

## STEPPING OUT

By Jeff Dunne

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jeff@bearcreations.org

## CHARACTERS

ANGELINE	An outgoing, energetic woman
MARCO	A quiet, reserved man
GALE	An occult practitioner with an interest in Marco

## SETTING

Giuseppe's Bar, a somewhat rundown tavern establishment.

SCENE

*(It is mid-morning in Giuseppe's Bar. Marco is cleaning up, moving glasses from a drying rack to a set of shelves, when Angeline enters from the kitchen holding a wooden spoon with marinara in it.)*

ANGELINE

Try this.

MARCO

What is it?

ANGELINE

It's foot fungus. What do you think it is?

MARCO

Could be fungus, the way you clean up. And the last thing you asked me to try did taste a little like a foot.

ANGELINE

I added a touch of dill to the marinara.

MARCO

I thought you did that last week.

ANGELINE

That was marjoram. Here. Taste.

*(He tries it.)*

MARCO

It's good.

ANGELINE

It's good, or it's *good*?

MARCO

Better than normal, not as good as sex.

*(Angeline walks out while saying.)*

ANGELINE

That all depends on who you're having sex with.

*(Marco shakes his head, and goes back to prepping.)*

ANGELINE (OFF)

Speaking of that...

MARCO

Marinara or sex?

ANGELINE (OFF)

Maybe both.

MARCO

*(To himself...)*

This'll be interesting.

ANGELINE (OFF)

I have a friend who was asking about you.

MARCO

*(Still to himself.)*

This'll be a disaster.

ANGELINE (OFF)

Her name's Gale.

MARCO

Can we not shout back and forth like this? If you want to talk, just...

*(Angeline enters carrying a cutting board and a tomato.  
She brings them to Marco.)*

We're relocating the kitchen now?

ANGELINE

Can you dice this up? I need six ounces.

*(She immediately exits back into the kitchen.)*

MARCO

Yes, because I have this superpower of measuring the weight of tomatoes with perfect  
precisi—

*(Angeline returns carrying a kitchen scale.)*

ANGELINE

Smart ass.

MARCO

So this friend... why was she asking about me?

ANGELINE

Not sure.

MARCO

I find that hard to believe.

ANGELINE

Well, she's looking for a job. Waitress. I told her that we might be looking—

MARCO

No, no, no, no. Angie, I know your friends. Where did you meet her? At a séance?

*(Angeline is about to answer, but when he mentions a séance she clams up.)*

You did, didn't you? I was joking, but you actually met her while calling up the dead. We don't need ghosts in the bar. We've got enough trouble with the living customers.

ANGELINE

She says she's been here before. A few times.

MARCO

Good for her.

ANGELINE

I think she kind of likes you.

MARCO

Then definitely not. I don't need...

*(He sees something in her expression.)*

You didn't. Tell me you didn't.

*(Angeline looks around, awkward and guilty.)*

MARCO (CONT)

Angeline....

ANGELINE

I didn't say we'd hire her. I just said... maybe... she should stop by to talk with you.

MARCO

Great. Just great. Let me guess, she'll be the one wearing Egyptian jewelry with a tattoo that says "I Ankh For Dead People".

ANGELINE

She's not like that.

MARCO

Right. So when's she coming by?

*(There's a knock.)*

Oh, look. A sign from the other side.

ANGELINE

Try to be a little less cynical than your normal self, okay?

GALE (OFF)

Hello?

ANGELINE

In here.

*(Gale enters from the kitchen. She is dressed in modest clothes suitable for a restaurant server.)*

GALE

I came in through the back because I wasn't sure if—

ANGELINE

It's fine. Gale, Marco. Marco...

MARCO

Nice to meet you. Sorry, my hands are—

GALE

No, it's fine. It's nice to meet you. Angie has told me so much about you.

MARCO

*(Looking at Angeline.)*

No kidding.

GALE

*(Looking back and forth between them and sensing the tension...)*

I... uh... I could use a stop in the ladies room.

