

Weddings and Wakes

by

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CAST

TONY. 39, a mercurial guy. Tries to hard.

ANGELO. 38, gentle, a bit timid.

MAYOR. 38, a guy's guy, liked by all.

RYAN. 38, doesn't quite fit in. Intelligent, cantankerous.

WHIZ. 39, smart, confident, capable.

HOUND. 40, blue collar ladies' man

THE TIME

The present.

THE PLACE

Sunny's Bar. Bayside, Queens, an outer borough of New York City.

AT RISE

RYAN sits at the bar by himself, frequently checking his watch and obviously frustrated.

MAYOR

Ryan! How the hell are--

RYAN

(Accusingly.)

What time were we supposed to meet here?

MAYOR

I don't know, around nine or so?

RYAN

And what time is it now?

MAYOR

(Looking at his watch.)

Uhh, quarter after ten.

(RYAN sighs loudly and shakes his head in exasperation. MAYOR, oblivious to RYAN, looks around the bar.)

Man, this place is exactly like I remembered it! Leave it to Tony to reserve the back room for us, just like the old days!

RYAN

(Sarcastically.)
Isn't that wonderful. Look, Tony called a million times to get us all here. So where is everyone?

MAYOR

Oh, you know the boys.

RYAN

That's why I'm asking.

MAYOR

Same old Ryan, worrying about everything.

RYAN

So what's up with Tony? Why did he want to get together so badly?

MAYOR

You know him. He thinks any chance the boys could go out, they'll take it.

RYAN

Judging by this turnout, he's wrong.

MAYOR

(Playful teasing.)
Hey, you're so miserable, why'd you show up?

RYAN

Because I'd rather get this done with than have him call me another fifty times.

MAYOR

(Chuckling.)
Ryan Ryan Ryan. We're gonna have a blast. As soon as the boys get here.

RYAN

I'm telling you, they're not --

(Just then ANGELO walks in.)

ANGELO

Hey!

MAYOR

(To RYAN.)

See?

(MAYOR and ANGELO hug.)

ANGELO

See what?

MAYOR

Nothing. Just that the boys would all show up.

ANGELO

Of course we're gonna show up. Although it would have been a lot easier if I could have brought my wife, but Tony didn't wanna hear nothing about that. So how the hell are ya?

MAYOR

Great, man, great. How's the bank? You still doing--

ANGELO

Yeah, yeah, same old. Man, isn't it good to be out again? I don't know why we don't do this more often, even with the wives--

MAYOR

God no!

ANGELO

No, really. Last time I saw you guys was, what, Johnny's sister's wedding?

RYAN

No, I think it was Whiz's uncle's cousin's wake.

ANGELO

That's right! More than a year ago!

(Happily.)

We had a ball that night--

(Embarrassed at his happiness at a wake, he becomes excessively somber, and makes the sign of the cross.)

I mean, no disrespect to Whiz's uncle's cousin, it was sad and everything.

(Happy again.)

ANGELO (CONTINUED)

But afterwards, when we all sat around at the diner? I haven't laughed so hard since. Man, we gotta get together more often!

RYAN

(Sarcastically.)

Here's to more deaths in the family.

(Whiz and Hound enter... Everyone gives enthusiastic greetings and hearty hugs.)

MAYOR

Congratulations Whiz. You're the first known case of rigor mortis setting in on a live person.

WHIZ

(He pats MAYOR'S stomach.)

You hiding someone under that shirt?

MAYOR

I'm working' on it.

(To Hound.)

And you, stop being a freak and start getting fat.

HOUND

God forbid I should end up looking like you guys. Hey, why'd Tony pick this place? Hasn't been a woman in here in twenty years.

MAYOR

Same old Hound. Have a beer, relax.

(He hands a beer to HOUND.)

HOUND

Relax? Relaxing I do at home with the wife. Come on, there's that disco up the block --

WHIZ

Disco? Now you really sound like an old man. It's called a club.

HOUND

It's still a disco, far as I'm concerned.

MAYOR

Do me a favor: stop using that word.

HOUND

What's wrong with it?

MAYOR

That's our generation's Viet Nam, man. I think of all the guys that never came back from it.

HOUND

You just didn't know how to get into it. You couldn't dance, get your hair right, nothing --

MAYOR

You hear that? My demise in Hound's eyes was that I couldn't achieve the right "bouf."

HOUND

I tried to teach you how to use the blow dryer, but you never listened.

MAYOR

(To the group.)

Remember how much Hound and the disco boys hated me because I wouldn't join the impenetrable wall of men?

HOUND

Don't start.

MAYOR

(He again pantomimes an unsmiling tough guy doing disco dance moves.)

Twenty-three Italian guys dancing in place at the edge of the dance floor. Side by side, not talking, not smiling, just staring at people on the floor and practicing their moves.

HOUND

All I know is, there are women at this disco down the block. This place, forget it.

ANGELO

Let's just hang out till Tony gets here, then we'll see where we end up.

WHIZ

You mean he's not here yet?

RYAN

Nope.

ANGELO

Hope he's all right.

HOUND

Oh, he's all right. Probably in another bar, a whorehouse or a mud wrestling match. Now, whether he shows up here, that's a whole other question.

MAYOR

Ahhhh, he'll be here. Probably just got started late, or he got lost, or he's mauling Julia.

HOUND

(Joyful groan.)

Ohhh, Julia.

WHIZ

Man, what a doll.

ANGELO

Hand picked right outta high school.

WHIZ

Best body I ever saw.

MAYOR

And when she was on the beach? Wearing that little string thing?

HOUND

(Groaning.)

Stop.

WHIZ

But even better? Her little Catholic high school dress.

HOUND

What's the deal with those outfits? I mean, they're supposed to represent innocence and virtue, and here are these girls wearing pleated mini skirts, silky little blouses and pumps -- at sixteen and seventeen! It's like God's playing this little joke on men, saying "Hey, for the

rest of the world, I'll talk about holiness and purity, but between us guys, is this hot or what?"

