

**THE COOLER**

Written by

Frank Hannah & Wayne Kramer

**EXT. STYGIAN DARKNESS - NIGHT**

**STYGIAN DARKNESS**

star  
another...  
stars.  
of  
aerial  
DISSOLVING

The suggestion of traveling through space. Suddenly a sparkles to life in the distance. Gives rise to and another... until we're looking at a whole galaxy of No, not stars. LIGHTS. NEON LIGHTS. A throbbing skyline neon. LAS VEGAS, NEVADA. As seen from a descending shot. We PLUNGE down into her shimmering embrace...

**TO:**

**EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT**

City  
THE  
passing  
school"  
FOUR

Cruising the Strip, taking in modern day Las Vegas. Sin gone theme park. Gigantic behemoths of pulsating neon: MGM GRAND... EXCALIBUR... LUXOR... TREASURE ISLAND... revamped faithfuls like CAESARS and THE DESERT INN... ...then heading DOWNTOWN to Fremont Street, where "old Vegas makes its last stand. BINION'S HORSESHOE, THE QUEENS, THE LAS VEGAS CLUB arid...

**THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND CASINO**

of  
flash

One thing's for sure. This place ain't no bastard child Epcott Center. At least, not yet. Sure there's some going on, but it's more class than overkill.

A  
the  
whisper  
you

This is where the pro's come to savor a time forgotten.  
joint where every dealer knows your name. Where part of  
allure is the smell of moldy paneling and the tactile  
of worn felt. Where "funny business" doesn't just get  
blacklisted... It gets you dead.

Lets us enter.

**INT. SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND CASINO - NIGHT**

**CREDITS SEQUENCE**

MACHINE  
BLACKJACK,  
tables

TRACKING through the casino floor; highlighting SLOT  
PAY-OFFS and pockets of rowdy players winning at  
CRAPS and ROULETTE. It's just one of those nights. The  
are on fire.

shooter  
the

A FLOOR MANAGER nods as a hefty bet is paid out to a  
at a craps table: He checks out his watch, anxious for  
arrival of...

**INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT**

From behind a FIGURE in a suit. All we see is a murky  
reflection in gold elevator doors. The floor numbers  
descending rapidly...

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

**STICKMEN, CROUPIERS, DEALERS**

all anticipating the arrival of...

**INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT**

figure's  
away

The elevator doors open... and we PAN DOWN to the  
feet. He steps out onto the casino floor... and right  
we notice he has a pronounced limp.

features

Following behind the figure. We haven't seen his yet... (and won't for a while.)

**TRACKING SERIES -**

TABLE,  
brushes the  
just

-- the figure (seen in soft focus) passes a ROULETTE the wheel already in mid-spin. His hand casually side of the table... and we PAN ACROSS to the wheel -- in time to see the ball landing on 00. The players HOWL defeat. The croupier rakes in all the losing checks slight nod of respect to the passing wraith...

with a  
the  
calling

-- TRACKING PAST SOME BLACKJACK TABLES... RACKING from passing figure (still in soft focus) to a DEALER out:

**DEALER**

Insurance?

Off  
players  
moved  
figure

At the next table, ANOTHER DEALER pulls a six card 21. the players' stunned reactions. No way! One of the instinctively glances behind him... but the figure has on. The dealer stifles a grin, her eyes following the as he heads toward...

lands  
He  
his  
the  
the  
thundering

-- A HOT CRAPS TABLE. The CROWD APPLAUDS as the shooter a hard eight. The dice are fished back to the player. shakes them up with double ought bravado. We RACK from hand LARGE in the f.g. to our murky figure passing in background. The player throws... (we keep tracking with figure) as the stickman calls it: SEVEN OUT! to a chorus of disappointment.

-- Our figure passes by in the foreground, while in the

the ATM background, we see a growing line of shame at one of  
**MACHINES.**

corridor -- Following behind our figure as he turns into a  
of SLOT MACHINES. CUT TO REVERSE ANGLE from the far end  
of the corridor. As the murky figure approaches, a player  
in the f.g. hits a jackpot.

payout. Another player in mid-ground is also in the midst of a

payouts Suddenly -- with the approach of the figure -- both  
trickle to a stop.

**PLAYER IN F.G.**

(kicks the slot machine)  
Don't you hold back, baby. Spit it  
out, darlin'. C'mon... Hey! Hey,  
this ain't right. S'posed to be eight  
hundred dollars. Where's the goddamn  
manager? Who's in charge of these  
rip-off slots? Yo, ma'am... change  
lady...

**CASINO BAR FLOOR - BAR AREA - NIGHT**

cup FOLLOWING BEHIND the figure as he turns out of the slot  
corridor and heads over to the bar. He pours himself a  
of coffee.

**FIGURE/BERNIE**

Hey Doris, you got any cream?

container. She DORIS THE BARTENDER wanders over with a small  
starts to pour... Empty. We quickly STEADICAM AROUND to  
reveal BERNIE LOOTZ's features for the first time. His sad  
sack eyes register scant surprise at the empty cream  
container.

**BERNIE**

Forget it.

WAITRESS He's just about to leave, when an attractive COCKTAIL  
cruises up. NATALIE BELISARIO -- late 20's-mid-30's.  
Everything about her sparkles, except her eyes.  
They're post-mortem. She appears frazzled. Sifts  
through some coin tips.

**NATALIE**

(sotto)

Shit.

(to Doris)

Dewars and a Diet Coke. Please.

her A sheepish look comes over Bernie. He tries to catch  
eye. She doesn't even glance at him.

**BERNIE**

Hi, Natalie.

recognition. She looks at him. Only the faintest hint of

**NATALIE**

Hi. Uh...

**BERNIE**

Bernie.

**NATALIE**

Yeah, Bernie.

(to Doris)

Hey, you seen Shelly around? He  
promised to position me at the tables  
tonight. I've been on skid row all  
week.

**DORIS**

(chilly)

You didn't settle me from last night.

**NATALIE**

No? You sure? Fuck... And I was way  
under. It's been, like, an A.A.  
convention the whole week. I'll make  
up for it tonight. Promise.

one Doris mutters something under her breath -- heard that  
before -- and dumps Natalie's drinks on her tray.

**BERNIE**

If I see Shelly, I'll let him know.  
That you're looking for him.

Natalie grabs up her tray. Doesn't even look at Bernie.

**NATALIE**

Thanks.

She takes off.

**DORIS**

Bitch. That's the third time this  
month...

(to Bernie)

Let me get you that cream.

**BERNIE**

(staring after Natalie)

Nah, it's okay.

**DORIS**

Don't get sweet on that, Bernie. Not  
unless you're looking to get short-  
changed.

it She raises the empty cream container for effect, turns  
over. A few drops dribble out.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

of Bernie limps away from the bar. We hear another spike  
FLOORMAN sound from the gaming area. As he approaches, a  
stops him.

**FLOORMAN**

Hey, Bernie, Shelly needs you on  
eleven.

**BERNIE**

(nods)

Uh... Let's do the Chivas Regal.  
Have that... Natalie bring it over.  
The one working nickel slots next to  
the Paradise. I spoke to Shelly  
earlier, he wants her at the tables.

rowdy  
brings  
it.

The floorman nods, walks off. Bernie makes for the gaming tables. Takes his time about it. His approach an ill-wind to the area. The players appear to sense

dice.

It's in their reactions. A slight hesitation of the

a

Fingers tensing over a pile of chips. A hand tugging at tie.

The Cooler has arrived.

a

As he reaches table eleven, Natalie intercepts him with short glass of Chivas Regal.

**NATALIE**

This is you, right?

**BERNIE**

(takes it from her)

Thanks.

**NATALIE**

Joe said I should stick around. You say something to Shelly?

Bernie just smiles at her.

**NATALIE**

Wow. That was fast. Hey, thanks.

eyes.

She offers up a smile. It jump-starts those dormant

eight to  
what she

Her whole face comes alive. Notches her up from an a ten. Bernie immediately glances away. He's afraid might read in his gaze.

**BERNIE**

Don't mention it.

makes

Bernie gestures her over to table eleven. Immediately

BULLDOG.

the HIGH ROLLER in question. A good old boy named

one  
He's the one boasting loudly as he shakes the dice with  
hand.

**BULLDOG**

I'll make you a fortune on five and  
nine. C'mon forty-five-sixty-three  
fifty-four!

intentionally  
Bernie grabs the drink from Natalie's tray,  
bumps Bulldog...

**BERNIE**

Hey, buddy, is this your drink?

**BULLDOG**

Back off, pal. I'm on a roll here.

Bulldog  
perfectly on  
Another man gladly accepts the drink. Meanwhile,  
sends the dice high up into the air. They drop  
the table. The stickman calls it.

**STICKMAN**

Seven out!

**BULLDOG**

Mother-fucker!

**STICKMAN**

Thank you for those bets, folks.

sure  
The croupiers hungrily devour the chips from the table.  
Bernie moves on quietly before anyone notices.  
But he's been noticed all right. By Natalie. Not quite  
what she's just witnessed. Who is this guy?  
We hear a VOICE over the intercom.

**VOICE (V.O.)**

Conway, party of twelve, please check  
your reservation at the Paradise  
Lounge.

speaker.  
Bernie reacts immediately to the code words over the

**BERNIE**

(to himself)

Yeah, yeah, I'm comin'...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. CASINO FLOOR CRAPS TABLE - MONTAGE - NIGHT**

players  
A -- a player makes a hard six at a craps table. The  
howl...

the  
B -- from the same angle we PAN UP from losing dice to  
same guy. Bernie looming large in the background.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - BLACKJACK TABLES - NIGHT**

Next  
A -- Bernie taking a seat at another blackjack table.  
to him, a full table of players on a good run of cards.

appears  
filling  
B -- The same table with less players as the dealer  
to be gaining an edge over the players. The only thing  
up are ashtrays.

Natalie  
show  
is  
C -- Same again, with one player. This time with  
watching in the background. Intrigued. QUICK JUMP CUTS  
the player's mountain of chips going down until there  
only one.

last  
into  
D -- The dealer taps the felt for the man to bet his  
chip. After a moment of indecision he flips the chip  
the air...

**BRIDGE**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - OVERLOOKING THE CASINO FLOOR -  
NIGHT**

glass.  
...the chip becoming an Alka-Seltzer dropping into a

Casino  
The glass is in SHELLY KAPLOW's hand. Director of  
Operations for the Shangri-la. Late 40's-early 50's.  
Distinguished, slick, oozing charm. But lose the  
Cartier,  
Armani and Paco Raban and you're looking at pure  
street.  
He's watching Bernie through the two-way glass. Shakes  
his  
head in admiration.  
Suddenly the office door swings open. THREE MEN stride  
in.  
Shelly projects immediate deference to NICKY "FINGERS"  
BONNATTO. Mid-50's. Former Geovassi family underboss  
from  
"back east." The guy's a relic from the days before  
MBAs  
became the weapon of choice in the "family" business.  
He  
wears his corporate makeover like a bad coat of paint  
with  
traces of Mulberry Street primer showing through.  
Nicky's accompanied by a pair of CORPORATE TYPES in  
Hugo  
Boss threads. Shelly glances their way with a look that  
wind- suggests he's working himself into a full-on sphincter  
side up. Bad news x2. Shelly's muscle, LOU stands off to one  
with an apologetic expression.

**SHELLY**

Nicky, how the hell are you? I didn't  
know you were coming in...

back,  
Nicky reaches out to shake Shelly's hand. Gets nothing  
then remembers.

**NICKY**

(shakes his head)  
Whassimater? You think I don't wash  
up after goin' to the John? Forget  
about it.

Nicky grabs Shelly, embraces him.

**SHELLY**

(uncomfortably)  
You shoulda called ahead. I woulda  
sent a car...

**NICKY**

Ehh. We thought we'd surprise you.

**SHELLY**

Well, anytime, Nicky. Anytime.

Shelly sizes up the corporate types.

**NICKY**

Shelly, I want you to meet one of  
our smartest VPs, Larry Sokolov. And  
his numbers guy, Marty Goldfarb.

Shelly sees where this is going. Larry extends his  
hand...

**LARRY**

How do you do, Shelly?

...then catches himself. Quickly pulls it back. Shelly  
stares  
him down for a tense beat.

**SHELLY**

What can I get you boys to drink?

Off their uncomfortable expressions...

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - A SHORT WHILE LATER - NIGHT**

Shelly seated across from Nicky, Larry and Marty.

**SHELLY**

So... what brings you to town, Nicky?

Nicky looks cautiously across the table.

**NICKY**

Look, Shelly, this is your joint,  
you run it the way you see fit. But  
we got a smart kid here and he's got  
some good ideas on how to revitalize  
the Shangri-la.

**SHELLY**

Revitalize? What are you talking

about? We did thirty-five million last year.

takes Nicky shoots a look over at Larry and Marty. Larry this as his cue.

**LARRY**

First off, Shelly, I want you to know, I have nothing but respect for you. You've done a fantastic job with the Shangri-la for the last sixteen years. No one would dispute that.

**NICKY**

Yeah, no one doubts that, Shelly.

Shelly nods carefully. But...

**LARRY**

But, the business has changed out here. You just have to take a look at the Strip to see what I'm talking about.

**SHELLY**

You mean, that amusement park mook fest out there? You know what that is? That's a fucking violation of something that used to be beautiful. That used to have class. Like a gorgeous high priced hooker with an exclusive clientele. And then that Steve Wynn cocksucker knocks her up and puts her in a family way.

into Nicky and Larry exchange looks. Marty drops his gaze his lap.

**SHELLY**

Now she's nothing but a cheap, fat whore hiding behind too much makeup. I look at her and see all those ugly stretch marks and I want to cry. 'Cause I remember her as she was.

**LARRY**

Yes, well... there's no denying the bottom line. Those eyesores are raking it in. And we can't compete against

that.

**SHELLY**

What? You think I'm trying to compete with that? You think this joint's about bringing in the stroller crowd? Fresh off some fucking E-ticket ride, looking to break the house on red and black. Fremont's never been about that bullshit. This is where old time and real money comes to play.

**LARRY**

The numbers, they don't back you up, Shelly. Nostalgia's grand. We all love nostalgia -- but it belongs in a museum. I think it's time to decide whether you're running a museum or a casino.

a Shelly is close to losing it. He catches himself, takes  
breath.

**NICKY**

Hey, forget about it. We'll talk later. Over dinner.

**MARTY**

(rubs his hands  
together)

So, how's the action?

disturbed Larry shoots him a disapproving look. Off Shelly's  
control. expression. He's already calculating serious damage

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

Bernie makes his way across the casino floor, when he's intercepted by Shelly.

**SHELLY**

Bernie. Mr. Cool. Got a moment?

**BERNIE**

I was just heading over to --

**SHELLY**

It can wait.

BARTENDER

Shelly escorts Bernie over to a nearby bar area. The  
zips over with some drinks.

**SHELLY**

How's the knee?

Bernie shrugs. Natalie steps up to the bar a few feet  
away.

Puts in a drink order. She catches Bernie's eye. Nods.

Bernie smiles.

**SHELLY**

I was speaking to this orthopedic  
surgeon over at Vegas Memorial. He  
tells me they can replace a man's  
entire kneecap with titanium. It's  
the kinda thing that costs a shitload,  
but since the man's into us for five  
hundred large, I'm sure we could --

**BERNIE**

(stealing glances at  
Natalie)

I told you, I'm not gonna be around  
after Sunday.

**SHELLY**

(sighs)

Where you gonna go, Bernie? Where  
the fuck are you gonna go that's  
better'n here? I got you covered in  
this town. People, they know you  
work for me, that's currency in your  
pocket. That's fuckin' respect when  
you walk the floor. Where you gonna  
get that anyplace else?

**BERNIE**

(sighs)

Seven days, Shelly. Seven days and  
I'm out from under.

past

reaches

She

A beautiful WOMAN in a low cut dress, sashays her way  
them, heading for a high rollers craps table. Shelly  
out, napkin in hand, grabs her arm. Hands her his card.

attitude. snatches it, looks it over. Immediately loses all

Oh shit.

**SHELLY**

That's right. I like to know who's shopping it in my neighborhood. You wanna keep working the Shangri-la, you come see me tomorrow morning in my office. We'll go over the rules together. And before you come, you bring me a clean bill of health. OK?

The hooker just nods.

**SHELLY**

All right, get outta here.

drink She takes off. At the same time Natalie leaves with her order. They walk in the same direction. Shelly mistakes Bernie's wandering look for interest in the hooker.

**SHELLY**

You want that, Bernie? She's yours. Anytime. I'll keep a tab running for you.

(Bernie shakes his head)

What's a matter? Not your type?

picking up Bernie just stares after Natalie, Shelly finally on it.

**BERNIE**

Things are getting hot on fourteen. I gotta go.

seizing up He limps off. Shelly stares after him. A predator his prey. Calculating.

**EXT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - NIGHT**

of a convenience store with the name, THE EZ MARK in pink glowing neon. It's

two

actually supposed to read: The EZ MARKET, but the last letters of "Market" have burned out.

**INT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - COURTYARD - NIGHT**

oasis, if

One of those center pool style motels. A hard luck ever there was one.

rent

As Bernie limps toward his room, his neighbor, a low

courtyard

HOOKER, approaches from the opposite end of the

with a huge-ass JOHN in tow.

a

They converge at their doors at the same time. There's

She

weariness about the hooker that's endemic to this town.

glance

winks at Bernie. He nods at her. Then casts a furtive

mouths,

over at the John. The man flips him off. The hooker

"Sorry." Bernie hastily enters his apartment.

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

makes

Bernie flips on the light. A dim overhead bulb hardly

a dent in the gloomy surroundings. Typical drab motel furnishings.

to

We notice a couple of dead plants on the radiator next

Something

the window. A single place setting on the counter.

No

odd: an empty cat food bowl on the kitchenette floor.

sign of a cat. Go figure.

of

Bernie heads over to the dresser. A half-filled bottle

side.

gin rests next to a lone glass with a crack down the

channel.

He pours himself a shot. Turns on the TV. A religious

Shitty reception.

**ON SCREEN:**

religious  
solicits

an Appalachian Pentecostal service. The members of the congregation taking up snakes and writhing around in hysteria, while a number at the bottom of the screen viewer donations.

a  
pillows,

Bernie doesn't even try to change the channel. He takes seat on his bed, props himself up against a pair of stretches out.

From next door, the sounds of wild humping.

**HOOKER (O.S.)**

...Oh yeah, baby, give it to me. Oh yeah, that's the spot... Do it to me harder, you big stud... Ooooooh...

soundtrack

Bernie closes his eyes, tries to ignore the X-rated coming at him through the carpaccio thin walls.

raises his

The hooker's moans are starting to get to him. He fist to the wall, then stops himself. He's just not the confrontational type.

The  
with  
bizarre  
Lootz.

Instead, he heads over to the TV, cranks the volume up. hysterical moaning from the snake ritual now blends in the grunting and groaning from next door, making for a remix that could only exist in the world of Bernie Bernie emits a deep sigh, closes his eyes.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

cheer as  
SALESMAN.

Big action at the craps tables tonight. The players MR. PINKERTON makes another pass. He exudes USED CAR

Natalie arrives with his drink.

**NATALIE**

Seven and Seven?

off  
again.

Pinkerton reaches for the drink without taking his eyes  
the table. He throws a hard six. The crowd cheers

shirt

He turns around, stuffs a hundred dollar chip down her  
and slyly cops a feel.

**PINKERTON**

Thanks, dollface.

leave...  
him.

Natalie shudders in disgust. She spins around to  
runs smack into Bernie, spilling her tray of drinks on

**NATALIE**

Oh shit... Sorry... I'm such a klutz.

Bernie wipes himself off, helps her pick up the pieces.

**BERNIE**

It's all right. Happens.

Natalie tries to wipe him down a bit more.

**NATALIE**

Sorry, this guy... fuckin' hands,  
you know...

**BERNIE**

S'okay. You might want to stick  
around.

Bernie wiggles his way next to Pinkerton. He gives the  
stickman a certain look.

**STICKMAN**

Excuse me, Mr. Pinkerton. You have  
no hard eight.

**PINKERTON**

(throwing in a chip)  
Gimmie a hundred dollar hard eight.

Bernie just watches as Pinkerton throws the dice.

**STICKMAN**

Eight the hard way!

front of

The players go nuts. The stickman taps the felt in the shooter.

**STICKMAN**

Nine hundred dollars to Mr. Pinkerton.

**PINKERTON**

Parlay! Parlay!

The Boxman seated at the center looks up at him.

**PINKERTON**

C'mon. You can take that action.

The Boxman feigns concern, then nods in approval.

**PINKERTON**

That's what I'm talking about. None of this low limit bullshit.

flips

Just as the stickman feeds Pinkerton the dice, Bernie

Natalie

a dollar chip over toward the center of the table.

peers between them to catch a glimpse.

**BERNIE**

Dollar hard eight.

the

The chip lands on Pinkerton's parlayed bet. He releases

dice from his stubby little fingers.

**STICKMAN**

Eight easy! Easy eight! Hard eight comes down.

himself.

The players cry out in defeat. Pinkerton grumbles to

He fingers his rail of chips.

**PINKERTON**

Five hundred dollar hard eight. And press my nine up two units.

The

He throws in the chips. The croupier places his bets.

dice are fed back to him. He throws.

**STICKMAN**

Easy way eight! Eight easy!

clarity  
Pinkerton is fit to be tied. After a passing moment of  
he empties his entire rail.

**PINKERTON**

Hard eight.

The entire table stops down for a second.

**PLAYER (O.S.)**

Way to go, Pinkie! Bet the farm.

Pinkerton sets his dice carefully and lets them fly.

**STICKMAN**

Seven out!

leave  
Pinkerton slams his fist down on the table. He turns to  
the table to find Natalie smiling at him.

**PINKERTON**

What the fuck you smiling at, bitch?

on  
his  
moment.  
Pinkerton starts to lose it. Security moves in, right  
time. Natalie shoots Bernie a satisfied look. He averts  
eyes shyly and limps away. She stares after him for a

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

is  
Mid to  
years.  
BUDDY STAFFORD, the Paradise Lounge's star attraction,  
performing on stage. He's a poor man's Tony Bennett.  
late 60's. A staple at the Paradise for the last 20

floor,  
The singer sluggishly descends the stage to the lounge  
almost tripping over his microphone cable.

ladies,  
companions  
playfully in  
Buddy works the room, leaning in real close to the  
delivering the requisite eye contact. When their  
react with mock outrage, Buddy raises his fists  
a boxer's defensive stance. It's classic Buddy Stafford

schtick.

From somewhere across the lounge, an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN jumps up and throws her panties at Buddy. Buddy catches them and waves them in the air... just as another pair whizzes by...

We PAN ACROSS to Shelly seated at his corner booth, in the company of Nicky Fingers, Larry and Marty.

TIGHT ON SHELLY as he focuses on Buddy. A smile threatens his patented stoicism. He's flashing back on the old days.

While Nicky and Marty are clearly enjoying Buddy's eyes. performance, Larry fixates on the singer with joyless eyes.

We take on LARRY'S POV of Buddy --

SLOW MOTION CLOSE-UPS of BUDDY SINGING. The MUSIC SLOWED DOWN with the action, emphasizing Buddy's lack of energy.

Sweat dripping off Buddy's forehead, splattering into tiny jewels against his microphone. Buddy's tired eyes. Shaking hands around the mic.

SMASH CUT to real time APPLAUSE as Buddy reaches the end of the song. Larry is the only one not clapping. RACK ACROSS to Shelly as he picks up on this.

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - BACK STAGE - NIGHT**

Shelly approaches Buddy's dressing room. He enters without knocking...

**INT. BUDDY STAFFORD'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT**

...to find a trembling Buddy hunched over on a sofa, hugging himself. Buddy immediately sits up...

**BUDDY**

Shelly. I was a goddamn embarrassment tonight. I shouldn'a let you talk me into going on.

(massages his throat)

It's definitely strep.

**SHELLY**

You were velvet out there, pops.  
Silk.

see a

Shelly throws a pair of red silk panties to Buddy. We  
room number scribbled on the crotch area.

**SHELLY**

They were hanging on the door outside. Forget your tonsils. When the muff confetti stops coming, that's when you got yourself a problem.

**BUDDY**

(dangling the panties  
on his finger)

You get a receipt?

**SHELLY**

Excuse me?

**BUDDY**

Charmayne's in the lobby. They got these on sale in the window. Victoria Secret's Valentine's Collection. And the broad waiting in the room, what she set you back? Always Grade-A for Ol' Buddy.

**SHELLY**

Are you kidding me? Gimme that.

(snatches the panties  
away from Buddy)

You don't fucking deserve this. All those ladies going home with a sweet breeze between their legs because you still do it for them and you're fingering me for some kinda Buddy Stafford ego pimp. Hey, fuck you, old man.

Shelly feigns as if he's leaving.

**BUDDY**

(affectionately)

Get back here, you prick. Hand it over.

stares

Shelly throws the panties back at Buddy. Buddy just at him with pained eyes, waiting for something else. mirror balls his wrinkled forehead.

Sweat

Hands

table.

Shelly nods. Removes a foil package from his pocket. it to Buddy. The singer rushes over to his dressing

hands

Unwraps his works. Rubber tubes his forearm. Trembling juggle lighter and hypodermic.

dope

Shelly's

Shelly takes a seat on the sofa. Buddy, euphoric as the hits the spot. Tears in his eyes. He picks up on somber expression in the mirror.

**BUDDY**

Whassimatter, kid? You got that Nostradamus look.

Shelly shakes his head.

**BUDDY**

You ever watch those nature shows on **TV?**

Shelly shakes his head.

**BUDDY**

I've seen this one a dozen times. It's about lions. Cycle of life thing. The leader of the pack...

**SHELLY**

Pride. It's called a pride.

**BUDDY**

Yeah, pride. The leader of the pride... when he gets on in years. It's just a matter of time before some young male arrives on the scene to challenge him. They go at it and

the old cat gets the crap beaten outta him. It's humiliating. In front of all the females, this goes down. And after he's defeated, he's cast out of the pride, to scavenge and die alone in the bush.

**SHELLY**

Yeah, nature's got a real sick sense of humor.

**BUDDY**

No shit. It's fucking tragic because the old lion can't figure it out on his own. That he's past it. It'd be so much easier for him to just walk away and save himself all that pain and humiliation.

**SHELLY**

That's like admitting to yourself that you're already dead. I prefer nature's way.

**BUDDY**

(a beat)

Yeah. Me, too.

Shelly holds Buddy's gaze in the mirror.

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - BACK STAGE - NIGHT**

Shelly exits the dressing room, to find Larry waiting  
on him.

He's accompanied by a good looking YOUNG MAN.

**LARRY**

Shelly, got a minute...

Shelly's expression: no. But he heads over anyway.

**LARRY**

Shelly, this is Johnny Capella.

**JOHNNY**

How ya doin', Shelly?

Johnny extends his hand. Shelly ignores the gesture.

**SHELLY**

I know you from somewhere, right?

**LARRY**

Johnny's been opening for Danny Ganz at the Mirage. Sony's talking about signing him to a three album deal. They're positioning him as the new Ricki Martin.

**SHELLY**

And I should be interested in this, why?

**LARRY**

Johnny's looking to headline. I told him we might be interested.

**SHELLY**

(icy)

We?

**JOHNNY**

Hey, if this is a bad time...

**SHELLY**

Even if I were interested, Buddy's got ink with us through 2003. I just renegotiated his contract last year.

**JOHNNY**

Sounds like the two of you need to get on the same page.

(to Larry)

If I don't hear from you by Thursday, I'm taking the Stardust's offer.

eyeball Johnny nods at Shelly, takes off. Shelly and Larry

each other for a long, cold beat. Shelly's about to say something, when Nicky and Marty approach. Larry shrugs, flashes a chilling smile.

**NICKY**

Where's Buddy? I wanna buy the old fart a drink.

**SHELLY**

Buddy asked me to send you his regards, Nicky. He's not feeling so great. I think he's got that stomach flu that's going around.

**NICKY**

Oh yeah? That's too bad.  
(Shelly isn't fooling  
him)  
Well, another time then.

**MARTY**

Hey, Shelly, Nicky says you might be  
able to hook us up with some  
showgirls. Something with class.

do I  
Marty's  
smile.

Shelly eyeballs Marty for a tense, extended beat. What  
look like, some fuckin' pimp, college boy? Just as  
starting to get real uncomfortable, Shelly cracks a

**SHELLY**

Sure, no problem. You got any  
preferences?

**NICKY**

(jumps in)  
Yeah. Something with big headlights,  
nice rims and low mileage.

**MARTY**

You got any Asian babes?

Shelly looks to Larry.

**LARRY**

I think I'll just stick with the  
tables.

news.

We linger on Shelly's unsettled look. This guy is bad

**EXT. SHANGRI-LA PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Arriving  
against

Bernie weaves his way through the lot to his car.  
at his Buick, he's startled to find Natalie leaning  
it. She holds up the \$100 chip the drunk tipped her.

**NATALIE**

Buy you a drink?

Off of Bernie's surprised expression...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE MAKAWAO BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT**

keep  
to  
lose themselves.

She  
sips on an umbrella drink; he's nursing his usual gin.  
Natalie has an astrological chart in front of her. In  
between  
sips, she makes annotations to the chart.

**NATALIE**

(almost to herself)  
Your Progressed Venus is Gemini,  
12.5 Degrees, and is in Direct motion.  
Which tells me that you're a slow  
starter when it comes to romance.

(off Bernie's taken  
aback expression)

You know what? This is real  
unprofessional of me. I shouldn't  
discuss your chart with you until  
I'm all done. I can tell by that  
look, you think this is all a lot of  
**B.S.**

**BERNIE**

No... I just know what the outcome's  
going to be.

**NATALIE**

The outcome? There's not, like, one  
particular outcome. A lot of things  
enter into it. The planets, moon  
phases...

**BERNIE**

The outcome won't change with me.  
It'll be all bad.

**NATALIE**

God, I have never met anyone who was  
so down on themselves. I used to be  
down on myself, OK? I don't go there

anymore. I've got just three more correspondence classes with this stuff, then I'll have my certificate and everything. And you know how I got OK?

**BERNIE**

(deadpan)  
You had your chart done.

**NATALIE**

Yes, as a matter of fact that is perfectly correct.

**BERNIE**

Do you know what I do at the Shangri-la?

**NATALIE**

I asked around. You're a "cooler."  
You turn winners into losers.

**BERNIE**

And do you know how I do that?

**NATALIE**

I know there's stuff that goes on in casinos all the time --

**BERNIE**

I do it by being myself. People get next to me and their luck turns. It's always been that way.

