The Degenerate

A Short Screenplay

By

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INT. BAR - DAY

Two overweight men, NICKY and FREDDY, both late forties, and both wearing red short-sleeved shirts, sit at a table watching a football game on a big screen TV.

There is a big bowl of peanuts, and some empty beer bottles in front of them.

Besides SULLY, the bartender, early forties, they are the only ones in the place.

One of the teams is leading by a huge margin, and has just scored another touchdown.

Nicky tears up a piece of a paper and throws the remnants in the air.

NICKY
Fuckin’ parlay cards.

Sully points at the paper on the floor.

SULLY
C’mon, Nicky. Who’s gonna clean that up?

NICKY
I’ll get it in a bit.

FREDDY
Where’s that put you on the day?

NICKY
I’m six for six, all losers.

SULLY
It’s bad enough you leave those goddamn peanut shells all over the place, now I gotta clean up your losin’ cards too?

NICKY
I said I’d pick ‘em up. Just take it easy. Gimme another drink would ya?

FREDDY
Yeah, me too.
Sully grabs two beers from a cooler and walks them over to the table.

SULLY
I suppose you want these put on your tab?

NICKY
Considerin’ I ain’t got no money, that’s probably a good idea.

SULLY
Pretty soon, you’re not gonna have a tab either. You’re gettin’ close to five hundred.

Nicky is surprised.

NICKY
Five hundred? For a couple of weeks worth of beers?

SULLY
It’s been a couple months since you paid.

NICKY
Don’t worry about it. Today’s the day. I can feel it.

FREDDY
But, you ain’t hit a bet in six tries today.

NICKY
Those were small potatoes bets. I got the big money on tonight’s game.

SULLY
I sure hope you know what the hell you’re doin’.

NICKY
Trust me. I got a system.
Nicky taps his head with his finger.

:FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nicky and Freddy still sit at the table. A different game is now on the TV, and the score is close.

FREDDY
Fourth quarter. Everything going to plan?

NICKY
Not bad.

A man, VANCE, early thirties enters the bar. He is a skittish fellow, dressed in a blue shirt, blue blazer, and khaki pants.

He nervously walks over to the bar and takes a seat.

Sully comes over to him.

SULLY
What can I get ya?

VANCE
Gin and tonic with a twist, please.

SULLY
Comin’ right up.

Sully starts to make the drink.

Vance looks over his shoulder at Nicky and Freddy. Nicky notices.

NICKY
Somethin’ I can help ya with, friend?

Vance shakes his head and points to himself.

VANCE
Who, me?
NICKY
No, the invisible man sittin’ next to ya. Yeah, you.

VANCE
No. You just look like somebody I know, that’s all.

NICKY
Who?

Sully places the drink on the bar. Vance nods, and turns around to face Nicky and Freddy.

VANCE
Just a guy from back home in Ann Arbor.

FREDDY
Michigan?

VANCE
Yeah.

NICKY
Ain’t never been to Michigan.

VANCE
Yeah, sorry, just a dumb assumption.

NICKY
You just move here?

VANCE
No, I’m in town on business.

NICKY
What do you do?

VANCE
Insurance.

NICKY
What kind of insurance?

VANCE
Boy, you sure ask a lot of questions.
NICKY
Just bein’ friendly.

VANCE
Life insurance. What do you do?

Nicky points to his surroundings.

NICKY
You’re lookin’ at it.

VANCE
You hang out in a bar?

NICKY
And gamble.

VANCE
Really? It must be nice to make a living that way.

FREDDY
I wouldn’t call it makin’ a livin’.

VANCE
I don’t follow.

NICKY
Why don’t you come have a seat. That way we don’t have to keep talkin’ across the room.

Vance gets up and takes a seat at the table.

VANCE
So, why wouldn’t you call it makin’ a living?

NICKY
Well...

Nicky’s cell phone rings and he answers it.
NICKY
Hello? Hey now, the last game ain’t over yet. Well then, I guess I’ll just have to get you your money then won’t I? We’ll talk after the game.

Nicky hangs up the phone.

FREDDY
That’s why I wouldn’t call it makin’ a livin’.

VANCE
You lose a few bets?

FREDDY
A few? This guys in for ten large with the biggest bookie in the state.

Nicky glares at Freddy.

NICKY
Just tell my whole fuckin’ life story, why don’t ya?

VANCE
Don’t mind me, I’ll be gone in a few days. Your secrets safe with me. I’m Vance.

Vance extends his hand and Nicky shakes it.

NICKY
Nicky, and that’s Freddy, and the bartender is Sully.

VANCE
Nice to meet all of you.

A man in a fancy suit, LEO, stands in the doorway and looks around.

Vance sees him, and quickly turns his face away.

VANCE
Shit.
Leo beelines for Vance.

LEO
There you are you little shit.

Vance attempts to get up, but Leo grabs him by the hair and slams his head down on the table.

VANCE
Fuck.

LEO
Where’s the fuckin money, Vance?

NICKY
Hey.

FREDDY
What the fuck is goin’ on here?

Leo points at Freddy, still holding his grip on Vance with the other hand.

LEO
Shut the fuck up, fatass, this is between me and the no payin’ little weasel here. Now, where’s the money?

Vance starts crying.

VANCE
It’s in my jacket pocket.

Leo reaches into Vance’s jacket pocket, and pulls out a small wad of hundreds.

He releases his grip and starts counting the money.

Vance collapses to the floor, holding the side of his face.

Leo puts the wad in his pocket.

