

## BEEN SO LONG

### Che Walker

BARNEY: Evening.

*Pause.*

What would you like to drink?

GIL: Don't like the way you asked me that question.

*Pause.*

BARNEY: I see.

GIL: Something 'boutchour tone.

*Pause.*

BARNEY: Something about my tone . . .

GIL: How long you worked this gig?

BARNEY: In this bar, or bars in general?

GIL: Yes.

BARNEY: Which one?

GIL: Both. Wanna know all of it.

BARNEY: Four years here, ten years in all.

GIL: You're burnt out.

BARNEY: I don't feel burnt out.

GIL: Burn out, mate. This place smells funny.

BARNEY: Any movement on your choice of drink?

GIL: Heard you was closing down.

BARNEY: Next month.

GIL: No . . .

BARNEY: Jake's across the road has killed us.

GIL: Jake's right, I passed that gaff on the way up here. Place was ramup. All the pretty people from MTV.

BARNEY: MTV mob used to chance it in here. Can only surmise it got a little too rough for them.

GIL: Packed over there. Both floors.

BARNEY: Yeah.

GIL: Jake and his brothers know how to run a party.

BARNEY: I'd work there if they had a position for me.

GIL: What about your punters?

BARNEY: My punters are mostly in Jake's.

*Pause. GIL breathes deeply.*

GIL: It's time. Yes. Yes. It's time.

BARNEY: I beg your pardon?

GIL: Taste it, Gil taste it, mate.

BARNEY: You getting ready to order a drink?

GIL: SHUTCHOUR MOUTH!

*Pause.*

WHERE IS HE?

BARNEY: Where is who?

GIL: Raymond LeGendre.

BARNEY: Raymond LeGendre . . . Don't know nobody called Raymond LeGendre.

*GIL grabs BARNEY and slams his head on the counter. He smashes an empty beer bottle and holds it close to BARNEY'S neck.*

GIL: i'm not here to be fucked about! It is time! I will be denied no longer! I've trained long and hard for what i'm gonna do to raymond le fucking gendre! It is my destiny to fillet the man! I have spent three long years of my life turning myself into a shark that breathes! (*Suddenly quiet.*) Again I ask you: where is Raymond LeGendre?

BARNEY: (*his face squashed*) I hnstly dnt knw th gizr.

GIL: You're a big fat fucking liar!

*GIL releases BARNEY.*

BARNEY: Perhaps if you described the fella. Wha's he look like?

GIL: Raymond LeGendre?

*Pause.*

He looks good, man. Tall man. Powerful physique. Moves easy. Athletic. Crisp garms. Birds go potty for him. He's relaxed, you see? They feel safe. He makes 'em laugh, he's cheeky. Like a kid, makes 'em giggle and drop their drawbridge. Perfect pitch. He must die.

BARNEY: Wait a minute . . . I know who you mean. Used to box a little in that gym across from the Talacre?

GIL: That's the one. Geezer keeps hisself well trim.

BARNEY: Used to come here every night, back when we was booming Zoomed right in on the women. Could set your clock by him pulling. You'd know it was time for last orders when he'd be helping a girl on with her coat. Every night. Different girl, same result.

GIL: Definitely the same cat.

BARNEY: Geezer should be in movies or summink.

GIL: Geezer should be neutered. Where is he? Raymond LeGendre.

BARNEY: On my life, mate, if it's the same guy, he's not stepped in here for two years at least. I don't know if he moved out the area, or got religion or got married or what, but he's not been in here for two years, I swear.

GIL: If you're blowing smoke up my arse, I'll gut you Somerstown style.

BARNEY: Got no reason to protect him, don't know the man. Just used to watch him work the women every night.

*Pause.*

GIL: Some geezers go through life . . . I dunno, they just, they just, they just . . . Flow, y'know? Glide through it. Fluid. Effortless. Pain free. No fear, no sweat . . . And some geezers go through life . . . They bounce into one brick wall after another. 'Til they're fucking blind with brain damage . . . And they know, after a while, they know . . . what their lot is gonna be . . . Then they start to smell bad.

*Pause.*

Listen, my friend. I'm sorry, I put my hands on you. Y'wanna bar, bar me. I'm a wrong 'un. I'm a wrong 'un.

BARNEY: Forget about it.

GIL: Been trying to forget about it for three years. Have a drink wimme.

BARNEY: You pour. My hands are still shaking.

*BARNEY puts out whisky bottle and two short glasses. Gil puts some money on the counter and pours the drinks.*

GIL: Cheer.

BARNEY: Cheers.

GIL: Gil.

BARNEY: Barney.

GIL: Easy.

BARNEY: Niceness.

*Pause.*

GIL: Ain'tcha curious as to why I wanna kill Raymond LeGendre?

BARNEY: Not remotely.

*Pause. GIL breaks down crying,*

GIL: He took my girl from me.

He took my girl,  
He took my girl,  
He took my girl,  
He took my fucking girl from me.  
Any girl he wanted, he took my girl.  
I only had the one girl . . .  
Both of 'em, both of 'em laughin' at me.  
I couldn't be more humiliated if I'd shat meself in public.  
Raymond Legendre . . . he took the love from me.

*BARNEY hands GIL a tissue.*