

TALKING TO STRANGERS IN BARS

By Glenn Alterman

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SYNOPSIS: Two strangers have just met in a bar during happy hour. They've had a few drinks and are having fun, until they open up to each other about why they're really there.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

HE (m)Can be played by an actor in his 30's to late 40's. *(59 lines)*

SHE (f).....Can be played by an actress in her 30's to late 40's. *(58 lines)*

TIME: Modern day.

SETTING: A bar.

AT START: *The lights come up on a section of a dimly lit bar. On the bar are two half filled drinks. In front of the bar are two empty bar stools. HE is standing on the right side of the stage. SHE is standing on the left side.*

HE: *(Walking towards the bar, to the audience.)* Alcohol, a colorless flammable liquid produced by the natural fermentation of sugars and is the intoxicating constituent of wines, beers, spirits, and other drinks.

SHE: *(Walking towards the bar, to the audience.)* Drinking alcohol clearly has an important effect on social behaviors, such as self-disclosure, sexual adventuresomeness, and so on.

HE: *(Taking a seat at bar.)* Bar, a room or establishment where alcoholic drinks and sometimes food are served.

SHE: *(Sitting next to him.)* Happy hour, a period of time, usually in the late afternoon and early evening, during which a bar or lounge serves drinks or food at a reduced rate.

Light change. They are looking at each other, playfully smiling, holding their half-filled drinks. They've already had a couple of cocktails but are not drunk.

HE: *(Taking a sip of his drink, playfully, seductively smiling.)* So... you come here often?

SHE: *(Smiling, fun, seductive.)* Where have you been all my life?

HE: *(Bigger smile.)* What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this? *(They both laugh, take a sip of their drinks.)*

SHE: Is it hot in here, or is it just you?

HE: Someone said that to you?

SHE: Yeah, I swear. Some guy, some bar, downtown.

HE: Really?

SHE: Oh you wouldn't believe some of the lines I've heard.

HE: I bet.

SHE: *(Then, fun, sexy.)* Know what would look good on you?

HE: What?

SHE: Me!

HE: (*Smiling.*) NO!

SHE: Yeah, some guy, Upper East Side, (*Toasting him.*) happy hour!

HE: (*Toasting her.*) Happy hour!

SHE: And that guy was definitely *happy*.

HE: (*Looking at her.*) And so am I.

SHE: (*Smiling at him, talking a sip of her drink.*) Me too. Love my happy hours!

HE: (*Looking right at her.*) The people you meet.

SHE: (*Looking at him, softly.*) Strangers...

HE: (*Toasting her.*) ...who quickly become friends

SHE: (*Teasing.*) Sometimes—good friends.

HE: (*He touches her hand, playfully.*) So tell me about yourself.

SHE: (*Noticing his hand on hers.*) What do you want to know?

HE: (*Leaning in, playfully whispering.*) Everything. Everyone's got a story. (*Moving in even closer.*) And I'll just bet yours is...

SHE: (*Playfully coy.*) Stop.

HE: What?

SHE: (*A playful whisper.*) We're in a public place.

HE: So?

SHE: (*Smiling, playful.*) What kind of girl you think I am?

HE: (*Sipping his drink.*) It's happy hour. You think anyone here really cares about us? (*A beat, a bit more serious.*) I like you.

SHE: (*Sincerely.*) I like you too. You have nice eyes. First thing I noticed. (*Gently.*) They're warm, comforting, safe.

HE: (*Then, playing.*) Where have you been all my life?

SHE: (*Playfully.*) Waiting!

HE: (*A beat, looking even deeper into her eyes.*) So tell me.

SHE: Tell you what?

HE: (*Softly.*) What's your name?

SHE: (*Coy.*) What's the difference?

HE: Don't you trust me?

SHE: (*Playing.*) I don't know, I'm not quite sure.

HE: Look into my eyes. Comforting, safe, right? ...Hey, I'm a nice guy.

SHE: I think you are.

They're both quiet for a moment.

HE: *(Finishing his drink.)* Tell you what, if you tell me your name, I'll buy you another drink.

SHE: *(Coy.)* Hey, what kinda girl you think I am?!

HE: *(Sitting up.)* A nice girl, an interesting girl. Someone special.

SHE: *(A bit more serious.)* Yeah?

HE: We have a connection, can't you feel it?

SHE: *(Becoming a bit uncomfortable, sitting back in her chair.)* I guess, sort of.

HE: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

SHE: *(Sitting up.)* No, it's okay.

HE: *(A little embarrassed.)* You, uh, want me to leave?

SHE: *(Looking at him, serious.)* No. Don't. Stay.

HE: *(Smiling.)* Good.

SHE: *(Sincerely.)* I think we're having "a moment" here.

HE: A moment, what do you mean?

SHE: *(More serious.)* I don't know. Just, y'know, a moment. Some truth. *(Suddenly getting upset.)* No games or lies! No damn deception! *(Then, angrily.)* No—BULLCRAP!

