

Chuck
Johnny

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

VOICE ON PA (V.O.)

Good morning, Placid Piners! It is Monday July 28, 2003. Funnel Cake fest was indeed a blast, and rest assured that area of Tupper Dining Hall will be repaired very soon.

Lights up on Johnny working his crossword. Chuck enters carrying hedge clippers.

Start

Good morning.

CHUCK

Morning.

JOHNNY

It's early, picnic tables are clear. You want to sit outside? Keep me company?

CHUCK

Too hot for me. Nearly finished with this. Four letters, ends in "O". Clue is fat tuna.

JOHNNY

Toro. T-O-R-O.

CHUCK

Japanese?

JOHNNY

Yup.

CHUCK

Crossword's not hard enough they got to use Japanese.

JOHNNY

You ever had it? Sushi?

CHUCK

JOHNNY

Raw fish? (Chuck nods) Not on purpose. Now, those fish tacos-

CHUCK

You should be their spokesman.

JOHNNY

I tell ya, if my wife could've cooked like that, I wouldn't have killed her.

A pause.

CHUCK

What did you say?

JOHNNY

I said, if my wife could've - (Johnny looks up from his crossword at stone-faced Chuck.) I guess I crack that joke a lot, huh?

CHUCK

That's supposed to be a joke?

Another pause. Chuck continues to the door.

JOHNNY

My wife was a pretty good cook, but once she got that crock pot it was all over. Nothing on God's green earth needs to be cooked for eight hours.

CHUCK

Yeah.

JOHNNY

I think about Rosie every day. I'm just wisecracking. It's just some dumb thing I say.

CHUCK

It's a strange thing to joke about. I just don't find it funny.

JOHNNY

Look, I get it, O.K? But around here, a little sense of humor might come in handy.

ish tacos-

CHUCK

I lost my sense of humor.

JOHNNY

You sure as shit did.

CHUCK

Lost it right around the time I killed my wife.

JOHNNY

OK, I get it, it's not funny. Let it go for chrissakes.

CHUCK

No, it's not funny. It's not funny at all.

A long pause.

JOHNNY

So what Tyler said, it's true?

CHUCK

Depends what he said.

JOHNNY

That you were in prison? Got hired out of that state program?

CHUCK

Yes.

JOHNNY

Can I ask you something?

CHUCK

Sure.

JOHNNY

You want to put those hedge clippers down, first?

CHUCK

What? Oh.

Realizing, Chuck sets them down
on the table.

JOHNNY
That program, what's it called?

CHUCK
The "Project Hope Reentry Initiative."

JOHNNY
I read about it.

CHUCK
It was in all the papers.

JOHNNY
If you don't mind me asking, If you... how can they let you work around a bunch of us old people?

CHUCK
I didn't murder my wife. It's a long story.

JOHNNY
I look busy to you?

A long pause.

CHUCK
I used to teach Literature. American Lit. At the State College down in New Paltz. Anyway. At the end of the semester, the faculty has a party. I had three martinis in an hour. Then I started drinking. Driving home, about a half a mile from my house, I drifted over the center line, head-on into another car. I killed my wife and I killed the other driver. Kid named Chris Metzger. Freshman. He was a swimmer.

JOHNNY
Dear Lord.

CHUCK
Two people dead makes it Vehicular Manslaughter, first degree. I was in Sullivan Correctional for nine years. Sober for ten.

JOHNNY
My Rosie got sick. Got sick and she passed, and that was hard enough. I can't imagine if...

CHUCK

No, you can't. It's like - it's like you have a beautiful sculpture in your house, or like a Ming Vase or something. Priceless. And then, one day for no reason, except you're drunk, again - you just take a hammer to it, smash it into a million pieces. And there's shards and dust and fragments all over the floor. And everyone tries to console you, tells you that time heals all wounds.

JOHNNY

Time doesn't heal shit. No one who ever needed the healing ever said that.

CHUCK

Those pieces, those shards - they just get stuck there. You can't clean them up. They just become part of the floor. So you wake up, and you go to work or you go to the park or a diner. And during the day maybe it does fade a bit. Maybe you do forget a little. But then you come home, and you open that door and that same mess is waiting for you. Every day.

Chuck picks up the hedge clippers and starts toward the door.

Hope you get that jukebox, Johnny. I really do. There's a lot to be said for going back in time.

JOHNNY

Wait. Let me join you. Grab my juice, would you?

CHUCK

Sure. Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to go into all of this.

JOHNNY

Don't be sorry. This is what we do here. We talk. It's the fifth thing.

CHUCK

Thanks.

JOHNNY

Where's your partner today? Day off?