

(O)n THE 5:31

By mando alvarado

CHARACTERS:

GINA MORGAN
BENNY DURAN
SANDRA KERTZ-DURAN

TIME:

PRESENT
PAST MOMENT
THOUGHTS IN THE MOMENT
IN-BETWEEN
COULD HAVE BEEN

PLACE:

BAR

RE(Visit)

SANDRA: An old bar. Rustic. Brass. Can smell the beer. For now, it's closed.

*GINA...She comes in carrying a bus tub.
She sets out candles on the tables. She picks up some dirty glasses.*

GINA

Routine.

When you lost everything else, that's what you got.
What you can come home to.

You sign in.

Go over your section. Over the drink specials. How many kegs?
Wood. Mirrors. The Moosehead.

Don't have to think. Don't have to care about anything.

Just.

An empty mind.

Just.

Work.

Gina goes into the kitchen.

*SANDRA: BENNY...He walks in. He's wearing a black suit, rolling a black suitcase.
He thinks about leaving. But he can't.
He looks around. This place is very familiar to him.*

Just then, Gina walks back out and she sees Benny. They lock eyes.

An inner shift.

BENNY

When it happens,

GINA

when you feel that sledgehammer land on your chest,

BENNY

When you recover, sit back and think about what you saw,

GINA

what you thought you saw,

BENNY

What you felt, what you thought you felt, what you were doing

GINA

and what you thought you were doing,

BENNY

When you close your eyes and you try to recall the memories, the events, the situations, you realize...

GINA

there are only two things that you can bank on.

BENNY

What you think you happened

GINA

and what really happened.

BENNY

They're both truths

GINA

and they're both lies...

BENNY

And you want to just -

GINA

- Can I help you?

BENNY

Huh?

A shift back to Present.

GINA

You need something?

BENNY

Hi.

GINA

...Hey. (Beat) We're not -

BENNY

- Bathroom?

GINA

- open just -

BENNY

I really need to go.

GINA

It hasn't been cleaned.

BENNY

Just, can I use the bathroom?

GINA

No.

BENNY

I think I'm going to be sick.

GINA

In there.

BENNY

Thanks.

He goes in. She begins to clean. She takes a peek in the bathroom's direction. After a moment, the door opens and she goes back to work. He returns.

BENNY

I like the way it smells in there.

GINA

What?

BENNY

The scent -

GINA

Of the bathroom.

BENNY

No. The fruity smell. It reminds me of Hawaii.

GINA

It's Passion's fruit.

BENNY

You mean Passion Fruit.

GINA

No. Passion's fruit. That's the name on the candle.

BENNY

Interesting. Did you buy it at sex shop?

GINA

Do you need anything else?

BENNY

I see you're still working here.

GINA

What the fuck does that mean?

BENNY

Nothing. Just. I used to come to this bar.

GINA

A lot of people come to this bar.

BENNY

But I came quite a few times actually.

GINA

I don't remember you.

BENNY

Really?

GINA

Nope. Not at all.

*Gina walks back into stockroom.
Benny's mind shifts.*

BENNY

Not at all? What the hell does that mean?

How can she not remember me?
This IS the bar. Where it all started.
Moosehead. Mirror. The table.
No. This is it.
You enter places.
A lot of places and sometimes they're just that. Places.
Full of empty faces. People you come across. Never see again.
But that's not this place. This place I remember.
A place that started out as a misfired connection that turned
into something, then nothing.
Then
Everything.
Then
Back to nothing.
I remember...
Her....

A shift.

THE Bl(i)nd DATE

*BENNY: SANDRA...She walks into the bar.
She looks around. Checks her phone.
She's nervous. Makes a call.*

Benny leaves.

SANDRA

Liza, I don't want to do this. It's too soon. I'm overwhelmed. I don't like blind dates. They make me feel icky. What's his name again? Benny. What kind of name is Benny? Sounds like he's hairy. A hairy Jewish man. He's from Chicago? Great. I hate the Cubs. Why do you do this to me? Okay. Okay. Okay. I'll text you from the bathroom.

She hangs up. GINA spots her. She walks up. She's softer than before. Hopefull...

GINA

Can I get you something?

SANDRA

Have you seen a guy, brown hair? Looks like he's waiting for someone?

GINA

Nope.

SANDRA

What time is it?

GINA

Eleven after.

SANDRA

Yeah. I'll wait.

GINA

Okay. Just let me know if you need anything.

*GINA walks off and picks up some glasses at another table.
Sandra stares at her phone.*

Shift into Gina.

GINA

I'm a product of a divorce.

Now I don't blame my unsuccessful attempts at love on my parents. They did the best they could.

But they did leave an impression.

You can go two ways.

You can run, protect yourself. Never really invest in someone because you don't ever really want to feel pain. Disappointment. Or.

You can do what I do.

Be honest.

Go full in.

Swan dive into love and let the chips fall where they may.

Shift back.

You sure you don't want a drink?

SANDRA

Um. I'll take a...is it rude to order a drink before the person whom you are supposed to meet, to have a drink with, but they don't show up on time, and you don't even know what they look like, do you have a drink or do you wait?

GINA

He's late. You can drink.

SANDRA

Right. Right. Drink? I don't know. Vodka? I don't really like Vodka. I hate beer. Wine gives me a headache-

GINA

I'll get you a bourbon. Straight up. There's a chill in the air.

SANDRA

Thank you. I'm horrible at making choices under stress.

God, I hate waiting.

It's so suffocating.

GINA

What was that?

SANDRA

Nothing. Just thinking out loud.

*GINA comes back with bourbon.
Places it on the table.*

GINA

How late is he?

SANDRA

12 minutes.

GINA

That's it?

SANDRA

It's rude.

GINA

It's not so bad.

SANDRA

I'm on time. And you know what that says about me? It says that I'm desperate. I'm here before he is and that means I have nothing else going on in my life that would cause me to be late. It says that I have been thinking about this date all day, getting ready for it instead of just being a thing I had to do like the laundry, a pedicure or getting a smoothie on the way to the gym. It puts me at a disadvantage.

GINA

I just think it makes you considerate of another person's time.

SANDRA

It fucking sucks.

GINA

Yeah. Okay. Let me know if you need anything else.

SANDRA

I'm the bitch. Again. Sorry. How's your day going?

GINA

My day?

SANDRA

Yeah? How's it going?

GINA

Peachy.

SANDRA

Been working here long?

GINA

Actually today, I complete my first official week.

SANDRA

Well, congratulations.

GINA

Yes. Applaud me for keeping employment for a week.

SANDRA

That's not what I meant.

GINA

Don't worry. I got this thing. I turn everything into a negative.

SANDRA

I can't believe he's still not here.

GINA

It happens.

SANDRA

You wanna have a drink with me? Celebrate your week.

GINA

You gay?

SANDRA

No.

GINA

Just a little bit?

SANDRA

Funny. No.

GINA

Okay.

SANDRA

I'm on a blind date.

GINA

Seems to be the flavor.

SANDRA

Huh?

GINA

Fourth blind date this week.

SANDRA

How did they turn out?

GINA

You know, it was a coin flip. It worked out for some and not for others.

SANDRA

It's not gonna work out for me.

GINA

I see that you got the negative thing//too.

SANDRA

It's not that.

GINA

Well, you never know//how-

SANDRA

Karma.

GINA

Karma?

SANDRA

I'm fucked with Karma. You see, when you hurt someone, someone that didn't deserve it, they were nothing but good to you and they gave you nothing but unconditional love or the closest thing to it. All the time. But you couldn't accept it because you're a selfish bitch who's too scared to let anyone in so you shit on them, you rip them a part because you can, but it'll come back to you. What you did. You did some horrible shit and you know that the wrath of God will strike you down because you deserve it. You had something pure and you fucked it up.

GINA

You're a complicated woman.

SANDRA

I'm a coward. What's your story?

GINA

It's short.

SANDRA

Do you have a somebody?

GINA

A significant other?

SANDRA

Yes.

GINA

Who has time? Come home smelling like beer, cigarettes. Who wants to put up with that?

SANDRA

There's always someone.

GINA

Eh, I've been down that road before and it's always a letdown. I don't know about karma. It just feels like this is how it is. How it's gonna be. I'm not doing anything with my life. Working at a bar. Wah. I'm trying to figure it out. Hoping I have some of that good side of Karma heading my way.

SANDRA

Have you ever gone on a blind date?

GINA

No.

SANDRA

I got an idea. Let's trade places.

GINA

That is a horrible idea.

SANDRA

No, it's perfect.

GINA

Are you serious?

SANDRA

Wait. What's your name?

GINA

Gina.

SANDRA

Sandra.

