

SHEPSEL AN' THE BARRACUDA

A full-length play

By

WILLIAM PHILIP ZACCHI

WILLIAM PHILIP ZACCHI
253 EDWARD STREET
RIDGEWOOD, N.J. 07450
201 396-9344
Zakwheat@yahoo.com

PLACE: LOUIE'S POOL HALL EAST HARLEM NEW YORK CITY

TIME: SPRING 2006

CHARACTERS:

JOSE: mid twenties

SHEPSEL: mid fifties

BARRACUDA: late fifties

GUSTAVO: early thirties

CARLOS: early fifties

THE SETTING

A room UPSTAIRS from the main playing area downstairs. The Room should give off the impression someone lives here, even if haphazardly; a lost soul clinging to memories. In the middle of the room is a pool table with balls strewn all over the table. Over the pool table are two hanging lights. STAGE RIGHT is a doorway which leads to the main playing area downstairs. UPSTAGE RIGHT is a pay phone with a dartboard next to it. In the middle of the dart board is a switchblade. Also UPSTAGE RIGHT are two pictures of wind mills taken out of a traveling brochure; held together by scotch tape. UPSTAGE in the CENTER WALL are two pool racks. Between the pool racks is a picture of a teenage gang posing coolly. Above the picture is a clock which reads 9:05. The clock should run during the duration of the play. UPSTAGE LEFT is door with the letters boldly printed in red ink: DON'T ENTER - TAKE A HOP! On the door knob is a faded gang jacket with the letters on the back: RED WINGS. STAGE LEFT are two windows overlooking the street. Next to the window down STAGE LEFT is a table with a shot glass, a marijuana pipe, bags of marijuana, a radio, and a bottle of tequila on it. A chair is next to the table with a towel hanging over the chair. Next to the table is a beebie gun and box of pellets. Scattered all over the floor are empty food containers, cigarette butts, crumpled brown envelopes; the kind marijuana is sold in. Playboy bunny posters adorn the walls as well as posters of comedians from Lenny Bruce to Rodney Dangerfield. On all the walls are the signatures of all the people who had visited the room. The lighting should suggest a shadowy glow as if a bomb were about to go off.

At opening:

Barracuda wears a bright Italian knit shirt, sharkskin pants, and beat up alligator shoes. Around his neck is a red horn. On his left arm is a tattoo of a Barracuda. On his forehead is a big bandage, as well as on the left side of his face; another bandage indicating he had been in a fight, and caught the worst end of it. DUKE OF EARL BY GENE CHANDLER plays on the radio. Barracuda lights a joint, inhales, blows the smoke out the window, taps on the table to the rhythm of the song. After a few tokes, he places the joint in an ashtray, pours tequila into a shot glass, gulps it down. He picks up the joint, smokes, smirks at something that has caught his attention out the window. He thinks for a long moment, stands, lowers the lights over the pool table, picks up the beebie gun, kneels, then shoots three rapid shots out the window, falls to the floor laughing hysterically. OFF STAGE we hear VOICES yelling in SPANISH. SHEPSEL quietly enters the room, watching Barracuda, laughing. He is wearing a dishevelled suit, carrying a suitcase. Barracuda doesn't see Shepsel, and crawls along the floor to the window UPSTAGE LEFT with the beebie gun. Barracuda takes a peek out the window, chuckles, then shoots three rapid shots again, and then totally goes into a fit of laughter. Shepsel puts his suitcase down, and laughs.

SHEPSEL

Is that you, Salvatore?

The Barracuda walks ever so cautiously towards Shepsel, shuts the radio off, then places the beebie gun down on the pool table, then turns on the lights, stares with a penetrating gaze at Shepsel. Shepsel avoids eye contact at all cost, picks up the beebie gun, and talks more out of necessity, than want.

SHEPSEL

Damn. This beebie gun must be over forty years old. I remember the day dad gave you this like it was yesterday, Salvatore.

BARRACUDA

(in a slow deliberate tone)

The name is...

Barracuda slams a pool ball down hard on the pool table.

BARRACUDA

BARRACUDA!!

Shepsel flinches, approaches his question with caution.

SHEPSEL

Even for me?

BARRACUDA

For everybody!

SHEPSEL

As kids you said I was the only person who could call you, Salvatore.

BARRACUDA

Well, we ain't kids no more - it's Barracuda or else - and that means especially to you!

Barracuda grabs the beebie gun out of Shepsel's hands, places it on the pool table.

SHEPSEL

I know you're probably still mad even after all these years, but I simply couldn't live with myself any longer; I've come to make my amends.

Shepsel holds out his hand to shake. Barracuda looks hard at his hand, then slaps it away.

BARRACUDA

Why don't you go fuck yourself!!

SHEPSEL

I was hoping the passage of time would have mellowed your hatred of me, Salvatore.

BARRACUDA

What'd I just tell you 'bout that Salvatore shit - it's Barracuda, or I throw you down the stairs!

SHEPSEL

Just be patient with me... it's been a long time.

Barracuda walks to the stairs, and yells down:

BARRACUDA

Jose!! Get your ass up here!!!

After a few moments, Jose comes running up the stairs. He's in his mid twenties, and wearing flashy clothes that don't match. On the back of his shirt is printed, Jose. Barracuda points to Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

What's this??!!

JOSE

Yo, bro, if your here to buy a dime bag of weed you deal with me downstairs. Nobody comes up here to bother the Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

I think there's been a little bit of a misunderstanding. My drugs days are way over. I just wanted to see my half brother, Salvatore; not buy weed.

JOSE

Salvatore?

Jose chuckles softly.

JOSE

So, Cuda, man, that your real name?

Barracuda grabs Jose by the collar, and pulls him close to him.

BARRACUDA

Hear me good, Jose - you ever call me, Salvatore you go head first out that window!! You comprehendo?!

JOSE

No, bro, you the Barracuda!!

Barracuda releases his grip on Jose. Jose studies Shepsel with piercing eyes, then looks at the Barracuda, then back to Shepsel.

JOSE

If he your half brother... he's the guy that-

BARRACUDA

- that cost me a three year rap!! An' now the cocksucker wants to make an amends!!

JOSE

This punk left you! We should kill'em for what he did!

SHEPSEL

I have a different version of what happened all those years ago!

JOSE

You punta!!

The Barracuda walks behind Shepsel, and pushes him. For a few moments, Jose, and Barracuda push Shepsel back, and forth - till finally Shepsel pushes his way past them, and briskly goes to the dart board, and pulls the switchblade out. Barracuda, and Jose freeze. Shepsel goes up to Barracuda, holds the switchblade out for Barracuda to take, opens his shirt, and holds the switchblade to his throat.

SHEPSEL

If you hate me that much - kill me!!

Barracuda trembles with emotion as he holds the knife to his throat.

JOSE

Stick'em, Cuda, man - stick'em!!

Abruptly, Barracuda goes to dart board, thrust the switchblade back in the board.

JOSE

This faggot left you - ain't you gonna at least hit'em?!

Shepsel goes up to Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

You lied to me! You need to own up to that. You told me we were going upstate New York to take in the scenery - not pull a heist!

BARRACUDA

You knew me; you knew I wasn't the type of guy to take in scenery!

SHEPSEL

But never did I think for a second we were going to rob a gun store -

BARRACUDA

(overlapping)

-it don't matter! You left me high, an' dry to get caught!

SHEPSEL

I admit it - I panicked when I heard the gun shot coming from inside the store - anybody in their right mind would have fled.

Barracuda goes right up to Shepsel,
grabs him by the collar.

BARRACUDA

But you weren't just any guy - you were my brother!!

Barracuda raises his fist as if
he's going to hit Shepsel, and
fights with every sinew of his
being not to hit him. Finally, the
Barracuda releases his grip on
Shepsel, and pushes him away.

JOSE

You want I should hit this faggot, Cuda?!

SHEPSEL

Please. The name is Shepsel.

JOSE

And what the hell is a Shepsel?! That like some sorta fungus
I ain't to suppose to touch?

Jose laughs sardonically.

SHEPSEL

For your information it's a rich Hebrew name that means sheep.

Jose starts making sounds like he's a sheep as he walks menacingly around Shepsel.

SHEPSEL

(to Barracuda)

Who is this guy to you?

JOSE

I am, Jose Torrez, Gonzalez, the third. To my women; I am known as mighty Joe Young; the spic with the hot stick - an to my man, the Barracuda I am the eyes, and ears of Louie's pool hall - and the Barracuda's business partner. If you don't wanna get your hands dirty Cuda, man; I'll take care of this punta.

SHEPSEL

The name is Shepsel - damn it!!

JOSE

Yo, bro, don't be catchin' no attitude with me!

Jose pushes Shepsel hard, then pushes him again even harder. Shepsel sneaks a pleading glance at Barracuda. Barracuda steps between them.

BARRACUDA

Cool it, Jose! We got customers waitin' - go sell.

Barracuda motions with his hand for Jose to give him all his money. Jose takes a large wad of money out of his pocket hands it to Barracuda.

Barracuda walks to the table,
throws the money on it, picks up
plastic bags with weed in, hands
it to Jose. Jose walks to the door
, stops.

JOSE

Why you lettin' him stay up here witcha?

BARRACUDA

Cauz' he's goin' to amuse me. From what I remember about'em;
he's not capable of hurtin' a fly.

SHEPSEL

I have been in a few scraps, you know.

Barracuda, and Jose break into a
fit of laughter.

SHEPSEL

I don't care if you believe me. I know who I am.

JOSE

If you woulda cost me three years in the big house; I woulda
cut your throat faggot.

Jose starts to go down the stairs,
then immediately comes right back
up.

JOSE

(to Barracuda)

Carlos braggin' all over Harlem how he kicked your ass.

Jose exits.

