

# Revival

by Carla Neuss

“In revival, time does not exist”  
-Duncan Campbell

**Characters:***Crispin: late twenties**Fred: late fifties**Tyler: mid-twenties**Jo: early-twenties**Mansfield/Robert/Jo's Men: different ages, all above forty, should be double cast as the same actor**Scene 1: A bar. A bartender, Crispin behind the bar. Tyler sits on a barstool. The lights come up. Tyler spins on the barstool, facing the audience. A special on him, perhaps.***TYLER**

I am a knight errant, wandering on my God-given quest, sword and shield at my side. My horse and I enter a misty wood, so thick with fog that I cannot see my mail-clad hand in front of my helmeted face. Then, the hair on the back of my neck suddenly bristles...hot, sticky air surrounds me and I turn around to see, a giant red dragon. It knocks me from my horse and eats my steed, tearing it limb from limb. I take this moment to gird myself, loins and all and plunge my weapon into the heart of the fire-breathing beast. Blood courses all around me and I pull myself out, with much effort, from under the titanic corpse. Too exhausted to walk, I crawl, propelled only by thirst until I see a clear spring bubbling out of the leaves and foliage. Just as I am about to drink and sate my thirst, golden light surrounds me and an angel appears with a silver chalice filled to the brim. She holds the cup up to my lips and says, "Drink, fair knight, and regain your strength for thou hast fought well". (to the bartender) Crispin, make me that drink.

*Wordlessly, Crispin starts to make a drink...it's complicated, precise, silence such that no one dares to break the spell of quiet.**Door opens noisily. Fred enters. His mere presence is noisy. He sits right next to Tyler.***FRED**

Sir, when you have a minute.

*Crispin keeps working, in silence. Tyler watches enthralled. Finally Crispin sets a mysteriously pink fizzy drink in front of Tyler. He takes out a small stirring straw, captures some of the liquid and tastes it.***TYLER (reverently)**

It's beautiful.

**CRISPIN**

Let me know what you think.

*(to Fred)*

How can I help you?

FRED

Yes. I think I would like a vodka martini, with four olives please.

CRISPIN

I'm sorry but we don't serve vodka.

FRED

You don't serve vodka?

CRISPIN

No.

FRED

Any particular reason?

CRISPIN

Why would you serve a spirit that has absolutely no flavor?

TYLER (to Fred)

This your first time?

FRED

I'm sorry?

TYLER

Your first time. Here.

FRED

Yes.

TYLER

There's a few rules you should know.

FRED

Rules?

TYLER

Rule 1: no vodka will ever be served at the bar

Rule 2: men must wear jackets, with or without ties. (looks at Fred's jacket) Very good.

Rule 3: men may not approach women; only women may take the initiative in talking to men.

And Rule 4: there are no drink requests permitted, only stories or inclinations should be presented to the bartender for him to utilize or ignore at his discretion.

FRED

Inclinations.

TYLER

Say you're in a whiskey mood. Don't say, "Crispin, I'll have a whiskey sour", say, "Crispin, I want something that will blow my mind with rye whiskey".

FRED

But what if I want a whiskey sour.

TYLER

Then you can find yourself a different bar.  
You ready to order now?

FRED

What did you have?

TYLER

It doesn't have a name yet. It's brand new. Here, taste it.

*Fred tries it.*

FRED

It tastes like a mystical encounter with the divine.

TYLER

Exactly.

CRISPIN (*who has just finished writing down the recipe in a little journal*)

We'll call it The Knight Errant.

FRED

I'll have one Knight Errant, please.

Scene 2:

*Crispin is at the bar. Tyler enters, hangs up his coat.*

CRISPIN

I found it.

TYLER

Found—no. You didn't.

CRISPIN

Yes. Just ordered it.

TYLER  
The Crème Yvette?

CRISPIN  
The Crème Yvette.

TYLER  
Where? How? How much was it?

CRISPIN  
A ninety-year-old woman died. She had an unopened bottle. Heard about it through a friend, her son knew how much it was worth. It should arrive in the next three weeks.

TYLER  
That's amazing. I can't believe it.

CRISPIN  
I know.

TYLER  
What will you do with it?

CRISPIN  
I don't know. I don't know.  
Tell me a story, I need to get my mind off of it.

TYLER  
I am the cabin boy on Cortes' ship sailing to the new world. We see the jungle green coast floating on the horizon. Cortes stares at it, stroking his beard. When we drop anchor, I put Cortes into his golden armor. We row ashore, Cortes standing at the helm, glinting in the sun like a beacon. We step on land, kissing the sand. We look up. Twelve native warriors have emerged from the jungle. We see the gold jewelry in their ears, chins, noses. Cortes licks his lips. The warriors pass us a gourd of ceremonial drink to welcome us. As we drink, we know their lives will soon be changed. Forever. As we drink, the sea is colored blood red by the setting sun. What am I drinking?

*As Crispin starts concocting, Fred bounces in.*

TYLER  
Fred!

CRISPIN  
Fred.

FRED

Crispin, Crispin, I am ready for something I have never before experienced involving chartreuse.

CRISPIN

I'm—

FRED

Take your time, take your time.

*(cont to Tyler)*

I've been researching. See, chartreuse the color was named from a liqueur of that hue made by French monks for medicinal use. It's a secret recipe of herbs, roots, flowers...and it glows a bright green. Imagine it, all these men of God sitting around in their brown robes trying to come up with the perfect drink, a tincture with the power to heal. Amazing, when you think about it.

TYLER

Sure is.

CRISPIN *(to Tyler)*

Here you go.

*(to Fred)*

Chartreuse, you said?

FRED

Yes. This is going to be a first for me.

*Crispin starts making the drink*

CRISPIN *(while he mixes the drink)*

Pretty much all liquors were made by monks, not just chartreuse but you got your St. Germain, that's elderflower liquor, Christian Brothers, Amaretto, Fra Angelico, angostura bitters. When the monasteries started shutting down, the priests turned to these old recipes and started producing on a large scale. Some of the recipes are written on a scrap of paper 400 years old and locked up in a bank vault. Or some of them only one person living has memorized in his head. Those recipes are worth their weight in gold. And much more.

FRED

How'd you end up tending bar?

CRISPIN

I wanted to create something that no one else had. Can't paint or write songs, but I can make drinks. And it just so happens that most people need a drink more often than they need a painting or a song.

TYLER  
Very true.

FRED  
Amen.

*Beat. The door opens. A woman in a short cocktail dress enters with a man's suit jacket draped over her. She walks up to the bar.*

JO  
Can I get a vodka cran please.

CRISPIN  
I'm sorry, but we don't carry vodka.

JO  
What?

FRED  
See it has no flav—*(he is silenced by stares/glares from TYLER)*

CRISPIN *(to Jo)*  
I'm sorry.

JO  
Well then. Can I at least smoke in here?

CRISPIN  
Sure.

*He wipes off a table and sets out an ashtray. He gives her a light.*

JO  
Thanks.

*He returns to the bar.*

TYLER *(to Crispin)*  
Could you refresh us on the consequences of breaking the rules?

