

**THE CINCINNATI KID**

Written by

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Based on a novel by

Richard Jessup

**SHOOTING DRAFT -**

1965

**FADE IN: SERIES OF ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY**

riverside  
than  
posters  
themes  
of

Exterior scenes of St. Louis, particularly the industrial district. Even more important to establish the place is the time: end of summer, 1936. Election would help, with the Republican ones stressing such as "Burst the Roosevelt Bubble," "Save the American Way Life," "Vote for Landon and Knox."

**EXT. FACTORY - DAY**

picket  
picketing is  
entrance  
a  
this  
pickets

One of the most typical scenes of the day: a mass line outside a textile or shoe factory. And the anything but peaceful; the demonstrators are in direct conflict with the police, who are trying to keep an open for strike-breakers. Whatever the general action, small segment of struggle breaks off from it, and it is that our CAMERA picks up: some police chasing some

faction

or some pickets chasing some strike-breakers, the one pursuing the other up an alley with violent intent.

**EXT. ALLEY - DAY**

assault  
bitter,

A couple of the pursuers catch up to the pursued and them with clubs or other weapons. The fighting is dirty and noisy.

**INT. KITCHEN IN SLEAZY RESTAURANT NEAR RAILROAD**

are  
the  
opening  
DEALER

The eight men gathered here in a game of five-card stud clearly removed from the struggle outside, even though SOUNDS of it are very close, coming through window on the alley. In fact the noise is so loud that the of the hand in progress reacts in annoyance.

**DEALER**

Somebody shut the goddam window. Let a man think.

also  
player.  
table  
spies,  
himself  
Kid  
about a  
more  
dealt,  
are

The player nearest the window shuts it. The Dealer, who owns the restaurant, is the talkative type of poker player. Except for THE CINCINNATI KID, the other men at the table look like hoods of one sort or another: gunmen, labor spies, extortionists, what have you. The man who fancies himself the toughest of them all is named DANNY, and he and The Kid have almost all the money on the table between them, about a hundred dollars in front of each. No other player has more than a few dollars left, and now, as fifth cards are dealt, there is about forty dollars in the pot. Only four men are left in the hand.

**DEALER**

Possible straight gets a --

(deals the card)  
-- lovely little four.

**FIRST PLAYER**

On the last hand even, you couldn't  
give me a break.

**DEALER**

I put the brakes on your straight,  
didn't I?

(he laughs; no one  
else does; he deals  
to The Kid)

There you are, son, a gorgeous deuce.

**KID**

Thanks.

**DEALER**

(deals to Danny)

And our lucky friend from Chicago  
gets a queen with his pair of sixes.  
Little lady make you happy, Buster?

**DANNY**

Deal to yourself, clown.

**DEALER**

Dealer gives himself a --  
(deals card and groans)  
I might have known.  
(to Danny)  
Bet your sixes, Buster.

**DANNY**

I told you not to call me that.  
(then as the dealer  
turns away)  
Cost you --  
(counts out his money)  
Ninety-four bucks.

**DEALER**

Biggest pot of the whole game, I got  
to drop.

**DANNY**

(to First Player)  
Interested?

**FIRST PLAYER**

Wouldn't call you if I had a pair

higher'n sixes. Which I ain't.

He turns over his cards, leaving it up to The Kid.

**KID**

Don't seem like he'd bet out without something better than the sixes, does it?

(fingers hole card as if to fold)

Cost me every cent I've won since yesterday afternoon.

(studies Danny's face)

But I tell you, I got this stubborn streak. Call the ninety-four dollars.

He counts out the money, which is almost all he has.

**DANNY**

(indignantly)

You can't have better than a pair of kings!

**KID**

Oh, I'm not claiming anything that fine.

(turns over an eight, making a pair of them)

Just enough to beat the pair of sixes.

**DANNY**

You seen my hole card, you bastard!  
(indicating Dealer)  
He was dealing them high.

pulling in  
total.  
squarely

Attending to first things first, The Kid has been the pot, adding it to his own stake, and pocketing the total. Now as Danny accuses him again, The Kid looks him squarely in the face.

**DANNY**

You stole that dough.

**KID**

You better watch those loose lips of yours, you want to have any teeth left behind them -- Buster.

He stands up.

**DANNY**

You wouldn't of shelled out ninety-four bucks --

**KID**

I called you on account of I didn't think you had another pair or another six and I know a punk like you would get greedy and try and buy the last hand.

He walks off, disappearing through a door marked "MEN."

**INT. MEN'S ROOM - THE KID AT MIRROR**

He is waiting when the door opens abruptly, and Danny appears, his right hand in his coat pocket. The Kid's hand goes to his own pocket and as he whirls around, a straight razor appears in it, its blade snapped open. Pushing Danny to the wall with one hand, he keeps him pinned there with the razor in the other, while he bolts the door. Danny gets his right hand out of the pocket with a gun in it, but The Kid moves the razor blade against his neck.

**KID**

Drop it.

As the gun clatters to the floor, and the others force the door, The Kid takes a step backward to provide enough momentum, then swings at Danny's middle with his left, dropping him, then jumps up on the wash basin and wriggles his way out through a window.

**SUPERIMPOSE: MAIN TITLES**

Danny recovers his balance and his gun, unbolts the door just before it is smashed in, and runs with the others to get out of the building and after The Kid.

**EXT. ALLEY BACK OF RESTAURANT - DAY**

moved on.  
to  
Danny

The conflicting parties from the picket lines have  
The Kid drops from the window to the ground and starts  
run toward the railroad yards. A few moments later,  
and four other poker players appear and run after him.

**EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - DAY**

The  
and  
track  
the  
getting  
burst  
passenger  
with the

The chase across the tracks goes on behind the Credits.  
Kid's pursuers split into two groups to cut him off,  
they seem to have succeeded in cornering him against a  
on which a passenger train is bearing down, headed for  
station. His dubious chance of escape depends on his  
beyond this track in front of the train, which, with a  
of speed, he manages to accomplish just in time. The  
train divides The Kid from his pursuers, and we PAN  
train into the depot.

**INT. UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS**

arrival  
bag  
before  
passengers

The train slowly stops. Amid all the atmosphere of  
in a day when the Pullman car was still the ultimate in  
travel, LANCEY HODGES appears on a platform, takes his  
from the Pullman porter and passes it on to a Red Cap  
he has descended the steps. He walks with other  
and Red Caps toward the center of the station.

**EXT. UNION STATION - DAY**

across  
campanile.

Shooting through the Meeting of the Rivers fountain  
Market Street to the Romanesque building with its

**EXT. UNION STATION - TAXI STAND - DAY**

Lancey getting into a taxi.

**THE CREDITS END**

**INT. TAXI - PROCESS - DAY**

sights go  
rear

Lancey sits in serene repose in back, watching the  
by. The HACKIE steals a couple of looks at him in the  
vision mirror.

**HACKIE**

What you looking for, mister?

**LANCEY**

Do I have to be looking for something?

**HACKIE**

I can pretty much tell.

**LANCEY**

You can pretty much tell what?

**HACKIE**

Some guys come to town, I can tell  
if they're looking for something.

**LANCEY**

What do you think I'm looking for?

**HACKIE**

If you're looking for girls, I can  
fix you up.

**LANCEY**

I strongly doubt if you could fix me  
up. In that department.

**HACKIE**

Well what are you looking for?

**LANCEY**

You're looking for a clout in the  
head if you don't keep your face to  
the road.

**EXT. PLUSH HOTEL - TAXI STAND - DAY**

Hackie

A doorman takes Lancey's suitcase as Lancey pays the

at  
and walks into the hotel. A SECOND HACKIE whose cab is  
the curb reacts to seeing Lancey and steps forward.

**SECOND HACKIE**

Hey, you know who that is?

**HACKIE**

No. Who?

hotel.  
But the second hackie has followed Lancey into the

**INT. LOBBY OF PLUSH HOTEL**

Hackie  
with  
Lancey crosses to the desk to register as the Second  
goes to a row of phone booths and enters one. He dials  
his eyes on Lancey registering.

**SECOND HACKIE**

(into phone)

Shorty? Want to hear who just checked  
into the Park Sherman... Yes, you  
do. Lancey Hodges.

**INT. BOWLING ALLEY - ATTENDANT**

sheets  
report  
He is talking on the phone while he hands out score  
and shoes to some bowlers. He is just as excited by the  
as the Hackie is.

**ATTENDANT**

The Kid know?

**INT. BAR - FEATURING THE BARTENDER**

He is talking on the telephone behind the bar.

**BARTENDER**

Somebody sure as hell ought to tell  
The Kid.

(hangs up)

Lancey Hodges is in town.

**INT. BAR - CLOSE SHOT - DRINKING MAN**

another  
He reacts to the news in a big way. CAMERA PANS to

looks.  
DRINKING MAN, who is equally impressed. They exchange

**FIRST DRINKING MAN**

Kid's been laying for him a long time.

**INT. BARBER SHOP - BARBER AND CUSTOMER**

**BARBER**

You ask me, The Kid'll go after him as soon as he hears.

**CUSTOMER**

Who's got a better right?

**INT. HOBAN'S POOL ROOM - HOBAN AND THE SHOOTER**

Through  
poker  
a  
We are in the front room where the pool tables are.  
an open door in b.g., we can see the unadvertised but  
unconcealed other activity of the establishment: a  
game in progress.

**HOBAN**

You going to tell The Kid, Shooter?

**SHOOTER**

Hell, I can't not tell him.

**HOBAN**

It's where he's been headed for years.

The Kid enters the place through the front door, still  
a  
little dishevelled from his escape.

**KID**

(in greeting)  
Hey!

**HOBAN**

What you say, Kid?

**KID**

Hey, Hoban.

**SHOOTER**

Where you been? Boys been holding a chair for you in back.

**KID**

Business opportunity come along.  
Something too good to pass up.

**SHOOTER**

Turn a profit?

**KID**

Yeah, did okay. Except I almost had  
it took back.

**HOBAN**

Oh, one of those.

**SHOOTER**

(concerned)

You been in too many rough ones  
lately, Kid. You can't go on forever,  
coming out in one piece.

**KID**

I got to build my stake, Aren't enough  
chances in this town to let one go.

**HOBAN**

You're too good, that's your trouble.  
People who know you're the Cincinnati  
Kid, they don't want to sit down  
with you --

**KID**

For nickels and dimes... Thing is  
I've about used up St. Louis.

**SHOOTER**

(nodding)

The streets are getting full of guys  
you've hustled.

**KID**

Been thinking about Miami. There's  
nothing to keep me here.

**SHOOTER**

(after a moment)

The hell there isn't  
(as the Kid looks at  
him)

Lancey Hodges' in town.

**KID**

Yeah?

(then)  
The Man himself, here in St. Louis --  
I might just stick around Shooter.

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

Lancey is on the phone, sitting on the bed.

**LANCEY**

(into phone)  
Mr. Schlaegel? How are you? And your  
enchanted wife?... Tomorrow is quite  
convenient... I generally prefer  
stud but you name it... Your stakes  
are my pleasure, sir... Thank you,  
why don't we make it after lunch? My  
diet these days is enough to spoil  
anyone else's appetite... A pleasure,  
sir. Please remember me to your  
charming wife.

him,  
His  
deeply.

He hangs up and some of the strength seems to go out of  
as if he had been through too long a sustained effort.  
eyes show that he is feeling pain and he breathes

**EXT. HAROLD STREET - DAY**

and

Harold Street leads to the river and we follow The Kid  
The Shooter as they walk down it in the gathering dusk.

**SHOOTER**

(lighting a cigar)  
I been seeing it coming for a long  
time, Kid. Long time.

**KID**

I ain't exactly been hiding it.

**SHOOTER**

No, you ain't been hiding it.

**KID**

Well I got to know.

**SHOOTER**

Sure, you got to know. We all got to  
know.

**KID**

Sometime or other we got to find out  
how much juice we got.

**SHOOTER**

That's why I had to tell you.

**KID**

You ever sit down with him?

**SHOOTER**

Yes, I have.

They walk along, The Shooter pursing his lips  
thoughtfully.

**KID**

Well, what happened?

**SHOOTER**

Nothing. Nothing at all.

**KID**

You lost.

**SHOOTER**

I didn't lose. I'm too good to lose  
when I set my mind to it. I play  
poker a certain way, Kid. I've had  
my Lancey Hodges. Only with me it  
was Whistling Sam Magee to New  
Orleans.

**KID**

(respectfully)

I heard about him.

**SHOOTER**

Well then you know it all... about  
20 years ago it was, maybe more.

**KID**

What happened?

**SHOOTER**

Why, I lost it. It dried me up on  
the inside for a long, a very long  
time.

**KID**

Yeah?

**SHOOTER**

I been where I'm going, know what I mean?

extends  
small  
and  
The Kid nods as they come to where an old wooden pier into the river. Along the river bank can be seen a portion of the mile-long Hooverville that stretches up down the Mississippi.

**EXT. PIER**

at  
They walk out on the pier and eventually stop, look out the river, watching the working boats. They have their thoughts; The Shooter smoking his cigar.

**KID**

You think I'm ready?

**SHOOTER**

(after some time,  
several seconds of  
thoughtful puffing)  
Kid, I don't think you're ready.

**KID**

(quickly)  
Oh.

**SHOOTER**

But you're not going to take my word for it, are you? Are you now?

**KID**

No, I ain't. I can't.

**SHOOTER**

I know, I know. You got to find out for yourself.

**KID**

I don't figure to take him right away. But if I can hang in there long enough, I can outlast him. If I can outlast him, I got a chance. You admit that, don't you, that I got a chance?

**SHOOTER**

I already said I didn't think you were ready.

**KID**

Did you think you were ready when you sat down with Whistling Sam Magee?

**SHOOTER**

Kid, I thought I was the best stud poker player in the world. I'm telling you now, I thought I was the best.

**KID**

Well, I don't think I'm just a cocky square with a fair hand with cards. I got something.

**SHOOTER**

No, you ain't no cocky square. And you probably got something.

**KID**

Okay. And I ain't saying that you was either when you sat down with Whistling Sam Magee.

**SHOOTER**

If you got the stuff, being a little cocky don't hurt you none.

**KID**

Well, would you say if I got any chance at all?

**SHOOTER**

This much of a chance. If Lancey is not right. If he's got a cold, or his stomach ulcer is acting up, or something like that.

**KID**

But then everybody'd see he wasn't right and it wouldn't prove nothing. Listen, we got to have it understood. If he's not right, we call it off till he is.

**SHOOTER**

You're set on a real showdown, aren't you? Your mind's all made up.

They start back off the pier.

**KID**

I got to. You said yourself I got to. I'm overdue.

**SHOOTER**

Yeah, you been around a long time -- I was a lot younger than you when I went up against Whistling Sam -- But you'd be kinda young too, to be The Man.

**KID**

I gotta find out.

**SHOOTER**

(after a pause)

Want me to set it up?

**KID**

(gratefully)

I wish you would, Shooter Man.

**SHOOTER**

All right.

**KID**

Hey, what if he turns me down?

**SHOOTER**

He won't, the way I'll spread the word. He'll have to take you on, someone in your class. If he ducked it, that'd make you The Man.

**KID**

You think he knows I'm around?

**SHOOTER**

He can smell meat like you a mile and a half up the river. He knows you're around and he'll sit down with you. You want to butt heads with The Man, I'll set it up.

Kid.  
pier.

Ahead, on the levee, CHRISTIAN is seen waiting for The  
She has not yet seen them as they approach off the

**SHOOTER**

There's your woman.

**KID**

I wouldn't want to wait around too long. I want to get in and get it over with.

**SHOOTER**

He must of come to St. Louis for a big money game. I'll probably get asked do I want to deal it for them. And however long that takes, he'll have to rest up for you.

**KID**

Oh, well, if he's tooling a dollar, I can understand that. Sure.

**SHOOTER**

You got much of a stake?

**KID**

Close to three grand.

**SHOOTER**

Work on it. But three grand will give you a ride and even if you don't win, why you'll come away with a good idea of what you're made of. But once you go in Kid you can't quit. You get that straight right now. Two of you go in and only one of you can come out.

Christian sees them and moves toward them.

**KID**

Well, school's out. I damn sure don't want no lessons. I want everything he's got.

**SHOOTER**

It's the only way to be, Kid.

giving her Shooter turns away abruptly as Christian arrives, a brief nod.

**SHOOTER**

See you.

The Kid takes Christian's arm automatically; he watches

head

Shooter walk way down Harold Street. He and Christian  
in another direction. She is humming a mountain tune.

**CHRISTIAN**

When we leaving town, Kid? This week?

**KID**

No, I won't be ready. Not for a while.

**CHRISTIAN**

I thought --

**KID**

Might even turn out we don't go.

She is surprised by this and, in her own hesitant way,  
curious.

**CHRISTIAN**

You must feel different about it  
than you did Saturday.

He looks at her fondly and, for one fleeting moment of  
weakness, is actually tempted to tell her about Lancey.

But

it is too sharp a break with tradition.

**KID**

Yeah, I'm feeling a little different.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. KID'S BEDROOM**

where  
window,  
f.g.  
eyes  
He  
catches  
afraid

It is night and the room is lit only by a single lamp  
Christian sits in her nightgown on a chair by the  
turning over the pages of a mail-order catalogue. In  
The Kid lies on his back under a sheet on the bed, his  
closed and his hands clasped tensely behind his neck.  
opens his eyes and turns to look at her. The movement  
her eye, and she instantly stops turning the pages,  
the noise has disturbed him.

**KID**

It's all right. You don't have to

act like a cat. You're not bothering me.

**CHRISTIAN**

You want me to turn out the light?

**KID**

No. I'm overtired, that's why I can't sleep.