SHEPSEL

(very carefully measuring his
words)

Is that why your face is all bruised?

BARRACUDA

At least *I* fought!

SHEPSEL

(trying to maintain his
dignity, failing)

I'm not a head breaker. God gave me other gifts.

BARRACUDA

God made you a chicken shit.

Eerie silence as Barracuda stares
deadpan at Shepsel, then goes to
table, pours a shot of tequila into
a shot glass, drinks it. Barracuda
picks up the pool stick, bangs it
hard on the table while looking
with piercing eyes at Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

You know why I took you on the heist with me, an' not a
hundred other guys from Harlem? Cauz' everybody in Harlem
thought you were a chump. I wanted people to respect you.

SHEPSEL

Let's call a spade, a spade - you knew exactly what I was
made of. Never once did I share with you, or that son of a
bitch for a father that I had the slightest inclination for a
life of crime!

Barracuda points to the posters of
comedians on the walls.

BARRACUDA

You think it's what I wanted?! Our old man wanted this for
me!

SHEPSEL

You could have stood up to him. I did. The more he pushed me
into being something I'm not - the more I wanted to be a
pacifist for the sheer joy of annoying that bastard.

BARRACUDA

Pacifist! Whatta line of bull! How many times did you come to
me, an' say, "so an' so is botherin you"; knowing full well
I was gonna throw an unmerciful beaten on the guy.

SHEPSEL

(after a beat)

Okay. I was wrong to do that.

BARRACUDA

Without me protectin' you - you woulda been open prey for any guy in East Harlem. The heist woulda made me proud of you - it woulda changed everyone's opinion of you.

SHEPSEL

You're making this very hard on me; can't we just stay in the here, and now?

BARRACUDA

You'd like that wouldn't you - forget it all, and be all chummy, chummy again! Not so easy! An' what's your excuse that you, and Josephine left Harlem as soon as I got busted?!

Shepsel casually walks to the dartboard, pulls a few darts out of it, steps a few feet away, starts to throw the darts at the board.

SHEPSEL

(very calmly)

I had to leave. Everyone, but everyone was blaming me that you got caught.

Barracuda stares bitterly at Shepsel, goes to the table, pours another shot of Tequila into the shot glass, gulps it down, then rushes over to Shepsel, takes the darts out of his hand, throws them on the floor.

BARRACUDA

(his words building with an angry conviction)

So! Why now after almost thirty years didja come TODAY - of all days to seek out my forgiveness?! HUH?! Why today?! You prick you didn't even visit me in prison!

SHEPSEL

I'm going to put this out to you as bluntly as I can - I didn't have the integrity do to the right thing because I was so busy getting wasted on booze everyday -

BARRACUDA

-booze! You can come up with a better line than that you pansy ass!

SHEPSEL

Did you here what I just said?! I'm an alcoholic.

BARRACUDA

An alcoholic - you were always a weak minded fuck!

SHEPSEL

It has nothing whatsoever with being weak minded - it's a known medical fact; it's a disease.

BARRACUDA

I ain't buyin' it. Booze head, or no booze head - thirty years is a long time to wait to say, " I'm sorry for costin' you three years in prison."

Shepsel places his hands gently on Barracuda's shoulders - Barracuda pushes them away, goes to the window, looks out. Shepsel is right behind him in pursuit.

SHEPSEL

I'm going to try, and paint as vivid of a picture that I honestly can. From the moment I woke up; to the moment I went to sleep I had a drink in my hand. I was a human waste. I simply didn't have the integrity to do the right thing which was to find you, and ask for your forgiveness.

BARRACUDA

Whatta a line of shit you have... you're gonna blame it on booze. You ain't gettin' off the hook that easily.

Barracuda walks to the pool table,
leans heavily against it as if he's
struggling to control his emotions.
Shepsel walks right next to him.

SHEPSEL

I've waited a long time to be able to muster the courage to
say this to you; I'm sincerely sorry, and... I love you my
brother.

Barracuda picks up a pool ball,
slams it down hard on the pool
table.

BARRACUDA

Nobody loves me!! That's for punks like you! Me! I want only
two things; fear, an' respect!

SHEPSEL

Everybody needs to be loved!

BARRACUDA

Not me, so don't say it again that you love me!!

Shepsel goes to hug Barracuda -
Barracuda pushes him away.

BARRACUDA

Get the hell away from me - kiss my ass you an' love!

SHEPSEL

Now that I'm clean, and sober three years... I believe I
finally understand the meaning of love.

BARRACUDA

So whatta you want a ticker tape parade?

SHEPSEL

What I'd like is a little understanding from you. I'm trying
my best to work step nine with you.

BARRACUDA

Step nine!

Barracuda laughs shrilly, bangs the pool stick down hard on the pool table.

BARRACUDA

So you sick puppy; you joined a cult group - step nine!

SHEPSEL

I can assure you that Alcoholics Anonymous is not a cult group. The twelve steps of A.A. are life transforming.

BARRACUDA

I can see how transformed you are. Jose hit you, and you didn't even hit'em back.

SHEPSEL

That's not the way step nine works. It has absolutely nothing to do with violence, or proving my manhood.

BARRACUDA

Then I want nuthin' to do with it.

Shepsel is obviously getting frustrated, takes a deep breath, and talks with a much stronger conviction:

SHEPSEL

Step nine is to make an amends except when to do so would injure them, or others.

Barracuda grins slyly at Shepsel as if he has him right where he wants him.

BARRACUDA

So all I have to do is forgive you?

SHEPSEL

It would make this long trip worth wild... I didn't fair too well with Dad.

On "dad" it's as if Barracuda's whole demeanor changes.

BARRACUDA

(with a sense of urgency)

So you saw pops today?

SHEPSEL

Yes I did. He wouldn't shake my hand. All he said was, "you're no son of mine - you're a pussy."

Barracuda walks right up to Shepsel, and gets right in his face.

BARRACUDA

Did pops say anything 'bout me?

SHEPSEL

Why would he say anything bad about you? You were always his favorite.

BARRACUDA

Don't lie! You sure pops didn't say anything bad about me?!

SHEPSEL

Not a word...

BARRACUDA

Of course not. Pops likes the way I turned out?

SHEPSEL

Does dad know you're up here selling pot?

BARRACUDA

None of your business... so how'd you know I was up here if pops didn't tell you?

SHEPSEL

I was driving around Harlem; sort of; you know reminiscing, and who do I run into, Benny the bat, and he told me I'd find you up in this room.

BARRACUDA

Did he say anything bad 'bout me?

SHEPSEL

Not a word. Why are you so concerned about what people are saying bad things about you?

BARRACUDA

Alotta people like to say this, an' that 'bout me. Let'em tell me to my face, an' see if I don't crack their heads open.

SHEPSEL

My dear, brother; how about I treat you to dinner?

BARRACUDA

I don't leave here till all the weed is sold. I don't trust Jose worth a shit.

Shepsel forces a feeble smile as he's lost for words. Shepsel walks over to the door.

SHEPSEL

That's cute. Don't enter - take a hop. Do you live in there?

BARRACUDA

Me. I got a beautiful home in the Bronx.

SHEPSEL

I'm sure everybody gets a kick out of the door.

Shepsel laughs tightly.

BARRACUDA

What's so cute' bout it? It's Jose's room - so don't even think 'bout goin' in there.

SHEPSEL

You sure I can't treat you to dinner? I have to admit... this room gives me the spooks.

BARRACUDA

What?! You don't like the pool table?!

Barracuda slams his fist down hard on the pool table, then walks to wall CENTER STAGE, and hits it hard three times.

BARRACUDA

So you don't like my fucken walls?!

Barracuda rushes to the door with the don't enter- take a hop written on it, and smacks the door three times -

BARRACUDA

You don't like this door?!!

Barracuda gets right in Shepsel's face.

BARRACUDA

Up here I'm king! Nobody messes with me up here! So if you want my forgiveness so badly - you'll have to get it up here!!

Barracuda goes to table, pours a shot of tequila into the shot glass, gulps it all down, then picks up beebie gun, shoots two shots out the window.

SHEPSEL

I'm sorry; I didn't know how much this room meant to you?

Barracuda is visibly upset, throws Shepsel a hard glance, then shoots twice out the window with the beebie gun. Shepsel ever so cautiously walks to window UPSTAGE RIGHT, looks out.

SHEPSEL

Aren't you worried you might hit one of them in the eye?

BARRACUDA

Nope. The Hoya's know not to mess with me.

SHEPSEL

Is this like an everyday thrill for you?

BARRACUDA

Nope again. You bein' up here with me calls for a special occasion. It's the day of forgiveness.

Shepsel smiles warmly, walks right up to the Barracuda with his hand extended out to shake.

SHEPSEL

So I guess you've forgiven me?

BARRACUDA

Ain't gonna be that easy for ya.

Barracuda lightly smacks Shepsel's hand away.

BARRACUDA

You want my forgiveness; you'll have to earn it.

SHEPSEL

(after a beat)

What exactly do you mean, "have to earn it?"

BARRACUDA

There's gas station on the New York Thruway that's ripe for the takin'.

SHEPSEL

You mean - ROB IT?!

BARRACUDA

Exactly! Bingo! The key to my forgiveness.

SHEPSEL

I think you're a little confused. Yes. I want your forgiveness, but not if I have to go on a robbery to get it.

BARRACUDA

Think about it. This time you don't drive away to leave me to get caught, and you get one hundred percent forgiveness. It would prove your manhood to me.

SHEPSEL

(firmly)

I have no desire to have to prove my manhood to you. I'm fine just the way I am.

BARRACUDA

Not to me you're not. Jose called you a faggot. Anybody calls me a faggot - we're goin' to blows! I want you to hit, Jose - an' all is forgotten, an' maybe I might go out to dinner witcha.

