My Dinner With Destiny

It was not too long before my friends took off the blindfold and the room that before had smelled musty and sweet came into focus through the dim lighting. Stark wooden tables and primitive chairs were hunched under swag-like refugees from a summer camp commissary. The walls and columns of the small cellar were blooming with colorful but tacky memorabilia, the kind that make for a shrine to capitalism and pop culture: antique Coca Cola advertisements and fake orange crate lids; biscuit tins; banjos just out of reach of anyone who might be tempted to take one down on his knee and play. And, through the din of tourists clothed in camera bags and floral shirts lifted the voices of people I thought I must know anywhere, even in a place as unfamiliar as this.

The first to announce herself was Patricia, whose “Willa, baby!” shouted out over the heads of the shocked diners with a shameless excitement. "Shush, everyone. Willa-baby's here!" And with that came the clumsy pause that every birthday celebrant dreads, the discordant fumbling for the first note of "Happy Birthday to you..." The song played out more like the recitation of a greeting card, try as some of them might to make their drunken voices sing on key. At least Casey, my friend and sometimes employer when freelance photography was not working out for me, could always be counted on to end everything with a loud flourish, which in this case was an apt match for her bright yellow saffron and glowing red sash. She was a beacon in any shadow. I had never yet seen her, however, attend any social occasion without some measure of effervescence.
Works Cited


