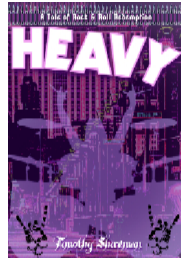


A Tale of Rock & Roll Redemption

HEAVY

Timothy Shirkman



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A tale of Rock and Roll redemption.

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EXT. - TAVERN - NIGHT

Atlanta's busy streets are lined with cars and jaywalking pedestrians as the general public celebrates the easing of COVID restrictions by flooding the Metro area's drinking establishments with thirsty customers.

Recently reopened bars and nightclubs are hopping, with jubilant throngs of cooped-up neighbors parched for a taste of the city's vibrant music scene.

Midtown hotspot the Led Balloon Saloon is no exception. Rock music from within thumps a driving backbeat into the loose collection of smokers, random tourists, and MARTA passengers waiting patiently on the sidewalk.

Large colorful flyers hype 'Live Band Karaoke' tonight, with house band DARK HORSE providing the in-person entertainment.

Walking behind their wives LARA and GINA, fifty-year old friends SCOTT Templeman and BRIAN Lange share news that prompts a ceasefire in their latest esoteric musical debate.

BRIAN

--and we're allowed to play their instruments?

SCOTT

Yup.

As the pair of couples approach the venue's sticker-covered entrance, an early departure causes the ambient decibel level to flare briefly. The small group pauses to locate IDs and gather cash as the curious fellows eavesdrop on the local talent.

BRIAN

Are you sure?

SCOTT

Positive, the drummer owes me a favor.

LARA

(to Gina)

He designed their logo.

GINA

Oh, cool.

Brian peers in at the lead guitarist while Scott holds open the heavy steel door.

BRIAN
Man, a '69 Gibson SG Standard--

SCOTT
--With the Lyre vibrato tailpiece.

BRIAN
That thing's gotta be worth--

SCOTT
About four grand.

LARA
Can we go in? I have to pee.

GINA
(impatient)
Me too. Where's the Ladies' Room?

BRIAN
Ahoy matey, hold your bilge water,
you leaky little swamp trollop--

SCOTT
On the left, past the pool table.

As they enter, his verbal slight earns Long John Brian a playful double-tap to the solar plexus and groin from the missus.

SCOTT
Oh, direct hit!
She sank your battleship!

LARA
Swamp trollop?
Bite your tongue, you scurvy dog!

GINA
Oh don't worry, I'll bite his
tongue.

BRIAN
Aye, me feisty lass, now you're
talking!

Brian and Gina embrace and share a kiss, publicly playing out their goofy inside joke with an easy laugh.

BRIAN
Y'know, later tonight I'm gonna
plunder that booty.

GINA

Just don't drink too much, you
smelly pirate hooker.

Squeezing by, Lara intentionally brushes against the front of her spouse's jeans, pursing her lips and winking at her titillated hubby. Teasing her tawny mane of coppery locks, the seductive schoolteacher video-vamps it up a bit:

LARA

You're cute. Are you in a band?

SCOTT

Yes.
(follows inside)
Yes I am.

INT. - LED BALLOON SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Music: Cover - 'Sweet Child o' Mine' by Guns 'n' Roses

A five-piece band rocks hard as a faux Axl Rose asks 'Where do we go now?'. The quintet's rhythm section gallops along, with a squalling Gibson solo accompanying the struggling singer as the lyricist erupts in a caterwauling crescendo.

Scott and Brian nod in rhythm, listening hypercritically as only musicians can. Recently released from quarantine, the buddies relish the soulful, reverb-laden warmth of live tube amplifiers.

The unfortunate wives stand looking at one another dubiously and covering their ears in dismay. Scott, sensing the women's discomfort, hands Lara some disposable foam ear protection. The redhead kisses him affectionately on the cheek and passes a pair to her blonde bestie.

With a pointed finger and a thumb's up, the ladies head to the restroom and the men make a beeline to the crowded bar, applauding the stylings of Steve from Virginia Highlands.

SCOTT

I'll get the drinks.
(motions)
Grab a couple of slips.

INT. - LED BALLOON SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Standing at a high-top, the couples catch up and tip Moscow Mules and bottles of Yuengling. The boys discuss obscure music trivia and polyrhythmic time signatures while their long-suffering wives send each other snarky texts, laughing in emojis in lieu of shouting.

As the next tone-deaf volunteer earnestly gives it his all, the band's drummer spots Scott, sending a smiling nod and a 'what's up' from the stage as he delivers a tasty fill.

SCOTT

(amused)

Man, we used to play this at every party.

The popular 80's rock ballad nears it's peak and the would-be Sebastian Bach lets loose, screeching an ear-piercingly off-key 'I Remember You'. The wives ignore the banshee cry onstage and dish on the jostling crowd while their judgmental husbands cringe.

BRIAN

Wow, that was physically painful.

Tiny golf pencils scribble out the foursome's musical choices and the small photocopied forms are submitted.

INT. - LED BALLOON SALOON STAGE - LATER

Scott sits behind a boom mic atop the throne of the tricked-out DW kit, each of it's dual kick drums proudly sporting a groovy new 'Dark Horse' logo. He takes a swig and sets his half-empty beer beside the Zildjian hi-hat stand.

He raises the sticks, getting a feel for the balance and weight of the oak Pro-Marks, stretching and breathing deeply to calm himself.

