

THE PUMA AND THE DUMBWAITER

A Two-Act Comedy

By Matt Tudor

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THE PUMA AND THE DUMBWAITER

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARK ----- Chef - owner of restaurant/bar, Late 40s
LAURA ----- Waitress, Mid-thirties
BETTY ----- Bar Customer, Mid-thirties
KELLY ----- Reporter, Mid-thirties
BRUCE ----- Police Chief, Mid-fifties
DAN ----- Fire Chief, Mid-thirties
SONNY ----- Farmer, Late-twenties
INSPECTOR ----- Female Health Inspector, Mid-fifties
SOARING EAGLE ----- Indian Chief, Mid-forties

Time

The winter of 1983, mid-January

Place

Mark's Place, a bar/restaurant in a very rural town on Cape Cod

Act One. Scene one. Monday, early afternoon. Snowing.

Scene two. Next day, early afternoon. Snow abates.

Scene three. Next day, early afternoon. Snow stops.

Act Two. Scene one. Next day, early afternoon. The sky is clear.

Scene two. Next day, early afternoon. The roads are clear.

[Production note: the use of *italics* lower case represents a moderately raised voice or sound; The use of CAPITALS upper case represents shouting or a loud noise]

ACT 1
Scene 1

1

Mark's Place, a bar/restaurant on Cape Cod. There is a bar, stage left, with six stools. Behind the bar is a large mirror and picture window. A swinging door upstage leads off stage to the dining room and the bathrooms. An elevated large TV is located to left rear corner. An entrance, stage right, leads to the street and parking area. On the same wall, another large window oversees the parking lot. A staircase leading downstairs, stage right rear, leads to the basement kitchen. Upstage from the picture window which overlooks the parking lot is an electric dumb waiter leading to the basement kitchen. The bar is sparsely decorated as it might be in a small rural town. The owner, MARK, in uniform chef whites, is at the bar, with the waitress, LAURA. SHE is sporting casual attire under an apron. It's early afternoon, three hours before dinner service. Heavy snow is seen coming down through the parking lot window.

MARK

Snow! And more snow!

LAURA

No one's going to come out. If we can't fill the dining room, we need to fill the bar.

(LAURA moves over to the TV, turns it on.)

TV ANNOUNCER

"The snow storm is expected to increase in intensity. Most of the Cape will be affected."

LAURA

(Turns off TV, gestures displeasure.)

Any ridiculous fool can look out the window and see that. And a full moon, to boot.

(The street door opens and BRUCE, the Police Chief, swaggers to the bar.)

BRUCE

Hi Mark. Hi Laura. What a winter.

(MARK nods)

LAURA

That's no snow job.

(DAN, the Fire Chief, enters and heads to bar.)

DAN

2

(To BRUCE)

You here already? Might've known. Hi Laura. Hi Mark.

(MARK nods again)

LAURA

Say, is that a new uniform?

DAN

Yeah. We got rid of that drab color.

LAURA

The red makes you look really hot!

DAN

You think so?

(Looks in the bar mirror)

(LAURA moves closer to him)

LAURA

Positively spiffy.

(SHE snaps his suspenders)

BRUCE

(Grimaces)

Should be another bar in town.

(PHONE RINGS. MARK points to LAURA to answer it.)

LAURA

Mark's Place. Good evening who? ...Oh, yeah, he just came in. For you, Chief.

BRUCE

Yeah?... Can't it wait? I just got off work ... No, tell Sonny to come over to the office tomorrow ... He's coming here? ... That so? Uh-huh!...Well, yeah, Ok. See ya

(HE hangs up)

Damn, this is supposed to be a part-time job in the winter.

DAN

I'd say you're part-time full time.

(BRUCE looks at DAN sternly. MARK pays no attention, still sitting at bar)

LAURA

3

What'll it be, guys?

DAN

Jack Daniels for me. And get that *sweeeet* stuff for Bruce.

LAURA

I haven't seen Sonny in a long while. What's he want?

BRUCE

A wild animal is running loose. Mauling pigs and killing dogs. Sonny's prize pigs have been attacked.

MARK

(To BRUCE)

You're kidding? That hasn't happened in ...what?...over 5 years now. And then it was a rabid pack of coyotes.

BRUCE

Yeah, it was 1978. The first year I took this job.

LAURA

Remember, there was a bounty on each one and everyone was out with their shotguns blowing up the neighborhoods. Damn dangerous to be out.

MARK

What do you think it is?

BRUCE

Don't know. Sonny's report might be a bit flaky, though.

(To LAURA)

Sonny's your cousin, right?

LAURA

Distant cousin. Town's boredom level would make anyone flaky. It's January and the only one who's got something to do is a wild animal loose in the snow. Of course, if the menu were different. ...

MARK

So you've said. Many times.

LAURA

Why don't you create some marvelous winter dishes to bring people out in this weather?

BRUCE

4

No one's coming out in this mess. First, you can't see.

LAURA

Come on, Bruce. This is New England. In five minutes ...

Yeah, wait five minutes, a different climate. But ...

(To MARK)

Look what you offer them ...

(Holds up menu)

You offer them hamburgers ... ugh! You offer them pizzas ... ordinary pizzas! You offer them subs. What is this, a restaurant or a sandwich shop?

(Turning to the others)

He used to have a trendy restaurant in New York. Limos double-parked outside.

And he didn't even serve steak.

DAN

I'm a meat and potatoes guy. A good, sturdy pot roast with buttered mashed potatoes would be a change around here.

LAURA

How about these suggestions: Roast Loin of Pork, Scandinavian-style, stuffed with prunes and apples with a marvelous dill cream sauce? How about a hearty Beef Stroganoff with wide, buttered noodles? Braised Short Ribs in a Chianti sauce? Stuffed Chicken Breast with julienned ham and vegetables? Who's going out for a rinky-dink hamburger? I don't care if it came from Ferdinand the Bull and he graduated Cordon Bleu.

DAN

(To MARK)

She's got a point, Chef. My missus would come out in this weather for some of those dishes. She doesn't cook much. These days, sometimes not at all.

LAURA

Mark, you're from the city. These people in this town are mostly Nordic. Hearty souls. But, see, you have potential clientele already.

MARK

(Moves to bar, takes several shots)

This is the key ...booze! It's what brings you two guys hereso that's it!

LAURA

What's it?

MARK

We'll have a two for one special, every fifth drink on the house.

BRUCE

5

Say, that might work. There's no liquor store within ten miles either way ...if they were thirsty, they'd have to come out.

MARK

(To LAURA)

That's the plan.

LAURA

What happened to the new menu specials you were going to start next week?

(To the others)

Listen to this. This is what Mark thought could get the dining room moving.

Let's say I'm at a table of four.

(With high theatrics, gesticulating madly)

“Good evening folks! We have *several* Combination Bonanzas this evening, the old mix and match taken to new levels. First, the classic Surf and Turf with King Crab Legs and Sirloin Steak. Then, we have Turf and Surf with Lamb Chops and King Crab Legs. Then, to delight you further, we have Surf and Sand with King Crab Legs and Scallops Francaise. Hold on now, we have more.”

MARK

Laura, enough!!!

LAURA

Yes, this is the kind of menu you'd die for....so ... “Next, can we excite your palate with Surf, Sand and Surf with King Crab Legs, Scallops Francaise and Stuffed Haddock Florentine? (Pause) No, not yet?”

MARK

Laura, you're irritating the shit out of me!!!

LAURA

Oh, come on, Mark, let the boys hear. “How about this teaser? Surf, Surf and Surf? That's King Crab Legs, Stuffed Haddock Florentine and Stuffed Jumbo Shrimp. What happened to the meat selections, you ask? How about Turf and Turf, with Sirloin Steak and Roast Leg of Lamb? Want a seafood selection, too? You got it! How about Turf, Sand and Surf, with Steak, Scallops and Crab? Or, Turf, Turf and Turf? What's that? Good that you asked? That's Chicken, Turkey and the old Duck ... the ol' quack-quack.”

(Turns to MARK)

You know what? I'm quack-quack! That menu is for the quack-quack summer traffic. You'll certainly “die” trying to maintain it.

MARK

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LAURA, DAMN IT NOW! ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

BRUCE

That does sound like city food to me, Mark. This is the country...deep down, far out country. King crab legs? Not for me. What's Haddock Florentine? Never heard of it.

(DAN gestures disbelief, rolls his eyes)

DAN

(To BRUCE)

It's haddock flown in from Florence, Italy.

LAURA

Yeah, tell Mark he's crazy. Those new specials will kill this restaurant for sure. Not to mention they'll think they're at Howard Johnson and ask to have the specials all repeated. It's all too much for me...I've got a lot of time invested here and I'm not giving up until we get a sensible menu.

MARK

I didn't say I was going to change to that menu right away.

LAURA

(Paces, showing frustration, turns to MARK)

You know what...you're a dreamer!

For goodness sakes, Mark. Look out the window. I don't know what you need to change to, but not with that hyped up extravagant menu. Who's going out for Haddock stuffed with a creamed spinach and Mornay sauce?

BRUCE

Not me, for sure.

DAN

Laura, you've been with Mark for five years now. Right?

LAURA

Yes, five good years. But winters like this, I wonder if we'll make it to late spring.

DAN

That's why I have to ask: don't you have any other skills?

LAURA

Been a waitress all my life.

DAN

7

So you *really do* have as much at stake as Mark has?

LAURA

(Turning to MARK)

That's why I want you to make the right decisions here. You understand? Of course, you do. Look, you got divorced five years ago and you took the last remaining notes on your restaurant in New York to open this place. This is all you have ...ALL YOU HAVE...ALL I HAVE!

MARK

You always have to state your mind...don't you?

Listen, all of you. I bought this place because it had the only year-round liquor license in this town. It also had a small bedroom downstairs so I could live here ... no outside rent. I could stay open six months longer than anyone else. That meant to me that I could survive in the winter. And you know how chefs are very concerned about hot food for their customers...well, this place had an electric dumb waiter for getting hot food upstairs in a hurry. Just push a button. It's right over there. (Points) But, I didn't plan on winters like this.

LAURA

Who did?

MARK

You know what else?

DAN

I'm glad I have a full-time job and a pension.

LAURA

Really? A hot uniform and security, too?
(Moves still closer to DAN)

MARK

Before I was a four-star chef in New York, I taught English at the local community college. There was this short story we studied in the class room. It was about a small café which the old waiter-owner insisted he keep open even when he didn't have much business. This old guy felt his café was an oasis, a refuge for those townspeople who needed to go and sit, dine quietly and rest. The outside world was dark, lonely and disorderly. That meant a lot to me when I bought this place...a place with good light, clean and restful ...a refuge ...oasis from the ,,,,changing universe.

LAURA

8

My, you never told me that. Another dimension, I never knew.

(Pauses)

What about advertising? Everyone loves roast prime rib of beef. How's your credit?

MARK

Good still.

LAURA

If you got a good deal on, say, twenty cases of beef rib-eyes, and ran a roast rib of beef special every night at \$6.95....and put an ad in the local paper...I bet you'd be mobbed.

BRUCE

Boy, I'd be here.

DAN

I like juicy end cuts.

LAURA

And a strapping end cut you are! Ha!

(Turning to MARK)

That's what you need ...you need publicity and plenty of it.

MARK

I'll think it over.

LAURA

NO, no!!! Indecision is death. Now is the time to act!

DAN

(Turning back to LAURA)

You're a regular ball of fire.

LAURA

(Now circling DAN)

You *just* have *no* idea.

(The door to the street opens. SONNY, dressed in overalls and heavy parka, stamps his feet and heads over to the bar. He spots the Police Chief and sidles up to him.)

SONNY

9

Hi Chief. I figured you'd be here. My pigs ... God awful, bitten around the neck, claw marks down their backs. My prize pigs ... show them each spring at the festivals.

(PHONE RINGS again.)

BRUCE

Excuse me, Sonny! I know it's for me ... Chief here. What? ... You, too, Frank? ... Yeah, that's right. Sonny's here, telling me about his pigs. How about goats? Lost any goats? ... All right, calm down. I'm looking into it ... Yeah, that's right. See ya.

MARK

What do you think it is?

BRUCE

Could be a lot of abandoned, stray dogs around.

MARK

They get into my garbage plenty of times.

BRUCE

Before I got here I was getting descriptions of a large creature with a long tail being seen near the bike path, even crossing the road. Some said it was at least 60-70 pounds.

DAN

That sounds like a mountain lion.

MARK

How could a mountain lion get onto Cape Cod? What'd he do, walk across the bridge?

LAURA

A mountain lion? You mean, a puma?

BRUCE

Someone could have left their pet puma behind last summer. There are many young deer and small mammals in the woods. Winter, animals get really hungry. A fat pig would be a nice meal.

MARK

Maybe Laura is right.

LAURA

You bet I'm right.

SONNY

10

I'm thirsty.

MARK

A beer?

(SONNY nods)

MARK

Sonny, I heard you on the Boston call-in radio show this morning. You were really graphic describing your pigs. A lot of interested people listened in. I wouldn't be surprised the papers don't pick it up.

SONNY

Someone ought to do something! Chief, what are you going to do? I make money on them pigs.

(Turns to MARK)

Now, maybe you could use some pork chops ... cheap!

BRUCE

My favorite food. Say, Mark, what's the specials tonight?

MARK

Ask Laura. She'll give them to you.

LAURA

It's a roasted Robin stuffed with a ragout of delicate worms. Not for everybody.

MARK

Damn it, Laura! These guys might be hungry! You say you care, then you make absurd crazy cracks like that. Sometimes I

DAN

DAMN!!! LOOK! Look out the window! That mountain cat just crossed the parking lot.

BRUCE

Where?

DAN

(Pointing out large window)

OUT THERE!!

