

**CROUPIER**

A screenplay by

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Script

Shooting

**FADE IN:**

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

A roulette table. The PUNTERS place their bets. TWELVE  
all PLAYERS, nine men, three women. The FACES of the men,  
ages, intense, hopeful, fearful. Which of them is JACK?

**JACK'S VOICE**

Now he had become the still centre  
of that spinning wheel of  
misfortune.

A MAN'S hand spins the wheel. The ball is thrown  
against the spin. Hands, faces, chips...

**JACK'S VOICE**

The world turned round him...  
leaving him miraculously untouched  
The little white ball circles the  
spinning wheel.

The PUNTERS'S faces as the ball starts to bounce. All  
eyes are on the bouncing ball.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The croupier had reached his goal.  
He no longer heard the sound of  
the ball.

The back of the CROUPIER'S hand, his slicked-back short  
hair, razor cut. The CAMERA moves around to his face...

**JACK'S VOICE**

To begin with he was Jack Manfred...  
whistling sound takes Jack back in time.

**INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY**

dyed  
on  
JACK is walking through a maze of open-plan partitioned offices. He is casually but fashionably dressed, hair blond long, a nervous elegance about him, almost unrecognisable from the croupier's face. He searches for the right office. He finds it. The name the open is GILES CREMORNE.

**INT. GILES' OFFICE - DAY**

Jacketless,  
GILES CREMORNE, a public schoolboy in his late twenties comes forward and vigorously shakes JACK'S hand. he wears yellow braces. Next to his tidy desk is a slot machine.

**GILES**

Take a pew, Jack. You look well.  
What's it been, two years since we broke bread?

GILES has an upper-class accent, but an acquired street manner.

**JACK**

Three years, two months. March '93.

**GILES**

What a memory you've got. Maths always was your strong suit. What happened to the moaning Lisa?

**JACK**

She went back to South Africa.

**GILES**

(digging)  
Did she?  
(smiles)  
You were pretty thick at one time.

**JACK**

We all played the field.

mobile  
GILES frowns at a memory, an implication. GILES'S

phone buzzes. He picks up.

**GILES**

Hi-ya... I'll call you back.  
(to Jack)  
Now then...

**JACK**

(suddenly)  
I want a job, Giles.

**GILES**

(cautiously)  
All right. As what?

**JACK**

I was thinking perhaps I could be  
a reader. You employ readers, don't  
you?

**GILES**

We do. For unsolicited manuscripts.  
We pay twenty pounds a manuscript.  
You might get two, maybe three in  
a week. Can you live on sixty  
pounds?

JACK opens a pack of Gitanes.

**GILES**

Sorry. This is a no-smoking office,  
Jack. You've written a book, haven't  
you? I didn't read it myself, but --

A WOMAN SECRETARY puts her head into the office.

**GILES**

Give me ten minutes, Fiona.

FIONA puts a fax on GILES'S desk, smiles at JACK, and  
goes.

**GILES**

Fiona used to read for me.

He winks at JACK.

**GILES**

Let me tell you about our operation.  
We like personality authors. People  
the public recognises. Celebrity's  
what sells books. We can always

find someone to do the writing.  
First, we need the face. Then the  
concept.

(he is reading the  
fax)

Right now I'm looking for a soccer  
novel. Something where a tycoon  
buys a lousy team and takes it to  
the top. Seven figure transfer  
fees. Corruption all down the line.  
Violence on and off the pitch.  
Steroids. Got any concepts? It  
could be a thug story. I tell you  
what. Why don't you think about  
it. A couple of pages. The pitch.  
Steroids. Got any concepts? It  
could be a thug story. I tell you  
what. Why don't you think about  
it. A couple of pages.

(smiles)

With plenty of sex, of course.

handle,  
GILES pops a coin into the slot machine, pulls the  
waits.

**JACK**

Interesting, Giles. I will think  
about it.

The machine spits out several coins. GILES takes them.

**GILES**

Let me give you three words of  
advice, Jack. Don't give up. Stick  
with it. Who persists wins. That's  
my motto. Write, write, write.

JACK nods, extends his hand. A firm handshake.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack had three words for, Giles.  
Go fuck yourself.

machine  
Meeting over. GILES smiles goodbye, pockets his slot  
winnings.

**INT. JACK'S BASEMENT FLAT - SITTING ROOM - DAY**

a  
The untidy evidence. To the accompaniment of the music,

Invention  
A  
vases  
everywhere,  
Poker  
A  
of  
table.  
glass  
soccer  
letter...  
drink.

discordant version, three dog-eared copies of 'The  
Of The Wheel', A Novel by JACK MANFRED. Worn furniture.  
pile of literary magazines. Two elegantly arranged  
of flowers. Women's fashion magazines. Books  
including 'Scarne on Gambling', 'The Education of A  
Player', 'Delta of Venus' and other books by Anais Nin.  
woman's dress, back from the cleaners. A framed etching  
Cape Town, South Africa, in the eighteenth century.  
Finally...  
Beneath the iron barred window, with a view of the iron  
steps down from the street, JACK sits at the dining  
In front of him is a word processor. He toys with a  
of vodka, smoking a Gitane, and leafing through a  
fan magazine. He starts to touch-type, looking at the  
screen, not the keyboard. Words appear, letter by  
THE BALL... A NOVEL... BY JACK MANFRED. He pauses to

**EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY**

A MAN, face unseen, steps into a phone booth. CLOSE ON:  
his hands. It is impossible to tell where he is.

He opens his pocket book, addresses, diary etc., and  
searches through for something.

**EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY**

among  
uniform.  
crossed  
starts  
longer

He finds what he's looking for: a small photograph,  
others of girls, of a ten year-old boy in school  
On the back are three phone numbers, two of them  
out. The MAN lifts the receiver, inserts coins. He  
to press the numbers. There are CLOSE-UPS of his finger  
pressing the sequence of digits, each one CLOSER,  
than the one before, until...

**INT. JACK'S SITTING ROOM - DAY**

waits

The phone rings. JACK looks to the answering machine,  
for the voice.

**MAN'S VOICE**

Jacko, if you're there, pick up. I  
want to talk to you. It's important.

JACK hesitates, then picks up.

**JACK**

Dad, I'm here.

**EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY**

tie.

The MAN is handsome, tanned, 50ish, white shirt, dark  
He is JACK'S father.

**JACK SR.**

How's it going?

The subsequent conversation is INTERCUT between SITTING  
ROOM and PHONE BOOTH.

**JACK**

Great.

**JACK SR.**

Found a job?

**JACK**

No.

**JACK SR.**

Well I've got something for you.  
In London, I mean. I've been  
chatting to some friends. Do you  
know the Golden Lion casino? It's  
in Bayswater, I believe... They're  
looking for a dealer, a croupier.

JACK SR pulls out a cigarette - a Gitanes.

**JACK**

That's not what I want to do, dad.

JACK stubs his cigarette out.

**JACK SR.**

(lighting his  
cigarette)

Don't be stubborn. The pay won't be grand, but it's regular. That's what you need, isn't it? I know you don't like taking my advice...

**JACK**

(drinks)

It's not that.

**JACK SR.**

I've set this up for you. Call the Golden Lion and ask for Mr Reynolds, he's the Manager. I don't know him personally, but I've spoken to his boss. Don't say no, Jacko. Give yourself a break.

JACK reaches for a cigarette.

**JACK**

All right, I'll think about it.

I won't. Goodbye, dad.

**JACK SR.**

Just do it. You've got the knack, you've got the personality, you got that from me.

JACK lights up.

**JACK SR.**

You understand the punters. Think about it, you can write during the day and sleep knowing the bills are paid.

As he speaks, he watches passing WOMEN.

**JACK SR.**

For Christ's sake, Jacko, don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Have you written that name down? Reynolds, at the Golden Lion.  
(exhales)

**JACK**

(exhales)

All right, dad. Yes, I'll call

him.

down  
JACK is not enthusiastic, but he scribbles the name  
on a pad.

**JACK**

So how are you doing, dad?

**JACK SR.**

Great. I've just started a new company. Solid financing. It's good.

(pause)

I love you Jacko, you know that

**JACK**

Yes, I know that.

**JACK SR.**

Don't let yourself down.

**JACK**

I won't. Goodbye, dad.

JACK hangs up.

**INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY**

We  
walks  
barman's  
suit  
Stubbing out his cigarette, JACK SR. leaves the booth.  
now see where he is. A beach bar in South Africa. He  
to the bar and....goes behind it, slipping on his  
jacket. A WOMAN in dark mirror glasses and a bathing  
is waiting.

**JACK SR.**

(smiles)

Sorry to keep you. What'll you have?

**INT. JACK'S SITTING ROOM - DAY**

JACK, disturbed by the call, pours himself a vodka. He looks at what he's written: 'THE BALL... A NOVEL BY...  
**JACK MANFRED.'**

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack knew something was wrong.

He'd forgotten Giles' advice. Giles said three words.

JACK inserts a word in the title. It now reads: 'ON THE BALL'. JACK drinks. After a moment...

**JACK'S VOICE**

JACK'S VOICE No. Jack knew it still wasn't quite right...

'IN  
the  
falls

He types: 'IN THE BALLS'. Then, on reflection, deletes THE'. Through the iron bars JACK watches feet pass on street above. A drunk drops a beer can over. The can in SLOW MOTION but the clatter is loud.

**DRUNK'S VOICE**

I want to fuck the whole world over.

**INT. CASINO - DAY**

of  
and

Reception area. The CAMERA turns around the fake glitz the interior: brass, drapes, polished wood, mirrors, moves towards the front door.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Welcome back Jack... to the house of addiction.

JACK'S  
him.

The door opens. Against a blaze of street daylight, silhouette appears. The CAMERA moves forward to greet JACK removes his wristwatch.

**INT. CASINO - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY**

his

JACK shakes hands with DAVID REYNOLDS, a cold man in late forties, dead behind the eyes.

**REYNOLDS**

David Reynolds, I'm the Manager here. Sit down, John.

**JACK**

Jack.

REYNOLDS examines a file in front of him.

**REYNOLDS**

You've been recommended by the management here. They know your father. He has a bit of a reputation, hasn't he?

**JACK**

(frowns)

Has he?

**REYNOLDS**

In any case, I understand you've had some previous experience... in South Africa.

(Jack nods)

You'll find the rules a little different here. Before we start, you haven't got a police record, have you?

**JACK**

No.

REYNOLDS opens the door. He lets JACK go on ahead.

**REYNOLDS**

Where did you go to school?

**JACK**

(surprised)

I was at Beadles.

**REYNOLDS**

I don't think I know that one. Private, I suppose.

**INT. CASINO - HALL - DAY**

tacky

The full overhead lights give the casino an exposed, appearance, devoid of mystery or glamour. The place has roulette tables and blackjack counters. It is deserted except for several CLEANING LADIES, vacuuming, emptying ashtrays. REYNOLDS walks with JACK, talking.

**REYNOLDS**

There are three types of casino in the U.K. High volume. Small faction. And MOTR. That's middle of the

road. Us.

**JACK**

Do you have a Salon Prive?

**REYNOLDS**

We tried. But there wasn't enough business. The punters like company.

REYNOLDS goes to one of the tables with JACK.

**REYNOLDS**

Let's see you handle the chips.

He slides open a box and tips 200 chips of varying denominations onto the table.

**JACK**

I have to assume the serial numbers on the bowl and cylinder correspond.

**REYNOLDS**

We check every four days.

**JACK**

Why four? And not three or five?

**REYNOLDS**

(shrugs)

It's the procedure here. Now sort the chips.

JACK starts to stack the chips in piles from a hundred pounds to five. REYNOLDS watches. JACK'S fingers work

fast.

In a matter of moments he has the lot stacked.

**JACK**

Stacks of 20. Rows of 5.

**REYNOLDS**

Any exceptions?

**JACK**

25 pounds or 25 pence in fours.

**REYNOLDS**

Give me 365.

He presses a stopwatch in his hand. JACK quickly sets

out

piles

four neat piles, three of 100, one of 65. All four are in denominations of ten and five.

**REYNOLDS**

Very good. Now take these colours...

He throws a pile of blue and white chips on the table. The blue are 10, the white are 5.

**REYNOLDS**

I want 780, but I want 500 in denominations of 25.

JACK nods and gets to work. His fingers make Reynolds's ticking watch seem slow.

**REYNOLDS**

(impressed)

Very good.

**INT. CASINO - DAY**

Now at a roulette table, REYNOLDS has prepared the bets for fifteen punters. It's a set-up to test Jack's style and concentration. REYNOLDS gives JACK the white ball.

**JACK**

You use two alternating, don't you?

**REYNOLDS**

We do.

(hands him a second ball)

**JACK**

(hesitates)

Where's the magnet?

**REYNOLDS**

They've been tested.

JACK spins the wheel, throws the ball against the turn.

**JACK**

No more bets.

REYNOLDS

As the ball begins to bounce, but before it stops, turns to a CLEANING LADY who's emptying some ashtrays nearby.

**REYNOLDS**

Could you stop that for a minute?

catches  
the  
The WOMAN looks up, surprised. JACK watches, then  
sight of REYNOLDS surreptitiously moving a chip onto  
third line.

**JACK**

I'm sorry, sir, I've called no  
more bets.

The  
JACK reaches across, takes the chip and puts it on the  
wood Grounding the wheel. REYNOLDS nods approvingly.  
ball stops.

**JACK**

23 Red. Odd.

23.  
He now rakes away the losers' chips and pays out the  
smallest first, before getting to the major pay-out on  
It's all very efficient and speedy.  
REYNOLDS is increasingly impressed.

