

WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS

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Cast of Characters

MAN, in his mid-thirties

WOMAN, in her late-twenties

At Rise:

(A lobby in the Las Vegas-McCarran International Airport. Late morning. There are two chairs on stage. WOMAN is sitting in the stage left chair. She is dressed in a prim business suit and flats. In front of her is a piece of carry-on luggage. It looks recently bought. On her lap is a designer-knockoff purse. She peers up ahead of her as if reading a display. She checks her watch, a small gold wristwatch. She sighs. She looks around her to see if anyone is watching her. She reaches into her purse and removes a Polaroid photograph. She stares at it sadly. MAN walks on from stage left. He is dressed in a white dress shirt—sleeves rolled up—unpressed slacks, and shoes in need of a shine. He is carrying a well-worn duffel bag. He looks around for a place to sit. He sees the empty chair by the woman. He walks behind her. As he does, he looks over her shoulder at the photo she is holding.)

MAN

Handsome devil. This seat taken?

WOMAN

(Presses photo to her chest)

Wha—? I'm . . . I'm sorry, what?

MAN

(Nods at photo)

Handsome devil.

(Points at seat)

This seat taken?

WOMAN

No! I mean . . . no. Please.

(Gestures to seat)

MAN

(Puts his duffel bag down. Sits. Looks up as if at display. Frowns. Looks at woman.)

Boston?

WOMAN

Boston?

(Looks up as if at display.)

Oh, yes. Boston.

MAN

Looks like he's going to have to keep supper in the oven for you.

WOMAN

He?

MAN

(Man smiles and points at photo still pressed to her chest)

Handsome devil.

WOMAN

Oh, no. I mean . . . Yes. Yes, he will.

(She puts photo back in her purse.)

We're going to be late, aren't we?

MAN

Delayed.

WOMAN

Yes, delayed.

MAN

Vegas just hates to let us go.

(Laughs)

Business?

WOMAN

Yes. Conference. You?

MAN

Every year. Same people, same talks, same luck. How about you? Hit the jackpot?

WOMAN

Oh, I don't . . . I had some quarters in my purse, but . . .

MAN

Came up dry. I wish I could do that. Keep it to a couple of quarters. But they make you walk right past the tables to get anywhere. Next thing you know . . . Hard eight, baby! Hard eight!

WOMAN

I'm sorry. Hard . . . ?

MAN

Hard eight. Craps talk. Sorry. My weakness. Just love to roll dem bones. Don't tell my wife.

(Points up to the right as if at sign.)

What happens in Vegas, right?

WOMAN

What happens . . . ?

(Looks up to the right as if at sign.)

Oh, yes.

MAN

Ain't that the craziest slogan you ever heard? "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." That kills me. It's like "C'mon! Get drunk, gamble, go to strip clubs—We won't tell!" I guess that family angle wasn't working too well, huh?

WOMAN

I never thought of it that way.

MAN

Yeah, well, something tells me they had men in mind when they cooked it up. Women are too behaved for a thing like that. Right? I bet you were on your best behavior.

(Woman shoots him an uneasy glance then looks away.)

Although you'll have to explain to the handsome devil what happened to those quarters. I bet he don't miss a thing.

WOMAN

No, he doesn't.

MAN

Just the same, good advice though. "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." If my wife ever came out here with her pals, I'd be saying, "Hey, have fun. But keep it to yourself, okay? I don't want to hear any stories!"

WOMAN

You would? You wouldn't?

MAN

You kidding me? Who'd want to know that stuff? You'd never get a good night's sleep again. Did you see those people? That's not what they're like at home, trust me. And they don't want them like that at home either. They're just, "Get it out of your system, come home and mow the lawn. Just don't lose the mortgage or come back with a disease."

WOMAN

Is that what your wife says?

MAN

(Laughs)

No, of course not. Women never come out and say it, do they? But that's what they're thinking. They've got to say, "I want you to be completely honest with me." Because that's their thing, right? But they don't want to hear it. Who would?

WOMAN

I would.

MAN

(Laughs, nods.)

I know you would, but you wouldn't. No one would. It doesn't do anybody any good.

WOMAN

You wouldn't want to know?

MAN

Know?

