

The Economy Sucks

by

J.E. Clarke

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Janet Clarke
janetgoodman@yahoo.com

FADE IN:

INT. BAR ROOM

A classic Irish bar - filled with rich wood tables and flowing taps.

STEPHEN SLATER (30s) sits at the counter, drink in hand. Overdressed for the surroundings, his suit is worn.

A dark man sits next to him. CHARLES (20s) is suave, but casual. Perfect hair. High-end clothes.

LUCY (20s) stands nearby; an icy blonde with a hard edge.

An application lays open in front of Stephen.

STEPHEN

You know, we didn't even want three kids. It just sort of happened. Maria was so excited, we decided to see it through. Sarah was born, and we couldn't have been happier.

Charles nods in sympathy. Lucy curls a strand of hair around her delicate finger.

STEPHEN

Everything was fine for awhile. Then the economy tanked. And they laid me off.

The BARTENDER wanders over. Stephen nods for a re-fill. Suds pour over the top.

STEPHEN

(muttering)

Twenty years service, one month severance. The system sucked me dry, and threw me away.

The bartender offers Charles and Lucy a pint. They shake their heads "no" - seem disgusted.

Stephen scans the paperwork.

STEPHEN

Blood type? You really need this?

CHARLES

Trust me, it's important.

Stephen scribbles in "AB Positive."

STEPHEN

At first, Maria found work at Stop and Shop. Almost forty, and they had her bagging groceries. But it didn't pay the bills or put food on the table. Then the unemployment ran out, and it got even worse.

Lucy purses her lips. Stephen reads through the document.

STEPHEN

We sold all our stuff. The TV, the kid's video games. But it wasn't enough. Stimulus, my ass. The recession never ended. Not for us, anyway.

He fishes out a cigarette. Charles snatches it from of his hand.

CHARLES

If you agree to this, that's got to go.

He taps the application form.

CHARLES

No smoking clause, right here.

STEPHEN

Not even one? Come on, give a guy a break...

LUCY

It's a deal breaker, Stephen. We're providing you and your family with full health benefits. We won't have you screw it up with that nasty habit.

Stephen grumbles, checks the box.

STEPHEN

Fine.

CHARLES

There's no rush. Take your time. We wouldn't want you going into this with any doubts.

STEPHEN

My job was writing contracts. I can breeze through this, eyes half shut. Looks pretty straightforward.

He glances at Charles.

STEPHEN

I sign this, and you guarantee my family will be cared for? Annual payments of fifty thousand for the next ten years - no matter what happens?

CHARLES

As long as there's no fraud on your end. If you're as healthy as you claim.

Stephen CHUCKLES darkly as he signs.

STEPHEN

At least you have your health. Isn't that the phrase they use?

LUCY

(nods)

Family is everything. That's another.

Stephen fishes a picture from his pocket and shows it to Charles and Lucy.

In the photo, MARIA smiles on a summer's day. THREE CHILDREN cling to her waist.

STEPHEN

They're worth it. Aren't they?

Lucy smiles, touches the sun in the picture. Stephen hands her the paperwork.

LUCY

A beautiful family. You should be proud.

STEPHEN

Can't we work out a local solution? Let me stay nearby?

CHARLES

We tried doing that before. Too many marks. Too many questions.

Lucy tucks the application in her pocketbook.

CHARLES

We'll get this notarized, set up wire instructions for the automatic payments.

Charles pays the bartender, holds out his hand to Stephen. Stephen recoils at the touch of his skin.

CHARLES

Sorry. Forgot to warm up. You'll get used to it. I promise.

STEPHEN

Can I at least go home, say good-bye?

The couple look at him sadly.

LUCY

You can watch from afar, but you can't go in. Can't take the risk you'll say something wrong. That could bite us in the ass, down the road.

STEPHEN

I guess you're right. Maybe it's easier this way.

CHARLES

Definitely an improvement on traditional methods. An ethical solution, for an age old problem. Win-win, for everyone concerned.

Stephen SIGHS, walks slowly towards the door.

CHARLES

You'll like the apartment; we've spared no expense. Big screen T.V., in-house gymnasium. All the perks. Days off, of course.

LUCY

We've saved up quite a bit over the years. Liquidated in 2008, before everything crashed.

She glares at Charles.

LUCY

Except for that Madoff investment you insisted on pursuing.

CHARLES

We only lost a million. No blood shed on that deal. Beats what we lost in '29...

The three reach the door, open it to the night outside.

STEPHEN

Does it hurt?

CHARLES

Just a pin-prick. Feels like a flu shot.
But the rush afterwards is awesome.

The door JINGLES shut behind them.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

Is it true you glitter in the daylight,
like they show in Sarah's movies?

LUCY (O.S.)

No. We tan. Very badly.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Fucking Twilight bullshit...

FADE OUT: