

DUST
(formerly Easy Street)
by
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Original Screenplay

Seventh Draft

Represented by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY QUAY, RIVER LIFFEY - DAY

The wind blows a cloud of dust above the dark green river water. As the dust settles on the surface it is carried away by the current.

A WOMAN and CHILD, stand on the footbridge above the river, watching the dust disperse.

EXT. NARROW STREET - DAY

FLASHBACK - ONE WEEK EARLIER

Traffic is at a standstill. One DRIVER sits in air-conditioned MINI COOPER comfort, talking on her mobile phone. A MAN in a Mercedes taps his finger impatiently while trapped by traffic.

INT. TAXI - EVENING

This Taxi is clean as a whistle, just like JAMES, the thirty-five year old driver, carefully groomed and dressed.

James pushes his designer sunglasses up for eye contact through the rear-view mirror with his exasperated PASSENGER.

JAMES
(attempting to
placate)
Gridlock, the price of success.

PASSENGER
How far is it?

The car in front moves forward by a couple of yards and cars behind start hooting madly at James. He inches forward the precious few yards.

JAMES
Hold on. We're moving.

They move forward by barely a car length and stop.

PASSENGER
How far?

The Passenger reaches for his wallet - American Dollars, Sterling, credit cards but only twenty euro in two tens.

JAMES
We're doing fine.

PASSENGER

Not me. This will cover it.

He pushes the twenty euro into James' hand, opens the door and jumps out to walk.

James looks at his meter - 28 euro - he's being stiffed.

EXT. NARROW STREET - EVENING

James bounds out of his taxi and watches his runaway Passenger disappear.

JAMES

Shit! Bastard.

He abandons his car to run after the Passenger.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey! You owe me....

A scruffy TEENAGER in a shell suit pulls up on a scooter beside James' taxi. The Teenager has a good into the empty car.

James stares back with anger in his eyes. The Teenager looks ahead. James gives up on his chase and goes back to his taxi.

As James side steps the Teenager he momentarily locks eyes with a Latvian man, VALDIS, who is crossing the street, picking his way tentatively between the stationary cars.

The Teenager accelerates towards Valdis, snatches his duffle bag. Jorge fights to hold onto his bag but the Teenager wins the tussle and speeds away.

VALDIS

(in Latvian)

Fuck you boy!

Valdis trips and falls against the bonnet of James' taxi. He falls to the ground, bangs his head and is knocked out cold.

A small CROWD gathers and forms a circle above Valdis. Everybody stays standing, unanimously unwilling to touch the unconscious Valdis.

Blood trickles from a cut on Valdis's forehead. He is cheaply dressed and wears a few days growth of beard.

JAMES

I didn't hit him.

The MINI Driver takes a dismissive look at Valdis.

MINI DRIVER

(to Crowd)

Who saw what happened?

The MERC DRIVER who was too far back to see what happened, nods at the Mini Driver, supportive.

MERC DRIVER

That's what they all do. This weeks scam....

James hunkers down next to Valdis. He punches 999 into his mobile phone.

JAMES

(into phone)

Ambulance.

MINI DRIVER

(frustrated)

Christ sake. We'll be stuck here forever!

JAMES

Junction of Prince's Street and Stoneybatter.

James stays hunkered down but doesn't touch Valdis.

MERC DRIVER

(to James)

If you get done... well there's no justice.

A Police Car arrives against the flow of traffic. A POLICEMAN and POLICE WOMAN get out, snapping on rubber examination gloves as they approach the scene.

POLICE WOMAN

Who put in the call?

James looks up and nods 'yes'.

JAMES

He's out cold.

POLICE WOMAN

Who was driving this car?

JAMES

(flustered)

I was. But not at the time of the accident... he fell... the car wasn't moving.

POLICE WOMAN

Stop digging yourself a hole, okay?

The Police Woman unwraps a silver survival sheet and shakes it out to cover Valdis. As the sheet settles over Valdis, his eyes dart open - panic and confusion.

Before James can stop it Valdis has grasped hands with him and stares wildly into his eyes. He pulls James closer.

VALDIS
 (guttural whisper)
 Bag, passport, permit?
 (broken English)
 Everything I own is in that bag.

James tries to extricate his hand from Valdis's grip but he holds on tight - desperation. James is uncomfortable. He scrunches his face in disgust - the dirt of Valdis's hands and clothes.

MINI DRIVER
 He's drunk. He fell over.
 Can't we just clear the road and
 get going?