GINA

Nice to meet you.

SANDRA

Nice to meet you too. So. You take my life and I'll take yours. You go on the blind date and I work the bar.

GINA

You don't want that. Trust me.

Benny enters. He's soaking wet. He looks around.

SANDRA

Oh shit. I think that's him. Here he comes. Please.

BENNY

Sandra?

Gina and Sandra look at each other.

GINA

Yeah?

SANDRA

Can I get you something to drink?

BENNY

Sorry I'm late. I missed the 5:31. Then I got caught in the rain. And now my underwear's all wet. I probably shouldn't have said that. Can I have a bourbon? Neat.

GINA

Me too.

SANDRA

Coming right up.

Sandra and Gina give each other a look. Sandra goes to the back, watching from a distance. Benny and Gina sit.

BENNY

You come here often? Oh man that was horrible.

GINA

I've been here before.

BENNY

It's a cool little spot.

GINA

It's got some interesting characters.

BENNY

I like it. Especially the Moosehead.

GINA

It's caribou.

BENNY

Oh.

GINA

Fucking with you.

BENNY

Oh. Why?

GINA

I like punctuality.

BENNY

Sorry.

GINA

Show's your considerate of other people's time.

BENNY

Point taken. So. Tell me about yourself.

GINA

Not much to tell.

BENNY

Where you from?

GINA

Around here.

BENNY

Local?

GINA

Yup.

BENNY

That's different.

GINA

In what way?

BENNY

This is such a transient town. It's rare to meet someone who was actually born here.

GINA

I didn't have much of choice.

BENNY

You been here your whole life?

GINA

Yup.

BENNY

You have any dreams?

GINA

Dreams?

BENNY

Yeah, you know, what do you want to be when you grow up?

GINA

That's a scary thought.

BENNY

What is?

GINA

Adulthood.

BENNY

You know, and I don't want to be weird about this although by saying "I don't want to be weird" already makes me weird but, you're really pretty.

She looks at him. Then looks at Sandra. She gets up.

GINA

I'm not Sandra.

BENNY

What?

DIS (comfort)

A shift in Gina.

SANDRA: She looks at me. The day in all began.

GINA

For the record.

So no one is confused.

I met her first.

She walked in.

Into MY bar.

Sat at MY table.

She was wearing all black, a red scarf, unsure of herself.

A shift in her fingers.

A crazy red lipstick smile.

A tilt.

A bend.

Vanilla.

Bourbon.

I shared a drink, a moment with her...

First.

I met you first.

SANDRA: Then Gina goes back to cleaning the table.

*As we Shift back to the Present,
Sandra drifts away.*

Re (veal) ING

GINA

Look, the front of the bar is open.

BENNY

I know.

GINA

But this section. It's closed.

BENNY

Can I just sit here for a moment? I just. I need to sit here. At this table. For just for a moment. Still a little queasy.

He sits. Silence.

BENNY

This was my table. You sure you don't remember me?

GINA

Come on man, it's been a very long fucking week. I'm tired.

BENNY

Do you need help?

GINA

With what?

BENNY

Setting up.

GINA

No, I can handle it.

BENNY

I've worked in a bar before.

GINA

No.

BENNY

Come on, I recognize that look. It's like your fourth double in a row or something, right? Let me help you set up the room up and then I'll go.

GINA

Light the candles.

BENNY

Okay. You got a lighter?

GINA

Front of the house, ask the bartender.

BENNY goes to the back.

Shift.

GINA

Fucking men.

They think they know everything.

That look that he was talking about?

It's not exhaustion. It's indifference.

My face has been carved into what I have become.

Alone.

I don't give a damn about him.

About men like him.

As far as I know,

He's like every man that's been in my life.

(re)Call

BENNY enters again, but there's something different. He's not Benny per se, in fact, as Gina recalls the memories of the men in her life, he takes on the shape of those men...

BENNY

Come here.

GINA

No.

BENNY

God dam it, Regina. Come here.

GINA

Don't call me that. Only my daddy is allowed to call me that.

BENNY

I am your daddy.

GINA

My daddy pays the bills. My daddy takes care of the house. MY DADDY HAS A JOB!

BENNY

Does your daddy love you like this?

Kisses her neck.

GINA

Only when he was drunk.

Benny shifts.

BENNY

Gin Gin. That's not funny.

GINA

Then you shouldn't tread on ground you don't have traction for.

BENNY

What time you get off work?

GINA

Late.

BENNY

Want me to wait for you?

GINA

What for?

BENNY

For you and me and Mr. Happy.

GINA

Mr. Happy's gonna be disappointed. Ms. Buttercup's got a visitor.

BENNY

It's that time again?

GINA

Every month Jr.

Benny shifts.

BENNY

Come here. I miss you.

GINA

Get off me. I have to work.

BENNY

Come on G. I miss you.

GINA

So?

BENNY

Doesn't that mean anything to you?

GINA

No.

BENNY

You still pissed at me?

GINA

Go home Bobby.

BENNY

Tomas.

GINA

Frank. Just go home.

Benny shifts.

BENNY

You know I love you.

GINA

Yeah, you loved the hell out of me the last time.

BENNY

I'm sorry.

GINA

No. You're not sorry. You're never sorry. Cause if you were sorry. You wouldn't behave like that.

BENNY

I love you so much it hurts. My arms hurt when you're not in them.

GINA

Bullshit.

BENNY

Give me another chance.

GINA

I'm not gonna be your punching bag every time the mood suits you. What about me?

BENNY

What about you?

GINA

Don't you think I have bad days? Don't you think that I don't want to wake up? Just lie in bed and not work. Don't you think I wish my arms didn't hurt? Because they're not wrapped around someone that really loves me.

BENNY

I do love you.

GINA

Stop it. I'm not buying what you're selling Frank.

BENNY

Tony.

GINA

John. I've been down this road to many times, making the same mistakes. I'm not doing it again.

Benny shifts.

BENNY

Not even if I promise?

GINA

Empty. That's what I hear from you. Empty.

BENNY

Give me another chance to prove you wrong.

GINA

Why?

BENNY

Cause you know what we have is true. When we're in bed, talking, drinking, laughing. It's the good stuff. I know I make you happy.

GINA

You wanna know the last time I felt really happy with you?

BENNY

When?

GINA

I came across this short story. About a lady who lived in the country or some farm or something. And every morning, her husband would take the train into the city for work. One of those mornings, she was watching the news and she saw that there had been a train wreck. No survivors. The train was the 5:31....her husband's train. A flood of relief came over her. Not sadness, relief! And she started dancing around her living room, dreaming of all the things she would do- now her life

would really begin! Then the doorbell rings. She opens it. And standing there is her husband. Sadness washes over her and she begins to sob. He assumed it was for him, for being lucky he didn't get on the 5:31. But it was for herself. For the death of her soul. And I think about that. About her. And then I think about you Juan-

BENNY

Larry-

GINA

Jim. I think about you. And what you're doing to me. Killing my soul. And I imagine that you were on that train. And that thought. Your body smashed to pieces. Limbs ripped apart. Face mangled, unrecognizable. That brings a small smile to my face. Because I have my soul back. Just for a moment. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?

BENNY

You're a real bitch.

GINA

I need you to get on the 5 fucking 31.

Benny storms out as Sandra enters and sits.

Sensing her in the room, Gina turns to face her.

(2)nd DATE

A shift into another memory, a moment in the past.

SANDRA

You told him that?

GINA

I did.

SANDRA

That was utterly divine.

GINA

It was stupid.

SANDRA

No way. That guy was an asshole.

GINA

He might have been my last.

SANDRA

You'll have another chance at it.

GINA

Nevermind. Drink?

SANDRA

Yeah. Can I have a bourbon?

GINA

What kind?

SANDRA

I don't know.

GINA

You want something oaky?

SANDRA

You pick.

*Gina goes and pours a bourbon.
Comes back.*

GINA

Here you go.

SANDRA

Are you alright?

GINA

I'm fine.

SANDRA

I think you did the right thing.

GINA

I hate being alone.

SANDRA

Wanna go somewhere, have a drink with me? Celebrate your new found freedom.

GINA

What for? I'm a spinster. No one wants me.

SANDRA

Bullshit. I do.

GINA

I'm really scared.

SANDRA

What, no way. You look like the kind of woman that kicks that kind of fear in the balls.

Gina laughs.

GINA

It's all a show.

SANDRA

Let's get out of here.

GINA

I don't know.

SANDRA

I'm serious. Come have a drink with me.

GINA

I got to finish my shift.

SANDRA

When's the last time you did something outrageous?

GINA

When I pretended I was you.

