

# Jules and Vincent, Brett and the Burger: Pulp Fiction Scene Analysis



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* can be found near the top of many all-time-top movie lists. It is renowned for its absurd and deadpan humor, its modern satirical tone, and most noticeably its disorienting and time-breaking storytelling techniques. In the film, three interlacing stories are presented about events relating to Marsellus Wallace, a mob boss. The first is about Vincent Vega, Wallace's hired assassin, who takes Wallace's wife to dinner and later rescues her from an overdose. The second tracks Wallace himself, who attempts to track down a prizefighter named Butch who betrayed him. After both of them are taken captive, Wallace forgives Butch for rescuing him. In the final story, we watch Vincent and his partner Jules obtain a briefcase and later have a scuffle with a diner robbery. Specifically, Vincent and Jules visit the apartment of Brett, one of Marsellus Wallace's associates. What follows is one of the most iconic scenes of the movie that still holds relevance in cinema history. Director Tarantino uses high and low angle shots, close-up shots, and framing in the scene in order to establish Jules's and Vincent's intimidating appearance and their valuation of power for the sake of power.

At the start of the scene, Tarantino uses cutting on action in order to contrast the uncertainty and confusion of Brett's friend with the seriousness of Vincent and Jules. Furthermore, by cutting again on action of the door slam, Tarantino is able to hold the camera on the shut door, physically reflecting the idea that Brett's crew is now trapped by the pair. As Brett's second friend is lying on the couch, the camera naturally captures him with a high-angle shot. This, coupled with the following low-angle shot of Jules, contributes to the depiction of Jules as superior and powerful, whereas

Brett's friend is inferior. Augmenting the fact is Jules's serious expression and formal clothes as compared to the friend's startled expression.

Additionally, the succeeding shot consists of Jules standing tall in the center of the room while Brett is seated on the right side eating a burger and his friend is lying down on the left side. On the frame, the vertical height of Brett and his partner is significantly shorter than the height of Jules, and is furthermore off-center. Jules is of utmost importance in this scene and has complete dictation of what happens. He even says to Brett's friend to lie back down when the friend tries to get up, reinforcing his power both metaphorically and physically.

The tension in the scene, caused by the power that Jules exudes, is supplemented by the casual dialogue and nonchalant actions of Jules and his partner. Jules casually discusses a burger with Brett while Vincent walks to the kitchen. The following shot is an over-the-shoulder (or rather an over-the-hip) shot of Brett, with Jules away from focus in the foreground and Vincent away from focus in the background. But even with the lack of focus, the very presence of the pair remind both the viewer and Brett that he is sandwiched between the two and has no direction to escape. He even nervously looks in front and then behind him when Vincent walks towards the kitchen.

Furthermore, during Jules's conversation with Brett, Jules asks to take a bite of the burger, and the camera cuts to a low-angle shot of him eating on the left side of the screen and Brett sitting on the right hand side of the screen. By including a shot with both individuals situated together, Tarantino reinforces Jules's power over Brett: his request to eat Brett's burger was less of a question and more of a command. When the camera cuts back to Brett,

a tight frame with the kitchen in the background reminds us of Brett's feelings of overwhelmingness and fear in this situation. Lastly, the tension is exemplified by the vocal silence of the scene—whether it's during Jules's ridiculously long sip of sprite or the clanging of cutlery while Vincent searches for the briefcase—allowing the viewer to completely soak in the expressions of hostility on the henchmen and timidity of Brett and his friends. And the silence allows a buildup of uncertainty—and therefore tension—which is resolved by the discovery and opening of the suitcase, consequently transferring all of the power displayed by the characters into the suitcase and displaying the unparalleled importance of the suitcase.

Through various filming, composition, and editing techniques, Tarantino is able to effectively set the stage for the rest of the story by establishing not only the power but the dedication of the duo to completing their job of retrieving the suitcase. As we will later find out, this scene is the cornerstone for Jules's eventual character transformation. It's a scene that is still held in the memories of many movie-goers today.