

TEA

By

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2016

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Interior. A coffee shop with vintage oak-like furniture, from the tables to the cafe bar-side. At this time, the shop is almost empty, with seemingly only a few employees around. Some chairs are stacked upside down on unused tables. Mostly dim in the cafe, The lighting is focused on the table Daniel resides on. Daniel is a man of his late 30s, wearing a contemporary button-up with denim jeans and dark dress shoes. He sits, slightly hunched over his empty cup, subtly shaking while rocking back and forth, trying to find a comfortable position. Next to him is 3 empty white ceramic cups. A man in a suit, wearing glasses and holding a glossed briefcase, walks into the cafe, towards Daniels' table. This catches Daniels' attention, as he looks up in anticipation.

COWALSKI:

Excuse me, are you Daniel?

DANIEL:

Um, yes, yes I am. Are you-

Cowalski points to his name tag, and places his index finger to his lips. He takes a seat in the chair across from Daniel

DANIEL:

So it is you. Thank you so much, I haven't been able to sleep.

COWALSKI:

I do apologize for this Dani, but we are on a time frame. It's about your brother.

DANIEL:

Wait. My brother?

COWALSKI:

Yes Dani, your brother, good lord. It seems your brother has-

DANIEL:

Wait, what about my son?

COWALSKI:

Your son?

DANIEL:

Is he okay? I've been here for so long drinking so many cups of coffee. Look at me, I'm shaking!

COWALSKI:

Please sir Dani, get a hold of yourself. Your son is perfectly fine.

DANIEL:

Oh my god. Thank god, thank you.

COWALSKI:

Yes yes, but your brother, Dani. I'm sorry Dani, but I feel you must embrace yourself. Deep breaths.

DANIEL:

What's more important is that my son is safe and in good hands. I hardly even know my brother.

COWALSKI:

You should know as you are family.

DANIEL:

I suppose.

Cowalski picks up his briefcase and places it on the table. He unbuckles the steel clasps and begins to shuffle through his documents.

COWALSKI:

Your brother, Daniel, was operating in a drug dealership.

DANIEL:

He dealt with drugs? Like coke?

COWALSKI:

Why yes, and not the cola kind mind you. Or bath salts.

DANIEL:

I didn't really know my brother.

COWALSKI:

Oh, he's dead.

DANIEL:

What?

COWALSKI:

Yes, he was shot down. He left a last will.

DANIEL:

You said it so.. nonchalantly.

COWALSKI:

Well, I figured since you didn't know him, the delivery wouldn't have to be as subtle.

Cowalski pulls out a white paper. From his suit jacket, he pulls out a pair of reading glasses. He clears his throat.

COWALSKI: (cont'd)

What I have here is your brother's will. It says here that he (clears throat) loved you with all his heart and treated you closely whenever he could. What he has stowed away is the money he managed to make that he wanted to give to you.

DANIEL:

What? How much?

COWALSKI:

Um. Double?

DANIEL:

Double digits?

COWALSKI:

Double quadruple digits.

DANIEL:

Jesus.

COWALSKI:

I know, this may be a lot to take in, what with all that I just laid out to you. But you have all this money now! This is quite the...the American Dream!

DANIEL:

[Pause] The American Dream's been dead.

COWALSKI:

Oh that's rather cliché to say. Come on now, Daniel, with that money you could...(Cheerfully) buy an extravagant sports car, hm? drive around and live in one of those fancy apartments with the view of the beach.

DANIEL:

What do I look like, a South Floridian? No, no. [Pause] I'm sorry. This is a lot to take in.

COWALSKI:

Generally, this is the time where I leave and hand you the money, but it looks like you have a lot on your mind. (pause. smiles) Let me help you out, Dani.

Cowalski juts his chair around, finding the right, comforting spot to sit in and look at Daniel.

DANIEL:

This is the part where I'd decline, but...I just don't know anymore. Life is bizarre.

COWALSKI:

Well, look at the bright side, Dani. You are a free man. You can use your brothers', erm, 'fortune' and live a free life.

DANIEL:

I can't see that as an American Dream, but I guess I can see that as maybe my dream?

COWALSKI:

There you go. Celebrate, my young friend.

