

THE TRIALS OF ANTHONY LEMON



Episode II: Il Padrino

“How much for your daughter?”

Weeping willows lined the private road to Il Padrino’s manor. A peach sun was sinking beneath the manor’s octagon dome as Anthony Lemon approached in his jalopy.

—Ritzy place.

Anthony Lemon toed the clutch, downshifted and peeled in. He parked his jalopy in the manor’s port-cochaire and stepped out. His feet crunched the gravel. Dogs barked at Anthony Lemon behind all of the windows.

Fucking dogs. Always trying to kick my ass.

Anthony Lemon stepped onto the entry porch from the side. He tightened and leveled the sides of his bowtie, thinking:

Just a heart-to-heart between two men: Il Padrino and Anthony Lemon. I’ll rip his fucking eyes out if I have to. Then:

Isn’t there another way?

Anthony Lemon exhaled and depressed the small white button of the doorbell.

Just go with the flow, Ant’. Keys: left pocket. Mr. Il Padrino, it’s a pleasure: shake. Yea baby.

Anthony Lemon swallowed. He heard double-footsteps behind the door. Then in the fanlights appeared a large outline.

A second later the door swung open—on a butler holding a leashed bear.

—Mr. Lemon? asked the butler.

Anthony Lemon nodded gravely.

—Our Master’s expecting you sir. Come in boss, don’t be shy. I’ve got the Madame. That’s it boss.

Anthony Lemon stepped inside and cleared his boots of grit on the rug.

—What’s the cutie’s name? asked Anthony Lemon.

—This is Madame Blanc-vingt, you see ever after Lady Il Padrino died the Master... The butler launched a discourse on the history and demise of Lady Il Padrino. Anthony Lemon gave commands for the butler to shut the fuck up.

—That being that, said the butler, the Master needs Madame Blanc-vingt like I need a kick in the head.

—Right, right, said Anthony Lemon. Listen pal, give me the scoop. How’s your master pay for all of this shit?

The butler smiled impregvably.

—Would you like a tour of the house before I introduce you to the Master? asked the Butler.

Dogs, bears and butlers trying to kick my ass. Easy now.

—Sure thing man. Say do you have a chocolate fountain somewhere in here?

—Ever since the Lady died I'm afraid we had to kill chocolate. The butler continued:

—Am I making myself perfectly clear Mr. Lemon?

—Crystal, said Anthony Lemon.

They three walked from the foyer to a side parlor.

—Now here is the Countess' drawing room. We never finished unpacking after the move, which is why you see boxes everywhere. Mr. Lemon?

With his x-ray vision Anthony Lemon scanned the boxes: dinosaur bones, old masters, jewels.

Where's all the fucking chowder?

—Just lookin,' laughed Anthony Lemon. A bead of sweat soaked into his collar.

—Right this way, Mr. Lemon.

Anthony Lemon followed butler and bear into the hallway. They walked down halls of purple and teal wallpaper. The butler pulled open another side door.

—The greenhouse, said the butler. Where the Lady first came down with the fever.

Anthony Lemon examined a piece of garden croton.

—It's a bit steamy in here man. And all these plants, how do you feed them?

—The Master's irrigation system takes care of the feeding sir, which we normally call watering.

Anthony Lemon blushed in shame for his ignorance. Feeding, watering, what's the fucking difference?

—Come on man I didn't come here to see plants, said Anthony Lemon.

—Right this way, then Mr. Lemon. You're gonna like this!

The butler led Anthony Lemon up a few staircases. As they ascended Anthony Lemon caught sight of ships painted on the dome's soffit.

—Say who built this place? asked Anthony Lemon.

—Someone obsessed with octagons, a strange bird, said the butler. Right here, Mr. Lemon.

Anthony Lemon opened the door for the butler and the bear. Then he stepped in.

—Welcome to the planetarium, said the butler.

—I can't see a fucking thing, said Anthony Lemon.

The bear sniffed. Then the butler said:

—Actually we should not be here. Come! Refreshments.

In the kitchen downstairs Anthony Lemon stared giddily into the fridge:

—Oooh, duck. Hey is that blue raspberry?

