

The Letdown

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EXT-BALCONY-DUSK

It is May, and MIKE DAVENPORT stands on the balcony of HIS apartment. HE has just graduated from the University of Pittsburgh's Political Science program and is having a party to celebrate HIS graduation. MIKE is in the middle of talking with a few guests when HIS longtime best friend DAVE comes out to the balcony holding two drinks.

MIKE:

(to GUEST #1)

Well, hey, thank you again for coming. I'll be making my rounds, so I'm sure I'll be seeing you again tonight. Feel free to get something to eat and make yourself at home.

GUEST #1

Oh we wouldn't have missed it for the world, Mike--

GUEST #2

And for the record, we think Yale is going to be a great fit for you.

MIKE:

(smiling)

Thank you.

GUESTS 1 AND 2 leave the balcony, leaving MIKE and DAVE as the only two remaining guests outside.

DAVE:

(handing MIKE the drink)

Here. Mixed it myself.

MIKE:

(skeptically, raising an eyebrow)

What it is?

DAVE:

It's a Gin and Tonic. You like those right? You order them all the time.

MIKE:

(still skeptically)

Yeah?

DAVE:

Relax. I didn't do anything to it.

Trust me. I've known you since the third grade. If I'd wanted to kill you, I'd already done it.

They both laugh. MIKE takes a sip.

MIKE:
(swallowing)
Mmm, this is very good. Where did you learn to mix?

DAVE:
You know that semester I took off after I broke my leg? After I'd gotten off the pain meds, I needed to get a job to earn money to pay for an apartment. You know Toads in Greensburg, right?

MIKE nods as HE swallows a sip of HIS drink

DAVE:
I took a two week bartending course, got hired there, and it turns out I was one of the faster bartenders. They always put the fast ones on weekends. I made a killing. I'm talking 1200 bucks a night Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

MIKE:
Good call.

They both take sips of their drinks.

DAVE:
So, Yale Law School next semester?

MIKE:
(defeated)
Yeah.

PAUSE. DAVE stares at MIKE who is entranced in a daze, staring at HIS glass.

DAVE:
Hey. Snap out of it okay? So you didn't get into Harvard. You know what Mike, fuck 'em. Bottom line, Yale is still the Ivy League. Some firm is going to look at your resume and see that you graduated

from Yale School of Law, and they'll be just as impressed as if you went to Harvard. You know why? Because you can't be a shithead at this stuff and get into the Ivy League. You've got the brains, man. And Yale's a great school. Be proud of the fact that you got in--

MIKE:

I am. Really, I promise I am.

DAVE:

Could have fooled me. C'mon man, you've been bummed this entire party. People aren't gonna want to stay if the guest of honor's acting like he skipped his daily dose of Zoloft. What's eating at you?

PAUSE. MIKE takes another sip of HIS drink.

MIKE:

It's Kate.

DAVE:

Look, man, I know that you're hurting from that. Believe me, I know. You and I, we're hopeless romantics, and as such, we bleed more than the average guy when we get smacked down by the girls who we love.

MIKE:

It's not even that I was rejected, Dave. I mean, Christ, my first girlfriend cheated on me with someone who I thought was my friend at the time. And I can't count the number of times I've been told no by a girl I've wanted. I guess what hurts the most is being made out to be the bad guy in all of this. To be made out to be the one who was trying to take her away from the guy who loved her. To be cast out as the douchbag in the entire situation.

DAVE:

The truth will come out eventually. You know that--

MIKE:

How can it? I'm leaving. The only perspective that anyone has is his, and you know Kate's going to defend him.

DAVE:

Well that's why you've got me. If you really think about it, it's probably a good thing that I'm a year behind you because of the semester I took off. You really think that your lifelong best friend is going to let people believe you're a scumbag. Hell no, man. Not in a million years.

MIKE:

(with a smile)

Thanks Dave. I'm sorry for being a downer. I just...

MIKE lets HIS thought trail off and shakes HIS head.

DAVE:

What is it?

MIKE:

I guess I just wanted to be remembered, when I left, you know? I don't really feel like I've effected anyone, in any way, whatsoever.

DAVE:

I hear you. Like I said, you and I, we're hopeless romantics. Of course we want to be remembered. And to the people who matter to us, we will be. But let me ask you something.

MIKE nods, then HE takes a sip of HIS drink.