**REYNOLDS**

Haven't you forgotten something?

**JACK**

(thinks)  
I don't think so.

**REYNOLDS**

Wipe your hands.

JACK takes out a handkerchief.

**REYNOLDS**

Not with your own cloth. Besides,  
your pockets will be stitched.

**JACK**

What happens if I want to sneeze?

**REYNOLDS**

You won't. Not without permission.

JACK laughs. REYNOLDS smiles. They like each other.

**REYNOLDS**

Fine. Now let's move on.

**INT. CASINO - DAY**

A blackjack table. JACK is turning cards over for five punters in an arc. REYNOLDS is moving from one chair to the next playing each of the five hands.

**REYNOLDS**

How many aces are left?

**JACK**

Five.

**REYNOLDS**

I make it six.

**JACK**

Five.

REYNOLDS looks down at the table.

**REYNOLDS**

What makes you so sure?

**JACK**

It's a rule. Always stand by your first count. The odds are you're right.

**REYNOLDS**

Good call.

JACK pulls out the shoe.

**JACK**

You want me to check?

**REYNOLDS**

(irritably)

I said good call.

REYNOLDS walks away. JACK puts the shoe back. He takes his watch out of his pocket, glances at it.

**JACK'S VOICE**

It had taken him 45 minutes, but Jack now had Mr Reynolds's number. The man couldn't count.

**INT. CASINO - OFFICE - DAY**

Back in the office REYNOLDS is talking to JACK. On REYNOLDS'S desk is a framed photograph of his suburban wife and two kids.

**REYNOLDS**

Let me just run through a few things. As a dealer you never gamble, not anywhere. We'll need your picture.

**JACK**

What for?

**REYNOLDS**

For the database. It can be accessed by every casino in the country. We have the same system for punters.

**JACK**

I don't gamble.

**REYNOLDS**

Ever?

**JACK**

I don't gamble, Mr Reynolds.

REYNOLDS doesn't pursue it.

**REYNOLDS**

Next point. Friendships between croupiers inside or outside the casino are discouraged. Relationships with females working here are expressly forbidden.

**JACK**

We had the same rule at Sun City, but it was impossible to check.

**REYNOLDS**

This isn't South Africa. We'd know, because someone would report it. Believe me, someone always does.

**JACK**

Does know? Or does report? What would happen if I knew something like that and didn't report it?

**REYNOLDS**

We'd know. There are no secrets in this casino. You'd be punished.

**JACK**

How?

**REYNOLDS**

First offence: verbal warning. Second offence: written warning. That one's filed and sometimes copied to the Gaming Board. My discretion. Third offence: you're sacked on the spot. You'd never work in a casino in this country again. There's another rule: you're forbidden to talk to or recognise a punter outside the casino. If you see someone who's gambled here, even if it's just casually on the street, you must ignore him. Or her. You're not married, are you?

JACK shakes his head

**REYNOLDS**

Girlfriend?

**JACK**

Yes.

**REYNOLDS**

She's not in the gaming business is she?

**JACK**

No.

**INT. CASINO - "CROW'S NEST" - DAY**

A CCTV Centre over the casino. JACK crosses the room, looking down through a glass floor at the empty casino below. REYNOLDS walks over to a series of twenty or

more

banked TV monitors with many Video 8 tape decks.

**REYNOLDS**

This is our Crow's Nest. I'm showing it to you now, but you'll never see it again.

**JACK**

Very impressive.

**REYNOLDS**

We have tapes in here that go back six months. Let me show you something.

REYNOLDS presses a button. Together they look at a TV monitor which shows an overlook of a roulette table

where

a WOMAN is cheating. REYNOLDS freezes the frame.

**REYNOLDS**

See that? That was six weeks ago. The dealer missed it. The guy up here missed it, but I watch these tapes after hours. Nothing gets by me. Now the lady's in jail. It's easier to take ten million pounds from a bank than take one penny from this casino.

**INT. CASINO - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Again in the office. REYNOLDS extends his hand. JACK

shakes

it.

**REYNOLDS**

You can start Monday week.

**JACK**

Fine.

**REYNOLDS**

That hair will have to go.

**JACK**

Fine.

Pause.

**REYNOLDS**

Are you planning to make a career in casino work?

**JACK'S VOICE**

And end up like you?

**JACK**

I just want the job.

**REYNOLDS**

Jack, you're not the usual type we get here.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Mr Reynolds was right. It was true. Jack was up above the world. An artist, living in the clouds. Looking down.

The  
A HIGH ANGLED SHOT of the office, JACK and REYNOLDS.  
phone rings.

**REYNOLDS**

Excuse me...

REYNOLDS picks up and listens. The CAMERA descends.

**REYNOLDS**

I can't talk about this now... no, I'm with somebody. They can wait! I'll be home at the usual time... all right, I'll call you back in an hour...

(hangs up)

Don't ever get married, Jack. Casino work doesn't mix with house and garden. Any questions?

The CAMERA reaches a LOW ANGLE on JACK, looking up.

**JACK**

Yes. What's the salary?

**EXT. CAR - STREETS - TWILIGHT**

a  
The street lamps have come on. JACK is at the wheel of  
Sixties Austin-Healey.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The casino paid its staff monthly in arrears. He would have to wait six weeks for his first cheque. He needed money now.

**EXT. USED CAR LOT - TWILIGHT**

walking  
Under a canopy of coloured lights A CAR DEALER is

round jack's car, examining it.

**DEALER**

(fake American accent)

What kind of deal you looking to?

**JACK**

What's the Blue Book price?

**DEALER**

That's not relevant. An old car like this, it depends on the condition.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The car was a gift from Jack's father. That's to say, Jack Senior had given it to him before the bailiffs arrived.

The DEALER picks at the cracked leather seats, the protruding stuffing, the chipped dashboard, the rust.

**DEALER**

This ain't exactly what you'd call mint.

He bends down and looks underneath the car.

**JACK**

How about fifteen hundred?

**DEALER**

How about five hundred.

**JACK**

What?!

**DEALER**

How about we split the diff... Seven-fifty.

**JACK**

Is that your idea of arithmetic?

**DEALER**

I'm not a mathematician. I'm in business.

**JACK**

Eight-fifty.

**DEALER**

Seven-fifty.

The DEALER looks at JACK. JACK stares back. It's as if one is waiting for the other to blink first. Neither blinks.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He suddenly wanted to be rid of it. 'Hang on tightly, let go lightly'. It was a saying Jack remembered.

JACK leans into the open car and takes out his hat and cigarettes. He has accepted the offer. The music begins...

**INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT**

... And continues. JACK stands, with an unlit cigarette, in a crowded moving train. He looks at the faces, MEN and WOMEN. He sees PEOPLE reading books. He looks at the TITLES: Romantic fiction, Classics, Business Management, Thrillers, Self-Help, Cooking....

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack imagined people reading his book. One day he would enter their heads, play with their imaginations, test their feelings...

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

JACK crosses the road. He turns down a side street where Victorian houses have been converted into flats. There are scores of 'For Sale' and 'To Let' signs down the street.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He would tell them you have to make a choice in life. Be a gambler or a croupier. And then live with your decision come what may.

behind  
He goes down into a basement, closing the iron gate  
him.

**INT. JACK'S BASEMENT FLAT - NIGHT**

JACK unlocks the door, goes in, to the accompaniment of  
street sounds and a dog barking.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Marion saw life differently. She  
was a romantic. And thought he was  
too.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

hangs  
vase  
bedroom.  
Radio music is playing from another room. An orchestral  
version of 'Try a Little Tenderness'. JACK comes in,  
his hat up, looks around. He sees a neatly arranged  
of flowers that wasn't there before. He goes to the

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

from a  
is  
to  
JACK sees on the bed, an open box and a carrier bag  
designer department store. Among the white tissue paper  
a simple black silk dress and lace-decorated black  
underwear. He smiles and picks up the knickers. He goes  
the open bathroom door, from which comes the music.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

away.  
A radio plays beside the bath. The water is draining

wearing  
She  
MARION NEIL, a red-haired woman in her mid-thirties,  
a bathrobe with the name MARION on it is examining the  
lines on her neck in the half-steamed bathroom mirror.  
sees JACK, turns with a smile. JACK holds up the black  
knickers.

**MARION**

I couldn't resist them.

**JACK**

You mean I won't resist them.

JACK goes to her.

**MARION**

No, no. I'm not ready for you.  
There's some vodka in the freezer.

**JACK**

You want me drunk?

**MARION**

(laughs)  
I won't be that long.

towards  
She pushes him gently with the flat of her palms  
the door.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

bathroom  
the  
JACK comes back into the bedroom. MARION pushes the  
door, not quite closed. JACK tosses the knickers onto  
bed.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

food  
pours  
JACK takes the vodka bottle out of the freezer, pours  
himself a glass. He sees two bottles of wine opened,  
neatly prepared, ready to cook, an open cook book. He  
a glass of wine.

**INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT**

barred  
above.  
JACK sits drinking his vodka. Looking up through the  
window he sees women's legs passing on the street  
On the desk beside the computer is the glass of wine.

MARION materialises in the door to the bedroom. She is  
made up, wearing the black dress and high-heeled black  
shoes, a black scarf around her neck.

JACK takes the glass of wine and gives it to her.

**JACK**

You really are a beautiful woman.

**MARION**

(pleased)

It's not just inner beauty, is it?

**JACK**

Turn around.

MARION whirls to show off her dress.

**JACK**

You're all I desire.

He reaches for an envelope on the desk. He gives it to her. MARION opens it. There are several fifty pound

notes

inside.

**MARION**

Where did you get it?

**JACK**

I. sold the car.

**MARION**

You shouldn't have done that. I know what it meant to you.

**JACK**

I owe you for the rent. It's only a car. I can get another.

**MARION**

Take it back. Till you sell your book.

**JACK**

Come on, Marion. Let's face the truth. Nobody's going to publish it.

**MARION**

Of course they will. You just have to be patient. I'm betting on you.

She raises the glass of wine, drinks.

**JACK**

I'm not much of a bet.

He drains his glass.

**MARION**

You are to me.

She takes her scarf, puts it round his neck, pulls him seductively towards the bedroom door.

**MARION**

Come into my world.

She winds the black scarf across his face, covering his eyes.

**MARION**

(whispering)

You're my prisoner.

**JACK**

I've got something to tell you.

**MARION**

I want to hear it.

**JACK**

I've got a job.

**MARION**

(startled)

What job?

MARION pulls the scarf from his eyes. She wants to look at him.

**JACK**

In a casino. As a croupier. A dealer.

**MARION**

How did you land that?

**JACK**

It came my way. 450 a week.

**MARION**

(sits up)

450? What did you do, just walked in and said I want to be a croupier? Don't you need training?

**JACK**

I had training. In the Republic.

**MARION**

You were a croupier there? You never told me that. I thought you just knew some gamblers.

**JACK**

I start Monday week.

From the street comes the whining sound of a car alarm.

**MARION**

450 a week. I've never earned that in my life. You're an enigma, you are. A fucking enigma.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Not an enigma, just a contradiction.

MARION looks deeply into his eyes.

**MARION**

You sold the car. You got a job. What's the third thing? Tell me.

**JACK**

There's no third thing. Don't be superstitious.

**MARION**

I love you Jack, you know that.

**JACK'S VOICE**

And he half-loved Marion. And she knew that too.

in Outside, the car alarm stops. JACK takes MARION'S head his hands. She reaches for one of them, examines it.

**JACK**

Are you trying to read my palm?

**MARION**

You've got such beautiful hands.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The hands of a conjuror, a woman had told him once. Or a card sharp.

Their hands interlock. She leads him into the bedroom.

**INT. NAIL STUDIO - DAY**

JACK'S hands are being worked on by a woman MANICURIST.

**MANICURIST**

What line of work are you in?

**JACK**

I'm an undertaker.

**MANICURIST**

Really?

The MANICURIST stops for a moment, looks at him with curiosity.

**INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY**

A BARBER is cutting JACK'S hair. He goes up JACK'S neck with electric clippers. Jack's hair is now black.

**BARBER**

Do you work round here?

**JACK**

My office is in Shanghai.

**BARBER**

(surprised)

What do you do?

**JACK**

I'm an arms dealer.

The BARBER stops for a moment, nonplussed.

**INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - DAY**

In front of the mirror JACK buttons a white shirt and skillfully ties a black bow tie. His short hair is

lacquered

on.

back. He reaches down for his black jacket... puts it

The transformation is complete.

mirror.

As he scrubs his nails, JACK sees a WOMAN in the

cotton

She is changing her clothes. She pulls off her Indian

dress. She's wearing pants but no bra. Quite

unselfconsciously, not looking Jack's way, she dresses

in

her casino clothes.

him. JACK dries his hands. He turns. The WOMAN smiles at

**BELLA**

I'm Bella.

**JACK**

Jack Manfred.

**BELLA**

Hi, Jack.

(fits herself into  
the uplift bra)  
Welcome to the cesspit.

**JACK**

Is it that bad?

**BELLA**

(starts to do up  
her top)  
How do I look?

**JACK'S VOICE**

Like trouble, Bella. You look fine.

**BELLA**

The punters love it. Tits in  
uniform.

She laughs.

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

at JACK appears at the head of the table. The PUNTERS look  
him, not recognising him.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The usual bunch. They didn't know  
Jack, but he knew them.

**JACK**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

A fat INDIAN PUNTER addresses JACK.

**INDIAN**

Where's the other fellow? Where's  
Geoff?

**JACK**

He doesn't work here any more.

