

"CHAMPAGE HAZE"

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARIS - DAY (1927)

The third Friday in May.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Le Bourget Field.
2. The Eiffel Tower.
3. The embankments off the Seine.
4. Empty dancefloor of The Dingo Bar.
5. Inside The Select.
6. Outside the Café Alfredo.
7. Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Front tire rests atop a curb.
8. Outside The Hotel Majestic.
9. Gare du Nord Station.

INT. GARE NORD STATION - DAY (1927)

The Platform is alive with people. Barnaby Jones, a well-dressed Brit, steps down onto it. Then, he sees his old college buddy from before the war, a former Russian Prince.

SUPER: "Springtime in Paris. 1927."

JONES

Serge!

Serge holds a cardboard sign. The black letters spells, Drunken Idiot. He approaches Jones.

A man behind him reads a newspaper. It's bold headline reads, Nungresser & Coli Feared Dead.

JONES

Nice touch, with the sign.

SERGE

Well, I didn't want to pick up the wrong person.

The old friends embrace.

JONES
You sure left London fast.

SERGE
I was needed elsewhere.

Jones and Serge exits the platform.

EXT. GARE NORD STATION - DAY (1927)

Jones and Serge emerge from the train station.

SERGE
How's the wedding coming. One more week.

JONES
Ask Gwen. All I know is that I'm needed at the Church.

Jones hands colorful cash to porter.

JONES
(to porter)
Secure us a cab.

Jones looks around at his surroundings.

JONES
You better be there too.

SERGE
Won't miss it for the world.

INT. CAB - DAY (1927)

Jones and Serge travels down a tree-lined street.

The cafes buzz with Parisians at tiny round tables. From small one, a man with a fire-burned face raises his glass high in a salute to his friends.

Serge notices him as they pass.

SERGE
Poor man.

Jones looks out too.

JONES
The war.

SERGE
It affected us all.

JONES
And not to the better.

EXT. HOTEL MAJESTIC - DAY (1927)

The Hotel Majestic, one of Paris' more luxurious haunts off the Rue de Rivoli, opposite the Tuileries.

Jones and Serge's cab pulls up to the hotel. Attentive staff crushes to their vehicle.

JONES
Why are we stopping here?

SERGE
Milo has a room upstairs. We will grab him and head to my place.

JONES
Has he finished his new book?

SERGE
Not yet. Though the parts I read are quite good.

INT. THE HOTEL MAJESTIC - DAY (1927)

Jones and Serge crosses the lobby as stylish guests wander about.

JONES
Why's Milo staying here. I thought he was broke.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY (1927)

Jones and Serge enter.

SERGE
I loaned him some money.

JONES
I wouldn't make it a habit.

SERGE
He owes you money too?

JONES
He called it an advance.

The elevator doors close.

INT. HOTEL MAJESTIC, TOP FLOOR - DAY (1927)

A loud DING! announces Jones and Serge's arrival to the top.
Together they travel down a long corridor lined with identical doors.

SERGE
That much? Wow.

JONES
I'm a sucker for the arts.

SERGE
We are almost there. I can help you squeeze it
out of him.

Serge suddenly stops. The door that leads to Milo's room is ajar. It appears kicked in.

SERGE
What's this? Milo!

The door swings open.

INT./EXT. HOTEL MAJESTIC, PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY (1927)

Milo comes out in a white fluffy robe.

MILO

I know. I know. The repair job is pathetic. But the idiots you call friends lost their key.

Serge and Barnaby walks into the room.

JONES

Friends?

In the room are two men. They stand at attention as Serge and Barnaby enter.

Everyone yells:

Surprise!

JONES

What? Jules? Eberwine?

SOUND: Pop! from a Champagne Bottle radiates the room.

EBERWINE

Let the debauchery begin.

The German beams. He holds a Champagne bottle. Its overflows with white foam.

Jones watches it hit the floor. He looks at his friends one by one. Then, to Serge. This is what remains of his rugby team he captained before the war.

Milo crosses the room. He heads toward the bedrooms.

MILO

Good seeing you, Jones. We will catch up later.

JONES

You going to write.

MILO

No. Sleep.

JONES

Ah. See you later.

SERGE

Who's responsible for this line-up of buffoons?

Jules rushes up and greets Jones in his traditional French way, kisses both cheeks.

JONES
Too few remain.

JULES
True. But the ones that do. Remember us all.

The two embrace.

JULES (CONT'D)
Mon bien ami.

Jules rubs his pencil-thin moustache with the tips of his finely manicured fingers.

JONES
It's good to see you again.

Eberwine wanders over from center of the room. Champagne sips from his open bottle onto the floor.

JONES
Who invited Eberwine?

EBERWINE
I came with the bar.

The German and Brit embrace.

EBERWINE
Miss me?

Eberwine moves in for a kiss. Jones pushes him away.

EBERWINE (CONT'D)
Here.

Eberwine hands him his bottle of Champagne.

EBERWINE (CONT'D)
You need this more than I.

Jones takes a hefty pull from the bottle.

JONES

When did you guys arrive?

EBERWINE

Last night.

JULES

We have the hangovers to prove it.

The Frenchman falls onto the sofa.

JONES

A Stag Party in Paris?

Serge ushers Jones outside to the balcony.

EBERWINE

That's the idea of it.

SERGE

Let's take the party outside.

Jules pops up.

Serge and the others move through the double doors that lead to the wrap around balcony.

JONES

The view here is amazing.

Eberwine hands Serge and Jules open bottles of Champagne.

EBERWINE

Here you go.

The Parisian skyline rolls out as far as the eye can see. To the left of them stands the massive concrete spine of the Arc de Triomphe, and to the right, across the dark waters of the River Seine, is the red steel rafters of the Eiffel Tower.

Jones raises up his bottle of Champagne.

JONES

To the Old Boys!

Serge, Jules and Eberwine responds in unison:

The Rugby Champs of '13.

SOUND: green bottles clinks together.

JULES

Oui. Old Boys. It seems an appropriate theme
for the weekend.

JONES

So, it does.

Barnaby slaps his friends backs.

As they slurp down their drinks, they all smile and nod at one
another.

A dressed Milo wanders out.

MILO

Who's in for the Quarter? First round is on me.
Though, it seems I have misplaced my wallet.

Milo dangles his keys to all.

MILO (CONT'D)

But not my car keys.

The others turn to him, and laugh.

EXT. HOTEL MAJESTIC - DAY (1927)

The Stag Party is on the move.

A valet approaches them.

VALET

Do you need a cab?

JONES

Where's Milo?

SERGE

He's coming.

SOUND: a car's horn. HONK. HONK.

Milo sits behind the wheel of an extra-long Rolls Royce. He cuts off traffic as he does a u-ey. The car swings in front of the Majestic.

They others stand by as Milo screeches his car to a halt.

MILO

Hop in.

Eberwine walks up. The German traces his hand along the long rectangular-shaped hood.

EBERWINE

A Silver Ghost Cabriolet, a most impressive machine, Milo.

MILO

Some things you do not sell.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Car travels along the Rue de Ravoli
2. Car crosses the Seine via Pont Neuf.
3. Sorbonne grounds with Panthéon in the distance.
4. Palais de Luxumboug and its Gardens.
5. Close-up of Statue de la Liberté.
6. Car travels along Boulevard du Montparnasse.

MILO (V.O)

There is much to see in Paris, a city fond of pretty things. But after wandering about for a spell, most end up here – at a table surrounded by friends, in the Quarter.

EXT. THE CAFÉ DOME - DAY (1927)

Milo takes an available parking spot.

Jones and his entourage survey their new surroundings as they pile out of a cab. They land in the very heart of the Quarter, before the Café Dome.

Jules looks annoyed, gazes over the Dome's terrace. Its tables overflow with tourists.

JULES

Hell, if there had been this many Americans in 1915. How many young men would've been saved.

Milo pops out of his car.

MILO

Over here.

Milo waves to the others. He turns his back to the Dome. Then, he heads across the street to a small, deserted café with red and blue tube lighting spells out "Café Alfredo."

JULES

What?

EXT. CAFÉ ALFREDO - DAY (1927)

On the backstreets of Raspail and Montparnasse, the Café Alfredo's one redeeming point is its fine view of the Cafés Dome, as it buzzes with activity.

JONES

What's wrong with the Dome?

MILO

The Dome's dead. Has been for years.

EBERWINE

Dead? It's packed with women.

MILO

Oui. tourists.

JULES

Thank Hemingway for that.

SERGE

So, we are staying here?

MILO

Why not? It has a fine view and well-stocked cellar.

Alfredo's proprietor arrives. He angrily eyes the table.

PROPRIETOR

Milo. Did you come to pay your tab?

Serge removes his wallet and lays down a small mountain of colorful cash.

SERGE

I hope this will cover it. Plus, whatever more we wish to drink.

Proprietor scoops up the money.

PROPRIETOR

You are my most welcomed guests. It's always, a pleasure, to see Milo, and his friends. Qu'est-ce que vous voudrez? Champagne?

He pronounces it with much gusto sham-pah-nyun!

JONES

Qu'est-ce que vous recommandez?

MILO

Luke, my companions are not impressed with their current state. Could you change all that?

PROPRIETOR

Un magnum de la Grande Dame de la Champagne, coming up.

Jules' family most prestigious label.

JULES

How's Gwen?

SERGE

How would I know?

JULES

I was asking Jones, Serge?

SERGE

Oh.

The Russian gets up.

SERGE (CONT'D)

I need something stronger than Champagne.

JONES

Gwen's good, Jules. Though, I think she's getting a little worn out by the wedding.

EBERWINE

Cold feet?

JULES

Eberwine?

EBERWINE

She's beautiful. She could have any man she wants. Right?

JONES

Eberwine. Remind me, why we are friends?

EBERWINE

Because, I tell you the truth.

JONES

Ah. How noble.

A newspaper boy walks by. He shouts as he hawks them.

NEWSBOY

Nungressor's plane, The White Bird, still missing.

JONES

Is that the latest edition, boy?

NEWSBOY

Still warm, Monsieur.

Jones hands him some coins as he liberates a newspaper from him.

The Parisian Times' two-inch bold type reads:

NUNGESSER AND COLI FEARED DEAD.

EBERWINE

Some say they made it to Maine.

JULES
No one knows.

Jones reads article aloud.

JONES
Nearly two weeks have passed since two French war aces, Charles Nungesser and his navigator Francis Coli, took off from Le Bourget, in a forty-hour effort to reach New York.

EBERWINE
New York is a world away.

Milo pops up.

MILO
Let me see what's taking Luke so long.

EBERWINE
What is Milo's story?

JULES
He's quite famous.

EBERWINE
Him?

JULES
Wrote a bestselling book on the war.

JONES
You should read it. It's rather good.

EBERWINE
Only if he rewrites the end.

Serge arrives with a tray of shots glasses and a huge bottle of Stoli.

SERGE
We have been sober far too long.

The Russian pours vodka into the shots glasses.

SERGE (CONT'D)
Grab one.

The others do.

SERGE
Schastleevo.

JONES
Schastleevo.

JULES
Schastleevo.

EBERWINE
Prost.

Milo returns with Proprietor and his wife.

MILO
What are you guys discussing now? The
popularity of British expansionism?

JONES
Not yet.

MILO
What did I miss?

JULES
The possibilities of a Trans-Atlantic crossing.

MILO
They found Nungesser's plane?

JULES
No. Not yet.

SERGE
What time is it?

EBERWINE
Quarter after three.

SERGE
Good. Let's finish these up. We need to meet
Ian at the Select at four.

EXT. MILO'S SILVER GHOST - DAY (1927)

Eberwine quietly watches his friends interact from the backseat. Paris stretches out before him. As the wind whips at his face, he gazes out. Recalls the faces of friends lost in a failed effort to reach it only a decade ago. He tries to push their images out of his mind. Then, he decides it is time for smoke.

Eberwine removes a German cigarette from his gold case. Plugs it in his mouth and grabs his lighter.

But the wind denies him the pleasure. The flame is too weak. He flips it over. Adjusts the lighter to its maximum setting and he tries again. It works. However, the tiny inferno causes the German to remember a much larger one.

DISSOLVE TO: EBERWINE'S FLASHBACK

EXT. OUTSKIRT of YPRES - NIGHT (1915)

SUMMER OF 1915: THE INFERNO

Bend over sign reads Paris 321 Kilometers.

Eberwine, cloaked in darkness and muck, trails his commanding officer, Captain Hauser, as they trudge through ankle-deep mire at the base of a pitch-black pine forest ruined by war. With each repeated step, their boots make a sad sucking sound as they yank them from the muddy earth on the outskirts of the Dutch town of Hooge, east of Ypres.

