

Working Title Options:

Story of a Life  
Bartender  
The Business of Living  
The Last Shift  
The Big Stuff  
Last Call  
Closing Time  
One Last Drink  
The Local  
At the Bar  
Wasted Time  
This Wasted Life

by  
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For Sopher

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Characters:

Jim (40s) - A bartender but not at this bar (although he used to bartend here years ago). He is a real raconteur, a storyteller. Someone who belongs in an earlier era, perhaps the 1950s or 1890s. Hates technology. Made a bunch of money doing voiceover work and blew it all. Lives in the moment. Not concerned about the future. Could hop on a freight train tomorrow. Obviously, no wife or kids. Very good friends with Danny, the owner. Knew Robert well and liked him: they shared many drunken, drugged times together. He drinks everything.

Toby (60s) - Quiet. Small. A regular's regular. Has known Robert for almost 30 years. Made a bunch of money selling plastic jewelry. Drinks Johnny Walker black on the rocks. A great poker face. Still waters run deep. Strangely, he's an intimidating presence. Has lived in the neighborhood forever. Grew up in the Village. Plans to retire and move far away soon.

Bert (50s) - One of the bartenders. Has worked at the bar for many years. He's reliable, a good guy. Quick with a joke. A professional bartender, like Jim. No wife or kids either. Always ready for a new adventure. He drinks mostly good whiskey.

Elisa (40s) - A local. Lives around the corner. Sort of the den mother. Works in the dying artform of books. She needs a man, but she's a bit batty. Divorced, her husband left her for a rich older woman. She has some odd hobbies: dolls and photography. Still attractive but off limits to the men. A real broad. Her and Robert shared a loner connection and many deep conversations. Robert had a soft spot for her. She drinks red wine out of her own glass that she keeps at the bar.

Danny (40s) - The Owner (part owner). And he is the poorest of the three guys who own the bar, so he's around the most. Very close with Jim. He was Robert's boss but Robert was there first. He bought the bar 9 years earlier but the lease is coming up and the rent's gonna increase enormously. They may have to call it quits. The bar is his life, his dream. He has a wife and two kids out in the suburbs. He always wanted to be a big shot movie producer. Drinks beer and whiskey.

Cathy (40s) - Robert's ex-wife. They are still good friends. She has not remarried but she couldn't handle Robert's lifestyle. She works for a rich businessman. She's another tough broad. She really wonders what happened to her life. Where did it go? She was going to be a lawyer but she quit. She's adrift. She drinks wine or vodka sodas. She helped raise a ton of money for Robert's hospital bills.

Michael (35) - He works in publishing, he's a book editor. Very smart and comes from an old money family that lost their fortune. He hates his generation and anyone younger and all of their bullshit jobs (ie marketing, branding). He's a raging drinker. One of Robert's best friends. And along for the ride on many a bender. The bar has become his office, where he meets writers. They call him the Professor. He drinks Stoli and soda mostly but lots of other stuff too, depending on his mood.

Megan (25) - a girl that Michael has only been seeing for about two weeks. She works in marketing at his publishing house. A pretty Blond who grew up in Connecticut, she is part of the younger generation. She met Robert at the bar once. From her appearance you would think that she doesn't know how to drink.

Setting:

A small bar. This is only a bar, not a restaurant. A bar, stools, a couple of booths (or tables), a bathroom, a jukebox.

Darkness.

From the Jukebox a Song (Tom Waits' "Closing Time") increases in volume.

Lights up.

Toby is seated upstage at the end of the bar, facing the audience. Jim sits next to him, he's just started telling a story. Toby drinks Johnny Walker black on the rocks. Jim is taking a break and drinking a short Stella.

JIM

We just came from a funeral so this is a good time to tell this story. You remember Tom Hansbury's funeral? That must've been what, eight years ago?

Toby nods Yeah.

JIM

God, has it really been that long? Where does the time go? (he looks at his drink for a fraction of a second. Then,) Did you ever hear the Garbage Man story? The full story?

Toby nods No.

JIM

No? I didn't think so. Okay. This was after Tom's funeral. And you remember, that was a crazy funeral: his brothers. Wild Joe. Bruce Meacham was there. Petrocelly. So we're all riled up: hootin' and hollerin'. Then finally we get back here. Because Robert has to work. He's gotta open the bar at one. So we are sitting in here drinking. And there's nobody in here. Just me and Robert. Waiting for everybody to get back from the funeral. To reconvene. We're in our Sunday best. I mean, we just came from a funeral, we look goooooood. I mean not as good as we look now obviously.

Toby's face says, "Yeah, sure." He agrees, they do look good.

JIM

We were all suited up, slicked back. The air was full of Vitalis and possibility. (Jim smiles and his eyes show a sinister streak) Sitting in here just having a drink. We'd had a few before the funeral. And During the funeral. So, needless to say, we're feeling a little lucid. A little lubricated. Exchanging stories, little anecdotes, just stupid moments we remember about Tom. It was a gorgeous day. Middle of the summer. A sky so blue you wanted to put it in an inkwell. The sun big and bright, in all of her glory. A glorious day, all around. Aside from the whole burying a good friend aspect of the day, it was a truly beautiful day. You're glad to be alive--you're Thankful to be alive on a day like that...Anyhow, here we are. Much like you and I are right now. And who do you think walks in?

Toby doesn't know.

JIM

Who do you think? The Mayor? No. Not the mayor. Some bullshit celebrity like Sarah Jessica Whoever? No, none of that crap. A big time rocker, the spirit of New York, like Lou Reed? Naw, fuck that shit.

Into the bar on that beautiful day in the middle of the summer walks Larry and Lenny.

Toby looks at him like, "Who the fuck are Larry and Lenny?"

JIM

Two of New York City's finest Garbage Men in all of the five boroughs. We know these guys. They're our local guys. They picked up our garbage every day, rain or shine, puke or piss, these dudes are here. So Larry and Lenny walk in to use the bathroom. No big deal. Happens all the time. Any day. As common as a taxi cab. Larry snatches a Daily News off the counter, goes in to the john to sink some submarines and Lenny sits right down here next to me and orders a Coke.

No big deal.

Now, for whatever reason, call it the booze, the beautiful day, the spirit in the air, the funeral, the cocaine--whatever it is, I suddenly have an idea. In the spur of the moment it seems like a great idea.

I suddenly feel a strong kinship to Lenny. And to the city. And to all creatures great and small. And to the world. And because of this sudden certain kumbayaness that I am feeling, I want to experience the full circle of life. And up until that point in my life I had had my fair share of adventures: 1. Patagonia with Richard, 2. Saskatchewan with Pete, and 3. Durango with...myself. Those had all been magnificent and transforming. Each in its own way. In the case of Durango almost resulting in my unfortunate early demise. But nonetheless! An adventure. But the one thing I had not done, in all my time living in this town, in this festering cesspool of ivory towers, ivory hunters, and all the poor saps stuck somewhere in between, myself included, I had never done The Shit. I had never picked up people's shit, people's garbage. And now, for whatever reason, I had this powerful urge to want to experience what that felt like, right now, to pick up people's shit. Rich people's shit. Poor people's shit. And everybody else's shit. I wanted to see if there was any difference. Or if all shit, at the end of the day, as they say, smelled the same...

So I turn to Lenny and I say, "How would you feel if Robert and I finished your shift?" (Pause)

And Lenny, without even pausing, without a whisper of hesitation, he whips out this huge set of keys and smacks them down on the bar and leaves them there.

"Knock yourself out."

Now of course, I'm sure, Lenny is not thinking that I actually mean this. He is assuming it's another drunken BS pipe dream. But I look at him and I say, "All right" and I snatch the keys. I look at Robert, I'm like, "Robert, let's go."

And he hasn't been paying attention so he says, "Where are we going?"

"To clean up New York City."

He looks at me, we share a long look, and he understands what I'm saying, and I'm watching his face and this little smirk starts to grow around the edges of his mouth, almost as if to say this is what Tom would do. Because you know, Tom was a crazy motherfucker. He once punched a giant. I mean literally a Giant! So Robert throws down his towel and walks around the bar.

"Watch the bar," he says to Lenny.

And as he's passing, Lenny says, "You guys are really gonna do this?"

Robert keeps walking, "We're gonna try."

"Either of you numbnuts ever drive a garbage truck before?"

I say, "What do you think?"

"Well it's a--"

"Ah dat dat dat dat dat dat," And Robert cuts him off in that way only Robert can. Sort of high falutin and a little arrogant but totally savoring the ridiculousness of the situation. "Ah dat dat dat, we got this."

And I almost lose it but manage to keep a straight face.

I push open the front door, and as we're leaving the bar I hear Lenny say, like my Mother, "Be careful." Robert and I start cracking up.

We get outside and it's a beautiful day.

Robert looks at me, "I know you don't really have a plan here but I think I should drive."

I toss him the keys. "Sounds good to me."

And let's be honest, I was in no shape to be handling heavy machinery. Even light machinery. No machinery should have been passing through my hands at this point.

Now it's important to remember that we're both wearing suits. We both look good. I'm in a nice black Hugo Boss three piece with Italian wingtips, I got a red pocket square, and a silk tie. And I've got my sterling silver cufflinks on too. And Robert is dressed to the nines also. He's got on a black two piece with a nice blue tie. Shiny black shoes like mirrors.

So we both hop up front in the cab, and we have no idea what we're doing. At that point I didn't know if these garbage trucks were manual or automatic. But thankfully for us we realize right away that it's an automatic.

"Where to, Miss Daisy?" Robert says.

"Just around the block, my good man," I tell him, and he really gets a kick out of that.

He puts it in to gear and away we go!...About forty feet. He puts it in park, we both hop out and survey the scene.

Black bags of garbage. Okay, we can do this. I grab a bag, it's not terribly heavy, and I toss it in the back of the truck, that big trough. Robert comes around the back of the truck and grabs a bag, tosses it in there. We're feeling pretty good about ourselves at this point.

"Piece of cake," says Robert.

We pick up three bags, toss 'em in, I say to Robert, "Let's carry on."

"You got it."

I hop on the back, which, let's be honest: that's the thing I really wanted to do. Hang off the back of a garbage truck, wind in my hair, sun on my face...But unfortunately we only need to go about another forty feet. Robert stops the truck. I hop off. And I'm feeling pretty good. So far the bags are no big deal. The smell's not that bad. It's all right. I can do this.

So I grab two bags and toss them in the back. Robert grabs one. I grab two more. Toss. It's gettin' full back there so I decide to use the hydraulic jaws. Robert tosses the last bag in, I pull the lever and the huge jaw starts going. It scoops down, grabs the bags and pulls them up. And it was then we discovered something neither of us was thinking about:

The bags explooode! (he laughs as he says it). And poor Robert: Liquid just sprays straight out and all over Robert and his nice suit.

He stands there a moment. And I'm laughing. And laughing. And laughing. The look on his face! Robert takes a whiff of himself: "I think it was orange soda and milk."

He walks up to me and I'm dying, just about to piss my pants. But before I realize it: he wraps me up in this big bear hug, squeezes me tight, and whispers in my ear: "This was your idea." Well, let me tell you something: we laughed and laughed and laughed. And the great thing now, with both of us smelling like shit, was that we didn't care. We're tossing bags to each other. We're catching bags against our chests like footballs. We're working the Jaws. Letting Whatever spray out. I'm hopping on the back, dangling. Robert's gunning that thing around the block. And man, we are makin' the rounds!...

And now people are starting to look at us kind of strangely like who the hell are these guys? Dressed in full nice suits picking up the garbage? Driving the garbage truck? And looking back, I can see how that would be weird. But Robert was loving it. He was performing. We both were.

Some little old lady says to Robert, "Did you guys lose a bet or something?" And you know what Robert said in response? Classic Robert.

"Nope. We lost a friend."

And away we go.

Elisa came walking by and she goes, "What the hell are you guys doing?"

I say to her, "We are cleaning up this town!"

"You guys are crazy."

Maybe. Probably.

We keep going. We're enjoying ourselves. Robert's singing, "Hot town, summer in the city, back of my neck gettin' dirty and gritty. Bend down, isn't it a pity, doesn't seem to be a shadow in the city. All around, people lookin' half dead. Walkin' on the sidewalk, hotter than a match heaaaaaaaaaaaaaad!"

Now we've only been doing this for about twenty minutes, a half hour tops. We've gone around the block.

Larry comes running up to us all crazy, screaming, "What the hell are you guys doing?!"

We look at him.

"What do you think we're doing? We're picking up the garbage."

"You're picking up Everything!"

