

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

M&F  
MELVIN +  
CAROL IN  
UPSCALE  
RESTAURANT

FINALLY  
(FEELINGS OPEN UP -  
THEN A MISTAKE)

INT. FIRST RATE RESTAURANT

As he enters, looks for and then spot Carol. She is having a martini at the bar... Sitting on a stool -- watching COUPLES dance... Happy by herself... Turning down a MAN who wants to buy her another... And Melvin watches... Watches his date.

HEAD WAITER  
Shall I get her for you?

MELVIN  
No, it's all right. I'll just watch.

He enjoys watching her for a few more beats... She turns -- Melvin makes a "Haul your ass over here" gesture... and she smiles and walks toward him... A WAITER has lifted her drink -- placed it on a tray and follows her. She takes a bit of a slalom course through the tables, giddy as the MUSIC PLAYS and couples dance in the b.g. She notices the waiter in her trail.

START → CAROL  
(mouthing the words  
to Melvin)  
My drink is following me.

Melvin watches her approach. It is all too exquisite. He takes a breath -- it doesn't come easily.

~~START~~

CAROL  
You look s...

She stops herself from saying "sexy," regathers, then...

CAROL  
You look great.

They arrives at the table. He holds out her chair for her.

CAROL  
You wanna dance?

MELVIN  
I've been thinking about that since you brought it up before.

CAROL  
(rising)  
And?

MELVIN

No...

(and before she can  
digest that)

... I don't get this place. They  
make me buy an outfit but they let  
you wear a house dress. I don't  
get it.

ON CAROL

Melvin has no idea he has insulted her. Sandbagged in  
extreme, she gets up -- actually ready to leave.

MELVIN

No. Wait. What? Why? I didn't  
mean it. You gotta sit down. You  
can still give me the dirty  
look... just sit down and give it  
to me.

*you stand here too*

CAROL

Melvin, pay me a compliment... I  
need one and quick... You have no  
idea how much what you said just  
hurt my feelings.

MELVIN

(really pissed,  
mutters)

That monomminute somebody gets that  
you need them they threaten to go  
away. Never fails.

CAROL

That's not compliment, Melvin...  
That's just trying to sound smart  
so I feel stupid... A compliment  
is something nice about somebody  
else... Now or never.

MELVIN

Okay.

He waves her down.

*— touch on shoulder - guide her  
back to seat.*

CAROL

(sitting)  
And mean it...

MELVIN

MELVIN

Can we order first?

She thinks and then nods. The waiter is across the room.  
This does not stop Melvin.

MELVIN

(calling)

Two crab dinners and pitcher of  
cold beer.

(to Carol)

Baked or fries?

CAROL

Fries.

MELVIN

(calling)

One baked -- one fries.

~~STARTLED WAITER~~

~~(shouting back)~~

~~I'll tell your waiter.~~

MELVIN

(to Carol)

Okay, I got a real great  
compliment for you and it's true.

CAROL

I am so afraid you're about to say  
something awful...

MELVIN

Don't be pessimistic. It's not  
your style. Okay... Here I  
goes... Clearly a mistake.

(this is hell  
for him)

I have this -- what? Ailment...  
And my doctor -- a shrink... who  
I used to see all the time... he  
says 50 or 60 percent of the time  
a pill can really help. I hate  
pills. Very dangerous things,  
pills. "Hate," I am using the  
word "hate" about pills. My  
compliment is that when you came  
to my house that time and told me  
how you'd never -- well, you were  
there, you know... The next  
morning I started taking these  
pills.

CAROL  
(a little confused)  
I don't quite get how that's a  
compliment for me.

Amazing that something in Melvin rises to the occasion --  
so that he uncharacteristically looks at her directly --  
then:

MELVIN  
You make me want to be a better  
man.

] this is very  
genuine - very  
sincere.

Carol never expected the kind of praise which would so  
slip under her guard. She stumbles a bit -- flattered,  
momentarily moved and his for the taking.

CAROL  
That's maybe the best compliment  
of my life.

MELVIN  
Then I've really overshot here  
'cause I was aiming at just enough  
to keep you from walking out.

Carol laughs.

STOP

CAROL  
So how are you doing with those  
pills? Well, I hopahopahopa.

MELVIN  
Takes months to know... They work  
little by little.  
(holds his head;  
then)  
Talking like this is exhausting.

Carol moves to the chair next to him... She sits very  
close -- he tenses.

CAROL  
Have you ever let a romantic  
moment make you do something you  
know is stupid?

MELVIN  
Never.

CAROL

Here's the trouble with never.

TIGHT SHOT

for the kiss. <sup>HUG (PECK ON CHEEK)</sup> Their faces are close -- she looks at him... She closes her eyes -- her face moving toward him -- he is wide-eyed and afraid... His face almost moves away -- in a shot this close it's almost flight... But now his head moves back and he receives her kiss. It is brief. Carol smiles encouragement to him and herself. Melvin can't bear the pleasure.

MELVIN

You don't owe me that.

CAROL

That wasn't payment. When you first came into breakfast, when I saw you -- I thought you were handsome... Then, of course, you spoke... So now that your soft li'l underbelly is all exposed. Tell me, why did you bring me?

Melvin's voice is soft -- hesitant, okay, vulnerable... as he holds up his hands in a "stop" signal.

MELVIN

Well, ah... that's a personal question.

CAROL

Tell me even if you're scared.  
Tell me why you wanted me here.  
It's okay.

She kisses him again.

CAROL

If you ask me... I'll say, "yes."

MELVIN

(dissembling)  
There are lots of reason... I had a thought that if you had sex with Simon it might...

CAROL

(humiliated)  
Sex with Simon?

MELVIN

It's one idea...

CAROL

That's why you brought me? Look at me! Is that really why you brought me... Like I'm a what and I owe you what?!

MELVIN

I don't know why I brought you -- that idea occurred to me is all... It came out first... Hey, you kiss him -- me... He says he loves you. You two hit it off. But you don't want to... fine... Forget what I said about sex with Simon. It was a mistake.

CAROL

(wiping away tears)  
I'll never forget you said it.

MELVIN

It was a mistake.

But she has already turned away and exits the restaurant... Melvin alone and miserable.