LEO
You’re paid up. Try to be a little more careful before you borrow next time.

Leo exits the bar.
Nicky and Freddy help Vance up.

    NICKY
    Who the fuck was that guy?

    VANCE
    His name’s Leo, he works for a loan shark that I borrowed money from.

    NICKY
    Hold on a second here. If you had the money, why didn’t you just give it to him.

    VANCE
    It was supposed to be paid up yesterday. That money was from another loan shark that I still have to pay back. Fuck, what am I gonna do?

    NICKY
    I’ll tell you what you’re gonna do. The same thing I do with my bookies.

    VANCE
    What?

    NICKY
    Keep borrowin’.

    VANCE
    I don’t see what good that’ll do.

    NICKY
    Everytime I lose a bet, I place another one. Lately, I pretty much been labeled a degenerate, so as long as I keep placin’ bets, they’ll keep takin’ the bets, thinkin’ it’s easy money.

Freddy looks at Nicky in shock.

    FREDDY
    That’s your big plan? To keep diggin’ yourself in deeper and deeper?
NICKY
Yeah, cause sooner or later, one of those bets hits, and you’re back to square one. Like this game...

Nicky points at the TV. The score has changed since they last watched the game, and a team now leads by ten points with only twenty seconds to go.

NICKY
...Fuck!

Freddy and Vance turn to look at the TV.

FREDDY
Shit.

VANCE
Are you losing?

NICKY
No, I already fuckin’ lost. This game’s over.

FREDDY
Hey Vance. How much did you borrow from that loan shark?

VANCE
Twenty five hundred. Why?

FREDDY
Cause if they did all of that for twenty five hundred, I don’t wanna be around to see what they do to him for ten grand.

Freddy makes for the door.

NICKY
Where you goin’?

FREDDY
Home, where it’s safe.

Freddy quickly exits the bar.
NICKY
Chickenshit.

Vance looks worried.

VANCE
What are you gonna do?

NICKY
Like I told you, I’ll keep placin’ bets, and they’ll keep takin’ ‘em. If they wanna send a guy like that Leo to come get me, then to hell with it.

VANCE
Sounds like a fairly decent plan.

NICKY
They ain’t gonna sweat over ten grand.

VANCE
Ten thousand, eight hundred seventy five, to be exact.

Nicky gives Vance a confused look.

NICKY
Huh?

Vance reaches into his jacket, removes a handgun and fires a shot directly into Nicky’s forehead.

Nicky falls back onto a table, dead.

Vance puts the gun back in his jacket and walks over to the door. He locks it, and walks over to Sully at the bar.

Sully has his hands up.

Vance has a much cooler demeanor than when he first entered the bar. He takes a seat in front of Sully, and lights a cigarette.

VANCE
Put your fuckin’ hands down and get me a gin and tonic, and make sure you put some goddamn gin in it this time.
Sully puts his hands down, makes the drink as fast as he can, and places it in front of Vance.

Vance takes a sip and winks at Sully.

**SULLY**
Better?

**VANCE**
Better.

Vance continues to sip the drink. Sully stares at him.

Vance gets annoyed with this real fast.

**VANCE**
What?

**SULLY**
How does this work?

**VANCE**
How does what work?

Sully moves his hands in a circle between himself, Vance, and Nicky’s dead body on the floor.

**SULLY**
This.

**VANCE**
Oh, that this. Well, since you’ve gone along with your little part of the bargain, and managed to deliver Nicky on a silver platter, your debt is cleared.

**SULLY**
I know that part already, but I got a stiff in my bar for chrissake.

**VANCE**
That’s not something you need to concern yourself with.

Vance gulps down the rest of the gin and tonic.
SULLY
But I got a fuckin’ stiff in my bar!

Vance slams the glass on the bar shattering it.

VANCE
Listen, fucko, you wanna know all the
details? You wanna know how this is
gonna work? Fine. I’m gonna walk out
that door, and you’re gonna lock it
behind me and not let anybody in, until
shortly thereafter, when a man, a
cleaner, is gonna show up here and get
rid of the body.

SULLY
And then what?

Vance reaches over the bar and grabs Sully by the shirt.

VANCE
And then you keep your fuckin’ mouth
shut, because I swear by christ if I get
word that you spoke of this to anyone,
I’ll come back and burn this fuckin’
place down with you in it. You got me?

Sully quickly shakes his head in agreement.

SULLY
Yeah.

Vance releases his grip on Sully and stands up.

VANCE
Wonderful.

SULLY
What about Freddy? What if he comes
back? He was afraid that something
might happen.

VANCE
If fatass wants to come around askin’
questions, you just tell ‘em that Nicky
left here tonight, and you ain’t seen
‘em since. Good enough?
VANCE
Thanks for the drink.

VANCE
Lock the door.

Sully nods yes and Vance exits the bar.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Vance walks through the parking lot until he gets to a car. He opens the passenger side door and gets in.

INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Leo sits in the passenger seat. He looks at Vance with an ear to ear grin.

LEO
Did it work?

VANCE
Yeah it worked.

Leo claps his hands in celebration.

LEO
Hot damn, that was some good actin’ in there.

Vance stretches his jaw and puts a hand up to it.

VANCE
You didn’t have to slam my face on the table so hard, ya know.
LEO
All part of the act, right?

VANCE
All part of the job. What’s next?

LEO
Another degenerate with his name on one of our bullets.

Vance points out the front window.

VANCE
Let’s go.

EXT. BAR, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The car speeds off down the road.

:FADE OUT

THE END