That's Not Yours

Daniel Schoolcraft

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That’s Not Yours

CAST: 4 M
KLAUS DORTMUND: German expatriate, irritable, works at an extreme sports store
JACK HEYWOOD: Shorter, works in the men’s section of a fancy department store
BRUNO: Gang enforcer, jock-ish, comes off like a high school bully
MARC: Lowest on the gang totem pole, in over his head, clumsy

SETTING: A creekside hunter’s camp in a rundown park, somewhere on the outskirts of a large American city with an organized crime problem. There’s a couple of stump or log stools around an empty firepit filled with crumpled beer cans. It’s not hunting season. Plentiful amounts of garbage and litter should obscure the banks of the creek, including large pieces of garbage such as kitty litter boxes.

TIME: Present day, a muggy late summer afternoon

SOUND: Forest AMBIENCE, a creek bubbling.

LIGHTS UP to the sound of a beer can opening.

(JACK and KLAUS sit on the stump stools, KLAUS’ beer cooler to their side and drinks in hand, leaning back and looking into the audience.)

JACK: …That’s like the poser would-be musician high school kids and stuff that talk their parents into buying them a brand new Flying V or something when they haven’t even learned how to play, when they’d be better off just getting an ancient Stratocaster or something from a pawn shop, at least ‘til they…

(KLAUS glares at JACK, before getting up and walking down to the creek, dodging around garbage to the disembodied foot.)

JACK (loudly and mockingly) Your tetanus shot better be up to date!

(KLAUS kicks aside a piece of garbage and reveals the dismembered foot, gagging in spite of himself, perhaps just from the smell.)

KLAUS: What the...

(KLAUS swears violently and recoils.)

KLAUS (cn’t): Holy hell, it IS a goddamn foot! (He suddenly and inexplicably calms down.) That’s… weird.

JACK: It’s not like it’s gonna bite you.

(KLAUS bends over and peers closer at it, wrinkling his nose at the smell.)

KLAUS (cn’t): Holy hell, it IS a goddamn foot!

(He suddenly and inexplicably calms down.)

That’s… weird.

JACK: It’s not like it’s gonna bite you.

(KLAUS bends over and peers closer at it, wrinkling his nose at the smell. The foot’s at least a few days removed from its body and has decomposed appropriately. Also, it has a tattoo saying ‘MADE IN CHINA’ on about the ankle.)

KLAUS: (noticeably calm yet visibly disturbed) Yeah, it’s, uh, kinda… Anti-climatic. It’s just a foot. We found a foot. And, it’s apparently made in China.

JACK: (half-skeptical) Made in China? Really. You’re sure it’s not fake?...

KLAUS: Fake feet don’t stink!

JACK: They can too! Hold on, I’m coming down, I want a closer look.

(JACK puts down his drink, before loudly and violently tumbling down the creek, knocking over his stump stool and kicking garbage aside as he comes. He looks at the foot, does a double-take, and is suitably convinced.)

JACK (cn’t): Right, that looks pretty real.

(KLAUS nods uneasily.)

JACK (cn’t): And we’re POSITIVE there’s no smelly corpse that this foot belongs to?

KLAUS: Hell if I know. I’m not really sure I’d want to…

(JACK’s cell phone rings. JACK looks at it and sighs.)

JACK: Damn it, I never should’ve put this number on that call list at work. I can’t get any damn peace anymore…

(JACK puts his phone back and starts kicking around garbage, looking around. KLAUS still looks disturbed.)

KLAUS: What are you… Oh, right. Right, like we’d see a foot but wouldn’t see a big honking body… Chill, already, will you?

JACK: What the hell are you panicking about? It’s not like we killed the, uh, the foot. If we even bother to make a police report out of this, we’d just say ‘Oh, we found a foot. Yeah, at the park, under the bridge. Somebody must’ve died.’ Don’t worry about it.

JACK ponders momentarily, and hops back up to the campsite to KLAUS’ cooler, and pulls from the cooler a roll of damp paper towels.

KLAUS: Now what the hell… You’re not gonna…

(JACK hops back down, and wraps paper towels around his hands like he’s about to pick up dog poop.)

JACK: Hey, it could be worse. I wasn’t going to cover my hands at first. For chrissakes man, it’s just a foot! There’s nothing attached to it, it’s not like it’s going to suddenly turn into Thing from the Adams Family or some-
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(JACK and KLAUS sit on the stump stools, KLAUS’ beer cooler to their side and drinks in hand, leaning back and looking into the audience.)

JACK: …That’s like the poser would-be musician high school kids and stuff that talk their parents into buying them a brand new Flying V or something when they haven’t even learned how to play, when they’d be better off just getting an ancient Stratocaster or something from a pawn shop, at least ‘til they… (His voice trails off and he squints at something down below in the creek.)

KLAUS: They what?

JACK: (cups his eyes and squints again.) Is that a foot?

KLAUS: (squints) What, that thing down there by the…

JACK: (takes a drink) Yeah, that.

KLAUS: You’re sure that’s not just a prosthetic foot or a mannequin foot or something?

JACK: No, I’m pretty sure that’s an actual, uh, foot.

KLAUS: (puts his drink down) Hold my drink, I’m going to clear this up so we don’t spend the rest of the night trying to figure out if that is, indeed, a foot. It’s probably just some weird rotten piece of something.

JACK: Like, some weird rotten piece of a person?

(KLAUS glares at JACK, before getting up and walking down to the creek, dodging around garbage to the disembodied foot.)

JACK: (loudly and mockingly) Your tetanus shot better be up to date!

(KLAUS kicks aside a piece of garbage and reveals the dismembered foot, gagging in spite of himself, perhaps just from the smell.)

KLAUS: What the… (KLAUS swears violently and roars.)

KLAUS (cn’t): Holy hell, it IS a goddamn foot! (He suddenly and inexplicably calms down.) That’s… weird.

JACK: It’s not like it’s gonna bite you.

(KLAUS bends over and peers closer at it, wrinkling his nose as at the smell. The foot’s at least a few days removed from its body and has decomposed appropriately. Also, it has a tattoo saying “MADE IN CHINA” on about the ankle.)

KLAUS: (noticeably calm yet visibly disturbed) Yeah, it’s, uh, kinda… Anti-climatic. It’s just a foot. We found a foot. And, it’s apparently made in China.

JACK: (half-skeptical) Made in China? Really. You’re sure it’s not fake?

KLAUS: Fake feet don’t stink!

JACK: They can too! Hold on, I’m coming down, I want a closer look.

(JACK hops down his drink, before loudly and violently tumbling down the creek, knocking over his stump stool and kicking garbage aside as he comes. He looks at the foot, does a double-take, and is suitably convinced.)

JACK (cn’t): Right, that looks pretty real.

(KLAUS nodds uneasily.)

JACK (cn’t): And we’re POSITIVE there’s no smelly corpse that this foot belongs to?

KLAUS: Hell if I know. I’m not really sure I’d want to…

(JACK’s cell phone rings. JACK looks at it and sighs.)

JACK: Damn it, I never should’ve put this number on that call list at work. I can’t get any damn peace anymore…

(KLAUS still looks disturbed.)

JACK: What are you… Oh, right. Right, like we’d see a foot but wouldn’t see a big honking body… Chill, already, will you?

JACK: What the hell are you panicking about? It’s not like we killed the, uh, the foot. If we even bother to make a police report out of this, we’d just say ‘Oh, we found a foot. Yeah, at the park, under the bridge. Somebody must’ve died.’ Don’t worry about it.

KLAUS: What are you… Oh, right. Right, like we’d see a foot but wouldn’t see a big honking body… Chill, already, will you?

KLAUS: (to himself) Yeah, it’s just a foot. Just a foot.

(JACK ponders momentarily, and hops back up to the campsite to KLAUS’ cooler, and pulls from the cooler a roll of damp paper towels.)

KLAUS: Now what the hell… You’re not gonna…

(JACK hops back down, and wraps paper towels around his hands like he’s about to pick up dog poop.)

JACK: Hey, it could be worse. I wasn’t going to cover my hands at first. For chrissakes man, it’s just a foot! There’s nothing attached to it, it’s not like it’s going to suddenly turn into Thing from the Adams Family or some-
thing out of Army of Darkness and start attacking us! Chill already!

KLÀUS: What about the Thing from The Thing? You're telling me to chill?

You're the one that…

(JACK picks up the foot and examines it.)

KLÀUS: (disbelieving) …Oh, good God.

JACK: What? I'm gonna make you say it with me if I have to say it again. It's just. A foot.

(KLAUS slumps and paces uneasily.)

JACK: Just a foot, huh?

KLÀUS: Are there even coyotes out he—

(JACK's phone rings again; he looks and silences it.)

JACK: Oh, COME ON!

KLÀUS: Maybe, uh, maybe I'm just getting a bit paranoid, your terribly loud phone ringer nonwithstanding, but maybe we should, you know, get the hell out of here?

KLÀUS: NO.

JACK: If you're going to mumble something about 'What if they think we did it,' we've got solid enough alibis to take care of us. Your job, my job, and the other guys that come and drink beer with us sometimes.

KLÀUS: It's not about grossness, okay, it's kind of about grossness, it's not about alibis, it's not that I think they'll think we did it, it's just that I don't want my entire life pulled up and thrown into Witness Protection because we found a freakin' foot!

JACK: Or maybe you're just a wimp. You're talking to the guy that got his leg busted open something fierce when I wrecked on that bike trip that one time, remember? If I can put up with seeing my own leg bones sticking out of my leg then I can put up with picking up a damn foot and putting it in my damn ice chest. Besides, it's just until we get to a police station. It'll stink, it's kinda gooey at the stump, it's probably full of disease and festering bacteria, that's probably the worst of it. We can put up with all that, right?

KLÀUS: (exasperated) You didn't hear a damn thing I just said, did you? It's not about being blood shy, it's cause I've got a friend from high school I'll never be able to find or talk to again because he walked into something he shouldn't've and now he's in Witness Protection and I don't know where the hell they put him!

JACK: (ignoring) Oh calm down, it'll make an awesome story. I mean, how much crazier does it get than 'Oh hey, we found a foot?'

KLÀUS: (facepalms) You… totally did not help your cause. At all.

KLÀUS: N-, no. Just. If you're gonna do it, do it, so we can leave and get this damn thing over with.


(JACK straightens himself and looks offstage as they prepare to leave, but suddenly hears something. The distant sound of a car pulling up and parking fol-
KLAUS: What about the Thing from The Thing? You're telling me to chill?
You're the one that...
(JACK picks up the foot and examines it.)
KLAUS: (disbelieving) ...Oh, good God.
JACK: What? I'm gonna make you say it with me if I have to say it again. It's just.
A foot.
(KLAUS slumps and paces uneasily.)
JACK (c'nt): Here, you wanna see—
(JACK mimes like he's going to toss KLAUS the foot. KLAUS jumps back, and then glares at JACK.)
JACK (c'nt): I suppose it's not really my place to play David Caruso, but it looks like this was either chewed off by a wild animal or something or hacked off with something like a saw or an axe or something.
(JACK realizes what this implies and drops the foot, recoiling himself.)
KLAUS: Just a foot, huh?
JACK: Yeah, maybe we mighta oughta put in a police report... Considering where we are, I'd put the odds of it being some murder victim at a bit higher than, say, some homeless guy getting eaten by coyotes or something.
KLAUS: Are there even coyotes out here?
JACK: Maybe we oughta put in a police report... Considering where we are, I'd put the odds of it being some murder victim at a bit higher than, say, some homeless guy getting eaten by coyotes or something.
KLAUS: Are there even coyotes out here—
(JACK's phone rings again; he looks and silences it.)
JACK: Oh, COME ON!
KLAUS: Maybe, uh, maybe I'm just getting a bit paranoid, your terribly loud phone ringer nonwithstanding, but maybe we should, you know, get the hell out of here?
JACK: (picks up the foot again.) Hmm... Made in China, huh? Well, unless there's some Triad with a peg leg hobbling around Chinatown, I'd say the deed's been done, if you get what I'm saying.
KLAUS: It's not about blood shy, it's 'cause I've got a friend from high school I'll never be able to find or talk to again because he walked into something he shouldn't've and now he's in Witness Protection and I don't know where the hell they put him!
JACK: (ignoring) Oh calm down, it'll make an awesome story. I mean, how much crazier does it get than 'Oh hey, we found a foot?'
KLAUS: (facepalms) You... totally did not help your cause. At all.
JACK: Oh, suppose I should ask. You want another drink before we go on with this?
(KLAUS cringes.)
JACK: I suppose I should ask. You want another drink before we go on with this?
(KLAUS winces and stares off away from Jack.)
(KLAUS gags. JACK tries to wipe it with a paper towel, but fails at getting much of it.)
JACK: Now, was that really that painful?
(KLAUS gags again.)
KLAUS: NO.
JACK: If you're going to mumble something about 'What if they think we did it,' we've got solid enough alibis to take care of us. Your job, my job, and the other guys that come and drink beer with us sometimes.
KLAUS: It's not about grossness, okay, it's kind of about grossness, it's not about alibis, it's not that I think they'll think we did it, it's just that I don't want my entire life pulled up and thrown into Witness Protection because we found a freakin' foot!
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JACK: (ignoring) Oh calm down, it'll make an awesome story. I mean, how much crazier does it get than 'Oh hey, we found a foot?'
KLAUS: You... totally did not help your cause. At all.
JACK: Here, hold this.
(KLAUS cringes.)
KLAUS: N-, no. Just. If you're gonna do it, do it, so we can leave and get this damn thing over with.
(KLAUS winces and stares off from Jack.)
(KLAUS gags. JACK wraps more paper towels around his hand, grabs the cooler in the other, walks down, and puts the foot in the ice chest, closing it up, but getting a bit of substance from the moldering end of the foot on the lip of the cooler. KLAUS gags. JACK tries to wipe it with a paper towel, but fails at getting much of it.)
JACK: Now, was that really that painful?
(KLAUS gags again.)
KLAUS: Yes. No. For Christ's sake, let's just get out of here and get this done, Caruso.
(JACK straightens himself and looks offstage as they prepare to leave, but suddenly hears something. The distant sound of a car pulling up and parking fol-
What the hell?

What? It's not my fault, it's the stupid car they gave us. It's…

Can't you do ANYTHING right?

What? It's not my…

I swear sometimes…

What the…

Oh, um, shit. Hide.

Alright, you dumbass, we're here. So this is where it went down?

Yeah, right here, this campsite…

I was in a hurry, I thought someone was coming, so that's why it got left behind.

(offstage, deliberately trying to be intimidating.)

Excuses, excuses. If it'd been just a random chunk of anything else, nobody would've given a shit and we wouldn't be standing here right now, but NO, you had to leave behind one of the most blatantly obvious pieces of the human body.

Maybe it was. But it's still one missing foot, and one missing foot's enough to blow this whole damn thing all over the city. We don't need the entirety of Chinatown gunning for us. That wouldn't be good, would it?

I mean, yes, I mean… I swear, this is exactly where it was! It had to have been some sort of wild animal or something, it'd've had to be! I mean, who in their right mind steals a dismembered foot?

Well, too bad, that doesn't matter anymore.

But I…

Nope. For all we know a flash flood or something could've made it disappear.

It hasn't rained, has it?

It's been pretty bone dry, hasn't it?

Shit.

Then again, it HAS been a couple of days, I doubt it's still gonna be here.

Oh, shit.

You're sure? For all we know a flash flood or something could've made it disappear.

No, it's been pretty bone dry, hasn't it?

Well, -I- don't have to worry about it. You do. They wanted that foot back. It's the only way they could be sure. You're sure it's gone?

But I…

Oh, bullshit, you can't keep a girl longer than a one-night stand.

You really think I'd fall for that?

But… Hey, it was worth a shot…

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(louder by its car alarm inexplicably going off, gets JACK and KLAUS' attention.)

BRUNO: (offstage) What the hell?
MARC: (offstage) What? It's not my fault, it's the stupid car they gave us. It's…
BRUNO: (offstage) Can't you do ANYTHING right?
MARC: (offstage, coming closer) What? It's not my…
BRUNO: (offstage, still closer) I swear sometimes…

(JACK notices the incoming gangsters.)

JACK: What the…
KLAUS: (realizing) Oh, um, shit. Hide.

(JACK and KLAUS dash into the audience, hiding far enough away to keep themselves invisible but still be able to see what transpires. After they go, BRUNO and MARC arrive onstage, MARC carrying a cooler remarkably similar to JACK's and BRUNO carrying a shotgun over his shoulder and a particularly large switchblade.)

BRUNO: Alright, you dumbass, we're here. So this is where it went down?
MARC: Yeah, right here, this campsite…
BRUNO: Shut up, you don't have to tell the whole damn world. I know already.
MARC: I was in a hurry, I thought someone was coming, so that's why it got left behind.

(BRUNO plays with the switchblade, deliberately trying to be intimidating.)

BRUNO: (irritated and exasperated) Excuses, excuses. If it'd been just a random chunk of anything else, nobody would've given a shit and we wouldn't be standing here right now, but NO, you had to leave behind one of the most blatantly obvious pieces of the human body.

(BRUNO points at the creek and plays with his switchblade some more.)

BRUNO: If I were you, I'd start looking, if I wanted to, oh, go home at a… reasonable time. Or, uh, go home, period.

(MARC gets the hint and jumps down into the refuse, cooler in hand, gingerly pushing over garbage and looking for the foot of desire, occasionally looking back up at BRUNO, who checks his watch and pretends not to notice, but keeps playing with his switchblade.)

BRUNO: (calming down) Eh, it shouldn't be too hard. It's only been a couple of days, it can't've gone too far.

BRUNO: Hope not.

(The next few moments pass silently as MARC realizes the foot isn't here, even though it's only yards away where KLAUS and JACK are hiding. His calm demeanor slowly becomes increasingly panicked. BRUNO continues calmly playing with his switchblade.)

MARC: (slightly harried) Then again, it HAS been a couple of days, I doubt it's still gonna be here.
BRUNO: Well, gee, I sure doubt feet decompose that quickly.
MARC: It hasn't rained, has it?
BRUNO: Nope. You said it wasn't in the creek anyway.

(MARC swears to himself.)

MARC: You're sure? For all we know a flash flood or something could've made it disappear.
BRUNO: Nope, it's been pretty bone dry, hasn't it?
MARC: Shit.

(After one last glance around, MARC climbs back up, still holding the cooler. BRUNO stares at him.)

BRUNO: Done already?
MARC: I swear, it's gone. If I had to guess I'd say a dog or something got it and carried it off. We really shouldn't have to worry about it now, should we?

(BRUNO stares daggers.)

BRUNO: Well, -I- don't have to worry about it. You do. They wanted that foot back. It's the only way they could be sure. You're sure it's gone?
MARC: (borderline terrified) No, I mean, yes, I mean… I swear, this is exactly where it was! It had to have been some sort of wild animal or something, it'd've had to be! I mean, who in their right mind steals a dismembered foot?
BRUNO: Well, too bad, that doesn't matter anymore.
MARC (realizing): Oh, shit.

(BRUNO holds up the switchblade.)

BRUNO: Marc, you've fucked up one time too many.
MARC: But I…
BRUNO: Shut it. They told me that if you fucked up again—
MARC: It can't just be… Already?
BRUNO: Yep. It'd be the last time you fucked up.
MARC: But I left it… Oh, c'mon, I've got a wife and ki—
BRUNO: Oh, bullshit, you can't keep a girl longer than a one-night stand. You really think I'd fall for that?
MARC: But… Hey, it was worth a shot…

(BRUNO indicates the shotgun.)

BRUNO: Shut up, you're worse than a four-year old. Unfortunately, it's not hunting season, so we can't do this the easy way…

(MARC clutches the empty cooler like someone in dire need of a hug.)

MARC: (on the verge of tears, panicking) But, my parents, my, my dog… Oh shit, oh shit…

BRUNO: You don't have a dog!

(BRUNO ignores the rest of Marc's babbling and brandishes the switchblade.)
BRUNO (cn’t): Man, it’s amazing what one stupid foot can—
(JACK’S cell phone rings yet again, obnoxiously loud.)

BRUNO: What the fu—
(BRU NO reflexively points his knife uselessly at the woods, before realizing his gun might be a better idea and reaches for it. Simultaneously, MARC takes advantage of the distraction and clocks BRUNO in the head with the cooler. BRUNO drops his knife and collapses, out cold, and MARC clubs him in the head with the cooler repeatedly, beats him with the stock of the shotgun, stabs him with his dropped switchblade, and grabs him with everything else he has on hand, before dropping the now-bloodied cooler and taking off like a bat out of hell. After a long pregnant pause, he suddenly dashes back on stage, grabs a large piece of garbage from the refuse, and beats on BRUNO further, before running off again. He’s not taking any chances.)

(Another pause ensues.)

JACK: (running back on stage with the cooler and the evidence, slightly) Holy shit, holy shit, can you believe what just—

KLAUS: (running back on stage too, in an I-told-you-so tone of voice) ...I told you this was a bad idea! You wouldn't listen to a damn thing I—

JACK: ...And it's all kind of my fault too, who'd a thunk a stupid phone call would’ve...

(MARC suddenly dashes back on stage with yet another object with which to bludgeon BRUNO’s corpse, and also perhaps to clean up the mess. KLAUS and JACK’s conversation screeches to a halt. A tremendously awkward pause ensues.)

JACK (to MARC): Oh, hi.
(KLAUS is mortified and looks like he's going to cry. JACK notices MARC’s cooler.)

JACK (cn’t): Nice cooler.

END

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Here Roams The Wolf,
The Eagle Whets Its Beak

— Lord Byron, from Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage

The sun has risen, ever so slowly, in the horizon. I watch her dressing in the tent, the silhouette of her body shaking across the orange nylon, cast by the unsteady flame of a small lantern. It is a struggle, I can tell. Time is never kind to aging bodies.

*Do you need any help?* I ask, knowing the answer.

*I’ll manage*, she says.

I look into the fire. She always does.

*Winded*, she jokes *What’s for breakfast?*

I look around and say nothing. We laugh.

I watch her crawl out of the tent. *Did you hear the wolves last night?* I ask as she pulls herself up next to me onto the old log.

*It was beautiful*, she says, *wonderful fire.*

We sit for a moment in silence, the murmur of the nearby river and the erratic crackling of fire filling the gap.

*What do you think they were howling about?* She asks quietly. *It sounded somber.*

I turn my head and look at her. The wrinkles of her face seem softer in the light of the fire.

*I say Loneliness, perhaps.*

Long ago, we found each other by chance. Nothing more than that, nothing less. In those days, she was an artist. Her paintings were beautiful. She sometimes painted with her breath, blowing the watery ink around the canvas the way the wind effortlessly colors the sky in autumn. *The wolf mates for life*, she said one day between breaths, her cheek resting on canvas, *and after the loss of their partner, they often never move on, but remain solitary. The ink swirlled and twisted, I wonder, she said, maybe sometimes that’s why they howl at night.*

She never signed her paintings, dated them, or left any hint as to where they came from. There’s something about it she said. *The wolf knows its weight in this world; it knows it’s no larger than the breadth of its howl. It doesn’t try to be anything more than what it is.* I still can’t say that I truly know where she came from, or how she came to be. To love something simply for what it is, nothing more, nothing less, is a beautiful thing.