

**OLD FRIENDS**

By Christiane Lange

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ACT 1

ATHENS

1. EXT. STREET IN EXARCHEIA - DAY

Shot of classic art deco building.

Front door opens and LAERTES [~65] steps out and carefully scans the street. His appearance is informally elegant - like an arty intellectual.

He carries a walking stick that seems to be more style than need, as he walks off perfectly vigorously.

2 INT. CAFÉ EXARCHEIA - DAY

Laertes is sitting at a table, upright and still, hands folded over the walking stick. He is watching the door.

Nobody else is there, except for the waitress and an old man in a corner. The old man is watching a football game on a muted TV.

PHILIP [60s] walks in and joins him at the table. He looks like an old-school PASOK functionary, which he is.

Laertes doesn't greet him, just looks at him with a mix of curiosity and irony.

PHILIP

(showily friendly)

My old friend, it's good to see you.

Philip puts his cellphone on the table, clearly a habit.

LAERTES

Your definition of friendship must be different from mine.

PHILIP

Comrades then? Laertes, we have history!

LAERTES

Comrades?

(he looks incredulous)

I have betrayed comrades because of you.

PHILIP

Don't be like that. We've been good for each other.

Laertes gives him a look. Philip persists in looking jovial.

PHILIP

I saw that your godson had a solo show recently. You must be so proud. I hear he's quite the painter.

LAERTES

(sharply)

Let's leave Nikos out of this.

PHILIP

But why? You mean he doesn't know what you got up to back in the day?

LAERTES

That's cheap. Even for you, Philip. Your wife? Children? Your mistress? Gossip says that you're bedding the prime minister's mother. Convenient! You never stop, do you? For your own sake, leave it be.

PHILIP

All right, all right, don't get yourself all worked up.

The waitress approaches and sets down a glass of water for each.

WAITRESS

What can I get you?

LAERTES

Greek, double, sweet.

PHILIP  
(chuckling)  
You're such a traditionalist.  
Freddo, medium, please.

Waitress leaves to get their order.

**ACT 2**

4 INT. CAFÉ EXARCHEIA - DAY (CONTINUED)

Laertes is furious, but keeping himself in check.

LAERTES  
(coldly)  
Why am I here? Why don't you get  
to the point?

Philip drops the jovial act, and shows himself - a  
hard-nosed operator.

PHILIP  
(business-like)  
I need a favor, for old times'  
sake.

LAERTES  
You have balls, that much I'll  
give you.

PHILIP  
What did you expect? M21's back  
in the news. First the proclama-  
tion about that robbery, then  
the assassination. You had to  
know I would need to talk to  
you!

LAERTES  
I'm a respectable, retired aca-  
demic. That was the deal, and  
I've kept it to the letter.

PHILIP  
They quoted the first M21 proc-  
lamation. Those are your words  
they used.

LAERTES

And you're one of the very few people who even know that those words were mine. Words that are in the public record. I can't control if some kid decides to reuse them 40 years later.

PHILIP

Who says it was a kid?

LAERTES

According to the papers, it was a prank, so, a kid. Who says otherwise?

Philip's expression shows that he is debating how much to tell Laertes. The waitress brings the coffees.

Philip and Laertes maintain the eye contact like two boxers and ignore the waitress. But Laertes remembers his manners, and turns to her with a smile.

LAERTES

Thank you very much.

Philip follows the waitress with his eyes, to make sure she is out of earshot before he continues.

PHILIP

Since when do you believe the papers?

LAERTES

Since I became a civilian. I write scholarly articles on French literature these days, not proclamations. My days as an activist are long gone.

Philip smirks.

PHILIP

Activism? Is that what we call it these days?

LAERTES

(resigned sadness)  
We were the vanguard, but we failed. We failed.

PHILIP

You know, that's something I always admired about you. You were a true believer. Ridiculous, but admirable.

LAERTES

Are you just here to insult me?

PHILIP

No, not at all. We have a situation.

LAERTES

You may have a situation. I don't.

Philip takes a sip of coffee, measuring up Laertes over its rim.

He sets down the cup carefully, and checks his phone for messages.

Laertes just looks at him rather arrogantly, as he waits.

PHILIP

(superior air)

Don't you understand? I'm here to protect you.

LAERTES

Do tell! Protect me from what exactly?  
Some joker puts a proclamation in the paper about a robbery that didn't happen. A politician is gunned down.  
What does any of that have to do with me?

Philip gives him a look that says "really?"

PHILIP

This is the case of the decade. It won't just go away.

LAERTES

So?

PHILIP

Everything points to M21. The proclamation, the way they killed Vangelis.

LAERTES

May I remind you that M21 ceased to exist a long time ago, and that you're the one who shut it down?

PHILIP

With your help, yes.

LAERTES

I don't need reminding. I live with that every day.

The old man in the corner gets up and starts shuffling towards the door.

His route takes him right by Philip and Laertes' table. They both notice and in silent agreement stop talking and sip their coffees.

### ACT 3

PHILIP

What I am trying to get through to you is that, like it or not, M21 is back from the dead.

LAERTES

We both know it isn't.

PHILIP

OK, let me try again. M21 *needs* to come back from the dead. It ties up all the stray ends in this mess, if it's M21. But that also means we'll have the Americans and the Brits breathing down our necks, don't you see? We need arrests and quickly.

Laertes stares at him coldly.

LAERTES

We? You need this perhaps. *We*  
don't.

PHILIP

Don't be so obtuse. It doesn't  
suit you. You're all over the  
old files. If we allow this in-  
vestigation to run rampant,  
you're at risk, again.

LAERTES

(leaning towards  
Philip)

Philip, what you don't seem to  
grasp is that any risk to me is  
a risk to you.

A look of equal parts confusion and dread moves  
across Philip's face, but he stays with the attack.

PHILIP

What you don't understand is  
that you need to help me fix  
this. I will need names, old ev-  
idence, something to make this  
go away.

LAERTES

No. I did it once, and swore it  
would never happen again. You'll  
have to find a different scape-  
goat for your problem.

PHILIP

You can swear all you like.  
Doesn't change the situation.

LAERTES

(cold ironic edge)

Only if you think I would be  
fool enough to leave it at  
swearing.

There are tapes of our conversa-  
tions in several safe places.  
Anyone goes near me or anyone  
else in those old files and  
you're history. Forget an M21  
revival. I told you, find a dif-  
ferent solution to *your* problem.  
Understood?



Philip, exasperated, realizes he has lost the game and leaves without another word.

Laertes once again sits very still and upright, resting his hands on the walking stick.

He takes out his wallet and leaves enough money for the bill.

Then he pulls out his phone, dials.

LAERTES

Nikos? I need to see you.

(he listens)

As soon as possible.

(he listens)

That's fine, I'll be there.

Laertes gets up and walks to the door. This time, he is leaning on the stick.

**END**