

(Sam exits. Gidd happily eats as MAX KREIS enters from the street: his clothing a touch too loud for the area – what they would fashionably call “glad rags.” He carries with him a locked satchel.)

MAX

Gidd! Giddy-boy! H-h-h-h-h-how yeh doin’?

(Max laughs. Gidd melts into his bowl of ice cream. Max sets his satchel down by the bar.)

MAX

This place looks like shit. You ain’t been entertain’ customers again, have ya? Where’s Sammy?

(He rings the bell on the bar.)

Sam-*myyyyy*! The ol’ Blizzard’s back for his legs!

(Sam re-enters from the storage room.)

MAX

Sammy-boy!

(A moment between them.)

MAX

Well pick yer jaw up, will ya, and gimme two scoops of vanilla.

SAM

We ain’t serving ice // cream.

MAX

Two scoops of rum raisin, then.

SAM

We ain’t open for another hour.

MAX

Now, Sammy. You gotta work on yer people skills. No wonder this place is such a tomb.

SAM

I like those that’re likeable.

MAX

See, that’s it right there: that’s rough business.

SAM

Well, you'd know.

MAX

Ice cream's not the only thing that's chilly roun' here, huh?

(Towards Gidd.)

He still got that, uh, duh-duh-duh-duh-duh...?

SAM

Gidd?

(Snapping to get his attention.)

Gidd. Get back there and help me shuffle them tubs.

(Gidd gets up, on high alert, and scurries off into the storage room with his ice cream. When he's gone:)

SAM

Reiner must be gettin' pretty desperate.

MAX

Says you.

SAM

Says the papers.

MAX

Oh. Ya keep up with us. That's sweet.

SAM

The D.A.'s really puttin' the screws to you guys.

MAX

And you believe everything you read?

SAM

Then why are you here?

MAX

...Auld Lang Syne.

(Pause.)

SAM

Answers no.

MAX

No? ...Well that's tough, Sammy. You put me in a tough spot.

SAM

I put *you* in a tough spot? How'm I s'posed to explain that long line a low-lifes comin' thru my door?

MAX

It's Yonkers: who'll notice?

SAM

It's taken two years to shake off that reputation.

MAX

As I *recall*, "that reputation" made pops a very wealthy man.

SAM

Don't you call him that.

MAX

And that's good business, Sammy. You see an opportunity and ya take it.

SAM

Yeh, well, I'm running things now, Max. And I'm runnin' 'em straight. And if you tell me what my father wanted one more time, I'll bust your face in. You were just some runt what hung around the store.

(A pang of moral regret.)

He bootlegged; he got rich; he gambled it away. So much for seein' opportunity.

MAX

How's George Brady? It's been, what, *three months* since you paid the lease?

(Sam shakes his head. He goes for the front door and opens it. He waits for Max to leave.)

SAM

Before I lose my temper.

MAX

Once that mortgage goes under, and it *will*, maybe soon as next week —

SAM

He's not gonna sign the lease // over.

MAX

Men have done worse, and for less money.

SAM

We've got an // understanding.

MAX

— And who's to say who he'll give it to? Any meathead with the dough could swipe this from right under yeh!

SAM

Once Gidd's military pension check comes in — !

MAX

Aw, wise up blue nose! Our man on the Pension Board's got it all figured. Those checks get lost all the time. They're mostly on the level but you can convince a guy or two to let things fall through a crack. Or three. For the right price.

(Sam closes the door.)

SAM

You don't got the right.

MAX

That's good business.

SAM

He earned that money fightin' over there, for you, for // your rights.

MAX

Sure he did. But you don't learn to bend, you break. Isn't that what pops used to say?

(Sam advances on him, grabs his collar and throws his hand up as though to strike Max.)

MAX

(Quickly.)

And whose to say it won't be found? Maybe they just need a good pair a eyes.

(Sam holds his fist in mid-air. He wavers.)

MAX

Go on. There's that ol' Sammy-boy I know.

SAM

...I see you around here again, I'm callin' the cops.

(Sam lets go of Max.)

MAX

You'd turn in your brother, huh?

SAM

You're not my brother.

MAX

You an' me grew up here, *together*. I know what this place means to you. Means that to me too — excusin' the runt comment. And there ain't exactly a swarm of stand up guys to hand things over to. Knock away kids, sure. Deadbeats, degenerates, all kinds of souse hounds and swingers who'd turn this place into god-knows-what. But good strong pillars of the community? Like you? That's a rare commodity. People see what you've done, turnin' a bad business good — they respect that. I respect that. You kept it alive. And I'm not here to kill what — what you're *father* started. So....

(Max places the satchel up on the bar.)

SAM

What's that?

MAX

Good faith.

SAM

I'm not takin' that.

MAX

Well *I* can't take it back. I already set it down.