WHIZ

Look, we're gonna lust after women, then I'm with Hound: let's go to a disco.

ANGELO

Calm down, Tony'll be here soon.

HOUND

Where the hell is he?

MAYOR

You know him. He's gotta be doing something stupid.

WHIZ

Fifteen years later, he's still annoying the shit out of us.

HOUND

Hey, remember that time--

RYAN

Oh no!--

HOUND

On the Fourth of July--

RYAN

Please don't start--

HOUND

In the Hamptons?

RYAN

The same old stories!

MAYOR

(To RYAN)

What?

RYAN

Reminiscing, reminiscing, reminiscing, that's all we do. Laugh about old times, lust after old girlfriends and dream about being eighteen again. We're living in the past.

(Pause.)

WHIZ

And ... your point is?

RYAN

Nobody talks about old stuff as much as we do.

WHIZ

Oh yeah? Then tell me something: why are all these retread shows and movies so popular?

RYAN

I don't--

WHIZ

The same shit we used to watch as kids, now all over the TV again. Two hundred and ninety-seven channels, and two hundred and ninety-six are running "Leave it to Beaver, I Dream of Genie" --

MAYOR

I still dream of Genie--

RYAN

TV's been doing reruns for a million years.

WHIZ

What about the movies? Charlie's Angels, one -- and two, as if the first didn't suck enough. James Bond every two weeks. A million superhero movies -- Hell, they even threw one to the blind guy there.

ANGELO

I liked Daredevil.

RYAN

Fine, let's talk about Daredevil, or Devil Dogs, or even the devil. BUT let's take a break from the Hamptons stories.

ANGELO

Sure, whatever.

MAYOR

Plenty to talk about.

RYAN

Sure there is.

MAYOR

There's politics, and the state of the world, our careers
and --

ANGELO

Right.

(A long pause as they all struggle for something to talk
about.)

HOUND

Man that some wild Fourth of July in the Hamptons--

RYAN

(Resigned, he says the first sentence simultaneously
with HOUND.)

--Wild Fourth of July in the Hamptons. Here we go again.--

MAYOR

Big party, all kinds of gorgeous young women, and that
moron starts launching bottle rockets in the living room.

ANGELO

(Laughing.)

That was wild!

MAYOR

That was stupid. All those gorgeous giggly drunk girls,
then boom! bottle rockets everywhere.

WHIZ

Never saw anything like it. Every girl snapped into stone
cold sobriety.

RYAN

The fact that there wasn't a stampede amazes me.

ANGELO

That's Tony for you. Did the wildest things, and walked
away laughing.

MAYOR

Well I wasn't laughing. All those women, drinking so much that even I started looking good. Laughing at my jokes, listening to my stories -- they were buying it!

WHIZ

They weren't buying anything. You were boring as shit.

MAYOR

Not that night, man. That night, I had the *power* of a party host. Running the show, supplying the drinks, entertaining the guests. And all those women, hoping to latch on to the *power*. Till Tony and his bottle rockets.

WHIZ

Can you imagine yourself now around a bunch of drunk nineteen year old girls?

HOUND

Oh forget it. I'd be bouncing around from girl to girl, giggling and touching and hoping.

ANGELO

No way I'd keep up with them.

WHIZ

But to die trying.

MAYOR

Believe me, young girls ain't all they're cracked up to be.

WHIZ

Bastard's going out with a twenty-three year old and he's gonna rub our faces in it.

MAYOR

I'm telling you, it's a lot of work.

ANGELO

Sure it is -- an old man like you trying to get into all those positions.

MAYOR

Gets old faster than you think.

(Pause.)

WHIZ

You want to hit him or should I?

MAYOR

Thing is, to young women, we look cool -- when actually we're just too old and tired to do anything.

HOUND

What are you talking about?

WHIZ

He's just talking about the married guys, Hound.

HOUND

I'm married!

ANGELO

The faithful ones.

MAYOR

How many you seeing now?

HOUND

You mean, on a regular basis or one-timers?

MAYOR

(Chuckling.)
Same old Hound.

ANGELO

Regularly, irregularly, how many?

HOUND

I don't know, four or five?

WHIZ

Jesus! I wish I could get away with that!

HOUND

You guys, you just don't wanna play the game.

MAYOR

How the hell you meet 'em?

HOUND

What are you, blind? You don't see the women on the train?

MAYOR

I see 'em all the time. But what kind of a line are you throwing?

HOUND

(Prophetic, as if departing great wisdom.)
My line, is no line.

(Pause.)

MAYOR

Now I've seen it all: the Hound giving us Zen shit.

HOUND

You get on a train, it's hot, you say, "Man, it's hot in here." It's crowded, you say, "When are they gonna put on some new cars?"

WHIZ

That's it?

HOUND

She likes you, she'll come back at you. It's like in church.

MAYOR

Church?

HOUND

A great pick up joint. With a sure-fire pick-up line built in: "Peace be with you."

MAYOR

What the *hell* are you talking about?

HOUND

"Peace be with you." When the priest tells you to shake hands with your neighbors. What you do is, you make sure to sit next to a good-looking girl -- there are plenty of 'em in church, all dressed to the hilt -- next thing you know, you're shaking her hand, big smile, saying, "Peace be with you." After church, you just start talking to her, saying things like, "I haven't seen you at this mass before," you know, like you're a regular church goer or something. Her guard is down because she's in church, and you come off

looking like an altar boy. Then you ask if she'd like to discuss the bible over a cup of coffee or something, and it just goes from there.

WHIZ

Where were these tips years ago when I could've used 'em?

HOUND

What, you can't play around a bit?

WHIZ

Absolutely, positively not. I screw around, I even think of screwing around, my wife will find out. And when she does? Good-bye. Talk to her lawyer in the morning.

HOUND

That's bullshit, man. Women don't leave. They cry and bitch and threaten and complain, but they don't leave.

WHIZ

Your first left.

(Pause as HOUND reflects on this.)

HOUND

That was different. She wasn't normal.

(Beat.)

Carefully concealed her mental illness till we were married.

