

# **HEAT**

A Screenplay written by

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Based on his novel

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A word about what follows:

This movie takes place over a thirty hour period in Las Vegas  
-- JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

Those emboldened words are crucial, because whatever Vegas is, just before Christmas is the most desperate time. The whole place feels different; the town explodes on the 26th, but before, it's as empty as it ever gets. The holiday decorations, which I have not bothered to go into in the script, are pathetic, forlorn.

It's dangerous these pre-Christmas days, and that sense of foreboding should be felt constantly. This is not any city we have quite looked at before. I'm not a director so I don't know if the town should look darker or starker or what. I just know this:

We are not visiting Disneyland.....

In the darkness, the sound of a car screaming to a halt.

FADE IN:

EXT. EDGE OF A STREET IN A CITY - NIGHT

We are looking at the gutter, the curb, the sidewalk beyond.

A car door opens. Then quick footsteps. Then another car door opens. And now, something else is audible: pain. It's a woman in agony.

Something white is tossed onto the hard ground. Then a man's hands appear, grab the white thing, start to pull. It is a sheet and as it is jerked up, a WOMAN spins into view.

KEEP HOLDING:

The Woman lies stunned, her body half in the gutter, half on the curb. The white sheet and the man's hands are gone now. The woman is covered with blood, and it is her pain we heard a moment before.

Now the sound of a car door slamming, running footsteps, another door slam, then the roar of a motor gunning into the night.

The woman, groaning but trying so hard not to, lies still as if gathering herself for an effort. Then the effort comes: She slowly forces herself up in a crawling position.

The woman is close up. Her name is HOLLY. She is close to thirty, has a slender naked body, a face that was pretty before the terrible battering: her mouth bleeds, her nose too, her eyes are nearly swollen shut.

Still on her knees, Holly stares off into the night.

CUT TO:

WHAT SHE'S STARING AT

It's fuzzy, out of focus. But it's red in color, that much we can tell, a red sign.

HOLLY

Still staring, but now she manages to squint, forcing her eyes to focus and

CUT TO:

THE SIGN

It reads EMERGENCY and we are in the street near the side entrance to the hospital.

CUT TO:

HOLLY

Dazed, the bleeding worse, making an almost superhuman effort as she starts to crawl toward the sign. She creeps a foot forward, now another, now she's gone a whole yard, now it's too much and she collapses, lies helpless.

There are no tears in Holly's eyes. She does not cry. Ever.

She gets back into a crawling position, or almost does, because she hasn't the strength and falls hard face down again, lies there, panting.

Now she moves with even greater determination, gets onto her knees, begins slowly, slowly to crawl, it's inch by inch now and --

The emergency sign and Holly -- and from the sign's point of view, she seems miles away, she'll never make it, never, but then an ORDERLY moves under the sign, lighting a cigarette, stretching, thinking his thoughts. He takes an inhale, hears the moans, stares out into the night and

CUT TO:

A WHEELCHAIR

Whizzing along, Holly collapsed, riding as the Orderly pushes her as fast as he safely can and

CUT TO:

A HOSPITAL BED

As Holly is gently placed on it and

CUT TO:

A WHITE CURTAIN

Is whooshed around the bed area. A FEMALE DOCTOR and two NURSES work on Holly. She opens her eyes and tries to talk.

FEMALE DOCTOR

Shhh....

HOLLY

(whispering, all but  
incoherent)

Esca... Esca... Escalante...

The Doctor leans down and tries to hear. She moves her ear to her lips as she whispers.

EMERGENCY ROOM CORRIDOR

The Doctor comes out from behind the curtain, closing it and motioning to TWO grizzled, waiting POLICEMEN.

FEMALE DOCTOR

She'll be out for awhile...she kept repeating, "Escalante" over and over... Maybe the guy who did this to her?

The cops both look a little rattled.

GRIZZLED COP

Okay...thanks, doc. We know who  
she's talking about...

The Cops turn and head down the hall toward the exit. The Doctor goes back behind the curtain, where Holly is still being worked on.

CUT TO:

INT. AN EMPTY BAR - NIGHT

NICK ESCALANTE a tough, intense looking guy, sits drinking whiskey -- the name Holly whispered, the man the two cops are looking for. One wonders if Nick knows they're looking for him-- as he keeps glancing at the door as if he's waiting for something to happen.

Nick's face would be handsome if there wasn't such a sullen, half-drunken look on his face. Handsome or not, he's obviously successful with women-- it's not so much his size or considerable strength, it's this: the man is dangerous.

The clock over the bar says a few minutes before four, in a dump outside of town.

Nick taps the bar next to his shot glass, like he's ASKING FOR A HIT AT THE BLACKJACK TABLE.

The BARTENDER is old and half asleep.

BARTENDER

Maybe you should be getting home,  
Nick...

One searing glance from Nick and the Bartender lowers his eyes, and hastily pours out another drink.

Another customer enters the bar. Her name is DD. She is thirty-five, sexy, zaftig. She wears a dark skirt and a wide belt and white sweater tucked in to accentuate her breasts. This is not a hooker however; there is something vulnerable and sad about her.

Nick watches as DD goes to the other end of the bar, orders something, pays, very carefully not looking Nick's way. Now as she picks up her drink --

DD, as she casually glances toward him.

NICK ESCALANTE -- He has been expecting this; he gives her a small but confident smile.

DD -- A freezing look back at him. Then she turns quickly and walks away.

DD sits down in the farthest booth in the corner. She looks at the time on her phone-- 3:59. She opens it and dials.

DD  
 Oz...I'm here. Where are you?  
 Call if you'll be much longer.

She clicks off, a little annoyed and wary of Nick.

CUT TO:

THE CLOCK OVER THE BAR. 4:05 NOW.

Back to DD, lost in thought, then startled as --

NICK (O.S.)  
 (trying to hide his  
 drunkenness)  
 Ya coulda fooled me.

DD spins, looks up at him. He is holding a glass.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Second you came in, I said, that's  
 a lady enjoys a good time.

DD  
 I enjoy a good time.

NICK  
 On diet soda?

He puts the glass on the table for her.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 I asked the bartender to gimme  
 another for you -- I thought it'd  
 be seven and seven.  
 (nodding to an empty  
 ashtray)  
 Don't smoke either?

DD shakes her head. She's nervous but tries to hide it.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 No vices, that it?

DD  
 I have plenty of vices.

NICK

Really?...

He smiles slyly, trying to be charming but coming off as menacing. She opens her phone and turns away from him.

DD

Look-- thanks for the drink, but my boyfriend's overdue.

(into her phone)

Osgood...I know they won't let you call from the pit, but if you're not here in five, I'm leaving.

She clicks off her phone and puts it in her purse.

NICK

(laughing)

"Osgood?"

(beat)

You coulda made up something better than that.

DD

That's his name.

NICK

What's your name?

She sighs and looks away. He downs a drink.

NICK (CONT'D)

Just tell me your name and I'm gone forever. When I think of you walking in with that sweater, well, I want a name to go with that frame. Little poem, get it?

(he laughs)

Or else I can just stand here and guess your vices--

DD

DD.

NICK

(angry suddenly)

I said your name, no initials shit.

(hand to his mouth)

Oops. Probably you don't swear, neither.

DD

It's my name. My grandmother ran a Doris Day fan club. She named my mother DD-- she named me DD.

Nick turns, starts off but stops and looks at her.

NICK

You know what I think, Doris Day?  
You and me, we had a shot.

There is a passing POLICE SIREN outside. Nick glances out the window-- DD wonders if he's worried about the police.

He swaggers away to the bar, not looking back. She watches as he quickly downs three shots of FINLANDIA VODKA.

DD is alone and relieved. The clock says 4:25.

She sighs, looks at her phone, then gets up and heads for the door.

Nick slides off his seat, strides over and reaches the door first, blocking her exit.

NICK (CONT'D)

He must get all the ass he wants,  
this legendary "boyfriend" of  
yours...

Frustrated and unable to get around him, she goes back to her seat.

NICK (CONT'D)

(rambling, drunk)

Making you do all this waiting  
around and standing you up and  
sitting back down...

She gets out her phone and texts.

NICK (CONT'D)

Texting him? You know what you  
should tell Osgood? Tell him "fuck  
you."

She ignores him. He comes over to her booth and stands blocking her exit from the seat. He seems drunker.

NICK (CONT'D)

See, if you were with me, I'd never  
treat you like that.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I wouldn't leave you waiting 'cause  
I'd be afraid I'd lose you to some  
jerk like me, who wouldn't deserve  
you either and

(beat)

If you were mine...I'd never lie to  
you....

There's a sincerity and vulnerability that wasn't there  
before that she catches in his eyes and voice. She's  
surprised by it-- like maybe this is a guy she COULD go for.

DD

Yeah...you wouldn't would you?

She seems lost in thought, and intrigued by him. But he  
quickly sabotages his own chances.

NICK

If there is a boyfriend and you're  
not another bullshitting bitch.

She's completely turned off, and shakes her head.

NICK (CONT'D)

Let's dance.

DD

What? No.

NICK

Jes you and me, c'mon. Who d'ya  
like, I'll put it on...

DD

I don't wanna dance...really.

NICK

Jay-Z? That who you like? Jay-Z?  
What the fuck does he sing?

She looks toward the Bartender for help, but he ignores them.

DD

Please, Mister--

NICK

(huge)

You got to like somebody!

DD stares up at Nick's dangerous face and powerful body.

DD  
 (soft)  
 Katy Perry?

NICK  
 (calming)  
 Okay. Katy Perry.

DD  
 I'm not in the mood, though, okay?

NICK  
 (a pause)  
 I got plenty time. Maybe you'll be  
 in the mood later.

DD looks like she'll burst into tears. She glances out the window, down at her phone, over at the Bartender, over at the back-door. Nick slams his hand on the table.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 ANSWER ME!

DD  
 Maybe later, sure.

NICK  
 "Later." That's our own private  
 password, y'unnerstan'?

A pair of headlights come visible as a car zooms into the parking lot, parks, and a MAN gets out.

DD  
 (anything to get rid of  
 him)  
 Right, right, you got it.

Nick staggers away from the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOOR TO THE CRUMMY BAR

OSGOOD PERCY hurries from his car. Nice looking guy. Not big, but trim and fit. Tie and jacket. His right hand goes instinctively to his hair-- Osgood wears a toupee. It's a good wig, flattering, but he can't stop touching it, as if he's afraid it was going to scooting off someplace.

INT. CRUMMY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Osgood enters, stops and looks around. He spots DD and hurries toward her.

DD is relieved to see him approach. He sits.

OSGOOD

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but the roulette pit was a zoo-- two Saudis got drunk and I had to calm them down and comp their rooms, then they decided they--

DD

Let's go.

OSGOOD

(surprised)  
I just got here.

DD

There's a drunk been hitting on me, let's blow before something happens.

OSGOOD

I'm here now, nothing can happen, forget about him.  
(leaning closer)  
Try to remember why we're here -- I picked this place because it's so deserted -- we can think. In town all the places are noisy, and if we go to my place or your place, we'll just have sex--  
(pause)  
This is our future. What's your decision?

DD is torn.

DD

You're the best man I ever met.  
Ever, ever, ever....

She leaves off the "but," but it's implied.

OSGOOD

At least it's not an insult, but it also isn't an answer.

Osgood touches his wig, then takes her hand.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)

Darling, I hate to pressure you,  
but the Caesar's people have  
offered me a roulette pit of my own  
in Atlantic City. It's a big break  
and I have to tell them tomorrow.  
So tonight's your deadline for  
telling me yes or no. Don't worry  
about me, I'll get another break in  
a couple of years, all that matters  
is us. Will you come with me.

A KATY PERRY SONG starts playing in the background.

DD

You don't just mean "Come with me."  
You mean come live with me and love  
me and marry me-- well shit, I been  
married three times, Osgood, I suck  
at it, all you can say for sure is  
I give great divorce...

(listening, sinking  
feeling)

Is that a Katy Perry song?

NICK (O.S.)

It's "Later."

They look up and see Nick, menacing and very drunk, hovering  
over the booth.

OSGOOD

We're talking.

NICK

"Later" is our password, asshole.  
To dance.

(offering his hand to DD)

DD?

OSGOOD

You said you'd dance with him and  
you told him your name?

DD

I was trying to get rid of him....

OSGOOD

What else did you tell him?

NICK

She tol' me a lot -- like what a prissy whiner you are and how you can't get it up....

(to DD)

Come on and dance.

OSGOOD

She changed her mind, all right?

NICK

She didn't change her mind, you just changed her mind. That's not "all right." That's all wrong!

He grabs her wrist and she yanks it away.

NICK (CONT'D)

I like it when they fight.

OSGOOD

Don't...touch her.

NICK

I barely touched her.

Osgood stands up, getting between DD and Nick.

OSGOOD

I don't think you want to make me mad.

DD

Osgood, don't--

Nick holds up his hands in a gesture of compliance.

NICK

I won't touch her again.

(beat)

Not until she asks me.

(beat)

But I got one question.

(beat)

Can I touch you?

With that, he rips the wig from Osgood's head. Osgood, stunned, feels his head. He is flushed, humiliated. And to make it worse, DD looks embarrassed.

Nick, taunting, backs into the area of rectangular tables. He waves the wig, as if he was in the schoolyard.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Nyah-nyah-ee, nyah-nyah.

OSGOOD  
 Give me that.

NICK  
 Come get it.

Osgood lunges. Nick, the much larger man, avoids him, laughing.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Does it bite?

Osgood makes a couple of attempts to grab it, but Nick keeps it away from him. DD gets up.

DD  
 Osgood -- come on, please, please --  
 get me out of here...

OSGOOD  
 That cost a lot of money--

NICK  
 Doris Day doesn't like it--

DD  
 Fuck the money-- I'm scared!  
 Please, Osgood!

He thinks, then starts to walk toward the door.

Nick watches them.

OSGOOD  
 I could have handled him.

DD  
 I know...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The two cars are parked near each other.

OSGOOD  
 I don't like to make a big deal out  
 of it, but I'm good with my  
 fists...

DD  
I'm sure in your line of work you  
have to be.

OSGOOD  
That's right.

They go to his car, but he hesitates in opening the door for  
her.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)  
Shit -- I hate guys like that,  
think they own the goddamn world.

DD pushes around him and opens the door.

DD  
Let's just go.

OSGOOD  
Dammit.  
(he shuts her door.)  
You think less of me for walking  
out, don't you?

DD  
(she does)  
How can you even ask that when I'm  
the one who got you to leave?

NICK (O.S.)  
Ozzie....Ozzie-Wozzie...

They turn. Nick is standing in the doorway, holding the wig.

DD  
We'll get in the car, we'll drive  
around, we'll talk...

OSGOOD  
Sure... That's what we'll do...

She slips inside the car, he shuts the door. During this,  
Nick has been going "Ozzie-Wozzie," over and over. Osgood  
whirls, seething.