(sits up and swings  
his feet to the floor)

Why can't you sleep?

**CHRISTIAN**

(lightly)

Undertired, I guess. If a person rests all day, she doesn't have much to rest up from at night.

(stands up)

Why don't you have a nice hot bath? I could give you a rubdown and then you could have a nice hot bath, and then maybe you could sleep.

to a  
She waits at the foot of the bed for him to come slowly  
decision.

**KID**

'Kay. Can't hurt to try it.

on  
she  
returns  
waiting  
Not  
turning his  
shoulder  
She goes into the bathroom, where she turns the water  
gently so the tub will take a long while to fill. Then  
takes a bottle of alcohol from the medicine chest and  
to the bedroom with it. She stands in front of him  
for him to move, but The Kid is singularly listless.  
till she sets the bottle down does he respond by  
face to the pillow. She goes right to work on his  
muscles, and she seems to know what she is doing.

**KID**

What did you do with yourself this time?

**CHRISTIAN**

Last night I went to a movie with  
The Shooter's woman. French movie.

**KID**

In French?

**CHRISTIAN**

They had the words in English at the  
bottom of the picture. But The  
Shooter's woman knew what they were  
saying without it. Pig's woman or  
somebody told me she went to college.

**KID**

Sure. Majored in man-eating.

**CHRISTIAN**

I think maybe she really did go. But  
I never quite dared to up and ask  
her.

**KID**

I didn't know you ran with The  
Shooter's woman.

**CHRISTIAN**

We got to be kind of friendly when  
you both were in that three-day game  
down to Cairo. 'Course she's older'n  
me.

**KID**

And been around more. A lot more.  
What was the movie like?

**CHRISTIAN**

Weird. It wasn't a straight story  
where you knew whose side you were  
on, the way you do in regular  
pictures.

**KID**

American pictures.

**CHRISTIAN**

Yeah. There were lots of things I  
didn't understand.

**KID**

What was it about?

**CHRISTIAN**

Well, there's this town in Europe a long time ago where they get a message from a Spanish general he's coming to spend the night with his troops. So all the men are scared silly about what the soldiers will do to them.

**KID**

Nothing weird about that.

**CHRISTIAN**

But all the wives and daughters tell the men to go hide somewhere and let them bargain with the enemy.

**KID**

That don't make much sense.

**CHRISTIAN**

Wait. The way they handle it is they go to bed with the Spaniards. And the next morning the soldiers go off peacefully and everybody's happy.

**KID**

Including the husbands and fathers? Don't they suspect?

**CHRISTIAN**

That's part of what I wasn't sure of. I guess they know what went on but they care more about their safety and their money than they do about their honor.

**KID**

Then they got their heads screwed on straight. Honor's just an idea. You can't see or feel it and you can't eat it and you sure as hell can't get any mileage on it.

She slaps him on the rump and straightens up.

**CHRISTIAN**

I'll just turn off the bath water.

He doesn't move but just stays relaxed and closes his eyes.

**INT. BATHROOM**

large  
where it  
the  
think of  
back

Christian, humming softly, turns off the water, takes a towel from a rack and puts it on a stool by the tub will be more convenient for him. She lingers to test water with her finger and do anything else she can to assure maximum comfort for her man. Then she steps into the bedroom. The sight of him makes her advance cautiously and confirm her suspicion that he is asleep.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT**

working on  
radio.  
radio. She

MELBA, The Shooter's woman, is sitting up in bed her eyebrows and listening to MUSIC turned up LOUD on a The bedside phone RINGS, barely audible above the answers it.

**MELBA**

(into phone)  
Hello... Yes, it is. You want him?  
(calling)  
Shooter! Telephone! Shooter!

noise  
it's  
bed  
opens  
quarters,

She gets no answer, which is no wonder in view of the from the radio. But the radio is across the room and slightly easier for her to get out of the side of the she's on, and go to the door of The Shooter's room. She this and we see The Shooter in bed in his own small reading a magazine. He turns around inquiringly.

**MELBA**

Phone for you. I always seem to be the one to answer it, no matter who it's for.

**SHOOTER**

(getting up)  
If you'd rather we put it in my room --

**MELBA**

Are you kidding?

into it,  
the  
but  
little

The Shooter picks up the phone but before he speaks he pantomimes to her that he won't be able to hear over radio. She seems to regard the request as an imposition she does go grudgingly to the radio and turns it down a little before she returns to her bed and her cosmetic chore.

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)  
Hello?... Well, hello. What brings you to our fair city? Little action, maybe?

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

Lancey, dressed for bed, is on the phone.

**LANCEY**

(into phone)  
How could you guess, Shooter? I was invited by a Mr. William Schlaegel --

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT**

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)  
Owns most of the Schlaegel Brewery. Braumeister beer.

movement  
She  
makes

The Shooter sits down on the edge of Melba's bed, the jostling her so she pricks herself with her tweezers. She exclaims in protest and gives him a dirty look that makes The Shooter stand right up again.

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

**LANCEY**

(into phone)  
As he put it, rather bluntly, I felt, we don't want everyone to have to watch everyone else dealing to see to it they don't make any little accidental errors by mistake. I told him a man couldn't ask for a better guarantee of a fair-and-square game

than having The Shooter deal it. So if you're willing, we're meeting at two o'clock in the afternoon. Ask for Mr. Schlaegel's suite at the Park Sherman... Good. I'm glad you can do it, Shooter. Be a pleasure to see you again...

(then)

Oh pretty much the same... Just have to be a little careful about smoking and drinking and eating -- and breathing. See you tomorrow. Good night.

chair,  
reveal

He hangs up the phone, settles himself in a comfortable and opens a heavy book. CAMERA MOVES in CLOSE enough to the title: Prescott's CONQUEST OF PERU.

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT**

drawn  
still  
the  
remainder of  
writes  
starts

It is midday outside but the window shades are tightly to keep the daylight from disturbing The Kid, who is asleep. Christian, dressed for the street, moves from bedroom to the kitchen-living room which is the the two-room apartment. Finding paper and pencil, she a quick note and leaves it on the kitchen table, then out.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE WINDOW - DAY**

end-  
"All  
particular  
of  
trend

featuring one bathing suit displayed among others in an of-season sale with some such advertising message as bathing suits reduced 1/3 for clearance!" The suit is a two-piece one, exposing two or three inches bare midriff -- the first modest forerunner of the that led eventually to the bikini.

**CHRISTIAN'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Would you wear it in public?

looking at

CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Christian and Melba  
the display.

**MELBA**

Wouldn't be much point wearing it in  
private. Sure, why not, as long as  
you don't have a bulge to hide?

They start walking.

**CHRISTIAN**

I don't know, Melba.

**MELBA**

(looking her over)  
My guess is there isn't anything  
about you needs hiding. But I'll  
give you a more definitive opinion  
at the bath.

**CHRISTIAN**

(startled)  
At the what?

**MELBA**

Turkish Bath. After we're through  
shopping. I'm treating you, Christian.

**CHRISTIAN**

I never been. I'm not even sure what  
you do.

**MELBA**

You don't do anything. That's what's  
so marvelous. They do it to you.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. STEAM ROOM**

CAMERA finds Christian and Melba among the perspiring  
females.

**CHRISTIAN**

The third time I stayed. Never went  
back to the boarding house except to  
pick up my things.

**MELBA**

And that side of it's held up? No complaints in the bed department?

**CHRISTIAN**

Well, just one.

**MELBA**

(intrigued)

Yes?

**CHRISTIAN**

The nights he isn't there.

**MELBA**

He really does that to you, does he? You got one of the rare ones.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. MASSAGE ROOM**

curtain  
are  
Christian and Melba are on adjoining rubbing tables, a separating them from the waist down only. Their heads close enough so they can talk without their masseurs necessarily hearing every word they say.

**CHRISTIAN**

You find a guy, you love him, and that's it. It's supposed to just go on like that for life. Right?

**MELBA**

According to the propaganda, right.

**CHRISTIAN**

But it isn't my life, it's his life, with me tacked on. You have any idea what it's like to be a hash slinger in a cheap restaurant?

**MELBA**

No, honey, the stock crash wafted me right from the daisy chain into unmarried bliss.

**CHRISTIAN**

It's hell, if you'll excuse the word. But I didn't want to quit. The Kid made me. I felt I ought to hang on

to something that was me away from him. You know what I mean?

**MELBA**

Sure. Some girls solve the problem by taking on an extra guy.

**CHRISTIAN**

I'm serious. Having children might take care of it, I don't know. Or -- this is really a terrible thing to admit.

**MELBA**

Your most sordid secrets are safe with me. Confess.

**CHRISTIAN**

If he was rich, or famous --

**MELBA**

Why don't you give him both?

**CHRISTIAN**

(smiling)

Why not? Well, if he was rich and famous, maybe I wouldn't mind so much just being -- just a woman to him. Do you think that might make it seem more worthwhile somehow?

**MELBA**

Somehow! Are you sincere, sweetie?  
(reacting to the  
masseur's touch)  
Oooo -- divine.  
(to Christian)  
Isn't this heaven?

**CHRISTIAN**

I'm not sure. In a way it seems soft of --

She is at a loss for a word.

**MELBA**

Decadent? Depraved?

Christian looks blank.

**MELBA**

Wicked?

**CHRISTIAN**

Well, yes.

**MELBA**

That's what I meant by heaven.

**INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL**

comfortably  
Everything  
played  
a  
of  
types;  
good-  
as  
end

Lancey, Shooter and five other men are sitting in padded chairs around a well-appointed poker table. about the game is in sharp contrast to the one The Kid in. It is played with chips - expensive ones; there are a couple of bottles of wine on ice, fine cigars, a tray sandwiches, etc. Lancey's opponents are all wealthy two of them could be Texas oil men. The youngest, a looking man of thirty, is BILL SCHLAEGEL. The Shooter, nonplaying dealer, distributes fifth cards to the four remaining players in the hand, and both Lancey and Bill up with four cards of one suit showing.

**SHOOTER**

(as he deals)

Still queens -- possible flush -- no help -- possible flush.

**FIRST WEALTHY TYPE**

Queens check to the possibles.

**LANCEY**

Check.

**SECOND WEALTHY TYPE**

Check.

ranking

Bill silently tosses in two of the rarest and highest chips on the table.

**FIRST WEALTHY TYPE**

Fold.

**LANCEY**

And up two.

**SECOND WEALTHY TYPE**

Fold.

**THIRD WEALTHY TYPE**

Biggest pot yet.

A phone RINGS and the Third Wealthy Type answers it.

**BILL**

Call the two thou.

**LANCEY**

(turning over queen  
of his suit)  
Queen high.

**BILL**

(indignantly)  
Jack high. Can you beat that?

**FIRST WEALTHY TYPE**

He just did.

**THIRD WEALTHY TYPE**

(to Second Wealthy  
Type)  
It's your office.

**SECOND WEALTHY TYPE**

Dallas or Tulsa?

**THIRD WEALTHY TYPE**

She just said office.

during  
and  
Bill  
the

The Third Wealthy Type takes the phone and speaks on it  
the ensuing. The Second Wealthy Type crosses to the bar  
fixes himself a drink. Lancey takes in his winnings.  
hasn't recovered from the blow. There is a hiatus in  
game.

**BILL**

How the bloody hell did you figure  
out I didn't have the king or the  
ace?

**LANCEY**

I recollect a young fellow putting the same question to Eddie the Dude. It was a game in the grand lounge of the "J.M. White, Third," the largest paddle-wheeler ever built. "Son," Eddie told him, "All you paid was the looking price. Lessons are extra."

(turns to Shooter)

First time I heard of this Cincinnati Kid was in New Orleans, at Yeller's. I knew right away I'd have to play him someday.

**SHOOTER**

You'll enjoy his game.

**LANCEY**

I may admire it. But if he's all that good, I doubt if I'll enjoy it.

**SHOOTER**

The tougher the competition, the better you used to like it.

**LANCEY**

I've learned to take everything in moderation.

**EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

with  
It is early evening. The Kid approaches the restaurant  
Christian on one arm, Melba on the other.

**KID**

(to Melba)

Have a drink with us?

**MELBA**

Better not. Shooter said they'd break at seven, and he has to have his food first, then his nap.

(looking The Kid over)

You know, there's a day in your life I'm looking forward to.

**KID**

In my life?

**MELBA**

The day The Kid becomes The Man.

enter the

She smiles at them both and goes off. They move to  
restaurant.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. RESTAURANT - KID AND CHRISTIAN**

front

The plates with the remains of their main course are in  
of them. The Kid pours what's left of a bottle of beer  
into  
his glass.

**CHRISTIAN**

How'd you sleep Kid?

**KID**

I slept okay.

**CHRISTIAN**

I hope you don't mind my not being  
there when you woke up.

**KID**

No I don't mind --  
(then)

What she was talking about, Shooter's  
woman -- I'm going up against a big  
game soon.

**CHRISTIAN**

She told me. It's a very big game, I  
hear.

**KID**

Yes.

**CHRISTIAN**

Will it be long?

**KID**

Why?

(then)

What's the matter?

**CHRISTIAN**

I thought --

**KID**

Thought what?

**CHRISTIAN**

I'd go home and see Mama.

**KID**

I wouldn't be able to spare you much change.

**CHRISTIAN**

Oh, I wouldn't want much. Bus is really the best way to go.

**KID**

Would a hundred fish do it? For the bus and something nice to bring your Mama?

**CHRISTIAN**

That would be fine, Kid. Just fine.

**KID**

When would you want to go?

**CHRISTIAN**

There's no reason for not going right now unless --

She lowers her eyes, finding it hard to say the words.

**KID**

Unless what?

**CHRISTIAN**

Unless you wanted to go to bed first.

**KID**

Do you want to? Would you like it?

**CHRISTIAN**

Un-huh. I'd like it.

**KID**

You want dessert?

**CHRISTIAN**

No. You?

**KID**

(shakes head)  
Coffee?

**CHRISTIAN**

I don't need it.

**KID**

Neither do I.

He looks o.s. raising a hand to summon the check.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT - DARKENED WINDOW**

lamps  
the  
the  
It is dark in the room and dark outside, the street  
furnishing only enough light for a faint border around  
window shade. Christian's head and nude back move into  
Shot; she pulls the shade aside to look out.

**LONG SHOT - ILLUMINATED CLOCK - CHRISTIAN'S P.O.V. -  
NIGHT**

The time is a few minutes before ten.

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT - CHRISTIAN**

in  
and  
over  
She lets the shade fall back into place. Moving quietly  
the darkness, she begins to dress. CAMERA PULLS BACK  
PANS to include The Kid, lying on the bed with a sheet  
him. He seems to be asleep until he speaks.

**KID**

You still haven't said it.

**CHRISTIAN**

Said what?

**KID**

If you're coming back.

sits  
Christian abandons the process of dressing herself and  
down in the easy chair to answer this question.

**CHRISTIAN**

Maybe I ought to stay with Mama and  
Papa a while, and see.

**KID**

What's to see?

**CHRISTIAN**

I never did like city streets.

**KID**

Oh.

**CHRISTIAN**

Uh-huh. The promise didn't fulfill itself for me.

**KID**

Promise?

**CHRISTIAN**

Come to the city and all. Electric lights and flush toilets. All the pretty dreams -- it was all promise.

**KID**

Oh, I see.

**CHRISTIAN**

I don't know if you do or not Kid -- You're city -- and I'm country -- You grew up with it.

**KID**

I don't think that's why you're going -- because you like it so much better in the country.

press

She doesn't comment one way or the other, nor does he the point.

**CHRISTIAN**

What will you do?

**KID**

Well, I've got that big game.

**CHRISTIAN**

I heard he's The Man for you.

**KID**

Yes. If I won, there would be a lot of money.

**CHRISTIAN**

You'll win. You been coming on strong a long way. This is your time.

(then after a long  
moment)  
Come home with me to Mama's Kid.

**KID**  
(finally)  
I'm sorry.

**CHRISTIAN**  
(gently)  
I know you are honey -- I know it.

She gets up and begins to pack her clothes in an old  
suitcase.

After a moment The Kid gets out of bed.

**KID**  
I'll go down to the bus with you.

**CHRISTIAN**  
You don't have to.

**KID**  
(starting to dress)  
I'll go down with you.

**CHRISTIAN**  
(after a pause)  
Kid --

**KID**  
Yeah?

**CHRISTIAN**  
This is going to sound kind of funny  
to you, but I want to ask it.

**KID**  
Sure.

**CHRISTIAN**  
Do you think there's any chance, if  
you do win this big game, that you  
might do something else besides cards?  
(hastily)  
I don't mean never play poker. I  
just mean not have it be the only  
thing you do.

**KID**  
Hell, it's the only thing I know how  
to do. What else is there for a guy

never finished school? College graduates are walking the streets looking for jobs -- trained people, engineers, scientists!

**CHRISTIAN**

I realize --

**KID**

(not letting her speak)

When you're The Man, you don't have to hustle -- When you're The Man, The Best, the Big Money comes around on their knees just beggin' to hustle you. I'm not goin' to quit. I'm goin' to win.

**CHRISTIAN**

Yes, I can see that. Of course I didn't say quit.

**KID**

Well you see how it is.

**CHRISTIAN**

That's all right.

**KID**

(after a moment)

Christian, you aren't doing this to be off my back, in case I lose?

**CHRISTIAN**

I been thinking about it a long time. I been planning to go home and see how I felt about things.

**KID**

And this just helped you decide.

**CHRISTIAN**

That's all.

**KID**

Then don't go.