Barracuda goes to the stairs, and yells down:

BARRACUDA

Jose get your ass up here! Shepsel wants to straighten you out!!

SHEPSEL

I'm warning you - I will simply leave!!

BARRACUDA

I'll decide when you can leave!

SHEPSEL

I will not be held hostage!!

BARRACUDA

Jose, get up here!!

Shepsel goes right up to Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

Please; if you care about me even a little; don't do this to me.

BARRACUDA

Don't beg like a dog - that's not what I want!

Jose comes running up the stairs.

JOSE

So you ready to deal with me, Sheepman?!!

SHEPSEL

This is barbaric - I'm leaving!!

Shepsel goes to pick up his suitcase, but Jose beats him to it, grabs the suitcase out of his hands, and throws it to Barracuda, who places it under the table.

JOSE

I don't like bein' called barbaric!!

Jose pushes Shepsel. Barracuda throws the pool stick to Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

Hit'em over the head - an' all is forgiven!!

JOSE

Yo, Barracuda; who's side you on?

BARRACUDA

Blood is thicker than skin - hit'em, Sheppy!!

Shepsel throws the pool stick down on the pool table.

SHEPSEL

NO! I refuse to be bullied into this insanity! May I please have my suitcase?

Jose pushes Shepsel very hard. Shepsel is struggling to maintain his composure. Barracuda again picks up the pool stick, throws it back to Shepsel. Jose glares at Barracuda, then punches Shepsel in the arm. Shepsel holds the pool stick as if he were about to hit, Jose.

BARRACUDA

Do it, Sheppy! Crack his spic head open!!

Jose backs away from, Shepsel, sighs.

JOSE

(to Barracuda)

Oh, yeah - hit the spic over the head! Ya know, Cuda man; I'm gonna think twice about talkin' my spic boys outta cumin' up here to slice you up!

BARRACUDA

Send'em up, an' see what happens!

Jose leaves in a huff. Shepsel throws the pool stick down on the table.

SHEPSEL

If hitting someone is the only way I'm going to get your forgiveness - you're in a loosing battle. Step three is to turn to do God's will - and God's will is not for me to hit anyone, or for that matter; get angry.

Barracuda walks to the window
UPSTAGE RIGHT yells out:

BARRACUDA

Hey HOYA'S!! I got a man of God up here who wants to rumble in the name of the Lord!!

Seconds later, bottles can be heard hitting the wall followed by angry voices YELLING IN SPANISH.

SHEPSEL

That's it!! I've had enough of your abuse! I'm leaving!

Shepsel goes to the table, grabs his suitcase. Barracuda rushes to Shepsel, places both hands on his shoulder.

BARRACUDA

(in the most charming voice he can muster)

I'm a jerk off. Stay. Deep down I really want to forgive you... It's just that it's been a long time... Please... stay.

Barracuda takes the suitcase out of Shepsel's hands, places it back under the table.

SHEPSEL

No more abuse?

Barracuda shakes his head no, then pours Tequila into a shot glass, and looks at Shepsel with devious, searching eyes.

BARRACUDA

Drink, an' all is totally forgiven.

SHEPSEL

Sorry; not gonna happen.

Barracuda places the shot glass under Shepsel's nose. Shepsel walks to the other side of the pool table with Barracuda right on his heels.

BARRACUDA

You failed test one by not hittin', Jose. Have a drink... an' we fall in love again.

Barracuda again, places the shot glass under Shepsel's nose. Shepsel pushes the drink away from his nose.

SHEPSEL

You lied! You said no more abuse! Trying to get me to drink - knowing that I'm an alcoholic shows me how little respect you have for my recovery.

Barracuda places his finger in the shot glass, tries to put his finger on Shepsel's lips - Shepsel pushes Barracuda's hand away.

SHEPSEL

Get that fucken drink away from me!!

BARRACUDA

Holy shit - you cursed!! There's hope for your manhood yet.

Barracuda drinks the Tequila.

SHEPSEL

I've had it. This amends isn't worth the trouble. I'm leaving!

Barracuda blocks his path from getting to the suitcase.

BARRACUDA

Ya know, Sheppy; I'm kinda proud of you. I couldn't budge you to my way of thinkin'. Bravo!

SHEPSEL

I owe it all to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Barracuda starts to rack up balls,
finishes, chalks up a pool stick,
hands it to Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

Playin' a little pool will mellow me right out... c'mon,
don't leave...who knows when I'll see you again?

SHEPSEL

Just be fore warned; one more insult, and I will leave.

Barracuda shakes his head, no.

BARRACUDA

Since you're my guest; you break.

SHEPSEL

I'm horrible at pool. Will you teach me?

BARRACUDA

All I do is business up here. I never play pool.

Shepsel aims the cue ball, hits it,
getting no balls in.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: The matter of
whether they get a ball in, or not
is of little consequence. It
shouldn't change their dialogue in
the least.

Barracuda chalks up his pool stick,
aims, shoots, getting a ball in.
The posters of Rodney Dangerfield,
and Lenny Bruce catch Shepsel's
attention.

SHEPSEL

Am I correct? That's Rodney Dangerfield, and Lenny Bruce up
on the wall?

BARRACUDA

Only the best go on the wall.

Barracuda aims, shoots, misses.

SHEPSEL

Do you know the most favorite thing about growing up in East Harlem with you was?

BARRACUDA

Me protectin' you?

SHEPSEL

Whereever we went in Harlem together; people would walk up to us, and say, " Barracuda tell us a story. Barracuda tell us a joke", and in a moments notice you'd come up with a story, or joke that made everyone laugh hysterical. It made me fell special to walk with you. You always said, " you wanted to be a stand up comedian." I truly believe you would have been great.

BARRACUDA

I was good, wasn't I?

Shepsel vigorously shakes his head
yes.

BARRACUDA

Who could ever forget your dream. Oh, shit! How you busted pops balls when you would say, " I wanna be an F.B.I. Agent. And you wonder why Pops hates you - he was a born criminal; the enemy of the F.B.I.

SHEPSEL

I have to confess; I loved irking him.

Shepsel chalks up his pool stick,
shoots, misses. Barracuda chalks up
his pool stick.

SHEPSEL

Can I show you something?

BARRACUDA

You're wearin' a wire tap?

Shepsel laughs, grabs his suitcase from under the table, places it on the chair, opens it, takes out a chess trophy.

SHEPSEL

I won a chess tournament.

Shepsel hands it to Barracuda, who looks at it for a brief moment, then instantly hands it back to Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

I knew it couldn't be for no man's game. You were the worst at sports in all of Harlem.

SHEPSEL

(with a hint of irritation)

For your information; I had to beat out a six foot six lumberjack with steely eyes. He shook at the power of my Queen.

Barracuda chalks up his pool stick.

BARRACUDA

Still; it wasn't for no man's game.

Shepsel bites his upper lip not to lash out at the Barracuda, takes out his wallet, and takes pictures out, and holds them in front of Barracuda's eyes.

SHEPSEL

Did you know you're an uncle to two children?

Barracuda doesn't seem to thrilled, gives the pictures a quick once over - Shepsel practically forces Barracuda to look at them as he places the picture right in front of Barracuda's eyes as he's about to shoot.

SHEPSEL

That's your niece, Tommy; a contractor with two kids, and that's your other niece, Loretta. Beautiful, isn't she?

Again, the Barracuda shows no interest which only instigates Shepsel to be more forceful, and places another picture in front of Barracuda's eyes.

SHEPSEL

Look at, Josephine. Hasn't she aged quite gracefully?

Barracuda doesn't even acknowledge the picture.

BARRACUDA

MING! You wanna play pool, or not?

SHEPSEL

(exasperated)

We're family! I'm simply trying to update you with your family.

Shepsel takes another picture out of his wallet.

BARRACUDA

What the hell now?!

SHEPSEL

I sell antiques. This is a picture of my store.

BARRACUDA

So you sell dead people's furniture.

SHEPSEL

I can assure you; it's a lot more prestigious than that. I plan to open a second store.

BARRACUDA

Who gives a shit?! I pull in almost a thou' a week sellin' weed.

SHEPSEL

Why do I have this gut feeling you wanna act as if you're better than me? Selling pot is illegal; not to mention it leads to harder drugs.

BARRACUDA

You're startin' to get on my nerves!!

Barracuda without even aiming, hits the cue ball very hard getting no balls in. Shepsel looks dryly at Barracuda, aims. Barracuda is keenly watching Shepsel as a shit eating grin caresses his face.

BARRACUDA

(with a sexual overtone)

So how is good ole, Josephine?

Shepsel is about to shoot, stops.

SHEPSEL

She's fine thank you.

BARRACUDA

When I fixed you up with her all I wanted you do was break your cherry - not marry the broad.

SHEPSEL

Well then; I thank you. I have no regrets whatsoever about marrying her. Next month we'll be celebrating thirty one years of marriage.

BARRACUDA

You do know, Josephine was well seasoned?

Shepsel shoots Barracuda a hard gaze, shoots, misses.

SHEPSEL

It's your turn - shoot.

As Barracuda chalks up his pool stick; he stares at Shepsel very coquettishly.

BARRACUDA

Yeah.. Alotta guys in East Harlem said, " she was the best piece of ass they ever had."

SHEPSEL

I know what you're trying to do. It won't work.

BARRACUDA

Didja know I had her too?

SHEPSEL

(sharply)

No. I didn't know that.

BARRACUDA

Did her in the back of my car. Man; you shoulda heard her moanin'.

SHEPSEL

Spare me the details! Remember you're talking about my fucken wife!

BARRACUDA

Gettin' mad. There's hope for step nine yet...

Barracuda shoots, getting a ball in.

BARRACUDA

Does she still give a great blow job?

