

SANCTUARY, NORTH

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Dramatis Personae

bob meecher, A LIVING, NATURAL MAN	51
HANK, CHUCK'S FRIEND	40
CHUCK, A SOUTH DAKOTA URANIUM INDIAN	34
KALISTA, BARMAID AND STUDENT OF ETHICS	30
GIGI (RHYMES WITH "PIGGY")	50

SYNOPSIS

The youngest son of a very famous and very masculine writer grows up brilliant but bi-polar. He also suffers from alcoholism and a recurring compulsion to wear women's clothing. He's acquired a wife, five children and a medical degree, but for much of his life he's pursued the provisional: projects invented during fits of manic energy only to be abandoned weeks or months later. Now he's moved to a remote hamlet near the Canadian border where he's the only doctor in a region the size of Connecticut. This is the place he's chosen to make his stand: permanence, mental stability and masculinity—or die.

Sanctuary, North 4M, 1 F

SANCTUARY, NORTH

Jordan, Montana, population 600. It's the early spring of 1981 and the mostly unpaved streets have thawed into mud and slush. Hell Creek Bar is one of two in the settlement. Inside there's lots of dark wood, a pool table and a jukebox. A coin phone is affixed to the wall; the names of beers glow in neon. We see only one person in the bar: a pugnacious, plaid-shirted man named Bob Meecher. He stands motionless, his back to the bar as if posing for a statue, his hand curled around an almost-empty glass of beer. After a moment, we hear a rhythmic scraping on the stoop outside—followed by three concluding thumps to knock the slush off the snow shovel. Kalista enters, a woman with keen eyes set in a forthright, nothing-special face. She leans the shovel against the wall.

MEECHER

The way I see it, I'm a living, natural man. I got flesh and blood; I got inalienable rights, see? And among these is travelling. The Constitution says I got a right to travel. So how come the DMV says I gotta have a license? They call it a *driver's license*, but I told the trooper "I'm not driving; I'm *travelling*." So he says "Show me your travelling license." An' I say "the Constitution is my travelling license. I don't need another license 'cause I'm a living, natural man." So he says identify myself and I say "I'm Bob Meecher, a unique citizen of Garfield County. That's my identity. That's my masculinity. He says "I need proof of identity." I say, "I already *told you* my identity. I'm a living, natural man; that's my identity. You can't understand that because you're *not* a living, natural man. You're some kinda corporation. You're a legal fiction. You have no masculinity. You're un-mascrel!"

KALISTA

Un-huh.

MEECHER

So he calls a manager. That's what they call 'em now: not sergeant, "*manager*." And I wait there in the cold for the manager and I tell him my fee schedule applies. "Gonna cost you a dollar-fifty cents a minute to keep me waiting. My time is valuable. I'm travelling on business—on personal business."

KALISTA

Couldn't you wait in your truck?

MEECHER

But that's just it, see? It's not a truck.

KALISTA

In your car, then.

MEECHER

I don't drive a car. Ain't no car made can go up the track to my place—not in this shit!

KALISTA
So what do you drive?

MEECHER
I drive a truck.

KALISTA
Un-huh.

MEECHER
But it's not a truck *legally*. Did you know something can be lawful but not legal?

KALISTA
I didn't know that.

MEECHER
My truck is lawful. I've got a right to travel in my truck with or without a license. I told the trooper I can show you my Affidavit of Truth wherein I declare that I have never knowingly, willingly, intelligently signed away ANY of my rights, INCLUDING the right to travel. NO! If you sign anything, you have indebted your spirit.

KALISTA
Even a Christmas card?

MEECHER
I mean anything legal. A Christmas card is okay. I told the officer: "I am not a jurisdiction. I am not a jurisprudence!"

KALISTA
Did he *say* you were a jurisprudence?

MEECHER
Not in so many words. He said I was driving a vehicle without a license.

KALISTA
What did you say?

MEECHER
I said it's not a *vehicle*! It's a *conveyance*! I'm *travelling* in a *conveyance*!"

KALISTA
I bet that stumped him.

MEECHER

Sure did. That's why he called his manager. So the manager comes an' *he* wants to see my license. I told him I *used to* have a license: I cut it into itsy-bitsy pieces, just like my birth certificate. (You gotta do that, too.) "I got no contract with the State of Montana," I told him. "So I don't need a license."

KALISTA

What did he say?

MEECHER

He said it was a state highway.

KALISTA

Was it?

MEECHER

Route two hunderd.

KALISTA

So what happened?

MEECHER

They cuffed me and took me in. I said "I cannot comply! I *cannot* comply! I cannot give you recognition! I am bound by the Constitution."

KALISTA

No question: if they cuffed you, you were bound.

(He takes a sip of beer.)

MEECHER

I asked to see their oath of office. I *demand*ed to see it. They're supposed to carry it on 'em all the time—unless they got it memorized. Some of 'em are mental cases and they *can't* memorize.

KALISTA

Memory is hard.

MEECHER

And they alter the definitions of words! They alter the definition of my name when they write it in all capital letters. That's not me! That license didn't apply to me even before I cut it up 'cause it was all-capital letters. I'm the living, natural man—all lower case.

KALISTA

Un-huh.

MEECHER

An' they use quotations. Quotations ain't me either. I'm Bob Meecher of Garfield County an' my truck is private property. I got it notarized.

(Pause.)

KALISTA

Another Bud?

MEECHER

Nah, I gotta go soon. Marty's picking me up.

KALISTA

What happened to your conveyance?

MEECHER

Impounded. Gonna cost me \$200 to get it back.

KALISTA

Tough luck.

MEECHER

Not gonna impound anything else of ours, I'm telling ya, if they come to Justice Township, they'll be dealing with a sovereign en-titty—an *armed*, sovereign en-titty. Freemen! That's what we are! Freemen on the Land! We make our own laws. We even make our own money.

KALISTA

I didn't know you could do that.

MEECHER

Whadda I owe ya?

KALISTA

Seventy-five cents.

(He hands over a dollar bill. Kalista holds it up to the light.)

MEECHER

I want my change in silver.

KALISTA

I'll see if I got one.

(She unlocks the register and scoops out the quarters.)

KALISTA

Nope, just U.S. mint, bi-metallic trash.

MEECHER

That stuff's shit.

KALISTA

Take it or leave it?

MEECHER

I'll take it.

*(She tosses him a coin. Headlights shine against the curtains in the window.
Truck doors slam outside.)*

MEECHER

There's Marty. He's got a shotgun in the cab all the time now, loaded an' ready to go. Next cop that interferes with us gets it!

KALISTA

Tell him to leave it outside. I don't want it in here.

(Meecher moves toward the door only to find his way blocked by Hank and Chuck who enter, stomping the slush off their boots. Chuck has sharply-drawn Indian features. Hank is a few years older.)

HANK

Betty, she told me he grabbed Jana. Grabbed her by the scrubs 'n said "Don't you question my authority!" Passionate, like "No! She ain't goin' down!"

CHUCK

How'd Betty know that?

HANK

Heard it.

CHUCK

Heard it from Jana?

HANK

Don't know where she heard it, but she heard it. Hey, Kalista.

KALISTA

Hey, guys.

CHUCK

'Evening, Kalista. *(To Meecher, whom he plainly doesn't know.)* Hi.

MEECHER *(guardedly)*

Howdy.

(Meecher retreats to the bar and resumes his previous position, grasping his now-empty glass.)

KALISTA

The usual, Chuck?

CHUCK

Yeah, thanks.

KALISTA

Hank?

HANK

Coors. Slice of lime.

KALISTA

Oh you kidder, you!

CHUCK

So how old is she?

HANK

Donno. Ninety? How old you think she is, Kalista?

KALISTA

Who?

HANK

Old Frau Kessler lives south of town.

KALISTA

In the blue trailer?

HANK

Yeah, the blue trailer.

KALISTA

She can't be *that* old, can she? Ninety?

CHUCK

Sometimes it's hard to tell.

HANK

She's out of her head, I know that. Crazy outta her head.

CHUCK

An' he wouldn't let her die?

HANK

Nope. Wouldn't. Big needle, Betty said. Big needle for adrenaline. Heart massage. Wouldn't let her die.

CHUCK

Old woman. Out of her head. She needs to die.

HANK

He wouldn't let her.

(They look at Meecher, a cue for him to join in. Meecher gazes back at them.)

HANK (CONT)

He's a funny guy. Hard workin'. Nobody works like him. I seen that red Subaru, three in the morning, an' he's goin' someplace to deliver a baby or something.

CHUCK

No babies here. Who'd have a baby here?

KALISTA

It could still happen.

CHUCK

Maybe a heifer.

HANK
Naw, he don't do animals.

CHUCK
He is one!

KALISTA
Be nice, Charlie. Anyway, *I* do the heifers.

HANK
Got a knack for that, don't ya? You know what she does, Chuck? She talks to cows in labor. Calms 'em right down.

KALISTA
It's not a knack. And I don't talk—not much, at least.

HANK
Waddia do, then?

KALISTA
I listen.

(Pause.)

CHUCK
He's still a freak, if you ask me.

HANK
Subaru's five years old—got almost 300,000 miles, Jerry says at the garage.

CHUCK
So why's he here? *Here*, of all places!

KALISTA
You talkin' about who I think you talkin' about?

HANK
Yup.

MEECHER
Which is?

KALISTA

He's gotta be somewhere, don't he?

CHUCK

Yeah, but why here? Lord knows there's easier places, more intrestin' places. He could live in Fort Lauderdale.

HANK

Someplace warmer for sure.

CHUCK

Where *does* he live, exactly?

HANK

The county gave him a trailer behind the hospital.

KALISTA (*a snort*)

Hospital!

CHUCK

I know that trailer: an Airstream.

HANK

That's the one.

CHUCK

Ever been inside?

HANK

Nope. But one night I was walking the dog over there an' I heard sobbing coming from inside. Real hard sobbing.

(Pause.)

MEECHER

I don't walk my dogs. I let 'em run loose.

(Pause.)

CHUCK

Sobbing?

Coulda been the VCR.

HANK

(Pause.)

Maybe he likes to hunt? Maybe that's why he's here.

CHUCK

Maybe.

HANK

(Pause.)

I like to hunt. I hunt Elk.

MEECHER

(Pause.)

He told me he used to hunt in Africa. He shot elephants. One month he shot eighteen elephants. He told me he feels bad now.

KALISTA

You believe him?

