

Ups and downs

Characters: Frank

Nick

Jane

Scene 1

Inside a building. The heavy rain from outside is heard. Frank comes in. He is in his fifties and walks with a distinct limp. He stands in front of the elevator. He presses the button. Nothing happens. He waits. Nick comes in. He is in his thirties. He quickly glances at Frank. They stand there together.

Frank: *(looking at his shoes)* All this dirt. The rain. The summer rain steaming up all the earth's damn dirt. *(feeling someone else's presence, looking at Nick's shoes)* It's you. Are you lost? What are you doing here? *(Silence)* It's an old one. It's so very slow. It gets to you. Someone should fix it. *(Pause)* You did this to me. It's the least you can do. You should talk. *(Pause.)*

Nick: I'm here to get my things.

Frank: You got them some weeks ago. What are you doing here?

Nick: Told you what —

Frank: What do you want, Nick?

Nick: What do you mean?

Frank: Nobody's here at this hour.

Nick: You and I are here. *(Pause.)*

Frank: Why are you like this?

Nick: Like what?

Frank: Like you've just killed someone and you're still looking for trouble —

Nick: *(The lights start flickering.)* You hear that?

Frank: It's my lungs. It's all the cigars. I breathe heavily but I still do it.

Nick: You should be thanking me. It looks nice on you.

Frank: What is?

Nick: This style of yours. The limp. It's a style, a swag, a way —

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Frank: I'm glad you like it.

Nick: I didn't mean to hurt you.

Frank: Is that so?

Nick: It is, I mean it. I didn't mean to.

Frank: You were throwing all these things out the window. You meant to hurt someone.

Nick: What were you doing out there?

Frank: I didn't blame you. I still don't. In fact, I forgive you.

Nick: It was your fault. I used to *respect* you. I'm holding you responsible.

Frank: You'll be missed, you know —

Nick: You're full of yourself. You're rotten.

Frank: There he is —

Nick: I should have thrown *you* out the window. I didn't do it —

Frank: Why didn't you?

Nick: I should have. I would have. I'll kill you. One of these days, I'll come into your office, it's higher up in the building and I'll just kick you out the window.

Frank: You're not getting anywhere near my office with these shoes and this *dirt* on them.

Nick: I'll shit on your office.

Frank: No, you won't.

Nick: I will and then I'll kick you out the window.

Frank: Maybe do it the other way around. I'd *hate* to see that.

Nick: One of these days, I'm telling you. You'll be falling and falling and you'll hit the ground, you'll crash into the concrete, I'll smash you into the world and your bones turned to sugar and your insides rotten. Your insides will burst out and everyone will see, everyone will know you're rotten. Or that you have no insides. You're hollow, you're empty.

Frank: Which is it? You've got to decide.

Nick: I should have done it. (*Pause*)

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Frank: You'll find a new job. Better position. You'll be a man again. There are jobs out there. You'll move on. You're young, you're strong, you're smart. You've got nothing to worry about. You're young. You'll do alright. Go on now. You can take the stairs. Leave. (*Pause.*)

Nick: I'd rather wait here with you. We could talk some more.

Frank: No more. No talking. Go.

Nick: I'd rather stay. It's the least I can do. Keep you company.

Frank: I'll find someone to send you your things. I'll send her to you. *She* still works here.

Nick: *Make* me leave. (*Pause*) I'm staying. It will come down eventually. Then we'll go up, together —

Frank: No, we won't. You'll go.

Nick: Alright, I will go up, I'll take it alone.

Frank: You don't even work here anymore.

Nick: Thanks to you.

Frank: That's right. You've got no purpose. No reason to be here. But that's not *it*, is it? It's not *it* you care about.

Nick: What is *it*?

Frank: It's not it and you know it. Both of us know it.

Nick: No, you know nothing. You're sick with it, not knowing. That's exactly what it is.

Frank: I'm sorry for what happened. What can I tell you, I'm sorry.

Nick: That's not good enough. I wasted years in here. The best years. I wasted my life for you, for all of you.

