

Must

by

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Cast:

GEORGI – Male 58, Bulgarian immigrant, slight accent, occasionally gruff in speech. He owns a restaurant called Must. He is loud and boisterous, and generally upbeat.

IVAN – Male, 35, Georgi's son, who lives 60 miles away, and is far more reserved and nervous.

Setting and props:

Present day, Must Restaurant, in Santa Rosa. Georgi is at the host stand. On the stand there are two distinct cell phones (phones 1 and 2) with distinct ring tones (cell phone 1's tone is creepy), and an order pad and pen. Ivan will be carrying a concealed gun.

Must

At rise, Georgi is standing at the host stand,
talking on cell phone 1 with ear buds in his ears.
He is taking notes on a pad.

GEORGI

In a gruff voice

This is Georgi ... Yeah? Who told you to call me? ... Emil? Yeah. He's my cousin
... Look, lady, I really don't care about your reasons. Just tell me who you want taken
care of and when ... O.K. ... Cost? Didn't Emil tell you? ... 50 thousand ...
Lady, that's the cost ... Discounts? Like you're in AARP? No, I don't give discounts
... Lady, I got a business to run, if you want me to bump off your husband's business
partner, bring the money to my restaurant ... It's called Must. It's on Mendocino
Avenue ... (*seems flattered*) Oh you liked it here, well thank you ... Yes our
desserts are very special, I'm glad you enjoyed. (*gruff again*) Now if you want to do
business, come here between 2:00 and 5:00 tomorrow and bring the money. Hold on.

Presses hold button, yells

Hey Stefan, you moron. The forks go on the left side ... Yeah I'm sure.

Presses hold button, continues to write

Lady, you there? ... What should I call you? ... (*chuckles*) Madame X? I think you've
seen too many noir movies. So are we on? ... O.K. What's his name? ... No, not
your husband. His partner. ... Sam ... And his last name? ... Sam Salmonella.
That reminds me, I'm about to open for dinner. If you're serious about this, you'll
show up tomorrow.

Ends call, puts pad down, takes out ear buds, yells

OK people, we're open. No reservations for 15 minutes, but look sharp.

Picks up phone 1, scrolls as if checking messages. Ivan enters

GEORGI (cont.)

Puts phone down, crosses to Ivan

Ivan! Why didn't you tell me you were coming to town.

Hugs Ivan

Must

IVAN

Hi dad. It was just a spur of the moment thing. Sonya has a night class, and I thought it'd be a good time to drive up and see you.

GEORGI

What about your mother?

IVAN

I wasn't in the mood to talk to her – she keeps bothering me about wanting grandkids.

GEORGI

Slaps Ivan on the back

That's a son's curse. Most of her friends have grandchildren. She's wanting to keep up with the Petrovs.

IVAN

I'm always amazed at your ability to use Bulgarian names in American expressions.

GEORGI

That's because Bulgarian expressions are too depressing. So can we get you something to eat?

IVAN

That's not what I came here for.

GEORGI

You came to a restaurant to not eat? I hope our customers don't feel that way.

IVAN

How's the place doing?

GEORGI

It's picking up. People are starting to go out again. Tonight will be slow, but it's a Tuesday.

IVAN

That's what I was counting on.

GEORGI

What do you mean?

Must

IVAN

Just that we'd have more time to talk.

GEORGI

Lovingly pinches Ivan's cheek

Oh Ivan, I love our conversations. So what can Georgi do for you?

IVAN

Stop that. I want to have a serious discussion.

GEORGI

Makes a playfully sad face, clasps his hands, and bows his neck

Oh. Serious. We must be solemn.

IVAN

Dad. I want to talk to you on the level. Just man to man.

GEORGI

About what?

IVAN

My childhood. How our relationship got this way.

GEORGI

I know you wanted me to be around more. But I was trying to make ends meet as a salesman. It meant odd hours and lots of traveling. Until I finally had enough to open this restaurant.

IVAN

Dad, I know –

Cell phone 2 rings.

GEORGI

Just a minute. (*answers phone*). Hello this is Must. How may I help you? ... No, our chopping block specials are only for lunch ... OK, one order of dead man's soup. One order of blood sausage. Do you want the sausage with smothered onions? ... Anything for dessert? ... Our special is devil's food cake ... That will be \$52.40. It will be ready in 20 minutes. Bye.

Puts phone down

Must

IVAN

That's what I'm talking about.

GEORGI

What do you mean?

IVAN

This isn't a normal restaurant. And you were lying about how you got the money to open it.

GEORGI

We serve food here. Of course we're a restaurant.

IVAN

It's a front. The sketchy waiters and cooks. (*Picks up both phones*) The two phones. Weird menu items. Even the name tips everyone off.

GEORGI

Must?

IVAN

I know enough Bulgarian to know that Must means "revenge!"

