

(DRAFT: 22 Aug 2021)

LOST IN PLACE
HANK & TEDDY
By Craig Houk



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HANK & TEDDY

Early into a world-wide pandemic, good-natured Teddy, from across the road, checks in on his surly neighbor, Hank. A delicate exchange results in a bad decision.

Characters

HANK Male, Early Fifties

TEDDY Male, Mid Thirties

Time

Present.

Setting

A small American town. Summertime. Early Morning. Hank's porch.

(AT RISE: Hank is sitting on an old, rusted metal chair and drinks from a bottle of whiskey. Maybe he smokes. Teddy approaches but keeps his distance.)

HANK: Somethin' I can help you with?

TEDDY: It's Hank, right?

HANK: S'right. Who's askin'?

TEDDY: Yeah. Sorry. My name's Teddy. Me and my wife, Danielle, we moved here a few months back. We're just across the road here. The yellow house with the gray trim.

HANK: Aw, damn. Looks like you drew the short straw, Teddy. Livin' next to them lesbians.

TEDDY: Oh. Well, they seem all right to me. Adele pretty much keeps to herself and, Rhonda... well, she's a character for sure, but she's harmless. She's got shitty taste in beer, though.

HANK: Well, my condolences, nonetheless. So, what can I do for you, "Teddy from across the road"?

TEDDY: Nothin' really. Just thought maybe I'd check in on you. What with the pandemic and all. Felt like it might be the neighborly thing to do.

HANK: Ah. Well, I appreciate your concern, but I think I got everything under control over here.

TEDDY: You sure?

HANK: I just said as much, didn't I?

TEDDY: You did, yes.

HANK: So, maybe our business here is finished.

TEDDY: If you say so.

HANK: I do. *(Teddy lingers.)* You ain't gonna leave, are you?

TEDDY: Yeah, no I'm leavin'. It's just that...

HANK: What?

TEDDY: Listen. It's a small town, you know. And people talk.

HANK: They sure do.

TEDDY: Right. And look, I get it. We don't know each other. And truth is, ain't none of it any of my business really...

HANK: Accurate on all accounts, Teddy.

(Beat.)

TEDDY: It's a tough time to be on your own, though. Don't you think?

HANK: Like I said. I got everything under control.

(Beat.)

TEDDY: Understood. Sorry to have bothered you. You have a good day, Hank.

(Teddy starts off.)

HANK: It's a hoax, you know.

TEDDY: What's that?

HANK: The virus. It's all bullshit.

TEDDY: You think so?

HANK: I know so.

TEDDY: Lots of people are sick. And lots of 'em are dead.

HANK: It's the flu. Okay? People get sick every year from the flu. And people die from it too. It is what it is. But all of a sudden, here we are on lockdown. I mean, come on now. When in the history of this country did we ever quarantine healthy people. Huh? You quarantine sick people, not healthy people. It's a joke.

TEDDY: I ain't sure I follow. I think it's a little more complicated than that, don't you?

HANK: Hey, listen. You want the government regulatin' what you do; you go right ahead. Okay? You like havin' your brain washed, that's your problem. But that ain't how I live my life. And anyway, I don't see you wearin' a mask, Teddy. So, somethin' tells me you might be a little skeptical yourself.

TEDDY: Honestly, I can't make heads or tails of nothin' no more. I'm just doin' what I can to protect me and my wife.

HANK: You're plenty young enough. You ain't got nothin' to worry about.

TEDDY: Well, we're tryin' to start a family, you know. So, I guess I'm just bein' a little extra careful right now.

HANK: All the more reason to steer clear of that garbage vaccine they been peddlin'. That shit'll mutate your sperm.

TEDDY: What? Noooo. You're puttin' me on. That can't be right.

HANK: All I know is, it does more harm than good.

TEDDY: Oh, I don't know about that, Hank.

HANK: Look, I'm just providin' you with the facts. Okay? Feel free to take heed or don't. Your choice.

TEDDY: Well, I appreciate the information.

(Silence.)

HANK: My wife left me.

TEDDY: Oh. I, uh...

HANK: All right now, you don't have to make like you didn't know. That's why you came over here, ain't it? That's what you meant when you said, "Now's a tough time to be on your own." Am I right? *(Teddy nods.)* Thought so. *(Beat.)* Yeah, she took the kids and ran off a few weeks back. In the middle of the night.

TEDDY: I'm sorry, Hank.

HANK: She left a note, though. You wanna hear it?

TEDDY: Uh... No, I'm sure it's...

HANK: I don't mind. Got it right here.

(Beat.)

TEDDY: All right

(Hank pulls a letter from his pocket and reads it.)

HANK: Dear Hank, I suppose there ain't no easy way to put this. Your test came back positive. For sheer stupidity. Sadly, it's just what I expected. A very rare strain of foolishness has crept inside your nasal cavity, dug its way through the soft tissue, and has settled inside your brain. In the coming weeks, I imagine you'll find yourself expostulating out loud and to no one in particular, insisting that your rights are being violated and that the ice bucket challenge was in fact a satanic ritual meant to cleanse large numbers of people in preparation for the greatest human sacrifice in recorded history. Should you come across anyone who voices an opposing viewpoint, you will likely defend your position shamelessly and with remarkable ignorance. I also expect you'll be dead within a few months. Or at least, one can only hope. Meantime, the kids are safe with me. Or, more to the point, safe without you. Yours in perpetual bewilderment, Charlene.

(Silence.)

TEDDY: Damn, Hank. That's... that's rough.

HANK: Charlene thinks I'm a whack job.

TEDDY: Well, there's two sides to every story. Right? So, what? So, you've got... sophisticated opinions. I mean, just because you view the world a little different than others, don't mean you're altogether wrong.

HANK: Aw shit, Teddy. You just twisted yourself into knots there tryin' to pacify me, didn't you?

TEDDY: Well, I'm just aimin' to be neighborly, I guess.

HANK: So, you've said. (*Hank offers the bottle to Teddy.*) You want a swig?

TEDDY: Uh... No, I think I'll pass. Thanks, though.

HANK: Come on now. Might help you to loosen up.

TEDDY: No, I'm not really into the hard stuff.

HANK: You worried I got it?

TEDDY: I'm worried we all got it.

HANK: Fair enough.

(Silence.)

TEDDY: We're hopin' for a girl.

HANK: Sorry, what?

TEDDY: Danielle and me. We'd like to have a baby girl.

HANK: Oh yeah? Well, most men want boys. I know I did. But, well, three strikes and I was out.

TEDDY: Oh, come on now. It can't have been all that bad.

HANK: Be careful what you wish for, Teddy.

TEDDY: Well, to be truthful, I don't much like how I turned out. As a man, I mean. You see, my dad was a real hard-ass and my mom... well, she sorta faded into the background a lot of the time. Easy for her to do I guess, bein' surrounded by mostly boys and an overbearin' husband. (*Beat.*) My oldest sister – my only sister – Carol, she, uh... well, I guess - though I'm not entirely sure – that she had a lot in common with Rhonda and Adele across the way. She died several years back. We were never real close. Partly because she was nearly twenty years older than me, but mostly because my family kinda treated her like an outcast. Maybe I was too young to really know any better, but I took part, nonetheless.

HANK: Listen. You can't hold yourself responsible for the choices other people make.

TEDDY: Well, I don't think Carol had much choice in the matter. Though I know I sure did. I failed her. So, I suppose – selfishly - I'm wishin' for a little girl, so that I can maybe somehow make it up to her. By givin' my daughter somethin' my sister never got. Unconditional love.

(Silence.)

HANK: I miss the old days.

(Teddy smiles knowingly.)

TEDDY: Right. Well, I won't keep you any longer, Hank.

HANK: Startin' to warm up anyway. I'll probably head back into the house to cool off.

TEDDY: It was nice to meet you.

HANK: Likewise.

(Teddy turns to go, but then stops.)

TEDDY: Before I go though...

HANK: Yeah, what?

TEDDY: I suppose I'll take you up on your offer for a swig of that whiskey. And only because it seems like the neighborly thing to do.

(End of play.)