NICK  
I don't want this, I don't know  
what I'd feed it.

Osgood starts toward Nick. DD is appalled.

Nick tosses the wig onto the ground before Osgood reaches him.

NICK (CONT'D)

Ooops.

Osgood looks at the wig, then studies Nick.

OSGOOD

Go back in the bar.

NICK

Why?

OSGOOD

Safety precaution, let's say.

NICK

You don't trust me? After all we've been through? Ozzie, I got a flash for you-- I don't need tricks to deal with you...

(suddenly pointing toward the cars)

Goddamit, Doris Day, stay over there, this is between us--

On those words, Osgood turns.

DD is in the car and gasps.

Osgood suddenly looks back at Nick and Nick smiles. He hasn't moved an inch.

NICK (CONT'D)

No tricks necessary --

Nick takes a haymaker swing at Osgood's face.

DD cries out.

Osgood takes a quick half step back, ducks to one side as Nick's punch sails by and then, before Nick can regain his balance, Osgood moves in, buries a right into Nick's gut.

Nick grunts.

Nick blinks, surprised, his big body turning from the force of the blow and --

Osgood Percy moves in, sending a barrage of sharp punches into Nick's stomach, so fast you can't even count them.

Nick retreats-- but no good, Osgood's quicker, and the punches keep coming. Now Nick has his arms down protecting his stomach as he stumbles and crashes hard to the parking lot pavement. He lies there, trying to catch his breath.

Osgood moves close to the drunk, body ready, fists clenched, moving from side to side, waiting--

DD is stunned. She stares at him.

DD  
(little voice)  
Osgood?

Osgood keeps his eye on his fallen enemy.

OSGOOD  
Shut up.

DD  
But--

OSGOOD  
I said shut up, DD.  
(pushing his foot hard  
against Nick's body)  
No one's leaving 'til it's over --  
and it isn't over until you say it  
is.

Nick, dazed, tries to sit. It's hard for him to talk.

NICK  
(beaten)  
Sorry... I go too far when I been  
drinking... Sometimes what I think  
is fun isn't fun for everybody...  
and it's over.

Nick reaches out his hand for help.

DD  
Don't!

But it's too late. Osgood helps Nick up, and as soon as he's on his feet, Nick has him, lifts him up off the ground in a brutal bear hug, screaming:

NICK  
Asshole... Fucking asshole!

Osgood, moving his slim body with great quickness, twists left, right, breaks the pressure from the hold, and then he is on the attack again, creaming Nick's stomach.

Nick grabs him again and falls with him hard behind the parked car.

DD, in the other car, can't see them but she can hear them alright, the ripping punches, the curses from Nick. She hesitates, gets out of the car, but the battle is still just outside of her sight. Suddenly, silence.

DD  
 (whispering)  
 Osgood?  
 (no reply)  
 Osgood, you okay?  
 (no reply, DD is scared  
 now)  
 Osgood, come ON!

And now hands are visible at the far hood of the car. Bloody hands. Big and bloody, much bigger than Osgood's hands.

DD (CONT'D)  
 (frozen)  
 Aw, shit.

And then Osgood, shaky and bloody, stands on the far side of the car as the big hands slide down. Osgood bends, lifts.

Nick's bloody face-- as Osgood lifts him by the hair. When Nick is half standing, Osgood slams him forward over the hood of the car.

OSGOOD  
 Is it over? Your call. I hope you want more. Believe that -- I've loved the last few minutes -- I could beat the shit out of you all night long.

Nick doesn't move much -- Osgood jerks him upright.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)  
 I'd like an answer.

Nick, close up. He does a total fold.

NICK  
 I'm sorry -- I am -- please, I'm really a good guy, don't hit me anymore, lemme be...

Osgood, holding Nick by the neck, looks at DD.

OSGOOD

This is what you were afraid of?

Osgood tosses the bigger man down to the ground. Blood still pours from Nick's mouth.

DD goes to Osgood with new found respect and brimming with love and passion. She reaches for him.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)

I'm a mess.

DD

Let me be the judge.

She sticks her tongue into his mouth and holds him until he pulls away.

OSGOOD

Is that what I do?

DD

In a gentlemanly way.

They hear an approaching siren.

DD (CONT'D)

Maybe the Bartender called the cops. We better go...

Osgood looks down at Nick, then walks over to the wig. Before he can pick it up--

DD (CONT'D)

Leave it.

NICK

I thought you like it?

DD

Which do you want, slugger? That wig on your head or my breasts in your hands?

(beat)

In Atlantic City...

He rushes over, gives her a kiss then they get in the car and speed away.

On the pavement, Nick struggles until he's on his knees in a crawling position, not unlike Holly in the opening.

The siren gets louder, and the car finally speeds in. The Grizzled Cop and his partner get out of the car.

GRIZZLED COP

Escalante. Just the man we've been looking for.

Nick raises his head, looking at them. His face beaten.

OTHER COP

Jesus...What the hell happened to you?

NICK

I dropped a contact...  
(sitting)  
What's going on, guys...

GRIZZLED COP

(sympathetically)  
It's Holly. She's in Mountain View.  
(beat)  
Asking for you...

Nick suddenly looks sobered and very concerned. It's obvious, from his utter shock and concern, he had nothing to do with her beating.

The Grizzled Cop offers a hand to help him up-- it's obvious they're friends.

INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE - DAWN

There are half a dozen machines and tubes hooked up to Holly. Her face is puffier and some of her hair on the side of her head has been shaved to allow for STITCHES.

She slips in and out of consciousness but looks relieved to see Nick standing at her bedside. She reaches out her hand and puts it on top of his hand.

The cops slip in through the curtain.

GRIZZLED COP

She say anything?

Nick shakes his head.

HOLLY

Didn't see him...

The Grizzled Cop knows it's a lie; so does Nick, and Holly knows that they know, but it's the story she's sticking to.

She looks at Nick, comforted and closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRUMMY STREET - NAKED CITY, LAS VEGAS - EARLY MORNING

It's one of the worst slums in Vegas. Empty bottles, broken glass, a few LOCALS staggering home in the early morning light.

We reach a remarkably unimpressive house and move up to the second floor --

CUT TO:

INT. TINY VEGAS APARTMENT - SAME

This place has only one unusual aspect: every bit of available wall or ceiling space is covered with MAPS.

Nick is in bed, asleep. As his eyelids flutter, start to open, he forces them shut and the instant he does--

CUT TO:

SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY UNEXPECTED AND BEAUTIFUL

A tranquil, beautifully sculpted rice paddy in a rural, untouched area of Southeast Asia. Breathtaking view of a nearby mountain. WIND CHIMES tinkling in the air. Peace.

Nick walks through, looking lighter, cleaner, almost ethereal. Asian children play and a LITTLE PEASANT GIRL rushes to him giggling, and hands him a flower.

There is a serenity and ease to him we didn't see the night before. He is content.

CUT TO:

INT. TINY VEGAS APARTMENT

Nick is back, and immediately stressed at the oppressive surroundings. He is not a happy man.

He reaches out and grabs a hand towel, laying it over his eyes to block out the light and reality of the tiny room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - SILVER SPOON CASINO HOTEL - MORNING

It is early enough to be empty. There is a giant, waving inflatable SANTA and a slew of REINDEER and TINSEL decorating the outside. Under the awning, canned CHRISTMAS CAROLS play to no one's delight, next to a DOORMAN, sweating in a carriage outfit.

A battered Ford pulls in. Nick gets out, dressed casually. He walks toward the coffee shop entrance in on the first floor.

NICK  
(to the Doorman)  
Turn that shit off.

DOORMAN  
I wish.

Nick enters the coffee shop.

INT. SILVER SPOON COFFEE SHOP - A LITTLE LATER

It's also decorated in wilting, pathetic but shiny decoration and a big plastic tree with only a few tattered balls on it.

Nick is at the counter, forcing down some eggs and coffee. Behind the counter-- flitting about-- is a beaten down, older waitress, ROXY.

Behind them, at a table, a thirty-year-old assistant room clerk in a blazer, BENNY, is trying to sweet-talk an attractive older lady, MARIE. Both Nick and Roxy listen in-- sometimes amused, sometimes disgusted.

BENNY  
This is not a town for trusting people, Marie. Especially at Christmas.

Roxy nods at Nick knowingly.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
I'm married... I'm not wearing a ring, you wouldn't have known but I wanted you to know.  
(MORE)

BENNY (CONT'D)  
It's been awful... Have you ever  
been married?

MARIE  
Divorced.

BENNY  
Then you know the agony of living  
without love...

Nick rolls his eyes, and Roxy shrugs at him. But Marie puts her hands over Benny's staring at him.

The quiet is broken when Osgood, wigless, enters. He walks straight to Nick, then sits on the stool next to him.

OSGOOD  
(exultantly)  
Worked like a charm, Nicky. We  
leave for A.C. tonight.

NICK  
You hit me a little harder than we  
agreed to, Oz.

OSGOOD  
You weren't supposed to take my  
fucking hair.

NICK  
She likes you better without it.

OSGOOD  
(happy)  
Yeah. She really does.  
(beat)  
Women love honesty.

NICK  
Sure. That's why you conned her  
into moving to AC with you.

Osgood gets out a bankroll and counts out FIVE HUNDREDS in front of Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)  
You counted wrong.

OSGOOD  
We said one-fifty for your time and  
trouble. One-fifty if she agreed  
to go with me. The rest is a  
bonus.

Nick rubs his eyes, and while they're closed:

CUT TO:

INT. A QUICK VISION OF THE BAR - NIGHT BEFORE

NICK

If you were mine...I'd never lie to  
you.

She picks up on the sincerity and vulnerability.

There's a sincerity and vulnerability that wasn't there  
before that she catches in his eyes and voice. She's  
surprised by it-- like maybe this is a guy she COULD go for.

DD

Yeah...you wouldn't would you?

She looks at him, moved.

INT. SILVER SPOON COFFEE SHOP - PRESENT

Nick, a little disgusted with himself, slides two of the  
hundreds back to Osgood.

NICK

It's not a bonus, it's a tip. I  
don't take tips.

Nick pockets the other three hundreds. Osgood is even  
happier than he came in.

OSGOOD

Day keeps getting better and  
better.

Osgood pats Nick's back, then shakes his hand heartily

OSGOOD (CONT'D)

I owe you, pal.

He gives Roxy a wink and walks out. A long pause, then:

ROXY

I take tips.

He smiles at her. They listen in on the conversation behind  
them.

BENNY

You're leaving tonight...I'm stuck here at a job I hate, with a wife who doesn't care...and the memory of what could have been...

MARIE

Maybe you could come upstairs...and we can make some real memories.

They gaze into each other's eyes. Nick gets up, turns around, grabs Benny out of his chair, and flings him into the plate table next to the buffet-- plates and cups crash down, but they're so hearty, few break. Nick looks relaxed-- not angry at all.

Marie jumps to her feet, astonished. Nick looks at her.

NICK

He's not married, he does this all the time, and he'll forget you in the morning.

Embarrassed, Marie hurries out of the restaurant. Benny gets to his feet; not hurt but annoyed.

BENNY

Nick?! What the fuck, man?

NICK

Sorry, Benny.

Benny sees a WOMAN ALONE enter the restaurant. He goes right back into seduction mode-- making a beeline for her and introducing himself.

Nick takes one of the hundreds and leaves it as a tip for Roxy, then walks out. She quickly stashes it in her bra.

EXT. STRIP MALL - MORNING

A MAINTENANCE MAN is stapling up Christmas lights around the complex.

Nick pulls up in front of a lawyers office, disgusted with the decorating.

On the door, two names: The first, in the center and large reads: "PINCHUS ZION, ATTORNEY AT LAW." Below, in much smaller print in one corner is the second name: NICK ESCALANTE.

Nick walks up and enters.

INT. PINKY AND NICK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nick enters.

PINKY is short, energetic, bright. But it's an odd law office: there is no secretary, nothing. He's it. Beyond is another door with Escalante's name. Pinky sits at his desk.

PINKY

Never thought you'd make it in.  
Isn't this your five thousandth  
morning in the Athens of America.

NICK

Soon as I get my stake I'll be  
gone.

PINKY

That quarter million? How close  
are you now?

NICK

Two-hundred-forty-nine thousand  
eight hundred to go. It was two-  
hundred-forty-nine-thousand-seven,  
but I left Roxy a big tip.

PINKY

So, two hundred? Seriously, why  
don't you have me hold onto it  
before you walk past another black  
jack table or a waitress?

Nick goes to turn his computer screen around.

PINKY (CONT'D)

You got like four hundred e-mails.  
You wanna look at them? Could be  
cash to be made...

Nick sits across from Pinky, turns the screen away from him,  
and puts his feet up.

NICK

I'm not up to it.

Pinky opens an email and reads.

PINKY

"Dear Nick Escalante: I like to think I'm the toughest guy I ever met--

NICK

Delete.

Pinky hits a key and it's gone. He brings up the next one. This is obvious something they've done before-- it amuses Pinky but annoys Nick.

PINKY

"I am sixty-two with a question--"

NICK

Delete.

He deletes it and opens the next.

PINKY

"Dear Nick. How can I become a mercenary like you. I'd like to go someplace tropical--"

NICK

Delete--

PINKY

(continuing without deleting)

Not the desert, because I burn easily--

NICK

I said delete.

PINKY

"And I have a tremendous fear of scorpions since I was a child and saw a nature show --"

Nick comes around quickly, trying to grab the keyboard. Pinky tries to push him back, laughing, even as he struggles to keep reading.

PINKY (CONT'D)

"...that was so terrifying I had to have my shoes checked for scorpions before I put them on--" No! Come on, Nick--

Nick pushes in front of him and deletes all the emails.

PINKY (CONT'D)  
 You asshole! You deleted *all* of  
 them! Some of them had pictures...

Childish jostling ends, when the door opens and Pinky affects a serious professional demeanor. It is CYRUS KINNICK. He is twenty-two years old, nerdish and fabulously wealthy.

PINKY (CONT'D)  
 Pinchus Zion, attorney at law, how  
 may I help you--

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Cyrus Kinnick. I was looking for  
 Nick Escalante--

Nick shakes his head adamantly to Pinky behind Kinnick's back. But Pinky, annoyed about the email fight, hands his friend over:

PINKY  
 Right behind you.  
 (as Kinnick turns)  
 Nick, this is Cyrus Kinnick.

Nick glares at Pinky, then looks at Kinnick and nods.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 I was referred by an ex-client of  
 yours back in Boston. I'm planning  
 on hitting the casino tonight--

NICK  
 Can't help you. Got to be over  
 twenty-one, they'll lose their  
 license.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 (pause, then dead serious)  
 I suppose that's funny. I'm twenty-  
 two, but my youthful appearance is  
 one of the reasons I think I need a  
 body guard. Three years ago while  
 I was still at MIT I started a  
 company called Kinni-Tech.

NICK  
 When you were nineteen?