Brian assumes lead vocal duties, and he sits tuning up, gently noodling on the vintage Gibson six-string.

With the band's bassist and keyboardist rounding out the impromptu jam, the extra bandmates become a tambourine-wielding, cowbell-equipped cheering section.

Getting the go ahead nod from the keyboard player, Scott pushes up his glasses, seizes his Moment of Zen and declares to the largely disinterested crowd:

SCOTT

This one's for the Maestro.

Music: Cover - 'Tom Sawyer' by Rush

The hard-drinking crowd pauses at the opening salvo of the prog rock classic and several burst into spontaneous cheering as the infectious synth groove initiates a sine wave of Gen-X nostalgia in band members and listeners alike.

Cellphones pop up to document the Herculean task of percussion about to be foolishly attempted by this mere mortal.

Brian's cutting, high-pitched falsetto dances along the twisty lyrics as a few of the bar's other Karaoke vocalists join in, a wall of new voices blending into the amplified soundscape.

The monumental prowess of the late, great Neil Peart sweeps the group into the chirping digital tones of the song's middle section.

Brian's well-practiced fingers scrawl nimbly across the SG's fretboard, scorching the noble hunk of overdriven hardwood into a sonic frenzy as the soaring solo concludes.

Scott bears down with renewed focus and intensity as his spotlight moment approaches. Years of precise air-drumming with headphones and countless basement jams on crappy kits have yielded this sublime muscle memory.

Brian looks over expectantly as the other musicians hope for the best and brace for impact.

Here it comes.

The untamed Canadian spirit courses into the maple shells as Scott lets the Force flow through him. He fluidly hammers home the delicate strokes and thunderous rolls of the Master.

His descending flurry of triplets and splashing cymbals complete, Scott powerfully sticks the landing by bringing the flowing tempo back full circle to a reprise of the pulsating bridge.

In that triumphant moment, Scott revels in the holy communion of live music as the enthusiastic audience of a hundred and twenty fans channel the spirit of the energetic musicians.

Scores of patrons are swept up in a burst of spontaneous musical alchemy, clapping and singing along until a series of staccato flourishes signal the abbreviated outro and grandiose live ending.

While the cheering mob hoots and whistles, Black Horse's idle drummer takes a good-natured ribbing from his rhythm guitarist. Impressed, the pair of professional musicians give Scott and Company a 'We're Not Worthy' bow as the raucous accolades continue.

EXT. - TAVERN - LATER

The two couples exit the steamy confines of the rollicking bar, hugging and cavorting like mischievous youngsters. The delighted women pitch the earplugs in a nearby trashcan as their tipsy husbands battle tinnitus and bad WIFI to summon a ride.

GINA

Oh my God, that was so much fun!

LARA

You guys were so good!

SCOTT

You still got it, B.

BRIAN

I do miss playing live.

GINA

The whole bar was singing, even the bouncer.

LARA

I know, I couldn't believe it.

The smiling women hug the lucky pair of musical dad-bods in appreciation.

SCOTT

When the crowd starts singing
louder than you, that's the moment,
y'know?

Gina nuzzles her aging guitar hero with flirty glee.

GINA

Those people were eating out of the
palm of your hand.

BRIAN

It's almost better than sex.

SCOTT

If it's not, you're not doing it
right.

BRIAN

Speaking of sex--

Brian smooches his permanent paramour as the first hired car arrives. Gina pours her pickled partner into place, pointing out the rideshare company's COVID mandate.

SCOTT

Ah yes. Sex, drugs and rock n roll.
The American Way.

LARA

While you were playing, I
remembered how proud I am to be
with you.

Still buzzing from the evening's stellar performance, Lara
turns to face Scott and kisses him hungrily.

LARA

I am so turned on right now.

Brian's head emerges from the open door wearing an upside-
down mask, shouting gleefully:

BRIAN

All right, Groupies!

GINA

Yeah, yeah, let's get you home,
rock star. Don't forget, it's trash
night.

BRIAN

Come on, it's still early.
Let's go to the Clermont, or at
least get some Waffle House.

GINA

Not with your cholesterol.

The ladies exchange goodbyes as Gina masks up, sits and
buckles.

LARA

We would love to, but it's twelve-
thirty on a school night.

BRIAN

What about you, Mister Scott?

SCOTT

I'm giving her all she's got
Captain, but we don't have the
power.

BRIAN

Wanna go get some Dilithium
crystals?

GINA

Absolutely not. Now fix your mask.

SCOTT

I'm afraid she won't take much more of this, Jim.

GINA

Sorry about that, Scott.

SCOTT

No worries.

The second car approaches as Gina tries to close the Prius' door. Brian leans out in one last desperate attempt to keep the party going.

BRIAN

What the hell happened?
We used to stay out all night.

GINA

We grew up, space cadet.

SCOTT

We did?

LARA

Some of us did.
Besides, hangovers suck.

BRIAN

Hangovers?
Keith Richards is rolling in his grave right now--
and he ain't even dead yet!

GINA

Yeah, well let me know when Mick and the boys start paying our mortgage.

BRIAN

I mean, back me up here dude: Why'd we start playing music in the first place?

Scott looks thoughtfully at his lovely mate, smiles and answers matter-of-factly as he helps Gina close the car door.

SCOTT

Chicks, Man.