

HAPPY HOUR

A play in one act

By

Jim Blanchette

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CHARACTERS

JANET PHILLIPS An attractive, intelligent alcoholic. She is witty and personable. Yet, she cannot seem to stay away from this bar, which has essentially become her home. Mid 30's.

SMITH A bitter former street drunk who went from victim to victimizer. He is snide and caustic. He takes special delight in razzing JANET. As owner of the bar, he feels that it is his right. Mid 50's.

KEARNS The naive and simple barmaid. She has never gone out of her way to experience life. 20's.

ALBERT A wino who struggling to find pride in his life. Late 50's.

MICK A semi-intelligent bar patron. Just out looking for a good time. 50's

BOB A patron. (This actor can double as Albert if necessary)

GERT A patron.

DORIS A patron.

*Other patrons can be added if a more active bar is desired or parts can be combined if a smaller cast is required.

SETTING

The bar is a slightly run down neighborhood hangout. There are assorted tables and chairs and there is also a bar. Behind the bar sits the shelves full of various liquors. The walls are slightly dirty and there are cobwebs in the corners. The whole bar should have a well-used look about it. The window UC is filthy but the name SMITTY'S can be seen written so it looks backwards to the audience. The door UR is also glass.

STYLE

It is relatively quiet bar where people go to drink and that is about all. The only real appeal the bar has is the enigma of Janet Phillips. If a large cast is used, a normal lighting plot to fill out the whole bar should be used. If a smaller cast is desired, the main acting area can be lit and the fringes left in darkness to give the illusion of a "crowd." Lights can dim at various times to illustrate a passage of time.

*NOTE. Patrons come to this bar to drink. They should go through a fair amount of alcohol and should be affected physically and mentally as the action progresses. None should be as pronounced as Janet, however.

HAPPY HOUR

(SMITH and the patrons are engaged in a lively discussion. KEARNS is watching the action with disgust and is standing just outside the group of characters.)

SMITH: All right, all right. Now, do I have all the bets?

MICK: Well, I don't know if I should.

SMITH: C'mon, Mick. It's only a buck. And it's a double pot tonight. Last night, our lucky winner went home drunk and forgot to take his reward. So, tonight the kitty stands at 46 bucks.

(A few murmurs from the others are heard.)

DORIS: O.K., I'm sold! Here's my dollar. Now, all I have to do is guess how many times she's gonna fall down tonight, right?

SMITH: Absolutely correct, my good woman. The guess which is the closest without going over gets all the dough.

MICK: What if she don't show?

SMITH: If the infamous Janet Phillips doesn't make an appearance this evening, I will take off my clothes and dance the limbo.

DORIS: Let's say a quick prayer that she makes it.

GERT: Not to worry, Dotty, old girl. Janet's as dependable as Old Faithful. She hasn't missed a night in— how long did you say, Smitty?

SMITH: Five years.

BOB: Five years. She comes every night and she never leaves sober.

SMITH: Hell, sometimes she never leaves.

(ALL laugh except Kearns.)

KEARNS: I don't think she'll be coming in.

SMITH: Did I hear something from the peanut gallery?

KEARNS: I said that I don't think she'll be coming in. So, you're wasting your time on this silly little pool of yours.

SMITH: You sound so sure of yourself. What makes you think that we won't be seeing Miss Janet this evening?

KEARNS: She told me.

(ALL laugh.)

SMITH: You're kidding, right?

KEARNS: No, I'm not kidding. When I took her home last night, we talked all the way to her apartment and she was in tears. She told me how much she hated the stuff and how it has ruled her life and that...

ALL: (Finishing her sentence.) No matter what it takes, this time she's going to quit for sure.

KEARNS: How did you know?

SMITH: Are you crazy? I've heard it a hundred times. That same speech. That broad needs new material.

BOB: My favorite part is when she tells you about her world famous chili and then gives you the recipe.

ALL: A quart of whole tomatoes, a pound of ground round, three jalapeno peppers and a fifth of tequila—for the cook. Ha! Ha!

GERT: Oh, but you men always miss out on the best one.

DORIS: (Imitating JANET.) You know, last night I think a man came home with me. Or was it a bottle of scotch.

KEARNS: I really don't think it's nice to bring into the open things she says when she's drunk.

SMITH: Janet has said those things to so many people that....

GERT: Enough about the past. What I want to know is where the Whopper stands tonight.

ALL: Ooh! Big payola! How about it, Smitty! Boy, I'd like to win that! etc.

SMITH: Quiet, please, ladies and gentlemen. After last night's failures, the Janet Phillips grand sweepstakes prize stands at 3,540 dollars!

MICK: Holy shit! How do I get a crack at that?

SMITH: Ah, gentle sir, this is not a pool for the weak of heart and mind. Many a foolhardy gambler has tried and failed. (SMITH pulls out a rules sheet.) To win, you must guess the amount of drinks she imbibes in the evening, exactly, and the type of cocktail she drinks, exactly. Only drinks she consumes count and no one can force her to drink, although gentle coaxing is permitted. She must order every drink, but anyone can buy her booze, as long as she orders it. Entry fee, ten bucks. Still interested, Mick?

MICK: You bet! Put me down for a ten-spot.

SMITH: Because we have so many veterans in the pool tonight and this is your first time, I'll give you a little hint. If she is drunk when she walks in, she likes dark liquors. Scotch, whiskey, etc. If she's only slightly inebriated, she likes fruity drinks. If she hasn't been drinking at all, (SMITH knocks on the bar.) she likes light colored booze.

MICK: Some clue. How the hell am I supposed make up my mind!

SMITH: Guess.

DORIS: Well, he had better make a guess quick, 'cuz here she comes.

SMITH: Write your guess down on this napkin, Micky. Now, remember everybody, if anybody blabs to her about this, all bets are forfeited and they go into tomorrow's pot. All money and guess slips into this ice bucket and no peeking.

DORIS: Enough gab! Everyone act natural!

(Patrons run around the bar looking for seats and finally end up seated very close to where they started, the women at one table and the men at another. SMITH goes behind the bar and cleans glasses, while a bewildered KEARNS watches the activity. Enter JANET.)

ALL: (A la first grade.) Good evening, Janet.

JANET: Hi ya, troops, what's up?