**INDIAN**

Well, let's hope you know your job.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN trying to look as young as possible throws 100 pounds in cash to JACK.

**WOMAN**

Tens, please.

She turns to the WOMAN next to her, who looks very similar.

**WOMAN 2**

Perhaps this man will bring us luck.

The WOMAN has sensed her friend's interest in JACK. She's jealous.

**WOMAN**

(to Jack)

What's that aftershave you're wearing?

**JACK'S VOICE**

Never converse with the punters. It slows things down. Speed is volume, and volume is profit for the casino. Aim at twenty spins an hour.

JACK pretends he hasn't heard the question. In the background REYNOLDS is watching as JACK spins the wheel.

**JACK**

Last bets, please.

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

Later. A plastic-looking BLONDE WOMAN, heavily made-up, sits at the table. She nods to JACK. PUNTERS are placing their bets. She has 50 casino chips of £100 denominations in front of her. JACK notes the large sum.

PUNTERS

The BLONDE puts £2,500 on red and £2,500 on black.

and

round the table are astonished at the size of the bet

the strangeness of betting both red and black.

win.

JACK spins the wheel. Black 10 comes up. JACK takes the red loss and moves it across the table to the black

leaves

The BLONDE picks up the £5,000 without a reaction and the table.

desk.

JACK notices that she goes straight to the cashier's

JACK clears the chips away, starts to pay out.

A WHITE-HAIRED MAN on JACK's right speaks to him:

**MAN**

You're new here. You'll get used to Madame Claude. She comes in once or twice a week and does that.

JACK nods.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He knew the scam. Come in with five grand cash. No questions asked. Launder it by getting a casino cheque when you cash in. Jack wondered why Mr Reynolds permitted it? After all there's was no profit in it for the casino. Or was there?

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

GREEK

Later. A different set of PUNTERS. The wheel spins. A

looks

MAN sits at the table. He doesn't attempt to bet. He

replace

around to see a CROUPIER in his late 20's waiting to

curious

JACK at the wheel. This is MATT. He gives JACK a

out.

complicitous smile. JACK collects the chips and pays

**JACK**

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I'm going to hand you over now to my colleague. Goodnight.

MATT takes over.

**MATT**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

REYNOLDS appears and takes JACK'S arm.

**REYNOLDS**

(quietly)

Good work, Jack. You handled yourself well.

At the table, MATT glances at the GREEK man.

**INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT**

5  
card  
groan.  
One

JACK is now dealing to FIVE PUNTERS. He has a 10 and a  
exposed for the house. TWO PLAYERS go bust. ONE PLAYER  
sticks on 19, the next on 20. The LAST PLAYER buys a  
for 21. JACK turns over an ace for the house. He twists  
again. It's a 5 - making 21. The two losing PLAYERS  
The LAST PLAYER is paid evens for equalling the house.  
of the PLAYERS who's gone bust gets up, having lost all  
his chips, and leaves.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Suddenly a delayed wave of elation  
came over him.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

5

Across the casino an Oriental man, MR TCHAI, is walking  
towards the table with REYNOLDS. Behind him is a 6 foot  
bulging BODYGUARD. REYNOLDS comes up to JACK's table.

**REYNOLDS**

Why don't you take a break, Jack.

**JACK**

(puzzled)

All right, Mr Reynolds.

MR

He moves his chair back, nods at the remaining PLAYERS.  
TCHAI sits down, watched by the BODYGUARD.

JACK.

BELLA comes up, smiles sweetly, and takes over from

**BELLA**

Good evening, Mr Tchai.

**MR TCHAI**

Good evening.

TCHAI pulls out a sealed bank packet of £5,000.

**REYNOLDS**

Enjoy yourself, Mr Tchai.

REYNOLDS waves to a WAITRESS who comes over.

**WAITRESS**

(to Mr Tchai)

Your usual, sir?

TCHAI nods. He hands her a £50 note.

**WAITRESS**

Thank you, sir. Enjoy your game.

**JACK'S VOICE**

£50 for a diet Coke. Waitresses were the true winners in the casino. They were the only members of staff allowed to accept tips. On a good night they could get between £200 and £300.

at

The WAITRESS goes. The other PLAYERS at the table look

MR TCHAI, wondering who he is.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

REYNOLDS walks with JACK across the casino.

**REYNOLDS**

Mr Tchai always likes to play at that table, and only with Bella.

**JACK**

Does he win?

**REYNOLDS**

(smiles)

He's a good customer.

**JACK'S VOICE**

A good customer is a consistent loser. Was that what Mr Reynolds meant?

**INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT**

croupier  
JACK is changing into his street clothes. The young  
MATT comes up to him.

**MATT**

Where do you live, Jack?

**JACK**

Over the river.

**MATT**

Have you got transport?

JACK shakes his head.

**MATT**

I'm going over the river. I'll give you a lift if you like.

**JACK**

Thanks.

**INT. BMW - NIGHT**

beside  
MATT puts the car into gear, drives off, JACK sitting  
him.

**MATT**

So how do you feel, your first night? I'll bet you're on a high.

**JACK**

Nice car.

**MATT**

She's my baby.

**JACK**

How long have you worked at the casino?

**MATT**

Coming up to two years now.  
(mysteriously)

But I was away for six months.

**JACK**

You've done pretty well.

**MATT**

(smugly)

Not bad. I have other interests,  
of course.

MATT spins the car round a corner.

**MATT**

I'm off to a little watering hole.  
Why don't you join me? Relax.

**JACK**

No thanks, Matt. I need my eight  
hours.

**MATT**

I'll lay you five to one you won't  
sleep. In this job you have to  
unwind. Otherwise it'll kill you.  
I mean that.

**JACK**

Some other time.

**INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

JACK pours himself a vodka, smoking a cigarette.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

JACK starts to take his clothes off. MARION is asleep  
in bed. She wakes.

**MARION**

What's the time?

**JACK**

I don't know.

Clock beside the bed reads 4.30.

**MARION**

How did it go?

**JACK**

Fine.

He gets into bed beside her. She takes him in her arms.

**MARION**

You're shaking. What is it?

**JACK**

Tension. It'll go.

**MARION**

Poor baby. This'll relax you.

She starts to massage his neck, his hair.

**MARION**

I loved it blond.

**JACK**

It's only hair. I haven't changed.

**INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

throws  
She  
MARION is dressed in a suit, preparing to leave. She  
her nightgown into a laundry basket. JACK is asleep.  
bends to kiss him. He wakes.

**MARION**

When you get home, I'm asleep.  
When I leave home, you're asleep.

**JACK**

(dreamily)  
I'll see you in my dreams.

**INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY**

JACK'S  
MARION drops a set of keys into her bag, glances at  
covered computer. She draws the curtain back. Daylight  
illuminates the old etching of Cape Town.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

JANI DE VILLIERS is 30-something, blonde, tanned,  
expensively dressed in designer clothes. She gives JACK  
ten £50 notes.

**JANI**

In 20s, please...

then  
towards  
He slots the cash into the "bank" beneath the table,  
counts out £500 in £20 chips. He slides the chips  
her, looks at her. She smiles.

ARABIC-  
down  
There are ten other PEOPLE at the roulette table. An  
LOOKING MAN with a moustache behind JANI is looking  
the front of her dress.

**JACK**

(frowns)

Place your bets.

numbers,  
calls  
Around the table the PUNTERS move their chips onto  
lines, colours. JANI throws three chips to JACK and  
the numbers:

**JANI**

5...8...11.

JACK places them for her.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack could see this woman was an  
experienced gambler. Professionals  
always place their bets through  
the croupier. That way there are  
no comebacks.

number  
pays  
MAN  
him.  
wheel  
The wheel spins, 11 is the number. JACK calls the  
and puts the 'dolly' on 11. JANI smiles faintly. JACK  
out across the table. JANI leaves two chips on 11 The  
behind JANI puts his chips on 11. JANI glances up at  
She sees the MAN is betting with her. JACK spins the  
again. 33 comes up.

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

him.  
The MAN moves closer to the table to one side of JANI.

round  
chip

Concealed in his hand is a chip. As the ball bounces and lands again on number 11, the MAN deftly adds the to the square. JACK clocks it.

**JACK**

I'm sorry, sir, that's a late bet.

**MAN**

(in Arabic accent)

What are you talking about? It's 11, I've won. With this lady.

**JACK**

(carefully)

You've won with the two chips you placed earlier, but the third chip was a late bet.

**MAN**

I put them on together.

**JACK**

I'm afraid that's not so, sir.

getting

REYNOLDS, who has been watching the tables, sees the beginning of an incident. He comes over. The MAN is angry. JANI watches.

**MAN**

Now look here, you...

**REYNOLDS**

Is there a problem, sir?

**MAN**

Yes. This croupier is accusing me of cheating.

**JACK**

It was a late bet. This gentleman has been following the lady's numbers and...

The MAN interrupts JACK and touches JANI's arm.

**MAN**

(to Jani)

Do you think I cheated?

JACK and REYNOLDS wait. JACK glances at JANI.

**JANI**

In my opinion... it was a late bet.

**REYNOLDS**

I think we should talk about this, sir. Away from the table.

**MAN**

(angrily)

No. I won. I want to be paid.

REYNOLDS'S He bangs his fist on the felt. JACK waits for decision. REYNOLDS looks at JACK.

**REYNOLDS**

Pay the gentleman. In full.

The REYNOLDS steps back, JACK pays out JANI and the MAN. MAN takes his winnings. He looks at JACK with hatred, then leaves the table.

collects REYNOLDS watches him, looks to JACK and nods. JANI up her winnings and throws two chips to JACK. She stands to leave.

**JACK**

I'm sorry, madam, we don't accept gratuities in the UK. It's different in South Africa.

**JANI**

(surprised)

You know where I'm from?

JACK nods and gives her back the two chips.

**JACK**

I've lived there.

**JANI**

(sweetly)

Well, thank you anyway.

JACK watches her leave.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Bright woman, he thought. She knew the rule of gold. Quit when you're ahead.

arguing  
JANI heads towards the cashier. JACK sees REYNOLDS with the irate ARABIC MAN near the entrance. He looks back to the table.

**JACK**

Place your bets.

makes  
On his way out the ARABIC MAN looks towards JACK and an occult sign with his hand.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

JACK  
table  
a  
GREEK'S  
It is late. There are few PUNTERS left at the tables. tidies up his table, which is next to MATT's. He looks across at MATT and sees the GREEK MAN who was at the the first night when MATT took over. The GREEK wins on a number. MATT clears the table and counts out the winnings, quickly and efficiently.

moves  
up.  
cameras  
has  
his  
JACK stiffens. He sees that something is wrong. MATT piles of chips across to the GREEK, who doesn't look JACK glances in the direction of the hidden video and the crows' nest. REYNOLDS is in the back-ground, seen nothing untoward. JACK watches the GREEK pick up winnings and leave.

**INT. BMW - NIGHT**

Again MATT is driving JACK home.

**JACK**

(hesitantly)

Look Matt, there's something I have to say to you. I saw you

cheating.

**MATT**

(violently)

What the fuck are you talking about?

**JACK**

That Greek guy who won at the end.  
You paid him out in 25s not 20s.

**MATT**

(angry)

I don't cheat, Jack. You've got it  
wrong.

**JACK**

I'm not going to report it.

stop.  
MATT slams on the brakes. The car comes to an abrupt

MATT turns to JACK, furious.

**MATT**

What are you, a cop?

**JACK**

If I see you do it again, I'll  
report it.

**MATT**

I don't get you. Even if it was  
true, which it isn't, what the  
fuck difference would it make to  
you?

**JACK**

Because if a supervisor knew I'd  
seen you and I hadn't reported it,  
I'd lose my job as well. And I  
can't afford that.

**MATT**

So it's Mr Clean. Wise up, Jack,  
this whole business is bent. The  
casino is nothing but legal theft.  
And that's OK. It's the system.  
Half the punters who come in are  
using stolen money, drug money,  
they haven't earned it. We earn  
our money.

(softens)

I'm on your side, Jack. I don't

need an enemy.

**JACK**

You're talking about complicity.

**MATT**

I don't know what that means. I'm talking about not rocking the boat.

MATT holds out his hand for JACK. JACK shakes it. MATT grins.

**MATT**

OK, now let's unwind.

He puts the car into gear and drives off.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Matt was an escape artist. Like Jack's father.

**EXT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

the  
through  
MATT's car pulls up in the parking lot at the back of restaurant. He and JACK get out of the car and go through the open kitchen door.

**INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

cooking,  
Greek.  
The kitchen is full of people, some involved in some standing around smoking and drinking, mostly

**MATT**

Hey, Andros!

He shakes hands with a GUY who looks like the owner.

**MATT**

This is Jack.

through  
JACK shakes hands too. They cross the kitchen and go through a bead curtain. Piped Greek music is playing.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

game  
A smoke-filled private dining room. There is a poker

dotted  
Greek  
bar

in Progress. FIVE MEN are playing, a DOZEN GIRLS are about watching. There is a trestle table laden with food, from stews to salad, buffet-style. An improvised with ouzo, vodka and wine. It's help-yourself.

**JACK**

Who are these guys?

**MATT**

Mostly people in the casino business. A few drug dealers.

**JACK**

And the girls?

**MATT**

Just girls. What are you drinking?

**JACK**

Vodka. Straight. On the rocks.

**MATT**

Good call. Help yourself.

noise

JACK pours himself a vodka, scoops up some ice with his hand from a bucket. Clouds of smoke envelop him. The is close to deafening.

**JACK**

Does Bella come here?

