

Unfriended
By
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FADE IN ON:

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The night swaths the street with soft shadows.

TOM ADKINS (40s, arrogant corporate) shoulders briskly past PEDESTRIANS. Swinging a briefcase, he beelines towards a building labelled: "Pat's Bar."

At the entrance, Tom transfers the briefcase to his other hand - angles to get a grip on the knob.

From the sidewalk, a rusty voice intrudes.

VOICE

Psssst!

Tom swings towards the source: a BEGGAR sits huddled against a wall, surrounded by trash bags and cardboard.

BEGGAR

Before you get your drink on, Corporate Guy - got a dime or two to spare?

Something BUZZES in Tom's jacket. The Beggar extends a hopeful hand.

BEGGAR

I'm not askin' for much. But a fella's gotta eat. It's been days.

The buzzing continues. Tom fumbles in his jacket. The Beggar's eyes light up. Score?

BEGGAR

Bless you! You've no idea how much this mea-

Tom pulls out his phone. No spare change. The bum's face falls, as... Tom cracks a grin into his cell.

TOM

(into the phone)

Jumping Jeezus on a pogo stick! Alan, cool your jets! It took me time to find the bar. According to Zagat's, this place doesn't even exist...

Tom listens. No response. Behind him, the beggar sags.

TOM
 (into the phone)
 Hello?

Tom glowers at his screen, face illuminated in the glow.

INSERT: It wasn't a phone call after all.

Instead, a Twitter notification to @NewYorkNumbers, by an account modestly calling itself @MassivePecker69:

"Dude, you're a CPA? Wherever you went to college, you can shove that Romper Room degree up your puckered ass!"

TOM
 Mother molesting puerile prick!

Tom starts to type a response. Realizing the Beggar's watching, he gives up - just hits "Report."

Digging in a pocket, Tom pulls out wadded bills and tosses them in the man's lap.

TOM
 Here. Buy a Starbuck's on me.
 (looks him over)
 Or clean socks. Enjoy.

BEGGAR
 Sir, thank you so very, every much! This is enough for -

TOM
 But consider yourself grateful.

The beggar stammers. That comment caught him off-guard.

BEGGAR
 Of course. But-

TOM
 YOU get to live off grid, with no responsibilities in the world. But for those of us with a job - and a data plan - lemme tell ya, modern life blows chunks!

Tom stomps into Pat's Bar, slams the door.

The beggar stares after him, at a loss for words.

INT. PAT'S BAR

Dim lights hide faces which don't want to be seen. Pat's is where souls drown sorrows; alone, and not at peace.

ALAN (40s) sulks at the bar.

Ignored by the bored BARTENDER, Alan communes with the tumbler of brown liquid in his hand.

His wrinkled clothes and body language say it all. In his own abject way, Alan's as beaten as the beggar outside.

Tom beelines over, sits down. Assesses Alan's drink.

TOM

Jack Daniel's Sinatra Select, I hope?

ALAN

On my budget? Hells to the no. And at 50% ABV, Wild Turkey gives me just the oblivion I need.

Tom's face melts.

TOM

Alan, buddy. Drinking much? Just... no.

The bartender drifts over, shoots Tom a "what's your poison" look. Tom waves towards a row of beer bottles.

TOM

Whatever you got that's craft and hoppy. Please.

Dropping his briefcase and cell onto the bar, Tom pulls his seat closer to Alan. SCRRRRRAAAAAPE.

The bartender arches an eyebrow.

BARTENDER

Careful with the tiles there, pal!

TOM

In this place? Get real. Who cares?

Tom shrugs. And focuses on Alan, concerned.

TOM

On the phone, you said you and Rachel -

ALAN

Split. Not exactly a shocker, but that's the news.

TOM

You guys *never* had it easy.

ALAN

Well, the fight was final - *this* time.
Which means there's nothing left for me
in this world. Except this bottle of
Turkey.

(beat)

And the "pleasure" of bitching to you.

TOM

Hey, what are old friends for? I'm glad
you called.

Alan sips his drink, morose. Tom forces a smile.

TOM

Listen, maybe things aren't all that bad.
I mean, I never saw what you did in
Rachel. That small breasted, big butt,
loud mouthed combo's gotta wear you down
eventually...

Alan turns and glares.

ALAN

You're talking about my ex-fiancee!

TOM

I mean, no offense. Whatever makes you
happy, dude.

ALAN

We were happy for five years, goddammit.
Then she up and leaves for no reason!?

TOM

I tagged that one as flaky from Day One.
What was her excuse this time?

ALAN

The three As, as she so gracefully
phrased it on her way out the door.

TOM

Huh?

ALAN

Abandonment. Addiction. Can you believe
it? She accused me of both!

TOM

And the third?

ALAN

"Asshole". She threw that one in, just for fun.

The bartender arrives with Tom's bottle, tops off Alan's drink. Alan gulps it down, croaks.

ALAN

More.

TOM

About the "addiction" part... Based on the demonstration I'm seeing here, I'm starting to suspect we need to talk.

A RINGTONE blares in Alan's pocket. He throws a palm up at Tom: "Stop."

Fishing out his cell, Alan cups it in his hand for privacy. Tom chuckles at the move.

TOM

You got a girlfriend on the side? That'd be a fourth "A" - Adultery!

Scrolling through an app, Alan reads threads. Lobs nasty comments at each one.

ALAN

Fucking piss for brains.

TOM

Excuse me?

ALAN

Not you - this account. The chucklehead thinks he's some sorta galaxy brain. But based on the stuff he spews, he's not competent to use a PC mouse!

(scrolls more, points)

As for *this* twat-waffle: fifty bucks says he's a bot!

Face scrunched in annoyance, Alan furiously types.

ALAN

Frigging fat fingers!

TOM

Alan-

ALAN

You STD riddled butt plug!

He shoots a bashful look at Tom.

ALAN

Not you. Auto-type glitch.

TOM

(beat, soft)

Buddy, if there's anything I've learned from my years in finance: you can't drown your anger issues in booze. That floats.

The two old friends share a look.

TOM

So, Rachel left you for "addiction"? No more secrets, Alan. Tell your old pal the truth.

Alan sighs, puts down his phone.

ALAN

It's not what you think. She claimed I had... a *social media* problem.

Something BUZZES on Tom's phone. Tom side eyes it - tempted. But he doesn't pick up.

Instead, he listens as Alan's confession flows.

ALAN

If I gotta be honest, Rachel had a point. But it wasn't that bad at first, right? Remember the internet back when we were in college, Tom? We'd argue politics on listserve. AOL. Usenet. Those were innocent, classic times!

Tom nurses his beer. Nostalgia sparks in his eyes.

TOM

Sure, dial-up took forever. But you're right - what it gave us back was good.

ALAN

Then came MySpace. Then Facebook. Sharing that first kitten meme was such a rush! And remembering birthdays, a breeze. With technology that revolutionary and freeing, what could possibly go wrong?

TOM

Yeah, that's how any dealer operates. They use the pleasurable stuff to hook you. But then afterward -

ALAN

You can't walk away. The traps close in!

Alan waves for more whiskey. As the bartender pours, Tom sneaks a look at his own cell.

INSERT: Another message from @MassivePecker69:

"U can't handle the truth, can you snowflake soy boi? Go play with your pencil dick. BTW, UR girlfriend says hi!"

TOM

(snarls to himself)

Blithering world-class idiot.

He furiously types, takes his eyes off Alan.

INSERT OF TOM'S TYPING: "Project much, 69? UR pretty obsessed with junk size, "Massive". OMG, wonder why?"

Tom hits send. Looks up.

Alan's growling at his own phone now, too.

ALAN

Man. I miss Facebook so, so much.

TOM

(beat)

Gimme your keys, Alan.

ALAN

What?

TOM

Now! I mean it. Hand 'em over. If you're saying *that*, you're too drunk to drive!

ALAN

No! I'm not saying Facebook's perfect. But you gotta admit, it had its charms. Sure, we had to deal with conspiracy posts about Russian Propaganda and Diet Pepsi Causing Autism -

TOM

I *think* the claim was Parkinson's?

ALAN

Still, in hindsight - those pages rocked!

Alan's phone rings again. He flips the bird at the screen. Loads a rude animated GIF - hits SEND.

Tom's phone buzzes. Groaning, he reaches over - switches it to mute. Alan rambles on.

ALAN

At least with Facebook, people were Friends!

TOM

Allegedly.

ALAN

But all this newfangled stuff is about "influencing". Instagram, Tik-Tok....

TOM

"Improved communication", my ass cheeks. You ask me, social media doesn't unify. It divides. And sucks!

Alan stares at the wallpaper on his phone: it's a picture of him with RACHEL, shot in much, much happier times.

ALAN

A lot of things suck these days.

He drinks deeply, muses.

ALAN

Rachel leaving me was the last straw. I was in this never ending Twitter beef-

TOM

Twitter? Say no more. That one's the worst!

ALAN

Yeah, with some shit-for-brains troll who's hate-followed me for months. I mean, everyone's bound to find a serious serving of stupid on any site, but this particular specimen is in his own league! I'd have blocked that oozing pus ball, but he'd interpret that as a win.

TOM

(chuckles)

Lemme guess. It's some teenager jerking off in his mom's basement?

ALAN

That wouldn't surprise me. This guy's wrong about literally *everything*.

Every other thing he argues is a straw man fallacy! Sprinkled with red herrings for variety.

TOM

How's his false dichotomies?

