

A QUIET APPREHENSION

by Camille Atebe

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Sandra ..... The bartender. Anywhere from 30-50.

Dustin Gallo ..... A young police officer.

Xenia Norris ..... A pregnant woman of indeterminate age.

Mallory ..... A retiree regular.

Anson ..... Mallory's husband, and another regular.

Edina ..... A nurse

Baxter ..... A heartsick oilfield worker

### Place

The Wait. A bar situated next to a hospital, The Wait is a small, eclectically furnished pub. UC is the front door, DR a door leading to the toilet. A bar sits diagonally R, and a dartboard is UL. Two tables with chairs fill the rest of the room. It is early fall.

### ACT ONE

*Mid-afternoon. The lights come up on SANDRA, behind the bar, reading a book. A siren is heard faintly in the background. MALLORY comes out of the washroom.*

**MALLORY** Should I just be bringing my own toilet paper? Because I've gotten to the point where I feel like I'm nagging you about re-stocking. And I don't like to nag.

**SANDRA** Sorry, Mal. I'll get some more tonight.

**MALLORY** By the time you finish here, all the stores are closed.

**SANDRA** Tomorrow on my way in, then.

**MALLORY** No, you'll forget again.

**SANDRA** I'll write it down.

**MALLORY** You wrote it down the last two times, and you still forgot. No, I have a better idea. You give me some of your petty cash and I'll go buy some now.

**SANDRA** You don't have to do that.

**MALLORY** Yes, I do. I've run out of tissues and I refuse to use paper towels.

*SANDRA digs in the till and gives Mallory a couple of bills.*

**MALLORY** Better give me a bit more. You're going to need paper towels pretty soon, too, and I don't want to be wiping my hands on my jeans for weeks before you get around to re-stocking.

*SANDRA hands MALLORY another couple of bills.*

**SANDRA** Thanks, Mal.

**MALLORY** Yeah, you're welcome.

*MALLORY exits, and SANDRA goes back to reading. After a moment, the door opens and DUSTIN and EDINA enter. He looks pale and shaky, and she leads him to a table.*

**EDINA** Just sit down and take a deep breath. Sandra? Can I have two brandies?

**SANDRA** Will whiskey do? I haven't got any brandy.

**DUSTIN** I'll just have an orange juice. I'm on duty and I can't...

**EDINA** Don't be silly. *(To Sandra)* Whiskey will be fine. *(To Dustin)* One whiskey won't matter.

**DUSTIN** I really shouldn't drink.

**EDINA** You also really shouldn't faint at the sight of blood. It's a big day for breaking the rules.

**DUSTIN** I feel like such an idiot.

*SANDRA brings them two whiskeys.*

**SANDRA** Don't worry about it. I don't like blood either.

**DUSTIN** But I'm a police officer. I should be able to deal with blood.

**SANDRA** And I'm a bartender. I should be able to deal with blood too. But every time there's a bar fight, I can't watch.

**EDINA** Except that this place is so empty you never have any fights.

**SANDRA** I was trying to make the kid feel better.

**DUSTIN** Thanks.

**SANDRA** So what happened?

**EDINA** A severed finger.

**SANDRA** Whose?

**DUSTIN** I don't know. Just some guy in the emergency room. I had brought Kevin in for assessment-

**SANDRA** Kevin?

**EDINA** One of our homeless regulars. Every couple of months he goes a little more crazy than usual, so the police bring him in and we clean him up, get him back on his meds, find him some clean socks-

**DUSTIN** And send him back out onto the street.

**EDINA** We keep him as long as we can.

**DUSTIN** I know.

*There is a sad silence.*

**SANDRA** Can I get you another whiskey?

**EDINA** Yes.

**DUSTIN** No.

**EDINA** (*Firmly*) Yes. Drink that up.

*DUSTIN sips the whiskey and grimaces.*

**EDINA** This is no fine twelve year old single malt. Just get it down you.

*DUSTIN pours the rest of the glass down his throat and nearly keels over.*

**EDINA** You don't drink much, do you?

**DUSTIN** No.

**EDINA** You haven't been a police officer long, have you?

**DUSTIN** Two years.

**EDINA** And you don't drink?

**SANDRA** Leave him alone. Abstinence isn't a sin. *(To Dustin)* Are you feeling better?

**DUSTIN** No. My throat hurts.

**EDINA** That's a good sign.

**DUSTIN** It is?

**SANDRA** Ignore her. I'll get you an orange juice.

*SANDRA returns to the bar, and ANSON enters. He looks around, then turns to SANDRA.*

