**SPEAK EZ**

A play by Quentin Stuckey

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**Cast Of Characters:**

Doug Hammersmith: a bartender

Emma Zanderfield: a flapper

Georgie Davis: a bootlegger

Lauren Lottles: an alcoholic

Marion Whitlock: a Christian

Sam Salinger: an undercover agent

**Act 1, Scene 1: The Future**

(The year is 1928, the very height of the Jazz Age. A hedonistic, excessive, fast paced culture is the rage of New York City. Prohibition of alcoholic beverages has had the opposite effect: people are drinking more than ever before, people are dancing, people are fornicating; it’s an exciting and stimulating time to be alive. The lights fade in on stage to reveal the interior of an unnamed Speakeasy on West 52nd street. Tables and chairs are littered all over along with the bar table and stools. Unlabelled and labelled liquor bottles are illuminated behind the bar. The bar is empty except for Doug Hammersmith, a middle aged bartender who is right in the middle of counting his inventory of beer, wine and spirits. He is listening to an announcer on the radio as he completes this task)

Radio Announcer (slightly muffled): Despite the continued support and enforcement of the Volstead Act, which forbids the production, distribution, sale and consumption of all alcoholic beverages, establishments which provide the illegal liquid for the general public are in operation across the United States. These establishments are known as Speakeasies, and as to be expected, they are usually hidden away from the most casual of persons and are often operated by members of organized crime. It is estimated that over two thousand are currently open just in New York City alone, an alarming number to say the very least. (pause) We have here with us an individual who promises to crack down on these Speakeasies and reinforce the Volstead Act, ladies and gentlemen please welcome Captain Sham of the New York City Police Department.

Sham: (slightly muffled) Good evening to all of you folks at home.

Radio Announcer: Can you speak directly into the microphone Captain Sham?

Sham: (louder) How is this?

Radio Announcer: Maybe sit back a bit.

Sham: How about now?

Radio Announcer: Yes, there you are.

Sham: I’m glad to be here.

Radio Announcer: Captain Sham, could you offer our listening audience your most honest opinion on the Speakeasy establishments and what you and your boys plan to do about it?

Sham: I, for one, am absolutely appalled at this country’s flippant and utterly careless attitude towards an amendment that was put into practice for the good of society. I believe that we as people do not need any kind of elixirs to create artificial pleasure or happiness. Alcohol is an ill of our world, and frankly drinking has no solid foundation in a civilized community. I cannot believe that these madmen had the nerve to open these kind of places in the first place, they are nothing but lawbreakers; pure and simple. (pause) We as policemen hope to close every last Speakeasy in America and to prosecute all of those responsible for their operation; we will start with the streets of New York City. I hope that long testimony has answered your question.

Radio Announcer: Would you mind repeating what you just said? I’m not certain if we got all that.

(There is a tap at the door. Doug shuts off the radio and walks over stage left to the door. He opens the top sliding shutter which allows him to look into the eyes of the person on the other side of the door.)

Doug: What is the password?

Georgie: (o.s.) Liberosis.

(Doug closes the sliding shutter and opens the door carefully. Georgie Davis, a young bootlegger enters through the door carrying a large wooden crate)

Doug: Ah, there’s the man of the hour!

Georgie: Well I ain’t a sap.

Doug: Not tonight you ain’t. (pause) You have been in the past.

Georgie: How you doing Doug? Chipper as always?

Doug: I’m glad to see that you ain’t a cop Georgie.

Georgie: You think any cop could pronounce that damn password?

Doug: What do you got tonight?

Georgie: I got plenty.

Doug: That’s my boy.

Georgie: Say what does that word even mean?

Doug: What word?

Georgie: The word.

Doug: Georgie, what word?

Georgie: You know, the password to get into this dump.

Doug: It ain’t a dump, it’s a business.

Georgie: (sarcastically) Aw geez, did I offend you?

Doug: As a matter a fact you did. And I don’t know what the word means.

Georgie: Where did you find that word? I’ve never once seen you open a volume of the dictionary. Did you hear it at a petting party?

Doug: I heard it on the street.

Georgie: On the street? In New York?

Doug: Where else?

Georgie: So you were just passing by, enjoying the day when some real beauty walks by and says to nobody in particular: “liberosis.”

Doug: Were you tailing behind me? Because that’s exactly what happened.

Georgie: Hey sarcasm is my language; it isn’t yours so just watch yourself.

Doug: You can’t take ownership of everything Georgie.

Georgie: I can take ownership of what’s in here. (gestures to the crate) Which reminds me. Do you have the appropriate funds to pay for this? Cause I can’t give it to you until you cough up the dough.

Doug: I’ve got the money.

(Doug takes a wad of cash from his pocket and hands it to Georgie)

Georgie: I don’t know Doug, this feels a little light.

Doug: Then why don’t you count it?

Georgie: Too many bills to count it all out. But it still feels pretty light to me. How about adding some weight to it?

Doug: Pipe down, what do you got in there?

Georgie: I’ve got a pretty good selection for you tonight Doug.

Doug: Well don’t keep talking about it, let me lay my two eyes on it! Open the box!

Georgie: It’s a crate.

(Georgie places the wooden crate on top of the bar table and opens up the top. He begins to remove different sized bottles wrapped in newspaper and line them up next to the crate)

Doug: Oh boy, they just keep coming and coming!

Georgie: Only the best for my Dougie.

Doug: Don’t say that to me, you sound like a flit.

Georgie: Oh quit your whining, you let flits and spooks in here every evening. I see them coming and going all the time. People are starting to talk.

Doug: What do they say?

Georgie: They say “hey Georgie, did you know that Doug lets spooks and flits drink in his speakeasy?”

Doug: Everybody has a right to drink no matter who or what they happen to be.

Georgie: That’s what you think. (pause) Now then we got some bathtub gin, beer, whiskey, rum, vodka and courtesy of Mr. McNeal: a little champagne.

Doug: Champagne? Why would your boss be so generous?

Georgie: You caught him in a good mood. He brought extra giggle water, just for you.

Doug: (examining the bottle of champagne) This looks to be top of the line stuff.

Georgie: Certainly is. (pause) McNeal even wrote you a card.

Doug: Read it.

Georgie: (reading) To my favourite and forever noble customer. Yours truly, Mr. Martin McNeal of McNeal’s Gang. (pause) P.S. drink responsibly.

Doug: How are things on the mob end anyway?

Georgie: Oh they’re fair. Mr. McNeil says I’ve been doing such a swell job that he’s giving me the rest of tonight off. Though I have to be in at nine am tomorrow.

Doug: That’s fine, got any plans?

Georgie: I think I might hang around here tonight. You know, throw back a few drinks, see how people are doing.

Doug: You don’t have any more deliveries?

Georgie: This one was my last.

Doug: But Georgie don’t you have to report back to McNeil? What about all the dough you got on you?

Georgie: Ah he trusts me; he’ll get it tomorrow morning. (pause) Of course I’d be lying if I told you that I didn’t keep a few bills for my own trouble.

Doug: You’ve got a lot of nerve to steal from a mafia boss, you outta be whacked.

Georgie: That’s what McNeil tells me.

(They both laugh)

Georgie: I came close a few days ago.

Doug: Close?

Georgie: Yeah, close as in closed to being whacked.

Doug: Someone tried to kill ya?

Georgie: Not me, one of the other guys in the organization. Hey, would you butt me?

(Doug pulls out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, he hands one to Georgie as Georgie pulls a lighter out of his pocket)

Georgie: Thanks.

Doug: Finish your story.

Georgie: (as he lights up the cigarette) I just happened to be standing right next to this fella when he was shot by two members of Louie’s crew. They were about to turn their guns on me when I beat them to it. BANG! BANG! Just like that. Oh man, if only you had seen it. They went down like two trees falling in the forest. I got so excited by the whole thing that I almost forgot about my bleeding buddy. He pulled through alright. Took him to a hospital, suffered from non-life threatening injuries. You know how it goes.

Doug: You both could’ve been killed.

Georgie: But we weren’t, were we?

Doug: Doesn’t it bother you that blood must be shed all the time just so people can drink?

Georgie: Sometimes. I’m telling you Doug, you have to have the thickest skin to do what I do. I mean I’m out there every night risking being shot or being caught by the cops. But you know, we do it all for the benefit of the people.

Doug: Would you like a drink?

Georgie: (laughs) I think you know the answer to that.

Doug: Whatta ya have?

Georgie: Whiskey on the rocks.

(Doug grabs a bottle of whiskey and an empty glass and pours the whiskey into the glass slowly)

Doug: (pouring) Georgie, we get along pretty well don’t we?

Georgie: Sure we do. You’re a swell enough guy.

Doug: (handing him the glass) Would you say that we’re good friends?

Georgie: Hey, I said on the rocks! Where’s the ice?

Doug: Sorry.

(He walks over to the small ice box located on the far end of the bar table and grabs two cubes. He then drops them into Georgie’s glass)

Georgie: Atta boy, thank you. Now what were you saying?

Doug: I was just asking if you considered us good friends.

Georgie: Good friends?

Doug: Yeah.

(Georgie laughs)

Doug: What’s so funny?

Georgie: Doug, you and I are the best of pals. Where is all of this coming from? You need money?

Doug: No.

Georgie: Somebody after you? Cause you know I could take care of that. (pause) Well somebody from the gang could.

Doug: Nobody is out to get me.

Georgie: Well you obviously have something on your mind. Am I right about that?

Doug: Maybe.

Georgie: You answered “maybe” to a “yes” or “no” question. The hell’s going on with you?

Doug: Georgie how about cutting me some slack? This isn’t easy for me.

Georgie: It ain’t easy for you to talk to me?

Doug: No, that’s not what I meant.

Georgie: You know this isn’t the only speakeasy around here. I can go somewhere else if you like.

Doug: Right there. That’s what’s on my mind.

Georgie: What? Me leaving?

Doug: No, the speakeasies.

Georgie: (taking a drink) What about them?

(Silence)

Georgie: Doug? What’s the matter with you?

Doug: I’ve just been doing some careful thinking is all.

Georgie: What sort of careful thinking?

Doug: Georgie, do you ever…you know, think about the future?

Georgie: The future?

Doug: Yes.

Georgie: You mean like what am I going to eat for breakfast tomorrow or the day after?

Doug: Well that’s the idea but I meant more of what you’re gonna be down the road. Does that ever cross your mind?

Georgie: Not really. Does that cross your mind?

Doug: Well yeah. I’ve been thinking about it a lot lately. I can’t seem to get it off my mind. (pause) I’ll be going about my day like regular, and then suddenly I’ll start thinking about what could lie ahead. I’m not focusing on today but rather tomorrow or a month from now. Do you understand what I mean?

Georgie: Doug listen, why don’t you have a drink? It’ll calm you down.

Doug: I’m perfectly calm. And you know I barely drink as it is.

Georgie: Maybe that’s the problem.

Doug: That I don’t drink enough?

Georgie: Yeah Doug, booze soothes the human soul. I think somebody notorious once said that.

Doug: Was it you?

Georgie: Yeah but I ain’t found any fame yet.

Doug: Booze is a wonderful thing but it’s not what I’m talking about.

Georgie: What else is there for you to discuss besides alcohol? You’re a bartender.

Doug: Can’t you understand that I ain’t talking about booze? I’m talking about the future. I mean, I’m operating this speakeasy now but where the hell am I gonna be in five years?

Georgie: Probably still operating this speakeasy.

Doug: This stupid law can’t go on forever Doug. That damn Volstead act has caused more problems than it’s solved. People are drinking more, not less! (slight pause) Once the United States gets their wake up call and abolishes the Eighteenth Amendment then places like this will be no more. And where will I be? What will that mean for me?

Georgie: You’ll still be here ya yellowbelly! Serving people their drinks, listening to their worries and keeping the ice cubes ice cold. Only all of that will be legal! You won’t even have to worry about this joint getting an unexpected visit from the cops.

Doug: That’s another thing preying on my mind.

Georgie: Two things? Man you really overthink! Go see a shrink!

Doug: What if my place ever got raided? I could go to jail or worse.

Georgie: That would never happen.

Doug: Why not?

Georgie: Cops only like to raid speakeasies that are operated by the mob. Are you a mob member?

Doug: No one’s ever asked me to join.

Georgie: (laughs) That’s because you’re too moral for our liking. The only connection you got to our organization is me and my deliveries; that’s it!

Doug: Isn’t that enough for them to throw me in the hole?

Georgie: Am I a cop? Why the fuck would I know that?

Doug: I just assumed that you would have some inkling.

Georgie: McNeal usually just tips them off, that ain’t my style.

Doug: So what do you do then?

Georgie: I run.

Doug: I can certainly picture you doing a lot of running.

Georgie: (taking a drink) Don’t you like your job?

Doug: I do.

Georgie: Then what are you complaining about? You’re being very sore tonight.

Doug: I’m not complaining, I’m just concerned about what I’m gonna be and where I’m gonna be later on. Maybe I don’t want to be a bartender until the day I die.

Georgie: What on Earth do you think you could be? A banker? A writer? A cop?

Doug: Those are more respectable jobs than a bartender.

Georgie: Whose been telling you that? Jesus man, one moment you’re fucking hard as nails and the next you’re soft as a pillow.

Doug: Hey, you wanna be kicked out?

Georgie: Oh settle down, I’m not going anywhere.

Doug: You’ll be going back to your boss if I toss you out!

Georgie: So do it. Come on, be a big man Doug. Throw me out. Pick me up and toss me on the street.

(Silence)

Georgie: Yeah, that’s what I thought.

Doug: I spill my guts to you and you have the audacity to tell me to stop thinking and jug a beer? You really are a sap tonight.

Georgie: There it is, hard as nails!

Doug: Shut your goddamn mouth.

Georgie: Hard nails indeed.

Doug: I don’t even know why I brought this up, you’re taking it far too lightly. (pause) You came over here just to razz me and nothing else.

(Brief silence)

Georgie: Doug, let me offer you my honest opinion on your predicament.

Doug: Georgie, I-

Georgie: (interrupting him) Now hear me out. I think that you’re still living in the rotten, filthy trenches of the war. Just like you, I remember what that was like. It isn’t something we’d want to go back to. We made it out alive and well. Many of our friends weren’t as lucky as we were. Life was miserable then. (pause) It was more than miserable, it was absolute shit. It was the closest that this country ever came to total annihilation. But the war has finished, right? We’re not down in the trenches anymore. We ain’t got a thing to worry about. Not a damn thing! We should all learn to let go of our fear and just (taking a drink) throw back a whiskey on the rocks and live for today! Carpe diem! That’s what all the kids are saying.

Doug: When you talk like that you sound like Emma.

Georgie: (laughs) Only Emma can sound like Emma. (pause) Though I only know her from the stories I’ve heard. Say, uh…

Doug: Say what?

Georgie: Well its Friday night, ain’t it?

Doug: Did you look at your calendar today?

Georgie: I got one for Christmas that I have yet to put up.

Doug: Christmas was four months ago, what are ya waiting for?

Georgie: For Emma Zanderfield to walk in here tonight, that’s what I’m waiting for. I mean she’s a regular here, isn’t she?

Doug: She is.

Georgie: Well therefore she ought to be coming here at some point.

Doug: You’ll have to wait and see.

Georgie: I certainly hope that she does grace this joint with her presence.

Doug: Do you fancy Emma Zanderfield?

Georgie: I’d rather her be the one to fancy me. She’s a sure beauty if I ever knew one. (pause) Don’t you like Emma?

Doug: That’s affirmative.

Georgie: But do you fancy her?

Doug: Is there a difference between “like” and “fancy?”

Georgie: Certainly there is. It all depends on what you would do if you were alone with somebody.

Doug: You mean sex?

Georgie: Hey! Not around the kids!

Doug: You can take her Georgie. I ain’t interested.

Georgie: Too young for you?

Doug: No, just too much on my mind.

Georgie: Is Marion on your mind?

Doug: Georgie…

Georgie: Sorry, I’ll shut up.

(We hear the sound of a knock at the door)

Georgie: Want me to get that?

Doug: Drink your drink Georgie. (walks over to the doorway stage left) What’s the password?

Lauren: (o.s.) Oh hell Doug, can’t you just let me in? You know it’s me!

Doug: Not without the password.

Lauren: (o.s.) I wrote it down, now I can’t seem to find the paper darling.

Doug: I’m gonna close the shutter.

Lauren: (o.s.) Okay, here it is! Here it is! (pause) Liberosis.

Doug: There ya go.

(Doug closes the shutter and unlocks the door. Lauren Lottles, a young, attractive flapper girl enters through the doorway)

Lauren: Well, here I am at last! (looking around) Oh, nobody is here.

Doug: The night is still pretty young.

Lauren: Young?! It’s almost nine thirty. I’ve been to three other speakeasies this evening and they were packed with people! People of all colours, shapes and sizes; it was unbelievable!

Doug: Oh quit pulling my leg. You only ever set foot in this joint and no other place.

Lauren: (hugging him) Oh Dougie, how I’ve missed our banter together!

Doug: (laughing) Funny about that, I haven’t missed it.

Lauren: Will you take my coat Dougie?

Doug: Sure thing.

(He takes off her long white coat and hangs it up on the coatrack located next to the doorway)

Lauren: Doug, is that Georgie Davis sitting over there?

Doug: Depends on which Georgie Davis you’re talking about.

Lauren: Oh stop fooling! Georgie Davis, one of Mr. McNeil’s bootleggers. He is absolutely dashing. I’ve spent the last few weeks drooling over his pictures in the newspaper. Oh you’ve never seen a newspaper so wet!

Doug: Ew.

Lauren: Did he come here to make a delivery?

Doug: That he did.

Lauren: And has the delivery already been made darling?

Doug: Well yes.

Lauren: And yet he’s sitting in the bar, looking as if he’s going to be here for a while.

Doug: I think he’ll be around for most of the night.

Lauren: Then how about you pour me a tall glass of brandy and sit it next to the arm of Georgie Davis, old timer?

Doug: Georgie doesn’t drink brandy.

Lauren: But I do. I’ll be the one to drink it. Now come on old timer!

Doug: I told you that I don’t appreciate that nickname.

Lauren: Doug, you must learn to be more appreciative.

Doug: I’m only forty two ya know.

Lauren: I know and I’m afraid that’s considered over the hill.

Doug: Lauren…

Lauren: Alright darling, let me apologize for my behavior. I am very sorry. (pause) Now how about a drink?

Doug: Will you agree that I ain’t so old?

Lauren: Yes I will agree with that; and anything else you’d like for me to agree with. How about a drink darling?

Doug: You’re almost thirty Lauren. Pretty soon you’ll be over that hill too, and I can already predict that you ain’t gonna be a pretty sight.

Lauren: You are right, now about that drink?

Doug: Come over to the bar.

(Doug crosses over to the other side of the bar table located centre stage as Lauren pulls out a bar stool and sits next to Georgie who has just finished his first drink and is now reading a newspaper)

Doug: (to Lauren) What can I get you?

Georgie: Another whiskey on the rocks Doug.

Doug: Coming up Georgie, how about you Lauren?

Lauren: I thought I told you earlier, I would kill for a tall glass of brandy.

Doug: You never said you’d kill for it.

Lauren: Come on Dougie! I’m very thirsty!

(Doug turns his back to the two of them as he prepares their drinks)

Lauren: (to Georgie) Hello there.

Georgie: Evening.

(Brief awkward silence)

Lauren: Anything interesting in there?

Georgie: In what?

Lauren: The newspaper. You are reading a paper aren’t you? Unless you’re actually reading one of those filthy magazines.

Georgie: It’s a newspaper.

Lauren: Is there anything interesting in it?

Georgie: Oh lots of things, nothing all that interesting though.

Lauren: (laughing) You are very clever darling!

Georgie: Thank you. I know.

(Georgie sets the paper on the table and examines Lauren)

Georgie: Wait a minute, Emma? Emma Zanderfield?

Lauren: (extending her hand) Even better. My name is Lauren, Lauren Lottles.

Georgie: (grabbing the newspaper) I’m sorry I thought you were somebody I knew.

Lauren: Well you don’t know me yet, we’re just being introduced Mr. Davis.

Georgie: You know who I am?

Lauren: Oh what girl doesn’t? You’re the bees knees my friend. A dream come true; an attractive, mysterious kind of-

Doug: (interrupting) Tall glass of brandy and whiskey on the rocks.

Georgie: Thanks Doug.

Lauren: (sarcastically) Yes thank you Doug.

(Lauren quickly downs the tall glass of brandy and firmly plants it on the bar table)

Lauren: Oh my.

Georgie: You didn’t just down that entire glass of brandy did you?

Lauren: You watched me didn’t you?

Georgie: I watched in disbelief. (pause) Don’t you find it too strong?

Lauren: Of course, if it weren’t strong then what would be the point of drinking it?

Georgie: That’s true but to down it the way you did, that’s witchcraft! I can’t even do that!

Lauren: I can throw back as many drinks as I desire and still feel decent the next morning. Some say it’s a gift.

Georgie: Really? You see that as some big time accomplishment? Something to brag about?

Lauren: I am bragging, aren’t I?

Georgie: Indeed.

Lauren: Another brandy Doug!

Georgie: (to Doug) Does she always drink like this?

Lauren: Oh I drink every day, usually around this time.

Doug: It’s true Georgie, this gal is another loyal regular of mine.

Lauren: Nothing calms me down the way hooch does.

Georgie: I’m sure a good majority of people share that same opinion.

Doug: None like her.

Lauren: What is that supposed to mean?

Doug: Nothing at all. Drink your drink. Both of you.

Georgie: I plan to.

Lauren: (to Georgie) Enough chit chat, let’s talk Georgie Davis. I think you’re one of the most interesting people I’ve ever met. I mean doing the things that you do, it gives me the chills just thinking about it!

Georgie: You really fancy me eh?

Lauren: (crossing her leg over her lap and exposing her ankle) More than you’re aware of darling.

Georgie: Uh huh. Well as much as I am flattered Ms. Lottles, I’ll have to reject your advances.

Lauren: Advances? What are you talking about?

Georgie: (grabbing her bare ankle) This for starters.

Lauren: I will thank you to not grab at me darling. I do not allow men to paw at me the way you just did.

Georgie: (laugh) Are you serious right now? Ever since you got here you’ve been flirting with me like a common day flapper. And the moment I reject you, you suddenly declare, in your most defensive tone, that you will not be touched by any man.

Lauren: I said “pawed”. And you’re awfully lucky that you’re a bootlegger. And because you’re a bootlegger, you’re a great service to the New York community.

Georgie: I’ll have you know that I have a lot of luck. What I do for a living has nothing to do with it.

Lauren: It has everything to do with it.

Georgie: How?

Lauren: It’s because of your job that I am stopping myself from planting one on ya!

Georgie: Are you threatening me sweetheart?

Doug: It’s a possibility.

Lauren: My fist appears to be clenching.

Georgie: (standing up) Oh so you want to slug me?

Doug: (setting down the glass of brandy on the bar table) Come on guys, not in here.

Lauren: (standing up) Damn right I want to slug you!

Georgie: Watch that mouth of yours! True ladies don’t speak in that manner!

Lauren: I am not a true lady. I am my own person. I can be whoever I want to be.

Doug: Georgie, Lauren; settle down

Georgie: Come on you feisty girl. Hit me! Mutilate me!

(Lauren raises her fist)

Doug: Lauren no!

Lauren: If I hit you, it would ruin your handsome looks. And I couldn’t possibly do that darling.

Doug: So don’t hit him.

Georgie: (sitting back down) You flappers are all alike. Flash without substance.

(Lauren suddenly punches Georgie in the face. He falls out of his chair and onto the floor)

Doug: Georgie!

Georgie: God damn it!

Doug: (to Lauren) Why would you plant one on him like that?

Lauren: Someone has to show these men that women can be just as tough and gruff. Especially a dangerous man like that. (pause) And a handsome man. (to Doug) Aren’t you going to get him some ice? The man is hurt darling.

(Georgie stumbles to his feet)

Georgie: I’m fine.

Doug: Do you want any ice there Georgie?

Georgie: Just another drink please.

Doug: With ice?

Georgie: Yeah.

Lauren: I didn’t mean to hit you as hard as I did.

Georgie: (to Doug) You see what I mean? First they get the right to vote, then they can dress and talk however they want and now they can go around slugging people. What’s next for these gals?

Doug: We’ll see what the future has in store.

BLACKOUT

**Act 1, Scene 2: The Past**

(The lights fade back in on stage to reveal the same interior of the speakeasy. The set is now packed with people; drinking, dancing, talking and laughing. Typical jazz circa the 1920’s is playing in the background. Doug and Georgie are talking together at the bar table as Lauren is engaged in a conversation with three other men)

Georgie: Look at her over there. Who does she think she is?

