

UNTITLED SCREENPLAY

by

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BAILEY ROAD COMMUNITY LUNCH

By Rob Weafer

INT: A WORN DOWN COMMUNITY DINING HALL AT A LOCAL
CHURCH-LUNCHTIME

Tables are set out, about 8 of them, with folding chairs. It is a large meeting room in the church with a kitchen off to one side. Volunteers are working away preparing food. A long serving table is bare, hot plates empty waiting for the large trays and pots. People have already filed in and are seated waiting for lunch to be served. They are a ragtag bunch of seniors, mostly healthy, some in scooters and walkers. There is a bit of chatter as they wait.. People file in at staggered moments and say hi. Everyone knows each other.

A crew of 3 regulars walks in and people say hi, make greetings and they head to their regular table of the last 5+years. One is already arrived and waiting for them. They sit down and start the usual banter.

DOLEN

Colin... You still flapping your
lips. How do you do that when
you're the only one at the table?

COLIN has a PH.D in science and is long retired. He will usually scan his iPad while he waits for people to arrive, looking for flyers and deals on groceries.

COLIN

Hi. Pineapples are on for 3\$ at
NoCost.

RON

That'd be great if anyone at this
table liked them. We tell you this
every week, dude.

DOLEN

Don't start him talking... He won't
shut it for at least 10 minutes.
Each word in an excuse for the
next. The guy used to lecture for
hours.

RON

Is Marlene coming?

DOLEN

She walks..pretty cold... She might
not bother.

COLIN

Pea soup... Big can... 88 cents.

RON

Now I can get behind some pea soup.

DOLEN

Told ya... Yap yap yap. That's Wednesday's flyer, dude. Sales over.

COLIN

Damn.. Is it?

DOLEN

I don't know... Just trying to shut you up.

COLIN

Saw a great foreign film yesterday... From Argentina I think.

DOLEN

Lemme guess... You forgot all the details in the last 24 hrs.

RON

Marlene's here. Hey Marlene!

Marlene's a new addition to the table. She's only been used to the banter and abuse for a couple of months. The crew figured she'd eventually run once she got to know them but she laughed along and decided to stay. She had moxy.

MARLENE

Hey guys. You guys already do the daily trivia?

RON

Not yet. Dolen's not finished with Colin.

MARLENE

Oh.

DOLEN

You'll starve if you don't stop to eat... So just shut it, professor.

RON

What was the movie about?

COLIN

Hold on... Let me think. It was really good. I want to get the themes right.

DOLEN

No shit.

MARLENE

Here we go.

RON

Was it up for an Oscar?

COLIN

No..wait.. It was from Brazil.

RON

Start the trivia, Dolen. This could take a while.

The crew had a regular ritual of guessing the celebrities that were born that day.. To help with memory as they got old. DOLEN pulled out his cell to start the game. He checks out the list everyday before the lunch.

DOLEN

Not a lot today, guys.

COLIN

I'm looking it up now.. The title.

RON

Fire away, Dolen.

TOMMY, a regular, obese and invalid at the next table slumps slightly left and his head falls back in his massive, electric wheelchair. The table froze and waited for the snore that usually followed. It takes longer than usual.

RON

Jeez... Is he.. ?

DOLEN

Doubt it. Give it a minute.

TOMMY snorts a bit and begins snoring.

RON

Christ... Every time.

DOLEN

He's not going anywhere. Tests from his last doctor's visit were not bad.

RON

He's good at movie trivia when he's conscious.

DOLEN

I'll go before he does. I'm in rough shape.

RON

How's the nurse who draws your blood at the clinic doing? You making any headway?

DOLEN

Nurse Feratu? Same... Cialis stopped working last year so don't know why I'm bothering. She doesn't get my jokes but laughs out of politeness.

RON

New flash.. We all do.

RON and DOLEN both laugh at the jab. MARLENE smiles, feels the warmth and laughs too. She was going to fit right in after all.

The minister of the church steps in to announce the lunch will soon be served.

DOLEN

Shush. It's the Rabbi.

RON

(loudly into the room so
the priest will hear)
What is the nature of the profane,
pastor?!

PASTOR

(good humoured smile)
Well they didn't really identify
it at the seminary but I have a
feeling it's at your table.

RON

Burn. Good one, Rabbi.

DOLEN

He's a good guy.

MARLENE

He's totally right.

RON

I believe he is. Got the name of
that movie yet, professor?

COLIN
It was Afghanistan.

RON
Well, they both start with "A".. So
you're improving.

DOLEN
Shush... He's gonna say grace.

PASTOR
Heavenly father... We thank you for
this food and for the people who
made it. And for this gracious
opportunity to commune and break
bread in your presence.. Amen.

For all their irreverent bluster, the table never failed to
bow their heads and say "Amen" in unison at the same time.
They were all getting up there and didn't want to take
chances.

Ron, in true form, pulls out his lighter, lights it and
holds it up as if at a rock concert and proclaims,

RON
Yeeaahh providence!