Pinky suddenly realizes who this is and is very impressed.

PINKY  
 He'll do it.

Nick looks at Pinky, surprised at having his services volunteered.

NICK  
Heard of him?

CYRUS KINNICK  
Do you have a cell phone, Mr.  
Escalante?

NICK  
No.

Cyrus is completely taken aback.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I'm either fucking, fighting or at  
the casino. There's no one I want  
to talk to when I'm doing any of  
those things.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Luckily most people don't think  
like you.

PINKY  
Every phone today has something  
called an ARM chip. Every ARM chip  
used, they give this kid a dollar.

CYRUS KINNICK  
(embarrassed)  
That's a simplification, but--  
(to Nick)  
Do you think you could tell me a  
little bit about *yourself*, Mr.  
Escalante?

NICK  
Well, I've been knocked down, blown  
up, lied to, shit on and shot at,  
so nothing surprises me much  
anymore except the things people do  
to each other. I'm not a virgin  
except in my heart. I'm a licensed  
pilot, I've taught Karate in Tokyo  
and lectured on economics at Yale.  
I can memorize the front page of  
the New York Times in five minutes  
and repeat it back to you in five  
weeks.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
 I was National Golden Gloves  
 Champion three years in a row, I'm  
 fluent in four languages, and--

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Jesus--

NICK  
 And don't interrupt me, there's  
 more.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 More?

NICK  
 Yeah -- I lie a lot.

Cyrus stares at him for two beats, then giggles a little.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 I'm at the Grand. Shall we say  
 nine o'clock?

Nick shrugs an okay. Cyrus nods to Kinnick and leaves. Nick collapses back into a seat and rubs his eyes.

The wind chimes start...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - NIGHT

The wind chimes sound. Nick, in his glowing white clothing, walks down a path surrounded by expressive and exotic trees.

Nick sits down on the path and raises his head to look at the spectacular canopy of stars.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - DAY

Nick opens his eyes and sees no stars-- just the torn, stained material on the roof of his car.

In the seat next to him, a bag of Wendy's take out. He sighs, picks up the bag and gets out of the car.

EXT. NICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Nick walks around a ragged hedge, carrying the take-out.

He stops when he sees Holly sitting on his doorstep. She should probably be in bed, and shows all the signs of her battering the night before. Her eyes are half closed, her nose is broken and her mouth is swollen.

Nick is surprised and concerned.

NICK

Should you be out of the hospital?

HOLLY

(amused)

Probably not.

CUT TO:

INT. TINY VEGAS APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

They sit at Nick's kitchen table, not far from his bed. It is as dark as it can be at this time-- the shades are drawn. Holly sips on Nick's coke, and the food remains in the bag. Nick does his best to disguise how upset he is.

It's important to remember something with these two: no matter how much they scrap and lie, once they were something to each other. And whatever they were, they're not now. They missed connections somehow, and they both know it. And they both know that's sad.

She won't look at him as she talks. He watches her carefully.

HOLLY

I had a date last night, nice old guy, we had a nice time, blah-dee-blah. He got tired, I left his room early. I went to get the elevator, but it was going up; there were three guys inside.

NICK

Not good.

HOLLY

The young guy was the boss, really built. The big guys were his flunkies. Young guy said, "come to the party," and I said I was tired and he said, "Hey, I'm too pretty to turn down," and he pulled me in and I didn't panic, I been in other situations, blah-dee-blah.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
(slurping)  
I just finished this, sorry.

He shrugs that it's fine.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
Where was I?

NICK  
Blah-dee-blah.

HOLLY  
Okay, the elevator went up, I didn't see the floor, I had other problems like how best to make my departure and then we're in his suite and I said, "Where's the party?" And he said, "You're it," and then he said let's have some champagne and I said no and he said, "Hey, this is Cristal," like I'm supposed to swoon and then he scurries into the next room while one of the big uglies pops the cork and blocks the door and after a while he's back, he's wearing a robe and it's mostly open and he signals for the other two to go into the next room and I'm working on a good sob-story because Young Guy didn't seem like the kind who was into rejection when he said it; "Are you the lucky bitch," and I said, "Am I ever, 'Cristal'." And he said, "No, what makes you lucky is you're the only girl in the world tonight who gets to touch it," and I bat my eyes and say, "touch what," and he looks down at himself as he opens his robe the rest of the way and says, "The Envy of all Mankind."

(beat)

And right now, I am, for the first time, very scared, because when a guy has a name for his cock, you know he's not playing with a full deck.

A moment of silence passes between them.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
You don't want to hear any more.

NICK

I didn't want to hear this much.

HOLLY

He did what he did and the big guys worked me over on the service stairs and some hotel people dumped me at Mountain View, blah-de-blah.

(finally looking him in the eye)

Will you help me?

NICK

Sure, I'll drive you to the cops. Tell them what you just told me. I'll even wait there for you.

HOLLY

No cops, Nick. All I want is an apology.

He laughs at her and gets up. Now he won't look at her, and she stares at him.

NICK

I'm going to guess the three gentlemen you ran into were not IBM executives. What hotel were you in?

HOLLY

The Croesus.

NICK

Better and better.

HOLLY

A lot of people like it.

NICK

(building)

Every high school student knows there is no such thing as organized crime in America -- and every grammar school student knows that if organized crime did exist, the last city it could exist in would be Vegas -- and every goddam Kindergarten student knows if the Combination did come to town, the last hotel to be tainted would be the Croesus.

(big)

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

Shit, Holly, all their waitresses  
have moustaches, their showgirls  
can rip the phone book in half.  
You could always piss me off.

HOLLY

I know.

He goes to the door, opening it and letting in a burst of  
sunlight. Holly cringes and her wounds look worse in the  
light.

NICK

I'll drive you home.

She gets up and goes to the door.

HOLLY

I have my car.

She stands there, staring at him. He's annoyed.

NICK

Holly, when I came to this town and  
you were just the pimply kid who  
lived down the street--

HOLLY

My skin was *perfect*--

NICK

That first year, Baby himself tried  
to recruit me for the Combination.  
I said no, if someone got bloody, I  
wanted it to be for my reasons, not  
anybody else's. Baby accepted  
that, and since then, I have stayed  
away from them and they have stayed  
away from me.

HOLLY

(beat)

An apology. Nothing more.

NICK

Can't help you.

She looks at him a moment longer. It seems like his decision  
is final. She leaves. He shuts his door hard.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROESUS HOTEL - AFTERNOON

A high end fabulous palace, completely decked out with decorations. Nick pulls around on a side street and walks in through a service entrance.

INT. CROESUS HOTEL SUB-BASEMENT

Nick comes down the stairs, and although the hotel itself is a palace, the underbelly is as leaky, bleak and horrible as any other hotel.

Nick ducks under some pipes, and walks toward a group of housekeeping carts, where he finds MILLICENT, a five-three, two-ninety, sensual African American Nick kisses her cheek.

MILLICENT

They don't much appreciate us  
having visitors.

NICK

I'm interested in a young guy in a  
suite, high floor, travels with two  
blond bodyguards.

MILLICENT

No you're not, sweetie.

He looks at her quizzically, not about to walk away.

She sighs goes over to a very old, bulky monitor on a computer that looks like it's running DOS and types in something on a cracked keyboard. She hits a button and a filthy printer starts spitting out a page.

MILLICENT (CONT'D)

You helped me out once...Tyler  
would be dead now if it wasn't for  
you...so I owe you forever.

She takes the sheet-- room assignments for the 39th floor. She circles one name in a suite.

MILLICENT (CONT'D)

But do something for me now,  
sweetie. Promise.

He looks at her calmly. She hands over the paper.

MILLICENT (CONT'D)

Don't fuck with this guy.

He folds the paper and puts it in his pocket. He walks out on the corridor of pipes to a door leading to the hotel.

CUT TO:

INT. CROESUS HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

It is sprawling and mostly empty, with a few tourist groups arriving by bus. In the background, bells ring, glasses clink, and voices murmur in the mostly empty CASINO off the lobby.

On a sofa in the corner, Nick sits patiently, eyeing people entering and leaving the casino.

A limo pulls up outside, and a group makes its way toward the lobby.

A BELLHOP comes over to Nick and whispers in his ear. Nick gives him a TEN, and the Bellhop moves on.

DANNY DEMARCO enters with his two huge blonde bodyguards, TIEL and KINLAW. DeMarco is in his mid-twenties, pretty face, spends a lot of time sculpting his body. Powerful, dark, arrogant. Kinlaw is a conscience free man, 6'6", 260; Tiel is smarter, bigger and meaner looking.

DeMarco is met by two very well dressed, impeccably groomed employees, GREETERS for the high rollers working directly under BABY who runs the place.

Baby even comes out of an office, gives a curt but sincere greeting to DeMarco

CUT TO:

CLOSER ON DEMARCO

Now he's laughing heartily with his friends and Baby.

DeMarco takes a quick GLANCE at Nick in the middle of the laugh, then immediately is back in his own world.

CUT TO:

NICK

His mouth twitches as he watches how relaxed, attractive and care free this guy is.

Nick rubs his forehead and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - SUNSET

Nick glows as he stares in peace at the vast horizon.

CUT TO:

LOBBY - PRESENT

Nick opens his eyes.

CUT TO:

DEMARCO

Even closer on his smiling mouth.

THE GROUP ACROSS THE LOBBY

Baby shakes hands again and goes back to his business, heading into the casino. He's cordial, but a busy man.

DeMarco and his men get into the elevator.

Nick listens to the casino sounds for a few moments more, then gets up and leaves the lobby for the street.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKY AND NICK'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Pinky is working, filling out forms when Nick enters. Nick takes the folded up paper that Millicent gave him and puts it on the desk in front of Pinky.

PINKY

What's this about?

Nick stares at him blankly, then sits on the edge of the desk.

PINKY (CONT'D)

I don't want to know.

NICK

Who is he?

Pinky goes on his computer and looks up the name. He makes several faces as he seems to dig up very bad information very quickly.

PINKY

Danny DeMarco is from a fine old wop family in Lexington, Kentucky. He owns a six bedroom house with two pools, one inside, one out. His father, Sammy DeMarco owns a trucking company, a cement business, and the carting business that services pretty much every government building in the south.

(looking up)

It doesn't say it here, but, reading between the lines, Sammy loves his only son, very, very much. Do you want me to read you the raps he's beaten?

NICK

Not necessary.

Nick picks up the phone and punches in a number.

NICK (CONT'D)

Holly, it's me.

INTERCUT with Holly, in her small but pleasantly furnished apartment. Lights out except for a small lamp next to her and the light from the TV. Three cats wander around.

She is on the couch, under a blanket, doing NEEDLEPOINT, and using a large pair of SCISSORS to clip away stray threads on the back of the project.

HOLLY

I knew you'd call...

NICK

Yeah...well I'm afraid I got some bad news. I checked around, and couldn't find the guy. Whoever it was must have skipped town.

Close up on Holly, who is very calm, continuing her work with her hand-- perhaps getting a little sloppier even as she struggles to keep her voice clean and emotion free.

HOLLY

You know what he did when he finished? He put a gun inside me, and I don't mean my mouth, and he said, "You got one shot at breathing..."

CUT TO:

NICK

Gripping the phone incredibly tight, and Pinky, sensing something is terribly wrong on the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. CROESUS HOTEL LOBBY - EARLIER

Just a flash to a close-up of the corner's of Danny DeMarco's mouth curling up as he laughs.

HOLLY (V.O.)

"Tell me you love me and if I believe you I'll let you go...you're free as air."

CUT TO:

HOLLY

Telling her story, clipping threads off the needlepoint

HOLLY

And I hated him so much and this cold thing was in me and I was bleeding but I said, "Oh, God, I love you, I love you so much, I do," and he said, "Never shit a shitter." And he pulls the trigger and I scream -- but there's a "click." He was just playing a game with me. Some fucking game to play with another human, right, Nicky?

BACK ON NICK as he trembles. Pinky looks concerned for Nick as he takes a long time to say anything.

NICK  
Doesn't change anything. I tried,  
Holly.

HOLLY  
All those times I told you I cared  
for you--

NICK  
I know, I know, you were lying--

HOLLY  
No. Every thing I said was true.  
And when you hit bottom, who  
climbed down there and found you?

She hangs up.

INT. PINKY AND NICK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

NICK is slow to put down the phone.

PINKY  
So...you want to tell me what that  
was?

NICK  
Nothing.

He gets up and walks toward the door. Pinky is worried.

PINKY  
Where you going?

NICK  
(beat)  
Over to the Grand to meet the kid.

Nick crumples the paper that Millicent gave him, drops it in the trash, and heads out the door.

Pinky doesn't look convinced that Nick is heading to the Grand.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GRAND HOTEL CASINO - NIGHT

Cyrus is even better dressed than he was in the afternoon; he may be young, but he looks sharp and ready for action.

Next to him, walking through the array of flashing lights on the casino floor, Nick looks much more casual.

A SCREAM goes up from an OLD LADY nearby winning a jackpot. Cyrus seems startled by everything-- to Nick it's all white noise.

CYRUS KINNICK

I hadn't realized the Grand was so big.

NICK

The noise bothers people sometimes. It's actually a lot quieter than usual because of the holidays.

CYRUS KINNICK

I don't mind noise.

They walk further, looking at the action.

NICK

Silver Spoon is smaller, just down the block.

CYRUS KINNICK

But my *suite* is here...

NICK

Don't worry. They'll let you back in.

CYRUS KINNICK

By all means then.

Cyrus turns and heads toward the exit. Nick studies him as he walks, not sure what to make of him.

EXT. VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

In the Vegas pre-Christmas night, Cyrus Kinnick and Nick walking toward the Silver Spoon on the sidewalk. A car pulls up alongside of them a WOMAN sticks her neck out.

WOMAN

Wanna blow job?

NICK

No thank you, Katherine.

WOMAN  
 (squinting)  
 I can't see shit without my  
 glasses; that you, Nicky?

NICK  
 It is.

WOMAN  
 Well, Merry Christmas!

As she drives away:

NICK  
 Welcome to Las Vegas, Mister  
 Kinnick.

They continue on.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER SPOON LOBBY

Nick enters with Cyrus. Nick spots the lothario, Benny,  
 smooth talking a wide eyed middle-aged WOMAN at the elevator.  
 He spots Nick and is rattled.

BENNY  
 I can't wait...let's take the  
 stairs...

They head up the staircase, Benny looking over his shoulder,  
 as Nick and Cyrus enter the casino.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Seemed like he was afraid of you?

NICK  
 Never saw him before.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 So...were you in the gulf?

NICK  
 No, I stayed on the sand, it was a  
 lot drier.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Ha, that's funny.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
 I did some research on you, and,  
 among other fantastic things, I  
 read you were on the team that  
 tracked down Saddam. So...you  
 know... tell me about it.

Nick stops and stares at him. Cyrus squirms.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
 I'm an open book, ask me anything  
 you want.

