

"RULES OF THE GAME"

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FADE IN:

EXT. CAR JUNK YARD -- DUSK

An orange-blue sky looms over row upon row of stacked cars. MIKITA, a medium sized dog, trots along a narrow dirt road winding through the piles.

ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA - 1985

Puffs of dust rise from his paws as he leads us to a single story house. Burnt out lawn. Empty beer bottles litter the porch. Mikita ascends the wood steps, slips through a torn screen door.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DUSK

JACK ROURKE, 9, soiled tank top, pulls Long Neck beers from a refrigerator and sets them on a nearby tray. Mikita licks his chops, whimpers. Jack picks up the tray and pushes through a swinging door.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM DUSK

FOUR BLUE COLLAR MEN in various states of comfortable undress sit around a poker table playing cards.

The walls are bare, absolutely no pictures or decorations. A lamp hangs from the ceiling.

Mikita follows Jack, weaves through the men's legs into the living room. The Stanley Cup Hockey Final's on the black and white tv, complete with rabbit ears antenna and aluminum foil booster.

Sitting at the poker table, DEKE ROURKE, late 30's, portly, with a three day beard and soiled t-shirt to match Jack's, rubs his belly, slowly fans out his cards.

WAYNE ANSEL, late 30's, bean pole, Buddy Holly prescription glasses, suspiciously eyes Deke's belly hand. As the OTHER PLAYERS mirror Wayne's concern, Jack walks around the table carefully placing bottles down.

Deke checks his cards: A, Q, K, J, 6. He tosses some chips in the pot and sets his hand near his remaining three chips.

Jack lowers the tray and heads back into the kitchen. Wayne checks out Deke's chips - his pile's grown from three to five. Wayne exhales, takes seven chips from a healthy stack, tosses them into the pot.

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WAYNE
Raise and call.

Deke's short. Can't meet the bet.

DEKE
How's my credit?

PLAYER #1
You know the rules, Deke.

PLAYER #2
Never make deals with players.

DEKE
I wasn't asking you!

Deke turns to Wayne.

DEKE
It's short money.

Wayne looks away. Deke pushes from the table, barges into the kitchen.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DUSK

Jack's ass lands on the table. Deke rips open Jack's shirt, revealing a necklace connected to a silver dollar in a coin holder. Jack defiantly takes hold of the chain. Deke smirks, snaps it free and pushes through the door.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM DUSK

Deke throws the necklace at Player #1.

DEKE
That's a double headed silver
dollar.

Player #1 drops it on the pot. Deke turns to Wayne.

DEKE
Whaddya got?

Wayne spreads his cards on the table, smiles.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack lays on the slab mattress petting Mikita. The Stanley Cup broadcast seeps through the walls as does the creaking opening and closing of the screen door.

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CONTINUED:

Cars start and pull away. Headlights streak the wall, catch a pair of hockey skates hanging from a nail.

Jack closes his eyes, falls asleep.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM -- MORNING

Jack lifts the chain from a pile of Wayne's chips. The coin holder's empty. Jack picks up a bottle cap, studies it, then continues around the table collecting the others.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND -- DAY

The schoolyard's filled with students. Appearing from either side of us, TWO KIDS rush toward a huddled group.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - HUDDLE -- DAY

Grimy, dirty cards rest on the dirt.

Jack runs a low key poker game using bottle tops for chips. FOUR OTHER KIDS crouch inside the huddle, including CHARLIE ANSEL, 9, wearing similar Buddy Holly glasses as his father.

The Two Runners reach the huddle, peer over shoulders. Jack has four beer caps in front of him, Charlie none. A huge stack makes up the pot. All have 5, 10 and 25 cent marks penned on them.

HUDDLE KID #1

Jack's duffing.

HUDDLE KID #2

Gonna make Charlie his bitch.

Huddle Kid #2 snaps his gum, nods his head. Jack throws some caps into the pot.

JACK

Call.

Charlie shows his hand. Three of a kind. Jack holds his close, remains stoic. Charlie grows impatient.

CHARLIE

Whaddya got?

The Others chimes in, "show your cards". Jack smiles, sets his down. Royal Flush. Charlie falls backward in disbelief. The group explodes in amazement, excitement as Jack rakes in the caps.

Suddenly, pounding steps bring ANOTHER BOY into the huddle.

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CONTINUED:

BOY

Mr. Anderson's coming!!

Jack picks up the cards and tops as the group disbands.
Charlie rises, quickly follows Jack.

JACK

You owe me a lot of money, Squirt.

Jack pulls out a tin of Copenhagen, slams the container
against his thumb, places dip in his mouth.

CHARLIE

Maybe we can make a deal?

JACK

Never make deals with players.

Jack slows down.

JACK

But I tell you what. This one
time...

CHARLIE

(waving out his arms)
Anything!

Jack spits and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY -- NIGHT

We're traveling pretty fast through the sky. We can't see
shit except a far away glowing. A traveler's beacon. It
brightens as we approach. Neon. A city. An engine whine revs
as a commercial airliner enters frame.