**ANSON** I thought Mallory was here.

**SANDRA** She was. She went out to buy toilet paper.

**ANSON** Why? We have cupboards full of it at home. I'll have a beer.

**SANDRA** *(Hands him a bottle and a glass of orange juice)* Not for you. For me. Can you take this to the cop?

**ANSON** For you? You've got her doing your shopping now?

**SANDRA** Yup. You want a glass?

**ANSON** Have I ever wanted a glass?

*ANSON moves to EDINA and DUSTIN. He hands the orange juice to DUSTIN.*

**ANSON** Here you go. Glad to see you're one of the conscientious ones. *(To Edina)* Hey... you.

**EDINA** Hey you? Where were you raised, a trailer park?

**SANDRA** Nothing wrong with being raised in a trailer park.

**ANSON** Sorry. I thought I knew your name there for a second, then I realized I didn't. I've seen you in here before though, haven't I?

**EDINA** Every time I'm here, you're here.

**SANDRA** He's always here. Anson, meet Edina. Edina, Anson.

**ANSON** A pleasure. And this fine citizen is...?

**DUSTIN** Dustin. Dustin Gallo. Nice to meet you, Hanson.

**ANSON** Just Anson. No H.

**DUSTIN** Oh, I'm sorry.

**ANSON** That's all right.

**EDINA** There's always a woman with you, whenever I come in.

**ANSON** Mallory. My wife. Apparently she's Sandra's new personal shopper so she's not here at the moment. Mind if I join you?

**DUSTIN** Of course. Pull up a chair. *(To Sandra)* Excuse me, may I have another one?

**EDINA** He's very polite.

**SANDRA** Must have been raised in a trailer park.

**DUSTIN** I was, actually.

**EDINA** I bet all your childhood friends ended up in jail.

**SANDRA** You're wonderfully open-minded, aren't you? Free of stereotypes. Here you go.

*SANDRA brings another glass of juice to DUSTIN and clears the table of empties.*

**DUSTIN** A lot of them did, actually.

**EDINA** I'm not a complete lout, Sandra. Stereotypes are usually based in some sort of fact.

**ANSON** Absolutely. For instance, you would never find me going out shopping for someone else, because I'm a man. But Mallory, being a woman, well, she hopped right to it.

**SANDRA** I've been out of toilet paper for a week. She volunteered to go.

**DUSTIN** I probably would have volunteered, too.

**ANSON** Well, there goes my theory.

**EDINA** You done that juice? My break is almost over.

**DUSTIN** You go ahead. I don't think I could face any more blood.

**ANSON** Blood? What happened? Stabbing, shooting?

**DUSTIN** Severed finger.

**ANSON** Yours?

**DUSTIN** *(Displaying both hands)* No. Someone in the ER.

**EDINA** Our fine constable is a fainter.

**SANDRA** Edina, go back to work.

**ANSON** A fainter? No kidding? What's it like, fainting? I've always wondered. I've never fainted, myself.

**DUSTIN** It's mostly embarrassing.

**ANSON** No, not emotionally. Physically. Does everything go black, do you feel yourself fall? Or is it like you lose a few minutes completely?

**DUSTIN** I feel it coming on, then everything just sort of fades out. Then later it fades back in.

**EDINA** It's not something you want to experience.

**ANSON** Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't mind, just once. I think I'd like to experience everything once.

**DUSTIN** Everything? There are some things you wouldn't like to experience, I'm sure.

**SANDRA** Like bankruptcy.

**EDINA** Or a barium enema.

**DUSTIN** Or being shot.

**ANSON** Done it, done it twice, done it.

**EDINA** Two barium enemas?

**SANDRA** You've been shot?

**DUSTIN** Bankruptcy's not so bad.

**SANDRA** Anson, when were you shot?

**ANSON** Oh, years ago. It wasn't serious.

**SANDRA** Who shot you?

**ANSON** Don't have a clue. The whole thing was a blur. It was foggy and awful, and no one was properly introduced.

**EDINA** Sounds a lot like my marriage.

**ANSON** It was a war, actually.

**EDINA** Tell me about it.

**SANDRA** You were in a war?

**ANSON** Yup. Wouldn't recommend it.

**DUSTIN** Are you a soldier?

**ANSON** Was. Then I moved into advertising. Can I get you another orange juice?

*MALLORY enters. She is carrying a huge package of toilet paper and another huge package of paper towels. As she speaks, she unloads them behind the bar.*

