

SHARK WATCH

Original story and screenplay

by Ron Micci

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FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL BLOCK - NEWARK, NJ - LATE MORNING

Cheap row houses and abandoned lots. A flashy late model car slowly cruises the street occupied by three young HOODS. Farther up the block, ROMEO, a goombah in his 40s, strides along, dressed in sports jacket and slacks. He's tall, swarthy, a Tony Lo Bianco type.

INT. MOVING CAR

Two hoods up front, one in back. Passenger side hood scopes the street.

FIRST HOOD

Where is he, I don't see him?

The hood in the back seat leans forward against the passenger headrest, points him out.

SECOND HOOD

That's him.

EXT. STREET

As the car pulls up to the curb.

FIRST HOOD

Hey, Romeo. Ruggiero wants to see you.

ROMEO

What?

FIRST HOOD

Get in.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOCIAL CLUB

To ESTABLISH.

INT. BACK ROOM

Fat mafiosi captain ANGELO RUGGIERO is sorting cash at his desk. A beat, his door opens, and Romeo enters.

RUGGIERO

I got a job for you.

ROMEO

Me?

RUGGIERO

Am I talking to myself?

He rises, goes to wall safe, extracts a satchel containing \$250,000 in cash, places it on his desk.

RUGGIERO

Two-fifty large. Here's an address.

He hands over slip of paper.

ROMEO

A fortune teller?

RUGGIERO

She'll make the exchange. Don't fuck up.

ROMEO

Why me?

RUGGIERO

Robert DeNiro wasn't available. And Romeo -- sample the shit.

Romeo nods.

RUGGIERO

Get going.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GARDEN STATE PARKWAY

Romeo's car speeds by, takes the Seaside Heights off ramp.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PIER - NEW JERSEY SHORE

Children pitch and whirl, swoop round and round in one of those giant bucket rides, their gleeful cries piercing the air.

A car swerves into the parking lot. Romeo gets out, opens the rear car door and removes a satchel from the back seat, as well as a pair of binoculars. He looks around briefly, unzips the satchel, briefly inspects the contents of it -- bundles of cash -- and zips it shut.

He turns, hefts satchel and binoculars up the ramp to the boardwalk.

ON THE BOARDWALK

he pauses, looks left and right. There's a chain link fence along the perimeter of the amusement area. He makes his way there. Stops.

He raises the binoculars, peers out to sea.

WHAT HE SEES through those binoculars -- a freighter not far out.

He checks his watch. Starts up the midway.

AT A SAUSAGE STAND

a teenage KID leans on the counter and ribs the FAT GUINEA behind the grill.

KID

You got sau-seege? Sau-seege for me?

GRILLMAN

Yeah --

He takes a swipe at the kid, who jumps back, bumping into Romeo.

KID

Sorry.

Romeo scowls. Continues down the pier. Passes an amusement booth. A TEENAGER is trying to drum up business. You get three balls for a buck, and the object is to knock tin cans off a ledge with a softball.

TEENAGER

Hey, hey, hey, three balls for a buck. Everyone's El Duque, huh? Come on.

Romeo swipes a softball. Hurls it and knocks one of the bottles off its perch.

TEENAGER

Hey. See that.

He looks around, but Romeo is already gone.

He reaches the edge of a darkened arcade, pauses to look around. Setting the satchel down, he lights a cigarette, takes a drag on it. Checks his watch again. Whips out a cell phone.

ROMEO
 (into phone)
 Angelo? Yeah -- yeah, I'm here. I
 don't see no palm reader.
 (looks around)
 Wait a minute.
 (spies gypsy fortune
 booth)
 I think I got it, I'm good. Yeah,
 I'm cool. Relax.

He stashes the phone. Starts on his way.

Another FIGURE steps out of the shadows -- a FED. Or at least that's what he'd like us to believe. Dressed in business suit. He produces a cell phone of his own, pantos talking into it.

EXT. GYPSY FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH

Romeo approaches, pauses, looks around.

INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S

The GYPSY FORTUNE TELLER is seated in a room draped in deep red. She looks up as Romeo enters.

An evil smile crosses his lips.

He whips out his gun, just basically displays it for her, puts it on the table.

He sits down opposite. There's a tarot deck there.

ROMEO
 You do that?

GYPSY
 What?

He points.

GYPSY
 No.

Romeo throws her a questioning look.

GYPSY
 You gonna do business, do business.

ROMEO
 I need to know you're on the up and
 up.

GYPSY

Ruggiero sent you. The money?

Romeo reaches for the satchel, sets it on table top. He empties it -- thick stacks of bills tumble out.

ROMEO

Two-fifty large.

He begins to replace the money in the satchel. The Gypsy puts her hand on his. They hold a look.

Pause.

ROMEO

When?

GYPSY

Four.

ROMEO

Four o'clock.

(a beat)

Don't try to pull no shit.

Romeo rises slowly. Eyes the Gypsy. He goes out. The Gypsy reaches for the tarot deck. Turns a card: TOWER COLLAPSING.

EXT. BOARDWALK

Romeo emerges from the fortune teller's. He moves to one of the amusement stalls opposite. Ducks into the shadows. Observes.

The Fed who has been keeping tabs on him appears in front of the fortune teller's booth.

INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S

The Gypsy hears someone outside. Stashes the satchel of money. The Fed comes in.

FED

Guy who just came in here?

He flashes a phony police badge.

FED

Tell me about him.

GYPSY

That guy?

FED

That guy.

GYPSY

He wanted his cards read.

FED

Don't give me that shit.

GYPSY

People like to have their fortunes told. That's why they come down to the shore. Sunburns, tarot cards, getting sick on stale pizza and cotton candy.

FED

That guy was a mobster. You can't bullshit me. Start talking.

GYPSY

Excuse me just a minute.

She gets up, disappears into the back. SOUND OF A DOOR CLOSING. Several long beats as the Fed looks around. Now he realizes she's not coming back. He quickly darts after her.

IN THE DARK RECESS

behind the main room, he encounters a locked door. Tries the handle. No dice.

Resigned, he starts back.

EXT. FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH

The Fed emerges, heads down the midway.

Romeo observes him for a beat. Crosses to the Fortune Teller's and enters.

INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S

Romeo looks around. The place is empty.

ROMEO

Hey?

Silence. He tries the door at the rear. Nothing.

He turns, exits.

EXT. BOARDWALK

Romeo starts down the street, spies a diner. Crosses to it, goes inside.

INT. DINER

A lunch counter, booths. It's deserted except for a couple of crusty-looking shore types draped over the counter.

Romeo plops down in a booth.

The WAITRESS comes over. She's about 40, not unattractive.

WAITRESS

Hello.

She hands him a menu. He gives her a good once over.

WAITRESS

You're staring.

ROMEO

The sea air, does things to you.

He stares some more.

WAITRESS

The menu.

He eyes the menu. Eyes her.

WAITRESS

I'll come back.

ROMEO

No -- wait.
(re: menu)
What's good?

WAITRESS

Everything. Nothing. Just pick something.

The front door opens and the Fed comes in. He throws a suspicious look at Romeo, takes a seat at the counter.

Romeo smiles, eyes the Fed.

ROMEO

See that guy, the one who just came in?

WAITRESS

Yeah.

ROMEO

Do me a favor. Go spill some coffee on him.

WAITRESS

You're out of your mind.

ROMEO

It would make me very happy.

WAITRESS

It would make me unemployed.

ROMEO

That guy's a cop. A fed.

WAITRESS

I got nothing against cops.

ROMEO

And I thought you were such a sweet lady.

WAITRESS

(gestures)

So what's it gonna be?

She thumps her pencil, registers frustration.

ROMEO

Coffee, black, turkey club on white toast. If I throw up, I know who to blame.

She jots it down.

WAITRESS

You'll throw up.

She starts off.

ROMEO

Hey?

(off a look)

What time do you get off?

WAITRESS

Like, none of your business.

She turns to leave, takes a few steps, then turns back.

WAITRESS

Three-thirty.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DINER - TWO HOURS LATER

Romeo is leaning against a car. The Waitress emerges from the diner. Passes him, halts.

WAITRESS

You coming?

They start on their way.

WAITRESS

I thought you might buy me a drink.
I have to change first. Well?

He nods.

INT. RENTED ROOM

The Waitress and Romeo enter the room. Romeo glances around. It's a bit of a dump.

WAITRESS

I don't invite just anyone up to my
dump. Isn't it sumptuous?

She sits on the bed, sighs.

WAITRESS

Let me just kick back for a minute.

She removes her shoes and tosses them on the floor. Leans back. She's tired.

ROMEO

I don't have much time.

He eyes his watch.

ROMEO

In fact, no time for drinks, or games.

WAITRESS

(mocking)
Uh-oh, is this where you get tough?

ROMEO

Lady, I don't have time for
pleasantries.

She manages to rise, crosses to closet -- he intercepts her. Tries to kiss her.

WAITRESS

Hey --

He tries again, she pulls away.

ROMEO

You're making me angry.

WAITRESS

Can I change?

Romeo checks his watch.

ROMEO

Last chance.

She throws him a sour look. He pulls a gun.

WAITRESS

Hey -- come on.

ROMEO

I told you -- I don't have time.

BLAM! BLAM! He pumps two shots into her. Her body jerks back and she slams against the wall, then slumps over dead.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REFRESHMENT STAND -- DAY

Romeo pays for an ice cream cone. Checks his watch. Scopes the scene. Starts down the boardwalk.

He pauses opposite the FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH. The Gypsy is seated outside.

They exchange looks. She nods. He tosses the rest of the ice cream cone into a wastebasket, follows her inside.

INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH

They sit around the table.

ROMEO

You didn't say nothing to the fed, right?

GYPSY

Do I look stupid?

Pause.

ROMEO
(gestures)
So?

GYPSY
Just a minute.

She disappears into the back room. Returns with the satchel, puts it on the table.

He opens it, brings out a large bag of white powder. Removes a jackknife from his pocket and slits it open.

He samples a line of the stuff with a rolled-up bill. Nods. Stuffs the bag back in the satchel. Gives her a half salute.

The Fed emerges from behind the curtains. Only the catch is, he's not really a Fed. It was all a ruse. He's another hood, a guy named TONY. He's got a gun pointed. A silencer.

ROMEO
Hey -- what is this?

TONY
Gimme the shit, and shut up.

ROMEO
You know who you're dealing with?

TONY
Sure I know.

ROMEO
You don't fuck with Angelo Ruggiero, goombah.

TONY
Ruggiero is sticking his nose in where it don't belong. You tell him up north, to stay the hell out.

ROMEO
He'll kill you for this.

TONY
He'll kill me? I don't think so.

He points the barrel of a SILENCER at Romeo -- CHUG! CHUG! Romeo catches those slugs, crashes against the wall and falls in a heap.

Tony checks for a pulse.

TONY

I'm afraid his lifeline ran out.

He collects the bag of cocaine and stashes it in the satchel.

He points the SILENCER --

TONY

Yours too.

CHUG! CHUG! -- she catches two slugs and flops to the floor.

He turns to leave, pauses. Cuts the pack of tarot cards and gazes at what he's cut to, although we cannot see it. He shakes his head, goes out.

EXT. FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH

The mobster emerges, rearranges his lapels, starts off down the boardwalk carrying that satchel.

CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing FORTUNE TELLER'S BOOTH against the larger backdrop of the surrounding shops and stalls and milling tourists on the amusement pier.

The pier gets tinier and tinier as we PULL AWAY. Tourists go about their business, and we can hear gleeful cries from the amusement rides as the mobster vanishes into the crowd.

FADE OUT.

THE END