WHIZ

I don't know how you do it. I can't. Forget the moral reasons, it's all the work you gotta do. The opening lines, the small talk, the smiles, the dinners, the idiot conversations, the wondering if you should make a move, the guilt that comes after.

HOUND

Ah, it's like golf.

(He takes a golfer's stance and swings an imaginary club.)

Sand traps and water traps and roughs. Gotta deal with 'em all if you're gonna make par.

WHIZ

No wonder I can't stand golf. At least with my wife, there's no mystery. I know I'm not getting any, and half the time I'm not sure I want it. Every night, I watch a

ball game on TV, and she's happy because she knows where I am.

HOUND

Sounds like my wife.

WHIZ

Ball games till eleven, then she tells me to come to bed so we could "cuddle." That's her form of sex these days.

HOUND

Isn't their sex drive supposed to kick in around now?.

WHIZ

She don't want to give me sex, that's her choice. But don't expect any "cuddles" from me. She tells me to come to bed, I tell her I'm staying downstairs because I can't read with the TV on. Then, I lower the sound and check the dirty movies.

ANGELO

You get the nudie stations?

WHIZ

Nothing I'd get pegged on. A few nudie tapes, but -- I hate to say this -- I'm bored with 'em. They speed through the undress scenes, and go right to two people pumping away like rabbits. Like one of those nature shows studying the mating habits of chimpanzees.

MAYOR

You ever check out the Spanish channels?

RYAN

What for, none of us speaks Spanish.

MAYOR

You don't have to speak Spanish to know what I'm talking about. "*Pelricula*," big-butted Spanish women getting undressed every five minutes.

ANGELO

Naked?

MAYOR

Not naked. Who wants naked? They get down to skimpy little underwear, which you can see through since they

always seem to fall into water or get caught in the rain or get hosed down "accidentally" by some old pervert washing a car.

ANGELO

That's sick, man.

MAYOR

And the editors in those Spanish movies? Good old fashioned *machismo*. They always leave a couple of frames where you see everything before they scramble it. It's like a professional courtesy for perverts.

WHIZ

You know, I thought as I got older, I wouldn't be so intent on looking up a girl's dress. But as time goes by, I'm more of a pervert than when I was a kid.

HOUND

That's why you have to cheat, man.

WHIZ

Forget it

HOUND

And what are you doing now? Looking up dresses? Spanish T&A movies?

MAYOR

That's not cheating. That's good clean male fun.

HOUND

You tell your wife you're doing it?

MAYOR

Course not.

HOUND

Then it's cheating!

MAYOR

You're out of your mind!

HOUND

I'm telling you, you can't bottle up hormones. They're gonna come out, one way or another. Triggered by any woman within a thirty-mile proximity who ain't your wife.

(Chuckles and murmurs of agreement. Beat.)

ANGELO

You know, all kidding aside, I'm pretty happy with my wife. In fact, we've probably gotten closer over the years.

(A long, uncomfortable pause. During which everyone stares angrily at Angelo. They then all get up from where they're sitting, walk away from Angelo and keep their backs turned to him. They all sigh and groan.)

ANGELO

What? What did I--

MAYOR

(Soft-spoken and pedantic.)

Angelo, you know where we are? In a *bar*. And with a bar comes *bar* talk. And there is no entry in the bar talk dictionary for "gee, ain't we lucky to have our wives."

RYAN

Hey Hound, with all the brain power you put into women, how do you get any work done? I mean, how do you shut off the hormones long enough to--

HOUND

Women are an essential diversion from the worst accounting job in the world. Used to be nine-to-five. Now five's lunch break.

(Beat.)

Gotta do it. Or some other idiot will.

ANGELO

Put in all the hours, get good reviews, and they'll still let you go in a heartbeat.

HOUND

Like cattle.

MAYOR

Know what line of work I was in last year? The unemployment line.

ANGELO

You were?

MAYOR

We merged with a bigger place, and my department was nuked. We always made a profit, but not enough for those bastards. Got a package, but the money goes faster than you think.

ANGELO

Two kids and a mortgage: tell me about it.

MAYOR

Savings gone, I was on fumes. Then I took this job selling restaurant refrigerators. All commission, but if I beat off the alley cats, I get some tasty table scraps.

HOUND

It's all corporate bullshit, man.

MAYOR

All that school, classes at night. I thought it was leading up to something. I thought you pay your dues, then kick back in a corner office.

RYAN

Yeah, right.

MAYOR

(Tongue in cheek.)

You know whose fault it is. Our parents. They couldn't settle for us being laborers, firemen or cops like them. No, we had to do better. So here we are, all of us with the first higher degrees in our families, and we're all wondering if we'll have a job next year.

(Beat.)

RYAN

This is ridiculous. Where is Tony?

ANGELO

He'll be here.

RYAN

This is just another stupid prank --

(Fireworks erupt, sending everyone diving to the floor.)

MAYOR

That moron!

RYAN

Never changes.

ANGELO

Same old --

(TONY enters.)

MAYOR

Tony!

TONY

Howdy, boys!

(All but RYAN greet TONY with friendly fake punches and shoves.)

RYAN

Well, hasn't this been fun. Trapped in a den of decay for hours, reliving every Hound-gets-laid story, and having my ear drums blown to Hoboken. Why? Because this brain surgeon

(He points at TONY.)
wants to see us.

TONY

(Shakes RYAN's hand, then hugs him.)
Come on, it's just a couple of firecrackers. Hope you guys ain't getting old on me.

HOUND

Why'd you make us wait around so long -- we couldda been out chasing.

TONY

Had to take care of some things.

WHIZ

But you're the one who--

TONY

Couldn't be helped. Had to be done before Tuesday.

WHIZ

What, you going away or something?

TONY

Sort of.

WHIZ

Business?

TONY

Kinda.

WHIZ

Kinda? It is or it isn't.

HOUND

(He puts his arm around TONY.)

I know, he's getting a little on the side.

TONY

I wish. Just getting ready for a little trip, that's all.

