

Red Pill

By Sam Went

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Seventh Draft

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHRIS, Early 20s.

CASSIE, Early 20s.

JOE, Early 20s

TYLER, Mid 30s

DAN, Early 20s.

ANON 1-4, played by the rest of the cast

A BASEMENT

2014. A comfortable chair is set off centre. Next to it, on a small table, are set several books of conservative philosophy (Rand, Burke, Aristotle etc).

Once the audience has entered, total darkness.

The remainder of the stage remains in darkness as TYLER (early 30s) is illuminated sitting in the chair, holding a glass of whisky, with ice.

TYLER

I read an article in Time Magazine recently that argued men have become obsolete. Half of the population obsolete. Useless. Surplus to requirement. Like we were the cotton gin or the original Xbox. Leaving aside the irony of print media calling something else obsolete, let's take a look at the writer's reasons for her declaration.

TYLER brings the whisky glass to his lips and drinks. Keeping the whisky glass in his hand he stands and starts addressing himself more directly to the audience.

TYLER

She argues that the function of men in society is violence. Like the noble Alexander all men are good for is to hack and slash and kill until we reach the Hydaspes! The role of men is to be hunters and soldiers and with the advent of drone warfare why do we even need men anymore?

Pause

TYLER

Some initial observations. Firstly, is it not dangerous to ask whether we need a particular part of our population? Secondly, I would like to see her make this argument to a soldier who has recently lost his legs to an IED in Afghanistan.

But, more importantly, let's interrogate this claim that all men have to offer is violence. When I brushed my teeth this morning I don't recall doing so with a spear. Take Alexander again, was he just a conqueror? A man whose passion was violence and violence alone? Or was he also a leader? A builder of cities and nations? Could these not be things for young men to aspire to? Could the modern world not use these things?

Pause

TYLER

I may disagree that men have no purpose, but it is plain to see that young men feel as if they have no purpose. When the bankers in their hubris and greed brought the world economy to its knees in 2008 the promises made to this generation of wealth, opportunity and prosperity were broken. And who did the governments ride to the rescue of? Why, the two percent of bankers who caused this disaster in the first place. While leaving the rest of us, still, six years on, to live in the bankers' rubble. We have a lost generation, a hopeless generation of educated, competent young men condemned to a zero hours contract at CEX. Alexander wept for there were no more worlds to conquer. Today men weep because there is no more reason to get out of bed.

Pause

TYLER

Liberalism has demonstrated it is incapable of providing us with opportunity, but, even more, it is incapable of providing us with purpose. A system that produces only poverty and hopelessness will not survive. People want change, but they don't yet know what change. We stand at a crossroads between descent into chaos or, if the right people can guide it, a renewed purpose. We await only a trigger to see which way history will turn.

TYLER returns his whisky to the table and leaves the stage.

LIVING ROOM

CHRIS, CASSIE and JOE, all early 20s and dressed in nerd casual, sit on a threadbare sofa. Their feet are resting on a beaten up cold coffee table. Also on the table is an empty bottle of cheap vodka, a second bottle following fast behind, a carton of orange juice, three plastic cups and a chopstick. CHRIS and JOE are holding the controllers of a PlayStation 3, which is at the front of the stage. CASSIE is texting on her phone.

CASSIE

I forgot to say, I saw Dan the other day.

CHRIS

(too quickly)

Oh?

CASSIE pushes CHRIS playfully.

CHRIS

Fuck!

CASSIE

Not like that! At least, I'm pretty sure he didn't think it was that. He just wanted to catch up. I'm playing winner, which at this point looks like it'll be Joe.

CHRIS

And whose fault is that?

JOE

Mine for being better at this game than you. Honestly, Chris, you should try taking a leaf out of my book and use your funemployment productively.

CHRIS

By memorising the combos for a five year old video game?

JOE

It's paying off, isn't it?

CASSIE

Is this how you've been spending your time?

JOE

For weeks. I'm thinking about putting it on my CV. "Ability to perform pointless repetitive tasks for hours at a time without complaint."

CHRIS

And while he's been doing that I've been upstairs sending out job applications.

JOE

And we've had the exact same number of interviews so who's really been wasting their time? Cass, you were saying something about Dan. How is he?

CASSIE

He showed me his katana.

JOE

What a specific euphemism.

CASSIE

No, he's bought himself an actual sword. And he gave me a demonstration. I've never been asked to leave a Starbucks before.

CHRIS

Why has he - ? Fuck!

JOE punches the air and CHRIS hands his controller to CASSIE who takes it.

CHRIS

There's a bright side to this.

CHRIS begins to make himself a drink with the vodka and orange juice.

CHRIS

So why does Dan have a Katana?

CASSIE

It's his zombie plan. You know, what you'd do in case of a zombie apocalypse. Don't pretend everyone in this room doesn't have one.

JOE

You know that thing'll be blunt as shit.

CASSIE

Yeah?

JOE

They're not just going to let someone buy an actual Katana. What if they, well, started swinging it around a Starbucks for example. It's a cosplay prop! There are laws in place to stop people like Dan arming themselves with genuine 16th century weaponry. His zombie plan is, effectively, to hit them with a stick.

CASSIE

What's your ideal apocalypse? Where do you think you'd really flourish? Drink me, Chris.

CHRIS

You're playing.

CASSIE

I can do two things at once.

CHRIS starts mixing another drink.

JOE

We were talking ideal apocalypse?

CHRIS

I assume we're not including our current economic apocalypse that's helped Joe become a Street Fighter addict.

JOE

I prefer Street Fighter savant.

CASSIE

Fun apocalypses only.

CHRIS

Your drink. I still don't know how you're going to -

CHRIS holds up the finished drink to CASSIE. CASSIE opens her mouth wide and CHRIS extends the cup towards CASSIE's mouth. CASSIE bites down on the edge of the cup and drinks by tipping her head back while she continues to play the game.

CHRIS

Have either of you seen the film "Reign of Fire"?

JOE

No.

JOE sees CASSIE about to answer by shaking her head, but fearing for his sofa JOE stops her.

JOE

Don't answer that, Cass.

CHRIS

It's your standard zombie apocalypse setup. Society has collapsed, the last humans are living in shitty compounds, but, instead of zombies, it's a dragon apocalypse.

JOE

You think you could fight a dragon?

CHRIS

No, but I don't think I could fight a zombie or a Dalek either.

JOE

Then why's it your ideal apocalypse?

CHRIS

Okay, let's face it, I'm pretty useless.

JOE

If you're putting that on your CV I think I know why you're not getting many responses.

CHRIS

You know what I mean! I can't farm, I can't shoot, I've not been practicing with the katana. Any self respecting post-apocalyptic community throws me out for dragon food. But, in Reign of Fire there are these two bearded guys in the compound whose job is to act out Star Wars for the kids. Remembering what happened in Star Wars is definitely a skill I have.

CASSIE

The moment - dammit!

As CASSIE starts to speak the cup she was holding in her mouth drops, spilling the remains of her drink on her. She is unphased.

CASSIE

The moment someone joins the compound who can do a halfway decent Chewbacca impression you're dragon food.

CHRIS

I can do a Chewbacca impression!

JOE

Let's hear it then.

CHRIS attempts a Chewbacca impression. He can't do one.

JOE

That was -

JOE's eyes snap back to the screen.

JOE

Bullshit!

CASSIE puts down the controller and takes a victory bow.

CASSIE

Take that Street Fighter savant!

JOE

Maybe I oversold that.

CASSIE

I'm the Mozart to your Salieri.

CASSIE picks up the second vodka
bottle.

CASSIE

We're out.

JOE

I'll go. I want to get some crisps anyway. Same again?

CASSIE

Can we afford anything else?

JOE

No, but isn't it nice to pretend? Cash.

CHRIS and CASSIE hand JOE an
assortment of cash.

JOE

Won't be long.

JOE exits. Pause. CHRIS picks up
one of the controllers tentatively.

CHRIS

Shall we?

CASSIE

Are you doing okay?

CHRIS

Do I not seem like - ?

CASSIE

No.

CHRIS

I just...I'm not dealing with this whole thing as well as
Joe.

CASSIE

You don't have to.

CHRIS

Sending out job application after job application, that I'm pretty sure no one's reading. Getting up every day when every day feels the same and nothing ever happens so..why bother? I feel stuck. Or like I've failed somehow. And I just miss not feeling that way.

CASSIE

You know it's not your fault, right? You didn't fuck the economy.

CHRIS

I guess, intellectually, I know that. But it doesn't *feel* that way.

CASSIE

Everyone we know is just as broke and directionless. That's the real reason I'm doing this MA. So I can read books for another year and put off having to deal with all of this.

CHRIS

How's that going by the way?

CASSIE

Fine. I like it okay, but turns out the thing I really enjoyed about uni was hanging out with you...and Joe and the others of course.

CHRIS

Maybe we could turn up sometime.

CASSIE

You got ten thousand pounds you want to set on fire?

CHRIS

If I did we wouldn't have sent Joe out for more paint thinner.

CHRIS holds up one of the empty
vodka bottle to illustrate.

CASSIE

What was that, by the way, when I mentioned I was hanging out with Dan?

CHRIS

What was what?

CASSIE

(impersonating Chris)

'Oh?'

CHRIS

Just normal surprise.

CASSIE

You sounded almost jealous.

CHRIS

Well...I...wasn't.

Pause.

CASSIE

I know you like me.

Pause.

CHRIS

Was it obvious?

CASSIE

Incredibly.

CHRIS

And you don't...mind?

CASSIE kisses CHRIS.

CHRIS

I think I've got half a bottle of gin in my room, I could go get it and we can -

CASSIE

Or I could just come with you?

Pause as it takes CHRIS just longer than it should to work out what CASSIE is suggesting.

CHRIS

Yes.

CASSIE

Let's go.

CASIE takes CHRIS by the hand and
leads him offstage.