

Death By Hibachi

By

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

A small empty kitchen table sits eagerly awaiting the keys that are heard penetrating the lock of the apartment's front door. Other keys jingle on the ring, urging on their companion until the deadbolt finally gives in. A door squeaks open, then slams.

The table is thrilled when, as expected, the keys are tossed upon him, and then equally horrified when a newcomer is also tossed upon him: a pink slip. In the process of tossing the notice of doom, PETE EVANOVICH (mid-late 20s), manages to give himself a papercut.

PETE

Ow! Jesus.

Pete waves his hand for a moment before looking at the cut with trepidation. A small bubble of blood appears on the side of his finger, but it might as well be a leg amputation by the look on Pete's face.

PETE

Oh, no.

He looks away, near ready to pass out: blood is not his thing. He locates a band-aid in a kitchen drawer, quickly washes the finger, avoiding direct eye contact with it, then clumsily applies the bandage.

Pete, dress-shirt untucked from his slacks, walks toward the door to his living room.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Moving boxes are stacked in the sparse room. As Pete walks over to his desk, he takes notice of the '2' blinking on the answering machine beside his computer. In one smooth circuit, he presses the play button on the answering machine, the monitor button, wiggles the mouse until the screen pops to life, then plops down in desk his chair.

ANSWERING MACHINE GUY (V.O.)

You have two new messages. Message received Friday 10:01 a.m..

The high pitch voice of Pete's girlfriend, ALANA, fills the room as Pete logs into his Facebook account.

ALANA (V.O.)

Uh, hi, Pete. It's Alana. Listen, I know this is kind of a cop out calling you this way, buuuut I think we should start seeing other people.

Pete's head nearly twists off in confusion as he stares at the machine.

ALANA (V.O.)

I think we both know this thing we had has gotten stale rather quickly, so no sense dragging it out, right?

Pete snaps his attention back to his Facebook account, taking note of his relationship status which reads 'Pete Evanovich is in a relationship', but no Alana thereafter.

ALANA (V.O.)

Anyways, Pete, I hope you understand, and I want you to know I'm still rooting for you to get that big promotion you're expecting.

He types Alana's name in the search box and zooms into her relationship status. It too still says 'in a relationship', however it continues on to say 'with Timothy Warren'. Pete's jaw drops like a brick.

ALANA (V.O.)

Well, I think that's about it. Uh, try not to call me, okay, honey? You're a doll. Thanks. Bye.

Pete leans back in his chair as the machine plays on -

ANSWERING MACHINE GUY (V.O.)

Message received 10:42 a.m..

The voice of his his very Polish mother then populates the air -

PETE'S MOM (V.O.)

Hello, sweetheart. Just calling to wish you a wonderful birthday... even though I'm still waiting for you to call and wish me a wonderful birthday. It's a week before yours, remember, dear?

Pete leans back toward the monitor.

PETE'S MOM (V.O.)  
I wished you a 'happy birthday' on  
your Facebook, too.

In panic, he clicks back to his page. Sure enough, his mom's greeting is indeed on his wall.

ON THE MONITOR:

"Happy birthday to my wonderful  
baby boy - 4,000 diapers and two  
college degrees later, he's finally  
on his own at 28. Congratulations,  
sweetheart."

Pete takes notice of the 12 'likes' on his mother's status: agony, pure unadulterated agony, the likes of which Pete's face has never displayed before.

PETE'S MOM (V.O.)  
Thank you so much for showing me  
how that Facebook thing works. I  
have over 100 friends now!

Pete focuses in on his own number of friends - 21: the agony continues. Pete crosses his forearms on the edge of his desk and drops his forehead upon them.

PETE'S MOM (V.O.)  
(scoffs)  
Not sure where they were when your  
father died three months ago.

But enough about that, dear. I hope  
you're going out to have lots of  
fun with all your little friends  
tonight. Love you.

A couple of kissy noises follow before the answering machine pipes in -

ANSWERING MACHINE GUY (V.O.)  
End of new messages.