Nick, expressionless, doesn't blink.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
 Okay, okay, you don't want to talk,  
 that's not what I hired you for.  
 But are you always so touchy?  
 (no reply)  
 You're a violent man, aren't you?

NICK  
 No. I'm not. I don't like  
 violence.  
 (beat)  
 I'm just good at it.

Cyrus walks into the casino. After a beat, Nick follows.

INT. SILVER SPOON CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus is a tiny bit disappointed-- It's considerably smaller,  
 less glitzy and glamorous than the Grand.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 This is where we want to be? I  
 mean, there's not a secret door to  
 a nicer, say, less rundown place?

NICK  
 I've been looking for that door my  
 whole life, kid; haven't found it.

A COCKTAIL WAITRESS walks up. Nick gives her a nod.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Can I get a Fuji water?  
 (to Nick)  
 You knock the bottles over, they  
 don't roll away.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
 Nicky?

NICK  
 Finlandia, double...In a square  
 glass so it doesn't roll away.

Cyrus laughs at Nick. The Waitress walks away.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Well. I'm going to hit the craps  
 table.

NICK  
 The hundred dollar tables are back  
 there.

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Yeah, but-- I can make a greater  
 number of smaller bets at the five  
 dollar table.

Nick tries to hide his aggravation. If this has been a bad  
 day for Nick, it's just turned unendurable.

NICK  
 Sounds like a winning system.  
 (beat)  
 I got your back.

CUT TO:

THE CRAPS TABLE - LATER

Cyrus is having a great time, and having a congenial time  
 with his FELLOW LOW LIMIT GAMBLERS at the table. Cyrus  
 spreads out TEN single chip sucker bets-- multiple hardway  
 and proposition bets-- before each roll.

Nick is watching from a seat at an empty blackjack nearby,  
 looking bored and disgusted.

He rubs his forehead and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - NIGHT

The wind chimes rattle furiously.

Nick, in his light shirt and pants looks to the side. In the  
 rice paddy, calf deep in water, stands Danny DeMarco.

He has Holly by the hair, and plunges her under the water. It is a totally unsettling distortion of his normal fantasy sequence.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER SPOON CASINO - PRESENT

Nick, now on edge, opens his eyes sharply, still surrounded by laughter, bells and buzzing.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
I've got to say, Nick....

He turns-- CASSANDRA, 20's, in uniform, has taken the dealer's position at the table. She is terribly appealing, not so much a knockout as this: There's just something decent and clean about her.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
I've seen you happier.

NICK  
It's because I'm about to make a very bad decision.

CASSANDRA  
If you know it's bad, why don't you stop yourself?

He looks at her as if she's said something profound.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick is bent over the sink, splashing water on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. CROESUS HOTEL LOBBY - FLASHBACK

An extreme close-up of the corner of Danny's mouth curling into a smile.

INT. CASINO MEN'S ROOM - PRESENT

Nick looks in the mirror, water running off of his face.

We follow Nick as he pulls open the door. The door starts to close on a very slow HYDRAULIC. It gives Nick time to plug a quarter into a pay phone and dial.

NICK  
Holly...It's Nick again....I think  
we should see about that apology.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - CRAPS TABLE

Cyrus Kinnick BLOWS IN HIS HAND and tosses the dice. He yells triumphantly, really getting into it, even though just a couple of his bets pay and the rest are swept off the board.

Nick walks over from the rest room area, looking more serious than we've seen him.

He taps Kinnick's shoulder before the next roll.

NICK  
We're quits, okay?

CYRUS KINNICK  
(stunned)  
But I intend on gambling for hours--

NICK  
You're safe in the casino, Kinnick;  
nobody'll mug you in the casino and  
outside they've got these yellow  
things called taxicabs, just get in  
one and you'll be back at the Grand  
in half a minute, safe and sound.  
Goodbye, Kinnick.

Nick strides out of the casino, leaving Cassandra curious, and Kinnick astonished. He looks at Cassandra.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Where's he going? Did he say  
anything?

CASSANDRA  
Wherever he's going, it's someplace  
he shouldn't.

Kinnick looks genuinely concerned.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

A lonely, raggedy SALVATION ARMY SANTA rings a bell for donations.

A MAN'S HAND offers a hundred dollar bill. Santa stops ringing his bell and looks up.

CUT TO:

A WIDESCREEN TV

The DENTAL TORTURE SCENE in MARATHON MAN plays with Lawrence Olivier asking Dustin Hoffman: "Is it safe?"

CUT TO:

INT. SUITE 3906, CROESUS HOTEL - NIGHT

It is an amazing suite with a spectacular view of the strip. It is 2 a.m.

Tiel and Kinlaw, Danny DeMarco's two beefy blonde bodyguards are sprawled out on a huge sectional watching the movie. There are sounds of SEX coming from one of the bedrooms, where the man is definitely having more fun than the WOMAN who seems like she's in pain.

Asleep on the sectional, a drugged up, scantily clad PROSTITUTE. There is ANOTHER PROSTITUTE in the kitchen raiding the mini-bar.

KINLAW

He should just tell him it's safe,  
then kick his ass...

Tiel looks at Kinlaw with contempt-- it's obvious that Tiel is the smarter of the two, and that they hate each other.

A DOOR CHIME sounds. Tiel nods for the subservient Kinlaw to get it-- Kinlaw grumbles to himself as he gets up and goes over.

Kinlaw looks out the peephole.

CUT TO:

## PEEPHOLE

It is foggy and distorted. A man stands outside the door, in a Santa Hat and Coat.

CUT TO:

## THE SUITE

Kinlaw stares out, not know what to make of it.

KINLAW

Some guy in a Santa hat.

TIEL

(not looking back)

Well-- See what he wants.

Tiel opens the door. It's Nick, looking non-threatening. Besides the SANTA COAT and HAT, he's wearing completely different clothes: tight pants and a tight shirt, lizard boots with a large GOLD OCTAGON hanging down on his chest.

NICK

I'm here to see Danny DeMarco.

KINLAW

About?

NICK

I have a present for him.

(beat)

Friend of Baby.

KINLAW

He's busy.

He slams the door on Nick.

TIEL

You out of your mind? Slam the door on a friend of Baby's?

Kinlaw shrugs. Tiel walks over and Kinlaw backs away.

TIEL (CONT'D)

Baby doesn't just run the Croesus,  
he runs the town--

Tiel opens the door. Nick is standing calmly where he was before.

TIEL (CONT'D)  
You know Baby?

NICK  
Fifteen years.

TIEL  
What's this about?

NICK  
Girl.

KINLAW  
He said he had a present.

TIEL  
He likes them thin and pretty.

NICK  
You just described her.

TIEL  
Where is she?

NICK  
In my sled on the roof.

Tiel chuckles, then motions Nick in and shuts the door.

TIEL  
Pat him down and watch him.

Tiel walks across the living room to the hallway off the bedrooms.

Kinlaw gives Nick a thorough pat-down.

INT. SUITE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tiel steps to the open bedroom and stops in his tracks.

ANOTHER PROSTITUTE  
(garbled)  
I love you...so much...

Tiel looks away, then knocks on the door frame.

ON THE BED

The Prostitute is blonde, wearing a torn teddy. He is on her back on the bed with her head tipped back over the side.

Her MASCARA is all over her cheeks and Danny's gun is in her mouth.

Danny is standing near her, holding the gun in her mouth. He wears a hotel robe, and has on pants, fly open. He looks over at Tiel.

DANNY DEMARCO  
That sound convincing?

TIEL  
What I could make out of it...

Danny takes the gun from her mouth, and she takes a very deep gulp of air.

TIEL (CONT'D)  
Guy out there, friend of Baby's.

Danny puts the gun in his robe pocket. He takes a wad of bills from his pants pocket and drops it on the prostitute's stomach.

DANNY DEMARCO  
Take your sister with you.

He doesn't have to ask twice. The other Prostitute is off the bed, grabbing her dress and shoes.

INT. SUITE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kinlaw is standing between Nick and the rest of the room. Nick sees the Prostitute, hair tangled and eyes smeared black, hurry out of the bedroom with an armful of clothes.

She shakes the Prostitute strewn on the couch, barely able to rouse her.

ANOTHER PROSTITUTE  
Let's go, Shel--

She nearly drags her to her feet and they hurry out past Kinlaw and Nick as Tiel and Danny exit the bedroom area.

DANNY DEMARCO  
You search him?

Tiel looks at Kinlaw who gives a short nod.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Check the hat?

Kinlaw looks caught with his pants down. Of course-- the perfect place to hide a weapon.

Tiel comes over, pulls the hat off, and turns it inside out-- nothing. He tosses it aside.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 Sorry about that, Santy Claus.  
 Can't be too careful these days...

Danny makes himself CHUCKLE.

The smile makes Nick flinch-- but he remains steady.

Danny goes to the bar and pours himself a drink.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 Drink?

NICK  
 No thanks.

DANNY DEMARCO  
 So...what does Baby want from me now?

NICK  
 I'm not here for Baby.

Tiel and Kinlaw keep a close eye on Nick. Danny comes closer, sitting on the back edge of a couch. Danny shrugs for Nick to say what's on his mind.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Last night... a friend of mine was shown some disrespect... and I thought, you know, maybe you might do something to make it okay.

DANNY DEMARCO  
 Me? Disrespect? To a lady?  
 (to his men)  
 Any of this ring a bell?

KINLAW  
 No sir--

TIEL  
 (overlapping)  
 Not to me--

NICK

The friend of mine, she told me you inserted a weapon, a pistol, in her private parts and frightened her bad.

DeMarco is beginning to enjoy himself as his hand slips into the robe pocket where he has his gun.

Kinlaw and Tiel circle around so they're behind Nick and between him and the door.

DANNY DEMARCO

Oh, no, no, no, Santy--

NICK

Nick.

DANNY DEMARCO

I hope I'm not on the naughty list for that. That's not disrespect, Nick, that's a game. We were having a party.

Nick is aware of the men behind him.

NICK

What happened after wasn't so nice either -- she was pretty banged up.

DANNY DEMARCO

(to Tiel and Kinlaw)  
Is he talking about us?

TIEL

Absolutely not--

KINLAW

(overlapping)  
Not us, Mister DeMarco.

DANNY DEMARCO

They're lying, Nick.

NICK

I assumed as much.

DeMarco goes to the window and stares out at the Strip-- the incredible array of neon.

DANNY DEMARCO

So how much is this going to cost me?

NICK

She doesn't want money, she's--

DANNY DEMARCO

Nonsense. She's a whore. Whores want money, that's why they're called whores instead of--

NICK

No, she--

DANNY DEMARCO

It's best not to interrupt me, Nick.

NICK

Yes sir.

DANNY DEMARCO

She's a whore. You're her pimp. She did her job, you're doing yours-- I get that.

He turns back around and walks toward Nick.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

But Nick, between you and me-- I mean, look at the way you dress, not even the Santa suit, the rest of us-- I mean, there's nothing lower than a pimp.

NICK

I like to think I'm in the people business.

DANNY DEMARCO

(laughing)

The "people" business -- I never heard it called that before--

(staring at Nick)

Are you from fucking Mars?

Nick very carefully puts his hand to his pocket-- the Guards flinch, but don't touch him.

He slowly takes two credit cards from his pocket.

NICK

I'm legit, Mister DeMarco -- look -- see? Credit cards, Visa, American Express, they're mine.

DANNY DEMARCO  
(shaking his head)  
You are from Mars.

He goes back behind a desk to one side of the room. He opens a desk drawer and takes out a packet of money.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
Twenty thousand. Will that cover  
the disrespect?

NICK  
You're very generous--

DANNY DEMARCO  
-- And you're very stupid.

He pushes the money back into the drawer, and takes the gun out of his robe, looking it over, touching it tenderly.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
You probably know what this  
is...and where it's been?

Danny laughs a little and slowly points the gun at Nick.

NICK  
Let me just leave.

Danny puts the gun down on the desk.

DANNY DEMARCO  
Oh, you're gonna leave, Nick; the  
question is what kind of shape are  
you going to be in when you--

NICK  
Look, here's what happened--

DANNY DEMARCO  
Didn't I tell you something about  
interrupting me?

NICK  
Yes, sir.

DANNY DEMARCO  
You remember what?

NICK  
You said it was best not to do.

DANNY DEMARCO

Riiiiiiight.

Tiel and Kinlaw, behind Nick, give each other a flicking glance-- an attack on Nick is imminent, and they're ready.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

See, if I'm sweet to you Nick, if I let you walk out free as air, I'd want people to know how sweet I am. So you tell me. Now. Be honest, Nick -- talk to me about my good qualities, and if I believe you, you're free as air.

Nick seems more frightened now than we've seen him.

NICK

You're a great man, Mister DeMarco -  
- a peach of a guy -- you're the best, a genuine top of the line human being.

DeMarco is really enjoying it.

DANNY DEMARCO

Am I as terrible as all that?  
(shaking his head)  
You failed so far, Nick, but I'll give you one more shot -- Go on. Talk about me. I'm waiting.

Nick rubs his forehead, closing his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - NIGHT

It is still beautiful, even though TORRENTIAL RAIN IS POURING down.

Nick walks along a path adjacent to the Paddy. She finds Holly, naked and strewn on the bank.

DANNY DEMARCO (V.O.)

--The fuck you thinking about?

CUT TO:

NICK - PRESENT

He opens his eyes, looking at Danny. His voice is low. His body is still.

NICK  
This place I like to dream  
about.... it relaxes me...

DANNY DEMARCO  
You're crazy.

NICK  
This has just been another game  
you've been playing with me, hasn't  
it? Like all your other games?

DANNY DEMARCO  
Goodbye, Nick.

Danny's had enough of him. He gives his men the NOD.

NICK  
Only this time you were playing  
with me.

And on those words--

A LONG SHOT OF THE FOUR MEN, FROZEN. This is the instant before the explosion of violence and what we see is this: NICK, with TIEL in front of him, KINLAW right behind, turns for the door.

DEMARCO, expectantly, sits at the desk.

NOW -- THE CAMERA MOVES IN VERY CLOSE ON:

KINLAW, the giant behind Nick.

The action resumes and as he reaches inside his jacket pocket for his pistol, there is a double sound: something hard rockets into bone and KINLAW involuntarily grunts.

Now for a second he stands there frozen, color draining.

And in the next second (as action resumes) he begins to SCREAM and SCREAM. We don't know why or what's going on in the rest of the room, we're only seeing Kinlaw, who now starts to fold.

From another part of the room comes the cry of "SHIT" and Nick moves into view, keeping KINLAW up, bringing Kinlaw's arms around his body so that his back is pressed tight against Kinlaw's front.

And Nick drops his head at an angle to his chest as DEMARCO yells, "STOP HIM."

With a terrible crunching sound, Nick snaps his head into Kinlaw's face, shattering the nose, the cheekbone, and sending blood flying.