Doug: Lauren Lottles.

Georgie: Uh?

Doug: Did she hit you too hard? Her name is Lauren Lottles.

Georgie: I’m aware of that, but who is she really?

Doug: A girl of extreme confidence?

Georgie: I hate her so much.

Doug: So how come you won’t stop looking at her?

Georgie: I don’t know.

Doug: She’s pretty fond of you.

Georgie: I don’t believe a word of it. She’s got all those men wrapped her finger like a god damn…uh

Doug: Like a wedding ring?

Georgie: Yeah a wedding ring.

Doug: I don’t think she’s ever gonna get married.

Georgie: How come?

Doug: Just listen to the chatter over there.

Lauren: (to the men) But you see I just couldn’t possibly afford to refuse his offer of a frank, romantic weekend so I just took it.

Man #1: And what did he do to you? I mean…with you. What did he do with you?

Lauren: He had me proofread his manuscript. He’s been shopping around this God awful novel for months now and no publishers want to take it. He asked me for my opinion and honestly there wasn’t one sentence in that piece of writing that brought me any pleasure. When I read something, I want my bones to shiver and my skin to crawl. His writing just didn’t have that effect. (taking a sip of her drink) It was all about World War I, perfectly dreary subject. The point is that the war is over and we’re still here to enjoy ourselves! There’s no need to gloss over the horrors of such a dreadful time.

Man #2: What happened to the frank, romantic weekend?

Lauren: Excuse me?

Man #3: Yeah Ms. Lottles, you said that this gentleman offered you a frank, romantic weekend?

Man #1: How is reading a manuscript frank?

Man #3: Or romantic?

Lauren: (slight pause) Did I say that? (laughs) I’m afraid I’ve had too many cocktails, I’m telling you gentlemen things that aren’t true!

Man #2: I don’t think you’ve had enough. (to Doug) Can we get another round over here old timer?!

Georgie: (to Doug) She didn’t have to hit me ya know.

Doug: I know Georgie.

Georgie: I’m opposed to any kind of physical violence.

Doug: That’s rich coming from you.

Georgie: How do you figure?

Doug: Georgie who is it that you work for again?

Georgie: Mr. McNeil’s gang.

Doug: And who are they?

Georgie: The mob.

Doug: And what do they do?

Georgie: They-(pause) Oh I see what you did there. Real wise guy ain’t ya?

Doug: No Georgie, just quick on my feet. (pause) I can’t say the same for you.

Georgie: Hey!

Doug: I’m sorry but it’s been awhile since I’ve seen a man be so cowardly.

Georgie: She could’ve yelled at me some more or threw a drink in my face, but she didn’t have to hit me.

Doug: Why don’t you tell her that?

Georgie: And risk getting hit again? Get outta here.

Doug: Drink a little more, maybe you’ll work up the courage.

Georgie: Even old fashioned hooch can’t make me do something I don’t wanna do in the first place.

Doug: Are you afraid of Lauren?

Georgie: I ain’t afraid; I’m just not fond of her.

Doug: Do you fancy her?

Georgie: Very funny, now why don’t you lay off pal? (We hear the sound of a knock at the door) Go answer the door.

Doug: I’m surprised we can hear that in all this noise.

Georgie: I heard it, you didn’t hear nothing. Don’t go taking the credit.

(Doug walks over to the door stage left and opens the shutter)

Doug: Password?

Marion: (o.s.) There’s a password?

Doug: There’s a password required to get in.

Marion: (o.s.) I don’t think I know it.

Doug: Have you ever been here before?

Marion: (o.s.) A few times actually.

Doug: What is the password?

Marion: (o.s.) I didn’t know there was one.

Doug: If you’ve been here before then you should know that.

Marion: (o.s.) Well I haven’t been here recently.

Doug: Look you don’t know the password so logically I can’t let ya in. Good night!

Marion: (o.s.) Wait a minute! Please just wait!

Doug: Alright but you got one minute.

Marion: (o.s.) Do you remember a Marion Whitlock?

Doug: Marion who?

Marion: (o.s.) Whitlock.

Doug: Marion Whitlock?

Marion: (o.s.) Yes.

Doug: Don’t tell me that you’re-

Marion: (o.s.) May I come in now Douglas?

(Brief silence)

Doug: You may enter.

(Doug closes the shutter and unlocks the door. Marion Whitlock, a forty year old woman with a long white dress enters through the doorway holding a pile of books in her arms)

Marion: Hello Douglas.

Doug: Please call me Doug. How are you Marion?

(He hugs her awkwardly)

Marion: Oh just fine. You look awfully grey though. Have you been fretting a lot? Your face is full of lines.

Doug: I’m afraid I don’t wash my hair enough. Or my face for that matter. (pause) Here come and take a seat at the bar.

Marion: Thank you.

(Doug crosses over behind the bar table as Marion takes a seat next to a drunken man, she accidently slams her books down beside him)

Drunk: (slurred) Hey lady! What’s the big idea?

Marion: Oh I’m ever so sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you.

Drunk: (slurred) Ah that’s okay I guess. Can I buy you a drink? You look like a gal who can throw back a couple.

Doug: Leave her alone Max.

Drunk: (slurred) Why should I? Is she your girl?

Doug: Just drink your beer Max and stay out of it.

Drunk: (slurred) Alright ya chump.

(The drunk turns his back to Marion and Doug)

Marion: Max seems rather charming.

Doug: I can assure you that he’s not. He’s anything but charming; don’t let his looks fool you.

Marion: What is he then?

Doug: Max? He’s...well you know.

Marion: A drunk?

Doug: Yeah that’s the word I was searching for.

Marion: So this place is still going strong?

Doug: Yeah, I can’t complain. We get plenty of customers most nights and no raids; that’s a speakeasy success story if I ever heard one.

Marion: (laughing) Oh Doug.

Doug: Whataya drink?

Marion: Oh nothing for me, thank you for offering.

Doug: Really? You don’t want a Mary Pickford or a south side?

Marion: No thank you.

Doug: A shot of vodka?

Marion: No.

Doug: I know! How about bourbon?

Marion: No Doug.

Doug: Brandy?

Marion: Doug, please just relax and don’t worry about serving me a drink. I understand that it’s your occupation but we’re old friends; there’s no need for you to feel like you’re at work.

Doug: (laughs) But look around, I am at work. Do you not enjoy drinking anymore?

Marion: We can talk about that later, can’t we?

Doug: Talk about what later? What are ya talking about?

Marion: Doug, do you realize that’s it been two full years since we’ve last seen each other?

Doug: That long eh? I swear it was four.

Marion: Perhaps it feels like four but it’s only been two. You must tell me, how has life been treating you?

Doug: Why would you want to know about that?

Marion: Because it’s been two years silly and I came here to see what’s new in your life.

Doug: (laughs) Life. I gotta tell you Marion, life has been strange.

Marion: In what way?

Doug: This for example.

Marion: This is strange?

Doug: Very strange indeed if you ask me.

Marion: What is so strange about the speakeasy?

Doug: Not the speakeasy, but you know what I mean. You coming here after four years.

Marion: Two years.

Doug: Right, two years. You didn’t even write me. I mean no disrespect to you, you wrote me for the first couple months but then nothing after that. I thought that maybe something bad had happened to you. (pause) At one point I thought you may have been six feet under.

Marion: You mean that you thought I was dead?

Doug: Yes, those kind of irrational fears prey on my mind all the time. Especially if they concern someone that I- (pause) you know.

Marion: What?

Doug: Ah come on Marion, you know I was never good at things like that.

Marion: You can’t tell me that you love me anymore?

Doug: It’s because I don’t love you anymore.

(Brief silence)

Marion: I’m starting think I should’ve stayed here with you. It might have done you some good.

Doug: Good?

Marion: Maybe I could’ve at least stayed in the neighbourhood.

Doug: In New York? There was nothing for you here.

Marion: You’re the one who always assured me that there was something for everybody in New York.

Doug: Not for you evidently.

Marion: I felt like becoming an explorer, I couldn’t resist such a wonderful opportunity to explore the jungles of Africa. I saw all sorts of things while I was there, it was amazing. With everything I was doing on a daily basis, I could never set aside the time to write to you.

