

The F&L at 1330

by

Ken Green

Contact:
Ken Green
kcgreen60@gmail.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CARLA, late 30s, bar owner

BERNARDO, 40s, bar owner

ELENA, 20, student, daughter of CARLA

JIMBO, late 30s, used car salesperson, friend of CARLA and BERNARDO

MULTIPLE ROLES

HIPSTER 1 & 2

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1 & 2

DEVELOPER 1 & 2

SETTINGS

Interior of the F&L, a bar on the Near North Side of Chicago.

Exterior of the F&L

PRODUCTION NOTES

"The F&L at 1330" takes place in the summer of 2010 over the course of several weeks. The setting is a dive bar on the Near North Side of Chicago at a time when gentrification is occurring rapidly - new condos, new stores and restaurants, new residents.

Because gentrification is at the core of the play, the sounds of the neighborhood are important. Car horns, occasional shouting by partiers walking by on a Saturday night (as they head to other new, swanky restaurants, etc.)... and the near constant sounds of construction as new high-rises are going up all around the bar. The construction sounds should be loud enough for the audience to hear, but not so much as to overwhelm the actors' lines. You'll know the right balance when you hear it.

Because the F&L is a "dive bar" (I actually hate that term. If you want to know why, read the play or ask me), it's filled with stuff that you find in such a place - old trophies from softball teams gone by, weird crap that someone found in an alley and thought was cool (like, say, a headless mannequin torso), photos of past customers and employees who have either moved on or "moved on." It's junk, but it's endearing junk.

Basically, the F&L is that bar you always walk past but never really want to go into.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

SETTING: Fernando and Lalo's, a bar on the North Side of Chicago at 1330 N. Larrabee St. It is an old bar with nothing fancy about it. Considered by some to be a dive, but not to the regulars and the owners who simply call it THEIR bar. The walls and the bar itself are comprised of old, stained wood. There are beer signs on the walls, and a few of the seats of bar stools are ripped. There is a jukebox in one corner. It sometimes works. There is a jar in the shape of a bear on the bar for tips. The jar is empty.

SCENE: May, 2010. It is noon on a Friday. CARLA, the bartender, and JIMBO, a customer, sit at one end of the bar. JIMBO is reading the newspaper. The bartender is moving back and forth from a storage room to the bar section, carrying cases of beer to stock in the coolers, checking notes in a ledger book, then back to stocking beer. While this is going on, the sounds of construction - drilling, riveting, digging, the engines of heavy machinery - can be heard as new high-rise buildings are being erected all around them. The noise is staccato. Stopping and starting and sometimes affecting their conversation. They occasionally have to shout above the din.

CARLA

(To JIMBO) 'Nother beer? (No response) Jimbo... (Nothing) Yo, Jimbo!

JIMBO

(Startled) The fuck are you yelling for?

CARLA

You want another beer or no?

JIMBO

A what?

CARLA

Beer, Jimbo! You want another beer?

JIMBO

What you think, Carla? You see my bottle is empty.

CARLA

I'm working, alright? Ain't got time to look at your damn bottle every five minutes.

JIMBO

Your job IS looking at my damn bottle every five minutes. This a bar, ain't it?

CARLA

You want the beer or not, Jimbo?

JIMBO

Yeah, goddamnit.

CARLA hands JIMBO a beer, snatches money off the bar, then goes back to refilling beer cooler.

JIMBO (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm one of your best customers, don't forget that.

CARLA

From noon to five on Fridays, you're pretty much my only

JIMBO

You like it if I stop coming in here?

CARLA

Gimmie a chance to find out.

The construction noises stop.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(To no one) Thank God. (To JIMBO) Why're you always here on Fridays anyway? Used car business doing that good?

JIMBO

This is my Friday place, you know that. Been my Friday place for years. I tell Petey to watch the lot, come over here and start the weekend right. Boss privileges. And what I look like sitting in one of them fancy-ass sports bars trying to watch one of fifty-two TVs? I'm beer and a shot. Besides, it ain't that busy on the lot on Fridays. People ain't buying cars like they used to. Economy or some shit.

CARLA

Not even used cars, huh?

JIMBO

My lot's full. (Pause, then goes into salesperson mode) Hey, I got this really nice Chevy...