MICK: (Examines JANET thoroughly.) You're sober?

JANET: Lucky guess.

MICK: Shit!

JANET: What have you been telling your new customers about me, Smitty?

SMITH: He's just got a thing for drunk bimbos.

JANET: I bet you say that about all the girls, you scoundrel. (To MICK.) Sorry, guy, not tonight.

SMITH: Not tonight? What does that mean?

JANET: I'm not going to be drinking this evening.

(ALL react.)

SMITH: You can't be serious.

JANET: Of course I'm not serious. I just wanted to see your reaction.

SMITH: You just caught us off guard for a minute.

JANET: By the reaction I got, you would think you bet on the wrong horse at the track.

(ALL shift uncomfortably in their seats.)

SMITH: (Changing the subject.) What's your poison for the evening, Janet?

JANET: Oh, shit! Here I am gabbing when I should be drinking. I don't want to know the answer to this next question, but did I miss happy hour?

SMITH: Technically, yes, but I'll extend it to you for one order.

JANET: Thanks, Smitty, old man. You are a prince among bartenders. I think I'll have...(ALL perk up for the order.) twelve gin and tonics.

(ALL respond variously, i.e. some are happy that they are still in the running, some are already out of the pool because they picked the drink wrong, etc..)

SMITH: You mean six, because when you order one drink at the regular price, you get the second one free during happy hour. So, would you like six gin and tonics?

JANET: I would like to teach the world to sing. I would like to be rich and famous so Robin Leach could whine a glamorous story about me. In lieu of that, I would like twenty-four cocktails, and, taking into account all the mathematical variables, I am placing an order for twelve gins. And burn them, please. Damn them to hell, if you catch my metaphor.

SMITH: Any other special requests, your highness?

JANET: Since you asked, squire, it would be quite nice of you if you were to hold the rocks, extra lime, and keep the peanuts coming, I don't want to get drunk on an empty stomach.

SMITH: Ah, yes. Intoxication on a full stomach makes regurgitation so much more interesting.

JANET: You know what I meant. I would prefer not to get drunk this evening.

SMITH: And twenty-four gins will give you a nice little buzz.

JANET: Silly rabbit, they're not all for me.

SMITH: Will Mr. Kong be joining you this evening?

JANET: As it so happens, I will be joined by several friends from work. We will be discussing ways in which we can turn our company into a major corporation.

SMITH: You have a job? I thought you were a professional lush.

JANET: Very droll Mr. Smith. Yes, I have a job and I would love to tell you all about it, but it's very hush-hush! I'll give you the first hand, inside story right after I make my first million.

SMITH: Speaking about your first million, let's turn our attention to your delinquent bar tab. It is starting to get a little high.

JANET: Not to worry, oh superb dispenser of spirits and sodas. If all goes well this evening, I can guarantee payment within days.

SMITH: Then I can assume a number considerably less than 365.

JANET: Relax. You'll get your dinero.

SMITH: The reassuring promises of Janet Phillips. I can start filling out the deposit slip now.

JANET: I'm glad I could help ease your troubled mind. So, how about a drink?

SMITH: If you'll excuse me, I had better crack open a case of gin and start mixing.

JANET: Thanks, Smitty. I'll just take a look around and see who's who in the world of alcoholics.

SMITH: Just take a look in the mirror.

JANET: You'd better watch yourself, Smitty. Keep sweet-talking a girl like that and there is no telling what kind of trouble you could get in.

(JANET starts wandering around the bar pantomiming conversations with the patrons. SMITH starts making JANET's drinks. KEARNS comes to place an order at the bar.)

KEARNS: I need a Manhattan and a St. Pauli's Girl.

SMITH: No St. Pauli's. Give him a Samuel Adams. It's a better beer.

KEARNS: Can do! (Notices JANET.) I can't believe she's back! Last night she was crying so much and she said she'd never come back. She sounded so sincere.

SMITH: She probably was. She was drinking tequila last night. And eating the worms.

KEARNS: So, you agree that she drinks too much.

SMITH: I never said that.

KEARNS: Shouldn't you say something? She's in here a lot.

SMITH: How would you know? You've only been working here a week.

KEARNS: FYI, I have been working here nine days, and she's been here till closing every time I've worked.

SMITH: She's here till closing every night, period. Sometimes, she's here when I open. She is my best customer.

KEARNS: Doesn't that tell you something?

SMITH: It tells me that she's thirsty. Look, Helen, how she drinks is none of

my business!

KEARNS: You goof. You sell drinks. Of course it's your business.

SMITH: Don't be clever. I mean it's not my place to say anything.

KEARNS: Yes, it is completely your place. The sign on the front says "Smitty's."

SMITH: I mean what she does is none of my affair-- No, that isn't going to work either. Ah, try this. Shut up.

KEARNS: C'mon, Smitty.

SMITH: Look, Janet is a big girl. If she wants to quit sloshing it up, she wouldn't keep coming back here. A bar isn't exactly the best rehabilitation center.

KEARNS: Well, then what about her bar bill? It's pretty big. It is a smart business move to cut her off.

SMITH: Not a good enough reason. That broad always finds a way to pay me. She's never not paid me. You just have to know when to ask for it. So, quit yappin' and take this hooch to your table and make me some money.

KEARNS: I still think it's a good idea to cut her off.

SMITH: I don't pay you to think. Who would? I pay you to shake your ass and sell booze and you don't do either one very well.

(KEARNS goes to wait on tables. JANET returns to her seat at the bar where SMITH has produced some of her drinks. JANET guzzles her first drink.)

JANET: Oh, Mr. Barkeep. Could I speak to you for a second?

SMITH: Certainly. Problems?

JANET: I believe there is something rather important missing from these gin and tonics. Namely, the gin.

SMITH: Are we going through this again? Everyday it's the same thing. Where's the Beefeater's? Your taste buds are so worn out by this stuff, that not even 190 proof could get a rise out of them.

JANET: You can't talk your way out of this one. To invoke the vernacular, this cocktail has plenty of tail and no...

SMITH: All right, all right. We don't have to get smutty. Let's ask somebody else to decide. (TO GERT.) Come here and do a little taste test for us, sweetheart.

GERT: Sure, Smitty.... What is it?

