

HELP NOT WANTED

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT - 10:07 P.M.

The studio apartment is so small that the mournful Sam Smith number playing from some cheap speakers on the counter can be heard clearly from the bedroom, where LANCE, 21, is getting ready. He is lanky, sharp-featured, and fidgety: he tugs at his shirt, messes with his hair, and drums his fingers.

The rest of the apartment is a mess, with pizza boxes, pizza crusts, blankets, empty mugs, and dirty socks everywhere. SADIE, 24, is tidying efficiently, her frizzy curls pulled back from her face in a ponytail. She's wearing nice jeans and a clean shirt but clearly isn't one to spend hours on her makeup and outfit.

SADIE

Is this... congealed bourbon on
your coffee table?

LANCE (O.S.)

You say that like you're surprised.

SADIE

God, you'd think if Mom taught us
anything it would be to put a
magazine between your booze and
your coffee table. Where are your
wet wipes?

LANCE (O.S.)

Right between my feather duster and
my copy of "Martha Stewart Living."

SADIE

It's OK, I think I have some in my
purse.

LANCE (O.S.)

God, you're such a mom.

SADIE

(muttering)

Four little brothers will do that
to you...

SADIE is pulling a pack of Wet Ones from her purse when her cell phone rings; after glancing at the number and then at LANCE's open bedroom door, she turns the music up a bit and answers the call.

SADIE

(quietly)

Hey... Yeah, 10:30, 10:30 sharp...
No, no, that sounds great.

(MORE)

SADIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, we'll be there. Listen, I can't talk right now, I'm at his place. OK. See you soon.

LANCE (O.S.)

Fuck.

SADIE

What?

LANCE (O.S.)

I said, "fuck."

SADIE

I heard you the first time, sarcastic pants. I meant what's wrong now?

LANCE (O.S.)

I changed my mind about this shirt again. I look like a hipster who packed it all in and became a banker. I look like Jason Schwarzman thirty years from now.

SADIE

Overruled. No one knows what Jason Schwarzman will look like thirty years from now.

LANCE walks into the living room.

LANCE

You get my point.

SADIE

I do, and I'm ignoring it, because you look fantastic. And we need to go.

LANCE

Why, though? I could mope so much better here.

SADIE

Exactly.

LANCE

(softly, as if to himself)
Netflix is here. Bourbon is here.
Adele is here. Ben & Jerry's is here.

SADIE

How old was this pizza? The box looks like it remembers the first Bush administration.

LANCE

I forgot to inquire when I ordered. I guess it's possible they sold me some kind of chemically-preserved, 25-year-old pizza. Maybe we should stay here and launch an investigation...

SADIE

Nope. It's time for you to re-enter the world of the living. Also, I threw the last slice out.

LANCE

What the hell?!

SADIE

Oh, come on. You deserve better than week-old pizza, and you deserve better than Evelyn.

LANCE shoots SADIE an angry glare, but she doesn't seem to notice.

LANCE

Uh, little soon to be making cracks about my ex-pizza, Sadie.

SADIE

Oh.

(clears throat)

Sorry. Anyway, I brought over Chipotle, it's in your fridge. I figured that it's, like, half a step up on the health scale.

LANCE

Did you get brown rice?

SADIE

I did.

LANCE groans.

SADIE

It's better for you! Do you have any idea what your cholesterol would be if I weren't around to take care of you? Now come on, we're gonna be late.

LANCE

Late for what? I'm pretty sure bars stay open past 10:15.

SADIE

Late for my patience, then. Shoes, on, now.

LANCE mumbles something incomprehensible, clamping a cigarette in his lips as searches his pockets for a lighter.

SADIE

Oh, for the love of-- do mid-October resolutions mean nothing to you? We're quitting.

LANCE

Look. I can go sit on sticky wood-imitation bar stool for a few hours and drink \$6 beer, or I can quit smoking. But I most definitely cannot do both.

SADIE

(snaps his cigarette in half)

You'll have to, because you won't be able to run for the bus we have to catch if you're busy giving yourself lung cancer. Chop chop!

INT. BAR - 10:21 P.M.

The bar is homey: shabbily painted walls strung with twinkle lights, arcade games next to the pool tables, mismatched chairs at all the tables. At the far end of the bar is a curtained doorway leading to a back room. Some kind of Bob Marley cover plays on the radio. There are some beautiful women in the crowd, including a ponytailed SORORITY SISTER relaxing at the bar and a YOGI in a tight green t-shirt sitting at a table with her friends.