Nearby, strange, syrupy silhouettes surround them while they make their way through the twisted woods that borders the British-held line. Hauser, from Eberwine's hometown of Essen, is leading his unit further south into No Man's Land. It is 3 A.M. Ahead, waist-high piles of rubble from the bombed-out buildings form a winding, serpentine-shaped stone wall. Right before it, a rock toss away, is a burned-out truck resting on its side.

The truck is the huddle point for Hauser's squad. Their orders are to support the scattered men moving menacingly towards the village.

The Germans are looking for a breakthrough to push beyond Ypres,

to the open grounds leading to the channel and its port towns of Dunkirk and Calais, the very backbone of the British Expeditionary Force's lifeline.

HAUSER
Having fun yet?

He's an avid hunter and a soul accustomed to the rigors of war. He crouches down like a tiger ready to pounce behind a fallen pine, poised near the enemy's perimeter. He checks his watch; then gestures to his unit to halt.

Before them, a faint halo-like glow hovers over the trenches of an element of the British Rifle Brigade.

HAUSER
(turns to Eberwine)
Shh, the debauchery is about to begin.

His men form a line down the spine of a shallow bomb crater and ready their rifles. War is near as a platoon of Flammenwerfers approaches; wearing their portable backpacks filled with petrol.

The Flammenwerfers inch closer.

Eberwine waits and watches Captain Reddemann's men moving into position.

HAUSER
This is the time I hate the most. The inaction.
Waiting for the madness to reveal itself.

Eberwine sees little in front of him, though he hears in the distance soldiers going back and forth and telling dirty jokes.

There is more movement before the trenches. Eberwine's eyes adjust to the night, and he sees hooded, Martian-looking men dressed in dull rubber suits creeping up to the side of them. The flamethrowers coupled together as one, tank and spray.

Then, the fiery ordeal begins: with an oily swoosh followed by a loud incendiary boom, and an elongated orange flame hisses, like a giant cobra, spitting a solid wall of fire that turned night into day.

As a false dawn glistens in Eberwine's face, revealing the morbid reality of the unburied dead, pulverized and jelly-like,

the true cost of war; the remains of the fallen men litter the wet landscape.

In front of the layers of dead, within the blaze and the fortified rubble, they hear cries and shouts, and afterwards, quick bursts of rifle fire. The noise is sniffed out by a whirling firestorm that comes down hard upon the Brits like a bolt of lightning.

HAUSER

The game has begun. Let's go.

As dozens of steady streams of fire shot out twenty-five feet in length into the trenches and roughly made walls, men resembling light matches spring out and over their holes.

The oily infernos cling to their khaki uniforms and skin.

A fresh recruit from Hamburg stands up next to Eberwine. He charges ahead towards the fiery fortifications before Eberwine could stop him. After a few gallant steps, a single bullet pierces him as his body spins backwards.

HAUSER

Their snipers are awake.

EBERWINE

They never learn.

HAUSER

Time to move. Stay low.

The German Officer reveals his bright white teeth, encircled by a dirty face.

HAUSER (CONT'D)

Let's fine a whole.

Chaos engulfs everything within sight. Calmly, Hauser barks orders. The captain appears immune to fear.

Further in front of their position, to their left and their right along the line, more false dawns take flight, followed by heavy screams, as the second row of the British defenses come alive.

Eberwine fires until his magazine was empty.

EBERWINE
Not much sport in this.

HAUSER
The more of them we kill. The sooner we go
home.

EXT. THE SELECT - DAY (1927)

Milo's car parks in front. Everyone hops out except Eberwine.
The German stares at his college friends and his new
surroundings.

JONES
Hey, buddy. You okay.

Eberwine smiles.

EBERWINE
Sure.

We are all damaged. We are all searching for connection.

Our lives have value.

Scenes:

Party crashers

Jones gets sick.

Let's take him to my place; it's around the corner.

Serge home – I got him.

Gwen's there, with her luggage.

Milo, Jules and Eberwine heads out with Lizzie and Sarah

Serge and Gwen

Jones is downstairs.

Milo plays the piano.

Serge comes down.

Next morning.

Let's check you into the Ritz. It will be safer.

When are we going to tell him?

Soon. But first, I need to show you something.