Pete's head remains planted on his forearms. But just when he appears quite dead, he springs back to life, attacking the keyboard keys until 'how to kill yourself' is populated in his Google search bar. Wikipedia quickly obliges his request with an article entitled 'Suicide Methods'.

He scrolls through the list: bleeding (wristing-cutting). He glances at his bandaged "wound" and nearly dry-heaves.

He shakes his head as he continues: drowning, no; suffocation, uh-uh; hypothermia, too hot by the temp noted in the bottom corner of his screen; electrocution, blech; Jumping from height...hmmmm.

Pete rises from his seat and walks over to a sliding door leading to a small balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Pete slides the door open and steps out onto the small balcony, surrounded on both sides by other matching outcrops. A small Weber grill and a single chair are the space's only occupants.

He quickly inspects the drop. After easily surveying a mole on top of a bald man's head below, he concludes a three flight jump doesn't exactly guarantee a quick ending. Dejected, he moves back inside.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Back to the list, scrolling: firearms, hanging, vehicular impact, and then...poison. Carbon monoxide to be exact.

Upon reading "the incidence of suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning through burning charcoal, such as a barbecue in a small room, appears to have risen. This has been referred to by some as "DEATH BY HIBACHI".

Death by hibachi! That's it! Pete leaps from his chair.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Pete grabs the grill and wrestles it through the sliding door.

INT. SMALL BATHROOM - DAY

Pete clumsily rolls the grill beside the sink and snaps the door close. He lifts the top of the grill, revealing a small canister of lighter fluid and a small bag of charcoal briskets.

With momentum and desire for a quick ending to cheating girlfriends, cold-hearted human resource professionals, guilt-inducing mothers, he pulls out the wire grill with the lighter fluid and bag of charcoal perched on top and places it on the sink.

Pete snaps up the bag of charcoal and dumps out...three...sad, little briskets: enough to kill maybe an ant in a small metal lockbox. He takes up the lighter fluid and shakes it: empty.

Dejected again. But Pete will not be swayed. He clutches the doorknob and swings the door open.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Pete scoops up the keys from the kitchen table.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

A YOUNG MOTHER examines some healthy snacks on one side of the aisle. Standing on the other side of the aisle is her 5 year-old offspring, JESSICA, zeroing in on a large package of Oreos.

JESSICA

Mom, can I have these?

Mom's not really paying attention as she reviews the nutrition information on the side of a package of flax seed cookies.

YOUNG MOM

Hmm?

Jessica picks up the package and brings them over for mom's approval.

JESSICA

These, Mom. I want these cookies.

Mom finally looks down and is horrified at her daughter's poor choice. She snatches the package as though her daughter's pick up a ticking time bomb.

YOUNG MOM

You can't have these, Jess, they're terrible for you.

JESSICA

But I like those better.

This is a major newsflash to mom.

YOUNG MOM

When did you ever have these?

JESSICA

Gigi gives them to me at lunch.

YOUNG MOM

What? You only eat what I give you for lunch from now on, understand?

Mom shoves the Oreos back on the shelf before returning to her quest for something healthful.

Jessica, shoulders slumped, looks longingly at the cookies. Seeing her mom is occupied elsewhere, she slowly reaches for the rejected package and quietly slips it beneath a head of Romaine lettuce.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Pete steps out of his economy car, and, with great purpose, strides toward the store...only to be cut off by a loooooong chain of grocery carts being pushed by a lanky teenager who's blasting music through his headphones, and clearly being paid by the hour.

The carts finally roll by and Pete marches through the front doors.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Young mom perches herself in front of a myriad of frozen vegetables. Opposite is Jessica, surveying the myriad of ice cream selections.

JESSICA

Can I have ice cream, Mom?

While grabbing a couple bags of frozen veggies, she replies without looking -

YOUNG MOM

We have ice cream at home - those all-fruit popsicles, remember?

JESSICA

But they don't taste good.

YOUNG MOM

Sure they do.

A half gallon of chocolate ice-cream beckons the little girl. She turns her gaze to the edge of the package of Oreos still hiding beneath the lettuce, and from her look, she knows she should be happy getting away with one treat so far.

She's bored now, following her mom as they walk down the aisle.

In another aisle, walks Pete: straight for the bags of charcoal. He snatches a small bag, but then notices the empty space behind the label for lighter fluid.

PETE

Really?

Exasperated, he seeks out an attendant.

Beside the double doors leading to the back room, Jessica opens a refrigerated unit storing frozen fish. But she's not interested in fish. She's found a source of entertainment: condensation.

Jessica opens the refrigerated door and proceeds to draw a big smiley face. Once that's completed, she writes "Hi!" below it.

YOUNG MOM

Jess!

Startled, Jessica immediately lets the door fall shut.

YOUNG MOM

You don't do that. Now your fingerprints are gonna be all over the glass.

JESSICA

Sorry.

And she is, but that doesn't make mom much happier.

YOUNG MOM

Come on.

As they walk away, Pete makes his way over toward our previously mentioned double doors. A STOCK BOY pushes through with a pallet of goods.

PETE

Excuse me. Can you check in the back and see if there's any more lighter fluid? The shelf is empty.

Irritated at the interruption, the stock boy replies -

STOCK BOY

Everything is out already.

PETE

Everything?

STOCK BOY

Yeah.

Pete points to the pallet.



PETE

So this is the absolute, last  
pallet you have back there?

The boy hesitates.

STOCK BOY

Uh, yeah.

Just who is the human resources guy around here?

PETE

Mind if I take a look?

Pete moves around the boy toward the doors.

STOCK BOY

Hey, you can't go back there.

Pete leans into the boy.

PETE

Then I suggest you do or I'm going  
to tell your boss he should fire  
your ass...immediately.

It's clear he's not bluffing, so the boy pushes back through  
the doors in defeat.

And that's when Pete sees it: the smiley face. The smiley  
face that says "!iH". He studies it for a moment, and then,  
try as he might, he can't stop the edges of his mouth from  
curling upward.

The symbol fills his heart, and when the boy returns with a  
few canisters of lighter fluid -

STOCK BOY

I found a few underneath -

- Pete snatches one and leaves without a word, but smiling  
all the while.

STOCK BOY

Wacko.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

The briskets pour into the grill, and the lighter fluid  
immediately follows. But wait...the grill is back in it's  
rightful place.

A hamburger and a couple of hot dogs are soon being cooked when Pete startles at the sweet voice of Stacy (mid 20s) from the balcony next door -

STACY

Hi there.

PETE

Oh, hi. Didn't know someone was living over there already.

STACY

Just moved in today. Nice out here, isn't it?

PETE

Sold me on the apartment.

STACY

(chuckles)

Me, too.

(beat)

I'm Stacy by the way.

PETE

Oh, yeah. Sorry. I'm Pete. Nice to meet you, Stacy.

Pete turns his attention back to the grill. Stacy takes the hint -

STACY

So I guess I'll be seeing you around then, Pete.

Pete forces a little smile.

PETE

Guess so.

Stacy slides the door open and is just about to step inside, when Pete blurts out -

PETE

I have a few extra burgers and dogs if you're interested.

Stacy steps back.

STACY

I was just gonna order out actually.

PETE  
Save your money.

STACY  
Really?

PETE  
I'm walking to my fridge right now,  
so place your order.

STACY  
I'm dying for a burger.

Pete pauses briefly at the death reference, but recovers quickly.

PETE  
You got it.

Stacy smiles.

STACY  
Okay. I'll be right over.

Pete steps through the sliding door with a smile of his own.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jessica helps unpack the groceries, when mom discovers the Oreo infiltration. She places the package on the kitchen island and locks eyes with her daughter.

YOUNG MOM  
Sit down.

Jessica sits down at the kitchen table. Oh boy, she's done it this time. She picks up her mom's keys from the table and fidgets with them nervously. But then mom pulls out a couple of glasses, pours milk in each, and places them on the table. She opens the package and places it between her and Jessica.

YOUNG MOM  
Just this once, understand?

Jessica smiles, then nods.

JESSICA  
Promise.

Jessica places the keys back on the table before she and her mom take up their forbidden fruit, and savor the moment.

FADE OUT