**NATALIE**

That sounds to me like a self fulfilling prophecy. There's a whole chapter on that in my course. Anyways, I can see a big factor in your life is that you're lacking companionship. There's nobody to deflect off. If you've got, as you put it, bad karma, then you need someone with good karma to neutralize it. Well, that's my take on it anyway.

extended  
Bernie maintains eye contact with Natalie for an  
beat. Then drops his head, gazes at his glass.

**BERNIE**

I don't know about you, but I'm real

tired.

remains Natalie nods. Bernie motions to stand. Natalie just seated. Keeps talking.

**NATALIE**

I have this recurring dream where I'm on some beautiful island in the Bahamas. I'm sitting on the beach, taking in this amazing sunset with one of these in my hand  
(gestures to her drink)  
...and then it starts to rain. And I wake up and it's my roof leaking on me. Yeah, I'm also real tired, Bernie.

**BERNIE**

(not even sure why he's telling her this)  
I only got six more days. Well, almost five really. Then I'll be leaving town.

**NATALIE**

Only five more days?  
(a beat)  
Then we shouldn't waste any more time.

Natalie covers Bernie's hand with hers.

**NATALIE**

Why don't we go back to your place?

**BERNIE**

(completely caught off-guard)  
I, uh... If this is... I don't know... I don't know if I can afford...

composure. Natalie flinches slightly. Then swiftly regains her

It's Vegas. An honest mistake.

**BERNIE**

Oh god... I'm so sorry... I didn't mean... You see -- that's exactly what I'm talking about. I've gone and "cooled" the damn table.

**NATALIE**

Ah, just shut up, Bernie. You haven't gone and cooled anything. Not by a long shot.

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

tries  
Natalie's hand flips on the television. Another bizarre religious service. We pull back from the screen as she  
to change the channel. Just gets a whole lot of static.  
Bernie's standing uncomfortably in the middle of the  
room.

**NATALIE**

You should complain about this.

**BERNIE**

I'm not here that much. Drink? Sorry, all I got's gin.

**NATALIE**

Nah. I've had my fill. Go ahead.

plants...  
Bernie walks over to the dresser, pours himself a shot.  
Natalie glances around. She notices Bernie's dead

**NATALIE**

You know, once they're dead, they don't really grow back. In case, that's what you're waiting for.

Let's  
in  
Her eyes land on the empty cat bowl. She's about to say something, when she picks up on Bernie's expression.  
not even go there. She gestures to an old record player  
the corner.

**NATALIE**

So... got any music?

shelves...  
It's  
Bernie opens one of the kitchenette cupboards. Bare  
except for a lone RECORD up on top. He brings it down.  
a Sinatra album. Never been opened.

record  
its  
way  
much

Natalie looks on as Bernie meticulously removes the  
from its sleeve. He blows a few particles of dust from  
surface. Then delicately lays it on the turntable. The  
he goes about this is incredibly ceremonious. With as  
care as given to disarming a nuclear weapon.  
Natalie can't help but smile.

record.

Bernie lowers the needle to the first cut of the

record

Everything seems to be going so well, until...

SKREEEEEE! The needle skids across the surface of the  
with a sound worse than chalk on a blackboard.

delicious

Bernie opens his mouth in a silent grimace... and a  
laugh comes out.

Bernie

It's Natalie's laugh. Talk about a tension breaker.

needle

turns to her, shrugs. He tries again. This time the

singing

catches... and Sinatra takes command of the room. He's

Vegas.

"This Town," a finger snapping upbeat Valentine to

Marred only by a slight clicking caused by the scratch.

forefinger. He

Natalie summons Bernie over with her wagging

picks up his glass, shuffles over.

**NATALIE**

Sit. Relax. I promise you, at least  
one of us has done this before.

**BERNIE**

This is not my first --

**NATALIE**

Sssh. Surprise me.

involuntary

She starts massaging his shoulders, eliciting

touched  
herself,  
Bernie.

moans from him. Bernie is almost in tears. Nobody's  
him like this in years. And it shows.  
Natalie takes Bernie's glass, gulps down the remains  
then sets it on the floor. She drops down next to

Starts kissing him. Takes it slow.

**NATALIE**

You're doing real good.

reigns,  
of  
and  
keeping  
screamer.  
of the  
at  
explodes,  
Bernie,

They fall back onto the mattress. Natalie taking the  
maneuvering her hips, kicking off her panties...  
Bernie gets an eyeful of a tattoo on her butt. A pair  
dice. Both twos.  
In seconds, Natalie has separated Bernie from his pants  
underwear, taking him inside of her, Ol' Blue Eyes  
the rhythm...  
Natalie moans uninhibitedly. Surprise: she's a real  
Moments later, we hear banging from the hooker's side  
wall. Some John telling them to keep it down.  
Bernie, with tears of elation in his eyes, thrusts away  
Natalie... for all of thirty seconds, before he  
convulsing in her arms with a stifled gasp.  
Frank winds down "This Town" a few seconds later. Poor  
he didn't even make it through the song.

**BERNIE**

Sorry...

Natalie wraps her arms around him.

**NATALIE**

Don't worry, Bernie. I've had worse.  
We'll try again later.

We  
Bernie rests his head on her breasts. Closes his eyes.  
hold on him. A few seconds pass... and he breaks into a  
smile.

Fade to black.

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY**

on  
TIGHT on Bernie sleeping. He still has that goofy smile  
his lips. A beat or two later, he opens his eyes. We  
PULL  
BACK to reveal that he's alone in the bed. No sign of  
Natalie.

in  
Bernie turns to the pillow next to him, buries his face  
it. Takes a deep breath. Moans at her scent. Ambrosia.  
He  
still has his face in the pillow, sucking in deep  
breaths,  
when Natalie steps out of the bathroom. Big smile.

**NATALIE**

Hey, so, you wanna get some breakfast?

Bernie just looks up at her; replay on the goofy smile.  
Heaven.

**BERNIE (V.O.)**

-- I did six months at Rikers for  
running numbers. It was Shelly's  
thing, but I took the rap for it.

**INT. MOONLIGHTER COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Bernie and Natalie sit eating breakfast.

**BERNIE**

After I get out, I call up Shelly  
and he tells me to come out here. I  
figure he's going to set me up good  
at the Shangri-la. But he tells me  
they got all these rules about casinos  
employing felons. So he gets me this  
gig doing telemarketing for one of  
their fronts -- trying to scam  
pensioners out of their retirement  
money. I lasted two weeks.

(20's)  
back to

As Bernie talks, Natalie spies a very PREGNANT GIRL coming out of the restroom. Her eyes follow the girl a table where a YOUNG MAN (20's) waits on her.

**BERNIE**

Already, I was getting in deep. Finally it got so bad, I had to beg Shelly to take on my markers around town. That just bought me more time to keep losing. I put Shelly in an awkward position. I understand why he did what he did.

(taps his knee)

**NATALIE**

He did that to you? What, he shot you?

**BERNIE**

Baseball bat.  
(off her cringing expression)  
I got off easy.

**NATALIE**

That's getting off easy?

**BERNIE**

I was out of control.

**NATALIE**

But he maimed you...

**BERNIE**

Let me tell you something. I'm grateful for what he did.  
(off her stunned look)  
No kidding. Every time I get an urge to play off the clock -- to so much as drop a quarter in a slot -- I reach down and squeeze what's left of my cartilage. It's one helluva reminder.

**NATALIE**

Jesus... I thought stuff like that didn't happen no more. Like that was just in the movies or something.

Bernie holds her gaze her for a moment.

**BERNIE**

Anyway, Shelly and I worked out a payment plan. Two years off the books at the Shangri-la, cooling tables. Five more days and I walk.

start Before Natalie can respond, we hear the pregnant girl to moan out loud. The waitress rushes over.

**PREGNANT GIRL**

(clutching her belly)  
Oh shit, I think I'm going into labor!

escorts The young man at the table rushes her to her feet, without her toward the exit in a dramatic fashion. All this paying the bill.

trips As they pass by Bernie and Natalie's table, the girl That's over Natalie's purse. Bernie quickly helps her up. when he notices the young man...

**BERNIE**

(shocked)  
Mikey?

**MIKEY**

Bernie...

thrown There's a quick moment of confusion. Bernie feels a bit by it all.

**EXT. MOONLIGHTER COFFEE SHOP - PARKING LOT - DAY**

step. Bernie accompanies them out to their car at a quick

have Once out the door, the girl's contractions appear to subsided. Natalie walks with the girl to try and help.

**PREGNANT GIRL**

I'm OK now. False alarm. Thanks.

Bernie pulls Mikey aside.

**BERNIE**

Mikey? Is that...? You're not the...

**MIKEY**

(nods)

Bull's eye. One time. Obviously runs in the family. I guess you're gonna be a grandfather, Bernie.

Fairlaine. They reach the couple's car. A rusted out 1955 Ford  
By the looks of it, they've been living out of it.

**BERNIE**

This you?

**MIKEY**

Hey, what the fuck, it runs. Anyways, we gotta be somewhere...

**BERNIE**

How's your mom doing?

**MIKEY**

I'm gonna pretend like you give a shit and tell you, she's getting by. As long as she's wasted.

Bernie nods. He gazes past Mikey to the girl.

**MIKEY**

Name's Charlene, in case you were wondering. Looks like she's carrying a whole litter in there, don't it?

**NATALIE**

When was the last time you saw a doctor?

Charlene sidles up alongside Mikey.

**CHARLENE**

This clinic in Jersey. Maybe six months ago. I wasn't about to go back after they treated me like cattle. Just because I didn't have no insurance. And those places, they're crawling with T.B. from all 'em spies.

**BERNIE**

So, you're in town...?

**MIKEY**

Maybe a week or so. Got some business to take care of.

**BERNIE**

If you want, stop by the Lucky Star Motel. Give us a chance to catch up. I'm on three to eleven shift at the Shangri-la. I work the floor.

**MIKEY**

No shit. Well, how 'bout that? Yeah, maybe I'll do that. We can play catch up. For the kid's sake. Gotta split.

**NATALIE**

(to Charlene)

Take care.

They  
doesn't

Mikey helps Charlene into the front passenger seat.  
drive off. Natalie looks to Bernie. She's curious, but  
ask. He appears thankful for that.

**INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLES - NIGHT**

the  
last  
FACE  
Zippo.

CLOSE on a skyline of black chips neatly positioned on  
felt. We see the owner of the chips strike a match. His  
one. It fizzles out quickly. TILT UP to the PLAYER'S  
with an unlit cigarette hanging from his lips.

A hand quickly reaches in, lights the cigarette with a

PULL BACK to reveal Bernie.

**PLAYER**

Thanks...

**BERNIE**

Don't mention it.

Bernie sits at the table.

**DEALER**

(he knows the routine)

Hundred dollar minimum here, sir.

on the Bernie peels off a hundred from his billfold. Lays it  
felt.

**DEALER**

Money plays one hundred.

**PLAYER**

(to Bernie)

No offense, pal, but there's twenty other tables. What do you wanna come sit on my head for?

**BERNIE**

Just wanna play one hand. Feeling lucky tonight. I got this voice in my head, says this is the table...

**PLAYER**

I know this is the table. I'm already doing good here. It's my fucking table --

**BERNIE**

(touching him)

Hey, heard the one about the fella walks into a bar and says, "Hey, who owns that big great dane outside?" A man at the end of the bar raises his hand. "I do." The fella says, "Yeah? Well, my dog just killed it."

The dealer finishes shuffling, begins to deal.

**BERNIE**

"Whaddya mean your dog just killed my great dane? What kinda dog you have?" The fella just shrugs and says, "A chihuahua." "You tellin' me your chihuahua just killed my great dane? How?"

(a beat)

"I dunno," the fella says, "I think he got stuck in his throat."

tickled. Bernie starts laughing. The player is less than

Just then the dealer interrupts them.

**DEALER**

Insurance?

We see the dealer's got an ace showing.

**PLAYER**

God damnit!

dealer  
busts  
Bernie

The player waves off the insurance, as does Bernie. The checks. Nothing. As the hand plays through the dealer out. Bernie glances over at the dealer. What the hell? places his chips again.

**PLAYER**

You said, one hand.

**BERNIE**

(agitated; to dealer)

Keep going.

aren't  
the  
Shelly

The dealer plays. Bernie and the high roller win again.

Bernie glances around him uncomfortably. We see Shelly approaching. Shelly just has a nose for when things

running smoothly. Larry is lurking behind him.

The dealer turns up some cards. And again, Bernie and

high roller win. Bernie looks absolutely perturbed.

gestures something with his head. Bernie cashes out.

**PLAYER**

Hey, stick around, pal. You and me,  
we make a great team.

from

Bernie strolls over to Shelly. Shelly guides him away

the table under Larry's watchful eye.

**SHELLY**

What was that?

Bernie shrugs, still confused.

**SHELLY**

Well, what fucking gives? Is it  
McGann? He's been with us twelve

years. The man's as standup as my dick.

(thinking to himself)

Maybe he's got money problems. I'm gonna pull him. He wasn't counting 'em, was he? The mook with the streak?

Bernie shakes his head. Larry sidles over.

**LARRY**

Is there a problem?

**SHELLY**

(zero tolerance)

No, there's no problem. Fella's on a streak, is all.

**LARRY**

(re: Bernie)

Let me guess? This is one of your "coolers?"

**SHELLY**

Why don't you announce it to the whole fucking joint?

**LARRY**

(lowers his voice)

Man, they told me you were a stickler for the old ways. But coolers? What is this guy, some kind of degenerate gambler? Reformed card shark? He doesn't look too effective to me.

**SHELLY**

He's the best. Take it from me.

**LARRY**

Sure. Whatever. But there ways -- subtle ways -- to keep things in our favor. I'm talking more forward thinking methods.

**SHELLY**

That right? I suppose you got a whole fucking prospectus on the subject.

**LARRY**

As a matter of fact I do. Like, right off the bat, I can tell you this wallpaper isn't going to cut it. It's too uplifting. I would go with

more muted tones.

**SHELLY**

Yeah? Wallpaper?

**LARRY**

And personally, I think the waitresses can all pop another button or two. Myself, I wouldn't hire anything less than a C cup.

extracts  
Shelly looks to Bernie. You believe this mook? Larry  
a CD from his jacket...

**LARRY**

Know what this is? Music to be sure. Pleasant, non-intrusive. But blended in at a subsonic level is a mantra. "Lose... lose... lose." And that's just skimming the surface. We really need to talk, Shelly.

of  
Shelly is close to losing it. When MORRIE, the manager  
the Paradise, comes running up...

**MORRIE**

Shelly, you better come quick.

**INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT**

hastily  
suites.  
Shelly, Larry and Bernie following behind Morrie as he  
leads them down a hallway of the Shangri-la's best  
They arrive at an open door, the sound of a TELEVISION  
beckoning them inside...

**INT. BUDDY STAFFORD'S SUITE - NIGHT**

playing.  
his  
paradise.  
Starting on the TV set: "Lost Horizon" (1937) is  
It's the scene where Robert Conway (Ronald Coleman),  
brother and Maria are leaving the lost city in the end.  
Conway looks back for one last tearful view of

floor  
side  
his

PANNING OFF THE SCREEN to a pair of naked feet on the  
next to the bed... revealing Buddy slumped against the  
of the mattress... a hypodermic needle protruding from  
arm. Death glaze fixated on the screen.

breath.

Bernie slumps back against the wall. Catches his

Larry,  
emotion.  
upmanship.

