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SF PERUSALS

Al's Business Cards

by Josh Koenigsberg

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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AL'S BUSINESS CARDS was first produced by AT PLAY (Harrison David Rivers, Artistic Director; Kelcie Beene and Carly Hugo, Producers) in association with OLD VIC: NEW VOICES (Kevin Spacey, Artistic Director; Rachael Stevens, New Voices Network Manager) at Theatre Row in New York City in August, 2009. It was directed by Lauren Keating; the set design was by Jian Jung and Tsubasa Kamei; the costume design was by Melissa Trn; the lighting design was by Tito Fleetwood Ladd; the sound design was by Amy Altadonna; and the production stage manager was Amanda Kate Joshi. The cast was as follows:

AL GURVIS . . . . . Azhar Khan
EILEEN LEE . . . . . Lauren Hines
BARRY BARRINI . . . . . Bobby Moreno
DANIEL LUCE . . . . . Malcolm Madera
JOSE ALVAREZ . . . . . Gabriel Gutierrez

CHARACTERS

AL GURVIS – A gaffing assistant. Light-skinned Indian male who almost looks Hispanic. Has aspirations.

BARRY BARRINI – Al's co-worker. White male. Not the brightest bulb.

EILEEN LEE – A real-estate agent. White female. Recovering alcoholic.

DANIEL LUCE – Eileen's soon-to-be-ex-husband. White male. Alcoholic.

JOSE ALVAREZ – Private Investigator. Hispanic male. Slick.

SETTING

Elizabeth, New Jersey

TIME

Friday afternoon through Monday morning

For Azhar.

Scene One

(Friday afternoon. Two gaffing assistants, **BARRY***, who's white, and* **AL***, a light-skinned Indian who almost looks Hispanic, stand by a craft service table on a film set in Jersey.* **BARRY** *munches from a bag of chips,* **AL** *makes himself a coffee and sips it.)*

AL. Hey, I tell you I got business cards.

BARRY. Who did.

AL. Me – I did.

BARRY. *(chuckling)* What? What for?

AL. What do you mean, "what for"?

BARRY. I mean what the hell you need business cards for?

AL. 'Cause I'm in a business, Barry. I'm looking for greater opportunities in the business that I'm in, so I made myself business cards, what's the problem?

*(***BARRY** *giggles, shakes his head and munches.* **AL** *sips his coffee.)*

Yo, I tell you what happened though?

BARRY. *(mockingly)* What, with your *business cards*?

AL. Yeah, with my fucking business cards.

BARRY. *(laughing)* What do these business cards say on 'em anyways?

AL. What do you mean, "What do they say on 'em?" They say, "Al Gurvis, Professional Gaffing Assistant."

*(***BARRY** *bursts out laughing.)*

Honest to God, what's your problem?

BARRY. What'd you hire a secretary also?

AL. *(shaking his head)* You're a fuck-stick.

BARRY. Hey, what extension do I dial to get you? Can I borrow the company car? Hey, how were the profit margins this quarter? *(chuckles)* Business cards…

AL. Yeah, that's right, business cards! Y'know some people want to advance in the world, not stand around scratching their butt all day, munching loudly on chips or whatever.

*(***BARRY** *eats a chip loudly.* **AL** *slurps his coffee indignantly.)*

I tell you what happened with them though?

BARRY. No, Al – what happened with your business cards.

AL. Alright, so I order 'em from ABC Printers, right? – supposedly the best fucking print shop in Jersey – and I get a call last Monday saying they're ready. Fine. I go in, pick 'em up, take 'em home. Know what they say on 'em?

BARRY. No, what do they say on 'em?

AL. They say, "Eileen Lee – Executive Realtor."

*(***AL** *looks at* **BARRY** *expectantly.* **BARRY** *munches. They stare at each other.)*

They say, "Eileen Lee – Executive Realtor."

BARRY. I heard you – who's Eileen Lee.

AL. Not fucking me, that's who. See what happened is they must've mixed up my cards with hers. So I call her up.

BARRY. Wait a minute, you know her?

AL. What? No, fucktard, her number's on the fucking business cards.

BARRY. Oh right, okay.

AL. So I call her up, I go, "Is this Eileen Lee, Executive Realtor?" She goes, "Yeah, who's this." I go, "It's Al Gurvis, I got your business cards." She goes, "Great, I'll be in to pick 'em up this week." I go, "Nah nah, it's not the printers calling honey. It's *me*, Al Gurvis. I got your business cards."

