

The Bad Deal

By

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The Bad Deal by Stuart Byng

First Edition

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The Bad Deal

Carlos was the epitome of a charming man. Young, beautiful, and with a personality that would charm the birds from the trees and arriving in the United Kingdom from Brazil just two years ago, at the age of 20. He was an ambitious salesman, already amassing quite a fortune before he left his home country. He left to become even more successful, as he felt his skills could be put to better use in other countries. He was gifted with the ability to convince any person of almost anything. Such was his charm. It had allowed him to become a salesman that was hard not to buy from. He now ran his own shop in a mid-sized town in the UK, Stonebridge. His shop name was a play on his surname, Teixeira, and was called Tex's Emporium. In his shop he sold a wide range of items. There were many gimmicky items that many people didn't realise they needed, at least until Carlos worked his magic and they often ended up leaving with two or three of them, plus other products.

Carlos also ensured that there was a constant refreshing of his items, with new things added on a daily basis. He knew people would always want to buy things, and he intended to be the one who had just what they needed. Although he sold many kinds of gadgets, he stood by the usefulness and quality of every single item. He knew every detail about every single item in his shop. This was the key to his success. He provided quality items at very reasonable prices. Honesty in all his business dealings was the way he operated and was the only way he wanted to operate. However, he did also offer a more specialist product to those in need. He could usually tell within seconds of speaking to someone if they would be in need of this service. He supplied a range of cures for the many addictions and problems of life. He had researched and invested much time and effort into this other side of the business, and although it was lucrative, it was his desire to help others that drove him to do what he did. He was, on the whole, an honest man.

He opened seven days a week, as he liked to always be available when anyone needed him. He felt that his shop was doing a great service to the community. He always arrived at the shop one hour before opening time. He liked to have the presentation all in order, so that his products were always shown in their best light. He was meticulous in the way his shop was set out, and every item was in a specially chosen area in order to maximise the impact it had on the customer. He was successful because he was so careful about every single aspect of the business.

Within ten minutes of turning the sign round to open on this fine but frosty Monday morning, the bell over the door gave out the familiar jingle. Carlos stood smiling behind the counter. A short woman of about fifty came through the door. She turned to the left and began to browse the aisles. He felt this one

might be just a browser, but he would give her a few minutes at least to allow her time to settle into the ambiance of the shop. She walked slowly around, occasionally picking an item up and examining it, then placing it back on the shelf. Once she was halfway round, Carlos approached her.

“Is there anything I can help you with, madam?” he said, smiling his most winning smile.

“I’m just looking at the moment thanks” she replied without looking up at him

“No problem, but if I may be of any assistance, please just let me know”

“Okay thank you”

She glanced up at him then, and the change on her face was instantaneous. As soon as she saw him, her slight frown disappeared to be replaced by a broad smile. He knew then that he would make a sale here. It was just the way it went, mostly.

“Well, I was looking at this item here actually” she said, picking up a gadget that cleaned spectacles.

“I see yes. Well, that is a very popular item. It has a scratch resistant brush that you first use to clean the surface of the lenses. Then you remove the compact case and apply the two carbon micro-fibre pads to both sides of the lens. It removes all marks and leaves your glasses sparkling like they are new again”

During his sales pitch, the woman was mesmerised. She did not take her eyes away from Carlos’ face.

“Let me demonstrate for you” he said, holding his hand out for the woman’s glasses. She gave them to him immediately. He took them and brushed the lenses as he had explained. Then he used the cleaning pads. Within a minute, he returned them to the woman. She examined them very carefully for almost a minute.

“Wow, these are so clean. Even cleaner than when they were new! I will take some. Actually, I will take some for my friend too. Wow”

“That’s great, madam. This way, please”

He lead her to the counter where he put the items through the till. There were no complaints at the price of the items from the woman. She was positively beaming. She placed them in her bag and took her change.

“Thank you very much” she said

“My pleasure, madam. Please come again soon”

“Oh, I will. Bye!”

