

Do you remember that time? It was still early in the night and the ten o'clock crowd had not made it out to the bar yet. You sat there on your stool, stuck to the floor, and listened to the bartender complain about his roommate eating the left over Chinese that he didn't even pay for.

In the background, you hear the softest voice a woman could ever have say in a rich, passionate whisper, "I'm glad you're here with me this Valentines." Heads turn and you face her profile as her lips descend upon another man, and their faces soon vanish like your next beer.

Comically, you call out, "Hey, eggroll! How about another round?" As the bartender steps down and pulls a five dollar bill from your pity party campaign fund, some poor soul plays Elvis on the Wurlitzer jukebox; the words too familiar to ignore, the acoustics too perfect to pass up, and your backbone a six pack thick.

Your Miller Longneck bottle transforms into a microphone and you cut away from the bar like two north poles trying to share a urinal. Elvis's voice beckons you over to his twenty-five cent mausoleum. The neon bubbles piping through the plastic tube as she looks up from the 45's that continue flipping over and over with a click and a clank.

Her green eyes watch with a smile and then her lips move to join yours like dueling hearts at a piano bar, *"For you have made my life complete, and I love you so...Love me tender, love me true, all my dreams fulfill. For my darling, I love you, and I always will..."*

"What's Valentines without the King?" she laughs glancing deeper into your bloodshot eyes.

"My name is Mitch. What's yours?" you ask leaning closer, taking in the strawberry fragrance of her long, blonde hair.

"My friends call me Hope," she admits with a twitch of her nose.

"I don't recall seeing you around here before," you grin while digging out the spare change from the caverns of your blue jeans.

"That's because you've been too busy with your girlfriend...and Elvis."

"Love makes for a small orbit I guess," you reply holding a palm full of pennies and lint.

"Where is she tonight?" she smiles as her eyes begin to survey the bar.

"Hit a meteor New Year's Eve," you smirk. "Had to abort the mission."

"Didn't seem to knock you off course if you still come here," she beacons as her eyes return to meet yours again.

"Hoping she would wander in tonight. Pretty stupid, huh?" you confess.

"Pretty romantic, actually." The jukebox begins to click and clank.

"What about you?" you pause. "Any astronauts in your life?"

"What life?" she laughs, "I'm here on Valentines, all alone, talking to a guy who sings off key into a bottle of domestic beer."

"You didn't answer my question," you say without thinking.

“No, no astronauts. I’m one of those my-career-comes-first kind of woman,” she grins and turns toward the jukebox as another record loads.

*Hush my darling, don’t fear my darling, the lion sleeps tonight...Hush my darling, don’t fear my darling, the lion sleeps tonight...*

“Did you pick this one, too?” you ask joining her as she faces the tomb of forgotten loves.

“Only Wurlitzer in the neighborhood,” she says confidently. “Come on,” she tugs at your arm and pulls out a couple of wrinkled dollar bills. “Next round of heartbreak is on me.”

“Sure. How about I get you another drink?” you offer noticing your bottle is now empty.

“I’ll have what you’re having,” she invites.

“Two shots of self-pity coming up,” you laugh as she makes her way to the empty dance floor, waiting for you to return, which you do. Shots in one hand. Longnecks in the other. You offer them up and she takes one of each, winks and joins you as you take your shot.

The jukebox clicks over one last time and you both turn in anticipation, sharing one single breath as the melody begins to play, your hips begin to sway, and the air begins to fill with hope.

*Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs.*

*What’s wrong with that? I’d like to know. So here I go, again...*