

Box for a Box

A county Clerk's Office in downtown Chicago. A water cooler sits in a corner, a trash can the corner opposite. Upstage there is a desk. MARK, 42, an introverted and successful defense attorney enters, followed shortly by ANDY, 36, a bookseller and collector of oddities. JIM, 24, the County Clerk waits behind the desk with headphones around his neck.

Andy bumps into Mark and knocks his briefcase out of his hand.

MARK

Excuse me! I'm here to pick up a box. Name is Mark Busceli.

Jim nods his head. Exits. Andy is on the ground, helping Mark pick up his papers.

ANDY

Sorry about that! You're picking up a box, too?

MARK

Just some things I need before I can go.

Mark sets his briefcase down in a chair and heads towards the water cooler. A pen cap falls out of his pant leg.

ANDY

I've been waiting two weeks for this.

MARK

What's that?

ANDY

You dropped something. Looks like a pen cap.

MARK

Thanks.

Mark reaches in his pocket looking for his pen.

ANDY

Do you normally do this sort of thing?

Do I do what sort of thing? MARK

Mark is still digging in his pockets.

Collect? ANDY

Collect? MARK

Yeah. Isn't that why you're here? ANDY

I'm waiting on personal belongings. MARK

Oh. *(Beat)* Did you just get out? ANDY

Get out? MARK

Of prison. ANDY

Mark remains silent.

What did you do?

I didn't *do* anything. Where is my pen? MARK

I hear you, brother. You should get a lawyer, contest! ANDY

I am a lawyer. MARK

That's an interesting job! You must meet all kinds of people, learn so many stories. ANDY

Did you see my pen? MARK

ANDY

Sure didn't. I work at Basement Book's. Do you like books?

MARK

(still looking for his pen)

Hemmingway.

ANDY

I'm Melville myself! (Beat) I found a pen out on the sidewalk. Maybe it's yours.

Andy pulls out Mark's pen. Mark eyes Andy suspiciously. Mark grabs the pen and steps back from Andy, putting the pen in his inside jacket pocket.

ANDY

Where are you going?

MARK

What?

ANDY

You said you were waiting on things so you could go.

MARK

(sitting down)

It's a personal matter.

ANDY

What kind of personal matter?

MARK

(opening his briefcase and beginning to straighten out his papers)

I'm going to Pennsylvania, ok?

ANDY

(sitting next to Mark)

What's in Pennsylvania?

MARK

Home.

ANDY

You know, some people say you can never go home again.

MARK

You can always go home.

ANDY

(begins to pull out a pack of cigarettes)

You seem tense. I bet you need a cigarette. I used smoke.

MARK

(not noticing the cigarettes)

I don't smoke.

ANDY

(putting the pack back in his jacket)

Yeah, you don't look the type. Probably get up every morning at six on the dot to jog five miles. I know people like you.

MARK

I don't jog.

ANDY

You've probably never smoked a cigarette. Probably never even held one.

MARK

Quit. Two years now.

ANDY

(winks)

I knew that. (Beat) I don't think you're really a lawyer.

MARK

(shaking file)

If you don't mind.

ANDY

I bet you just got out of the pen. White-collar crime.

MARK

(to himself)

Jesus Christ.

ANDY

You in your button up shirt and tie. Always the clean-cut guys.

MARK

I was not in prison.

ANDY

What about crimes of passion?

MARK

Excuse me?

ANDY

You know, crimes whose motives were nothing more than the overpowering emotional stirrings of passion? Not that you would know anything about that.

MARK

I know nothing about crimes of passion?

ANDY

You manipulate cold, hard statistics when you commit crimes.

MARK

When I commit crimes? I put criminals behind bars, ok? I imprisoned a man last month for killing his wife!

ANDY

Reminds me a story I heard. There was this woman in France, I think it was in the late 80's. She tried killing her husband with sleeping tablets, but she miscalculated the dose and just made him sleep for a long time. You see she really wanted him dead. She tried slitting his wrists, gassing him, smothering him with a pillow, but she just couldn't kill the man.

Mark downs the water.

ANDY

Finally, the woman stabs him eight times and succeeds. You know what happened to her? A French judge deemed it a crime of passion and let her go free. What some people do in the name of love!

