

THE CINCINNATI KID

SECOND DRAFT SCREENPLAY

PRODUCER: Martin Ransohoff

DIRECTOR: Sam Peckinpah

WRITER: Ring Lardner, Jr.

November 3, 1964

THE CINCINNATI KID

FADE IN:

SERIES OF ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY

1-5

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

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

6

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

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

7

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

INT. KITCHEN IN SLEAZY RESTAURANT NEAR RAILROAD

8

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

DEALER

Somebody shut the goddam window.
Let a man think.

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

8
CONT'D
(2)

DEALER

Possible straight gets a --
(deals the card)
-- lovely little four.

FIRST PLAYER

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

DEALER

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

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

There you are, son, a gorgeous
deuce.

KID

Thanks.

DEALER (deals to
Danny)

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

DANNY

Deal to yourself, clown.

DEALER

Dealer gives himself a --
(deals card and groans)

I might have known.

(to Danny)

Bet yoursixes, Buster.

DANNY

I told you not to call me that.
(then as the dealer
turns away)

Cost you -
(counts out his money)
Ninety-four bucks.

8
CON
(3)

DEALER

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

DANNY (to First Player)

Interested?

FIRST PLAYER

Wouldn't call you if I had a
pair higher'n sixes. Which I
ain't.

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

KID

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

(fingers hole card as
if to fold)

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

(studies Danny's face)

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

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

DANNY (indignantly)

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

KID

Oh, I'm not claiming anything
that fine.

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

Just enough to beat the pair of
sixes.

DANNY

You seen my hole card, you
bastard!

(indicating Dealer)

He was dealing them high.

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

DANNY

You stole that dough.

KID

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

He stands up.

DANNY

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

KID

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

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

INT. MEN'S ROOM - THE KID AT MIRROR

9

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

KID

Drop it.

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

SUPERIMPOSE: MAIN TITLES

9
CON
(2)

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

EXT. ALLEY BACK OF RESTAURANT - DAY

10

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

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - DAY

11

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

INT. UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS

12

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

EXT. UNION STATION - DAY

13

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

EXT. UNION STATION - TAXI STAND - DAY

14

Lancey getting into a taxi.

THE CREDITS END

INT. TAXI - PROCESS - DAY

15

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

HACKIE

What you looking for, mister?

LANCEY

Do I have to be looking for something?

HACKIE

I can pretty much tell.

LANCEY

You can pretty much tell what?

HACKIE

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

LANCEY

What do you think I'm looking for?

HACKIE

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

LANCEY

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

HACKIE

Well what are you looking for?

LANCEY

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

EXT. PLUSH HOTEL - TAXI STAND - DAY

16

A doorman takes Lancey's suitcase as Lancey pays the Hackie and walks into the hotel. A SECOND HACKIE whose cab is at the curb reacts to seeing Lancey and steps forward.

SECOND HACKIE

Hey, you know who that is?

HACKIE
No. Who?

16
CONT'D
(2)

But the second hackie has followed Lancey into the hotel.

INT. LOBBY OF PLUSH HOTEL

17

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

SECOND HACKIE (Into phone)
Shorty? Want to hear who just
checked into the Park Sherman...
Yes, you do. Lancey Hodges.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - ATTENDANT

18

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

ATTENDANT
The Kid know?

INT. BAR - FEATURING THE BARTENDER

19

He is talking on the telephone behind the bar.

BARTENDER
Somebody sure as hell ought to
tell The Kid.
(hangs up)
Lancey Hodges is in town.

INT. BAR - CLOSE SHOT - DRINKING MAN

20

He reacts to the news in a big way. CAMERA PANS to another DRINKING MAN, who is equally impressed. They exchange looks.

FIRST DRINKING MAN
Kid's been laying for him a long
time.

INT. BARBER SHOP - BARBER AND CUSTOMER

21

BARBER

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

CUSTOMER

Who's got a better right?

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

22

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

HOBAN

You going to tell The Kid, Shooter?

SHOOTER

Hell, I can't not tell him.

HOBAN

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

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

KID (in greeting)

Hey!

HOBAN

What you say, Kid?

KID

Hey, Hoban.

SHOOTER

Where you been? Boys been hold-
ing a chair for you in back.

KID

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

SHOOTER

Turn a profit?

KID

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

HOBAN
Oh, one of those.

22
CONT
(2)

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

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

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

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

SHOOTER
(nodding)
The streets are getting full of
guys you've hustled.

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

SHOOTER
(after a moment)
The hell there isn't
(as the Kid looks
at him)
Lancey Hodges' in town.

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

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

23

Lancey is on the phone, sitting on the bed.

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

23
CONT'D
(2)

He hangs up and some of the strength seems to go
out of him, as if he had been through too long a
sustained effort. His eyes show that he is feel-
ing pain and he breathes deeply.

EXT. HAROLD STREET - DAY

24

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

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

KID
I ain't exactly been hiding it.

SHOOTER
No, you ain't been hiding it.

KID
Well I got to know.

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

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

SHOOTER
That's why I had to tell you.

KID
You ever sit down with him?

SHOOTER

Yes, I have.

They walk along, The Shooter pursing his lips thoughtfully.

KID

Well, what happened?

SHOOTER

Nothing. Nothing at all.

KID

You lost.

SHOOTER

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

KID (respectfully)

I heard about him.

SHOOTER

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

KID

What happened?

SHOOTER

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

KID

Yeah?

SHOOTER

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

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

EXT. PIER

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

KID

You think I'm ready?

SHOOTER

(after some time, several
seconds of thoughtful
puffing)

Kid, I don't think you're ready.

KID

(quickly)

Oh.

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

They start back off the pier.

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

I gotta find out.

SHOOTER (after a
pause)

Want me to set it up?

KID (gratefully)

I wish you would, Shooter Man.

SHOOTER

All right.

KID

Hey, what if he turns me down?

SHOOTER

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

KID

You think he knows I'm around?

SHOOTER

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

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

SHOOTER

There's your woman.

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

You got much of a stake?

KID

Close to three grand.

SHOOTER

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

25
C01
(5)

Christian sees them and moves toward them.

KID

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

SHOOTER

It's the only way to be, Kid.

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

SHOOTER

See you.

The Kid takes Christian's arm automatically; he watches The Shooter walk way down Harold Street. He and Christian head in another direction. She is humming a mountain tune.

CHRISTIAN

When we leaving town, Kid? This week?

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

I thought --

KID

Might even turn out we don't go.

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

CHRISTIAN

You must feel different about it than you did Saturday.

He looks at her fondly and, for one fleeting moment of weakness, is actually tempted to tell her about Lancey. But it is too sharp a break with tradition.

KID
Yeah, I'm feeling a little
different.

25
CONT'
(6)

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S BEDROOM

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

KID
It's all right. You don't have
to act like a cat. You're not
bothering me.

CHRISTIAN
You want me to turn out the
light?

KID
No. I'm overtired, that's why
I can't sleep.
(sits up and swings
his feet to the floor)
Why can't you sleep?

CHRISTIAN (lightly)
Undertired, I guess. If a person
rests all day, she doesn't have
much to rest up from at night.
(stands up)
Why don't you have a nice hot
bath? I could give you a rubdown
and then you could have a nice
hot bath, and then maybe you
could sleep.

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

KID
'Kay. Can't hurt to try it.

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

KID

What did you do with yourself
this time?

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

In French?

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

Sure. Majored in man-eating.

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

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

KID
American pictures.

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

KID
What was it about?

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

KID
Nothing weird about that.

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

KID
That don't make much sense.

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

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

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

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

She slaps him on the rump and straightens up.

26
COM
(4)

CHRISTIAN

I'll just turn off the bath water.

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

INT. BATHROOM

27

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

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

28

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

MELBA (into phone)

Hello...Yes, it is. You want him?
(calling)

Shooter! Telephone! Shooter!

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

MELBA

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

SHOOTER (getting up)

If you'd rather we put it in my room --

MELBA

Are you kidding?

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

28
CONT'D
(2)

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

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

29

Lancey, dressed for bed, is on the phone.

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

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

30

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

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

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

31

LANCEY (into phone)
As he put it, rather bluntly, I
felt, we don't want everyone to
have to watch everyone else deal-
ing to see to it they don't make
any little accidental errors by
mistake. I told him a man couldn't
ask for a better guarantee of a
fair-and-square game than having
The Shooter deal it. So if you're
willing, we're meeting at two o'clock
in the afternoon. Ask for Mr. Schlaegel's
suite at the Park Sherman...Good. I'm
glad you can do it, Shooter. Be a
pleasure to see you again...
(continued)

LANCEY (cont'd)

(then)

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

31
CC
(2)

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

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

32

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE WINDOW - DAY

33

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

CHRISTIAN'S VOICE (o.s.)