CRISPIN  
I will personally throw you out.

FRED  
And how is one supposed to learn the rules?

CRISPIN

Another patron has to communicate them to you.

FRED

But men cannot initiate conversation with women.

TYLER

Rule 3.

CRISPIN

No.

FRED

I see a serious design flaw in this codice of particular rules. So unless she comes up to us and asks us the rules, we have no way of communicating them to her.

CRISPIN

Yup, that's pretty much it.

*The woman's cellphone rings. They all look. She looks at it. Silences it. She takes a final slow drag off her cigarette. Then she leaves. They all unconsciously exhale after she leaves. Crispin hands Fred his drink, if he hasn't already.*

FRED

What exactly is the point of the rules anyway, Crispin?

CRISPIN

Eons ago, before Prohibition, the temperance union, before the Puritans and Plymouth Rock, liquor was something to be savored and enjoyed...the flavor, the texture, the color. Like different perfumes but perfumes for the tongue, for the palette...Bars and pubs were places of coming together, of reflection, safety and serenity. Of communication. Tell me a bar you know like that. Tell me a bar you know without sticky floors, smelly bathrooms, horrible come-ons, slurred words, belly shots, one night fucks, shitty music, overwhelming sensory din, none of it calm, none of it peaceful, none of it restful. The rules are in place to keep this kind of bar from becoming that kind of bar. The rules are necessary to restore at least this bar to what it was meant to be. A safe place. A beautiful place. A sacred place.

*Fred finishes his drink.*

FRED

So you'd like your bar to be a church.

CRISPIN

Some people have church, the rest of them have bars.

FRED (*pointing to his chartreuse drink glass*)  
What do you call this?

CRISPIN  
Monk's Reverie.

FRED  
I'll have another.

*Scene 3: Afternoon in the bar. Crispin sits alone. Ave Maria plays on a record next to him. Beautiful multicolored vials of liqueurs sit in front of him on a table. He tastes one. Closes his eyes. After a beat, he swallows. He writes a few notes in his little notebook. He tastes others. Same process. He takes copious notes. The door bangs open. JO enters. She is dressed in a beautiful evening gown.*

CRISPIN  
We're closed.

JO  
The door was open.

CRISPIN  
We open at six.

JO  
Can I just sit and have a smoke then? I have to meet someone in 20 minutes.

CRISPIN  
Fine.

*He gestures to a chair, far from him. She sits, lights up and watches him. He tries to get back to tasting but his concentration has been disrupted.*

JO  
Don't you know you should never drink alone.

CRISPIN  
I'm not drinking.

JO  
Really. Because it looks a little bit like you are.

CRISPIN  
I'm tasting.

JO

That's a useful line. I'll remember that.

*He jots a few more notes. He lifts up a glass filled with purple liquid.*

JO

What's that?

CRISPIN

Crème de violette.

JO

What's it taste like?

*He tastes it. A long beat as he savors it.*

CRISPIN

Springtime. Pollen. Unfulfilled promises. Nostalgia. Wistfulness. Dandelion greens. Old women's perfume. First love. And first loss.

*Beat.*

CRISPIN

It'll go well with gin, vermouth, sweet or dry, elderflower, cointreau and tonic.

*He writes all of this down.*

JO

Can I try it.

*CRISPIN looks at her. Then he gets up and hands her the glass. She bolts it all down. Then ponders.*

JO

You forgot baby's skin, provence in the summer, cool evenings, hammocks, satin sheets and gifts wrapped in tissue paper.

*She hands him back the glass. He takes it and writes her words down in his notebook.*

JO

So is there any chance of me getting a real drink while I'm here?

CRISPIN

Like I said, we don't open til six.

JO

Guess I'll have to come back later then. Thanks for the taste.

*She leaves. He goes back to tasting.*

*Scene 4: Later that night. Crispin wipes down the bar expectantly. Looks at the clock. It chimes. Fred bounds in the door.*

FRED

I am imagining something delicious featuring crème de violette, Crispin, my man.

CRISPIN

Say no more, I have just the thing.

*He quickly makes a drink.*

CRISPIN

You're the first to try it. New recipe.

FRED

Just look at the color. The swirl of liquids.

*He smells it.*

FRED

Smells like...that region. In the south of France. All the lavender.

CRISPIN

Provence.

FRED

Yes.

CRISPIN

Try it.

Fred sips it.

FRED

Perfect.

*Beat.*

CRISPIN

You're becoming more regular than my regular.

FRED  
Where is Tyler?

CRISPIN  
Well if he doesn't show, you'll have to become my storyteller.

FRED  
Me? No, no. I can't tell stories. I just give my inclinations, I trust you to do the rest.

CRISPIN  
You should try a story sometime.

FRED  
I would never want to limit your creative genius with a paltry story on my part.

CRISPIN  
But that is the beauty of the story. It lets you become a coauthor, a partner in creativity. You create a vision, a dream of a taste in your mind. Then I am free to create, to satisfy or disappoint.

FRED  
So I am a woman. And you are a man.

CRISPIN  
Never mind.

*Beat.*

FRED  
Alright. I'll try it. But just for you. I'm not a natural storyteller.

CRISPIN  
Everyone is a natural storyteller.

FRED (clearing his throat)  
I am...I am...I am a policeman, who just witnessed a little girl get in an accident...she was run over by a car, no, she was trampled by a horse drawn carriage or...wait, she was caught under the wheels of a tram or one of those cable cars before electricity...

CRISPIN  
What era is this?

FRED  
A hundred years ago. Or wait, it's 1912. Yes, 1912. Okay, let me start over. I am the architect of the Titanic. I watched her be built and now I'm on the maiden voyage. I'm steering the ship through ice fields...

CRISPIN

You're the designer or the captain?

FRED

Both. No, the designer, the captain has let me steer the ship for a bit while he takes his...tea. And then we hit something. The ship is going down, people are screaming, the orchestra plays its last song. What drink am I drinking as I watch my dream boat, my life's work and my life, get engulfed by the black water?

CRISPIN (sighs)

Do you mix it yourself or does one of the drowning bartenders make it?

FRED

Hmm. You choose.

*Crispin fills a glass with some scotch and places it in front of Fred.*

FRED

What's that?

CRISPIN

Scotch.

FRED

Scotch.

CRISPIN

You're about to drown right?

FRED

See, I told you I wasn't a storyteller.

CRISPIN

That's because your story wasn't true.

FRED

True? The Titanic didn't sink after all?

CRISPIN

You weren't in it. Stories only work if they have some of you in them.

FRED

Maybe I was in it...metaphorically.

CRISPIN

You'll get it eventually. With more practice.

FRED

More practice. Well, cheers to that.

*He drinks the Scotch. Tyler enters.*

FRED

Tyler! We were worried about you.

TYLER

Worried?

FRED

When your regulars are only two people, you get worried if fifty percent of them don't show up.

CRISPIN

There are other regulars. You two are just the early Sunday evening regulars.

FRED

Never mind then, we're not keeping the bar afloat by our business after all.

TYLER (to Crispin)

Did it come yet?

