Appendix 1

The short story  (Thomson & Jones, 2009)

YOU WERE PERFECTLY FINE

By Dorothy Parker (1893 –1967)

The pale young man eased himself carefully into the low chair, and rolled his head to the side, so that the cool chintz comforted his cheek and temple.

“Oh, dear,” he said. “Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear. Oh.”

The clear-eyed girl, sitting light and erect on the couch, smiled brightly at him.

“Not feeling so well today?” she said.

“Oh, I’m great,” he said. “Corking, I am. Know what time I got up? Four o’clock this afternoon, sharp. I kept trying to make it, and every time I took my head off the pillow, it would roll under the bed. This isn’t my head I’ve got on now. I think this is something that used to belong to Walt Whitman. Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear.”

“Do you think maybe a drink would make you feel better?” she said.

“The hair of the mastiff that bit me?” he said. “Oh, no, thank you. Please never speak of anything like that again. I’m through. I’m all, all through. Look at that hand; steady as a humming-bird. Tell me, was I very terrible last night?”

“Oh, goodness,” she said, “everybody was feeling pretty high. You were all right.”

“Yeah,” he said. “I must have been dandy. Is everybody sore at me?”

“Good heavens, no,” she said. “Everybody thought you were terribly funny. Of course, Jim Prierson was a little stuffy, there, for a minute at dinner. But people sort of held him back in his chair and got him calmed down. I don’t think anybody at the other tables noticed it at all. Hardly anybody.”

He was going to sock me?” he said. “Oh, Lord. What did I do to him?” Why, you didn’t do a thing,” she said. “You were perfectly fine. But you know how silly Jim gets, when he thinks anybody is making too much fuss over Elinor.”

“Was I making a pass at Elinor?” he said, “Did I do that?”

“Of course you didn’t.” she said. “You were only fooling that’s all. She thought you were awfully amusing. She was having a marvelous time. She only got a little tiny bit annoyed just once, when you poured the clam-juice down her back.”

“My God,” he said. “Clam-juice down that back. And every vertebra a little Cabot. Dear God. What’ll I ever do?”

“Oh, she’ll be all right,” she said. “Just send her some flowers, or something. Don’t worry about it. It isn’t anything.”

“No I won’t worry,” he said. “I haven’t got a care in the world. I’m sitting pretty. Oh, dear, oh, dear. Did I do any other fascinating tricks at dinner?”

“You were fine,” she said. “Don’t be so foolish about it. Everybody was crazy about you. The maître d’hôtel was a little worried because you wouldn’t stop singing, but he really didn’t mind. All he said was, he was afraid they’d close the place again, if there was so much noise. But he didn’t care a bit, himself. I think he loved seeing you have such a good time. Oh, you were just singing away, there, for about an hour. It wasn’t so terribly loud, at all.”

“So I sang,” he said. “That must have been a treat. I sang.”

“Don’t you remember?” she said. “You just sang one song after another. Everybody in the place was listening. They loved it. Only you kept insisting that you wanted to sing some song about some kind of fusiliers or other, and everybody kept shushing you, and you’d keep trying to start it again. You were wonderful. We were all trying to make you stop singing for a minute, and eat something, but you wouldn’t hear of it. My, you were funny.”

“Didn’t I eat any dinner?” he said.

“Oh, not a thing,” she said. “Every time the waiter would offer you something, you’d give it right back to him, because you said that he was your long-lost brother, changed in the cradle by a gypsy band, and that anything you had was his. You had him simply roaring at you.”