

Cocktails

By

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ACT I

Scene 1

*(A living room. Wealthy, upper class, old money. There is a small practical bar.*

*A couple sits in two chairs: HE is reading the newspaper while SHE is reading a small magazine. The late afternoon sun illuminates the room through the window.*

*After a silent moment, SHE stops reading her magazine and stares at him.)*

SHE

Philip, you've been awfully quiet this weekend. You've barely said a word. On Friday, you pushed me out of the car while it was moving. Yesterday, you spit at me right after I innocently asked for the time. And this morning, when I told you I had never had anal sex before in my life, you had this crazy, weird smile on your face, and in one fell swoop, you made a liar out of me. I think you owe me an explanation.

HE

Forgive me, darling. I haven't been myself lately.

SHE

I trust you haven't stopped taking your lithium.

HE

Of course not. There's been too much stress at work lately. We are all working so hard. I didn't meant to hurt you. I'm sorry you couldn't walk this morning.

SHE

Philip, what I mean is -- I think it's over.

HE

What's over?

SHE

This -- this marriage. You and I. I'm asking you for a divorce.

*(Dead silence. He casually folds a section of his newspaper and throws it at her.)*

HE

Excuse me.

(CONTINUED)

SHE

That's what I'm talking about. You're doing these sudden things that are insulting and demeaning. Usually, I'M the one who does them. I don't trust you. I can't live with you anymore. Why are you so mean to me now?

HE

You really want to know?

SHE

Yes. Before you start messing with the brakes in my car, we need to do something about all this. Your disdain for me is now less subtle than ever before. What is the reason?

HE

Well, then, if you must know -- it's because -- how shall I put it kindly? -- my life as it is now would be more bearable if it were not for the goddamn fact that you are in it.

SHE

I hope you're telling the truth and not beating about the bush anymore.

HE

Actually, the real reason would be too cruel.

SHE

As much as it may hurt me, Philip, I've always believed in honesty above everything. Please level with me.

HE

I am doing my best.

SHE

Does any of this have anything to do with that incident last week when you woke up in the morning just before I did, and you, with one kick, sent me flying into the closet?

HE

Only vaguely.

SHE

Then I'm afraid you must help me out here. I'm at a loss.

HE

I had not just woken up. I had been lying there in bed for an hour thinking about how utterly and irrevocably my annexation with you had resulted in the total ruination of my entire life.

(CONTINUED)

SHE

I begin to understand why I landed in the closet.

HE

(shrugs)  
Naturally a reflex reaction.

SHE

(dawning on her:)  
You hate me. You've finally realized it. And you're expressing it very articulately.

HE

(defensively)  
I've been pulling back.

SHE

(understandingly)  
You wish I was dead.

HE

Don't disparage yourself. I only wish I hadn't met you.

SHE

Then it's settled. We're finished. You can take the house and the boat. I'll just take the car and the ranch in Santa Fe.

*(HE considers this, then he goes to the bookshelves and looks very hard for a book. Finally he finds one, and proceeds to tear the pages out of it. SHE just watches. When he is done, he stares at her, waiting for a reaction.)*

SHE

I've already read it.

*(HE grabs another book and does the same. As he stares at her:)*

SHE

I hate Barbara Taylor Bradford. I never wanted to read it and I never will. It's a bad choice for a gift.

*(At this, he grabs another book. HE holds it up for her, menacingly.)*

SHE

All right. You may keep my car.

HE

(putting book down)  
Divorce granted. Drinks?

SHE

You know the rules. Not before six.

HE

(making drinks anyway)  
There are no rules anymore. We're divorcing.

SHE

So we are. Then, let's celebrate. To freedom.

HE

To solitude.

SHE

To sanity.

HE

To Emancipation. The usual?

SHE

Thank you. It really IS liberating, isn't it? To come to terms with the fact that what must be must be. And so there.

*(HE pours, and as she watches:)*

SHE

That's not my usual.