SHEPSEL

None of your damn friggin' business!

BARRACUDA

You're beginnin' to unravel... I even put it up her ass.

SHEPSEL

You're not a brother - you're an animal!!

Shepsel pushes Barracuda which
draws a mischievous grin from
Barracuda.

BARRACUDA

Gettin' mad, huh? I'd bet my bottom dollar she's home now
gettin' the shit screwed outta her by somebody!

Shepsel raises his fist as if he's
going to hit Barracuda at the next
word. Barracuda suddenly begins to
applaud.

BARRACUDA

You've completed the first step in my forgivin' you finally.

Barracuda picks up the beebie gun,
thrust it into Shepsel's hands.

BARRACUDA

Take your frustration out on the Hoya's.

Without even thinking, captivated
by an inner anger he has not felt
in years, Shepsel shoots three
rapid shots out the window, then
thrust the beebie gun into
Barracuda's chest.

BARRACUDA

Goes to show you; even a pacifist has the seed of violence
in'em.

SHEPSEL

When it comes to my wife; I've reached the boiling point.

BARRACUDA

It was all bull. Josephine wasn't as loose as I made her out to be, an' I never had her.

SHEPSEL

You sick bastard - you just wanted to rile me!

Barracuda looks out the window.

BARRACUDA

Man; all the Hoya's are lookin' up here. You may have hit one in the face.

Shepsel very cautiously looks out the window.

SHEPSEL

(with a sense of extreme
panic)

I need to go down, and apologize.

BARRACUDA

No way! You're up here with me, an' I never apologize. Where's your car parked?

SHEPSEL

It's that blue Ford almost directly across the street.

BARRACUDA

Whoa! Man, oh, man you'd better stay up here cauz' most of those Hoya's were members of the Noble Lord gang. They probably saw you shoot the beebie gun at'em, an' would probably cut your heart out if you went down now.

SHEPSEL

You had this all planned out, didn't you? Keep me hostage up here. Well, I'll wait a half hour the most, then I'm leaving with, or without your forgiveness.

BARRACUDA

Deal.

Barracuda walks over to the picture
of the teenage gang on the wall.

BARRACUDA

Look at my gang. We were the toughest gang in New York.
That's why those Hoya's across the street have it in for me.
The Red Wings always kicked the Noble Lord's asses.

SHEPSEL

You do realize I took that picture of you, and the Red Wings
with the camera dad brought us.

BARRACUDA

Yep! Pops was real proud of me the day we kicked the Noble
Lords asses. He loved the fact that I was the leader of the
gang - how'd I get my nickname?

SHEPSEL

You bit a guys ear off in a fight.

BARRACUDA

Pops gave me my nickname... those were the days.

Barracuda points to each gang
member in the picture.

BARRACUDA

Ray Ray, Frankie Meats, Muskey, Baby Tom, Johnny Roastbeef,
Paulie the Greek - an' my main man, Mikey Meldish; a true
warrior. Even though I was the leader; I couldn't get you in
the gang. None of'em thought you had the balls to fight.

SHEPSEL

Hold on a second here. If my memory serves me right; I saved
your ass from catching a massive beating when two of the
Noble Lords jumped you.

BARRACUDA

You! Saved my ass?!

SHEPSEL

I remember it like it was yesterday. I saw them beating on
you -

BARRACUDA

- hold up! It's All comin' back - put the Red Wing jacket on!!

Barracuda rushes to the door, grabs the red, and white jacket with the words Red Wings on the back.

SHEPSEL

I can't. I'd feel like a fool - plus I wasn't a Red Wing.

BARRACUDA

I say tonight you are.

Barracuda starts to take off Shepsel's jacket. Shepsel puts up a light resistance. Barracuda starts to sing as he's putting the Red Wing jacket on Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

Forgiveness, forgiveness.. That's what I wanna do.

SHEPSEL

I guess I could scare a few people with this jacket on me.

BARRACUDA

Alright! So they were beatin' on me - then what?!

SHEPSEL

I hit one in the face -

BARRACUDA

-show me! Act it out just like it happened!

Shepsel halfheartedly starts to throw punches at an imaginary figure.

BARRACUDA

Harder!

Shepsel swings harder.

BARRACUDA

Then what?!

SHEPSEL

I hit the guy in the face, then I punches the one holding you like a man possessed -

BARRACUDA

- an' I beat the hell outta the other one!!

Barracuda starts punching wildly at an imaginary figure as if he were taken over by a demon.

BARRACUDA

No one messes with me - NO ONE!! Gotta make Pops proud of me!!

Barracuda continues to punch at an imaginary figure in a frenzied state. Shepsel stops to watch Barracuda with a hint of concern written across his face. Barracuda is now punching with unbounded fury as he heads toward the pool table. When Barracuda reaches the pool table; he picks up the pool stick, and bangs it on the pool table like a man possessed till he is spent physically. Barracuda is emotionally drained, goes to the table, pours a shot of Tequila, gulps it so quickly the Tequila falls over his shirt. Shepsel walks up to Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

Salvatore... are you okay?

BARRACUDA

Salvatore?... Who the fuck is that?

SHEPSEL

Salvatore Malfatano is a rich name.

BARRACUDA

(viciously)

He's dead! Let'em stay dead!!

Barracuda lights a joint of weed.

SHEPSEL

Booze, and pot are not the answers to what is ailing you.

BARRACUDA

Ailin' me! You ail me.

Barracuda walks right up to Shepsel, and blows smoke in his face. Shepsel glares at Barracuda, walks away from the Barracuda. Barracuda walks up to Shepsel, holds the joint out for him to take.

SHEPSEL

Have you heard a word I said? I'm in recovery! Any normal person with enough integrity would respect my recovery.

BARRACUDA

Integrity. Ooooh, what a fancy word. I'm the Barracuda... I have no integrity.

SHEPSEL

I've tried. God knows I've tried to reason with you. First you try, and get me to hit, Jose; then you tempt me with a drink- and the best is you made up stories about my wife to provoke me into violence.

Shepsel takes out his wallet, slams a card down hard on the pool table.

SHEPSEL

My numbers on the card. Call me if you want to talk like two sensible human beings. I'm leaving!

BARRACUDA

What 'bout my forgiveness?

Shepsel picks up his suitcase.
Barracuda rushes to the stairs to
block Shepsel from leaving.

SHEPSEL

I will not beg like a dog!

BARRACUDA

You think I'm gonna just let you leave like that? I've had a lotta years to think 'bout what I was gonna do to you if I caught up witcha. I decide when you can leave!

SHEPSEL

Sorry; I will no longer be held hostage.

Barracuda lifts up his shirt to
reveal a gun.

SHEPSEL

I'm your brother - you wouldn't shoot me!

BARRACUDA

I've killed lesser men who didn't cost me three years in the slammer.

SHEPSEL

(after a beat)

You are joking about killing people?

Barracuda walks right up to
Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

Look into my eyes. You see any sign of me jokin'?

SHEPSEL

No. You seem sincere. It's just that as kids you swore you'd never grow up to be a hit man like our father.

BARRACUDA

Kid stuff. Pops made me who I am today - tough as nails.

SHEPSEL

If you ask me; I think we both needed; not toughness from him, but more love.

BARRACUDA

Damn you really like that word, love.

SHEPSEL

Doesn't every child want more love from it's father?

BARRACUDA

That wasn't Pops make up - so accept it.

Uncomfortable silence between them
as if something unspoken wants to
be said. Shepsel stares searchingly
into Barracuda's eyes.

BARRACUDA

Why ya lookin' at me like that? Is there sumthin' I don't know that you know?

SHEPSEL

It's just that the brother I grew up with was tough, but not a killer.

BARRACUDA

Gonna be a bigger man in the Gambino family than my father.

SHEPSEL

You always used to pull pranks on me... tell me this is a prank.

Barracuda shakes Shepsel violently.

BARRACUDA

You gotta believe me that I killed someone - tell me you believe me?!

SHEPSEL

Believe that you've gone so far off the scale of human decency that you would take a life.

Barracuda releases his grip on Shepsel, walks to the dart board, grabs the switchblade, then slams it as hard as he can back into the dartboard.

BARRACUDA

(almost as if he were pleading his case)

I did it... I killed...

Barracuda turns to face Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

Ya gotta believe me... please believe me.

SHEPSEL

Why do you want so badly for me to believe you've killed people?

BARRACUDA

It's important to me that before you leave here tonight you `member me as a guy who was fearless.

SHEPSEL

I'd rather remember you as a kind, loving person rather than a hit man.

BARRACUDA

(like a damn bursting)

I'm not KIND!! And I'm not LOVING! I'm the Barracuda - the toughest guy to ever come out of East Harlem...

Eerie silence between them.

BARRACUDA

(with a tinge of despair)

Go on leave... I'm not gonna shoot ya.

SHEPSEL

I never doubted that... Ya know what I also doubt; that you want me to leave. I think deep down you care as much about me as I care about you.

BARRACUDA

(gayly)

Your turn to shoot.

Shepsel chalks up his pool stick,
but stops to watch Barracuda as he
pours a shot of Tequila.

SHEPSEL

Not for nothing, but when I got here that bottle was three quarters full, and now, in a brief time there's less than a half of bottle left. Alcoholism is believed to be an hereditary decease.

BARRACUDA

Just when I was beginnin' to feel okay around you - you accuse me of bein' an alcoholic!

SHEPSEL

Think about it. How many times did our father come home drunk out of his mind?

BARRACUDA

Get this clear! I can handle my booze - if you can't that's your problem!

SHEPSEL

(carefully measuring his
words)

It's just that I care about you.

BARRACUDA

Up yours!

Barracuda drinks. Shepsel just
shrugs, again aims, stops.

