

THE DREADFUL CLUB

(First 16 Pages)

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TEASER

FADE IN:

**INT. SMALL ROOM - NIGHT**

Looks like it was decorated in 1985. Simple furniture.

A palm reader ZINA NIKOLAEVA (70) holds the hand of a client. She runs her finger along his hand. Speaks in a Slavic accent.

ZINA  
You have Earth hands.

MAXWELL BOOTH (40) stares at his hand as she runs her finger across the various lines on his palm.

MAXWELL  
Is that a good thing?

ZINA  
It is neither good nor bad. It is who you are.

MAXWELL  
Good to know.

ZINA  
You are level headed. Practical.

MAXWELL  
Thank you.

ZINA  
Also means you are not afraid to work hard. Get your hands dirty.

MAXWELL  
(chuckling)  
Guilty as charged. But I have a strong work ethic.

ZINA  
No doubt.

Silence. He watches her with intensity.

ZINA (CONT'D)  
Your life and fate lines come very close together.

MAXWELL  
Meaning...?

ZINA  
Your life's work and your fate are  
intertwined.

MAXWELL  
Can you see where it all leads?

ZINA  
Yes.

She's silent for a moment.

ZINA (CONT'D)  
Do you enjoy so much blood on these  
hands?

MAXWELL  
Wow. You are good. As good as I've  
been told.

She gives him a cold stare.

ZINA  
Good enough to add my own onto  
them?

MAXWELL  
That doesn't have to happen.

ZINA  
But it will. And the blood of many  
others.

MAXWELL  
You make it sound so demeaning.

ZINA  
Truth is always demeaning for those  
who do not wish to hear it.

MAXWELL  
You're taking it pretty well.

Cold silence.

ZINA  
In the end, we all face the truth.

MAXWELL  
And what truth will I face?

She lets go of his hand.

ZINA  
The one you deserve.

His face goes blank.

ZINA (CONT'D)  
Fate awaits us. Does it not?

He nods.

MAXWELL  
It doesn't have to end this way.  
You can--

ZINA  
But I will not. I could never do  
what you want.

MAXWELL  
Pity. I could use someone like you.

He stands. Produces a handgun with silencer.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)  
I always get the job done.

Fires once. Nina falls forward onto the table.

Places the handgun back under his coat.

He begins looking around. Combs through objects on a nearby desk but doesn't toss them around. Very methodical.

Opens a small drawer. Rummages around. Picks up a small stack of business cards.

Goes through them one by one. Pockets the whole stack.

Eyes a CELL PHONE. Pockets it also.

Opens another drawer. An OLD-STYLE ADDRESS BOOK. Takes it out and flips through a few pages. Then into a pocket.

Steps back to the table. Pulls out a small cloth. Wipes off the side where he sat. Then the chair.

He wipes off the doorknob and opens the door with it to leave.

ACT 1**INT. CELINE'S OFFICE - DAY**

As the characters speak, view pans the room: Various diplomas cover the clean wall. A large window faces the suburban neighborhood below. It's a bright, sunny day.

SANCHO (O.S.)  
And to see them prancing around in  
all black. Piercings and other  
grotesque body modifications.

CELINE (O.S.)  
Does that bother you?

CELINE PONCE (37) casual dress, sits in a chair. Large computer tablet in her lap.

Across from her sits SANCHO PELÁEZ (~35). Wears a fashionable but not flashy suit.

SANCHO  
How would you feel if people  
dressed in physician's smocks,  
stethoscopes around their necks,  
spending countless hours in some  
club pretending to be doctors?

CELINE  
Touché.

SANCHO  
And this preoccupation with the  
dead. Goes hand in hand with that  
zombie craze.

CELINE  
Many have never experienced it like  
you have.

SANCHO  
Like what?

CELINE  
Death. Loss.

He says nothing.

CELINE (CONT'D)  
For some, it's a coping mechanism.  
Dealing with the unknown by  
embarrassing it.

SANCHO  
I could think of better ways.

CELINE  
When the Black Death ravaged  
Europe, people did some  
extraordinary things to cope. To  
find meaning. Look at what COVID  
did to our modern ideas.

SANCHO  
There's a difference between  
hoarding toilet paper and assuming  
some bizarre, unfounded lifestyle.

CELINE  
Fear takes many forms.

SANCHO  
Touché again.

He stands. Walks over to the window. Looks out.

SANCHO (CONT'D)  
When those zealots went about  
flogging themselves, they really  
did believe they could bring about  
an end to all that misery.

CELINE  
They didn't know they were  
spreading the very disease causing  
the misery.

SANCHO  
They were ignorant. Ignorant by  
circumstance. Not like today.  
College educated people who  
scoffed at simple ways to contain  
that Twenty-First Century  
pestilence. Spreading the very  
disease it was meant to contain.  
They are the worst kind of  
ignorant.

CELINE  
And that is...?

SANCHO  
Ignorance by choice.

CELINE  
And you? What can we do to bring an  
end to your misery?

SANCHO  
It won't involve flogging myself.

CELINE  
You sure about that?

He turns. Give her a steely stare.

She stares back with a sympathetic look.

He relents. Looks at his watch.

SANCHO  
Need to cut our session short  
today. I have a wake to attend.

CELINE  
Oh? A friend of yours?

SANCHO  
An acquaintance.

CELINE  
My condolences.

SANCHO  
Thank you. Point of fact, she was a  
woman much like yourself.

CELINE  
Really? How so?

SANCHO  
Tried helping people with my...  
Particular issues. In her own way.  
I actually mentioned you to her.  
Briefly.

CELINE  
I'm honored.

SANCHO  
Despite her old, holistic ways, she  
was very open to modern medicine.  
Might even recommend you for those  
she cannot help.

CELINE  
Nice to be appreciated.

She gets up and moves to the office door.

CELINE (CONT'D)  
Curious. Will Pavel be there?

SANCHO  
Perhaps. From what I understand he  
did know her.

CELINE  
If he is, could you ask him to give  
me a shout?

SANCHO  
Missing his sessions?

CELINE  
Just pass it along.

**EXT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Sancho emerges into the room. Celine remains in the doorway.

A receptionist sits behind a counter. HEATHER, an elderly woman, is the only other person waiting. She rises as Sancho passes by.

She looks at him as he heads to the door. Watches him leave.

CELINE  
Come in, Heather.

She looks at Celine and smiles. Heads into her office.

**INT. CELINE'S OFFICE -CONTINUOUS**

Celine closes the door behind them.

HEATHER  
That... Man.

CELINE  
Yes?

Heather gropes for words, then....

HEATHER  
Nothing. Just...

CELINE  
Just?

HEATHER  
Reminded me of someone I knew a  
very long time ago.

CELINE  
He gets that a lot.



**INT. LARGE ROOM - DAY**

Zina lay in state, surrounded by flowers and candles. The rest of the room is half lit. Various people walk by. Some make the sign of the cross. Others give a small bow. Subdued CRYING and SOBBING.

Sancho enters the room. He stops. Surveys the mourners.

GEORGINA (25) approaches him.

GEORGINA

Hola. Nice of you to come.

SANCHO

The least I could do.

He looks over at Zina's coffin.

SANCHO (CONT'D)

What happened?

GEORGINA

Her nephew found her when she didn't answer the door. One shot straight through the heart.

SANCHO

Shot?!

GEORGINA

Yes. No struggle. Nothing taken but her cell.

SANCHO

What did the police say?

GEORGINA

Are you crazy? We take care of our own. Getting them involved would only make matters worse.

He moves towards Zina's body.

Sobbing mourners move off. He stands next to the body.

Her face looks peaceful, as if asleep. Her hands are clasped over her chest.

SANCHO

(in Spanish)

Rest in peace.

He rest his hand upon hers. He starts making the sign of the cross, but stops halfway, drops his hand.

He moves off. Winds his way around some people. Moves towards the back of the room.

Looking around, his head stops.

Eyes a half hidden figure in the back of the room standing in what little light shines there:

A pair of cargo pants covered legs. Heavy black boots. The hem of a trench coat. A dangling hand.

The WRIST appears REDENED and CRACKED.

Sancho moves towards him. Stops a few feet away.

SANCHO (CONT'D)

Pasha.

PAVEL (PASHA) LEVITSKY (30) doesn't move from the shadow. A dim light cast across his head reveals short brown hair. His voice is young and hoarse, but not overly so. Smart as hell but tortured by a world that both envies and hates him.

PAVEL

You started making the sign of the cross. Didn't take you for a religious man.

SANCHO

I'm a man of faith. Not religion. You are neither I recall.

PAVEL

I take the same view as Christiaan Huygens... The world is my country, science is my religion.

Silence. Then...

PAVEL (CONT'D)

Who did it?

SANCHO

Nobody knows. Georgina told me her family found her like that. Thought it wise to keep it from the authorities.

PAVEL

Wouldn't have mattered anyway. All she'd become is another file on some database to be forgotten like all the others there. Another human reduced to ones and zeroes.

Sancho turns to look at her coffin.

SANCHO

She deserves better than this.

PAVEL

Isn't that the life thrust upon us? Live in the shadows. Die in the shadows. At least she has a roomful of mourners. And she no longer has to face the problems of this world.

Pavel walks up beside Sancho. A full head taller, the same red and cracked skin surrounds his neck above the shoulders. Both stare at the coffin. Not a bad looking guy.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

Fear no more the frown o' the great. Thou art past the tyrant's stroke. Care no more to clothe and eat. To thee the reed is as the oak. The scepter, learning, physic, must all follow this, and come to dust.

(Quote is from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*)

Sancho lowers his head. Pavel turns and leaves back towards the doorway.

Sancho turns to watch Pavel, who must duck to get through it.

SANCHO

Celine's asking about you.

Pavel pauses for a moment, then goes out of sight.

Sancho moves back to the coffin. A deep sadness grips his eyes.

# **INT. MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO - DAY**

TANIA WILKS (25) wears a Gi, surrounded by a group of men and women of various ages.

TANIA

Most assailants come from behind.  
Ten to one they'll not know how to  
properly subdue you. And that's  
your advantage.

She turns to a young man and motions him over.

She turns his back to him.

TANIA (CONT'D)

Observe.

The young man creeps up from behind. A step away, he lunges  
at Tania, grabbing her from behind.

She moves quickly to release herself. Then takes the young  
man out and onto the floor.

TANIA (CONT'D)

Once you have them down... *A quick  
kick to the head!* That'll give you  
time to get away. And them a good  
headache.

She helps the young man up. They bow to each other.

TANIA (CONT'D)

The one thing you don't want to do  
is stick around and gloat. Get  
away. Get help.

She looks at a CLOCK ON THE WALL.

TANIA (CONT'D)

With that, thank you for your time  
today. See you next week. Except  
for you Val. Enjoy your honeymoon.

VALERIE (22) blushes. A lady next to her grasps each of her  
arms in congratulations.

Tiana gives her good-byes. Others do the same.

She then moves to her work desk along the wall. She starts  
taking off her belt notices CHAZ (30), a good looking guy  
bearing a disarming smile walking towards her.

CHAZ

Good touch. A kick in the head.

TANIA

Thanks Chaz.

As she speaks she takes off her jacket. He's in awe of her skin-tight black tee shirt encompassing her fit torso.

TANIA (CONT'D)  
Martial arts mixed with good old  
fashion street fighting can make a  
powerful combination.

CHAZ  
No doubt.

Both chuckle.