CRISPIN

Not yet.

FRED

Did what come?

TYLER

The Crème Yvette.

FRED

What's that?

CRISPIN

A liqueur that is nearly impossible to find. Production stopped decades ago. Very rare. I found it.

FRED

What does it taste like?

CRISPIN

I don't know.

So Tyler, what do you have for me today?

TYLER

Uh, what did he have?

CRISPIN

A Scotch.

TYLER

Scotch?

CRISPIN

He told a story.

FRED

It wasn't as...inspiring as yours. But with practice, he says.

CRISPIN

With practice. Let him see a master at work. Tell me your story.

TYLER

Give me a minute. To think.

FRED

See, even the master has to think about it. I didn't get a chance to think.

*A beat. We are worried he won't come up with one. It takes that long.*

TYLER

I am a young painter living in Paris. All the other painters are still painting water lilies and cathedrals but I want to paint the people. It is winter. I am walking along the Seine. I see an old woman selling flowers. I must paint her. I must make people see what I see. I rush home to my garret. I light a kerosene lamp and paint long into the night, only from memory. I stop using my brush and start putting the paint to canvas directly with my palette knife. The colors are dark and rich. I paint only from memory. At three in the morning I stop. I collapse on my cot from exhaustion. I wake with the sunrise. The early morning light shines onto my canvas and I see. A masterpiece. Beautiful, human, brilliant. There has never been anything like it by me. By anyone. I realize I have changed the course of art forever. There is a knock on my door. Somehow, it is the old woman, the one by the river, the one in my masterpiece. She kisses both my cheeks and gives me a brimming cup. Make me the drink she gave me.

*Crispin starts to work.*

FRED (to Tyler)  
What held you up?

TYLER  
Life. The world. Everything that exists outside those doors.

FRED  
Ah.

*Beat.*

FRED  
Crispin, I think I need to follow up the Scotch with something else.

CRISPIN  
Anything in particular?

FRED  
What do you know about St. Germain?

CRISPIN  
It's new. Made from elderflowers in the Swiss Alps that only bloom 3 weeks out of the year. Harvested by bohemians by hand, bicycled down the mountains to the old style stills. Art deco inspired bottle. The flavor encompasses lavender, lychee, passionfruit, citrus but doesn't settle on any of them. Good with champagne, gin, lemon or by itself. Floral, wistful, dreamy...like tulle and pastels and scented handkerchiefs. Anything else you want to know?

FRED  
No. I find too much knowledge can start stepping on the beauty of beautiful things. Something with St. Germain. Go.

*Crispin starts mixing a drink.*

TYLER  
You were worried about me?

FRED  
Hmm? Oh yes. Very. Almost called the police to go looking for you.

TYLER  
What if I never came?

FRED  
I suppose I would have had to keep practicing storytelling on my own. And gotten very drunk off of Scotch.

TYLER

Very drunk. Have there ever been drunk people in this bar? Or are the other regulars just like us? Tasters.

CRISPIN

No one is like you two.

TYLER

But what are they like?

CRISPIN

How should I know? I don't know them. I'm just their bartender.

FRED

Don't minimize yourself, Crispin. You're an artiste.

CRISPIN

And what does that mean exactly?

FRED

You remind us of our senses. You remind me that my miraculous mouth has tastebuds and loves textures and wants to taste color and smell and touch. You remind me of all the places I haven't been, all the sounds I haven't heard, all the lovers I haven't kissed. You open the eyes of soul.

*The door opens. An older man enters in a tuxedo with JO in her evening dress.*

MR. HOPKINS

Just one drink, you'll love this place. I promise.  
Crispin, allow me to introduce the luminous Miss Josephine Ross.

CRISPIN

Hello.

JO

How do you do.

*They sit at the bar, next to Fred.*

MR. HOPKINS

This is unlike any bar you've ever been. Do you know another bar that features a 1935 phonograph? Same one my mother had at home when I was growing up. Crispin here runs a tight ship, there are rules of behavior.

JO

Rules of behavior.

MR. HOPKINS

Rule 1: no vodka.

Rule 2: jackets required for men.

Rule 3—what was rule three? Rule 3. The old man's mind is slipping. It's somewhere in there, I've never ever broken any of the rules. Rule 3...

TYLER

Men may not approach women, only women may take the initiative in talking to men.

MR. HOPKINS

Yes! Thank you. Men may not approach women.

JO

Really.

MR. HOPKINS

And Rule 4, the most important. No requests for drinks. You can tell a story or hint at an inclination.

JO

I see.

MR. HOPKINS

You really have to just see it done, then you'll understand. Crispin, may I proffer you a story?

CRISPIN

I am ready and waiting.

MR. HOPKINS (to JO)

Yes you are.

(to CRISPIN)

A forgotten hero of a lost Greek myth, a young man bold and strapping, tall, handsome embarks on a long journey across the sea. He knows not what he seeks besides his fortune. Along the way, over years, he slays monsters, acquires gold, garners laurels. All know him as the Hero of A Thousand Triumphs. He is so honored, so lauded, he doesn't notice as his beard grows grizzled, his back a little bent, his bones slightly brittle. But he is still strong, still slaying ever-present monsters, still flaunting constantly looming danger. But he doesn't realize that he has no place to lay his head. He anchors his ship one day in the bay of a rocky island. He wants to feel land under his feet. As soon as he sets his feet on dry land, he sees a beautiful maiden, young...no, ageless. She approaches him, the breeze lifting her hair, rippling her dress. She draws near to him, looks him in the eye as she hands him a goblet. He suddenly realizes how thirsty he is, how thirsty he

has always been. He drinks. By the time the goblet leaves his lips, he stands once again tall, once again his hair golden, once again strong. Make me that drink.

*CRISPIN begins making the drink.*

JO  
Make it two.

MR. HOPKINS  
Don't you want to tell your story?

JO  
I think we can both drink yours.

MR. HOPKINS  
Two then, Crispin.

CRISPIN  
Coming right up.

*Beat. Crispin makes the drinks.*

JO (leaning to look at FRED and TYLER)  
So according to these rules, unless I speak to these men first, they are not allowed to speak to me?

MR. HOPKINS  
Exactly.

JO  
Hmm.

*She turns away from them. She turns quickly back to them as if to speak and then abruptly doesn't. She psyches them out a couple of times. Mr. Hopkins laughs.*

MR. HOPKINS  
They won't budge. Crispin runs a very strict establishment.

JO  
And what happens if someone breaks the rules, even inadvertently?

MR. HOPKINS  
They are escorted out.

JO  
No...

MR. HOPKINS

Of course. What are rules if there are no consequences? Standards. Like we had in my day.

JO

And what day was that?

MR. HOPKINS (leaning into her)

Actually, I was just thinking that today is my day.

*She coyly smiles, playing along. Crispin sets the drinks in front of them.*

MR. HOPKINS

Thank you Crispin. We'll be at my usual table. Come, my flower.

*He leads JO to a corner table, dimly lit, with the drinks. They sit closely together and talk quietly and flirtatiously. Crispin, Tyler and Fred turn back to each other.*

FRED

And now she knows the rules.