RYAN

What was so important that you dragged us all down here?

TONY

(Forced exuberance.)

What, I've gotta have a special reason to see my friends?

RYAN

For all these years, it's just weddings and wakes. Until tonight.

TONY

(More forced exuberance.)

As good a night as any.

WHIZ

Something's up.

TONY

Can't you just leave it that I felt like getting together with the boys?

RYAN

Not after the trouble I went through to --

TONY

All right, all right!
(Beat.)

TONY (CONTINUED)

I've ... I've had some ... Things ain't been too rosy lately, so I figured, hey, I need a good time.

(With building enthusiasm.)

And where else but with the boys? Man, you guys ever have as good as time as we did in the Hamptons?

(A collective groan from the group.)

Happiest I ever was.

RYAN

We know you loved the Hamptons -- that was pretty clear the first hirty-two million times you told us. It was a nice break from the real world --

TONY

To me, it was the real world.

MAYOR

Hey, I loved the Hamptons -- fifteen years ago.

TONY

The fun we used to have? Man. You remember that Fourth of July weekend?

MAYOR

(Sarcastic.)

We were discussing how much we enjoyed losing any chance of *getting laid* that night.

TONY

Or the time I ripped up that parking ticket in front of the cop and threw it in his face?

MAYOR

You spent the night in jail. You were miserable.

TONY

Compared to now, I didn't even know what misery was.

MAYOR

Tony, the key words here are "summer house." Now replaced with the words, "winter house," which translates into mortgages and repairs and --

TONY

The Hamptons was everything --

RYAN

(Bored.)
Everything, right.

TONY

Sometimes I wish I never met you guys, never went out to the Hamptons. Maybe I'd have been happier with my miserable life.

WHIZ

What so miserable about your life?

TONY

Nothing. *Nothing*. That's what's so miserable. I go to work, teach a bunch of hyper Catholic high school kids, drive home in the dark at four-thirty, have a boring, sensible dinner at five-thirty, feed the kid, mark some tests, try to keep my eyes open at eight-thirty, and fall asleep watching something stupid on TV. Unless, of course, the baby's sick, which is every other night. Then I get up at three in the morning and hold her. Now, if it were three in the morning in the Hamptons, I'd be in prime time. Me and the boys, laughing at the bar, not a care in the world.

ANGELO

But you didn't think it would last forever, right? I mean, you knew there'd be a time when you'd have to do something. You're a teacher; that's gotta be rewarding.

TONY

Teaching: biggest sucker bet there is. You think, "I could make a difference." Then, you get a taste of the bureaucracy, the crotchety administrators, the brain-dead students, and whatever do-goody-good ideals you had are blown outta the water.

HOUND

So you hate your job. Welcome to the club.

TONY

Yeah, but the difference is, you guys make money while you hate your jobs.

RYAN

So get out of teaching.

TONY

And do what?

RYAN

You're a bullshittie; be a salesman, like everyone else.

TONY

Hell do I know about selling?

RYAN

You know what we all know. A little bit about a lot of things. A lot about nothing.

ANGELO

Or just stay where you are. Okay, you hate your job, so does everyone else. Put in your eight hours, then go home to that gorgeous wife of yours.

WHIZ

What more you want?

TONY

It's not what I want, it's what she wants -- or doesn't want, which is to be living on a teacher's salary in Brooklyn. When she met me, I was the all-powerful teacher, the older man. Now? Illusion's gone. She sees is an old fuck-up.

MAYOR

Least her eyesight's good.

(They all laugh, including TONY, who is grateful for the tension release.)

WHIZ

Sounds like my wife.

TONY

Yeah? You fight a lot?

WHIZ

Sure, we fight. Not all the time, but --

TONY

Well, we fight -- all the time. She gets so pissed.

RYAN

Why?

TONY

I don't know. Maybe because we don't go anywhere.

(Beat.)

Or I have a few pops after school.

(Beat.)

Or a few snorts.

(Beat.)

Or I don't come home for a few days.

(Pause as everyone stares at Tony incredulously.)

RYAN

(Sarcastically.)

She's got her nerve.

HOUND

You still getting high every day?

TONY

Not every day. I miss a few.

RYAN

And family vacations minus family; that a regular habit?

TONY

Not a ... I just ... you know, once in awhile.

HOUND

You give her a good alibi?

ANGELO

Don't encourage him!

TONY

Used to. Not anymore.

HOUND

What do you tell her?

TONY

I don't.

HOUND

Jeez, even I wouldn't try that.

ANGELO

What happens when you come home? She must go ballistic.

TONY

Actually, she just gets real quiet. She'll make dinner and not say a word. Then, when dinner's over, and I'm watching TV or something, she'll start throwing things at me.

Little things, like a notepad or something. I don't say nothing, you know? Like, let her get it out of her system. But then, instead of calming down, she starts throwing bigger things. Scares the shit out of the kid, and sure enough I start getting pissed. I tell her to stop, she starts screaming. Then she comes at me with fists flying.

(Beat.)

Then? Then I gotta ...

(Makes a fist.)

RYAN

You hit her? You hit your wife?

TONY

I don't start it, I defend myself. She's a Brooklyn Italian girl, she'll knock out most contending middleweights.

ANGELO

Christ, Tony. That's your wife.

TONY

I just try to hold her off, you know, from pummeling me.

RYAN

I don't care what she does to you, you can't be hitting --

ANGELO

Thought you were better than that, man. Had it under control.

TONY

(Suddenly angry.)

I got nothing under control. I am completely outta control, goddamnit! I'm either miserable or I'm high.

(Pause.)

MAYOR

I'm sorry, man, but I still don't see what's so bad with your life. You got enough money to get by. A wife who's a pain in the ass like every wife, but still gorgeous. A healthy kid. What else is there?

TONY

There's the Hamptons.

ANGELO

The Hamptons are gone, man!

RYAN

You go out there now, you'd probably hate it. I would.

MAYOR

You don't count. You hate everything.

RYAN

Sleeping on back-breaking beds, one disgusting bathroom among us, no air conditioning, no privacy. When you're eighteen, fine. Not now.

