

## **WE CLOSE AT 9.**

**SETTING:** Diner, Late 20th Century. San Francisco.

### **CHARACTERS: (5 Total)**

RANDY - *30s, Has had a long day at work.*

MICK - *20s, Trying to lay low.*

BURGUNDY - *30-40s, Experienced, Confident Detective.*

MORADO - *30s, Calm and Level headed colleague of Burgundy.*

DAKOTA - *Late Teens, has the closing shift.*

*These roles can be gender swapped. Burgundy, Morado, and Dakota have no assigned gender.*

### **Author's Notes**

'We Close At Nine' is inspired by a mix of films that take place around the same time as this play does. Quentin Tarantino's films 'Pulp Fiction' and 'Once Upon A Time... in Hollywood' and Ryan Johnson's 'Knives Out,' A singular scene meant to create some tension and have some fun. There's no message, there's no underlying theme. There's room to think of a theme, for sure, but it was never written with one in mind. There is also no set year, date, or even decade. It's a retro 60's diner in a time well after that.

As said above, I don't really care if the roles are gender swapped. This isn't me attempting a splash of woke in the personal vault in case I get into trouble later in life, it's merely just allowing people to feel okay performing this. If it works, it works. However, I suggest having Dakota played by a teenager/young adult. Dakota isn't met to be a middle aged waiter, because that version of Dakota would change this scene.

All in all, Author's notes are just the person who wrote it trying to control their play as much as possible. Oh well, enjoy reading.

**SCENE ONE: 8:15.**

*(Lights up on Diner. RANDY is sitting on a bar stool. He has a plate next to him containing a half eaten burger, a smattering of fries, and a drink in his hand. DAKOTA is on the other side of the counter. Randy has been talking to himself for a while, Dakota has been listening. There is no one else in the diner except for the kitchen staff in the back)*

**RANDY:** I always thought that what I lacked in my organization... my charisma made up for it. But when my charisma is ruined by my lack of organization... I start to double back-

**DAKOTA:** Uh-Huh.

**RANDY:** I start to think I need to... get my life together. Who knows how many more orders I could've gotten today, if I had some sort of... *(ruminates while he looks at his plate, picks up a fry or two)*

**DAKOTA:** A plan?

**RANDY:** Yeah- that's it! If only I was able to, you know... *(Beat. Take a sip of his drink)* Just have a spreadsheet or a script... I don't know.

**DAKOTA:** Your main problem is that you don't know what to plan. *(saying this while putting away some napkins, maybe a few plates, any kind of diner prop)* If I were you, I'd go back to the start. Rebuild your frame. *(Gestures to the tray)* you finished?

**RANDY:** No, but it's probably cold. *(Puts down the drink, picks up the burger, takes a bite. It is indeed still cold)* It's cold.

**DAKOTA:** Okay, I'll take it-

**RANDY:** Woah, hang on. I like it cold.

**DAKOTA:** You like- *(Gives Randy a look)* You're so weird.

**RANDY:** Not any weirder than you.

**DAKOTA:** *(Scoffs)* That's... not true.

**RANDY:** I doubt you like your diner job. I hate my job too. You'd sit down and complain like this.

**DAKOTA:** I might complain about it, but not in this setting. I don't know you enough to vent to you.

**RANDY:** That's fair... small circle n' all. But you probably don't like your pay either.

**DAKOTA:** Well I am only seventeen. Any money is good money.

**RANDY:** *(Chuckles)* Should be.

*(Randy picks up his drink and takes a sip, he can pick up the burger as well- really whenever he likes. MICK enters the diner. He seems distressed and a little frantic)*

**DAKOTA:** Welcome to the Dandy Diner. I'm Dakota, I can get you started over-

**MICK:** *(Breathing heavily)* Hi- heyo- hey... how's it going.

**DAKOTA:** Uh... good.

*(There's a pause. Randy pays no attention to Mick, he is merely focused on the last few bites of his burger)*

