

14-2944 Love Song to Miss Kitty
02/13/14

Cast of characters

Samuel: 37, tall, broad shouldered, hair shaved close to the scalp
Robert: Around 35, African American
Toby: 34, Looks like a country boy; wears sleeveless button down shirts, straw cowboy hat
Dana: 26, short, compact, looks like a wrestler
Big: Leader of the DC Rawhides, a country western dance group
Tina & Elaine: These are 2 older, lesbians.

Three Acts: Act I: Saturday night
Act II: The next Friday
Act III: Saturday of the same weekend

There are 4 dances in the play: *Canadian Stomp, Chill Factor, Mambo Shuffle, Waltz Across Texas*

The stage is a small dance floor about 18 feet by 15 feet. It has a rail around it for drinks. There are 3 openings for entering the dance floor. At stage right, front, there is a small round table with two stools. There is a cash box on the table. Above the table hangs a sign that says “Miss Kitty’s” and a second that says “I.D required”. At stage right back is a DJ booth. Stage left front, there is a larger table with 4 stools. There is a set of stairs going up to indicate an upstairs bar/office.

Title: Love Song to Miss Kitty

Act I, Scene 1

We hear the sound of rain in the background.

Elaine: Thank god the rain stopped. Last thing we need is for the weather to keep them in.

Tina: Let’s hope they come out; loan payment is coming due. I just wish it could be like it was back in the day; whenever the boys filled up this place, it was like a surge of estrogen to my dried up snatch.

Elaine: (As if making a point.) The Rawhides draw a crowd.

Tina: But it’s a different kind of crowd. They drink too much and don’t know how to dance.

Elaine: Drink too much? We run a bar!

Tina: (With anger) Big and his DC Rawhides (as if reciting from rote) “a 501 (c) 3 charity: a country western dance group that raises money to fight AIDS through its performances.”

Elaine: It is for a good cause.

Tina: I just guess its not cheap taking a troupe of twenty-somethings to “fund raise” on the party circuit—what with travel and lodging. But I’m sure Big economizes by doubling up. I should have known we couldn’t trust him.

Elaine: Tina, he bailed us out and he’s your nephew.

Tina: So his being blood means he can just go an up the interest on the loan?

Elaine: Well, he said that’s what we agreed to.

Tina: Did we?

Elaine: Something about the interest being tied to Treasury Bonds (shrugs as if to say, “I don’t know”.)

Tina: (Rolls her eyes.)

Elaine: Maybe we don’t have the best heads for business.

Tina: We managed this place just fine. We’ve had nearly 20 years of queers two steppin and doin the cowboy waltz.

Elaine: (Looks at her skeptically.) I still think we should have called the place “Red Velvet”.

Tina: Ok, the past couple of years we’ve had a string of bad luck. Economy’s bad. Lights and water get cut off even though we pay on time; some kinda city inspector shows up everyday and fines us for something or other; only thing that hasn’t happened is no one has poisoned the well, let the cows loose, and set the barn on fire. But the economy will get better. We’ll turn this place around.

Elaine: Just like we did in California.

Tina: California?

Elaine: You remember. That little saloon we had back during the Gold Rush.

Tina: (looks ashen. Elaine’s face falls when she realizes what she has said.)

Tina: Remember. (With an edge of hurt.) How can you expect me to remember our past lives, when I can’t even remember what happened last night?

Elaine: (Sounding as if she is trying to reassure both of them.). Oh, stop your worrying. You were probably just sleepwalking.

Tina: I’m getting to be like my mother. (A cloud of concern passes over Elaine’s face. Tina sighs in resignation).

Elaine: I feel bad. I didn’t even wake up.

Tina: Better that one of us is rested. Anyway we have bigger things to worry about than me wandering out and not remembering it.

Elaine: We’ll be fine. Big and his boys draw a huge crowd.

Tina: Do you really think we should stop being a country western bar? And switch over to music that sounds like someone smacking two boards together while a synthesizer farts weird outer space noises in the background. Tammy Wynette would roll over in her grave. He’s had his eye on this place even before he gave us the loan. I worried when we took it that he was just waiting for us to miss a payment.

Elaine: He didn’t say we should play that kind of music all the time. Just mix it in with the country.

Tina: And what did he want to call it. . . that mix of his? (Tina smirks. Elaine smiles and shakes her head from side to side.) Brodeo. (Tina and Elaine both bust out laughing.)

Elaine: Brodeo. (They both laugh again. (They finish and begin to exit the stage.)

Tina: (heard off stage.) And why to they call him big? Now, when I was the Maharajah and you were my concubine. That was big!

Act I, Scene 2

(Discussion takes place “outside” of the bar. Big and Dana have their collars turned up against the light drizzle)

Big: (Referring to bar.) It’ll be mine someday. (Mutters under breath.) One way or another.

Dana: You sure you want the place, Big. It’s not even in the gayborhood, and it’s kind of old and rundown.

Big: Did you know they made a sequel to Saturday Night Fever? (Dana shakes his head, “no”). John Travolta’s character, Tony Merano, (imitates the strut) trades in his white polyester suit for a leotard, tank top, and leggings (does a few modern dance moves) and moves from Brooklyn to Manhattan because he realizes that he is more than just a disco dancer. He is a real dancer. There’s this scene—before he lands the lead in an important Broadway dance revue—where he tells this snotty ballerina, “I was incredible when I lived in Brooklyn” And she says, “So what happened?” And he says, “I moved to Manhattan.” (Points to the bar) This is my Brooklyn. But more importantly, I’m going to make it into Manhattan, and just like Tony Merano, I’m going to be big there.