Nick releases Kinlaw, moves out of view as Kinlaw begins to fold as from somewhere else in the room is the anguished shriek of "GODDAMMIT, GODDAMMIT."

Kinlaw, in a stupor, hits the floor as the sound of another offscreen blow is heard along with a GASP that follows.

Kinlaw on the floor begins to roll around like a wounded animal, one hand going for his kneecap, the other for his face.

He rolls around as a SHOT EXPLODES but he's so deep into his own TROUBLES HE DOESN'T REACT. He continues to writhe on the floor as another GUNSHOT is heard -- except he doesn't hear much of anything. He's rolling and moaning and now another SOUND comes, it could be anything, but it's probably a skull connecting with something very hard.

There is the sound of general suffering in the room now. Kinlaw keeps writhing. Now, from Kinlaw on the floor --

CUT TO:

THE LONG SHOT OF THE FOUR MEN FROM A FEW SECONDS BEFORE.

THIS TIME -- THE CAMERA MOVES IN VERY CLOSE ON:

Tiel, the giant in front of Nick, and we'll see the same scene played out from an angle on him.

He is reaching for his gun as he starts for the door when a double sound comes from behind him: SOMETHING HITTING BONE and a LOUD GRUNT from Kinlaw.

He begins to turn to see what the hell's going on back there.

Now as Kinlaw begins to scream and scream he increases the speed of his turn and the move for the gun.

As he completes the turn, a hand appears to the right of his face, a hand carrying CREDIT CARDS and the CARDS RIP TIEL'S FACE across the forehead and instantly there is a curtain of blood in front of his eyes. The hand with the credit cards is gone.

Unable to see, Tiel starts screaming, "SHIT."

Now DEMARCO'S voice going "STOP HIM," is heard and Tiel wouldn't mind doing that except the blood will not stop pouring down in front of his eyes.

Tiel swipes helplessly at his eyes, the gun out but useless, and he SWEARS but that's useless, too.

And now from nowhere a fist appears, a fist with a pointed RED RING, and the fist slams into Tiel's Adam's apple and he gasps, his hands go to his throat, his voice box gone.

THE HAND with the ring is no longer visible.

There is the sound of a GUNSHOT, but it's not Tiel's gun-- it's useless to him now and helplessly he lets it fall to the floor.

Tiel begins to stagger.

And now Tiel follows the gun down, falling to the floor himself, unable to breathe well or see or anything else.

Another GUNSHOT. Tiel couldn't care less. He continues to roll on the floor, the blood soaking the rug beneath his head. He keeps on rolling around as if that might help. But nothing can help. Now what's probably a skull connects with something very hard.

Tiel couldn't care less. There is the sound of general suffering in the room now. Tiel keeps writhing. Now from Tiel on the floor--

CUT TO:

THE LONG SHOT OF THE FOUR MEN FROM A FEW SECONDS BEFORE.  
THIS TIME THE CAMERA MOVIES IN VERY CLOSE ON:

DEMARCO. He sits at his desk.

Now as the double sound of the BONE CRUNCH and the GRUNT take place, DeMarco blinks.

And sits there. And then as Kinlaw starts screaming, DeMarco's eyes go wide in disbelief.

He starts to stand. He's up as he hears Tiel screaming "SHIT."

And now DEMARCO screams something himself: "STOP HIM."

There is a crunching sound as he fumbles for the gun on the desk.

His hands still don't have it as "GODDAMMIT, GODDAMMIT," comes from TIEL.

HIS HANDS grip the gun as another blow echoes and Tiel GASPS.

Now the gun is up. DeMarco FIRES. There is a moment of recoil.

He FIRES again. A second shot. A second recoil.

Then a LARGE GOLD OCTAGONALLY SHAPED PIECE OF JEWELRY creams him in the mouth; both sides of his mouth start to BLEED, the power of the throw and the weight of the jewelry take away DeMarco's balance.

-- DEMARCO falls backwards over the desk chair.

Now his skull careens into the wall and his eyes go up into his head and stunned, he begins to join in the audible suffering in the room. But Tiel and Kinlaw were writhing. DeMarco, semiconscious, is still. Now from DeMarco on the floor--

CUT TO:

THE LONG SHOT OF THE FOUR MEN FROM A FEW SECONDS BEFORE. AND THIS TIME THE CAMERA MOVES IN VERY CLOSE ON:

NICK ESCALANTE. With no warning whatsoever, he snap-kicks his sharp heeled right lizard boot straight into the kneecap of Kinlaw behind him and KINLAW GRUNTS --

Nick leaves him for the moment, moving toward Tiel, raising his right hand with the credit cards held tight.

He moves his right hand further across his body as behind him now comes KINLAW'S SCREAM.

Now with all the strength he has he slashes the cards across the stunned and suddenly bleeding back of Tiel.

And now he moves faster than before, backward to Kinlaw who is about to fold and would if Nick didn't grab him, hold him upright as TIEL cries "SHIT."

Now it is DeMarco's turn to cry out: "STOP HIM," but Nick pays no attention, simply drops his chin at an angle down to his chest.

The head is heavy and the skull is hard, but not the face and Nick crashes his head into Kinlaw's face, the crunching sound is very loud.

And so is TIEL's shriek of "GODDAMMIT," as Nick takes his fastest move yet, and as he does, he brings his right fist back, the fist with the round and sharp red ring and--

-- the blow to the Adam's apple destroys Tiel's voice box, but Nick doesn't take much time to think about it, instead, he launches into a dive.

Now there is a gunshot as with right arm he yanks off the heavy gold medallion from around his neck, lands on his left shoulder and starts to roll up.

Nick's on one knee as the second shot EXPLODES. Tiel and Kinlaw are making terrible sounds but they might as well be on the moon for all the attention he pays them.

Now he backhands the octagon toward DeMarco, fires the thing with tremendous power. He stays on one knee as the sound of the gold landing is heard. Now he starts to stand.

And now he's on his feet as DeMarco's skull collides with the wall. Now from Nick standing there--

THE SAME ACTION we've seen from an angle on each person, except this time--

We're high, looking down as the THREE MEN start the move toward the door and DeMarco, so unaware of what's about to happen, watches from behind the desk.

And it goes so fast -- fast and it keeps getting faster --

-- Nick is like a machine, all so perfectly grooved, the snap kick to the knee, the slash across the forehead, the angled skull blow to Kinlaw's face, the voice box blow that finishes Tiel, then the dive, as DeMarco fires and fires again, but each time too slow, each shot landing behind Nick --

-- And now the octagon is in the air and DeMarco's mouth starts bleeding and over the back of the chair he goes and it's done and --

Nick, standing there, perspiring lightly, looking around at the helpless figures on the floor. He closes his eyes briefly--

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - DAY

The gloom is gone-- and Nick is alone again, basking in the sunlight.

CUT TO:

INT. CROESUS HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

A woman's hand rings the door bell on Suite 3906.

After a few moments, Nick opens the door. He no longer has on the Santa coat.

The woman is Holly-- she's wearing a kerchief and big sunglasses to cover the bruises on her face. She lowers the glasses and looks at Nick expectantly. He nods for her to enter.

As the door opens, she can see Tiel and Kinlaw tied on their sides, back to back on the floors. They don't move a whole lot. Their guns, disassembled, are in a trash can.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

When Holly enters she can see DeMarco sitting tied to the desk chair in his robe. She takes off the sunglasses and kerchief and puts them in her PURSE.

HOLLY

That's him.

NICK

Jesus, it better be, or he's got one hell of a lawsuit.

She walks slowly up to Danny and looks him in the eye.

HOLLY

Remember me?

He's still cocky even though his mouth is swollen and caked with dried blood.

DANNY DEMARCO

Sure -- you're the party girl we played all those nice games with.

HOLLY

Right. And I had so much fun I couldn't stand that the party was over. I wanted it to go on forever.

DANNY DEMARCO

(to Nick)

You should get out while you still can.

Nick says nothing. He takes a few steps back and watches.

Holly kneels by DeMarco, opens his robe and his pants, pulling them down to his knees.

HOLLY

Doesn't the Envy of All Mankind want to come out?

DANNY DEMARCO

You know who I am?

(louder)

Do *either* of you know who I am?!

HOLLY

(smiles)

'Course. You're the party giver.

HOLLY stands, takes a step back, opens her purse and takes out the large pair of SHEARS she used on the needlepoint. She snaps them together loud --

NICK, immobile, watching--

TIEL and KINLAW, and as she makes another SNAP! with the shears they quit their moaning, stare at her and--

DEMARCO, shouting--

DANNY DEMARCO

--The fuck is she doing?

Nick watches as Holly moves back toward Danny, snipping air.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 Is this about money? Is that all  
 this is, sure it is, take it, take  
 twenty, for Christ's sake.

HOLLY  
 --What money? --

NICK  
 Twenty-K, desk drawer.

Holly opens the drawer, flips the banded bundle of cash to  
 Nick. Then.

HOLLY  
 (to DeMarco)  
 It's not a game about money. It's  
 a game about love. Remember?

Holly kneels in front of DeMarco again, snipping the shears.  
 She snips the SHEARS close to his crotch.

DANNY DEMARCO  
 (to Nick)  
 It wasn't me -- I didn't do  
 nothing. They did it, Tiel and  
 Kinlaw were the ones--

KINLAW  
 (whispering)  
 We didn't get our turn 'til  
 after...

HOLLY  
 (whirling to Kinlaw,  
 enraged)  
 Shut up!

Nick almost smiles as Kinlaw looks scared.

Holly returns her attention to DeMarco.

HOLLY (CONT'D)  
 I hope I sharpened these enough --  
 I do hope so, let's see.  
 (camera stays on her face  
 while she moves her hands  
 and we hear DeMarco's  
 panic)  
 I guess they are sharp-- see?  
 There's a little tiny cut on the  
 top of the Envy of All Mankind.  
 (MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(smile)

'Course, probably doesn't look all that little and tiny to you.

DANNY DEMARCO

... Lemme be... Jesus, you got the wrong idea... I'm really a good guy, I am...

Nick closes his eyes briefly --

CUT TO:

EXT. CRUMMY BAR - FLASHBACK

Nick pleas to Osgood, the same way

NICK

I'm sorry -- I am -- please, I'm really a good guy, don't hit me anymore, lemme be...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - PRESENT

Nick blinks the memory away. Holly continues playing with DeMarco.

HOLLY

You're not mad at me, then? Cause I sew-- I could stitch that up for you....

DANNY DEMARCO

...No...

HOLLY

Good as new...

DANNY DEMARCO

Not mad...

HOLLY

Good. 'Cause I'm not mad at you either, and I'm gonna give you the same break you gave me.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Tell me you love me and if I believe it, then you can keep it, but if I don't believe you that means you're a bad boy and bad boys must be punished so The Envy of All Mankind will have to go away with me.

DANNY DEMARCO

I love you.

HOLLY

(to Nick)

I don't think that sounded very sincere, do you?

NICK

This is your show.

Again the sound of the sheers.

HOLLY

Last chance.

DeMarco breathes harder, his skin going pale. Tiel and Kinlaw are shocked as they see him start to CRY.

DANNY DEMARCO

I fucking love ya, I love ya, I just love...

(voice hoarse now)

...Love... please, shit, I made a little mistake, anyone can make a little mistake, don't, don't...

He looks like he'll pass out.

NICK

That was pretty good. Let's get going.

She looks back at Nick and sighs, then looks back at DeMarco.

HOLLY

You were so sincere, crying like a baby, I feel bad about that cut now...

DeMarco faints, CHIN DROPPING DOWN ON HIS CHEST.

Holly opens her purse and drops in the SCISSORS.

Holly, pleased with herself, walks out, with withering looks for Tiel and Kinlaw.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Coming?

Nick doesn't move.

NICK

I need a second...

HOLLY

I'll hold the elevator for you?

Nick holds a FINGER against Tiel's throat and presses slightly. Tiel gasps for air, wide-eyed.

NICK

You follow us or even ask about us,  
I'll find you and kill you with one  
finger.

He presses to make his point.

NICK (CONT'D)

Understand?

Tiel nods. Kinlaw nods, too, as hard as he can.

Nick pulls the drape cord off of Tiel's wrist. It's enough for Tiel to get out of in a few minutes.

Tiel confused and subservient, nods meekly.

Nick walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Holly is holding the door open. Nick leaves the room, gets in the mirrored elevator with her, and the door closes. Holly gets out the money.

HOLLY

This is for you.

NICK

No thanks.

HOLLY

At least take half?

NICK

You're going to need it. You've got to get out of town. Tonight.

HOLLY

I know; I spent the last few hours packing, without regret I might add, 'cause I'm heading straight from here to--

NICK

Don't tell me. If I don't know, I can't tell anyone.

HOLLY

(suddenly worried)

You're not staying, are you?

Nick doesn't answer.

NICK

You knew damned well they'd come after us.

HOLLY

So did you.

Nick looks at her, knowing she's right. He looks away and shake his head.

The elevator opens.

LOBBY

Holly and Nick walk casually across the Lobby.

HOLLY

This is a chance for you, Nick. You always talk about leaving Vegas, maybe this is the push you need?

CUT TO:

EXT. CROESUS HOTEL

DECK THE HALLS blares over a tinny speaker in the background. Nick walks Holly to her car. She gets in. He looks anxious.

HOLLY

You could have killed them. No one would have known it was you.

NICK

I'd know.

(beat)

Blah-dee-blah. Right?

She laughs a little and he nods to her. She drives away. Nick watches the car disappear, then lowers his head and walks away.

CUT TO:

A BOTTLE OF FINLANDIA

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT. TINY VEGAS APARTMENT

Nick, showered, a towel around his waist, pouring himself a double. He takes a sip; tastes good. He downs the glass, refills it. He pulls on pants and a T-shirt.

He fills another glass and downs that.

CUT TO:

NICK'S BED

Nick falls back on the bed.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA - DAY

Nick falls back onto a grassy hill. He hears a CHILD laughing and opens his eyes.

It is a young BLIND GIRL. She smiles in Nick's general direction and reaches out her hand for him.

He waves his hand in front of her face to test that she's really blind. He stares at her, intrigued, then takes her hand.

Nick is led out of the sunlight to a murky swamp. The girl points out into the water and says something in CHINESE.

Nick walks out and finds a GOLD COIN on top of the muck. He looks back at the girl-- she's no longer looking in his direction. He reaches down under the water and feels around. TO his surprise he brings up HUGE HANDFULS of gold coins.

In his dream he hears TAP, TAP, TAP and looks around. There is quiet, and then TAP, TAP....

INT. NICK'S BED - EARLY MORNING

...TAP. Nick sits up suddenly-- it's a quarter after five.

He hears the tapping again-- it's at his back window. He opens the curtain...

OSGOOD'S FACE, covered in blood.

Nick stares a moment in disbelief. Osgood slides down out of view, leaving blood smeared on the glass. Nick bolts for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. AREA BEHIND NICK'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

It is a secluded empty lot, covered in weeds. Nick rushes around the corner-- spots Osgood on his hands and knees.

