

Thank You for the Drink (Play Version)

Setting

Tavern, 1880's, Idaho, Summer

Characters

Oswald

The Stranger

Mid-morning. A dusty, desolate tavern in the middle of Idaho, US. Bar setup with a counter, a shelf with jugs labelled with different liquids, a sole table with two chairs, and drinking glasses lined up on the counter, waiting to be polished. The faint sounds of insects and creaking can be heard. Oswald, the owner, is polishing a glass behind the counter. He takes a full minute to polish the glass before a naked, sunburnt Stranger stumbles in through the door, shocking Oswald into dropping glass onto the ground. Stranger stands there taking in a breath, notices Oswald, and begins to slowly stagger to the bar. Oswald reaches for a concealed gun behind the counter, but Stranger stumbles into table chairs. Oswald pauses before taking his hand away from the gun. Stranger picks himself up and makes his way to the bar.

Stranger: Water?

The two stare down into each other for a beat before Oswald disregards the Stranger and begins to sweep the broken glass.

Stranger: Water?

Oswald: \$2.

Stranger: Excuse me?

Oswald: You want water? It's \$2.

Stranger sighs and leans forward

Stranger: I don't exactly have any money on me.

Oswald: Yeah I didn't think so. I can judge a lot about a man's wealth by his outfit. Or lack thereof.

Stranger: Wait, please

Stranger reaches out his hand

Stranger: I'm begging for your goodwill in my time of need.

Oswald examines Stranger and gestures for him to lean closer.

Oswald: Look, it's not that I love to see a grown man suffering without even so much as a pair of garments around his intimates. But I'm running a business out here. I don't do handouts. So unless you got \$2, I suggest turning back and going the way you came.

Stranger: There's nothing for me out there. I was on my way to Oregon when I was robbed. Couple of bandits came. One of them held a knife to my throat and made me strip down to nothing. Imagine being out in the intense summer sun with nothing but the skin on your back for two days. I don't care about my stuff. I don't even care about Oregon. I just want a glass of water.

Oswald: Not my problem. If free water is what you're looking for, there's a lake about thirty miles north. If you get walking, you might just make it by tomorrow morning.

Oswald turns to walk away but Stranger grabs Oswald's arm.

Stranger: Listen to me dammit! Are you fixing to have a man's death on your conscience? If I leave here without so much as a drop, I will die and then it's my blood on your hands.

Oswald grabs Stranger's arm back.

Oswald: For fucks sake, no money, no goddamn water! Why can't you get that through your thick skull? I'm not going to tell you again. Get your ass out of my tavern before I come over there and drag you out myself!

Oswald pushes the Stranger to the floor. Oswald takes a polished glass and a jug labelled "water" from the shelf behind him and begins to pour himself a cup of water. Oswald places the jug on the counter and stares down Stranger as he sips the water. Stranger stands himself up and slowly limps to the door.

Oswald: Why don't you dig around in that asshole of yours? Maybe you have some spare change in there somewhere.

Oswald chuckles to himself, sets glass of water down, and goes back to polishing glasses. Stranger stops at the door and pauses.

Stranger: You ever heard of the game Five Finger Fillet?

Oswald: (*unphased*) Well now I know that head of yours was cooking out in the sun too long if you think there's an American who doesn't know the knife game.

Stranger turns back to look at Oswald.

Stranger: What do you say to a round?

Oswald pauses and peers back up at Stranger.

Stranger: One minute each. Whoever has the least blood on their fingers by the end is the winner.

Oswald stares for a beat before letting out a loud, long laugh.

Oswald: Damn, I haven't had a good laugh like that in years. You must truly be desperate. Just look at you. Those fingers probably couldn't even wrap around a knife. Let alone a glass of water.

Oswald picks up glass of water and takes another sip.

Oswald: Why, if you beat me, I will personally get on all fours and let you ride me all the way to Oregon.

Stranger: One glass of water. That's all I want if I win.

Oswald: And what do I get when I win?

Stranger: I walk through that door and you never hear from me again.

Oswald thinks for a moment, walks around bar and goes to the Stranger. Oswald stares at him for a moment before letting out a little smile.

Oswald: Okay Slick. You got yourself a deal.

Oswald reaches out his arm and the Stranger and him shake hands.

Oswald: Take a seat at my best table right over there.

Oswald gestures to the table and chairs

Oswald: And I will get my very best knife from my very fierce competitor.

The Stranger staggers to the seat and sits himself down. Oswald returns behind the bar and grabs a pairing knife. Oswald plays around with it as he goes to the table and takes a seat opposite Stranger. Oswald hands the knife over to Stranger.

Oswald: Your bet. You start.

The Stranger takes the knife and stares into the blade. Beat. He then peers back up at Oswald.

Stranger: If I'm starting, you keep time. You got a clock?

Oswald takes his focus away from the Stranger to a clock and spends a few moments watching the time. Stranger leans over the table and holds out the knife level to Oswald's throat. Oswald starts to turn back to Stranger.

Oswald: Fifteen seconds till three. You rea-

Oswald is cut off as he turns fully back to Stranger who slides the blade across his neck. Oswald immediately grabs his throat as blood starts to pour down his hand and fingers. Oswald falls to the ground and violently twitches while gasping for air. Stranger firmly grasps onto knife before releasing it. Beat. Stranger stands up, wanders to the bar and grabs Oswald's glass of water. Stranger turns and stares at Oswald as he drinks what's left of the glass. Stranger slowly walks to Oswald, places the glass next to him, and leans down to him.

Stranger: *(quietly)* Thank you for the drink.

Stranger stands up and walks out the door. Oswald has a few moments of struggle before stopping still, fully dead. Beat.

Lights down.