SHEPSEL

Any chance you've changed your mind about dinner?

Barracuda just smirks, picks up the
beebee gun.

SHEPSEL

There's not a reason in the world to shoot at them.

Barracuda laughs shrilly.

BARRACUDA

I'm an alcoholic - I don't know what I'm doin'.

Barracuda pumps the beebee gun
twice. Shepsel throws the pool
stick down on the pool table, walks
right up to Barracuda, and tries to
grab the beebee gun out Barracuda's
hands. Barracuda instead forces the
beebee gun into Shepsel's hands,
and over powers him into taking two
shots out the window. Moments
later, CURSING IN SPANISH can be
heard followed by bottles hitting
the wall.

SHEPSEL

That was it! I'm done playing games with you - I've had it!
I'm leaving!!

BARRACUDA

You'd better think 'bout sumthin'; you gotta make it from the
pool hall to your car, an' I'd bet my last dollar the spics
will rip you a new asshole!... You can't leave.

SHEPSEL

I'll simply call the police.

Shepsel takes his cell phone out of
his pocket, starts to dial.

Barracuda smacks the cell phone out of his hand, and it falls to the floor. Barracuda steps on the cell phone furiously with his feet till the phone breaks.

SHEPSEL

You no good bastard - I'm going to get you for that!

Barracuda just smirks, picks up the beebie gun, starts shooting out the window furiously.

BARRACUDA

If they come up here pick up the pool stick, an' hit the first Hoya over the head that comes near you.

Jose comes running up the stairs.

JOSE

Cuda man!! You'd better stop shootin' at the Hoya's! You shot Carlos's wife in the face!

Barracuda just smirks at Jose goes back to shooting the beebie gun.

JOSE

You ain't yourself tonight, bro. You swore if you caught up with the Sheepman you were gonna put'em in the hospital, an' he's wearin' your Red Wing jacket.

Shepsel quickly takes off he jacket, throws it on the pool table.

JOSE

Too late Sheepman; the Hoya's across the street saw you wearin' the jacket - your ass in big trouble!

SHEPSEL

Salvatore! Stop shooting!!

JOSE

(slyly)

You's better listen to the Sheepman, Salvatore.

Barracuda places the beebie gun down on the window sill, goes right up to Jose, and grabs him by the collar.

BARRACUDA

Who gave you permission to call me, Salvatore?

Jose pushes Barracuda's hands off him.

JOSE

That's the second time tonight you've put your hands on me. We comin' to an end, man.

BARRACUDA

Don't give me any lip - go back downstairs, an' sell!

JOSE

I gotta ninety five on the conductor's exam - so we comin' to an end. You'd better find someone else to sell your weed for ya. I start learnin' how to drive a train next month.

BARRACUDA

Sounds like a lotta bullshit!

JOSE

When you see, bro that I ain't here next month sellin' weed for ya, then we see who's bullshittin' who?

BARRACUDA

Then next month I'll be shootin' beebie pellets at you.

Barracuda laughs shrilly.

JOSE

Didja hear what I said before - you hit Carlos's wife in the face with a pellet!

SHEPSEL

(to Jose)

This lunatic broke my cell phone. Can I borrow yours to call the police?

JOSE

Call the man. That's not the way we handle things in Harlem. You'd better think about it, Cuda. The Sheepman ain't gonna be much help if they come up here.

BARRACUDA

Me, an' Sheppy ain't scared!

SHEPSEL

Don't you dare involve me anymore in this insanity than you already have!

JOSE

If you had shown me some respect tonight I might go talk to'em, but you ain't shown me no respect.

BARRACUDA

Why don't you just kiss my hairy ass!

Barracuda is now shooting the
beebee gun rapidly out the window.

BARRACUDA

Gonna be a night you're never gonna forget, Sheppy!

SHEPSEL

(to Jose)

Please! I'm literally begging you to call the police for me!

Jose looks down the stairs.

JOSE

Oh, Shit!! You in trouble now , Cuda - here comes Carlos wiith a knife!!

Carlos, a well built Puerto Rican comes running up the stairs, pointing a bowie knife at Barracuda. Barracuda drops the beebie gun on the floor, pulls the gun out from under his shirt, points it at Carlos. Moments later, Gustavo, mid twenties is right behind Carlos holding a baseball bat.

SHEPSEL

Help me dear, Lord!

Everyone looks warily at Shepsel. Carlos takes a step towards Barracuda.

End Of Act 1

ACT 2

Carlos takes another threatening step towards, Barracuda. Gustavo stares rigidly at Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

See if I don't blow your head off before you can reach me with that knife!

CARLOS

You shoot me, and every Rican in Harlem will get both of you Red Wing faggots!

BARRACUDA

Faggots, huh?! You think, Sheppy, and me are scared?! We're Red Wings - scared of nuthin'!

SHEPSEL

(terrified)

I'm not a Red Wing; I'm -

CARLOS

(overlapping)

-then why were you wearin' the Red Wing colors, and shootin' beebee's at us for?

SHEPSEL

I admit; I'm guilty, but I never thought it would come down to this.

BARRACUDA

Don't beg, Sheppy - Red Wings don't beg.

SHEPSEL

Salvatore...please put the gun down.

BARRACUDA

Why should I? If the tables were turned Carlos would shoot me.

JOSE

You shoot, Carlos, Cuda man; there goes the pot business.

SHEPSEL

That's something to think about, plus the fact; you could go to prison.

Carlos places the knife down on the pool table. Barracuda keenly watches him, still pointing the gun.

CARLOS

(baiting Barracuda on)

Why don't we settle this with our fist...Sal...Va... Tore.

Carlos abruptly goes into a boxing stance.

BARRACUDA

No need to. I'm the one holdin' the gun.

CARLOS

Punta! You scared I might throw a beaten on ya again?

BARRACUDA
 (suddenly loses all his
 bravado)

That ain't it -

Shepsel closes his eyes, and begins
 to pray.

SHEPSEL
 (loudly, with conviction)
 God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
 change -

BARRACUDA
 - what the hell are you doin' prayin'!!

CARLOS
 -man, these Red Wings are tough -

Gustavo, Carlos, and Jose laugh.

SHEPSEL
 (raises his voice even more)
 -the courage to change the things I can-

BARRACUDA
 -fucken, Sheppy!! STOP IT!!

Carlos, Gustavo, and Jose laugh
 even louder.

SHEPSEL
 -AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!

Shepsel takes a deep breath, and
 smiles brightly, goes to the table,
 picks up the tequila bottle, and
 shot glass, then walks over to
 Carlos.

SHEPSEL
 Have a drink to celebrate the new found friendship between
 the Red Wings, and the Noble Lords.

BARRACUDA

(to Shepsel)

What the hell you doin' givin' my good booze away?!

Carlos stares quizzically at Shepsel, then takes the bottle, and shot glass, and pours himself a drink, and gulps it down. Shepsel now takes the bottle to Barracuda who has stopped pointing the gun at Carlos. Barracuda places the gun back under his shirt, pours a drink, gulps it down, places the bottle on the pool table.

SHEPSEL

For peace, and good will among men.

CARLOS

You gonna fight me, or not?

Barracuda walks towards Carlos with his hand extended out to shake. Carlos hesitates, looks at Shepsel, then shakes hands with Barracuda.

BARRACUDA

Ya know, Carlos; I gotta give you credit for comin' up here with only a knife.

Barracuda points to Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

This guy comin' back here tonight got me all wound up. He brought back memories of the old rumble days between the Noble Lords, an' the Red Wings.

CARLOS

You shoot me, or my wife one more time in the face with a beebie pellet, and then we're really gonna rumble.

BARRACUDA

Nay. We're done, and to show you how much I value your business I'm gonna give ya two free bags of weed on me. Jose, give'em two bags on the house.

Jose takes out two bags, hands them to Carlos. Barracuda takes money out of his pocket.

BARRACUDA

An' here's twenty bucks to buy some beer with.

Carlos takes the money.

CARLOS

I swear, Barracuda, on my son's life; that there ain't gonna be enough weed, or beer to stop me from comin' up here with my gun if you shoot any more beebee's at us.

BARRACUDA

Is that a threat?

SHEPSEL

(quickly interjects)

No! We're done. I give you my word on that!

Carlos , and Gustavo exit. Jose points at Shepsel.

JOSE

You ain't yourself, Cuda, man; he's the guy you should be shootin' beebee's at.

BARRACUDA

Don't tell me what I gotta do.

JOSE

Bro; you'd better think about this; Carlos gonna brag all over Harlem how you backed down from handlin' your beef with your fist.

BARRACUDA

Let'em brag. When the time comes we'll see who's still standin'. Go sell. You still work for me, Mister Conductor.

Jose grimaces at Shepsel, exits
down the stairs.

SHEPSEL

Is this the way you live your everyday life?

BARRACUDA

Excitin', huh?

SHEPSEL

I would say 'insanity' is a better word for it.

BARRACUDA

Just think; you can tell all your A.A. Buddies 'bout tonight, an' I'll bet they get jealous.

SHEPSEL

SAL! Carlos came up here with a knife to stab you, and you pulled out a gun to shoot him! Tell me that's not a little on the insane side?

BARRACUDA

Yeah, but I ain't the one who denied bein' a Red Wing - you were.

SHEPSEL

(articulating each word
carefully)

I...AM ...NOT...A RED WING - NOR do I ever want to be.

BARRACUDA

I gave you a chance to redeem yourself in my eyes, and you failed.

SHEPSEL

I have some bad news for you; I didn't exactly see you wanting to take on Carlos on in a fair fist fight.

Barracuda's eyes turn to rage; he
grabs Shepsel by the collar.

BARRACUDA

You sayin' I was scared?!

Shepsel musters all his strength to
take Barracuda's hands off him.

