

Termites

A Deadly Conversation

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Termites

A DEADLY CONVERSATION

Salata: Welcome Mr. Isaacs. Please come in. Sit. Drink?

Isaacs: No, thank you.

Salata: I hope you don't mind if I partake.

Isaacs: It's your house.

Salata: Ahh. And don't you forget it.

Isaacs: I was surprised to receive your invitation today.

Salata: Really? That's odd. I figured someone like yourself would have expected a meet and greet sooner rather than later.

Isaacs: A person like myself?

Salata: You know, one who is curious? You're a curious cat, Mr. Isaacs.

Isaacs: Hmm. Curiosity and cats. I'm not sure I like where this conversation has started nor its destination.

Salata: Right to the point, eh? Like a bloodhound. Doggedly pursuing matters you have no business chasing.

Isaacs: Okay okay, Mr. Salata. Cut the shit. What do you want? Is this about what I've been writing for the paper? Because if it is, I'm not retracting a single article.

Salata: No. Write whatever the hell you want for your slop tabloid. I am no censorship nazi.

Isaacs: No, you're not. You are, however, a money hungry mobster hiding behind a businessman persona.

Salata: HAHHAHA...You are exactly the man I thought you would be. Even on the enemies' turf—

Isaacs: Enemy? I don't see you as an enemy.

Salata: No? Then why all the negative attention.

Isaacs: Simple. I don't like bullies who push people around for the fun of it.

Salata: I'm no bully, Mr. Isaacs. I simply examine my competition, find those who are barely keeping themselves above water, and throw them a flotation device. It just so happens that after, their boat now has my name on it. So, at the end of the day, I get all the credit and the profit that comes with saving a small business.

Isaacs: I don't like dirty fighters either.

Salata: Dirty? You think I'm dirty, Mr. Isaacs.

Isaacs: No, I know you are.

Salata: Accusations... These are why I called you down to my humble place of business.

Isaacs: A brand new 20,000 square foot warehouse is humble?

Salata: Compared to a high rise, yes. I'll get there someday. But not if you don't help me with my little problem.

Isaacs: Honestly, if you want my help with anything, it should be to measure what handcuff size you are.

Salata: Is that right? You don't know anything, really. Everything you've written about me is speculation at best. Circumstantial. He said she said bullshit.

Isaacs: I know you're laundering money through those small businesses you 'help' and then dump the blame on the original owners when they get raided.

Salata: Oh, you are adorable, Mr. Isaacs. Like a child who dresses up in daddy's big boy clothes. Pretending to be something you're not.

Isaacs: Pretending? Interesting. How about I pretend to give a shit about this conversation for the next thirty more seconds, and then I'm going to leave, for real. So, unless you can tell me why you invited me down here so aggressively, I will be leaving, Mr. Salata.

Salata: Your sources.

Isaacs: My sources?

Salata: Yes. I want names.

Isaacs: I don't reveal my sources, Mr. Salata.

Salata: At least tell me if they are within my organization.

Isaacs: I can not confirm or deny anything. You go ahead and assume where I get my information. Maybe I'm just good at reading people. Maybe I'm lying when I write my articles in the so-called 'slop tabloid' I work for, huh? No, you called me because you are afraid.

Salata: No. Not afraid. I, like you, have to do my research.

Isaacs: Research?

Salata: Have you ever had a pest problem, Mr. Isaacs?

Isaacs: What the hell does that have to do with anything?

Salata: Just answer the question. Must you be defensive?

Isaacs: Given the circumstance, can you blame me?

Salata: I guess not... Please, Mr. Isaacs, answer the question. Have you ever had a pest problem?

Isaacs: Like mice?

Salata: Or bugs or small critters.

Isaacs: No, not really, no.

Salata: Okay. So how would you handle it?

Isaacs: Do you require an exterminator, Mr. Salata? A quick Google search can help you faster than I can.

Salata: Indulge me, Isaacs. How would you handle the little buggers?

Isaacs: I would start with traps.

Salata: Ahhh. You, see? You'd handle it in house first.

Isaacs: What are you getting at?

Salata: When you have a problem, generally, men like us—

Isaacs: Like us?

Salata: Doers, Mr. Issacs. We are men of action.

Isaacs: Okay...

Salata: As I was saying, men like us, when presented with a problem we look for simple solutions. Efficient, cost-effective solutions that yield the best results. However, if that problem is out of the scope of our skill set, we bring in an expert.

Isaacs: Do you normally speak in dodgy metaphors?

Salata: I'm a complicated man, Mr. Isaacs.

Isaacs: And I am a man who hates bull shit and having my time wasted.

Salata: Then let me get to my point.

Isaacs: Go ahead, then. I'm giving you 30 seconds before I walk out that door.

Salata: Fine. When dealing with a pest problem, we must investigate. We break down the issue. First off, if an infestation is what we have, we don't immediately go to burning the house down or tenting the damn building off and fumigating. No. That nuclear solution is

too much. Too much money. Or worse, destroys what we have built altogether.

Isaacs: You have to identify the type of pest.

Salata: Precisely. I knew you were smart, Mr. Isaacs.

Isaacs: And I knew you were a pedantic schmuck.

Salata: Careful. I can only take so much abuse before I retaliate.

Isaacs: I figured that was what THIS was.

Salata: Then why come here in the first place if you knew there was a chance of physical reparations?

Isaacs: Maybe I'm not as smart as you think I am, Mr. Salata... But anyway. You were saying about the type of pest.

Salata: I thought my time was about up.

Isaacs: Call me curious...

Salata: I believe I already did... Now if the type of critter in question is a rat or even cockroaches, no big deal. Those types of vermin, while vile, are simple enough to eradicate. Lay traps, maybe a bit of poison here, a little hammer bashing there, and poof no more little irritations. Afterwards, we just cleanup the gross parts, replace a tile or two and go about our business. Like they weren't even there. Minimal damage.

Isaacs: I feel like you're stalling for something.

Salata: But if the pest in question turns out to be a termite or a carpenter ant...Oh, ho, ho, then we have a major structural threat, Mr. Isaacs. You see, rats and cockroaches don't harm the building itself, per se. They are usually motivated by a warm place to sleep, eat, and raise their young within the previously unmolested domicile. However, termites and such do all the things rats and cockroaches do while destroying the house itself.

Isaacs: You're worried that one of my sources is someone within your inner circle.

Salata: Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not. But I won't know...

Isaacs: Well, like I said, I don't reveal my sources. Especially to a crook.

Salata: Crook? I'm no crook. I'm just worried that if someone within my 'organization', as you put it so accusatory, IS feeding lines of bull shit to you that makes me lose business and hurts my hard built clean reputation. I want to put a stop to it.

Isaacs: Fed lines of bull shit?

Salata: Someone is telling stories, and I don't appreciate it. Embellishing details.

Isaacs: You're afraid, is what you are. And instead of going hunting yourself and seen as paranoid by your cronies, you would rather drag me into your little game.

Salata: What did I say about finding efficient solutions?

Isaacs: Screw you.

Salata: I don't appreciate that kind of disrespectful response.

Isaacs: Fine. Screw you, Mr. Salata. Is that respectful enough for you? I'm leaving. See you never you crooked son of a bitch.

Salata: You're not leaving! Until I get a name or names if you're feeling generous.

Isaacs: What part of my tone did you NOT understand? You are the thickest mother-

Salata: Brenda and Toby...

Isaacs: ...What the hell did you just say?

Salata: Brenda Sykes and Toby McCallister.

Isaacs: ...What about them?

Salata: I figured you would be...resistant to my questioning, so I did a little digging. Something you do on a regular basis as a part of your reporter duties. But of course, your well of information is as poisoned with the filth of the corrupted streets. Like a storm drain in the city. You just collect anything and everything that flows to you.

Isaacs: I verify everything that comes across my desk, no matter how disgusting the stink. And in my experience, the smellier the source, the bigger the real mess truly is...Mr. Salata. Now where did you get those names?

Salata: It appears that you have no family, Mr. Isaacs. My SOURCES tell me that you live alone.

Isaacs: Leverage? You're looking for leverage on me. And your 'sources' came up with those two names? Pathetic. At least threaten MY life for Christ's sake.

Salata: In MY experience, people are more inclined to bend the knee when others' lives are on the line, Mr. Isaacs. Not necessarily their own...

Isaacs: Well, you'll be disappointed to know that Ms. Sykes and Mr. McCallister are nothing to me emotionally.

Salata: You're bluffing, Timothy. I can see the concern in your eyes.

Isaacs: Threatening their lives will NOT change my mind.

Salata: That's too bad.

Isaacs: Yeah. For you.

Salata: You are in no position to be making threats, Mr. Isaacs.

Isaacs: Ha! Threats? I don't make threats, Anthony. I make promises.

Salata: You were searched at the door. You have nothing to stop me from ending you here and now.

Isaacs: God! I love how wrong you are. If you are as good at intimidating a reporter as you are at business, it is a miracle you are still afloat. First you were wrong about me being weak enough to give you, my sources. Then you pull two names that mean zero to me, and finally you think I would walk in here with no means to defend myself? You really are an absolute idiot!

(BANG, BANG, BANG)

Salata: An idiot! Who is the idiot now? Mr. Timothy Isaacs!

Isaacs: You are! (Isaacs pops up after playing dead for a moment.)

Salata: What!? How!? I...I shot you.

Isaacs: Shot AT me with blanks. You see! My source is your head of security.

Salata: Frankie! That rat!

Isaacs: Don't you mean termite?

Salata yelled in frustration then pulled the letter opener off his desk and lunged at Isaacs. Isaacs reaches beneath his long black sock for an ankle holster, pulled, aimed, and fired. Once, twice, three, four, five rounds of his .22caliber pistol. Salata slumps to the floor with a deadening crash, tumbling over top of the mahogany desk, breaking a lamp in the collapse.

Isaacs stands back, breathing hard, and braces the pistol with both hands against his chest. A man barged into the room.

Frankie: What happened?

Isaacs: It seems I've saved the city on pest control costs.

Frankie: What?

Isaacs: Don't worry about it...Call the police. They are going to want to hear all about this...Tell them Anthony 'The Salt' Salata is dead.