

BARFIGHT

a 10-minute play
by Tom Baum

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MAN, 30s (Jesus)

ABBY, 20s, a bartender

OLD MAN, 60s-70s (God)

A wine bar. The time is the present.

(Lights up on a MAN, on a barstool, and ABBY, the bartender. ABBY's wearing a cross around her neck.)

ABBY: We've got a nice white Zin, if you're into Zins.

MAN: Forget it, I don't drink mouthwash. Gimme the house Merlot. And one for yourself.

(ABBY shows him her water bottle.)

ABBY: Thank you, not while I'm working.

MAN: Ask you a question?

ABBY: Sure, anything.

MAN: That cross you're wearing. Is that just for show?

ABBY: I was raised Catholic. But the church thing, that's pretty much behind me now

MAN: Yeah, ex-Catholics, they're a religion unto themselves. You believe in Evolution?

ABBY: Sure, what's not to believe? Evolution is God's plan for change.

MAN: God's plan. You eat too much Mexican food, you get a pain in your heart. Your appendix is useless, but if it bursts you die. The more you procreate, the greater your chances of cervical cancer. But you love God no matter what. Sounds like Battered Woman Syndrome to me.

ABBY: I didn't say I loved Him.

MAN: But you believe in God.

ABBY: I'm guessing you don't.

MAN: Put it this way. We're not on the best of terms. Where are you going?

ABBY: Excuse me a second.

(An OLD MAN has entered and taken a seat at the end of the bar.)

ABBY: Hi, what can I get you?

OLD MAN: I'm looking for José Cuervo. I don't see him back there.

ABBY: That's because we're not a full bar.

OLD MAN: A wine bar, what's the fun in that? *(to MAN)* You. What are you having?

MAN: *(recognizes him)* Oh shit. The house red, what's it to you?

OLD MAN: Take it easy, son. All right, Abby, bring me a bottle of the house red.

ABBY: How do you know my name?

OLD MAN: There's no trick to that. And some bar nuts, if you got 'em.

(ABBY returns to the MAN.)

ABBY: You know this guy? He seems to know you. *(puzzled)* Seems to know me too.

MAN: He thinks he knows me. I'll take some of those nuts as well.

(ABBY takes the OLD MAN his bottle of wine, takes a sip from her water bottle.)

ABBY: So...you from around here?

OLD MAN: Here, there, and everywhere. I'm ubiquitous.

MAN: Abby, my advice? Ignore this guy.

OLD MAN: Yeah, don't pay me any mind. I'm just an old Jew.

ABBY: I didn't really need to know that.

OLD MAN: What, you got something against Jews?

ABBY: I didn't say that, did I.

OLD MAN: I got news for you, Abby. You've been talking to one over there. Except that Jew forgets where he came from.

ABBY: I have nothing against Jews, OK?

OLD MAN: Nothing against them? That's a hell of a way to put it. Where would we be without the Jews? Freud. Marx. Einstein. All the game-changers were Jewish. 'Cause of the Talmud. Taught them to question everything, even their own faith. They have me to thank for that. Never caught on, though. Judaism was basically a dud.

MAN: Yeah, Pops, whose fault was that? "No graven images"! How can you sell a religion without graven images?

OLD MAN: You can't. Learned my lesson. You need violence and blood. So where you been hiding yourself, son?

MAN: Oh like you don't know.

OLD MAN: (*to* ABBY) He's been avoiding me his whole life. Supposed to be my right-hand man, in perpetuity. But he pulled a fast one, didn't you, son?

ABBY: You know what? I'm gonna let you guys talk.

MAN: You knew about the switch. Guy offered to take my place.

OLD MAN: Offered? You paid him.

MAN: Yeah, I paid his family after you let the poor bastard bleed to death up there. Never mind, it's typical.

OLD MAN: So why didn't you go through with it?

MAN: Why? Because I was making a good living. I had a year's worth of back orders. Cabinets. End tables. Oxcarts. People liked me. I was enjoying myself. You hated that. (to ABBY) He's always had intimacy issues. Aloof. Up in the clouds. (to OLD MAN) How's Mom doing?

OLD MAN: She's maintaining. She misses you, son. "Where's my boy, when is he coming home."

MAN: It's your home. It's not my home. Your fault for dragging her up there.

OLD MAN: (to ABBY) He was always a pain in the *tuchus*, this one.

ABBY: Seriously, leave me out of this.

OLD MAN: No, please, we need to settle things once and for all.

ABBY: I'm not getting in the middle here. You guys need to go back on your meds.

OLD MAN: Oho. She thinks we're both crazy.

MAN: I know one of us is.

OLD MAN: (to ABBY) I'll tell you what's crazy. Driving a car with a defective tie-rod.

ABBY: What tie-rod? What are you talking about?

OLD MAN: And that sleazebag your mom's dating—the one who sold you that Mazda.

ABBY: How do you know who she's dating? What else do you know about me?

OLD MAN: Besides the birthmark under your left armpit? Everything. I'm in the details. (*to MAN*) You deny you were a handful as a child? Killing snails, then trying to raise them from the dead?

MAN: Apple doesn't fall far from the tree. What about the fires and the floods? (*to ABBY*) He lost a bunch of friends there. I was supposed to make up for that. I make tons of friends every day. They walk with me, they talk with me, they wouldn't mind raising a glass with me. (*pause*) What's the matter, Abby? You look upset.

ABBY: I'm dreaming. This is a nightmare. Abby, wake up.

MAN: Take it easy, you're wide awake. (*to OLD MAN*) You, you were all cozy with the Popes. I was for the people.

OLD MAN: He's just jealous. Can't do miracles.

MAN: Who says I can't? I'm famous for them.

