

THE F&L AT 1330
By Ken Green

CHARACTERS

CARLA – African American/Latinx/Mexican, female, mid 30s. Part owner of Fernando and Lalo’s bar, which has been in her family for decades. Strong-willed, decisive, take-no-shit woman. She owns the bar with her brother, BERNARDO.

BERNARDO – Latino/Mexican, male, early 40s. Part owner of Fernando and Lalo’s bar along with his sister CARLA. He enjoys owning a bar but not the work that goes along with it. He is the “personality” of the bar.

ELENA – Latinx/Mexican/African American, female, early 20s. College student. She is interested in every aspect of the family business, despite a career path that is headed toward corporate America. She is the daughter of CARLA.

JIMBO – Latino/Mexican, male, early 40s. Childhood friend of CARLA and BERNARDO.

OTHER CHARACTERS (dual roles)

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2/COP/HIPSTER 1/REAL ESTATE AGENT 2 – male, any race

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1/YOUNG GIRL/HIPSTER 2/REAL ESTATE AGENT 1 – African American, female

ACT I
Scene 1

SETTING: Fernando and Lalo's, a bar on the North Side of Chicago at 1330 N. Dayton St. It is an old bar with nothing fancy about it. Considered by some to be a dive, but not to the regulars and the owners who simply call it THEIR bar. The walls and the bar itself are comprised of old, stained wood. There are beer signs on the walls, and a few of the seats of bar stools are ripped. There is a jukebox in one corner. It sometimes works. There is a jar in the shape of a bear on the bar for tips. The jar is empty.

SCENE: 2010. It is noon on a Friday in June. CARLA, the bartender, and JIMBO, a customer, sit at one end of the bar. JIMBO is reading the newspaper. CARLA is moving back and forth from a storage room to the bar section, carrying cases of beer to stock in the coolers, checking notes in a ledger book, then back to stocking beer. While this is going on, the sounds of construction – drilling, riveting, digging, the engines of heavy machinery – can be heard as new high-rise buildings are being erected all around them. The noise is staccato. Stopping and starting and sometimes affecting their conversation. They occasionally have to shout above the din.

CARLA

(to JIMBO) 'Nother beer? (no response) Jimbo... (nothing) Yo, Jimbo!

JIMBO

(startled) What? Why the fuck you yelling?

CARLA

You want another beer or no?

JIMBO

A what?

CARLA

Beer, Jimbo! You want another beer?

JIMBO

What you think, Carla? You see my bottle is empty.

CARLA

And you see I'm working, right? I ain't got time to look at your damn bottle every five minutes.

JIMBO

Your job IS looking at my damn bottle every five minutes. This a bar, ain't it?

CARLA

You want the damn beer or not, Jimbo?

JIMBO

Yeah, goddamnit. (CARLA hands JIMBO a beer, snatches money off the bar, then goes back to refilling beer cooler.) Hey, I'm one of your best customers, don't forget that.

CARLA

Only from noon to five on Fridays. And even then...

JIMBO

How you like it if I stop coming in here?

CARLA

Gimmie a chance to find out, would you?

The construction noises stop.

(to no one) Thank God. (to JIMBO) How come you always here on Fridays anyway? Used car business doing that good without you?

JIMBO

Fucking sucks. People ain't buying cars like they used to.

CARLA

Not even used, huh?

JIMBO

Sales are shit. Got all these fucking cars on the lot taking up space. (pause, then goes into salesperson mode) Hey, how's your car running? 'Cause I got this really nice Chevy...

CARLA

(exasperated) How many times you gonna come here and try to sell me a car? I got rid of my car, I take the el now. Two stops. Ain't gotta buy gas. Sometimes in the summer I even walk to work. I LIKE walking. Don't need a car.

JIMBO

Don't need or can't afford? I got some easy rates, no money down...

CARLA

The bar is doing shit business right now, but it ain't that damn bad.

JIMBO

Carla, it's fucking four-thirty on a sunny ass Friday in June. All over the city, people are hitting the bars early to start the weekend. But not in here in the F and L.

CARLA

We do good on Fridays. People just come in later.

JIMBO

MUCH later, apparently. Anyway, all that walking? Not good for you. Honestly, honey, you ain't getting younger.

CARLA

Keep talking and you ain't gonna get any older.

JIMBO

Just stating facts. We ALL getting older. (pause) Tell you what, you can test drive it for a whole week. That's something I only do for real good friends.