SMITH: That's what I want you to tell me. Don't worry. It isn't going to kill

you.

(GERT drinks.)

GERT: I thought you said this wouldn't kill me. Put a little arsenic in that to take the bite off it, Smitty.

(GERT returns to her table.)

SMITH: Satisfied?

JANET: You probably fixed it with her before I came in.

SMITH: Listen, Janet. I don't have to serve you, you know.

JANET: Okay, I'm sorry.

SMITH: My ass. You come here because I let you run up a tab. No one else will. And I let you keep coming back because you don't let the bill get too high and I got a soft spot for hagged out slugs like you. If you want to start carrying around a briefcase of cash so you can go to another bar and get pickled, that's fine with me.

JANET: All right. I'm sorry.

SMITH: However, I feel a simple apology will not be enough. If you would like to stay in my good graces, you will have to do something for me.

JANET: I will not sleep with you.

SMITH: Get serious. I want you to do a song and dance for the whole bar.

JANET: Not again, Smitty. It's embarrassing.

SMITH: I mean it, or no more happy hour hooch, and I'll charge you double for those drinks in front of you.

JANET: You can't do that. (SMITH starts to remove the drinks. Janet tries to stop him.) Come on Smitty, I said I was sorry.

SMITH: The bar needs entertainment. I can't afford a karaoke machine, so start singing.

JANET: Why are you being so nasty?

SMITH: Well, it ain't menopause. You insulted my character by implying that I would purposely alter your drinks.

JANET: I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

SMITH: The only apology I will accept is a song and dance. Let's go, twinkle toes.

JANET: All right! (To the others.) Ladies and gentlemen. By command persistence of the management, I will now present my stunning rendition of George and Ira Gershwin's " I Got Rhythm " while I drink four gin and tonics. Here goes.

(JANET starts singing and dancing and

drinking to the song. She is able to
down four drinks before she is
finished.)

JANET: (Over the applause.) Are you happy, Smitty?

SMITH: I'm beaming with pride. Let me finish the rest of your drinks at the
happy hour price.

JANET: What a guy!

MICK: (To JANET.) Hey, that was quite a routine you did there.

JANET: Hey, thanks. Aren't you the guy who asked me if I was drunk when I
came in?

MICK: Yeah.

JANET: Well, well, well. So, going to try your luck again?

MICK: Huh?

JANET: You tried to pick me up when I first walked in the joint.

MICK: Oh, yeah.

JANET: You are not very good at this, are you? You'd better go work on some
lines for later. I can tell already that you're not going to get
anywhere with me.

MICK: Why not?

JANET: Let's face it, bud, you are not Cary Grant. And as far as stimulating
intellectual conversation goes, you get a D plus. Shall I go on, or do
you get the picture?

MICK: Are you saying I'm stupid?

JANET: No! I'm saying you're boring and stupid. You make Cro-Magnum man look
like he could teach a riveting seminar on recent American history.
I've had more interesting talks with a pay phone. Not talking to
people on the other end of the phone, I mean actually talking to the
pay phone. I'm sure the guys down at the factory think you're a hoot,
but I am not in the habit of consorting with men who haven't read the
philosophers!

MICK: Is this a joke?

JANET: Nobody's that funny. Take a hike, will you? I've got some drinking to
do.

MICK: Talk to you later?

JANET: Sure you can practice on the pay phone outside.

MICK: (stunned) Nice talkin' to you,...

JANET: Let's do lunch. (MICK leaves.)

SMITH: (To JANET.) PMS?

JANET: Can it. I wasn't that hard on him. (Drinks number 6.)

SMITH: You weren't that nice to him either.

JANET: Excuse for not wanting to take care of your buddies. I'm not into sympathy fucking.

SMITH: Such a high and mighty girl using such gutter language.

KEARNS: Come on, Smitty. Leave her alone.

SMITH: Now, here's the intellectual insight you've been waiting for. I have to finish making your drinks. Janet, this is Helen Kearns. Helen, Janet.

(They talk at the same time.)

KEARNS: Thanks. We've met.

JANET: Nice to meet you.

SMITH: Oh, boy, I can't wait to hear this conversation.

KEARNS: (To JANET.) Hi, Janet, I'm Helen. We've talked several times this week and I took you home last night.

JANET: Well, I don't normally swing that way, but you're the best looking thing in this bar. Was I good?

KEARNS: Oh, (slightly rattled) uh, I mean I drove you home.

JANET: Yeah, I figured that out. That was you? Thanks. Sorry I don't remember meeting you. Sometimes the old brain waves get a little misdirected.

SMITH: Or sometimes, like tonight, you come into the bar sober enough to remember the folks you meet. (Janet scowls at him.) Something you want to say, Janet.

KEARNS: (diverting the conflict) Hey, it's O.K., I don't mind at all. So, is there a problem with Mick? You want to tell me what he said to you?

JANET: It's just that cretins like him are causing an incredible amelioration of modern civilization and every now and then you can't help letting it get to you, you know?

KEARNS: Yeah! Men. But he's harmless.

JANET: I'm really sick of these jerky pinheads trying to pick me up every time they think I've had too much to drink.

SMITH: When else do you pick up broads?

JANET: Gee, Smitty, you've just reaffirmed my faith in mankind.

SMITH: No sweat. (To Kearns) You on the clock or what?

KEARNS: Well, I've got to get back to work, but if you need me (singing) "just call out my name and I'll come running."

(KEARNS smiles and leaves.)

SMITH: (As he delivers drinks to JANET) Here. Have some more.

JANET: Boy, where did you find her, Smitty? She's a little too sweet and innocent to be working in this place. Don't get much of that around here.

SMITH: You'd know all about that. She's a good kid, a little ditzy but good. Sometimes, I swear you can almost see a light twinkle in those eyes of hers. Then, somebody sneezes and she says, "Was that me?" and it destroys the whole illusion.

JANET: At least she doesn't try to pretend she's something she's not.

SMITH: Not yet, although I expect one day soon she'll come to work thinking she's Barbarella or something.

JANET: Well, I think I'll go be a sociable butterfly. Can I have a bar tray? Kisses. (She puts four drinks on it and starts walking to other tables.) Hey, ladies, no dates?

DORIS: Ladies night. No men, no problems.

