

Bar Betting

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. NICE BAR - NIGHT

The bar is packed. It is a very cool place, filled with the hippest set of patrons, all drinking craft beers and filling the air with somewhat pompous chatter.

Two twenty-something young men are engaged in conversation at the corner of the bar with an empty bar stool between them.

DANIEL, of thin build with bushy hair and horn-rimmed glasses, takes a swig of dark beer before continuing the conversation with his equally thin, bald-headed friend, MAX.

DANIEL

Easy. Dave Chappelle in You've Got Mail with--

MAX

(interrupting)  
You've Got Mail?

DANIEL

Don't deny you've seen it. Bear with me here. Dave Chappelle in You've Got Mail with Greg Kinnear, who's in Little Miss Sunshine with Paul Dano, and he's in There Will Be Blood with...come on, let's say it together...

MAX

Daniel Day-Lewis.

DANIEL

Daniel Day-Lewis.

MAX

Fucking unbelievable, man.

DANIEL

You lose. Pay up.

MAX

She's in the bathroom. I'll do it, I swear.

DANIEL

God I love winning.

EMILY appears as if from nowhere. She is small and cute, with short pixie bangs and several visible tattoos.

EMILY

What did you win?

DANIEL

On that note, I think I'll head  
outside for a smoke.

Max chugs the rest of his beer as Emily reclaims her seat at  
the bar. Daniel takes his beer and leaves.

EMILY

Did I miss something?

MAX

You know how Daniel has to turn  
everything into a bet?

EMILY

Oh yeah. What did you lose this  
time?

MAX

I have to ask you out.

Emily nearly spits out her beer from laughing too hard.

MAX

Now, did I miss something?

EMILY

I lost a bet with him a few days  
ago.

MAX

Oh yeah? Do you have to ask me out?

EMILY

No. I have to say yes when you do.

MAX

That guy never loses.

EMILY

I'd like to think we're the winners  
this time.

Max smiles at Emily for a moment.

MAX

Yes. I think we are. Shall we go  
outside and let him witness the  
payoff?

EMILY

Sure. It's not like his ego can get  
any bigger.

Emily hops off her bar stool and throws on her coat. The pair winds their way through the crowded bar to the front door.

EXT. NICE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Max opens the door, letting Emily pass through, and as soon as he exits and barely glances in Daniel's direction, he's already speaking.

MAX

Well congratulations, you're a real pain in the ass, but I suppose a thank you is in...

Max and Emily step up to Daniel at a table surrounded by other young drinkers, including one rough looking character, a man they call VIGO.

They are silent as they watch Daniel, eyes closed, stab a knife between each of his fingers on the table in very quick succession while the group counts out loud.

THE GROUP

...7...

As Daniel gets to his pinky, then goes back.

THE GROUP

...8...

And again.

THE GROUP

...9...

Vigo is visibly excited.

And again.

THE GROUP

...10!!

The group cheers and lets out a collective sigh, as Daniel stabs the knife into the table and drinks triumphantly.

DANIEL

Pay up, Vigo.

VIGO

(defeated)

Fine. Fair is fair, I guess. The knife is yours.

Daniel pulls the knife from the table, inspects it, kisses it, folds it back up and happily puts it in his pocket.

DANIEL

I do so appreciate a gracious loser.

MAX

Dude. That was insane.

Daniel notices his friends for the first time. Max is shocked but impressed. Emily is not amused.

VIGO

Your buddy here sure thinks highly of himself.

DANIEL

Why shouldn't I? I never lose.

Vigo smashes his cigarette butt a little harder than necessary. The group has thinned and the last few pat Daniel on the back as they scatter. Emily and Max get closer.

Daniel's hand reaches to shake Vigo's hand, but Vigo pulls it back and eyes Daniel carefully.

VIGO

I'm sure it's foolish to tell you what I'm about to tell you, but I think you deserve it.

Daniel picks up his drink.

DANIEL

You're no fool. And if it's good, then I definitely deserve it.

Daniel smiles as he goes to drink, and eyes Vigo. Vigo never looks away.

EMILY

Daniel, we came out here so you could witness the outcome of the bets with Max and I, so--

Vigo lights another cigarette as Daniel completely ignores and cuts off Emily.

DANIEL

(just as he empties his glass and sets it down)  
--Are you going to tell me this so-called foolish thing?

MAX  
I'm sure it's nothing, so as we  
were saying--

He smiles at Emily who is visibly irritated, but she smiles  
back as she takes a drag from her cigarette.

DANIEL  
Yeah, we'll get there.  
(to Vigo)  
Come on, man. What?

Vigo smiles a big yellow smile. Emily gets frustrated and  
steps back, disinterested in all of it.

VIGO  
Well, if you really want to know,  
there's a man at a bar on the other  
side of town and he's never lost a  
bet. Ever.

DANIEL  
Ha! Impossible. Everyone loses  
eventually.

VIGO  
Do you?

DANIEL  
Well, no, but--

MAX  
You have!

Emily hears this and rejoins the group, still acting as  
though she's not interested. Daniel is confused at first, but  
then gives a sigh of realization.

DANIEL  
Oh, right! The beer chugging...with  
that chick--

EMILY  
(interrupting)  
Don't say chick.

DANIEL  
(without missing a beat)  
--that broad at the baseball game.

EMILY  
Ass.

Max giggles a little. Emily goes back to actively trying to ignore Daniel and Vigo.

VIGO  
And you lost?

DANIEL  
It happens. But I only lost a pack of smokes. I'm quitting anyway, so I guess I'm really still a winner.

Max looks at Vigo, who is taking very slow draws from his cigarette and examining the smoke very intently as he releases it.

Max leans in to Daniel and talks very quietly.

MAX  
(whispering)  
This guy's a weirdo.

Emily begins to eye Vigo as she puts her cigarette out in the ash tray on the table.

DANIEL  
So, tell me about this guy.

VIGO  
He owns a bar, on the other side of town, like I said. He makes a few very specific bets. Like challenges really. He picks the wager. You try to complete the challenge. And that's it.

DANIEL  
Sounds stupid.

VIGO  
(lets out a hearty laugh)  
Oh, it's far from stupid. It's impossible actually. No one has ever beat him.

DANIEL  
I'd take his silly challenges!  
Where is this bar.

Vigo reaches into his pocket and pulls out an old receipt.

VIGO  
Pen?

Daniel and Max pat their pockets.

MAX

Emily, I know you have a pen.

EMILY

I want nothing to do with this.

DANIEL

No one's asking you to take down the minutes. Just give us a damn pen.

Emily angrily reaches into her purse and hands a pen to Daniel, who gives it to Vigo.

Vigo scratches something onto the old receipt, and hands the slip of paper and the pen to Daniel.

VIGO

Ask for Marcus. But I'm warning you, this is no joke, man. And forget I sent you.

DANIEL

Right. OK. Whatever.

Vigo pretends to tip a non-existent hat to Emily, and leaves the three friends at the table.

DANIEL

Drink up, kids, we're bar hopping tonight.

MAX

Yes! Adventure.

EMILY

I'm not going. This is stupid.

Daniel rolls his eyes, and chugs down the rest of his beer.

MAX

Come on, it'll be fun. We'll call it our first date. Daniel can play his little game, and we'll have some drinks. Harmless.

Emily softens sighing in agreement. Daniel and Max excitedly bump fists.

CUT TO:



EXT. DINGY BAR PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Daniel, Max and Emily are parked directly in front of a dark, nondescript bar with the car still running. They are inspecting the place.

EMILY

I do not like this. Horror movies start this way.

MAX

Yeah, dude, I dunno about this place. I've been to pretty much every bar in this city, and I've never even heard of this one.

DANIEL

Just think of it as a bar with games. Let's at least go in.

MAX

OK. But if it's no good, you promise we'll leave?

Before answering, Daniel is already half out of the car.

DANIEL

Promise.

EXT. DINGY BAR DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Daniel gets to the bar door first.

They stop. Daniel starts to push it open.

MAX

Whoa. You're just gonna go in? Just like that?

DANIEL

Well...yeah. Why wouldn't I?

EMILY

Because this is weird and creepy, and we have no idea what's in there.

DANIEL

Jesus, it's a bar. Let's just go in! We're not gonna get killed or something. It's still in business, so whatever's going on in there can't be that bad.

With that, Daniel pushes open the door.

INT. DINGY BAR - CONTINUOUS

A bartender is paying little attention to patrons or the three friends. Daniel approaches.

DANIEL  
Um, I'm here to see Marcus.

BARTENDER  
(pointing)  
Downstairs.

The Three friends follow the instructions.

INT. DINGY BAR MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It is dark, dingy and nearly empty except for a motley group of people of all ages and styles. All are playing various card games, drinking games, etc.

At the far end of the room, there is a man at a table, drinking alone, separated from the rest of the people. He is watching the entire scene, and then stares directly at Daniel.

DANIEL  
That's Marcus.

MAX  
How do you know?

DANIEL  
Come on.

They cross the room, each head turning to follow them as they make their way to Marcus.

INT. MARCUS' CORNER - CONTINUOUS

At the table he sits, large, unshakable. The table is old and wooden with what looks like axe chops all over the top of it. There are no other chairs at the table.

