

AQUA FORTIS

written and adapted by

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(c)

OVER BLACK: WHITECHAPEL. LONDON 1887.

FADE IN:

EXT. BATTY STREET - EARLY MORNING

Beneath a thick fog the faint flicker of a GAS LAMP illuminates the narrow street that consists three storey tenement blocks and houses.

PAN THROUGH DOOR NUMBER 16.

A ground floor consists of two rooms; a bedroom and a kitchen, and a passage leads to a backyard that has an unattended shed. These rooms are occupied by landlady LEAH LIPSKI 30s and her husband PHILIP of the same age, and their six children all under ten years old.

A wooden staircase consists of ten steps that lead to the first floor which consists of another two rooms: one at the back, and one at the front.

The front room is occupied by Polish immigrant ISAAC ANGEL 21, and his pregnant wife of six months MIRIAM ANGEL 22.

The room at the back is occupied by MRS LEVY 30s, and RACHAEL RUBENSTEIN 20s.

Another short staircase where a small WINDOW (if you look out is twelve feet from sill to pavement) From this window you can command a view of the bed in Isaac and Miriam's Angel's room situated below.

The top floor consists of just one room which is occupied by Polish Jew ISRAEL LIPSKI 22. This room is converted into a workshop with a fitted bench.

CHURCH CLOCK STRIKES.

INT. ISAAC ANGEL'S ROOM - EARLY HOURS

Boot riveter Isaac Angel opens his eyes, then throws out an hand to reach his silver pocket watch that sits upon his bedside cabinet.

CU: Six o clock.

He turns to face his sleeping wife and whispers to her.

ISAAC ANGEL

I have to get up.

MIRIAM ANGEL

(quietly)

All right.

He rolls out of bed and slides into a pair of work trousers, then grabs a shirt that hangs from a nail in the wall.

He leans over a small table beneath the window, covered by a muslin blind and whispers a prayer, before he kisses his wife gently upon the head.

ISAAC ANGEL

I'll be back for lunch.

MIRIAM ANGEL

It will be ready for you when you come.

ISAAC ANGEL

And Samuel will come for his boots this morning sometime. Give them to him and tell him I will call on him later.

MIRIAM ANGEL

I will.

She gets up and locks the door upon his exit, then lies back down.

INT. ISRAEL LIPSKI'S WORKSHOP - MORNING

Walking stick maker Israel Lipski anxiously paces the floor, before he exits in a creased shirt and dusty trousers.

INT. STAIRCASE - MORNING

He walks barefoot as he descends the stairs.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Israel Lipski opens the shed door and begins searching inside.

Philip appears behind him and taps him on the shoulder.

PHILIP

(irately)

What are you looking for?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

A piece of pipe.

PHILIP

What do you want it for?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

I need it for my sticks.

Lipski then reenters the house.

EXT. 16 BATTY STREET - MORNING

Polish Immigrant SIMON ROSENBLOOM 20s knocks on the door. It is opened by Israel Lipski.

ROSENBLOOM

Good morning, Mr Lipski. You said to come for work this morning.

ISRAEL LIPSKI

Yes. Come in.

INT. ISRAEL LIPSKI'S WORKSHOP - CONT'D

Work tools laid out at the far end of the workbench, and sticks scattered around the room.

There is a bed and a sofa situated perpendicular to the door, and a window half opened, with a table and two wooden chairs situated in front of it. There are cups and soup bowls upon the table.

Lipski picks up a TOP END and shows it to Rosenbloom.

ISRAEL LIPSKI /

You can bend these top ends first, then fine file them.

Rosenbloom immediately takes off his coat and sets to work.

ISRAEL LIPSKI /

There will come another man- a
filer. He will require another
vice. I will go and buy another
one, and a sponge for the boy to
varnish with when he comes.

Israel Lipski slips on a pair of boots, then a short jacket
and cap before he exits.

Rosenbloom works at the bench.

INT. GROUND FLOOR PASSAGE - MORNING

Mrs Levy opens the front door as landlady Leah Lipski enters
carrying a pot of hot water.

She spots Israel Lipski lurking in the passage.

LEAH LIPSKI

(to Israel Lipski)

I'm making coffee. Do you want
one?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

Yes. I'll be back soon.

LEAH LIPSKI

I'll leave it on the table for
when you get back.

Lipski exits.

Philip kisses Leah Lipski on the cheek and also exits.

INT. ISRAEL LIPSKI'S WORKSHOP - CONT'D

A perturbed Israel Lipski enters.