PASTOR
Now THAT's funny! Take care guys.

RON
Until next time, padre.

RON sits and the crew get back into their routine.

RON
So dude... Where's the trivia?

DOLEN
The phone... Still loading.

RON
Crap phone.

DOLEN
It's the exact same model as yours.
You told me to buy it.

RON
That's why I KNOW it's a crap
phone.

DOLEN

Oh.

MARLENE

So you guys do trivia every lunch?

RON

Ya. It's a memory exercise. We can barely remember what we had for breakfast.

DOLEN

Speak for yourself.

RON

What did you have, Kreskin?

DOLEN

Uhhh. Hang on ..

RON

(to Marlene)

See?

COLIN

It WAS Afghanistan!!!

RON

Nothing comes from Afghanistan now... It's a caliphate. Films are illegal.

COLIN

(still staring at his iPad))

Oh...ya. It was really interesting.

DOLEN

Apparently.

JUST then a big redwood of a dude walks in carrying bags and wearing a big hiking pack. He is in a long run-on sentence in a big booming voice. He's pretty young but the lunch brings in all sorts.. It's all welcomed. All kinds of odd behaviour is tolerated. His name is JOHN. RON and DOLEN's interested is piqued.

DOLEN

Wonder what's up with this poor guy? Any ideas Mr. Social Work?

RON

Used to see this back at the shelters and detoxes. He's not mentally ill in the text book sense.

DOLEN

Well let's sit him down... See what the hell is going on.

RON

I'll wave him over.

MARLENE

Excuse me?! I don't think that's a good idea. I don't feel very comfortable around him.

RON

Neiher do I. What's your point?

MARLENE

It's just that he could be violent.

RON

Dolen is violent. Don't every get into an instant coffee debate with him over Nescafe or Taster's choice.

MARLENE

I'm serious. Don't ask him to sit here. He terrifies me.

RON

He terrifies ME. He probably terrifies everyone... No one will start a conversation with him. That's probably one of the things making him nuts.

MARLENE

Do WE have to be the first?

RON

What... Leave it up to the next guy? This is the courage you've been reading about in novels, kid. It's not that shining armor baloney. I've been trying to get the pastor on board. He's clueless.

MARLENE

I don't know...

DOLEN

Courage never does. Don't worry... It'll be fine.

RON

You ready?

DOLEN

Never am for your antics. Bring him on.

MARLENE

Goodness.

RON

Don't get up and leave. It'll destroy him. Got it?

MARLENE

What have I gotten myself into..

RON

Onward christian soldiers..
Jeez..the pastor always leaves before the hard cases show up.

RON puts his hand up and catches big John's attention. He sees this and makes his way over to the table with 2 heaping plates of food for this big boy. COLIN knows the play and puts his iPad away. JOHN is still in his run on sentence, nonsensical, wide eyed rant.

RON

Got a seat over here bud.

JOHN

Jeez... Thanks. Nobody's ever invited me over before. I think cuz it's I watch a lot of Youtube and some opinions of Trump, try to be objective. After what I saw on the vaccines during Covid,I keep my eyes peeled. Especially living outside that last couple of months. I try to look at both sides, ya know? I think people hate me for that. I lost my house 6 months ago. That was a big surprise.You gotta look at both sides... That's important.

RON

Ya... For sure. How'd you end up here?

JOHN

Hard to say. My world is Youtube now. All of a sudden I couldn't work at all... A big healthy guy, can't get out of bed. Oh and my wife died suddenly of cancer. It couldn't have been the vaccines...

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

They weren't invented yet. Been trying to figure it out.

RON

Cancer, he? That sounds bad.. Really bad.

JOHN

I know... I stopped going to work. Lost the house. I'm sleeping at the back of the church here. Anyway, you gotta listen to both sides. It's like King Arthur... The round table... That was a lot of sides. Democratic. So I try to be King Arthur..live up to my wife's memory. A quest. I talk about important things now.. Always talking about things, trying to learn about the world. It's a big world.. You always gotta be learnin' history and stuff. I never read. I never understood anything anyone was walking about. I hang out at the library now all day and looks at books. They're so interesting.. You can learn so much by reading books. My wife read... I was always trying to measure up. How about JFK and Marylin? Wow. Didn't know that. It was in a book.. Wow. Do you like my backpack? Someone gave it to me on the street.. .just walked up and gave it to me. People can be nice sometimes. Anyway, I'm tryin' to get registered with welfare in this district. They won't give me a cheque till I do. Jeez.. The food here is pretty good. So what's all this about the Romans and stuff.. They were pretty cool, ya know?

RON and DOLEN let him prattle on for a bit then DOLEN's jumps in.

RON

So that's how you got here?