DAVE:

Do you remember when we graduated high school? How the class valedictorians got up to the podium and told us that what we did while we were there actually mattered? After the ceremony, I think it was you who said it first, but you and

I both agreed that it was a crock of shit.

MIKE:
(swallowing)
Well, that's because it was.

DAVE:
Well, I hate to break it to you. But did you ever think that what we did while we were in college didn't really matter, either? You see Mike, that's our problem. You and I, we have the maturity level of about a 27 year old, and we're trapped in a younger body. We're always looking to be remembered, to find the deeper meaning in life, and searching for a deeper fulfillment. Bottom line, we grew up faster than the rest of the people our age.

MIKE:
I agree with you on that one.

They laugh a little, and take a sip of their drinks.

DAVE:
(swallowing)
Do you remember your 21st birthday?

DAVE chuckles a little bit to HIMSELF.

MIKE:
(smiling)
Yeah, what about it?

MIKE takes a swig of his drink, finishing it off. HE sets it down on a table off to the side.

DAVE:
Well, I'm just saying, it proves my point. I mean, we took our girlfriends out to a black tie dinner, as this double date. You and I look like fuckin' penguins in our tuxedos, and you remember the first drink you ordered?

MIKE:
(smiling)
I do, a vodka martini--

DAVE:

Shaken not stirred, because you
wanted to feel like James Bond.

They laugh.

DAVE:

You see what I mean though, Mike?
That epitomizes us, and where we're
at in terms of understanding life.
Do you know what you're supposed to
do when you turn 21? You're
supposed to get shitfaced and have
messy drunk sex. That's what
college people do. It doesn't
matter if your a girl or a guy.
Girls just like to go get drunk in
groups so they can take lots of
pictures, but you know they're
giving their number out to every
drunk asshole they meet. Why?
Because when the morning rolls
around, you chalk it up to being
drunk and you move on with life.
That's what makes you and me
different from all the rest. I bet
the drink you just had is your
first one tonight.

MIKE:

(chuckling)

It's my second.

DAVE:

(sarcastically)

Oh, we better get you to the
bathroom then...you feeling okay?
You are well on your way to being
so far gone that you won't be able
to walk a straight line soon--

MIKE:

(laughing)

Alright, shut the fuck up, I'm not
that big of a lightweight.

Pause. The two chuckle.

DAVE:

Seriously though, Mike. The people
who matter, they are the ones who
will remember you. And with regards

to what we did while we're in college. I think some of it mattered, but I think going in, you know, when we were 18 years old, it was inflated to be the ultimate experience. Here we were, on the cusp of the ultimate party. Four years of fun and excitement, and oh by the way, we were supposed to get a degree somewhere in there, I think.

MIKE:

(chuckling)

Yeah. Then the sad reality of life set in. If you want to get anywhere, you've gotta work your fingers to the bone.

DAVE:

You see? College was a letdown. Just like high school was a letdown. We came here to become men, and we never thought to ask the question, "didn't we already complete that task?" You know? College just didn't live up to what we thought it was supposed to be.

PAUSE.

DAVE:

Take this for example. You remember when you lost your virginity?

MIKE:

Yeah. Sorry for crying in front of you, I realize that you probably took a lot of my man cards for that one.

DAVE:

I didn't mind when you came to me like that. In fact I was glad to be able to talk you out of your hysterics. But you remember what I asked you that day?

MIKE:

(with a quizzical look)

No. I don't think I do.

DAVE:

I asked you if you felt any different.

MIKE:
And I didn't.

DAVE:
That's right, you didn't. You expected that if you were going to do that...if you were going to commit what was, in your mind, a huge sin, you would at least FEEL something. And you didn't. I mean, granted, I'm sure it felt great, but again, it was just another let down. Another disappointment you could notch up there with all the others you'd experienced in your life, like getting picked last in gym. That's what I'm saying man, for guys like you and me, who grew up when they were 15, high school and college were just let downs.

MIKE:
What's that say about life, then?

DAVE:
Some say life begins at 30 or 40. Who knows? Maybe there are birthdays to look forward to after you turn 21.

MIKE nods. KATE SALINGER walks on to the balcony.

KATE:
Hey, there's the grad.

MIKE:
(standing up)
Hey there, Kate, thanks for coming.

DAVE:
Hi Kate (to MIKE) I'm gonna go in, gotta take a piss.

DAVE leaves the balcony and MIKE and KATE sit down.

