

"Time and Place"

By Valerie Work

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Setting: A bar

Time: The present

Characters:

First Woman

Man

Second Woman

Bartender (is male)

Synopsis:

A man and two women with no previous relationships get into an argument after work in a bar. The bartender disappears and the relative strangers must decide how to proceed.

Man is seated at a booth table. First Woman is seated at the bar. Second Woman is seated at a different table than First Man. The Bartender is behind the bar, lurking and mixing drinks.

Man

Do you have the time? I'm just wondering because my watch broke, I mean the battery died and I'm waiting here while they fix it, that place next door, while they put the new battery in because there was a line ahead of me. Run on watch batteries. Heh. Heh-heh. Strange thing for everyone to be out of. So anyway I have to know if it's time to go pick it up.

First Woman

Are you trying to hit on me? 'Cause if you are I can tell you that I am not interested, in fact my date is meeting me here any minute and I'm telling you he could kick your ass in a heartbeat.

Second Woman

What's your problem? What's your problem lady? He's not trying to hit on you Miss Overwhelmingly Full of Herself. He just wants the time and you're being a massive bitch.

First Woman

Hey, who are you calling me a bitch? What's your problem? Last time I checked this conversation did not exactly involve you you know.

Second Woman

I'm just saying I don't like hearing people being nasty to each other in public places. Some of us come here to unwind you know, to unwind after a long hard day's work at the office, a respectable office in a respectable neighborhood in this respectable city thank you very much. We come in here and here you are, ruining the scene. My scene. A person just comes in for a quick little one and here you are in here being a bitch.

Man

I really do need to know the time. Bartender? Do you have the time? I should have asked you in the first place.

Bartender

Clock's broke.

Second Woman

Do you mean to tell me that there is no clock in this establishment? No way of marking time? Like some kind of Rip Van Winkle drunk time abyss lost thing?

Bartender

Nope. Broke.

Second Woman

So that's it huh.

Bartender

Yep.

Second Woman

I don't actually have a watch either. Sorry.

(pause)

First Woman

I'm not sharing my time on my watch with all you crazy people. My date is coming any minute and then we are leaving, we are leaving to attend some better quality establishment, some place where they actually have a working clock, but I won't need it anyway because I, being on top of these matters, have my own timepiece. Some of us have things to do and people to meet and schedules to keep.

(Pause. The Bartender disappears.)

Second Woman

Well I think I'll have another drink. I think I will have another. Bartender? Bartender, can you make me another drink?

(Everyone notices that the Bartender has disappeared.)

Man

Where did he go?

First Woman

He was just here. He was just here one minute ago.

Second Woman

Probably went to the loo. Would go in to the loo just when I want another drink. Figures. Lot in life for me.

First Woman

I didn't see him leave. I mean I didn't see him leave and I was sitting right here.

Second Woman

You just weren't being observant. Figures. Your kind.

(pause)

Man

He did leave awfully fast.

First Woman

Yeah, it's really strange that I didn't see him, that I didn't see him go. He would have had, he would have had to walk out from behind the bar, walk around the corner, the corner of the bar, and back across the whole back of the room. I know, I used their restroom and that's where it is, I used it when I first got here. Not bad, not a bad one for a bar.

Man

That is a long way to go and this bar is not exactly crowded.

Second Woman

Maybe he fell. Maybe he fell, got sick or had a heart attack and fell, fell down back there. *(pause)* I think we should check.

(Everyone looks behind the bar.)

Man

No.

First Woman

No, he is definitely not there. We would see him.

Second Woman

Okay.

(pause)

Second Woman

Well now what do we do.

First Woman

We could call 911.

Man

But what would we say? What would we say when they ask, to state the nature of the emergency?

Second Woman

We'd be like, well there was this bartender here and he just disappeared. What are they supposed to say.

Man

Yeah. We would sound awfully dumb.

First Woman

He might be a ghost.

Man

He might be a ghost.

Second Woman

He might be a ghost.

Man

Whoa.

Second Woman

A haunted bar.

(pause)

First Woman

Then what are we drinking? If we are drinking beer served by a ghost. Is it real beer, or Phantom Beer?

(Everyone regards their beer glass.)

Second Woman

I don't want to think about that. I don't want to think about that at all. I think we should leave. I think we should leave this place. Funny things are happening and I don't like it, I don't like it at all.

Man

It is haunted. And we have been witnesses.

First Woman

Or worse. He could have been murdered. Chopped up into microscopically small pieces in just a flash before we could notice, his body parts stashed in there among the drink glasses and bottles.

Second Woman

The murderer could be lurking. He could be lurking in the back room and we'll never know it.

Man

We'll never know it until he strikes again.

(pause)

Second Woman

So anyway, I think we should leave.

Man

All right.

(Pause. No one moves to leave.)

First Woman

I have a confession to make, I have a confession to make to the floor. My date is not coming. He is not on his way. I made him up. He is completely imaginary and not real.

Man

Well.

Second Woman

Well. *(pause)* That wasn't exactly honest of you now was it.

First Woman

No. No, I guess not.

(pause)

Man

Well, I have a confession too. My watch battery did not die. My watch is not next door at that watch shop, it is not getting a new battery and so there was not a line. Crowd. Wait for it. And actually, I have a clock built into my cell phone, my cell phone, my blackberry and also my iPod, like any actually normal person does these days. I was actually trying it pick you up.

First Woman
Oh.

Man
Yeah. So, okay, let's go.

First Woman
Let's go.

Second Woman
Let's go.

(They leave. End of Play.)