SHEPSEL

It's called being human.

BARRACUDA

I'm the BARRACUDA - scared of no one motherfucker!

SHEPSEL

And even if you were scared: I wouldn't have any less respect
for you... I mean that.

Sublime silence. Barracuda pours
himself a shot of Tequila, drinks.

BARRACUDA

Bein' scared may be okay for you, but not for me.

Shepsel goes right up to Barracuda,
and looks him squarely in the eye.

SHEPSEL

When I left you to get caught thirty years ago I was so
depressed I had a death wish. Can you relate?

BARRACUDA

Me! A death wish?

Barracuda laughs sardonically.

SHEPSEL

Yes! Death wish! You're shooting beebie pellets at the Puerto
Ricans across the street knowing full well they hate you, and
yet you provoke them.

A shit eating grin surfaces across Barracuda's face as he walks to the window, and looks out.

BARRACUDA

Cummere...

Shepsel walks the window, cautiously looks out.

BARRACUDA

Look at'em. There must be thirty spics lookin' up here with hatred in their eyes.

SHEPSEL

But you did give them pot, and brought them beer.

BARRACUDA

Don't mean shit. Tonight it all comes to a head.

SHEPSEL

What do you mean by that?

BARRACUDA

You think I'm finished with, Carlos? He attacked my manhood - an' you - you fruitcake sayin' a prayer, an' havin'em laugh at us.

SHEPSEL

I will not say I'm sorry. It's all part of my spiritual convictions.

BARRACUDA

Well, it ain't part of mine! What I wanna see from you is one iota of bravery to fight when the shit hits the fan.

Shepsel sighs.

SHEPSEL

I have change. I'll simply call the police if my life is in danger.

Barracuda laughs coolly.

BARRACUDA

I got bad news for ya; that phone doesn't work worth a shit.

Shepsel goes to the pay phone,
takes change out of his pocket,
places it in the phone, listens for
a moment, then slams the phone
down.

BARRACUDA

See; I toldja. An' anyway; even you got across to the man
everybody would deny everything, an' you'd look like a fool.

SHEPSEL

God knows I tried to reason with you, but you've worn out my
patience, as well as my need for forgiveness. I'm going back
home.

Shepsel picks up his suitcase.
Abruptly, Barracuda picks up the
beebee gun, pumps it three times.

BARRACUDA

You go one foot near those stairs - I start shootin' like a
wild man, an' see if the spics don't rip you, an' your car
apart.

Shepsel places his suitcase down,
walks over to the Barracuda, and
grabs the beebee gun out of his
hand.

BARRACUDA

I'll just start shootin' at'em with my gun, an' then my dear
brother the shit will really hit the fan.

SHEPSEL

You've trapped me. Is that what you think?

Barracuda smirks.

BARRACUDA

All I simply want is too see us go down in a blaze of Red Wing glory.

SHEPSEL

Do you hear yourself? You know how pathetic it sounds to still believe in street gangs at your age. You've gotten a lot of things off your chest - well, I'm going to forget I'm a man of God for a second, and point blank tell you; the Red Wings were nothing but a bunch of street thugs without an iota of integrity among any of you - in other words: LOSER'S!

Barracuda storms right up to
Shepsel, gets in his face.

BARRACUDA

Loser's! You ever call me a loser again - I'll cut your throat with that switchblade!!

SHEPSEL

Coming here was seemingly a mistake on my part. I should have realized how much you hate me by that letter you wrote me.

BARRACUDA

What the frig you talkin' 'bout now?!

Shepsel takes a letter out of his
coat pocket.

BARRACUDA

I don't wanna hear it!

SHEPSEL

All night I've let you put me down; now I think it's time to give you a dosage of your own medicine. (starts to read from letter) You lowlife Jew bastard -

BARRACUDA

- THAT'S ENOUGH!!

SHEPSEL

- the only mistake Hitler made is not killing your mother,
and your whole Jewish family -

BARRACUDA

- GIMME THAT LETTER!

Barracuda chases Shepsel around the pool table as Shepsel reads from the letter.

SHEPSEL

- you mean nothing to me! All you are is a punk who can't fight his own battles!

BARRACUDA

-cool it with the letter!

SHEPSEL

- I'm ashamed to even walk on the same side of the street as you!

Barracuda and Shepsel pick up the pace as they run around the pool table.

BARRACUDA

Prove yourself to me tonight, and all is forgotten -

SHEPSEL

-not to me it's not! I don't even consider you a man because you made it with a guy that I'm glad was killed!!

Barracuda jumps on the pool table, and jumps onto to Shepsel, and after a brief struggle, grabs the latter out of Shepsel's hands, and tears it up.

SHEPSEL

What's wrong?! Can't face the facts that you could write a letter that shows your true colors towards me! I may need your forgiveness, but I feel you also need mine!

BARRACUDA

Good old Pops practically wrote the whole letter for me.

SHEPSEL

Oh, please, all night has been about you testing my manhood - at least own up to the fact that you wrote the letter!

BARRACUDA

I said, " pops dictated that letter to me; word for word."

Tense silence as Shepsel leans on the pool table for support at this revelation.

SHEPSEL

(adds dryly)

I don't believe it... my own father wrote this.

BARRACUDA

Believe it.

SHEPSEL

How could he be so cruel?

BARRACUDA

Accept it. The prick had his own set of rules, and nobody, but nobody could ever tell him he was wrong.

SHEPSEL

Tell me the truth...did he think I was gay?

BARRACUDA

Whoa, Sheppy! Be a man, and own up to the fact that you were hangin' out with the only fag in East Harlem.

SHEPSEL

It was nothing like that. We never touched.

BARRACUDA

Then what the hell were you doin' hangin' out with Artie Mo so much? Don't think for a moment that it didn't 'cauz me embarrassment too.

SHEPSEL

Did you ever stop to think that maybe Artie Mo offered me something I couldn't get from my own father?

BARRACUDA

An' what was that? A dick up the ass?

SHEPSEL

I told you - we never touched! He was a kind, considerate man.

BARRACUDA

Who just happened to be a homo.

SHEPSEL

He offered me kindness, sensitivity, and a way to look at the world apart from the East Harlem mentality.

BARRACUDA

All I know is; I hadda bust a coupla heads when guys would call you a fag.

SHEPSEL

I don't care what people thought -

BARRACUDA

-bullshit! I think you cared more than you're willin' to admit.

SHEPSEL

Don't put words into my mouth! Artie Mo was more like a father to me than my own father was. If not for him I would know nothing about the antique business; not to mention the books he turned me onto; an appreciation of fine art, and culture that was surely missing in our household.

BARRACUDA

I have to admit; you've almost sold me. It's a shame pops had'em thrown six stories off a rooftop.

SHEPSEL

What?!

BARRACUDA

The papers wrote it was a suicide.

SHEPSEL

Even his own mother said it was a suicide.

BARRACUDA

Think again. All the cops, and journalist were on Pops payroll. He dictated to them what he wanted to be printed.

SHEPSEL

You sure about this?

BARRACUDA

One hundred percent. Why do you look so shocked? That's the way Pops operated.

SHEPSEL

And to think I went to see him today to seek out a relationship with that poor excuse for a human being - you know what?! I think I will go back to see good old Pops, and give him a peace of mind! I'd like to tell him from the deepest part of my soul," You should drop dead you no good bastard!!

BARRACUDA

(sarcastically)

Not for nuthin', bro; I see a big change in you already; for a man of God you shouldn't be sayin' those nasty things.

SHEPSEL

Even men of God have their limits.

BARRACUDA

Open your eyes, bro. You knew as well as me that our father killed people.

SHEPSEL

Perhaps I am guilty of living in an illusion.

Barracuda takes the gun out from under his shirt.

BARRACUDA

See this gun. Guess who gave it to me?

Shepsel shrugs.

BARRACUDA

Pops did.

SHEPSEL

(trying not to come off as
bitter, failing)

So I imagine he's very proud of the fact that you've
supposedly killed people with it?

BARRACUDA

Why'd you say, "supposedly"? You know sumthin' I don't know?

SHEPSEL

What would I know? Me. A person who values human life.

BARRACUDA

I know you think bad of me...

(adds gravely in a tone of
voice we haven't heard
before)

But I to; value human life.

SHEPSEL

In this whole chaotic night; that's the most sensible thing
you've said so far.

BARRACUDA

(instantly back to his old
self)

But don't think for a friggin' second that the Barracuda is
anything, but a man's man who wouldn't hesitate to kill if
provoked into it.

SHEPSEL

Why do you seem to have this unyielding need to prove to me
how tough you are?

BARRACUDA

`Cauz when you go home to dear, Josephine; I want you to
'member me always as a guy who took shit from nobody.

SHEPSEL

It really is important to you that I leave here remembering you as a tough guy. I would rather much leave here remembering you as the soft, kind brother I grew up with, Salvatore.

BARRACUDA

- what'd I tell you about that Salvatore stuff - Hnah?!

SHEPSEL

SALVATORE!! Men who live, and die by the gun are simply people who deny the existence of God.

BARRACUDA

What'd God ever do for me?

SHEPSEL

More than you could imagine.

BARRACUDA

Then tell me this if you're such a holy roller - where was God in our house as kids?! Bet you don't have an answer for that one.

SHEPSEL

God was there. We just didn't know it.

BARRACUDA

So tell me hotshot - where's God in this room?! Is God going to keep me alive if I throw away my gun?!

SHEPSEL

You'd be very surprised that the miracles God can perform.

BARRACUDA

Tell that to good old Pops.

SHEPSEL

Sooner, or later; he will meet his maker, and answer for all the wrong he has done.

BARRACUDA

(adds sadly)

Pops had great plans for me in the mob.

SHEPSEL

Why'd you say it like that? You seemed to have lived up to his expectations so I'm sure in his sick, demented mind he's proud of you.

BARRACUDA

But Pops wanted more than I could give.

Barracuda picks up a pool ball, and bangs it down real hard three times.

SHEPSEL

In which way?

BARRACUDA

Screw that! Talk to you! How would a guy like you understand anything when it comes to a man's honor!

SHEPSEL

It depends on what you mean by honor?

BARRACUDA

To believe that the greatest thing I could get out of this life - was respect! Without respect a man has nuthin'! Fucken nuthin'!

SHEPSEL

I don't think you realize how much that's our father's voice that's talking.

Abruptly, Barracuda picks up the beebie gun, takes one shot out the window.

BARRACUDA

Tonight... it all comes to an end.

SHEPSEL

You keep shooting at them, and it will come to an end.

BARRACUDA

Shittin' in your pants, hanh, Sheppy?

SHEPSEL

It's called being practical minded. Carlos point blank said, " he will come back up here with a gun."

BARRACUDA

Let's play some pool.

Barracuda starts to rack up the balls.

SHEPSEL

Let's leave this room, and go somewhere where we can talk without being distracted.

BARRACUDA

No! We're stayin' right up here. We ain't runnin'. Tonight it all comes to a head.

SHEPSEL

(very concerned)

You keep saying that. Are you trying to tell me something?

BARRACUDA

It's simple... tonight I meet God.

Barracuda breaks the rack, gets a ball in. Shepsel studies Barracuda closely. Barracuda takes a toy soldier out of his pocket, reflectively studies it. Shepsel is chalking up his pool stick, but obviously watching Barracuda's every move.

BARRACUDA

Maybe tonight I get my soldiers back from pops.

SHEPSEL

Are you okay?

Barracuda doesn't answer Shepsel; he walks to the back wall, looks at the picture of the Red Wings seemingly lost in his own world, then looks for a long moment out the window, then walks back to the pool table.

BARRACUDA

This is the only one Pops didn't take from me.

SHEPSEL

I remember your soldiers well. You were always the Revolutionary soldiers. You always won the battles.

Shepsel reaches out for the toy soldier, but Barracuda snatches it quickly away from Shepsel.

BARRACUDA

No one touches my toy soldier - not you! NOT POPS! I was his favorite! He usta put me on his lap, and say, " my warrior son! King of the battles."

Barracuda laughs icily; almost demonically.

SHEPSEL

You were his favorite. There's no getting around that fact.

BARRACUDA

If you `member - it was Pops that gave me my nickname - THE BARRACUDA!! He never gave you a nickname!

SHEPSEL

Okay! You were his favorite - let's leave it at that!

Shepsel seemingly upset, shoots quickly, missing the ball.

BARRACUDA

Why should I fucken leave it at that?! Huh?! Pops was proud of me!

SHEPSEL

Like that is something to be proud of; a pot pusher; a guy connected with the mob who says he's killed people.

Barracuda glares at Shepsel, then grabs him by the collar.

BARRACUDA

I'm more than that! Do you understand me?!

Shepsel pushes Barracuda off him.

SHEPSEL

This has gone on as far as it's going to go. I think I should just leave. I really don't care if you forgive me, or not!

BARRACUDA

(suddenly puts on the charm)

No! You can't leave. I want you as a witness.

SHEPSEL

A witness to what?

BARRACUDA

Your favorite word, "love."

Barracuda kisses Shepsel on the forehead, goes to the table, pours a shot of Tequila, drinks. There is an uncomfortable silence between them. Barracuda places the pool stick down on the pool table, picks up the beebie gun.

SHEPSEL

If Carlos comes up here, and shoots you; you have no one to blame, but yourself.

BARRACUDA

Ya know, tonight you cumin' back here brought back a lot of memories that I had forgotten about. You have my permission; call me by my name.

SHEPSEL

(slowly embellishing the name.)

Sal... vatore... Malfatano.

BARRACUDA

(adds warily)

But if I die tonight nobody would know who I was. Everybody knows me as Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

Why are we talking about your death? You have a lot of good years left in which to turn your life around.

BARRACUDA

(deadly serious)

No, my dear Sheppy; the good years are over.

SHEPSEL

Not true.

Barracuda chalks up the pool stick; his eyes never leaving Shepsel's as if he was about to go into foreign territory that he's not sure about.

BARRACUDA

You fear hell, don't you?

SHEPSEL

Doesn't every human being?

BARRACUDA

Not me! I spit at hell!

SHEPSEL

I'm sure heaven is much more preferable.

BARRACUDA

Me; I'd rather take hell 'cauz I know the kind of scumbags I'll be with.

SHEPSEL

What's with all this talk about heaven, and hell? Let's just get through tonight.

BARRACUDA

Scares ya, huh? You got nuthin' to worry 'bout; a pacifist like you is goin' right to heaven.

SHEPSEL

(firmly)

Please! Enough about heaven, or hell - or death for that matter. I'm not planning to go anywhere.

BARRACUDA

The nights young; you'll never know.

SHEPSEL

I don't know what your diabolical mind has cooking, but don't try to scare me.

Barracuda goes to Shepsel, puts his arms around his shoulder.

BARRACUDA

I want you to know; no matter what happens tonight; I still haven't forgiven you, but I'm gettin' close.

SHEPSEL

I'm sorry to inform you, but whether you forgive me, or not; my life goes on.

Barracuda grins coolly.

BARRACUDA

(abruptly)

But you came here with one purpose in mind; for me to forgive you... You leave without my forgiveness, and it'll screw up your mind. Three years, bro; three fucken years you cost me.

Shepsel breaks away from
Barracuda's grip.

SHEPSEL

Sorry, but I don't buy that anymore. You took me on the
pretense of a lie, and it back fired on you.

Barracuda glares at Shepsel, walks
to the window.

BARRACUDA

I'll shoot!

SHEPSEL

You need a shrink - do you know that?

Shepsel goes right up to Barracuda,
and looks him squarely in the eye.

BARRACUDA

A shrink - arrr, I think that's funny.

Barracuda laughs coolly.

SHEPSEL

What I think you really need is to get out of Harlem.

BARRACUDA

I'd bet my bottom dollar that tonight you go back to the
boonies, an' you won't even 'member I existed.

SHEPSEL

Not true. You have my phone number. Come spend a weekend with
me. You might actually like the tranquility. Who knows? Maybe
I can even find you a job -

BARRACUDA

Doin' what?! Cookin'?! Cleanin' toilets?! No! I'm my father's
son through, and through!!

SHEPSEL

No. You're not. There's goodness in you.

BARRACUDA

Don't want, "goodness" - I want fucken respect!

SHEPSEL

There's that word again. I respect you -

BARRACUDA

- but you're not the type of guy I want respect from-

SHEPSEL

(overlapping, slightly
irritated)

Why? Because I'm not a killer?; Nor am I a guy who walks around with a gun?! I'm the guy who's respect you should want the most- someone who genuinely loves God, and you!

BARRACUDA

Please... don't leave...

SHEPSEL

Why In God's creation do you want me to stay since all you do is question my belief system?

BARRACUDA

Tonight is the night you finally become a man.

SHEPSEL

I have some very bad news for you; I don't give two shits whether you respect me as a man, or not!

BARRACUDA

(slyly)

Ya know, Sheppy; for a guy who calls himself a man of God you sure do get upset pretty easy... I got you by the balls.

SHEPSEL

Kiss my ass!

Hastily, Shepsel picks up his
suitcase.

BARRACUDA

Okay. You wanna leave? Fine. I thought you'd be honored that I wanted you to be witness to what's gonna happen tonight. Ya know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna go downstairs, an' check if it's safe for ya.

Barracuda rushes down the stairs. Shepsel walks to the window, takes a quick peek out, gazes at the door, thinks for a long moment, walks to the stairs, looks down, then stares at the door with the letters on it; Don't Enter - Take A Hop on it, then goes to the door, listens for Barracuda, then goes in. A few moments later, Shepsel exits from the room just as Barracuda comes up the stairs, catching Shepsel as he's coming out of the room.

BARRACUDA

What the fuck you doin' in there?!!

SHEPSEL

I was curious. Forgive me, but the words on the door caught my attention.

BARRACUDA

An' whydaya think Jose had me paint that on his door for, huh?!

SHEPSEL

I imagine to keep people out.

BARRACUDA

So why the hell didja go in there for?!!

SHEPSEL

Alright! Forgive me! I'm guilty. I shouldn't have gone in there.

Uncomfortable silence as Barracuda goes to the table, pours himself a shot of Tequila, drinks.

BARRACUDA

Leave if you want to. All is safe.

SHEPSEL

I wouldn't mind staying a little longer with you.

BARRACUDA

Don't do me any favors. It could get wild up here.

SHEPSEL

I'm not afraid.

BARRACUDA

An' what brought about this great change? A second ago you couldn't wait to leave.

SHEPSEL

I was thinking that maybe I need to come to a more gentler understanding of you.

BARRACUDA

There's nuthin' to understand - I'm the BARRACUDA! Period!

Shepsel picks up a pool stick,
starts to chalk it.

SHEPSEL

All night we keep starting to shoot some pool, and something keeps getting in our way.

Shepsel places the balls in the
rack, hands the pool stick to
Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

(carefully words the
question)

If that's Jose's room; aren't we keeping him from his room?

Barracuda breaks the rack very hard
as if he couldn't care less about
getting any balls in.

BARRACUDA

He doesn't go to sleep till all the bags are sold - well! Are you leavin', or not? All night you been yappin' 'bout wanting to leave.

SHEPSEL

Why the sudden rush to get rid of me?

Shepsel steps up to the pool table,
shoots, getting a ball in.

BARRACUDA

No reason. I just don't need you to be a witness any longer.

