

Cold Front by Arianna Tull

CHARACTERS:

Matt Taylor- late 30s. Diner owner. Long term relationship with Lauren.

Lauren Clarke- mid 30s. Works in the city. Long term relationship with Matt.

Christine Davidson- early 20s. College student. Troy's daughter.

Troy Davidson- mid 50s. Christine's dad, he came out as gay 9 years ago.

Riley Hansen- late teens. Simply unashamed.

Tommie Sanders- late teens. Recently graduated high school.

Allen Dunne- late 20s. A bit of a fuckup. The oldest.

Gwen Dunne- mid 20s. Well off but directionless. The middle kid.

Hudson Dunne- early 20s. College student. The youngest.

ACT I

Matt stands behind a counter CS with a pile of receipts in front of him. He counts them quickly out of habit, but there is no real sense of urgency. A door leading to the street is on a diagonal wall SR, a doorway to the kitchen is directly behind Matt, and three tables sit DS. Christine and Troy sit at the table SR, Tommie sits CS, Hudson sits SL.

Lauren enters from the street and heads straight for the counter. She slips behind it and starts digging around for something to eat.

MATT

Hey, stop that.

LAUREN

I'm hungry.

MATT

Then order something.

LAUREN

Much hunger. Must eat to talk!

MATT

Get out from behind the counter. I'll make you food.

LAUREN

My hero. Where is Griff?

She takes a seat in a bar stool DS of the counter with a bagel in her hand.

MATT

Sent him home early. He looked a little freaked about his finals.

LAUREN

A sympathetic boss too! What doesn't my man have?

MATT

Patience.

LAUREN

Fair enough. Do you want some help? Doesn't look like a bunch of people in here, but you look busy.

MATT

You don't work here.

LAUREN

And?

MATT

And - you don't work here.

LAUREN

Yeah, and?

MATT

(with a sigh)

I guess you could refill everybody's drinks.

Lauren leans across the counter to kiss him and she steals the notepad and pen he uses to take orders. She holds them up for him to see.

LAUREN

Just in case someone wants something.

She takes a full pot of coffee and heads to Tommie's table first. Tommie is in her own world. Allen enters from the street and heads to Hudson's table.

LAUREN

Doing okay over here.

TOMMIE

Oh - yeah, sorry. I am.

LAUREN

Need to be topped off?

TOMMIE

No, I'm all good.

LAUREN

Alright. Let me know if you need anything!

Lauren heads to Hudson and Allen.

ALLEN

Hey, man. You look good!

HUDSON

Thanks. You just get off work?

ALLEN

Yeah. My boss is a total fucking dick, you have no idea.

HUDSON

You text me nightly about it.

ALLEN

Well, I guess you do know then, huh?

LAUREN

How are you guys doing over here?

ALLEN

Better, now you're over here sweetness.

HUDSON

Come on.

LAUREN

Need anymore coffee.

ALLEN

Hey, hun. Take a quick seat. We'll talk about the first thing that comes up

He pats his lap, she glares.

LAUREN

That'd be an awfully short conversation.

She pours a little coffee into the mugs and heads back to the counter.

HUDSON

You don't have to be so - aggressively sexist, you know.

ALLEN

I'm not aggressive about it.

HUDSON

Okay, sure.

ALLEN

When is Gwen getting here?

HUDSON

She said she's on her way from class, so hopefully soon.

ALLEN

God, and she was so worried she'd have to wait for me.

LAUREN

Good god, this town just keeps attracting the worst kind of creeps!

MATT

Who is?

LAUREN

The Pauly Shore wanna-be over there.

MATT

I would say he's a bit more Brendan Fraser.

LAUREN

With that hair? No way.

MATT

Specifically in that one cave man movie.

LAUREN

Ha! Sure, okay now I see it.

Christine laughs.

CHRISTINE

--I'm your favorite kid anyway.

TROY

You're my favorite daughter.

CHRISTINE

Not fair! You can't say that.

TROY

Fine - you're my favorite child --

CHRISTINE

Fin//ally!

