

A Divine Comedy

By

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TITLE CARD: "10 PM on a Saturday"

TITLE CARD: "Somewhere in Illinois"

A man COUGHS excruciatingly, followed by the loud THUD of a body hitting a table. The screeching of CHAIRS MOVING, as well as the TINKLING OF GLASSES AND SILVERWARE is heard.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

TYLER CARLYLE, an old man suffering from the onset of dementia, sits in a recessed booth wide-eyed and terrified. An untouched cup of coffee, blueberry muffin, and opened notebook sits in front of him, while a slow doo-wop song plays over the cafe's stereo.

Tyler marks a single dash amongst many in his book, before looking up to stare at an uncomfortable WAITRESS cleaning up the trash from a previous customer. She hurriedly returns to the back kitchen. On the paper are paranoid chicken scratches and disturbed doodles.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Fourteen.

Tyler turns to examine the CAFE EMPLOYEES behind the counter, whom appear to be glancing at him offhand.

The BELL of the cafe door is heard, as his friend, BART BLINDER, an aged, garrulous man given to mania, comes to sit next to him.

He places a small briefcase in front of him on the table.

BART

I've done it, Tyler. I've finally decided.

TYLER

What's that, Bart?

BART

I finally realize that I love life; all the revelries, the jubilation. The lucidity of it all is so transcendent!

At a table across the room, a young man coughs exorbitantly before collapsing on the table. Tyler, distraught, watches as the cafe employees carry him off to the back room.

(CONTINUED)

BART

You know, I was listening to this song the other day. I hadn't heard it since I was a Sophomore in high school.

Tyler watches, terrified, as he examines the cafe employees carrying the young man to the back.

Bart clicks open the briefcase, revealing an old backgammon board inside. He begins placing the checkers on the board. He grabs two coffee creamers to replace two missing white checkers on the board.

BART (CONT'D)

The Teen Commandments! Number one: stop and think before you drink. It's so idealistic and youthful. I want my life to be just like that.

TYLER

We're all going to hell.

BEAT.

BART

What's that?

Bart turns to look at the table as the waitress begins cleaning. Tyler makes another mark in his book.

TYLER

The man, over at the table.

BART

What man?

TYLER

There's something in the coffee.

Bart looks at Tyler's cup.

BART

Did you put creamer in yours?

TYLER

No, look.

Tyler points to another coughing customer. Bart turns to see him fall face first as the employees rush out and haul him into the back.

(CONTINUED)

BART
That's very strange.

Tyler makes another mark in his notebook.

BART (CONT'D)
That's very strange, indeed.

Beat. Bart rolls a die onto the board, motioning to Tyler.

BART (CONT'D)
I'll play white, huh?

TYLER
I think they're going to hell.

BART
Hell? Why would you think hell?

TYLER
There's an aura about the place.

BART
"An aura!" It sounds so brooding.

TYLER
Can't you feel it? Some demonic
necromancy is in this coffee.

BART
And here I thought we were going to
play a game together; talk about
the weather. Now I'm involved in
witchcraft.

OFF SCREEN, another character coughs and hits the table. The clamoring of MOVING CHAIRS and SHUFFLING FEET is heard.

Abruptly, the waitress from before sets a coffee on their table as Tyler makes another mark in his book.

BART
Thank you so much.

Bart takes a drink of the coffee as Tyler recoils.

TYLER
You're a madman!

BART
Mm, you must be if you haven't had
this coffee.

(CONTINUED)

Bart takes another sip.

BART (CONT'D)
This stuff... Will send you
straight to heaven. You ever think
of that?

TYLER
No, I haven't.

BART
Well then just roll so we can
start.

Tyler begrudgingly rolls a die, getting a 6.

BART (CONT'D)
After you, then.

The two begin playing in earnest, while the shop seems to
quiet down to a normal volume.

The BELL of the shop door opening is heard, as a raucous
man, ARNOLD HEMBERLY, enters the restaurant with a younger
woman on his arm. He laughs as he takes his seat at the
table across from Bart and Tyler, who watches him with
obvious displeasure.

BART
Oh, don't mind him, Tyler.

Across the way, Arnold notices Tyler, whom he meets with a
wide-toothed grin.

Bart takes another drink of his coffee.

TYLER
You're sealing your fate, you know.

BART
Oh, please. What makes you think
these people are going to
hell? Maybe they were good in
life.

TYLER
No good comes from a cough.

Tyler moves one of his checkers haphazardly while watching
the cafe employees behind the counter.

(CONTINUED)

BART (O.S.)

