

PRICELESS ICE

by Kyle Patrick Johnson

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY FIELD - NOON

A magnificent diamond, large as a golf ball, displayed on faded purple velvet, sits on a small wooden table in the middle of prairie grass. Refracts the sun's rays, brilliant.

Three adults circle it, hold hands. They are:

HUNTNER (60), English, distinguished goatee; VYNNIE (30), waist-long hair, her eyes always wide open as if in surprise; SAFARI (30), voluptuous Betty Boop figure.

The sky darkens. The diamond ceases its light show.

HUNTNER

Now is the time of renewal!

Huntner thrusts his arms into the air, the others follow.

They turn their faces to the vanishing sun overhead, stare into the eclipse, mouths open in ecstasy, bent backwards.

HUNTNER

Unblinking heaven, mother-father
Sun, Apollo's Eye! Cleanse us!
Renew us in our dedicated
watchfulness, that our inner eyes
be as seeing as thy own.

The little group looks like an unfurling flower.

Darkening field.

Faces to the sky. Eyes wide open.

Too wide open.

The sun emerges from the eclipse. Light pours over the group.

ALL

Apollo cleanse! Apollo cleanse!
Apollo cleanse! Apollo cleanse!

They release their hands, wave their arms, shake heads, rub eyes, twirl in a tizzy. Dizzying flurry of arms and legs.

Huntner reaches up to his eyelids, yanks. Pulls off a piece of Scotch tape from each eye. Screams with the pain. Presses a palm against each eye. Shakes his head.

Vynnie and Safari follow suit: yank, scream, press, shake.

Vynnie freezes, rubs her eyes, blinks, points at the table.

VYNNIE
Where'd it go?

Purple velvet, wooden table, but no diamond. A worn dark spot on the velvet where the diamond had been.

Huntner goggles at the void. He reaches up to his eyelids, forces them open with his hands.

HUNTNER
Blast and bloody hell, I'm going to catch it. The damn thing's gone!

Vynnie looks underneath the table. Nope, not there.

SAFARI
It can't have-- no, no.

VYNNIE
What, what?

SAFARI
Apollo himself, you think? Taken it like in the books? Really?

HUNTNER
Maybe. Maybe not. One of you snagged the ice, more like? Open your pockets.

Huntner takes a step. Safari and Vynnie jump backwards.

VYNNIE
NO! We didn't take it. Maybe you did, to get the insurance.

HUNTNER
You're insane. I'll get canned. Insurance isn't under my name.

The three face each other across the table, distrust crackles amongst them.

SAFARI
You're not touching me.

Huntner whips out a cell phone.

HUNTNER
Only one way to settle this, 'cause Apollo's not going to tell me.

SAFARI
You asked him yet?

HUNTNER
I'm calling the police.

VYNNIE
What police? We're in the middle of
nowhere.

HUNTNER
That small town that we passed. Had
to have a county sheriff or
something. They'll take you down.
One of you. I promise you.

Huntner flashes a malevolent snarl as he dials.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - DAY

MATT CADAVID (30), county Coroner, green scrubs, alone. Bends
across a dead body, examines a swollen black lung. Nasty
goopy sounds as he works. He whistles a lively swing tune.

A dark, shadowy, indistinct FIGURE tiptoes up behind Cadavid,
patient, stalks his prey.

Suddenly the Figure looms above him, a terrifying surprise.
Figure strikes him hard on the back.

Cadavid falls face forward. Into the dead body.

A wet goopy sound. Gross.

CADAVID
(muffled)
Egglehard, goddamn it.

Cadavid straightens, wipes his face on a sleeve.

The Figure: RON EGGLEHARD (40), idiot smile, idiot face.

EGGLEHARD
Was your mouth open? Huh?

A cell phone rings. In Egglehard's pocket. He whips it to his
ear.

EGGLEHARD
Egglehard speaking... Uh-huh... Uh-
huh... Uh-huh... Uh-huh...

Egglehard hangs up.

CADAVID

Who was that?

EGGLEHARD

I don't know.

(affects an accent)

Don't matter, pardner. Okay,
partner, saddle up. Time to ride.

CADAVID

We got a case? But I'm in the
middle of an autops--

EGGLEHARD

Remember the Layoffs! You're my
crew now. And I say: Onward!

Cadavid wipes his hands on a towel, throws it on the floor in
disgust.

INT./EXT. EGGLEHARD'S CAR/COUNTRY HIGHWAYS - AFTERNOON

Egglehard drives like a nitwit, swerves across the midline,
never looks at the road. Cadavid holds on for dear life.

Cadavid still wears his dirty scrubs.

EXT. COUNTRY FIELD - AFTERNOON

Huntner, Vynnie, and Safari stare dumbfounded as Egglehard's
car careens across the field towards them, never slowing.
They dive out of the way.

The car skids, brakes engaged, too late. It crashes over the
wooden table, splinters fly.

Egglehard jumps out, sucks the air in deep, pounds his chest.

EGGLEHARD

This is the life out here! So
serene. These must be our suspects!

Huntner, Vynnie, and Safari climb to their feet.

EGGLEHARD

Describe yourselves. Three things
each, that's enough for me.

HUNTNER

Um, Bob Huntner. Jeweler, museum
curator, Apollo's Eyes-er.

SAFARI

Safari. Writer, ESPN, hot dogs.

VYNNIE

Vynnie Vinton. Widow, widow, widow.
And you're from the police?

Vynnie licks her lips, a lustful look for Egglehard.

Egglehard, jaw open, stares at Safari's curvy body instead.

Cadavid, still shaken, clambers out of the car.

CADAVID

Yup. Matt Cadavid, Coroner. My
partner, Ron Egglehard, Detective.

HUNTNER

Nobody's dead. It was theft.

EGGLEHARD

I know who did it.

Everyone looks at him in astonishment.

EGGLEHARD

It was easy. Vynnie, I arrest you
for the theft of... What was it?

HUNTNER

The Bringington Diamond.

VYNNIE

What!! Why?

EGGLEHARD

Your names both start with V. V is
the 23rd letter in the alphabet.
Michael Jordan, God rest his soul,
was the greatest basketball player
ever. Basketball starts with B. B
for Bringington. B for Theft!

SAFARI

V is the 22nd letter.

EGGLEHARD

Damn.

Unfazed, Egglehard ogles Safari, flirts with gross abandon.
Safari is unresponsive.

CADAVID

Shouldn't we be looking around for the diamond, Ron?

EGGLEHARD

Can it run away? Does it have legs? Don't worry, then. It'll stay put.

(beat)

Maybe we should frisk them.

Egglehard makes a kissy face at Safari. No response.

EGGLEHARD

Say, what is this?

VYNNIE

She's blind... Detective.

Cadavid takes charge, steps in front of Egglehard.

CADAVID

What is this group?

HUNTNER

We are Apollo's Eyes. We met at the Religious Studies section at a bookstore last week. We discussed the upcoming solar eclipse, shared a common bond of spirituality. I, um, borrowed the Bringington Diamond from the museum. I'm a janitor, don't you know. And aside, did you know that the curator keeps the exhibits refrigerated? Icebox cold, preserves them longer, especially the parchments. Frigid job getting the diamond out, I'm telling you.

Cadavid looks bored. Huntner gets back on topic.

HUNTNER

The Diamond serves to refract Apollo's life-giving rays, a symbol of multifaceted-- Is he all right?

Egglehard pitches forward, falls over. Face down in the muddy car tracks.

EGGLEHARD

Maybe the thief came up from a tunnel. Or buried it. I'll find it.

Cadavid leans to Huntner, snide remark.

CADAVID

His daddy's the Chief of Police.

Egglehard squeals with delight. Holds a piece of Scotch tape.

Cadauid looks down, shifts his feet. Dirty discarded pieces of Scotch tape litter the ground.

Egglehard counts the pieces of tape as though counting is hard work.

A light dawns.

Egglehard bursts out laughing. Riotous, uproarious.

EGGLEHARD

I got it. Let me guess. You guys, during the eclipse, taped your upper eyelids open?

HUNTNER

It's our duty. Someone had to wait for mother-father Sun's return in unblinking reverence. We are Apollo's Eyes.

EGGLEHARD

That total eclipse lasted for, what, three or four minutes?

SAFARI

It seemed like an eternity.

EGGLEHARD

I bet it did. Because your eyes needed to be refreshed by blinking.

HUNTNER

Yeah, they burned bloody hell.

CADAVID

That's possible.

EGGLEHARD

And while you were distracted, the thief worked through the pain and ate the diamond.

CADAVID

That's not possible.

VYNNIE

It was as big as a golf ball!

EGGLEHARD

You do have a professional hot dog eater. The same woman who, every day, handles blindness.

Safari doubles over in sudden pain, grabs her midsection.

CADAVID

Well, okay, if you say so. I guess that's it hitting the pyloric sphincter.

Egglehard leaps forward, buffets Safari on the head, knocks her down. He stands over her like a triumphant gladiator.

HUNTNER

But the diamond! Can we make her vomit the thing back up?

CADAVID

No way. It'll tear up her esophagus on the way out. I wouldn't do that to a dog, much less...

HUNTNER

She's a thief. Who cares about her? I need to get that diamond back to the exhibit.

EGGLEHARD

Do nothing. Truth will out. In about 24 hours.

Cadavid grimaces. The thought gives him literal pain.

SAFARI

No, I think I've been poisoned. I didn't swallow... OW.

Safari goes limp, suddenly.

Egglehard's car starts. Wheels spin, dirt flies. Vynnie is in the driver's seat, waves goodbye.

The car rockets across the field, out of sight.

FADE TO BLACK.

The sound of a car crashing into a tree.

EGGLEHARD (V.O.)

I shoulda got those brakes fixed ages ago.

CADAVID (V.O.)
(shrieks)
What?

SAFARI (V.O.)
Oh, she did it? Ah. I suddenly feel
much better.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - DAY

Cadavid pores over the same dead body, focused.

Egglehard tiptoes up behind him. Gets closer, closer.

Egglehard raises an arm to push Cadavid.

Cadavid bends to the side.

Egglehard, off-balance, pitches forward, face-down into the
body's groin.

He comes up, spluttering.

Cadavid laughs.

EGGLEHARD
Oh no, oh my... aggggh.

Egglehard pours liquid soap into his mouth, swishes, swirls,
spits it out onto the floor.

Goes to the sink, turns on the cold water. Puts his head
under the stream, bubbles froth out of his mouth.

CADAVID
You get a confession out of Vynnie,
yet?

Egglehard replies, something indistinct.

CADAVID
I mean, she did it, right?

The bubbles cease. Egglehard straightens, turns off the
water.

EGGLEHARD
No, she didn't.

CADAVID
But she stole your car. A getaway
car.

EGGLEHARD

She doesn't have the diamond. She said she just wanted a man to chase her for once.

CADAVID

So we'll never know who did it.

EGGLEHARD

I guess not.

CADAVID

That's the way it goes.

EGGLEHARD

I guess.

CADAVID

I wouldn't want to be Huntner right now, explain this to his curator.

EGGLEHARD

I guess not.

CADAVID

A valuable piece of ice like that. Priceless loss.

EGGLEHARD

I guess.

CADAVID

At least it's been insured, I hope.

EGGLEHARD

I guess.

CADAVID

Huntner'll be fired for sure.

EGGLEHARD

I guess not.

CADAVID

Huh?

EGGLEHARD

Curator forgave him. Case closed.

Cadavid goggles in astonishment. Doesn't make sense.

Egglehard shrugs. He leaves.

Cadavid leans back over the body.

INT. COUNTRY FIELD - DAY

Overcast, clouds.

The remains and splinters of the wooden table on the ground.

The purple velvet cloth lies by itself. A dark wet spot lingers in the middle.

The sky opens up, rain pours down.

The velvet cloth becomes completely dark now.

FADE OUT.