

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

The Comfort Zone

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MICHAEL: 40s. Any ethnicity. Male.

NOX: 30+. Any ethnicity. Any gender.

GAELEN: Late 30s. Any ethnicity. Male.

ASHLEIGH: Mid-30s. Any ethnicity. Female.

SETTING:

A generic bar in a generic town.

TIME:

Evening. Maybe a Tuesday.

CONTENT WARNING:

Graphic violence, sexual content.

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The Comfort Zone, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

A generic bar in a generic town.

It's semi-full. People are there. The ones we care about at the moment, however, are a forlorn MICHAEL at the bar, nursing a stupid blue drink with an umbrella in it, and NOX, the bartender.

MICHAEL sighs pitifully.

NOX

You want another one, Mike?

MICHAEL

(Shaking his head)

No.

I shouldn't.

NOX

You look like someone just killed your cat. In front of you.

MICHAEL

I wish.

My cat probably hates me, too.

Beat.

NOX

You want to talk about it?

MICHAEL

Would you consider me an ineffectual person?

NOX

How so?

MICHAEL

Powerless and inadequate. A pushover.

NOX

Like a glob of useless jelly? A pile of meat just sitting there taking up space?

MICHAEL

Yeah!

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NOX

...

No.

MICHAEL

No?

NOX

Look, everybody has off days, Mike.

MICHAEL

Yeah. What about off months? Years?

NOX

Sure. It doesn't mean you're ineffectual.

MICHAEL

But it can mean my entire life has been a futile waste of the gift of existence.

NOX

You're not a pile of meat. You're just having a rough patch.

MICHAEL

...

NOX

Okay, hit me. What's something you've always wanted to do?

MICHAEL

Feel useful.

NOX

I mean, more of an activity? Have you ever wanted to travel anywhere?

MICHAEL

Only places where I'm not, I guess.

NOX

For the love of God, Mike, you're going to have to work with me a little.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

I can't even hold a conversation anymore.

NOX

...

You know what my advice would be?

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MICHAEL

What?

NOX

Small steps. Nothing big changes overnight. You know?

MICHAEL

I don't know, Julia left me pretty quickly.

NOX

In terms of personal change. What if...just the next person who asks you something? For help or to hang out, do anything...whatever it is, just say yes. See where it takes you.

MICHAEL

Yes?

NOX

Yes. Just say yes.

MICHAEL

What if it's something that I don't want to do?

NOX

Say yes, anyway.

MICHAEL

...

You really think that'll work?

NOX

Instantly? No. But it's about stepping in the right direction. You keep moving. And then one day, before you even know it, all those little steps added up to something.

MICHAEL

Huh...

NOX notices something.

MICHAEL

I guess that makes sense.

(Off NOX'S staring at
the something)

Is everything okay? What did I do wrong?

NOX

Nothing.

(Pointing)

That couple over there is staring at you.

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MICHAEL looks where NOX is pointing and sees they are right.

A ways away, GAELEN and ASHLEIGH are staring at MICHAEL, pleased, not insignificantly weird smiles plastered on their faces.

Is my fly down again? MICHAEL

Just ignore them. NOX

They're kinda creepy. MICHAEL

GAELEN and ASHLEIGH stand and make their way over to MICHAEL and NOX.

Okay, they're coming over. NOX

Oh, my god. MICHAEL

Don't stress. It's okay. They're just--fellow humans. NOX

Hello. GAELEN

... MICHAEL

Hi. NOX

Do you mind if we join you? ASHLEIGH

... MICHAEL
(Taking NOX'S advice)

Yes!

You do mind? GAELEN

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...No. Please sit.

MICHAEL

GAELEN and ASHLEIGH split and sit on both sides of MICHAEL, sandwiching him between them.

Thank you!

ASHLEIGH

You're welcome.

MICHAEL

Sorry for staring at you. We were just admiring you.

GAELEN

Admiring me?

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah. We love your vibe.

ASHLEIGH

My vibe?

MICHAEL

Yeah. We were sitting over there, eating our bbq wings, when my wife saw you sitting over here. That's my wife, Ashleigh.

GAELEN

Very pleased to meet you. This is my life husband, Gaelen.

ASHLEIGH

Nice to meet you.

MICHAEL

Oh, the pleasure is all ours.

ASHLEIGH

What's your name?

GAELEN

Michael.

MICHAEL

Michael.

GAELEN

Michael!

