

WE, THE HUMBLE

By

GONÇALO DE JESUS

(+351) 915 223 890

goncalodejesus16@gmail.com

BLACK OUT:

INT. ROYAL DINING ROOM - MIDDAY

A silent awkwardness in the air, with no visuals. A sniffle; a throat clear; the sound of cutlery on plate. A beat goes by. Two or three more.

QUEEN MATHILDE

Will you be attending the meeting later today?

KING VALENTINE

Not sure yet.

Mathilde tries to process the answer. After a bit, she hesitates, but insists.

QUEEN MATHILDE

They'll be discussing the-

KING VALENTINE

(interrupting; not annoyed, but wanting a peaceful meal)

I know.

QUEEN MATHILDE

This is not to be taken lightly, you know? This could be your life on the line.

KING VALENTINE

Oh, please, Mads. Are you telling me you'd be so upset, if...

SCENE:

A side view of a very long royal table shows enough food to feed a small army. Sat on OPPOSITE SIDES are KING VALENTINE (31) and QUEEN MATHILDE (19), each with a large plate that's not even half filled.

Aside from the table, not much furniture populates the room; beautiful paintings on the walls make up for the rather lackluster wallpaper.

An extremely well-produced caricature of the King sits on the wall: not to its center, with the right amount of offset to the left to unbalance the visual scenery. It depicts the King with grand, shiny boots; an enlarged, pompous ruff; and a small blade that would almost look like a dagger if not for its swordlike features. It is clear that the King understands not the sarcasm of its implications.

Queen Mathilde fidgets a meatball with her fork, staring at it emptily. The King glances up at her once or twice, expecting a reaction, but obtaining none. Both seem like their chairs are wrong, constantly shifting in their seats just enough not to alert the other to their discomfort; not that the other would have noticed, either way.

King Valentine clears his throat, wipes his mouth, and excuses himself off the table. Mathilde seems annoyed at this, shaking her head ever so slightly.

CUT TO TITLE CARD:

WE, THE HUMBLE

CUT TO:

INT. ROYAL MEETING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The King sits in an ornate chair in a conference room, with everyone else on the other side of the sarcastically LONG table.

To his side, where the Queen would sit, a tall vase holds up what would be a beautiful PLANT, if not visibly WITHERED from water starvation. Otherwise, there's not much to look at in this room; the THICK CEILING TRIMS are PAINTED with uninspired depictions of war and glory are the only features of this wooden room. An ELEVATED MAP of Uphaven sits in the center of the table.

Oblivious to the cacophony of arguing advisors and generals, King Valentine is SLUMPED over himself and NEARLY ASLEEP: his head falls, and he picks it up; it falls again, and the cycle repeats. The loud protests of the many advisors almost drown out the handful of Generals, but they fight back with strong presence that easily counters the spineless nature of the opposing side.

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

(61)

This is preposterous. Do you really expect us to ignore the threat?

ADVISOR ERNEST

(63)

But what threat, General? Something you may have heard in the trenches?

ADVISOR ADRIAN

(51)

If only you would present any proof whatsoever—

GENERAL LEHMEN

(62)

This cannot fall through our
very hands; we are telling
you, they-

The King SHAKES his head, SITS himself up, and RAISES A HAND. In a split second, the room is silent, with the exception of a furiously scribbling STENOGRAPHER (29). After a bit, the stenographer comes to his senses, and looks up at the King. He shyly steps back from the typewriter.

KING VALENTINE

Ladies and gentlemen, these
meetings bore me. General,
have you any proof, this time?

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

Your Majesty, I have trusted
spies inside the Hossian
Empire, who claim that a group
of assassins has indeed been
dispatched recently, and are
on their way here.

GENERAL LEHMEN

Your Majesty, this is of the
utmost importance; we must
deal with this. Our sources
haven't identified the
assassins, and have no trail
to go on. We have to deal with
this now.

ADVISOR ADRIAN

Your Majesty, we cannot focus
on this... goose hunt; as you
know, we are about to undergo
a serious refactor in our
system, with-

KING VALENTINE

(interrupting with a hand up,
silencing the advisor)

You will all have your lands
as planned, Adrian. That is
already in motion.

Adrian, the second advisor, seems to EASE UP. He takes a step
back, and CHANGES HIS TONE, now much softer and, for lack of
better expression, ass-kissing.

ADVISOR ADRIAN

Well, if that reform is
ongoing to better organize our
districts, then it may be
better to—

As he speaks, the FAINTEST sliver of contempt passes through the
King's face. It's the contempt of one who had anticipated this
kind of behavior, but does NOT hold it against them: he knows
that the advisors are solely worried about their promised
properties.

KING VALENTINE

I understand. I expect you're
having a sudden change of
heart as well, Ernest? And all
others?

The advisors go to nod, but stop themselves at the thought of
confirming their second intentions. They look around at each
other, knowing that the rest are thinking the same. Some take a
small step back.

KING VALENTINE

You may give us the room. I
would like a word with the
Generals.

In somewhat of an orderly line, the advisors exit, along with
the stenographer. King Valentine MOTIONS the Generals closer.
The youngest General hesitates as if trying to figure out if the

gesture meant to sit closer, and looks at the other Generals in expectation. The confirmation comes as the rest moves towards the King's side of the table, followed by the youngster. They sit on each side of the table, CLOSER.

KING VALENTINE

(taking a beat with a deep sigh,
wondering whether to even approach
the situation like this)

Gentlemen, I will not lie to
you. Of course you know that
none of this leaves that door.

(his gaze wanders off for a
second, but he regains focus, this
time with a sliver of grief on his
face)

I'm scared. This was never my
war. I never wanted to fight
the Empire. But my father had...
other ideas... and then he died,
and...

The Generals give him an understanding look. He was known to be
an unruly prince as a child, who frequently skipped etiquette
and royal government tutoring.

GENERAL IRVIN

(61)

We'll discuss and find a
solution, Your Majesty.

As they start to get up and leave, the King motions them to sit
down.

KING VALENTINE

Stay. Talk about it here. I
want to hear.

They sit back down.

GENERAL LEHMEN

Well, Your Majesty, something we had thought of was to have three layers of personal royal guards, even inside the palace.

GENERAL THRISTAN

(57)

But in case of a security breach or treason, you'd be even more vulnerable as they would have access to your close circle.

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

Another plan we had discussed was to place decoys; people similar to you in the palace and around it. They can't hit you if they don't know where you are.

This triggers a THOUGHT in the King's mind, a thought that RETURNS ONCE OR TWICE during the following exchange.

GENERAL BOLUPIN

(36)

But this creates a point of entry, as anyone who observes the palace closely will notice that you would be consulted for royal matters and the others wouldn't.

GENERAL IRVIN

We could make fake meetings with the decoys—

GENERAL LEHMEN

And if they disguise
themselves as royal advisors?

GENERAL THRISTAN

Every plan will have its
flaws, we can't expect
everything to just—

The King raises a hand, and they all become quiet AT ONCE.

KING VALENTINE

I understand. It seems like
the more we wait, the closer
they get. How long could it
take you to track them down?

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

We are not entirely sure, Your
Majesty, but we are expecting
a week and a half, provided
that our own forces stay
intact.

KING VALENTINE

I see.

(double, triple, infinitely
thinking about what he's about to
say, he decides to say it anyways)

They can't hit me if they don't
know where I am... So what if we
put people in every castle in
the country, with a decoy
each?

GENERAL IRVIN

Your Majesty, wouldn't this
plan take quite a long time?

KING VALENTINE

It would. Which is why I would leave right away with only a handful of people to keep me safe.

I would stay in undisclosed towns that only those who went with me would know, and wouldn't report back until absolutely necessary.

GENERAL BOLUPIN

Should we find the assassins, how would we warn you, Your Majesty?

KING VALENTINE

By the time you caught the assassins, there would be no more need to hide, and a royal decree in the largest towns would suffice for me to know and return.

GENERAL THRISTAN

Your Majesty, this is highly irregular.

GENERAL LEHMEN

It may work.

GENERAL BOLUPIN

Are we considering this plan?

GENERAL LEHMEN

I don't see why not.

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

It's immediate and it sounds effective; the next steps are clear, but we should maybe work out how it will work if we take longer.

KING VALENTINE

This is deliberate, General. You should not know any more details; this is the best way to keep me guarded. Rest assured that an announcement in the largest towns is enough; when it's safe, of course.

GENERAL BOLUPIN

How will you rule from some unknown place, Your Majesty?

KING VALENTINE

I will not. I don't think there is a secure way to do so. In my absence, Mathilde will rule. She may not be fond of leadership, but I believe she will do a good job at - in the least - not bringing the nation to ruin in the short time I'll be away.

I trust you all to steer the government in our bellic efforts to defend against the Empire.

The Generals NOD in acknowledgement of the trust bestowed upon them.

GENERAL ARBUSTRY

Yes, Your Majesty.