SANDRA

Let's get out of here. Go get into some trouble.

GINA

If life were only a movie.

SANDRA

But it can be. What does the little voice inside your gut say?

GINA

She says fuck it. Close out.

SANDRA

I think you should listen to her.

Sandra gets up.

SANDRA

I'll wait for you outside.

Sandra leaves.

GINA

That was the start.

RE(kindle)

*Benny flicks a lighter.
Present.*

BENNY

Start at what?

GINA

Huh?

BENNY

The candles? What table?

GINA

Over there. Start over there.

He begins to light candles.

BENNY

I like lighting candles.

GINA

Mmmmm.

BENNY

Focused light. For the darkness to live around it.

GINA

I see couples, huddling. Kissing. Nibbling on each other.
Laughing. Makes me want to puke.

BENNY

I think it's romantic.

GINA

You would.

BENNY

What does that mean?

GINA

You look like the type.

BENNY

Maybe once, long time ago.

GINA

Yeah, been there too.

BENNY

You dig working here?

GINA

No.

BENNY

Then why do you do it?

GINA

It pays the rent.

BENNY

There's got to be more to it.

GINA

No one likes their job.

BENNY

I do. I like my job.

GINA

Ah shit, you're one those optimistic people aren't you?

BENNY

I prefer closet optimist with a hint of cynicism.

Quick shift.

GINA

I hate optimism.

It's pointless.

Hope. Faith.

Just a bunch of nonsense that keeps you from facing the truth.

BENNY

And what's that?

GINA

Excuse me?

BENNY

What's the truth?

GINA

You heard that?

BENNY

What?

GINA

Did you hear what I just?

BENNY

You called me an optimist.

GINA

What's up with the suitcase?

BENNY

I'm taking a trip.

GINA

Where?

BENNY

Anywhere but here.

GINA

I've been there.

BENNY

Yeah. My first time. Was actually on my way out.

GINA

And you decided to just stop in for a beer?

BENNY

I met my wife here.

GINA

Really?

BENNY

Yeah. You were there.

FRAGMENT OF (truth)

A Shift back to that first encounter. SANDRA enters.

SANDRA

It was a blind date.

GINA

We traded places.

BENNY

But I ended up with her.

Sandra sits.

GINA

I got you something to drink.

SANDRA

Bourbon.

GINA

It was on me. I felt bad.

SANDRA

It wasn't your fault.

BENNY

And we sat at our table.

SANDRA

Yes. Our table.

GINA leaves.

BENNY

I hear you. Yes. Our table. But. Like this memory, this specific moment, what we saw, what we experienced. All of us together, can any of it be taken as truth?

SANDRA

It's our table.

BENNY

I get that. It's our table.

SANDRA

It's where it all started. For all of us.

BENNY

Yes. Just. Here me out. But was it even *this* table?

SANDRA

Yeah. Right here. Two rows from the stage. Three rows from the Moosehead.

BENNY

You know, at the end of the night, they move all the tables to the side so they can mop the floor. And in the morning, they put the tables back. But it's not always the same table that goes back to its original position. So our table, the actual table, could be sitting over there.

SANDRA

But that's not the point of this.

BENNY

How can it not be the point? We're talking about our table.

SANDRA

Because the truth isn't about the physical table. It just a fucking table.

BENNY

Then what's the truth?

SANDRA

The bar. The day we all met. It's not the table that's important. It's what happened at the table that matters.

BENNY

And what happened?

SANDRA

Us.

BENNY

Sandra would like for you to believe
that what happened between us was worth it.
That this pain I'm feeling inside was worth it.

SANDRA

Benny would like for you to believe
that he's become jaded. Closed off.

Angry. Filled with regret.

But I know what he was.

BENNY

And what was I?

SANDRA

Raw. Fresh. Gentle.

*BENNY sits. A shift back to a
memory, a moment.*

(1)st Go of THE 2nd

GINA: It's the first date. I bring them a drink. She smiles. I try to smile. Should be me sitting with her.

Gina leaves.

BENNY

So, you're Sandra?

SANDRA

Yeah. Sorry about that.

BENNY

Okay. So. I'm Benny. Why did you do that?

SANDRA

You were late. I got nervous. If you want -

BENNY

No. I thought it was pretty cool.

SANDRA

Sometimes I like to play pretend.

Awkward but good awkward.

BENNY

So, you're a temp?

SANDRA

Yeah. Till I finish school.

BENNY

You like temping?

SANDRA

No one likes work.

BENNY

I do. I like working.

SANDRA

Really? What do you do?

BENNY

I'm a copy writer.

SANDRA

For what?

BENNY

For commercials. Like, "No one beats a Honda like a Honda." Or
"It's not just a burger, it's a Whataburger."

SANDRA

You wrote those?

BENNY

No. Just wanted to give you an example of good copy. I generally crank out useless material. But I like what I do. Makes me feel like I'm doing something.

SANDRA

Like you're earning your keep?

BENNY

Exactly. My family used to work on farms. Well, not me but my dad and my older brother. They would go to Wisconsin or Michigan and pick whatever was in season. You could see it in their faces, their hands, the way they moved. They earned every penny. So, I feel like I owe it to them. To love what I do because they sacrificed so much for me.

SANDRA

You were the chosen one.

BENNY

They didn't leave me much of a choice.

SANDRA

I'm sure they're proud of you.

BENNY

I don't know. My dad died when I was in high school and my big brother resents me. So.

SANDRA

Your dad was proud of you.

BENNY

So, Liza's your sister?

SANDRA

Now, Benny's probably thinking,
'How come we've never met
and why did we have to meet on a blind date?'
Too much expectation.

BENNY

I hate blind dates. So much expectation.

SANDRA

See.

But expectation is part of the excitement.

BENNY

It freaks me out. I've been a mess all day. I wanted to come in early, scope it out. You know, switch places with the Waitress.

SANDRA

I'm really sorry.

BENNY

It's okay. Just messing with you. I guess I wanted to see, witness the disappointment right at the moment you saw me.

SANDRA

I'm not disappointed.

BENNY

Oh. No? Well. Neither am I.

SANDRA

You're blushing?

He shifts.

BENNY

I know this girl.
I mean, we just met.
But I know her.
And for the record, what she did.
Fucking cool. I like her. Shit.

They both shift.

BENNY
I like//her-

SANDRA
I like him.

BENNY
I don't want to mess//this up-

SANDRA
I don't want to mess this//up-

BENNY
Got to play this//cool-

SANDRA
Got to play this cool-

BENNY
I really like you.

SANDRA
What?

BENNY
I mean, that I think you're cool. You know, pretty cool person, a kind of person that I like to be around. You know, hang with the homies with.

SANDRA
So, I'm like one of your homeboys?

BENNY
Yeah, but with benefits.

SANDRA
I'm not looking to fuck my homies.

Sandra gets up. Gina brings in two bourbons.

GINA
Messed it up already?

Shift to the in-between.

BENNY

I get up. And I went after her.

GINA

You convinced her to stay.

SANDRA

I gave you another chance because you were an idiot.

BENNY

But what if I don't go after you? What if I I'm too scared and I stay back?

SANDRA

Then this moment wouldn't mean anything.

GINA

And we'd all be strangers.

BENNY

Isn't that better?

GINA

I don't know. Maybe.

SANDRA

You can't run away from the pain. It happened. Come after me. Benny. Come after me.

BENNY

I go.

He goes after her.

GINA'S (L)ove (L)ives

*Gina watches them leave. Again,
she stands alone.*

GINA

You only get like 4 great loves in your life. And there's nothing you can do about it. You will love them and they will mark you forever. My first one, when I was a kid. His name was Alan. He lived in a gated subdivision. A fancy gated subdivision. We would play tether ball after school. I'd let him win. One day in lunch, our pictures were up on the wall. School pictures. And we were staring at them. And he said, "Your picture came out good." 'Really' I say. "Yeah, who knew?" And he walked off. Hand in hand with Linda, the class whore. Second time, I was 19. I was engaged to Pete Garcia. He was the manager at Best Buy. Which was a great perk. Lots of great electronic equipment. He got me a job working with him. Loved that jerk. At night, he would ask me to take home stuff, left over stuff he said. Customers never picked them up. So I did. About 6 months later, I'm in front of a judge, getting probation for theft, I lose my scholarship to school and he walks off hand in hand with Debbie, the Best Buy whore. The third time. That was Jeff. More about him later. And the last time. I didn't have a choice. She was my fourth. My final.

B(ring)ING it BACK

GINA: Sandra wore a beautiful wedding dress. A dress I helped pick out. They're song came on. They embraced, locked hand in hand. And began to dance. Ladies and Gentleman, may I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Benny Flores.

At first, it's a nice dance but then they break into that fun choreography you see on the you tubes. The song ends. They sit at their table.

BENNY

Are you having fun?

SANDRA

Yeah.

BENNY

You want a drink?

SANDRA

No.

BENNY

What's a matter?

SANDRA

Nothing.

BENNY stares at her ring finger.

BENNY

How come you're not wearing your ring on your left hand?

SANDRA

It's weird.

BENNY

You think it's weird?

She takes it off.

SANDRA

It's my new friend. Meet Permanent Patty. This is my husband. Weird. Do you feel funny saying I'm your wife?

BENNY

No.

SANDRA

Well, good for you.

BENNY

I mean, I get what you're saying. It was a little weird to call you my fiancé. Like saying it out loud made me feel like I was a fraud. Like I didn't deserve you. Like I was so lucky anyone would want to marry me. So that fact that you did. That you stood up in front of all these people and said yes, I can't help but be excited to call you my wife. So, can I put it back on your ring finger?

SANDRA

Okay.

He slowly takes it off her hand and tries to put it back on. She yanks away.

SANDRA

Do you love me?

BENNY

Yeah, that's why I married you.

SANDRA

What if we can't live up to our vows? I was standing there, and these words were coming out of my mouth. And then I heard yours, they were so epic. It's unrealistic.

Benny shifts.

BENNY

Sandra is freaking out. Now I'm freaking out.
What should I do? I can be a total douche
and make it about me.
Put up a front.

Do you think this was a mistake?

SANDRA

I'm not saying that.

BENNY

Fuck Sandra. Why did you go through with it if you didn't want to get married to me?

SANDRA

I'm not saying that. God, you're such an asshole.

BENNY

That's not going to work.

What did I say?

SANDRA

You didn't say anything.

You held my hand,
looked into my eyes,
and you kissed me.

BENNY

You thought you were gonna fail me.

SANDRA

You thought I didn't want you.

BENNY

I thought you wanted someone else.

SANDRA

I thought this is too good to be true.

BENNY

I thought you were the one.

SANDRA

I was scared.

BENNY

So was I.

*He places the ring back on the
proper hand. He sits.*

SANDRA

Did you know you were gonna marry me when you first saw me?

BENNY

I liked you. A lot. You?

SANDRA

I knew but I had to be convinced.

BENNY

Anyone who makes me dance to Celine Dion and I like it has my heart.

SANDRA

Celine is fierce but emotional.

BENNY

That's why I love you.

SANDRA

But what if in 10 years you stop loving me? You wake up one morning and you think to yourself, God, I hate this woman. I have wasted, wasted 10 years of my life with her.

BENNY

Well let's skip ahead. 10 years.

A shift to that moment.

IN THE DEVIL'S (den)

Benny stands at the door way of the bar.

GINA

We're back at my bar.

SANDRA

I shouldn't have come here.

GINA

It hurts. I'm helpless.

BENNY

It's our 10-year anniversary.

SANDRA

And we are celebrating where it all began.

GINA

I ask you for drinks.

BENNY

Bullitt Rye on the rocks.

SANDRA

White wine.

GINA

Coming right up.

SANDRA

You're running late.

Again.

You walk in and think, "Crap. She looks pissed."

BENNY

Actually, I thought, she looks sad.

What did I do wrong?

SANDRA

You didn't do anything wrong. I did.

BENNY

I sit down.

SANDRA

You're wearing that crisp black suit.

BENNY

I want to tell you that I got a promotion.

SANDRA

I want to tell you that I've just come back from the doctor.

A.DOC S(upor)T

*Another shift to another moment.
Right before.*

*BENNY: Gina comes in. Running late.
She's flustered.
Sandra sees her and she gets up
And throws herself into Gina's arms.*

SANDRA

Where the fuck were you?

Sandra just continues to hold her.

GINA

I told you I had the late shift today. You knew that.

SANDRA

I called you, dammit.

GINA

I'm sorry. I was running errands. What's a matter?

SANDRA

...

GINA

Baby, you're freaking me out. What the hell is going on?

Sandra has a small ironic smile.

SANDRA

Karma.

GINA steps back.

GINA

Karma?

SANDRA

I was misdiagnosed. The Doctor said it was ulcers. And I kept fooling myself. Didn't take it seriously. And. It cut into my stomach lining. Now it's spread.

GINA

No.

SANDRA

Yes.

GINA

Does he know?

SANDRA

Not yet. We're supposed to meet here for dinner.

GINA

Shit. What are you gonna say?

SANDRA

I don't know. Nothing.

GINA

You're not gonna tell him?

SANDRA

That would be one hell of 10-year anniversary gift.

GINA

That's not funny.

SANDRA

I don't want it to be one of those memories. Not tonight.

GINA

But it will be for me.

SANDRA

I'm not married to you.

This stings Gina.

SANDRA

I'm sorry. I didn't...

GINA

So what now? What did the Doctor say? This is treatable right?
With Chemo, pills-

SANDRA

Six months.

GINA

Excuse me?

SANDRA

He gave me six to eight. That's all.

GINA

He's wrong. That motherfucker is wrong.

SANDRA

Gina.

GINA

That's ridiculous. We'll get another opinion. There's gotta be a way. There's some method or new alternative whatever. Something. There's something out there that will fix this.

SANDRA

I can't be fixed.

GINA

What's a matter with you? No. I'm not gonna let you do that.

SANDRA

It's okay.

GINA

It's not okay. I'm not doing this. You're not doing this. Everything will be fine. You'll take some medicine and you'll be here forever. That's it. That's how it's gonna-.

SANDRA

It's too late. He's here.

*Benny stands. And we're back at
the moment after this moment...*

BENNY

I'm running late.

GINA

We're at my bar.

SANDRA

I shouldn't have come here.

GINA

It hurts. I'm helpless.

BENNY

It's our 10-year anniversary.

SANDRA

And we should celebrate where it all began.

GINA

I ask you for drinks.

BENNY

Bullitt Rye on the rocks.

SANDRA

White wine.

GINA

Coming right up.

BENNY

She looks sad. Did I do something wrong?

SANDRA

You didn't do anything wrong. I did.

BENNY

I sit down.

SANDRA

You're wearing your crisp black suit.

BENNY

I want to tell you that I got a promotion.

SANDRA

I want to tell you that I've just come back from the doctor.

BENNY

I get down on my knee, and ask you if you remember what you said to me the first night we got married?

SANDRA

I do.

What if in 10 years you stop loving me? You wake up one morning and you think to yourself, God, I hate this woman. I have wasted, wasted 10 years of my life with her.

BENNY

And here we are. 10 years later. And...

SANDRA

You want to say the right thing. The perfect copy that captures this moment. But you didn't. What did you say?

BENNY

I don't remember.

Silence.

BENNY

But what I know. What I thought when I was here with you. In this moment. I thought of the day we got married, when I saw you walking down the aisle. All I could see was your smile. And I thought you were smiling for me. And it was the most beautiful smile I had ever seen and I told myself that there's no way on earth I'm going to take that away from you.

SANDRA

I was smiling for you. In that moment. It was all for you.

SANDRA gets up and walks off.

RARE M(o)MENT

Benny and Gina look at each other. They're in the same space but in a different time, like an in-between time. A time to be honest with each other.

BENNY

I had no clue about you.

GINA

That's how she wanted it.

BENNY

And you didn't mind it?

GINA

I fucking hated it and I fucking hated you.

BENNY

I can't believe she told you about the diagnosis first.

GINA

I saw her first.

BENNY

She didn't tell me about till three months later. We had a horrible fight. She said she didn't tell me because she didn't want me wasting my time looking for hopeless treatments. She just wanted to spend the remaining time she had her way.

GINA

That's my fault. I hammered her with pamphlets and doctors and treatments and everything in between. She didn't want any of it.

BENNY

This fucking hurts.

GINA

Yes, it does.

BENNY

I'm realizing how much she really loved you.

GINA

Doesn't mean she loved you any less.

BENNY

Tell me about Jeff.

GINA

No. Why?

BENNY

Because I'm tired of thinking about this. Aren't you?

GINA

I don't know. That poor kid didn't even know what he was getting into. I broke his fucking heart.

BENNY

So tell me about it.

She looks at him, wondering if she's going to let him in.

THE LAST (sup) PER

BENNY: I'll be Jeff.

SANDRA: I'll be the mother.

GINA: And I guess I'm me. Welcome to the last supper.

*Benny and Sandra sit at the table.
They transform in JEFF and his
MOTHER. Gina sits across. Silence.*

BENNY

Mom, this was delicious.

GINA

Wait. Try it again. He was younger. Sweeter.

