

John Death



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John Death
By
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Dedication

To *Shoham*, thanks so much for the encouragement.

A Man's Word

Sunday, 27th July

As the white sports car slowly drove towards the entrance to St. Joan's chapel to the sight of the onlooking congregation, John glanced at the tall elderly Priest through his window, should he step down and join the congregation as they marched into the chapel or just zoom off. His eyes gazing at the concealed scarred face of the Priest, reluctant on whether he should join them, John lifted his foot off the accelerator and onto the brake pedal, putting the car to a halt right in front of the chapel as he stared at the Priest.

The church members were a bit frightened as they wondered who it was and why the stranger parked there, the Priest excused himself and walked down the steps to meet John.

"I hope you've found peace, my son!" said the Priest as he lowered his head down to have a good look at John.

John rested his left arm on the open window with his fingers on the steering wheel, he sighed and looked at the dashboard, sighed again then turned to the passenger seat and picked a laptop, a big brown envelope then handed it over to the Priest.

"Thank you, John!" said the Priest, "Thank you very much! I can't thank you enough for this great sacrifice."

John turned his face away from the Priest.

"You're welcome to worship with us anytime you want, Brother John!" added the Priest, loud enough for the church members who were standing outside to hear.

As the car window rolled up, John drove off without saying a word to the kind Priest.

“Thank you once again!” said the Priest, as he waved joyfully then he turned back towards the chapel and saw his church members watching him, he then smiled at them as he stepped up.

“Praise the Lord, brethren!” he said, “Isn’t this a good day to serve the Lord?!” he hugged one of the members before proceeding into the chapel.

“Oh, father,” said one of the women, “I was really scared at first, I thought that stranger was going to pull out a gun and start shooting at us!”

“Oh come on, Sister Mary!” said another, “You and your hallucinations!” she joked as they all laughed.

“The world is clouded by darkness in these times, Theresa,” replied Mary, “You can never tell, dear!”

“Right you are, Mary,” said the Priest, “But we have the good Lord on our side! Fear not!”

As John drove off, he stared at his rear view mirror, watching to see if the Priest was still standing where he left him. John switched on the car radio and played a rock music as his mind pondered on the events of the past few days.

The Director

Monday, 21st July

“John Dead?” hollered the petite secretary as she stared at the people in the waiting room with a feeling of awe.

“Death, John Death!” he answered, “I am he!” with his hand up.

The rest of the people turned to gaze at him in astonishment.

“The Director would see you now!” added the secretary, “Please follow me.”

John stood up, dropped a fashion magazine on the table as he picked a big brown envelope. He aligned his red tie properly as he walked to the secretary.

“After you,” he said.

The secretary led him to the Director’s office as he walked behind her, smiling at the ladies in the office who couldn’t but drool over the sight of the elegant, timid looking tall hunk dressed in a black suit as they made their way into the office.

“Ah! John! I was just telling my friend Idris here about you. Please come in,” said the Director as he adjusted his reading glasses, he stood to his feet and stretched his hand in warm reception, “Am I glad to see you.”

John and the Director shook hands, as he nodded to the one called Idris after withdrawing his hand from the Director’s clench.

“Actually, this is like the millionth time he’s telling me, the story!” said Idris, a short dark-skinned bald fellow in white crocheted garment, “I finally get to meet the boss’ superman! Good to see you, buddy!”

“Good to see you too, sir!” answered John.

“Sorry for keeping you waiting, you know how the office is; meetings here and there, and what does a man get at the end of the month?” said the Director, “Not enough money to keep the mistresses happy, huh?!” they all burst into laughter, “Please have a seat, son!” he pressed a button on the desk phone as the secretary answered, “Vanessa, we’re going to need that bottle of scotch!”

“I’ll be right there, sir,” she responded.

“Good,” said the Director, “Have I got a surprise for you, son? I’ve saved that bottle for ages! We need to celebrate!”

“Every time I hear the word surprise it reminds me of the incident at Terry’s, the night we went for his birthday,” said Idris.

“Ah! Terry, he’s a jerk. Forget him!” interjected the Director.

