

Nothing Ever Happens in New Jersey

Hap Burke

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An elegant but slightly tacky New Jersey casino restaurant. The restaurant is crowded: waiters rush back and forth and every table is filled, mostly with elderly couples. Each table is covered in a white table cloth and has a small candle and a rose in a vase as a centerpiece. Over the bar, several TVs play a boxing match. Distantly, slot machines buzz and chime.

In a secluded corner, BARRY and AVA sit facing each other. Ava (25), confident, elegant, and beautiful, is wearing a red evening gown with a fashionable PURSE. She looks like she might be at a royal wedding rather than a New Jersey casino. Barry (25), on the other hand, has uncombed hair and is wearing jeans and a Hawaiian shirt. He fits right in with the restaurant crowd. The two look like they might be on a date-- twin wine glasses, two lobsters, and two bowls of soup sit before them--except that Barry has an open LAPTOP next to his plate. Ava, however, leans in attentively.

AVA

Doing anything fun this weekend?

BARRY

(stammering)

Hm? Not-- I mean no. None plans.

Nothing this weekend. No.

Ava laughs.

AVA

Me neither. This is all I'm doing.

BARRY

(nervously smiles)

Cool. You bet.

A beat. Ava takes a sip of wine and surveys the crowd around her. Barry types on his laptop.

AVA

So what are you going to do with your cut of the take?

BARRY

Uh, you know-- I'll buy--

(looks around, sees salad)

--Spinach. Gotta eat healthy, you know. Because I take care of myself.

AVA
6 million dollars will get you a lot
of spinach.
(beat)
I think I'll buy a farm. I've always
wanted one.

Ava's WATCH beeps.

AVA (CONT'D)
Oh-- I should get going. I don't want
Vincent to get mad at us.

Barry types purposefully on his computer.

BARRY
Okay. Perimeter systems are-- down.

Ava pulls a GUN out of her purse, checks the barrel, cocks
it, and puts it back in her purse.

AVA
Great. Wish me luck!

Ava glances about, stands, and confidently strides off into
the crowd. Barry watches her leave. He sighs.

A beat, and Barry types on his laptop again. On the laptop
screen: Ava's Facebook profile pops up. Barry scrolls through
the page, and stops at the relationship section. Ava's
profile says she's single.

Another beat, and HUNGRY TIM (60s) sits down at the spot Ava
just vacated. Hungry Tim wears glasses, sweatpants, and a
Hawaiian shirt. He takes a sip of Ava's soup.

HUNGRY TIM
Evening, Barry.

BARRY
(distracted)
Hey, Hungry Tim.

Hungry Tim swivels Barry's laptop towards him. Barry snatches
it back, but Hungry Tim has seen Ava's Facebook.

HUNGRY TIM
Still thinking about Ava?

BARRY
She's perfect, Tim.

HUNGRY TIM

Son, you have to stop sitting on your hands and ask her out.

BARRY

I've tried! But every time I'm with her I get so nervous.

HUNGRY TIM

You won't feel right unless you do something about this. Besides, kid, tonight is your last chance.

Barry looks up from his laptop.

BARRY

What do you mean?

HUNGRY TIM

This is our last gig together, remember? Vincent says he's splitting up the crew after this job.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

VINCENT PACIFIC, a well-dressed and handsome George Clooney-type, stands in front of eleven or so people, among which are Ava, Barry, and Hungry Tim.

VINCENT

This is our last gig together. I'm splitting up the crew after this job.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. RESTAURANT - JUST AFTER

Barry slaps his forehead.

HUNGRY TIM (CONT'D)

And with the Feds closing in on us? Vincent told us that we'll all have to go immediately off the grid after the job. Ava said she's gonna move to France or Alaska or something.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The warehouse, just as before.

VINCENT

The Feds are closing in on us. We'll all have to go immediately off the grid after the job.

AVA

(whispers directly to Barry & Tim)
I'm gonna move to France or Alaska or something.

INT. RESTAURANT - JUST AFTER

Barry slaps his forehead again.

HUNGRY TIM

You know what I'd do if I was you?
Seize the goddamn day and take a
goddamn chance.

Barry solemnly looks at Ava's Facebook profile on his laptop.

Barry then looks around the restaurant. One one side of the room, he notices dozens of elderly couples. Old men and women sit across each other, holding hands and whispering in each other's ears. One especially old and feisty couple makes out in a corner booth.