**MATT**

That bitch? No.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

her

The poker game. A MAN with fair hair gets up, kisses a GIRL whose dress is a bathing suit, puts his arm round and they wander off. MATT is at the table. JACK is replenishing his vodka.

**MATT**

Hey Jack, join us.

**JACK**

No thanks.

**MATT**

(laughs)  
Don't worry, I won't report you!

**JACK**

I don't gamble.

GIRL appears behind JACK's shoulder.

**GIRL**

You don't gamble, but do you smoke?

The GIRL has a joint in her over-ringed hand. She is dressed in purple Indian cotton.

**JACK**

Sometimes.

**GIRL**

(hands him the  
smoking joint)  
How about now?

She blows smoke in his face. JACK drains his vodka, pours himself another.

**INT. RESTAURANT - LAVATORY - NIGHT**

JACK comes into the Gents, another smoke-filled room. Three or four MEN are arguing over a drug deal, standing in front of the urinal. One of them has an envelope full of cash, another a packet of drugs.

JACK goes to a lavatory stall, opens the door. In the stall the fair-haired MAN who was at Matt's table is sitting on the lavatory, his trousers round his ankles. The GIRL in the bathing suit is sitting on his thighs, bobbing up and down. JACK sees a butterfly tattoo on her left cheek, the Queen of Spades.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Marion. I'm on my way...

**INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

JACK puts his arm on MATT's shoulder at the poker table.

**JACK**

I'm off. I need to sleep.

**MATT**

Loosen up, Jack. If you don't, this job'll get to you. The pressure's too much, believe me, it'll break you.

**JACK**

"The world breaks everyone, and afterwards many are strong in the broken places." Ernest Hemingway.

JACK turns and leaves, helping himself to another drink.

**MATT**

Wasn't he the one who shot himself?

**INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

JACK comes to the flat. He is drunk. He starts across the dark room. Suddenly the light comes on. JACK turns to see MARION, sitting in a chair in her night-dress.

**MARION**

Where've you been? I've got to give evidence in court at nine.

**JACK**

Don't play the cop with me, Marion.

**MARION**

Take that back!

(furious)

Fucking take that back. I'm not a cop any more.

**JACK**

I take it back. You're not a cop any more. You're a store detective.

**MARION**

Are you drunk?

**JACK**

Probably.

**MARION**

This fucking job's getting to you. You haven't written a fucking word since you started.

**JACK**

Do you have to swear all the time?

**MARION**

(hurt)

Well, that's my poor upbringing. I didn't go to no private school. I haven't got no class. I want to live with a writer. Not a fucking croupier. I don't even know what the word means. Croupier.

**JACK**

Marion, stop this.

**MARION**

(near to tears)

What do I mean to you? I want to know. Tell me.

There is a pause.

**JACK**

You're my conscience.

**MARION**

Haven't you got a conscience of your own?

JACK has no answer. He goes into the bathroom.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY**

The computer is still covered. JACK is standing at the table dealing cards, practising. One card slips. He swears silently. He flexes his fingers, cracks his knuckle joints. He looks at a skirt, legs, high heels, Passing above the barred window.

**EXT. PICCADILLY - EVENING**

JACK emerges from the Underground, one of the CROWD.

**EXT. PICCADILLY - STORE - EVENING**

JACK goes into a large Department Store.

**INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING**

department.

MARION is store-walking in the women's underwear

display.

It is Sale time. Baskets of tights and knickers on

thieves.

CUSTOMERS are rummaging. She is on the look-out for

She jumps as JACK places his hand on her hip.

**MARION**

What are you doing here?

(looks round  
nervously)

You know the rules.

**JACK**

What about a drink on the way home?

**MARION**

I don't finish till eight. Make it  
nine and you're on.

**JACK**

I'm on at nine.

**MARION**

Well, that's our life now, isn't  
it?

**EXT. PICCADILLY - EVENING**

large

JACK pauses in front of an airline office. There is a

picture of Cape Town, and a special ticket offer.

earlier

JANI comes out of the office. Her hair, tied back

in the casino, is now glamorously fluffed out. She sees  
JACK. He doesn't see her.

**JANI**

Thinking of going back?

JACK is startled. He doesn't recognise her for a moment.

Then...

**JACK**

Oh hello.

**JANI**

(smiling)

You know what? I'd like to buy you a drink.

**JACK**

It's against the rules. Dealers are forbidden to talk to punters.

**JANI**

That's stupid. What are the odds of you being seen with me?

**JACK**

Impossible to calculate.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack knew that, in reality, all odds are calculable.

**INT. RITZ HOTEL - NIGHT**

JACK  
The Art Deco bar. Expensive PEOPLE around. JANI and  
are installed on a sofa. A WAITER puts down two  
Martinis.

**JANI**

(raises her glass)

To coincidence.

**JACK**

(drinks)

There's a casino in this hotel.

**JANI**

I'm not much of a gambler really.  
I just like this bar.

**JACK**

So why did you come to my casino?

**JANI**

I was at a loose end. A friend of  
a friend gave me a courtesy

membership.

**JACK**

First visit to London?

**JANI**

No, no. I come every couple of years. I always think I'm going to stay. I'm from Cape Town originally

**JACK**

I was born in the Transkei, on the Wild Coast.

**JANI**

Near the casino.

**JACK**

In the casino.

**JANI**

Now there's a coincidence. My father used to gamble there.

**JACK**

Your father?

**JANI**

I loved the atmosphere. But it destroyed my poor mother.

**JACK**

The debts.

**JANI**

And the lies. Gamblers are born liars.

**JACK**

(nods)

And superstitious too. It's like witchcraft.

**JANI**

That's Africa. There's an African in all of us, isn't there?

**JACK**

We all came from Africa, supposedly.

**JANI**

Do you believe in astrology?

**JACK**

Absolutely not. But then, I'm a Gemini and Geminis don't believe in astrology.

JANI laughs out loud.

**JANI**

You know, you don't strike me as a typical croupier.

JANI drinks. JACK notices her wedding ring. JANI catches the look.

**JANI**

I'm not married. I wear it to keep the flies off.

(looks at her watch)

I must go. Let me pay for this.

**JACK**

Absolutely not.

**JANI**

Toss you for it.

**JACK**

I don't gamble.

JANI nods, stands up, takes out a notepad and pen. She looks round feigning conspiracy.

**JANI**

(low voice)

I know this is verboten, but if you feel like a chat or maybe dinner, give me a call.

She scribbles her name and phone number on the pad, tears off the page, gives it to him.

**JANI**

I'll understand if you don't.

(smiles)

But I hope you do.

She leaves. JACK watches her go, looks at the page she's given him.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

scissors.

In front of a mirror JACK trims his hair with nail

He is dressed in his croupier's uniform. He straightens his bow tie.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He didn't know why, but he'd started to dress for the casino at home...

**INT. UNDERGROUND COMPARTMENT - NIGHT**

JACK sits in the compartment.

**JACK'S VOICE**

... like a musician in his tuxedo, going to the concert hall on public transport...

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

chips  
looks

An ARAB at the end of the table kisses all his £50 and sets them out on the table. The wheel spins. JACK round at the PUNTERS.

The ball bounces, falls on zero. Everybody loses. Many groans.

coughs. A  
that

A MEDITERRANEAN-LOOKING MAN with a gold bracelet gob of phlegm from his mouth lands on a pile of chips JACK is raking away. A WOMAN in her mid-thirties is appalled.

**WOMAN**

Animal!

**JACK**

Would you mind being more careful, sir.

**MAN**

I've got 'flu.

He coughs again, but into a handkerchief.

**WOMAN**

Then go back home. To the zoo!

to JACK clears the piles of chips to one side. He signals a SUPERVISOR. The SUPERVISOR hurries over.

**JACK**

This gentleman accidentally coughed onto these chips. I don't think it would be hygienic to stack them...

The SUPERVISOR signals a WAITRESS over.

**SUPERVISOR**

Agnes. These chips have to be counted and put into the steamer.

**AGNES**

Yuck.

She looks at JACK, grimaces, and takes the chips away.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

on. The last PUNTERS are leaving. The overhead lights come

A CROUPIER is wheeling away a trolley with thousands of chips. TWO MEN are covering the tables with shrouds.

**INT. CASINO - STRONG ROOM - NIGHT**

of open REYNOLDS watches as JACK and MATT count the thousands pounds, putting them in piles. Behind them is a large safe.

**MATT**

I can't give you a lift back tonight.

**JACK**

Don't worry.

REYNOLDS places the notes in steel boxes.

**EXT. CASINO - NIGHT**

JACK, comes out. BELLA hurries after him, following him round the corner.

**BELLA**

(calling)  
Jack. Do you need a ride?

**JACK**  
No. Thanks.

**BELLA**  
My car's in the garage.

**JACK**  
Maybe another time.

**BELLA**  
I'll take you up on that.

**JACK**  
(pleasantly)  
Goodnight.

other  
He straightens his hat and walks off. BELLA walks the way.

**EXT. STREET. NIGHT**

see  
JACK'S  
A MAN lurks in the shadows ahead of JACK. JACK doesn't see him. But as he comes past, the MAN steps out blocking JACK'S way. He is the Arabic-looking MAN JACK earlier caught cheating at the casino with JANI.

**MAN**  
You don't recognise me? You had me barred. You fucking little worm.

**JACK**  
Wait a minute. You got yourself barred.

**MAN**  
It was you, you shit.

it  
MAN'S  
The MAN reaches forward and grabs JACK'S tie. He yanks it with farce. JACK gasps. He rams his elbow into the MAN'S chest.

The MAN kicks JACK on the shins. JACK topples. The MAN leaps at him. JACK, knees him in the groin.

The fight is untidy and vicious. Both men collapse struggling onto the pavement.

sees

A car appears, a Mini-Cooper. BELLA is driving. She the fight.

JACK'S nose is bleeding. The MAN kicks him in the back. JACK yells with pain, gets to his feet.

**JACK**

Now I'm going to kill you.

He boots the MAN in the head. BELLA gets out of her car and runs over to them.

**BELLA**

Jack!

The MAN is screening under JACK'S repeated blows. BELLA pulls JACK away.

**BELLA**

Jack. Leave him! Come on!

JACK'S face is masked with blood and fury. BELLA is frightened by JACK'S violence.

**BELLA**

Let's go. We don't want the cops here.

the

Before she can get JACK into her car, he goes back to MAN groaning on the floor. He stamps on the MAN's hand. BELLA is shocked.

**JACK**

(coldly)

He won't cheat again.

in,

BELLA pulls him away, bundles JACK into her car, gets drives away.

**INT. BELLA'S FLAT - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

on

wipes

Water is running in the basin. BELLA puts JACK'S jacket the lavatory seat. She starts to undo his tie. JACK his blood-stained nose with a wet flannel.

**BELLA**

You're shaking.

**JACK**

It's the tension.

washes  
She undoes his shirt and takes it off. He winces. She  
his torso, cleans him up.

JACK looks at his shaking hands. BELLA takes him by the  
hand, leads him into the bedroom.

**INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

She sits him on the bed. The room is lit with coloured  
lamps.

**BELLA**

Excuse the mess.

the  
JACK pulls her suddenly into his arms, pulls her onto  
bed. She is startled.

**BELLA**

Careful.

breast.  
JACK'S hands open her blouse. He reaches for her  
hungrily,  
BELLA'S surprise becomes excitement. He kisses her  
side  
his hands rummaging in her clothes. She reaches for a  
zip in her skirt.

**BELLA**

Don't tear anything.

BELLA kicks off her shoes. There is a burst of passion  
between them. For JACK, a continuation of the violence  
with the MAN on the street.

For BELLA, it's a sudden release. Her naked foot knocks  
over the bedside lamp.

down.  
JACK spreads BELLA on the bed. She tugs his trousers  
He rips her black underwear away.

**INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

She

Later. JACK is lying sprawled on the bed with BELLA.  
reaches across him and retrieves the fallen lamp.

**BELLA**

It's funny, isn't it? If that guy  
hadn't come up to you, you wouldn't  
be here now.

JACK strokes her bottom.

**JACK**

I hate cheats.

**BELLA**

All men are cheats.

BELLA picks up a joint from the bedside and lights it.

**BELLA**

I spent two years on the game. I  
don't mind telling you that.

JACK looks at her.

**BELLA**

But don't worry, I'm clean as a  
whistle. I only did S & M.  
(she hands the joint  
to JACK,)  
No blow jobs. No screwing.

**JACK**

Why did you quit?

**BELLA**

I got scared.

**JACK**

(inhales)  
I can imagine.

**BELLA**

Can you? I'm happy being a dealer.  
At least the punters keep their  
hands to themselves.

**JACK**

You called the casino a cesspit.

**BELLA**

Well it is. But I know where I am.

JACK hands the joint back to BELLA.

**BELLA**

I've been watching you work. You're the best in the place. But you know that.

**JACK**

I despise the job.

**BELLA**

Ah, we all say that. But if we hate it, why do we do it?

JACK doesn't answer.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack wanted to say we do it for the money. But that wasn't really true.

BELLA leans over JACK and begins gently to massage his flesh.

**BELLA**

What do you really want to do?

She puts the joint in an ashtray.

**JACK**

The Indian rope-trick.

**BELLA**

Look, now I'm pumping you. I'm sorry. It's none of my business. It's just that you're not like the others.

**JACK**

Not like Matt, you mean.

**BELLA**

Now he's a real shit. Don't get friendly with him. I'm sure he's got his hand in the till. You know what he said to me once? "I want to fuck the whole world over. That's my mission." The shit!