**CHRISTIAN**

(firmly)

No, this is your time -- Now you go on Honey and you play The Man -- I'll be at Mama's.

hasn't  
then  
to  
clean  
the  
he  
adding

She closes the suitcase and puts on the one dress she packed. The Kid, dressed now, watches her for a moment goes to the bottom drawer of the dresser and opens it to reveal a stack of money under a shirt. He takes five twenty-dollar bills and counts them on to the top of dresser, snapping the crisp leaves gambler style. Then stoops down again and takes out two more twenties, them to the pile.

**KID**

I wish it could be more.

**CHRISTIAN**

That's all right.

top  
the  
picks up  
room. At

He doesn't actually hand her the money. He leaves it on of the dresser and she goes over and takes it, folding bills and putting them in her change purse. The Kid her suitcase, and she leads the way into the other the front door she stops and looks back at the little apartment for a moment.

**CHRISTIAN**

I don't guess I'll ever forget these rooms, Kid.

**KID**

I don't guess I will either.

**CHRISTIAN**

You going to move?

**KID**

If I win, it won't be good enough.  
If I lose, I lose it all.

She looks at him for a moment, then exits. He follows.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. TAXI - PROCESS - NIGHT**

on  
The Kid and Christian sit in silence. She puts her hand  
his.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. BUS TERMINAL**

room,  
a  
gets  
suitcase  
The Kid and Christian sit on a bench in the waiting  
still silent. He has her suitcase between his legs and  
pile of magazines on his lap. She looks at a clock and  
to her feet. He follows her to the door, carrying the  
and magazines.

**EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT**

the  
follows her  
Christian boards a bus that has seen better days. On  
steps she turns to take the bag from him, but he  
on.

**INT. BUS - NIGHT**

the  
which  
Christian takes a seat. The Kid puts her suitcase in  
overhead rack and hands her the magazines, none of  
would be classed as heavy reading.

**CHRISTIAN**

Goodbye, Kid. Good luck.

**KID**

Goodbye, Christian.

They don't kiss. He turns and goes out.

**EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT**

a  
starts  
back  
There are not many passengers boarding this bus. After  
couple of moments, the driver closes the door and  
off. Christian waves from the window, and The Kid waves

outside to her. When the bus has gone, he walks around the  
of the terminal to the front.

**EXT. FRONT OF BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT**

hackies There are a couple of cabs at a taxi stand. One of the  
He offers his services to The Kid, but The Kid declines.  
wants to walk.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL**

hours It is midday and the poker game is almost twenty- four  
old. Our attention is focused on Bill Schlaegel, who is  
writing out a check.

**BILL**

Four stacks? Right, Shooter?

**SHOOTER**

Four.

proceedings The Shooter takes advantage of the lull in the  
to move to the telephone.

**BILL**

Thank you for the entertainment,  
gentlemen. My particular gratitude  
to you, Lancey. It's been a rare  
pleasure to watch a great artist at  
work. Thank you for the privilege.

thick. Lancey gives him a quick look, finding this a bit

**LANCEY**

Well now, son, you're quite welcome.  
Can't say I recall another man, in  
all my days on the three rivers, who  
seemed to find it quite so pleasurable  
losing all that money.

place, Bill puts his check down in front of The Shooter's  
and gets to his feet.

**BILL**

Good day, gentlemen. You're welcome to use the premises as long as you like.

speaks  
CAMERA MOVES with Bill as he passes The Shooter, who is waiting on the phone while the hotel operator dials his number. Bill gives him a friendly pat on the back, and in a low, harsh voice for The Shooter's ears alone.

**BILL**

I want to see you.

comes on  
Bill goes out. Shooter looks after him as his party the phone.

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)

Hi, Kid. Shooter here. Listen, I told the woman I'd take her to the ball park, but I'm still working. How about you and Christian take her out?

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT**

**KID**

(into phone)

Christian's gone home to see her folks.

**INT. PLUSH HOTEL ROOM**

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)

Oh.

(then)

Well listen, would you mind taking her yourself? The gang'll be there, in the section... Thanks. Appreciate it. See you.

the  
He hangs up, returns to the table and starts to shuffle cards in his own spectacular way.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. BUSCH STADIUM, ST. LOUIS - DAY**

for a  
A game is in progress between the Cardinals and another National League club. The batter at the plate connects long one. CAMERA FOLLOWS the flight of the ball.

**EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA**

section  
They are making their way to meet their friends in the they prefer. They stop to watch the ball as the fans around them rise to their feet. The section they have just reached is in the sun, overlooking the outfield.

**EXT. FIELD**

An outfielder races back and makes a difficult catch.

**EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA**

them to  
in  
SOKAL,  
accent.  
have not  
men  
they  
because,  
details of  
seats,  
caught.  
They start on their way again. CAMERA PANS ahead of a group consisting of Hoban; HOBAN'S WOMAN, still sexy her forties; PIG, whose name could derive with equal justification from either his looks or his manners; and who talks colloquial American with a Central European accent. The group as a whole is notable because its members risen to their feet with everyone else, because all the are basking in the sun with their shirts off, because view the action on the field with detachment, and nevertheless, they are constantly placing bets on the game. Now, as people around them resume their seats, Sokal is able to confirm that the fly ball has been caught.

**SOKAL**

(to Hoban)

You owe me two fish on the out, plus three on the inning, minus two on no strikeouts so far.

The Kid and Melba join them.

**HOBAN**

Hiya, Kid. Getting yourself in shape  
for The Man?

(to Melba)

Shooter still on the job?

**HOBAN'S WOMAN**

Where's Christian?

**MELBA**

(in a whisper)

Lay off that.

**PIG**

What'd she do, take off? So did mine.  
Don't lose no sweat, Kid, there's  
plenty more where they came from.  
All shapes and sizes.

**KID**

Hi, Hoban. Sokal. Pig.

He and Melba sit down.

**HOBAN**

(to Sokal)

Boyer. One to two on the sacrifice.

**SOKAL**

Five to three, I'll give you. Two-  
fifty against one-fifty.

**HOBAN**

Mark it.

**SOKAL**

I figure they'll walk him. Fill up  
first.

**KID**

Not with who's coming up. I'll take  
the same odds.

While he is talking, Melba unbuttons his shirt.

**MELBA**

Get some of this sun.

**SOKAL**

(to The Kid)

Mark it.

**KID**

(to Melba)

Guess I will.

in  
rarely

He takes his shirt off. Melba finds some suntan lotion  
her bag, and applies it to her face and arms, her eyes  
straying from The Kid.

**HOBAN**

Bunting, Sokal.

**EXT. BALL FIELD**

second

The bunt is fielded by the first baseman, who throws to  
for the out. There is no play at first.

**SOKAL**

So they pitched to him. I still win.

**PIG**

(to Kid)

Everybody been on the phone to  
everybody about coming to watch you  
and Lancey. Big Sprigi, Yeller to  
N'Orleans, Old Lady Fingers. They're  
all coming.

**MELBA**

(to Kid)

Let me give you some of this. Keep  
you from burning.

**KID**

I don't think --

**MELBA**

Can't hurt you.

spreads  
applying  
with her

Without waiting for his approval, she goes ahead and  
the lotion on his skin, painstakingly, as if she were  
paint to canvas, working it in, one area at a time,  
fingertips.

**HOBAN**

(to Sokal)

Chance to invest your profits. Bet  
you an even fin he make first.

**SOKAL**

(looking toward plate)  
Who we got -- Warwick? You got  
yourself a bet, pal.

CAMERA  
midriff.  
ball,  
the  
meets

The men concentrate their attention on the diamond.  
MOVES IN to Melba's fingers playing across The Kid's  
From the field comes the sharp CRACK of a bat against a  
followed by a SHOUT from the crowd. CAMERA PANS UP to  
faces of Melba and The Kid as he looks at her and she  
his gaze with inviting eyes.

**SOKAL'S VOICE**

Not your day, Hoban.  
(calling to a vendor)  
Hey, beer!

**MELBA**

(softly)  
Mais tu es charmant --

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - CLOSEUP - MELBA**

With the same look of invitation in her eyes.

**MELBA**

Charmant. Come here, please.

ball  
under  
on  
apartment.

CAMERA PULLS BACK. Wearing the same clothes as at the  
park, she is sitting in a chair with her legs tucked  
her. The Kid is sitting on a straight chair at a table  
which he has a cup of coffee. They are alone in the

**KID**

Any special reason?

**MELBA**

Me. I'm special.

He stands up but doesn't move toward her.

**KID**

Sure you are. You're The Shooter's woman.

**MELBA**

Right. And maybe I'll go on being The Shooter's Woman, even after you and I have had our little romp. What do you think about that?

**KID**

First place, Old Shooter'll come barging through that door any minute. He said they were winding it up.

**MELBA**

No barging. He doesn't have his key with him.

(stands up)

Have to buzz from downstairs.

(moves toward him  
provocatively)

So we can treat ourselves to a little sample of things to come.

The Kid stays where he is as she comes up against him.

**KID**

Also it don't mean anything to you, you're Christian's friend?

**MELBA**

Honey, she lost her franchise the minute she got on that bus. You know that.

(her arms around him)

I have a shaky sense of security, Kid. Don't make me feel unwanted.

then  
He kisses her and lets himself enjoy it for a while,  
pulls away.

**MELBA**

No good?

**KID**

You know damn well how good it was.

Where's a pack of cards?

**MELBA**

What do we need cards for?

**KID**

Gin or casino, you name it. All I know is we're switching to another indoor sport.

**INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL**

already  
another  
writing  
table

The poker game is over. Two of the Wealthy Types have departed; one is finishing a drink on the way out; is putting his winnings into his wallet; a third is out a check. Lancey and The Shooter still sit at the table in f.g.

**SHOOTER**

Lady Fingers'll want to come, I bet, and she's right on the edge of her stake. She could spell me dealing.

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure. Haven't seen the dear old bitch in fifteen years.

**SHOOTER**

Well, that's it, then. Monday night, Room Three-Eleven at the Dorset Hotel. And may the best man win.

**LANCEY**

Yes, that's how it usually comes out in the long run. You think this boy is going to give me trouble, Shooter?

**SHOOTER**

Yeah, he's going to give you trouble.

**LANCEY**

I don't want it to be one of those marathon games. Not any more.

**SHOOTER**

Like the session with The Portugee at Jolly's in Omaha. Remember?

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure. Longest game I ever played though, I was a kid on my way to the Klondike gold rush. At Soapy Smith's in Skagway. Four nights and three days.

**SHOOTER**

You win?

**LANCEY**

Depends how you look at it. When we wound up, the Yukon River had frozen over and you couldn't get through to Dawson City till the following June. Made myself a Hundred and fifty bucks and missed the gold rush.

**SHOOTER**

You been around a long time.

**LANCEY**

That is undeniably true. But it doesn't mean I'm ready to retire. How old is this boy of yours?

**SHOOTER**

Twenty-six, twenty-eight, something like that.

**LANCEY**

Well, now, makes me feel a whole lot better, knowing that. I was thirty-six when I sliced up Eddie the Dude. This Kid of yours is just going to have to wait a few years.

**INT. CORRIDOR, PLUSH HOTEL - FELIX**

a row  
FELIX is  
brutality  
a  
sight  
Shooter

He is standing by an elevator in f.g. keeping watch on of room doors including the site of the poker game. an impressive physical specimen whose capacity for is masked by a quiet, deferential manner. When he sees door open, he moves so as to be out of The Shooter's as the latter comes toward him. It isn't until The

the rounds the corner in f.g. and presses the button for  
elevator that Felix makes his presence known.

**FELIX**

Excuse me, Mr. Shooter, sir, but Mr. Schlaegel asked me to remind you how eager he was to see you.

The doors of the elevator open. Felix yields precedence  
to The Shooter and they enter it. The doors close.

**INT. LOBBY, PLUSH HOTEL - AT THE ELEVATORS**

An elevator opens, and The Shooter and Felix come out.

**SHOOTER**

I ought to call my woman.

**FELIX**

Yes, of course. They always like to know it if you're going to be late for supper.

a row CAMERA MOVES with them as The Shooter leads the way to  
of telephone booths and enters one.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID**

plays They are sitting at the table in a game of casino. She  
lays an ace from her hand, adds a seven from the board, and  
them both on top of a three-card pile.

**MELBA**

Still building eights.

**KID**

Thanks for putting it together for me.

He plays an eight and takes in the whole pile.

**MELBA**

It's not my game.

The telephone RINGS. She stands up.

**MELBA**

Want to know what is?

CAMERA FOLLOWS her to the phone. She picks it up.

**MELBA**

(into phone)

Hello -- Oh, hi, sugar -- why not?

fiddles  
direction.  
She reaches a hand around to the back of her neck,  
with her dress a moment, then beckons in The Kid's

**CLOSE SHOT - THE KID**

comes  
He doesn't understand what she wants but he gets up and  
to her obligingly, CAMERA MOVING with him.

**MELBA**

(into phone)

What's the switch?

the  
wiggles her  
the  
She points to the hook-and-eye fastener at the top of  
zipper that runs down the back of her dress. The Kid  
pantomimes the question "What for?" but she just  
finger impatiently at the fastener while speaking into  
phone.

**MELBA**

(into phone)

Whose idea was that?

seems  
Melba  
back  
hand  
The Kid still doesn't know what she has in mind but it  
easier to humor her than not. He unfastens the hook.  
smiles her thanks and, to his consternation, reaches  
and pulls the zipper all the way down. She places her  
over the mouth-piece of the phone.

**MELBA**

(to Kid)

He's not coming home now.

She steps out of the dress.

**MELBA**

(into phone)

Whatever you say, Shooter man.

**INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER**

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)

Explain to The Kid, will you?

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID**

Melba in her bra and panties, snuggles against The Kid.

**MELBA**

(into phone)

He'll understand.

**INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER**

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)

Tell him they decided to play a little longer, and I'll call him at his place later when the game's over...

Right. Goodbye, honey.

He hangs up the phone and emerges from the booth.

CAMERA

the

MOVES with him as he joins Felix and they walk toward hotel entrance.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID**

The Kid, his policy toward this new situation still unresolved, holds her lightly while he tries to think

it out

aloud.

**KID**

Listen, Melba --

**MELBA**

I have to tell you first. You're sitting down with Lancey next Monday night.

**KID**

I wish it was sooner. I wish it was tomorrow.

**MELBA**

Shooter'll give you all the details later.

**KID**

I don't like waiting that long.

**MELBA**

Let's not kick a gift horse in the teeth, sugar. We've got this time together. Let's try to "fill each unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run."

contrary She invites a kiss and he obliges her. But there is a force at work inside him.

**KID**

Listen, what I was going to say before, I don't want you to think I'm being some kind of jerk or I don't feel you'd be great to sack up with.

**MELBA**

Then let's cut the filibuster.

**KID**

I've made dolls that were friends of mine's wives. I figured if they were willing, they were doing it to their husbands, I wasn't.

**MELBA**

Of course. Any other attitude, you're degrading the woman. You're not treating her as a person with a mind of her own, but as somebody's property.

for a Again she presses close to him and again he savors her moment.

**KID**

Only thing is, it's different with The Shooter than anybody else. He's so straight, I got the obligation to be straighter with him than other people. So do you. On account of we both owe him plenty.

**MELBA**

I thought we just agreed that what you and I did was strictly between us.

**KID**

Can't be.

(decisively, pulling away from her with a pat of dismissal)

Shooter's the closest thing to family I got. It's almost like he was my old man. Don't you see how that's got a bearing on us?

He starts out. Melba stares after him, scarcely able to believe what is being done to her.

**MELBA**

Sure, it means I'm your mother.

**EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - DAY**

The  
main  
continues

An expensive automobile, with Felix at the wheel and Shooter next to him in the front seat, approaches the house of a lavish estate in a St. Louis suburb. It along the driveway past the house.

**EXT. AREA AROUND SWIMMING POOL - CLOSE - BILL AND BABY**

BABY in

In swimming trunks, Bill is spoon-feeding a year-old a highchair. Looking o.s., he waves in greeting to The Shooter.

**EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - THE SHOOTER**

Bill's

He walks from the parked car toward the pool, returning salutation.

**EXT. AREA AROUND POOL**

the  
brushed

SHOOTING from behind The Shooter as he approaches the attractive family group that includes, besides Bill and baby, a FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL who is having her hair

mother. A  
feed the

after swimming by ROSANNA SCHLAEGEL, her beautiful  
family dog completes the picture. Bill continues to  
baby as he hails The Shooter.

**BILL**

Shooter -- very generous of you to  
come on such short notice. Rosanna  
you know, and I think you've met my  
daughter June.

(indicating baby)

No point introducing you to William  
the Fourth. He has a bad memory for  
names.

**SHOOTER**

(greeting them in  
turn)

Mrs. Schlaegel. How are you, June.  
What's it all about, Bill?

**BILL**

Little something I'd like to sound  
you out on. But the least I can do  
is offer you a drink.

**ROSANNA**

Like me to fix it, love?

**BILL**

Wonderful. Why don't you do a batch  
of your Bloody Marys? If that's okay  
with you, Shooter?

**SHOOTER**

Great. Whatever.

As she goes off, Rosanna cautions June about her hair.

**ROSANNA**

Just don't let it get wet again.

topic he  
As soon as his wife is gone, Bill goes right to the  
doesn't want to discuss in her presence.

**BILL**

I've been quite busy on the telephone  
since I last saw you. There's a lot  
of interest all over the country in  
this game with Lancey and The Kid.

**SHOOTER**

Betting interest?

**BILL**

Jack Doyle in New York is giving twelve to five on Lancey. Same odds in Reno. I've taken fifty thousand of it so far.

**SHOOTER**

Fifty thousand!

**BILL**

I'll probably go for more but I didn't want to rock the odds.

**SHOOTER**

I knew you liked The Kid's style but why you going in so deep?

**BILL**

Two reasons. First, I want to see that smug old bastard gutted worse than he gutted me. Second, as long as that's going to happen, I don't see why I shouldn't make some money out of it.

**SHOOTER**

But how can you be so sure? The Kid could do it, we both know that, but --

**BILL**

"Could" isn't good enough for a man who hates to lose money as much as I do. He's going to need help -- from the best man with a pack of cards between Omaha and New Orleans.

**SHOOTER**

Not a chance, Bill. You ought to know I never ever use what I got with the cards for nothing but tricks and dressing up a game.

**BILL**

Sure, I know it. That's why you're the man they choose to give them a square deal. That's what makes it so perfect. Nobody'll be looking for it.

**SHOOTER**

It's out. Out.

**BILL**

The great thing is they'll be so close, The Kid won't need much. Three or four key hands.

**SHOOTER**

Understand this, Bill. I'd like for The Kid to win, and I sure as hell don't want to see you lose all that money --

**BILL**

If I did, I'd have to collect that twelve grand you owe me. Not myself. My collection agents. You knew poor Wildwood Jones, didn't you?

**SHOOTER**

OK but I'm paying it off! It's comin' in ain't it? Six grand already.

(then as Bill just  
looks at him)

Bill, you got to listen to me --!

**BILL**

No, I don't. It's quite the other way around. You have some delusion you're a free agent, but you're not. I own you.

**SHOOTER**

For God's sake --!

**BILL**

Shut up. I'll cross the twelve off the books and give you ten thousand dollars in cash. And you can tell The Kid if he needs more of a stake, I'll put it up.

(looks o.s. and smiles)

Marvelous. Here's Rosanna with what you need.

glasses

CAMERA MOVES to include Rosanna carrying a tray with  
and a pitcher full of Bloody Marys.

**BILL**

-- for that dry feeling on the roof  
of your mouth.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT - CLOSE SHOT - WINDOW - DAY**

It is raining dismally.

**MED. CLOSE SHOT - THE KID**

He is lying on one half of the bed, with the covers  
thrown  
back, his hands clasped behind his head, wearing pajama  
bottoms. He turns his head and stares at the white  
expanse  
of unoccupied bed.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAY**

The weather is clear as The Kid wanders idly along a  
residential street of well-kept nineteenth century  
buildings.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. BAR - THE KID**

He is drinking a bottle of beer slowly. CAMERA PANS to  
another  
bar stool where a customer is having his shoes shined  
by a  
NEGRO BOY who slaps his rag against the shoes with a  
fine  
sense of rhythm. Finished, he collects his dime and  
nickel  
tip, and moves to The Kid.

**BOY**

Shine them up for you sir?

**KID**

No, thanks.

**BOY**

Fetch you a newspaper maybe?

**KID**

No.

**BOY**

How about a singy-song then? I play good.

**KID**

Play what?

and  
like  
can  
The Boy takes out a tobacco can with the lid torn off the top flattened down and shakes it, producing a sound the rustle of dry leaves. Then he produces a similar that makes a rattling noise when he shakes it.

**BOY**

Dry corn in this one. Blue shale stone from the river in this one. You ready?

**KID**

Yes, I'm ready.

see  
The Boy looks at the BARTENDER, who has moved closer to what's going on.

**BOY**

(to bartender)  
You ready?

**BARTENDER**

Hell, I'm ready for anything.

begins  
in  
accent  
The Boy stands perfectly still for a few seconds, then to shake the can with corn in it. After a bit he brings the shale stone can with the other hand to chord and the rustle of the first can.

pure,  
and  
hum.  
At the same time he begins to sing a simple song in a delicate voice. It is catfish music created on the spot sounds strangely like the idle tunes Christian likes to

**KID**

(when the song is over)  
Thank you very much. That was nice.

Where did you learn to do that?

**BOY**

I picked it up from Herman.

**KID**

Who is Herman?

**BOY**

My friend I pick it up from.

**KID**

Is he a good friend?

**BOY**

I don't know 'bout that suh. He just a frien' who teach me some things.

**KID**

Well, I don't want a shine, but here's fifteen cents.

**BOY**

Thank you, sir.

**BARTENDER**

And here's another dime for you, fella.

is  
Suddenly he  
out  
He rings up a NO SALE and flips a dime to The Boy, who  
astonished and then worried by this munificence.  
grabs his tobacco cans and his shoe-shine kit, and runs  
into the street.

**BARTENDER**

Nice little colored kid.

**KID**

(mostly to himself)  
-- Yeah.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. STEAM BATHS - THE KID AND JANSEN**

neck  
JANSEN, a masseur, is at work loosening up The Kid's  
and shoulders.

**JANSEN**

Monday night, uh, Kid?

**KID**

Monday night.

**JANSEN**

I sprung for some of the action. A yard and a half of that five-to-two.

**KID**

Thanks, Jansen.

(in pain)

Hey!

**JANSEN**

We got to get you loosened up. I never felt you this tight.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. BUS TERMINAL - PHONE BOOTH - THE KID**

He is in the middle of a call.

**KID**

(into phone)

Just tell The Shooter I'll be there on the dot Monday night.

**MELBA'S VOICE**

(over the phone)

And until then?

**KID**

He doesn't have to know.

**INT. THE SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA**

**MELBA**

(into phone)

I'm not asking for him.

**INT. BUS TERMINAL - THE KID**

discussion.

up a  
the

He hangs up the phone, rather than continue the  
CAMERA FOLLOWS him as he comes out of the booth, picks  
small duffel bag, and walks to the door that leads to  
busses. He goes out into the night and gets into a bus.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY**

toward  
A bus drives along a main road in the Ozarks, heading  
CAMERA. As it comes close, the name of its destination:  
"FAYETTEVILLE" can be read.

**EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - DAY**

buildings  
to get  
an  
question.  
corner,  
wants to  
the  
The bus stops momentarily at a small cluster of  
around an intersection. The Kid is the only passenger  
off here. As the bus continues on its way, he goes to  
attendant in a gas station on one corner, and asks a  
Referred to a general store and post office on another  
he crosses and goes into it. The STOREKEEPER comes back  
outside with him to point out the route to where he  
go. It is along a dirt road that winds uphill behind  
store. The Kid starts up the road.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. CREST OF ROAD - DAY**

the  
hill  
leading  
consists of  
and a  
The Kid reaches the summit of the hill directly behind  
crossroads, and looks down into the valley between this  
and the next one. He starts down an even narrower road  
to a little farm on a hillock in the valley. It  
a modest cabin, a single barn, a fenced cow pasture,  
few cultivated fields.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. CRAIGIE FARM - DAY**

the  
Christian comes around a curve in a path on one side of

yoke  
front

unlatches  
hesitation,  
the

house, carrying two five-gallon milk cans slung in a  
over her shoulder. A little dog YAPS and runs from the  
door of the house to the front gate. She looks in that  
direction and CAMERA MOVES to include The Kid as he  
the gate and walks toward her. After a moment's  
she moves to meet him, gliding on her bare feet to keep  
water in the cans from slopping out.

**CHRISTIAN**

Hello, Kid.

**KID**

Can I help you with those?

**CHRISTIAN**

Taking it off is harder than taking  
it on in.

She turns toward the side of the house and walks to the  
kitchen door. The Kid follows.

**CHRISTIAN**

How's The Shooter?

**KID**

Fine.

**CHRISTIAN**

You haven't played yet?

**KID**

Monday.

**CRAIGIE**

**INT. CRAIGIE KITCHEN - CHRISTIAN, THE KID AND MRS.**

them,

MRS. CRAIGIE, Christian's mother, opens the door for  
giving The Kid a sharp, appraising glance.

**CHRISTIAN**

This is Eric, Mama. He's come to see  
me.

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

How do, Eric.

turns  
to the  
the

Christian crosses to the drain sink near the pump and her back. Mrs. Craigie lifts the cans off the yoke on drain board. She and Christian each take a can and pour water from it to prime the pump.

**CHRISTIAN**

We lost suction on the pump right in the middle of canning.

steaming  
hampers

The Kid looks at the stove with a couple of large pots on it, and the table alongside with a half-dozen of green beans.

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

There's coffee. And sour ham and bread in the warmer, if you're hungry Eric.

Craigie and  
stems  
stove.

As soon as they are finished with the pump, Mrs. Christian turn to the table, where they begin to snip and cut beans before putting them into the pots on the

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

You know anything about canning, you know we can't stop now. If we'd been looking for company, we never would have started.

**CHRISTIAN**

Spring beans, you have to cook them fast. But you find yourself some breakfast.

**KID**

I'm all right. Bus stopped for doughnuts and coffee.

**CHRISTIAN**

You can stay with us tonight and still make it back to St. Lou on the Sunday schedule by about midnight. I told Mama and Papa about The Man. And all.

**KID**

Where is Mr. Craigie?

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

To the barn. Why don't you go down and introduce yourself? Christian and me'll be at this another hour or two.

**KID**

I think I will. I think I'd like that.

(to Christian)

Okay?

**CHRISTIAN**

Sure. And I'll see you a little later on.

(then, as he starts out)

Papa don't know everything. About you and me.

who  
The Kid looks quickly at her and then at Mrs. Craigie,  
keeps her gaze fixed on the beans.

**EXT. CRAIGIE BARN - CRAIGIE - DAY**

pile  
handled  
Kid  
the  
talking,  
He is pitching manure from all over the cow-lot into a  
banked against the side of the barn, working a long-  
shovel with practised ease. He looks o.s. and sees The  
approaching but continues his work as The Kid enters  
SHOT. Nor does he stop shoveling while they are  
except at moments of particular significance to him.

**CRAIGIE**

Hello.

**KID**

How do you do, Mr. Craigie. I'm Eric Stoner.

**CRAIGIE**

Christian's Eric.

**KID**

That's right.

**CRAIGIE**

You seen her?

**KID**

She's helping her mother can.

**CRAIGIE**

You minding to marry Christian?

The Kid looks at him a long moment then --

**KID**

You got any objections if I do, or  
if I don't?

boots  
Craigie takes a couple of steps toward The Kid, his  
sucking in the muddy ground.

**CRAIGIE**

Son, that's what I call a sharp  
answer.

**KID**

It was what I call a sharp question.

**CRAIGIE**

We don't know much about you,  
Christian's mother and me.

**KID**

I'm what's known as a three-river  
man. Which just means I go around  
playing stud poker wherever I can  
find the kind of action I'm looking  
for.

**CRAIGIE**

You met Christian when she was working  
to Hot Springs?

**KID**

Yeah. I was playing in this game in  
the hotel and she was a waitress in  
the coffee shop. We went out. I told  
her I thought she could get a better  
job in St. Louis.

**CRAIGIE**

Now how did you happen to tell her

that? Maybe you run some kind of  
employment service on the side?

**KID**

I said it because I wanted her in  
St. Louis. Anyway, she made it there  
and she called me and we been seeing  
each other ever since.

**CRAIGIE**

Living together?

this  
The Kid takes his time before deciding how to answer  
one.

**KID**

Yeah, living together.

**CRAIGIE**

How come she come home now? She going  
to have a baby?

**KID**

Not that I know of.

**CRAIGIE**

You two have a fight?

**KID**

No.

**CRAIGIE**

She must have had a reason.

**KID**

Think so? Well, you've known her  
longer than me.

(then)

Look, Mr. Craigie, let me and  
Christian find out a few things then  
maybe I won't have to answer your  
questions.

**CRAIGIE**

I never run across anybody like you.  
I guess I don't understand gamblers.

**KID**

That's all right. I don't understand  
farmers.

**CRAIGIE**

You say things that sound smart alecky. But I'm not sure if they really are smart alecky.

**KID**

Well I can't take into account what somebody's going to feel every time I say something.

**CRAIGIE**

Are you a believer?

**KID**

In some things.

**CRAIGIE**

I mean in God.

**KID**

That's a tough one. I don't disbelieve in Him, but I couldn't say I believed in Him either. I guess I just never paid Him much mind. Didn't seem important.

**CRAIGIE**

God not important?

**KID**

I don't mean what He does isn't important -- if He exists. I mean it's not important to me whether He exists or not.

**CRAIGIE**

Christian was raised in a Christian home.

**KID**

Is that so? I didn't know ---

(then)

I'm not aware of the difference.

(pause)

I'm not asking permission to marry Christian, you know.

**CRAIGIE**

I know.

**KID**

If I was, the only person I'd be

asking it from is her.

**CRAIGIE**

(after a moment)

Who is this fella Christian says  
you're going to play that's so  
important?

**KID**

He's the king of the stud poker  
players.

**CRAIGIE**

And you're going to play him.

**KID**

Yes.

**CRAIGIE**

Are you any good?

**KID**

I'm this good. The Man has got to  
play me.

**CRAIGIE**

What happens if he don't?

**KID**

Then I'm The Man.

**CRAIGIE**

That important to you?

**KID**

I been trying to figure that out  
ever since I set it up.

**CRAIGIE**

You playing because of money?

**KID**

(after a moment)

Not really.

**CRAIGIE**

Christian said you never was much  
worried about money -- I been worried  
about money most of my life -- up  
until I figured out it wasn't so  
important.

**KID**

No, it's necessary, but it isn't so important.

**CRAIGIE**

Well how come you want to play this King fella?

**KID**

Ambition -- maybe security, like that.

**CRAIGIE**

Is it aspiration to be the King or just uncertainty about the future?

**KID**

I ain't looking for security if that's what you mean.

**CRAIGIE**

Not trying to lock something up tight and nail it down?

**KID**

That would figure into it. But that isn't all of it. -- It's important to me.

**CRAIGIE**

Now son which is more important to you, this king business or Christian?

**KID**

If you got the guts to ask that question, Mr. Craigie, I guess I got the guts to answer it. Christian, if you came right down to it, is not as important as doing what I have to do.

his Craigie has finished piling the manure. He puts away  
shovel.

**CRAIGIE**

Well son, I had to know.

**KID**

Know what?

**CRAIGIE**

There never was a man worth a damn,  
to my mind, who let his woman stand  
in the way of the thing he had to  
do.

(then)

I got to go now -- see what I can do  
for a sick heifer. Why don't you  
take Christian, when her Mama lets  
go of her, and tell her I said you  
should go to the old spring. It's a  
good place.

**KID**

Thanks. I'll tell her.

Craigie walks away.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. SPRING - DAY**

It is a small shack against a rocky bluff. CAMERA PANS  
Christian and The Kid as they come down the path and  
enter.

**CHRISTIAN**

It stays warm all winter.

**DISSOLVE:**

**INT. SHACK**

CAMERA MOVES to reveal Christian and The Kid, who are  
in the pool without clothes, treading water.

**CHRISTIAN**

Papa's mama used to bring her wash  
up here.

**KID**

We liable to draw an audience?

**CHRISTIAN**

Don't worry. It's on our land --  
Nobody uses it.

She starts to swim, CAMERA MOVING with her upper back  
as she reaches the side of the pool and pulls herself on to  
the

drawing  
on his

bank, lying on her stomach. The Kid joins her, first  
himself up on his stomach alongside her, then turning  
back to look through the slats at the sun.

**CHRISTIAN**

You must have said something to Papa  
gave him the picture on us in St.  
Lou. Else he never would have spoke  
to you about this place.

**KID**

I told him on account of he already  
knew. Never any sense feeding a man  
a lie he's not going to believe.

**CHRISTIAN**

Even if he did know, I'm glad you  
told him.

him.

She raises herself up so that she is directly above

**KID**

(in mock protest)  
Hey, you're all wet!

**CHRISTIAN**

So are you, foolish.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. CRAIGIE PORCH - CRAIGIE AND THE KID - NIGHT**

Mrs.  
jars  
just  
heads. The

The two men are sitting just outside the kitchen, where  
Craigie and Christian are pasting labels on the mason  
they filled earlier. The paste and some of the jars are  
inside an open window on a shelf behind the men's  
light comes from a kerosene lamp inside.

**CRAIGIE**

Let me get this straight in my head.  
Cards is all a matter of luck, who  
gets dealt the best ones.

deck

The Kid stands up and selects six playing cards from a

paste  
as to  
faces,

in his pocket. During the next few lines he uses the  
on the shelf to stick together three pairs of them so  
form three double-thick cards. One of these has two  
another two backs, and the third a back and a face.

**CRAIGIE**

So when one of you professional  
gamblers sits down with a bunch of  
your -- what do you call them --  
customers, clients?

**KID**

The technical term is "suckers." Or  
"marks."

**CRAIGIE**

Their chance of winning is just as  
good as yours, except if you got a  
way to control it, who gets what  
cards. Right?

**KID**

Not right. That's cheating and it's  
not any part of what we're talking  
about.

**CRAIGIE**

Then how do you win?

**KID**

I'll show you.

He displays his three cards.

**KID**

You see one of these cards is white  
on both sides, one is red on both  
sides, and the other is white on one  
side, red on the other.

**CRAIGIE**

What about it?

The Kid lifts a straw hat off a peg on the porch wall.

**KID**

This. I put the three cards in a hat  
and shake them up, and then I ask  
you to draw one card out blind. Put

it face down on the table so neither of us can see the bottom side.

assumes the  
"red"

Craigie does as instructed. The ensuing dialogue card he picks is red on top; if it's white the words and "white" will be reversed in the dialogue.

**KID**

Okay, red on top. That eliminates the all-white card, right. So the card you've picked is one of two -- the all-red or the red-and-white. One out of two is an even chance, an even-money proposition. Right -- you follow me?

**CRAIGIE**

I think so.

**KID**

So if I said I'll bet you a dollar to seventy-five cents the other side of that card is red, you'd take the bet wouldn't you?

**CRAIGIE**

Seems like. Yeah.

**KID**

And that answer makes you a sucker. Because the odds are two to one, the other side of that card is red, and I ought to be offering you a dollar to fifty cents instead of seventy-five.