Barry turns his head to the bar. Dozens of gray-clad old men sit by themselves, hunched over beer bottles and Manhattans. One SAD MAN in the corner of the bar is crying.

BARRY

(with conviction)
Okay. I'll do it.

Hungry Tim's WATCH beeps.

HUNGRY TIM (CONT'D)

Time for me to go, kid. Good luck.

Hungry Tim takes from under the table a fashionable PURSE, pulls a GUN out of it, cocks it, puts it back in the purse, and strides with purpose away from Barry and into the crowd.

Barry watches Hungry Tim leave. A beat, then Barry opens a Facebook message to Ava. He begins writing: "Dearest Ava- It is I, Barry"--

At once, a passing WAITER with a PITCHER of water nonchalantly jostles Barry's table and spills water onto Barry's laptop. The screen goes immediately dark.

Barry glares at the waiter and pulls a CELL PHONE out of his pocket. He opens a contact for Ava, takes a breath, and dials her number. A RING and--

Another passing WAITER jostles the table, knocking Barry's phone out of his hand and directly into Barry's soup. The phone goes black. Barry exhales violently.

Barry glances around the restaurant. By the bar, he notices a dusty wall-mounted PAY PHONE. His eyes light up. Barry walks towards the phone--

And a DRUNK OLD MAN (70s), standing next to the phone, deliberately pours a full glass of water onto it. The phone sparks and begins to smoke. The drunk old man chuckles.

Barry turns towards the entrance to the casino floor. Though the door he sees dealers, waiters, and dozens of women in red dresses. He turns and glances at the sad man, still crying at the bar.

Barry takes a deep breath and marches towards the door.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Barry paces across a crowded and noisy casino main floor. Hundreds of slot machines blink and buzz with electric energy. Past the slot machines, smartly-dressed dealers stand behind green velvet tables and preside over games of blackjack, Texas hold 'em, and roulette. Like the restaurant before, the casino is mostly populated with the elderly, some suave and well-dressed, others wearing Hawaiian shirts similar to Barry's.

Barry passes a WAITER with a tray of champagne flutes.

BARRY

Excuse me, I'm looking for a beautiful woman in a red dress?

The waiter slowly glances around the room. Barry follows his gaze. Nearly every woman is wearing some shade of red.

Barry frowns and walks on. Nearing some roulette tables, he slows. At once, he notices dozens of blue-uniformed security guards. Some standing over gambling tables, some guarding exits, and one or two playing slots. All have pistols at their sides.

Barry's eyes dart about nervously. A SECURITY GUARD detaches from a roulette table some fifty feet away and begins to

stride directly towards Barry, gun jangling at his side.

At once, a hand grabs Barry's shoulder and pulls him back. Barry stifles a scream.

It's Vincent, smartly dressed in a dashing tuxedo.

VINCENT

(directly into Barry's ear)

What the *hell* are you doing out here?

With a hand clenched tightly on Barry's shoulder, Vincent steers Barry into a seat at a craps table. Vincent sits next to Barry. A DEALER nods at Vincent.

DEALER

I did not realize you came with a companion, Mr. von O'Connell.

VINCENT

Ah, yes, this is my-- squire. Billy Crystal.

(aside to Barry)

I'm under cover. *We* are under cover. What the *hell* are you doing out here?

BARRY

Gambling?

VINCENT

Christ. Let me ask you something: do you have 72 million dollars?

BARRY

What? No, why?

VINCENT

It'll cost us 72 *million dollars* if you screw this job up. You're a goddamn security expert. Your job is done. Now get the *hell* back to the van and wait there like we planned!

A FAINT BEEP. Vincent taps his ear--he's wearing a small EARPIECE. Subtly, Vincent speaks into the earpiece.

VINCENT

Ava? Already in the VIP lounge? Good.

Barry's eyes light up. Slowly, he reaches for the earpiece. Vincent swats Barry's hand away.

VINCENT

Get the *hell* out of here!

Barry obeys. Across the casino floor he spots the entrance to a VIP lounge. A large BOUNCER guards the door. Barry starts towards it with purposes. As he walks, he is tapped on the shoulder.

Barry turns. Behind him is a SEDUCTIVE OLD WOMAN in a red dress. She smiles.

OLD WOMAN

Someone told me you were-- *looking* for me?

