

**DANI & JOE: A GEN X LOVE STORY**

by  
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## CAST

**DANI** - (female/50ish) Confident and capable, with an aura of assuredness about her. She possesses a depth of soul that makes her feel powerful. Also a great vulnerability that doesn't. Forever searching for a big life, like in novels. She is plus sized and not usually referred to as beautiful, but that doesn't mean she isn't. There is something unusually captivating about her.

**JOE** - (male/one year older than Dani) The brother of Dani's childhood best friend and was close to her parents as well. Reserved and aloof, extremely intelligent and very successful. An intellectual liberal, but conservative in manner. His life is lined up and in order, all things in place. He carries himself with authority, and those around him give it to him. He is as far removed from his primal self as is possible...except when he's around Dani.

ACT ONE

A New York City apartment, empty except for a Queen-sized bed in the middle of the room, and a man (JOE) leaning against the wall. Waiting.

From down a hallway comes the sound of keys, a door opening, closing, and footsteps approaching.

A woman (DANI) enters the room. She is dressed in a chic, avant garde manner. Except for her shoes which are worn boots, cool and comfortable.

She sees Joe. He sees her. Then they quickly look away.

DANI  
Where's the guy?

JOE  
Running late.

She looks around, anywhere but at him. He looks at a fixed point, anywhere but at her. They are paying complete attention to each other without paying any attention to each other.

The bed is (and will remain) between them.

DANI  
How late?

JOE  
Half hour.

DANI  
(she sighs a heavy sigh)

JOE  
Do you have obligations?

DANI  
Yes. I do.

JOE  
Is one of them a costume party?

He looks at her outfit pointedly.

DANI  
Speaking of obligations: how's your wife?

JOE  
Pregnant. Again.

DANI  
Your third?

JOE  
Fourth.

DANI  
Jenny said you had two kids.

JOE  
Three.

DANI  
So Jenny was misinformed.

JOE  
Most people are.

DANI  
You got right to it then.

JOE  
Yes.

Silence. The pressure builds in the room with all the things not said. Let that silence happen until the pressure is too much. (\*this is a note for all the sections of silence in the piece, let them be organically broken.)

Finally:

JOE  
Jenny said you're a librarian now.

DANI  
...

Finally:

DANI  
Will you please text the guy and find out how much  
longer?

\*

Joe sends a text.

DANI  
Thank you. I-

JOE  
Excuse me, I-

JOE  
...need to make a call.

He exits. The door to the  
hallway opens and closes.

Dani's cool facade breaks...Her  
breathing speeds up. Across her  
face are signs of anger, loss,  
fear, pain, love, desire, self-  
hatred...all the emotions that  
might be engaged when reunited  
with an ex from a complicated  
relationship.

Door down the hallway opens and  
closes.

JOE (O.S.)  
Thank you, I appreciate your understanding. I'll see  
you tomorrow.

Dani pulls herself back together  
- almost.

Joe enters. Hangs up his phone.  
Checks messages.

JOE  
The guy says "within 30 minutes".

Dani takes out her phone and  
sends a text. Receives one. Then  
sends another. Then puts her  
phone away. She is silent, then:

DANI  
This is so stupid.

JOE  
Excuse me?

DANI  
This is stupid.

JOE

What is?

DANI

This. Us. Having to be here.

JOE

That was your stipulation if I remember correctly.

DANI

I never thought you'd actually implement it.

JOE

Then it was illogical for you to pursue it.

DANI

(pointedly)

It was illogical for me to pursue a lot of things back then.

(beat?)

JOE

You have some fucking nerve playing the victim here.

DANI

Language, Professor Joe.

JOE

It's Joseph.

DANI

"Joseph".

(scoffs)

You're lucky I don't still call you Joey.

JOE

Just because you haven't matured past your childhood nickname doesn't mean the rest of us haven't.

DANI

Ah, Joey...I remember him well. It was Joey who first felt me up...Joey who first fingered me...Joey who I gave my first blow job to...

JOE

Your crassness is one of the least attractive things about you.

DANI

Of course I didn't have much choice regarding the blow job...waking up with someone's dick in your mouth kind of alleviates the burden of choice.

JOE

That's beneath even you.

DANI

I'm sorry if the truth is inconvenient for you-

JOE

Would that be the whole truth, or just Dani's version of it?

DANI

The truth is the truth.

JOE

So where does the truth that you were coming on to me rate on your truth scale?

DANI

I did /not-

JOE

/You laid down next to me on the sofa- wearing underwear and tank top-with no bra-and then stretched out your leg and started massaging my dick with your foot - like in Footloose.

\*  
\*

DANI

Flashdance.

JOE

Whatever.

DANI

And I was asleep.

JOE

Uh huh.

DANI

And 15.