On the wall behind Marcus is a huge wooden wheel with a spinner and sections labeled "Van Gogh", "Scarlett Letter", "Polyphemus", "A Man From the South", "Inigo Montoya", "A Healthy Smile".

The three friends stop in front of the table. Marcus stares, but doesn't speak.

DANIEL

Marcus?

MARCUS

Who sent you?

DANIEL

No one. I don't know. A guy. Some guy. I hear you have some kind of challenge, or bet, or whatever?

MARCUS

Yeah, I have some kind of whatever. You think you're ready?

DANIEL

Well, I don't even know what it is, but I'm usually ready for anything. I don't lose.

Marcus laughs heartily and stands from the table slowly. He speaks directly to Daniel, never moves or motions, keeping his arms crossed.

MARCUS

Rule one, your friends can be here, but they cannot speak. Understand?

Daniel nods, and elbows Max, who nods. Emily just stares.

MARCUS

Then, you spin this wheel to determine what you lose.

DANIEL

OK, what do I win?

MARCUS

(ignoring the question)  
Then you take the challenge.

DANIEL

What's the challenge?

MARCUS

(ignoring the question  
again)  
Then you lose.

DANIEL

Right. Whatever, I'm not worried.  
So, what do I win?

Marcus smiles a huge toothy grin and leans forward.

MARCUS

You win what I won...the bar.

EMILY

What?! The whole bar? That's  
insane. What kind of crazy--

MARCUS

(to Emily)

You! I said no talking. There are  
rules.

(to Daniel)

She is trouble. Shut her up.

EMILY

Shut me up? Daniel, I swear to God--

Marcus leans closer to Emily.

MARCUS

I SAID NO TALKING!

The entire room, already quite quiet, goes completely silent,  
all eyes on Marcus and his three guests.

DANIEL

It's fine. She won't say another  
word.

(to Emily)

Right, Emily?

EMILY

Whatever.

She takes a step back, and stands silently with Max on one  
side of the table.

DANIEL

So, anyway, I win the bar?

MARCUS

Yes. The bar. If you beat my  
challenge, this bar and everything  
in it is yours.

DANIEL

I don't have anything much to wager  
that's worth a whole bar.

MARCUS

Most people don't. But you, like everyone else who comes to see me, like myself when I came here, have something that I happen to value as highly as any material possession.

DANIEL

Uh, what's that?

MARCUS

Pride.

DANIEL

Ha! Yeah, I'd say I have pride. I value it very highly.

MARCUS

Exactly. And while you don't have a bar or probably much else in this world, I have plenty to gamble with, and you seem to have enough pride to part with.

DANIEL

How do I part with pride?

MARCUS

Spin the wheel and I'll show you.

Daniel eagerly approaches the wheel. Marcus' back is to him.

MARCUS

Once you spin, the challenge is set and you cannot change your mind.

DANIEL

I won't.

He reaches for the wheel.

DANIEL

Wait. I don't even know what the bet is, what the challenge is.

MARCUS

I believe you said you weren't worried, that you don't lose. So, I ask you, does it matter?

DANIEL

No. It doesn't.

Daniel spins the wheel.

It goes around fast, and for a long time. The clicking is the only sound in the whole place. Marcus never looks behind him, just staring straight ahead, keeping an eye on the room.

The wheel begins to slow.

It lands on "A Man From the South".

DANIEL

Man from the south. What is that?

Marcus lowers his huge arms, smiles and sits down at the table, reaches under it and lifts a box onto it.

MARCUS

It means that if you lose, I cut off your left pinky.

MAX

(out of no where)

I'm sorry. What? Ha! His finger? His finger! That's crazy. Daniel?

DANIEL

Shut up, Max! No talking.

(turns back to Marcus)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. They won't talk. My left pinky? So, I'm going to play some game and if I lose you cut off my finger, but if I win, I get the bar?

MARCUS

Precisely.

Emily squeals a little. Marcus flashes a glare at her. She stops.

Daniel looks at his friends. Emily is shaking her head, and Max is wide-eyed.

MARCUS

Shall we begin?

DANIEL

Yes.

MARCUS

Please come around and stand across from me.

Daniel leaves the wheel and moves to the other side of the table. Max and Emily are right next to him.

From the box, Marcus removes one match and a hatchet.

He sticks the match, stick-side down, into a small hole in the center of the table so that it is standing on end. He slides the hatchet towards Daniel.

MARCUS

Would you like a drink before we begin?

DANIEL

Yes, I think I would. And for my friends too?

Marcus looks just over Daniel's shoulder and holds up 3 fingers.

MARCUS

What you will do is take that hatchet and use it to light that match. You have three tries.

DANIEL

Is that what you'll cut my finger off with if I actually lose?