Shelly just stares at Buddy, a slight tremor of grief  
threatening his granite features. He glances over at  
who takes in Buddy's deathly repose without a hint of  
Larry meets Shelly's eye with a subtle smirk of one-

An incendiary beat passes between them. Then...

**SHELLY**

(to Morrie)

Get a hold of his daughter. Assist  
her with the arrangements. The Shangri-  
la will take care of everything.

**MORRIE**

What about the Paradise?

**SHELLY**

She goes dark tonight.

**LARRY**

That won't be necessary.

on  
A

Shelly and Larry exchange looks again. Bernie picks up  
it. The tension in the room threatens nuclear fission.  
loud ANIMAL ROAR reverberates on the soundtrack...  
accompanied by jungle-like percussion... as we CUT TO:

**INT. THE PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

CAPPELLA

A "now performing" poster on a metal stand: JOHNNY  
live at the Paradise Lounge!

doors

PANNING off the sign and following a COUPLE through the

FEMALE

to

cages.

makes

picks up

audience.

moves

stage

seem

start

fast

shifts

table.

back of

stares

aged

into the theater.

...our eye drawn to the stage. A troupe of gorgeous DANCERS in leopard print G-strings, grinding their hips to the muscular rhythm.

Flanking them are a pair of strutting LIONS in elevated cages.

An EXPLOSION OF LIGHT and SMOKE... and JOHNNY CAPPELLA makes his entrance. Decked out in a reflective suit that picks up every light in the house and throws it back at the audience.

Johnny's got the style of a Harry Connick Jr. and the moves of Ricki Martin. The energy this guy brings to the stage makes the last twenty years of Buddy Stafford's reign seem like suspended animation. The women in the audience start fanning themselves with delight.

It's a new dawn in Paradise. And the panties are coming fast and furious.

We see Shelly watching from the back of the room. He shifts his attention to Nicky, Larry and Marty at a primo table.

They're having a grand time. Nicky pats Larry on the back of the head. "Good work, kid."

Larry turns and raises his drink to Shelly. Shelly stares right through him. A declaration of war.

**INT. CASINO MIDWAY - NIGHT**

Bernie and Natalie wander around the midway. A middle-aged WORKER at the ring toss booth gets her attention.

**RING TOSS WORKER**

Over here, young lady! C'mon, give it a try. Eight for a dollar.

worker  
Natalie drags Bernie over. She pays her money and the  
eight.  
hands her the rings. Natalie throws, and misses all

The man pats her on the shoulder.

**RING TOSS WORKER**

Sorry there, sweetheart. Better luck next time. Wanna try again?

a  
Natalie is about to take him up on it, when she catches  
Bernie's eye. His look suggests she's being played for  
sucker. She decides against it.

himself.  
They walk off down the midway. Bernie chuckles to

**NATALIE**

What?

**BERNIE**

Nothing.

**NATALIE**

What?

**BERNIE**

Nothing. You're just an easy mark, is all.

**NATALIE**

An easy mark?

**BERNIE**

Yeah. Easy mark. You never heard that term?

Natalie shakes her head.

**BERNIE**

When we were kids, Shelly and me, we used to work Coney Island during the summer. When a guy would walk up and seemed eager to open his wallet, we would always mark him with chalk. We'd pat him on the back or arm with the chalk. Like, 'Hey buddy, good

job!'

(pats Natalie)

Meanwhile, he had no clue the other  
guys saw him coming a mile away.

Easy mark.

her. Natalie looks down at her shoulder where the man patted

seat She brushes it for effect. Bernie smiles. They take a  
at the end of the midway.

dragged Natalie locks onto a little toe-headed BOY being  
The around by his OLDER BROTHER and the brother's FRIEND.  
kid has a glazed look in his eyes.

Bernie Natalie fixates on the boy with a haunted expression.  
picks up on it.

**BERNIE**

You OK?

**NATALIE**

You notice last night, that tattoo  
on my butt?

**BERNIE**

(are you kidding?!)  
Little Joe.

**NATALIE**

Yeah, two twos. Little Joe.

in the Natalie hides her face behind her soda cup. Looks off  
distance.

**NATALIE**

I had a son. His name was Joe. I was  
his mother for a year.

**BERNIE**

You know, you don't have to tell me  
this.

**NATALIE**

I want to, Bernie. Better you know  
the worst of me up front. Later,

when I'm already invested in you,  
it'll be too hard to come clean.  
After I tell you this, you'll  
probably... I mean, I'll understand.

She tears her eyes away from Bernie. Bernie can't  
believe  
him.  
what he's hearing. That she wants to be invested in

What could be so bad?

**NATALIE**

I gave my son up for adoption. I  
just wanted my life back. I was  
seventeen going on eighteen and I  
was selfish. My family, they didn't  
want to have nothing to do with me  
after that. So I hitched a ride out  
here. Figured I could make it as a  
showgirl. Ten years later...

(shrugs; starts to  
break up)

I like to think that if it happened  
when I was older -- with some guy I  
cared about -- maybe things would  
have been different. I think about  
my Little Joe. And, I do know he's  
better off. I'm convinced of that.

for a  
Oh  
focuses  
her...  
She lowers her soda. Turns to Bernie. He studies her  
lengthy beat, stoic features. She wipes away her tears.  
well, that's that. Bernie stands up. Looks around...  
on the arcade clock. It reads 1:40 a.m. He turns to

**BERNIE**

So, you wanna go try your hand at  
the dime pitch? It's early still.

laugh-  
cry...  
Off Natalie's tear-filled features. She breaks into a

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

doesn't  
come  
cuts.  
away  
Baby's."  
against

Bernie and Natalie making love. Slow, tender. Natalie make with the "Oh yeah, baby, you're doing great" encouragement. Just some low key moans. Bernie doesn't too soon either. He outlasts Sinatra through several In contrast, we hear the hooker and her John howling through the walls. An escalating ostinato of "Oh Until Natalie reaches behind her and raps her fist the wall. Big smile from both of them.

**EXT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - DAY**

Buick.  
heads  
key in  
hesitates

Bernie and Natalie returning from breakfast in Bernie's Buick. Bernie can't find a parking spot. Natalie climbs out, for the room. Natalie arrives at the room. She's about to stab the key in the lock, when she realizes the door is ajar. She hesitates for a moment, then pushes it open...

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY**

is  
bathroom.

...to find Mikey and Charlene waiting on them. Charlene is puffing away on a Marlboro when Natalie enters. She immediately stubs it out. Rises, heads for the bathroom.

**CHARLENE**

I gotta go pee. I'm always peeing.

She closes the door after her.

**NATALIE**

(to Mikey)

How did you get in here?

**MIKEY**

I told the desk clerk Bernie was my old man. He let us wait inside. That a problem?

**NATALIE**

Bernie's looking for a parking space.

**MIKEY**

(chuckles)

Shit. I musta taken the last one.

doorway. Mikey steps up to Natalie. She hasn't moved from the

Her dislike for Mikey is evident.

**MIKEY**

Tell me something, Natalie? Is he paying you?

**NATALIE**

Excuse me?

**MIKEY**

My old man, is he renting your ass? 'Cause otherwise I just don't get it. A loser like my pops in the company of some primo T & A. It don't compute.

stares him Natalie doesn't dignify Mikey with an answer. She down unflinchingly. Mikey reaches out to Natalie's ear, "pulls" out a \$20 dollar chip.

**MIKEY**

This enough to get me a taste? Family discount?

still He drops the chip down Natalie's cleavage. Natalie doesn't react. Mikey reaches up, starts caressing her face.

enters. She flinches. Right then, the door swings open. Bernie Mikey snaps his fingers and a rose appears in his hand. He extends it to Natalie. She ignores the gesture, steps aside.

**BERNIE**

Mikey...

**MIKEY**

Hey, Bernie. I told you I was gonna

stop by.

**BERNIE**

Yeah... I figured you'd call ahead.  
We were out at breakfast.

She Charlene emerges from the bathroom. Natalie heads over.  
doesn't want to be around Mikey.

of She stops in front of Charlene, points to a sprinkling  
white powder on the side of her nose.

**NATALIE**

You missed some.

the Charlene immediately swats the coke off. Natalie enters  
bathroom. Closes the door.

**MIKEY**

You see, the thing is, Bernie, we're  
kinda strapped. I mean, Charly here's  
expecting like yesterday, and we  
don't have the dough to make with  
the right nutrition for her an' all.  
So, I was wondering if you would  
care to invest a little in your  
grandchild's future... his well being.

two. Bernie scratches his head, thinks on it for a moment or

a Then heads over to the kitchenette cupboard. Pulls down  
over coffee can. Extracts a thick wad of bills. Hands them  
to Mikey.

**BERNIE**

There's about three grand there.  
That's all I got.

**CHARLENE**

Bless you, Bernie.  
(pats her belly)  
You know, Michael, I -- think we  
should name her Bernadette. After  
your father.

**MIKEY**

You mean, Bernie. Trust me, it's a boy.

Bernie seems quite moved by it all.

**CHARLENE**

(to Bernie)  
Wanna feel her?

**BERNIE**

I don't think... I don't want anything to hap...

**CHARLENE**

Ooh, I just felt her kick. C'mon, Bernie, gimme your hand...

She places Bernie's hand over her stomach.

**CHARLENE**

Feel that?

**BERNIE**

(not sure)  
I don't know... I think so...

Mikey takes Charlene by the arm...

**MIKEY**

We'll catch you later, Bernie. I think I'm gonna take Charly over to the hospital right now. Get her checked up real good.

Charlene kisses Bernie on the cheek. He blushes.

**CHARLENE**

Take care, Pop.

**BERNIE**

Mikey...

Mikey turns in the doorway, eyebrows raised. Yeah?

**BERNIE**

You're not going to try anything stupid while you're in town?

Mikey plays it dumb. Huh?

**BERNIE**

You mess up and they'll cut you no

slack. That's all I'm saying. You got a kid to think about.

They  
the  
as  
Mikey nods, backs out of the room. Charlene giggles.  
disappear into the parking lot. Natalie emerges from  
bathroom. She lights up a cigarette, just stares at him  
if to say: sucker. Bernie shrugs.

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Larry  
gaze  
a  
Shelly enters to find Larry seated behind his desk.  
immediately leaps to his feet, phony apologetic grin.  
Nicky and Marty are lounging on Shelly's sofa. Shelly's  
is drawn to a table in the middle of the room. There's  
something on it, covered in a plastic sheet. He raises  
"what gives?" eyebrow.

**NICKY**

Shelly, I hope you don't mind...

**SHELLY**

What's going on, Nicky?

**NICKY**

I'm sorry we didn't say nothing about  
this earlier... but the deal wasn't  
closed yet.

**MARTY**

Don't worry, Shelly, you're gonna  
love it.

off  
Nicky gestures to Larry. Larry whisks the plastic sheet  
the table...

SHANGRI-  
...to reveal an impressive SCALE MODEL of a redesigned

**LA HOTEL AND CASINO.**

"Lost  
mountain  
The model boasts huge snow-capped Himalayan peaks a la  
Horizon," surrounding a completely overhauled hotel and  
casino. A Matterhorn-like rollercoaster traverses the

promise  
at a

top. Gold and marbled pillars, terraces and floors  
to raise the bar on Las Vegas opulence. We're looking  
hundred million dollar investment easy.

**NICKY**

The new Shangri-la Hotel and Casino.  
We break ground on her in six months.

Off Shelly's startled expression --

**NICKY**

I know what you're thinking? Where's  
she gonna go? You need space to  
expand, right? Well, that's been  
taken care of. We're now the proud  
owners of The Golden Frontier next  
door.

**LARRY**

(gesturing to the  
model)

She's perfect. Three floors of gaming,  
IMAX theater, entertainment center,  
boutiques, restaurants, rollercoaster,  
you name it. She'll pay for herself  
in three years, and then it's easy  
money.

**NICKY**

Isn't she great, Shell?

prisoner

Shelly slowly approaches the model like a condemned  
mounting the scaffolding.

swimming

We see his stoic features reflected in her sparkling  
pool.

**SHELLY**

In "Lost Horizon," these people,  
their plane crashes in the Himalayas --  
and they get rescued and taken to  
this Utopia in the mountains. Shangri-  
la. It's beautiful. The place is  
completely isolated. Untouched by  
the outside world. There's no war,  
no greed, no bullshit... Time is  
slowed down. People, they don't age.  
It's... paradise. That's what Shangri-

la is. Paradise.

**LARRY**

Yeah, we've all seen the movie. And your point is?

Shelly whirls around, yells:

**SHELLY**

You don't fuck with paradise! All'a ya!

**NICKY**

Hey, Jesus, c'mon, Shelly. We're not trying to fuck with it. We're trying to make it better.

**SHELLY**

How... how, Nicky, could it be any better? Right now it's perfect. It's the last of its kind. It's pure... and this.

(points to the model;  
weary)

...this is just... it's a mockery. An insult. Trying to make something of it that it isn't.

**LARRY**

What are you talking about? It's right outta the movie?

**SHELLY**

Whose talking about a fuckin' movie? This ain't a fuckin' movie. This is my life. This is my house of worship. You people are shittin' on all that's sacred to me.

A tense silence ensues. Nicky, Larry and Marty exchange looks.

**SHELLY**

(tired laugh)

I got just one question? Where you gonna be when they decide to change it back? When the people, they come looking for the real Vegas, from before all this Epcott Center bullshit. Who's gonna give it to them? You guys? I don't think so. You know who? The same fucks who

started this shit in the first place.  
It's all gonna come full circle and  
bite you in the ass. Mark my words.

wasn't Shelly falls silent. Massages his forehead. Shit, that  
the way to handle it.

places a Nicky gets up from the sofa, walks over to Shelly,  
away. hand on his shoulder. Shelly flinches, but doesn't pull

**NICKY**

You make some good points, Shelly.  
Maybe it'll swing back the other  
way, who knows? But the smart money  
suggests we roll the dice. I'm not  
gonna bullshit you; naturally there's  
gonna be a lot of restructuring in  
the months to come, but I want you  
to know, you'll always have a place  
with us.

**SHELLY**

Where's that? Behind the bar?

**MARTY**

(laughs)  
Behind the bar, that's a good one.

**NICKY**

I think you should take some time  
and think things through. All this,  
it's a lot to digest, y'know.

**MARTY**

Speaking of things to digest, I'm  
starving. How's that buffet they got  
in the Valley of the Blue Moon? You  
recommend their prime rib, Shell?

Shelly stares right through Marty. Choke and die on it,  
motherfucker.

**SHELLY**

It's food.

**NICKY**

Hey, my arteries can use a workout.  
Lead us to the trough, Shell.

Larry's  
dropping  
him.

Shelly nods at Nicky, then shifts his gaze to Larry.  
all smiles. He steps forward to join them, his hand  
down and caressing the surface of Shelly's desk behind

unloads

A subtle gesture not lost on Shelly. Shelly mentally  
a full chamber into Larry's chest. Returns the smile.

**INT. CASINO - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

is

As Shelly and the group pass a hot craps table, Nicky  
drawn to it.

**NICKY**

Wait up a second...

**MARTY**

I thought we were gonna eat?

of

SUBURBANITE.

Only now do we see Bernie has arrived to cool the table  
its hot shooter -- A LOUD, pudgy, overdressed

Shelly eyes Bernie.

**SHELLY**

Maybe we wanna play over there. Less  
crowded.

**NICKY**

Nah, let's play here. This is my  
lucky table. I always play here.

(to the others)

Go on ahead. I know where to find  
you guys.

quickly

Shelly signals Bernie to back off. Bernie steps back.

