FAVORS
by JULIANNE HOMOKAY

CHARACTERS
PENNIE, 30's, married; the type of eternally popular, timeless beauty who can still pull off the latest trends.
ALISON, Pennie's best friend, 30's, single; always a step behind, slightly frumpy, a bit overweight, yet cute because she's so infectious.

TIME/PLACE
Afternoon; a typical brass-and-fern restaurant where two women friends would meet for lunch without thinking twice about it.

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Lights up on a typical brass-and-fern restaurant. PENNIE and ALISON are mock-arguing over the check.

PENNIE
No let me get this.

ALISON
You got the last one.

PENNIE
You don’t have a job.

ALISON
I told you, I just got hired at Office Depot.

PENNIE
Take your dirty hands off that bill before I clobber you.
(ALISON relents. Beat.)
So why won’t you do it?

ALISON
You were serious?

PENNIE
Yes.

ALISON
Well think about it, Pennie, Jesus.

PENNIE
You need a job.

ALISON
I told you, I found a job.

PENNIE
That job’s beneath you.

ALISON
And this isn’t?

PENNIE
That blue smock they make you wear?
ALISON
I don’t have an issue with the blue smock.

PENNIE
You’ll look even fatter than you do normally.

ALISON
You still wear jelly shoes, for Christ’s Sake.

PENNIE
At least jelly shoes don’t make me look fat.

ALISON
Nothing makes you look fat, geez. Thanks for picking me up when I’m down. What an awesome best friend.

PENNIE
If you really were my best friend, you’d do this for me.

(beat)

ALISON
Just say for a second.

PENNIE
Yeah.

ALISON
Just say I considered it.

PENNIE
Yeah?

ALISON
Not that I am.

PENNIE
Of course.

ALISON
How much would it pay?

PENNIE
Double what you’d make at Office Depot.
ALISON
That’s... (calculates) 760 a week?

PENNIE
Yep.

ALISON
You’d pay me 760 dollars a week.

PENNIE
Yes I would.

ALISON
You’d pay me 760 dollars a week to sleep with your husband.

PENNIE
And I’d take taxes out.

(beat)

ALISON
Is he that bad?

PENNIE
Oh, no.

ALISON
Small dick?

PENNIE
Well, it’s not the size, it’s what they do with it.

ALISON
That’s a myth.

PENNIE
No, it’s not.

ALISON
So Brad’s got a small dick, you never told me that before.

PENNIE
No, he doesn’t, I’m just saying.

ALISON
If it’s not the dick, then what is it?
PENNIE
It’s just that...

ALISON
Just what?

PENNIE
I’m so tired, you know?

ALISON
I think we’ve already established that I don’t.

PENNIE
Lingerie is scratchy.

ALISON
I wouldn’t know about that, either.

PENNIE
Some positions are a lot of work.

ALISON
So I’ve heard on Jerry Springer.

PENNIE
I’ve got a thong callus in my butt smile.

ALISON
That’s the price you pay.

PENNIE
So I’m tired is all I’m saying.

ALISON
For love.

PENNIE
I want to wear flannel jammie bottoms.

ALISON
For companionship.

PENNIE
I want to binge-watch “Gilmore Girls.”
ALISON
For having a gorgeous husband who loves you.

PENNIE
I just want my body to myself for awhile.

ALISON
Oh. Do you not....? You know.

PENNIE
What?

ALISON
You know what I mean.

PENNIE
You mean?

ALISON
Yeah.

PENNIE
Every time.

ALISON
Now you’ve really lost me.

PENNIE
He makes sure that I do, which is totally generous, but when I’m done first it gets painful, and when he’s done it’s done as far as he’s concerned. So it’s not like reversing the order is an option. So I’ve been foregoing. Because I can’t take it anymore. He’s about to go outside the marriage, Alison. Which believe it or not, I’m fine with, but I want it to be with someone I trust, and you need a job, a better job, so why don’t you goddam do this one goddam thing for me, goddammit?

(beat)

PENNIE
But?

ALISON
I’m not saying I won’t. How would this work?
PENNIE
Well. We could set a schedule at the beginning of every week.

ALISON
How can you guarantee he’ll be in the mood?

PENNIE
He’s always in the mood.

ALISON
Fair enough. What kind of, you know, landscaping does he like?

PENNIE
Clean. With like a landing strip.

ALISON
That will require some Nair. Positions?

PENNIE
We’d put the standard three in the contract. Anything beyond that you’d earn hazard pay.

ALISON
Good, ‘cause I don’t think I can get my legs behind my head.

PENNIE
Remember I was a cheerleader. How about I attach a rider for yoga classes?

ALISON
I could shoot for the knees up by the ears.