(EVERYONE rushes to the window to look. MARK stays at bar, looking out window, then, glances at bottle, takes a slug)

BRUCE

11

Where? I don't see anything.

LAURA

Me neither. Gone, I guess.

SONNY

Chief, you gotta go after it! It tore up my pigs!

DAN

Bruce can't see beyond the end of his shotgun. Remember the coyote fiasco five years ago? There old Bruce was, crouching along on his knees, when he spotted a shadow moving along someone's lawn. He took careful aim and cut a utility pole in half. Damn near ...

BRUCE

Yeah, but ...that....can't beat you driving over your fire hoses last time out. The rear tires flattened the brass fittings....they were useless.

SONNY

Why can't you catch it, chief?

BRUCE

Getting dark, Sonny. We'd need search lights.

DAN

See, no get up and go.

(To BRUCE)

Here, have some Bourbon instead.

LAURA

I'm concerned about that cat prowling around near my car out there, thank you very much! But, on the other hand, a mountain lion roaming the hills can be quite picturesque. A Currier and Ives winter scene.

(Phone rings. MARK answers.)

MARK

Mark's Place ... What? ... (Long pause) You don't say? ... YOU DOOOON'T SAY?... Tomorrow's fine. Terrific ... Ok. Bye.

LAURA

12

Who was that?

MARK

An eager beaver reporter from the Boston office of The New York Times! She wants to come out here tomorrow and interview everyone about the mystery lion.

LAURA

What loony would travel out here from Boston?

MARK

Actually, she was cross country skiing just ten miles from here on a mini-vacation. Her editor insisted she cover the story. We need to welcome her. Her reporting can improve our business.

SONNY

Will I be interviewed?

MARK

Sure, why not? Well, things are certainly looking up. See, I'm starting to feel ...

LAURA

That's the publicity we want!!

DAN

(Motioning for another round)

Just think of it, Sonny. You'll be on the six o'clock news. You'll be a celebrity.

MARK

(Thoughtfully, quietly)

Maybe, the mountain lion is the ticket ... God's answer. In a town south of here, a severe autumn storm undercut the shoreline so badly, houses perched on the cliffs toppled into the sea. Those poor owners ... tragic, but the bars were jammed with gawkers. We could be mobbed.

(Door to street opens and BETTY, a distraught woman, rushes to the bar, starts arranging her hair in a pocket mirror)

BETTY

Oh, I'm sorry I look so frantic, but I've had the worst possible occurrence.

BRUCE

Did you lose a pig, too?

BETTY

13

Oh, heavens, no! Unless you mean my ex-husband.

(Sees MARK waiting for her order)

Thank you. Yes, a Smirnoff martini straight up with an olive. Gin makes me run SCREAMING for the Ibuprofen. And a glass of water, please.

(SHE climbs up on a bar stool)

BRUCE

What seems to be the matter?

BETTY

I was just THROWN out of my house by my demon ex-husband. 59 Center St. That's MY HOUSE, mind you!

BRUCE

I'm Police Chief Miller. What's your name? Maybe I can help.

BETTY

Oh, thank you. I'm Betty Sanders.

(MARK serves her drink.)

LAURA

Thrown out in a blizzard? The tyrant!

BETTY

Yes, well, I was married to . . . I won't say . . . just he was . . . is . . . an internationally famous artist, I guess you would say . . . a celebrity. He got behind in his taxes and to spite me . . . I know it was to spite me . . . he sold my house so he could pay off the I.R.S. Here's the killer: he said when we got married that he put the house in both our names. He didn't. And my divorce attorney never told me, because, now that I think of it, he was paid by my ex-husband . . . never told me that I didn't get the house. So, there I was thinking up until 3 pm this afternoon that I was living in my house, mind you, and there was a loud rap at the door. Answering, I found the sheriff, another official, and a woman officer all asking me to quit the premises. QUIT THE PREMISES??? I screamed. QUITE THE PREMISES?!?

(Pause)

So, here I am, having . . . quit the premises.

(She takes a long sip of her martini, then her water.)

LAURA

Oh, you poor dear! How awful! Do you have a place to stay tonight?

BETTY

14

Well, to be truthful, I don't.

(Pause)

Actually, my getting here was quite a trial, over the vast frozen tundra; might as well be the Yukon wilderness out there. No one on the road. No road for that matter. An old sage once said, "Just aim somewhere between the telephone poles, and stop when you hear the tinkle of broken glass." So here I am minus one house and one headlight. Is there symmetry in that?

(Shrugs, sips.)

Certainly, no justice!

MARK

You look like you could stand a bowl of hot soup.

BETTY

Oh, thank you. That would be scrumptious.

(MARK departs for the kitchen.)

BRUCE

Where do you live? Or used to live?

BETTY

(Sipping heartily on her cocktail)

Next town over. Where both the lights and males are out of commission.

BRUCE

You should see the Police Chief there.

BETTY

Not on your life! Everyone there is tied to frayed matrimonial strings. It's a rotating sex club. The Police Chief is married to my corrupt lawyer's sister, and she serves as ornamental chairwoman and screws the mistress of a town selectman. The women are all divorcees, unattached or recently entangled. It's a swinging snake pit of promiscuity.

LAURA

Sounds like fun to me.

(Looks to DAN for agreement)

DAN

At least you get to enjoy our town water.

BETTY

What do you mean?

SONNY

You guys don't have any wells. You have to import your water from us.

BETTY

Is that why it tastes so funny! How does the water get there? Through the sewer pipes?

SONNY

That's not funny! My prize pigs are raised on our water.

DAN

(To BETTY)

Your homes ... when they catch on fire ... are put out with our water.

(BETTY takes another hearty sip from her cocktail, followed by a drink of water.)

BETTY

And you must be.....?

DAN

Dan Weeks. I'm the town's Fire Chief.

LAURA

Doesn't he look so handsome?

(BETTY hands DAN the glass of water)

BETTY

Here, you can use this on the next fire. It could extinguish anything but thirst.

LAURA

These two guys run the town, more or less ...

BETTY

Really? I don't believe that. After the scandal in your Police Department, the short comings published in our daily rag, it was only natural your Fire Department tried to capitalize on it ... in print. That must have created a lot of friction in what should have been a spirit of cooperation. What I hear is that it's run by nincompoops. I'll have another martini, please.

(LAURA slides behind bar, fixes drink.)

SONNY

16

I don't know about ninnypoops, but our locals never get hired for town offices here. When I was growing up, the local kid got the job. Now, locals like me aren't ever hired. Outsiders with degrees get the jobs. Oh, yeah, we get the temporary jobs, like cleaning oil drops off the ocean beaches in the dead of winter, hundreds of unemployed people up at sunrise, armed with tiny mesh strainers taped to broom handles. But, when it comes to permanent good paying jobs, forget it.

LAURA

Tell them about your experience at the high school.

SONNY

For five weeks I subbed as a cook. When it came time to hire a permanent cook, I wasn't qualified 'cause I got no high school diploma. Since when do diplomas make that much difference? Since when do you have to go to school to learn how to put a can on an opener, flip a switch to open the can, shut it off, remove the can from the opener, then put the contents into the pot and add cold water? Do you have to go to school to put peanut butter on one piece of bread and jelly on the other piece and put them together to make a sandwich? If you move here from Timbuktu, your chances of getting a job are great. But if you were born here, in this town, in the same house you lived in, as I was, forget it. That's why I'm partial to where Betty lives. They hire townies.

(Pause)

Don't get me wrong. I love this town. But I tell you ... it's just not right. If it wasn't for the land my father left me, I'd be destitute. As it is, I volunteer for the police and fire department, hoping for a part-time job.

BRUCE

You do a great job, too.

DAN

Double ditto.

(MARK returns from kitchen with soup. Serves BETTY)

BETTY

Thank you, Chef.

(Bar phone rings. BRUCE picks up.)

BRUCE

Yeah, what is it now? ... Another sighting? ... Who? And ran towards his car? ... Where was it? ... Call the State Police ... Yeah, I'll be here. See ya.

BETTY

17

What's going on in this town?

LAURA

A mountain lion is running around on the loose.

BETTY

Really! Now, a *mountain man* ...I'll go looking myself!

SONNY

A mountain man?

MARK

(To SONNY)

Never mind.

(To BETTY)

You seem the outdoors, adventurous sort.

BETTY

Scandinavian, through and through.

MARK

Well, Laura and I have been trying to decide how to increase business.

BETTY

Simple. My ex-husband is a celebrity. Lure him to the restaurant with a meal and free drinks and then accidentally push him down the stairs over there. A celebrity corpse always draws a crowd.

LAURA

A corpse ...huh?

BRUCE

Now, Betty. We can't have any of that. This is a law and order town.

BETTY

You think so? Well, just wait 'til they get here.

MARK

Who?

BETTY

The diggers. That's who?

(LAURA has moved near DAN, listening to the exchange)

BRUCE

Who the hell are the diggers?

LAURA

(Laughs)

Obviously to bury the corpse.

DAN

Obviously. Ha, ha!

(LAURA and DAN exchange warm looks)

BETTY

What do ANY of you know about property rights?

DAN

Easy. You buy a piece of land, record the sale ... then it's yours and no one can touch it.

BETTY

No, I'm not here to engage you all inno, never mind. You'll see. They were over the hill last week before the snow began, digging.

BRUCE

Doing what? Doing what?

MARK

Digging she said. But what were they digging?

BETTY

Bones! Ancient Indian bones!

(While everyone wonders silently the implications of that news, BETTY swills on her drink. BRUCE and DAN nod for another. MARK fixes each in turn.)

SONNY

I never knew but my Indian ancestors came from here. Could be buried close by. A distant uncle still lives on the reservation.

DAN

Come to think of it, I heard on my two-way squawk box a group of archeologists are digging up old Indian grave sites around here. Is that what you mean, Betty?

BETTY

(Sipping heartily)

Precisely.

MARK

I bought this place from a guy who told me when he was digging the foundation he found some bones.

DAN

Yeah, what'd he do?

MARK

I think he called somebody and they told him to mail them in. That was year before we closed on the deal. Actually, I got a letter several weeks ago from a tribe not far from here. The elders believe that the bones this guy found belong to their tribe. It requested that I let some members inspect my lot for artifacts and remains. I said OK.

LAURA

You never told me that.

MARK

It meant nothing at the time. I was trying to save my restaurant.

BETTY

Don't any of you know what can happen with these diggers? I mean about your property rights?

LAURA

In the summertime, I work for the town's History Museum part time. We've got Indian bones and relics on display. I know groups are getting court orders all around the country to preserve the past, and if a site is discovered, they can get the right to dig it up wherever it is. Then, the relics are cleaned with a solution. Mainly, permits must be obtained to dig. Generally, I'm told, the sites are all dug up getting the remains exhumed.

MARK

Dug up? How?

BETTY

20

Darling, your restaurant may become a *rather large* hole in the ground!

MARK

A HOLE? A LARGE HOLE? ARE YOU KIDDING?

BRUCE

Of course, since it's private property, they'd have to get your permission and a permit.

MARK

THEY CAN'T ...I WON'THOW DARE THEY?

DAN

Betty, that's just rumor, right?

BETTY

It's not just the burial grounds, but the ghosts who rise up to torment the living.

SONNY

I'VE SEEN GHOSTS!

(SONNY races to window and points into the distance)

LAURA

Where?

SONNY

You remember, Laura. The old mansion near my farm. Always at midnight during the fog.

MARK

I'm for a drink.

(Takes a shot)

BETTY

(To SONNY, hands him a card)

Young man, here's my old address. The next time you see a vengeful spirit ...send him here.

(Calls for a new drink)

Stories about dead Indians isn't just folklore, people. Some of them crawl out of their dusty lairs and deliver a compelling message.

BRUCE

Just pure nonsense. We can't think ...

LAURA

21

Mark, here, is sitting on an old site.

BETTY

And there's a mountain lion prowling around?

MARK

Yes, yes.

BETTY

I'll give you odds that's a reincarnated Indian. Cats are revered and respected.

BRUCE

More nonsense. I tell you. Just foolishness.

BETTY

Sonny's got relatives buried nearby? See? Logical.

MARK

You think...?

(SONNY's nervousness erupts)

SONNY

(Rushes to window)

WHERE IS HE? DO YOU SEE HIM? CHIEF, DON'T SHOOT HIM!!!

LAURA

(Rushing over to SONNY)

Calm yourself. No one knows anything for sure.

DAN

Betty may be right. If the diggers come, they'll desecrate sacred ground and that'll be reason for ...how did you say? ...

BETTY

Tormenting the living.

BRUCE

If they come out, we'll just....we'll just ... bury them again...that's what.

SONNY

BURY MY ANCESTORS AGAIN? WHAT?

LAURA

Sonny, calm down! No one's doing anythingyet.

MARK

OH GOD!

(Slaps his forehead twice, sinks down onto a bar stool)
I forgot ... not tomorrow.

LAURA

NOW, what could be so bad?

MARK

Laura, I forgot to tell you. We have to close in the morning tomorrow.

LAURA

Close? You mean shut the doors?

MARK

Just for the morning. Maybe longer.

LAURA

Ok, ok. What is it?

MARK

I had a certain amount of time to tie into the town's sewer line. No more cesspool. Heavy fines and forced closure if I don't. The deadline is here. Tomorrow.

DAN

You going to keep the bar open? How about the dining room?

MARK

Yes. The dining room will start serving when we're hooked up. Why?

DAN

Well, my missus and I have been together for some time, but lately, after she won big on the lottery, quit her job ... even stopped fixing my meals ... things haven't been so hot. Some of it has to do with this town ... in the winter time, couples seem to split up. You can't blame them, really. Nothing to do each night but stare at the TV.

