

A BAD HAND

A Gameplay Cinematic Screenplay

Based on the Quest for

FALLOUT: CASCADIA

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. THE MARINER CLUB - BACKROOM - NIGHT

Rain streaks amber-stained windows. A PRE-WAR JAZZ RECORD crackles in the distance, warped by two centuries of decay.

The backroom is all shadows and smoke. Leather booths. A single lamp casts sick yellow light on a corner table.

JOHNNY BRADSHAW (40s, rumpled suit, campaign pin still on his lapel) sits alone. Leg bouncing. A whiskey glass sweats in front of him, untouched.

He checks his watch. Checks the door. Checks his watch again.

The door opens.

THE DRIFTER enters, silhouetted. They move with purpose, scanning exits.

Johnny FLINCHES. Hand darts toward his hip - no gun. Old instinct, new cowardice.

JOHNNY
(startled)
Who... who are you?

The Drifter slides into the booth across from him. Says nothing.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Look, tonight's not good. Whatever you want, I can't help you.

The Drifter studies him. The sweat. The tremor. The untouched drink.

THE DRIFTER
Someone's already been here tonight. The Spades, maybe?

Johnny goes WHITE.

JOHNNY
(urgent whisper)
Keep it down! Yeah, yeah. The Spades were here. Courtesy of
Granddaddy.

(bitter laugh)
Guess I'm deeper in the hole than I thought.

THE DRIFTER
The Orcas sent me. Granddaddy's tired of excuses.

JOHNNY
(pleading)
Look, I know how this works. I need one more day. The caps are
coming.

THE DRIFTER
Convince me your plan is solid, and maybe I'll put in a good
word.

JOHNNY
(words tumbling out)
It wasn't my fault! Commissioner Rothwell, Security, they were
backing me. Then they just stopped. Used me to expose the Orcas'
investments. I was bait, and I didn't even know it.

The Drifter's eyes drop to Johnny's wrist. GOLD CUFFLINKS catch the lamplight. Expensive. Too expensive.

THE DRIFTER

Nice cufflinks. Pretty lavish for a broke man.

JOHNNY

(defeated)

They're... from Alicia Wu. A gift. Proof that Security wouldn't dare touch me.

(bitter)

She probably set me up too. Damned Hearts. Always two-faced.

THE DRIFTER

Names. Connections. All of it.

JOHNNY

(lowering voice)

Alicia Wu handles contacts in Security. She's got a mole - Sergeant Vickers. He's been funneling caps for months.

And Sawmill from the Diamonds? He skims from Granddaddy's operations. If the old man found out, there'd be hell to pay.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That enough?

The Drifter stands. Johnny half-rises.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Wait, wait - what are you going to tell them?

THE DRIFTER

That depends on what Granddaddy wants to hear.

The Drifter walks out. Johnny slumps back, staring at his untouched whiskey.

JOHNNY

(to himself)

God help me.

He reaches for the glass. His hand is shaking too badly to lift it.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKFIN LOUNGE - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Upscale decay. Velvet curtains. A mahogany table. The room has armed guards at every door.

ROCCO (50s, expensive suit straining against muscle) stands by the window, jaw working like he's chewing glass.

ALICIA WU (30s, elegant, calculating) sits with perfect posture. A cigarette holder in two fingers. She hasn't taken a drag. The cigarette is a prop. Everything about her is.

At the head of the table:

GRANDDADDY.

A ROBOBRAIN. Pre-war military chassis, brain dome clouded with age. The voice that emerges is pure old-world mob boss - Franklin Calamari, preserved in formaldehyde and spite.

GRANDDADDY
(mechanical rasp)
Our guest arrives.

The Drifter enters. Guards close the door.

ROCCO
You find Bradshaw?

THE DRIFTER
Yeah, I found him.

THE DRIFTER (CONT'D)
Security burned him. Commissioner Rothwell was feeding him money, then cut him off before the election. They used Johnny to expose your political investments.

SILENCE.