“So, Terry brought a hooker home on the night of his birthday,” added Idris as he laughed, “He thought his wife was still out of the country cause she left for some training about a week before that!”

“Like I said, Terry needs a brain transplant!” added the Director, “Maybe a goat’s brain would do him good!”

“They both came home drunk, he and the hooker, so as they staggered into the living room kissing and smooching, throwing their clothes here and there, the lights came on,” Idris said as he tried to control the tears falling from his right eye, “He got the surprise of his life; he didn’t know that his wife came home and organised a surprise party for him.”

John giggled and let the smile linger a bit on his face as he struggled not to lose his cool amidst the entertaining men.

The secretary walked in holding a tray with three glasses and a bottle of scotch on it. The two men were still laughing as she served them.

“He called me the night she kicked him out of the house,” said the Director, “I told him he deserved it!”

“Sorry, I don’t uh...Drink,” a modest John said, as she offered him a shot.

“Wow, you don’t drink or you quit, son?” asked the Director.

“Actually, I’m kind of taking a break for now!” replied John, “The last experience didn’t favour my reputation!”

“Well, I hope I get to be there when you resume from your...break!” said the Director as they laughed, “Nevertheless, here’s to John...for um...saving my life!” he raised his cup, “Lift your cup, son. You can toast to it but you mustn’t drink to it!” he joked.

“To John!” added Idris as the men toast to the small occasion, “You’re a good man, John!”

“Yeah, but the funny thing about life is, good men don’t live long in this world,” the Director said, “Thank you Vanessa, you may go now!”

As the secretary walked out of the office, the Director gently sat on his chair in time to catch Idris staring at her bum.

“I told you Idris, she’s getting married in two weeks. Keep your eyes and zippers away from my secretary. Eh?” he giggled, “Her fiancé is an old friend’s son.”

“Okay! Okay! Alright, but hey, I’m your old friend too, boss.” Idris joked, “I remember you telling me whatever is yours belongs to me as well!”

“Get a life you short-circuit, you’ve got a beautiful wife and kids, what more could you possibly want?” the Director jested, “So, John. I hope that’s not your CV in the envelope right there,” pointing his finger at the brown envelope John held.

“Well, it is, sir!” John responded sheepishly.

“Let me have that,” the Director inquired.

John gently handed the envelope over to him.

“Copies, I hope?” said the Director, “Right?”

“Yeah!” John nodded.

“You’re already qualified for anything once it comes to me, son!” said the Director as he squeezed the envelope through the shredder, “Martha would kill me if she finds out I let you in with a CV after what you’ve done for me. She really can’t wait to see you,” he smiled, “Idris here will take you to your new place tomorrow,”

he belched, "Excuse me boys. Hmm! Idris, remind me to go easy on the breakfast next time."

"Mmm!" came Idris' response.

"Where was I?" he said, "Oh yes! He will take you to your new apartment and will also let you know how we get down in the real world, son. I want you to be part of the family. If you're okay with what you'll find, then you can report at the house the day after tomorrow," he stood up gazing at John as he yawned, "But in case you don't feel comfortable with the whole thing, John. Take this," placing a signed empty cheque on the table and slid it over to John, "You can have it, plus the apartment...and go chase your dreams with it if you want, son."

"Here's my card!" said Idris as he sipped the last drop in his cup, "Lines are open twenty four-seven"

John collected the complimentary card from Idris, loosened the tight from his tie and sat on the edge of his chair bedazzled, staring at the empty cheque.

"Go on, take it! You've earned it, son," said the Director generously, "I wouldn't be standing here today if it wasn't for you. So, consider this a token of a favour returned. You deserve more than this!"

"Sir," said John, "With all due respect I don't think this is..."

"Just take the damn cheque, buddy," interjected Idris, "It's yours for real."

The Director picked the cheque from the table and walked towards John. John gently stood to his feet.

"Here! You can cash whatever you want whenever you want, son!" the Director slipped the cheque through John's inner pocket, "Tax free, there's no catch! Money isn't worth my life so, for giving me a second chance to live again, I need to do to you what my heart would find warming! Call Idris first thing tomorrow morning, so he'd go show you your gift from me!"

