



# STUDY DRUGS

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*“It’s not only illegal drugs that we need to be worried about, hell no!  
You can never forget for even one measly second the ones that fall  
off the back of a truck.”*

*U.S. Director of National Drug Control Policy  
‘The Drug Czar’*

*Panic has set in.*

“Hey Edo, you’re in my will Dude!”

*As shouts start coming from a fast-moving left.*

“An A Edo, I got an A on my paper!”

*Another one ricochets from that Colonial-looking building way over there in the distance.*

“You de-man Edo!”

Moving swiftly through a crowded Campus as nothing but flattery fills-up the autumn air.

“Edo! Edo!”

Racing past many of his student-body peers, “Excuse me.” Twisting and turning as dry leaves crunch under some quick-moving feet, “Pardon me.” Navigating Princeton’s Ivy League tradition of academic excellence with extreme agility... Edo looks down at his watch for only a split second - “Shit” - he knows he’s really late for economics class. “See you after class Mr. Singer”, Professor Marcus suddenly blocks the way.

Locking eyes after being startled, the tall lean Professor winks right back at Edo through his round glasses... before his student needs to take-off in an anxious hurry.

“I need to see you after class Mr. Singer, to go over your assignment”, the tweed and patches Professor demands in a tone that masquerades as serious. “Sounds great Professor, gotta run though.” This former track star needs to keep moving... or it’ll be too late to get in... which means dodging crowded walkways with the skill of a running back. “Pardon me.” But high school is a long time ago. “Sorry.” And today even Educators are hooked on his product... running through an open lawn after seeing his destination is finally within reach. And why wouldn’t they be?

Breathing heavy from an all-out sprint.

It is the best damn stuff on Campus!

Climbing two steps at a time because he can’t afford to get locked out... Edo’s adrenaline pulls open the thick oak door to Cameron College rather easily. He then bursts through with purpose, squeaking from that first sharp turn. Looking way ahead in the distance he sees that there are many more sharp turns in this maze of Protestant nostalgia... and that he needs to get through it without twisting an ankle or something like that. Antique frames lining the dark oak panelling that seem to go on forever... literally forever. “Hey Edo?”

“Gotta keep moving Phil.”

Edo is one of the most popular students on Campus.

“I need to talk to you Edo.” But it’s not for reasons one might expect. “Later Lisa... text me later.” Here at Princeton, one of the finest learning institutions on the Planet. “Just text me what you need.” This particular student operates in the shadows only of this revered *Planet of Academia*. “I will.” But his customers are hardly the sort that would ever live in the

shadows; only their vices do. “Edo wait up.” People today need plenty of help getting through their *higher learning* years... geez even the staff need help keeping up... *Publish or Perish* as the saying goes - which is especially true in this *Ivy League Planet*.

Edo stops on a dime.

A surprising chunk of today’s student body that populates this *Ivy League Planet* needs plenty of help keeping up with all this cut-throat competition.

Looking up at Room Number 315.

Edo’s side hustle has made him everyone’s best friend on this Ivy League Planet...

wiping away the perspiration from the twenty-minute obstacle course that needed to be conquered in order to get here. Then quickly composing himself before opening that door.

“I’m only fifteen minutes late”, after glancing at the time, “which isn’t so bad.”

This present reality forces a deep breath... and then a few steps forward. Edo carefully opens the classroom door... and tries like heck to be invisible... moving slowly towards the first available seat he can find at the back of this cavernous band-shell.

“MR. EDO SINGER.”

Shit! Four hundred students and he had to spot me!

“Nice of you to join us”, bellows from below.

Everyone turns in unison as the new student tries to cower. Busted!

“Glad you could find the Morris Singer Convocation Hall”, Dr. Pitkanen announces with major sarcasm to a hushed class with curious eyes. A public flogging meant to throw off the scent; Edo smiles back with a humbling admission of, “Sorry.”

“I am sure you are Mr. Singer.”

Prolific Author and Essayist, ubiquitous Media Pundit from FOX to CNN and everything in-between, renowned Speaker on Public Policy and a highly sought-after Advisor to Fed Chairman’s going back to Volcker; Economics Professor Jonathan Pitkanen is not unlike the slew of Professors Edo has in his thick black book of human weakness that he must make happy. He’s just the most arrogant. Whether he shows up or not he still gets an A; this is just theatre... his theatre. “Ok class, back to supply curves.” So Edo plays along. Consistency in any product or service is the key to success... and leverage - put that in your Economics 101 pipe and smoke it!

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Dead to the world after another night of Carnal-Heaven, or more like the Porn-Olympics... sprawled out in a coma-like slumber with the sheets pulled far away from any contact to the bed’s corners... both blankets have been pushed into messy piles.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

A phone interrupts the beautiful post-coitus silence.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

Only one person moves... and it's Edo. His ears open, barely, the rest of his body goes back to stillness, it has to.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

Elisha groans.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

And Edo smiles at that groan.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

Edo's Long Island Nymphet lets out another sound of disapproval... then promptly rolls over for more shut-eye; she earned it.

Slowly starting to negotiate his body closer to the dancing cell on the bedside table... Edo's shapely brunette takes everything and then some. "Hello", struggling to sit up.

"RISE AND SHINE RITCHIE RICH."

Edo falls listlessly back because he needs to.

"Edo my man, push that piece of tail away and get vertical, would ya?"

Edo's eyes stay glued shut, "I'm up."

"I bet you are. Now do me a favor and get a move on, I'm staring at a brand new shipment of your favourite little diamonds."

Sliding to the end of the bed with a wave of excitement, "It's about friggin' time", trying to process his friend's very powerful words.

"Knew that would do it, now get your ass over here so we can settle up with this treasure."

"Yup... ok... I'll be there in twenty."

*Click.*

Edo takes a deep breath... and wills his body to get moving. Everyone on Campus loves those amazing diamonds, turning and reaching over to kiss a motionless Elisha on the behind.

*Mwa.*

And what a perfect behind it is.

Edo remains a zombie.

He tries to sit up... but it is slow.

He has to rest his head in his hands.

Which takes some time by any measure.

This Gold Medal Porn Star then moves to stand, securing his legs underneath him, making his way towards the bathroom... where the powers of a steaming shower will do its magic on his very depleted body.

*Closing the door behind him.*

*Then turning on the water.*

"Amazing", after finally getting in... "ahhh", as the hot water rains down on his skin. Edo can't help but sport a smile from his marathon love-making to Elisha. Last night was a blur, it's always a blur... but it's one of the best kinds of blurs a college student can have in

this life. Every muscle being pushed and pulled to the max to experience a true Goddess... to please a true Goddess. Edo just needs to hit the right button and she's ravenous... the entire night! Any of that next morning soreness only reminds him of how much maternal power she really possesses.

Ten minutes later the steaming bathroom sends out a new man.

"You are delicious", planting one on her heart-shaped ass, "just delicious", and another.

Elisha starts to giggle. Edo could kiss that ass all morning if he didn't have to check out those diamonds. "You have time for breakfast?", in her deep-sleep voice.

"I can meet you at Joeys in an hour." "Ok Joeys in an hour", with the cutest face covered in sleep, "I've got to get up", rubbing her eyes after lifting up slowly.

"Yes you do pretty lady", putting on his jacket because he has to go.

"What time is it?" "Almost ten." "Shit I've got a noon class", pushing-off the blankets to show a blessed body that always creates a charge.

My Lord.

My very benevolent Lord.

A jolting electrical charge.

If I only had a bit more time - Edo's mind drifts - I'd dive in and do unspeakable things, no questions asked! Fixed on that wiggle because there is no other choice, unable to stop remembering how soft her skin is. "I'm out of here", shifting his gaze away from her perfectness, "I'll see you at Joeys in an hour."

That woman has a spell on me alright.

"I'll order you the special."

"With extra bacon."

"I know I know", standing at the bathroom modelling a silhouette of perfect nakedness.

I have to get out of here now.

"My man", enthusiastic fist bumps walking through the front door, "it is a rapturous day my rich white friend."

Within seconds of walking through that front door Edo can spot it... it is impossible to miss unless you're blindfolded. "So these are them?" A large box rests peacefully on the small kitchen table in Cecil's cosy one-room apartment. "They are", with the widest grin.

Putting his hand in to feel thousands... tens of thousands of pink blue and bright yellow pills... "Jesus fuckin' Christ!" "Christ's got nothing to do with it, nothing at all", Cecil moves closer, and reaches inside the box too. "The smoothness of Adderall, the power of Vyvanse, and the rock-bottom price of Ritalin, these are the world's most perfect hybrids my friend." "How the hell did you get so many?" Hovering over this teeming box like it's a cure for cancer or something. "The less you know the better." "But..." "Trust me Edo, I mean it", in the most profound directness Edo has ever heard leaving his friend's mouth. Calculating

the profits in his head from such a haul, while putting his hands through the entire box like they really are diamonds.

“Amazing isn’t it”, Cecil states the obvious.

Edo needs to sit down.

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Confidant, funny, handsome with a killer smile; her almond-shaped brown eyes catch him entering the popular Diner like a Rock Star. In fact, the second her sexy eyes catch her hunk entering... they can’t help but stay glued to his every move. The second Edo enters the conveniently-located Diner that’s just across the street from the main Campus... he is swamped by his fellow Ivy Leaguer’s - it’s like he owns the secret password for hacking into the final-grade database or something! Seeing his Peers provide big smiles and many pats on the back... gets Elisha full of the ‘what ifs?’ for a future with Edo. Every time she sits and waits for him at their normal spot it happens, which is always after a titillating sleep-over... this smitten Co-ed loves to watch it all go down. Never forgetting to give her a quick glance while he’s being mobbed... he knows where he needs to end up... where he needs to be sitting... where their favourite booth is.

“Nice to see you Edo.”

“Donny B!”

In the last booth on the left away from this fawning crowd.

“I need to see you later.”

In every Ivy League School it’s always the same.

“Text me.”

Young entitled kids sent to compete on Planet Academia.

“I’m running out of stock”, whispering into Edo’s ear.

They may have plenty of disposable income to blow off plenty of steam.

“I’ll take care of you, don’t you worry.”

But they’re here to perform first... at least come exam season. And the entire school always needs help with this kind of performance... both student and teacher.

“Edo. Edo.”

A relentlessly selfish crowd is going on while Edo smiles back at Elisha with a raised finger, then mouthing, “I’m going to be quick.”

Edo’s eyes freeze her... she feels his swagger from head to toe over the length of this Diner.

She smiles back with eyes that show she will wait for as long as it takes... because Edo Singer is the man she wants to be with - if it was up to her of course; but nothing is up to her when you pick a man like Edo. With so many pats on the back you’d think this charming Politician had just won the Heisman or something? Exciting her in all the right places ignites a raging something! A dancing heart absolutely! Yet Elisha still understands that she needs to keep it really cool in their favourite booth drinking her morning cup of wake-up.

This is her Lover.

She needs it after what he did to her last night.

Her Protector.

Seeing him moving through the gauntlet.

Her Mentor.

His eyes stay right with her while moving so smoothly... so full of confidence... he never wants to leave anybody out.

“Hello beautiful”... *mwa*.

Elisha is a slave to her Edo.

“Your eggs are on the way.”

“Thanks”, sliding in looking exhausted from all that work. She only gives him happy after offering-up one very dirty girl last night.

“Coffee?”

“Please Joanie.”

“Nice sweater Edo”, pouring with a grin.

“Thanks.” They all can’t help it; every woman is taken-in by Edo’s swagger. Never does Elisha ever take any of their time together for granted - how can she? Staring at her with his undivided attention... that dirty girl knows exactly what Edo likes.

“Do you have a busy day?”

“Crazy busy... I have four classes and an essay I have to finish for friday.”

“On what?”

“Building a sustainable economy from the ground up... with proper environmental regulations.”

“Interesting?”

“Franklin says he can get me one for a hundred bucks.”

“You going to do it?”

Edo’s face changes. “Never... I’m here to get my degree, not a lesson in fraud.”

Edo has an interesting gauge of morality, since Elisha knows what he ‘really’ does... it gives her a secret thrill she keeps a tight lid on.

“Here we are, scrambled with extra bacon.”

He’s never said it because she’s never asked... but she can put two and two together.

Edo starts on his breakfast like he hasn’t eaten in days. The brunette with the brown eyes watches her man because she needs to... because she never knows when their time is going to be ripped away.

“You want to go see Pulp Fiction? It’s playing at the Revue.”

“When?”, devouring but looking at Elisha... then at the tv on the wall... studying last night’s sport’s highlights. “Nash is a bum... trade that guy already!”, between bites. Edo lays-down a few bets here and there.

“It’s playing on Friday night, the ten o’clock show.”

