

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER

by

J. Edwin Bishop

The scene opens with Ted, Marshall, Lily and Barney sitting at their usual table in the bar. They are talking, laughing, etc. quietly while the narration takes place over

them.

NARRATOR

Well, kids, when you get older you start to play a much more extensive version of the "what if" game. When you're young, you can take a lot of chances with little consequence because you can always start over, but as you approach 30, you start to realize that everything you do can have an effect on what seems like the ever diminishing amount of life you have left. You don't randomly hop a bus to Seattle or not worry about things like a 401k or an IRA. But most importantly, you don't just up and quit your job for idealistic purposes, at least not without a plan...

The characters voices rise and we enter their story.

MARSHALL

All I'm saying is that Ted has to really think about what his options are.

BARNEY

And all I'm saying is that Ted thinks too much already.

TED

But...

Lily interrupts Ted.

LILY

Ted can't just quit his job whilly-nilly and hope for the best. He has to have a plan, some kind of safety net.

MARSHALL

Quitting his job straight out is just crazy.

TED

Well, I...

Barney interrupts Ted.

BARNEY

What are you guys talking about? Ted's an accomplished architect who wouldn't have a problem finding a job anywhere he wanted.

TED

That is kind of...

Lily interrupts Ted.

LILY

Just because they want Ted to work on shopping malls in Queens instead of high rises in the city doesn't mean he's compromising any of his ideals.

MARSHALL

Yeah, I mean this could just be a temporary thing. Just a project for a year or two, where Ted can put in his time on this in order to get his pick of the litter down the line.

LILY

I mean, Marshall isn't going to get to fight all the cases he wants to fight every day of his life, but he's willing to take on the less attractive ones in order to fight the fight he wants to some days.

MARSHALL

And even though it won't be every day, he'll still have the security of knowing he's working.

TED

I think Marshall and Lily might...

Barney interrupts Ted.

BARNEY

Oh, Ted should be working freelance, out on his own, with his own rules and his own life in his hands, to do with as he sees fit.

LILY

That's just stupid, Barney. No one actually lives like that. I know they say there are people that do, but that's just a trick people without jobs pull on you.

MARSHALL

So they can take your jobs.

LILY

Exactly.

BARNEY

Hogwash. Ted would do fine out on his own, making his own decisions, living

his own life. Don't you think, Ted?

TED

Well, I don't really know if...

Barney interrupts Ted.

BARNEY

Sure, it'd be great. I can just see it now...

Stage lights go dark as narrator's voice comes over again.

NARRATOR

Now kids, your Uncle Barney always had a bit of a different take on our lives than the way things actually were. His visions would sometimes lack...a certain depth to them. In thinking about my possible future that day, and by extension his own, Barney drew us a picture-perfect world years down the line...

The action moves to the bar, where Future Ted is bartending and Future Barney is talking to him from the other side.

FUTURE BARNEY

And you wanted to design shopping malls for a living.

FUTURE TED

I don't know what I ever was thinking. These last five years have been the best of my life, Barney.

FUTURE BARNEY

And they're only going to get better, my friend.

Barney raises his glass to a girl at the end of the bar and smiles, which she returns.

FUTURE TED

Do you ever wonder what might have happened if I'd kept that job, though?

FUTURE BARNEY

What? So you could be living out in rural New York with Marshall and Lily, withering away to new episodes of America's Biggest Loser and the Michaelson's new baby down the street? I don't think so. I think our lives are just fine.

FUTURE TED

Yeah, you're right. I love my life now. I don't have a steady job, a girlfriend or a savings account, but I really enjoy being a bartender. I get to meet new people all of the time, and I get to drink excessively and indiscriminately.

FUTURE BARNEY

As well as sleep with women excessively and indiscriminately. High five.

Ted gives Barney a high five

FUTURE TED

You know, I was out at Marshall and Lily's last week and they had all of this food and some snooty wine and they were going on and on about some action-thriller they'd seen the night before called Mr. Brooks and how it was full of murder and mystery and horror. They really thought it was great and that I should check it out, but I just can't seem to find time in my life right now for the extra things, you know?

The entire time Ted is talking, Barney is continuing to make flirtatious gestures with the attractive girl down at the end of the bar.

FUTURE BARNEY

I'm sorry, Ted, all I got there was strong shot and why haven't you poured one for that girl yet?

Ted smiles and kind of nods.

FUTURE TED

All right, Barney.

Ted walks down to the girl and pours her a shot.

FUTURE TED

My friend Barney couldn't help but notice you were in need of a drink. I'm getting off in half an hour, maybe you could call a friend and the four of us could continue this somewhere else?

The girl laughs sexily, takes the shot, winks at Barney and walks out of the bar seductively. Ted walks back to Barney.

FUTURE BARNEY

What the hell, Ted? She's leaving?

FUTURE TED

Don't worry, I took care of it. She's going to pick up a friend and then we're meeting them back at my place in an hour for drinks.

FUTURE BARNEY

My man! High five!

Ted gives Barney a high five.

FUTURE BARNEY

You know, life is good. Life is pretty damn good.

Barney and Ted both duck down, indicating end of scene, the lights resume on stage and the four are still seated at the table.

BARNEY

And I'd say "life is pretty damn good" and we'd be happy.