Doug: What about that John King?

Marion: John King? You mean the gentlemen who brought me on the expedition?

Doug: Yeah, the British chap.

Marion: Oh he was an excellent teacher, the things he had me doing to help with his research certainly kept me occupied.

Doug: I can understand that. (pause) I was excited by what you wrote me in the letters you sent. You talked of taming lions, playing with elephants and swinging from trees like a damn monkey.

Marion: I never swung from any tree, that was merely an attempt at humour.

Doug: What are you? A comedian all of a sudden?

Marion: (laughing) Oh my, you are still the same Douglas Hammersmith that I left behind.

(Brief silence)

Doug: It’s just Doug now.

Marion: Doug. (pause) So I thought that-

Man: (interrupting) Can I get some hooch fella?

Doug: Sure, whataya have?

Man: A south side please.

Doug: Coming up. (to Marion) Hold on for a second.

(Doug turns his back on the two of them as he prepares the drink)

Man: Hey! Turn the record up a bit!

(The jazz music gets slightly louder)

Man: That’s more like it.

(The man stares at Marion for a few moments as she shyly looks away)

Man: Hello there.

Marion: Good evening.

Man: Buy you a drink miss?

Marion: Oh no thank you.

Man: You know I ain’t trying to pick you up, I’m just trying to be a gentlemen. (pause) You don’t look or act like the rest of the gals in this dank. You don’t got short, boyish hair, a high skirt or stockings; you’re a little more plain and old fashioned. It’s like you’re a snapshot from a different era. An era before all this excess and mischief. I mean you don’t even have a glass in front of you, and even if you did it would be empty because you’re much better than that. (pause) Wait a minute, are you Lois Long?

Marion: Please leave me alone.

Man: You got books in front of you. What are you reading anyhow?

(Marion doesn’t respond)

Man: Is it something silly or smutty?

Doug: Here you are: one south side.

Man: Thank you kindly. (to Marion) You behave yourself eh? You’re kind of a wild one.

Marion: Hardly!

Doug: That’s the second guy whose tried to get you to come home with him isn’t it?

Marion: That man insisted that he wasn’t trying to win me over, he was just interested in my affairs.

Doug: Maybe he just wanted the two of you to go steady.

Marion: I’d rather be in the stomach of a lion than go steady with him.

Doug: Do you hear yourself talking right now? Man you are one strange bird.

Marion: Doug, I’d like to talk to you somewhere else.

Doug: What’s wrong with this place?

Marion: It’s too loud, it’s too flashy and too many men have a crush on me.

Doug: Fine, fine; where would you like to go to chat?

Marion: Don’t you have a back room or something like that?

Doug: I got an idea Marion. How about we desert all of my customers and go to the deep jungles of Africa to talk? Whataya say?

(Brief silence)

Doug: Oh I’m sorry, do you not fancy that idea?

Marion: Doug, I have the sinking sensation that you’re angry with me.

Doug: And how!

Marion: Well what did I do to make you this upset?

Doug: Are you pulling my leg? (laughing) It’s not that hard to understand why I’m angry with you. Two years ago, you and I were on top of the world. People envied what we had, we’d walk hand in hand down West 34th and people’s days seemed a little brighter because they saw actual love with their own eyes. Life was swell when it was just me operating this place and you writing for The New Yorker; but you, you weren’t satisfied. (pause) You met that British fool who took you far away. I actually believed that you two were nothing more than acquaintances. To think that I thought I would still have a place in your life after you went far away, boy I tell you I’m a fool. The most optimistic people are the biggest fools, because we believe that the good will always trump the bad; only to be let down by that belief. Even after you stopped writing, a part of me still hoped that the letters would start up again. Rather than face the fact that you adored him and the jungle more than you adored me, I convinced myself that you were dead. (pause) Deep down I knew the truth of course. (pause) And now here you are, stopping by to see me at my place of business expecting me to welcome you with open arms without feeling a little blue. You ain’t right in the head Marion, and you never were.

Marion: I didn’t know that you felt that way.

Doug: I do. Boy, it felt great to let all that out.

Marion: Are you crazy Doug?

Doug: Uh?

Marion: How could you say things like that to me?

Doug: But it’s how I feel!

Marion: Well your feelings hurt.

Doug: Yes, my feelings were hurt. When you left me.

(Georgie races up to Doug)

Georgie: I don’t mean to interrupt you two kids when you’re having a conversation but uh, there’s a knock at the door.

Doug: So go see who it is.

Georgie: Me?

Doug: Yeah, you know what to do.

Georgie: Geez, it’s a big responsibility.

Doug: I have the feeling that you can handle it.

Georgie: Do you think it could be Emma?

Doug: Go and find out.

Georgie: Aw geez, I could really stand to comb my hair.

Doug: Answer the door.

Georgie: Well alright, but what’s the password again?

Marion: Liberosis.

Georgie: Yeah that’s it. Thanks a lot!

(Georgie walks over to the front door and pulls open the shutter)

Marion: I guess I remembered the password after all. (pause) Even after two years.

Doug: Two years is long but it’s not an eternity. (he looks at the pile of books beside Marion) What are all these books for?

Marion: Oh it’s not important anymore. I’ve just been reading a lot more than I used to.

Doug: What have you been reading?

Marion: Nothing.

Doug: No I’m curious, I wanna take a look.

Marion: Douglas, please don’t.

Doug: I don’t care if you’ve doodled all over them like you normally do, I just wanna see what you’re reading.

Marion: Douglas!

Doug: (reading off the book titles) “Why The 18th Amendment Should Remain In Effect”, “The Dangers of Drunkenness”, “How You Can Keep Prohibition Alive and Well”, “Fear of Beer.” Marion, what is all this?

Marion: It’s just some books from the church.

Doug: Oh my God.

Marion: Douglas?

Doug: Of all people, it had to be you.

Marion: Douglas I-

Doug: (backing away from her) You’re a born again Christian aren’t you?

Marion: Douglas.

Doug: You didn’t come here to see me, you came here to spread your prohibition propaganda in my speakeasy. (gasps) For all I know, you could be in connection with the cops!

Marion: Douglas, I have seen the light and decided to change my ways. Prohibition is the best thing that’s ever happened to this country, and more people need to realize that fact. I’m part of this committee and we’re trying our hardest to get this message out to the people. Alcohol is a cancer on our society.

Doug: Say that to me again as I jug a beer without any fear. (pause) Don’t you see how this crazy law has done exactly the opposite of what it set out to do? When you outlaw something as common as booze, you automatically make every person a law breaker. How is that good? How is that justice? But then again, why have laws when people are just going to break them anyways? Aren’t we all evil by nature? Maybe we’re the cancer on society.

Man: (raising his glass) Here, here!

Marion: Doug-

Doug: I want you to leave.

Marion: Douglas!

Doug: No come on Marion, please get out of here. I’m asking you kindly to leave my joint.

Marion: Please don’t do this.

Doug: Go back to the jungle Marion. Spread your message there. Tell the damn tigers all about the evils of intoxication. Go anywhere but here!

(Marion rises from her stool, collects her books and begins to make her out of the front door)

Marion: (turning back to Doug) Thank you for the drink.

Doug: (sarcastically) Yeah, it’s on the house Marion!

Georgie: (to Marion as she exits out the front door) Come back anytime!

(Doug sighs)

Georgie: You alright?

Doug: Pour me a drink Georgie.

Georgie: What?

Doug: Pour me a drink.

Georgie: Scotch?

Doug: Scotch.

(Georgie walks over to the other side of the bar, grabs a glass and pours a small amount of scotch in it)

Doug: Hey, a little more than that. Come on.

Georgie: You’re the bartender, not I.

(Georgie pours more into the glass)

Doug: Thanks.

(He takes a big gulp of the scotch as he listens carefully to the jazz music, he begins to bop his head to the beat)

BLACKOUT

**Act 1, Scene 3: The Present**

(The lights fade back in onstage to reveal the Speakeasy once again, it is now later on in the evening and the party is beginning to die down. The music has become quieter, people are becoming restful and the whole bar is littered with empty bottles and glasses. Doug, Georgie and Lauren are seated together at the bar)

Doug: What’s the point of anything? Life is meaningless. Random, absurd, depressing and filthy.

Georgie: Maybe the mob will put a price on my head; I’ve been reaching into their pockets for a long time. Somebody is bound to notice.