“Ok beautiful”, stuffing the final bits of toast in his mouth. “That sounds great”, sliding out of the booth with her man, “Pulp Fiction it is”, knowing that she can’t come across as too-controlling with a guy like Edo, “I can’t wait”, adding a big smile. “Busy day, gotta keep



moving.” Lately their meals have a time limit of twenty... thirty minutes tops if he’s had a few; Elisha doesn’t have the courage to ask for more.

“My man Edo!”

Getting out of this place presents the same battle as getting in.

“Party at Sigma Kai Saturday!”

“You got it.”

Elisha knows that every woman in here dreams of being with a man that’s so magnetic.

“Edo!”

“Bobby G.”

It is merely a few steps at a time.

“We’re watching the hockey game tonight!”

“I’ll be there.”

And can take forever to leave.

“Football weekend!”

Just like any other place on Campus.

“I’ll bring the beer.”

Elisha could have stayed in bed all morning with Edo.

“Johnny”, leaning in, “I’m going to need two touchdowns from you this weekend.”

Princeton New Jersey is a postcard town of 10,000 students.

“Two... I need two.”

But to Edo it’s merely a cozy Piazza.

“You got it Edo”, Princeton’s speedy wide receiver Johnny Newsome, A.K.A. Johnny Flash, returns with a ‘sure-thing’ smile.

Standing proudly by his side with a fixed look of support, any woman that can’t admit feeling ten feet tall waiting for a charmer like Edo would be an outright liar.

“Ricardo”, a restrained nod barely two steps out of the Diner.

“Edo”, returns with the same nod.

There is no expression on either one of them.

“The specials are great today”, Edo says strangely-seriously.

“I’ll have to remember that”, the massive black man moves closer with eyes that really stare, “til next time”, leading his four-large-men-Posse past.

Edo grabs Elisha’s hand tighter as they move in the other direction; every student knows who that was. Big man on Campus Ricardo Blackmon is a broad-shouldered, thick-armed, six foot-seven power forward from one of those new-fangled Charter Schools that have been popping up in every housing project of the northeast. Queens is the rumour around here. A 3.6 GPA that averages twenty-two points per game, and whose likeness is on every poster hanging in the rafters of Jadwin Gymnasium; being an accomplished academic is not the first thing anybody thinks when they see this man-child. This is color-obsessed America after all... and it’s in every nook and cranny.

“I’ll see you later beautiful.”

Racism is a topic Elisha hears plenty from so many of her sorority sisters... most think nothing about spewing out ignorant generalizations whenever the media gets everyone all

riled up. Fake news or Irresponsible Journalism... it all ends up stirring the same *Us against Them* crap.

After that strange encounter with Ricardo, Edo looks to have changed... "Friday night Pulp Fiction." His final kiss even feels different. Never knowing when she's going to see Edo next. "Call me." Elisha just shows desire in her eyes and hopes for the best.

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Putting on an absolute clinic of spin moves and awesome dunks that leaves both Cecil & Edo with their tongues hanging out... it's hard not to be awed by such physical prowess... Ricardo Blackmon plays mean on the court, real mean. Attending one of those way-too-early tryouts was when Edo met both Cecil and Rico, as he's affectionately known around Campus, for the first time. Rico's the main weapon and Coach Dugood knows it, geez everyone in the Ivy League knows it. Edo and Cecil are merely trying-out for back up spots to King Rico, and everyone knows that too. Running, jumping, chasing loose balls... spirited effort is the only way Coach Dugood will ever notice Edo. Smart and shifty with a lethal first step, Cecil proves to be a decent back-up point guard, but Edo... well Edo sits further down the bench. A serving of humble pie is what these tryouts are showing him because he is barely keeping up.

In the change room after two hours of torture, Edo keeps a close watch on Rico... since he is like nothing he's ever seen before. This is a smart dude in a grown man's body, an absolute beast on the court; thanks to some very hypocritical NCAA rules Rico Blackmon has never had two cents to rub together - but that's a whole other discussion. To the outside world he's a hero only, a Princeton Tiger, a venerated example of a true student-athlete; but Edo knows far more, because in the pill business he's his biggest Competitor.

"Sixty milligrams is the best size for a nice six hour jolt", packing a black nylon duffel with packets of twenty-four, "some like to crush it and snort it", Cecil shakes his head, "idiots." Five million prescriptions written by Psychiatrists only looking to do good; today's top ranked schools grinding standards can cloud anyone's judgement. In fact, way-too-many students today need something to fight back against this smothering competition... a smothering competition that includes brainiacs from every eager corner of the globe.

"My kid is an honor student", reverberates every Ivy League Campus and beyond.

Study Drugs have become the boost that fights against this ruthless Competition, it is the foundation - and the DEA has no clue, none at all. Thank God for that!

"I'm giving you a hundred packs to start so you can load up your dealers", Cecil rhythmically loads and counts.

They'd rather focus on grow-ops and street corner heroin.

"That should last me three days."

Which is a big problem too.

"Ok two hundred packs then, that should last you the week."

“And make my dealers happy”, waiting in Cecil’s recliner, “they’ve been bone dry for almost two weeks.”

Forty-eight hundred pills might sound like a lot, but really it just primes the pump; at least half the students and pretty much the same amount of staff use. Four to five thousand pills per week times forty-two weeks of the year - summers are slow - puts their little cottage business at close to 200,000 pills. For many this drug is a daily necessity - and is why the first pill is always free – always! At twenty bucks per this revenue stream is north of four million... of which Edo owes everything to Cecil, his stocky Machiavellian Pal with the smooth jump-shot who knows how to leverage his resourceful African-American world with Edo’s very entitled Caucasian Planet. A 3.7 GPA from a Charter School in Harlem put him here, smack on Edo’s lap... or should we say next to him on those five-mile runs after Practise.

Bloody torture those things were... thought I was going to die, really! Still remember them like it was yesterday... yet I thank god for every one of them... especially on settle-up day with Cecil.

“Oppressed People focus way too much emotion on their Oppressors... keeps them down, trapped in their mother-fuckin’ bullshit. There’s a lot we can learn from the white man”, Cecil quotes his Grandpa Josh’s very serious words whenever he’s alone with Edo.

“Pragmatism is a daily goal”, continuing to load, “not a damn destination.”

Cecil has been influenced greatly by his Grandfather... who unfortunately took an errant bullet from a trigger-happy Cop who’d mistaken him for a Perp. Not only did Cecil have a Savant-like ability to grasp the addictive depths of human-nature... after all he was prescribed Adderal himself, which lit the bulb of opportunity the day he landed at ‘price-is-of-no-damn-concern Princeton’. You see before Cecil it’s important to remember that the price of a pill was five bucks, and was a hit-or-miss proposition. Now it’s twenty, and people love the quality and consistency; it’s why Edo is one of the most popular students on Campus, and his pockets are always full. Only Edo knows Cecil is the biggest supplier on six other Campuses too.

“I saw Rico at Joeys.”

Stopping all of a sudden... and then re-starting. “Did he talk to you?”

“He said ‘til next time.”

Rattled by the sound of his competitor’s name, Cecil continues to pack his bag, only faster. Edo knows that Cecil has nothing to worry about in the least... their stuff is hands down the best, but even shitty drugs have a way of selling fine, it’s not like people walk up to a Walgreen’s and see every *speed brand* laid out to compare. These are illegal drugs were talking about... at least in these volumes.

“You know we could put him out of business if we undercut his price.”

Stopping as if he has just been prodded with something sharp, “When you have a superior product you do not lower your price... ever, this is not a race to the bottom! I spent a lot of time and money making sure we got these formulas right.” Dropping a full bag in front of his junior partner, “I have no desire to be mother-fucking Walmart”, and taking a seat next

to him. "Well I'm just saying." "Don't be so eager to adopt the American model of Capitalism... the Germans, now there's a model where quality still matters."

Taking a humble sip of his coke.

"Porsche is the model my friend."

Grabbing the remote, and turning on the big screen.

"Or the Yankees... now there's a brand associated with quality."

Edo sits quietly and keeps sipping.

The two of them start watching the Bronx Bombers battle the Indians in a rare matinee game. Edo looks over at Cecil... a few times... then back to the game. Cecil Brody's got the strength of someone hooked on a vision, someone bred to really understand - someone from Edo's world, which is amazing considering his roots. Edo follows Cecil's lead and puts up with Rico - but he'll never stop imagining the piles of cash if they had the entire market all to themselves. The American Dream is alive and well in this tiny apartment.

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Seeing it from the road always provides a tingle... always provides a tingle of nostalgia when I turn into that awesome driveway of memories... always there is something when I see those ten-foot-high wrought-iron gates with stone columns on either side... stirring up where I came from to say the least.

*Reaching out to press the button after lowering the window.*

"Singer residence", exits the tiny speaker built into the column.

"Lewis it's me."

"Master Edo, come in come in."

*The gate immediately opens.*

Beginning a trek up a never-ending driveway of a sprawling two-hundred-and-sixty-acre estate in New Canaan, Connecticut... a red white & blue Yankee enclave overflowing with vaults of old money. "I just need to", tilting my head out the window... enjoying the clean air that transports me back to a time when life was amazing! Coupled with the most fantastic breeze which also transports my soul back to a time when life had no stress... not a one. Which is just what the doctor ordered for an ambitious Princeton student who is cooked-to-the-max because he's the most popular dealer on Campus.

Edo Singer is my name... or should I say Edo Aaron Singer is its' rightful weight. I am the ninth-generation heir of the needle and thread Singer Sewing Machine Empire that

changed the way we all dress, and I mean *all*. My family put a simple-to-use-tabletop in 75% of all the houses in this country going back close to a hundred and fifty years.

The Soul knows... which is why I never sleep well the night before I'm set to visit my Grandmother. After pulling into a giant circular driveway like I've done many times before... this enormously excited driver keeps moving towards the main house because I want to park in front of it like I've also done many times before. My heart is beating fast.  
*Putting the car in park.*

I need to open the door quickly... and stand there like a statue.

"Ahhh."

Those first few seconds out of the car always makes me inhale the freshest most familiar air... the freshest most familiar air that has been sorely missed. The memories are everywhere, and in every direction, and they're of an amazing playground that is stored under 'the most-fun-ever' file in my brain. Snowball fights. Long walks in the woods seeing deer, moose, and the odd red fox... even though I always did want to see a bear; what kid doesn't? Horse-back rides that never should have ended... plus the unforgettable aroma of those steaming piles, fixed at the snow-white stables in the distance Edo remembers this place well. This vastness has been in the Singer family for more than a century... absorbing it all from an accommodating 360-degree perch. Grandma made this place the most-fun-ever for a boy whose Parents were seldom around because they were off in another corner of the Globe running their large manufacturing plants... while hosting their large cocktail parties...or maybe *cocktail influencers* is better. In third world countries anything can be *influenced*.

Suddenly Edo notices him standing on the porch with a warm smile. "I'm coming Lewis", closing the car door, and jogging towards him.

"Master Edo."

He always owns a warm smile.

"Always nice to see you Lewis!" Heading towards a slightly-built older man of normal height. "That it is." Leaning in for a heartfelt embrace to someone he's known since birth, a genial man who has served the Singer family well. "It is smashing to see you Master Edo." Lord knows it wasn't easy... especially after Karen. "Come in Master Edo come in."

"Thank you Lewis... it is so great to see you."

"And you as well Master Edo... you are looking exceedingly vigorous."

"I try."

"You are trying very well, I must say."

A few steps into the massive foyer, which is always a trip back in time... the traditional decor and far eastern art hits Edo in the face. "EDO", echoes from the top stair. Tilting up... "Grandma", and then racing towards her as she makes her way down the impressive Gone with the Wind Staircase.

"It's so wonderful to see my Edo", kisses to both cheeks... plus a long look after a tight embrace. Hands on both his arms... "You are as handsome as ever... a real man's man

you've become", grabbing his left hand, and leading him into the massive sitting area of big windows and even bigger vistas.

"Anything to drink Master Edo?"

"A cold beer would be nice."

"Two Lewis", Grandma smiles.

Breaking the mold as far back as anyone can remember; Grandma Eleanor Singer... Ely to her friends, and everyone was her friend... was and still is an open-minded, optimistic, and very gregarious soul - which is some feat considering the stuffy world that raised her. Old money equates very much with old values, except with Grandma. "You need everyone in this world in order to make up the whole pie", she'd repeat when it was just the two of them, which thankfully was often back when Edo was young and wide-eyed. Lord knows his own Parents never saw the joy of taking a day-off to play hooky... those were the best for Edo every time.

"So, tell me what's new at school?"

"The girls."

"I bet Valentino... they probably can't get enough of my grandson."

"Thanks Lewis." Edo always has a grateful smile for Lewis.

"You're not going to join us?", Grandma nudges.

"Sorry but I prefer Scotch."

"Well of course you do."

"And I don't start until four", walking away with a sarcastic smirk Edo has seen a million times before.

For over forty years these two have been finishing each other's sentences. Edo's Grandma has never seen color, and she raised him the same way; which wasn't easy at the dreadfully pale private school Edo attended.

Time moves effortlessly when these two are together.

Smiling as they catch-up; her charms know no bounds.

"Come, I want to show you my new painting", standing with excitement after catching up for a good while, three beers worth. Grandma Ely reaches to grab her grandson's hand. And then leads him towards a quieter part of the house overlooking the pond, where her Studio's located. Up-beat and nimble, being with Grandma makes it easy to forget there's a world out there... navigating the twists and turns of this castle with purpose; even Edo's name came from his Grandma, it was something she absolutely insisted on.

"It was the one time I had to put my foot down", after Edo had been teased for the umpteenth time, "Edo is a very special name, and you're a very special boy." Moving in with serious eyes, "And what do those stupid blue-bloods know anyways?" Referring to the blue-blood colony of - Logan Academy of Leadership for Boys. "What do they know about the Land of the Rising Sun anyways?", sternly at her grandson, whose thick-skin had not yet been developed.

Spending her own formative years in Japan with her own terminally-distracted Parents... Miss Eleanor Singer had her own personal Governess named Carol taking her everywhere... and teaching her everything.

“Edo is the former name of the great city of Tokyo, the seat of power for the Tokugawa Shogunate which ruled Japan from 1603 to 1868, eventually turning it into one of the most amazing cities of the world... floating world it was called”, Grandma explained, “and what a world it was”, her eyes sparkled on the topic.

Edo has seen it twice for himself, once for an entire summer when he was eight - the place was nothing he'd ever experienced. Next was when he was fifteen, older but still awed like a newborn; both times Grandma was his tour guide... spending all day learning and laughing. “One that doesn't travel far away sees from only one chapter from the book of life”, she constantly reminded.

Without Grandma Ely Edo would be just another spoiled trust-fund kid; now he makes his money off of them.

“Come on in and see what I've been working on.”

Grandma's Studio has a large collection of paintings, sculptures, and scattered supplies... which is how this place has always looked to her grandson. With a purposeful gait she keeps leading her grandson to the window... by the far corner... where an easel stands-out from the rest.

She places her hand on Edo's shoulder, and starts to position him just so in front of it.

“Where one stands is very important when admiring art.”

Which happens whenever her newest piece gets unveiled to her most-favourite audience.

Who is immediately focused on a large charcoal... a large charcoal that is probably five feet by four feet... and is of a massive building on the shores of some unknown body of water with a giant crack running down its' walls deep into the earth, continuing through each human she's drawn on one side.

“Well what do you think?”

“It looks dark.”

Only the truth works with Grandma Ely.

“Good eye Edo, it's supposed to be, it's the whole nuclear nightmare thing that's going on in Japan. Let this be a warning to the world.”

So much of Ely the Artist's work is about reflection, about absolute truths, about harbingers in the future. A real Dynamo who's always curious about why things are the way they are; now if only Edo can find a woman from his own generation that can teach him as much.

“I love you a lot my Edo”... *mwa*... “thanks for coming to visit your crazy old Grandma, it means everything to me.”

“I love you too Grandma”, turning, “goodbye Lewis”, waving at the porch.

“Happy trails Master Edo.”

“Thanks.”

“Drive carefully”, Grandma keeps waving with a lit-up face.

Seeing them both in the rear-view after pulling away... gigantic smiles from the two of them in their comedic simpatico that's lasted forever. It's only been a day, but Edo feels rejuvenated heading back into his crazy world, and that's a good thing because next week is exam season.

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“Just got the new grand theft, we're all checking it out tonight!”

Exam season is always the craziest time of year.

“Call of duty, 7 o'clock at Steinberg's place.”

Which is why I'm criss-crossing Campus in a rainstorm to get to Cecil's place.

“Party at Altro's Place.”

No matter the weather I still get stopped in any direction I'm headed; at this point in the calendar year everyone needs to stay awake long enough to cram as much useless information into their brains so that, hopefully, all those Mothers and Fathers will lay-off for another semester.

“Big card game at Morelli's.”

This Princeton world comes down to a simple letter written on the top of that first page.

“Monday night football.”

If four pills a week was the norm, then eight is now the new norm; especially since being caught without any pills will almost certainly cause stomach-churning anxiety. Higher learning today is a \$50,000 per year investment... which is hardly chump change. Students know it, and Parents know it. The only problem is that most Parents never let their Students forget it! That's why I instruct my Dealers to double the amount they walk around with to ten packs total, not the five that requires too many re-fills. At two hundred and forty pills worth twenty dollars each - having them walk around with close to five thousand dollars in cash does make me nervous.

“Edo my man”, fist bump, “how was your visit with your Grandma?”

“Great... really great”, entering Cecil's place.

“Grandparents are aces with me my brother from a different mother.”

Sitting down in my usual spot, and putting my feet up on the table... “God bless exam season”, and then locking my hands behind my head. What twenty-year old wouldn't be ecstatic about making a hundred grand in under a month... in cash!

“I'm getting a thousand more packs prepared for the end of the week.”

“Sounds good.”

“That should cover us for the next three weeks.”

“Niccece.”

Trying to open his safe that's hidden in a lower kitchen cabinet.



*CLICK.*

“Here’s a hundred packs for tonight”, tossing them onto the kitchen table, “I’ll get you a knapsack.”

Man must have two dozen knapsacks scattered around this place, his preferred mode of transport; Cecil’s aren’t used for books.

“I saw Rico hanging outside Langdon Dorms.”

Cecil finishes packing his knapsack... and zips it up. He then leaves it on the table while heading for the fridge. He pulls out two cokes... and moves towards the couch.

“Here.” “Thanks.”

“You saw him outside the dorms?”, taking a perplexed seat.

“He was with Lester, they were hanging out, just sitting on a park bench.”

Cecil hates Rico, not because he’s a better basketball player... geez he’s better than almost everybody in the entire Ivy League... Cecil hates Rico because he’s seen as a threat to his territory, his livelihood. You see Cecil’s plan is to not only graduate... which he most certainly will with a 3.8 GPA Dean’s List thank-you very much... Cecil’s plan is to also make sure he leaves these privileged pickings with five million in cash. “I’m no drug dealer Edo, hell fuckin’ no!” That’s five million and not a penny less. “The plan is to leave this Princeton Planet with enough cash to invest in some primo real estate and never look back.”

That is some declaration.

“This is the only place I’ve ever been where a black man has a god-damn chance!”

Considering he started in this cutthroat game with nothing except some fast talk and dark skin - not the criteria for success in this here U.S. of A. - in Edo’s book this man is nothing short of a genius. “I’m no dime-bag snake”, Cecil declares with deep conviction.

Hell no.

Moving ‘Study Drugs’... even these massive amounts, can definitely seem benign, even Edo doesn’t see the harm - but that’s probably the money talking, along with the incredible ease of doing it in such an incubated society. “Be careful Edo, it’s odorless and tasteless, but deadly”, Grandma’s constant heeding on the insidious clutches of human denial.

There’s no DEA here Grandma, just rolls of cash - and all I hear is the sweet Siren call for more; nobody knows this secret side of Mr. Edo Singer.

“You going to the Godiva fraternity party tonight?”

“Ya... what?”

Maybe this thing with Rico is personal. “You with me?... CECIL?”

“Huh?” “I asked if you’re going to the Godiva bash?” “The fraternity of hot white chicks.”

“That one.” “Wouldn’t miss it for the world, I’ve got my eye on a little peach”, Cecil sparks up a joint. “A nice white peach whose CEO Daddy would shit if he found out what I’m going to do to his little sweetheart tonight.”

*Puff Puff.*

Then he passes it.

“You’re a Dad’s worst nightmare.”

*Puff Puff.*

Edo passes it back quickly because those are the rules.

“I am that.”

*Puff Puff.*

“I am a terrible black man with almost four million dollars is what I am”, a spiteful tone as he brings the joint to his lips for a congratulatory haul.

Edo can never know what it’s like to be a black man... a really smart one in this Caucasian Pleasantville named *Princeton*.

“Yes sir that girl is all mine tonight”, a final haul of a near-dusted spliff.

Sounds like Cecil’s got a lot to prove.

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Blaring music in this fraternity house full of horny college students... *BOOM BOOM BOOM*... the dancing and grinding is in every corner... *BOOM BOOM BOOM*... and the groping is in plain sight... *BOOM BOOM* ... in this grand old Victorian... *BOOM BOOM*... that is usually one of the most respected female fraternities on Campus... *BOOM BOOM* ... but not tonight... *BOOM BOOM* ... not when all these pheromones keep bouncing-off of every wall... tonight it’s the Playboy Mansion... and the upstairs bedrooms have quickly become the Grotto.

“EDO EDO”, the group in the corner begins to chant, “EDO EDO”, over the music.

Seeing his Posse of Dealers... strategically chosen from both the cool kids and the geeks for obvious reasons... in great spirits all of them. This is the last big blowout before the entire Campus shuts down tighter than an Amish village for exam season... or should one say *Pill Season*... smiling back at all of them. These are geeks with pills... that are definitely not geeks to these girls.

“EDO EDO EDO.”

I love that my Posse are so popular.

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What?... after struggling for a few seconds while looking around these very unfamiliar surroundings... again?... and again?... who-the-hell is laying next to me?

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

Over my left shoulder there is a sudden moaning ... a sudden female moaning.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

I try like hell to move my left hand... but it has limited mobility thanks to being trapped in an extremely awkward position. My other arm’s completely numb.

*Vibrate Vibrate Vibrate.*

And that damn cell continues to bounce!

What the hell happened last night?!

I can feel an ass... and then another smooth one next to that... and then more than just one pair of breasts?? What if that's Oscar phoning to say that Elisha is on her way up??

"Hello?"

These two tanned blondes have not moved even one inch.

"I said hello?"

Five hundred bucks means Oscar knows exactly what to do; a bottle of lagavulin every Christmas means he must absolutely be sending out a warning if she is in the building.

From lifting my head so quickly I'm dizzy.

Miss Elisha Bernstein is not the type that likes surprises when they're not for her, she's beautiful and entitled and that's all I'm going to say about that. Daughter of a Long Island Cosmetic Surgeon who bought her a candy-apple red BMW convertible for her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; on a completely other note she gives out-of-this-world pleasures anytime anywhere.

"Edo... hello Edo?"

Edo loves the dirty girl with the good girl coating.

"Who's this?"

Turning around to see two exceptional babes in their full-on nakedness... from where their hands are positioned it looks to have been one intimate night of partying.

"It's Justin... hello? Edo you there?"

"Ya Justin, hi", rubbing the cobwebs out.

"Did I wake you?"

A deep exhale gets released from realizing it's not Oscar. "No... what's up?"

"We have a big problem. You need to get over here right away!"

With sleep barely out of my body, and the stench of crazy university sex still caked on from head to toe; blondes can really be a hell of a lot of fun.

That voice has this Entrepreneur up and out in seconds.

"I'm on my way." Especially when there are two of them.

After running as fast as my depleted body would allow... I am now sitting on a flimsy beach chair in a cramped dorm-room just two buildings over - with eight sets of anxious eyes staring back. It is impossible to get settled... and someone really needs to pee... except that I am glued to this piece of shit chair. "We've all been robbed over the last twenty-four hours", Justin Carter blurts out in a scared voice. "What???", shoots out of the guy he aimed it at.

"Malcolm was robbed off-campus leaving a bar. Peter was nabbed outside the library. Khalil was coming out of the gym. Howard was walking Robert's Path. Cosmo was..."

"Robbed? You mean at GUNPOINT?"

“Yes I mean at gunpoint.”

Justin’s declaration pierces an alcohol-soaked stomach... there is a war going on in there and someone is losing badly.

“Big guys in ski masks cornered every one of us. One kept saying, Cecil’s not worth dying for, Cecil’s not worth dying for.”

The gawking faces have turned pale; Edo’s first instinct is to join them. Keep it together... just hold it together... is being reminded instead. These are your Dealers, your Foot Soldiers... you need to show strength and concern, strength and concern. “So you’re telling me that everybody’s been robbed here?”

“Yes.” “Aha.” “I’m bone dry Edo.” “I’ve got deliveries to make this afternoon.”

“I need stock.” “My phone’s been ringing off the hook.”

A common chorus only serves to heighten the alcohol-soaked stomach.

“We all need stock Edo, and fast. You know this is exam season. If we don’t get some inventory soon we’re going to lose our customers.”

Searching for an answer regardless of what his stomach is doing. “Ok everybody, new rules”, thinking fast, “nobody walks around alone, buddy-up like we’re on a field trip. Watch each other’s back, and from now on only five packs at a time.”

“That’s going to make a lot of unnecessary trips.”

“I know but I need some time to deal with this, just give me some time”, locking eyes in order to project strength. Guns?? Ski masks?? This is Princeton god-damn it! What the hell is going on here?? “Everybody wait for my text, and remember to pair up”, standing as sweat pours out of everywhere, “don’t do a thing until you get my text... you hear me!” Turning... and then leaving the room; there’s only one place I need to go.

Keeping one foot in front of the other in a complete haze, “Solvitur Ambulando Edo”, rings loudly with each step, “nothing can’t be solved from a long vigorous walk”, Grandma Ely emphasized during so many of their country ambles together. Both of them navigating the many challenging paths that snaked the Singer property and beyond... even in winter; Edo knows he’s lucky... really lucky, because where he needs to end up is at the other end of the Campus, a good forty-five minutes away. Grandma Ely’s words may have started this walk... *step step*... but for the life of me I haven’t the faintest idea... *step step*... what has possessed me to head straight over??

“Hey Edo!”

Maybe a little of Grandma’s Philosophy is exactly what I need right now.

“Ya... er... oh hi.” Passing the usual slew of Admirers with just a smile through the haze.

Today’s Ivy League Customer is hardly a Meth-head... offering another forced smile.

Some are truly the ‘best of the best’ of their class... plus a noticeable nod.

Yet despite the massive volume that is being moved... it is amazing how they all seem to be holding that addictive tiger by the tail.

“Edo my man!”

Everyone so incredibly-obsessed with chasing the American ideal of unlimited potential.

“Hey Nate.”

By denying any biological limitations.

“Kathy.”

“Edo!”

These high-achieving customers are future Senators and Scholars, Creators of all types - and since Addies, a class-two controlled substance that mentally lubricates it all so well, no dilated pupils or anxious ticks... damn thing is undetectable really. Linking-up every chain in the brain - memory context and understanding... so that it can perform better.

“A Man’s true character is released when he’s in crisis.”

Sweat keeps pouring out while approaching the target.

“Know thyself my grandson, one must always know thyself to accomplish anything in this life, my very loveable grandson.”

Echoes with each scared step.

“Old Isaac Merritt Singer had a tough ride let me tell you, nothing is easy in this life my little Edo, remember that.”

Approaching a quorum of large beefy men gathered outside the Athlete’s Residence, their eyes are fixed on each and every step.

“You are a Singer, and a Singer always finds a way out of any mess.”

What am I doing here?

“Never forget that the world needs the whole pie to function.”

Grandma’s voice plays over and over.

“Gentlemen”, including a stride of confidence.

Edo’s legs are trembling on the inside.

Opening the front door... this new visitor disappears through it with absolutely no reason to look back... just to continue for those stairs... up to the fifth floor of this low-rise... any elevator use is strictly forbidden.

“Greed is everything Edo, so make sure you make friends with it, you hear me. Human motivation is led by greed and clear-thinking only.”

Grandma Ely was no fool; but what am I?

“Greed is powerful, you remember I said that.”

Adrenalin is taking these stairs two at a time.

“Think clearly, remember that.”

Another large group of expression-less faces say nothing after entering the fifth floor. This new visitor knows what he needs to do... pulling up his shirt and showing that he’s clean, not a threat to their Boss in any way shape or form. One of the Giants moves closer... and gives a pat-down from head to toe; scared would be an understatement.

“You’re good.”

There is no way he didn’t feel all that sweating.

*Knock Knock.*

“Come in”, shouts back.

Hesitating a few seconds in order to try and re-gain some composure.

Then tilting downwards, concentrating on that handle... turning... cautiously opening the door after doing such a simple task. This scared visitor takes only a few steps forward... maybe three, and looks around, into a decked out open concept over-the-top bachelor pad that has two massive plasmas hanging on the wall playing different sports. A sectional sofa & four leather chairs are pointed in just the right way for watching those huge screens. Two giant speakers crank out a deep bass that vibrates beneath the floor.

*“Jamaican funk is what is... give it all up to you...”*

Then the new Guy closes the door carefully... and takes a few timid steps more into a group fixated on those hanging screens. From one of the back rooms Rico walks out briskly, and stops the minute he sees this new guest. He then quickly turns, and gives a long look into the sofa area. One of his Posse members gets up quickly... and lowers the stereo. A swift shake of his head... and all seven lift immediately, and begin to file out... passing slowly with intimidating scowls.

This new caller just stands there frozen... these are seven massive men who could block-out the sun.

“Sometimes we can debate what’s in our head forever.”

The door shuts behind them.

“Eventually Edo, eventually everything comes down to a negotiation.”

That is why there is a determined gait aimed at Rico; no Posse means determination and action. Edo knows he needs to remain calm despite a million and one thoughts going-off in his head.

It’s Showtime.

“So now I understand ‘til next time.”

Rico offers an unsettling grin in return, and then turns away. “Can I offer you a drink? I’ve got a killer bottle of Canadian Club... it’s somewhere down here”, fiddling under the bar. Edo’s heart beats faster from losing sight of him. “It’s somewhere here.” This feels like a bad idea, a really bad idea - is he getting a gun?? “Here it is”, with a pleased face, “I only have a taste if we win... which is usually when I score over thirty.” Placing two tumblers out. “Ice?”

His voice has been hijacked.

“I forgot, that’s not a question in your world.”

Able to smile - but what kind of smile is it?

“Blue bloods don’t use ice, not manly enough. A fine scotch should never be watered down, sacrilege!”

After pouring, Rico grabs the two glasses and makes his way over to the comfy chairs.

“Come on I’m not going to bite, come, sit with me”, extending one of those glasses,

“personally I’ve never met a manly blue blood, but who knows maybe you’ll be the first?”

There is no surprise that these two choose to sit on opposite sides of the sectional.

“Take everything and leave nothing for the colored man, absolutely nothing”, Rico’s tone rises. So this is a clash of color, Edo’s mind notes. “To Princeton”, Rico lifts his glass.

*CLANK.*

They both drink on cue.

Grandma said negotiations are a dance; it’s Showtime - Part Two.

“I’d like to ask you something... with the greatest of respect of course. What would you do if your Dealers were being robbed at gunpoint?”

Rico immediately takes another slow sip... and then sits back into his extremely gushy chocolate brown sofa. For courage Edo downs another... and waits. Here’s to hoping this athlete understands the pragmatic benefits of a good offense over a passive defense.

“I see your predicament, I do. A man must always be prepared to protect his livelihood.”

“And his employees?”

“They’re part of his livelihood.”

“That’s good to hear, because I’ve got a group of scared employees who don’t know what the hell is going on. I’m sure you would agree these robberies can’t be good for business, either one of our businesses.”

Rico leans forward, “I tried to arrange a meeting with Cecil so many times”, shaking his head, “but he just ignores me.”

Suddenly Edo realizes what’s going on here... and it’s pointing right at Rico’s very sensitive ego.

“Black men should not be so willing to ignore each other.”

And his African-American culture too.

“And be so willing to work with the man!”

What the hell is he talking about?

A Ritalin generic, and a weak one at that, giving at best a four-hour jolt; Rico’s product doesn’t hold a candle to Cecil’s. Edo’s rough estimate is that he’s moving a hundred thousand pills a year, which puts him well in the rear-view when it comes to volume and infrastructure; but this cultural fixation puts an entirely different spin on things?? Edo knows Cecil’s position on any sit-down with Rico, these two are speaking two oil & water languages and Grandma Ely’s grandson is the only one who can do anything about it.

Edo takes another drink because his nerves feel like they want to run and hide.

Then he exhales.

“What can I do to help?”

There will be no hiding and definitely no running.

Rico stands... and stretches a bit.

Then he strolls over to the massive windows that frame the entire east wall of his super-sized unit. When he’s positioned just right... he stops... and stares.

Minutes pass without a word.

Edo takes a few more sips; his nerves are getting the workout of a lifetime here. Does Rico know the type of volume they move? Does he know about Cecil's other business on six other Campuses? The wait is excruciating... absolutely excruciating for this new guy... it's why he's almost finished his drink... and he hates Canadian Club!

"I want to be a Partner with you Edo, and with Cecil of course. I want to move more product... lots more product."

This I wasn't prepared for - besides the six-foot-seven thing, and the guns; why the hell would Cecil want to be a partner with Rico? "Come on Edo think", pressing, "find a road out of this mess!"

Suddenly I stand... and with the most patient stride I head towards the window. "Never let them see you sweat", Grandma lectured after having to endure another one of my classmate's endless teasing, "people always respond to your expression... remember that." Arriving next to Rico with some real confidence, I halt next to him and aim outside. Soon we're both staring... absorbing the autumn sun that is beaming through.

"So you think a Partnership is the best way to do this?"

"Listen Edo I'm going to be honest with you, my scholarship is for three more years, then the plan is to be in the Pros with an eight-figure contract. But I can't bank on that right now, anything can happen between now and then, an injury or whatever. And I've got lots of mouths to feed before that's going to happen."

"So you need to make more money?"

"Who doesn't, especially with all those damn NCAA rules. I also need to find a way to clean my money."

Finally Edo has found a detour. "Now that I can help you with."

Rico's face lights up.

Edo met Peter Frieberg in first-year economics, a man bred to understand the finer nuances of money, or should one say 'orphaned cash'. His acumen caught Edo's curiosity; his father is one of the largest diamond wholesalers in the country, with a direct line to Antwerp - the Holy Mecca of beautiful stones. They've been close friends ever since. Every year Peter cleans close to two million in cash for Edo... bingo bango all that paper turns into a few sparkling gems he can hold in his hand while walking down the street.

"I can definitely wash as much as you need."

"What's the vig?"

"Twelve percent."

Rico's face relaxes for the first time... "That sounds good"... reaching for another sip. He takes longer than usual this time.

"I think we can work with that", trying to hold back a grin.



You think?

Rico's swift acceptance is hardly a surprise, in fact I know for certain that the standard vig for washing money can go as high as thirty percent, and that someone like Peter Frieberg would never work with a man like Rico. Ever!

Of course he's smiling... I just offered him the *Insider's Rate of Lifetime*.

"I think I can work with that."

Really, you think?

Edo is starting to feel that he's got Rico in a far more sensible place; but his face lets on to nothing. "So you want to move more product... that's a fair request. What's stopping you?" He'll worry about Cecil later.

"It's my supply, some months I get enough but others it's like pulling teeth. I'm telling you Edo if I had fifty thousand more pills they'd be gone", snapping his fingers, "just like that."

"I can get you more pills."

"And the quality, what about the quality? Because that's another problem I'm always having to deal with." "I can definitely guarantee you that the quality will always be there. And whatever doesn't work for you I'll take back, no questions asked. You have my word."

"I like you Edo, you're a straight shooter. If you mean what you say then I think we have a deal." Rico raises his glass, "To our new Partnership."

*CLANK.*

"What about territory?", the second Rico finishes his toast.

"We don't need to start carving up the streets... there's plenty here for everybody, just let our Dealers work it out. Don't forget our retail prices are all going to be the same, this doesn't need to be adversarial, just let the market flow."

Lifting his glass to leave such silly talk behind, "To Study Drugs."

*CLANK.*

"You're right."

Edo can tell Rico has a hard time with trust.

"I know I'm right, this is going to work out fine. We're all going to get what we want here", burying any doubt with an optimistic tone. What am I going to tell Cecil about all this?

"Edo my man you are alright", shaking vigorously while holding it tight... engulfing it while chaperoning his new Partner to the door. "No more robberies", looking right into his eyes, "just business... that's all we're going to worry about from now on." "Yes." "And if you have any problems with anything, you're going to call me directly and we're going to talk it out." "Absolutely."

"I have your word on that?"

"Yes."

"And everything we've just discussed stays between you and me."

"Man you are a very pushy white guy. Yes. Ok", cracking a smile. Rico won't risk losing Edo's laundromat.

“You need to call me a few weeks before you need stock”, stopping at the door, leaning in to open it, “the more notice the better.”

“Sure.”

“Great.”

Rico’s Posse turns in unison when that door opens.

“Call me anytime”, wanting them to hear this part of the conversation. Seeing their startled faces as I move past, slithering through this beefy mass. “Ok I will.”

This is one different posture than merely an hour ago.

“See you Edo.”

When I arrive at the elevator doors my posture becomes even more different.

*BING.*

“Have a good day gentlemen.”

Very different and very smug before I step in.

*BING.*

*BING.*

*BING.*

*BING.*

The doors open into another set of startled eyes.

“Gentlemen.”

My strong legs take me out of the building... into a fresh autumn breeze.

With each step I’m feeling more optimistic... more confident ... even though I know I have one more walk ahead of me. Good thing it’s going to take a while... because I’ve got no clue what I’m going to say to Cecil??

“You need everyone in this world in order to make up the whole pie.”

But I know I’m going to figure it out by the time I get there.