

# Quang Tri/Baghdad

By

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## Cast

Eddie Slusarczyk (Sluzy)	Mid fifties, beat-up, workingclass, opinionated, lives for his son. Owner of the Sunnyside Tavern.
Gary Slusarczyk	Eddie's son, an athlete, a golden boy, a straight arrow, age nineteen.
Cazzie Koczorowski	Friend of Eddie's since childhood, still lives in the neighborhood, drinks in Eddie's Bar, his confidante
Tony Chlusowicz	Another friend of Eddie's since childhood, still lives in the neighborhood, drinks in Eddie's Bar
Benny Charczowski.	Bartender at the Sunnyside, also grew up with Eddie, soft-hearted, emotional, a bit simple.
Jeannie Slusarczyk	Eddie's wife. A tough, no nonsense woman.
CNN Reporter	Female, a professional.
Cameraman	(CNN and later Al-Jazeera)
Greeno (and Soldier)	Private in the Marines
Esperanza (and Soldier)	Private in the Marines

The play takes place primarily in The Sunnyside Tavern in Chicago's Riis Park neighborhood and a later in a house in Baghdad.

The year is 2004, the post invasion insurgency in Iraq is in full swing.

## Scene One

(The Sunnyside Tavern in the Riis Park section of Chicago. The tavern contains a bar and several tables with chairs, maybe a booth or two, a tv over the bar. Two exterior walls of the tavern run upstage/downstage on either side of the stage with room for action on the exterior side. One wall contains the brickface front of the tavern with the tavern's front door. The opposite wall is a crumbling, cracked and pitted plaster wall with bars on the windows. This is the back wall of the tavern with the tavern's back door. Later it will be the front of a house in Baghdad. Upstage is a door to the back room of the tavern and a door to a closet.)

Eddie Slusarczyk (Sluzy) and his son Gary are downstage of the tavern throwing a football. They throw back and forth from where they stand. They throw pretty hard. Eddie has a limp.

	GARY
How's the back?	
	SLUZY
Now why would you ask me that?	
	GARY
Cause I don't want to hurt you.	
	SLUZY
Come on. Put something on it	
	GARY
I got something on it.	
	SLUZY
Come on. Put something else on it. Show me what you got.	
	GARY
I don't want to hurt you.	
	SLUZY
Come on, ya fairy. You couldn't hurt me if you tried.	
	GARY
You'll bust a gut. You know you will.	
	SLUZY
Put some pop on it. Ya throw like a sissy.	

GARY

Dad.

SLUZY

Come on you're a little pussy ya throw like that.

GARY

Hey!

(He throws a bullet that catches Sluzy in the chest. Sluzy falls to the ground.)

Dad!

(Gary runs over to Sluzy, holds out a hand and helps him up slowly.

Easy. Easy. Take it easy.

(Sluzy is standing.)

SLUZY

Yeah, ok. Now that's what I call a forward pass.

(Sluzy stuffs the ball in Gary's gut and walks away into the tavern. Gary exits. In the Sunnyside Tavern Eddie sits at a table with Cazzie Koczorowski. They are drinking beer. Tony Chlusowicz is at the bar with a beer talking to the bartender, Benny Charczowski. It is Saturday night at the end of August. Benny fiddes with the TV.)

BENNY

Hey boss. Who you like this weekend?

TONY

Don't change it.

BENNY

Hey boss. Bears or --

SLUZY

Don't say that word.

BENNY

What word, boss?

TONY

I was watching that.

SLUZY

Don't.

BENNY

(To Tony.) I'm looking for the sports. (To Sluzy.) I say take the points cause the Bears are ---

SLUZY

Don't say that word.

BENNY

What, the Bears?

SLUZY

I told you not to say that word. I never want to hear that word again as long as I live.

BENNY

I can't say, "Bears?"

SLUZY

Stop it. There are no Bears. The Bears are dead. I never want to hear that word in here again.

TONY

Hey Cazzie you going the Bears game?

SLUZY

Hey what is wrong with you?

TONY

I asked him was he goin the Bears –

SLUZY

You wanna talk like that you can take it outside. This is a respectable joint.