Lauren: (puffing on a cigarette) You guys think I could ever be a star?

Doug: Sure.

Georgie: You mean in the pictures?

Lauren: Yeah, I think I have the perfect face for Hollywood. It’s symmetrical. At least that’s what some producer said to me earlier tonight.

Georgie: You were talking to a producer?

Lauren: He said his name was Cole Porter and he can get me lots and lots of parts.

(Doug and Georgie begin to laugh)

Lauren: You don’t believe me?

Doug: Lauren, were you born yesterday?

Lauren: 1902 actually.

Georgie: Cole Porter is a songwriter, not a Hollywood producer.

Lauren: Oh, I thought I had heard his name before.

Doug: You probably have dozens of times! We’re always playing his records.

Georgie: In fact, listen closely.

(Brief silence as they listen to the music playing)

Georgie: Oh wait, this ain’t Cole Porter.

Lauren: Dougie, I’d like another drink.

Doug: Did we upset you? Are you drowning your sorrows?

Lauren: No you didn’t, I’m just not as blind drunk as I could be.

Georgie: You’ve been drinking all night!

Lauren: So have you darling, I can smell it on your breath. You better get some mouth wash.

Georgie: Oh I’m sorry that I can’t smell as nice as you. You know you’re only supposed to spritz yourself with perfume, not bathe in it.

Lauren: (laughing) Yes darling, I go home every night and dip myself into a pool of perfume. It’s the only way I can truly cleanse myself.

Doug: Brandy Lauren?

Lauren: Vodka if you have any.

Georgie: Oh he does I made certain of it.

Lauren: Is your handsome mug feeling any better Mr. Davis?

Georgie: It’s been hours since you laid one on me, so yeah my face is feeling grand.

Lauren: God knows I didn’t want to ruin your only redeeming quality.

Georgie: The redeeming quality being my face?

Lauren: Certainly.

(Doug sets an empty glass down on the table and pours a small amount of vodka in it)

Lauren: Thank you Dougie.

Georgie: Doug, where is she?

Doug: Who?

Georgie: Emma Zanderfield, you promised me that she would stop by tonight.

Doug: I never promised you anything Georgie.

Georgie: You said that she was a regular here.

Doug: She is but apparently tonight she had other plans.

Georgie: What else could she be doing?

Doug: Lots of things. You never know with Emma.

Lauren: Emma Zanderfield is the vilest person I’ve ever met.

Georgie: That’s a mouth full, what makes you say that?

Lauren: I just don’t find her to be a very respectable person.

Doug: Lauren isn’t too fond of Emma because they go after the same kind of men, and Emma is usually the gal to win them over.

Georgie: Ah so she’s jealous of Emma?

Lauren: I am not jealous, I am fully confident in my own skin. Emma is overly confident, she’s plain old arrogant darling.

Georgie: So she’s an arrogant darling? Sounds like my kind of lady.

Lauren: You know that you just took my words out of context.

Georgie: Doug is Emma coming or not?

Doug: It’s almost two in the morning Georgie, I’m gonna be closing up soon.

Lauren: Oh Doug it’s only two! You must wait till four!

Doug: I’m calling it an early night.

Georgie: Are you going to see Marion after you close up?

Doug: Marion ain’t even in my vocabulary; as far as I’m concerned she didn’t even set foot in this place tonight.

Lauren: I didn’t know that Marion stopped by.

Georgie: You were too occupied with Cole Porter.

Lauren: How is she doing?

Doug: Marion is history.

Georgie: She spent a lot of the time in the jungles of Africa, you gotta admit that that’s exciting. Didn’t you go along with her for a bit?

Doug: Where? To Africa?

Georgie: Yeah.

Doug: No I never went. Can we forget about Marion please?

Georgie: Okay, let’s talk more about Emma Zanderfield. In fact, why don’t we call her up? Where’s your phone Doug?

Doug: We’re not waking her up.

Lauren: She probably isn’t even at home, and if she is then she probably has a gentlemen caller as usual. The whore.

Doug: Now Lauren you know that’s not fair. I’ve seen you go home with your fair share of men too.

Lauren: Dougie, you should really learn how to mind your own business.

Georgie: Doug I’m really hung up on Emma, could you at least give me her telephone number?

Lauren: Georgie you don’t need that wench!

Georgie: Don’t you call her that!

Lauren: If I wasn’t so infatuated with you, I’d punch you again!

Doug: Would the two of you settle down? Let’s not have another boxing match.

Georgie: (to Lauren) Maybe I outta hit you back! That way we’ll be equals once and for all.

(Suddenly there’s a knock at the door)

Lauren: (to Georgie) Maybe that’s the heavy weight champ coming here to knock you out.

Georgie: Doug, go see who it is!

Doug: I will but I’m closing up in thirty minutes then I’m kicking everybody out for the night.

Lauren: Four am darling, four am!

Doug: No.

Georgie: How about four thirty?

Doug: (walking over to the doorway stage left) I’m getting the door.

Georgie: Five, that’s our final offer.

Lauren: “Our” final offer? I like that.

(Lauren places her hand on Georgie’s lap)

Georgie: Lauren, you can’t keep threatening to bash my head in one moment and be all warm for my form the next moment.

Lauren: I don’t take orders from you Mr. Davis.

Doug: (opening the shutter) What’s the password?

Emma: (o.s.) Liberosis.

Doug: Thank you.

(He closes the shutter and unlocks the door. Emma Zanderfield enters through the doorway. She is a blonde girl, age twenty three with a pensive yet playful look. She is wearing a white dress with red earrings. Sam Salinger, a tall strapping man wearing a long trench coat, suit, tie and hat enters alongside her)

Doug: Emma, it’s good to see you.

Emma: Hello Doug, I apologize for intruding this late but this was the only place open right now.

Doug: What do you mean the only place open? Every other speakeasy is closed up?

Emma: Yes, at least on this side of New York. Apparently a lot of them have been raided by the police tonight.

Doug: (stuttering) The police?

Georgie: Emma! How are you?

Doug: The police have been going around raiding speakeasies on this street?

Emma: I wouldn’t worry about it Doug, things seemed to have died down now; but a lot of the other places are no longer operating. They’ve arrested a few people but most of them just scattered like rats.

Georgie: Emma!

Doug: I knew this would happen eventually. (to all the other guests) Alright, another thirty minutes and I’m closing up. As some of you may have heard, the cops are on our trail so rather than stay open into the wee hours of the morning and risk being raided; this is the last call for beer, wine and spirits! (pause) Emma, who is this?

Emma: Oh sorry Doug, this is Sam Salinger. He’s a friend of mine.

Georgie: Are you going steady?

Doug: It’s nice to meet you Sam.

Sam: Same to you uh…

Doug: Douglas Hammersmith. But just call me Doug.

Georgie: I’m here too! Why doesn’t anyone introduce me?

Emma: Doug, who is that man who keeps shouting?

Doug: Oh that’s Georgie. You’ll have to forgive him. He ain’t all there tonight.

Emma: Is he drunk?

Doug: No, just idiotic.

Georgie: (to Lauren) Hey do you think she noticed me?

Lauren: You already know what I think.

Doug: (walking over to the bar) Emma, I’d like you to meet Georgie Davis and you already know Lauren Lottles.

Emma: It’s very nice to meet you. (pause) Lauren, we haven’t seen each other in quite some time, I’ve missed you so much!

(Brief silence)

Lauren: Oh darling Emma, come here and hug me!

(Lauren and Emma embrace as Georgie and Doug watch looking puzzled)

Georgie: (whispering to Doug) I thought she hated her.

Doug: (whispering to Georgie) You can never be certain with Lauren.

Georgie: (whispering) You also said that about Emma.

Doug: (whispering) They’re practically twins.

Lauren: Who is this that you brought with you?

Sam: My name is Sam, Sam Salinger.

(They shake hands)

Lauren: Nice piece of arm candy, where can I get some?

Emma: We only met tonight. The two of us were dining alone at Fredrick’s and we got to talking.

Sam: She’s a real stand up gal. I’m certainly lucky to have caught her eye.

(He puts his arm around her)

Georgie: (to himself) He ain’t such a stand up guy.

Sam: Did you say something?

Georgie: Yeah I said something, I said that you-

Doug: Hey! How about a drink? It’s the last call anyways; let’s all have one together and then we’ll call it a night. We can go home safely without running into any cops; it’ll be a nice time. What would everybody like to drink?

Lauren: Another vodka please.

Georgie: Whiskey on the rocks.

Man: Bathtub gin!

Man #2: Beer!

Girl: Beer!

Doug: Anyone else?

Emma: Sam and I are alright, we don’t need a drink.

(Everybody in the speakeasy gasps)

Georgie: Why are you here then?

(The lights fade out to establish a passage of time, they then fade back in to reveal the same crowd of people drinking except for Emma and Sam)

Emma: Because I’m sick of drinking.

Doug: Sick of drinking? What does that mean?

Lauren: Have you gone completely wacko? Alcohol is the finest medicine available, its doctor recommended.

Sam: It’s also illegal.

Georgie: We tend to skip over that.

Sam: Well I don’t I’m afraid, I’m for prohibition.

Georgie: Will somebody get Mr. Volstead a tall glass of bourbon?

Lauren: I’ll take a tall glass of bourbon.

Doug: Emma, I gotta tell ya…

Emma: Yes Doug?

Doug: I’m very surprised by your sudden change in character. Hell you’re a regular around here. A famous regular I might add. I mean, we all know Emma Zanderfield.

Man #1: She’s gorgeous and witty!

Man #2: Hedonistic and charming!

Lauren: Funny and funny looking!

Emma: What?

Lauren: I meant “witty”.

Man #1: I said that already.

Lauren: Shut up darling or I’ll come over there.

Doug: You were in here only last weekend and you drank literally until the sun came up; you’ve always been a-

Georgie: Flapper.

Doug: Yes, you always know how and when to have a good time.

Emma: I do know the “how” and “when”; but I don’t know the “why.” Why have I spent the last few years of my life behaving like that?

Lauren: Like a human being? What are you getting so hysterical about?

Georgie: She ain’t hysterical.

Sam: She’s on the right path. And so am I.

Doug: If you two don’t want to drink then why were you going around looking for an open speakeasy?

Sam: We wanted to find a place to talk.

Georgie: Let me ask you something Mr. Salinger, why are you for the Volstead Act?

Sam: Well, I care about my country firstly and…(he continues talking in the background)

Emma: (whispering to Doug) I need to speak with you right now.

Doug: You want to talk with me?

Emma: Yes Doug, it’s important and it can’t wait!

Doug: So talk then.

Emma: I can’t, not in front of Sam and the rest of them.

Doug: Alright, come with me to the far end of the bar table.

(Sam continues talking with Georgie and Lauren listening, as Emma and Doug casually slide down to the far end of the bar table)

Doug: What’s the matter Emma?

Emma: Doug, you’ve always been a dear friend of mine.

Doug: Thank you. I consider you a dear friend as well. Now tell me, are you really quitting alcohol?

Emma: Yes I am, but that doesn’t matter now.

Doug: Emma, you’re starting to sweat. That’s not like you. That’s not like you at all.

Emma: I’m incredibly nervous Doug.

Doug: What’s all this razz dazz about?

Emma: Sam.

Doug: What about Sam?

Emma: He brought me here against my will.

Doug: Uh?

Emma: Sam is a-

Doug: Yeah go on.

Emma: Sam is an undercover prohibition agent, he’s been forcing me at gunpoint to take him to all the speakeasies I’ve been to on this side of New York so his men can come in and raid them. He’s taking my knowledge and using it to his advantage. (pause) Now Doug I know your first instinct will be to run for your life. But I beg of you, don’t be foolish like that. Time is of the essence.

Doug: That’s why speakeasies are being raided tonight. It’s all because of you!

Emma: Shh! (pause) It’s not because of me, it’s because of Sam.

Doug: But you’re the gal whose leading him down the trail!

Emma: I tell you he’s forcing me. He has a gun in his pocket.

Doug: How did you even meet this guy?

Emma: We met at that restaurant and really got on like a house on fire. I told him that I was planning on quitting drinking and when he found that out he told me what he did. He thought I would be willing to help him crack down on the speakeasies because I wasn’t going to drink any longer. (pause) When I said no, he pulled out his gun and has been ordering me around all night. It’s been torturous.

Doug: This is too much Emma. How the hell did you get yourself into something like this?

Emma: I never would’ve spoken to him if I knew who he was!

Doug: Do you realize that my pal Georgie is a member of McNeil’s gang? If Georgie gets arrested then McNeil will most likely get arrested too. And Georgie will probably be whacked as fast as he can drink.

Emma: That obnoxious man is the Georgie Davis?!

Doug: Yes and not just him but Lauren will get arrested too, and so will everybody else; this is madness! (pause) Wait if Sam is a prohibition agent, then why did you mention that speakeasies were being raided tonight when you first came in?

Emma: Because Sam doesn’t want anyone to suspect him, he wants to blend in with the rest of the crowd. To agents like him, an old fashioned raid is good news but to us, an old fashioned raid needs to be passed on so it can be avoided. He is trying to be just like us.

Doug: He’s here in my place! A raid is unavoidable at this point! You’ve really done a number on us Emma! I can’t believe you!

Emma: Lower your voice.

Doug: What the hell am I-(pauses, starts whispering) What the hell am I going to do?

Emma: We need to establish a plan Doug. You and this place have always been swell to me, I don’t want to see you get raided, I truly don’t.

Doug: When I woke up this morning, I had a feeling that-

Emma: There’s no time for superstitions! Now come on, let’s think of something before-

Sam: (raising his gun and flashing his badge) Everybody put your hands up!

Doug: Oh fuck me.

(Every person in the bar puts their hands above their heads)

Sam: Oh Emma, you don’t have to sweetheart.

Emma: You have a gun Sam; I’m keeping my hands in the air.

Georgie: Who are you?

Sam: My name is Sam Salinger like I told you. And I am an undercover prohibition agent.

Lauren: I didn’t even know that was a thing.

Sam: Everybody be silent.

Georgie: You rotten scum! Do you even know who I am?

Sam: I don’t care.

Georgie: Alright then.

Sam: All of you, you’re all law breakers. That’s the only thing I care about. The rest of my men are on their way over now and they’re going to bust this place up once and for all.

Georgie: Oh no, I think he’s serious!

Sam: You shut up.

Doug: Now Mr. Salinger-

Sam: That’s Detective Salinger.

Doug: With all due respect I’m not too keen on addressing you like that.

Sam: Hey I’ve got a gun.

Emma: Doug, don’t be a hero.

Doug: I don’t want to be no hero; I just want to talk to Detective Salinger.

Sam: On second thought, could you call me Sal?

Lauren: Incompetence thy name is Sam Salinger.

Sam: What was that?

Doug: Look here fella, let’s just talk about this. Let’s have an open dialogue.

Sam: What is this to you? A god damn play? We’re not talking. This is not open for discussion.

Doug: You see Sam I’d rather not be raided tonight. In fact it’s a complete nightmare to me that my worst fear is coming true.

Sam: If you don’t quiet down I’ll shoot you.

Doug: Oh go ahead; I don’t want to live anyways.

Sam: If you insist.

(Everybody gasps)

Emma: Sam, be reasonable. You don’t want to hurt anyone.

Georgie: I want to hurt him though.

Doug: (whispering to Georgie) You got a gun on ya?

Georgie: (whispering) Are you gonna shoot yourself?

Doug: (whispering) No!

Georgie: (whispering) You said you didn’t want to live.

Doug: (whispering) Look when Sam’s back is turned, take out your gun and-

Georgie: (whispering) I got my gun taken away.

Doug: (whispering) What? Why?

Georgie: (whispering) The gang thinks I’m a little too trigger happy, so I got it taken away for a week.

Doug: (whispering) How can they possibly expect you to do your job without a gun?

Georgie: (whispering) It’s an incentive to stay in line and out of trouble.

Doug: (whispering) You said McNeal told you that you were doing a swell job.

Georgie: (whispering) He doesn’t know about the gun situation.

Doug: (whispering) Fuck sakes Georgie.

Georgie: (whispering) I’m sorry Doug. I’m so sorry.

Sam: You people in the back, stop sipping your drinks!

Man #1: Why don’t you make me?

Sam: My men will be here very soon and when they see you people still drinking…

Man #2: What will they do?

Sam: (to Emma) Listen do you mind going back there and taking their hooch away?