I look at him confused. "Yeah?" I mean we're the garbage men we're supposed to pick up the garbage.

"Not the recycling! Not glass! Not cardboard! Not metal!"

Oh. That didn't even cross my mind.

"Goddamn it! I can't have glass and cardboard in the truck!"

I got so into it I wasn't even thinking about that.

"Me neither," says Robert.

"Fuckin' Lenny!" Larry responds.

"Hey, don't give Lenny a hard time just 'cause we're stupid." I thought that was a great line I said if I don't say so myself.

Then Larry kind of looks us over for the first time: "Why are you guys so dirty? You're disgusting."

"Oh, we had an issue with the Jaws thing. We didn't realize liquids shoot out. How are you not so disgusting?"

"Cause I've been doing this twenty-three years, Asshole! And I'm not gonna let you two idiots get me fired."

"Fair enough."

"Lenny and I are gonna finish our shift. You two idiots are gonna go back to the bar."

I'm thinking, all right, that's fair enough. So Robert and I jump on the back of the truck, one on each side. Larry sees us.

"What the hell are you guys doing?"

"We're going back to the bar, aren't we?"

"You guys can walk."

"Oh, come on, Larry, it's two blocks."

By this point Larry is so fed up with us he just throws his hands up in the air and says, Fuck it.

He gets in the cab, starts driving. And of course he makes a turn to come back around and he goes right past the Sixth Precinct.

And here we are hanging off the back smiling and waving like the idiots we are.

Perfectly on cue, Squad car pulls out, lights flick on, siren wails, and they pull us over. The garbage truck. We jump off, explain to the cops we were just hitching a ride back to the bar. And looking back, in hindsight, that was not the smartest thing to say.

We plead our case. Larry pleads his case. But they don't care. Poor Larry gets a ticket for reckless operation of a motor vehicle for 450 bucks! (he laughs) I shouldn't laugh about that. Larry takes the ticket, we hop up in the cab with Larry--more than anything just to see what he'll do 'cause we stink. He kicks us out of the cab. And rightfully so. It's only a block and a half so we race him back to the bar.

We beat him 'cause he catches the light.

We get inside and Lenny's behind the bar. What's surprising is that this big manly overall clad garbage man--who looks like a garbage man, all in the green with the green cap. He's just casually drinking a Martini with about a dozen olives. Acting as if that's normal. He sees us, we come in here. There's one other guy, this old timer, Mike sitting at the front booth reading the paper and drinking a beer but he doesn't even notice us. We walk inside. Lenny says, "Hey, how'd it go?" Totally casual. No worries at all.

We tell him, Yeah it went pretty good, but before we can really get into it the Garbage Truck comes screeching to a stop right in front of the bar, right at the Bus Stop, and Larry just lays on the horn.

Lenny starts screaming, "All right, all right," like they're an old married couple. He downs the rest of the Martini and takes the glass with the olives with him, which looked utterly ridiculous, this Garbage Man daintily holding a Martini glass by the stem as he walks outside to the Garbage Truck.

As he passes us all he says is, "Thanks, guys. I left the money by the register."

What a Guy! He paid for his drink. Who does that? We watch from inside the bar and Lenny hops up in the cab with the Martini Olives and Larry takes one look at that and throws it out the window. Ha!

And awaaaaaaaaaaaay they go! Off to finish their route that we fucked up...

Robert gets back behind the bar, I resume my post right where you are.

And then, and I shit you not, two of the most beautiful creatures I've ever seen in my life walk into this bar.

Robert and I look at each other like, what the hell is going on here? Have we entered The Twilight Zone? Even Mike turns around

and checks out these ladies. So, of course, being the professional bartender that he is Robert starts a conversation. I myself am feeling lonely sitting down here so I decide to mosey on down and saddle up next to them. Robert has his leaning-over-the-bar-perch-talking-to-them pose going. You know that move. It's a common bartender move. So we're doing well, we've got them surrounded. A blond and a brunette--mid to late twenties. Tall, most likely models of some variety. But they're not stuck up or dumb, they're just cool. Really cool. Gretchen and Vanessa. God knows what nonsense I'm spewing out of my mouth. I may have said I was a train conductor for all I know. But I am totally enraptured by their beauty and my mind has turned to mush. Robert's too. We're just talking. Verbal diarrhea. And these girls, you can tell, they're trying to be nice but something is off. And Robert and I are oblivious until finally Gretchen says, "I'm sorry, I don't mean to be mean," and I'm hanging on her every word, "but you guys Stink!" Robert and I are dying! (laughing) Holy Shit, we totally forgot! We do stink! Of course we stink! We explain to the girls that we were just manning a Garbage Truck but that just weirds these beautiful creatures out more. And of course it does! Who wouldn't it?

So, long story short, these girls are totally weirded out by us. They finish their one drink and leave.

Then finally Danny shows up, catches a whiff of us, tells us we're morons ruining his bar--which he is absolutely right about. He takes over Bartending. Robert and I go back to his place and shower. I borrow some clothes. Then we come back here, and by now everyone has returned from the funeral, and we all get down to a very important good old fashioned afternoon drinking session in honor of our dearly departed friend, the one and only, Tom Hansbury...

(Pause. Drink.)

Anyway...That's one of my favorite Robert stories.

Sound of a latch unlocked: A Man exits the bathroom.

JIM

And it's about time! Jesus.

BERT

Sorry.

JIM

What were you doing in there, reading the entire Sunday Times?

BERT

The machinery wasn't running as smoothly as usual.

JIM

That's because it is not well lubricated.

BERT

You may be on to something there.

JIM

Of course I am. I would like to have a little taste of some whiskey, and I think that you should join me.

BERT

All right. Jameson?

JIM

That'll do the job. And let me buy this good man a drink.

Toby tries to wave him off.

JIM

Oh, come on! Come on! Jesus, just let me buy you a drink.

Toby relents.

BERT

You want a short beer?

JIM

Yeah, that'll do. I was just telling the Garbage Man story.

BERT

Oh, yeah? That's a good one.

JIM

Yeah. It was really something. Robert just went along with it. Kept my crazy unbelievably stupid idea going.

Bert puts down the short beer.

JIM

He was good like that.

BERT

Here you go.

JIM

It was a hell of a service. Very beautiful. (to Toby) Wasn't it?

Toby nods Yes.

JIM

They had a bagpiper. The whole family was there. His brother and sister. All the nephews and nieces. Cathy, of course. She had to be there. And let's raise a glass: to our dear friend, Robert. May you find what you're looking for, and the peace we all deserve.

They all drink. Toby leaves to go smoke.

JIM

It's a sad day. But I must say, I am glad he is no longer suffering. No longer lying in that hospital bed up in the Bronx. That was too depressing. Unfair. He should've been down here, with us. But the stupid bureaucrats in all of their brilliance decide to close the only hospital in the whole neighborhood!

BERT

It's a shame.

JIM

I mean, it had only been there since 1849! What a joke! It's a terrible thing to say, but he should've passed away in the Village. This is where he lived. One of the last bohemians. One of the last to taste how much fun this city used to be. Don't get me wrong, it was tough too. It's gotten cleaned up. But in the process they scrubbed away all the flavor. There's nothing left but million dollar condos on every streetcorner! And across the street a Bank! And across from that a Starbucks... But, then again, I am old. I don't tweet. I don't log on to the youtube and watch a cat wearing a sombrero. I don't have 5,000 "friends" on the facebook. Punch you in your facebook! Ah, I'm just ranting for no reason. I should go around the corner and get a cupcake, cheer myself up.

BERT

You're not wrong.

JIM

I know, but I'm starting to sound like a broken record. I can actually stand outside of myself and see myself ranting about these "new ways" that we all communicate because I've done this

so many times. The more things change, the more more things will change. You can't stop change.

BERT

Don't beat yourself up about it. You gotta remember youth is wasted on the young.

JIM

Yeah, I'm just pissed off 'cause I don't get it and it doesn't feel right to me. Something feels off.

BERT

Maybe you were born in the wrong time.

JIM

Probably. You're probably right. I would like to drive a steam train straight through somebody's blog. That's my idea of sharing my experience.

BERT

You should teach a class at the New School.

JIM

(laughs)

There's an idea. Hello impressionable eighteen-year-old coeds, I'm your new Professor. Professor Jim. The first thing we're going to teach you is how to become a blacksmith while drinking a quart of bourbon and singing the Battle Hymn of the Republic. That's week one!

BERT

I would pay to see that syllabus.

JIM

Oh, that's right. You have to pay. You do. Cold hard cash. Directly to me. In my hand. That's another thing that kills me and then I'll stop.

BERT

What's that?

JIM

No one under age thirty carries any cash.

BERT

It's true.

JIM

They just put everything on cards. Mommy and Daddy's American Express. No one has any concept of money 'cause it's not real. It's all just imaginary barcodes and ones and zeroes floating around in the ether.

Toby walks back in.

BERT

You're also jaded because you're a bartender.

JIM

Yeah. That's also true. I don't know how much longer I can keep slinging drinks to Joe College before I reach across the bar, rip out his neck, and feed it to him.

Toby returns to his seat.

BERT

Egh.

Toby: Egh.

JIM

Too much?

BERT

Might be time to take a break. We can't have you murdering some poor sap. And Toby doesn't want to put up twenty-five grand to bail you out.

Toby shrugs, no he does not.

JIM

No, it's fine. It's fine. I'm all right. It's just the kids these days: all people look at is their phones. A handsome guy and a pretty girl will be sitting right next to each other at the bar and what are they both doing? That's right, they're looking at their phones! Checking their email. Checking their texts. God forbid they miss something. It's terrifying. The whole social fabric is breaking down and I am on the front lines witnessing it but no one is listening to me!

BERT

Well, you're old.

JIM

I know I'm old, I'm not the "target demographic", but that doesn't change the fact that this shit is fucked up. People used to get together to drink to loosen up and then tell stories, maybe meet someone new, have a real encounter. But now we're all just pairs of eyes staring at screens. These kids don't even look at you when they're ordering a drink. It's all (he acts it out with an imaginary phone and his head down) Bud Light...Vodka Soda...Old Fashioned...And I swear to God if you order an Old Fashioned and don't even look at me, you're getting my piss in a glass and you can shut the fuck up and drink your drink or get the fuck out.

BERT

Between that and the credit cards I don't know how we survive.

JIM

Yeah, you're right. Nobody orders drinks anymore. It used to be an unwritten rule, Oh, I'll get this round, you get the next one--you know, back in the last century when we were all interacting like human beings. Now, people order their one drink and pay for their one drink. You can have a group of girls, or guys, I shouldn't generalize because it goes both ways. And these five people are friends, they all come in to the bar together, they're going to hang out together. And what do they do?

BERT

Fly solo.

JIM

Every single one of them is going to go up to the bar and order Their drink and wait for Their drink and then, all five of them are going to do the same thing. It's Madness! It's Maddening! I don't know what happened but all of this fantastic revolutionary high falutin technology that's supposed to make the world a better place, is turning us into lonely selfish Assholes who have no social skills whatsoever!...I am generalizing.

BERT

My favorite is when you bring them their drink and tell them how much it is, they have No Idea that they need to pay you. No foresight, "Hey, maybe I should get out some money." Nothing. Then you're standing there waiting for them to take out their money. And then you inform them that the Large sign that reads Cash Only is not a decorative piece and in fact we don't take your Daddy's gold AmEx card. But there's an ATM right next door because nobody nowadays carries Cash.

JIM

It's kindof amazing.

BERT

"Oh, do you take Bitcoin?"

JIM

I heard that for the first time the other day a guy tried to pay with that.

BERT

How'd you handle it?

JIM

I told him his Bit Part in my bar was over and to get the fuck out.

BERT

Do you know what it is?

JIM

No idea. Nor do I care. On principal. I want somebody to come in to the bar and try to pay me in Gold. Just flip a Krugerrand up in the air for me to catch. Anybody that does that will drink free on me the rest of the night.

BERT

What about silver? Or precious stones?

JIM

No, this is not a Trading Post. I will accept Cash and Gold. And if you've got Confederate Money I'll accept that too, but I won't like it.

BERT

Maybe you'll get another big commercial, won't have to sling the hooch for a while.

JIM

Video games. That's where the money is. Another thing I can't figure out. Are there this many grown men playing this shit, because I don't know any.

BERT

I think the last one I played was Donkey Kong.

JIM

Yeah! At an arcade, right?

BERT

Yeah.

JIM

See, that's okay. At least that's social. This new shit where guys spend three days on their couch trying to get to level 47 is crazy. I don't get it.

BERT

That should be your calling card.

