

SEVEN CARD ANGLER

Written by

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INT. THE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

A clock ticks, echoing in the cavernous room. Mr. Watson breathes in and out, trying to control his breath and calm himself down. It isn't working.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

I found myself in a drawing room, with high dark ceilings like the Mariana trench. Just visible in the darkness was a shiver of taxidermy shark, all looking at down at me.

Mr. Watson fidgets in his seat, a loud leather chair which complains and squeaks at the slightest movement.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

I wore my nicest suit, despite it's sloppily stitched repairs across the seams. I fidgeted and scanned the room, and say something alarming.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(speaking)

Dear god.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

Above the empty fireplace floated a painting. Several people in a longboat shaken by a violent storm.

Rough seas fade in as they call out.

The little boat creaks in the waves.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

Most prominent in the painting, however, is a man falling off the longboat, and his comrades trying to pull aboard, and snatch him out the jaws of a shark.

The waves crash.

The men yell.

Watson hears a growl as the shark lunges and-

SNAP

A door unlocks, and slowly creaks open.

Many steps enter in, followed by distinct, heavy steps.

MERIBBAAL MAW
Heya bluntnose.

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
Meribaal Maw would bare his teeth
when he spoke, and they glinted
between his words.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(speaking)
Hello,

His voice cracks, and he clears his throat.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(speaking)
Hello Mr. Maw.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
Mr. Maw was broad, wide, and built
like a shark. His eyes were cold
and still.

Watson's heart beats audibly.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
There was a palpable weight to his
gaze, pinning me in place.

Maw sits down opposite Watson, and the chair sags and groans
under his weight.

MERIBBAAL MAW
You know why you're here, Watson?

MR. WATSON
Y-yes, Mr. Maw.

Watson chair squeaks as he shrinks in his seat.

His heartbeat drowns out the ticking clock.

He controls his breathing, and his heartbeat subsides.

The clock reasserts itself.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

I had fallen on hard times. The firm I worked for had been dissolved, and I had fallen behind on my-

MERIBBAAL MAW

The box.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

-though I suppose this isn't important right now.

One of the lighter foot steps comes forward.

They place a box on the table.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

My eyes away from the box, up to a great white on the ceiling. Maw noticed, and smirked.

MERIBBAAL MAW

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

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

My stomach almost capsized.

Watson's stomach mingles with the creaking of the timbers.

MERIBBAAL MAW

We lost our harpoons.

Men yell, waves crash, something roars.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

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

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

He held up his left hand. The shark had taken his index, ring, and pinky finger.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Lost one of my sailors, too.

He chuckles.

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
My eyes darted to the man in the painting, inches away from the shark's jaws.

A faint scream, muffled by a splash.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
Maw's eyes remained still, and his smirk sank beneath his skin.

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

Watson swallows.

MR. WATSON
(speaking)
N-No sir, Mr. Maw.

MERIBBAAL MAW
You still own that land by the shore?

MR. WATSON
(speaking)
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
(narrating)
This couldn't be good, but it was the only thing between me and foreclosure. What choice did I have? I agreed.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(speaking)
Alright. I'll play.

MERIBBAAL MAW
Excellent.

He unlocks the box.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

The box was full of card decks. A few shimmered like gemstones, some were matte like slate. He thumbed through them, and pulled one out.

MERIBBAAL MAW

How about this one?

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

He held up an emerald green deck with a tessellated cuttlefish pattern. I wasn't able to speak through the lump in my throat, but I nodded in agreement.

Maw shuffles the deck.

He deals seven cards to each of them.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

I was 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

The game is Seven Card Angler.

The clock continues ticking, Watson fidgets in his seat.

MERIBBAAL MAW (CONT'D)

Got any black fives?

MR. WATSON

(speaking)

No.

Maw draws a card.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(speaking)

Go Fish? We're playing Go Fish?!

MERIBBAAL MAW

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

Watson's heart rate relaxes.

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
A kid's game! Surely it's not that simple?

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(speaking)
Got any black twos?

Maw growls and flings a card across the table.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
Maw passed the 2 of Clubs to me. It really was that simple. Go Fish.

Hear cards passed and drawn.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
Despite my relief, each trick felt like an hour. Maw's eyes circled the table as I got up to four pairs, and he only had two.

Maw flicks his hand of cards.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
He was fuming.

MERIBBAAL MAW
Black fives.

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
To my dismay, I had the five of clubs. I passed it to him.

The card slides across the table.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(speaking)
Any red eights?

MERIBBAAL MAW
No.

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
I'm sure you've played go fish. The game goes on. I got up to six pairs, and Maw up to five.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Red fours.

Watson slides the 4 of Diamonds to Maw. It makes a faint sigh across the table, until Maw catches it against the table.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

Six pairs for both.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Your turn, bluntnose.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

At this point, I had the King of Spades, 7 of Spades, 10 of Clubs, 10 of Hearts, and the 9 of Spades.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(speaking)

Got a Red Ten?

Maw thrums his cards again.

MERIBBAAL MAW

No.

MR. WATSON

(narrating)

I drew the Ace of Spades.

MERIBBAAL MAW

Black six.

MR. WATSON

(speaking)

Go fish.

Maw grumbles and draws a card.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(narrating)

I had a good feeling about the Ace of Spades or the seven of Spades.

The clock ticks louder. Watson's heartbeat matches it. Maw lets out a low grumble.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)

(speaking)

Black... Seven.

Silence. Even the clock stops ticking for a moment.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
The effect on Maw's countenance was
immediate.

Maw slings the card at Watson.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
He threw the seven of clubs,
completing my seventh pair.

Maw growls, and throws his remain cards to the side.

MR. WATSON (CONT'D)
(narrating)
I believe he could've bitten
someone's head off.

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

MR. WATSON
(narrating)
I could scarcely believe it. I
didn't dare linger, lest I wake up
from a dream. I left the house as
quickly as possible.

Doors open. Seagulls cry in the clear sky above him.

END