TONY

Nah, we'd pick up right where we left off. Guys were meant to hang together, not guys and women.

RYAN

Look, you get older, you become miserable any way you look at it. You'll be miserable if you're with women too long, you'll be miserable if you're with the guys too long.

MAYOR

Take it from Ryan. He's about as miserable as they come.

RYAN

I'm serious. Look at my father. He was probably a fun guy when he was younger. Now? Now, everything is misery to him.

TONY

Your father got miserable for one reason and one reason only. Your mother.

RYAN

Hey, don't you talk about my --

TONY

No offense against your mom, but she is a woman. And women just wear you down. Like Julia -- man, I'm so sick of fighting with her.

ANGELO

I'm sure she is too, what with you hitting her

TONY

I told you, she starts the physical, I just defend myself.

RYAN

Why do you let it go so far that she's throwing punches?

TONY

I, I don't know, I just can't help it.

RYAN

If it's that tough, maybe you should split up for a while.

TONY

(He walks menacingly towards Ryan until the other guys stop him.)

You trying to ruin my marriage?

WHIZ

Whoa! We're just talking here.

TONY

I don't take that from anyone, you hear me?

WHIZ

Hell you getting so jumpy about?

RYAN

You brought this up.

HOUND

Slugging matches with Julia? You get an unnecessary roughness penalty, ref throws you in the box.

(Pause.)

TONY

Yeah, yeah, I know. Sorry Ryan.

(RYAN snorts.)

TONY

(With an embarrassed chuckle.)

We did split up for a while. Nothing official, she just kinda left after a blow-up we had. Took the kid, moved back with her mother.

ANGELO

Yeah?

TONY

At first I felt great. I mean, all the pressure was off. No nagging, no kid screaming. Like the Hamptons all over again.

(Sighs.)

But, like everything else, it didn't last.

HOUND

She moved back?

TONY

No -- that's what's weird. All of a sudden, the house was too quiet. Actually missed the kid screaming -- I even missed Julia's nagging.

MAYOR

Geez, that is weird.

TONY

First, she makes my life miserable by being home, then she makes my life miserable by *not* being home.

HOUND

(Beat.)

You need to get out more, babe.

TONY

Get out where?

HOUND

Discos! Meet some new women, hook up with the boys.

MAYOR

You can always count on the boys.

TONY

Yeah? So how come I had to make all these calls to get us here?

WHIZ

Well, you should've told us how screwed up you were.

TONY

What, like a charity case, get on the phone and plead for sympathy? No way!

(Pause.)

RYAN

So where you and Julia stand now?

TONY

Well, she's still living at her mother's ... and ... I go by there.

HOUND

Oh, she has you over to her mother's?

TONY

Not really. I just kinda show up.

WHIZ

Kinda show up?

TONY

You know, after work.

MAYOR

She cool with that?

TONY

At first. But when I started telling her to come home, she got pissed. Told me she's never coming back. Said she doesn't want to talk to me.

WHIZ

Sooo, you're not seeing her.

TONY

No, I am.

RYAN

But you just said she doesn't want to talk to you.

TONY

Right.

ANGELO

But you're still going over there.

TONY

Right.

WHIZ

To play craps with your mother-in-law?

TONY

They won't let me in the house.

HOUND

Sooo you're *not* going over there.

TONY

No, I still am.

(Pause. The boys all look confused.)

MAYOR

This is like Abbott and Costello meet Guido style. Are you seeing your wife or not?

TONY

I am. Whether she wants me to or not.

(The following five lines are said simultaneously.)

MAYOR

Whoops.

WHIZ

Oh shit.

HOUND

The hell outta here.

RYAN

Ridiculous!

ANGELO

Can't believe this.

TONY

I drive over, sit in my car, and wait for her to come out. Then, if she goes somewhere, I follow her.

RYAN

Tony, man, that's stalking!

TONY

If she and I *happen* to be on the same street at the same time, can I help it?

WHIZ

They put people in jail for that!

TONY

Just watching from a distance.

ANGELO

Hell's wrong with you?

TONY

She's what's wrong with me.

RYAN

Then let her go!

TONY

I can't!

WHIZ

Know any school songs? Bubba, the head bull at Rikers, likes to hear his new bitches do the rah rah when they wear tcheerleader's outfit.

TONY

What, they gonna arrest me for watching her?

WHIZ

Stop playing dumb! They'll tell you not to be within a mile of her. And if you are, they'll throw your ass in jail.

TONY

Phhh.

RYAN

Will you listen to this? A wife beater. A stalking wife beater. And we're trying to be nice to him. Tony, man, let me put it bluntly. You are officially, certifiably, beyond-kidding-around fucked up. Not your regular-funny-ha-ha-fucked up, not your stupid-but-basically-harmless fucked up, but seriously, dangerously fucked up.

TONY

Thanks a lot, pal.

RYAN

You need help, man. Serious help. A psychiatrist or something--

TONY

(Flaring anger.)

A psychiatrist? You calling me craz?

RYAN

They deal with this all the time. They know the causes for it--

TONY

I know the cause for it: her!

(Beat.)

Look, I got enough troubles without having to deal with a psychiatrist.

RYAN

So you'd rather keep beating your wife--

TONY

I told you, she started--

ANGELO

Hey, I know! Talk to a priest.

TONY

A priest?

ANGELO

That's their job.

TONY

(Chuckling derisively.)

Listen to what you're saying. Me, talk to a priest. That's better than the shrink idea! You know the last time I talked to a priest?

ANGELO

Tony--

TONY

My communion. Fifth grade. Me in a white suit and muddy shoes.

ANGELO

You tell a priest your problems, he listens and--

TONY

And what? Do five Hail Mary's? What makes you think a priest -- a guy who's never been married, never touched a woman -- is gonna help me with my marriage?

ANGELO

They talk to people about everything.

TONY

You know what they'll tell me? To look in my heart for God's wisdom. Well, let me tell you, I've looked, and I ain't seen much. A priest will ask me if I talk to God. Yeah, I talk to Him all right. I curse Him out for putting me in the middle of this.

