

The Green Room

Attached to the wall across from the mahogany imitation dressing table was the floor to ceiling mirror mounted in a black plastic frame that looked into the room and criticized everyone who waited to go on the air. At least that was how Anthony felt. Like a mannequin, he stood motionless in the center of the Green Room fixated at his reflection until he pulled his golf shirt down in an attempt to cover the ripples around his midsection. Not a six-pack. He saw just flab. No matter how he tugged his golf shirt down or pulled it out it wouldn't cover his expanding waistline.

Glaring at the mirror he muttered, "I don't even play golf", as he adjusted the shirt with a tug and another tug.

"I don't even like golf. So why did I wear this shirt? It's terrible," he said to the mirror.

There was a soft knock on the door before Jason, the assistant stage manager opened the door, peeked in, and announced, "Glad you arrived early to the set. Now it's only five minutes, Mr. Baker." Jason saw Mr. Baker, who was impeccably dressed, with his hair neatly styled, wink at him from across the room, as he gave his trademark reassuring smile.

"Five minutes." Biting his lip he scowled at the mirror. "Five minutes." He rubbed his hands together trying to wipe the sweat off. His frown dug deep canyon-like groves in his forehead as he noticed the outdated movie posters that attempted to cover up some of the plaster cracks in the wall across from the mirror.

He studied himself in the mirror. "Why did I even consent to be here?"

He turned sideways as he felt the mirror laugh at him. "Maybe they were right. I can't do it." First he turned and looked over his right shoulder and he shook his head

in disgust at the view. His left side he felt was even worse. Grabbing a brush from the dressing table he took two swipes through his hair. “Gray” he muttered. “More grayer. At least it’s not falling out like my father.”

“These pants. I don’t think they go with this shirt. I should have worn something different. Anything would have been better.”

Slumped in the chair he just stared off into the mirror of the Green Room. Even though it’s called the Green Room the walls are painted in a subtle and relaxed shade of gray. Soothing, that’s what the designer concluded. The color, the designer believed would make the guests feel relaxed and less stressed before going on the air. “Let’s remove anxiety for them”, she told the producers. But the pale properties of painted walls did not always translate to relaxation for the person who waited in this room.

Except for the tar colored coffee stain in the corner of the room near the coral loveseat, Anthony felt the carpet was relatively clean if no one considered the dark path in the carpet that marked the pacing movements of everyone who waited in this room. The coffee stain caught his attention. He stood above it eyeing it like a Rorschach Test. The blot, the shading, the texture, the color influenced a response, a bat, a human torso, a butterfly. He angled his head. He squinted down at the coffee stain, ‘half-human, a broken Minotaur, a decapitated Centaur.’

Watching the Centaur, the aroma of stale coffee drifted through the air as it carried him away, far away from the green room to a small room that was painted not quite blue and not quite green. He thought maybe they ran out of the paint and mixed the two colors together to stretch it in order to cover the walls. The rancid coffee

carried him from the present to the past, to another room with another desk where another coffee blotch stained a rust-colored carpet hundreds of miles away.

The high school guidance counselor looked more like a Drill Instructor on Paris Island training raw Marine recruits than an academic preparing students for life. Mr. Evans, who was more round than tall wore a flat top haircut giving him a compact athletic look, even though he struggled to climb the flight of stairs to his office. He wore a loose fitting tie that did not match his gray dress shirt. His sport coat occupied the only other chair in the room. He sat behind his wooden desk that was empty except for a lone thin manila folder and cup of stale coffee. His glasses rested on the tip of his nose like a crippled house about to slide off a cliff. It just hung there in space. Mr. Evans eyed him above the frames. With a sip from the coffee he began, "Your school work, what work you have undertaken, is like you, worthless."

Anthony stood frozen.

Mr. Evans lifted Anthony's folder. He shuffled through the papers inside before looking at him.

"What a waste. You have again and again under achieved in every aspect of your academic life."

Mr. Evans snapped the folder shut, shook his head in disbelief. "What a waste. You have wasted my time today. Please don't waste a college's time by having them tell you what we already know, that you are an untalented and less than average student." He folded his hands resting them on top of the folder.

“Frankly,” he said as he removed his glasses pointing them at Anthony, “you just do not have what it takes. In these days when higher education is valuable you frankly are not worth it. Mediocre would be a monumental step up.”

He voice droned on in the stuffiness of the cramped room like a buzz saw chewing up raw wood at a lumber mill. “Look, do me a favor, don’t waste your parent’s money and a college’s time. Do not take a seat from someone who can make use of the precious opportunity that you will waste. As your guidance counselor, I suggest you look into being a custodian or a janitor, perhaps at a college. So, I think we are done here. This concludes our session before your graduation. See my secretary for a pass to return back to your class. Good luck in the future Mr. Baker.”

Another soft knock came on his door rescuing him from the past and returning him to the present. No longer in high school, no longer in that green room, now he is back in a different green room standing in one place rocking back and forth.

“Mr. Baker they are ready for you.” Jason stood in front of the open door. He spoke into his head set. His voice was soft and yet excited. He reached for Anthony. The house lights flashed then dimmed before they heard the T.V. announcer's voice come through the ceiling speakers, *“And now, Live from New York City - it’s Saturday Night! With tonight’s special musical guest, the multi-talented, grammy-winning songwriter, artist, and performer, Anthony B. Baker!”*