TONY

Hey free speech, Sluzy. I got a right.

SLUZY

You don't shout, "Fire!" in a movie theatre. And you don't say, "Bears" in the Sunnyside. Don't even whisper it.

CAZZIE

Hey, Sluzy. How many is that?

SLUZY

Who's counting?

BENNY

Hey boss, I'll keep an eye you wanna go home.

SLUZY

What, it's early. I'm just gettin started.

CAZZIE

It ain't that early.

SLUZY

Yeah yeah yeah.

(A moment of silence and then the sound of a bugle blowing Taps in the distance. Sluzy stands up. Tom and Cazzie get up too and look out the door towards the sound of the music.)

TONY

What the heck?

SLUZY

Quiet.

TONY

What?

(Pause for a phrase of Taps.)

BENNY

What is it?

SLUZY

Quiet, will ya?

BENNY

Ok, ok.

(Pause for another phrase of Taps.)

CAZZIE

Hey is that ---

SLUZY

Come on, you guys.

(Pause.)

CAZZIE  
Is it that kid?

SLUZY  
Will you pipe down?

TONY  
Yeah, must be.

(Taps comes to an end. A moment.)

SLUZY  
What is the matter with you guys?

CAZZIE  
That Villeneuve kid?

TONY  
Danny.

CAZZIE  
Danny Villeneuve?

SLUZY  
Yeah. His old man didn't want him in Arlington. So they buried him at Irving Park.

CAZZIE  
How'd he get it?

SLUZY  
I don't know. One of them roadside things.

CAZZIE  
We shoulda gone. Why didn't we go?

TONY  
Yeah we shoulda. Why didn't we?

SLUZY  
Man, was that weird or what. Thought I was up there in Quang Tri there for a second.  
Goddamn.

CAZZIE  
Sluzy, you knew? Why didn't you tell us? We coulda all gone.

No thanks. SLUZY

Why? CAZZIE

You must be kiddin me. Everytime I hear it I'm up in the Z.  
(Benny is behind the bar with his back turned.) SLUZY

Benny, you ok? SLUZY

Yeah. BENNY

Benny? SLUZY

I don't like that. Why they gotta play that? BENNY

Hey Benny take it easy. It's all over. SLUZY

All over for that kid. BENNY

Easy, Benny. Take it easy. SLUZY

We shoulda gone. I woulda liked to pay my respects. BENNY

Kid was good. CAZZIE

Goddamn right. Best little halfback St. James Apostle ever saw. SLUZY

And probably ever will. CAZZIE

And probably ever will. SLUZY



Goddamn shame is all. BENNY

Yeah, Benny. CAZZIE

I saw his old man. What's his name? I saw him right after. TONY

Victor I think. SLUZY

Yeah? Victor? I saw him right after. Man, was he a mess. Really messed up. TONY

Yeah. That kid was really really good. SLUZY

Yeah. TONY

Never shoulda happened. CAZZIE

What? SLUZY

They called him up right outta Southern Illinois. Wasn't ten seconds outta college. Boom. Never shoulda happened. CAZZIE

Goddamn shame is all. BENNY

You shoulda seen his old man. TONY

(The tavern door opens. Gary Slusarczyk enters. He is nineteen or twenty, an athelete, a golden boy.)

Hey Sluzy, look who's here? BENNY

Hey, Gary Touchdown, Gary Long Bomb Slusarczyk, if it isn't little Gary whatsisname. Ain't he supposed to be in detention? CAZZIE

GARY

Hey Caz.

CAZZIE

I hear he's kissin' girls in the boys bathroom again.

GARY

No way, Cazzie. You got the wrong guy. I'm in training.

CAZZIE

Aint't that a bitch.

TONY

Hey look who the cat dragged in. How's the arm, Gary? How's it feelin'? Feelin' like a winner? What do you got in there, Gary baby? Cruise missile? Sidewinder? ICBM?

GARY

Hi Tony. Good to see you.

TONY

Good to see you, Gary. How's it going up there in Madison? You launchin any rockets up there yet?