**MALLORY** I got enough to last you a couple of months. You owe me \$12.50, but you can pay me back in drinks. I'm taking a Bailey's. *(She pours*

*herself a drink and joins Sandra at the other end of the bar) Is Anson making friends?*

**ANSON** I had to. You ran out on me. Mal, this is Edina...

**MALLORY** We've met. Hiya.

**ANSON** And this is Dustin.

**MALLORY** Hello Dustin.

**DUSTIN** Hello, ma'am.

**MALLORY** It's Mallory.

**DUSTIN** Sorry, ma'am. Mallory.

**EDINA** Anson was just telling us about his time as a soldier.

**MALLORY** *(Surprised)* He was?

*The door opens, and XENIA enters. She is heavily pregnant. All turn to look at her, casually at first, then the looks turn to stares. She stands uncomfortably in the doorway. Finally SANDRA speaks.*

**SANDRA** Can I help you hon?

**XENIA** I... can I use your washroom?

*Everyone relaxes.*

**SANDRA** Sure, right over there.

*XENIA goes through to the washroom.*

**ANSON** You know what's weird? I remember a time when a pregnant woman would walk into a bar and no one thought twice about it.

**EDINA** That's because the smoke was so thick in the air no one could tell who had walked in.

**ANSON** No, seriously. I'm not saying that I think women should drink when they're pregnant. It just used to be that people were expected to take care of themselves.

**EDINA** A foetus can't take care of itself.

**ANSON** Yes, I know, I'm just saying I think it's sad that we all assumed the worst of this poor woman.

**EDINA** Speak for yourself. I've seen too many messed up kids. I like to err on the side of caution.

**SANDRA** Edina, I thought you were going back to work.

**EDINA** *(Looking at her watch)* I have a few more minutes. Can I get another?



**SANDRA** Three?

**EDINA** I'm not pregnant.

**SANDRA** Dustin?

**DUSTIN** Yes, please.

*SANDRA pours the drinks, and takes them to the table. There is a silence. Then XENIA'S voice is heard from the washroom.*

**XENIA** Excuse me? Um... there's no toilet paper.

**MALLORY** Oh, damn. Sorry! *(She takes the toilet paper from behind the bar and rushes over to the washroom)* I'm bringing some in, just a second.

**ANSON** Now, that's the problem with being a woman. TP dependency.

**EDINA** It's hardly a crippling addiction, Anson.

**DUSTIN** What did people use before toilet paper was invented?

**SANDRA** Toilet paper has always been invented.

**EDINA** Leaves. And newspapers.

**DUSTIN** That would have been uncomfortable.

**ANSON** I remember being in Russia back when it was still the Soviet Union. Now that was some uncomfortable toilet paper. Soviet women were a hell of a lot hardier than we ever gave them credit for.

**DUSTIN** What were you doing in the Soviet Union?

*Before ANSON can answer, MALLORY enters from the washroom.*

**MALLORY** Anson, I think I broke the paper towel dispenser.

**ANSON** So?

**MALLORY** Can you go and fix it?

**ANSON** Me? Why?

**MALLORY** Because you're handy.

**ANSON** This isn't my house. I don't have to be handy in public.

**SANDRA** I'll fix it, Mal. It's my bar, after all.

*SANDRA exits to the washroom. MALLORY pulls up a chair with the others after retrieving her drink.*

**DUSTIN** Anson was just telling us about his time in the Soviet Union.

**MALLORY** (Again surprised) He was?

**ANSON** No, no, just discussing toilet paper.

**EDINA** And on that note, I must return to work. (Rising) Nice to meet all of you. Constable Gallo, I'm sure I'll see you again.

**DUSTIN** (Also rising) I think I'm ready to come with you now. I should check on Kevin.

**EDINA** Kevin is in good hands, he'll be shunted through the system as usual.

**DUSTIN** I just think I should let him know I didn't run out on him.

**EDINA** He saw you faint. I think he knows he hasn't been abandoned.

**DUSTIN** Still, I'll come. Bye, nice to meet all of you.

**ANSON** Likewise. Don't be a stranger.

**MALLORY** Bye.

**SANDRA** (Re-entering from the washroom) Bye.

*DUSTIN and EDINA exit. XENIA comes out of the washroom. She looks pale and shaken, and sits at the remaining table. MALLORY and ANSON watch her with concern. SANDRA has returned to the bar with the empties and doesn't notice her until Mallory speaks.*

**MALLORY** Are you okay?

**XENIA** I think so. (To Sandra) Can I get a... an orange juice.

**SANDRA** I'm sorry, hon. The cop drank the last of it. I've got apple... (She checks the fridge) Actually, no, I don't. Sorry.