JIM

Hello there. How are you? I'm Jim Vance and I don't get it.

Enter Elisa.

ELISA

(as she walks in)

Hello.

JIM

Hey, Elis.

BERT

Hello.

Toby nods Hello. She kisses each of them.

ELISA

Good to see you all.

JIM

You too. You made it back all right.

ELISA

I got a ride from Brian. But he had to go do...something, so here I am.

BERT

Glad to have you here.

ELISA

Happy to be here.

BERT

Are we having...

Bert holds up a wine glass, but it is different than their normal wine glasses, Elisa has her own wine glass she brought in to the bar that is kept there for her.

ELISA

Yes. Thank you. (she puts all of her stuff down, and there is a lot: various bags, a hat, a scarf, a water bottle, etc) That was a lovely service.

JIM

Yeah, it was.

ELISA

Under the circumstances, I thought, (Bert fills her glass)

JIM

(to Bert)

I got that.

ELISA

Thank you. (Jim nods a "you're welcome") I thought that the speech his brother made was really beautiful.

JIM

No doubt.

ELISA

Talking about, being so honest about how they didn't really get along because they lived such different lives. You know, one very successful--not that Robert wasn't successful but you know what I mean--

JIM

The only success is failure. Because then you're free.

ELISA

All-right. Yes. That may be true. (Jim and Bert share a smile between them) But financially speaking Ken was much more successful than Robert which (Jim gets uncomfortable) even though you may not want to believe that such things matter, in the real world they very much do.

JIM

If all you wanna do is make money, all you gotta do is sell people shit they don't need.

BERT

(joking with him)

You mean like alcohol?

ELISA

Yes. But still, to have such candor given the circumstances and then to get up in front of Everybody and basically say that "My brother was the better man because he cared about people, he helped people", that's a pretty powerful statement to make--

JIM

No, it's not! It's just Kenny making himself look good. "Oh how magnanimous. I am in the company of this Great Man, My Brother!" Who's now Dead! And can't defend himself.

ELISA

I don't think you need to defend yourself when nice things are being said about you.

JIM

Not if they're lies.

ELISA

But they're not lies. Robert was a genuinely good person. A caring person. A kind person.

JIM

But that's a fact. It doesn't need to be said. It's a given.

ELISA

I think it's important to remember. It's important to remind people, because people quickly forget. We remember the Hitlers and Jeffrey Dahmers and Neros and Pol Pots. But we forget the quiet person who does one good thing. No one celebrates the unseen good deed. Which is why we need to be reminded.

JIM

Remind me. Please. Restore my faith in humanity. Because, I can tell you, little lady, it is faltering.

ELISA

All right. Okay...You remember back when Greg and I broke up, when my marriage was ending.

JIM

Of course. That was an awful time for you.

ELISA

(she points at him)

That's true. You're right. It was. Never in a million years did I think that he would leave me. This schlubby balding man who only got his job because I found it for him!

JIM

But you're not bitter.

ELISA

(she smiles)

If anyone was going to leave anyone, I would be the one to leave him. So when he told me he'd met someone and that someone was famous and rich and older and she wanted Him and he was going to go with Her, I mean are you fucking kidding me!

JIM

Fucked up.

ELISA

It's totally fucked up! And I remember right after all of this happened, this conversation that was about to change my entire life, he packed up some of his things and just left, and he didn't seem at all upset about it. That was it. He was leaving me. To be with her. Her with a ton of money. Me with my crappy little apartment. I seriously didn't know what to do with myself. But I figured I needed a drink. And drinking at home alone was far too depressing. And I wasn't gonna call anybody. It was almost one o'clock in the morning on a Tuesday. So where did I go?

Jim points a finger for Here.

ELISA

That's right. Robert was working. Tuesday nights. I knew all of his shifts. It was Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and then Friday and Sunday happy hour.

JIM

That's right.

ELISA

What do you work now over at--

JIM

I do Thursday, Friday, Saturday night. Sunday happy hour.

ELISA

Aren't Sunday happy hours the best.

JIM

Yeah, that's when you can get down to the "business of jawing" as Robert used to say.

ELISA

I used to love the Sunday happy hour in here. When everybody had already gone to church, or done your errands, or gone to the gym, or did some shopping, and then everyone would congregate here to swap stories and find out what was going on in the neighborhood. And then the afternoon sunlight coming in through those windows was so warm and inviting. Some game would be on the TV, in the background, not the focal point, and everyone would just relax and have a few drinks and then next thing you know the sun would be going down and then finally it would get past the buildings across the street and that glow would be gone and everyone would know subconsciously that it was time to go so they would start trickling out. Some would go to dinner together, some would go home to make dinner, or make love...And then we'd all be in bed by 9:30 and up at 6am bright Monday morning ready to face the work week ahead!

JIM

Maybe you.

ELISA

Those Sundays were very important for decompressing and Robert was a big part of that and I miss it.

JIM

We don't do it much anymore.

ELISA

No! It used to be natural. People would instinctively come here in the afternoon. But now...

They sit a moment in silence  
pondering.

ELISA

Finally...

JIM

Fuck...Where does it all go?...

Elisa puts her hand on Jim's shoulder and squeezes his collarbone. Jim smiles appreciatively, then he turns it into a joke.

JIM

Oh, baby, yeah! Right there. Work it. What was all this talk earlier of makin' sweet love?

Elisa playfully slaps his arm.

ELISA

Don't you wish.

JIM

I do, in fact. How did you jump inside of my mind?

They share a look.

JIM

Come on, now. Finish your story.

ELISA

Right. Where was I? Uh...

BERT

You said you were coming here.

ELISA

That's right. Thank you. I was coming here. So I left my place, came over here about one. I remember there was a surprisingly large number of people here for a Tuesday night. The bar was full. Down here was full. So there was really nowhere to sit. I came down here and stood. Robert came over, asked what was going on and I immediately just burst into tears. (Elisa is laughing about this) Ha! So Robert pulls me aside and is like, hey what's going on? I tell him that Greg just left me, I couldn't sit home alone in my apartment. And he's like, do you want to sit down here? And there were guys sitting here who I didn't know and I

told Robert no because I didn't really want to deal with making chit chat or--

JIM

Having some drunk asshole hit on you.

ELISA

Yeah, that too.

JIM

I understand. I have the same problem.

ELISA

Oh do you?

JIM

Yeahp.

ELISA

How do you deal with it?

JIM

I sleep with a lot of awful women.

ELISA

Different strokes for--

JIM

Exactly. (he takes a sip)

ELISA

So Robert asks me if I want to sit in the booth up front at the windows and I tell him yeah sure, that'd be good. So he walks me over, sits me down, and then he acts like he is my waiter at an expensive French restaurant. Suddenly, he has a French accent, there is a towel draped over his forearm, and he is extolling the virtues of our delicious house Cabernet at five dollars a glass. But I'm having none of that. I explain to Robert that I am here to drink whiskey (she slams her fist down on the bar, joking around) Bourbon! With a little bit of ice. And a soda back. And maybe some fine cheeses. Soft cheeses. And some pate. And a plate of meats. Hard meats.

JIM

Ba dum bum.

ELISA

What? Oh, right. And Robert's playing along with his ridiculous French accent. He tells me his name is Guillaume. And then he had an entire elaborate backstory worked out that he must have come up with on the spot right then and there which for the life of me, I can't remember it except that it was totally absurd and somehow involved La Resistance, the Eiffel Tower, and a French Bulldog with awful breath or something like that. It was crazy stuff. So stupid. But very impressive to come up with off the top of his head.

So he brings me my drink and then sits down with me and asks me what happened, am I all right, you know, the basics. But now the French accent is gone. This is real talk, not the joking around stuff. So I'm telling him about Greg and about the other woman, the rich writer, and I'm just blabbing on and on and on. I was really out of my head. Robert just sits there patiently listening to me and I don't know for how long, I had no sense of time, I was just Upset.

But finally it must have been awhile because someone at the bar yells out, "Hey, can I get a drink over here?!"

JIM

So what does Robert do?

ELISA

He gets up and goes and takes care of them.

JIM

He was a pro.

ELISA

Yeah. Refills drinks up and down the bar and then he comes back over to me with a new drink as well. And sits with me again. Now I'm doing most of the talking, and it's mostly nonsense, nothing profound or important. Just talking. Until finally one of the regulars, Bill, turns to Robert and says, "Hey Robert, you've got a case of some duncekis over here." Robert stands up and looks and sees these guys, the guys who were yelling out for drinks--they have reached over the bar, at the taps and are pouring themselves beers.

JIM

Duncekis. I like that.

ELISA

So Robert walks over to them and tells them to get the fuck out. These guys, and they're like frat boy types, they say, Sorry. They know that they were in the wrong but they're laughing like

it's some big joke. Robert tells them again to get the fuck out of here. So now three guys stand up. These frats boys get all standoffish. Standing right up to Robert and Robert's not backing down. He tells them to get the fuck out of my bar. And now these "duncekis" are staring down Robert right in his face. And Robert's not big. I mean, he's not small either. He's average. And these are a couple of big frat football type guys. They could definitely beat the crap out of Robert. One of the guys says something smart like, "You were over there chatting with your girlfriend. I wanted a beer, so I took it." And he pokes Robert in the chest...Now Robert keeps his cool but Bill, who has been sitting quietly at the end of the bar sipping his Stella for God knows how long, he gets up and walks over to them. And it's important to remember here that Bill might be almost 50 but he's big--

JIM

He's enormous.

ELISA

And he looks fuckin' crazy.

JIM

Yes, he does.

ELISA

Bill walks over to them and just stands there. After a moment he finally says, "All right, boys. Time to go." And these frat dudes are staring them down trying to look tough. Robert standing there with his chest puffed out. Finally Bill says, "I ain't gonna ask you again." Now I don't know what those boys saw in Bill's eyes but when they looked at him the last time they both immediately stuck their tails between their legs and were out the door. Robert went behind the bar, Bill came back over by me and all he said was, "Duncekis." (she takes a drink) Robert kept coming back over to me, and then as it got later and cleared out I moved down here and we sat and talked until the bar closed. Robert stayed with me. He told me about his break up with Cath and how that was his fault and men are stupid. And we sat here, got Really drunk, and shared the real deep shit within ourselves, the secret stuff.

JIM

And what would that be?

ELISA

Oh, no. That's between me and Robert and the bar. I can't reveal those secrets. It's like they say--

JIM

(ear to bar)

Hello, bar? It's me, Jim. You know me. Can you tell me Elisa's secrets?--

ELISA

What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. Robert pulled down the gates and then it's only two blocks, but he walked me home. By now the sun was almost coming up. We hugged outside of my building, we both had tears in our eyes it was such an emotional conversation and now I'm getting all emotional just thinking about it--

Jim hands her a napkin.

ELISA

Thank you. We hugged and it felt like for an hour. Now I realize it was probably only a minute at most. But I kid you not it felt like an hour. And I really needed, that night, a shoulder to cry on. Quite literally.

I went inside, Robert went home and I went to bed and woke up the next morning--well, actually it was later on that day. Sometime in the afternoon--I'd called out sick to work, that wasn't happening. But I woke up, first of all, incredibly hungover. But second, I felt okay. I didn't feel like my world was collapsing all around me which I very easily could have. I felt like I was going to get through this. It was gonna be rough for a while but I would come out the other side. I would survive. And a lot of that was because of Robert.

JIM

To Robert.

ELISA

To Robert.

They all raise their glasses and drink.

ELISA

But that's just how Robert was. He gave a shit. He would sit there with you for hours or loan you money if you needed it--

JIM

What are you trying to say?

ELISA

Nothing! Nothing at all.

JIM

I'm just teasing you.

ELISA

Oh, okay. I didn't know if I struck a nerve. I didn't want to do that.

JIM

No, it's fine.

ELISA

That's just how Robert was. Like remembering that homeless guy, the one that used to sleep at the bus stop? Remember that guy? What was his name?

JIM

Oh, I remember him...

ELISA

(to Toby)

What's that?

Elisa puts her ear to Toby and Toby says something.

ELISA

Franklin! That's right. Franklin.

JIM

Franklin? Was that his name?

ELISA

Yes. Franklin. Thank you, Toby. Robert took a liking to that guy. I mean, he was crazy. Some serious mental problems there. But Robert always tried to help him out. If he was getting some food delivered to the bar he would get something for Franklin too. I think he gave him an old coat of his.

JIM

But that's just the kind of guy Robert was...is...was.

Enter Danny (Owner) with Robert's ex-wife, Cathy.

JIM

Hey!

DANNY

Greetings, everyone.

JIM

Hey, Cath, I didn't know you were coming by.

