

1.

"Hard Boiled Detective"
By Jeff James

1. EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT

We hear the crack of a match. Close-up on the burst of flame, then a cigarette, now lit and dangling lazily from the lips of JAKE GETTY. Camera pulls back, and Jake begins speaking in VOICEOVER.

JAKE (VO)

Billy McTeague was a bleeder.

In fact, the first time I ever met him, he bled a good bit of himself all over my rug and my last good silk shirt. He was a short little man, ugly as sin and hairy like a poodle – all dark and curly – but he was the best numbers man in the tri-state area. Or he had been until he ticked somebody off. A few somebodies, actually. But I didn't give a shit about that. Right now, all I cared about was the \$500 Billy owed me, for "services rendered".

Jake crosses the street and walks up to a dilapidated old building. He steps up to one scuffed green door and knocks. No answer. Jake knocks again, harder. No answer. Jake pulls out a credit card or a lock picking kit and jimmys the lock. The door creaks open and stops halfway with a soft thud. The room inside is dark, so Jake flips a switch, right before almost tripping on something.

2. INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

JAKE (VO)

Two more steps and I'd have fallen face first into a pool of poor old Billy. Somebody sure had made a mess out of him. I decided then that this was going to be a short visit, but first...

JAKE

(Under his breath.)

The money!

Jake begins looking around the room, which, but for the

2.

dead body in the middle of the floor and a good amount of blood, is relatively untouched.

JAKE

Come on, Billy, you shit!

He gives the body a good once-over and then he searches the desk, the chair, and everything on one side of the room. He tries to be thorough without leaving any evidence. He does manage to dig out a flask from one desk drawer, which he swigs half-heartedly. It does not taste pleasant, but he pockets it.

JAKE (VO)

...I knew it was hopeless, though, so after getting good and breathless on top of it all, I headed on over to where the hopeless hang their hats.

3. INT. BAR - NIGHT.

Jake is sitting at a bar and twisting beer labels into grotesque shapes.

JAKE (VO)

Between the lighter fluid in that flask and a few rounds of good old American piss, I got somewhere in the neighborhood of cross-eyed before you could spit twice. I sat there, sorry for myself and feeling mean enough to fight but drunk enough to fall, wishing Billy was still alive so I could kick my \$500 out of his ugly little head. I needed a drink, but the bartender wasn't taking the hint.

JAKE

Come on, one more. On my tab.

BARTENDER

That trick hasn't worked on me in years, mister. Get some cash or get out.

Jake considers this for a second and then gathers himself up to leave. He pushes a handful of change across the bar.

3.

JAKE

Don't say I never gave you anything.

BARTENDER

Your generosity warms the very cockles of my Irish heart. Don't trip and fall in a hole on your way home.

JAKE

Same to you.

Right as he is about to leave, a young woman carrying a stack of fliers walks into the bar.

WOMAN

(Holding up flier)

Mind if I put one up?

BARTENDER

No problem.

Jake watches as the woman pins the flier to a wall. It is a missing-persons flier, and the picture appears to be of the woman herself.

JAKE

(Bemused)

Are you... lost?

WOMAN

(Indicating poster.)

My sister.

(To the bartender.)

This is one of the last places she was seen.

BARTENDER

Not much good with faces, sorry.

JAKE

How long has she been gone, miss... uh... I didn't catch your name?

WOMAN

I didn't tell you my name.

4.

There is a bit of an awkward pause...

WOMAN

She's been gone a month now. Just over a month.

JAKE

Well, if I hear anything, I'll...

WOMAN

Call the number on the flier.

(To the bartender.)

Thank you.

She walks briskly out the door. Jake watches her go with a wistful look in his eyes. The bartender continues polishing glasses.

JAKE

Think she'd go for me?

BARTENDER

I shoulda cut you off hours ago.

JAKE

Eh, go shove it up your...

The rest of Jake's sentence trails off as he stumbles out the door on his way home.

4. INT. JAKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Someone is snoring, loudly - like they have some kind of condition. As the camera searches for the source of the sounds, it pans across a depressing, moldy, cluttered, shabby, etc., office. A desk is in one corner. Right behind the desk and leaning back at full tilt in a crummy office chair is our man Jake, sleeping like a train wreck.

The camera stops on Jake's face. He is dreaming. After a few split-second flashes of some indistinct scenes, we switch completely to Jake's dream.

5.

XX. INT. BAR – NIGHT

Jake is sitting at the bar, drunk again. The bartender is counting his register.

JAKE (VO)

I never did find out Julia Waters' real name, and I never had that dream again, but I think about it sometimes when it gets real quiet outside and I'm low on smokes.

My old partner, Mickey Rhino, once told me, "Some things out there ain't for us to know." Personally, I always thought Mickey was full of shit, but what's to be done about it now? The bastard's dead and he still owes me fifty bucks.

Jake slams back his drink and stares off into the distance.

JAKE

Guess we'll never know, huh, Cappy?

BARTENDER

Don't call me that.

And if you paid better attention, you would know that her daughter was her own sister.

JAKE

Huh?

BARTENDER

Her old man, you know... he's the father.

JAKE

Not following you.

BARTENDER

Well, if you could hold your drink, maybe you wouldn't have dozed off at the end of it.

Jake looks at the bartender, then at his empty drink, then at his empty wallet. He gets up to leave.

6.

JAKE

Whatever, Cappy. I'm headin' home. Keep my tab open!

BARTENDER

You don't have a tab.

Jake stumbles out of the bar and into the street. The bartender finishes counting the register and picks up a TV remote.

BARTENDER

Man, for being such a ladies man, Jack Nicholson sure is an ugly motherfucker.

The bartender shakes his head dolefully and turns off the TV. Cut to black.

THE END