

"Greenback Relativism"

by

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FADE IN:

EL CORTEZ BAR. GUADALESTE, MEXICO. LATE AFTERNOON.

Jorge Hernandez, 55 sits at a table in the back of the smoke-filled bar opening Walnuts with nutcrackers shaped like a pair of female legs. He has a heavy build and a greasy, shifty air which is accentuated by his stubble and stained tan suit.

A young waitress collects the tray of empty walnut shells from his table and he playfully slaps her arse as she passes, making the noise of a stag in rut.

The waitress forces a weary smile at him, a look of mild fear in her eyes.

Jorge looks up at the open entrance door. The hot sun outside creates a stark contrast to the dark interior of the bar creating a rectangle of white light.

Jorge cracks another nut and looks up again.

The silhouette of a mexican peasant women is framed in the doorway. Maria enters and moves in hunched nervous steps towards Jorge.

As she reaches his table she removes her bonnet and shifts it between her work-worn fingers. When it is clear he is not going to speak, she begins.

MARIA

Senor. You wanted to see me..?

Jorge cracks a particularly large nut between the silver legs of the nutcracker and studies the revealed nut between thumb and forefinger.

JORGE

Si Maria. It was most unfortunate about your husband. Most unfortunate.

He beckons for the waitress to approach.

JORGE (TO WAITRESS)

Another Cassis... Maria, would you care for a drink?

MARIA

No Gracias.

JORGE

Your husband was a good worker. One of my best. Pedro was a good man.

MARIA
I knew my husband, Senor.

JORGE
But of course.

(BEAT)

A most unfortunate accident.

The waitress arrives with his drink. He swirls the opaque liquid as if looking for an answer.

JORGE
But who could have known that the scaffolding was not assembled correctly? My building sites have an excellent record for safety, you'll not find a safer site in all of Mexico...

He looks up at her waiting for agreement.

She looks down at the stone flagging.

JORGE
I want to give you something Maria, but I want you to understand I don't have to do this. I realize things will be difficult for you now, with no money for the little one.

Maria fights to hold back a tear. She raises her head and the water welling up in her eyes reflects of the ceiling light.

She touches a small silver cross around her neck and with composure matches his gaze once more.

JORGE
So I am giving you this...

Jorge reaches into his jacket and pulls out a fat battered black leather wallet. He opens it and carefully pulls out one of many 100 dollar bills. He lays it on the white tablecloth in front of Maria.

MARIA
Senor! You are most gracious! This is the most money I have seen in my life. May God bless you.

The camera zooms into the The 100 dollar note until it fills the screen. The face of Benjamin Franklin stares implacably out.

JORGE (VO)
This is the last time we speak of
this, yes?

THE POLO LOUNGE, BEVERLY WILTSHIRE HOTEL. LOS ANGELES CA.

The camera pulls back from the bank note to reveal the affluent surroundings of The Polo Lounge. The 100 now rests on the monikered cloth of a drinks table. Either side, sat on two green leather chairs are MONTAGUE LEIBERMAN and HARRY TOWNE. Both in their early 60's and looking every part the well heeled film producers.

They continue a conversation that seems to have been going on for a some time. Montague puffs lazily on his Montecristo cigar.

MONTAGUE
I'm telling ya H. Light Blue!

Harry shakes his head in disbelief and reaches for his balloon brandy glass.

HARRY
Blue? You gotta be outta your gourd
Monty. They're gonna be pink.

They both look over in the same direction.

A beautiful waitress is bending over the bar, fishing for something out of sight. As she leans over, the curve of her inner thigh becomes visible for an instant,

Both men lean forward on their chairs.

The waitress leans back from the bar, holding a drinks straw. She looks round, instinctively aware that she's being watched.

MONTAGUE
A girl like that wouldn't wear pink.
Look at her for Chrissake. She's a
ballbuster.

HARRY
Well then. There's only one way to
settle it. Let's call her over.

He slaps his open palm on the 100 dollar bill.

HARRY
Benjamin here tells me she's
wearing pink pantyhose.

(To the Waitress)

Miss. I wonder if you could settle
a bet for us...

FADE OUT.