ISRAEL LIPSKI

(to Rosenbloom)

The shop is still closed.

He helps Rosenbloom to bend some top ends before he exits
again.

Beat.

Lipski returns with a local boy- RICHARD PITMAN 16.

ISRAEL LIPSKI /

(to Rosenbloom)

I am going to buy a sponge for
the boy to varnish with.

He leaves Richard Pitman in the room with Rosenbloom then
exits.

Beat.

Russian born locksmith ISAAC SCHMUSS 30s enters the room and
observes Richard Pitman and Rosenbloom as they work at the
bench. He mumbles something incoherent to Rosenbloom and they
briefly speak.

Richard Pitman idly taps a hammer annoyingly at the
workbench.

ROSENBLOOM

(angrily)

Get on with your work! Stop
knocking about like that!

SCHMUSS

(interjects)

I go breakfast. I come back.

Schmuss exits while Rosenbloom and Pitman carry on working.

GROUND FLOOR.

Mrs Levy calls up the stairs.

MRS LEVY

Israel, your coffee is getting
cold.

RICHARD PITMAN O.S

He ain't here!

Mrs Levy shakes her head in annoyance then exits the house
with Leah Lipski.

Rachael Rubenstein brings a chair to the front door and
places it just outside.

EXT. 16 BATTY STREET - MORNING

She sits down while two small CHILDREN play in the passage
behind her.

Hebrew teacher SAMUEL SPIERS 30s appears in front of her and attempts to enter the house.

She blocks his path.

RACHAEL RUBENSTEIN
Where'd you think you're going?

SAMUEL SPIERS
Upstairs.

RACHAEL RUBENSTEIN
Why?

SAMUEL SPIERS
I'm going to Angel's room to see
if my boots are done.

INT. 16 BATTY STREET - MORNING

The children run down the passage into the backyard. Rachael Rubenstein chases after them, leaving Spiers standing outside the house. He is joined by another MAN and they begin talking to one another.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. MR. SCHMIDT'S SHOP - MORNING

Israel Lipski approaches the tall, bearded SHOPKEEPER.

ISRAEL LIPSKI
I want to buy a vice. How much?

SHOPKEEPER
Three-shillings-sixpence.

ISRAEL LIPSKI
I only have three-shillings-
fourpence.

SHOPKEEPER
It is not enough. It is three
shillings-sixpence. Please leave
my shop if you cannot afford to
buy it.

ISRAEL LIPSKI
What time does the oil shop open?

SHOPKEEPER

Eight-thirty. Now please leave my shop.

Israel Lipski exits.

EXT. MR SCHMIDT'S SHOP - MORNING

He stands outside and waits for the oil shop to open.

INT. OIL SHOP - DAY

Israel Lipski enters after the PROPRIETOR opens up.

PROPRIETOR

What can I get you?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

A pennyworth of aqua fortis.

Israel Lipski produces a PHIAL and hands it to the Proprietor who fills it with AQUA FORTIS.

PROPRIETOR

What do you want it for?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

I am a stick maker. I want it for staining sticks.

PROPRIETOR

It is poisonous. Be careful not to spill it.

Proprietor corks the phial then hands it back to him.

INT. 16 BATTY STREET - DAY

Israel Lipski and SchmuSS stand on the stairs. They look through the window, down upon Miriam Angel as she lies upon the bed in her chemise.

SCHMUSS

(to Israel Lipski)

Give me the bottle.

ISRAEL LIPSKI

What are you going to do with it?

SCHMUSS

I'm going to rob her.

Israel Lipski hands him the phial and they descend the stairs towards her room.

EXT. ISAAC ANGEL'S ROOM - MORNING

Schmuss bends down and puts his finger through a round hole in the door. He uses pliers to turn the key on the inside lock.

INT. ISAAC ANGEL'S ROOM - CON'TD

Panicked, Miriam Angel climbs off the bed, before she is knocked unconscious by Schmuss.

Israel Lipski removes his hat, and then his coat where he drops them at the base of the bedstead.

Upon the bed, Schmuss leans over her and pours the AQUA FORTIS down her throat, causing her to spew violently.

Schmuss attempts to pour what's left of the aqua fortis down Israel Lipski's throat as a brief tussle ensues b'twixt, before Schmuss exits the room.

Israel Lipski stumbles and climbs to his feet where he looks down upon Miriam Angel who lies helpless and semi-naked upon the bed. Her chemise pulled up to her breast.

She coughs and splutters violently as she rolls on her side and spills blood from her mouth.

Israel Lipski locks the door, then puts a hand over her mouth as he strokes her naked thighs and breasts with his free hand.

INT. STAIRCASE - CONT'D

DINAH ANGEL 40s climbs the stairs to the first floor. She bangs her fist upon the door of the same room.

DINAH ANGEL

Miriam? Miriam, open up. It's me,
Dinah.

INT. ISAAC ANGEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Israel Lipski gazes at the door fearfully, then he hides himself under the bed.

A HAMMER bangs from above.

DINAH ANGEL O.S /
*Miriam, it's me, Dinah! Are you
in there?*

She tries the lock.

INT. STAIRCASE - CONT'D

Mrs Levy climbs the stairs to the first floor where she confronts Dinah.

MRS LEVY
(concerned)
What's wrong?

DINAH ANGEL
(panicked)
It's Miriam, my daughter in law.
She does not answer when I call
her.

Mrs Levy bends down and looks through a small hole in the door. She attempts to turn the key in the lock.

MRS LEVY
The key is still in the lock. It
is locked from inside.

She rushes upstairs to the landing where she looks through the window down upon Miriam Angel's room.

POV: Miriam Angel lies still upon the bed with her head turned to the side.

She rushes back down the stairs and attempts to force the door open with her shoulder and knees. Dinah and Rachael Rubenstein assist.

Eventually they force the door open and enter the room.

INT. ISAAC ANGEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Mrs Levy rushes to Miriam who lies half naked and unconscious. Yellow bile leaks from the side of her mouth while there is blood on her chemise and mattress.

She takes her by the arm and attempts to wake her.

MRS LEVY

(panicked)

She's not breathing. Get the
doctor! Quickly!

Rachael Rubenstein quickly exits the room in sheer panic.

Dinah exits the room in deep shock as she sobs hysterically.

Simon Rosenbloom and Richard Pitman appear briefly inside the room and stand agape as Miriam Angel lies dead.

Leah Lipski returns with DR. JOHN KAYE 50s- A balding man with a long bushy, grey beard.

He quickly goes to Miriam Angel's body and feels for a pulse as he checks her injuries.

He spots Israel Lipski hiding under the bed. He pulls him up by the arm and slaps his face to wake him.

Israel Lipski opens his eyes as the Dr. Kay inspects him further to ascertain his condition.

DR KAYE

(calls out)

Get the police, at once.

Beat.

Two BAILIFFS arrive and grab Israel Lipski by the arm. They lead him out through the door.

BAILIFF#1

C'mon, you wretch!

DR KAYE

(to Bailiffs)

He needs to be taken to hospital
for tests. He may have inflicted
injuries.

INT. COBBLERS WORKSHOP - DAY

Isaac Angel works at a bench when a frantic Mrs Levy enters.

MRS LEVY

Isaac! Come quickly! You must
come quickly! It's your wife! She
has been attacked!

He immediately grabs his coat.

ISAAC ANGEL

(fearfully)

But what's happened to her?

MRS LEVY

She was attacked by one of the
lodgers. The police have taken
him away. They say he attacked
her in her room.

Highly perturbed, he follows her out of the building.

EXT. STREET - DAY

ISAAC ANGEL

But what did he do to her?

She struggles to keep up with him as he skips towards his lodgings.

MRS LEVY

They won't say.

EXT/INT. 16 BATTY STREET - CONT'D

They arrive to a CROWD gathering outside the dwelling. A BLUDGER (Constable), stops him from entering the room.

ISAAC ANGEL

(stricken)

I'm husband of woman who's been
attacked. Please, you must let me
see my wife. I must see her.

BLUDGER

Nobody enters... not until we've
removed her body.

ISAAC ANGEL

But I-I must see my wife, now! I am husband! Please, you must let me see my wife!

BLUDGER

I've been given strict orders not to let anyone through, and that includes next of kin.

ISAAC ANGEL

But I-I must see my wife! I am husband!

BLUDGER

You can enter after we've removed her body.

ISSAC ANGEL

What happened to her?

BLUDGER

I'm not obliged to answer.

ISAAC ANGEL

What about baby?

BLUDGER

We dunno anything about a baby.

Dinah Angel sobs as she comforts him and leads back down the stairs.

EXT. BATTY STREET - CONT'D

DINAH ANGEL

Isaac, it was the stick maker. He was hiding under her bed when the doctor arrived.

ISSAC ANGEL

What did he do to her?