She left the shop. Carlos was very happy with his first sale. The woman had been positively ecstatic with her purchase. This is how he wanted every customer to feel. Most of the time, this is what happened.

It had been a busy day for Carlos. He had sold over two thousand pounds’ worth of items. This was about the average for a Monday. It was only half an hour until closing time, and it would most likely be quiet until then. It was possible there would be no more customers now. It was already dark outside,

and this usually meant a much slower flow of people. He checked over the day's sales. Once he had added it all up, it was actually better than he had estimated. It totalled £2675.22. This was excellent for a Monday.

Just when he thought he was finished for today, the bell over the door gave out its jingle. It was a sound he always loved, even this late in the day. The man who had entered was very smartly dressed. He looked like a businessman. He was tall with dark hair, which was neatly combed with a side parting. He wore a long, heavy coat. It was dark grey and looked to be made of wool. He didn't stop to browse, just headed straight to the counter.

"Hello sir" Carlos said, applying his winning smile, "How may I help you today?"

"Well" the man replied in a faint American accent, "I have been told that you deal in other items besides these gadgets you have here"

"I may or I may not, sir. May I ask who recommended me?"

"It was Stetson Pope. He said you would know his name. You helped him with an addiction he had a few years ago"

"I see. Yes, I do recall Mr Pope. Nice man. Is he well?"

"Yes he is. He is very good. That is why I believed him when he told me about you. Despite the kind of outlandish claims of the cure you provided"

"I can assure you my methods are tried and tested. I'm sure Mr Pope is enough proof if you know him well"

"I do indeed. That is why I am here"

"Very well. But these dealings are not for normal trading hours. Can you return here in one hour?"

"I can. I need your help"

"Okay sir, you will get it, rest assured. See you in an hour then?"

"Yes and thank you"

He left the shop as quickly as he had arrived. After he left, Carlos locked the door and turned the sign round to closed. He had some work to do.

At 7pm the man returned. Carlos unlocked the door and let him in, locking the door again behind him, then returning to his place behind the counter.

"Right sir, may I ask your name?"

"Its Barnes, Kaden Barnes. And I know your name is Carlos"

"Right, that's better. Now Kaden, could you please explain your problem?"

"I can. I am a gambler. Well, an addict actually. My debts are starting to spiral out of control and it needs to stop. Otherwise before much longer, I will be broke"

"Thank you for your honesty, Kaden. That is important. It makes this process much easier. For both of us"

"And just what is this process, then?"

"It is really quite simple. I give you seven pills. You just take one a day, always at the same time, lets say 10am. You must stay as close as possible to this time every day. And certainly no more than 30 minutes to either side of this time. Understand?"

“Pills. Is that all? Surely it can't be that simple”

“It is. They are very special pills though, not available anywhere else. It is my own, shall we say, recipe”

“And then I will be cured?”

“Not quite. That will be your first course. After that, you will be cured completely, you have my word”

“And the price?”

“We will discuss that once you have seen they work. Agreed?”

“Agreed”

“Right, here are your pills”. He passed a small brown bottle to Kaden. “The instructions are also on the side. Although they are simple enough. But the time is vital. 10am sharp is preferable. Then you just return here next Monday at 7pm for your next course. And to discuss payment of course”

“That sounds great”, Kaden says, stashing the pill bottle in the inside pocket of his jacket, “Thank you very much”

“You're welcome, sir”

Kaden then leaves the shop. Carlos knows he will not believe fully until he has experienced the power of the pills. They are a secret recipe, known only to him. It has been his labour of love to create such pills. His desire is to help people, and this is even better than selling them the very useful items to be found in his shop. These pills can be lifesavers.

One week later, Carlos is waiting when Kaden returns to the shop. They go inside and resume the positions of customer and client.

“How are you, Kaden?” Carlos says

“I am amazing. This is amazing. You are amazing. How on earth do these things work?”

“That I cannot divulge. So you feel better then?”

