

Other Memories

by

Peter Wood  
peterwood2@gmail.com

A coffee shop in disarray. One of the tables is upside down, the other is on its side and only one of the stools is upright, the other stools and chairs appear to have been thrown about the place with abandon and violence. It is sunset, and the light streams gold into the coffee shop, but night is quickly approaching and the darkness outside will slowly seep into the space throughout the play. In the distance, an explosion, some gunshots and two screams, one from a man and one from a woman. Then silence. Moments pass and JACK emerges from the bathroom exit, crawling on his belly and holding a large metal pipe in one hand. Seeing that the shop is empty, he quickly crawls behind the counter. Another scream, this time closer. From behind the counter we can hear Jack muttering to himself.

JACK

Oh god, oh god, oh god. Not real. This is not happening not happening.

He laughs a laugh on the edge of madness.

JACK

Just dreaming all a dream not real must've ate a bad burrito always have nightmares when I eat Taco Bell you think I'd learn but . . .

There is a loud crash right outside the coffee shop, like a car plowing into a dumpster.

JACK

Shit!

He is quiet. Slowly he peeks out from behind the counter furthest from the entrance door. A shadow fills the doorway, Jack backs behind the counter.

JILL enters, a small pistol in one hand, hair disheveled, wide-eyed with shock and terror. Casting a quick eye on the shop, she see it is empty, then turns back toward the entrance, making sure she hasn't been followed. Jack runs from behind the counter, metal pipe raised above his head to deliver a skull-crushing blow and letting out a crazed yell. Jill turns pistol raised to shoot. They recognize each other only a split-second before attempting to kill each other.

JACK

Jill!

JILL

Jack!

They stand still for an uncomfortable moment, battling conflicting desires. Finally, the need to have human contact overwhelms all of the hurt and bad memories and they rush together and tightly embrace.

Beat. A scream, several blocks away. Jack and Jill both move to the door to see if there is immediate danger. Seeing nothing and no one, they relax slightly and back away from the door. Throughout, however, they will both keep a close watch on the entrance in case someone else . . . or something else approaches.

Jill rights one of the tables and pulls up a chair. Jack moves toward her, but now the moment has gone all awkward again.

JILL

So. Um.

JACK

Yeah.

JILL  
How are you?

JACK  
How . . .

They both laugh, the tension  
breaks and Jack pulls up a  
chair to sit next to her.

JACK  
Well, honestly, I've had better days.

JILL  
Yeah. I hear ya.

Pause.

JILL  
Look, I don't think we should stay here too long. Too exposed.

JACK  
You have a car?

JILL  
I did. Don't anymore, that was me out there, that crash.

JACK  
Oh.

JILL  
Fucker was the in the back seat. Thought I'd got him in the  
head, but all of sudden I saw him . . . saw him in the rear  
view . . .

Jill goes into a state of shock,  
remembering the sight. Her  
body convulses suddenly and  
she begins to cry, shaking  
from the terror of coming so  
close to death. Jack puts an  
arm around her shoulders, kisses  
her forehead and strokes her  
arm gently.

JACK  
Shh.

Her sobs grow.

JILL  
The look in his eyes. Jack. The look in his eyes was . . .  
like he was looking a million miles away, blackness.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

Like I didn't exist. Not really, not as *me*. I was just . . .  
a . . . just a thing. An object. Something to be used and  
thrown away.

JACK

Shh. I know. I know.

JILL

You don't. You always said that, but you don't. You've never  
been looked at like that. You've never had to remember--

She pulls away from Jack.

JILL

I'd seen that same look a hundred times before in his eyes.

She breaks off.

JILL

Fuck it. He's dead dead now. God I wish we'd holed up in a  
bar. I could use a drink.

JACK

You know, there are advantages to bumping into your slightly-  
alcoholic-writer-ex-boyfriend who has taken to writing in  
coffee shops fortified with a bit o' the Irish magic . . .

He pulls a flask from his  
pocket, tosses it to Jill.

JILL

My hero!

JACK

Always was, you just didn't take the time to notice. Or forgot  
it all too soon.

A slightly awkward pause until  
he grins and winks at her. She  
grins back and takes a hearty  
swig.

JACK

I . . . Jill.

Pause.

JACK

Actually, I'm pretty damn scared right now.  
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Don't really have any heroic ideas, just a bunch of jumbled memories of us and how you used to feel next to me and how much I laughed that first time we went out and saw whatever the fuck movie it was I forget but remember so fucking clearly that eruption of cola from your nose as I made you laugh so hard and now the world's gone to shit and all I can do is remember the times we had and the times we didn't have. And  
. . .

Pause.

JACK

Sorry.

JILL

Fuck heroic. Fuck memories.

They come together, kissing and embracing with a desperation borne out of fear and adrenaline and the need to touch life after being surrounded by death. This is not about love, or even sex, but about life.

They forget the doorway.

They forget the gun.

They go down on the floor, clumsy but intense as they begin to undress each other. Suddenly, the entrance door bangs open as two zombies crash into the space. Jack and Jill hurriedly try to reach the gun and the metal pipe on top of the table, but they manage only to knock the table over, their weapons flying out of reach as the zombies come at them, quicker than expected.

BLACKNESS

SCREAMS

The sound of breaking bones.

Silence broken only by the off-kilter shuffling of zombies and a disturbing slurping sound.

After a few moments, the lights come back up. Jack and Jill have been dragged behind the counter, their legs still visible, perhaps even still twitching. Zombie Earl is behind the counter, bent over and doing something we don't want to see. Zombie Bob rights the table, pulls up a chair, holds Jack's flask in his hand. Contemplates a moment then takes a swig. Swallows, then chokes and spits some blood from his mouth.

