

KENNETH. Hey.

(A moment.)

I was wondering if maybe, I wasn't sure, but –

Are you going to happy hour at Chi Chi's tonight?
Maybe I could tag along?

CLAY. Ah, damn it. Lois is heading out of town for a wedding, Kyle's sick, and I have a PTA meeting.

KENNETH. Oh okay. No problem.

CLAY. But I think maybe Frankie and Steve might still –

KENNETH. No no, that's fine. I'll just –

CLAY. We'll grab you next week. You like tequila?

KENNETH. I'm not sure.

CLAY. I drink enough to burn my face off. We'll have fun.

KENNETH. Sounds good.

Thank you, Clay.

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(To the audience.) Third highest numbers?

In the whole branch?

Frankie might have to watch her back?

I took a long walk after work. I meant to go right to the post office to meet Bert and head over to Wally's, but for some reason, I went in the other direction. It was cold and the wind was faster than a pain in my ass, but I walked along the river and past the train tracks.

I made my way out to the elementary school and watched teachers put up decorations for the Winter Wingding. I walked past the old houses on Smith

Square and saw families in front of fireplaces, wearing wool sweaters. Wondering what to eat for dinner.

It was a Friday night. Autumn was slowly sinking into winter and the evening had a buzz that you could almost hear through the power lines.

Before, I never really clocked the changing of the days. Each one for me was always the same between the bookstore and Wally's. I didn't know how a Monday could feel different from a Thursday. How Fridays, with their promise of the weekend, had their own air of expectancy. But working at the bank had tuned me in to the rhythm of the people around me for the first time and that night as I walked around town, I felt that everyone everywhere might be waiting. Wondering what would happen to them. What could the weekend bring?

I watched couples walking through leaves and children opening bottles of Coca-Cola, I should have been happy. Work was good. I had my high solution numbers and no one seemed to have discovered Bert. It was better than I could have imagined.

But I felt quiet and lonely. Why did I want to howl like a wild animal?

"Welcome Friend, You're Right on Time."

I walked until I lost time and found myself standing in front of Sam's book shop. It was now closed and boarded up, white paper taped in the front windows.

I thought about him smoking a cigarette in the desert.

I thought about all the years I'd spent in the store. How many hours I sat in its aisles, smelling dust and every day wondering, "What's coming?"

CORRINA. Kenneth!

(CORRINA enters as the lights rise on the sidewalk outside of Sam's shop.)