ATLANTIC CITY - PRESENT DAY

INT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - GATE -- NIGHT

We DOLLY BACKWARDS, stare at an ornate belt buckle sporting
the silver dollar. TILTING UP we see it's Jack, now in his
20's. He's confident and well groomed. This isn't the same
dirty kid from grade school.

INT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CUSTOMS -- NIGHT

A CUSTOMS OFFICIAL, 30's, female, uniform inspects Jack's
Passport. She swipes it across a scanner. Something catches
her attention on the screen. Her eyes dart up to him.

INT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CUSTOMS OFFICE -- NIGHT

Jack sits across from a SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL, 50's. He compares Jack's passport photo to Jack. The picture's missing a small scar on his cheek bone.

SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
You get that scar while you were gone?

JACK
Before I left.

SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
Seven years. Why the homecoming?

JACK
The World Series.

SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
The World Series?

Jack smirks.

EXT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CUSTOMS -- NIGHT

Through the window, the Senior Customs Official watches Jack exit the terminal. The other Customs Official steps up.

SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL
Phone the Keystone. Tell 'em Jack's back.

INT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - BAR -- NIGHT

SASHA EVANS, 26, smart, independent, gorgeous sits alone watching TOURISTS, TRAVELERS and BUSINESSMEN walk to and from flights. Jack passes, sees her, continues on.

At the bar, DEL WOODRUFF, 60's, silver lion, receives a drink from the BARTENDER, pays with a hundred dollar bill.

DEL
Keep the change.

Sasha sees the money, perks up.

INT. NEWARK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DEL'S TABLE -- NIGHT

We PUSH IN on Del. He looks up as Sasha steps into frame.

SASHA
May I join you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Del smiles.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Del rakes in a pot of chips. Sasha sits behind him clapping and whistling. FOUR OTHER GAMBLERS including one with a cowboy hat, fill out the table. One of them leaves and Jack fills his seat.

The DEALER begins the initial distribution for seven card stud, gives each Player three cards, one of which is face up. Inspecting the table, the PITBOSS, 40's, heavy set, intense, does a double take upon seeing Jack.

Jack checks out his cards: two queens. The Pitboss glances up at a security camera. Jack eyes Sasha. She stares back in challenge. He smiles. She doesn't return the sentiment.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - SECURITY CAMERAS -- NIGHT

FOUR SECURITY GUARDS observe various banks of monitors. One takes notice of The Pitboss, speaks into a radio.

SECURITY GUARD

Gus, you should swing by Seven Card Stud. There's someone here you might recognize.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

GUS, 50's, casual dress with a Black Hawks hockey jacket, stands at the balcony watching the floor.

GUS (O.S.)

Copy.

Gus lowers the walkie.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Del looks at his cards then glances at Jack.

DEALER

(to Del)

Sir, you have low card.

Del slides a \$500 chip into the pot. Jack's open card is a queen, which makes three all together. He glances at the other players open cards. No Queens. He makes a bet.

The Dealer gives the group more cards. Jack's competitors fold, save Del. Del's got three tens. He throws in two more \$500 chips.

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CONTINUED:

DEL

Call.

Jack lays his cards down. One Queen. His remaining two cards are face down. The Dealer turns them over: a five and a Jack. He's dumped the good cards, purposely lost.

COWBOY

Lady Luck ain't spreading her legs
for you, slick.

The Dealer begins the next game. Jack collects his cards, opens the betting with the flick of a chip. In the deep background, we see Gus walk into a Kiosk.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - KIOSK -- NIGHT

Gus slaps a box of cigarettes against his palm, receives his change from a CASHIER. He steps back on the Casino floor as MICHAEL SEAVER, 50's, slicked back hair, suit, approaches.

MICHAEL

Jack Rourke in my casino. And what
action does my Head of Security
initiate? Spectator.

Gus unwraps the cigarettes, walks with Michael toward the stairs leading to the balcony.

GUS

It was a long time ago.

MICHAEL

It will never be a long time ago.

GUS

He took what I had to give him. He
paid his dues.

MICHAEL

So now you believe he stole the
money. 'Cause you protected him like
a son.

Gus stops, pulls out a cigarette.

GUS

Jenny's your wife, Michael. She says
he took the money he took the money.

MICHAEL

Gotta watch who you take under your
wing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

Yeah...

MICHAEL

Get him out of here.

Michael moves away. Gus's dialogue stops him.

GUS

The law states he can't work in a casino. It says nothing about playing in one. Besides...

(narrows his eyes,
thinks, nods)

...he's about to leave.

MICHAEL

Jenny sees him, we'll both be in the shitter.

(reaches for radio)

Lemme have that.

Gus hands it over. Michael speaks into the radio.

MICHAEL

I need Dieter & Wallace.

DIETER (O.S.)

This is Dieter.

MICHAEL

Get over to seven. I want you to tail Jackie.

DIETER (O.S.)

Jackie? You mean Gus's Jackie?

MICHAEL

Yes, Gus's Jackie. The prodigal gambler's returned.

He tosses Gus the radio, walks away.

MICHAEL

I see he's got you smoking again.

Gus smiles, lights the cigarette.

GUS

Jackie, Jackie, Jackie...

