

THE MAN IN QUESTION

Written by

Andrew Kaberline

INT. CHRISTIE'S BAR AND GRILLE - HAPPY HOUR

A dimly lit bar. The kind of place that also serves food, even if no one ever orders it.

JANE (30) sits at a table for two, complete with decorative candle, looking hopeful about her date.

JANE

So, tell me about yourself.

MONTAGE OF DATES

A series of SINGLES occupy the same seat across from JANE.

ARTHUR

Well, I live with my mother. She's right outside. I can invite her to join us if you'd like?

JANE

Let's not.

PARKER

Damn it. I left my wallet at home! Is that gonna be a problem?

JANE

As long as you don't order anything.

RAYMOND

I'm looking for someone who isn't going to ask me to make changes.

JANE

Ok, that's-

RAYMOND

I mean not a thing. I'm a finished product.

JANE

Excuse me a moment.

END MONTAGE

Jane hurries to the bar, tended by a smiley young man, TOMMY.

JANE (CONT'D)

Can you close my tab?

TOMMY

That was the quickest one yet.

JANE
Is he looking?

TOMMY
The coast is clear.

JANE
Great. Let's try again tomorrow!

JANE makes her Irish Exit, leaving her date behind.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE CHRISTIE'S - CONTINUOUS

JANE rushes out the front of the bar, takes a few steps, and enters the APARTMENT BUILDING next door.

After a few seconds, the lights in the place above the bar flick on, and JANE takes a seat in the window.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

On the couch, a robe-clad Jane scrolls through her phone.

She is using PICKEE, an online dating app.

Different men's profiles pop up, and Jane swipes left with zeal - almost like she's conducting an orchestra.

Another left... another... another... all lefts.

Profiles stop popping up. Jane tries to refresh.

ON THE PHONE: THERE ARE NO MORE BACHELORS

Jane feels personally attacked by her phone.

She fiddles with the app.

ON THE PHONE: ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DELETE PICKEE?

Jane readies herself to give up.

PING!

There's a new match! No photo on the profile, just a name, THE HYGIENIST.

Jane takes the plunge and clicks.

ON THE PHONE: THE USUAL PLACE. TOMORROW. IF YOU CAN GUESS WHO I AM, DRINKS ON ME.

Jane thinks for a moment. She types out a reply....

ON THE PHONE: BRING YOUR WALLET.

Jane smirks, and turns out the lights.

INT. CHRISTIE'S BAR AND GRILLE - THE NEXT DAY

Jane inches into the dank bar and scans the room. There are a handful of gentlemen. Tommy flashes a smile behind the bar.

Jane takes an empty stool, passing a DAYDRINKER who sits three stools away.

TOMMY

Who's the lucky victim today?

Tommy pours her a pint, already knowing her order.

JANE

The victim is always me.

TOMMY

Fine. Who's the lucky *gentleman*?

JANE

Great question. Hey Tommy, any of these guys regulars?

TOMMY

The only regular I see is you.

JANE hands her phone over to Tommy.

JANE

Read that.

Tommy smiles wide, and hands the phone back.

TOMMY

He's really making you work for it.

JANE

You've never seen any of them before?

TOMMY

I don't think so, but I don't work every shift. How about I check if his name matches any of the tabs?

JANE

Won't do any good.

TOMMY
Why's that?

JANE
I doubt "The Hygienist" is his
Christian name.

JANE hops down and puts her coaster on top of her pint.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'm gonna investigate. Keep it cold
Tommy!

AROUND THE BAR

Jane makes her rounds.

She passes a LOTHARIO standing on the wall next to a Jukebox.
He flashes a nicotine-stained grin her way.

LOTHARIO
What's shaking?

Jane heads to her usual table, where a MAN IN A SUIT holds
hands with a DATE who looks suspiciously similar to Jane.

Rounding the corner, Jane makes eye contact with a NERVOUS
MAN who reaches for his pint glass, but accidentally knocks
it off the table - glass and ale littering the floor.

He gets down to wipe up the mess.

NERVOUS MAN
Jeez - sorry!

Jane returns to her stool at the bar, the Daydrinker now only
TWO stools away.

Jane removes the coaster and takes a long gulp from the pint.