BARRY. *(chuckling)* What do you, gotta spell it out for her?

AL. I know, right? She's like, "Wait a minute – *Al Gurvis* – where do I know that name from. Are you in the program?"

BARRY. "*Program*" – what program?

AL. Oh, that's what they call A.A., I think.

BARRY. Jesus, she's an alcoholic to boot?

AL. What do you mean, "to boot?" Nah, she's in recovery or whatever.

BARRY. Aw, that's a myth.

AL. Huh?

BARRY. "Recovery." You are who you are – once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.

AL. Well, that's your opinion.

BARRY. What, you don't agree?

AL. The point is I'm like, "No, you don't know me from the fucking program. You know me cause you got my business cards and I got yours."

BARRY. What, she didn't notice?

AL. No, she's like, "I *do*?" I'm like, "*Yes*, you do. *That's* how come you know my name, honey." So she checks, sure enough she finds 'em. She goes, "Ohhh, that's right! So *you're* Al Gurvis." I go, "Yes, I'm Al Gurvis – Professional Gaffing Assistant."

BARRY. *(chuckling)* Why the fuck did you write "Professional Gaffing Assistant?" Why not just call yourself, "Electrician." They're practically the same thing.

AL. 'Cause I'm not an electrician, I'm a professional gaffing assistant.

BARRY. Yeah, but no one's gonna know what that is. I don't even think that's a real title.

AL. No, but y'know – they'll probably go, "Professional gaffing assistant – what's that? Oh, it's probably like an electrician. I know – I'll hire him to do electrical work."

BARRY. Who the fuck is gonna say that?

AL. Y'know – people. People are smart.

BARRY. If they're so smart, they'll know the difference between a licensed electrician and "Professional Gaffing Assistant." Just say "Electrician."

AL. Nah, I'm not gonna lie.

BARRY. Well, Jesus, Al, you're misleading them as it is.

AL. What do you mean I'm misleading them as it is?

BARRY. C'mon, Al. *(beat)* Y'know.

AL. No, I don't know – what are you talking about?

BARRY. What, I gotta say it?

AL. Say what?

BARRY. Jesus Christ. Look, even if they're idiots, and they say, "Oh he's not a licensed electrician, he's close enough, we'll hire him anyways" – don't you think they're gonna feel a *little* misled when they hire "Al Gurvis" and *you* show up?

AL. Why wouldn't I show up. I'm Al Gurvis.

BARRY. I know you're Al Gurvis. But Christ, Al – they think they're hiring a white electrician and instead they get this lying Hispanic? You're credibility's gonna go to shit.

*(***AL** *slurps his coffee.)*

Nah, I mean I'm not saying…I mean, look, it could be worse. It's not like you're from the middle-east or something. Some *towel-head.* Nah, I'm just saying, as long as you're a Hispanic guy with an American guy's name, you might as well call yourself an "Electrician."

*(***BARRY** *grabs a can of soda and opens it. They stare at each other.)*

AL. First off? I'm Indian.

BARRY. Who's Indian.

AL. Me. I'm Indian.

BARRY. Who *you*? You're not Indian.

AL. Uh, yes, actually. Yes, I am.

*(***BARRY** *looks him over.)*

BARRY. Nah.

AL. No, I'm not asking you. I'm telling you – I'm Indian. I'm half-Indian.

BARRY. Half-Indian, half-Hispanic?

AL. No, just half-Indian.

BARRY. And the other half – what, half-American?

AL. *(annoyed)* Well, I'd like to think I'm *all* American.

BARRY. Well, not technically.

AL. Look, my mom grew up in India! My dad's, I don't know, some kind of Irish. But I grew up here, I don't have a fucking accent.

BARRY. No, I know – I didn't say that. I know your deal. I just thought your mom was from Mexico or whatever.

AL. Well, she's not, she's from India, so what's your point?

BARRY. Huh? No, I don't have a *point*, I'm just saying. Y'know – be careful. Cause the world's a fucked up place, y'know? No, I did not know that you were from India or whatever.

*(***BARRY** *munches awkwardly.)*

Man, I'm tired, I got like no sleep last night. *(offering the bag)* Hey, you want some?

AL. No, I don't wanna touch 'em with my lying Hispanic hands.

BARRY. Aw, c'mon. Besides you said you weren't Hispanic.

AL. Oh – so what, if I was, you wouldn't give me none?

BARRY. What? No! But y'know it's a moot point, or whatever. I mean Indian's good. Indian's better.

AL. Indian's *better*?

BARRY. What? No, c'mon I'm giving you a compliment here.

AL. Oh, you're giving me a *compliment*?

BARRY. Jesus, why's everyone's so sensitive these days! We're just talking here.

AL. All right, let me ask you a question, Barry. Let's say someone gets my business card.

BARRY. *(trying to lighten the mood)* Yeah, after you get 'em back from that alcoholic, am I right?

*(***BARRY** *smiles.* **AL** *doesn't.)*

AL. Let's say someone gets my card…

BARRY. Uh huh…

AL. Wants to hire me…

BARRY. *Very* possible…

AL. Then I show up. Are they gonna be pissed that I'm a lying Indian?

BARRY. No!

*(***AL** *nods and walks away.)*

But y'know, cause you'll tell them.

*(***AL** *stops and turns back.)*

AL. What'll I tell them?

BARRY. Y'know. That you're only *half* or whatever. I mean I think we're in agreement here.

AL. No, we're not in agreement.

BARRY. *(snaps his fingers)* I got it: you put your picture on the business card.

AL. My what? My *picture*?

BARRY. Yeah, you get 'em back from this Real Estate Drunk and then you redo 'em. You put your picture on the card. That way, if someone wants to hire you, they'll know what they're getting themselves into.

AL. Y'know what? Fuck you.

BARRY. Fuck me? What for?

AL. Cause you're an idiot! If someone gets my card, wants to hire me, they're not gonna give a shit what I look like! If anything, it's a, it's a…*pleasant surprise*!

BARRY. Hey look, Al, I'm with you. *(beat)* But it's just not true.

AL. Oh really? So what – you think when I go to pick up the cards from this Eileen Lee, she's gonna see me, scream, and run in the other direction?

BARRY. What, you're gonna go see her? Today?

AL. Yeah, after work or whatever. I made a 'date' or whatever to pick 'em up.

BARRY. "*A date*"? *(looks at him curiously)* When was the last time you got laid?

AL. What? Fuck you. I gotta use the bathroom.

BARRY. Okay, how about this: let's make a wager.

AL. A what? No.

BARRY. Aw, c'mon, this is perfect! You're gonna go see Eileen Lee – okay. She'll be our guinea pig. If she doesn't say anything about how your name and face don't match – you win.

AL. What'll I win?

BARRY. You win, uh…I don't know, a box of fucking chocolates.

*(***AL** *starts walking away.)*

Ghirardelli Chocolates.

AL. *(He loves those.)* All right, fine. Now I gotta use the bathroom before break's up.

BARRY. Whoa, whoa, whoa. What if you lose.

AL. I won't. She's not gonna say anything.

BARRY. Yeah, but what if she does.

AL. Jesus Christ, Barry, I don't know. I'll get *you* a box of chocolates.

BARRY. I don't like chocolates.

AL. Well what *do* you like?

BARRY. Scotch.

AL. Fine. It's a little expensive, but okay, I'll buy you a bottle of cheap Scotch. But trust me, she's not gonna say anything.

BARRY. What makes you so sure?

AL. 'Cause that's my whole point – you got a pessimistic outlook on life and people don't work that way! Besides, we're talking about a nice polite Asian girl here.

BARRY. Asian? What did she, have an accent on the phone?

AL. What? No, but c'mon – Eileen *Lee*?

BARRY. Whatever. It's a deal though, right?

AL. Yeah, okay, it's a deal.

*(***BARRY** *wipes his Frito hand on his pants and offers it to* **AL**. **AL** *shakes on it.* **BARRY** *pulls him in close.)*

BARRY. Remember, we're using the honor system here. Don't go lying to me and telling me on Monday that she didn't say nothing if she did. I'll be able to see it on your face.

(The buzzer rings signaling the end of the break.)

AL. Aw, great. Alright, I gotta use the bathroom.

BARRY. That's three times you told me. What do you, want me to wipe your ass for you?

End of Scene

Scene Two

(Friday afternoon, later. **AL** *sits at a Starbucks, drinking a coffee. A box of business cards sits on the table in front of him. His leg shakes from all the caffeine. He looks around for* **EILEEN LEE**. *From behind him,* **EILEEN LEE** *walks in, dressed in a well-fitting suit. She is not Asian. She looks around and sees the box on Al's table. She approaches him tentatively.)*

EILEEN. Al Gurvis?

AL. *(turns to look at her)* Yeah.

EILEEN. *(extending a hand)* Hi. Eileen Lee.

AL. Really?

EILEEN. Really. *(smiling)* Let me guess – you thought I'd be Asian.

AL. Who me? No, no. *(beat)* Why – you get that a lot?

EILEEN. Um, from time to time. It's the name I guess. Although I don't really get the connection. I mean the general of the confederate army was named Robert E. *Lee,* so. Who knows?

(She shrugs and smiles politely. **AL** *nods, staring at her. He's very attracted to her.)*

Sorry to sneak up on you like that by the way.

AL. Yeah, I was gonna say, I was looking for you over by, uh…by here. So were you in the bathroom this whole time?

EILEEN. Uh, no, I just came in. There's another door, right there.

AL. *(seeing it)* Oh, no kidding. Hey, to think, I could've come in that way.

*(***AL** *smiles like he's just made a joke.)*

EILEEN. Yup. That's another way to come in.

AL. Yeah. So you want a coffee or something?

EILEEN. Oh. I, uh, I would, but I was just sort of on my way home. Well, I was heading to a meeting first, and *then* I was going home, but anyway. Y'know it's funny actually – I expected you to look a little different too.

AL. *(sensing disaster)* What, you mean like cause of my voice on the phone, you thought I'd be younger or something.

EILEEN. No, actually I expected you be, uh, well…white.

*(***EILEEN** *shrugs and chuckles.* **AL** *nods, upset that he's lost the bet.)*

Sorry – was that inappropriate to say?

AL. Nah, nah. *(disappointed)* Y'know, it's just the world we live in, right?

EILEEN. No, but I was going to say, if anything, I'm glad I was wrong. I mean if anything, it's a…a pleasant surprise, y'know?

AL. *(excited)* It *is*, right! I mean you don't want to see another boring white guy walking around Jersey, right?

EILEEN. *(agreeing)* Oh no – definitely not! I mean you're, what – Indian? Half-Indian?

AL. Half-Indian, that's right!

EILEEN. Yeah, that's much more interesting. And what's the other half?

AL. Oh, uh, some kind of Irish, I don't know. I didn't really know my dad that well.

EILEEN. Oh. Well, who cares, right?

AL. Yes, exactly – who cares! The important thing is that it was a *pleasant surprise*, am I right? *(to himself)* No, I think I won this bet.

EILEEN. Hmm? What bet?

AL. Oh no – it was just this little thing. Me and my buddy, y'know.

EILEEN. You and your buddy?

AL. Yeah, he's a *(makes a jerking-off motion)*. He thought when you saw me you'd be like horrified or something.

EILEEN. That I'd be horrified?

AL. Or y'know – 'freaked out' or whatever. That my name and face don't match.

EILEEN. Well, your friend obviously doesn't have a very positive or mature outlook on life.

*(***AL** *is so excited, he tries to say three things at once.)*

AL. Ye – Exa – Okay, now I *have* to buy you a cup of coffee.

EILEEN. Oh no, really that's okay.

AL. Listen, take it to go if you want. Take it to your meeting or what have you. But I am buying you this cup of coffee. How do you like it?

EILEEN. Um, well, with half-and-half and sugar, but –

AL. Okay – small, medium, or large?

EILEEN. Um, I usually get a grande, but –

AL. One grande coffee coming right up.

*(***AL** *exits towards the side where* **EILEEN** *came in.* **EILEEN** *stands there. She sees the box on the table. She goes to open it.)*

(re-entering) They ran out of grande cups. You want a small or a large?

EILEEN. Oh, uh, I'll just take a tall then.

AL. *(beat)* That's a small, right?

EILEEN. Yes, right.

*(***AL** *nods and exits.* **EILEEN** *watches him go. She opens the box and checks the cards inside, making sure they look right. She closes it up again.* **AL** *re-enters with a cup.)*

AL. And here is one tall coffee on me.

EILEEN. Well, thank you very much, Al.

AL. Listen, it's the least I could do considering you just won me a box of my favorite chocolates – Ghirardelli Chocolates. You ever have those? They sell 'em at that place 'Vintage Chocolates' on Atalanta Plaza. You ever been there?

EILEEN. No, I don't think so.

AL. Oh, it's great, you gotta check it out – just past the Turnpike. It's like two minutes from my place on Livingston and New Point. But y'know, I don't go that often cause of, y'know –

*(***AL** *pats his stomach, signaling that he doesn't want to get too fat.* **EILEEN** *smiles and nods. She points to the box.)*

EILEEN. So are those the, uh…?

AL. Huh? Oh yeah, I got your cards right here. *(chuckling)* We got so carried away, I almost forgot. Here.

(He hands the box to her. She takes them.)

EILEEN. Great. Thanks.

(She opens them up and looks at them.)

Oh, they look great. Y'know, they really *do* do a good job over there.

AL. Oh at ABC? Yeah, best print shop in Jersey, you ask me.

EILEEN. Definitely. Well anyway, thanks so much, Al. It was great meeting you.

AL. Yeah, you too.

EILEEN. *(getting up)* And, uh, good luck with everything.

AL. Yeah, same. *(making a joke)* Hey, good luck with the name!

*(***EILEEN** *starts to leave.)*

EILEEN. *(smiling)* Thanks.

AL. Yeah. *(suddenly realizing)* Hey hold up – Eileen.

EILEEN. Hmmm?

AL. You got mine too, right?

EILEEN. Your…?

AL. Y'know, my business cards.

EILEEN. Oh. Uh, no, I dropped them off at the printers.

AL. What, at ABC?

EILEEN. Yeah. Oh my God, I thought – I thought I told you on the phone. I dropped them off right after you called last Monday, so you could pick them up if you needed them.

AL. Oh. Well, so you couldn't've told me on the phone. Y'know, if you did it *after* we spoke.

EILEEN. *(embarrassed)* Right. God, I'm such an idiot. I'm so sorry.

AL. *(trying not to be mad)* Nah, nah. That's, uh, that's okay. Uh. Let me just call 'em up, I'm sure they have 'em.

*(***AL** *takes out his cell phone.)*

EILEEN. Okay. God, I'm so sorry. In hindsight, it seems really dumb.

AL. *(dialing)* Yup.

*(***AL** *listens to the phone ring. And ring.)*

Aw great, they're fucking closed!

EILEEN. *(a little shocked from his obscenity)* Oh. Uh, gee.

AL. Y'know, it's just that they're closed for the whole fucking weekend now.

EILEEN. Oh my God, really?

AL. Yeah, they close for the weekends there – bunch of fucking amateurs!

*(***AL** *notices his language has upset* **EILEEN**.*)*

Oh. Uh, sorry, I don't mean to curse so much.

EILEEN. No, I understand. I mean who closes their business on the weekends, right?

AL. A bunch of fucking amateurs, that's who! Aw, crap, there I go again. Sorry.

EILEEN. No, that's fine.

AL. Hey you don't know offhand if they looked okay? My business cards, I mean.

EILEEN. Oh. Uh, I think they were fine. I mean I took one out when you called, just to check the name on it. I don't think I noticed anything wrong.

AL. So it said "Al Gurvis" and it spelled it G-U-R-V-I-S.

EILEEN. Yup, I think so. It said, "Al Gurvis – Professional Gassing Assistant."

AL. Wait a minute – it said *what*?

EILEEN. Uh, it said "Al Gurvis – Professional Gassing Assistant."

AL. Aw, f – *(He stops himself from cursing. He composes himself.)* It's 'Professional *Gaffing* Assistant. Not, uh, not 'Gassing.' '*Gassing*?!'

EILEEN. *(chuckling)* Oh my God, you're kidding. They didn't send you a proof?

AL. Nope. Nope!

EILEEN. And they're usually so good there. I guess the 'F's must've looked like 'S's?

AL. Yeah well. *(beat)* Anyway, it's not your problem, right?

*(***AL** *sighs and sits down.* **EILEEN** *watches him, guiltily, not knowing what to do. She goes back to the table.)*

EILEEN. Tell you what, let me – let me buy *you* a cup of coffee.

AL. Huh? Oh no – that's all right. I got one already. Besides, it's not your fault.

EILEEN. Well, one – it sort of is. And two – I should at least repay the favor. Tell you what – I'll get you a pastry instead, how's that?

AL. A pastry? What, like one of those Banana ones there?

EILEEN. Yeah, I'll get you a Banana one. It's the least I can do for screwing this up.

*(***AL** *shrugs, clearly wanting one.* **EILEEN** *puts her box down and goes to get a pastry.* **AL** *waits until she's out of sight, then opens the box of cards and pockets one. He smells himself and fixes his hair.* **EILEEN** *comes back with a pastry.)*

So just out of curiosity, what *is* a Professional Gaffing Assistant anyway?

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