LAURA

23

(Moving closer to DAN)

Everyone needs someone. Don't you think, Dan?

DAN

(Sorrowfully)

Yes, I do.

(LAURA acknowledges with a broad smile)

LAURA

Now, a sewer line to the highway? That's going to need a long trench. How are you going to dig that? Especially when it's been snowing.

MARK

I forgot a backhoe is coming. By law, they have to go down a minimum of 12 inches.

(Slugs back his drink)

12 INCHES! DID YOU HEAR? 12 INCHES!

(EVERYONE forms around MARK, deeply concerned)

LAURA

(Calming)

What's so important about 12 inches?

DAN

Yeah, what?

MARK

MORE BONES ...MORE BONES, THAT'S WHAT!!!! THAT MEANS MORE DIGGERS

(Sinking over bar stool)

The fates are playing with us.

BRUCE

I don't get it.

LAURA

We've gone from worrying over a mountain lion to grave diggers.

MARK

Laura, not now, please.

(Spins around facing all)

MARK (Con't)

24

When I had my restaurant in New York, before the food reviews, you don't know what it was like ... the whole family had mortgaged their homes to help me and I ...

(Leans forward)

COULDN'T CONTROL ANYTHING.

(Lifts his head)

Now, here again ... the memory is ...the feeling is returning...the anxiety, the stress, the ...

(LAURA puts an arm around MARK)

LAURA

Uncertainty?

MARK

(Clutches LAURA)

God, yes! But it's different somehow. I'm not alone physically, yet I am spiritually. I have you people, but I'm still a deep, empty vacuum. OH!!! The agony of being me!

(Sipping on drink)

(A long pause, while everyone stares at MARK)

MARK (Con't)

It's an existential nightmare; all of my life's meaning wrapped up within THESE (gestures) four walls, surrounded (points out window) by God's icy fingers....wondering, wonderingwhere ... whatwhen....how....

(Murmuring, becoming indistinct)

...why!

(Suddenly alert)

Mark's Place was supposed to be the new exposition for my renewed life.

(LAURA and DAN move to MARK's side)

BETTY

Boy, is he morose? Like this often?

LAURA

All he needs is a good night's rest.

(MARK finishes his drink)

MARK

Rest? Can't think about it. Have to work.

(To SONNY, urgently grabbing his lapel)

Maybe you can help me tonight? \$10 an hour. *Please!*

SONNY

Great! I need money for my pigs.

MARK

I need to get more circulation downstairs. Too hot, even in the winter.

(Urging caution)

When we get to the bottom of the stairs, be careful. There's a folding security gate.

When you open it, your fingers could get caught.

(MARK and SONNY head downstairs.)

(Phone rings)

BRUCE

Yeah, what is it now? ... By the school playground? ... Thanks, I'm coming.

(HE goes to the kitchen stairs and shouts down.)

SONNY! I NEED YOU UPSTAIRS! Tell Mark, you'll be back later.

(SONNY and MARK come running upstairs.)

SONNY

What is it, Chief?

BRUCE

The mountain lion is near the school.

DAN

(Getting up, gesturing to drinks)

Mark, put 'em on my tab.

BRUCE

Mine too.

MARK

I can't believe our children are in jeopardy now.

(After SONNY races to exit, DAN and BRUCE rush for doorway, and crash into each other. Each registering scowls, all leave for the school.)

Be careful, guys!

(LAURA goes behind bar, finds something, places it under her apron.
BETTY finishes her soup.)

BETTY

Good soup! What's in it?

MARK

Kale, sausage and white bean.

BETTY

Very sustaining. I needed it.

LAURA

Come on, Betty. My place is around the corner. You can stay there tonight. I'll be right back, Mark.

BETTY

What about the ... big fella outside?

LAURA

The school is a mile away. My car is here. I have a garage. And I have this:
(She pulls a large knife from beneath her apron.)

BETTY

Wooooohhhhhheeeeeee! Wish I'd had one of those when I found out about my house!

(THEY put on their coats and exit.)

(An anguished MARK leans against the bar)

Oh, Lord, see to it my place fills tonight ... we need the money!

(Suddenly flips around on his back, arms outstretched)

YOU HEAR, LORD M...O...N...E...Y!!!

(Blackout)

The next day, 2 pm. Snow abates. LAURA is primping in the bar mirror. MARK comes up from downstairs with DAN.

MARK

(To DAN)

I'm glad you had time to come over. As I said, those pilot lights haven't been readjusted for years.

DAN

Well, my pleasure. You see what most chefs don't realize is that pilot lights can ignite gases from anywhere. I see you have them turned up.

MARK

That's because the sauté pans quickly blow them out.

DAN

Just be careful. Now, what's the business about that hole down there by the foundation?

MARK

Remember Betty talking about the diggers yesterday?

DAN

Yes.

MARK

They came this morning with their shovels. I greeted them, showed me their permit and started right in. By the time I had gotten coffee upstairs and returned, one of them said they were leaving and coming back. That's all he said. After they had dug that hole, they left as silently as they came. Very eerie.

(MARK and DAN move over to bar)

LAURA

Thanks, Dan. Such a man ...keeping us safe.

(DAN acknowledges with a warm smile)

DAN

Well, you know I'm the Building Inspector in town as well. When they come the next time, let me speak with them.

Ok.

LAURA

Mark, while you were downstairs, the Deere people with your backhoe called and will be coming tomorrow instead of today.

MARK

Just as well. I need a day off from that complication.

LAURA

(To MARK)

Didn't you think the bar was so strange last night? So many sightings. First, there was this woman who said she saw a beast half dog- half large cat, then another said it was half fox-half cat, then it was half fox-half dog. Then, it had a long tail, then a short tail. Then it weighed 30 pounds; then 80 pounds. But, I'll never forget when Bruce came back from chasing the puma around the school yards and Dan, god love you, kept referring to him as (Laughing) ...Elmer Fudd with his double-barreled shotgun, blasting holes in the school's tennis courts. That man is seriously dangerous.

DAN

He's plain dumb. Anyway, I have work at the station. Laura, maybe you and I

LAURA

.. any time. Take care, Dan.

(DAN exits)

LAURA (Con't)

(To MARK)

Now, Mark, we seem to be at cross purposes here.

MARK

What do you mean?

LAURA

I thought we were going to use the puma to attract customers to the bar.

MARK

Yes.

LAURA

Then why are we hunting it?

MARK

29

We intend to capture it, send it to a zoo. But meanwhile, all the commotion is good business.

LAURA

OK. Otherwise, it doesn't make sense.

(The outside door opens. DAN and KELLY enter. She is wearing leather pantsuit and clutches a briefcase.)

DAN

This woman is looking for you, Mark. She just drove up.

MARK

Can I help you?

KELLY

You the proprietor?

MARK

I am.

KELLY

I called last evening.

(She extends her hand to MARK.)

Name's Kelly. I'm a roving reporter with the *Times*. I cover the Cape so I'm here about a mountain lion killing livestock.

LAURA

Yes..., there is a beast roaming around, slinking through the farm lands... a beautiful creature living by pure instinct.

KELLY

I'm not interested in your aesthetics of a 'beautiful creature.' I've had our vacation disrupted. And my boyfriend is really pissed that every time we're doing something fun, my editor calls and ...well.... here I am not in the best attitude.

(SHE takes a note pad out, begins writing.)

What're the details? From the beginning.

LAURA

I'm sorry your life has been put on hold, but isn't this your JOB?

KELLY

30

You're right! It is! But it better be worth it. So again, the details from the beginning.

MARK

Laura, ease up, please.

LAURA

The Police Chief got a call. Various reports kept coming in ...horrifying details of clawed, chewed pigs, ripped-to-tatters, half-eaten cats ...reports that defy description.

KELLY

No need to be so dramatic. My readers just want to know the truth.

LAURA

The truth, my dear woman? Why, Kelly, the absolute truth has eluded all since the time of Aristotle and Plato. Haven't we lived through enough media lies?

KELLY

That's an affront, if that's what you expect!!

(BETTY enters from street)

BETTY

(To LAURA)

Thanks for the coffee this morning. My lawyer said unless he saw the documents about the house seizure, I might as well stay put for now. He said don't enter the house.

(Pause)

Well, I'm up for a *rather large* Smirnoff martini. I'm still a bit rickety.

DAN

I might as well stay for one.

BETTY

(To KELLY)

Hi, I'm Betty. You're

KELLY

Kelly, for the *Times*. My editor sent me on a story about a mountain lion.

(Looking at LAURA)

A true rendering of the verifiable facts.

MARK

31

Does anyone need a drink? I do.

(MARK fixes everyone drinks.)

(The front door opens. BRUCE enters carrying a heavy shotgun)

DAN

Here comes Ol' Elmer.

BRUCE

Say Mark, I was around back,... you know, down around where you take deliveries into the kitchen?

MARK

(Fixing drinks)

Lots of bushes back there.

BRUCE

Well, this is what I think. With that door half open to the kitchen ...and that's a big garage door ... you can get some four legged visitors looking for food, a feast for the right raccoon.

MARK

I do get them sometimes. Harmless mostly. A clever raccoon once opened a whole jar of Maraschino cherries, and ate most of them, stems and all. But they can't get up the stairs over there. A self-locking gate keeps them out.

LAURA

Raccoons are omnivores, but it's the meat smells that worry me with you-know-who slinking around.

KELLY

(To LAURA)

Have you seen this lion? I better not be on a wild goose chase!

BRUCE

Mark, do you know there are men downstairs digging around your building, right now?

MARK

Oh, they've come back. Dan, they're downstairs.

(LAURA glances out the window)

LAURA

32

(Pointing frantically)
MY GOD! THE MOUNTAIN LION!

KELLY

Where? By Jesus, THERE HE IS!

(BETTY rushes to the window and SHOUTS.)

BETTY

(Pointing to the next town)
59 CENTER ST!!! 59 CENTER ST!!

LAURA

Mark, how the hell are we going to catch him?

(BRUCE lifts his rifle. It goes off. BANG. Plaster falls from the ceiling.)

DAN

YEE GODS, MAN! ARE YOU CRAZY?

MARK

Outside! Fire it outside!

(BRUCE races outside. More shots. BANG. BANG)

KELLY

(An aside)
Country bumpkins. The whole lot.

DAN

A loose cannon, for sure.

LAURA

A servant of the people: a crackbrained loony.

(BRUCE reenters bar.)

BRUCE

Missed him.

LAURA

Luck wouldn't have it.
(Eyes roll)

God help us.

BRUCE

33

But, I scared off the diggers ... scattered like a grenade explosion.

DAN

(To BRUCE)

Boy, have you got a gift for screwing things up.

MARK

Who's going to pay for the hole in my ceiling?

BRUCE

(Staring at ceiling hole)

Don't worry. The town will fix it.

KELLY

I could use a drink. Several, in fact.

(MARK goes behind bar. BETTY returns to bar)

MARK

What's your pleasure?

KELLY

(Glancing at her note pad)

Johnny Walker Black on the rocks, please.

(MARK fixes her drink, takes a shot himself.)

MARK

Kelly has been sent to cover our town story.

KELLY

Actually, I'm here to Uncover it, for whatever it's worth to my reading public.

BRUCE

(Shaking)

We can't panic. After all ...it's on the news. The public thinksthat's the truth!

LAURA

The unnatural truth, you mean.

BETTY

34

(Theatrically)

Daarrrlings, UNcovering the UNnatural truth will simply UNnerve everyone.

DAN

Look at Bruce ... he's a wreck!

(To BRUCE)

You should retire.

BRUCE

(To DAN)

What are you doing about that big cat? ... You're so smart!

(DAN and BRUCE square off, staring at each other)

MARK

No matter, you two! As long as the bar fills up each night, packed with crazed, frightened people, it would be welcome.

BRUCE

Now, see here, Mark. We must keep everyone under control.

DAN

My, my. The picture of self-control speaking?

BETTY

(Holds up her cocktail olive)

Chief, so far, only this olive pinned to this toothpick is under control.

KELLY

(To BRUCE)

Do you usually fire that gun off indoors?

BRUCE

(To KELLY)

Who are you?

KELLY

Reporter for *The New York Times*, Boston office.

BRUCE

Make sure you spell my name right.

(To MARK)

Listen to the publicity hound.

KELLY

(To MARK, writing on her pad)

Chef, what do you think?

MARK

About the hole in my ceiling? I'm more concerned about those lunatics that have been digging a hole in my foundation. Downstairs right now.

BETTY

What lunatics?

KELLY

Yes, pray tell, what lunatics?

MARK

Some members of an old Indian tribe looking for more bones.

BETTY

Oh, you mean the diggers? I told you so!

MARK

(To KELLY)

The previous owner constructed this building right on top of a burial site. He found some bones when he dug the foundation.

KELLY

(Still writing)

Really?

MARK

Several weeks ago, I gave the tribal elders permission to come and see if there were more remains. They came this morning, stayed awhile, then left. Now, they're back.

KELLY

Another story?

(SHE follows everyone around writing furiously in her notebook)

DAN

36

I'll have to take a look at that permit tomorrow.

MARK

You know what's worse? I've got a backhoe coming tomorrow to dig a trench for the sewer pipe. In order to get open tomorrow night, I've got to get rid of those bone pickers.

LAURA

I bet that permit probably gives them some jurisdiction over the site, now that you have given your permission.

KELLY

(Writing)

"gives them jurisdiction over the site" There's got to be some laws I can research. I'm going to call this in when I get to my motel.

DAN

Yeah, I gotta go, too. But, Mark, when I come back I'll be looking at your building's integrity. That hole may have weakened the foundation somewhat. Anyway, I'll be around checking for several days.

(KELLY and DAN exit)

BRUCE

Mark, I'm going to double check on that garage door downstairs for you.

