

ET TU, BREW TEA

By Jeff Dunne

© 2020 by Jeffrey A. Dunne

CHARACTERS

AMY High strung college student who hasn't slept in days.
DONNA College friend of Amy's.

SETTING

Some modern-day college dwelling setting such as an apartment or dorm common room.

SCENE

(Amy is sitting at a table, a mug of steaming water in front of her. Behind her is a counter, shelf, or other table on which is a half-full box of tea bags, and a bit of a mess where several bags have been broken so that there are tea leaves scattered around. Amy holds a tea bag in her hand over the steaming mug as Donna walks in.)

AMY

(Angry, at the tea bag...)

I'll do it! I swear I'll do it!

(Donna stops short, dumbfounded.)

Tell me what I want to know! I'm not messing around!

DONNA

Amy?

AMY

Shhh. Gimme a sec. *(Turning back to the tea.)* Give it up, or I swear I'll drop you right in that boiling water!

DONNA

Are you mugging a teabag?

AMY

Don't be silly. *(To the tea...)* I'm giving you until the count of three! One...

DONNA

What are you hoping—

AMY

Two...

DONNA

You've done some strange stuff before, Amy, but I think this is the weirdest.

AMY

Two and half...

DONNA

I don't think tea counts.

AMY

What?

DONNA

Counting. I don't think tea does it. I mean, for all it knows, between one and three comes two, two and a half, guinea pig, and lemondrop.

(Amy considers this.)

Hell, it might think it's got like a good week before it needs to make a decision.

AMY

I hadn't thought of that.

DONNA

I thought perhaps you hadn't.

AMY

(To the tea...)

Alright, listen up, you. This is how it's gonna go. Either you start talking, or you're getting thrown in there. I'm going to count to three, and that consists of the numbers one, two, two and a half, and then three. Three's when you get dunked, understand? None of this one two three and then dunk. On three. You may not even hear 'three' if your ears are at the bottom, because they'll be touching the water at that point. Now, one...

DONNA

What exactly are you trying to beat out of the little baggie?

AMY

Not beat out. Threaten. *(Points to the counter/whatever with the mess on it.)* I tried beating some others, but they broke. And not in a good way.

DONNA

Still, what are you—

AMY

Hang on. *(To tea...)* Two! *(Back to Donna)* What?

DONNA

What are you hoping to—

AMY

Oh, right. I was watching a bunch of reruns last night—

DONNA

Quick aside. How late?

AMY

I don't know. Around two? And one of the commercials was for this chamomile (*pronounced cha-moe-ma-lee*) and vanilla tea—

DONNA

What?

AMY

Chamomile (*again mispronounced*) and vanilla—

DONNA

You mean chamomile (*correctly pronounced*)?

AMY

Is that how you pronounce it? Huh. I would *not* have guessed that. It looks like cha-moe-ma=lee. Or maybe chamo-mile.

DONNA

Didn't they say it on the commercial?

AMY

Maybe, but I had the tv muted. Everyone was asleep, and I like watching reruns without the sound better anyway.

DONNA

Do you...

AMY

That way I can make up my own dialog.

DONNA

Why does this not surprise me?

AMY

Anyway, the commercial said, and I quote, that chamomile and vanilla tea holds the secret to a good night's rest. And I thought, what an amazing coincidence that this particular commercial would come on just now while I'm watching tv...

DONNA

At two in the morning.

AMY

Right. So I figure it's some kind of sign. You know how much trouble I've had sleeping ever since I got my grades last week, and...

DONNA

Have you been up since two a.m.?

(Amy stops, looks nervous.)

It's nearly one in the afternoon. Have you really been up since...

AMY

Anyway, so I figure if this tea holds the secret, I'm—

DONNA

First off, Amy, it's a commercial. Companies can say anything they want on—

AMY

I know that. You think I don't know that? I did my research.

DONNA

Uh huh.

AMY

What?

DONNA

Research?

AMY

I looked up chamomile (*misprounced*) and vanilla tea, and their website confirmed that this blend of tea has held the secret to a good night's sleep for nearly four thousands years.

DONNA

Their—

AMY

Four thousand years!! I mean, holy shit, Donna, how could we let that much time slip by without trying to get that secret? I'm not the first person to have a sleepless night.