GARY

Yeah, Tony you bet.

TONY

That's great, kid. Good to hear it.

BENNY

Well oh well, if it ain't the quarterback in the flesh. The one and only. Hey champ, how they treatin' you up in Madison, Mr. Big Ten Hotshot?

GARY

Like a king, Benny. Like a king.

BENNY

Hey hey put out your cigarette, this kid got rocket fuel in his veins. Man, I gotta tell you, Gary, I still get the willies when I think about that pass, that one against Lane Tech, that artillery shell, what was it fifty yards, sixty yards, felt like it was hangin' up there for a million years, remember that Sluzy, whole place exploded like a bomb goin' off when that pass came down and that little Kucharsky kid scooted into the endzone. Jiminy Christmas.

(Benny wipes away a tear.)

TONY

You are the only guy I ever met got choked up over a touchdown pass.

BENNY

Sorry, guys. Sorry

SLUZY

Gary.

GARY

Hey dad.

(The shake hands.)

SLUZY

I thought you were up in...

GARY

Yeah. Yeah I was, but I came home. Got a ride and I just...

SLUZY

Oh yeah? Everything ok? All systems go?

GARY

Yeah, yeah. I just wanted to, uh. I just wanted to.

SLUZY

You seen your Mom? She send you over here?

GARY

No, no. I just figured.

SLUZY

So let's go home and see her.

GARY

Can we stay here?

SLUZY

You got ID?

GARY

Dad.

SLUZY

What's up?

GARY  
Can we talk?

SLUZY  
You wanna talk?

GARY  
Yeah, can we...?

SLUZY  
Hey guys. We're gonna take a walk. We'll be back. Come on.  
(Sluzy and Gary exchange glances.)  
Hey Benny. You keep that register closed, Ok?

BENNY  
Yeah, boss.  
(Sluzy steps outside the tavern into the street Gary follows him. As Gary is leaving Cazzie grabs him by the arm.)

CAZZIE  
Hey be careful. He's had a few.  
(Gary steps out.)  
(To Tony). You see the look on his face?

TONY  
Gary?

CAZZIE  
No, Sluzy.

BENNY  
Somethin up?

CAZZIE  
Somethin's up.

TONY  
Tell you what. I don't think I would want to be that kid.

BENNY  
He loves that kid.

CAZZIE  
He loves that kid too much.  
(They all sit at one table. Out in the street Sluzy and Gary are talking.)

I don't get it. SLUZY

Me neither, Dad. GARY

No, I don't get it. SLUZY

That's what I'm saying. GARY

But you don't just cut a kid. You don't just cut a kid without a reason. He's gotta give you a reason. He's gotta say abc, xyz. He's gotta say something. SLUZY

He didn't. He didn't say anything. GARY

What did he say? SLUZY

He just called me into his office. GARY

And what did he say? SLUZY

He said he was only carrying three quarterbacks and you're not one of 'em. GARY

Why not? SLUZY

He didn't say. GARY

He had to say something, Gar. He had to give you an explanation. You got a right. SLUZY

What right? GARY

The right to an explanation. I don't like your face. I don't like the cigar you smoke. I don't like the way you throw over the middle. Something. SLUZY

He didn't.

GARY

Well why not?

SLUZY

I don't know.

GARY

Well did you ask him?

SLUZY

Dad, I can't just....

GARY

Well somebody's gotta talk to him. See what's what.

SLUZY

No.

GARY

Why not?

SLUZY

Dad. I didn't make the team. The end.

GARY

You gotta stand up for yourself, Gary. You can't let 'em push you around like that. You don't push back, they never stop pushing.

SLUZY

I know, Dad.

GARY

Then bust in there and find out what the hell is he thinkin' about he doesn't want to play you at quarterback. You got a right, Gary. You earned it. Single season passing yards. Single season total yards. Single game touchdowns, single game completions. He owes you an explanation.

GARY

What difference does it make? I'm out.

SLUZY

He didn't give you a chance.

GARY

He gave me a chance, Dad. I didn't make it.

SLUZY

So what are you gonna crawl in a hole and hide? Cause no kid of mine walks away from a fight. That just don't happen.

GARY

Not everything is a fight. I can't fight my way on the team.

SLUZY

But you earned it fare and square. Best high school record of any kid on that lousy team, who the hell does he think he's kiddin'?

GARY

Maybe I just wasn't good enough. Did it ever occur to you? Huh? Did it ever cross your mind?

SLUZY

You sound like an old woman on her knees in the back row of the church. I am not worthy, O Lord. You gotta fight, Gary. If it don't take a fight, it ain't worth winning.

GARY

I'm sick of winning. I'm sick of football. I'm sick of it. I don't even remember what I like about it anymore.

SLUZY

You're just mad. Cause you don't mean a word of that.

GARY

They don't want me. They got more quarterbacks than they need. And I am not one of them. So just get over it.

SLUZY

You worked too hard.

GARY

I'm not big enough, I'm not fast enough.

SLUZY

You got the best arm I ever saw.

GARY

It's not enough. Nothing I do is enough for this guy.

SLUZY

You don't just walk away. Cause, or else what was the point? Why did you work so hard? Why did you do it?

GARY

I don't know what to do.

SLUZY

Well do something. Goddammit. Rob a bank. Join the army. Something. Anything.

GARY

Hey back off.

SLUZY

What is wrong with you?

GARY

I just told you what is wrong with me.

SLUZY

Well snap out of it for crying out loud. Listen to you. You sound like a little girl lost all her jacks.

GARY

This is how I sound. This is me.

SLUZY

Well I don't know this kid. This ain't my kid. My kid gets knocked down, he gets up off the ground and runs another play. That's my kid.

GARY

That's horseshit. Dad.

SLUZY

Don't you open your mouth to me. You get back up there to Madison, get back on that team and get your job back. You're a quarterback. A record holder.

GARY

I am just one more quarterback up there. And they all got a rocket in their arm. And they all want it just as bad as me.

SLUZY

How many shots you think you get in his life? This is your shot, Gary.

GARY

Dad, stop.



SLUZY

If I had half the chances you had. One tenth.

GARY

I got nothing left.

SLUZY

You were a snotnose crybaby when you stepped onto that field the first time. You want me to paint a picture? It was not pretty. Couldn't take a hit. Couldn't control your temper. You don't remember, do ya? You have gone from boy to man playing football,

GARY

Dad, listen to me what I'm trying to say to you.

SLUZY

You go back to school and –

GARY

I don't belong in that school.. I only got in because I can throw a football.

SLUZY

You can't just walk away from your life like that.

GARY

It's not my life. With all the things that are happening in the world right now, in Iraq and everything with the terrorists and these crazy men talking suicide and holy war. I just want to say, Hey wake up everybody. Look what's going on all around you. Everybody's got their head so far up their butt they can't smell daylight.

SLUZY

What do you think, you're better than everybody?

GARY

I just think I gotta do something.

SLUZY

Then goddammit do something. Get up off your ass and do something for christ sake. Instead of sittin around like an old woman.

GARY

I am trying to get it through your thick skull.

SLUZY

Get what?

What I did. GARY

What did you you do? SLUZY

I joined the marines. GARY

You did what? SLUZY

I joined the Marines. GARY

Are you out of your mind? There is a war on. Goddammit. SLUZY

I know that. GARY

Everything I did for you? What the hell are you thinkin with? SLUZY

Dad, listen to me for a minute. GARY

What the fuck am I supposed to tell your mother? SLUZY

Dad! GARY

Shut up. SLUZY

(Sluzy hits Gary, backhands him in the face.)

Goddammit, that is the last time. Do you hear me? GARY

(Gary grabs his father and puts him up against the wall and slowly pushes him to the ground. He stands over him enraged trying to control himself, threatening him. In the bar, Cazzie gets up, goes to the door and listens.)

Gary, no. SLUZY

GARY

You hear me, goddammit.

SLUZY

Gary please.

GARY

Go ahead. Tell me to control my temper. Cause you're so goddamn good at that. You're a regular role model.