NICK

Oz...

Nick kneels and holds Osgood up, moving him back to sit against the wall.

He's a mess-- mostly his head is bloody, but it's on his clothes and hands, too. He looks like he's been beaten to a pulp.

OSGOOD

They're looking for you, Nick... I don't know who you pissed off...but they want you dead...

NICK

What happened?

OSGOOD

Big bastards...

NICK

Two blonde guys?

OSGOOD

No. Three thugs...all of them  
dark...

Different guys...Nick is concerned.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)

They had me pulled out of the  
pit...brought the employees into a  
room six at a time...asked if we  
knew "Nick" and described you.

In pain as he laughs.

OSGOOD (CONT'D)

I must've had a tell. I didn't  
make a sound, but they yanked me  
out of the line... They worked me  
over...I still didn't say...

(beat)

I owed you, Nick. Now we're even.

NICK

Yeah...I guess DD got a pretty good  
guy at that...

(beat)

You got a phone? Let's get you an  
ambulance...

Osgood nods to his pocket. Nick takes out the phone, and it  
takes him a few seconds to figure it out.

OSGOOD

Someone said they started at the  
Croesus before they got to the  
Caesar's. They're going from  
casino to casino... You got to get  
out...

Osgood passes out. Nick feels his pulse.

NICK

(on phone)

I need an ambulance behind 419  
Baker Drive... man, badly beaten...  
get a move on it...

He puts the phone into Osgood's hand and looks at him with  
sympathy, then walks back around the building.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER SPOON CASINO - DAWN

Vacuums roll across the carpets as the casino is nearly empty. It's early morning-- time for the CLEANING CREW, as this is as close to "closed" as this place gets.

Cyrus Kinnick CHEERS his roll at the crap table. He's surrounded by a couple of late night/early morning stragglers who have watched an impressive run. They ad lib ENCOURAGEMENT for him to keep going.

CYRUS KINNICK  
That's it for me guys....

Cyrus takes a few congratulations from the others and walks away from the table with a half rack of chips.

We follow him toward the cashier, but he sees NICK, sitting alone in the nearly empty BAR that looks out into the casino. Nick is drinking, staring out into space.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
Hey!

Cyrus approaches. Nick is surprised to see Cyrus-- even more surprised to see the half rack of chips.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
Thought you left-- I was worried about you.

NICK  
You were worried about *me*?  
(beat, looking at chips)  
Why'd you buy so many chips?

CYRUS KINNICK  
I didn't buy them. I won them.

Nick is too stunned to speak.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
You really brought me luck.  
(off his dull stare)  
Not a bad night?  
(to a sitting waitress)  
Fuji water.

NICK  
You won twelve grand on hard ways and prop bets?

CYRUS KINNICK  
 Twelve thousand...three hundred  
 forty. Yeah.

Nick nods, gets up and walks to the casino.

CASINO

Nick walks over to Cassandra's empty table, where she is shuffling cards and placing them in the shoe.

In the background, we can see Cyrus in the almost empty casino, cashing in at the CASHIER.

CASSANDRA  
 Hey. Up early or back late?

NICK  
 Friend of mine left town, we had  
 kind of a going away thing.

CASSANDRA  
 Sounds sweet.

NICK  
 Some of us enjoyed it more than  
 others. How much longer you on  
 this shift.

CASSANDRA  
 (checking her phone)  
 Ten minutes.

NICK  
 I'll keep you company-- maybe make  
 enough to make a run for it.

Nick is calm, almost glib, and she's sure he's kidding.

CASSANDRA  
 The stake you're always talking  
 about? That quarter million?

NICK  
 That quarter million.

CASSANDRA  
 I got to tell you-- You did  
 something for me once... so believe  
 this-- I'm the one killing people  
 tonight, Nicky. Try another table  
 or bet small.

Nick holds up a hundred dollar bill.

NICK

I had three of these just this morning-- yesterday, I guess. I tipped one to Roxy. I gave one to Santa.

(putting down the bill)

One chip.

Cassandra sighs, wanting to push it back, but her PIT BOSS, a few tables away is watching her. She deals. Her up card is a king. He has a ten and a nine.

CASSANDRA

What is it?

NICK

I've a got nineteen and you've got a ten showing-- except I know something. Your down card is another picture card which makes twenty so my nineteen is shit.

CASSANDRA

(incredulous)

You want to hit nineteen, Nicky?

NICK

I'll tell you why -- because there's a weight on my shoulder now, luck's riding on my shoulder now -- it's happening.

Nick, close-up.

NICK (CONT'D)

I've got to go for the throat, Cass, because of all the people in all the casinos in all the world, luck's come camping on me. So yes, I want to hit my nineteen, and I'd like a two, a two is twenty-one and means I win, my two please, Cass.

Cassandra turns the next card: a TWO.

CASSANDRA

Jesus.

Cyrus comes wandering over from the background, not getting too close, but amused, watching. Nick lets his winning ride.

NICK

Deal.

She does, he wins, he lets it ride.

NICK (CONT'D)

Deal.

(he wins again)

Deal.

(a black jack)

Deal.

He holds on twelve. She busts with a picture card.

She changes his chips for larger chips but gets a nod from the Pit Boss.

CASSANDRA

Take care, Nicky.

An OLD, SQUINTY-EYED DEALER takes her place. Nick studies him. The pit Boss gives him new decks and takes the old shoe.

HOTSHOT DEALER

You playing?

NICK

No, you got mean eyes --

He grabs his chips and heads back to the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO BAR - A LITTLE LATER

Nick walks in and Kinnick is pleased to see him.

CYRUS KINNICK

How'd you do?

NICK

I had luck riding with me but then they changed dealers and --

(stops suddenly)

Asshole!

(to Cyrus)

Not you -- me -- how do I know it's gone...?

He spins and hurries out of the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO

Nick is at the table with the Hotshot dealer. Nick sits, bets two chips, gets a blackjack.

NICK  
 (stunned)  
 It's stronger.  
 (to the dealer)  
 Give me a chip box, please.

The Dealer hesitates.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Just give me one.

The Dealer reaches comes out with a wooden box, empty, with four rows, each of which will hold twenty-five chips.

HOTSHOT DEALER  
 Ten thousand Limit.

Nick splits his chips to two spots, and wins both hands on the first deal. Curious STRAGGLERS in the casino start to make their way over. The angry Pit Boss hovers.

NICK  
 Can I raise it?

PIT BOSS  
 No.

NICK  
 I got time.

Nick spreads his bets over five spaces.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - THE CHIP BOX.

He's got a couple of chip boxes; two columns full on the second and is starting on a third.

NICK  
 (counting)  
 Twenty....twenty-five....  
 (MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
 (he takes out twenty-five  
 thousand, starts to bet--  
 then pulls back)

No.

(looking at the dealer)  
 I'm not greedy, you've gotta win  
 sometime--

And he bets one single yellow chip - a hundred dollars.

The Hotshot Dealer has a blackjack and wins the lone chip.

PIT BOSS  
 (furious)  
 What the fuck is this?

NICK  
 Retribution....and watch your  
 mouth.

CUT TO:

THE CHIP BOXES

Damn near full.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

THE STRAGGLERS AROUND THE TABLE. Kinnick is behind Nick's  
 shoulder.

Nick is in control -- he has four bets on the table, ten  
 thousand each. The Dealer has an eight showing.

NICK  
 I stand. If I win, I'm over two  
 hundred and fifty grand.

HOTSHOT DEALER  
 (turning over his down  
 card-- a ten)  
 Pay nineteen.

He reaches for Nick's hands:

THE FIRST HAND. NINETEEN.

Now the second. Twenty.

And the third. Twenty.

Fourth and last and was there ever any doubt? A big fat  
 twenty.

THE PIT BOSS - He mouths the words "son of a goddam bitch."

NICK. He stands.

NICK  
Two hundred and fifty-eight  
thousand isn't exactly a round  
number, but I'm not one to quibble.

The Stragglers applaud. Kinnick pats his back.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Incredible-- can I buy you a drink?

NICK  
No.  
(of Kinnick's  
disappointment)  
On a night like this, I do the  
buying.

CUT TO:

THE BAR

The Waitress takes their order.

NICK  
Fuji?

CYRUS KINNICK  
Finlandia. Two.

NICK  
Doubles.

Nick looks at the chip boxes as the Waitress goes for their drinks.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I'm finally getting out. Ten free  
years. I've been dreaming that  
since forever-- twenty-five grand a  
year, I can live like a king in  
Asia....

CYRUS KINNICK  
I guess you don't like Vegas?

NICK

You're not supposed to like Vegas.  
It's just a virus people catch  
sometimes.

CYRUS KINNICK

(beat)

I have a confession-- I've read  
everything there is about you on  
the internet-- Saudi Arabia,  
Afghanistan...the Somalian  
pirates... I've been in awe of you  
for years now. You're like-- the  
guy who can't lose.

Nick thinks about it, amused by Kinnick's unsullied  
confidence in him.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)

A while back in Boston I saw this  
old man walking and he had a sign  
on his back and it said, "Please  
don't hit me"....

(remembering)

And my first thought was, "What a  
sad thing"...

(louder)

But then I got so fucking mad  
because I realized that was going  
to be me when I got old, a nut  
scared of the world. That's why I  
looked you up. To teach me...

NICK

Teach you what, for chrissakes?

CYRUS KINNICK

Anything. Everything. I want you  
to kill the fear I live with every  
day. I want to do something brave  
before I die, I want to be you.

NICK

What do your friends call you?

CYRUS KINNICK

I always wanted to be called "Ace"  
or "Duke" but Cyrus is the only  
thing anyone's ever called me.

Nick nods slowly, then downs his Finlandia.

NICK  
Listen Duke....

Cyrus is chilled at the sound of the nickname.

NICK (CONT'D)  
You're a twenty-year-old  
billionaire. You don't have the  
right to want to "be" anyone else.  
Other people?-- They all want to be  
*you*.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Twenty-two.  
(off Nick's blank stare)  
I'm a twenty-two year  
old...billionaire.

NICK  
Point is... there is nothing I can  
teach you. There's nothing I have  
that you need.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Not true. You want to know how I  
won these chips?  
(pleased)  
Just being around you gave me  
confidence, and that's my theory.  
It's not enough to *want* to win, or  
to *think* you'll win...you have to  
*know* you'll win. That's how I  
built my company. That's how I  
played tonight. That's how you  
played, too.

Nick thinks about it, and as he looks at it, glances at his  
chip racks, no longer satisfied.

NICK  
You're right, Duke. I should have  
kept going.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Kept?...What? No, I didn't say  
that! You won, you've got to--

NICK  
(lost in thought)  
First few years would be fine, but  
after that I'd just realize I was  
another day closer to being back  
here.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
 I never pushed the logic, because I  
 never thought I'd be in this  
 position. Quarter million's  
 nothing. But half a million...

Cyrus shakes his head, panicked for Nick. Nick gets up.

CUT TO:

CASSIE

Back at her table which is empty. Nick sits. Cyrus comes trailing him, not happy with this turn.

NICK  
 I want to play the whole table,  
 Cass, all seven spots, and I don't  
 want a limit.

She expresses her dismay, but he stares at her.

CASSANDRA  
 I'll have to clear that.

NICK  
 Clear it.

CUT TO:

THE PIT BOX

Cassandra approaches, whispers. He looks at Nick and nods.

CUT TO:

NICK

Smiling as Cassandra returns.

CASSANDRA  
 You got it.

NICK  
 He thinks I'm gonna lose.  
 (whispering after waving  
 at the Pit Boss)  
 Asshole.

He bets a single chip. Cassie deals; she has a blackjack.

NICK (CONT'D)

Great, that's out of your system.

He bets ten thousand on each of his seven spaces. She deals herself another blackjack.

CASSANDRA

Told you, I'm a killer.

NICK

You're a pussycat, that's two blackjacks you'll never get again.

(patting his shoulder)

My friend is still riding heavy. Five me another chip box, Cass, I'm going to need it.

She gets it.

MONTAGE

NICK keeps betting--

CYRUS watches, holding his breath--

He sometimes has a dip in fortune, but he keeps building, SLOWLY-- Nick is tense, the Pit Boss is tense--

And finally he has four chip boxes full-- just over half a million.

CYRUS KINNICK

Nick...you got it...you won.

NICK

No limit, right?

CYRUS KINNICK

No, no, no....Nick, don't you see, you'll get one then you'll need two million...then ten-- you'll never stop, unless you stop. Just stop--

NICK

It's not enough.

(to the Pit Boss)

One hand, double or nothing.

Nick pushes all his chips onto one spot. A gasp from all. The Pit Boss is intrigued as he stares into Nick's eyes.

CYRUS KINNICK

Jesus, no!

NICK

I'm on a lucky streak, Duke. I  
can't lose.

Nick keeps his eyes on the Pit Boss.

NICK (CONT'D)

One hand.

Cassandra looks at him pleadingly to stop.

The Pit Boss studies Nick and finally:

PIT BOSS

Deal.

Cassandra has a ten up. Nick turns his over-- a nine and an  
eight.

NICK

We're back where we started,  
Cassandra.

Cyrus shakes his head vehemently.

NICK (CONT'D)

You got a picture card under there.  
Hit me.

The Pit boss looks relieved.

NICK (CONT'D)

Four or less. Hit me. Give me a  
four, Cass...

Cassandra turns over the card. It's a SIX. GASPS from the  
onlookers.

She turns over her down card -- another six.

CASSANDRA

If you'd just stood, Nicky. You  
would have won.

The chips are pulled away from Nick.

INT. SILVER SPOON LOBBY - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Two dark, lean muscular men, TONY and FRANK, enter with a white haired gentleman, JULIAN REEVES. Tony and Frank aren't as big as Danny's bodyguards were, but they seem a lot meaner, a lot smarter, and a lot more dangerous.

Julian is all business-- very polite, but used to getting his way.

Julian goes to the desk and signals for a female CLERK as his men stay alert.

JULIAN

My name is Julian Reeves, I'm looking for a man named Nick. Bit of an accent. Tough, very little hair. I wish I had a last name for you--

CLERK

Escalante?

Julian is pleased. He nods to one of his thugs, who turns and talks quietly into a hands-free cell.

JULIAN

Does he reside at the hotel?

CLERK

I think he lives over in Naked City.

JULIAN

Have you seen him tonight?

CLERK

Nick's here a lot-- not usually this early-- I just came on shift.

JULIAN

I'm going to need to gather your employees and speak to them. If you have a conference room available, that would be most helpful.

ANOTHER dark thug, PAUL, enters the building and join Tony and Frank.

CLERK

(nervous)

I'm not sure if I can--

JULIAN

The man I work for, Samuel DeMarco is very upset about an incident that occurred with his son Daniel. He's very close friends with the owner, if you'd like to check with him...

She dials a phone nervously.

CLERK

Jerry, it's Kath-- there's a man here who says he's a friend of Mr. Hadley's...