CARLA

We ain't real good friends. (stops working on cooler, then checks some figures in the book on the bar)

JIMBO

Bullshit, woman. We known each other since eighth grade. Me, you, your brother Bernardo. School, hanging out, getting high, even fighting... (thinking) I had dinner at your folks' house so many times I couldn't keep count.

CARLA

Thirty-seven.

JIMBO

(shocked) For real?

CARLA

Probably. You were always over our place. Always.

JIMBO

Eh, you know what was up.

CARLA

Yeah, yeah, I know. (pause) You talk to your folks anymore?

JIMBO

Yeah, whenever they want some shit. Funny how they wanna talk to their (finger quotes) "dyke" daughter now that she's making some decent bucks. Besides, whenever they kicked me out, I know I could go over to the Martinez family and my real good friend, Carla.

CARLA

We ain't real good friends.

JIMBO

(suddenly) I took you out on a date!

CARLA

(stops suddenly) What? When? (scoff) We ain't never been out on no date.

JIMBO

Hell yeah, we did.

CARLA

You're fucking crazy.

JIMBO

Bullshit. We saw that movie about the dude with the scissors. The scissor man.

CARLA

Scissor man? (thinking) "Edward Scissorhands"?

JIMBO

Naw, the other one.

CARLA

What other one? How many movies you think there are about men with scissors"

JIMBO

C'mon. The guy with the scissors for hands.

CARLA

THAT'S "Edward Scissorhands," fool. (pause to think) And that wasn't a date. Bernardo went with us. It was, like, a group thing.

JIMBO

I told him I was gonna ask you out and he said I couldn't take you to the movies unless he went too. To protect you or some shit. I had to pay his way into the damn movie, too.

CARLA

(thinking) That was a date? (thinking) Huh. I didn't know that. Why didn't you say something?

JIMBO

Well, I didn't know how you'd take it, so I figured I'd... ease into it. But eventually I said, fuck it, put on my big boy pants and asked.

CARLA

(thinking) Huh. So you were my first date with a woman.

JIMBO

Wait, first? Who else you...

CARLA

Nobody you know. So you never thought about asking me out again?

JIMBO

Shit, couldn't afford to keep paying for you, me AND Bernardo.

CARLA

You were stupid for listening to Bernardo. Ain't nobody have to protect me. You got played, Jimbo.

JIMBO

Whatever. After that, you started dating Marco... then Ralphio... apparently some OTHER woman... THEN Augusto.

CARLA

You forget Javier.

JIMBO

...and then Roberto... (long awkward pause) ...then, you know, other things happened...

CARLA

Yup, other things happened.

JIMBO

Then you had a baby girl and left ol' Jimbo just standing there.

CARLA

Well, it wouldn't have worked out with us anyway.

JIMBO

Why not?

CARLA

You too bossy. (laughs)

JIMBO

I'M too bossy? You dated Ralphio, the motherfucking Marine who told you to be home for his phone call every night at ten and you got the NERVE to call ME bossy?

CARLA

I'm just fucking with you, Jimbo. You were a very good-looking, polite kid back then.

JIMBO

Damn straight I was. (pause, then realization) Wait... back then? What about...

CARLA

Besides, other girls were chasing after you. You didn't need me.

JIMBO

(proudly) I guess you right. I WAS a damn catch, wasn't I?

CARLA

Oh, shit, what did I start?...

JIMBO

I guess I was doing alright in the 'hood. 'Til everybody started moving away 'cause the rents was going up.

CARLA

Yup. Mexidus.

JIMBO

Mexidus?

CARLA

Mexidus. Mexican exodus. New folks moved in, Mexicans couldn't pay the rent, Mexicans moved out. Mexican exodus. Came up with that myself.

JIMBO

Congrats. Anyway, them Polish girls that moved in wasn't ready to be with somebody like me. And being Mexican to boot...

CARLA

Well, they definitely wasn't any nicer to a Black Mexican. They kept asking me, (vague, stereotypical European accent) "You are... what? The Mexican? The black?" Like they couldn't comprehend somebody being black AND Mexican. But you did alright, from what I saw. There were one or two of them girls...

JIMBO

Yeah, there was one or two. I guess even they couldn't resist... the Jimbo Look... (gives what she thinks is a seductive look)

CARLA

(sarcastic) Wow, how did I dodge that bullet?

JIMBO

Well, I hadn't perfected it yet... (the sounds of construction start again, not as loud as before, but...) Shit, they ever take a fucking break?