TROY

-at this table.

CHRISTINE

Ugh! Come on! Just admit it.

TROY

Never.

They both laugh and drink, letting the conversation die for a moment. Lauren heads over to them, having missed them in her first round.

LAUREN

Hey, you guys okay over here? Need any coffee?

TROY

Thank you.

Lauren fills their mugs and wanders back to the counter. Matt and she have a silent conversation.

CHRISTINE

How is Jimmy?

TROY

He's alright. He wanted to come up here with me but he couldn't get off work.

CHRISTINE

Ain't no rest for the DJ, huh?

TROY

Pretty much.

CHRISTINE

Well - tell him that I missed him. Hopefully he can come up next time.

TROY

I wouldn't bet on it, but hopefully.

Another small silence as they both think on what to say.

TROY

How is school going?

CHRISTINE

Pretty good. Film theory is kicking my ass, but it's fun.

TROY

And the loan went through okay?

CHRISTINE

Yep, they accepted it.

TROY

I think you'd be hard pressed to find a school who didn't willingly accept money from you.

CHRISTINE

Fair enough.

TROY

Do you think it would help you get some more financial aid if you had divorced parents?

Christine averts her eyes and doesn't respond for a moment. Riley suddenly enters from the street and goes straight for Tommie's table. Riley sits closed off.

TOMMIE

Hey!

RILEY

Hi -

TROY

Sorry, I // shouldn't have -

CHRISTINE

No, it's alright. Uhm - I don't know. Maybe. If I just reported Mom's income.

TROY

Well, I'm not sure if it'll come to that. Divorces are a little costly.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, I got it.

TOMMIE

So -- Gibbsland was really fun.

RILEY

Cool.

TOMMIE

Yep. I lost the costume contest to the sheriff. That's alright though. I didn't really think I'd win, you know.

RILEY

Sure.

TOMMIE

You graduate next week, right?

RILEY

On Saturday.

TOMMIE

Awesome! Hopefully your mom will take tons of photos.
I wish I could actually be there.

RILEY

Why?

TOMMIE

What do you mean? To see you graduate.

RILEY

You want to sit in a hot church for two hours to see
me get a piece of paper?

TOMMIE

Hey, I feel like it's half mine! I think I've done
more of your homework than my own these past few
years.

RILEY

Don't. Please don't.

TOMMIE

I won't - I was...I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything
// by it.

RILEY

Whatever, it's fine.

*Tommie drums her fingers the table. Matt comes
by with a pot of coffee. He places a mug in
front of Riley and fills it quickly.*

MATT

You know what you want?

RILEY

I'm just here for a conversation.

MATT

I love when city kids come in.

RILEY

What?

MATT

Don't worry about it. Our special is a jack omelette.

Matt goes directly into the kitchen and Lauren takes a seat at the counter again, not so slyly eves dropping on all the conversations. Riley glares after Matt.

TOMMIE

So, did you ever go to prom? You've been kinda MIA the last few weeks.

RILEY

No.

TOMMIE

Oh - why not? I thought // that he -

RILEY

Billy never asked.

TOMMIE

Damn. What a jackass. Go on four dates with a guy and he still won't ask you to prom.

RILEY

I guess so.

TOMMIE

Are you -- are you gonna still see him? Now that Prom season is over? I remember you said you // were gonna -

RILEY

I like him. He's nice to me.

TOMMIE

Wasn't I nice to you?

They both pause. Tommie can't think of anything else to say. Riley sighs and looks up from her work. They look at each other for a minute. Riley bites the inside of her cheek then sits forward.

RILEY

We're friends still, right?

TOMMIE

Yeah, of course we are.

RILEY

You'd - give me advice and stuff if I needed it?

TOMMIE

Sure? I don't think I'd be good at giving advice on like - robbing a bank or anything but, yeah.

RILEY

Can you be serious for once in your life.

TOMMIE

Yeah, yes. Sorry.

RILEY

Can I talk to you then, for a minute.

TOMMIE

I thought that's what we were already doing.