CATHY

I thought it the right thing to do. To come here and have a drink.

JIM

And you are correct.

DANNY

(joking, they are best friends)

Good to see you again, James.

JIM

You too, Daniel. It has been too long.

ELISA

Hey, Cath.

CATHY

Hi, Elisa. (they hug)

ELISA

It was a beautiful service.

DANNY

Wasn't it? That's what I was just saying in the car.

CATHY

I was glad that they put up those pictures of Robert.

DANNY

(to Bert)

Hello there, kind sir.

BERT

Hello, yourself.

DANNY

I would like a drink of the alcoholic variety. Preferably something in the brownish color range.

BERT

That's a good choice. I have a lot of that.

DANNY

Cath, what are you having?

CATHY

Oh, just a glass of wine.

DANNY

Red or white, darling?

CATHY

Uh, white.

BERT

(to Danny)

Redbreast?

DANNY

Yeahp. And a shorty.

Bert nods, he knows what beer to pour.

ELISA

How are you doing?

CATHY

I'm okay. How about you?

ELISA

Oh, you know--

DANNY

I hate to say it, and this is gonna sound kind of morbid. (to Elisa) It may offend some more delicate ears.

ELISA

Oh, should I cover up?

DANNY

But, I kind of wish they had him laid out. His body. I would've liked to have seen him. There. I said it. You can all hate me.

ELISA

No--

CATHY

I understand--

JIM

You are an animal! A savage!

DANNY

I know.

JIM

You should be locked up for even expressing such ideas.

DANNY

(joking)

I'm out of line, I realize that.

CATHY

I can understand what you're saying. But I'm actually glad he wasn't. If you'd seen him the last few days you would know what I mean.

Cathy starts to cry. Elisa comforts her.

ELISA

Hey, it's all right.

CATHY

I'm okay. I'm sorry.

DANNY

No, it's my fault. I'm an idiot. I know you're right.

JIM

Different strokes for different folks.

ELISA

That's right.

CATHY

I'm fine, really.

DANNY

Let's all raise a glass here. To my dear friend, colleague, employee, but mostly my friend, Robert. To Robert!

ELISA

To Robert!

JIM

Here here!

CATHY

(quietly)

To Robert.

Toby raises his glass.

DANNY

Who needs a drink? Toby, your glass is empty. Can we get this man another of your finest Johnny Walker of the Black variety.

BERT

I can do that.

CATHY

I was glad to see so many people made it out there. It's kind of a trek.

DANNY

Yeah, it was good. There were some people, like Jason Furia, who Jesus, I hadn't seen in--

JIM

A long time--

DANNY

A long time.

ELISA

We were just recalling some of our favorite Robert stories.

DANNY

Oh, yeah?

CATHY

Like what?

Bert puts Toby's drink down.

DANNY

I got that.

Toby raises his glass in a gesture of thanks. Toby takes a sip and then he leaves to go smoke.

JIM

Like that time we commandeered the local Garbage Truck.

DANNY

Oh yeah, that's right.

CATHY

You idiots.

JIM

That's the proper term, I think. Yes.

ELISA

I was telling about my break up with Greg and that night Robert spent with me.

Everyone is silent a moment. No one knew they ever slept together. Elisa finally realizes...

ELISA

No! I don't mean like that. Here, at the bar. And then he walked me home.

CATHY

(plays it straight)

What, you were too good for him?

ELISA

No, no, not at all. I was just having a rough night--

JIM

You weren't attracted to Robert? You didn't think he was a handsome man?

ELISA

What?! No, I misspoke. Of course he was attractive. He was very attractive. He was a very attractive handsome man and (she sees their smiles) you're all fucking with me.

They all laugh.

CATHY

Of course we're fucking with you!

DANNY

(hugs her)

Oh Elisa, I love you so much but it's too easy.

JIM

But you're not too easy.

ELISA

Oh!

DANNY

Oh!

JIM

He would've gotten mauled to death by--how many cats now anyways?

ELISA

(playful)

Only two! You know it's only two. Stop!

DANNY

Oh, that is funny.

The laughter dies down. People catch their breaths. Finally...

CATHY

(dead straight)

But seriously, you fucked him, right?

Jim almost does a spit take and then starts laughing and coughing.

ELISA

No! No!

CATHY

I'm just teasing you.

Jim coughs and goes to the bathroom.

DANNY

You all right there?

Jim coughs and waves him off. Toby returns.

DANNY

Oh, boy. (he looks around) Look at this place. It's Packed! Just packed on a Sunday.

CATHY

Line out the door.

DANNY

Right.

ELISA

Danny, do you remember that guy, Franklin?

Toby returns to his seat. He rolls his eyes.

DANNY

Who?

ELISA

Franklin. He used to sleep on the bus stop bench.

DANNY

Oh, yeah yeah yeah. That homeless guy. Fuck that guy.

ELISA

I was saying how Robert would help him out. Give him food or a coat. That's the kind of guy Robert was.

DANNY

That little fucker drove away more business. He stank. And he chose, for Whatever reason, to camp out right in front of my bar. I'm sorry but good riddance. I'm trying to run a business here.

ELISA

Yes...But...

Cathy puts her hand on Elisa's arm as if to say, Drop it. Jim exits the bathroom.

DANNY

You wanna hear some Robert stories? There's a lot of great Robert stories. You remember Montreal and Saratoga? Jim remembers Saratoga. That was a night.

JIM

I don't remember much.

DANNY

Exactly. My favorite Robert story is the Hammer story.

ELISA

I don't think I know that one. Do I?

CATHY

(genuinely surprised)

No.

DANNY

Jim knows what I'm talking about.

Jim laughs.

DANNY

So this is during the day. It's the afternoon. On a Tuesday or Wednesday?

JIM

It was during the week.

DANNY

During the week. In the afternoon. Happy hour. No one's in here except Thin Tim and like some young couple up in the front booth. It's a beautiful day. Sunny. Robert's reading the paper, got his glasses on like he would (he pantomimes this). Thin Tim is sipping a beer at the bar across from Robert. No big deal. A typical weekday before work lets out and people start showing up.

So in walks this guy, who Robert described as forty-something, medium build, dressed kind of shabby but not homeless. Wearing like a really old brown leather jacket that looks like it's been

laid out in the sun and run over by a tank. He also has on not a cowboy hat but a...what do you call it?

JIM

Akubra.

DANNY

Yeah. That. And long greasy hair under it. But the thing Robert noticed right away when he walked over to him was one: he had both of his hands in his coat pockets and two: he had typewriter eyes.

ELISA

What are typewriter eyes?

DANNY

It's almost like your eyes are constantly twitching back and forth.

JIM

Almost like you've been shocked.

DANNY

Yeah, as if someone stuck their fingers in an outlet and the shock resulted in permanent eyeball vibration.

JIM

That would be the, uh, medical term.

DANNY

Of course! So this dude's got his hands in his pockets, typewriter eyes, and he orders a long island iced tea.

Jim chuckles.

BERT

We Are famous for those.

DANNY

We don't serve those. We don't make those. So Robert informs him of our position on the long island iced tea front. So this guy orders a Rum and Coke. So Robert goes over here, by Tim and he's making this drink. Meanwhile our Guy has leaned all the way across the bar, pulled a Ruler out of his jacket pocket and is Attempting to hit the button that will pop open the register so he can presumably grab the money. So Robert sees this and he does kind of a double take which I'm sure I would've done the

same thing. This guy's whacking for the register and not hitting what he needs to hit because his plan is not the most thought out. Robert sees this and runs down the bar towards him. Now this guy, obviously crazy, is waving a wooden ruler in the air and slicing it around like a sword. So Robert's trying to calm him down but that's not working. And now, on a sidebar, after working in the bar industry for the better part of my adult life, I have learned a few important things. One is that you can deal with drunk. You can deal with stupid. And you can deal with stupid and drunk. But what you can't deal with is Crazy. And typewriter eyes, long island iced tea, and ruler: that is at the top of the list of crazy.

CATHY

How did he never tell me this?

DANNY

I think this was right after you guys had (motions for split up).

CATHY

Ah.

DANNY

So this crazy guy is waving a ruler around. And Thin Tim, God Bless him, he tried to get involved but this dude is wildly slicing a ruler in the air so it's best to stay out of the way. This guy is demanding money saying, "Give me your money, give me your money." And swinging this fuckin' ruler at Robert. It's one of those old school rulers with the metal edge so the thing's dangerous. God only knows where this tweaker got it.

So obviously Robert's not gonna give him any money but Robert's desperate to figure out a way out of this situation. He's telling the guy to calm down but that is just making him more manic. And now, we don't keep a lot of weaponry here at the bar. In my experience it's best not to have anything that is truly dangerous behind the bar because you're just going to end up hurting not the person you want to but some other innocent bystander.

But now that being said, we just so happened to be re-hanging some pictures around here the day before. So next to the register, along with a box of picture hooks and nails, was a hammer.

So Robert grabs this hammer. And now Robert is fuckin' pissed. He was in here quietly reading the paper and--

CATHY

--with his reading glasses on--

DANNY

--that's right. With his reading glasses on. And then this crazy fuckin' lunatic comes in here and starts threatening him not with a gun, not with a knife, but with a fuckin' ruler!

JIM

Have some Goddamn decency. If you're going to try to rob a place, use a gun or a knife like a normal human being.

DANNY

That's right! What you said is just a little bit crazy but I know what you mean and I agree with you.

JIM

I'm just saying, there are rules.

DANNY

Yes. There are. So Robert grabs this fuckin' hammer and he's fed up with this nonsense and this asshole. So he slams the hammer down on the bar. Like a warning shot right across the forehead of this fucker. If you look you can see it right here. (he points it out) He marches right around the bar. Now, I don't know but I'm assuming this asshole who I'm sure, and we would later find out was a dope addict who needed to score, I'm sure this guy had to be Terrified. I mean we all know Robert, the sweet gentle Robert but there was that other side that Rarely came out.

CATHY

Rarely.

ELISA

I don't think I've ever seen it.

JIM

It's like Haley's Comet.

DANNY

That's right. Well this was one of those times and Robert, wielding this fuckin' hammer, went straight at this guy. And he backpedaled out of the bar and Robert just kept going straight at him, screaming at him, "Come on, you Mother fucker! You wanna go! Come on! You fuckin' asshole! Come on! Come on!" So now the Crazy Baton had been passed from our crazy ruler wielding friend to our local bartender friend, Robert.

Robert gets out on the sidewalk and he's all fired up, just going straight at this guy. And our guy, I have to say smartly-- he was a drug addict he knew not to draw attention to himself. He tucks away the ruler and now all people see is our dear beloved friend Robert screaming like a lunatic at this guy and chasing him down the street with a Hammer!

CATHY

How far did he get?

DANNY

All the way to the corner. Now you have to remember, this is a beautiful summer day. It's not every day you see a guy screaming at the Top of his Lungs and brandishing a hammer.

So finally Thin Tim calms Robert down and our tweaker friend takes off down the street.

So he's gone. Robert slowly calms down. The adrenaline starts to go back down. Tim and Robert head back in the bar. They're both just happy that the whole strange ordeal is over. That couple in the front window, no doubt terrified, they take off. Never to be seen or heard from again. And I can't blame them. If I came into a bar for a quiet drink and it was soon filled with a dude waving a ruler like a sword and a bartender banging around a hammer, I might not want to put that establishment high on my list of places to visit again.

The whole strange ordeal is over.

CATHY

But it's not over.

DANNY

No. So two things happen. First, somebody calls the cops. Someone who didn't know Robert must have seen him waving that hammer around out on the street and called the cops. And, in fairness to that person, not an unreasonable move. If I saw someone I did not know on the sidewalk threatening someone else with a hammer, I most likely would have done the same.

Now the Sixth Precinct as you all know is two blocks away. So within ten minutes the cops are here.

But in those ten minutes Robert and Thin Tim have time to think and they quickly realize that they need to get rid of the hammer. So Thin Tim leaves with the hammer and takes it to his apartment.

The cops show up and Robert plays dumb: "What hammer?" The cops explain to him that people saw him with the hammer. Again Robert plays dumb.

JIM

(referencing "Treasure of the Sierra Madre")

"Badges? What Badges?"

DANNY

So now what Robert doesn't know is that the Tweaker also went to the cops. What possessed this drug addict to think that going to the cops was a good idea is beyond me, but he does. First he ditches his ruler of course. Then he tells the cops that he was just having a drink and then the bartender went all Chuck Norris on him and threw him out because he didn't like how he looked. Didn't like his eyes. He has a condition, he says. Now wait, it gets better. So Robert has to go down to the Sixth Precinct and now he has to just come clean and tell the whole story. He tried to cover up the hammer but he now knows he has to just fess up. So he tells the whole thing, the typewriter eyes, the ruler, trying to open the cash register, then the hammer, chasing him down the block, and then getting rid of the hammer.

And the cops find the whole thing Hysterical but because Robert lied initially and this guy is claiming assault, they have to go through with it.

So Robert has to hire a (laughing) lawyer, he has to go to court, he has to have Thin Tim come in as a witness because there is no other witness to what happened inside the bar, remember that couple disappeared, and everyone else only saw what went on Outside the bar.

So after all of this time, all of this money, all of this absolute waste, the Judge dismisses all charges against Robert and Typewriter Eyes disappears back into whatever hole he crawled out of...

ELISA

Wow.

CATHY

Only Robert.

DANNY

Right. Only Robert.

JIM

You're forgetting the best part.

DANNY

Oh, right. So his next shift, Robert's next shift, what do you think happened?

ELISA

I don't know.

JIM

"I'll have a Yellow Hammer Slammer. Nope: make that a Hawaiian Hammer."

DANNY

We put hammers all over this bar. Every drawer--

JIM

Every cabinet--

DANNY

Inside the coolers. We even put one in the toilet. In the tank and then unhooked the handle so Robert would have to fix it.

CATHY

Brutal.

DANNY

But man was that funny. (he laughs)

JIM

To the Velvet Hammer!

DANNY

The Velvet Hammer!

CATHY

The Velvet Hammer.

ELISA

Hammertime!

Danny and Jim laugh.

DANNY

Elisa, that's good.

ELISA

(has no idea why or the reference)

Yeah? Okay.

JIM

I think we need a refill.

BERT

Well that's why I'm here.

CATHY

I got this one.

JIM

No, come on--

DANNY

Absolutely not--

CATHY

Let me buy a round. Jesus!

DANNY

Well, all right.

JIM

If you insist.

ELISA

That is a great story, Danny.

DANNY

One of my favorites. It's so Robert.

CATHY

It doesn't surprise me.

DANNY

No, if you think about it it makes perfect sense.

JIM

They always say speak softly and carry a hammer.

CATHY

Is that how it goes?

JIM

Something like that.

DANNY

That is a Fun Robert story but you wanna know my Favorite Robert story from this bar, and it's a short one.

ELISA

Sure.

CATHY

Absolutely. Do I know it?

DANNY

I don't know. Do you know the Indian story?

Toby nods Yes. Jim knows it but doesn't say anything.

CATHY

No, definitely not.

ELISA

No, I don't think so.

DANNY

This must've been ten years ago. It was in here. Jim, you were bartending.

JIM

That sounds like something I've been known to do. From time to time.

DANNY

It was a Friday or Saturday night, I don't remember which.

JIM

It was a Friday.

DANNY

How do you know that?

JIM

I remember.

DANNY

(small pause, then)

I stand corrected, it was a Friday night but it was early, only about nine o'clock. There aren't that many people in here, it's just starting to fill up. In walks this Indian, and I mean an enormous dude. I'm a big guy and this guy made me feel small. He's got a leather jacket on, long greasy hair, and he just quietly comes in and sits down right here.

ELISA

When you say Indian do you mean--

DANNY

I mean Cowboys and Indians--

JIM

Comanche.

DANNY

I mean a large scary and may I include, already drunk, Indian. And you can tell this fella is upset about something. I can practically feel the energy coming off of him. It's not a good energy. It's a mean energy. A violent energy. And, mind you, he hasn't said a word. All he's done is come in here and sat down. But his mere presence changed the entire feel of the bar. I've never seen anything like it.

JIM

And I have to serve him.

DANNY

That's right! Jim has to ask him,

JIM

"What'll it be, kemosabe?" But obviously I didn't say that.

DANNY

No. I would have thrown you out of the bar for saying that.

JIM

I would've thrown myself out. And kicked my own ass.

DANNY

No, so Jim asks him what he wants and Robert and I are basically hiding out over here letting Jim deal with him.

CATHY

What did he order?

JIM

Well whiskey. A double. Neat.

CATHY

Oh, Jesus.

DANNY

Yeah. Not exactly a White Wine Spritzer.

Danny laughs, they do too.

JIM

If I'd had any balls I should've just put down like a large water.

DANNY

But no. Smartly, Jim gets this very large angry man his whiskey which he proceeds to down in one gulp and then instantly order another. Now at this point people are starting to move away. I mean they are giving this Indian a Wide berth. Robert is seeing the same thing that I'm seeing and he says, "We've gotta do something about this." I'm thinking, Yeah, like get the hell out of here. Meanwhile Young James over here has the unfortunate task of pouring this man another large whiskey.

JIM

Let me tell you, there is no way to water down a double whiskey neat.

DANNY

So Robert, who's been sitting here since happy hour imbibing many drinks himself, picks up his glass, his brandy snifter mind you, and he goes, "This is ridiculous. I'll talk to him." Robert walks right on over and sits down next to this hulk of a man. And I'm thinking, my first thought is: Robert's dead. This Indian is going to hit him so hard his head will probably pop right off and I am going to be forced to catch it. He's not gonna live, that was my first thought.

JIM

Perfectly logical.

DANNY

My second thought was thinking if we have anything around here I can get my hands on to use once this Indian starts pummelling Robert.

CATHY

You mean like a hammer?

DANNY

Yeah, no hammer. But I do notice the broom over here and I slowly inch myself towards that broom, trying not to draw attention.

Meanwhile Robert sits right down next to this guy and starts talking to him. I have no idea what he is saying but I am just waiting--slowly reaching my hand out for the broom handle--waiting for the shit to hit the fan which I am 95 percent certain is about to happen.

ELISA

Jim, what were you thinking?

JIM

I was in more of a state of shock. I mean I've dealt with my fair share of sketchy drunks. Guys you're not sure which way they're gonna go. But even I, at that time, was thinking Robert had just jumped out of the warm safety of the boat and was about to go toe to toe with a Great White.

DANNY

Absolutely.

JIM

I have to admit, part of me was glad it was Robert and not me. Part of me was genuinely scared for him. And part of me was in absolute awe at what he was attempting.

DANNY

It was like trying to pull a hand grenade though the eye of a needle.

JIM

Yes. Or--Oh, that's pretty good.

DANNY

Thanks. So I'm watching Robert. And Robert's not talking anymore. But whatever he said is slowly sinking in to the Indian's brain. And he's getting even more and more jacked up--

JIM

Amped up--

DANNY

Like he's going to blow. Like a tea kettle. And Robert just sits there looking at him. No fear coming from Robert. I'm sure any minute Robert's going to be on the floor and I'm gonna be the dipshit hitting this enormous creature with a broom like a fly swatter and only making him angrier. I'm waiting and waiting. And then he turns to Robert and I'm like, okay, here it is. Here we go. He looks right at Robert and Robert looks right at him

and then this huge Indian just breaks down and starting sobbing and grabs a hold of Robert and clutches him.

JIM

Totally engulfs him--

DANNY

In a hug. Robert just disappears into his arms. This huge Indian's got his head on Robert's shoulder and he's just sobbing uncontrollably. I'm in a state of shock.

JIM

I felt the whole bar just collectively exhale. It was probably just you and me who were holding our breathes but it felt like everyone.

DANNY

So Robert keeps hugging this Indian. What else you gonna do? I drink an entire beer in about four seconds I'm so relieved that tension is over. The Indian cries for a little bit, he gets it all out of his system then regains his composure. And now he feels like a totally different person. All that anger and hate that he had fueled from inside which was palpable to everybody, is gone. Now he just looks like a Big Indian. Not a scary big Indian. He wipes the hair from out of his face and it's not a mean or an angry looking face. It's actually a very jovial kind of face.

JIM

Jovial?

DANNY

Well what would you call it?

JIM

Tranquil.

DANNY

Tranquil? No, it was not tranquil.

JIM

Then what?

DANNY

I don't know!

ELISA

Serene!?

CATHY

Placcid!?

DANNY

No.

BERT

Kind.

DANNY

Yeah. It was a kind face. Which you never would have known with all that hair in front of it.

ELISA

So then what happened?

DANNY

Then he finished his drink, got up, patted Robert on the shoulder and left.

ELISA

That was it?

DANNY

That was it.

CATHY

What did Robert say to him? Did he ever tell you?

DANNY

No. I never found out.

JIM

I did.

DANNY

Really?

JIM

Yeahp.

DANNY

What did he say?

JIM

He said..."That's between me and the Indian."

ELISA

Good line.

JIM

That's the God's honest truth.

Toby leaves to go smoke.

DANNY

So you never found out either.

JIM

Some things are best left unsaid.

CATHY

Well I'll drink to that story. Thanks for sharing, Danny.

DANNY

You bet.

They all raise a glass and drink.  
Now Danny gets emotional, covers  
his face.

CATHY

Hey, it's all right.

Jim puts his hand on Danny's  
shoulder.

ELISA

It's okay.

DANNY

(thru tears)

I know, I know.

JIM

Just let it out, big guy.

Danny is really feeling it. Bert  
pours him a glass of water, puts  
it down in front of him and Danny  
immediately downs it.

CATHY

There you go.

DANNY

Oh. It just...It just took me back. I miss those times. I miss the simplicity of it all. Coming in here. Meeting up in here and having a few drinks. Life gets complicated but that is simple. I'm just... (he gets emotional again) I'm just so sad that Robert's gone and I don't know how much longer we'll be here and maybe it's best that Robert won't see it gone, and that we'll all have these memories.

CATHY

That what's gone? What are you talking about?

DANNY

The bar. When it's gone. Who knows what will happen.

ELISA

Why would it be gone?

JIM

When the lease is up. The rent here will be...

DANNY

Too much. That's it. We'll have no choice.

JIM

Fuckin' Yuppies.

CATHY

Well maybe that won't happen.

DANNY

No. It will. We've already talked to them.

ELISA

How much do they want to increase it?

DANNY

Triple.

ELISA

Triple?! They can't do that.

DANNY

Oh yes. I assure you, they can.

ELISA

But what'll you do? What are you going to do?

DANNY

There's nothing to do. It's impossible. We'd have to charge fifteen dollars a drink.

JIM

I only pay fifteen dollars a drink if there are tits involved.

ELISA

We can't let this happen. We need to fight this. This is an important place for the community. We need to start a petition, get signatures!

DANNY

I appreciate your spirit, Elisa, but it's a bar. This isn't St. Vincent's.

CATHY

It sucks.

DANNY

You're right. It does suck. First we lose Robert and then we lose Robert's place. Aw, shit. It's too depressing to even think about. I need a drink. What do you recommend for someone who has lost their dear friend and their dear bar?

BERT

(finger to his lips, thinking)

Hmmm...Perhaps something in the sad Irish variety--

JIM

Just get this man a Jameson already! Jesus!

Toby returns.

BERT

One Jameson, it is. Good choice.

DANNY

Poor Robert. Goddamnit! And seeing him, at the end...

CATHY

When was the last time you saw him?

Toby sits back down.

DANNY

(thinking)

Uh... (to Jim) when did we go up there? Monday was it?

JIM

Monday, yeah.

CATHY

That's good. I'm glad it was Monday. Monday was the last good day Robert had. He looked okay that day. What am I talking about, he looked like shit. But it got worse after that.

JIM

It's all right, I know what you mean.

CATHY

I think he kept up all of his strength for you guys. Most of his good friends came that day and I think he wanted to try to show some fortitude. To have some dignity. He gave it all he had for that day. I'm glad. That's a good way for you guys to remember him. Still having a sparkle in his eye. He put on a good face that day. Because I will tell you, it got worse right after that. It went downhill fast. It's like he was holding on, storing up all of his strength for one final performance and then after that all of the air just came out of him.

Pthhhhhhhh...

I stayed with him the last two nights. I don't know why. We hadn't been together in years. But I had to be there. Maybe part of it was me feeling sorry for myself 'cause I have no one. Or feeling sorry for Robert... Just a couple of lonely people in a hospital room together (she laughs). I'm sure we weren't the only ones... I'm sure lots of people were dying and lots of people were being cut up and sewed back together, and lots of people were being born. And hopefully the good outweighed the bad... He was a difficult man, Robert. Let's not pretend he was perfect. He wasn't. He could be petty and childish and stupid and selfish. Very selfish. That's a streak we all own. But he could also be funny, and crazy and smart and thoughtful. And hopefully the good outweighed the bad.

He spent his life hoping for a break and it never did come. Them's the breaks I guess. Not everybody can get that big break. Otherwise we'd all be on TV and there'd be nobody in here to serve drinks to.

JIM

(joking)

Hey, this is a success factory.

CATHY

(laughs)

Sure it is...This is a place to lick your wounds. To dream big. To talk big. Oh, to talk big. Nobody could talk bigger than Robert. It's kind of sad now. But it was never arrogant. It could get pretentious. But he in the end knew his place in the world: Bar tender. That's what he really was. Wanted to be an actor, wanted to be an artist, ended up a bartender. Not the first nor the last.

We talked a lot in his last few days about Failure. He kept saying that in some ways he was a failure and in some ways he wasn't. There's a lot of luck involved in all of it anyway.

JIM

(raises his glass)

Here here.

Danny raises his glass.

ELISA

(raises her glass)

True.

Toby raises his glass.

CATHY

He loved everybody very much. He hoped you all knew that. He enjoyed every minute you all spent together--the good, the bad, and the ugly. And he enjoyed spending time with all of you. That's the greatest gift you can give someone is your time. And Robert gave a lot of his, to all of you...

The last night before he passed he was in and out of it. He would wake up, say, "Hey" and then pass out. He did that a couple times. The strangest was when he woke up, wide awake, or so I thought--he brought his head up, his eyes wide open, and all he said was: "Peaches are delicious."

And then Boom, he passed back out. I laughed. It was almost like a comedy routine. You could never come up with the stuff it was so random. "I like dogs very much." (she laughs)

But early in the wee hours which is actually quite fitting because Robert did some of his best philosophizing late at night, here, probably with a glass of Remy in his hand, talking about something he read in the paper or some revolution happening halfway around the world...

He was lucid for a little while. And he told me, don't sweat the small stuff. Go big or go home! I'm not sure if he was joking about that one. But he did say that he regretted never going Big. He never took a huge Risk. He always had a backup plan or a Plan B or a job (motions to the bar) to get by. He regretted not putting it all on the line and failing miserably. He even said most likely he would not have succeeded. But at least taking the risk. Even if you lost it all: lost all your money, lost your apartment. Wound up out on the street. Because that never would have happened. We all have too many friends and too many people who care about us and you don't realize it until you really totally completely fail...That, or you're close to Death. Ha! Robert found that very funny. That was his big regret: not risking it all and failing miserably. It's something to think about. We all fall into these lives and these routines, myself included. And when do we ever truly take a risk? Take a Big chance? It's rare. It takes huge cahones to do it. And for most people it's not gonna be a shiny success. But, there's something to be said for that. And it obviously meant something to Robert because it was one of the last things we talked about--

Cathy's emotion hits her and she brings her hand to her face. Danny puts his arm around her.

DANNY

It's all right.

CATHY

I'm sorry.

DANNY

You don't have to apologize.

JIM

Nobody's got to apologize for showing real human emotion. Not on my watch!

DANNY

It's something to think about. I don't know why that would've been on Robert's mind but it's something to think about.

CATHY

Yeah, I don't know either. I really haven't had time to fully process it yet but I'm definitely going to give it some thought.

ELISA

At least if you Risk it All you feel something, good or bad.

JIM

That's true.

DANNY

Yeah but sometimes it's easier said than done. It's easier for a single guy--and Robert Was a single guy--to say that than somebody with a wife and three kids.

ELISA

Of course.

CATHY

No doubt.

JIM

Maybe he was simply saying that that Risk, it doesn't have to be this huge enormous life changing thing that you do. You can still risk without fundamentally destroying your family. It sounds to me the more of a smell all the roses, kiss all of the pretty ladies, tip your waiter well than merely meaning you have to go climb Mount Everest.

DANNY

Maybe so.

CATHY

Or maybe it's just about not losing sight of what those things are that are worth taking a risk for.

TOBY

Or maybe it's that he was fucking with all of you.

Silence. People look to each other.

JIM

That's definitely a possibility too.

Toby gets down off of his barstool and begins...

TOBY

The first time I met Robert was almost thirty years ago. He was very young, fresh to the city. He was bartending at this place up in the garment district that I used to go to after work. (he

thinks a moment) Sullivan's. It's not there anymore obviously. I came in there one night after a long day spent mostly on the phone yelling at people and having people yell at me. I sat down at the end of the bar, just like here. I ordered my drink, the same drink, just like here. And I sat there for a good half hour without saying a word. I would want another drink I'd motion to Robert and he'd come over and refill me. No small talk, no chit chat. I didn't know Robert but he didn't ask me a million questions, ask me some bullshit about how my day was--none of that nonsense. And then I pulled out my cigarettes and before I got the cigarette to my lips (Bert flicks a lighter on), there was Robert with a light, ready to go. And that told me two things. (he lights his cigarette) One, that he was paying attention. And two, that he was smart enough to know when to shut up.

So on that next drink--

DANNY

You know you can't smoke in here.

Toby gives Danny a long look and continues telling his story. And smoking.

TOBY

Like I was saying, on the next drink I introduced myself to Robert. And then, we began to talk. And we stayed talking for about thirty years...

Back then, I wish you all could have seen him as a fresh faced, eager young Actor. Like many in this town he was full of excitement, full of hope, there were endless possibilities. He was gonna do great things. That's what they all think when they first get here. But then the months turn into years which turns into you're not that young man anymore which turns into the dreams become the hobby and, as is often the case, life gets in the way. The business of living takes over...

The great thing about Robert was that even though he didn't get that success as an actor he hoped for, he didn't bitch and whine about it. My granddaughter, Isabel, and her friends, all they do is bitch and moan about the dumbest things. And they're teenagers! What do they have to complain about?!

CATHY

Nothing.

TOBY

That's right, nothing. Youth is wasted on the young, it's very true. But Robert wasn't like that. Sure, he could get frustrated. Or scream out if he didn't get something he thought he deserved. But on the day-to-day, in the real world we all live in Robert didn't traffic in the art of self-pity. He had no stomach for it. And that is becoming a rarer and rarer commodity, my friends. Trust me, I have grandkids. I see it. I see where it's going. An entitled whiny generation that's where we're headed--

JIM

Who don't know how to tip.

TOBY

That's very true.

JIM

And they don't know how to drink either.

TOBY

Well, maybe that's not such a bad thing. I hope that they don't know how to smoke either. Because as we just saw, this shit will kill you...

Toby takes a drag.

TOBY

Robert was one of my closest friends. He was a real solid individual who gave a shit, about the things that really matter. And these are also becoming rarer and rarer nowadays. Robert never would have gotten caught up in all the nonsense and noise we have to deal with on a daily basis now. No, Robert was (to Elisa) a reader, of real books.

ELISA

That's right. A big Chandler guy.

TOBY

(to Danny)

He was a music guy.

DANNY

We saw Buddy Guy at least two dozen times.

TOBY

He got out there and interacted with people. Here, he interacted with people. Face to face. There was no hiding behind screens. No checking your facebook.

JIM

(general, not directed at Toby)

I'll punch you in the Facebook!

TOBY

(ignores Jim's antics and simply continues)

He was a professional at the lost art of getting to know somebody.

DANNY

I'll drink to that. Everybody.

They all raise a glass.

DANNY

To the lost art of getting to know somebody.

They all cheers and drink.

TOBY

It's a great irony that the man known for bringing a room together, for bringing People together, died alone in a hospital bed up in the Bronx. And I didn't (to Cathy) mean it that way, I know he wasn't alone, you know what I mean.

CATHY

Yes.

TOBY

The last time I saw Robert was last Sunday. I wanted to see him while he was still there and remember him that way...

I sat with him. I held his hand. He was very weak but he put on a good face. He was trying to show his strength even though he had very little left.

We talked about our families and we talked about our lives, some of the good times we'd had together, some of the trips we'd been on. We talked about food. We talked about regrets. We talked about how much we were going to miss each other. (he gets a little emotional) And whenever it got to be too much, Pnaaaa!! (he makes a fart noise), Robert would fart, and we would laugh and laugh. The first time I thought it was just a coincidence. But sure enough, when I started to get emotional again Pnaaaa!! (ibid). He would let one rip. And he must've done

this four or five times. I have no idea how he kept it all stored up, and the strength to keep it, and then the timing to know when to deploy it. Pnaaaa!!(ibid) It was unbelievable! And there we were, two old friends, one's dying, the other is old, and he's placing these perfect fart bombs and we're both crying and laughing through our tears and finally mostly laughing like a couple of thirteen year old boys...

And then I finally had to go...And that was an emotional time. Very hard. I got outside his door, and the door was still open and I had my back against the wall and I'm wiping my tears from my face with my hands because I have to go back out there and face the real world and then it suddenly hit me--it hit me here (he points to his brain) and here (he points to his stomach) and I knew what I had to do.

So I just let one Rip. And it was loud. I kind of aimed it at Robert's door. Then I walked away. I didn't look back. Because I wanted the last image in my mind to be of Robert laughing at what I'd just done. I could see it so clearly. And it made me smile...

Hugs. Exchanges. New drinks  
poured, etc.

DANNY

(to Bert)

What do you say we get down to business here and do some actual drinking?

BERT

So you want a Long Island Iced Tea?

DANNY

(laughs)

I want--

ELISA

(raises her empty glass)

I'll have another.

JIM

I got that.

DANNY

(cont.)

--something in honor of the man, the myth, the legend--

Enter Michael with a Girl.

MICHAEL

After you, my dear.

DANNY

Hey, look who's here.

JIM

The Professor!

MICHAEL

Hey, everybody. Allow me to introduce--(he sees Bert) Ah!!

JIM

Hello Ahhh!!! It's very nice to meet you.

MEGAN

Hello. Megan.

CATHY

Hi, Megan.

DANNY

Welcome, Megan.

MICHAEL

(to Danny)

What the fuck is going on here? I mean, what the fuck?!

DANNY

Go easy there.

MICHAEL

What the...

BERT

Hello, Michael. Long time no see.

MICHAEL

(laughs, points at him)

That's funny. That's really funny. Somebody better tell me what the fuck is going on!

DANNY

What do you think you see, Michael?

MICHAEL

(looking right at him)  
I see Robert. Right here!

DANNY

You don't know what you see. Now sit down and have a drink like a sensible human being.

MICHAEL

I...

Danny pulls out a barstool for Michael.

BERT (ROBERT)

And what would the lady like this evening?

MICHAEL

Um, uh, I don't know. What would the lady like? Megan?

MEGAN

(pause, then)

Dirty martini. Hendricks. As many olives as you can fit in the glass.

ROBERT  
(surprised)

Okay.

JIM

That's called going for it.

MEGAN

Oh, yeah?

JIM

Absolutely.

ROBERT

Michael? Michael?

DANNY

(slaps Michael on the shoulder/back)

What'll you have?

MICHAEL

Uh...Whiskey...in a glass...a bunch of whiskey. (Danny gives him a pat) (quietly, to Danny) Seriously, what's going on here?

DANNY

I don't know. But don't lose it on me. I can't have you cracking up.

Toby says nothing.

MICHAEL

Jim? Jimmy? What's going on?

MEGAN

Are you all right?

MICHAEL

Cath? Elisa? What do we...

Robert puts down Megan's glass and then pours the martini into it.

ROBERT

Here you are.

MEGAN

Ooo, excellent.

ROBERT

And how many olives would you like?

MEGAN

Let's start with...five. That's good.

ROBERT

Michael, here's your Maker's. Did you want a little ice?

Michael stands and slowly looks them all over, then returns to Robert. Finally, Megan jumps in.

MEGAN

Do you want some ice? It's not a trick question.

MICHAEL

Uh, ice, yes. Sure.

Michael sits down next to Megan.

MEGAN

I remember meeting you before. A while back. I came in here, you were working.

ROBERT

That's right.

MEGAN

How's it going in here?

ROBERT

I'm dead.

MEGAN

(looks around)

It is pretty dead in here. Not good for you. Good for us but not for you.

ROBERT

Yes.

Michael drinks his entire whiskey.

MEGAN

Whoa. Slow down, buddy. This isn't a race.

Robert pulls down the Maker's bottle and pours him another.

MEGAN

Were you all at this funeral Michael was at?

CATHY

Yes we were.

DANNY

You bet.

JIM

Absolutely.

Toby and Elisa nod Yes.

MEGAN

It was for a good friend of all of yours.

DANNY

Yes it was. He used to work here.

MEGAN

Oh.

JIM

He was a bartender.

MEGAN

What was his name?

DANNY & CATHY

Robert.

JIM

Robert.

Elisa mouths the word: Robert.

