

The Art of Darkness

By

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(At rise: The stage is set as a rather drab apartment. A man- CONRAD- stands in the center of the apartment, looking a business card.)

CONRAD.

Worth a shot.

(He pours a glass of wine and sets it on a table. Then he dips the card in the wine, pulls it out, and sets it on fire.)

Suddenly, a knife comes flying into the room and lands inches from CONRAD.)

JESUS TAP DANCING CHRIST!

KAFKA.

(Offstage.)

You called for me?

(Enter KAFKA, an eccentric yet well dressed woman. The cut of her suit is simply wrong- as if it was tailored by someone who'd never actually seen a suit, merely heard about them.)

Well, here I am. What can I do for you?

CONRAD.

I've got a problem.

KAFKA.

I didn't hit you with the knife.

CONRAD.

No, that's not it! I've got other problems-

KAFKA.

Everyone does.

CONRAD.

Just how exactly did you get here, anyway?

KAFKA.

You sent for me. I came. Neither rain sleet snow nor hail can deter me from delivering on my promises.

CONRAD.

No, how did you get IN HERE. Like in this room. The doors are all locked-

KAFKA.

Oh yes. Magic, dear boy.

CONRAD.

Seriously?

KAFKA.

What, you don't believe me?

CONRAD.

Are we talking like Harry Potter magic or Uri Geller magic?

KAFKA.

No, this goes deeper! You don't believe in magic!

CONRAD.

Can't say I do.

KAFKA.

Why is it then you want a magical solution to your problems? Surely looking where you don't believe isn't going to do you much good.

CONRAD.

Okay, you're right, you win, you have a point. Now, about my problem-

KAFKA.

Don't be hasty. Your name?

CONRAD.

Conrad.

KAFKA.

Just the one?

CONRAD.

Um... Franz. Franz Conrad.

KAFKA.

Well aren't we backwards! Joseph Kafka. Obstacles eliminated, problems solved and even occasional pest control.

(KAFKA extends a hand.)

CONRAD.

Joseph? Not Josephine?

KAFKA.

Don't discriminate! Ugh. Rude.

(Pushes her hand towards CONRAD forcibly.)

CONRAD.

What are you doing?

KAFKA.

It's a handshake, boy. Don't you do those out in the Congo, Mr. Conrad?

CONRAD.

I've never been to the Congo.

KAFKA.

Details, details. Shake my hand.

(CONRAD does.)

THE CONTRACT IS SEALED.

(CONRAD looks terrified for a moment. Then, KAFKA starts laughing.)

I'm joking, I'm joking! No Faustian bargains to be made here. Don't worry.

CONRAD.

So, um... Kafka, are you going to help me or not?

KAFKA.

That depends. What manner of problem do you have?

CONRAD.

Inter... interpersonal.

KAFKA.

Ooh, my favorite kind! I can make people disappear.

CONRAD.

So you're a murderer, then?

KAFKA.

A murderer?! Please, nothing so vulgar. Any liquored up hillbilly with a shotgun can kill monkeys at the zoo. I, am an artist!

CONRAD.

Yeah, the Pablo Picasso of death, I bet.

KAFKA.

No, more like Hieronymus Bosch. Now, you may be wondering- can Mr. Kafka help me? Why don't pretty girls like me? What sort of payment are we talking about? What's the capitol of Albania? Well, to answer those questions in no particular order- self esteem issues, if you have to ask you can't afford it, yes, and Tirana.

CONRAD.

Um... I think that's good. But I'm not going to lie I'm not really sure.

KAFKA.

Now, tell me- what's your problem?

CONRAD.

Well, there's this girl I like-

KAFKA.

I could make her disappear but I think that would make more problems than it solves. Also, 59.

CONRAD.

No, there's someone in the way. She's got a boyfriend. I- I want you to make him disappear.

KAFKA.

84. Oh yes, kill her lover and then she'll fall madly in love with you! Hit men- this year's top valentine's day gift!

CONRAD.

If he's out of the way I can slip in.

KAFKA.

She will trace it back to you, my friend.

CONRAD.

But I thought you said you were an artist-

KAFKA.

Never underestimate the cunning of women. It's gotten wiser men than you killed!

CONRAD.

I don't want your opinions I want results! Get rid of the boyfriend.

KAFKA.

