

Transcription:

TC	Speaker	Dialogue
00:00:00	GF	I notice very often people specifically sit at bars because when you're married for so many years, sometimes there's not much conversation left, and you need the kind of a sounding board to keep conversation going instead of just being stuck in the head of the person you've been hopefully lovingly married with.
00:00:17	HO	Do I pretend this is your first in here? Okay. Or do I pretend that you're a regular? I don't really know. Am I the wingman or am I just a bartender in the background? What do you want me to do?
00:00:28	RN	There's an old pub saying that parsons may moralize and fools decide, but a good publican takes neither side.
00:00:48	AH	My name is Andy Horning and this is Elephant Talk. It's a show about all things relationship, the soulful, the silly, the stormy, and the sexy. Welcome to Episode 35. Our show today comes from the archives and it's a bit of a different format. We bring you some observations from bartenders. Bartenders have this unique perspective on relationships. What do relationships look like from behind the bar? Bartenders are these, in a way, these silent observers of relationships in action.
00:01:38	GF	My name is Griffin Farro. I work at the Bramble and Hare, a farm-to-table bistro with craft cocktails located on Pearl Street. Relationships affect my business in a positive and negative way. I've seen marriages start, I've helped marriages start. I've introduced people, watch relationships blossom, watch amends, and help to console either way.
00:01:59	AH	What happened the other day?
00:02:00	GF	Really interesting. I had two different regular customers who operated in different social circles. They had been bumping into each other but have never really made a point to actually introduce each other and that was a busy, busy Saturday night and not a single space was open except for a non-community table. And this gentleman walks in and I offer him to just sit with a total stranger and I was able and this perfect almost haiku-like of a moment. Just sit him down and have them just totally dial in. You could just see in their eyes that they were happy, that this perfect happenstance was kind of happening and then they were engaged and they were talking and they left together, which is always really fun to see.
00:02:43	AH	You played a little matchmaker there?
00:02:45	GF	Oh, absolutely.
00:02:47	AH	And from your perch, we imagine that you've taken in the beginnings, the middles, and the ends of relationship. What's your perspective on this thing called relationship?

00:02:59	GF	I've noticed very often people specifically sit at bars because when you're married for so many years, sometimes there's not much conversation left and you need the kind of a sounding board to keep conversation going instead of just being stuck in the head of the person you've been hopefully lovingly married with and it's really nice to be able to provide that, just help them transition into different conversations, notice when somebody is agitated, see if you can shift the conversation in a different direction, notice when somebody is just done.
00:03:29	AH	So greasing of the wheel so to speak as a bartender being kind of a third person to assist.
00:03:37	GF	[INAUDIBLE 00:03:37] liaison. And it's also great playing matchmaker at the bar introducing people, you know, if it's just a social friendship scale. There's nothing more satisfying than bunch of strangers sitting down and leaving, shaking hands and saying, "I can't wait to see you again," hopefully here. And those are the kind of memories that you associate with a bar, the fact that we can associate a smell and a flavor with that, I think there's something absolutely romantic about that.
00:04:04	AH	What's the role alcohol plays in all that? I imagine good and bad. What do you notice?
00:04:10	GF	I think alcohol is a medicine on one side of the coin and it quickly turns into a poison on the other side of the coin. I've seen alcohol ruined relationships. But at the same time, I list dozen of spirits, cocktails, and wines that I know that are associated with a time, in a place, and a moment with certain people and that's again really romantic. Chateau Musar from my friend's wedding. A glass of pretty mediocre port for when my friend's grandmother comes sit down or one regular who walks in the door and I don't even need to ask him what he's having. It's already being made.
00:04:44	AH	Have you witnessed any bad things happening in terms of partnerships?
00:04:49	GF	Yes, in many different ways. I think my least favorite is when people play the dating game and then it's unrequited love because unrequited love is, you know, you give it your best and it's still not good enough and that's when they end up losing two customers because that can turn into almost say a toxic situation. It's hard to be persistent without being creepy. And very often, some person might be just coming in to have a drink and that other person is looking for a dating scenario. One person is not getting what they want and another person is being pestered. You end up losing two people at the same time because of that.
00:05:25	AH	What have you learned about how to be in partnership?
00:05:28	GF	Being emotionally open is very difficult, being direct about how you feel and not bottling things up is also difficult.
00:05:36	AH	You're talking about being vulnerable with your feelings.