**ANSON** Give her a glass of Guinness. It's full of vitamins and iron and all that bracing stuff. A little glass'll do her the world of good.

**SANDRA** I don't have any Guinness.

**XENIA** Do you have any kind of juice?

**SANDRA** (She rummages in the fridge) I should just give up my licence and make this place a juice bar, the custom I'm getting today.

**XENIA** A glass of water will do.

**SANDRA** I have a juice box! Grape Medley. Does that sound okay?

**XENIA** It'll be fine. Thanks.

*SANDRA brings the juice box over and XENIA sips it. ANSON and MALLORY watch her curiously.*

**MALLORY** You look like you're ready to pop. When's your due date?

**ANSON** Excuse my wife. She's very blunt.

**MALLORY** How else does a person ask a question like that?

**XENIA** That's okay. I, um, I... I guess I'm due pretty soon.

**MALLORY** Pretty soon? Don't you know the due date?

**XENIA** No.

**SANDRA** I thought doctors always gave you a due date.

**XENIA** I haven't been to a doctor.

**MALLORY** You haven't been? *(Moves to Xenia)* Are you crazy?

**ANSON** Don't be cruel, Mal. If it's been an uneventful pregnancy why should she go? Women have been having babies for millennia. It's not an illness, it's a natural function. I don't think doctors need to be involved at all.

**MALLORY** Oh, don't be an anarchist, Anson. Of course doctors are needed. Sure, it usually goes well, but what if it doesn't? Remember Gillian?

**XENIA** Who's Gillian?

**MALLORY** Our second daughter. I thought the pregnancy was going fine, but at the last minute I ended up having an emergency c-section. I had toxemia and didn't know it. I felt fine, but Gillian was almost dead inside me. If it weren't for the doctors-

**ANSON** Alright, I stand corrected. I'd forgotten about Gillian.

**XENIA** I know I should have been earlier, but... Well, I'm here now.

**SANDRA** This is a bar, not a hospital. The hospital is next door.

**XENIA** I know. I'm working up my courage to go in. I'm scared of doctors. And hospitals. Actually I'm not sure I'm not just scared of hospitals because they're so full of doctors. I'm Iatrophobic.

**ANSON** Is that a formal diagnosis?

**XENIA** No, I looked it up on the internet.

**SANDRA** But you're going now?

**XENIA** I'm trying to.

**ANSON** Why now, if you don't mind my asking?

**XENIA** I've been feeling pains.

**MALLORY** What kind of pains?

**XENIA** Really sharp, shooting pains, here. *(She indicates her belly)*  
Sort of like really bad cramps.

**MALLORY** Like contractions?

**XENIA** I don't know.

**SANDRA** Yes, like contractions. Listen, hon, you need to get yourself over to the hospital *now*.

**XENIA** How much for the juice? *(Rising)*

**SANDRA** It's on the house. Now get moving.

**XENIA** Thanks.

*XENIA wobbles a bit, and MALLORY takes her arm and leads her to the door.*

**MALLORY** Do you want me to go with you?

**XENIA** No, thanks. I'll be fine. *(She exits)*

*MALLORY returns to the table, joining ANSON. SANDRA picks up her book again.*

**ANSON** I had completely forgotten about Gillian.

**MALLORY** Well, you weren't there. You were in Cyprus. It's easier to forget something you only ever heard about.

**ANSON** Still, she's my daughter. You're my wife. I should have remembered.

**MALLORY** You do when prompted. That's enough. Another beer?

**ANSON** No thanks. I'm still nursing.

**MALLORY** Were you talking about your army days?

**ANSON** I wasn't a nurse in my army days.

**MALLORY** Don't be disingenuous. You were talking to Edina and the policeman about your army days.

**ANSON** It came up in conversation. I wouldn't say we were talking about it.

**MALLORY** You never talk about it.

**ANSON** Never is pretty definite. I generally have other things to talk about besides my quasi-career of forty years ago.

