

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

INT. THE NIGHTHAWKS CLUB - NIGHT

Jack BENTLEY (early 40s, male) enters the dimly lit club, filled with people from all walks of life. Some drinking, some smoking, some chatting. Quieter than he expected.

His eye settles on a lone figure - Hal "Halley" PEARSON (early to mid-20s, male, finely tailored clothes) - at a corner booth, hands wringing together. Jack approaches the table.

JACK

Hal Pearson?

HALLEY

Oh, it's ... just "Halley" is fine. I'm guessing you're Detective Bentley? Um, take a seat. If you want! Of course.

Jack takes the seat and studies the young man across from him.

The quiet stretches on. Halley keeps twisting his fingers together.

HALLEY (cont'd)

Is there something you wanted? I don't mean to overstep or seem rude or ... or if I've done something wrong then I apologize, I meant no harm.

JACK

Save the apologies, kid. Just trying to figure out what happened to Julian Casey. Figured you might know something about that.

Halley stops fidgeting. Interesting. Didn't expect that.

HALLEY

Of course, I didn't think anyone else was looking for him. Or ... have you found him? Or found something? Is there anything I can do? If there's anything you need -

JACK

One thing at a time, kid. Was hoping you could tell me why this ...

Jack pulls a polished, golden signet ring from his pocket. Lays it on the table between them.

JACK (cont'd)
Was found with his personal effects.

HALLEY
That's mine. Or it was mine. I gave
it to him years ago, before he was
drafted. Something to remember, well,
home. Thank you, I'll -

Halley reaches for it. Jack holds up a hand to stop him.

JACK
Couldn't find many ties to Mr. Casey
outside of yourself, and what
happened doesn't seem like a random
act.

HALLEY
(Disbelieving)
Are... are you accusing me? Of
hurting Julian? Or being involved in
whatever's happened to him?

JACK
Wouldn't be the first time personal
connections went sour. Doesn't help
you're with the Mezzotatia.

HALLEY
They aren't that bad! They might be
overdramatic, perhaps -

JACK
(Growing more heated)
Petty theft, public endangerment? All
to play philosopher. Worse than
"overdramatic."

HALLEY
It... yes, but -

JACK
Doesn't seem like something your
friend would agree with either.

HALLEY
He didn't, and we did argue, but we -

JACK
Made it worse by planning Mezzotatia
events, I'd guess? Least, based on
what I've heard. Planned even more
after Mr. Casey disappeared.

HALLEY

Please, I can explain that -

JACK

Your rich friends raising hell in the same places Mr. Casey was last seen?

HALLEY

It was foolish, I realize, but there was no ill intent! Only -

JACK

Doubt that, but -

HALLEY

Just stop! I...

(Pause)

I-I'm sorry. But whatever you think I've done, it isn't that. I only... I care about what's happening. I care about someone.

Halley looks down, eyes slowly shifting between his polished signet ring and the tarnished wedding ring on Jack's finger.

HALLEY (cont'd)

(Softly)

Unlike you.

A beat passes, filled with the white noise of other patrons milling about. Halley looks down at his still hands.

JACK

You think you know everything, kid. But you didn't fight, so don't pretend -

HALLEY

I'm not. I don't know what you saw - you're correct - but other people saw the same things. And they kept trying to care, regardless. But you?

Halley shakes his head. A silent moment passes, and Jack sends the ring sliding across the table. Halley blinks, then tentatively reaches for the ring. No response. Ring held delicately in his hand, Halley stands and heads toward the door.

Jack waits a few moments, fingers on his own ring, almost like he's about to remove it. Deciding against it, he heads toward the door, leaving behind an empty table bathed in the glow of weak electric lights.