Dana: But you are big.

Big: I know I’m big down there. That was the only part of the movie I couldn’t relate to—John Travolta in those tights—a little small down there. But I want to be big in every sense. (He moves his shoulders and hands in these “modern” dance moves Travolta does in the movie and then extends his arms out to Dana, who hesitates only for a second before leaping up and linking one arm around Big’s neck, who in turn links one arm around Dana’s waist and spins him around.

Dana: How could they hate you? You said your aunts raised you after your mother died.

Big: (Smiles in a way that suggests—if only you knew.) People have a tendency to like my bad parts; it’s the other parts—the supply chain for the bad parts—they’re not to keen on. The guys you saw dancing in there last night, we were all good friends once. If last night, had been four years ago, you would have seen me in the front line, dancing the line dances with them. But I realized I could do so much more than that. They couldn’t see that part of me, and when it came out, it was like they didn’t know me. Plus there was some romantic involvement. He got sick. There’s all this drama. My aunts end up taking care of him. He loses weight with them. And he manages to turn them and everyone else against me.

Dana: Got sick. With like what, cancer? Is that why he lost weight?

Big: No, the losing weight was Jenny Craig or some shit like that. That sick part, that was. . .that was more like a bad cold. . .a bad cold with a rash and some other stuff.

Dana: You’re aunt freaked me out last night.

Big: (Makes a face that say, “How?”)

Dana: My first time here. I go up to the bar; she barely glances my way, and slides over rum and coke with a twist of lime, like I'd ordered one a thousand times.

Big: (Laughs) The regulars call them the All Knowings because they've owned this place so long they know everyone's business. If you ask them, they'll tell you all about their past lives, how they keep coming back again and again as a couple. (Shrugs.)

Dana: So the four of you started the Rawhides?

Big: That was part of the problem. I started the group but. . . well I didn't think the guys exactly had what it took. I needed guys who could do-- (He pivots on one foot, rolling his hips while he turns in a circle. He removes his shirt and threads it back and forth between his legs while thrusting his crouch back and forth.)

Dana: That makes me want it balls deep.

Big: (Smiles in a way that says, "of course") Plus they just wanted to dance to that old country music. Don't get me wrong. I'm all for the ranch and the open range, but if you can be sheriff of the town? (Holds out one hand as if it is one side of scale.) Brooklyn. (Holds out the other hand as if it's the other side of scale.) Manhattan.

Dana: (Looking at the bar) So you going to inherit it?

Big: Unlikely—but I have other plans. They've been having a spot of trouble lately.

Dana: (Makes a face that asks, "trouble?")

Big: Couple of code violations. Some mix ups with the utility company. So you brought the boots and hat?

Dana: Nods (and pats a gym bag he has slung over his side). Thanks for letting me audition on my own and giving me the Rawhides t-shirt even though I'm not officially in yet.

Big: Those private dances you've been doing for me were pretty convincing. (Dana moves up against Big and shimmies his ass against his pelvis.) Why don't you go in and change. I need to send a text about our next rehearsal and then I'll be in. You can change in that bathroom upstairs--the one by the office.

Dana: Sounds good.

Big: Oh and hey. . . while we're here could you do me a favor.

Dana: Sure Big. Whatever you need.

Big: I had this lunch box when I was kid. . .well, no. Never mind. I can do without it.

Dana: You want a lunch box?

Big: My aunt won't give it back to me because she says it has sentimental value. In the office by the back bathroom—my lunch box should be there. Do you think you could go and get it for me?

Dana: Sure Big. But why don't you just ask them for it.

Big: I have. Like I said, neither of them ever cared for me much. My mother gave me that lunch box. My aunt says it only thing she has to remember my mother. I just really want

it back. It's hard to lose your mother when you're as young as I was. My whole life has been about wanting someone to give me the love I never had. (Looks at Dana.)

Dana: (Shrugs). I can get the lunch box.

Big: Good. Get dressed and I'll be in. (After Dana goes in, Big waits a few beats and then takes off without entering the bar.)

(Dana enters, no one is at the bar and no one is on the dance floor. He makes his way into the bathroom and comes out wearing boots, a cowboy hat and a DC Rawhide shirt. He enters the office.)

Act I, Scene 3

While he is in the office, Samuel, Toby and Robert come back into the bar.

Robert: (To Toby) You suck at pool.

Toby: I won at pool. And deal was that if I won, you had to hear about my dream you were in.

Robert: All right, but only if I get to tell you guys about my dream Samuel was in.

Toby: You were Darwin.

Robert: Charles?

Toby: Yes, Charles Darwin, but he had a tail he held in one hand. (Robert begins to act out the dream.) He kept stroking it and asking, "Do I still really need this? Then instead of hands, you had two clubs. You were trying to hold a small stuffed animal (Samuel tosses him a rolled up bar towel) so you could bring it to your chest, but you kept failing, so you clubbed it to death.

Robert: Probably deserved it. My turn. It started with Samuel's ex wife asking him, "Are you sure you're straight." Then she became his first boyfriend and she says "Are you sure you're a top" Then he was surrounded by 3 young assailants. (Samuel puts his hand up as if it's a stick up.) He assumes they plan to rob him. (He acts out the rest of the dream as its being described.) He is wearing a suit and they order him to strip and when he does all he is wearing a jockstrap and white tube socks. They order him to dance. He's timid at first but then he starts doing these wild pelvic thrusts. They force him at gunpoint to facefuck each of them. It was hot.