GENERAL THRISTAN

Of course, sir.

KING VALENTINE

Good. Pick your best men.
Seven.

I leave in the morning sun. You
can start the preparations for
the other castles at noon.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROYAL PALACE OUTSKIRTS - EARLY MORNING

The morning light paints a golden outline on the surrounding green hills. In a back road leading out of the palace, SEVEN GUARDS are stationed in a line, awaiting the King's arrival, which happens soon after.

The King exchanges pleasantries and handshakes with the guards, and they enter a LARGE ORNAMENTED CARRIAGE, that pulls off with one of the guards at the leash.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

As the carriage moves along the countryside, there isn't a soul in sight. Way ahead of the carriage, a LARGE TOWN comes into view.

INT. CARRIAGE - LATE MORNING

In the background, a ROYAL GUARD SULLIVAN (36) WRITES a message on a PIECE OF PARCHMENT, and MUMBLES INAUDIBLY, as if repeatedly reading what he's writing back to himself. The King PEERS out of the window, and points at a map in his hand.

KING VALENTINE

This is our first stay. A
bigger town; more places to
hide.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY AFTERNOON

The carriage proceeds in the road, approaching the town. Gradually, houses pop up here and there, with the occasional farm. Closer to the town, there is a dense presence of DILAPIDATED HOUSES, some with hints of SMOKE STAINS on the outer walls. This town was invaded LONG AGO and reconquered, but its integrity and pride are yet to be fully rebuilt.

EXT. LARGE TOWN'S CENTER - AFTERNOON

The carriage comes to a stop in the town center. The people around STARE in confusion and curiosity as the door opens and a LARGE CARPET is extended. Out comes the King, accompanied by THREE GUARDS. At this sight, the curious onlookers PROMPTLY LOOK DOWN at the dirt.

ROYAL GUARD WILLIAMS (31) steps out onto the road, and is given a PIECE OF PARCHMENT by Royal Guard Sullivan - the same one that he was writing on just now - and begins reading the announcement.

ROYAL GUARD WILLIAMS

Citizens! You are favored with the presence of Your Majesty, King Valentine the First. Self-evidently, any and all orders you are given during His Majesty's stay in this humble town are to be obeyed at once, irrespective of their nature.

You will not, under any circumstance, discuss His Majesty's presence in this humble town, whether amongst yourselves or with anyone from outside this humble town.

For a beat, the guard FURROWS AN EYEBROW. Shrugging, she slowly folds and wraps the piece of parchment, SCANNING the crowd for any immediate reactions.

ROYAL GUARD WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

That is all. You may resume your everyday activities during this visit, unless told otherwise by and solely by His Majesty, the King himself.

The guard turns back, leans into the carriage, and murmurs to her colleague.

ROYAL GUARD WILLIAMS

Why'd we need to say the same
thing thrice?

King Valentine does some DISGUISED LIGHT STRETCHING as one would after a long ride. He scans the people's reaction. An emotional amalgam surrounds him: amidst the general contempt for the royal presence in their town, the people feel a deep DISTRUST AND DISCOMFORT, with suspicions of an ulterior motive for this visit.

Getting confused FURROWED EYEBROWS and WARY SIDE-EYES wasn't the reception the King expected. His expression shifts away from the joy he previously had, seeming a bit hurt by this.

EXT. LARGE TOWN'S MAIN STREET - DUSK

King Valentine walks along the main street, surrounded by the royal guards at all angles; one guard carrying TWO LARGE, HEAVY SATCHELS walks inside the circle with the King. Upon arriving in front of a LARGE BEAUTIFUL HOUSE with an ample front garden, the King stops and looks at it for a while.

KING VALENTINE

This one will do.

The King CONFIDENTLY steps up to the front door and knocks. A CHILD (8) answers the door. The King, counting on being received by an adult, LOOKS FORWARD and SEES NOTHING. Raising an eyebrow, he SLOWLY LOOKS DOWN to see the child staring at him blankly. The King becomes uncomfortable at the thought of interacting with a child.

KING VALENTINE

Are... your, uhm, parents
around?

The child NODS, and CLOSES THE DOOR. After a few seconds, the door opens; the child is HALF-HIDING behind the legs of TWO WOMEN (32, 29), who are now at the entrance.

ROYAL GUARD VALIAN

(29)

You are in the presence of His
Majesty, King Valentine, the
first of his name.

KING VALENTINE

Hello, hi. I am visiting this
town for a while, and I want
to acquire your house. For the
time being, of course. You may
return when I leave.

[End of excerpt]