SLUZY

Gary, I'm sorry.

GARY

I ought to bust your head wide open.

SLUZY

Gary. Stop it. For the love of God, stop it. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't see it coming. It just happened. I'm sorry. Ok? Ok?

GARY

Jesus. You really know how to have a conversation, don't you?

SLUZY

Gary, wait, Gary. Marines? You joined the marines?

GARY

Yes I did. Cause I hate those motherfuckers what they did to our country and I want to do something about it. And don't start in on me. I am not listening to you.

SLUZY

The Marine Corps?

GARY

They need guys like me.

SLUZY

Gary wait a minute. Gimme a hand. Help me up.

GARY

I'm sorry. I lost my temper. You've got a bad habit.  
(Gary helps Sluzy up on his feet.)

SLUZY

Ok. Ok. Now listen to me.

GARY

No you listen to me.

SLUZY

Just hear me out. Cause I got a few things --

GARY

Don't lecture me.

SLUZY

Will ya shut up for five seconds, I can hear myself think.

GARY

Just say it.

SLUZY

So. (Pause.) Joined the Marines.

GARY

Yep.

SLUZY

Fuckin' Army isn't good enough for you?

GARY

No.

SLUZY

Hadda join the Marines?

GARY

Yeah.

SLUZY

People dyin' in that war.

GARY

That's the whole point, Dad.

SLUZY

Look at me. Look me in the eye. How could I be so proud of such a fuckin' idiot?

GARY

I don't know? How?

SLUZY

I don't believe this is happening.

GARY

Yeah? Well I'm leaving in the morning.

SLUZY

Gary, Gary. This is not your fight. You got no reason.

GARY

I've got every reason.

SLUZY

Name one.

GARY

Me. That's my reason.

SLUZY

That ain't a reason. That ain't even an excuse.

GARY

Ok, you're my reason. That's even better.

SLUZY

Don't put this on me. That's horseshit.

GARY

I am walking out that door because I have joined the Marines. So we can go home now, and we can say good bye, you and me and mom...

SLUZY

You wanna kill her?

GARY

...or I can walk out that door and I am gone.

SLUZY

You walk out that door, don't plan on comin back.

(Blackout.)

Scene Two

(In the Sunnyside Tavern. Sluzy comes into the bar. His buddy Cazzie Koczorowski is drinking a beer and watching the news on cable tv. Tony Chlusowicz is at the bar with a beer talking to the bartender, Benny Charczowski. )

CNN

Analysts say the war has seen a marked increase in the number and the sophistication of attacks by enemy insurgents on American troops.

SLUZY

Turn it off, Benny. I'm sick a hearin it.

CNN

And while the timing and severity of attacks has increased especially in and around Baghdad, military spokesmen point to the fact that the number of insurgent casualties is increasing dramatically and that --

BENNY

(Over the newscast.)

You got it, Boss. I'm sick of it too.

SLUZY

Any objections?

CAZZIE

Nah, it's just the same stuff over and over.

TONY

I don't even hear it anymore.

(Benny turns off the TV.)

SLUZY

Bastards. No respect for human life. Chop off heads. Kidnap women. I don't get it.

CAZZIE

Hey, what do you expect?

SLUZY

Ought to go over there and hit em with everything we got. The barn door. Whatever. The kitchen sink.

CAZZIE

Ah come on.

SLUZY

No, teach em a lesson they won't forget.

CAZZIE

What are you talkin about?

SLUZY

We ought to bomb the fuck outta their *place*. That *holy* place. What is it?

CAZZIE

Mecca?

SLUZY

Mecca. Obliterate the motherfucker. Right off the face of the earth. What the hell? Who the fuck cares? Who's gonna stop us? Like they don't deserve it? Like they aren't asking for it? Like anybody would miss it? What the hell is it, anyway? It's like some kind of a, what? Some kind of...

CAZZIE

Temple. Shrine.

SLUZY

Yeah, right. Temple. Fuck it. Boom. One less temple. Who needs it?

CAZZIE

Are you serious?

