

PRICELESS

by

John R. Woodruff

WGAw1098993

24272 S.4090 Road
Claremore,OK 74017
918-342-1524
jrwood97@aol.com

FADE IN:

INT. T.J.'S APT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small figurine table lamp throws a weak orange circle on the bedside table. In the circle, a well-worn paperback copy of "Antique Value Guide" lays open, face down.

Across from the table, a period dresser with a large mirror showcases cut-glass perfume bottles, vintage boudoir toiletry items and tiny porcelain animals.

Reflected in the mirror: an attractive woman in her mid-twenties with a generous mouth and too-straight hair (T.J. MARTIN). She sits cross-legged in bed totally absorbed in the screen of her laptop. Periodically she mutters under her breath and types on the keyboard.

Across the foot of her bed lays a homemade quilt containing one sleeping cat.

T.J.
She's doing it AGAIN. Arrrgh!

Fists POUND the mattress.

The cat, stretches, yawns and crawls up under the laptop.

T.J.
(catches her breath)
Oh! Ali, you scared me...silly girl.

T.J. reaches down, extracts the cat, eyes still riveted to the screen.

CLOSE ON COMPUTER SCREEN

The mouse cursor depresses the gray "CONFIRM BID" button. Immediately, a "DO YOU WISH TO RE-BID" message pops up.

T.J.(O.S.)
Yes, YES.

Frantic fingers punch in "\$81.26" in the bid field, press "ENTER." An error message informs T.J. the "AUCTION HAS ENDED".

T.J.(O.S.)
Arrrgh.

Fingers refresh the screen. The auction just ending was for a Harker Apple and Pear bowl. The high bidder in the amount of \$79.56 is 'PRICELESS415'.

BACK TO SCENE

T.J. looks at the laptop screen.

T.J.
Who IS this person?

She strokes Ali as she contemplates her loss.

T.J.
Damn and I wanted that bowl
too. Gotta be some rich bitch with
money to burn.
(looking into cat's face)
Well, at least we made her pay for
it! Hmm, you think?

T.J. logs out, SNAPS the laptop shut.

She puts Ali on the floor, scoots the laptop under the bed and crawls under the covers. With a sigh, she switches off the table lamp.

For a moment there is not a sound in the room. Then:

T.J.
PRICELESS!

Sound of pillow being POUNDED.

INT. SAME LOCATION - MORNING

The bedside phone is RINGING and RINGING. A hand reaches out from under the covers...hovers above the receiver. The answering machine picks up.

As a MOTHER'S VOICE begins recording, the hand disappears back under the covers.

MOTHER'S VOICE (ON MACHINE)
(sing song)
Teresa Jane, it's Mom! HELLO...You
there? HELLO.
(cheerily)
We've been waiting all week to hear
from you, dear.
(aside)
She's not there... I guess. I don't
have her cell phone number.
(back to machine)
OK. Call me. Oh...oh, Paula's
getting married...no date yet.
(beat)
Call me! Dad says "hello". Bye.

The phone goes dead. A faint GRUNT emanates from under the covers as the body turns over.

INT. T.J.'S APT/KITCHEN-DINING - SHORT TIME LATER

The decor is one part efficiency kitchen/dining and one part collector's cove with Fire King dishes, antique toaster, 50's cafe curtains and lots of Apple and Pear plates, bowls, pitchers and other pottery.

T.J., face hidden behind a cereal box, CRUNCHES her cornflakes. She turns the box around revealing the trace of a milk mustache and continues CRUNCHING energetically.

Ali jumps up on the table. T.J. grabs her.

T.J.
Ali, you know you're not allowed up here. Where's your bowl?

Cat under her arm, T.J. searches through the bottom cabinets until she locates the small bag of cat food. She pours a dabble into a cereal dish on the floor. Puts Ali on the floor.

T.J.
OK, there you go. Now, stay OFF the table.

T.J. returns to her cereal and coffee. Half way into the first bite, the phone RINGS. She partially rises, pads the table with both hands, finally locating her cell phone under the newspaper. She glances at the number.

T.J.
Hi, Jacki. You still on?
(listens)
Good. Pick you up in 30. OK?
(listens some more)
Right. Bye.

INT/EXT. T.J.'S CAR - DAY

JACKI opens the car door and slides in. She's dark-eyed, athletic-looking twenty-something in a well-worn baseball cap, T-shirt and faded jeans.

Her entire body says "energy."

JACKI
Hi!

T.J.
Ready for action?

JACKI
You betcha. Get my e-mail?

T.J. checks her mirror, pulls out into traffic.

T.J.
Nope....I mean I haven't checked my e-mail this morning. Why? What's up?

JACKI
Scored big time. You know that Red Poppy rolling pin I've been wanting?

T.J.
You found it!

JACKI
YES.

T.J.
eBay?

Jacki nods "yes."

The car accelerates onto the freeway passing early morning construction pickups and soccer moms with bouncing kids in the back.

JACKI
I was so scared someone would jump in at the last minute and outbid me.

T.J.
Tell me about it. I got shot out last night on a Apple and Pear bowl.

JACKI
Priceless AGAIN?

T.J.
She's got my number Jacki. I swear, I'll never sneak anything past that woman. She must haunt the Internet looking for MY Apple and Pear.

The car exits toward an older part of the downtown fringe.

JACKI
Know whatcha mean. I finally gave up on wall pockets...they're just outta reach.

T.J. whips into the parking lot of a large exposition building surrounded by cars.

T.J.
Big crowd today.

They search for a parking spot, winding past shoppers of every description, all converging on the entrance sign proclaiming "FLEA MARKET TODAY."

JACKI
No kidding. Hey, there's one!

T.J. carefully wedges her vehicle into the open space beside an SUV being loaded with a small, oak table.

T.J.
Nice.

JACKI
You see the carving?

T.J. turns off the ignition, glances toward the building.

T.J.
Ready?

Car doors SLAM as the two women make a beeline for the covered entrance bordered on both sides by fresh fruit and vegetable vendors.

INT. FLEA MARKET - DAY

Doors fly open to reveal...chaos: A cavernous room filled with wall-to-wall HUMANITY crawling over and around one another examining, testing and HAGGLING over civilization's detritus.

Excited CHATTER arises from the endless array of small booths, card tables, display cases and clothing racks filled to overflowing with pottery, paintings, vintage dresses, cowboy memorabilia, tramp art, woven rugs, bird cages, old records and furniture.

Behind every table is a sharp-eyed, gray-haired proprietor or pony-tailed, tattooed trader eager to swap stories, make deals or hawk their wares.

The girls hang momentarily in the doorway inhaling the ambiance.

T.J.
What a rush!

JACKI
So many goodies...so little time.

They are blown into the fray by the on-rush of yet another batch of collectors BURSTING through the door behind them.

T.J.
Remember, Apple and Pear...Apple
and Pear.

Immediately, the women are swept along by the clamoring tide.

IN THE VINTAGE CLOTHES BOOTH

Jacki ducks into a small nook to scope out a black velvet cocktail dress. She places the dress up against her body for a fit check.

JACKI
Whatta you think?

But T.J.'s long gone.

Jacki scrutinizes the hanging white tag. The vintage-attired PROPRIETOR confines in a stage WHISPER:

PROPRIETOR
I may be able to do a little better
than that, say...\$73?

JACKI
It's beautiful...let me think about it.

She returns the dress to the rack then stands on her tiptoes trying to spot T.J. in the moving sea of faces.

IN THE KITCHEN COLLECTIBLE'S BOOTH

A kitchen china display hooks T.J. like a fish. She fights her way upstream to the bait...a Fire King pitcher. Reaching between two TALKING women, she snags her prize, receiving wilting looks in the process.

T.J.
Excuse me.

It looks perfect. T.J. carefully runs her finger around the rim. Stops. A little flake is missing. She examines the imperfection.

The SHOPKEEP looks over her shoulder.

SHOPKEEP
You don't see many that nice. Perfect.

T.J.
No. It's not perfect there's a
flake missing... here.

SHOPKEEP
Lemme see.

T.J. awaits the verdict.

SHOPKEEP
Not noticeable...but I'll knock
off...five dollars.

T.J.
Make it ten and I'll take it.

The shopkeep pulls out a little spiral pad. She flips through
the pages, squints at some cryptic notes.

SHOPKEEP
Ummm, got too much in it. Make it
eight.

T.J.
(smiling)
Done!

While the shopkeep wraps her pitcher in newspaper, T.J.
fumbles for her purse.

JACKI(O.S.)
What'd ya get?

T.J. turns around, looks up.

T.J.
Fire King pitcher. What about you?

JACKI
Nothing so far. Wait a minute...wait
a minute. Is that a wall pocket?

T.J. scans the shelves.

T.J.
Where?

Jacki stoops down and comes back up with her prize. She
opens her hands.

JACKI
Nippon.

She checks the price tag...shows it to T.J..

T.J.
 Good price. Hope it's not a knockoff.

The shopkeep returns with the pitcher in a brown grocery sack which she trades for T.J.'s dollars.

JACKI
 I'm gonna get it.

T.J.
 Ok. Meet you in the next booth.

Jacki, makes a final inspection, hands the wall pocket to the shopkeep as T.J. dives back into the crowd.

MONTAGE OF FLEA MARKET SCENES

-- Jacki and T.J. examine a hand-woven rug struggling to check it for damage in the narrow confines of a small booth.

-- Jacki tries on more vintage clothing--modeling hats for T.J.'s approval.

-- T.J. discovers a "real find"... a set of Fire King cups and saucers which she proceeds to purchase.

-- A chance meeting of friends and the introduction of a young, tag-along daughter and soon-to-be collector.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - PARKING LOT - LATER

Double doors swing open to expel Jacki and T.J., arms laden with grocery sacks, recycled shopping bags and one funky old floor lamp with a beaded fringe shade.

JACKI
 Maurie looked good...huh?

T.J.
 Great. And that Sophie...just like her.

JACKI
 I guess.
 (looking over T.J. packages)
 Good hunting.

T.J.
 Oh yeah, but not one piece of Harker. I'm getting paranoid. You know, I haven't found any decent Apple and Pear in over a month... not ONE piece.

JACKI
Probably Priceless.

T.J.
NOT funny.

JACKI
Could be. I mean she lives in the
Bay area. Right?

T.J. stops walking...scrutinizes Jacki.

T.J.
What makes you say that?

JACKI
Well, like her name's Priceless415.
And, isn't this area code 415...I
mean Duh.

T.J.
Oh God, you're right. You're RIGHT.
I feel so stupid. I never made the
connect...
(striking her head)
Right in MY own backyard. My life's
over...I'll NEVER find another good
piece. NEVER.

JACKI
Sorry.

T.J., eyes closed, runs her fingers through her hair. A
passing couple glances her direction questioningly.

T.J. opens her eyes, EXHALES, begins walking again. Jacki
puts her arm around T.J.'s shoulder, gives her an encouraging
hug.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

The two women consume garden salads and sip coffee. Guy
watching through the window is an acknowledged plus.

JACKI
I have a little secret I've been
saving.

T.J.
OK, who is he?

Jacki smiles, pops a salad tomato into her mouth.

JACKI
 Actually he works in my
 building...third floor.

T.J.
 Yeah? And...

JACKI
 Name's David, likes to bike. Great
 sense of humor.

T.J.
 So, what's he look like?

JACKI
 Hmm, sandy hair...thin...maybe 6
 foot. Nice eyes.

T.J.
 Where'd you meet Mr. Nice Eyes? I
 want details, details.

JACKI
 Elevator. Building snack
 bar...around. I mean, we've locked
 eyes several times in the past
 couple of months.

T.J. pauses to scope out a couple of guys who just came in.

T.J.
 How's the sex?

JACKI
 We've only had one date.

Jacki picks the onions out of her salad.

T.J.
 What's taking so long, girl?

JACKI
 I'm almost afraid to say it
 T.J....but I have a good feeling
 about this one.
 (muses)
 Everything seems ...oh I don't
 know...RIGHT maybe.

T.J.'s gaze follows another male passerby. As he disappears
 from view her attention snaps back to Jacki.

T.J.
 I hate you, you know.