MICHAEL

Robert. (explaining to Megan) He was a dear friend of all of us. I have been coming in to this bar for... (thinks) fourteen years. Robert was the first person I met when I moved to New York. I was staying with my buddy, Patrick, around the corner. I had just moved here, gotten off a bus from D.C. I had a couple of bags. That was it. And I walked into this bar. In the afternoon. A beautiful sunlit day. One of those days that felt like anything was possible. Of course I was also twenty-three at the time so that might've had something to do with it. I came in here, I sat down. I said, "I just got here." And Robert said,

The lighting should subtly change and focus on Robert and Michael.

ROBERT

Well now you're here.

MICHAEL

So now what happens?

ROBERT

That I don't know. But I think that first you should have a drink.

MICHAEL

I like what you're thinking.

ROBERT

I am a semi-professional.

MICHAEL

I'm thinking... (he looks around, at the taps, at the bottles)  
What kind of bourbon do you have?

ROBERT

You know a lot about bourbon?

MICHAEL

(small pause, decides)

No.

ROBERT

All right. You're having a Maker's. And a shorty.

MICHAEL

What's a shorty?

ROBERT

(incredulous)

A short beer.

Robert pours the beer.

MICHAEL

What's that?

ROBERT

This is... something new... you let me know what you think of it.

Robert puts the beer down.

ROBERT

You're new, and it's new.

Michael takes a drink.

MICHAEL

It's good.

ROBERT

Brooklyn Pilsner.

MICHAEL

Okay.

Robert pours the Maker's. It is a very healthy pour.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'm Michael.

ROBERT

Robert.

They shake hands.

MICHAEL

Nice to meet you. What do I owe you?

ROBERT

That's four and that's three. (Michael goes straight for his wallet) Ah, dat dat dat. There's no rush. We can settle up in a bit.

MICHAEL

Okay. Thanks.

Michael acts like he's consulting his NYC Not for Tourist's guidebook.

MICHAEL

Robert, is (pronounces it like the Texas city) Houston street far?

ROBERT

(laughs)

No, no it's not far. Five minute walk. But Michael?

MICHAEL

Yeah?

ROBERT

Houston. It's pronounced Houston.

The lighting can slowly return to all of them.

CATHY

That's funny.

MEGAN

Your name's Robert?

ROBERT

Yes.

MEGAN

How many Roberts work at this bar?

MICHAEL

Just one.

Quiet. Megan looks all around at each of them. They are all looking at Robert and he back at them, but with a small "knowing" smile on his face. Finally Megan looks to Robert.

MEGAN

I'm confused.

MICHAEL

No, you're not.

MEGAN

Are you all messing with me? Because I'm super gullible. That's not very nice.

ROBERT

Nobody's messing with you.

MEGAN

Good.

ROBERT

But I'm dead.

MEGAN

I don't follow...the joke...

ROBERT

There's no joke. They were all at My funeral.

MICHAEL

Yeeeeeeeahp.

Megan looks around the room.

MEGAN

So I'm supposed to believe that you're dead?

MICHAEL

I'm not sure I believe it either. There's a strong possibility that right now I am stone cold drunk off my ass, passed out somewhere, probably on a park bench, preferably maybe your apartment (to Megan) if I'm lucky, and this is all just a weird dream that is going on inside of my head as some way for me to recognize and deal with the fact that you're dead.

MEGAN

This isn't a dream, I can tell you that much.

MICHAEL

And fuck you for dying, you asshole. You were one of the first people I met when I moved here, you're not supposed to be dead now. You're supposed to hang around and tell the world the crazy stories of the wild adventures you went on with this guy (points to himself). Of course I'm also supposed to be a well known writer by this point but that hasn't worked out either. So we're both failures: you by dying and me by living.

JIM

Go easy, Michael.

MICHAEL

Don't tell me to go easy, Jim! Fuck you! This man was my friend. My brother. If not for him I'm not sure I'd even be hanging on right now. I wouldn't be here.

CATHY

What are you talking about?

ELISA

Yeah. What do you mean?

MICHAEL

(to Robert)

You'll remember this. A couple years ago. We went out to Belmont. You and me and Brian. And this was a rough time. We needed some luck to change. I was hurting because at the time I had lost my job and I hadn't told anybody--too much pride--but I was really hurting for money. Almost tapped out. And if

something didn't happen, if my luck didn't change, if I didn't get a job, I was gonna have to leave New York.

So we go out to Belmont. I have got a thousand dollars to spend. My last thousand. I am out of cash. I've got credit cards but my checking has got about fifty bucks in it and my savings maybe two hundred. I'm in trouble. So I figure go to the track, turn this thing around. Why not? What have I got to lose? I mean aside from my apartment and my dream to make it in New York, there's that, but really that's nothing.

So we get out there and we all start betting. In about two hours I end up losing almost all of my money. A large chunk of it anyway on this longshot horse, Backpfeifengesicht, twenty to one, who I am convinced is going to win. It's a German word which means "a face badly in need of a fist." Sounds like my kind of horse. I enjoy beating myself up. Done. Sold. That's my horse.

Robert meanwhile bets on this other horse, Vyjack, twelve to one. He puts five hundred down on him.

And what do you know? Vyjack wins! Robert wins!

Backpfeifengesicht finishes last and Robert's twelve to one takes the race. Six grand Robert wins.

And we're all hammered on our way back to the city, and Robert's trying to get me to take some of this money but I want nothing to do with it. Pride, again. So we get back here and we get shlomered. I somehow stumble home, wake up in the morning with my coat and my shoes still on. Yeah, one of those nights. I'm up and I've got nowhere to go, I don't have a job. I'm making coffee and riffling through my pockets and trying to piece together last night. I stick my hand in my pocket in here (his inside breast) and I pull it out and there's this wad of cash. All hundreds.

I'm looking at it and I'm thinking: now, I didn't win so how do I have this much money? And then I realize that at some point, in my drunken stupidity, Robert must have slipped this cash into my pocket. Probably because I wouldn't take it. Well, I'm still not gonna take it so I call him up. No answer. I wait a little bit, have some coffee, eat something, I try him again: no answer. Go and use the bathroom, shower, clean myself up--try him again, for the third time, no answer.

So by now it's about time for the bar to open so I just figure I'll come over here and talk to him.

I walk into this bar, and there's nobody in here except like three people. I walk up to the bar, I pull this wad out of my pocket, and I slam it down on the bar (he does this). Why I did that, I have no idea. Because it was awfully dramatic and it was fucking loud for three o'clock on a Monday. I slam it down. And

then I lift my hand up. I look at Robert and I say, (he nudges to Robert)

ROBERT

(playing Michael's part)

You forgot your winnings in my pocket, pal.

MICHAEL

That's right. I sit down, and I patiently wait for Robert's response. He looks at the money. He picks it up (maybe Robert does this). He flips through it. Then he leans across the bar. I lean in (Michael has his elbows on the bar) Robert gets right up next to my ear. And you know what he says?

DANNY

No.

Cathy and Elisa nod No.

JIM

No.

Toby nods No.

JIM

What does he say?

MICHAEL

(to Robert)

What did you say? Do you remember?

ROBERT

Of course I remember.

MICHAEL

What was it?

Robert pauses, looks around the room.

ROBERT

I said "You can't leave."

MICHAEL

That's right! Then you put the money in my hand and you turned around and walked away. There was no arguing. No reasoning that

was going to happen. My Pride wasn't going to get in the way because you were not going to allow my pride to get in the way. At first I was pissed. Then, while you went downstairs to change a keg or whatever you were doing, I was trying to come up with a good response, a cool response that would get the money back in your hand.

But then I realized: stop being a prick. Stop being an asshole. Let your friend help you. I didn't want anyone to know I was in trouble, but he knew. He knew and he helped me out. And I'm still here.

JIM  
(raises his glass)

For better or for worse.

MICHAEL

Definitely for worse.

JIM

I'll drink to that.

And they all do.

DANNY

Yeah, Robert, the more I think about this, maybe you should've invested that money in some nondescript Florida land deal--you might've gotten more return on your investment!

MICHAEL  
(taking the joke)

Ha ha! Very funny!

JIM

You could've thrown it off the back of a train!

CATHY

Or given it to Bernie Madoff!

JIM

That's right.

MEGAN  
(to Robert)

So why are you here?

And that line cuts through the  
laughter. Everyone looks at each  
other.

ROBERT

I come bearing a message from the great beyond.

Everyone takes that in.

MEGAN

Really? What is it?

ROBERT

(pause, he waits, then,)

I'm just messing with you. I'm here to work. This is my shift.

ELISA

Yes it is.

JIM

That's true.

MEGAN

But you have to be here for a reason. You're not just here to  
work. You're dead!

ROBERT

Hey, just 'cause I'm dead doesn't mean I can't still make a mean  
martini.

CATHY

That sounds delicious.

DANNY

I might have to have one of those.

MICHAEL

Now that you're dead, what do you regret?

ROBERT

I regret a lot, Michael. I never understood those people who say  
they go through life with no regrets. I could never relate to  
that. I feel like every day there's regrets, some bigger than  
others. And if you can keep 'em small: small regrets instead of  
the big life changing regrets, then you're doing pretty good.

MEGAN

I don't have any real regrets.

ROBERT

Well, you're young. Live a little, you will. Most of your life right now is ahead of you. Full of hopes and possibilities. You still think your dreams are going to come true.

MEGAN

If not, maybe I will make them come true.

ROBERT

You can't force a dream to come true. There's a lot of luck involved. If you make it happen through sheer determination then maybe your dream wasn't big enough or you're spending too much time working and not Living.

MEGAN

Maybe you didn't work hard enough. Maybe you wasted too much time.

ROBERT

You're right, I did. I'm sure I wasted weeks, months, years. Did I want to be a bartender? No. This is where I wound up. I wanted to be a successful actor but that didn't work out. Maybe I wasn't good enough. Maybe I didn't get the breaks I needed. Whatever it was, it happened and here I am. The important thing is to not beat yourself up. The journey is not the destination. The destination is the journey. Or as John Lennon said, Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans. My plans just didn't pan out. So in that sense, am I a failure? Yes. Yes I am. But remember this, Miss Megan, with your pretty blue eyes and shiny blond hair and your face without a line etched into it: most of us are failures. The majority of the people in the world fail. We only celebrate those that succeed because we've been taught that success is the way to happiness. But if most of us are gonna fail anyway, why can't we be happy too...And, success is boring. Failure, there's a lot more interesting things that happen in failure. And that's where you meet all the characters.

MICHAEL

I'm a failure.

ELISA

I'm a failure too.

CATHY

I'm a failure.

JIM

We all are! Except Toby, Toby you are a shining success but we won't hold that against you.

TOBY

Thanks, Jim.

DANNY

I keep trying to act like I'm a success but in the end I'll probably fail too.

ROBERT

You're gonna have to close the bar.

DANNY

I know. When the lease is up we're toast. It's just the nature of the beast. The rent will go Way up.

ROBERT

Do you want to know my favorite story from this bar?

DANNY

Of course.

JIM

Absolutely.

CATHY

Do we know it?

ROBERT

No. I don't think so. (to Megan) I've worked here for seventeen years. (to Danny) You guys have owned it for the last nine. (to All) I've seen a lot of crazy things happen in this bar: a hammer. An Indian. And a lot of crazy characters: Stan, Joseph. Remember Jeff Sweeney? What a lunatic. He must be dead by now.

JIM

Or he's a Congressman.

ROBERT

(laughs)

Right. We've all seen, some crazy shit. But my favorite story from this place doesn't involve any drugs. It doesn't involve an insane amount of drinking. It's not about some stupid celebrity. Or some beautiful girl who stopped the hands on that clock from

ticking (he points to the clock). No. My favorite story happened in that time after 9/11. When they kept telling us that the world had changed. It had changed forever. And maybe it has and maybe it hasn't. I really don't know. But in those weeks afterward I was in here one night.

I was working, and there were a decent amount of people in here. Mostly young folks trying to blow off some steam, which was understandable given how fucked up everything was. And in here, at the bar, was the one and only, Creepy Ted.

JIM

Tedd-y!

DANNY

Oh, he's the worst.

MICHAEL

Fuck that guy.

MEGAN

Why? What'd he do?

ROBERT

He didn't Do anything. It's what he would try to do. He's--

JIM

(interrupts)

He's a loser who hits on women, in a bad way.

ROBERT

Yes, I guess that pretty much sums it up. So he's in here and he's going around, working his moves--

JIM

He's about thirty-five with dyed blond hair, stupid hipster glasses, and he still lives with his Mother.

ROBERT

Yes. I'm not sure if that last part is true.

