

Test of Time

By

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INT. CANTEEN - DAY

YOUNG ANDY is a teenage student, between 14 - 16 years old. He looks like the typical nerd: bespectacled, smart, arrogant, and bait for school bullies. He is studying by himself when another teenage student, YOUNG JULIAN, tall and shrewd-looking, enters and sits down next to him and begins talking to him. Both boys are in secondary school uniforms. During voice overs, we cannot hear what the conversation is about, although they continue speaking.

ANDY (V/O)

Anyone remember what your school days were like? Do you recall, say, that point in polytechnic or JC when it finally hit you that we couldn't be children anymore? Or maybe we've forgotten the blissful, complete ignorance of your primary school days, when the question "how many erasers" was all that mattered. For me, I most remembered secondary school, that magical period mixing innocence and maturity. Many of the truly defining experiences first came to us here.

JULIAN

So Royston Lee knows who you are, and he's waiting outside with his boys. He's waiting for you.

ANDY

Royston is waiting outside my school so he can beat me up for calling him a piece of degenerate scum on the internet? Does he even know what that means?

ANDY (V/O)

People tell me I've got a big mouth. All I can say is, you should have seen it at fifteen.

JULIAN

You know when some pranksters tried to get us with a bucket of water outside the gate and we stayed dry by getting a teacher escort?

(CONTINUED)

ANDY

All the teachers should have left school by now.

JULIAN

(Holding up an NCC uniform)
But not all their clothes have.

ANDY (V/O)

If Cambridge had believed in that "Higher Order Thinking" nonsense, Julian shouldn't have failed his O Levels.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Andy and Julian are walking tightly together to the school gate. Julian is conspicuously wearing an adult-sized NCC uniform, complete with beret.

ANDY (V/O)

He should have gotten a bonus for his sheer audacity.

ANDY

(removing his glasses)
I don't want Royston to recognize me.

JULIAN

(trying on glasses)
I'm more worried about them noticing the smell Mr. Tan left in here. Do I look adult enough?

Andy and Julian catch up to two other students also making their exits. As they step outside the school boundaries, ROYSTON steps in front of Andy.

ROYSTON

Hey prick.

Andy and Julian freeze. Royston's friends surround Andy.

ROYSTON

(spitting)
Suddenly got nothing to say? Let's come over here and talk.

Royston grabs Andy and slams him into the fence, but Julian gives Royston a shove.

(CONTINUED)

JULIAN
(in a gruff, adult voice)
Can you tell me what's your
problem?

ROYSTON
Eh, you teacher ah?

JULIAN
And you are?

Royston snorts with contempt. Julian suddenly throws a punch at Royston's jaw, flinging him to the ground.

JULIAN
Listen. I may be new to this school
but I'm not new to your type. Do we
understand each other, little Roy?
Stay away from my students.

Julian grabs Andy's arm and strides away, leaving Royston and his followers stunned.

ANDY (V/O)
After that day, for some reason,
Julian always preferred to use that
particular adult tone of voice.

He didn't apply his smarts to
schoolwork, so as my ship came in
after the O Levels, we drifted
apart like as was typical. I only
saw him again two years later.

INT. BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

The bar is almost empty. Andy runs in, stumbling just in front of where Julian is sitting. Two years later, Andy still looks very similar to his young self, but Julian has distinct facial hair and is more adult-looking. A trio of gangsters burst in, one of them holding a long stick.

ANDY (V/O)
After I entered Junior College,
many things were different.

ANDY
Got a phone? I might need the
police.

(CONTINUED)

ANDY (V/O)
One thing that wasn't, was Julian.

JULIAN
(staring at the gangsters)
Just like old times.

EXT. FOOTPATH - LATE AFTERNOON

Andy and Julian sprint down a slope onto the footpath. A gangster struggles to keep up, yelling incoherently.

ANDY (V/O)
He suggested we get to a place both of us knew well. Like before, Julian rejected the most obvious solutions to things. Like before, I trusted him anyway. To be honest, I looked up to him.

Julian runs up to a bystander who is holding an umbrella, snatching it from her hands before continuing to run.

EXT. VOID DECK - LATE AFTERNOON

Andy and Julian are running through the void deck, gangster hot on his heels. Julian appears suddenly in front of the gangster, knocking him over. Each time the gangster tries to find his feet, Julian smacks him again. Andy watches the violence, horrified. Another gang member also views the scene from a distance. When he doesn't leave, Julian hits the gangster on the ground again, despite that he's unconscious and bleeding. The other gangster runs away.

ANDY
What the hell are you doing?

JULIAN
These asses are the same as school bullies. Same shit. Remember how last time when we hit Royston, he -

ANDY
(interrupting)
This is not like Royston! This is not like secondary school! Are you insane?... When did you change?

JULIAN
Change? Change? Nothing changed!
Especially not you, standing to one
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JULIAN (cont'd)
side while I help you. At least one
of us can actually DO something on
his own! Don't you think so? Huh?

Andy is speechless. Julian seems to regret his words in the
ensuing silence between them.

ANDY (V/O)
He was right. The difference was
all in orders of magnitude. Many
people don't transform into someone
else when they hit adulthood.
Studiers study harder, gangsters
pick up sticks, and I keep being
good for nothing. We go through our
defining experiences, and
everything after is just an
extension of them. Julian's
defining moments were in secondary
school, and he stuck. While I... I
hesitated.

JULIAN
Never mind. Forget it.

Andy digs in the gangster's pockets and fishes out a phone.
The words on the screen say "Emergency Call Only". Andy
looks back at Julian, who is watching him closely.

JULIAN
What do you need his phone for?

Suddenly, Julian makes a grab for the phone. In the struggle
for it, Andy shoves, and Julian lets go and backs away. Andy
takes the umbrella, hitting Julian across the cheek.

ANDY
Get out of here! Get out! I don't
want to see you again. I don't want
to see you again.

Julian looks at Andy with a mixture of confusion and hurt.
Then he slinks away into the night. Andy uses the gangster's
phone to call an emergency number.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Young Julian and Andy are sitting together at the bus stop.
Julian is dressed in the NCC uniform, and Andy in his school
uniform. They share a comfortable silence, shoulders pressed
together. Then a bus passes by and obscures them from view.

6.

CUT TO BLACK.