CHUCK

I believe he feels bad now.

KALISTA

Jana says he'll give you 24 hours straight if you need to have 'em. He don't stint, don't stint at all. Only two things make people work like that: extreme love or extreme guilt.

HANK

Or a mix of both?

KALISTA

One other thing: survival. You'll work hard to survive.

CHUCK

We're survivors! Freemen are survivors!

MEECHER

I bet you are.

CHUCK *(finally acknowledging Meecher)*

KALISTA

So are roaches. (*Kalista stomps on one behind the bar.*) God, do they ever survive!

(*Pause.*)

HANK

One thing I wanna know is waddia you do with an elephant once you've shot it? Ya got all that meat to contend with.

CHUCK

Cut it up with a chain saw?

HANK

Then what?

KALISTA

I think they just saw off the tusks.

MEECHER

An' the govermint won't let you do that anymore! Can't shoot the critters and can't sell the tusks on the free market! Can't shoot 'em on my own land.

CHUCK

You got elephants on your land?

MEECHER

I got wolves on my land! But they're *Federal* wolves and they're *protected*, govermint says. Goddamn tree huggers protect everything now 'cept human beings!

HANK

The Democrats wanna protect a tiny fish! You hear about that?

CHUCK

A tiny fish?

MEECHER

I'm a living, natural man an' my rights ain't protected!

CHUCK

Anybody shot you yet?

MEECHER

No...

CHUCK

Well there you go!

MEECHER

But we're ready if they try! I'd just like to see 'em try!

CHUCK

I figger if God didn't want us to shoot critters, he woulda let them shoot back.

MEECHER

You making fun of me?

CHUCK

Nope, just stating the obvious.

MEECHER

Lemme tell ya something not many people know: in '76 the Sierra Club said we was using natural resources too fast an' Carter *agreed*. So the govermint's gonna reduce the population to 150 million by the year 2000. Abortion can't do it fast enough. You gotta use the military!

CHUCK

Un-huh.

MEECHER

Only they wanna make it look like natural disasters, see? Hurricanes and stuff.

KALISTA

How do ya make something look like a hurricane?

MEECHER

They got ways. Look at acid rain! No, they got ways to do it—an' they don't mind killin' folks either. They want us to die! When they sent me that notice of foreclosure, it was an invitation to Auswitch. They want me to move off the land into one of them Forest Service death camps. So a course I'm gonna defend myself.

HANK

Against Auschwitz?

MEECHER

Against the *govermint*. Against the globalists and the UN. Do you know what they put in shampoo? I never use shampoo.

CHUCK

Coulda fooled me.

(Headlights shine against the curtains.)

MEECHER

That cocksucker Marty! It's about time!

(Meecher moves to the door.)

KALISTA

You take care, now.

(Kalista retrieves Meecher's glass and washes it.)

HANK

Who was that guy?

KALISTA

Name's Bob-something—all lower case. Doesn't tip.

CHUCK

Come in often?

KALISTA

Naw, those Freemen got no money. All been foreclosed on.

HANK

I guess that's why they're Free-men.

KALISTA

There's gonna be trouble someday. They've been printing cashier's checks.

HANK

Is that legal?

KALISTA

Not legal nor lawful. They over-pay with a forged check, then demand a refund.

HANK

Funny guy. Ever offer you a check?

KALISTA

He wouldn't dare. This bar is cash-only. 'Nother thing they do: they file phony liens against people's property—millions a dollars of phony liens.

HANK

Does that work?

KALISTA

Can't work often or he wouldn't be nursing a single glass of beer like that. He can't get his truck back, either.

HANK

Tough luck.

KALISTA

But I shouldn't be talking about customers behind their backs.

(The door jingles and Gigi enters. He's a muscular fireplug of a man wearing a bright red dress and a blonde wig. He hasn't shaved since morning. His mascara and lipstick seem to have been applied with a whisk broom. He's wearing heels which are clearly too small for him. He totters to the bar, remembering midway across the room to add a little sashay to his stride.)

GIGI

Hola, barkeep ! A libation, *por favor!* A cup of nectar, mayhap, or what have you. Many a mile I've come... across the river and into the trees. Many a mile to this clean, well-lighted place. Gentlemen, good cheer! I saw the sign. I saw the sign and told myself this is a place where a lady could have a cocktail unmolested—if you gentlemen would allow?

CHUCK *(a whisper)*

Holy fuckin' hell...

KALISTA

Shush.

GIGI

Indeed, this is the cocktail hour! The hour of cock-tails!

KALISTA

Everybody's welcome at the Hell Creek bar. What'll it be?

GIGI

Perhaps a Cuba libre? With a slice of lime? A whiff of the tropics, as it were? A breeze from the Gulf?

KALISTA

I'm sorry, ma'am. We're clean outta limes.

GIGI

Oh.

(Pause.)

HANK *(feeling his way)*

There'll be another shipment in June.

GIGI

Bonsoir, monsieur. (to Kalista) That's alright. Just leave the lime off.

HANK

Can't be easy walking in them shoes. With the slush n' all.

GIGI

Is there slush out there? I hardly noticed.

(Pause.)

CHUCK

I guess you're not from around here?

GIGI

No, I'm not.

(Pause.)

CHUCK

You just passing through?

GIGI

You could say I'm just passing through. There are no permanent residents anywhere—except the cemetery!

HANK

This is true.

GIGI

Is there, uh, a hotel in this town?

KALISTA (*a snort*)

Hotel!

HANK

Used to be one: the Garfield Hotel.

GIGI

I take it this institution no longer exists?

HANK

They turned it into a motel.

GIGI

What's it called?

HANK

The Garfield Motel.

GIGI

I see. That kinda makes sense, doesn't it?

CHUCK

You heading west or heading east?

GIGI

I'm on route two hundred heading... south. Oh, thank you.

KALISTA

Anytime.

HANK

Your voice is kinda like the south, ma'am.

GIGI

I used to live in the Florida Keys, Key West, to be precise. That's as far south as you can get in this country. Then my father moved us to Havana.

CHUCK

Havana, Cuba?

GIGI

Is there another Havana?

KALISTA

I think there's one in Illinois.

CHUCK

Habla usted espanal?

GIGI

Por supuesto, señor. What do I owe you?

KALISTA

Dollar twenty-five.

(Gigi pulls out a tiny coin purse and slides six quarters onto the bar.)

HANK

Havana, Cuba. You've come a long way, ma'am.

GIGI

I like the open country.

HANK

Country don't get much opener than here.

GIGI

I like the sea, too.

HANK

You're a long way from the sea.

GIGI

I love the way it changes colors as you leave the land: shimmering clear white over a fine, sandy beach, then green, then aquamarine, then—finally—the timeless deep blue of the Gulf Stream!

HANK

That sounds real nice. That sounds like a book.

GIGI

Why thank you! I wrote a book, actually... a few years ago.

HANK

What kinda book?

GIGI

It was a personal memoir, mostly about my father.

(Pause.)

CHUCK

The motel's near the County Health Center. You know where the Health Center's at?

KALISTA

Charlie!

GIGI

I don't... I don't know where anything's at. I'm just passing through, as I told you gentlemen earlier.

HANK

Well, we'd be happy to have you stay a spell. Jordan's a nice little town.

KALISTA

Real little an' real nice.

CHUCK

Jordan is nice *because* it's little. If there were more of it, it'd be less nice. If there were none of it at all, that'd be perfect. The way I see it, every person that doesn't live here is a blessing. Every person that doesn't live here is blessed. Every person that doesn't live here is a lucky dog.

KALISTA

Don't exaggerate. It's got advantages.

CHUCK

Yes it does. Jordan is outstanding if you're a fossil.

HANK (to Gigi)

We're famous for fossils— dinosaur fossils.

GIGI

A paradise for paleontologists!

CHUCK

A sandbox for boneheads. That's another thing: everybody here is stupid. Makes me feel right at home.

HANK

That may not be strictly true, but you know what he means.

GIGI

It seems like a town in contact with nature.

CHUCK

Some parts are less natural than others.

GIGI

I'll have another cocktail, if I may. The lime is unnecessary, I find—superfluous, a mere ornament.

KALISTA

Sure thing.

(Pause.)

HANK

Used to be limes at the supermarket, but they closed.

GIGI

Ah, the fluctuations of commerce—the vicissitudes of rural retail!

HANK

Gotta go to Billings now.

KALISTA

There's Walmart in Miles City.

CHUCK

If you're goin' to Miles City, ya might as well go to Billings.

GIGI

How far is Billings?

HANK

'Hundred and thirty.

GIGI

And Miles City?

HANK

Eighty-five.

CHUCK (*an edge*)

You should get a map. Get yerself a goddamn map an' you'll know where you are! Ya get lots of information from a map.

GIGI

I know how to read a map, thank you. I don't have one handy tonight.

HANK

Not much to show. Around here the map is all paper and no ink.

GIGI

What are the people like?

HANK

Hard-working people. Ranchers.

GIGI

No farmers?

HANK

Some farmers. Spring wheat mostly.

KALISTA

Some peas.

HANK

Dry, edible peas. Some Lima beans.

KALISTA

Lima beans becoming quite popular—except to eat, of course.

GIGI

I think a relationship with the soil gentles the disposition of people. It makes them kinder and more humane.

HANK

A rancher's got relationship with the soil. He's got relationship to his herd an' his herd's got relationship with the soil.

CHUCK

Me, I got relationship with dirt.

GIGI

Do you?

CHUCK

I got 3100 acres of dirt. At \$200 an acre, what's that come to, Kalista?

KALISTA

Gimme a second.

(Kalista rummages for a calculator.)

GIGI

That's quite a spread.

HANK

Bigger than mine.

CHUCK

You damn right it's bigger'n yours! Towny-man! He *walks* his dog!

HANK

Chuck here is one of our leading citizens, the top Indian on the totem pole, you might say.

CHUCK

A pillar of the community, an all 'cause my pillar's bigger'n yours!

HANK

You mustn't mind his country ways, Ma'am.

GIGI

Oh I don't. I don't mind. I think he's charming. How did he become so well-to-do, if he doesn't mind me asking?

CHUCK

You can ask, but I might not tell.

GIGI

Are you one of those oil Indians from Oklahoma?

CHUCK

Nope, I'm a uranium Indian from South Dakota. I'm radio-active. People tick when they get near me. They tick too much and it ticks me off.

HANK

He hasn't scalped anybody yet, but it could happen.