BENNY

Okay. Mom, this was delicious.

Gina nods in approval.

SANDRA

I'm glad you enjoyed it.

Silence.

GINA

More wine?

BENNY

Sure.

SANDRA

Don't forget you're driving Jeff.

Silence.

BENNY

You know, Gina is a big fan of broccoli rabe.

SANDRA

You don't say?

GINA

Yes mam. It's very tasty.

SANDRA

You've eaten broccoli rabe before?

GINA

Well broccoli, I mean, I like broccoli.

SANDRA

My dear, it's not the same thing.

GINA

Either way I enjoyed it.

SANDRA

How did you two meet?

GINA

He picked me up at the bar I work at.

BENNY

I just got out of class and I needed a beer. And I saw her, bending over the table and I thought, "I got to get me some of that."

SANDRA

How romantic?

GINA

He's full of it. Normally, I don't pay the customers any mind. Bunch of drunks or hopped up college kids. But he was different. He sat in the corner. Staring into the froth, dreaming away. I knew he was...

SANDRA

He's very special.

BENNY

So is she.

SANDRA

So, you work at a bar?

GINA

Yup.

SANDRA

Is that your life's ambition?

GINA

It's a job.

BENNY

And she's good at it.

SANDRA

And how long have you been dating her?

BENNY

Long enough to know.

SANDRA

That's up for debate.

GINA

Maybe we can do this another time.

SANDRA

No. I think this is the perfect time.

BENNY

I know this may feel a little rushed.

SANDRA

It's foolish.

BENNY

You and dad got married after only knowing each other for a couple of weeks.

SANDRA

And looked how that turned out.

BENNY

I'm just saying I know she's the one.

SANDRA

How old are you?

GINA

Old enough not to let you speak to me in that tone.

SANDRA

You think he's your meal ticket? You're way out of whoreville.

GINA

Listen lady, I know he's your son but you-

SANDRA

This is your last shot isn't it?

GINA

Excuse me?

SANDRA

I know women like you. Desperate to make one last go of it. You're looks are fading, wrinkles make up the landscape. Womb is drying up wasted away on eggs you've aborted so you trap whoever you can.

GINA

Who the fuck do you think you are?

SANDRA

He's just a kid.

BENNY

I love her.

SANDRA

You still love your xbox.

BENNY

Mother.

GINA

You're gonna let her talk to me that way?

BENNY

Gina. Look let's all settle down. And talk about this. Mother, do you have any cheesecake?

GINA

Cheesecake? I'm going home. And I want you to come with me. We don't need her blessing.

BENNY

Sit down Gina.

GINA

Jeff. No.

SANDRA

You go. You go alone. You get no help from me.

BENNY

Can we just chill for a moment?

GINA

He looked at me.

And I looked at him.

I knew he was a boy. But I thought.

I've dated so many fucked up men,

maybe he would be different. But he was a child.

And I couldn't be a wife and a mother.

BENNY

You didn't marry him?

GINA

Nope. She was right. Jeff was my way out. And I loved that kid. But I couldn't do that to him. Force him to choose. His life was still ahead of him. We did had fun though. He was clumsy in bed but he was honest. And he loved me. Like really loved being with me and I destroyed him. I got to pee.

She goes to the bathroom. Benny sits alone. He walks back into the back of the bar. Turns on a song.

D (ance) B (reak)

BENNY

When I was a kid, the first album I owned was Neil Diamond.
 I was 6 years old.
 I have no idea how I got that album.
 But I would put it on and pretend that I was at a concert.
 A large stadium. 100,000 people. And it starts.

Far

*We've been travelling far
 Without a home
 But not without a star*

Free

*Only want to be free
 We huddle close
 Hang on to a dream*

*Sandra enters. We find ourselves
 back in a moment when their love
 was young but full of hope.*

SANDRA

You're an idiot.

BENNY

But I'm your idiot.

SANDRA

Yes, you are.

BENNY

*Got a dream to take them there
 They're coming to America
 Got a dream they've come to share
 They're coming to America*

*They're coming to America
 They're coming to America
 They're coming to America
 They're coming to America
 Today, today, today, today!*

SANDRA

Today!

BENNY

Today!!

The song ends. They stare at each other. Benny smiles.

BENNY

So?

SANDRA

So.

BENNY

I think we should try.

SANDRA

I hate that word. Try.

BENNY

You're right. I'm a Mexi CAN not Mexi CAN'T. (Pause) So, let's do it, right?

SANDRA

I never thought I'd get married much less become a mother.

BENNY

I always thought you...

SANDRA

You never asked.

BENNY

Who doesn't want kids?

SANDRA

This is my last year of law school.

BENNY

Then when you finish.

SANDRA

No, then I have to get a job.

BENNY

So then when?

SANDRA

I don't know. Kids are so expensive. I'm not sure when the time will be right.

BENNY

There is no good time to have a baby Sa.

SANDRA

I don't want to give up my life.

BENNY

We'll figure it out.

SANDRA

What's to figure out?

BENNY

I want to have kids. That's my vote.

SANDRA

But you don't have to give up everything you're working for.
It's not fair.

BENNY

You can finish up next year.

SANDRA

And be one of those mothers. No.

BENNY

We'll work through it. Together. As a family.

SANDRA

A family? What are we gonna do? We can't live off of what you make. It's not like you want to make more money. You have no drive.

BENNY

I have -

SANDRA

No Benny. You're perfectly content.

BENNY

I'm doing what I love.

SANDRA

But having a child is a big responsibility. You have to man up.
And I don't see that from you.

BENNY

What do you want me to do? Find a better job? Become a dog like
all the other animals in the office. Fighting each other for
scraps. Just so we can get a pat on the head.

SANDRA

It's called ambition.

BENNY

I'm not comfortable with that. Things will be what they will be.

SANDRA

I can't work like that.

BENNY

This is who I am. This is who you married.

SANDRA

And I accepted that. But this is different.

BENNY

I'm good enough to be a husband but not a father?

SANDRA

You don't get in the way. I manage things. If they go wrong,
it's on me. I agreed to that. I don't mind carrying the load.

BENNY

You're always such the martyr.

SANDRA

I'm trying to have an adult conversation.

BENNY

Me me me me! I do things too. I carry things too.

SANDRA

You're the baby. You've always been the baby. And I don't need
another one.

This stings Benny. Silence.

BENNY

I want us to have one.

SANDRA

Why?

BENNY

We need it.

SANDRA

That's a bad place to be Benny. To need a child. I don't like putting band aids over deep cuts.

BENNY

It's a part of life. When we're old and our kids have grown up, and all we have left is our memories, decisions like this will have seemed trivial.

SANDRA

I hate being dragged into corners I can't get out of.

BENNY

Having a baby is not a trap.

SANDRA

For me it is.

BENNY

Let's look at it from another perspective.

SANDRA

Don't try to sell me.

BENNY

I'm not. I'm just giving you different copy.

SANDRA

Pitch me.

BENNY

Let's think about this as freedom. An evolution of the self. Because you no longer have to be self-centric. And. AND. You will create something that will always love you. And you will always love it. No matter what. "Babies, unconditional for those who live by conditions."

They stare at each other.

SANDRA

I can't.

Sandra walks out.

BENNY

That's it. I don't want to do this anymore. These memories, these fucking lies I told myself. I don't want them. I don't want any of this. Anymore.

A fractured reality. A shift into an alternative timeline.

BAC (k) at (THE) bar

*Gina enters carrying a bus tub.
Benny shifts back to the candles.*

GINA

I lied

BENNY

Excuse me?

*Benny takes the bus tub from her
and places glasses in them. He
starts to set up the tables.*

GINA

What are you doing? Can you stop?

BENNY

I got to get ready. Bar opens in 10 minutes.

GINA

What are you talking about?

BENNY

Wait. Have we met?

GINA

Yeah. That's what I was trying to tell you.

BENNY

Shit. You used to work here.

GINA

Huh?

BENNY

This is mad crazy. I had a blind date with some girl. And you traded places with her. That's fucking funny and ironic. Now I'm working here. What was her name? Susan?

GINA

Sandra.

BENNY

Right. Sandra.

GINA

She's your wife.

BENNY

What? I'm not married.

GINA

Stop it.

BENNY

Stop what? I didn't work out. We only had that one date.

GINA

I don't understand.

BENNY

Tell me about it. She was a little weird. Not for me. You doing alright?

GINA

No.

BENNY

You look confused.

GINA

I am.

BENNY

It's been what, 10 - 12 years? What are you doing these days?

GINA

I really don't know.

Sandra walks up from behind. She covers Gina's eyes.

SANDRA

Guess who?

