

"Balance"

by

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FADE IN:

FADE IN FROM BLACK SCREEN

"BOLERO" (RAVEL) IS HEARD.

A small black circle of liquid swirling round anti-clockwise.

White cream is being poured into this black coffee. The white swirls mixing into black.

INT. BATHROOM. NIK CROSBY'S BEDSIT, EARLS COURT, LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

NIK CROSBY (28) takes a sip of his coffee. He wears a white bathrobe with shaving foam covering half his face.

He rests the coffee mug on the ceramic basin and brings the shaving razor to his face.

After two downwards strokes, the razor leaves a red mark on the white foam. He touches the cut and a look of absolute fear spreads across his face.

He continues shaving on his jaw line, deeper and deeper, peeling back the skin. A different jaw line is visible underneath his own.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

INT. ESCALATOR. EARLS COURT SUBWAY STATION. DAY.

Nik, now wearing a white jumper and light slacks, is standing on the downward escalator. On the wall to his right are rows of A4 sized advertisements. In every one ARCHIE MARINO's (59) face stares out, the black collar of his shirt visible and face bloody from a gunshot wound above the left eye. Nik is sideways on to the photos, heading downwards and unaware.

INT. TRAIN PLATFORM. EARLS COURT STATION. DAY

Nik waits on the platform in the morning rush hour.

The train, when it comes, is so busy he can't get on, but he seems to lack the energy to push like the other passengers and remains on the platform.

As the train pulls out. He watches his reflection zip past in the carriage windows. He stands alone, but in every fourth window is reflected Archie Marino, watching over his shoulder.

Nik looks down at his shoes unaware.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN. DAY.

Nik sits on the train, an open sketch book on his lap. He looks tired and depressed.

The train doors close from left to right, meeting in the middle, then open again.

Nik closes his palms over his face and opens them, mimicking the effect of the doors.

When he opens his hands again the view has changed to a harbor wall in Cabopino, Spain.

EXT. HARBOR. CABOPINO PORT. SOUTHERN SPAIN. 10PM.

Archie Marino steps out of a car with the aid of a wooden walking cane.

He walks into "Albert's Bar & Grill" restaurant.

"BOLERO" (RAVEL) continues to play, now from the restaurant's sound-system.

Nik watches him from across the road. He leans on a large ship's anchor wearing a black polo-neck top, black jeans and dark sunglasses. Despite his imagining this is probably what a hitman should look like, he looks decidedly out of place.

He opens a book of matches to check the message.

"Thursday From 10pm. Albert's Bar and Grill"

He surrepticiously reaches into the inside of his jacket and pulls out a photo.

The photo is of Archie Marino. A black cross in felt pen has been drawn on the photo over his forehead.

Nik looks at his watch - 22:20. He produces a small bottle of pills from his side pocket, takes a tablet and swigs from a bottle of water resting next to the large black anchor.

EXT. ALBERT'S BAR & GRILL. NIGHT.

Archie sits at a table alone, outside on the terrace.

The waiter arrives and he orders a bottle of wine.

EXT. CABOPINO HARBOR. NIGHT.

Nik watches Archie's wine arrive and pats his jacket pocket, feeling for the gun.

He makes two false starts to the restaurant but nerves beat him. It is too public.

From his jacket pocket he pulls out a pink washing up glove and puts it on his shooting hand.

EXT. ALBERT'S BAR & GRILL. NIGHT.

The waiter bumps into Archie's table, sending his bottle of wine splashing onto his trousers.

Archie dabs the stain with a napkin and moves inside with the help of his cane.

Nik crosses the road, both hands in his jacket pocket.

INT. TOILET. ALBERT'S BAR & GRILL.

Nik follows Archie into the toilet. Archie stands at the urinal with his back to the door. His walking cane rests against the sink. A large bird is carved into the wooden handle.

Nik quickly checks the two cubicles, making sure they are empty.

He picks up a hand towel and wraps the gun in it to deaden the noise.

He approaches Archie just as he's about to turn round.

With eyes closed and looking away, Nik points the gun and pulls the trigger. There is a muffled thud.

MUSIC STOPS ABRUPTLY.

Nik looks round. Archie has been shot in the back of the head. His forehead and frontal lobes are splattered against the blue tiles, It is a real and brutal sight.

Nik whimpers, wide-eyed with fear. He drops the gun and rushes from the toilet.

