

Too Late for Barking

by

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Cast of Characters

SAL:

60's

FRANK:

40ish

Place

Bar

Time

Morning

Setting: The play takes place inside a dive bar. Wooden floors, wooden bar counter that needs to be sanded. Fake plants and crooked pictures on the walls. A broken arcade or two. The place is an absolute disaster and shouldn't even be open for business.

At Rise: The play opens up on Sal and Frank. Sal being the father, is dozing on while sitting in a booth. His son Frank sits across from him, staring at him.

FRANK: Close the bar?

SAL: ...What's that?

FRANK: Time to lock up?

SAL: ...What time is it?

FRANK: Coming on four.

SAL: Oh. (looks around the place) I don't see anybody else...no one passed out in the bathroom?

FRANK: Nah. Place is dead past five hours. You should close much earlier.

SAL: I don't wanna close much earlier.

FRANK: No one ever comes in here past ten.

SAL: There have been some nights.

FRANK: When? In 1962? (laughs)

SAL: Don't mock me.

FRANK: Why bother staying up, dragging yourself around the bar for no reason?

SAL: I like it here.

FRANK: You can barely keep the lights on.

SAL: My choice.

FRANK: Always your choice.

FRANK leaves the booth. Locks front door.

SAL: What are you doing?

FRANK: I'm locking up.

SAL: Unlock the door.

FRANK: There's nobody coming in here.

SAL: UNLOCK THE DOOR!!!

FRANK slowly unlocks the front door.

FRANK: Never change.

SAL: What's that? You're whispering.

FRANK: Not important.

SAL: I don't change because I don't have to change.

FRANK: So you did hear me.

SAL: You need to change. Go out and get a job instead of depending on your old man to cover your life's costs.

FRANK: You need me to help you.

SAL: Says who? You?

FRANK: You can't keep up with this place.

SAL: I'm doing just fine without your help.

FRANK: Isn't it time to retire?

SAL: Retire? (laughs) Retire spells death where I come from.

FRANK: Why keep on?

SAL: You want me to die?

FRANK: No.

SAL: Leave you this place, the house...whatever money's left over. It's a good score actually.

FRANK: Why do you talk that way?

SAL: What am I supposed to think with you?

FRANK: I'm your son, what is there to think about?

SAL: My son?

FRANK: Yeah Sal, your son.

SAL: Okay.

SAL begins placing stools on top of bar counter.

FRANK helps him from the other side of the bar counter.

BOTH men reach one another at the center of the bar.

SAL (winded): Thatta boy.

FRANK: You okay?

SAL: Yeah.

SAL missteps but regains his walk.

FRANK: Have some water or something.

SAL: Fine, fine.

FRANK: ...Fucking guy.

SAL: What??

FRANK: What?

SAL: Stop whispering! If you got something to say be a man and say it!

FRANK: Talking to you falls on deaf ears anyway so what's the point of me saying anything to you?

SAL: Be quiet then.

FRANK: I wanna take over the bar.

SAL: Huh? Wanna what? Who?

FRANK: I want to take over the bar.

SAL: You couldn't take over a merry-go-round.

FRANK: I wanna take over the bar.

SAL: What makes you think you can do that?

FRANK: Why can't I?

SAL: Don't ask me a question with a question son.

FRANK: ...I can bring this place back to life.

SAL: When did it die?

FRANK: Years ago. I have memories of sitting on this floor with people stepping over me and nothing but noise and chaos. Used to be packed. It's dead.

SAL: It was a different time.

FRANK: Let me bring it back.

SAL: How you gonna do that?

FRANK: Renovation. Innovation.

SAL: Since when have you become an innovator? (laughs)

FRANK: Why you always laughing at me?

SAL: Don't ask a question with a question, son.

FRANK: My question's more important?

SAL: Is it?

FRANK: Why you always putting me down?

SAL: It's too fucking late for your barking. You're right, lock up, shut the lights, I'm going home.

FRANK: I wanna take over the bar.

SAL: You can't take over the bar!

FRANK: WHY?

SAL: You're too stupid to take over the bar! You're a dunce. Your brain stopped expanding in high school. Understand that or do I have to bring out a blackboard and draw pictures. You are not intelligent enough. It's a dead end.

FRANK: I can do a better job than you can.

SAL: Really?

FRANK: I want to make this place new and, and, and---

SAL: Sit on it.

FRANK: Sit on what?

SAL: Until I'm gone.

FRANK: I gotta wait for you to croak?

SAL: Small price.

FRANK: I don't have forever, either, you know.

SAL: That's not my problem.

FRANK: I'm not getting any younger.

SAL: Still not my problem.

FRANK: I wanna take over the bar now, Sal.

SAL: When I die, you can have it.

FRANK: Why not---

SAL: WHEN I DIE!! (beat) It's yours, it's all yours, I promised your mother God rest her soul, the love of my life...it's all yours but you will have to wait and that's it.

FRANK: You're a selfish man, always was, always will be.

SAL: It's my life. If you don't like it, build your own life. Nobody asked you to stay here.

FRANK: Believe me, I tried.

SAL: Try again! That's the problem with your generation, you give up too easily, make room for the real winners in life. Stub your toe, go cry to momma but now momma isn't there. I'm here! And I won't baby you like she did. I won't worship the ground you walk on. For what? For who? Your ego? What ego? You couldn't strike out on your own no matter how much money I threw at you for support. College, travel, businesses...what? Where did it all get you? Here. If I knew you'd come full circle I'd a saved a hell of a penny and invested it into my own ideas and been a helluva lot further than where I ended up...your mother coulda still been with us, too---

FRANK: Don't you dare blame me for mom's death!

SAL: I'm not blaming but I propose a what if..what if I didn't throw away my money on you? What if I had more funds to care for your mother? WHAT IF?

FRANK: You're a sick man.

SAL: And you're a dunce.

FRANK: If you give me over this bar, I can do something with it.

SAL: Frank, we are in a local neighborhood in Queens. Nobody cares. We shouldn't even be here anymore. It worked before because the air was pumping with attitude and excitement. All those locals are gone, moved down to Florida. This new breed is city bound, they look at this place, even if they notice it, they see it like the plague. That's it.

FRANK: I'm not some waste of life. You know, you're my father, you shouldn't ever stop believing in me.

SAL: Why do you need my beliefs? You got your own.

FRANK: I want to make something of myself.

SAL: Why do you put that on me?

FRANK: Who else have I got?

SAL: Yourself.

FRANK: Give me the bar and I will prove to you what I can do on my own.

SAL: No.

FRANK: Let me take things over!

SAL: It's cold outside tonight, Frank. I might slip on some ice on the walk home, bump my head just enough to die...

SAL puts on his coat, scarf, hat.

Then you can have the bar. (beat) Lock up.

FRANK turns to his Father but SAL turns away and exits out backdoor.

FRANK turns out the lights.

END OF PLAY