

TROPHY

by NICK ZAGONE

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Trophy

Characters:

Janelle - 19 babysitter, musician, songwriter

Steve - 40's parent, musician and playwright

Setting:

Middle-class family unit living room- with child. Remnants of the child are scattered about; toys, dishes, clothes, etc.

Time: Recently.

(Janelle strums on her guitar quietly. Steve enters with two glasses of wine. A beat as he watches her.)

JANELLE
(seeing him)
Oh.
(stops playing)

STEVE
No, no! Please...

JANELLE
No, it's definitely... time for wine.

STEVE
Oh. Was he a bit of a bear tonight?

JANELLE
Of course not. Zach's a dream.

(Hands a glass to her.)

STEVE
Nostrovia.

JANELLE
Are you sure?

STEVE
Listen to your elders. Nostrovia.

(They raise glasses. Drink.)

JANELLE
What's that mean? Nostrovia?

STEVE
A toast! I'm supposing.

JANELLE
Okay. But what does it mean?

STEVE
Haven't the slightest. It's Russian, that I know. A friend of mine reiterates it.

JANELLE

Is he Russian?

STEVE

No. Scottish. But interestingly his father received a degree in Russian history. Thus, he grew up with..

TOGETHER

Nostrovia.

JANELLE

Is he a History Professor?

STEVE

Who?

JANELLE

Your friend's father dummy.

STEVE

(drinks) Orthopedic surgeon.

JANELLE

I see.

STEVE

You do? Well, you'll have to explain it to me then.

JANELLE

I know a lot of people who aren't what they seem. Congratulations.

STEVE

It was nothing. Really.

JANELLE

Is that who you saw tonight? This Scot who speaks Russian?

STEVE

Sure! Why not. Any other questions?

JANELLE

Yes. Why back so early?

STEVE

Award shows, please... they're not all that.

JANELLE

Come on.

STEVE

Oh, you'll be turning into a pumpkin around 10pm soon enough my dear.

JANELLE

Come on, no after-party? You're Writer of the Year.

STEVE

Is that what it says?
(crossing to the trophy and reading it)
"Popularity Contest Winner" 1st place.

JANELLE

Stop.

STEVE

Small print: "This award is purely a conciliatory prize for most tickets sold and does not in any way reflect proof of professional writing ability. The actors and director saved your ass. Nostrovia."

JANELLE

You won. Who cares what you think. Right?

STEVE

I'm sorry.
I used your songs.

JANELLE

I know what you were saying sorry for.

STEVE

I stole them. Really.

JANELLE

You changed them, but I knew.

STEVE

It wasn't me entirely. You know.

JANELLE

Can't get the toothpaste back in the tube. We're studying Watergate.

STEVE

Ah. Junior College.

JANELLE
Not for long. California here I come!

STEVE
Right back where I started from.
Well I'm glad to see you're studying something.

JANELLE
My grades are up.
I have more. Songs.

STEVE
Of course you do.
Not even a contract. I'm a cad.

JANELLE
You're okay. I still see the good in people. Even when
there's not much there.

STEVE
Thank you. I think.

JANELLE
Those songs weren't even that good. You made them better. I
figure if someone's using what I write at my age, I'm on my
way.

STEVE
You play wonderfully.

JANELLE
Just play?

STEVE
And sing and write and all of it.
You've come a long way. Baby.

JANELLE
What?

STEVE
It's an old ad. Before your time. I'm sorry. For robbing
your music sure, but subconsciously for not having any
ideas of my own. I'm... out of gas. But... I can abscond and
appropriate, then reformat and revise... I'm good at that,

thank Christ, because at this moment in time I colloquially
"Got Nothin'". This is really yours...
(Drops the trophy.)
Dammit.

JANELLE
Ok. You need to chill. You're going to wake up Zach and
frankly I don't want the damned thing.

STEVE
Shit. Oh no. Did you hear him? I'll listen.
(Goes to listen.)

JANELLE
Is he up?

STEVE
Quiet as a mouse.
You want to leave.

JANELLE
I do. But. I just got my drink. And it's making my headache
go away. Nostrovia.

STEVE
I'm sorry. I'll chill.
You're beautiful... person.

JANELLE
God.
My first drink. From you. Of course, I see where this is...

STEVE
Janelle, I hope you don't think...

JANELLE
Oh I do think... and that's a lie.
"I hope you don't think..." but it's okay.

STEVE
Thank you for being ingratiating. 'Cause you're right I do
think and I am trying...

JANELLE
I'm not going to do anything with you.
And you're not going to do anything with me.
Don't try to deny it. I know that's what this is...

STEVE
I'm not denying it.

JANELLE
Okay. How do you feel? Relief?

STEVE
No because you merely believe I'm attracted to you and want to sleep with you...

JANELLE
Oh my Goaaaaaaaaaad...

STEVE
Oh yes if it was only that plain and uncultured...

JANELLE
You guys, you guys need to stop...

STEVE
Now I am NOT some douchebag at some club who finds your derriere appealing to my sensibilities...

JANELLE
Doesn't matter! Lalalalalalala, not listening...!

STEVE
You are brilliant and talented and I can't...

JANELLE
"You love me for my mind." Baby.

STEVE
I love you period.
I didn't ask for it.
So fuck you. You're breaking my heart. And that's fine.
I'll take you home.

JANELLE
I have my own car.

STEVE
You do? You do. That's right. Well. I used to take you home. It's been four years. Four years you know. And you've been accepted to...

JANELLE
More like seven.

STEVE
Seven?

JANELLE
More like my whole life. You're my uncle.

STEVE
By marriage!

JANELLE
You know, you're sick and wrong. Really. All of you. It's a wonder I'm alive. I put my trust in men. I have to put my trust... in men. All. The. Time. It's... all I can say is it makes me... afraid. Of everything. Everything I first believe to be good.

STEVE
You *should* question everything. Young people should. Everyone should. Your naive.

JANELLE
And you took advantage of it.

STEVE
I haven't laid one finger on you.

JANELLE
You stole my music.

STEVE
I just apologized for that. And you accepted it.

JANELLE
Whoever said forgive and forget was an idiot. Did you expect me to forget? And then what, fall in love with you?

STEVE
Carin and I are...

JANELLE
Having troubles. Sure she told me.

STEVE
She told...?

JANELLE

Sure! And she's out of town! Of course. Boy, you... Yes. I should have expected this.

STEVE

You did. You did expect it. You didn't get up and go. You knew Carin was gone and we were having problems. But here you are. You accepted a drink from me... you knew what was coming.

JANELLE

Wow. You're terrible. I really liked you. You helped me with my music. Introduced me to... but meanwhile.

STEVE

I'm sorry I can't help my feelings.

JANELLE

Yes, yes you can. You're an adult. And you'll get over it. And maybe you'll make it work with Carin or otherwise get a divorce and then meet someone on Craigslist. But you'll get over it. While I... I might not. I might never.

STEVE

Yes you will. You will.

JANELLE

But you do. You still do.

STEVE

All right. All right. All right.
(holding back tears now, fumbling through wallet)
Let me pay you for your services and you can go. Let's see, twelve dollars an hour... is it twelve? Carin usually does this... help me out.

JANELLE

It's twelve.

STEVE

Right. Yes. Um... my multiplication. Here, here take it. Take it all, really. Considering...

JANELLE

(taking it then counting out cash)
This is enough. Here, that's all that I need.

STEVE

No! No, no, no, you take it. It's the...

JANELLE

That's enough. This is all that I... twelve times three hours...

STEVE

Four hours, four hours, plus tip...

JANELLE

Fine then that's...

STEVE

No I want you to...

JANELLE

I don't want it! I don't want it!
(throws the extra cash at him)
I only want what is fair!

STEVE

(stooping, picking up the cash, stumbling)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

JANELLE

That's all. That's all.

STEVE

You need to go.

JANELLE

I know. But god help me, dammit I don't want you to feel...

STEVE

Oh yes, yes I feel... ellipses... dot, dot, dot. But you're right, I've had things not go my way before. With... And believe me in the back of my heart I knew this wasn't going to happen and it was quotes "sick and wrong" but you're right, I will get over it.
(sitting on the floor now)
Go.

JANELLE

I can't leave you like this. Get up. I really didn't... Get up.

STEVE
Go. Please.

JANELLE
I'm probably not going to want to ever see you again. But I'm not going to see you in my mind's eye like this. Do me the goddamned favor, of standing on the porch and making sure I get to my car safely, like a gentleman, and waving goodbye like the proper end to a parent-babysitter relationship. Can you do that for me?

(He nods.)

Get up.

(She helps him up.)

(There's a beat as they hold each other.)

(She kisses him lightly.)

(He responds. Wants more.)

(She has to pull away violently.)

JANELLE
You had to ruin it. You fucking ruin it.

(She exits, slamming the door.)

(A beat. Steve goes to the door and opens it.)

(Stops. A car starts up and peels out.)

(He waves. Then puts his hands over his face. Laughing pitifully.)

(Steve goes to the trophy... and wants to throw it but can't. Only slams it down hard. He sees the guitar. She left it. He picks it up.)

(A child begins to cry... and cry... and call for his mom.)

(Steve doesn't move as lights fade...

to black.)

END OF PLAY