(Pause. Everyone is somber.)

WHIZ

Hey, what the hell we all so down about? Tony's fucked up: what a surprise. He's only been fucking up since we've known him. Okay, this time it's worse than normal, even by his standards. But there's nothing here he can't fix, right?

TONY

Well--

WHIZ

Okay, so let's calmly, rationally review the facts.

TONY

But you don't know--

WHIZ

Relax, I know what I need to know.

TONY

No you don't--

WHIZ

Don't worry, we'll figure it all out. We're like family, right?

TONY

Yeah, but--

WHIZ

Just like the Hamptons, okay?

TONY

(Resigned.)

Yeah, sure. Whatever.

WHIZ

Okay. So, problems with the wife -- worse than most, but we all have 'em.

HOUND

Part of life.

ANGELO

Except none of us ever hit our wives before.

RYAN

Can't soft-soap that.

WHIZ

You heard him: in self-defense. I mean, yeah,, he went too far. But that's in the past, right Tony?

TONY

(Morose.)
Yeah.

RYAN

It's not that simple.

WHIZ

We'll figure this out, right Tony?

(There's a pause as they wait for Tony to answer, but he is silent. WHIZ then jumps in with enthusiasm to regain the positive momentum.)

WHIZ

All right, the wife beating, it's DONE, even in self defense. What's next?

RYAN

The stalking.

TONY

It's not --

WHIZ

Okay, so it's not stalking, but it's kinda like it. It's pretty close to it without actually being it, if you know what I mean. I mean, technically, if you were looking at it like a lawyer, you could say it was.

RYAN

Spoken like a true lawyer.

TONY

I wasn't stalking her--

WHIZ

Never said you were. Just saying it was a bit overboard. But that's okay, we'll work it out.

RYAN

I can't believe this.

WHIZ

So this thing, which, in the technical sense, could be considered stalking, you're gonna end it, right?

(Again there is a pause as they wait for Tony to agree. He remains silent and looks to the floor.)

Tony?

(Tony remains silent and looks uncomfortable.)

WHIZ

Tony!

TONY

Well, it's ... see, it's kinda not gonna be a problem anymore.

WHIZ

See? He's already got this beat. Cool. You guys are getting back together.

TONY

No.

WHIZ

Okay. So you're, you're ... you're letting her go. You're tired of the whole thing, bored of sitting in front of her house.

TONY

Well, yeah, I guess that probably woulda happened.

MAYOR

Wait wait wait wait wait. You said *woulda*. What *did* happen?

TONY

She got a restraining order.

(The following four lines are said simultaneously.)

ANGELO

That's all!

RYAN

I knew she would.

MAYOR

Hello!

Ouch!

HOUND

Oh, she's had that awhile.

TONY

Whoa. How long?

WHIZ

Oh, I don't know, half a year, eight months?

TONY

What are the terms?

WHIZ

The terms are, I gotta stay the fuck away from her.

TONY

How *far* away?

WHIZ

I don't know, a mile, something like that.

TONY

But you're still showing up at her mother's house.

ANGELO

Sometimes.

TONY

You said a lot before.

RYAN

Well, not every night. I take off for Christmas, New Year's, Labor Day --

TONY

If she's got a restraining order, you're not supposed to be there at all!

WHIZ

They could put you away, man.

MAYOR

Don't I know it now.

TONY

(Beat. Then the following three lines are said simultaneously.)

ANGELO

Oooops.

HOUND

Oh shit.

MAYOR

It gets better.

WHIZ

(Defeated, resigned to bad news.)
Go ahead.

TONY

Ahhh, it was about a month ago. I was out earlier that night, at that club, La Mouche.

MAYOR

(With exaggerated anguish, hand to his forehead.)
Ohhhhh, these discos.

HOUND

They're dance clubs.

MAYOR

You could call a skunk a scented mammalian, it's still a skunk.

WHIZ

(To TONY.)
So you're at this club ...

TONY

And I'm hanging, right?

(As he gives his next lines, HOUND gets visibly excited. He starts beating the table like it was a drum.)

Talking to some young girl. She wants to dance, I dance with her. She wants to drink, I buy her drinks. She wants to giggle with her little girl friends about me being older, I deal with it. She wants to do some coke in the parking lot, I snort a few lines. Next thing I know, we're in her

car, grabbing and mauling, grabbing and mauling, and I'm into it--

HOUND

(So excited, he has to stand up.)
Of course you're into it!

TONY

With this young girl I don't even know. Just like the Hamptonsj

HOUND

(Standing and beating the table, almost as if he is about to climax from the story itself.)
Right!

TONY

Then, I start thinking about Julia.

HOUND

(Dumbstruck, he sits immediately, stops drumming, and speaks morosely.)
Uh oh.

TONY

(Loathing.)
Even when she's not there, she's there. Pissing me off, interfering where she's got no right to interfere. And me? I'm losing it with this hot, stoned twenty-one year old. Goddamned Julia!

(Pause.)

TONY

So anyway, I tell this girl I'm not into it, she's too stoned to care.

HOUND

Man.

TONY

So ... I decide. I can't enjoy fucking around, and getting stoned anymore, might as well live with Julia.

ANGELO

(Sarcastically.)
Oh, I'm sure that'll win her over.

TONY

So I drive to her mother's house, outta my mind and very, very pissed.

HOUND

Oh shit.

TONY

It was late. Musta been after two in the morning.

MAYOR

Jesus, Tony!

TONY

So I'm sitting out front, thinking I'll just sleep in the car, be there in the morning when she comes out for work. But then I think, it's hot and miserable in my car, why do I have to sleep like a dog when she's in a comfortable bed?

RYAN

Don't tell me you--

TONY

It was time for her to come home.

MAYOR

(Sarcastically.)

And at two in the morning, when you're stoned and horny is the time to tell her.

ANGELO

What'd you do?

TONY

I rang the bell. Said I needed to speak to her. And she never even opened the door! Told me I'd better leave or she was calling the cops.

