

99 BOTTLES OF BEER

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CONCRETE BASEMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE UP of JACK (20s), who is soaking wet in sweat from fear. He is crying while singing frantically.

JACK

(singing)

45 bottles of beer on the wall, 45 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 44 bottles of beer on the wall. 44 bottles of beer on the wall, 44 bottles of beer.

(sobs)

Take one down and pass it around, 43 bottles of beer on the wall...

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S CAR - DAY

Jack is driving on a winding road while singing leisurely.

JACK

(singing)

99 bottles of beer on the wall, 99 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 98 bottles of beer on the wall. 98 bottles of beer on the wall, 98 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 97 bottles of beer on the wall.

Jack turns to his side to check out the expression on CARLA (20s). She is clearly annoyed with his singing, shaking her head and rolling her eyes while pouting her lips, but in a sweet way.

She brushes a few hairs away from her face. She has a plain wedding ring on her left ring finger. Jack amps up the volume to mess with her.

JACK (CONT'D)

(louder)

97 bottles of beer on the wall, 97 bottles of beer. Take one down and pass it around, 96 bottles of beer on the wall...

A black screen.

TITLE displays.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCRETE BASEMENT - NIGHT

POV from Jack: from a black screen to fuzzy unfocused view of the concrete basement. He looks down and sees he is sitting in a chair. His right foot is in a plastic bucket and the sock and shoe on that foot has been removed.

A little bit of smoke can be seen moving past Jack under the dim light.

JACK  
(muffled screaming)  
Help! Somebody help me!

WIDE SHOT reveals Jack is tied to a chair with tape over his mouth. There is a cardboard box by the table in front of him.

A well-dressed, sophisticated and graceful man, SIMON (40s), smokes quietly in another chair behind Jack while staring at a photo of Carla on his phone. Simon is wearing a plain wedding ring on his left ring finger.

Simon slowly stands up and pulls his chair in front of Jack. Jack hears the footsteps and tries even harder on fighting the losing battle against the rope that bind him to the chair.

Simon stands in front of Jack, who has panic in his eyes.

SIMON  
Hi, Jack. Do you know who I am?

Jack shakes his head and continues struggling.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
My name is Simon.

Jack suddenly stops struggling and his eyes widen.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Did Carla ever... talk about me  
with you?

Jack nods.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
Good. If you know WHO I am, you  
know WHY you're here, so let's move  
on to WHERE.  
(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

(sits down in the chair)

We are 3 stories down under an abandoned facility in the middle of nowhere. You can scream as loud as you want, but I promise you, there is nobody in a 5-mile radius who would be able to hear you.

Jack whimpers.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The only reason why I gagged you is because I personally can't stand loud noises. Now, if I take it out, (points to the gag) and you start screaming at a volume that I find intolerable, I'm just going to gag you again.

(beat)

Do we understand each other?

Jack pauses, and nods hesitantly. Simon stands up and takes the gag out of Jack's mouth and sits back down. Jack has a very guilty look on his face. He lowers his head.

JACK

I'm really sorry.

SIMON

I know you are.

JACK

I loved Carla.

SIMON

I don't care.

Simon puts the cardboard box on the table and starts unloading laboratory equipment, one by one.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Did Carla ever tell you what I do for a living?

JACK

You... you teach science?

SIMON

Chemistry professor, to be exact. Did you pay attention in chemistry class in high school, Jack?

JACK

I...

SIMON  
 (pulls out a burette)  
 Do you know what this is?

JACK  
 A... a pipette?

SIMON  
 Close, but no, this is a burette.

Simon sets up a burette stand and clamps the burette in place.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 A volumetric pipette measures a precise amount each time. A burette, on the other hand, gives you a lot more freedom.

CLOSE UP of Simon's hand shows the warped skin and flesh on his hand. Jack is terrified by the horrible disfigurement.

JACK  
 (voice trembling)  
 What are you going to do to me?

SIMON  
 (points to his right foot)  
 This is your driving foot, right?

Simon adds water from a half-full Ozarka jug into the bucket containing Jack's right foot and sits back down.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
 I'm going to make sure you never hurt another person again the way you hurt me.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S CAR - DAY

POV from Jack. Carla is sleeping in the car. Jack puts a few stray hairs behind her ear for her. She wakes up and smiles at him. She looks innocent and beautiful.