MARK

I'll go with you.

(BRUCE and MARK head downstairs)

BETTY

Don't you just love impending chaos?

LAURA

Tomorrow, a swelling crescendo.

BETTY

Followed by a clash of cymbals. How intoxicating!

(Pause)

Come on, Laura. Tell me about the chef. He's so vulnerable; in need of desperate caring.

LAURA

You know, Betty, Mark is unattached.

BETTY

So you say. Not for yourself, Laura?

LAURA

Not really. My tastes flow toward the exotic, untamed and untrammeled.

BETTY

Plucked from the pages of The National Geographic, I gather?

LAURA

The problem is always education. The wild spirited always lack finesse and perspective.

BETTY

So true ..so true.

(SHE takes a long swill of her martini)

Our contemporary world doesn't provide us with a be-all male. He could *never* be sufficient for the adventurous, keen-eyed, lascivious female.

LAURA

So true, so true! The game is to seek out whoever fits the particular desire at the moment. Another desire, another fit,... another desire, another fit.

BETTY

So true, so true! You should live in my town! But, Laura, I could never be that busy. My life lies in fantasy. Dreams satisfy me very well. Well....not ...that... well.

VOICE (O.S.)

(From the basement)

THERE HE IS! THERE HE IS!

(Several more loud shotgun BLASTS from the basement)

BANG!!! BANG!!! BANG!!!

(BETTY and LAURA dive over the bar)

(MARK runs upstairs)

(BETTY and LAURA peer over bar at MARK)

38

MARK

Old Fuddy-dud just took aim at a moving shadow and blew off the hinges to the door downstairs.

(Holds up the hinges)

Behold! No more door!

LAURA

You mean ... you mean?

MARK

Yes. Now we have a chance.

BETTY

(Frantic)

A chance to do what? A CHANCE TO DO WHAT????

(With crazed expression, SHE slugs down the last of her martini)

END OF SCENE TWO, ACT ONE

ACT 1
Scene 3

39

SETTING: The next day, 2 pm. Snow has stopped.

AT RISE: LAURA is standing alongside BETTY, who is seated at the bar having a martini. MARK is seated on a bar stool, his head bowed. Next to him is a large tote on another bar stool and a long handled shovel.

LAURA

(To MARK)

After yesterday, you deserve a drink.

(LAURA moves behind bar, fixes MARK a drink)

MARK

Need something to keep me going. Very early this morning I saw large paw prints in the kitchen dust downstairs.

(Takes drink)

BETTY

(Sipping casually)

Now, that's not very encouraging.

MARK

Laura and I came in early to do some prep for tonight. The damn backhoe ...

BETTY

I just love the masculine snorting and rhythmic clankety-clank. I get goosebumps every time!

LAURA

Well, tearing up the driveway, exposing more bones ... poor Mark almost drove right into the trench.

MARK

I was so nervous, I almost cut my wrist opening a cryovaced bag of chicken.

(Shaking)

Do you know what that would have done? We couldn't open, that's what. But when I saw that a big animal had walked from my refrigerator downstairs to the dumb waiter over there.

(Points)

Following some meat scent, I guess.

BETTY

40

(Gulps down her drink)

DID YOU SAY PAW PRINTS? How'd ..he ... it ...he get into the kitchen?

LAURA

Remember there's no door anymore. Elmer Fudd shot off the hinges last night.

MARK

Plus, he was gnawing on this bone.

(Pulls bone from tote)

See?

(Looking at bone markings)

Those are big tooth marks ... some hungry animal.

(BETTY stares at tooth marks)

(LAURA sees KELLY at front door)

(MARK replaces bone in tote)

(LAURA moves to front door, unlocks it. KELLY enters)

KELLY

Thanks, Laura. It's not so cold today.

(Nods to BETTY, who signals for another drink)

(ALL nod; KELLY looks about, settles near the bar, LAURA following)

LAURA

Is your boyfriend still pissed?

KELLY

Actually, yes! But he has an inventive way of getting over it. No telling what he'll do.

(Turns to MARK)

Say, Mark! You look beat! How was the bar last night? Busy?

MARK

I wonder whether it's all worth it.

KELLY

41

Yes, well, I talked with my editor. He wants me to stay here and cover all the stories. It's not often a tiny off-beat town in the off-season comes alive with off-the-wall national stories. Actually, I did some research last night.

LAURA

Those bone pickers are driving Mark crazy.

BETTY

You haven't seen anything yet. I warned you about far-reaching implications.

MARK

Right! Yesterday, they found some bones under the foundation. This morning, when I approached them, I got handed the same permit, which I saw was really a court order from the State Archaeologist's office.

KELLY

Do you know what they do? I think my boyfriend has a part-time connection with them.

LAURA

They investigate whether the bones belong to Native Americans. If they do, then the State Archaeologists will insist that all of the remains and artifacts be removed and preserved.

MARK

Well, those people took some of them to that State guy. One digger said the site was an important archaeological discovery. "Our ancestors may be here," he said. Then that damn backhoe carved up another corner of the building where the old sewer went to the cesspool. Holes and bones are everywhere, leaving a pock marked bone orchard. Dust is everywhere. The kitchen is wrecked.

(Pauses looking into his tote)

But I found a few artifacts.

BETTY

What kind of artifacts?

MARK

Axes and spearheads, pottery, all kinds of tools.

(HE sits up pulling from his tote several axes and bones)

And bones. Here's what you look like in the afterlife. You can see they've been cleaned with a solution.

BETTY

(Examines axe)

Could have cleaved the ex's head in two with this one.

(MARK gets off bar stool, mimics the digger's performance) 42

MARK

You should watch those morons with their tiny, little shovels, picks, and small brooms and hover over their precious ancient hole, feathering away the soil ... in *my kitchen!!!*.

(HE grabs shovel)

Then they start another hole ... like this.

(Demonstrates)

As far as I can see, they're not preserving the past. They're exploiting the remains.

KELLY

You've got a point. Go on, Mark.

(Continues to take notes)

MARK

Do you think other people would allow a burial site to be violated and dug up?

BETTY

Been telling you: those diggers doing that all over town. And leaving a mess.

(BETTY leans into conversation, listening intensely)

MARK

Well, it's not fair to me and to those native souls who came and settled the land, died and settled into eternal peace. It's not fair for those bizarre boobs to bounce in and unsettle everything, in the name of settling rumors of who they were and how they settled.

KELLY

That's *very* unsettling!

MARK

As I said, they're down there dressed in jeans and T-shirts, murmuring among themselves like demented high priests, on all fours, pointing, pricking, poking, prodding and gouging out the soil, a feverish ritual not unlike chasing a poor mountain lion around the countryside. I'll tell you it's unsettling ... the whole business. And what's worse, I see it as a sign of our changing times. Nothing is ever permanent. But now ...

(Slowly and sorrowfully)

I feel my life will be carried away on a gusty night riding a snowy wind storm of change. And my livelihood, my identity will be broomed into the distant...far... reaching...vista.

BETTY

Mark, you show a passionate instinct framed by a sensibility. A rare commodity these days. How did you wind up out here in the boonies?

MARK

43

Lost my home in a divorce. Plus the agony of alimony payments.

BETTY

My, my! A kindred spirit.

(Moves closer to MARK)

(The front door opens, and BRUCE strides in with shotgun)

LAURA

Chief, fancy seeing you here. I thought you were on the cat's trail.

BRUCE

Yeah, well. Mark, the usual. Can't say I've had a quiet night with the phone calls. The town is panicking and the media wants a new angle.

KELLY

What's the latest, Chief?

BRUCE

The State Police collared a guy known to have brought illegal exotic pets onto the Cape.

KELLY

So, allegedly, he is responsible for this Puma?

BRUCE

Allegedly nothing! Nonsense! No, the guy's a loser ... got a sullen, unstable background. He's the guy all right. An abuser of women, too. We just have to establish a link.

BETTY

If that's all you need to convict, my ex-husband fits the bill. He's at 59 Center St.

LAURA

(To BETTY)

You never told me you were abused.

BETTY

Didn't I? Yeah, abused in the worst possible way. By silence. By ignoring me. By making me feel I didn't exist. By making me feel I wasn't there. A non-entity. A nobody.

(Slowly)

A worthless ... zero. Z ...E...R...O. ZERO!

MARK

44

(Lays a comforting hand on BETTY'S shoulder)

I get it ... I really get how you feel.

(MARK and BETTY exchange tender looks, slight embrace)

KELLY

Unforgiveable.

LAURA

Yes, Betty. That's horrible.

BRUCE

Well, it looks like you've found some friends here.

MARK

Friends, indeed.

KELLY

What about the mysterious cat? Anyone see him again?

LAURA

Just some paw prints down in the kitchen, that's all.

BRUCE

JESUS! REALLY?

MARK

He was sniffing around looking for meat. Downstairs.

(Moves behind bar)

BETTY

That's what you said before. Right? I heard, but I was caught up in my own personal grief ... guess I wasn't paying enough.... YEE GODS, MAN. That lion was....*really downstairs* in your kitchen?

(BRUCE moves farther down the bar. MARK fixes him a drink)

MARK

Yes, now, folks, it's imperative that we keep the folding, steel security gate at the base of those stairs over there closed. I had it installed to keep raccoons from coming upstairs. It self-locks but can be opened quickly and easily by the latch.

LAURA

45

Mark, you wouldn't be saying that if you thought the cat couldn't get upstairs.

(A nervous BETTY looks at a framed document on wall)

BETTY

I've been looking at this certificate. (Points) It says that your dumbwaiter has a rated speed of 15 feet per minute. That's your dumb waiter over there, right?

MARK

Yeah.

(BETTY pulls a calculator out)

BETTY

(Sips heartily on her martini)

So, what would you say was the distance in vertical feet from here to your basement?

MARK

How far above the basement is this floor?

BETTY

Yes, precisely. You see, dear proprietor, our lives depend on the seconds it takes for that *puma to ride the dumbwaiter and get to us ...yeee gods, man!*

MARK

Betty, calm yourself. Lions don't know how to push up and down buttons.

BETTY

It's a full moon and you are crazy! I had three domestic cats years ago, and one learned to turn on the rotary fan, another learned how to open the pantry and the other, get this, learned how to push buttons in our apartment house elevator with his nose. *Am I sounding unreasonable here!!!*

MARK

You're really projecting into the future.

BETTY

My future doesn't care to be my past. How far above the kitchen are we?

MARK

I'd say 10 feet.

BETTY

46

(Doing her calculations)

At one foot every four seconds, that Puma can reach us in 40 seconds. That's our edge.

KELLY

(Using another calculator)

Betty, I get the same results. That's not much of an edge. That's the amount of time it'll take me to ... DIVE BEHIND THE BAR!.

MARK

Ladies, I'm sure we're safe up here.

BRUCE

As long as I'm here, you're safe.

LAURA

Chief, you actually frighten me when you're around.

BETTY

Mark, I don't mean to be hysterical, BUT IAM!! FORTY SECONDS IS NOT ENOUGH FOR ME TO EVEN ...FINISH MY MARTINI.

(DAN enters front door)

DAN

Hi Mark, I just checked on your diggers. They're leaving right now.

BRUCE

These ladies are very nervous about the cat downstairs.

DAN

You're just as dangerous as the cat. When are you going to fix that door downstairs?

MARK

Oh, God!!!!

(MARK jumps off bar stool, races to dumb waiter, looks in)

Oh....that cat! That lion! Holy Cow! Now, I remember. His dusty paw prints were IN... IN the dumbwaiter.

DAN and BRUCE together

DOWNSTAIRS QUICK!!!

(Both DAN and BRUCE race downstairs)

LAURA

47

You don't think ...?

BETTY

You shouldn't think ...?

KELLY

You wouldn't think ...?

MARK

His nose could push the 'UP' button and he'dbe ...

BETTY

You said he couldn't do that. YOU SAID HE COULDN'T DO THAT. SO HE'S GOING TO BE UPSTAIRS ...HERE ...WHAT'S THE TIME? FORTY SECONDS? OH, GOD!

LAURA

Mark, that's too far-fetched.

MARK

Just saying that's a possibility.

(KELLY runs behind the bar with BETTY)

LAURA

Yeah, you're right. I'm coming, girls!

(LAURA dives behind bar, too)

(Suddenly, more shotgun blasts from downstairs)

BANG !!! BANG!!! BANG!!!

MARK

(Looking downstairs)

What the hell was that?

(DAN charges up the stairs, out of breath)

DAN

That lion's back! He was downstairs.

(BETTY, LAURA and KELLY pick their heads up behind bar)

BETTY

Where is he now? *Not in the dumbwaiter?*

(KELLY writes feverishly, notepad in hand)

KELLY

Not in the dumbwaiter? Yes, give it to us ... straight facts.

(Pauses, looks up and stares, eyes bulging)

BETTY

I have too much to live for.

(Looks to the heavens)

Lord, not my time!!!

DAN

NO! He's gone. Bruce scared him off and the diggers, too.

MARK

You mean, they've *all* left.

(LAURA stands up behind bar)

DAN

Yup! Hightailing it down the street.

KELLY

That's a relief.

(Writing furiously)

Puma frightens diggers. Police Chief fires shotgun pointblank at Puma. Chief misses Puma. Puma chases diggers. Chief chases Puma chasing diggers. Fire Chief witnessing Police Chief chasing Puma chasing diggers ... all 'hightailing down the street.'

LAURA

(To KELLY)

That's not accurate, certainly not true. I just saw Bruce outside returning to downstairs.

DAN

The media has a license for fiction.

(Motions to BETTY and LAURA)

But, come on out. You're safe, now.

(HE extends arm around BETTY)

(MARK takes a drink)

MARK

49

I can't cook with all that going on downstairs. I'm going to stay closed tonight.