JANET: Smart move. Men always try to drink you under the table. By the end of the evening, you've got a horny drunken slob who passes out in your lap.

GERT: And sticks you with the check.

DORIS: And pukes on your dress.

JANET: Damn straight! Men, they are evil bastards. They 're trying to get all our booze and everything else, too. Fight 'em. girls. Fight 'em to the last drop! (She drinks #7)

WOMEN: To the last drop!

(JANET moves on.)

DORIS: What the hell is she talking about?

GERT: Does it matter? Just filling time between gin and tonics.

DORIS: Any excuse for a drink, huh?

GERT: When she decides she needs an excuse.

(JANET has moved on to MICK's table. He has been sitting alone since their last encounter.)

JANET: Hey, haven't I met you someplace before? You look like you could use a drink. Here, have one of mine. (JANET drinks #8 and slams the empty

glass in front of MICK.) See ya, slugger.

BOB: Yo, Janet. Come humor me for a second.

JANET: I didn't even know you were here.

BOB: I must have been in the can.

JANET: Well, I can't hold that against you.

BOB: So, how are you doing?

JANET: How am I doing what?

BOB: Anything.

JANET: I do anything pretty well. I excel at two things: drinking and cooking. Bobby, did I tell you about the batch of chili I made last week?

BOB: Gosh, no, Janet. Why don't you tell me about it?

JANET: God, I love chili. Chili con carne. Anyway, I used this new recipe. Lots of beef, a quart of tomatoes, a couple jalapeno peppers, a can of kidney beans. Now, this is slightly different from the old recipe. Then, while the chili is stewing, I add a fifth of tequila.

BOB: (Playing along.) You put tequila in your chili? Interesting.

JANET: No, I put it in the cook. Why should the chili be the only one to get stewed. (Laughing too much at her own joke.) Christ, where do I come up with them? Wasn't that great?

BOB: Good variation on an old joke. I'll give it a 5.9 on execution and a 3.4 on originality.

JANET: Thank you, Robert. You are very kind. (Drinks #9.)

BOB: Go, Janet.

JANET: You liked that one, did you? Instant replay. (Drinks #10, the last one on the tray.) Golly, Wally, I'm empty. But, lo, on the horizon, I see an oasis filled with bubbling alcoholic pools of relief for my aching thirst. See ya, Bobby.

(As she leaves, BOB pushes a chair slightly into JANET's path. She trips on the chair and falls.)

SMITH: (From the bar.) Janet, did you spill on my floor again?

JANET: No, Smitty, I'm fine. You really shouldn't be so concerned about me!

SMITH: (TO BOB) I saw that, jerk. Keep it honest.

BOB: Sorry, Smitty.

SMITH: To anyone who might be interested, that one doesn't count.

(A few disapproving mumbles. BOB goes to the bathroom; if necessary, the actor playing BOB can change into ALFRED at this time. JANET goes to her drinks, oblivious to the previous conversation. KEARNS crosses to JANET.)

KEARNS: Can I get you anything?

JANET: I could use a gin and tonic.

(The alcohol is starting to take effect on JANET.)

KEARNS: It seems you have a few of those.

JANET: So I do. (She drinks #11.) Now, I have one less.

KEARNS: Can I get you some chips or anything?

JANET: Peanuts. I love peanuts. Lots of protein and sodium and fatty oils and other nasty things that I shouldn't be eating.

KEARNS: When are your friends showing up?

JANET: Friends?

KEARNS: I thought you had some friends who going to join you.

JANET: Why? Am I coming apart? (She laughs too much.) Oh, my sides are splitting. Somebody call a doctor.

KEARNS: Your friends aren't coming, are they?

JANET: Sure they are, sweetheart. So, don't get all mushy on me. They just got held up in traffic, or knowing this neighborhood, maybe they just got held up.

KEARNS: You think this is a bad neighborhood? Maybe you should call them-

JANET: I was just kidding. Don't get worried. I'm sure they are all right.

KEARNS: Oh. (Pause) So, why did you all decide to meet at the bar?

JANET: Big happenings at the old office. We're all gonna be rich!

KEARNS: What are you-?

JANET: Why the first degree? If you're an industrial spy, you can fergit it. I ain't tellin' you anythin'. -

KEARNS: No! I'm no spy. I just want to get to know you a little better. Maybe we can become friends.

JANET: Christ, not again. Look, sweetheart, I'm real flattered, but my caboose don' swing both ways.

KEARNS: Huh?

JANET: I don' live on both sides of a one-way street.

KEARNS: What?

JANET: Please, I am tryin' to tell you that I was kidding before. I ain't gonna sleep with you 'cause I ain't a lesbian.

KEARNS: But-

JANET: And don' make any stupid remarks about religion 'cause I get enough of that on Archie Bunker reruns. I am not gay!

KEARNS: That's not what I want at all.

JANET: Then, could you please be blunt. These drinks are startin' to alter my perceptions.

KEARNS: That's what I want to talk to about. Your drinking.

JANET: Oh, God give me the serenity to accept that good Samaritans will try to stop me from drinking, the strength to change their minds about drinking, and the wisdom to keep drinking until they leave me the fuck alone. Is that what you're selling, sister? Repent thine evil ways and live a life free of mind-altering substances. Jesus will help you quit drinking. Don't you people remember that Jesus turned water into wine. He was the first big promoter the alcohol business had. They're still tryin' to figure out how he did it. Seagrams would make a mint.

KEARNS: I'm not from the church. I just want to talk about your need for alcohol.

JANET: Why don' we talk about your need to pester me? Why do you give a flyin' fart about me, anyway?

KEARNS: We're both intelligent women. You're the only semi-descent person who comes in here. I like you, but I think you have a drinking problem and I want to help you.

(SMITH notices the conversation.)

JANET: I don' have a drinkin' problem. Watch. (Drinks #12.) See? Didn't spill a drop.

KEARNS: That's not funny.

JANET: I know what you meant. I also know how important it is to change the world when you're young. But you can't fix what ain't broken. So, please go get me some peanuts and let me drink. I don' need a councilor, jus' a waitress.

KEARNS: You are doing serious damage to yourself. Your body won't be able to handle it forever.

JANET: God, shut up. Did you ever think that maybe that was the fucking point?