**DAKOTA:** Take a seat- I can get your order. Just so you know, we close at nine.

**MICK:** Okay, uh... Is it okay if I... use the bathroom?

**DAKOTA:** Are you here to use the bathroom and go?

**MICK:** Well, I... *(He looks over his shoulder at the door)* I haven't gotten that far-

**DAKOTA:** Just stay for a bit, okay?

**MICK:** Thanks.

*(There's an awkward pause. Mick just stands there)*

**DAKOTA:** Dude- go to the bathroom-

**MICK:** Okay- thank you.

*(Mick exits off upstage. Dakota looks skeptical, turns back to Randy. He has finished his burger. He has began to conquer the rest of his fries)*

**RANDY:** Weird guy- huh?

**DAKOTA:** Eh, we always get crackheads in here anyway. He's sweaty, but he's not on drugs.

**RANDY:** How can you tell?

**DAKOTA:** Randy- I've worked here for about 6 months now. I know he's not gonna smoke crack in the restroom because he didn't ask for a spoon, and he doesn't have a backpack.

**RANDY:** Why does he need a backpack to do drugs?

**DAKOTA:** Well he doesn't... need a backpack, but if he's fitting the look-

**RANDY:** Ohhh. *(Eats a fry)* I get it.

*(Mick enters stage again, he seems calmer but he's still a little paranoid he goes up the bar stools and sits on Randy's left, two seats from him)*

**DAKOTA:** How can I help you?

**MICK:** I'll just get a... *(He scans the menu overhead, then snaps his finger and points to a...)* Chocolate milk, please.

**DAKOTA:** *(Scoffs)* You wanna kids pack, too?

**MICK:** No, actually I'll just get some fish and chips. *(Beat. Dakota feels like he's joking)* It looks good in the photo.

*(Dakota nods and goes into the back, offstage. He returns and begins to look for a chocolate milk in the fridge)*

**RANDY:** Good choice.

**MICK:** Huh- what now?

**RANDY:** Chocolate milk... good choice.

**MICK:** Oh, thanks. *(Beat)* I mean- I agree. *(Longer beat. Randy takes a bite of his fries)* Why is it a good choice?

**RANDY:** It's a good recovery drink. Running around, working up a sweat. It's good to have chocolate milk after all that.

**MICK:** Oh yeah, of course. *(Dakota puts his chocolate milk on the counter. It's in a bottle. Dakota exits out the back again)*

**RANDY:** Which you've clearly been doing-

**MICK:** *(A raise in tone, a hint of stress)* Yeah! Totally- I am? I have? What... *(Long pause)* funny guy you are.

**RANDY:** *(Looks at Mick like he's a little crazy)* Yeah... funny guy I am.

*(Another long pause, Randy takes a sip of his drink. He looks at it before finishing his sip, the drink is empty. He turns to his fries and finishes them off. Mick takes a giant gulp of his chocolate milk, he chugs it, and almost finishes, before Randy slowly turns to him. He puts the bottle down)*

**RANDY:** Okay- listen, man. I don't care if you're some chocolate fiend, or you're on a weight loss journey, it's not going well, or you just did a run- clearly not in those jeans- or whatever... I'm not gonna judge you for your reason for having chocolate milk, alright? Perfectly normal recovery drink.

**MICK:** Uh... okay, thanks man.

**RANDY:** No problem. *(He turns back to his plate and his empty cup, he bangs the drink a couple times on the counter signaling he wants another.)*

**MICK:** I'm Mick.

**RANDY:** *(Turns to him, extends his hand)* Randy.

**MICK:** Nice to meet you. *(Beat)* How was your day?

**RANDY:** Oh, well let me tell you-

*(Dakota comes through the back doors with a fish and chips in his hand, he interrupts Randy)*

**DAKOTA:** Oh man- let him tell you! *(He places Mick's fish and chips on the counter. He stops)* Don't actually let him tell you. He's been here for almost an hour. If he gets going on his day, you'll be here 'til midnight.

**RANDY:** Words hurt Dakota. Okay? Hope you know that.

**DAKOTA:** Oh, give me a break-

**RANDY:** Thing is- I haven't asked about *your* day. I haven't ripped apart how *your* day wasn't as bad as *my* day-

**DAKOTA:** You work in an office, I stand here for 8 hours-

**RANDY:** But you didn't have to tell Mick here that he doesn't wanna hear about *my* day-

**DAKOTA:** *(Gestures to Mick)* I doubt he does!

**MICK:** Do you guys know each other, or...

**DAKOTA:** Know by heart. Voluntarily-

**RANDY:** Customer service is your job, Dakota. Don't play rough with me.

**MICK:** Hey, Dakota? Could I get another drink?

**DAKOTA:** *(Looks down at Mick's chocolate milk, which is now empty, he is surprised)* Oh, wow. Yeah for sure! *(Looks at Randy's drink)* Another coke for you too?

