

Mi Dispiace

825 words

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“Big mistake,” Cliff said.

“Yeah whatever,” Wilson said.

“That one and the female on the lawn. In front of the co-op. Those two. But the TA one killed me, I had it all set up. Which I didn’t grasp.”

“The lawn one you might have *imagined* being an option, you’re saying.”

“Okay forget the second one. First one I was taking Italian. I mean why would I do that?”

“I took Danish my first quarter,” Wilson said.

“So? Even worse. Thing of it was, I didn’t place her as particularly attractive until then.”

“Italian roots? Some reason I’m picturing the guy’s wife in the Godfather, not the New Jersey one the Sicilian one. The accent.”

“I’ll admit,” Cliff said, “that person was voluptuous. But no mine was Nordic. Strawberry blond.”

“*Northern* Italy then.”

“No Italy. She was from the Peninsula, the suburbs. Like Los Altos.”

“Regardless she came on to you. The big moment you’re building up to.”

“Right. I was a little freshman. She leans in as I’m leaving. What an idiot.”

“Maybe. Alcohol in play?”

“Sure, but that wasn’t it. She’s like 22 23 going for a master’s that they stick teaching a conversation class. An older woman. I panicked. I mean now, she’s my age.”

“I get you on that. How’d you panic?”

“Got out of there. Instead of following her back in the apartment.”

“But how do you know?”

“That’s what she wanted? Cause I asked her.”

“Okay Bud,” Wilson said. “You’re fucking with me here.”

“Sorry. I asked her last week.”

“Huh?”

“I drove down to Redlands and paid her a surprise visit. What triggered it was a thing on Amazon Prime, some guy does something similar.”

“Wait a second hold on,” Wilson said.

“I know,” Cliff said, “just like that. Sometimes don’t over-think shit’s what I’m learning.”

“Where’s Redlands even at?”

“You know, out there, for you get to Palm Springs.”

“Unh-huh. And they got a college? Or she’s not doing that.”

“No they do. She’s teaching French now, which confused me trying to find her. She likes it there, has a husband and kid. I can see it.”

“So we’re talking like 20 years . . . so what the hell happened?”

“I walk in--thiz her office--it doesn’t take her long, she’s pretty sharp. Asks me did I ever go to Italy and put the material to use.”

“But not what you happen to be doing there.”

“Not at first. She offers me tea. Says she loves it when she reconnects with previous students, that it doesn’t happen enough. Her husband teaches ceramics she said.”

“Same place?”

“Wasn’t worried about that. I built up to it with the small talk bullshit, then I asked did she remember the end semester get-together.”

“Cmon *what*.”

“She didn’t say anything but I could tell she did. So I said I made a mistake that night.”

“Dog I give you credit. I wouldn’t be doing this.”

“Yeah kinda surprised myself there. She said it was for the best that I *didn't* make a mistake.”

“Je-sus Christ. She's dialed right into it.”

“Then she gets up and says anyhoo, thanks for stopping by and please keep in touch. I get up too but I point out stopping by's like a 4 hour round trip, what I just did.”

“What she say to that?”

“She said they have a spare bedroom, if I want to break up the trip.”

“You're kidding.”

“I know, but so yeah that was it.”

“*It* it?”

“I call her an hour later from I-10 at Pomona. She's not there but she calls me back. She said thanks for being a good sport that night.”

“What does *that* mean?”

“That's what *I* said. She said for taking it in stride. Her insecurities back then.”

“What does *that* mean?”

“No idea. I asked did she want to have lunch sometime, meet halfway. That the traffic's pissing me off at the moment and that'd be my limit.”

“Good point.”

“She says sure. Some *time*. And that’s it again.”

Wilson thought about it. He said, “This is the thing with chicks.”

“Can be,” Cliff said.

“How’d she look even? You didn’t touch on that.”

“Fine. Slightly rounder. That’s not the point.”

“That mean you still want her? Or really do just want to have lunch. I’m playing with you.”

“I’ve been tossing it around what *do* I want. There’s the textbook answer and the real life one.”

“Real life one’s not complicated, you want your face between her legs, at least for a second. For old times’ sake.”

“You’re an idiot. Real life I want to examine her better, convince myself she’s not appealing.”

“Exactly what I’m saying.”

“Okay you’re not funny. Textbook I want to run a couple situations by her, get her take.”

“Ah. So textbook you’re using her. Actually both cases you’re using her.”

“Yeah you gotta do that.”

“You were veering off there for a while,” Wilson said.