Barry pauses, considers it, shakes his head no, and walks on. The seductive old woman sighs sadly.

INT. IN FRONT OF VIP LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Barry approaches the entrance to the VIP lounge. A velvet rope and a large bouncer block the door. A sign next to the door: "FORMAL ATTIRE REQUIRED."

Barry looks down at his Hawaiian shirt. At the entrance, a well-attired ELEGANT COUPLE approaches the bouncer. The bouncer smiles and lifts the rope to let them in.

Right behind them, a Hawaiian shirt-wearing SCRUFFY OLD MAN (70s) follows close behind the couple. The bouncer swiftly punches the man in the gut, and the man doubles over.

Barry leans back. He looks down at his own Hawaiian shirt, then quickly scans the nearby area. At a slot machine some twenty feet away, a DRUNK MAN, heavyset and wearing a ratty tuxedo, lies face-first on the machine, passed out. Right behind the man, a door to a bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Barry has pushed the drunk man, now stripped to just a sweaty undershirt and underpants, into a small toilet stall that the two both occupy. It's cramped. Barry has changed outfits: he now wears the drunk man's tuxedo, which is far too large for him. The sleeves cover Barry's hands entirely.

Barry shoves the drunk man so that he is sitting upright on the toilet. He carefully drapes his own Hawaiian shirt over the drunk man.

Barry checks his collar and steps out of the stall, gingerly

closing the door behind him. Passing by a large mirror above sinks, he checks his reflection. Rolling up his absurdly long sleeves, he smooths down his hair and tries a smolder.

At once, the door opens. Barry spins frantically--there's nowhere to hide. With great commotion--

Hungry Tim and the seductive old lady enter the bathroom, passionately making out.

BARRY

Hungry Tim?! What the hell are you
doing here?

Hungry Tim breaks out of the kiss. The old woman blushes.

HUNGRY TIM

Barry?!

(he recovers)

Well-- what I said to you earlier
really worked me up. Look at me, kid,
I seized my moment!

He gestures to the seductive old woman, who smiles. Barry stares in confusion and disgust for a long beat.

HUNGRY TIM (CONT'D)

Better get to Ava quick, pal, the
job's almost done.

Barry opens his mouth to speak, stares for another beat, says nothing, and rushes out of the bathroom.

INT. VIP LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Barry enters the VIP lounge, rolling up his sleeves. The lounge is similar to the main floor of the casino, but significantly posher: the chairs and tables are covered in red velvet, and the mostly elderly crowd all wear formal.

Barry scans the room, elderly person after elderly person--

And Barry spots Ava, across the large room and reclined on a couch next to a HANDSOME STRANGER, who has his arm around her. They are laughing.

Barry swallows, and begins to cross the room. A BOOKIE stops him.

BOOKIE

Excuse me, sir. Will you be placing a

bet on anything today?

BARRY

Uh--

(a quick glance at Ava)

Yeah.

Barry starts towards Ava again. All the while, Ava and the handsome stranger stand, hand in hand. The handsome stranger leads Ava to a unobtrusive door near the back of the room. The door is clearly marked: "STAFF ONLY."

The handsome stranger swipes a card through a reader on the door jamb and pushes the door open. Barry quickens his pace. Ava and the handsome stranger walk through the door. Barry breaks into a run. The door swings shut--

Barry stops the door with the tips of his fingers. He pushes the door open to find--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A long hallway, dimly lit with exposed wiring and piping above. No one is in sight. He darts down the hallway.

As Barry approaches a bend in the hallway, he hears resounding footsteps. A quick look around the corner, and he spots two FAT SECURITY GUARDS marching towards him. Past the guard, some hundred feet away, Ava and the handsome stranger disappear in the distance.

Barry frantically ducks back behind the corner. Breathing heavily, he looks up and down the hallway for a place to hide. Nothing. The footsteps grow louder. From around the corner, Barry hears the guards talking.

FAT SECURITY GUARD #1 (O.S.)

I'm telling you, something's going on tonight. I just know it.

FAT SECURITY GUARD #2 (O.S.)

You kidding me? Nothing ever happens in New Jersey.

FAT SECURITY GUARD #1 (O.S.)

I know, I know. I just got a feeling, you know?

The two guards round the corner. Barry stands awkwardly in the direct center of the hallway.

FAT SECURITY GUARD #2
What the hell are you doing here?

BARRY
Um-- Gambling?

The second security guard grunts in affirmation. The two guards pass Barry. Barry blinks in surprise, then sprints away after Ava. The two guards continue their slow stroll the opposite direction down the hallway.

FAT SECURITY GUARD #2
(to Fat Security Guard #1)
See, here's the thing: you and me?
We're professionals. We'd know if
something was up.

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Barry rushes out of the hallway and into a dimly-lit room with a low ceiling. Ava is nowhere in sight, but before Barry are FOUR DOORS.

Barry yanks the rightmost door open, revealing another small room filled with PILES OF MONEY--probably several hundred thousand dollars in cash. Barry sighs and shuts the door.

Barry turns to the next door, pulls it open, and reveals a small room filled with GOLDEN TREASURE: goblets, doubloons, jewelry, and the like. Barry rolls his eyes and shuts the door again.

Barry opens the third door. Behind this door is a room filled with three elaborate EGYPTIAN SARCOPHAGI, brilliantly detailed with golden and silver inlays. Frustrated, Barry slams the door shut.

Barry opens the fourth and final door, revealing another long hallway. At the very end stand Ava and the handsome stranger. Barry starts to run down the hallway.

BARRY
Ava! I--

Ava and the handsome stranger begin to kiss, deeply and passionately. Barry stops dead in his tracks. Ava runs her hands through the handsome stranger's hair. Barry turns away.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Barry trudges down another dimly lit hall, his head hung low.

He unwittingly passes through small laser beams that dot the wall.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Meanwhile, in a large and crowded security room, a row of red lights one by one begin to light up as Barry triggers each laser alarm. A SECURITY EXPERT notices the lights, grabs a telephone, and begins to rapidly dial a number ALARM BELLS start to ring loudly, and pandemonium breaks out.

INT. VIP LOUNGE - JUST AFTER

Barry trudges through the VIP lounge, his head still hung low. Security men and women rush past him with guns and tasers out. Barry doesn't notice them.

INT. RESTAURANT - JUST AFTER

Barry alone sits at the restaurant bar amidst the same single old men from before. Muffled POLICE SIRENS rise and fall, red and blue POLICE LIGHTS flicker through the windows, and armed SWAT UNITS every so often run through the restaurant and into the casino. Barry is nonplussed and dully sips a Manhattan.

From behind, a slightly bruised Hungry Tim plops down on a bar stool next to Barry. Barry gloomy nods. Hungry Tim waves to a bartender, and a Manhattan is placed before him.

HUNGRY TIM

Evening, Barry.

(beat)

How'd it go with Ava?

Barry slowly shakes his head no.

HUNGRY TIM (CONT'D)

Same. She told me she was a widow...
She wasn't.

BARRY

Yeah, well, I ran into Ava kissing a handsome stranger.

HUNGRY TIM

(beat)

Barry-- The plan-- Ava was supposed to seduce the casino owner to steal his ID badge, remember? I guess kissing was part of her plan.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The warehouse, as before. Ava speaks directly to Barry.

AVA
I'm supposed to seduce the casino
owner to steal his ID badge. I guess
kissing will be part of my plan.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - JUST AFTER

Barry slaps his forehead.

HUNGRY TIM (CONT'D)
You know, there's a chance she's still
in the holding cells--

Barry has already run off.

INT. HOLDING CELL BLOCK - LATER

Barry rushes past the two fat security guards, who keep watch over a cell block. The guards smile at Barry in recognition. Barry glances into the various cells. Most hold disgruntled-looking elderly casino patrons. Barry presses on.

Near the end of the room, Barry pauses. In the corner of the cell is a woman, head in her hands, in a red dress. It's Ava.

BARRY
Ava!

Ava looks up. She runs to her cell door.

AVA
Barry?! Oh my God, you came for me!

BARRY
Oh, it's nothing.
(a beat)
Actually, there is something.
Something I want to ask you.

AVA
Ask me anything.

BARRY
Do you--
(deep breath)
Do you want to go with me on a date?

AVA

Oh, Barry, I feel like I've told you.
I-- have a long-distance boyfriend.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The same. Ava speaks to Barry.

AVA

By the way, I feel like I should tell
you. I have a long-distance boyfriend.

INT. HOLDING CELL BLOCK - JUST AFTER

Barry slaps his forehead.