

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?

SULLY

Yeah.

Vance reaches into his pocket and throws a bill on the bar.

VANCE

Thanks for the drink.

Vance walks over to the door.

He opens it and stands in the door way. He points at the lock.

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