GINA

Don't do that.

Gina pulls away violently.

SANDRA

What's a matter with you?

GINA

I don't like when you do that.

BENNY

Oh shit. Talk about memory lane. It's you! Sarah right?

SANDRA

Sandra. Yeah. You work here?

BENNY

Yeah. Lost my job. You know, recession and shit. Companies pulled back on the advertising dollar.

SANDRA

(To GINA) Looks like I picked the right one. (To Benny) That's too bad. You'll get back on that horse.

GINA

You need to stop.

SANDRA

Stop what?

GINA

This isn't funny.

BENNY

So, you guys are an item?

SANDRA

Happily married.

BENNY

Well, at least one of us found love.

GINA

STOP IT!

They stop.

GINA

It didn't happen this way.

BENNY

Who's to say it didn't?

GINA

I'm not going to lie to myself.

BENNY

It makes it easier.

GINA

It's not that simple.

BENNY

I don't care. This is what I want. And that's how I'm gonna remember it. Period.

Benny walks off.

SANDRA

Isn't this what you've always wanted?

Gina decides to continue the fractured reality.

RE(dressing)WHAT's K(now)n

SANDRA

How come you never said "Te amo?"

GINA

In Spanish. No one really says "Te amo." They say "te quiero mucho" which can mean "I need you a lot." That's kind of fucked up when you think about it. Instead of it being about loving them, it's more about you needing them so badly you'll do anything To keep them.

Gina looks at Sandra.

GINA

Close your eyes.

SANDRA

I hate the dark.

GINA

Come on. Close them. I got something for you.

Sandra does. Gina pulls out a gift.

GINA

Open them.

SANDRA

What did you do?

GINA

Open it.

*Sandra does. It's a special gift.
(Up for you to decide)*

SANDRA

Oh man. Why? What is this?

GINA

Guess.

SANDRA

I don't know.

GINA

What's today?

SANDRA

Sunday.

GINA

And? Come on, take a wild guess.

SANDRA

It's all you can eat pancakes day down at Ihop?

GINA

Sa. Guess.

SANDRA

I don't really know.

GINA

It's the day you freed me.

SANDRA

Freed you from what?

GINA

You came into my bar, switched my life around and freed my soul.

SANDRA

It's been that long?

GINA

10 years.

SANDRA

It's gone by fast.

GINA

That's a good thing.

SANDRA

Yeah. It is.

GINA

Promise me something.

SANDRA

You look so serious.

GINA

I am serious.

SANDRA

Okay.

GINA

Don't ever leave me.

SANDRA

That's not in my immediate plans.

GINA

I'm serious. Listen to me. If this is what we're doing now, promise me that you're never gonna leave me.

SANDRA

It's a big promise to ask.

GINA

I know. But. I can't make it without you.

SANDRA

You're being dramatic.

GINA

No. I'm done. This is my last chance.

SANDRA

Don't give me that 4 loves nonsense.

GINA

I'm not. I don't want to go through this again. You're it. This time I don't want you to leave. Never. In fact, I'm gonna make sure I die before you just so you don't leave me.

SANDRA

Gina. That's not funny.

GINA

I'm not joking.

SANDRA

You're not dying. No one's dying.

GINA

Promise me.

SANDRA

You know, you're asking the impossible.

GINA

Why?

SANDRA

Because how can I guarantee that? Who knows what's gonna happen or where we're gonna be 10 years from now?

GINA

Well, if you promise, you'll be here with me.

SANDRA

I'm not built that way.

GINA

Then just say it. Make me feel better. Say that you'll want me forever.

SANDRA

I don't want to say something and then it comes up and bites me in the ass later.

GINA

I won't hold it against you if it doesn't work out.

SANDRA

That's a lie.

GINA

I won't.

SANDRA

Yes, you will. Every night, you'll be wishing I was on the 5:31, imagining a train running over me, shredding me to pieces, mangling my body, slices and ripping every part of me apart so I can feel the pain you're feeling.

GINA

That's terrible. Do you think I'm like that?

SANDRA

No. Bad joke.

GINA

Please. I'll never ask anything of you that's this serious again.

SANDRA

Okay. I'll never leave you.

GINA

Thank you.

SANDRA

You're welcome.

GINA

Te quiero mucho.

SANDRA

Te amo.

They rise up slowly together. "Old Road" plays off in the distance. They lock hands. And dance gracefully. Rising each other up past themselves, out of their body. Two souls linked together. They sway, play chase, drifting back in forth, fitting in each gap of each other's body. GINA turns for a moment, when she looks again, Sandra's gone.

GINA

I needed her when I should have loved her.

Gina exits.

BE (NN) Y

*Benny moves into the bar slowly.
He walks over to the table. He
stares at the empty space on the
other side of the table.*

BENNY

Routine.

You wake up, the mind goes into automatic.

You do everything you programmed yourself to do.

Your eyes open.

You turn off the alarm clock.

You do a cat stretch.

You get up.

Sit on the edge of the bed. Feeling the hardwood floor on the ground.

You stumble to the bathroom.

Piss.

Miss the toilet.

Woops.

Wipe it clean. Put the seat down. Flush.

Slide over to the mirror.

See how the day before has aged you.

Drink some water.

Go over to the coffee pot.

Turn it on.

Take out two cups.

Put one back.

Sit.

Wait.

Routine.

*He's dressed in his black suit. He
stares at the coffee cup. Sandra
enters. A shift into the what will
always be, what will always happen
no matter what.*

The (IN)evitability(TY)

Sandra spots Benny sitting at the table. She recognizes him.

SANDRA

Hi. Sorry to bother you. Are you Benny?

He looks up. A bit shocked.

BENNY

Yes?

SANDRA

It's me, Sandra.

He shakes his head.

BENNY

I'm sorry I don't remember you.

SANDRA

That's okay. Our firm handled the Duane Reade fiasco with you guys. That ring a bell.

*He knows what she's trying to do.
He refuses to look up at her.*

BENNY

Nope. I never met you before. This isn't happening.

Awkward moment.

SANDRA

Benny? You can't control it.

It's inevitable.

BENNY

No, it's not.

SANDRA

Yes, it is. I will always meet you. How I meet you might be different. Where I meet you might be different. But I will always be with you.

BENNY

I can't do it again. I don't know how.

SANDRA

Just ask me to sit down.

BENNY

No.

SANDRA

Benny, this is when you ask me to sit down.

He looks up at her and all those feelings come rushing in. She's right. He'll never escape her.

BENNY

Would you like to sit down?

Sandra sits. Shifting back into new path.

BENNY

Right, the Duane Reade thing, I do remember you. Honestly, I normally have a horrible memory, you know, people will tell me things I said or moments that happened and I don't have any memory of it, sometimes I feel like I'm an idiot or I wasn't present, in that moment with the person, don't know where I was but I wasn't there, but what you told me, somehow it stayed with me. I hate change. I'm a control freak. But the idea that it's all random and the only certainty is uncertainty and if you want stability live in the instability that it's a good thing. I've been trying to fuse it into my life philosophy.

SANDRA

Wow.

BENNY

Was that too much? I do that.

SANDRA

No. I just didn't realize that waiting for the bathroom with you had such an impact.

BENNY

It did.

SANDRA

Cool.

Another awkward pause.

BENNY

You come here often? Shit. Sorry. That's horrible.

SANDRA

No. It's fine. Actually, this is my first time. I was supposed to meet a friend of mine but she bailed on me. So. I was gonna go but then I saw you.

BENNY

Talk about randomness.

SANDRA

Yeah about that. Nothing is random.

BENNY

But you said -

SANDRA

I was wrong.

BENNY

Really? Are you kidding?

SANDRA

I do that. Spout out whatever self-help bullshit I'm reading at the time.

BENNY

Oh.

SANDRA

It's a trait. I'm working on it.

BENNY

Wow.

SANDRA

I'm sorry.

BENNY

No. It was good. Makes me feel a little better. So what you reading now?

SANDRA

Blink. Following my gut intuition.

BENNY

Listening to the little man inside you.

SANDRA

One, who said it was a man and two, she told me to come over and say hi.

BENNY

I'm glad *she* did.

SANDRA

Me too.

They smile at each other. It's starts up again.

(0)n (THE) line

BENNY

Year one.

SANDRA

He asks me to move in.

GINA

She comes to my bar.

BENNY

Year 2.

SANDRA

I say yes.

GINA

We're friends.

SANDRA

Best friends.

BENNY

Year 3.

SANDRA

Marriage.

GINA

I'm not invited.

BENNY

Year 4.

SANDRA

Itchy.

GINA

Me too.

BENNY

Year 5.

SANDRA

Work a lot.