PENNIE
And you’d get a per diem. For accoutrements.

ALISON
dVDs, Frederick’s of Hollywood, Trojans—

PENNIE
Magnums, I might add.

ALISON
Whoo.

PENNIE
I told you it wasn’t the dick. But we’ll supply the birth control, that won’t have to come out of your per diem.
ALISON
And Brad’s okay with this?

PENNIE
Brad thinks it’s a great idea. He’s always thought you were cute.

ALISON
Brad thinks I’m cute?

PENNIE
Especially since the Jenny Craig.

ALISON
Guys like him usually don’t think girls like me are cute. I mean, he was our high school’s star wide receiver. I was in the Home Economics club.

PENNIE
You’re in a higher league than you think you are, Alison.

Thank you.

PENNIE
And anyway, when’s the last time you had a good roll in the hay?

ALISON
“Roll in the hay?” Is there a bright golden haze on the meadow, too?

PENNIE
Since college, I bet.

ALISON
I’ve had sex since college, Pennie.

PENNIE
Oh yeah? When?

ALISON
You don’t know everything about my life.

PENNIE
Yes I do. You tell me everything. I bet it was college. I bet it was that Gavin guy from MIT. That geek.

ALISON
Who you and Buffy and Clare made me break up with.
PENNIE
So here’s my chance to make that up to you. Don’t you miss that physical intimacy with a man? Wouldn’t that feel nice? C’mon, Alison. Whadya say. This is win-win here.

(beat)

Please?

(beat)

I’ll throw in a 401K.

(beat)

ALISON
Why me, Pennie?

PENNIE
Haven’t I gone through like a thousand reasons?

ALISON
It’s not like he’ll be banging his secretary. The three of us have some history. What if this starts messing with your relationship?

(PENNIE cackles.)

What?

PENNIE
You’re afraid Brad might fall for you?

ALISON
People bond when they have sex on a regular basis.

PENNIE
Wouldn’t you be more worried about the reverse?

ALISON
So you’re saying there’s no way a guy like him could fall for someone like me.

Basically, yes.

PENNIE
There’s no way in the infinite universe he’d ever want to leave you for me if we became involved.

ALISON
It’s not “involved,” it’s a paycheck. And no, I’m not worried. Mating is an exact science.
ALISON
Again with the league theory.

PENNIE
That’s right. If you mate outside your league, the person in the league below will always be insecure that the person in the league above will stray for something better.

ALISON
And the person above will resent that they settled, I remember.

PENNIE
So you’ll do it? So to speak?

ALISON
Fuck you, Penelope.

PENNIE
What’s wrong?

ALISON
You basically sat there and told me Brad would never fall for me because I’m too ugly for him and you’re still thinking I’m gonna do this?

PENNIE
Yeah, I do.

ALISON
You’re jacked.

PENNIE
No one says “you’re jacked” anymore, Alison. And that’s exactly why you’re gonna do this. People like you need people like me to have any sort of meaningful social life at all. And you’re getting a chance to fuck a guy you wouldn’t be able to get on your own in a million years, and we both know it. Because I love Brad, but I simply can’t fuck him for awhile, I just can’t, and if I lose him because of that, it will be your missed opportunity. I don’t know why it’s such a crime to acknowledge all this. We all know it’s true.

(beat)

ALISON
Okay. Here’s the deal.

PENNIE
Okay you’ll do it?
ALISON

Not under the current terms.

PENNIE

You’re making a mistake.

ALISON

You’re my friend, and I love you, Pennie, so I’m gonna tell it to you straight. You might think you’re extending me this great opportunity here, but what you’re forgetting is that there’s a blessing in not being gorgeous. Oh yeah. We have to work a whole lot harder at being real human beings. And it seems readily apparent that the bottom line is your husband is getting sick of your high maintenance, shallow ass. Now as I said, I love you, but I don’t like you all that much. And you’ve pissed me off enough today that I’m willing to prove it to you. I’ll still fuck your husband, if you’d like. But I’ll do it because I want to, not because you’re paying me. I’ll do it because I can. As long as we establish who’s doing who the favor here.

(ALISON extends her hand.)
We still on?

(They shake on it.)

PENNIE

You bet.

ALISON

Good. I’ll start tomorrow. I’ll come over after work. I’ll be wearing the blue smock. Only the blue smock.

(ALISON snatches the check away from PENNIE.)
You’re going to live to regret this.

(PENNIE snatches the check back.)

PENNIE

Oh yeah?

ALISON

Don’t say I didn’t warn you.

(ALISON snatches the check back one more time and exits to pay it.)

PENNIE

Keep dreamin, my friend.
(PENNIE slings her purse over her shoulder and follows ALISON off.)

(end of play.)