RYAN

What'd you expect?

TONY

I don't have the right to talk to my wife?

RYAN

Not at two in the morning!

WHIZ

(Beat.)

So . . . did she call the cops?

TONY

I dared her to.

MAYOR

Oh, brilliant --

TONY

And she did! She called the cops on her husband!

WHIZ

(Beat.)

And?

TONY

Well, I was gonna sit there in my car, let them take me in, you know? But, then I'm thinking, why should their life be so easy when mine's a mess? They wanna get in the middle of my marriage, I'll make 'em work for their paycheck, those fat, lazy Irish bastards -- no offense Ryan.

RYAN

Yeah, right.

TONY

So I tear ass outta there, you know? And the cops, they take off right after me. Next thing I know, I'm in a high-speed chase, just like the movies!

ANGELO

Jesus, this guy's living in a fantasy world!

TONY

Well, we're going pretty good, sixty on the side roads.

ANGELO

What's wrong with you? You get people killed like--

TONY

Believe me, nobody got killed. I know how to handle a car.

WHIZ

(Defeated, but still interested.)

Just ... keep going.

TONY

So there I am, going through the side streets, you know? But now there are even more cops on my ass. So I figure, before they cut me off completely, I'll get on the highway, really open it up. So I get on the Belt, figuring if I could make it over the Verazano and through Staten Island, I'll be in Jersey and the cops can't touch me.

MAYOR

Um, Tony? New York and Jersey have been formally introduced and are now speaking regularly with each other.

TONY

I guess so, because when I got on the bridge there were, like, thirty cop cars waiting for me.

WHIZ

(Counting off with his fingers.)
Reckless endangerment, harassment, violation of a restraining order, drunken driving.

TONY

If that was all they charged me with ...

ANGELO

Oh boy.

WHIZ

What else?

TONY

Assault.

HOUND

Assault--

TONY

Of a police officer.

HOUND

Tell me you got in a fight with a cop.

TONY

I didn't *start* a fight with anybody.

There he goes again.

MAYOR

You have a death wish?

RYAN

TONY

Hey, I was ready to go in peacefully. By that point I was tired of the whole thing. So, when I get outta the car, I got my hands on my head, like they do on TV. Well this one cop who's supposed to put the cuffs on me -- I'll never forget his name -- O'Reilly, that Irish bastard -- sorry Ryan.

RYAN

You're way past offending me.

TONY

He comes up to me and starts pushing me, calling me a piece of garbage, saying he wishes he could just beat me till I'm senseless. That Irish bastard, sorry Ryan --

RYAN

(Resigned, puts his head down on his arms on the table.)
Just ... finish the story.

TONY

That Irish-- that *guy* -- he got no right to treat me like that.

ANGELO

You don't think they're gonna be pissed?

TONY

Yeah, but they're supposed to be professionals. Pushing me like that, the guy violated my civil rights.

MAYOR

Your civil rights? I'm your friend and I'm ready to beat you with a flashlight.

TONY

I'm not just gonna sit there with some cop pushing me around.

WHIZ

(Resigned to the inevitable bad news.)
Sooo...

TONY

So I yelled back at him. And then -- I don't know, it depends on the angle -- I kinda may have pushed him.

WHIZ

Back to "kinda."

MAYOR

You "kinda" pushed him? Either you did or you didn't.

TONY

(He stands up to act out the following.)

Well, see, he was so close to my face with his bad breath and everything, I just wanted a little breathing room. Problem is -- and everything was happening so fast, you know -- I may have instinctively, like, put out my hands, you know? Just to get that breathing room. And, well, when I put my hands out -- I don't know -- my hands, well, they could have been interpreted as being closed.

ANGELO

What?

TONY

And I think that, well, um, my closed hands, they were, like, near his face. So, I don't know, I guess to some of them, from their distorted perspective, it could have looked like I was punching him in the face -- which I wasn't, technically. But I think the Irish bastard cop -- sorry Ryan -- I think he thought I punched him, because he went down like a shot.

ANGELO

You decked a cop?

TONY

I didn't deck him! See, his face lunged forward right into my closed hands, which were just trying to get me a little breathing room.

ANGELO

Assaulting a police officer. A nice little hole you dug.

WHIZ

The cops, what'd they do after that?

TONY

I don't know. It happened so fast. One minute I was face to face with this Irish cop, next minute I'm on the floor with twenty of 'em looking like they wanted to kill me.

MAYOR

That surprises you? The fact that they didn't surprises me.

WHIZ

You lucked out.

TONY

Lucked out? I spent the night in jail with some of the sickest bastards I ever saw.

WHIZ

How'd you get out so fast?

TONY

Bail. Five thousand bucks for it, and God knows how many more thousands for my friggin' lawyer.

WHIZ

Why didn't you call me? I coulda handled the legal--

TONY

Too embarrassed. About this, about my whole life falling apart. The way you guys used to know me, compared to what I've become.

(Pause.)

MAYOR

(Soft, considerate, with a hand on TONY'S shoulder.)
Nothing to be embarrassed about. You've always been a fuck-up in our eyes.

(Soft chuckle from the boys, including Tony.)

WHIZ

What'd you finally get charged with?

TONY

Violation of a court order for going to Julia's door, driving while intoxicated, resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer -- and driving without a seat belt.

(Pause.)

MAYOR

Driving without a seat belt?

(Beat.)

Man, did you ever piss them off.

(Laughs from the group.)

RYAN

I don't know what you guys are laughing about. I don't know who this guy is anymore. Wife beating, fighting with cops, high-speed chases? What if he killed someone on that chase? Or what if he beat up Julia so bad that she was like one of those women you see on the news? I'm not going to lose sleep over him getting what he deserves.

(Beat. TONY stares at the floor glumly.)

MAYOR

Come on Ryan. The guy's hurting.

RYAN

Doesn't make it right.

MAYOR

I don't like it either, but what are you gonna do? We're his friends.

RYAN

Not anymore.

TONY

Thanks.

