

A Cube with a View

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By

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## A Cube with a View

*We're on a corporate patio where most employees come out to smoke or sit under the tree for a quick break. There is only one table with chairs. Other chairs are also available around the patio but no other table.*

*ALEX enters carrying a glass of soy milk and sits at the table. She takes a full minute to contemplate her situation. She is dressed in very plain clothes. She wears sensible shoes. Alex is pretty but not stunning.*

*DENNIS enters carrying a non-descript tray/container of French fries. He is also managing various containers/bottles/packets of ketchup, ranch dressing, mustard, and mayonnaise and napkins. He notices ALEX. Pauses to make a decision. Then sits at her table. Dennis is average in every way; he is handsome but not stunning. He has a warm and genuine smile.*

*Throughout the play, DENNIS occupies himself with the fries and condiments - putting them on, opening containers, using napkins, eating, waving them as an extension of his arm to make a point. And so on. ALEX on the other hand does not drink from her glass.*

*There is friendly co-worker energy between them. ALEX and DENNIS alternately look as though they're about to start a conversation but think better of it before speaking to the other. At least 60 seconds passes silently between them.*

Man, they sure—

DENNIS

Do you think it's going to rain?

ALEX

Excuse me?

DENNIS

Rain. Do you think it's going to rain?

ALEX

I think it's supposed to. Right?

DENNIS

ALEX

I think so too.

Yeah. It is. Supposed to rain.

*They both consider the possibility and can't decide if they want to change the subject or not.*

DENNIS

Oh I know—

Sorry—

ALEX

You know when—

Sorry—

ALEX

You go.

DENNIS

I was just going to say that I remembered reading the forecast in the paper this morning. It said there is an 80% chance of rain. Those are pretty good odds. That's all. What were you? Going to say?

ALEX

Oh...it doesn't matter.

DENNIS

No really. I interrupted you. What were you going to say?

*Dennis is distracted by his love of fries. Alex notices his distraction.*

ALEX

I was going to say it probably won't rain...because it's supposed to rain. You know how that seems to happen? A lot. Right? The greater the percentage, the more likely it is not. To. Rain.

DENNIS

I'm not following.

ALEX

I know.

DENNIS

Oh. No. I'll stop messing with them. I just. Um. I don't understand why you think it's not going to rain.

ALEX

I was making a joke. Poking a little fun. At the weather....

*They share a nervous laugh.*

*Now really stuck for conversation. An epic silence seems to pass.*

DENNIS

Hey! Could you believe that guy?

ALEX

Who?

DENNIS

You know... what's his name...shit, what is that guy's name?

ALEX

Does it matter?

DENNIS

I know it. Damn it. I know his name. This is embarrassing. What is it?

ALEX

Stop thinking about it.

DENNIS

What?

ALEX

If you stop trying to remember his name, then you'll remember it.

DENNIS

Oh.

*Occupies himself with his fries and such.*

*They search for something to talk about.*

ALEX

Where do you suppose they put the other tables?

DENNIS

I don't know. I guess they could be cleaning them, or painting them. Maybe they're getting new ones.

ALEX

Yeah maybe.

*They search for words.*

DENNIS

How is—

ALEX

How are—

Sorry—

Sorry—

DENNIS

You go.

ALEX

I was just—

DENNIS

Frank! His name is Frank!

ALEX

Well, now that we've cleared that up—

DENNIS

Now I can tell you what I was going to say.

*He lets the anticipation build.*

ALEX

Okay. I'm ready. You can tell me.

DENNIS

Frank was in a full on rant about cats!

ALEX

Huh.

DENNIS

Have you ever heard him do that? Oh my god, it's hilarious! Somebody gets him started about cats – I mean people actually egg him on, set him up, you know? Oh my god, it's so damn funny – and then he just goes off on this full on rant about how he hates cats. And then. And then. He always ends it by shouting, "I fucking hate cats with all my fucking heart!" I'm tellin' ya' you gotta hear him do it. I can't even do it justice. Oh. It's great.

