

"EMPIRE OF THE SUN"

Revised 4th Draft
February 2, 1987

Screenplay by
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Second Draft
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Third Draft
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EOS 0245

Based Upon the Novel by

J.G. Ballard

Shooting Script
February 2, 1987

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FADE IN:

EXT. SHANGHAI (THE BUND) - DAY

1 Faintly heard, the SOUND of an English Boys' Church Choir. 1
We are looking at the distant skyline of the Shanghai Bund
seen across the expanse of the dirty, fast-moving Huangpu
River.

Nearer, the surface glitter of the water is broken up by
floating objects...which turn out to be, flowers, scattered
singly and in garlands, flowing by with the tide, tumbling
about in the wash of the cargo ships and motorized junks
which we have seen in the background. *

1A ANGLE ON A JAPANESE FLAG

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1A*

filling the frame. It leaves the frame revealing the
Shanghai Skyline of the harbor.

Inside the shot, after we have seen the first flowers
is a caption which fades on over the Shanghai skyline in
the misty morning light: *

"In 1941 China had been at war with Japan for four years.
Inside the city of Shanghai, thousands of Westerners lived
in the diplomatic security of the International Settlement.
Careful not to create an international incident by invading
Shanghai, the Japanese army of occupation had dug itself in
outside the city and waited.....for Pearl Harbor.

2 EXT. SHANGHAI CATHEDRAL - DAY

2

We are still with the SOUND of the Boys' Choir.

This is the Church of England and you wouldn't know you
were in China. There is nobody walking around because
anyone who belongs here is inside at Choir practice. Cars
and limousines are waiting to take them home. Each car has
a CHAUFFEUR and it is the chauffeurs, when we see them, who
show us that we are not in Surrey. *

We start to take a special interest in one of the cars, a
new Packard, and in its chauffeur, who is called YANG.

3 INT. SHANGHAI CATHEDRAL (CHOIR STALLS) - DAY

3

The SOUND TRACK "comes home" now as we see the boy
CHORISTERS in full throat.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED 3
In good time for the 'Amen' we come in close to one of the boys, and this is our introduction to JIM, aged 11. He is hot and uncomfortable and not a very pious chorister. Singing mechanically, he shifts his gaze around and uses his fingers to loosen his collar.

3A ANGLE ON JIM 3A
In his Cathedral school uniform. The full sound of the choir seems to be coming from his throat alone. Following 'Amen', Jim appears to be relieved.

4 EXT. SHANGHAI RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY 4
The Packard (Yang driving, Amah next to him) bowls along through the dust of a side street. A feeling of happy release.

5-5A OMIT 5-5A

6 OMIT 6

7 OMIT 7

8 EXT. AMHERST AVENUE - DAY 8
The Packard moves on avoiding bicycles and pedestrians as it passes the gateways of the European houses.

When the Packard turns into one of the gateways we note the OLD DESTITUTE MAN who sits by the gatepost in rags.

9 INT. MOVING PACKARD - DAY 9
Jim twists in his seat to look at the old destitute man.

10 JIM'S POV - OLD DESTITUTE MAN 10
From the moving car.

CONTINUED

11

OMITTED

11

*

11A

EOS 0245

OMITTED

11A*

*

CONTINUED

11B OMITTED

11B*

11C OMITTED

11C*

11D OMITTED

11D*

11E OMITTED

11E

11F OMITTED

11F*

11G OMITTED

11G*

12 OMITTED

12

13 EXT. JIM'S HOUSE (ESTABLISHING SHOT)

13

LOS 2245
It's Surrey in the sun, a wistful colonial re-creation of a manor house. Only the spiral of a Pagoda (in the BG) tells us that we aren't in England on a rare sunny day.

14 INT. JIM'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - DAY 14

JIM'S MOTHER, an English woman, sits elegantly at the piano playing Vivaldi. A cigarette burns wistfully from a nearby ashtray. She looks out the open door.

15 EXT. JIM'S HOUSE (LAWN) - DAY 15

JIM'S MOTHER'S POV - JIM

rides his bike on the lawn in a thick terrycloth robe.

Amah holds up Jim's clothes and is shouting.

AMAH

(in Chinese)

Please put these on, you'll catch
your death of a cold.

Jim rides his bike by and almost hits her.

16 ANGLE ON JIM'S MOTHER

EOS 0245

16

16A CONTINUED

16A

JIM'S FATHER

China isn't our war.

JIM

We're awfully lucky, aren't we? -
living here and having everything...

JIM'S FATHER

(putting towards coin)

Luck is it? Funny thing is, the harder
I work the luckier we get.

JIM

Oh...I only meant lucky....

He glances towards the beggar distantly banging the cigarette
tin as usual.

JIM

...luckier than him.

