

"THE BENEVOLENT GANGSTER"

BY

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FADE IN:

ON CHURNING WATER

so close there is nothing else.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

sounds echo like screams in the distance.

MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

as two currents of water collide. Swirls of liquid twist and turn. Light plays against dark until everything is...

BLOOD BLACK

CUT TO:

Panicked eyes open.

INT. HOUSEBOAT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

SAUL FISSURE is awake. He wipes the sweat from his face, stares at the clock. CLICK, it flips to "05.33".

INT. HOUSEBOAT / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Saul fills the Bialetti with water, scoops a measure of coffee into the filter funnel, screws down the top.

INT. HOUSEBOAT / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Saul enters cradling hot coffee. He stops at a half played game of chess, stares at the board for a moment. Then moves his Knight to protect a Pawn, attack a Bishop.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - DAWN

Saul steps onto the deck, sips his coffee, watches the sun reach over the horizon. He takes a deep breath, exhales.

EXT. HOUSING ESTATE - MORNING

A Range Rover Vogue pulls over. HAUSER and O'BRIEN get out.

INT. APARTMENT / BEDROOM – MORNING

QUINN lays face down in bed, arm stretched over SOPHIE, bag of Cocaine on the dresser. OFF SCREEN there is a THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, on the front door. Sophie's eyes blink open.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK / SIXTH FLOOR – MORNING

Hauser bashes on the door, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

O'BRIEN
Make a hole.

HAUSER
Hold your horses.

CLICK, the door inches open.

SOPHIE
What is it! What d'you want!

HAUSER
Quinn?

SOPHIE
He's not here.

She slams the door.

INT. APARTMENT – MORNING

CRASH, the door kicks open. O'Brien grabs Sophie.

O'BRIEN
My friend asked you a question.
Where's Quinn!

Hauser pushes past, follows the hall.

SOPHIE
Don't you touch him. Leave him
alone! Quinn. Quinn!

O'Brien backhands her, THWACK.

INT. APARTMENT / BEDROOM – MORNING

Hauser finds Quinn still face down in bed.

HAUSER
Rise and shine. You syphilitic
foetus.

He grabs him by the ankles, drags him upright. Quinn
flinches, squints at Hauser.

QUINN
What did I do?

HAUSER
Like you don't know. Where is it?

QUINN
Where's what?

Hauser throws him at a pile of clothes.

HAUSER
Get dressed.

INT. HOUSEBOAT – MORNING

Saul escapes the cold, slides the door shut. He wanders
past his library of books to the kitchen.

He returns a moment later with a fresh cup of coffee, sits
down at his desk, lifts the page still in his IBM Model D
electric typewriter, reads the last paragraph.

He reviews his notes, takes a moment to marshal his
thoughts. Then starts to type.

INT. DIAGONAL STRIP CLUB / BASEMENT – DAY

Hauser and O'Brien back Quinn through the door.

QUINN
Look. Guys. You're barking up the
wrong tree.

HAUSER
It wasn't you. You didn't do it.

VAUNT COURIER steps out of the shadows.

VAUNT
It's just a big mistake?

QUINN
That's what I've been saying.

Vaunt punches him in the stomach, THUMP.

VAUNT
You didn't take what you took.

QUINN
I wouldn't do that. Why would I do that?

VAUNT
Because it's in your nature. It's who you are.

QUINN
On my mother.

VAUNT
Gentlemen.

Hauser and O'Brien grab Quinn. One on each arm, they drag him across a bench.

VAUNT
You right handed?

QUINN
What?

VAUNT
Are you right handed!

QUINN
Yes I'm right handed.

O'Brien forces his right hand flat on the bench.

VAUNT
Last chance.

QUINN
Please. Whatever you think I did. I didn't!

Vaunt draws a Wakuzashis Samurai sword, jams it against Quinn's baby finger.

VAUNT
You did it. I know you did it. Now where is it?

He pushes harder, cuts the skin.

VAUNT (CONT'D)
Where is it!

QUINN
I sold it! Alright! I sold it.

VAUNT
Who'd you sell it to? Who did you
sell it to!

QUINN
Raymond Springer!

Vaunt grits his teeth, forces down, cuts Quinn's finger off
at the knuckle.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - MORNING

Saul hits carriage return. The page rolls out. He lays it
face down on a stack, solemnly turns the pile over.

He sits with the manuscript on his lap for a second. Then
puts it carefully on the desk beside the typewriter.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

FENWICK WEISSBAUER is on the phone.

