

# **CRIME STOPPERS**

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CHARACTERS:

ROBBER }  
 GONZO } *Played by same actor. Man in twenty to forty age range.*

MAN: }  
 NEWSREADER: } *Played by same actor. Any age.*

BERNIE: *Gonzo's best friend. Twenty to forty age range.*

MARIA: *Gonzo's mother. Forty to sixty age range.*

KRISTY: *Gonzo's girlfriend. Twenty to forty age range.*

SETTING: *First a bottle shop, then Maria's lounge room.*

*(The robber, wearing a bandanna covering his face, enters a bottle shop, looks around for a moment, then pulls a gun and points it at the man behind the counter. He thrusts a bag at him with the other hand.)*

ROBBER: Empty the till, asshole!

MAN: What's that?

ROBBER: I said, empty the till into this bag, asshole!

MAN: Come again?

ROBBER: What's wrong with you! Are you fucking deaf!

MAN: Sorry fella. *(Pointing to his ear)* Deaf as a post. If I could see your lips I could probably lipread you.

ROBBER: Read this, you idiot!

*(He thrusts the gun in his face.)*

OPEN THE TILL AND GIVE ME ALL YOUR MONEY!

MAN: If you'd take the scarf off I could read your lips... just a suggestion.

*(Robber, obviously at the end of his tether, rips the bandanna off and thrusts the gun in the man's face again.)*

ROBBER: OKAY, READ MY LIPS, ARSEHOLE! OPEN THE TILL AND PUT ALL THE MONEY IN THE FUCKING BAG!

*(The robber freezes. The man becomes a newsreader. Bernie enters as though watching the scene on television.)*

NEWSREADER: Police are appealing for witnesses to a violent armed robbery at a Northcote bottle shop last night. If you know the identity of this man or can provide information as to his whereabouts or any information about this crime please call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or contact your local police station.

*(Robber and newsreader exit.)*

BERNIE: Oh, my God! That's...Shit! Gonzo!

*(Maria enters.)*

MARIA: Where's Gonzo? Is he home?

BERNIE: *(Pointing at the 'TV')*

He's...he was on TV!

MARIA: TV? What's he doing on TV? Oh my God...he didn't get interviewed by Sam Newman or something, did he?

BERNIE: Worse! He...

MARIA: What?

BERNIE: He was...just in the background...during the weather report.

MARIA: The weather report! What's he doing in there? He's supposed to be home. The meatballs will turn into rocks!

*(Gonzo enters)*

GONZO: G'day people.

MARIA: Gonzo! You're here!

GONZO: I brought some wine, Mama.

*(He pecks Maria on the cheek and hands her the bottle.)*

MARIA: Bernie said you were on the weather report!

GONZO: What? Have you been eating your homemade chutney again, mate? I told you, marijuana may look like basil but it's not the same thing.

BERNIE: I just thought I saw you, that's all. It must have been someone else. You've got a common face.

GONZO: Thanks, mate. Just as well the ladies don't agree. Speaking of which, did Kristy phone here?

MARIA: She said she'd be a little late, but she's coming. I'll get you boys some food. Turn that TV down will you, Gonzo.

*(She exits. Gonzo moves to turn the volume down. He shakes his head and laughs.)*

GONZO: The weather report. You're such a loser, mate.

BERNIE: Well, what else could I say? I couldn't tell her the truth, could I.

GONZO: The truth about what?

BERNIE: Y'know, where you were last night.

GONZO: What are you on about?

BERNIE: The bottle shop! You were at the bottle shop!

GONZO: I think she knows I didn't crush the grapes myself, Bernie.

BERNIE: No, but...what you were doing there!

GONZO: At the bottle shop.

BERNIE: Yes!

GONZO: She asked me to get it, you moron. I'm Italian! I've been drinking alcohol since I was eight years old. What the hell is wrong with you?

BERNIE: But I saw you...

GONZO: Where?

BERNIE: At the bottle shop!

GONZO: A lot of people saw me. What's the big deal?