A moment of awkward silence. Then...

CHAZ (CONT'D)  
I envy Valerie. From what I hear  
they'll be in Bermuda.

TANIA  
A far cry from our urban jungle.  
Need to get there myself someday.

CHAZ  
On my bucket list too.

TANIA  
Cure your wanderlust?

CHAZ  
Yep.

Both smile, look into each other's eyes. Both waiting as those the next words will determine their destiny.

She turns and sits at her desk. Smile disappears. Wakes her computer up.

CHAZ (CONT'D)  
Speaking of wanderlust... A good  
friend of mine's opening up a new  
restaurant downtown.

She doesn't look at him.

TANIA  
Oh.

CHAZ  
Upscale casual. Great wine  
selection.

TANIA  
Sounds... Nice.

CHAZ  
No trip out of the country but  
something new. You're welcome to  
join me. This Friday?

She glances at a CALENDER on the wall. On Friday are the  
words FULL MOON and symbol.

CHAZ (CONT'D)  
If you're not busy.

TANIA  
Ah... Have plans. Sorry.

She doesn't see the veiled disappointment on his face as she  
types away on her computer.

CHAZ  
I understand. Perhaps some other  
time then.

She really doesn't want to answer but...

TANIA  
Perhaps. Have fun and... Don't over  
eat. Bad for the digestion.

CHAZ  
Will do. Have a good weekend.

He leaves. She turns to watch him. As he heads to the locker  
room another young lady approaches him. They start chatting.

She turns back around. Her sad eyes stare at the calendar  
again...

FULL MOON.

**INT. WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Celine strides by her receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST  
How was lunch?

CELINE  
Nice to have an hour or so with the  
hubby.

RECEPTIONIST  
An afternoon break for both of you.  
Oh...

Celine stops, turns to her.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Clark called. Her son's having  
those nightmares again. Message on  
your desk.

CELINE  
I'll give her a shout.

She opens her office door..

**INT. CELINE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON**

She's about to say something but notices a PLANT ON THE  
WINDOW SILL.

She pauses, then shuts the door behind her.

Goes to her desk.

CELINE  
Do you not recall my conversation  
about you showing up in the buff?

The voice of BRYSON FLETCHER (41) comes through the air. Our  
Invisible Man sits on the couch. A man whose brilliance is  
match only by his inflated sense of superiority.

BRYSON  
I did remember, Doctor! My latest  
invention.

Celine looks over at an 'empty' couch. The cushions move as  
though someone's there. As Bryson speaks, a zipper sound  
also comes from him.

BRYSON (CONT'D)  
I impregnated a neoprene jumpsuit  
with my secret sauce.

Celine sees what looks like the inside of the jumpsuit.

He then zips it back up.

BRYSON (CONT'D)  
A bit warm in the summer but does  
wonders in the winter!

Celine gets comfortable at her desk. Brings up her laptop.

BRYSON (CONT'D)  
Bet those imbeciles at the Pentagon  
would love to get their hands on  
this.

CELINE

Why don't you sell it to them?

BRYSON

*Pfft!* Those brain trusts aren't capable of realizing it's proper use. Wait a few generations for those mental minions evolve.

CELINE

And is this the same sauce you poisoned yourself with?

Silence.

BRYSON

I wouldn't use the word.. Poisoned.

CELINE

What word would you use?

BRYSON

*Wordsss...* Self sacrifice. All great discoveries carry risk. Didn't Pasteur take great risk? How many people are alive today because of his work?

CELINE

And the creation of biological weapons--

BRYSON

Ah! See what I mean! Noble goals turned to corrupt the human race.

CELINE

Or its creator.

Silence.

Celine looks at her laptop. Thereon a medical chart.

CELINE (CONT'D)

You haven't be refiling your meds?

BRYSON

Oh. Well. Been feeling much better.

CELINE

Tell me.

As he speaks, she goes to the window sill and moves the plant back.