

BROWN BOTTLE FLU

by

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INT. APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Rough around the edges writer, JUPITER DIVES, 30s, sips her tea as she stares at her laptop. Talks to herself.

JUPITER

I could put him in Arkansas. Yeah,
that could be good. Hmmm...

She takes a drag off a rolled-up piece of paper. Blows out imaginary smoke. Puts it back into the clean ashtray.

DRUNK WOMAN (O.S.)

Remember when you pronounced
"Arkansas" like "Ar Kansas?"

Over to a sloppy, two-day dirty DRUNK WOMAN in a robe, her face covered in cold cream, smoking a real cigarette. She takes a swig from a bottle of whiskey.

JUPITER

I was only seven, I'm an adult now.
A writer. A writer who pronounces
things correctly and doesn't get
laughed at by the entire class.
(over her shoulder)
Where'd you get that bottle, I
thought I hid it.

DRUNK WOMAN

Guess you didn't hide it good
enough, Miss Brand New Bitch.
(blows smoke)
Miss Award-winning Brand New Bitch.

JUPITER

It's not that I'm not proud of the
award--

DRUNK WOMAN

You're welcome.

JUPITER

I just want to take the work more
seriously going forward. Someone is
finally paying me to write, I don't
want to fuck it up.

DRUNK WOMAN

Yeah, well, no one gives a shit
about Ar-kansas, it's stupid. And
if you got published once and won
an award, maybe you should just, I
don't know, stick to the formula.

(MORE)

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

(shakes bottle)

Every writer needs a creative lubricant, Jupiter. Nobody's ever been impressed by sober Stephen King.

JUPITER

I forgot how much you loved Cujo.

DRUNK WOMAN

(growls like a dog)

He blacked out the whole thing. Of course, there was also cocaine, which I've recommended to you several times.

JUPITER

He's the longest-running writer of our time, you know and it's only because he sobered the hell up. You can't write if you're dead.

DRUNK WOMAN

Who gives a shit if it's garbage? Seriously, you're going to tell me that his work is better now than when he was picking old cigarette butts up from trash cans filled with beer-drenched vomit? Shawshank Redemption or Dreamcatcher?

JUPITER

What's Dreamcatcher?

DRUNK WOMAN

I rest my case. Man, why is it every time someone gives you a little bit of responsibility you take it as a sign from the universe to clean yourself up and go completely straight edge? And you turn me into the bad guy.

(digs through things)

Where's the weed? Did you hide that too? You did, didn't you? You're uptight. Do you know who wasn't uptight? Hunter S. Thompson.

(takes a swig)

Ernest Hemingway, huh?

JUPITER

Hemingway blew his brains out. Gonzo too, killed himself with his wife on the phone.

(MORE)

JUPITER (CONT'D)

She's probably still finding pieces of him in their kitchen.

DRUNK WOMAN

(plops on couch)

And if you don't think there's poetry in that ma'am, then I don't know what to tell you. Life is horrible and beautiful all at the same time, and it doesn't make sense, but who would want to live it any other way?

Drunk Woman raises up the bottle. Takes a gulp.

JUPITER

Don't you ever get bored cosplaying Bukowski?

DRUNK WOMAN

I'm glad you brought up Bukowski, I wasn't going to, it seemed too obvious but you--

JUPITER

You always bring up Bukowski. He's your get-out-of-jail-free card for being an unattractive alcoholic--

DRUNK MAN

Hey, hey, hey, me and Bukowski can...

(thinks about it)

Could? *Could've*? CAN have any woman we want.

JUPITER

So that's it, I have to get wasted to do my work? Just keep pounding alcohol until my body gives out, but hell it makes a good biography after I'm dead--

DRUNK WOMAN

One-hit wonders don't have biographies written about them.

Drunk Woman watches Jupiter not typing as she peers over her shoulder. She pushes her out of the way.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

You know what, just let me do it.

JUPITER
 (pushes her back)
 Why so it can end up being some
 garbled, twisted, rambling mess?

DRUNK WOMAN
 I'm hit or miss at worst!

They struggle back and forth.

JUPITER
 It took ten years to write one
 novel! Every time I would try to
 finish, here you come, rhyming out
 of the blue.

DRUNK WOMAN
 People like words that rhyme. It
 RESONATES with the public. I know
 how much you love that word 'cuz it
 makes you sound smart.

JUPITER
 Why don't you grow up? We got lucky
 on one book, but we just can't
 chance it. This is my career we're
 talking about--

DRUNK WOMAN
 (grabs laptop)
 Give it to me!

JUPITER
 (grabs laptop)
 No, let go!

Drunk Woman lets it go. Jupiter tumbles back. Recovers.

DRUNK WOMAN
 My writing is better. More
 colorful. That's what people want.
 Color. Not boring, self-
 deprecating...
 (whispers in her ear)
 Freud shit about a mother's
 unloving breast.
 (off her look)
 Yeah, I saw the rough pages. It was
 pathetic.

JUPITER
 I barely remember her. You helped a
 little with that.

DRUNK WOMAN

(flinches, mood change)

Come on, what do you say you let me make you your favorite? Whiskey double with a whiskey back. We can have a drink and then we'll dance until we pass out surrounded by Pizza Bites and shame. Oh! We can go outside and dance, remember how we used to do that?

JUPITER

And get arrested again.

DRUNK WOMAN

That only happened one time.

JUPITER

Twice.

DRUNK WOMAN

Oh yeah, that night we smoked with that weird guy with the guitar. Didn't you fall in the pool or something? What the hell was in that? K, you think? Might've been GHB but--

JUPITER

See, that's what I'm talking about, getting arrested, smoking with strange homeless men, I'm done.

DRUNK WOMAN

Hey, we don't know if he was homeless.

JUPITER

He was playing a guitar with no strings.

DRUNK WOMAN

He didn't have strings, did he?

Jupiter tries to smoke the paper cigarette. Drunk Woman knocks it out of her hand.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Will you stop with the fake cigarette. Be a man!

Drunk Woman lights two cigarettes. Holds one out for her.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)
 You've been fine lately, come on.
 Come on, buddy.

She hesitates. Drunk Woman gestures.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)
 It'll help you think.

Jupiter takes the cigarette. Inhales. Exhales. Oh, good.

JUPITER
 No!
 (puts it out)
 First the cigarette and then a
 whole handle before I stumble to
 the liquor for more. Then blacked
 out dancing with my half-naked ex
 at Hotel Normandie again.

Over to Drunk Woman who is scrubbing the cold cream off her
 face in the mirror, her back turned to us.

DRUNK WOMAN
 You got laid.

JUPITER
 I threw up on my dog the next
 morning. Brown Bottle Flu for
 almost a week. I'm still
 recovering.

DRUNK WOMAN
 So have a little hair of the dog,
 make it go away. It always goes
 away.
 (playful)
 Hey, remember that time you dressed
 like a clown?

Drunk Woman turns around, now with full clown makeup on.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)
 I think you were Bozo or no, you
 were a...
 (extra sad voice)
 Sad teenage clown. Now that was a
 night. What was it, rum?

JUPITER
 Jäger.

DRUNK WOMAN

Oh yeah, Jäger, that devil. You took the train all the way downtown for that horrible Halloween party and hooked up with... what was her name?

JUPITER

Kelly.
(slight grin)
The extra curvy one.

DRUNK WOMAN

Kelly, that's right. Damn it to hell, Jäger.
(laughs)
Remember your clown makeup around your mouth was all messed up from you two slobbering all over each other?

JUPITER

That was from eating chicken wings.

DRUNK WOMAN

Bullshit, you let her finger fuck you. You're lucky you didn't get a yeast infection, her fingernails were filthy.

JUPITER

You're so crude. It was a pretty fun night though.

DRUNK WOMAN

Motherfuckin' right it was. The first night we met.

JUPITER

It was, wasn't it?

DRUNK WOMAN

So, we write about clowns.

JUPITER

"We" are not writing about anything. And I'm especially not writing about clowns.

DRUNK WOMAN

I'm just saying, you wouldn't even have to do any research--

Drunk Woman sits the bottle down beside her. Jupiter accidentally knocks it over.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Now look what you've done. Oh!

Drunk Woman gets on her knees. Slurps it off the carpet. Jupiter recoils as she watches her.

JUPITER

Don't slurp it out of the carpet, come on!

DRUNK WOMAN

It was right on top, it hadn't even soaked in!

JUPITER

Look, I don't want your help, so you can go, okay? This is my work and I'm the only one that can dictate what it becomes.

DRUNK WOMAN

(mocking)

"This is my work and I'm the only one that can dictate what it becomes."

Drunk Woman pacing behind her, Jupiter poses herself to type. Silence as she doesn't. She closes her eyes. Takes a sip of tea. A drag of the paper cigarette.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

You thinking about the cancer babies? You are, aren't you? Every time you can't write and don't want to drink you start thinking about going down to the cancer ward and seeing all the bald babies.

JUPITER

Stop talking.

DRUNK WOMAN

You can't just walk up into a cancer ward, Jupiter. Strangers, people off the street, just coming in to gawk at sick, immune-compromised children because they're trying to guilt themselves into going after their dreams?

(sits like a sad clown)

It doesn't work like that.

JUPITER

I hate when you drink the dark. You get borderline abusive.

DRUNK WOMAN

"Hello Darkness, my old friend."
Play that, will you?

JUPITER

No music. Quit trying to knock me off my creative vibe.

DRUNK WOMAN

I haven't seen you write anything since I've been here.

JUPITER

Because of you!

Drunk Woman spots a bottle of whiskey tucked in the couch.

DRUNK WOMAN

Ha!

She cracks it open. Chugs it.

JUPITER

Great. It's like a goddamn speak-easy in here. Where is this shit coming from, behind the bookcase? I should do a whole sweep, clean it all out. It would feel good to pour it down the sink. Watch it wash away, like a psychological thing. Out with the old...

Jupiter's voice drifts off as she turns around to her laptop. Stares at the screen. Silence for a moment.

DRUNK WOMAN

You're not your father, okay? Does that make you feel better?

JUPITER

Don't bring him into this.

DRUNK WOMAN

Daddy was an illiterate drunk, so now you can't drink because you're worried that you'll lose your words too. It's called Imposter Syndrome.

JUPITER

He's dyslexic.

DRUNK WOMAN

(waves it off)

Agh, someone told him that one time and he ran with it. He's a book hater, plain and simple. I know it and you know it.

JUPITER

I used to have to hide my books so they wouldn't incite him. He even tore one of them up. A library book. Got me banned. When I first got published, I called him to tell him and he said "that'll work" and hung up the phone.

DRUNK WOMAN

Well, you got the last laugh didn't you? You grew up and persevered in not only reading but writing too. I think that's worth celebrating.

Drunk Woman pours a drink. Puts it into Jupiter's hands.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Come on, you deserve it.

She takes it to Drunk Woman's delight. She raises her glass.

DRUNK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Cheers!

The cheers. Down their drinks at the same time.

INT. APARTMENT - OFFICE - LATER

Drunk Woman is passed out in front of the laptop. Still in her robe, but most of the clown makeup smeared off, we see that Drunk Woman is really Jupiter.

On the screen: "The sad clown went downtown on a train alive with frowns."

THE END