

# The Blind Pig

A short story by [Katherine Wikoff](#), with ChatGPT assists

Jules and Marc sat along the back wall, at the same table from two years earlier. Mounted above them was the head of a wild boar, its glass eyes glinting in the sconce-light, tusks yellowed and chipped. The fur along its jaw had begun to peel back from the taxidermy seams, giving it a faintly snarling expression.

In the dim light, the animal looked startlingly alive.

The restaurant leaned hard into its cave aesthetic, despite a storefront location on the ground floor of a luxury high-rise apartment building. The walls were fashioned of rough stone, mottled with old moisture stains and lit by low sconces shaped like torch brackets. Shelves of dusty wine bottles and netted wheels of cheese lined alcoves like offerings in a crypt. Even the stained concrete floor felt uneven, as though worn by centuries of foot traffic that never quite existed. Overhead, thick wooden beams crossed the ceiling like the ribs of something long dead, and the air smelled faintly of truffle oil, garlic, and the salty, earthy tang of mineral damp. The place felt like a grotto designed for aging delicacies and quietly rotting memories.

Two years ago, they'd come straight here, still tasting dirt and panic, laughing too loudly at nothing—dazed by the sheer fact of not being caught, jittery with the knowledge that something unspeakable had just happened and no one knew but them. Twigs clung to their jackets. Their shoes tracked in the story they weren't going to tell, of bad decisions and dumb luck. The fall hadn't been their fault. But they hadn't tried to stop it either, and afterward, they'd done even less.

Tonight, they were smooth and polished, draped across their chairs as if nothing had ever happened. But the room felt charged, like a circuit warming, and beneath the practiced ease and fine tailoring, their nerves were strung like wire. Marc's gaze drifted casually across the room's undercurrents—deliberately cataloguing any uneven silences, unexpected eye contact, or too-abrupt laughter. Jules scanned the room aggressively, as if daring someone to ask the wrong question. Both men looked relaxed. Neither was.

"I think I got the patatas bravas last time," said Marc, squinting at the menu in the dim light. "But they weren't crispy enough. You remember?"

Jules sipped his Negroni, nodding slowly. "Yeah, you complained. You said they tasted like apology fries."

"They did. Like something a waiter brings after spilling on your lap."

There was a pause. A chime of laughter from a nearby group. The mounted boar's head cast a faint shadow over the candlelit grain of the table.

"I almost ordered them again, out of—" Marc made a little looping gesture "—some kind of trauma nostalgia. But I think I'll try the octopus this time. 'Charred, with paprika emulsion and fennel ash.' Sounds like a crime scene."

Jules gave a soft, mocking laugh. "Naturally, you'd find the most theatrical thing on the menu. Symbolic, maybe? All those waving, clasping arms."

Their laughter thinned, then vanished. Marc adjusted his napkin. Jules looked around at the moody lighting, the string of Edison bulbs coiled like barbed wire above the bar.

"It hasn't changed much," Jules observed. "Same faux rustic everything. Same bartenders in leather aprons. Same smell of burnt rosemary and hubris."

"And still no prices on the cocktail menu," Marc said. "That's how you know it's good."

Another pause.

The waiter, a young man with sleeve tattoos, a soft voice, and exquisitely hollowed cheekbones appeared with water and complimentary olives. "Would you like to hear the specials?"

"No," they told him in blunt unison.

He blinked, faltered. Carefully placing the olives on the table, he scribbled their order with a nervous smile, then slipped away. The dark olives, stuffed with pimento, almonds, and cheese, lay glistening and sinister on a white plate.

"I think he's wounded," remarked Jules with amused detachment. He watched the waiter disappear behind the bar, then leaned in, lowering his voice like they were gossiping. "So?"

"I was surprised to get your text. I assume you've seen the news."

Jules picked up an olive, rolled it between thumb and finger. "About the hiking trail? And the backpack they found during the search for that lost kid?"

Marc gave a tight nod. "They said it was intact. Weatherproof. Like it had just been sitting there, who knows how long."

"They always say that. 'Intact.' Makes it sound more intentional." Jules popped the olive into his mouth, chewed, winced. "Christ. Still with the pits. Who does that? It's like they want lawsuits."

"I suppose it all depends on what they think they've found. Inside the bag, I mean."

Jules shrugged. "A couple of energy bars. Spare socks. At worst, a package of those awful gummies she liked. No blood. No knife."

"So, no real context then," mused Marc. He raised his fingers, ticking through the facts. "No ID. No knowing how long it was out there. No way to trace it."

"We hope," Jules pointed out.

They fell silent again. The buzz of the room carried on, glasses clinking, small plates landing with curated clatter. The waiter returned, this time with bread and a charcoal-infused dipping oil—everything blackening but the truth.

"You think they'll reopen the case?" Jules asked when they were alone again.

Marc didn't answer right away. He reached for the bread, tore off a piece, dabbed it lightly in the oil. "They might. Although 'reopen' implies there was a case opened in the first place."

"The knife . . ." said Jules.

"Could be anywhere. Maybe somewhere on the way down, maybe in the river. But nowhere nearby, which is the main thing."

Jules gave a slow nod, thinking. "They didn't look too hard. Not for her. Not with her record."

"And we were helpful," Marc added. "Grieving friends. Concerned. Sober by then."

"That's the beauty of ordering one drink and a plate of fried potatoes," Jules said. "Looks like restraint."

Marc's smile twisted ruefully. "God, we were such cowards."

"Honestly, though. The way she was running her mouth," Jules said. "High as hell. Threatening to tell—well, everyone."

"Then she lunged . . ."

"Slipped," Jules said, with a swoosh of his hand to emphasize the sequence of events.

"And she was wearing those shoes."

A brief silence as the waiter arrived with the octopus and a plate of Morcilla de Burgos, placing them on the table with a silent flourish, eyes lowered. He reached into the pocket of his apron for the bottle of red wine, uncorked it, and poured into stemless glasses already on the table. "Enjoy," he whispered, already retreating.

“Anyway,” Jules said after a moment, reaching for his glass and circling a finger atop the rim before picking it up, “we’re not here to moralize. We’re here to split tapas and get ahead of the situation.”

“Exactly.” Marc raised his drink. “To foresight.”

They clinked, softly.

Between them the blood sausage steamed, and the octopus curled tighter on its plate. The wine breathed. The air thickened—stone and meat.

“Well,” murmured Jules. “*Que aproveche.*”

Overhead, the boar stared, unblinking.