**CRAIGIE**

But if there are just the two possibilities.

**KID**

There are three possibilities.  
(indicating card on  
table)

That can be the red side of the red-and-white card, or it can be either side of the all-red card. In two cases out of three the other side is red. And I'd win the bet from you two out of every three times we made

it.

**CRAIGIE**

(dubiously)

You would?

**KID**

Sure. It's obvious when I explain it, isn't it?

**CRAIGIE**

Reckon so. Except if there's only two things that the bottom side can be, red or white --

**KID**

Take my word for it -- the odds are two to one. And knowing that is the difference between your gambling man and your sucker. Not who gets the better cards but who knows what the proper odds are. In a poker game there can be a million different situations, each with a different set of odds to figure. The man who ends up winners is the man who knows when to bet and how much...

**CRAIGIE**

The sucker is still took advantage of, isn't he? The gambler knows something he don't know.

**KID**

Sure -- like if you grow better corn or raise a cow that gives more milk than the other guy's. Or two business men are in competition, or two lawyers are up against each other in a courtroom. Whatever your line is, the one who wins out is the one who knows his job better.

**CRAIGIE**

Seems like there should be something else to it --

**KID**

There is -- Making the man you're playing against think he's got the best hand -- and making him pay to find out.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. CRAIGIE KITCHEN - THE KID**

wood-  
under the

He is lying on a cot in the darkness, next to the big  
burning stove. Christian enters the SHOT and slips  
covers with him.

**CHRISTIAN**

I can't stay long. Papa'll be getting  
up to milk.

**KID**

I'm the one can't stay. I got to  
head for that bus.

**CHRISTIAN**

Why did you come, Kid?

**KID**

Well, hell, I don't know. I had kind  
of a rough time after you left.

**CHRISTIAN**

Rough how?

**KID**

Tuesday there was a ball game, but  
then the Cardinals went on the road.  
I never known time to drag so; I was  
all torn apart --

**CHRISTIAN**

Because of the poker game coming up?

**KID**

That's how I read it, but I was  
reading it wrong. It wasn't Lancey  
or the game that was chewing at my  
insides --

**CHRISTIAN**

What else is there could give you  
such a bad time?

**KID**

I finally figured it. I located where  
the trouble was. It was you.

She is genuinely surprised at this and at first a bit

dismayed. But her more considered reaction is one of pleasure.

**CHRISTIAN**

Oh, --

She kisses him.

**KID**

When you talk about doing something besides poker if I get to be The Man, you don't mean pass up the chance to make some dough from it for a while?

**CHRISTIAN**

I sure don't. I told Papa, wherever money comes from, it feels the same when you spend it.

**KID**

You were going to do some thinking down here.

**CHRISTIAN**

I done some.

Then they both react as Craigie can be heard getting up.

**KID**

I'll be back after the game Christian -- You wait here for me and I'll let you know.

**CHRISTIAN**

All right Eric -- Good luck Monday.

She gives him a quick kiss and stands up.

**KID**

I got that made now. You said it right. My time's come.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - NIGHT (PRE-DAWN)**

The sun hasn't risen yet as The Kid boards the bus for St. Louis outside the general store.

**EXT. HIGHWAY IN MISSOURI - DAY**

afternoon

The Kid's bus crossing the endless plain in the sun.

**EXT. ST. LOUIS BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT**

little  
Kid,

The clock above the loading platform says it is a after two in the morning as the bus pulls up, and The groggy from the long ride, gets out.

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT**

energy  
that

He enters wearily, goes straight into the bedroom and collapses on the bed. After a moment he summons the to loosen his shoelaces and kick his shoes off. But completes his preparations for sleep.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT**

is  
she  
pours

The Shooter is awake because he can't sleep, and Melba awake because she is trying to persuade him to do what considers prudent. He sighs deeply as she solicitously him a cup of coffee.

**SHOOTER**

Twenty-five years I been building a reputation.

**MELBA**

Handle this thing right and your reputation will be better than ever.

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

bottles.  
pills  
carafe,  
sip of

Lancey is also awake, confronting a row of medicine He finishes laying out an assortment of four different and capsules, pours himself a glass of hot milk from a and proceeds to take the pills one at a time, with a milk after each.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. KID'S APARTMENT**

himself  
clothes, and  
bottle  
stake.  
can  
envelope  
in  
watch. It  
cup

The Kid, looking completely refreshed, is readying for the game. He has chosen casual, comfortable now he collects three items to take with him: a large bottle of mouthwash, a green sun-vizor, and finally, his stake. When he withdraws the money from the dresser drawer, we can see the pile has increased in size. The Kid finds an envelope to put it in, and he is ready to go. He starts out but in the middle of the kitchen he stops to look at his watch. It is too early. He crosses to the stove, pours himself a cup of coffee, and sits down to drink it.

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

game,  
smoking  
and  
he

Lancey has decided on a change of costume from his last game, and this time he goes for the old-fashioned velvet jacket and silk foulard. Over this he puts on a light overcoat. Then he assembles medicines, toilet articles and money, putting them all into a small satchel. Finally, he puts on his hat and goes to the door.

**INT. PLUSH HOTEL CORRIDOR**

We follow Lancey's progress as far as the elevator.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT**

by  
things to

Melba and Shooter have finished dressing, and he waits by the door while she does the inevitable last-minute things to her makeup.

**SHOOTER**

I made up my mind to this. I ain't

going to give him any help till he needs it.

**MELBA**

I'm glad you're taking a stand.

**SHOOTER**

Hey, what if he starts off lucky and stays ahead of the game the whole way. It could happen, you know.

**MELBA**

You'll make it happen, Baby. I've got faith in you --

**EXT. CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT**

The hands are at 7:25.

**INT. TAXI - THE KID AND DRIVER - NIGHT**

The Kid is looking at the clock tower.

**KID**

Once more around the square.

**EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE DORSET HOTEL - NIGHT**

The taxi drives away from CAMERA following The Kid's instruction. CAMERA PANS to the front of the Dorset Hotel, which they have just passed. It is fifty years old or more, no longer elegant but still respectable.

**INT. POKER SUITE - LANCEY**

He is standing at ease among old friends, sipping a creme de menthe frappe.

**LANCEY**

It's a friendly town, St. Louis. I've always said that.

CAMERA MOVES to take in the people around him, one after another. The Shooter is there, and Pig and Sokal and Hoban, and Melba and Hoban's woman and a couple of other women whose

of  
fifty,  
energetic;  
stature  
diplomacy and  
once  
around  
the  
with

main attributes are physical, and Bill Schlaegel. Out  
town representatives include LADY FINGERS, who is about  
down on her luck but still cheerful and remarkably  
and YELLER, a light-skinned Negro who has achieved  
in what is mainly a white man's world, through  
a quick wit. The room is the large living-room of a  
splendid suite; there are enough chairs and couches  
the walls to accommodate a good many spectators, while  
middle of the room has been cleared for a round table  
seven chairs.

**SHOOTER**

We ain't seen much of you though,  
last seven, eight years.

**LANCEY**

Climate, Shooter. In my declining  
years, I spend more and more time in  
Florida and the Gulf Coast.

**LADY FINGERS**

Lot of folks been figuring another  
reason you was keeping clear of the  
three rivers.

**LANCEY**

What reason is that, Lady Fingers?

**LADY FINGERS**

Cincinnati Kid.  
(laughs)  
That the way it is, Lancey? You been  
scared of The Kid?

**LANCEY**

Should I be scared of him?

**LADY FINGERS**

Damn right you should! I'm telling  
you, that boy going to make your  
stomach ulcer bleed before the night  
is out. He's close to murder. I seen  
him give a fella the shakes so bad

on a fourth card, it took a pint of  
corn liquor to settle him down.

**LANCEY**

Thanks for the warning.

turned  
direction in

Lancey notices that most of the people around him have  
to look at the doorway. He glances in the same  
a casual sort of way.

**FEATURING THE KID**

and

He saunters toward Lancey. Almost everyone greets him,  
he responds to as many as he can. Melba intercepts him.

**MELBA**

Mow the man down, sugar pie, make it  
quick and bloody. Been too many lean  
years for all of us.

**KID**

I intend to take Shooter right along  
with Lancey.

**MELBA**

I'm not talking about the old Shooter.  
He's been factory rebuilt. A new  
spirit dwelleth in him, and his gaze  
is on distant hills.

Lady

The Kid would like these cryptic words explained, but  
Fingers descends on him.

**LADY FINGERS**

So you showed up after all. You're a  
braver boy than I thought, so much  
the worse for you.

**KID**

You think I'll be sorry I come?

**LADY FINGERS**

Bound to. That Lancey ain't human,  
he's one of them barracuda fish.  
He's liable to bleed to death, right  
on a flush hand before he give up to  
you. I seen him gut a fella so bad,  
the fella quit and got up and spit

red in the john and went square.

The Kid sees Lancey approaching, and turns to him.

**LANCEY**

Hello, Kid. Pleasure to know you.

**KID**

Lancey. I been looking forward a long time.

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure. You seem to know about everybody. Yeller from New Orleans?

**KID**

What do you say, Yeller? Still feeling salty with me?

**YELLER**

Forgiven long since.

(to Lancey)

We had a little jurisdictional dispute.

**KID**

I hustled a couple of boys, right in his territory.

**YELLER**

So I tried to tell him our rules down there. Colored marks are for colored hustlers.

**KID**

And I tried to tell him how I got no prejudice. When I'm on the edge of my stake, I hustle anybody at all, regardless of race, creed or color. Anybody at all.

**YELLER**

Including my girl.

**KID**

Hell, I figured I was doin' you a favor.

**YELLER**

You did.

shake

Suddenly they both laugh over a private memory and hands, obviously old friends.

**LADY FINGERS**

(to Lancey)

Did you know Old Cottonhead died?

**LANCEY**

No, I hadn't heard.

**LADY FINGERS**

Heart give out in a high-low game.

**LANCEY**

(turning to The Kid)

How you feel, Kid?

**KID**

Great. You?

**LANCEY**

The best. You think maybe we ought to see if we can stir up some action?

**KID**

Whatever you say, Lancey. You're the --  
(correcting himself)  
You're our guest in this town.

**LANCEY**

Well, I'm kind of in the mood to play a little cards.

**KID**

I think we ought to be able to get a game together in this crowd.

**LANCEY**

But first you take a look at things -- make sure everything's the way you want it. I already been around.

**KID**

Thanks. I'll do that.

follows

He turns toward the center of the room. The Shooter follows him.

**MED. SHOT - AT POKER TABLE - KID AND SHOOTER**

with a  
tied  
flat,

The old, solidly built wooden table has been covered  
white linen cloth on top of a blanket. The cloth is  
down under the rim so that the surface of the table is  
tight and cushioned by the blanket. The Kid presses his  
fingers into it to test these factors.

**SHOOTER**

It's an old table. Everything's pretty  
old in this hotel.

**KID**

It's solid, that's what counts. And  
you got the top fixed perfect.

Lancey comes into the SHOT behind them.

**LANCEY**

Light all right for you?

**SHOOTER**

Two hundred watt bulb.

**KID**

Fine, excellent. Okay with you?

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure. Shooter's set us up just  
great.

**KID**

Sure has.

**SHOOTER**

Thank you, gents. Tried to do the  
best I could.

(looks from one to  
the other)

Cards?

**LANCEY**

Why not?

**KID**

Good a time as any.

**SHOOTER**

(calling)

Hoban! Okay!

(to Kid and Lancey)

You both know Joe Hoban. He's a draw  
poker man, but clean and straight as  
they come.

he  
it  
table.  
Hoban comes into the SHOT with a dispatch case, which  
sets on the table. He unlocks it with a key and turns  
upside down. Thirty sealed decks of cards spill on the

**HOBAN**

They come from the St. Louis Bridge  
Club, but they're poker size cards.  
They been bonded by the club steward  
and I seen him take them out of the  
safe. Shooter, Lady Fingers and me  
pick them up and come straight here  
with them.

**SHOOTER**

Hoban's selling them to us at five  
dollars a pack, with the usual  
guarantee. If it's proved any deck  
is spooked, he pays off the losers.

**LANCEY**

St. Louis Bridge Club, eh? Steward  
still that old yard bird Okra?

**HOBAN**

(disturbed)  
That's him.

**LANCEY**

(not noticing; to Kid)  
Old stud man, Okra.

**KID**

I don't know him.

**LANCEY**

Quite a character. Quite a character.

**HOBAN**

(anxiously)  
Nobody heard from me what the cards  
were for, Kid.

other  
There is a quick exchange of glances all around as the

Hoban's

three realize what the imaginary suspicion is behind  
defensive reaction.

**LANCEY**

(to Kid)

Been ten years since I seen or spoke  
to Old Okra.

**KID**

'Kay, fine. Don't worry about it,  
Lancey. Who's sitting down with us,  
Shooter?

**SHOOTER**

Four of us. Me, Pig, Yeller and Doc  
Sokal. If that's all right with you  
both?

**KID**

'Kay, fine.

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure.

(to Kid)

Shall we have a look at the decks?

**CLOSE SHOT - KID AND LANCEY**

the  
one by  
the  
the  
this  
satisfied  
to  
without  
The  
them,  
too, into the case.

with the pile of decks and the empty dispatch case on  
table in front of them. They start checking the decks  
one, each putting the ones he has covered in a pile for  
other's consideration. They examine the seals and the  
cellophane visually, and they also sniff both ends for  
odor of a hot iron. By the time they are through with  
process; The Kid has found three decks he isn't  
with, and Lancy two. The Kid passes his three rejects  
Lancey, who tosses them back into the dispatch case  
looking at them. Then Lancey tries to submit his two to  
Kid, but The Kid waves them away, and Lancey throws  
too, into the case.

**LANCEY**

Well, Kid, what's your game?

who  
until  
for his

CAMERA PULLS BACK to include the other four players,  
have come up to the table, still not taking chairs  
Lancey and The Kid have chosen theirs. Though Lancey's  
question is purely ritualistic, they look to The Kid  
reply.

**KID**

I don't mind stud poker if that's  
okay with you.

**LANCEY**

I got no objections to stud.  
(to the others)  
Gentlemen?

them --  
otherwise

Consulting the others is a formality, but all four of  
Yeller, Shooter, Pig and Sokal -- nod or grunt or  
indicate assent.

**MED. SHOT - FEATURING BILL**

he'd

across the room, he is indicating to The Shooter that  
like a word with him before play begins.

**MED. SHOT - FEATURING SHOOTER**

inconspicuously

He detaches himself from the group and sidles  
over to Bill.

**BILL**

Tell The Kid I have a suite on the  
fifth floor. He can drop up during  
the breaks. Bedroom all for him any  
time he wants a nap.

**SHOOTER**

That's thoughtful of you, Bill.

**BILL**

I'm a thoughtful man. I hope you  
are.

**THE POKER TABLE**

The Kid gestures to Lancey to choose his seat. Lancey  
picks acknowledges the courtesy, glances at the window and  
himself a chair facing away from it.

**LANCEY**

Privilege of age. Can't take the  
glare of the morning sun in my eyes.

The Kid, following protocol, moves to a seat directly  
across from Lancey's. The Shooter takes his place at the table  
twenty-halfway between The Kid and Lancey, and pulls the  
five eligible packs of cards to him.

**SHOOTER**

You want to have the usual brandy  
and coffee on hand, Kid? Anything  
special for you, Lancey?

**LANCEY**

Why, yes, Shooter. Creme de menthe  
frappe. Green.

**SHOOTER**

(glances around)  
You got that, Hoban?  
(to the table)  
Gentlemen, if there are no objections,  
I'm the dealer. These rooms have  
been contracted for, and there will  
be an ante of ten dollars per chair,  
per day. During the breaks for me,  
Old Lady Fingers has agreed to deal,  
but she don't care to be a player --

**LADY FINGERS' VOICE**

Do too care!

CAMERA PANS to reveal Lady Fingers as she steps from  
among the spectators to a place behind Lancey.

**LADY FINGERS**

Can't afford to play, that's the  
real truth. Had a bad year and I'm  
way over my edge.

**SHOOTER**

Lady Fingers will get three dollars an hour from the ante, plus her room and food, and a five-minute break every hour. Gents?

**LANCEY**

Fine, Shooter man.

**KID**

'Kay with us.

**LADY FINGERS**

If you don't see me when you need me, call room three-oh-eight.

(taps Lancey's shoulder)

You know who else ain't with us no more? Miriam, widow used to run the kitchen game to South Chi. Lost two month's Relief at blackjack, coal dealer cut her credit, and she froze in her bed.

**THE PLAYERS - FEATURING THE KID**

counting  
see  
stack of  
as

The Kid has taken his roll from his pocket and is it out rapidly. The other players watch, interested to how much he is putting out. After counting out one thirty hundreds, he distributes the rest in stacks of twenties, tens and fives, folding each bill over once protection against picking up more than one at a time.

**SHOOTER**

Gentlemen, this is a game of five-card stud poker. There is no limit. A dead man has one half hour to raise his roll outside and get back in the game.

The Kid has completed his count.

**REVERSE ANGLE - FEATURING LANCEY**

He takes the money from his satchel.

**LANCEY**

Five grand? Nice, tidy sum. I'll put out the same.

CAMERA PANS to Yeller.

**YELLER**

I swear I don't know what I'm doing sitting down with you titans, but maybe it's worth putting up five thousand for the educational value.

CAMERA PANS to Pig as he brings out a roll and drops it casually in front of him.

**PIG**

I'll play with what I have in my pocket till I have to send out for more. Twenty-seven, twenty-eight hundred, I don't know.

bills  
CAMERA PANS past The Kid to Sokal, who is counting out from an impressive roll.

