

BAR MAGIC
by pwatson1974

It's a bar, so it's said, where everybody knows your name. Only it isn't; it's more the kind of bar where no one knows your name and if they do, they keep their mouths shut about it. Unless you happen to be a gajillionaire headline magic act. Then it's kind of hard not to know your name, bar or no bar

No, I don't know why Jared de Silver, the guy who out Copperfield's Copperfield, keeps coming back to a tucked away, locals bar so far off the bright lights of the Strip it might as well be in a different city. Really, I don't. He hasn't said and a good barman listens when people want him to; he doesn't press them for details when they don't. But he does. He's pretty much become one of the regulars. And yes, that is weird given he owns his own theatre complex, which, naturally, includes its own bar, along with gift shops and a night club where people far richer and more attractive than my typical clientèle hang out. People who might be more a gajillionaire performer's speed. And, no, I really haven't asked. Wondered like Hell? Sure. Speculated when he's not around with the other regulars and Tina, my waitress? You betcha. Asked? Not a chance.

This relationship lasted for a while. He came in, usually by the door, but it wasn't unusual for me or Tina to turn around and find his bar stool occupied when it wasn't two seconds earlier; he got a round in, put his card behind the bar and got himself from lightly buzzed to 90% horizontal; we got him a cab home and within a few nights this would repeat. No one bugged him to see magic tricks, no one asked for autographs, he didn't behave like anything other than a guy who wanted a lot of drinks. Things worked. Couldn't last.

Things started to go, well, I won't say downhill, but weird when Tina's sister Rina, don't blame me, I didn't name' em, showed up while he was half and a bit cut. Rina's the 'smart one', going to some Ivy League School to study stuff I can barely pronounce never mind understand. And she'd got a major crush on a certain dark-haired gajillionaire magician. So, she broke one of the cardinal rules of the bar: she approached him. Fortunately, Jared just focused on her blearily, if you can focus blearily, kind of mutually exclusive things there. Most people would have seen he really wasn't in fit state to do much more than lift a bottle and swallow, but not Rina. She actually asked him to show her some magic, and she asked him if I, why get me involved, could take a picture of him with her in it. And Jared slurred something that sounded like "Sure" so I found myself with Rina's cameraphone in my hand, trying to figure out how it worked while she fussed, getting herself ready. I finally figured it out, and flash. One picture taken no harm done, I hoped. Only there was a slight problem with what was there after the flash. Or, more accurately, what wasn't there: No Rina.

Now, first off, I admit, I stared, probably for quite a while, and I might have been gaping like a guppy, too, but eventually I managed to ask what happened. I might have edited the exact phrasing I used a little. Anyway, Jared just sort of looked blank, not tricky for him at that point and slurred out that she wanted to be in a picture with him so she was. Yeah, I looked at the phone like I was in some dumb horror movie and had just been told not to. Then back at Jared, who now had a smirk that only people this close to falling over can ever manage properly, then back at the phone, then back to Jared. I may not be the brightest bulb in town, but I could see where this was going: nowhere I wanted it to go. I especially didn't want to have to explain to Tina, or, worse, her mother, that Rina was now a bit of artwork. So I did something stupid myself, very stupid actually, I threatened Jared. Not to do him harm, I'm not that stupid, and besides Tina and her mom would do much worse than I ever could conceive of, but to bar him. The fact that he could buy the bar, the building it came in, the street and most of the zipcode before he ran out of pocket change didn't occur to me. The word 'barred' got him sober...er real fast. So he takes the phone, does whatever the hell it is he does and sticks his hand right into the phone. If my jaw had been hanging open before it was now on the floor, and it tried real hard to get into the cellar when he pulled Rina right out of the phone. She blinked for several seconds and I figure the only thing that saved Jared from a barrage of questions, I know because I got enough of them, was that he chose that moment to fall forward

onto the bar and start snoring.

That let him off Rina's intellectual assault. At least until the next time she was in town when she got to him before too much decent scotch did. But, before that, next time he came in, I had to lay down the law (hah!): He couldn't just go changing people like that, even if Rina had seemed to enjoy it once he'd let her out, but that wasn't the point. He sort of shrugged in agreement. Rina, however, went apoplectic once she found out about the rule, so I had to change it. He could, in fact, change people, but had to put 'em back before the night was out. That meant before he got completely out of it. He agreed. And more or less kept to it. Although if you bugged him too much when he was too far gone, he'd likely collapse before remembering to turn you back. Still he always turned up the next day to undo that. So we let him get away with it. Even if I know one of those times he 'forgot' deliberately. Mind you, she was shrill so I can't really complain too much. And Rina added something else that he didn't have to change people back immediately if they didn't want to be. At which point I stopped listening to her to preserve my mental well-being.

Anyway, despite Rina, Jared kept coming back. I gave him her schedule whenever I knew she'd be in town, but it didn't seem to affect his appearances at the bar. Although whenever she was there, he drank less. Not much less, but he didn't have to be poured into a taxi and could usually walk home, with someone's, more often than not Rina's, help. And all the times they decided to freak me out, like when Jared squashed and squeezed her into a little baseball sized blob of quivering silly putty and left with her like that; or the time he flicked his fingers and where Rina was sitting was now a bottle of beer, which he left swigging from; or when I overheard Rina telling Tina about what he'd done to her and caught something that sounded like 'flashlight' before my brain shut down my ears. Yeah, if I'd had half a brain I might have seen the obvious but I've known Rina since she was a baby and, even though I know she's a grown adult I still see her as the shy, gawky, bespectacled teenager she was. Sorry, Rina.

So, now that I've embarrassed them enough for now, at least if the “you will die, slowly and painfully” look I'm getting from Rina is any indication, I'd like to propose a toast. To the happy couple!