WOMAN

If your wife came to Vegas and . . .

MAN

My wife? God no!

(Laughs)

Not that she would. Like I said, it's a man thing. But if she did . . . God no.

WOMAN

Why not?

MAN

Why not? Because . . . I mean . . . Do you think the handsome devil would want to know if, you know, you did . . . you know?

WOMAN

Yes, I think he would.

MAN

(Laughs, shakes his head)

I'm sorry. I don't want to be insulting or anything, but . . .

(Pause)

Look, I know I started this whole thing. You were just sitting here quiet and I came over and . . . Let's just leave it at that.

WOMAN

No. You don't understand. He would want to know. Of course, he would.

MAN

(Looks away. Nods.)

Okay.

WOMAN

He would!

MAN

Okay.

WOMAN

(Stares at man. Pause.)

Why wouldn't he?

MAN

Why would he?

WOMAN

So . . . so he could know. So we could talk about it.

MAN

Talk about it? Talk about what? Talk about how maybe you were getting a little bored? How you thought some other guy might spark things up for you a little bit? How some other guy might do the job just a little better?

WOMAN

No, it wasn't like that!

MAN

(Pause.)

Hey, look. This is none of my business.

WOMAN

It wasn't like that.

MAN

Okay.

WOMAN

It was . . . We just started talking.

MAN

Okay.

WOMAN

We were just getting along so nicely. Neither of us knew anybody. Neither of us had anyone to talk to. It was just nice to have someone to eat dinner with.

MAN

Okay.

WOMAN

(Pause)

He made me laugh.

MAN

Women like that.

WOMAN

And then it . . . It was his last night. He wanted to make a toast. He ordered champagne.

MAN

Lady . . .

WOMAN

It was the champagne, really. If it wasn't for the champagne . . .

MAN

Lady . . .

WOMAN

The champagne.

MAN

Lady. Don't tell him anything. Trust me, he don't want to know.

WOMAN

(Slumps back in her seat.)

He has to know.

MAN

(Pause. Nods towards purse.)

That him?

WOMAN

(She reaches into her purse and pulls out the picture.)

The waiter . . . took a picture. He asked us if we wanted a souvenir.

MAN

Handsome devil.

(Pause)

You know what he is?

(She shakes her head.)

He's the guy every other guy hates at first sight. He's the guy we don't believe is real. He's the guy we keep our wives up for hours after a party bugging her, "So, you think he was good looking? Do you? You do, don't you? Do you?"

(Pause.)

Lady, he don't want to know.

WOMAN

He has to know.

(Woman stares at the photograph. Man waits for a moment, then stands quietly, picks up his duffel bag, and begins to walk away stage right.)

WOMAN

(Still staring at photograph.)

What field are you in?

MAN

(Stops. Looks back at her over his shoulder.)

Field?

WOMAN

(Woman puts photograph back into her purse. Looks up.)

Yes. You said you attended a conference?

MAN

Right. Heating systems.

WOMAN

Heating systems?

MAN

Yeah. I know, kind of dumb having a heating systems conference in Las Vegas, but this is where we have it.

WOMAN

You've been coming here a long time?

MAN

(Walks back to seat. Puts down duffel bag. Sits.)

Oh, yeah. Let me see . . . eleven years now.

WOMAN

You're not bored of Vegas yet?

MAN

There's no getting bored of Vegas.

WOMAN

No.

MAN

The place is completely different every time. Everything just keeps getting better and brighter. Well, everything except me that is. I can barely stay awake past ten anymore. Can't remember the last time I closed up a joint, not that anything closes up around here.

WOMAN

Your wife miss you when you're gone?

MAN

I guess. She says she does. She has her fun though while I'm here. Her and her sister sometimes, you know, they have their adventures.

WOMAN

You miss her?

MAN

(Pause. He stares at her suspiciously.)

Do I miss her?

(Woman stares back coldly.)

Look, I'm sorry about . . . I was just trying to give you my perspective, a guy's perspective. I didn't mean to nose in on things. You do what you think you got to do. I mean, hell, I could be talking out of my . . . I mean, what the hell do I know?

WOMAN

You don't miss her?

MAN

Yes, of course I miss her. She's my wife. We get along.