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Again, the game's between Jack and Del. Jack slides in all his chips. Stares at Del. Del flicks his cards. Contemplates. The Other Players fidget, smile. This has become interesting quite quickly. Suddenly, Del folds. The group sighs.

Sasha watches Jack gather the chips, stack them like a pro, drag a finger over the top to level and even them.

COWBOY

Let's see whatcha hidin'.

The Cowboy reaches over to pick up Jack's cards. Jack places his hand over them.

JACK

This isn't crazy eights. You wanna see my cards? Stay in the game and call.

On the far side of the casino, Jack notices DIETER and WALLACE, 30's, huge men, nondescript suits, moving slowly through the crowd. Jack pockets his chips.

COWBOY

Whoa-whoa-whoa...

SASHA

Hey, buddy, where you going?

Jack walks away from the table.

SASHA

Hey buddy?!?

Sasha hops off the stool.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Sofa chairs, couches, tables, charcoal window overlooking the entire casino, surveillance televisions on the wall, framed pictures of Michael with all manner of celebrities and a giant oak desk behind which Michael sits.

The monitor shows Jack leave the Casino. A moment later, Sasha follows.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - VALET PARKING -- NIGHT

Jack whistles for a cab, waves as Sasha exits the Casino.

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CONTINUED:

SASHA

That was *my* mark in there, *my* score.

The cab reaches Jack. Sasha grabs his arm.

SASHA

Hey, buddy, I'm talking to you!

Jack sees Dieter and Wallace approach the door.

JACK

I'm Jack. Not buddy.

She releases his arm. Jack hops in the cab as Dieter and Wallace step outside. The cab pulls away.

WALLACE

You get it?

DIETER

Checker. 719.

They pass Sasha on their way back in. Intrigued, she watches Jack's cab disappear.

INT. JACK'S TAXI -- NIGHT

The Driver listens to a playoff game on the A.M. radio.

CAB DRIVER

You a hockey fan?

Jack doesn't answer. The Driver lowers the volume. Jack stares out the window. Lights and buildings streak by.

INT. DEKE'S TRUCK - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Holding his hockey stick and gear, YOUNGER JACK, 13, rides shotgun as Deke drives. They reach an intersection. Deke puts on his right blinker. Pauses, switches the blinker to the left.

DEKE

I'm gonna sit in on a few hands at the tee-pee.

Deke continues driving. Jack sulks deep into his seat.

EXT. INDIAN CARD CASINO - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

We hear a hockey game on the radio, find Deke's truck near the front of the parking lot. The radio's suddenly clicked off as the passenger door opens.

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CONTINUED:

Jack steps out, tosses the hockey gear over a shoulder, drags his stick.

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - **FLASHBACK** -- DUSK

A bunch of TEENAGE BOYS play hockey. Tough boys. Working class boys. The smallest of which is Jack. The kid's good. Really good. Handles the puck well, skates around defenders. A natural.

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - PARKING LOT - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Deke's truck comes into frame. Idles. Exhaust spews from the tail pipe. The driver's side door opens and Deke steps out, leaves the car running.

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Pissed off, Deke reaches the glass, searches for his son. He finds him and as he takes a breath to yell, Jackie checks an older, bigger boy into a far wall, claims the puck and heads for the goal. Deke's impressed, speaks to himself.

DEKE
(to himself)
Alright Jackie. But I'm still gonna
kick your ass.

Deke lights a cigarette, exhales smoke as Jack scores.

DEKE
That's my boy! That's my boy...

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Deke's sitting in the stands. Jack and the others continue playing. Trading hits, passing the puck, shooting it HARD!!

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

A pile of cigarette butts rest near Deke. He smokes with the RINK CUSTODIAN, 50's, drinks from a flask.

RINK CUSTODIAN
You should come see him play. His
Pee Wee team's got a shot at winning
it all.

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CONTINUED:

DEKE

Yeah, yeah... It's just, I'm a single dad and all, between work and my own life, it's, you know, its tough.

The Rink Custodian nods, hands back the flask, turns to the rink. Jackie's got the puck, skating for the goal. Until a player appears out of nowhere, cross checks him hard.

Jackie twists through the air, slams onto the ice and goes limp, slides a dozen feet before physics slows him down. The other boys rush over, see if he's okay. A couple of the bigger players take the hitter to task. A moment passes and Jackie comes to, sits up.

INT. DEKE'S TRUCK - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack sports a black eye and proud of it. He beams a smile, displays a newly chipped tooth. Deke smiles back. This is a true moment, a father-son bonding moment.

DEKE

I'm gonna start coming to your games, kiddo.

Deke grins at his boy. Jack's happy, feels the love.

DEKE

You're gonna have to miss some shots for me. Maybe lose a few games.

Jack's heart drops.

DEKE

You're okay with that ain't ya', Jackie? We are a team, right?

Jack nods. Slowly faces forward, then out the window. A barren landscape streaks by.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. TAJ MAJAL - JACK'S ROOM -- EVENING

Jack stirs. Sees the message light blinking. He pulls himself from bed, walks to the window, opens the shades. It's dusk. Neon comes to life. Another night in Atlantic City.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Cars and pickups are parked outside. A few have chicken wire and cages attached to the back. A cab pulls up and Jack gets out. Stares at the barn, doesn't want to enter.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

SPECTATORS crowd every foot of the place except a small, fenced in circle. Money changes hands. Men point and yell. Jack forces his way through the group toward the bleachers.