HE

I never liked your usual. Let's give you a real drink. Like MY usual.

SHE

I never liked YOUR usual. Give me MY usual. I want to enjoy this drink.

HE

You THINK you enjoy it. That's because you don't know any better.

SHE

Isn't that good enough?

HE

No. It's too ignorant. Limited. Our marriage, for example. You thought you liked it, but you never really knew ME. The REAL me. I'm insupportable. You now see that I can be as rotten as you've been to me in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HE (cont'd)  
the past. You've realized it; you can't stand me  
anymore; yet, now, you're all wiser nonetheless.

SHE  
I still have not changed my mind about my drink.

*(HE thinks hard.)*

HE  
All right. YOUR usual.

*(SHE smiles victoriously as he goes back to the  
bar.)*

SHE  
And I never changed my mind about my marriage,  
either. I always knew it wouldn't last.

HE  
*(hurt)*  
How could you think such a thing?

SHE  
I shouldn't really tell you. But it wasn't the size of  
your penis. Two olives, please.

*(HE freezes on his tracks.)*

SHE  
Darling, don't look at me like that. I told you that  
THAT wasn't the reason. How could any mature person  
possibly care about something like THAT?  
*(grabbing her drink, which does NOT  
contain olives yet:)*  
You're a darling.

HE  
I never heard a complaining sound out of you.

SHE  
Exactly!

HE  
That wasn't just a low blow, that was the magic bullet.

SHE  
*(looking at her glass:)*  
Philip, please. I said two olives.

HE  
Your ruthlessness knows no bounds.

(CONTINUED)

SHE  
Let's not focus on tiny trivialities. I always knew we wouldn't last because that's what my shrink said.

HE  
I've never even met your shrink.

SHE  
Yet she knows you intimately.

HE  
She knows YOUR version of me. Grossly tainted by your inadequate perspective, I'm sure.

SHE  
She advised me to observe you well. Very well. For months. And finally we came to our own conclusion.

HE  
And??

SHE  
I said to her: "I don't think it will last." She concurred, and she said: "Find someone bigger."

HE  
And? Have you?

SHE  
Be serious, darling. We're married. I have morals... Have YOU found someone else?

HE  
No.

SHE  
Of course not. Who'd want to?

HE  
As a matter of fact I HAVE found someone else. And she wants me. And she finds me immensely pleasurable.

SHE  
Then she must be two feet tall and sort of narrow.

HE  
She's tall and very fat.

SHE  
Obviously sex can't be very important to either one of you.

(CONTINUED)

HE  
As a matter of fact she LIVES for it.

SHE  
And who may this be?

HE  
Your sister.

*(SHE is stunned, and then she suddenly throws her drink in his face. He is left there, stunned.)*

SHE  
I'm so sorry.

HE  
It all happened once, by chance. Very quickly. We came back for seconds very often.

*(HE proceeds to dry himself off.)*

SHE  
I had never lost my temper quite like this. Usually when I do things of this sort, I plan them.

HE  
And I'm sorry I forgot your two olives.

*(HE flings two olives at her.)*

SHE  
My sister!

HE  
Naturally we won't go much into her, or what it is she likes to do the most, and what she's very good at.

SHE  
My fat and very tall sister!

HE  
The one with the looks.

SHE  
My sister is going to live in this house!... WHERE are you going to build another WING??!

HE  
You were always jealous of her.

SHE  
WHY would I be?



HE

She has presence.

SHE

Of course she has. VOLUMES of it!

HE

You asked; you have your answer.

SHE

Adultery!... I want that car BACK.

*(HE thinks, then nods:)*

HE

Fair enough.

SHE

What else do you like about her? She is cross-eyed.

HE

She can see with both eyes.

SHE

So can I.

HE

Not CLEARLY. She has twenty/twenty.

SHE

If she can, although clearly, see in two directions simultaneously, why can't she transcend fantasy and perceive the real size of your wee-wee?

HE

People, being people, are apt to focus on different things. Obviously she has the wisdom and presence of mind to leave trivialities alone and concentrate on things that really matter.

SHE

I don't recall sex being a trivial subject with you.

HE

It may surprise you to know this, but to me sex is just sex.

SHE

That's exactly why you would cry like a baby and beg for mercy when I wasn't in the mood to give any.

(CONTINUED)

HE

I was putting on an act. I read it in a book. A man should always make the woman feel like she's needed. Only, now, I need your sister more.

SHE

So it's over?

*(Beat)*

HE

At first I was content with just a fling on the side. Upon careful consideration, I think you're right. It is over.

SHE

A divorce?

HE

Yes.

SHE

*(taking it in:)*  
Get me another usual.

HE

*(gallantly)*  
Right away.

*(At the bar now, HE throws the two olives in first, then he prepares the drinks.)*

SHE

Are you going to marry her?

HE

She wants to.

*(HE hands her her drink.)*

SHE

Right away?

HE

Not before our divorce comes through.

SHE

Oh.

HE

Naturally, a rush job of any kind would not be respectable. I'm thinking mostly of you, of course.

(CONTINUED)

SHE

Very kind of you.

HE

I do apologize nonetheless.

SHE

Yes.

HE

It was getting harder to keep the composure. Harder and harder to maintain the lie. It might even have turned out extremely violent.

SHE

I do have so very few real teeth left.

HE

I am older now. When I take a whack at somebody my fists hurt for a little while.

SHE

It really wouldn't have led to anything but unbridled mayhem. A few things tossed at me here and there and I can maintain my civility. But give me physical violence of any kind and I can react like a female Mike Tyson. Besides, you do have cute ears.

HE

(grateful)  
And I'll miss your elbows.

SHE

You like them?

HE

I noticed them last week. It was a relief to finally find something.

SHE

I understand. I just saw your ears now.

*(They down their drinks.)*

HE

(going back to the bar...)  
We need another one.

SHE

You've read my mind.

(CONTINUED)

HE

(as he pours:)  
We've just exchanged compliments. I think it's a  
breakthrough.

SHE

(nods)  
Too bad it's all coming to an end.

HE

(re: the drinks)  
WHICH usual?

SHE

(smiles)  
A whichever-you-want usual.

HE

(sweetly polite)  
No. YOU tell me.

SHE

(wide grin)  
Surprise me.

*(And HE begins preparing and pouring the drinks.)*

SHE

My sister should be very happy with you.

*(Beat)*

HE

I hope so.

SHE

Why it's a sidecar!

HE

(nostalgic:)  
Remember?

SHE

Our first date!

HE

Very good!

SHE

How you always hated them!...

(CONTINUED)

HE

Ah, but you didn't know that when you ordered them.

SHE

But by the time I ordered two more, I DID!

HE

(reminiscing)

That's when I knew we were meant for each other.

*(A pleasant, but awkward, silence.)*

SHE

Would my sister ever order a side car for you? Ever?

(Silence.)

Would she even know that you hate Cape Cod... and book a cottage?

HE

(slow discovery...)

The thought of tall and big people at this very moment begins to disgust me.

*(They look at each other lovingly as they raise their glasses -- their sidecars -- and "clink" them together.)*

*They drink. HE, of course, reacts disgustingly to the aftertaste of the sidecar he's just poured for himself, as she observes him adoringly.)*

SHE

(sweetly, offering it:)

Here, darling: you can have MINE too.

*(HE takes her glass as SHE hands it to him as if it were a present. With both drinks in hand, HE looks at his wife, enraptured. Finally, without taking his eyes off of her, HE puts the drinks on a table, takes her, and kisses her passionately.)*

*After a moment, SHE pulls back.)*

SHE

You... you have the most... HORRIBLE breath...!

*(But, of course, HE silences her with a ravishing kiss -- and his breath -- and as she slowly gives in, we come to:*

THE END