

THE COST OF WAR

Written by

Marnie Mitchell

A waitress fed up with the antiwar protests in 1962 New York City,  
changes her stance once the effects of war hit close to home.

Copyright 2020

Jrsygrl65@aol.com

FADE IN

SUPER: GREENWICH VILLAGE, NYC - SUMMER, 1962

City noise. Traffic. Kind of dirty. Rows of eclectic shops, cafes, theaters, all with apartments above. A Bohemian mecca.

EXT. W. 4TH STREET - DAY

On a sidewalk bustling with people, PAMELA (18), stands out. Tall, thin, beautiful and very stylish, she navigates through the crowd, beaming with confidence.

To her right is Washington Square Park. Beatniks gather on its green lawn. Musicians, artists, and...war protesters.

On the corner, PROTESTERS hand out pamphlets titled, "MAKE LOVE NOT WAR". One is shoved at Pamela, but she refuses it. She rolls her eyes in disgust then walks across the street.

EXT. MACDOUGAL STREET - DAY

Tucked in a row of street level shops, a narrow, cement stairway leads underground. Sign overhead, "THE GASLIGHT CAFE". Pamela heads down the steps.

INT. THE GASLIGHT CAFE - DAY

Stark contrast to the sunny outside. Fliers, posters, murals cover cement walls. No windows. It's always nighttime here.

On her way to the counter, Pamela walks by lamp-lit tables where people talk, laugh, smoke and drink coffee.

She waves to BOB (21), cherub faced guy with a scruffy beard who sits alone, writing furiously. He gives her only a nod.

Behind the counter, cute hippie BEVERLY (25), scoops coffee grounds from a sac and pours them into a filter. Pamela gives her a friendly squeeze then grabs an apron.

BEVERLY

You seem extra happy today.

PAMELA

I am! Got my first modeling job, Bev. Which means I'm closer to escaping this dungeon.

BEVERLY

Far out. Better work harder on getting him to ask you out then.

Beverly gestures toward Bob. Pam winks at Bev, grabs a coffee pot and heads to his table.

Beverly chuckles as Pamela approaches with a very sexy walk. But, Bob doesn't notice.

PAMELA

Top you off, Bobby?

He nods, doesn't put his pen down, doesn't even look up as she tops off his cup. She glances at his word filled page.

PAMELA

What you working on today?

BOB

Song. Ain't sure how I feel about it yet.

PAMELA

Wish I could write. I get ideas, but then can't ever seem to get them on paper the right way.

BOB

I dig that. It doesn't all come from your head. You gotta reach inside your heart too. Open it up. Let it bleed on paper. You need to have passion.

PAMELA

I'd like to hear your new song.

BOB

Was about to give it a go.

He gestures to the empty stage.

PAMELA

Groovy. Can't wait.

As Pamela checks on surrounding tables, Bob gets on stage.

Harmonica around his neck, guitar in hand, he places his open notebook on a stool. He immediately has everyone's attention.

BOB

This is a new song. It ain't no protest song. I don't know what it is yet. Here it goes.

At a table, Pamela tops off someone's cup as Bob begins to play guitar then sings.

BOB

How many roads must a man walk down  
before you call him a man? How many  
seas must a white dove sail before she  
sleeps in the sand? Yes, and how many  
times must the cannon balls fly before  
they're forever banned? The answer my  
friend, is blowin' in the wind. The  
answer is blowin' in the wind.

Bob continues to sing as Pamela heads back to the counter.  
She whispers to Beverly who quietly continues to work.

PAMELA

That's not a protest song?

They giggle. Pam watches Bob as Beverly keeps working.

PAMELA

I just don't understand. That's all  
anyone does anymore. Protest songs,  
protest poems. Everything is about  
protest. How about a love song?

BEVERLY

Well, we're passionate about ending  
the war, Pam. I mean, aren't you?

PAMELA

You know my dad is there, he's a  
Lieutenant. He writes us all the  
time and tells us it's no big deal.  
He says it's really important that  
we win. So why are people trying to  
end it? We can't stop until we win.

At a loss for words, Beverly watches Pamela scoop coffee  
grounds from the sac and start brewing a new pot.

INT. THE GASLIGHT CAFE - NIGHT

A bit more crowded, a lot more smoky. Bob sits alone at a  
table, writing as he listens to an ANGRY POET on stage.

Beverly wipes the table next to Bob's. He leans toward her.

BOB

Where's Pam been? Haven't seen her  
in a few days. She coming back?

BEVERLY

Yeah, she had a family issue. Don't  
you worry. She'll be back next week.

Beverly shoots Bob a knowing wink before she walks away.

ANGRY POET  
 Bombs bursting in air! Our very  
 own anthem glorifies despair!

As angry poet walks off stage, the crowd snaps their fingers.

EXT. W. 4TH STREET - DAY

Pamela heads down the sidewalk. She walks slow this time, taking interest in the activity in Washington Square Park.

Bongo drums keep the beat as people chant...

PROTESTERS  
 Make love, not war!

As she reaches the corner, a FEMALE PROTESTER (16), attaches a pin to Pamela's shirt. "FIGHT FOR PEACE".

Pamela looks at the pin, then flashes the peace sign at the female protester before heading across the street.

INT. THE GASLIGHT CAFE - DAY

Pamela enters and walks straight to the counter. Doesn't even notice Bob's face light up when he sees her. With concern, Beverly watches her approach.

BEVERLY  
 Hey, Pam. You doing okay?

They hug. Pamela takes a small notepad from her bag before she stashes it under the counter. She grabs an apron.

PAMELA  
 I'm okay. Thanks.

BEVERLY  
 He's been asking about you.

Beverly gestures to Bob, seated next to the stage. Pam forces a slight smile, puts the notepad in her apron pocket, grabs a full coffee pot and heads to Bob's table.

Happy to see her, Bob smiles as Pamela tops off his coffee. She doesn't notice. She places the pot on the table.

BOB  
 Hey. Glad to see you back. Ain't been the same without you. What you been up to?

PAMELA  
 Bleeding on paper.

Confused, Bob watches as Pam steps on stage. She pulls the notepad from her pocket. No one else pays attention.

PAMELA

War, nothing out of the ordinary. I never questioned it, just believed when I was told that it was necessary.  
-- We are AMERICA! We've never lost!  
We fight to win, we have to win at any cost!

Beverly watches intently. Chatter begins to quiet.

PAMELA

So why protest? Why complain? Why bother? --- Something I never understood until my own family paid with a son, a brother -- my father.

Now people are listening. Pamela's eyes are teary, her voice louder, her delivery is powerful. Passionate.

PAMELA

Well I have questions now! Like -- why are we there? What is it for? How many deaths will they ignore? -- So many questions, my head is spinning! Is it possible that it's just about winning?

Everyone's attention is on Pamela. Her voice softens.

PAMELA

Then I found my answers -- at a cemetery. One full of our nation's military. -- Staring at my father's name, I realized -- to them -- it's just a game.

Pamela closes her notebook, pulls it to her chest.

PAMELA

But when you're willing to win, at any cost -- it's obvious to many, that -- you've already lost.

Several seconds of silence. Then, snapping.

Pamela looks over at Bob, who stares at her in awe. He clenches his fist over his heart.

Notebook in hand, Pamela walks offstage. She passes tables of people still snapping, and heads out the door. Bob grabs his things and runs after her.

FADE OUT