BERNIE: I know! That's the problem!

GONZO: You do know the prohibition era's over, don't you, buddy.

BERNIE: Look, mate. I just want you to know that whatever your reasons I'm here for you. I'm not gonna shop you, no way. The cops come knocking on my door, there's no way they're gonna get information outa your best mate Bernie Pike. No way, no how. My lips are sealed. They'll have to beat it out of me with lead pipes!

GONZO: *I'm gonna beat you with a lead pipe if you don't tell me what the/...*

*(Maria enters.)*

MARIA: The pasta's nearly done.

GONZO: Hey, how about opening the wine? I made a special trip to the bottle shop last night just for you, y'know.

BERNIE: But just to buy wine, that's all he did. Nothing else, right Gonzo?

GONZO: Well, not just the wine I/...

BERNIE: We don't need to know, do we Maria. None of our business what Gonzo does. I'm sure it's all above board and completely legit. He's a good boy, right Maria? He's no fool.

MARIA: No he's not, Bernie. You on the other hand, I'm a little worried about. You might have to help me with this cork, Gonzo.

GONZO: No worries.

*(To Bernie) Don't smoke anything else while I'm gone. Okay?*

*(They exit. Bernie is agitated. Kristy enters also agitated. She speaks in a hushed voice.)*

KRISTY: Hey, Bernie! Where's Gonzo?

BERNIE: They're in the kitchen/...

KRISTY: God, I don't know what to do!

BERNIE: Why?

KRISTY: I was at work and we had the TV on in the bar and you'll never guess who I saw!

BERNIE: Gonzo.

KRISTY: Gonzo! How did you know?

BERNIE: I saw it too. I was starting to wonder if I'd imagined it.

KRISTY: He robbed a bottle shop!

BERNIE: I know, I know...and he's acting like nothing's happened.

KRISTY: Well, of course he's acting like nothing's happened. What's he gonna do, show you photos?

BERNIE: What are *we* gonna do?

KRISTY: What else can we do?

BERNIE: You're right!

KRISTY: We have no choice.

BERNIE: We have no choice.

KRISTY: We'll convince him to turn himself in.

BERNIE: That's right, we'll...What! No, way!

KRISTY: He has to turn himself in, Bernie. The judge will go easier on him if he surrenders. It's a first offence, he's got a job, he comes from a good family...

BERNIE: Are you crazy! He'll do jail time, Kristy. You wanna celebrate your honeymoon on a conjugal visit?

KRISTY: So, we'll put the wedding off until he gets out.

BERNIE: It's armed robbery, sweetheart. He could go away for years!

KRISTY: But what if the cops come after him in the middle of the night and he goes for his gun and he's shot down in a hail of bullets and dies in his mama's arms.

BERNIE: You watch too much TV.

KRISTY: I sure as hell wish I hadn't been watching tonight.

BERNIE: Yeah, you and me both. Look, he doesn't have a record. The cops don't know where to find him. The only way he'll get caught is if someone he knows turns him in. And who would turn Gonzo in? Everybody loves him.

KRISTY: Not everybody.

BERNIE: Who would turn him in?

KRISTY: Well, Sophie Purnell for one.

BERNIE: Sophie? You think so?

KRISTY: Hell has no fury like a woman spurned, Bernie. He dumped her for me and she'd love a chance to dump on him.

BERNIE: You could be right.

KRISTY: And then there's the reward.

BERNIE: Reward? What reward?

KRISTY: They give a reward for information that leads to an arrest.

BERNIE: They didn't say that.

KRISTY: Everybody knows that. It's common knowledge.

BERNIE: Really. How much?

KRISTY: I dunno. Thousands probably.

BERNIE: Thousands! You think?

KRISTY: He got away with a lot of money.

BERNIE: Wow. Thousands, huh.

*(Pause. They are both deep in thought.)*

KRISTY: But if that bitch Sophie Purnell thinks she can ruin my wedding she's got another thing coming. You're right. We can't turn him in. We'll elope to Italy or Greece or somewhere and buy him a bad wig and we'll live on the pork.