HE: *(Surprised.)* Wow!

SHE: *(Suddenly realizing.)* Sorry, I didn't mean... Just slipped out I guess. *(She turns away.)*

HE: You okay? *(She doesn't respond. Softly, a slight joke.)* We've lost contact Houston. ...Come back little Sheba, ...please.

SHE: *(She slowly turns, looks at him, embarrassed smile.)* Sorry.

HE: Was it something I...?

SHE: No, it's nothing, just... Nothing. *(She takes another sip of her drink.)*

HE: *(A beat.)* You know what I think?

SHE: What?

HE: I think we should have another drink.

SHE: Another, really?!

HE: One-last-drink.

SHE: *(Like a bad girl.)* You mean like one for the road?

HE: (*Smiling.*) Maybe. You want that drink?

SHE: Yeah. (*Finishing her drink.*) Sure!

HE: (*As he's about to order, seductively.*) Then after, if you want, maybe we can... go back to your place and...

SHE: My place?!

HE: Too soon? I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

SHE: My place? (*Looking at him, then realizing.*) Ohhhh, I get it.

HE: What?

SHE: (*Disdain.*) You're married.

HE: (*Suddenly uncomfortable.*) No.

SHE: Yeah, right

HE: I'm not married. But even if I was would it really matter?

SHE: Would it really...?! Yeah, probably (*Looking at him, an edge.*) —to your wife! How could you...? (*Suddenly upset, getting up.*) Look, uh, thanks for the drinks. Was nice meeting you. I'm sorry, but I really should get going.

HE: What? No, c'mon, stay.

SHE: Suddenly I'm just not feeling very "happy" anymore. (*Looking right at him.*) Look, I don't like messing with married men, okay?

HE: But I'm not!

SHE: (*Looking at him.*) Yeah, right, say hello to the misses for me.

HE: I've never been married, I swear!

SHE: (*Looks at him, then sitting down.*) Then why'd you want to go back to my place?

HE: (*Putting his drink down, looking at her for a moment, then, sincerely.*) I don't know what I was... I'm sorry. ...Look, my name's Marv. (*Smiling.*) Marvin. I'm here in the city on business. And I'm staying at some crappy, inexpensive hotel, mid-town. Actually, it's kind of a dump. My company's on a very limited budget. So I was sitting in my crummy room this afternoon, feeling... I don't know, a little lonely. So I decided to go out, have a drink. Saw this bar, saw it was happy hour. Came in, saw you sitting here by yourself. You smiled. (*Smiling.*) I came over, and you said hello. And suddenly I felt *happy*. Look, I realize I really don't know you, don't even know your name. But for what it's worth I like you, you're nice. We're just having a little fun here, that's all. I like talking to you, looking at you, laughing with you. And, well, I thought the idea of bringing someone like you back to my crappy hotel room would be

disrespectful. I probably shouldn't have even suggested that we... We don't have to go anywhere. We can just sit here and talk, get to know each other. Then we can leave, if we want, go our separate ways. But for now would you like to just sit here and talk? I'm really a nice guy. *(He lifts his glass, takes a sip.)* Whatiya say?

SHE: You are a nice guy. Sorry I got so upset. *(Looks at him, then gently smiles.)* My name's Maryanne.

HE: *(Smiling, sincerely.)* Hi.

SHE: And I'm married.

HE: *(Sitting back in his chair.)* Oh.

SHE: And I found out recently that my husband had been cheating on me—for a while. Maybe a long time, I don't... You see, it seems he liked to go to bars after work and pick up women...

HE: ...at happy hours.

SHE: Right. So we're separated. And I'm filing for divorce soon.

HE: Oh.

SHE: And... lately I've been finding myself going to happy hours—a lot.

HE: Huh.

SHE: Celebrating my new, almost single life again. *(Then, smiling.)* You seem like a really nice man, Marv. *(HE smiles.)* Tell me about yourself.

HE: I'm sorry about you and your husband.

SHE: Thanks.

HE: *(Then, sincerely.)* So what do you want to know?

SHE: Whatever you want to tell me. *(SHE takes a sip of her drink.)* It doesn't really matter.

HE: *(HE gently puts his hand on hers.)* You're right, it really doesn't.

SHE: *(SHE smiles.)* Let's. Just. Talk. *(As he lights fade, they both face forward again.)*

HE: Bars. Booze.

SHE: Sometimes you win.

HE: Sometimes you lose.

SHE: *(Turning towards him.)* Sometimes you meet someone, a stranger.

HE: *(Turning, looking at her.)* A friend.

SHE: Someone to talk too.

SHE: Listen too.

SHE: *(Smiling, softly.)* Happy hour.

HE: *(Smiling, softly.)* Happy hour.

They look at each other, and smile. Blackout.

THE END

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