

THE ASHTRAY
BY JAMES MCEWAN JNR

SCENE 1.
EXT.CITY STREETS.DAY.

- A) Camera moves slowly left to right across busy city streets.
- B) A view of Edinburgh Castle can be seen.
- C) Faces are unseen, only movements of busy people going about their daily duties,

Noises are heard, talking, vehicles moving on streets, horns blowing, city sounds.

- D) Camera whip-pans from one person to the other to the other.
- E) Camera scans a few lone streets, looking for something.
- F) Camera moves slowly towards a lone lane as the noises start to fade as it approaches a pub in the lane. Camera 'moves' through the entrance as a man walks out.

SCENE 2.
INT.PUB.DAY.

It's a little pub, quaint in a way and not very busy.

Camera moves closer towards the bar, then around it, whip-panning from bar person to various customers sitting around the bar, to empty plates and glasses on one of the tables.

The plates and glasses are taken away and camera moves off again.

Camera moves closer to the bar again and pauses.

Camera whip-pans towards entrance where two young suited men walk in, heading towards the bar. As if to hide from them, camera 'looks' around immediate area of bar, looks past an empty glass, then an ashtray on a nearby table and moves on.

Camera then returns to 'look' at the ashtray and as the two gentlemen approach the table, camera 'moves into the ashtray, looking up towards the two gents who sit down, one each side of the ashtray.

They are brothers, discussing their late father's will, which has gone to his very young recent wife. Robert orders drink; John takes packet of cigarettes from pocket.

Robert comes back with drinks. They talk.

JOHN

So...what's the latest on the will?
Please tell me it's being changed...

Robert replies despondently.

ROBERT

I'm afraid not John. It looks like
Mary's getting the lot!

John is not a happy man.

JOHN

I don't fucking believe it, I
really don't! We're his own sons
and he gives everything to some
gold digging hussie he only met a
few months ago.

ROBERT

I know John, but it's his choice.
We have to respect that. I don't
like it myself.

JOHN

Well, I think it's wrong. She
fucking planned this all along. I
bet she's fucking laughing at us.

ROBERT

Probably. But what can we do?
They were married. She's got every
to what he left her.

John pauses to think then looks at his brother with a glint of deception in his eye.

JOHN

Maybe so. But what if we were to
find out something that makes her
look like the hussie she is? What
if we were to find out, just say
that she cheated on him...?

Robert plays the game and suggests a default in their father's will.

ROBERT

Adultery *would* make her claim null
and void make us sole claimants...
But how would we find that out?

John motions a scheme.

JOHN

Simple. One of us console her, buy
her dinner... Seduce her...

Robert looks surprised.

ROBERT

Are you suggesting what I think
you are?

John smiles.

JOHN

Be honest. Haven't you always
wanted to shag her?

Robert looks even more surprised.

ROBERT

You are unbelievable! No...No
we're not doing this. We can't do
this!

They both stop to drink from their beer. John offers
another solution.

JOHN

Well...it's either that... Or we kill
her.

Robert chokes on his beer.

Scene continues in fastmo, from POV from ashtray.
Gents finish drinks and leave.
Ashtray has a little ash in it, which is blown by
barmaid collecting glasses.
Two women come in. They are recent lovers. Carol sits
at the table, lights up a cigarette. She looks
stressed. Julie gets the drinks. Julie returns and
sits. They talk.

JULIE

I'm so sorry Carol. This is all my
fault. I should have never
pursued this.

Carol gently holds her hand as she smokes.

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CAROL

I'm a big girl Julie. This happened because I wanted it to. I was never really happy with Bob anyway...

JULIE

Really? But, from what you've told me in the past, you two were very happy.

Carol looks at her lover sheepishly. She lied about the state of her marriage.

JULIE (CONT'D)

So...what happened? I mean... were you ever happy?

CAROL

Yes... of course. But...there was just...something...

Julie tightens their holding hands gently.

JULIE

What is it Carol? Do you want to tell me something...?

Carol takes a deep drink; Julie puts the cigarette out in the ashtray. Carol takes a deep breath and speaks.

CAROL

Recently... Bob told me something one day that... sort of changed everything.

Julie looks at her in anticipation of an answer. Carol takes another large swig from her glass. She hesitates, then reveals all.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Bob has experimented in his past... sexually...

JULIE

Well...that's not too bad. We've all, well not all, done it Carol.

There is a silence between the two.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Who was it with? Another guy?

CAROL

No...not exactly.

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JULIE

Sadomasochism...?

Carol shakes her head. Julie tries again.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Prostitutes...?

Carol looks at her lover in all seriousness.

CAROL

Animals...?

Julie looks at her in total shock.

The rest of the scene goes in fastmo. They drink up and leave.

The barmaid once again collects the glasses and blows the ash out of the ashtray.

A woman and a man come in next. They are local reporters.

She carries a briefcase. He fetches the drinks, she sits at the table, gets the cigarettes out.

He returns with drinks. Camera speed returns to normal. Once again, the chitchat starts.

James looks eager to get talking.

JAMES

Right... what have you got?

