

CLOSING TIME

Written by

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INT. "MOMENTA" COLLECTIBLES - MORNING

CLOSE-UP. A 1974 JVC VIDEOSPHERE, DISPLAYING THE ICONIC VIDEO GAME "PONG" - WITH ITS FAMILIAR, MONOTONOUS PIP...PIP...PIP.. UNTIL THE WELCOME BELL OF A STORE RINGS OUT. GAME OVER.

ELLIOT DYSON looks up from behind the counter - clearly unable to hide his reaction to the beautiful WOMAN who has just stepped in to his modern, high-end memorabilia boutique. Turning slowly on her heels as she surveys the merchandise on display, the woman drifts inexorably towards him on a cloud of childlike wonder, passing an ornate cage with a Cockatoo.

WOMAN

What a beautiful bird.

ELLIOT

It's funny you should say that.

Because a moment ago...

(switching to Cockney)

I was finkin' da exact same fing.

And in an instant...the connection is unmistakable.

WOMAN

Great accent. I can barely manage:

(also going Cockney)

"My name is Michael Caine and it's my aim..."

ELLIOT

"...to be in every bloody movie ever made."

WOMAN (CONT'D)

"...to be in every bloody movie ever made."

ELLIOT

You know that?! Get outta here!

WOMAN

(giggling)

**You** get out of here!

ELLIOT

(offering her his hand)

Elliot Dyson. Who on earth are you?

WOMAN

I'm Grace.

ELLIOT

I know how cheesy this is going to sound. And I mean gorgonzola-level cheese. But you look so familiar. I **know** you. Do you have a last name?

GRACE  
 (surprisingly curt)  
 I do.

ELLIOT  
 O-kay. So...how can I help?

GRACE  
 I'm looking for something rare and beautiful. One of a kind.

ELLIOT  
 Would I be out of line asking if it's a gift for the man who shares your last name? Or someone els..

GRACE  
 I lost that man in a car accident exactly two years ago, to the day, Mr. Dyson. So...it's a reminder.

ELLIOT  
 I am so sorry. What a jerk, with my shmoozy proprietor routine.

GRACE  
 And you were doing such a great job too. Although "bonjour madame" would have been way smoother than the Cockney term for a female.

ELLIOT  
 My apologies, Grace. My private wisecracks usually pass unnoticed.

GRACE  
 Like the bird in the gilded cage?

ELLIOT  
 That...was unintentional. But annoyingly symbolic all the same.

GRACE  
 I guess you don't get out of your cage much. No "significant other"?

ELLIOT  
 (gesturing to his store)  
 You're looking at it.

GRACE  
 So do you have any more symbols or proverbs for sale? A rolling stone ...with no moss perhaps?

ELLIOT  
I have Keith Richards' alarm clock.

GRACE  
Unused of course.

ELLIOT  
An ideal gift for that special  
someone who just won't wake up.

And instantly, Grace's desire for amusing banter dissolves.

GRACE  
I hope it's not just me..but we're  
burning time now with small talk  
when this...is so rare.

ELLIOT  
This?

So she delivers a fateful hand-gesture - laying it all on the line right there: upturned palms, fingertips tilting back and forth in the space between them. Indicating him and her.

GRACE  
This.

ELLIOT  
(caution to the wind)  
I know. It's crazy. Two minutes and  
I feel like I've known you forever.

GRACE  
Ditto. That's my favourite line  
from the movie "Ghost", by the way.  
Although we're still a long way  
from sharing a pottery wheel.  
(goofy grin)  
So what do you say we get out of  
here? Start with a cup of coffee  
and see where life takes us.

ELLIOT  
Six o' clock and I'm yours.

GRACE  
You're kidding, right?

ELLIOT  
Grace...you just arrived in my  
store like an 18-wheeler. And from  
what I can tell, you are amazing.  
Quite possibly spectacular. But I  
can't close now! Give me..

GRACE

Why not?

ELLIOT

Let's do that coffee right here and I'll tell you about it.

GRACE

I'll make the coffee.

ELLIOT

I have a 1960's Faema espresso machine back there. So it can be a little intimidating.

GRACE

If it's an E61, I say we skip the coffee and book a chapel in Reno.

(responding to his sudden  
look of incredulity)

I studied Antique Appraisal in London. That's where I met my husband. Being the only Americans in our year, we were pretty much regarded as the cultural lepers.

ELLIOT

By people with names like Pemberton-Smythe..

GRACE

Or Huffington-Reeves. Oh my!  
A genuine 1961 Faema E61.

