

OLD DAY DAWNING

By Jeff Dunne

© 2019 by Jeffrey A. Dunne

CHARACTERS:

Jack, in his 20s

Amy, in her 20s

Carol, slightly older than Jack and Amy

*A small conference room. Amy and Jack are near the door, listening intently to what is going on outside the room.*

JACK

Footsteps! Open it.

AMY

How can we be sur-

JACK

Just open it! *(Amy looks uncertain.)* Now! Open the fucking door!

AMY

*(Still hesitating...)* But what if-

*The door starts to rattle as someone attempts to open it, Jack pushes Amy away so he can unlock it.*

CAROL (OFFSTAGE)

It's me. Open the damn door!

*They unlock it. Carol bursts in, and they quickly shut it behind her.*

CAROL

Are you trying to get me killed?! What were you thinking!?

AMY

It could have been anyone! How could I know for sure..

*There is a loud thud against the door, and they all jump back. There's a rapid series of thuds against the door, and they all suddenly rush to reinforce it - pushing furniture in front, or whatever other means are available. The thudding eases, but continues.*

CAROL

*(Ominously...)* They're coming.

JACK

Were you able to—

CAROL

No. They blocked the way.

*Amy takes out a cell phone. They look at her, but she shakes her head, and puts it away again.*

We'll never make it out that way. They're everywhere now. Any luck getting to—

JACK

*(Shaking his head...)* Same. Hundreds of them. More coming every minute. There was no way. *(In despair...)* No way.

AMY

So that's it? This is the end?

*They all stare at each other.*

There has to be some way out! This can't be... I can't die here! I... can't... die... here! Do you hear me!?! I'm not going to—

*Carol and Jack try to snap her out of it, grabbing her arms, yelling "get ahold of yourself" and "we're not gonna die". Suddenly the thuds fall silent.*

JACK

They've stopped.

CAROL

Really, Captain Insight? But what does it mean...

JACK

How the hell should I know?

AMY

Maybe they gave up. Maybe they went back to...

CAROL

You wanna go out there and look? I didn't think so.

JACK

So now what? We can't stay in here forever, unless you got a whole lotta gummy bears stuffed into-

CAROL

Will you drop it with the god damn gummy bears, already, Jack!? I told you, it's not funny.

JACK

It's kinda funny. (To Amy) You think it's funny, don't you?

AMY

I don't kn-

CAROL

One. You find *one* fucking gummy bear in your bra, and for the rest your damn life-

AMY

Is *that* what that whole-

JACK

How did it get in there again? Come on, Carol, ho-

*He's interrupted by a sudden slow, deliberate knocking on the door. Three knocks, as they all hold their breath. After a slight pause, they start to relax, and then there's a fourth knock.*

AMY

What... what is it?

JACK

Knocking.

AMY

I know it's knocking, Jack-ass. What does it mean?

JACK

I think... I think it could be some kind of signal.

CAROL

Are you shitting me?

JACK

It *could* be a signal.

CAROL

Of course it's a signal! That's what knocking is, you dumb-ass.

JACK

What's this with the ass fixation all of a sudden? Jackass, dumba- (*He stops, then has a thought...*) I wonder if it's a code of some kind.

AMY

It's not a code, Jack. You're just an ass.

JACK

No, not that. The knocking. Knock knock knock, pause, knock. It might be a c-

*The series of knocking repeats, three knocks, pause, a fourth knock.*

AMY

Could it be that cat thing?

CAROL

What?

AMY

You know, the cat. The cat. In the old commercials? For 9 Lives cat food.

JACK

Are you talked about Morris the Cat?

AMY

Right. And he had some kind of code.

CAROL

(*Thoroughly disgusted.*) Morse?

AMY

Right! Morris Code. It could Morris Code. (*Sing-songy to the old commercial tune*) Meow meow meow meow, meow-

CAROL

It's Morse Code, Amy. Not Morris Code.

JACK

Seriously, Amy. What a fu-

CAROL

Don't even start, mister I-can't-get-the-pen-to-write.

JACK

Hey, it was-

CAROL

Shut up. Just shut up. It's not Morse Code.

JACK

Like you'd know.

*Amy has taken out her phone again and is trying to look something up.*

AMY

Damn. Still dead.

JACK

What did you think-

AMY

I *thought* I could look up how to decipher Morse Code.

JACK

The three knocks are an S. I remember that from S O S.

AMY

And the one knock?

JACK

I'm not sure. Maybe that could mean the number one.

AMY

S one? What could that me-

*The knocking repeats itself, only this time it is just two knocks, pause, single knock. Jack and Amy look at*

*each other in puzzlement. Carol watches the two of them in even greater disgust.*

JACK

Wait! I have an idea.

*He repeats the last knocking pattern on the door. There is no response.*

AMY

Let me try something.

*Amy knocks out shave-and-a-haircut, and a moment later come the concluding two knocks. Amy and Jack look knowingly at each other, and then there is the delayed third knock.*

AMY

This is maddening! How the hell are we supposed to know how to re- Wait, I have an idea. (*Leaning into the door...*) Who is it?

*Carol shakes her head in total disgust.*

What? What?!

CAROL

We know who it is, Amy. (*Gives Amy a look.*)

AMY

Oh. Oooh.

