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920 words

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It was tough to find a parking spot and when Chris got to Bob's Donuts there was a line.

"10:30 on a week night?" Chris said to the guy in front of him. "What's everyone doing?"

"Bake times," the guy said.

"Ah, something I should have known then," Chris said, whatever that meant. "I assume you're a regular?"

The guy didn't answer and Chris said, "I'm a local--mostly--but not a regular. I did use to come here after a Bond movie. Or before. You remember when they'd open at the Royal? Down the street?"

The guy'd had enough of Chris but another guy spoke up. "Those were the days my friend. Always right near Christmas."

"So you know," Chris said, turning around to the guy and his admittedly pretty voluptuous female friend. "I had a birthday then too. One year--the one time I invite about 20 kids? It was sold out and we end up at a theater on Market Street, watching something else."

“Bummer,” the guy said.

“Which one was it?” his friend said.

“That we missed? I think it was *Licence to Kill*. I could be mixed up, I was ticked off.”

“That must have been so disappointing,” she said.

Chris was thinking it wasn't *that* bad, it was 6th grade, you got over it. But nice of her to be concerned.

She said, “That's the one where he goes rogue.”

“I remember that,” the guy said, “he gives up his Double-O license and does it his way.”

“All about revenge,” she said.

“Was that like the first Timothy Dalton?” the guy said.

“Pretty sure second one,” she said. “You're thinking of *The Living Daylights*.”

“Oh yeah,” Chris and the guy both said.

“She knows her movies,” the guy said. “She watches 'em working out, she's very disciplined.”

“He tends to be too,” she said.

The original guy in front looked back like *what're you doing in here stuffing your face with donuts at this hour if y'all are so disciplined*.

Chris had to agree, and one thing for sure, he himself had *no* discipline at the moment, and he had extreme weakness for glazed buttermilk bars, especially Bob's

and especially fresh out of the deep-fryer--which is why he tried to avoid the place when he was in town--and the line moved and you could see them better on the cooling rack, and maybe go for two.

Back outside Polk Street had a decent vibe tonight, not too many homeless, and you didn't otherwise feel like you were going to get mugged going back to your car, though these days in San Francisco that part was unfortunately becoming a crapshoot.

The movie guy took a big bite of something powdery with fruit inside--not your best choice from in there--and got caught up in his phone . . . and Chris figured what the hay and discreetly handed the woman a business card from when he once worked for the Chronicle, but the number was still good and you never know.

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He'd been subletting the apartment on Broderick Street in the Marina and living in Manhattan Beach, and for the most part it worked out okay. There'd been the one tenant, tech guy from North Carolina who seemed normal but then turned on Chris, stopped paying the rent and called the Building Department and threatened to sue him and so on . . . and Chris had to dangle him off

the roof to equalize the situation, though things almost got away from Chris and he dodged a bullet and thank God never heard from that guy again.

There were a couple of tenants since, everything fine, but the current ones asked if they could break the lease and move to Oregon, they were going to hemp-farm up there, and did he mind them leaving some furniture in the apartment.

Chris minded all of it but didn't say anything and wished them well. He'd heard from a guy who tried it that the hemp business up there was over-saturated, but that guy did get stoned a lot, and why stick your nose in someone's dreams.

So he'd been back in the apartment since yesterday, and the people's furniture actually helped, and soon enough you go through the hassle of re-renting the place but for now a little change-up wasn't the worst thing.

He flicked on the late news. They were in the middle of a live cam where the reporter was on a residential block and there was police activity behind her and crime tape.

The reporter said someone was found unresponsive around 8 o'clock and foul play is suspected, and therefore the crime scene business.

The camera panned to the front door of the house-- and there was that same detective who talked to Chris about another matter, and had been quite relentless. Chris thinking Jesus Christ, even when I don't do something I have to worry.

He wasn't going to be able to sleep, he looked at his watch, last call wasn't until 2, might as well head over to Weatherbee's.

First the phone rang. It was the gal from the donut line. "I'm thinking you're a pompous ass," she said. "I mean a business card. How pathetically forward is that."

Chris said you want to meet for a drink and she hesitated so he said or you can come over, and she hesitated again so he gave her the address. Then he left. It's important, she'll figure it out.