ALAN

Big time abundant. Those, too! The guy has no life experience or insight at all. His takes are so consistently rancid, if he tweeted the world was round, I'd give the Flat Earth Society a fresh look!

(beat)

That night, we'd been going at each other for five hours straight. The only break I took was for a piss. I was so damned absorbed I didn't hear Rachel at first. Even though she was standing right behind me! It's only after she texted to say she was leaving I got the message... far too late. Thanks to my obsession with scoring digital points, my entire life's turned to shit!

A tear trickles down Alan's cheek. Tom forces a laugh to lighten the mood.

TOM

Oh fuck. C'mere you big, lovable loser!

He bear-hugs Alan. Two old friends together: bonding over insults, Wild Turkey and craft beer.

ALAN

(sniffles)

Yeah, that's me. The digital loser of the millennium.

TOM

Just joking. You're *no* loser. The Alan Connor I know is smart. Wickedly funny, too.

ALAN

At times, sure. But now? Hells no.

TOM

Well, sometimes you get too intense. But that's a virtue, not a flaw! That's why we've been best friends all these years.

(beat)

On and off, as work and time permits.

But you're brave enough to speak your mind. And bottom line, that's what counts!

Holding Alan at arm's length, Tom squeezes his shoulders.

TOM

Bartender! Another round for Alan and myself here. And make it *top drawer* this time. Alan's my oldest, dearest friend. He - of all people - deserves to mourn his relationship in style!

The Bartender pulls out glasses, pours.

ALAN

Thanks, Tom. I dunno what inspired me to text you tonight.

TOM

You called in the Calvary. And you were right!

The two toast. Glasses clink.

TOM

Hey, how's about for shits and giggles we Twitter tag-team that asshole nemesis of yours? I hate to say I'm a veteran of that hell-hole. So in the spirit of revenge, let's ratio that scuzz-ball until he bleeds.

ALAN

(shrugs)

Why not? With Rachel gone, I've got the time. Weird we haven't connected there before.

Tom whips out his phone.

TOM

IKR? What's your handle, pal?

ALAN

MassivePecker69.

Record scratch. Tom freezes.

TOM

What?

ALAN

Yeah, I know. It's kinda colorful. But I was going for that irreverent "burn all bridges" vibe.

TOM

You sure it's not MassivePecker70? Or 68?

ALAN

No. Sixty-Nine.

(laughs)

C'mon, you of all people get the joke!

TOM

Please tell me there's a hyphen?

ALAN

No. Why?

Tom angrily scrolls through the messages from "@MassivePecker69" on his phone. His eyes flare.

ALAN

Tom, you look... pissed. What's wrong?

TOM

(chokes)

You wanna know if I can "handle the truth"? We were college fucking roommates, Alan! If I attended "Romper Room", so did you!

Tom grabs his briefcase and cell, storms for the exit.

ALAN

Was it something I said?

TOM

"Massively"? Yeah!

ALAN

Where are you going?

TOM

Go ask NewYorkNumbers. To "play with my pencil dick" - according to you!

Tom slams the door. He's gone.

The bartender and Alan exchange looks, confused. Alan grabs his phone, scrolls through messages.

ALAN

Oh. My. God. "Project much." That's how Tom talks! I shoulda recognized his phrases before...

BARTENDER

Dude, even for this dive, that went south fast. What'd I miss?

Alan flips his phone, shows the bartender the screen.

ALAN

I didn't know he was NewYorkNumbers.

BARTENDER

And you're...

ALAN

MassivePecker69. Metaphorically, at least.

BARTENDER

Oops.

The bartender scrolls through messages, cracks a smile.

BARTENDER

According to this, you have his girlfriend to go home to.

ALAN

(hangs his head)
If only that were true.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Tom storms out of Pat's Bar. A familiar voice intrudes.

BEGGAR

Hey man - hope you had fun tonight!

Tom swings around, finds the man still on the sidewalk, but now sporting colorful, brand new SOCKS.

The beggar wiggles his toes happily. Tom snarls.

TOM

Thanks to Twitter? I lost a lifelong friend. So, no - it sucked!

The beggar blinks, confused.

BEGGAR

You Twittered at a bar? That's where
you're supposed ta unplug. Ya know, real
life?

Tom punches buttons on his phone, calls an Uber...Tosses
the cell to the beggar.

TOM

Poor but wise. And goddamned right. I'm
gonna make that my habit *everywhere* from
now on!

BEGGAR

This is an iPhone 13. You absolutely,
positively sure you wanna give it up?

Tom waves towards an unseen Uber driver and stalks off.

TOM

Yeah. Tell MassivePecker69 I said hi.
Enjoy!

The Beggar stares at the cell in his hand - an expensive,
unexpected gift.

BEGGAR

Thanks Mister... I think?

FINAL FADE OUT: