

JAX

An Original Screenplay
Robert Wallace

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www.rob-wallace.co.uk

0781 5700365

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1. EXT. LAFAYETTE / LOUISIANA / USA. NIGHT.

1.

BLACK. Head-up: Christmas.

In a quaint, old American style bathroom, a woman (MOTHER) grabs hold of a huge towel and scoops a young teenage girl out of a bathtub, simultaneously wrapping it around her. She cuddles her tightly.

The bathroom is steamy, blood splattered over the white tiles behind them.

On the floor the twisted corpse a man, his skull cracked open, bleeding.

MOTHER

Come here Jax, baby.

Jax's bare feet are skidding and sliding around on the wet floor tiles.

We focus on her dainty feet; toes curling, shiny with water.

She is crying, shaking with fear. Her mother's arms are still gripping her.

MOTHER (Cont'd)

You're okay, I'm here now. It's okay.

Jax clutches hold of her mother like there is no tomorrow. Her face, eyes wide.

MOTHER (Cont'd/OS)

He won't touch you no more baby. But I had to see for myself Jax. Just what he was.

2. THEN: THE CLICKS OF A CAMERA SHUTTER.

2.

CLICK: That image dissolves into a crime scene, a cordoned off Police Line, around the quaint old Louisiana house.

CLICK: A newspaper headline: **"Mother convicted. Second-degree murder"**.

CLICK: A teenage girl receiving a High School Prize, a silver plated statuette of a swimmer. The arc of a diver. Significant.

CLICK: THE NEW YORK TIMES, Theatre Review. Off Broadway. A photograph of JACQUELINE DONOVITCH - JAX. Caption: "Charlotte actress excels in three different roles in Broadway show. An Italian spoof."
'*La Reincarnazione del Dotter Grimaldi.*'

'Astonishing!' 'Convincing!' 'Donovitch is tremendous.'

CLICK: From still to motion; we move along a high-diving board and see:

3. INT. LONDON AQUATICS CENTRE / SWIMMING POOL / DAY

3.

HEAD-UP: London, current time.

Naked adult feet and ankles pad along the diving board; shiny red toenails. They come to the edge of board; it bends slightly with the weight.

We see Jax, her face. Now in her forties; slim build, athletic figure. She's dark-haired; attractive and nervous.

WE HEAR her heart pound; her breaths rise and fall. The creak of the springs as she stretches in preparation to dive. This is gutsy.

We can feel her tension and anticipation. Almost taste her fear.

We stare down to the pool below. It looks like a paperback, shimmering blue and dangerously far below her.

SHE SPRINGS off the board, a perfect dive, through the air and ... then ...

4. INT. UNDERWATER / SWIMMING POOL / LONDON DAY

4.

She perforates the surface of the water. Jax swims confidently up to the surface, a strong front crawl. She gasps for air.

Then she powers through the water, her face in a snarl of ANGUISH. We FEEL she is fighting the demons that haunt her.

Jax, her face says it all. It always does; her expression, her eyes.

Jagged images of the night in Lafayette, the old iron bath tub, her mother's arms. Blood. Fear.

She fights the images, we can feel it. THEN: she thrashes over to the edge and she's out of the water in one fluid movement.

She's panting, hands on her knees. Finally, she looks up, her eyes shine.

And we know exactly what she is thinking.

5. INT. FLOWER RESIDENCE / KITCHEN / DAY

5.

Jax looks around a very modern, well-equipped kitchen. She's the same age as in the pool dive. Her phone rings and her husband is straight in.

ANDREW (OS)

I can't make dinner tonight, Jax. Sorry.

Her face, close. It radiates disappointment.

6. INT. ANDREW FLOWER'S OFFICE, NORWICH / DAY

6.

ANDREW FLOWER, her husband is in his late forties; slicked back, dark hair. Blunt-edged moustache; etched features and chunky black glasses. He's at his desk in his office; wearing white factory overalls.

His accent is clipped, upper class English; distinctive - well-bred - and well educated. And he isn't sorry.

In front of him on the desk: an attaché case, full of cash: Euros, Dollars, Sterling. A passport and various travel tickets.

JAX (OS)

Oh ... (a beat) ... how so?

ANDREW

I've things to attend to here.

JAX (OS)

Shame.

ANDREW

Yes, I know. (a beat) But I've got to test run some machines for compliance.

7. INT. FLOWER RESIDENCE/ NORFOLK / KITCHEN / DAY.

7.

She looks across at her friend, LUCIA PALUZZI. Vaguely Loren, fifty, a fiery brunette from Sicily. Lucia tries not to listen or react.

