

**One for the road**

by

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INT. LOCATION

NICOLAS at his desk. He leans forward and speaks into a machine.

NICOLAS  
Bring him in.

He sits back. The door opens. VICTOR walks in, slowly. His clothes are torn. He is bruised. The door closes behind him.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Hello! Good morning. How are you?  
Let's not beat about the bush.  
Anything but that. D'accord?  
You're a civilized man. So am I.  
Sit down.

VICTOR slowly sits. NICOLAS stands, walks over to him.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
What do you think this is? It's my  
finger. And this is my little  
finger. This is my big finger and  
this is my little finger. I wave  
my big finger in front of your  
eyes. Like this. And now I do the  
same with my little finger. I can  
also use both... at the same time.  
Like this. I can do absolutely  
anything I like. Do you think I'm  
mad? My mother did?

He laughs.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Do you think waving fingers in  
front of people's eyes is silly? I  
can see your point. You're a man  
of the highest intelligence. But  
would you take the same view if it  
was my boot - or my penis? Why am  
I so obsessed with eyes? Am I  
obsessed with eyes? Possibly. Not  
my eyes. Other people's eyes. The  
eyes of people who are brought to  
me here. They're so vulnerable.  
The soul shines through them. Are  
you a religious man? I am. Which  
side do you think God is on? I'm  
going to have a drink.

He goes to sideboard, pours whiskey.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

You're probably wondering where  
you're wife is. She's in another  
room.

(drinks)

Good-looking woman.

(drinks)

God, that was good.

He pours another.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I can hold my booze.

(drinks)

You may have noticed I'm the chatty  
type. You probably think I'm part  
of a predictable, formal, long-  
established pattern; i.e. I chat  
away, friendly, insouciant, I open  
the batting, as it were, in a light  
hearted, even carefree manner,  
while another waits in the wings,  
silent, introspective, coiled like  
a puma. No, no. It's not quite  
like that. I run the place. God  
speaks through me. I'm referring  
to the Old Testament God, by the  
way, although I'm a long way from  
being a Jewish. Everyone respects  
me here. Including you, I take it?  
I think that is the correct stance.

(pause)

Stand up.

VICTOR stands.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Sit down.

VICTOR sits.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Thank you so much.

(pause)

Tell me something.

(silence)

What a good looking woman your wife  
is. You're a very lucky man. Tell  
me... one for the road, I think...

He pours whiskey.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

You do respect me, I take it?

He stands in front of VICTOR and looks down at him. VICTOR looks up.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
I would be right in assume that?

Silence.

VICTOR  
(quietly)  
I don't know you.

NICOLAS  
But you respect me.

VICTOR  
I don't know you.

NICOLAS  
Are you saying you don't respect me?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Are you saying you would respect me if you knew me better? Would you like to know me better?  
(pause)  
Would you like to know me better?

VICTOR  
What I would like... has no bearing on the matter.

NICOLAS  
Oh yes it has.  
(pause)  
I've heard so much about you. I'm terribly pleased to meet you. Well, I'm not sure that pleased is the right word. One has to be so scrupulously about language. Intrigued. I'm intrigued. Firstly because I've heard so much about you. Secondly, because if you don't respect me you're unique. Every one else knows the voice of God speaks through me. You're not a religious man, I take it?  
(pause)  
You don't believe in a guiding light?  
(pause)  
(MORE)

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

What then?

(pause)

So... morally... you flounder in wet shit. You know... like when you've eaten a rancid omelette.

(pause)

I think I deserve one for the road.

He pours, drinks.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Do you drink whiskey

(pause)

I hear you have a lovely house. Lots of books. Someone told me some of my boys kicked it around a bit. Pissed on the rugs, that sort of thing. I wish they wouldn't do that. I do really. But you know what it's like - they have such responsibilities - and they feel them - they are constantly present - day and night - there responsibilities - and so, sometimes, they piss on a few rugs. You understand. You're not a fool.

(pause)

Is your son all right?

VICTOR

I don't know.

NICOLAS

Oh, I'm sure he's all right. What age is he... seven... or thereabouts? Big lad, I'm told. Nevertheless, silly of him to behave as he did. But is he all right?

VICTOR

I don't know.

NICOLAS

Oh, I'm sure he's all right. Anyway, I'll have a word with him later and find out. He's somewhere on the second floor, I believe.

(pause)

Well now...

(pause)

What do you say? Are we friends?

(pause)

(MORE)

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

I'm prepared to be frank, as a true friend should. I love death. What about you?

(pause)

What about you? Do you love death? Not necessarily your own. Others. The death of others. Do you love the death of others, or at any rate, do you love the death of others as much as I do?

(pause)

Are you always so dull? I understand you enjoyed the cut and thrust of debate.

(pasue)

Death. Death. Death. Death. As has been noted by the most respected authorities, it is beautiful. The purest, most harmonious thing there is. Sexual intercourse is nothing compared to it.