**SOKAL**

Five G's, I'm with it. Don't mean I'm goin' blow it all, though.

smaller  
CAMERA PANS to The Shooter, who is counting out a stake than anyone.

**SHOOTER**

Last and certainly least --

of  
tosses  
He puts his money out without counting it, takes a deck cards, rips the cellophane off it, takes the jokers and them offhandedly to one side, not seeming to take aim.

**FEATURING THE JOKERS**

resting  
the  
Heads turn as the cards sail through the air in unison, landing inside The Shooter's familiar hat, which is crown down on the mantelpiece. The spectators gape at display of dexterity.

**FEATURING THE SHOOTER**

from  
He begins to shuffle and all eyes are upon him, not suspicion but from pure admiration. He is in peak form,

slapping  
him,

shuffling six times, once for each player and then  
the cards down before Lancey, who is to the right of  
with an empty chair in between.

**CLOSE - LANCEY**

perceptible

He waives his privilege of cutting with a barely  
nod.

**THE POKER TABLE**

sort  
stop  
view

The Shooter acknowledges the compliment with the same  
of gesture. Then he begins to deal in his magnificently  
precise way, pitching each card so that it comes to a  
six inches in front of the player's money and in clear  
of everyone at the table.

**CLOSE SHOT - SHOOTER'S HANDS**

completes  
there  
calls

With Sokal in b.g. It is notable that as The Shooter  
dealing hole cards and switches to the first up card,  
is no visible difference in the motion of his hands. He  
the cards as he deals them.

**SHOOTER**

Seven, nine, trey, nine, ace, and  
The Shooter guns up a ten. Ace bets.

**LANCEY**

Ten dollars.

**SHOOTER**

Dealer folds.

**SOKAL**

Call the sawbuck.

**CLOSE SHOT - FROM BEHIND KID**

He looks at his hole card: an ace.

**KID**

I'm in.

**PIG'S VOICE**

Call.

**YELLER'S VOICE**

Call.

**THE POKER TABLE**

The Shooter deals again.

**SHOOTER**

King to the seven, pair of nines,  
deuce to the trey, queen-nine, ace-  
eight.

**KID**

Nines bet twenty bucks.

the  
Shooter  
Each other player folds in turn. The Shooter pulls in  
cards, and The Kid pulls in the seventy dollars. The  
shuffles and deals again.

**SHOOTER**

Queen, ten, king, four, ace again,  
and a king for The Shooter.

**LANCEY**

Ace bets ten dollars

**SHOOTER**

King over.

**TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL**

end  
them a  
share,  
the  
They are perched on the back of a love seat at the far  
of the room, with their feet on the arms. This gives  
view of the table through a pair of opera glasses they  
but they are far enough from it to be able to discuss  
hands freely.

**HOBAN**

Shooter won't stay on a king or an  
ace if there's another one showing.

**BILL**

What's he have to have in the hole?

**HOBAN**

Ten or better. With no other ten showing.

**THE POKER TABLE**

eight,  
ace-  
card.  
other

The second round has been dealt. Sokal has a queen-  
The Kid a pair of tens, Pig a king- seven, Lancey an  
five. Yeller, like The Shooter, has folded on the first  
The Kid makes the same bet of twenty dollars, and the  
three remaining players drop.

**LANCEY**

New deck.

separates  
two. He  
Shooter  
going  
his

Unhesitatingly, The Shooter pulls in the cards,  
them into four or five piles, and tears each pile in  
glances around, and Hoban comes up behind him. The  
hands him the torn-up cards and unseals another pack,  
through the same routine of throwing the jokers into  
hat.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - AT THE POKER TABLE**

to  
and  
cup  
has  
Yeller  
about  
called,

It is around midnight, and there is a more settled look  
the game; some of the players have removed their coats,  
there is a good deal of smoke in the air. The Kid has a  
of coffee by him, presumably with brandy in it; Lancey  
his frappe; Pig is drinking whiskey; the Shooter and  
have bottles of bear. It is the end of a hand. With  
six hundred dollars in the pot, Pig, who has been  
turns over his hole card triumphantly.

**PIG**

Aces over eights.  
(waits for a challenge,  
but the others turn  
their cards)  
Thank you, gents.  
(as he pulls in money,  
to Yeller)  
Be a laugh if the two champs ended  
up cleaned.

**CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY**

He barely notices Pig's remark.

**CLOSE SHOT - KID**

He barely notices Lancey's reaction to Pig's remark.

CAMERA MOVES among the spectators, who also have a more  
settled look about them. There is a bar, attended by a  
uniformed HOTEL BELLMAN, and most of the people are

drinking.

We see in passing a couple go through the door to the  
bedroom  
and close it behind them. CAMERA HOLDS on the love seat

as

Bill rejoin Hoban on their perch.

**BILL**

Any action?

**HOBAN**

(shrugs)  
What do you expect first five or six  
hours?

**BILL**

Still feeling each other out?

**HOBAN**

Pig's ahead about a grand, Shooter  
maybe three hundred.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**CLOSE SHOT - CARDS BEING DEALT**

Sokal gets a nine of clubs, The Kid a six, Pig a queen,  
Yeller  
a king, Lancey a jack, and The Shooter a four.

**SHOOTER'S VOICE**

King bets.

oral

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show the players. There is less accompaniment to the betting now.

**YELLER**

King says twenty.

drops.

Lancey calls, Shooter drops, Sokal calls, The Kid

**PIG**

In for twenty.

**SHOOTER**

(dealing)

To the nine a ten, to the queen a seven, to the king a jack, and to the jack a jack.

**LANCEY**

Pair of jacks will venture a hundred dollars.

**SOKAL**

(who has the nine and ten of clubs showing)

I'm in.

**PIG**

(after studying the board)

Up two hundred dollars.

**YELLER**

(folding)

Leave it to the rich folk.

**TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL**

**BILL**

Lancey could be laying for him with three jacks.

**HOBAN**

Pig don't think so.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Call the two hundred.

**THE POKER TABLE**

Lancey puts in his money and so does Sokal.

**SOKAL**

I'm sticking.

**THE POKER TABLE**

Sokal, a

Shooter deals another round: an eight of clubs to second seven to Pig, a ten to Lancey.

**SHOOTER**

Possible straight flush, pair of sevens. Pair of jacks are still high.

**LANCEY**

Check to the sevens.

**SOKAL**

Likewise.

**PIG**

(trying to be casual)  
Bet the size of the pot. Nine hundred and eighty dollars.

**LANCEY**

In for nine eighty.

**SOKAL**

I'll play.

**TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL**

**BILL**

What's with Lancey? I thought he'd raise with three jacks or drop with two pair.

**HOBAN**

He probably thinks Pig's faking the queens. Anyhow, Doc's liable take them both with a straight or a flush.

**THE POKER TABLE**

as The

There is a good deal of suspense hanging on each card  
Shooter deals. Sokal gets a five of diamonds, and his disappointment is too great to conceal.

**SHOOTER**

Busted, no flush, no straight. Pair of sevens with a queen gets a nine. To the pair of jacks, a trey.

**PIG**

(counting his money,  
trying to be calm)  
Pair of sevens will bet whatever I got here. Twenty-four hundred bucks.

**LANCEY**

I'll call your twenty-four hundred --

**CLOSE SHOT - THE KID**

He watches Lancey, puzzled; this isn't what he had expected.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

-- and raise you whatever I have left.

The Kid relaxes; this is more the way he figured it.

**THE POKER TABLE**

Lancey is completely calm. Pig is shattered, his whole world suddenly blown apart.

**LANCEY**

Comes to fourteen hundred fifty dollars, Pig. Don't imagine you'll have any problem promoting that much in half an hour -- plus whatever you care to raise me.

All eyes are on Pig, which doesn't make it any easier for him. He just sits there, his hands shaking.

**SHOOTER**

Fourteen fifty to the queens. You want to take your half hour, Pig?

There is another long moment before Pig flips over his up cards.

**PIG**

No, I'm out. Out of the game.

his  
suddenly  
hole  
cards

He looks at Lancey with malevolence. Lancey turns over up cards and tosses them in front of The Shooter. Pig lunges toward the cards, wanting a look at Lancey's card, but Lancey is too quick for him and pushes the into the pack The Shooter is assembling.

**SHOOTER**

(to Pig)  
You Tap City?

disadvantages  
Shooter  
other  
pushes

Pig is suffering, weighing the advantages and of making the dread admission. Finally he nods. The takes a ten dollar bill from his own stake, and the four remaining players each add a ten. The Shooter pushes the money toward Pig.

**PIG**

I got a woman.

**SHOOTER**

I thought you and Hilda were quits.

**PIG**

We're back.

going  
he  
passes

The other players look at The Shooter to see if he is to accept this statement at face value. He nods, that does, and each man contributes another ten. The Shooter passes the second fifty to Pig.

**SHOOTER**

See you around, Pig.

**PLAYERS**

(ad lib)  
So long, Pig -- See you -- 'Night.

**PIG**

(getting up)

So long.

room for  
back for

CAMERA FOLLOWS him to the door. The spectators make him, no one saying anything. At the door, Pig turns his valedictory gesture.

**PIG**

Good luck -- Kid.

He goes out.

**CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY**

his

He has been rearranging his money, but Pig's words make head jerk up and toward the door.

react in

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the other players, who dismay to the breach of form.

**SHOOTER**

He shouldn't have said that. Not after taking Tap City from the table.

**KID**

His woman's been giving him a rough time. Wants him to quit and go square.

**SOKAL**

At his age? Crazy.

**LANCEY**

He wants to wish anybody luck, doesn't bother me. Personally, I don't figure The Kid needs it.

**KID**

Thanks, Lancey.

The

With that, the tension is gone. But just to make sure, Shooter pushes his chair back.

**SHOOTER**

I know it's early, men, but what about taking a little break?

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - BILL, MELBA AND THE SHOOTER**

The  
Melba fills a beer glass from a bottle and serves it to  
Shooter.

**BILL**

(to Melba)

It always distresses me, a man  
reaching his middle years and still  
having no assurance of next week's  
income.

**MELBA**

I know what you mean. I like a man  
to have plenty of assurance.

the  
and  
but  
want to  
The Shooter's gaze wanders o.s. CAMERA MOVES to FEATURE  
objects of his attention, who are Lady Fingers, Lancey  
The Kid. The two men would like to talk to each other,  
Lady Finger's is monopolizing Lancey, and he doesn't  
offend her.

**LADY FINGERS**

Spider Man died kind of slow. First  
he give them a kidney, then his gall  
bladder, and then they taking his  
whole damn stomach. You remember  
Spider Man, run the dice table down  
at Turk's Club to Memphis.

**LANCEY**

Who? Oh, Spider Man, sure, sure.

**LADY FINGERS**

He died kind of slow.

The Shooter comes to Lancey's rescue.

**SHOOTER**

Need your help, Lady Fingers... to  
make arrangements for food and  
shelter.

each  
He whisks her away. Lancey and The Kid, finally facing  
other alone, don't quite know how to begin.

**LANCEY**

Good crowd.

**KID**

Yeah. Nice-looking broads.

**LANCEY**

That's a fact.

**KID**

That was a pretty thing to watch  
what you done to Pig with those jacks.

**LANCEY**

Thanks, Kid. From you, that's nice  
to hear.

**KID**

When he bet out first, he was ready  
to think you had them back to back.  
Even when he bet the size of the  
pot, he figured there was still a  
chance you were laying for him. But  
when you called him, I could see it  
in his eyes he thought you had jacks  
and tens, and I knew you had him  
hooked.

**LANCEY**

You knew, did you? Before I raised?

**KID**

Oh, sure, I seen what you were pulling  
all along.

Lancey is a bit taken aback by The Kid's confident  
assertion,  
but he manages a smile.

**LANCEY**

You been to Miami, Kid?

**KID**

Not yet.

**LANCEY**

Beautiful town, lot of loose money  
around. You ought to come down some  
time.

**KID**

You mean it?

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure. Lot of room down there.  
Another spot you ought to work someday  
is Reno, Nevada.

**KID**

I heard.

**LANCEY**

You got to have nerves though. So  
much going on. Action everywhere you  
turn. You lose the feel of the cards  
when you're in so much action day  
in, day out.

**KID**

I'd like to make it out there.

**LANCEY**

There's different levels of action  
there -- you'd find yours, any kind  
you could ask for.

**KID**

I generally stick to stud.

**LANCEY**

Sure, sure, for eating money. But  
you know how it is, I like to lay  
off once in a while and try craps.  
Nothing serious -- I don't even think  
of it as work.

**KID**

Oh, I do that. I'll take a night off  
and shoot a little casino. Or even  
blackjack.

**LANCEY**

Your age, you don't need a regular  
vacation every year. But me, I have  
to forget the grind for a couple of  
weeks. I go to this place near Delray  
Beach, and the whole time I don't  
play anything but bridge.

**KID**

That's interesting. I could go for  
bridge if there was a way to do it  
without partners.

**LANCEY**

I'm not keeping you from your woman,  
am I?

**KID**

(after a slight  
hesitation)

No. We're -- she's gone away for a  
while. We're not sure we're looking  
for the same thing.

**LANCEY**

I'm sorry to hear that.

**KID**

I was hoping Christian would run  
with me and wouldn't try to make a  
big deal out of it.

**LANCEY**

But she tried?

**KID**

Yeah, and now I don't know. I don't  
figure a man can change his way  
because the way I see it a man's  
lucky he's got something going for  
him that he can hold on to. A man  
can't change his way for a woman.

**LANCEY**

Nooo, a man can't do that.

**KID**

I been wondering if it isn't maybe a  
better idea not to look for a fixed  
thing. Just tie in to something nice  
when you're away from the action,  
and enjoy it, and let it wear itself  
out.

**LANCEY**

(after a long moment)

That's very interesting you should  
say that. You're pretty young to  
have figured things out already.

**KID**

Well she didn't understand how it  
was with me and ---

**LANCEY**

(warmly)  
Between us?

**KID**

There ain't but a few people, I guess  
who would understand --

**LANCEY**

(as The Kid doesn't  
finish)

Kid, you're the best stud man I've  
seen in 35 years of action. You know  
that?

**KID**

Well -- thank you.

**LANCEY**

And when it comes to broads, which  
is getting to be an academic problem --  
I can look back now to the two or  
three I ever considered I might want  
to spend the rest of my life with,  
and you know what? I like it...  
looking back on them, that is --  
(then)

I always got a lot of companionship  
out of a good book.

**KID**

It's very educational, hearing what  
it's like for a man your age.

**LANCEY**

Glad to be of help. And it's good we  
had this little talk so I know we  
can be friends regardless what  
happens.

**KID**

That sounds good to me. I didn't  
think you was coming in at me like a  
grudge match.

**LANCEY**

No room for any kind of emotion in a  
fair game of stud. I learned that a  
long time ago.

**LADY FINGERS' VOICE (O.S.)**

Ready for some action, gentlemen.

They look at each other and then exit.

**ANGLE INCLUDING THE POKER TABLE**

and  
all  
Lancey,  
Lady Fingers is sitting in Shooter's place, rippling  
shuffling the cards. Yeller, Sokal, and The Shooter are  
either sitting at the table or standing near it.  
followed by The Kid, returns to the table.

**LADY FINGERS**

It's a whole New Deal. Good hands  
all around. Prosperity for everybody.

**LANCEY**

You're still good, Fingers.

**LADY FINGERS**

Getting crippled up, Lancey. Not  
many of the old gang left. You heard  
Whistling Sam was gone?

**LANCEY**

No, I didn't hear.

**LADY FINGERS**

I was the one got called to the morgue  
to identify him. I don't suppose you  
seen anybody been run over by a twelve-  
ton bulldozer.

**LANCEY**

No, can't say that I have.

**LADY FINGERS**

Don't go out of your way.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - TOWARD WINDOWS**

Morning sunlight is streaming in.

**THE POKER TABLE**

Shooter has  
The  
The Kid, facing the sun, wears his eyeshade. The  
resumed the deal and now hands out last cards to Sokal,  
Kid and himself.

**SHOOTER**

Bet the pot. Four hundred and twenty dollars.

**SOKAL**

Fold.

**KID**

It's yours.

**SHOOTER**

Thanks, gents. Makes me exactly even. This kind of a game, that's a smart place to quit.

(takes his money off  
the table)

Just do the dealing, if that's all right with everybody.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE**

the  
a  
an ace-  
king.

It is later in the morning. Three players are left in hand on the last card: Yeller with nothing higher than jack, Lancey with a king-queen showing and Sokal with

**SHOOTER**

Ace-king is the high man.

**SOKAL**

Shoot the works.

(counts it out)

Nine hundred and thirty bucks.

**YELLER**

I'm over.

**LANCEY**

(putting out the money)

What have you got?

**SOKAL**

(unhappily)

Doesn't matter. If you can call me, you beat me. Ace-king high.

**LANCEY**

(turning an ace)  
Ace-king-queen high.

**YELLER**

(to The Kid)  
I had them both with a pair of fives.

**SOKAL**

Winds it up for me, men. And I can't  
say it's been a pleasure.  
(despairingly)  
That one I was sure I could steal.

**YELLER**

Lancey has a built-in burglar alarm.  
I'm also withdrawing from the field  
of battle, gentlemen. Settle for the  
seventeen hundred I've already  
dropped.

about  
\$8,000

Yeller pulls in the money in front of him. There is now  
\$19,500 left on the table, \$11,500 in front of Lancey,  
in front of The Kid.

**LANCEY**

(to The Kid)  
Well, just the two of us.

**KID**

Yeah, just the two of us. Deal them,  
Shooter Man.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE**

unhelpful  
king-

There is around \$1,500 in the pot. Shooter deals an  
card to Lancey's pair of aces, and a nine to The Kid's  
queen-ten.