Samuel: Not my scene. I'm a gentleman. I only have sex after the third date. Besides once when I was having sex with my ex-wife, I slapped her ass and said "Take it bitch." She grabbed the lamp and swung it into my head. I learned my lesson—No kinky stuff.

Robert: But wanted to.

Samuel: What?

Robert: Own her ass? (Samuel gives a noncommittal shrug and draws heavily from his beer.)

Toby: Now me! Now me!

Robert: Now you? Bitch, nobody dreams about you.

Toby: You'll change your tune when I'm gone.

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Robert: How many times have you been gone? You've already run back (makes quotation marks) "home" to Tennessee to your crazy Christian, family like 3 times and each time, they turn you around and send you back.

Toby: I just like to get back to the country to remember what it feels like to hoe a row.

Robert: Hell, you hoed more than a farmer with a hundred acres.

Toby: Well, it's like we said back at Bible College: blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Anyway, this time it's my high school reunion and there is someone I'm hoping will be there.

Robert: Who!

Toby: We were in the same homeroom freshman year and became friends. We would play pac man in his basement. One day were playing and all the sudden, he says, "Whoever loses has to blow the other." I thought about it for all of second, and lost as fast as I could. I had gotten down on my knees; he unbuttoned his pants and I wiggled them down. Then I pulled down his underwear. I was about to grab that thing and go down on it, his mother called from the top of the stairs, "Dinners ready!"

Samuel: And

Toby: And nothing. I jumped back on the sofa as fast as I could and he pulled his shorts and pants back up, and we went upstairs for dinner.

Robert: You're going all the way back to Tennessee to give someone a blowjob? Here (starts to unzip his pants.)

Toby: I only do 7 inches, no more, no less.

Samuel: (To Robert) It's not about a missed blowjob. (To Toby) Why do you have to go back in order to go home? Why can't home be here?

Robert: Yeah, isn't that what gay men do? Make their homes and families in their hearts. Flourish in exile. We're better for it.

Toby: Maybe its not exile. Maybe it's grief. For something I lost by never having had the chance to know it.

There is a country western song being sung by a female vocalist. The song is all drama both in terms of vocal and lyrics. Samuel, Robert and Toby are all humming along, every once in a while they join in on a word, or a phrase.

Toby: (Sings a snippet of the song) "I still have the ribbons from your hair." Why do gay men like country music?

(Samuel shrugs. Robert does the same. As the song builds, Toby start to sing louder and Robert and then Samuel joins in. They stand up together and sing with full throttle emotion. They break into three-part harmony. When the song ends. . .)

Robert: Yeah, I don't get why gay people like country.

Samuel: Me either.

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Toby: Got me.

Robert: Yeah. No idea. Hopefully they'll start liking it more or we might lose this place. See there's another reason you can't go. We've got to keep the numbers up. Keep the dance alive. Plus, you need to stay and take care of Tina. Like she took care of you when you broke up with Big.

Samuel: What's wrong with Tina?

Robert: The cops brought her home from a McDonald's. They found her yelling into the drive through speaker at 4:00 this morning.

Toby: She was demanding to speak to the President.

Samuel: Obama?

Toby: Fillmore—said she knew him.

Samuel: Which of their past lives (Toby and Samuel laugh.) What did Elaine say?

Toby: She slept through it all, until the cops called, and Tina doesn't remember anything.

Samuel: Maybe it's was nothing—sleepwalking.

Robert: I once took Ambien and later found out that I had had sex with 3 people and eaten everything in my refrigerator—everything—all between the hours of 1 am and 3 am.

Toby: You've done that without taking Ambien, but you need to stop using those sleeping pills.

Dana comes out of the office. As he comes back out, his phone beeps. He doesn't notice Samuel and the others. His phone absorbs his attention.)

Dana: (Reads text out loud.) Change of plans will reschedule audition. Don't forget lunch. Big. (He says with sarcasm) Great (and let's out a sigh while shaking his head.)

Robert: (Calling out to Dana.) Girl! What happened to your pants! Looks like you got attacked by a pack of dogs.

Toby: Is he wearing Daisy Dukes?

Robert: (As if figuring it something out.) Oh that explains it. (Pointing to the t-shirt). Um hmm (nods his head knowingly.) A DC Rawhide.

Samuel: (Trying to get Robert and Toby to stop their teasing.) Guys. Guys. (To Dana) Ignore them. It's just envy. I saw you last night, but I don't remember you dancing with the Rawhides.

Dana: Because I'm not a Rawhide...yet.

Robert: Yet?

Samuel: (extends hand to Dana in introduction) Samuel. And this is Toby and Robert.

Dana: Dana. I remember you guys from last night. You're the dancers. How do you remember all of them?

Robert: Unlike the Rawhides we can count out 8 beats and have a sense of rhythm.

Samuel: It's easier than it looks if you start with the easy ones and work your way up. The steps are same; it's just the combinations.

Toby: When you break it down its simple.

Robert: That's its beauty—the parts are simple, it's the combinations that are awesome—

Samuel: Its like when a poem takes something ordinary—situates it—and reveals how extraordinary it really is. . . That's how I feel when I dance--its like reading one of those sentences; -- suddenly the ordinary is something new. What about you?

Dana: We didn't read much poetry in the Marines.

Robert: Marines?

Toby. Marines--you can fuck em silly.

Robert: Just don't try to kiss them.

Samuel: I meant do you dance?

Toby: He's a Rawhide. You know he can't.

Dana: I can dance like this? (pirouettes)

Robert: A marine, ballerina. (strokes his chin and looks at Toby as if considering the possibility. They both nod in unison, as if it makes perfect sense.)