TED

I don't know if...

Lily interrupts Ted.

LILY

Barney, you can be a real idiot, you know?

TED

Lily, let me...

Marshall interrupts Ted.

MARSHALL

Why would anyone want to have that shallow and vapid an existence? I think Ted wants more...

Ted finally interrupts someone.

TED

You guys, I think I can fend for myself here, especially against Barney. And as for your vision of our future...

BARNEY

You mean my amazing vision of our future.

TED

As for your "amazing" vision of our future, I don't know that I really see it going down that way.

BARNEY

Oh, what do you see, then, Ted? I guess you don't see us still spending time together at the top?

TED

Well, I see us spending time together, just not in quite the way that you imagined it...

The lights go out again and Future Barney and Future Ted appear again, this time with Ted looking much more haggard and Barney more obviously intoxicated. The narrator's voice comes over again.

NARRATOR

Now kids, your Uncle Barney always had a way of looking at the world that was very, I don't know how to say it, one-dimensional I guess. He never really saw things the way they were, just the way he thought they should be.

FUTURE BARNEY

And you wanted to design shopping malls for a living.

FUTURE TED

I don't know what I was ever thinking leaving that job. These last five years have felt like the previous thirty combined.

FUTURE BARNEY

And they're only going to get better, my friend.

Barney raises his glass and winks at a man standing down at the end of the bar. The man looks slightly confused.

FUTURE TED

I spend all of my time wondering about what might have been if I'd kept that job. Maybe I'd have met the woman of my dreams, had children, a whole different life that I could look back and reflect on every week.

FUTURE BARNEY

What? So you could be living out in rural New York with Marshall and Lily, withering away to new episodes of America's Biggest Loser and the Michaelson's new baby down the street? I don't think so. I think our lives are just fine.

FUTURE TED

Yeah, Barney, you're right (sarcastically). I love my life right now (also, sarcastically). I don't have a steady job, I barely scrape by bartending, I don't have a girlfriend or anyone of any meaning in my life outside of you. My savings account costs me more money than it holds to keep every month and all I seem to do is drink excessively and indiscriminately like my liver isn't going to give out any day now.

FUTURE BARNEY

As well as sleep with women excessively and indiscriminately. High five.

Ted reluctantly gives Barney a sort of high five, as Barney's drunken hand wavers over the bar.

FUTURE TED

I was over for dinner with Marshall and Lily last week. It was really nice, they had this meal that actually had more than one dish, and this really great Spanish wine I'd never tried before. I even only had one glass of it. Then we talked about This Is England, which I'd just watched off of Netflix the other night, and it was so nice to actually be able to talk about the movies I enjoy instead of just watching them on my couch alone and then falling asleep with the lights still on. I haven't actually made it to my bed in over three months, Barney. Three months!

As Ted bears his soul out to Barney, Barney continues to flirt with the now slightly angered gentleman at the end of the bar.

FUTURE BARNEY

I'm sorry, Ted, all I got there was strong shot and why haven't you poured one for that girl yet?

Ted, having spent the past five years with the steadily deteriorating Barney, smiles and nods at him.

FUTURE TED

All right, Barney.

Ted walks down to the gentleman.

FUTURE TED

I have to apologize for my friend, he's a bit drunk and thinks you're an old friend of ours from college. Let me buy you this shot, then just wave at him and he'll be happy.

The man takes the shot, waves at Barney, then turns and leaves the bar. Ted returns to Barney.

FUTURE BARNEY

What the hell, Ted? She's leaving?

FUTURE TED

Don't worry, I took care of it. Uh, she's going to get a friend, and they're going to meet us back at my place in an hour. I'm off now, so why don't we go back there, you can have a drink and lay down on the couch, all right?

FUTURE BARNEY

My man! High five!

They again attempt a high five, to little success.

FUTURE BARNEY

You know, life is good. Life is pretty damn good.

They both duck down and the lights on the stage resume. The four are still sitting at the table, Barney with a shocked look on his face.

BARNEY

I would never mistake a man for a minx. I'm just...I'm...I'm shocked at you, Ted.

MARSHALL

I don't know, Barney. I've seen some of the girls you take home.

BARNEY

That's just...that's...that's ludicrous. Never have I gone below a seven. Never.

TED

Settle down, Barney. I may have been overly harsh, but still, I don't think it's a very good idea for me to quit my job.

LILY

Now you're talking some sense, Ted. You'll see, your job will turn out just great and your life will be perfect, just like all of ours.

BARNEY

You see that girl right over there? You see her? What's she, a nine? A nine point five? I'll sleep with her right now.

TED

She's maybe a six point five, Barney. Maybe.

BARNEY

A...Wha...a six point five, Ted. We're looking at a verified eight point five, if not higher. Marshall?

MARSHALL

I have to go with Ted on this one.

BARNEY

Lily?

LILY

As wrong as I think this is, she's no higher than a seven. I'm sorry, Barney.

BARNEY

I am finding a nine and I am sleeping with her tonight. No, better yet, a ten. You heard me, a ten. I am sleeping with a ten tonight.

They continue to interact, but voices drown out in ambient noise and narrator comes over again.

NARRATOR

And in the end kids, we were all right. I stayed at my job, I eventually met your mother and here we are today. Barney was even right, at least about that night.