

COMMENCE ATTACK ON THE HOT DOG

BY RYAN GLASER

SCENES

ACT ONE

- Scene I. **The Tasty Dog restaurant in Oak Park, IL.**
Scene II. **Admiral Ackbar's studio apartment on Lake Street.**

CAST

Admiral Ackbar
Nien Nunb
Ethan Parker
Cara Higbee
Juan Gonzalez
Tasty Dog Customer #1
Tasty Dog Customer #2

ACT ONE

SCENE I

(The Tasty Dog restaurant in Oak Park, IL, a culturally rich, relatively affluent suburb less than ten miles immediately west of Chicago. The city was the birthplace of Ernest Hemingway and boasts myriad architectural landmarks, many designed by renowned Prairie School architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who once kept his home and studio in Oak Park.

The restaurant has been relocated from its previous locale and currently resides on historic Lake Street in a building comparable to a miniature IHOP with an isosceles triangular affixed skyward over a large bay window. The Tasty Dog has long ingratiated itself to Oak Park residents as a mainstay for those with an affinity for hot dogs, cheeseburgers, gyros, and tacos, all for fewer than five clams. The basic, modern sign outside boasts THE WORLD'S BEST HOT DOG above the Tasty Dog logo; inside the restaurant is bright and clean with counter seating for solo dining and a half dozen outdoor tables for those who wish to commune with nature.

It's just after 11 a.m. on a Saturday morning and the first real surge of customers are beginning to filter through the front glass door. A handful of customers are dispersed throughout the restaurant, a mix of families, high school students, singular counter diners, and two African American males. The staff consists of the well groomed manager Ethan Parker, age 16, Juan Gonzalez, an affable, pudgy twenty-something with a penchant for sampling fries from customer's trays, Cara Higbee, an uncommitted co-worker in her senior year of high school prone to speaking off-the-cuff, and Admiral Ackbar, former Supreme Commander of the Rebel Alliance Fleet who is beginning his first day of employment with the Tasty Dog.

Ackbar appears amphibious with bulging, oversized eyes, massive bulbous forearms, a droopy, whiskery neck, and a nasally voice that resonates as though submerged below water; he is a principled, well-meaning character from Mon Calamari who brings a cultural naiveté to his interactions with people that often dissolves into unfortunate misunderstandings.

Admiral Ackbar is standing behind the counter with his arms at his sides nodding attentively at Ethan's instructions. Juan is wearing a headset and busying himself with the sudden influx of drive thru orders; Cara is working the register at a pace best described as pedestrian. Three Hispanic males are back in the kitchen slapping together cheeseburgers, ladling chili over Vienna beef hot dogs, and keeping an eye on the fryers.)

ETHAN. Listen Ackbar, I know things haven't gone so well for you at some of your other jobs but ...

ACKBAR (*dismissively*). You mean Trader Joes? Who's ever heard of goat cheese? That's disgusting. Nothing but a bunch of hippies over there. (*Shakes his head in disgust.*)

ETHAN (*calmly*). Alright Ackbar, just promise me you'll come find me if you have any questions and *please* try not to offend any of the customers.

ACKBAR. Geez, if I didn't know your last name was Parker I'd think you were the spawn of Grand Moff Tarkin. Ever heard of a B-Wing starfighter? (*Lovingly*) I designed it, peewee, that's my baby.

ETHAN. See, that's the kind of talk I'm worried about. Just serve the next customer that comes in the door, and remember, Cara's here to help you. (*Glances over at Cara who's chewing gum and running her long, blue polished nails over the face of the register.*) Oh, and your chunky bulldog friend is not allowed to hang out here during your lunch break.

ACKBAR. Nien Nunb? How else is he supposed to get his cup of fries? Ha, thought the Empire was defeated at the Battle of Endor, not throwing their weight around at the Tasty Dog.

(The front door of the restaurant opens moments later and a wheelchair bound African American male begins wheeling towards the register whence his companion, a corpulent, middle aged African American male holds the door open then proceeds to trail him to the register. Ackbar takes up his position at the cash register and watches their approach with some consternation. Ethan has put on a headset to help Juan with drive thru orders; if Cara senses any impending trouble, she gives no indication.)