OLD MAN: Houdini stuff. Parlor tricks. Delusions of grandeur.

MAN: I walked on water, didn't I?

OLD MAN: You think you walked on water. And you made the people think that too. Just a lot of stupid hypnotism.

MAN: And what's wrong with that? Isn't that a bigger miracle? To make others see your thoughts, no matter how bizarre?

OLD MAN: Whatever, I'm not complaining. You got a religion out of it.

MAN: I never asked for a religion. All I wanted was to set an example to the world. Abby, what are you gaping at?

ABBY: (*to both*) WHO ARE YOU?

OLD MAN: And by the way, those earrings you snaked from Target? They don't go well with your face.

ABBY: Oh...my...God. And you're his...No, you can't be....Ohmigod, is this the Rapture?

MAN: Hey, don't get me started on the Rapture. That's total bullshit.

ABBY: You let a guy fill in for you.

MAN: That's right.

ABBY: On the cross.

MAN: Hey, weren't you listening? The guy volunteered!

ABBY: That's horrible! That's unforgivable! Everybody thinks you died! Oh gosh, my mom was right. I'm going to Hell.

MAN: Now why would you go to Hell?

ABBY: You were supposed to die for my sins.

MAN: So?

ABBY: If you didn't die, there's no way out for me. I'm doomed. I'm dead meat.

MAN: What do you mean, dead meat? You're a living breathing young woman. And very attractive, if I may say so.

OLD MAN: Oh here he goes. He's trying to convince you he isn't gay.

MAN: Who's denying it? I'm all things to all people.

OLD MAN: "Leave your wives, leave your children, come with me." Sounds pretty gay to me.

ABBY: So where have you been? Instead of up there with Him.

MAN: Oh, I've been all over. Trying to clean up the messes my old man makes. Hasn't been any picnic. Everywhere I go, I meet people claiming to be me. Or worshipping me. I never asked to be worshipped. I cringe when I'm thanked at the Grammys. How about the losers? Are they cursing me? No way.

ABBY: (to OLD MAN) They're cursing you for cancer.

OLD MAN: Excuse me?

ABBY: You heard me. My grandmother's dying of cancer, OK? She's why I left the Church.

OLD MAN: Why bother creating the universe, if it's gonna run perfectly? Things have to go wrong now and then.

MAN: "Now and then"?!? Listen to this guy.

ABBY: Yeah, every day, it's something new. Tornados.

MAN: Tsunamis. Genocide.

ABBY: Terrorism.

MAN: You want to hear another myth about Dad? That he doesn't give you any more than you can handle. That he even gives a shit.

(The OLD MAN gets off his barstool.)

OLD MAN: OK, that tears it. I'm gonna give you what I should have given you all those years ago. A good spanking.

MAN: Better idea: Why don't you have me crucified?

OLD MAN: Nah, you'd just wimp out again. Admit it. You were scared of the pain.

MAN: No, I just didn't want to live with you for all eternity.

(The MAN and the OLD MAN have begun pushing and shoving. The MAN gets the OLD MAN in a headlock, slams him to the floor.)

ABBY: Hey. Stop it. He's an old man, you're hurting him. Stop it! Stop it! Ohmigod, look at that, he's bleeding!

OLD MAN: Yeah, I tend to bruise easily.

MAN: That's why he's so vindictive.

ABBY: No....no....Bleeding? That's impossible. *(to MAN)* You're the one who bleeds, not him. Ohmigod, I'm such a dork! You guys have been messing with me, haven't you?

OLD MAN: "Ye of little faith." To quote him.

ABBY: If you're God, make this room turn upside down.

OLD MAN: Sorry, not in my repertoire.

MAN: Hey, don't look at me. I'm over that hocus-pocus.

OLD MAN: I'll see what I can do about your grandma, though. Since you brought it up.

ABBY: Why don't you both just leave?

OLD MAN: She wants us out of here.

MAN: Can't say I blame her. Sorry if we freaked you out.

ABBY: Just go please.

OLD MAN: We're going. *(to MAN)* I think we made some progress, don't you?

MAN: Yeah, we got a few things off our chests.

OLD MAN: I've missed you, son. Can we hug it out?

(The MAN and the OLD MAN hug.)

MAN: OK, leggo. Enough love.

OLD MAN: Your mother's dying to see you again.

MAN: Can't do it, Pops. I've got unfinished business here.

OLD MAN: Fine, if that's your attitude. I'm outa here.

(The OLD MAN lurches unsteadily for the door.)

ABBY: Maybe I should call you a cab?

MAN: Don't bother. He has no trouble getting around.

ABBY: *(to MAN)* What about you?

OLD MAN: Him? He's got a one-way ticket to Hell.

MAN: You try sending me there. I'll start another revolution.
And it won't be turn-the-other-cheek this time.

OLD MAN: You're never gonna learn, are you?

MAN: What would Dad do? And then I do the opposite.

ABBY: Guys? You start in again, I'm calling 911.

OLD MAN: Take it easy, we're done. I'll have my eye on you,
son.

MAN: That's the cross we all have to bear.

OLD MAN: (to ABBY) Bye, Abby. Drinks are on him. Tell your grandma she's got another five years.

(The OLD MAN exits.)

MAN: Crazy old coot. So what do I owe you? Wait, wow, I left my wallet in my robe. What's the damage?

ABBY: It's all right. It's on the house.

MAN: Bless you, Abby, but no. I'll make it up to you. You won't be out a drop.

(The MAN exits. ABBY steadies herself, takes a long pull at her water bottle, tastes something strange. Pours the water into a glass. It's wine. She crosses herself as the "Hallelujah Chorus" rises and the lights fade to black. END OF PLAY.)