Puzzles

Feeling themselves tossed about in a maelstrom of incertitude and insecurity, Jason, Jeremy, Josh, Jordan, Juan and Travis enter a drinking establishment. Tony, the bartender, declines to serve one of them. Which one? On what basis?

Jessica, June, Joyce, Julie, Janelle and Tricia are sitting at a nearby table. One of them says: “It’s just like guys to act like that.” The others make mental notations in their respective ongoing studies. Shortly, they finish their drinks and leave. Which of them made the observation? Who was first out the door?

With the aid of geomorphology, remote sensing, echolocation and, finally, intuition, we locate someone who may be able to answer these questions. Coincidentally, a major storm is beginning to exert a menacing authority over the island on which he is staying. As the winds increase and heavy raindrops begin to hit the lean-to, he realizes that he probably should have been on the last boat out, instead of obsessing over a puzzle. But now, at least, he might as well finish it, whatever happens. He turned on the flashlight, picked up the magazine again, and focused:

At the bar, Jason, an ancient history major, had opined to his friends facetiously: I trust the ice in the drinks in this place will achieve the benchmark set by the kings of ancient Mesopotamia, that is, “free of dirt and twigs and dung.” Tony, overhearing, though aware that these standards would be met, felt that his tavern was being quote, high-hatted, end quote, by such nonsense. Unwilling to verbalize this, per se, he ignored Jason but told Travis — who, he thought, quote, didn’t look right anyway, end quote — that there was, quote, no way you’re going to get a drink in here today, buddy, end quote (with his decision unknowingly touching on a gratuitous alliterative connection), and that he and his friends could all — in Travis’s later inventive paraphrase: return to the maelstrom of incertitude and uncertainty whence you came. It was preferable for Tony to lose the price of a few drinks than face the likelihood of hearing from his about-to-arrive regulars whom, he believed accurately, quote, wouldn’t want to hear that kind of shit, end quote, while they were, quote, just trying to have a fucking beer and watch the game, end quote. So that solves the men’s part.

Now for the women. It was apparent that Julie was the natural leader of the group, but she usually avoided the role; it was Tricia (who thought of herself as a Tamara) that had made the comment about guys acting that way, based on socio-anthropological predisposition, though without quite hearing exactly what was said, and unaware that there were socio-economic underpinnings to the scenario’s foundation. Janelle — who didn’t consider the quote, other, end quote, gender quite so superfluous and annoying as some of her friends did — was appalled by the way Travis, whom she had seen in one of her classes and thought was, quote, interesting, end quote, had been spoken to by the quote, neanderthal, end quote bartender, and so was first out the door to see if she could manage to run into Travis a little later on, on campus, to commiserate — which should wrap everything up, except to mention that it seemed apparent that Travis and Janelle’s impending relationship would be a central feature in next month’s puzzle. If he could survive what was turning out to be a major hurricane, he would solve that one, too.