00:05:39	GF	We don't have the luxury of showing emotions while we're working. So very often, that spills over into our personal time, especially considering we have a very small amount of personal time and we just want to lock up and not be a social person, not have to open up, not have to ask, "How are you today? Are you actually okay?" Because you're just tired. You need that personal time.
00:05:58	AH	So you've had weddings here, you've had engagements here. Talk a little bit about what you've witnessed.
00:06:05	GF	Knowing that a man is coming in to get one knee and propose to his wife is one of the most giddy I have ever been. It was absolutely adorable, everyone knowing what's going on and waiting to see if it was going to work out properly, having after parties of people dancing, families yelling, screaming, kids running everywhere, the liquors flowing like wine and the wine is falling like beer. It does make me want to be in a relationship because seeing that in other people is really something else. It kind of takes away that bitter, beaten-up bartender feeling out of you.
00:06:41	AH	Do you ever have couples bring you in consciously to ask for advice or inner fear on some level in their relationship?
00:06:50	GF	Putting out fires is a big part of being a bartender. They definitely come and seek out help. "I don't know how to deal with him today. He's just been absolutely insane." Or, "How often has she been coming in? I'm a little bit worried about her." It's the give and take of being a bartender is knowing all and seeing all but deciding whether or not you're going to divulge everything you know because sometimes you just don't want to hurt anyone.
00:07:13	AH	And so what are the kinds of things that you say to individuals when they're frustrated in their relationships?
00:07:21	GF	Most of the time it's just about deflecting. They just need to hear themselves talk, much like a priest, people are willing just to word vomit all over you to a total stranger at times or there's person you go to when times are tough. They just want to sit down and drink that other side of the coin or the medicine of alcohol and hopefully just listen to themselves, talk to the bartender and we love to provide that.
00:07:54	HO	So I'm Haylee Ortiz. I work at Mister Tuna in Denver. I'm in bartending on and off for about 10 years, just even in the past couple of years has been crazy like with Tinder. So I have like, you know, regulars that will come in and we know them as like the Tinder Date Guy or Girl or whatever and it's sort of like, "Okay, do I pretend this is your first time in here? Okay. Or do I pretend that you're a regular? I don't really know. Am I wingman or am I just a bartender in the background? What do you want me to do?" Just if she says this then just get help and get me out of here.
00:08:25	AH	Well, have you noticed couples come in and they only talk to you because they don't want to talk each other?
00:08:29	HO	I've had that happened, but as far as like the middle of relationship, I have quite a few guests that I've had come in that are married and they come and