KELLY

(Still writing)

“Chef, beside himself with anguish, refuses to be intimidated by mountain lion ... refuses to give into despair, refuses to see the reality of his desperate situation, refuses to”

LAURA

(Sidling next to KELLY)

Kelly, you make no sense. You think this is fun and games? Out from the big town to witness a small town in crisis?

KELLY

As a reporter, just following my nose.
Mark, it's your place. What'd ya going to do?

(BRUCE comes upstairs. BETTY returns to her bar stool)

BRUCE

The lion is gone, and the diggers have split. But they left many artifacts wrapped up in cheesecloth, saturated with chemicals to clean them.

(Opens towel, shows artifact)

Like this. That's not safe.

KELLY

Are you talking about cleaning fluid?

LAURA

I told you.

BRUCE

I think I saw them using lighter fluid. Yeah, empty Zippo lighter fluid cans all over.

DAN

That stuff is highly flammable. As your Fire Chief, I should warn you.

BETTY

Say, Laura, would it be unheard of to ask for another drink? I've always been RIVETED to the notion of being absolutely sloshed the instant I die. Essentially, thoroughlyquite numb, in fact! You should have one, too, on me. Go on, Laura.

(PHONE RINGS)

MARK

50

Yes, who? ...no, I mean, what? ..My neighbor? Yes..no, I mean ... what the hell?....
Serving tonight? ... OH, let's see ... That really depends on whether the boob
archeologists and ancestors downstairs haven't set the basement on fire, whether the
Police and Fire Chiefs don't evacuate the building, whether we all don't get killed in a
stampede to get out of the building, whether the reporter from *The New York Times*
doesn't create an avalanche of media frenzy, whether our dear waitress, Laura, doesn't run
off with the Fire Chief before he can put out the fire, whether our devoted customer, Betty,
doesn't capitalize on the turmoil by charging the atmosphere with lively, caustic taunts to
all who pass her bar stool, or whether the mountain lion can figure out how to get upstairs
or whether the health inspector will close us or I ... don't just lock the door and climb
headfirst into a *rather large* bottle of Beefeater. Does that answer your question?

(Looks at receiver)

I guess not. She hung up.

BETTY

You're a marvel of understatement ...you are. Cute, too!

(MARK shows the signs of too much drinking, gets amorous)

MARK

(Clinging to bar, directly to BETTY,)

Ah-ha! When Man stares into his bleak future, he begins to envision dreamy portraits of
intimate women ... with soft outlines whom he hopes ...to....to...

(Stops abruptly)

PREPARE FOR THE EVENTUALITY!

BETTY

Who's preparing for what eventuality?

MARK

CHANGE, the eventuality of CHANGE.

KELLY

I'm sorry. I'm not following that. Come again.

MARK

(Intensely)

The cosmos is changing. Clearly, this simple, little restaurant poised on a little hill, in a
little town, on a little peninsula is changing. Don't you feel it, people? I can't say that
what's taking place downstairs is part of the global agenda. But we can do
nothing to stop it. The snow first, then the dust. Soon, this little place will become dust.
We will *all* become dust. And it is to dust, we belong.

(Grabs the bottle of Beefeater, takes a slug)

BETTY

51

Mark, take it easy. A dash of poetic, metaphysical sentiment is only welcome now and then.

MARK

(Continuing unabated)

How wrong I was to complain that dust was clinging to my kitchen. That was the first clue I should have recognized that we are going to change. Frankly, I wanted to have my food and restaurant succeed, but now, the heavenly suggestion urges me to accept a dusty future. First snow, then comes the dust.

(Pauses for another slug)

All drink heartily. Pour one for the boys. Laura, champagne for Laura. Yes, let us salute the past and partake of the future. Dust will forever reign. Gather together and prepare for the Eventuality.

KELLY

(An aside)

Off the deep end! Clearly deranged!

(MARK climbs onto a bar stool and lowers his head. LAURA
lays her hand on his shoulder)

LAURA

(To KELLY)

You might want to give him a break. Sensitive men are prone to emotional excesses.

(To the OTHERS)

I've been with him for more than several years now, and we always somehow make it through the winter. But this winter is tougher and tougher on him. No one wants to invest in failure, least of all me and most of all ... dear Mark here. He's so Christian in his caring for others, his endurance, his constant suffering. He's remarkable, this man. Man among men.

BETTY

Indeed, Man among men.

LAURA

This little hilltop restaurant IS a life changing experience.

BETTY

As it is, so fated and so shall it remain. God bless and bottoms up.

MARK

52

(HE raises his head)

NO.....NO, SAY NO! THEY HAVEN'T DONE THAT ... NO! They can't leave them close to those stoves. They have...gas pilot lights. Oh, Jesus, I gotta go downstairs! Right now!

(SOUND of a muffled explosion from downstairs)

BOOSH!!! BOOM!!!

(MARK races to stairs, pauses looking downward)

LAURA

What the hell was that?

BETTY

Chaos no longer impending!

DAN

Doesn't sound good. DOESN'T SMELL GOOD!!

(DAN runs over to stairs, followed by BRUCE. THEY collide with MARK standing still, the three of them stumble and collapse at the base of the stairs)

(BETTY and LAURA move to the head of the stairs looking downward at the three men)

LAURA

Didn't Mark say, "gather together and prepare for the eventuality?"

BETTY

Yeah. True to his word, Man among Men.

END OF THIRD SCENE, ACT ONE.

ACT II
Scene 1

SETTING: The next day, same time, 2 pm. The air is clear.

AT RISE: LAURA is helping BETTY on with her apron, both are standing near the bar. MARK is standing next to the shovel.

MARK

Betty, that's about it. Always smile and look like you know what you're doing.

LAURA

(To BETTY)

Just 'trail' me.

(To MARK)

She'll catch on within a week.

BETTY

At least I can pay my bar bill now.

MARK

Why? What happened?

BETTY

Without any income, I have to work.

MARK

Thank God we got the sewer line connected or else we wouldn't be open tonight.

(LAURA straightens BETTY's apron)

MARK

Ladies, we have a limited menu. One hamburger, one pizza, two meat dishes and one salad. If it hadn't been for calling the right people to stop the digging, getting delays, who knows what I'd be serving. Downstairs is still ankle deep in rubble and cracked concrete. As it is, I have to hop like a toad from the grill to the ovens.

LAURA

(To MARK)

How are you holding up?

MARK

Why? What do you see?

LAURA

A man consumed by Beefeater.

MARK

(Stumbling over to the bar)

Seriously?

LAURA

Clearly!

(KELLY enters front door)

BETTY

Mark, we're all friends here. Why don't you let it all out?

(MARK grabs BETTY's hand and kisses it fervently)

BETTY

Oh! What a triumphant moment of tenderness ... from you to me? Really?

MARK

Yes, you'd understand. I heard you the other night saying what a non-entity you were in your marriage. How alone you felt. How miserable you were.

KELLY

Is Mark all right? I mean ... is he ... himself?

LAURA

(To KELLY)

It's very irritating why you keep questioning him?

(MARK embraces BETTY with one arm and stands before

KELLY and LAURA.)

MARK

No, I'm not myself! Clearly not myself.

(Long quivering pause)

Don't you see? How can I be myself when I have been told all these years I didn't matter? I didn't matter the youngest in my family; I didn't matter in the service: I was Government Issue. I didn't matter in my marriage. The judge in my divorce hearing said I didn't matter anymore. Just like Betty, here. You didn't matter, did you my sweet?

BETTY

55

No, not that I can ever remember.

(MARK pulls BETTY closer and kisses her deeply)

KELLY

My, you two have advanced! Say, Mark, may I interrupt? I got some news for you. Apparently a new wrinkle has emerged.

BETTY

His forehead has too many now!

KELLY

Yes, well ... here's the rub, Mark ... My research tells me that those archeologists have the backing of the elders. Their ancestors were buried downstairs. That you do know. What you don't know is that when they come back, they'll be armed with more court documents to locate relatives of those buried. They can come and force protection of their family burial site ... even if it's in your basement.

LAURA

Force protection? How?

KELLY

It's covered in Massachusetts's Laws of Easements.

(Takes out a paper)

I'll read it to you. "Any owner who buys property known to have a burial plot is required to allow any relative of those buried" – get this – "access to the site and allow that person to maintain, improve or otherwise, prevent desecration to that site."

MARK

Which means? Practically speaking?

KELLY

Mark's stove may become a flower bedecked shrine.

MARK

What I have is a shrine of rubble with a hole for visiting worshippers. They damn near blew up my kitchen yesterday with their cleaning fluids. Who are these people? Can't they leave me alone?

(Shaking)

I can't create like this!

BETTY

56

What else do you know about this law?

KELLY

Rarely overturned. A stipulation does include the burial rites for future members of the same deceased family.

MARK

Ye gods, woman! *That means ...that means....*

KELLY

Yes, exactly.

BETTY

Exactly what?

LAURA

Yes, exactly what?

KELLY

You have to understand that old burial sites going back several hundred years might have the remains of many families, which means many families could have shovel access to your downstairs kitchen.

MARK

(Grabs shovel)

Shovel access? Like this? New corpses in the ground?

KELLY

Seeing how I imagine there's not much room down there, they might have to be stacked.

MARK

Stacked???

BETTY

Sounds real cozy. Maybe there IS life after death.

KELLY

Mark, you would have to keep index cards where they all were, not to mention some kind of grid system, to separate them when they're reburied.

MARK

Index cards? Grid System?

LAURA

Now, this is really too much ... much more than more than too much ...

MARK

Laura! Willyou ...please!.

(MARK slumps over a bar stool. LAURA and BETTY gather close to MARK)

KELLY

And you'll have to show where they rest. Do you have crosses of some sort?

MARK

Crosses?

LAURA

How about bones?

MARK

(Weakly)

You can have the cross I bear.

(LAURA picks up two bar swizzle sticks, demonstrates)

LAURA

How about if we use these?

BETTY

But, Kelly, how are they going to determine who's who down there? I mean finding a relative means knowing how related they are.

KELLY

That's the other thing. According to the law, Mark must provide the archeologists reasonable time to engage in genealogical research.

MARK

Genealogical research??

KELLY

Yes, Mark. We have DNA now to trace lineage.

LAURA

By the way, did I tell you that Sonny's heritage goes way back, even to the American

Indians. His uncle, still alive, is tribal chief, named "Soaring Eagle." He's very concerned about the disruption of these burial sites. Angry, I'd say.

MARK

WHAT ABOUT SONNY?

LAURA

Maybe Sonny's got relatives buried downstairs.

MARK

Sonny's relatives buriedin my basement?

(MARK slugs down a drink from the bar, lowers head)

BETTY

(Like a circus barker)

Step this way, folks! Line up now to negotiate your plot fees.

(POLICE CHIEF BRUCE enters front door)

(BRUCE looks at MARK)

BRUCE

Say, what's wrong with MARK? He looks dead.

MARK

Don't say dead ...not deadnever say dead!

KELLY

Chief, he's suffering from lackluster business. I can promote it if Mark will let me.

MARK

How are you going to promote if those boobs continue? All I'll have downstairs is a shrapnel-pocked pizza oven. Also, The Health Inspector is scheduled to show up this week, too. DID YOU HEAR THAT? That's all I need. That woman is a royal pain. Holes in the basement. Holes in the ceiling. Holes in my head.

KELLY

Then sell pizzas! You got take-out, Mark?

LAURA

Take-out pizzas? No dining room tips? What are you thinking?

BETTY

Yes, what would happen to our jobs?

KELLY

You'll need someone to deliver with a reliable car.

BETTY

Don't look at me. I lost my house. Sacrifice my car, too? Absolutely Not!

LAURA

Well, if we must, we must. We could stimulate business if our pizzas were extraordinary. Could you create gourmet pizzas, something unique?

MARK

I could if I didn't have all those other specials to contend with.

LAURA

So take the meat from the crab legs, utilize our scallops, shrimp, fresh basil and spinach. You know how to do it.

MARK

Yeah, sure, if I cancelled all the rest. No steaks, chops or roast beef. You'll have to buy a lot of pizza boxes, too.

BETTY

Still, who's going to do it?

BRUCE

What about Sonny? All he's doing right now is sitting at home. Call him up.

(MARK pours through the phone book pages, realizes the book is upside down, slaps his own face)

(DAN enters restaurant quickly)

DAN

That damn lion has reappeared. Neighbors across from our station called over, saw it in their back yard going into the woods.

MARK

It should be easy to track over the wet earth.

BRUCE

(To MARK)

When you get Sonny, tell him to meet me at the station house. Gotta go.

KELLY

60

More on the Puma? I gotta go, too.

(BRUCE and KELLY exit while MARK resumes dialing)

MARK

(On the phone)

Oh, Sonny. Mark, here. Chief Bruce wants you over at the station. The lion's back. ... OK? Great! Bye.

LAURA

Once we get the kitchen back in order, what signature pizza could you make, Mark?

MARK

I could make these: white cheese sauce, topped with spinach, tomatoes and feta cheese. Or topped with roasted eggplant, garlic, fresh basil, sun dried tomatoes, roasted red peppers and feta cheese. They're Greek pizzas.

LAURA

Oh, I like that. Any with red sauce?

MARK

Sure. Red sauce with peppers, onions, mushrooms, broccoli and black olives? Then, scallop and crab with red sauce, fresh spinach and broccoli. Steak with red sauce, peppers, onions, mushrooms. So many variations.

LAURA

Sounds promising. I'll get pizza boxes in town tomorrow night. Good.

BETTY

I met a Greek once.

LAURA

And?

BETTY

On holiday before I got engaged. I was bending over looking at my bike, when I got groped from behind. I screamed and turned around to find this creep smiling at me. I grabbed a cop nearby, and when I told him what had happened, that creep just smiled, too. When I got home, I told my fiancé and that creep just smiled and said that women can expect that and take it for granted.

