

## *The Shining* (1980) Bar Scene

### **Sequence Analysis**

Stanley Kubrick's 1980 horror adaptation of Stephen King's novel, *The Shining*, is rich in cultural references, motifs, allegories, history, and too many other literary and visual devices to name. Choosing any sequence in the movie would provide insurmountable information to discuss. In this essay, themes from the Bar Sequence will be analyzed.

The sequence in question is a little more than five minutes long and occurs about halfway through the film. The sequence's exposition begins with Jack Torrance, just having been accused of abusing his son, Danny, as he enters the hotel's "Gold Room", which is normally used for parties. With the absence of any other guests, hotel staff, and alcohol on hotel premises during the winter, the Gold Room seems cavernous and desolate. The golden paneling covering the walls and ceiling, and the glowing yellow lights provides the audience with a sensation that this room exists in a separate reality than the rest of the hotel. The entire room feels like it is in its own ethereal plane. It is almost heaven like, and certainly suggestive of the supernatural. The room is clearly empty behind him, as well are the shelves behind the counter as Jack approaches the bar.

The inciting incident of this sequence begins when Jack vocalizes his willingness to sell his soul for an alcoholic beverage. With the camera focused on Jack, it appears that he begins talking to his reflection behind the counter. When the camera cuts, we see that this is not the case. A man whom the audience has never seen before, stands in front of a variety of drinks that were not there previously. Something on the other side is seemingly taking Jack up on his deal.

The rising action begins as Jack and Lloyd, the ghostly bartender, begin to have a casual conversation. The dialogue is rich with important information. The conversation begins with

Jack recognizing Lloyd from somewhere. Jack acts as if Lloyd has been a side character in the movie the entire time, and he even runs down a brief history between the two. The dialogue continues with Jack complaining about his sobriety, and slowly escalates to a tirade concerning the hatred he possesses for his wife and son.

The climax of the sequence is when Jack suddenly turns the conversation from his hatred toward Wendy, to the disdain he carries toward his son. Context tells the audience that Jack does not think much of his family, and in fact, he views them as a hindering his writing progress. This is where he breaks about the incident where he hurt Danny. He spews lies, maybe trying to convince himself that he is not a monster. He tries to defend his actions, claiming he loves his son. Here, the audience is deliberately deceived to either cause confusion or to force the audience to question the reality that is presented to them. A timeline has already been previously established concerning Jack being sober for five months after an incident where he injured Danny's shoulder. In his conversation with Lloyd, Jack claims the incident was three years prior rather than five months.

The falling action occurs when Wendy is heard yelling for Jack's help from the hallway outside the Gold Room. Wendy rushes in and insists that there is a strange woman in the hotel who is the actual cause of Danny's dishevelment from the sequence prior. Wendy is in denial that Jack could do such a thing, so obviously she jumps on the idea of a mysterious woman being the culprit. Jack, knowing that he is responsible for what happened to Danny, asks his wife if she is "out of her mind". The resolution comes when Jack leaves with Wendy to search for this woman.

### **Visual Symbols**

Mirrors are heavily referenced through the entire film when regarding the supernatural elements. Every time Jack has an encounter with a "ghost", it occurs with him standing in front

of a mirror. This is no different in the Bar Scene, where Jack first begins talking to his reflection behind the counter before it becomes Lloyd.

Isolation is one of the main overarching themes. This is brought to life by just how vast and empty the Gold Room is behind Jack and Lloyd. The position of the bar in relativity to the rest of the room helps to make the room feel larger as well. The bar is located right in the front, with the majority of the space behind it in the background.

The framing for this scene is also driving the isolation home. When framed in a two-shot together with the expanse of the Gold Room beyond them, the background is kept almost entirely in deep focus. Kubrick has always been a master of depth of field so he can stuff more things into a shot to further the storyline. In this case, Kubrick is not trying to add more to the frame, but to keep it minimal. The two-shot adds to making the room feel empty and desolate as the countless tables and chairs remain clearly visibly unoccupied and stagnant behind Jack and Lloyd.

### **Dialogue**

The conversation in this sequence wastes no words. Every word and sentence furthers the story and adds context. It is nearly confirmed that Jack has some sort of ties to the hotel's past. The audience could already infer that Jack and the hotel are connected by previous references such as when Jack claims he knows what is around every corner. Additional evidence to this is Jack being the only initial person to have interactions with other "ghosts". A seemingly out of place reference to Rudyard Kipling's *The White Man's Burden* is made by Jack. When viewed with the larger context of the movie, this could be tied in with the themes of Native American genocide.

### **Sound Effects**

The sound in this scene helps tell the story of isolation and supernatural phenomena. Both men's voices echo through out the chamber of the Gold Room. The echoes are soft but prominent. Mixed in, the wind rustles outside due to the snowstorm. Regardless of the wind's naturally occurring explanation, the sound is exaggerated intentionally for this scene. The wind combined with the visual suggestion of an ethereal plane really brings out the sensation that this sequence is occurring in a separate realm or reality.

### **Overarching Theme**

On its own, this scene serves to upend any previously established reality. Everything should be questioned and scrutinized because nothing seems to make sense. How could Jack know Lloyd? Where do Lloyd and the alcohol come from? Why does Lloyd show up now? This scene is where the audience should realize that previous information can not be trusted. Set in context with the entire film, this scene serves as a transition before the climax. After this sequence, everything begins coming to a head. This sets up the downfall that will ensue shortly.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the sequence could mean a multitude of things. It could mean that the hotel exists either in multiple realities or multiple timelines. Jack might be a reincarnation of someone with a past life connection to the hotel, forever destined to repeat a violent cycle of atrocities. The hotel itself is actually haunted and the spirits drive Jack into madness. The latter option is what Kubrick presents at face value, and what most audiences perceive. I personally prefer the interpretation that Jack is trapped in a never-ending cycle, destined to commit acts of violence through generations, as this explanation ties in to the more subtle theme of Native American genocide.

## Works Cited

*The Shining*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick, Warner Brothers. 1980.