SLEEPLESSNESS

by Seth Kenlon
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FADE IN:

INT. REUF’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

REUF, a mean and sadistic old man of about seventy years of age and heavily addicted to coffee, is sitting in his easy chair. Across his lap, set upon the chair’s armrests, is a serving tray upon which there is a tin mug. His apartment is old and in decay. At his feet is a silver carafe of coffee.

Reuf watches a small television set, which also may serve as the motivated source of light within the room. From the television we hear the artificial LAUGH-TRACK of sitcoms and the hyperbolic MUSIC of poorly made commercials.

Reuf blinks as if awakening from a deep sleep (although his eyes have all the time been wide open and trained upon the television screen) and realises that his tin mug is empty. He reaches down to get the carafe of coffee but finds that he cannot reach it without moving from his current position. He takes his mug and RAPS it upon the serving tray.

INT. HALLWAY - BEFORE REUF’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

AZRA, Reuf’s innocent and tender young daughter of seven, is playing with a baby doll in the empty and decaying hallway. She is playing that the baby is peacefully sleeping.

Azra hears Reuf hitting his serving tray from inside. Azra lifts the baby doll into a sitting position, which triggers a recording within the doll’s body of a baby CRYING, as if it were a real infant that had just been awakened from a nap.

Azra hurries into the apartment.

INT. REUF’S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Azra needs no instructions; she takes the carafe at Reuf’s feet and begins to pour him a new cup of coffee. The carafe turns out to be empty.

Reuf RAPS upon the serving tray angrily, desperately.

Azra hurries to the kitchenette to refill the carafe.
INT. KITCHENETTE - NIGHT

Azra refills the carafe with coffee that has been slowly boiling upon the stove. Having emptied this into Reuf’s carafe, she sets about preparing a back-up pot of coffee. However, when she takes a tin of “Sefka” Brand Coffee, she discovers that there is only one bean of coffee left.

Azra appears concerned at the coffee shortage. She can make no more coffee.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Azra returns to Reuf with the carafe full of coffee and refills his tin mug.

Reuf commands Azra to sit and watch television with him. He drinks his mug full of coffee, until it is empty.

    REUF
    Come here, Azra my dear, and watch television with me.

    AZRA
    But I don’t want to watch television.

    REUF
    You watch television with me, and make sure I never see the bottom of my cup.

Azra sits on a sofa and watches television. Reuf takes an especially long drink of his coffee, and Azra quickly comes to his side to refill the cup when he sets it back down.

Azra returns to her seat.

Azra, bored with television, attempts to sleep. Reuf sees this and RAPS his now empty mug upon his tray and prompts Azra to pour him more coffee.

Azra pours coffee into the mug. She tries to take a drink of the coffee she has just poured but Reuf pushes her away. She makes another attempt and Reuf gives in and allows her to take a sip.

An advertisement for Sefka brand coffee appears on the television. Reuf laughs. Reuf claps his hands. Azra takes advantage of the distraction by stealing the mug away from Reuf and drinks until the cup is empty. Reuf angrily pulls his cup close to him and glares at Azra. He sends her to her room.

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Azra goes without resistance to her room.

INT. AZRA’S ROOM – NIGHT

Azra’s room is meagerly but carefully decorated with second-hand dolls and dried flowers and the like.

Azra crawls into bed but cannot sleep.

She hears the CHATTER of the television no matter how hard she tries to block it out, and she can even seem to hear her father’s loud SIPS of his coffee. Furthermore, she can’t seem to stop fidgeting due to her recent heavy dose of caffeine.

Azra hears the DOOR OF THE APARTMENT OPEN. She goes to her room’s door and looks through the large keyhole. She sees what is happening in the apartment’s main room...

INT. MAIN ROOM – NIGHT

Reuf is at the door. SEFKA, the owner of Sefka Brand Coffee, enters the apartment.

    SEFKA
    Hello, Reuf. I’m here as agreed.

    REUF
    Yes, just on time. And you’ve brought the coffee?

Sefka takes five small bags of coffee beans from his knapsack. He gives this to Reuf, who takes the bag of ground beans to the kitchenette to GRIND and brew the coffee. Sefka waits patiently in the living room.

Sefka turns and seems to look right at the keyhole through which Azra is peering.