MARCO

Through there.

GALE

Thanks.

*(Gale exits.)*

MARCO

Alright. What gives?

ANGELINE

What do you mean?

MARCO

You're trying to set me up.

ANGELINE

What makes you say—

MARCO

She's exactly my type. Hair, face, eyes. What? Did you pick her out of a catalogue or something?

ANGELINE

Marco, you're so damn suspicious. No, I did not pick her out of a catalogue. *(Pause.)* She was in a police lineup at the station and...

MARCO

Stop. I'm not looking for anyone. I'm happy.

ANGELINE

Marco. Listen to me. Will you stop with the tomato and just listen for a second? Gale's good people. You're good people.

MARCO

So that's your thinking? We're both plural, so—

ANGELINE

I know you're comfortable. But what's wrong having someone in your life again?

MARCO

I'm good with my life. I like my life.

ANGELINE

That's great, but I remember what you were like before. With Carol. You used to smile a lot more.

MARCO

I smile now.

ANGELINE

Only when the customers are watching. What are you afraid of? Really?

MARCO

I'm not afraid. I'm comfortable. Why risk that?

ANGELINE

Because maybe you could be more than just... comfortable. Take a risk.

MARCO

A risk. That's just what—

ANGELINE

A *little* risk. I'm not asking you to fight grizzlies. Try making a change here or there. Just to see. You might find—

MARCO

Angie, I'm happy. Changing my life is a risk I'm not willing to take. Not right now.

ANGELINE

Not ever's what you mean.

*(Marco shakes his head at her just as Gale enters.)*

GALE

You were low on T.P., so I restocked it.

*(Angeline gives Marco a “see, she’s a keeper” look.)*

MARCO

Thanks. So... Gale...

GALE

Marco.

MARCO

Gale...

GALE

I think you were supposed to say ‘Polo’ there.

*(Marco tries to hold it back, but a chuckle escapes him.)*

MARCO

Angeline tells me that you’re looking for a job?

GALE

Hopefully. I have a little business of my own, but it doesn’t bring in a lot.

MARCO

So what’s the other, uh...

GALE

It’s... Well, I guess there’s no point in being coy or anything. I do some... occult consulting.

MARCO

I don’t believe in any of that.

GALE

I think you do.

*(Marco turns to give Angeline an accusing look, but she shakes her head to say “I didn’t say anything”.)*

There’s an energy about you that... It’s not the energy of someone who thinks the world stops at the limit of what he can see.

MARCO

So what do you do? Magic spells, raise the dead...

GALE

Why? Do you need a busboy too?

*(Again Marco tries to hold back a laugh, but a chuckle escapes.)*

MARCO

Alright.

GALE

Alright?

MARCO

We can give it a try. When can you start?

GALE

As soon as you get out from behind the bar and let me finish putting the glasses away.

*(Marco shrugs, and steps back. Gale walks behind the bar and starts orienting herself.)*

ANGELINE

I need to check on the marinara.

*(Marco gives her a doubting look.)*

Or the spoons or something.

*(Angeline exits.)*

GALE

Can I level with you?

MARCO

Level with me... What do you mean?

GALE

I don't really need a job.

Angie put you up to this.

MARCO

No.

GALE

It's okay. This isn't the first time she's tried to set me up with someone. I hope she didn't...

MARCO

Didn't what?

GALE

You know... I hope she didn't do anything... you know, say anything that was...

MARCO

No. No. It's all good.

GALE

Good.

MARCO

I, uh... *I* actually started the conversation, to be honest.

GALE

Oh. (*Beat.*) Look, I... don't take this the wrong way or anything, but I'm not really looking for... you know, to get into a relationship.

MARCO

I know.

GALE

You know?

MARCO

Mm hmm.

GALE

Then... what *are* you doing here?

MARCO

Can I ask you a kind of odd question?

GALE

MARCO

You mean this conversation can get even weirder?