**KID**

Cost you a grand.

**LANCEY**

Compulsory call, Kid.

The Kid turns up a jack and pulls in the money.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE**

the The last bet has been made and there is about \$3000 in pot. Lancey exposes his hole card.

**LANCEY**

Two pair, jacks up.

**KID**

Kings up.

He takes in the money.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE**

kings, The There is \$2500 in the pot. Lancey shows a pair of nine to Kid an ace and three odd cards. The Shooter deals a Lancey.

**THE KID**

He is watching The Shooter intently.

**FEATURING THE SHOOTER'S HANDS - KID'S P.O.V.**

Shooter The dealing motion looks perfectly legitimate as The SHOT to gives The Kid an ace. Lancey's hand reaches into the turn over his up cards.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Studded again.

**THE KID**

Now He takes the money in slowly, his eyes on The Shooter. has the distribution of money has been reversed. The Kid something under \$12,000, Lancey something under \$8,000.

**THE SHOOTER**

He avoids meeting The Kid's gaze.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID**

Kid a

On the fourth card Lancey shows a pair of sevens, The pair of eights and a ten.

**LANCEY**

Two thousand dollars.

The Kid lifts his hole card and we see it is a ten.

**KID**

Call two thousand.

He turns to watch The Shooter.

**FEATURING THE SHOOTER'S HANDS - KID'S P.O.V.**

completing

Again there is no indication of improper dealing as The Shooter gives Lancey an odd card and The Kid a ten, his full house.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Two thousand more.

**THE POKER TABLE**

**KID**

Take it. I can't beat three sevens.  
(then as The Shooter's  
eyes flicker with  
surprise)

I'd like a break to get some food  
and sleep -- I'm winners so it isn't  
up to me to say it but I'm saying it  
anyway.

watches

He exits. After a moment The Shooter follows. Lancey them go then rises, apparently still fresh and strong.

Lady

Fingers joins him.

**LANCEY**

(pleasantly)

My dear, that young man is a stud  
poker-playing son-of-a-bitch.

**LADY FINGERS**

Gettin' to you, Lancey?

Lancey looks at her a moment, then smiles.

**LANCEY**

(softly)

Not yet he isn't.

He moves through the crowd, then exits.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BEDROOM - BILL'S SUITE - THE KID & SHOOTER**

They are alone in the room. Shooter is uncomfortable and would like to be elsewhere but The Kid is standing in front of the closed door.

**THE KID**

Now, just what the hell are you trying to pull?

**SHOOTER**

(trying to bluff it)

Nothing -- what are you talking about?

The Kid grabs him and slams him against the wall.

**THE KID**

You, Shooter Man -- you been feeding me cards for an hour.

**SHOOTER**

(angry and ashamed)

The hell I was.

(he waits a brief moment then eases away from The Kid)

Christ, Kid, even if I was you couldn't spot it -- I'm too good a mechanic for anybody to spot it.

**THE KID**

(grabbing him and slamming him against the wall again)

But I was looking for it, Shooter --

four times you give me the cards I need.

**SHOOTER**

(a little shrill)

You seen it before often enough. One player draws four good ones.

**THE KID**

Never in a game when I been told ahead the dealer has a stake in my coming out on top.

**SHOOTER**

(slumping)

My woman told you.

**THE KID**

She told me enough to make me start thinking.

**SHOOTER**

(almost pleading)

Why should you bitch if I give you a little help?

**THE KID**

Why, you dumb bastard? -- You have to ask me why.

(ready to hit him)

I could break you apart for what you've done.

**SHOOTER**

(backing off)

Kid, you got to understand. It wasn't my idea --

**THE KID**

Well who the hell's was it then -- Schlaegel? --

**SHOOTER**

He's got the squeeze on me Kid and he's meaner than hell. He'll cut me up if I don't come through.

(then)

You think I wanted to deal a phony game? You think it don't mean something to me? I never done a crooked thing before in my life.

**THE KID**

My ass bleeds for you -- Now you get straight on this. No fix. You come along straight or I blow it wide open.

**SHOOTER**

He's liable to kill me.

**THE KID**

He ain't goin' to do nothin' to you except pay off because I'm goin' to win.

**SHOOTER**

It is a hell of a chance to take.

**THE KID**

You got no choice.

**SHOOTER**

He ain't goin' to like it.

**THE KID**

(almost yelling at  
him)

He ain't goin' to know.

(then quietly)

Shooter, I'm goin' to win this one -- win it my way -- and you ride with me or you're out, finished.

**SHOOTER**

I ride with you.

**THE KID**

You better not forget it -- now beat it. I need some sleep.

Shooter looks at him, then moves towards the door.

**THE KID**

Tell Mr. Schlaegel I accept his offer to use the room.

The Shooter goes out. The Kid crosses to the phone.

**THE KID**

(into phone)

I want to be called at 4 p.m. on the nose. For sure -- Thanks.

CUT TO

**INT. LANCEY'S ROOM**

remove  
In the privacy of his room he shows how close he is to exhaustion. Wearily, he sits on the bed and begins to  
his shoes. Then, catching his reflection in the mirror, straightens.

**LANCEY**

Not yet he isn't. But he damn well might.

CUT TO

**INT. BEDROOM, BILL'S SUITE - CLOSE SHOT - MELBA**

with  
with  
speaks  
She is in the final stages of undressing. CAMERA MOVES her as she steps to The Kid's bedside and gets into bed with him. Having accomplished this without waking him, she speaks into his ear in imitation of a hotel phone operator.

**MELBA**

Good afternoon, sir. It's exactly four o'clock.

by his  
He awakens in considerable confusion. Melba is amused  
difficulty in adjusting to his circumstances.

**MELBA**

It's really only about twenty-five to four. You can stay right where you are.

**THE KID**

I don't want you to think I'm getting too personal, but you mind telling me how the hell you come to be here?

**MELBA**

You mean you don't remember last night? We drank all that champagne and you said "Let's get married right away," and we chartered a plane to --

**THE KID**

Can it --  
    (then)  
Where's Shooter?

**MELBA**

I locked the door. It's incredible  
the way you invariably worry about  
The Shooter.

**THE KID**

It's incredible the way you invariably  
don't.

**MELBA**

Worrying takes time and we don't  
have a lot.

**THE KID**

We're supposed to sit down again at  
half past four.

**MELBA**

Does it really matter so much to you  
now, that sense of obligation to The  
Shooter?

**THE KID**

    (thinking about Shooter)  
I got no obligations to The Shooter.  
    (then to Melba)  
Or to you.

**MELBA**

Obligations are not what I have in  
mind.

**CUT TO**

**INT. LANCEY'S ROOM**

He is shaving. Apparently much stronger but his hand is  
shaking. He looks at it. It steadies. After a moment he  
smiles  
a little.

**CUT TO**

**INT. BATHROOM, BILL'S SUITE**

water  
door.

CAMERA is on the shower door as the SOUND of running  
ceases. The Kid can be seen indistinctly through the

**THE KID**

Reach me a towel?

comes  
to him  
quick  
steps  
shaving.

Melba, who is dressed again and applying her lipstick,  
into the SHOT, takes a towel from a rack and hands it  
after he opens the shower door. He gives himself a  
once-over with it, then secures it around his waist,  
out of the shower stall, and begins the process of  
Melba meanwhile finishes restoring her makeup.

**MELBA**

You any idea how much The Shooter  
has involved in this game of yours?

**THE KID**

If Schlaegel bet as much on me as I  
heard, I guess he'd pay a nice piece  
of change to be sure I won.

**MELBA**

It's worse than that. Schlaegel staked  
him for three years. He has his hooks  
so deep in Shooter Man, he'll take  
out his liver when he pulls them  
out.

The Kid stops shaving and looks at her.

**THE KID**

You asking me to go along with the  
fix?

**MELBA**

I'm asking you to consider whether  
your ego is worth destroying another  
man's whole life.

**THE KID**

You're still working for him. On my  
time you're still working for him.

**MELBA**

What kind of switch is this? You criticize me for trying to chippie on him, then I get a little loyal and you're at me for that.

**THE KID**

No -- I don't hold it against you. You wanting to make things right for him -- but this game I handle my way -- win, lose, or draw.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

**MELBA**

Rolls and coffee for the hard-headed hero.

CAMERA PANS to take in the view of the bedroom as she crosses it to the door, talking as she goes.

**MELBA**

Believe me Kid there is too much at stake for us to rely on your doing it on your own.

She has paused at the door to finish her sentence. Now she unlocks and opens it -- to Christian. Melba is so taken aback she can't do anything but stand there holding the door open. The Kid, in the bathroom in f.g., is similarly frozen in his tracks. After a moment Christian advances into the room.

**REVERSE ANGLE - CHRISTIAN IN F.G.**

The scene as it looks to Christian is circumstantially incriminating. CAMERA MOVES with her gaze from The Kid to the one mussed bed, to Melba. The faces and the silence of the two people are even more incriminating than the circumstances.

**CHRISTIAN**

Hello, Kid. Hello, Melba.  
(a pause)  
You said wait home 'til you let me know.

**THE KID**

Yeah, that's what I said. We took a break in the game to catch some sleep. Shooter sent his woman up here to wake me up.

**MELBA**

Yeah, I woke him up.

**CHRISTIAN**

It don't take much.

**MELBA**

No, I didn't find it any trouble.  
(awkwardly)  
Well, you children don't need me, that's for sure. See you downstairs.  
(to Christian)  
You, too, honey, right?

**CHRISTIAN**

I'll be around if The Kid wants me.

**THE KID**

See you, Melba. Thanks.

**MELBA**

Por nada, as they say. It was nothing.

SOUND of  
into the  
up his  
using  
towel and

She walks past CAMERA and a moment later comes the door closing behind her. The Kid, who has moved bedroom, crosses to his clothes on a chair, and picks undershorts and trousers. He returns to the bathroom, the door for partial concealment as he removes his puts on his shorts and trousers.

**THE KID**

You been to the place?

**CHRISTIAN**

No, I've got my bag downstairs. Maybe I'll take it over later on tonight.

**THE KID**

How's your Mama and Papa?

**CHRISTIAN**

Fine. How's the game going?

The Kid fastens his trousers and returns to the basin  
to  
wash off  
give his face a last few strokes with the razor and  
the soap.

**THE KID**

It's come to be just me and Lancey.

He comes back into the bedroom to finish dressing. As  
his  
movement brings him fairly close to Christian, he  
realizes  
he hasn't kissed her, and repairs the omission before  
putting  
his shirt on.

**CHRISTIAN**

(after the kiss)

I was wondering.

**THE KID**

I got my mind on the cards.

**CHRISTIAN**

I know. And I don't want to rattle  
you. We got plenty to talk about,  
but it can all wait. Except I want  
to say this. I came back because I  
figured if it was going to work with  
us, it's silly me sitting home with  
Mama while you're playing your big  
game. I mean if I'm any use to you  
at all, this is when it's most  
important.

To The Kid preoccupied by the game and the fix, feeling  
both  
affection and guilt. The idea that she can be any use  
to him  
against Lancey is one he can't grasp.

**THE KID**

I'm glad you came, Christian. You  
got as much right here as anybody.

(then)

More right, I should have said.

**CHRISTIAN**

Should you?

**THE KID**

Hell, yes. The change I come out with when I win this one, you're going to be the one to spend it.

He moves toward the door.

**CHRISTIAN**

Eric --

**THE KID**

(turning back)

Look, I said I'm glad you came -- and that's all until I wrap this up -- I'm a poker player, remember?

She looks at him. After a moment he exits. She follows.

**CUT TO:**

**THE POKER TABLE**

It is evening. Lady Fingers deals a first up card to the two players. The Kid gets an eight, Lancey a jack.

**THE KID**

The eight'll try two bills.

**LANCEY**

(turning his card)

No stay.

Lady Fingers scoops up the cards, shuffles them into the rest of the deck, submits it to Lancey for his cut, and deals them another two cards apiece -- all in the space of seconds. The Kid gets a queen, Lancey a nine.

**THE KID**

Two hundred.

**LANCEY**

(turning his card)

No stay.

**INT. POKER SUITE**

loveseat  
sits  
speaks

CAMERA starts on Yeller, who is stretched out on the  
with his eyes closed and PANS UP to INCLUDE Hoban, who  
at the observation post with the binoculars. Yeller  
without opening his eyes.

**YELLER**

Anything?

**HOBAN**

Naaa, Kid paired kings. He wins a  
hundred.

outside;  
and  
table,  
his  
to  
cards.

CAMERA MOVES on PAST a window, showing it is night  
past a group of other spectators; past Bill, Shooter  
Melba who watch the game grimly; and finally to the  
where The Shooter is dealing again. The Kid is down to  
undershirt, and even Lancey has made a few concessions  
comfort. The players have just been dealt their third  
Christian moves up to stand behind The Kid.

**LANCEY**

Queen bets another C-note.

**THE KID**

(folding)

Take it away.

He looks up at Christian.

**THE KID**

Go read a magazine, honey.

She hesitates. Then moves away. Lancey watches this.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - CHRISTIAN**

Christian's

It is later at night. The magazine lies open on  
lap; she is staring absently into space.

**LADY FINGERS' VOICE (O.S.)**

All right, gents. I'm declaring a break.

The announcement rouses Christian from her reverie.

**THE POKER TABLE**

look

Lady Fingers is in the dealer's chair. The two players pretty weary.

**LADY FINGERS**

I break.

**THE KID**

I don't want a break.

**LANCEY**

Well, I don't either.

**THE KID**

Deal.

Lady Fingers puts down the deck. Picks up a new one.

**LANCEY**

(snapping)

Same deck is good enough.

**THE KID**

I want a new deck.

**LANCEY**

Alright, alright -- A new deck then, Jesus.

**THE KID**

Deal.

Puts

Lady Fingers looks at the two men for a long moment. the cards down.

**LADY FINGERS**

You want to deal? Then deal them yourselves. I'm going to the john. I'm going to get something to eat, and I'm going to take a nap. You barracudas can snap all you want but at each other -- I'm taking a break and if you don't like it you can

both go to hell.

each  
She turns and stalks off. Lancey and The Kid look at  
other for a moment, then both grin.

**THE KID**

I guess we been told.

**LANCEY**

Looks that way.

**THE KID**

(rising)

See you in about 3/4 of an hour,  
Lancey, right?

**LANCEY**

Make it an hour. Old bones need a  
little more time to loosen up.

**THE KID**

(meaning it)

Listen, I think it is amazing you've  
been able to keep going this long.

stands  
the  
not  
nobody is  
door.  
by the  
As he heads for the door, Lancey reacts to this. Then  
and looks around the room. Groups of people stand in  
shadows watching silently, not hostile but certainly  
friendly. He is The Man but he is getting beat and  
sorry. After a moment he turns and leaves from a side  
CAMERA PANS to HOLD on Christian as she stops The Kid  
door.

**INT. POKER SUITE**

**CHRISTIAN**

(taking his hand)

Eric --

**SHOOTER**

(simultaneously)

Your fan on the fifth floor wants  
you to have a bite with him. Alone.

**KID**

There's nothing to talk about.

**SHOOTER**

You better, Kid. You don't, you're only making worse trouble.

Christian scans both their faces as they talk...  
concerned.

**THE KID**

If you think so.  
(to Christian)  
Sorry.

**CHRISTIAN**

What's wrong?

**THE KID**

Nothing, Nothing you have to worry about. I'll see you later.

He heads for the door. Christian looks after him.

**THE KID**

Get something to eat.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BILL'S SUITE**

Bill and The Kid are sitting at a room-service table.  
Bill nibbles at some cheese and crackers while The Kid tackles a large steak. Felix, the chauffeur, stands in attendance on them.

**BILL**

I thought it would be better if you and I sat down together to see if we couldn't work out our differences.  
Felix!

He motions to Felix, indicating a wine bottle on the table.  
Felix steps over and refills The Kid's glass.

**THE KID**

What I told The Shooter goes.

**BILL**

Are you saying no before we've even discussed it? Am I to feel all my arguments will be wasted?

The Kid just looks at him -- then returns to his meal.

**BILL**

I'll skip to the final argument.  
(then)  
More salad, perhaps?

forward He makes a peremptory gesture to Felix, who springs to offer the salad bowl to The Kid.

**BILL**

The Shooter will be back dealing when you start again. He will give you an occasional helpful card.

**THE KID**

That's an argument?

**BILL**

That's a fact. I'm coming to the argument.

**THE KID**

I'll give you a fact. I won't let it happen.

**BILL**

Is that knife sharp enough? Felix.

side, Felix jumps into action again. He moves to The Kid's blade, reaches into a breast pocket and takes out a switch neck. It which he clocks open an inch or two from The Kid's is an extremely ugly-looking and menacing weapon.

**BILL**

See if it cuts better with that.

steak. Felix hands the knife to The Kid, who tries it on his

**BILL**

Sharp?

**THE KID**

Very. But it don't cut any ice with me.

He jams the knife in the table and snaps off the blade.

**THE KID**

(rising)

Not this time. He exits.

**INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR**

down

As The Kid exits Christian is waiting for him. He moves the corridor, preoccupied. She follows.

**THE KID**

Did you eat?

**CHRISTIAN**

No.

**THE KID**

(stops, looks at her  
irritated)

Why not, for Chris sakes?

**CHRISTIAN**

Eric --

**THE KID**

(moving away)

You should eat something.

**CHRISTIAN**

(loudly, stopping)

I've got to talk to you.

He stops, looks at her.

**THE KID**

Talk.

**CHRISTIAN**

(fumbling)

It's -- about us. What's going to happen?

**THE KID**

(interrupting)

What's going to happen? What's going to happen for Chris sake is I'm going

to win the game.  
(then more softly)  
You go back to the apartment, honey,  
this might take two more days.

