

Uneven Exchange

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Pale streetlights illuminate the front of a local bar. It's small and quaint, but alive none the less. It's definitely survived the test of time.

INT. BAR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

We push slowly through a dim lit hallway toward the backroom, protected by a half-closed STEEL DOOR. The sounds of an unfriendly confrontation involving two men behind the door is heard. We do not yet see the altercation.

TOUCH (O.S.)

We told you last time this wouldn't go good for you.

ROY (O.S.)

I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I-

The THUD of a stiff punch landing resonates. The victim howls out in pain.

INT. BAR - OFFICE - NIGHT

We are now behind the door; it's a junky backroom office. After a few short beats, another punch is heard before a FIGURE stumbles into view. He's dazed and stumbles into a GLASS TROPHY CASE, taking it to the ground with him.

CLOSE ON - ATTACKERS

Two smooth, atypical, yet aggressive black enforcers. One of them is the silent but imposing JULIAN "JULS" COOPER (28), smooth-faced and fit, with well-barbered hair. The other is the angry man we heard, only referred to as "TOUCH" (27), and is slightly taller and well dressed.

JULS

Ease up a little. We can't collect from a corpse.

Juls is visibly uneasy with the chain of events occurring. The victim, ROY HALL, is a shady looking middle aged man dressed in a cheap suit and lots of gold.

ROY

He's right! Let me make this right!

(CONTINUED)

Touch's hand springs to his waistline, returning with a scraped up, black, 1911 handgun. A slow, menacing pace begins. He's got blood-lust in his eyes and getting more fired up by the second.

TOUCH

I'm not understanding how we keep ending up in this SAME scenario, Roy.

Touch begins to dangerously toy with his gun, which is aimed in Roy's direction. Scare tactics, of course.

TOUCH (CONT'D)

We bring you in, we get you started, not to mention no matter who tried to press you over the years, who was always there?  
(steadies aim)  
That's right, it was us.

ROY

(stuttering)

Please, I appreciate it. I really do!

Touch turns to Juls, sarcasm in full effect. Juls' look says it all, he's ready to wrap this up.

TOUCH

Hell of a motherfucking way to show appreciation, huh?

Juls sighs, he knows where this is headed. Touch snatches Roy up by the collar. Roy is inches from making out with the barrel of the gun.

TOUCH

Open up. Come on, come on, I won't knock them all out, I'll save you one or two.

It's not looking good. Juls becomes uneasy and shifts on his feet.

ROY

Wait!

(nervous laughter)

Wait! My vacation money! I'm so stupid, it's about twelve grand! Take it, please! It's right over in that trophy.

(CONTINUED)

Roy points to the broken mess that used to be the trophy case. A large TROPHY rests on its side within the glass shards.

JULS

Now, that's more like it. I'll go get it, so we can get moving.

TOUCH

Relax, Cuzz. He's gonna get it for us.

(shoves Roy)

Make it quick too, time is money.

He scurries through the mess and grabs the TROPHY with a wooden base. Bloodied, battered and bruised, he moves like his life depends on it to remove the bottom of the trophy. It's false bottom which releases FOUR LARGE MONEY ROLLS.

ROY

Here, here we go. This should do it, right? We're all straight?

Touch moves towards him promptly and snatches it from his grip. He inspects it, thoroughly, almost like he's counting it by sight.

Eyes locked to Roy while he passes them off to Juls, one by one.

TOUCH

Yeah, I think this should work. But I forgot just ONE thing.

POW! POW! POW! POW! Brutal crosses, all in succession, from Touch's right. Apollo Creed reincarnated? Juls observes the savagery, but only a moment longer.

TOUCH

First Friday of the Month, means First Friday of the Month!

JULS

Alright, alright, let's get the fuck outta here. He's done.

(to Roy)

Don't make us have to visit again, motherfucker.

The two speed for the door with haste. On the way out, TOUCH scoops up a PAPER BAG with more money rolls in it. Roy's "short payment".

(CONTINUED)

TOUCH

Next time, I come in squeezing.

EXT. BAR - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

A matte black CHEVROLET TAHOE with chrome rims sits under a streetlight. The duo speed walks down the alley from a side exit and enter the SUV, with Touch at the wheel.

EXT. TAHOE - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The engine growls for a beat before turning over and humming to life. The brake and headlights come on, and the car peels out of the alleyway.

INT. TAHOE - MOVING - NIGHT

The interior is clean, leather, and has a tree air freshener hanging from the rear view mirror. Very well maintained.

Juls sits reclined, staring out the window in thought. He's not all there, something troubles him. Touch reflects the incident while driving.

TOUCH

I can't wait until we get the green light on him! Fuckin' him up every other week gettin' so old!

He's passionate about this, untamed even. His vibe lasts but so quickly before killed when he notices a quiet Juls.

TOUCH

What the fuck is wrong with you?

JULS

Yo, why you got the assumption that just cause I'm quiet something gotta be wrong?

TOUCH

Cause you been acting funny all week, that's why. What's up, you on your period or something?

Juls shoots a "fuck you" look in his direction. Clearly not for the jokes at the moment.

JULS

No, you ignorant motherfucker. I use my brain and actually think outside of the cowboy mentality, sometimes.

(CONTINUED)

TOUCH

Fuck you. Don't forget, the cowboy  
shit saved our asses quite a few  
times.

(beat)

Think about what, anyway?

He pauses for a beat, contemplative, then proceeds.

JULS

This, that shit that happened back  
there. Look, lately I've just been  
feeling like I don't wanna keep  
doing this. I mean, think about it.  
We been lucky or blessed or  
whatever so far, but one day  
somebody else could have US on the  
floor ready to shoot, then what?

(beat)

This shit ain't in my plan forever,  
bro. I got Tee to think about, not  
to mention Junior.

Seeing the authenticity in his words, Touch relents now. The  
serious side takes over.

TOUCH

Shit, I thought they were the whole  
reason you decided to keep doing  
this shit anyway?

JULS

No...yeah... fuck, I don't know. At  
first, yeah, it was but now it  
seems like I just do it cause it's  
what I know. I just know I'm past  
this. I feel like I got enough in  
stash for us to move and start over  
fresh.

Touch's tone face says it all - 'Whoa, stash? As in money? A  
large quantity"?

TOUCH

Yeah? You been stacking like that?

Juls nods slowly, eyes focused on the street ahead.

JULS

Yeah, I'm sitting pretty.

(CONTINUED)

## TOUCH

Ha-Ha, my man, always thinking  
about tomorrow and shit! What you  
got planned next?

Juls falls silent, he's much 'the thinker'. It's clear his  
mind is moving in directions Touch can't fathom.

EXT. TAHOE - MOVING - NIGHT

A view of a STOPLIGHT as it turns from yellow to red is  
seen. The trucks progresses through, just making the cutoff.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It's the next morning. We're in on an expensive, beautifully  
crafted tombstone in a quiet cemetery setting.

CLOSE ON - TOMBSTONE

It's decorated with flags. The wording reads: "JACK COLSTON.  
1975-2012. HUSBAND, FRIEND, MAN OF DUTY." A MAN'S HAND  
places a bouquet of flowers in front of the tombstone.

The owner of the hand, a troubled looking man of Italian  
descent with slick hair and a face full of stubble, stands at  
the grave in thought. This is FRANCIS CARTINO (39),  
affectionately known as FRANK.

## FRANK

Thought you might appreciate those.  
Rest easy, brother.

After a few beats, he turns and walks away.

EXT. IMPALA - MOVING - MINUTES LATER

A shiny new Chevrolet Impala maneuvers through a yellow  
light, just as it turns red. We identify Frank as the driver  
through the window.

EXT. CARTINO RESIDENCE - DAY

Frank comes to a stop in front of a Victorian style home in  
a quiet neighborhood of the city. It's well maintain with  
beautiful garden shrubbery in the small lawn.

INT. CARTINO RESIDENCE - DAY

A brief view of the modernized and "cozy, but not rich" styled home is in view. The modest décor and clutter showed signs of extra attention to cleanliness.

KITCHEN

A lovely brunette woman, SOPHIA CARTINO (38), leans against the sink in a pair of Hospital Scrubs. She has natural beauty but shows signs of fatigue. Glass in hand, she takes a sip of orange juice.

After a beat, Frank walks into the kitchen, playfully.

FRANK

(in character)

Now there's the Nurse I would want  
for my overnight stay.

Sophia grins sheepishly, and then breaks into a full 'cheese'. Frank moves in and grips her at the waist, lightly. Her eyes close in bliss as a gentle kiss is applied to her forehead.

FRANK

No sleep on the job last night,  
huh?

SOPHIA

Not even a power nap. Action  
packed every minute.

FRANK

That's why you're the best.

She smiles. She notices a SPOT OF DIRT on his pant leg. Her tone switches more seriously.

SOPHIA

You went to the cemetery?

He nods, face showing containment of silent pain. She addresses his concern with the utmost sympathy.

SOPHIA

It will get easier. Give it more  
time; it's barely been a year. He's  
still with you, watching over you.

(beat)

Talk to any of the guys lately?

This question is not a pleasant one, clearly. A slight shake of the head breaks his hesitation.

(CONTINUED)



FRANK

Not since I turned in my badge.  
They still think I should  
investigating from the inside. It's  
not the same to me.

SOPHIA

These things always come full  
circle. Don't give up on justice.

His vision trails off in "yeah, whatever" fashion.

FRANK

Yeah, maybe...

She embraces his face into her hands soothingly. The moment  
is tender, calm. .until-

CLOSE ON - KITCHEN DOOR

REEEEK! The door swings open loudly interrupting them. A  
young, slim, brunette with looks that could put her in an  
Abercrombie and Fitch advertisement rushes in with reckless  
abandon. REBECCA CARTINO (20), the daughter of Frank and  
Sophia, is a young woman on a mission.

They both look at her, and stop her dead in her tracks.

FRANK

Woah, slow down before you kill  
someone, Becca! Where's the fire?

She returns back through the threshold between the kitchen  
and the next room. This time she's walking instead.

REBECCA

Mom, Dad, not a lot of time. I  
forgot my American Law book and  
this professor takes points off if  
you come late and interrupt his  
lecture.

They exchange a glance to one another before looking back at  
her. Frank finally steps up.

FRANK

You're going to be late anyway if  
you take the bus. They're doing  
construction on Liberty Avenue.  
(beat)  
How about I give you a ride  
instead? I don't want you mowing  
down old women and children on the  
way.

(CONTINUED)

Rebecca sighs at the obvious humor in his tone. Who likes to be the butt of a joke? Gratefully, she responds with a bit of her own sarcasm.

REBECCA

Thanks...now if only I could escape prosecution from my own Dad.

Sophia giggles, chiming in.

SOPHIA

The supremest of all courts. The court of Frank Cartino.

Sophia AND Rebecca giggle now. It's a cute family moment. They're all grinning.

FRANK

Grab your book and meet me outside.

Rebecca takes off in the other direction. Frank gives a "she's something else" type of head shake before turning to kiss Sophia again.

FRANK

Guess I'm going to play taxi.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH CAMPUS - DAY

The Impala pulls up to the curb alongside of the historic Cathedral of Learning on the Main Campus of the UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH.

INT. IMPALA - PARKED CURBSIDE - DAY

Frank looks over to Rebecca with great concern.

FRANK

Maybe it's me, but I feel out of the loop. Anything new to talk about?

(beat)

No new knuckleheads for me to take in the shed?

To say 'she's embarrassed' would be an understatement. None the less, she denies.

REBECCA

Nope, other than these classes kicking my butt, everything is ok.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Nothing worth it comes easy, but  
you're going to make a hell of an  
Attorney one day.

This makes her smile warmly now.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Any plans for the weekend?

REBECCA

Finishing a paper then maybe just  
hanging out with Allison.

FRANK

You two wouldn't know what to do  
without each other.

She nods, and gathers her things up. He's stalling, and she  
knows this.

REBECCA

Listen, Dad, I love you, but I've  
gotta get going..

He nods, and leans over to kiss the side of her face.

Rebecca opens the door and exits the vehicle, all while  
Frank watches her closely. After a few beats, he smiles and  
pulls off.

EXT. SMALL RESTAURANT - DAY

A small, seemingly independent owned restaurant sits between  
other shops and stores in a busy business district. Plenty  
cars are parked along the curb and many citizens from all  
walks of life stroll the area.

INT. SMALL RESTAURANT - DAY

It's clean, hardly fancy, and barely modernized but still  
manages to be occupied with plenty of patient customers. Few  
waiters and waitresses patrol the floor, checking on each  
patron.

Touch and Juls sit at a small table together. Juls holds a  
cellphone to his ear while Touch digs in on a plate full of  
eggs, uninterested.

JULS

(into phone)

It's done, all good. I doubt we'll  
have to go back through again.