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.

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.

GABE

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

BARB

Just hold on a second.

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

VALERIE

I'm sorry, Keith. I just can't do it.

KEITH

But why?

VALERIE

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

KEITH

You suddenly realize this after four years?

VALERIE

Well, yeah.

KEITH

Then why did you keep getting on me about proposing?

VALERIE

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

KEITH

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.

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.

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. Bark 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.

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.

GABF

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?

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.

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.

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.

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

Jack. Jack Amsterdam.

Gabe shakes his hand.

GABE

Gabe.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

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.

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.

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.

GABF

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.

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?

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.

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 kneeing 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.

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

FRANKLIN

restrooms. The faucets, the soap dispenser, the paper towel dispenser. All of them just loaded with filthy bacteria.

GABE

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

FRANKLIN

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?

GABE

That's a good point.

FRANKLIN

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?

GABE

What?

FRANKLIN

There's pee on the handle.

GABE

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.

GABE

Thanks.

FRANKLIN

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 jewelery 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.

 \mathtt{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 forty five 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 forty five minutes, or that he stared at you zoned out for forty five minutes.

DEL

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

Lily rushes into the coffee shop.

LILY

Are you open?

DET.

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?

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.

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.

 $\alpha \Delta M$

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?

LILY

I'm a dancer.

CAM

Dancer or stripper?

LILY

Jesus you're blunt.

CAM

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

LILY

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

CAM

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

GABE

What are you doing?

CAM

Huh? Nothing.

Cam shifts around a little more.

GABE

Are you doing the fucking pee pee dance?

Cam shifts around faster now. Lily stares in wonder.

CAM

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

GABE

Then go to the bathroom!

CAM

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! 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

T₁TT₁Y

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?

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, blooding 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?

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

T₁TT₁Y

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.

VAGO

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 quickly 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.

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.

DEL

You guys sure you don't want meatloaf and eggs?

Everyone looks at Del in disgust.

GABE

Why would we want that?

DEL

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

BUM

Hey, I'll take it.

Jack snaps his fingers and points to Bum.

JACK

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

FRANKLIN

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

DEL

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.

JACK

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

GABE

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

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

CAM

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