

Tricks, Lies and Backhanders

By

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INT. BENNY'S - BAR - POOL TABLE - NIGHT

A pair of HANDS arranges THREE POOL BALLS against the END CUSHION.

A cacophony of ROCK MUSIC and CHATTER fills the air.

A RED striped and BLUE striped ball sit side by side on the table with the BLACK ball placed on top. It balances between the two balls and the cushion below.

The individual takes time to stabilize the black ball from falling off. After a couple of attempts to finely tune the arrangement the hands move away slowly...The balls remain in place.

RICHIE (early 50s), scruffy, weasel-ish, a man who enjoyed his youth a little too much, looks up from the table.

BOB (mid 20s), tight haircut, tracksuit, stands at the other side of the table. He looks on intently.

"Working class" would generously sum up this place and its clientele.

RICHIE

Right chief, we're good to go.

BENNY'S - LOUNGE - SAME

Less crowded than the boisterous bar area. Couples engage in conversation. Relaxed, down tempo music plays overhead.

DEREK (30s), bad boy handsomeness to him, BLACK t-shirt, sits at a table before a pint of lager. He takes a sip, eyes up a BARMAID (late teens) collecting glasses nearby.

BAR - POOL TABLE - SAME

Richie stands beside Bob, holds the white ball.

BOB

So what is it you're saying you can do here?

RICHIE

Ok, it's like this...I bet you twenty notes I can hit that black ball with this white ball, without the white leaving the table or touching the red or blue.

BOB  
By just hitting it like this?

Bob does the standard cueing motion towards the table.

RICHIE  
Just like that, no jumps or trick  
shots.

BOB  
Well, there's gotta' be a trick,  
right?

An attractive barmaid, STEPHANIE (mid 20s) approaches with a pint of stout, she hands it to Richie.

RICHIE  
Thanks, dear. Put it on my tab.

Stephanie replies with a smile and a wink, heads back to the bar counter.

Richie turns to a group sitting down nearby.

MALCOLM sits beside JILL -- FRED sits beside SAM (all mid 20s)

RICHIE  
Gentlemen...and lady.  
(nods to Jill)  
I have challenged your comrade  
Robert here.

Bob stares at the table, sizes up the situation. Richie takes a sip of his pint, leaves it down.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
I think he needs your opinion on  
the matter.

LOUNGE - SAME

Derek downs a mouthful, his face drops, MEG (30s), average looks, makes her way towards him.

A sly grin curls her lips -- She wears RED.

DEREK  
Meg...?  
(MORE)

DEREK (CONT'D)  
 (looks around,  
 whispers)  
 What are you doin' here?

MEG  
 (all smiles)  
 I came to see you, sweetie.

She takes a seat across from Derek before he can respond.

DEREK  
 I told you never to come here.  
 This is my...fuckin' local. I'm  
 supposed to be meetin' Kathy after  
 she finishes work...in like five  
 minutes.

MEG  
 I know.

BAR - POOL TABLE - SAME

Richie, Bob, Malcolm, Jill, Fred and Sam all congregate by  
 the table. Bob gestures towards the balls set up against  
 the cushion.

BOB  
 And the white won't leave the  
 table, no trick shots.

RICHIE  
 Or jumps.

MALCOLM  
 Well there's has to be a trick,  
 yeah?

RICHIE  
 Fuckin' Lyrebird we've got in  
 here, have we? Look, I'll make it  
 more interesting. If all of you go  
 in for twenty and I don't do it, I  
 cough up fifty to each of you.

The five punters look at each other, consider.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
 Ye can all have a go first. If by  
 chance one of you pulls it off, I  
 pay up. How does that sound?

LOUNGE - SAME

Derek leans in towards Meg, conscious of the people sitting nearby.

DEREK

I thought we agreed to meet tomorrow night...at our usual spot...? She's gonna walk through that door any minute.

Meg replies with an indifferent smile and nod.

MEG

Yeah, in five you said.

Derek frowns, his exasperation turning to anger. He leans in closer.

DEREK (CONT'D)

What the ff-- is wrong with you? You'll blow the whole thing.

MEG

For whom exactly? Me...or Shelley?

Derek freezes, stumped. He tries to play the innocent card.

DEREK

Wha-- who's Shelley? What are you on about?

Meg looks at him, half leering.

Derek gives up the act as soon as he started it. His eyebrows furrow in genuine curiosity.

DEREK (CONT'D)

How did you find out about her?

BAR - POOL TABLE - SAME

The group still contemplate the bet.

MALCOLM

Nah, I'll pass.

RICHIE

Chicken shit.

MALCOLM

Look, there's obviously a sure way for him to do this. Does he look like the kinda' guy that has money to blow on something that might not come off...? I'll answer that, no he doesn't, ok. No offense. And I'm not givin' him the satisfaction of getting one over on me.

JILL

I'm with Mal on this one, no thanks.

Richie shakes his head contemptuously.

RICHIE

See, you've poisoned her mind now with your lack of endeavour.

MALCOLM

She's old enough to make her own decisions.

Richie quickly turns to Bob, Fred and Sam.

RICHIE

Ok, ok, you three, twenty each if I do it, but! If I fuck it up, I give you...three hundred quid, between you...huh?

The three exchange glances, tempted.

FRED

I'd like to see that cash up front if you don't mind.

Riches fishes around in his back pocket, produces an adequate bundle of notes. He fans them momentarily, proving his worth.

Malcolm scoffs, a wry smile, humbled. Jill laughs.

BOB

Jesus! Did ya flog a lung?

SAM

No way, he wouldn't get half that for one of his!

RICHIE

Yeah, yeah, funny men. So what's  
it gonna be?

Pause. The three reflect on the proposal.

LOUNGE - SAME

Meg picks up a beer mat, picks off pieces, all very casual.  
Derek looks around him warily.

MEG

Oh, the usual way...I looked  
through your phone. You know, your  
messages, call registers--

DEREK

You've no right--

Meg just about contains a laugh.

MEG

(waves her hand)  
Shut the fuck up...Don't even try  
to preach that whole privacy act  
bullshit on me.

Derek shrinks in his seat, glances furtively around.

MEG (CONT'D)

I've had my suspicions for months.  
(taps her chin in  
mock wonder)  
Mmmm, reams of calls, missed,  
dialled and received from a number  
not registered in your phone  
book...That's not mine...and  
presumably not your wife's.  
At least you deleted whatever  
messages you got from her, but  
wait! You forgot about that little  
sent items folder, didn't you?  
(shakes her head,  
laughs)  
Fuckin' idiot...Made for some  
interesting reading though, I must  
say.

DEREK

Look, I--

Meg ignores Derek, looks past him. Her expression brightens.

MEG

Ah, here she is.

Derek freezes for the second time, cringes. He turns around.

SHELLEY (late 30s) a little lower down the pecking order in terms of looks than Meg, marches towards their table. A similarly ambiguous smirk on her face -- She wears BLUE.

She and Meg exchange courteous smiles.

SHELLEY

(friendly)

Derek, how are you keeping?

Derek's expression is gone from "Oh shit" to just plain "Rabbit caught in the headlights". Shelley sits beside Meg.

MEG

I've never seen him caught for words like this before.

(to Shelley)

Or does he put on a different face for you? The brooding, silent type maybe?

SHELLEY

No, just the charming, phoney, loud mouth we talked about.

(to Derek)

So here we are, huh? Your two bits on the side all under one roof.

BAR - POOL TABLE - SAME

Bob weighs up the possibilities.

BOB

...I dunno. I'm having my doubts.

SAM

Me too, it's got to be a certainty for him to be so confident.

RICHIE

Ok, if that's how you feel.

Richie goes to take the balls from their positions.

FRED

Whoa, whoa. What are you doin'?

RICHIE

No money no demonstration. You gotta pay to see.

SAM

What! Show us the fucking trick, man.

RICHIE

No way.

The three trade glances again. Sam turns to Fred.

SAM

Come on, it's only a score. You're pulling in decent wages every week, you shouldn't even be thinking about it. To me  
(points at Bob)  
and him, it's a significant portion of that money we queue for every Thursday.

RICHIE

If it's only that chump whose putting his money down, we go back to the original twenty each way bet...But, if you two jump on, you could get this.

Richie waves the wad of notes in front of them.

Bob's attention is caught by KATHY (30s), a "healthy" built woman, pushing her way through the crowd. A rung down from Shelley on the looks ladder -- She wears WHITE.

SAM (O.S.)

Alright, I'm in.

Bob and Kathy make eye contact briefly, her cold, rigid expression unflinching. Bob turns away, eyes bulging.

FRED (O.S.)

Ok, me too...Come on, Bob, fuck it. I wanna see this.

Kathy makes her way towards a DOORWAY.

"LOUNGE" is written above it.

                  RICHIE (O.S.)  
So Bobby, yay or nay?

Bob looks back towards them, thinks.

                  BOB  
...Yeah, go on.

                  RICHIE  
Excellent, we got a deal.

LOUNGE - SAME

Meg and Shelley remain seated at one side of the table. A meek, uncomfortable Derek sits at the other.

                  MEG  
                  (to Shelley)  
I told him about how I found out  
about you.

Both sneer.

                  SHELLEY  
Yeah, that was rather dumb, wasn't  
it, Der?

                  MEG  
Nope, not too bright, and it ain't  
the first time you've played away  
from home either...and got caught.

Derek lowers his head in defeat. Time to bail.

                  DEREK  
Ok, you've got me. I'm a creep,  
snake, rat...fuckin' piece of  
shit, whatever...But I gotta go.

He motions to stand up -- The two women act quickly, rise to their feet also. They put their hands on both his shoulders.

                  MEG  
No, no, no, whoa there, Joe Buck.  
Not so fast.

Between the two of them, they force Derek back down on the seat.

SHELLEY

You're here to meet Kathy,  
remember?

MEG

You don't want to stand her up  
now, do you?

BAR - POOL TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Richie shakes their hands -- The money is put on the table.

A small crowd of curious people have gathered around.

Richie shapes up to take the shot.

LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Derek struggles tamely to wrangle free from the women's grip, still desperately trying to avoid a scene.

Kathy approaches in the background. Derek's panic rises.

DEREK

Look, just let me go, alright. You  
won't hear from me again, I  
promise. I'm history.

The girls look at each other. They grin menacingly in response, shake their heads.

INTERCUT - BAR - POOL TABLE/LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Richie is bent over the table, the cue directed at the white ball.

RICHIE

Are you ready?

He peers back at the three guys standing behind him.

Without looking forward, Richie hits the white ball gently down the table towards the three balls.

CUT TO:

Kathy appears behind Derek as Meg and Shelley let him go.

CUT TO:

The white is half way down when Richie slams his fist on the table. The resulting tremor displaces the balls.

CUT TO:

Derek turns around. Meg and Shelley step aside. Kathy brandishes a balled fist, a large wedding ring bound around her middle finger.

CUT TO:

The red and blue balls separate, allowing the black to drop down into the path of the incoming white ball.

CUT TO:

Kathy punches Derek square in the nose. The jagged diamond ring penetrates the flesh.

CUT TO:

The white and black balls collide to the CHEER of the people watching. Malcolm and Jill join in, loudly.

LOUNGE - SAME

The whole place looks on as Derek is doubled over on the seat, SCREAMING in pain. Blood leaks from his nose.

CHEERING sounds from the bar area.

BENNY (50s) the owner, his grossly disproportioned belly spilling over his belt buckle, stands behind the counter pulling a pint.

He watches Derek's theatrics, rolls his eyes in weary familiarity.

BAR - POOL TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Richie saunters over to the money, picks it up.

He walks past the three suckers, smiles broadly. They shake their heads, gutted.

LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Kathy stands over Derek, an expression of fury tempered by satisfaction.

Meg and Shelley exit the establishment, mission accomplished.

BAR - COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Bob leans against the counter, stung.

BOB

That decrepit motherfucker.

Stephanie appears behind the bar, smiles.

STEPHANIE

You're like the eighth person he's caught with that this week. That's why he has that sort of cash on him...If it's any consolation.

BOB

Not really...And I see you were bustin' your ass to try and warn us an all, thanks.

STEPHANIE

What am I gonna do, he gives me a cut to keep my mouth shut.

Bob looks back at the pool table.

BOB

Wankers...Pint of Miller.

Stephanie fetches his drink. Derek appears beside Bob, a bloodstained tissue held to his nose.

BOB

What happened you!?

DEREK

I was kinda...found out.

BOB

Again! Fucks sake...You're just being complacent now.

Derek is wounded by Bob's lack of sympathy. He looks around to anybody within earshot.

DEREK

My brother, ladies and gentlemen!  
What a guy, huh? An epitome of  
compassion...Fuck you!

BOB

Don't worry, she'll forgive you.  
Like the last time...and the time  
before that.

Derek puts his elbows on the bar, rubs his temples.  
Stephanie comes back with Bob's pint.

DEREK

Double JD and coke, Steph.

Kathy appears between the two. Bob looks at her uneasily,  
as she puts a hand on his shoulder.

KATHY

I'm sorry, Bob, but I've had  
second thoughts concerning  
our...little arrangement. You're  
nearly worse than him.

Kathy thrusts a twenty quid note into Bob's hand. Now it's  
his turn to look like a blinded rabbit. Kathy turns to a  
confused Derek.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Your darling sibling overheard me  
on the phone the other day  
planning this with Shelley...or  
was it Meg? I've stopped keeping  
track. You know I never liked the  
idea of him having his own key,  
always in and out, "borrowing"  
stuff he never returns...So  
anyway, in order for things to run  
as smoothly as it did out there,  
he bribed me for his silence,  
imagine that! And for very  
reasonable twenty quid. That's all  
you're worth to him. Which is  
something we actually agree  
on...But what a scumbag to do that  
to you, his own flesh and blood.

Kathy shakes her head, TUTS loudly in mock solemnity.

Stephanie comes back with the whiskey and coke. Derek's eyes are fixed like lasers on an increasingly unsettled Bob.

KATHY (CONT'D)

We were supposed to do this transaction in secret, that's what I had second thoughts about...I felt you should know.

Bob's eyes dart nervously from Kathy to his glowering brother.

BOB

Uh, if it's any consolation I just lost it on the table to Richie. He'd be more than happy to show you how he done it.

(smiles meekly)

So no one's really a winner here, bro...you know?

Kathy steps out of the way.

KATHY

I'll leave you to it then.

Bob and Derek stand face to face, poised

Kathy walks past Richie by the pool table. She spots the fat wad of notes still in his hand.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Good, you can put that towards getting us a nicer motel next time.

RICHIE

(grins)

My thoughts exactly. Three star it is.

Richie's lustful eyes follow her out as Derek throws the first punch in the background, landing Bob on his back.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END