"Thank you, sir!" said John.

“Say no more, son. It’s nothing,” he said, “By the way, I really would love it if you’d come meet my wife and daughter at the house!”

“It’ll be my pleasure, sir!” John responded, “You can count on that.”

“Alright then, you can go now,” said the Director.

John thanked him once again and made his way out of the office.

“Hey, John!” called the Director,

“Yes, sir!” responded John as he turned.

“You play golf?” he asked.

“No, sir!” John responded, “Not into sports!”

“Well then, maybe one day you’d tell me how you got that name over a bottle of scotch. Whoops! It’s gotta to be coke now, I guess!” joked the giggling Director, “John Death! Unique, I love that name. It’ll always be a reminder of what you saved me from.”

“Thank you, sir!” replied John.

“How about deer hunting?” the old man inquired again.

“Well...That, maybe!” he said.

“First Saturday of next month,” proposed the Director, “You’d love it! You take care, son!”

“I will, sir,” replied John as he smiled and shut the door behind him.

Acclivity

Tuesday, 22nd July

“She got five bedrooms in her belly and she is all yours, man!” said Idris as he toured John round the new apartment, “You’ve got a Jacuzzi in two of the bedrooms. The rest of the boys sure ain’t gon’ like you!”

John wore a cold smile as they walk through the fully furnished modern apartment located at the heart of the city, one of the structures that best described the cultural wealth of the city. The stylish and classy furniture made John feel he wouldn’t miss a thing in the world once locked within the dark modern interior.

“State of the art furniture and of course the latest technology in sound gadgets,” said Idris, “You’re much younger than me so I presume it’ll be easier for you to figure out how to operate these high-tech babies!”

Idris took John round the house, everything was new and classic.

“And this is your gearhead, buddy,” added Idris as he opened the door to the garage, “She’s a beauty, isn’t she?” referring to the white convertible SLR McLaren Mercedes parked in the garage, “Hit the road with this super twin-turbo baby and you’ll understand why she cost a fortune!”

“Impressive.” John said as he bent to have a look at the interior, “The only time I’ve ever saw this baby was on TV!”

“Arguably one of the most beautiful cars of all time!” Idris added, “Well, you live the dream now, buddy! The apartment with everything in it has got your name on it, however, the rule is, if you wanna work for the boss you’ve got to return the signed cheque

and go on a \$26, 000 a month allowance which will be wired to any account of your choice on the 20th of every month or...You can still keep the house, the car and the cheque. Walk away like a bird flying down into the sunset. I'd land on the beach and pick as many bugs as I want if I was you! It's your call, buddy!"

John brought out the cheque from his pocket, while still admiring the car; smiled, sighed and handed it over to Idris without saying a word.

"Are you sure about this, man?" asked Idris.

"A hundred percent sure, my friend!" John responded.

"Hmm! Wise choice, man! Wise choice!" complimented Idris as he pocketed the cheque. "You'll be briefed tomorrow at the house, by the boss himself."

"You said that like he knew I wasn't gonna go for the cheque!" said John.

"Trust me, he said you'll never go for the cheque." replied Idris, "The boss thinks and says that you're a good guy! However, a piece of advice; when you get to the house just do yourself a favour and not try anything stupid with the boss' precious gem!"

"Precious gem? I don't follow!" John responded.

"Diane, his daughter," Idris said, "I know he has got a soft spot for you in his heart, you know, the whole-saving him from Tobriano's boys and all. And from the look of things, you're young and charming, and with a charisma like that, Diane will forget her brains in the Johns. Oh, pardon me for that, it just came out. It's not like..."

"We're cool!" said John.

"The thing is, I know exactly what will go down once she sets her prurient eyes on you. Just saying."

"Hmm! You have no idea what will go down!" John mumbled as he caressed the white convertible.

"What? I didn't get that?" Idris interposed.

“I said, you have no idea what will go down!” John responded, “Every man has got his own principles!” turning to Idris, “You don’t like me, do you?”