INT. AZRA’S ROOM – NIGHT

Azra draws away, frightened, from the keyhole. She paces about her room, wondering who the stranger is and why he has come to visit.

Azra sits upon her bed but finds she can hardly sit still because of the caffeine. So she spends time rather frantically cleaning her room, but she is so full of excess energy that she ends up doing more harm than good.

Courageous again, Azra goes to look through the keyhole once more...
INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The coffee has finished brewing. Sefka and Reuf are drinking coffee together.

INT. AZRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Azra tries to sleep in her bed but hears the CLINKING of tin mugs and SIPPING of coffee.

At last, there is the SOUND OF A KEY in the door to Azra’s room. The door swings open and Reuf enters. He pulls Azra from her bed and brings her out into the main room.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Sefka sees Azra.

SEFKA
Yes, she should do nicely. And you, Reuf? how long will that bag of coffee last you?

REUF
It’ll last. I’ll make it last.

Sefka grabs onto one of her legs and shakes it a bit to ensure that she’s sturdy on her feet, and he does the same to her arm. He again indicates approval and gives Reuf five bags more of coffee.

Sefka takes Azra by an arm and begins to lead her to the front door of the apartment.

AZRA
No! Where are you taking me?

SEFKA
Come along, child, you don’t want to stay here with an old man. You’ll come to work for me at my factory.

AZRA
But I don’t want to work for you.

Azra escapes from him and runs back to her room and closes the door, forgetting that it is Reuf who possesses the key.

Reuf opens the door and pulls Azra back out toward the front door.

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Again Azra runs back in and tries to at least start packing her belongings -- her dolls and flowers and one or two spare sets of clothes. But the men are merciless, and Sefka takes her and leads her from the apartment.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

Sefka tosses Azra into the back seat of his old car and gives her a blanket, clearly implying that she should try to sleep. Sefka gets into the driver's seat.

Azra lays upon the back seat and pulls the blanket (full of holes) over her. Sefka STARTS THE CAR and they drive away.

INT. SEFKA'S CAR MOVING - NIGHT

Azra cannot sleep, nervously wondering where Sefka is taking her. She lies in the backseat of the car in fearful anticipation.

Azra imagines she can smell coffee, and soon realizes it is not her imagination; the floor of the car is littered with coffee beans and with emptied carafes once filled with coffee.

EXT. SEFKA'S COFFEE FACTORY - NIGHT

Sefka and Azra arrive in the car at the factory. Reuf pulls Azra from the car and leads her to the factory, which is a large, forbidding, and apparently disheveled structure in the middle of an especially dark and oppressive valley.

INT. SEFKA'S COFFEE FACTORY - NIGHT

Sefka and Azra enter the factory. The coffee factory is full of large machinery and burlap bags of coffee. YOUNG CHILDREN of ages ranging from five to twelve are working at packaging coffee beans. Their wide-open, blood-shot eyes shift quickly about the room, and they all twitch with an excess of caffeinated energy.

Sefka continues inside in order to lead Azra to her workstation. Azra remains at the door.

A particularly PITEOUS CHILD steals some coffee beans for himself. Sefka sees this and is furious. He takes the beans from, and beats harshly, the piteous child.

Sefka turns to summon Azra but is surprised to find that Azra is no longer standing at the factory door. She has completely disappeared.
EXT. SEFKA’S COFFEE FACTORY - NIGHT

In horror, Sefka hurries out of the factory to search for Azra, but she is already halfway up a hill on her way out of the valley in which the factory sits.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE - NIGHT

Azra finds a small village not far from the valley. The village is still asleep. Azra runs through the town’s maze-like streets in search of some sign of hope. After running in virtual circles, she is too weary to continue. Oblivious of a nearby café, Azra lies down in a gutter to rest.

Azra again cannot sleep from caffeine. She is fidgeting and again imagines she smells coffee. Azra notices the café.

Azra goes to the window and looks longingly through the café windows. There are croissants and danishes and tarts and sweet-rolls, still steaming from the oven, in the window.

The CAFÉ OWNER and the only CAFÉ CUSTOMER, drinking coffee, notice her and come out of the café to invite her inside.

INT. SMALL CAFÉ - NIGHT

Azra wanders about the café in awe. She is obviously starving and cannot decide what to choose to eat.