Would you wear it in public?

CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Christian and Melba looking at the display.

MELBA

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

They start walking.

CHRISTIAN
I don't know, Melba.

33
CONT'
(2)

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

CHRISTIAN (startled)
At the what?

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

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

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. STEAM ROOM

34

CAMERA finds Christian and Melba among the perspir-
ing females.

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

MELBA
And that side of it's held up?
No complaints in the bed depart-
ment?

CHRISTIAN
Well, just one.

MELBA (intrigued)
Yes?

CHRISTIAN
The nights he isn't there.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. MASSAGE ROOM

35

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

CHRISTIAN

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

MELBA

According to the propaganda, right.

CHRISTIAN

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

MELBA

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

CHRISTIAN

It's hell, if you'll excuse the word. But I didn't want to quit. The Kid made me. I felt I ought to hang on to something that was me away from him. You know what I mean?

MELBA

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

CHRISTIAN

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

MELBA

Your most sordid secrets are safe with me. Confess.

CHRISTIAN

If he was rich, or famous --

MELBA

Why don't you give him both?

SHOOTER (as he deals)
Still queens -- possible flush --
no help -- possible flush.

36
CONT'D
(2)

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
Queens check to the possibles.

LANCEY
Check.

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Check.

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

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
Fold.

LANCEY
And up two.

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Fold.

THIRD WEALTHY TYPE
Biggest pot yet.

A phone RINGS and the Third Wealthy Type answers it.

BILL
Call the two thou.

LANCEY (turning over
queen of his suit)
Queen high.

BILL (indignantly)
Jack high. Can you beat that?

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
He just did.

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

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Dallas or Tulsa?

THIRD WEALTHY TYPE
She just said office.

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

35
 C
 (c)

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

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

She is at a loss for a word.

MELBA
 Decadent? Depraved?

Christian looks blank.

MELBA
 Wicked?

CHRISTIAN
 Well, yes.

MELBA
 That's what I meant by heaven.

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

36

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

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

36
CONT'D
(3)

BILL

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

LANCEY

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

(turns to Shooter)

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

SHOOTER

You'll enjoy his game.

LANCEY

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

SHOOTER

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

LANCEY

I've learned to take everything in moderation.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

37

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

KID (to Melba)

Have a drink with us?

MELBA

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

(looking The Kid over)

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

KID

In my life?

MELBA

The day The Kid becomes The Man.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. RESTAURANT - KID AND CHRISTIAN

38

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

CHRISTIAN

How'd you sleep Kid?

KID

I slept okay.

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

No I don't mind --

(then)

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

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

Yes.

CHRISTIAN

Will it be long?

KID

Why?

(then)

What's the matter?

CHRISTIAN
I thought --

38
CONT'D
(2)

KID
Thought what?

CHRISTIAN
I'd go home and see Mama.

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
That would be fine, Kid. Just fine.

KID
When would you want to go?

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

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

KID
Unless what?

CHRISTIAN
Unless you wanted to go to bed
first.

KID
Do you want to? Would you like
it?

CHRISTIAN
Un-huh. I'd like it.

KID
You want dessert?

CHRISTIAN
No. You?

KID (shakes head)
Coffee?

CHRISTIAN
I don't need it.

38
CONT'D
(3)

KID
Neither do I.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT - DARKENED WINDOW

39

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

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

40

The time is a few minutes before ten.

INT. KID'S APARTMENT - CHRISTIAN

41

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

KID
You still haven't said it.

CHRISTIAN
Said what?

KID
If you're coming back.

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

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

KID
What's to see?

CHRISTIAN
I never did like city streets.

41
CONT'D
(2)

KID
Oh.

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

KID
Promise?

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

KID
Oh, I see.

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
What will you do?

KID
Well, I've got that big game.

CHRISTIAN
I heard he's The Man for you.

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

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

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

KID (finally)
I'm sorry.

41
CONT'D
(3)

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

She gets up and begins to pack her clothes in an old suitcase. After a moment The Kid gets out of bed.

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

CHRISTIAN
You don't have to.

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

CHRISTIAN (after a pause)
Kid --

KID
Yeah?

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

KID
Sure.

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

KID
Hell, it's the only thing I know how to do. What else is there for a guy never finished school? College graduates are walking the streets looking for jobs - trained people, engineers, scientists!

CHRISTIAN
I realize --

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

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

KID
Well you see how it is.

CHRISTIAN
That's all right.

KID (after
a moment)
Christian, you aren't doing this
to be off my back, in case I lose?

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

KID
And this just helped you decide.

CHRISTIAN
That's all.

KID
Then don't go.

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

She closes the suitcase and puts on the one dress
she hasn't packed. The Kid, dressed now, watches
her for a moment then goes to the bottom drawer of
the dresser and opens it to reveal a stack of money
under a shirt. He takes five clean twenty-dollar
bills and counts them on to the top of the dresser,
snapping the crisp leaves gambler style. Then he
stoops down again and takes out two more twenties,
adding them to the pile.

KID
I wish it could be more.

CHRISTIAN
That's all right.

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

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

KID
I don't guess I will either.

CHRISTIAN
You going to move?

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

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. TAXI - PROCESS - NIGHT

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BUS TERMINAL

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

EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT

44

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

INT. BUS - NIGHT

45

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

CHRISTIAN

Goodbye, Kid. Good luck.

KID

Goodbye, Christian.

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

EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT

46

There are not many passengers boarding this bus. After a couple of moments, the driver closes the door and starts off. Christian waves from the window, and The Kid waves back to her. When the bus has gone, he walks around the outside of the terminal to the front.

EXT. FRONT OF BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

47

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

48

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

BILL

Four stacks? Right, Shooter?

SHOOTER

Four.

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

BILL

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

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

LANCEY

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

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

BILL

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

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

BILL

I want to see you.

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

SHOOTER (into phone)
Hi, Kid. Shooter here. Listen,
I told the woman I'd take her to
the ball park, but I'm still work-
ing. How about you and Christian
take her out?

48
CONT'D
(2)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

49

KID (into phone)
Christian's gone home to see her
folks.

INT. PLUSH HOTEL ROOM

50

SHOOTER (into phone)
Oh.
(then)
Well listen, would you mind taking
her yourself? The gang'll be there,
in the section...Thanks. Appreciate
it. See you.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. BUSCH STADIUM, ST. LOUIS - DAY

51

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

EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA

52

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

EXT. FIELD

53

An outfielder races back and makes a difficult
catch.

EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA

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

SOKAL (to Hoban)
You owe me two fish on the out,
plus three on the inning, minus
two on no strikeouts so far.

The Kid and Melba join them.

HOBAN
Hiya, Kid. Getting yourself in
shape for The Man?
(to Melba)
Shooter still on the job?

HOBAN'S WOMAN
Where's Christian?

MELBA (in a whisper)
Lay off that.

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

KID
Hi, Hoban. Sokal. Pig.

He and Melba sit down.

HOBAN (to Sokal)
Boyer. One to two on the
sacrifice.

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

HOBAN
Mark it.

54
CONT'D
(2)

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

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

While he is talking, Melba unbuttons his shirt.

MELBA
Get some of this sun.

SOKAL (to The Kid)
Mark it.

KID (to Melba)
Guess I will.

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

HOBAN
Bunting, Sokal.

EXT. BALL FIELD

55

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

SOKAL
So they pitched to him. I
still win.

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

MELBA (to Kid)
Let me give you some of this.
Keep you from burning.

KID
I don't think --

MELBA
Can't hurt you.

55
CONT'D
(2)

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

HOBAN (to Sokal)
Chance to invest your profits. Bet you an even fin he make first.

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

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

SOKAL'S VOICE
Not your day, Hoban.
(calling to a vendor)
Hey, beer!

MELBA (softly)
Mais tu es charmant --

CUT TO:

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - CLOSEUP - MELBA

56

With the same look of invitation in her eyes.

MELBA
Charmant. Come here, please.

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

KID
Any special reason?

MELBA
Me. I'm special.

He stands up but doesn't move toward her.

56
CONT'D
(2)

KID

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

MELBA

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

KID

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

MELBA

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

(stands up)

Have to buzz from downstairs.