Shelly, Larry and Marty head for the restaurant. Nicky  
slaps down some green.

who is

rail

The stickman slides the dice over to the suburbanite  
shooting. He scuttles the dice. They bounce up over the

the  
and spike Nicky on the forehead before dropping back on  
felt. The players chuckle.

**STICKMAN**

Out! Seven, line away seven...

fires  
Nicky rubs his forehead, glares at the suburbanite. He  
back.

**SUBURBANITE**

C'mon, pops! What the hell? I coulda  
paid my mortgage with the money I  
just lost.

the  
Nicky says nothing. The table is quickly cleared by the  
dealers. The stickman skips the next shooter and feeds  
dice to Nicky.

**SHOOTER**

Hey? I'm supposed to be next...

**NICKY**

File a grievance, shithead.

a  
Suburbanite is still fuming over his loss. Nicky places  
couple hundred on the passline.

**STICKMAN**

We're coming out. Crap Eleven, any  
seven.

Nicky throws in some chips to the center.

**NICKY**

Hundred dollar big red.

pre-shot  
Suburbanite watches as Nicky runs through a lengthy  
routine. Lots of hand jive and cuff shooting.

**SUBURBANITE**

Hurry it up, gramps. Your soup's  
getting cold.

Nicky throws.

**STICKMAN**

Crap, Ace Deuce. Line down.

The croupiers takes down the pass line.

**SUBURBANITE**

Hey, Busketti, maybe you should try shuffleboard.

fires

Nicky is fed the dice again. Same routine. Nicky just an incendiary look back at the suburbanite.

**SUBURBANITE**

Uncle Palsy? Shake'em this direction.

Nicky throws.

**STICKMAN**

Four, hard four. The point is four.

The players make their bets.

**SUBURBANITE**

Good now throw it before you fucking keel over and die, old man.

Nicky slowly starts his routine defiantly.

**SUBURBANITE**

Happy birthday to me. Happy Birthday to me... Jesus, fuck, I'm another year older already.

Nicky throws.

**STICKMAN**

OUT! Seven! Line away.

with  
chips

Nicky claps his hands dealer style -- for effect -- and a gentlemanly smile steps back from the table. Nicky's are quickly swept up by the croupier.

**SUBURBANITE**

Don't take it so hard, pops. Everybody craps out.

smile  
from

Nicky locks eyes with the suburbanite. Then flashes a that suggests he's going to brush it off. He turns away from the table...

**SUBURBANITE**

Now go change your fucking Depends.

real  
holds  
with  
suddenly  
laying

Nicky makes like it's all in good jest. Yeah, that's cute. He heads around the table to the suburbanite, out his hand as if to say: Hey, no hard feelings. The suburbanite shrugs. What the fuck? I was just playing you, pops. He reaches for Nicky's hand... when Nicky headbutts him. Before anyone can react, Nicky starts into the suburbanite. The man goes down and. Nicky continues pummeling him...

**NICKY**

Who's laughing now, huh? ya fuckin' prick! C'mon, crack wise again... Ya fuckin' smooth as a Ken doll, no-dick, suburbanite scum. How's that for a game?!

He  
fingers  
pocketful  
attempts

Shelly alerted to the fracas, rushes back to the table. takes immediate control of the situation. Snaps his at security. The suburbanite is whisked away with a of comps and a bruised ego. Shelly takes Nicky aside, to calm him. Nicky keeps railing at Shelly:

**NICKY**

That ain't right, Shelly! Guy fucks up my game like that. Who the fuck does he think he is?

**SHELLY**

You're right. He's just a piece of shit. Forget about him.

**NICKY**

I thought this joint had more class. Used to be, we wouldn't even let bums like that in...

Nicky catches himself. He looks at Shelly for a beat.

good  
a

There's an unspoken understanding between them. "The old days." We see Bernie in the b.g., looking more than bit shocked.

**INT. THE MAKAWAO BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT**

Bernie seated with Natalie.

**BERNIE**

This town... You know, Natalie, all I want to do is go some place where I can tell day from night. Where they got clocks on the wall. I can't breathe around here no more. Four days and I'm gone. I'm not even sure I can hold out that long.

**NATALIE**

(a beat)

So where does that leave us?

**BERNIE**

A week ago, I didn't remember what it was like to have a woman's hands on me. I'm still pinching myself, expecting to wake-up from...

(just blurts it out)

Come with me, Natalie. I want you to come with me.

**NATALIE**

God, Bernie, that's...

**BERNIE**

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to spring that on you.

**NATALIE**

Bernie... I want to be with you. I do. But I don't know if I can leave with you.

Bernie's look: Why?

**NATALIE**

I was working on a compatibility chart for the two of us. And it looks good, really, it does.

**BERNIE**

So, what's the problem?

**NATALIE**

That's with us here. In Vegas.

Bernie's expression: Oh.

**NATALIE**

Maybe I was being presumptuous, 'cause I knew you were leaving... and I tried working it in different ways... It wasn't good, Bernie. I got scared. But that's just for now, for the immediate future. Once the planets realign, maybe a year from now...

**BERNIE**

Natalie... I can't... Not another year. Not another week.

Natalie's  
in  
A somber mood falls on the table. Bernie reaches for hand. Instead, he knocks the salt over. It spills out front of them.

**BERNIE**

I think... we probably shouldn't see each other anymore.

**NATALIE**

Why, Bernie? We only got a couple days left together. Why not make the most of them?

**BERNIE**

(a long beat)

Because if I spend one more night in your arms, I'm not going anywhere.

**NATALIE**

And that's so bad?

stubs  
Bernie just stares at her, shrouded in sadness. Natalie out her cigarette, rises.

**NATALIE**

Take care, Bernie.

front  
Bernie casts his eyes to the mound of spilled salt in

of him. Nods. A few beats later he raises his head...

**BERNIE**

Natalie, don't...

Gone. A WAITRESS appears.

**WAITRESS (O.S.)**

Get you another?

**BERNIE**

(nods)

I think you better bring me the  
bottle. Please.

**INT. SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND CASINO/BAR - NIGHT**

Once again, we see Bernie's feet limp across the casino  
floor.

He walks up to the bar, asks for a cup of coffee.

Doris brings it over. Short on the cream again.

He just sips it black. Gloom and doom features. Life  
sucks.

His master's VOICE sounds over the intercom:

**VOICE (V.O.)**

Chang, party of fifteen, your table  
is ready, Chang party of fifteen.

Bernie looks to Doris. Sighs. Only three more days.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

CHEERING  
He heads for the crap tables, the sound of raucous  
becomes audible. A large crowd starting to gather.

soon as  
tenses  
Bernie noodles his way to the front of the crowd. As  
he gets a look at the heavy hitter at the table, he  
up.

Oh shit.

of a  
racket. Playing up her extremely maternal state.

Regal. Just then Natalie sidles up to Bernie with the Chivas

Without thinking about it, he grabs the glass off the tray, downs it in a single gulp.

**CHARLENE**

(clutching her tummy)  
Come on, Mikey. This is our future.  
Don't blow it.

Mikey throws down a bet for the dealer.

**MIKEY**

Put this on the line for the boys.

throws The stickman thanks him as they place the bet. Mikey  
table. down more money. We can see Mikey has bets all over the

**MIKEY**

With shoes!

**STICKMAN**

Dealer's got shoes. Hands high, the  
dice are out! The point is nine.

**CHARLENE**

Come on all you's. Put a good thought  
in for our baby!

the As everyone dotes over Charlene, Mikey quickly swaps  
dice before anyone can see. He throws.

**STICKMAN**

Six the hard way!

Charlene. Mikey is paid nine thousand by the croupier, as is

any Bernie stands frozen. He doesn't bother trying to get  
closer to the table. He knows it'll do no good.

**CHARLENE**

Oh my god, I just felt him kick! He  
knows. He knows you're all pulling  
for him. God bless you all.

second. Natalie looks over at Charlene. Their eyes meet for a

It's as though Natalie knows it's a scam and Charlene's acknowledging it.

Mikey throws again.

**STICKMAN**

Six the hard way! Look out, we got a shooter!

Charlene Another nine grand. Mikey's rail is nearly full.

hops around awkwardly causing more distraction.

arrives. Bernie is really sweating it out now. Then Shelly

Larry is hot on his tail.

**SHELLY**

How much?

**BERNIE**

Eighteen thousand since I stepped up. I'm sorry, Shelly, I guess I've been hit and miss lately.

Something Shelly's expression tells us he isn't so sure.

definitely isn't kosher.

As Charlene chatters on, Mikey switches the dice back.

Shelly makes him.

**SHELLY**

(sotto)

Fucking amateurs...

Mikey throws...

**STICKMAN**

Seven out! Line away.

Mikey's The players and crowd, though disappointed, applaud achievement.

**MIKEY**

(bowing)

I thank you. My wife thanks you. My

unborn child thanks you.

Mikey moves his rail of chips to the felt.

**MIKEY**

Color me up will ya?

Larry notices Shelly slipping on a pair of leather gloves.

**LARRY**

You've gotta be kidding me.

(off Shelly's steely glare)

That's not how I propose we handle it. We'll turn the matter over to the authorities. They'll be blacklisted, their credit ruined...

**SHELLY**

(gets in Larry's face)

And then we'll give 'em both a lollipop for the ride home. Come watch and learn, Harvard. A little lesson on how to protect your investment -- the old school way.

Shelly walks over to Mikey and Charlene, Larry lingering behind him.

**SHELLY**

Hey, that was some run you had back there.

**MIKEY**

Uh, thanks. Just lucky I guess.

Mikey steals a tense glance at Charlene. She starts to fidget nervously.

**SHELLY**

Why don't we go do this in my office? I don't like to hand out all this amount of cash on the floor.

Security (Tony and Lou) corrals the couple. Leads them away.

Bernie watches as they pass by. Mikey looks into Bernie's

say

eyes. They both know he's been made. Natalie doesn't anything, just looks at Bernie.

**INT. CASINO RECEIVING AREA - NIGHT**

on the

Slot machines everywhere -- some on the way out, some way in. Crates of casino supplies.

an

Bernie rushes in with Natalie behind him. Heading for aural beacon of BLOWS landing on flesh... GRUNTING, **PLEADING...**

of

few

some

once

...arriving to find Tony and Lou kicking the shit out of Mikey on the floor. Charlene lies clutching her belly a few feet away. Shelly swings a baseball bat, warming up for blood sport. Larry watches from the sidelines -- at once appalled and enthralled.

**CHARLENE**

Oh my God... I can feel the contractions coming on...

Bernie rushes over to Shelly...

**BERNIE**

Shelly, stop them! Don't do this!

**SHELLY**

Get lost, Bernie, this got nothing to do with you.

**BERNIE**

It's got everything to do with me. He's my son.

look

Everyone stops dead. Freeze frame. Shelly gets a weird look in his eye. A fuse has just been lit...

**SHELLY**

What did you say?

**BERNIE**

I said, he's my --

**SHELLY**

Who? This little prick?

Shelly smashes Mikey across the shoulder with the bat.

again...  
AARRRGGGGHHH!!! Shelly raises the bat to cream Mikey

Bernie grabs Shelly's arm. Shelly shoves him back.

Raises the bat again...

**MIKEY**

Pop, help me...

**BERNIE**

Shelly, don't you fucking do it!

Grabs  
Shelly freezes. He lowers the bat, throws it aside.

Bernie by his collar...

**SHELLY**

Were you in on this? Jesus, you better  
come clean with me.

**BERNIE**

NO! God, no! I didn't know nothing  
about it.

Shelly's  
Shelly releases Bernie. There's a strange look in  
eye. We see the wheels turning...

**SHELLY**

How much you think their lives are  
worth, Bernie? Myself, I don't think  
they're worth piss. But, hey, it  
ain't my kid...

almost  
Bernie sees where Shelly's going with this. We can  
hear the cell door slamming in his head.

**SHELLY**

Let me see: they were up almost a  
hundred and fifty grand. That's 150  
G's someone's gonna have to account  
for. What do you say, Bernie, seventy-  
five grand a piece?

eyes.  
Bernie glances over at Natalie. She has tears in her

He looks to Shelly pleadingly. Please don't do this...

**SHELLY**

Hey, I know you don't have that kind of cash. But, since you're a friend of the house, I'm willing to front you.

**BERNIE**

Shelly, they didn't get away with the money... You didn't lose anything...

the Shelly glances over at Lou, nods. Lou kicks Mikey in face. His nose snaps like a twig.

**BERNIE**

Oh Jesus... Yes! All right. It's on me. 150 G's.

Charlene clutches her belly, moans...

**CHARLENE**

Oh god, oh god... you gotta get me to the hospital... contractions...

**BERNIE**

Shelly, please help her. That's my grandson...

**SHELLY**

Hey, why don't we all break out the champagne? Lootz is about to become a granddaddy.

(walks over to her)

How you doin' there, sweetheart? Must hurt like crap, huh?

**CHARLENE**

(nods)

Hurts so bad...

**SHELLY**

Yeah?

Suddenly Shelly kicks Charlene in the belly! WHAM! She screeches out.

**NATALIE**

Oh God...

**BERNIE**

Jesus NOOOOO!!!

witnessed.

blows

Even Shelly's goons can't believe what they've just  
Larry is aghast. Bernie rushes Shelly, starts raining  
on him. Shelly swats him off. He drops down next to the  
squirming girl, rips her sweater and blouse up over her  
stomach...

padding

...to reveal a mound of fake padding. He tears the  
away from her, throws it at Bernie.

**SHELLY**

Here! It's a fuckin' boy. Anyone got  
a cigar?

nervous

step

curls

The muscle start laughing it up. Relief. Larry emits a  
giggle. Natalie's jaw hits the floor. Bernie takes a  
back. He's about to go into serious shock. Charlene  
over, sobbing.

**SHELLY**

(to Bernie)

You sure you still want to be good  
for it? Because if you want to change  
your mind, I don't blame you.

Bernie looks over at Mikey. He stares up at his father,  
trembling.

**MIKEY**

I'll make it up to you, Pop, I  
swear...

tempted

Bernie holds his son's gaze for a beat. He's almost  
to... He just shrugs and nods at Shelly.

**BERNIE**

It's on me.

**SHELLY**

(shakes his head)

That's the worst fucking call you  
ever made in your life.

ON NATALIE at that moment. We can tell she agrees with Shelly... but thinks all the more of Bernie for it.

That  
might even be love in her eyes.

Shelly snatches his baseball bat up off the floor.

Walks  
pulverizing  
over to Mikey, and brings it down full force,  
Mikey's left kneecap. Oh man, the scream...

**BERNIE**

What are you doing?! I thought we had --

**SHELLY**

150 G's buys their lives. This is just a little slap on the wrist to remember me by.

Natalie turns her head. She's about to throw up. Larry watches, unflinchingly. Charlene is making with some pleading now.

serious

**CHARLENE**

Oh god... it wasn't my idea.

Shelly steps up to Charlene, tapping the base of the bat in the palm of his hand. He smiles reassuringly at her.

**SHELLY**

You know, motherhood is a beautiful thing. This... you made a mockery out of it. Maybe you'll get to experience it for real one day.

**CHARLENE**

(nods, sobbing)  
I want... to be a mother... please don't hurt me...

**SHELLY**

I'm not going to hurt you.

Shelly turns his back on her. Charlene starts sobbing relief.  
They're not going to hurt her. It's going to be all right.

Wrong. Shelly throws the bat to Lou. The heavy steps up  
to  
the plate (as we RACK FOCUS to Shelly walking away) --  
CRUNCH!!! followed by the girl's SHRIEKS. Natalie  
buries her  
head in Bernie's shoulder.

