

Touch of Success

by

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Cast of Characters

PHILIP:

30's

CARL:

30's

Place

NYC

Time

Evening

Setting: The play takes place at the New York City apartment of Philip. It's a modern day apartment, newly built within last couple of years.

At Rise: Philip drinks from a glass of iced amaretto, Carl drinks a beer. Philip is sitting center of his couch, Carl sits in a sofa chair with his luggage beside him.

PHILIP: I listened to your voice message and I'm taken aback by what I heard.

CARL: I was drunk.

PHILIP: Drunk?

CARL: Yeah man, you know I like a drink. I didn't mean to come at ya, I was annoyed anyways cause of my Ma and then it was late at night and was letting my mind go and so I called ya and when you didn't pick up, as usual, I got even more annoyed and left some kind of message that I don't even remember, so...

PHILIP: You have no recollection of what you said?

CARL: I'm sure I said some shit but like I said, I was drunk, so, you know, I maybe shouldn't have called you like that, so...

PHILIP: But, you aren't drunk now, right?

CARL: Nah, man.

PHILIP: Good. I'm glad you aren't drunk now, this way we can talk about what's on your mind in a clear, coherent way.

CARL: Nothing's on my mind.

PHILIP: I'm talking deep into the recess of your mind, Carl...the shit that gets hidden in the closet...that's where I want to go.

CARL: Yeah, but, I don't, so...

PHILIP: You left me a message that I'm going to playback for you.

CARL: You kept my message?

PHILIP: I've waited months.

CARL: I see that.

PHILIP: Months so that you could listen, we can listen together, now.

CARL: Shit man, you're crazy to keep that message.

PHILIP: Am I?

CARL: Bro, I told you, I was drunk, it means nothing.

PHILIP: It means everything...

CARL lights a cigarette.

CARL: Go ahead...play it.

PHILIP presses play on his phone and both men listen in.

CARL'S VOICE: Hey man...uh...you didn't answer your phone...doesn't surprise me, I know you're busy, always busy lately it seems...well, I guess you're going after your fortune, big dreams and loads of discipline, no time for anyone you love...anymore...your soul, what about your soul? You can't just rule out that cause there's greater things in you...so much...in your forties now, so I guess...well, you are a maniac, you are a different breed, I'm not like you, I—the research I do is to discover the origins of mankind, that's what I do and, it's different kind of work that I do, so...capitalism, capitalism will be dead, you can't focus your life on that...it's about humanity and I'll never stop trying until I die.

PHILIP: First thoughts?

CARL: That's a fucked up message.

PHILIP: Yeah. Why is it fucked up?

CARL: Cause I said some shit man, I'm sorry.

PHILIP: No! I don't want to hear sorry, I want to know what the fuck you were talking about. You just heard it. I want you to translate it. I want to hear from you in front of my face, what the fuck you meant.

CARL: You really wanna argue over some dumb ass message I left you while I was drunk?

PHILIP: I've known you since we were kids, same way as you've known me. There's no bullshitting one another.

CARL: I just traveled five hours by plane to come see your ass.

PHILIP: And I've waited seven months to play you this message.

CARL: You're crazy.

PHILIP: Explain or fuck off.

CARL: Oh, it's like that.

PHILIP: It's like that.

CARL: I don't need this shit. I'm outta here.

PHILIP: Run like you always do.

CARL: What do you want me to say?!

PHILIP: I want you to tell me what is on your mind.

CARL: And then what? What good will that do?

PHILIP: So there is some dirt.

CARL: Dirt? There ain't no dirt man. There's you and me and your life and my life and things evolve and it is what it is.

PHILIP: Stop talking in riddles.

CARL: Dude, you have your own life and you're happy, it doesn't matter what I think. Who cares?

PHILIP: I care.

CARL: Now you care?

PHILIP: I've always cared. Since when haven't I cared?

CARL: Don't put me in this situation!

PHILIP: What situation?

CARL: I just want a fucking holiday, I don't need this drama. Should I stay at a hotel?

PHILIP: Stop being a dick, sit down and talk. When did talking get so hard for you?

CARL: We couldn't talk about this before, you wait months until I'm---

PHILIP: I handle my business face to face, real business...I don't do things over the phone, you know that.

CARL: Yeah, well...are you happy in your life?

PHILIP: Why wouldn't I be?