TYLER

Who is she?

FRED

Miss Josephine Ross, apparently.

CRISPIN

There was a big charity benefit ball next door tonight. Mr. Hopkins attends those regularly.

TYLER

And who is Mr. Hopkins?

CRISPIN

One of my other regulars. Usually Friday evenings after the theatre.

TYLER

So he's rich.

FRED

She's pretty. And young. Very young.

TYLER

And probably short on cash.

CRISPIN

Tyler, can I make you something else?

TYLER

Yes, I'll have what the gentleman is having, Geriatrics' Fantasy.

CRISPIN

You can do better than that.

TYLER

Sorry, not tonight. Fred. Crispin.

*He leaves money on the bar and leaves.*

FRED

Any ideas what's eating him?

CRISPIN (shaking his head)

He doesn't talk about himself much. Just tells the stories.

FRED

But I believe it was you that said the teller always puts himself in the stories.

CRISPIN

He does. But I don't go looking for him there. I just make the drinks.

FRED

Do you consider yourself a part of the revival?

CRISPIN

The revival?

FRED

The Cocktail Revival. There's a whole movement of you guys right now. New York, London. Revisiting the past through what you mix in a glass. Pre-Prohibition cocktails, my research tells me, are very big.

CRISPIN

Maybe in those places but as you can see, there isn't exactly a revival happening here.

FRED

Do you know the exact definition of revival? It is a restoration of use, acceptance, activity or vigor after a period of quiescence or obscurity. Literally, a bringing back from the dead. Like Jesus or Lazarus. Death is a key element. What can you revive if it has yet to die?

*Beat. Fred places money on the bar.*

FRED

I will leave you with that and when I see you again, I will have a story for you.

CRISPIN

Have a good night.

*Fred exits. Crispin tidies the bar, the empty glasses, coasters. In the corner table, Jo and Mr. Hopkins sit very close together. He plays with her necklace. His fingers trail to her collarbone. She brushes his hand away.*

JO

On that note, I should be heading home.

MR. HOPKINS

Yes, yes. I should too. Go home, check my blood pressure, shoot some insulin, run some dialysis. The hobbies of the elderly.

JO

Thank you for this evening.

MR. HOPKINS

I assume you take checks.

JO

I prefer them.

*He writes out a check.*

MR. HOPKINS

May I call you again?

JO

Five is the limit. You're just one down.

MR. HOPKINS

I'll take that as a yes.

Crispin, you'll just put this on my tab.

CRISPIN

Yes sir. How did you enjoy the drink?

MR. HOPKINS

It was perfect.

*He escorts JO out the door.*

*Crispin clears their table of glasses. He drinks the last drop of Jo's glass.*

*Scene 5: The next day, mid afternoon. Crispin is playing a different record and tasting different liqueurs. Jo enters.*

JO

I'm here for the tasting.

CRISPIN

You are always dressed different. Who's your date tonight.

JO

A graphic designer. Wanted a companion for a concert he was seeing.

CRISPIN

Ah.

JO

What are you trying today?

CRISPIN (listing them off)

Cointreau, Lillet Blanc, Amaretto, Frangelico, St. Germain and Triple Sec.

JO

Quite a line up.

CRISPIN

Yes.

JO

You want me to leave don't you.

CRISPIN

I didn't say that.

JO

But you do.

CRISPIN

I am kind of working here.

JO

Fine. I'll come by tonight after the concert. With my date. But I will be working then.

*She leaves.*

*Crispin switches a record on the phonograph. He sits and listens, not tasting.*

*Scene 6: Fred enters, focused. He has a notebook and a Bible under his arm.*

CRISPIN

You said you'd come with a story last time.

*(Beat. Fred looks at him)*

No?

FRED

Okay. I have a story for you.

CRISPIN

All ears.

FRED

I am a pastor at a small church with a dwindling attendance. Mostly white-haired conservatives whose heads nod near the end of my sermons. I get a call from a couple, been members for years. Family grew up in the church, I confirmed all their children. I answer their phone. Their oldest son just committed suicide. Shot himself in his car. They ask me to preach at his memorial service. I stumble out of my house. I remember baptizing him, a little baby. I drive to my favorite bar. The bartender sees my face. He hands me a drink to help me write. What am I drinking.

*Beat. Crispin looks at him.*

FRED

Crispin. Make me that drink.

*Crispin nods. Begins making the drink. Silence.*

*Crispin hands him the drink. Fred moves to a booth table. He sits, staring at his notebook and Bible. Gradually, he starts writing.*

*Tyler enters.*

TYLER

Hey Fred.

Fred doesn't look up, acknowledges with a slight gesture.

TYLER (to Crispin)

He's not sitting at the bar tonight?

CRISPIN

Not tonight. What'll you have?

TYLER

Did it come?

CRISPIN

No. What'll you have.

TYLER

A story, you know that.

CRISPIN

Alright, hit me.

TYLER

I am an eight-five year old man. For the last sixty years, I've loved the same woman. We grew up together, she married. I mourned but still loved her. I see her sometimes on the street, her silver hair, still standing up tall. She doesn't look at me. Then one day, her husband dies. Lavish funeral, the whole town shows up. I go to the wake. See her talking quietly with friends. One by one people start to leave. Soon we will be alone. I will go up to her, declare my love which is over sixty years old, say 'I will wait no longer', take her in my arms and kiss her. I have one drink before I walk over to her, to strengthen my resolve, to dispel all fear. What drink do I have?

CRISPIN (starts making a drink)

That's the plot of 'Love in the Time of Cholera'.

TYLER

What? No. I just made that up.

CRISPIN

That's 'Love in the Time of Cholera'. Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Read it.

TYLER

Nah. I already know the story.

*Crispin hands him a drink, a beautiful crimson color.*

TYLER (sips it)

Mmmm. Like a spiced kiss.

CRISPIN

Good.

TYLER (referring to Fred)

Did he end up giving you a story today?

CRISPIN  
Kind of.

TYLER  
Was it good?

CRISPIN  
It was true.

TYLER  
Oh.  
That should be another rule, check truth at the door along with coats and umbrellas.

CRISPIN  
Maybe a good idea.

TYLER  
No I think it's completely necessary. Once people start showing up with true stories, retelling painful episodes from their lives, this place becomes just another bar and you'll be just another cry-on-my-should-while-I-charge-you-for-drinks bartender. We can't have that Crispin.

CRISPIN  
Yeah.

TYLER  
I'm going to go talk to him about it.

CRISPIN  
Don't.

TYLER  
He'll understand, Fred gets things like that.

CRISPIN  
Just leave it Tyler.

TYLER  
Crispin, come on, you know that's not the point, stories like that...

CRISPIN  
And what exactly is the point? In your mind. No please, I'd love to know.

TYLER  
Whatever man, it's your bar.

---

CRISPIN

I know.

*Beat. Fred finishes writing in his notebook, rubs his eyes.  
The door opens, Jo and her date enter, laughing.*

JO

'K, no one will tell you this but this place has very strict rules.

MANSFIELD

Someone must have told you.