Samuel: But can you dance like this? (pulls him himself up against Dana and puts Dana's hand on his shoulder.)

(Tina and Elaine enter as Toby and Samuel dance. They dance, awkwardly at first, but then Dana gets the step.)

Tina: Do you remember the first time you ever saw two men dance together?

Elaine: (Nods in the affirmative) Hotter than any gay porn I had ever seen.

Tina: Its amazing how you can see a man's soul when he dances.

Elaine: It reminds me of when David ripped off his clothes and danced with joy in front of the Ark of the Covenant and all the Israelites were offended by his nakedness.

Tina: But God was pleased.

Elaine: What a memory. I tell you though, those years in Egypt sure we're hard.

(When it ends Samuel and Dana take hands and walk off the dance floor.)

Robert: You said you weren't a Rawhide, "yet"?

Dana: I came tonight to audition. Big asked me to

Robert: (To Dana.) I didn't realize dancing was involved. I thought you got in by bottoming for Big

Dana: (Waves hand, playfully dismissive). Ah. . .I've already done that

Robert: You know he's. . .

Toby: (Puts up hand.) Stop. . .

Robert: What? He deserves to know.

Toby: We've had this discussion.

Dana: What?

Robert: (scowls and shakes his head—"never mind").

Dana: Well, I guess I'd better find a cab to take me home. Big was supposed to be my ride.

Robert: Literally or figuratively? (Looks at Toby) Cause I hear that's one long limo.

Samuel: Where you headed?

Dana: Out to Del Ray. Unless I can find Big.

Samuel: (As if to discourage him from looking for Big.) I'm just around the corner. The guest room is yours.

Dana: I like a guy who's decisive. Ok, then.

Robert: Wait. . .(looks at Toby.) Toby, you promised to show us that new dance.

Samuel: How many counts is it?

Toby: Just 32. . . .(Senses Samuel's reluctance) but we'll just do the first 8 before you go. The first 8 are always the easiest. One and two and three and four, five, six seven and 8. Easy.

(They try it together and count it out.)

Act 1, Scene 4

Tina: (Confused) I took the money from the cash register upstairs to put in the lunch box, but I could not find it.

Elaine: Don't worry we'll leave it in the register drawer; I'll go up and find the lunchbox.

Tina: But the mortgage is coming due. If we don't have the money. . . well.

Elaine: Don't worry, I'll go upstairs in a bit and look.

Tina: I'm sorry. . .I just can't remember

Elaine: You don't have to remember. We'll live in the moment.

Tina: Part of living in the moment is remembering how you got there. I'm scared I'll end up like me mother.

Elaine: That's everybody's fear.

Tina: I mean how she died. I'm afraid it's happening to me.

Elaine: We don't know that, but we're going to find out what's going on and then, well then. . . we're going to make everything right.

Tina: What if it can't be made right?

(Elaine says nothing.)

Elaine: We won't let that happen. . .

Tina: But what if . . I don't even know who I am.

Elaine: I would still know you.

Tina: Me or a memory of who I was?

Elaine: I've known and loved each incarnation of you--even those couple of years you decided you were a femme.

Tina: (smiles and moves closer into Elaine's arms.) I looked like a truck driver who'd fell into a makeup box.

Elaine (laughs.)

Tina: Truth be told. . .

Elaine: What?

Tina: Our being reincarnated. . so that at some point we're free of attachments and don't have to come back. . .

Elaine: Yeah. . .

Tina; (Shakes her head) I've always wanted to come back. . .was glad that we were imperfect enough to come back. (reflective). That our wants and longings pulled us back.

Elaine: Sounds like a country western song.

Tina: An "awful sweetness".

Elaine: Like the tremor of an orgasm.

Tina: (laughs) You always did know how to get a girl's mind off things (reflective pause) I don't want to lose my mind. . .if it were my body. . .well. . .who will I be without my memories?

Elaine: Our memories. You would still have them . . .its just that I would hold them for you. . in my heart. . .and I would carry both them and you, like. .

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Tina: An awful sweetness.

Elaine: Like the tremor of an orgasm.

Tina: If we can't fix this. . .if we can't make it right. . .I still remember when my mother looked at my dad and said, "Who are you?" The man she had been married to for more than 50 years. That's when I knew it was over. Promise me if its what I think it is, you'll help me end this life. (Elaine hesitates.)

Tina: Just this one.

Elaine: I promise. . .as long as you promise to wait for me.

Tina: Promise.

Act II, Scene 1, the next Friday

The lights go up, the group is sitting around the table

Samuel: I haven't heard from him all week.

Robert: Maybe for him it was just a one-time thing.

Samuel: What do you mean?

Robert: A hookup.

Samuel: A hookup? I offered him the guest bedroom so he wouldn't have find a way back to Del Ray. I hardly know him.

Robert: That's what gives anonymous sex its rush.

Samuel: What?

Robert: The risk.

Samuel: I wouldn't know.

Robert: Or maybe it's why long-term relationships don't last.

Samuel: Why?

Robert: The lack of risk.

Samuel: What?

Robert: Makes for monogamy . . .I mean monotony. But there pretty much the same thing.

Tina: (To Elaine) For him (nodding toward Robert) relationships are like fevers. (Elaine nods.)

Elaine: He stays until the sex cools down. He doesn't want a boyfriend. He wants a redeemer.

Tina: And it isn't what our redeemer gives to us, it's what he takes away.

Samuel: I've had enough of your god-damned monotony. We didn't have sex. We cuddled.

