HERO

BY

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INT BAR - NIGHT

Half full, a watering hole for blue collar people, men and women who work, drink, sleep, and work some more. On a stool, smoking, CORY, 30, dirty fingernails and lank hair. He sips a beer and watches the mandatory baseball game.

He frowns as KYLE slides onto the next stool. Clean, neat, yuppyish, 30, he looks out of place. Yet, he launches the conversation.

KYLE
This seat taken?

Cory shrugs.

KYLE
Great. Who's playing?

CORY
Orioles and Yanks.

KYLE
Who do you like?

CORY
Yanks are ahead.

The Bartender arrives.

KYLE
(to bartender)
Whatever light beer you have...and one for my friend here.

Cory hardly qualifies as a friend, but he won't pass up a free beer. He empties his mug and pushes it to the bartender.

KYLE
Come here often?

Cory looks as if he's about to punch Kyle.
KYLE
Oh, wait, I didn't mean it like that. I was wondering what might be good...on the menu. My girlfriend will be here in thirty minutes, so I thought maybe you might recommend something.

CORY
The ribs ain't bad most nights, and you can't miss with the burgers. Steer clear of the meatloaf. It ain't worth eating.

KYLE
That's good to know, good to know. How are the steaks? She likes them rare.

CORY
On the thin side. Order the ribeye.

The bartender arrives with the beers. Kyle hoists his in a toast.

KYLE
Cheers.

They toast and drink, Cory much faster than Kyle who drums his fingers on the bar. Cory frowns, and Kyle forces a little laugh.

KYLE
Sorry. I'm a little nervous. You see, this is a big date.

He grins and pulls a velvet ring box from his pocket.

KYLE
A very big night. With any luck, I'll be engaged and laid by midnight.

CORY
Good for you.
KYLE
Thanks, thanks a lot. She's perfect, and I mean perfect.
Pretty, smart, fit, good job, she's exactly what a man wants.
And tonight is my chance to seal the deal. You know what I mean?
Seal the deal. If I do it right, I seal the deal.

Cory looks as bored as he feels.

CORY
Great.

KYLE
You got a girl?

CORY
Had one. Things didn't work out.

KYLE
Oh, man, I’m sorry. That's rough. Amy isn't my first either--just my last.

Kyle laughs, but Cory doesn't.

KYLE
Hell, where are my manners?
(holds out hand)
Kyle here.

CORY
Cory.

They shake. Kyle grabs his beer and takes a long pull.

KYLE
God, that tastes good.

Kyle waves his almost empty mug at the bartender and signals for two more.

KYLE
So, Cory, got any words of wisdom for someone about to pop the question?
CORY
Don't talk too much.

Kyle laughs.

KYLE
That's good, good. Like I can keep from talking, right? I'm sooo nervous. God, I've never done this before.

The bartender delivers beers. Cory grabs his as if it might run away.

KYLE
What makes it tough is that her father thinks I'm a wimp. He's a former NFL tackle, real big guy who wants a jock for a son-in-law, like I could play football. He hunts too, a gun nut. Wants to take me out to bag ducks or geese or rabbits or deer, anything that moves. I'm not into hunting, so he keeps telling Amy to find herself a real man. I'm a real man. I'm just not a Neanderthal like Mr. NFL.

CORY
Dads never think you're good enough. Trust me, I know.

KYLE
How do you prove you're good enough?

Cory shrugs.

KYLE
Look, I read about this thing on the Internet. A guy like me, in my predicament, wanted to look like a hero. So, he hired a guy to start a fight. Then, he cleans the guy's clock, right there in front of his girlfriend. Chased the guy
away, and she bought it, thought her date was a regular James Bond.

Cory studies Kyle a long moment.

CORY
You're looking for someone to let you win a fight?

KYLE
Yeah, well, yeah, something like that. You think that's a good idea?

CORY
Pretty desperate if you ask me.

KYLE
Very desperate.

(laughs)
I'm so pathetic. You probably think I'm a dweeb or something. But I thought it was so doable when I read about it. How hard could it be to pay someone to take a dive?

Cory drains a glass and starts on the other.

CORY
How much would you pay?

KYLE
You know someone?

CORY
Maybe. How much?

KYLE
Well, I wouldn't expect anyone to do it for less than two hundred.

Cory's eyebrows rise.

KYLE
And if he does it the way I want, I'm willing to kick in another hundred.
CORY
Three hundred to fake a fight?

KYLE
Well, it's a little more complicated than that.

CORY
How complicated?

Kyle leans closer and lowers his voice.

KYLE
I was thinking of something a little more...courageous.
(beat)
Here it is. We walk out of here, and you mug us.

CORY
Mug?

KYLE
Stop us and demand money, jewelry. I give you everything, but when I get to the ring box, I throw it at you, distracting you. Then, I grab your gun, knock you to the ground, and you run away.

Kyle beams.

CORY
Sorry, I don't have a gun.

Kyle produces a fanny pack and lays it on the bar.

KYLE
Saturday night special. Not loaded. Plus your first hundred. The rest I'll leave in an envelope with the bartender.

Cory studies the game.

KYLE
Come on, man, do me a favor. She'll go crazy for it.
CORY
Four hundred.

Kyle frowns and shrugs.

KYLE
Hell yes, four it is. Damn!
(slaps Cory's back)
Damn! That's terrific!
WHOOOOEEEE!

Cory shakes his head and sips.

EXT ALLEY - NIGHT

Cory leans against the wall, smoking. He unzips the fanny pack and pulls out a small revolver. Looks at it before he shoves it into his pants. He then takes out a hundred dollar bill and pockets it, grinning.

Crossing the alleyway come Kyle and AMY, as pretty as Kyle described her, wearing a skirt. Cory tosses away the fanny pack and his cigarette. Pushes off the wall.

EXT SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Cory and Amy stop in front a jewelry store, a metal grate protecting a window full of jewelry.

KYLE
Like diamonds?

AMY
What girl doesn't?

In the window, Cory's reflection.

CORY
Turn around.

They hesitate.

CORY
DAMNIT! TURN AROUND!

Kyle and Amy face Cory.
CORY
(waving gun)
Give it up.

AMY
Kyle?

CORY
Shut up and throw your purse over here.

Amy tosses her purse.

CORY
(to Kyle)
Wallet, watch, what's in your pockets.

Kyle takes off his watch and tosses it. Cory catches.

CORY
Come on, come on.

Kyle tosses over his wallet and produces the velvet box. He stares at it.

CORY
Don't make me use this.

Kyle throws the box high in the air. Cory looks up to catch it.

BAM BAM BAM

The bullets slam into Cory whose face shows utter surprise before it goes slack.

BAM BAM

Cory collapses on the sidewalk.

By the window, Amy holds a small automatic. Kyle gapes at the blood on Cory's chest.

KYLE
You...you shot him?

AMY
I killed the sonofabitch.
AMY
(grabbing her purse)
Get your things.

KYLE
What?

AMY
I don't want to be here when the police arrive. Pick up your stuff!

Kyle can't move. She looks back at him and shakes her head.

AMY
Jesus, get a grip.

She shoves the pistol into a holster on her thigh and grabs his wallet and watch.

AMY
What's wrong with you. Come on!

Her foot hits the velvet case. She picks it up and opens it. Then, she smiles and closes it.

AMY
We'll talk about this later.

She grabs his arm and tugs him down the sidewalk.

AMY
He got what he deserved. Come on.

As they hurry down the sidewalk, Kyle turns his head one last time to view the dead Cory.

FADE OUT.