

A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE

Screenplay by

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Adapted by Ernest Hemingway's story

SECOND DRAFT  
Hemingway's Homage REMIX

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FROM BLACK

NARRATOR (VO)

It was late and every one had left the café except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light.

FADE IN:

EXT. CONTEMPORARY CAFÉ -- LATE NIGHT

The café terrace is empty as there are no people sitting in the many chairs, nor are there any meals being enjoyed on the tables. It is obviously late at night, for the sky is black, yet there is an OLD MAN sitting in the leaf silhouettes that are cast from the tree standing in front of the electric light.

The old man is deaf, so he is especially sensitive to the climate's change from day to night. The daytime is dusty and unpleasant, but at night the dew settles the dust, making it quite nice to sit in tranquilly. The old man is also a little drunk.

INT. CONTEMPORARY CAFÉ -- LATE NIGHT

The only other people in the café, the YOUNGER WAITER and OLDER WAITER, are observing the old man. They sit at a table that is close against the wall near the door of the café. They look over the terrace of the empty tables.

They're not about to give the old man a hard time because he's a good client, but they also know that if he became too drunk he'd walk away without paying. So, together, they keep watch on him.

OLDER WAITER

Last week he tried to commit suicide.

YOUNGER WAITER

Why?

OLDER WAITER

He was in despair.

YOUNGER WAITER

What about?

OLDER WAITER

Nothing.

YOUNGER WAITER

How do you know it was nothing?

OLDER WAITER

He has plenty of money.

Passing in front of the waiters' line of sight from the street, an un-hooded girl is hurrying along with a soldier. The street light shines on the brass number of his collar.

YOUNGER WAITER

The guard will pick him up.

OLDER WAITER

What does it matter if he gets what he's after?

YOUNGER WAITER

He had better get off the street now. The guard will him. They went by five minutes ago.

Suddenly, a rapping noise is heard from the outside.

EXT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The old man disturbs the shadows by rapping on his saucer with his glass.

INT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The waiters look at each other until the younger one stands up, walks through the door toward the terrace, and stops in front of the old man.

EXT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

YOUNGER WAITER

What do you want?

The old man looks at him.

OLD MAN

Another brandy.

YOUNGER WAITER

You'll be drunk.

The old man looks at him again.

The waiter turns and enters the café.

INT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The younger waiter approaches the older one, still sitting at the table.

YOUNGER WAITER

He'll stay all night. I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock.

The waiter goes to the counter to pick up the brandy bottle and another saucer.

YOUNGER WAITER

(continued)

He should have killed himself last week.

He marches out to the old man's table.

EXT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

He puts down the saucer and pours the glass full of brandy.

YOUNGER WAITER

You should have killed yourself last week.

The old man motions with his finger.

OLD MAN

A little more.

The waiter pours on into the glass so that the brandy slops over and runs down the stem into the top saucer of the pile.

OLD MAN

Thank you.

The waiter takes the bottle back inside the café.

INT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

He sits down at the table with his colleague again.

YOUNGER WAITER

He's drunk now.

OLDER WAITER

He's drunk every night.

YOUNGER WAITER

What did he want to kill himself for?

OLDER WAITER

How should I know.

YOUNGER WAITER

How did he do it?

OLDER WAITER

He hung himself with a rope.

YOUNGER WAITER

Who cut him down?

OLDER WAITER

His niece.

YOUNGER WAITER

Why did they do it?

OLDER WAITER

Fear for his soul.

The younger waiter pauses while facing his colleague, then he glances at the old man. Then he turns and to face again.

YOUNGER WAITER

How much money has he got?

OLDER WAITER

He's got plenty.

YOUNGER WAITER

He must be eighty years old.

OLDER WAITER

Anyway I should say he was eighty.

The younger waiter stops again. He holds his arms up and rubs his face.

YOUNGER WAITER

I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o'clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?

OLDER WAITER

He stays up because he likes it.

The younger waiter recovers and shows a slightly angry face.

YOUNGER WAITER

He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me.

OLDER WAITER

He had a wife once too.

YOUNGER WAITER

A wife would be no good to him now.

OLDER WAITER

You can't tell. He might be better with a wife.

YOUNGER WAITER

His niece looks after him. You said she cut him down.

OLDER WAITER

I know.

YOUNGER WAITER

I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing.

OLDER WAITER

Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him.

EXT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The image of the old man is in accordance with what the older waiter said. He is tidy and peacefully stares at his glass.

YOUNGER WAITER

(background)

I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work.

The old man looks from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters. He points to his glass.

OLD MAN  
Another brandy.

INT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The waiters look at each other in the same way from earlier. This time, the younger waiter is frustrated and pushes from the table with anger.

EXT. CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The younger waiter stomps toward the old man. Upon arrival, the waiter becomes condescending to the deaf man.

YOUNGER WAITER  
Finished. No more tonight. Close now.

OLD MAN  
Another.

The waiter wipes the edge of the table with a towel and shakes his head.

YOUNGER WAITER  
No. Finished.