BELLA touches a bruise on JACK'S body.

**JACK**

Ouch.

**BELLA**

Sorry.

simply

She kisses the bruised skin, pulls him to her. BELLA wants to be held.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack could hear Matt saying it...

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY**

JACK is at his desk typing intently. There is a pile of new pages in the sunlight.

**JACK'S VOICE**

"I want to fuck the whole world over. It's my mission."

MARION passes in the foreground. She kisses him on the back of his head and leaves. JACK'S fingers move across the keyboard, dancing.

**JACK'S VOICE**

At last he had found what he'd been looking for. A clear and simple theme. And a hero to act it out. Little Matt...  
(Pause)  
...Chapter One.

**INT. CASINO - WASHROOM - NIGHT**

MATT is shaving.

**MATT**

I look like shit.

JACK is scrubbing his nails at a basin.

**JACK**

Rough day?

**MATT**

Rough life, Jack.

A YOUNG WOMAN appears in the mirror behind the two MEN. Her name is PAT. She is dressed like BELLA.

**PAT**

Hi. I'm Pat.

appearance,  
MATT and JACK say 'Hello'. MATT appraises PAT'S  
winks approval at JACK.

**JACK**

(to Matt)

What happened to Bella?

**MATT**

I'll tell you later.

JACK is mystified.

**INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT**

chair  
JACK is dealing to MR TCHAI and three OTHER MEN. One  
at the table is empty.

**MR TCHAI**

What happened to Bella?

**JACK**

She was re-assigned.

The  
JACK shows 13. He turns over his third card, a King.  
bank busts. JACK pays out.

JANI sits down in the vacant chair. JACK conceals his  
surprise, a hint of nervousness.

**JACK**

(formally)

Good evening.

JANI nods impassively.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack knew this was no coincidence.  
Why had she come?

BODYGUARD  
her  
The MEN look at the glamorous woman. MR TCHAI doesn't  
register her presence. He is as inscrutable as his  
who hands him an envelope. JANI takes out money from  
purse. JACK counts it.

**JANI**

One thousand even. In fifties.

JACK  
MR  
receives

JACK slots the money down, counts out 20 £50 chips.  
deals. Bets are placed. 100 from JANI. The cards turn.  
TCHAI splits two aces. JANI has a 6 and 7. MR TCHAI  
two los and wins big. JANI gets a 10 and busts.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He wondered if she believed he  
would bring her luck...

JANI'S face is impassive. She receives her cards...

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

cards.

JANI busts again. JACK sweeps away the chips, the  
JANI reaches into her bag, takes out another thousand  
pounds.

**JANI**

In fifties.

The MEN at the table look at JANI.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Or did she think he would help her  
win?

**INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT**

at

JANI loses again. She is down to 4 chips. She looks up  
JACK. Their eyes meet, hers desperate, his helpless. MR  
TCHAI picks up on the look.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He knew how to fix it for her. His  
father had taught him the trick.  
Switch the sequence. Bust the bank.  
The casino wouldn't spot it. But  
Jack was wary of the punters...

JACK glances at the MEN at the table.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He could see Mr Tchai was counting.

He couldn't risk it.

chips  
JANI places her last bet, glances at the mountain of  
in front of MR TCHAI. JACK catches her look. He deals.  
JANI reaches for her next card. JACK observes her left  
hand.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He noticed she wasn't wearing her  
ring. Why not? Odds on she'd sold  
it.

gets  
JACK plays out the hand. JANI loses. She immediately  
up. She is crushed.

**JANI**

Good night. Thank you.

She walks away from the table.

**JACK**

Good night.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Thank you, she said. For what,  
Jack thought. Jani de Villiers  
knew the odds.

TCHAI looks at JACK.

**MR TCHAI**

Pretty woman.

**INT. JACK'S BEDROOM/SITTING ROOM - NIGHT**

carefully  
open  
legs  
JACK is sitting on the bed fully clothed. He is  
sewing a button on his croupier's jacket. Through the  
bedroom door MARION can be seen sitting on the sofa,  
tucked under her, reading the new typescript.  
The phone rings. In the bedroom JACK picks up.

**JACK**

Hello...

**EXT. SOUTH AFRICA CASINO - NIGHT**

round

JACK SR. is in a public phone. Coloured lanterns hang  
in the night. Distant laughter.

**JACK SR**

How's it going, Jacko?

INTERCUT between JACK and JACK SR.

**JACK**

Fine. I took the job.

**JACKSR**

Good for you. I was wondering what  
happened.

**JACK**

I tried to call you, dad, but they  
said your line was disconnected.

**JACK SR**

(jovially)

Ah yes, I moved house. Needed a  
bigger place. How's that book of  
yours coming along?

In the sitting room MARION looks towards JACK in the  
bedroom.

**JACK**

I'm getting there.

**JACK SR**

It's good to have the job to fall  
back on, isn't it?

(pause)

There goes my other phone.

**JACK**

Goodbye dad.

He hangs up. MARION turns the last page of the  
typescript.

She's finished.

**INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT**

JACK comes in from the bedroom. MARION says nothing.  
She  
puts the typescript down. JACK waits.

MARION gets off the sofa.

**MARION**

I don't like it.

**JACK**

Why not?

**MARION**

I don't like it at all. You had a wonderful character before, the Gambler. He was so romantic.

**JACK**

He was a loser. This guy's a croupier. He can't lose. People have shat on him all his life. Now he's in control. He's a winner.

**MARION**

Is that your idea of a winner? He doesn't give a shit about anyone. He uses people and --

**JACK**

(interrupting)

-- It's because of the sex, isn't it? You don't like the sex in it.

**MARION**

I don't give a fuck about the sex. Most men'll fuck a lamppost. He's just a miserable zombie. Is that the way you feel now? Is that what's happened to you?

**JACK**

Marion. It's a book.

**MARION**

Oh really. Then why is he called Jake. Why don't you come clean and call him Jack.

(softens)

There's no hope in it.

**JACK**

It's the truth.

**MARION**

Without hope there's no point to anything.

**JACK**

Now wait a minute. What's so hopeful about your job? Spending the day catching poor people stealing. You said yourself the organised gangs get away with it. At least in the casino everybody gets caught. Rich or poor, the odds are the same. It's all relative.

**MARION**

Crap. It's not relative. It's unfair. Like your casino. It's designed unfair. And your croupier's a little shit because he goes along with it.

JACK sees MARION is getting really angry. He crosses the room, Pointedly takes MARION'S handbag, opens it, takes out a National Lottery card and receipt. The doorbell rings.

**JACK**

(coldly)

You're just like all those other dummies out there. Fourteen and a half million to one! Is that your idea of hope?

The doorbell rings again.

**MARION**

The door, Jack.

**JACK**

Leave it.

**MARION**

No. Answer it!

JACK hands her the lottery card and goes to the door, opens it. BELLA stands there.

**BELLA**

You fucking little shit! You shopped me.

**JACK**

What are you talking about?

MARION watches, numb.

**BELLA**

Reynolds got a doctor in. They forced me to take a dope test. It was positive. As you knew.

**JACK**

I don't know anything about it.

BELLA looks over to MARION.

**BELLA**

Your boyfriend fucked me, smoked my dope, then shopped me. What do you think of that? I can't get a job now.

(to Jack)

You bastard. You're no different from Matt. A pair of vicious little shits, that's what you are.

**JACK**

(firmly)

Look Bella, I don't know anything about this. You should talk to Matt.

**BELLA**

You're all scumbags.

**MARION**

I agree.

on

Without looking at MARION, BELLA suddenly kisses JACK the lips. BELLA looks hard at JACK, then leaves. JACK pursues her.

**EXT. BASEMENT - NIGHT**

BELLA runs up the iron stairs to the gate at the top.

**JACK**

Bella!

Without looking back she flings the gate shut, goes off down the street. JACK turns.

**MARION**

Go on. Go after her!

the MARION slams the door to the flat. JACK is half-way up  
stairs, alone.

**EXT. PICCADILLY DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING**

WOMEN The rush hour. 6 in the evening. JACK watches MEN and  
coming out the store.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack had no idea where Marion was staying, or with whom. He realised he knew little about her life. But then, he had never asked about it.

moving JACK now sees MARION. He is about to go up to her,  
through the flow of the crowd, then he stops.

them, A MAN in his 30s, tall with a moustache, greets MARION.  
He's been waiting for her. JACK watches the two of  
unseen.

takes The MAN and MARION exchange a few words. She smiles,  
his arm. He leans forward to kiss her.

**JACK'S VOICE**

For the first time in a long while Jack thought about his mother. She'd left when she couldn't take it any more. His father had said 'Don't worry, Jacko, she'll come back.' She didn't.

JACK turns and walks away.

**JACK'S VOICE**

But Marion wasn't his mother...

**INT. CASINO - CROWS NEST - NIGHT**

of JACK stands behind REYNOLDS who is playing back a video  
GREEK. the earlier incident in which MATT cheated with the

**JACK**

He's paying out in stacks of 25.

**REYNOLDS**

I can see.

He freezes the frame, presses a button, zooms in on the detail of MATT's hand covering the chips.

REYNOLDS

On another video monitor MATT is dealing blackjack.  
looks at the screen.

**REYNOLDS**

Little shit.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Chapter Three. His existence was forming an interesting pattern of betrayals. Sometimes he was unsure whether he was the betrayer or the betrayed.

REYNOLDS looks up from the screen.

**REYNOLDS**

(grudgingly)

Thanks for the information.

**JACK**

A pleasure. Pity about Bella.

**REYNOLDS**

She was a real asset. But what could I do?

JACK lights a cigarette.

**REYNOLDS**

(shakes his head)

Sorry. No smoking in the Nest, Jack.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY**

him  
phone,  
looks  
dead

Working at his computer, JACK lights one cigarette from another. He pauses from his typing. On the desk beside is the note with JANI's phone number. He picks up the starts to dial, then stops, replaces the receiver. He distracted, lost. On the table MARION'S flowers are in the vase.

**INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY**

looking

JACK comes downstairs from the upper floor. He is at a book he has selected: 'SCARNE ON CARDS'.

signing  
Eastern

Across from the cash desk near the entrance a book is in progress. A small crowd surrounds a Middle

author called HABIB dressed in a kaftan. GILES is with him. A PHOTOGRAPHER is there. A few camera flashes.

GILES sees JACK at the cash desk. He is uncertain for a moment, then smiles.

**GILES**

(calling)

Jack!

Hearing his name, JACK turns. GILES comes over.

**GILES**

I thought it was you. It's the hair!

**JACK**

(touching the back  
of his neck)

I'm working on that soccer story.

**GILES**

(vaguely)

Right.

(suddenly)

Look, I must get back to Habib.

**JACK**

Habib?

**GILES**

My author. He's a Terrorist. He's written a kill-and-tell book.

(puts his hand on  
Jack's shoulder)

Take care.

JACK'S  
comes

GILES heads back to the signing. The CASHIER puts book in a bag. GILES stops, thinking of something. He

back to JACK.

**GILES**

Jack, look, next weekend I'm having a house party. Here...

(removes a card  
from his pocket  
book)

It's near Oxford. Why don't you come? It'll just be social. No business.

(conspiratorially)

Bring a friend. I've plenty of room.

**JACK**

(looks at the card)

I'll try and make it.

**GILES**

Looking forward!

GILES goes back to his group. JACK looks round the bookstore, sees thousands of books in piles.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Books piled like chips. Stack 'em high. Sell 'em fast. Make a killing. You think you're a gambler, Giles, but you're not. You're a dealer.

A camera flash.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT**

JANI'S white Honda winds its way through the wintry Oxfordshire countryside. The moon is bright.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Chapter Four...

**INT. HONDA - NIGHT**

her,  
JANI, wearing dark glasses, is driving. JACK, beside  
reads a map with a torch.

**JACK**

I don't know how you can drive at night with those glasses.

She turns and smiles at him. Her left hand is bandaged.

**JACK**

How did you hurt your hand?

**JANI**

Just an accident. Nothing.

**JACK**

Turn left ahead.

The car turns into a lane.

**JACK**

Jani, there's something I want to say. Before we get there. I don't know what the sleeping arrangements are. Giles probably expects us to share a room.

**JANI**

That's fine.

**EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT**

leads  
three  
to

The Honda's tyres crackle on the gravel drive which to a floodlit yellow stone country house. There are cars parked outside the entrance. The Honda stops next to them.

**INT. HONDA - NIGHT**

takes

JACK prepares to get out. JANI catches his arm. She takes off her dark glasses. Her right eye is bruised.

**JANI**

There's no point pretending it was an accident. I had a fight with someone, that's all.

being

In the distance there is the sound of a tennis ball struck.

**EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - TENNIS COURT - NIGHT**

ball.

A floodlit tennis court. A racquet smacks a tennis

game  
JACK sits with GILES drinking Bloody Marys watching a  
of mixed doubles.

of  
Everybody's wearing sweaters. JANI is playing with one  
girlfriend.  
GILES'S friends, GORDON. On the other side, two girls,  
FIONA from Giles' office, and CHLOE, Gordon's

of  
JACK follows JANI'S game. She is far and away the best  
the four.

when  
GILES is also studying JANI's movements, her knickers  
she serves.

**GILES**

She's a dab hand With a racquet,  
your friend.

**JACK**

South African women are very sporty.

about  
JACK watches JANI'S strong leg muscles as she moves  
the court.

**GILES**

I can see. How did she get that  
shiner?

JACK has been waiting for this.

**JACK**

I found her in bed with someone.

**GILES**

(surprised)  
Who was he?

**JACK**

She.