MARCUS

Do you have a better means of removing a finger?

DANIEL

I do. I just won it in a bet tonight, so it's gotta be good luck. This'll be a breeze, so here, take it, and we'll pretend that you might actually have the chance to use it.

Daniel takes his recently acquired prize and gives it to Marcus.

MARCUS

Very well.

A young man walks up to the table with 3 shots of some dark-colored liquor. He hands a shot to Daniel, and one to each of his friends, using a hand with a missing pinky.

Emily and Max look at the young man's hand and at each other. Emily starts to speak, but Max silently shakes his head and puts his finger to his mouth to shush her. They both take their shots.

Daniel looks at his friends.

DANIEL  
OK, guys, this will be my biggest  
win to date.

He downs his shot.

MARCUS  
You're ready then?

DANIEL  
Yes.

Marcus again looks over Daniels shoulder and motions to someone. A set of scary twins step up behind Daniel.

DANIEL  
What's this? Who are they?

MARCUS  
Insurance.

Daniel inspects the new spectators.

INSURANCE 1  
Best of luck.

INSURANCE 2  
You'll need it.

The Insurance laugh.

Daniel shudders.

Daniel picks up the hatchet, and loosens up a bit. He holds the hatchet up over the match, aims, and raises it over his head.

Emily and Max take a collective sigh.

Daniel slams the hatchet down just grazing the side of the match. It does not light.

DANIEL  
That's one. And it was pretty  
fucking close for a first shot. I  
hope you have another job lined up,  
buddy.

He does it again, this time missing the match on the other side.

Emily and Max are tense. Daniel is a little less sure of him self.



DANIEL

Whatever. Third time's a charm. I think I'll paint the place, get a new sign, ya know, make it my own.

Daniel pulls the hatchet from the table and raises it one more time. A bead of sweat drips onto the table.

Marcus is smiling.

The insurance moves in closer.

Max is staring at the match. Emily looks around. Everyone in the room is missing an earlobe or a finger, or has a burn on his arm, or a bald head. In some sort of fire pit, there is a branding iron. She looks again at the wheel.

Daniel holds the hatchet up a bit longer and looks at his friends.

He takes a breath as Emily looks at him. His arm begins to come down..

Emily LUNGES at him, grabbing his hand and the hatchet.

EMILY

NOOOOO! No. Take the match out and strike it on the hatchet. It's a trick!

Marcus stands up fast, knocking back his chair. The insurance moves in, waiting for permission to grab Daniel.

MARCUS

I said no talking!! You're a cheat. All of you. Cheaters.

He grabs Daniel's wrist and holds it on the table. He smiles and laughs.

He reaches for the knife, which is laying very near Max and Emily.

Daniel starts to scream and tries to pull away.

DANIEL

Oh my god!!

Emily panics. She is holding the hatchet. Just as Marcus stretches his fingers to take the knife, she lunges and strikes the hatchet at the table, cutting off Marcus's pinky finger.

EMILY

Oh shit!

Marcus lets out a blood-curdling SCREAM. The insurance run to him, forgetting the situation.

The scene is chaotic.

MARCUS

(to the Insurance)

Get them!

DANIEL

Let's go.

Max and Emily are in shock.

DANIEL

I said RUN!

Emily lets go of the hatchet which is stuck in the table between Marcus' finger and hand, and they all three run.

The run up the stairs and into the bar.

INT. DINGY BAR MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The CHASE is on. The three friends run to the front door and burst out into the night.

The bartender doesn't even look up.

BARTENDER

Come again soon.

EXT. DINGY BAR PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The three speed to the car.

The insurance exit the building just as...

The friends jump in the car.

As they pull away, we see Vigo leaning on a parked car watching them escape.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Daniel is calmed but energized. Max is excited and scared. Emily is completely freaking out.

They are all out of breath.

The car speeds ahead. They stop at a red light.

Daniel wrings his hands and looks out the window from the backseat.

DANIEL

So, that was weird.

EMILY

(screaming)

I cut off a man's finger!!

MAX

I cannot believe that just happened. Did you win or lose? I don't even know. That was fucking crazy!

(turns to Emily)

You cut off someone's fucking finger!

EMILY

Oh my god. Oh my god.

DANIEL

I say we call it a draw.

EMILY

Stop talking about betting!

MAX

That dude was totally gonna cut off your finger. Maybe all your fingers! Maybe all our fingers!!!

DANIEL

I know! I can't believe that just happened. I never lose. At least I won that bet at the first bar, so I'm still one up for the night...

Daniel stops and rifles through his pockets.

DANIEL

Dammit!

MAX

What?

DANIEL

I left the knife.

FADE TO BLACK.