

SEVEN DEADLY SINS

- LUST -

"The Portrait"

by

Michel J. Duthin

(inspired by Guy de Maupassant)

FADE IN:

INSERT

A casual notebook with an orange cover.

A hand enters the frame and opens it to the first page.

It's filled with a trembling black ink handwriting.

The first line matches to the V.O.

BRAD (V.O.)

My name is Brad. Brad Cooper.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

BRAD (40), a handsome man, stares serenely at us in a dark room.

An electric light beam coming from nowhere bathes his face.

His eyes in the void, he smiles.

BRAD (V.O.)

Until the age of 39, I lived
peacefully, without knowing love.
Life appeared very simple, very
pleasant and very easy. I was
rich.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

A desert road leading to nowhere.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Relaxed, Brad drives a red Maserati Convertible, smoking a cigar.

By his side, on the passenger seat, a gorgeous YOUNG BLACK WOMAN, dark glasses on the nose, and head laid back, enjoys the sun and the speed.

BRAD (V.O.)

I enjoyed so many things that I
had no much passion for anything
in particular.

The car speeds up.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

It leaves a cloud of dust in her tracks.

BRAD (V.O.)

It was good to be alive!

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The full moon lights the bedroom.

Brad and a REDHEAD WOMAN make violent love. She moans under
Brad's carnal assault and kisses.

Her nails scotches Brad's back while he pulls back her
hair.

REDHEAD WOMAN

(under her breath)

Slap me, pig!

Brad slaps her.

She moans again.

LATER

Brad rests on his back, half naked, and handcuffed to the
head of the bed.

He smiles.

By him, the redhead woman sleeps on her tummy.

BRAD (V.O.)

I knew a lot of women without my
heart being touched by any true
passion or wounded by any of the
sensations of true love.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A night bar crowded by a multitude of people where music plays loud.

A glass in hand, Brad leans against a wall, talking to two girls, a BLONDE and an ASIAN GIRL seated in a booth and laughing.

He looks so self-confident.

BRAD (V.O.)

Those who love in the ordinary
way must experience ardent
happiness --

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the men's bathroom, Brad is making love to the two girls.

The blonde is kneeled, her head at the height of his zip.

Brad's tongue runs on the neck of the Asian girl as he paws her breasts. She arches her back with excitement and caresses the blonde's hair.

BRAD (V.O.)

-- though less than mine
possibly, for love came to me in
a remarkable manner.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Brad is in an antique shop, talking to the OWNER, a beautiful long dark hair woman.

They both stand in front of a magnificent cabinet.

Brad appears to be bewitched.

BRAD (V.O.)

The owner told me it was the work
of a seventeenth century Venetian
artist named Vitelli.

The owner tries to catch Brad's attention with a come-hither look, but he has only eyes for the cabinet.

BRAD (V.O.)

It was very rare.

Brad's fascinated eyes fill the screen.

BRAD (V.O.)

The past always attracted me. The present terrifies me because the future means death.

Facing him, the beautiful owner has turned into an 80 year-old decrepit woman with grayish hair.

Brad brushes the wood with his fingertips.

BRAD (V.O.)

What a singular thing temptation is. One gaze at an object and, little by little --

Brad signs a check to the owner who is back as the beautiful woman who she actually is.

BRAD (V.O.)

-- it charms you, disturbs you, fills your thoughts as a woman's face might do.

He tears the check off and hands it the owner.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The cabinet is now set in Brad's living room. The room is full of old pieces of furniture.

A real private antique shop.

BRAD (V.O.)

It was mine.

Brad places an armchair in front of the cabinet and sits. He stares at it, admires it, a fist under his chin, like a connoisseur.

BRAD (V.O.)

I am sorry for those who never know the honeymoon of the collector with the antique he's just purchased.

FADE TO:

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brad has not moved.

He is still staring at the cabinet.

Then, he gets up, steps closer, turns the key, opens its door, pulls out the drawers --

BRAD (V.O.)

I handled it with rapture, with all the intense joy of possession.

He caresses the old waxed wood, passes his hand on one of the back panels and stops.

He frowns.

Looking closer, Brad realizes that the panel is thicker than the rest.

BRAD (V.O.)

There was something there.

LATER

Brad drives delicately a knife into a slit in the wood.

Slowly, the panel slides back and a secret drawer appears.

Brad pulls it and discovers a piece of folded black velvet inside.

Very moved, Brad doesn't make a move for a while, then he slowly unfolds the piece of velvet.

Inside, he finds an old faded sepia photograph under an oval and wooden frame.

A portrait of a young beautiful smiling woman.

Her blonde and lock hair is put up in a bun. She wears a dress from the beginning of the 20th century and a magnificent necklace of white pearls.

Almost trembling, Brad takes the photograph out.

BRAD (V.O.)

When, how, why had this woman's
picture had been shut up in this
drawer?

He stares at the photograph.

BRAD (V.O.)

What story did this souvenir
conceal?

With the back of his fingers, Brad caresses her face on the glass.

BRAD (V.O.)

Who shoot it?

He takes the frame to his face, smells the wood, and closes his eyes as he breathes in.

BRAD (V.O.)

Who was she smiling for?

Brad reopens his eyes and, swiftly, puts the picture back in the velvet, and folds it back.

He pushes the drawer in, and closes the cabinet door.

BRAD (V.O.)

I decided I would call her Mona.
Because of her mysterious smile.

The cabinet appears to radiate as a door slams O.S.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A sun ray bathes the waxed wood of the cabinet as a door opens and someone enters O.S.

Brad faces the cabinet, hesitating.

He opens frenziedly the door, pulls the drawer and grabs the piece of velvet.

He takes the photograph out and lets the velvet falling on the floor.

Brad stares at the beautiful smiling face.

BRAD (V.O.)

Was it not strange that this picture may be the only souvenir remained of her when she was young?

Slowly, Brad's hand descends on his torso, caressing, rubbing his chest --

BRAD (V.O.)

Was it when they were going to marry that the man who had adored her had taken her portrait --

Brad's hand rubs down his tummy.

BRAD (V.O.)

-- the only thing he could still love if she would ever die?

His hand is about to cross down his belt when it stops.

Brad stares at his own reflection in a nearby mirror.

BRAD (V.O.)

I barely recognized myself. Who was that man who was staring at me?

Troubled, Brad picks up swiftly the piece of velvet, wraps it around the frame, and puts it back in the drawer.

He clenches his fist, deeply sighs, and closes the cabinet.

He turns again to the mirror, glaring.

BRAD

(harshly, to his reflection)

What?!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Brad sits in the bar, alone in a booth.

He looks lost, mind-absented. He hasn't touched his drink.

Around him, nightlife carries on.

Straight couples, lesbians, gays, threesomes, all-nighters, lots of lookers...

On his own, a GUY sniffs a rail of coke.

Around a table, THREE MEN cheer while a tall BLACK GIRL strips, dancing lasciviously on a table.

A SEXY GIRL comes to talk to him, very vamp.

Provoking, she puts her foot on the edge of Brad's seat, right between his thighs. Her bare long and tanned leg appears from under her side-cut dress.

She speaks to Brad but the music is too loud to hear her.

Brad stares up at her, deadpan.

He don't give a shit.

The sexy girl gives him a finger as she walks away and mouths:

Fuck you!

BRAD (V.O.)

She obsessed me, haunted me.

INT. ANOTHER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad lies in a bed, on his side.

He doesn't sleep.

A YOUNG SOUTH AMERICAN TYPE MAN is resting by him naked.

BRAD (V.O.)

I was tormented by turns, as when
one falls in love, and after the
first vows have been exchanged.

The young man is turned to Brad's opposite side.

He softly cries.

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Brad enters his living room and locks the door behind him.

He steps firmly to the cabinet, turns the key, and opens
the door.

BRAD (V.O.)

I wouldn't leave my house
anymore.

He pulls out frenziedly the drawer and takes the photograph
out.

He glosses the glass of the frame on his face, kisses it,
smells it again --

INT. BRAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brad sits at a small Louis XIII table and leans over the
notebook.

He writes frantically, filling pages with a trembling black
ink handwriting.

BRAD (V.O.)

I felt like I was spaced out, in
a trance.

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad is naked in his bed. The frame is put on the bed
table, the eyes of the blonde woman looking at him.

He turns to the portrait, smiling.

BRAD (V.O.)

I could not be without her nor
pass an hour without looking at
her.

He switches off the light.

LATER

Brad is sleeping.

A moon beam bathes his face.

He opens his eyes wide in a jump and scans the bedroom.

BRAD (V.O.)

I was not alone anymore.

He turns back.

The blonde woman from the portrait lies next to him.

Mona.

She's real.

And she's naked.

She turns to Brad and smiles to him.

BRAD (V.O.)

She came back from the dead for
me --

His hesitated hand reaches out for her face, her hair.

BRAD (V.O.)

-- that beautiful, adorable,
mysterious unknown dead woman.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Brad drives his red Maserati Convertible. He looks
lighthearted.

As he smokes a cigar, he turns to Mona seated next to him.
She smiles at him and tosses her hair.

She's now wearing modern clothes and modern hairdo.

BRAD (V.O.)

I took her with me always and
everywhere as she were my wife.

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad is making love to Mona.

He is panting and sweating.

Mona moans under Brad's carnal assaults.

BRAD (V.O.)

I loved her so much that I would
never be separated from her.

He reaches orgasm.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Brad is chatting happily with Mona in the same booth as he
was before. They both cheer and drink.

Brad leans over her and brushes gently a lock of her hair
over her forehead.

BRAD (V.O.)

My happiness was so great that I
could not conceal it.

The blonde and the Asian girl walk by him and stare at him
with weird eyes.

BRAD (V.O.)

No lover ever tasted such
intense, terrible enjoyment.

EXT. BLIND ALLEY - NIGHT

Both leaned against a brick wall, Brad is making love to
Mona.

In the shadow of a street lamp light, her dress is pulled
up and Brad gives the best of himself to satisfy her.

BRAD (V.O.)

But they saw her --

The red and blue light of a nearby police patrol car flashes.

TWO POLICE OFFICERS walk down the ally and step to Brad who hasn't noticed them.

One of the police officers points his flashlight to Brad.

Brad appears in the halo of the flashlight.

BRAD (V.O.)

They guessed --

With horror, the police officer realizes that Brad is in fact alone, his pants half down, masturbating against the brick wall while gazing at the picture.

FADE OUT:

BRAD (V.O.)

They took her from me --

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK - STREET - DAY

Brad drives his Maserati. In the passenger seat lies the portrait.

FLASHBACK - BRAD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brad is alone in his bed, masturbating under the sheets, gazing at the photo.

FLASHBACK - BAR - NIGHT

Brad is sitting in the booth by the photograph, cheering to it.

The blonde and the Asian girl stare at him with weird eyes.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

Brad's serene face fills the frame, bathed by an electric light beam coming from nowhere.

Brad is alone in a cell, seated on a bed in a white room empty of all furnishings save a bed.

With empty eyes, he stares at the cell door with its tiny glass window.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Two men wearing white stand in a long corridor in front of that door.

They watch Brad through the tiny window.

DR. SANDRIDGE is a 70 year-old man with white hair.

DR. REIGL (30) lowers his eyes to the clipboard in his hands.

DR. REIGL

Brad Cooper. Forty. Schizoid-affective disorder.

DR. SANDRIDGE

He's the one of the most singular cases I've ever seen.

INT. DR. SANDRIDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

In his office, Dr. Sandridge sits behind his desk, smoking pipe, facing Dr. Reigl.

DR. SANDRIDGE

By the way, did you read his journal?

He shows the notebook with the orange cover.

DR. REIGL

I did -- I did in fact.

DR. SANDRIDGE scratches his nose and puffs his pipe.

DR. SANDRIDGE
What did you think of it?

DR. REIGL
But -- that -- Mona -- does she
really exist?

DR. SANDRIDGE
Only in his head, but --

Dr. Sandridge opens one of his desk drawers, takes the piece of black velvet, puts it in front of Dr. Reigl, and unfolds it.

The portrait of the woman appears.

Visibly distraught, Dr. Reigl stares at her.

Almost trembling, he slowly clenches his fists on his thighs.

A light of desire appears in his eyes.

Without any notice, Dr. Sandridge shrugs.

DR. SANDRIDGE
A man's mind is capable of
anything.

FADE OUT: