

**Cast of Characters**

Victor Grason, 30

Cynthia Mears, 33

**Place**

A bar that occasionally features stand-up comics.

**Time**

The present, about eleven o'clock on a Thursday evening.

# *Uneasy Overture*

by Emmett Loverde

*SCENE:* The set consists of a “stage” area—perhaps a raised platform in front of a curtain containing a microphone on a stand—and a couple of chairs and tables facing it. Sound effects: general bar buzz, clinking glasses, etc.

*AT RISE:* CYNTHIA MEARS, 36, pretty, sits alone at a table that obviously held a crowd of four earlier: it is littered with dirty glasses and a half-eaten plate of nachos. She watches the stage with mild curiosity as VICTOR GRASON, 31, charming but rumped, completes a stand-up monologue at the microphone on the “stage”. He is getting appreciative laughter from about twenty or so unseen “patrons”.

**VICTOR.** Men are being phased out. I figure one of these days women are going to take over the sperm banks. That will make men obsolete. Out of style.

*(CYNTHIA starts to watch VICTOR more closely.)*

The problem is men can’t have babies. And they are *ticked off*—have been for centuries. Ladies, trust me: men would love to try having a baby—just so they can brag about it! “Check this out, dude: nine pounds, eleven hours, and *no painkillers!*”

*(CYNTHIA chuckles involuntarily.)*

Ladies, next time you get sexually harassed, I want you to look him in the eye, shake your head, and say “Uterus Envy.”

*(Laughter.)*

*(Waving:)* Thank you very much. I’m Victor Grason, I’ll be here all week—good night!

*(VICTOR exits the stage to continued applause. He deposits himself at a table which is empty save a half-full glass of water. He*

*slurps the water and mops his brow. Bar music starts up in background; bar noises swell.)*

**CYNTHIA.** Good show.

**VICTOR.** Thanks, thanks. I like this place. *(Chugs water.)*

*(Pause. CYNTHIA, realizing that that's the end of their conversation, focuses her attention elsewhere. As his pulse settles, VICTOR looks over at CYNTHIA, finally appreciating both her beauty and her attempt at conversation.)*

Where are your friends?

**CYNTHIA.** Pardon?

**VICTOR.** Weren't you with some people?

**CYNTHIA.** They left.

**VICTOR.** They hate the show?

**CYNTHIA.** *(Smiles.)* No. They had to get home.

**VICTOR.** *(Nods.)* Work tomorrow?

**CYNTHIA.** Hmm? Uh, yes—work tomorrow.

*(VICTOR, thinking that his attempts to converse are being rebuffed, smiles politely and pulls out a small notebook into which he begins jotting notes.)*

How long have you been doing this?

**VICTOR.** What, stand-up? A few months. How'd I do?

**CYNTHIA.** I already said it was a good show.

**VICTOR.** Do you think the rest of the audience liked it?

**CYNTHIA.** They were laughing.

**VICTOR.** But you definitely liked it?

**CYNTHIA.** I wouldn't have said that if I didn't mean it.

**VICTOR.** Thanks. Thanks for the support. *(Jots more notes.)*

**CYNTHIA.** What's that you're writing?

**VICTOR.** Excuse me?

**CYNTHIA.** What are you writing? Are those notes on your performance?

**VICTOR.** *(As she is saying the same thing:)* Notes on my gig tonight. Good guess.

**CYNTHIA.** How do you think you did?

**VICTOR.** I don't think men really "get" me.

**CYNTHIA.** I "got" you.

*(VICTOR moves his chair to her table; she clears some glasses to accommodate him.)*

**VICTOR.** Do you think it works?

**CYNTHIA.** Sure. That stuff about men wishing they could have babies.

**VICTOR.** Most guys think I'm full of it.

**CYNTHIA.** Are you?

**VICTOR.** Full of it? Probably. You sure your friends didn't hate the show?

**CYNTHIA.** Reggie thought you were too slow, his girlfriend Jane thought you said everything too fast, so they started arguing. They missed most of your routine.