KEARNS: What?

JANET: When is forever going to get here?

KEARNS: Janet, are you saying that—

JANET: I have nothing that any normal person would consider a life. I work a dead end job. I have no family. No social life except for this place. The only joy I have is coming here to drink. So would you go away and let me have some joy?

KEARNS: But you know this stuff is killing you.

JANET: It's a small price to pay.

(SMITH comes over to JANET and KEARNS)

SMITH: Problems over here?

JANET: Daddy, she won' let me drink my booze.

SMITH: She's got plenty of fire water, Helen.

KEARNS: I was just going to get her some peanuts.

SMITH: You've been standing here for five minutes. Are you going to scrawl it in Braille on your ticket or do you think you can remember it from here to the bar?

KEARNS: I was only talking, Smitty. She needs help.

SMITH: Well, I have other customers far more in need of your services. What exactly do you do here? I forget.

KEARNS: All right. I get it.

SMITH: I don't think so, sweetie. Janet drinks a lot. Everyone knows that, but she don't need any help. Do you, Janet? (JANET drinks #13.) You see? So don't hassle my customers about drinking, or maybe you don't need to work. That's right. I'm sure that toddler of yours will have no problems finding a job. He can say Mama and drool, right? He'd fit right in around here. I'm sure he could do a worse job than you are right now.

KEARNS: Excuse me. I have to go wait on my tables.

SMITH: Excuse me I have to go make some drinks.

JANET: Excuse me. I have to go be sick.

(She starts for the bathroom and immediately loses balance and

falls.)

SMITH: That's one.

(JANET staggers to her feet. ALL patrons are watching her in anticipation. She falls again. ALL yell TWO. She gets up and moves closer to the bathroom. She falls. ALL yell THREE. KEARNS rushes to her aid. She receives boos from the crowd but gets JANET to her feet. She falls. ALL yell FOUR. KEARNS gets JANET into the bathroom.)

MICK: All that, after ten drinks or so.

SMITH: She's had thirteen.

GERT: Pity the fool who bet on her to go over twenty.

SMITH: She's gonna make it.

DORIS: Should I call her a cab?

SMITH: How unfaithful are the unknowing? Do you not realize that we are talking about the great Janet Phillips? With the strength and the stamina of a bull elephant and the liver of two. Have we not seen her drink every person in here under the table? Has she not proven through her incredible imbibing prowess that she is patron saint of bars and distilleries everywhere? She deserves not our scorn and pity, she deserves our encouragement, our praise, our accolades. When the going gets tough, the tough get loaded!! Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the high priestess of high balls, the first lady of libation, the baroness of Bourbon. The one, the only... Miss Janet Phillips!!!

(Enter JANET as all applaud.)

JANET: Fuck off.

(She staggers back to her seat without falling down.)

SMITH: How are you feeling, Janet?

JANET: Like a million bucks... have jus' been shove' righ' down my throat. There is only one cure I know. (Drinks #14 and #15.) There. All better.

SMITH: Here. Want something to eat?

JANET: It was your lousy peanuts that made me blow my cookies in the firs' place. I'll stick to the limes in my gins.

KEARNS: (Entering from the bathroom.) Well, that's all cleaned up. What a mess.

GERT: Was it something she ate?

KEARNS: I don't think she's eaten anything all day except peanuts.

DORIS: Damn it.

GERT: Pay up, sweetheart, five big ones.

DORIS: Lucky guess.

KEARNS: You girls are sick. How could you bet on her stomach contents?

DORIS: She gave me three to one odds.

KEARNS: (To Janet.) Hey, are you O.K.?

JANET: Righ' as rain. (Drinks #16.) Aaahh.

KEARNS: I really don't think you should have any more.

JANET: What!?! And waste all this swill that Smitty is passing off as gin? I couldn't insult him like that. I'm sure I can think of somethin' better. (Looks at her drinks.) Maybe.

(SMITH notices KEARNS talking to JANET. SMITH shoots a steely gaze at KEARNS, who goes back to work as quickly as possible. JANET stares at her booze. Enter ALBERT the wino. He is shabbily dressed and unkempt. He has a certain indistinguishable charm about him. As ALBERT is greeted by the patrons, JANET gradually drops her head on the table And falls asleep.)

SMITH: Hi, Albert, how are the bitter cold streets of an unconcerned society? Are you feeling lonely? Unwanted? Rejected?

ALBERT: Only when I walk in here. Ya know, Smitty, I always kinda wanted to know how an ol' street drunk like you managed to buy himself a bar. A run-down hole in the wall, but a bar just the same.

SMITH: After a while, I got pretty sick of living like a bum, so that last year and a half I stayed on the street, I quit drinking.

ALBERT: Bullshit. If you gave up the bottle, why did you stay on the street?

SMITH: Nobody's going to give a job to a wino whose street address is second garbage can on the right in the alley between 154th and 153rd. So, the money I was begging for hooch, I started putting in the bank.

ALBERT: An' after a year and a half, you had enough to buy this bar. That's horseshit.

SMITH: You certainly are going through the barnyard. Of course, I didn't have enough to buy it after a year and a half. I had enough to buy the

place after about five months. Begging can be more lucrative than you could guess, especially if you don't blow it on cheap wine.

ALBERT: Then why did ya stay on the street? Even gutter scum like you can't love the pavement that much.

SMITH: Being as your thoughts are always on where your next meal is coming from or how bad society has screwed you over, you wouldn't understand why I stayed. I needed to save up cash to stock the liquor, pay the help, and get an apartment so they had a place to send my contracts besides my favorite garbage can.

ALBERT: If I knew it was gonna take this long, I wouldn't have asked. How about a drink? -

SMITH: I don't think I have any Prestone, but I can look.

ALBERT: Smitty, ya got all the charm of a beagle's butt, an' half the looks.

SMITH: That's what I like about you, Albert, always full of fight and full of booze.

ALBERT: I'd really like to keep you entertained, but I jus' came in to have one with Janet. Where's my best girl?

SMITH: Living up to all her mother's expectations. (Pointing.) Face down on the table. Resting up for the big finale.

ALBERT: Thar she blew. Jus' send over a waitress when ya getta chance, Smitty.

SMITH: For you, Prince Albert, the world.