Jax tries persuasion.

JAX

Cannelloni? Oh, and I found a very old bottle of Chateau Latour from that guy in Norwich. Tell me you're not tempted?

He tries to sound sincere.

ANDREW (OS)

Tempted, yes of course I am darling, but committed too. I'll be just as quick as I can. You understand ... don't you? I, I have a deadline.

JAX

Sure ... I'm just, uh. Call me when your done ... okay? I'll come and get you.

Jax hangs up, wipes her eye, walks back to Lucia.

JAX (Cont'd)

You got that I'm sure?

LUCIA

Oh ... that's too bad. He must work. On your wedding anniversary. I'd be mad as hell.

Jax sits back down on the stool, slugs some wine.

Lucia looks at her; grabs her car keys, looks at the door.

LUCIA (Cont'd)

I must go. Andrew is so damn selfish, Jax.
(a beat). But I know what I'd do.

8. EXT. NORWICH CITY CENTRE / NIGHT.

8.

Friday night street sounds, car horns, lights, traffic, people.

An Audi Estate cruising through town. Jax is at the wheel.

On the passenger seat is an insulated food box and beside that - the precious bottle of Chateau Latour.

At the traffic lights, suddenly a group of drunk youths slap the roof and bonnet, making obscene remarks.

She hits the central locking and floors it, ignoring the red light.

9. EXT. THE FLOWER GROUP LIMITED / MEAT PROCESSING PLANT/ CAR PARK / NIGHT.

9

The Audi stops. Jax, struggles with her picnic and hurries to the main entrance. The door is open ...

CONTINUOUS:

10. INT. AUTOMATED PRODUCTION AREA / NIGHT

10.

We see a wall-mounted, state-of-the-art, digital, control box.

CURRENT ALARM STATUS: DISARMED CURRENT CCTV STATUS: OFF

The noise is tremendous, pulsating, heavy duty factory machinery for producing pet foods. It's freezing in here.

She hurries through the production area, huge slabs of meat swing around on hooks connected to a steel conveyor belt.

She runs bouncing into the cold meat, colliding into carcass after carcass. We can see she is repulsed by the smell of blood.

She sees a narrow steel staircase to a gantry above a moving conveyor belt.

She waits, catches her breath. Climbs the stairs.

CONTINUOUS

11. INT. GANTRY / NIGHT

11.

She makes her way towards her husband's office, not glancing over the rail.

CONTINUOUS

12. INT. ANDREW FLOWER'S OFFICE / NIGHT

12.

The office is unoccupied, but Andrew's desk is littered with papers, travel documents and his passport. And the casino chip.

The closed attaché case perches on the edge of the desk. THE LOCK CLASPS OPEN.

Jax pushes the food box and wine onto the desk, making a space.

She sees: the desk and the case. His computer is on: LUFTHANSA home page.

She's curious: airline tickets, hotel vouchers.

She picks them up, flicks through. Stena Line ferry tickets to Holland ... and a lot more.

She sniggers, imitates Andrew's voice; the sound is uncanny.

JAX

Anniversary card. Chocolates. Jewellery.
Party favours for my troubled angel, Jax.

The office door opens, and Andrew comes in cautiously. He looks surprised and uncomfortable but trying hard not to show it.

Jax is startled.

JAX (Cont'd)

Shit! Andrew! (a beat) I was miles away.

She is still holding the bundle of travel documents; confused.

He sees them, and we see alarm flash across his face.

ANDREW

Talking to yourself Jax ... Are you alright?

JAX

Just a bunch of thugs at the lights ...
scared the shit out of me (a beat) ... plus
the smell out there makes me wanna puke.

ANDREW

You get used to it Jax. You have to.

JAX

Uh-huh, I guess you do. Anyway, I've brought
you a present.

HIS EYES FLICK BRIEFLY TO THE FOOD BOX.

ANDREW

A present?

A beat. Then with the other hand, she opens the food box and exposes a plate
wrapped in tin foil. She touches it.

JAX

Lucia's idea. And it's hot, boy!

He tries to force a smile, but it just won't work. He's too distracted.

ANDREW

That's great ...

She closes the food box and picks up the dusty old bottle.

JAX

Well, got a corkscrew?

He moves into the room, his eyes quickly darting from her face down to her hand.

ANDREW

Somewhere, yes.

She's looking at the tickets now; half interested.

JAX

Yeah ... 1982... very expensive;
but hey, ten years is ten years.

ANDREW

You shouldn't have gone to so much trouble.

She's more interested now.

JAX

It's no trouble ... and maybe some glasses?
And not just canteen tumblers, either.

