

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

BB Note: I forget exactly when I wrote this. Prophetic? Probably not (I hope).

%%%

[Scene: The Lonely Shamrock Pub, Anytown, USA, on session night. Five patrons at the bar watching the NBA finals and six musicians at a table in the corner opposite the TV. An infinity of space intervenes but you have to imagine it's there.

After more or less tuning, a mode of musical expression vaguely reminiscent of Irish traditional commences.

Two unpleasant looking persons - one we'll call Rosie, not her real name, and the other named Marco - enter the pub and approach the musicians. The session leaders are Jim, not his real name, and Beth, not his real wife.]

%%%

*Rosie (on a bar stool, addressing musicians who have just finished a set):
Very nice music. Very nice indeed.*

Jim:

Thanks . . . I don't think I've seen you two here before.

Rosie:

No, this is our first time, isn't it, Marco? (*M. - seated at a table - nods vigorously*) But we've heard about you . . . from friends.

Jim:

Anyone who likes the music is always welcome here at the Lonely Shamrock.

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

Rosie:

Why, that's very kind of you . . . what did you say your name was?

Jim:

I didn't, but it's Jim . . . and yours is . . .?

Rosie (ignoring the question) :

Well, we don't want to interrupt . . . play away. We're here to listen, not talk. *(Marco whispers into Rosie's ear)* Oh yeah, great idea . . . listen, Jack - sorry, *Jim* - when our friends were here last week they said one of you sang a song, something about a scolding wife who dies and goes to Hell but gets kicked out . . . they said it was . . . really cute. *(Rosie speaks the last few words through clenched teeth, but Jim is oblivious.)*

Jim:

Oh yeah - "The Women are Worse than the Men", that's the name of the song. Ed over there learned it somewhere and he's been singing it for the past few weeks.

Rosie (forcing a smile):

We'd really love to hear it at some point, wouldn't we, Marco? *(Marco nods vigorously as before; Rosie whispers to him, gesturing surreptitiously towards Ed)* He's wearing a bowling team shirt - perfect! This is going to be almost too easy!

Jim:

OK, tell you what - we'll do a few tunes first, then I'll see if Ed wants to sing tonight, how's that sound?

Rosie (in a low growl):

Don't give the bastard a choice.

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

Jim:

Sorry, what did you say? That TV is awfully loud tonight.

Rosie:

I said, I bet he has a masterful voice, big strong good-looking guy like that . . . *(Marco, smiling broadly, nods vigorously; Rosie, sotto voce)*
Marco, goddam it - we have a job to do here. None of that tonight or I'll have to report you.

[The group strikes into a jig set while Rosie and Marco pretend interest. At the conclusion, Jim leans over and says something to Ed.]

Ed:

Sure, no problem.

(Clears throat and starts singing. Polite applause from other musicians at conclusion.)

Jim *(to Rosie)*:

So there's the song your friends liked. It is kind of cute but maybe not politically correct, heh-heh. . .

Rosie *(leaping to her feet, screaming)*:

You bet your sorry XY ass it's not politically correct! *(Reaches in pocket, pulls out a badge, tosses it on musicians' table)* See this, people? It says that this session is dead meat, you're all in a heap of trouble, and YOU, Big Macho Ed with the Deep Voice, will be doing a lot of whimpering instead of singing for the foreseeable future. Right, Marco?

Marco:

Yes, Rosie. Of course. Anything you say.

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

Jim (*in panic*)

... but ... but who ARE you?

Rosie:

Look at the badge, dipshit. It says we're the FATHEADS.

Jim (*eyes wide, trembling*)

The ... the WHAT?

Rosie:

You need it spelled out, precious? OK, here goes: FATHEADS - Feminist Atheists, Triumphantly Humorless, Eliminating All Demeaning Songs.

Jim (*weakly*):

Oh my god, no ... the most feared acronym in the trad music world ...

Rosie (*gleefully*):

Oh your god, yes . . . the PC storm troopers, the Boudiccas of Woke. You've heard about us and now you get to meet us. We've been watching you for weeks, secretly recording every diddly note of your tunes and songs, just waiting for you to slip into our clutches. When Macho Sexist Bowling Pig there decided to besmirch, offend, and insult Us Birthing Persons with his stupid song, we knew we had you and your carnivorous beer-swilling buddies by the short hairs. And now you're about to learn a lesson you won't soon forget. . .

Beth (*standing behind a quivering Jim with strong hands on his shoulders*):

Now wait one damned minute, lady. I'm as much of a woman as you are and I don't get all worked up about that song. It's just a silly folksong, that's all.

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

Rosie:

Well, Princess, we'll just have to work on your consciousness a little, won't we? You know, make you aware of your victimhood . . . *(aside)* I always enjoy this part. *(to Beth)* Tell me, dear - does your group play a jig called "I Buried My Wife and Danced on Top of Her?"

Beth:

. . . er . . . yes, as a matter of fact, we do.

Rosie:

. . . and is there always a lot of XY snickering going on when it's over?

Beth:

. . . er . . . yes, there is. *(Rosie stands with an expectant look; a change comes over Beth's face that's not pleasant to see.)* Yes, dammit. . . THERE IS! *(glares at Jim and the other male musicians)*

Jim *(almost slobbering)*:

Beth, sweetie honey pie! Don't listen to her . . . I don't even like that tune! And I SWEAR I'm only kidding when I call that reel "The Maid Behind the Bar Where She Belongs" - honest!

Rosie *(has been talking on cellphone, now puts it away)*:

Well, sorry we had to do this. The Diversity Enrichment Detachment is on its way over right now, so I don't recommend that any of you try to sneak out. You're allowed one phone call to tell your families where you're going to be for the next six months. *(Sneering, to Ed)* In your case, Mister Gutter-ball, maybe longer. Looks like you need a BIG re-education job . . . but we FATHEADS know what we're doing. Don't we, Marco? Marco knows all about it . . .

RETRIBUTION: A PLAYLET

Marco (*with slightest trace of fear this time*):
Yes, Rosie. Certainly. Anything you say . . .

Rosie (*to Beth*):

Come on, let's split before the DED gets here. I've been on this job for six years and I still can't get used to all the snivelling and blubbering that goes on when they finish. I know the DED are pros, but dammit sometimes even I feel sorry for them (*wiggling thumb impatiently at cowering male musicians*) when it's over.

Jim (*desperately as Beth and Rosie exit*)

Poochiekins! Honeybunch! Don't leave me . . . I'll do anything, ANYTHING . . . look! It's all his fault! (*starts attacking Ed with bodhran clapper but collapses in sobs; sounds of pitiless laughter from Beth and Rosie as flashing lights appear outside pub*)

Rosie: Well, look who's here!

(*Pub door crashes open, patrons scatter, musicians are riveted in fear*)

Rosie:

Say hi to the DED, you jerks! HAHAHAHAAAA . . .

CURTAIN