It's here we see the attraction. On two opposite ends of the circle rests cages. TWO TRAINERS reach in and retrieve FIGHTING COCKS. On one side, a street kid, BIRDY, 17, straps razors to the cock's feet.

Jack's a bit put off by the kid, the straps, the razors. Birdy glances over, locks eyes with Jack. The Trainers enter the ring, hold the cocks up for all to see.

People point, cheer. A GIRL with a morbid curiosity looks on as her BOYFRIEND explains what's occurring. Jack wanders, searching the crowd. Gus is at the top row. He cups his hands over his mouth.

GUS

Jackie!

Jack sees Gus wave, climbs the steps. The Trainers stand in the middle of the arena, repeatedly thrust the birds together, pull them apart.

JACK

You know I hate this.

GUS

Just want to make sure you remember the rules of the game, kid.

The Trainers throw the birds. The crowd jumps to its feet. Jack glances at Gus whose eyes are on the ring. Reluctantly, Jack watches the birds go at it.

Feathers fly. Razors slice. The animals attack without reason or remorse. Their eyes dark beads of killer instinct.

GUS

Rule number one: you're gonna get hurt.

Jack's eyes narrow on the scene, sees a deathly blow. One cock goes down. The other mercilessly strikes.

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CONTINUED:

People turn in frustration. Reluctantly hand over cash.

The Girl's crying. Her Boyfriend drapes an arm over her. She shakes it off, pushes through the crowd.

The downed bird flops about in slow motion. The other continues to peck until its of no consequence. The Victor's raised and the Trainer beams a smile of triumph as he slowly rotates with his champion feathered gladiator.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Jack and Gus walk toward Gus's car. An old school Pontiac. Suped up. Impeccably clean. With a small gold hockey trophy for a hood ornament.

GUS

We're talking clockwork odds here, kid. One slip, one nervous twitch, one mistake, it all comes down on top of us.

Gus opens the door, hands Jackie a meal ticket.

GUS

Get some dinner.

JACK

I'm good, Gus. Really.

Jack tries to return the card.

GUS

Make sure you get some greens.

Jack smiles sheepishly. Gus gets in the car.

GUS

We'll meet up at the shopping carts. The entrance is in the back by the pallets.

JACK

Think I can get a ride back?

GUS

Rule #2, Jackie...

Gus turns the engine over.

GUS

...don't lose your pride.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls out, leaves Jack in the dust.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Steaks barbecue. Potatoes cook. Veggies drain. A plate's picked up by a SERVER. We FOLLOW the plate through the kitchen and into the main floor, pass Jack as he finishes his dinner while skimming *CARD DEALERS MONTHLY*.

Sasha sits down across from Jack, picks up his utensils, cuts a piece off of his steak.

SASHA
So, Jack-Not-Buddy?

Jack lowers the magazine.

SASHA
Do you miss it? Dealing cards?

Jack stares back at her.

SASHA
You're quite infamous around the
Keystone.

JACK
That's a generous phrasing.

SASHA
The Keystone's full of generous
people.

JACK
Especially from the airport.

Sasha chokes on her food. With the fork, she makes a hash mark in the air, regains her composure.

SASHA
I'm not a hooker, if that's what
you're thinking.

JACK
You're too smart to be a hooker. But
that's none of my business. Sorry
about erasing your Mark.

Jack tosses her a chip. She tosses it back.

SASHA
I take your money it'll be off the
table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
(stands to leave)
Like you took the Mark's?

SASHA
I know the rules, Jack. Do you?

JACK
They're coming back to me.

Jack walks away. The WAITRESS arrives. Sets down the check. Sasha searches for Jack, picks it up, smiles.

SASHA
What a dick.

EXT. USED CARS & PAWN - OFFICE -- NIGHT

From afar, WE SEE a USED CAR SALESMAN, 50's, paunch, greasy hair, rise from his desk and greet Jack knowingly. They talk as he leads Jack outside to a '69 Firebird.

EXT. USED CARS & PAWN -- NIGHT

Jack idles at the entrance. Behind him, the Used Car Salesman stands by the office, shit eating grin, shirt riding up his belly.

EXT. VON'S -- NIGHT

Jack pulls up to the entrance, puts on his blinker. A street sweeper passes and Jack turns into the lot, parks near the shopping carts alongside five other cars.

Gus steps from beneath the awning, lights a Marlboro. Jack gets out of the Firebird.

GUS
It's bad luck to spend money before
you make it.

JACK
Is that a rule?

GUS
It's common sense, wise guy. Now put
a fire under it.

Jack locks the car, points at Gus's cigarette.

JACK
I thought you quit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

I did.

They walk around the building.

EXT. VON'S - LOADING DOCKS -- NIGHT

Gus and Jack come around the corner. A SECURITY GUARD, 50's, sits on a fold out chair by the back entrance. Stacks of pallets line the wall.

GUS

A couple of these guys are rocks.
Tough buccaneers. Some get restless
and throw a party any decent hand
can crash. You get a rush, cool it.