ACKBAR (*indignantly*). Hey, you can't bring your own chair in here. Geez, what's the matter with you? There's plenty of seating accommodations here at the Tasty Dog.

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #1. What the hell that catfish-looking freak just be saying to me?

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2 (*righteously*). I think he be saying he not want your crippled ass eating up in here.

CARA (*softly, to herself*). Oh, this ought to be good.

ACKBAR. Stand up when you're talking to me. Besides, I can hardly see your face, geez, what happened. If you weren't so tall and unfrocked I'd think you were a Jawa. You won't find any droids here.

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #1 (*more confused than angered*). I ain't know what he be saying. Get this damn fish back in water or we'll come back when you gonna fry him. (*Laughs unconvincingly.*)

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2. Yeah, yeah man. Get me some rye bread up in here, get you on my plate.

ACKBAR. Listen, I'm not a protocol droid, I'm an Admiral. I don't speak your language. Whatever are you saying?

CARA (*looking directly at Ackbar*). This mess is all yours Admiral. Ha, good luck explaining this one.

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2 (*matter-of-factly*). I ain't know if you be filming some prank in here, all in a costume, or you be thinking it all funny to pick on my crippled buddy here. But all we be needing is a couple of them chili hot dogs and some onion rings. Understand Admiral Fishman?

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #1. And it ain't look like we be paying for them now.

ACKBAR. I don't know what your saying. With this kind of attitude you can take your business over to Jimmy John's.

(*Cara, after serving a customer, slips back by the drive thru window and informs Ethan trouble is afoot. Juan, overhearing the conversation, can be heard laughing uproariously. Ethan and Cara are back within moments.*)

ETHAN (*diplomatically*). I'm terribly sorry, gentlemen. What is going here? (*Stares at Ackbar incredulously.*)

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2. Charlie Tuna and his damn whiskers here is trying to get us to go over Jimmy John's. Apparently you ain't serving our kind. You be fixing for some trouble in here? Picking on a crippled black man trying to get himself a hot dog.

ETHAN (*increasingly panicked*). No, no, no trouble here. What can I do for you gentlemen?

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #1. First kid, we ain't paying for nothing. Be getting harassed by a goddamn catfish trying get us some chili dogs and some damn onion rings.

ACKBAR. Ha, you'll probably want goat cheese on that.

CARA (*annoyed*). God, where did you all find this one?

ETHAN (*trying to maintain a semblance of control over the situation*). Gentleman, you got it. No trouble here. I'll have Cara bring it to you on us. No problems here.

CARA (*inaudible*).

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2 (*appeased*). That's what we be talking about. And bring us some cokes man, chili be spicy as hell. (*Staring hard at Ackbar.*) You best find something else to do, get yourself down to Lake Michigan or something man.

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #1. You all be lucky I ain't looking for no trouble.

ACKBAR (*with the aplomb of a former Supreme Commander*). Listen, I don't know if you're casing the place for droids or looking to obtain some free chili dogs and go all Sarlacc pit monster at the Tasty Dog. But this isn't Jimmy John's, we don't serve scoundrels.

ETHAN (*ushering Ackbar away from the scene*). Ackbar, why don't you go clean the bathrooms again, just like I showed you? Alright?

ACKBAR. Oh, fine. If that's what you want Ethan. No problem. Commence attack on the hot dog!

CARA (*kissing up to Ethan*). I'll bring them their food. God, you've done enough *Admiral*.

JUAN (*distantly, from behind the melee*). I'll want to hear all about this stuff. Damn man.

(*Laughing.*)

ETHAN (*Wheeling the customer to a booth apologetically*). Thanks gentlemen. No, no, you're right. She'll bring your food right over.

CARA (*to Ackbar*). You think you can handle cleaning the bathroom without incident?

ACKBAR. What's with those blue nails? You wouldn't last a day in the Rebel Alliance Fleet. Someday I'll show you some prototypes of the B-Wing, kind of looks like that little Volkswagen you pulled up in.

(*Ackbar grabs a few cleaning supplies from a wire rack offstage and heads in the direction of the bathroom, stopping only at the condiments station to pump mustard in his mouth. He grabs a few straws and begins to chew on them as though they were licorice and catches the eye of a child who's mouth drops in disbelief.*)

ACKBAR (*to the child*). Eat your hot dog peewee. (*Opening the bathroom door.*) Geez, didn't know anyone was in here.