SLUZY

One more hole in the sand. Who cares? What the hell are we waiting for? Hunh? We dick around like idiots. Stop dickin' around. Go long. Drop the bombs. What do we care? Like what, it's got some kind of archeological *value* we're supposed to *preserve* it or something? Historical value? Horseshit. They have forfeited their historical value. You lose buckwheat.

CAZZIE

What is the point?

SLUZY

Point of what?

CAZZIE

What you said.

SLUZY

Why does there have to be a point? What is their fucking point? Blow up the World Trade Center? Where is the point in that? I say, eye for an eye. Blow it up Mecca. Make em think twice next time. There wouldn't be a next time.

CAZZIE

Yeah but there might. That's the whole point. There still might.

SLUZY

What the hell can they do to us they haven't already done?

CAZZIE

Like a bomb or something. You know like a nuclear bomb.

SLUZY

Yeah fuck. Well, that's what I'm sayin'. We gotta bomb the fuck outta there before they figure out that  $E$  equals  $m$  cee square and all that shit. Cause sooner or later they're gonna figure it out. I mean if you and me are sittin in a bar in Riis Park and we know it, how long before they know it?

CAZZIE

What are you talkin about, "E equals  $m$  cee square?" I don't have the slightest fuckin idea what that means, and neither do you.

SLUZY

You know what I'm sayin.

CAZZIE

No I don't. And neither do you.

(Pause.)

SLUZY

You're right. I don't know what I'm sayin' anymore. I really don't. What the hell is goin'on? Crazy men on camels runnin' around the desert with weapons of mass destruction. Just waitin' for us to blink. I swear to god. I swear to god. If I was a kid. I swear to god.

CAZZIE

What?

SLUZY

Hell. I don't know. I'd go. I'd re-up. I swear to god. Get it right once and for all.

CAZZIE

It's a war, Sluzy.



SLUZY

I know what it is.

CAZZIE

So what are you talkin' about? There ain't no right. It's fucked up. By definition. By the very nature of the endeavor.

SLUZY

So what the hell are we supposed to do? We supposed to sit here on our asses and watch 'em fuck up the whole goddamn world with their maniac Islam bullshit? Is that what we are supposed to do?

CAZZIE

How the hell should I know?

SLUZY

I am proud of those kids. If I was a kid. I would be proud.

CAZZIE

Are you outta your mind? Because I am gonna get really pissed off here in a minute.

SLUZY

Listen to me. I would be proud.

CAZZIE

I can't believe I'm hearing you what you're saying.

SLUZY

Then goddamn listen to me. I would be proud. Cause there is right. And there is wrong. Ok? And that war was fucked up I am the first to admit it. But this war is not that war. This one is not the same.

CAZZIE

They got bullets, don't they? They got bombs, don't they? Sounds very similar so far. They got eighteen year old kids haven't lived a day in their lives getting shot to shit, don't they?

SLUZY

That ain't the point, Cazzie.

CAZZIE

Then what is the point, Sluzy? Where are you goin' here? Cause I do not follow your line of thinkin' And you are pissin' me off. You are makin' me think you didn't learn a single thing from that war. Where is your memory?

SLUZY

We gotta draw a line in the sand. That's all there is to it. Draw the line. And then goddamn defend it. Otherwise, where does it stop? Where does it end? What is the future?

CAZZIE

Don't tell it to me. I don't want to hear it. You want to tell it to somebody, tell it to Terry Konopacki, ok? Had six days left when he drowned in the Delta. Tell it to Petey Kuczowski. He wasn't there two months as I recall and his head dropped in his lap. Tell it to Tammy Lubieniecki's brother while your at it, what's left of him. And Joey Mieroszewski, right? Tell it to his Purple Fucking Hearts his Mom's got hanging in the den. And Frankie Ozarowski's little brother, the one with no hands? And Aly Woitecki. They never even found his body. And Mickey Sokolski got burnt to a cinder cause they dropped the napalm on the wrong side of the river.

SLUZY

Hey. All right. All right. I'm only sayin...

CAZZIE

And when your done tellin' all them, go down to Irving Park cemetery and whisper it to my brother Ziggy. I'm sure he'd like to hear all about it, Sluzy. He's just all ears.