JANE
I've identified the man in
question.

TOMMY
Do tell.

JANE
First, I need to review the four
suspects.

Jane and Tommy survey the room, lingering on the Lothario,
the Suit and his Date, the Nervous Man, and the Daydrinker.

JANE (CONT'D)
Let's begin at the end, with our
fellow rail-fly, the Daydrinker.

TOMMY
Ok. What about him?

JANE
When I first sat down he was three
stools away, but now, he's only two
away. What does that say?

The Daydrinker turns to look at Tommy. They both shrug.

JANE (CONT'D)
It says this man, inching towards
me, is the most obvious suspect.
Which means he can't possibly be my
mystery man.

TOMMY
Then why move closer to you?

JANE
Glad you asked.

JANE moves to the Daydrinker's original stool and shakes it.

JANE (CONT'D)
The notoriously wobbly leg. This
man had no idea, because he's never
been here before.

DAYDRINKER
She's right!

JANE
Thank you.

JANE moves towards the Nervous Man, now back in his seat.

NERVOUS MAN
Mind the glass!

JANE
The Nervous Man locks eyes with me,
starts sweating bullets, and
fumbles his drink.

TOMMY
Perhaps stunned by your beauty?

JANE
Flattered, but no.
(To Nervous Man)
Mind telling us what you wiped the
floor with?

NERVOUS MAN
Betting slips.

JANE
As I suspected. This man was not
looking at me, but *past* me - to
this.

Jane points to a TV above her, with a soccer match on.

JANE (CONT'D)
He broke the glass after a big
swing in a sporting event on which
he had laid odds.

NERVOUS MAN
There was a late golazo and now
they're heading into extra time!

JANE
I do not know what that means.

Jane moves to the Suit and his Date, still holding hands.

JANE (CONT'D)
My usual table. At first, I looked
at this tableaux and saw a man
dressed for a date. Maybe even a
date with me, based on the
resemblance of the seated young
lady. Maybe he adjusted for the
differences between online dating
photos and reality. A mixup.

TOMMY
It's possible.

JANE
But it's not! Look at how close
they are. Look at their hands. A
first date? Hardly. Please direct
your attention to the bulge in his
jacket pocket.

Jane reaches into Suit's jacket.

SUIT
Hey!

Jane produces a ring box, and opens it towards the Date, revealing a diamond.

DATE
Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!

TOMMY
Isn't that sweet!

JANE
This bar is no place for big romantic gestures.

As the Suit and his Date smooch, Jane keeps moving to the jukebox and the Lothario.

JANE (CONT'D)
That leaves the Lothario.

LOTHARIO
Hey baby.

JANE
He's got his eye on me, he's looking for love.

TOMMY
So that's your man?
LOTHARIO

Oh yeah!

Oh no!

JANE

JANE (CONT'D)
The smile gave him away.

Lothario smiles.

JANE (CONT'D)
Nicotine stains everywhere.
Atrocious teeth. It's doesn't fit the profile of my mystery man; He fancies himself a hygienist.

Jane takes her seat at the bar, and texts on her phone.

TOMMY
I don't get it. You said you cracked the case.

JANE
It's simple. There's only one suspect who is a regular, thinks this is a good place for a romantic gesture, and has a lovely smile.

PING!

Tommy looks at his phone, revealing his PICKEE profile, "The Hygienist", with a new alert.

ON PHONE: DID I GUESS RIGHT?

Jane takes a confident sip from her drink while Tommy beams.

TOMMY

Do you remember a while back, you suggested I quit bartending and go to dental school because of my smile? I told you I wasn't smart enough for that, and you-

Jane cuts him off.

JANE

I said you'd have to settle for dental hygienist instead.

The other patrons clap, impressed by the sleuthing.

DAYDRINKER

Ah, so the bartender did it!

JANE

I suppose this drink is on you.

TOMMY

I suppose it is.

Jane and Tommy take a long look at each other. Jane pulls up the PICKEE app on her phone, and promptly deletes it.

JANE

So, tell me about yourself.

Tommy and Jane talk and listen over a pint at the bar, which suddenly doesn't seem quite so dimly lit and dank.

FADE OUT.

THE END