TASTY DOG CUSTOMER #2 (*turning around*). Oh man, that damn Fishman again.

ACKBAR (*loudly*). It's a trap! It's a trap!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(*The scene is Admiral Ackbar's studio apartment on Lake Street, a few blocks from the Tasty Dog. The apartment is housed in a vintage three flat and appears quite barren save Ackbar's chunky bulldog Nien Nunb donning an undersized vest, a handful of blankets strewn about the floor, and Ackbar's commander's chair placed centrally in the room. Ackbar is wearing a black Trader Joe's tropical patterned t-shirt and walks about the room stopping contemplatively at a framed photograph on the wall of Lando Calrissian giving a couple of anonymous Ewoks a piggyback ride amidst festivities on Endor.*)

(*Nien Nunb is lying prostrate on a pile of blankets barely lifting an eyelid over Ackbar's constant chatter.*)

ACKBAR (*mostly to himself*). This Trader Joe's shirt is pretty hip. Bet you Ethan doesn't have one of these.

NIEN NUNB (*bubbly snoring*).

ACKBAR. You know who else slept a lot? Yoda. Except he disappeared and became all shadowy leaving only that raggedy frock he always wore. Kind of hippy like, that Yoda. What with that rustic hovel he slept in and that disheveled appearance. I bet he'd eat sheep's milk yogurt if there were a Trader Joe's on Dagobah.

NIEN NUNB (*drawn-out sigh*).

ACKBAR (*with paternal concern*). And you barely touched your cup of fries. It may be your last cup since Ethan says I shouldn't come back, not even to return the straws I stuffed in my pockets.

(Ackbar pensively reclines in his chair considering his prospects for future employment. The sound of Ethan's familiar voice can be heard just offstage inquiring which apartment is Admiral Ackbar's. Moments later he raps several times on the front door coaxing Nien Nunb to bark unenthusiastically and Ackbar to rise from his chair. It is just after 6 p.m.)

ACKBAR. Geez, who could that be? Maybe some of those Japanese tourists outside of the Frank Lloyd Wright studio who tried to take a picture with me. I don't see how they can see anything. *(Opening the door)* Geez, it's Ethan. All craft, prepare to jump into hyperspace on my mark!

ETHAN *(sheepishly)*. Hello, Admiral Ackbar.

ACKBAR *(dignified)*. Ethan, what brings you?

ETHAN. Listen, I'm sorry I had to let you go this morning. Saturday's our busiest day and I couldn't have all that stress around the restaurant. Look, you seem like a good guy, maybe fast food isn't the best field for you.

ACKBAR. But I like hot dogs.

ETHAN. Who doesn't? But that isn't ...

ACKBAR *(interrupting)*. Nien doesn't, he prefers fries. And sometimes onion rings, you know, on the weekends. *(Glances over at Nien Nunb who's now resting comfortably on his pile of blankets.)*

ETHAN *(in the direction of Nien)*. Jesus, what are you feeding him, he looks enormous.

ACKBAR. Nothing you won't find on the Tasty Dog's menu.

ETHAN. About the Tasty Dog, look, I'm real sorry I had to terminate your employment so abruptly. I'm sure you'll be fine, right? What were you telling me? Something about famous battles and the rebellion?

ACKBAR *(prideful)*. Listen here peewee, I was once enslaved to Grand Moff Tarkin. If you don't think I can take a little criticism, you've been smoking that stuff Juan keeps under the boxes of taco shells.

ETHAN. Fair enough. *(Sound of a car horn is heard distantly.)* That's my mother; it's family dinner night. I've got to run to Fazoli's. I wish you the best Ackbar. You and Nien take care.

ACKBAR *(following Ethan to the door)*, I appreciate that. You would have made a hell of a pilot kid, may have even would have had a spot for you on Home One. So long.

ETHAN *(in parting)*. Thanks, I guess. So long Admiral.

ACKBAR *(softly, to himself)*. Fazoli's eh, wonder if they could use a little help.

CURTAIN