Frank: That's your job.

Nick: It's nobody's job to waste his life.

Frank: Any job is a waste of life. Any work in here is a waste.

Nick: My work had meaning. I did good work. For you, for them.

Frank: It's a waste. Yours and mine. Mine still is. Yours is not. You're free. Think of it that way, if it helps you forget it.

Elena Liapopoulou Adamidou

Nick: It doesn't.

Frank: I can't help you with that. The point is: forget about it. Move on. And sorry about that other thing. The one you care about.

Nick: There's no other thing.

Frank: Don't make a big deal out of it then. *(Pause.)*

Nick: It's no big deal.

Frank: That's right. *(Jane comes in. She's in her forties. Nick goes for the stairs. Frank grabs him.)* What is it? I thought it wasn't a big deal.

Nick: It's not.

Jane: What isn't?

Frank: It's nothing, we were just talking. Don't you want to know what about?

Jane: No. *(Pause.)*

Frank: He was just telling me he wants to take a shit on my office because of you. Isn't that right, Nick?

Nick: Sure.

Frank: You make him want to shit himself. *(Nick goes for the stairs again.)*

Jane: *(to Nick)* No, it's alright, *I'll* take the stairs.

Nick: No need. *(Nick leaves.)*

Frank: What did I tell you —

Jane: You're having fun.

Frank: And that annoys you.

Jane: Not anymore.

Frank: You can go with him.

Jane: Why?

Frank: You saw him. He doesn't seem right —

Jane: That's how he is. You're worried about him?

Frank: I'm just saying. Maybe you should.

Jane: No need. *(Lights out.)*

Scene 2

A few minutes later. Inside the elevator. Silence. Frank and Jane stand there looking at each other. Jane and Frank are stuck inside. Jane 's panic dials down as the dialogue progresses.

Jane: What is it? Why are you looking at me like that?

Frank: I'm just thinking about how you've ruined me.

Jane: You can stop staring.

Frank: I don't think I can.

Jane: Don't be like that. I don't like it.

Frank: Like what?

Jane: Stop it.

Frank: Stop what?

Jane: Stop it, now, please.

Frank: He left as soon as he saw you. Like a scared cat.

Jane: You were the one that seemed scared. Were you afraid of him?

Frank: Can you imagine the three of us being stuck in here?

Jane: Were you? Afraid he'll beat you up?

Frank: He told me he came here to see *you*. He knew you would be here at this hour or at any hour.

Jane: You were afraid. You always are.

Frank: That's right. And you're a loyal, a humble worker —

Jane: Admit it. You were afraid. Afraid he'll break the other leg as well, that you'll be crawling like a worm afterwards. That he'll destroy you.

Frank: I'd like to destroy you right now. *(Pause.)*

Jane: What was he doing here?

Frank: I told you. He came for you.

Jane: Don't start.

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Frank: Doesn't he have anyone else to bother?

Jane: Don't you? (*Pause.*)

Frank: To get his *things*, he said. He came here to get his things.

Jane: What *things*?

Frank: You look worried. Almost guilty —

Jane: Cut it out. (*as she checks her phone*) He shouldn't have come here today.

Frank: You won't get good service here, put it away.

Jane: I know. I'm just looking (*Frank comes closer to her. Jane steps back and she stands there with her back on the mirror. Frank looks at himself. He fixes his tie.*)

Frank: You know, times like these are very hard. The last months had been hard on me. I made mistakes. Do you understand what I mean?

Jane: I do. We don't have to talk about it.

Frank: These times are hard for us, for everyone. During hard times people do things—

Jane: I said I understand. What's done is done.

Frank: Ask me what things.

Jane: No. (*Silence. They stand there. Jane steps away from Frank and sits down.*)

Frank: Ask me.

Jane: What things?

Frank: The things they do. They don't think about them when they do them. Or before they do them. They don't think. They don't know how to. All they know is that they'll regret it. But they still do those things. (*Pause.*) When I met you, I instantly regretted it. When we started this, I stopped knowing how to think —

Jane: I can tell.