ALBERT: Put in a can. (To JANET.) Wake up, puddin', time ta go ta school.

JANET: Mommy, I don't feel good.

ALBERT: Hey, sweet butt, hows 'bout wakin' up long enough ta give a big how d'ya- do ta ol' Albert. (He shakes her gently.) -

JANET: Huh? (She sits up.) HI! (She puts her head down again.)

ALBERT: Not long enough. (He shakes her.)

JANET: (She sits up and sees Albert as if for the first time.) HI!!

ALBERT: Hi, catnip. What's shakin'?

JANET: My breasts. I forgot to wear a bra again.

ALBERT: (Laughs.) That's why I come ta see ya. You kill me.

JANET: I was hopin' you'd come in. (To Smitty.) Hey, wasn't I sayin' earlier how much I wanted Albert to come in?

SMITH: No.

JANET: Mus' have been last week. (To ALBERT.) Where's my hug? (They embrace.)

Much better. How've ya been, kid? I haven't seen ya in a while.

ALBERT: Doncha remember? I had ta go to a diff'rent parta town for a week or so. Cops was real hard on us 'roun' here.

JANET: Oh, sure, that's right. (Drinks #17.) Can I buy ya one?

ALBERT: Nah, the waitress'll be here ma minute.

JANET: C'mon, Albert, I'll buy ya one.

ALBERT: No! When I come in here, I come ta be reg'lar people, even if I ain't. So, I'd like ta buy my own drink. Sounds stupid, don' it?

JANET: No. It doesn't. Hey, it'll give Smitty one less thing to razz me about. So, what part of town have ya been in?

ALBERT: Me an' some o' the guys went ta the zoo.

JANET: No offense, but that doesn't exactly seem ta be your kind of place.

ALBERT: Now that's what I thought, but there's a bit a logic workin' here. Pitcher this. Pretend I'm the President or somethin'. Here I am, President Johnson, bringin' his wife and kids for a nice day at the zoo. Uh oh, here's this wino sittin' by the entrance an' I know he's gonna bother me or cough on my wife or somethin'. So, before this lush does anythin', I'll jus' give 'im a fiver an' hope he doesn't do somethin' ta my wife's new dress. Now, 'course, not every body is gonna give an ol' drunk a five but they'll usually give me somethin' ta keep my distance. Purdy good, huh?

JANET: That's great. Why did ya leave?

ALBERT: I bummed a buck off the wrong guy.

JANET: Who?

ALBERT: The police commissioner. He got us outta there so fas' I still don' know where my underwear is.

JANET: Here's ta Albert. It's good ta have ya back. Prosit!

(She drinks #19. During the previous speech of ALBERT's she drank #18.)

ALBERT: There ya go. Toastin' me when I ain't got no booze.

JANET: Here, have one of mine. (He hesitates.) Oops! Borrow on of mine an' ya can buy me a replacement when that efficient little cocktail waitress gets over here.

ALBERT: Fair enough. Ta you.

JANET: Not ta me.

ALBERT: Yes, ta you 'cause I like the way ya make me feel, like real people, I

like that. I like you.

JANET: Thank you, Albert. That's sweet.

ALBERT: An' nobody pours back the hooch like you do.

JANET: I'll drink to that.

(She drinks #20 and ALBERT drinks one with her in tandem.)

ALBERT: After Thunderbird, this stuff is a nice change.

JANET: Boy, you don't get into bars much, do ya?

ALBERT: No, that I don't. Well, kid it's abou' time ta hit the streets.

JANET: Already. You jus' got here.

ALBERT: I know, but if I don' get out there soon, I ain't gonna find a warm place ta crash.

JANET: Why don'cha stay, an' we'll go home ta my place and you can sleep there tonight.

ALBERT: I couldn't do that. Thanks, but the other guys wouldn't let me alone for a minute if they found out I went home with a good lookin' broad. Besides, you don' wanna wake up with a smelly ol' drunk on your floor.

JANET: I wouldn't make you sleep on the floor and you're not-

ALBERT: No, I know. (Rises to leave.) I owe you a drink. What are we drinking here anyway?

JANET: Gin an' tonics, if my clouded memory serves me correctly.

ALBERT: (To KEARNS.) Are you the waitress? My lady friend would like two more gin an' tonics. The cash is right here on the corner of the table.

JANET: I only need one, Albert. To replace the one you borrowed.

ALBERT: Let a guy get you a present for bein' nice, huh?

JANET: Thank you. Give me a hug. See ya tomorrow?

ALBERT: Sure, if I get enough cash together.

JANET: Good night. Sleep well.

ALL: Good night, Albert. See ya, pal. Later, Albert. etc. (Exit Albert.)

SMITH: There goes the next president of the United States.

JANET: Can' cha ever say somethin' that isn't nasty?

SMITH: Excuse me, Mother Theresa. I'll try to be more like you next time. (He does a very exaggerated impression of JANET.) Kin ya gitmea gin'n

tonic 'fore I die uva ter'ble thirs'. (Pretends to vomit.) Where's my drink?

KEARNS: Why don't you ease up on her a little bit, huh? You've been giving her hell all evening.

SMITH: I always treat her the same way. We have a special relationship. She comes in to drink and I give her a reason. It's, whatdyacallit, a perfect symbiotic co-existence.

KEARNS: Well, it wouldn't hurt to be a little nicer to her.

SMITH: You want nice, turn on the Brady Bunch. You want to drink, come to a bar. Here, take these two gins over 'to slush bucket.

KEARNS: She doesn't need them.

SMITH: Nobody needs them. She wants them. If she didn't, she would stagger home.

KEARNS: How is she getting home?

SMITH: She's got the manager from Drunks-R-Us to come by and get her.

KEARNS: Is that a joke?

SMITH: Boy, all those hours watching old sit-coms are really starting to pay off for you.

KEARNS: Maybe I should ask-

SMITH: Helen, do yourself a favor. Getting emotional attached to these souses is just going to start eating away at you. You can't try to save everyone. The second you lose one, you'll be the one who starts drinking.

KEARNS: Should we at least get her keys?

SMITH: She doesn't drive. She can't afford the insurance.

KEARNS: But what about-

SMITH: Enough. Stop playing concerned citizen on my time and don't hassle her about anything. Just take these drinks to her.