		see me together, like their date night is to come and find Haylee which is great. I had this lady come in and her husband was a friend of mine, but she's like sitting down with her brother and she's just crying at the bar and I'm just like, "No, no, no. What's wrong? What's wrong? What can I do for you?" And she's like, "No, we're going to get a divorce." And I was like... she didn't even tell her brother that, but she was sitting there and it's just like bartender sometimes we just have to kind of be that emotional sort of bucket. They just want to put things into. It was kind of shocking to like have that upward of emotions. So I've seen that as well.
00:09:09	AH	Do you ever had to play referee or therapist?
00:09:11	HO	Oh, yeah. Yeah. I mean we're chemist, we're therapist, we're psychologist, we're everything else, you know, we have to play all of those rules and I like it. I like that challenge. I like seeing relationships come together from that side of the bar, but I also see them fall apart which is heartbreaking but it's definitely a dose of reality. You can't totally hate it, right? So it's just that's something that happens.
00:09:34	AH	It's real, right?
00:09:35	HO	Yeah, it's a bar, there's booze. You can get mad. Something I think that I've learned and this more goes for like the dating part of a relationship, whether it's the first date, second date, third date, you've been together for a year that type of thing is that if you're feeling awkward after one or two drinks and you try and have another one to get rid of that awkward feeling after one or two drinks, if it's awkward after or two, like it's going to get worse later on, like just stop. Maybe just go home. I mean you don't have to stay out all night and a date doesn't have to last the entire night. Sit down, have a conversation, great, and move on. Another big thing that I think that I notice as a bartender is the amount of times that you see a phone out, the more that I see phones come out, the worse I see the outcome of a date. You know, I kind of have this rule with my significant other that we don't bring out phones at the table, we don't bring out phones at the bar, we don't bring out phones whenever we are having us time, period, it doesn't happen.
00:10:33	AH	Wow! That's discipline. Does one of you ever bring out the phone and the other say, "Ah, put that back"?
00:10:39	HO	Yes. Yes. Yes. We both do it.
00:10:41	AH	So let me ask you a question. What's the craziest thing that's ever happen in terms of interacting with a couple?
00:10:47	HO	I had a situation. Okay, it was a couple, it was a Tinder date, you can tell. There's like interview questions that happen. The guy goes to the bathroom and the girl is like, "I need a shot. I need another shot. I need another shot." I'm like, "Okay. Girl, I got your tequila right here. Yeah, awesome!" Does her shot of tequila and then she's just so nervous and I see her like physically being nervous and shaking and so she does this shot and it's still doesn't calm her down and so she starts grabbing fruit out of my like big garnish bowl and I had things like cucumbers, oranges, you know, the regular bartendery things. She

		just grabs and starts peeling all of my fruits and vegetables. She was so nervous. She needs something to do with her hands. She's just like peeling it and for some reason, I just let her do it.
00:11:30	AH	Did it help her calm down?
00:11:31	HO	Because I was like I don't want to give her more alcohol, but I do want her to kind of chill out. I understand this like weird nervous feeling that you have right now.
00:11:37	AH	I imagining you would see a fair amount of exploitation of women.
00:11:43	HO	Absolutely.
00:11:44	AH	And so as a female bartender, what is it like on a serious note to see this area where alcohol can make women susceptible to, you know, men who desire to take advantage of them?
00:12:03	HO	So generally, whenever I see this happen, because it does happen and it's terrible, a big thing, a trigger point for me and not always because it doesn't always play out this way, but this will be the first thing that makes me sort of keep an eye out and try to like look out for my girls type of thing is when the lady is not allowed to order anything or ask any questions. That's usually the first thing.
00:12:23	AH	That's a red flag for you.
00:12:24	HO	That's a red flag for me, but you know it can be any sort of relationship and one person speaks and orders everything but in the way that the other person in this relationship is like trying to and they kind of get shut out. So there's that type of situation. I also see certain situations where... yeah, maybe a bartender or some hospitality professional should sort of step in where it gets a little bit uncomfortable and you can tell. There are certain ways to kind of let the bartender know that you're uncomfortable and we can help out. We're not trying to get in your business, but I mean we're there. We can feel out what's going on. Great bartenders are the most like empathic people.
00:13:05	AH	Congratulations on your award.
00:13:07	HO	Thank you. Thank you so much.
00:13:08	AH	Being named the Top 5 Bartenders in Denver.
00:13:11	HO	Yeah. Yeah, it's huge. It was a big deal and I'm so glad to be here and I'm so glad you guys asked me.
00:13:25	RN	My name is Ron Nadel and currently I am a bartender at The Burns Pub in Broomfield. The bartender is a close listener, a keen observer, and is uniquely placed to be able to give silent advice, maybe with a support of nod of the head or a rueful shake of the head. There are patterns that we recognize. For example when a couple is in the exploratory stage what the layman refers to as the first date, people pay attention to what you order, how you select your