SHEPSEL

So we're back to that again? A witness to what?

BARRACUDA

Sumthin' that'll shake your God believes to the bones.

Barracuda laughs icily which only
concerns Shepsel more.

SHEPSEL

Why do I keep feeling that you're trying to tell me something all night?

(adds with a sense of
conviction)

Speak to me! Forget all these games.

BARRACUDA

For a man of God you got sum' pair of balls goin' in that room.

SHEPSEL

(with a hint of suspicion)

Jose's room?

BARRACUDA

If he ever found out you went in his room there'd be hell to raise from'em.

Abruptly, Shepsel aims at the cue ball, then stops, throws the pool stick down on the table.

SHEPSEL

Just answer me one question.

BARRACUDA

Just leave damn it!

SHEPSEL

Is Jose tight with our father?

BARRACUDA

Whatta you gettin' at?

SHEPSEL

The thing I'm wondering about is why would Jose have a picture of our father in his room with an x over dad's face?

BARRACUDA

No reason! Go! You've been wantin' to go all night - so fucken go! I forgive ya okay?! What's gonna happen tonight ain't gonna be a pretty picture!

SHEPSEL

I care about you - I'm staying!

BARRACUDA

Then suit yourself - but don't bring up the room no more! You hear me!

Shepsel walks right up to Barracuda, and gently grabs him by the arms.

SHEPSEL

It's okay, Salvatore.

Barracuda breaks away from Shepsel
seemingly getting unraveled.

BARRACUDA

What's okay?!

SHEPSEL

If you live in there. When Josephine, and I first went to Pennsylvania we lived in a broken down shack with rats all over the place.

BARRACUDA

(in an almost desperate
whine)

But... I have a beautiful house in the Bronx.

SHEPSEL

Then why are there all those pictures of our family on the bureau?

Sublime silence as Barracuda goes
to the pool table, picks up a ball,
bangs it at first very slowly on
the pool table, then harder, and
harder till finally he throws the
ball as hard as he can at the wall.

BARRACUDA

Okay! I live in there - now you can go back to Josephine,,
and gloat!

SHEPSEL

I would never gloat. I care too much... and I think I
understand.

BARRACUDA

An' what is it that you understand?! That I failed as a man!

SHEPSEL

Not in the least, but that you're not as tight with dad as
you've made me to understand.

Barracuda flings another pool ball
at the wall.

BARRACUDA

I couldn't care if the cocksucker dies tonight in his sleep!!

SHEPSEL

You know he hated me because I wasn't the warrior son he
wanted, but what?...what happened that made you hate him so?

BARRACUDA

He did me wrong! He nailed me to the cross...he took away my
manhood... piece by piece - ME! THE BARRACUDA!! A guy not to
be messed with.

Barracuda starts flinging one pool
ball after another at the wall till
he is spent.

BARRACUDA

I simply couldn't do what he wanted me to do... and I've
lived to regret it ever since.

SHEPSEL

I'm sure whatever that poor excuse for a human being wanted
you to do couldn't be anything worth wild.

BARRACUDA

But it was!!... He wanted me to be in the mob with'em... he
wanted me to climb the ladder...to sorta like be like him; to
be a killin' machine like he was.

SHEPSEL

I pray God; you didn't succeed.

Tense silence as Barracuda tries to
find the conviction to say what he
has to say as if it were the
hardest revelation of his life.

BARRACUDA

(the following speech should
be like a dam bursting,
building with momentum)

No... I failed - and he never let me have back my respect again... never - all I had to do was kill a guy who was a friend of mine, an' all woulda been good, but I couldn't pull the trigger... just as I was about to shoot the guy his grand daughter came into the kitchen, and said, " grandpa come play with me." I just couldn't pull the trigger with the kid there.... But pops didn't wanna hear nuthin' 'bout no grand daughter - he wanted the guy dead, an' he had to be by me to prove myself to'em. When he heard I didn't fulfill the contract fucken pops beat the shit outta me in front of all his mob friends... beat me bad-

SHEPSEL

-bastard!

Barracuda walks around the room
like a caged animal, trapped.

BARRACUDA

He made sure nobody would have anything to do with me.

(a beat, then says the
following words as if they
were the hardest of his
life)

Because I was a - A PUNK!! He made sure I was an outcast - not even allowed to walk on the same street as him... I failed... so all I have is Jose... and that room where I live like a fucken sham of the universe.. No wife... no friends... there is no made man... no Gambino family... there's nuthin'.

(raises his voice again)

Pops made sure nobody had anything to do with me - I FAILED AS A MAN! I want my respect back, and I'm goin' to get it back- TONIGHT YOUR CUMIN' BACK CONFIRMED what I have to do.

SHEPSEL

Listen carefully to me; you did the right thing by not killing the guy in front of his granddaughter. If you really think about it with a clear head;

it was probably one of your greatest acts of humanity not to pull the trigger. You have nothing to feel ashamed about.

BARRACUDA

That's easy for you to say - NOT ME! Tonight the Barracuda goes down in a blaze of glory.

Barracuda hastily picks up the beebie gun, starts to feverishly shoot out the window.

SHEPSEL

No SAL!

Shepsel goes to try, and stop him, but Barracuda pushes him away, and continues to shoot.

SHEPSEL

You heard, Carlos; he said, " he'd come back with a gun!"

BARRACUDA

Look at the Hoya's gettin' all pissed!!

Barracuda abruptly goes to the table, pours a shot of Tequila, drinks, then pours another shot, and quickly gulps it down. Shepsel cautiously goes to the window to look out. OFF STAGE the angry voices of Puerto Rican's cursing in Spanish can be heard. Barracuda rushes to the dart board, pulls the switchblade out, and places it in his back pocket.

BARRACUDA

I wanna be nice, an' mellow for when Carlos comes up.

Barracuda goes back to shooting the beebie gun out the window.

SHEPSEL

But he will come up - PLEASE! COME TO YOUR SENSES!

BARRACUDA

I know he'll come up; I'm countin' on it. Don't worry, Sheppy nobody's gonna harm you.

Jose comes running up the stairs.

JOSE

Cuda, Man!!! You goin' crazy, bro?! Carlos is talkin' 'bout killin' you!

SHEPSEL

Let's leave here, Salvatore! Let's get in my car, and drive out to Pennsylvania, and never look back!!

BARRACUDA

Can't go, Sheppy! My runnin' days are over!

JOSE

Bro, if you stop shootin' maybe I can talk Carlos outta comin' up here!

BARRACUDA

I have a score to settle with, Carlos - he beat me up yesterday! Nobody beats up the Barracuda!

SHEPSEL

SALVATORE!! You don't have to prove your manhood! You did the right thing - dad was wrong!

Barracuda stops shooting, goes to Shepsel, looks him directly in the eye.

BARRACUDA

But... was he?

SHEPSEL

YES!

BARRACUDA

Relax. It'll all be over soon.... and I can end the voices.

Barracuda goes back to shooting
beebee's out the window. Shepsel is
frozen with fear. Jose walks to the
door.

JOSE

Oh, shit!! Here comes Carlos!!

Barracuda seems quite peaceful, and
lays the beebee gun down on the
floor. Suddenly Carlos, and Gustavo
come running into the room. Carlos
is holding a gun which he instantly
points at Barracuda. Barracuda
grins slyly, pulls his gun out, and
places it on the floor, then begins
to unbutton his shirt.

BARRACUDA

You don't have the balls to shoot me, Carlos. Prove yourself
to me - SHOOT ME!

GUSTAVO

You always said you were gonna kill'em - do it!!

Carlos continues to point the gun
at Barracuda; almost slightly
confused by his behavior he didn't
expect from the Barracuda.

SHEPSEL

No! PLEASE!! He's not in his right frame of mind!

BARRACUDA

C'mon, Carlos!! You've wanted to kill me since we were
teenagers - well, here's your chance!

SHEPSEL

No, Carlos - NO!

CARLOS

No, Cuda man! I don't want it to be this easy! Let's go at it like men.

Suddenly, Barracuda pulls the switchblade out of his back pocket, and rushes at Carlos. Carlos shoots him in his left shoulder. Barracuda slumps to the floor.

SHEPSEL

God NO!!

Shepsel rushes to the Barracuda.

GUSTAVO

We better get outta here before the man comes!

Jose, Gustavo, and Carlos run down the stairs. Shepsel lifts Barracuda's shirt to check out the wound.

BARRACUDA

It's okay, Sheppy... I wanna die...

Shepsel runs to the table, grabs a towel hanging over the chair, runs back to Barracuda, places the towel over the gun wound. Shepsel sticks his head out the window, and shouts:

SHEPSEL

Someone get me an ambulance!! There's a guy up here with a gun wound!!

Shepsel helps Barracuda to the chair.

BARRACUDA

What's my...name?

SHEPSEL

What?!

BARRACUDA
(barely audible)

My name?

SHEPSEL

Salvatore Malfatano.

BARRACUDA

It's a good name, huh?

SHEPSEL

Yes! Yes! Hold on - someone I'm sure will have the decency to call for help!

BARRACUDA

Sheppy... my brother... you can tell me now...

SHEPSEL

Tell you what?

BARRACUDA

That... you... love me.

SHEPSEL

Oh, God, yes - I LOVE YOU!! I'm going to take care of you my dear brother!

Shepsel cradles Barracuda in his arms pulling him to his chest. THE OFF STAGE sound of an ambulance approaching can be heard.

SHEPSEL

Hang on a little longer - Some one's called for an ambulance!

Barracuda manages a wry, almost peaceful grin, struggles to pull Shepsel by the collar towards him to whisper the following words:

BARRACUDA

I... forgive you... Shepsel.

Barracuda slumps into Shepsel's
chest.

CURTAIN.