WOMAN

And you've never left anything in Vegas?

MAN

(Starts to get up.)

Look, I don't know you, you don't know me. We just—

WOMAN

You ever leave anything in Vegas?

MAN

(Pause. Sits down slowly.)

Why do you want to know?

WOMAN

A guy's perspective. Nobody wants to know—

MAN

Nobody does want to know.

WOMAN

Bullshit! Nobody wants to be kept in the dark. He'd want to know. I'd want to know—

MAN

You'd want to know?

WOMAN

Of course I'd want to know! That's what it's about. It's the not-knowing, it's the pretending, it's the "Everything is just fine, dear" that—

MAN

That's what makes it work. That's what it takes to make it work. You say it's fine, it is fine. You say you're happy, you are—

WOMAN

That's not right! That's not right at all. You can't just act like you're happy and you're happy. You can't just act like you're faithful and you're faithful. You have to—

MAN

You do have to. That's exactly what you have to do.

WOMAN

Why? Why?

MAN

Why? Because . . . because . . . because we're human! Because we're all really bad selfish people just trying to get out of bed in the morning! Because my wife's been married to me for thirteen years and she gets more of a kick out of the new living room couch than she does from me! Because I've got a ten-year old daughter who's got nicer

MAN (cont.)

things to say to the dog than to her old man! Because if we didn't pretend, there wouldn't be anything there! It's all we got is the pretend!

WOMAN

But . . . but that's not how it's—

MAN

How long have you been married?

WOMAN

Four years.

MAN

Four years. Four years and you've already got a souvenir. Don't tell me how it's supposed to be because you don't know. But you go ahead. You go ahead and tell him. Then you'll know. Then you'll know.

WOMAN

I will.

(Pause.)

And so should you.

MAN

(He lunges forward with finger raised.)

Listen!

(Woman shrinks back. Man catches himself. He slowly leans back. Pause.)

Listen. I already apologized for telling you your business. You don't need to tell me mine. Once a year I get. Once a year I get to feel more important than the living room couch. Once a year I get to have someone hear what I'm saying, actually listen to what I say. And you know what? That's just pretend too. I know that. Every year I save up for it. Taking the empties back. Hitting some scratch tickets. Putting the change in a jar. My craps money, I tell her. My Hard Eights Fund. Sure it's game: You tell me I'm handsome. You tell me I'm the best. I'll roll snake-eyes. "Oops, honey. I lost it all again this year. Better start saving up for next." But it ain't no more expensive than the game I play at home. Except in Vegas I get to win.

WOMAN

(Pause.)

What's her name?

MAN

It's different every year, it's—You know, they don't stick around long. Not much of a career, I guess. I just tell them what I'm looking for, they send them over. They know. They get it enough, I suppose. They'll stay for two days, three days. It's usually the ones

MAN (cont.)

at the end of it. The older ones. They know you're looking for, what you're not looking for, you know . . . prom night with the head cheerleader. We go out to dinner, we have drinks, we . . . Lorraine it was this year. Lorraine. She was nice.

WOMAN

You should tell your wife. Maybe you can change things. Make it what you want.

MAN

It's not—It's what she wants. She wants . . . him.

(Points to purse.)

Or some guy with money, some guy with clout. You know, I got . . . I got her the house and the kid. I'm tapped out. She got what she wanted from me. I got no more to give.

WOMAN

That can't be true. Talk to her. Ask her.

MAN

I don't have to. I know.

P.A. SYSTEM

Flight #1017 to Boston is now at the gate. Will passengers for Flight #1017 please report to Gate #5.

WOMAN

Tell her.

(Man shakes his head.)

I'm telling him.

(Man shakes his head again.)

I am.

MAN

Don't.

WOMAN

I have to.

(They stare at each other for a moment. Then he stands, picks up his duffel bag, and begins to walk off stage right.)

WOMAN

My conference is being held here again next year. Same time.

MAN

(Stops and turns around.)

What, you want to compare notes?

Compare notes?
WOMAN

See which of us is right?
MAN

It's not a game.
WOMAN

Well . . .
MAN

P.A. SYSTEM
Flight #1017 to Boston is now boarding.

MAN
We'll see next year, won't we?

(Blackout.)