KALISTA (*who's found the calculator*)

Six hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

CHUCK

Ha!

KALISTA

Land's gone up. I told you land would go up with Reagan.

HANK

Trouble is nobody wants to buy it. Can't sell it 'cept to somebody wants to live here.

CHUCK

A mile of it is right on Blood Creek.

GIGI

"Blood Creek"—such an evocative name!

HANK

That's west of here. I don't know why it's called that.

CHUCK

I know why: it's 'cause it's muddy—an' blood's thicker than water.

HANK

They say that's true, but I wouldn't know.

GIGI

Oh, it is. Blood is thicker than water. In a way, that is. Blood is more viscous, but water is heavier.

HANK

That's interesting.

GIGI

Blood viscosity changes with pressure: thick and sticky on diastole, thin and slippery at systole. Could I have a re-fill, please?

KALISTA

So Blood Creek is thick, that makes sense. But why the hell is Hell Creek called “Hell Creek”?

HANK (*to Gigi*)

Hell Creek flows into Blood Creek. Blood Creek flows into the Musselshell River.

CHUCK

Hell, she knows that!

KALISTA (*firm*)

Not if she’s just passing through, she don’t.

GIGI

“Musselshell” is a nice name, too.

HANK

‘Course before Hell Creek flows into Blood Creek, it flows into Dovetail Creek, which flows into Lodge Pole Creek. It’s all one creek: meanders so much the name changes.

CHUCK

You forgot Drag Creek. Lodge Pole Creek flows into Drag Creek. That’s a funny name, ain’t it? “Drag Creek.”

KALISTA (*a diversion*)

Another one, Chuck?

CHUCK

If you insist.

GIGI

A creek that changes names inexplicably! The region is full of wonders.

CHUCK

So is blood thicker than water or not?

GIGI

Blood is a sheer-viscosity fluid. Sometimes it's thick, sometimes it's thin; sometimes it clots. But gentlemen, the night is young! Let's talk about something less sanguine. You've got waterfront property, Chuck. It is "Chuck," isn't it? Congratulations are in order—nay, a toast! To waterfront property! Bottom's up, Chuck! "Up-Chuck." Ha!

(Gigi collapses in laughter.)

HANK

Up, Chuck!

KALISTA *(lifting an empty glass)*

To waterfront property!

(The men drink.)

GIGI

Excellent! Very refreshing!

KALISTA

You get any flood damage out there, Chuck?

CHUCK

Flood damage? You mean *blood* damage!

KALISTA

You know what I mean.

CHUCK

Flooding's not a problem for me. Flooding's a problem for other people.

GIGI

So what's your problem?

CHUCK

I don't got a problem.

GIGI

Everybody's got a problem.

CHUCK

Not me.

GIGI

Everybody's got a problem.

CHUCK

What's yours?

GIGI

Oh, how kind! (*To Kalista*) "Up Chuck" wants to buy me a single-malt Scotch—best one you got.

CHUCK

Hey, wait a minute...

(Gigi laughs hard again.)

GIGI

That's an old joke! Three Scots in a bar an' one of 'em says. "Oh, I'm not feeling well." An' the second one says "you don't look well; what ye got?" An' the first one says "I think I'm coming down with *Yorres*." An' the third one says...

GIGI AND KALISTA

"What's *yorres*?"

HANK

I never heard that one.

KALISTA

I heard it once.

CHUCK

I mean, I wasn't offering to buy you...

GIGI

I know! That's the joke!

HANK

Funny.

GIGI

My father told that joke! God! My father knew a lot of jokes. He could tell 'em, too. He was a writer, a professional writer.

HANK

Was he? And you followed in his footsteps?

GIGI

Yes, I did, somewhat.

HANK

Did he read your book?

GIGI

No, but he read something else I wrote.

HANK

Did he like it?

GIGI

He said—these are his exact words—"the good parts were like ripe plums in vomit."

KALISTA

I can see how that would endear him to you.

HANK

Sounds like quite a character.

GIGI

Oh he had a way with words. He could crawl into your mind with words and live there, inside your mind—with words you'd never forget.

CHUCK

Wrote books, did he?

GIGI

Yes, novels and stories—and a wonderful book about bullfighting. I love my father very much.

CHUCK

What's he doin' now?

(An awkward silence.)

KALISTA

What's it like to live in Havana? I never been out of the country.

Not even Canada?
HANK

Not even Canada!
KALISTA

Hell, Canada's right next door!
HANK

Stop changing the subject, you guys.
CHUCK

I'm not a "guy," Charlie—in case you haven't noticed.
KALISTA

I'm sorry, Kalista. It's getting' hard to tell sometimes.
CHUCK

Thanks a million!
KALISTA

Hell, you know what I mean.
CHUCK

No, I don't. You tell me what you mean.
KALISTA

She asked a question. She can ask our visitor a question, can't she?
HANK

What was the question?
GIGI

About Havana.
KALISTA

But of course! Gentlemen—and lady—I'll happily regale you with tales of life in the tropics, but first a visit to the little girl's room is in order.
GIGI

Right back there to your left, Ma'am.
KALISTA

CHUCK

Or your right—it's up to you.

(Silence until Gigi exits.)

HANK

What the fuck you doing, Chuck? Needling him like that?

CHUCK

Me? What the fuck's HE doin'? JESUS! The lies...

HANK

Chuck...

CHUCK

"I'm heading south..."

KALISTA

Well, what's he *supposed* to say?

CHUCK

Nobody heads south from here. If you're heading south, you got no business here.

KALISTA

What would you say if you were in his shoes?

CHUCK

I wouldn't *be* in his shoes. They're too small for him an' my feet are bigger than his!

KALISTA

He's suffering. Go easy on him.

HANK *(to Kalista)*

You seen this before?

KALISTA

Nope.

CHUCK

An' the get-up! Where'd he get those clothes?

KALISTA

The shops at Big Sky, I bet. That's a fancy dress. Fancy shoes, too.

HANK

They don't look comfortable. Poor bastard.

CHUCK

Makes me sick.

KALISTA

You can go home, Charlie.

CHUCK

I don't want to go home.

KALISTA

Then be polite, that's all.

HANK

Yeah, act natural.

CHUCK

Natural! I should confront him. I should make him speak truth!

HANK

What good would that do? Huh?

CHUCK

Clear the air. Get things straight.

KALISTA

Too much truth is too much truth.

CHUCK

You learn that in college?

KALISTA

No, I learned that tending bar.

CHUCK

I just want to see him 'fess up, that's all.

HANK

You want to lose him?

CHUCK

No...

HANK

We need him. We need him to stay.

KALISTA

We need him to get some sleep. His eyes.

CHUCK

What about 'em?

KALISTA

Didn't you see? His eyes look... overcome—even when he laughs.

(Gigi reemerges.)

GIGI

Life in the tropics! We were discussing life in the tropics! Pina Coladas served in a fresh pineapple; gory sunsets and sacred mornings—and in between, the stars! A tapestry of stars—like milk glowing in the heavens. We had a boat, of course: Papa at the wheel, me on the foredeck shooting flying fish with a .22. I was a good shot. I tied for champion of Cuba shooting live birds when I was eleven years old. God, they were proud of me! God, I was good! Papa held me in his arms and said “Good shooting, Gig. Twenty birds and didn't miss one!”

CHUCK

If he could see his little miss now!

HANK

Is that what he called you, “Gig”?

GIGI

He called me “Gigi.” The whole family did. Still does. Another one, please.

KALISTA

With respect, Ma'am, I think you've had enough.

GIGI *(slowly)*

You refuse to serve me?

KALISTA

I'm not refusing; I just think you've had enough.

GIGI

I'll be the judge of that. One more.

KALISTA

I'm sorry, Ma'am.

GIGI

Are you questioning my authority? Don't. Don't you question my authority.

KALISTA

I don't question your authority. I just say you've had enough.

HANK

She may be right about that.

KALISTA

I'm concerned for you, Ma'am.

HANK

We all are.

CHUCK

Kalista knows when you've had enough. I hadn't lived here two months before she told me I'd had enough. She was right, too.

HANK

You're still here though, aren't ya?

CHUCK

I'm still here, but I've had enough.

KALISTA (*to Gigi*)

Would you like to pay up now? You're welcome to stay. Just don't drink any more.

GIGI

What do I owe you?

KALISTA

Six twenty-five, ma'am.

(Gigi pulls out the coin purse and dumps its contents on the bar.)

GIGI

What have I got there?

HANK

You're making a wise decision.

KALISTA

Two—eighty.

GIGI

That's... not enough.

KALISTA

Not quite, ma'am. You could owe me the rest.

GIGI

No. No, I couldn't do that.

KALISTA

Well, that's alright...

GIGI

Just a sec.

(Gigi hikes up his skirt and pulls a wad of bills from his pantyhose. The men try not to look.)

CHUCK

Jesus!

GIGI

There! That oughta do it.

KALISTA *(stunned)*

I can't change a fifty. Anybody got change for a fifty?

HANK

You kiddin' me?

CHUCK

Not on me.

KALISTA

I think you got something smaller there, ma'am. I think I see a twenty.

GIGI

I'm sorry. I shoulda seen that... before.

KALISTA

Take your fifty back. I'm putting it in your purse.

GIGI

Thank you. You're very kind. Very kind.

KALISTA

And here's your change: three quarters is seven, three makes ten. Ten is twenty.

GIGI

Thank you. Here. You keep that.

KALISTA

That's a five, Ma'am.

GIGI

I KNOW IT'S A FIVE, DAMIT!

(The phone rings. Kalista moves to answer it.)

KALISTA

Hell Creek Bar. Who? No, she's not here. Sure thing. Bye.

GIGI

I shot twenty birds in a row. Number twelve was a real screecher. Came flat out of the trench; I couldn't judge the angle. First shot missed. Second shot got him just as he reached the boundary. The bird hit the top of the fence and fell back. I don't remember getting the second shot off. It's not something I did consciously. It wasn't under my control—it just happened.

HANK

We do things sometimes... We don't know how.

KALISTA

And your dad loved you for it.

GIGI

That day he loved me. Papa loved me for that.

(Pause.)

KALISTA

It's a shame for the pigeons, though.

CHUCK

Got too many pigeons in the city.

HANK (to Gigi)

Chuck lived in Sioux Falls before he came here.

CHUCK

They put out poison for 'em.

GIGI

Be kinder to shoot them.

CHUCK

Yup. There are critters that shootin's the kindest thing you can do.

(Pause.)

KALISTA

I never lived in the city.

(Pause.)

HANK

You married, Ma'am? A lovely lady like yourself must be married.

GIGI

I *am* married. We live in Bozeman. My family lives in Bozeman.

CHUCK

You got *a family*?

GIGI

Three boys and two girls.

HANK

And they live in Bozeman?

GIGI

They live in Bozeman. I visit on weekends.

CHUCK

That's three hundred miles.

GIGI

Three - twenty.

CHUCK

Every weekend?

GIGI

Every other weekend.

(Pause.)

HANK

What are their names?

GIGI

John, Lorian, Patrick, Sean, Vanessa. *(Pause.)* I'd like another.

KALISTA

To make an even half-dozen?

GIGI

Another *drink*. Please?

HANK

Maybe have some coffee first?

KALISTA

I'll make you a special... no charge.

(Kalista fills a tall glass with soda water and adds a cherry.)

GIGI

What makes it special?

KALISTA

A splash of grenadine: watch.

(Gigi watches the tentacles of grenadine elongating in the glass.)

GIGI

A starfish—a starfish of blood! Its tentacles—their embrace is fatal!

CHUCK

‘Nother one for me, too. Please.

(Kalista draws Chuck another beer.)

GIGI

Fatal to all, the starfish is! Fatal to John and Lorian! Fatal to Patrick and Sean! And fatal to little Vanessa!

HANK *(gently)*

Are you going to join them?

GIGI

Of course! The starfish is fatal to their father, too!

KALISTA

Here, kill the starfish.

(She hands Gigi a swizzle stick. He stirs furiously, spilling some.)

HANK

If you’re going to join them, you’ll be heading west, not south.

KALISTA

You should be heading to bed.

GIGI

To bloody bed. Bloody-bye bed!

KALISTA

You got a long drive tomorrow.

CHUCK *(to Kalista)*

He’s driving to *Bozeman*?

KALISTA

For family time.

CHUCK

Jesus...

GIGI

Yes, Bozeman, the metropolis where loved ones live. It's a university town. My family deems it a decent abode where Jordan is not. Jordan, they say, is indecent. Jordan is *descent*.

(Headlights shine. A truck door slams outside.)

KALISTA

See who it is, Hank.

(Hank goes to the window and peers over the curtains.)

HANK

It's that lower-case fella again.

KALISTA

Shit.

GIGI

Another gentleman! 't's quite... exquisite!

KALISTA

Ma'am, you've got a problem with your lipstick. You come with me and I'll fix you right up.

GIGI

Is it smeared?

KALISTA

Just a smudge.

(Kalista half-drags Gigi to the washroom. Hank steps into the doorway, ostensibly to get his hat, but manages to block Meecher's view as he enters. Chuck picks up a pool cue.)

HANK

Well, hello again!

MEECHER

Howdy.

CHUCK

Looks like you came back just in time to play a game of pool.

Oh... ah don't play pool.

MEECHER

What a shame.

CHUCK

The bartender here?

MEECHER

In the ladies' room.

HANK

She comin' back?

MEECHER

They usually do.

CHUCK

Something we can help you with?

HANK

I'll wait for the bartender.

MEECHER

Could be awhile.

HANK

(Pause.)

HANK (CONT.)
That your truck out there? A Jeep Gladiator! Don't see many of those anymore.

MEECHER
That's Marty's truck. He ain't comin' in.

CHUCK
Is he your get-away driver?

MEECHER
No, he just ain't comin' in. *(Pause.)* I was wonderin'... could either of you guys cash a check for me?

CHUCK

Ha! Maybe next Wednesday.

MEECHER

It's a governmint check.

GIGI (*off*)

You're ruining it!

KALISTA (*off*)

Well, hold still!

MEECHER

Somethin' going on back there?

CHUCK

Whatever it is, it's minding its own business. (*Pause.*) So if it's not gonna be pool, what game are you playin'? 'Cause pool's the only game we play in this bar.

MEECHER

I'm not into playing games.

HANK

If you've got a message for Kalista, we'll see that she gets it.

MEECHER

I need fifty bucks. I got security. I need fifty bucks tonight.

CHUCK

Who'd have that kinda money in Jordan?

MEECHER

The bar's got it. I bet the bar's got a hundred!

CHUCK

The bar's money is the bar's money. An' if you got any ideas about that, I can tell ya that the bar's money is gonna stay the bar's money.

MEECHER

Un-huh. Who you speaking for? Who gave you the right to speak for the bar?

HANK

Maybe he was "called to the bar." (*Pause.*) That's a joke.

MEECHER

Ain't funny. I don't like jokes that ain't funny. And you—I don't see you playing pool. I just see you holdin' a stick. Are you threatenin' me?

CHUCK

Nope.

MEECHER

Then put that stick down. I won't let you threaten me with a stick. Put it down now.

(Chuck puts it down.)

MEECHER (CONT)

I am caused by nature to be a perfect man. I'm not looking for trouble, but if it's trouble ya want, I'll give it to ya. Each man must rule himself while harming none. That's what I believe.

HANK

That's what we all believe.

(A muffled argument comes from the washroom.)

CHUCK

So waddia need fifty dollars for on a Friday night?

MEECHER

That's none a your business. I got security. My words are securitized. My words are gilded.

HANK

Of course they are.

KALISTA *(off)*

NOW PLEASE, JUST STAY HERE, OKAY?

MEECHER

I'm good for it, is what I'm saying.

(Kalista emerges.)

KALISTA

Sorry about that. Call of nature.

MEECHER

'T's alright.

KALISTA

What's your pleasure?

MEECHER

I don't wanna drink. I come on business.

KALISTA

Well then, what's your business?

MEECHER

M'am, I'm gonna frame this in a rational way 'cause I value your time and your interest.

KALISTA

I appreciate that. It's busier than it looks tonight.

MEECHER

Do you have children, Ma'am?

KALISTA

What's that got to do with anything?

MEECHER

If you have children, you'll want them to see this. This is a great moment. This is a moment when a living, natural man stands up to the British Admiralty and Crown Vatican Law! 'Cause that gas station is actually Vatican property under rule of the present Pope, John-Paul II. They have stolen my identity and made me fictional. *Capitis Diminutio Maxima!* They are morally and mentally corrupt and incapable of automitry!

KALISTA

They wouldn't take your check?

MEECHER

Hell no!

CHUCK

How odd.

MEECHER

We need to fill up! Marty's tank is almost dry an' we got thirty cents between us! Ya see, Marty thought I'd have cash an' I thought he'd have gas.

KALISTA

Did you explain that at the station?

MEECHER

Hell yes!

CHUCK

I woulda thought they'd take a govermint check, wouldn't you, Hank?

HANK

Sure, if you have a govermint I.D.!

MEECHER

This has nothing to do with checks! This has to do with the gender they have stolen from me, with my legal emasculation! They want me to be less than a man. But I AM a man, a living, natural man.

CHUCK

Look, if ya need money for gas, here's five.

MEECHER

I need fifty! I live on Piney Butte!

KALISTA

That's a trot.

MEECHER

An' Marty's gotta drive to his place after he takes me home.

CHUCK

Does he, now?

MEECHER

He lives out Sutherland Road an' he don't wanna be outta gas when he gets there! What's he gonna do if he's outta gas when he gets there?

CHUCK

Walk, I guess. Isn't that what living, natural men do?

MEECHER

Don't you be making jokes, you...

HANK

I think I got five, too. That'll get ya started.

I need fifty, I tell ya.

MEECHER

I don't got fifty.

HANK

Would you take a cashier's check?

CHUCK

I'll take anything.

MEECHER

Look, I wouldn't normally do this, but under these special circumstances, the bar will put in five, but you gotta leave *now*.

KALISTA

Are you trying to get rid of me?

MEECHER

Not at all. We relish your company.

CHUCK

But we feel for Marty who's waiting in the truck. He's been waiting a while.

HANK

He can wait some more. I got fifteen dollars, now. Maybe I'll have a beer.

MEECHER

Hey! That money's for gas—you're not spending it on beer!

KALISTA

Who sez?

MEECHER

I won't take it for drink.

KALISTA

Money's money.

MEECHER

I'm about to close.

KALISTA

MEECHER

Well I'll wait while you do.

CHUCK

Listen, mister...

KALISTA

It's alright, Chuck.

HANK

You don't value Marty's time very highly.

MEECHER

His fee schedule's the same as mine: a dollar-fifty a minute!

CHUCK

Cheap at twice the price!

KALISTA

Why don't the two of you try the Antlers? It's not as if there isn't another bar in town.

HANK

You got fifteen dollars now.

CHUCK

An' thirty cents.

MEECHER

I tell ya, I need fifty! It's a dollar-fifty a gallon!

HANK

How big is your tank?

MEECHER

I got jerry cans.

CHUCK

Yer not getting fifty!

MEECHER

Marty's got a shotgun in the truck. You could keep that as security.

KALISTA

This isn't a hock shop, Bob.

MEECHER

Anybody?

HANK

None of us have fifty bucks. Try the Antlers.

MEECHER

Fuck the Antlers! Ain't nobody there. I looked.

KALISTA

Try the convenience store.

CHUCK

They're convenient.

MEECHER

Fellman don't want us in there.

(There's a loud thump from the washroom.)

KALISTA *(her patience wearing thin.)*

Then try the station again. Explain it to Jerry calmly.

MEECHER

I'm calm. I'm always calm.

KALISTA

It's good that you're calm. Jerry will appreciate that.

MEECHER

But look, I got a right to be here! I got inalienable rights, an' among these is life, liberty and happiness...

(Gigi explodes from the washroom.)

GIGI

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS! ONLY THE PURSUIT! I applaud the pursuit. I encourage it! Hell, I exemplify it! I wanna buy a drink for the man who pursues happiness as passionately as I do!

MEECHER

Jesus H. Christ! ¹

GIGI

Good god, let's *all* pursue happiness! Happiness is a bird on the wing: you gotta keep your weight forward, pivot on your left foot and let go with both barrels! Bam! Bam! To the bluebird of happiness!

MEECHER

What in Lord's name is this?

CHUCK

A living, natural woman!

MEECHER

Shiiiiit!

GIGI

The pursuit of happiness is enshrined in the documents of our liberty, it flows from the pen of Thomas Jefferson. I wanna buy a drink for the man who admirers Jefferson's pen as much as I do!

CHUCK

Don't be shy; introduce yourself!

MEECHER

You got freaks in here? You got faggots?

KALISTA

Look, *Bob*...

GIGI

The bluebird of happiness is heterosexual and so am I! Can you doubt it? Bam! Bam! Can you doubt it for a minute? I need a drink.

MEECHER

I will denounce you! I will denounce you to the county sheriff.

CHUCK

'Cause you want the *govermint* involved?

¹ An act break, if desired, can come at this point. The second act should begin with Gigi repeating "The pursuit of happiness," then continue as written.

KALISTA

There's no call for that.

GIGI

The sheriff joining us? Quite the party at Hell Creek!

MEECHER

Some kinda freak show in here...

HANK (*to Gigi*)

Ma'am, if you point out your car to me, I'll drive you to the motel.

MEECHER

I bet you would. I bet you'd like that. A motel room with some freak!

HANK

Look, you...

KALISTA

This is no business of yours! Hank is a gentleman and he's worried for her.

MEECHER

For *her*? He's worried for *her*? Can I just point out one itsy-bitsy thing, something that seems to have escaped all yourz attention?

HANK

I don't think you need to point anything out.

MEECHER

Where'd you find HER? Where'd you find IT?

GIGI

My abode is elsewhere. I'm just passing through.

KALISTA

She's just leaving and so are you. You gotta get gas, remember?

MEECHER

Jerry's open all night.

GIGI

Don't make the gentleman leave! We're just getting acquainted! My name's Gloria. I'm headed south.

CHUCK

Ain't that the truth!

MEECHER

You always been a pervert?

HANK

Look, mister... lower case. You need to mind your manners.

MEECHER

Oh, 'cause there's a LADY present, is there?

HANK

No, 'cause *I'm* present.

MEECHER

Well *excuse* you!

KALISTA

But there *is* a lady present.

MEECHER

Well *excuse* you, too!

GIGI

KEEP 'EM FROM DYING, that's what I say! I'm anti-death and always have been—it goes with the pursuit of happiness. My goal is to be the last person to die in my lifetime.

MEECHER

Yer a fucking fruitcake is what you are!

GIGI

Never touch it! Destroys a girl's waistline. Got an uncle sends me a fruitcake every Christmas, but I never touch it. You wanna arm wrestle?

MEECHER

Arm wrestle?

GIGI

I can take you. I can take you arm wrestling any day! I can take the sheriff, too. I can take you both, one in each hand!

MEECHER

I wouldn't arm wrestle with you if you were the last man on earth! I outta punch your pansy face!

KALISTA

You do and the sheriff's coming *for you*.

GIGI

Papa taught me how to box. He was a good boxer—not as good as he thought he was, but he was good. You got gloves? Every bar should have gloves for an occasion like this.

(Gigi yanks off his shoes and dances around in a boxing stance.)

KALISTA

There's no gloves and there'll be no punching.

GIGI

He taught me to lead and counter, taught me to shift and parry. I'm in shape. I can cool you with one punch. I can make *criadillas* outta you, *criadillas con huevos revueltos*!

(The phone rings.)

GIGI (CONT.)

And the bell sounds for round one. Gigi explodes from his corner like the champ he is, pulverizing his opponent with a flurry of jabs. Bam! Bam! Bam! Three lefts, quick as lightning, a right, a left—and he's drawn blood already!

KALISTA *(under this)*

Hell Creek Bar. Who? I can't hear. How would I know?

MEECHER

Jesus!

HANK *(to Gigi)*

Hey, take it easy, man. Calm down.

GIGI *(bobbing and weaving)*

But the champ *can't* calm down! The champ's gotta win! That's what makes him a champ!

KALISTA *(to Gigi)*

Cool it!

GIGI

It's a boxing blitzkrieg as Gigi lets loose with all he's got!

KALISTA

JUST COOL IT!

CHUCK

SHE SAID COOL IT.

(Chuck claps his hands in front of Gigi's nose. Startled, Gigi staggers backwards onto the bar, hanging there like a prizefighter on the ropes.)

KALISTA *(into the phone)*

I don't want to talk to you. Got that? Don't ever call me again.

(She hangs up. Pause.)

HANK

I never cared much for boxing, two guys banging away, sweat flyin' everywhere. I think you learn more about another man by playing checkers. You see how his mind works: does he plan ahead? Is he reckless? Super-cautious? Women spend a lotta time talking about feelings, but a game of checkers tells me all I need to know. Chuck, here, he don't play checkers.

GIGI *(somewhat re-feminized)*

Chuck fouled me. You, sir, are no gentleman!

MEECHER

An' you sure as hell ain't no lady! Ha!

CHUCK

An' this ain't Fort Lauderdale!

GIGI

How could you possibly know?

MEECHER

About what?

GIGI

About ladies. What do you know about ladies that lets you exclude me from that category?

MEECHER

Oh, I could tell you was a man right away. You're a pervert man and a sissy man an' a sick-in-the-head man, but you've got masculinity just like me.

GIGI

This last... insults me.

MEECHER

I seen plenty a naked women. I know the difference!

HANK

Okay, you made your point.

KALISTA

Listen... *Bob*. I happen to know that this lady is the only one here with enough cash to fill your tank. If you treat her in a gentlemanly way—if you inspire confidence in her—if you're polite, she MIGHT, I repeat, MIGHT lend you fifty bucks against Marty's shotgun.

CHUCK

If it's any good.

MEECHER

You kiddin' me? He wouldn't know a shotgun from a douche bag!

GIGI

Quite wrong about that. I'm intimately acquainted with both objects. What kind of shotgun is it?

MEECHER

Stoeger side-by-side, 12 gauge.

GIGI

I'll pass, thank you very much.

MEECHER

It's in good condition. It's imported from Italy.

GIGI

But it's made in Brazil. Could we have a drink for the gentleman?

MEECHER

You ain't even looked at it!

GIGI

I don't wish to denigrate Marty's shotgun, but neither do I believe it's destined for my collection.

MEECHER

Who says he'd even sell it to ya? We're only talking about a loan. A fifty-buck loan! Anyway, if you're just passing through, how's he gonna get it back?

GIGI

You mean he'd want it *back*? Whatever for?

MEECHER

He hunts with it.

GIGI

He'd do better with a douche bag—a douche bag fires every time.

CHUCK

That's tellin' him!

GIGI

Give the gentleman a drink! Give me one, too!

KALISTA

Sorry, the bar's closing. The bar's closed, in fact.

MEECHER

It's only ten o'clock!

KALISTA

The bar's closing early tonight. Lemme give ya a Coke to take out to Marty.

MEECHER

Marty drinks Seven Up.

KALISTA

Got that too.

MEECHER

Ah... ya don't hafta do that...

KALISTA

It's my treat. I hate to put you guys out on the street, but this just ain't the night for it.

(A long, angry blast on a truck horn outside.)

MEECHER *(to Gigi)*

Would ya take it for thirty-five? I don't got much time.

GIGI

Perhaps if I saw the instrument...

MEECHER

Sure, I'll go get it.

KALISTA

It stays outside, ya hear me?

MEECHER

Get out here, then. This'll just take a minute.

GIGI

Where are my shoes?

MEECHER

Here's one.

(He holds it by the heel like a pistol.)

GIGI

Ah, commerce in the night air. The enchantment continues!

(Gigi puts on his shoes and totters out in Meecher's wake.)

HANK

Is he gonna be alright?

KALISTA

You better watch.

(Hank moves to the window as before.)

KALISTA (CONT)

We gotta get him home and keep him there.

CHUCK

How do we get him home without him knowin' that we know?

KALISTA

That we know what?

CHUCK

That we know who he is!

KALISTA

Jesus, Chuck, ya think he'd even remember?

HANK

Marty's looking at him real funny. If you could see his face!

CHUCK

I bet!

KALISTA

We gotta keep people from seeing him. His reputation'll be shot to hell.

CHUCK

What makes you think everybody don't know already? You weren't too surprised. Maybe the whole town knows—everybody except me, Hank and the Freeman!

KALISTA

We need a plan.

CHUCK

Put a sack over his head?

KALISTA

We could try that.

CHUCK

What if we let him drink till he passes out, then take him home and dump him?

KALISTA

That's not ethical—an' it would take all night.

CHUCK

You got something else on?

KALISTA

I got classes tomorrow.

CHUCK

College girl! Whatcha studying?

KALISTA

Child Development. Ethics. Introduction to Theatre.

CHUCK

What's your major?

KALISTA

I can't decide.

HANK

Jesus! They look really pissed.

(There's shouting outside. Gigi backs into the room pursued by Meecher, who's poking him in the chest.)

MEECHER

Sodom and Gomorrah, that's what you are! You're the reason this country's goin' down the toilet! I shouldn't let you *touch* that gun—gonna wipe it down with Lysol now.

GIGI *(under this)*

Dear Sir... Dear Sir...

(Gigi trips and falls.)

KALISTA

Look...

HANK

Hey now...

MEECHER

I'm not talkin' to you! This guy makes me puke! It takes a lot to make me puke. I'm a tolerant individul, but I ain't camping in Gomorrah!

(Gigi tries to get up but can't. He plops down on his fanny.)

GIGI

Pursuit of happiness, you said. Does that only apply to you and your beastly friends?

MEECHER

You're nothing but pollution and corruption—pollutin' the earth like the EPA. An' you leave my friends out of it!

GIGI

The Masai are more civilized. A woman feels safe among the Masai!

MEECHER

Well this ain't Massachusetts!

KALISTA

Cool it, you two! The bar's closed.

(Kalista switches off the "OPEN" sign.)

MEECHER

I'm gonna tell all my friends what kinda bar this is!

CHUCK

Go ahead! Tell 'em both!

MEECHER

I will! Trust me, I will!

KALISTA

The Antlers is more your kinda place anyway.

(Marty leans on the horn again.)

MEECHER

I'm coming! Lord knows I don't wanna stay in this shit hole of vice.

(Meecher exits. Kalista locks the door behind him.)

GIGI

What a disagreeable man—his friend, too. I told them what it was worth and they started shouting. The gun and its owner, both beneath contempt! Is my dress alright?

KALISTA

It's alright.

(Gigi tries to see his fanny.)

GIGI

This is one of my favorites. It's not ripped?

KALISTA

A little dirty is all.

CHUCK *(to Kalista)*

I got an idea. Lemme talk to ya back here, can I?

KALISTA

Okay, but make it quick.