JOE

And I was 16. And I reacted like any 16 year old boy - just like you had hoped I would.

DANI

You don't get it.

JOE

I get it.

\*

She starts laughing.

DANI

Okay.

JOE  
I don't.

DANI  
I know.

JOE  
I mean it.

DANI  
Of course you do.

JOE  
Your sarcasm is another of your inferior traits.

DANI  
I bet your wife isn't sarcastic.

JOE  
No. She isn't.

DANI  
Sardonic, maybe? When required?

JOE  
...

DANI  
When complimentary to whatever point *you* are trying  
to make, of course. \*

JOE  
You're not nearly as clever as you think you are.

DANI  
Bet your wife is clever, tho.

JOE  
She's beautiful, she doesn't need to be clever. \*  
(Or: She doesn't need to be clever, she's beautiful.) \*

DANI  
Bet she's the right mix of doting mother and adoring  
wife. Never too much. Never too little. Just  
attractive enough to make other men admire you, but  
not enough to where she doesn't spend a great deal of  
her time exploring and planning ways to be sexually  
adventurous in a desperate attempt to keep you  
interested. \*

JOE  
And I love her deeply for it.

DANI  
So why are you here, then? \*



JOE

Oh, Dani...you really don't think I...Come on now, you're smarter than that.

DANI

(She smiles pityingly at him.)

JOE

I have no feelings for you Dani, good or ill.

DANI

You didn't have to be here.

JOE

I did if I wanted my half of the money.

DANI

You already have money.

JOE

Not enough to where I can turn my back on the proceeds of half of an above-market New York City apartment I bought when the market was depressed I don't.

DANI

You're a best selling author.

JOE

Of books on Economics.

DANI

And a think-tank influencer.

JOE

I'm pretty sure that's not a thing.

DANI

You could have bowed out. In fact it would have been the gentlemanly thing to do.

JOE

You're the one who left, if anyone should be bowing out it's you.

DANI

For someone with no feelings, you seem to have some feelings.

That lands on him. Silence

DANI

If you loathe me /as much as you-

\*

JOE  
/I don't loathe you.

\*

DANI  
You can barely even look at me.

JOE  
I could care less about you.

DANI  
Is that right?

JOE  
Other than an occasional cringe-worthy memory from a youthful indiscretion, I truly do not think about you at all.

DANI  
Youthful like ma at 13 when this all began? Or youthful like me at 37 when it ended?

\*

\*

JOE  
I swear on the lives of my children that I have no feelings of any kind for you - now or ever.

DANI  
So you put my name on the deed because I was so irresistible, is that it?

JOE  
You have your own perverse kind of charm.

DANI  
Seriously.

JOE  
(shrugs)  
Everyone's got a kink.

Silence.

Dani retreats. Takes out her phone, and scrolls through. After some time:

JOE  
I don't appreciate the thing about the blow job.

Dani doesn't look up from her phone.

JOE  
I did not force myself upon you.

DANI

Ok.

JOE

You came to me. You came to me in the middle of the night when I was asleep. Every single time you came to me.

DANI

Except for the time you came to *me* when I was 17.

JOE

I came to visit your dad. Not you.

DANI

And you came to *me* in the middle of the night while *I* was asleep. Were you visiting my dad then, too? \*

JOE

What does it matter? You hid from me the rest of the weekend. \*

DANI

Your grand gesture denied by the fat girl you were trying to humor?

JOE

Rest assured it was only me I wanted to humor. \*

DANI

And then you came to me here, in New York. After my dad died. \*

JOE

I had to be here for work.

Silence. Then: \*

DANI

You can't even give me one.

JOE

Give you one what?

DANI

One small bit of acknowledgement that I was worth the effort. \*

JOE

You mean something other than putting you on the deed to a New York City apartment?

DANI

Yes. I mean something other than that.

JOE  
You knew the deal.

DANI  
What deal.

JOE  
From the very beginning.

DANI  
The beginning - when I was 13, you mean?

JOE  
Yes, the beginning when you were 13, and would wait  
until my then-girlfriend left and then sneak into my  
garage to make-out with me. And also the  
middle...when you were 16 and would wait until that  
girlfriend left and then sneak into my room and fuck  
me. And the /end when-

\*

DANI  
/The end when I would wait until you left your fiance  
to sneak into our apartment and fuck me? Except I  
didn't know you had a fiance. Did I?

\*

JOE  
You knew there was someone else in my life.

DANI  
You should have told me.

JOE  
We were having an affair, Dani. The whole point is  
don't ask don't tell.

DANI  
For you maybe.

JOE  
Yes, exactly for me. An affair is also a very selfish  
endeavor.

DANI  
What about me?

JOE  
What about you?

DANI  
What was I supposed to get out of it?

JOE  
Decent sex and a place to stay?

DANI

Fuck you.

JOE

What did you want out of it? \*

DANI

A connection to another human being. What did you want?

JOE

A lot of sex. With a lot of women. A lot of different women.

DANI

...

JOE

You weren't the only one. Ever. But you were one of the longest. If that makes you feel "special".

DANI

Was I nothing to you?

JOE

You were available.

DANI

Nice.

JOE

And you would do whatever I wanted you to.

It is a demeaning statement, and we for a moment feel her feeling her shame. \*

\*  
\*

DANI

And that was enough?

JOE

Yes. Yeah. Hell yeah.

DANI

And now?

JOE

I don't cheat anymore.

DANI

Since when?

JOE

Since I walked into this apartment and found it cleared out of your belongings.

He's carried that hurt for ten years...so it lands, but she won't give it to him and pushes on.

DANI

And was that before, or after, your honeymoon?

She's carried that hurt for ten years...so it lands, but he won't give it to her and pushes on.

JOE

After.

DANI

Because I broke your heart?

JOE

Because you helped me understand how lucky I was to have an exquisite woman without any penchant for the self-serving immaturity you displayed waiting for me at home.

DANI

At home on your tree-lined street, with your picket fence and two-car garage you mean?

JOE

Have you been stalking me?

DANI

You wish.

He doesn't believe her.

The picture on your book jacket?

JOE

So you've read my books?

DANI

(shaking head)

I like interesting books - no, I had to re-shelve it a couple of times when I worked at the library.

JOE

Worked? So you're not a librarian anymore?

DANI

No.

JOE

What are you then?

DANI  
A muse.

JOE  
A muse.

DANI  
Yes.

JOE  
I didn't realize "muse" was an actual career choice.

DANI  
And yet, here I am.

JOE  
Not since the fall of the Roman Empire.

DANI  
Greek...as you well know. I'd bet money you even know  
the word in the original language.

JOE  
(almost sheepishly)  
Moúsa.

DANI  
Show off.

JOE  
Says the muse...

They don't laugh, or even smile,  
but there is a moment - a very  
brief moment of humor, briefly  
shared between them. It is gone  
immediately, but something has  
begun. (In my head the visual is  
a pinball being released and  
ready to be engaged. The  
visceral is expectant, primal  
and dangerous. Also maybe  
stepping into the roles that  
define them to each other?  
Though neither of them have any  
sense of any of that  
consciously. Yet.)

JOE  
So, what are the duties of a modern day muse?

DANI  
Same as they ever were.

JOE  
You are inspiring a...?

\*

She lets it hang a moment, then:

DANI  
He's a photographer.

That it's a "he" doesn't escape  
Joe.

JOE  
And what do you do for this photographer? How do you  
inspire him.

DANI  
He likes me to be around him.

JOE  
(mocking)  
Your proximity generates greatness?

\*

DANI  
He says my proximity generates the most expansive and  
creative ideas he's ever had.

JOE  
And how do these ideas manifest?

DANI  
He creates beautiful characters for me to embody and  
present, then places me in various environments and  
shoots it.

JOE  
So he plays dress up with you.

\*

DANI  
He likes looking at me.

JOE  
Is that so.

DANI  
And showing me off.

A challenge to him, who didn't.

\*

JOE  
Ágria tsírko.

DANI  
...



JOE

That's Greek for "circus freak". Which is what you sound like you are actually embodying. \*

She studies him. Then:

DANI

You are so intelligent in so many areas, but when you come across something that doesn't fit neatly into your formulas and equations, something that requires you to go beyond your intellect and into your soul to understand, you always demean it.

JOE

I understand perfectly - this artist dresses you up in crazy outfits, sticks you somewhere out in public looking uncomfortable, and takes pictures of it.

DANI

They are not crazy outfits. They are ensembles designed to be a commentary on society's limited view of beauty! \*

JOE

They are outfits designed to make you feel as humiliated as possible in public view as he records your shame and discomfort for all to see in perpetuity. The only difference between that and a carnival freak show is that instead of a sideshow tent with swill on the ground, it takes place in a swank gallery with swill on the walls, and everyone pretends it's the most interesting thing they've ever seen. At least at the freak show patrons have the decency to acknowledge it's their base and prurient curiosities for why they're there...the gallery crowd pretends they're there for the art, and not the subjugation of those they wouldn't look twice at normally. \*

DANI

I am not being subjugated.

JOE

That's not how it looks in those photographs.

Dani regards him for a moment, then:

DANI

What photographs would those be, *Joseph*? \*

JOE

...

DANI

Now...how would someone who hasn't thought about me \*  
in ten years know what I looked like in those photos?

JOE

... \*

DANI

Who's the stalker now?

to be cont'd... \*