**SHELLY**

(to Tony and Lou)  
Get 'em outta here. You ever see  
them in this joint again, kill 'em.

**SHELLY**

(to Bernie and Natalie)  
You two, you're still on shift.

Shelly catches Larry's eye: I hope you were taking  
notes.

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Bernie's seated on the edge of his bed, drowning his  
sorrows  
with a bottle of gin. Moonlight paints him in jail bars  
of  
shadow. Natalie lingers in the b.g.

**BERNIE**

I did this to myself. I planted the  
seed. When Angela took off with Mikey,  
I didn't... I never made an effort  
to get back in his life. I figured,  
the kid don't need a loser for a  
father. Now it's all come full circle.  
I give him the money, I open the  
door to all this... I musta had it  
coming. Payback.

Natalie's hand lowers the needle onto the Sinatra  
record.

"Nice 'n' Easy" starts up.

She walks over to Bernie, takes the bottle away. Helps  
him  
to his feet.

He gives himself over to her reassuring embrace.  
Natalie  
raises Bernie's face to her's.

**NATALIE**

Bernie, it's a big world out there.  
If you just took off -- if we took  
off.

Bernie shakes his head. It's too late for that now.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER - NIGHT**

against  
the  
Natalie staring up at the ceiling, Bernie nuzzled  
her. Her features appear softer than ever. Luminous in  
moonlight. Realization moist in her eyes.

**NATALIE**

You awake, Bernie?

He grunts something inaudible.

**NATALIE**

I -- think I love you.

Bernie tenses up. Huh?

**NATALIE**

No, I don't think. I'm pretty certain  
of it.

right.  
Bernie raises his head, not quite sure he heard her

staring  
at her back.  
Natalie sits up, hugs her knees. Bernie finds himself

**NATALIE**

You blind-sided me, Bernie Lootz. I  
never saw this coming. You shouldn't  
do that to a girl.

shiver...  
Bernie reaches out, caresses her back. She emits a

**NATALIE**

There's still things you don't know...  
should know... I don't want to ruin  
it...

Bernie pulls Natalie back toward him.

**BERNIE**

It won't make any difference, Natalie.  
Whatever you come clean about, I'm  
not gonna feel any different about  
you. I'd say the words, but with my  
luck...

**NATALIE**

Say 'em anyway. To hell with rotten  
luck. That's overs.

**BERNIE**

(a beat)  
I love you, Natalie.

Natalie smothers her lips against Bernie's. He  
enshronds her  
in his arms. Fade out...

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY**

Fade into SOFT FOCUS. Slowing taking form... A CAT'S  
FACE  
seen in extreme close-up.

WIDER -- to reveal the cat resting on Bernie's chest.  
She  
MEOWS as he stirs awake. He's stunned to see her there.

**BERNIE**

Trixie?

The cat jumps off his chest and slinks over to her  
empty  
food bowl. Meows again. Bernie breaks into a wide  
smile.

**BERNIE**

Trix. You came back.

Bernie shields his eyes from the bright sunlight  
streaming  
in through the blinds. Huh? This is a first for him.  
He's  
never gotten direct sunlight in his room before. What's  
the  
deal? Did the world just turn on its axis?

He glances over his shoulder... No Natalie. Just her  
impression in the sheets. And a note on her pillow. For  
a

up

moment his heart stops. He conjures up the worst. Grabs  
the note, unfolds it.

SPECTACULAR

We see a lipstick kiss and the words: HAVE A  
**DAY!**

Bernie lets out a joyful whoop! Leaps out of bed...

**SMASH**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS - DAY**

hear

CLOSE-UP: Trixie eating some tuna out of her bowl. We  
the record player needle drop on "Luck Be A Lady." Cut

to:

Bernie

Bernie's feet gliding around the room... PAN UP to

snatches up

dancing with himself. He's positively aglow. He

-

a salt shaker and sings along with Sinatra. It's true -

life

love makes the world go around. It obviously also gives

sprung

to dead plants, as evidenced by the small bulb that has

that.

up overnight above his radiator. But we won't dwell on

**INT. SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND CASINO - DAY**

the

Bernie struts into the casino a changed man (still to

pronounced

tune of "Luck Be a Lady"). Even his limp seems less

as he greets fellow workers as they pass.

for

He catches a glimpse of himself in a wall mirror. Maybe

reflection he

the first time, he likes what he sees. In the

averts

notices Natalie smiling at him. He meets her eyes. She

them quickly, keeps walking.

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - THAT MOMENT**

appears  
picks

Shelly watches Bernie from the video monitor. He  
less than delighted over Bernie's sunny disposition. He  
up the phone, dials.

**SHELLY**

(into phone)  
Yeah, it's me. Get Bernie over to  
crap table six.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

of

Per usual, Bernie walks up to the bar, asks for a cup  
coffee. Doris slides it over.

**BERNIE**

(looking around)  
Got any cre --

cream.

Before he can answer, Doris hands him a container of

into his

A full container. Taken aback, he starts pouring it  
cup, when he hears a VOICE over the intercom:

**VOICE (V.O.)**

Lovett, party of six, your table is  
ready, Lovett, party of six.

Bernie looks to Doris.

**BERNIE**

Duty calls.

**INT. CASINO - MONTAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

just  
crazy!

A -- Bernie arrives at a hundred dollar blackjack table  
in time for the dealer to bust out. The crowd goes

side of  
jackpot.

B -- Bernie takes a break by leaning up against the  
a slot machine. Suddenly, the woman playing it hits a

C -- Everywhere he seems to go, people continue to win.

smile  
appears  
follow

D -- Bernie, despite the spooky irony, can't help but  
as mountains of chips pile up on the tables. Shelly  
behind him. Not a happy camper. He gestures Bernie to  
him.

**INT. CASINO SLOTS AREA - NIGHT**

of  
in

They head over to a section of slots. As they pass one  
those huge million dollar slots, the FLOOR MANAGER cuts  
front of them.

**FLOOR MANAGER**

Hey, Shelly, check it out. The new  
Mega-Million. I call her Marnie,  
'cause she's one frigid broad. Sure,  
once in a while she'll flash you a  
bit of tit, but your chances of  
hitting a home run -- one in twenty  
million. Here, give her a shot...

looks

He hands Shelly a cup of quarters, takes off. Shelly  
to Bernie. He's trying to keep a lid on his anger.

**SHELLY**

(feeding Marnie  
quarters)  
You wanna tell me what's going on  
out there?

**BERNIE**

I don't know...

Shelly pulls the lever.

**SHELLY**

What do you mean...

Marnie immediately spits out a small jackpot.

**SHELLY**

(reacts with surprise)  
What do you mean, you don't know?  
We're down almost a mil out there.  
Doesn't seem strange to you?

**BERNIE**

(shrugs)  
Guess I'm having an off day.

**SHELLY**

You don't have off days, Lootz. You're shitty luck incarnate. What's wrong? You coming down with something? You've got this look about you...

Shelly starts feeding Marnie again.

**BERNIE**

Nothing's wrong. Fact is, I've never felt better.

**SHELLY**

What's that supposed to mean?

**BERNIE**

She loves me, Shelly. She told me last night. Natalie.

SIREN,  
just  
slot  
hits  
expression

On the mention of Natalie's name, we hear a shrieking followed by a deafening toll of slot bells. Shelly's landed the million dollar jackpot. Shelly stares at the in surprise -- then looks over at Bernie. Realization hard. Fuck! The floor manager staggers over. His is priceless.

**FLOOR MANAGER**

Sweet Jesus... you popped her cherries.

as if  
first

SEVERAL CASINO WORKERS have gathered to witness the deflowering of Marnie. They gaze reverently upon her, witnessing the "Close Encounters" mothership for the time. Shelly drags Bernie out of earshot.

**SHELLY**

Natalie? She told you, she loves you?

He's

Bernie nods, a huge grin wrenching his cheeks apart. about to go helium on us.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

when  
Natalie's serving drinks to a table of high rollers,  
Tony and Lou appear behind her...

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Shelly  
his  
Natalie  
The door to Shelly's office slams behind Natalie.  
glares at her from behind his desk. We see him thumbing  
steel abacus. The beads drifting toward the center.  
shakily lights up a cigarette.

**SHELLY**

Put that fucking thing out!

gather  
Natalie, startled, drops her cigarettes. She kneels to  
them up.

**NATALIE**

Sorry.

**SHELLY**

You should be. You've gone and fucked  
it up big time. I paid you to be his  
cooze companion, not his fucking  
true love. But, no, you had to go  
and get all profound on the poor  
schmuck.

(mimics female voice)

"I love you, Bernie." You know what  
you've gone and done, sweetheart?  
Those four little words of endearment  
have already cost this casino a  
million and counting today.

**NATALIE**

I don't understand...

**SHELLY**

(jumps to his feet)

Lady luck. You never heard 'a lady  
luck?! That's what's goin' on out  
there. Lootz is Kryptonite on a stick.  
He should have 'em throwing ice cubes  
out there, but instead I got a fuckin'  
meltdown on my hands.

Shelly walks around his desk to Natalie.

**SHELLY**

OK, here's what's gonna happen. You're outta his life by the time he gets home. Don't even tell him to his face, just leave a note. I'll make some calls, situate you at another joint.

**NATALIE**

I can't do that.

**SHELLY**

(right in her face)  
Excuse me?

**NATALIE**

It wasn't an act. I meant it. I love him.

**SHELLY**

(close to losing it)  
What's there to fuckin' love? He's a loser. Always has been, always will be.

**NATALIE**

I thought you were his friend...

**SHELLY**

And I thought you were a smart cookie when I picked you out. You do not want to fuck me over, darlin'. I'll see to it that your next John's a rattlesnake out in the desert. Now get the fuck outta here.

his Natalie rushes from the office in tears. Shelly closes eyes for a moment -- gotta keep it together.

**INT. SHANGRI-LA CASINO - NIGHT**

off Bernie approaches some cocktail waitresses about to go duty.

**BERNIE**

Hi. Any of you seen Natalie around?  
I'm supposed to give her a ride home.

**COCKTAIL WAITRESS #1**

I think she left already. She wasn't  
feelin' too good. We been covering  
for her.

Off Bernie's expression: Oh...

**EXT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - NIGHT**

his  
Bernie's Buick pulls into the lot. He parks, heads for  
room.

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Bernie enters. Flips on the light. No Natalie.

**BERNIE**

(calls to the bathroom)  
Natalie? You in there?

spreads  
Notices the  
No answer. He heads over. Finds it empty. Concern  
across his features. He glances around the room.  
closet wide open. Natalie's clothes missing.

**BERNIE**

(sotto)  
Natalie.

dresser  
That's when he catches sight of the note taped to the  
mirror. He rushes over, rips it off.

**FOR**  
**I'M SORRY BERNIE. I GUESS IT JUST WASN'T IN THE CARDS**  
**US. TAKE CARE, NATALIE.**

tremble.  
Bernie slumps to the floor in disbelief. Starts to

Christ,  
Then rocks back and forth, wracked by stifled sobs.  
make it stop hurting...

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER**

from  
bottle.

Bernie seated at the foot of the bed, drinking bourbon  
a solitary glass. He's almost gone through an entire

his

He glances down, notices a pair of Natalie's stockings  
sticking out from under the bed. He brings them up to  
face. Breathes her in, only to exhale a sorry breath.

**INT. SHANGRI-LA CASINO - BAR - NIGHT**

starts to  
for

Bernie stops at the bar for a cup of coffee. Doris  
pour the cream... whoops... empty. Bernie shrugs. Par  
the course. Time to go to work.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

turned  
facing

We see Bernie back in top form. Forget Mr. Cool, he's  
into Mr. Freeze with a vengeance. The high rollers are  
a nuclear winter on the floor thanks to Bernie.

**SERIES**

full

A -- A man with a fresh bankroll sits at a card table  
of hubris. Bernie pulls up a chair next to him.

craps  
are  
leaving

B -- We see a crowd of players hovering over a busy  
table. The cheerful congregation turns sour as the dice  
flung. Players groan as they jettison the table,  
just Bernie...

players  
their  
bankroll  
dealer

C -- We see a dealer pull a six card twenty one as  
sit with twelves and thirteens. They sit stunned as  
money is swept away. The same man with the hefty  
unclips the last of his green. He throws it over to the  
to change in.

D -- Larry, roaming the floor, is visibly disturbed by

quantify Bernie's cooling ability. It's something he can't  
and it unsettles him. He glances up toward Shelly's  
observation window, knows the man is gloating.

stogey. Good call. From behind the glass, Shelly lights up a  
Hint of a smile. You go, Bernie.

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

and Johnny Cappella rocks the house. PAN ACROSS to Shelly  
mood, Bernie seated in Shelly's booth. Shelly is in a jovial  
while Bernie is a portrait of misery.

**BERNIE**

I want you to tell me the truth,  
Shelly. Did you say something to  
Natalie? Did you muscle her --

**SHELLY**

Jesus, Bernie, is that what you think  
of me? That I would fuck with your  
happiness? That hurts.

Cappella. Bernie shrugs an apology, shifts his gaze to Johnny

**BERNIE**

This guy's all flash. No soul. I  
miss Buddy. Place isn't the same  
without him.

**SHELLY**

Buddy was tired. I gave him an easy  
out. It coulda been a lot worse...

**BERNIE**

(confused)  
You gave him an easy out? What are  
you talkin' about? I thought he...

get Shelly looks almost... tortured. Something he needs to  
off his chest.

**SHELLY**

He woulda never taken the buy-out  
offer. Buddy woulda stuck to his  
guns, no matter what. And they woulda

ended up hurting him. I couldn't let that happen.

**BERNIE**

Jesus... you... How can you sit here and justify it? Like you were Dr. Kevorkian or something?

**SHELLY**

Listen to me, you dumb fuck -- I loved that sonofabitch. But his time was up. What I was supposed to do, leave him to those corporate wolves? What I did, it was the humanitarian thing. That I have no doubt about. Afterwards, I held him in my arms and I cried like a fucking baby. What? You got this look -- what's this fucking look?

Off Bernie's shocked expression --

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

him on  
baptism  
off,  
head,

Bernie sits watching TV, a bottle of Ten High next to the bed. Same religious channel. This time it's a mass taking place on some river bank. He's about to doze when he hears a light rapping on the door. He cocks his head, not sure if it's the booze talking.

Bernie throws open the door --

doorway.  
dark.

Natalie standing there. A lonely angel framed in the doorway. Suitcase at her feet. 24 carat tears glistening in the dark.

Then  
to  
life.  
good.

They just stare at each other for an extended beat.

Natalie stumbles into Bernie's arms. Clingwraps herself to him. Bernie squeezes his eyes closed. Holds on for dear life. It's a different kind of pain now; one that hurts so

**ANGLE ON NATALIE**

about  
tomorrow. A

from over Bernie's shoulder. There's a bittersweet look  
her. Nothing good can come of this. But that's  
long ways off.

**INT. BERNIE'S BEDROOM - LATER**

seems at  
from a

Bernie and Natalie lie in each other's arms. Bernie  
ease. Natalie eyeballs the ceiling, smoke wisping up  
cigarette.

**NATALIE**

Bernie? You awake?

**BERNIE**

Yeah.

**NATALIE**

Let's just take off.

Bernie looks over at her.

**NATALIE**

I mean it. Let's just pack up and  
go. Tonight.