He drinks.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Talking about sexual intercourse...

He laughs wildly, stops.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Does she... fuck? Or does she... ? Or does she... like... you know... what? What does she like? I'm talking about your wife? Your wife.

(pause)

You know the old joke? Does she fuck?

(Heavily, in another voice)

Does she fuck!

He laughs.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

It's ambiguous of course. It Could mean she fucks like a rabbits or she fucks not at all.

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Well, we're all God's creatures. Even your wife.

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

There is only one obligation. *To be honest.* You have no other obligation. Weigh that. In your mind. Do you know the man who runs this country? No? Well, he's a very nice chap. He took me aside the other day, last Wednesday I think it was, he took me aside, me, and he said to me, he said, in what I can only describe as a hoarse whisper, Nic, he said, Nic (that's my name), Nic, if you ever come across anyone whom you have good reason to believe is getting on my tits tell them one thing, tell them honesty is the best policy. The cheese was superb. Goat. One for the road.

He pours.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Your wife and I had a very nice chat but I couldn't help noticing she didn't look her best. She's probably menstruating. Women do that.

(pause)

You know, old chap, I do love other things, apart from death. So many things. Nature. Trees, things like that. A nice blue sky. Blossom.

(pause)

Tell me... truly... are you beginning to love me?

(pause)

I think your wife is. Beginning. She is beginning to fall in love with me. On the brink... of doing so. The trouble is, I have rivals. Because everyone here has fallen in love with your wife. It's her eyes have beguiled them. What's her name? Gila... or something?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Who would you prefer to be? You or me?

(MORE)

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

(pause)

I'd go for me if I were you. The trouble with you, although I grant your merits, is that you're on a losing wicket, while I can't put a foot wrong. Do you take my point? Ah God, let me confess, let me make a confession to you. I have never been more moved, in the whole of my life, as when - only the other day, last Friday, I believe - the man who runs the country announced to the country: We are all patriots, we are as one, we all share a common heritage. Except you, apparently.

(pause)

I feel a link, you see, a bond. I share a commonwealth of interest. I am not alone. I am not alone!

Silence.

VICTOR

Kill me.

NICOLAS

What?

VICTOR

Kill me.

NICOLAS goes to him, puts his arm around him.

NICOLAS

What's the matter?

(pause)

What in heaven's name is the matter?

(pause)

Mmmmmmmmm?

(pause)

You're probably just hungry. Or thirsty. Let me tell you something. I hate despair. I find it intolerable. The stink of gets up my nose. It's a blemish. Despair, old fruit, is a cancer. It should be castrated. Indeed I've often found that that works. Chop the balls off and despair goes out the window. You're left with a happy man. Or a happy woman.

VICTOR does so.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
You're soul shines out your eyes.

**Blackout.**

**Lights up. Afternoon.**

NICOLAS standing with a small boy.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

NIKKY  
Nicky.

NICOLAS  
Really? How odd.

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Do you like cowboys and Indians?

NICKY  
Yes. A bit.

NICOLAS  
What do you really like?

NIKKY  
I like aeroplanes.

NICOLAS  
Real ones or toy ones?

NIKKY  
I like both kinds of ones.

NICOLAS  
Do you?  
(pause)  
Why do you like aeroplanes?

Pause.

NIKKY  
Well... because they go so fast.  
Through the air. The real ones do.

NICOLAS  
And the toy ones?

NIKKY

I pretend they go as fast as the  
real ones do.

Pause.

NICOLAS

Do you like your mummy and daddy?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Do you like your mummy and daddy?

NIKKY

Yes.

NICOLAS

Why?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Why?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Do you find that question hard to  
answer?

Pause.

NIKKY

Where's mummy?

NICOLAS

You don't like your mummy an daddy?

NIKKY

Yes. I do.

NICOLAS

Why?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Would you like to be a soldier when  
you grow up?

NIKKY

I don't mind.

NICOLAS

You don't? You like soldiers.  
Good. But you spat at my soldiers  
and you kicked them. You attacked  
them.

NIKKY

Were they your soldiers?

NICOLAS

They are your country's soldiers.

NIKKY

I didn't like those soldiers.

NICOLAS

They don't like you either, my  
darling.

**Blackout.**

**Lights up. Night.**

NICOLAS sitting. GILA standing. Her clothes are torn. She  
is bruised.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

When did you meet your husband?

GILA

When I was eighteen.

NICOLAS

Why?

GILA

Why?

NICOLAS

Why?

GILA

I just met him.

NICOLAS

Why?

GILA

I didn't plan it.

NICOLAS

Why not?

GILA  
I didn't know him.

NICOLAS  
Why not?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Why not?

GILA  
I didn't know him.

NICOLAS  
Why not?

GILA  
I met him.

NICOLAS  
When?