ANDREW

Yes (a beat) what are you doing with those?

JAX

Do you know, I've never been to Miami . . .
or Amsterdam for that matter ... (a beat) ...
but I thought Amsterdam was business?

She opens one of the airline tickets and immediately sees:

FRANKFURT TO MIAMI, FIRST CLASS. Name of Passenger: Elisabeth DeLuc.

Jax looks up at him innocently puzzled.

JAX (Cont'd)

Who the hell is Elisabeth DeLuc?

ANDREW (voice raised)

Please give them to me ... Jax.

JAX

What?

Jax doesn't quite know how to take him, puzzlement melts to FEAR.

ANDREW

I said give-them-to-me.

He's serious now, moves in closer.

JAX

Andrew. Who is Elisabeth DeLuc?
What's going on?

ANDREW

Give them to me.

He holds his hand out now, jabbing his open palm at her, moving closer

ANDREW (Cont'd)

Now!

JAX

Andrew, stop this. You're frightening me.

Jax glances down to consult the ticket.

In that split-second, he flips and makes a sudden grab for them.

ANDREW

You want me to spell it out?

JAX

Yes.

ANDREW

Why do you think? I've met somebody.

JAX

Since when?

ANDREW

A year. Now give me those tickets.

JAX

You've been seeing someone a year?

She starts to move back, both incredulous and annoyed.

JAX (Cont'd)

So, when were you planning to tell me?

ANDREW

Tonight. Now give them to me. Or I'll take them from you.

JAX

Tonight?

She evades, dances quickly around the edge of the desk, feeling her way blindly behind her with her empty hand.

He is onto her now, she is not going to get away. FEAR is in her eyes.

The closed attaché case is still perched on the edge of the desk.

As she sidles around, she knocks into it. It falls.

A beat

Stack loads of cash spill out from it: Euros, Dollars, Pounds. She stares down at the money with confusion and growing terror.

As she looks back at him - *SNAP!* - his hand catches her sharply on the chin. Dazed, she drops everything.

She's shocked and touches her bloody mouth.

ANDREW

Damn Lucia. DAMN HER.

His eyes catch the wine bottle; and hers. A possible weapon.

Jax tears out of the office, running along the corridor for all she's worth.

BEHIND HER NOW, he is running towards the gantry.

CONTINUOUS

13. INT. GANTRY / NIGHT

13.

They are on the gantry now ABOVE the killing area. Where the stunned animals are hoisted onto a line called 'the blood track.' There are rows of hooks.

BELOW we see a sign CONTAMINATED WASTE and a moving conveyor belt.

The machinery is noisy. Andrew shouts:

ANDREW
Let's try and talk.

She looks over the low railing, wiping her bloody lip.

JAX
Too late for that.

She looks over her shoulder, he is ten feet behind her now and on to her.

She grips the rail, TERRIFIED. Sure, he will kill her; she tries to stall:

He slows to a walking pace directly at her.

JAX (Cont'd)
How can you do that, you bastard.

ANDREW (dismissive.)
Ha. People change.

JAX
Yeah, I guess they do. And to think I bought you a fucking car.

ANDREW
Oh yes? With what, exactly?

JAX
Money, what do you think?

ANDREW
But whose money?

JAX
Mine.

ANDREW
Mine I think. It's all mine.

JAX

It was my money which I'd saved. From my Mother.

He laughs at her.

ANDREW

A couple of dollars from a lousy drunk.

JAX

The hell did you say?

ANDREW

You *heard*.

Jax is incredulous. His spite is raw:

ANDREW (Cont'd)

Yes, you heard alright. The money is mine. You contribute nothing. *Not even children.*

He's INFRONT of her now; in her face.

JAX

How can you say that? You know why I -

He swings at her face again; starts to lose his balance.

It's happening fast. The momentum of his punch. He's toppling ...

He's lost it now...

He plunges forward over the guard rail onto the moving conveyor belt BELOW.

The crack of his head on the hard rubber paddles tells us he's unconscious.

Or dead.

He doesn't move.

On the belt, his body is automatically dragged onto a double 'de-hairer'; then INTO an enclosed mincer of steel worms and blades. They are sharp enough to pulverise and chop bone into MUSH for waste disposal into the incinerator.

It takes seconds. In a few more the remains will be ashes; like the rest.

Jax is on her knees, looking down at the bloody conveyor belt.

Exhausted she rolls over onto her side, curls up into a ball and cries. His words echo: '*You contribute nothing.*' She gasps for breath.

Jax, her body is shaking as she sobs.

Slowly, she stands and walks unsteadily towards the washroom.