ALEX

I don't get it.

DENNIS

He hates cats. Frank. Hates. Cats.

ALEX

You mean he really hates cats or is he just being funny or even ironic because he has like four of his own cats?

DENNIS

No he really fucking hates cats.

*More attention to food/drink while looking for words.*

ALEX

I need a different cubicle.

DENNIS

What's wrong with your cube?

ALEX

It's too small.

DENNIS

Your cube is huge. Don't you have the biggest cube on our floor?

*Alex ponders this.*

ALEX

I need a window cube.

Why?  
DENNIS

I just do.  
ALEX

DENNIS  
Where are you in line? You must be like next or second or close.

ALEX  
I'm next.

DENNIS  
Well, that's good. So what's your hurry?

ALEX  
I made an appointment with Brock.

*Takes this in. Makes a decision.*

DENNIS  
You made an appointment to see the Managing Partner because you want a cubicle with a window and you're next on the list anyway?

ALEX  
Next could be a long time.

DENNIS  
Next could be tomorrow.

ALEX  
How are your fries?

DENNIS  
Mmm?

ALEX  
Your fries. How are your fries? You seem to be enjoying them.

DENNIS

Yeah, they're good. Actually they're really good. I love fries and these are the best fries in town.

Luuuuu fries.

ALEX

I'm in love with him.

DENNIS

With who?

ALEX

Whom. Brock.

DENNIS

Brock.

ALEX

Yes. I know it's crazy. He's the Managing Partner and all, but I just can't stop thinking about him.

Whew. It feels good to finally say it out loud.

*The atmosphere changes.  
Dennis gathers himself.*

DENNIS

No you're not. Not really.

ALEX

Yes. Really.

DENNIS

No really. You're not.

ALEX

What is the matter with you? You're not being very supportive.

DENNIS

Alex, his name is "Brock."

So? ALEX

As in dumb as a rock-Brock. DENNIS

Dennis... ALEX

I'm just sayin. DENNIS

He's the Managing Partner. ALEX

Because all the smart ones were hired away. He's the Managing Partner by default not by design. DENNIS

That's rude. ALEX

That's true. DENNIS

*Stand off.*

Well, he likes me. ALEX

How do you know? DENNIS

We were reviewing files together last week. Our hands touched. There was this... electricity. I know he felt it too. ALEX

And what did he do? DENNIS

He turned the page... ALEX

Yeah... DENNIS

So?! ALEX

He's not into you. DENNIS

How do you know? Why not? ALEX

*Decides to be careful with her.*

DENNIS  
Because he would think you're a pushover. You're too sweet.

ALEX  
What are you talking about?

DENNIS  
Sweet. For him. Too.

ALEX  
Why are you being so mean?

DENNIS  
I'm not! That guy's totally into bondage. C'mon an arrogant fuck like Brock? Oh yeah. Whips.

ALEX  
And how would you know?

DENNIS  
Believe me. I know.

*Alex makes a decision*

ALEX  
Well, I could do that.

DENNIS  
You?!

ALEX  
Why not?

DENNIS  
Because you practically wear your hair in braids. You wear sensible shoes...and...kinda...quiet...clothes. No offense. I mean I like your clothes and your hair—

ALEX  
Oh no! No offense taken!

DENNIS  
I...I just meant. I was just sayin—

ALEX  
Saying what?

*Enter BROCK with a partially eaten apple.  
He is bigger and louder than life. He stands.*

BROCK  
Yes, Dennis. What were you saying?

*Dennis painfully takes in an injured Alex*

DENNIS  
Well, Brock. I was just saying that Frank's crazy. He's uh...he's...going off on one of his cat tirades. It's funny but sometimes I wonder if maybe he hurts

DENNIS (cont'd)  
someone else's feelings. I don't think he means to, but I still think it probably happens even though he's just trying to be funny.