**RANDY:** Yeah, thank you.

**DAKOTA:** Alright, coming right up!

*(He exits out the back again to put the empty bottles in the trash. Before he comes back out, Mick looks out the window. He sees two figures step out of a car parked in front of the diner. His eyes widen, and he becomes stressed again)*

**RANDY:** Would you believe that Dakota kid is seventeen-

**MICK:** No way- Really?! *(He gets out of his chair)* That is so crazy...

**RANDY:** What's wrong?

**MICK:** Oh nothing... I'm gonna go to the bathroom. *(He exits towards the bathroom)*

*(Dakota re-enters with two drinks)*

**DAKOTA:** Where'd Mick go?

**RANDY:** Bathroom. But his spoon is still here.

*(Beat. BURGUNDY and MORADO enter through the diner doors. They are dressed in Burgundy... and Morado suits. Morado is big, very big. The two of them take in their surroundings of the diner. Burgundy looks to Dakota, looks at Randy, and then points to Dakota)*

**BURGUNDY:** Hey! *(Doesn't know Dakota's name, so he squints at his name tag)* ...Dakota. This the Dandy Diner?

**DAKOTA:** *(Confused, a little startled)* Y-yeah, as it says on the signs. Can I...

*(Burgundy begins to walk around the diner, it seems he carries some nostalgia with him, a bit of reminisce)*

**BURGUNDY:** Now... It might've moved from its first location, or maybe a man like me is too old to remember, but is this the *original* Dandy Diner? The one that opened in 1967?

**DAKOTA:** Uhm... Yeah, it sure is.

**BURGUNDY:** Wow. Well isn't that something. I used to go here all the time! Grew up in the Bay area, *this* was the spot back in the day. You know that, Mo?

**MORADO:** *(bluntly)* I've been here 5 months. So... no.

**BURGUNDY:** Well, there you go.

*(Burgundy takes a seat next to Randy. Not the one over, the one right next to him. Randy has been silent this whole time, his drink remains untouched)*

**BURGUNDY:** I'm Detective Loren Burgundy. My colleague over there is Detective Eden Morado. Not to worry, I know you guys are innocent.

*(He takes out a notepad and a pen. Morado stays by the door, but he starts to check out the place, eventually they can walk around and do as they please, but Morado never sits at the barstools. Morado goes over to Randy's side)*

**MORADO:** Sir- come with me, for questioning-

**RANDY:** Questioning?

**MORADO:** Like Burgundy said, we know you're innocent. We need information on a-

**RANDY:** Well if i'm innocent, then surely it doesn't hurt for me to stay where I am.

**MORADO:** I'd prefer if you'd follow me to one of those booths, for a private discussion.

**RANDY:** What's this about? *(Beginning to freak out. Morado grabs his arm)* Hey! I'm staying put!

**MORADO:** Like hell you are!

**BURGUNDY:** Relax, Morado. We can slow this down. Take it one at a time *(Beat. Morado let's go of Randy)* Actually - Dakota. What time did you start today?

**DAKOTA:** Clocked in at three.

**BURGUNDY:** What time are you off at?

**DAKOTA:** nine-thirty.

**BURGUNDY:** *Closing shift, huh? (Smiles, it's a little awkward, but Dakota chuckles in good fashion. Burgundy turns to Randy)* I didn't catch your name, what is it?

**RANDY:** Randy Collins.

**BURGUNDY:** Randy... with an -ie or -y?

**RANDY:** With a -y.

**BURGUNDY:** Okay... is that your full name? Or is it Randall?

**RANDY:** No, it's just Randy.

**BURGUNDY:** Just Randy, huh? *(He takes another pause and smiles again)*  
Say Randy - just gimme your best guess: what time did you get here?

**RANDY:** Oh jeez - ehm. *(Beat)* Must've been just before eight at least.

**BURGUNDY:** So... almost an hour here then?

**RANDY:** Yeah, give or take.

**BURGUNDY:** What's taking you so long to leave, Randy? *(Burgundy leans back in the stool, there's an unease)*

**RANDY:** Well - I, Uh... I'm a slow eater, food took a while to get here..

**DAKOTA:** He's also been talking about his job for half an hour

**BURGUNDY:** Your job? Where you work, Randy?

**RANDY:** I work at a... moving company. Except, I'm not the mover, I'm the guy trying to sell the move.

**BURGUNDY:** Nice. Which company is that?

**RANDY:** Oh, uh... BayMovers.

**BURGUNDY:** No kidding! *(Chuckles)* You guys helped Mo move! Hey Mo!

**MORADO:** *(Looks up from whatever the hell he's been doing)* Huh?

**BURGUNDY:** This guy works for BayMovers!

**MORADO:** Oh. *(Little zoned out, then he realizes-)* Oh! BayMovers- Holy shit! You guys got me into 29th & Cabrillo!

**RANDY:** Oh yeah! I remember someone telling me about that place. Nice little area, eh?

**MORADO:** Sure is. I got this great view of the park, and there's the-

**BURGUNDY:** So anyway, Randy. How many people have been in here since you came along?

**RANDY:** Well, there were these two old guys, talking about the Giants. And this lady came in and ordered a coffee, she was quite nice actually.

**BURGUNDY:** *(Burgundy writes down all this in his notes, then- he looks at the Fish and Chips on the counter) Whose are these?*

**RANDY:** Oh - some guy named Mick.

**BURGUNDY:** I always loved these. My favorite Dandy Diner Delight. Is this Mick guy still here?

**RANDY:** He just went to the bathroom-

**BURGUNDY:** You guys okay if I have some? I gotta say, I am *starving*. This is what Dandy is *all* about. And - if not the Cod, what's the harm in a few fries?

**DAKOTA:** *(Looks at Randy, then to Burgundy) Dig in.*

*(Burgundy slides the plate over to him, then he picks up one of the pieces of fish and takes a bite. He sits there for a minute, chewing. He smiles)*

**BURGUNDY:** That's some good cod. *(He wipes his hands)* Hey, Mo - You hungry?

**MORADO:** A little.

**BURGUNDY:** Let's split this. Take the plate, I'll keep the fish

*(Burgundy puts his piece of fish into one hand, and takes the other hands and extends the plate)*

**MORADO:** Deal. *(He walks over, takes the plate, and sits next to Burgundy, one seat off of Mick's old seat)*

*(Burgundy takes random bites of the fish on the napkin whenever he feels like it. But not right away. He picks up his notepad and looks at Randy and Dakota)*

**BURGUNDY:** Now this Mick, guy. You said he's in the bathroom?

**RANDY:** Yeah, he went in there before you guys came in.

**BURGUNDY:** How long has he been here?

**DAKOTA:** Got here at 8:20. Give or take.

**BURGUNDY:** 8:20? What's he doing in the bathroom?

**RANDY:** We don't know.

**DAKOTA:** We ruled out Crack, though.

**BURGUNDY:** Out of all things, *that* gets ruled out first?

**RANDY:** Well he didn't have a backpack

**DAKOTA:** Or a lighter. Or... anything.

**BURGUNDY:** He had pockets, surely. This is a bit of a ridiculous discussion. He could completely be doing drugs in that bathroom, or he could be taking a dump. You don't need much to do drugs. No offense, but you (*Points to Dakota*) look about 16 and Randy here works for a moving company. For all we know he's got the whole shabang hiding in plain sight. Rolling papers, bags, spoons, lighters, cigars, tablets, or any assortment of fruits could be in either one of his back pockets. However... I think none of that's true. I think it's more to do with the *reason* I'm here.

*(Burgundy looks over at the chocolate milk Dakota brought in for Mick. At this point, he doesn't bother to ask, as he is narrowing down on what he wants. He takes the bottle and starts to drink it)*

You know, Dakota. This is almost like some weird kind of coincidence. The fish and chips, the diner, and now this drink. A friend of mine used to come here as well. More than me, believe it or not. He played for the football team at Lowell High. I wanna say he was a... wide receiver. I don't know football all too well - but he was one of the guys who ran a lot. He'd come here after games, celebrate with the team, but every time I saw him here, he'd order chocolate milk. This *same* drink. Now I may not understand football, but I understand that when a kid ran like he ran in those games, he *needed* a drink like this. A little sugary, unhealthy and what not... but it sure does help you recover.

