

*Summary: A brief flicker into the life of Marty Jones, a 'J. Alfred Prufrock' of sorts, with an advantageous adaptation of his character in descriptive salutations.*

A literal wreak of panic, Jones stumbled through the street.

“Get a hold of yourself Marty,” he said to himself. The wind whipped up on concrete sidewalk along Madison Avenue. He clutched at his overcoat and pulled it tighter. Always a crowd, he found wherever he was going the mass of people moved against him. “This will work out.” he muttered.

He found out his wife was cheating on him earlier that morning. He knew all along. He also knew his children were not his children, but that took longer for him to recognize and come to terms with. When he saw Robert, her friend, look in her eyes at the Christmas party they held every year one year, and the look she gave him back, he knew. He then put together why John could build blocks so well and Janine was a wiz with mathematics. Marty taught history at the local public high school. So when Janine learned long division and John grew fond of automotives and carpentry, Robert being a contractor, and Marty's wife a physical therapist; putting two and two together when he looked into their eyes and saw they were not his, Marty looked for ways to forget what he knew. He took classes at a local community college to learn science and parts and mathematics and electrical engineering. He was average, to a degree, though he carried a four-point-o GPA. It helped him relate to his kids and help them with their homework.

That morning his wife came over after having slept at her mother's and taking the kids out of the blue the night before while he was grading papers and doing homework after helping the children with whatever they were working on. He nodded after she told him, which she did not expect; so flustered, taken aback, she packed her things as well as the young ones into a suitcase and left. She ushered them out the doorway.

“Is daddy coming?” Janine said. John just looked back. Marty looked to his work, and the house was quiet when the door closed. Charlotte Jones, née Cheniér, came to the door with Robert McNamara with divorce papers and a paternity suit. Marty signed the papers and agreed to the test. Robert grinned down at him with a sneer close to a leer, though in good spirits. Charlotte looked awkward as if she wanted the five minutes to go by fast, after seeing no fuss was to be made; she bowed slightly under Robert's hand.

“You never had time for me, Marty. If you made time for me maybe we could work it out, but I've never felt connected to you.”

After signing the papers, Marty (Martin) Jones walked along Madison Avenue, before stopping at his favorite café he frequented since his early twenties to sit for a cup. Sandra-Shay was working. He liked her, as she did him. She never asked questions—just small talk. He liked that.

“The usual Marty?” she asked.

“Of course, you sniveling cretan. What did you think I was going to as for, a rope?”

“Easy, Marty,” she said. “You've never talked to me that way before.”

“Then maybe you should do your job and get me a cup of coffee,” he said. She seemed crestfallen, and abject, left to run his order to the baristas in the back of the shop from the patio-

area. Marty thought nothing. He was beyond thinking for this moment. So much was always there, but here, he could be nowhere.

“Here's your cup, Marty,” she said, after returning with a mug and saucer.

“Thanks, you revolting waste; it's burnt. I've been coming here for twenty years and getting the same drink every time, and it's burnt; how hard is your job Sandy—it's Sunday? Is that the reason? Maybe if you tried a little harder at such menial jobs as making a cup of coffee and whatever else brought you here, you would be something better with your life!”

“Marty, please, you haven't even tried it yet.” Tears welled beneath her sad, gleaming eyes. She worked this job and another while putting herself through school and providing for her family since she was sixteen after her mother passed. As a result her father drank himself to death when she was twenty-two. “Please be reasonable,” she said.

“I'll take the coffee but I want you to know what a worthless life you are, Sandy; you are scum, do you hear me? You will never be anything in this life and that will always forever be,” he said. She sobbed and a tear streak from a drop traced her cheek into his cup as she leaned over it in proffered friendship as he said this. She went over to Benjamin, her boss, and asked if she could take a cigarette break. Seeing a crying woman, as would any man, he said yes, and followed.

Marty sipped his coffee and smiled. It was perfect. He waited a few moments and sipped. He pressed the button in his overcoat pocket, and the bomb underneath his vest exploded with an echoing ball of fire.