

MATTERHORN

A full-length play

By Joseph Correll

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MATTERHORN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BILL - Early 50's. Bill is moody and sullen. But he has a charming side, which he lost long ago, the resurfaces under certain circumstances. He is returning to his hometown for his High School reunion.

BECKY - Early 30's - Becky is a sweet and sassy waitress. She has a philosophical side, and many theories on the nature of human existence.

SHARON - Early 50's. Sharon is gregarious, sarcastic, and full of life. She is a Los Angeleno who has returned to her hometown for her High School reunion.

GARY - Early 50's. Gary is friendly and a joker. He is a successful business man that is returning to his hometown for his High School reunion.

SETTING: A small-town restaurant on a dark and rainy night.

MATTERHORN

The Blue Colony restaurant looks like it was built probably in the thirties or forties. The dining room has fallen into disrepair, but there is definitely a charm about it. Faded photos of past customers who did something no one can remember cover the walls. A few strings of Christmas lights with many of the bulbs burned out hang across a large and imposing bar. The bar has a mish-mash of glasses and mostly cheap liquor. There is a hallway marked restrooms, and a swinging door that goes to the kitchen. A large plate glass window looks out onto a dark rainy night. The red and blue glow of a neon sign can be made out.

Becky is a waitress in the restaurant and is clearing some dirty plates from a table. Becky is in her thirties, and quite pretty with long straight hair. She does not wear a uniform. She wears a pair of jeans and an unremarkable blouse. Becky carries the plates back into the kitchen. A bell on the front door jingles and a customer enters. This is Bill Rollins, early fifties, a man who looks like he carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. You can tell he was probably very good looking when he was younger, but time has taken its toll. He is the kind of man you walk by everyday and do not notice at all. He is wet from the rain and carries a large duffle bag and a small backpack. He has obviously just come from some sort of trip. He walks in and looks around the restaurant.

BECKY

(off)

I'll be right with you.

BILL
Fine, no rush.

BECKY
Have a seat anywhere.

Bill looks at the completely empty restaurant.

BILL
It's very slow tonight.

Becky comes out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a towel.

BECKY
We do better at lunch. The rain may have kept some people away.

BILL
That's true. There's usually a lot more people.

BECKY
You've been here? I don't recognize you. I know pretty much everyone.

BILL
I meant more people back in the day, when I lived here. It was a really busy place.

BECKY
Well, don't be too disappointed. I'm here. Is it just you? What brings you in?

BILL
I'm here to meet some people I knew back in High School.

BECKY
Nice. Old friends.

She motions towards his duffle bag.

BECKY
Are you traveling?

BILL
Yes.

BECKY
Did you just get in? Or just leaving?

BILL

Both actually. I'm on business, and I'm in town for the Saint Francis reunion tonight. I was thinking I'd make a quick change here before I head over to the school. I'm taking a red eye out right afterwards. I can't believe how empty it is. Are you here by yourself?

BECKY

Tonight I am. Pete, the cook went home sick.

BILL

So, then who's making the food tonight?

BECKY

Now, I guess I am.

BILL

He left you alone to handle all the customers? You probably should have just closed and gone home. There's no one for miles and you're here by yourself.

BECKY

You're not some kind of creep are you? Because I can take care of myself. There's a phone right there, and I'm not afraid to use it!

Becky points towards an old rotary phone sitting on the counter nearby.

BILL

That's an old phone. Does it even work?

BECKY

It does. It's an antique but the owner wanted to keep it. There's no cell signal here. We're supposed to be getting better coverage, but right now this is what we've got to work with.

Bill nods in acknowledgment.

BILL

Do you even know how to work it? I think those phones probably went out before you were born.

BECKY

(smiling)

I took a class in it. I'm well trained on the phone. I hate when the phone number has a lot of nines. You want a cocktail or a beer while you wait?

BILL
No, I don't drink.

BECKY
(smiles)
Good for you.

BILL
How about a Coke?

BECKY
We're out of regular coke. All I have is Diet.

Bill nods. Becky goes to get his
Coke.

BILL
I'm surprised how little this place has changed. The booths
are new.

BECKY
(at the bar pouring a coke)
Not new. These same booths have been here since before I
started.

BILL
Well, it's been a very long time since I was here last. A lot
of it is the same.

BECKY
Things do not change much or often around here.

Becky hands him his Diet Coke. Bill
notices a calendar on the wall.

BILL
I can see that...that's a really old calendar.

BECKY
What?

BILL
It looks like that same calendar has been up there for quite
awhile.

BECKY
Yeah, it's old.

BILL

Why don't you take it down?

BECKY

I like the pictures. I flip the months.

BILL

It says September, but it's October.

BECKY

It just turned October.

BILL

A week ago.

BECKY

Okay, I like the September picture. So I leave it on September all the time.

BILL

It's just a bunch of cows. What do cows have to do with September?

BECKY

They're all cows. It's a cow calendar.

BILL

So, do you have a thing for cows?

BECKY

They're okay. Does the calendar bother you? Because I'm not taking it down.

BILL

(laughs)

No, I kind of like it. When I pulled into town, it felt like time had actually stopped.

Becky starts to fill salt and pepper shakers.

BECKY

Oh it has. Time is relative.

BILL

I'm sorry?

BECKY

It's relative.

BILL

I don't get it.

Becky continues filling salt and pepper shakers while she talks to Bill.

BECKY

Think about it. Whether something happened years and years ago or just last month, your mind just gives them all the same weight. The memory of your breakfast, looks about the same as your Jr. Prom, to your brain. So when you think about it, really, there is no real "time". In our minds it's all the same. It might as well be that everything in your life just happened all at once, because it's all just jumbled up in there. A minute, or a year. It's all the same. So the past never really goes away does it? I'm writing a paper on it. Do you want to order something while you wait?

BILL

No. I'll wait for them to show up. You're in school?

BECKY

Yeah, I went back last year to get my degree- just community, but I figure I've only got so much time, so I should make the most of it.

BILL

School and work. That's a lot.

BECKY

I do it for my daughter.

BILL

How old is she?

BECKY

She's twelve.

BILL

I see. Well, she's lucky to have a mom who's looking out for her.

BECKY

That's sweet. You're very nice. Pretty shy and quiet, but nice.

BILL

I'm not that shy. I've been talking to you the whole time.

BECKY

But, I'll bet you wouldn't be, if we weren't the only two here.

BILL

This is not a conversation I expected to have when I walked in here. Actually, none of this is what I expected. I thought others would have come back to at least check this place out before the reunion. I expected a crowd from my class.

BECKY

Guess they're not as sentimental as you.

BILL

It's just not what I pictured. Maybe this was a mistake.

BECKY

Then you wouldn't have met me.

BILL

True.

BECKY

You know, you're one of the lucky ones.

BILL

What do you mean?

BECKY

You got out. Out of town. I'd love to get out. But I'm still here. What's your name?

BILL

Bill. Bill Rollins.

Becky extends her hand.

BECKY

Nice to meet you Bill Rollins. I'm Becky. Just Becky, until we know each other better. Which we probably never will, ya know. Do you think you folks will be eating? Or just drinks?

BILL

I don't know. I hadn't thought about it.

BECKY

Okay, Here's a menu just in case. It's just me, so you can only pick something that I know how to make.

BILL
What do you know how to make?

BECKY
Pancakes. And eggs.

BILL
That's it?

BECKY
Pretty much. You can ask for anything else on there you want,
but you'll be taking your chances. I'm a terrible cook.

BILL
(laughs)
I think you really should have closed and gone home.

BECKY
(smiling and reiterating what
she said earlier)
Then I wouldn't have met you. What reunion is it for you if
you don't mind me asking?

BILL
Thirty fifth.

BECKY
Well, I'd say you don't look a day over your twenty fifth.

BILL
Thanks, that's kind. But I'm afraid not true.

BECKY
You're wife didn't want to come along for the festivities?

BILL
My wife?

She points to the ring on his
finger.

BILL
Oh my wife- no, no. She's home with the kids.

BECKY
And where's home?

BILL
Illinois.

BECKY
Really? What part?

BILL
Oh, do you know Illinois?

BECKY
No.

BILL
Then why'd you ask what part?

BECKY
Honestly, I don't care. I'm just trying to make conversation so it doesn't get too awkward.

BILL
That's okay. Springfield, Illinois.

BECKY
I've been to Springfield, Massachusetts.

BILL
So have I.

BECKY
Nice right?

BILL
It's okay. There's a Springfield, Arkansas too.

BECKY
Oh, how's that one?

BILL
Dunno. Never been.

BECKY
I guess most places have a Springfield.

BILL
Even the Simpsons. It's a pretty common name.

Awkward pause. The conversation has stalled.

BECKY

I've got some inventory to do in the back. Let me know if you need anything.

Bill gives her a half hearted thumbs up. Becky goes to the back. Bill sips from his drink. He looks at his watch. He gets up and walks over to the window. He holds up his cell phone in different parts of the restaurant trying to get a signal. Then he walks to the bathroom door, stands in front of it, and carefully studies and surveys the restaurant, perhaps in nostalgia. Bill returns to the counter.

He picks up the old rotary phone, holds it up, reaches in his jacket, pulls out a pocket knife and cuts the cord.

He sits back down and resumes sipping his drink. The door opens and Sharon and Gary enters laughing. Bill gets up from the counter and watches them come in.

Sharon is in her early fifties. She is beautiful, put together, and she wears a cosmopolitan, trendy dress and carries a purse that matches. Gary is the same age and is a good looking guy. He's charismatic, and is dressed in a casual collared shirt and sweater. They are both laughing.

SHARON

(laughing)

No, that wasn't Carolyn, that was Margie. Terrible. I still feel bad about it!...Bill!

She runs up to Bill and hugs him.

GARY

Wow! You haven't changed a bit!

BILL
Huh?

GARY
I'm just kidding ya fat fuck. What happened to your hair?

Gary tousles what's left of Bill's
hair.

BILL
Time happened. And that color in yours?

GARY
It's called medium neutral brown.

BILL
Neutral?

SHARON
Well, I think you both look great, all things considered.

GARY
All things considered?

SHARON
Meaning, we're old as shit.

Gary walks around and surveys the
restaurant.

GARY
Speaking of shit, I wonder if they still have the same food
here?

SHARON
Bill, I don't know why you wanted to drag us back to this
dump. Do you think they allow smoking in here? I thought in
some parts of the country you could still smoke in
restaurants.

GARY
You can't smoke in any restaurant, anywhere, anymore.

SHARON
Fuck it. I'm not in L.A. People won't give me that "you know
you're poisoning us all" look.

She takes out a cigarette and
lights it.

GARY

I like this place. Some great memories here.

SHARON

I thought there would be people here.

BILL

That's what I said.

GARY

Are we going to eat? Just for old times sake?

BILL

Sure, I thought we would hang out here for a half hour or so.

The three of them take a seat at a table.

BILL

So you two came together?

SHARON

Yeah. Gary drove. And he drove like a maniac.

GARY

You dared me to!

SHARON

I didn't mean it! You practically got us killed... But I'll admit it was pretty fun. So what time should we head over to the reunion?

GARY

We've got time.

SHARON

No we don't. Not much. I want to get there early so I can see if I can guess who people are as they come in the door.

BILL

Do you know if anyone else is headed out this way?

SHARON

No, the roads were empty. Probably the rain. It should only take us five minutes or so to get back to the school.

BILL

I see.

GARY

Sharon looks great. Don't you think so Bill?

SHARON

(pointing to spots on her
face)

Thanks. I look okay, thanks to a little prick here, a little
prick there.

GARY

A little prick there.

Gary points to Bill's dick.

SHARON

Mmmm. That's not how I remember it.

GARY

I'm being ironic.