EXT. ALBERT'S BAR & GRILL. NIGHT.

Nik puts his hands in his pockets, lowers his head and walks as calmly as possible through the restaurant. No-one seems to notice him. The music is loud, mutter of dinner conversation strong. The distance between toilet and diners is enough to have masked the gun shot.

EXT. CABOPINO HARBOR. NIGHT.

Nik walks into the street.

A safe distance from the restaurant he drops the glove into the yellow trashcan and breaks into a run.

EXT. A NEWS STAND. HOXTON SQUARE. LONDON. DAY.

Title: ONE WEEK LATER.

Nik walks down the London street.

He passes a newstand and pauses, searching the foreign titles.

He buys a Spanish Newspaper.

He lights a cigarette and stands, scouring the Newspaper for any incriminating news.

Nothing catches his eye.

He throws the paper in the bin.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN.

The train goes into a tunnel, lights dim.

When the lights come up, Nik looks to the end of the carriage. There, on the furthest seat, as in his sketches, sits Archie Marino, wearing a black suit and staring directly ahead.

The train enters another tunnel and the lights go out.

NIK

Sweet Christ.

The lights come back up. He looks again.

Archie Marino has turned his head and is staring straight at him.

Nik is paralyzed with fear, Marino continues to stare impassively.

INT. PLATFORM. KENSINGTON HIGH STREET STATION.

The train doors slide open, Nik exits in a panic.

Just as the doors are about to close, Marino follows.

INT. TICKETING HALL. KENSINGTON HIGH STREET STATION.

Nik takes the escalator steps two at a time.

At the top he waits by the ticket barrier wide-eyed with fear.

The escalator reveals Marino's head followed by body, moving towards him.

A crowd of tourists cut sideways across, obscuring Nik's view. When they pass, Marino has vanished.

Nik waits watching the escalator. The sound of a busker playing "BOLERO"(RAVEL) on the violin, badly, is heard.

Nik walks away from the escalator and through the winding tunnel to the station exit. The sound of the busker gets louder.

Nik pensively turns the corner, bringing the busker into view. It is Archie Marino playing the violin in his black suit, face bloodied from the gunshot wound.

Nik has no choice but to run past him screaming.

EXT. KENSINGTON HIGH STREET. DAY.

Nik bolts from the station exit and continues running down the street.

INT. FITZROVIA TAVERN. DAY.

He enters the concealing darkness of the bar hyperventilating and in an obvious state of distress.

He sits at a barstool. The Barkeep puts down his Spanish newspaper and comes over.

BARMAN

What can I get you, sir?

NIK

Double Jamesons. No ice.

Nik takes the drink and drains it. He looks in the mirror behind the bar. In the reflection, Archie Marino is over his shoulder, standing stock still, staring directly at him.

Nik turns slowly and deliberately.

There is no-one there.

BARMAN

That's three pounds? Another?

Nik turns back round and fishes for some change. He extracts a crumpled ten pound note and hands it to the Barman, nodding.

The barman refills his glass.

The entrance door bangs open and a man enters.

Nik is wound so tight he drops his glass and spins round to face the door.

It is a man carrying a delivery of drinks. The Barman acknowledges him and goes over to help.

Nik stands up and brushes the whiskey stain from his trousers.

Behind the bar, a bottle of Russian vodka catches his eye. He looks at his watch, remembering something.

He gets up to leave and looks through the bar to the Saloon bar.

Sitting in a snug is Archie Marino once more staring at him.

The Barman, carrying a crate of drinks crosses his view, when he moves, Marino is gone.

Nik reaches into his pocket and takes another tablet from the small pill bottle.

EXT. NIK'S BEDSIT, EARLS COURT. DAY.

Nik approaches the rundown building. He is looking around him with the paranoid movements of a disturbed pigeon.

INT. NIK'S BEDSIT. EARLS COURT. DAY.

The room is musty and unclean. Unwashed plates pile up in the sink. A week's worth of Spanish newspapers lie on the floor. The curtains are drawn.

Nik opens the curtains.

The sun streaks through catching the dust and shining its light onto the newspapers.

The sun catches a large photo on the wall showing Nik hugging a girl against a Spanish beach backdrop. The picture is framed with the caption "Nik Crosby and Alex Roccas, Marbella 2007."

He tries to open the window but it has been nailed shut.

He looks down onto the street below.

There, leaning on a lamp-post and looking straight up at him, is Archie Marino.

Nik is momentarily frozen with fear, then instinctively shuts the curtains.

He sits against the opposite wall clutching his knees to his chest.

The sound of "BOLERO" (RAVEL) is heard from the next flat. Nik looks at the wall where the sound is coming from, wide-eyed with fear.

He walks to the wall and presses his ear against the damp wallpaper.

With glazed eyes, through lack of sleep, he begins to dream and hallucinate.

INT. NIK'S DREAM.

Nik is on a beach at sunset. Behind him is Estepona lighthouse.

The lighthouse beacon comes on.

He looks up and sees the silhouette of a woman in the tower.

The sun moves at triple speed across the sky. Everything is triple speed except for him. As the sun sets to the right of the lighthouse, it immediately rises to the left.

Nik watches the female silhouette in the lighthouse.

NIK

Why did you ask me to do it? I
didn't want to. Where did you go?
Why did you leave?

He looks around him at the scorching, unnatural brightness of the day.

NIK

I've lost night.

He walks to the water's edge.

He looks at his reflection in the still water. Archie Marino stares back, from a night sky, stars and moon behind him.

Nik looks up from the water, to see it is bright day.

He looks again in the water. The moon sets and rises immediately, left to right, behind Marino's face.

ARCHIE MARINO

I've lost day.

Nik steps back from the water and everything slows down.

The sun sets slowly out to sea. A long shadow is cast over everything.

At Nik's feet he casts no shadow, where his shadow should be, a transparent white outline marks his body's parameters in the sand.

Nik follows this outline upwards to see a table with two chairs and a chess board on the shoreline.

He sits down on the side of the white pieces.

Archie Marino sits by the black chess pieces. He is dressed in black with his brains blown out, but eyes focused sharply on Nik.

Nik stares back, now wearing a white suit, covered in flecks of blood. With his left hand he tries to move a white chess piece. His arm casts no shadow over the table.

NIK

No shadow.

A gun shot sounds. MUSIC STOPS. Nik is brought back to his room.

INT. NIK'S BEDSIT.

Nik is still lying against the wall. The television is on, the volume barely audible.

The phone rings then clicks to answer machine.

ALEX

Nik Crosby? Nik? Pick up if you're there... I can explain everything.

Nik looks over at the phone. He reaches up for the receiver.

ALEX

The library. Biography section C. It's all there, I've left it, hidden.

Nik picks up the phone as it clicks off. He holds it to his ear, listening. Only the ringtone is audible.

NIK

Alex?

INT. EARLS COURT PUBLIC LIBRARY. EVENING.

Nik stands in the aisle facing the shelves and flicks through a few books searching the spines with his fingers.

Through the gap between the books and shelf he sees Archie Marino's piercing eyes.

For the first time, Nik's eyes register something other than fear. He makes a sudden dash along the bookshelf keeping Marino in his sights above the tops of the books.

He turns the corner of the aisle ready to confront him, but Marino is gone.

Nik has found himself in the Biography section. A large letter "C" on the aisle.

He trips his fingers along the shelf, through the "C"s.

NIK (TO HIMSELF)
 C, C, C, Caulfield, Cranford,
 Cromwell, Cros...oh my GOD!...it
 can't be!

He drops the books he's holding and reaches for this new book.

He looks at the cover. The title reads:

"NIK CROSBY. A BIOGRAPHY."

He turns the book in his hand. The rest of the sleeve is blank. No author. No publisher.

NIK
 What the fuck is this?

He opens the book and flicks through to the photos. Pictures of him as a baby, schoolboy, the photo from his bedsit wall.

He turns to the fly leaf. The date is 2007. No lending ticket.

Nik takes the chair at the end of the aisle and begins to read.

He becomes so involved, he forgets where he is and lights a cigarette.

NIK (TO HIMSELF)
 It's all here...all true.

He turns to the final photo. It is a picture of Nik talking to Alex Roccas, the girl from the photo in his bedsit, against a London skyline. The caption beneath it reads:

"NIK HEARS THE TRUTH FROM ALEX ON TOP OF ST PAULS CATHEDRAL. AUGUST 24 2007"

Nik looks at the clock on the wall. The date reads August 24.

A Librarian appears, incredulous that someone is smoking in the Library.

LIBRARIAN
 Sir, you can't smoke in here.
 This is a Library!

