

IN RETROSPECT

Written by

J. P. Faceto

Based on Stellar, by Daniel Warner.

INT. 'PLAY IT AGAIN SAM'S' - NIGHT

Empty but joyful. Filled with references and decorations from the '40s to the '90s.

TWO MEN play pool.

SALLY (40s), good-looking woman, fills large glasses of beer behind the counter.

Jerseys, vinyl discs, and movie posters are displayed on the walls, all across the place.

Sport games and documentaries play on the TVs.

JACK (30s), a man out of his time, sits in a booth. He dresses nicely.

SAM (50s), friendly-face, brings him the menu.

SAM

Would you like a conversation... or some music?

JACK

Neither, thanks.

Sam puts the menu on the table.

SAM

Come on, everybody needs a little something, right?

Jack looks away.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, at least the people that come here do.

JACK

This is the only place in this part of the city that stays open this late.

Sam grabs a dishrag and cleans the table.

SAM

Nah. All the restaurants work twenty-four seven nowadays.

JACK

Yeah, they do... don't they?

SAM
Just let me know if you need
anything, sir.

Sam walks away.

JACK
I used to cook, you know? Before
they upgraded the kitchen. I loved
cooking for people back in the day.

Sam cleans the counter in front of Jack, smirking.

SAM
Seems like it wasn't a welcome
upgrade, huh?

JACK
No, no, it was. They're good. Way
better than me.
(a beat)
That's why I'm leaving. Taking off.

Sam turns to Jack, who picks the menu from the table.

SAM
Yeah, this new generation is very
efficient, aren't they?

JACK
(reading the menu)
They're better off without me,
that's for sure.

Sam sits joins Jack in the booth.

SAM
Well, from my understanding, we
lost this... human interaction.
Look around, that's why this place
is always empty.
(a beat)
Shame. I remember when clients used
to appreciate some smiles and
courtesy. Restaurants start with
passion.

Jack puts the menu down.

JACK
I'll have a beer, please.

INT. 'PLAY IT AGAIN SAM'S' RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Four empty glasses of beer rest on the table. The place is now completely empty, aside from Jack and Sam, who still sit on the both. Drinking.

JACK

I guess you're right. There's more to it. Maybe I shouldn't-- I shouldn't leave just yet.

SAM

Yeah, stick around! Just for a little while. Until people like you completely vanish from this planet.

Jack finishes his drink and puts the glass away.

JACK

What do you mean by people like me?

SAM

You know. Old fashioned.

JACK

How old do you think I am?

SAM

Old enough to understand what old-fashioned feel like.

Jack stares Sam.

JACK

What about you? Did you get to experience the good-old times?

SAM

It depends. Each generation has it's own idea of the so-called good-old times. Let's say I lived through a couple.

JACK

And how was that like?

SAM

Nostalgic.

Sally walks in. She picks up the glasses from the table.

SALLY

How's everything going?

JACK
(looking at Sam)
Pretty good so far.

SALLY
Good, good.

Sally stops and turns to Sam.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(stuttering)
Samuel, I have to remind you. You
need to close the place soon. It's
way pass the--

SAM
I know, I know. I appreciate your
concern, Sal.

Sally walks away. Jack glances at her.

JACK
That's what I'm talking about.

SAM
But Sally's different. I'm lucky to
have her here with me.

JACK
If you say so...

SAM
We've been together for thirty
years now. Never had any
complaints, never broke a single
glass.

JACK
Good for you.

They admire Sally washing the glasses on the sink behind the
counter.

SAM
She still got it, you know? That
human touch we were talking about.

JACK
That's pretty hard to find these
days.

Jack's eyes turn to Sam.

JACK (CONT'D)

What about you? How do I know
you're not one of them?

SAM

Me? One of them? You've been
talking to me for the last hour and
couldn't figure it out?

JACK

I don't know, they're getting
pretty good... too damn good.

SAM

Well, yes, in a way.

JACK

But you have a good place here. You
hit the jackpot, my friend. Hold on
to it.

Sam chuckles.

SAM

Didn't you read the signs? I'm
passing it on too. Can't afford to
run it anymore.

Jack sighs.

JACK

I know. That's why I decided to pay
one last visit. My dad used to
bring me here.

(a beat)

So many memories-- good memories,
all of them.

Jack turns to the pool table.

JACK (CONT'D)

It was right here that he taught me
how to play pool.

Jack turns to the other side of the restaurant and points at
a table in the corner.

JACK (CONT'D)

First date. First beer.

(smiling)

First hangover... Guess we don't
have that nowadays.

SAM

Oh, we do. It's just more convenient to experience all that on a computer screen.

JACK

That's just too depressing.

SAM

I'm sorry.

JACK

No, that's okay. We all have to move on at some point.

(a beat)

But what I mean is, you have to hold on to this--

(looking around)

This place. This idea. This atmosphere.

(a beat)

People need to be reminded that we're still humans on the inside.

Sam smiles and nods.

SAM

Right on, my friend.

Jack forces a smile. He looks at his stylized watch.

JACK

Better be going now. To a wife I don't know and children I don't have. In a house I can't afford.

Sam and Jack stand up.

SAM

Don't worry, you're still young.

JACK

Come on, we talked about this. It's not time that I'm worried about.

SAM

I understand. Just, don't give up. Not yet.

JACK

You too, Sam. You too.

SAM
Trust me, there are still good
people out there.
(pointing outside)

Jack and Sam shake hands. Then hug.

SAM (CONT'D)
It was a pleasure to meet you, Mr.?

Jack puts the coat on.

JACK
Jack. Call me Jack.

SAM
Alright, Mr. Jack. Have a great
night. Stay safe out there.

Jack nods. He walks to the door.

Sally approaches him.

SALLY
(stuttering)
Excuse me, sir. You forgot to pay
for your beer.

Jack turns back.

JACK
Pardon me, M'lady.

Jack grabs his cellphone and swipes the screen up. It lights
up and makes a sound.

A green light blinks under Sally's apron, making the same
sound. Sally smiles and nods, mechanically.

JACK (CONT'D)
Have a great night.

Jack walks out the door.

EXT. 'PLAY IT AGAIN SAM'S' - NIGHT

Jack steps out of the restaurant into a futuristic city. Neon
signs and bright colorful lights surround him. Flying cars
and platforms come from all directions.

He stands on the sidewalk of a levitating block, thousands of
feet away from the ground.

Jack presses a button on his watch.

He picks a cigarette from his pocket, lights it up and walks away to the other side of the block.

Jack looks at the inside of the restaurant from the large windows.

Sally argues with Sam while he cleans the pool table inside.

SALLY

Another client was leaving without paying. That's why you went bankrupt.

SAM

Yeah, yeah. We're already broke anyways. What difference does it make? It's our last client, for Christ's sake.

Sam turns the light off. Jack looks away and signs for one of the flying passing cars.

The AI DRIVER (late 20s), hologram, pulls over. Jack enters.

A.I. DRIVER

Greetings, Jack. Where to tonight?

JACK

Anywhere.

Jack adjusts himself on the back seat.

A.I. DRIVER

You have arrived at your destination. Have a great night.

JACK

Anywhere but here. Let's try Mars.

A.I. DRIVER

Right away, sir.

JACK

(murmuring)
Stupid robots sometimes.

The flying car takes off.

The "OPEN" sign on the restaurant's window turns off.