ASHLEIGH

Oh, wow.

GAELEN

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ASHLEIGH
What a delicious name.

MICHAEL
Really?

GAELEN
Oh, yeah. Classic.

MICHAEL
...

NOX
Do either of you want anything?

ASHLEIGH
...

GAELEN
...

MICHAEL
...

ASHLEIGH
So, Michael. We were eating our bbq wings. And I noticed you sitting over here all alone.

GAELEN
With your little blue drink with the umbrella.

ASHLEIGH
We just love that.

NOX
I can get you two of those.

ASHLEIGH
IF WE WANTED YOU TO BE A PART OF THE CONVERSATION WE WOULD INVITE YOU TO IT!

NOX
...

MICHAEL
...

GAELEN
It's such an adorable little drink.

ASHLEIGH
And we were looking at you and we just clicked with your vibe, you know?

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GAELEN

Really clicked. With everything about it. It's such a perfect vibe.

MICHAEL

Thank you?

ASHLEIGH

Thank YOU.

GAELEN

Thank you, Michael.

(Perhaps putting a hand on MICHAEL)

Thank you.

NOX

Mike, if these people are making you uncomfortable--

ASHLEIGH

I swear to God if you say one more word I'm going to walk into your bathroom and smear feces all over the fucking walls.

NOX

Okay, out. I want both of you out.

ASHLEIGH

...

GAELEN

...

MICHAEL

...

ASHLEIGH stands and exits directly into the bathroom.

NOX

Hey!

GAELEN

(To MICHAEL)

Stay right here, okay?

MICHAEL

What?

GAELEN hops over the bar and murders NOX. Whether it is with his bare hands or MICHAEL'S blue drink or any

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*other fun makeshift weapon
nearby, it gets very bloody.*

*The other bar patrons scream
in terror and run away.*

*MICHAEL just sits in shocked
horror, staring at GAELEN as
he beats NOX'S body to a
bloody pulp behind the bar.*

*This goes on for a fair
minute.*

Finally, GAELEN stops.

*He stands up straight,
breathing and letting out the
tension, absolutely splattered
in NOX'S blood.*

GAELEN

I hate bartenders.

So! Where were we?

*ASHLEIGH re-enters from the
bathroom, not completely
smeared in shit, but
definitely enough to imply she
made an intense amount of
scatological artwork in a very
short amount of time.*

ASHLEIGH

I fucking hate bartenders.

*GAELEN and ASHLEIGH return to
their seats beside MICHAEL,
still too scared to move.*

GAELEN

So. Your vibe.

ASHLEIGH

Yeah. We just really dig your vibe. All of you.

GAELEN

We were just wondering. Because we've been looking for the perfect person to ask.

ASHLEIGH

Can we eat you?

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MICHAEL

...

WHAT?!

GAELEN

Can we eat you?

ASHLEIGH

Like, your skin. Specifically.

MICHAEL

Please don't hurt me.

GAELEN

We're not going to hurt you.

ASHLEIGH

We just wanna eat your skin.

GAELEN

Now, full disclosure, we're still honing our flaying skills.

ASHLEIGH

He's better at the faces.

GAELEN

But you're unmatched with genitals, love.

ASHLEIGH

Shut up!

I will fuck you over Michael right now.

GAELEN

Oh, yeah?

ASHLEIGH

(Biting her lip)

Mmmhmm.

MICHAEL

Wait! Wait, please!

ASHLEIGH

I'm sorry, Michael. That was rude. Did you wanna join?

MICHAEL

NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TO SAY YES!! I DON'T WANT TO SAY YES!!

NOOOO! NOOOOO, DON'T HURT ME!! NO NO NO NO!

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ASHLEIGH

Jeez Louise, slow your roll.

GAELEN

Yeah, we were just asking.

ASHLEIGH

Pretty simple request. No need to get all bent out of shape.

Beat.

GAELEN

Wanna fuck over the bartender?

ASHLEIGH

Oh my god yes.

GAELEN and ASHLEIGH go at each other like crazed animals.

MICHAEL, screaming, literally experiencing irrevocable trauma, weasels his way out of the crossfire and runs out of the bar.

GAELEN and ASHLEIGH transfer themselves over the bar and fuck over NOX'S dead body.

The lights slowly fade as GAELEN and ASHLEIGH ad-lib pleasure, noises of coitus, and vehement berating of the dead bartender.

END OF PLAY.