BROCK  
I love the end where he screams, "I fucking hate cats with all my fucking heart!" That just kills me. Every time.

DENNIS  
I um, I guess I'm done. Let me just clean up my mess.

BROCK  
What is all of this? For fries?

DENNIS  
Yeah. Well.

BROCK  
That's good enough. Let me sit down and enjoy the rest of my apple. And talk with this pretty lady.

ALEX  
That would be lovely.

BROCK  
What was your name again sweetheart?

*Dennis takes in an injured Alex.*

ALEX  
Alexandra. 22<sup>nd</sup> floor.

BROCK  
Oh riiiiight.

*Long awkward silence.*

This sure is a goood apple.

DENNIS  
I'll see you later, Alex. Brock.

BROCK  
Yep.

*DENNIS exits with his condiments.*

ALEX  
Sir—

BROCK  
No sir. Nobody sir's me. Just Brock.

ALEX  
Okay. Brock. I was just going—

BROCK.  
Alexandra? What's your last name?

ALEX  
Stone.

BROCK  
You're on my calendar for this afternoon. Two o'clock. Right?

ALEX  
Yes.

BROCK  
Well we can just talk here. Now. Can't we?

ALEX  
Um, sure.

BROCK  
Unless, do we need privacy? Is this a human resources matter?

ALEX  
Oh no, no. Now is fine. This is fine.

*From here through the rest of this scene, BROCK begins biting his apple and chewing somewhat rudely and loudly. He may pause to pick a piece from his teeth or flick some off his shirt. He may become concerned with getting a little juice on his tie.*

BROCK  
Shoot.

ALEX  
I sit in the cubicles on the south side of the building.

BROCK  
Okay. I'm with you.

ALEX  
There are only four window—

BROCK  
So whatya' think of Dennis?

ALEX  
How do you mean?

BROCK  
You know. What do you think of him? He sits on the south side on twenty-two. He get his work done? Any problems?

ALEX  
We're peers. We don't review each other's work. I don't know what it's like.

BROCK  
True enough. Go on.

*Alex looks for opportunities to be closer to Brock. Sometimes he pulls away, sometimes he accepts her gesture and other times he leans into it.*

ALEX  
There are only four window cubicles. So I'm in...wait...let me draw it. I'll show you.

*Moments while Alex sketches on a napkin.*

So here's the west side and the south side. This is the hotel across the street from the south side. Here are the eight cubicles.

BROCK  
Where does Dennis sit?

ALEX  
Dennis? He sits in the left window cubicle. They're all numbered. I think he's 103.

BROCK  
He make a lot of personal calls?

ALEX

I wouldn't know. I sit here. Three cubes away and catty-corner from him.

BROCK

You have great real estate there. Right on the hallway. Biggest cubes. You've got your own printer too, no?

ALEX

Yes. I was wondering if we—

BROCK

Who else sits around you?

ALEX

Um, sir. Brock. Why are you so interested in Dennis?

BROCK

I'm thinking about promoting him.

ALEX

Dennis?

BROCK

Is there a problem?

ALEX

No I just—

BROCK

Ohhh, I know what this is about. You want to be promoted ahead of Dennis. Am I right? Clever girl...

ALEX

No!

BROCK

Sure and here you are making passes at me. A married man.

ALEX

Divorced.

BROCK

All the same. Does Dennis know you're after his job?

ALEX

I'm not after his job. Sir, I wanted—

BROCK

So you think that if we hook up I'll promote you over Dennis?

ALEX

Oh! This is wrong. I wanted—

BROCK

Because I will.

*Alex makes a fast decision. Too fast.*

ALEX

I'm in love with you.

BROCK

I'm not interested in love. I am, however, very interested in advancing the careers of my employees.

*Long silence*

So. Are you in? So to speak?

ALEX

Asshole.

BROCK

I'm sorry I didn't hear you.

ALEX

I said asshole.

BROCK

Now you're talkin'. Let's go up to my office.

ALEX

You are not at all who I thought you were.

BROCK

Ah c'mon, don't spoil the mood. This is just getting good.

ALEX

That day. In your office. Our hands touched. I felt electricity and I thought you did too. Don't you remember?

BROCK

Listen if you don't want to play, then why are we here?

ALEX

I wanted to ask you for a window cube.

BROCK

Is that all?

ALEX

Yes.

BROCK

Then no.

ALEX

No?

BROCK

No.

ALEX

Oh.

BROCK

If I let you jump the fence then all the other sheep are going to want to follow you.

ALEX

We're sheep?

BROCK

What's the difference? The point is that you'll get a window cube whenever you're up for one. Not before.

ALEX

What a waste.

BROCK

You played your cards all wrong. Miss. Stone.

*Silence. Their moods clash.*

ALEX

You're awful.

BROCK

Do you want to go up and fuck or not?

ALEX

Why did...I can't believe...

BROCK

Look, why do you care so much about a damn cubicle anyway?

ALEX

Because it has a view.

BROCK

Of a hotel. A fucking hotel.

ALEX

Never mind.

BROCK

You may as well tell me. This can't get much worse for you.

ALEX

I just. I thought it would make me feel...important.

BROCK

A window?

ALEX

Can you please just forget about it?

*A moment to take in palpable power imbalance.*

BROCK

*Leaving*

Well...if you ever change your mind.

ALEX

No way.

BROCK

You will.

ALEX

I won't.

BROCK

Too bad.

*Taking his time, he throws the apple in the trash.*

For you.

*BROCK exits.*

*ALEX takes a long time to gather herself.*

*DENNIS enters.*

DENNIS

How'd it go? Are you okay?

ALEX

How did you know he was gone?

DENNIS

I saw him leave.

ALEX

Were you spying on me?

No. Okay yeah. DENNIS

Why? ALEX

Because Brock is a raging asshole that's why. DENNIS

Yeah. ALEX

Did you get your cubicle? DENNIS

No. ALEX

Are. Are you. Are you still in love with him? DENNIS

No. ALEX

*Relief.*

Can I ask you something? DENNIS

Oh. No. ALEX

Why? Why do you want a window cube so badly? DENNIS

Can we just forget about this? ALEX

I know you want one. DENNIS

I did, yeah. ALEX

DENNIS

You're at the top of the list. People quit every day around here. You. You'll probably get a window next week.

ALEX

I know...

DENNIS

Oh right. Wait. I'm sorry. Did you just say you "did" want a window?

ALEX

Yes. I mean, I did.

DENNIS

But not anymore.

ALEX

What did you do with your fries?

DENNIS

Oh. I. Threw them away.

ALEX

Why?

DENNIS

I don't know I just did.

ALEX

I wanted to feel important, alright?

DENNIS

I'm sorry?

ALEX

I thought a window cube would make me feel important.

*Right at the end of her line.*

DENNIS

You can have mine.

ALEX

What?

DENNIS  
My cube. I'll switch with you.

ALEX  
Why?

DENNIS  
Because it doesn't matter to me.

ALEX  
It doesn't matter to me either—

DENNIS  
It does though.

It's important to you. And you're important. To. Me.

*Awkward but sweet silence.*

ALEX  
We should probably go up. I'm so going to have to figure out how to deal with this on my timesheet.

DENNIS  
Do you want your glass of milk?

ALEX  
It's actually soy milk.

DENNIS  
Soy milk.

ALEX  
I don't even know why I brought it out here.

DENNIS  
Oh.

*Awkward moment.*

Hey, I know!

Mmm? ALEX

Well...I was thinking about... DENNIS

I don't even like soy milk. ALEX

You know...we could... DENNIS

...we could? ALEX

Go by Frank's cube...you know...and maybe we could... DENNIS

Ah. We could. ALEX

DENNIS ALEX  
Meow. Meow.

*EXIT.*

*LIGHTS.*