LANCE

Ugh, it's "generic reggae night."
Let's go to Al's instead.

SADIE

No! I mean, they have Bell's Oberon on tap here, your favorite. And anyway, Al's is so overpriced.

SADIE glances at her watch as she practically drags him over to the bar.

SADIE

Two Bell's Oberon, please.

LANCE

(muttering)

...music's giving me a headache...
Now, it would help if I could have some nicotine in my system, but no...

SADIE

(holding out a beer)

Here. Slàinte.

LANCE

Gesundheit.

Sadie takes a drink; Lance chugs a good half of his.

SADIE

Is this newfound enthusiasm, or do you think I'll let you off the nightlife hook once you finish your beer?

LANCE

I know you way too well to answer that question. But, theoretically, would it work?

SADIE

You know me way too well to ask that question.

LANCE sighs dramatically, propping his elbows on the bar.

SADIE

Hey, check out your nine o'clock. Look at her!

LANCE

Mmm.

SADIE

She looks like fun.

LANCE

Yeah, tons of fun. We could talk about how, like, *literally crazy* it is that she and her roommate both got bids to Delta Kappa.

SADIE

All right, all right. But Miss Green T-Shirt in the booth over there is stunning. You should talk to her.

LANCE

Do I look like a guy who can date a girl who wears a FitBit? She's probably done two types of Pilates in the last two days. I've eaten pizza for my last three meals.

SADIE

God, has anyone ever told you you can be kind of a buzzkill?

LANCE

Yes. You have. About half an hour ago.

SADIE

Well, I have to agree with myself. I mean, look, you're single, in a bar full of beautiful women, and you have Chipotle waiting for you in your fridge. So lighten up.

LANCE

I'm not sure what the point of sitting in the same bar as some potentially single women is. It's always just loud enough that you're never totally sure you've heard a girl's name right, and then you spend half the conversation wondering whether to call her "Bethany" or "Stephanie," and...

While LANCE rants, SADIE starts making world's-smallest-violin motions. When LANCE notices, he breaks off.

LANCE

Nice. Real mature.

SADIE

Oh, come on. Cheer up!

SADIE punches his arm.

LANCE

God, I hate it when you talk to me like you're baby-sitting. Are you about to make Easy Mac and promise me Mom will get promoted to the day shift soon?

SADIE

Hey, 21-year-old habits die hard...

LANCE

At least this time you're letting me drink. But for real, can we ditch the bar and go get some Easy Mac? Because actually that sounds amazing...

SADIE

No! We have to stay, at least until... Until...

Just then EVELYN walks into the bar alone: 23, doe-eyed, her outfit a perfect storm of hipster nonchalance and Madewell glitz.

LANCE

Evelyn!

SADIE whips around to follow LANCE's gaze.

SADIE

(softly)
Oh, for fuck's sake.

LANCE

(still staring at EVELYN)
'Scuse me...

SADIE

Oh no no, you are not going over there to talk to the reason I found you in the fetal position in an apartment full of old pizza and dirty socks.

LANCE

Don't see how I could. Can't talk to a break-up.

SADIE

Oh, come on. She wasn't the right girl for you.

LANCE
Why? Because you never liked her?

SADIE
Because she's pretentious.

LANCE
Artistic.

SADIE
Because she forgot your birthday.

LANCE
Who cares?

SADIE
I do.

LANCE
OK, well, if you'll excuse me a
minute...

SADIE
Where are you going?

LANCE
Use your imagination.

LANCE crosses the bar toward EVELYN. The bar is small and
SADIE leans slightly forward on her barstool to eavesdrop.

LANCE
Um. Hey there.

EVELYN
Oh! Hey. Hi.

After a brief, awkward standoff, they lean in for a shoulder-
hug.

LANCE
How have... how've you been?

EVELYN
Oh, y'know. "A quick succession of
busy nothings," as Ms. Austen would
say. How about you?

LANCE
Good. I mean... yeah, good. Been
working a lot.

EVELYN

Me, too. I'm performing at Barrow House this Thursday.

LANCE

Oh, really? That's fantastic. Maybe... maybe I'll stop by.

EVELYN

(wrinkling her brow)
Yeah. Right.

LANCE

What?

EVELYN

Oh, come on, it's a little late to pull one over on me. I know you never liked my poetry.

LANCE

Hey, I never said that!

EVELYN

Exactly, Sadie had to. And believe me, the only thing better than hearing that your partner doesn't appreciate your craft is hearing it from his big sister...

LANCE

OK, first of all, it's not that I didn't like *your* poetry. I just never... *understood* the whole spoken word genre in general...

EVELYN

And you hated Brooklyn even though you knew I wanted to move there, and you never saw yourself getting married, and you mentioned exactly none of this to me. But you know what? I'm not even mad anymore, because at least I found out before I wasted any more time with some philistine who doesn't appreciate me. See you around, Lance. Enjoy your loneliness.

LANCE flinches slightly, reddening, as EVELYN breezes back out of the bar.

SADIE
(softly)
Oh, shit.

Hesitantly, SADIE gets up and crosses to where LANCE is still standing.

SADIE
Hey. I--

LANCE
God! Can you not keep your nose out of my business for more than thirty seconds?

SADIE
What's that supposed to mean?

LANCE
I mean when you permanently fuck up my relationship, the least you can do is get out of my face while I deal with it.

SADIE takes half a step back, reddening in turn.

SADIE
Right, well excuse me for not staying up to date with everything you're keeping secret from your girlfriend.

LANCE
Oh, please. You knew what you were doing. Interfering with my life is your full-time job.

SADIE
How--

LANCE
'Go out instead of staying in, and go to this bar not that one, and break up with this girl, and hook up with that one, and quit smoking, and wear the shirt I picked out.'
I'm fucking sick of it!

SADIE stiffens, looking like she's just been slapped.

SADIE
So sorry that I tried to help. It's this crazy thing I do for people I love.

LANCE

Yeah, you helped, helped me like a hole in the head. Next time, spare yourself the trouble.

LANCE turns and storms toward the door, fishing his cigarette pack out of his pocket as he goes. But a phone alarm rings at the back of the bar, signaling a group of at least 20 people to rush out of the back room and shout "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LANCE!" They hold small presents and a cake and seem oblivious to what just happened. LANCE spins around so fast he drops his cigarettes.

LANCE

I... I...

PARTYGOER #1

(laughing)

Look at him, fucking speechless!

PARTYGOER #2

Please, somebody tell me they got that face on video.

PARTYGOER #3

Done, done, and done!

LANCE

How...?

PARTYGOER #1

Sadie, stupid. She called everyone up and invited--

PARTYGOER #2

Bribed, threatened, and harangued, more like. Nah, only kidding. Happy birthday, or whatever. Now, where's the cake? I was told there'd be cake.

PARTYGOER #4

I didn't know they let you have parties here?

PARTYGOER #5

They didn't, 'til Sadie called the manager...

The crowd slowly flows past Lance into the main room of the bar, calling "happy birthday" or leaning in for quick hugs. SADIE picks up LANCE's cigarettes. When the final partygoer moves on, LANCE and SADIE lock eyes.

SADIE
Smoke break?

EXT. BAR - 10:32 P.M.

LANCE and SADIE walk outside, and are silent for a moment as they both light up.

SADIE
(clears throat)
For the record? I was pretty blitzed at the party when I let all that stuff slip to Evelyn. Fireball is... not my friend.

LANCE
Well, to be fair, Fireball isn't anyone's friend. Also, to be fair, Evelyn is a pretentious bitch.

SADIE
(laughs faintly)
Yeah, well, whenever you find the next one, I'll leave you in peace while her psychosis plays out. Seriously. Even if she tries to make you go vegan or grow a goatee, I won't intercede.

LANCE
Oh, *thanks* for that. And... thanks for tonight. Really. I mean-- I--

SADIE
Don't sweat it. This was a breeze, compared to my your fifth birthday. Getting sugar-high kindergartners to stay in their pirate costumes is a real pain in the ass.

LANCE
Yeah, that's what they all say.

LANCE pauses, looking over his shoulder at the party inside.

LANCE
Should we head back in?

SADIE
Of course we should. This shit'll kill us.

LANCE holds the door open, letting light and the sound of upbeat reggae pour outside, while Sadie takes one last drag and carefully grinds her cigarette butt to extinction.

LANCE
(mimicking SADIE)
Chop chop!

They grin at each other, and, as SADIE heads for the door, LANCE grabs her hand and spins her under his arm in a silly twirl.

LANCE
C'mon, you heard the bitch. Let's
go enjoy our loneliness.

FADE TO BLACK