

Down By the River

by Randall Davis Barfield

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Setting: At the bar inside a typical upscale urban bar

4 characters:

Brandon is an attractive 37-ish architect who is divorced and shares custody of his one child.

Cindy is an attractive 37-ish real estate broker who is divorced and childless.

Bartender is a part-time student at a local college or university.

Sandy: Cindy's sister

SCENE ONE

Brandon (comes slowly over to where Cindy is sitting): Mind if I join you? Name's Brandon.

Cindy (sipping): Hi Brandon. Free country, my friend. Elections held on a regular basis thank you. I'm Cindy.

Brandon (smiles and sits slowly on the stool): Well... the country part I'm sure about. Free--less sure I guess. (Pauses) So, how's the world?

Cindy (taking in his face): Depends on whose world you're talking about. How's yours?

Brandon: Bit prosaic at present I'd say.

Cindy: (lifts her brows but makes no sound)

Brandon: Just trying to be funny. It could be better. But also worse.

Cindy (nods): That makes sense. Look, not to be rude but if you're married, I'm not interested. I'm not a bullshitter.

Brandon: I'm a 'was married'.

Cindy: Let me guess. You're a young widower and have a kid or two. They're home with your mom right now. In fact, you're in need of a mom. For the kids precisely. Well, keep looking.

Brandon: No, no widower. Kid yes. One. We share custody.

Cindy (looks him over again, impressed): Let's see. Definitely must've been you who left her. I'll give you that much.

Brandon: Nope.

Cindy (raises her brows): You gamble too much? Drink?

Brandon: Guess I could if I wanted to... but ...

Cindy: Oh God. You're impotent then!

Brandon (laughs): That, I assure you, can be left to discovery!

Cindy (laughs): True and I'm a natural at exploring. Me, I'm no fridge I'm glad to say.

Brandon (smiles): That's making it very clear. Let's talk more about you. Divorced?

Cindy: That's it. Put asunder instead of under, fortunately, but on friendly terms I might add.

Brandon: Who put you asunder? Obviously God didn't.

Cindy: Not a who. A what.

Brandon: An incident?

Cindy: No incident. A tight fist rather. That and bossiness.

Brandon (smiles): So, you like to spend money and you don't like bosses.

Cindy: Only if they pay well. Very well.

Brandon: Umm, maybe you didn't really love the partner. Him or her?

Cindy: A him. No, perhaps I didn't... or... not enough anyway. Have to admit that.

Brandon: It happens, but there are more fish. Kid?

Cindy: No kid, thankfully. Just little ole me on the make. Or on the take? Make or take, I forget which.

Brandon: I see you need another drink. May I? (Motions the bartender over who takes her glass and goes to prepare another drink) So, what do you do? You know, productivity.

Cindy: You first. Let me guess. Accountant.

Brandon: Nope.

Cindy: Economist or finance manager? Am I close?

Brandon: A little close. It does start with an “a”.

Cindy: I know. Asshole par excellence!

Brandon (Laughs throwing his head back) OK. I’ll tell you. Architect.

Cindy: Hey, that’s neat. I sell houses. Cumberland Realty.

Brandon: Good company. So, I’m talking to a pro here.

Cindy: Not really but I’ve been selling a few years now and I’ve really learned a lot. (Bartender puts the drink down a little too hard and some splashes onto Cindy’s clothes.) Hey, careful!

Bartender: Sorry ma’am. Please, let me... (Rushes around with some paper towels for Cindy to wipe her clothes.)

Cindy (wiping the spill): Are you two working together? If so, don’t dream that I’m going over to your place tonight so you can wash and dry my outfit.

Brandon (laughs): No, nothing like that. What do you take me for? But now that you’ve given me the idea ... (Notices her facial expression) Hey, what’s the matter?

Cindy (Dazed, a staring off into space look, then comes to): Oh, it’s the date. Wendy died on this date. Last year.

Brandon (Sympathetic): A relative or friend?

Cindy: No, my sweet mutt. She was only 8 years old.

Brandon: Oh, sorry. I know what you mean. I had a dog for nearly 10 years. Real beaut.

Cindy: Guess nothing lasts forever. So sad. Exit my virginity first, then exit my marriage, later exit Wendy. What’s next? My gallbladder? My appendix?

Brandon : Well, maybe both eventually.

Cindy: Hey!!

Brandon (Winces): No, just kidding.

Cindy: You'd better be.

Brandon: Oh, I'm sure it isn't that bad. You'll be okay. Hey, I was gonna mention something. I've got a cabin.

Cindy: That's nice. Is it a cabin in the sky or a cabin in the cotton? (They both laugh)

Brandon: Young Bette Davis—*Cabin in the Cotton*. Actually it's down by the river.

Cindy: And Neil Young. *Cabin in the Sky*. Hey, I love Bette's acting but I once read she could be a first-class b-i-t-c-h. Gary Merrill, one of her husbands, was dying or nearly dying and they just happened to be on the same airplane. Bette walked over to where he, now her ex, was sitting and said hi. He was reading and never even looked up. Wouldn't acknowledge her.

Brandon: That's pretty rough I'd say.

Cindy: Guess we pay for everything in life eventually.

Brandon: Wasn't she in a movie once and played twins? One rich and the other poor I think.

Cindy: Right. *Dead Ringer*. Great flick. The rich sister somehow managed to marry the poor sister's boyfriend. Before she became rich, of course. So finally upon the boyfriend's death the poor sister couldn't take it anymore and began plotting revenge. Hey, speaking of rivers, why are some of them up and others down?

Brandon (Smiles): Good question. North or south maybe?

Cindy: Yeah but what if the river's east or west of ya? A lot of them are.

Brandon: Oh, then it's over, as in over west that way or a bit over to the east there.

Cindy (Eying Brandon): And there's over the hill. It happens so fast. You have an answer for everything. I like that. Are you for real?

Brandon: Hope so. Wanna pinch me? Here. (Moves closer)

Cindy (laughs): Oh a pinch is nothing. Actually I may have a little more in mind if...

Brandon (Interrupts): Uh-oh. Now the "if" clause. I know something about those.

Cindy: If... What I mean is, if things keep going as they are.

Brandon (All smiles): And the "little more in mind"? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?

Cindy (Smiles back): I'd say definitely a good thing. Sure.

Brandon: Now you're talking. Why don't we work on making that 'good thing' a reality?

Cindy: I think I'd like that. But, you know. No guarantees.

Brandon: That shouldn't be a problem. We aren't appliances, are we?

Cindy (Giggles): You make me laugh. Feels very good.

Brandon: You make me feel like ... oh, like yelling on a mountaintop I guess. Like I could conquer something or some place. That feels good too.

Cindy (Studies wristwatch): Rugged man in the wilderness. Wasn't that Jeremiah Johnson? Uh, look at the time. Always things to get done. Why don't we meet again? Friday maybe?

Brandon: Same time same place?

Cindy: Yeah. That'll work. (Pauses) Isn't that another movie title?

Brandon: Well, I think the movie title is Same Time Next Year. Alan Alda.

Cindy: And Ellen Burstyn. Right-o. You know about a lot of things. It's a deal.

Brandon: Friday it'll be then. A little parting kiss?

Cindy: If it's wet.

Brandon (Smiles): Very.

(Both finish their drinks and stand up and kiss. Stage darkens. End of Scene 1)