RILEY

As my best friend, I mean. Can I talk to you as my friend for a minute? Not as my ex.

TOMMIE

Oh - yeah, sure. What's up?

RILEY

I had sex with Liam.

TOMMIE

Okay --

RILEY

Last Friday night.

Tommie suddenly can't make eye contact. She bites at the skin around her fingernails.

TOMMIE

Oh! Okay, uhm. Sure. What's - uh - why do you wanna talk about that?

RILEY

I haven't told Billy yet.

TOMMIE

Well, that sucks. You should probably tell him.

RILEY

No shit.

They are silent again. Riley studies Tommie for a while.

RILEY

I'm sorry. I shouldn't bring this stuff up around you, I know it's too fresh for you.

TOMMIE

No, you know, it's fine. It's been over for a long time.

RILEY

Not really. It's only been a few months since we broke // up --

TOMMIE

No, it has. You met Liam nearly a year ago and it was over. Neither of us wanted to say anything. Then you met Billy and -

RILEY

Right --

TOMMIE

I kinda thought it was over for Liam and me, but I guess he's still in the running, huh?

RILEY

Way to make me feel like a jackass, Tommie.

TOMMIE

I didn't mean it like -- I'm sorry, I'm just trying to make the situation a little lighter.

RILEY

Well, don't.

TOMMIE

I won't. I'll shut up, just -- tell me whatever is on your mind.

RILEY

I didn't think I still liked Liam.

TOMMIE

Of course you do, he's like all you talk about.

RILEY

Right, but - I don't know. I figured that after I met Billy - I like him enough that - shit, I don't know what to do.

TOMMIE

Look, just...is there one of them you like more?

RILEY

Not really. It's all equal, that's why I can't figure it out.

TOMMIE

Well - I guess - I think Billy might be better for you. Liam is kind of an ass.

RILEY

I know he is just - fuck, sometimes he smiles at me during rehearsals and I melt.

TOMMIE

I thought the theater season was over.

RILEY

He's my Billy Flynn at the *Lyric* this summer.

TOMMIE

You got cast?

RILEY

Yeah, we've been in rehearsals for like three weeks after school. I told you this.

TOMMIE

No you didn't!

Everyone glances up at the table.

TOMMIE

Sorry - No, I would have remembered you saying you were cast in *Chicago*.

RILEY

Whatever, I'm Velma. I have to wear a wig.

TOMMIE

That is **not** just whatever, Riley. That is really // awesome!

RILEY

Drop it, we're talking about something big here.

TOMMIE

Sorry. I get that feeling. I -- there's a girl at work and she makes my heart go really fast sometimes and like - we've been out for coffee and stuff, but

she has a boyfriend, you know.

RILEY

What a bitch. She shouldn't lead you on like that.

TOMMIE

Yeah, I guess.

RILEY

This sucks ass. Fuck, can't this just be easier.

TOMMIE

I'm sorry. If there's ever anything I can // do -

RILEY

Look, I gotta go. I told my mom I would be back by five.

TOMMIE

Sure, no problem. I'll see you later -

Riley leaves without a second thought. She almost runs into Lauren, who is making rounds with the coffee pot again.

LAUREN

Doing okay over here, guys?

TROY

Sure. Do we settle the check at the counter?

LAUREN

Yep, whenever you guys are ready.

CHRISTINE

Thanks.

LAUREN

No problem. Thanks for coming in.

She heads to Tommie who is trying as hard as possible not to cry. Lauren pauses before getting to her table. She goes back to the counter, glances around for Matt who is in the kitchen, and grabs a plate from under and places a donut with sprinkles on it. She goes to Tommie's table.

LAUREN

Hey, kid, do you like donuts? We got way too many this morning and we're honestly having trouble

selling them.

TOMMIE

No, thank you.

LAUREN

You sure? It's on the house if you want it.

TOMMIE

Thanks, but -

LAUREN

I'll leave it here. Honestly, we have like three more boxes in the back. Eat it if you want, but don't worry about it. Want any more coffee?

TOMMIE

Yes, please.