The Security Guard opens the door for them.

INT. VON'S - POKER AREA -- NIGHT

Gus and Jack enter a converted area complete with poker table, dangling lights, wet bar, etc. Gus heads to the bar, leaves Jack with his hands in his pockets. Standing at the bar is BATES DANIEL, 50's.

GUS

Fellas, meet Jackie Rourke. Proof
positive ugly kids come from ugly
parents.

Bates turns to the others.

BATES

Gus has a family?

GUS

That cost you an unblended scotch.
(looks at Jack with
pride)
Close enough.

Bates walks around the bar, gives Gus a fresh pour. Jack approaches the poker table. Three other men occupy positions: NIPPER, 60's, clean cut, intense, DUFFY, 60's, three day beard, unkempt hair, Hawaiian shirt, HARRY, 50's, sideburns, Sheriff's Uniform.

GUS

That's Nipper, he runs the game.
Duffy, he sells boats. Harry's the
sin city badge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
(sitting down)
Hey, guys.

BATES
That's my seat.

Jack pops up.

BATES
Just kidding.

HARRY
Bates is our resident asshole.

Bates dabs at his nose like he's been punched, hands Gus a glass.

BATES
Bar's open, Jack.

JACK
Thanks, but -

Gus takes a couple steps to the table.

GUS
Jackie doesn't drink.
(sits down)
Are we gonna play or stock shelves?

BATES
We're waiting on Del.

The bathroom door opens. Del Woodruff steps out, wiping his hands on a paper towel.

NIPPER
Let's go!

SLAM! A new pack of cards hits the edge of the table, breaking the box seal. Nipper holds the deck, starts shuffling. Del sits by Nipper and Gus. Eyes Jack.

NIPPER
You know him?

DEL
Played a couple hands last night at the Keystone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY

Must've been more than a couple for
you to remember.

BATES

I play all the time and can't recall
if I'm up or down.

GUS

Rule of thumb, Bates - you're down.

Nipper finishes shuffling, sets the deck on the table. Bates
cuts it. Nipper begins dealing.

NIPPER

Mr. Rourke, you've been here two
minutes and already have me
sniffing. Watch yourself.

Again, the first two cards are dealt down, the third remains
face up on the table. Jack has lowest face card, a 2 of
hearts, and opens the betting. His cards are a 5 and 6, also
hearts.

Jack tosses in a couple hundred dollar bills. Bates throws
in his cards. So does Del. Duffy pauses, folds as well.
Nipper, Gus and Harry are still in. Nipper deals the next
round of cards face up.

Jack receives an 8 of clubs. Nipper has a pair of 8's. His
new card's a queen. Harry has shit and folds.

Nipper reaches for his cash but changes his mind.

NIPPER

Check.

Jack looks at his cards. He's hoping for a straight or
straight flush. He throws in another hundred. Gus tosses his
cards away. Jack looks up to Nipper. Nipper contemplates,
tries to read Jack.

He squints his eyes, looks deep into Jack's. It's as if
Jack's irises reflect the cards Nipper can't see and the
cards Jack hopes for.

NIPPER

Fold.

Jack collects the money and Nipper the cards. Like a proud
father, Gus flashes a grin at Jack.

TIME CUT:

INT. VON'S - POKER AREA -- NIGHT

Bates pulls the pot.

NIPPER
Let's cool the queen.

Nipper rises.

BATES
That's it for me. I'm even and I'm
leaving.

Bates grabs his coat, heads for the exit.

Jack's got a large pile of money in front of him. Harry removes his pistol, sets it on top of Jack's cash, walks away. Gus gets a kick out of this, puts a hand on Jack's shoulder.

GUS
Let's go shopping.

INT. VON'S - NIPPER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The dial on the floor safe spins. Nipper opens it, pulls out various stacks of cash. At the door, a flashlight beams on. Nipper turns and it shines in his eyes. The Security Guard steps forward.

NIPPER
Jesus...

Nipper closes the safe. He passes the Security Guard, sticks a few bills in the guy's shirt pocket.

NIPPER
This make you a blind man?

SECURITY GUARD
I'm a hungry blind man.

Nipper laughs, gives him another couple bills.

INT. VON'S - SNACK AISLE -- NIGHT

Gus and Jack stroll down the aisle. Gus grabs a bag of chips, rips it open, shares it with Jack. They speak softly.

GUS
Nipper's been skimming money for
years.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS (CONT'D)

He likes to take exotic vacations to Asia and play Granddaddy Day Care.

Gus sets the open bag on a nearby shelf. Grabs some pretzels, opens the top, digs in.

GUS

You should know what we're doing is for everyone in that room. Particularly Harry, who suspects Nipper of some local transgressions over a Happy Meal or two.

He offers the pretzels to Jack. Jack shakes him off.

JACK

We're what, five deep?

GUS

Plus the goalie.

JACK

What's his name?

GUS

Sasha.

Gus sets the bag on the shelf.

GUS

Let's find the drink aisle.

INT. VON'S - REFRIGERATION AREA -- NIGHT

Jack sips a chocolate milk. Gus pops a beer.

GUS

Rule number three: take what they give you.

INT. VON'S - POKER AREA -- NIGHT

Harry, Jack, Duffy and Nipper sit at the table. Del and Gus stand by the bar.

DUFFY

I'm out.

Duffy rises, steps to the bar. A huge stack of money rests in the middle. The game's between Nipper and Jack. Nipper stares into Jack's eyes again. This time, Jack's a bit intimidated, keeps looking away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nipper checks his hand. J, 10, 9, 8, 7. Spades. Straight Flush. He slides half his remaining cash in. Jack taps his cards on the table.

NIPPER
Stop being a boy and man up to the
pot, you scrubber.

GUS
Nipper.

NIPPER
I know all about your run in at the
Keystone, how you -

GUS
NIPPER!

NIPPER
Call.

Nipper chuckles.

NIPPER
You know what the odds are of
beating me?

JACK
Yes, I do.

Jack slides all his money in.

JACK
Clockwork odds.

He lays down his cards. Royal Flush. Nipper's face goes ashen. Jack was bluffing, played him.

HARRY
(as Duffy mouths
words)
Holy shit!

Gus slowly approaches the table as Jack pulls in the pot. Nipper rises and walks to the bar.

DUFFY
Want a drink?

NIPPER
Fuck you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUFFY
 (to himself)
 Do I look thirteen?

Jack pulls out a small black bag, slides the money in, catches snippets of Nipper and Gus's conversation.

NIPPER
 I can't wear this loss. They're gonna audit me, Gus. They're gonna audit the safe...

Jack zippers the bag, grabs his coat. Gus turns.

GUS
 Jackie, you think you can give Nipper here another shot? Maybe a bit of a loan?

JACK
 I'm sorry. But I don't make deals with players. There are rules.

Jack walks from the room. Nipper turns to Gus, stares at him long and hard.

DUFFY
 So much for splashing around the Cambodian kiddy pool, eh, Nip?

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Jack's Firebird drives through frame. A few cars and moments pass before we hear some skidding and revving, then see the car re-enter the opposite side and slows to the shoulder.

INT. JACK'S FIREBIRD -- NIGHT

Jack stares at the Casino, sees VALETS park cars, people enter and exit. Glances at the money bag. Contemplates.

GUS (V.O.)
 Rule #1: You're gonna get hurt.
 Rule #2: Don't lose your pride.
 Rule #3: Take what they give you.

JACK
 Rule #4...

Jack thinks. Taps his head against the steering wheel.

JACK
 Rule #4. Aw, fuck rule number 4.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slaps the stick into gear, peels out.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Jack struts in the door, gives a cocky nod to the BELLBOYS and VALETS, winks at the CASHIERS, strolls past the slot machines and gaming stations, heads right for the high roller poker table.

A TUXEDOED GUARD, 20's, stands by the roped off area. Jack opens the top of the bag. The PIT BOSS, 40's, well built, steps over, begins the liability speech.

PITBOSS

Mr. Rourke, welcome to the VIP tables. Dealer rotation's at fifteen minute intervals.

Jack becomes impatient, nervous. He cranes his neck, looks around the casino.

PITBOSS

In the event you play alone, the house will sit various shills, announced to you, for continued gaming.

JACK

Yeah, yeah, I gotcha.

Jack attempts to step into the roped area. The Pitboss firmly places a hand on Jack's shoulder, continues.

PITBOSS

In the event of any discrepancy, I am sole judge and my decision stands. By accepting the first card, you agree with all terms presented, including your chip count. Do you have any questions?

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Watching from the bar, JENNY SEAVER, 40's, blonde, expensive dress, jewels, smiles mischievously.

Sitting next to her, but facing away, TAYLOR D'ORO, late 20's, black shirt and pants, glances into the mirror, sees the Pitboss unclip the rope, escort Jack to the poker table.

Jack pauses, stares across the floor. Taylor swivels around, holds his drink up in a toast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

I'll leave you boys to catch up.

She slips off her chair, heads for the elevators.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

Jack receives a rack of gambling chips. Like a pro, he stacks them in piles of five, then runs his finger across the top. The DEALER distributes the first round of cards.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Gus enters the double doors. Ascends a flight of stairs.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

The Pitboss speaks into a courtesy phone as ANOTHER PLAYER gathers the pot.

PITBOSS

Mr. Seaver, he's losing.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

MICHAEL

He's sandbagging. Next rotation, put in a mechanic and cut him down.

Gus enters.

GUS

This a bad time?

Michael points to the monitor.

MICHAEL

Your Railbird's in the Steam Room.

Gus steps over, furrows his brow upon seeing Jack.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Better yet, get a mechanic, clear the deck and sit Taylor.

Michael punches off the speaker phone, walks around the desk to join Gus. On the tv, the Pitboss clears all but Jack.

MICHAEL

He comes in again I'm taking Jenny to the Stanley Cup and you can watch from the Sports Book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jenny traipses through the office door.

JENNY

I doubt there'll be a next time.
Right, Gus?

GUS

I don't work for you.

JENNY

How unfortunate.

She settles in on the couch, smiles seductively.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

Jack watches the Pitboss whisper to the Dealer.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

Hold my glass or get the rope. Your
choice.