FENWICK
(into phone)
Passages have been underlined?

He shuffles through a dozen photographs of an antique book.

FENWICK (CONT'D)
No. No. I'm interested. I'm
definitely interested. I'm just
curious to know how much damage
these vandals have done.
(listens)
Yes. Yes. I realise this is a
unique opportunity.
(listens)
So we do this. What's the final
number?
(listens)
And if you bring it in person?

He writes "14745" on the photograph.

FENWICK (CONT'D)
And that's dollars?
(listens)
When will you be in London?
(listen)
Call me with the details.

He cuts himself off, dials four digits.

FENWICK (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Send her in.

He hangs up, hides the photographs in a drawer. ISABEL
CATOLICA pushes open the door.

FENWICK (CONT'D)
Sorry to keep you waiting.

He comes out from behind his desk, shakes her hand.

ISABEL
I was a little early.

FENWICK
Not at all. Not at all.

Isabel looks around.

FENWICK (CONT'D)
I thought we'd take this somewhere
a little less formal.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - DAY

Saul enters, clean-shaven, wearing a dark suit, matching
shirt. He puts on his wristwatch, pockets a clip of cash.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - DAY

Saul leaves holding a manuscript box. He locks the door,
makes his way up to the street.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Fenwick sits with Isabel in a corner booth.

FENWICK

My advice. Be combative. But not aggressive. You'll get what you want if you stand your ground.

He glances up. Saul pushes open the door.

FENWICK (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil.

He slides out, gesture. Saul weaves his ways past five, six seven customers. Isabel stands up.

FENWICK (CONT'D)

Isabel Catolica meet Saul Fissure.

ISABEL

Mister Fissure.

He shakes her hand.

SAUL

Please. It's just Saul.

ISABEL

Thank you for taking the time to see me.

SAUL

Blame Fenwick. This-is all his doing.

FENWICK

Is that it?

SAUL

Done and dusted.

Fenwick takes the box. Isabel returns to her seat.

FENWICK

Guy's never missed a deadline. In how many years? Not one.

SAUL

You're over egging the pudding a little.

FENWICK

And you're being modest.

SAUL
What would you like?

FENWICK
Not for me. Time to make a move.

SAUL
You're leaving?

FENWICK
Have to get this back to the
office. You two play nice.

Saul looks at Isabel.

SAUL
Excuse me for one second.

He escorts Fenwick to the door.

SAUL (CONT'D)
I thought you'd stay. At least to
begin with.

FENWICK
You're just two people having a
conversation.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Fenwick turns left, starts up the street.

INT. VOGUE (PARKED) - DAY

Hauser and O'Brien watch Fenwick hail a Taxi.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Saul takes a sip of espresso. Isabel loads her cappuccino
with sugar.

ISABEL
What's the thinking? What drew you
to him?

SAUL
Frank White wasn't born. He was
made. He was socialised into it.

ISABEL

No one forced him to become a criminal.

SAUL

He did what he had to. What was necessary to survive.

ISABEL

I disagree. They were all. To a man. Violent sociopaths.

SAUL

Who all had this Robin Hood myth attached to them? Al Capone. John Dillinger. Frank White.

ISABEL

People like to romanticise criminals?

SAUL

Certainly. But I believe there's something more.

ISABEL

Sociopaths don't feel guilt. No guilt. No charity.

SAUL

So what motivated their behaviour?

ISABEL

Getting what they want.

SAUL

Yet they all managed to ride the crest of public opinion against. In Frank White's case. New York's rampant self-interest.

ISABEL

They'd none of them. Even know how to spell "altruism".

INT. VOGUE (PARKED) – DAY

Hauser gets in. O'Brien holds up a magazine, shows him a "d-list" celebrity.

O'BRIEN
Knife or gun?

Hauser glances over at the picture.

HAUSER
Gun.

O'BRIEN
That screams knife.

HAUSER
She screams you get caught.

O'BRIEN
Almost getting caught is half the
fun.

HAUSER
Front and centre.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP — DAY

The Vogue pulls up beside Saul and Isabel. Hauser gets out.

HAUSER
Mister Fissure. Mister Saul
Fissure?

SAUL
Do I know you? Have we met?

HAUSER
Mister Courier would like a word.

SAUL
Courier? Sorry. Doesn't ring any
bells.

HAUSER
Well he knows you.

SAUL
Get him to call my agent. Fenwick
Weissbauer. Make an appointment.
I'm sure we can arrange something.

HAUSER
Stop playing silly buggers. And
get in the car.