**CHRISTIAN**

(flatly)  
If I go, I'm not going back to the  
apartment. If I go -- I'm just going.

**THE KID**

(after a long moment)  
Well, that's up to you, Christian.

He looks at her a moment longer then moves up the  
corridor.  
She watches him, then turns. Standing in the open door  
some  
distance away are Schlaegel and Felix.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. POKER SUITE - THE SHOOTER'S HANDS**

Shuffling the cards. CAMERA PULLS BACK enough to see  
his  
face as he looks across at The Kid. CAMERA PANS to a  
CLOSE  
SHOT of The Kid, and then past a couple of spectators,  
including Christian and Melba, to Bill, whose eyes are  
on  
The Kid. Finally CAMERA PANS back to The Kid.

**THE KID**

I told you, Shooter -- I won't go  
for it.

**THE POKER TABLE - INCLUDING BILL**

Both The Shooter and Bill are aware of a portentous  
note in  
The Kid's tone.

**LANCEY**

What's up?

**THE KID**

The Shooter's not well. He didn't  
want to spoil the game, but he ought  
to be resting... He ought to be in  
the hospital.

**LANCEY**

Well, we got Lady Fingers. Or we can deal ourselves.

**SHOOTER**

I'm okay. What The Kid's talking about is nothing. It's just not important.

**THE KID**

It is to me... You want to kill yourself, do it on your own time.

there  
what.  
Lancey looks from The Kid to The Shooter, sensing that  
may be something more behind this, but not knowing just

**LANCEY**

I got to go along with that, Shooter.  
Lady Fingers! You ready?

**CLOSE SHOT - LADY FINGERS**

Rising from her chair.

**LADY FINGERS**

Like Eddie the Dude said on his deathbed, I'm as ready as I'll ever be.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - CLOSE SHOT - THE KID AND POKER HAND**

clubs.  
Kid's  
hundred  
thousand, and  
thousand.  
The four cards showing are the ace, ten and two little  
As CAMERA PULLS BACK we also have time to note The  
stake. He is still ahead. Lancey counts out five  
dollars from his stake, leaving about thirteen  
puts it into a pot that already contains around a

**LANCEY**

I can't persuade myself you have the flush.

The Kid turns up the jack of clubs.

**LANCEY**

Now I can.

The Kid pulls in the money.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - THE KID - LANCEY - AND POKER HANDS**

most as  
nines  
Both men are showing the strain. Perhaps Lancey the  
he appears to be consistently losing. Showing are two  
and two odd cards.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

I'm going to pay the price to look  
at that third nine.

money.  
The kid turns up another nine and reaches for the

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Caveat emptor. New deck, please.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID**

Lancey's  
and  
He shows a pair of eights and two odd cards against  
pair of queens. He takes another look at his hole card,  
we see that it is of no help to him.

**THE KID**

Pair of eights bets an even thousand  
dollars.

**HOBAN AND YELLER**

The  
tense  
They are both sitting on the back of the loveseat now.  
binoculars pass from one to the other. Both men are  
over the growing excitement of the game.

**YELLER**

Ten bucks and my notoriously fallible  
instinct tells me the boy is bluffing  
this time.

**HOBAN**

Mark it.

enough  
CAMERA MOVES to the other four remaining spectators:  
Christian, Melba, The Shooter and Bill. They are close  
to see the cards but too close to discuss them.

**THE POKER TABLE**

and  
The kid has almost half the money in front of him now,  
is playing with increasing assurance and pressure.

**LANCEY**

(turning his cards)  
I'm not that curious.

**HOBAN AND YELLER**

**HOBAN**

(excitement in his  
voice)  
The Kid is pushing it and making it  
stick.

to  
CAMERA MOVES to the other four spectators as they react  
The Kid's successful streak.

**SHOOTER**

(in a low voice)  
He's getting to him.

The  
kill.  
And it looks that way. Lancey appears old and unsure.  
Kid sharp and cold. A young barracuda moving in for the

catch The  
encouragement.  
CAMERA MOVES in close to Christian as she tries to  
Kid's eye. Thinking she has it, she smiles her

**FEATURING THE KID**

Lancey  
He looks right at her and doesn't seem to see her. Lady  
Fingers has dealt the first up cards of a new hand, and  
is high.

**LANCEY**

Two hundred.

**THE KID**

And up five.

**LANCEY**

Fold.

**CLOSE - CHRISTIAN**

complete Amid the growing excitement and tension she is a  
outsider.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE**

pair of The Kid shows two jacks and two odd cards; Lancey a  
aces and two odd cards. Lancey puts about eight hundred  
dollars into the pot.

**LANCEY**

Betting the jack isn't there, Kid.

The Kid exposes his hidden jack.

**SHOOTER, BILL AND MELBA**

faces Greed and an almost vicious satisfaction marks their  
Bill as they watch Lancey falter. The Shooter whispers to  
just loud enough for the girl to hear.

**SHOOTER**

We're in -- I think he's got him.

moment Christian looks at them, then at The Kid. Hesitates a  
then suddenly gets to her feet and starts for the door.  
Only Melba notices her, and even she doesn't have time to  
question her. CAMERA FOLLOWS Christian to the suite entrance,  
where she picks up her bag then turns to look back at the  
table.

**FEATURING THE KID**

line

The place where Christian was sitting is right in his  
of vision but he hasn't observed her departure.

**CLOSE SHOT - CHRISTIAN**

She goes on out the door.

**INT. POKER SUITE - ANGLE INCLUDING WINDOW**

room,  
a  
full  
poker

The second dawn of the contest is near at hand. The  
continuously lived in for so long by so many people, is  
shambles of dirty glasses and plates, empty bottles,  
wastebaskets and ash trays, and frayed people. At the  
table, Lady Fingers is dealing a new hand.

**LADY FINGERS**

A jack and a ten. Jack bets.

Lancey

CAMERA MOVES in close enough for us to see the cards.  
has the jack of hearts, The Kid the ten of clubs.

**LANCEY**

Jack is willing to wager two hundred  
dollars.

The Kid takes his first look at his hole card.

**CLOSE SHOT - SHOWING FACE OF HOLE CARD**

It is the queen of hearts.

**THE KID**

And up five hundred.

shaken.  
pressing  
badly  
are a  
settles as

Lancey looks at him a long moment. His face pale and  
The Kid is beating him. Pushing -- buying -- always  
and Lancey knows he is losing one hand at a time, not  
but consistently and inevitably. His age and fatigue  
strong handicap for the long pull. Then his face

summoning  
this

if he had come to a decision. He smiles lightly  
some last reserve of strength, almost as if he knows  
will be the last hand, win or lose.

**LANCEY**

Call your five hundred and five  
hundred more.

**THE KID**

(after a brief  
hesitation)  
Call.

**HOBAN AND YELLER**

**HOBAN**

Fifty to one hundred says Lancey  
paired his jacks.

**YELLER**

Mark it.

**THE POKER TABLE**

giving

Lady Fingers deals the ten of diamonds to The Kid,  
him a pair, and the ten of hearts to Lancey.

**LADY FINGERS**

Pair of tens. Jack, ten of hearts.

**THE KID**

Five hundred.

**LANCEY**

Your five hundred -- and up one  
thousand.

effort

The raise is a surprise. The Kid's eyes go up to study  
Lancey's face, even though he knows what a futile  
that is.

**HOBAN AND YELLER**

**HOBAN**

Fifty to seventy-five he's got the  
jacks wired.

**YELLER**

Mark it -- Could be a high heart.  
Queen's the best, but that old man  
can be cocky with an ace or a deuce.  
'Specially having one of The Kid's  
tens.

**THE POKER TABLE**

**LADY FINGERS**

One thousand to the tens.

**THE KID**

Call.

**LADY FINGERS**

(dealing)

A third ten, and a nine of hearts to  
the ten, jack.

**SERIES OF ANGLES**

Hoban

The Kid, Lancey, Shooter, Melba, Schlaegel, Yeller,  
and others as they realize this could be the big hand.

**HOBAN**

He'll run. He's beat on the board  
anyway you look at it. Even if he  
has the jacks it is better than eight  
to one against improving.

**YELLER**

He won't run and I don't think he's  
got the jacks. I think he's going  
for the flush.

**THE KID**

(after a moment)

Two thousand, five hundred dollars.

Lancey looks at him, then at the cards. The moment  
stretches.

**LADY FINGERS**

(finally)

Two thousand, five hundred dollars  
to the three hearts.

Lancey looks at her. His face briefly showing his  
anger. The  
Kid notices this and reacts.

**LANCEY**

(finally, casually)  
Reasonable bet. Two thousand five hundred.

(he counts out the money to Lady Fingers)  
Deal them.

**SHOOTER**

(knowing this is it)  
He's going for it and The Kid's got him. He's going all the way.

**LADY FINGERS**

(dealing)  
A queen of diamonds to the three tens.  
(a note of excitement in her voice)  
And an eight of hearts to the possible flush. Possible straight flush. Three tens bet.

The Kid checks the amount of money in front of him.

**THE SHOOTER AND BILL**

their  
They exchange a quick look of satisfaction, and then eyes go back to the cards.

**HOBAN AND YELLER**

They each take a quick turn with the binoculars.

**HOBAN**

If The Kid bets into the flush he's filled up with a queen in the hole.

**YELLER**

If The Man has a flush or a straight, he goes under.

(then)  
But not with both.

**FROM BEHIND THE KID**

hearts.  
unless  
He looks at his hole card. It is still the queen of  
He has a full house, which has to be the winning hand  
Lancey had the audacity to bet out with a jack-seven of

hearts, and to raise The Kid with a jack-ten-seven.

**THE KID**

Bet what's in front of me. Make it  
fifty-four hundred bucks.

He counts out all his money except a few smaller bills.

**THE WATCHERS**

Reacting.

**FEATURING LANCEY**

He takes his time before he responds.

**LANCEY**

Fifty-four hundred bucks is a nice  
piece of money.  
(counting it out)  
I see the bet and raise sixty-seven  
hundred.

he  
wallet  
The  
Kid looks at him frozen.

Slowly and deliberately, revealing nothing in his face,  
reaches into his breast pocket and takes out a slim  
and begins to let the bills flutter out on the table.

**THE SHOOTER AND BILL**

Bill hisses softly into The Shooter's ear.

**BILL**

Kid has him, doesn't he?

frozen by  
the raise.

But The Shooter, like the Kid, is white-faced and

**THE REMAINING SPECTATORS**

The  
Shooter, and Melba.

They crowd in close to the table: Hoban, Yeller, Bill,

**KID**

(after a long moment)  
I'm taking my half hour to raise my  
stake.

**LADY FINGERS**

I declare a thirty-minute break.  
Leave your cards and money on the  
table. The game will start again at  
five forty-five.

**LANCEY**

I'll take your marker, Kid.

**KID**

I can raise it.

**LANCEY**

I know you can.

**KID**

Long as you know.  
(he raps the table)  
-- Call.

**LANCEY**

(turns up a heart  
seven)  
Straight flush to the jack -- That's  
\$6700 you owe me, Kid.

**CLOSE SHOT - THE KID**

and he  
accumulated  
among  
Kid  
at  
is a  
to

There is nothing to be gained from a poker face now,  
reacts with a stunned expression in which all the  
strain and fatigue is beginning to show. CAMERA MOVES  
the spectators: Hoban and Yeller, who are sorry for The  
and admiring of Lancey; Bill, who is all the more angry  
his defeat because his hopes were up; The Shooter, who  
very unhappy man; and Melba, whose anger at the Kid is  
balanced by her fear of Schlaegel and what will happen  
The Shooter and possibly to her.

**THE POKER TABLE**

dumbly.

Lancey pulls in the money while The Kid stares at him  
Lady Fingers riffles the cards.

**LANCEY**

New deck.

**LADY FINGERS**

Are you playing, Kid? You got a half  
an hour to raise your stake.

**KID**

No -- I'm through.

**LADY FINGERS**

(formally)  
Gentlemen, this game is over.

**LANCEY**

You're one hell of a poker player,  
Kid. That was a rough hand.

**KID**

Thanks.

**LANCEY**

What's the tab for the whole show?

brandy  
join

As he settles up, the CAMERA FOLLOWS The Kid to his  
bottle. As he pours himself a slug, Melba and Shooter  
him.

**CLOSER ANGLE**

**MELBA**

You had to do it, didn't you -- you  
had to go for it your own way.

(then, as The Kid  
doesn't answer)

Well, sonny, I hope you learned  
something. I know we sure as hell  
did.

**KID**

Where's Christian?

**MELBA**

She's gone. She's got too much sense  
to stick with a two bit loser.

**SHOOTER**

Shut up.

(then:)

Sorry, Kid.

**KID**

Yeah.

(then:)

I should have known he had it, Shooter Man. I walked into it.

**SHOOTER**

(trying to grin as  
Schlaegel and Felix  
move up)

Well, Kid, it's like I said -- you just wasn't ready.

**BILL**

(to The Shooter)

Are you ready, Shooter Man? We're having a meeting and I suggest you join us.

Melba by

Shooter looks at him a moment and nods, and taking the arm, moves toward the door followed by Felix.

**MELBA**

Why me -- I'm not part of this.

**SHOOTER**

(jerking her forward)

Oh, yes you are -- you and your big mouth -- you're part of it all right.

**SCHLAEGEL**

He's right, my dear. Now run along with Felix. We're going to have a long talk about that big mouth of yours.

door.

Melba starts to protest, but Felix jerks her out the door.  
Shooter hesitates, then follows.

**DIFFERENT ANGLE**

Schlaegel turns to The Kid.

**SCHLAEGEL**

I was wrong. I figured you for brains. But you're a loser, Kid. You had a chance to play with grownups and you ran.

(then, as Lancey and

Lady Fingers approach)  
They weren't playing your game. They were playing mine. Think about that while you find a place to hide. But hide good, Kid -- because I got a message for you and I'm going to see it delivered.

it.  
The Kid looks at him, looks at Lancey and Lady Fingers, wondering about what Schlaegel has said, angry about

**THE KID**

Any time.

Schlaegel nods, moves to the door.

**NEW ANGLE**

Lancey and Lady Fingers join The Kid.

**LADY FINGERS**

Never thought I'd see the day. You raising tens on a lousy three-flush.

**LANCEY**

Gets down to what it's all about, doesn't it? Making the wrong play at the right time.

**THE KID**

(sharply)  
That's what it's all about?  
(then, as Lancey looks at him and doesn't answer)  
You were crazy -- odds are three hundred to one against.

**LANCEY**

(after a moment)  
I don't play a percentage game. I play stud poker my way. And I got the money and you got the questions. Figure that out.  
(then, not unkindly)  
You're good. But as long as I'm around, you're second best, Kid... and you might as well learn to live with it.

The Kid looks at him and doesn't answer.

**LANCEY**

Look me up if you're in Miami after  
Christmas. Stillson Hotel.

door. He smiles his very pleasant smile and goes out the

**SCENE**

their Lancey stops surrounded by a crowd of admirers offering  
takes a congratulations. The Kid watches for a moment then  
crowd and long drink out of the bottle and eases through the  
out the door.

**INT. CORRIDOR**

as The Kid moves down the hall and enters the elevator.

**INT. LOBBY**

street. as he moves through the almost deserted lobby into the

**EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAWN EFFECT**

city. SERIES OF ANGLES of the Kid walking alone through the  
following During the above there is an impression someone is  
him.

**EXT. DESERTED STREET NEAR THE KID'S APARTMENT**

trapped. He turns a corner and there is a man blocking his path.  
Suddenly three men move in behind him. He turns,

**CLOSER ANGLE**

hustled in The men are four of the original seven players he  
the opening scene.

then NOTE: During the progression of the game first one,  
observers. two, then all four men will be included among the

Their

Always in the background, never positively identified.  
presence should be felt if not recognized.

**DANNY**

So it ain't Eric Stone, from the  
foundry. It's the Cincinnati Kid  
King of the stud poker players.

**THE KID**

No -- not the King -- not much of  
anything right now.

**DANNY**

(moving towards him)  
We'll start with giving you back  
what you gave me.

He moves toward The Kid.

**CHRISTIAN (O.S.)**

Eric --

The men hesitate.

**NEW ANGLE**

as Christian gets out of a taxi.

**DANNY**

(as she moves toward  
them)  
Tell her good-bye, sport. You ain't  
going any place.

**THE KID**

I know that.

He crosses to Christian.

**CHRISTIAN**

Are you all right?

**CLOSER ANGLE**

**THE KID**

I'm fine.  
(then)  
Weren't you going to say good-bye?

**CHRISTIAN**

I said good-bye.

**THE KID**

Yeah, I guess you did.  
(then)  
You don't know if I won or lost do  
you?

**CHRISTIAN**

No -- it doesn't really matter.  
(then after a long  
moment)  
I love you, Kid -- and it's not  
enough.

**THE KID**

Yeah, I know.

**TAXI DRIVER**

(calling)  
Listen, Lady, it's coming on the  
morning rush. I got to have one fare  
after another or I'm behind for the  
day.

long  
the  
the  
Christian doesn't answer. She looks at The Kid for a  
moment, then turns and goes. He watches her. She enters  
cab and it leaves. The Kid just stands there.

**DIFFERENT ANGLE**

ignores  
knocks him  
They  
the  
Danny and the others move up around him. The Kid  
them. After a moment Danny swings from behind and  
to the pavement. He lies there stunned for a moment.  
look down at him. Then he comes up. He flattens two in  
process of being badly beaten. They leave him.

**DIFFERENT ANGLES**

walks  
away.  
as the city awakens. Finally, he stirs, stands and

**FADE OUT**

**THE END**