Robert: You take home a bottom looking to get done by a hot daddy and you spoon him but don't fuck him. No wonder he hasn't called you in a week. I wouldn't of called either.

Samuel: What would you have done?

Toby: Been distant and unavailable. . . treated him badly. A guy like—what was his name—Dana--doesn't want you to ask him what he wants. He expects you to tell him. Practice saying, "Bend over boy".

Samuel: He isn't like that. Plus I couldn't.

Toby: Why not?

Samuel: I kept thinking about him being with. . . dating Big.

Robert: I can hear Big. "Bend over boy. Yeah. Take it."

Samuel: We didn't go there. Anyway, We cuddled; we slept. We got up in the morning. I made blueberry pancakes.

Robert: (Under his breathe) Oh, Lord. That is the wrong kind of flipping.

Samuel: We had coffee. At the door I said, "See you again?" and he said "Definitely!

Robert: (looks over to Tina and Elaine.) You two have been together forever--any relationship advice?

Elaine: When you decide to be with someone, you decide that you are willing to give up always being able to choose what you want.

Tina: And they do the same.

Elaine: The key is to never constrain each others choices so much. . .

Tina: That even though you stay together, you hate each other.

Elaine: (Nods in agreement)

Robert: Oh thanks. That fucking helps! I would have done better to have asked you two for dog grooming advice. (To Samuel and Toby.) Did I ever tell you about that day I was walking by that football field near work? It was lunchtime and I'm walking along and there is this guy in front of me. Tight calves, big thighs, this tight round ass, small hips, huge shoulders, spikey blonde hair. And I'm thinking I've found the man of my dreams and so I say, "Hey," and he turns around and the man of my dreams is a lesbian.

Toby: Blonde hair? Why does it always have to be a white man?

Robert: You know I do not date black man. Half of the black guys I chat with on line are on the down low and still go to church each Sunday. They got profile pictures where they are looking over their shoulder with their bare ass up in the air, and their profile says "Looking for scintillating conversation and new friends. Just checking this site out. Hey. Holler at me." And then I get these guys who want to "conversate". Conversate is not a verb. I don't know how many times I have had to tell someone that "sup" is not an interrogatory.

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Tina: (To Elaine) Why is the black man so angry?

Elaine: (Ticking each off on her fingers) Slavery. Jim Crow Laws. Segregation. Racism.

Tina: No I mean why is the (points to Robert) black man angry.

Elaine: (Ticking each off on her fingers) Slavery. Jim Crow Laws. Segregation. Racism.

Tina: (Nods her head in acknowledgement.)

Big enters with Dana. They are playful with each other and seem oblivious to those around them. Dana tilts his head up and kisses Big.

Robert: (To Samuel) I guess when he said you'd see him again, he meant with his boyfriend.

Samuel: (Stares with mouth open.)

Big: (After the kiss he notices Tina staring at them.) Aunt Tina. It's always a pleasure to return to your fine establishment after a week away. You have no idea how much I miss it.

Tina: Don't get smartallecky with me boy. I haven't seen you here but that doesn't mean you haven't been.

Big: Old lady, what are you talking about?

Tina: Your less trustworthy than a stripe-ed snake. Somethings gone missing and I have half a mind to suspect. . .

Big: "Stripe-ed" snake? Something gone missing—and I'm to blame? Are you out of your mind?

Tina: You would like nothing better wouldn't you? Then you could rob us of this place without me even knowing it.

Big: Crazy old bat.

Tina: Damn cattle rustler, get off my land!

Big: Get off your land?

Tina: (Flustered.) My land! My Bar! (Sputters.) Same thing! God knows how many of my cattle have you made off with!

Big: (Perplexed and then makes a show of looking around) Mooooooo! (laughs) quite a herd you got.

Tina: What does your taking my money have to do with you mooing like a cow, Erwin?

Big: Erwin. No one has called me since I was 13. (Says this almost as if it's an epiphany.) (With matter of fact cruelty.) I mooded because you said I had stolen your cows.

Tina: (Looks confused and terrified.)

Big: That's right—your cows!

Tina: Did not!

Big: You did.

Tina: Well I . . . I . . . (She lunges at Big and takes him down. Everyone rushes to separate them. It ends up with Tina sitting up atop the pinned Big.)

Elaine: Tina, please! (Reaches out to touch her shoulder.)

Tina: Who are you?! Get your hands off of me. (Tina jumps up and runs off stage. The boy's start to chase after her. Elaine holds up her hands.)

Elaine: No. no. You boys stay here. I'll take care of it. (She exits.)

Robert: Oh my God. What just happened?

Toby: I think she forgot where she was.

Robert: Where or who?

Toby: Does it matter? . . . hell, half the time people don't know who they are.

Big: Like you nit wits.

Toby: Don't start, Big.

Big: (To Toby) You can't stop remembering who you were. Going back to Tennessee isn't going to make you right. No place, no person can do that. And you (To Robert) Mr. Badass. You think you push people away because they aren't worthy. But really you push them away because your afraid you're not worthy. It's a common gay condition: reject them before they can hurt you. And you (To Samuel) afraid to get your sexy on. You want Dana? You could have him if you were man enough. (Sees Samuel's surprise.) What you didn't think he told me about your playing spin spoon. Well, he did, while I was banging his ass. To bad your not still married. He'd like that even better.

Robert: A total top married to a woman. . .now that's hot. (Toby elbows him to show his disapproval)

Big: (scornfully.) Reading *Hop on Pop* to him while you cuddled.

Robert: I love *Hop on Pop*.

