

Deadlywinks

By

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FADE IN:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The curtains are drawn. Sunlight peeks through the cracks. Two middle-aged MEN square off at the adjacent table:

NORMAN (portly, with wire-frame glasses) glares at his opposer:

PAUL (slight, with receding hairline) returns his gaze with equal intensity.

They're deep in thought, calculating. Are they playing chess? No. A green felt mat is spread on the table.

Small green and blue vinyl disks lined up before Norman; blue and red before Paul. A squat, red plastic pot splits the distance between them -- This is Tiddlywinks.

Paul continues his stare. He raises a pinky and screws it into his nostril. Norman watches in quiet disgust.

Paul withdraws his finger and darts it into his mouth, slurping off its slimy harvest. Norman holds back a gag.

NORMAN

If you're so hungry, why don't you
just order room service? You
needn't eat your brains.

Paul springs up, winds up and smacks Norman as hard as he can. Norman's glasses fly into the middle of the room. Norman's turned face reveals a day-old black-eye.

PAUL

This isn't the goddamn Hampton Inn!

Norman hisses at Paul and reaches for his glasses, but he's constrained: a shackle affixed to his pudgy ankle leads to a radiator pipe via a four-foot chain.

Paul rises to retrieve the glasses.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You can't put this off forever,
Norman. Check-out's tomorrow.

He drops the glasses in front of Norman, who grabs them and puts them back on.

NORMAN

Paul, we've been over this. If you want a rematch, you need to take it up with the North American Tiddlywinks Association -- the governing body of our-

PAUL

That was an illegal bristol you pulled in Toronto and you know it, Norman!

NORMAN

Well, how in the world would this rematch be legal?

Paul retreats to the closet, digs through a bag and returns with a handgun, aiming it at Norman. Norman cowers.

PAUL

You lose. You die. I, as runner up, go to Cambridge for the world singles championship.

(beat)

I lose...

Paul presses the gun against his own temple.

PAUL (CONT'D)

... and you're free to go.

Norman studies him. A knock at the door.

MAID (O.S.)

(foreign accent)

Housekeeping!

Paul lowers the gun and jerks his head toward the door.

PAUL

No thank you!

They pause and no other sound comes from the door. Paul raises the gun at Norman.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Or do you want the easy way out?

Norman flinches, and cowers a long moment. He pries an eye open to see the gun still aimed at him.

NORMAN
 Alright, fine, I'll play.

Paul stashes the gun in the closet and puts on a Member's Only jacket.

PAUL
 Game ends when all winks are potted. No time limit. We squidge off when I get back.

NORMAN
 I don't have my squidgers.

Paul draws a small leather sack from his pocket and drops it on the table, spilling out silver dollar-sized plastic chips.

PAUL
 You can use mine.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Paul enters through the lobby doors carrying a pizza and crosses by the front desk when the FRONT DESK CLERK (heavy-set, middle-aged woman) notices him.

FRONT DESK CLERK
 Hello Mr. Schmendrick, are you enjoying your stay?

Paul glances over his shoulder but scuttles along.

PAUL
 Yes. We're- *I'm* good on the housekeeping though. Okay?

FRONT DESK CLERK
 Okay. Have a good evening.

Her narrowed eyes follow him down the hallway.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Norman hunch over the table. They're well into the match, with winks scattered all about the felt.

Norman flicks a wink into the pot and lines up his next shot. Paul gnashes on a slice of pizza.

Norman misses. He takes a deep sigh and his stomach growls as he looks at the remaining half of pizza in the box on the windowsill next to Paul. Inside, the gun lies on a glob of sauce and cheese.

Paul studies the table: the blue and red disks are mostly covered by green and yellows. He frowns.

PAUL

The squap and blitz. Shoulda seen that coming.

He takes another mouthful of pizza. Norman watches.

NORMAN

Please. I haven't eaten since you jumped me yesterday. My blood sugar...

Paul jolts up and cocks back his pizza-wielding arm.

PAUL

Here!!

He slaps Norman in the face with his half-eaten pizza slice.

Norman recoils and helplessly watches the slice plop to the floor. He uses his shirt to wipe sauce off his face and glasses.

Paul resumes studying the situation. Norman lowers his shirt and gestures to one of Paul's disks.

NORMAN

You could try a cracker with that one.

Paul glares at him. Norman cowers in preparation of another strike.

PAUL

I don't need your charity.

Paul lines up where Norman suggested. He squidges at the pile of disks and smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Alright!

Norman sighs.

NORMAN

That was a nice gromp, indeed.

PAUL

Hehe! Let's see what you do now, champ.

Norman studies the table for his options. He looks at Paul. Finally, he flicks at a pile and disks scatter.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hah! Didn't think so!

He gets in position and flicks disk after disk into the pot. Norman watches quietly.

NORMAN
Can you even afford a trip to
England? The NATwA doesn't cover
travel expenses, you know.

Paul misses.

PAUL
Shut up and mind your own business.

Norman takes another shot, disrupting a pile. Paul pots another two winks.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I still have a bit of my
inheritance left.

He misses. Norman's turn.

NORMAN
Your parents gone?

Norman squops one of Paul's winks. Paul scowls.

PAUL
What's it to you?

NORMAN
I lost mine too. We're just a
couple of middle-aged orphans,
aren't we?