Emma: I brought you here and a number of other places, isn’t that enough for you? I’ve done my share of dirty work.

Sam: Emma, I have a gun.

(Emma sighs as she slowly walks over to the back of the bar)

Sam: Pour them all on the floor like a good girl.

Georgie: Don’t do that! That stuff ain’t cheap!

(Emma takes one of the glasses away from the men)

Sam: For God sakes Emma! Pour it out!

Georgie: Come on Zanderfield, don’t do it.

(Suddenly there’s a knock at the door)

Sam: Ah that must be my men.

Lauren: You can’t let them in without saying the password darling.

Doug: Lauren, does it really matter at this point?

Lauren: It’s a rule Doug, it doesn’t matter if we’re all being held at gun point. There’s still the matter of the password.

Sam: All of you just keep your hands up. I’ll answer the door.

(Sam walks over to the door stage left, we hear pounding on the other side of the door)

Sam: Take it easy there boys. I’ll let you in.

Emma: Not very patient, are they?

(The door suddenly bursts open before Sam has a chance to open it. The impact knocks him out on the floor. Standing on the other side is Marion Whitlock)

Marion: Doug! Doug! Something terrible is going on and you need to know right away!

Doug: Uh Marion…

Marion: No Doug listen! Time is of the essence! I was strolling along the street on my way home when I saw a number of speakeasies being raided by cops and prohibition agents. And I thought to myself: “they’ll probably end up finding Doug’s place and raid it.” Although I’m morally against what you people do here, I care about you Doug. And the thought of your place being raided and you going to jail, I couldn’t handle it. So I came back to warn you. (pause) I’m sorry I should’ve said the password but there was simply no time.

(Brief silence as everyone in the speakeasy slowly puts their hands down)

Marion: Who is that on the floor there?

Emma: Sam Salinger, a prohibition agent.

Marion: But wait a minute, how could…oh.

Doug: Everybody get the hell outta here! The bar is now closed! Good night!

(Everybody in the bar scatters and runs out of the front door stage left)

Georgie: Lauren! Lauren!

Lauren: Yes?

Georgie: You uh...got some place you need to be?

Lauren: Just my place.

Georgie: May I come along?

Lauren: Certainly you can darling. But enough talk, we have to run.

(The two of them run out the front door together, hand in hand)

Doug: Marion, I don’t know what to say.

Marion: Just say what’s in your heart.

Doug: I hate your guts but I’m forever grateful for what you’ve done here tonight. Don’t forget that. Thank you Marion.

Marion: I hope I didn’t hurt that agent too badly.

Emma: He’ll live, now come on let’s get outta here!

(The rest of them quickly exit through the front door stage left)

BLACKOUT

**Act 1, Scene 4: The End of Time**

(The lights fade back in on stage to reveal the speakeasy now torn apart and destroyed. Tables are flipped, broken glass is littered all over the floor, copious amounts of alcohol are spilled all over the tables and the lights are a little dimmer. Emma and Doug enter through the doorway stage left quietly)

Emma: Oh my God. Look at this place.

Doug: It was raided after all.

Emma: At least no one got arrested.

Doug: I see that Mr. Salinger is no longer passed out on the floor.

Emma: (calling out) Hello?

Doug: What are you doing?

Emma: Making sure no one is here. (pause) Hello?

Doug: I think they heard you.

Emma: Looks like we’re all alone.

Doug: Yeah.

Emma: Oh Doug, I feel just awful about this. Your place is completely destroyed.

Doug: I’m just happy everyone was able to scram before the coppers showed up.

Emma: Aren’t you furious with me? You were before when I told you who Sam really was.

Doug: You know Emma, in a way; this ain’t such a bad occurrence.

Emma: How come?

Doug: I was beginning to wonder if this place was gonna be my whole life. Maybe I would’ve died here, who’s to say? But I think I truly wanted a way out and now I have it.

Emma: What are you gonna do now?

Doug: I guess I’ll…I don’t know actually. I still have to think about it. But at least this raid has granted me the ability to do anything I want to do. (pause) I’m no longer trapped here.

Emma: I thought you were afraid of a raid happening.

Doug: I was, believe me I was. But now that it’s happened and I’m seeing the results of it; it’s not so bad really. (pause) Maybe that’s because I wasn’t here for it.

Emma: Raids are never pretty.

Doug: I imagine that you saw plenty earlier tonight.

Emma: You mean last night, it’s Saturday morning. The sun is going to come up soon.

Doug: I wish the nights would last longer.

Emma: I wish it were night time all the time. (pause) We’ve now seen what we could’ve been a part of if it weren’t for Marion Whitlock. Come on, we should both go home and get some shut eye.

Doug: Wait uh…

Emma: Wait for what?

Doug: Maybe we could-

Emma: Doug.

Doug: Not petting Emma. I don’t mean that silly.

Emma: I didn’t say that you did.

Doug: I’d just like to chew the fat with you for a few minutes.

Emma: You’re getting softer these days you know.

Doug: Because I want to talk?

Emma: Because you think I’m willing to listen to you at five thirty in the morning.

(Brief silence)

Doug: You’re right Emma. We should be on our way.

Emma: Aren’t you curious as to why I quit drinking? That is what you wanted to talk about right?

Doug: Yeah. I’m very curious.

Emma: Take a seat.

Doug: All the chairs are busted.

Emma: I guess we’re standing then.

Doug: So what made you want to give up the hooch?

Emma: It’s not easy to talk about.

Doug: You don’t have to.

Emma: But you want to know about it.

Doug: Forget about me, I can’t force it out of you. You have a right to privacy.

Emma: I don’t talk to people.

Doug: Uh?

Emma: I never genuinely have a chit chat with anyone.

Doug: Are you crazy? All you did at my joint was chat and drink.

Emma: Exactly. It wasn’t really me doing the talking; it was the endless amount of gin, vodka, wine.

Doug: So you think alcohol possessed you? You’re sounding like one of those prohibition agents.

Emma: I lost myself when I drank. Do you understand what I mean by that?

(Doug shakes his head)

Emma: You realize how powerful that giggle water is? It takes over every element of your body and doesn’t let go until the morning after; it’s like an illness. You don’t talk properly, walk properly; you can’t even look in the mirror without seeing a stranger looking back at you.

Doug: You lost yourself?

Emma: It’s more than that. (pause) I found life to be boring without being drunk.

Doug: You’re bored?

(Emma nods her head)

Doug: Why?

Emma: I don’t know Doug. Nothing seemed to thrill me. Each hour that I didn’t have a drink in my hand, I found it to be unbearable.

Doug: It sounds like you ain’t all there anymore.

Emma: I knew that you wouldn’t understand.

Doug: I want to Emma. Believe me I do. I’ve just never had anyone tell me that they were bored by life, especially living in our time.

Emma: Maybe I’m depressed, but it’s worse than that. I feel disinterested. And a glass of beer was the only thing that numbed the feeling.

Doug: Oh.

Emma: I have a problem; and it all stems from drinking.

Doug: How can alcohol be a problem for anybody? The only reason it’s a problem now is because they’re trying to take it away from us.

Emma: Maybe they should.

Doug: So you agree with Sam?

Emma: I do agree with him, but I don’t agree with the execution. I don’t think men should go around busting places up and intimidating people. (pause) Then again, maybe that’s the ultimate answer. It could be the only way to bring people peace.

Doug: Take away something that makes them feel alive? That made you feel alive?

Emma: Being alive is a death sentence.

Doug: And an utter bore?

Emma: Yes.

Doug: I wish I could make you feel better. I wish there was something I could say or do to change your outlook. (pause) But you know I’m not your boyfriend or anything. We’re just good friends.

Emma: Until the very end.

Doug: We are all dying, slowly.

Emma: So we are.

(Brief silence)

Emma: I don’t want to die. I just want to be sober.

Doug: It won’t last Emma, we keep coming back to things knowing full well they’re going to kill us; but we enjoy the thrill. That is why we come back. Cause we’re all dying already, we might as well die with pleasure.

Emma: What about meaning? Is there a meaning? Because I can’t seem to find one.

Doug: Let’s change the subject. (pause) How about a drink? There has to be one bottle that the pigs missed.

(Emma quietly exits through the doorway stage left, leaving Doug alone on stage. He finds a full liquor bottle, examines it carefully and then takes the cap off and takes a big gulp)

Doug: Time for bed.

BLACKOUT

**THE END**