

HOSTAGE

By

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FADE IN

INT. DAY - OFFICE (PRESENT)

It is a hectic day at an unnamed New York investment bank. Eight of the top players at the firm are called into an emergency meeting by JON GOLDMAN, the firm's "Vice President of Operations".

INT. DAY - CONFERENCE ROOM (PRESENT)

The unnamed men, all dressed in the finest suits, file into the room. A couple of the younger ones are cracking jokes.

As they enter, Jon tells them all to turn off their cellphones and leave them on a table near the entrance of the room. They all comply.

Jon is at the head of the table, contemplatively spinning an old silver dollar through his fingers. The men begin to sit down, many of them still with a sense of levity about them.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE #1

(With a sarcastic tone)

I didn't realize Jon had the power
to call meetings. I should have
just sent my secretary!

A couple of the younger men let out a forced laugh at the young executive's poor attempt at a joke. Another, older executive chimes in.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #1

In all seriousness though, what's
this about, Jon? We've all got work
to do.

Jon remains silent for a long moment while looking at the man.

JON

You and I both know that just isn't
true.

The older executive looks puzzled.

JON

If this meeting were to end right
now, you would go back to your
office, tell your secretary to make
lunch plans, and sit with your feet

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JON (cont'd)
on the desk reading the (Wall
Street) Journal, wouldn't you?

The older executive is silent for a moment and then grins.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #1
(Half-jokingly)
It counts as work if you're getting
paid for it!

Most of the men in the room chuckle this time. Jon, however, maintains the stoniness of his facial expression as he sets the silver dollar on the table, gets up from his chair, walks over to the conference room door and locks it. He sits back down, and looks around the table at all of the men.

JON
I suppose you all know the age-old
adage about how it's all fun and
games until somebody gets hurt?

Most of the men nod, but it's clear that they aren't really paying attention.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #2
I don't know what you're getting
at, Jon, but if you don't get to
the point...

The older executive stops short of finishing his sentence as Jon pulls a silenced 9mm pistol out of his pocket and sets it lightly on the table in front of him, right next to the silver dollar.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - DUSK (1969)

Jon, 10 years old, sits in front of the television as snow falls outside the window beyond the screen. He hears his FATHER open the front door, then runs to greet him.

Jon's father is a tall, handsome man whose face is hidden by the shadow of his hat. His long overcoat is speckled with flakes from the storm raging outside.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT (1969)

Jon sits in the middle of the rectangular table and his parents sit at the head and tail. They are both speechless and tense, occasionally looking over at the other a spiteful gaze. It is clear that something is terribly wrong with their marriage. They continue to eat in silence.

INT. DEN - NIGHT (1969)

Jon is back in the den watching television. He can barely hear his parents arguing about money a few rooms over. He pays their quarrels little attention anymore due to their seeming regularity.

The fighting stops, and Jon's father walks slowly into the den, a slight hint of blurriness in his eyes. He picks Jon up, and puts him on his lap. Jon's concentration still belongs to the evening programming.

His father reaches into his pocket pulls out an old silver dollar, then hands it to Jon. His attention is now firmly placed on this exciting new possession.

FATHER

Jonny, (BEAT) this is a silver dollar from 1873. That means it's almost a hundred years old.

Silently, Jon looks at the coin with a sense of wonderment as his father continues to talk.

FATHER

It was given to me by my father on his deathbed, just as it was given to him by his father. I want you to have it so that you can one day give it to your son.

Jon stares up at his father, then hugs him around the chest as if to say, "thank you."

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (1969)

Jon is sitting up in his bed, flashlight in one hand and silver dollar in the palm of the other. He is examining the face on front and the intricately pressed eagle that adorns the back.

A shot rings out from downstairs. His MOTHER runs into the room and tells him to stay where he is, then rushes out. He hears her scream from the bottom of the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

Jon walks out of his room to the top of the stairs. He looks down and sees his mother on her knees, and on the floor next to her a limp hand, lightly holding a gun, protruding from the door of his father's study. There are speckles of blood on the door frame.

Jon's mother sees him, runs up the stairs, then pulls his head into her chest so that he can't see what lies below. He can feel her tears on his head.

INT. CAR - DAY (1970)

Jon and his mother pull up to a small, run-down apartment complex. Jon's solemn face is pressed against the glass.

MOTHER

Jon, honey. I know it's smaller
than we're used to, but we just
have to make due with what we have.

Jon says nothing as he stares off into the distance.

FLASH-FORWARD TO PRESENT:

INT. DAY - CONFERENCE ROOM (PRESENT DAY)

The men stare at the gun in front of Jon. There is a bewildered sense of fear about them. Jon looks around the table at the men, then loosens his neck tie.

JON

Here is what's going to happen,
gentlemen. (BEAT) We're going to
sit in here and talk until we come
to a single basic understanding. If
anyone tries to leave, I will shoot
them. If anyone tries to yell for
help, I will shoot them. If anyone
so much as looks over at their
phone, I will shoot them. (BEAT)
And most importantly, if anyone
fails to come to this
understanding, I. Will. Shoot.
Them. Do you understand?

Some of the men nod with a subdued sense of fear, while others still seem more perplexed than anything. Another of the older executives, the company's Chief Financial Officer, begins to speak.

(CONTINUED)

CFO

So let me get this straight. (BEAT)
You're going to hold us hostage in
here until we agree with whatever
crackpot ideology you decide to lay
on us?

JON

That seems to be the sum of things.
But you're missing one key point.

CFO

Which is?

JON

That we're not leaving this room
until every single one of you is
either in agreement that this
company and others like it have
undermined and destroyed this
nation's economy for the purpose of
personal and stockholder gain,
(BEAT) or every single one of you
is dead. What I'm saying,
gentlemen, is that, unless you
don't value your lives, we're going
to fundamentally change the way
this company runs.

The men are silent for a moment, until one of the older
executives speaks up.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #2

And why would we want to do that?
Our profits are already far
exceeding what they were before the
crash.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DAY - LECTURE HALL (1980)

Professor JAMES HILLSON, a feebly-built man with a large
voice, stands at the front of the a medium-sized lecture
hall in which 20 year old Jon sits in the second row.

PROFESSOR HILLSON

...and in that way, United Fruit
and their successful overthrow of
Jacobo Arbenz and Guatemalan
democracy, using American Cold War
fears as justification for violent

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILLSON (cont'd)
CIA tactics, constituted a new
generation of American Crony
Capitalism.

Some of the students in the room seem bored out of their minds, while others in the back of the room are whispering and giggling. Jon, however, is focused intensely on every word from the professor's mouth. In his notes, he has underlined the term "crony capitalism".

PROFESSOR HILLSON
So, what conclusion can we draw
from this series of CIA coups? What
do these actions say about the
relationship between our capitalist
system and the democratic
principles upon which this country
was founded, and which it declared
it would actively promote in the
Monroe and Truman Doctrines?

The professor looks around the room.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
Anybody?

Jon slowly raises his hand.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
(Pointing at Jon)
Yes, Jon.

JON
Well, I guess it says that
capitalism has undermined the basic
principles of democracy, in a way.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
That's correct, but can you expand
on that idea?

JON
Um, I suppose you could argue that
capitalism has, in a way,
completely supplanted the ideals
laid out in the Monroe and Truman
Doctrines and become... I don't
know... our sole guiding principle.

The professor seems completely ecstatic that Jon has said this.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR HILLSON
EXACTLY! It seems that THE PROFIT
MOTIVE has become our God, the
principle upon which we base not
only our economy, but our
government and our foreign policy!

INT. DUSK - PROFESSOR HILLSON'S OFFICE (1980)

There is a knock on the door. Professor Hillson, sitting behind a nearly insurmountable stack of papers, yells at the person to come in.

Jon feebly comes through the door and stands in front of the desk.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
Jon! What can I do for you this evening?

Jon seems hesitant to say what he's thinking.

JON
Well, it's... it's just that I noticed in class that no one else seemed to care that much about what you were talking about. (BEAT) I mean, it feels like such a pressing issue, and everybody's so apathetic about it. I just don't understand.

Hillson is silent for a moment as he studies Jon with a contemplative gaze.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
I'm glad you came, Jon. Your insight and dedication to the subject are easily a cut above your peers, and for that I'm thankful. It's not often that a student of your caliber comes along.