		whisky, that tells a lot about how you're going to be as a kitchen partner, what kind of foods you like or you just eat out all the time. The body language is also very interesting. If the couple has to sit at a table, they'll sit opposite of each other, this gives them a chance to safely observe each other and no risk of touching. But if the couple already feels like maybe they like each other then they're going to want to sit at the bar because then they're sitting actually side by side. It gives them a closeness that you don't get when you're sitting opposite each other. That tells you a lot about what's going on unconsciously in the minds of the young couple, the early couple. I have seen couples who are mad at each other. They take advantage of the screen of eating. You get to hide your face behind a menu and then when you select your food or your craft cocktail, you can concentrate on the plate in front of you and you can focus on holding the glass and sipping the wine as if you're contemplating it while really all the while in the back of your mind, you're thinking about how mad you are at the other person, but you don't have to look each other in the eye.
00:15:12	AH	Are they talking to each other in that?
00:15:14	RN	Perfunctorily, you know, just minor chitchat and then silence.
00:15:20	AH	Have you ever been brought in to mediate or referee a disagreement?
00:15:24	RN	Well, you know, there's an old pub saying that parsons may moralize and fools decide, but a good publican takes neither side. You have to approach the couple and you have to have a certain aloofness as if you don't notice that they're upset. Rarely will a couple draw you in for an opinion. When a person's on their own and unhappy, they often draw you in for an opinion and you become the master of the non-statement, right? You come up with maybe a platitude or an aphorism or something that keeps the person going but you're not necessarily taking sides. In the bartender trade, we do have some empirical measure of how well a date is going and that is the size of the tip compared to the actual tab. You expect if you do well you're going to get 15%, 20%, but when you get more, you know that they were enjoying each other and you're reaping the benefits of that.
00:16:36	AH	So great tip equals great date hence.
00:16:38	RN	Great date. Everybody is doing well.
00:16:40	AH	Bad date equals not such a great date.
00:16:42	RN	Have you ever seen people at a craft table who are doing really well? They tip the croupier? He had nothing to do with their luck. Well, that's what it's like. You know bartenders see a lot of things, kind of like doctors. And we become part of the furniture. People feel safe to be able to do or say anything as if nobody is there. They know about that bartender patron privilege. They feel safe and they open up and you begin to build relationships with the regulars, dispensing silent therapy as I call it and giving them a support of ear.
00:17:17	AH	You ever rescued a relationship?
00:17:20	RN	Yeah, that's a good question. When somebody is drowning at the table...

00:17:24	AH	So to speak.
00:17:25	RN	Yeah. And I think a good bartender will come to the rescue just by interrupting the flow first of all but complementing them on their selection of food or drink and you look closely into the eyes of the couple looking for signs that you found something in common for them and then you can walk away and just let things take their course. You have to know when to back off and when to intercede. There's no training for that. That's just experience.
00:17:56	AH	Yeah, lots of intuition I imagine.
00:17:59	RN	That's it.
00:18:00	AH	You know when my wife and I were struggling before we had kids, we would go to a restaurant or a bar and invariably with a little bit of alcohol, more feelings came out. We would get into sticky situations and it's embarrassing, it's humbling, and it was always nice when service providers massage the dynamic to make it a little easier and some of that was either not paying attention or paying attention and soothing.
00:18:32	RN	It eases the way, it smooths over any difficulties that might be going on.
00:18:46	AH	It's not often we get to hear what bartenders are really thinking about what goes on in front of them. So thanks to the bartenders today. I loved listening to what they had to say. In a way, it's a voyeuristic view of what's happening out there, a snapshot of how couples are relating. Thanks to Griffin Farro, Haylee Ortiz, and Ron Nadel for their observations. For additional for information, for resources on this episode, find our show notes at ElephantTalk.org . Elephant Talk is produced by Kim Poletti. Our theme music is by Rob Burger. Audio production assistance provided by Leslie Gaston-Bird and Josh Kern. Please review the show in iTunes. Your feedback is greatly appreciated. Thank you for listening to Elephant Talk. I'm your host Andy Horning. This is real love. This is Elephant Talk.
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