A pause. Bill is visibly
uncomfortable with the
conversation.

SHARON

Does anyone even work here?

BILL

Nice girl in the back. Her name is Becky. She's alone and she
can only make eggs or pancakes.

Sharon looks at Bill's duffle bag.

SHARON

Is that yours? Did you come straight from the airport?

BILL

Yeah, I just got into town a little while ago. Came straight
here.

SHARON

Gary and I are at the Red Roof Inn. Where are you?

BILL

I'm not staying. I'm taking the red eye out tonight.

SHARON

No! No! I thought we were going to hang out this weekend?
You're leaving tonight?

BILL

I've been on the road for work. I have to get back. Sorry
about that.

SHARON

I was hoping we could pick up a bunch of wine coolers and get
drunk in the stupid Mustang this douchebag rented. Then drive
around yelling out the window like a bunch of idiots.

BILL

I think the reunion will be enough excitement.

SHARON

It's probably going to be lame. Mary Rinaldi planned it.
She's such a dip shit.

GARY

Maybe she's not a dip shit anymore.

SHARON

Once a dip shit...

GARY

Ah, be nice. She was my date for the Jr. Prom.

Sharon walks over and tries to peek
in the kitchen window.

SHARON

I rest my case. Did you say something about a waitress?

GARY

At least we're all together tonight, so lets eat some shitty
food and see who shows up at this shin dig.

SHARON

We're not all here.

A beat.

GARY

Ok, not all of us.

SHARON

Have either of you been in touch with Ron? He's my Facebook
friend, but he's not on there a lot.

BILL

I'm not on Facebook.

SHARON

You're not on Facebook? Are you kidding me?

BILL

Why would I want to be on Facebook?

SHARON

So you can see how much better you look than all your high school friends who got really old and look it.

GARY

Bill's the example of the guy who got old and looks it.

SHARON

I don't ever speak to Ron, but I do post on Susan's page every year on her birthday. Sometimes on other days, just for no reason.

GARY

She still has a page?

SHARON

They don't delete the page when you die.

GARY

They don't?

SHARON

No. Everything just stays there.

GARY

For how long?

SHARON

I don't know. Forever.

GARY

That's creepy.

Sharon walks over and picks up a menu and reads it while she speaks.

SHARON

It's only creepy if she starts "liking" my vacation photos. I think it's nice that I can go on there and remember her or say something nice. Let her know when I'm thinking of her. Just say hello. "So Susan, what's the deal with taking all those sleeping pills?"

The yacht club and art auctions keeping you awake at night? Just asking. Miss you. Love Sharon". Look! They still have pastrami.

Becky comes out of the kitchen with a pie which she places into a glass display case.

BECKY

Hi folks, I'll be right with you.

She wipes down the counter and comes over to the table.

BILL

This is the nice waitress I was telling you about.

BECKY

Sorry for the wait. Can I get you folks something to drink?

SHARON

I'll have a sloe gin fizz.

BECKY

A what?

SHARON

A sloe gin fizz. I used to get them here all the time.

BECKY

Never heard of it. Do I make it really slow?

SHARON

No, sloe gin, S,L,O,E. It's called gin but it's not really gin. It's red and sweet, and it's made from...

Becky looks at Sharon completely baffled.

SHARON (CONT'D)

I'll have a vodka tonic.

GARY

A sloe gin fizz? Really?

SHARON

Susan and I used to drink them, so I thought, in her memory-

GARY
What kind of beers do you have?

BECKY
Budweiser.

GARY
Great.

BECKY
Bottle or can?

GARY
Tough decision.

BECKY
Life is all about choices.

GARY
Bottle.

BECKY
Excellent choice.

BILL
I'll stick with my Diet Coke.

SHARON
Come on, have a drink with us!

BILL
I quit drinking years ago.

SHARON
Boo!

GARY
Sharon-

SHARON
Just one drink!

BILL
That's not how it works. But I'll watch you.

SHARON
You can be the designated driver.

BILL
Sorry, I can't. I have to drive myself, and then I'm headed straight to the airport.

SHARON
You are no fun Bill Rollins.

BECKY
He seems fun to me!

GARY
He's okay.

SHARON
I don't know if "fun" is how I would describe him.

BECKY
He seems nice.

SHARON
He is nice.

BECKY
Quiet.

SHARON
Yes. Nice and quiet. A very good description of Bill. He's the sweet, sensitive type, wouldn't you say Bill?

BILL
I never really liked that description.

BECKY
I think it's nice.

BILL
Okay.

SHARON
(to Becky)
What's your name? Becky? Do you have an ashtray?

BECKY
I was trying to be polite, but you can't smoke in here.

SHARON

Why even come to the middle of the country if you can't smoke there anymore?

She puts out her cigarette on a plate.

BECKY

So you all must be good friends?

GARY

(sarcastic)

Why? Did this guy say we were friends? That is a huge exaggeration.

BECKY

You want more time to look at the menu while I get your drinks?

GARY

I thought there was only a choice between pancakes and eggs.

BECKY

There is.

GARY

Eggs.

BILL

Eggs.

SHARON

Are the pancakes gluten free?

BECKY

No, they're just regular pancakes.

SHARON

Do you have something a little lighter like a Caesar salad?

BECKY

(surprised)

Hmmmm. Salad. I could probably make a salad without too much fallout. How do you want your eggs?

GARY

Scrambled.

BILL

Scrambled is fine.

BECKY

Good call.

Becky goes back to the kitchen. The three take a seat at a table.

SHARON

This is fun. I don't know why we don't stay in touch more. It kind of feels like no time has passed, doesn't it?

BILL

Time is relative.

SHARON

What?

BILL

Never mind.

SHARON

So Bill, what have you been up to?

BILL

Nothing really. Work. Paying the bills. Usual stuff.

SHARON

Gary was telling me he just opened up his fifth Sonic franchise.

BILL

I don't think they have Sonic where I live. I've never tried it.

GARY

Want one? Maybe we could go in on one together.

BILL

Nah, my job is okay.

GARY

You like selling life insurance?

BILL

I don't sell life insurance. I'm a traveling Actuary.

SHARON

Ooh! Sounds fancy!

GARY

What's an actuary?

BILL

I use theoretical mathematics and statistics to determine uncertain future events, like when you're gonna die.

SHARON

(off handed)

Well, I don't have life insurance.

BILL

Everyone should have it. Well, most people.

SHARON

It feels too negative to me. And I don't have a family, so-

BILL

You're right then, you don't need it.

GARY

Right, when you die no one will even notice.

Sharon gives him a look.

GARY

Unless it's on Facebook.

A beat.

GARY

(to Bill)

I was sorry to hear about you and Dianne breaking up. How are the kids doing?

BILL

They seem happy splitting time between Dianne and I. Probably good that they can't get too sick of one of us.

GARY

Must be hard. That's why I never got married.

SHARON

(incredulous)

Oh, is that why?

BILL

It was actually fine. We both wanted out.

SHARON

You should have married me, we always made a nice couple, don't you think?

GARY

Oh my God, you two. I hope this isn't going to be one of those things where people come to a reunion and hook up with their exes... is it?

SHARON

I don't know. It could be.

BILL

We're barely exes. Three dates.

SHARON

I'm kidding of course.

GARY

Of course.

SHARON

Of course. Unless...

A beat.

SHARON

I'm kidding!! And Bill is going right to the airport so there's no time for that.

GARY

You could make time.

SHARON

With you, there would be plenty of time for that.

BILL

Huh?

SHARON

Don't you remember? Gary is a two pump chump.

GARY

I was seventeen. I think that's pretty common.

SHARON

I didn't hold it against you.

BILL

Do we have to talk about this?

SHARON

It wasn't like I was cheating on you, Bill. You were there.

BILL

Don't remind me.

SHARON

You wouldn't be up for repeating the infamous "after prom action"?

They both stare at her awkwardly.

SHARON

You know, that's the only time I've done the old two on one thing. I'll admit it got a little awkward, but sometimes late at night when I'm alone in my bed, I do look back on it fondly.

BILL

We were drunk.

SHARON

At one point I wondered if you two even needed me there.

GARY

I was so shit faced, I didn't know what I was grabbing.

SHARON

(laughs)

I think Bill liked it.

Bill changes the conversation.

BILL

So, what else can we talk about?

GARY

Do either of you keep up with anyone else? I really only stayed in touch with you two, and of course Susan.

SHARON

I can't believe she's been gone, what? Eight years now?

BILL

Nine.

GARY

(raising his beer)

Only the good die young.

SHARON

What?! Billy Joel? Really? What are you sixty?

GARY

What's wrong with Billy Joel?

SHARON

Nothing, if it's 1978.

GARY

They haven't made any good music since 1984.

BILL

1984?

GARY

Yeah. Van Halen. 1984. Jump. Panama. DLR.

SHARON

What's DLR?

GARY

David Lee Roth.

BILL

David Lee Roth.

SHARON

You know, there's a lot of great music being made right now if you're paying attention and not stuck in 1984.

GARY

Music today blows. Half of it doesn't even have instruments. It's electronic crap.

SHARON

Yeah, so, at one time someone invented the violin, and I'll bet a lot of people were like, "What's this shit? What happened to the good old days? Bring back the fucking Zither."

Bill high-fives Sharon.

BILL

Zither. That's hilarious.

SHARON

Open your mind. These days any Tom, Dick or Malik, who wants to make music has a decent shot. Back then, we'd have maybe six or seven albums we wanted. These days there are literally thousands of bands to choose from.

GARY

That's the problem, no quality control.

SHARON

Hey, what time is it?

BILL

7:38. We have time. It's only a four minute drive. Six at the most. With the rain, maybe just a little more.

SHARON

You've got this all worked out haven't you? You were always efficient and punctual.

GARY

Excellent qualities.

SHARON

I need to text work before they go home for the weekend.

BILL

What time is it there?

SHARON

4:38. Los Angeles time.

Becky comes over to the table with water, a vodka tonic and a Budweiser beer.

BECKY

Here are your drinks...

SHARON

Just give me a second while I text work.

BECKY

Good luck with that.

SHARON

What?

BECKY

We have a really bad signal in here. Who's your server?

SHARON

You are.

BECKY

No, I mean your service provider, for your phone?

SHARON

Is one better than the other?

BECKY

No, they're all shitty.

SHARON

Then mine's A. T. and T.

BECKY

Yeah. That definitely won't work here. They keep saying we're going to get better coverage soon.

SHARON

So how do you call out?

Becky points to the old rotary
phone.

BECKY

That dinosaur there is the only phone we've got. You're welcome to try to call them if you like. But we don't have long distance service.

SHARON

Who doesn't have long distance? It really feels like it's still 1983 here. If I don't send an emoji of me saying, "Whoo hoo!", or at least a smiley face, they'll think I'm mad at them. And they'll worry about it all weekend. And I don't want that.

GARY

You L.A. people are really weird. Who sends a cartoon of themselves saying "whoo hoo" to let the office know everything is fine? Is everyone out there eight years old?

SHARON

If you're twenty-five, you're over the hill. Hence all the prick, prick in the face.

GARY

Don't say prick in the face.

SHARON

Speaking of pricks in the face, can we go back to talking about our three-way?

Becky is a little horrified.

BECKY

I'll get to work on your food. Enjoy your visit.

Becky goes to the kitchen.

SHARON

There's really no signal here??

BILL

That's what she said. I tried, but nothing.

SHARON

Well, I'm going to try.

Sharon gets up and walks around the restaurant. She goes to different areas holding her phone up high in the air and checking to see if there is a signal. Bill and Gary talk, while she tries every angle and location possible.

GARY

So how have you been? You look great.

BILL

Thanks.

GARY

I mean, you're unbelievably fat, but somehow it looks good on you.

No response.

GARY

It's too bad you have to go back so soon. I was hoping to get some guy time this weekend if we could ditch Sharon.

Sharon is holding her phone high.

SHARON

I can hear you. I'm in the same room.

GARY

Maybe go back out to Kingsbury Lake for some fishing, or some hunting, do something stupid and immature.

BILL

Yeah, I don't think so. I have to get back. Sorry.

Sharon walks out the door holding
her phone high over her head.

GARY

Well, I'm sorry that I haven't been in touch more. I know how hard it was for you after Susan...

BILL

Killed herself.

GARY

Not for sure.

BILL

I'm sure.

GARY

I always loved the way that you stood up for her against the other kids at school. They were so mean to her. I guess they were mean to us too, but they say be careful picking on the nerds in High School, because they'll probably end up your boss later.

BILL

Whatever you say, Gary.

GARY

They say success is the best revenge.

BILL

Is it? Is it the best revenge?

GARY

And we're all successful. I can't wait to get over there and make them all suck it.

Bill laughs.

BILL

What time is it?

GARY

Five minutes later than the last time you asked. And you have a watch...

BILL

Yeah. Sorry. Okay. We've still got time.

GARY

Yeah, we got time.

BILL

Yeah.

Awkward silence.

GARY

Are you dating? Seeing someone? Are you putting that big dick of yours to good use?

BILL

Actually, that's none of your business.

GARY

I just-

BILL

What about you? Are you putting that tiny dick of yours to any use at all?

GARY

Umm. Umm. I tried some internet stuff, but the women on there were either grossly obese, wanted my money, or she'd show up with a discernible mustache.

A pause.

GARY

I'm kidding!! Jesus! What happened to your sense of humor? Despite what Sharon says, you used to be fun.

Sharon comes back into the restaurant.

SHARON

I walked all around the parking lot and up the street. There is no signal. I'm freaking out a bit. I haven't been without a phone or internet since it was invented. God, things sucked before it was invented.

GARY

They didn't suck. Things were awesome! We made our own fun. These days everybody just stares into their lap. Don't you miss going to the library and actually researching a fact?

Neither of them miss it.

GARY

Really? The Dewey Decimal System? ... Nothing?

Sharon still tries to get her phone to work.

SHARON

Wait! Wait! It's going through... It's going through... So slow... It's going, and... it's not going.

GARY

Give it up. Let's spend time with each other. We don't have much time left.

Becky comes over.

BECKY

Bad news. We're out of eggs. But I do have pancake batter.

SHARON

It took you that long to find out you were out of eggs?

BECKY

I was looking for the eggs. We always have eggs. I don't know what happened to the eggs.

SHARON

Let's just skip it and go.

BILL

Not yet.

GARY

Come on guys, give Becky a break. We'll all have pancakes.

SHARON

Caesar Salad.

BECKY

Right.

GARY

What happened to the juke box? There was one right over here.

BECKY

We have a digital juke box, over there on the wall.

GARY

Does anyone have a quarter?

BECKY

Songs cost a dollar.

GARY

What? For one song?

BECKY

I don't make the rules.

GARY

Jesus.

Gary goes over to a juke box and
looks at the songs.

GARY

I don't know any of these songs. They don't have any Duran
Duran.

BECKY

I think Steve is trying to get the kids in again, with all
the new music.

BILL

I worked with us when we were kids.

SHARON

Well, I know what the kids like, let me check it out.

Sharon picks a song and it begins
to play.

A fun, modern, electronic type dance song, like "Fancy Footwork" by Chromeo, or any contemporary modern electronic dance song.
Sharon starts dancing.

SHARON

Yeah, this'll work. I love this song.

GARY

What is it?

SHARON

Just listen. And keep an open mind.

Sharon is dancing on her own. She's a pretty good dancer, and very sexy with her moves. Gary stands and watches her.

GARY

I have an open mind.

SHARON

(dancing)

Sure you do. So, what do you think?

GARY

What the fuck is this?

SHARON

It's fun. Don't be such an old man.

GARY

I am an old man.

SHARON

Well, don't act it. Come on Bill!

BILL

No thanks. My dancing days are over.

GARY

(to Sharon)

I'll dance with you.

SHARON

Bill is a way better dancer than you.

GARY

How do you know? You haven't seen me dance in thirty five years.

SHARON

Show me what you got.

Gary dances. He does a weird twisting dance where his shoulders hunch forward and back and he sticks his butt out over and over. Bill watches them dance. Becky moves to the music quietly and subtly.

SHARON

(to Gary)

What the hell is that?

GARY

Dancing.

SHARON

You look like a cat that's trying to throw up a fur ball.

GARY

It doesn't look good?

SHARON

No. Stop it. You're worse than in high school. I don't want to dance with you.

GARY

Then Becky, Becky right? Dance with me.

BECKY

Will it get me a bigger tip?

GARY

A much, much bigger tip.

BECKY

Okay!

Becky and Gary dance. Becky tries to imitate Gary's weird dance.

SHARON

Don't encourage him.

Gary rubs Becky like a cat in heat.

SHARON

Watch it there Gary, she could be your daughter.

GARY

No way. How old are you?

BECKY

Thirty three.

GARY

Shit.

SHARON

Come on Bill, don't leave me hanging out here.

The three of them dance for a bit.
Then Sharon takes Bill's hand and
tries to get him up but he
declines.

SHARON

Come on Bill! This is supposed to be fun. Let's practice for
the party! We need to look good for all the oldsters.

Sharon motions over to Gary.
Sharon, Gary and Becky dance
through this next section of
dialogue.

SHARON (CONT'D)

(motioning towards Gary)

Show this pussy what you can do!

BILL

I'm sorry. I'm really tired. Jet lag has me knocked out. But
don't let me stop you guys.

SHARON

Come on, old man! You were a great dancer. Let's see some of
those moves!

GARY

(to Becky)

You'd never know it to look at him, but even though he was a dweeb, he was quite the stud. Right Sharon?

SHARON

Definitely. And no one says stud. Or dweeb. God you're old.

GARY

So are you.

SHARON

Not like you. My staff says I'm "dope"

GARY

What?

SHARON

Cool. With it. Hip. Awesome.

GARY

Are you sure they didn't mean you ARE a dope?

SHARON

Screw you nerd.

GARY

(to Becky)

You're very good!

BECKY

I haven't danced in a long time.

GARY

You could never tell. And neither have I.

BECKY

You can totally tell, but please don't change a thing. You're very entertaining.

GARY

This isn't my music! I'd be a lot better with some Van Halen.

BECKY

What's that?

GARY

What's that?? You've never heard of Van Halen?

BECKY

It sounds familiar.

GARY

They're superstars! They had a great album called "1984"

BECKY

Oh wow!! That's neat. That's the year I was born. Give me a dollar.

GARY

For what?

BECKY

I think there's a song on there that you all will like.

Becky puts the dollar in the juke box, and Working For The Weekend by Loverboy begins to play.

Sharon and Becky dance doing their best to entice Bill to join them. Surprisingly Bill jumps up and struts his stuff impressing the women, and making Gary incredibly jealous. The three make up a "routine" and are having a blast.

Gary is so jealous, that he walks to the juke box and yanks the cord out of the wall. The music stops.

SHARON

What'd you do that for?! It was fun.

GARY

It was like the Jr. Prom all over again.

SHARON

Wow. I've really worked up a sweat. I haven't danced like that since- since maybe High School.

BECKY

You guys must have been fun back in the day. The three musketeers!

SHARON

There were four of us.

BECKY

I'm sorry, was one of you not able to make it?

SHARON

Yes. One of us was not able to make it.

BECKY

(joking)

That's too bad. I'll bet you all got into a lot of trouble back then!

SHARON

We did all right.

GARY

Bill was actually hot. Can you believe that?

BECKY

I believe it.

SHARON

I have a picture, would you like to see?

Sharon goes through her purse and pulls out a photo.

BILL

Don't bother her with this. She doesn't care about your old pictures.

Becky looks at the picture.

BECKY

Wow. You were a good looking group. I don't know about those clothes, but you look happy.

GARY

We were nerds. But good looking nerds.

BECKY

And that's the girl who couldn't make it?

GARY

Yes, she was great. She was a lot of fun. She had a terrific voice. Really beautiful. Actually, you look a lot like her.

BILL

No she doesn't.

SHARON

(changing the subject)

She was a great singer.

BECKY

What happened? Why couldn't she make it?

GARY

She died. A few years back.

BECKY

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

BILL

She wouldn't have come anyhow.

SHARON

Yes, she would have.

BILL

I don't think so.

SHARON

It was a long time ago. I'm sure she'd forgotten all about it.

BECKY

Forgotten what?

BILL

None of your business. I doubt that she forgot about it.

BECKY

You're right, I do kind of look like her-

GARY

It's not a nice story.

SHARON

Well then let's not tell our waitress.

BECKY

You don't have to tell me.

BILL

No, go ahead Gary. Tell it.

GARY

Well our friend's name was Susan. The four of us were thick as thieves. Do you know what that means?

Becky rolls her eyes and nods.

GARY

Well, Susan had a thing for Mr. Bill here. Like I said, he's not much to look at now, but then... Anyhow. You know how kids today take pictures and send them to each other? Naughty pictures? Well, we didn't have cell phones back then, but we did have cameras. Susan took a topless picture of herself, and was going to give it to Bill. A group of mean girls got a hold of it.

BECKY

Oh no-

GARY

Yes. And they made copies of it. A lot of copies of it. Susan was supposed to sing in our annual Christmas concert. The night of the show copies of the picture were slipped into all of the programs. So when people opened them- there was Susan smiling back at them. Only a few people actually got to see them before Sister Ann grabbed all the remaining programs and threw them away. But the damage had been done. It was really, really tough for Susan after that.

SHARON

It was a really shitty thing to do.

BECKY

That's awful. No wonder she wouldn't have wanted to come back.

GARY

She might have. She married a very rich guy, named Ronald. She had a couple of great kids. I think she would have wanted to show everyone how she turned her life around.

BILL

She didn't turn her life around.

SHARON

She took too many sleeping pills and fell asleep in her bathtub.

Becky is shocked. There is silence as she figures out how to respond.

BECKY

Really awful story.

BILL

Those assholes ruined her life. She never got over it.

SHARON

They were just kids. Kids do mean shit all the time.

BECKY

(to herself)

I hate bathtubs.

BILL

Yeah, well, they're all still around. And she's not.

BECKY

It must be hard for the three of you to be back here without her.

SHARON

We were fine until a minute ago. Can we please just get out of here and go to the party?

BILL

Let's eat first. All that dancing made me hungry.

SHARON

There will be a ton of food at the reunion. Let's just go over now.

BILL

There's probably not a lot of people there yet.

SHARON

Come on! Let's go!

BILL

(more sharply than he intended)

Nobody's going anywhere!

BECKY

(lightening the mood)

Okay, I have to go back there and figure out how to make pancakes. How do you want them?

GARY

What are the choices?

BECKY

With syrup. Or without syrup.

GARY

With syrup. Sounds perfect!

Becky goes off into the kitchen.

GARY (CONT'D)

Bill, do you really want to eat? There'll be food at the party. And haven't we had enough nostalgia? Should we just head over now? Get inside and pick a spot?

SHARON

Sure, let's go. This place is kind of depressing. I'll pay her for the food.

BILL

I don't want to be the first one there. I'd rather wait for a crowd and blend in.

SHARON

You've always been so shy!

BILL

No one will probably even remember me.

SHARON

What? Sure they will! What about Maryann Peet? She always had a thing for you.

BILL

I don't think so.

GARY

Does anyone know what happened to Maryann Peet?

SHARON

I think she lives in New York.

BILL

She was the one who got kicked out of art class right?