Elliot sings the opening of "Also Sprach Zarathustra" as she approaches it. And Grace ends the stanza with a timely "boom boom, boom boom" before starting to prepare two cappuccinos.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You were about to offer some sad excuse for why you can't, or should I say "won't" close your store for a few hours and escape with me.

ELLIOT

His name is Freedman.

The tiniest flicker of a reaction from Grace.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I've never met him. Don't have enough information to Google or send him a Facebook friend request. But this guy doesn't want a friend.

GRACE

Then what does he want?

ELLIOT

Freedman wants me out of here. So I have the pleasure of regular visits from his so-called "associates".

GRACE

But why does he want you out so badly? Are you being threatened?!

ELLIOT

I don't know and I really don't care. Strip mall, overpass, peeler bar..I'm staying put. And no, there have been no threats..yet. These guys are too slick for that. But they're pushing hard..real hard.

GRACE

And you think by leaving with me..

ELLIOT

It's a territory thing. To understand, you probably have to be a guy, or a pitbull with its leg up. A closed store sends the wrong message. Besides, everything I need has always been right here.

Then she hands him his cup, with intricate latte foam art.

GRACE

I see your bird in a gilded cage  
..and raise you one phoenix.

ELLIOT

(grinning at her creation)  
Wow. I'm keeping this masterpiece intact for as long as I can.

So he takes a long, slow sip - not to disturb the image.

GRACE

Elliot. Come with me now. Please.

ELLIOT

Grace, how can it hurt to wait a few hours? We may have forever.

GRACE

We don't. We should leave right away. While we still can.

ELLIOT

You're starting to freak me out.  
 Seriously. Five minutes ago, you  
 were a total stranger and..WHOAH!  
 (gaping into the cup)  
 Your phoenix flapped its wings.

CLOSE-UP. THE CAPPUCCINO FOAM PHOENIX - ANIMATED FLAPPING

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(horrified realization)  
 Did you just drug my coffee?

Then he sees it. And following his furtive gaze, she does too: through the storefront window, jet black silhouettes of men in long coats sprinting past, heading for the entrance.

GRACE

Elliot..I swear to you. I don't  
 know how any of this works. I'm not  
 even meant to be here!

But a moment later, the door slams shut - of its own accord - before its deadbolt locks out the men on the other side. From the force of their shoulder charges though, it won't hold.

ELLIOT

Did you just do that!? Who..? No..  
 WHAT are you?!

GRACE

You have to believe me, Elliot.  
 This is just as scary for me. I'm  
 making it up as I go along. And I  
 need to watch every word, every  
 step so we both make it out of here  
 alive. But what I did with the door  
 is nothing compared to what **you** can  
 do in here. You just never realized  
 your power because you disappeared  
 into this cocoon of worthless junk.

ELLIOT

What are you talking about, Grace?!  
 This "junk" is priceless.

GRACE

It's only priceless to **you**, Elliot!  
 But if you won't leave it behind  
 now..Freedman will take your life.  
 It really is now or never! But you  
 have to **want** to leave. You have to  
**choose** to come with me.

ELLIOT  
But I don't even know who you are!

GRACE  
Patek Phillipe Chronograph - 1947.

ELLIOT  
(realization strikes)  
You sold..no..gave me this watch!

Fumbling frantically with the clasp, he flips it over to the engraving on the back: "MY ELI, TILL THE END OF TIME - GRACE"

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
What is this? Another hallucination  
like your phoenix? Then a straight  
jacket, so Freedman takes over my..

But she's not listening to another word. Grabbing his face with both hands, Grace kisses him deeply. And suddenly the echo of men battering the door melts into a monotonous, pounding PIP...PIP...PIP. Not a game of "Pong", but an ECG.

INT. CEDAR SINAI HEAD TRAUMA UNIT - CONTINUOUS

Removing a sleek VR headset, Grace turns to the man lying in the adjacent bed with sensors on his head, stirring groggily.

GRACE  
Welcome back, my love.

ELLIOT  
How long have I been out?

GRACE  
730 days.

A beat later, the door of the room bursts open - scattering the chairs, mop and tables that had barricaded it shut. And a wild-eyed doctor stumbles in with a pack of orderlies in tow.

DOCTOR  
(aghast)  
He's..awake! I can't.. What were  
you thinking, Mrs. Dyson?! You  
could have killed both of you!

GRACE  
If you pulled the plug this  
afternoon, Dr. Freedman, you would  
have killed the best part of me  
anyway. Now get out! I'd like to be  
alone with my husband.