RYAN

You want me to tell you everything's going to be like the old days? It's not. You got away with stupid shit when you were younger, and it must have spoiled you, because now you're doing even more stupid shit, but you can't get away with it now. And if you're too embarrassed to tell us why are we all here?

TONY

(It starts casually, almost with chuckles, but ends up somber, as a self-revelation.)

'Cause ... I got no one else to talk to. My wife, my kids, my family, her family, they pleaded, they yelled, and now

they're done with me. I'm alone here. Facing serious time behind bars and I'm alone. Suspended from teaching, can't see the kid. I'm already in jail, man. Solitary

TONY (CONTINUED)

confinement in my head, constantly thinking, "how did I fuck it up so bad?" About the only time I'm happy is when I'm thinking of the Hamptons. About the fun we used to have, just laughing, hanging with the boys.

(Beat.)

WHIZ

When's your court date?

TONY

Next Tuesday. That's when we decide whether to go to trial. Otherwise I'll have to do a plea, but my lawyer, he already told me I'll be doing time.

(Silence.)

ANGELO

Tony, I'm ... I just hope--

TONY

(Back to forced chuckling nonchalance.)

No, don't "hope" for me. Waste all that time "hoping" the kid stops crying, "hoping" Julia comes home, "hoping" the judge is lenient. Biggest sucker bet there is, "hope." It's Lucy pulling the football away from Charlie Brown over and over again. And dumb fuck Brown just keeps "hoping" she'll leave it there just one time - and he always ends up on ass.

(Pause.)

ANGELO

Geez, I --

TONY

There's one thing I wanna do before I go in.

HOUND

There's a good nudie bar in College Point.

TONY

No, not that. Hamptons.

ANGELO

The Hamptons?

TONY

One more time. A fresh memory to get me through.

ANGELO

When?

TONY

Right now.

ANGELO

It's close to midnight!

TONY

So? We'll grab some coffee, take one car, bullshit the whole way out. Like old times!

MAYOR

I'm there!

WHIZ

Sure, you're there. You only have a girlfriend at home. What about the rest of us with wives?

HOUND

I think I could do it. Tell Jenny there's a weekend accounting clinic that I forgot to mention.

WHIZ

And she'll buy that?

HOUND

Of course. Buys everything I say.

WHIZ

That's what you said about your first wife.

HOUND

Don't worry about me, I'm going. What about you?

WHIZ

Nah. No way.

HOUND

Come on, it's Tony's last road trip.

WHIZ

The hell am I going to tell my wife?

HOUND

Give her an alibi.

WHIZ

Like what?

HOUND

I don't know. Tell her Tony got sick and you gotta get him to a nerve specialist who's on vacation in the Hamptons.

(Beat.)

WHIZ

Your wife'd buy that?

HOUND

Sure.

WHIZ

Well, mine would kill me. Tell you what, you guys go ahead. I'll go home and plead my case -- see if she'll let me out tomorrow.

HOUND

It's sad to hear that pleading shit.

WHIZ

It's even sadder to do it.

(WHIZ shakes hands with everyone, TONY last, then walks out of the bar.)

HOUND

Angelo?

ANGELO

Guess I could show up tomorrow with Janey.

TONY

What?

MAYOR

You better stop drinking right now. A wife on a road trip?

HOUND

Angelo, as much as we love your wife ...

ANGELO

Well, if Janey can't go ... Good night, fellas.

(He shakes hands with everyone except TONY. He then approaches TONY, pauses, then shakes hands.)
I hope you figure it out one day.

TONY

Thanks, man.

(ANGELO exits.)

HOUND

Ryan?

RYAN

(Derisive chuckle.)
And that kind of says it all, doesn't it? I've just poured my guts out explaining why this is wrong, and you see it as one more excuse for a road trip.

HOUND

But he's gonna pay the price starting next week, so --

RYAN

What about Jeannie? What about his kid?

MAYOR

It's just a night out.

RYAN

It's a night to get out. I'm done with him.
(He leaves without shaking anyone's hand. Beat.)

HOUND

(For the first time, he is visibly shaken by RYAN'S words.)

Wow.

(Beat.)

MAYOR

(Somewhat numb, then with forced exuberance.)
Well, let's get a move on. Get this last road trip officially--

HOUND

Yeah -- ooh, Jesus!

TONY

What?

HOUND

My father. He's uh ... I told him I'd help with... He needs to move a few things.

(TONY slumps, as if defeated by this latest blow.)

MAYOR

Are you kidding me? A night in the Hamptons. He'd understand.

HOUND

Yeah, maybe ... but I did, uh, you know, say I'd ... then Jackie was making gravy and--

MAYOR

I can't believe this.

HOUND

I'm uh, I'm gonna have to ... you know me, I'd love to, but ...

MAYOR

This is --

HOUND

Good luck, Tony. Mayor.
(He leaves.)

TONY

Hound?

MAYOR

(Trying to maintain a cheerful facade.)
Well, it's you and me, boy.

TONY

Even Hound

(Beat.)

MAYOR

(Ushering TONY towards the exit.)

We, uh, we better get that coffee good and strong for the trip out. Must be one or two old dinosaurs we'll recognize out there - find a place to crash.

(Tony stops and goes back to the bar. He walks silently to a bathroom.)

Bladders ain't what they used to be, huh?

(Now addressing the closed bathroom door.)

You know, I'm thinking, got to be a few of the old bartenders out there who will remember us Hell, we used to support them in the old days. I'm sure we could crash with-

- (A loud explosion. MAYOR jumps. Beat.)

Jesus Christ, again with the firecrackers? It wasn't that funny the first time.

(Behind the door, we the thump of TONY'S body hitting the ground.)

Tony?

(Bangs on the door.)

Tony!

(Bangs the door harder, tries to open it, but it's locked.)

Oh my God, what did you do? Oh my God. What the -- Oh my God.

(Crying, he pulls out his cell and dials.)

I need an ambulance. 215-05 35TH Avenue. Jesus, hurry!

(Lights down.)

END