BERNIE: Lam.

KRISTY: What?

BERNIE: You mean, you'll live on the lam.

KRISTY: Nah, I don't like lamb.

BERNIE: The Greeks do some very nice dishes...trust me, you'd learn to love it.

KRISTY: Okay, whatever. You mix with some lowlife. Know where we can get fake passports?

BERNIE: Sure...I can ask around. So...did you happen to write down the number to ring?

KRISTY: What number?

BERNIE: Y'know...the number to ring with information.

KRISTY: Why would I?

BERNIE: I dunno, I thought you said you were going to turn him in.

KRISTY: I said I'd convince him to turn himself in.

BERNIE: I can't see it would make any difference. Either way he's going down. And some cash would come in handy for the wedding.

KRISTY: But you said we'd have to wait for years!

BERNIE: Well, maybe not years. With good behaviour he could be out in months. Then you don't have to live on the pork in Greece.

*(Pause. Realisation strikes.)*

KRISTY: You want the reward money don't you!

BERNIE: No! I was thinking of you! As if I'd sell my best friend down the river for a few thousand dollars! I can't believe you'd think that!

*(Pause)*

Of course, if I put a little away in a short term deposit and earn some interest...we could all benefit. Turn this into positive instead of a negative. Think about it/...

KRISTY: If you think I'm going to give up the man I love for money your/...

*(Maria and Gonzo enter.)*

GONZO: Shit, that cork was a tight son-of-a-bitch.

MARIA: Gonzo, such language in front of ladies!

GONZO: Oh, sorry. By golly, that cork was a tight little so-and-so.

MARIA: Hello, Kristy, I thought I heard your voice.

KRISTY: Hi, Maria.

MARIA: Sit down, I'll get you some food.

KRISTY: I'm not really hungry...thanks.

GONZO: *(Kissing her on the cheek.)* What's up, babe. You look pale.

KRISTY: I'm fine...I just...I'm fine.

BERNIE: We're all fine. Just fine.

KRISTY: How are you?

GONZO: I'm fine. You sure you're fine?

MARIA: We're all fine! Now let's have some fine wine...

*(She stops in her tracks as her eye catches the TV. She crosses herself quickly.)*

Santa Maria!

*(They all watch.)*

GONZO: *(Laughing)* Hey, that bastard on the news looks just like...

*(He is suddenly serious.)* Me. What the...?

*(He realises everybody is looking at him.)*

That's not...You don't think that that's...It's not! It's not me, Mama, I swear!

BERNIE: Look mate, I told you, you don't have to worry. You'll be out in a few months and we'll have saved a nice little nest egg for you.

KRISTY: We are not turning him in! I can't believe you would turn on your best friend!

BERNIE: *(To Gonzo)* It wasn't my idea, mate. She said the judge would go easy!

KRISTY: Ever since I mentioned the reward money dollar signs have been flashing in your eyes!

BERNIE: You're the one who said he'd die in a hail of bullets! *(To Gonzo)* I was thinking of you, mate.

KRISTY: *(To Gonzo)* Don't listen to him, sweetie. We'll elope to Greece and eat roast lamb and they'll never find us...we can still be happy/...

GONZO: You two are insane! You really think that I robbed a bottle shop? Don't you know me at all?

BERNIE: We all do things on the spur of the moment, mate.

GONZO: On the spur of the moment I buy an expensive pair of sunglasses. I don't take a bloody gun into a bottle shop and threaten to blow someone's head off!

KRISTY: I know things have been tight but we don't need a big wedding. We'll go to a registry office in Athens. I don't care as long as I'm with you.

GONZO: I did not rob anyone! I'm telling you this guy is not me! Sure, he looks like me...exactly like me...but it's not! Mama, please believe me!

MARIA: I know it's not you.

GONZO: No, you're not listening to me! I wouldn't do something like...

*(He realises what she's said.)* You believe me?