KATE:
So, you excited about Yale?

MIKE:
Yeah. Definitely. What about you? I

mean, you've got a few years to go yet, but you should be excited. College is a time to live it up.

KATE:

Yeah, sometimes though, I wish I was in your position, either done, or ready to get out of here.

MIKE:

Well don't go wishing your life away. It goes fast enough, believe me.

KATE:

(chuckling)

You sound like my father.

MIKE:

(chuckling)

Thank you?

KATE:

It's a complement, I'm saying you sound very wise. You're welcome.

PAUSE.

KATE:

Boy, you lucked out with the weather. It's beautiful out here.

PAUSE.

MIKE:

Yeah, had a little chat with God, I was like "hey, do me a favor, I need a cloudless day on this date, at this time," and He snapped His fingers and was like, "no problem bud, pound it, you 'da man."

MIKE pounds the air above HIS head like HE'S pounding God's imaginary fist.

KATE:

(laughing)

Wow, I wish I had that close of a relationship with God.

MIKE:

(smiling)

It has it's perks.

PAUSE.

MIKE:

So Kate, I mean. This is great that you came and all, but are we just going to ignore the elephant in the living room, or what?

KATE:

What are you talking about?

MIKE:

I'll take that as a yes, then.

PAUSE.

KATE:

Mike, I'm sorry, okay? Look, I didn't tell Derrick to tell you to back off, he was the one who picked up on you getting too close, alright?

MIKE:

No, it really isn't alright, Kate. He looked at me, and in a very respectful, but threatening tone, told me, in kinder terms, to back the fuck off. I really hope he knows that I don't appreciate that, and that I'm not afraid of him, at ALL, Kate.

KATE:

Well what did you want him to do, Mike? You were flirting with me, and you've been doing so for quite some time, and in front of him. Can you blame him for feeling threatened, and for taking an accosting tone with you? I don't think you can?

MIKE:

No, maybe I can't blame him for that, but I can blame you for not talking to him about how you felt. Do you understand how led on I felt by you?

KATE:

I suppose I didn't realize that.

MIKE:

(sarcastically)

Oh, you SUPPOSE? Well, let me tell you the signals I got from you Kate. When a girl looks at a guy and says after he admits his feelings for her that "Oh, I'd date you too," that's a pretty BIG signal. And furthermore, another big signal would be when the clock on the wall reads 3 a.m. and you look me in the eye and say that you don't want to leave my apartment. Those are both pretty big signals, Kate.

PAUSE.

KATE:

(with sympathy)

I'm sorry. I didn't realize that those were the signals that I was sending to you. I just simply meant them as gestures of friendship.

MIKE:

Well now you know that I misinterpreted them to mean something more.

PAUSE.

MIKE:

I just don't like being painted out to be the bad guy. I didn't kiss you, I didn't do anything wrong with you.

KATE:

You're not the bad guy. I feel like a bitch.

MIKE:

Well, you had to tell me somehow. I wasn't giving you much of a choice in all of this.

KATE:

I'm sorry, for the way that this ended up. I thought we had a good thing going.

MIKE:
I'm sorry for how this ended up
too.

PAUSE.

MIKE:
I should probably go inside, I know
some people who probably want to
talk to me.

KATE:
Okay.

MIKE gets up to go inside and is caught in the doorway by
DAVE.

DAVE:
You going to tend to your adoring
masses, my friend?

MIKE:
(smiling)
Something like that.

DAVE walks out on to the balcony and joins KATE, taking the
seat vacated by MIKE. There is a moment of silence between
KATE and DAVE.

KATE:
So, you've known Mike for how long?

DAVE:
Since the third grade.

KATE:
(somewhat incredulous)
Wow. You two have really grown up
together.

DAVE:
That's true. Sometimes he jokes
that I've been following him
around.

KATE:
(chuckling)
Well, there's nothing wrong with
having a friend around for a long
time, right?

DAVE:
(chuckling)

I suppose not

KATE:

So you're pretty close to him,
then, right. You guys have a solid
friendship?

DAVE:

Yeah.

KATE:

I'm assuming he's told you about me
then?

DAVE:

(sigh)

Yeah. He's mentioned you.

KATE:

How broken up about the whole thing
is he?

DAVE:

To be honest with you, more than he
should be. With all due respect,
Kate, from what he tells me, you
led him on, and that's why it hurts
so bad for him. He's been rejected
before, he can handle being told
no. It's a little harder for him to
handle believing that someone might
have feelings for him when they
don't.

PAUSE.

DAVE:

Look, the bottom line is, he wants
to be remembered, to be missed, by
you especially.

KATE:

I will miss him.

DAVE:

Kate, again, with all due respect.
No you won't. Come June, you'll
have forgotten that anything ever
went on between you two before
spring break.

KATE:

That's not true.

DAVE:

Fine. Then prove me wrong. Because you know what, Kate? Anyway you look at it, you win in this situation. You get the boyfriend, and you get to move on with your life. I guess I'm challenging you not to forget about him, and to tell your friends, and more importantly, your boyfriend, the truth about what happened.

KATE:

What's that supposed to mean?

DAVE:

It means that maybe you didn't fuck him, and maybe you didn't even kiss him; but bottom line, you know that you had feelings for Mike, and that you led him on, and to cover your tracks, you probably just got done telling him that he misinterpreted your signals, am I right?

PAUSE. KATE doesn't respond.

DAVE:

Your silence speaks volumes.

DAVE gets up from the chair and leaves KATE alone on the balcony.

INT-APARTMENT-LATER THAT NIGHT

MIKE and DAVE are cleaning up some trash after the party.

DAVE:

(handing MIKE a trash bag)
I saw you talking with Kate outside earlier. How'd you leave it with her?

MIKE:

(opening the bag and starting to fill it)
I don't know. To be honest, I can't wait to get on that plane tomorrow.

DAVE:

Where are you doing your internship again?

MIKE:
Burton/Smith, it's a firm based out
of Massachusetts, I'll be working
in their main office in Boston.

DAVE:
Boston huh?

MIKE:
Yup, good 'ol beantown. I'm hoping
to catch the Sox at Fenway while
I'm up there.

DAVE:
You know who else is going to be up
there?

MIKE:
Who?

DAVE:
Kayla Weirton.

MIKE:
Oh really?

DAVE:
Yeah, she's doing an internship for
a local financial investment firm

MIKE:
That's really cool.

DAVE:
Yeah...and...

DAVE digs into his back pocket and pulls out a small piece of
paper.

DAVE:
I told her I'd give this to you.

PAUSE.

MIKE:
What is it?

DAVE:
Well open it.

MIKE:
Is this her number?

DAVE:

(sarcastically)

No it's her uncle's number. She thought in case you'd ever need it, you know...of COURSE it's her number.

MIKE:

(chuckling)

Thanks, but why...I don't...get it.

DAVE:

She's had a thing for you...all year essentially. I told her to go after you, but she was too afraid to. When I told her what had been going on with you and Kate, she literally cried in my room for an hour. She felt terrible for you.

MIKE:

So what am I supposed to do? I can't just call her out of the blue.

DAVE:

Mike, do you think she's cute?

MIKE:

Yes, very.

DAVE:

Do you think you might have some things in common?

MIKE:

Well we're already pretty good friends.

DAVE:

Exactly. So worst case scenario, you go to Boston and you have a friend in the city. But in answer to your question, yes, she's probably waiting in anticipation for a call or a text. You'd probably make her day if you did one of those two things. Why don't you give her a call when you land tomorrow.

MIKE nods in agreement. DAVE and MIKE tie up the final trash

bags and take them outside.

EXT-APARTMENT COMPLEX-NIGHT

MIKE and DAVE put the trash in the cans.

MIKE:
Thanks again for coming man. You
got a way home?

DAVE:
I'm actually staying with a friend
out in Bridgeville. I'm going to
take the "T" to South Hills
Village, then a friend from work is
picking me up and taking me home.

MIKE:
Mmmk, good.

PAUSE.

DAVE:
You're going to be okay. You
understand? It's not a question,
it's a statement. You will be okay,
I promise. Don't worry about having
an effect on the people you left
behind. The ones who matter are the
ones you've effected. Go be
brilliant at Yale.

MIKE:
Thanks Dave.

They shake hands. MIKE walks back up HIS front steps to HIS front door. HE watches as DAVE trips slightly as he walks towards a nearby trolley station.

MIKE:
(calling to DAVE)
Good thing you got someone driving
you when you get off the trolley.

DAVE:
(without turning around,
jokingly)
I swear to drunk, I'm not God.

MIKE:
Mmmhmm, I believe you.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS.

THE END.