GILA  
When I was eighteen.

NICOLAS  
Why?

GILA  
He was in the room.

NICOLAS  
Room?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Room?

GILA  
The same room.

NICOLAS  
As what?

GILA  
As I was.

NICOLAS  
As I was?

Pause.

GILA

As I was.

NICOLAS

Room? What room?

GILA

A room.

NICOLAS

What room?

GILA

My father's room.

NICOLAS

Your father? What's your father got to do with it?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

You *father*? How dare you? Fuckpig.

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Your father was a wonderful man. His country is proud of him. He's dead. He was a man of honour. He's dead. Are you prepared to insult the memory of your father?

Pause.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

Are you prepared to defame, to debase, the memory of your father? Your father fought for his country. I knew him. I revered him. Everyone did. He believed in God. He didn't think, like you shitbags. He lived. He lived. He was iron and gold. He would die, he would die, he would die for his country, for his God. And he did die, he died, he died for his God. You turd. To spawn such a daughter. What a fate. Oh, poor, perturbed spirit, to be haunted forever by such scum and spittle.

(MORE)

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
How do you dare speak of your  
father to me? I loved him, as if  
he were my own father.

Silence.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Where did you meet your husband?

GILA  
In a street.

NICOLAS  
What were you doing there?

GILA  
Walking.

NICOLAS  
What was he doing?

GILA  
Walking.  
(pause)  
I dropped something. He picked it  
up.

NICOLAS  
What did you drop?

GILA  
The evening paper.

NICOLAS  
You were drunk.  
(pause)  
You were drugged.  
(pause)  
You had absconded from your  
hospital.

GILA  
I was not in a hospital.

NICOLAS  
Where are you now?  
(pause)  
Where are you now? Do you think  
you are in a hospital?  
(pause)  
Do you think we have nuns upstairs?

GILA  
No nuns.

NICOLAS  
What do we have?

GILA  
Men.

NICOLAS  
Have they been raping you?

She stares at him.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
How many times?  
(pause)  
How many times have you been raped?  
(pause)  
How many times?

He stands, goes to her, lifts his finger.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
This is my big finger. And this is  
my little finger. Look. I wave  
them in front of your eyes. Like  
this. How many times have you been  
raped?

GILA  
I don't know.

NICOLAS  
And you consider yourself a  
reliable witness?

He goes to the sideboard, pours a drink, sits, drinks.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
You're a lovely woman. Well, you  
were.

He leans back, drinks, sighs.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
Your son is... seven. He's a  
little prick. You made him so.  
You have taught him to be so. You  
had a choice. You could have  
encouraged him to be a good person.  
Instead, you encouraged him to be a  
little prick. You encouraged him  
to spit, to strike at soldiers of  
honor, soldiers of God.  
(pause)  
Oh well...

(MORE)

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 in one way I suppose it's academic.  
 (pause)  
 You're of no interest to me. I  
 might even let you out of here, in  
 due course. But I should think you  
 might entertain us all a little  
 more before you go.

**Blackout.**

**Lights up. Night.**

NICOLAS standing. VICTOR sitting. VICTOR is tidily dressed.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 How have you been? Surviving?

VICTOR  
 Yes.

NICOLAS  
 Yes?

VICTOR  
 Yes. Yes.

NICOLAS  
 Really? How?

VICTOR  
 Oh...

Pause.

NICOLAS  
 I can't hear you.

VICTOR  
 It's my mouth.

NICOLAS  
 Mouth?

VICTOR  
 Tongue.

NICOLAS  
 What's the matter with it?  
 (pause)  
 What about a drink? One for the  
 road. What do you say to a drink?

He goes to the bottle, pours two glasses, gives a glass to  
 VICTOR.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 Drink up. It'll put lead in your  
 pencil. And then we'll find  
 someone to take it out.

He laughs.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 We can do that you know. We can  
 have a first class brothel  
 upstairs, on the sixth floor,  
 chandeliers, the lot. They'll suck  
 you in and blow you out in little  
 bubbles. All volunteers. Their  
 daddies are in our business. Which  
 is, I remind you, to keep the world  
 clean for God. Get me? Drink up.  
 Drink up. Are you refusing to  
 drink with me?

VICTOR drinks. His head falls back.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 Cheers.

NICOLAS drinks.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 You can go.  
 (pause)  
 You can leave. We'll meet again.  
 I hope. I trust we will always  
 remain friends. Go out. Enjoy  
 life. Be good. Love your wife.  
 She'll be joining you in about a  
 week by the way. If she feels up  
 to it. Yes. I feel we've both  
 benefited from our discussions.

VICTOR mutters.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 What?

VICTOR mutters.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)  
 What?

VICTOR  
 My son.

NICOLAS

Our son? Oh don't worry about him.  
He was a little prick.

VICTOR straightens and stares at NICOLAS.

Silence.

Blackout.