JIM'S FATHER

17

CONTINUED

17

Jim sits behind a boys' desk while the family Beagle devours Jim's dinner which he has put on the floor. Jim is changing into his pyjamas and drops each piece of clothing onto the floor where he stands. His Amah collects them one at a time and folds them up. Jim drops his tie and the Amah bends to pick it up. He drops his shirt. The Amah reaches into a corner to retrieve it. Jim drops his trousers almost under the bed. The Amah has to reach into the darkness, under the dust ruffle to retrieve and fold these too. She is about to pick up a balsa wood airplane when Jim snaps:

JIM

Don't touch that or I'll kill you
Amah!

She leaves. Jim resumes writing furiously into a school notebook. After a few minutes he HEARS his parents getting ready for bed (the closing of doors and the running of water). Jim closes the book.

17A ANGLE ON THE BOOK - EVE

EOS 0245

17A

17 CONTINUED

17

She leaves. Jim resumes writing furiously into a school note book. After a few minutes he HEARS his parents getting ready for bed (the closing of doors and the running of water). Jim closes the book.

17A ANGLE ON THE BOOK - EVE

17A

It reads in childish script "Contract Bridge the James Graham Way".

17B INT. JIM'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

17B

Jim opens the fridge door. We see it is stuffed full of food. We can see his Amah in the background.

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JIM

(to Amah)

Please hand me the butter bickies.

His Amah doesn't respond.

JIM

You have to do what I say!

CUT TO: Sc.18 Page 6

18

INT. JIM'S HOUSE (HALL) - NIGHT

18

Jim creeps through the hallway both hands full with milk and cookies. He passes his father's study and watches his father sitting next to the fireplace and tosses dossier after dossier into the fire. While OS we hear the drone of the radio (WAR NEWS) from his mother's room.

ANGLE ON JIM

He continues down the hall until he comes to his parent's bedroom.

Through the partially open door, he SEES his mother behind her make-up mirror, removing her eye shadow with a piece of cotton wool. Rouge, powder, and lipstick are stripped away until her face looks blank. Then she opens her nightgown and, with a big powder puff, applies some talcum powder (against the heat) on her chest. The radio is on, playing WAR NEWS. She frowns with worry and turns it off.

18A

ANGLE ON JIM

18A*

20

CONTINUED

20

JIM

(drowsily, like a little boy)

Nothing, he was playing tennis.

His mother laughs.

JIM'S MOTHER

Was he winning?

JIM

I don't know, it was just a dream.

Jim, irritated by the smoke, waves it away. Mother gets up and puts her cigarette out in the wash basin.

JIM (continued)

Perhaps that's where God is, all the time,
that's why you can't see him when you're
awake. Do you think?

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20

CONTINUED

20

JIM

Goodnight.

She lets Jim go and walks to the door.

JIM (continued)

Mother....if God is above us, does it mean up
like flying?

EOS 0245

JIM'S MOTHER

Sssh....goodnight, sleep tight.

JIM

Goodnight.

His parents close the door.

20 CONTINUED

20

ANGLE ON JIM

His eyes are open as he HEARS the drone of the Japanese squadrons in the sky.

21 INT. JIM'S HOUSE (SITTING ROOM) - DAY

21

We see that a wind-up gramophone is playing the scratchy MUSIC of a Vivaldi which we previously heard Jim's mother playing on the piano, and in the mysterious afternoon light, more mysteriously still, a Pierrot is dancing quietly and alone to the music.

22 EXT. JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

22

The gramophone MUSIC continues faintly. We see Jim's house.

ANGLE ON PACKARD

Yang dozing behind the wheel.

In the front yard, a half dozen GARDENERS tend to the flower beds.

23

24A EXT. CROWDED STREET SHANGHAI - DAY

24A

The pavements and roadway are crowded with a bewildering mixture of pedestrians - BAR GIRLS, GANGSTERS, PAUPERS, BODYGUARDS, WOMEN IN SEQUINED DRESSES, among the crowds of CHINESE PEASANTS going to market with burdens of fruit and vegetables and bales of cloth hand from yokes, and STREET VENDORS selling cages songbirds, live chickens, snacks of frying snake.

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CONTINUED page 60 - Sc.24A

There are three other luxurious cars ahead of the Packard. Gaily colored balloons spill from the window of one car. The crepe and feathered head of a hobby horse sticks out of the window of another. And in the backseat of a third car, he SEES two people in huge powdered wigs dressed like Marie Antoinette and Louis the Sixteenth. All around the car, presents

CONTINUED (page 8)

EOS 0245

Lt. Price reaches over to a fruit bowl and plucks a red shiny apple from it and he bites rather savagely into it.

LT. PRICE
Ripe for the taking.

Mrs. Lockwood and Jim's Mother titter nervously.

Bored, Jim wanders over to his father who is engaged in conversation with an aristocratic Chinese man (Mr. Chen).

MR. CHEN
Get out of Shanghai while you can.