Frank: We all give something to take something. That's how it is in everything. There are ups and downs. You deal with them and I think you and I, that's what we did. We dealt with them. We made a deal with each other. We still do, don't we?

Jane: We do. (*Pause.*)

Frank: Why, why would you do it?

Jane: Do what?

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Frank: They called me last night. *(Pause.)*

Jane: This job, what we had, what we did, you are right. It gave us whatever it gave us. And now it's over.

Frank: You talked, you told the world, everyone.

Jane: *(as she stands up)* I did.

Frank: You mention names. My name?

Jane: What do you think?

Frank: Why?

Jane: Don't be like that. You know why.

Frank: Because of him? Because I fired him? It wasn't about him. There were massive layoffs. It was everyone. Everyone is gone.

Jane: Besides me. I'm left here with you. *(Pause.)*

Frank: I'm done.

Jane: We are both done.

Frank: You are not. You saw an opening, you went for it. You don't care.

Jane: Nobody cares. *(Pause.)*

Frank: Is it out? *(Frank takes Jane's phone.)* It's probably out by now, right? Is it?

Jane: It's out there.

Frank: I don't want to face them. I don't know how.

Jane: You're rambling.

Frank: It's not that simple. There are people who believe in me, who believed in me.

Jane: He believed in you —

Frank: Not everything is about you and that dud.

Jane: It's just the truth. I just told the truth about us.

Frank: You didn't.

Jane: You're wrong.

Frank: Stop it. You didn't. It's all lies. You told lies.

Jane: I didn't and you know it. It's the truth.

Elena Liapopoulou Adamidou

Frank: I'm done. You didn't have to do it —

Jane: You'll be in trouble for a while. You have money. You can't be done for long. You'll be fine. (*The lights start flickering.*)

Frank: I didn't think it was true, that's why I said it.

Jane: Said what?

Frank: That you've ruined me. (*The elevator slowly starts working again. Lights out.*)

Scene 3

A few minutes later. Inside Frank 's office. He tries to light up a cigar. Jane is on his laptop.

Jane: These things will kill you.

Frank: You've killed me.

Jane: You'll be fine.

Frank: You're the worst. Where's the other one? *(Frank is searching for a lighter.)*

Jane: I don't know where he went. He's in his office.

Frank: Where's the lighter?

Jane: Here it is —

Frank: What, where?

Jane: *Our* article, our story.

Frank: You're the worst.

Jane: Don't you have anything else to say?

Frank: No, I don't. You're the worst.

Jane: I'm hungry. I'll get something to eat.

Frank: *(as he finds the lighter)* I'll get us something to eat.

Jane: No, I'll better leave.

Frank: You know, he *will* read about it.

Jane: Along with every single person you know.

Frank: You wanted to take me down.

Jane: And what if I did? It's just another one for you out there.

Frank: This time is different.

Jane: You did this to yourself.

Frank: And what did you do?

Jane: You'll be fine. You always are. *(Frank lights up the cigar.)* Get that thing away from me.

Elena Liapopoulou Adamidou

Frank: Don't leave.

Jane: Don't you want to read it?

Frank: I don't care. (*Frank goes to the window to smoke. He opens it and looks out.*)
Well, what do you know —

Jane: What is it?

Frank: He jumped.

Jane: What are you talking about? (*Jane goes over to the window.*)

Frank: He jumped. Your boy jumped. (*Jane looks down.*) At least, he didn't keep his promise.

Jane: What —

Frank: He didn't leave anything for me, you know, on my office.

Jane: No, he didn't. All the shit and dirt, he took it down with him.

Frank: He cared about you —

Jane: He didn't.

Frank: He cared about everything too much —

Jane: Stop. Stop talking. (*Pause.*)

Frank: It's the truth. (*Jane goes to the door.*) Take the stairs this time.

Jane: Sure. (*Jane leaves. Lights out.*)