CARLA

(Exasperated) I take the el, alright. Sometimes I walk, even in the summer. I LIKE walking. Don't need a car.

JIMBO

Not now, but things change. What if you move?

CARLA

Been here for more than thirty years, Jimbo. I ain't moving.

JIMBO

Yeah, but all that walking? You ain't getting younger.

CARLA

Keep talking and you ain't gon' get no older.

JIMBO

Tell you what, test drive it for a whole week. I only do for real good friends.

CARLA

We ain't real good friends.

JIMBO

Bullshit, woman. We known each other since eighth grade. Me, you, Bernardo. School, hanging out, getting high, even fighting... (Thinking) Had dinner at your folks' house so many times I can't count.

CARLA

Thirty-seven.

JIMBO

(Shocked) For real?

CARLA

Probably. Whatever, we ain't real good friends.

JIMBO

(Suddenly) I took you out on a date!

CARLA

(Stops suddenly) What? When? (Scoff) We ain't never been out on no date.

JIMBO

Hell yeah, we did.

CARLA

You're crazy.

JIMBO

Bullshit. Saw that movie about the dude with the scissors. The scissor man.

CARLA

Scissor man? (Thinking) "Edward Scissorhands"?

JIMBO

Naw, the other one.

CARLA

How many movies you think there are about men with scissors?

JIMBO

C'mon. The guy with the scissors for hands.

CARLA

THAT'S "Edward Scissorhands," fool. And that wasn't a date. Bernardo was there. It was, like, a group thing.

JIMBO

Your brother said I couldn't take you out unless he went too. To protect you or some garbage. I had to pay his way, too.

CARLA

That was a date? (Thinking) Why didn't you say something?

JIMBO

In my head, I thought you knew. I wasn't "Jimbo" back then. I wasn't sure about... stuff.

CARLA

You asked me out, you were sure about something. You never thought about asking me out again?

JIMBO

Couldn't afford to keep paying for you, me AND Bernardo.

CARLA

Bernardo played you, Jimbo.

JIMBO

Why the fuck would he do that?

CARLA

To get a free ticket to the movie. (Pause) He was a little bit protective. Any guy came to the house looking for me, he'd greet 'em at the door, give 'em the stink eye, third degree 'em. Playing big brother. (Thinking) He could be sweet when he wanted to be but he always had to act like he was the big man.

JIMBO

Whatever. After that, you dated Marco... Juan... Anthony

CARLA

Billy...

JIMBO

...then Roberto... (long awkward pause) Had a baby girl and, well... other things.

CARLA

Well, it wouldn't have worked out with us anyway.

JIMBO

Why not?

CARLA

You too bossy. (Laughs)

JIMBO

I'M bossy? You dated Ralph, the fuckin' Marine who told you be home for his phone call every night at ten. I'M bossy?

CARLA

I'm just fucking with you, Jimbo. You were a very good-looking, polite kid back then.

JIMBO

Damn straight I was. (Pause, then realization) Wait, back then? What about...

CARLA

Besides, other girls were chasing you. You didn't need me.

JIMBO

(Proudly) I guess you right. I WAS a damn catch, wasn't I?

CARLA

(To no one in particular) Crap, what did I start?...

JIMBO

I did alright. 'Til the neighborhood changed. Them Polish chicks that moved in wasn't ready for dating a Mexican.

CARLA

They wasn't ready for any of us it seems. And you did alright. There were one or two...

JIMBO

One or two. Guess even they couldn't resist... the Jimbo Look. (Gives what she thinks is a seductive look)

CARLA

(Sarcastic) Now how'd I dodge that bullet?

JIMBO

Your buttin'-in brother, that's how. Where's he at anyway?

CARLA

Who knows? Rambling around the neighborhood somewhere.

*The sounds of construction start
again, not as loud as before,
but...*

JIMBO (CONT'D)

Damn, they ever take a break?

CARLA

Goes on all day long.

JIMBO

How can you stand that shit?

CARLA

(Shouting over noise) What?

JIMBO

(Raising voice) I said "How can you stand that noise all day long?"

CARLA

(Shouting) What's long?

JIMBO

I said...

Most of the noise suddenly stops.