MARY

Well...to coin a phrase, he's pretty fucked really. I've managed to get certain documents with his signature on it. I think this will finish him.

JAMES

Don't count your chickens too soon. We've said this before remember...?

Mary goes into her briefcase and pulls out an A4 size envelope and gives it to him. They look around cautiously. He goes into the envelope and pulls out some photographs. He is pleased with what he sees.

JAMES

Fucking hell! How did you get a hold of these?

Mary takes a sip of her drink, raising her eyebrows in satisfaction.

MARY

Let's just say someone owed me a favour or they were going to end up on the front page instead of him.

James gives the photos back; they go back in the briefcase. He takes a drink. She smokes, flicking ash into the ashtray.

JAMES

Somebody you slept with...?

MARY

Now... that would be telling. For all I know...you might sell me out...

James tries to re-assure her.

JAMES

You know I wouldn't do that.

MARY

Isn't that what we said to our friend in the photos?

James has a wee laugh. He has another drink. She flicks more ash into the ashtray.

JAMES

So this it. We go with this tomorrow...agreed?

She smiles and nods in acknowledgement. James smiles at her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So...when are you going to let me take you out?

Mary smiles.

MARY

As soon as you've got something I want or need, which will be never.

James smiles.

JAMES

You're a hard bitch Mary. You really are. (pause) How's it feel to know that you control the destiny of Scotland's highest politician?

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Mary smiles.

MARY

Now...that *would* be telling.

Scene returns to fastmo. People come and go through the bar, as seen through the ashtray. Barmaid once again blows the ash out of the ashtray, as opposed to cleaning it. Two 50 + gents enter the bar, 1 gets the drink. The other sits at the table and pulls the cigs out. They are the best of friends. He lights one up, the other gent returns with drink
They talk.

GEORGE

So, what's up Jack you sounded pretty serious on the phone...

JACK

Look George...there's something you have to know, and it's best if you hear it from me and not someone else.

George looks at his friend a little surprised.

GEORGE

Jack...what's wrong? I mean, whatever it is, you can tell me.

Jack is reluctant to speak and drinks up. He is very nervous. George tries to re-assure him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It must be serious. What is it?
Is it something about me...?

JACK

Sort of...

George sits back a little, hesitant about what he is about to hear.

GEORGE

Go on Jack. Whatever it is, it can't be that bad surely.

Jack takes another large drink of his beer as he prepares to tell all.

JACK

Promise you won't hate me George.

George looks at him, now a little alarmed. Still, he re-assures his friend, unaware of the forthcoming

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confession.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's about Lucy...

George looks at him, more alarmed.

GEORGE

Lucy? What are you talking about?

Jack is silent, just happy to get the first line out.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

My Lucy...?

Lucy is George's daughter. Jack is about to tell him that he is her natural father after an affair with his ex-wife during George's troubled marriage a few years ago.

Jack takes his final swig of beer and offers to get another one.

He is stopped cold by George, alarmed at the nature of the discussion.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I think you better tell me what's going on Jack, don't you?

Jack looks at him, takes a deep breath and reveals all.

JACK

You remember that time when you and Susan went through that really rough patch...and she moved out for a few weeks...?

George sits a little forward. He looks defensive and serious.

GEORGE

What about it?

JACK

Look...there's no easier way to say this.

Camera whip – pans to George, looking very much like he doesn't like what he is about to hear. Jack continues, looking very scared.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm Lucy's father...not you.

Camera whip-pans to George. His expression hasn't changed. It's as if he didn't hear what Jack said, probably shocked. Jack gets the rest out while he still has the guts.

JACK (CONT'D)

When Susan moved out, she moved in with me. We got close and...

Camera whip-pans to George. He looks a lot more serious, now shocked.

GEORGE

What are you trying to say Jack?

Jack looks very scared and guilty.

JACK

I'm trying to say that... look, I've already said it.

GEORGE

Said what Jack? I didn't quite hear you.

Jack is silent as he smokes nervously. He stubs one out and tries to light another. George leans over aggressively, stops him and shouts at him.

GEORGE (SHOUTING)

SAY WHAT JACK? I SAID I DIDN'T HEAR YOU!

Jack withdraws, scared. He avoids eye contact.

JACK

I'm sorry George. I'm Lucy's father. Susan and I never meant for this to happen.

George continues to shout angrily.

GEORGE (SHOUTING)

SUSAN AND I...?! SHE'S STILL MY WIFE YOU FUCKING ARSE! (pause) SHE'S STILL LIVING WITH ME!

Jack responds sharply.

JACK

No she's not George. She moved in with me this morning while you drove here.

George remains up-seated. He can't quite believe what he is hearing. His anger boils. He pulls out his mobile and phones home. After a few rings, no one answers. She is supposed to be home looking after 'their' young daughter. He ends the call. Jack looks at him, sorrowfully. He puts the cigarette out and gets up to leave. George remains, looking shocked and bemused. As Jack walks out, scene fades.

CUT TO.

CARD: -

"What if you were to come back as an ashtray..."

Caption fades to reveal end of sentence...

"...Wouldn't life just fucking depress you!!!"

THE END