

Where Everybody Says "Goodbye"

Nice, white tablecloth & napkin restaurant. Four tables: two couples [JANICE & DENNIS, MARY & BARRY], one singleton [MARTIN]. Imagine going in and out of hearing different conversations -- as if there are definitely portions that the audience is NOT hearing in some cases. Some breakups are volatile and passionate, others are quiet and restrained. Aim for variety in tone.

Cast

RITA

MARTHA

MARTIN

JANICE/CASS

DENNIS/JOE/OFFSTAGE VOICE OF CARL

MARY/CHARLENE

BARRY/CHARLES

TESS/JOANNE

Small costume changes can help distinguish characters -- A jacket, sweater, glasses, a tie, etc. added or removed; hair up to down or down to up, etc.

TABLE 1: JANICE & DENNIS

JANICE

[as DENNIS sits at the table] Nice of you to show up!

DENNIS

Were you waiting long?

JANICE

Long? Try seven years!

DENNIS

Wait -- what is -- ?

JANICE

I can't go on not knowing if you will even show up for dinner!

DENNIS

Now, that's not fair! I got caught at work!

JANICE

At work? Try "in bed with my brother's wife"! [MARTHA hovers with menus, snaps them back. RITA watches from side]

DENNIS

What? How dare you --

JANICE

How dare *I*??? How dare *YOU*!!!

DENNIS

This isn't happening!

JANICE

This is DEFINITELY happening. I'm done! [Stands, knocks over chair]

DENNIS

[Stands] Don't do this --

JANICE

Don't do THIS??? YOU shouldn't have done THAT! [Slaps him, storms out. He follows--slips MARTHA number, mimes a "call me," exits.]

[MARTHA resets chair, clears tables. RITA seats CASS & TESS at TABLE 4]

TABLE 2: MARY & BARRY

MARY

I am not trying to blame you for --

BARRY

I know, I know...

MARY

But I just --

BARRY

Of course, of course...

MARY

I hope we can be --

BARRY

We will, we will...

MARY

Good bye, then. Thank you for --

BARRY

Good bye. Good bye. [Gentle embrace, lingering eyes. He gestures for her to exit ahead of him, he follows after--silent, but extreme, reaction to breakup]

MARTHA

It's still early. Wait till the weekend! About 9 on a Saturday!?! They really keep you hopping.

RITA

Wow. I guess that's why Carl said you barely make any tips.

MARTHA

Not a lot, but every now and then, you get a clinger--like that guy. [Points to TABLE 3: MARTIN] He's been there for about three hours. He only just stopped crying. We've called four cabs--but they were all stolen by the stormers. Anyway, he had the salmon" And maybe *two* desserts if we're lucky.

TABLE 4: CASS & TESS

CASS

I thought you knew--.

TESS

How could I? You never said.

CASS

I know

TESS

You never said anything--about--

CASS

I know

TESS

It was a shock, really, to have you come home with--

CASS

I know--and I'm sorry.

TESS

I just wish--

CASS
I know.

TESS
I mean, you could have told me. We could have worked something out.

CASS
Really?

TESS
Maybe, maybe. I just don't think I can trust you.

CASS
Of course.

TESS
Maybe another time. After a while.

CASS
Yeah?

TESS
... but not now. Not like this. I'll leave my key in the mailbox.

CASS
But --

TESS
Don't. Goodbye. [exits. CASS sits with white wine a little longer. Throws it back. Stands to exit--slips MARTHA number, mimes a "call me," exits.]

[CHARLES & CHARLENE sit in the newly empty TABLE 1]

CHARLES
[at TABLE 1, to MARTHA] Excuse me? Excuse me???

MARTHA
[Barrelling on, to RITA] Oh, you just got seated--see if you can get an app order in before they leave. If they ask, we're out of red wine and cranberry juice.

RITA
[to table] Good evening--can I tell you about the specials? Okay, our soup is lentil with andouille sausage and sage crema. We have salmon en croute--the vibrant, fresh, youthful filet is wrapped up and entangled

in a flaky, but persistent, buttery crust. Also, smothered chicken breast. That's a piece of flesh that is just piled on and piled on with spinach, breadcrumbs, and sorrow--oops, typo--I mean, *sorrel*.

CHARLES

You said something was suffocated? That sounds about right.

RITA

So, the smothered chicken?

CHARLENE

Enveloped in a flaky, crusty shell? Trapped? To stew in one's own juices?

RITA

Yes, the salmon is--

CHARLENE

I'll have that.

RITA

Can I get you anything to drink? We are out of red wine and cranberry juice.

CHARLENE

Pinot Grigio.

CHARLES

Bloody Mary (MARTHA overhears, shakes head, NO).

RITA

Sorry, no tomato juice. Nothing colorful or sticky.

CHARLES

Fine. A vodka.

RITA

Great.

[MARTHA seats JOE & JOANNE in empty TABLE]

MARTIN

Excuse me?

RITA

Yes?

MARTIN

Can I get an extra roll?

RITA

Sure, I'll get that out to you in a jiff! [exits]

MARTIN

[sigh] That's what you said twenty minutes ago.

CHARLENE

Vodka? Really? Really?!?!

CHARLES

What?

CHARLENE

Nothing.

CHARLES

What???

CHARLENE

I said "Nothing."

CHARLES

Oh, here we go again.

CHARLENE

"Here we go again." You are such a cliché!

CHARLES

I'm a cliché? Really? Really?!?!

CHARLENE

Raising your voice like this in a nice restaurant?

CHARLES

Oh and what about you? Hm?

CHARLENE

What about me? What ABOUT me???

RITA

[returns with white wine & vodka] Here are your drinks, your food will be out in a few minutes!

CHARLES

You want a cliché? [Stands, throws drink at CHARLENE]

CHARLENE

What the--what do you think you're doing?

CHARLES

What I should have done fifteen years ago!

CHARLENE

Oh really??? [Stands, pours drink over CHARLES' head]

CHARLES

Wha--??? [They bicker and sputter out the door]

MARTIN

[to RITA, who is crossing] Did you find that roll?

RITA

Oh, slipped my mind! Be right back.

JOE

Nice night.

JOANNE

Yeah, I guess. Look--

JOE

[at the same time] Look--

JOANNE

Um.

JOE

You go.

JOANNE

[at the same time] You go.

JOE

Ha. Um. So. Let me just--

JOANNE

Um. Okay. I guess--

JOE

Thanks. So. You are great. And I have loved every minute of our time together. And--

JOANNE

You know, let me just--

JOE

Hold on, I'm getting to the important part.

JOANNE

Right, but let me just--

JOE

Babe, I can't imagine my life without you. I have loved you since before I knew you existed. I had a space in my soul that was you shaped. And, babe, it hurt so bad until I met you. And now you're here, part of me. Please do me the honor of becoming my--[starts to lower to the ground... JOANNE grabs his elbows to keep him standing].

JOANNE

No. That's what I was afraid of. No. I can't. I won't, Joe. I'm so sorry. No.

JOE

What? Wait --

JOANNE

Jesus, we didn't even order drinks.

JOE

Would you have said *Yes* after a gin and tonic?

JOANNE

Probably not.

JOE

Oh my god. I'm so--sorry? I'm so--

JOANNE

Um. Thank you. You're sweet--I just--

JOE

I'm so--I have to-- [exits]

JOANNE

[to MARTHA] I'll have a Tanqueray and tonic, please. And a dessert menu.

RITA

[to MARTHA]

Was it always like this?

MARTHA

We were a regular restaurant for a while. The old chef was written up all over town. Really special, high end stuff. Once the breakups started, he got bored and left. Almost nobody stayed through salads.

RITA

So there's no chef?

MARTHA

Well, Carl does some desserts. The rest are Pepperidge Farm and Marie Callender.

RITA

What happens when someone orders food-food?

MARTHA

If they are still around after a while, we send Carl up the block to the sneeze-guard buffet place.

RITA

So our specials--

MARTHA

Are whatever is out in the steam trays. I pop in and take a look before I get here.

MARTIN

[sheepish] Sorry, any word on that roll?

[OFFSTAGE VOICE OF CARL]

Hey, Rita! Martha! Psst!

[RITA looks around, confused, MARTHA exits & re-enters with a tray bearing a gin & tonic and a long hoagie roll in a produce/bakery style plastic bag in a basket. She drops the drink at JOANNE's table and the basket at MARTIN's table].

MARTIN

Any butter?

MARTHA

No.

JOANNE

[sips on her drink and sees MARTIN looking at her]

Yes? Can I help you?! [recognizes him] Oh--wait. Martin? Martin Crabknuckle?

MARTIN

I thought you looked familiar. Joanne? Joanne Groinenfeller? It can't be! Whaddya know!? How have you been since the aughts?

JOANNE

Has it been that long? I'm okay. Doing pretty well. You look good--are you, uh, seeing anybody?

MARTIN

No, nope. Newly single. Are you seeing anybody?

JOANNE

[pause] No. [pause] Wanna get out of this place?

[end]