Julian looks in the casino and sees Nick getting condolences from the Stragglers at the blackjack table.

Julian motions the Clerk over, who puts down the phone-- shaking, she knows she's stepped into something over her head.

JULIAN

Is that gentleman Nick Escalante?

The Clerk is reluctant now, but nods.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

I won't be needing to speak to your employees after all.

And with a pleasant smile he walks into the casino, with his men behind him.

AT THE BLACKJACK TABLE

Nick is staring at his busted hand which has been left in front of him, seemingly oblivious to his surroundings

*TONY approaches from the roulette table area. He takes a knife from his pocket*

*FRANK approaches from around the slot machines. The bulge of a gun under his suit jacket.*

*IN THE REFLECTION of a nearby large SLOT, JULIAN is coming up behind him with PAUL trailing him.*

*Paul has a bulge in his jacket.*

Julian steps behind Nick. The Pit Boss senses trouble.

JULIAN  
Nick Escalante?

NICK  
(not looking back)  
Yeah.

PIT BOSS  
Not in the casino.

There are two SECURITY GUARDS in the background and they move toward the scene at the slight flick of the Pit Boss's head.

Cyrus, still beside himself at the loss, doesn't recognize the threat going on from Julian and his men.

JULIAN  
No trouble. Will you come outside  
with me, Nick?

Nick ignores him, but glances around at the closing men.

NICK  
(to Cassandra)  
It was a hell of a run, wasn't it?

Cassandra gives him a sympathetic nod.

Paul, behind Julian (who is behind Nick) pulls his gun from it's holster with a loud WHOOSH

AND NOW, OFF OF THIS WHOOSH SOUND, ANOTHER SEQUENCE, LIKE THE HOTEL SCENE, WHERE VIOLENCE ERUPTS.

We see tiny pieces of the action will fit together as the sequence is repeated, starting with:

THE FACE OF Paul BEHIND JULIAN

He's right in front of the crap table where Cyrus was playing. He looks confident and amused by Nick's loss. He grimaces as we hear him pull his gun from his holster.

The sound of CHIPS rattling and hitting the ground. Paul turns to the right to see. The sounds of someone yelling "STOP HIM" and then the sounds of wild yells from the onlookers.

Still on the face of Paul, he's turning slowly back to face Nick when there is a CRACK of wood against a jaw and then PLAYING CARDS FLY PAST THE THUGS FACE.

They haven't all fallen when he grimaces and the GUN flies up out of his hand past his head. Nick's hand reaches and grabs his neck, pulling him forward.

He stumbles and Nick's hand shoves him hard against the barely cushioned edge of the Blackjack table.

Nick's hand lets go of him and he grabs his GLASS from the table, charging past Paul.

A SMASH and a scream. Off camera, Cyrus yells "NICK!"

Followed by a GUNSHOT.

A moment later a whipping sound, followed by a grunt and a THUD.

All during this, Paul, unconscious, is dropping to the floor.

There is scuffling, and electrical sound and another THUD, then silence except for MOANS and the TINKLE OF HANDCUFFS.

CUT TO:

JULIAN'S CLOSE-UP

The WHOOSH of the gun coming out of the holster behind him.

We see Nick's hands and a rack of CHIPS being thrown off to the left, in the direction of Frank, (who was approaching from Roulette tables). The sound of chips falling and:

JULIAN YELLS: "STOP HIM," and then the sound of wild yells from the onlookers.

Julian is hit in the face with the CARD SHOE, that comes in a long arc right to his jaw. CARDS erupt from the device as the top flips in the air. Julian drops to the floor.

Julian is struggling to remain conscious as he crawls on the floor. The Thugs falling GUN and a shower of FALLING, FLUTTERING CARDS falls around him.

A glimpse of Paul as he's pulled, and the sound of his face being cracked into the Blackjack table.

A SMASH and a scream. Off camera, Cyrus yells "NICK!"

Followed by a GUNSHOT.

A moment later a whipping sound, followed by a grunt and a THUD.

There is scuffling, and electrical sound and another THUD, then silence except for MOANS and the TINKLE OF HANDCUFFS.

CUT TO:

FRANK'S CLOSE-UP

Frank hears the WHOOSH and sees Paul, off camera, pulling the gun.

He goes for his own weapon, but suddenly the tray of chips are coming at him. The sound of the chips falling around him.

The WHOOSH of the gun coming out of the holster behind him.

Offscreen, JULIAN YELLS: "STOP HIM."

Frank is suddenly JOSTLED as the straggling ONLOOKERS swarm him, going for the spilled chips.

He gets out a gun, but keeps being pushed as he tries to squeeze to an open area. The sound of Julian being hit with the card shoe, the gun falling and Paul having his face smashed into the blackjack table.

A SMASH and a scream.

Cyrus yells "NICK" as Frank squeezes off a SHOT.

A moment later Frank is hit in the NECK by a KNIFE thrown from across the room. He drops his gun and reaches for his neck, collapsing.

A moment later a whipping sound, followed by a grunt and a THUD.

There is scuffling, and electrical sound and another THUD, then silence except for MOANS and the TINKLE OF HANDCUFFS.

CUT TO:

THE SAME SEQUENCE AGAIN, THIS ONE STARTING ON:

TONY'S CLOSE-UP

We move up from the knife drawn and opened down at Tony's side. We move up to his face.

Sound of Paul behind Julian drawing his gun.

Sound of chips rattling and crashing. Julian yelling "STOP HIM" and then the sounds of wild yells from onlookers.

The sound of the wood shoe hitting Julian, and cards fluttering. The gun falling and Paul having his face smashed on the blackjack table.

Tony raises his knife and comes forward. The sound of a glass, and in a moment Nick is on top of Tony, smashing him in the face with the glass, and wrenching the knife from his hand. Tony screams.

Off screen, Cyrus yells "NICK!". Nick is still in Tony's frame and turns, looking in horror.

There is a GUNSHOT, then Nick kicks Tony away and THROWS TONY'S KNIFE at Frank.

The Thud of Frank falling. Nick charges out of frame and we see two SECURITY GUARDS rushing through the frame.

There is scuffling, and electrical sound and another THUD, then silence except for MOANS and the TINKLE OF HANDCUFFS.

CUT TO:

THE SAME SEQUENCE AGAIN, THIS TIME STARTING ON NICK:

He hears the holster, then reaches across the table for a rack of chips and flings them in Frank's direction.

Sound of JULIAN yelling "STOP HIM" and the wild yells from the onlookers.

Next to Nick, Cyrus, isn't sure what's happening or where he should go.

In the next instant, Nick grabs the card shoe and swings it all the way around, and smashes Julian in the face with it.

As cards fly, he kicks the gun out of the Thug's hand, then grabs Paul by the neck, pulls him, and smashes his face into the blackjack table.

He grabs his glass, takes two steps and smashes it in the face of the charging Tony. He grabs the knife.

He turns as he hears "NICK!"

He hears the shot and reacts in horror as Cyrus is hit.

He grabs the knife, throws it. We hear the THUD as Frank is hit and falls to the floor.

Nick moves toward Cyrus, but is suddenly hit with TWO TASER CLIPS. He's jolted, and collapses in spasms.

On the ground, his eyes are frozen open. The MOANS of the injured are heard.

A Security Guard kneels on his back and HANDCUFFS Nick's hands behind his back.

CUT TO:

ONE MORE TIME, AT AN ACCELERATED SPEED

LONGSHOT OF THE ACTION

Paul pulls his gun. Frank goes for his.

Nick grabs the chips, hurls them at Frank. Onlookers rush for the chips, jostling Frank.

Nick swings the shoe all the way around, smashing it in Julian's face. The cards fly.

Nick kicks the gun from the Thugs hand, then grabs him and drives him face first into the edge of the table.

Nick sees Tony attacking from his other side. He grabs the glass, charges into him, smashing him in the face with it, taking the knife.

Cyrus sees George aiming his gun at Nick's back. He yells "NICK" and actually steps in front of Nick, taking the bullet for him. Cyrus falls in pain.

Nick throws the knife, dropping Frank. He rushes in horror toward Cyrus, but is hit from behind by the Security Guards with their Tasers.

He falls shaking and his eyes close.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

NICK'S P.O.V.

He's looking at the drain of a bathtub as water pours down on his head.

He gasps for breath and is pulled out of the stream.

INT. DELUXE OFFICE BATHROOM - DAY

A FLUNKY pulls the newly conscious Nick from the edge of the bathtub, and tosses him, head soaked, harshly on the floor.

FLUNKY  
(calling out)  
He's awake...

Another Flunky comes in.

CUT TO:

INT. DELUXE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The two Flunkies drag the woozy Nick and plant him into a leather chair.

It is a spectacular, high floor, spacious office with a view in all four directions.

Present across from him, in two separate chairs are Julian and his boss, the squat, angry SAMMY DEMARCO. He is old school and full of carting industry anger.

Sammy's son, Danny, is reclined on the couch. He does not look good-- very pale, sitting carefully, one leg up on the couch. Yet seething and ready to shoot Nick as soon as he sees him.

The Flunkies and the Office belong to Baby, who paces the room and runs the meeting.

BABY  
Nicholas.

NICK  
Baby.

BABY  
I hear you had me down half a million over at the Silver Spoon.  
(MORE)

BABY (CONT'D)  
You gave it back, just like the  
time at the Croesus two years ago.

NICK  
Yeah. Just like that.

SAMMY DEMARCO  
Can we get on with this?!

Baby shoots Sammy a very nasty look-- he won't put up with any shit, from anyone.

BABY  
In my office...in my town... I  
talk.

Sammy shuts his mouth-- not used to being backed down like this. Baby continues glaring at him then turns his attention to Nick.

BABY (CONT'D)  
Then what? All hell breaks lose.  
People are shot on my casino floor.

NICK  
The kid, Cyrus Kinnick...he okay?

BABY  
I have no idea, Nick. Why would I  
know this?

Nick shrugs.

BABY (CONT'D)  
This is Sammy DeMarco. An old  
friend. He's come to make a claim  
against you. Unfortunately for  
him, he did not come to me first,  
he had Julian, here, look for you  
on his own, and I have to replace a  
section of carpet in the Silver  
Spoon.

Nick nods apologetically.

BABY (CONT'D)  
All this happened, I'm told,  
because someone broke into Suite  
3906 of the Croesus

DANNY DEMARCO  
Not "someone." Him.

BABY

(glaring at Danny)  
 He beat up three guys and took  
 twenty thousand dollars that didn't  
 belong to him. He tied up two  
 bodyguards, then put a bullet in  
 each of their heads.

Nick is surprised, while the others are at ease.

BABY (CONT'D)

I talked to a witness who claims  
 you were there.

NICK

And you believe that?

BABY

If I did, you'd already be dead.  
 (beat)  
 But I've brought you here to give  
 me your side.

NICK

I was there, Baby.  
 (beat)  
 Can I ask...what he says happened?

DANNY DEMARCO

(to Baby)  
 I told you before.

BABY

Tell it again, so Nick can hear.

DANNY DEMARCO

(annoyed)  
 I feel guilty cause I let him in.  
 We'd ordered room service and we  
 were having a great time, old Tiel  
 and me, drinking Scotch and kidding  
 Kinlaw and when the knock came, I  
 wasn't thinking, I just opened the  
 door.

Baby looks at Nick questioningly. Nick nods.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

He's got this bandana covering his  
 face and he pistol whipped me  
 across the mouth--  
 (pointing out cuts)  
 See?

Baby looks and nods.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 He's quick; he took out Tiel and Kinlaw like they were nothing, and ties them back to back like they were when you found them. And he ties me to a chair.

DeMarco shakes his head; he's full of grief describing what happened.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 He thinks I'm out, but I'm faking, I'm awake the whole time and while he's tying them, his bandana slips and I see his face -- the he rifles my desk, takes the twenty -- and then, for no fucking reason, he goes crazy, shoots maybe my two best friends in all the world -- probably he's pissed there wasn't more cash and probably he would have killed me too but there was a sound in the hall so he panicked and ran.

(pause)

He shot them with their own guns, Baby; check; you'll see I'm telling the truth, they'll have his fingerprints all over them.

NICK  
 Don't bother. My prints are all over them.

BABY  
 This is all true then?

NICK  
 Some.

BABY  
 Which?

Nick leans back and closes his eyes and--

CUT TO:

CASSANDRA

Turning over the six and --

BABY (V.O.)  
Nick--

CUT TO:

BABY'S OFFICE

Nick opens his eyes and sighs.

NICK  
He left something out.

DANNY DEMARCO  
Bullshit. Nothing else happened--

NICK  
No...you forgot something.  
(beat)  
Someone else was there.

Danny squirms.

SAMMY DEMARCO  
(to Danny)  
You said it was just him.

DANNY DEMARCO  
He's lying.

BABY  
Who else was there Nick?

NICK  
Was there when I got there.  
(beat)  
On the small side...big nickname  
though. Called himself the Envy of  
All Mankind.

Nick stares at Danny, watching him trembling and seething.

NICK (CONT'D)  
What happened to him again,  
Danny?...

Danny goes to lunge at Nick but is held in the chair by  
Julius and blocked by Baby.

BABY  
You better take this seriously,  
Nicholas....you might not have much  
longer to live.

Nick nods slowly.

NICK

I'll ask just questions, Baby. If you can answer them to your own satisfaction, do what you will.

Baby nods.

NICK (CONT'D)

First: Why would I use a gun?

SAMMY DEMARCO

(exploding)

What the fuck kind of question is that?! Why does anyone use a gun?!

BABY

Nicholas never does -- his specialty is edged weapons, things you wouldn't look twice at--

He picks up a small ashtray.

BABY (CONT'D)

Believe me; he could kill you with this from fifteen feet or five. I suspect Nicholas is the most lethal man alive.

Sammy isn't impressed. Danny twitches.

BABY (CONT'D)

(to Nick)

And the answer to your question is this: it's a perfect cover -- no one would ever dream Nick Escalante needed a piece to commit a robbery.

Danny nods to his father, who is eyeing his son with some doubt-- Danny's story isn't adding up for him.

Baby stares at Nick.

BABY (CONT'D)

Your second question, Nicholas, your second and last.

NICK

Let me get something straight -- he was awake the whole time, he saw everything.

DANNY DEMARCO  
Most terrible thing I ever seen,  
too.

NICK  
And that's everything that  
happened.

DANNY DEMARCO  
Everything.

NICK  
Baby, what do you know about my  
body, underneath my clothes?

BABY  
Not so much, Nick. We'll keep it  
that way, thanks.

NICK  
Well then, here's my second  
question--  
(leaning in)  
How is it possible that I know that  
Mister DeMarco here has a small but  
definite cut on the upper side of  
his penis? Answer? I saw it put  
there by a dear sweet lady with a  
pair of garden shears--

Danny bolts up

SAMMY DEMARCO  
What is this crap?