(moves toward him

provocatively)

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

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

KID

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

MELBA

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

(her arms around him)

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

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

MELBA

No good?

KID

You know damn well how good it was. Where's a pack of cards?

MELBA

What do we need cards for?

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

56
CONT'D
(3)

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

57

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

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

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

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

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

SHOOTER
Yeah, he's going to give you trouble.

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

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

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

SHOOTER
You win?

57
CONT'D
(2)

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

SHOOTER
You been around a long time.

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

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

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

INT. CORRIDOR, PLUSH HOTEL - FELIX

58

He is standing by an elevator in f.g. keeping watch on a row of room doors including the site of the poker game. FELIX is an impressive physical specimen whose capacity for brutality is masked by a quiet, deferential manner. When he sees a door open, he moves so as to be out of The Shooter's sight as the latter comes toward him. It isn't until The Shooter rounds the corner in f.g. and presses the button for the elevator that Felix makes his presence known.

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

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

INT. LOBBY, PLUS HOTEL - AT THE ELEVATORS

59

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

SHOOTER

I ought to call my woman.

FELIX

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

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

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID

60

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

MELBA

Still building eights.

KID

Thanks for putting it together for me.

He plays an eight and takes in the whole pile.

MELBA

It's not my game.

The telephone RINGS. She stands up.

MELBA

Want to know what is?

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

MELBA (into phone)

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

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

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

61

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

MELBA (into phone)
What's the switch?

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

MELBA (into phone)
Whose idea was that?

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

MELBA (to Kid)
He's not coming home now.

She steps out of the dress.

MELBA (into phone)
Whatever you say, Shooter man.

INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER

62

SHOOTER (into phone)
Explain to The Kid, will you?

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID

63

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

MELBA (into phone)
He'll understand.

Q
INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER

64

SHOOTER (into phone)
Tell him they decided to play a
little longer, and I'll call him
at his place later when the game's
over...Right. Goodbye, honey.

He hangs up the phone and emerges from the booth.
CAMERA MOVES with him as he joins Felix and they
walk toward the hotel entrance.

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID

65

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

KID
Listen, Melba --

MELBA
I have to tell you first. You're
sitting down with Lancey next Mon-
day night.

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

MELBA
Shooter'll give you all the details
later.

KID
I don't like waiting that long.

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

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

8
KID
Listen, what I was going to say
before, I don't want you to think
I'm being some kind of jerk or I
don't feel you'd be great to sack
up with.

MELBA
Then let's cut the filibuster.

65
CONT'D
(2)

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

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

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

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

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

KID
Can't be.
(decisively, pulling
away from her with a
pat of dismissal)
Shooter's the closest thing to family
I got. It's almost like he was my old
man. Don't you see how that's got a
bearing on us?

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

MELBA
Sure, it means I'm your mother.

EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - DAY

66

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

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

67

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

EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - THE SHOOTER

68

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

EXT. AREA AROUND POOL

69

SHOOTING from behind The Shooter as he approaches the attractive family group that includes, besides Bill and the baby, a FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL who is having her hair brushed after swimming by ROSANNA SCHLAEGEL, her beautiful mother. A family dog completes the picture. Bill continues to feed the baby as he hails The Shooter.

BILL

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

(indicating baby)

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

SHOOTER (greeting them

in turn)

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

BILL

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

ROSANNA
Like me to fix it, love?

69
CONT'D
(2)

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

SHOOTER
Great. Whatever.

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

ROSANNA
Just don't let it get wet again.

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

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

SHOOTER
Betting interest?

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

SHOOTER
Fifty thousand!

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

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

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

SHOOTER

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

69
CONT'D
(3)

BILL

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

SHOOTER

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

BILL

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

SHOOTER

It's out. Out.

BILL

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

SHOOTER

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

BILL

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

SHOOTER

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

(then as Bill just looks at him)

Bill, you got to listen to me -- !

BILL

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

69
CONT'D
(4)

SHOOTER

For God's sake -- !

BILL

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

(looks o.s. and smiles)

Marvelous. Here's Rosanna with what you need.

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

BILL

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

(TIME LAPSE)

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

70

It is raining dismally.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

71

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAY

72

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BAR - THE KID

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

BOY

Shine them up for you sir?

KID

No, thanks.

BOY

Fetch you a newspaper maybe?

KID

No.

BOY

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

KID

Play what?

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

BOY

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

KID

Yes, I'm ready.

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

BOY (to bartender)

You ready?

BARTENDER

Hell, I'm ready for anything.

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

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

73
CONT'D
(2)

KID (when the song is over)
Thank you very much. That was nice.
Where did you learn to do that?

BOY
I picked it up from Herman.

KID
Who is Herman?

BOY
My friend I pick it up from.

KID
Is he a good friend?

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

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

BOY
Thank you, sir.

BARTENDER
And here's another dime for you, fella.

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

BARTENDER
Nice little colored kid.

KID (mostly to himself)
-- Yeah.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. STEAM BATHS - THE KID AND JANSEN

74

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

JANSEN
Monday night, uh, Kid?

KID
Monday night.

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

KID
Thanks, Jansen.
(in pain)
Hey!

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BUS TERMINAL - PHONE BOOTH - THE KID

75

He is in the middle of a call.

KID (into phone)
Just tell The Shooter I'll be
there on the dot Monday night.

MELBA'S VOICE (over the
phone)
And until then?

KID
He doesn't have to know.

INT. THE SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA

76

MELBA (into phone)
I'm not asking for him.

INT. BUS TERMINAL - THE KID

77

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

78

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

EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - DAY

79

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CREST OF ROAD - DAY

80

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CRAIGIE FARM - DAY

81

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

CHRISTIAN

Hello, Kid.

KID

Can I help you with those?

CHRISTIAN

Taking it off is harder than taking it on in.

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

CHRISTIAN

How's The Shooter?

KID

Fine.

CHRISTIAN

You haven't played yet?

KID

Monday.

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

82

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

CHRISTIAN

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

MRS. CRAIGIE

How do, Eric.

Christian crosses to the drain sink near the pump and turns her back. Mrs. Craigie lifts the cans off

the yoke on to the drain board. She and Christian each take a can and pour the water from it to prime the pump.

82
CONT'D
(2)

CHRISTIAN

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

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

MRS. CRAIGIE

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

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

MRS. CRAIGIE

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

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

Where is Mr. Craigie?

MRS. CRAIGIE

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

KID

I think I will. I think I'd like that.
(to Christian)
Okay?

CHRISTIAN

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

(then, as he starts out)

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

82
CONT'D
(3)

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

EXT. CRAIGIE BARN - CRAIGIE - DAY

83

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

CRAIGIE

Hello.

KID

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

CRAIGIE

Christian's Eric.

KID

That's right.

CRAIGIE

You seen her?

KID

She's helping her mother can.

CRAIGIE

You minding to marry Christian?

The Kid looks at him a long moment then --

KID

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

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

CRAIGIE

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

83
CONT'D
(2)

KID

It was what I call a sharp question.

CRAIGIE

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

KID

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

CRAIGIE

You met Christian when she was working to Hot Springs?

KID

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

CRAIGIE

Now how did you happen to tell her that? Maybe you run some kind of employment service on the side?

KID

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

CRAIGIE

Living together?

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

KID

Yeah, living together.

CRAIGIE

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

KID
Not that I know of.

83
CONT'D
(3)

CRAIGIE
You two have a fight?

KID
No.

CRAIGIE
She must have had a reason.

KID
Think so? Well, you've known
her longer than me.
(then)
Look, Mr. Craigie, let me and
Christian find out a few things
then maybe I won't have to answer
your questions.

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

KID
That's all right. I don't under-
stand farmers.

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

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

CRAIGIE
Are you a believer?

KID
In some things.

CRAIGIE
I mean in God.

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

CRAIGIE
God not important?

83
CONT'
(4)

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

CRAIGIE
Christian was raised in a Christian
home.

KID
Is that so? I didn't know ---
(then)
I'm not aware of the difference.
(pause)
I'm not asking permission to
marry Christian, you know.

CRAIGIE
I know.

KID
If I was, the only person I'd be
asking it from is her.

CRAIGIE (after a moment)
Who is this fella Christian says
you're going to play that's so
important?

KID
He's the king of the stud poker
players.

CRAIGIE
And you're going to play him.

KID
Yes.

CRAIGIE
Are you any good?

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

CRAIGIE
What happens if he don't?

KID
Then I'm The Man.

