

SCRATCHING AT THE SURFACE

By

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FADE IN:

INT. URBAN CITY FLAT, BEDROOM – NIGHT

We move across the littered desk of a student; pizza boxes, textbooks, stationary – the usual culprits, take up most of the space.

We focus on the calendar: RENT DUE is on tomorrow's date.

Beneath the calendar, on the only free desk space are coins – lots of them, scattered over the desk. Painted fingernails scrap them into piles.

JESS (O.S.)

How much is there? A couple hundred?

The owner of the fingernails looks up. This is LAURA. She sits on the office chair at the desk.

LAURA

You're not going to like it, mate.

Laura speak to JESS. A boyish teen girl. She lies on the bed shooting at a target with an AIRSOFT GUN that looks pretty real. Jess makes a nice shot.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Nice. Why can't you just ask your dad for money? He won't mind.

JESS

He will. And because. It would be admitting defeat. How much is there?

Jess fires again, totally missing this time.

JESS (CONT'D)

Dammit.

LAURA

Not enough. By a long shot.

JESS

Well enough is never enough. Richard Branson started out with £300 now he has £3.6Bn and he's still going.

Jess sits up. She poses James Bond style with the gun in the mirror.

LAURA

Well, you are not Richard Branson. And I hate to break it to you pal, but you are nobody. And you're starting out with less than forty-two pounds btw.

Jess throws the gun to Laura, who narrowly catches it.

JESS

Every somebody was nobody once upon a time.

Laura has a playful look of mischief on her face.

LAURA

How much is your rent?

JESS

Not important. Asshole.

Jess slips on her beat-up trainers.

LAURA

Four seven five?

Jess shifts awkwardly, debating telling.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Four eight five?

JESS

(with a sigh)

Straight five.

Laura laughs.

LAURA

You're screwed. You know that right?

Jess climbs to her feet.

JESS

Bag that shit up. I have a plan.

LAURA

Your plans scare me. They're either completely useless or scarily brilliant. What you gonna do? Rob a bank?

Laura takes a cigarette out of the full pack on the desk. Jess shrugs, picks up the gun.

JESS
Not exactly.

EXT. CITY HIGHSTREET – EVENING

Jess and Laura walk through the tired streets of a metropolitan city that could be just about anywhere.

They almost blend into the crowd, but Jess walks fast. Laura trails behind, with a cigarette in her mouth.

Outside an OFF LICENSE, Jess stops.

LAURA
Here?

JESS
Here.

LAURA
Before you like stick the place up,
please bear in mind that these shoes
weren't made for running away from the
cops? And you don't look good in orange.

JESS
Ye a little faith, pal. Honestly.

Laura opens her cigarette box. Nine left.

LAURA
Hey, wait.

JESS
What?

LAURA
Steal me a lighter while you're at it?
Oh and don't forget to kill the
witnesses.

Jess flips her off.

Laura laughs at her own joke, and attempts to spark up her cigarette with the bust lighter.

EXT. OFF LICENSE - LATER

Laura smokes and waits. Jess exits the shop very quickly.

JESS
Go! Go. Run.

This startles Laura.

LAURA
What?!

JESS
Run, asshole!

They take off running down the street.

EXT. SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jess and Laura run for their lives down the next street.
Jess pulls Laura to the side of a garage.

JESS
Stop.

Laura slaps at Jess.

LAURA
What did you do you stupid asshole?!

JESS
I'm just messing about!

Laura shakes Jess. Jess struggles to get free.

LAURA
This is not something to kid about,
Jess! How could you fucking do that?
Tell me you didn't use a gun? Jess, tell
me you left that gun at home?! I was
only joking. I didn't think you were
actually going to do it!

JESS
Why not? Way I see it, either way it
goes, don't have to worry about rent.

Laura slaps Jess hard on the arm.

LAURA
You're going to ruin your life.

JESS
What? For buying a lighter?

Laura looks at Jess' hand. There is a lighter wrapped in a receipt in it.

LAURA
Oh you're a prick.

Jess chuckles. Laura swipes at her one last time, this time Jess dodges it.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Dickhead!

Jess puts her arm round Laura, who relaxes.

JESS
You didn't actually think I'd do that, did you?

The two start walking. Laura looks at the receipt.

LAURA
Lucky x five? What the F is that?

Jess fishes into her pocket - produces scratch cards.

JESS
I told you I have a plan.

EXT. SECOND SHOP - LATER

They approach a row of newsagents.

LAURA
You know the odds of winning, don't you?

JESS
You win or you lose. 50/50.

LAURA
You're an idiot.

JESS
And in youthful idealism they did write...well I bought fifteen so I gotta win at least once.

Laura takes one last heavy drag on her cigarette.

LAURA

My friend, in the words of *Hunger Games*
aka your life next month – may the odds
be ever in your favor.

We focus on Jess's smile as...

SONG: *THE STORIES – MONEY (THAT'S WHAT I WANT)*

...kicks in at full volume and we move into montage:

The outside of various shops. Jess going in/out.

Laura smokes – a lot. The almost-full pack of cigarettes
slowly goes down to almost-empty.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS – DUSK

LAURA

It's not defeat, you know?

Jess finishes scratching the latest card.

JESS

Twenty one. What isn't?

LAURA

Asking your dad for help. He loves you.
Plus he knows how hard it is being a
student these days.

JESS

The day isn't over until the last card
tells us what we need to hear. Keep
going.

Jess flicks a card at Laura. Laura huffs.

LAURA

At least the robbery plan would have
been quicker. Just pick up the damn
phone, would you? Seriously.

Jess snaps her fingers at the card.

JESS

Twenty-two for twenty-two? Or a pound?

Laura scratches the card. She laughs.

JESS
A quid?

LAURA
(reluctantly)
Try a hundred quid.

EXT. OFF LICENSE – DUSK

They pass the first off license they went in earlier.
Jess steps to go in. Laura grabs her back.

LAURA
We've won back what we lost. Let's call
it quits. You dad probably won't making
up the difference rather than outright
paying for it.

Jess looks at Laura and shrugs, defeated.

JESS
All or nothing. Or today will have been
a waste of time.

Jess walks into the shop.

Laura cracks open her cigarette carton. It's empty.

LAURA
Can you get me some cigarettes?

Jess heads into the shops, adding as she does:

JESS
You've had enough.

Laura audibly sighs and gazes up at the setting sun.

Time is almost up.

INT. JESS'S DORM ROOM – NIGHT

Jess and Laura stare at the calendar. The RENT DUE is a
tough sight to behold.

Across the table lies almost a hundred scratched off
losing cards.

JESS
I've got to do it, haven't I?

Laura puts her hand of Jess' shoulder.

LAURA
You'll be fine. Just ask him for half
and I'll see if my parents can give me
the rest.

Jess picks up the phone and walks off into the
background. We stay with Laura.

Laura looks at all the losing cards.

She finds one that hasn't been scratched yet.

We focus on Jess.

The soundtrack kicks in – this time, acoustic.

*The best things in life are free, but
you can keep them for the birds and
bees...*

Still in the background, Laura scratches the forgotten
card.

In the foreground, inaudibly, Jess has a tough
conversation with her father.

In the background, Laura suddenly jumps up and down like
crazy. She is celebrating.

FADE OUT

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