

In The Face of Trouble

by

Joseph Arnone

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Cast of Characters

BILL: 50's
ROGER: 30's
EMILY: 20's

Place
Studio

Time
Morning

Setting: The play takes place inside an office attached to a larger studio for post-production services. The office has a wooden desk, cluttered with papers and framed photos and scripts. There's a few liquor bottles kept in one corner on a small table. A pair of chairs stand in front of the desk and overall the place comes off as one great big junk pile.

At Rise: The play opens up on Bill, who sits in his chair behind his desk alone. He reads over some papers when Roger enters his office.

BILL: Did you look over that footage?

ROGER: Yeah, it's terrible.

BILL: Is it?

ROGER: We can't work with this guy.

BILL: No?

ROGER: Did you see the footage?

BILL: No, but I heard from Emily. It's that bad?

ROGER: Bill, it's beyond bad. It's not even a film, it's one of those snuff type movies.

BILL: I know. (beat) Close the door.

ROGER shuts the office door.

Sit down...(lights a cigarette and leans back in his chair) Listen, we're in a real bad spot. With everything that's going on in the world right now, business is the worst it's ever been. I made more money back when I was first starting out. I don't even think I can afford to keep Emily on and she's been with me for over a decade..almost like a daughter to me, but I don't think I can keep her much longer if we continue going down this path. You know my wife is sick, Roger, she's at home and it's getting harder and more expensive to care for her and at this point I don't know if she's even gonna make it...(he stands up, paces the room). Everything's falling apart and this guy Jimmy walks in here with his degrading films but offers me a boat load of money for them, what choice do I have, Roger? I realize that it's not who we are, not what we're about, but at the same time if I don't take the money, we're most certainly going under and it's more than the business I'll be losing...at least if we take on the job, it'll keep us afloat, maybe just long enough to where things can get back to normal...I don't know...so many years for nothing. I'm on the verge of throwing the towel in.

ROGER: I knew things were getting bad but not this bad.

BILL: They're gettin' worse.

ROGER: Yeah?

BILL: Oh, yeah. You've no idea...

ROGER: What if you fired me for now and bring me back when---

BILL: Roger, you're my workhorse. Without you, the building crumbles.

ROGER: I know you're in a tough spot, but this isn't the kind of work I ever thought you'd ask me to do.

BILL: No?

ROGER: No, no, it goes against--

BILL: What are you saying?

ROGER: I'm saying I don't want to have anything to do with this.

BILL: After all that I've done for you---

ROGER: It's not that Bill. We're getting involved with some real shady characters. These types of people play by a different set of rules. What they do is illegal, you know that, I can't attach my name to that.

BILL: It's just temporary. Maybe a few months of work. All under the table.

ROGER: We'll be in their circle. That what you want?

BILL: Of course it's not what I want, but the work isn't coming in. Things have changed, Roger! There's no support out there coming our way. This is it.

ROGER: Come on, there's gotta be a better way, we've worked too hard to mingle with this.

BILL: If we worked on these films for a few months, gave them the finishing touches they need, what's the big deal?

ROGER: You know the big deal.

BILL: Roger, the business won't survive!

ROGER: You really want me to get involved with this, in order to make a living? I thought you had more integrity than this.

BILL: Where's your loyalty? I've done everything for you?

ROGER: And what have I done, Bill?

BILL: Even Emily said she'd commit.

ROGER: You fucking asked Emily to work on these films?

BILL: As a backup.

ROGER: To me?

BILL: Had a feeling you'd react this way.

ROGER: How can you get Emily involved in this?

BILL: My wife is dying, Roger. She's on the borderline, if I can't cover the next few payments for her treatments, she might die! And what if that happens? How am I supposed to live with that? At least with the treatments she has a shot and I can't...I'm not going to let her down.

ROGER: (sighs) I can't believe this shit.

BILL: This is life. Can't make any of it up.

ROGER: No, you can't.

BILL: Do the first film and see how it goes, alright?

ROGER: I have savings. I'll give you everything I have from my bank to help Jeanie.

BILL: Jeanie and I can't take your money.

ROGER: Yes, you can.

BILL: No, no.

ROGER: Don't you know she's like a mother to me? You think I would ever forget? I had nothing. Was living in subway stations and showering at the gym. You didn't know that, did you? Why do you think you'd find me sleeping on the office floor some mornings.

When I had nothing, you and Jeanie were the ones who believed in me enough to give me a chance. If it weren't for the both of you, God only knows where I'd be today, but instead, I've made my way somehow, I'm established. I'm better off than I ever was because you gave me my start.

Hear me out, I have some gigs coming up, just enough to make ends meet to ride this thing out. I'll be fine. Let me lend you and Jeanie the money needed for her treatments. Please Bill. I'll give you all that I have to see her through, but please, we can't go into business with this guy cause he'll destroy everything we ever stood for and we can't lose that, that's everything to me and I believe that's everything to you and Jeanie wouldn't want us getting involved with him either.

BILL: (blows his nose) You got me all fucked up over here.

ROGER: You're like a father to me.

BILL: (beat) It's not as easy as that Roger. I signed the contract.

ROGER: ...What contract?

BILL: The contract, the fucking contract.

ROGER: With the guy?

BILL: Yes, yeah.

ROGER: You already made the deal?

BILL: I signed.

ROGER: Damn it! Why didn't you discuss this with me first Bill?!

BILL: What do you want me to say?!

ROGER: Break the contract! There's no way we are going in on this!

BILL: It's signed!

ROGER: Break the contract. This is bullshit. Contracts can be broken.

BILL: Listen, calm down and listen to me right now, sit back down...listen, I signed a five picture movie deal.

ROGER: FIVE??!!

BILL: We do five and we're out for life.

ROGER: You're destroying everything Bill.

BILL: Believe me, no amount of money you claim you have is gonna be enough to save Jeanie.

ROGER: How do you know?

BILL: Because I know the costs. It's my wife. You think you know better than me?

ROGER: I wasn't saying that.

BILL: This is it! Five pictures.

ROGER: I feel sick.

BILL: Go fix yourself a drink.

ROGER: No, no. I gotta get out of here. I can't be here right now.

BILL: Roger, even if we spoke before I made the deal, I wouldn't have taken your money...I appreciate your offer, more than you will ever know. I can't see the other side of this thing until I finish my obligation. Believe me, everything will work out. We need to close our eyes, push ahead and get the job done. This is our best shot at holding on to everything.

ROGER: IS it?

BILL: Our only shot.

ROGER: But what have we lost once it's all said and done Bill? That's what I'm worried about...what have we lost?

ROGER leaves the office.

A moment goes by.

EMILY enters.

EMILY: You okay, Bill?

BILL: Fine.

EMILY: I heard you guys arguing.

BILL: Yeah, well, Roger's a fine man but there are things he doesn't know, he'll understand someday... Fire up that footage, the sooner we get started on it the better. I want it all over with, without looking back.

EMILY: Okay.

BILL: We'll have a meeting later today when things settle a bit. We have a plan, we'll execute, we'll live to see another day, right?

EMILY: I hope so, Bill.

EMILY exits.

BILL: I hope so, too.

END OF PLAY