Mark gets up to throw the paper cup away.

ANDY

Are you married?

MARK

No, I'm not married.

ANDY

Me neither. I guess you could say I collect women, too! (Andy gets up and walks over to

the desk) That's why I'm getting the box. For a collection.

MARK

Look, its nice you have a hobby and all, but I just really want to get my box and go.

ANDY

You don't want to hear about my collection?

MARK

No.

ANDY

(walking towards Mark)

Have you had a case like the French one?

MARK

No. I haven't had a case like the French one.

ANDY

(sitting next to Mark)

So what's up with the flight home?

MARK

Family.

ANDY

What's wrong with it?

MARK

Nothing.

Mark begins to straighten his tie.

ANDY

Hey pal. Looks like you're missing a cufflink.

MARK

I didn't even notice.

ANDY

Opal.

MARK

How did you know that?

ANDY

Got the same ones myself.

MARK

These were custom made. You couldn't.

Andy reveals one cufflink from his pocket.
Mark stands up.

That's my cufflink!

ANDY

No it's not. It's mine. I found it.

MARK

After I lost mine.

Mark grabs it out of Andy's hand.

It has my initials on it!

ANDY

(pulling out a handkerchief and wiping his glasses)

That's the artisan mark. I got it from a regular of mine, at the bookstore. Funny story. His brother was convicted last month of manslaughter...

MARK

That's my handkerchief!

ANDY

Oh this? Got it from a girl I met last week. A tomcat in the sack! She does this thing with her tongue...

MARK

Patricia?

ANDY

You know Trish?

MARK

Of course I do.

ANDY

Sorry to hear about your luck, pal. Awesome girl.

MARK

(taking a few steps back from Andy)

Stop calling me pal. I'm not your pal.

ANDY
(standing up)

Just last week Trish and I went to the symphony. Music by some guy named Maylor or Meyer.

MARK
Gustav Mahler?

ANDY
(taking a step towards Mark)
That's the guy. I guess he's her favorite. Mine too.

MARK
Gustav Mahler is my favorite composer. I took her there last week! Who are you?

ANDY
You know he wrote his first death march at the age of six? Can you imagine? Some people just don't have a sense of a humor. Know what I mean?

MARK
Tell me right now who you are and what you're doing with my ex.

Andy takes a step towards Mark.

ANDY
I heard this story once, took place in Iceland, of all places. This family sued a funeral parlor because a family member of theirs...

MARK
I asked you a question!

ANDY
Oh but I have to.

MARK
Answer me!

ANDY
(backing Mark up against a wall)
So this man had just died and his funeral was on December 26th. When the family saw the body in the coffin, they found him dressed in a Santa suit and wearing a fake beard!

Andy reaches out and puts his hand on Mark's shoulder as he laughs. Mark gets nervous and

punches Andy in the face. Andy grabs on to Mark's shoulder before stumbling backwards.

ANDY
(on the ground)

See what I mean, no sense of humor.

MARK

What have I done? What I have done?

Andy says nothing but stares up at Mark, intently from the ground.

My god. Patricia.

Mark eyes Andy. He side steps past him to pick up his brief case, shoveling his papers inside. Backing away from Andy and towards the door he pulls his phone from his pocket.

You stay the hell away from me! And Patricia! Swear to God, I will throw you in jail if she isn't ok. You better I hope I never find you.

Mark exits. Andy gets up from the floor, straightens his shirt and puts the hanky back in his pocket. Jim enters with two boxes.

JIM

I need to see your i.d.

ANDY
(reaching in his back pocket)

Here you go. Do I need to sign something?

JIM

Sign right here, Mr. Busceli. Where'd the other guy go??

ANDY

Left in a frenzy. I think there may be something wrong with him, mentally. You might mention to your supervisor an unstable guy came in here today. His name should be his box.

Jim looks at the other box.

JIM

Sarah Rogers
May 1, 2008

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Andy Logan. Weird. I'll pass the word on, I guess.

ANDY

Thank you very much. Have a great afternoon, Jim.

Andy begins to walk out when Jim stops him.

JIM

Wait! You forgot your plane ticket.

Andy eyes the ticket and then, reaching out with a wide grin on his face, takes the ticket, winks and exits.

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