—Restrain yourself Mr. Lemon, please! We can eat after your meeting. Mon dew!

Anthony Lemon blushed with shame. He closed his eyes on temptation.

—Il Padrino never uses the kitchen, Mr. Lemon. He only eats raw steak of the cow.

—Raw steak of the cow? What the fuck do you mean raw steak of the cow?

The butler nodded blithely.

—Let me show you, said the butler. He cleared his throat then said:

—Argos, the blinds. Chop chop.

—Word, said a robot voice. The kitchen's huge venetian blinds swung open, herding in beams of daylight. The backyard was a huge paster. Cows roamed the grass, biting, chewing, mooing. Anthony Lemon looked closer at the cows... Afternoon sun glistened in their wounds. They were covered in raw red wounds.

—Raw steak of the cow, muttered Anthony Lemon. This guy's a fucking animal.

—Il Padrino has...most unusual tastes Mr. Lemon. One time at a dinner with his brother, well they don't speak anymore but the children—

—Don't start another one of your fucking family chronicles pal, warned Lemon. —Suffice it to say the kids were delightful that night.

The butler sighed and composed himself.

—Mr. Lemon, I think that the Master will see you now.

At that moment Anthony Lemon heard footsteps walking down the hallway. From it a man approached at leisure. He had a slender oval face capped in steampunk goggles with green lenses and gold frames. He walked within the folds of a velvet smoking jacket, pure maroon, and strode on illegal gucci loafers but was otherwise naked. In the fingers of his left hand smoked a cuban cigar, in his right hand lay the slender torpedo of a cigarette holder, also smoking, capped with emerald. He exhaled blue smoke at ease.

—Welcome to the North Shore of Long Island. Has something stolen your mind, Mr. Lemon? Come here, kiss my feet.

Anthony Lemon approached obediently. He groveled at Il Padrino's feet and kissed each loafer.

—Well done Mr. Lemon, thank you. One moment as I settle a point of business.

Il Padrino looked at the butler and the bear.

—Take that stinking animal outback and cleanse it for me Terence. Thank you. Then water or feed it or how they ingest. Thank you.

Terence led the bear from the kitchen outside. Anthony Lemon felt vindicated.

—Where do you come from Mr. Lemon?

—I took the parkway from Brooklyn. I live under a trainline there.

—Ah, Brooklyn. The fish's bony head. I know a few ruffians there. Beautiful people.

Anthony Lemon looked at the creep ready to beat his ass.

—Well Mr. Lemon, it's very simple. In economics it's what we call an exchange of goods: you want my daughter, and I want your money.

Anthony Lemon couldn't stand to think of Maria as goods. He barked: —What are you a fucking Harvard economist or something?

—One better Mr. Lemon. I'm the wealthiest man in all of Long Island. Shall we get down to brass tacks?

—How much for your daughter? asked Anthony Lemon.

—One daughter for a drop of Mr. Lemon's blood, said Il Padrino. He blew a smoke ring from the stub of his cigar. I will not ask twice Mr. Lemon.

Anthony Lemon heard a vague pounding on the ceiling.

—Anthony, Anthony, cried a voice (it was Maria's) don't agree. This is how he kills them all.

Sudden brilliance flashed through Anthony Lemon's mind like a chameleon changing hue. He swung a fatal karate chop towards Il Padrino's neck. But a lightning bolt smote a glass orb above Anthony Lemon's head, ruining his balance.

Ma de. Ta ma de. Il Padrino.

Where's that fucking bear when you need it? But it was over in an instant:

Cool as that Anthony Lemon swung a kitchen knife from the block and plucked out Il Padrino's eyes through the goggles.

A moment later Il Padrino lay juiced on the floor.

Anthony Lemon threw down his weapon and the eyes in disgust.

—Maria!!! he bellowed.

His love came down with tears in her eyes.

—Oh Anthony, you did it.

He flexed his muscles for her. Then he said:

—Let's get the fuck out of here Maria.

—He's dead. He's finally, finally dead.

—Maybe now the cows will sleep.

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