

CROUPIER

A screenplay by

Paul Mayersberg

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.

shakes

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.

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

dress. 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

JACK is changing into his street clothes. The young croupier 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

MATT puts the car into gear, drives off, JACK sitting beside 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
MAN behind JANI puts his chips on 11. JANI glances up at
him. She sees the MAN is betting with her. JACK spins the
wheel 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?

dressed

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

JACK

Sometimes.

GIRL

(hands him the
smoking joint)

How about now?

pours

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

INT. RESTAURANT - LAVATORY - NIGHT

Three
front
cash,

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

stall
on
in
and
the

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

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

JANI

I'll understand if you don't.

(smiles)

But I hope you do.

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

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

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

MR TCHAI

What happened to Bella?

JACK

She was re-assigned.

JACK shows 13. He turns over his third card, a King.
The
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?

The MEN look at the glamorous woman. MR TCHAI doesn't register her presence. He is as inscrutable as his
BODYGUARD
her
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
GREEK.
JACK stands behind REYNOLDS who is playing back a video
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

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

Eastern

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

GILES heads back to the signing. The CASHIER puts

comes

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

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

in

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
casino,
doubles up. The SUIT breaks away, rushes across the
pushing screaming WOMEN aside, heads for the door. MR
with a
TCHAI's BODYGUARD blocks his way and fells the SUIT
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

JACK is sitting in a Christmas-decorated cubicle, a
curtain
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.
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

typescript. unloading page after page. JACK assembles the

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

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

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

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

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