

Three Monkeys

By

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Cast of Characters

<u>Manuel Gracian:</u>	Bartender. Youngish. Well dressed. Californian of "Mexican" descent. His "lapses" into Spanish are from pride not weak English.
<u>Matthew Girard:</u>	A disheveled middle-aged writer.
<u>Andrew Williams:</u>	Young man, works at Sid's garage. An "okie".
<u>Ruth Bowles:</u>	Young woman, works as a waitress at the Frontier Cafe.
<u>Robert Fontaine:</u>	Rich middle-aged man from Los Angeles.
<u>Vera Fontaine:</u>	Robert's early middle aged wife.

Scene

The Three Monkeys Bar in the Mojave.

Time

Evening. Late Summer 1937.

THREE MONKEYS

Lights come up on the interior of the Three Monkeys Bar. There should be some kind of picture of the three monkeys (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil).

Manuel Gracian is standing behind the bar. He is checking his supplies.

Matthew Girard enters. He is carrying a battered briefcase and possibly an old manual typewriter. He walks over to a table and sets his case(s) on it. He then sits in a chair and looks over at Manuel.

MANUEL

Señor?

MATTHEW

Manuel.

MANUEL

The usual?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

Manuel pours a drink into a glass and brings it over to the table.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

Matthew takes a long drink. Then sets the empty glass down. Manuel looks at it, then back at Matthew.

MANUEL

Another?

MATTHEW

If you could be so kind?

Manuel looks at Matthew for another moment. Then goes back to the bar and pours another drink. He brings it back to the table.

MANUEL

If you don't mind me saying, Señor, you look tired.

MATTHEW

I am, Manuel. Very tired.

MANUEL

You worked today then.

MATTHEW

Yes and no. Nothing that's going to bring me any money.
But yeah, I worked hard today.

MANUEL

Why do you think it won't make any money?

MATTHEW

Has it ever?

Manuel is interrupted by the opening of the door. Andrew comes in. He's dressed in greasy coveralls. It might have a "Sid's" logo on it. He looks around. He doesn't see what he's looking for. He walks over to another table on the other side of the stage.

MANUEL

Señor.

MATTHEW

(nods)

Andy.

ANDREW

Matthew. How's it goin'.

MATTHEW

It's going. But just barely.

MANUEL

What would you like?

ANDREW

A cold beer would really hit the spot.

Manuel nods and goes to the bar and gets a beer.

MATTHEW

So Andy, how's your mother doing?

ANDREW

Momma's doin' fine, thanks. Well, 'bout the same anyway. But I think the fresh air and sunshine are doin' her good.

MATTHEW

When's the last time you went to see her?

Manuel puts the beer down on Andrew's table.

ANDREW

Sid let me take the truck over to the Stony Brook Retreat just last weekend.

MATTHEW

Sid's a great guy.

ANDREW

Yessir, he is. Not just anyone would have given me a job here. Hey, that reminds me, there was some lady down at the station earlier looking for you.

MATTHEW

For me? What did she want?

ANDREW

Didn't say. Just said she knew you.

MATTHEW

But I don't know anyone in town...

ANDREW

She wasn't from here. Musta been drivin' north though. Askin' after Garlock.

MANUEL

Garlock? No one goes to Garlock these days.

ANDREW

I know. I told her. But she wanted directions.

MATTHEW

Garlock? Really?

ANDREW

Yeah. Mean sumthin' to you?

MATTHEW

It's just I did that piece a while back and I mentioned Garlock.

The door opens and Ruth comes in. She's dressed as a waitress for the Frontier Cafe. She's very pretty.

ANDREW

Hey there.

Ruth comes over and sits with Andrew. Manuel smiles at her and she smiles back.

Manuel pulls out a bottle of soda and opens it.

MATTHEW

So beautiful, when are you going to stop hanging out with Andy and run away me?

RUTH

Where would we go?

MATTHEW

Paris.

(pause)

We'd live in a garret, drink wine, and starve.

Manuel brings the bottle of soda over to Ruth and hands it to her.

MANUEL

Señorita.

RUTH

Gracias, Manuel.

MANUEL

Di nada.

RUTH

When you put it that way, how can I resist.

MATTHEW

So, instead you're going to go with good looks and youth huh?

ANDREW

I thought...

RUTH

He means you honey.

ANDREW

Oh.

RUTH

(laughs)

So when are you going to publish that great novel you're always going on about.

MATTHEW

No one wants to publish the stories that are really worth telling.

RUTH

Such as?

MATTHEW

Maybe I should write about a young woman, who through no fault of her own is trapped in a dead end job in some small town, say in California.

There is a silence as Ruth, Andrew and Manuel look at Matthew.

RUTH

Like Mojave.

MATTHEW

(digging his way out)

What, oh no, no one would want that, not even me. Maybe... Monterey.

ANDREW

Where's that?

MANUEL

Over on the coast.

ANDREW

Oh. I never made it that far. The air probably wouldn't be so good for Mama anyway.

RUTH

(touches Andrew's arm)

You're probably right. I'm... I'm glad you stopped here.

There is the sound of a rattletrap "jalopy" going by.

MATTHEW

Another one. More Okies.

(pause)

Sorry Andy.

ANDREW

It's OK.

Ruth reaches over and touches Andrew's arm.

RUTH

There are so many.

ANDREW

Headed down to Weedpatch. Not all of them can get as lucky as me.

MATTHEW

Lucky? You're stuck in Mojave son.

MANUEL

It could be worse.

ANDREW

Yeah. Weedpatch.

MATTHEW

But there's one of those stories that would actually be worth telling.

RUTH

What's that.

MATTHEW

Those Okies. God, their stories would be heart wrenching. Can you imagine having to pass through all the country between here and that Dust Bowl and only seeing sand. Then getting here and looking out over the valley. And the hate they face here.

ANDREW

Yeah. I can.

MATTHEW

Sorry. Point taken. But hey, we're all from somewhere else. I used to live back east. Ruth's from somewhere else too, aren't you Ruth?

RUTH

I am. But Manuel here isn't.

MANUEL

Sorry *Señorita*, I'm from Los Angeles.

RUTH

I'm sorry, I just assumed...

MANUEL

Oh *mi familia* has lived there since long before California was a state. But, well, I've just gotten here to Mojave.

MATTHEW

There's another one.

MANUEL

What?

MATTHEW

Your story. How the hell did you end up out here in Mojave. You were living in the city...

Robert and Vera enter. They look around the room and Vera gestures towards Matthew. Robert is dressed like a "gangster" from the movies and Vera is a "moll". She has on a veil and her face is obscured. They walk over to Matthew.

ROBERT

So this is the great Matthew Girard?

MATTHEW

You've actually heard of me?

ROBERT

Yeah. I have. I'm Robert Fontaine.

Robert pauses, as if he's said something significant.

MATTHEW

Um. Pleased to meet you.

ROBERT

Likewise. I'm a fan of yours, you could say.

MATTHEW

Really? No one seems to even know that I exist.

ROBERT

Oh, but I've read all your tales about the prospectors out here in the Mojave. Great adventures.

MATTHEW

Thank you. But... What tales?

VERA

They published them in *Real Adventures*.

MATTHEW

Oh... I never had anything under my name in that rag.

VERA

Matthew. Yeah, someone must have stolen your stories.

MATTHEW

No. I used a pseudonym. I needed the money. Wait, how did you know it was me?

(pause)

Vera?

VERA

(nods)
Yeah. I recognized them.
(pause)
How long's it been?

MATTHEW

(pained)
Three years. What happened to you? I... Well after... I didn't hear from you. I thought you must have ended up in Tehachapi.

VERA

No. I wasn't... They never caught up with me.

MATTHEW

And you turn up now.

VERA

Yeah.

MATTHEW

Why now?

ROBERT

'Cause I made her. She told me who really wrote those stories.

MATTHEW

But...

ROBERT

When I found out she knew you, I just had to make her... Well introduce me.

*Robert grips Vera roughly **and** possessively.
Matthew looks at Vera.*

VERA

Matt, this is my husband Robert.

ROBERT

Like I said I'm your biggest fan.

MATTHEW

Great. Would you like an autograph?

ROBERT

Nah. I want to see this place you write about.

MATTHEW

Wrote. I haven't done much in a while.

ROBERT

That's a damn shame. But I want to meet the people, see the places.

Manuel laughs.

MANUEL

Nobody wants that.

Robert sneers at Manuel.

ROBERT

Oh but I do. I particularly want to meet Smitty.

MATTHEW

Smitty? I don't remember...

ROBERT

The Garlock Nugget.

MANUEL

(laughs)

The. Garlock. Nugget.

Robert looks at Manuel angrily.

MATTHEW

(confused)

I don't... Oh.

ROBERT

That's right. I want to know all about it. Where it was found. Where it is now.

VERA

Matt, please.

Vera lifts up her veil and she is bruised and has a black eye.

MATTHEW

What the hell happened to you?

Vera looks at Robert.

ROBERT

(shrugs)

She lies.

MATTHEW

What about?

ROBERT
Everything.

MATTHEW
This time?

ROBERT
That she didn't know how to find you.

MATTHEW
Oh.

ROBERT
Which she did. Obviously.

Matthew looks at Vera. Then back at Robert.

MATTHEW
And you want to know...

ROBERT
About the Garlock Nugget. You wrote...

MATTHEW
I remember what I wrote.

ROBERT
Then where's Smitty. Where's the nugget. You said he kept it at his camp.

MANUEL
(laughs)
His camp?

ROBERT
A gold nugget the size of an ostrich egg, just kept at some old coot's camp.

MANUEL
You wrote that?

MATTHEW
Years ago. I'm not proud.

ROBERT
You're going to tell me...

VERA
Robert?

Robert slaps Vera. Andrew, Ruth and Manuel, react with shock. Matthew stands up angrily. He calms down again.

MATTHEW

I can't.

ROBERT

Oh, but you will...

MATTHEW

It's not that I'm unwilling to, I just can't.

Robert pushes Vera away and pulls out a pistol then points it at Matthew.

ROBERT

And I say you will.

Ruth moves closer to Andrew, and Andrew reaches out to her. Vera steps away and moves across the room. Manuel looks down at the bar.

ROBERT

Nobody move.

MATTHEW

Okay, okay. No need to get worked up. Let's just talk...

ROBERT

Exactly. I just want to talk. All you have to do is tell me all about Smitty and the Garlock Nugget.

ANDREW

(starts to stand)

Mister, could you just...

ROBERT

No, no. You can't go, you might bring the law. Now just sit still and this will all be over soon.

(to Matthew)

So, are you going to tell me?

MATTHEW

There isn't really anything to tell.

ROBERT

You're not going to lie to me too are you?

MATTHEW

Oh no. I'll tell you the truth, I'm just not sure it's what you want to hear.

ROBERT

Oh? What does that mean.

MATTHEW

I'm another of Vera's lies.

Robert looks at Matthew for a moment, then over at Vera then back at Matthew. Vera opens her purse.

ROBERT

I don't...

MATTHEW

I wrote that story for the radio. Three years ago.

ROBERT

Radio?

MATTHEW

Death Valley Diaries. That's where I met Vera. She worked at the station.

MANUEL

I never heard of it.

MATTHEW

Yeah, and that's part of *my* problem. Almost no one did. The show failed.

ROBERT

Then...

MATTHEW

Yeah. I made it *all* up. Smitty doesn't exist, and the Garlock Nugget is just a figment of my imagination. And not a particularly good one. I've had better come out of a glass of booze. No one could believe in a nugget that size.

Robert looks over at Vera. He is angry.

ANDREW

Mister. There's no harm done.

ROBERT

No harm? I... You don't understand. I needed that nugget. I need the money.

VERA

(almost sympathetically)

I...

ROBERT

I made a deal with some... People. People you don't back out from.

Robert moves towards Vera. The gun is now pointing at her.

MATTHEW

Hey, this place is the Three Monkeys. You know, "See no evil".

MANUEL

No oigas mal.

RUTH

That's, "Hear no evil".

ANDREW

And "Speak no evil". We're ain't goin' to say anythin' mister. There's nothin' in it fer us.

Robert steps towards Vera.

ROBERT

I... I don't know what else I can do. I gotta...

Ruth knocks her soda bottle off the table. Robert turns towards her as Andrew pulls Ruth to him. Vera pulls a gun out of her purse as Robert is about to shoot at Ruth, Vera shoots Robert. His gun goes off (upwards) as he's hit. Robert falls to the floor.

VERA

There should be another monkey. "Do no evil".

Matthew, Andrew, Manuel and Ruth stare at Robert's dead body. Then at Vera. Vera looks at her gun then puts it on the bar.

VERA

Well, Matty, it looks like you were right about me being bound for Tehachapi.

RUTH

Why's that?

VERA

Women's Prison there.

Matthew stands up and steps towards Vera. He stops and then kneels down by Robert. He picks up the gun.

ANDREW

Now I ain't sure that really seems fair. After what he done to you. What he was goin' to do. And Mama didn't raise me up to put up with disrespectin' women.

RUTH

Andy's right.

VERA

But...

MANUEL

They're both right.

VERA

But... What about...? What do I do about...
(points at Robert)

MATTHEW

There's a whole lot of empty between here and a new
life. God, I should write that down.

Matthew puts Robert's gun in his pocket.

VERA

You could...

MATTHEW

(looking at her)
Could what?

VERA

Come with me.

*Matthew looks at her for a moment, then shakes his
head. He puts his hand in the pocket with the gun.*

MATTHEW

(picks up his glass)
No. I've got all I need here.

Matthew drains the last of his glass.

Manuel goes and gets a mop and bucket.

MATTHEW

Come on, Andy. Let's help the lady load up her car.

Ruth goes and sits Vera down at a table.

RUTH

Look Andrew will make sure your car's filled up.
(pause, Vera nods)
And Manuel will draw you a map.

*Manuel nods. Matthew and Andrew stoop over to pick
up Robert.*

Lights fade out.