

MCGURK'S SUICIDE HALL  
PILOT

By

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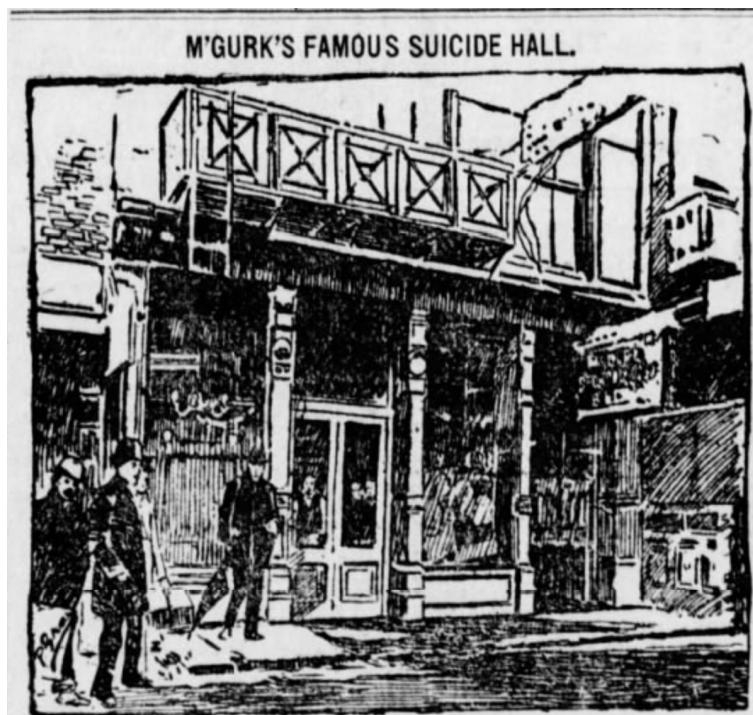
*Based on Real People and Real Events  
(More or Less...)*

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The REAL McGurk's Suicide Hall



M'GURK'S "SUICIDE HALL."  
No. 28 Bowery. Now closed.



## CHARACTERS

(\* indicates character is a historical figure)

JOHN MCGURK\*..... 40-50s, Owner of McGurk's  
 "SHORTCHANGE" CHARLEY STEELE\*... 30-40s, McGurk's Bartender  
 LIZZIE SWEENEY..... 30-40s, Local Madam  
 "EAT 'EM UP" JACK MCMANUS\*..... 30-40s, McGurk's Bouncer  
 TEDDY ROOSEVELT\*..... 20-30s, Police Commissioner  
 SGT. O'REILLY..... 60s, Police Shift Commander  
 OFFICER O'BRIEN..... 30s, Beat Cop  
 OFFICER O'GILL..... 20s, Beat Cop  
 GUS..... 16, Experienced Pickpocket  
 JONAS..... 14, Beginner Pickpocket  
 SHUFFLES..... 15, Pickpocket  
 WILLY..... 50s, Homeless Drunk  
 INCREDIBLY SAD MAN..... 40s, Man, Incredibly Sad  
 DESPERATE MAN..... 30s, Man, Desperate  
 JACOB RIIS\*..... 40s, Reporter  
 SUSIE..... 20s, Local Sexworker  
 NEWSIE..... 10, Newsie  
 DAPPER GEORGIE..... 40s, McGurk's Choreographer  
 JIMMY SALESMAN..... 30s, Salesman  
 AUGIE..... 20s, Upper Class Tourist  
 ELEANOR..... 20s, Upper Class Tourist  
 DANCERS..... 20s, McGurk's Dancers  
 PROFESSOR..... 20s, McGurk's Piano Player  
 SAILOR..... 20s, Sailor On Leave  
 BARKER..... 40s, Sideshow Barker  
 CLERGYMAN..... 50s, Local Priest  
 THOMAS EDISON\*..... 50s, Inventor, Businessman

**EXT. THE BOWERY - MORNING**

The Bowery. New York City. 1896.

An elevated train chugs up the avenue, trailing smoke and ash, which falls like snow on the trash-covered street below.

The sidewalks are filled with a vibrant, chaotic bustle of TOURISTS, SCAMMERS, SALESMEN, and FREAKS, while the sounds of BELLS, PUMP ORGANS, and CITY LIFE permeate the air.

**We MOVE down the street seeing flashes of Bowery life.**

-A DIME MUSEUM storefront where a BARKER stands on a raised platform next to a MAN WITH AN ENORMOUS BULGE. The Barker addresses a crowd of IMPRESSED ONLOOKERS.

BARKER

Step right up and see the man with a thousand cocks! Just look at that bulge! Look at the volume! Is it one big one and hundreds of tiny ones? Or are there a thousand medium to small sized cocks? 10 cents will get you the answer-

-A FILTHY ALLEY where a CLERGYMAN approaches a HAGGARD CHILD leaning pathetically on a crutch. The clergyman bends down to give the child some food and comfort.

CLERGYMAN

-For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever-

The Haggard Child SMASHES the Clergyman across the head with his crutch.

STREET KIDS pop out of hiding and start BEATING the Clergyman mercilessly, as The Haggard Child steals the Clergyman's wallet.

-A PLATFORM before a CROWD where THOMAS EDISON, late 40s, on stands next to some VERY CUTE DOGS. Behind him a banner reads: "Alternating Current: The Tesla Monstrosity".

EDISON

The immoral and evil dangers of Alternating Current must be kept from our homes! Now... who wants to see me electrocute these dogs!?!

The crowd CHEERS.

We settle on...

**EXT.MCGURKS SALOON - CONTINUOUS**

A run down, soot-covered Bowery bar front. It's a dump.

Rusting metal columns frame large plate glass windows featuring the words "MCGURK'S SALOON" in flaking gold plated letters. Beneath it, hastily hand-painted, "AND HOTEL".

SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAAAAAAPE

JOHN MCGURK, Irish, 40s-50s, gruff, tough, cunning, and impatient, wearing a suit that once was dapper, slowly comes into frame dragging a LARGE FLOWER POT along the ground.

The pot arrives at it's destination in front of the bar. The sickly looking plant does nothing to improve the scene.

McGurk steps back to assess his work. He's pleased, but something is wrong...

