE
Yeah.

CAM
How’d she die this time?

GABE
That’s just it, she didn’t. I think I might be cured.

BARB
Well that’s one problem out of the way.

Barb motions toward the window. Gabe turns to see Yago pressed up against it and drooling on the glass.

Franklin shakes his head in disgust.

FRANKLIN
Doesn’t he realize how many germs are on that window?

Jack takes a cell phone from his pocket.
DEL
Jack, would you quit screwing around with that thing and just let me call the cops already?

JACK
You gotta trust me on this one, Del. You call the cops and he’ll be out in a few hours. This will be a little more permanent.

CAM
If he wants you guys so bad why doesn’t he just come inside?

JACK
Easy. He’s scared.

They look at Yago, still pressed up against the window with a crazed look in his eye.

BUM
He don’t look scared to me.

JACK
What, that? That’s just an act. If I were so inclined, I’d go out there and give him a swift kick in the ass right now.

CAM
So do it.

JACK
I’m a lover, not a fighter. And like I said, I got a better idea.

Jack dials a number on his cell, and sits in silence for a moment before his eyes light up with glee.

JACK
Hey, pallie! I’m fine, and you? Wonderful. Hey listen, I’m down at Del’s and there just happens to be a certain oily friend of yours standing outside. Oh you do? Oh you are? Fantastic. Oh, and I should tell you he’s packing, but knowing him there’s probably no bullets in it. Okay, see you soon.

Jack hangs up and puts the phone in his pocket.
JACK
Problem solved.

LILY
Who did you just call?

Jack looks at his watch.

JACK
Five, four, three, two, one, now.

Jack looks out the window just as a big black car screeches up to the curb. The doors open and Hill, Mark, and Shane get out.

Yago turns around and puts his hands in the air, walking casually toward the three men.

Mark and Shane rough Yago up a little. Hill opens the trunk of the car, and the two men toss Yago in.

Hill slams the trunk and walks to the back door of the car. He salutes Jack, and all three of them get into the car, closing the door as it speeds off.

CAM
What the fuck just happened?

GABE
It was those mobsters again!

JACK
Mobsters? Nah. Those guys are car salesmen. Yago’s just a little behind on his payments.

CAM
But I’ve never seen car salesmen just take a guy and --

JACK
Yep, behind on his payments.

DEL
You sure he’s not going to come back and mess up my place, Jack?

JACK
I don’t think you’ll have to worry about him ever again, Del. If my estimations are correct, his friends are gonna end up carrying him by the handles.
FRANKLIN
Uh, what car dealership are those guys with?

JACK
Why?

FRANKLIN
I wanna make sure I never buy a car there.

Jack laughs, but everyone else still sits in shock.

JACK
Oh, c’mon you guys. It’s all over with.

He looks to Lily.

JACK
Look at it this way. At least your debt is cleared. With him anyway.

LILY
What do you mean? With him?

JACK
Well, you’re gonna have to repay me somehow. How bout dinner?

Lily smiles.

LILY
I think I can handle that.

CAM
Aww, to hell with that. Make her strip.

Lily reaches out and slaps Cam in the mouth.

CAM
Ow! What the hell. Ok, ok. You’re not a stripper. Shit.

Cam rubs his mouth.

JACK
Alright, time for breakfast, and I’m buying. Who wants steak and eggs?

Everyone raises their hand. Del rubs his chin.
You guys sure you don’t want meatloaf and eggs?

Everyone looks at Del in disgust.

Why would we want that?

Cause it was yesterday’s special and nobody bought it.

Hey, I’ll take it.

Jack snaps his fingers and points to Bum.

Yes, give him the meatloaf, and steak and eggs to boot. Steak and eggs all around.

Can you make mine well done? Make sure you get all the E Coli out?

You got it. It’s about time I get to cook something.

Del whistles a happy tune as he hurries off toward the kitchen.

Jack turns to Gabe and places an arm around him.

So, congrats on being cured. I’m assuming you came up with a story?

Yeah, but I don’t know if I’m going to write it now.

Jack removes his arm, and everyone looks on in shock.

What are you talking about? I thought you couldn’t wait to start the book.
GABE
And I can’t, but I’ve been sitting
here thinking about things for a
few minutes, and I realized
something.

LILY
What?

GABE
It’s not some cheesy secret agent
story that’s going to be the great
American novel. It’s this...

Gabe taps a finger on the table.

GABE
...it’s something real, and that’s
exactly what you guys have inspired
me to write.

Jack raises his coffee cup.

JACK
I’ll drink to that.

The rest of the group raises their cups in a toast.

THE END