JO

I had to wheedle it out of them.

Good evening, Crispin. Will you explain the rules to Mr. Mansfield here or should I?

CRISPIN

I think I'll pass that opportunity on to Tyler. He's the biggest proponent of the rules.

*All look at Tyler. He is waiting to speak until he is formerly addressed by Jo. He seems nervous.*

JO

Well Tyler...do you care to enlighten us?

TYLER

The rules are as follows:

Rule 1: no vodka will ever be served at the bar.

JO (to Mansfield)

You might want to take notes.

TYLER

---

Rule 2: men must wear jackets, with or without ties.

JO (to Mansfield)

You're in the clear.

TYLER

Rule 3: men may not approach women, only women may take the initiative in talking to men.

JO (to Mansfield)

Good thing we're already talking.

TYLER

Rule 4: there are no drink requests permitted, only stories or inclinations should be presented to the bartender for him to utilize or ignore at his discretion.

JO (to Mansfield)

Clear?

MANSFIELD

Completely.

JO

You want to go first or should I?

MANSFIELD

I can. (to Crispin) I'm inclined to have something with bourbon, please.

CRISPIN

Coming right up.

JO

I'm disappointed. I was hoping for a story.

MANSFIELD

Baby steps.

JO

Fine then. I'll tell a story.

Crispin. Are you ready? Are you listening? Are your ears aching to hear and your fingers aching to mix me a concoction bred from our mingling imaginations? Alright. Here we go. (in a storytelling voice) I am a fair maiden, madly in love with Sir Lancelot, the Lady of Shallott to be exact but I won't hold it against you if you haven't read the poem. And when I say madly in love, I mean *madly*. Stark, raving obsessed. I live in a tower, complete with a curse and I can never leave or look out the window but I just have to look at the world outside through the reflection of a giant mirror I keep handy. And I weave a tapestry of everything I see in it but can't look at directly. My life is pretty hard. One day, I see him, Lancelot, riding past my window. He's gorgeous, glinting in gold armor and all is forgot as I spring out of my chair and lean out the window to get a better view. A crash behind me. My mirror has broken in a thousand pieces. The curse has come upon me. I know what comes next. My inevitable death. I wrap myself in my woven shroud. I walk down to my little boat (I live on an island) and I know once I get inside, I will float down the river and die. This is how curses work, you know. Tears stream down my face, my courage is faltering but I steady myself. I accept my fate. I drink from my humble, earthen cup, one drink for strength. One drink for destiny. One drink for death. That's the drink I want.

*Beat. Crispin mixes a drink.*

MANSFIELD

That was rather tragic.

JO

That's why it's a Tennyson poem.

FRED

Poetry takes tragedy and tries to make it beautiful.

Show me a poem that takes tragedy and shows it for what it is. Tragic.

JO

Maybe the tragic is beautiful.

FRED

Only when it's happening to someone else. Crispin, what do I owe you.

CRISPIN

It's on the house tonight, Fred.

FRED (nodding)

Good man. Good night.

Good night.

*He exits.*

JO

Too bad. I was hoping for a discursive exploration of tragedy.

TYLER

So now it's free drinks for the rule breakers?

CRISPIN

Just let it alone, Tyler.

TYLER

Just saying.

*Beat.*

JO

I'm gonna take this opportunity to run to the toilet.

*She exits.*

MANSFIELD (to Crispin)

So, she's a regular here?

CRISPIN  
Not really.

*Beat.*

CRISPIN  
How did you two meet?

MANSFIELD  
Friend gave me her business card. He used her for a wedding. She's smart though, isn't she?

CRISPIN  
Yes, I suppose so.

*Beat.*

MANSFIELD  
So how long have you been running this place?

CRISPIN  
Almost a year.

MANSFIELD  
Business good?

CRISPIN  
Getting better.

MANSFIELD  
Yeah. I think you're building quite a reputation for yourself. I heard about it a while ago through the grapevine but didn't know where it was...kind of hidden isn't it?

CRISPIN  
Kind of.

MANSFIELD  
That's good for this sort of place. You wouldn't want just anyone to stumble in.

CRISPIN  
Anyone can come.

MANSFIELD  
Yeah but just anyone wouldn't come. It attracts characters.

*Jo enters.*

JO

You can stop talking about me now.

MANSFIELD

I told you she was smart.

*She swallows the rest of her drink.*

JO

That was nice. Well, it's getting time for me to hit the road.

MANSFIELD

I'll walk you out.

JO

Thank you. Night, all.

*They exit. If we can see outside the window, Mansfield gives Jo a check. She leaves.*

*He reenters.*

MANSFIELD (to Crispin)

And how much do I owe you?

CRISPIN

Fifteen fifty.

MANSFIELD

Here you go. Keep the change.

CRISPIN

Thank you.

MANSFIELD (goes to the door)

I may be back some time. If I want to go to a different time and place. Cheers.

*Mansfield exits.*

*Beat. Crispin clears glasses. Tyler sits silently.*

CRISPIN (to Tyler)

How you doing?

TYLER

What do you mean by that?

CRISPIN

It was a fairly simple question.

TYLER

Do you want to actually know how I'm doing, about my life, my rent, my relatives, my buddies, my girlfriends, my dying grandmother or grandfather, my health issues, my insurance issues, my job issues, my emotional issues, my Freudian past, my uncertain future, my desires, my fears, my weakness, my reoccurring neuroses...is this what you mean by 'How're you doing?' Or was it just something to say?

CRISPIN

Either. Whatever. If you feel like talking, talk.

TYLER

Crispin. I don't come here to talk. I come here to tell a story and taste something I've never tasted before. That's why people come. Because that's what you have to offer. Those are the economics of this bar. Now, if you want to start changing the transaction—if *you* come here to talk—that's fine. Your bar. Your rules. But I'll just say, if you do that, the people who come will be very different. And I don't know if that's what you really want.

*He leaves money on the bar and leaves. Crispin takes the money and begins cleaning up.*

*Scene 7: Lights up on Fred at the bar, mirroring where Tyler was sitting at top of show. He faces the audience.*

FRED

I am a lifelong cripple. Born that way. Probably will die that way. Forty years never being able to walk. I beg for my living. I hear one day in the marketplace, where I live on my mat asking for alms, that a monk in a nearby village has made a tincture that is told to cure all ills. I have tried countless tincture, potions, salves, prayed to innumerable relics and made holy pilgrimages. Still I cannot walk. But hope is the food of the unfortunate. I spend my week's earnings to be taken to this monk. A farmer agrees reluctantly to drive me on his wagon, carry me to the holy man's door. I knock on the door. It opens. His eyes look too old for his face. He greets me, ushers me inside. Herbs I do not recognize hang from his rafters. All that is on the wall is a crucifix. He turns to me and asks, 'What do you want?'. I say what I thought was obvious, 'I want to be healed'. He turns away from me. In silence. For what seems like an eternity. Is he praying? Is he thinking? When he finally turns back, he has the fermented herb tincture in a wooden cub. He hands it to me. 'Drink', he says. I hold the cup. I smell the drink. It is strong, woody, potent. I hesitate. I wonder. I doubt. I look at my withered legs. I drink. I look up at the man. He looks still sad. I look at my legs. I cannot believe my own eyes. They are strong, straight,

full. The monk helps me stagger to my feet. I have not stood in all my life. Until now.  
Make me that drink.