DANIEL:

Um-

COWALSKI:

Acquaintance.

DANIEL:

Right. I guess I can finally leave my job. Maybe travel the world like I always wanted. Maybe my brother would've wanted that.

COWALSKI:

Probably whatever your heart desires, as it's your money now.

DANIEL:

It's just- I don't know. I try to find more meaning in life but in the end it's always about fucking money. I work at a high class retail store, where we have to sell clothing constantly, and look at the money, look at the numbers. 'If you can't handle the numbers, ya ain't hot shit, but cold diarrhea' is what my boss drills into our skulls. When I found out my son was missing, I felt like I was in the world of ruthless hyenas. All my co-workers found it an opportunity to take my sales or try to sell me something, ME. [Pause] I'm sorry again, all of this stuff that just hit me, it's very overwhelming.

COWALSKI:

I understand. You know what I find soothing? A nice cup of tea.

DANIEL:

I'm sure, but this place only makes coffee unfortunately.

As Daniel speaks, Cowalski begins to bring up his suitcase, laying it on the table. From the suitcase, he takes out an ornately decorated teacup, and two teacups of the same style. He begins pouring himself his own cup of tea
(Silence)

DANIEL: (cont'd)

How did you put that-

COWALSKI:

Would you like some tea? It's my own family recipe. Tea is calming, soothing.

DANIEL:

I..this is fucking crazy. Maybe I had too much coffee.

COWALSKI:

Well, tea is known to be very calming and much enjoyable. You should have a cup to calm your nerves.

DANIEL:

I'm, I'm good. I should probably get going.

COWALSKI:

Now now Dani, you're unstable. You need to feel at ease, take a step back. In other words...(gestures empty cup) Tea?

DANIEL:

I really don't want any tea right now.

COWALSKI:

Must I list the amazing facts of tea? It soothes the mind. It is the best drink to have for capitalism. Although it originates from the United Kingdom, it's ironic that it generally frees the soul, doesn't it? Look at me, an American trying to degrade other countries. Quite patriotic isn't it? (chuckles) Once you soothe the mind, you are free to do what it is that your heart truly desires.

DANIEL:

That's true.

COWALSKI:

But to repent for your brother's actions, you must use that money for the right reasons.

DANIEL:

What does that mean?

COWALSKI:

Charities, family, less of the non-materialistic things. We don't wanna follow the stereotype that people see as the American Dream now would we?

DANIEL:

Are you trying to guilt trip me, Mr. Cowalski? At this time?

COWALSKI:

Well...it is whatever sets you free without a sinful heart. Or soothes you. Like tea. Have some tea to calm you down from jumping to crazy conclusions like those, good chap!

DANIEL:

I...(Irritatedly) why should I listen to this bullshit? I have the money now. And I'll use that fucking money to have the goddamn power I want. Because that's what's important.

COWALSKI:

You're still on edge. Come now-

DANIEL:

No fuck this, this is all a lighthearted HAHA joke to you. (stands up) My son is still missing out there, thank god he may be alright but still. I'm gonna use this money to find him, then I'm gonna use this money to tell my co-workers to fuck off, then I'm gonna tell YOU to fuck off for treating me like a joke. Y'kno what I might as well do it now since the money belongs to me, FUCK. OFF.

(Silence)

COWALSKI:

It is relaxing to have wealth, but is not useful when your mind is about to have an apeshit meltdown. (to the audience) Like a certain someone in America I know.

Pause. Daniel sits back down. His hands covering the estranged expression on his face. He uncovers his face, and leans back on his chair.

DANIEL:

I never got to know most of my family. I never got to meet my brother. I always wondered what it was like, to actually have a close bond with a sibling.

COWALSKI:

I see. Well...Did he look a lot like this? (takes off glasses)

Silence. Daniel's expression slowly changes from the estranged melancholy to surprise and shock.

DANIEL:

I can't believe...this can't be. Alex?
(Pause.)

COWALSKI:

(chuckles) No, Cowalski silly. (cleans glasses) I just wanted to know if I looked like your brother, I never got that before.

Daniel leans back into his chair, this time the expression on his face is lifeless. Silence. He grabs the empty tea cup, and gestures it towards Cowalski. Cowalski grabs the pot, and pours it into the cup. Daniel begins taking slow sips from the cup filled with tea.

DANIEL:

(calmly) Your recipe?

COWALSKI:

(smiles) Family.

In synchronization, Daniel and Cowalski both slowly begin taking sips from their cups of tea. (Beat). Soon, another man in a suit walks on stage, holding a briefcase. His suit is of a color scheme that is the opposite of Cowalski's. The man walks towards Daniel's table.

MAN IN SUIT:

My god, Daniel! I'm terribly sorry, I arrived at the wrong shop waiting for god knows how lon- is that tea? When did they sell tea here?

DANIEL:

No sir, this is from this man right here. (gestures towards Cowalski) Family recipe.

MAN IN SUIT:

Well, why not just have coffee here rather than tea?

DANIEL:

Tea is calming. Soothing. Soothes the nerves.

MAN IN SUIT:

(Pause) Well, as much as I'd like to be calm like yourself Daniel, I have some news to discuss. To introduce myself to you and your friend-

DANIEL:

Acquaintance.

MAN IN SUIT:

Ah, that too. My name is Kowalski.

DANIEL:

What.

COWALSKI:

(cheerfully) Ah what a coincidence, my name is also Cowalski!

MAN IN SUIT:

A pleasure to meet you good sir! (shakes Cowalski's hand)

COWALSKI:

Mine is spelled with a 'C'

MAN IN SUIT:

(points to self, smiling) with a 'K'. (to Daniel) Now for the important news Daniel.

Cowalski's expression drops to a sudden sense of fright. He burrows through his suitcase, rummaging through his files.

DANIEL:

I don't understand, he's Cowalski, you're Kowalski, what is all of this about?

MAN IN SUIT:

It's about-

COWALSKI:

I'm sorry to interrupt, but Dani. Is your name Dani L.?

DANIEL:

What?

COWALSKI:

Is your name Dani L.? Dani Long

DANIEL:

My last name is Cliff....Daniel Cliff

COWALSKI:

I...I, I, I. Daniel? As in D-A-N-I-E-L?

DANIEL:

Yes.

Pause. Cowalski looks down at his suitcase, and back at Daniel, shaking his head. Daniel's eyes widen.

MAN IN SUIT:

[Pause] It's about your son, Daniel.

Daniel begins shaking his head. Pause

DANIEL:

No...no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

COWALSKI:

I'm terribly sorry, Daniel.

MAN IN SUIT:

We found him in the river.

DANIEL:

This can't be happening.

MAN IN SUIT:

We are still in pursuit of the assailant.

COWALSKI:

This was all a mistake. I'm sorry Daniel.

DANIEL:

My son...(refrains from hysterically crying) My money?

MAN IN SUIT:

Money?

COWALSKI:

The money...is not yours, Daniel. I must get going. I'm terribly late. (Cowalski gets up from his chair, grabbing his suitcase)

DANIEL:

No, stop! (grabs suitcase) This was all I have now. I need this. For my future! My son...his funeral...

After some struggle, Cowalski yanks the briefcase away from Daniel's grasp. Silence. Daniel moves his chair position.

COWALSKI:

Don't bother getting up. Please. I'm terribly sorry for this.

DANIEL:

It's all I have now. Please.

Cowalski turns his back to Daniel.

DANIEL: (cont'd)

Cowalski...Cowalski!!

Cowalski walks off stage.

COWALSKI:

(Off-stage) Keep the tea!!!

MAN IN SUIT:

We can try to salvage whatever we can. If you need a funeral...try GoFundMe. I heard those work.

DANIEL:

Why is it all a joke...Is it because the American Dream is a joke?

MAN IN SUIT:

I can't say Daniel, as bizarre of an assumption that is. My condolences to you. Best of luck, Daniel.

Kowalski, the man in suit, begins to walk out, but something in the air catches his attention. An aroma. He sniffs around and begins to smell the tea.

MAN IN SUIT: (cont'd)

There's cannabis in this tea. Thought I should let you know.

The man in the suit walks out. Daniel, alone, finally breaks down into tears. The music of a piano sonata begins to play in the background as the stage fades to black.

END.