

ONE WEAK LINK

Written by

Steven Koenig

Cell: 414-202-8399
Email: stkoenig@syr.edu

EXT. MARSHALL STREET. DAY

2 MEN and 1 WOMAN are standing on Marshall Street, eyes fixated on the wooden sign above the door which reads "MJ's Bar". JAMES - the happy go-easy 22-year-old ex-frat boy, a very attractive man who still carries the ignorance of a fresh college graduate, pops open a bottle of champagne and the 3 owners cheer, smiling widely. James pours a glass and passes it to MATT, 23, a recent Syracuse University graduate and James' roommate all 4 years, who is motivated to venture into his first business opportunity but he is the lazy ex-roommate, the one who tries to take the easy way out and not take blame for his poor decisions. James then pours another glass for LAURA, the 26-year-old older sister of Matt who clearly still acts like the big sister. She is wearing a women's sport coat but still looks very attractive and appears to have a more business-like aura to her than Matt or James, considered by all 3 to be the most responsible and leader of the group. Once everyone receives a champagne glass, they look towards their sign once more.

LAURA

This better be a one time thing -
no drinking on the job guys, ok?

JAMES

Whatever you say, boss

James winks at Laura, the first sign he is into her, and raises his glass.

LAURA

To the first night of many,
gentlemen. Matt, lets make Mom and
Dad proud!

They clink their glasses together and take a sip.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You guys wanna head inside for a
quick run through, making sure
everything is ready for opening
night?! T minus 1 hour, let's get
this place bumpin!

As they unlock the front doors and walk through the entrance, Laura pulls out a notebook and walks to the bar, setting the notebook down so all 3 can see.

The bar is packed with Syracuse decorations, with 'Cuse jerseys covering the walls and Orange and Navy paint on the walls and floors. A Barstool flag is seen flying. The wall is stocked with liquor and there is a DJ booth in one of the corners.

They start running through a list of tasks necessary for opening night.

LAURA (CONT'D)

So we've agreed it's \$5 cover until 10:00 then we bump it up to 10 bucks, right?

MATT

Yeah but the girls get in free right?.

LAURA

Of course. Do you really think girls like me ever paid when I went out in college?

James checks Laura head to toe.

JAMES

If you looked anything like you do now, I think it's pretty safe to say no

James makes a "cool guy" hand gesture at Laura as Matt is seeing in the background jokingly sticking his fingers down his throat.

LAURA

(blushing)

Oh shush, if we're gonna be business partners you're gonna have to be more professional, okay? But thank you

LAURA (CONT'D)

Alright, what else... You guys got the bouncers covered, right?

Matt immediately shifts in his seat with a concerned look on his face.

MATT

Umm yeah about that... Do we really need two bouncers? It just seems like a big waste of money...

LAURA

\$150 isn't gonna kill us, plus we can probably get so many more people in the door if we have a second so it'll be worth it.

JAMES

Wait, didn't I hear you on the phone earlier with your mom saying you couldn't find another bouncer?

LAURA

Dammit Matt why didn't you tell me this sooner! But this one's on you too, James, I asked you both to work on this task months ago!

JAMES

Sorry, but Matt kept telling me not to worry because he was going to use Vanessa's brothers.

MATT

(excitedly)

Yeah those 2 are huge, they've gotta been juicin' since middle school. Plus they're dumb as bricks so they'd have been willing to work for cheap.

LAURA

(confused)

Wait... That Vanessa, your ex?

JAMES

Oh I didn't hear you guys broke up, what happened? I thought she was gonna be your "forever and always"?

Laura stifles a laugh but Matt ignores her.

MATT

(squirming)

Oh nothing, we just kinda grew apart this summer I guess...

Laura fakes a cough.

JAMES

Hmmm... Laura, is that really what happened?

Laura tries to respond but is laughing too hard to say anything, she ends up just shaking her head and pulling her phone out.

MATT

Ahh don't worry about it - it wasn't that big a deal, plus we can't be wasting out time - we gotta find our second bouncer!

By this time, Laura has composed herself and able to respond.

