

My grandfather was the real thing. A craftsman... And I remember when I was a kid, I mean eight or nine, we'd go downtown to Penn with Opa. To walk and look in store windows. Downtown was real nice back then. You'd get dressed up to go shopping. You know, Pomeroy's, Whitner's, whatever. I felt really special, because he was this big, strapping man and people gave him room. But, what I really loved was that he'd take me to office buildings, banks... you name it, and he'd point out the woodwork. And if you got really, really close he'd show some detail that he'd carved for me. An apple blossom. Really. That's what I'm talking about. It was back when if you worked with your hands people respected you for it. It was a gift. But now, there's nothing on Penn. You go into the buildings the walls are covered over with sheetrock, the wood painted gray, or some godly color, and it just makes me sad. It makes me... Whatever.

OSCAR. You okay?

TRACEY. Listen, that piece of paper that you're holding is an insult, it don't mean anything, Olstead's isn't for you.

Scene 6
May 5th, 2000

Outside it's 84°F. In the news, the U.S. unemployment rate tumbles to a thirty-year low, 3.9%. The City of Reading fires a dozen employees, fearing a deficit of \$10 million. Allen Iverson and the Philadelphia 76ers prepare for Game 1 of Eastern Conference Semifinals.

Lights up. Bar. Stan prepares a gimlet. Jessie sits at the bar eyeing a birthday cake. Oscar is behind the bar playing a portable electronic game.

STAN. A gimlet, shaken but not stirred.

Stan places the cocktail on the bar.

JESSIE. Did you actually put some alcohol in it this time?

STAN. Against my better judgment, I did—

JESSIE. Very funny.

Jessie takes a sip. Savoring.

STAN. You been warming that seat for a long time. Are the ladies coming?

JESSIE. That's what they say, but who knows at this point?

STAN. What time were they supposed to meet ya?

JESSIE. Officially? Over an hour ago.

STAN. Jesus. Is something going on that I should know?

JESSIE. Dunno. Cynthia. The promotion. Whatever. Tracey pretends like it ain't a big deal. But, I can tell she don't like taking orders from Cynthia. And don't spread this, but things haven't been so good between them.

STAN. That's the way people are in this town. Bitch and moan, want something better. But, then the minute someone does well, forget it.

JESSIE. Tell me about it. Tracey's been going around town whispering that the only reason Cynthia got the job is cuz she's Black. Two months ago she couldn't give a shit, and suddenly—

STAN. C'mon. Bullshit. Cynthia earned that promotion.

JESSIE. Sure, but I know for a fact that it pissed off a lot of people.

STAN. Gimme a break. People don't like change. I wouldn't lose any sleep over it—

JESSIE. You're right, fuck'em all, I'm sick of being in the middle. Let's cut the cake.

STAN. You sure?

JESSIE. Yeah!

STAN. Hey, Oscar.

OSCAR. Yeah?

STAN. Will you get me a knife?

Oscar retrieves a knife from the bar.

You got any special birthday wishes?

JESSIE. Hell yeah. But, you know what would be nice, a kiss. I just wanna be kissed today.

Jessie blows out the candles.