

***Requiem For John***

(Setting: The courtyard of a bar in New Orleans. A brick wall with wrought iron fencing surrounds the area. There are ferns and tropical plants. Several tables stand empty. Two women and a man in their mid to late forties sit at a table down stage left. There is a carved wooden box on the table in front of them, and the remains of three tall drinks. Waiters and Waitresses come and go clearing up after the lunch time rush. One of them stops at the table.)

WAITRESS

Can I get you another drink?

LAURA

We're still fine. I think.

SUSI

I'm terrific. What's the name of this drink again?

BARRY

It's called a Hurricane.

(He picks up a small book and reads.)

*It's a traditional New Orlean's favorite. 4 and a half ounces of light rum--*

LAURA

We don't care, Barry. We don't care what it's made of.

SUSI

I want another one.

LAURA

You don't need another one. We have to be able to walk out of here.

SUSI

I can walk just fine.

BARRY

I'd like another ice tea.

WAITRESS

That's one Hurricane and another ice tea. Anything else?

LAURA

The bill. We'll want the bill.

SUSI

Where are we gonna eat dinner?

LAURA

We just had lunch.

SUSI

She's never been on vacation before? You know that Barry?

LAURA

This isn't a damn vacation!

BARRY

Mother and I went to Las Vegas last year. You should try Las Vegas sometime.

(Looking through his guide book.)

There's a cemetery tour that leaves at three from the Absinthe House. I don't know if you have to buy tickets ahead of time.

LAURA

I don't want to go on any damn cemetery tours. We are not here to visit cemeteries.

SUSI

I can't believe you got Alice to go to Las Vegas.

BARRY

We saw Tom Jones.

LAURA

(Placing her hand protectively on the carved box.)

We are here to take care of John and that's all we're here for.

SUSI

Tom Jones is still alive?

LAURA

I should have come on my own. I knew I should have come on my own.

BARRY

He has an amazing floor show.

SUSI

Seems like most of them are all dead.

BARRY

Maybe we should have taken John to Las Vegas.

LAURA

Why would you say that? John never wanted to go to Las Vegas. He wanted to go to New Orleans. He went on and on about going to New Orleans. You know that.

SUSI

Well, that was John, wasn't it? He went on about things.

LAURA

We should go back to the hotel. We ought to go back to the hotel and think things over.

SUSI

Barry wants to go on a tour of the cemeteries.

(WAITRESS brings tray to the table.)

WAITRESS

Here you go! Another Hurricane and an ice-tea. You sure you don't want something, ma'am?

LAURA

I'll just have a sip of hers.

WAITRESS

I'll bring the check back in a minute. (She exits.)

SUSI

They do that cause they know you'll change your mind. When I was a waitress, I never brought the check unless they were standing up with their hands in their pockets.

BARRY

When were you a waitress?

LAURA

Barry, what time is the riverboat excursion?

BARRY  
(Reading)

One leaves at seven and at nine.

LAURA

One can't leave at seven and at nine. One can only leave once at seven or at nine.

BARRY

It's the same boat. It goes out. It comes back, and then it goes back out.

SUSI

Well, that's efficient.

LAURA

We'll take the nine o'clock. It will be more festive.

SUSI

You're sprinkling your ex-husband's ashes in the Mississippi River, and you want it to be festive?

LAURA

I've been carting this box around for six months, and tonight I'm getting free of it. I think that festive is appropriate. Is there a moon tonight? I didn't think to look at the sky, last night.

SUSI

We were in Biloxi. Isn't there some kind of song about the moon in Biloxi?

LAURA

Let me have a sip of your Hurricane.

SUSI

You have to carry me out, remember?

BARRY

You want some ice tea?

(During these last speeches, A tall woman dressed entirely in black enters the courtyard. She wears dark glasses and a broad brimmed hat. She stands languidly. A WAITER rushes to her side and escorts her to a table at stage right. She slowly removes her long black gloves as the WAITER fusses over her.)

BARRY

Wow!

SUSI

Wow? Wow what?

BARRY

Don't look.

(SUSI and LAURA both look. BARRY cringes. The woman takes no notice of them.)

SUSI

Countess Dracula!

BARRY

Shhhhh!

SUSI

She can't hear me.

LAURA

If she's Countess Dracula, she can probably smell you.

BARRY

Don't make a scene.

SUSI

You're the one making a scene. You're the one who said 'wow.'

BARRY

I didn't mean to. I just--she looks like the woman in the book.

(He is rattling pages in the guidebook.)

She's famous for something. Here! See?

(He shoves the guidebook at them.)

LAURA

(Takes book and studies the picture, studies the woman, studies the picture again.)

I don't know.

SUSI

(Snatches book. Makes her own comparisons.)

I don't know.

BARRY

It's her! She owns the Voodoo mansion. It even says, she comes out sometimes and takes refreshment in the French Quarter.