The old man waits until the waiter is done wiping the table. Then he pauses to look up at him. Finally, he stands up. Slowly, he counts the saucers. Then he takes a wad of money with a clip out of his pocket. He slowly counts off his payment for the drinks and eventually leaves a tip.

The waiter watches him go down the street.

The old man walks unsteadily but with dignity. He disappears into the night.

With a breath of finality, the waiter returns inside to help close up.

INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

OLDER WAITER

Why didn't you let him stay and drink?  
It is not half-past two.

YOUNGER WAITER

I want to go home to bed.

OLDER WAITER

What is an hour?

YOUNGER WAITER

More to me than to him.

OLDER WAITER

An hour is the same.

The younger waiter pauses to look at him. Then he looks at his wristwatch. An impatient tapping of his fingers on the table ensues.

YOUNGER WAITER

You talk like an old man yourself.  
He can buy a bottle and drink at home.

OLDER WAITER

It's not the same.

The younger waiter hesitates in his response. He slows the rapid tapping of his fingers. Silently, thinking to himself, then he expresses a humble glance. The tapping ceases.

YOUNGER WAITER

No, it is not.

The older waiter's expression turns sly as the tension from the entire conversation and possibly the history of them working together feeds him sarcasm.

OLDER WAITER

And you? You have no fear of going home  
before your usual hour?

The younger waiter's humbleness is again shielded by a frustrated and twisted face, this time by out of defensiveness.

YOUNGER WAITER

Are you trying to insult me?

The older waiter's offensive is quenched by his colleague's reaction, and he settles with a non-hostile face.

OLDER WAITER

No, hombre, only to make a joke.

YOUNGER WAITER

No. I have confidence. I am all confidence.

OLDER WAITER

You have youth, confidence, and a job.  
You have everything.

The older waiter turns his back and goes to busy himself cleaning up. The younger one shadows him.

YOUNGER WAITER

And what do you lack?

OLDER WAITER

Everything but work.

The younger waiter gets his attention by grabbing his shoulder to turn him around.

YOUNGER WAITER

You have everything I have.

The older one suddenly appears sullen and sad faced.

OLDER WAITER

No. I have never had confidence and  
I am not young.

The younger one pauses, trying to hide his expression of agreement.

YOUNGER WAITER

Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock up.

But the older one has ceased his chores and stands confrontational.

OLDER WAITER

I'm one of those who like to stay late at the café. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night.

Flabbergasted and at a loss for further argument, younger one stammers out.

YOUNGER WAITER

I want to go home and into bed.

OLDER WAITER

We are of two different kinds. It is not only a question of youth and confidence although those things are very beautiful.

The older waiter removes his working vest and tosses it, surrendering it to the table.

OLDER WAITER

(continued)

Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the café.

The younger one exhales and smiles.

YOUNGER WAITER

Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long.

But the older one remains serious and does not return a smile. The other one's smile has dissipated.

OLDER WAITER

You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant café. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves.

YOUNGER WAITER

Good night.

OLDER WAITER

Good night.

The younger one wastes no more time to gather himself and leave. The older one goes to finish closing and continues the conversation with himself.

OLDER WAITER

It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly--how can you expect to hear yourself think? Or carry on a conversation? Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity--although that is all that is provided for these hours.

EXT. CAFÉ -- LATE NIGHT

There is a subtle movement of leaving the café from inside to outside, where the empty terrace of vacant chair of the old man stays in the electric light until it is turned out, and the well-lighted place becomes different, alienated. Immediately, the older waiter is seen locking the door behind him and of his exit from the café, leaving it behind him, father with each step.

NARRATOR

What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it, but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada.

EXT. STREET -- LATE NIGHT

The older waiter is seen walking father away from sight, but slowly, into the mist that covers the street, with no one else and no buildings in sight. Eventually, he disappears into the void as the old man had done earlier.

NARRATOR

(continued)

Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada.

INT. BAR -- TWILIGHT

The waiter smiles and finds himself standing before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

NARRATOR

(continued)

Hail nothing full of nothing,  
nothing is with thee.

BARMAN

What's yours?

OLDER WAITER

Nada.

The barman is not surprised and begins to turn away.

BARMAN

Otro locos mas.

OLDER WAITER

A little cup.

The barman pauses and then complies with a small cup of coffee.

OLDER WAITER

(continued)

The light is very bright and pleasant  
But the bar is unpolished.

The barman looks at him but does not answer. He's too tired for conversation. The waiter gulps down the stale, warm coffee. It's bitter, but it'll bring him home.

BARMAN

You gonna want another copita?

OLDER WAITER

No, thank you.

EXT. THE STREET -- TWILIGHT

The sky is no longer black, but full of the mysterious, orange glow that sometimes lingers in the hours previous to dawn. It serves as a reminder that daylight will soon arrive. The waiter begins to walk down the street in a trance, nearly devoid of thought. He begins to mumble to himself.

OLDER WAITER

Home to my room. To lie in bed and wait  
for the daylight. After all, it's  
probably only insomnia. Many must have it.

FADE OUT: