

SEVEN CARD ANGLER

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. THE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

The room has high ceilings. The windows are also high, but narrow enough to not let much natural light in. Dark wood panelling reaches all the way to the ceiling. The panelling is filled in with taxidermy fish and sharks.

Opposite the windows are absurdly tall doors. Off to the side is an old ornate fireplace, which sits empty. Absent the comforting sounds of crackling wood, absent the kind warmth of a fire, even bare of the memories of past fires.

Above the fireplace, in the midst of the sharks is the painting "Watson and the Shark" by John Singleton Copley, which depicts a group of people attempting to rescue a man from a shark.

The sharks look to the center of the room. In the center of their gaze sits MR. WATSON, a portly, nervous, man in his late 30s. He's wearing his nicest suit, which has sloppily stitched repairs across several seams.

He sits in a chair at a table. The legs are carved into claws, and the arms are claws grasping bundles of sticks. The seats are cushioned with leather.

Opposite him is an empty chair, and above it a great white shark hangs from the ceiling.

The room is quiet, aside from the ticking of a clock on the mantelpiece, and Watson's nervous breathing. He fidgets in his seat, causing the leather to protest.

The tall double doors open, dragging the silence out as they creak open. A half dozen servants enter the room.

One turns the empty chair, one brushes off the table, then the seat. After making a few more adjustments, they line up.

Enter MERIBBAAL MAW, a man in his mid 50s, broad, wide, built like a shark. Old scars writhe out from the edges of his fine suit, and he's missing three fingers.

MERIBBAAL MAW  
Heya bluntnose.

He sits down, the leather chair groaning under his weight as he fills it entirely. His eyes are cold and still, his teeth are slightly bared, glinting at Watson from beneath his lips.

Watson's heart beats up through his chest out through his ears like a gramophone, filling the room.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

You know why you're here, Watson?

MR. WATSON

Y-yes, Mr. Maw.

Watson shrinks in his seat as he's crushed under Maw's gaze. He wants to look anywhere else. His heart now drowns out the ticking clock.

Watson's gaze surfaces at the great white. Maw notices, and a smirk swims onto his lips, but his eyes remain cold.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Good eye. She was a hell of a fighter. She hit the dingy, almost capsized us.

Watson feels a little nauseous as he hears the growling timbers and hissing waves.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

We lost our harpoons. I had to jab her in the roof of the mouth with a gully knife. She took a bit of me with her, too.

He holds up his left hand, which is missing the index, ring, and pinky fingers.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

Lost one of my sailors, too. (He chuckles)

Watson's eyes dart to the painting. He can hear the man screaming over the waves. Maw's eyes remain cold and still and his smirk sinks beneath his skin.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

You still don't have the money, do you?

MR. WATSON

(swallowing his nausea) N-No sir, Mr. Maw.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Do you still own that land by the shore?

MR. WATSON  
Yes, Mr. Maw, I live there.

Maw licks his teeth.

MERIBBAAL MAW  
How about a game? You win, your  
debt's gone. I win, you pay the  
debt with the land. Either way,  
your debt gets settled.

Mr. Watson nods in agreement. Maw motions to one of the  
servants, who presents a box to him with several card decks.

He selects one with a emerald green tessellated cuttlefish  
pattern. The servant handles the cards with gloved hands.

He deals seven cards to each of them. Watson is dealt the 2  
of Hearts, 2 of Spades, 6 of Hearts, 7 of Spades, 8 of  
Diamonds, Jack of Diamonds, and King of Spades.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)  
The game is Seven Card Angler.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)  
Got any black fives?

MR. WATSON  
No.

Maw draws a card.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)  
Go Fish? We're playing Go Fish?!

MERIBBAAL MAW  
Seven. Card. Angler. First to seven  
pairs wins. Your turn.

Watson looks at his hand. It's a kid's game, he can handle  
this! His heartrate relaxes.

MR. WATSON  
Got any black twos?

Maw growls, flinging the 2 of Clubs across the table.

The play goes on, each getting a pair from their opponent or  
from the deck. Watson gets up to four pairs, Maw up to two.

Maw's eyes circle the table, counting the pairs, counting the  
seven cards in Watson's hands and the nine in his own.

MERIBBAAL MAW  
Black fives.

Watson scans his hand, and sees the five of clubs. He sighs, and passes Maw the 5 of Clubs.

MR. WATSON  
Any red eights?

MERIBBAAL MAW  
No.

The game goes on. Watson gets up to six pairs, Maw up to five.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)  
Red fours.

Watson slides the 4 of Diamonds to Maw. It makes a faint sigh across the table, until he stops it with the middle finger of his left hand. Six pairs for both.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)  
Your turn, bluntnose.

In Watson's hand, the King of Spades, 7 of Spades, 10 of Clubs, 10 of Hearts, and the 9 of Spades. Maw's hand is visible for the first time.

He has the 8 of Spades, the 9 of Diamonds, the 3 of Spades, the 6 of Spades, 5 of Diamonds, the King of Diamonds, and the 7 of Clubs.

The game ends when one of them calls for a black seven.

MR. WATSON  
Got a Red Ten?

Maw holds his hand between his left fingers, and taps them against his fist.

MERIBBAAL MAW  
No.

Watson draws the Ace of Spades. Maw looks over his hand.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)  
Black... Six.

MR. WATSON  
Go fish.

Maw draws the 4 of Clubs. Watson contemplates his hand. His eyes linger on the Ace of Spades and the 7 of Spades.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)  
Black... Seven.

Maw places the 7 of Clubs on the table, and slides it across to Watson. Watson has won, and Maw could bite someone's head off.

MERIBBAAL MAW  
(growling)  
Get of my sight. Our business is  
concluded.

Watson contains his joy and relief, and follows a servant out the door, away from Maw forever.

FADE OUT