NICK  
It's easy to find out if I'm lying--  
just have him take down his pants.

DANNY DEMARCO  
You're not buying this crock, Baby?

Baby says nothing.

NICK  
Somebody go get a microscope--  
we'll need it to locate Danny's  
pecker.

DANNY DEMARCO  
I'm not stripping for nobody.

BABY

I think you must, Daniel. Nicholas is risking his life on a very unusual long shot. I know it's embarrassing, but I'll make it easier-- I'll go into the next room and we'll both take our trousers down.

DANNY DEMARCO

I WON'T.

Baby stares at Danny. Danny looks at his father to back him up, but Sammy is stonefaced.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

It's a matter of principle.

Nick starts laughing. Danny is out of control.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

You siding with him? You believe him over me?!

Danny looks at his father who looks disappointed in him. Danny storms out.

Sammy and Julian look at each other.

SAMMY DEMARCO

Apparently, my son was mistaken.

Sammy stands, nods to Baby and walks out with Julian.

Baby looks at Nick.

BABY

What the hell went on in that suite?

(thinking)

I don't want to know.

Nick smiles.

BABY (CONT'D)

You know that prick'll come for you?

NICK

Yeah.

BABY

And I'm afraid you're not welcome  
in any of my establishments. It's  
nothing personal... You know I like  
you Nicholas.

NICK

I was thinking of leaving town  
anyway...

Baby offers his hand. They shake and Nick walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR - IN FRONT OF THE CROESUS - DAY

There is a THUGGISH DRIVER, EDDIE. Julian gets in the front  
seat. Danny gets in the back, hiding the pain coming from  
between his legs. Sammy gets in the back and slams his door.

They start to drive. Sammy yanks on his son's ear then  
pushes him away.

SAMMY DEMARCO

What the fuck? What other guy?

DANNY DEMARCO

There was no other guy-- it was all  
Nick Escalante.

The veins on Sammy's neck look like they'll burst.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)

Why should I sit there and let Baby  
kill him?! Let him run Vegas, he  
don't run me.

(beat)

I'm gonna kill that bastard myself.

Julian is impressed.

JULIAN

Your dad and I go back to Lexington  
at four. We'll leave Eddie with  
you.

They wait on Sammy's reaction. He finally claps a fatherly  
hand around Danny's neck.

SAMMY DEMARCO

Now you sound like my son.

Sammy is pleased but Danny hardly notices-- he has one thing on his mind: Nick.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE - DAY

Nick walks in. The Cops are just leaving.

GRIZZLED COP  
What do you, live here now?

NICK  
Yeah, might as well...

GRIZZLED COP  
Were you at the Silver Spoon last night?

NICK  
Nowhere near it.

PATIENT STATION

Nick goes to a station and finds CYRUS KINNICK. He is being tended to, by his personal assistant, ANYA-- a beautiful redhead in a business suit. Nick's jaw drops at the sight of her.

Cyrus is wired up but doesn't look terrible, and his spirits are buoyed at seeing Nick.

CYRUS KINNICK  
Every time I think it's the last time, there you are...

NICK  
You took a bullet for me, Duke.  
What the hell's your problem?

CYRUS KINNICK  
You're welcome. I know you'd do the same for me.

NICK  
Wrong again, Duke.

Nick pulls over a chair and looks at Cyrus, then at Anya who is giving Cyrus contracts to sign.

CYRUS KINNICK  
My travelling secretary, Anya--  
Nick Escalante--

Anya reacts and holds out her hand to Nick. He hesitantly shakes it.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
She doesn't speak much English.

NICK  
What would be the point of that?

CYRUS KINNICK  
When are you leaving town?

NICK  
You know, I thought about what you said...if I won the two-fifty, I would have gone for five. Then, why not a million.  
(thinking)  
Anyway, I'm busted again. And I'm not going anywhere.

CYRUS KINNICK  
I thought you'd say that.  
(to Anya)  
Anya?

He nods to her. She hands Nick a ticket in a small folder. Nick looks at it in disbelief.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
Anya, get me some ice chips.  
(Pantomiming)  
Ice chips. Cold....Brr.

Anya nods, smiles and leaves the area. Nick is looking at the ticket, truly touched.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)  
Anya got your passport number from Pinky. It's one way-- first class. You'll probably cash it in and piss it away at the tables.  
(beat)  
Now, the check...

He nods to Nick. Nick finds a check in the folder.

NICK  
Five grand...

CYRUS KINNICK

Live like a king for three months,  
or stretch it out...then you're on  
your own. By the way, you can't  
cash that check in the US-- it's  
only good at an HSBC overseas.

Nick is overwhelmed.

CYRUS KINNICK (CONT'D)

When I'm over that way, maybe I'll  
look you up.

NICK

(sincerely)

Yeah, Duke. You do that.

Nick shakes Cyrus's hand and staggers out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nick walks out, awkwardly pocketing the check, almost running  
into the stunning Anya as she hurries back inside with the  
ice chips.

Nick, heading for the elevator, sees DD heading out and down  
another hall.

NICK

Hey...DD....Doris Day...

DD turns around. She'd be more frightened if it wasn't such  
a public setting with VISITORS and MEDICAL STAFF passing.

NICK (CONT'D)

Oz here?

DD

Osgood was jumped last night,  
pretty bad...Three thugs.

NICK

I wouldn't want to be the other  
guys.

(nodding)

How's he doing?

She nods, obviously worried, but hopeful.

DD

Guess we're stuck here a little longer. I can't wait to get out of this town...

Nick nods and gets in the elevator,

NICK

Take good care of him. You got a good guy. He deserves you.

DD is stunned. The elevator door closes on Nick.

DD stands there a moment, surprised and moved. She walks down the hall to Osgood's room, anxious to see him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nick exits and his eyes are everywhere--

An INFLATABLE SANTA jerking in the wind.

A MAN looking at him from a passing car.

A CURTAIN coincidentally moving in a window across the street.

A MAN to his left, down the block, with his face concealed as he reads a newspaper.

A CHILD in the back of a car, wearing a cowboy hat and pointing a cap gun out the window.

Nick takes a breath to relax. He doesn't know when or where an attack will come-- he just has to wait.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Nick approaches-- again his antennae are up. He's looking at different windows, in every car along the way.

He stops at his door, calming himself down. He closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHEAST ASIA

Nick sits relaxed in a field of high grass, with wind chimes TINKLING in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. TINY VEGAS APARTMENT

Nick BURSTS INTO THE APARTMENT, tense and ready to fight. Nothing. No one inside waiting for him.

He does a slow check to make sure nothing's been touched.

IN THE KITCHEN

He stops to look at a snapshot, taped to the fridge, peeling it off. It's of him with HOLLY-- both younger, about ten years ago. Holly is draped all over him and looks extremely fresh faced and happy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE - FLASHBACK

Nick looks down at Holly in bed, beaten beyond belief.

CUT TO:

NICK IN THE KITCHEN

Nick sadly sticks the photo back in place.

Another photo catches his eye-- it's of him and Pinky backstage with a lot of SHOWGIRLS someplace cheesy, but Pinky is drunk and happy.

A thought sullies Nick's pleasant recollection.

NICK

Pinky...

We stay on the photo as Nick bolts from the apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKY AND NICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Pinky is leaning back in his padded office chair in front of his computer at his metal 1960's era desk. HE looks calm but is sweating and in pain-- there is a NYLON CORD wrapped tightly around his neck-- an empty gun clip is being used to tighten it like a tourniquet. It's being held still-- blood forms a ring around his neck-- but one gets the impression that another turn and that's all for Pinky.

Standing behind the, holding the tourniquet in place with a 9mm in his free (and concealed) hand, is Danny's driver, Eddie. He is a picture of complacency and patience.

Through the door he can see Nick walking from his car. It's not a surprised for either-- each can see the other.

Nick is extra alert as he opens the door to the office and enters.

PINKY

(gasp)

Hey, Nick. How'd you make out at the casino.

NICK

Walked in with a hundred bucks, left with nothing.

(beat)

Pinky-- I won't bother you if you're with a client.

Pinky starts to laugh and Eddie-- without malice-- tightens the tourniquet.

DANNY DEMARCO (V.O.)

Shut up, Nick.

Nick glances over and sees Danny behind the other desk, his gun out and ready.

NICK

Where do you want me?

DANNY DEMARCO

Stay over there for now.

There is a little kitchen area near the door-- nothing more than a half fridge, a microwave, and a coffee maker stacked up with a rack of Styrofoam cups, sugars, creamers, and plastic utensils on the side.

Nick pours coffee into a Styrofoam cup..

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 Here's what's going to happen. If you tell me where the whore is, this guy walks away. You get to live, too, but you won't be walking so much.

NICK  
 Mind if I heat this up?

EDDIE  
 (flatly)  
 Drink it cold.

Nick eyes the thug behind Pinky.

Nick dumps three sugars into the coffee, takes a plastic spoon and stirs it slowly.

NICK  
 What if don't know where she is?

DANNY DEMARCO  
 You die. He dies...and don't worry, I'll find her eventually.

Nick approaches, looking lost in thought. He is at the corner of Pinky's desk. Danny is worried because he's seen him in action-- Eddie is watchful but unconcerned.

DANNY DEMARCO (CONT'D)  
 Get back over there--

Very carefully, with just his pinky, Nick slides Pinky's stapler to the edge of the desk so he has room to put down the coffee cup.

NICK  
 Here's the thing, Danny. I have one other suggestion, and feel free to say no.

DANNY DEMARCO  
 I said get back.

Nick gives the coffee a stir, then takes the spoon out, holding it casually.

NICK  
 Hear me out...

Nick takes a step back from the desk. Pinky winces afraid of what's coming.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 You don't kill the girl. You don't  
 kill Pinky.  
 (beat)  
 And you don't kill me, but instead--  
 (holding the spoon  
 daintily up between thumb  
 and forefinger)  
 I kill you with this plastic spoon.

Nick shows the spoon to Eddie, then slips it in his own breast pocket.

Eddie can't help laughing a little at the idea, thinking it's a joke and Nick laughs with him a second.

DANNY DEMARCO  
 (annoyed at Eddie)  
 He's not kidding, dammit!

EDDIE  
 Of course he's kidding--

NICK  
 I'm not.

PINKY  
 (gasping)  
 Oh...shit.

THE SEQUENCE, AS BALLETTIC AS IT IS VIOLENT, HAPPENS IN SUPER-SLOW MOTION FOR KEY MOMENTS, SPEEDING UP FOR THE INBETWEEN MOMENTS

This time, we don't stop and see it through close-ups and only see it once.

In slow motion Nick swings his leg, and kicks the STAPLER AND COFFEE cup he's positioned toward Danny.

Still in slow motion, Danny raises his gun.

Now, from Danny's P.O.V., still in slow motion, Nick finishes the kick, falling flat to the ground. The cold coffee comes directly at Danny in a spray-- but so does the stapler. Then the action SPEEDS UP.

Fast Speed on Danny, the stapler hits him in the face, knocking him back and sending his SHOT into the CEILING.

On Eddie-- in slow motion-- he can't believe what he's seeing-- he raises. Nick is out of sight on the floor on the other side of the desk. Eddie raises his gun over Pinky's head, not sure what's coming.

NICK, on his back, IN SLOW MOTION, kicks up with both legs against the edge of Pinky's desk, and drives it UPWARD and toward Pinky and Eddie.

At full speed, PINKY is smashed backwards as the desk comes up on its side. His chair slams hard into Eddie, PINNING HIM between the wall and the chair.

NICK, in slow motion, comes around the desk, using it as cover from Danny's second SHOT. Nick puts one hand on the tourniquet-clip-handle to keep it from turning, and jams his thumb into Eddie's eye with the other hand.

At full speed, EDDIE, screams. Nick grabs him by the face and smashes his head against the wall. Eddie slides down, leaving a blood stain on the wall.

NICK, in slow motion, unwinds the tourniquet, and, after a moment, Pinky frees himself from it. They have cover behind the upturned desk.

And now, Nick pushes the desk across the floor, using it as a shield.

ON DANNY, at full speed, he fires into the metal desk, then is hit by it. Nick suddenly comes over the top of it, grabs Danny by the hair and pulls him up and over.

In SUPER SLOW MOTION, Danny's hand loses its grip on the gun.

IN SUPER SLOW MOTION, Danny comes down hard, face first on the floor.

In SUPER SLOW MOTION, Nick, seemingly out of nowhere but still holding Danny's hair, comes slamming down, one knee down into Danny's back.

IN SUPER SLOW MOTION, Nick slips the spoon from his pocket and plants it on the floor, eating part down. (This is a rigid plastic spoon, by the way, not a flimsy one.) It is pointing straight up, right next to Danny's stunned head.

IN SUPER SLOW MOTION, still holding Danny's hair, Nick lifts Danny's head ten inches off the ground, then moving it to the left a little, slams the head down.

Danny's eye comes down on the spoon Nick's holding in place.

In full motion, Nick smashes the head down as he pulls away the hand holding the spoon. The spoon goes through the eye and into Danny's brain. His other eye is left wide open, as blood drips from the wound.

The sequence over, Pinky manages to sit up still catching his breath, and rubbing the ring of blood around his neck.

Nick stands up over Danny, who goes into a SPASM. The gun GOES OFF but no one is hit, and Nick peels the gun out of Danny's hand.

One more little spasm and Danny is dead.

PINKY (CONT'D)  
You did it? You killed him with a  
plastic spoon?

Nick looks at him-- he's not proud of it, but he's not denying it.

PINKY (CONT'D)  
Holy...shit....Well that's fucked  
up.

Pinky gets up with Nick giving him a hand, looking around the destruction.

NICK  
Maybe it's a bad time-- but I think  
you're going to have to find  
another tenant....

Pinky nods, pleased for Nick.

PINKY  
No...it's a good time...  
(beat)  
Merry Christmas, Nick...

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Nick, in first class, reclines in his seat, looking out at the stars. He is brought an airplane sized bottle of Finlandia and a glass filled with ice by a pretty, Asian FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

CUT TO:

EXT. MACAU AIRPORT - MORNING

Nick's plane lands.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT/CUSTOMS - MORNING

It is crowded, everyone else is ASIAN, but Nick looks refreshed-- ready to get out of here and start his new life.

CUT TO:

INT. HSBC BANK - MACAU - MORNING

Nick hands over his Passport with the check and money is cheerfully counted out to him by a pretty TELLER.

CUT TO:

EXT. HSBC BANK - MACAU - A LITTLE LATER

Nick walks out. It's a bustling city, not the serene country life of his fantasy, but it's still exotic and beautiful.

The people and buildings fascinate him.

Then he TURNS A CORNER and stops dead in his tracks.

In front of him, a huge MACAU CASINO -- just as large and magnetic to him as any thing in Vegas.

He stands there, thinking.

NICK

This time I'll stop...

He looks around then walks toward the casino-- no longer dreading it, but excited at the prospect of expanding his bankroll.

THE END