Valdis, frightened by the commotion, pulls James closer.

VALDIS
 Bag? Money? Big problem.

JAMES
 Your bag was snatched. It's
 gone.

Valdis doesn't understand.

VALDIS
 (in Latvian)
 Everything is in my bag.

POLICEMAN
 (to James)
 Do you know the injured party?

James tries to retrieve his hand again. Valdis won't let go.

JAMES
 I've never seen... No...
 (to himself)
 Fuck sake.

An Ambulance arrives. A PARAMEDIC sets to examining Valdis.

PARAMEDIC
 (friendly, direct)
 What happened to you? What's
 your name?

Valdis looks confused, shakes his head and looks towards James. The Paramedic looks at James expectantly.

JAMES
(defensive)
What? What do I know?

PARAMEDIC
Are you associated with this man?

JAMES
Associated? No. I just phoned...

The Paramedic gives James a wry look.

PARAMEDIC
Are you the driver?

JAMES
He got knocked over...

The Paramedic ignore James' protestations and gets on with his work.

PARAMEDIC
(to his colleague)
He may be concussed. He can't tell me his name.

JAMES
(reluctant)
He's not from here. He doesn't speak English. His bag was stolen. He got knocked over trying to save it.
(final, dismissive)
That's all I know.

The Paramedic shines a torch into Valdis's eye. Valdis releases his grip on James to push the Paramedic away. He jumps up onto his feet.

The Police step in to protect the Paramedic.

POLICEMAN
(staccato to Valdis)
You have to go in the ambulance.
(explains to James)
Head injury, just in case.

The Merc Driver purses his lips and leans over to the Mini Driver, a thinly disguised leer at her cleavage.

MERC DRIVER

Jesus, these bastards get better treatment than our own.

Mini Driver nods in agreement, a glint in her eye.

JAMES

(to Policeman)

Is that it then? Can I get back to earning a living?

The Paramedic and the Policeman steer Valdis towards the Ambulance but he digs his heels in and won't go. He's frightened and flustered.

VALDIS

No! No! Please no!
(broken English)
I won't be taken back!

Valdis shakes off the Paramedic. The Ambulance radio crackles a call from base. They pack up their stuff, snap off their gloves.

PARAMEDIC

(to James)

Think before you call us again... a real emergency?

The Ambulance leaves. The Police drive away.

Valdis and James are the only ones left standing on the street. The Merc and the Mini drive away.

VALDIS

Big problem?

I/E. JAMES' TAXI - EVENING

James drives in silence.

A WOMAN laden with bags of shopping flags him down.

James shakes his head bitterly and drives on.

WOMAN

(angry, to James)

Turn off your sign you gobshite!

Valdis sits in the back seat, head stooped, arms hanging limply in his lap.

James flicks a switch and the roof sign goes dark.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

In stark contrast to the Taxi, this place is untidy, lived in, toys all over the floor and the dishes haven't been cleared up from breakfast.

James frowns as he surveys the mess. He ushers Valdis to sit on a couch.

JAMES

Grace?
 (he shouts louder)
 Grace?

Footsteps running down the stairs.

GRACE (O.S.)

Sshhh. I just got the baby down.

GRACE shuffles in wearing a baggy tracksuit and slippers. She was once beautiful but doesn't get a chance lately - no time. Her long hair is held back with a scrunchy.

JAMES

(under his breath)
 The state of this place.
 (before he thinks)
 You've been busy anyway?

Grace sets to clearing the breakfast table. She piles delph roughly into the sink. With her back to James she lights a cigarette and inhales deeply.

GRACE

(mimicking James,
 light-hearted)
 How was your day? Were the children behaved? Your children...
 (turns to James,
 serious now)
 The baby has been sick. I just got him to sleep. Jesus ... anything less than perfect isn't good enough.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

Valdis sits on a couch, head stooped, cowering.

His gaze settles on a photograph of a smiling family, Grace, James and their daughter.

The Little Girl from the photograph, ROSIE, four years old, spotlessly clean, ready for bed, dressed in pink pyjamas, sneaks into the room.

When she sees Valdis she puts her finger to her mouth.

ROSIE
(conspiratorial)
Ssshhhhh. My brother is asleep.

She smiles at Valdis. She finds her dark-skinned doll on the couch and sits up next to him.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
We can't sleep.

She adjusts the doll's tiny outfit to tidy it. She uses a miniature brush to tidy the doll's black hair.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Can you sleep?

Valdis smiles sadly at her. He lowers his head and looks away. Rosie stands on the couch next to him and gently runs her tiny brush through his hair.

VALDIS
(has to speak)
Please. Hello little girl.

Rosie laughs - only a tiny patch of his hair looks neat.

He lifts his hand as if to his heart and takes a well worn photograph from his shirt pocket. He shows it to her. She touches it and smiles at him.

ROSIE
Is she a princess?

The photograph is of a GIRL the same age as Rosie.

Choked, Valdis pockets the photograph.

Rosie runs to ...

THE KITCHEN

She runs in excited. James and Grace change their demeanour to hide that they were rowing.

ROSIE
Mammy the man has a princess too!

GRACE
What man?

ROSIE

The man in ...

JAMES

That's what I was trying to tell
you...

Grace runs to the -

SITTING ROOM

Valdis stands up respectfully when she comes in.

Grace takes him in at a glance and stops dead.

GRACE

(to Valdis)

How did you ...

(to James)

Are you mad? Why did you bring
him?

She glares at James, a 'what are you thinking' look.

Valdis just smiles shyly.

JAMES

He doesn't speak English. He
was robbed...

GRACE

(furious)

Rosie, are you okay?

James comes to Valdis's defence.

JAMES

Don't be like this in front of
him. I invited him

GRACE

He doesn't speak English? So
what did you say to him? Come
around and....

(quietly to James)

....frighten my daughter?

Rosie half-hides behind James, her arm around his leg.

ROSIE

I'm not frightened.

Grace sweeps Rosie into her arms and carries her out of
the room. On her way ...

GRACE
 (has had enough)
 He'll have to leave...look after
 him. And while your at it go
 and earn some money to look
 after your family.

Rosie is frightened by Grace's brusqueness and starts to cry as Grace carries her upstairs.

Then the sound of the Baby crying from upstairs.

Valdis looks at James.

VALDIS
 Big problem?

JAMES
 (nods)
 Yeah, big problem.

Valdis makes to leave.

VALDIS
 Thank you sir.

He goes outside.

JAMES
 Wait a minute. Can I help?

Valdis shrugs his shoulders.

VALDIS
 (broken English)
 I'm sorry to upset your house.

I/E. JAMES' TAXI - NIGHT

Valdis sits silently in the front seat this time as James drives back towards the city centre.

Valdis watches out the window as they drive down streets bustling with PEOPLE - laughing, drinking, shopping - commerce in action.

FOUR TEENAGE GIRLS wiggle past in short skirts and high heels, carefree, laughing mischievously as they go.

James stops the car on O'Connell Street.

JAMES
 This is it. I'm sorry.

VALDIS
 No, please sir. Big problem.

James takes a ten euro note from his pocket and gives it to Valdis. Valdis looks at the money sadly and shakes his head.

James reluctantly gives him a second ten euro note. Valdis smiles sadly at James. He holds his hand out to James.

JAMES
(resigned)
That's all I made today. You
have it.

Valdis gives James back the money and as quickly as the escaping Passenger earlier, he jumps out and disappears into the night.

James jumps out to follow him, the twenty euro raised in the air.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Where will you go?

A YOUNG COUPLE approach James.

YOUNG WOMAN
Are you free? Did that Polish
bastard stiff you?

EXT. CITY QUAY - DAY

BACK TO THE PRESENT

The traffic is heavy but moving.

I/E. JAMES' TAXI

James has a fare onboard, a sophisticated BUSINESSMAN.

JAMES
(laced with irony)
...sure hasn't Ireland become
the 'land of opportunity'.
We're all living like kings.

BUSINESSMAN
So everyone's working here?

JAMES
If they're not, they don't want
to.

The Businessman looks across the river at the imposing edifice of the Financial Services Centre buildings. A cloud of dust blows over the river.

BUSINESSMAN

What's goin' on here?

James stops at a red light just at the footbridge.

On the footbridge, the lone figure of an EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMAN and her three-year-old DAUGHTER scattering ashes from an urn. They watch the ashes blow away on the wind.

The Businessman and James watch in silence.

They watch A POLICEMAN and A POLICEWOMAN walk across the footbridge from the opposite side. The Policewoman talks brusquely to the Woman and without incident she moves on, consoling her Daughter as they go.

The Policewoman strides ahead - job done.

The Policeman, sensitive to the situation, sees some dust on the rail above the water. He brushes it off respectfully and watches a tiny cloud of dust fall to the water and disappear. Almost in secret he makes the sign of the cross.

The lights turn green and James drives on in silence.

FADE OUT.

