

**JAMIE.** It is, it is.

*(JAMIE walks over by MAN at the jukebox.)*

I got him to put a few classics on there. At the bottom, on the right . . .

**MAN.** Oh yeah. Some great choices. Nice. Here, I'll play this . . .

**JAMIE.** Careful, that thing is temperamental, steals quarters.

*(MAN puts a quarter in the jukebox. Nothing plays. He pounds it a little bit.)*

**JAMIE.** Well, I guess you don't have the touch, after all. Sorry.

**MAN.** Oh well . . .

**JAMIE.** I'm going in back for a minute. We going to be OK out here?

**MAN.** What? *(Beat. Looks around and then looks at ABBY, getting it:)* Oh sure, sure. But I'm deducting it from your time! Kidding! *(He laughs.)* Go ahead, no funny business. I swear to God!

*(JAMIE exits. MAN comes over by ABBY. They both sip their drinks.)*

**MAN.** You love Rice Krispie treats, huh?

**ABBY.** I'm trying to quit. I've got a marshmallow on my back!

**MAN.** *(They laugh a bit:)* Hey, I'm sorry if this seems odd. I hope I'm not making you uncomfortable.

**ABBY.** Well, yeah but, don't worry about it. Next to a lot of my customers, you don't even move the needle. Besides, it can take me months to save a thousand bucks. And I didn't even have to dance on a pole! "Bow, chicka, bow, bow . . .!"

*(She takes out the money again and fans it out, trails it down her front, funny/suggestively.)*

**MAN.** My eyes, my eyes! We said no "funny business!"

*(They laugh a bit and she puts the money away and nonchalantly gets up and moves a bit away. She's not actually all that comfortable with things.)*

**ABBY.** OK, so what did you want to talk about?

**MAN.** Oh, you know, everything, nothing. How long have you known Jamie?

**ABBY.** A while.

*(Pause.)*

**MAN.** I don't mean to pry.

*(Pause.)*

**MAN.** You know, I've been married thirty-five years.

**ABBY.** Uh huh.

*(Pause.)*

**MAN.** You're with someone that long, it feels . . . sort of like it's an accomplishment. You never want to break that winning streak, you know?

*(Pause.)*

**ABBY.** Jamie and I have been seeing each other about two years, right around.

**MAN.** How'd you meet?

**ABBY.** He used to stop off to eat before going home.

**MAN.** At the IHOP.

**ABBY.** Yeah. We'd talk, like that. Every time we'd talk a little more. Nothing special but he seemed different than the late-shift crowd.

**MAN.** How different?

**ABBY.** Well . . . sober.

**MAN.** A plus.

**ABBY.** Two in the morning at the IHOP, that's like waiting on Jimmy Hoffa. Oh, and on our first date, he took me out dancing.

**MAN.** Yeah? Disco?

**ABBY.** Oh no, far from it.

**MAN.** What's far from disco?

**ABBY.** He showed up in a nice suit. I thought we were going for pizza! But I ran back in and changed into this red dress I had, and we were off! He took me to this club where they play older music with a live band. They even had a mirror ball! It's so corny but I loved it, it was like going back in time, like those old movies with "supper clubs"? We danced!

**MAN.** What did you dance to?

**ABBY.** Oh, some, I don't know, big-band stuff, forties music. What was that one song . . . ? Something about having a crush or something? It was . . . great, magical.

**MAN.** I bet.

**ABBY.** . . . I totally fell for it.

**MAN.** That's nice. That's very nice.

**ABBY.** *(Pause.)* Oh and soup.

**MAN.** I'm sorry?

**ABBY.** Soup.

**MAN.** You like soup?

**ABBY.** Well, one time he tried to make dinner for me. It was a nightmare, like they had to call FEMA. But, he happened to have some of those big cans of soup that people share, you know?

**MAN.** Right . . .

**ABBY.** So, we split one and that's become . . . you know how couples have their "things"? Splitting a can of soup is one of ours.

**MAN.** Huh . . .

**ABBY.** "Chicken and stars."

**MAN.** "Chicken and stars . . ."

**ABBY.** Stupid, huh?

**MAN.** No, it's nice.

**ABBY.** *(Beat.)* And I like his vocabulary.

**MAN.** His vocabulary?

**ABBY.** You know how people say, "awesome" or "amazing" and it can mean anything or nothing? I guess I'm kind of a snob about that stuff. I was an English major. It just seems lazy. Jamie went to college, you know.

**MAN.** Yeah, he told me, Eastman school, at Rochester. You were an English major?

**ABBY.** I was.

**MAN.** Who's your favorite writer? Wait, don't tell me . . . Dylan Thomas.

**ABBY.** "Rage, rage against the dying of the light!"

**MAN.** I was right!

**ABBY.** I think that's his most famous. I miss those classes, I'll definitely go back some time.

**MAN.** You didn't finish?

**ABBY.** My dad got sick so I moved back to take care of him. He needed a lot of help for a few years. He passed six months ago.

**MAN.** I'm sorry.

**ABBY.** Thanks. But, Jamie was there for me. He's a solid person, you know?

**MAN.** Are you going to go back? To get your degree?

**ABBY.** Boy, I am earning this money!

*(They laugh a bit.)*

**MAN.** OK, sorry, I'm being too nosy.

**ABBY.** No, it's OK, it's your dime. I'd like to. I think I'll just have to wait and see.

**MAN.** OK, this is one of "those" questions: Where do you see yourself in ten years? Twenty?

**ABBY.** Huh . . . OK . . . I'd like to have my degree. Maybe be a teacher. I like to write. The dream is a life of tea and literature, maybe some kids? Not a real big dream, I know . . .

**MAN.** No, it's great. And kids . . . kids are huge, important. And Jamie?

**ABBY.** Don't tell him but . . . I hope we're together in ten years. I really hope so. But there's a lot between here and there.

**MAN.** Like?

**ABBY.** No, I think we're really good, I do.

**MAN.** What about him?

**ABBY.** What about him?

**MAN.** Well, he's got that plan, you know, to take time off and practice, like that. He wants to be great. He told me about seeing that "In Memoriam" thing on the news?

**ABBY.** Boy, he told you a lot of stuff! That "In Memoriam" thing? Between us, it's a little creepy . . . But seriously, I want him to do that sabbatical, isn't that a great idea? And you just helped us with it, a LOT!

**MAN.** So, he's chasing his dream. That OK with you?

**ABBY.** OK?

**MAN.** Yeah.

**ABBY.** Well . . . I'm not going to stop him. He can play all he wants. I think he could be great.

**MAN.** Do you?

**ABBY.** I do.

**MAN.** So you'll do everything to . . . you'll help him. Might mean taking a back seat?

**ABBY.** I want him to succeed, I really do. It's just— I've always heard that a lot of really successful people are . . . I just don't know that he's selfish enough to be great.

**MAN.** I see . . .

**ABBY.** Oh, I know, another thing I love? A lot of times, when he closes the bar, we turn down the lights, have a drink, and we'll sit here for a while. And he plays, just for me. Just us. We sit here and it all goes away . . . the drunks at IHOP, the garbage on the street, the smell of kitchen grease in my hair. And pretty soon . . . it all fades and it's just . . . us. I love it . . . those late-night private concerts, how many people get those?

**MAN.** *(Beat.)* You love him.

**ABBY.** *(Beat.)* I do.

*(Pause.)*

**MAN.** Quick story . . . I knew a guy once.

*(JAMIE reenters.)*

**JAMIE.** What are we talking about?

**MAN.** I was about to regale Abby with a story!

**JAMIE.** Is this a private regale?

**MAN.** Not at all! Group regale! Get a drink . . . OK, here goes . . . I knew this guy.

*(JAMIE goes behind the bar and gets a drink. MAN stands and sort of acts out the story.)*

**MAN.** A baseball pitcher. I mean, he was the goods, a pitcher, lights out. This guy was going places. Drafted, first round. They started him out in the minors, like everybody . . . but he was a lock. I mean, a lock.

**ABBY.** And?

**MAN.** And he got married. Bam, pregnant! The minors don't pay much and even with his signing bonus . . . he was moving up fast but in the off-season, he got a job, loading trucks, midnight shifts for Canada Dry. Responsible, right? Good guy, right? One night, maybe he was tired, whatever, he caught his throwing hand under