JIM'S FATHER
They've left us alone so far.

MR. CHEN
(with a weary sigh)
My dear Mr. Graham, five hundred million Chinese have been fighting the Japanese for four years. Believe me, we have no illusions about their intent vis a vis our city.

Their conversation is interrupted by a drunk guest (in Chinese dress) who puts his face close to Mr. Chen in order to make a joke...

DRUNK
Very good, old boy - utterly convincing -

MR

Elsewhere a young man is explaining to an older man:

NAVAL OFFICER

My people want to know why I'm not coming home to fight. Why should I go to the war - let the war come to me, that's what I say. It's no good us upping stakes and abandoning the British interest - we're a mercantile nation...

OLDER MAN

A trading nation...

NAVAL OFFICER

A trading nation, my very point...

Elsewhere.

LT. PRICE

(preaching to a group)

The ideal war was the Russian-Japanese war... kept the beggars occupied, except that it wasn't long enough, only kept them occupied for a few weeks but that's the ticket, keep the beggars

Elsewhere.

MR. MORTIMER

(a fast talking chap)

Take it from me, the Japs won't go into the International Settlement because it'll be gunboats up the Yangtze and they know it.. they won't risk the British Navy and the American fleet...

MR. MORTIMER'S WIFE

(wily)

George said the Japanese won't go into Manchuria.

MR. MORTIMER

(grandly)

I was wrong about Manchuria but that was because the Manchurian Navy was never going to show up and they knew it!

34

EXT LOCKWOOD HOUSE TERRACE - DAY

49 CONTINUED

49

JIM'S FATHER

...See which way things are going.
I don't want you and Jamie alone in
the house.

Jim looks outside, unbeknownst to him, it's his last look at
decadent Shanghai.

49A (NOW TRANSPOSED TO SCENE 24A)

49A*

49B (NOW TRANSPOSED TO SCENE 25)

49B*

49C (NOW TRANSPOSED TO SCENE 26)

49C*

EOS 0245
(OUT TO SCENE 24, Page 18)

61

CONTINUED

61

War seems to have started outside on the river. As Jim picks himself up fearfully from the floor, the connecting door into the next room is flung open and Jim's father dashes in, in his pyjamas.

JIM'S FATHER

Jamie!

JIM

I didn't mean it! It was a joke!

JIM'S FATHER

Get dressed!

JIM

I am.

JIM'S FATHER

We're leaving!

VOICES

...The whole damned American fleet
...on the radio...at the bottom of
Pearl Harbour...</

63 EXT. CATHAY HOTEL- DAY

63

The street outside the hotel is full of PANICKING PEOPLE. Jim and his parents push their way into the street. Across the street amidst the people is the Packard.

63A ANGLE ON JIM AND HIS PARENTS - THEIR POV

63A

They see through the crowd Yang waving from across the street. They make their way frantically through the hysterical crowd.

63B ANGLE ON YANG

63B

Several people try to pile into the car but Yang fights them off.

63C ANGLE ON JIM

63C

He reacts proudly to Yang's heroics.

JIM

What are you doing?

His Amah puts down her side of the chest and crosses the entire hallway, her intention undetectable. Without warning she slaps Jim across his face. Turning on her heels she walks back to resume her struggle with the chest down the stairs and into the foyer.

74A EXT. JIM'S HOUSE (POOL) - DAY (NEW SCENE)

74A

Establishing shot of pool now three-quarters full. Water is turning brown and there are leaves on the surface.

74B INT. JIM'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAY (2 DAYS LATER) (NEW SCENE)

74B

The kitchen is empty but there is evidence of Jim being there for over a week - empty food tins, bottles and Jim's general rubble - he has eaten almost everything.

75 INT. JIM'S HOUSE (DINING ROOM) DAY (2 DAYS LATER)

</

86
THRU
87

86
THRU
87

88 EXT. SHANGHAI CHINESE STREET - DAY

88

Jim is cycling past a row of poor-looking shops. Inside one of them he sees TWO JAPANESE PRIVATES and sweeping everything off the shelves, as the CHINESE SHOPKEEPER watches in horror. Jim turns his bicycle towards the shop and comes to a halt. He calls to one of the privates.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED:

91

FRANK

Hello, kid. You alright?

JIM

Yes, I think so.

FRANK

Who belongs to you? Where do you live?

JIM

13 Amherst Avenue
(he gets to his feet)
I'm waiting for my mother and
father. They've been... delayed.

FRANK

Delayed? Some kind of crazy British
kid. What's your name?

JIM

James Graham. I've written a book
on contract bridge. Are you with
the American fleet?

BASIE

Is that right, Jim?

JIM

I can show you some houses I lived in before Frank found me. They were luxuriant.

BASIE

Luxuriant? You had good sense being born there, Jim. I imagine there was a lot of good living.

*

JIM

There certainly was good living, Basie. There was opulence.

*