JIMBO (CONT'D)

...ALL DAY LONG! (Pause) Damn, how do you deal with that?

CARLA

Can't do shit about it, so...

JIMBO

(Looks out the window) How many them things they putting up?

CARLA

Two over on Dayton and another one on Freemont. Hardwood this, marble that...

JIMBO

Bet the rent is high as hell...How much you think?

CARLA

(A little exasperated) Jimbo, I don't know.

JIMBO

I'mma look it up

Takes out smartphone.

JIMBO (CONT'D)

What's that one over there called?

CARLA

How the hell I know? They take two streets, smash 'em together and you got the name of the building.

JIMBO

You should be taking an interest in what's going on in your neighborhood.

CARLA

Whatever, Mr. Rogers, this ain't my 'hood no more. I don't recognize half the shit around here. Used to be able to walk around this place blindfolded.

JIMBO

Or blind drunk. (Pause, then regret) Sorry Carla. I didn't mean nothing by that. I was just...

CARLA

I did rehab, Jimbo. I talked about being fucked up to strangers every day for months. I can handle it.

JIMBO

(Looking at phone) Ah-ha, found it.

Begins reading website.

JIMBO (CONT'D)

"FreDa is a next evolution of city living..."

CARLA

Freda? Who the fuck is Freda?

JIMBO

Capital F-re, capital D-a. (Reads more) Ah. It's between Fremont Street and Dayton Street. Fre. Da.

CARLA

Yeah, yeah, I get it. A building named Freda.

JIMBO

(Reading the ad copy) "FreDa is the next evolution in city living, an urban oasis that has become one of Lincoln Park's prime addresses..."

CARLA

(Confused) Lincoln Park? Since when is this Lincoln Park? Shit's been Cabrini-Green forever, even after they tore the projects down. But now it's "Lincoln Park"... (shakes head)

JIMBO

Well, Cabrini-Green ain't got no, whaddya call, pizzaz, no "ooh la la." People wanna live in Lincoln Park, so... (Continues reading) "With commanding views of the North Chicago skyline, FreDa is mere steps away from Lincoln Park's best shopping and dining options... blah blah blah... a rooftop pool... blasé blasé blasé... hardwood floors... marble countertops... fitness center... WiFi..."

CARLA

So how much?

JIMBO

One bedroom... three and a half g's.

CARLA

Fuck outta here. To RENT? Every month?

JIMBO

My old man paid about eight hundred a month for our three-bedroom over on Noble. He'd lose his shit if he saw this.

CARLA

Lotta money. Explains a lot.

JIMBO

Whaddya mean?

CARLA

Why so many folks interested this place.

JIMBO

(Skeptical) Somebody wants THIS place? The F and L? To buy? This dump?

CARLA

(Offended) You can get the hell out, you know.

JIMBO

Sorry, Carla, but... (Takes a look around the room) c'mon.

CARLA

We ain't had a lot of money to put into the place. Mostly 'cause people don't tip.

*CARLA shakes "tip bear" at JIMBO
who waves it off.*

But lotta folks still after this "dump." We got people coming in every week looking to buy this place. Don't know if they wanna it for a bar or somewhere to put a five hundred-story condo. They mostly come in when Bernardo's here. But they want this place fierce.

JIMBO

Bernardo? Your brother thinking about selling the place?

CARLA

(Stops what she's doing to straighten JIMBO out) First, he can't sell nothing unless I say so. My name's on the deed... (Pause) too. Get that straight. This bar been in our family for years. Decades even. Our old man Fernando and Uncle Lalo left the bar to me... and, you know, Bernardo too. So, if anybody's gonna sell it...

JIMBO

Alright, damn, chill out.

CARLA

And we're doing OK business. Not great. But OK. And them folks that's gonna be living in them condos gonna need drink somewhere, so why not here?

JIMBO

(Scoffs) You think they're coming here? To the F and L? Look, I know them hip folks like dive bars...

CARLA

Hey, this ain't no dive bar.

JIMBO

Whatever. But even by dive bar standards, this place is...

CARLA

Watch it, Jimbo.

JIMBO

Things are changing, Carla, you gotta up your game. (Pause)
That new bar over on Clybourn? Big-screen TVs. ALL the games.
DJ on the weekends. Big-ass food menu.

CARLA

Big deal. (In an "ooh la la" voice) "Oh, look we got
appetizers... jalapeño poppers and shit... Here you go,
here's a goddamn hamburger with a goddamn fried egg on top...
And a million beers that all cost an arm and a leg."

JIMBO

(Sarcasm) Yeah, who needs that when you got... (counts) three
kinds of beer. Speaking of which...

Shakes her beer bottle.

CARLA

Well... (searching for reasons) this is a REAL bar. People
come to drink and talk shit. Maybe watch a game, listen to
the jukebox.

JIMBO

I seen some of the regulars from here checking those joints
out. (Pause) And you saw what happened to the diner, right?

CARLA

What diner?

JIMBO

Tick Tock Diner over on Elston. Been there for decades.
Chicago institution and shit. Neighborhood changed and them
new folks didn't give a damn about some "institution." They
wanted "brunch." Fancy waffles. Eggs Florentine or Benedict.
(Pause) Quail eggs! Fuckin' eggs from a quail! Not damn
corned beef hash, sunny sides, white toast and black coffee.
Business dried up and they sold it for chump change. Not even
close to the first offer.

CARLA

How you know how much it sold for?

JIMBO

I know things. (Pause) 'Course you could do like Calo if it
comes to it.

CARLA

Calo?

JIMBO

Italian joint over on Wells? Business not good. Poof.

CARLA

What's "poof"?

JIMBO

I mean, I ain't got proof but, you know, business tired of losing money...

*Imitates striking a match and
throwing it.*

"Oh no, the restaurant just mysteriously burst into flames. Guess I gotta collect that insurance money." Poof.

CARLA

There's not gonna be any "poof" around here, OK?

JIMBO

Just saying. If you're gonna get rid of this bar, do it now.

CARLA

We ain't selling, and we ain't going to...

*The door suddenly opens and
CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1 and 2 come
in.*

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(To CARLA) 'Scuse me, you the owner?

CARLA

Yeah. I mean, one of 'em. What's up?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

We're working on the site down the street...

JIMBO

Damn, which one? There's about four of 'em.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

FreDa.

JIMBO

Ah. Y'all working on FreDa.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

You know about it?

JIMBO

Oh, yeah, we know ALL about it. Say listen, why y'all out here fucking up the neighborhood...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Hey, we just work there. It's a job, you know...

CARLA

Yeah, we know, but still... never mind.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

'Sides, I grew up around here. Went to Immaculate Conception.

JIMBO

(Seductively) Catholic school girl, huh...Well, if you want a tour around the old neighborhood, I got some time...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

(Pipes in) I used to live just north of here, over on...

JIMBO

(Dismissively) Yeah, that's cool. (Back to CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1) So, what's a good time to...

CARLA

(Interrupting) I'm guessing you came in here for a reason.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(Tearing herself from JIMBO'S gaze) Huh... Oh, just letting you know we're shutting the water off for a while.

CARLA

(Upset) What? Why?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

Gotta connect the water main to the building. Sorry.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

You shoulda got a notice.

CARLA

I didn't get shit. (Thinks) Fuck, unless Bernardo forgot to... Shit. (To CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2) Well, for how long?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

Thirty minutes. Or, like, an hour. But probably thirty minutes. Or a little longer. Maybe two hours

CARLA

Come on! I'm a bar! I gotta wash glasses, people gotta use the bathroom.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

You shoulda got the notice. (Pause) Sorry, we gotta get back.

JIMBO

Come on back. Four. Five o'clock. I'll be here.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(Thinking) Maybe...

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS exit.

CARLA

Shit. How the fuck I'm supposed to run a business like this?

JIMBO

Maybe that's the plan. You said it yourself, people are interested in this place. (Pause) Tick Tock, Tick Tock...

CARLA

I don't wanna hear your conspiracies.

*Construction noises start again,
startling them both.*

JIMBO

Break time's over, I guess. Can I get that beer now?

CARLA

(Raising voice) What?

JIMBO

(Raising voice) Beer. Now?

She shakes the bear-shaped jar that holds tips at JIMBO, who reluctantly pulls money out and puts it in the jar.

END OF SCENE