*Suddenly a small library catalog card is slid under the door. They all stare at it, and finally Carol picks it up.*

JACK

Well?

CAROL

It's a catalog card.

JACK

A what?

CAROL

A catalog card. It's how they used to keep track of what books were in the library.

JACK

On cards?

CAROL

Yeah. On cards.

JACK

Why not just keep a list on the computer?

CAROL

This was before computers, Einstein.

JACK

Oh.

AMY

What does the card say?

CAROL

It's for something called "The Tibetan Book of the Dead".

AMY

The Tibetan book of... What could that mean?

CAROL

I think it's a threat.

AMY

Books don't threaten.

*Jack and Carol just stare at her,  
dumbfounded.*

JACK

Maybe you should go out there and explain—

*Another card is slid under the door.  
They all stop and stare at it. Amy  
reaches down and picks it up.*



AMY

(*Reading...*) Inside The Alamo. Author, Jim Murphy.  
Published 2003 by-

CAROL

Still think that books don't-

*Another card slides through. Jack  
picks it up.*

JACK

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kick.

CAROL

Kid.

JACK

What?

CAROL

Kid. Sundance *Kid*.

JACK

No, it says Kick. K. I. C. Ki- Oh. Yeah. It's kid.  
The d's faded. What did they print this with anyw-

*Another card slides through. Then two  
more. Amy collects and reads them.*

AMY

Who's Agatha Christie?

CAROL

This is not good. Really not good. (*Goes to the door, and  
calls out.*) Hey! Look. Can we talk about this?

*There is a pause, then another card  
slides in. Jack picks it up.*

JACK

It's for a book called "The Prince".

AMY

The Prince? What does *that* mean? Are they saying Yes?  
No?

CAROL

The Prince... That sounds so familiar... I feel like...

JACK

It's by some dude named Niccolò match-eye ay-velly.

CAROL

Give me that. (*Reads...*) Machiavelli, you idiot.

JACK

So what does that mean?

CAROL

It means no, they don't want to talk.

AMY

(*At Jack...*) This is all your fault! (*To Carol...*) Let's go into the library, he says. (*This now turning into a mocking repeat of an earlier conversation...*) But it's creepy in there. It's just old books. No one goes into libraries any more, Jack. Right, so it'll be safe. (*Turning now to face Jack...*) So what do you have to say now, Jackass? Trapped in some abandoned study room with fifty thousand angry books outside waiting to bludgeon us to death the moment we step out of here?! Well!?! Well!?!

JACK

We just need... We need to figure out what they want.

AMY

They want to kill us.

JACK

But why? We didn't do anything.

AMY

You're trying to get inside the head of a *book*. No, of thousands of books. Angry books. (*Then going off on a depressive tailspin...*) Angry, angry, vengeful books. That are trying to kill us. Thousands of angry, violen-

CAROL

Wait a minute. (*Amy and Jack look at her.*) That's a great question. What is it that *thousands* of books, books on all kinds of different subjects... would have in common?

AMY

What the hell does a book even want anyway?

CAROL

They want to be...

CAROL AND JACK

Read.

JACK

That's it. They want to be read.

*The knocking starts...*

They're not angry...

*The knock has grown into a returned stream of thudding.*

They're lonely.

*The thudding grows faster and harder.*

Okay, they might also be a little angry.

AMY

(At the door...) Hey! Books!

*The thudding quickly stops, and they all look at each other with a modicum of hope. Then there is a late-coming single thud, and their heads all jerk back to looking at the door in fear.*

(Hesitantly...) What... what do you want from us?

*There are shuffling noises, and then another catalog card is slipped under the door. Jack picks it up.*

JACK

Learn to ree ack, an activity book.

*Carol takes it from him.*

CAROL

Read, you jackass. Learn to Read.

JACK

Oh yeah. The d's faded again. What *did* they prin-

CAROL

So that's it. They just want to be read.

AMY

(To herself in relief...) They aren't going to kill me...

CAROL

(*Shaking her head in disgust...*) They aren't.

JACK

Then what was with all the threats? The Alamo, the murder mysteries, the mac-and-cheese guy?

CAROL

Maybe... (*She considers...*) Maybe they were just telling us how they feel. Stranded, betrayed...

*They all stare at the door for a moment, then...*

Is that it? Do you just want to be read again?

*There is silence, then a single thud on the door.*

AMY

What does that mean?

JACK

Yes?

CAROL

Only one way to find out. Do we risk it?

JACK

Don't see any other choice.

CAROL

*(To the door...)* Alright. I'm going to open the door now, but you can't all come charging at us. We can only read one of you at a time. Do you understand?

*There is a single thud. There are nervous looks between them, then finally Jack opens the door.*

JACK

Alright. Who's first?

*After a moment a copy of Winnie-The-Pooh comes lofting into the room. CAROL picks it up, and they all sit down on the floor. Once they are settled, she begins to read.*

CAROL

"Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head behind Christopher Robin."

*The lights begin to fade, and Carol reads as much of the following line as necessary until the lights are out (preferably with her fading volume to match).*

"It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. Anyhow, here he is at the bottom, and ready to be introduced to you. Winnie-the-Pooh."

CURTAIN.