SHARON

Yeah, she did some pottery that was basically a giant dick. And her paintings had giant dicks in them. Basically everything she did had some kind of dick in it. Mrs. Hathaway warned her twice and then kicked her out and sent her to shop class instead.

BILL

I don't remember that story exactly.

SHARON

In shop class she used the lathe to make a giant wooden dick. But Mr. Travis liked it and kept it on his desk. She told me he gave her an A. She was really good at making dicks.

BILL

Do you know what she does now?

SHARON

She's an artist in New York I think. I read something about her in a magazine a few years back.

BILL

What did it say?

SHARON

It said she made some really great dicks. Not in those words- but that was the gist.

GARY

If you'll excuse me please...

SHARON

Where are you going?

GARY

All this talk about dicks. I have to go to the little boys room.

SHARON

Number one or number two?

GARY

Why does that matter?

SHARON

I want to know how much alone time I'll have with Bill.

GARY

Number one. So make it a quickie.

Gary goes over to the restroom and enters it.

BILL

So, what'd you have in mind?

SHARON

What? No. Just, well, why didn't you ever reach out to me especially after Dianne left? You told me you would call when we were at Susan's funeral. Why didn't you?

BILL

What does it matter? We live on opposite sides of the country.

SHARON

Ever heard of something called an airplane? You could come out to L.A. on the weekends every so often or even a few times a month if you liked it.

BILL

I can't afford that.

SHARON

I can. I make a shit ton of money. Like a lot.

BILL

You do? I figured you were doing okay-

SHARON

It's obscene, really. So money is not an issue. I wish you weren't rushing off tonight after the reunion, I'd really like to catch up. No pressure. But I'd like to know you again, even if it's just as friends. Come out to L. A. for a few days, see what you think.

BILL

I don't like the sun.

SHARON

No one does. People bitch all the time that it's too sunny. People are assholes, and they'll bitch about whatever they don't have.

Gary returns from the restroom.

GARY

Okay, times up. I'm back. The party's over.

SHARON

That's what people say every time you show up.

BILL

We were done anyhow.

SHARON

For now.

GARY

Should we go? It's almost time.

BILL

Let's wait for our food. No one is ever on time for these kinds of things.

SHARON

I don't know why you're so nervous Bill. You look great, you're successful-

GARY

Enough.

SHARON

You've got two great kids. We're lucky to have made it to our thirty fifth reunion. Not everyone did.

GARY

Don't keep bringing her up. We're supposed to be having fun tonight.

SHARON

Why not? She should be here with us.

GARY

She should. But she's not. We are. So, let's go with that.

SHARON

I blame Ron. Her husband should have been looking out for her. It's so easy to over do it with sleeping pills and painkillers. Especially with alcohol.

BILL

She didn't "over do it"

SHARON

I wish one of us had been around to talk to her about whatever she was going through. If we had been around, I think she'd be sitting here right now, getting ready to eat pancakes with us.

Becky shows up with their food.

BECKY

Ok. Sorry about that. Two pancakes and a Caesar salad.

GARY

Wow, it's really remarkable how much you look like her.

SHARON

I asked for the dressing on the side.

BECKY

You did? I'm sorry. Do you want me to make the whole salad again, or are you okay with it on there?

SHARON

I hate to be a pain, but I really need it to be on the side. I'm allergic to some brands of Caesar dressing. I have to taste the tiniest dab. Then if I don't die, it's all good.

BECKY

You want to just take a tiny dab off of that salad and see if you die?

SHARON

I'm not literally going to die. But I could become deathly ill.

GARY

And we have no way to call an ambulance.

BECKY

If she gets sick, you can call 9-1-1 on the phone over there. But no one is likely to come for at least an hour. So, yeah, you'll probably die anyhow.

SHARON

You know what? I'm not really that hungry anyway.

BECKY

No, I can remake it. Don't worry about it. I just hate to waste food.

SHARON

We're going to have to leave soon anyhow.

BECKY

It won't take but a minute.

SHARON

It seemed like it took a lot longer than a minute to make this one.

BECKY

Well, time is relative.

SHARON

What?

BILL

Tell them what you said about time. She's writing a paper on it.

SHARON

You're in school? That's so nice.

BECKY

I have a daughter, and I want her to go to college, so I thought I need to get a better job than this one, and the only way to do that is to go back to school.

SHARON

How smart. How old is your daughter?

A beat.

BECKY

She's eleven.

SHARON

What's her name?

BECKY

Angela.

SHARON

Pretty name.

BECKY

Thank you.

SHARON

Must be hard for you to work nights.

BECKY

Why?

SHARON

Well, someone has to take care of her... I mean, I don't know that for certain. I've never had kids. But on TV they usually don't let them hang out alone.

BECKY
It's not a problem.

GARY
You have a baby daddy?

BILL
Gary!!

GARY
What? What did I say?!

SHARON
Don't be rude.

BECKY
My husband watches over her while I'm at work.

SHARON
Never had a husband either. I tried to get Bill here interested, but he went off and married a cunt.

GARY
Sharon! Dianne was not a cunt.

BILL
No, she was great. It was me mostly. But it's all good now.

GARY
Time heals all wounds.

SHARON
Cliché, party of one?

BILL
Tell them what you said about time.

SHARON
Time? What about time?

BECKY
Nothing really. Just that time is relative. Like how long that salad took. It really didn't take that long, but because you wanted it and were waiting for it, time took longer.

SHARON
It's still the same amount of time no matter how I perceive it.

BECKY

But I hypothesize that time is really in our heads. Like for instance. Think about High School. Four years. Pretty short. Now think about your job. How long have you been there?

SHARON

Seventeen years.

BECKY

Now compare them. In your mind the four years takes up as much space as the seventeen years. Maybe even a little more because there's probably a lot of things that happened to you in High School that really stuck with you. Whereas work, not so much.

SHARON

I don't get it.

BECKY

Memories all take up the same space when you look back on them. Except for certain things that I call, a Time Spike.

SHARON

What's that?

BECKY

A time spike is an event that stays with you vividly forever, no matter what. It could be something really great like having a baby or a wedding day, but usually it's something traumatic and terrible that you can't get out of your head. That you can't unsee no matter what, no matter how much time passes, those time spikes take up an awful lot of space in our memories. It's like gigabytes vs. kilobytes.

SHARON

And you learned all this waiting tables?

BECKY

This place is so slow, it gives me time to think about a lot of things.

SHARON

I don't really know what your talking about. But it sounds really smart. So, I'm sure your going to do well in school.

BECKY

Do you want me to get you a new salad?

SHARON

Yes, please.

Becky takes the salad and goes back to the kitchen.

BILL

Sorry.

GARY

You know, you never said "dressing on the side"

SHARON

So?

A beat.

SHARON (CONT'D)

She should have known better. Just look at me. Do I look like a person who would want their salad dressing all over their salad? One look at me and you know I'm an "on the side" kind of person.

GARY

I don't think they do a lot of "on the side" here.

SHARON

Well, she could have asked.

GARY

(placating)

Sure. She should have asked.

SHARON

Whatever. Can we just skip the food and go? I'm sure plenty of people are there by now.

BILL

(looking at his watch)

You think so?

SHARON

Yes, I think most people like to get there first so they can guess who the old people are when they come through the door. Which is what I was hoping to do. But it's probably crowded by now.

BILL

We can go. I just want to go to the bathroom first. Fix my hair.

GARY

What's left of it.

Bill goes into the bathroom.

GARY

So how did your conversation go?

SHARON

He doesn't seem interested at all.

GARY

Really? I'm surprised. I always thought you two made a nice couple.

SHARON

Don't give me that. You thought the two of YOU made a nice couple.

GARY

Why are you always joking about stuff like that?

SHARON

Joking. Okay. Whatever. It doesn't matter. Neither of us could compete with Susan.

GARY

You should give him the letter you wrote. If you don't you'll never know how he really feels.

SHARON

What's the point? It's embarrassing.

GARY

It's not embarrassing. Maybe he just doesn't want to talk about it here. He's tired, he has to fly out tonight. We're talking about our dead friend and his divorce. Not exactly romantic.

SHARON

I guess.

GARY

Give me the letter.

SHARON

What are you going to do with it?

GARY

I'm going to slip it into his bag. He'll find it when he gets home. Once he reads it, I'll bet he'll call.

SHARON

And if he doesn't? I don't want to give it to him anymore. He's not interested. I don't know why I thought he would be.

GARY

If he doesn't respond, you live three thousand miles away, and you won't see him until our fiftieth reunion or until I'm dead, whichever comes first.

SHARON

It's hard for me to decide which one I really want to come first.

GARY

Give it to me.

SHARON

Okay! Okay! I can't believe I'm agreeing to this. I feel like a sixteen year old girl.

GARY

Then it's really appropriate tonight. Give me your note, before he comes back.

Sharon takes a letter out of her purse. Gary leans over to Bill's bag. He slips Sharon's note into his jacket. Then he reaches towards Bill's bag and unzips it, pretending to put her letter inside. He freezes. He stares inside at something for at least ten seconds.

SHARON

What is it?

He motions her over with his head. She leans over. Gary lifts out a shotgun. And then another gun. Sharon's eyes grow wide. Sharon mouths the words "What the fuck??", Gary shakes his head back at her. They have a physical conversation without words.

SHARON

(NO WORDS)

What do you think that's all about?

GARY

(NO WORDS)

I have no idea.

SHARON

(NO WORDS)

What do you want to do about it?

GARY

(NO WORDS)

I don't know.

BILL

(yelling, off in the
bathroom)

I think you're going to be surprised at how great my hair looks.

Gary shoves the two guns back into the duffle. The whole bag rattles and crashes as if it were filled with many firearms. Gary quickly zips it up. He and Susan go back to their seats, frozen.

Bill comes out of the bathroom, and back to the table. He is wearing an ugly toupee and glasses.

BILL

What do you think? Do you think the oldsters at the reunion will be surprised?

Gary and Sharon say nothing.

BILL

What's the matter do I look that stupid?

A beat. Sharon's eyes dart around the room nervously.

SHARON

No- no. No...it looks great. You look ten years younger.

BILL

Thanks. I had been debating on whether to wear it or not.

SHARON

You should definitely wear it. Right, Gary?

Gary is staring off into space,
fixated on what he has just seen.

GARY

Huh? What?

SHARON

(trying to snap Gary out of
it.)

The hair and glasses make Bill look a lot younger don't you
think?

GARY

What? Uh...totally. Yeah.

BILL

What's wrong with you two?

Sharon pulls it together, but
speaks with just a bit too much
urgency.

SHARON

Nothing. Nothing. I think my blood sugar is low. Can I have
some of those pancakes?

BILL

The gluten-

SHARON

Fuck the gluten.

Sharon grabs Bill's pancakes and
starts to eat them.

BILL

Okay, I guess we can go now. It's probably crowded enough.

Gary looks at Susan eating the
pancakes, and then at Bill.

GARY

No, no- we should stay here and finish the food, right?

SHARON
(stuffing her face)
Yeah. This gluten is delicious.

Sharon shovels the pancakes into
her mouth.

BILL
I don't want to wait too long.

Sharon dismisses Bill with a little
too much fervor.

SHARON
(over-doing it)
It's kind of nice just the three of us! It's going to be so
loud there we won't get to visit. I'm enjoying just being
together.

BILL
Okay. Sure. For a little bit.

Awkward silence. Sharon and Gary
stare into space.

BILL
So, what did you want to talk about?

SHARON
Um. I don't know. Gary- what should we talk about?

BILL
Maybe we should just go to the reunion.

Sharon quickly thinks of a way to
stall for time.

SHARON
No! No. No. Do you remember Father Martin?

BILL
Sure. Gym right?

SHARON
(cheerfully)
Right, right. Well turns out- guess what?

GARY
(trying to help)
He molested a bunch of little boys?

SHARON

No! But good guess! He was caught embezzling thousands of dollars from the school and using it to pay for his gay lover's apartment in New York.

BILL

Really? Wow.

SHARON

I know. Hilarious right?!

BILL

What??

Sharon realizes she is becoming slightly hysterical.

SHARON

I mean not hilarious. I mean sad. Sad and surprising. I always liked him.

GARY

I can't believe Father Martin was... one of those.

SHARON

You can say "gay" Gary. It's not a dirty word.

BILL

He never molested me.

SHARON

Being gay doesn't mean you want to have sex with little boys. He was having sex with some man in an apartment in New York. Gary, he didn't molest you, did he?

Gary is staring into space.

SHARON

Gary!!

GARY

Huh! I'm so sorry. Yes, I think so.

SHARON

Father Martin molested you??

GARY

What?! No, no. He didn't molest me.

SHARON
Then why did you say he did?

GARY
I did?

SHARON
Just now.

GARY
Sorry.

Sharon and Gary have a very intense conversation, back and forth, there eyes locked on one another.

SHARON
That's not what we said.

GARY
I must have drifted off.

SHARON
Well stop it. We're talking. We're reminiscing about the good 'ole days and our pedophile priest.

BILL
You said he wasn't a pedophile.

SHARON
(distracted and irritated)
He was a priest...the odds are pretty good. Anyhow, It doesn't matter 'cause he's in prison now.

GARY
Why is he in prison?

SHARON
Pay attention! He embezzled all that money from the school and gave it to his lover in New York!

GARY
He did?

SHARON
Gary. Focus.

Gary snaps out of it. He has thought of a possible way out of the situation.

GARY

Hey, I was just thinking, why don't I go on ahead, and you two can catch up, and you know, I'll go on ahead. Sharon can ride with you Bill.

BILL

No, sorry, can't. My car is full of tons of luggage and stuff. It's packed full. We can go now if you guys want. I'll follow you. We'll all go together.

Sharon wonders what Bill may have stashed in his car.

SHARON

You have even more luggage in the car?!

BILL

Yeah, I've been on the road for awhile. I just brought this bag in because I was planning on changing clothes, but I changed my mind. I don't think I need to change clothes anymore.

SHARON

No. You look great. You don't need to change clothes. We all look great. Everybody looks great.

BILL

Can we go?

GARY

I should just text Bob Warner and tell him we'll be there soon. I told him I'd text when I was on my way. I'll be right back.

SHARON

Good idea Gary.

BILL

Text's don't work remember?

GARY

Oh yeah. Maybe I can get a signal in the parking lot?

SHARON

Yes, Gary, try that, maybe there's a signal in the parking lot. Go try. Maybe you'll have better luck than me.

BILL

We'll be there in a few minutes. You can see him then. I want to see him too.

Sharon tries to hide the panic in her voice.

SHARON

Why do you want to see him? You weren't friends were you?

BILL

No, we weren't friends. We definitely were not friends. I didn't have a lot of friends.

SHARON

You had us. We were always great friends, right Gary?

GARY

Huh? I don't know.

SHARON

Gary!! We are talking to you.

GARY

I'm sorry.

BILL

What's going on?

SHARON

He's had too much to drink I think.

BILL

Half a beer?

Sharon makes up a story off the top of her head.

SHARON

Well,....um... he's on pain medications. So, yeah, they don't mix as we all know. That's what happened to Susan, and we don't want to lose you too, Gary.

BILL

What medication are you taking?

A beat. Gary does not answer. He is lost in thought. Sharon jumps in to keep the conversation moving and focused.

SHARON

Oxicotin. Pain killers. He hurt his back awhile ago. Right Gary?

GARY

What are you talking about? I don't have a drug problem.

SHARON

(emphatic)

Gary! The first step is to admit you have one. Now, tell us about it!

Gary finally gets that Sharon is stalling.

GARY

Oh, yeah, well- Okay, maybe I do a little bit. Um... I was... It sort of happened last month- so not much to tell...

Gary doesn't know where to begin. Sharon wants this to be a very long story so that they can stall for time.

SHARON

He's embarrassed. I get it, addiction is hard to talk about.

GARY

Yeah, it is.

SHARON

Maybe it's easier if I tell it.

GARY

I definitely think it's easier if you tell it.

Sharon thinks for a beat about what her story will be. She finally lands on an idea.

Becky returns to the table and brings the new Caesar salad.

SHARON

Well, it all starts with his pornography addiction.

BECKY

Dressing on the side.

SHARON

How nice. This looks so nice, doesn't it guys? Great job Becky. Sorry for being a pain in the ass.

BECKY

Can I get you folks anything else right now?

BILL

Just the check.

SHARON

No, no- not yet- what do you have for dessert?

BECKY

Um, some old pie I think. I'm not sure of the flavor.

SHARON

I'll have it.

BECKY

Don't you want me to check what flavor it is first?

SHARON

I don't care what flavor it is. I just love pie.

BILL

What about the gluten?

GARY

Do you guys still make that gigantic dessert?

BECKY

Which one?

GARY

You know, with the mountain of ice cream. Mount Everest or something?

BECKY

Ah, the Matterhorn?

GARY

Yes, that's it, the Matterhorn.

SHARON

Oh my God, the Matterhorn. Remember when we all used to get the Matterhorn, Bill?

BILL

Sort of.

BECKY

We still make it, but no one orders it. It's meant for eight people.

SHARON

We'll have it. I'm starving. Forget the pie, we'll have that shit-ton of ice cream thing.

GARY

What's on it again?

SHARON

Who cares what's on it, Gary. It's ice cream. Jesus.

BECKY

It's sixteen scoops of ice cream, hot fudge, butterscotch, bananas, strawberries-

GARY

Wow.

BECKY

Walnuts, pecans, caramel, whipped cream and eight cherries. I've never made it. No one orders it. It's kind of a joke, actually.

GARY

If we finish it, do we get it for free?

BECKY

I don't think so?

SHARON

We'll have that. Three spoons.

BILL

We don't have time for this.

SHARON

Oh come on, Bill it will be like old times.

BILL

I'm all about the old times, but I really think we should be going.

SHARON

We'll have it. Thanks. My treat.

BECKY

(to herself)

It's way too much ice cream for three people.

Becky goes off to make the sundae.

BILL

I really don't think we have time for some mountain of ice cream, that I barely remember.

GARY

Oh you remember Bill, Susan used to take her spoon and slide it down the whole side of it. She'd say, "I'm skiing the Matterhorn!"

BILL

Oh yeah. I do remember that.

Silence.

SHARON

So where was I?

BILL

Gary's porn addiction.

Sharon gathers her thoughts. She begins to ramble a story that she is obviously making up parts of as she goes along. The story is about her, but she tries to tell it from Gary's point of view.

SHARON

Right, that. Well, Gary was dating this woman. This was several years back. They met at a...a...whatdayacallit...a Jamba Juice- Gary walked in and saw this very attractive woman. And this went on for a few days and Gary began to notice that this gal only ever had the fruit smoothies... not the ones made with sherbet because those have a lot more calories. She was in good shape for a woman her age. But sometimes she would...she would...she would ask for extra sherbet on the side. But uh...um...she...uh...um... tried not to make a habit of that, right Gary?

Gary looks at her blankly.

SHARON

Anyhow, this guy, um, I mean Gary, was getting a Jamba juice one morning, and they got to talking, and he invited her out on a date.

Well, the first date should have been a warning sign for this woman, it was at Benihana and Gary and this...this... woman decided to share the um... the sashimi sampler and the...the...the... whatdayacallit...the colossal shrimp. Well...this guy...I mean, Gary ate most of the sashimi sampler. Then, completely out of the blue, he decided to order hot sake. His date didn't like sake, and he didn't even ask her what she wanted, he just ordered it. No discussion. Like, he was being a real dick. Just, "I'll have hot sake, please" Well um... um ...she...she decided to let it go and, and, and, they continued to date. But there'd be little signs here and there, that this guy, I mean Gary, was a real dick. He might order wine and not ask her if she wanted anything. Or he'd make popcorn at night and not share it. One night, she was, she was,...she was over at his house to watch, um, ah... Platoon on DVD.

A long pause.

SHARON

I'm sorry. I lost my train of thought. Where was I?

GARY

We were going to watch Platoon.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Yes, that's right, so, so, so,... she went to the bathroom, because she had had....uh....um...a lot of liquids...and naturally she spied inside his medicine cabinet, and she was shocked to find that it was overflowing with drugs. Everything from uh, Oxycontin to, um, Hydrocodone. Methadone. Percocet. Percodan. Amphetamines. Methadone. Vicodin. Ritalin. Mollies. Fentanyl. Black beauties. Ketamine. Red devils. Blue Meanies. Tylenol. Methadone. Skittles. Smarties. Xanax. All of it. Right Gary?

GARY

Yeah, right. I had issues.

SHARON

You sure did. What an asshole.

Bill notices that his bag has been moved, and the zipper is not closed.

GARY

And then came the porn? Was that next?

SHARON

Right. Tell him.

GARY

You tell him. I'm not comfortable with it.

BILL

Did somebody move my bag?

SHARON

Okay. Well uh...this uh... this woman moved in with him despite all of this. She has this complex where she thinks she can fix people who are broken, but it never works out.

BILL

(challenging Gary)

What was her name?

GARY

Huh?

BILL

How long ago did you date this woman?

GARY

Ummmm... two years. Give or take.

BILL

So, not that long ago.

GARY

Right.

SHARON

Right. So anyhow, this woman and...Gary... were living together and she started to suspect he was stealing the drugs out of her...I mean his...medicine cabinet and then um, you know, uh...watching porn while he was high. So one night she came home and there was Doug, I mean Gary with uh... his mouth taped shut, chip clips on his nipples and a...a... giant cucumber stuck up his ass. He was so startled he jumped up, tripped over an ottoman, hit his head on the glass top coffee table and cracked his head open. He didn't even feel it because he had taken so many painkillers. That was it. She walked out and never saw him again. Did she Gary?

Sharon tries to engage Gary, but he's more shocked about her made up story than what's in Bill's bag.

GARY

No, she didn't.

Becky comes over.

BECKY

We're out of caramel. Do you still want it?

SHARON

Yes, we still want it. It's not a problem. Just put extra butterscotch.

BILL

(pointedly)

I think we'll skip the ice cream. I'm sure there'll be plenty of desserts at the party.

SHARON

No, I want that Matterhorn thing.

BECKY

It's way too much, really.

BILL

It's too much Sharon.

SHARON

Oh, come on. It'll be fun.

GARY

(full of tension)

Can I get another beer please?

SHARON

(more angry than she should be)

Gary, do you really think you need another beer, with your drug and alcohol addiction?

GARY

Could I just have some water please?

Becky looks at Bill.

BECKY

What's with the get up?

BILL

The what?

BECKY

The get up. The wig and glasses. Are you in disguise?

BILL

Do you think it makes me look younger?

BECKY

Not really.

BILL

Oh. Well, that was honest.

BECKY

I think you're pretty handsome without it. You don't need that.

SHARON

Yeah Bill, you don't need that. You look great. Right Gary?

GARY

He looks okay.

SHARON

I think he looks great. Better than you.

GARY

Sure, yeah. Bill, you look great.

BILL

(to Becky)

I'm kind of sensitive about my hair, I used to have a lot of it...I think I'll wear it.

BECKY

And the glasses?

BILL

Don't you think they make me look smarter?

BECKY

Hmmmm. Maybe. I guess glasses make everyone seem smarter. But you seem pretty smart to me! I better go get cracking on that gigantic ice cream sundae. It's a lot of work.

A lot of arm muscle scooping all of that ice cream...A lot of work. It's just way too much ice cream.