SLUZY

Ok. All right. All right. (Silence.) I am proud that I served. I am proud of all those guys.

CAZZIE

And so am I. But if you ask me why we fought I will tell you I don't know. And if I ever did know, well that was a long time ago.

SLUZY

And I am proud that I fought.

CAZZIE

Gimme one reason. Gimme one good reason.

SLUZY

So I could be there for Benny.

CAZZIE

And why the hell was Benny there? Why was anybody there?

BENNY

(Benny is upset.)

Drop it, Cazzie.

CAZZIE

He's pissin' me off. You goddamn piss me off like that I swear to god I will never set foot in this bar again as long as I live. I will not listen to that.

BENNY

(He is very upset.)

Drop it. Both you guys. Just drop it.

SLUZY

I'm sorry, Benny. Too many beers, I think.

CAZZIE

Bullshit you're sorry. You always do that. You piss me off, Sluzy.

TONY

Shut up you two.

SLUZY

So fuck you too, I take it back.

CAZZIE

So go ahead. Take it back.

SLUZY

I do. I would. I would go and fight.

TONY

I said shut up.

CAZZIE

You would?

SLUZY

I would.

CAZZIE

You would hump a gun and go and fight?

SLUZY

I would be proud.

CAZZIE

Yeah. You would. You probably would.

BENNY

He said shut up. He said shut up. Don't anybody listen to nobody around here?

(Benny hunkers down behind the bar.)

TONY

Nice goin you two. I can't even hear myself drink.

BENNY

(From behind the bar.) Think

TONY

What do I gotta think? I aint' in high school.

BENNY

I can't hear myself think.

TONY

Look what you did. I wanna listen to idiots I'll go home and listen to Lydia.

(Tony goes behind the bar to check on Benny.)

CAZZIE

What are you so pissed off all of a sudden?

SLUZY

I don't know. It's on my mind is all.

CAZZIE

You got your pants on backwards? Cause you're a real peasure to be with.

SLUZY

I don't know. I'm all fucked up.

CAZZIE

Hey, whatever happened to Gary? Walks in here one night and boom he's gone.

SLUZY

Hey mind your own business will ya. I can handle my kid.

CAZZIE

You guys had words. I heard ya.

SLUZY

You didn't hear nothin so help me god.

(Blackout.)

Scene Three

(Sluzy is alone at a table in the tavern, after closing. He is counting the cash.)

CNN

...the latest casualty figures on the string of car bombings that have rocked the capital city of Baghdad in the last ten days –

(Sluzy turns off the tv as Jeannie his wife comes in.)

JEANNIE

Where is he, Eddie? Gimme a clue, cause I am not a mindreader.

SLUZY

I don't know

JEANNIE

This is not like him. I am very upset and you are sitting there cool as a cucumber. What is the matter with you? You know something I don't know?

SLUZY

No, Jeannie, I don't know a thing. Your guess is as good as mine.

JEANNIE

This don't smell right to me, Eddie. What are you telling me, huh? My kid just disappeared one day, didn't come back from classes and none of his roommates know where he is, where he went?

SLUZY

Your guess is as good as mine.

JEANNIE

Well why the hell am I guessing? Why don't I know? Why should I have to guess where my boy is? Why am I playing guessing games, Eddie?

SLUZY

I don't know, Jeannie. How many times I gotta tell you, I don't know any more than you know, so please don't take it out on me because I do not have the patience for this.

JEANNIE

You don't have the patience? This requires some kind of superhuman patience on your part?

SLUZY

I don't know where he is, Jeannie. How many times I gotta say it?

JEANNIE

Well what are you gonna do about it? You just gonna sit there and count the cash and pretend like nothing is happening or you gonna go up there to Madison and see what is going on?

SLUZY

What is going on?

JEANNIE

I don't know what's going on, that's what I'm asking you.

SLUZY

And I am telling you I don't know.

JEANNIE

Jesus, Eddie. Eddie. Stop counting. He's got a game on Sunday.