SUSI

That would be at night, Barry. And it would be a different kind of refreshment.

(The WAITER returns with an evil looking drink on a tray which he serves to the woman. SUSI and LAURA gawk openly. BARRY tries to slouch down in his seat. The woman pays them no attention. As the WAITER returns, LAURA snags him.)

LAURA

I want one of those.

WAITER

Excuse me?

LAURA

I want one of whatever that woman is having. Tell my waitress will you?  
(He goes.)

SUSI

She knew you'd want something else. That's why she didn't bring the check.

LAURA

She didn't bring the bill because she's a lousy waitress, but we can ask her who that woman is.

SUSI

Why do you care?

LAURA

Barry cares. Barry, stop looking as if you were going to sink under the floor. We're tourists we can do this sort of thing.

SUSI

How can we be tourists if we're not on a vacation?

BARRY

She's looking at us. Oh, God, she's getting up!  
(LAURA and SUSI turn to look as the woman rises comes over to their table. BARRY drops the book on the floor and dives after it.)

MADAM DUPRES

Is something wrong with your friend?

LAURA

Barry? Is something wrong? I guess he dropped something.

MADAME DUPRES

He looked ill. I can sometimes help when someone is ill. Are you sure he's all right

LAURA  
Barry? Are you all right?

BARRY  
(Still under the table.)  
I'm fine.

LAURA  
He's fine.

SUSI  
He thought he recognized you from the guidebook.

Woman  
Guidebook?

LAURA  
But we told him you probably weren't that woman.

MADAME DUPRES  
What woman?

LAURA  
Barry? Come back up here and show the lady the book.

BARRY  
(Rising back into sight.)  
Uh...I...uh...

SUSI  
(Takes book from him.)  
Here it is. There is a resemblance.

MADAME DUPRES  
(Takes the book and looks at it.)  
Ahhhh.  
(closes the book and hands it back to BARRY.)  
I see. I am sorry if I have disturbed you. Excuse me.  
(She returns to her table.)

SUSI  
God, that was embarrassing.

LAURA

She probably gets that all the time, don't you think? The way she dresses. She must get reactions all the time. She must be used to it.

BARRY

I made a fool of myself.

SUSI

No.

LAURA

Certainly not. She probably has men throw themselves at her feet all the time.

SUSI

In a hat like that you have to expect that sort of thing.

BARRY

She thinks I'm an idiot.

SUSI

No.

LAURA

Of course not. Shy. She thinks you're shy.

BARRY

I'm ridiculous. John used to say it, and it's true. I am ridiculous.

LAURA

John was an asshole. Wouldn't you rather be ridiculous than an asshole?

BARRY

You've come over fifteen hundred miles to New Orleans with that asshole in a carved box so that you can sprinkle his ashes on the Mississippi in the moonlight. Nobody will ever do that for me. I ought to just start being an asshole.

SUSI

Did we decide whether there was going to be a moon?

LAURA

I'm not doing it because he was an asshole. I'm doing it because I used to love him and now he's dead and I'm still alive. I am not doing it because he was an asshole, but if you want me to bring your ashes here when you're dead and sprinkle them on the Mississippi in the moonlight, I will. I promise.

SUSI

I'll come with her.

BARRY

It wouldn't be the same.

(WAITRESS enters)

WAITRESS

Somebody ordered a zombie?

LAURA

Right here.

WAITRESS

(Setting down the drink.)

You still want that check?

SUSI

Maybe we'll hold off on the check.

WAITRESS

Right.

BARRY

I want one of those too!

SUSI

Barry! You don't drink!

WAITRESS

Sure thing. (exits)

LAURA

Barry, you won't make that cemetery tour.

BARRY

I don't think I want to go on the cemetery tour anymore.

SUSI

Wait until the Zombie takes affect.

BARRY

My whole life has been a cemetery tour.

LAURA

No angst, Barry. We don't have time for it.

SUSI

This is coming from the queen of angst?

BARRY

I know that's the same woman. Why didn't she say so?

LAURA

Well, if it is the same woman she probably doesn't want to be pestered. Not that you were pestering her. You were under the table, but I bet lots of other people do pester her.

SUSI

It's odd that she came over here at all when you think about it. Actually, she was pestering us.

BARRY

There are tours of the mansion. It says so here in the book. Maybe we could go on one of the tours.

LAURA

I don't want to go on any tours! I want to sprinkle John and go home.

BARRY

You don't want to come all the way to New Orleans and not see the city. New Orleans is one of the cultural capitals of the world. It says so in the guidebook.

LAURA

I can see the city just fine from here. Besides, if you went on the tour and the voodoo lady was there and she wasn't the same woman, you'd be disappointed. This way you can tell everyone that you met her.

BARRY

But that would be dishonest.

LAURA

What the hell is in this drink?

SUSI

Rum. That's all they serve in New Orleans. One deadly rum drink after another.