Azra soon comes across a plateful of rolls next to which sits the café customer, whose cup of coffee steams in his hand. Azra grabs the cup of coffee from the customer and gulps all of it down within seconds.

The café customer angrily forces Azra from the café for her appalling behaviour and for being an obvious caffeine junkie. The café owner scolds the customer and hurries after Azra to offer her some food but already she is far away.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

Azra wanders from the village with the café. She sits sadly and ponders her situation.

Eventually, she returns to Sefka’s Coffee Factory for its warmth and promise of coffee.
INT. SEFKA’S COFFEE FACTORY - NIGHT

Azra knocks upon the factory door, and Sefka answers it. He is angry but mostly glad to see that she has returned. He immediately puts her to work.

Azra works diligently at packaging freshly freeze-dried coffee. She works near a large cauldron of coffee that is being funneled into a threatening-looking freeze-drying mechanism.

There is a knock upon the factory door. Sefka goes to answer it. It is Azra’s evil father Reuf.

Reuf fidgets nervously and looks at the coffee around him dreamily. Sefka notices his curious disposition, and seems somewhat concerned about it.

SEFKA
Reuf, what brings you out here, so far from home?

REUF
(nervously)
I just wanted to make sure that little Azra was working out well for your fine establishment.

SEFKA
The little brat is a nightmare, but she’s come to her senses now, I think.

REUF
Good. That’s good news!

SEFKA
How’s the coffee?

REUF
Coffee? What coffee?

SEFKA
The coffee I brought to you.

REUF
Oh...that coffee...I think I drank it all.

Reuf tries to help himself to a cup of coffee. Sefka prevents him from drinking and prompts the children nearby to continue working.

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SEFKAS
Oh no you don’t! The agreement was
the child for coffee. I gave you the
coffee. I can’t help it if you drank
it all.

REUF
(motioning to the mug that
Sefka has taken from him)
This? But that’s just a friendly cup
of coffee!

SEFKAS
This is for factory workers only. It
helps them stay awake. None for you.

Reuf sees Azra and acts pleased to see her.

REUF
Well at least see my little Azra!

SEFKAS
(with reservation)
For a little while.

Reuf hurries to Azra and embraces her, although she clearly
is not at all pleased to see him.

REUF
Azra, it’s me -- you’re dear father!
(seeing the powdered
instant coffee nearby)
When has your father ever denied you
anything?

Reuf desperately tastes some powdered instant coffee from
one of the packages Azra is making -- even though he has no
water to add to it -- and she does nothing to stop him.

Azra seems to ponder. She has a plan.

Azra takes some roasted coffee beans from a nearby pile and
gives them to Reuf “secretly.” Reuf is grateful and he
places the beans in his pocket.

Sefka notices Reuf placing beans into his pockets. Sefka
rushes over to Reuf and confronts him.

SEFKAS
How dare you steal from my factory!
I saw those beans you put into your
pocket!

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CONTINUED: (2)

REUF
How dare you accuse me of stealing!
I didn’t take any of your beans!

SEFKA
I saw you put them into your coat
pocket myself! Do you think I don’t
have eyes?

REUF
I won’t stand this disgraceful
treatment.

SEFKA
You’re not leaving this factory until
you return my coffee beans.

Reuf makes an attempt to leave, and Sefka attacks him.
They are soon literally at one another’s throats.

As the violence increases, they end up leaning dangerously
close to the vat of coffee being freeze-dried into instant
coffee.

Azra sneaks away from the battling adults. Azra goes to
the factory door.

Azra takes, from a pile of packaged and ground beans, bags
of coffee marked “decaf”, and leaves the factory...

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - DAWN

Azra runs happily into the breaking dawn toward the
village.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE - DAWN

Azra runs toward the café.

INT. SMALL CAFÉ - DAWN

Azra enters the caffee with the bags of decaf and takes a
seat at a table full of danishes. Near the plate of
danishes is a pot of steaming coffee. The café owner is
clearly happy to see her.

Azra begins eating a danish and ignores the pot of steaming
coffee.
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The café owner, glad to see that she has chosen food over caffeine, brings her a plate of muffins, choux pastry, strudel, and other assorted pastries, and a tall glass of orange juice. He takes a bag of decaf from her and goes to brew it, as Azra drinks her orange juice.

FADE OUT:

THE END