Jon nods slightly with a humble sense of humility about him.

PROFESSOR HILLSON
But you need to understand that most people aren't willing to fight for a just cause, especially when it threatens their comfortable, secluded lives and the broken ideologies that permeate them.

(CONTINUED)

Jon thinks about Hillson's comment, lets it sink in, as he continues to stand there awkwardly.

JON

(Dejectedly)

I guess that means things are never going to change then?

PROFESSOR HILLSON

Don't worry, Jon. I have faith that the situation will resolve itself in time through the efforts of individuals such as yourself. As Margaret Mead once said, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

FLASH-FORWARD TO PRESENT:

INT. DAY - CONFERENCE ROOM (PRESENT DAY)

JON

...and yet you all received record-setting bonuses while the rest of the country suffered as a direct result of your careless high-stakes derivative schemes.

The executives around the table are starting to get restless and uncomfortable. Jon has been detailing the inadequacies and pitfalls of high-stakes investments and derivatives for the past 10 minutes.

One of the cocky young executives fixes his tie, then stands up and stares straight at Jon.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE #1

I don't know about you guys, but I'm tired of this sick little game.

JON

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

The young executive thinks about it for a moment then starts to move towards the door.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE #1

I bet it's not even a real gu...

A silenced shot is heard from across the room, and the young executive falls to the floor into a lifeless pile.

(CONTINUED)

The other executives are stunned, and a few of them look towards the young executive as the floor around him begins to pool with blood. Some of them cover their mouths in shock and disgust.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #2
How could you do this Jon? What
about your wife? (BEAT) What about
your daughters?

The thought of his family seems to briefly phase Jon, but the stoniness of his facial expression returns in an instant.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #2
You know there's no way out of this
now?

JON
There never was.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DAY - PROFESSOR HILLSON'S HOME (1983)

Hillson and Jon sit hunched over at an ornate antique chess board. Jon makes a move, and Hillson lets out a small chuckle then quickly makes his move.

HILLSON
You always seem to fall for the
same tricks, don't you?

Jon is silent as he thinks hard about his next move. Hillson is studying him. Without looking up, Jon begins to speak.

JON
I think I'm going to ask Natalie to
marry me.

HILLSON
(Slightly taken aback)
Do you think that's such a good
idea?

Jon is again silent for a moment as he contemplates both his next move and his answer to the question.

JON
I think so. I mean, we were
considering giving up the baby,
(BEAT) but I really love her, you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JON (cont'd)
know, and I can see us starting a
family together.

This time the professor is silent as Jon makes his move and begins to speak again.

JON
Plus, her dad offered me a job at
his investment firm. I mean, it's
entry level, but he said there's
plenty of room to move up. I think
this could be a good opportunity
for me... for us.

Hillson makes his move, but doesn't look up at Jon when he responds. He just continues to stare straight at the board.

HILLSON
I guess I just thought that you
were beyond the idea of pursuing
the American Dream. I thought that
you were going to help me change
the world.

Jon is hesitant to respond.

JON
It's not that I haven't enjoyed the
past three years, (BEAT) but I
can't just spend my life protesting
the WTO and handing out pamphlets.
We've put so much work into
changing minds, and we haven't even
made a goddamn dent.

Hillson is completely silent for what seems like an eternity.

HILLSON
I see...

Jon looks straight into the professor's eyes, then looks back down at the chess board as he makes his move.

JON
Check-mate.

FLASH-FORWARD TO PRESENT:

INT. DAY - CONFERENCE ROOM (PRESENT DAY)

The executives around the table now exude a far more solemn tone. The pool of blood on the floor has grown towards some of the men's feet, and they have compensated accordingly.

OLDER EXECUTIVE #1

Jon, you've proven that you're serious, but you don't really expect this to change things do you?

JON

I'm the only one left. (BEAT) The politicians won't do anything. You bought them all out. (BEAT) The people of this country won't do anything. They're too distracted with their toddler pagents and reality shows. (BEAT) And lastly, you're all too goddamn greedy to do anything but make the situation worse. (BEAT) So you see, I'm the only one left