“Oh no! I’ve got nothing against you, man. I’m just giving you a heads up, buddy!” said Idris, “I’ve been around the family for more than a decade now! The boss would shoot down an angel or any plane that cast a shadow on his daughter’s skin during summer.”

“You made it sound like the man is a maniac, give him a break!” said John.

“Trust me,” said Idris as he walked close to the convertible, “As soft as he might appear on the surface, it’s safer for you to sleep in a hungry lion’s den than ride with...”

“Can I have the keys, already?” John interjected.

“Sure, why not,” said Idris, “Here!” as he flung the keys, “The keys to the apartment and the car!”

“Thank you, man!” said John.

“You’re welcome!” said Idris, “By the way, how were you able to take out six armed men at the supermarket like that! The way the boss described it, he made it sound like a scene from the movies!”

“Let’s just say I’m a professional at what I do, buddy!” John boasted.

John shut the door on entering the car, “What does this button do?” pressing a button, “Oh! Figures!”

The garage door rolled up before Idris could utter a word, and John didn’t hesitate to put the big engine to the test.

“I believe you know your way out!” said John as he reversed.

“Yes, I do. Will pick you up 9:30am tomorrow,” said Idris, “The boss wants us there by 10am prompt.”

“Okay, man!” he said, “See you then!”

“Schmuck” Idris whispered.

Meet the Podruffio's

Wednesday, 23rd July

Two guards with a police dog each stood by a pair of large sophisticated iron gates as Idris and John drove in a black SUV through the statues that ornamented the big mansion, the magnificent estate had three swimming pools with a spectacular view over the lake. John noticed the presence of many gardeners and a few armed men.

“Loads of security in here,” said John, “The old man must have got many enemies!”

“Yeah, it wasn't like this until the day after you saved him,” said Idris, “The boss fired the other guys and hired these bad boys when he realised that one of his competition, Tobriano means business. It's a fortified wall in here, these boys wouldn't even let a mosquito come near the fence now!”

“They look like they could eat a tiger alive!” said John referring to the guards.

“My thought too, buddy! Oh and um...John,” said Idris, “That thing I told you about the boss' daughter, it's no joke, okay? Some fool got fed with lead weeks back for raising his hand on the precious gem.”

“Is that right?” asked John.

“Damn right, my man,” answered Idris, “And that fool was actually the supposed-to-be future son in-law!”

“Hmm! That's cold!” John added.

The car pulled up front at the mansion. Idris and John got out, one of the guards made a move to frisk John.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you. Special guest here,” said Idris, “You do that, the boss would cut those fingers off, Tony!”

The guard moved back staring at the men. John followed Idris into the mansion.

“Aah! John! Finally, you are here,” said the Director as he welcomed them, “Sonia, go get Diane,” talking to one of the maids, “Diane! Martha!” he cried out loud, “John Death is here!”

“Good morning, sir!” said John as he shook the Director’s hand.

“Morning, John!” responded the Director, “You got here just in time. My daughter was just about going out! I hope you like your new place.”

“Oh, it took my breath away, sir. I super love it.” said John, “Woke up feeling like a prince this morning.”

“Oh, trust me,” said the Director, “I know that feeling.”

“Daddy,” said a soft tender voice.

The men turned.

“Ah! There she is!” said the Director.

As the young and beautiful Diane made her way gently down the stairs in her red dress, John was bedazzled by her sight.

“Isn’t she beautiful?” said the Director as he smiled joyfully.

“Yes,” responded John, “Yes, undeniably!” Briefly lost in a world of fantasy as Diane walked down smiling, wearing the most beautiful dress he had ever seen which had an enormous paillettes that created a mermaid impression. Diane’s smile expressed one thing only; that she need not make any apologies for her curves.

“Honey, this is the man!” said the Director, “I want you to meet John Death!”

“I feel alive now,” whispered John as he smiled.

Diane tried to cover her teeth in order not to fully give in to his jokes, but anyone with a good sight could tell that he got her right where he wanted with his good sense of humour.

“Hi, John!” she said, “Daddy told me a lot about you,” she stretched her tender hand for a shake.

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