

Single Malt

Written By

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INT. BAR - EARLY MORNING

Lilly Barnes, the Owner and Executive Bartender at "Eighteen Acres," a Washington, D.C. bar a few blocks down from the White House, can be seen wiping down tables as a news report can be heard from a TV in the corner of the room.

NEWS REPORTER:

With the Inauguration of President-Elect Charles Renshaw just days away, President Sam Mansfield gave his farewell address to the nation tonight, in which he said that he felt that his administration left the country in better shape than they--

The TV goes dark as Lilly turns it off. She continues to wipe down tables. It is dark outside, and clearly after hours, roughly 3 a.m. A few moments later, a light knock is heard at the door.

Lilly goes over to the door to open it to find Adam Sullivan, the Special Assistant to the President of the United States standing at her door. Adam is an old friend.

ADAM:

Do you know where I might be able to get a good scotch around here?

LILLY:

(smiling)

For you, Adam, I'll open up anytime.

Adam steps inside and the two hug for a moment before Adam removes his coat.

LILLY: (CONT'D)

What are you doing up so late anyway? Isn't your boss leaving office in a matter of days?

Lilly heads behind the bar.

ADAM:

Well, until Renshaw takes the oath, it's still our responsibility to run the country.

LILLY:

You got any stories from the

(MORE)

LILLY: (CONT'D)  
 Situation Room to share?

ADAM:  
 C'mon-

LILLY:  
 I know, I know, it's classified.

ADAM:  
 You'll find out in my memoir.

LILLY:  
 (a chuckle)  
 If I buy it. You still take your  
 scotch on the rocks?

ADAM:  
 Yeah.

Adam's phone beeps as Lilly ducks under the bar, produces the bottle, and pours them both a small glass of scotch with some ice cubes. Adam pulls out his phone and starts tapping on its keyboard.

LILLY:  
 Still working, even when you're  
 not.

ADAM:  
 (without taking his eyes  
 off of his phone)  
 I call it the D.C. disease.

LILLY:  
 Trust me, it's not just this town.

Lilly raises her glass, and after finishing his email, Adam puts down his phone and raises his as well.

LILLY:  
 To the next chapter.

ADAM:  
 Hear hear.

They clink glasses and then take a swig.

LILLY:  
 Speaking of the next chapter, what  
*is* next for you?

ADAM:  
 I've got some options.

LILLY:  
In town, or elsewhere?

ADAM:  
A few in town. Defense lobbying firms, private intelligence firms, stuff like that.

LILLY:  
They all come with seven figure salaries?

ADAM:  
Yeah. Lowest offer I've had was 3.5 million a year.

LILLY:  
I wonder what it's like to have that kind of money. You'll have to let me know.

ADAM:  
Well, that's the thing. I'm not sure if it's what I want.

LILLY:  
Really? I have to admit Adam, I never thought I'd hear you say that.

ADAM:  
I don't know Lilly, I'm still on the fence about it, but I'm just...

LILLY:  
Burned out?--

ADAM:  
Exactly. I feel like I've been sleep-walking for the last eight years.

LILLY:  
Maybe you should get that checked out.

ADAM:  
I'm speaking figuratively.

Adam takes a sip of his drink.

ADAM:  
You know, I remember when I turned  
(MORE)

ADAM: (CONT'D)

25. I was a young Staff Assistant in Senator David Samson's office. I remember thinking to myself that twenty years from that moment, we were going to be twenty times as productive as we were back then.

LILLY:

You got that right.

ADAM:

Not quite. I mean, we're a thousand times more productive now. Everyone's tethered to a blackberry. Everyone's on call 24/7. It just doesn't stop.

LILLY:

And you're afraid if you stay here, you won't stop?

ADAM:

Yeah. I've attended too many funerals. Too many good guys, having heart attacks way too young.

LILLY:

When did you start thinking that you might want to get out?

ADAM:

Probably when I attended a funeral for my friend Chris. He and I were staffers together in Samson's office. I was Samson's Legislative Director when Chris was his Defense Policy Advisor. I distinctly remember seeing Chris' wife sitting in the front pew at St. Matthew the Apostle. Stoic. Tears soaking every inch of skin on her cheek. I just couldn't help but think to myself that it was this town that killed him.

LILLY:

Yeah, but in the end, you chose to stay. So why stop now? You obviously made it through.

ADAM:

I made it through because there was  
(MORE)

ADAM: (CONT'D)

always that next challenge for me to conquer. When I was Staff Assistant, I wanted to be a Legislative Aide. When I got to that job, I wanted to be a Legislative Director, then a Chief of Staff, and when I got to the point when I was a Senator's Chief of Staff.

Adam lets his thought trail off as he shrugs and takes another sip of his drink.

LILLY:

You set your eyes on the White House.

ADAM:

Why not? You'll have the most prestigious address, on the most prestigious business card in this town. And at the end of the day, I just don't feel like I have anything left to prove here. I've done everything that there is to do, and I've seen the world the process.

LILLY:

You haven't seen the world.

ADAM:

Yeah I have. I've been to places people only read about. Madagascar, Chile, Tibet--

LILLY:

No, there's a difference between traveling the world on business, and seeing the world. You've done the former. And while you were busy doing that, you were missing out.

A beat. Lilly thinks of something and holds up a finger in a "hold on" gesture.

LILLY: (CONT'D)

Here, let me show you something.

Lilly ducks under the bar and pulls out a bottle of a dark amber colored scotch. She takes out two new glasses and

puts a few ice cubes in each glass

LILLY: (CONT'D)

This bottle has been in my family for three generations. My grandfather had it, who passed it down to my father, who in turn passed it down to me.

Lilly cracks the seal open.

ADAM:

What are you doing? That's a collector's item--

LILLY:

It's called living.

She pours them both a glass.

LILLY: (CONT'D)

Something that you haven't done nearly enough of.

She raises her glass.

LILLY:

Carpe diem.

Lilly takes her swig, but Adam stands there dumbfounded for a moment before raising his glass.

ADAM:

Carpe diem.

Adam takes a swig of his drink. He savors the liquid before swallowing.

ADAM:

That is the very definition of "the good stuff."

LILLY:

Yeah. And all this time you thought it was the 24 year old bottle.

ADAM:

Why did you do that for me? Crack open that bottle, and at this moment?

LILLY:

Because Adam, you haven't had  
(MORE)

LILLY: (CONT'D)

enough of these moments in your life. I would say that you're very successful. You've made a lot of money, bought a lot of very expensive things, but you haven't lived.

ADAM:

There's not a lot of time for that when you work in D.C.

LILLY:

So leave.

ADAM:

(with a slight smile)

I thought you liked having me around.

LILLY:

I do. I just don't want to see you kill yourself at work all the time.

ADAM:

I know. Neither do I. Not anymore.

LILLY:

So what's keeping you here?

ADAM:

I worry that if I leave, I'll become irrelevant.

LILLY:

Adam, at some point, everyone in this town leaves, and all of those people, to some extent, become irrelevant. You worked in the White House for Christ's sake, as the Special Assistant to the President of the United States. That alone is going to get you a book deal.

ADAM:

You are correct. I have a meeting with the publisher in Manhattan next week.

LILLY:

See? I know you worry about

(MORE)

LILLY: (CONT'D)

relevancy, but you've already written some history. I think you're right when you say that you've got nothing left to prove here. So. Have you given any thought to what you might do outside of the beltway?

ADAM:

Well, I have one possibility. Back home.

LILLY:

You mean where you grew up?

ADAM:

Arizona, yeah. There's an opening for a Senior Vice-President of Client Relations at Sullivan, Inc. It's my family's business.

LILLY:

You never told me that your family owned a business.

ADAM:

I spent my life thus far trying to forget that it existed. I was stubborn and arrogant as a younger man. I wanted to be somebody. Someone important, someone who mattered. It was always my father's dream to have my join the business one day, but I always saw my dad as someone who was trapped by that business, so I put it out of my mind.

LILLY:

What does your father's business do?

Adam lifts up his shirt cuff and reveals a beautiful dress watch.

ADAM:

They're watchmakers.

LILLY:

(Holding Adam's wrist to look closely at the timepiece)

(MORE)

LILLY: (CONT'D)

That's a beautiful watch.

ADAM:

Thank you. I have to admit it, my dad has lead the business very well. This watch retails at about \$2,000, but they have a few models that can pull in upwards of \$20,000.

LILLY:

Oh my God.

ADAM:

I know. The business is mostly run by my brother these days, but every Christmas, my dad would set aside one of that year's dress watches, and give it to me as a gift. He'd always enclose a card that said "if you ever change your mind."

LILLY:

And when did you start to change your mind?

ADAM:

After my first year in the White House. I started to see people whisper things, about how they'd stay for a couple of years and then leave, but I always found one thing interesting. They'd leave for jobs in New York, Chicago, Miami, or L.A. No one ever stayed here.

LILLY:

Well didn't you tell me once that there were rules that people had to follow before heading over to K street? You can't just leave the White House on a Tuesday and wake up Wednesday morning as a registered lobbyist.

ADAM:

That's right, but no one I knew ever came back, even after they'd waited the designated time period written in the lobbying laws.

LILLY:

It's because work is more of an addiction than a profession here.

ADAM:

Exactly. And not to flaunt it, but I've already made my money. And you're right, I do have a book deal, and I knew I would land one as soon as I got this job.

LILLY:

So you think you're going to leave?

ADAM:

Yeah. I do.

LILLY:

Even though you don't know the first thing about watchmaking?

ADAM:

I don't need to. It's an administrative position overseeing customer relations. I'll be overseeing our store managers, customer service, and brand representatives. We've got four stores across the United States. One in Phoenix, L.A., New York, and Miami. All I have to be is good with people, and I am.

Lilly shakes her head and smiles.

ADAM: (CONT'D)

What?

LILLY:

You just threw me a curveball with the whole family business thing.

ADAM:

You know it's funny. I used to think of my family's business as a set of shackles. Keeping me from becoming someone.

LILLY:

And now, it's the only thing that's setting you free.

Adam nods his head in agreement. He raises his glass.

ADAM:  
To freedom.

LILLY:  
(raising her glass)  
No, to living, and not merely  
existing.

The pair clink glasses. Then they each finish their drink. Both of them savor the scotch before swallowing. Adam gets up from his chair.

LILLY: (CONT'D)  
God, that's good.

ADAM:  
(nodding)  
Mmmhm. Alright, I've got a call to  
make on my lunch hour tomorrow.  
I've gotta tell my dad and my  
brother I'm coming to work for  
them.

LILLY:  
(jokingly)  
Slaughter the fatted calf! The  
prodigal son has returned.

Adam smiles. Lilly comes out from behind the bar. The pair shares a hug.

ADAM:  
I'll miss you, Lilly.

LILLY:  
I'll miss you too. But hey, you  
could always open a store in D.C.  
God knows you have enough people in  
this town who can afford to blow  
tens of thousands of dollars on a  
watch.

ADAM:  
I'll let my dad and brother know  
that. Thanks for the scotch. Put  
that bottle away.

LILLY:  
(smiling)  
Oh you know I will. It'll always  
(MORE)

LILLY: (CONT'D)

be under the bar if you're ever in town and need a drop of the good stuff.

ADAM:

Thanks Lily. Good night.

LILLY:

Good night, Adam.

Adam exits the bar.

FADE TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS.

THE END.