11-3-64

P.61

CRAIGIE
That important to you?

83
CONT'D
(5)

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

CRAIGIE
You playing because of money?

KID (after a moment)
Not really.

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

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

CRAIGIE
Well how come you want to play
this King fella?

KID
Ambition -- maybe security, like
that.

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

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

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

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

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

11-3-64

P.62

KID

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

83
CONT'D
(6)

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

CRAIGIE

Well son, I had to know.

KID

Know what?

CRAIGIE

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

(then)

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

KID

Thanks. I'll tell her.

Craigie walks away.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. SPRING - DAY

84

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

CHRISTIAN

It stays warm all winter.

DISSOLVE:

INT. SHACK

85

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

11-3-64

P.63

CHRISTIAN

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

85
CONT'D
(2)

KID

We liable to draw an audience?

CHRISTIAN

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

She starts to swim, CAMERA MOVING with her upper back
as she reaches the side of the pool and pulls herself
on to the bank, lying on her stomach. The Kid joins
her, first drawing himself up on his stomach alongside
her, then turning on his back to look through the slats
at the sun.

CHRISTIAN

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

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

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

She raises herself up so that she is directly above
him.

KID (in mock
protest)

Hey, you're all wet!

CHRISTIAN

So are you, foolish.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CRAIGIE PORCH - CRAIGIE AND THE KID - NIGHT

86

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

11-3-64

P.64

CRAIGIE

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

86

CONT'D

(1)

The Kid stands up and selects six playing cards from a deck in his pocket. During the next few lines he uses the paste on the shelf to stick together three pairs of them so as to form three double-thick cards. One of these has two faces, another two backs, and the third a back and a face.

CRAIGIE

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

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

86
CONT'D
(2)

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

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

CRAIGIE
Then how do you win?

KID
I'll show you.

He displays his three cards.

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

CRAIGIE
What about it?

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

KID
This. I put the three cards in
a hat and shake them up, and then
I ask you to draw one card out
blind. Put it face down on the
table so neither of us can see
the bottom side.

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

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

CRAIGIE
I think so.

86
CONT'
(3)

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

CRAIGIE
Seems like. Yeah.

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

CRAIGIE
But if there are just the two possibilities.

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

CRAIGIE
(dubiously)
You would?

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

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

KID

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

86
CC.
(4)

CRAIGIE

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

KID

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

CRAIGIE

Seems like there should be something else to it ---

KID

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. CRAIGIE KITCHEN - THE KID

87

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

CHRISTIAN

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

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

CHRISTIAN
Why did you come, Kid?

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

CHRISTIAN
Rough how?

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

CHRISTIAN
Because of the poker game coming
up?

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

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

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

She is genuinely surprised at this and at first a
bit dismayed. But her more considered reaction
is one of pleasure.

CHRISTIAN
Oh,---

She kisses him.

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

CHRISTIAN

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

37.
CONT
(3)

KID

You were going to do some thinking down here.

CHRISTIAN

I done some.

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

KID

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

CHRISTIAN

All right Eric -- Good luck Monday.

She gives him a quick kiss and stands up.

KID

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

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - NIGHT (PRE-DAWN)

83

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

EXT. HIGHWAY IN MISSOURI - DAY

89

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

EXT. ST. LOUIS BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

90

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

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

91

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

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

92

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

SHOOTER

Twenty-five years I been building a reputation.

MELBA

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

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

93

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

94

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

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

95

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

INT. PLUSH HOTEL CORRIDOR

96

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

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

97

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

SHOOTER

I made up my mind to this. I ain't going to give him any help till he needs it.

MELBA

I'm glad you're taking a stand.

SHOOTER

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

MELBA

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

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - NIGHT

98

The hands are at 7:25.

INT. TAXI - THE KID AND DRIVER - NIGHT

99

The Kid is looking at the clock tower.

KID

Once more around the square.

EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE DORSET HOTEL - NIGHT

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

INT. POKER SUITE - LANCEY

101

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

LANCEY

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

CAMERA MOVES to take in the people around him, one after another. The Shooter is there, and Pig and Sokal and Hoban, and Melba and Hoban's woman and a couple of other women whose main attributes are physical, and Bill Schlaegel. Out of town representatives include LADY FINGERS, who is about fifty, down on her luck but still cheerful and remarkably energetic; and YELLER, a light-skinned Negro who has achieved stature in what is mainly a white man's world, through diplomacy and a quick wit. The room is the large living-room of a once splendid suite; there are enough chairs and couches around the walls to accommodate a good many spectators, while the middle of the room has been cleared for a round table with seven chairs.

SHOOTER

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

LANCEY

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

LADY FINGERS

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

LANCEY

What reason is that, Lady Fingers?

LADY FINGERS

Cincinnati Kid.

(laughs)

That the way it is, Lancey?
You been scared of The Kid?

LANCEY

Should I be scared of him?

10
CONT
(2)

LADY FINGERS

Damn right you should! I'm telling you, that boy going to make your stomach ulcer bleed before the night is out. He's close to murder. I seen him give a fella the shakes so bad on a fourth card, it took a pint of corn liquor to settle him down.

LANCEY

Thanks for the warning.

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

FEATURING THE KID

102

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

MELBA

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

KID

I intend to take Shooter right along with Lancey.

MELBA

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

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

LADY FINGERS

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

KID

You think I'll be sorry I come?

LADY FINGERS

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

The Kid sees Lancey approaching, and turns to him.

LANCEY

Hello, Kid. Pleasure to know you.

KID

Lancey. I been looking forward a
long time.

LANCEY

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

KID

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

YELLER

Forgiven long since.

(to Lancey)

We had a little jurisdictional
dispute.

KID

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

YELLER

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

KID

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

YELLER

Including my girl.

KID

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

YELLER
You did.

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

LADY FINGERS (to Lancey)
Did you know Old Cottonhead died?

LANCEY
No, I hadn't heard.

LADY FINGERS
Heart give out in a high-low game.

LANCEY (turning to The Kid)
How you feel, Kid?

KID
Great. You?

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

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

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

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

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

KID
Thanks. I'll do that.

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

MED. SHOT - AT POKER TABLE - KID AND SHOOTER

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

Lancey comes into the SHOT behind them.

LANCEY

Light all right for you?

SHOOTER

Two hundred watt bulb.

KID

Fine, excellent. Okay with you?

LANCEY

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

KID

Sure has.

SHOOTER

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

(looks from one to the other)
Cards?

LANCEY

Why not?

KID

Good a time as any.

SHOOTER (calling)

Hoban! Okay!

(to Kid and Lancey)

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

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

103
CONT'D
(2)

HOBAN

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

SHOOTER

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

LANCEY

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

HOBAN (disturbed)

That's him.

LANCEY (not noticing; to

Kid)

Old stud man, Okra.

KID

I don't know him.

LANCEY

Quite a character. Quite a character.

HOBAN (anxiously)

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

There is a quick exchange of glances all around as the other three realize what the imaginary suspicion is behind Hoban's defensive reaction.

LANCEY (to Kid)

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

KID

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

'Kay, fine.

LANCEY

Sure, sure.

(to Kid)

Shall we have a look at the decks?

CLOSE SHOT - KID AND LANCEY

104

with the pile of decks and the empty dispatch case
on the table in front of them. They start checking
the decks one by one, each putting the ones he has
covered in a pile for the other's consideration.
They examine the seals and the cellophane visually,
and they also sniff both ends for the odor of a hot
iron. By the time they are through with this process;
The Kid has found three decks he isn't satisfied with;
and Lancey two. The Kid passes his three rejects to
Lancey, who tosses them back into the dispatch case
without looking at them. Then Lancey tries to submit
his two to The Kid; but The Kid waves them away, and
Lancey throws them, too, into the case.

LANCEY

Well, Kid, what's your game?

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

KID

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

LANCEY

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

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

104
CONT'D
(2)

MED. SHOT - FEATURING BILL

105

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

MED. SHOT - FEATURING SHOOTER

106

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

BILL

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

SHOOTER

That's thoughtful of you, Bill.

BILL

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

THE POKER TABLE

107

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

LANCEY

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

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

SHOOTER

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

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

107
CONT'D
(2)

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

LADY FINGERS' VOICE
Do too care!

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

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

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

LANCEY
Fine, Shooter man.

KID
'Kay with us.

LADY FINGERS
If you don't see me when you
need me, call room three-oh-
eight.
(taps Lancey's shoulder)
You know who else ain't with us
no more? Miriam, widow used to
run the kitchen game to South
Chi. Lost two month's Relief at
blackjack, coal dealer cut her
credit, and she froze in her bed.

THE PLAYERS - FEATURING THE KID

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

SHOOTER

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

The Kid has completed his count.

REVERSE ANGLE - FEATURING LANCEY

109

He takes the money from his satchel.

LANCEY

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

CAMERA PANS to Yeller.

YELLER

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

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

PIG

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

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

SOKAL

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

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

109
CONT'
(2)

SHOOTER

Last and certainly least --

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

FEATURING THE JOKERS

110

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

FEATURING THE SHOOTER

111

He begins to shuffle and all eyes are upon him, not from suspicion but from pure admiration. He is in peak form, shuffling six times, once for each player and then slapping the cards down before Lancey, who is to the right of him, with an empty chair in between.

CLOSE - LANCEY

112

He waives his privilege of cutting with a barely perceptible nod.

THE POKER TABLE

113

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

CLOSE SHOT - SHOOTER'S HANDS

114

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

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

1
CO. 1
(2)

LANCEY
Ten dollars.

SHOOTER
Dealer folds.

SOKAL
Call the sawbuck.

CLOSE SHOT - FROM BEHIND KID

115

He looks at his hole card: an ace.

KID
I'm in.

PIG'S VOICE
Call.

YELLER'S VOICE
Call.

THE POKER TABLE

116

The Shooter deals again.

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

KID
Nines bet twenty bucks.

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

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

LANCEY
Ace bets ten dollars

SHOOTER
King over.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL

117

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

HOBAN

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

BILL

What's he have to have in the hole?

HOBAN

Ten or better. With no other ten showing.

THE POKER TABLE

118

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

LANCEY

New deck.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - AT THE POKER TABLE

119

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

PIG
Aces over eights.
(waits for a challenge,
but the others turn their
cards)

11
CONT
(2)

Thank you, gents.
(as he pulls in money,
to Yeller)

Be a laugh if the two champs
ended up cleaned.

CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY

120

He barely notices Pig's remark.

CLOSE SHOT - KID

121

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

CAMERA MOVES among the spectators, who also have a more settled look about them. There is a bar, attended by a uniformed HOTEL BELLMAN, and most of the people are drinking. We see in passing a couple go through the door to the bedroom and close it behind them. CAMERA HOLDS on the love seat as Bill rejoin Hoban on their perch.

BILL

Any action?

HOBAN (shrugs)

What do you expect first five or six hours?

BILL

Still feeling each other out?

HOBAN

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

(TIME LAPSE)

CLOSE SHOT - CARDS BEING DEALT

122

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

SHOOTER'S VOICE

King bets.

122
CONT'D
(2)

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

YELLER

King says twenty.

Lancey calls, Shooter drops, Sokal calls, The Kid drops.

PIG

In for twenty.

SHOOTER (dealing)

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

LANCEY

Pair of jacks will venture a
hundred dollars.

SOKAL (who has
the nine and ten of
clubs showing)

I'm in.

PIG (after studying
the board)

Up two hundred dollars.

YELLER (folding)

Leave it to the rich folk.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL

123

BILL

Lancey could be laying for him
with three jacks.

HOBAN

Pig don't think so.

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)

Call the two hundred.

THE POKER TABLE

124

Lancey puts in his money and so does Sokal.

SOKAL

I'm sticking.

THE POKER TABLE

125

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

SHOOTER

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

LANCEY

Check to the sevens.

SOKAL

Likewise.

PIG (trying to be casual)

Bet the size of the pot. Nine hundred and eighty dollars.

LANCEY

In for nine eighty.

SOKAL

I'll play.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL

126

BILL

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

HOBAN

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

THE POKER TABLE

127

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

SHOOTER

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

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

127
CONT'
(2)

LANCEY
I'll call your twenty-four
hundred --

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

128

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

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)
-- and raise you whatever I have
left.

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

THE POKER TABLE

129

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

129
COM
(2.

SHOOTER (to Pig)
You Tap City?

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

PIG
I got a woman.

SHOOTER
I thought you and Hilda were quits.

PIG
We're back.

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

SHOOTER
See you around, Pig.

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

PIG (getting up)
So long.

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

PIG
Good luck -- Kid.

He goes out.

CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY

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

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

SHOOTER

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

KID

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

SOKAL

At his age? Crazy.

LANCEY

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

KID

Thanks, Lancey.

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

SHOOTER

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

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - BILL, MELBA AND THE SHOOTER

131

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

BILL (to Melba)

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

MELBA

I know what you mean. I like
a man to have plenty of assur-
ance.

CC
(2)

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

LADY FINGERS

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

LANCEY

Who? Oh, Spider Man, sure, sure.

LADY FINGERS

He died kind of slow.

The Shooter comes to Lancey's rescue.

SHOOTER

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

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

LANCEY

Good crowd.

KID

Yeah. Nice-looking broads.

LANCEY

That's a fact.

KID

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

LANCEY

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

KID

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

LANCEY

You knew, did you? Before I raised?

KID

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

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

LANCEY

You been to Miami, Kid?

KID

Not yet.

LANCEY

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

KID

You mean it?

LANCEY

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

KID

I heard.

LANCEY

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

KID

I'd like to make it out there.

LANCEY

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

C...
(4)

KID

I generally stick to stud.

LANCEY

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

KID

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

LANCEY

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

KID

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

LANCEY

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

KID (after a

slight hesitation)

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

LANCEY

I'm sorry to hear that.

KID

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

LANCEY
But she tried?

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

LANCEY
Nooo, a man can't do that.

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

LANCEY (after a long moment)
That's very interesting you should say that. You're pretty young to have figured things out already.

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

LANCEY (warmly)
Between us?

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

LANCEY (as The Kid doesn't finish)
Kid, you're the best stud man I've seen in 35 years of action. You know that?

KID
Well -- thank you.

LANCEY

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

I always got a lot of companion-
ship out of a good book.

KID

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

LANCEY

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

KID

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

LANCEY

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

LADY FINGERS' VOICE

(o.s.)

Ready for some action, gentlemen.

They look at each other and then exit.

ANGLE INCLUDING THE POKER TABLE

132

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

LADY FINGERS

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

LANCEY
You're still good, Fingers.

132
CONT'
(2)

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

LANCEY
No, I didn't hear.

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

LANCEY
No, can't say that I have.

LADY FINGERS
Don't go out of your way.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - TOWARD WINDOWS

13

Morning sunlight is streaming in.

THE POKER TABLE

131

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

SHOOTER

Bet the pot. Four hundred and twenty dollars.

SOKAL

Fold.

KID

It's yours.

SHOOTER

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

(takes his money off
the table)

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

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

135

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

SHOOTER

Ace-king is the high man.

SOKAL

Shoot the works.

(counts it out)

Nine hundred and thirty bucks.

YELLER

I'm over.

LANCEY (putting out
the money)
What have you got?

135
CONT
(2)

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

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

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

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

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

Yeller pulls in the money in front of him. There is
now about \$19,500 left on the table, \$11,500 in
front of Lancey, \$8,000 in front of The Kid.

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

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

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

136

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

KID
Cost you a grand.

LANCEY
Compulsory call, Kid.

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

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

137

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

LANCEY

Two pair, jacks up.

KID

Kings up.

He takes in the money.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

138

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

THE KID

139

He is watching The Shooter intently.

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

140

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

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)

Studded again.

THE KID

141

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

THE SHOOTER

142

He avoids meeting The Kid's gaze.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID

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

LANCEY

Two thousand dollars.

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

KID

Call two thousand.

He turns to watch The Shooter.

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

144

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

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)

Two thousand more.

THE POKER TABLE

145

KID

Take it. I can't beat three
sevens.

(then as The Shooter's
eyes flicker with surprise)
I'd like a break to get some food and
sleep -- I'm winners so it isn't up
to me to say it but I'm saying it
anyway.

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

LANCEY (pleasantly)

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

LADY FINGERS

Gettin' to you, Lancey?

Lancey looks at her a moment, then smiles.

LANCEY (softly)
Not yet he isn't.

145
CONT
(5

He moves through the crowd, then exits.

CUT TO:

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

146

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

THE KID

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

SHOOTER (trying to bluff it)

Nothing -- what are you talking about?

The Kid grabs him and slams him against the wall.

THE KID

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

THE SHOOTER (angry and ashamed)

The hell I was.
(he waits a brief moment then eases away from The Kid)

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

THE KID (grabbing him and slamming him against the wall again)

But I was looking for it, Shooter -- four times you give me the cards I need.

THE SHOOTER (a little shrill)

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

THE KID

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

146
CONT'D
(2)

THE SHOOTER (slumping)

My woman told you.

THE KID

She told me enough to make me
start thinking.

THE SHOOTER (almost
pleading)

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

THE KID

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

(ready to hit him)

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

THE SHOOTER (backing
off)

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

THE KID

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

THE SHOOTER

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

(then)

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

THE KID

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

THE SHOOTER

He's liable to kill me.

THE KID

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

146
CC
(3)

THE SHOOTER

It is a hell of a chance to take.

THE KID

You got no choice.

THE SHOOTER

He ain't goin' to like it.

THE KID (almost yell-

ing at him)
He ain't goin' to know.
(then quietly)

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

THE SHOOTER

I ride with you.

THE KID

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

Shooter looks at him, then moves towards the door.

THE KID

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

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

THE KID (into phone)

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

CUT TO

INT. LANCEY'S ROOM

147

In the privacy of his room he shows how close he is
to exhaustion. Wearily, he sits on the bed and be-
gins to remove his shoes. Then, catching his re-
flection in the mirror, straightens.

LANCEY

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

147
CONT
(2)

CUT TO

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

148

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

MELBA

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

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

MELBA

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

THE KID

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

MELBA

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

THE KID

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

MELBA

I locked the door. It's incredi-
ble the way you invariably worry
about The Shooter.

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

148
CUT
(

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

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

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

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

MELBA
Obligations are not what I have
in mind.

CUT TO

INT. LANCEY'S ROOM

149

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

CUT TO

INT. BATHROOM, BILL'S SUITE

150

CAMERA is on the shower door as the SOUND of
running water ceases. The Kid can be seen in-
distinctly through the door.

THE KID
Reach me a towel?

Melba, who is dressed again and applying her lip-
stick, comes into the SHOT, takes a towel from a
rack and hands it to him after he opens the shower
door. He gives himself a quick once-over with it, then
secures it around his waist, steps out of the shower
stall, and begins the process of shaving. Melba mean-
while finishes restoring her makeup.

MELBA

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

150
CONT
(2)

THE KID

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

MELBA

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

The Kid stops shaving and looks at her.

THE KID

You asking me to go along with the fix?

MELBA

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

THE KID

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

MELBA

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

THE KID

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

There is a KNOCK on the door.

MELBA

Rolls and coffee for the hard-headed hero.

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

MELBA

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

150

C

(.)

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

REVERSE ANGLE - CHRISTIAN IN F.G.

151

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

CHRISTIAN

Hello, Kid. Hello, Melba.

(a pause)

You said wait home 'til you let me
know.

THE KID

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

MELBA

Yeah, I woke him up.

CHRISTIAN

It don't take much.

MELBA

No, I didn't find it any trouble.

(awkwardly)

Well, you children don't need me,
that's for sure. See you downstairs.

(to Christian)

You, too, honey, right?

CHRISTIAN

I'll be around if The Kid wants me.

THE KID
See you, Melba. Thanks.

151
COM
(2)

MELBA
Por nada, as they say. It was
nothing.

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

THE KID
You been to the place?

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

THE KID
How's your Mama and Papa?

CHRISTIAN
Fine. How's the game going?

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

THE KID
It's come to be just me and Lancey.

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

CHRISTIAN (after
the kiss)
I was wondering.

THE KID
I got my mind on the cards.

CHRISTIAN

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

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

THE KID

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

More right, I should have said.

CHRISTIAN

Should you?

THE KID

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

He moves toward the door.

CHRISTIAN

Eric --

THE KID (turning
back)

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

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

CUT TO:

THE POKER TABLE

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

THE KID

The eight'll try two bills.

LANCEY (turning his

card)

No stay.

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

THE KID

Two hundred.

LANCEY (turning his

card)

No stay.

INT. POKER SUITE

153

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

YELLER

Anything?

HOBAN

Naaa, Kid paired kings. He wins a hundred.

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

LANCEY

Queen bets another C-note.

THE KID (folding)

Take it away.

He looks up at Christian.

15

THE KID

Go read a magazine, honey.

She hesitates. Then moves away. Lancey watches this.

TIME LAPSE

INT. POKER SUITE - CHRISTIAN

154

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

LADY FINGERS' VOICE (o.s.)

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

The announcement rouses Christian from her reverie.

THE POKER TABLE

155

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

LADY FINGERS

I break.

THE KID

I don't want a break.

LANCEY

Well, I don't either.

THE KID

Deal.

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

LANCEY (snapping)

Same deck is good enough.

THE KID

I want a new deck.

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

155
CON
(2)

THE KID
Deal.

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

LADY FINGERS
You want to deal? Then deal
them yourselves. I'm going to
the john. I'm going to get
something to eat, and I'm going
to take a nap. You barracudas
can snap all you want but at each
other -- I'm taking a break and
if you don't like it you can
both go to hell.

She turns and stalks off. Lancey and The Kid look
at each other for a moment, then both grin.

THE KID
I guess we been told.

LANCEY
Looks that way.

THE KID (rising)
See you in about 3/4 of an hour,
Lancey, right?

LANCEY
Make it an hour. Old bones
need a little more time to
loosen up.

THE KID (meaning
it)
Listen, I think it is amazing
you've been able to keep going
this long.

As he heads for the door, Lancey reacts to this.
Then stands and looks around the room. Groups of
people stand in the shadows watching silently, not

hostile but certainly not friendly. He is The Man but he is getting beat and nobody is sorry. After a moment he turns and leaves from a side door. CAMERA PANS to HOLD on Christian as she stops The Kid by the door.

155
C
(3)

INT. POKER SUITE

156

CHRISTIAN (taking his
hand)
Eric --

SHOOTER (simultaneously)
Your fan on the fifth floor wants
you to have a bite with him. Alone.

KID
There's nothing to talk about.

SHOOTER
You better, Kid. You don't, you're
only making worse trouble.

Christian scans both their faces as they talk....
concerned.

THE KID
If you think so,
(to Christian)
Sorry.

CHRISTIAN
What's wrong?

THE KID
Nothing, Nothing you have to
worry about. I'll see you later,

He heads for the door. Christian looks after him.

THE KID
Get something to eat,

CUT TO:

Felix jumps into action again. He moves to The Kid's side, reaches into a breast pocket and takes out a switch blade, which he clocks open an inch or two from The Kid's neck. It is an extremely ugly-looking and menacing weapon.

15
CC
(2)

BILL

See if it cuts better with that.

Felix hands the knife to The Kid, who tries it on his steak.

BILL

Sharp?

THE KID

Very. But it don't cut any ice with me.

He jams the knife in the table and snaps off the blade.

THE KID (rising)

Not this time.

He exits.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR

158

As The Kid exits Christian is waiting for him. He moves down the corridor, preoccupied. She follows.

THE KID

Did you eat?

CHRISTIAN

No.

THE KID (stops, looks at her irritated)

Why not, for Chris sakes?

CHRISTIAN

Eric --

THE KID (moving away)

You should eat something.

CHRISTIAN (loudly, stopping)

I've got to talk to you.

He stops, looks at her.

INT. BILL'S SUITE

Bill and The Kid are sitting at a room-service table. Bill nibbles at some cheese and crackers while The Kid tackles a large steak. Felix, the chauffeur, stands in attendance on them.

BILL

I thought it would be better if you and I sat down together to see if we couldn't work out our differences. Felix!

He motions to Felix, indicating a wine bottle on the table. Felix steps over and refills The Kid's glass.

THE KID

What I told The Shooter goes.

BILL

Are you saying no before we've even discussed it? Am I to feel all my arguments will be wasted?

The Kid just looks at him -- then returns to his meal.

BILL

I'll skip to the final argument.
(then)

More salad, perhaps?

He makes a peremptory gesture to Felix, who springs forward to offer the salad bowl to The Kid.

BILL

The Shooter will be back dealing when you start again. He will give you an occasional helpful card.

THE KID

That's an argument?

BILL

That's a fact. I'm coming to the argument.

THE KID

I'll give you a fact. I won't let it happen.

BILL

Is that knife sharp enough?
Felix.

THE KID

Talk.

158
CONT
(2)

CHRISTIAN (fumbling)
It's--about us. What's going
to happen?

THE KID (interrupting)
What's going to happen? What's
going to happen for Chris sake is
I'm going to win the game.
(then more softly)
You go back to the apartment, honey,
this might take two more days.

CHRISTIAN (flatly)
If I go, I'm not going back to
the apartment. If I go -- I'm
just going.

THE KID (after a
long moment)
Well, that's up to you, Christian.

He looks at her a moment longer then moves up the
corridor. She watches him, then turns. Standing
in the open door some distance away are Schlaegel
and Felix.

CUT TO:

INT. POKER SUITE - THE SHOOTER'S HANDS

159

Shuffling the cards. CAMERA PULLS BACK enough to
see his face as he looks across at The Kid. CAMERA
PANS to a CLOSE SHOT of The Kid, and then past a
couple of spectators, including Christian and Melba,
to Bill, whose eyes are on The Kid. Finally CAMERA
PANS back to The Kid.

THE KID
I told you, Shooter -- I won't
go for it.

THE POKER TABLE - INCLUDING BILL

160

Both The Shooter and Bill are aware of a portentous
note in The Kid's tone.

LANCEY
What's up?

THE KID

The Shooter's not well. He
 didn't want to spoil the game,
 but he ought to be resting...
 He ought to be in the hospital.

160
CC
(2,

LANCEY

Well, we got Lady Fingers. Or
 we can deal ourselves.

SHOOTER

I'm okay. What The Kid's talking
 about is nothing. It's just not
 important.

THE KID

It is to me... You want to kill
 yourself, do it on your own time.

Lancey looks from The Kid to The Shooter, sensing
 that there may be something more behind this, but
 not knowing just what.

LANCEY

I got to go along with that,
 Shooter. Lady Fingers! You
 ready?

CLOSE SHOT - LADY FINGERS

161

Rising from her chair.

LADY FINGERS

Like Eddie the Dude said on his
 deathbed, I'm as ready as I'll
 ever be.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - CLOSE SHOT - THE KID AND POKER
HAND

162

The four cards showing are the ace, ten and two
 little clubs. As CAMERA PULLS BACK we also have
 time to note The Kid's stake. He is still ahead.
 Lancey counts out five hundred dollars from his
 stake, leaving about thirteen thousand, and puts
 it into a pot that already contains around a
 thousand.

LANCEY
I can't persuade myself you have the
flush.

162
CONT
(2)

The Kid turns up the jack of clubs.

LANCEY
Now I can.

The Kid pulls in the money.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - THE KID - LANCEY - AND POKER HANDS 163

Both men are showing the strain. Perhaps Lancey the most as he appears to be consistently losing. Showing are two nines and two odd cards.

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)
I'm going to pay the price to look
at that third nine.

The kid turns up another nine and reaches for the money.

LANCEY'S VOICE (o.s.)
Caveat emptor. New deck, please.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID

164

He shows a pair of eights and two odd cards against Lancey's pair of queens. He takes another look at his hole card, and we see that it is of no help to him.

THE KID
Pair of eights bets an even
thousand dollars.

HOBAN AND YELLER

165

They are both sitting on the back of the loveseat now. The binoculars pass from one to the other. Both men are tense over the growing excitement of the game.

YELLER

Ten bucks and my notoriously fallible instinct tells me the boy is bluffing this time.

165
CONT
(2)

HOBAN

Mark it.

CAMERA MOVES to the other four remaining spectators: Christian, Melba, The Shooter and Bill. They are close enough to see the cards but too close to discuss them.

THE POKER TABLE

166

The kid has almost half the money in front of him now, and is playing with increasing assurance and pressure.

LANCEY (turning
his cards)

I'm not that curious.

HOBAN AND YELLER

167

HOBAN (excitement
in his voice)

The Kid is pushing it and making it stick.

CAMERA MOVES to the other four spectators as they react to The Kid's successful streak.

SHOOTER (in a low
voice)

He's getting to him.

And it looks that way. Lancey appears old and unsure. The Kid sharp and cold. A young barracuda moving in for the kill.

CAMERA MOVES in close to Christian as she tries to catch The Kid's eye. Thinking she has it, she smiles her encouragement.

FEATURING THE KID

168

He looks right at her and doesn't seem to see her. Lady Fingers has dealt the first up cards of a new hand, and Lancey is high.

LANCEY
Two hundred.

168
CON'
(2)

THE KID
And up five.

LANCEY
Fold.

CLOSE - CHRISTIAN

169

Amid the growing excitement and tension she is a
complete outsider.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

170

The Kid shows two jacks and two odd cards; Lancey
a pair of aces and two odd cards. Lancey puts
about eight hundred dollars into the pot.

LANCEY
Betting the jack isn't there, Kid.

The Kid exposes his hidden jack.

SHOOTER, BILL AND MELBA

171

Greed and an almost vicious satisfaction marks their
faces as they watch Lancey falter. The Shooter
whispers to Bill just loud enough for the girl to
hear.

SHOOTER
We're in - I think he's got him.

Christian looks at them, then at The Kid. Hesitates
a moment then suddenly gets to her feet and starts
for the door. Only Melba notices her, and even she
doesn't have time to question her. CAMERA FOLLOWS
Christian to the suite entrance, where she picks up
her bag then turns to look back at the table.

FEATURING THE KID

172

The place where Christian was sitting is right in his line of vision but he hasn't observed her departure.

CLOSE SHOT - CHRISTIAN

173

She goes on out the door.

INT. POKER SUITE - ANGLE INCLUDING WINDOW

174

The second dawn of the contest is near at hand. The room, continuously lived in for so long by so many people, is a shambles of dirty glasses and plates, empty bottles, full wastebaskets and ash trays, and frayed people. At the poker table, Lady Fingers is dealing a new hand.

LADY FINGERS

A jack and a ten. Jack bets.

CAMERA MOVES in close enough for us to see the cards. Lancey has the jack of hearts, The Kid the ten of clubs.

LANCEY

Jack is willing to wager two hundred dollars.

The Kid takes his first look at his hole card.

CLOSE SHOT - SHOWING FACE OF HOLE CARD

175

It is the queen of hearts.

THE KID

And up five hundred.

Lancey looks at him a long moment. His face pale and shaken. The Kid is beating him. Pushing - buying - always pressing and Lancey knows he is losing one hand at a time, not badly but consistently and inevitably. His age and fatigue are a strong handicap for the long pull. Then his face settles as if he had come to a decision. He smiles lightly summoning some last reserve of strength, almost as if he knows this will be the last hand, win or lose.

LANCEY

Call your five hundred and five hundred more.

THE KID (after a
brief hesitation)
Call.

175
CONT
(2)

HOBAN AND YELLER

176

HOBAN
Fifty to one hundred says Lancey
paired his jacks.

YELLER
Mark it.

THE POKER TABLE

177

Lady Fingers deals the ten of diamonds to The Kid,
giving him a pair, and the ten of hearts to Lancey.

LADY FINGERS
Pair of tens. Jack, ten of hearts.

THE KID
Five hundred.

LANCEY
Your five hundred -- and up one
thousand.

The raise is a surprise. The Kid's eyes go up to
study Lancey's face, even though he knows what a
futile effort that is.

HOBAN AND YELLER

178

HOBAN
Fifty to seventy-five he's got
the jacks wired.

YELLER
Mark it - Could be a high heart.
Queen's the best, but that old
man can be cocky with an ace or
a deuce. 'Specially having one
of The Kid's tens.

THE POKER TABLE

179

LADY FINGERS

One thousand to the tens.

THE KID

Call.

LADY FINGERS (deal-
ing)A third ten, and a nine of hearts
to the ten, jack.

A SERIES OF ANGLES

180-186

The Kid, Lancey, Shooter, Melba, Schlaegel, Yeller,
Hoban and others as they realize this could be the
big hand.

HOBAN

He'll run. He's beat on the
board anyway you look at it.
Even if he has the jacks it is
better than eight to one against
improving.

YELLER

He won't run and I don't think
he's got the jacks. I think
he's going for the flush.

THE KID (after a
moment)Two thousand, five hundred
dollars.

Lancey looks at him, then at the cards. The moment
stretches.

LADY FINGERS (finally)

Two thousand, five hundred dollars
to the three hearts.

Lancey looks at her. His face briefly showing his
anger. The Kid notices this and reacts.

LANCEY (finally,

casually)

Reasonable bet. Two thousand five
hundred.(he counts out the money
to Lady Fingers)

Deal them.

SHOOTER (knowing
this is it)
He's going for it and The Kid's
got him. He's going all the way.

180-1
CONT'
(2)

LADY FINGERS (dealing)
A queen of diamonds to the three
tens.
(a note of excitement
in her voice)
And an eight of hearts to the
possible flush. Possible straight
flush. Three tens bet.

The Kid checks the amount of money in front of him.

THE SHOOTER AND BILL

137

They exchange a quick look of satisfaction, and
then their eyes go back to the cards.

HOBAN AND YELLER

138

They each take a quick turn with the binoculars.

HOBAN

If The Kid bets into the flush
he's filled up with a queen in
the hole.

YELLER

If The Man has a flush or a
straight, he goes under.
(then)
But not with both.

FROM BEHIND THE KID

139

He looks at his hole card. It is still the queen
of hearts. He has a full house, which has to be
the winning hand unless Lancey had the audacity to
bet out with a jack-seven of hearts, and to raise
The Kid with a jack-ten-seven.

THE KID

Bet what's in front of me. Make
it fifty-four hundred bucks.

He counts out all his money except a few smaller
bills.

THE WATCHERS

190

Reacting.

FEATURING LANCEY

191

He takes his time before he responds.

LANCEY

Fifty-four hundred bucks is a nice piece of money.

(counting it out)

I see the bet and raise sixty-seven hundred.

Slowly and deliberately, revealing nothing in his face, he reaches into his breast pocket and takes out a slim wallet and begins to let the bills flutter out on the table. The Kid looks at him frozen.

THE SHOOTER AND BILL

192

Bill hisses softly into The Shooter's ear.

BILL

Kid has him, doesn't he?

But The Shooter, like the Kid, is white-faced and frozen by the raise.

THE REMAINING SPECTATORS

193

They crowd in close to the table: Hoban, Yeller, Bill, The Shooter, and Melba.

KID (after a long moment)

I'm taking my half hour to raise my stake.

LADY FINGERS

I declare a thirty-minute break. Leave your cards and money on the table. The game will start again at five forty-five.

LANCEY

I'll take your marker, Kid.

KID

I can raise it.

LANCEY
I know you can.

193
CONT
(2)

KID
Long as you know.
(he raps the table)
-- Call.

LANCEY (turns up
a heart seven)
Straight flush to the jack. --
That's \$6700 you owe me, Kid.

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

194

There is nothing to be gained from a poker face now, and he reacts with a stunned expression in which all the accumulated strain and fatigue is beginning to show. CAMERA MOVES among the spectators: Hoban and Yeller, who are sorry for The Kid and admiring of Lancey; Bill, who is all the more angry at his defeat because his hopes were up; The Shooter, who is a very unhappy man; and Melba, whose anger at the Kid is balanced by her fear of Schlaegel and what will happen to The Shooter and possibly to her.

THE POKER TABLE

195

Lancey pulls in the money while The Kid stares at him dumbly. Lady Fingers riffles the cards.

LANCEY
New deck.

LADY FINGERS
Are you playing, Kid? You got a half an hour to raise your stake.

KID
No -- I'm through.

LADY FINGERS (formally)
Gentlemen, this game is over.

LANCEY

You're one hell of a poker player,
Kid. That was a rough hand.

195
(

KID

Thanks.

LANCEY

What's the tab for the whole show?

As he settles up, the CAMERA FOLLOWS The Kid to
his brandy bottle. As he pours himself a slug,
Melba and Shooter join him.

CLOSER ANGLE

196

MELBA

You had to do it, didn't you --
you had to go for it your own
way.

(then, as The Kid doesn't
answer)

Well, sonny, I hope you learned
something. I know we sure as
hell did.

KID

Where's Christian?

MELBA

She's gone. She's got too much
sense to stick with a two bit
loser.

SHOOTER

Shut up.
(then:)
Sorry, Kid.

KID

Yeah.
(then:)
I should have known he had it,
Shooter Man. I walked into it.

SHOOTER (trying to grin
as Schlaegel and Felix move
up)

Well, Kid, it's like I said --
you just wasn't ready.

BILL (to The Shooter)
Are you ready, Shooter Man? We're
having a meeting and I suggest you
join us.

196
CONT
(2)

Shooter looks at him a moment and nods, and taking
Melba by the arm, moves toward the door followed by
Felix.

MELBA

Why me -- I'm not part of this.

SHOOTER (jerking her
forward)

Oh, yes you are -- you and your
big mouth -- you're part of it
all right.

SCHLAEGEL

He's right, my dear. Now run
along with Felix. We're going
to have a long talk about that
big mouth of yours.

Melba starts to protest, but Felix jerks her out
the door. Shooter hesitates, then follows.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

197

Schlaegel turns to The Kid.

SCHLAEGEL

I was wrong. I figured you
for brains. But you're a loser,
Kid. You had a chance to play
with grownups and you ran.
(then, as Lancey and Lady
Fingers approach)

They weren't playing your game.
They were playing mine. Think
about that while you find a place
to hide. But hide good, Kid --
because I got a message for you
and I'm going to see it delivered.

The Kid looks at him, looks at Lancey and Lady
Fingers, wondering about what Schlaegel has said,
angry about it.

THE KID

Any time.

197

(

(

Schlaegel nods, moves to the door.

NEW ANGLE

198

Lancey and Lady Fingers join The Kid.

LADY FINGERS

Never thought I'd see the day.
You raising tens on a lousy three-
flush.

LANCEY

Gets down to what it's all about,
doesn't it? Making the wrong
play at the right time.

THE KID (sharply)

That's what it's all about?

(then, as Lancey looks at
him and doesn't answer)

You were crazy -- odds are three
hundred to one against.

LANCEY (after a
moment)

I don't play a percentage game.
I play stud poker my way. And
I got the money and you got the
questions. Figure that out.

(then, not unkindly)

You're good. But as long as I'm
around, you're second best, Kid...
and you might as well learn to
live with it.

The Kid looks at him and doesn't answer.

LANCEY

Look me up if you're in Miami
after Christmas. Stillson Hotel.

He smiles his very pleasant smile and goes out the
door.

SCENE

199

Lancey stops surrounded by a crowd of admirers offering their congratulations. The Kid watches for a moment then takes a long drink out of the bottle and eases through the crowd and out the door.

INT. CORRIDOR

200

as The Kid moves down the hall and enters the elevator.

INT. LOBBY

201

as he moves through the almost deserted lobby into the street.

EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAWN EFFECT

202

SERIES OF ANGLES of The Kid walking alone through the city. During the above there is an impression someone is following him.

EXT. DESERTED STREET NEAR THE KID'S APARTMENT

203

He turns a corner and there is a man blocking his path. Suddenly three men move in behind him. He turns, trapped.

CLOSER ANGLE

204

The men are four of the original seven players he hustled in the opening scene.

NOTE: During the progression of the game first one, then two, then all four men will be included among the observers. Always in the background, never positively identified. Their presence should be felt if not recognized.

DANNY
So it ain't Eric Stone, from the
foundry. It's the Cincinnati Kid
King of the stud poker players.

204
CON
(2)

THE KID
No - not the King - not much of
anything right now.

DANNY (moving
towards him)
We'll start with giving you back
what you gave me.

He moves toward The Kid.

CHRISTIAN (o.s.)
Eric - - .

The men hesitate.

NEW ANGLE

205

as Christian gets out of a taxi.

DANNY (as she
moves toward them)
Tell her good-bye, sport. You ain't
going any place.

THE KID
I know that.

He crosses to Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Are you all right?

CLOSER ANGLE

206

THE KID
I'm fine.
(then)
Weren't you going to say good-bye?

CHRISTIAN
I said good-bye.

THE KID
Yeah, I guess you did.
(then)
You don't know if I won or lost
do you?

CHRISTIAN

No - it doesn't really matter.
(then after a long
moment)

I love you, Kid -- and it's not
enough.

206
CONT'D
(2)

THE KID

Yeah, I know.

TAXI DRIVER (calling)

Listen, Lady, it's coming on the
morning rush. I got to have one
fare after another or I'm behind
for the day.

Christian doesn't answer. She looks at The Kid for a
long moment, then turns and goes. He watches her. She
enters the cab and it leaves. The Kid just stands
there.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

207

Danny and the others move up around him. The Kid
ignores them. After a moment Danny swings from be-
hind and knocks him to the pavement. He lies there
stunned for a moment. They look down at him. Then
he comes up. He flattens two in the process of being
badly beaten. They leave him.

DIFFERENT ANGLES

208

as the city awakens. Finally, he stirs, stands and
walks away.

FADE OUT

THE END