LAURA

Ehh you know I think we've got a quick minute to spare. Here, check this out James; it was quite the memorable 4th of July.

CU on a phone-quality video of a man setting off a firework and it exploding straight on a girl's face. Laura swipes on her phone to reveal the next photo in her camera roll, a female face severely burned and discolored as she is laying in a hospital bed.

MATT

(quietly)

She hasn't returned any of my calls since...

JAMES

Oh. My. God. That is too funny. Damn Laura, why aren't you around more often, I like hearing about this side of Matt!

MATT

Alright, alright, my bad. Sheesh. But save my embarrassing stories for a better time, we're opening in 45 and now we've gotta find this second bouncer.

LAURA

I feel like I don't say this often but yeah, Matt's right. Alright well since you fucked up Matt, you go find another and quickly. Oh, and take your playboy roommate with

James salutes Laura and she walks away to tend to other bar grand-opening duties. As soon as she leaves, Matt pulls out his computer and types in Craigslist, searching "Bouncer" in the search bar. Laura returns.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Why the hell are you guys on your computers, I told you to find a bouncer!

JAMES

Well yeah, Craigslist's got plenty of good options

LAURA

God damn! I'm the one who didn't go to school here but I know to just walk outside to Marshall street and find someone! Just flash a crisp hundred dollar bill and somebody is gonna say yes - I'm not making you find a genius or anything.

EXT. MARSHALL STREET. CONTINUOUS.

James and Matt walk out to the "bustling" scene of Marshall Street. Though it is not too crowded, there is a steady stream of people.

James points out a tall, muscular man that had the right physique of a bouncer. He is wearing a sophisticated outfit with his textbooks in his arms and a backpack. Matt checks him head to toe.

MATT

Nah. Sorry. He looks way too smart to be a good bouncer. I mean look at that outfit, he looks like he's off to class in Whitman! Remember, we're not looking for a genius - even Laura said it!

James points out another man, DOUG, 23, a big, friendly, foolish man wearing a graphic t-shirt and a big smile on his face. As with the first candidate, he carries the physique of a bouncer. He is carrying a Chipotle bag. Matt checks him out just as he did the first candidate.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hmm, good choice James, I think he's got potential. But I think we gotta see something MORE to prove he's what we're looking for, ya know?

As Matt says this, a HOMELESS MAN approaches Doug.

HOMELESS MAN

Hey, spare me a dollar?

Doug reaches for his wallet and grabs a dollar and hands him a dollar.

DOUG

Oh of course, have a great day sir!

HOMELESS MAN

Oh, thank you so much... I hope it's not too much to ask but... my wife kicked me out and I just need a little more money to buy a bus ticket and get outta town. Is it too much to ask for a \$20? The bus is coming in --

The homeless man pulls an iPhone X out of his back pocket and checks the time.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

-- 25 minutes so I don't have any other way to get the money in time.

JAMES

(to Matt)

No chance he's gonna buy this bullshit!

But Doug reaches into his wallet and, smiling, hands the homeless man a \$20.

DOUG

Oh I'm so sorry! Here, please, of course! I hope everything works out, sir

Doug begins walking away but the homeless man reaches out, stopping him.

HOMELESS MAN

Oh but I haven't eaten in nearly 24 ho-

Before the homeless man could finish his sentence, Doug already shoved his Chipotle bag in the man's face.

DOUG

Here, take this! I hope you don't mind guac. I'll head in and grab another, I don't want you to miss that bus! Many blessings sir.

Doug awkwardly bows to the homeless man as he walks away, face smothered in a burrito and texting on his iPhone X.

MATT

Shitt, did that just really happen?
Wow that kid is such an IDIOT! He's
perfect!

Doug turns around and begins walking the way he came, towards
Chipotle.

MATT (CONT'D)

We gotta catch him quick, we can't
miss out on this guy!

JAMES

Are you sure? I mean Laura said we
don't need a genius but I don't
think she meant stupid...