“Much better. No desire to gamble at all. In fact, if I pass a bookies I look inside and feel sorry for the people in there, wasting their time and money. I would go as far as to say that I detest even the thought of gambling”

“Perfect. Just perfect. Now, to the price”

“It will be worth it. What you have done for me is priceless”

“I want £10,000”

“What!! I know I said it was priceless but ten grand. Ten fucking grand! For seven fucking pills. Fuck you!”

“That is the price I'm afraid”. Carlos remained calm despite Kaden's agitation.

“Not a fucking chance. You are a con man”

“But you are cured. Or you will be. If you do not pay and get your final course of pills, then the addiction will return only ten, maybe twenty times worse. Is that what you want?”

“Fuck that, you are lying. This is a con. I just have willpower now that you have made me think I am cured by these pills. No way”

Kaden leaves the shop laughing. Carlos is dismayed but confident that he

will see the man again, and soon.

The next afternoon Kaden returns to the shop.

“Hello Kaden” Carlos says, “How are you?”

“I am in a mess again. I’m sorry about what I said yesterday. Really sorry. I have just lost an enormous amount of cash and have no idea why I even did it”

“I did warn you. The pills are powerful and the course *must* be completed in full”

“I know that now. I will pay. I just need to get the money together, which I can do by this evening”

“That is fine. But the price is £20,000. I need to cover the excessive costs and you have caused me some problems”

“You are joking, right?”

“I’m afraid not. I underestimated my own costs when I gave you the other price. These ingredients are very, very expensive”

“Right. Okay. Is 7pm okay?”

“Fine. And here is a pill for now”

Kaden takes the pill and swallows it dry. He leaves the shop without saying another word.

At 7pm, Kaden and Carlos are back in the shop. While Carlos has his back to him, Kaden lunges at Carlos with the knife he has brought with him. He knocks Carlos to the floor, but he recovers quickly and before Kaden knows what is going on he himself is on the floor and is bleeding from his lip. Carlos is on his feet and the knife is on the counter.

“Why did you do that?” Carlos says, “That was very stupid. I am not stupid. And I have survived far tougher people than you. You are a disgrace. Now get the fuck out”

“Please” Kaden says, in a weak voice, “Please I need the pills. I shouldn’t have tried that. Sorry”

“If you are being truthful now, then you must go and get the money and return here within the hour. No more fucking around. I get money. You get pills. Then you are cured you miserable snivelling little bastard”

“Okay, okay. I will be back”

He hurries out of the shop. Carlos again believes he will return.

Carlos waits by the door, looking out at the street and waiting for Kaden to return. He is prepared for any eventuality. Despite the fact that Kaden is much bigger than him, he is confident he can overpower the man if necessary. He then sees the man. He looks a bit frantic. Carlos is certain that the man has the money. This he just seems to know.

Kaden runs across the street. Just as Carlos is unlocking the door, he hears a screech of tyres. He looks outside. Kaden is on the floor and about a hundred metres along the street there is a blue lorry. Carlos doesn’t hesitate. He rushes out of the shop and to Kaden. Firstly, he checks for a pulse. But just from looking at the man, the way his head is tilted at a severe angle, and the amount

of blood already on the road, he knows he is dead. He quickly searches his pockets, finds the money and pockets it quickly.

A door slams then, and Carlos sees a short man approaching. He is wearing a baseball cap.

“Is he okay?” the man shouts, his voice breaking a little.

“I’m afraid not” Carlos says, “He is dead”

“Oh my god. Oh no. I didn’t see him until he was right in front of me. I just couldn’t stop”

“Don’t worry, sir. I saw it all. He just ran across the road. Didn’t even glance along the road”

“Right, right. Yes. Oh my god, I can’t believe this”

“I will testify to the fact that it was no fault of yours”

“Thank you. Oh, thank you. But what do we do?”

“Call 999. They will know what to do”

“Right. Okay. I just can’t believe this. Why did he run out like that?”

“Who knows why people do what they do. He took a final gamble, and it cost him dear”

THE END