NIK
 Get lost.

LIBRARIAN
 Right that's it. I'm calling the
 Police. I'm warning you...

Nik focuses at the mention of the law.

NIK
Police! No, sorry. I'll go. Look,
I'm going, see?

Nik walks to the exit, still carrying the book.

LIBRARIAN
Sir, the book, you haven't
borrowed it, leave the book...Sir,
you must leave the book!

Nik makes a run for it. The Alarm goes off.

EXT. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL. LONDON. APPROACHING DUSK.

Nik races up the wide steps of St. Paul's Cathedral and into the main body of the church.

INT. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

Nik enters the side door that leads to the whispering gallery.

INT. STAIRCASE. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

The spiral staircase is wide and made of stone, similar to Estepona lighthouse. At each turn dim orange lights show the way. He still casts no shadow against the stone wall.

He hears a familiar giggle and looks up just in time to see the shadow of a woman disappearing round the corner.

He quickens his step, trying to hold the shadow in his view. The shape of the body and sculpt of the hair is reminiscent of Alex, or possibly Eva.

INT. THE WHISPERING GALLERY. FIRST FLOOR.

He comes to the first exit and must walk round the gallery to access the second flight of stairs to the roof.

He is alone in the whispering gallery. The giggling is heard again.

He presses his ear against the stone wall and listens. Many whispering voices talk over each other. One stands out. A low, rasping voice.

RASPING VOICE
A vision. The pains of sleep. As
who pursued with yell and blow,
still treads the shadow of his
foe.

(MORE)

RASPING VOICE (CONT'D)

The sun now rose upon the night,
 out of the sea came he, And I had
 done a hellish thing, for all
 averred I had killed the bird
 that made the breeze to
 blow...still treads the shadow
 of his foe...

Nik in a cold sweat tears his head away from the wall.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

As he walks up the spiral staircase he hears footsteps behind him.

"BOLERO" (RAVEL) begins to play as if from a small portable stereo. The music gets louder with the approaching footsteps.

Nik looks at the twisting stone stairs behind him to see the black shadow of Archie Marino on the smooth wall.

Archie Marino himself comes into view.

Nik leaps up the remaining steps three at a time.

EXT. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL. ROOFTOP.

Nik opens the final door onto the roof of St Paul's. The area is circular.

He is greeted by a spectacular panoramic view of London at dusk. The sky is finally getting dark.

He walks over to the balcony and recoils at the height to the ground. He scans the viewing area.

On the other side of the circle is a woman wearing a cream business suit with her back to him.

Nik approaches slowly.

NIK

Alex?

The woman turns round as he approaches.

Just as her face is coming into focus the steel entrance door bangs behind him.

Nik pivots round in time to see Archie Marino step out of the door.

In a panic Nik runs to the furthest point away from both of them.

He crashes into a massive spotlight against the far wall, causing its trajectory to change from nearly vertical to horizontal.

Marino continues his approach.

Nik is struggling but his jacket has got caught in the metal mesh of the spotlight.

The spotlight comes on, bathing Nik in white light. He looks like a crucified bird.

Aerial view of the viewing area. Due to the adjusted angle of Nik's spotlight the viewing circle has been neatly divided into half dark, half light - it looks like a Yin Yang - with Nik in the white half and Marino in the black half. Marino continues to approach.

Marino all dressed in black approaches, the side of his face bloody from the gunshot.

Nik breaks free of the wire mesh, ripping his arm in the process.

Nik rushes towards the open door. He sees the woman in the cream suit - only now it is not in shadow and can be seen for what it is - white pigeon shit dripped down the gray wall in the shape of a human.

He reaches the door and tries to open it. It has jammed. He hits it with his biography.

Nik backs up against the balcony edge and looks over at the street below.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF STREET BELOW.

All the people on the street are dressed in black and white, like chess pieces. They move with a balletic symmetry. Black follows white, white follows black. Never touching.

EXT. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL. ROOFTOP.

Nik looks down at himself. He is now wearing a white suit.

Marino begins to walk towards him.

Nik opens the biography in a panic. The pages are black and white empty sheets.

They fly out the book on a sudden breeze around his head.

Marino becomes obscured by the flapping pages.

Nik leans back over the balcony and loses his footing.

In a swirl of black and white he falls off the ledge towards the street below.

FADE OUT.