**VICTOR.** What do you do?

**CYNTHIA.** What do you mean?

**VICTOR.** For a living.

**CYNTHIA.** Marketing. For a baby clothes manufacturer.

**VICTOR.** You got children of your own?

**CYNTHIA.** Not yet.

**VICTOR.** But you can stock up now on baby clothes.

**CYNTHIA.** I suppose. Do you do this often?

**VICTOR.** Meddle in people's lives? That's where I get all my material.

**CYNTHIA.** No—do you do a lot of comedy?

**VICTOR.** Whenever I can. Stand-up is totally addictive.

**CYNTHIA.** What's your day job?

**VICTOR.** I...work for a company that puts together computer CD-ROMs.

**CYNTHIA.** Oooh—I love computers! Do you make games?

**VICTOR.** Sort of.

**CYNTHIA.** Oh, I see—they're too violent for kids?

**VICTOR.** You could say that.

**CYNTHIA.** What games? Any I've heard of?

**VICTOR.** Probably not.

**CYNTHIA.** Name some.

**VICTOR.** (*Embarrassed:*) "Midnight Tease".

**CYNTHIA.** I don't know it. Is it a shoot-'em-up?

**VICTOR.** In a way.

**CYNTHIA.** Name some more.

**VICTOR.** "Bedroom Peeper".

**CYNTHIA.** Never heard of it. Try again.

**VICTOR.** "Bedroom Peeper II". "Bedroom Peeper III"? "Super Bedroom Peeper With X-Ray Vision"?

**CYNTHIA.** What's the object of these games?

**VICTOR.** They improve male hand-eye coordination.

**CYNTHIA.** Doesn't that make you go blind?

**VICTOR.** Look, I have no part in developing the games—I just answer phones. What was the argument?

**CYNTHIA.** My boyfriend and I were fighting, so Jane and Reggie drove him home.

**VICTOR.** Hey, first thing tomorrow morning he'll call you up and you guys will—

**CYNTHIA.** I may see him tonight, if he's still awake.

**VICTOR.** If he went home.

**CYNTHIA.** What's that supposed to mean?

**VICTOR.** Nothing. Nothing at all. I don't even know this guy. What's his name?

**CYNTHIA.** "Jerkface".

**VICTOR.** What's his name when you *like* him?

**CYNTHIA.** "Cherry-Picker".

**VICTOR.** Because he...

**CYNTHIA.** He's tall.

**VICTOR.** Let's change the subject.

**CYNTHIA.** Why do you work for a company like that?

**VICTOR.** It's a good company!

**CYNTHIA.** You should do more stand-up.

**VICTOR.** What was the fight about?

*(Pause.)*

**CYNTHIA.** You.

**VICTOR.** What, Jerkface thought I was awful so you stuck up for me?

**CYNTHIA.** I told him I thought you were cute.

**VICTOR.** Oh. Thanks. Why?

**CYNTHIA.** Because I think you're cute.

**VICTOR.** But why tell that to your boyfriend?

**CYNTHIA.** I don't know... we were all talking about who we thought was attractive, you know, in the movies and stuff, and I pointed at you and said, "Well I think *he's* cute," and Jerkface got mad and left.

**VICTOR.** You were talking during my show??

**CYNTHIA.** I was just trying to shut them up.

**VICTOR.** Which one was Jerkface?

**CYNTHIA.** Tall one. Red shirt. Ray-Bans. Arrogant son of a—

**VICTOR.** I remember him. Aren't Ray-Bans out of style?

**CYNTHIA.** I wouldn't know. Anyway, that was Jerkface.

**VICTOR.** Why was he wearing sunglasses in the dark?

**CYNTHIA.** Because he's a jerkface!

**VICTOR.** Until he becomes...Cherry-Picker!

**CYNTHIA.** (*Waves down unseen waitress.*) Check please?

**VICTOR.** I'm sorry, that was...inappropriate.

**CYNTHIA.** It's my fault. I should know better than to spill my guts to a comic.

**VICTOR.** At least now I got an idea of your taste.

**CYNTHIA.** I already said I think *you're* cute. What more do you want?

**VICTOR.** Yeah, but if Cherry-Picker was—

**CYNTHIA.** *Jerkface.*

**VICTOR.** If Jerkface was some total dork, then I'd say you had no taste.

**CYNTHIA.** You think he's a dork?

**VICTOR.** No—that's what I'm saying. I thought he looked pretty sharp.

*(An imaginary waitress approaches the table. CYNTHIA looks up at "her" questioningly.)*

**CYNTHIA.** How much? (*Listens to answer.*) Ouch!! (*Searches purse.*)

**VICTOR.** Let me get this.

**CYNTHIA.** Thanks.

**VICTOR.** (*Hands money to the "waitress".*) I don't even know your name.

**CYNTHIA.** Cynthia.

**VICTOR.** Cynthia..?

**CYNTHIA.** Just Cynthia.

**VICTOR.** I see.

**CYNTHIA.** Look, I'm sorry. It just doesn't seem worth it to get into details.

**VICTOR.** Are you two engaged?

**CYNTHIA.** Yes. No. I don't know.

**VICTOR.** You are or you aren't.

**CYNTHIA.** Okay, we're not.

**VICTOR.** So you were using *me* to stir the pot. I get it.

**CYNTHIA.** Don't flatter yourself!

**VICTOR.** (*Backs away from table.*) I'll just be slithering off now...

**CYNTHIA.** Wait. I'm sorry. You've been nice, and your whole routine about men wanting to have babies was funny and I just...

**VICTOR.** Why don't you go home and work it out with Jerkface—before you do any more damage here?

**CYNTHIA.** (*Flaring up:*) Why don't you... (*Softens:*) Why don't you tell me where *your* girlfriend is?

**VICTOR.** I don't have a girlfriend.

**CYNTHIA.** There's nobody?

**VICTOR.** I date.

**CYNTHIA.** Why no date tonight?

**VICTOR.** I've got a gig.

**CYNTHIA.** She can't come to your gigs?

**VICTOR.** I get weird when I'm on stage. Too keyed-up.

**CYNTHIA.** But wouldn't it be nice to have some little cheerleader sitting in the front row smiling up at you?

**VICTOR.** Then I'd be using her. That's not fair.

**CYNTHIA.** You wouldn't be hard to cheer for. It wouldn't be charity or anything.

**VICTOR.** Thanks.

**CYNTHIA.** I used to be a cheerleader.

**VICTOR.** I'm not surprised.

**CYNTHIA.** What do you mean?

**VICTOR.** You're pretty enough.

**CYNTHIA.** Looks were not supposed to be an issue. It was all about *talent*. That's what they said.

**VICTOR.** Talent, sure. (*Buries head in hands.*) Good god...

**CYNTHIA.** What's wrong? What did I do?

**VICTOR.** I'm sorry, this just brings back memories.

**CYNTHIA.** You used to date a cheerleader?

**VICTOR.** (*Nods.*) Look, I don't buy that Jerkface thought I was such a threat that he would just walk out.

**CYNTHIA.** Well...I said more than what I said I said...

**VICTOR.** What did you say?

**CYNTHIA.** I told him I was ready to screw your brains out.

**VICTOR.** In the Biblical sense?

*(CYNTHIA glares.)*

What the hell did you say that for?

**CYNTHIA.** Why do you think?

**VICTOR.** Did you mean it? You didn't mean it, did you?

**CYNTHIA.** I was just trying to get a rise out of him. He knew I was kidding! He had to know.

**VICTOR.** Why did he walk out?

**CYNTHIA.** I don't know! I don't know, damn it!

*(CYNTHIA is on the verge of tears. Instinctively, VICTOR reaches out to comfort her, but then pulls back.)*

**VICTOR.** I am not going to do this.

**CYNTHIA.** Do what?

**VICTOR.** I'm not going to get drawn into this thing between you and your fiancé.

**CYNTHIA.** He's *not* my fiancé! I told you that!

**VICTOR.** How long have you been together?

**CYNTHIA.** Three years. We met three years ago tonight.

**VICTOR.** Oh Jesus. Not again.

**CYNTHIA.** Again? I've never seen you before in my life. (*Catches on.*)  
Oh. You've been the rebound guy before.

**VICTOR.** She was a cheerleader, too!

**CYNTHIA.** But that's not what I'm doing.

**VICTOR.** Why don't you just go tell Cherry-Face you're sorry and make up?

**CYNTHIA.** He won't be there.

**VICTOR.** You just said you'd see him tonight.

**CYNTHIA.** If I go back to *his* place. I'm going back to *my* place.

**VICTOR.** You got your own place?

**CYNTHIA.** Yeah—it's really cute. You should see it. (*Catching herself.*)  
I don't mean *now*.

**VICTOR.** Just make up with him. Tell him to lose the sunglasses. You'll be fine.

**CYNTHIA.** Me make up with him? You think this is all *my* fault?

**VICTOR.** Hey, if my girlfriend told me flat-out she wanted to screw some other guy—

**CYNTHIA.** I didn't tell you what *he* said.

**VICTOR.** What did he say?

**CYNTHIA.** He didn't say *anything*.

**VICTOR.** I don't understand.

**CYNTHIA.** He said nothing. Nothing!

**VICTOR.** And every time someone says nothing to you, you have these little outbursts?

**CYNTHIA.** Three years and he hasn't asked me to marry him. Three years!

**VICTOR.** He has to ask tonight?

**CYNTHIA.** It's our anniversary!

**VICTOR.** Oh. Can't you propose to him?

**CYNTHIA.** Of course not!

**VICTOR.** Does he know you want him to propose?

**CYNTHIA.** Three! Years! *Tonight!!!*

**VICTOR.** Maybe he's not ready.

**CYNTHIA.** It doesn't matter. I don't want him.

**VICTOR.** Sure you do. You're talking crazy.

**CYNTHIA.** Nope. Not anymore.

**VICTOR.** Your ego is a little bruised—

**CYNTHIA.** I have been dropping hints for months!

**VICTOR.** How subtle were the hints? Guys can be pretty dense.

**CYNTHIA.** One day we were driving up the coast and I put on a tape of the wedding march. He almost took us off a cliff.

**VICTOR.** High winds?

**CYNTHIA.** Another time I pulled him into a jewelry store to look at wedding rings. He had a sneezing fit and ran out.

**VICTOR.** Dusty?

**CYNTHIA.** One night I got into bed with him and I was wearing a wedding dress.

**VICTOR.** I hear to unfasten those dresses you need a PhD...

**CYNTHIA.** He wouldn't touch me. He made me take it off by myself or he would sleep in the other room.

**VICTOR.** No further questions, Your Honor.

**CYNTHIA.** It's *over*:

**VICTOR.** It's not really *over*...

**CYNTHIA.** Yes it is. Over. I'm done.

**VICTOR.** One night you're wearing a wedding dress to bed, the next you're done? I don't think so.

**CYNTHIA.** You don't understand. The wedding dress was the last straw.

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