

STEAK

Written by

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Logline: In 1960s New York, Tony, a loyal gangster, aspires to become the head of the family business, but there is only one thing in his way: he's vegan.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT, 1960

A dimly lit old-fashioned Italian restaurant decked out with red booths. The door swings open, and TONY -- 20s, slim, clever -- enters.

TONY (V.O.)

As far back as I can remember, I
always dreamed of this day.

All the tables are empty except for one.

TONY (V.O.)

The day I become the Don.

THE DON -- 70s, wrinkled and wise, silent but smart -- sits across an empty chair. LUCA -- 50s, big and loyal -- stands beside him.

Tony struts over to the table, greets them both, and sits down.

THE DON

You are looking good, my boy.

Tony smiles.

THE DON (CONT'D)

I'm sure you know why we're meeting
today. I'm getting older and the
family--

A nervous WAITER walks over, sweating profusely. He brings menus to the table.

LUCA

Not now.

WAITER

Sorry, but can I get you anything
to--

THE DON

Tell the chef, he's feeding the
Don. He'll know what to make.

He shoos the waiter away.

LUCA

Hurry, quick, pal.

The Don turns back to Tony.

THE DON

What I was saying was that I'm getting older, and the family business needs a leader. I took charge after my grandfather passed. And I think it's time for you to take the mantle.

A beat. Tony grins.

TONY

I'm honored. Thank you, sir. This means the world to me.

The Don smiles. He waves his hand, and the waiter comes back over.

THE DON

Bring over some whisky, it's a celebration.

CUT TO:

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT - LATER

Their glasses are almost empty. The three of them laugh, bonded.

The waiter and the CHEF bring three large, expensive steak dishes over to the table. The chef kisses the Don's ring.

CHEF

I hear it's a special occasion. These cuts are my finest, please enjoy.

The Don nods, and he and Luca pick up their utensils excitedly.

Tony looks at the piece of meat staring up at him. He doesn't touch it. The Don and Luca are digging in. It is absolutely delicious. Tony doesn't budge. The Don notices.

THE DON

What's wrong, Tony? Eat up.

A beat.

TONY

I can't.

Luca and the Don look at each other, confused.

THE DON
You can't?

TONY
Yeah, I can't.

LUCA
And why's that?

The Don takes a sip of whisky.

TONY
I'm Vegan.

The Don spits out the whisky all over Luca. A beat.

LUCA
What the hell is a Vegan?

TONY
It's a diet. I don't eat foods that
come from animals, just plants.

THE DON
What?

TONY
It's not that big of a deal, I'll
just ask for some spinach and
salad.

THE DON
Not that big a deal? You wanna
insult the chef. You want to
embarrass me.

Tony is silent.

THE DON (CONT'D)
When the hell did this start? I
mean, weren't you stuffing your
face with prosciutto at Paulie's
wedding?

TONY
That was before I knew of the
horrors. I can't sit back and watch
animals be slaughtered. You know?

THE DON
Tony, you're a gangster. You kill
people all the time. You killed
that rat, Joey, two days ago.
(MORE)

THE DON (CONT'D)

But you won't eat a cow that is
already dead?

TONY

It just feels wrong.

THE DON

(to Luca)

Have you ever heard of something
like this before?

Luca shakes his head.

THE DON (CONT'D)

Just eat it. You're disrespecting
me.

Tony is still.

THE DON (CONT'D)

You know, if you continue this
nonsense, I can't have you take
after me. I'll have to go with your
brother.

This strikes a chord.

TONY

You can't be serious, he's an
idiot. I've proven myself again and
again for you.

THE DON

Yeah, he's an idiot, but at least
he eats meat. People will say
you're weak. Think of your poor
mother. Just eat the steak.

Tony looks at the piece of meat and back at the Don.

TONY.

I won't.

A beat. The Don nods at Luca.

Luca picks up the steak and tries to shove it in Tony's
mouth. Tony pushes it away.

TONY

Stop! I didn't realize you would be
so opposed to my morals. Can you at
least try to understand why I'm
doing this?

The Don and Luca laugh.

TONY (CONT'D)

Just imagine who the cow was. It had a life. Maybe even a family.

All of a sudden, the steak on Tony's plate moves.

STEAK (V.O.)

As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a pageant cow.

They all stare at the steak, jaws dropped.

STEAK (V.O.)

Yeah, I wasn't always a big piece of meat lying before you. I had a life, a family.

EXT. FARM - DAY (COW STOCK FOOTAGE)

Cows roam the field grazing. One large cow, STEAK, sits in the grass.

STEAK (V.O.)

I wasn't like the other cows.

Other cows pass by slowly, chewing as they walk.

STEAK (V.O.)

I saw where they end up. I told myself that wasn't for me. I was different.

Steak walks over to another cow, APOLLONIA.

STEAK (V.O.)

My wife, Apollonia, we shared a love like no other. She believed in my dreams. I was gonna get us outta there.

The two cows nudge their heads together.

STEAK (V.O.)

Everything was going to plan. I had to fatten up, we had to-

THE DON (O.S.)

Shut the fuck up.

CUT TO:

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tony is hunched over, invested in the story. For the first time in Luca's life, a tear rolls down his cheek.

THE DON

What the hell is going on here?

LUCA

Well, the steak and his wife had a beautiful--

THE DON

I mean, why are we listening to a piece of food? It's here for us to eat.

TONY

Didn't you hear the story? The steak was alive, just like you and me. How can you just call it food?

THE DON

How can you believe what it says? It could be lying.

STEAK (V.O.)

I'm not.

THE DON

Shut up. What kinda of restaurant is this with talking food?

The Don flags down the waiter.

THE DON (CONT'D)

Get the chef, this goddam piece of steak is telling us its whole life story.

The waiter rushes over with the chef, both panicked.

CHEF

(trembling)

There's a problem with your food? I'm very sorry. Please have mercy, let me replace those dishes right away.

THE DON

No need. Just tell me why this piece of steak is fucking talking to us.

CHEF
The steak is talking?

STEAK (V.O.)
Yeah, anyway, back to my story...

The chef screams!

CHEF
Demon!!

The Don ignores the chef, cowering on the ground. He turns his attention back to Tony and pulls out a pistol.

THE DON
Eat it.

Tony is still. Luca looks at the Don with puppy eyes. A beat. No one moves.

THE DON (CONT'D)
(voice quivering)
Fine! You're dead to me, Tony. I
loved you like a son.

The Don picks up his fork.

THE DON (CONT'D)
Well, someone's gotta eat this.

Gun in one hand, fork in the other, he reaches for the steak.

STEAK (V.O.)
Please no!

LUCA
Don't do it.

The Don grabs a piece and eats it. He smiles as he chews, but suddenly he coughs. He coughs again and gestures to his throat. He drops his fork and then his gun.

Luca and Tony look at each other. They don't move. The Don gasps for air and falls back in his chair, silent.

Luca takes the ring from the Don's lifeless fingers and hands it to Tony.

LUCA (CONT'D)
What you did was very brave.

Tony smiles; he is the new don.