JODI

by
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1. EXT. ALLEY. NIGHT. (FLASH FORWARD)

A WOMAN stands frozen. She watches a MAN with shoulder-length hair exchanging blows with another MAN in SLOW MOTION. Everything is silent except for a RINGING in the woman's ears. She squeezes her eyes shut.

2. INT. FRONT OF STAGE. NIGHT

The woman, JODI, 22 years old, opens her eyes. She's leaning against a wooden post near the stage at the back of the smoky underground bar, a cigarette tucked between her fingers.

She looks like one of the wild ones, with her hot pants, knee-high boots, and eyes heavy with makeup.

The ODD CAT is playing tonight – they really know how to work a crowd. Jodi watches the band, occasionally stealing glances at her BOYFRIEND, LAWRENCE, who's gone to get them drinks.

The GUITARIST, MIKE (22 years old, tall and skinny, with shoulder-length hair), performs a riff that makes the crowd go wild. Jodi smiles at their reaction as she takes a drag, then turns her attention on Mike.

Briefly Mike looks up, and their eyes meet. He smiles at Jodi, and she returns it, gives a small wave.

3. INT. BAR. NIGHT

Jodi nurses a Tom Collins at the bar. She runs a finger around the glass, her other hand ashing her cigarette in the ashtray on the counter.

Mike is at the other end, about to order something. When the couple beside him moves away from the bar, he spots Jodi right behind them.

His face lights up, and he makes his way towards her.

MIKE
(nervously)
Jodi?

Jodi turns around, gives him a smirk.

JODI
If it isn't the lead guitarist
of the Odd Cat.

MIKE
How’ve you been?

JODI
All right. I see you’re still keeping that hair.

MIKE
(LAUGHS) I see you’ve kept your humour. I’m real glad you came, Jodi.

Jodi turns away briefly, sticks her cigarette bud in the ashtray, dusts off her hands.

JODI
How long you been playing here?

MIKE
Couple months, every night. You’ll see me around for the rest of the year.

JODI
Don’t think I can convince Lawrence to take me out every day. Took him forever to bring me here as it is.

MIKE
I’ll buy you a drink then, since you came all the way.

Mike holds his hand up to signal the bartender, but Jodi stops him.

JODI
Thank you, but I’m all right. Lawrence won’t want me drinking too much. Says my face gets blotchy.

MIKE
(SCOFFS) Since when did you take orders from anyone?

Jodi hesitates, as if taken aback by the remark.

JODI
I only take orders if it’s the truth.

A man comes up behind Jodi: LAWRENCE (26 years old). His glass clinks against the counter as he sets it down. He puts his arm around Jodi’s waist.

LAWRENCE
Hope you didn’t miss me, sweetheart.

Lawrence looks like the CEO of some big company – or the son of a CEO – dressed in an immaculately tailored suit minus the jacket, though his tie has come loose.

JODI
Larry, this is Mike.

Lawrence looks Mike up and down as they shake hands.

LAWRENCE
So you’re the guitarist, huh? I enjoyed the show.

MIKE
Thanks -

LAWRENCE
You’re a friend of Jodi’s?

MIKE
Yeah. We grew up in Indianapolis together.

Lawrence nods, seems interested.

LAWRENCE
What brings you to New York?

MIKE
I was, you know, in search of bigger things. Met the guys when I first arrived in ’71, realized we all had musical talents, and the rest was history.

LAWRENCE
Jodi can sing, too, can't you, Jodi?... (SIGHS) Too bad it's not enough to help me pay the rent.

Mike sees Jodi shifting uncomfortably.

MIKE
Jodi and I used to be in a band, actually. Back in high school... (SMILES) She sang while I played the guitar with two other kids.

LAWRENCE
I didn't know that.

JODI
I told you once before, baby.

An awkward silence.

LAWRENCE
(as if he'd come to a revelation)
I can see why you brought me here.

JODI
I don't -

LAWRENCE
No, no – you wanted me to meet your friend. I can understand that.
(to Mike)
You know, she was always into guys like you. She never had a taste for boring bankers. She told me that herself.

JODI
(with a forced laugh)
You've had a little too much to drink, Larry –

LAWRENCE
But she knows what's good for her. She needed a place to stay, food and pretty things – that's what I love about her. She knows what's good for her.

Mike hesitates.

MIKE
Listen, buddy...I'm sure you and Jodi are a match made in heaven. I would never...we were never anything like that.

LAWRENCE
(SHRUGS)I'm just sayin'.

As if to prove a point, Lawrence leans in and kisses Jodi on the cheek. She makes the tiniest of flinches, like the kiss was static. Mike notices this.

Mike tears his eyes away when he sees the LEAD SINGER of the Odd Cat signalling for him from beside the stage.

MIKE
Sorry, I have to take this.

4. INT. BESIDE STAGE. NIGHT

Mike approaches NATE, the lead singer.

NATE
Hey, Mike, I was thinking – for tomorrow's set, we should...

But Mike isn't listening; he can't seem to take his eyes off Jodi and Lawrence.

5. INT. BAR. NIGHT

Jodi glances nervously at Lawrence as he knocks back his glass of bourbon and orders another round.

JODI
You should watch that, baby. You have a meeting tomorrow -

LAWRENCE
I know my limits, Jodi... (CLEARS THROAT) That Mike is a nice guy, isn't he?

Jodi sips her drink and doesn't answer.

LAWRENCE
Is that why you're all dressed up tonight? That you wore those itty-bitty shorts?

JODI
(quietly)
You asked me to put on these shorts, Larry.

LAWRENCE
But you should've known better, sweetheart.

He grips her arm tight. It startles her.

6. INT. BESIDE STAGE. NIGHT

Mike flinches when he sees Lawrence grip Jodi's arm.

NATE
And then we'll...Mike? Mike, are you okay?

MIKE
Yeah, yeah, I hear you. Is that all?

Nate nods, and Mike walks back towards the bar.

7. INT. BAR. NIGHT

Lawrence leans in close to Jodi's ear.

LAWRENCE
You know how pretty you are, don't you, Jodi?

JODI
(trembling)
Yes.

LAWRENCE
So if you know – and I know – how pretty you are, you don't need to go around advertising it to everyone else, do you?

JODI
(SHAKES HEAD) No.

Lawrence releases Jodi as Mike approaches them.

MIKE
Everything all right here?

Jodi clears her throat. She glances up at Mike, flashes him a smile.

JODI
Everything's fine, Mike.

Mike doesn't seem convinced.

LAWRENCE
(smugly)
You heard the lady, Mikey. Everything's fine.

MIKE
Listen, pal – if you got a problem, I suggest you leave.

Lawrence laughs, seemingly amused. He stands up and goes to take Jodi by the wrist.

MIKE
(a little louder)
Jodi stays.

JODI
No, Mike, really, it's fine –

MIKE
I have a spare bedroom, you can stay there as long as you want –

Lawrence grabs Mike's shoulder.

LAWRENCE
What makes you think she wants that?

MIKE
Hey – easy, pal. Easy.

LAWRENCE
What say we take this outside? Just you and me.

A few patrons have turned around, whispering.

JODI
C'mon, baby. Don't wanna make a scene now, do we?

Lawrence notices the attention. Slowly he lets go of Mike, adjusts his tie. He jabs a finger at Mike.

LAWRENCE
Don't expect us to be back anytime soon.

He storms out of the bar with Jodi.

8. EXT. ALLEY. NIGHT

The ground is soaked from the evening's rain, littered with broken bottles. There's little light coming from the streetlamp above the bar entrance. Lawrence is now gripping Jodi by her collar, shaking her.

LAWRENCE
(shouting)
Did you like that? Embarrassing me in front of your friend?

JODI
No, Lawrence, please –

LAWRENCE
You bitch – you think I don't know why you wanted me to bring you here? You think I'm stupid, is that it?

He slaps her, sending her falling to the ground. Suddenly, somebody socks him in the jaw: it's Mike!

Still on the ground, clutching her cheek, Jodi struggles to open her eyes to see what all the noise is about. She pulls herself up and watches them, eyes wide, as Mike and Lawrence have a go at each other, her feet rooted to the spot.

Both of them begin to move in SLOW MOTION. Jodi's hearing is overwhelmed by a RINGING in her ears that increases by the second. She squeezes her eyes shut.

The ringing is drowned out by Jodi's breathing, also slowed. Magnified. INHALE. EXHALE. INHALE. EXHALE –

- Jodi opens her eyes. Sense of time has returned to normal. The ringing is gone. She sees Lawrence on the ground. He's clutching his jaw, blood pouring from his nose. Mike is standing over him.

Mike turns to Jodi.

MIKE
Go! Run!

Jodi backs away, looking from Mike to Lawrence, then back to Mike. Both stare back at her, as if saying: *Pick me! Choose me!*

MIKE
Jodi, you need to run. Go to the cops, get help...

But Jodi no longer hears him. She rushes towards Lawrence, kneels down.

JODI
(gently)
Are you okay, baby?

Lawrence makes an unintelligible sound as he pinches his broken nose. Jodi helps him up, drapes his arm around her shoulders. They walk away from the bar. Mike stares after them, panting, anguish in his eyes.

Jodi doesn't look back at Mike.

END.

Synopsis

When Jodi visits an underground bar with her boyfriend, Lawrence, to watch her childhood friend perform, the evening takes a turn for the worst when her friend Mike realizes Lawrence's abusive nature. Mike tries to help – but will Jodi choose to break free, or stay with the one she loves?

(50 words)