*(He finishes the rest of the chocolate milk, walks back over to the counter and places it back on, he leans against the counter, facing*

*the audience)*

Few years after high school, he got into some trouble. He was somewhere on Green street, spotted at the scene of an armed robbery. He hadn't played a sport since grade 12, but he ran like a D1 track athlete. He ran 4 miles in under thirty minutes. Now that boy was *tired*. You wanna know where he ended up? *(takes a step out into the middle of the diner, and points at the floor)* Dandy's diner. And he ordered *that* drink. *(points to the chocolate milk)* And he got away. Gave him the legs to go wherever he needed to go. *(Beat)* Jack Lachlan's the only man I've never caught in my career. You'd be insane to think I'd let it happen like this again.

*(Burgundy signals to Morado to stand by the door, they look over to Dakota, motioning for the keys to the lobby. Dakota shuffles around to find them. Dakota passes them to Burgundy. Burgundy passes them to Morado)*

**BURGUNDY:** Michael Bereon... You know him as Mick. He escaped from prison about a week ago. Originally in for 1st degree murder. He was early 20s, black hair. About 5'8''. That all checks out? *(looks at Dakota and Randy, who both nod)* Good. He was just involved in a hit and run near the cleaning place on Anza. Knew it was him right away. He's a good runner too. But Jack knew not to order fish and chips before being on his way.

*(Burgundy takes a seat on the stool closest to the bathrooms, right next to Randy on the right side of him. Dakota stands on the far end, he is stressed. Morado pulls out a revolver from within his jacket. He looks to Burgundy as if to do the same, Burgundy shakes his head. Randy stays put, and takes a sip of his drink.)*

**MORADO:** Dakota, can you get a glass of water?

**DAKOTA:** Why do you need water now?

**MORADO:** It's not for me. *(Beat)* Pour it!

*(Dakota rushes over to the middle of the counter, grabs a glass, and dispenses water from a pitcher/bottle)*

**DAKOTA:** Okay... here- here. *(he places it next to Randy)*

**MORADO:** Randy. Take this *(he throws him a small pill, can be in a bag so it's easier to throw)*

**RANDY:** What's this for?

**MORADO:** Plan B, put it in the water.

*(Randy does as he says, Burgundy looks back and sighs)*

**BURGUNDY:** Oh are you serious, Mo?

**MORADO:** We need to be prepared for the worst. If he kills us, make sure he drinks it.

**BURGUNDY:** Weird... so weird.

**RANDY:** Hang on- did you mean Plan B as in like...

**BURGUNDY:** Jesus christ.

*(Beat. A moment of silence)*

**RANDY:** Well... How do you know he's still in there?

**DAKOTA:** There's no way out. Besides, we would've known if he would've left through the emergency door. It has a very loud alarm.

**BURGUNDY:** *(Looks at Dakota and smiles)* Best thing about Dandy's: They learn from their mistakes.

*(Long Beat. Everyone in the diner is looking in suspense at the door. Morado has had enough)*

**MORADO:** Want me to go get him?

**BURGUNDY:** No, no... He'll come out himself.

*(Another beat)*

**BURGUNDY:** Hey Mick! *(Pause)* Mick, man - I know you're in there. It's detective Loren Burgundy of the SFPD. Let's not make this too difficult, buddy. You're getting locked up again no matter what. There's no reward for sticking it out the longest.

*(Another pause. Then the bathroom door creaks open, but no one exits. Instead, Mick yells from offstage)*

**MICK (O.S):** Get lost ya damn pigs!

**BURGUNDY:** *(Chuckles)* Okay then.

*(Burgundy gets up and slowly walks over to the door, he reaches into his jacket and pulls out a pistol. He now has one hand on the handle of the door, and his other hand holding his gun)*

**BURGUNDY:** Allllll-right, Mick. *(cocks his pistol)* I don't really wanna do this. I have a nice suit on.

**MICK (O.S):** Kick rocks!

**BURGUNDY:** This color looks really good on me-

**MICK (O.S):** No!

**BURGUNDY:** Ouch. Hurtful words, Mick!

*(A pause, then-)*

Okay.

*(Burgundy opens the door. Three gunshots. They aren't aimed at Mick, but they do alarm him. After the three shots, Burgundy closes the door again)*

**MORADO:** What happened-

**BURGUNDY:** Shh.

*(Mick jiggles the doorknob, then bangs on the door from the other side)*

**BURGUNDY:** Ah, there we go! Welcome back, Mick-

*(As Burgundy opens the door, the stage lights turn off. We hear a pipe hit something, someone hit the floor, gunshots fired, then more. Then a stillness. Lights back on, Mick is standing over Burgundy's body. Morado is next to the doors, he lies dead)*

**DAKOTA:** Holy shit!

*(Dakota runs off through the backdoors. Mick does not pursue him. He's standing over Burgundy, toilet pipe in hand, and now an unloaded gun)*

*in the other hand. Randy is still sitting at the counter)*

**MICK:** Why the hell are you still here?

**RANDY:** Well... I was here to eat, but now there's no food. And no staff.

*(Beat. Mick reaches into Burgundy's jacket pocket. He pulls out an SFPD ID. He begins to chuckle, then laughs in relief. He skips over to Morado's body, pulls out another SFPD ID, and his relief overflows)*

**MICK:** Yes!!! Let's go! That's what I'm talking about! Ha!

*(Randy is a little taken aback, but still pretty nonchalant. Mick tosses him Burgundy's ID thing)*

**RANDY:** What's up with it?

*(Mick stands. There's a beat, he does not respond. The ID's are still in his hand)*

**RANDY:** Mick, what's-

**MICK:** I can't believe that. At all. *(Another beat)* Let me get you a drink.

*(Mick walks behind the counter, he grabs a glass)*

**MICK:** What do you want? They've got... Root beer, Pepsi... Coke is what you were having, right?

**RANDY:** Yeah. Yeah... *(He's still wondering about the ID's. Mick puts the glass of coke next to Randy and walks back around to the stool next to Randy)*

**MICK:** What a day, huh? *(He puts the ID's on the counter, looks at the mixed drink, which to him just looks like regular water)* this yours?

**RANDY:** Uhm... *(beat. He stares at it, unsure)* No. No, it's not.

**MICK:** *(He picks it up, and raises it)* Cheers.

**RANDY:** *(Raises his glass)* To what?

**MICK:** *(Searching)* Giant's won today.

**RANDY:** Can't beat that.

*(They both clink their glasses and drink. Randy puts his drink down, Mick almost finishes his. Randy looks at the SFPD ID of Burgundys, and he picks it up)*

**RANDY:** So what's the deal with this?

**MICK:** It's a fake.

**RANDY:** *(Alarmed)* What?

**MICK:** It's a fake. Burgundy and Morado we're trying to finish a job. They're not real cops. Look at the material... and the badge says SFFPD. *(Beat, he chuckles)* Dumbasses couldn't even get an acronym right.

**RANDY:** You're kidding. *(He's shocked, feels like he's done something wrong)* Why were they after you?

**MICK:** Killed their friend, that Jack guy. He hurt a lot of people. But he chose wrong with me *(he smiles)*

**RANDY:** But... you still killed someone.

**MICK:** Blurs the lines when it's Jake Lachlan. Besides, I haven't gotten caught yet.

*(Police Sirens sound from Offstage. A police officer voice comes on an intercom)*

**OFFICER (O.S):** This is the SFPD! Come out with your hands above your head!

**MICK:** And I don't intend to. Goodbye Randy.

*(He begins to walk offstage opposite the entrance to the diner, as he doesn't know the drink is spiked. Randy stands up)*

**RANDY:** Mick- wait.

**MICK:** Huh?

**RANDY:** I... *(He can't bring himself to do it)* Stay safe.

**MICK:** Thanks, Randy.

*(Mick exits offstage, after a few beats, Randy sits down. We hear a thud from offstage. Police sirens are still going. Randy looks up, into the audience)*

**THE END.**