JIM

Regardless, he's a douchebag.

ROBERT

Yes, everyone across the board, would agree that Ted is a douche.

JIM

Supreme douche.

MEGAN

You really don't like this guy.

MICHAEL

Fuck that guy.

JIM

He sucks. What's to like. He takes up space and scares off customers. Attractive customers, mind you. Like you. He scares you off.

ROBERT

Teddy's in here working his magic. I see him going table to table. He starts out in the front and offers to buy a whole group of girls drinks. And of course they take him up on it. So I'm making five vodka sodas for Teddy--

JIM

Oh, I hate him so much.

ROBERT

Teddy takes the ladies their drinks. He sits down with them. And they pretty much ignore him. He's at the table but he might as well be outside at the bus stop. They are paying no attention to him. He tries to start up a conversation with one of them but she obviously wants nothing to do with him. So dejected Teddy moves on. Because, God bless him, that's what Creepy Teddy does, he moves on. His ability to take rejection and then forget about it and get right back on the horse is quite astonishing really. So he goes to another girl at the bar: that doesn't go anywhere. He moves to a booth with some girls, they politely tell him to get lost. He's making his way down the bar. He tries a girl standing over by the jukebox, no dice. He starts talking to a girl waiting for the bathroom and then she goes in, and he waits, she comes back out, he starts to talk to her and she blows right by him.

JIM

Good.

MICHAEL

Yeah, fuck that guy.

ROBERT

Finally Creepy Teddy ends up all the way down here, at Toby's throne.

At this point, in the time it took him to make his way all the way down the bar, Elisabeth has come in to the bar. And you all know Lizzy.

CATHY

She's a sweetheart.

DANNY

Great girl.

JIM

Always very nice. But still, (he motions to Michael)

MICHAEL

Fuck that guy.

JIM

Exactly.

ROBERT

Lizzy's sitting down here and as most of you know, she had just lost her sister. She was in Tower One. And this was maybe...Six weeks later. Around Halloween. Everything is still very raw. And she's down here having some drinks. And I don't think it's wrong of me to say, she's numbing the pain a little bit.

CATHY

I'd do the same thing.

ELISA

For sure.

DANNY

It's understandable.

ROBERT

Absolutely. And now I see Teddy down here. And he sees her, and Lizzy's a very pretty girl--

MICHAEL

A knockout. (Megan looks at him) What? She is.

ROBERT

And I'm thinking, Oh shit. I'm gonna have to jump in here in a minute. So I'm down here by the taps doing my thing, and I'm

keeping one eye on Teddy. He says something to her and I'm thinking, Here we go. He says something else and she looks up from her drink at him. He says something else. He's talking and she's listening. And I'm waiting for any moment for this to explode. Because she's a little drunk and Teddy is, well, Teddy. And he's still talking. Very low, kind of conspiratorial. He slides over close to her. She doesn't recoil. He says a few more words, and then she says a few words. The same again. And I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop. Frankly, I'm confused by what is happening. Because she's a smart girl, and she knows who he is so she can't be falling for his lines. He knows who she is so I'm wondering what he's up to.

And then, out of Nowhere, she hugs him.

JIM

Motherfucker.

MICHAEL

Fuck that guy.

ROBERT

I shit you not, I poured beer all over myself I was so surprised by it. Now, I gotta go see what's going on. So I head down here and they're breaking out of the hug and she's saying, "Thank you." He's telling her she's going to be okay. I am Still waiting for the other shoe to drop. I know he's up to something. I ask them both if everything's all right. Especially Lizzy, to gauge how drunk she is. But she seems all right. Emotional but fine.

CATHY

How many had she had?

ROBERT

Maybe three or four. Five?

JIM

But that girl can drink.

ROBERT

Yeah. She was okay. I ask her if she wants another and she says No, that she has to go. And Teddy doesn't say anything. I'm waiting for him to jump right in as the gallant knight and say he'll walk her home. But no, nothing. He just stands there as she gathers up her things. Lizzy turns, says goodnight to me, says, "Thanks, Ted." He says, "See ya, Lizzy." And she leaves.

Now I'm standing here and I look straight at Ted. And he looks straight at me. He says, "What?" I'm trying to figure out what to say to him or what to ask him without sounding like an asshole. As in "Why are you such a douchebag but then that was okay"? But before I get anything out he says, "I lost my brother." I say, "I'm sorry. Downtown?" He says, "No. Five years ago. Brain Cancer." Jesus. "Yeahp." And then he said something that I've never forgotten. Creepy Ted said, "The Big Stuff man. I don't mess with the Big Stuff."

MICHAEL

FUUUUUUUCK...THAAAAAAT...GUYYYYYYYY!!

ROBERT

I understand the sentiment, Michael. I do. But he wasn't trying to be profound, or cool, it was just an offhand comment. Then he left and I'm sure went to some other bar and tried to pick up some other women.

DANNY

God bless him for trying.

ROBERT

(to Megan)

You asked me why I'm here. (to Michael) You asked me what I regret. I'm here for a Last Drink. That's why I'm here. So let's fill them up. (as Robert pours he speaks) I've been listening to all of you tell these stories. These stories of my life. That's really all we are is stories. And mine aren't so bad. There's some fun, some anger, some Love, and lots of friendship. Some would call this a Wasted life. My life a wasted one. And maybe it is. Maybe it isn't. Who knows. Let's be honest, it doesn't really matter anymore. (he laughs) I want to thank you. All of you.

They have to get everyone a fresh drink. Robert gives: Danny a whiskey. Toby Johnny Walker Black. Elisa a white wine. Jim a whiskey. Michael a whiskey. Megan a white wine. Cathy a white wine.

ROBERT

(everyone now has their drink)

Okay. Here we go: To good friends found along the way. (to Danny) To a good place to rest, laugh, and play. (to Cathy) To loving and losing and trying again. (to Jim) To Assholes and Vagabonds

and Losers and Clowns.(to Michael) To sticking around.(to Toby and Elisa) To old friends and good friends who help when we need it the most.(to Megan) To new friends and youth. Ah, what we wouldn't all give to be young again!

"Here Here!" Etc from everyone.  
They all drink.

ROBERT

(he walks out from behind the bar)

And to the Big Stuff. It's easy to forget. It's easy to lose sight. So much Mundane. So much to get Right. It's hard not to get bogged down by (he looks at Toby) the business of living. But ya gotta at least try. All the small stuff falls away. You laugh, you poop, you die.(he laughs. They all laugh) Keep the Big Stuff close at hand. Always within sight. The rest is...decoration. Don't let the flashing lights, soothing sounds, and intoxicating highs...Don't forget...because before you know it...

By now he stands next to the jukebox. He downs his drink and then hits the jukebox, Fonzie-style, and it comes on again.

ROBERT

Always wanted to do that.

A song plays: Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky".

ROBERT

(hears the song)

Somebody's got a sense of humor.

Robert puts his hands on their shoulders and touches each one of them as he goes. He shakes Danny's hand.

ROBERT

(to Danny)

How much time do you have left?

DANNY

Little less than a year.

ROBERT  
(to All)

Make the most of it.

Pause. Silence. He starts to go.

ELISA

We will.

ROBERT  
(turns back)  
I know you will. (he smiles, starts to leave)

CATHY

Where are you going?

ROBERT  
(small pause, then joking)  
To another bar. I've had enough of this place.

He starts to go. Then remembers  
when he puts his hands in his  
pockets.

ROBERT

Oh.

They all watch as if something  
Incredible is about to happen.

ROBERT

I almost forgot.

He tosses his keys to Danny who  
catches them.

ROBERT  
(joking)  
I don't have to go home, but I can't stay here!

He looks over them, smiles, and  
then leaves. And now, the come  
down off of the high: CODA: After  
a few moments of silence as they  
all take in what just happened.  
The music plays.

MICHAEL  
(re: song)

I didn't know this was on there.

DANNY

It's not. (claps his hands together to try to change the energy of the room, he moves as he talks) All right. This has been quite the day, hasn't it?

ELISA

It sure has.

DANNY  
(goes behind the bar)

I think the only way to truly deal with what we've all just been through (pulls out bottles from the well, etc) is to drink heavily. What do you think?

CATHY

Does the Pope shit a la mode?

JIM

I could do--I've never heard that one.

MICHAEL

Make it a double.

CATHY  
(to Jim)  
Stick with me, kid. I'm full of surprises.

MEGAN

I think maybe we should go.

MICHAEL

Why don't you go? Nobody wants you here! You're young and beautiful and attractive and young.

DANNY

Okay. That's it. You're having a beer.

MICHAEL

I want Whis-kay!

MEGAN

Then I'm gonna go.

MICHAEL

Then go. Who's stopping you?

MEGAN

You're a jackass.

MICHAEL

Yeah, that sounds about right.

DANNY

Megan, one for the road?

MEGAN

No, I shouldn't.

DANNY

Come on.

MEGAN

No, really--

MICHAEL

(too loud)

Come On!

She pauses and stares Michael down. Then,

MEGAN

Double shot of Wild Turkey. Soda back.

DANNY

You got it.

Michael's face shows he's trying to compute what Megan just said. Danny starts making drinks for everybody but he is way out of practice and slow. Jim walks behind the bar.

JIM

All right. Come on. Get out of there.

DANNY

Sit down, I got it. (he's looking for something)

JIM

The Wild Turkey's right here.

DANNY

Ah! Of course it is.

JIM

Michael, you're getting a delicious Bud Light.

MICHAEL

I don't want Bud Light. I want whiskay!

Jim takes over.

JIM

Cath, same again?

CATHY

Thanks, Jim.

JIM

Elis, one more? Toby?

ELISA

Uhhhhh, o-kay. One more.

Toby nods Yes. Michael puts his head down on the bar, in his arms. Jim makes their drinks. Toby leaves to go smoke.

DANNY

Cath, you working tomorrow?

CATHY

Yeah, unfortunately.

DANNY

You should take the day off. This has been a...long day.

CATHY

Yeah, I wish I could but there's too much going on.

JIM

That sucks.

CATHY

Yes it does.

DANNY  
(raising a glass)

All right. Come on. This one's on me.

ELISA

Thanks, Danny.

CATHY

Thanks.

DANNY  
(is about to speak, sees Michael)

Hey,

JIM

To good memories.

ALL

To good memories.

DANNY

To good memories.

They all drink: normal sips. Megan downs her Wild Turkey double and then drinks the soda back. She lets out an "Ah." They all watch her.

CATHY

Oh to be young again.

MEGAN

It was nice to meet you all.

DANNY

You too, Megan.

CATHY

You too, hon.

ELISA

Yes.

JIM

Take care.

DANNY  
(re: Michael, to Megan)

Is he out?

Danny goes over to the jukebox and picks some songs.

MEGAN  
(not angry)

What a sad little man. See you guys.

CATHY

Yeah, take care.

DANNY

Goodbye, Megan.

ELISA

Goodnight.

JIM

Get home safe.

Megan leaves as Toby returns.

CATHY  
(to Jim)

Get home safe?

JIM

What?

CATHY

Why don't you go walk her home if you're so concerned.

JIM

Maybe I will.

CATHY

It seems to me that girl could use a nice uncle.

JIM

Ooo, so mean. And I like it!

Cathy laughs. Jim laughs. Toby sits back down. Tom Waits' "Closing Time" plays.

DANNY

What's everybody's week look like?

CATHY

Busy.

DANNY

Yeah? You too, Elisa?

ELISA

Absolutely. No rest for the... (she's drawing a blank)

TOBY

Weary hearted.

ELISA

Yes. Right. Is that right?

JIM

I thought it was wicked. No rest for the wicked.

CATHY

I thought it was weary. No rest for the weary.

DANNY

I think it might be both.

Toby rolls his eyes.

JIM

What if you're wicked and weary?

CATHY

Then you really never get any rest.

Cathy and Jim laugh.

DANNY

What if--

Michael wakes with a start and looks all around.

MICHAEL

I just had the craziest dream!

They all look at him.

DANNY

Go back to sleep, Michael.

JIM

It's not a dream. It's called Life!

Small laughs.

DANNY

Now where were we? Oh, right. The week ahead...

The Lighting begins to fade. The conversation continues - mouths move - but there is no volume. The action carries on. Tom Waits song carries on. The business of living carries on as we slowly fade to black.

THE END

#### Track List

1. Jim - Garbage Men
2. Elisa - Break Up
3. Danny - The Hammer
4. Danny - The Indian
5. Cathy - No Risk
6. Toby - The Business of Living
7. Michael - I Just Got Here
8. Michael - Belmont
9. Robert - The Big Stuff
10. Coda