GALE

What are you still doing here?

MARCO

I own the place.

GALE

Yeah. And?

MARCO

And I keep it running.

GALE

Tending bar, chatting with the customers...

MARCO

That's right.

GALE

What kind of a crowd do you get? A lot of regulars?

MARCO

As a matter of fact.

GALE

Same group every night?

MARCO

More or less.

GALE

I'm guessing 'more'.

MARCO

Where's this going?

GALE

Do you ever... you know... take a night off? Get some rest?

MARCO

Honestly, no. I like the place. It's comfortable.

GALE  
Comfortable? Or familiar?

MARCO  
Can't it be both?

GALE  
Maybe. Is it? Comfortable, that is.

MARCO  
Not at the moment.

GALE  
What would you say if I asked you to... say... take a walk with me? Maybe just around the block.

MARCO  
Why?

GALE  
Just to get some fresh air?

MARCO  
I'm fine with the air in here.

GALE  
Marco... are you afraid to go outside?

MARCO  
What are you talking about?

GALE  
When was the last time you went out?

MARCO  
I don't know.

GALE  
Was it this month?

*(Marco just looks at Gale suspiciously.)*

Last month? Last year?

MARCO  
I don't remember.

GALE  
Was it during a storm?

MARCO  
I don't... Yeah. Yeah, it was. How- how did you...?

GALE  
Is that why you're afraid to go outside now?

MARCO  
I'm not afraid.

GALE  
You're worried there might be a storm out there? That there might be some kind of disaster waiting?

MARCO  
I'm not afraid of natural disasters. Unnatural disasters like undead busboys, those I could do without.

GALE  
Come on. Then let's go take a walk.

MARCO  
I don't think so.

GALE  
You care about Angie a lot, don't you.

*(Marco just stares at her.)*

She's in danger, Marco. You both are. You may not be willing to save yourself, but you can save her.

MARCO  
How?

GALE  
Just walk out that door.

MARCO  
I can't.

GALE  
I know you think that, but it's not true. You *can* leave, and it's time to go. You don't owe this place anything.

MARCO  
No.

GALE  
Angeline won't leave without you, and they're getting ready to bulldoze the building.

MARCO  
Bulldoze!?

GALE  
Maybe as soon as tomorrow.

MARCO  
They can't bulldoze my restaurant! I own the place!

GALE  
You did. But that was years ago, Marco. I think you know what I'm talking about. You do, don't you? It's time to leave now.

MARCO  
I can't.

GALE  
If you don't leave now, you really will be trapped here. And so will Angie. Forever. Except there won't be a bar anymore. Marco, you need to trust me. If you don't walk out that door, soon there...

MARCO  
There won't be a door.

GALE  
That's right.

MARCO  
And in here? In the bar?

GALE  
There won't be a bar, either. Just you two. And nothing. Forever.

MARCO

What's out there?

GALE

For me? Fourth Street. For you... I don't know. Maybe Carol. Maybe your folks. But whatever it is, it's waiting for you.

MARCO

No. This... no.

GALE

You know I'm right. If you can't do it for yourself, do it for Angie. She deserves better.

MARCO

I've got things to finish up here. I've got to get the place ready to open.

GALE

I'll take care of it. You, take Angie for a walk, okay? Don't let her sacrifice everything.

*(Marco stares at Gale for a long time, then nods.)*

MARCO

Hey, Angie!

*(Angeline enters.)*

You want to go take a walk? Maybe... go feed some ducks or something?

ANGELINE

Really? I... Yeah. That would be gr— Oh, but the marinara's still on the stov—

GALE

I'll keep an eye on it.

ANGELINE

You sure you don't mind?

GALE

Not at all.

ANGELINE

Well... okay, then. Sure. Why not?

*(Gale watches as they walk to the door. Marco looks back; Gale nods him on. Marco escorts Angeline out, then exits himself. Gale takes a deep sigh, then smiles with pride. She walks to the door and exits. Lights out.)*