Tyler, you can't play there. Pay attention to the game if you're going to play it.

Another cough, chairs shuffling. Tyler notices Arnold standing up.

BART (CONT'D)

And anyways, did you ever stop to think that these people could be making their ultimate transcendence? Heaven is a much more optimistic viewpoint.

TYLER

What number is that?

BART

You think too much, Tyler. That's why I'm in the lead so far.

TYLER

Seventeen?

Bart takes another sip of his coffee as Arnold saunters to the table, high and mighty.

ARNOLD

This is just a small world, isn't it? Hey--when did you two get back out on the streets?

TYLER

Eighteen!

Tyler makes another mark in his journal.

BART

Oh, we've been out for a while, now. The doctors said I had maniacal delusions--the good kind, at least.

Arnold chuckles as he looks over the two men. He seems excited to get to Tyler.

ARNOLD

I see you're still writing your poetry, Tyler.

The WHIRRING of the coffee grinder startles Tyler as he notices an employee staring at him from behind the counter. He turns to see Arnold still talking to him.

(CONTINUED)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
--hear back from our lawyers about the damages? That little incident didn't just disappear when you got admitted, you know.

Tyler stares at Arnold, dumbfounded.

TYLER
I don't--

BART
You know we've been keeping up with it, Arnold. We're professional men.

Arnold looks over Bart and Tyler for a pause. He smiles condescendingly, before noticing the game on the table.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
What's this, backgammon?

BART
Just a friendly game between two colleagues. Tyler and I find it therapeutic.

Arnold chuckles to himself.

ARNOLD
You should try chess. More of a thinking man's game. I hear it helps prevent alzheimers.

BART
Oh, I couldn't. I'm a pacifist, you know.

Arnold smiles.

ARNOLD
Of course. Well, I'll leave you two to your game. You should be getting a letter in the mail soon, Bart.

Yet another cough is heard, as the employees rush out to take another into the back. Tyler watches and makes another mark in his book.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
Oh, and Tyler...

Tyler looks at Arnold, blankly.

(CONTINUED)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
We're all hoping for a speedy
recovery.

Tyler watches Arnold as he walks back to his table. The waitress sets a cup of coffee down on Arnold's table as he takes his seat.

BART
He's such a busy body. Doesn't
even ask how your day has been.

Arnold raises his cup of coffee as a toast, and drinks. Tyler smiles wryly as he preemptively makes another mark in his book.

BART (CONT'D)
Oh me, oh my. This is good
coffee. Hey, are you going to eat
that muffin?

TYLER
Hmm?

BART
You know, I think you're being too
narrow minded about this coffee
thing. I'm drinking this, and I've
never felt more spiritual in my
life.

Tyler is fixated on Arnold as he chats and drinks his coffee.

TYLER
Just one more sinner. Hook, line,
and sinker.

Another cough from the booth next to Tyler and Bart's. Bart turns to watch the proceedings.

BART
Tyler, that man there was reading
the Book of Acts. You mean to tell
me a man reading the Bible is going
to hell?

Arnold whispers in the ear of the woman he is with. He glances at Tyler, whom is entranced.

BART (O.S.)
Tyler?

TYLER

All it takes is a few drinks...

BART

Well, here I am.

Arnold stands and sets money on the table before walking out of the shop. He makes his hand into the shape of a gun, firing one round at Tyler before leaving.

Tyler, defeated, sits back in his seat, staring blankly.

BART

Well, there's one more plus for my theory, at least.

Tyler stares at the half-finished game in front of him, and notices the rest of the cafe is now empty, bereft of any more sinners.

BART (O.S.)

Oh, well. There's always better luck next time.

Tyler looks to the counter, and sees every employee staring straight at him.

BART (O.S.)

But it must feel good knowing he's not going to heaven, at least. Right, Tyler?

Tyler's face contorts into a look of dejection, as he takes a drink of his coffee without thought.

BART (O.S.)

I'm still here, though. So what does that mean, huh? Hey, it's your move, Tyler.

Realizing what he's done, Tyler's face turns to terror, and then one of revelation.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Snow begins to fall on the lonely cafe as the night seems to lull asleep.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

A slow song plays over the radio as the employees of the cafe come to escort the now lucid Tyler from his seat. He follows towards the back door, which opens to reveal a blinding light that engulfs the entire frame.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Bart sits alone in the booth, eating Tyler's blueberry muffin as he stares at nothing in particular. In front of him, a half-finished game sits unresolved. Bart sighs, and throws the board shut.

THE END