Jack turns around.

TAYLOR

Hey, pal.

Taylor's at the entrance with a drink and cigarette. The
Pitboss unhooks the velvet rope.

TIME CUT:

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor and Jack play through the dialogue.

TAYLOR

You been gambling?

JACK

A little. Yourself?

TAYLOR

This is Atlantic City, Jack. There's
always some idiot walking around
with loose money. No offense. Call.

Jack sets his cards down. He's lost the hand. Taylor smirks,
stacks and counts his chips like a pro.

TAYLOR

Fate's quite the comedian, don't you
think? Should have it's own show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both ante up.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Michael, Jenny and Gus watch the Dealer change on the monitor.

MICHAEL

It's done, Gus. Over. He's not gonna score. Only sure thing's Jack losing. Inside five minutes.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

A pair of hands throw out cards. It's Sasha.

TAYLOR

No kiss?

She stoically ignores him.

TAYLOR

Jack and I used to be tight. But then, the same's true about you, isn't it?

Sasha ignores him.

TAYLOR

You might've been high card before, Jack. But you can't beat me now.

JACK

It's a little hard with your knife in my back.

TAYLOR

It was an opportunity. Get over it.

JACK

It was betrayal.

TAYLOR

It was business. Call.

Jack's lost again. He's left with seven chips. Sasha gazes down on him with empathy. Taylor beams that cocky smile.

TAYLOR

What was that rule? Number 2, I think - don't lose your pride? Is that what you're riffing on?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Don't know why Gus thinks he can
teach class to something off the
street.

JACK & SASHA

Hey!

Jack abruptly stands. He and Sasha turn to each other in
surprised unity.

TAYLOR

Ha! Ha! Ha! You gonna wait for me in
the parking lot? Look at yourself,
Jack. I got you so pissed off you
can't strategize.

Jack regains his composure, sits. Sasha resumes dealing.

JACK (V.O.)

Rule #1. You're gonna get hurt. Rule
#2. Don't lose your pride. Rule #3.
Take what they give you. Rule #4,
Rule #4, Rule #4...

TAYLOR

Call.

His inner dialogue broken, Jack stares at the cards.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

As Gus watches the monitor, Jenny removes a cigarette case,
opens it for Gus. He ignores her.

JENNY

Did you quit again?

He steams. Jenny takes one for herself, lights it, blows
smoke at him. On the screen, Jack loses his last few chips.

JENNY

It must be horrible to realize
you're not as cool as you thought
you were.

GUS

Fuck you, Jenny.

JENNY

Get me drunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

Now, there's a challenge.

Michael opens the sliding glass door.

MICHAEL

Gus, let's me and you step outside.

JENNY

A fight? Can I watch?

Michael points at her.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HIGH STAKES POKER -- NIGHT

The pot's still on the table. Taylor pulls the chips in, glances over at Jack.

TAYLOR

Remember that night at the Black & White club? Here's a fifty...

He tosses Jack a chip.

TAYLOR

...get yourself a fat chick.

Taylor winks at Sasha, passes the Pit Boss. Devastated, Jack rises. He slides the chip over to Sasha.

JACK

For the diner check.

Reluctantly empathetic, she nods. Jack steps from the table. The Pitboss holds the rope for him, snickers.

PITBOSS

Have a nice evening, Mr. Rourke.

Jack walks through the casino, passes OLD FOLKS betting at the smaller tables, CASINO EMPLOYEES who seem to recognize him, YOUNG GAMBLERS trying to make a name for themselves, RICH MEN with GOLD DIGGING BABES lavishing affection.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - PATIO -- NIGHT

Gus and Michael overlook the Atlantic City skyline. Michael lights two cigarettes, hands one to Gus. Gus takes it.

MICHAEL

I sent Dieter and Wallace to the Taj Mahal. I want Jack gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

They're not hurting him.

MICHAEL

Well, that's up to you, Gus. You brought him in here. You let him come between us.

GUS

I played by the rules. You did, too, Mike. Until you met Jenny.

MICHAEL

I hold all the cards, Gus. And I say Jack's gone. The hurt's up to you.

Michael walks inside. Closes the door. Gus remains on the deck, very much alone.

EXT. USED CARS & PAWN - OFFICE -- NIGHT

The Firebird's parked outside the office. Through the window, we see Jack receive cash from the Used Car Salesman. Guess it is bad luck to spend money before you make it.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack opens his door, sees Dieter sitting on the bed and Wallace standing by the window. They've rifled through his belongings. Wallace turns around.

WALLACE

That was a nice car. How much you get for it?

Jack steps into the room, sees Gus at the desk. Dieter and Wallace frisk Jack, take his wallet, the car money.

DIETER

Bring back memories?

WALLACE

Bad ones, huh?

Gus nods, rises from the chair, removes his Black Hawks jacket, rolls up his sleeves.

GUS

Rule #4, Jackie. Don't forget who you are. Or where you came from.

Dieter and Wallace hold Jack as Gus throws a fist at us. His Hockey Championship ring fills the frame.