Lauren pours the coffee and heads to Hudson and Allen's table.

LAUREN

Still doing okay over here?

HUDSON

Yeah, sorry. We're just waiting on our sister.

LAUREN

Not a problem. We aren't exactly super busy at the moment.

ALLEN

Care to stay over here then, hun? We could use the entertainment.

LAUREN

Let me know if you need any more coffee, okay.

She heads back to the counter to wait for Matt to get out of the kitchen.

TROY

I love you, but there is absolutely no way that *Sunset Blvd.* is better than any movie, let alone *Touch of Evil*.

CHRISTINE

No way its better than **any** movie? So *Sunset* is worse than...*Birdemic*?

TROY

Not what I meant but - yes, I like *Birdemic* more.

CHRISTINE

Then you're just stupid! And you have a stupid grudge against Billy Wilder for no reason.

TROY

If your dad had made you watch *Buddy Buddy* a thousand times, you'd hate Billy Wilder too.

CHRISTINE

By that logic I'd hate Julie Andrews! But no, I am a sensible human being.

TROY

Oh, shut up. We did not watch anything Julie Andrews that many times.

CHRISTINE

Mary Poppins every single Sunday for like eight years. Until we staged a revolt.

TROY

Okay, I guess we did watch it a few times.

CHRISTINE

A few? Mike and I weren't surprised when you came out for a reason, Dad. It was all the Julie Andrews. And the paisley shirts didn't really help either.

TROY

Whatever!

CHRISTINE

Don't you whatever me young man.

Troy makes a 'W' and a 'M' with his thumbs and forefingers as he says each word.

TROY

Whatever. Your Mom Works at McDonalds, Working for Minimum Wage.

CHRISTINE

God, you are such a kid!

TROY

Come on, we better get going. I'm supposed to check into the hotel in thirty minutes.

They both pack up go to the counter to settle their check. Matt appears from the kitchen as they reach the counter.

MATT
Everything good?

TROY
Great, thanks.

MATT
Okay. 10.15. Thank you. Come back again.

LAUREN
Sound happier to be talking to people, hun.

MATT
No thanks.

Troy and Christine exit to the street and nearly run into Gwen as she enters. She takes a seat with her brothers and immediately brings out a small notepad to sketch on.

GWEN
Hi, sorry I'm late. My fucking photography teacher kept us late because - of some bullshit, I have no idea. Then traffic was fucking awful.

ALLEN
Good to see you, lady.

GWEN
Yeah. Why did you wanna talk to us?

HUDSON
What, I need an excuse to see my siblings?

GWEN
No, but you know I go to school like an hour from here and Allen -- does something far away too.

ALLEN
I work at the coffee // shop, dude.

HUDSON
Okay, okay. I'm sorry. You guys know that...well, Mom and Dad were never doing great and Mom has been struggling since Dad moved out and...And she asked to move in with me.

ALLEN

Ha! That sucks!

GWEN

Good luck with that.

HUDSON

I don't mind, but I live in a studio apartment and I need a bigger place if she is going to live with me.

GWEN

So you want money.

HUDSON

I want help taking care of our mother.

ALLEN

I thought she had a job.

HUDSON

She makes less than you do. She can't afford rent by herself.

GWEN

So you want money.

HUDSON

Yes, I want you both to pitch in whatever you can.

GWEN

No way, I'm \$40,000 in debt and climbing. I can't afford my own place let alone buy one for you.

HUDSON

I'm not asking you to buy me a place, I just need help with the rent for a few // months.

ALLEN

I can't afford anything. My roommate's dog just had puppies so we need to go get them fixed and stuff.

HUDSON

I'm not asking for handouts, guys. Just enough to help // us get -

GWEN

No, Hudson. I'm a student right // now-

HUDSON

I'm a student too! I'm about to get a masters degree!

GWEN

In Philosophy! Are you kidding me, what the hell are you ever going to do with that?

ALLEN

Don't talk to him like that!

GWEN

Oh, shut up. You wouldn't know hard work if it slapped you in the face.

HUDSON

What are you planning to do with a theater degree? Work in a place like this?

GWEN

God! You're both such dicks!

HUDSON

I'm the dick!? I just want help buying a home for our mother and you // are the one -

GWEN

Mom is almost 55 years old, Hudson. She can find a home for her fucking self, she doesn't need to move in with you.

Gwen grabs her notepad and storms out just as quickly as she came in. Hudson and Allen sit dazed.

HUDSON

She was always a little dramatic, huh?

ALLEN

She's a fucking bitch.

HUDSON

You aren't helping pay either?

ALLEN

I don't have the cash, man. I'm sorry.

HUDSON

It's okay. I guess - shit, I guess I'll ask Dad.

ALLEN

Tell her to sell the ring?

HUDSON

It's sentimental.

ALLEN

It's expensive. Plus its been nearly 20 years since Dad moved out.

HUDSON

It's only a few thousand, it wouldn't would barely cover first last and a deposit.

They both sit in silence for a moment, Allen trying hard to find something to say.

ALLEN

Why are you such a mamas boy?

HUDSON

She makes me feel sad. She deserves better than we give her.

Matt enters again with a burger on a plate, he throws it down in front of Lauren.

MATT

Here is some artery killer. Ask before you leave and I'll make you some diabetes lure.

LAUREN

What a grump!

MATT

I thought you were hungry.

LAUREN

I thought you had a respectable establishment!

MATT

What are you talking about.

LAUREN

Just a bunch of drama in here today, I wasn't expecting it.

MATT

What do you mean?

LAUREN

Well - no you wouldn't want to hear it.

MATT

Oh good lord, just say it.

LAUREN

No, way. You don't like gossip.

MATT

I got used to the Real Housewives, didn't I?

LAUREN

I guess you did. Two girls just stormed out of here, the second one was pissed worse than anyone I think I've ever seen.

MATT

Really?

LAUREN

Yeah - Brendan Fraser's sister.

MATT

Who?

LAUREN

The guy who hit on me earlier, keep up.

MATT

Okay, I'm here, sorry.

LAUREN

Anyway, the mad girl who stormed out was yelling about money. I don't know who the third guy at the table is though.

They both look at Hudson for a moment.

MATT

Alan Ruck.

LAUREN

No way!

MATT

He is too! Alan Ruck in Ferris Bueller.

LAUREN

He doesn't look anything like that.

MATT

Maybe not, but he sure seems like the type.

LAUREN

The type to be Ferris' weird friend?

MATT

That's right.

LAUREN

He looks way more like Nick Frost.

MATT

Ah - sure. Okay. What else goes on when I'm not out here?

LAUREN

Well - John Cleese and his daughter left a while ago. Then, this girl at table four // I don't -

MATT

We don't number the tables.

LAUREN

Yeah, but then how do you know which table is what?

MATT

I say 'the one in the corner' or 'this goes to the guy with the hat'.

LAUREN

That's very confusing. Real restaurants have numbered tables.

MATT

Fine - go on.

LAUREN

The girl at table four // is -

MATT

Which one is table four?

LAUREN

The one with the girl.

MATT

Got ya.

LAUREN

Anyway. The girl at table four, I'm not totally sure what's going on there but her girlfriend or whatever stormed out a while ago and she looked real upset so I got her a donut.

MATT

We only had two left.

LAUREN

Now you have one.

MATT

That was her girlfriend? She didn't seem all that friendly.

LAUREN

Really? Hmm - Wonder what was really going on there. She seems real broken up about it. I feel bad.

MATT

She'll be alright. I'll make sure she gets a good ride home.

Lauren takes a bite of the burger - finally - and speaks with her mouth full.

LAUREN

When are you done for the day?

MATT

What?

LAUREN

Oh, shut up, I don't even have that much food in my mouth.

MATT

I'm closing up at 10. I'll be home around midnight.

LAUREN

Okay, I gotta get going. Thank you for lunch and for using me for free labor. I love you.

MATT

Love ya too.

They kiss. Lauren exits, taking the plate and the burger with her. Lights out.