McGurk adjusts the pot ever so slightly.

Perfect.

Satisfied, McGurk brushes his hands on his trousers and turns out to look on the street, ready to take on the world.

SPLAT! A HUMAN BODY falls from the sky right next to McGurk. BLOOD sprays all over McGurk's face and body.

McGurk turns to look at the mangled corpse next to him, then looks back out to the street.

MCGURK

Fuck.

He wipes some viscera from his face, then looks to the door.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

WE GOT ANOTHER ONE!

**TITLE CARD - "MCGURK'S SUICIDE HALL"**

**EXT.MCGURKS SALOON - LATER**

A white sheet is removed with a flourish to reveal an elegant CAFE TABLE WITH AN UMBRELLA SHADE now sitting in front of the bar. It is VERY fancy and wildly out of place.

McGurk, now clean but featuring wet hair and a damp suit, just looks at it.

MCGURK

The fuck is this?

PIVOT to reveal JIMMY, 30s, dapper, quick, and impossibly chipper holding the sheet.

Nearby there is a wagon with a painted sign on the side "Jimmy! Salesman Extraordinaire".

JIMMY

You asked me for something that would "give your customers the will to live."

MCGURK

I did.

JIMMY

Well it can't be done. Such an item does not exist. But I do have this.

McGurk looks at the umbrella.

SPLASH! Behind McGurk, water hits a large pool of blood where the corpse was on the cobblestones, spreading it out into the street.

"EAT 'EM UP" JACK, 30s, huge, tough, loyal, but not so bright, shakes the last couple drops of water from a bucket, then turns to re-enter the bar.

MCGURK

It's a fucking umbrella.

JIMMY

A keen eye, sir. It is a French umbrella! It keeps out the sun. It keeps out the rain. It provides a genteel buffer between your patrons and the charming ash falling from the elevated railroad. Nothing says "This bar isn't a piece of shit" quite like this genuine bona fide French Cafe Table and Shade.

MCGURK

My bar is not a piece of shite.

JIMMY

Of course not. But it does add a touch of class.

SPLASH another bucket of water.

McGurk steps closer to Jimmy.

MCGURK

Now look here... Jimmy Salesman.  
I'm under attack from the  
reformers, I'm up to my gullet in  
debt and fines, and I've got bodies  
falling from the sky. But the one  
thing I don't need any help with is  
class. So why don't you take your  
posh umbrella, and shove it up your  
arse.

JIMMY

It's a very nice umbrella.

MCGURK

Fuck off.

McGurk turns toward the bar.

JIMMY

(undaunted)

We could offer a one day free trial-

McGurk stops.

MCGURK

Free?

**INT.MCGURKS SALOON - CONTINUOUS**

It is dark, dusty, dank, and filthy. A dump.

While the place is mostly empty, the bar area is populated  
with a couple of regular early afternoon DRUNKS.

Through the front window we can see McGurk, Jimmy, and the  
Cafe Table and Shade.

LIZZIE SWEENEY, 30s-40s, cool, confident, and sarcastic, a  
"madam" of the neighborhood but who appears elegant and  
refined, sits at the bar watching McGurk and sipping whiskey.

Nearby leans SHORTCHANGE CHARLEY, 30s-40s, the bartender,  
clever, volatile, and master of sleight of hand, scratching  
something into the bar surface.

LIZZIE

You should start looking for a new  
job.

SHORTCHANGE

Don't say that, Lizzie. Boss will think of something. Always does.

LIZZIE

He's shopping for patio furniture.

SHORTCHANGE

And I'm sure it's part of a larger plan. This is what he does. He adapts.

Shortchange finishes his scratching on the bar and we see it: "Offings" beneath it are four score marks.

A SAILOR, 20s, handsome, naive, approaches the bar.

SAILOR

Whiskey. Two.

SHORTCHANGE

Right up.

He sets about "cleaning" two glasses and making the drinks.

SHORTCHANGE (CONT'D)

Like when the city passed that law saying bars couldn't serve booze on Sundays. The after church crowd is when half our sales come through. So what's he do? Give up? No he does not. He adapts, and opens the upstairs as a hotel.

LIZZIE

Where people go to kill themselves.

SHORTCHANGE

An *affordable* hotel. For the common man. And if a few sad sacks abuse his fair pricing to avoid making a mess at home, well that's hardly his fault is it?

Shortchange puts two dirty glasses of whiskey on the bar.

LIZZIE

Well, Shortchange, all I know is my girls only stay here for two reasons: Their Johns are broke, or their spirits are.

The sailor places a dime on the bar which Shortchange takes.



SAILOR  
Shortchange, huh? Funny nickname.  
Why they call ya that?

LIZZIE  
Why ya think?

Shortchange clearly places some change in the palm of the Sailor.

SHORTCHANGE  
Bit more specific than Charley. And  
1, 2, 3 is your change.

The sailor looks at Shortchange for a moment, confused, then laughs. Shortchange laughs back.

SAILOR  
Right.

The Sailor turns to go and looks in his hand to find it somehow empty. He looks to the floor and then turns back to Shortchange.

LIZZIE  
Handsome AND dumb. If only he were  
rich he'd be the man of my dreams.

Confused and offended, the Sailor scurries off as McGurk struts through the door brushing the ash from his shoulders like snow.

Through the front window we can see the umbrella is still in place.

MCGURK  
Charley, don't let anyone touch it.

SHORTCHANGE  
Touch what?

MCGURK  
The fucking umbrella.

SHORTCHANGE  
You bought it?

MCGURK  
God no. You don't shop for curtains  
while your house is on fire.  
Buffoon of a salesman left it  
behind "on trial". Get a free day  
of use from it, then it's going  
back.

SHORTCHANGE

Always thinking boss. So what's the plan?

MCGURK

Haven't a clue. Yet. But I'll think of one. For the time being, let's just... try and make the place... a bit more cheery.

On the bar TEMPERANCE, McGurk's enormous, fluffy, grumpy, and mangy cat, knocks a glass from the bar with a CRASH.

Her fur appears dark grey because she's covered in filth.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

Did the glass offend you sweetheart?

It did.

By the entrance, a haggard man, WILHELM aka WILLY, 50s, lies passed out across a table. This is where he lives. McGurk walks over and kicks his table.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

Willy!

Willy, drunk, rouses with a start.

WILLY

Hmm?

MCGURK

Sweep up, will ya? We're turning this place around.

Still wasted, Wilhelm staggers to his feet mumbling agreeably and indecipherably and scuttles over to get a broom.

LIZZIE

Aw, let him sleep, John.

MCGURK

If the man's going to live in my bar, he can at least tidy up.

"Eat Em Up" Jack comes out from the back.

JACK

I'll take the glass.

MCGURK

That's fine Jack. Now... Smiles!  
Everyone!

LIZZIE

John, far be it from me to delay  
your long overdue and, honestly,  
delightful downward spiral, but why  
not just... let it be? Lean in.  
After all, I'm sure there's plenty  
of sick fucks in this town who'd  
pay extra just to see someone jump.

MCGURK

Let it be, Lizzie? You mean give  
up? Put a sign out front that says  
"Come on down and watch the  
miserable die!" Not only would that  
be foolish, deranged, and immoral,  
that would be illegal. And we are  
running an honest business!

SHORTCHANGE

Now.

MCGURK

Yes. Now. Right here we have all we  
need to run a high end  
establishment. Excellent staff,  
charming decor, and the best  
evening floor show in the Western  
Hemisphere. So, we're going to  
cheer the place up, the suicides  
will stop, the fines will stop, and  
then I'm on the road to  
Millionaire's Row.

The front door opens as DAPPER GEORGIE, 30s, very dapper,  
entertainment director of the bar's stage, enters followed by  
several extremely haggard looking DANCERS.

DAPPER GEORGIE

(dapperly)

All right you trollops, step  
lively. Let's get this rehearsal  
over with so you can all get back  
to the gutters. John. The umbrella.  
Love.

MCGURK

Thank you, Dapper Georgie. There's  
a man with distinction and taste.

Dapper Georgie herds the dancers to the back, as we hear a DING! From a make-shift hotel desk off in the corner.

McGurk hurries over to meet two UNSEEMLY LOOKING INDIVIDUALS.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

(crossing)

Welcome to McGurk's Saloon and Hotel, do you have a reservation?

As he crosses, **our focus shifts** to a table surrounded by three of the kids who assaulted the priest from our intro: JONAS, 14, innocent, SHUFFLES, 15, nervous, and GUS, 16, shrewd, each with a beer in front of them.

GUS

This is the life. This is what makes robbing priests really worthwhile.

JONAS

Why couldn't we go somewhere where they had candy?

GUS

Because we're men, Jonas.

SHUFFLES

Yeah, we're men! But Gus, Jonas has a point. This place is a piece of shit.

GUS

You boys have a lot to learn. This place is a dying breed.

Gus points at McGurk.

GUS (CONT'D)

That man right there. John McGurk. Is a legend. He's owned the finest low life bars in the finest low life 'hood in the finest low life city that the world has ever known.

SHUFFLES

So he used to own some crime bars. Big deal. Word is that he's gone straight. What good does that do us now? I'm doing crime for the next generation.

JONAS

I want candy.

GUS

You don't get it, Shuffles. This is where we are going to take our game to the next level.

**Shift back to McGurk**, holding up a key for SUSIE, 20s, a sex worker, drunk and ballsy, and her CLIENT, 20s, very timid.

MCGURK

So that will be a one evening stay for the (*suspicious*) newly married couple.

The John reaches for the key McGurk GRABS the John's hand intensely.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

How are you both... feeling?

SUSIE

Fine?

MCGURK

Good. No fighting no yelling no gambling no graft no fires no violence no animal acts. And what you do in your room is no business of mine. But Mr. and Mrs. Toots. Don't do anything illegal. And please don't... make a mess.

Susie gives her client a wry look and they rush upstairs.

The BELL on the front door rings as a newsie runs in clutching the morning edition of the New York Gazette with the headline "MORE DEATH AT MCGURKS".

NEWSIE

Ya made the paper again today, Mr. McGurk!

MCGURK

Again? Goddamnit!

**Back to the boys.**

GUS

The best criminals thrive, and the best survive and here we can learn from the best criminals around. We just gotta be careful. Just because McGurk's playing it safe doesn't mean anyone else is.

(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

While officially the rule is no crime at all, all that really means is "don't get caught."

**McGurk walks up to the Newsie.**

MCGURK

Well? You little shit slinger.  
Let's see the slander of the day.

NEWSIE

Two cents.

MCGURK

My name's on the cover, and I still have to pay? Why don't you stab me while you're at it.

McGurk tosses the boy two coins.

**Back to the boys.**

SHUFFLES

And what if... just imagine-wise,  
ya do get caught?

Gus gestures towards Eat Em Up Jack, who has been at the end of the bar, GRINDING something on bartop.

GUS

See that hunk of leather over there? Anyone gets caught doing anything illegal? He bans them for life... the hard way.

JONAS

My god... That's "Eat 'Em Up" Jack!

SHUFFLES

What?

JONAS

"Eat Em Up" Jack! Former heavyweight bareknuckle champion! He's only my favorite brawler! Beat old Slippery Fred and Ricky the Pope. Nearly killed the Noodle Twins.

GUS

Jonas. Shut the fuck up.

JONAS

What I wouldn't give to shake his hand.

McGurk slams the paper onto the bar.

MCGURK

It's an outrage. Is there no better news about? Are the arsonists on strike?

Lizzie reaches for the paper.

LIZZIE

Well? Let's have it, John. It can't be that bad.

SHORTCHANGE

After all, there's such thing as bad press!

MCGURK

I'd prefer if you didn't-

Lizzie starts reading aloud from the paper.

LIZZIE

"May God curse John McGurk and his evil Saloon. Lord hear my prayer and strike it down with fire, lightning, and pestilence, leaving nothing but ash and regrets to remember the former suicide capital of New York..."

MCGURK

That's enough-

LIZZIE

"...This reporter, having covertly visited the sordid establishment from the depths of hell, has witnessed three self-murders this week alone, and in the duties his investigation, fully recommends that should the almighty prove negligent in his duties, our new police commissioner use his authority with great prejudice and shut McGurk's down, before this den of death and sin takes yet another life."

In silence, Lizzie neatly folds up the paper and places it back on the bar. Then she looks back to McGurk.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)  
Honestly, that could've been worse.  
I would've written worse.

SHORTCHANGE  
There's no such thing as bad press.

MCGURK  
Clearly, there is!

From the rehearsal in the back of the bar Dapper Georgie pipes up.

DAPPER GEORGIE  
Did they mention anything about the floor show!?

LIZZIE  
Oddly, no.

Dapper Georgie is disappointed.

SHORTCHANGE  
It's not fair. How, exactly, is a man supposed to stop someone bent on their own destruction? I mean... It's not that bad... There haven't been that many...

MCGURK  
No more than the normal amount of any bar slash hotel. What bar slash hotel doesn't have a few quitters each week?

Shift back to the boys as Jonas gets out of his seat.

JONAS  
I'm going to introduce myself.

SHUFFLES  
Jonas wait!

But Jonas is already marching up to Jack with his hand reached out for a friendly shake.

JONAS  
I am such a huge fan!



Jack, confused, looks up to see the young man with his hand outstretched, and springs into action, swiftly grabbing a handful of what he has been grinding on the bar.

JACK  
GLASS!!!

Jack blows a handful of ground up glass directly into JONAS's eyes.

JONAS  
(clutching his face in  
agony)  
MY EYES!!!

JACK  
EAT EM UP!!

Jack grabs Jonas by the hair and then PUNCHES him in the face. Jonas's friends look on in shock. The rest of the bar seems not to notice or care as Jack PUNCHES him AGAIN and AGAIN.

MCGURK  
Jack. Easy now.

JONAS  
(bleeding profusely from  
his eyes and face)  
I was saying hello!

JACK  
EAT EM UP!!!

Jack looks at McGurk confused, then SLAMS Jonas's face into the bar then drags his limp body along the bar as patrons calmly lift their drinks to allow the boy to pass. Jack drags him back and forth.

MCGURK  
Jack!

Jack lifts Jonas by the collar, carrying him to the front door, which he then opens.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
Mind the umbrella.

And Jack THROWS Jonas WAILING out into the street followed by a THUD.

Jack proudly struts back in as the boys stare on in horror.

Gus turns to Shuffles.

GUS  
So, Jonas is out.

McGurk surveys the mayhem that lies before him.

MCGURK  
Jack. How is that supposed to help cheer the place up? Am I the only person who cares that this place stays open? My god. This place is a piece of shit.

Shortchange and Lizzie exchange a look.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
But all that ends today. By hook or by crook I will turn this place around, and no one will stand in my way. I swear on my mother's soul that I will personally see to it that no one commits suicide in my bar slash hotel again!

SHORTCHANGE  
Hear hear!

A CRASH AND A SCREAM ring through the bar as shattered glass rains down outside the front window followed by the THWACK!! of a corpse landing on top of the cafe umbrella outside.

Beat.

MCGURK  
I can still return that.

At that moment we hear a loud SNAP as the umbrella top collapses down and a SQUEEEEEAK as the corpse, now impaled, slowly slides down the umbrella pole.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
FUCK!

**EXT. MCGURKS SALOON - LATER**

McGurk, Shortchange, and Lizzie stare at the impaled corpse.

SHORTCHANGE  
I'll start closing up.

MCGURK  
Close? Nonsense.

LIZZIE  
Nonsense?

MCGURK  
Just...

McGurk grabs a table cloth and throws it over the corpse on the pole barely disguising it.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
Willy!

Willy shuffles out to meet them.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
Take care of this.

Willy looks at the scene incredulous.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
And make it clean. I want to return that umbrella.

McGurk storms back into the bar.

LIZZIE  
(to Willy)  
Good luck.

Lizzie and Shortchange walk inside.

NOTE: At times throughout the following scene Willy can be seen through the window in the background trying to get the corpse off the umbrella.

**INT. MCGURKS SALOON - LATER**

McGurk and Jack sit at the bar. Temperance perches nearby.

MCGURK  
Now, Jack, the lad from earlier-

JACK  
The one I threw glass in his eyes.

MCGURK  
That would be the one.

JACK  
I grind the glass good.

MCGURK

I'm sure you do, Jack. But... you may have gone a little hard on the lad there. It seems the boy was merely trying to say hello.

JACK

I smashed him good.

MCGURK

That you did, Jack, and I'm not mad at you. But we can't just go smashing our valued patrons willy nilly. So... lets go through it one more time. Someone gets caught in a crime?

JACK

That's a bouncing.

MCGURK

That's a bouncing. Good! Someone pisses me off?

JACK

...That's a bouncing?

MCGURK

Indeed it is Jack. Say someone fucks with my cat?

JACK

That's a bouncing?

MCGURK

Jack. I want them dead and their corpse unrecognizable by their families. Nobody fucks with my cat, isn't that right, Temperance?

Temperance gives zero fucks.

JACK

Don't fuck with the cat.

MCGURK

You'd better fucking believe it, Jack. Now... someone says hello...?

Jack is stumped.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

You say hello back.

JACK

Right.

MCGURK

That's a good lad. You'll get it.

McGurk checks his pocket watch and starts.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

Shortchange! Second watch!

Shortchange places a few dozen shot glasses across the bar and fills them all with whiskey as Jack tosses some bums out of chairs. Lizzie goes back to her seat and watches the boys run around frantically.

Just then we hear the CHIME of a nearby church bell and HEAVILY BOOTED FEET.

A stream of UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS rolls into the saloon as they all head to the bar and grab shots and down them.

SGT. O'REILLY, 60s, and OFFICER O'BRIEN, 40s, corrupt cops with a Statler and Waldorf vibe take their usual seats at the corner of the bar near Temperance.

SGT. O'REILLY

(calling over to McGurk)

Started putting them on spikes out there John? I like it. Very medieval.

OFFICER O'BRIEN

Sends a message to the others.

Outside Willy having tried lifting the body is now just spinning the corpse in a circle on the umbrella.

O'Reilly pulls McGurk aside.

SGT. O'REILLY

Honestly John, while none of us mind, you might want be a bit more careful about things like that. The new commissioner reads the press, and after that last article, he's all fired up to shut you down.

MCGURK

Moreso than before?

OFFICER O'BRIEN

That uptight nutter is on the war path, I tell ya.

(MORE)

OFFICER O'BRIEN (CONT'D)  
 Hell, he's fired two different  
 police chiefs already. Can't even  
 take a mid-shift nap these days  
 without worrying he'll surprise you  
 on one of his "midnight strolls".  
 Half of us is on our final  
 warnings.

SGT. O'REILLY  
 The man just wants to see his name  
 in the papers. Bad look for him,  
 having this shrine of vice just two  
 blocks from Headquarters.

MCGURK  
 I can't control what people do,  
 Sergeant. If only more people were  
 as understanding as you fellas are.

SGT. O'REILLY  
 We good cops are indeed few and far  
 between. Speaking of  
 understanding...

McGurk reaches into the till and grabs some cash and hands it  
 to O'Reilly.

SGT. O'REILLY (CONT'D)  
 Long live McGurks!

POLICE  
 Hear, hear!

Lizzie hollers over to Sgt. O'Reilly.

LIZZIE  
 Not gonna live long with that  
 "covert" writer hanging around.

SGT. O'REILLY  
 What's that?

LIZZIE  
 Some protection your lot is. Can't  
 even stop having John's dirty  
 laundry spread about by some  
 undercover reporter.

SGT. O'REILLY  
 Well...

MCGURK

I'm assaulted from all angles. I tell ya, if I ever catch that shitscraping louse of a writer, I'd murder him on the spot.

SGT. O'REILLY

Well John, when you do, rest assured that nobody will arrest ya.

The police CHEER.

Outside Willy has now somehow figured out how to raise the corpse a little but it just keeps going up and down on the pole.

Just then OFFICER O'GILL, 20s, green and eager, runs in, ash flying off his shoulders.

OFFICER O'GILL

Sgt. O'Reilly! Sgt. O'Reilly!

SGT. O'REILLY

What is it?

OFFICER O'GILL

It's the commissioner! He's coming this way and he's on a rampage!

SGT. O'REILLY

Hmmm.... Shit.

TR

(off screen)

Bully!

OFFICER O'BRIEN

Sarge, what do we do?

SGT. O'REILLY

Boys let's all take a moment to calm down and think rationally. Hide!

The officers all scatter in a panic trying to find hiding places around the bar. They are doing a terrible job.

MCGURK

(shouting out the door at Willy as he tries to tidy up)

Willy! Now would be a good time to ditch the lawn ornament!

Amid the madness, Willy, still outside and struggling with the corpse on a pole, kicks the table in frustration causing the umbrella to suddenly open, launching the corpse into the air. Willy looks up, confused. The corpse doesn't come back down.

FOOTSTEPS draw Willy's attention as COMMISSIONER TEDDY ROOSEVELT, the future president, 30s, full of vim, vigor, and ambition, marches in behind him. Willy, tips his cap as the commissioner trods into the bar, passing McGurk nonchalantly cleaning the bar.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
Commissioner Roosevelt.

TR  
(in passing)  
Not now, reprobate!

TR marches directly to where O'Reilly had been sitting and stops.

TR sniffs the air, listens to the wind, and follows the "trail" like a hunter up to the place where Sgt. O'Reilly is terribly hidden.

TR (CONT'D)  
Sgt. O'Reilly, like any creature of prey the very scent of your fear has brought your destruction upon you. Come out of there this very instant!

SGT. O'REILLY  
(coming out from his  
hiding spot)  
That wall seems up to code, Mr. McGurk! Hmm? Oh! Good Afternoon Commissioner! What brings you here?

TR patrols the bar looking for the other officers and pulling them out one by one.

TR  
I should have known better than to hope the ill-mannered throng that comprises this sad police force could meet my high standards for moral rectitude, but this louting, lazy lot of malicious mindless malcontents has brought the city's shames to new lows!



SHORTCHANGE

(sucking up or mocking?)

If only we could muster a police force made up purely of upstanding Harvard men and social reformers.

TR

Quite right, peasant!

TR turns with laser-like focus to SGT. O'Reilly.

TR (CONT'D)

So, my wayward shift commander... I take it these daily "committee" meetings you lot are so passionate about have just been an excuse to get drunk on the clock.

SGT. O'REILLY

(Completely lost)

Well- You see Commissioner- Uh-

McGurk steps forward to help Sgt. O'Reilly.

MCGURK

Nothing could be further from the truth Commissioner. They're here on official committee business.

TR

Oh! Official "committee" business? That's fine then. Just one thing, Sergeant, for our own internal records. Oddly enough, I never bothered to ask exactly what "committee" was meeting.

SGT. O'REILLY

Hmm?

TR

What "committee" would that be exactly?

MCGURK

What committee?!? How ridiculous. Why of course it's the-

McGurk gestures to Sgt. O'Reilly, a deer in headlights, to make something up.

Confused, O'Reilly, following McGurk's gesture, looks down at himself for a moment, then back up.

SGT. O'REILLY

Police.

McGurk, frustrated, gestures for Sgt. O'Reilly to keep going.

SGT. O'REILLY (CONT'D)

Man?

TR

The Policeman?

MCGURK

(stepping forward)

The Policeman's Ball Committee  
Commissioner.

SGT. O'REILLY

(with joyous relief)

That's right! The Policeman's Ball  
Committee!

The other officers cheer their salvation.

TR

The Policeman's Ball? How come I've  
never heard of this before.

MCGURK

(spinning up a con like  
Michelangelo does a  
sculpture)

Well you're still new as  
Commissioner, Mr. Roosevelt. The  
policeman's ball is only held every  
8 years, or octannually, as it  
were.

TR

That's not even a word.

MCGURK

But it is.

TR

I don't think it is. But that's  
aside from the matter. Even if this  
committee exists, what possible  
purpose could it have visiting a  
horrible den of vice and sin like  
this?

OFFICER O'BRIEN

A site survey!

SGT. O'REILLY

Yes. That. You see, Commissioner... We thought that the upstandingness of our police moral fibers and such might sort of rub off on the philistines. You know... Give em a good moralling. And in that aim for to that goal... We were about to take a vote on this being the venue for our Octagonal-

MCGURK

Octannual.

SGT. O'REILLY

Yes, that- Ball!

A DING of the bell at the hotel desk. McGurk tries to usher TR out of the bar, while the officers huddle up to vote.

MCGURK

Grand. So you see commissioner, everything here is on the up and up. McGurk's Saloon is a legitimate business that is merely misunderstood-

TR

Now now, Mr. McGurk, don't get me started on that, for I have business with you, sir. I have been reading the papers- fine people, the press, many fine friends- and what I see is not good, sir, not good at all. Why, if I had any hard proof that this place had become a destination for those seeking to end their lives I would have to make it my quest, my solemn duty to shut you down.

DING.

MCGURK

Let's not be rash, Commissioner. The press, as wonderful as they often are, must simply be mistaken. There are no suicides here.

DING.

TR

Are you going to answer that?

MCGURK  
Answer what?

DING.

TR  
The bell, sir. Do you want to stay  
in business or not?

MCGURK  
Of course. The bell.

McGurk steps over to the hotel desk as TR follows to find an  
INCREDIBLY SAD MAN, 40s, incredibly sad.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Fuck.

TR  
What's that?

MCGURK  
Nothing. (To the Incredibly Sad  
Man) Good afternoon and welcome to  
McGurks Saloon and Hotel, do you  
have a reservation.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
(on the verge of tears)  
I didn't plan that far ahead.

MCGURK  
Oh that's a shame, well on your way  
then!

TR  
Good man! Surely you have  
vacancies. Give the man a room.

MCGURK  
Of course I would but the maid has  
to prepare each room.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
I won't mind the filth. I won't use  
it for long.

TR  
There! See! Compromise!

MCGURK  
Fine... Checking in today... and  
when will you check out?

Incredibly sad man shrugs.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
Checkout unknown.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
Can I get a room with a window?

MCGURK  
No. You. Cannot.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
That's ok. I have... other options.

MCGURK  
Jesus Christ.

TR  
Mr. McGurk!

MCGURK  
You know fella, while you are here,  
there is a lovely mission down the  
street where the pure love of Jesus  
can just fill up your every nook  
and cranny with joy like a puppy  
playing in the sun on Christmas  
morning.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
(handing over a wad of  
cash)  
Here's all my money. Just... give  
me the key.

Hating that he has to do it, he slides him a key.

MCGURK  
(through gritted teeth)  
Any bags?

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
No bags.

MCGURK  
Of course not.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN  
I thank you. And now... I am off to  
my room.

The sad man walks slowly to the bottom of the stairs, where  
he stops and turns back to McGurk.

INCREDIBLY SAD MAN (CONT'D)  
 Goodbye forever.

And with that the Incredibly Sad Man heads up to his room.

TR  
 Business! Is there anything finer?  
 Bully for business!

A weak "Bully!" from the bar.

The policeman's huddle breaks up.

SGT. O'REILLY  
 So then it's settled! The  
 policemen's ball will happen here  
 at McGurk's Saloon.

MCGURK  
 When???

SGT. O'REILLY  
 Tonight.

MCGURK  
 TONIGHT?!?

SGT. O'REILLY  
 (to McGurk)  
 I'm bad at improvising!

MCGURK  
 I noticed.

TR  
 A Ball? Here? Tonight? I've never  
 heard of anything so preposterous-

Roosevelt turns and notices Lizzie. He is stricken.

TR (CONT'D)  
 My dear madam... Are you lost?

Lizzie looks around and realizes he is talking to her.

LIZZIE  
 Physically or emotionally?

TR  
 A lady of refinement such as  
 yourself has no business in a  
 hellmouth such as this.

LIZZIE

(to McGurk)

He makes a great point... (back to TR) But then, if I were to leave, I'd miss the ball. (back to McGurk) That should be something to see.

TR

The ball? The ball! Well... I do love a ball! And this ball, Mr. McGurk, had better be good, for I shall most certainly attend.

MCGURK

Of course you will. Praise be.

LIZZIE

Bully.

TR

Indeed it shall be, and madam I should hope to see you there! Til tonight!

McGurk obsequiously holds the door for TR who marches out.

MCGURK

(waving)

Farewell commissioner! God speed!

McGurk watches him go for a second, then drops the act.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

And may you eat shit and die.

He turns back into the bar.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

Great. How, exactly, am I supposed to make this place suitable for a ball?

He SLAMS the door.

Outside, the previous corpse, dislodged by the door slam falls back down onto the umbrella, this time getting impaled to the point that the body crushes the table beneath.

MCGURK (CONT'D)

I'm going to return it!

**INT.MCGURKS DANCING HALL - LATER**

The bar is decorated, poorly, for the Policeman's Ball. As even more policemen mill about looking generally terrified.

The table from outside has been moved out of sight.

McGurk addresses a group that includes Sgt. O'Reilly, Shortchange, Eat Em Up, Lizzie, some dancers, and Dapper Georgie.

MCGURK

All right, everyone knows their role? Dapper Georgie, I need the entertainment tonight to be top notch and tasteful-

GEORGIE

(very dapperly, whatever that means)  
Our performances would please the Sultan of Brunei!

MCGURK

Sure. Shortchange, you man the bar. Sgt. O'Reilly do your best to keep your men in line. Lizzie... just be nice to the commissioner. Please.

LIZZIE

No promises.

MCGURK

And Jack, the hotel is busier than I would like for a governmental visit this evening so I need you to try and keep anyone from offing themselves.

JACK

You got it, boss. How do I do that?

MCGURK

Haven't a clue, just do it. Now hop to it!

The group rushes off to their respective stations as Shortchange pulls McGurk to the bar.

SHORTCHANGE

Such a hassle for just one guy. What is it with this Commissioner fella? Why's he got such a stick up his ass about us.



MCGURK

Because Charley, we are newsworthy, and he's a man with ambitions. Fool thinks he will be elected Mayor one day.

SHORTCHANGE

Mayor!?! Ya think he stands a chance?

MCGURK

Charley. Trust me. This is as far as Teddy Roosevelt goes in public service.

TR

(offscreen)

Bully!

MCGURK

Here he comes. Now off to your station, Shortchange. Georgie!

GEORGIE

Professor!

The man at the piano, PROFESSOR, 20s, starts to play and the can-can girls come out onto the sides of the stage as Teddy Roosevelt strides in.

TR surveys the scene.

TR

Well, Mr. McGurk... I had hoped that there would be more improvement for an event such as this.

MCGURK

Give it time, Commissioner. The moral fiber of your upstanding police force will take some time to properly absorb into the culture here.

TR

Naturally.

TR notices Lizzie.

TR (CONT'D)

Ah, Mademoiselle, what a pleasure to see you here.

LIZZIE

Howdy.

TR

A woman of refinement with a tinge  
of the West in her? Bully indeed.

MCGURK

Why don't you both sit down and  
enjoy the show, Commissioner.

LIZZIE

(to McGurk sotto voce)  
John, I don't want-

MCGURK

(sotto voce)  
You'll drink for free.

LIZZIE

(to TR)  
Come darling Commissioner, let's  
take in the arts.

TR

Well maybe just for a moment.

McGurk grabs Lizzie and TR and ushers them to seats of honor  
for the show.

MCGURK

Let me show you to our best table.  
Can I interest you in a whiskey?

TR

Never touch the stuff!

MCGURK

Never?

TR

Never! It's the devil's nectar,  
sir!

MCGURK

No booze at all?

TR

None. Alcohol is the seed of sin!  
...Except for brandy... And wine...  
Or, of course, a nice Mint Julep.

MCGURK

Ok, well, we've got none of that so  
I will find you some sort of...  
juice? And for the lady?

LIZZIE

Oh I'll try this Whiskey I've heard  
so much about.

Lizzie gestures and mouths to McGurk: "Make it a triple."

Dapper Georgie walks out to center stage.

MCGURK

Ah the show is about to begin.  
Enjoy.

McGurk runs back to the bar.

GEORGIE

Ladies and Gentlemen! For your  
pleasure and amusement, we now  
present: An evening of fine and  
chaste dancing in the French style!

The Can Can girls attempt to do refined dancing. Poorly.

**FLASH - IN A ROOM UPSTAIRS**

Jack holds a DESPERATE MAN, 40s, sobbing, up against a wall.

DESPERATE MAN

No one will ever love me.

Jack PUNCHES him.

JACK

Don't. (PUNCH) Be. (PUNCH) Sad.  
(PUNCH)

The Desperate Man WAILS.

**BACK TO THE BAR**

MCGURK

(exhausted)  
Charley. Whiskey for the tart and a  
"Sneaky Pete" for the Commissioner,  
extra strong.

Shortchange starts whipping together the drinks.

SHORTCHANGE

Boss, we got a problem.

MCGURK  
What now!?!

SHORTCHANGE  
I just got a tip. That reporter?

MCGURK  
What about him?

SHORTCHANGE  
He's here.

MCGURK  
WHERE?

SHORTCHANGE  
He's disguised.

MCGURK  
The covert bugger. As what?

SHORTCHANGE  
A cop.

MCGURK  
There must be a hundred cops here!

SHORTCHANGE  
I know.

MCGURK  
Well let him snoop. We've done  
nothing wrong. We're on the up and  
up. And everything is going  
according to plan.

McGurk takes the drinks over to TR and Lizzie.

MCGURK (CONT'D)  
(to Shortchange as he  
walks)  
Nothing to see here!

As he arrives. BANG!! THUD!!! Everyone looks up then at TR.

TR  
What was that?

LIZZIE  
Mr. McGurk! What a wonderful idea!  
That's exactly what this  
performance needs! A little  
percussion!

Lizzie starts to stomp and clap, and the cops follow suit. The Dancers try to adjust to the new tempo without getting too risqué.

It's hard for them.

**FLASH - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY**

Jack pops out of a room, fist covered in blood, and looks around the hallway. Behind him we see the Desperate Man still crying.

A dozen or so LOW LIFE PATRONS lean out their respective doors.

JACK

Where?

The Low Life Patrons point to a room down the hall. Jack trots towards it.

JACK (CONT'D)

GET BACK IN YOUR ROOMS AND LIVE!

**BACK TO THE BAR**

TR and Lizzie are watching the show.

TR

I've seen better.

NOTE: Unnoticed by the all the partygoers, above TR and Lizzie, a blood stain starts forming on the ceiling and then slowly moving down the wall.

MCGURK

Here are your beverages, I hope they're to your liking.

Lizzie grabs her whiskey and toasts TR.

LIZZIE

Bottoms up, Commissioner.

Confused TR does and immediately starts coughing.

TR

What was that???

MCGURK

Juice.

TR  
 (liking it?)  
 Damnedest Juice I've ever had.

McGurk notices the blood stain has lowered to the point of being between Lizzie and TR on the wall.

MCGURK  
 Ohhhhhhhhhhhhh-But first,  
 Commissioner, I must show you these  
 lovely decorations!

McGurk grabs TR and pulls him out of his seat and away from the blood taking over the wall behind him.

LIZZIE  
 (heading off to the bar)  
 I'll just help myself then.

McGurk and TR move over to the area by the staircase.

MCGURK  
 As you can see we have some, uh,  
 bunting, and that thing there.

TR  
 All right...

Just then Lizzie returns with two shots.

LIZZIE  
 Cheers Commissioner!

TR  
 Well, if you insist...

They clink and drink.

TR shivers.

TR (CONT'D)  
 What kind of juice is that???

LIZZIE  
 It's got vitamins.

MCGURK  
 Did you see the tinsel  
 Commissioner?

TR  
 Vitamins? What? Yes, sir, I see it.  
 I do have eyes. (starting to feel  
 the booze) Dear god I see it.

(MORE)

TR (CONT'D)

Tinsel. I am Theodore Roosevelt,  
and not much can get past me.

Just then, THUDTHUDTHUDTHUDTHUD!! Behind TR and McGurk, the  
corpse of the Incredibly Sad Man, foaming at the mouth slides  
down the stairs and onto McGurk's foot.

McGurk is horrified. Neither TR nor Lizzie have seen it.

GEORGIE

Now that's a tempo to dance to!  
Professor!

The music speeds up to the tempo of the man falling down the  
stairs. The Can Can dancers start to lose control and start  
to dance in their normal risque (for 1896) manner.

McGurk grabs Lizzie's sleeve.

MCGURK

DANCE.

LIZZIE

What?

McGurk points to his foot.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Shortchange! More juice!  
Let's dance commissioner!

MCGURK

(pointing)  
OVER THERE.

LIZZIE

Let's dance over there!

TR

(a little drunk at this  
point)  
Dance? You know at Harvard I was  
something of a-

LIZZIE

Come on!

Lizzie grabs TR and starts dancing away from the corpse.

TR

Oho! What fun!

Jack comes running down the stairs.

MCGURK  
 (whispering to Jack)  
 Jack, where have you been?

JACK  
 It's a mess upstairs.

MCGURK  
 Deal with it later! For now just  
 get rid of him!

McGurk points at the dead sad man.

JACK  
 Ok, boss!

McGurk runs over to the bar, where Lizzie and TR dance awkwardly nearby. As they dance, Lizzie tries to grab her drink from the bar but... it is just out of reach.

MCGURK  
 Everything all right, Commissioner.

TR  
 (still dancing)  
 I- Well- Actually, yes. You know,  
 Mr. McGurk, I rather think that I  
 am starting to enjoy myself.  
 Perhaps I have misjudged you and  
 your establishment.

Jack, unseen by Roosevelt, grabs Sgt. O'Reilly who gets several cops to help in rolling the corpse up in a rug.

MCGURK  
 (distracted by ensuring  
 everything happens out of  
 TRs line of sight)  
 Thank you, Commissioner, that's  
 very kind.

TR  
 In fact, this is the most fun I've  
 had in some time!

MCGURK  
 Isn't that grand. I may quote you  
 on that.

Just now, TR notices the glass that Lizzie has been trying, unsuccessfully to reach and he grabs it.



TR  
 Damn the torpedoes, full speed  
 ahead!

He shoots it. Lizzie is saddened.

Meanwhile, out of TR's sight, the body is now fully rolled up and behind a makeshift mobile wall of policemen. Charley and Sgt. O'Reilly pick the rug up and try to slowly, along with the protective human wall, shuffle towards the door.

TR (CONT'D)  
 (to Lizzie)  
 I dare say, my dear, I do think we  
 could dance with a bit more vigor.

LIZZIE  
 Vigor?  
 MCGURK  
 Commissioner, perhaps you  
 should sit down.

The corpse removing team is 1/3 of the way to the door.

TR  
 (ignoring McGurk)  
 Yes, vigor! All physical activities  
 are better with a bit of vigor.  
 Dance is no different. Now follow  
 my lead-

LIZZIE  
 I don't do vigor.  
 MCGURK  
 I don't think that's the best  
 idea-

TR  
 And prepare for a good twirling.

LIZZIE  
 I don't want to twirl.  
 MCGURK  
 Commissioner, no!

TR  
 WEEEEEEEEEE!

TR and Lizzie start CAREENING towards the rug disposal team who are now 2/3 of the way to the door.

MCGURK  
 COMMISSIONER STOP!!!!

Everyone stops in their tracks. The music stops.

Then, from near the stage a voice rings out.

VOICE  
 YES. STOP.

A man steps forward whipping off his policeman disguise to reveal a MAN, 40s, clean cut, upright, serious, and ambitious.

MAN  
Commissioner... you've been had.

Beat.

MCGURK  
Who the hell are you?

MAN  
My name is Jacob Riis and for the last few months, I have been covertly investigating-

MCGURK  
The reporter!

JACK  
EAT EM UP!

MCGURK  
Jack! No!

JACK  
I'll smash you good!

Jack grabs the reporter and throws him across the bar, bumping into Charley and then coasting straight through the plate glass window to the outside!

Charley, jostled lets go of his end of the carpet, and the corpse rolls out of the carpet and directly onto TR's foot.

Slight beat.

Then CRASH! From the spot where the blood had been dripping a hole in the ceiling collapses and a second corpse SLAMS to the ground.

The cops feign surprise. Silence. They look to TR to respond.

TR  
Corpses rolling on the floor!  
Corpses falling from the sky! What in the name of heaven and earth is going on here?

MCGURK  
Commissioner, I don't know why these people come here to do it.

(MORE)

MCGURK (CONT'D)

I have tried to stop people from killing themselves in my hotel. I really have. But they just keep coming and-

TR

Enough sir! I've had enough! What a monstrous display. I had read the articles. I was warned about you, warned about this place. A boarding house profiting from the misery of others? It's a scandal! A shame! Come one and all and see the wretched meet their demise! I tell you, Mr. McGurk, that if only they'd make having people kill themselves in your hotel a crime, I'd arrest you right now and I'd throw away the key!

Beat.

MCGURK

Wait... It's not a crime?

**EXT.MCGURKS SUICIDE HALL - DAYS LATER**

Shortchange and McGurk stand out front looking at something before them.

SHORTCHANGE

I don't think the commissioner is gonna like this.

MCGURK

I imagine not Charley.

We now see the front window has been replaced with one featuring a painted sign saying: "McGurk's Suicide Hall" above the door is painted the motto "Better Dead".

Shuffles wearing a sandwich board and handing out flyers to pedestrians.

SHUFFLES

Step right up and visit McGurk's Suicide Hall! The Hall with more suicides than any other hall in the world!

MCGURK

But, so help me god, if it's what's  
needed to get my American Dream,  
I'll take Teddy Roosevelt down.

Just then a couple, ELEANOR and AUGIE, 20s, posh, well  
dressed and slumming it, approach.

AUGIE

Look Eleanor, this spot looks  
dreary indeed.

ELEANOR

Doesn't it.

AUGIE

What do you say? Shall we step in  
and slum it?

ELEANOR

Let's!

They enter the bar, and McGurk looks to Shortchange.

MCGURK

Bully for business.

### CREDITS

#### EXT.MCGURKS ALLEY - DAY

We see the confused face of Jimmy Salesman.

The serious face of McGurk.

Back to the confused Jimmy.

We now see them standing over the broken, mangled and blood  
stained cafe table and umbrella.

Back to McGurk.

MCGURK

I'd like to make a return.

Beat.

JIMMY

No.

END OF PILOT