**GIEES**

I say. You're a dark horse, Jack.

four  
court.  
On court, Jani delivers a winning overhead smash. The  
PLAYERS shake hands across the net. They come off the

GORDON puts his arm around JANI. His girlfriend CHLOE notices. JACK is irritated. GILES catches the moment.

**GORDON**

(to Jack)

You don't play tennis?

**JACK**

I don't play anything.

**GORDON**

How boring for you.

JANI moves deliberately away from GORDON, who clearly fancies her, and sits down beside JACK. She pointedly

kisses

him on the cheek. GILES glances at GORDON, who shrugs. FIONA comes up to GILES.

**FIONA**

Where's our drinks?

**CHLOE**

They're so bloody selfish.

**JANI**

(to Jack)

I'm so glad you brought me.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack wouldn't have come without her.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT**

JACK and JANI, GILES, GORDON and their two GIRLFRIENDS are sitting down with drinks at a card table. GORDON opens a fresh deck of cards.

**JACK**

I don't gamble.

**GILES**

Don't be a spoilsport. It's only a few quid.

**JACK**

It's nothing to do with money. I don't gamble.

GILES looks to JANI to persuade him.

**JANI**

He doesn't gamble.

**JACK**

I'll watch.

**GORDON**

(insinuatingly)

Jack likes to watch.

(to Jani)

Does he like to watch?

JACK is getting angry. JANI is calm.

**JANI**

(to Gordon)

One more remark like that and I'll  
break your balls.

There is silence. GORDON is embarrassed. FIONA looks at  
CHLOE, they're shocked and impressed. JACK smiles.

**GILES**

(laughs)

I'll bet she could, too.

JACK defuses the atmosphere.

**JACK**

I'll deal, but I won't play.

He sits down, picks up the cards.

**GORDON**

You sure you know how?

JACK takes the pack of cards, splits it expertly into  
two,  
shuffles by pressing the two halves together open-  
palmed.

There is a rattling noise as the cards fold  
mechanically  
into one another, leaving the pack as if it hadn't been  
shuffled. FIONA and CHLOE are fascinated.

**FIONA**

Do that again.

JACK gives the cards to his right, GORDON cuts them.  
Another

immaculate professional shuffle, and out come the cards from JACK'S right hand, flicking across the table.

another

As the cards land, they fall exactly next to one in front of each player.

**CHLOE**

That's sexy.

neat

At the end of the deal, five players are looking at a fan of five cards before them.

**FIONA**

Don't they look pretty.

They all pick up their cards.

**GILES**

(frowns)

There's nothing pretty about this hand.

**CHLOE**

You're not supposed to talk, Giles.

**FIONA**

He's probably lying. He does that.

JACK catches JANI'S eye. She winks.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT**

Later. JACK deals the cards.

**JACK**

Last hand.

**GILES**

Hey. I've got an idea. Why don't we...

**FIONA**

(sharply)

No! No stripping.

**CHLOE**

Right. We're not having that again!  
(glances at Jack)  
Although...

**GORDON**

I'll stick to bluffing. That's  
what I'm best at.

JANI. JANI smiles, says nothing. JACK slides the pack to  
She looks up at him and cuts the cards. JACK deals the  
cards deftly. The FIVE PLAYERS pick up their cards.  
end Before each player calls we hear Jack's voice. In the  
he correctly predicts their call. Is it telepathy? Or  
something else?

**GORDON**

I'll stick.

**FIONA**

Two cards.

**GILES**

One card.

**CHLOE**

Oh I don't know...Er...two cards.

**JANI**

Three cards.

The PLAYERS examine their hands. The WOMEN are pleased.  
The MEN say nothing. JANI puts her cards together.

The betting begins. No one drops out. The raising goes  
round three times.

**FIONA**

That's it. I haven't got any more  
cash.

The betting comes to an end. JACK watches as they turn  
their hands over. GORDON turns over a Straight.

**GORDON**

Beat that.

CHLOE turns over a Flush.

**CHLOE**

Ha. Ha. Ha.

**GORDON**

Shit.

FIONA turns over a Full House.

**FIONA**

Not so fast, darling.

**GORDON**

(disbelieving)

Hang on, chaps. That's impossible!

GILES turns over four of a kind.

**GILES**

How's about that for impossible.

Laughter, cries of amazement.

**GORDON**

What's going on?

over, JACK is impassive. They all look to JANI, who turns one card at a time, a Straight Flush.

**CHLOE**

Wow. What are the odds for this happening?

More laughter, cries of amazement.

**FIONA**

Thousands to one.

**JACK**

42,300,000 to 1.

**JANI**

Approximately.

**GORDON**

I could've won if I'd been able to bluff.

JACK, JANI leans forward and takes the pot. GILES looks at then at JANI.

**GILES**

I get it.

**JACK**

Get what?

(smiles)  
Are you accusing me of cheating?

**GILES**

Good God, no. But with skill like that, what do you want a job for? You don't need to work.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

JACK sits on the side of a four-poster bed and takes off his shoes. On the other side of the bed JANI unzips her skirt. She looks round the room.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Here was an interesting question. Was writing work... or play?

JANI puts her skirt over a chair and goes into the bathroom. She doesn't close the door. JACK continues undressing. From a hold-all he removes a pair of pajamas. He glances at the open bathroom door, then climbs into his pajamas. He has two ugly bruises on his chest from the fight with the ARABIC MAN.

JANI comes out of the bathroom naked. She sees his body.

**JANI**

What happened?

**JACK**

Remember the guy who cheated at the table?

**JANI**

You don't like cheats, do you.

She walks across to her case, opens it, rummages around and takes out a nightie. This, without the slightest hint of embarrassment. JACK goes into the bathroom to brush his teeth. JANI climbs into bed.

**JANI**

Which side do you like?

**JACK**

(calling)  
You choose.

They get into bed.

**JANI**

That trick tonight, I don't think  
I've ever seen that before.

**JACK**

It can only work with amateurs, A  
pro would have spotted it.

**JANI**

I didn't.

**JACK**

Then you're not a pro.

brushes

JANI leans over and turns off the lamp. Her hair

JACK'S face.

**JANI**

Goodnight.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT**

a

In the deserted hall is a nineteenth century painting,

light

copy of Gericault's 'Raft of the Medusa'. The picture

illuminates the group of men and women, clinging to the  
raft and to each other.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

**JANI'S VOICE**

Jack...? I need your help...

JACK wakes drowsily.

**JANI**

I'm in trouble.

**JACK**

What kind of trouble?

**JANI**

I owe a lot of money.

**JACK**

Was that why you did the two grand?  
I couldn't help you.

**JANI**

I know that. But you can now.

**JACK**

I don't have any money. switches  
on the light. JANI is looking  
distressed.

**JANI**

Some people I know, they're planning  
to rob The Golden Lion.

JACK sits up, turns on the lamp.

**JACK**

You don't mean that.

JANI pulls up the bedcover around her body.

**JANI**

They mean it.

**JACK**

Who's they?

**JANI**

My creditors. One night, around  
three in the morning, they'll come  
into the casino -

**JACK**

(interrupting)

Forget it, Jani. It'll never work.

**JANI**

The point is, they want a man  
inside.

**JACK**

(laughs)

And I thought you were a bright  
woman.

**JANI**

Just listen. You don't have to do  
anything criminal.

**JACK**

(smiles)

Robbery's not criminal?

JACK gets out of bed, tours the room.

**JANI**

You don't have to be criminal. A man will come up to your table and deliberately cheat. You'll see him, stop him, and the guy will make a big scene. There'll be chaos. And that's when it'll happen.

**JACK**

You're serious.

**JANI**

You won't be committing a crime. The man will cheat, you'll just be doing your job, that's all.

JACK comes right up close to JANI in bed.

**JACK**

And I thought you were only after my body.

**JANI**

I've come to know you. You're honest.

(takes his hand)

I trust you.

**JACK**

What'll you do when it all goes wrong?

**JANI**

It won't.

**JACK**

But if it does.

**JANI**

You keep the ten thousand pounds.

**JACK**

What ten thousand pounds?

JANI gets out of bed.

**JANI**

These people will pay you ten thousand before and ten thousand after. They want someone they can be sure of, an honest dealer. That's the point. Not all dealers are honest. Mr Reynolds will never suspect you.

**JACK**

Reynolds? You've done your research.

She puts her hand on his.

**JANI**

I didn't know what else to do. You're my last chance.

She takes his hand and puts it on her bruised eye.

**JANI**

Next time it'll be my neck.

**JACK**

What about my neck?

JANI is close to breaking down. Her toughness evaporates.

**JANI**

I want to go back to Cape Town, I want to start again, clean.

**JACK**

I can't do it, Jani.

**JANI**

I'm asking you, as a...friend. You'd be saving the life of a friend.

JANI goes back to bed. She turns out the light. JACK stands in the middle of the dark room.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - PASSAGE - STAIRS - NIGHT**

JACK comes out of the bedroom in his pajamas, wearing his hat. He walks slowly down the passage. He hears the sounds of love-making coming from one of the rooms. He passes

'The Raft of the Medusa' as he goes down the stairs.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

JACK comes into the kitchen, switches on the light. He goes to the refrigerator, takes out a bottle of vodka.

He

washes a dirty glass and pours himself a drink.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack wondered why he was even considering it. Ten grand. In cash. That was why. But Jack didn't need the money. His father would have taken it, like a shot. But his father was a gambler.

He downs his drink, and leaves the kitchen.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - PASSAGE - NIGHT**

JACK walks back to his room. There is silence now, no sounds of sex.

sounds

**JACK'S VOICE**

He was always broke. Jake suddenly realised... it was Jake who was considering it.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

JACK comes in, tosses his hat on the bed. JANI isn't in the bed. The bathroom door is afar. He hears the sounds of gasping. He rushes to the bathroom.

of

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

JANI is holding her head over the lavatory bowl. JACK runs some water in the basin. He helps her to her feet and gives her a glass of water.

runs

gives

She washes out her mouth. She looks at him, tears running down her face.

running

**JANI**

I want you to forget what I said.

**JACK**

Wait a minute...

**JANI**

No, forget it. The bet's off.

clean She reaches forward for a toothbrush and starts to  
her teeth.

**JACK**

What about your father? Can he  
help?

his She spits the water out of her mouth, kisses him on the  
forehead and goes back into the bedroom. JACK looks at  
reflection in the bathroom mirror. He strokes his hair  
down.

**JACK**

Why don't you just go back to South  
Africa?

He leaves the bathroom.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

each JACK gets back in bed with JANI. They turn away from  
other and prepare to sleep.

**JACK**

How much do you owe?

**JANI**

Let it go.

**JACK**

Did they tell you to sleep with  
me?

**JANI**

I told you, all bets are off.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN**

She JACK wakes as JANI is dressed getting ready to leave.  
bends and kisses him.

**JANI**

I'm sorry.

**JACK**

What for?

**JANI**

I have to take the car.

She looks at him then leaves the room

**JACK'S VOICE**

Hang on tightly... let go lightly.

**INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

CHLOE

JACK comes into the kitchen. GILES is making coffee.

is sitting at the table, half-asleep in her nightgown.

**GILES**

Good night?

**JACK**

Not particularly.

**GILES**

And your lady?

**JACK**

She had to leave early. She asked me to thank you.

**GILES**

A bit unexpected, wasn't it?

**JACK**

Not entirely.

**GILES**

How's that football story coming along?

**JACK**

You said it was going to be social, Giles. No business.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He was overcome with a sense of urgency. He had to get it down... Chapter Five.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

heads  
dead  
small  
paper

JACK comes in, puts down his overnight bag. He yawns,  
for the bedroom. Suddenly, he sees that the vase of  
flowers is now full of fresh blooms. Underneath is a  
box, gift-wrapped. JACK opens it. Inside the tissue  
is a tiny gold charm on a chain. He examines it.

CLOSE-UP: The charm is a book, no title engraved.

JACK is touched.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

looks

JACK comes into the room. MARION is in bed asleep. He  
at her, smiles.

to

He starts to get undressed. MARION stirs. JACK puts the  
book charm around his neck. She moves from the middle  
one side of the bed, making room for him. He holds the  
charm.

**JACK**

It's beautiful. Thank you.

**MARION**

I hope it brings you luck.

**JACK**

It will.

we

MARION I haven't brought you much luck, have I? Perhaps  
shouldn't be together.

**JACK**

That girl, she works at the casino --

**MARION**

-- I don't care about her. Of  
course, I was angry. But not with  
you. The book is yours not mine. I  
was wrong, what I said about it. I  
hurt you, didn't I?

**JACK**

You're entitled to your opinion.

**MARION**

It's none of my business what you write. And your job, that's none of my business either. I love you. And I've done everything wrong.

JACK takes her in his arms.

**JACK**

I'll leave the casino soon.  
(he strokes her  
hair)  
I promise.

**MARION**

You will?

**JACK**

Within a month. Believe me, I'm going to quit!

They begin to make love. She holds the back of his head.

**MARION**

Then you can dye your hair blond again.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

JACK is asleep in bed with MARION. He is murmuring indistinguishable words. It wakes her. She gently touches his shoulder. He opens his eyes.

**JACK**

What?

**MARION**

You were talking in your sleep.

**JACK**

Not talking. Writing.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY**

JACK is at work alone. The phone rings. He leaves it and continues I working. Then he hears JANI'S VOICE.

**JANI'S VOICE**

I need to see you. I've moved. I  
have a new number. It's 468-3275.  
Please call me.

resumes  
There is a click. JACK scribbles the number down and  
work.

**INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT**

JANI'S  
The  
JACK gets off a train. He is dressed as a croupier. He  
walks to a public telephone on the platform, taking  
note from his pocket. He dials the number. The noise of  
the train and PASSENGERS makes it difficult to hear.  
phone at the end rings and rings. JACK waits.

**JACK**

I want to speak to Jani de  
Villiers...  
(waits)  
Jani... it's Jack... I'll come  
over now...

He takes out a notepad and writes down the address.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

The  
JACK walks down a street of rough, transient's hotels.  
street lamps are on.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Chapter Seven... Jack had decided  
to see her. The challenge was  
essential.

in.  
He comes up to a hotel called 'Journey's End'. He goes

**INT. HOTEL. STAIRS - NIGHT**

men's  
JACK climbs the creaking stairs under the fluorescent  
lights. He knocks on a door. JANI opens it. She wears  
pajamas. She looks unslept.

**JANI**

Come in.

She glances up and down the passage. JACK goes in.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

dingy

JANI carefully closes the door. JACK looks round the room.

**JANI**

It's not the Ritz this time.

She switches on a standard lamp, looks at him.

**JANI**

Is it yes?

**JACK**

Yes.

**JANI**

Thank you.

an

Reflected in a mirror, she opens her bag and takes out envelope, gives it to JACK. He looks inside. Four bank packets of £2500.

**JACK**

It doesn't seem fair. You're offering me ten grand in cash but you can't afford a decent place.

**JANI**

Well, life's not fair. We know that.

**JACK**

It's all relative. I need the money too.

**JANI**

Do you?

**JACK**

Yes.

**JANI**

The date's not set yet. I'll call you. One last thing: the man you're going to catch cheating, he may get violent. But you know how to deal with cheats.

**JACK**

(looks at her face)  
That bruise has cleared up nicely.

**JANI**

Bruise?  
(touches her eye)  
Oh, yes. It's better.

**JACK**

(touches his chest)  
I've still got mine.

JACK looks at her hand.

**JACK**

And your hand too.

**JANI**

(coolly)  
I took the bandage off yesterday.

She crosses to pick up a bottle of Scotch.

**JANI**

Would you like a drink?

**JACK**

No thank you.

JACK puts the envelope in his pocket. They look at each other.

**JACK**

I don't think we should meet again.

**JANI**

(nods)  
It's a shame there aren't more men  
in the world like you.

puts  
JACK goes up to JANI and kisses her on the mouth. She  
an arm around him.

**JACK'S VOICE**

There was a part of Jani he really  
liked.

He turns and leaves the room.

**EXT. HOTEL - STREET - NIGHT**

JACK comes out of the hotel, walks up the street.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Question: Was he gambling, taking Jani's money? Answer: No. Because he wasn't betting with his own money. He was being paid in advance for a service...

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

At the roulette table JACK spins the wheel, throws the ball.

**JACK'S VOICE**

In reality there were two clear elements of risk in this exchange. One: the possibility the cash was counterfeit. Two: the possibility Jani or her creditors would want the money back if the plan failed.

chips.  
A MIDDLE-AGED MAN is sweating. He fingers his last 2

He reaches for a number, hesitates. JACK sees that the MAN's hand is shaking.

**JACK'S VOICE**

To begin with he put the odds at 2 against. 7 for. He checked a random selection of bills at a bank. They were all good.

fifties  
with  
thirty  
Across the table a well-dressed JEWISH WOMAN in her  
is sitting next to a YOUNG MAN, a gigolo type, the top  
three buttons of his shirt undone. She too hesitates  
her bet, looks down at her card, marked with the last  
turns.

**JACK'S VOICE**

So now his odds were decidedly better. He put them at 8 to 1. The fact that the notes were good gave him one less negative. 2 minus 1. At the same time mathematically he had one more positive. 7 plus 1.

The WOMAN looks up at the YOUNG MAN. She hands him the

chip.

**WOMAN**

Bring me some luck.

The YOUNG MAN smiles. Takes the chip and puts it on 21.

prays

The MIDDLE-AGED MAN puts his chips on 8 and 11. He  
silently.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

The roulette table. The ball is bouncing in and out of  
numbers.

**JACK**

No more bets.

The MIDDLE-AGED MAN closes his eyes. The WOMAN puts her  
hand on the YOUNG MAN'S arm.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Next stage. He had to be secure at  
8 to 1 against having to give the  
money back, so he wouldn't spend  
it. If after one month no one had  
approached him, he calculated the  
odds of keeping it at 20 to 1.  
After three months he figured 100  
to 1 no one would turn up.

eyeing

The ball bounces into 21. The WOMAN gives a cry of joy.  
She grips the YOUNG MAN's hand. He leans over to her,

in

her diamond necklace, and whispers something seductive  
her ear. She stiffens with apprehensive pleasure.

The MIDDLE-AGED MAN opens his eyes, there is a look of  
misery on his face.

slides

JACK sweeps away the lost chips, pays out five minor  
winners. He calmly counts a small pile of chips and

them to the MIDDLE-AGED MAN by sleight of hand. Then he  
prepares to pay out the WOMAN.

The

No one has noticed the pay-out to the MIDDLE-AGED MAN.

mechanically.

MAN looks at JACK incredulously. JACK smiles

The MAN mouths the words 'Thank you' to JACK.

pile  
The WOMAN looks up at the YOUNG MAN. She gives him a  
of chips. He gives them back. He kisses her neck.

**YOUNG MAN**

How about a drink to celebrate?

emotion,  
The MIDDLE-AGED MAN stands up, his face creased in  
relief.

**MAN**

(to Jack)

Cash me in.

JACK converts the green coloured chips to £35 in house  
chips. The MAN nods at JACK, who smiles formally.

the  
The MAN leaves the table. PUNTERS place their bets for  
next spin. JACK sees the MAN stop by the next roulette  
table.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jake's experiment with the man  
would prove the point.

The MAN hesitates. He can't resist.

In CLOSE-UP: the MAN puts two of the chips down.

**JACK'S VOICE**

People don't change.

**INT. JACK'S KITCHEN - NIGHT**

swears  
MARION drops a plate as she's drying the dishes. She  
and bends to pick up the pieces.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

laundry  
chest  
MARION, undressed, pulls the old nightgown from the  
basket. She lets it fall back, goes to look in the  
of drawers for another. She can't find one among the  
underwear.

She goes on to JACK'S drawer and pulls out a shirt. She

unfolds it. Out drop the four packets of £2500.

She bends to pick them up. She looks at them  
incredulously.

**INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT**

JACK pushes several £50 notes into the slot and counts  
out  
two piles of chips for a PUNTER in front of him.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He watched their faces as they  
lost hour after hour, night after  
night, relentlessly.

JACK'S FACE as he deals.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He questioned the conventional  
wisdom that gamblers are self-  
destructive...

**INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT**

The FACES of PUNTERS around the table: concentration,  
grimness, apprehension...

**JACK'S VOICE**

He had come to believe that in  
reality, they want to destroy  
everyone else - their families and  
loved ones, everyone. Fuck over  
the whole world...

The white balls lands. The FACES of the LOSERS,  
resigned,  
desperate, angry....

The PUNTERS who are cleaned out get off their chairs,  
tear  
up their sequence cards, turn and walk away, quickly,  
slowly.

**ON JACK'S FACE:**

**JACK'S VOICE**

Without emotion he watched them  
go. Jake stayed.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

She  
sitting  
MARION is lying awake alone in bed. The phone rings.  
leans over to pick it up, then doesn't. From the  
room comes the message:

**JANI'S VOICE**

It's set. The day after tomorrow.  
The twenty-fourth. Good luck.

sitting  
Click. MARION gets out of bed. She goes into the  
room.

**INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT**

Then  
message.  
MARION replays the message. She stares at the phone.  
carefully she presses the ERASE button, wiping the  
She goes back into the bedroom.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY**

shoulders.  
JACK is at work. MARION'S hands are massaging his  
The little book charm dangles round his neck.

**MARION**

Aren't you ever tempted to gamble?

**JACK**

(looks up)  
Never. Why do you ask?

**MARION**

I can just imagine, being around  
so much money all the time...

**JACK**

Gambling's not about money.

**MARION**

Really?

**JACK**

Gambling's about not facing reality.  
Ignoring the odds.

She takes her hands away from his neck.

**MARION**

I must be a fool. I never think  
about the odds.

The sound of an underground train.

**INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT**

JACK sits impassively among noisy Christmas TRAVELLERS.  
The train stops. SOMEONE pops a balloon. JACK gets up  
and  
alights, followed by a streamer. He disappears into the  
crowd.

**INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT**

JACK hangs up his hat and coat, examines himself in the  
mirror. He picks up a small roll of paper. He unfurls  
it.  
A Christmas party hat.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Chapter Twelve...

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

A Christmas festive atmosphere. The casino interior is  
decorated with red and green balloons, silver and gold  
streamers, a large tree hung with £1000 chips.

JACK is dealing at a blackjack table. Like the other  
croupiers and dealers, he is dressed in a fancy red  
coat  
with green trim. He wears a silly paper hat.

The PUNTERS at Jack's table include MR TCHAI and four  
expensively dressed CHINESE MEN. The BODYGUARD stands  
behind  
are  
them. They are gambling big money. Wads of £50 notes  
changed into £100 chips.

JACK is coolly winning for the house. REYNOLDS looks on  
impassively in his Santa Claus suit. Three or four  
PUNTERS  
are watching the CHINESE lose heavily. MR TCHAI and his  
friends occasionally exchange a phrase in Chinese but  
they  
prepare  
to lose even more. JACK pushes hundreds of pounds into  
the  
box beneath the table.

which  
During a  
a  
REYNOLDS signals a SECURITY MAN to collect the cash  
is building up. He comes over with a safety cart.  
short break the money is taken from under the table in  
box, loaded into the cart and wheeled away.

**INT. CASINO - BAR - NIGHT**

water  
pass  
PRIVATE.  
TWO COLD-LOOKING MEN in suits are drinking mineral  
at the bar. They watch the SECURITY MAN with the cart  
by and disappear through a green baize door marked

One of the SUITS looks at his watch: five minutes to  
midnight.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

watch:  
from  
JACK is now at a roulette table. He sees a PUNTER's  
2.45. The atmosphere around the crowded table is noisy,  
laughter, loud voices. 1 One of the two MEN in suits  
the bar eases himself into a chair. JACK sees him. The  
SUIT throws him £500.

**SUIT**

Fifties. Ten of them.

**JACK**

What colour chips?

**SUIT**

Whatever.

pale  
colours  
JACK gives him ten pale blue chips and puts another  
blue chip into the rack alongside the rainbow of  
used by the other punters. The SUIT looks at his watch.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

empty.  
Two men in raincoats, DETECTIVES, approach REYNOLDS and  
talk to him. REYNOLDS becomes nervous, looks around the  
casino. The table at the bar where the SUITS sat is  
The PRIVATE green baize door slowly closes.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

delight

The ball bounces into number 5. There are cheers of  
from the winners, 5 is heavily covered.

number

The SUIT casually slides a pale blue chip onto the  
at the side.

JACK Sees the obvious cheat. So do other PUNTERS.

**JACK**

(stiffens)

Sir, I can't accept that bet.

The SUIT gets up and comes around the table to JACK.

**SUIT**

Are you calling me a cheat?

**PUNTER**

You are a cheat. I saw you.

**SUIT**

(grabbing Jack's  
lapel)

I'm talking to you.

his

JACK pushes him away. The SUIT hits JACK'S face with

SUIT

fist. Uproar around the table. JACK hits the man. The

shouting.

grabs JACK and pushes him backwards across the table,  
knocking all the chips over. The PUNTERS start

PUNTER

They grab their chips, especially the losers. One

They

tries to restrain the SUIT. JACK kicks the SUIT hard.

fight, trading blows.

see

At the blackjack table MR TCHAI and the other CHINESE

The

the fight. MR TCHAI barks at the BODYGUARD in Chinese.

BODYGUARD heads for the fight at the roulette table.

the

TWO DEALERS rush over to stop the fight. Somewhere in

distance there is the sound of a gunshot. PEOPLE start

screaming. The SUIT punches JACK in the stomach. JACK doubles up. The SUIT breaks away, rushes across the casino, pushing screaming WOMEN aside, heads for the door. MR TCHAI's BODYGUARD blocks his way and fells the SUIT with a hammer blow to the head.

The TWO DETECTIVES come up. One of them handcuffs the SUIT, who is lying on the floor. The casino is in uproar. A strange, violent Christmas party.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

JACK lies groaning on the floor. MR TCHAI is standing, watching JACK. REYNOLDS'S VOICE comes over the tannoy system:

**REYNOLDS**

Ladies and gentlemen, please be calm. There's no cause for alarm. Enjoy yourselves. It's Christmas.

'Rudolph  
amid  
other

REYNOLDS'S VOICE is replaced by a breezy version of the Red-Nosed Reindeer'. JACK struggles to his feet, the chaos. He falls back in pain. MR TCHAI and the CHINESE leave the casino with the BODYGUARD.

**INT. HOSPITAL - CASUALTY - NIGHT**

curtain  
has

JACK is sitting in a Christmas-decorated cubicle, a drawn round. An INDIAN NURSE is bandaging his arm. He has two large plasters on his chest.

The NURSE finishes the job, smiles.

**NURSE**

There you go.

JACK

She hands him two pills and a glass of water. In the background there are party sounds. The NURSE leaves. JACK fingers the charm around his neck.

MARION

There is a pause. Then the curtain is pulled back.

enters. She carries a bottle of wine and two cartons of Chinese take-away. JACK is surprised.