Matt doesn't hear James as he is already sprinting towards
Doug. James shakes his head and sprints to catch Doug as he
is opening for the Chipotle doors. They shout STOP and Doug
immediately stiffens up, letting the door close behind him.

MATT

(breathing heavy)

Sorry to startle you bro! I'm Matt
and this is James.

DOUG

Doug. Can I help you?

Matt points in the general direction of their bar's entrance.

MATT

We are opening the newest bar,
MJ's, and one of our bouncers fell
through for tonight. Any chance
you're free?

DOUG

Umm yeah I'm around but I don't
really have any experience, is that
a problem?

MATT

Oh no, trust me - I think you're
gonna be the perfect fit. Well
we're opening at happy hour, how
soon can you head over?

DOUG

I'm starving so I'm gonna grab a
burrito quick but I'll be over
right after!

They thank Doug and walk back to the bar, dapping each other along the way.

INT. BAR. CONTINUOUS

Matt and James run in, clapping, startling Laura.

LAURA
Everything work out I'm guessing?

MATT
Oh my god yeah, we found the perfect guy! Like he's huge and he's an absolute IDIOT!

JAMES
Not that it REALLY matters, but I did see a good candidate for a smart bouncer who I thought would be a great fit but Matt turned it down...

Once again, it sounds like Matt did not hear as he completely ignores James and continues talking

MATT
Like we saw a homeless man come up to Doug on the street telling the typical sappy story, and Doug completely bought it! He gave the guy 21 bucks AND a burrito! Like how stupid is this guy, he's gonna be perfect!

LAURA
I told you he didn't have to be a genius but I didn't mean he's gotta be a dumbass... I mean if I wanted to find a big dumbass I could've just asked you to be the bouncer tonight!

Laura turns to James and sees him rolling on the floor laughing

Laura looks back at Matt and sees him staring at his shoes, ashamedly. She quickly changes tone and tries reassuring Matt.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Hey don't worry about it, okay? I'm sure he's gonna make for great bouncer, I'm just pulling your chain

Matt nods, reassured. Laura checks her watch.

LAURA (CONT'D)8

And the best part is you guys only took 10 minutes to find him, we've got plenty of time to train him now!

The clock on the wall reads 4:25. Dissolve to the clock reading 4:50. There is a large black shirt sitting on the counter and the owners are sitting behind the bar, looking impatient. Doug runs in, breathing heavily.

DOUG

(out of breath)

I'm sorry guys I came as quick as I could! That Chipotle line was so long but I was hungry and couldn't bear leaving!

LAURA

Eh don't sweat it, we'll just need to give you a very brief training. My name's Laura, by the way.

DOUG

Doug.

JAMES

Alright I'll go quick here. So we were talking \$150 for the night, does that work? You'll be done around 3 so it's roughly 8 hours total.

Doug counts on his hands for a moment, then makes an angry face.

DOUG

Really? You think I'm worth THAT little?! I'm not wasting my night here to make less than minimum wage, that's bullshit! Seven bucks an hour is just too low, I'm sorry guys.

Doug grabs his jacket and heads towards the exit.

LAURA

Wait, what? Matt, grab me that calculator.

Matt grabs the calculator resting next to the cash register and passes it to James. James types on it for a second, then looks at Doug again.

JAMES

Yeah you're making... 18.75 an hour dude. Where you getting this 7 an hour from?

DOUG

Oh I'm sorry, my mama always said I wasn't too good with numbers...

MATT

Yeah we can tell. Jesus, you weren't even close bro!

The owners laugh together, and Doug puts his head down ashamedly.

LAURA

Sorry Doug it's nothing personal, you might wanna hang onto the calculator the rest of the night.

The owners stifle another laugh but Doug graciously accepts the calculator.

They give Doug a very abbreviated explanation about how to do everything, such as collecting the cover and keeping the line orderly.

JAMES

Well I'm sorry we had to go through things so quickly but does it make sense? Any questions?

Doug gulps once and nods.

DOUG

Umm most of it makes sense, but I'm guess I'm still confused how I'll know if their ID says they're actually 21.

MATT

Well it says it right on their ID...

DOUG

I told you already, I'm not too good with numbers man

LAURA

(quietly)

God, I work with a bunch of dumbasses

LAURA (CONT'D)

(audibly for all to hear)

Just look for any horizontal IDs, that means they're automatically 21. As for the vertical IDs, just look for the little "Under 21 Until" line below their picture and as long as they've had their 21st birthday you can let them in. Does that makes sense?

Doug nods again, looking more confident than before the explanation.

MATT

You'll get the hang of it in no time, just use that calculator again if you're confused and ask us if you've got any questions

LAURA

Alright I hope that makes sense because it's 5pm right... now. Welcome to opening night guys, this is it! Good luck Doug, I'll check in on you in a little while to make sure things are going smoothly.

The owners leave Doug and MIKE, 25, the typical experienced bouncer who does his own thing the whole night. The owners open the door and the line waiting outside screams and runs to the entrance. Doug takes the first ID with an feeling of confidence, holding the calculator in his left hand and the ID in his right.

The drinking and dancing continues as the bar slowly darkens as it gets later in the night. Soon the entire bar is packed with people dancing but people keep coming and coming. Everyone looks to be having a great time.

When the clock reads 12:45, two cops show up. The owners huddle together behind the bar.

JAMES

Hey look, the cops made came for opening night! Do you think they're coming in for a drink or lookin' for freshman who might've snuck in?

James laughs to himself and nudges Laura. Laura does not respond and instead maintains a straight face.

LAURA

On a serious note though, do you guys think some of the people we've been serving tonight look a little... Young?

James and Matt shake their heads.

MATT

Nah they all look to be at least 21 I think, I'll keep a better eye out the rest of the night.

Just then an UNDERAGE FEMALE approaches the bar, asking for a drink. She could easily pass for 12 years old. She is wearing a cowgirl outfit. Matt, James, and Laura look at each other in unison.

MATT (CONT'D)

Alright, I see what you mean...

JAMES

Isn't Halloween not for like another 2 months?

LAURA

Yeah, I thought so... Something's gotta be up. James, do you mind manning the bar while Matt and I check in on things?

James nods and Matt and Laura leave the bar and walk through the crowd. When they reach the entrance they see a much longer line on Doug's side than Mike's. They pull on Doug's sleeve and pull him away from the line.

DOUG

Hey guys, how have things been up front? You guys have been making a boatload on cover tonight! But I gotta say you might want to see what's up with Mike - he's been going so much slower than me tonight, he's probably only made half what I've made.

Without responding to Doug, Laura and Matt walk down Doug's line of people waiting to get in. It appears there are much younger looking faces in Doug's line than Mike's. When they reach the end of the line, they see a group of girls on their phones.

GIRL 1

Wait, he told you we should go in the line on the left, yeah?

GIRL 2

No! He said left is really strict, the right line is supposed to let us in even without our fakes!

Hearing this, Matt and Laura storm back inside, tugging on Doug's sleeve again and pulling him from the line.

MATT

Dude, are you sure things have been going well? You're making sure everyone's 21, right?

DOUG

Yeah of course! Just because I'm fast doesn't mean I'm sloppy about it. I just check those white & orange IDs and let 'em through if they pass!

LAURA

Wait, orange IDs? I'm pretty sure I read all 50 states have white IDs

Matt slowly reaches for his pocket, pulling out his outdated Syracuse ID

MATT

Doug, is there any chance those IDs look something like this?

Doug grabs the ID and carefully inspects it for what seems to be far too long

DOUG

Hmm... Well it kinda looks like that, I dunno this one might be a fake though - I probably wouldn't it slide

MATT

It doesn't have to be exact - do those IDs look similar?

DOUG

No. Hmmm... yes, I mean yes.

Matt covers his hands with his face and looks to the ceiling.

LAURA

I don't get it, what's wrong?

MATT

This... Is my Syracuse ID, not my real one. That means whoever he let in with these IDs could be college kids of any age!

DOUG

Oh shit, my bad

LAURA

Yeah it's "your bad", what the hell man I told you to ask if you had any questions! Shit! Doug, we'll be back soon don't let any more of these CHILDREN in!

Doug declines the next 2 students who appear at the gate presenting their SUID and the owners hear groans and boos from the line extending outside.

Laura and Matt leave Doug and return to their spot behind the bar. Matt inaudibly explains what they discovered and we can see James' reaction the more Matt tells him.

JAMES

Shit! Of all the big guys that roam these streets how did we manage to choose the biggest idiot of them all?

MATT

I know, my bad. I shoulda considered that Whitman kid after all I guess... Well at least there's nothing too bad that can happen to us, right?

JAMES

You're right

LAURA

What, no? Did you guys really not take the time to read up on the consequences of owning a bar?

JAMES

Well, no, we figured we didn't want to worry about the bad stuff.

Laura takes a deep breath.

LAURA

God I figured you'd read for at least ONCE in your life so you would be prepared for this.

MATT

My bad, but what were you saying?

LAURA

If we get 10 underage tickets tonight, there will be no second night of MJ's; they'll take our liquor license away!

JAMES

Hey guys, not to sound like a dick but we should probably get to exterminating these kids...

As Laura was explaining the consequences to Matt, James was watching the police officers as they approached a group of 3 girls, shined their flashlights on their IDs, and escorted them out of the bar.

LAURA

Shit I wasn't paying attention. Alright focus up you dweebs, we've let the cops get the first of 'em but we're not gonna let them get anymore!

MATT

We've got this! They've only got their first 3 victims and we're about

Matt glances at the clock on the wall now reading 1:10

MATT (CONT'D)

An hour and a half or so until we can start closing up. C'mon guys, we can do this!

Matt turns to James and they break into a well-rehearsed complex handshake that they've clearly been doing for years. Laura rolls her eyes and shakes her head but slightly chuckles.

LAURA

Idiots

With that, James and Laura leave behind the bar, leaving Matt alone to attend the drinks the rest of the night. Matt will be heavily overwhelmed attending to drink orders, running tabs, and cleaning being the only bartender now.

Right before James and Laura enter the crowd of people on the dance floor, James pulls Laura aside to talk to her

JAMES

Hey I just want to make sure things are clear - Matt was the one who refused MY bouncer option for DOUG. You know we wouldn't be this predicament if we could find someone competent enough to not mistake an SUID for a real ID...

LAURA

Okay, and?

JAMES

Nah that's all, I just wanna make sure you know I'm not an idiot and all if you were digging me before like I think you were...

James winks at her before and pulls her close. Laura turns around and slaps him

LAURA

That's not okay James! Matt's still my little brother and yeah he made a mistake but we're a team and we help each other out! And NO I was not "into you" earlier so stop your flirting because it's not going to work on me!

James quickly retreats but does not let the slap affect him, rather his eyes go wild in excitement and he rebounds quickly

JAMES

You're right, lets get these kids outta this bar!

Laura nods and the two walk onto the crowded dance floor

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- James and Laura asking a large group to pull out their IDs, then telling the entire group they have to leave immediately
- Matt pouring 3 drinks at the same time, then passing them to one of the dozens of customers yelling at Matt while dangling money in front of his face
- Shot of the clock reading 1:33
- The police officers writing a ticket and handing it to a boy and a girl
- James knocks a full cup out of three kids' hands and they begin pushing Matt until Laura pulls the kids off him and drags them towards the doors
- Matt running to the sink and quickly washing a set of glasses while Boos rain down on Matt. Pull out to reveal a heap of dirty glasses next to the sink
- Shot of the clock reading 1:56
- The police officers talking to a group of 3 girls away from the crowd on the dance floor
- Laura acting as a distraction as James sneaks a group past the police while they continue to search the crowd.

END MONTAGE.

CU of clock reading 2:13 AM, pull out to reveal the owners meeting behind the bar looking exhausted but happy. The dance floor has thinned with just a few stragglers left dancing and most others paying their tabs or casually talking.

The two cops are still inside but they are sitting in the corner talking, looking much less threatening than they had an hour ago while patrolling the drinkers.

LAURA

We did it, Matt! Every last one of them are out and we even had time to spare!

MATT

Good work guys! Did you get a count on how many tickets the cops wrote?

JAMES

It's only at 8 so even if they find another one we're still set.

Laura and Matt breathe a sigh of relief.

MATT

Thank God. I'm sorry I kinda
dropped the ball on this one,
fortunately it's all in the past
and we can just learn from this.

Police Officer 1 whispers in Police Officer 2 ear and he nods. They walk towards the exit. James, Laura, and Matt nonchalantly bump fists from behind the bar as they watch the policemen leave. As the cops approach the men's bathroom while walking towards the exit, they see the door swing open and two young boys stumble out, holding each other up for support.

The cops immediately run to the boys and one police officer pulls out his flashlight. Seeing the cops, the boys make a break for the exit but BOY 1 runs into one of the straggling dancers and falls, sprawling out on the dance floor. CU on the owners mouthing NOOOOO while grabbing the air in desperation.

BEGIN MONAGE:

- The Policemen grab the boys' IDs and shine the flashlight on two ID cards
- Police Officer 1 leaves the boys and approaches the owners as Police Officer 2 is shown writing tickets for the boys
- Police Officer 1 inaudibly speaking to the owners who are nodding to understand, their eyes fixated on their shoes
- Police Officer 2 escorting the boys outside, Boy 2 trips on the stairs and lands face-first
- Matt, with his eyes still fixated on his shoes, takes a framed piece of paper off the wall and hands it to Police Officer 1
- CU of paper to reveal liquor license for the State of NY
- Boy 2 kneeling on the stairs crying while holding his bloody nose as Police Officer 2 is pulling Boy 2's shirt, trying to drag him out.
- Doug inaudibly protesting and gesturing to be paid, James furiously pulling a crisp 100 and 50 out of his wallet and throwing it in Doug's general direction. Doug bends down to pick them up

- The disco lights and overhead lights shutting off
- The owners walking outside and locking the door

END MONTAGE.

EXT. WALNUT STREET. CONTINUOUS

The owners are walking along Walnut Street with one hand stuffed deep in their pocket, their other holding a beer. They are swearing and kicking the rocks they come across when walking.

JAMES

God this sucks. Whose idea was it to hire a dumbass like Doug again, MATT?

MATT

Dude.

LAURA

Yeah chill out James, Doug's a dumbass but it's an honest mistake. We've all been dumbasses tonight.

JAMES

Sorry, I'm just pissed about those cops.

MATT

Yeah what was up with that? Like we were probably 10 minutes from close when they busted those two boys, it's like they were waiting around to try and shut us down

JAMES

That's bullshit. Dude we gotta find a way to get back at 'em.

LAURA

At the cops? How are you expecting to do that?

In unison, they stop and look at the parking lot of Castle Court, currently filled with cars

MATT
(grinning)
Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

Laura and James break into grins and they clink their beers together.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CASTLE COURT. DAY

The scene dissolves to a shot of Castle Court, now in the daytime. The cars have left and the are replaced with students dressed in their best tailgate attire.

The bottles, once displayed on the wall in the bar, are shown in one corner with a sign saying, "Free Liquor! This one's on us - P.S. Don't let the cops know!"

The shot pulls out to reveal Laura, Matt, and James smiling and dancing on the roof of a police car parked on the street with its lights on. They are carrying their own respective liquor bottles, a handle apiece. As they did the night before, they clink their bottles together.

LAURA & JAMES & MATT
(Yelling)
It was worth it, it was all worth
it!

The owners chug their respective bottles. James grabs Laura's waist and pulls her close, leaning in for a kiss. Surprisingly, Laura puts her arms around James' neck and kisses James back. James' eyes open wide and he punches his fist in the air triumphantly, then goes for a high-five from Matt. Matt looks stunned, then shrugs and accepts the high five, smiling. James pulls away and lifts his bottle to the air, as do the others, as they clink and tilt their heads back and continue to chug their handles, dancing and laughing atop the police car.

FADE TO BLACK.