My friend, my friend- never stick your dick in a cake.

CONRAD.

What the hell does that have to do with anything?!

KAFKA.

Never stick your dick in a cake. It may still be a perfectly good cake and you can spend all day explaining it but at the end of the day nobody's going to eat it because you STUCK YOUR DICK IN IT! If you get rid of the boyfriend you've stuck your dick in her cake and that metaphor got away from me... I swear it made sense.

CONRAD.

Not in this universe. How... How do you function?

KAFKA.

At an extremely high level.

CONRAD.

Look, all I need is to have the boyfriend disappear.
That's it.

KAFKA.

Does "the boyfriend" have a name?

CONRAD.

Michael.

KAFKA.

Alrighty then. And why is he the problem?

CONRAD.

He's not right for her.

KAFKA.

Bing bing! 100. And of course, you are.

CONRAD.

What in the hell is with the numbers?

KAFKA.

Just counting the number of times I've heard certain things.

CONRAD.

You keep track of these things? You're going to keep this secret, right?

KAFKA.

Not "keeping track" more like "keeping score." It's a bit like a game of chess on a grand scale, except there's no real strategy, all the pieces are kings, and none of the spaces are connected.

CONRAD.

So... It's nothing like chess at all.

KAFKA.

Not really, no. Why do you think he's not right for her?

CONRAD.

She'd be better off with me.

KAFKA.

Sarcasm is lost on you.

CONRAD.

I'm serious! He's a self-absorbed jerk who doesn't care about her at all-

KAFKA.

Oh, the horror! The horror! I don't think her boyfriend treats her well and-

CONRAD.

Look, I've got a problem. You're a problem solver. I want you to solve my problem. Not to lecture me.

KAFKA.

There's the small matter of payment.

CONRAD.

Look, I'm desperate enough to look for a "magic" solution, I'll pay anything.

KAFKA.

Cupcakes will do. Or sexual favors. Or maybe sexual favors involving cupcakes?

CONRAD.

You can't be serious.

KAFKA.

What, are you too afraid you'd like it? Don't worry, you've already said you're heterosexual today.

CONRAD.

But you're a woman-

KAFKA.

My friend, you're not making any sense at all.

CONRAD.

You're insane. You are literally insane. I do hope you realize you're insane.

KAFKA.

That's the tricky thing about insanity. Crazy people don't think they're crazy. I, on the contrary, am fully aware of my own eccentricities. Which is just the nice way to say I hail from the people's republic of Madbodia with our main exports of mixed nuts and batshit.

CONRAD.

Ugh. Fine. You win. What do I have to do?

KAFKA.

Nothing, I was only joking. You don't have to pay unless you're satisfied with my services.

CONRAD.

Are we still on the sexual favors...?

KAFKA.

No. I'm going to help you. I've got a brilliant solution to your problem. I think you won't be troubled again.

CONRAD.

Great, finally a light at the end of the tunnel!

KAFKA.

Oh, don't you worry yourself about that. It's just the train.

CONRAD.

That... worries me more than I think it should.

KAFKA.

Don't worry, I am an artist, my friend. From the heart of darkness- no pun intended-

CONRAD.

No pun achieved.

KAFKA.

You called to me, and now your problem will be resolved.

CONRAD.

Good.

KAFKA.

That girl won't have to deal with self centered jerks any more. She'll be happy.

CONRAD.

I have your guarantee?

KAFKA.

Oh, yes. One hundred percent. If you have any complaints, please, call me again. I'll try my damndest to fix it. But there's one thing you should know-

CONRAD.

What's that? Kafka, what are you-

(KAFKA whips out a gun and in one fluid motion shoots CONRAD in the head. There's no time to respond, it's simply too quick.)

KAFKA.

Nobody's ever complained before. Well, I'd consider your problem well and truly solved. It's been delightful doing business with you, Mr. Conrad. I really think you ought to look into some heavy duty cleaners for these nasty bloodstains. Takes forever to wash out, let me tell you. Well, if you change your mind and don't find my solution to your problem satisfactory, please don't hesitate to call me again. I do so love repeat business but I almost never get any. Ah well, c'est la vie.

(He picks up the glass of wine and drains it.)
May I have another glass of wine? Don't mind if I do!

(He drinks straight from the bottle, taking it with him.)

I am sorry about the mess.

CURTAIN