DONNA

Whose website?

AMY

But then it occurred to me that maybe people have tried, but they just didn't know how, you know? So I... what?

DONNA

What website?

AMY

From the commercial. I mean, they'd know, right?

DONNA

Right. (*Shakes her head in dismay.*)

AMY

So I thought, maybe people had the same thought. "Four thousand years, that's a long time. Someone must have tried this already." But then I thought, nowadays, we have new techniques. Like all that waterboarding that was in the news a while back. Has anyone ever tried something new and clever like that?

DONNA

Whoa, slow down, Amy. First... God, where to even begin... First, waterboarding is like six hundred years old.

AMY

It is?!

DONNA

Yeah, not new. Second, waterboarding is a way to simulate drowning. You can't waterboard a teabag, because it doesn't have a mouth.

AMY

Oh.

DONNA

What you're threatening to do to it is called drowning. Or boiling. And both of those have been used as torture techniques for at least four thousand years.

AMY

Oh.

DONNA

Also consider... This particular teabag, which came from that box over there? I figured. This particular teabag has itself *not* been around for four thousand years. It was probably manufactured like a year ago.

(Donna goes over and looks at the box.)

AMY

They said it was an ancient Chinese secret.

DONNA

This stuff comes from Tulsa.

AMY

(Glares at the teabag.)

I am *very* disappointed in you!!

DONNA

It's not the teabag's—

AMY

Two and a half!!

DONNA

Give me that.

AMY

No! I'm going to get the secret out of the little fucker no matter what it takes!

DONNA

Just gimme. It's obviously not going to talk. It's had all the time in the world, and I have an idea.

(Reluctantly, Amy hands the tea bag over. As soon as she gets it, Donna throws the bag in the mug.)

AMY

Oh my god! Oh my god oh my god oh my god! I can't believe you just did that!

DONNA

Amy...

AMY

I mean, I know I was threatening it, but those were just threats! I never would have really...

DONNA

Amy...

AMY

Look at that. It's life essence is being sucked out of it! It's swirling around like... like... (*Suddenly calm...*) Oh, hey. It's kind of like when the Dementors are sucking the life out of Harry and Sirius Black, remember?

DONNA

Amy...

AMY

(*Suddenly realizing what this means...*)

Oh my god. You! You're the Dementor in this! How could you do this? I thought I knew you! We had microbiology together! I never suspected that you had this cruel, vicious streak in you. Not like this!

DONNA

I know you're overtired, but—

AMY

What are you? Some kind of heartless terrorist?

DONNA

Me?

AMY

How could you do that? Without even letting it say goodbye to its lov—

DONNA

You beat the crap out of like five teabags over there, Amy! Five! At least!

AMY

Accidents! All accidents! Every single one. I never meant to hurt them. I had no idea how fragile they were!

DONNA

Five times?

AMY

The first time I thought maybe it was just that one was defective. Then after the second... I thought maybe if I hit them instead of pretending to rip... But... So then I tried... Oh, Donna! What have I done?! What have I *become*?! I'm just like you. A monster! A terrible, horrible harbinger of death and destruction!

(Amy starts to sob.)

DONNA

Come here. Bring it in.

(Donna pulls a chair up to where Amy is, sits, and pulls Amy over against her shoulder, where she starts sobbing uncontrollably.)

It's okay. It's okay. Let it all out. That's right. Don't you worry about ruining my new blouse. It's fine. It was already two whole days old, and you know I don't like to wear things for more than an hour or two before someone leaks mucus all over... Oh my g.... No, no. It's fine.

AMY

I got... I got...

DONNA

An A minus. I know. But it was in cellular biology. That's a tough class...

AMY

My... my...

DONNA

Your parents will understand. It's okay.

AMY

B-but....

DONNA

Shhh shh shh. I'm sure everyone else in the class will still hate and envy you in the morning.

(The sobbing has gone silent. Amy has finally fallen asleep.)

That's a girl. That's right. Just sleep.

(Donna tests a little to confirm that Amy's asleep, finds that she is. She tries to extricate herself, but each time it looks like Amy is going to wake up. Eventually, with a huge sigh, she resigns herself to staying there while her friend sleeps.)

You're so buying me a new shirt, Amy.

(Lights out)