KEARNS: O.K. (She delivers the drinks.) Here you go, Janet. Enjoy.

JANET: Thanks. How thoughtful.

(JANET tries to squeeze the limes into her drinks but her coordination is too impaired. She spills part of drink #21, which she slurps off her table. A fairly drunk MICK comes over to talk to her. JANET is extremely drunk.)

MICK: So, how are we doin'?

JANET: Lemme think about it an' I'll get back to ya. (Finishes #21.) I think I'm drunk.

(They laugh)

MICK: That isn't very funny.

JANET: I know.

(They laugh harder and she falls off of the chair.)

SMITH: It's been a long intermission, folks, but for those who may be interested, the count is now five.

(Some reaction from the ladies. Also, if he was doubled, the actor who was playing ALBERT can return from the bathroom as BOB.)

MICK: How dija get on the floor? Are ya OK?

JANET: Jus' swell. But could you give me a hand? (MICK claps.) Yeesh! That joke is older than you are. Jus' help me up.

MICK: Let's see if I can manage it.

(He deftly helps her to her feet)

JANET: You have very strong hands, very nice hands... for an old man.

MICK: You have a lot of nice everything.

JANET: Well, you were doin' all right for a minute there.

MICK: Make it easy on a guy, can' cha? I've been drinkin' too much ta think of any good lines.

JANET: That's all right. You don' need any.

MICK: I don'? Great. So, your place or mine?

JANET: Babe, I'll never make it that far. We gotta find some place closer.

MICK: There's gotta be a hotel 'roun' here some place.

JANET: Sleazy roach pits, all of 'em.

MICK: (Struggling) How about...the men's room?

JANET: (pause) The men's room? (He turns away.) O.K.

MICK: You mean it? Great.

JANET: I'll go first. Then in one minute, you follow. It'll be less
conssspiculous...less conpilicious... less..oh fuck it, it'll be less
obvious. I'll meet ya by the stall by the wall. Bring me two of my
gins 'cause I'll spill 'em.

MICK: OK.

(MICK stares intently at his watch
and starts counting the seconds in
a small whisper. Janet gets up to
go and immediately falls.)

SMITH: And that's six everybody.

(JANET gets up and falls down
again. ALL shout SEVEN. KEARNS goes
to help JANET. ALL boo. SMITH
throws olives at them. JANET is up
and KEARNS goes to talk to SMITH.
JANET falls. ALL shout EIGHT. SMITH
holds KEARNS to keep her from
helping. JANET gets to her knees
and falls again. ALL look to SMITH.
He nods. ALL shout NINE. She starts
crawling to the men's room. MICK
stops looking at his watch, picks
up two drinks and staggers to the
men's room. He steps over JANET as
he enters, not noticing her. She
crawls into the men's room after
him.)

KEARNS: Let go of me!

SMITH: Okay. (KEARNS falls. ALL shout ten.) Let's not get carried away here.

KEARNS: (Rises.) That is so terrible the way you use that poor woman for
gambling.

SMITH: Poor woman? It's Janet, for cryin' out loud. Why do you give a shit
anyway?

KEARNS: I don't know. I just do.

SMITH: Well, knock it off. If you care for every one of them, you'll go
looney.

KEARNS: Then what am I supposed to do?

SMITH: Just do what I do. I sing this wonderful little tune. Ladies, care to
help me out?

WOMEN: Sure, Smitty.

(They start singing the following
song. Any tune can be substituted.
It doesn't have to be good.)

SONG: I DON'T CARE

GERT: WHEN THINGS GET ROUGH AND OUT OF WHACK.
DORIS: AND THINGS JUST MAKE YOU TENSE.
SMITH: JUST LIFT UP YOUR CHIN AND STRAIGHTEN YOUR BACK
ALL: AND BELT OUT THIS SONG THOUGH IT DON'T MAKE SENSE.

ALL: I DON'T CARE
I JUST DONT GIVE A SHIT
GIVE EM AN INCH AND THEY'LL RIP OUT YOUR HEART
SHED A TEAR AND THAT'S IT.

I DON'T CARE
I REALLY COULDN'T CARE LESS.
TRUST IN THE WORDS OF THIS QUAIN'T LITTLE SONG
AND YOUR LIFE WON'T BE A MESS.

(Quiet applause from BOB and any other patrons in the bar. KEARNS is sickened by the callousness.)

KEARNS: (sarcastically) GOSH! I feel better already.

SMITH: Somehow I knew you would.

KEARNS: She still needs help.

SMITH: That little song doesn't change anything, but it lets you stop thinking about it enough to get home with a clear conscious. Then you go to bed.

(JANET and MICK enter staggering to the table in tandem.)

MICK: Thanks for everything. Look, I gotta go. Can I buy you a drink?

JANET: GIN AND TONIC!!!

MICK: Barkeep, you heard the lady. On my tab. (To JANET.) Can I see you sometime?

JANET: This is my favorite hole. You can find me here mos' any night. (Lightly.) Jus' leave your wife at home.

MICK: (Puzzled.) How did ya know I was married?

(She didn't. An awkward moment. MICK leaves.)

JANET: Shit.

SMITH: (rubbing salt in the wound) HERE YOU GO, JANET!! A drink from your boyfriend. Wait a second. This drink is on me. I just remembered that son of a bitch doesn't have a tab here.

JANET: Thanks.

SMITH: Tsk, tsk. I wouldn't want to be you with only three drinks left.

JANET: Huh?

SMITH: When you came in tonight, you said a bunch of your work buddies were coming in to drink with you and they are going to be upset with nothing to drink.

JANET: They called and said they weren't coming, so I had to drink them.

SMITH: The phone hasn't rung all night.

JANET: They called me telepathically.

SMITH: I didn't know you could read minds. Can you tell what I'm thinking now?

JANET: Oh, you naughty boy!

SMITH: Oh, please. You're not even close. Last call.

JANET: Uh oh.

SMITH: Come on, Janet. There are only three more drinks. You can do it.

JANET: I don' wanna get sick.

SMITH: When has that ever stopped you? Face it, kid. You drank a lot of gin tonight. You've already been sick once. Sooner or later, you're gonna blow chow again. No time like the present. (JANET picks up #24.) Go, Janet, go. (She drinks #24.) That's one. (#25.) That's two, but can she do it? The last one? I doubt it.

JANET: Watch this. (#26.) Ta da!

SMITH: Let's hear it for Janet Phillips.

(Feeble yells from the others.)

JANET: I need another one please.

SMITH: Nope. I'm sorry.

(KEARNS notices.)

JANET: C'mon. Get me a gin 'n' tonic. Extra lime. No ice, and burn it.

SMITH: Can't do it, Killer.

JANET: Why not?

SMITH: Your bar bill is too high.

JANET: Don't give me that.

SMITH: Don't give me that, "Don't give me that" crap. We have an agreement. I

let you run up a tab and you pay when I tell you to. And I'm telling you to pay up. That'll be \$95.75, please.

JANET: You know I don't carry that much cash on me.

SMITH: Well, I don't take any crap, and I don't take American Express.

JANET: Jus' lemme order one more drink.

SMITH: And another and another and another. I'm sorry, toots. I have to draw the line somewhere.

(KEARNS smiles, figuring SMITH has finally done the right thing.)

JANET: Damn it, Smitty. I'm you're best customer.

SMITH: Not today, you're not. You owe me big bucks.

(BOB comes over from his table where he has been quiet all night.)

BOB: What's up, Smitty?

SMITH: You're still here? I thought you left hours ago.

BOB: Nah, I've jus' been hanging out, drinkin' an' thinkin'. What seems to be the problem?

SMITH: Super Lush wants another drink but her bar bill is too high.

BOB: I'll buy her a drink.

(JANET perks up as KEARNS sighs with disgust.)

JANET: Thanks, guy. Lemme have it, Shitty. I mean, Smitty.

SMITH: Sorry, Janet. I'm teaching her a lesson, Bob. I'm not going to serve her till her bar bill is paid.

(KEARNS is beaming.)

BOB: I'll pay her bill.

JANET: You will?

SMITH: You will?

KEARNS: You shit!

BOB: I'll pay the bill an' she can pay me back tomorrow. So, it won't be like I'm jus' shellin' out dough to an old friend. It's just a loan, okay, Janet?

JANET: Okay.

BOB: Besides, it's not like I don't know where to find her.

(BOB opens his wallet and pays the bill. KEARNS watches hoping he doesn't have enough to cover it. SMITH doesn't want to do it, but can't see any logical way to deny him.)

SMITH: Fair enough. One gin and tonic, comin' up.

(KEARNS turns away.)

JANET: Thanks, Bobby, I owe you one,

BOB: Or so.

JANET: Did I tell you 'bou' the chili I made las' week? Oh, God, groun' beef, tomatoes, peppers, tequila... for the cook, not the chili. (She laughs.)

BOB: That's great, Janet.

SMITH: There you go, Janet. Live it up.

JANET: You bet. (She drinks #27.) AAAhh! (She passes out.)

KEARNS: (Turning on the lights.) Closin' time. Drink 'em or lose 'em.

BOB: Yee hah! Pay up, Smitty ol' boy.

SMITH: Excuse me?

BOB: If you will look at your tally board, you will see that Janet Phillips has consumed twenty-seven gin and tonics. Extra booze, extra limes, and no ice. And, if you will look at my prediction, I guessed that she would drink twenty-seven of that same drink type.

(SMITH examines the tally and the betting slips and double checks Bob's claim.)

SMITH: My god, so you have. Everybody, Bobby has just won the Whopper. Almost 3600 dollars.

(Various cheers. KEARNS glares at BOB in disbelief.)

BOB: Thanks, but I want you all to know that I couldn't have done it without the incredible bladder of Janet Phillips.

(Cheers. JANET mumbles.)

SMITH: Congratulations, Bobby. Now, get the hell out of my bar.

BOB: Thanks, Smitty. You're quite a guy.

SMITH: Don't I know it.

(Patrons all file out, mumbling their good byes, patting BOB on the back, etc. SMITH, KEARNS and JANET remain. JANET starts to pick up glasses and empty beer bottles.)

SMITH: Go home, Helen. I'll clean up.

KEARNS: You being nice to me all of a sudden?

SMITH: Hey, you can stay all fucking night as far as I'm concerned. I was just giving you a chance to get out of here. I don't care if you ever see your kid again.

KEARNS: All right. I'm going. (pause) What about her?

SMITH: There you go, givin' a shit again. Git. I'll take care of her.

KEARNS: You will?

SMITH: I always make sure she gets out of the bar all right. It's the least I can do. She's my best customer.

KEARNS: Jesus, Smitty.

SMITH: No more lectures, huh? Get out of here.

KEARNS: All right. Night.

(KEARNS exits. SMITH starts to clean up and then throws his rag down.)

SMITH: Screw it. I'll clean up tomorrow. Come on, Janet. Time to get your drunken ass out of my bar.

JANET: (Mumbles.) But I don' wanna go ta school.

SMITH: Let's get up. We're going to the door now. You know, you made a bunch of people really happy tonight Albert was very glad to see you. You were very nice to him. You're such a good girl.

JANET: (Mumbles.) Thank you.

SMITH: I had a lot of business tonight, too. Not to mention the sixty-five bucks I overcharged Bobby on your bar bill. If you weren't so silly drunk all the time, you would have remembered that you paid me last night. You know, somebody went home without collecting the fall-down-go-boom pool again. I guess I'll just have to pocket that as well.

JANET: Good for you.

SMITH: So I'm going to call you a cab. I'll even pay for it.

JANET: No.

SMITH: You don't want me to pay for it.

JANET: I don't want a cab.

SMITH: Well, I'm not driving you home.

JANET: I don't want to go home.

(JANET awkwardly flings herself into SMITH's arms and begins kissing him sloppily but passionately. SMITH lets himself be kissed as JANET drunkenly ceases her amorous onslaught.)

SMITH: So, you're coming home with me again, huh? Then let's get home before you completely pass out.

(SMITH grabs her coat and helps her toward the door. He may have to sling her over her shoulder. He turns out the lights of the bar. As he closes the door, we hear JANET say:)

JANET: (Faintly.) What does a girl have ta do ta get a drink roun' here?

END OF PLAY