They all just look at her.

BECKY (CONT'D)

And I will get you some water.

SHARON

Thanks! You're very sweet. What a sweetheart, right Bill?

BILL

She's nice.

Becky goes off. They sit in silence for a moment. Sharon tries to compose herself and bring the conversation back to a level of normalcy.

SHARON

You know, I feel really bad about that whole Caesar salad thing.

GARY

What?

SHARON

I was kind of rude. Maybe I should go apologize to her. I'll just pop my head in the kitchen.

GARY

She's working in the kitchen, that's even ruder to interrupt her when she's in there.

Sharon can't believe Gary is thwarting her plan to get Becky alone to deliver a warning message.

SHARON

Gary! I just wanted to apologize to her...in the kitchen.

BILL

I don't think she seemed that upset. I wouldn't worry about it. And since when do you care about what other people think?

SHARON

(pointedly at Gary)

Maybe I should write her a note and then slip it to her with a twenty or something? Gary, I saw you put a piece of paper into your pocket a little while ago? Can I use that?

Gary realizes Sharon saw him put her letter into his pocket.

GARY

Um- yeah, that sounds like a good idea.

Gary takes the letter out and places it on the table.

SHARON

Who has a pen?

BILL

Don't do that. You'll just be making things worse. You okay Sharon? You seem agitated for some reason? And Gary, are you hot? You're sweating.

Sharon immediately stops looking for a pen. She realizes that Bill may know something is wrong. She tries to lighten the mood.

SHARON

What? Yes, yes, we're fine. I guess I'm just nervous about seeing everyone at the reunion. You know how people like to judge you about where you are in life.

BILL

You have a fantastic job. You told me how much money you have. People would be jealous of you.

GARY

How much money?

BILL

That's not polite to ask, Gary.

GARY

It's that much, is it?

SHARON

Whatever number your thinking of... It's a lot more than that.

Sharon stands and begins pacing
around the restaurant.

GARY

Have you thought about buying a Sonic Franchise? You and I
should go in on one together.

BILL

Yeah Sharon, you and Gary should buy a Sonic franchise
together!

SHARON

What?? No! I don't even eat meat.

BILL

You don't have to eat there.

GARY

And they make a lot of money.

SHARON

I told you. I make a lot of money, a lot, a lot, I don't need
anymore money.

BILL

Everyone could use more money.

GARY

You should consider it.

SHARON

(hysterical)

Why are you insisting that I buy a Sonic franchise with you?
Don't you have like six of them?

A long pause. Gary lets out a sigh.

GARY

Not anymore.

SHARON

What?

BILL

What?

GARY

Everything was fine... until there was a small food poisoning
incident. I don't think it was us, but we got sued and the
court differed. And then five McDonalds opened up. Like,
right next to my restaurants. Like they were being dicks
about it on purpose. So, I'm basically starting over.

SHARON

(offended)

Did you come to this reunion to ask me for money? Are you literally asking for a loan at a time like this?!

BILL

(knowingly)

At a time like this.

GARY

(right at Sharon, pointedly)

Um...I didn't know it was going to be as awkward as this has become. I didn't come just to ask for money. I wanted to see you guys. But you know how awkward it is to talk to friends about borrowing money. Especially when you haven't seen them in a few years.

Sharon fakes anger.

SHARON

Yeah, it's really, really awkward Gary! I can't believe you would do that. After all this...this...this time, you came to see me just to get money? Wow. You're...um...unbelievable.

GARY

I'm sorry.

Bill stands up.

BILL

Okay. That's it. Time to go.

SHARON

(speaking in "code" to Gary)

You know what? We shouldn't even go to that party. We should just skip it. It's all ruined now.

GARY

I said I was sorry.

SHARON

Gary maybe you and I should just go. Bill you can stay here and eat the Matterhorn. Gary and I will go fight about this in the car.

GARY

We will?

SHARON

Yes. We'll get in the car and drive somewhere and talk about it.

GARY

Okay. Do you think that's the best way to handle this?

SHARON

I don't know, do you have a better idea?

BILL

This is gonna be good.

GARY

I'm thinking...Maybe we're overreacting. I mean you're overreacting. Maybe this is all a big misunderstanding.

Bill begins to play "cat and mouse" with them.

BILL

Yeah, maybe. What are you talking about? Exactly.

SHARON

Um. Well...the thing is...that uh... Gary has asked me for money before, and I told him no and to never ask me again. So, so, so... it's a sore subject. (To Gary) I can't believe you brought this up again!

BILL

You said, you had more money than you know what to do with.

SHARON

Yes. Yes, I did. But I don't like to lend it out to friends. It never works out.

BILL

(goadng)

Did you lend money to a friend, what happened?

SHARON

Um. What happened?

BILL

Yeah? What happened? Did it all just blow up in your face?

SHARON

Well, it was awhile ago. Gary, did I ever tell you that story? The one about the person I lent money to and didn't pay me back? Do you remember it??

GARY

No. I don't know that story.

Sharon becomes very frustrated that Gary is not helping her with the situation.

SHARON

Really?

GARY

You never told it to me.

SHARON

Okay well, I don't like to talk about it.

BILL

Oh, come on Sharon. Tell us your story. We're all ears. Or... we could all just go now. Let's all go now. It's probably already getting crowded.

Sharon rattles off the following story, like verbal diarrhea. She's telling a story that probably happened, but she is having difficulty getting the words and details out. Sharon gets up and paces the restaurant while she speaks. Bill watches her.

SHARON

(on edge, stumbling and panicky)

It's fine. Maybe it will help to get it off my chest. It started right after I got the position I'm in now. At the time I was taking a...a...a spinning class. I started taking it without really knowing what it was. It really wasn't what I thought a spinning class would be, but I decided to stick with it. There was a woman who always spun next to me. Her name was a- a- a- ...Jan. And we got to know each other, and we started going out after Spin class to uh...to...to Jamba Juice and getting smoothies. And eventually we would go to the movies, or have lunch occasionally. And she would usually pay, which I thought was very nice because I knew I made a lot more money than she did. I eventually met her kids, they were very cute.... Uh... they were called...

what were their God damned names?...um Carl and Brian, I think. But who cares. They're not important to this story. Then one day Joan and I were having sashimi at this sushi bar after spin class, and the check came and I said I'd like to pay this time, because, you know, she always paid... and she started to cry. She told me this story about her Mom who was... she was... what was it again? Korean? No that's not right. She was, um... Japanese. And she was living in Japan, and she had no way to come to America due to immigration issues.

BILL

What was the issue?

SHARON

Huh?

BILL

Why couldn't she come to America on some kind of Visa or something?

SHARON

There were some issues as to why they wouldn't let her into the country.

GARY

What were the issues?

SHARON

Do you really want to know that Gary? Really?

BILL

This is a really good story.

SHARON

She was...um... very ill. Very, very, ill. Very sick. She couldn't travel because she was... um...I forget... um...addicted to painkillers. And so it was going to be impossible for her to travel. So Jane is sitting at the sushi bar and she's crying, and she asks me if there was anyway I could lend her fifty thousand dollars so that her mother could come to America and get treatment for her addiction. And you know me, I'm very trusting, so I said, "Sure!" It wouldn't be a problem as long as she paid me back. And to help her out I was going to give her a very low interest loan with a generous payment time table.

GARY

It was fifty thousand dollars to bring her to America?

SHARON

Yes, Gary!! It was fifty thousand dollars!! Why are you interrupting me? I asked you to tell this story, but you refused. There were a lot of expenses due to her, what I said, her addiction problem. Well, anyway, Joan started to pay me back on a regular basis. She...um...um...um... worked out the details with immigration. Then one month the payments stopped coming. She cut off all contact with me, and she moved away someplace.

BILL

Did you go looking for her?

SHARON

Um... yes. I did. I went to her neighbors house and asked if she knew what had happened, and told her the whole story of what had happened. But she didn't know much about what had happened. She was very old. I'm sure she's dead by now.

GARY

Maybe Jan went to be with her mother in Japan?

SHARON

(irritated)

No, I don't think so, Gary!

BILL

Why not?

SHARON

Because! Because her mother suddenly passed away back in...in...whatdayacallit... Nagasaki, before she came to America. So maybe June defaulted on the loan because of that. Because her mother wasn't coming anyway. Because she was dead. She probably used the money to take a cruise or something. I don't know. But it just left a bad taste in my mouth about lending friends money.

Just then headlights beam through the window of the restaurant. Sharon quickly walks over to the window.

SHARON

(very relieved and excited)

Look more customers!

BILL

Really?

Bill stands and picks up his duffle bag.

BILL

Is it people from school?

Sharon and Gary share a look.

BILL

I think I'd like to use the bathroom before we go.

Bill takes his duffle bag and goes into the men's room.

Sharon and Gary freeze. They cannot decide what to do.

GARY

(whispering)

Go out there! Tell them!

SHARON

(whispering)

What happens when he comes out and I'm not here?

GARY

(whispering)

I don't know.

SHARON

(whispering)

You go!

GARY

(whispering)

What's the difference if you or I go?

SHARON

(whispering)

Coming here was a terrible idea!

GARY

(whispering)

It wasn't my idea! It was Bill's!

SHARON
(whispering)
Do you think he came here to... you know.

GARY
(whispering)
They're getting out of the car.

Sharon goes up to the door. She motions "we're closed" and flips the sign on the door around to say "Closed"

GARY
(whispering)
Why'd you do that?

SHARON
(whispering)
I don't know. I don't think they should be here. Maybe we can work this out.

GARY
(whispering)
Maybe we can get word out somehow. There's got to be a way.

SHARON
(whispering)
How are we going to get the word out? That's the only phone-

Sharon points to the rotary phone.

GARY
(whispering)
We have to tell Becky.

SHARON
(whispering)
I was trying to do that before, but you fucked it up.

The cars headlights light up the restaurant, and leave. Gary heads to the kitchen, just as Bill exits the men's room and they are face to face. Bill is in a bright and colorful new shirt. Gary throws his arms in the air. Sharon shrieks.

BILL
What are you doing?

GARY

(nervous)

Just checking on the Matterhorn. Nice shirt.

BILL

I decided I should dress up a little after all. Make a memorable entrance. What happened to the other customers?

SHARON

They changed their mind.

BILL

(knowingly)

Huh.

Becky comes out of the kitchen with an enormous Sundae.

BECKY

Here you go!

GARY

Holy shit, that's a lot of ice cream.

SHARON

That looks delicious. Thank you so much.

BECKY

You're welcome.

Sharon stalls for time, and begins eating the ice cream.

SHARON

So Becky... Can I call you Becky?

BECKY

Sure.

Becky is massaging her arm. Sharon hands out spoons to Gary and Bill.

SHARON

How long have you worked here?

BECKY

Let me see. Thirteen years.

SHARON

Does it really feel like thirteen years?

BECKY

I'm sorry?

SHARON

I was thinking about what you said before about time, and how we're all running out of it. Come on, you two, don't make me eat this whole thing by myself.

GARY

I'm not really hungry.

Sharon glares at Gary.

GARY

Maybe a little.

He grabs a spoon and eats some ice cream.

BECKY

I didn't say we were running out of time. I said time is relative. Sometimes five minutes can feel like an hour, and sometimes a year can feel like a blip.

SHARON

That is so fucking true.

Sharon continues to eat the ice cream.

SHARON

You're very smart for a waitress. Would you like to join us? There's an extra spoon.

BECKY

Why?

BILL

Yeah, why? It's getting late.

SHARON

Bill, eat some ice cream.

She shoves a spoon into Bill's hand. He hesitates. She stares at him. He reluctantly takes a bite.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Becky, we'd just like to know more about you.

BECKY

Don't you have a reunion to get to?

GARY

It goes until eleven. Or later. We've got plenty of time. What is this? Butter Pecan?

BILL

I don't think we've got plenty of time.

SHARON

Don't be rude Bill. Have a seat, have some ice cream. Mmmmm this butterscotch is delicious. Bill, you have to try it!

BECKY

I'm working.

SHARON

There's nobody else here.

BECKY

Okay. Sure.

Becky sits with them.

SHARON

Here. Enjoy.

Sharon thrusts a spoon into Becky's hand.

BECKY

Are you sure?

SHARON

There's plenty. Look at it. It's a fucking mountain of ice cream. The three of us can't possibly finish it. Why didn't you tell us it was so big?

BILL

I'd like to go.

They all eat ice cream during the following conversation.

SHARON

Eat your ice cream. So, Becky, what you said about time, very interesting.

BECKY

Thanks. I'm hoping I get an A.

Becky slides her spoon down the side of the Matterhorn like she's skiing. Bill notices.

SHARON

I bet you will. Time being relative. Whoever thought of that?

BILL

(thoughtfully)

Einstein.

BECKY

It's really not that complicated. Think of time like a river.

Sharon nods and eats ice cream.

BECKY

And we're all traveling in a boat on the river.

Sharon nods and eats ice cream.

BECKY

And what we see around us, the trees, the water, the rocks—that's the present. And we're moving through it.

Sharon nods and eats ice cream.

BECKY

But just because we can't see the rest of the river behind us or ahead of us, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It's still there. But we're just stuck in the boat.

SHARON

Sure.

Sharon nods and eats ice cream.

GARY

Can we change the way the river goes?

Gary eats ice cream.

BECKY

I don't think so. I think the river goes the way it goes no matter what.

GARY

But what if there are forks in the river?

SHARON

Forks?

GARY

You know, multiple rivers. And we can steer the boat this way or that. We can choose to go this way or that way.

BECKY

Yes. I think that's true. The choices we make, determine where we ultimately end up. Or maybe all the forks in the river end up in the same place regardless of what we choose. There's no way to know for sure.

SHARON

It's like that poem about the roads in the woods.

GARY

What poem?

SHARON

There's two roads in some woods, but I took the path that was harder than anyone else, I was a pioneer, I made the difficult choice, and that's why I'm where I am today. I made a great decision, right Bill? A good decision. Not a very bad decision. It's called "The Road Less Traveled" I've always related to that poem.

BECKY

No.

SHARON

What?

BECKY

That's not what that poem is about.

SHARON

Yes, it is.

BECKY

No, it's not.

SHARON

I think poems are open to interpretation.

BECKY

They are. But words are words.

SHARON

I'd look it up, but you know, there's no...whatdayacallit... internet.

BECKY

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

SHARON

You have it memorized?

BILL

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh,
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,

BILL

And that has made all the
difference.

BECKY

And that has made all the
difference.

BECKY

Robert Frost. I memorized it too...in High School. One of my favorites. But it's not a poem about not following the crowd. It's a poem about self deception. It's a poem about regret. Or always wondering, "What if..."

GARY

Really?

They all eat ice cream.

BECKY

It's not called the "Road Less Traveled" A lot of people think that. It's called "The Road Not Taken" The poet takes one road, but ever after wonders what was down the road he didn't take. But were they really that different? Frost even says, that at the time, both paths looked pretty much the same. So, did he really take the "road less traveled"? Or is he just fooling himself to think the choice even mattered? Years later he looks back and says it has made "all the difference" But has it?

SHARON

That's not right. My old boss had a poster on his wall with part of that poem. It was of a guy in the woods with his fist in the air, like he just won the lottery. Eat up, the ice cream is melting.

Sharon eats ice cream.

BECKY

How is the speaker to know that he made the best choice, when he doesn't even know where the other road led? The kicker is that poem does not say whether the "difference" that was made is for bad or for good. The word "sigh" is key, because a sigh can be happy or sad. Maybe the choices we make don't matter at all, or maybe they matter a great deal. We'll never know. But at any rate, maybe it shouldn't be the little decisions that haunt us. It's the big ones that really matter...so...(she laughs) pancakes or eggs?

A beat. Sharon decides to attempt
to lighten the mood.

SHARON

You know Becky, Bill used to write poetry back in the day. Didn't you Bill?

BILL

A long time ago and they were terrible and embarrassing.

SHARON

They were good.

BECKY

You wrote poetry? Do you remember any of them? I'd love to hear one.

GARY

So would I.

Bill is becoming very anxious and impatient. He stands and picks up his duffle bag.

BILL

I don't remember any of those dumb poems. They were just stupid scribblings when I was bored in study hall. So stupid...Look. We have to go. Let's pay the lady and go before people start to leave the reunion.

GARY

It just started.

BILL
(emphatic)

I want to go now!

Sharon and Gary are sweating. Their hearts race. Sharon quickly digs into her purse.

SHARON

Just a minute.

BILL

What are you doing?

SHARON

Hold on.

She fumbles with her purse and pulls out a piece of paper. She begins to read it.

SHARON
(reading)

Soft. Cool. Damp. I float on grass, you-

BILL

What is this?

SHARON

You wrote it. I saved it.

BILL

All these years? No one wants to hear that. Please don't embarrass me, Sharon.

SHARON
(reading paper)

Soft. Cool. Damp.

I float on grass, you above me.
 Oxygen, I breathe you in,
 White vapor on a blue, tranquil sea.
 Translucent. Ever changing. Soft. Beautiful.
 I cannot reach, cannot touch, cannot feel you, so far above
 me.
 In a breath, you are gone.
 But I am at peace.
 Because you were there.

After a moment...

BECKY

Wow. That was quite beautiful Bill Rollins.

BILL

Stupid.

BECKY

Well, I liked it. You're no Robert Frost, but not bad for
 scribbling in study hall.

SHARON

I told you he was good. Bill was a great writer. We all
 thought he'd be famous someday. Didn't we Gary?

GARY

Yes, we did.

BECKY

Is it about you?

SHARON

No. It's not about me. It's about another friend.

GARY

The one that looked like you.

Becky realizes Sharon is talking
 about Susan.

BECKY

Oh. I see.

SHARON

Our friend who's not here.

BECKY

Well. It's very likely that she is here.

BILL

No. She's dead. She's not here.

BECKY

She could be.

BILL

I don't believe in ghosts. Or spirits. Or souls.

BECKY

Just because you don't believe in something doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

BILL

When you're dead you're dead. That's it.

BECKY

I don't think so.

GARY

(to Bill)

Me either. There's something more. There has to be.

BECKY

I have a theory I like to call "The Vacuum Cleaner"

The tension has built to a fever
pitch and Sharon just loses it.

SHARON

Another theory? Jesus Christ. Becky, PLEASE... please tell us your theory about the vacuum cleaner. Gary, Bill, you're not eating your ice cream!!!

Bill sits back down. They all
continue to eat ice cream.

BECKY

Say that "we are like Vacuum cleaners"

GARY

We all suck?

BECKY

You unplug us. We stop. We don't run. We die. No energy or electricity, and we're a heap of useless junk.

GARY

Ok...

BECKY

But... What if WE are NOT the Vacuum cleaner?

GARY

We're not?

SHARON

What are we?

BECKY

We are the electricity! We exist without physical substance. We go INTO the vacuum cleaner, and it comes on, and does its magic. Then when it breaks down or gets switched off, the electricity is still there. It's just not in the vacuum.

GARY

Where is it?

SHARON

In the wall socket dummy.

BECKY

Those we've lost surround us all the time. We can't see them. But we can feel their presence.

A beat.

BECKY (CONT'D)

It's just my theory. It may not mean anything. But my mind wanders when I'm filling the sugar containers.

BILL

Very nice, but it's way past eight now. I'd really like to head over.

SHARON

You don't want anymore ice cream?

BILL

I've had enough ice cream, Sharon. Come on Gary, let's go.

Bill stands again.

GARY

Why don't you go ahead... and Sharon and I will catch up.

BILL

No. I really think all three of us need to be there when we walk in. People will be surprised to see us walk in together.

BECKY

Anyhow. Here is your check. To go with your "bill"

BILL

What?

BECKY

Your card there... says "Bill" Here's the check, that's the bill. Get it? It's funny!...No? Okay. Enjoy your party.

Bill looks at the card. Becky goes back over the counter and starts cleaning up.

BILL

What's this?

SHARON

Nothing. Nothing. A joke. It's not funny. Give it here.

BILL

What kind of joke? I want to read it.

SHARON

Please don't. Please, please, please don't.

BILL

You read that dumb poem.

Bill opens the card. Reads it.

SHARON

Oh my God.

BILL

Is this for real? Or is it a joke? You're actually saying these things to me?

SHARON

I don't know. Which answer would you like to hear? I wanted to say something to you at Susan's funeral about how I felt. But Dianne was still in the picture, so I really couldn't.

And then you promised to call me, but you never did. If you had only called me. Things would be different now.

Sharon waits for an answer from Bill. There is none. Sharon opens her purse and takes out a prescription bottle. She takes a pill out and swallows it.

GARY

What is that?

SHARON

Painkiller. Want one? I feel like we're going to need it.

GARY

Don't you think it's better to be thinking clearly right now?

SHARON

Not really. Who knows? Maybe if I take enough of them, you can convince me to lend you money to open a Sonic Burger.

Becky comes over.

BECKY

You ready?

SHARON

For what?

BECKY

To pay the bill?

SHARON

We have to pay?

Becky looks blankly.

SHARON

I'm kidding. I'll pay.

Sharon opens her purse and pulls out her wallet. She hands Becky her credit card.

BECKY

Oh, we don't take credit cards. It's cash only.

SHARON

Really? There should be a sign or something.

BECKY

There is.

Becky points to a sign that says
cash only.

SHARON

I've never heard of this.

GARY

I have cash.

Sharon seizes on another
opportunity.

SHARON

Darn it. I wanted to leave you a really big tip for putting
up with us. I should run out to the ATM.

Bill hands Becky a hundred dollar
bill.

BILL

Becky, here's a hundred, that should cover it. We should go.
I want the three of us to walk into the reunion together. If
you want to give her more, drop by tomorrow, if you're still
around.

BECKY

I'm off tomorrow.

SHARON

See! She's off tomorrow. It'll be nice to spend time with
your daughter.

BECKY

What?

SHARON

Your day off. With your daughter and your husband.

BECKY

Oh yes. Right.

Sharon is getting desperate, and
stalls for more time.

SHARON

Do you have any pictures of her? I'd love to see.

BILL

Sharon, what's going on?

SHARON

I just want to see her daughter. You know how I love kids. Then we can go.

GARY

I'd like to see her too.

BECKY

Well... Okay.

Becky goes back to the counter to retrieve her purse.

BILL

Why are you so interested in her kid now? You didn't want anything to do with her a few minutes ago.

SHARON

I feel bad. I should at least pretend to be interested.

GARY

Yes. Let's all act interested.

Becky comes over to the table with a small purse. She pulls a photo out of it and hands it to Sharon.

SHARON

Oh! A real, actual photo! How retro. She's so cute! She definitely takes after you.

BECKY

Thank you.

GARY

Very cute. Right Bill?

BILL

Yes. Cute kid. Come on, let's go.

SHARON

Is this an old picture?

BECKY

I'm sorry?

SHARON

You said your daughter was eleven? She looks around six here?

Becky freezes.

BECKY

Yes, it's old.

SHARON

Do you have any recent ones saved on your phone?

GARY

You're being very nosy, Sharon.

Becky pauses.

BECKY

No, I don't.

SHARON

Really?! Almost every parent I know can't wait to shove their kids pictures into my face.

BILL

Come on Sharon. Let's go. Now.

Becky sits down and starts to cry.