**BERNIE**

(closes his eyes)

I can't do that. I've got an  
obligation to Shelly. There's no --

**NATALIE**

Fuck Shelly. He doesn't give a shit  
about you. Let's just climb into  
your car and get the hell out of  
here.

Bernie cuts her off.

**BERNIE**

I can't do that, Natalie. They'd  
come after me. And because you were  
with me... I wouldn't want that on  
me.

bed.  
Natalie finishes her cigarette. Well, she's made her

Bernie starts nuzzling her. She turns away.

**NATALIE**

Just hold me.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - DAY**

With Shelly looking on as a high roller cleans up at craps.  
Bernie standing right there next to the guy.  
Which only seems to make it worse, as Bernie's presence  
spurs the player on to an even bigger win.  
him. Bernie has that goofy "my heart is full" look about  
looks nearby Which can mean only one thing in Shelly's book. The man  
about ready to split an atom. We see Larry hovering  
with a smug grin. Off of Shelly's enraged expression...

**EXT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - DAY**

Shelly Lou's black Oldsmobile pulls into the parking lot.  
and the boys climb out, head for...

**EXT. THE MOTEL COURTYARD - DAY**

people Natalie's sunning herself at the pool. The only other  
Lou and around are a middle-aged couple and a young boy.  
nothing -- Shelly (slipping on his leather gloves), followed by  
Tony, strides purposefully up to Natalie -- no hellos,  
just grabs her by the hair...

**NATALIE**

Hey! Ouch! What are you...?

open, He drags Natalie over to Bernie's room, kicks the door  
shoves Natalie inside...

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY**

and Shelly throws Natalie onto the bed. Lou closes the door

draws the blinds.

**NATALIE**

You got no fucking right...!

**SHELLY**

What did I tell you?! What did I fuckin' tell you?!

**NATALIE**

I tried... I couldn't...

**SHELLY**

I don't give a fuck!

Shelly heads over to the closet, rips it open, pulls out a suitcase. He starts throwing Natalie's clothes into the case.

**SHELLY**

You're gone, sweetheart. History. Kiss paradise goodbye.

**NATALIE**

(hysterical)

I can't leave! I won't! I love him. Doesn't that mean anything to you, you heartless fuck?

Shelly stops packing. He grabs Natalie up off the bed, starts smacking her around.

**SHELLY**

Who the fuck do you think you are? You ain't nobody! I could make you disappear like this...

(snaps his fingers)

And nobody would ever notice you were gone. Nobody!

**NATALIE**

(yells)

Bernie would! I got friends! You don't fuckin' own me. You got no right --

Shelly lifts Natalie up, throws her across the room into the dresser mirror. SMASH! She crumbles to the floor, glass

with showering her. Natalie grabs up a shard, rushes Shelly  
it...

**NATALIE**

Fuck you!

Tony She slashes Shelly across the arm. Ouch, fuck! Before  
snaps and Lou can make a move, Shelly ensnares her wrist --  
shard, it backwards -- AARRRRGGHHH!!! Shelly snatches up the  
in shoves her back on the bed. We see her terror reflected  
the jagged glass against her cheek...

**SHELLY**

You fuckin' cunt...

He slices her cheek open.

getting Tony and Lou look on with mutual expressions: Shelly's  
a little carried away here.

Shelly staggers to his feet...

**SHELLY**

You think that's bad? That's just a  
taste, bitch. You're still here when  
Bernie gets home and I'll finish the  
job. I'll cut you into so many fuckin'  
pieces, the vultures'll be trading  
on you for a month.

bills. Shelly reaches into his jacket, pulls out a wad of

Throws them at Natalie.

**SHELLY**

Here... go get yourself some cosmetic  
surgery.

leaving Shelly gestures to Tony and Lou. They exit the room,  
Natalie sobbing into one of Bernie's pillows.

**EXT. LUCKY STAR MOTEL - NIGHT**

for  
pushes

Bernie parks. Heads for his room. He's about to reach his key, when he realizes the door is slightly ajar. He his way into...

**INT. BERNIE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

...darkness.

**BERNIE**

Natalie.

Bernie fumbles for the light switch...

**NATALIE (O.S.)**

No, don't. I've got a headache.

**BERNIE**

(closing the door)

Did you take something? I got some aspirin in the --

**NATALIE**

Yeah. I already took something.

make  
he

There's just enough moonlight in the room for Bernie to out Natalie curled over on the bed. As he approaches, trips over Natalie's suitcase on the floor.

**BERNIE**

Ouch!

mirror.  
edges.

He cuts himself on a splinter of shattered glass as he staggers to his feet. Which draws his attention to the

Moonlight glows off the edges. That's all there is --

On the dresser: his bottle of Ten High. Empty.

bed.

Confused, Bernie fumbles his way over to Natalie on the

**BERNIE**

Natalie, what happened? The mirror...

makes

He reaches out to touch her face... instead his hand contact with a lump.

**BERNIE**

Natalie.

He jerks back, flips on the nightstand lamp.

**NATALIE**

Bernie, no! Shit...

bloody rag  
Bernie chokes at the sight of her. She clutches a  
sheets... to her cheek. Blood on the pillow... blood on the

And tears.

**BERNIE**

Oh Jesus... Natalie, who did this to  
you? We need to call the police...

**NATALIE**

I love you, Bernie. I just want you  
to know that. I fell in love with  
you. That wasn't part of the plan. I  
thought... easy money...

**BERNIE**

What are you saying?

**NATALIE**

Shelly. He paid me to get next to  
you. To keep you around. Whatever it  
took...

**BERNIE**

(a whisper)

Shelly?

**NATALIE**

You got it right the first night. I  
was for sale. Bought and paid for.  
You were the easy mark, Bernie.

Bernie slumps down on the edge of the bed. Sucker-  
punched.

Trying to make sense of it.

**NATALIE**

At first you were just another John.  
But then I started to take a closer  
look. For the first time, here was  
someone who wasn't trying to hustle

me. Wasn't pretending to be somebody he wasn't. Just a decent guy trying to get back on track. And it didn't hurt any that you put me up on a pedestal. It sure puts the gutter into perspective...

**BERNIE**

(still in disbelief)

Shelly...

**NATALIE**

Shelly wants me gone. He says I bring you luck. Lady luck. I stayed... to tell you to your face... and then you wouldn't want me no more... and I could just go...

Bernie stands shakily.

**BERNIE**

We gotta get you to the hospital. We'll talk about this later.

**NATALIE**

Just tell me one thing, Bernie. Tell me there's gonna be a later.

Bernie doesn't answer her.

**INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM WAITING AREA - NIGHT**

Natalie. FADE IN on Bernie's hunched over figure, waiting on

emotions. He tugs at his car keys as he wrestles with his

pain. Natalie's betrayal has finally sunken in. The man's in

Natalie. His natural instinct is to just take off. Run. Fuck

Fuck Shelly. Fuck this whole goddamn town.

front of Suddenly he looks up. A couple of people pass by in  
face him... and then there she is. Standing a few feet away,  
patched-up, arms clutching herself, not sure whether to  
approach him or not.

slowly,  
clear to  
in

The sight of her just breaks Bernie's heart. He stands  
legs like jelly -- and in that instant it's all so  
him. He walks over, forgiveness in his eyes, contrition  
hers.

She tries to say something. He shakes his head.

**BERNIE**

Sssh.

their

They embrace with an intensity that threatens to merge  
atoms into a single being.

**INT. BERNIE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT**

cruise

Bernie drives down a quiet Vegas street. It's spooky.  
Almost too quiet. All the lights are green as they  
into the night.

**NATALIE**

Tell me again, Bernie. Tell me it's  
all gonna be okay.

**BERNIE**

Everything's gonna be fine. This is  
our time. This is you and me and  
we're going for it.

catches

Natalie leans over and kisses him. As she does so, she  
sight of her face in the mirror. Starts to tear up.

**BERNIE**

You look in the mirror, you don't  
like what you see, don't believe it.  
You look in my eyes. That's the only  
mirror you gonna need. Look in my  
eyes, Natalie.

girl

She looks into Bernie's eyes. Sees the most beautiful  
in the world. Tears roll down her cheeks.

**BERNIE**

I love you. Marry me?

Off Natalie's startled reaction...

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. HOLY ROLLER WEDDING CHAPEL - NIGHT**

**A NEON SIGN READS: "HOLY ROLLER WEDDING CHAPEL. OPEN 24 HOURS."**

their  
BOOM DOWN as Bernie carries Natalie out of the chapel,  
lips fused together.

**INT. BERNIE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT**

the  
Bernie and Natalie burn down the highway. The lights of  
big city just a glimmer in the rearview.

CASINO.  
Up ahead, a billboard reads: THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND

**TAKE A GAMBLE ON PARADISE.**

picks up  
no.  
TIGHT on Bernie. His expression turns grim. Natalie  
on it. She shakes her head. Silently pleading: Bernie,

sits  
Bernie  
Bernie tries to shrug it off. But the spectre of Shelly  
firmly on his shoulder. There's no escaping him. We see  
fighting it. Losing. SHIT!

the  
In the next instant, Bernie pulls a quick U-turn across  
middle shoulder, starts back toward Vegas.

**EXT. CASINO PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Bernie pulls into the parking lot. Kills his lights.

**INT. BERNIE'S BUICK - NIGHT**

Bernie reaches for the door. Natalie grabs his arm.

**NATALIE**

You don't have to do this, Bernie.

**BERNIE**

Yeah, I do. I have to tell him right

to his face. I will not look over my shoulder for the rest of my life -- our lives.

**NATALIE**

Bernie, your chart... that first night. I wasn't being straight with you. It's the worst chart I've ever seen. There's nothing in the cards for you. I'm scared...

**BERNIE**

Don't you see, that was before you opened your heart to me. Everything's different now. I got lady luck on my side. Ain't nothing gonna happen to me.

Natalie shakily opens her purse, pulls out a handful of hundreds. Pushes the money at Bernie...

**NATALIE**

It's three thousand dollars. Take it. Maybe Shelly'll accept it as a down payment. We can send him the rest in installments... after we get settled.

**BERNIE**

I don't think --

**NATALIE**

Take it.

Bernie stuffs the cash in his jacket. Climbs out.

**BERNIE**

Whatever happens, I --

**NATALIE**

(abrupt)  
I know, Bernie.

down  
She turns away. Stares out the window, tears streaming her cheeks.

**NATALIE**

(sotto; gentle)  
I know.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

FLASHBACK  
Bernie makes for the Paradise Lounge. SPLIT SECOND  
as he imagines Shelly laying into Natalie. Fast cuts.  
Reverberating sound echoes. Just the fuel Bernie needs  
to make his stand. By the time he arrives at

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

He's practically foaming at the mouth with rage. He  
barges in to find Shelly at a table in agitated conversation  
with Nicky, Larry and Marty. They fall silent, realizing  
something is wrong.

**SHELLY**

Bernie, what's the matter? You look  
a little fucking spooked.

Bernie throws something in Shelly's face. It's that  
bloody rag Natalie was holding to her cheek. It lands on the  
table in front of everyone.

WHAM!  
Shelly swats it away with disgust. Jumps to his feet.

gets in  
Bernie slugs him one. As Shelly doubles over, Bernie  
his face.

**BERNIE**

You lay another finger on her, I  
swear to God I'll kill you. You hear  
me? I'll fuckin' kill you!

away.  
Shelly's goons quickly move in, grab Bernie. Drag him

Shelly composes himself, turns to his guests.

**SHELLY**

Will you excuse me for a moment?

He rushes off. Nicky shoots Larry a resigned look.

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

strides  
himself to

Lou shoves Bernie inside. Bernie kisses floor. Shelly  
past, leans against his desk. Bernie slowly drags  
his feet.

**BERNIE**

(a hoarse whisper)  
Why? Why, Shelly?

**SHELLY**

Because you never give up a good  
thing, Bernie. You are a good thing.  
The best fuckin' cooler there ever  
was. And I need him back.

**BERNIE**

He ain't never comin' back.

**SHELLY**

That's a dead man talking.

**BERNIE**

I'm through with this joint, Shelly.  
Natalie and me, we just got married.  
We're outta here. I'll get a job out  
there in the world. Send you half my  
paycheck every month. Make good on  
my obligations.

**SHELLY**

(gets in Bernie's  
face)  
You try to walk on me, Bernie, and  
I'll fuckin' bury you. The both of  
you.

**BERNIE**

I don't think so.

Shelly's expression: Oh yeah?

**BERNIE**

You whack me, then Bernie Lootz ain't  
the world's biggest loser no more.  
That honor's gonna fall upon you,  
Shelly. And maybe you had it all  
along.

**SHELLY**

What the fuck? Me? I'm the loser?

**BERNIE**

What you got? What do you got in your life besides this joint?

**SHELLY**

What the fuck more do I need?

**BERNIE**

You got nothin', Shelly. This place -- your legacy -- it's a mirage. You turn your back and it don't even exist. There's no day, there's no night, it's all just one big fuckin' blur and it don't count for nothin'!

Shelly looks to Tony and Lou:

**SHELLY**

You believe this fuckin' guy?

Bernie gets eye-to-eye with Shelly. A first.

**BERNIE**

I feel real sorry for you. Yeah, you got this fear of germs thing. But it goes deeper than that. You can't get close to no one. On an emotional level. You're the worst kind of gambler there ever was: too scared to put his chips on the table. Too scared to open his heart... to extend any real kinda friendship. Always afraid it's gonna end out in the desert. Well, sweet fuckin' dreams, pal, 'cause I'm out and if that's where it ends, that's where it ends.

Bernie turns his back on Shelly, strides over to the door.

**SHELLY**

That's a real heartfelt speech, Lootz. All that Jimmy Stewart in ya face intensity. You almost sold me.

(massages his throat)

Man, I've got a fucking lump in my throat.

(a beat)

But it still don't change things. You bail on me without making good on my 150 G's and I'm gonna be forced

to close the books on you. You and  
the broad. You leave me no choice.

They  
anything.  
guess

Bernie turns, looks at Shelly. Shelly's dead serious.  
hard stare each other for a beat. Bernie doesn't say  
At least, not out loud. His eyes do all the talking: "I  
you leave me no choice either." HOLD on Bernie's steely  
resolve.

**INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT**

standing  
Murky

This could be the opening of the film -- Bernie  
with his back to us, facing the gold elevator doors.  
reflection. The floor lights ascending fast...

PUSH IN

The doors open and the soundtrack goes SILENT. SLOW  
on him as he takes in the action -- a gladiator about  
to enter the Coliseum. Something comes alive in his eyes.  
A  
loser.

previous

CLOSE-UP as his foot steps onto the casino floor --  
An explosion of amplified CASINO WALLA shatters the  
silence.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT**

he's

We follow Bernie as he wanders through the casino like  
done a thousand times -- but this time with conviction.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

whole

Bernie steps up to an empty table, throws down the  
three grand onto the felt.

**BERNIE**

Change only...

who it

The CREW working the table stop down as they realize

croupier

is. The table is dead. Bernie couldn't be needed. The slowly gathers up the green, hands it to the boxman.

**CROUPIER**

Check change three thousand.

The boxman counts the cash.

**BOXMAN**

This a pleasure cruise, Bernie?

**BERNIE**

You could say that.

**BOXMAN**

Well, it'll be a short one. Table's dead.

**CROUPIER**

It is now, anyway.

they're

The others chuckle. The boxman counts out the chips; given to Bernie. He places them all on the passline.

couple.

The stickman pushes over the dice. Bernie picks a

He throws....