ZOMBIE BOB

Damn it. I miss my whiskey.

ZOMBIE EARL

What?

ZOMBIE BOB

I said I miss my whiskey! I'm so tired of blood and brains.

ZOMBIE EARL

What?

ZOMBIE BOB

I said I'm tired of blood and brains! What the hell are you doing back there.

ZOMBIE EARL

Nothing.

ZOMBIE BOB

Don't look like nothing.

ZOMBIE EARL

Surprise.

ZOMBIE BOB

Surprise. Huh. Not sure I like surprises no more. Remember once, my thirty-second birthday, the wife threw me a surprise party. Got in touch with friends I hadn't seen since high school, Chris, Nick and Jon. Hadn't even realized just how much I missed 'em until I seen 'em again. Hell, she'd even gotten my first real love to be there. Emily.

Pause.

ZOMBIE BOB

Hell of thing, that was, havin' the balls to invite my first love. She was terrific.

Zombie Earl has risen to listen attentively to Bob's story.

ZOMBIE EARL

Who? Emily?

ZOMBIE BOB

Nahh. The wife.

ZOMBIE EARL

Right.

He bends back down behind the counter. Zombie Bob gazes at the flask, masochistically downs another shot. Coughs up more blood.

ZOMBIE BOB

Shit. Wish that shit would stay down.

Pause.

ZOMBIE BOB

Course, that might not be my memory and all.

ZOMBIE EARL

What?

ZOMBIE BOB

Damn boy, this is getting real annoying with you "whatting" everything I say. I said it might not be my memory is all. All the brains that we done eat, all those memories leaking into mine. Like, I'm pretty sure I never played Goldilocks in my third-grade play, or swam the English Channel when I was fifty-two. Hell, I wasn't even fifty-two when I . . . well, you know. My god! All these memories.

He throws the flask across the room.

ZOMBIE BOB

Like goin' cross-country on a motorcycle, or makin' love to a stranger in a taxi cab, or watching my baby girl smile as she takes my finger in her tiny hand and squeezes, or feeling the rush of wind and the silence of the sky while hang-gliding, the taste of mustard on rye, the sound of my father laughing big and round like what church bells sound like. So much life, so much . . .

Slow, churning anger.

ZOMBIE BOB

Now it's just blood and guts and brains and this constant aching hunger that fills me with a hollow emptiness. I can't feel anything, all the colors look gray. I miss . . . I miss the sound of my fucking heartbeat.

He throws the table, stands  
and rages through the space.

ZOMBIE BOB

I can't remember what memories are mine and what are other peoples, other brains. I think . . .

He comes to a stand-still.  
Zombie Earl has stopped what  
he was doing behind the counter  
and comes near Zombie Bob.

ZOMBIE BOB

I think that means that I didn't really have any strong memories to begin with.

Pause.

ZOMBIE BOB

Like I didn't take my chance. While I had it. While I could hear my heart beating. While I could enjoy Irish whiskey.

Pause.

ZOMBIE BOB

While I was alive.

Zombie Bob sits down again,  
heavily, tiredly.

ZOMBIE EARL

Yeah.

Pause

ZOMBIE BOB

What?

ZOMBIE EARL

I mean. Yeah. I . . . know what you mean. I think. Right?  
Like I know . . . I mean. Er.

ZOMBIE BOB

What? What are you trying to say?

ZOMBIE EARL

Just . . . you know. Yeah, I mean it seems like we should be *dismembering* and not remembering. Right?

Pause.

Pause.

Zombie Bob laughs like a maniacal undead creature, who, for a brief moment, finds the world to be simply, utterly goddamned funny. Zombie Earl thinks the laughter is at him.

ZOMBIE EARL

I mean. Sorry. Maybe not . . .

Zombie Earl slinks back toward the counter, Zombie Bob catches his breath and waves at his companion.

ZOMBIE BOB

No, no . . . wasn't laughing at you. Kid, you just freakin' made my day. "Dis" not "re" . . . That's rich kid, very very rich.

Zombie Earl still looks a bit confused and hurt.

ZOMBIE BOB

Hey, no really. Whatcha doin' behind that counter, hey Kid?

Zombie Earl brightens.

ZOMBIE EARL

Whip or no whip?

ZOMBIE BOB

What?

ZOMBIE EARL

Whip or no whip?

ZOMBIE BOB

Cream? Whipped cream?

ZOMBIE EARL

Yeah. Whip or no whip?

Zombie Earl ducks behind the counter, grabs something and turns his back to both Zombie Bob and the audience. Zombie Bob is curious and heads over to the counter.

ZOMBIE BOB

Hell, it'll probably cramp and choke me like a sonuvabitch, but whatever you are doing . . . whip.

We hear the unmistakable hissing sound of canned whipped cream. Then, Zombie Earl turns to reveal a head that matches Jill's, a circle cut from the top of the skull and a straw sticking out. Grinning, he hands it to Zombie Bob.

ZOMBIE EARL

House special: venti pineal frappacino, with one shot of sugar-free vanilla syrup and whipped cream to top it off.

Zombie Bob looks at Zombie Earl for a long moment, not sure if he is going to laugh or cry. Zombie Earl raises his own head, matching that of Jack.

Laughter wins out. Then Zombie Bob takes a sip.

ZOMBIE BOB

I guess other people's memories are better than no memories at all.

They slurp. Lights fade.

Blackness descends.