*Crispin starts making a drink. A long silence.*

FRED  
Has the Crème Yvette come yet, Crispin?

CRISPIN  
Not yet.  
How did the eulogy go?

FRED  
The service. Good. It was lovely. Or as lovely as those things can be. Wounds like that  
take a long time to heal.

*Crispin gives him the drink.*

FRED  
Ah.

He drinks. He closes his eyes. He savors.

FRED  
Yes. Yes. (to Crispin) Thank you.

CRISPIN  
So you are a pastor?

FRED  
Only humbly.

CRISPIN  
So what is it exactly that you do? Besides give sermons on Sundays.

FRED  
I make rounds. Visiting the sick. Praying for invalids. Serving soup at our soup kitchen.  
Counseling couples. Officiating marriages. Cheering the depressed. Writing eulogies.

CRISPIN  
Sounds like a full schedule.

FRED  
If your job description is to love people, it ends up taking up quite a bit of your time. This  
is my weekly reprieve.

CRISPIN

Glad to be of service.

*Tyler enters. He carries an ornately painted sign. It has the rules painted on it.*

FRED

Tyler!

TYLER (to Crispin)

I thought we could hang it somewhere not too obvious, maybe over by the bathrooms, set up a little light over it.

CRISPIN

What is it?

TYLER (displaying the sign)

It's the rules.

Beat.

TYLER

What do you think? I had the guy paint it a bit small, one through four and then at the bottom I had him put the consequences really small, kind of like reading the fine print, you know? I picked out the colors myself. To match.

CRISPIN

What's number five?

TYLER

What we were talking about. No personal sob stories. I wrote it out better than that but you get the gist. (Beat) Well?

*Long Beat.*

CRISPIN

Tyler...

FRED

You know, this reminds me of that verse. In Romans, on the spirit of the law versus the letter of the law; 'for we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law...'

TYLER

See, this is what I mean. This is why we need another rule. To keep all this real life talk out, to let this place be what it was intended, to let it be—

CRISPIN

To let it be what, Tyler? Your place? Your bar? Your refuge from the world, from real life?

TYLER

No, to let it be what it was supposed to—

*Crispin breaks the painting of the rules. Maybe it is painted on a mirror that he pushes over the edge of the bar. It shatters on the ground.*

TYLER

What the fuck—

CRISPIN

Fuck the rules.

TYLER

What?

CRISPIN

I said, fuck the rules!

TYLER

They're your fucking rules, man!

CRISPIN

I didn't come up with some bullshit rule about what can and cannot be talked about in here.

TYLER

They we could have had that part taken off, what the fuck is your problem!

CRISPIN

No more rules. Done. We don't need them anymore.

TYLER

And why is that exactly?

CRISPIN

Because I said so.

*Silence. Tyler kneels and picks up shards of mirror silently. After a beat, Crispin comes over and helps him clean up.*

TYLER

Do you remember, ten months ago, you opened this place in a shit part of town and I was your first customer. And you told me the rules. And I obeyed them. And I told other

people the rules. And I told other people to come. And I spread word about this place all over this goddamn town. And you said the rules are what would protect this place from becoming like everywhere else. Do you remember? Any of that? The rules were your idea in the first place. Yours.

CRISPIN

I don't need them anymore.

TYLER

Well, maybe the rest of us do.

*He stands, drops the pieces of mirror he is holding and leaves the bar, noticeably leaving his coat hanging on the coat rack. Crispin looks at the mess. Drops his pieces. Goes for a broom and starts sweeping up.*

FRED

How human we are, in the way we long for rules...a roadmap, a structure, a guide. We are mice who long for the maze when they are in an open field. You would never imagine how many people deify God in hopes of receiving a set of rules from Mount Sinai. They nod to the crucifixion in exchange for a source of sanctions and judgments, parameters and consequences just to have the sense that they are all alright. To such people, free will is the most upsetting part of Christianity.

Jo enters. She is disheveled and the strap of her black gown is broken. She looks like she's been accosted. Sits at the bar.

JO

Whiskey.

CRISPIN

Are you alright?

JO

I said I'll have a whiskey.

*Fred goes to the bathroom.*

CRISPIN

What happened?

JO (falsely cavalier)

My life is just too exciting sometimes, even for me.

*She shakily drinks her whiskey. A man, Robert, enters and spots JO.*

ROBERT

There you are, beautiful.

JO

The whole thing's off. You can go back to your party now.

ROBERT

Hey, hey don't be like that. We understand each other, no hard feelings. There's still dancing and the champagne toast to come. *(to Crispin)* Do you happen to have a safety pin?

JO

Don't touch me.

MAN

You listen because I'll only say this once. You want to run a business? This transaction has not been completed. And I'm sure as hell not going back in there without my date. Now have another drink, put on some lipstick and we're going back. Got it?

*Beat.*

JO

Fuck you. And fuck off.

*He grabs her arm, she resists. Crispin punches Robert in the face. Fred enters, seeing Robert stagger back.*

FRED

Robert?

ROBERT (dazed)

Fred?

*Fred looks at Robert. At Jo. At Crispin.*

FRED

Out on the town tonight

ROBERT

In a way. Can't say I was expecting to run into my pastor in a bar in this part of town at midnight.

FRED

I was going to say the same about you.

*Beat. Robert looks at Jo.*

FRED (to Robert)  
I will walk you home.

ROBERT  
Thanks, Reverend, but I'm—

FRED  
Let's go.

*Fred takes him by the arm. Robert doesn't budge looking at Jo, then leaves with Fred.*

*Silence.*

CRISPIN  
Reverend Fred, to the rescue.

*Silence.*

CRISPIN  
You need another drink?

JO  
No.

*Beat.*

JO  
No, I have a story this time.

CRISPIN  
Okay.

JO  
There's this young girl. Twenty. Brilliant. Beautiful. Falls in love with a boy, they grew up together. Time distance, inevitability separates them. Different sides of the continent. They long for each other. Girl decides to take matter into her own hands. Begins working. Odd jobs. She gets to dress up nice. She saves her money. Every penny that's not spent on discount evening gowns. After two years, she has enough money. She moves across the country to be with the boy. Finally. She arrives, her life packed up in boxes. She sees him. His eyes are cold, his embrace...tepid at best. He doesn't want her. She she's there, she'll make the best of it. She'll study poetry, get a degree, why the fuck not, what has she got to lose? She starts working, again. Paying every cent of her tuition. The schedule's ideal really, classes during the day, paid to go on dates at night. It's perfect. She recites the Shakespeare sonnets she studies during the day to the amusement of her nighttime patrons; she excels at sparkling witty banter at cocktail parties. She rattles off the names of German expressionists at art auctions, discussing Chopin and George Sand

at the symphony. The middle-aged elites are impressed, entertained, grateful for the increasingly hard-to-come-by hard-ons. Life is good, except for the occasional minor hiccups: ass-grabs, feel-ups, digging fingers. But she regularly performs a cost benefit analyses and concludes: the pros outweigh the cons. By far. And thus, she lives.