DINAH ANGEL

The doctor said she was poisoned.

Defeated and exasperated, Isaac Angel, with cap in hand turns away and stumbles across the cobblestone where he gazes up at his window during his lament.

He is joined by Mrs Levy, who attempts to console him.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. SCHMIDT'S SHOP - CONT'D

Schmuss stands in conversation with the Shopkeeper.

SHOPKEEPER

Did you hear there is a woman
dead at sixteen Batty Street?

SCHMUSS

I heard it.

SHOPKEEPER

They have locked him up - The
stickmaker who was here earlier
today to buy a vice.

SCHMUSS

I saw him earlier.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWGATE PRISON YARD - DAY

Israel Lipski stands upon a gibbet. The noose around his neck
is tightened by the HANGMAN.

A PRISON GUARD stands and monitors proceedings.

A MINISTER from the Church stands with the TORA opened.

GUARD

(to Israel Lipski)

Do you have any last words before
we commence?

ISRAEL LIPSKI

Yes! I did not do it! I never
touched her! You have made a
mistake! It was Schmuss who did
it! It was Schmuss! It was him
who killed her! I did not do it,
I say!

GUARD

You were found guilty by the
Queen's Court. Now let's proceed.

The Guard gestures to the Hangman who then proceeds with the execution, as the Minister makes the sign of the cross.

MINISTER

Israel Lipski, may God have mercy
upon your soul.

Hangman pulls the lever. The latch gives way. Israel Lipski swings like a fish caught in a hook.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. BATTY STREET DWELLING - NIGHT

Drunk, dispirited and angry, Isaac Angel returns with his BROTHER 20s, and his SISTER 20s.

ISAAC ANGEL

Leah Lipski, you must pay for my
wife!

He is quickly confronted by landlady Leah Lipski and her husband Philip.

LEAH LIPSKI

Isaac, what are you doing here?
You cannot come here. And you are
drunk. You need to leave, at
once.

ISAAC ANGEL

It all your fault! You Lipski's
are all murderers! You must pay
for my wife!

He lunges at her and drags her down by the hair as she screams blue murder, as Philip desperately attempts to pull him away.

ISAAC ANGEL /

You must pay for my wife! I must
kill you as my wife has been
killed!

He kicks and punches her viciously about the stomach and legs with his size twelve metal capped boots, causing her to cough violently.

Philip and Isaac's Brother finally manage to pull him away and drag him out of the building.

EXT. GEORGE STREET - DAY

A CONSTABLE bangs his fists upon the door of a tenement block.

Isaac Angel opens the door. A leather apron tied around his waist.

CONSTABLE

Would you be Isaac Angel?

ISAAC ANGEL

Yes.

CONSTABLE

Right! Come with me! I'm arresting you for assaulting Leah Lipski. You're coming with me.

ISAAC ANGEL

She must pay for my wife!

The Constable leads him away.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Isaac Angel sits upon the cold, damp floor. His head tucked firmly into his lap.

A burly STATION SERGEANT approaches. He points his finger directly at him.

STATION SERGEANT

Angel? Stand up.

Isaac Angel gets to his feet.

STATION SERGEANT /

You have committed a violent act upon Leah Lipski, the landlady at your previous abode. You will be taken to the Beak first thing in the morning. And you better be able to explain yourself, or else it's the clink where you will be taken next.

Isaac Angel nods his head in agreement. His eyes suffused, his beard soiled with saliva.

ISAAC ANGEL

She must pay for my wife.

STATION SERGEANT

Why must she pay for your wife,
then?

ISAAC ANGEL

She is a Lipski. All Lipski's are
murderers.

STATION SERGEANT

You just make sure you can speak
up for yourself in front of the
Beak. Your vengeance towards that
woman was completely unnecessary
in my opinion.

He walks off and jangle his keys.

INT. COURT - DAY

Isaac Angel stands in front of the BEAK (Judge). A mere
pitiful reflection of his once self.

BEAK

(taps gavel)

Isaac Angel, have you anything to
say before I pass sentence upon
you?

He shakes his head in melancholy.

BEAK /

Are you sorry for what you have
done to this woman?

He looks down and nods his head.

BEAK /

In the circumstances of you
losing your wife, I order you to
be bound over to keep the peace
for one year. Do you understand?

He acknowledges with another nod of the head.

BEAK

You are free to go.

Broken and lost, Isaac Angel is met by his Mother. She walks him home.

DISSOLVE:

THE END