MARIA: Of course it's not you.

BERNIE: I know it's hard to accept that your only son is a violent criminal, but/...

MARIA: It's not him, you imbecile! And he's not my only son...

*(They are stunned into silence. Maria sighs.)*

I was hoping and praying this day would never come.

*(Pause)*

He's not my only son because...I had another...I was a teenage single mother. My parent's were poor. I wasn't sure I could bring up one child let alone two so...They convinced me to give him up for adoption. Your twin brother.

*(Pause)*

I always believed it was the worst mistake I ever made in my life. I see now that I was right. I'm sorry I never told you, Gonzo. I could never bring myself to say the words out loud.

*(Pause)*

And now...I must go to the police.

GONZO: But...you don't know anything about him...

MARIA: I know his parents...that's a start.

- BERNIE: Hey, come on Maria. You don't have to put yourself through this. Give me the information and I'll go.
- KRISTY: I can't believe you're still trying to get the reward money!
- BERNIE: I'm not, I/...
- GONZO: I'll go with you Mama.
- MARIA: And get arrested? No way. Don't worry, I'll be fine. This is my mess and I'll clean it up.
- KRISTY: You shouldn't do this alone, Maria. I'll go with you.  
*(Maria exits and Kristy is about to follow.)*
- GONZO: Hey, babe...  
*(She stops. Gonzo kisses her passionately on the lips. Kristy appears stunned.)*  
Thank you.  
*(Kristy seems lost for words. She smiles, dazed, and exits. There is a long pause.)*
- BERNIE: Wow...do you believe that? Are you okay?
- GONZO: I'm fine.
- BERNIE: But you just found out you have a twin brother. That must be/...
- GONZO: I'm fine. Really. I'm just a little hurt that my best friend and the woman I'm going to marry both think I'm capable of armed robbery.
- BERNIE: Mate! We didn't really think it was you. I mean...I know you wouldn't do something like that. You're not that kind of guy.
- GONZO: Oh? And what kind of guy would that be? Poor? Desperate? Abandoned by his mother as a baby into an abusive household?
- BERNIE: You shouldn't blame Maria for this, mate. She was young and/...
- GONZO: I don't blame her! How was she to know the woman would die young?  
*(Pause)*
- BERNIE: What woman? His adoptive mother? How do you know that?
- GONZO: Because I met him.

BERNIE: Your twin? Where...? When...?

GONZO: Last night. I walk into the bottle shop and there's this guy pointing a gun in the face of some poor deaf bastard screaming obscenities. And I take a closer look and I realise...it's me!

BERNIE: Holy crap! What did you do?

GONZO: I didn't know what I was doing. I followed him out and I got in the car and followed him in the car and he turns into this deserted warehouse and he's about to run off with the money when he sees me. And it's like he's seen some ghost or something...like he's caught a reflection of himself in a mirror only there's no mirror. And we stand staring at each other for like ten minutes not saying a word and then it all starts pouring out...the whole story...our stories. I tell him mine and he tells me his. How he was adopted but his mother died when he was ten and his father turned to drink and beat him up and he got in with the wrong crowd and turned to crime.

BERNIE: Shit! Poor bastard.

GONZO: That's exactly what I said. And I swore right then and there that I'd never give him up because we were brothers and he deserved the breaks I'd had.

BERNIE: Do you know where he is?

GONZO: No...I don't need to know.

*(Pause)*

You breathe a word of this to Mama and you're a dead man.

BERNIE: No worries, mate. I take it to my grave.

GONZO: That's my boy. Now get me a beer from the fridge, will ya. This wine is shit.

BERNIE: Sure thing. One coldie coming right up for my mate Gonzo.

*(Bernie exits. Gonzo chuckles to himself.)*

GONZO: Your mate Gonzo's a little cold himself right now, asshole. But that's okay...there's a new Gonzo in town. And he's on fire!

*(He pulls out his bandanna and ties it around his neck, still laughing.)*

**THE END**