MARK

(Overhearing BETTY)

How humiliating!

(HE embraces BETTY)

I understand deeply. That was the beginning of your abusive life, as a non-entity. But you married the fiancé anyway?

BETTY

61

I was so young.

MARK

What a wasted youth!

LAURA

Today, you could slap him into court with a third-degree sexual harassment violation.

BETTY

Fat chance with the ex. He knew too many powerful people.

(Pauses)

But I've been thinking. Since the dining room business is in limbo, maybe I could earn some extra money helping Mark here in the kitchen making pizzas.

MARK

Once the pizzas take off, business picks up ... yeah, sure.

LAURA

(To DAN)

You gonna chase that cat, too.

DAN

No, I better stay in touch with the station for a while, not out in the field.

LAURA

That'd be nice. You can hang your hat 'round here long as you want.

DAN

I've been thinking about Bruce, being out there chasing that lion.

LAURA

In what way?

DAN

He's a dismal shot and once he misses, he'll start running. A lion can overtake him easily.

LAURA

Isn't he out there with Sonny?

DAN

Come on, Laura. Sonny's a farmer. The two of them ... like Eek and Meek.

MARK

Before dinner starts, maybe I should go downstairs and double-check everything.

BETTY

Good idea. I'll go with you.

(MARK and BETTY head downstairs)

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LAURA

(Looking at DAN)
Don't they make a cute couple?

DAN

Hadn't thought of it, really. But, he needs someone. To keep him occupied.

LAURA

That's where the imagination comes in, creating some excitement ... some pleasure. Are you following me, Dan?

DAN

That's why bars and restaurants are so important. People can go out and socialize ... get socially involved.

LAURA

Dan, you should get socially involved. What do you think?

DAN

Are you socially involved, Laura?

LAURA

When I have the desire.

(LAURA leans against the bar and studies DAN)

What do you do in your spare time?

DAN

Hang around the station mostly.

LAURA

I've always wondered how you slide down the fire pole? Give me a lesson.

DAN

What? Now?

LAURA

You guys aren't supposed to be shy. Come over here.

(SHE motions DAN closer)

DAN

Like this?

LAURA

Yes, now just suppose you're the pole, where do I place my legs?

(LAURA begins to wrap her legs around DAN)

END OF FIRST SCENE, ACT TWO

Scene 2

SETTING: The next day, same time 2 pm. The snow has stopped completely.

AT RISE: LAURA and BETTY, wearing aprons, are standing near the bar.
MARK stands behind it.

LAURA

Betty, did you know that Kelly was angry on the phone last night with her boyfriend?

BETTY

I sensed he hadn't forgiven her for breaking up their ski vacation.

MARK

Frankly, I didn't hear any of it. But when she hung up, she clearly wasn't pleased. "That guy doesn't live far from here," she said. It sounded like a threat.

LAURA

Speaking of that, Puma stories were the rage. He was seen south of here, then north of town, then on the hills back of the restaurant, then down in the valley.

MARK

Ol' blind Bruce's out there again with his gun. And he still hasn't fixed the door downstairs.

(KELLY enters front door)

KELLY

The roads are starting to clear. Still a mess.

LAURA

Kelly, when you were out chasing the puma with Bruce last night, what happened?

KELLY

That lion went after Sonny's pigs again. When Sonny got home, two of them had been mauled, one died.

LAURA

Poor Sonny. He's had his fill. Especially with all this snow.

(Pauses)

Guess what? I got a call from Sonny's uncle. As tribal chieftain, he's determined to exercise his right over the bones. He may show up one of these days.

BETTY

64

Another chief around here?

(Laughs)

I just conjured up this vision of a wrinkled, weather-worn old man wearing a ceremonial feathered war bonnet with a penchant for firewater.

LAURA

I've never met him, but, you're right. Wait until his eyes pop out staring at the bar.

MARK

That's all we need: a staggering, drunken Indian Chief fighting for possession of the bones.

KELLY

It'll going to be a wild grab bag.

BETTY

There's a keen sense of danger in the air ... positively lusting for resolve.

KELLY

Your Police Chief is insane. When he heard about Sonny's pigs, he was damn mad ... cursing ... shouting and waving and firing his gun in the air. That lion wasn't intimidated.

BETTY

He's Neanderthal and dangerous.

KELLY

Several hours ago, Sonny was wandering around his pig pen trying to corral them. He kept saying he was cold. I kept telling him to go inside. But I had to leave.

LAURA

The image of my cherub, pink cheeked cousin trying to corral a pink pig in the pink snow ...is really side splitting.

(PHONE RINGS)

MARK

Hello, Mark's Place.yes, we're openonly serving gourmet pizzas, though.... No, I'm sorrywhat? ... yes, you can break through ..an emergency call? Yes, operator. We have heat and hot water....what did you say?there's been a shooting? Where? On Sonny's farm? (Long pause)....yes, of course ...bye.

(KELLY starts taking notes on the bar)

BETTY

What was that?

MARK

A shooting on Sonny's farm!

KELLY

65

I could've guessed.

LAURA

Anyone hurt?

MARK

Listen, ladies. Get some clean dry towels for me. You'll find them in my office downstairs with some blankets.

LAURA

How'd it happen?

MARK

It's terrible! Sonny's been shot. Bruce fired at a shadow and hit Sonny. They're on their way now.

KELLY

I should've laid a wage.

LAURA

(To KELLY)

You're insufferable. How dare you! That's my cousin, for heaven's sake.

(LAURA and BETTY run downstairs)

(Front door opens; BRUCE carries SONNY's limp body)

MARK

Over here, Bruce! Gently now.

(MARK pushes aside the bar stools. BRUCE lifts SONNY onto the bar, stretching him out)

(BRUCE takes the phone, starts dialing)

BRUCE

Yeah, this is the Chief. ... Put it down in the log that there was a shooting at Sonny's farm... yes, there's a victim... never mind that....what? Oh, well. The victim was Sonny, himself. Talk to you later, bye.

MARK

OH, poor Sonny! What a way to go!

(To BRUCE)

Did you check his pulse?

BRUCE

Yeah, right! Check his pulse!

(HE checks SONNY'S pulse)

I don't feel anything.

MARK

Check it again.

BRUCE

I still don't feel anything.

(Long pause)

KELLY

Has he got a family?

(MARK assumes bowed head over SONNY)

BRUCE

Oh, Jesus! What have I done?

(DAN hurriedly enters restaurant)

DAN

I just heard.

(Pointing to SONNY on bar)

Is that Sonny?

(BRUCE nods)

(BETTY and LAURA come upstairs with blankets)

DAN

Are you sure?

BRUCE

Of course, I'm sure that's Sonny.

DAN

NO, NO! Are you sure he's dead?

LAURA

Are you saying he's dead?

BRUCE

I'd know a dead person if I saw one.

DAN

Are you sure you're sure?

BRUCE

Am I sure I can recognize a dead person?

LAURA

Are you sure?

DAN

For sure?

BRUCE

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Jesus, Dan!

DAN

I'm not so sure. I'm the only one with any medical training.

(To MARK)

Mark, you and Bruce move aside. I want a look.

LAURA

I want a look, too. I don't believe it.

MARK

He sure looks dead. We need something to move him.

(MARK then races into dining room and
retrieves a moveable cart, shoves it into the bar)

BRUCE

Oh, damn to hell. I've never killed anyone.

DAN

I heard it was an accident.

LAURA

My cousin dead!!

KELLY

(Writing)

How's this for openers? "A surreal accident took place when the Police Chief couldn't determine whether he saw a pink puma in the pink snow, or whether he was chasing a pink pig in the pink snow being chased by a pink farmer in the pink snow. The upshot was that the Police Chief shot down the pink farmer chasing the pink pig in the pink snow. The Police Chief will undoubtedly be holding a future inquiry into the shooting, being the Chief's only witness."

LAURA

Are you trying to be funny, Kelly?

BETTY

Disrespectful.

LAURA

Here are the blankets and towels.

DAN

(To BRUCE)

Did you report this?

BRUCE

Of course, I did. Do you think I'm an idiot?

DAN

I won't debate that.

LAURA

Well, put these blankets over him anyway. He looks frozen.

BRUCE

It's too late. It's too late...

KELLY

(Writing)

"It's too late," says the Chief.

MARK

Laura, it's too late for blankets.

KELLY

(Writing)

Chef says, "It's too late for blankets."

MARK

Laura, we can't open tonight.

LAURA

Who's thinking of that?

KELLY

Where's the ladies?

MARK

(Points towards dining room)

It's just in there.

(KELLY heads to the ladies)

(MARK glances out parking lot window)

MARK

Say, Laura. A car just drove up.

BETTY

An intrepid soul in this weather?

MARK

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A woman just got out. With a carrying case.

(Slams his forehead)

*Not now!!! Quick!!! Laura and Betty!!! Get downstairs and cover everything up
...especially the lion's paw prints, too.*

(MARK screams at BRUCE and DAN)

MARK (Con't)

Get him on the cart. Push him behind the bar. Pull that blanket over him. Hurry up!

BRUCE

Ok.

(BRUCE and DAN lift SONNY off bar onto cart)

DAN

Now, push Bruce; careful of his arms!

(BRUCE and DAN push SONNY behind bar)

MARK

QUICK, LOOK LIKE A CUSTOMER! IT'S THE HEALTH INSPECTOR.

LAURA

Mark, you think?

MARK

Yes, Yes.... I know her!

(While LAURA and BETTY run downstairs and BRUCE and DAN get on bar stools, the HEALTH INSPECTOR enters wearing heavy corduroy pants suit. SHE carries a leather valise from which protrudes large magnifying glass)

HEATH INSPECTOR

(Pointing to MARK)

You're the owner, right?

(SHE pulls magnifying glass out and peers through it at MARK)

MARK

Right.

INSPECTOR

You're on my schedule this week. Well, I won't be long, just want to see the kitchen first. Downstairs?

MARK

Down over there but don't trip. We're doing renovations, new concrete floor ... actually we're closed.

(INSPECTOR nods and heads downstairs)

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MARK (Continuing)

(Calling downstairs)

Laura? The health inspector is coming down.

BRUCE

I appreciate your difficulty with the health inspector, but Sonny can't stay behind the bar.

MARK

Just until the inspector leaves.

(LAURA comes running upstairs)

LAURA

She missed the dish area downstairs. But, quick! She's coming upstairs to inspect the bar next.

MARK

Quick, hide Sonny in the dumb waiter over there. Send it downstairs.

(BRUCE and DAN get SONNY, push him out from behind the bar and stick him into dumb waiter, then return to bar)

(INSPECTOR comes upstairs slowly)

INSPECTOR

(To LAURA)

Young woman, I'd like to inspect the bar now.

LAURA

Right over here. Anything you need, just ask.

(LAURA goes behind bar preparing for the inspection, moving bottles and turning on the hot water. SHE fixes drinks for DAN and BRUCE)

MARK

(Watching the INSPECTOR)

I normally wouldn't have expected you this time of year.

INSPECTOR

Actually, your name prioritized the list because the Boston edition of *The Times* was running a feature on a marauding mountain lion terrorizing the neighborhoods around here. As you were the only restaurant open in this township, it was understandable, you understand, that we, in the health department, you understand, concern ourselves with ... how should I say ... garbage.

LAURA

71

GARBAGE! THE EFFRONTERY!

MARK

I don't understand the connection.

INSPECTOR

Garbage, you understand, attracts animals.

(SHE pulls out her magnifying glass, stares through it at LAURA)

LAURA

Are you suggesting, Inspector, that our garbage is attracting a mountain lion.

INSPECTOR

Well, I was just

LAURA

That's a damnable charge. As one who is responsible for the beautification of this restaurant, I, *madam*, take serious offence.

MARK

(Quietly, to LAURA)

Since when were you responsible

LAURA

(To MARK)

Just now!

(KELLY returns and gets on bar stool, nods to BRUCE and DAN on bar. SHE leans over bar, scans the bar floor, looks around.)

KELLY

(To CHIEFS)

I could have sworn ... wasn't there somebody...?

(Shrugs)

(INSPECTOR spots KELLY on bar with notepad and marches over to her)

INSPECTOR

(To KELLY)

See here, miss, but I hope I'm not interfering with your writing. I was told the Health Department was checking up on inspectors during the winter season, but I didn't expect to have you follow me.

KELLY

72

Follow you? Clearly, you're mistaken. I'm from *The Times*.

INSPECTOR

THE TIMES! They've gone so far as to publish the names of inspectors, have they? You want my name? Well, you can't have it. I do my job as thoroughly as I can, despite the handicaps of weather, owners who don't cooperate or who ... (Looking over her shoulder) just lie. How much are you getting paid to rat on me?

LAURA

Inspector, she's a reporter.

INSPECTOR

I can see that. A guileless spy.

KELLY

Just doing my job.

LAURA

Inspector ... the bar!

INSPECTOR

Yes, the bar.

(INSPECTOR gets behind bar, begins inspecting. KELLY leans over bar again. KELLY and INSPECTOR exchange quizzical looks)

INSPECTOR

(To KELLY peering over bar)

Are you looking for something?

KELLY

Just some body ...er ... thing that might have fallen over.

MARK

(To INSPECTOR)

After the bar, where do you go?

INSPECTOR

Actually, I forgot to inspect the dishwasher downstairs. Your waitress, here, said it was in a separate room. That's next.

(LAURA suddenly charges downstairs calling out to BETTY)

LAURA

Betty, Betty? Send the dumbwaiter upstairs,.. Quick!

INSPECTOR

(To MARK)

That's fine for the bar. You have plenty of hot water for glasses.

MARK

Great! Ok, so you want to see the dish area next?

INSPECTOR

That would be fine. The dining room will be next.

MARK

Downstairs, just to your left.

INSPECTOR

Thank you.

(INSPECTOR heads downstairs)

MARK

(Gesturing to DAN and BRUCE)

Come on, we've got to get Sonny out of the dumbwaiter.

DAN

Back behind the bar? Bruce, stop slushing on that drink. Come on.

KELLY

Sonny's in the dumbwaiter? And I thought I was being insensitive.

MARK

Quick, you two.... My God, I need a drink.

(DAN and BRUCE race to dumb waiter, retrieve SONNY on the cart)

(MARK slams drink down from the bar. SONNY is replaced behind the bar. BRUCE and DAN resume bar stools)

KELLY

(Peering over the bar to SONNY)

Well, I'd say that was a better place for him.

(INSPECTOR comes back upstairs)

INSPECTOR

(Pointing to dining room)

I'll just poke around in there. You'll get a full inspection in the spring.

MARK

You'll want to take care getting home. It's almost dark. We don't have many street lights.

INSPECTOR

Yes, thank you. I appreciate the advice. I'm staying at a guest house not far from here. I won't be long.

(INSPECTOR pushes through dining room doors,
just as LAURA and BETTY come upstairs)

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LAURA

Has she gone?

(MARK points to dining room)

LAURA (Con't)

Where is Sonny now?

MARK

Behind the bar again.

LAURA

It's bad enough that we weren't that close as family, but shunting him about, down and under, up and over like this certainly won't be remembered very well by the rest of the family. We have to take special care of his body now, especially with his uncle coming.

BETTY

He certainly deserves the best.

KELLY

I'd certainly say! And you're family? What appalling behavior!

MARK

(To KELLY)

You can leave any time you want.

LAURA

(To KELLY)

You really want to see some appalling behavior?

MARK

Ladies, not the time.

(To LAURA)

Do you have a burial site for the family?

LAURA

That's just the problem. It's filled up. And Sonny told me years ago that he didn't want to be cremated. So.....

(LAURA looks at MARK earnestly)

MARK

So ... what? You're not suggesting....

(An unwelcome KELLY leans into discussion)

KELLY

75

Of course , she is!

DAN

Of course, she is ...what?

BETTY

Of course, she is ...what?

LAURA

I looked it up in the family archives at home.

BETTY

And what?

LAURA

The bones of his dead relatives ARE buried down there. Sonny *is* half Indian, on his father's side.

(To KELLY)

What's the law again?

KELLY

Law of Easements. Rarely overturned.

BETTY

(To HERSELF)

First, I got evicted from my house, my checking account was filched. I suddenly became a waitress hauling a dead body in and out of a dumbwaiter ... Now, I'm going to be a pall bearer? Let's see what the future holds.

(BETTY holds her cocktail in the light, stares into it, then takes huge sip)

What is next?

BRUCE

It's all my fault. Oh, God, how can I redeem myself?

(INSPECTOR leaves dining room)

INSPECTOR

Well, thank you again, Mark. I'll send my report to you. You will need a new floor downstairs, but you're working on that ... good. Nothing much, but I do think you should have your chefs clean up all those soup bones down there on the counters. Have to go. Bye.

MARK

Bye, Inspector.

(INSPECTOR exits restaurant)

(BRUCE and DAN pull SONNY on cart out from behind bar)

(ALL gather around, gazing at the body)

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(SOUND of INSPECTOR's car leaving)

KELLY

Listen people. I'm afraid that my boyfriend is on his way here. I spoke with him using the dining room phone just now. I told you he's quite capable of anything. But he thinks he can be of some help.

LAURA

What's he want with us?

KELLY

I don't know but in the past he'd arrive on my story's site and well....

LAURA

What are you up to Kelly?

MARK

What's he going to do?

KELLY

I don't know. I don't know.

BETTY

Don't forget Sonny's uncle is due any moment. What a shock to see his nephew dead. He'll really hit the booze then.

(Looking at SONNY)

He sure looks serene. Poor man heading to heaven should have had his shoes shined.

(Begins polishing his shoes with a bar rag)

LAURA

(Straightening his clothes)

I should've spent more time with him.

DAN

He was a steady, fine volunteer.

MARK

Decent citizen. He'll be missed.

LAURA

Sorely missed.

BRUCE

Yes, sorely missed.

(Writing furiously)

How's this for the next issue? "Now, the townspeople mourn the passing of one of their own, a man of the earth, a bearer of all righteous beliefs and values a small New England town could hope to possess. The Police Chief, filled with deep compunction, said the young farmer will be 'sorely missed.' Interment will follow the Massachusetts Law of Easements." Does that meet everyone's approval?

LAURA

It does but you don't.

BRUCE

No, no ... This is so sad. My professional life over.

BETTY

We should have a prayer.

MARK

Good idea.

(ALL lower their heads)

MARK (Con't)

How many times do we give ourselves to the Lord's will? How many times do we retreat from our stubborn, selfish ways? Never, if ever! But tonight, we glimpse upon the fading image of one of the few, a stalwart soul, a tiller of the soil, and we envy his simple heart, pledged so earnestly to the ways of the Lord. A fine, unblemished man who had no guile, who was so utterly trustworthy. We give him up with absolute grace and deep humility. Amen!

LAURA

Thank you, Mark. Wonderful sentiment. True to the Lord's Word. Amen.

(ALL say Amen)

(Suddenly, SONNY'S right leg projects straight into the air)

ALL

What???? He's alive!!!! He's alive!!!! ! YAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHAAAAAAA!

(SONNY'S eyes pop open and HE sits up)

(The GROUP falls back, mouths agape and staring)

KELLY

Mother of God!

SONNY

Where am I?

(SONNY gets down from cart, leans against it)

Chief? That you?

BRUCE

Sonny, thank god, you're alright. You are alright, aren't you?

DAN

Can't you see he's alright?

BRUCE

But why is he alright? *How dare he be alright!* The anguish he has caused! I mean, I felt awful. Really awful. *I didn't deserve to feel that awful!!*

DAN

Bruce, for onceshut up!

(BETTY rushes up to SONNY and pinches his cheeks)

BETTY

You deserve to be alive. Good for you.

SONNY

Oh, my head. I must have fallen. Hit something.

LAURA

Sonny, we all thought you were dead. What happened?

SONNY

Don't know. Just as I was pushing this pig through the snow, getting him ...you know ... some place safe away from the lion....

KELLY

Yeah, he's right. I was there last night when he was trying to coral his pigs.

BETTY

Couldn't you tell the lion was near?

SONNY

I couldn't see him. Just hear him. Low growl, then a loud hiss.

BRUCE

I heard him, too. Thought I saw him move ... so I fired at it.

SONNY

Was that you shooting? I don't remember any more.

MARK

So, Bruce, you thought you hit Sonny, picked him up and brought him here.

BRUCE

That's about it.

MARK

79

That calls for a drink. All on me.

(MARK goes behind bar and starts making drinks)

(DAN gathers LAURA to his side. BETTY huddles next to MARK. KELLY flanks everyone while writing in her notebook. SONNY is center of attention next to BRUCE)

(ALL toast SONNY)

CHEERS TO SONNY!!!

(The front door opens and SOARING EAGLE, an Indian Chief enters wearing full ceremonial head feathers, tasseled trousers and covered in war paint)

(ALL turn and stand agog. SONNY rushes up to him)

SONNY

UNCLE! How'd you get here?

SOARING EAGLE

I travel many miles to claim what is mine, the bones of our ancestors.

SONNY

But how'd you get here ...how'd you know?

SOARING EAGLE

I listen on talkie-walkie in truck. All news here is global news.

(The bar group gathers around. But KELLY has been seized by a shaking spasm of laughter. SHE's bent over and clutches her sides as if they are going to split open)

(Glancing over to KELLY's contorted shape, BETTY walks around the new Chief)

BETTY

(To SOARING EAGLE)

Whooooeee! You're some kind of medicine man!

SOARING EAGLE

Not Medicine Man. I'm Soaring Eagle, chieftain of all Cape Cod tribes.

(KELLY lurches out of control rolling around the floor)

(ALL stand over KELLY. BRUCE is thoroughly mystified)

I don't get it.

(MARK returns to Indian Chief)

MARK

Chief ... say Chief? What brings you here again?

SOARING EAGLE

I hear on talkie-walkie bones of ancestors found here. They belong to tribe.

(KELLY gathers some control, lifts off floor,
and straddles bar stool)

KELLY

(Still laughing)

I can't take it. No more.

SONNY

What's so funny?

KELLY

Nooo. Nooo. This is too rich to spoil it.

SONNY

Uncle, you've traveled so far. Would you like a drink?

SOARING EAGLE

(Pointing to bottles behind bar)

Ummmm. Firewater.

(MARK gets bottle and serves Chief a good shot.
Chief upends bottle and takes a swig)

BETTY

Now, that's what I call native enthusiasm.

(BRUCE finally asserts some authority)

BRUCE

Hi-ya Chief, I'm Bruce, Police Chief. That's not accurate.

MARK

(Interrupting quickly)

Yes, that's right. You see, Chief. The bones were found by a recent owner of this establishment.

DAN

81

(Interrupting quickly)

Dan, Fire Chief. Yes, you see. That owner sold the property rights of this restaurant, along with the bones, to this man, standing here, Mark.

LAURA

(Interrupting quickly)

Hi Chief, I'm Laura. You see, we're trying to act within the law here.

BRUCE

Yes, Chief, as Chief of Police, I represent the law.

BETTY

Hi Chief, I'm Betty. I see you're confused. You see, cousins of yours, I'm sure, came to this site to find out whether this site was indeed, I'm sure, an old burial site. When they came, they dug up this man, Mark's, foundation of his establishment. They were routinely disrupted from establishing that the foundation of their claim lay in the authenticity of their diggings by a reincarnated native Indian, namely, a mountain lion, when they came to this site to dig. You dig?

SOARING EAGLE

Swig? OK, I more swig.

BETTY

Yes, well, the foundation of the consensus was routinely disrupted and while no one could actually lay claim to the site, everyone tried ... at least in theory.

(BETTY watches Chief guzzle)

BETTY (Con't)

But then the prevailing theory claims that the burial site of old Indian remains should be consistent with the foundation of the consensus that states that authentic, established remains should remain where they are found, despite remaining attempts to remove the remains from where the remains were found when they came to this site to dig.

MARK

Betty, come over here.

(SHE moves to his side. HE embraces her softly)

Wonderful summation, honey. But I can tell the Chief's not following you.

BETTY

Think not?

MARK

You really are a tease!

BETTY

Yes, for all the right reasons.

(While SOARING EAGLE is occupied with his bottle, KELLY moves near him at the bar and THEY begin to chuckle. This draws MARK and DAN to examine the back of the Chief's outfit, especially his feathers, head dress, and trousers)

(MARK and DAN look at several clothing tags)

MARK

(To DAN)

Look at this one, Dan. It reads 'Toys 'R Us.'

DAN

Here's another one. It says 'Costumes by Walmart'

MARK

Still another, 'Party City'

(MARK and DAN spin the Chief around to face them)

MARK

Listen, mister. You're an imposter!

DAN

Fraudulent!

(SONNY rushes up to Chief)

SONNY

You're not my uncle!

KELLY

No, 'fraid not, Sonny. This maniac is my boyfriend, Tom.

SONNY

So where is my uncle?

SOARING EAGLE

(Resumes sincere, natural voice)

About two miles down the road with a flat. Listen, people. When Kelly told me you had a custody war over the remains of Indian bones, I had to stick my academic nose in.

BRUCE

I don't get it.

DAN

The Chief here is on some kind of mission, representing the local tribes.

SOARING EAGLE

Driving in, I saw your Health Inspector's car leaving. What did he want?

MARK

83

Inspection.

SOARING EAGLE

Did he mention the bones?

MARK

In passing. Thought they were soup bones.

SOARING EAGLE

When he realizes what he should've realized, he'll be back ... and no matter what he says the tribal Indian chiefs will win out.

BETTY

Why is that?

SOARING EAGLE

I have a PHD in Native American Studies at Harvard. During that tenure, I came to understand the native tribe connection between the soil and religion.

BETTY

(Pokes his arm)

Is this guy for real?

(KELLY follows every word)

SOARING EAGLE

Yes, you have an ill-conceived turf war over Indian burial rights.

(HE pulls a letter from inside his shirt)

This is a Cease & Desist letter from the State Archaeological Office, which reinforces the court order you got days ago, but ignored.

MARK

Ignored? I did not. This is private land and those bones belong to me.

SOARING EAGLE

You're Mark, right?

MARK

Right.

(SOARING EAGLE embraces MARK's shoulder,
begins walking around)

SOARING EAGLE

You look responsible. So understand that since colonial times the states only protected marked graves. Unmarked grave sites did not receive state protection. That meant they could be vandalized with impunity and they were.

MARK

Makes sense with all these amateur diggers on the loose.

BETTY

84

They were a frightening bunch.

SOARING EAGLE

Your burial sites were unmarked? Correct?

MARK

Yes.

SOARING EAGLE

So you see?

BRUCE

I still don't get it.

DAN

Have a drink, Bruce.

SOARING EAGLE

You are all Christians, I take it.

(ALL nod)

SOARING EAGLE

Then I appeal to you as Christians. Their burial practices relate to their religious beliefs. When the sites are disturbed or violated, their beliefs are infringed upon. You see, religious beliefs and practices are protected by the first amendment.

KELLY

(Writing)

“and protected by the first amendment.” Got it.

BETTY

So much for my high school civics class!

LAURA

So you're saying the burial sites downstairs were not protected by state law but are protected by the constitution.

BETTY

Bruce, here, thinks the bones belong to him as chief law officer of this town...at least until arbitration.

BRUCE

I got that.

SOARING EAGLE

No arbitration. Those bones belong to the tribes. Truthfully, they belong to the soil. They must be reinterred with ceremony.

(Points to SONNY)

85

This farmer has the closest rights to them, being part Indian.

SONNY

Say, you think so?

KELLY

Without question!

SOARING EAGLE

What you people don't want is to have that inspector return with a truck and injunction and remove all the bones. I'm here to keep that from happening. The tribes are a sovereign body with sovereign rights. We must allow them to control their own laws and customs.

MARK

(To SOARING EAGLE)

We might agree with you in spirit, but, again, my restaurant is on private land. I own the bones.

SOARING EAGLE

Maybe you think so, but history, custom and tradition over a thousand years will win out.

KELLY

There's a car pulling up.

LAURA

We should have left those bones where they were.

BETTY

It's all over the news. Pretty soon, people will show up for souvenirs.

LAURA

That image staggers me.

(The front door opens and the INSPECTOR returns.
SOARING EAGLE resumes the stereotypical Indian
chief drinking at bar)

INSPECTOR

Mark, I had to go back around outside to retrieve my valise.

MARK

Ok, I see you got it.

INSPECTOR

(Quietly to MARK)

I may be mistaken but when I was climbing back around I think I saw the hind quarters of a large animal just duck into the bushes. My headlights must have frighten it.

MARK

Bruce, our garage door? JESUS, NOT AGAIN!!!

BRUCE

Raccoons?

MARK

No, damn it. No raccoons!

BETTY

What are you saying, Inspector?

LAURA

Inspector, what did you say to Mark?

(To MARK)

MARK? MARK?

(MARK grabs SOARING CHIEF's bottle, upends it)

BETTY

I haven't seen him look so frightened sincesince...

DAN

MARK!!!

MARK

THE PUMA IS BACK!!!

KELLY

Yikes!!!

(Dives behind bar)

INSPECTOR

Come again???

MARK

(MARK rushes downstairs)

THE GATE!!! THE GATE!!!

BETTY

(Inching toward the bar)

I'll have a touch of that.

(Upends bottle)

LAURA

CALM DOWN, EVERYONE! We don't know if he's in the building.

MARK

(Returning)

She's right. Here, some drinks ...I'll pour.

(MARK goes behind bar. KELLY and he serve drinks)

DAN

87

(To MARK)

The inspector has something further to say.

INSPECTOR

That's right. Mark, it's not good. Outside, I started seeing more bones. I looked at the broken floor down there again, and what I thought were soup bones, weren't soup bones at all.

(INSPECTOR suddenly sees SOARING EAGLE
standing near bar with bottle)

INSPECTOR (Con't)

WHO or WHAT is that over there?

SONNY

(Delighting now in the ruse)

That's my great uncle, Soaring Eagle. Want to meet him?

INSPECTOR

No ...not right now. He seems peaceful. Leave him at peace, thank you.

LAURA

Just what do you mean by that, Inspector?

BETTY

The other bone has just dropped.

KELLY

(Writing)

"weren't soup bones at all."

INSPECTOR

On closer inspection ... and that's what I do ... inspect ...

MARK

Yes, yes.

LAURA

(To DAN)

Here it comes.

(INSPECTOR moves to bar, scrutinizes SOARING EAGLE
with his magnifying glass)

INSPECTOR

I may be wrong but I think this man is painted up for war.

SOARING EAGLE

UGH!

(HE offers INSPECTOR a shot of whiskey)

88

INSPECTOR

Not while on duty, thanks.

SOARING EAGLE

UGH!

LAURA

Inspector, what do you mean by what you just said?

INSPECTOR

Down therethose are human bones!

LAURA

Human bones in the basement, Inspector? The very idea! *Shocking!!!*

INSPECTOR

Yes, that's right!

KELLY

Where did you get your degrees?

BETTY

How can you tell?

INSPECTOR

Because I matched one of those bones to one that I have here in my valise. I'm an amateur forensic anthropologist and I can tell an adult human femur when I see one.

(SHE starts rummaging around in her valise)

Well, here they are!!!

(INSPECTOR pulls an identical bone with each hand, holding them up in comparison)

(EVERYONE recoils)

INSPECTOR (Con't)

See, they're the same, one from my valise and one from downstairs.

SONNY

MY BONES!

(SOARING EAGLE spots INSPECTOR's bones, stiffens up and points aggressively at INSPECTOR)

SOARING EAGLE

ME BONES!!!

(Rushes at frightened INSPECTOR, who starts to run around room)

INSPECTOR

89

WHAT'S HE DOING?

(LAURA and BETTY look at chase with comic detachment)

LAURA

Could you have ever imagined, Betty?

BETTY

The chief is gaining, Laura. By the next turn ... take odds?

(BRUCE tries to intercede, following INSPECTOR)

BRUCE

Inspector, INSPECTOR, I'm the Police Chief in town.

(LAURA and BETTY confer quietly)

BETTY

Where's his shotgun?

LAURA

He does seem undressed!

BRUCE

INSPECTOR, I'm in charge of their protection. Give it back.

(INSPECTOR takes another turn around bar)

INSPECTOR

NO, NO. IT'S EVIDENCE.

SONNY

(From sidelines)

MY BONES!!

(BRUCE is now following INSPECTOR, being followed by SOARING EAGLE)

BRUCE

Evidence for what?

INSPECTOR

Evidence that gives me the right to close down this food establishment.

(SOARING EAGLE overtakes BRUCE and is now behind INSPECTOR)

MEEE BONES!!!

MARK

WHAT? You're going to do what?

LAURA

COME AGAIN?

BETTY

(To LAURA)

You tell her we have jobs here.

LAURA

WE HAVE JOBS HERE!!

INSPECTOR

(Taking third turn)

YOU CAN'T HAVE BURIED BODIES IN AN OPERATING KITCHEN.

LAURA

We're closed. Those bones belong to history not some evidence drawer.

SONNY

MY BONES!

(KELLY's been at the bar drinking and writing furiously)

KELLY

"Can't have buried bodies in an operating kitchen." Got it!

MARK

Kelly, you can't print that. Give it here!

LAURA

(Rushes over to KELLY)

I got it, Mark!

(To KELLY)

Later for you, honey!

(SOARING EAGLE halts, stiffens, and points
fearsomely at INSPECTOR)

SOARING EAGLE

YOU ARE MEDDLING WITH THE PRIMAL CUSTOMS OF NATURE!

INSPECTOR

CUSTOMS OF NATURE???? MAD MAN!!! KEEP HIM AWAY FROM ME!

SOARING EAGLE

Those bones are to be returned to the tribes for proper burial.

SONNY

Right on!

BRUCE

NO, THOSE BONES BELONG TO ME.

(SOARING EAGLE reaches out for INSPECTOR's bones)

(INSPECTOR and SOARING EAGLE wrangle over bones)

(INSPECTOR hits SOARING EAGLE over the head with bones.
Chieftain falls)

BETTY

Inspector, now you've done it.

(KELLY rushes up)

KELLY

Sweetheart, are you all right?

MARK

(Returning to INSPECTOR)

I bought this business, and those bones were already there. Not my doing.

INSPECTOR

I'm just closing the food operation temporarily. You can keep the bar going as long as you have some kind of snack available: peanuts, pickled eggs, chips.

MARK

Five star chef reduced to making pickled eggs?

(KELLY helps SOARING EAGLE to his feet,
resumes note taking, following all around)

KELLY

"Chef reduced to making pickled eggs"

MARK

You can't print that...!!!!

(MARK tears top sheet off notepad)

BRUCE

As the chief law officer in this town, I see this heading to arbitration.

LAURA

(SHE moves closer to INSPECTOR)

Now, *that bone goes downstairs!*

DAN

92

Laura's right. It could belong to Sonny's family.

SONNY

Now that I think of it ...Laura, didn't you tell me ...?

LAURA

YES. For goodness sake, speak up. The inspector, here, is going to take your great, great, great, great Aunt Genevieve's *femur* and put it into a desk somewhere. Do you want that?

(SOARING EAGLE has recovered and back at bar with bottle)

SONNY

I never thought much about it. But, NOW

(SONNY lunges at the INSPECTOR, grabs one bone)

INSPECTOR

Unhand that bone!

SONNY

That belongs to me!

(SONNY and INSPECTOR wrangle on the floor)

(SOARING EAGLE leaves bar, joins melee on floor)

SOARING EAGLE

That belongs to him!

LAURA

Don't worry, Sonny! I'll get the other bone.

(SHE joins the melee on the floor)

Take this for being disrespectful!

(SHE hits INSPECTOR over the head with bone.

HE collapses)

(LAURA helps SOARING EAGLE get up)

SONNY

Thanks, couz!

LAURA

You haven't called me couz in years.

(LAURA and SONNY embrace)

LAURA (Con't)

As family, we need to spend more time together.

Oh, that would be great.

(INSPECTOR begins to rise off floor. LAURA belts her on the head again with the bone. Then gives bone to SONNY)

INSPECTOR

(Getting up)

That's it ...you are the ones being disrespectful!!!

(INSPECTOR glances around room at EVERYBODY)

INSPECTOR (Continuing)

I don't need this! I'm leaving here. *I'm never coming back!!! Do you hear, people??? I'm never coming back!!!! I'm going to retire right now. You people can cook and serve all the Indian bones you want. See if I care. You can even turn this Godforsaken little, tiny, insignificant restaurant into ...who knows ...who knows ...what?*

(Long pause)

into....into...a bone museum! That's what! A bone museum!!!

(SHE takes deep breath)

And you won't see my face.

LAURA

(Pointing to SONNY's bone)

Or bones?

INSPECTOR

Or bonesagain!!!! Do you hear me??

BETTY

(To MARK)

I think she just blessed this restaurant with her absence.

INSPECTOR

(Fuming)

I heard that! The replacement inspector will deal with you this summer. All of you!!! And I hope that ...

LAURA

You wish us well.

INSPECTOR

Huuuummmppppfffff!!!!

(INSPECTOR pulls up her trousers, gathers her valise and heads out door in a huff)

(SOARING EAGLE sees INSPECTOR leaving)

SOARING EAGLE

(With SONNY, both hold bone aloft)

SONNY and SOARING EAGLE

MEEE BONES!!!!

INSPECTOR

(Over her shoulder)

YOU'RE A WILD TURKEY IN HEAT! YOU'RE CRAZY ... CRAZY, DO YOU HEAR???

(INSPECTOR collides with door as she leaves. SOARING EAGLE chases her out and leaves, too)

SOARING EAGLE (O.S.)

AND DON'T COME BACK!!!!

(KELLY exits, too)

KELLY (O.S.)

GOOD RIDDANCE!

BETTY

Well, I'm up for a large martini. Anyone?

(PHONE RINGS)

LAURA

(Answers phone)

Yes, Mark's Place.what?(pause)Ok, thanks. That's great news. Bye

DAN

What was that?

LAURA

The State Police have captured the puma just over the next hill. That's over.

BETTY

What a relief!!!

(KELLY reenters bar)

KELLY

So much for the Inspector. For my story, what are deciding to do about the bones now?

BRUCE

Yes, as senior law officer, where does that leave us legally?

DAN

Not sure legally. Laura, where do you think it leaves us?

LAURA

95

First, let us get through this day. Then, we will file a permit for a Bone Museum. And notify the elders that we are going to retain the bones since Sonny is Indian.

MARK

Great idea! Yes...I see it happening! We'll turn the bar into a rock garden, effect an ancient, indoors Indian burial site, with a little enclosed fire, supply it with real artifacts, tools, arrowheads, pottery... oh, just think of it: and reproductions, all for sale.

BRUCE

You know what? Turn that hole in the ceiling into an Indian smoke chimney...sort of like a beacon of smoke coming out of a teepee.

MARK

It will be seen for miles. We'll be mobbed.

BETTY

I can wear one of those cute Indian maiden outfits while serving drinks.

SONNY

Am I working, too?

MARK

You're essential and you can deliver my new creation: The Wampanoag Pizza, made with corn, shredded buffalo meat, fried local fish and berries on a base of white bean hummus. Yum.

KELLY

And I can cover the opening, right?

LAURA

Certainly NOT! But before all of that planning, we have Kelly here to care for.

(To MARK)

Come on, Mark, grab her.

(KELLY recoils from bar. LAURA and MARK pick her up)

MARK

Where to? Into the street?

LAURA

Certainly NOT! Too good for her.

(LAURA motions to the dumb waiter)

KELLY

NO!! NO!! YOU CAN'T!!

MARK

Great idea, Laura. The dumbwaiter for her.

KELLY

96

Not that! Not that! The puma is down there!!! Pleeaaaaasssssseeeeeee!

(MARK opens the doors to dumb waiter)

(MARK and LAURA shove KELLY in, door is shut)

(SONNY, BETTY, BRUCE and DAN huddle)

SONNY

(To the OTHERS)

Do you think they could?

BETTY

Do you think they would?

BRUCE

Do you think they should?

DAN

Do you think they will?

(A smiling MARK and LAURA push the start button)

DAN, BRUCE, BETTY, SONNY

They did!

LAURA

Now, Dan, let's get really social.

(LAURA finds a music station on TV, grabs DAN
and begins a spirited dance)

(MARK pairs off with BETTY. BRUCE looks at SONNY)

BRUCE

Should you lead or should I?

(SOUNDS of a crash from dumbwaiter; all heads swivel)

KELLY (O.S.)

(From below and distant, yet audible)

NICE KITTY-KITTY! WHERE ARE YOU?? NICE KITTY – KITTY!!!

ALL

HOOORRRRAAYYYYYY!!!

(Play ends with all dancing and singing)

END OF PLAY