BENNY

I don't see you.

SANDRA

I only notice her.

GINA

I walk the line.

SANDRA

Year 6. I gave you that year.

GINA

Year 6. I took that year.

BENNY

Year 6. I lost that year.

I get drunk at a bar.

Meet someone else.

Someone I work with.

I was away.

On a business trip.

She smiled at me.

SANDRA: Gina shifts into someone new.

She takes a scarf and wraps it around her neck.

She's now COURTNEY.

Courtney smiles. This grabs his attention.

C(heat)

BENNY

You want to know why men are compared to dogs. And it's not because they run around. Sniffing whatever ass they can find. It's deeper than that. Its attention. We crave attention. You see, a dog just wants to love unconditionally. And they want recognition for that dedication. They want a pat on the head. A belly rub. They want to know that you care about them. Neglect a dog. And he'll go looking for that attention somewhere else. Men are no different.

As he continues the monologue they lock in arms, gliding to the ground. He rolls over next to her. Falls asleep. Morning after. Benny has just had a one-night stand with a woman at work. She wakes him up. Benny reaches over. Touches her hand. He wakes up. Looks around. Realizes it's not Sandra. Shit!

BENNY

Hi.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Hi.

A pause.

BENNY

What time is it?

COURTNEY (GINA)

Almost 8.

Awkward laugh.

BENNY

Oh shit.

COURTNEY (GINA)

You going in today? I have work. You have work.

BENNY

Yeah. Right.

COURTNEY (GINA)

We could call in. Hang out. No pressure.

BENNY

Do you know where my shirt is?

COURTNEY (GINA)

Um... Over there?

He looks around. Checks under the chair. Finds his shirt. Puts it on. He looks at her.

BENNY

I should go.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Okay.

BENNY

What kind of phone do you have?

COURTNEY (GINA)

What?

BENNY

My phone's dead.

COURTNEY (GINA)

You need a charger? I got an Iphone.

BENNY

That doesn't work.

COURTNEY (GINA)

You can use my phone if you want.

BENNY

No. That's not a good idea. Do you have any coffee?

GINA

I don't drink coffee.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Okay. Listen Courtney-

The room's getting smaller.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Let's not... it doesn't have to be weird.

BENNY

Okay.

COURTNEY (GINA)

It was nice.

BENNY

Yeah. Can you sit down? I got to tell you something.

COURTNEY (GINA)

What?

BENNY

Please. I should have said something before.

COURTNEY (GINA)

I don't want to hear it.

BENNY

I'm married. I've been married for 6 years. I was drinking. You came up to me!

COURTNEY (GINA)

You're blaming me.

BENNY

No. I was drunk. You're gorgeous. You're so out of my league.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Ah don't give me that.

BENNY

Really. I never in a million years would ever thought that a woman like you would wanna hook up with me.

COURTNEY (GINA)

You're full of shit. So full of shit.

BENNY

Sorry.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Doesn't matter. It was just sex. I'm good-you do this a lot?

BENNY

No. I've never-I never thought I'd be one of those guys-you're so gorgeous-

COURTNEY (GINA)

Stop.

BENNY

And you smiled.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Grow up.

BENNY

It was nice to feel wanted.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Get your shit and go.

BENNY

Okay. I just need to ask you something. Can we pretend that this didn't happen?

COURTNEY (GINA)

You're a real dick.

BENNY

I don't want to hurt my wife.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Oh now you're worried about your wife. Now you have a conscience. Your wife must be a lucky woman. You're such a stand-up guy. She picked a real good one.

BENNY

I'll take that as a yes.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Get the fuck out. Wait. I want to see you again.

Christmas music.

CHRISTmas P(art)y

BENNY: *The Christmas party.*

SANDRA: *Benny walks in.*

GINA: *He spots me.
I raise a glass.
He does a shy wave back.
In this moment, he sees me as
Courtney, his lover.*

BENNY: *Sandra walks in.*

GINA: *I smile at her. She
ignores me. In this moment,
she sees me as Gina, her
lover.*

*Sandra walks up to Benny. He's
acting nervous.*

BENNY

Hi sweetie.

*He pulls her to the other side of
the bar. Shifts. He looks around.*

SANDRA

What's a matter with you?

BENNY

Nervous. Boss. Cut backs.

*Gina sits at the table. She looks
over at Benny and Sandra.*

SANDRA

Benny is thinking, "Please don't ask me about that girl?"
Who's that girl? She keeps staring at you.

BENNY

I think her name is Courtney. She works in sales.

SANDRA

Mmmmm.

BENNY

Sandra is thinking, "Please don't ask me about that girl?"
Hey, who's that girl? She keeps staring at you.

SANDRA

I don't know. I think her name is Gina. She works here.

BENNY

You want a drink?

SANDRA

Yeah. Sure.

Benny goes over to the bar to get a drink. Sandra watches him leave. Then she quickly goes over to Gina.

SANDRA

What are you doing here?

GINA

I can't believe you didn't invite me to your Christmas party.

SANDRA

Go home.

GINA

I miss you.

SANDRA

Oh god.

GINA

I do.

SANDRA

This is no good.

GINA

I don't care.

SANDRA

I'm married.

GINA

Tell him about me.

SANDRA

No.

Benny returns. He stops. He wants to run away. Gina waves him over. He makes his way.

COURTNEY (GINA)

You want to join us?

Awkward moment.

BENNY

Sure.

He sits. Another awkward moment.

COURTNEY (GINA)

I love these kinds of parties. You never know who you are going to meet.

BENNY

Right.

SANDRA

That's true.

BENNY

You doing anything for the holidays?

GINA

I was hoping to spend it with someone I love but they keep letting me down.

SANDRA

I'm sure they have their reasons.

COURTNEY (GINA)

I think they're just being selfish.

BENNY

It's not easy. The holidays are tough.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Not when you know what you want.

Benny looks at his glass.

BENNY

Sandra sweetie, will you get me a coke? For my whiskey.

SANDRA

Why can't you get it yourself?

BENNY

Why do you have to make a big deal out of everything?

SANDRA

Fine. Okay. Sure. Can I get you anything?

GINA

I have everything I need.

She goes.

BENNY

I thought everything was cool?

COURTNEY (GINA)

It is.

BENNY

What are you doing here?

COURTNEY (GINA)

It's a company Christmas party.

BENNY

Why are you talking with her?

COURTNEY (GINA)

Because I can.

BENNY

What is this?

COURTNEY (GINA)

Fun.

BENNY

I'm not having fun.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Oh cheer up Tiny Tim, it's Christmas?

SANDRA comes back.

BENNY

Yeah, Merry Christmas!

SANDRA

Happy Hanukah.

BENNY

What are we talking about?

SANDRA

Nothing.

COURTNEY (GINA)

Oh, that's that necklace you told me about.

*She reaches up and touches it.
Softly.*

BENNY

Yes. She got it for me.

SANDRA

For our 6-year anniversary.

GINA

It's nice. You guys must have a great marriage.

She touches Sandra's knee.

SANDRA

I have to go to the bathroom. Wanna come with me?

GINA

Sure.

BENNY

Wait!

Benny grabs Gina.

SANDRA

What are you doing?

BENNY

Who's gonna keep me company?

SANDRA

You'll be fine.

BENNY

We should go home.

SANDRA

What's going on?

BENNY

I forgot about the dogs. I didn't leave out their food.

SANDRA

I'm not ready to go home.

GINA looks at Sandra.

GINA

I'll give her a lift.

BENNY

What?

SANDRA

Yeah, she can take me home.

BENNY

No!

Awkward. Gina confronts Benny.

COURTNEY (GINA)

I want you to tell her about us.

BENNY

There is no us.

SANDRA

What's she talking about?

Gina confronts Sandra.

GINA

Tell him about me.

BENNY

What's she talking about?

SANDRA

You should have some water. You need some water.

GINA

You're lying. You're both fucking lying.

SANDRA

I don't know what she's talking about.

BENNY

I think she's drunk.

COURTNEY (GINA)

YOU ARE LYING TO EACH OTHER!

SANDRA

We should go home.

BENNY

Let's get the fuck out.

They leave. The Christmas music fades away. GINA gets up.

GINA

I really hate playing the lover.

She walks out. Benny walks in.

(MOVING) past the Fee(LING)

Kitchen table.

BENNY

What time is it? God, what am I doing?

Sandra comes in. She's really sick. It's close to the end.

SANDRA

Who are you talking to?

BENNY

Just thinking out loud.

SANDRA

Is that something new?

BENNY

I guess it is. I didn't mean to wake you.

SANDRA

You didn't.

BENNY

You should get some rest.

SANDRA

I'll sleep when I die.

BENNY

That's not funny.

SANDRA

I'm not being funny. I only have a couple more months of awake time so I got to take advantage of it.

BENNY

Sa. (Pause) You want something to eat?

SANDRA

I'll just throw it up.

BENNY

Can I get you anything?

SANDRA

I'm fine. Just let me sit here with you.

BENNY

I have to -

SANDRA

Sit. We haven't done this in a long time.

BENNY

What?

SANDRA

Hold hands. Sit next to each other.

BENNY

It's been a while.

SANDRA

Tell me a story.

BENNY

I don't know any stories.

SANDRA

Come on, you're a writer.

BENNY

Not that kind of writer.

SANDRA

Tell me a story.

BENNY

Like what.

SANDRA

Tell me something about you. Something you've never told me before.

BENNY

You know everything about me.

SANDRA

There has to be something. Tell me.

BENNY

I cheated. When I was 18, I cheated on my girlfriend. I was stupid. And I'm not proud of it. But I locked it away. I pretended that it didn't happen. Took that memory and pushed way back. Where it couldn't be found.

SANDRA

You like to do that.

BENNY

I know. So that year, the same year, her father got real sick. We grew tight. I had lost my dad five years earlier so I knew what she was going through. Last week, I ran into her. At the grocery store. I hadn't seen her in a long time. And she gave me this great hug. It was... made me uncomfortable. She thanked me for standing by her. During her father's death. That if it wasn't for me, she doesn't think that she would've gotten through it. And the truth is, I only stood by her because I felt guilty. I was gonna be the best boyfriend ever because I had sinned. And this was a way to find some forgiveness. And when I saw her, the memory of that year flooded back in, for her, she saw support, for me, guilt. And I didn't tell her because I didn't want to demean that memory-

SANDRA

Doesn't matter. You were there for her.

They sit in silence.

SANDRA

I have never stopped loving you.

BENNY

I know.

SANDRA

All my life I was so afraid of being loved. It was easy for me to give. But for someone to love me back. I couldn't handle it. I didn't want the responsibility. But then I met you. And you took a part of my soul. And I wanted you to take it all but I couldn't -

BENNY

Maybe it's getting late. We should -

SANDRA

Listen, I'm trying to tell you something.

BENNY

Okay what?

SANDRA

I thought that I could go through my life only sharing that one part. The part you had. But I was wrong. Someone took the other part.

BENNY

What?

SANDRA

I had another love.

BENNY

When?

SANDRA

Doesn't matter.

BENNY

Who was it? Do I know him?

SANDRA

It doesn't matter.

BENNY

Why are you telling me this?

SANDRA

Because. I want you to understand.

Silence between them.

SANDRA

What are you thinking?

Benny doesn't say anything.

SANDRA

Don't shut me out. Say something.

BENNY

You shouldn't have told me.

SANDRA

I didn't want to end it this way.

BENNY

I was perfectly fine not knowing. Jesus Sa, you shouldn't have told me.

SANDRA

I didn't mean to hurt you.

BENNY

It didn't happen.

SANDRA

What?

BENNY

This, what you told me. It didn't happen. This moment didn't happen.

SANDRA

You can't keep locking away memories.

BENNY

Yes, I can. I choose what I want to remember and I remember you and I. Happy Marriage. Sure, we had some rough spots. But we got through them. That's it. Nothing more. Nothing less.

SANDRA

Listen to me. I need you to forgive me.

BENNY

I love you with all my heart.

SANDRA

But do you forgive me?

BENNY

It didn't happen. This moment, what you're telling me. It didn't happen.

*He walks out. Sandra's left alone.
She drops a newspaper on the floor
and then she leaves.*

(Obituary)

Gina enters, she picks up the paper. Reads. It's the Sandra's obituary.

GINA

It's cold.
 I'm wearing my red scarf. A gift.
 My jacket. A gift.
 My snow boots. A gift.
 My whole life feels like it's been a gift.
 I start fresh.
 Heading to who knows where.
 I stop to pick up the paper.
 Skim through the pages and there.
 Center of the page.
 There she was. Who she was. Who she left.
 And I want to cry.
 But I can't.
 I don't know why I can't.
 I'm angry. I'm frustrated. I'm silly. I'm tired. I'm feeling groovy. I'm ecstatic. I'm shocked. I'm still. I'm jaded. I'm hopeful. I'm hopeless. I'm tickled pink. I'm turning the corner. I'm jacked. I'm wired. I'm dancing. I'm light. I'm heavy. I'm moving like the wind. I'm mocking those who walk by. I'm twitching. I'm hunched over. I'm on my knees. I'm yanking off my boots. I'm kicking off the chill. I'm standing in the middle of the street. I'm yelling. I'm hearing my voice echo back. I'm flying high. I'm underground.
 I'm alone.
 I close the paper and I head to work.
 Because that's the only place I know.
 The only place that I can rely on right now.

Gina comes into the bar. Standing there are Benny and Sandra.

F(A)CING EACH OTHER

BENNY

I lost my wife.

GINA

I lost my lover.

SANDRA

I lost my soul mate.

BENNY

I lost my bearing.

GINA

I lost feeling.

SANDRA

I lost the past.

GINA

I lost your smell.

BENNY

I lost your smile.

SANDRA

I lost your hands.

BENNY

I lost my mind.

SANDRA

I lost some sleep.

GINA

I lost my food.

BENNY

I lost my CD's.

GINA

I lost my books.

BENNY

I lost my socks.

GINA

I lost the truth.

SANDRA

I lost the lies.

BENNY

I lost my courage.

SANDRA

I lost the nerve.

GINA

I lost my faith.

BENNY

I lost my disappointments.

SANDRA

I lost my fear of commitment.

GINA

I lost my fear of abandonment.

(*Breath*)

ALL

I lost myself.

*They all look at each other.
Sandra walks off.*

Con (CLUSION)

Gina grabs a bus tub. She puts out candles on the tables. She picks up some dirty glasses.

GINA

Routine.

When all else fails, that's what you got.

She goes into the back of the bar.

BENNY walks in. He wears a black suit and carries a rolling suitcase. He looks around. A small shiver shoots up his spine. He's been here before.

Gina comes out of the back. She sees him. They lock eyes. Shift.

BENNY

When it happens,
when you feel that sledgehammer land on your chest,
When you recover, sit back and think about what you saw -

GINA

Can I help you?

BENNY

Huh?

Shift to the Present. A present that will always be the present of this story.

GINA

You need something?

BENNY

Hi.

GINA

Hey.

BENNY

Do you remember me?

GINA

I do.

BENNY

Good. Yesterday, I was packing up some of her stuff. It's been hard trying to figure out what I want to keep and what I should give away. I never thought I would have to think about that. So, I was going through some of her things and I found this. This small special thing that was given between one lover to another.

*He takes out that special gift.
It rocks Gina.*

BENNY

At first, it fucking pissed me off. Shattered me. And not because you two were together. She tried to tell me about you but I didn't want to hear it. I didn't want her to be the one that did something wrong in our marriage. I did. In that moment, I wanted her to stay the good one. To me, she was always the good one. But then I found this and it just sent me back to that moment, and I couldn't face it. I just got so fucking angry with her. Fucking wanted to hate her. For all of it. Every fucking decision she made without me. Every moment she forced upon me. Every fucking time she reminded me that I was never going to be enough. Fuck! Here.

*He hands it to her. She takes it,
still fighting back her tears.*

BENNY

I thought about throwing it out. But I know she would want you to have it back.

GINA

Thank you.

BENNY

It fucking hurts.

GINA

More than anything.

BENNY

I don't know what's real anymore. I don't know what's a memory of something that took place or just a wish that it took place. I can't tell if this happened or was it even true or did any of it happen the way I thought it happened. I'm so fucking confused. And I don't understand why I wasn't enough for her.

GINA

Does it matter?

BENNY

Yes.

GINA

Why?

BENNY

Because. The day we met, at this table, at this place, the day she and I came together. That day is the same day for you.

GINA

Yes.

BENNY

Doesn't that fuck with you?

GINA

A little bit.

BENNY

So, then, let me ask you something?

GINA

Okay what?

BENNY

Knowing that, knowing how it all turns out, if you could go back to that day, would you do it all over again?

GINA

She will always love you. And she will always love me. And we will always love her.

BENNY

I should have been better.

GINA

Me too.

BENNY

Will it ever stop?

GINA

I hope not.

BENNY

What now?

GINA

We say good bye.

BENNY

Goodbye.

Benny heads out the door.

Lights fade as he walks out and she goes back to putting the bar in order.

The lights continue to fade till there's nothing left but darkness.

End.