CARL: Because you vanished? I have to make an appointment to fucking speak to you, I got things I'm doing and you're never around to hear about them, you cut me out and don't say you haven't cut me out cause I feel it and I know how you roll, you fucking cut people off if they cross you and what did I do? Huh? What did I ever do but love you like my brother and you disappear...why? Am I not good enough to be in your circle of success?

PHILIP: Of course you are good enough, you don't allow yourself to be.

CARL: How? How don't I allow myself to be?

PHILIP: Calm down. We're just talking here like grown men.

CARL: Tell me!

PHILIP: ...You have always had real potential---

CARL: Ahhh man, I gotta here this shit---

PHILIP: Because it's the truth. You have talent and you piss it away like it's always gonna be there. You don't work for it. You just work when you're *inspired*. Fuck inspiration! Hard work, discipline, focus, that's what gets you to where you need to go. Not random creative ideas and unfinished projects. You've got a mountain of ideas with no rope to climb with. What good will that do you? And that's only half of it. The other half of you is possessed by these stupid conspiracy theories that only make sense to you and whatever chatroom online you find yourself in and I get it's interesting and maybe even amusing for a minute or so but how does that filter itself through you and into your work? How? You're like a spray gun that never hits a target. Always scattered, all over the damn place. A multitude of beginnings that never reach an end. How can I take you seriously? You expect me to take you seriously?

CARL: No, I don't.

PHILIP: I'm not making any sense to you.

CARL: Yeah, you're making sense...but, how can I do what I do if you aren't around?

PHILIP: What am I your father?

CARL: We always shared creative ideas together. You were the one who always got me excited about shit, always making me feel like I can do something good, the only one who ever believed in me and then you vanish and it's like, what do I do now?

PHILIP: Come on, man. You have to bear the strain and do your own thing, same way as I did. You can't exist for the acceptance of others, you have to exist for you.

CARL: But my work is for others.

PHILIP: So is mine, but don't take me out of context. You have to have your own inner fight for what you believe.

CARL: I believe in my work, what are you talking about?

PHILIP: I'm talking about finishing a fucking project already.

PHILIP (cont'd): Name one project you've completed?

CARL: Well, I almost finished my graphic novel but ran out of cash, so---

PHILIP: Ran out of cash.

CARL: Dude, the economy tanked. I got laid off!

PHILIP: How much in unemployment did you make?

CARL: I don't know.

PHILIP: Thousands, I'm sure.

CARL: If I invested my unemployment into my book, I'd be broke.

PHILIP: You had three years prior! At least! Don't you get what I'm saying? You don't finish. Don't you want to get to the finish line for once in your life? Or do you just want to keep running in circles? Make me feel like I abandoned you. What the hell are you talking about? I am not responsible for you, Carl. And I've given you opportunity, I've guided you, always giving you advice, trying to get your head straight and turned on and you never follow through. You will last one month, two, maybe three before you fall back on the old grind and I'm sick of it, especially when you start talking to me about all that conspiracy crap. You came to New York and what did you do? You had room and board and couldn't allow yourself to land a job, ANY job, to make your start. You know I was distracted with what I had going on and you flee. You're the one who disappeared! I find out from my father that you left New York to go to Vegas. No phone call, no nothing, just up and went and don't you think that had an impact on me? Don't you think I was hurt by your actions? Not so much for me, but for you because the moment you took off, you left your chance. Instead, ten years went by, ten years of gambling, drugs and drinking. How many times did ya get kicked out of a motel? Huh? And you look at me like I'm supposed to feel sorry for you. Is that it? Is that what you want? Want me to feel bad for you? Cause that currency runs out. I don't hold no grudge, I've always been there for you any way I can, but you aren't there for yourself and I'm sick of it. So, what do I do? I gotta live my life! I have a wife that I love and a life that I'm working hard building and I have a hint of success, for the first time in my pathetic, struggling life, I have an inkling, a touch of success and you want to label me? Like I've crossed sides? How about being happy for me? Instead of trying to make me feel guilty for how hard I work on my dreams.

CARL: I'm not like you.

PHILIP: I don't want you to be like me. Be like you.

CARL: I am like me, Phil. This is me, this has always been me.

CARL (cont'd): That's what you don't see. That's what you refuse to accept. You can't take me as I am. I'm not big enough for you, I'm not able to congregate in your private office and concoct plans to obtain grand fortunes and build an empire. Why do I have to lose my closest friend if I'm not good enough in my own life?

PHILIP: You are--

CARL: I'm not! Don't start lying to my face, Phil. You see, that's the problem, you give me hope and then I believe things can be true and then I try, damn it I try so hard but it's not in me to keep going, I can't keep up with the work, I sag back down to some level, it's safer there and then it takes me hell to get back up again, I'm not reaching for the stars, like you, but at least I'm not freaking out all the time either. Just except me the way I am. I'm never gonna be this great---

PHILIP: You're a fool. You have the ability to do great things if you had the confidence and believed in yourself on your own terms. Why is that so hard for you?

CARL: Because like I told ya, I am who I am and you are who you are and that's just the way it is.

PHILIP: You've excepted mediocrity.

CARL: My mediocrity is my best, that's what I'm saying. This is it, Phil. There is no higher level I can reach.

PHILIP: I don't believe you one bit.

CARL: I'm confessing this to you once and for all. I'm not saying I'm not doing the things I want to do but what I'm saying is that it has to be the way I'm capable of doing it...I'm facing my own limitations.

PHILIP: You're giving up is what you're doing.

CARL: No!

PHILIP: Get clean! Go to rehab. Stop drinking and get clean. Get off the wacky baccy, clear your mind, stop popping pills, stop reading conspiracy theories and GET CLEAN!

CARL: I just want us to be friends like old times.

PHILIP: Get clean.

CARL: Like when we were kids.

PHILIP: Get clean.

CARL: So many great memories I have with you growing up.

PHILIP: I can't be your therapist anymore.

CARL: I don't want no fucking therapist!

PHILIP: You once told me that you look up to me. Don't I inspire you to do better?

CARL: You do, which is why I want us to talk more, it helps me.

PHILIP: You know, I've always wanted you to be on my team. Always. But you can't be on my team because you refuse to get your shit together. If you got clean, focused and made real progress in your work, became self-sufficient without depending on others to support you...you'd be on my team, no doubt. Plus, I can't hear anymore of those stupid theories you project. I like conversation, but not into the clouds. If you can't change, I will give you what you want, I'll accept you on your own terms, but if I do that Carl, you need to return the favor and accept me on mine.

CARL: What are your terms?

PHILIP: Things remain the same.

CARL: The same?

PHILIP: I've accepted you a long time ago. I accepted the real you, as you claim, I had to adjust, because you are right, you aren't the same as when we were kids and neither am I. I accept you, you accept me.

CARL: Why can't we be closer?

PHILIP: The same way you can't get sober. I accept you, you accept my adjustment to who you are. That's how this works.

CARL: I just want to be able to talk more, that's all.

PHILIP: No. We won't. Don't expect it. You are where you need to be and that's where you will stay, unless you change. If you want more, you have to do more, if you don't, then be content.

CARL: I'm not content.

PHILIP: I know you're not, but there's nothing I can do about it.

CARL: Give me a job. I can work for you and we can be around one another and make new memories.

PHILIP: Won't happen. You can't work for me.

CARL: Not good enough for you, King?

PHILIP: Not good enough for yourself. Has nothing to do with me.

CARL: Yeah, sure, nothing. You have the power to change my life and you won't cause you pass judgment on me. I would *never, never* judge you!

PHILIP: Of course you do.

CARL: If I was in your situation, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you.

PHILIP: We all seem to live in delusion at times, don't we? We imagine situations and scenarios based on how we think things could be or should be, but reality always finds a way to put us in check. Reality is our great equalizer.

CARL: If you helped me, I could work on myself.

PHILIP: Could never happen.

CARL: Why not?

PHILIP: It has to come from within, on your own Carl.

CARL: I had no idea.

PHILIP: What?

CARL: Had no idea you would have changed like this. You look like a stranger to me. It's like I'm not even your blood.

PHILIP: Perhaps that is what we have become, strangers.

CARL: I'm going back. I'm getting out of here. I'm not---

PHILIP: Carl, it's all up to you.

CARL: I'm outta here.

CARL grabs his suitcase.

PHILIP: I won't be following up. In fact, don't you ever contact me again, unless you handled your own business...you know what I'm talking about.

CARL: You'll never hear from me again.

PHILIP: That's on you.

CARL: That's on you!

CARL exits slamming the door.

END OF PLAY