There is the sound of a police siren. A police light flashes. All of them look out the bar window and then exit hurriedly.

(Lights go black. When they come up Elaine is sitting in the bar alone, staring into space, she looks resigned, like she has already done her crying. Robert enters.)

Elaine: Thanks for coming.

Robert: (Nods) We went to IHOP after you left for the hospital. So I was still up. When will she be home?

Elaine: They doctor said he wanted to hold her for at least 48 hours.

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Robert: Did he say anything else?

Elaine: Anything else? Damn it, Robert! They wouldn't even let me see her. I only know because Big told me.

Robert: Big? But Big's not her family. You are.

Elaine: He insisted on going to the hospital. When they asked if she had any family, she pointed to Big. He is her nephew.

Robert: But, you guys are married right?

Elaine: (sits sheepishly in silence) Never got around to it.

Robert: Ugh.

Elaine: I should have tackled her. Dumb luck. That cop must have thought, "What the hell, are these two old ladies doing chasing each other down the street at night." He was nice enough. At least he called an ambulance instead of putting her in the car.

(Robert slides a prescription bottle toward here. She picks them, looks at the label)

Elaine: (Says flatly.) Sleeping pills.

Robert nods and then she does.

Elaine (nods again) When I get her home, these will at least help keep her in bed at night.

Robert: Of course. (Gives a smile that shows he doesn't believe her, but understands.)

Elaine: Toby?

Robert: What about him? Last time I saw him he was going home to call some guy back home in Tennessee. I hope he's an early riser. I can hear his wife now, "Honey, who was that? Oh, just some guy who wants to blow me."

Elaine: Huh?

Robert: Never mind.

Elaine: He doesn't know does he?

Robert: Know?

Elaine: About? (She shakes the bottle).

Robert: No.

Elaine: Good. (Robert exits.) I promised, right?

Robert: Yeah. I would have too.

Act III Saturday of the same weekend

Act 3, Scene 1

Big: What's important now it taking care of Tina (corrects himself) . . . taking care of my family. No wonder the bar has been on a downhill slide, she's probably like old Ronald Reagan—running the place while she wasn't half right in her mind. Someone needs to manage it right.

Toby: Don't do this Big.

Big: Do what?

Toby: You want to kill Tina? You want to kill the woman who raised you—destroy what's left of her? Then go ahead and make this someplace she won't recognize. I know for you its all about going forward, but sometimes things are better on a smaller scale.

Big: You and I, we shared something.

Toby: Yeah, a fault line.

Big: The rubbing made for some pretty memorable friction.

Toby: But the crashing and breaking were too much for me. And I didn't help that you gave me syphilis. It's amazing that in all that time I never figured out that you were fucking around with half the city. I was just preoccupied with that huge prick of yours.

Big: It's not my fault that you could only see one part of me as big, but you never were good with the details. I regret that you caught syphilis.

Toby: "Caught" ?! You gave me (stressing the point) syphilis.

Big: (Shrugs) My bad. But maybe you could tell Robert to stop telling people that I have herpes.

Toby: He tells people your HIV positive.

Big: What!

Toby: I'll tell him to stop. (Elaine enters.)

Elaine: Big. There is no need for you to be here. Tina's fine--rested and lucid. Her old self.

Big: You know Elaine, putting it off is only going to make it worse. I would hate to have to put my aunt in a home so that she can get the care she needs. Maybe if you weren't so busy with the bar, I could be sure she was being properly taken care of.

Toby: Big. Please.

Elaine: (To Big). I believe in Karma, but you would be smart to leave now lest I decide to deliver your due early.

(Big exits. Tina comes in. She is somewhat tentative.)

Tina: Hey baby.

Toby: How are you tonight?

Tina: Good. But we need a favor though (point to herself and Elaine) We signed our powers of

attorney and we just need you to sign in the witness space. Should clear up the problem of letting Elaine make decisions for me.

Toby: Sure.

Elaine: Robert told us about your trying to reconnect with your friend in Tennessee. Did you ever call him?

Toby: I did.

Elaine: And?

Toby: He was surprised. I don't know how much Robert told you, but I asked him if he remembered playing PAC man in his parent's basement. He didn't. But as we are finishing up the conversation he says his has to go take his son to baseball practice.

Elaine: He has kids?

Toby: Three. (Pauses) The youngest is named Toby.

Elaine: Hhmm. So he remembered a bigger part of you than the pac-man piece.

Toby: Nods

Elaine: Here (turns page) here (turns page) here (turns page) and here.

Toby: That's a whole lot of witnessing.

Tina: And oh, we need a cover from you.

Toby: A cover? I've never paid cover.

Elaine: Just for tonight

Toby: Ok (reaches for his wallet)

Tina: Just a dollar (looks at Elaine who nods). That should do.

(Toby hands over the money.)

Tina: You were the most joy Big brought us. And I can never thank you enough for going on Jenny Craig with me even though you were as skinny as a whip. (They both hug him). We'll be in the office for a while if you need anything. There is plenty of Jenny in the freezer. Oh, and you can call the place anything you want. . .(Elaine shakes her head and mimes "Tina, no.")

Toby: What?

Tina: (Looking at Elaine and then saying to Toby) Never mind.

(Toby heads over to the dance floor where Samuel and Robert have just arrived.)

Toby: Ready to learn the rest of that dance—the last 8 counts?

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Samuel: You know in numerology, eight is the bridge to heaven.

Toby: Nice.

Robert: How do you know this shit? (Samuel shrugs.)

Toby: Ok, here we go, step turn, quarter turn, kick ball change right, hitch, kick ball change left, hitch, touch, touch. Got it?

Collectively: Got it.

Samuel: So this is the end?

Robert: The end.

Toby: The last eight counts. But there is no real end.

Samuel: No?

Toby: (Shakes his head, “No”.) You break the steps down and practice each part by itself over and over and again, and then you begin to connect the parts until they are seamless. You work them into muscle memory. . .so that it doesn’t matter what the particular song is. . .instead your body recognizes the rhythm and your muscles know what to do. . .

Robert: Are you talking about dancing?

Samuel: Its all a dance—and your heart. . . (taps his) muscle memory.

(Robert and Toby both tap their own hearts, smile, and the dance begins.)

The boys are dancing the new dance throughout Tina and Elaine’s dialogue. On the platform representing the office Tina and Elaine are drinking heavily. There is an empty bottle of Jack Daniels on the table and another half full. Tina holds the bottle of sleeping pills in her hand and turns it as she talks.

Tina: Twenty years . . . I guess it’s not too bad of a place to find yourself when the bartender yells last call. I remember once watching a father and his young daughter at the airport. He was teaching her to add and he was using his fingers to get her to understand the idea of sets. Two of these and two of these makes 4 of them. And I remember thinking to myself that’s how reincarnation works. (She pops some of the sleeping pills in her mouth.)

Elaine: You regret that we didn’t have children of our own in this life?

Tina: No. (two more pills) Children are the legacy of lazy people. What I mean is that we get reincarnated by relationships that make us something new and greater than what we were before. (a few more pills)

Elaine: So you’re not coming back?

Tina: (Smiles and take Elaine in her arms.) You made me new. (Pops a few more pills.)

Elaine: You made me whole.

Tina: I wonder what my legacy will be. (Pops a few pills and throws back some whiskey)

Elaine: You will be remembered for. . .

Tina: For slights, large and small. (They both laugh)

Tina: I want people to remember that I loved...that I honored you. The people that I taught to two-step across the years--I want them to remember when and smile. I know it seems like such a small thing, but

Elaine: (Reassuring her.) No. . .no. "do small thing with great love". Someone somewhere remembers, and when they do, they smile.

Tina: Alright baby. . .I'm going to put my head down now. . . I feel so tired. . . don't you worry. . . I'm almost on the other shore. (Slumps over.)

Elaine: (A look of anguish, and then resolve and determination.) Then let me set sail for you (take a handful of pills, throw them back and downs the rest of the whiskey, drapes her body over Tina's.)

The dance stops.

Act 3, Scene 2

Elaine: (starts to wake up. Mumbling) Oh, my head. Oh, my head. Both feet on the floor. Maybe the room will stop spinning.

Dana: (Enters the room.)

Elaine: (Seeing Dana) Did we die? Are we in heaven?

Dana: I brought you this. (Holds out the lunch box.)

Elaine: (Looks at the lunch box. Knitted browed confused). A lunch box? I thought you were supposed to get a crown in heaven...a lunch box? Wait a minute. I'm not dead am I?

Dana: You seem pretty alive to me.

Elaine (alarmed. Jumps up and rushes to the slumped over Tina.) Tina! Tina! (shakes her violently). Tina, wake up.

Tina: (wakes up. Hair matted to head; saliva running down chin.) What the fuck? Oh my head feels like it's in vice grip.

Elaine: Oh thank god!

Tina: Are we dead?

Elaine: (With relief and joy.) Oh, thank god, Tina no. I'm not dead. You're not dead. Thank, God! We're not dead.

Tina: (Disgruntled.) Shit!

Elaine: Thank god, we did all the boozing and drugging during the 60's! It must have upped our tolerance.

Tina: Well, I guess this must count as some kind of reincarnation.

Elaine: Or at least resurrection. I guess we'll just have to live.

Tina: Oh, alright. (seeing Dana, turns to Elaine) So who's the angel?

Dana: Dana.

Elaine: He had the lunch box.

Tina: The lunch box. (Looks at Dana).

Elaine: (opens the lunch box) But its empty.

Samuel: (comes in. He stands in the doorway. Dana doesn't see him.)

Dana: I never took the money. Big said to take the lunch box. He didn't say anything about the money. The money should be way in the back of the drawer. I wanted it to be safe. Would you tell Samuel? Would you tell him I didn't take the money?

Elaine: Why don't you tell him yourself?

Dana: I won't be back, and he probably thinks I'm a jerk for going with Big. But I like a guy who's in charge in bed. It's just that the guys who want to be in charge in bed are usually assholes out of bed.

Tina: (Looking past Dana to Samuel.) Is that right, Samuel? Nice guys can't be in charge in bed? (To Dana.) You know he has an eight inch dick?

Samuel: How do you know that? (Dana spins around to see Samuel.)

Tina: (Waves her hand to dismiss his question and shock.) Tell him your intentions.

Samuel: (Clears throat as if he has been practicing and says to Dana) I'm going to own your ass with my 8 inches. (coughs into his fist)

Dana: I want you to do me while you're wearing dress socks and your reading glasses—nothing else. I want you to bang me so hard that my head hits the wall. (glances below Samuel's waist) Am I making you hard?

Samuel: (Stammering.) You'd be surprised what you could make me do.

Tina: (To no one in particular) A bottom who's in control.

Elaine: Life's funny that way. (To Dana) I know what you're doing here, but (to Samuel) what about you?

Samuel: You guys didn't close the bar last night, and the office door was locked. The bar back locked up. Toby tried calling all day and got no answer. He called me because I'm closer, but he's on his way. He also called Big, so he might be coming to.

Toby and then Big enters

Big: (Surveys the state that Tina and Elaine appear to be in. He notices the prescription bottle next to the whiskey bottle. He goes to reach for it, but Tina snatches it away. He mutters

under his breath.) Didn't even have the sense to follow through. Would have made it easier.

Toby: (Aghast) What did you just say?!

Big: Nothing.

Tina: You know what you said, and we all heard you. You thought you were going to steal this bar from us but tricking us into a debt we couldn't pay off, and it would have been easier if we had just gone off and died. There's just one problem.

Big: That you didn't die isn't a problem, you still owe me money you can't pay back.

Dana: (Holds a neatly folded piece of paper up in the air between his two fingers.) I had to do something to make up for. Here is the paper you signed. It's the original.

Big gasps and lunges for him. Dana manages to pass the paper to Samuel. Big goes for him. Samuel passes it to Toby. He reaches to give it to Tina. Robert body blocks Big and holds him. Tina takes the paper, opens it. She takes a lighter from the desk and holds it, ready to flick it at the paper's edge. She looks at Big and shakes her head and puts the lighter down.

Tina: You're right, we owe you money and we have to pay you back. What you haven't factored in is that we don't own the bar.

Big: You. . . Wait a minute. What? You don't own the bar?

Tina and Elaine: Nope

Big: If you don't own the bar, then who does?

Tina and Elaine both look to Toby.

Big: Him?

Toby: Me?

Tina and Elaine nod.

Big: But my money?

Tina: Oh, we'll pay it back—as best we can. But you have to remember you made a personal loan and not a real estate loan. If you read this contract real close, its clear on the interest rate being...what was it?

Big: Variable

Tina: That's right, variable, but it wasn't clear on the collateral. There was never a lien against the title to Miss Kitty's. (as if having second thoughts, she feeds the contract into the office paper shredder.)

Big: Argh! (Pointing to Elaine and Tina). I'm not finished with you (pointing to Toby) or you.

Toby: (To Big, flatly) We were finished a long time ago. Sounds like you might want to do a better job of paying attention to details. Now get out of my bar.

Big storms out.

Act 3, Scene 3

(Toby is wiping down the bar counter top with a rag. Dana is sweeping. Samuel and Robert are leaning on the bar)

Samuel: (To Robert.) You seem to be dancing a lot lately with that new guy.

Robert: Oh him.

Samuel: Yeah.

Robert: He's as shallow as a mud puddle.

Samuel: Too bad.

Robert: Yeah, the good thing is he's just a dirty.

Toby: And as white as can be.

Samuel: (Laughs.)

Robert: As hard as I've tried, I can't seem to scare him off. He likes me, which makes me wonder why I'm wasting time on him. But we'll see.

(Tina and Elaine enter.)

Samuel: So what did the doctor say?

Elaine: (Brightly) You were right.

Tina: (Flatly) A brain tumor.

Elaine: That's what was causing the spells.

Tina: (As if trying to get her to face the facts.) The dementia.

Elaine: It's not dementia. If they can fix it!

Samuel: Can they?

Tina: No sign of it spreading. It's big, and in a sorta tricky place.

Elaine: But the doctor said they can get it.

Tina: He said they THINK they can get it, and then they'll see if it's benign.

Elaine: But it hasn't spread. So it's probably benign.

Tina: We're all dying. So who am I to be different?

Toby: Maybe we are all just changing. Maybe reincarnation is a daily event, with people and events reshaping us until we're complete and can stop.

Tina: Or just too tired to go on.

Toby: (Hand Elaine a stack of bills).

Elaine: What's this.

Toby: Bar receipts for the past two weeks.

Tina: Two weeks. We usually don't make this in six.

Toby: Big—I mean Erwin. . .

Robert: Erwin?

Toby: He wants to be called Erwin. He says that's the only way people will see how big he really is—anyway, he graciously agreed not to take his cut of the door for a while.

Robert: I heard rumor he was moving to Brooklyn.

Toby: LA. He made a pitch for DC Rawhide auditions as one of those reality TV shows. They're calling it *Cowboy Bunkhouse*. Anyway, a lot of Dana's friends have been coming. We're drawing a younger crowd who are interested in learning the dances

Tina: We can't take this. You own the bar now.

Toby: There's more where that came from; that's your share—you still have to eat. . . and pay Big back.

Tina: Are you glad you stayed? That you didn't go home.

Toby: Home? Home is here. I would say I was living my next life, but really I'm just getting started on the first.

The End

As to why Elaine and Tina aren't married. When they were stoners back in an ashram, they both married men—across times, lost track of them and never got officially divorced.

Robert: (to Tina and Ellen) did you have any relational advice

Tina: It sometimes takes a while to get into each other's rhythms

Elaine: Yeah, we didn't hit our stride until the Civil War.

Robert: The civil war, huh, which life was that

Tina: she was had just a blush of hair on her chin and the bluest eyes; she was a sweet boy barely 15.

Have you seen Staying Alive--Sylvester Stallone wrote it and directed, 1985—it's the sequel to Saturday Night Fever. John Travolta as Tony Manero has moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan to pursue a career as a Broadway dancer. He's trying to pick up the lead dancer and she tells her You're really special and she says, I know it, and he says I was special to once, and she says what happened and he says I moved to Manhattan. Well this, this is my Brooklyn. "When you step in front of that audience tonight, you're not one of them. You dance for them." In his big number he wears that pacahontas number. It's like the male version of flahs dance except it was made first