JOHN

Oh ya.. You guys asked me that. Sorry. I just keep talking and talking... Can't sit still... Not since my young wife died. Gotta keep talking ya know? Anyway, the Romans were really cool.. The coliseum and stuff. Ben Hur,

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

Caesar... I can watch this stuff at the library... It's a big world out there man. My wife knew about this stuff. Caesar got knifed!! Wow.. The tides of march... Tides affect everything.

RON and DOLEN have developed a short hand of clues and head nods over the years for bringing guys like JOHN in from the cold. RON steps in.

RON

That's quite a thing to lose your wife so suddenly, so young.

JOHN

I know! Totally freaked me out. Started partying day and night, lost my jo.. lost the house 4 months laterb. (back to the rant)Do you guys now about the war? Wow. Din't realize it was so big. They said JFK was invovled after or something and they shot him.And that was supposed to be Camelot! You know I know a lot about King Arthur now.

RON

That's pretty impressive, John. All this you're doing for you wife.

JOHN

Thanks. She's was special. (pause.. A small gap of emotion and he's back to his rant.) I think Arthur should be around now, that's why I'm trying to be like him, ya know?

RON

Understand perfectly, dude.

JOHN

Thanks, dude. Nobody gets me. Fuck man, electric cars... Totally toxic batteries, right? But you gotta look at both sides, right?

DOLEN

Absolutely.

JOHN

You guys are neat.. You know what I'm talking about. Toxic batteries and fish and stuff..

DOLEN

Do you like trivia?

JOHN

Na.. My wife was good at trivia. Such a smart girl. King Arthur..she would have liked him... Wouldn't have died on him. Stuck around.

RON

Sounds like a special girl. What did she look like?

JOHN

HUH?

RON

You're wife... How tall, hair color..

JOHN

OH...I haven't thought about that in a long time... Uhh.. She was about 5,2.. Sturdy gal.. Brown hair..

JOHN stops haltingly, pondering, rant is gone. He's just staring ahead.

JOHN

She had an east coast ... Uhh.. Accent... (pause.. his eyes moisten a bit) I... Uhh... I don't wanna talk about this ... I wanna talk about other stuff, guys.

RON

She sounds like a great gal... Go on, east coast accent..

JOHN

Uhh.. Ya... Folks are from east coast... Fishing town..

JOHN has come to a full stop, stopped eating. Tears are welling up. His head goes down and he lets out a sob.

MARLENE is new to the crew. Her mouth is agape at this whole thing.. Complete amazement. She moves in toward poor JOHN like she might takes his hand and RON waves her off. More to do.

RON
You didn't mention her name, John?
What was her name.

JOHN
I... Uhh.. I haven't said it in a
while...

RON
We figured. We've all been there,
kid.

JOHN
I don't know if I can say it..

DOLEN
Lost my wife too. Took me a while
to say her name.

(15 beats))

JOHN
Brigid... Her name was,,, Brigid

RON AND DOLEN lean out and give him some space. He starts sobbing a bit then collects himself. The rant is gone... JOHN's wild eyes are calm as he looks up and around.. Tears still evident.

JOHN
That was the first time I cried for
her. Ever. I don't know what you
did but.. Thanks.

RON
We know suffering, kid. Couldn't
let it go on.. Not if we could do
something about it.

COLIN
My name's Colin, that's Ron, that's
Dolen. This is Marlene.

DOLEN
Welcome back. Looks like you've
been gone a long time.

JOHN
I have. It's weird but I don't want
a drink now. I uhh.. Gotta leave
fellas... Gotta call my family.
They've probably been worried sick.

RON

Understood. Very King Arthur stuff... You slayed a dragon today.. THE dragon. You won't have to prove your courage in the same way again. That's what those dragons mean in those tales. Brigid would be proud.

JOHN

(a few more controlled sobs) uhh... Thanks.

Poor TOMMY in the massive wheelchair snorts loudly again, fills the room.. He wakes up and looks around.

COLIN

And that's Tommy.

JOHN is not ranting at all now. Very calm. He gets up, grabs his bags and big knap sack, heads out of the room. He turns and looks at the table. DOLEN gives a small wave. He departs.

MARLENE is still staring mouth agape at the situation and her new friends. RON and DOLEN move back into the table. COLIN pulls out his iPad again and starts looking at flyers.

CUT TO: MARLENE medium shot. She is astounded at what has happened, wondering about these gruff old, swearing curmudgeons and amazed. After some realization, she warms into a smile.

RON

Is the trivia up yet? Reprobate?

DOLEN

Shit. Popup ad... Gimme a second.

COLIN

The pea soup is Habitant. 88 cents.

DOLEN

Habitant? Well that's different. But the flyer's expired, professor.

COLIN

Oh... Right.

RON

So, Marlene. Up for a game of trivia? Think you can handle this table?

MARLENE

I... Uhh.. Don't think I'm gonna
ever leave after that. That was
amazing.

DOLEN

Just another day at Bailey Road.
There's always Tuesday. Up to it?

MARLENE

Ya. Wouldn't miss it.

THE END