Paul misses the pot.

PAUL
Shut up.

Norman's stomach growls. He looks at the pizza again, then to Paul.

NORMAN
Please. Just one slice. You've had
enough haven't you?

Paul looks at the box then back at Norman.

PAUL

Tell you what. You sink your next three shots and I'll give you a bite.

Norman stammers then nods. He lines up a shot and sinks it. He lines up another one. It goes in. He looks around and has but one more free option. He positions his squidger.

Paul watches closely.

Norman takes a good look at Paul: sneering at the action on the mat. Bits of chewed up pizza wedged in his teeth. Pizza sauce stains his knock-off Polo shirt.

Norman has lost his appetite.

He re-positions his squidger and flicks the wink to the other side of the mat -- nearest to the pizza box -- and it lands on a red disk.

Paul fumes.

PAUL (CONT'D)

John Lennon memorial shot?!

NORMAN

And it was worth it, too.

Paul steams and slaps Norman in this face. This time Norman's hardly stirred. He huffs through his beet-red face.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

You can kidnap me, starve me out,
and smack me with your puny little
hands as much as you want, but I am
still the North American
Tiddlywinks Champion.

Paul's face flashes red.

PAUL

That's disputable!

Paul charges Norman and tackles him to the floor. They wrestle as ferociously as two soft, desk-bound, middle-aged men could possibly manage.

They roll around on the floor and smack into the table. The pot spills over and winks rain down on them.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No! Our game!

Paul, distracted, is open to Norman who swings at him but only two of his five fingers barely connect -- more of a wipe than a slap.

PAUL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Really, Norman?

Paul grabs his hand and they wrest each other's wrists as they flail around on the floor.

Both at the brink of exhaustion, they phone in whatever strikes and grappling they can muster until they both collapse against the wall.

The pizza box teeters on the windowsill until the gun slides off the box, landing on the floor between them.

The remains of the pizza follows, plopping onto the gun.

They lock eyes on one another for a moment then scramble for the pizza.

Norman's chain jolts him back and Paul gets to it first.

Paul swipes the pizza away and grabs the gun, but Norman grabs a handful of pizza and mashes it into Paul's face.

He then grabs Paul's gun-holding arm and bites into it.

PAUL

Aarrgghh!!

Paul drops the gun and Norman scoops it up.

Paul wipes pizza off his face to see Norman pointing the gun at him. They both catch their breath and stare at each other.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hah! So, I guess you think you squopped me, eh?

NORMAN

You don't think I'll do it?

PAUL

Wouldn't matter anyway.

NORMAN

So you want to take the easy way
out then?

Paul breaks into a maniacal leer, raises his arms and jumps
at Norman.

PAUL

Roowwrrr!!

Norman fires: POP! POP! POP POP!

Paul's smile halts, then he breaks into an even more
maniacal laugh.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hahahahahaha!!

Norman watches him queerly, then looks at the gun. Smoke
wafts from the barrel. He sniffs it.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Did you really think a guy like me
could get his hands on a real gun?
Hahaha!

Paul inches closer to Norman. Norman scoots away from him.

NORMAN

Paul, I always thought you were a
little eccentric, but I really
think you need professional help.

Paul reaches into his sock and pulls out a Rambo knife.
Norman shuffles back as far as his chain will allow.

PAUL

I guess we'll just have to do this
the dirty way!

Norman kicks at Paul as he approaches. Paul leers at him as
he raises the knife to his face.

A knock at the door.

MAID (O.S.)

Housekeeping.

PAUL

No thanks!

NORMAN

Yes please!

A pause and they stare at each other. The door opens.

In the doorway, the MAID steps aside and the front desk clerk and a burly SECURITY GUARD (30s) take in the spectacle:

An overturned table, tiddlywinks scattered throughout the room, pizza bits strewn all over the carpet, and two pizza-smearred middle aged men -- one bound by a chain and the other wielding an over-sized survival knife bigger than himself -- staring back at them.

MAID

Mierda!

The security guard marches in, grabs the knife out of Paul's hand and plucks him off the floor by the collar.

SECURITY GUARD

Alright, mister, let's go.

PAUL

Ouch! Okay! Okay! Easy!

The guard ushers him to the front desk clerk. She glares at him.

FRONT DESK CLERK

Mr. Schmendrick, this is a single occupancy room. We're going to have to charge your card. Who is he, anyway?

PAUL

Oh him? He's just the North American Tiddlywinks Singles Champion.

He glances over his shoulder at Norman.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Good luck in Cambridge.

He winks at Norman, who offers back a weak smile. Paul turns as the guard walks him out.

SECURITY GUARD

Yeah, good luck in jail. Weirdo.

The desk clerk and maid rush to Norman. The maid fidgets with the shackle on his ankle.

FRONT DESK CLERK

My lord, are you alright?

NORMAN

Hey, I'm a champion. Been through worse. But can I let you in on a little secret?

FRONT DESK CLERK

Sure.

NORMAN

That shot in Toronto was an illegal bristol! And I got away with it! Haha! Haha! Hahahahaha!

The clerk and maid look at each other. The maid shrugs.

FRONT DESK CLERK

We'd better get him to a hospital.

The maid nods. Norman continues laughing.

FADE OUT.

THE END