(Kalista goes with Chuck to the back of the bar.)

GIGI

When people raise their voice in my presence I feel something quivering inside. It upsets me that people can be hurtful and angry. I must look a fright.

HANK

You look alright.

GIGI

Really?

HANK

You look fine.

GIGI

My name's Gloria. What's yours?

HANK

"Hank"—my name's Hank. I think I've seen you before, Gloria—or you've seen me.

GIGI

How could that possibly be? I'm unknown to this community. My father used to say we were a strange tribe. Perhaps it's our destiny to be strangers everywhere, even in paradise.

HANK

I wouldn't know about paradise.

GIGI

Fleeting strangers. Strangers who follow the fleet! Strangers, fleet of foot! Ha! I've tried to make friends here, but I haven't obtained recognition. People see you, but they don't *recognize* you.

HANK

Gloria...

GIGI

The trust of the entire community in its most intimate domain, the domain of health, counts as nothing in the absence of recognition. Esteem and gratitude are general emotions, whereas recognition is particular.

HANK

It's a small town. Everybody wears more than one hat.

GIGI

Nobody wears hats. Everybody wears caps, baseball caps with tractors on them, or a type of seed. Dirty caps with greasy visors...

HANK

Take Kalista, here. She runs her aunt's bar, but she goes to college, too.

GIGI

Does she?

HANK

Montana State.

GIGI

Kalista... the cup bearer. She wants to start a family. (*Catching himself.*) I mean, I sense that about her. I feel her maternity... desired. God help her in this town: not many men to choose from.

HANK

More men than women.

GIGI

But she needs a real man.

HANK

What I'm sayin' is if somebody left Jordan, that person would be missed.

GIGI

One doesn't leave Jordan, one *passes over* Jordan—like in the Gospel song. Oh God, do you think I can sing it?

*He dipped himself in the river of Jordan
And the cool waters made him whole.*

HANK

A small town will do that. It'll make you whole. It has to—there's no place to hide.

GIGI

That's what I thought at first—that's what I counted on. But it would help if there were a neutral corner, not a place to hide, but a place to rest. An in-between place.

HANK

In between what?

GIGI

In between public and private, a place of... sanctuary. Are you married?

HANK

No.

GIGI

You have a gentle face, Hank. You have a face that's all sweetness. And you're not married?

HANK

No.

GIGI

But you live with someone... here in town. You live with someone and you have a dog. You pursue happiness with a dog.

HANK

I walk my nephews' dog sometimes. In summer they walk her themselves.

GIGI

You have nephews? Ha! I make it sound like a disease! You have *nephews*...

HANK

Yes Ma'am. You may have seen them... or one of them.

GIGI

Uuuuh...

HANK

They've got Klinefelter syndrome.

GIGI

I see.

HANK

You know what that means. It means they're not all there. One of 'em's got an IQ of 72. He does the dog walking. The other's a bit brighter. He can drive.

GIGI

That's good.

HANK

It's genetic.

GIGI

I know it's genetic.

HANK

I know you know. I'm just reminding you. No offense.

GIGI

None taken.

HANK

So there's no cure.

GIGI

There's no cure for family. Family is terminal. I am my father's son and that kills me. Would you care for a supplemental libation? I keep a flask for medicinal purposes.

(Gigi extracts a flask from his purse.)

HANK

I don't know if that's a good idea...

(The phone rings.)

GIGI

I know what's prescribed... and proscribed. To your nephews' health!

*(With a trembling hand, he pours whiskey into Hank's glass, then empties the rest into his own.
The phone keeps ringing.)*

GIGI (CONT)

No cure for parents! No cure for progeny!

HANK

If you show me your car, I'll drive you wherever you want to go.

GIGI

That's kind of you. I don't have my car here. I walked.

HANK

Oh.

(Exasperated, Gigi answers the phone.)

GIGI

What *is* it? No, he's not here. No, she's not available. That sounds serious. I'm sorry, but that's not my problem, is it? You'll have to manage as best you can. Look, I told you before... Well, if I see him, I'll tell him. G'bye!

(Gigi hangs up but continues to address the mute instrument on the wall.)

GIGI (CONT)

Asshole thinks he can ruin my night off. Having a lovely talk. Don't get nights off. Don't get lovely talks. Think you can ruin it? Think again! Shoulda been more careful, the asshole. No, shouldn'ta. Accidents happen. Not the asshole's fault.

(Kalista and Chuck emerge, arguing.)

KALISTA

Don't ya see that she's the last person we'd wanna tell? She's almost as important to this as he is.

CHUCK

But she'd know what to do!

KALISTA

No, Chuck, we gotta work this out for ourselves.

CHUCK

I don't see how.

(The phone rings again.)

KALISTA

Shit!

CHUCK

Don't answer it.

GIGI *(singing)*

He dipped himself in the river of Jordan...

KALISTA

Hell Creek Bar. Yeah, I was in the back. No, he isn't. Really? Geez...

GIGI *(louder)*

And the pure water made him...

KALISTA *(to Gigi)*

WILL YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP? CAN YOU PLEASE SHUT YOUR MOUTH FOR A GODDAMN MINUTE!

CHUCK

Jesus, Kalista!

KALISTA

How'd it happen? Oh God. Oh God. Look, Jerry, if I see him, I'll send him. I know. I got it. 'Bye. *(She hangs up.)* One a them freeman types shot himself.

HANK

Fatally?

KALISTA

No. But it's bad.

HANK

How'd it happen?

KALISTA

Putting the shotgun away. He thought the safety was on, but it wasn't.

CHUCK

Jesus.

HANK

There's a lot of shot in a 12 gauge.

KALISTA

They want the doctor.

(They look at Gigi.)

GIGI *(toasting with the "special")*

To your health!

KALISTA

They say he's bleeding.

GIGI

To medical science! To healing professionals generally: nurses, dentists, chiropractors and podiatrists!

CHUCK

JESUS!

KALISTA

They *need* the doctor!

GIGI

What'd the doctor be doing in a bar this time a night?

HANK

Oh God...

GIGI

This is no place for the doctor! Doctor belongs at the County Health Center! Doctor belongs in the operating room!

KALISTA *(solemnly)*

Ma'am... Ma'am, listen to me: do you know where we could find a doctor—any doctor?

(Pause.)

GIGI

Why isn't there music? Shouldn't we have music? Whatcha got on the jukebox?

HANK

Gloria?

CHUCK

Why did I move to Montana? Just tell me why I moved to Montana.

HANK

Gigi?

(Gigi staggers to the jukebox. He inserts a coin and pushes buttons at random.)

HANK (CONT)

Did you hear what she said?

KALISTA

Gig?

CHUCK

Try "Greg."

HANK

GREG, did you hear what she said?

GIGI

I heard.

(A pager rings in Gigi's purse.)

HANK

Well?

(The jukebox plays Willie Nelson.)

GIGI

I like this song.

CHUCK

Hell, let 'em bleed!

KALISTA

We can't do that, Chuck.

CHUCK

He's a crackpot loner who thinks everybody's in cahoots against him—except when he needs us. Then if we don't come running we're denying his rights. I say let him bleed.

HANK

You don't even know which one it is. Did Jerry say which one it was?

KALISTA

Nope.

GIGI

This song is one of my favorites—just like this dress.

(Gigi sways to the music. Kalista pulls the jukebox plug out of the wall.)

GIGI (CONT)

Wajuh do that for?

KALISTA

Listen, Ma'am, you been to college, right?

GIGI

UCLA, class of '57.

KALISTA

You know about blood, so you know about bleeding.

GIGI

So what? So what if I know about bleeding? Doesn't every woman know about bleeding?

KALISTA

You know how to stop it.

GIGI

Do you always wear your hair like that?

KALISTA

Don't change the subject.

GIGI

What were we talking about?

KALISTA

Bleeding.

GIGI

I told you: I'm just passing through...

KALISTA

But you know better than anybody here how to help a man that's bleeding, am I right?

GIGI

I guess...

KALISTA

So can you please have a look at this guy?

(Pause.)

HANK

Kalista, you know that pair of jeans I borrowed from your brother? I got 'em in the truck. Let me give 'em back to you.

KALISTA

Yeah. That's a good idea. Give 'em back to me.

(Kalista unlocks the door and Hank exits.)

CHUCK

Oh, yeah, I got something to give back to ya, too.

(Chuck exits.)

GIGI

The community is enriched by the least of its members, Hank says. No man is an isthmus. God, this is... pretentious.

(Gigi lies on the pool table. Kalista makes coffee.)

GIGI (CONT)

Oh, that's delightful. I could sleep here.

KALISTA

Don't sleep. I need you awake.

GIGI

I see constellations above... Lights in the sky spell "Coors Banquet."

(Hank and Chuck return with clothes.)

CHUCK

I shoulda put this in the wash...

KALISTA

It'll do fine. Thanks, guys.

GIGI

You're not suggesting that I put those on?

HANK

Ya don't wanna get blood on your favorite dress, do ya?

GIGI

No...

HANK

Well, then.

GIGI

Men's clothes are distasteful to me.

KALISTA

It's all we got, Ma'am. Hank, why don't you go down to the station an' see how he is?

HANK

Should I tell 'em to stop calling around?

KALISTA

Don't tell 'em anything.

HANK

I'm goin'.

(Hank exits.)

GIGI

Men's clothes grip your ankles like shackles. They wrap your neck with layers and layers of fabric and your waist with leather...

KALISTA

Chuck—Chuck! Are ya with me here?

CHUCK

I'm with ya.

KALISTA

Go to the health center and get the emergency kit. It's on the wall just inside the door. Ya know, the *outer* door.

CHUCK

Waddu I do with it?

KALISTA

Take it to Jerry at the station. Then come back here; I'm gonna need you.

CHUCK

Okay.

KALISTA

So go.

CHUCK

You alright here?

KALISTA

I'm fine. Go!

(Chuck exits.)

GIGI

The garments men wear in Africa are flowing and cool. They hang from the shoulders. Djellabas and kaftans... the Masai wear a shuka they arrange in a hundred different ways, so practical for the Serengeti...

KALISTA

Ma'am, we need to talk.

GIGI

Girl talk? I love girl talk: shopping, the beauty parlor... It's got glamor for me.

KALISTA

That's not quite...

GIGI

I asked my wife if we could be girlfriends and still live together and have girl talk every day. She said "no."

(He reaches for his flask, but Kalista intercepts it.)

KALISTA

Well this is more woman-to-woman. For starters, I don't want you to drink any more. When the coffee's ready you can drink that.

GIGI

Can't a grown woman have a cocktail?

KALISTA

A grown woman doesn't act like a baby.

GIGI

What do you know about babies? I've had five!

KALISTA

Well you know how sometimes a baby wants something he can't have? He whines and complains and hollers that he's *gotta* have that thing. What he doesn't know is that life goes on regardless. He can live without it. He can live alright, especially if he's got no choice.

GIGI

What you describe is the cruelty of the universe. If the world were kind, it would end then and there. You can't have the thing you want, but you can't live without it, so you don't. You die—quickly, painlessly. What's crazy, what's clean crazy about life is that it goes on and on and it takes so much effort to end it.

KALISTA

Somebody's life is gonna end tonight if you don't help him.

GIGI

That's the craziness! Wouldn't it be better if he dies? Wouldn't it be better if he didn't want anything ever again?

KALISTA

It might be, but Cruel Universe wants him to go on living—isn't that what you said?

GIGI

I didn't say I was a party to it. I'm not the universe!

KALISTA

That's funny—most men think otherwise. Here, drink this.

GIGI

Owww. I burned my tongue!

(Kalista looks for milk to add to the coffee but doesn't find any. She adds soda water.)

KALISTA

Here, try it now.

GIGI

I don't want it.

KALISTA

DRINK IT.

GIGI

Better.

KALISTA

Drink it down. That's a good girl. I like your pearls. Are they real?

GIGI

An oyster died for every one of them.

KALISTA

Can I hold them?

(Gigi tries to take them off.)

GIGI

I can never open this thing...

KALISTA

Hold still. They're beautiful.

GIGI

A woman can see beauty in pearls. To an oyster they're a disease.

KALISTA

Stand up. I'll help you with the dress.

GIGI

I don't want to take it off. I'll go like this.

KALISTA

You can't go like that. You're gonna put on Chuck's shirt... and these jeans that Hank borrowed from my brother.

GIGI

What makes you so sure?

KALISTA

You're gonna do it because... that's what the occasion demands and you're gonna rise to the occasion.

GIGI

You couldn't be more wrong.

KALISTA

No, I'm right, 'cause I see you working at it.

GIGI

I'm not working at anything tonight.

KALISTA

Yes you are!

GIGI

Please...

KALISTA

Clothes don't make you a woman, Gloria. Not makeup and pearls neither. What makes you a woman is making the best of a raw deal. Now I don't dispute that you got a raw deal. I feel for you, but you're gonna make the best of it.

GIGI

"Grace under pressure"?

KALISTA

If ya wanna call it that.

GIGI

The phrase isn't mine. It's something Papa said.

KALISTA

It's a good phrase.

GIGI

He was a bastard. He killed my mother with a phone call. He screamed at her on the phone that she was a bad mother because of something I did, something I did in college. She died from shock because of a neuroendocrine tumor on her adrenal gland. When you have a tumor like that it's like a gun going off: a strong emotion can kill you. My father tried to blame me for it, said she died because of what I did. But he's the one. He killed my mother. I hate him. I hate him from the bottom of my soul. (*He begins to weep.*) I'm sorry. I'm so fucking sorry. I have very little grace.

KALISTA

Summon what you have.

GIGI

I'm so ashamed—so ashamed.

KALISTA

Why is that a problem?

GIGI

Being ashamed?

KALISTA

Yeah. Why is that a problem? Isn't everybody ashamed?

GIGI

My shame is special. My shame is diabolical.

KALISTA

You see, that's the man in you: ordinary shame won't do—you gotta have *special* shame.

GIGI

My shame tried to kill me. I begged it not to.

KALISTA

Honey, tonight you're gonna spit in shame's eye.

GIGI

I can't do that.

KALISTA

Stand up.

GIGI

NO!

KALISTA

I said, STAND UP!

(Gigi stands. Kalista pulls off the dress.)

GIGI

Why do I have to do this? Why can't I just stop?

KALISTA

Cruel Universe, remember?

GIGI

Why can't I end it all—here! Tonight!

KALISTA

Think of your family.

GIGI

It's not like I don't know how. I know how.

(Kalista removes a bracelet. She looks at Gigi's wrist.)

KALISTA

That's a nasty scar.

GIGI

Yeah—a bad surgeon did that. God, the incompetence!

KALISTA

Did he do the other one, too?

GIGI

Waddia think?

KALISTA

I'm gonna put your bracelets behind the bar with your pearls.

GIGI

I shoulda done it Papa's way: early on a Sunday morning with his mind completely clear. Took the shotgun to a room with tiled walls, put both barrels in his mouth and pushed the triggers with his toe. Bam! Bam! To the bluebird of happiness! A double dose of high-brass, number 6, taken orally.

KALISTA

Hands up.

(Kalista pulls off Gigi's slip. He stands in his undershirt.)

GIGI

Blew off the whole top of his head—frontal and parietal, clean down to the brainstem.

KALISTA *(folding the slip)*

You've got nice things.

GIGI

He did it on account of me, partly. At least partly on account of me. I killed them both, actually. I killed both my parents. I hate my life. I hate my life.

KALISTA *(handing him Hank's jeans.)*

These are gonna be big on you.

GIGI

I think I'm going to throw up.

(Kalista gets an ice bucket from the bar.)

KALISTA

Throw up; you'll feel better. Throw up now!

(Pause.)

GIGI

I want to, but I can't. I can't even throw up!

KALISTA

Think about a greasy pork chop. Think about Elton John.

GIGI

Some women don't have families.

KALISTA

But you do. You got a family an' you're gonna see to their needs.

GIGI

My family's in BOZEMAN!

KALISTA

Sister, as long as you're wearing pantyhose, your family's RIGHT HERE. Now GET THESE ON!

GIGI

Yeah, what if I'm not a real woman?

KALISTA

You're real enough for us.

GIGI

What if I'm some kind of deviant?

KALISTA

You can't get off the hook that way: we'd keep you if you were a Democrat.

GIGI

I AM a Democrat! I voted for Jimmy Carter—twice!

KALISTA

Twice?

GIGI

Both times—and the primaries!

KALISTA

Jesus, you musta had a screw loose. Get these on...

GIGI

I pity the man you marry.

KALISTA

Yeah, me too.

(Gigi pulls up the greasy trousers and is hit by a wave of nausea. He runs for the toilet and retches. Chuck enters.)

CHUCK

Kalista, the guy shot half his face off! Jerry's wrapped it with shop towels, but if he tightens them the guy howls like a baby and if he lets up, he starts bleeding a river.

(More retching. Chuck registers the situation.)

CHUCK (CONT)

Jerry called the highway patrol and told them to find the doctor. They're gonna send a car.

KALISTA

What's Hank doing?

CHUCK

He's holdin' the towels in place and just staring at the guy's hair. His hair is full of little bits of face—like snowflakes blown into a pine tree. It made me sick to look at it.

(Kalista draws two glasses of water and puts seltzer in them.)

CHUCK (CONT)

How'd ya make out with Gloria?

KALISTA

Hard to say. Let this fizz before you drink it.

CHUCK

Has he been in there long?

KALISTA

No. We gotta get him cleaned up before the troopers come.

CHUCK

Why? Why not let the troopers find him—kill two birds with one stone?

KALISTA

If the troopers find him like this, he's gone. They'll take away his license. Ya wanna live in a town without a doctor?

CHUCK

There'd still be Jana.

KALISTA

She'd leave, too. What's a nurse gonna do without a doctor?

(Chuck takes a sip of seltzer.)

KALISTA (CONT.)

So you gonna help me or not?

CHUCK

The troopers will check his trailer first.

KALISTA

Then they'll come here.

(Gigi emerges more sober and chipper than when he left. Hank's jeans are cinched around his waist with a belt that's too long. The cuffs are rolled up. He still wears his wig.)

GIGI

The change that throwing up makes in your morale is astonishing—and nearly instantaneous. Throwing up is a visit from God!

CHUCK

Doc, you gotta cut the comedy. You gotta see this man right away.

GIGI

Moi?

CHUCK

This man's gonna die if you don't come.

GIGI

A crackpot loner, you said. You said to let him bleed.

CHUCK

Please, doc. I seen his face: it ain't pretty. He's gonna die if you don't come.

GIGI

Tonight is a vacation for me. I've been working very hard. I deserve a break.

CHUCK

Doctor Hemingway, your break is over. That's right: we know who you are. Doc? DOC!

GIGI

WADDIA WANT FROM ME?

CHUCK

GET THIS SHIRT ON!

(Gigi pulls on the shirt.)

KALISTA

Go easy, Charlie.

CHUCK

He can take it! Greg... Greg! Look at me! We need you to be a man.

GIGI

Cowboy, I *am* a man! I'm more of a man than you'll ever be—and I'm going to keep my hair.

CHUCK

So keep it.

KALISTA

He can't go like that.

CHUCK

Why not?

GIGI

Is there something *wrong* with my hair?

KALISTA

You can't go like that.

GIGI

My *coiffure* DOES NOT prevent me from practicing medicine. If anything, I'm better like this. It relaxes me.

CHUCK

Be real, doc. The other barrel's still loaded.

KALISTA

Even if they don't shoot you, the State Health Department won't like it. They'll find out and you'll lose your job.

(A squad car flashes by the window, its siren blaring.)

CHUCK

Holy shit! That was fast.

KALISTA

They musta been close.

GIGI

The police?

CHUCK

They're not looking for night crawlers, Doc. They're looking for you.

(The pager sounds in Gigi's purse.)

GIGI

I've done nothing wrong. For fuck's sake, it was a *vacation*—a night on the town!

CHUCK

Then why did you take your pager?

KALISTA

Give me the wig. I'll keep it safe.

(She tries to remove his wig.)

GIGI

It's pinned.

KALISTA

Holy fuck, how many pins you got here?

GIGI

I like putting them in.

CHUCK

Lemme help.

(They remove the wig together.)

GIGI

It's like a cage, a stainless cage lined with scalpels, just wide enough to keep me standing. It's like being wedged in a downspout and fed through a tube. It's like breathing with one lung. Where are my shoes? My shoes are somewhere...

(Chuck leans against the pool table and pulls off his rubber boots.)

CHUCK

These are twelves. You can get into 'em sure.

GIGI

I can't wear those. Please don't ask me to.

KALISTA

Ya gotta wear something! There's a foot of slush outside.

GIGI

Oh, shit.

(Gigi pulls on the boots dwindling as he does so into unprepossessing maleness.)

KALISTA

Look at me.

(Kalista uses a bar towel to remove the rest of his makeup.)

GIGI

Had you fooled, didn't I? I'm a man. But sometimes the other... to go there is ecstasy! I feel composed. You think I'm normal now, but I'm not. I'm not composed. I'm not... reconciled.

(The squad car jerks to a stop outside, its lights flashing.)

CHUCK

Hurry, Kalista.

KALISTA

I'm hurrying.

GIGI

Oww!

(A car door slams.)

CHUCK

This is gonna be bad news.

(Hank enters.)

HANK

He's gotta get up there right now! The guy's gone into shock. He's breathing real slow.

GIGI

Is the trauma kit there?

HANK

It is.

(Gigi takes out the pager and a ring of keys, then hands his purse to Kalista.)

GIGI

I'll need oxygen. Take me by the health center on the way. A head wound, is it?

HANK

It's horrible.

GIGI

Does he know his blood type?

HANK

"A" positive.

GIGI

He's in luck. *Vámonos!*

(Hank and Gigi exit. Chuck and Kalista high-five.)

KALISTA

Oh my, oh my, oh my!

CHUCK

We did it!

KALISTA

Did you see the way he said “*Vámonos!*”?

CHUCK

“*Vámonos!*”

KALISTA

“*Vámonos!*”

CHUCK

He’s quite a guy, Gloria.

KALISTA

Yeah, he’s quite a guy. But his mascara’s too dark. For those eyes you need to go lighter.

CHUCK

“*Vámonos!*”

KALISTA

“*Vámonos!*”

CHUCK

You were great tonight.

KALISTA

So were you.

CHUCK

No, I mean it—really great.

KALISTA

Thank you.

(A pause as Chuck ponders something.)

CHUCK

Can I help you close?

KALISTA

There’s not much to do—just gonna lock the door. I’ll do the rest tomorrow after school. There’s one thing you *could* do for me.

What?
CHUCK

Pay up.
KALISTA

Hey, you were gonna start a tab for Gloria. You were gonna carry Gloria!
CHUCK

That was different.
KALISTA

How was it different?
CHUCK (*reaching for his wallet*)

Six seventy-five.
KALISTA

How was that different?
CHUCK

Gloria's my gynecologist.
KALISTA

(*He hands her a ten.*)

No change.
CHUCK

Thank you! It'll buy me lunch in Billings tomorrow. Tips were good tonight.
KALISTA

Well.... Good night.
CHUCK

What about your shoes?
KALISTA

I got moccasins in the truck.
CHUCK

KALISTA

Good night then. Thanks for what you did.

CHUCK

I'm gonna look in at the station on my way home.

KALISTA

You do that.

(Chuck turns at the door.)

CHUCK

Kalista...

KALISTA

WHAT?

CHUCK

You could leave this place. You could hang up your apron and just go.

KALISTA

Where could I go?

CHUCK

Someplace real. Where people deserve you. Fort Lauderdale!

KALISTA

But who would tend bar?

(There's a furious banging on the door. Chuck opens it. Meecher enters, out of breath, his jacket covered with blood.)

MEECHER

I WANT GLORIA! I WANT GLORIA RIGHT AWAY!

KALISTA

She's not here.

MEECHER

You wouldn't be lying to me, would ya? 'Cause I know you was covering up for her before.

KALISTA

I'm not lying. She's not here.

MEECHER

THEN WHERE'S SHE AT? I gotta talk to her.

CHUCK

What about?

MEECHER

There's been an accident at the station, an accident with a shotgun.

KALISTA

We know. They called.

MEECHER

I ran all the way...

CHUCK

You didn't have to. They called.

MEECHER

She could help. She knows about shotguns. Maybe she knows about bleeding.

CHUCK

She's not here.

MEECHER

We'd sure be grateful, Marty and me. I'm sorry 'bout what I said. He's lost a lot a blood, Marty has.

KALISTA

Gloria left.

MEECHER

She at the motel?

KALISTA

She just drove off. I think she left town.

MEECHER

Aw, shit! Shit, shit, shit!

CHUCK

The doctor's at the station now. Hank found him.

MEECHER

So the doctor's there?

CHUCK

Yup. The trooper drove him up.

MEECHER

It's horrible. You don't know how horrible it is till ya see it.

KALISTA

How's he doin'?

MEECHER

He's lost an eye already, almost for sure.

KALISTA

You better sit down. You look awful.

(Meecher sits.)

MEECHER

Thanks. I haven't eaten anything...

(Kalista slides a bag of chips down the bar. Meecher tears it open greedily.)

KALISTA (CONT)

You take care, Charlie.

CHUCK

You gonna be alright?

KALISTA

I'll be fine.

CHUCK

I mean with...?

KALISTA

I'll be FINE.

CHUCK

Okay, then...

KALISTA

Close both doors, will ya? It's getting cold again.

(Chuck exits.)

MEECHER *(his mouth full)*

Who's Hank?

KALISTA

He was here. You talked to him.

MEECHER

The guy who just left?

KALISTA

No, the other guy.

MEECHER

I don't remember the other guy.

KALISTA

You saw the cop car?

MEECHER

Yeah.

KALISTA

That was them.

MEECHER

So Hank found the doctor?

KALISTA

Yup.

MEECHER

Where was he?

KALISTA

He was walking his dog.

MEECHER

In this crap?

KALISTA

I guess the dog wanted out.

(Pause)

KALISTA (CONT)

You going back to the station?

MEECHER

Soon as I catch my breath. He's lost an eye for sure.

KALISTA

Sparagmos: the tearing of the body.

MEECHER

Huh?

KALISTA

At the end of a Greek tragedy when somebody's torn apart by beasts or gods, or by wild people, that's called *sparagmos*. They had a word for it. I learned it in my theatre class.

(Kalista looks for something else she can give him.)

MEECHER

What's the word?

KALISTA

Sparagmos.

MEECHER

Sparagmos.

(She opens a can of tomato juice and pours it into a glass. Meecher takes a sip and makes a face.)

KALISTA

Drink it. It's got food value.

(Meecher drinks.)

KALISTA (CONT)

How'd it happen?

MEECHER

I was holding the bag open, see? 'Cause we made a deal with Marty for the gun and the bag. So I'm holding the bag open and Marty... Marty pushes the gun into the bag, stock first. He grabs the barrels like this and... Miss? Would you mind looking me in the eye?

(She looks him in the eye.)

MEECHER (CONT)

Not yet! I gotta be ready. I don't usually let people look me in the eye 'cause they look away when they do. But if I'm gonna say this, then I want ya to.

KALISTA

I'll look when you say "go."

MEECHER

Okay. An' would ya look till I say "stop"?

KALISTA

It's not gonna be half an hour, is it? I got school tomorrow.

MEECHER

No, just fer a minute, I promise. Just don't be the first to look away.

KALISTA

How about I warn you if I'm gonna look away so you can look away first?

MEECHER

Okay, that's fair.

KALISTA

You ready?

MEECHER

Just a sec.

(Meecher takes a deep breath.)

MEECHER (CONT)

“Go.”

(She looks him in the eye.)

MEECHER

So... Where was I? He's got the gun by the barrels. And it musta caught on something... inside the bag. I don't know what. And to free it... Marty, he...

KALISTA

What?

MEECHER

Mother of all mercies! I need to touch yer heart!

KALISTA

Touch my heart?

MEECHER

It's not what yer thinking. It's the Sanctified heart of Mary, the Immaculate Heart that consoleth the faithful, especially at the hour of death. 'Cause I fear me the hour of death is come. I fear me a living, natural man will stop living tonight. So Ma'am, I need to touch your heart in prayer.

KALISTA

Really?

MEECHER

Just for a second. Just the tips of my fingers. I ask it as a favor.

KALISTA

I'm not immaculate. You know that, don't ya?

MEECHER

Doesn't matter.

KALISTA

So touch.

(He takes a deep breath and genuflects. He touches her heart.)

MEECHER

Marty, he grabs the barrels, and to free it, he gives a little tug. Just a little tug toward him. I feel the recoil in the bag. An' I look up. An' it's horrible. I never seen what's under yer face—like his face was inside out. I seen... What's that Greek word again?

KALISTA

Sparagmos.

MEECHER

Yeah. I seen *sparagmos*. *Sparagmos* like you're all alone and you lie in bed in the morning and there's fear before you even get up. *Sparagmos* 'cause you don't know what the day has in store for you, ya know? 'Cause you're not sure how life turns out—ya know?

KALISTA

I know.

MEECHER

Yeah. I guess you do.

(Pause)

MEECHER (CONT)

You can look away now.

(She looks away.)

MEECHER

Marty didn't know *sparagmos* was coming. But we had to fill the tank. We *had* to.

KALISTA

You finished with my heart?

MEECHER

Yeah. Thank you for that.

(He removes his hand and covers his eyes with it.)

MEECHER (CONT)

We had to fill it or we'd never get home.

(Pause)

KALISTA
You want to drink something else?

MEECHER
On the house?

KALISTA
Sorry Bob, no can do.

MEECHER
I thought...

KALISTA
I know, but this is a business, after all.

MEECHER
Okay. Gimme a Bud.

(Meecher lays a dollar bill on the bar.)

MEECHER (CONT)
Keep the change.

KALISTA
Thanks.

(Kalista draws the beer.)

MEECHER
I thought the bar was closed.

KALISTA
It can stay open a while longer. It's a clean, well-lighted place, kinda. It's well-lit.

(Meecher takes a swig and assumes the pose he had at the beginning of the play.)

MEECHER
This is a terrible thing that's happened. Terrible. Ya wonder why God lets things happen like this. Marty 'n' me, we're not corporations. We're not legal fictions. God oughta respect that, don't ya think?

KALISTA
You'd think so. Yeah.

MEECHER

The way I see it, a living, natural man's got inalienable rights and among these are life, liberty and *the pursuit* of happiness. And a beer every now and then. And the help and co-operation of yer neighbors—I mean when you *need* help. 'Cause this is a small town.

Ain't got but one doctor to heal the sick.

Ain't got but two bars.

Ain't got but one gas station.

And it's a buck fifty a gallon, cash only.

KALISTA

Cash only is a good policy.

MEECHER

But we had to fill the tank.

We had to fill up.

We had to fill up or we'd never get home.

End of play



