

OVER ICE

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Based on a concept by

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FADE IN:

INT. A SMALL RESTAURANT - DAY

A young man walks into a small restaurant. He is dressed well, and has the aspect of an individual who is both competent and dangerous. This is DANIEL, an assassin. He scans the room, eventually noticing an older man seated in one of the far booths. This is MATHIAS TEMPLETON, a crime lord. He has a glass of whiskey in front of him, presumably poured from the matching bottle set at the far side of the table. He does not look up.

MATHIAS

There's no need to wait for an invitation.

Daniel approaches. He exudes confidence, but clearly seems nervous beneath the surface. Upon reaching the booth, he hesitates for a moment, but slides in opposite to Mathias.

DANIEL

Mister Templeton.

MATHIAS

It's just "Mathias" today, Daniel. Honorifics have no place amongst friends.

DANIEL

Am I here as a friend?

Mathias looks down at the glass of liquor in his hand. It is fairly fresh, evidenced both by the amount of fluid remaining and the still-pristine ice present within it.

MATHIAS

Do you appreciate riddles, Daniel?

DANIEL

I never really cared for them. I prefer it when things are direct.

MATHIAS

I didn't ask if you liked them; I asked if you *appreciated* them. Can you understand their place both as a commentary on life and a compelling mental exercise?

Daniel does not respond. Mathias stares at him for several seconds before smiling humorlessly.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)

The very presence of a question demands an answer. In this way, a riddle - a question not only with an answer, but a correct answer - can be one of the most vexing inquiries one individual can make of another.

He leans forward slightly, staring into Daniel's eyes.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)

I ask you this because I have something of a riddle for you, Daniel, and I want to be sure that it won't fall on deaf ears.

DANIEL

Well, when you put it like that...

Mathias smiles again.

MATHIAS

Two men sit down in bar. They both order identical drinks, whiskey on the rocks. The first man finishes his very quickly, gets up, and leaves. The second man takes much longer, savoring every sip... and as he finishes, he dies.

DANIEL

Poison in the ice.

MATHIAS

Indeed... though don't be so quick to answer before you've been asked a direct question. As with so many things, riddles can often be misleading.

A few seconds pass in silence, during which time Mathias eyes his drink. He puts it down on the table and slides it towards Daniel.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)

Drink.

DANIEL

Excuse me?

MATHIAS

It's perhaps the finest whiskey on the planet.

(MORE)

MATHIAS (CONT'D)

Neither the most expensive nor the most famous, I'll grant you... but in every way that matters, you'll find no equal.

Daniel stares at the glass.

DANIEL

Tell me, Mathias: Do you appreciate *irony*?

MATHIAS

(Laughing)

You mean offering you my drink so soon after providing a riddle in which one was poisoned? Don't be so literal. Besides, the ice is quite fresh, as you'll see.

The words do not appear to sway Daniel.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)

Oh, come now, we've shared far more than a glass, Daniel.

Daniel nods almost imperceptibly, then takes a long but shallow drink from the glass. He replaces it on the table, then tilts his head to one side, considering.

DANIEL

It's good whiskey.

MATHIAS

Yes. Back to the topic at hand, though: In our riddle, what is the most important element?

DANIEL

The ice.

Mathias shakes his head.

MATHIAS

No, that is merely where we find our resolution. Suppose you were investigating the death. What questions would you ask?

DANIEL

Who wanted the man dead?

MATHIAS

And how would you determine that?

Daniel pauses before answering.

DANIEL

Why did someone want him dead?

Mathias nods, a look of satisfaction on his face. He reaches forward, takes the glass, and takes a drink of his own. After savoring it for a moment, he replaces the glass on the table and looks at Daniel.

MATHIAS

Do you know what sin is, Daniel?

DANIEL

A crime against God.

MATHIAS

Some would agree with you. Consider the inherent paradox, however: A truly omnipotent being would hold nothing in the way of desire, and thus would be immune to any offense.

DANIEL

We can't know that.

MATHIAS

We can make the logical argument. Furthermore, since one can assume that the many gods on this Earth are the work of men, they must therefore exist most profoundly in our minds. So, again: What is sin?

DANIEL

Did you ask me here to discuss theology?

Mathias looks slightly wounded.

MATHIAS

A sin, Daniel, is a crime against ourselves. It's a transgression so heinous that we feel only divine forgiveness can ever wash the stain clean. In some cases, it may seem so profound that nothing short of a second sin will ever right the wrong.

Tense silence follows the statement. Understanding suddenly registers on Daniel's face.

DANIEL
Your daughter.

Mathias takes another drink.

MATHIAS
There are two things no parent
should ever have to do. The first
is choose between one love and
another. The second is bury one's
own child.

He looks up at Daniel, suddenly seeming very weak and
desperate.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)
Do you understand what I'm asking
you, Daniel?

DANIEL
I understand.

Mathias looks both relieved and incredibly sad.

MATHIAS
Thank you.

Another few seconds pass. Daniel slides out of the booth,
hesitates a moment, then plants a kiss on Mathias's face.
Mathias gasps slightly, closing his eyes. Daniel turns to
leave, gets halfway to the door, then stops and turns around.

DANIEL
Why?

Mathias looks up with a sad smile on his face. He seems very
small and alone.

MATHIAS
Therein lies the riddle.

He looks down at his glass.

MATHIAS (CONT'D)
(To himself)
Oh, look... the ice is melting.

Mathias reaches over to the bottle and refills his glass from
it. Daniel watches, then leaves.

FADE OUT