

TRACE PART 2: ACE OF SPADES

Written by

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FADE IN:

We hear a familiar voice in the darkness.

ROMAN (V.O.)
We play this game of life by
breaking the rules. Eventually you
have to learn the rules of the
game. And then you have to play
better than anyone else. In the
end, you have to keep playing...

INT. ROMAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

A dim light flickers on to reveal ROMAN, a dark and
mysterious detective. He holds a pair of red dice and sits
lost in his thoughts.

The ring of a telephone pierces the silence. Roman answers it
and listens then puts the phone down and looks up.

ROMAN (V.O.)
And the game continues.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Roman walks through an alley way to discover a crime scene.
Suave Detective MCCARTHY turns around and lights a cigarette.

MCCARTHY
Long time no see.

ROMAN
It's been a while. (He shakes his
hand and smiles subtly then motions
to crime scene)How bad?

MCCARTHY
Bad.

ROMAN
What are we talking?

SPADE (O.S.)
Oh nothing major, just murder.

The voice belongs to a young attractive male in a suit, JASON
SPADE.

SPADE (CONT'D)

Jason Spade. I'm the newest investigator in town and by the looks of it, you two desperately need my help.

ROMAN

We have it covered, so get lost.

A white sheet covers a dead body. Roman crouches down to examine.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

The victim?

MCCARTHY

Mark Belfort. An attorney for Clifton and Skart Associates.

ROMAN

Any leads?

MCCARTHY

None.

SPADE

Unless you consider the fact that it was common knowledge that he held ties to the criminal underground. An obvious motive for any crook to knock him off.

McCarthy blows a puff of smoke and looks over at Roman.

Roman shoots an angry glare at Spade then crouches down and uncovers the top of the sheet. He grimaces.

ROMAN

Grim lesion to the back of the head.

MCCARTHY

Mr. Belfort appears to have had a nasty run in with a bullet, and lost. (He smirks)

Roman notices a poker card under the body. McCarthy looks away and takes a drag. Roman grabs the card. Words are written in blood on the front. Roman reads:

ROMAN

"Midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway."

He slowly stands and faces McCarthy.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Know anything about this?

MCCARTHY
Can't say I do. Seems our serial
killer sure enjoys his poker.

SPADE
It seems he enjoys his Dracula as
well. It's a quote from Stoker's
novel in case you didn't know. I'm
willing to bet his next attack will
occur somewhere near the Duplex
theatre. And as much as I'd love to
stay and chat, I'm going to go
investigate some real leads.
(Sarcastically) And though parting
is such sweet sorrow, I must bid
you adieu gentleman.

He lights a cigarette and walks away.

ROMAN
So we have to deal with that now
too?

MCCARTHY
Hey, the man is clever.

Roman glares at McCarthy then gazes at the card with a look
of concern.

ROMAN
I don't trust him. Keep him away
from the investigation.

MCCARTHY
(Flicks cigarette and
grins)
Where do we start?

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Red dice sit on a table. Opening credits roll during the
voice-over. Montage of the characters, scenes from Trace part
1, and other related images.

ROMAN (V.O.)
This game. It's like an addiction.
You want to walk away but end up
rolling again.
(MORE)

ROMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As long as you breathe, it can't be escaped. Things change when the stakes rise. I've handled plenty of criminals and their filth. And the criminal underground has remained silent for months now. But now we face a cold blooded killer. It decides our destiny, this game, and it relentlessly carries on...

As voice-over finishes, the montage ends with a shot of Roman and McCarthy, then focuses on the red dice.

INT. ROMAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roman throws off his tie and shirt and places his hat on the night stand. He uneasily pours a glass of whiskey and sits at his desk writing.

ROMAN (V.O.)

Murder. This raises the stakes to a whole other level. And this clue he left, what does it mean? Dracula?

Roman sits on his bed and nervously fiddles with the red dice.

ROMAN (V.O.)

I've never stepped toe to toe against a killer before. And who the hell is this Spade character? Tomorrow McCarthy and I will investigate some leads. I fear this could turn ugly.

Roman turns off the lamp.

INT. MCCARTHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Roman and McCarthy sit at a desk.

MCCARTHY

Seeing as the pin has so conveniently decided to fold his cards early, who is our lead suspect?

Roman appears deeply concerned.

ROMAN

With the pin disposed of I'm not sure anymore.

MCCARTHY

You know as well as I do that the underground never rests for long. There was bound to arise an ambitious newcomer sooner or later.

ROMAN

Out for blood to prove himself... Bring me a list of those in contact with Belfort.

MCCARTHY

Belfort was a powerful attorney and as your friend Spade pointed out, he did hold connections to the underground.

ROMAN

Sure, Belfort handled the cash flow under the table and most of his clients were criminals. So he gets pressure from the feds, and immediately he is disposed of. That still leaves the entire underground as possible suspects.

Roman picks up the bloody poker card resting on the table. He reads it silently to himself, a troubled expression on his face.

INT. ROMAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Roman sits at his desk planning. He takes a drink from his glass. Roman stands up and grabs the red dice while pacing about the room.

ROMAN (V.O.)

We're diving into the heart of the criminal underground. This sicko has read too many horror stories. It's 11:30.

Roman lays down on the bed.

ROMAN (V.O.)

Half an hour until midnight...

Roman's voice trails off as he falls asleep. The red dice rest in his hand as we fade to black...

In the darkness we hear a sharp and eerie laugh. Roman awakens with a start and glances at the clock which reads: "12 A.M.". He scrambles to dress and rushes out of the room.

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Roman is visibly shaken as he walks into the alley. A dead body lies on the ground. McCarthy rushes into the alley.

MCCARTHY

What is it?

Roman motions to the body. McCarthy looks on in horror.

MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

The victim?

ROMAN

Harry Alstott. Master thief.

MCCARTHY

How did you know?

ROMAN

I had a feeling.

Roman stares gravely at the body. McCarthy bends down then hands Roman a paper with blood on it. There are letters from newspaper clippings. It resembles a ransom note.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

What is this?

MCCARTHY

It looks like some sort of code.

Roman takes it and examines it.

ROMAN

We need to solve this now.

Spade emerges from the darkness and walks over to the body. Roman glares at Spade.

SPADE

Not only did he know that you two would be the ones investigating him, but he knew how you would react. The killer already knows your next move.

Roman angrily steps up to Spade.

ROMAN

Beat it Spade.

SPADE

The murderer is too smart for you.
He can easily outwit your plan of
action.

ROMAN

How do you happen to know so much
about this case? Seems a little
shady to me-

SPADE

Naturally, you weren't the right
men for the job so the city scoured
around and hired me due to my
expertise. (He smiles)

ROMAN

OK then. Solve this code if you're
the expert.

SPADE

It's a Betamaze code. Quite simple
really.

MCCARTHY

Then what does it say?

Spade takes the paper and glances at it nonchalantly.

SPADE

Something about a parking garage I
believe.

ROMAN

Tell us!

Spade lights a cigarette and begins to stroll away casually.

SPADE

I'd check somewhere with a rooftop
and parking garage. Farewell
gentleman.

Spade disappears around the corner.

ROMAN

He knows too much about these
clues.

MCCARTHY

Why don't you admit that he's good.
He was right, he might be the right
man for the job. We need his help.

ROMAN

That's bullshit and you know it!
Let's go to the rooftop so I can
prove it to you. We will crack this
case before he does, and we will
prevent the next murder.

Roman and McCarthy hastily leave the alley.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Roman and McCarthy cautiously move through a parking garage.
They both hold their guns close, ready to fire at any moment.

ROMAN (V.O.)

You can lose the game in the blink
of an eye, and each second could be
the last. It's only a matter of
time before the killer comes for
us. He could have killed us
already. He's toying with us. And
as we creep further into the
darkness, the killer slips away
without a trace...

They hear a scream from above and dash towards the sound.
They emerge on...

EXT. GARAGE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The detectives wearily sprint over to a body lying on the
ground. It is Spade, still barely alive. Fresh blood seeps
out from under him.

MCCARTHY

Shit! Spade!
(He examines the body)

Roman comes to a realization in horror.

ROMAN

You were right. Spade's not the
killer.

MCCARTHY

Yeah no shit Sherlock!

Spade points and struggles to utter words through a mouthful
of blood.

SPADE

Get...him...park-parking....garage.

He points and then his body goes lifeless. In the distance a dark figure runs away. Roman immediately starts to run after the figure.

The figure quickly disappears into the darkness. Roman continues to chase in vain and fires a few shots that miss the figure.

McCarthy leans down towards Spade's body closely as if he has noticed something.

Roman comes to the edge of the roof to find nothing. Down below the figure is on the ground and runs toward an underground parking garage. Roman points his gun to fire but decides it's no use to try.

Roman turns around, signals McCarthy, and they both sprint back into the garage to exit.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

Roman and McCarthy run down the street toward the underground lot where the figure disappeared. They approach the parking garage entrance and Roman prepares to enter.

MCCARTHY

Hey! Wait!

Roman stops and turns around. McCarthy appears deeply concerned.

ROMAN

What!?

MCCARTHY

I found this under Spade's body.

McCarthy hands Roman a bloody slip of paper with writing on it. It reads: "Parting is such sweet sorrow...Isn't it gentleman?"

Roman realizes the truth slowly. McCarthy and Roman share a brief look, nod at each other and we follow as they enter...

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

Roman and McCarthy cautiously move down the entrance ramp of the garage with their guns ready.

ROMAN (V.O.)

It's time for the showdown. All the cards are on the table. We'll see who has the best hand.

Roman and McCarthy enter the heart of the garage to find Claire tied up in a chair in the center of the garage. Roman's face displays his emotional connection to Claire. They approach the chair to untie her.

SPADE (O.S.)

