

One Night at the Paradise Diner

A short, one-act play

by

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Lou	Handsome, weary, careworn	N/A	Any
Gabe	Bright, devoted, an old friend to Lou	N/A	Any

SCENE

A diner. It is a classic, cozy place. GABE sits in a booth, alone. He is drinking a cup of coffee, and is deeply satisfied with it. There is another cup on the table, ready.

LOU enters. GABE gestures to the other seat in the booth.

There is tension between them, despite having known each other for a very, very long time.

(A SILENCE.)

GABE

Good to see you, Lou.

LOU

Same, Gabe. You doing all right?

GABE

Sure. Want coffee? It's good.

LOU

'Course it is. Has to be. Got my cup ready. Thanks.

GABE

You're always early. Always have been.

(THEY SHARE A STRAINED SMILE.
ANOTHER SILENCE.)

GABE

I'm glad you came.

LOU

Don't think you will be. He knows, you know.

GABE

That's why he's the Boss.

LOU

Yeah. He is. But that doesn't mean...

GABE

Don't Lou. I'm not a traitor. You aren't either....yet.

(LOU smiles sadly)

LOU

You know better than that. I am a traitor. I became a traitor in his eyes the instant that I decided to question anything he did. But you...you're right. Not yet. Probably never.

GABE

Look, Lou, we've been around for a long time. Been working for him since the beginning. Why buck him now? You know you can't win. You've got to know that.

LOU

Yeah. I don't have a choice. It's not like I chose it. He's the one who made the rules.

What do you think Mike will do?

GABE

Do you have to ask? He's the Boss' pitbull. He'll kill you. Or worse.

(There is a long pause)

GABE

Why, Lou? Why after all this time? You've seen it all. You're his right hand. Everything he did you...

LOU

Not everything, Gabe. You know that.

GABE

This is about that? You're going to go to war with the Boss over that? Are they worth it?

LOU

C'mon. It's not over them. And no, they're not worth it. It wasn't about them, it's about him. You saw what he did to them. I know, they're his pets. But look what he did. Can you follow someone like that?

GABE

I...look. I don't know the why. I believe in him. I believe in the plan. You don't....

LOU

The plan. I don't know what the plan is. Neither do you. But you know what he did. What he's doing. He's torturing them, Gabe. He put them in a situation where they had to fail. He put something in front of them and told them not to take it. And he knew they would...

GABE

It's about free will. He wanted them to choose...

LOU

Free will? Free to be his pets forever? To do what he says just because he says to do it? How is that free?

GABE

You had something to do with that, Lou. They didn't just...

LOU

Yeah. I had something to do with that. And they chose. They chose to disobey. And you know what he did? He put a death sentence on them. For that. Not for doing any harm to anything, just for doing what he told them not to do.

GABE

And how did that work out for them, Lou, after they listened - listened to *you*? Have you seen them? They kill each other in droves! There's not a generation of them that hasn't seen women, children enslaved, massacred, tortured - are you saying that they're better off because they listened to you?!

LOU

He knew, Gabe! He knew all along! From the beginning, when he put them there, put that damned tree right in front of them! He knew what they would do! He knew what they would become! Every killing, every scream, every death, the disease, the misery...*he knew!*

Yeah, Gabe. I've seen them. I see them every day. Every hour. And you know how he planned to...

GABE

I don't want to hear this...

LOU

You know what he did about it. Do you remember that teenage girl he got pregnant?

(GABE shoots him a look)

GABE

Yeah. I remember.

LOU

Oh yeah. That's right. You're the one who talked her into...

GABE

That's not fair, Lou! She was...

LOU

And her kid. His kid. You remember him. That was the plan, Gabe. To have them torture him to death. And why? So...

GABE

I said I don't want to hear...

LOU

So he could *forgive them*. That was the plan! That was the plan you put all your faith in! To have an innocent tortured to death just so he could forgive them for it! He could have forgiven anything he wanted to forgive! Any time! He knew! He knew what they would do all along! There was never any free will! Never! He knew what they would do!

(LOU pauses. Something occurs to him.)

(more softly) He knew...what I would do.

(LOU stops for a moment. Then he puts a pistol on the table, the muzzle facing himself.)

End me, Gabe.

GABE

What?! No! I...

LOU

End me. That would end the war. That would keep all this from happening - the death, the killing, the agony for them, and for us.

GABE

No! I couldn't if I wanted to! And I don't want...

LOU

Do it, Gabe! Or you sentence all of them! All of us! One act! One disposal of a traitor! One time you do something on your own! One time! Do it! Or live for eternity with all the...

GABE

That's not the plan!

(Silence.)

LOU

No. You can't, can you? Not even now. You know that's not what he wants.

All that time. From the beginning. When he was calling me his best and brightest. When he said he loved me above all others. He knew. He knew that someday I'd...I'd have to...

(LOU gets up. He drains his coffee, and prepares to go.
He takes the pistol.)

Thy will be done.

Thanks for the coffee, Gabe. Take care of yourself.

GABE

Lou, please. You know when the time comes I'll have to...

LOU

Yeah, I know. See you there.

GABE

I...I'm sorry. I'll...I'll miss you, Lou. We go way back.

LOU

Yeah. All the way back. I'll miss you, too.

(LOU leaves.)

FADE TO BLACK

END