CARLA

That's all day long.

JIMBO

How the fuck can you stand that shit?

CARLA

(shouting over noise) What?

JIMBO

(raising voice) I said, "How the fuck can you stand that noise all day long?"

CARLA

(shouting) All day what?

JIMBO

(shouting) LONG!

CARLA

(shouting) What's long?

JIMBO

I said (most of the noise suddenly stops) ALL DAY LONG! (pause) Shit, how do you deal with that?

CARLA

I can't do shit about it, so...

JIMBO

Yeah, but... ain't there, like, a "too much noise" ordinance or something like that?

CARLA

Do I look like a fucking lawyer?

JIMBO

Hate to tell you, Carla, but you barely a bartender.

CARLA

You're a funny bitch.

JIMBO

(looks out the window) How many of those things they putting up?

CARLA

Two over on Dayton and another one on Freemont.

JIMBO

Lotta fucking condos.

CARLA

One twenty-four stories, one ten stories, one twelve stories.

JIMBO

And you know all that. Thought you didn't care?

CARLA

Hardwood this, marble that...

JIMBO

Bet the rent is high as fuck...

CARLA

I ain't gonna be living there, if that's what you mean.

JIMBO

How much you think?

CARLA

(a little exasperated) Jimbo, I don't know.

JIMBO

Guess.

CARLA

I don't...

JIMBO

A one-bedroom. Just guess...

CARLA

No fucking idea.

JIMBO

About two grand, I bet.

CARLA
I ain't betting.

JIMBO
I'mma look it up (takes out smartphone) What's the name of the one over there?

CARLA
How the hell should I know? They take the name of two streets, smash 'em together and you got the name of the fucking building.

JIMBO
Never mind, I'll find it myself. (searches on phone while to CARLA) You should be taking a bigger interest in what's going on in your neighborhood.

CARLA
Whatever, Mr. Rogers. This ain't my neighborhood no more. I don't recognize half the shit around here now. I used to be able to walk around this place blindfolded.

JIMBO
Or blind drunk. (pause) Shit, sorry Carla. I didn't mean nothing by that. I was just...

CARLA
(not bothered) Eh, you ain't lie. It's cool, Jimbo, it was what it was. Can't stop you from telling the truth.

JIMBO
Yeah, well, still... sorry. (goes back to reading phone) Ah ha, found it. (begins reading website) "FreDa is a next evolution of city living..."

CARLA
Freda? Who the fuck is Freda?

JIMBO
I dunno... the name of the building, I guess. Capital F-r-e, capital D-a.

CARLA
(getting pissed again) Did they name that building after Freda Kahlo? Them gentrifying mother...

JIMBO
(studies phone). Hold on. (reads more) Ah. It's between Fremont Street and Dayton Street. Fre. Da.

CARLA

Yeah, yeah, I get it. A building named Freda.

JIMBO

(begins reading the ad copy) "FreDa is the next evolution in city living, an urban oasis that has become one of Lincoln Park's prime addresses..."

CARLA

(confused) Lincoln Park? Since when THIS neighborhood part of Lincoln Park?

JIMBO

Since they ran outta room in the real Lincoln Park, I guess.

CARLA

This shit's been Cabrini-Green forever, even after they tore the projects down. But now it's fucking Lincoln Park...

JIMBO

Well, Cabrini-Green ain't got no, whaddya call, pizzaz, no "ooh la la." Lincoln Park got a rep for being swanky, so... (continues reading) "With commanding views of the North Chicago skyline, FreDa is mere steps away from Lincoln Park's best shopping and dining options... blah blah blah... a rooftop pool... blasé blasé blasé... hardwood floors... marble countertops..."

CARLA

Ha! What the fuck I tell you?

JIMBO

"fitness center... WiFi..."

CARLA

So how much?

JIMBO

Hold on... (pause) Whoa...

CARLA

How much?

JIMBO

One bedroom... three and a half g's.

CARLA

The fuck outta here. That's to RENT? Every month?

JIMBO

I kid you not. Look, right there. (shows CARLA the phone)

CARLA

I don't need to see that shit.

JIMBO

A fucking one-bedroom apartment around here for almost four g's? (pause) My old man paid about eight hundred a month for our three bedroom over on Noble. He'd lose his shit if he saw a four-grand apartment in this neighborhood.

CARLA

Lotta money.

JIMBO

Lotta fucking money.

CARLA

Explains a lot.