SHARON

I'm sorry! Was that rude? I'm very sorry.

GARY

Nice job Sharon... What's wrong, Becky?

BECKY

Angela.

BILL

Are you okay?

BECKY

I was only gone for less than 30 seconds.

A beat.

BECKY

I was running late for work, and I was giving Angela a bath because she had gotten her lunch all over herself. Ketchup, mustard, it was a mess, and I wanted to have her cleaned up for the daycare. I was doing my makeup and curling my hair because I always got better tips when my face was done up and my hair was curled, because a lot of the guy customers really liked it that way. I couldn't decide what I was going to wear. I had gone shopping the day before and had some new blouses I bought that I thought the customers would like. There was a pink one with blue flowers, and a yellow one that just had white trim, but it had a very sunny feeling, which made me feel sunny, which made the customers happy and generous. They were both laid out on the bed, one next to the other with a couple of scarves. I wanted to see which one went better with which blouse. I used to wear a different color scarf everyday of the week back then. I had a whole drawer full of them. My Grandmother wore scarves and she had given me one when I was around five years old. I only was gone for less than 30 seconds. I know it sounds like it was much longer, but it really wasn't. All that happened in less than 30 seconds. I picked the yellow one with a green scarf that day. Then I went right back to the bathroom.

They all sit in silence for a moment.

BECKY

While I was in the bedroom picking out the shirt, Angela reached up and pulled my curling iron off of the sink. Into the bathtub.

Silence.

BECKY

The house had old wiring. I was going to get it fixed, but money was really tight because things had gotten slower and slower here. I had patched things up with some extension cords. She had never reached out of the tub before. Never. I don't know why she did that. Maybe she wanted to curl her hair.

Becky sobs.

BECKY(CONT'D)

I'd given her hundreds of baths. Just that one second. That one stupid, stupid second seemed like a thousand. Why did I do that? If only I had...It doesn't matter. So basically, my life ended on October 17th that year.

Silence.

GARY

What a terrible story.

BECKY

If I hadn't been trying to curl my stupid hair. I'm a single Mother, I was just trying to make extra money so that she could go to college. I was doing it for her. The wiring should have been updated, it should never have been like that.

They all sit for a moment.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I've never told this story aloud. I've run it over and over in my mind a million times, but I've never told it aloud. Thank you for that. I'm glad such nice people came in, and that we met. I'm sorry to have dumped this on you, when your on your way to such an important party. You don't have to pay, it's all on me. You've all been very nice. Thank you.

GARY

It's okay. It's okay. It's a stupid party. It doesn't matter if we're late. Or if we go at all.

SHARON

No, it doesn't. Right Bill?

BILL

I'm not sure.

SHARON

Really?

BILL

No. We should go.

SHARON

Why should we go? It's just going to be those same jerks from High School. I'm sure all the mean girls will be there. It's just going to remind me of what they did to Susan.

BILL

I know it was you.

GARY

What?

BILL

I know it was you Sharon.

SHARON

What are you talking about?

BILL

It wasn't just the mean girls. It was you. You got a hold of that picture, made copies, and put it into the programs. It was you.

SHARON

(terrified)

Bill... no...no...it wasn't like that, I was just trying to-

Bill leaps to his feet, pushing the table over.

BILL

I KNOW IT WAS YOU!!

Sharon stands and backs away from Bill. Becky sits in terror watching the scene unfold.

SHARON

(terrified)

We were just kids. A stupid joke. I was so jealous of Susan. So jealous Bill. Because of you. I was head over heels for you and you wouldn't give me the time of day, not really. We fooled around but you were never with me, it was Susan. It was a stupid and mean thing to do. But I was seventeen. A teenager. Teenagers do all kinds of stupid things....Did Susan know it was me? Did she know? I hope she didn't know. It was so, so stupid and mean.

BILL

She knew! Because Gary told her.

SHARON

What?!!

BILL

Gary told her what you did.

SHARON

(to Gary)

Why?! Why did you tell her?

You knew I was going to do it, you even encouraged me to do it, Gary!! Why would you tell her?!

GARY

I don't know. It was a long time ago. You're the one who did it. Not me.

SHARON

So, she knew it was me all this time?? You don't care about anyone but yourself. You never have Gary. You came to this thing to ask me for money?? You never cared about any of us! What I did was bad and stupid, but what you did was just vicious. Why would you do something so incredibly awful??!

Gary explodes.

GARY

So that Bill would hate you for it when he found out!!

A beat.

GARY (CONT'D)

I knew Susan would tell Bill. And that would be the end of it.

SHARON

The end of what?!

GARY

You! The end of you! You were such a bitch to me Sharon!! You never liked me.

SHARON

Because you did shit like that!! You were an asshole, and you're still an asshole! Well, your plan worked like a charm, because that was pretty much it for our little group.

GARY

Don't blame me for something you did. It was your idea! I just didn't stop you!

Sharon walks right up to Gary.

SHARON

You fucking closet case. You can go ahead and hate yourself if you want, but don't dump that shit on me.

GARY

Fuck you.

BILL

Shut up! Both of you. She trusted you! She trusted both of you! I trusted both of you. We were all supposed to be friends. You were supposed to protect her. Watch out for her. But you broke her heart! She never got over it. Never.

SHARON

Bill, I felt terrible. Just terrible. But I'm sure she'd forgotten about it. Everyone has mean and stupid things in high school done to them.

BILL

After that, the other kids were even meaner to her. They laughed behind her back. They laughed right in her face. Those motherfuckers. They laughed at her. And they're still walking around, still laughing at the nerdy girl with her tits hanging out at the Christmas concert. And it's because of you. Because of you Sharon. And because of you Gary.

SHARON

You think I don't know that she really killed herself? Because of me? Of course she did. You think I don't blame myself? Every single day of my life now? Do I take painkillers because I have arthritis or headaches? I'm sorry! I'm so, so sorry! I wish I could take it back. I'd do anything to take it back. If it could be her here right now going to the reunion, instead of me, I would give anything for that.

GARY

We don't know for sure why she took those pills. We'll never know. Yes, it was mean, really, really mean, but that's not a reason to...to... And it was years and years later. A stupid High School prank doesn't make a forty four year old woman kill herself.

Bill pulls a photo from his jacket.

BILL

I got this yearbook photo in the mail right after she died.

Sharon is stunned.

BILL

On the back, during high school, she had written "I heart you Bill" And under that, in new writing, before she died, she wrote..."Tell Sharon I forgive her."

SHARON
(devastated)

Oh, dear God.

Bill hands Sharon the photo.

BILL
She never turned you in, or tried to get even, because she loved and idolized you Sharon.

Bill turns towards Gary.

BILL
And you, you made it so much worse by letting her know it was her best friend who did that to her.

GARY
I'm sorry. It was a cruel thing to do. But you were my best friend, and Sharon was not good for you Bill. You know that.

BILL
(to Gary)
You weren't my friend, Gary.

GARY
Of course I was. I was your best friend.

BILL
You don't do what you did, to your best friend, Gary. You don't do it!

GARY
Bill...

BILL
The night of homecoming. We all got so drunk, and your house was closest so we went there. Do you remember?

GARY
Yes. No. I don't know. We got drunk a lot.

SHARON
Where was I?

BILL

Passed out in the backseat of my Dad's car. You thought I was asleep, but I wasn't asleep, Gary. You shouldn't have done that to me.

BECKY

What did he do?

BILL

You thought I was asleep, but I was awake.

GARY

Bill-

BILL

He was touching me.

GARY

I was drunk, we had an awful lot to drink that night. I didn't know what I was doing.

BILL

You knew what you were doing.

GARY

If you were awake, then why didn't you stop me?!

BILL

YOU WERE MY FRIEND GARY!

GARY

But I really thought...I thought you might want... that we could... I didn't know what I was doing. It was a mistake, and I'm sorry. Very, very sorry.

BILL

(icy calm)

You're sorry.

Bill turns to Sharon.

BILL

And you're sorry. I'm glad that you're both sorry.

Bill picks up his duffle bag.

BILL

Do you know why I came here tonight? Why I wanted to meet you here? Why I hoped this place would be crowded with those motherfucking assholes from high school? Why I know exactly how far the drive is from here to the reunion?

Becky tries to stand, and freezes
midway.

BECKY

I'm sorry. I should go get some of my work done in the back.

BILL

No stay.

BECKY

This is really none of my business.

BILL

It is your business. It is very much your business. Sit down
Becky.

Becky sits back down.

BECKY

I don't understand.

BILL

It's okay. Sharon. Gary. Sit down.

They hesitate.

BILL

(emphatic and menacing)

Sit.

They sit.

BILL (CONT'D)

Thank Becky for the great service, you're lucky she didn't
decide to close early and go home.

SHARON and GARY

Thank you.

BECKY

You're welcome.

BILL

You're lucky that she's such a conscientious worker, and that
she was here to bring you pancakes and a giant ice cream
Sundae. And a Caesar salad. Twice. We're all glad that you
decided to share your story with us, Becky. We're all glad
you decided to come into work tonight, and to stay open late
even though you were by yourself. You've made me think about
a lot of things tonight Becky. You're a good person. A very
good person. Remember that. Later on. Remember that. Becky.

BECKY
(meekly)

Carson.

A beat.

BECKY
My name is Becky Carson. I told you, that I'd let you know my last name when we became better friends. I think we're friends now.

BILL
Becky Carson.

BECKY
I'm glad to have met you, Bill Rollins. I have a feeling you're one of those people, that I'm never going to forget. I can tell. You're a real time spike.

BILL
Why don't you go in the back, Becky. Go clean up the kitchen and go home.

BECKY
Are you sure?

BILL
I'm sure. You don't need to be out here with us for this. This is our problem, and it needs to be fixed by us. It was very nice to meet you. But please go to the back. Don't come back out here. You should clean up and go home. Good luck in school. I'm sure you'll do great. I think Angela would be very proud of you. Good night. One of us will lock up.

Becky slowly heads to the kitchen.

BECKY
(tentatively)
Have a good time at your party, and if your in town again swing by and I'll treat you to the Matterhorn. And if it's not till your fortieth reunion, I hope I'm not still here.

Becky laughs nervously.

BECKY
Still working here I mean.

BILL
By the way, they were right, you do look like Susan.

She smiles and then she is gone.
Sharon and Gary are left alone with
Bill. Bill slowly unzips his duffle
bag.

He pauses.

SHARON

(with great urgency)

Bill, we don't have to go to that party. We don't. We don't
have to go.

Sharon backs up next to the phone.

SHARON

Let me just make a quick call, tell them we're not going to
make it...

Bill reaches inside his duffle bag.

Sharon picks up the phone. There is
no dial tone. She realizes the cord
has been cut.

GARY

(pleading)

Let's not go Bill. Let's do something else instead. None of
those people really liked us.

Bill pulls a... ball cap from the
duffle bag and places it on his
head, over the toupee. Bill puts on
his jacket and grabs the duffle
bag.

BILL

(pointedly)

I'm going to head over to the reunion. You guys don't have to
come if you don't want to. I thought we should all be there
together, but I can go see all those other assholes by myself
if I have to.

SHARON

(pleading)

Bill, you don't have to go to the reunion. Why don't you just
stay here with us?

GARY

Don't go Bill. Please. It's a stupid party. Please. Stay
here.

BILL

You two can stay here with Becky. But I'm going.

SHARON

Bill-

BILL

I've been looking forward to this reunion for a very, very long time. Who knows if we'll all be here for another one. So, I'm definitely not going to miss this one.

He walks towards the door. Stops.
He looks back at them.

BILL

Or, I don't know... I may just decide to skip it after all.

He continues to walk towards the door. He stops and turns back to them.

BILL

I'll decide on the way. Are you coming or not?

BLACKOUT