

The Hitch

© 2015 Victoria Blackwood
xxvikx@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. THEATER STAGE - EVENING

The act is styled as in old silent pictures:

Actors dance. A tall young MAN and in a tail-coat and a young blonde GIRL in a short skin-tight azure dress move away from the troupe towards the center. The MAN starts speaking out. The young GIRL looks at him with admiration. The troupe slowly stops dancing. He speaks the last phrase addressing to her. They kiss. Standing ovation. The curtain drops. Actors break up. The man and the young girl still nicely talk and smile to each other. Then kiss again and separate in contrary directions.

The man enters backstage. Black space around, only a lighted armchair is seen. There's his ''TWIN'', though dressed differently, sitting on the chair. Feels like he's from the future. The TWIN holds a small model of the whole theater building in his hands.

TWIN

See, I got your whole life right in my hands.

The MAN frowns and doesn't seem to understand anything.

TWIN

You know for how long I've been making this? But now I'm thinking, what for? Maybe just to show you. So you won't even take a look at this?

The TWIN lets off the model and it flies towards the MAN. The MAN slowly observes and then touches the model. The whole picture falls to pieces.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

New York. Autumn. 4am. A man - 25 y.o., named JAMES - sleeping, suddenly winces and awakens. Looks about - we see a screenshot from an old theater play tape on his laptop on the work table - then out the window - it's raining outside AGAIN. The atmosphere is gloomy, the character's in low spirits.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

A big architecture company. Many people at the office. JAMES comes in, greets his friends. Everyone's energetic and fun, there's sort of bustle around. JAMES comes to his place. Next to him a man named TONY, 24 y.o., rolls out a huge paper with an outline sketch and puts it onto a table.

TONY

You've finished the part?

JAMES

Yeah. Talked to them the whole evening yesterday. Decided on a regular hip. He wants a different angle and an additional dorm, so the cost a bit changed, but it didn't seem to bother. Take a look.

Gives a big packaged piece of paper to TONY - he unfolds and examines it. There's a house roof drawn professionally with all the details.

TONY

Awesome. I'll bring it to the lab.

Their colleague, FRANK, 25 y.o., flies into.

FRANK

Guess who just left my room.

JAMES

Leia Organa? Again?

FRANK

Almost.

Shows out a business card of an expensive world-renown restaurant chain, ''SALVAY''.

FRANK

They're opening a new one in Atlanta in two years. And yes, they chose us. Hope everyone can imagine total contract value. In a few days Borman'll announce the responsible team and the leader, so get ready for the hard work...

TONY
(happily)
You
kidding!

FRANK
You'd know if I was!

FRANK moves off to the lab.

INT. JAZZ BAR - LATE EVENING

JAMES, FRANK, TONY and another one - DAVE, 25 y.o. - at a table drinking. FRANK tells something, TONY and DAVE laugh. JAMES feels dispirited.

FRANK
Like it was everything I ever needed, you know... Nah...
I told you I'm never coming back. I just wanna do my thing and I don't dream of anyone even so pretty come to my life and destroy my inner concord. I've been trying to build my brain for decades and why the hell I'd ever let it decompose...

DAVE
Come on, was she so bad?!

INTERCUT:

A BLONDE WAITRESS comes up and brings more small drinks, then disappears.

BACK TO:

FRANK
She wasn't, but... It's useless to press upon me in any way. I'm like Darth Vader. If you press - you either get pressed harder or I just don't play with you in one team anymore. Simple.

TONY
True, man... I guess I'd be dead for years if I let shit like that control me. We all would be.

FRANK
My granddad was the smartest person to me. He got a severe brain contusion during the Wall street bombing in 1920, and after he couldn't speak for half a year. He was seven, hanging around Manhattan with his mom and dad.

The sun was shining upon, everything seemed so damn cool, no one would ever imagine some kind of tragedy happening during the midday here in Manhattan. One of the most peaceful parts of the city, you know... His mother met a friend right next to the epicenter, where the hell it was, a horse wagon or something... He and his dad went on to see some place and got pretty far from them... Then all he remembers is a loud snap, and this total darkness... He was just seven. He wasn't supposed to regain his senses. He was shell-shocked and couldn't walk. He was considered mentally retarded, I mean, it was a huge cross upon his future and career... He couldn't make friends, girls he liked were dashing off him like he was a fucking monster...

INTERCUT:

A bottle of alcohol falls down and goes smash with a loud sound behind the bar counter. FRANK's face gets somber.

BACK TO:

FRANK

But then things started changing with a rocket speed! He became best in class, lost his stuttering habit... And finally met a guy, who became his best friend and partner. The guy offered him a job in a local ''bank''. As there were 30s, logically in two months - no bank, no best friend, no money again, the house completely polished... No jewelry, not a damn dollar for coffee... Just nothing. That's when he learnt what friendship was. And that was the turning point of his life, even if it all may sound weird... He got angry. From anger he gained energy. With energy a man can break rocks. He never loved anyone. And as he said that was his power. He was never attached or manipulated. He belonged to himself. No one has ever owned his soul. Many of his classmates were either gone or on the verge by the end of the depression... It was a dead place! But he made it through all safe and wealthy, ending up directing one of the most profitable companies in the New York state.

JAMES

You're saying he achieved the whole thing thanks to his frigidity?

FRANK

Sure! He didn't love himself - consequently, he didn't pity himself. He didn't have a wife - consequently, was always focused on his own business. He didn't care about sham friends, cause he didn't have them - so no one could betray or sell him for 5 dollars. I'm not saying having friends or wife is bad, but feelings can be pretty destructive and we ALL know that!

TONY

Frank, he lost everything. He was a poor man in deep trouble. That was not his choice but his destiny. I don't think you're ready to burn up your home, hand out all the cash to the homeless and go seek for food in East Africa.

FRANK

(nodding)

That's why there're few cases.

TONY

We don't choose - mostly we get chosen.

A noisy group of people comes into, all look freaky - 3 girls, 4 guys. They're like an antipode to the JAMES' group. JAMES notices them. One of the girls reminds him of someone - his mood goes down and down. The group moves on to the farthest table and gets unseen.

DAVE

Well, how about a bit of a shake-up...

FRANK

Alright, let's go. (to Jim) - You coming?

JAMES

(shakes head)

No. Next time.

FRANK

(half-smiling)

OK. See you, man. (taps on his shoulder)

FRANK, TONY and DAVE go away. JAMES goes to the bar counter.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR COUNTER - LATE EVENING

JAMES
'Manhattan' please.

The barman mixes the drink. JAMES takes it and goes towards a small stage.

CUT TO:

INT. BY STAGE - LATE EVENING

Local music band playing jazz there. JAMES sits down next to an old, slim, grey-headed man watching the show alone. The OLD MAN turns his head and sees JAMES, then turns it back and watches the show, then turns his head again, squinting and as being amazed.

OLD MAN
Holy Lord...

No reaction. JAMES's lifeless and depressed. In a few seconds he pays attention to the OLD MAN.

OLD MAN
Excuse me, aren't you an actor or something?

JAMES
No. Not at all.

OLD MAN is thinking of something.

OLD MAN
Well, have you ever wanted to be?

JAMES
Do I look like a 13 year-old girl who just saw
Lara Croft?

OLD MAN
No, no... Just damn, you strongly resemble Nick
Jesselhoff, I'd say I hardly can see a difference...
Maybe someone already told you that...

JAMES

Who's this?

OLD MAN

Well, let's say a cheeky English dude... You've never heard of him?

JAMES

No.

OLD MAN

Oh, alright, alright...

JAMES

Why did you ask?

OLD MAN

Sorry, just some production difficulties. Drove me insane.

JAMES

Production?

OLD MAN

Yeah. In the TV world, we call it production. We're desperately looking for a suitable actor for the role of the guy I told you of. Sketch series, you know... Can't tell the name yet, even a... Travis Bonnet, Comedy Central. (stretches out his hand)

JAMES

James Alan Woods, Carsonbell Corp. You need an... Actor for the show?

OLD MAN

Yeah.

JAMES

And you probably know... Julia Ross?

OLD MAN

Oh yeah, saw her last week shooting another episode. Jolly girl. No doubt, has a future.

JAMES

May I try it on?

OLD MAN

Well, dude, I'd be happy! You know, it's for one season.

We've looked over a hundred of candidates... Pretty known names and a lot of new faces... No one even distantly resembling the man! But that's kind of a key condition. The material's sparkling... (gives JAMES his business card) Would be stupid to waste it. Go ahead, boy, who knows.

JAMES distrustfully scans the card, weighing things up in his mind.

INT. JAMES' APARTMENT - DAY

JAMES comes into, puts off his topcoat, enters the bedroom and flops down onto the bed as much tired, but he's obviously in much better mood and seems inspired. Phone call.

JAMES

Hello, mr. Bonnet.

BONNET (O.S.)

How's it going?

JAMES

Well, watched over 20 performances last night, woke up in the morning and couldn't find myself in the mirror.

Guess I found my twin brother! (laughs)

BONNET (O.S.)

(laughs) Going hard. You're doing the right thing, James. Great. I lean on you. You must be prepared well.

Time presses. Pilot tomorrow, as I said.

JAMES

Got it.

BONNET (O.S.)

Cool, see you, man.

Cut off. JAMES takes out a bunch of papers and leafes them through. It's a script. An architectural drawing lies right next. Suddenly JAMES hits on a random page not connected with the script, saying ''PHANTOM SHIP''.

INT. STUDIOS - MORNING

Large space. Big bustle. Decorations all around: a luxurious room with paintings on the walls and a big sofa in the middle; next to it - a small unpretentious office; farther - two big green screens. Make-up men doing their job. A lot of actors, some of them review their texts and talk to each other. JAMES among them, many recognize him and talk to him as they're friends. We see that he feels happy and relaxed. BONNET nervously walks back and forth and gives orders. JAMES comes up to BONNET. They greet each other and go towards the luxurious room, BONNET constantly saying something to JAMES. Both stop, BONNET directs JAMES to a place in the room. He stands there, reading his papers. A young black GIRL also involved in the scene is being instructed by BONNET. She nods. JAMES takes a look around, as wants to spot someone, but fails and gets A LITTLE disappointed. BONNET steps back. Rehearsal starts (then will shooting follow).

BONNET
Action!

INT. MAKE UP ROOM - NIGHT

JAMES is alone scrutinizing himself in front of the mirror, as not recognizing. His face is made up, he wears a blonde wig and seems taller than usual. He is tired, confused and feels a bit awkward. Phone call. Answers.

TONY (O.S.)

Hey man, sorry if it's late or something, you know we gotta have the whole thing tomorrow, so I kinda have a problem with those stairs, I'd need a bit of your advice... May I come, bro?

JAMES

Not today, man... Don't worry, we have time, as always.

TONY (O.S.)

O-okay. Hm... Bye bye. See ya.

Hang-up.

JAMES

Do you then put faith in stairs, Amine?

(those words - distorted quote from Frederick
Marryat's novel 'Phantom Ship')

INT. STUDIOS - NIGHT

Almost no one around. Silence. JAMES, still into the
character, approaches the exit door. BONNET goes
halfway.

BONNET

Here's the address and phone number. He said he's free
the whole day, so if you really want.

JAMES

Thanks a lot.

BONNET

(putting his jacket on)

You don't really have to. But this guy always got
the best Ricard! I'm French, you know. Childhood
drink.

JAMES

You were born in France?

Both walk out the door and go downstairs.

BONNET

Born and raised. We moved to New York when I was fifteen.

JAMES

Where's the accent?

BONNET

Don't really need him here. (to a girl far off) - Katy,
come on, I don't want you to be dead by October! Go
home, sweetheart. (lights up a cigarette) Moreover, I'm
64, so I forgot how Paris looked like those days, what
with the accent. (laughs)

JAMES

How did you get into the business?

BONNET

Well, I had a few friends... See, that's New York...
Back then it wasn't much of showbiz, we had some sort of
strong enthusiasm... We wanted to change the world. I
just loved the whole thing and I still love it.

You meet so many people almost every day... But you know what?..

Both sit down on a sofa. The lights around are getting dimmer.

BONNET

If I went back in time, I'd rather go fix aircrafts.
Who are you, architect?

JAMES

I am.

Silence for a few seconds. Then BONNET bursts out laughing.

BONNET

Joke. Never betray your business. One day it will betray you.

JAMES

I gotta go.

BONNET

Better change the clothes first.

JAMES

No, I'd better stay in character.

BONNET

(looking at the screen)

Alright, good job. Honestly, when you came to audition I didn't think you can do such things... Where you got that from?

JAMES

I don't know. New thing for me. New things are exciting. I played Peter Pan at school once.

BONNET

(laughs)

Must've been a sexy one. I'll give you a lift.

EXT. OUTSIDE WATERPOOL - NIGHT

Waterpool adjoined to a house. A 35 y.o. MAN#1 sits on a deck-chair, nervously looking about. His leg twitches.

MAN#1
(quickly stands up)
Ok, I'm going.

Goes towards the house.

MAN#2, 24 y. o., lies still on a deck-chair.

MAN#2
Damn, come on, it's not the time yet! Dumbo...

Goes after him.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MAN#2 looks out the window.

MAN#2
Oh no, right in, man...

MAN#1 comes up to him.

INTERCUT:

Pretty far away from them JAMES gets out of a car
and walks towards a big house.

BACK TO:

MAN#1
You're done, motherfucker.

The following happens quickly. MAN#1 takes the GUN
lying on a table, runs through the back door leading to
the waterpool, hides behind bushes and takes sight.
MAN#2 keeps peering into JAMES through binoculars. He
notices something wrong and runs towards the place
where MAN#1 is.

SLOW-MO:

MAN#2
Call off!..

Before he can end the phrase...

INTERCUT:

The MAN#1's face closely, as he takes a shot.

BACK TO:

MAN#2 automatically covers his head with his hands and, huddling up, sits down on the floor.

CUT TO:

JAMES falls down, keeping to his right side. Nearby houses light up. Turmoil rises. NICK JESSELHOFF, whom JAMES came to, sees the whole thing through his window and calls the police. A random man runs up to JAMES, sees his body over, applies a rag onto the wound and calls 911.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A day has passed. FIRST-PERSON VIEW: eyelids slowly open; a fluorescent lamp gives too much light - eyelids quickly close up, then slightly open again.

NORMAL VIEW: a ward. JAMES lies on a bed and seems very weak, his eyes lacklustre, breathing heavy, but he's come round from anaesthesia - he underwent an operation. FRANK stands by a window.

JAMES
Frank...

FRANK
(turns round)
Good morning, Vietnam.

JAMES
I can't move.

FRANK
What the freaking hell you were doing at Forest Hills?

JAMES
Sought for treasure.

FRANK
Found?

JAMES
Not the right time for your inner clown, Frank.

FRANK
Listen, dude, I have no idea what you were doing there and why you got shot, who were those people or why you were dressed up like a faggot, even though I thought I knew you better... We all have our private lives and stuff like that... But... I told our crew that we were having a big time right ahead, I told about Salvay... At times like that we're fucking supposed stay tuned and we can't just hang out with gangs somewhere at Forest Hills...

JAMES
I didn't hang out.

FRANK
Then you shouldn't have missed one trifling appointment Borman set for you yesterday morning.

JAMES
What...

FRANK
You had to come at two, right? So, he set the date to three. Urgently, because he had a call from their representative who had some open hours in her schedule during the day. She was sitting there, right in front of your private office door for a while. For a lo-ong while... Then she happily stood up, formed an exalted opinion on our company, gave us flowers and rode off into the sunset.

JAMES feels worn-out.

JAMES
Why me?

FRANK
Because your heroic ass was appointed the Salvay project chief.

JAMES keeps silent.

FRANK

I told you it was special. It was unique for us. We're literally just starting. We have no real experience. That was such a chance. And you just fucked everything up. You just fucked everyone up, James.

JAMES

Thanks for the support, bro.

FRANK

Alright, sorry.

JAMES

You know who shot me?

FRANK

(as exhausted)

Of course, I was exactly wandering about and managed to run up seconds before the shot, capture both of their faces, send the photos to Pentagon, receive their report and then interview them on this historical event. Should I read the whole document?

JAMES

No, just shut up.

FRANK

Police said some famous guy lived there and for some reason you were made up as him. Do you work up as a call-boy?

JAMES

NO!

A DOCTOR comes in.

DOCTOR

(to FRANK) Short examination. Leave the room.

FRANK leaves and slams the door.

INT. DRIVER'S CAB - MORNING

JAMES drives his car, his body slightly bent forward. His right side aches. As he can't drive anymore, 'parks' along the roadway, puts his head upon the rudder as in pain. Phone message - BONNET there. They
CHAT:

BONNET

Jamie, son, I'm really sorry for what happened... Just got back from Miami... You know this freaking sound-proof... I didn't hear anything, damn I'm so sorry man...

JAMES

I'm fine, sir. It's been a week already.

BONNET

So... Take care... Waiting for you here. Get well soon. Julia wants to meet you!!

JAMES

Well, you know, I don't think I...

Erases the message and BONNET's phone number. Rests. The pain gradually remits. Another phone call. Some 'ANNIE MCCANE CBS' there. In temper throws the phone out the window and drives away.

INTERCUT:

Some lout picks the phone up, observes it and moves on. Behind him is the theater model from the SCENE#1 - lifesized.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Splendid environment. Sunny outside. JAMES and FRANK, dressed strictly but not officially, sit at a table. FRANK drinks coffee.

JAMES

Damn, I love this coffee.

FRANK

Yeah, the only favourable type of love known to science. Well, bro, I'm really happy you finally got your chance.

Been a pretty long way. And you may plan whatever you want for this weekend, but I tell you we throw a blast party at my new shanty in Vegas. Imagine how's my mom excited?

JAMES

Mine as well. She still regrets I can't marry you.

FRANK

(laughs)

Over my dead body! Moms are the best.

JAMES smiles. DH WAITRESS comes, asks something and goes away. As she turns her back to the camera - SUPER-FAST CLOSE-UP: the word ''SALVAY'' on her collar.

FADE OUT.

CREDITS.

