

HEART SOUL & ROCK'N'ROLL KARAOKE SCENE

NOVEL

I entered and looked around. Yep. It was a dark, dingy dive. An old wooden bar stretching nearly the whole side of the room was to my right. A guy with a pony tail, white t-shirt, and black chinos was behind the bar was wiping it down. Another guy, in a faded green t-shirt and worn jeans, slumped on a stool. As we passed, the bartender pushed a mug of beer at him. "So, you had to fire her, huh?"

"Yeah," the other guy sighed and took a good-sized gulp.

"That's tough. Sorry to hear it."

Taking my arm, Patti tugged me to the left as she said into my ear, "We're in luck. It's Karaoke night!"

The left side of the room was taken up by a stage surrounded by round tables and chairs, about half of which were occupied. A Karaoke machine had been set on a table to one side of the stage. It was attended by a green-haired, twenty-something woman.

We settled at a table covered with carved graffiti. I watched as two tall, blond young things spoke to the attendant then stepped onto the stage and proceeded to destroy what I initially mistook for Lady Gaga's "Born This Way."

Patti placed our order: a chardonnay for her and a Yuengling beer for me. Turning her attention to the stage, she winced. "Yow! They are some kind of bad!"

I said, "Well, at least they're trying."

"Yes," Pattie added. "Very trying."

A few seconds later, the waitress set our drinks down. I don't drink much. One or two is my limit. But I took solace in the beer, hoping alcohol would ease the assault on my ears.

Patti and I tried to chat over the noise. When it was over, she grinned challengingly at me. "Want to go up there?"

"I don't know," I hedged.

"Oh, come on!" Patti took my arm and yanked me out of my chair. The next thing I knew, we were standing by the attendant and Patti was saying, "Have you got Halestorm on there?"

The attendant nodded.

"What?" I babbled. "I can't sing like Lzzy Hale!"

"Oh, but you can, my dear." Patti told the attendant, "We'll do 'Here's to Us,'" and pulled me up onto the stage. "You solo. I'll fill in with harmonies. We'll do the non-explicit version."

My stomach knotted up. “But ...”

“We’ve sung this plenty of times in the car.” She shoved a microphone into my hands. “You can do this.”

The music started.

Crazy thoughts raced around my head. My voice wasn’t warmed up. I hadn’t sung to a crowd outside of the church in over a decade. I was forty. Forty! Nothing worse than a middle-aged woman trying to be cool.

I started singing a bit hesitantly. The first couple of lines felt awkward, but then my body and my heart remembered what it was like to sing with a band. The next thing I knew I was lost in the song, flying with it, feeling powerful and free.

As Patti and I harmonized, I took momentary peeks at the audience. Yeah. We had them. They liked us. Even that scruffy guy at the bar had turned around and was watching us.

We finished to enthusiastic applause and shouts, during which I caught a glimpse of the bartender reaching across the bar and giving the scruffy guy’s shoulder a push. I followed Patti off stage and back to our table.

Face flushed, Patti flopped onto her chair. Her sophisticated Auntie Mame shell fractured as she giggled. “That was so cool! I felt like I was in college again!”

I couldn’t help grinning back at her. “It’s nice to know we still have it.”

“You really do,” a voice said.

We looked up. It was the scruffy guy from the bar. He cleared his throat. “May I?”

“Help yourself.” Patti indicated the empty chair.

The guy swung the chair around, plopped down, and rested his forearms on its back. He probably had been really cute twenty years earlier. His short beard, either grown intentionally or the result of forgetting to shave for the last week, was brown and sprinkled with gray. It gave his age away, as did the lines around his eyes. He was somewhere in his forties. He was a typical guy who had let himself go a little bit and enjoyed beer a little too much. Okay, to be honest, he had the beginnings of a beer belly. It was small, but there.

“I’m Neil Gardner,” he said.

SCRIPT

INT. FLYING FISH SHOW FLOOR – NIGHT

LINDSAY and PATTI sit at a table and sip beer as a KARAOKE SINGER murders a song.

PATTI

Yow! Is he bad!

LINDSAY

Well, at least he's trying.

PATTI

Let's go next, Lins.

LINDSAY

Are you out of your mind?

PATTI

Oh, come on!

PATTI pulls LINDSAY to her feet.

CUTAWAY:

INT. FLYING FISH CLUB BAR - NIGHT

NEIL GARDNER, 40s, scraggly hair and wearing an old t-shirt, worn jeans, and beat up sneakers, enters and plops down at a stool by the bar. BILLY the bartender waits for his order.

NEIL

I'll have a Yuengling, Billy.

BILLY

Coming up, Neil.

NEIL winces at the noise coming from the stage.

NEIL

Jeez, what the hell is that?

BILLY

Karaoke, my friend. Karaoke. Every Monday night my ears bleed. Thing is, your band draws so many People Friday through Sunday that the boss thought this might do the same thing. He was right.

BILLY (CONT'D)
People like making asses of themselves.
Who knew?

NEIL grunts. BILLY slides a bottle of Yuengling at him. The song changes. We hear PATTI and LINDSAY start singing a punkish song. NEIL's eyebrows go up. He swivels around on the stool so he can look at the stage.

CUTAWAY:

INT. FLYING FISH CLUB STAGE - NIGHT

LINDSAY and PATTI are singing their hearts out.

BACK TO SCENE:

NEIL watches LINDSAY and PATTI with great interest. BILLY points at LINDSAY.

BILLY (CONT'D)
That one's pretty good, huh?

NEIL
Yeah.

BILLY
You should talk to her.

NEIL
Nah. When did that ever go well?

BILLY
Shut up and just do it.

BILLY reaches across the bar and pushes NEIL off his stool.

CUTAWAY:

INT. FLYING FISH CLUB SHOW FLOOR - NIGHT

LINDSAY and PATTI return to their seats.

PATTI
That was like being in college!

LINDSAY
Total fun!

NEIL (O.C.)

Hey, you two are good.

The women look up. NEIL swings an extra chair around, and plops onto it, resting his forearms on the chair's back. Despite his casual pose, he is nervous.