

IN THE RED

by Ben Fergusson

"IN THE RED"

FADE IN:

INT. BAR, SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

A man walks into a rough-looking bar on a busy urban street in São Paulo.

MAN #1

Cerveja, por favor. [Subtitle: A beer, please]

The waitress grabs a bottle out of a fridge and opens it on the edge of the bar.

WAITRESS

You want a beer mat today?

The man pauses and they make eye contact.

MAN #1

Why not.

The waitress throws one down and begins to clean up behind the bar. He turns it over and reads something off the back of it. His mouth tenses up and he throws the beer bottle across the bar. It smashes against the wall and the waitress starts screaming at him. He walks out of the bar, tearing up the beer mat and throwing the pieces onto the street.

EXT. PARK, TOKYO

A Western-looking man is walking through an urban park in Tokyo. The leaves on the Japanese maple trees create a canopy of bright reds, yellows and browns above him.

He passes a Japanese teenage boy listening to his MP3 player and giving out fliers. The teenager turns and chases after him.

TEENAGER

Sumimasen [Subtitle: Excuse me!]

MAN #2

Mou ichido itte kudasai? [Subtitle: Pardon?]

TEENAGER

You're English? I learn English.

MAN #2

Then perhaps you'll understand, 'I'm not interested'.

TEENAGER

Take flier.

MAN #2

No thank you.

TEENAGER

Take it.

The man sighs takes the flier and looks down at it. He pauses for a moment, then moves swiftly to a park bin which he vomits into.

INT. BRITISH AIRWAYS BOEING 767, CLUB CLASS

A smart-looking woman in her mid-thirties is sitting, reading The Times. The headline on the front reads '500,000 jobs to go on 'hard road' ahead'. The man beside her looks over at the front page.

MAN #3

Worrying, isn't it?

The WOMAN looks up at him and then at the paper.

WOMAN #1

Oh, well I suppose. But I'm Russian. I'm on my back home.

MAN #3

Oh, sorry. I thought you were British for some reason.

The face maybe, or... I don't know. Sorry.

TANNOY

We will shortly be arriving in Moscow. The captain has turned on the fasten-seatbelt sign, so please return to your seats...

STEWARDESS

Do you need a landing card, madam?

WOMAN #1

Yes. Please.

She hands her a card.

STEWARDESS

The instructions for filling it in are all on the back.

The woman nods and smiles and then turns the card over.  
She double takes then reads something on the back of it.

WOMAN #1

(Under her breath). Oh God.

She lets the paper slip off her lap and onto the cabin floor. The camera follows it down as the pages slide apart and then pile up on top of each other, the headline still showing.

EXT. GARDEN, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

A South African woman (MIRIAM KRUGER) wearing sunglasses sits watching her two children (a girl and a boy) dancing through a lawn sprinkler on the grass in front of her. A man, also with a South African accent, wearing a suit (STEVE KRUGER) walks through the sliding doors behind her and grabs her. She shrieks.

MIRIAM

Jesus Steve! You scared the shit out of me.

STEVE

Sorry darling. You just looked so vulnerable.

MIRIAM

Yeah, that's actually creepy. Bloody fool.

She shoves STEVE affectionately and then kisses him.

CHILDREN

Daddy!

The children run forward screaming and embrace him. He bends down to kiss them and takes a pink petal out of his daughter's hair.

DAUGHTER

What's that?

STEVE

Hibiscus. In your hair. (STEVE looks round for somewhere to put it, finds nowhere obvious and drops it into his pocket). You been giving your mother hell?

DAUGHTER

No.

MIRIAM

(LAUGHS) Hey, you guys run in and dry yourselves. We're eating in five minutes.

STEVE sits down at the garden table beside her.

STEVE

Any excitements?

MIRIAM

Not really. The guy came about the sink. Cost the best part of 200 Rand.

STEVE shakes his head and then reaches over and takes her hand. MIRIAM looks up at him and smiles.

MIRIAM

It's good to have you home. (PAUSE) Oh, that weird uncle of yours sent you another postcard. He's apparently in England or something.

STEVE

Really? (BEAT) I'm going to grab a beer. You want one?

MIRIAM

I'm alright, love.

INT. STEVE AND MIRIAM'S KITCHEN

STEVE opens the fridge and takes out a beer. He opens it and then wanders with planned nonchalance over to the pile of post on the kitchen counter and pulls the postcard towards him. It has a picture of Queen Elizabeth II on it. He turns it over as he swigs his beer and then chokes on the contents, dropping the postcard.

The camera follows its fall to the floor, where it rests in pool of spat-out beer, picture-side down. The card reads: "In the UK. Times are tight. You should come and visit. Call me. Love, Uncle John." The spat-out beer begins to leak over the card, causing the ink to run.

EXT. NEULANDS CRICKET GROUND, CAPE TOWN

STEVE is watching a poorly attended cricket match. He sits high up in the stadium with no one around him. A woman in her mid-fifties, with a British accent comes and sits down in a seat in the row in front of him. They don't look at each other as they talk.

STEVE

What are my options?

WOMAN #2

It's a standard recall, as briefed when you started.  
There are no 'options'.

STEVE

(PAUSE) I'm on the brink of some exciting stuff.  
Important stuff. These white extremists... and this  
communist group. The one in Johannesburg..

WOMAN #2

Communists? C'mon Steve. No one's worried about  
communists anymore. You must have heard about the cuts.

STEVE

I heard about council housing and pensions and empty  
aircraft carriers. They didn't say anything about  
intelligence cuts.

WOMAN #2

No, they said 'The government has not announced any  
intelligence cuts'. It means exactly what it says it  
means. (BEAT) You should have seen it coming.

STEVE

I can't believe some fucking penny-pinching bureaucrat is  
destroying my life, because of some fucking Excel sheet  
that doesn't add up.

WOMAN #2

It's not your life, Steve.

STEVE

(PAUSE) How long have I got?

WOMAN #2

For what?

STEVE

How long have I got here? To say goodbye to my family?

WOMAN #2

Goodbyes don't work. It's better for them, and it's definitely better for us. You're done. The car's outside, ready to take you to the airport.

STEVE

I'm saying goodbye to Miriam and the kids. On the phone at least. That's not a request. I'm not asking.

WOMAN #2

(BEAT) Steve Kruger died in a car crash at about 9:15 this morning. Your wife and children have already been informed.

STEVE puts his head in his hands. He begins to cry.

WOMAN #2

It's over Steve. You've done a good job. Time to go home.

INT. BEHIND ARRIVALS GATE, HEATHROW AIRPORT

STEVE pushes his luggage on a trolley towards the sliding doors. His face is grim and he seems lost in thought.

As he comes nearer he hears the doors beginning to open and looks up and puts on a large, winning smile as the sun from the arrivals hall hits his face.

INT. BEHIND ARRIVALS GATE, HEATHROW AIRPORT

The doors open and STEVE walks out. A woman (ELAINE) and two children are waiting for him.

CHILDREN

Daddy!

The children run forward. STEVE kneels down and embraces them. After kissing them he stands up and kisses and embraces ELAINE.

ELAINE

I still can't believe it.

STEVE

(Now talking with an English accent) I know.

ELAINE

Six years at that bloody bank and that's the thanks you get. Bloody Belgians.

STEVE

I know.

ELAINE

(BEAT) You'll find another job, Ralph. And now you're home at least. For good.

STEVE

Yes. (STEVE smiles)

STEVE, ELAINE and the children walk out with the luggage.

INT. CAR PARK, HEATHROW AIRPORT

ELAINE drives up to the barrier of the car park. She puts the ticket in the machine and then pats her pockets.

ELAINE

Oh, have you got any change love?

STEVE fishes into his jacket pocket and pulls out a handful of Rand.

STEVE

No just... Euros.

As ELAINE continues to look through her handbag STEVE notices the pink hibiscus petal in between the coins. He looks at it thoughtfully and picks it out from the small pile of change.

EXT. MOTORWAY

The passenger-seat window of STEVE and ELAINE's car slides open. We see STEVE's coming out of the car. The petal flaps in the wind and eventually STEVE lets it go. It flies up and the camera follows it being turned and turned as it blows away.

THE END