BACK TO:

INT. CONCRETE BASEMENT - NIGHT

JACK  
 How... how did you know...

SIMON

Facebook! It's a wonderful thing, isn't it? All I had to do was make a fake profile with the photo of a kid she went to school with, and she friended me.

JACK

You don't love her.  
(beat, gets angry)  
Don't pretend like she means anything to you. Do you know how much you hurt her?

SIMON

Carla once asked me why I didn't want a child. I told her there are too many ways a child can grow up... wrong. It wasn't a risk I was willing to take, but it doesn't make me love her any less.

JACK

(loudly)  
If you love her so much, then why didn't you fight for her?

SIMON

(shouts at Jack)  
Shut up! What do YOU know?  
(gets right in Jack's face menacingly)  
It was PRECISELY because I love her that I let her go!  
(beat, lowers his voice)  
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to lose my composure.

JACK

Don't give me that bullshit. She told me what you said.

SIMON

(stops what he's doing)  
I had a very unhappy childhood. My life consisted of school work, chores, making ends meet, and nothing else. I was always first in my class, but never had any friends... It's a life I wouldn't impose on any enemy, let alone Carla.

They both sit in silence for a while.

JACK

She loved me. She wouldn't want you  
to do this!

SIMON

You're probably right, but I  
wouldn't know, since you've taken  
her away from me.

(beat)

I tried to explain it to her, I  
wanted her to understand why I said  
what I said, but she never spoke to  
me again...

(leans in uncomfortably  
close)

And thanks to you, she never will.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S CAR - DAY

JACK

(singing while looking at  
Carla)

Take one down and pass it around.

CARLA

No, no, no, watch out!

Jack turns back to the road and his eyes widen.

SFX: Brakes screeching

BACK TO:

INT. CONCRETE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jack lowers his head in guilt.

SIMON

Do you know what it's like to lose  
the only thing you've ever loved?

JACK

I know I deserve whatever you do to  
me. But hurting me won't bring her  
back, you know?

SIMON

Oh, don't worry, this won't hurt at  
all. My ears are sensitive to loud  
noises, remember?

Simon takes his phone out and pulls up Facebook.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The last post on her Facebook page was from you:

(reads from the post)

"Tormenting Carla by singing 99 bottles of beer on the wall all the way to 0 while she's trapped in the car with me, nowhere to run..."

(scoffs)

Tormenting... Sound familiar?

Jack is frozen in fear.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Since she spent her last few conscious moments listening to this song, all I'm going to do is rig up this apparatus to slowly drip Hydrofluoric Acid into this bucket...

(points to the bucket)

until you finish the song.

JACK

You are crazy.

SIMON

That may be, but it doesn't change the predicament you are in. I'll even give you a head start. Go ahead. You can begin now.

Jack attempts to get out of the chair again but fails. Simon pulls out a jug labeled Hydrofluoric Acid. Sweat starts gathering on top of Jack's lips.

JACK

You're messing with me, right? This is just water. This is not real.

As soon as Simon puts on lab gloves, Jack starts hyperventilating and singing as fast as he can.

JACK (CONT'D)

(singing)

99 bottles of beer on the wall, 99 bottles of beer...

Jack continues singing frantically, occasionally taking short sobbing breaks before hopping right back into the song.

All of this happens while Simon calmly pours the jar of Hydrofluoric Acid into a plastic beaker, then using the plastic beaker and a plastic funnel to transfer the acid to the burette.

SIMON

Chemistry 101, Jack. The fluoride is so electronegative, it even breaks down the oxygen bond in glass, so I'm using ALL plasticware today.

(beat)

Do you watch Breaking Bad? They covered this pretty accurately. It's my favorite show!

Simon sets up for the burette to drip slowly but continuously into the bucket. He sits down and lights another cigarette, slowly puffing while lecturing Jack.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The movies get it wrong all the time. We don't need a strong acid that sizzles with smoke to do permanent damage. Take Hydrofluoric acid here, looks just like water, but it's VERY corrosive, and its classified as a WEAK acid.

JACK (O.S.)

(singing)

87 bottles of beers on the wall, 87 bottles of beer...

SIMON

It never fully ionizes in diluted solutions, so it doesn't even have to BE concentrated... to eat through flesh.