CRISPIN

There's no drink in that story.

JO

Right. One day she decides to discard this tainted life and follow her heart: become a poet. She takes out her address book...all the numbers of all the men, their business cards with their work phone numbers, catalogued alphabetically. She has notes on their appearance so she can keep them all straight in her head. There's that many. She builds a fire in her tiny apartment. Without hesitation, she throws it all in. The potential profit of a thousand lonely men...now ash and smoke. She pours a drink. She toasts to herself, to her new life, to a clean slate. To poetry. What's the drink then.

*Crispin makes a drink. Hands it to her.*

CRISPIN

What does she do afterwards, with this new life?

JO

How the hell should I know? It's a fucking story. I just gave you the ending you wanted to hear.

*She lights a cigarette. Beat. Crispin leans near her to grab her empty whiskey glass. She grabs his face and kisses him. Hard. Pushes him away roughly.*

JO

That was for punching him. I won't be in anyone's debt.

*Fred enters.*

FRED

What a night, what a night. Crispin, had many nights like this before?

CRISPIN

No.

FRED (to JO)

Did Robert tell you his wife left him four days ago?

JO

No. I'm not in it for the stories.

FRED

But of course your clients are, my dear. You are the story they tell themselves instead of the truth.

JO

How poetic.

CRISPIN

Turns out she's a poet herself, Fred.

FRED

Really?

Would you recite one of your own works for us?

JO

With pleasure. (*she downs her drink and gets up*) I am assuming you both are familiar with Shakespeare's play, *As You Like It*? Act II, Scene seven...the melancholy Jacques expounds upon the seven ages of man. This piece is titled 'On the Seven Ages of Woman'.

A priori, the world: a stage.

Men and women but mostly men, merely players

Entrances and exits, in and out of one another

And thus, would I have you know

That one woman in her time plays many parts.

Here we go, seven ages seven parts starting with one: the little girl, sucking lollipops with pretty pert lip,

touching herself unawares in public as

men stare and women slap her hand until

The second age introduces Nabokov's nymphet,

who cries to please, in the meantime learns how to properly please, with eyelashes and boyish chests softening under Puberty's tenderizer.

Then the blossoming teenager with short skirt and razored legs

who laughs to hide marvel at the reactions, all of them,

of boys who catch sight of either breast or bush.

Then the co-ed clutching notebook to chest and at climactic moments

in bed with hard-breathing not-men wonders whether to scream or pretend to.

And then the wife consenting to play house

by pressing shirts and Hoovering carpets until

meeting husband at the door only in an apron

because he asked her to.

What follows is the expended mother with desert womb,

who younger men seek to nurse them through their wet-dreams.

And finally what ends this parody, the spinster,

who regardless of husband all women inevitably become,

despite smiles the corners of her mouth droop downwards

and now cannot coax the touches now that once she had no need to ask.  
Thin hair, creped skin, sans breast, sans pussy, sans desire, sans everything.

*Fred applauds, slowly.*

FRED

What and when were inspired to compose that?

JO

Just now, in fact. I apologize that I wasn't able to pull off iambic pentameter on such short notice. *(Beat)* Well, I'll leave you boys on that note. It's been fun.

*She leaves money on the bar and exits. Beat.*

FRED *(rising, putting on his coat)*

I will walk her home, I think. It has been a night. She likes you, you think?

CRISPIN

Me?

FRED

Yes.

*He exits. Crispin doesn't move. He slowly picks up the money Jo left on the table and a lighter. He looks at the money, like he's never seen money before. Then he burns it over the lighter discarding it in an ashtray.*

*Scene 8: Afternoon in the bar. It is closed. The doorbell rings. A figure leaves the window. After a long beat, Crispin enters and opens the door. He disappears outside it. He reenters with a package, oblong, wrapped in brown paper. He carries it carefully. Closes the door behind him, locks it. He draws the blinds.*

*He sets it on the table. Puts on a particular record that it takes him a while to find. The music plays. He approaches the table slowly. Sits. He slowly unwraps it, careful not to tear the brown paper which he folds. A box. Crème Yvette on it somewhere perhaps. He takes out the bottle. Runs his hands over the sides, feeling the shape of it. Turns it around slowly to see it from all angles. He holds it in his hands, feeling its weight. Touches the label. Presses the bottle against his cheek. Gently he opens the bottle. Smells the inside of the cap. Smells inside the bottle, closing his eyes. He touches his finger to the inside of the cup and tastes it, trying to savor the imperceptible drop. Puts the cap back on and goes to the bar; washes his hands, grabs an exquisite sherry glass. Puts on another record. An angelic soprano singing comes on. He sets glass and his black notebook and pen on the table.*

*He pours with precision, the sherry glass full of Crème Yvette. He looks at it, holds it up to the light, smells it again. He opens his notebook, pen in hand, raises the glass. Stops.*

*Closes pen and notebook. A breath. He takes his first sip, eyes closed. A long pause. It is incredible, indescribable.*

CRISPIN (exhaling)  
Oh...

*Scene 9: The Crème Yvette is placed in a prominent spot on the bar. Crispin is looking especially sharp, perhaps a bowtie. He tidies the bar although it is already spotless. He looks at the clock. He hangs Tyler's coat on a chair, his chair, at the bar. He looks at the clock again. After a long beat, Tyler enters.*

TYLER  
I'm just here for my coat.

*He goes to the coat rack. Notices his coat's not there. Sees it on the chair.*

CRISPIN  
Sit down.

*Beat.*

CRISPIN  
I got the Crème Yvette.

*Beat. Tyler sits. Crispin brings the Crème Yvette down from its place.*

TYLER  
Have you tasted it.

*Crispin nods. Beat. Crispin pulls out a glass. Pours some of the Crème Yvette in it, reverently. Pushes the glass to Tyler. Tyler holds it up. Looks at it. Raises it to his lips. Fred enters.*

FRED  
Friends—  
Am I interrupting something?

CRISPIN  
Come sit down.

FRED  
Is that—

CRISPIN  
Crème Yvette.

*All in silence, Crispin pours Fred a glass as well as himself. All three pause.*

CRISPIN (initiating a toast)

To—to what?

TYLER (to Fred)

Should we say a prayer?

FRED

For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly grateful. Amen.

CRISPIN

Amen.

TYLER

Amen.

They raise their glasses. They take imperceptible sips. Long beat. Silence. They look at one another, tasting.

CRISPIN

I know.

They all take another sip.

CRISPIN

I have so many pages marked off in my journal just for this. But I can't find any words.

Beat. The following list of words is punctuated by each of them taking sips at different moments, rhythmically.

FRED

Revelatory.

TYLER

Ethereal.

FRED

Pastorale.

TYLER

Cathartic.

FRED

Resurrection. And annunciation.

TYLER  
Tremulous.

FRED  
Silver-lined.

TYLER  
Floral.