Welcome, Welcome gentleman.

Spade steps out from around the corner followed by a crew of five henchman holding guns.

SPADE (CONT'D)

Glad you could make the festivities. Sure took you two long enough to figure it all out.

ROMAN

Why are you doing this?

SPADE

Because I can. The underground has been in my control for months now and you two are the only ones that pose a threat to the underground. So please enjoy the show. Start by saying farewell to your sweet Claire.

Spade points his gun at Claire and right before he fires...

SLOW MOTION: ROMAN DIVES AND KNOCKS THE CHAIR OVER AS THE BULLET FLIES OVER CLAIRE'S HEAD. ANOTHER BULLET HITS THE ROPES AND FREES CLAIRE'S HANDS.

Roman quickly drags Claire behind a pillar for cover as McCarthy quickly fires a shot that narrowly misses Spade. Roman and McCarthy then run for cover as Spade and his men spread out and begin firing.

SLOW MOTION: ROMAN AND MCCARTHY DIVE AND ROLL AND LEAN UP AGAINST THE SAME PILLAR FOR COVER AS BULLETS FLY AROUND THEM. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND THEN BOTH DIVE OUT FROM BEHIND THE PILLAR WHILE SHOOTING. TWO OF THE HENCHMAN GET HIT AND HIT THE GROUND DEAD.

Roman gets to his feet and runs toward a henchman hidden in cover.

Roman fires a bullet to the left leading the henchman to lunge out to the right where Roman places a bullet that catches the henchman square and drops him immediately.

McCarthy expertly runs while firing and takes out another one of the henchman with a dead-on headshot.

Another henchman jumps out of hiding and nearly shoots McCarthy before Roman nails him with a bullet.

McCarthy stands up and smiles at Roman.

SLOW MOTION: SPADE SUDDENLY EMERGES FROM HIS HIDING SPOT AND DRILLS MCCARTHY WITH A BULLET. MCCARTHY YELLS OUT IN AGONY. ROMAN WATCHES IN SHOCK AS MCCARTHY HITS THE GROUND.

Roman's shock quickly turns to rage as he aims his gun at Spade and charges toward him. Spade fires a shot that knocks the gun out of Roman's hand. Roman tackles Spade, knocking him off his feet and sending Spade's gun flying out of his hand and across the floor.

Roman and Spade wrestle for control. Roman eventually gains the upper hand and delivers a few violent blows to Spade's face.

Spade suddenly flips Roman and pulls out a knife. He holds it against Roman's throat and laughs exposing his bloody teeth. Roman realizes he faces his death.

SPADE (CONT'D)

And now I must bid you adieu.

Right before Spade plunges the knife into Roman, a bullet pierces Spade in the back of the head. He crumples to the floor dead. A gun smokes in the background. The gun is lowered to reveal McCarthy.

MCCARTHY

Jackpot.

Roman breathes a sigh of relief. He glances up at McCarthy in exhaustion.

ROMAN

I thought you were-

MCCARTHY

What can I say, Spade's not the only one who is acquainted with our friend Shakespeare. I'm quite the performer if you haven't noticed.
(He smiles)

ROMAN

Well it took you long enough. (He smiles)

MCCARTHY

(Sarcastically)

You didn't need my help at all.
It's not like I saved your ass or anything.

Roman glares at McCarthy who helps him to his feet. McCarthy motions toward the pillar.

MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

I think you're forgetting about someone.

Roman walks over and helps Claire to her feet. They look into each other's eyes for a few precious moments before Roman looks down, breaking their shared moment.

ROMAN

I have to go. Duty calls.

Roman wants to stay but makes himself walk away. He takes a few steps and turns back to face her.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Claire. Take care of yourself.

Claire watches Roman walk away again with a painful and familiar feeling displayed on her face, leaving so many unspoken words left unsaid between them.

EXT. COLORADO AVENUE - MORNING DAWN.

The morning sun peaks over the mountains. McCarthy and Roman, still bruised and bloody, exit the parking garage and gaze out into the sky.

ROMAN

Job well done.
(He smiles)

MCCARTHY

Until the next time. After all,
tomorrow is another day.
(He smirks)

SLOW MOTION: ROMAN AND MCCARTHY SHAKE HANDS. THEY NOD TO SYMBOLIZE THEIR BOND. NO WORDS NEED TO BE SAID. MCCARTHY LIGHTS A CIGARETTE AS THEY WALK IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

Roman walks down the street confidently.

ROMAN (V.O.)

This unpredictable game of life
throws you through a series of
twists and turns. We tell ourselves
that everything happens for a
reason. But does it?... Leave it to
chance to decide. Ante up. It's the
next round and it's your move, they
tell me. Gambling with a bet of
life on the line, my fate may be
uncertain. But I'll take my
chances. Only one thing left to do.

Roman pulls the red dice out of his pocket and smiles at them.

ROMAN (V.O.)

Pick up those dice and roll again.

Roman says the last words as he walks out of the frame.

FADE OUT