

HI NEIGHBOR!

by Rebecca Kane

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CHARACTERS:

BRIAN: An average officer worker, man, any race, flexible age, tense.

MARCUS: A local politician, man, any race, young enough to seem naïve, smiley.

SETTING:

Location: A quickly gentrifying section of Queen.

Time: Present day, a rainy evening.

SYNOPSIS:

Brian is just trying to relax at home, but local politician Marcus T. Davidson needs to make sure everyone in the neighborhood understands what he intends to do about the recent uptick in violence. Even if it means being part of it.

[BRIAN turns down the lights in his kitchen/living room to something relaxing. The sound of rain and maybe a little thunder is faint outside. He settles with a little homemade movie snack set up in front of the TV. There's some sort of distinct sequence from just before the streaming era, so a commercial followed by a distinct sitcom theme, like That 70s Show or Big Bang Theory or something. Just as the theme hits, his phone rings.]

BRIAN:
Christ.

[He looks at the number. Seems unfamiliar, but he picks up anyway.]

BRIAN:
Hello?

[He is taken aback by how loud the recorded call is. He also cringes because once or twice during the call, there's some sort of crackle.]

PHONE CALL [AUDIO]:
Hi neighbor! It's your local councilman Marcus T. Davidson! I'm proud to represent you and other citizens of Ditmars this week in Albany. On the docket this week is a cause very important to me: expanded ferry service to the Ditmars Park Lakefront! This vital waterway—

BRIAN:
Dream on, buddy.

[He hangs up and tunes back in to his T.V. show. Shortly after, the phone rings again.]

BRIAN:
Are you fucking—

[He looks at the screen.]

BRIAN:
What am I... fucking king of unfamiliar numbers... why have caller I.D. at all?

[He sends it to voicemail without answering this time.]

BRIAN:
Bullshit spam.

[He watches T.V. until the voicemail machine picks up, grabbing Brian's interest when he recognizes the voice:]

BRIAN *[AUDIO, RECORDED ON ANSWERING MACHINE]*:
You've reached Brian, leave a message.

MARCUS *[VOICE MAIL AUDIO]*:
Hi neighbor! Seems like we missed you. I'm just calling to ask for your support again on an issue that's very near to me and—

[There's a quick crackle. Brian jumps to delete it.]

ANSWERING MACHINE *[AUDIO]*:
Message deleted.

[A little wiggled out, he tries to tune into his show again. There's a moment of peace. Then a knock at the door.]

Brian isn't so much startled as annoyed as he goes to the door and opens it just a crack, keeping the chain on.

We can see a smiling face - bright teeth, dark eyes. MARCUS T. DAVIDSON is wearing a raincoat.]

MARCUS:
Hi neighbor! I'm—

BRIAN:
Marcus?

MARCUS:
Hi, yeah, that's me. My name's Marcus T.—

BRIAN:
Davidson, yeah, yeah.

MARCUS:
Are you familiar with our campaign?

BRIAN:

I get calls from you. I got one tonight. Uh, two, actually. Two tonight. It was kind of weird, to be honest.

MARCUS:

Oh, two tonight?

BRIAN:

Yeah, from two different numbers.

MARCUS:

That might just be a bit of a glitch from our calling center. We're rolling out our campaign on a few different platforms. Do you have a minute to hear about our vision for reducing violence in the area?

BRIAN:

No, you know what, I really was just looking forward to a night off...

MARCUS:

It won't take long.

BRIAN:

Do you just have like, a postcard or something?

MARCUS:

I have a flyer for you here and it also has some helpful info in registering to vote—

BRIAN:

I'm registered, thanks.

MARCUS:

If you need to check your polling site, then; the local election is just in a few weeks—

BRIAN:

Dude, come on. I'll look it up. I'll vote for the ferry or whatever.

[He glances at the flyer and looks very tired, but curiosity overpowers the exhaustion.]

BRIAN:

Did you say violence? Weren't you calling me about ferries earlier?

MARCUS:

Well, there's a bill on the docket to expand the ferry route to our neighborhood, which would really reduce car traffic in the area, and I know it may sound crazy, but there's some very real numbers to back up how overall reduced vehicular presence has a direct impact on lowering both accidental and violent deaths in the area. There was a study done by—

BRIAN *[sorry he asked]*:

Look, I'm sorry, man. I'll look it up and I promise I'll vote. See you later.