Rocco's hands curl into fists. Alicia's grip tightens on the cigarette holder. Granddaddy's brain dome HUMS.

GRANDDADDY

Security. Playing games with our money... our reputation.

ROCCO

(explosive)

I told you! We should've put Bradshaw down the second his campaign tanked!

ALICIA WU

(cool)

And announce to all of Cascadia that the Orcas backed a losing horse? Brilliant, Rocco.

ROCCO

Better than looking weak! We let this slide, every two-bit hustler thinks they can cross us!

ALICIA WU

Johnny knows Security's playbook. Their informants.

(to Granddaddy)

So we fake his death. Publicly, the Orcas are satisfied. Privately, we turn him into a weapon against the people who burned us.

ROCCO

The only message that matters is the one we send with a bullet in his skull!

They both look to Granddaddy. The robobrain's sensors swivel to the Drifter.

GRANDDADDY

You brought us this intelligence, Drifter. Tell me...

(pause)

And what would you do?

All eyes on the Drifter.

[PLAYER CHOICE - PATH A: THE PHANTOM KING]

THE DRIFTER
Both. And... neither.

Rocco scoffs. Alicia raises an eyebrow.

THE DRIFTER (CONT'D)
Johnny dies. Publicly. The Orcas send their message.
(beat)
But the body in the harbor isn't Johnny.

ROCCO
What the hell are you talking about?

THE DRIFTER
Fake his death and make it loud. Make it brutal. Every faction
sees what happens when you cross the Orcas.
(beat)
But Johnny becomes a ghost. Answers to Granddaddy directly.
Feeds you intel from Security, from the council - from anyone
who thinks he's dead.

ALICIA WU
(pleased)
A phantom asset.

THE DRIFTER
A phantom king. Politically irrelevant to the world. Privately,
your hand in every pocket that matters.

SILENCE.
A sound like grinding gears and broken laughter. Granddaddy is
CHUCKLING.

GRANDDADDY
(delighted)
Oh, I like you.

ROCCO
(sputtering)
Boss, you can't be serious -

GRANDDADDY
You think strength is a bullet.
(brain dome swivels)
But real power is a knife they never see coming. A puppet with
their hand so far inside them, they dance and never know the
strings.

Rocco's jaw tightens. He knows better than to argue.

GRANDDADDY (CONT'D)
Stage his death. Make it believable, and make it bloody.
(pause)
And Drifter? Do this right, and you'll find the Orcas remember
their friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASCADE WATERFRONT - PIER 7 - NIGHT

Fog rolls off black water. Rusted cranes loom like gallows.

A CROWD gathers at the pier's edge. ORCAS ENFORCERS keep them
back.

Rocco stands center, theatrical.

ROCCO
(to the crowd)
Let this be a lesson! The Orcas do not forgive! The Orcas do not
forget!

Two enforcers drag a BODY BAG to the edge. Heavy. Weighted.

In the shadows - the Drifter watches. Beside them:

JOHNNY BRADSHAW. Pale and trembling. Different clothes, with a hood over his face.

JOHNNY
(barely audible)
That's... that's supposed to be me in there.

THE DRIFTER
(low)
It's a John Doe. Courtesy of Alicia Wu.

JOHNNY
Christ.

The enforcers HEAVE the bag over the edge. A heavy SPLASH. The crowd murmurs. Some cheer. Most watch in silence.

THE DRIFTER
You're dead now, Johnny. The man you were - the politician, the candidate, the debtor - he's gone. What's left belongs to Granddaddy.

JOHNNY
(hollow)
Forever.

THE DRIFTER
Forever.

Johnny stares at the ripples. His expression flickers - grief, relief, terror, acceptance.

JOHNNY
(quietly)
I really was just another card in someone else's hand.

THE DRIFTER
At least you're still in the game.

Johnny pulls the hood tighter.

JOHNNY
(to himself)
Johnny Bradshaw is dead.

He turns and walks into the fog.

On the pier, Rocco raises his arms in triumph. The crowd disperses.

But in the shadows, the real game is just beginning.

FADE TO BLACK.