SLUZY

No. No game.

JEANNIE

Iowa State.

SLUZY

No. He don't. He's not playing.

JEANNIE

Is he hurt?

SLUZY

No, he ain't hurt.

JEANNIE

Then what?

SLUZY

He quit. He walked off.

JEANNIE

What?

SLUZY

You heard me.

JEANNIE

What kind of shit? And you didn't tell me? You didn't think to tell me about this? You didn't think I'd be interested to know my kid quit the team and no one knows where he is? What kind of shit?

SLUZY

I was hoping he would turn up. I didn't want to be a false alarm.

JEANNIE

It's Friday, Ed. No one's seen him since a week ago Monday

SLUZY

I did.

JEANNIE

When?

SLUZY

He came down on Tuesday. We talked.

JEANNIE

It's Friday, Ed. That was a week and a half ago. No one else has seen him? Oh shit. I'm calling the cops.

SLUZY

Call 'em.

JEANNIE

Why shouldn't I?

SLUZY

I already called 'em. I called the cops. I called the coach. I called the infirmary. I called the hospitals. I called his roommates. I called the Father.

JEANNIE

And?

SLUZY

And nothing. Not a trace.

JEANNIE

Jesus, Eddie.

SLUZY

This is his way of....

JEANNIE

What? His way of what?

SLUZY

I don't know. I really don't.

JEANNIE

What happened, Eddie? Something happened here. You are not being straight with me.

SLUZY

Jeannie. I just told you everything I know. I can barely think straight. Will you please cut me some slack.

JEANNIE

What goes on with you two? You live in your own little world. I am his mother. You have no right to do this.

SLUZY

I am not doing anything.

JEANNIE

You are freezing me out, Eddie. You are hiding something.

SLUZY

I am not.

JEANNIE

Swear to God, Eddie. Swear to God. If I find out.

SLUZY

Fine. Jesus. Go find something out. I wish you would. And when you do I wish you would tell me what it is. Cause I am so fucked up I don't even know my name right now. All I did was talk to him.

JEANNIE

When?

SLUZY

I said. Tuesday.

JEANNIE

Where?

SLUZY

Right here.



JEANNIE

He came down here? And you didn't tell me? What happened?

SLUZY

We had a difference of opinion. And that is all.

JEANNIE

Eddie. What did you say to him? What did you do?

SLUZY

You weren't even there, Jeannie. You got no right to say that.

JEANNIE

I don't have to be there. I am your wife. I know what goes on with you two. I peek through the window of your private little world, I listen through the keyhole and I think I can just about guess everything that transpired between you two.

SLUZY

Because you never lift a finger. You never made the slightest effort to help me with that boy. He had a god-given talent.

JEANNIE

An Eddie-given talent

SLUZY

God-given! And you know it.

JEANNIE

And I was given no part in it. You put me on the outside cause that is where you wanted me and that is where you kept.

SLUZY

Because you babied him. You sheltered him. You wouldn't let him be a boy --

JEANNIE

That is a lie. I raised him like --

SLUZY

And then you wouldn't let him be a man. And that is my job. My job.

JEANNIE

Why do you cut me out like this?

SLUZY

To make a man outta him. And that is all I am trying to do. So where is the crime in that, Jeannie? Where have I sinned? Why am I being punished like this?

JEANNIE

You're being punished? You're the one? Hey. Look around you, Eddie. You are not the only one in trouble here.

SLUZY

What am I gonna do, Jeannie? What am I gonna do without him?

JEANNIE

He'll be back. I know he will. He's my kid. He wouldn't just disappear and leave his mother like this.

SLUZY

He's a good kid.

JEANNIE

I know he is. He will turn up. Just wait. Just keep breathing and wait. I know he will.

SLUZY

Sure he will.

JEANNIE

And when he does turn up you better get down on your hands and knees and tell him you are sorry for what you did.

SLUZY

What did I do?

JEANNIE

I don't know, Eddie. But you better tell him you are sorry. Or I swear to God, Eddie. I swear to God. You will be lucky to get a Christian burial when I am through with you.

(Blackout.)