[He shuts the door and finally goes back to his couch to the T.V. He glances at his phone a couple times, expecting it to ring.]

There is some thunder, louder than expected. This doesn't make Brian jump as much as the next thing: another knock at the door.

He goes to the door but does not open it.]

BRIAN *[through the door]*:

Hello?

MARCUS *[through the door]*:

Hi neighbor!

BRIAN:

Jesus...

MARCUS:

Are you there?

BRIAN:

I... uh... yeah... what are you still doing here?

MARCUS:

The lightning's getting kind of close. I hate to ask— the last thing I want is to be burden to my constituents—but I don't suppose you would mind letting me in? Just for a couple minutes, until the rain slows down.

BRIAN:

Um...

MARCUS:

We can talk a little more about the Ditmars Park ferry stop and how I know it will be of tremendous service to the area!

[Now, Brian just rolls his eyes. He glances at the flyer he left by the door. After a moment, he lets it drop to the floor in a show of annoyance.]

MARCUS:

if you travel regularly to any neighborhood in Manhattan, your travel time could be cut in half! And traveling with regular exposure to the sun has many health benefits.

BRIAN:

Don't you have a team of interns or something who can do this shit for you?

MARCUS:

I prefer to keep a personal touch to my approach. I'll always be a man for the people in the neighborhood I grew up in. Until the day I die.

BRIAN:

Ugh, look, Marcus...

[A huge burst of thunder again. Brian is torn. When Marcus speaks again, he sounds a little scared now.]

MARCUS:

It'll only be for a minute.

[Brian glances outside the window.]

BRIAN:

Dude, why don't you just go to your car?

MARCUS:

That isn't my car.

BRIAN:

Then... well, whose car is that...?

MARCUS:

I don't know. Please, I really think if you hear me out...

BRIAN:

If you want me to vote, then get lost, dude.

[Brian goes to the T.V. and turns the volume up. Marcus knocks a few more times.]

MARCUS:
Hello? Neighbor?

BRIAN:
This fucking guy...

MARCUS:
Please?
Brian?

BRIAN:
FUCK OFF OR I'M CALLING THE COPS.

[He cranks the volume up on the T.V., trying to distract himself from how wiggled out he's feeling now.]

Suddenly, over the T.V., we hear a car screech and crash, then a car alarm going off.]

BRIAN:
Oh my god oh my god oh my fucking god

[He runs over to the window, but then decides he's too scared to look out of it. He just draws the curtains or blinds further shut and checks the lock on his door. He turns the T.V. off and tries to turn the lights back up but for some reason they won't obey the switch.]

BRIAN:
What the hell? How can the power already be out?!

[He throws his snacks into the sink or fridge or wherever, trying to do some deep breathing. He goes over the door after he's calmed down a bit. The locks are good. This gives him some reassurance. He goes to the window and steels himself—

When he looks out the curtain/blinds, there's nothing out there. He heaves a sigh of relief.

The rain has slowed. Brian nods and closes the curtains again. He goes to the light switch; this time it's working and he turns

the lights up a bit. Still, he heads toward another door.]

BRIAN:

Fucking storms. God, I need a hot bath.

[Just as he's almost gone, the T.V. turns on by itself. A commercial audio crackles.]

MARCUS [COMMERCIAL AUDIO]

Hi neighbor! It's your local councilman Marcus T. Davidson. Whether we want to admit or not, violence in the Ditmars area has gotten out of control.

[Brian screams and yanks the power cord out of the T.V.]

As soon as it's fully off, the phone rings. Brian yanks that cord out too.

Someone is trying to open the door. Brian runs over and starts trying to move furniture in front of the door.]

BRIAN:

FUCK OFF! FUCK OFF, I'M ARMED! I CALLED THE COPS! I'M NOT YOUR NEIGHBOR!

[He runs to the phone. No good because he unplugged it. He whips back around, frantic now, and slips on the flyer he dropped earlier. He falls, hitting his head on the edge of the counter. He flops to the floor grotesquely. Blood seeps out from his head with frightening speed.]

There's maybe one more knock on the door. Someone slips another one of Marcus's flyers under the door. It gets caught in the puddle of his blood.

End of play.]