FRED  
Creamy.

TYLER  
Joyful.

FRED  
Subtle.

TYLER  
Foreplay.

FRED  
And afterplay.

CRISPIN  
It's more than words, it's like a poem.

*Crispin pours them all some more.*

TYLER  
Don't you want to save it?

CRISPIN  
If I tried to save it, it would never be drunk. It would just be a trophy on the wall, admired but untouched. Once you open it, give it a month and it starts to decay, each day a little less good.

TYLER  
You could mix it, make a new cocktail, it'll go further...do you want a story for it?

CRISPIN  
No. I don't think it can be improved on. It's a complete story in itself.

*They sip some more. Soundlessly sigh.*

TYLER

I think if there was enough of this for everyone to take a sip at the same moment and hold it on their tongues, there would be world peace.

FRED

That would be revival. Tongues of flame descended on the heads of all that were gathered there. And they began to speak in languages none of them knew.

CRISPIN

Are there tongues of flame above our heads?

FRED

Not yet...

*Fred takes the bottle of Crème Yvette, stands up holding it up.*

FRED

He took the cup and gave thanks and praise saying, 'Take this and drink from it, this is the cup of the new and everlasting covenant, shared for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance, that every time we drink of this cup we proclaim the death and resurrection, until He comes again.

*They all drink. Jo enters. She is drunk. She is dressed as herself, whatever that is.*

JO

Evening, boys.

*Silence. Her presence disrupts the sacrosanctity.*

JO

No hello? Crispin, I at least thought you'd be happy to see me.

CRISPIN

Have a seat.

*She sits, a bit unsteadily.*

TYLER

No date tonight?

JO

I thought you weren't supposed to speak to me.

TYLER

The rules have been abolished.

JO

Too bad. Does that mean I can order a vodka and cran now?

*Silence. Crispin moves the Crème Yvette aside.*

CRISPIN

What will you have?

JO

Tonight I have no inclinations and I'm out of stories. I want to get drunk.

*Crispin pours her a scotch.*

JO

Scotch. Perfect. Your creativity never ceases to amaze.

*Silence. She sips. Looks at their glasses.*

JO

What are the three of you drinking?

FRED

Crème Yvette.

JO

Sounds overpriced.

CRISPIN

It's not much good for getting drunk off of.

FRED

I may beg to differ.

CRISPIN (changing the subject)

So where's the date? Is he meeting you here after his benefit ball for a nightcap?

JO

I don't have a date. I've cleared my schedule.

CRISPIN

Oh?

JO

Yeah, I wanted to give the three of you an opportunity to book me for any of your...needs. How about it Fred, any upcoming baptisms you need company for? Funerals? I'll give you a special rate.

FRED

You didn't seem like the type to mix business and pleasure.

JO

That's exactly the type I am. That's my whole business plan. What about you Tyler, now that you'll speak to me? I promise I will hang on your arm and laugh at everything you say.

CRISPIN

Cut it out. We're not your clients.

JO

Oh but we are all your clients, aren't we? Tell me, what are you doing right now, Crispin? Business or pleasure?

CRISPIN

My business is pleasure. Pleasure, beauty, transcendence...

JO

Then you and I are in the same business. Except, in my case, I'm the one making the drink and I AM the drink. Get it?

CRISPIN

Sure.

JO

No. You don't. You and your muse, your inspiration create drinks...birthed from other people's stories, exquisite concoctions of near extinct taste and flavors for a full bouquet in your mouth of a buzz, for a thrill, for a moment of looking around you and only seeing beauty. That's what I do. A different dress, a different flavor, a different persona, a different story. There's more than your way of skinning this cat.

CRISPIN

What cat?

JO

Pleasure. Beauty. Transcendence. Thrill. Meaning. That what we both do. You and me.

CRISPIN

Except you're an escort.

JO

And you're just another bartender.

*Beat.*

JO

So are any of you going to take me up on my offer, I need to book someone for tonight. Crispin?

CRISPIN

What do you want?

JO

Just to help everyone else transcend and make a few bucks off of it myself. I didn't get a check last time from that groping asshole and now I'm in bit of a lurch so for fuck's sake someone give me something!

FRED

You need money?

JO

Yeah Fred, I do, do you happen to have three grand lying around? Cuz you can't pay tuition with pretty dresses and cocktails.

TYLER

You need three grand?

JO

He speaks again! Yeah, do you think I can find that much change between your sofa cushions?

CRISPIN

Sorry Jo, we don't have anything for you.

JO

You don't have anything for me. Right. Good. Fine. Perfect. But you have enough for overpriced cocktails every night, every week. You do seem to have enough for that.

*She has walked behind the bar and peruses the shelves of bottles.*

JO

You don't have enough for me but you have enough for the finest chartreuse, the largest St. Germain, the best amaretto, sapphire gin, tonic water that comes in glass bottles, you have enough for that. You have enough for this—

*She turns to pick up the Crème Yvette and knocks it over. It breaks. Crème Yvette spills all over the bar.*

TYLER

You fucking cunt! Do you even know what that is?

JO

---

Alcohol.

TYLER

Do you know how much it cost!?

JO

Cost? What, three thousand dollars?

CRISPIN

More.

*Beat. Jo puts her hand in the puddle of Crème Yvette. She licks it off.*

JO

I've tasted better.

CRISPIN

Better what.

JO

Just better.

*Tyler frantically tries wiping the spill into his cup.*

CRISPIN

Just leave it.

FRED

It was beautiful while it lasted. Beautiful things never last. Like all revivals. You can't speak in tongues forever. How would anyone else know what you are saying?

JO

Sorry.

Beat.

CRISPIN

Thanks for coming guys. The bar's closed.

TYLER

Closed.

CRISPIN

Someone has to clean up this mess.

JO

I can help.

---

CRISPIN

No.

JO

I can.

CRISPIN

Just go.

*They all get their coats to leave.*

FRED

It was a beautiful evening.

*He leaves. Tyler follows, in anger. Jo trails after them. Crispin remains behind the bar.*

JO

Can I stay just for a cigarette?

*Crispin ignores her. She stays. She puts the phonograph on. Music plays, quietly. She lights a cigarette. Crispin clears all the glasses, broken glass and gets a towel to wipe up the spill. He stares at it. Jo puts her finger in the spill and holds it up to his lips.*

JO

Taste it.

*Beat. Crispin tastes the Crème Yvette from her finger.*

JO

Tell me what it tastes like.

CRISPIN

Vanilla. Violet. I don't know the rest.

JO

Wrong.

CRISPIN

What does it taste like then?

*She kisses him.*

JO

It doesn't taste like anything.

---

*They look at each other. Crispin looks away and then turns his back on her to start washing glasses. Jo looks at him. Then she leaves. He hears the door shut. He goes to the spill with a towel. He looks at it. He puts a finger in it and tastes it. A long beat. He looks to the door that Jo has just left through. He looks back. He puts down the towel and takes off his bowtie. He walks, then runs out of the door, following her. The lights slowly go down on the bar, the music still playing, the Crème Yvette dripping onto the floor.*

*END*

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