

STRUDEL, TEA, SKI

Written by

James Rose

jamesrose10@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. ASPEN - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: ASPEN, COLORADO

Townsite with ski hill as backdrop.

INT. CAFE - DAY

JACK RATZLAFF (22), boyish, secretly ambitious, smart, and his new girlfriend BELLE RACHEL (35), beautiful, plucked from Manhattan, culture before skiing, sit across from one another sipping cappuccinos at a trendy Aspen cafe.

An open magazine is between them on the table. It's busy. Mid-morning.

BELLE

Jack! I didn't know you were so talented.

We see the full page spread photo of a family of illegal Nicaraguan immigrants. Title: They do the job you won't. The byline: Jack Ratzlaff.

JACK

(nervous laughter)

Ah... it's okay. And I apologize, I thought I had enough to treat this morning.

With a smile, Belle chooses to ignore Jack's embarrassment about her paying (again) for... everything.

BELLE

Well, I enjoyed your story.

Jack smiles, leans across the table and kisses her adoringly.

BELLE (CONT'D)

How did you find them?

JACK

They're my neighbors down valley in the trailer park.

BELLE

Look at you. You've been here for what, five months? And look!

JACK
(shy laughter)
Long way from Esquire... or buying
you coffee.

BELLE
Jack, shh. You have to start
somewhere.

Jack looks downward. Uncomfortable with praise. His
smartphone BUZZES next to his mug. Jack reads it and becomes
electric.

JACK
I just got an email from... Winslow
Kennerly Wolfe III? Dunno who that
is but... wow, he loved my--

BELLE
WHAT?! You got an email from
Winnie!?

JACK
Winnie? Yeah, Says my piece is an
"all-timer." Wants to go for a ski
and strudel tomorrow at Bonnie's...

BELLE
Honey, it's WINNIE! You don't know
Winnie?

JACK
No, sorry I don't know Winnie.

BELLE
BIG personality. Used to be mayor.
Friend's with the other Jack in
town, Goldie and Kurt. Knows
everyone.

JACK
Huh.

BELLE
YES! And he's your boss... I guess?
You work for the magazine now?
Paying your rent?

JACK
(avoids eye contact)
No, still freelance... and no.

BELLE

Winnie's the publisher. Writes a popular column too.

JACK

Shit. Really?

BELLE

Yes! Come, come, let me see.

Jack hands Belle his phone.

Belle takes a split second to confirm.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Jack, honey, you better go!

JACK

I, I don't know. I don't really know how to ski...

BELLE

Doesn't matter! Go! Learn! Please, please, please go. Exciting!

JACK

(beat)

I, I don't...I'll embarrass--

BELLE

(practically screaming)

GO!

EXT. AJAX MOUNTAIN - DAY

Ski resort with chairlifts and plenty of SKIERS.

EXT. SUNDECK AT BONNIE'S - DAY

It's midday, perfect bluebird. Jack sits waiting at a picnic table watching skier's, drinking coffee. Fidgeting.

Down the slope toward Bonnie's comes a sleek man, WINNY (55), carving perfect race turns.

Winnie executes a perfect stop in front of Bonnie's, a mid-mountain Bavarian style restaurant, exhales the mountain air, clicks his skis off. No helmet, perfect blond hair, deeply tanned, million watt smile, perfect posture, Dale of Norway sweater, designer shades.

The king struts to where Jack sits.

JACK
(stuttering)
Mr... Mr. Wolfe... the third?

WINNY
Call me Winny. Ratzlaff eh? Jack
Ratzlaff?

JACK
Yes, sir.

WINNY
Considered a pen name? Where you
from, son?

JACK
(startled)
Ch- change my name?
(beat)
Cleveland.

WINNY
Let me guess: Aspen for the
bunnies.

JACK
(nervous laughter)
No, no, I came here--

WINNY
Come on, it's why guys like us are
here. You know where I'm from?

JACK
No, where--

WINNY
Delaware.

JACK
Oh, sounds nice.

WINNY
You kiddin'? Soon as I turned
eighteen, I was outta that armpit.

JACK
Oh.

WINNY
Tell me Jack, you write this
morning?

JACK
I, well, I--

WINNY
Write every damn morning. No matter
how hungover you are.

JACK
(meek)
Well... yes, sir, that's the way--

WINNY
Anyway, today, we ski. But first:
tea, strudel.

INT. BONNIE'S - DAY

Jack and Winny awkwardly wait in line for their strudel and tea. Winny knows all the skiers inside. Most charismatic man west of the Mississippi.

EXT. SUNDECK AT BONNIE'S - DAY

Winny and Jack now have the most delectable, fresh, apple strudel you've ever seen with homemade whipped cream. Winny is focused on carefully eating his dessert. Oddly proper, stuffy.

There's a painfully awkward silence.

Winny delicately takes the last bite of his strudel, sips the last of his tea. Carefully touches each corner of his mouth with a napkin.

WINNY
(refined)
Now, we ski.

EXT. AJAX MOUNTAIN - DAY

Winny and Jack start skiing.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

HIGH TEMPO AVANT-GARDE JAZZ begins.

- Jack struggles to keep up with Winny's progressively wild skiing.

- Hair in the wind, Winny is a daredevil. A rat in the granary.

- Borderline out of control. As in, this is Winny's mountain. Passive aggressive.

- Winny takes Jack down a double black diamond and skis way off ahead. Jack inches his way down, is frustrated, embarrassed, demoralized. There's anger in his eyes.

- He finally meets up with Winny at the bottom of the chairlift. King Winny is back slappin' with yet another pal. Jack overhears jokes, laughter aimed at his skiing.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. CHAIRLIFT - DAY

We see remnants of wind induced tears slowly drying on Winny's face. He takes a glove off and rakes his hand through his coiffed hair. Jack is frazzled, catching his breath.

JACK

You sure can ski, sir!

WINNY

Only thing I like more than chasing skirts. Tell me Jack, what else you got?

JACK

What else I got?

WINNY

Story ideas. Pitch me.

JACK

(nervous, averting eye contact)

Well, I, there's this...

WINNY

What's that, son?

JACK

There's this seminar about greenhouse gas emissions and--

WINNY

BORING. Next.

JACK

(fumbling)

Oh... uh... there's a fundraiser for breast cancer, I thought I could do a clever--

WINNY

Please god, no.

JACK

No?

WINNY

No! Boring! Come on, Jack!

JACK

(beat)

Okay, well... Belle and her friends...

WINNY

Who?

JACK

My girlfriend? Belle Rachel--

WINNY

(surprised)

Belle Rachel? And what's my little Belle up to these days? Wait, tell me... power turns under the sheets?

JACK

Power turns?

WINNY

Power turns. You? And her? How long it take you?

JACK

We're kinda taking it slow--

WINNY

The story Jack! What's the story?

JACK

Oh, right. Well, see, Belle and her friend--

WINNY

Wait let me guess. The brunette? Boy, what I'd do to her. I'd split her like... anyway go on...

JACK

(fumbling)

Uh, yeah, anyway... they have this new Instagram account and they--

WINNY

You know about her dad, don't you?

JACK

Her dad?

WINNY

Golfing buddy. Been having this sloppy affair with his masseuse for I don't know how long...

Jack can't believe what he's hearing.

WINNY (CONT'D)

It's true. Jack, what you need to understand is... there's plenty to write about that's *actually* interesting in this town.

Jack says nothing.

WINNY (CONT'D)

Take the women. In this town, sixty-five's the new thirty-five... Money, Jack.

Jack is speechless.

WINNY (CONT'D)

Go to any of one of those fundraisers... You'll see.

JACK

(stuttering)

You... you don't think writing more about the homeless would be--

WINNY

Good lord, no. Jack, no one *really* cares about the homeless! There will always be homeless!

JACK

But that shouldn't mean--

WINNY

Shouldn't mean what? Jack, you wanna get places, you write salacious.

Jack's eyebrows furrow.

WINNY (CONT'D)

That's right, you write about the
shit everyone *really* wants to read.

(beat)

Go to the restaurants, the parties.
Eavesdrop. Anything you can to get
the dirt.

JACK

(small)

Dirt...

WINNY

All else fails, embrace what any
writer worth their salt does.

JACK

What's that, sir.

WINNY

(gleefully)

Be mendacious.

JACK

...Lie?

WINNY

Don't be so harsh. Not your style.

(beat)

Jack, you do good work for me, I
can get you places.

JACK

Places?

WINNY

Places, Jack. I know you're
ambitious. And I know you're broke.
You feel stuck. Wanna know a little
secret?

(with a cheshire grin)

You *are* stuck... But I can help.

For a brief moment, Jack wears a look of a naive hope. Is
this for real?

WINNY (CONT'D)

Take your little that social media
story. Doesn't matter what it's
about. Just make sure it's
something that actually *hits*... See
how far you can bend the truth
before...

Winnie snaps his finger, startling a somewhat hypnotized Jack.

WINNY (CONT'D)

Stay with me, Jack!

(conspiratorially)

Tell Aspen about the infighting
between Belle and her friends.

Doesn't matter if there isn't any.

Give us some nasty. Jack, give us
the--

Now Jack starts to laugh. Laughing as he takes in the
spectacular views of the Rocky Mountains around him.

WINNY (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

Jack stops laughing, turns to face Winnie.

JACK

(with gusto)

You. Everything about you. I think
you're the epitome of what's wrong
with this goddamn nation. With
journalism. And I don't care two
shits if by me saying this I won't
ever write for your stupid little
rag again.

(chuckling now)

What a disgrace! Come to think of
it, I know exactly what I want to
write about next. A story about
this very conversation we're
having. I'll quote everything you
said. You want salacious? I'll give
'em...you. And I won't even have to
lie! You heard it first here,
buddy.

WINNY

Jack.

JACK

Don't "Jack" me, *dude*.

WINNY

(alarmed)

JACK! We have to get off the chair
now.

Jack lost track of himself in his tirade. They are seconds
from having to get off the chair. Jack narrowly makes it off
before crashing on the chairlift's down ramp - further
embarrassing himself on his skis.

A crowd of skiers including Winny have a hearty laugh at Jack's expense. Of course Winny helps him up... in front of everyone.

EXT. SUMMIT OF AJAX MOUNTAIN - DAY

Jack and Winny stand facing each other.

JACK

Thanks for the strudel.

(beat)

But other than that...

WINNY

Jack.

(beat)

I was hoping you'd say all that. Most kids who come to this town, all they think about is who's playing the Belly Up, was that Bieber at Snowmass? And whose bed they gonna be sharing.

Jack is a deer in the headlights.

WINNY (CONT'D)

Jack, you got a job. That is... if you still want one? Write about the homeless. About immigration. About anything you want. If it's about me... go easy.

(beat)

I take that back. Anything you want. Oh, and I have no clue who Belle Rachel is or her friends.

And with that, Winny skis off in perfect control. Beautiful turns down a beautiful mountain. Hair in the wind. The old pro.

Slowly, a smile forms on Jack Ratzlaff's face.

FADE OUT.