

THE TEST

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. MODERN KITCHEN - EVENING

Sleek, windowless, antiseptic, lots of counter space and a modern dinette set. The only oddity is that the cabinets are in different colors.

At the table sits IOLA, 40, pretty, well-maintained. She sips lemonade and watches the flat panel TV on the wall, a mindless soap. An electronic tablet sits on the table.

The tablet BEEPS and flashes green.

Iola goes to the freezer side of the fridge. She pulls out a frozen casserole in a green wrapper.

She unwraps the casserole, and places it in the microwave. The keypad features colors instead of numbers, and she presses the green pad. The microwave launches a program with a BEEP.

Smiling, Iola returns to the table and taps the tablet. It cycles into a schematic of the table with plates, glasses, and dinnerware in different colors.

Carrying the tablet, she goes to the corresponding cabinets and pulls out the items needed for dinner. Blue plates, red glasses, yellow knives and forks.

She meticulously sets the table according to the schematic, adding white, paper napkins. She smiles as the table perfectly matches the schematic--three for dinner.

Through the door trudges RON, 40s, big, in shape, in uniform. It could be a cop uniform except he's not armed. She comes to him, and they share a brief kiss.

IOLA
How was your day?

RON
Crazy. Today, I found one wrapped in plastic and stuffed inside an empty ice cream box in the freezer. I swear it gets worse every day.

She goes to the fridge and gets a beer for him.

RON (CONT'D)
You wouldn't believe how they hide it. What's for dinner?

IOLA
Green, it's green tonight.

RON
Didn't we have green last night?

IOLA
(pointing at tablet)
It said green.

RON
Did you remember to advance the
day?

She frowns, obviously not remembering.

RON (CONT'D)
It's OK. It's my fault I should
have put it on auto-advance.
(takes beer and hugs her)
I'll fix it.

She hugs him, a bit upset.

RON (CONT'D)
Did his test score come?

IOLA
It's on the machine.

RON
And?

She shakes her head. He grabs the tablet and taps it a few
times. She sits and turns to the TV.

RON (CONT'D)
What the hell.

She ignores him, lost in the show. Tablet in hand, he
leaves.

INT. JOSH'S ROOM - EVENING

JOSH, 14, headphones on, watches a movie on his tablet.
Typical teenage room with posters of movies and gorgeous
women, modern and windowless. Drawers in bureau are multi-
colored.

Ron enters. Josh looks up, and Ron motions for Josh to cut
the movie. Josh kills the connection and removes the
headphones.

JOSH
Hi, dad.

RON
Hey. Have you seen your test
score?

Josh looks away, trying to hide as teens do.

JOSH
Yeah.

RON
And?

JOSH
It wasn't my fault.

RON
What, someone else took the test
for you?

JOSH
No, no, it, it...I froze, I just
froze.

RON
Didn't we go over the test? Didn't
I tell you how important it was?

JOSH
I know, I'm sorry. It's not like I
didn't try. I'm just not a good
test taker.

RON
You're the son of a librarian.
Have any idea how that's gonna
affect my career?

JOSH
I said I'm sorry. It won't happen
again.

RON
It can't happen again. You won't
get another chance.

Josh's face pales.

JOSH
Education camp?

RON
If you're lucky. With this
score...

JOSH
You can do something, can't you?

Ron sits on the bed and wraps an arm around Josh.

RON
I'll do what I can. But now, you
have to come clean.

JOSH
Come clean?

RON
You wouldn't score like this if you
were doing what you were supposed
to be doing. So, tell me what you
have been doing.

JOSH
Nothing, I swear. I did exactly
what you said.

Ron stares into his son's eyes.

RON
I'm a librarian, Josh. I know the
statistics for the test. You
couldn't do what you did if you
followed the regimen.

Fear spreads Josh's face.

RON (CONT'D)
I'm not saying it's all your fault.
But don't tell me you followed the
program.

JOSH
It's not what you think.

RON
I can't help you if you're going to
lie.

They look at each other for a long moment.

JOSH
(whispering)
Old Man Granger.

RON
There, was that so hard?

JOSH
Dad-

RON
After dinner, Josh, after dinner.

JOSH
What are we having?

RON
Green.

JOSH
Mom forgot to advance the date
again?

RON
I turned on auto-advance. Won't
happen again.

JOSH
Thanks, I'm pretty tired of green.

EXT. GRANGER HOUSE - NIGHT

An old Victorian mansion set amidst sleek, metal and glass towers. An anachronism. Josh and Ron stand on the sidewalk, looking at a house with lit windows.

JOSH
Do we have to?

RON
You think I'm the only librarian
who can add two and two and get
five?

JOSH
Very funny.

They walk to the front door and knock. The door is opened by GRANGER, 70s, thin with the wispy hair of age, a man who has seen his share of trouble. He takes one look and opens the door wide.

INT. GRANGER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Josh and Ron sit at the table while Granger pulls two beers and a soda from the fridge. This is an older kitchen without color-coded cabinets.

GRANGER
I can't say this is totally unexpected.

RON
His test results came today.

GRANGER
How bad?

JOSH
I missed every question.

GRANGER
Every one? That's—

JOSH
Statistically impossible, I know.

GRANGER
Amazing.

Josh shrugs and sips soda as Ron and Granger pop beers.

RON
It means remedial camp. They won't let it go.

GRANGER
We talked about the test, Josh, how the score can change your life.

JOSH
I couldn't help it. I froze.

RON
What's done is done.

GRANGER
What now, librarian?

RON
I want to see them. And don't tell me you don't have them.

Granger smiles. He's been caught.

GRANGER
Are you sure?

RON
I really don't have a choice.

INT. GRANGER HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Granger leads Josh and Ron through a basement cluttered with boxes and old bicycles and racks of clothes, the flotsam and jetsam of a long life.

GRANGER
Don't blame Josh. When I saw him
spray painting-

RON
Spray painting?

GRANGER
A message on a wall, I sort of took
him under my wing.

They stop in front of a blank wall. Granger presses a hidden button, and a door opens. He reaches inside and turns on a light. He steps aside and waves them through.

INT. GRANGER HOUSE - SECRET ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ron and Josh enter a room with a single bookcase full of books. Hard cover, paperback, four shelves of old, well-worn books.

Ron moves to the books and touches them as if they're not real. Josh pulls out a book, and takes it to the table.

RON
I...I've never seen so many.

GRANGER
Obviously, I didn't obey the prime
directive.

JOSH
This is my favorite, Moby Dick.

RON
You've read all of these?

GRANGER
Many times.

JOSH
He has math books too.

Ron looks at Granger who shrugs.

RON
I would get a big bonus for a stash
like this.

JOSH
You can't rehab them, dad.

RON
No, I suppose not.

GRANGER
You can't take Josh back home.

Ron and Josh take notice.

GRANGER (CONT'D)
We know what they'll do to him in
education camp.

RON
He can't stay with you.

JOSH
Hey, I'm right here.

GRANGER
There's a village on the other side
of the river, outside the
jurisdiction. It's full of people
like Josh. I can arrange to get
him there.

JOSH
They have books?

GRANGER
More than me.

JOSH
Cool.

RON
It's not that simple.

JOSH
Sure it is. It's the only
solution.

Ron looks from Granger to Josh.

RON
 You two cooked this up, didn't you?
 (to Granger)
 You prepped him, convinced him that
 failing the test was the only way
 to get to this 'village'. It was
 all your idea.

GRANGER
 Look at him. Look. At. Him. Do
 you really think he can hide away
 like you have? Do you think he can
 survive a camp? What do you think
 his mind will be like when he comes
 back? They'll turn his brain to
 mush like they did your wife.

RON
 Don't-

GRANGER
 I remember Iola as a girl. I think
 you do too.

They exchange stares.

RON
 What will happen in the village?
 Who will protect him?

GRANGER
 People who value intelligence.
 They'll take good care of him.
 And I promise regular reports.
 You'll know exactly how he's doing.

JOSH
 Dad, I know it's sudden, but I
 remember the stories you told mom,
 about people who passed the test.
 I...I can't do that.

Ron moves to Josh and wraps his arms around him.

RON
 What, what will I do without you?

INT. MODERN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ron comes through the door.

RON
 Honey, I'm sorry-

BAINS (O.S.)
Where ya been, Ron?

Ron stops and looks at Iola and BAINS, in librarian uniform, sitting at the table. Leaning against the counter are two more LIBRARIANS, burly men with little humor.

RON
Bains, what are you doing here?

BAINS
I think you know. Where's your boy?

RON
That's what I'd like to know.

IOLA
Ron? Where's Josh?

RON
I don't know. He ran off after getting his test score. I went looking for him, remember?

Iola frowns as if remembering is the most difficult thing in the world.

BAINS
He ran?

RON
Yeah, who would've thunk. I mean, flunking ain't the end of the world, is it?

BAINS
He missed every question, Ron, every question. That's statistically—

RON
Impossible. Yeah, imagine.

BAINS
He got 'em all wrong because he knew all them right answers. That makes him anti-social.

RON
And a lot brighter than his old man. No wonder I couldn't find him.

Bains regards Ron with narrowed eyes.

BAINS
Got any idea where he might go?

RON
I wish. Parents are the last to
know, ain't they?

IOLA
I thought you and Josh left
together.

RON
(taking her hand)
No, I told you I was going out
after Josh.
(to Bains)
She mismembers sometimes.

Bains nods and stands.

BAINS
When he comes back, you call?

RON
I know my duty.

Bains pats Ron on the shoulder as he and the other two
Librarians leave.

IOLA
Josh is gone.

RON
He'll be back. He'll be back.

She frowns and looks at the fridge.

IOLA
Two person colors are yellow and
teal, aren't they?

RON
We'll redo everything, Iola. We'll
redo.

She smiles and holds his hand even as the TV lights up.

FADE OUT.