(puffs cigarette smoke)

The most beautiful thing is: it interferes with your nerve function, so this doesn't hurt immediately, and I'm thankful because it spares me of your horrible screams.

(puffs cigarette smoke)

But all it takes is 5% of your body surface area being exposed to ANY concentration to induce systemic toxicity.

JACK  
 (singing)  
 83 bottles of beers on the wall, 83  
 bottles of beer...

SIMON  
 Of course, the duration of exposure  
 is also a determining factor. So,  
 boy...  
 (beat)  
 How fast can you sing?

JACK  
 (singing)  
 82 bottles of beer on the wall...

CLOSE UP on Simon's expressionless face as he slowly smokes his cigarette while Jack sobbingly sings the rest of the song off screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S CAR - DAY

CLOSE UP on Carla's peaceful sleeping face.

JACK (O.S.)  
 (faintly singing)  
 2 bottles of beer on the wall, 2  
 bottles of beer. Take one down and  
 pass it around. 1 bottle of beer on  
 the wall.

POV from Carla as a hand moves into screen to put a few stray hairs behind her ear for her.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 (gradually singing louder)  
 1 bottle of beer on the wall, 1  
 bottle of beer. Take one down and  
 pass it around. No more bottles of  
 beer on the wall. Hooray!

CARLA  
 (stretches in her seat)  
 Wow, you actually went all the way  
 to zero, huh?

JACK  
 Honestly, I thought you were going  
 to stop me at 75 or something, but  
 you never did, so I kept going...  
 (MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

then I realized you were asleep  
when I got down to 10. Hahaha!

CARLA

Oh, no. Even if I was awake, I'd  
never stop you. You got yourself  
into this mess, you can sing your  
way out!

JACK

(whimpers like a dog and  
pouts)  
Brutal!

Jack eagerly awaits a sweet response for his goofiness. When he gets no reaction from Carla, he turns and notices Carla looking out the window with her brow furrowed.

JACK (CONT'D)

(drops the goofy face)  
Babe, you okay?

CARLA

Yeah, I just had a really  
disturbing dream about you and my  
dad.

JACK

Your dad?

Jack turns the wheel slightly with his left hand. He is wearing a plain wedding ring on his left ring finger.

CARLA

His name is Simon. He... uh,  
teaches science in Massachusetts.

JACK

This is the first time you've ever  
talked about him.

CARLA

There's a reason for that. We're  
not on speaking terms anymore. He's  
not... family.

JACK

I wondered about that, but I  
decided not to ask because I knew  
you'd tell me if you wanted to.

CARLA

Well, first, he tried to force my  
mom to abort me.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

When she finally left him, he didn't even ASK for partial custody.

JACK

I'm sorry, babe.

CARLA

You know, he once told me even if he knew I was going to turn out the way I am, he'd still choose not to have me.

JACK

Jeez, that is... harsh! What an ass!

CARLA

Whatever. I'm... over it.

Carla takes a deep breath and sighs. Jack turns to see Carla's face. She is clearly still sad and hurt over Simon's comments after all these years.

JACK

(beat)

I know a good way to distract you!

CARLA

I hesitate to ask...

JACK

Did you know the verse continues?

CARLA

What?

JACK

(singing)

No more bottles of beer on the wall, no more bottles of beer. Go to the store and buy some more. 99 bottles of beer on the wall.

Jack takes out his phone.

SFX: voice-recognition software beep

JACK (CONT'D)  
 (speaks into his phone)  
 Tormenting Carla by singing 99  
 bottles of beer on the wall all the  
 way to 0 while she's trapped in the  
 car with me comma nowhere to run  
 period.

Carla's smile disappears. She turns to him in horror.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 About to start the song over again  
 comma wish her luck exclamation  
 point.

Jack tags Carla on her post and hits the "post" button.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 (smiles winningly)  
 99 bottles of beer on the wall, 99  
 bottles of beer.

CARLA  
 (looks at Jack, terrified)  
 What...what did you just post on  
 Facebook?

JACK  
 (singing while looking at  
 Carla)  
 Take one down and pass it around.

CARLA  
 (looks back to the road)  
 No, no, no, watch out!

Jack turns back to the road and his eyes widen.

SFX: Brakes screeching

A black screen.

THE END.