**STICKMAN**

Yo Eleven! Pay the line.

He

Bernie picks up his three thousand dollars in winnings.

players.

lets it ride. The table quickly fills up with hungry

Bernie throws the dice again...

**STICKMAN**

Winner seven!

line

Bernie is now paid six thousand dollars on his pass bet.

feel

The other players also collect their winnings. They can something in the air.

little Bernie, forehead beaded with sweat, rubs the felt a  
before he picks up the dice. He throws...

**STICKMAN**

Six easy. Easy way six!

sure Bernie takes double odds on his bet. The boxman isn't  
what to do. Does he stop him? Does he dare?

Whatever it In the b.g., people gather to watch the action.  
is, it's catching. The table next to them bursts into  
applause.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - MONTAGE - NIGHT**

grabs A -- Close on a slot machine as it pays out. The woman  
the payout feverishly.

dealer B -- A group at the blackjack table cheers as the  
busts out.

longer. C -- The line at the cashier cage gets longer and

meticulously -- CHIPS. Stacks and stacks of chips, being  
counted.

number D -- A quick shot of a roulette ball dropping into  
large twenty-one. The dealer slowly puts the marker atop a  
stack of chips in the twenty-one square.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

for the A shot of the faces of frenzied dice players waiting  
as outcome of the throw. Followed by a thunderous release  
the point is made.

nearly In the center of it all. Bernie Lootz. His rail is  
and full of chips. The other players pat him on the back  
shake his hand as the croupiers busily pay the line.

out  
much  
could

He's a winner. And it's infectious. He's gone and "contaminated" the entire casino. The slots are ringing of control. CHEERING. WHOOPING. MOANS of delight. This excitement threatens to take the fucking roof off. Bernie just gazes around in amazement. If only Natalie see him now...

**BERNIE**

(sotto)

Natalie... this is you...

gently

Bernie takes a thousand dollars in chips, tosses it to the croupier.

**BERNIE**

For the boys.

Bernie  
money.

The entire crew stop for a moment out of respect. notices. They all nod as the boxman locks up the tip

**STICKMAN**

Okay, we're coming out. Get your YO bets, C&E, any seven...

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT**

Scotch,  
He  
assessment

Shelly sits alone in his office, nursing a glass of listening to some scratchy Chet Baker on the turntable. looks pre-occupied. Almost melancholic. Bernie's of his life having hit home. Suddenly the door is thrown open. It's Tony...

**TONY**

Shelly, take a look at number 4.

**INT. CASINO - CRAPS TABLES - MOMENTS LATER**

of the

Shelly wanders up slowly to find Bernie at the center

get

crowd. He steps behind the table into the casino pit to  
a closer look.

**SHELLY**

(to the boxman)  
How much is he up?

The boxman looks up nervously.

**BOXMAN**

Around three hundred thousand.

Shelly mouths the words under his breath.

**SHELLY**

Why didn't one of you fucking geniuses  
call me?

**BOXMAN**

We tried. You weren't picking up.  
Besides, it was Bernie.

The game resumes.

**STICKMAN**

Alright. We're coming out folks,  
hands high...

Bernie stops.

**BERNIE**

Wait!

Everybody quiets down to listen.

**BERNIE**

Color me up a hundred fifty thousand.  
(beat)  
And give it to him.

watches

Bernie points to Shelly standing in the pit. The crowd  
the drama play out.

**BERNIE**

That's what I owe you, Shelly. There  
it is. We're square.  
(to the table)  
Let it be known, Bernie Lootz lives  
up to his obligations.

lays

The boxman colors up a hundred fifty thousand in chips, them out on the table. He counts it and claps his hands together for the cameras.

**BOXMAN**

One hundred fifty thousand, coming in.

The

Shelly

others. A

from

Shelly stands motionless. Staring into Bernie's eyes. whole crowd watches. After what seems like an eternity, nods. Then the Boxman feeds the chips in with the moment later, we can nary tell they were ever gone. Larry appears next to Shelly. Nicky and Marty watching the sidelines -- dour expressions.

**LARRY**

What's the matter with you? He's one of ours and he's taking us to the fucking cleaners.

**SHELLY**

Lootz's off the clock. As long as he's off the clock, he's free to play. Just like every other schmuck in this joint.

**LARRY**

It smells wrong. I'm shutting him down. He's not leaving here with a dime --

of

him

Marty

Shelly suddenly jabs Larry in the throat with the tips his fingers. Larry gasps, starts to cave. Shelly keeps upright, escorts him to a nearby men's room. Nicky and looking on in amazement.

**INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT**

drags

The door flies open, Larry catapults into frame. OOF! Bounces off the wall. Shelly's right behind him. He

gets

Larry to his feet. Slams him into the wall again --  
right up in his face.

**SHELLY**

Now you listen real good, you Harvard  
turd. Lootz is on the up-and-up. He  
leaves here tonight with whatever he  
comes out with. You so much as touch  
a hair on his head and I'll fucking  
wallpaper this joint with your ass.  
Muted tones, right?

(slams him hard)

What's that? I don't hear nothing.  
Wait a minute -- yeah, now I hear  
it.

Blended in at a subsonic level.

Some kinda mantra: pain, pain, pain.

deep  
sink,  
b.g.

Shelly headbutts Larry. It's like the sound of a walnut  
cracking. Larry slumps to the floor. Shelly takes a  
breath. Control, control, control. He heads over to the  
washes his hands -- over and over. Larry moaning in the  
Shelly adjusts his tie in the mirror. Control.

**INT. CASINO FLOOR - CRAPS TABLES - NIGHT**

craps  
twenty  
off to  
dice.

Shelly exits the men's room, makes his way back to the  
table where Bernie is. Just in time to see Bernie lay  
five grand on the pass line. A waitress hands a drink  
Bernie. He takes a healthy swig. Then picks up the

Throws.

**STICKMAN**

Crap ace deuce! Line down!

is  
chips.

The crowd gasps in horror as Bernie's twenty five grand  
quickly raked in. He replaces it with another stack of

gently

The dice are pushed over to him. He rubs the felt real before throwing. Then lets loose the dice.

around

All eyes follow the dice. They hit the felt and bounce behind a stack of chips. The stickman can't spot them.

**STICKMAN**

Call it.

to

A croupier makes the call as anxious players rubberneck get a look.

**CROUPIER**

Twelve crap.

truth.

The crowd groans again. It appears the streak is over. Bernie looks out over the felt. This is his moment of

He unloads his entire rail and puts it on the field.

He yells out.

**BERNIE**

Fifty thousand dollars!

The crowd chimes in with every opinion under the sun.

**MAN (O.S.)**

On the field? What're you fucking nuts?

**WOMAN (O.S.)**

Don't do it!

**MAN 2 (O.S.)**

Shake it, don't break it, baby!

lets out

The dice are slowly pushed over to Bernie. The crowd is feeling it. The entire casino is feeling it. Bernie

throw

a long soulful sigh. His whole life depends on the next and everyone knows it.

show

Bernie rubs the felt as usual and lines up the dice to a six and a six. He picks them up.

**BERNIE**

Come on sixty-six!

from  
across

Locks eyes with Shelly -- then lets loose. The dice fly  
his hand. Slowly, ever so slowly we watch them sail  
the table. The entire table holds their breath in  
anticipation...

**CUT TO:**

**NIGHT**

**EXT. SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AND CASINO - MOMENTS LATER -**

seems  
behind

Bernie throws open the doors, stumbles out. His limp  
more pronounced. He wears a miserable expression.  
At the car Bernie steps up. Opens the door, slides in  
the wheel.

**INT. BERNIE'S CAR - NIGHT**

Natalie throws her arms around him...

**NATALIE**

Thank God... I thought for sure...

Bernie just looks at her. Pale, mournful features.

**NATALIE**

It's okay, right? You guys worked it  
out. He took the three grand? Tell  
me it's okay, Bernie?

He doesn't answer. Just starts up the car...

**INT. SHELLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

wiped  
winning

On the surveillance monitors: the epidemic continues --  
players winning at every table. The Shangri-la's been  
out. There's no way they can cover this amount of  
action.

PANNING ACROSS to Shelly. Defeated. The phone rings  
incessantly in the b.g. Shelly ignores it.

Lou pokes his head into the office:

**LOU**

Want me to get that, Shelly?

for  
Shelly doesn't respond. He reaches into his desk drawer  
shot... that bottle and a glass. Is about to pour himself a

the  
Fuck it. Pushes the glass aside. Takes it straight from  
bottle. The phone keeps ringing...

Hold on  
On the scale model of the newly proposed Shangri-la.  
it.

WHAM! A chair enters frame, shatters "paradise."

Kicking  
WIDER: Shelly trashing the model with a vengeance.  
the debris around the office.

Swats  
Drenched in sweat, Shelly staggers over to his desk.  
disinfectant the empty gin bottle to the floor. Picks up his  
spray, gives his desk one last wipedown. Immaculate.  
Stands, walks out...

**INT. BERNIE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT**

rearview  
We see the lights of the city receding in Bernie's  
the car mirror. Once outside of the city limits Bernie pulls  
over.

**NATALIE**

What are you stopping for?

Bernie throws open his door...

**BERNIE**

I think I'm gonna...

entire  
Throw up. And he does. It's as if he's choking up the  
city. Everything that's bad about it. Finally, he pulls

himself back into the car. Slams the door.

eyes.  
Natalie touches his cheek, a reassuring look in her

wad of  
almost  
Suddenly, he's smiling. He opens his coat and a huge  
cash tumbles out. He throws it up into the air. Natalie  
chokes with surprise.

**BERNIE**

Bahamas, here we come, baby.

She throws her arms around him...

hand of  
Suddenly an EXPLOSION OF LIGHT! A flashlight. In the  
a MOTORCYCLE COP. He raps on the window...

**COP**

Step out of the car please.

**BERNIE**

(lowers the window)

What's the problem, officer?

littering  
The cop runs the flashlight over the bundles of cash  
the car interior.

**COP**

Just step out of the car, please.  
Both of you.

lowers  
out.  
their  
Bernie and Natalie exchange unsettled looks. The cop  
his hand to his gun. Bernie nods at Natalie. They climb  
He directs them off to the side. Shines his light in  
faces.

**BERNIE**

If my driving... if I was going a  
little fast -- I was just over  
excited, officer. See, we just  
had a big win at the Shangri-la --

**COP**

You didn't win nothing.

The cop pulls out his revolver, trains it on them.

**INTERCUT WITH:**

**INT. SHANGRI-LA UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT**

the  
Who's

Shelly opens the door to his Cadillac. Climbs behind  
wheel. His keys are already waiting in the ignition.  
gonna steal Shelly Kaplow's car, right?

seat,  
mirror.

Shelly doesn't start her up. He just leans back in his  
emits a deep sigh. He glances up at the rearview

Catches sight of a SILHOUETTE in the back.

**INTERCUT WITH:**

**EXT. VEGAS HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

So

Bernie and Natalie staring into the barrel of the cop's  
revolver. Natalie clutches Bernie's arm. Bernie nods.

there you have it.

**NATALIE**

Oh Jesus, Bernie, I knew it. It was  
too good to be true. Who were we  
kidding?

**COP**

Get down on your knees. Both of you.

ground  
just  
Natalie

They look at him in shock. He gestures them to the  
behind Bernie's car. We CUT TO a shot from the highway:  
the cop standing at the tail-end of Bernie's car,  
and Bernie hidden from view.

**ON BERNIE AND NATALIE**

Natalie,  
still

down on their knees. Bernie places his arm around  
pulls her close to him. Paralyzed with terror, she  
manages a bittersweet smile.

but  
two  
Bernie should be projecting fear, but there's nothing  
his overwhelming love for Natalie in his eyes. It's a  
way current.

needs to  
that  
This is their last moment together; everything that  
be said is being transmitted through a look. A look  
says: no regrets.

**INTERCUT WITH:**

**INT. SHELLY'S CADILLAC - NIGHT**

his  
Nicky leans forward out of the shadows. Shelly holds  
gaze in the mirror. Nicky just shrugs.

**NICKY**

The kid wants you should know, Shelly,  
he's just protecting our investment --  
the old school way. See you around.

appears  
Shelly  
Shelly nods. He knows the score... A flash of steel  
against his head. Muzzle strobe -- THUP! So long,  
Kaplow.

**EXT. VEGAS HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

pistol.  
The cop looms over Bernie and Natalie. Cocks his

Lowers the gun to the back of Bernie's head.

place.  
They appear oblivious to it. They're already in another  
Sunning themselves in the Bahamas.

The cop squeezes back the trigger.

**ON BERNIE AND NATALIE**

shriek of  
still looking at each other. Suddenly the piercing

SCREECHING TIRES... followed by a reverberating, bone  
crunching --

WHAM! -- and a GUNSHOT.

eyes, not  
still  
lights  
would-

Bernie and Natalie still staring into each other's quite sure what's just transpired. Only that they're breathing. They look around, startled to see the tail of a PICK-UP TRUCK about ten yards away. The cop, their be assassin, rendered road kill beneath the wheels. All this in the blink of an eye.

shock-  
staggers  
driver's

Natalie clutches Bernie's arm. Suppresses a hysterical, induced giggle. Bernie just looks dumbfounded. He to his feet, rushes over to the pick-up truck. The head is protruding through the shattered windshield. Death-glazed eyes.

Shakes his  
floor of

Bernie feels for the man's pulse just to be sure. head. We see a dozen Coors empties on the seat and the truck.

They

Natalie checks the cop. Likewise. Bernie comes over. regard each other breathlessly.

**BERNIE**

He was drunk. It was just freak  
luck...  
(catches himself...)

**NATALIE**

Don't give it a name, Bernie. It  
scares me. All I know is, you're  
still running hot and that's a good  
thing. But we're only winners if we  
keep going. No looking back.

**BERNIE**

Lady luck, Natalie. I'm calling it.  
Lady luck. And we got it as long as  
we're together. They can't touch us  
now.

car. He kisses her furiously. Then drags her over to his

They climb in. Drive off.

**EXT. VEGAS HIGHWAY/INT. BERNIE'S BUICK - DAWN**

the Bernie's Buick racing into the sunrise. Racing toward  
dream. Bernie, eyes fixed on the road ahead, with the  
contented smile of a man who has gambled on love -- and  
won.

His prize, resting her head against his shoulder.

trumpet The money, well, that ain't half bad as well. A smoky,  
mood driven Chet Baker-like piece accentuates the triumphant  
on the soundtrack, as we SUPERIMPOSE...

**INT. PARADISE LOUNGE - NIGHT**

with a ...a little flash-forward into the future. Larry sits  
group of CORPORATE TYPES.

**LARRY**

Gentlemen...

(beat)

I thank you for your vote of confidence. As the Shangri-la's new Director of Casino Operations, I'm gonna make a personal guarantee to each and every one of you. Your investment in this casino will be well looked after. The future looks bright, gentlemen. Very, very bright.

and They raise their glasses to him. Congenial smiles, one  
Promises, all. Smiles that don't transcend to their eyes.  
promises. We'll see... DISSOLVING BACK INTO...

**INT. BERNIE'S CAR - MOVING - DAWN**

Sin STARTING TIGHT on BERNIE and NATALIE speeding away from  
shot) as City, PULLING OUT and RISING above them (helicopter

casinos  
Shangri-

we SUPERIMPOSE stock footage of all the old school  
being demolished. As we leave Vegas in the past... a  
la lost forever. Eulogized by Sinatra's LUCK BE A LADY.

**FADE OUT.**

**THE END**