**JACK**

How did you know I was here?

**MARION**

I thought you wouldn't want to spend Christmas Day alone in here.

She starts to pour wine. JACK is still puzzled.

**JACK**

Did you go to the casino?

MARION hands him a glass of wine.

**MARION**

Happy Christmas.

They touch glasses and drink.

**MARION**

Now...noodles or rice?

As she opens the cartons, JACK watches her, still uneasy.

**MARION**

(quietly)

I don't want a criminal for a boyfriend.

**JACK**

(suddenly)

There was a message, wasn't there?

**MARION**

It's probably easier for you to eat the rice.

**JACK**

Marion! What did you tell the police?

**MARION**

Nothing about you.

**JACK**

Then what?

**MARION**

Give up being a croupier, Jack. Or  
I'll shop you. All you have to do  
is keep your word. It's that simple.

JACK sinks back on the bed. She hands him the rice  
dish.

**MARION**

Here...use a spoon.

**JACK**

Leave me alone, Marion.

**MARION**

You're already alone.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He had always been alone. He had  
always believed it would make the  
decisions easier.

**JACK**

All right. I don't want to lose  
you. I'll quit. I swear to you.

MARION kisses him.

**MARION**

Why did you take the money?

**JACK**

I hate public transport.

**MARION**

What?

**JACK**

I want to buy a car.

**MARION**

(laughs)

How can anyone be that naive?

**INT. CASINO - REYNOLDS'S OFFICE - DAY**

JACK sits in front of REYNOLDS.

**REYNOLDS**

How do you feel, Jack?

**JACK**

Bruised.

**REYNOLDS**

Take your time. Two weeks. Three if you need it. We'll pay you sick leave. I don't want to lose you. You're a good man. Here...

He hands JACK an envelope.

**JACK**

What's this?

He opens the envelope. Inside is a casino cheque for £500.

**REYNOLDS**

(smiles)

Happy New Year. Have a drink on the company. You've earned it.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

JACK is sitting at his computer, drinking vodka, dressed in his CROUPIER'S suit.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Chapter Thirteen...

He types... On the SOUNDTRACK we hear the CASINO noise.

**JACK'S VOICE**

It's all numbers, the croupier thought. A spin of the wheel. A turn of a card. The time of your life. The date of your birth. The year of your death. In the Book of Numbers the Lord said: 'thou shalt count thy steps'.

There's a ring at the doorbell. He looks at his watch: 2.15a.m. The I ring comes again.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack thought, this is it. The famous two in the morning knock at the door. It wad pay-back time.

JACK goes to the door.

At the door. It was pay-back time. JACK goes to the door.

**JACK'S VOICE**

But he wasn't afraid. He hadn't spent one penny of the ten grand. He'd covered himself. He knew the odds.

stands JACK calmly opens the door. A UNIFORMED POLICEMAN there. JACK hadn't expected this.

**POLICEMAN**

Mr Manfred?

**JACK**

Yes...

numbers. The sound of the roulette ball bouncing against the

**INT. MORGUE - NIGHT**

of A POLICE DOCTOR uncovers a body on a gurney. The sound look. the ball find-ing a number. JACK can hardly bear to It is MARION. With emotion...

**JACK'S VOICE**

What were the odds of being killed by a car... on New Year's Eve?

**MAN'S VOICE**

She was on her way home... to you.

**JACK**

No. She wasn't.

with JACK looks away from MARION'S face. He sees the MAN gurney, the moustache, standing on the other side of the the MAN he saw with MARION on the street. He is DETECTIVE INSPECTOR ROSS. JACK is disorientated.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Marion had been visiting his mother...no, no, not his mother - her mother.

**JACK**

(to Ross)  
She was visiting her mother. Her  
mother.

(suddenly)  
Who are you?

**ROSS**  
Detective Inspector Ross.

**JACK**  
Who...

**ROSS**  
Ross.

**JACK**  
Who did it? Tell me!

He grabs ROSS'S lapels. ROSS carefully removes JACK'S  
hands.

**ROSS**  
We think it's a hit-and-run. A  
drunk driver, probably, But there  
is a possibility of a revenge  
killing.

**JACK'S VOICE**  
(distraught)  
Revenge? For what? Whose revenge?

**ROSS**  
As you know, she was a WPC with  
the Met. up until two years ago.

JACK fumbles in his pocket for a cigarette. There is a  
No  
Smoking sign on the wall. ROSS produces a Zippo and  
lights  
JACK'S Gitane.

**ROSS**  
She called me last week. She'd got  
wind of a planned robbery at your  
casino.

**JACK'S VOICE**  
What had that got to do with her  
death?

**ROSS**  
You didn't recognise the man who

attacked you, did you?

**JACK**

(loudly)

Of course I recognised him!

**ROSS**

(surprised)

You did?

**JACK**

I know a cheat when I see one. The man was a cheat.

ROSS sighs, looks at MARION.

back

JACK suddenly reaches down and pulls the white sheet over MARION'S face.

**JACK**

(to Ross)

Do you gamble?

ROSS is puzzled. JACK drops his cigarette on the floor, grinds it with his shoe. ROSS gives JACK his card.

**ROSS**

If anything occurs to you, call me.

JACK walks away from ROSS without a word. The DOCTOR is now filling out a form.

say

From the door JACK looks back. ROSS waits for him to say something. JACK doesn't speak.

**ROSS**

I was in love with her, you know.

the

There is a REPRISE of JACK covering MARION'S face with the sheet.

**EXT. STREETS - NIGHT**

In his croupier's suit JACK walks the night streets.

**JACK'S VOICE**

(quoting)

'The world breaks everyone, and

afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break, it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these, you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry'.

He passes a poster for the National Lottery bearing the legend: 'IT COULD BE YOU'. JACK doesn't see it.

**INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

having  
smashed.

A WOMAN smashes a plate over a MAN'S head. It's plate-smashing party time, Greek-style. TWENTY drunk PEOPLE fun. Zorba music. Plates are thrown, stamped on,

the  
him. A

JACK sits alone at a corner table, drinking, watching fun, unsmiling. One plate cracks into a wall behind

turns

MAN stumbles backwards into JACK's table. JACK swiftly moves his drink out of the way. The MAN apologises, to JACK. It is MATT.

**MATT**

Jacko! How're you doing?  
(shakes Jack's hand vigorously)  
I heard about the raid. Pity they didn't pull it off. I wish I'd been there.

smiles.

MATT has to shout above the noise and music. JACK

**JACK**

(quietly)  
But you were there Matt.

MATT doesn't hear.

**MATT**

What? You know what happened to me, don't you? That bitch Bella shopped me. I'd like to beat the shit out of her.

**JACK**

I'd like to buy you a drink.

**MATT**

Cheers. Happy New Year. I really like you, Jacko, you're so fucking straight.

(suddenly)

Hey, you haven't changed your clothes!

**INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

MATT

There are four or five PEOPLE left among the debris.  
has gone.

JACK is still there, drunk now.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The music stopped, Jack was drunk...  
hallucinating. He was back, as a  
child, in the Wild Coast Casino.

A BLACK WOMAN comes over to him. Her name is LUCY.

**LUCY**

You've been avoiding me.

**JACK**

(blearily)

Have I?

**LUCY**

I'm Lucy.

**JACK**

And what do you do, Lucy?

**LUCY**

I'm a witch. A white witch. Why  
don't we move on?

**JACK**

Are you going to put a spell on  
me?

**LUCY**

I might.

**EXT. GREEK RESTAURANT - DAWN**

she.  
Austin

LUCY guides JACK to a parked car. He is drunker than  
When he sees the car he starts to laugh. It is his  
Healey.

**JACK**

Nice car. How much did you pay for  
it?

**LUCY**

Too much. Eighteen hundred.

the  
She opens the door for him. They climb in. LUCY starts  
car.

**LUCY**

Where to?

**JACK**

Turn left at the lights.

They drive off.

**EXT. STREET - DAWN**

around a  
A deserted intersection. The Austin Healey swings  
corner. A WOMAN steps out from the kerb.

**INT. CAR - DAWN**

JACK reacts. He swings the wheel. LUCY shouts. The car  
swerves, missing the WOMAN.

**LUCY**

Hey! I saw her!

JACK looks back. The WOMAN is shouting after the car.

**LUCY**

You don't trust women drivers, do  
you?

**JACK'S VOICE**

Jack didn't trust anyone. Except  
himself.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAWN**

JACK sits at his computer. He is watching the printer

unloading page after page. JACK assembles the typescript.

**JACK'S VOICE**

It was finally finished. He thought of sending it to Giles. But that wouldn't be right. He would select a publisher at random, like a number.

CLOSE UP: The dedication: 'To Marion'.

The sound of the ball bouncing against the wheel.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

The ball falls into 10. JACK puts the doll on 10.

No one at the table has the winning number. JACK sweeps away the losing bets.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

A Blackjack table. The bets are placed. JACK turns over the bank's cards: a KING and an ACE. He takes all the chips from the five PUNTERS.

**PUNTER**

(to Jack)

You're wasting yourself. With your luck you ought to come over to our side.

**EXT. STREET. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT**

JACK comes up to a bookstore window. A sticker reads:

'IT'S

A WINNER'. There are quotes blown up from the reviews:

"AN

**INCREDIBLE INSIDE JOB...IT'S ALL HERE, THE SYSTEMS, THE SCAMS, THE SLEAZE...A TALE OF TRIUMPHANT DISGUST...OF EXHILARATING CONTEMPT...**" The display is just one book: 'I, CROUPIER'. Number 1 Bestseller.

**JACK'S VOICE**

Even his publisher had no idea who the author was. He had done the deal through a lawyer. It gave him a good feeling, no one knowing...

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

REYNOLDS is reading the book. He laughs out loud at something.

**JACK'S VOICE**

...It never occurred to anyone at the Casino that the Golden Lion had been his model. Why should it? Weren't all casinos the same....

**INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT**

tube.  
time  
JACK is sitting in his croupier's suit on the crowded  
He sees a WOMAN reading 'I, CROUPIER'. For the first  
we see the back cover...'by ANONYMOUS'.

**JACK'S VOICE**

...It gave him an exquisite pleasure, being an underground man. With all his money, he hadn't even bought a car. Jack knew the truth about himself, he was a one-book writer. A one time winner who had quit while he was ahead...

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAWN**

Five in the morning.

**JACK'S VOICE**

He changed nothing in the flat, bought nothing, spent nothing. The only thing he did was to remove the bars outside the window...

JACK comes in. The phone rings.

**INT. SUN CITY. CASINO - NIGHT**

the  
JANI is holding a mobile phone. In the background is  
casino room, the lights, colours, rattling sounds. She  
waits.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

JACK hesitates, then picks up.

**JACK**

Hello...

**JANI**

Jack! It's Jani.

The following conversation is INTERCUT.

**JACK**

Jani! Where are you?

**JANI**

Sun City. I've been meaning to call you for months.

**JACK**

(smiles)

How are you?

**JANI**

Great. I'm getting married. At least, I think I am.

**JACK**

Did you solve your problems?

**JANI**

Yes. I'm all over that now. Jack, hold on a minute. There's someone here who wants to talk to you...

JACK waits.

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

A MAN'S hand takes the phone from JANI.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

**JACK SR'S VOICE**

Jacko - how're you doing?

**JACK**

Dad!

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

JACK SR. his arm round JANI, talks into the phone.

**JACK SR**

I never thanked you properly for your help. Jani told me you behaved like a perfect gentleman throughout. I knew you would. I know my son.

**INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT**

JACK'S face is a mask, tight, fixed.

**JACK SR'S VOICE**

The woman thinks I'm going to marry her. But you know me. It's a shame things didn't work out. But we saw you all right. You didn't gamble the ten grand, did you?

**JACK**

(huskily)

As a matter of fact I did. But I won.

**JACK SR'S VOICE**

That's my boy. How's that novel of yours coming along?

JACK slowly puts the phone down. He takes a deep breath.  
Then smiles.

**JACK'S VOICE**

So that was it. The final card. Blackjack. His father, eight thousand miles and twenty seven years away, was still dealing to his son Jack from the bottom of the deck...

CLOSE-UP: A copy of the book: 'I CROUPIER'.

**JACK'S VOICE**

...But Jake the croupier had a sense of humour.

**INT. JACK'S KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Laughing, JACK pours himself a vodka, raises his glass.

**JACK**

To you. To both of you.

He drinks at a gulp. He turns. Standing in the doorway is BELLA, wearing a nightdress. She is sleepy.

**BELLA**

What are you laughing at? Who was

that on the phone?

**JACK**

A couple I know are getting married.

BELLA puts her arms around him lovingly.

**BELLA**

Fools.

A whistling sound...

**INT. CASINO - NIGHT**

We are back in the FIRST SCENE. The ball bounces around the spinning wheel. The FACES of the PUNTERS. Frozen expressions. They are almost still. We do not see the croupier. Then...

**JACK'S VOICE**

Now he had reached the point where he no longer heard the sound of the ball...

spinning  
Nothing moves except the little white ball in the wheel. The ball slows...

**JACK'S VOICE**

...the spin of the wheel had brought him home to the place where he was born.

JACK'S face. A hint of a smile.

**JACK'S VOICE**

The croupier's mission was accomplished.

chips  
The ball falls into green Zero. JACK rakes all the off the table. There are no winners. The film ends on a CLOSE-UP of JACK'S face. A look of calm satisfaction.

**JACK'S VOICE**

At last he was Master of the Game. He had aquired the power... to make you lose.

**OUT:**

**FADE**

**THE END**