**MALLORY** So this means you don't want to talk about it.

**ANSON** Nothing to talk about.

*ANSON drains his beer, stands, and goes to the bar.*

**MALLORY** Okay then.

**ANSON** Sandra, can I grab myself another? *(She nods yes, not looking up from her book)* Good book? What are you reading?

**SANDRA** Just a paperback I found under a table the other night.  
*(She shows him the cover)* It's okay.

**ANSON** I think I read that one. Isn't that author the ex-doctor who writes medical mysteries?

**SANDRA** No, this is the ex-pathologist who writes romantic thrillers.

**ANSON** Oh. Maybe I haven't read it then.

*The door opens and DUSTIN enters. He is once again pale and shaken.*

**SANDRA** Hello. Do you want another orange juice? I'm afraid I'm all out.

**DUSTIN** No, I think I'll have another whiskey.

**ANSON** More blood?

**SANDRA** It *is* the ER after all. There's bound to be blood. Sit down, Dustin.

*DUSTIN sits with MALLORY.*

**DUSTIN** There was some sort of altercation in one of the cubicles. I ran in, because, you know...

**ANSON** You're a policeman.

**DUSTIN** But the patient had pulled the IV out of his arm, and blood was spurting everywhere...

**SANDRA** *(Bringing DUSTIN his whiskey)* And you dropped like a stone.

**DUSTIN** I'm afraid so.

**ANSON** Bad luck, constable.

**DUSTIN** I just want this day to end.

**SANDRA** Don't worry. It will.

**MALLORY** What's happened? I think I missed out on some drama earlier.

**ANSON** Nothing major. Dustin here faints at the sight of blood.

**MALLORY** Aaah. Have you ever considered a different line of work, Dustin?

**DUSTIN** There isn't really anything I'd rather do.

**MALLORY** You never thought of maybe becoming a surgeon?

**DUSTIN** Very funny.

**SANDRA** Well, at least he's not a doctor phobic pregnant woman.

**MALLORY** It wasn't doctor phobic, it was something else. Inactophobic?

**ANSON** Ipanophobic?

**DUSTIN** What?

**SANDRA** Were you here when the pregnant girl came in?

**MALLORY** She was no girl. She was a woman, and old enough to put aside her fears and take care of her baby if you ask me.

**ANSON** Phobias aren't just fears. You can't put them aside, no matter how old you are. Do you think Dustin here wants to faint at the sight of blood? Don't you think he's tried to put aside that particular fear?

**DUSTIN** Does she faint at the sight of doctors?

**SANDRA** I don't know. We didn't ask her.

**ANSON** I don't think so. I think she just can't bear to be near them.

*The door opens and XENIA enters. All turn to look at her.*

**SANDRA** Well, here's the girl to ask. You can't have had time to see a doctor. It takes a couple of hours just to get to the triage nurse.

**XENIA** I couldn't do it. I went in, they took my name, I sat down, then I freaked out. I couldn't do it. And you know, I haven't felt the pains in a long time, so...

**MALLORY** I knew I should have gone with you.

**XENIA** It wouldn't have made any difference. I can't do it.

**SANDRA** Well, you're not having a baby in here. I'm sorry, phobia or no, you're not having it in here.

**DUSTIN** This may seem like a stupid question, and you've probably discussed it already, but if you're scared of doctors, why don't you get a doula?

**ANSON** A what now?

**MALLORY** I think she'd need a midwife. *(To XENIA)* Did you ever think of getting a midwife?

**XENIA** No. I don't have the remotest clue about having a baby. How would I go about getting myself a midwife?

**SANDRA** Internet.

**XENIA** I'll do that then. I'll go home, and find myself a midwife.

**MALLORY** To be honest though, a midwife is probably going to recommend you see a doctor. At least for a check-up.

**XENIA** Oh, god. *(To SANDRA)* You don't have another juice box, do you?

**SANDRA** No. Mal, would you? *(She removes a bill from the till and gives it to MALLORY)*

**MALLORY** What do you prefer?

**XENIA** Cranberry, if you can get it.

**MALLORY** Sure.

*MALLORY exits.*

**ANSON** *(To DUSTIN)* How'd you know about doulas and midwives and such?

**DUSTIN** My sister is one. A doula, that is.

**XENIA** Could you give me her number?

**DUSTIN** I could, but it wouldn't do you much good. She moved to Yahk six months ago.

**ANSON** Yahk?

**DUSTIN** In eastern BC. Little town. Apparently they needed a doula.

**XENIA** I could always have the baby on my own, right? Women have done that before, haven't they?

**SANDRA** You could, but if you don't know a contraction when you have one, then I wouldn't give you good odds for a successful birth.

**XENIA** Then what am I going to do?

**DUSTIN** You're going to have to deal with your fear of doctors.

**ANSON** Well, you're not having it now, so why don't you just relax.

**DUSTIN** I'm Dustin, this is Anson. Sandra is at the bar.

**XENIA** I'm Xenia.

**ANSON** That's a nice name. Is it Russian?

**XENIA** I don't know.

**ANSON** It sounds Russian.

**XENIA** It could be.

**DUSTIN** Are you married?

**XENIA** No.

**DUSTIN** Boyfriend? Partner?

**XENIA** None of the above.

**ANSON** I think he may be hitting on you.

**XENIA** Sorry, I'm not really interested.

**SANDRA** Pregnancy does that. I've never met a pregnant woman who wants to start dating.

**XENIA** I've found that it's mostly the men who don't want to date a pregnant woman.

**ANSON** Dustin here just offered.

**DUSTIN** No, I didn't. I mean, not that I don't think you're very attractive, but I wasn't hitting on you. I was just wondering if you had someone to help you through all of this.

**XENIA** I don't. It's alright. I think having someone else around would have made things harder.

**ANSON** So you aren't with the father, then?

**XENIA** No.

*MALLORY enters with a bottle of cranberry juice. There is an awkward silence as she goes to the bar and pours a glass. As she takes the glass to XENIA she notices the quiet.*

**MALLORY** What's up? Has something happened?

**XENIA** I've just made everyone uncomfortable by admitting that I am a single, unsupported mother.

**MALLORY** Why does that make everyone uncomfortable?

**ANSON** Because, Mal, it's hard to know what to say. In truth, Xenia, it's not that we pity you, or disapprove or anything, it's just that we don't really know what to say next. If the father was a complete bastard, then congratulations are in order. If he abandoned you, then perhaps you need a bit of sympathy. If you picked this kid out from a sperm bank, then we can all go on our merry way and leave you to your choices. But it's awkward, you know, broaching the subject with a stranger.

**XENIA** Fair enough.

**DUSTIN** Could I get a glass of juice too?

**SANDRA** You'll rot your teeth, drinking all that juice. *(She pours him a glass and takes it to him)* Here you go.

*EDINA enters in a flurry.*



**EDINA** There you are!

*All turn to her.*

**EDINA** Constable, you're needed at the hospital.

**DUSTIN** What happened?

**EDINA** Nothing bloody. Come on.

**DUSTIN** *(To XENIA)* It was very nice to meet you. I hope you sort things out. With having the baby, I mean.

**XENIA** Thanks. It was nice to meet you, too.

*EDINA and DUSTIN exit.*

**XENIA** *(To Anson)* Do you really think he was hitting on me?

**SANDRA** He did seem somewhat interested.

**ANSON** The love light was shining in his eyes.

**XENIA** He's far too young for me.

**ANSON** Well, Mallory and I were almost exactly the same age when we married. But it's a strange thing. We both hit thirty five in the same year and ever since I have aged, and she has not, with the consequence being that she is now far too young for me. My point is, age is no impediment to our love.

**MALLORY** Wise ass. Xenia, is it? *(XENIA nods)* Don't let anyone tell you you need a man.

**XENIA** I won't. I don't. He wasn't bad-looking, though.

**SANDRA** And cops get a decent salary.

**XENIA** But I'm not interested. Listen, you've all been very kind. I think I'm going to head home.

**MALLORY** You aren't going to make another try at the hospital?

**XENIA** No.

**SANDRA** Have you felt any more contractions?

**XENIA** No. It must have been gas. *(She digs in her purse and takes some money to the bar.)* Thanks. Bye.

*XENIA exits, and SANDRA, MALLORY and ANSON watch her go.*

**SANDRA** Poor kid.

**MALLORY** She's no kid. If the policeman is too young for her, she's no kid.

**ANSON** Well, with women a year or two can be a big deal. Women mature so much faster than men, after all. He's what, 21, 22?

**SANDRA** He said he's been on the job a couple of years. He's got to be at least 25.

**ANSON** So maybe she's 28? That would be a significant difference, at that age.

**MALLORY** 28? I would have thought mid to late 30's.

**SANDRA** I thought 40 at first, but that was just the stress, I think. She could be any age, though. She's sort of ageless.

**MALLORY** God, I wish I were ageless.

**SANDRA** Me too.

**ANSON** Not me. There's nothing better than being a man of advanced years. Girls pay attention to me more now than they did when I was young.

**MALLORY** Anson!

**ANSON** I don't do anything about it, darling. But I'm harmless now, so they feel comfortable talking to me. I'm no longer seen as a threat, and I no longer feel the need to impress pretty young things, so conversations are wonderfully relaxed.

**MALLORY** Unfortunately it goes the same for me.

**ANSON** Unfortunately?

**MALLORY** Well, it's not pleasant to realize that the reason handsome young men will chat with you is that they respect your age, and not because they fancy you.

**ANSON** And you scolded me!

**SANDRA** It's different for women, Anson. We need to be adored.

**ANSON** And men don't? People in general like to adored, ladies, don't think you have the monopoly on physical insecurity.

**MALLORY** Oh, all right, Anson. You're just as sensitive as I am. But I'd've thought that being married to a 35-year old like myself would have bolstered your ego.

**ANSON** Did you like that one? That was a pretty good line, eh?

**MALLORY** You make me sound like some sort of insecure society woman who gets a facelift with every birthday.

**ANSON** *(Laughing)* I can't win, can I?

**MALLORY** I mean, I've never had any problem admitting my age. I'm 69.

**ANSON** And a half.

**MALLORY** *(Laughing)* And a half.

*The door opens and BAXTER enters. He walks straight to the unoccupied table but finds no chairs there.*

**BAXTER** What is this, standing room only?

**ANSON** Sorry, we've got a surplus. *(He shoves a chair over to BAXTER)*

**BAXTER** Can I get a glass of red wine?

**SANDRA** Sorry. I've only got wine coolers.

**BAXTER** No red wine? What is this, 1982?

**MALLORY** What happened in 1982? Was there a grape vine blight?

**BAXTER** The last time I was in a bar that didn't have wine it was 1982.

**ANSON** That's a bit of an obscure reference.

**BAXTER** I'll just have a beer. Whatever you've got.

**SANDRA** That I can do. Unless you can wait a minute and I'll have Mallory nip over to the liquor store for a bottle of red.

**ANSON** You're going to have to put her on salary if this keeps up.

**BAXTER** I can live with a beer.

**SANDRA** *(Taking the beer over to BAXTER)* Are you waiting for someone in the hospital?

**BAXTER** No. *(Bluntly)*

**SANDRA** Oh. Well, enjoy your beer.

**ANSON** *(To MALLORY)* How old would you say he is?

**MALLORY** Anson!

**ANSON** Pursuant to our previous conversation, how old do you think he is? And would you be jealous if I talked to a female of the same age?

**MALLORY** What on earth are you talking about?

**ANSON** Well, I was thinking, at what point would you be jealous of my talking to a younger woman? At what point should I be jealous? Because we're not rich, so I don't have to worry about gold diggers, and I'd be interested to find out what you think my credible age-difference cut-off point is.

**MALLORY** *(To SANDRA)* Can you believe this man?

**SANDRA** I'm kind of curious. What would you say my age-difference cut-off point is?

**ANSON** Well, you're single, so the sky's the limit for you.

**SANDRA** How do you know if I'm single or not?

**ANSON** Are you?

**SANDRA** Yes.

**ANSON** So, Mal? Should I be jealous if you started flirting with that fellow?

**MALLORY** You're asking me whether I think he's too young for me?

**ANSON** I'm asking whether you think I should think he's a threat.

**BAXTER** I'm 38, and I'm not a threat. I'm really not interested in your wife. (Pause) No offence, ma'am.

**MALLORY** Well, that seals it. If he calls me ma'am, he doesn't have any interest. Does that answer your question, Anson?

**ANSON** Would it be the same for me? I can flirt with under 40's with no fear of being taken seriously?

**MALLORY** Darling, you can flirt with anyone you want. If they think they can last 49 years with you, then good luck to them. (To BAXTER) Thank you, young man, for your honest assessment. My husband can now rest easy in the knowledge that I am unattractive to everyone but himself.

**BAXTER** Oh, I think you're very attractive. But I'm at a point in my life where I just can't look at other women.

**SANDRA** Recently married?

**BAXTER** Heartbroken.

**ANSON** That's very sad. Is that why you're drinking at three in the afternoon?

**BAXTER** Is there any other reason to drink at three in the afternoon?