JIMBO

Whaddya mean?

CARLA

This place.

JIMBO

What about this place?

CARLA

Why so many folks interested it.

JIMBO

(skeptical) Somebody wants to buy THIS place? The F and L? This dump?

CARLA

(offended) Hey, you can get the fuck out, you know.

JIMBO

I'm sorry, Carla, but... (takes a look around the room) c'mon.

CARLA

So, we ain't had a lot of money to put into the place lately. Lotta folks still after this piece-of-shit bar.

JIMBO

For what, a tax write-off? (drains last of beer and waves bottle) One more...

CARLA

After that crack, you gonna wait. And we got people coming in here every week looking to buy this place. Don't know if they it for the bar or the land it's sitting on. Bernardo's been talking to 'em mostly. But, yeah, they want this place fierce.

JIMBO

Bernardo? Your brother thinking about selling the place?

CARLA

(stops what she's doing to straighten JIMBO out) First of all, he can't sell shit unless I say so. My name's on the lease... too. OK? This bar been in our family for years. Decades even. Our old man Fernando and Uncle Lalo left the bar to me... and, you know, Bernardo, too. So, if anybody's gonna sell it... (pause)

JIMBO

Alright, damn, chill out.

CARLA

(calming down) We ain't got no reason to sell it anyway. They can knock on that door all they want, they're just gonna have to build them fancy condos around us. (pause) Besides, folks that's gonna be living in them fancy new condos gonna need drink somewhere, so why not here?

JIMBO

(scoffs/laugh) You think they coming here? To the F and L? I mean, yeah, kids like them dive bars, but even by dive bar standards, this place is...

CARLA

Watch it, Jaime. (pause) Jimbo. Whatever you call yourself.

JIMBO

You know it's Jimbo. (pause) Look, I'm just saying you gotta step up your game. There's a new bar over on Clybourn. Bunch of big screen TVs that get ALL the games. DJ on the weekends. Big ass food menu.

CARLA

Hey, we got food. We got chips, pretzels, popcorn... wait, the machine is broken.

JIMBO

I'm talking about REAL food. Burgers and shit.

CARLA

Ah, who wanna go to some place like that? (In an "ooh la la" voice) "Oh, look we got appetizers... fucking jalapeño poppers and shit... Here you go, here's a fucking hamburger with a goddamn fried egg on top... And a million fucking beers that all cost an arm and a leg."

JIMBO

(sarcasm) Yeah, who needs that when you got a wide variety of... (counts) three kinds of beer. Speaking of which (shakes her beer bottle)...

CARLA

Well... (searching for reasons) this is a REAL bar. People come to drink, talk shit and forget their problems. Maybe watch a game, listen to the jukebox. This ain't no tapas bar or a hook-up joint...

JIMBO

I got lucky here a couple of times...

CARLA

...or where you come to try to see some soccer game being played in New Zealand at three in the morning Chicago time...

JIMBO

I'm just saying, you got a lot of competition now. You guys should think about selling now while the selling's good. Them new people moving in are looking for somewhere a little more... upscale to hang out.

CARLA

Don't need 'em then.

JIMBO

Even some of your regulars are checking those bars out. (pause) Besides, you saw what happened to the diner, right?

CARLA

Yeah, yeah...

JIMBO

Tick Tock Diner was on Elston for decades. Fucking Chicago institution, they called it. But the neighborhood changed and them new folks didn't give a shit about some "institution." They wanted "brunch"... fancy waffles, eggs benedict, quail eggs and shit... not fucking corned beef hash, couple of sunny sides, some white toast and a cup of black coffee. They sold that place for chump change, not even close to the first offer.

CARLA

How you know how much it sold for?

JIMBO

Hey, I know things. (pause) 'Course you could always do like Calo if it comes to it.

CARLA

Who's Calo?

JIMBO

You know. Calo. Ol' dude that owned the Italian joint over on Wells. Sold pasta, ravioli, lasagne, frutti di mare...

CARLA

I know what Italian food is, fool. Yeah, Calo. Old school joint. Still got candles in bottles on the tables with the dripping wax and shit. What'd this Calo do?

JIMBO

Greek lighting.

CARLA

What's the fuck's Greek lighting?

JIMBO

Well, I don't have proof but, you know... (imitates striking a match and throwing it) Poof. Greek lighting.

CARLA

What?

JIMBO

Greek lightning. Business not doing so good, you tired of losing money. One night, (fakes concern) oh no, the business just mysteriously burst into flames. Guess I gotta collect that insurance money and move on.

CARLA

Bet you don't say that shit around no Greek people. 'Cause it's a little... well, I ain't sure if it's racist but it's something.

JIMBO

It's just something people say. He got paid, though.

CARLA

(trying not to show interest) How much he get paid for that old-ass place? It couldn'ta been a lot because...

JIMBO

Five hundred thou.

CARLA

(stunned) Get. The fuck. Outta here. For THAT place?

JIMBO

Hey, prime location. I mean, back in the day, it was the shit. Everybody went there for a fancy dinner. But now, they got all them fusion places up and down that street, so who wants to go to some checkerboard tablecloth joint. It wasn't a big fire, just enough to fuck up the kitchen pretty bad. (pause) So, how's the insurance on this place?

CARLA

(thinking) Huh? Oh, the insurance on this place is fine, I don't need any "Greek lighting."

JIMBO

Well, just in case, I know a guy.

CARLA

You know too many guys.

JIMBO

I'm just saying, if you're gonna get rid of this bar, do it now.

CARLA

We ain't selling, and we ain't going to...

The door suddenly opens and two construction workers from one of the nearby building sites come in, a woman (CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1) and a man (CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2). They are both wearing work clothes, hard hats, etc. CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2 is holding a construction site flag used to wave in trucks and halt traffic.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(to CARLA) 'Scuse me, you the owner?

CARLA

Uh, one of 'em. What's going on?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

We're working on the site down the street...

JIMBO

Damn, which one? There's about four of 'em.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

FreDa.

JIMBO

Ah. Y'all working on FreDa.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

You know about it?

JIMBO

Oh, yeah, we know ALL about it. Say listen, why y'all out here fucking up the neighborhood with all them new buildings? You know, there used to be houses and shit here, with real families and shit.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Excuse me?

CARLA

Jimbo! (to Construction Workers) Ignore Jimbo. But, yeah, why?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

Hey, we just work there. It's a job, you know...

CARLA

Yeah, we know, but... nevermind, I know you just working there.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

That's all I'm sayin'. 'Sides, I grew up around here. Went to Immaculate Conception school.

JIMBO

(seductively) Catholic school girl, huh...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Moved away a long while ago, but it's weird coming back here and seeing how everything's changed

JIMBO

Oh, yeah? (getting interested) Well, if you want a tour around the old neighborhood, I got some time...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

(pipes in) I used to live just north of here, over on...

JIMBO

(dismissively) Yeah, that's cool. (back to CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1) So, what's a good time to...

CARLA

(interrupting) I'm guessing you two came in here for a reason.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(tearing herself from JIMBO'S gaze) Huh... Oh, yeah, just letting you know we're about to shut the water off in this area for a while.

CARLA

What? Why?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

They have to get into the water main to connect it to the building we're working. They have to shut it off to make the connection. Sorry.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

You shoulda got a notice.

CARLA

I didn't get shit. (thinks) Fuck, unless Bernardo forgot to... Shit. Well, for how long?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2

Thirty minutes. Maybe an hour. But probably thirty minutes. Or a little longer.

CARLA

Shit.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Or two hours.

CARLA

Come on! I'm a bar! I gotta wash glasses and people gotta use the bathroom

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Sorry.

JIMBO

Hey, Carla, things happen. (back to CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1) Now, what time you want to get to together for that tour? You could meet me here after you get off...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

Sorry, but you shoulda got the notice. (pause) We gotta get back. (they turn to leave)

JIMBO

Come on back. Four. Five o'clock. I'll be here.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1

(thinking) Maybe... (they exit)

CARLA

Shit. How the fuck I'm supposed to run a business like this?

JIMBO

Maybe that's the idea.

CARLA

What?

JIMBO

What were we just talking about? I mean, you said it yourself, people are interested in this place. Maybe this is part of the plan to get you outta here.

CARLA

I don't wanna hear your conspiracies.

JIMBO

Tick Tock, Tick Tock.

CARLA

Shut up, Jimbo.

Construction noises start again, startling them both.

JIMBO

Break time's over, I guess. Can I get that beer now?

CARLA

(raising voice) What?

JIMBO

(raising voice) Beer. Now?

CARLA

Yeah, yeah, I know, you ain't gotta shout. And how about a tip in the tip bear?

She shakes the bear-shaped jar that holds tips at JIMBO, who reluctantly pulls money out and puts it in the jar.

END SCENE