GEORGI

What do you mean I was lying? I worked hard to get here.

IVAN

Not doing what you said you did. You were not in sales.

GEORGI

What do you think I did all those years?

IVAN

You arranged for people to get murdered. You still do! If Arthur Miller wrote a play about you, it wouldn't be called Death of a Salesman. It would be Salesman of Death.

GEORGI

Pause

How did you find out?

Must

IVAN

Everyone knows! There's never any proof, but everyone knows.

GEORGI

So you're upset I never told you?

Cell phone 1 rings and he answers

This is Georgi ... You want me to kill an autistic director? That seems harsh. ... Oh! An art-is-tic director. That still seems extreme. ... I see, he didn't cast you in the last play ... Yes, I know him, but I thought he was an actor ... Oh, he does both ... Special requests? Maybe but it might cost you extra ... You want him to die on stage? I've seen him act several times, he does that on his own. I'm busy now. Call me tomorrow and we can talk more then.

Hangs up phone.

What were we talking about?

IVAN

I'm angry. Not that you didn't tell me your secret. I'm upset I didn't have a normal childhood.

GEORGI

We tried to make your life as normal as possible.

IVAN

I never had any real challenges. Anytime I had a disappointing grade in a class, the teacher would disappear.

GEORGI

What about your athletics? You loved wrestling – you won the state championship!

IVAN

I won three of the matches by disqualification because you kidnapped the opponents.

GEORGI

You beat the defending champion in the final.

IVAN

The referee was nervous and kept looking at you. You fixed that match.

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GEORGI

I only wanted what was best for you.

IVAN

What would have been best for me is letting me live my life. You always made me feel that I wasn't enough.

GEORGI

I'm sorry about --

IVAN

Pulls out a gun

And now it's time for me to get my "must."

GEORGI

Ivan! Put that away. You'll hurt yourself.

IVAN

It was easy for me to find out what you did. But you don't know what I've become.

GEORGI

Of course. You're a partner in a fancy law firm. What do you mean?

IVAN

Haven't you noticed a drop in business the past few years.

GEORGI

Actually yes. Competition. Some younger, very secretive player operating out of San Francis – No! You're not --

IVAN

That's right – I'm the Igwa.

GEORGI

Do you know what Igwa means?

IVAN

Yes – its Bulgarian for jaguar.

GEORGI

But you had a great career as a lawyer.

Must

IVAN

This makes more money. And it's more ethical.

GEORGI

So why are you here Ivan?

IVAN

You haven't figured that out?

GEORGI

You intend on killing me? Who's paying you for this?

IVAN

No one. I told you – pure revenge.

GEORGI

In front of all these people?

IVAN

The one thing you taught me is the code. These people aren't going to tell the police.

GEORGI

You've thought through everything.

IVAN

Points to his own head

The Igwa always does.

GEORGI

Before you do, I just want you to know ... I'm proud of you.

IVAN

Proud? I'm going to kill you.

GEORGI

The way you thought everything out. The cool nature in how you handle yourself. And you did every bit of this on your own. You bested me at my own game.

IVAN

Wow dad. That's the nicest thing a victim has ever said to me.

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GEORGI

It's from the heart. Now, finish the job.

IVAN

Long pause

Dad?

GEORGI

Yes?

IVAN

Are you ... really proud of me?

GEORGI

I am.

IVAN

But ... I mean ... Why have you never told me that before?

GEORGI

My son, that was not the life in the old country. Fathers never reveal their emotions to their sons. We act tough and hope our children learn that strength so they can survive a dangerous life. But I've been adapting. Too late for our relationship, but maybe that's a final lesson I can pass down.

IVAN

Pauses. Rushes to Georgi, hugs him.

Oh, papa!

GEORGI

Ivan! I love you!

IVAN

Long pause

So what shall we do now?

GEORGI

Perhaps we should form a partnership. Georgi and Son.

IVAN

Maybe Igwa and Dad.

Must

Cell phone 1 rings, Georgi picks it up

GEORGI

This is Georgi. Yes Madame X. (*rolls eyes*). You know, I'm going to let you talk to my part – that is my senior partner.

Hands phone and pad to Ivan, points out notes on pad.

IVAN

Hello Madame X. This is Igwa ... No, we don't give bulk discounts, perhaps you should try the assassin section of Costco ... Yes, we can also take care of Sam's wife. What's her name? ... Ella? So the targets are Sam and Ella Salmonella? ... I guess we won't use food poisoning ... Yes we take business very seriously. Just be here tomorrow with the cash.

GEORGI

Just a chip off the old yestska. Would you like some food?

IVAN

Actually I'm starving. Maybe some stuffed capon?

GEORGI

And some devil's food cake for dessert.

IVAN

That would be perfect.

GEORGI

Puts both hands on Ivan's shoulders

To a long and happy partnyorstvo.

END OF PLAY