

# Savage in Limbo

Written by John Patrick Shanley

DRAMA

**Characters:** *Denise Savage (32)*  
*Linda Rotunda (32)*

**Setting:** Scales, a bar in the Bronx, New York City

*A bartender and four neighborhood patrons spend a Monday night together. One of the patrons is Denise Savage. She's small, wild-haired, and is ready for some action. She tells them she has energy, and if she sits at home one more second with her mother, who looks "like a dead walrus," she will die.*

*Linda Rotunda, "a done-up, attractive, over-ripe Italian girl" enters and begins to cry. She pronounces her boyfriend's name Anthony as "Antony," and the word virgin as "version." Savage recognizes Linda from grammar school and knows her as a neighborhood joke. "You get knocked up every time you stop walking. It's stupid to lie about it. Everybody knows. You're sloppy and you're fertile."*

*The two women begin to talk.*

**SAVAGE:** Is he hittin you?

**LINDA:** No.

**SAVAGE:** What's he doin?

**LINDA:** He wants to see other women.

**SAVAGE:** What?

**LINDA:** He wants to see other women.

**SAVAGE:** And for this you think he's crazy, huh? You are a pisser.

**LINDA:** You don't understand.

**SAVAGE:** I understand that. That's very common.

**LINDA:** No, no. You don't understand.

**SAVAGE:** Have it your own way.

**LINDA:** He wants to see ugly women.

**SAVAGE:** They may look that way to you, honey, but I guess he sees 'em different.

**LINDA:** You don't understand. He told me. He says, Linda, I wanna see ugly girls.

**SAVAGE:** He said that?

**LINDA:** Yes.

**SAVAGE:** Well, what did he mean?

**LINDA:** He meant what he said.

**SAVAGE:** But that's not possible. Men don't go after women they think are ugly. If they end up with an ugly woman, it's because they made a mistake and they think she's goodlookin. Alright a drunk, a crazy guy, or a loser. But a guy like Tony? A guy like Tony Aronica would never end up with an ugly woman. You know why? He's just got too much dog in 'em. He thinks like a dog.

**LINDA:** What are you tellin me? You're tellin me nothin. I tell you what's goin on, and you tell me it ain't goin on. It's goin on. Anthony wants to see ugly cause I don't know why, but that's the fuckin news and don't tell me otherwise. Every Monday night I go to his place and we spend time together, and this night I go and he's got this look in his eye. Like he knows somethin, and like he never seen me before. I got a scared feelin right away. I touch him but he puts my hand away. He says he wants to talk. What's he wanna talk about before we go to bed? What's there to talk about? When a woman wants to talk to a man, it's cause she wants the man to see her better. When it's the other way, when the man stops you from touchin to talk, what's there to talk about? It's gotta be bad. I tried to keep him from talkin. I turned myself on. But there was somethin in his mind. Even my mother sees what Anthony's got. Even my mother. She'd like a taste. She knows where I'm goin on Monday nights. I don't come home till late, the mornin sometimes, but she don't say anything. Any other time she would. But she knows where I go, and she wants it for me. Once I was goin, and she whispered to me so's my father wouldn't hear, Take it, Linda. That's all. Take it, Linda. And I did. And now he don't wanna see me cause he wants to see ugly women. I said I'd be ugly for him, but he said no. It didn't work that way. I'm so ashamed. I feel ugly. I feel fat. Anthony don't want me no more.

**SAVAGE:** You're not fat. You're almost fat. But you're not fat. You wanna play some cards?

**LINDA:** No.

**SAVAGE:** These cards are disgusting anyway. I left 'em near the humidifier one night and they got all spongy. I got the humidifier cause my mother was dryin out. She never goes anywhere, she can't, and we got so much heat in the that fuckin apartment-I looked at her one day and she looked like a dead plant. So I went out and I got the humidifier and I run it every night. She still looks like freeze-dried shit, but I feel better cause I did somethin. I didn't just take it. I didn't just fuckin accept it. I believe in action. Anyway, between the humidity and my sloppy ways, these cards are real crappy. Some of these Sister Rosita's, you know, these witchtellers, they're supposed to be able to see your future inna pack a cards. I look at these cards, I never see anything about my future. I just see my fuckin life. I'm gonna go insane.

**LINDA:** What are you talkin about?

**SAVAGE:** I'm talkin about tension. I'm talkin about somethin snappin at your heels, but you can't get away. Bein apart from everybody else. Bein alone. There's a wall there. Like you're inna glass box, a bee inna jar, dreamin about flowers, smellin your own . . . death. People look at you, it's through somethin. You touch somebody, there's somethin over your hand.

**LINDA:** I don't get you.

**SAVAGE:** I'm trying to tell you somethin, but it's not easy.

**LINDA:** So tell me anyway.

**SAVAGE:** I'm a virgin.

**LINDA:** What?

**SAVAGE:** You heard me. You're just astounded. I'm a virgin.

**LINDA:** Why you tellin me a lie?

**SAVAGE:** In the beginnin, it was just bad luck. I'm not like you, and I got a big mouth, and well, it's easy not to lose it at first. You're scared, they're scared, somebody says: Boo, and everybody runs away. At least that's the way it was for me. To start with. But then it became a thing. Most every. body I knew lost it, you know, over a certain period a time, and there I was, still in the wrapper. It woulda been easy to lose it then. But it became a thing, you know? I felt different. I felt like I was holdin out for somethin. Not some guy, not just some guy. I felt like I was holdin out for somethin, sayin no, no, I'm not takin that life just cause it was the first one I was offered. So here I am. I'm thirty-two. And I'm still sayin no, no. And I still only got offered the one life, and I still don't want that one.

**LINDA:** You're a virgin?

**SAVAGE:** Yeah.

**LINDA:** Wow.

**SAVAGE:** Say somethin.

**LINDA:** What's it like?

**SAVAGE:** It's like holding your breath, only you never have to let go. No, that's not what it's like...

**LINDA:** I never knew anybody grown up who never, you know ... I feel like you know somethin I don't know.

**SAVAGE:** Well, I know you know somethin I don't know.

**LINDA:** Yeah, but everybody I know knows what I know. Except you. It's like common knowledge. But what you know, w it's like a secret. How does it feel?

**SAVAGE:** I feel strong. Like I'm wearin chains and I could snap 'em any time. I feel ready. I go to work and I feel like I could take over the company, but I just type. I go home and I see my mother in her chair and I feel like I could pick her up with one hand and chuck her out the window and roll up the rug and throw a big party. Everybody's invited. I go to the library and I wanna take the books down off the shelves and open all the books on the tables and argue with everybody about ideas. I wanna think out loud with other people. You know what's wrong with everybody? Too smart. I know it sounds crazy. I know. But it's true. Everybody's too smart. It's like everybody knows everything and everybody argued everything and everything got hashed out and settled the day before I was born. It's not fair. They know about gravity so nobody talks about gravity. It's a dead issue. Look at me. My feet are stuck to the fuckin floor. Fantastic. But no. That's gravity. Forget it. It's been done it's been said it's been thought, so fuck it. It's not fair. I've been shut outta everything that mighta been good by a smartness around that won't let me think not one new thing. And it's been like that with love, too. You're a little girl and you see the movies and maybe you talk to your mother and you definitely talk to your

friends and then you know, right? So you go ahead and you do love. And somethin a what somebody told ya inna movie or in your ear is what love is. And where the fuck are you then, that's what I wanna know? Where the fuck are you. when you've done love, and you can point to love, and you can name it, and love is the same as gravity the same as everything else, and everything else is a totally dead fuckin issue?

**LINDA:** That's what it's like to be a virgin?

**SAVAGE:** That's part of it. Maybe that's the good part.

**LINDA:** You wanna be my friend?

**SAVAGE:** I don't know how.

**LINDA:** Me neither.

**SAVAGE:** Why you want me?

**LINDA:** Cause I gotta make a change, and you're different.

**SAVAGE:** What are you gonna do?

**LINDA:** Things have got to where I got to make a change.

*(MURK: Hey, keep it down. SAVAGE: Back off.)*

**LINDA:** All I had was Monday. I just marked time till Monday. I ain't got Monday no more so I gotta make a change. Every. thing's doin shit on me an changin on me an lookin different than it was before and now there ain't no Monday and I'm thirty-two and my mother's gonna be on my case again my sucky life and I'll be fucking guys under staircases and I gotta make a change for myself this time no matter how much it hurts, I don't want to, scared, or it's goodbye Linda for sure. You gotta help me.

**SAVAGE:** How?

**LINDA:** Don't ask me that. That's the question. I don't know. But I gotta change.

**SAVAGE:** I gotta ask cause so do I, too.

**LINDA:** What are we gonna do?

**SAVAGE:** I don't know.

**LINDA:** I'm scared. I feel so scared.

**SAVAGE:** Why?

**LINDA:** I gotta move outta my whole house.

**SAVAGE:** So move.

**LINDA:** Why ain't you moved outta your house? *(No answer.)*

Why ain't you moved outta your house?

**SAVAGE:** I can't do that.

**LINDA:** Why not?

**SAVAGE:** My mother's a shut-in. She's trapped. I can't leave her.

**LINDA:** Ain't we shut-in's, too?

**SAVAGE:** I gotta good room. I got books there that I read. And I gotta refill the humidifier all the time. My mother, she can only walk on canes. I figured it out. Without me, she'd die in three days.

**LINDA:** You're scared, too.

**SAVAGE:** No, I'm not.

**LINDA:** Yeah, you are.

**SAVAGE:** Yeah.

**LINDA:** I thought you weren't.

**SAVAGE:** I'm scared of everything. I see what could go wrong with everything so I don't do nothin. I got this one thing in me that I hate. I'm a coward.

**LINDA:** We gotta be friends.

**SAVAGE:** Alright.

**LINDA:** I ain't never been friends with a girl. I guess this is it.

**SAVAGE:** I ain't never been friends with nobody. I ain't had the time. I got my mother. I got the job. I just talk at people, which is lonely. I honestly could just fall down from loneliness.

**LINDA:** Maybe ... Maybe we should do somethin together.

**SAVAGE:** For instance what?

**LINDA:** I don't know. Maybe we should go dancin together or somethin.

**SAVAGE:** Dancin?

**LINDA:** Somethin.

**SAVAGE:** I don't dance.

**LINDA:** Somethin.

**SAVAGE:** Maybe we should, I don't know, getta apartment. Together.

**LINDA:** Yeah? That'd be a step out, wouldn't it?

**SAVAGE:** It's an idea.

**LINDA:** So we're like girlfriends now, right? We're girlfriends, talkin to each other about bein roommates.