INT. TAJ MAHAL -- MORNING

Beaten and bruised, Jack approaches a game in the lobby, reaches to his belt, flicks a switch, removes his Double Headed silver dollar.

A glass enclosure holds three tiered levels full of silver dollars. Mechanical shovels repeatedly push them near the edge. Jack observes the tiers and their corresponding "chutes". He slips his silver dollar into an opening.

The coin rolls down the chute and vaults off an incline, lands on a stack of others but none fall to the receiving tray. He's lost everything. It sinks in. Jack straightens up, blinks, heads out of the casino.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY -- DAY

There's nothing around for miles except a cold, grey sky and what looks to be huge caverns of abandoned mines.

An old pickup piled high with bales of hay slows to the side of the road. The passenger door opens, revealing Jack's empty coin belt buckle as he steps from the vehicle.

He shuts the door and the truck pulls away.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE -- DAY

Where Mikita padded along the winding road, Jack now walks. He strolls across the dirt yard, gently touches a cross with "MIKITA" inscribed upon it. He ascends the stairs and tries the door. Locked.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE -- DAY

From the inside we see Jack peer through the windows. It's dark, dank. No life. The same furniture, only torn, worn. A leather recliner's perched in the middle of the room. Jack walks off the porch and around the house.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE - BACKYARD -- DAY

A row of old bird cages stretches a few yards from the house. Jack steps up to the door, slides a small window pane over, reaches in, unlocks the dead bolt.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

The door creaks open, catches on the swelled wood floor. Jack squeezes through. The sink's full of empty beer cans.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM -- DAY

Jack walks through where the swinging door used to be and flicks a light switch. All but one bulb has burned out.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - HALLWAY BY BATHROOM -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from steam floating beneath the door, continue down the hall to the living room, find the ratty furniture. A truck engine revs as headlights cross through the room. The engine turns off, a door opens and shuts. Footsteps cross the porch.

Deke enters the house, pauses at the hallway, then continues into the kitchen. The fridge opens and shuts, a beer top fizzes and spins on the floor.

Deke re-enters the living room, plops into the leather recliner and points an ancient remote. The same black and white television turns on. The picture's at a slight angle.

Jack exits the bathroom, sees his father in the chair, enters his room and closes the door.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Deke opens a bottle of beer. Wearing sweat pants and a t-shirt, Jack enters. There's nothing between them but apathy.

JACK

I need to stay for a while.

Deke sets his beer down, picks up a deck of cards. He shuffles and sets them on the table.

JACK

Uh-uh. You go first.

Deke cuts the deck, holds up a Queen. Jack reaches over, picks up the very next card, hands it to Deke, returns to his room, shuts the door. Deke stares at the card. An Ace.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

The change from the bare room's amazing. Woodcrafted cabinets on the walls, woodcrafted captain's bed, woodcrafted locker for hockey gear, the works.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from the whole house. In the living room, Deke sits down in his recliner, sets his beer on a table, lights a cigarette.

Meanwhile, Jack crawls in bed and turns out the light. We continue past Mikita's cross then over the hood of Deke's tow truck where we settle.

FADE OUT:

EXT. CAR JUNKYARD -- DAY

We hear clanking and banging while we look for Jack, see him arise from the wreckage and throw a tire onto the ground before disappearing again.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE -- DAY

Jack's on his back turning a wrench beneath the car, really fighting the bolt. It twists free, releases a stream of black oil. In the distance, Deke drives up in the Tow Truck. He stops by Jack's Volvo, shakes his head, pulls away.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DUSK

Jack's cleaned the counters, dishes, etc. It's safe to cook and eat here now. Jack opens up the cabinets beneath the sink, rummages around the piles of crap. Something catches his eye. An old metal bowl. Mikita's bowl. He rises, glances out at the bird cages.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Laughing, Jack, 11, tip toes through the living room.

DEKE (O.S.)

Jackie!

Jack climbs up into the recliner and tucks up his feet.

DEKE (O.S.)

Jack, did you feed the fighters?!?

Deke appears in the hallway, pokes his head in Jack's room. Unbeknownst to Jack, Deke's not playing the game.

DEKE

Jackie!!

Deke walks into the kitchen, rifles through cabinets, pours something into a bowl, exits out the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack slips off the chair and runs into the kitchen.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - KITCHEN - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Jackie steps up to the sink, looks outside the house. Deke sets the birdseed on top of the cages. The door's open, and Mikita's running around in a circle trying to avoid Deke's capture.

But Deke's not trying to catch him, he's pulling two Rooster carcasses out. Deke inspects them, then tosses the bodies onto the ground. He angrily drags Mikita out and pummels him with a beer bottle. Mikita's quickly silenced, killed.

Deke returns inside.

DEKE

You owe me two fighting cocks.

Deke grabs a beer from the fridge, leaves a devastated Jack staring out the window.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY -- DAY

The Tow Truck's parked in front of an old station wagon. Jack stands by the truck, his hand on the lever. Deke's with the car owner, LIZZIE BLACKFEATHER, 20's, Native American, and her baby.

The whine of the hydraulics prevents Jack from hearing their conversation. Lizzie's uncomfortable, nervously bounces the baby and peers over Deke's shoulder at Jack.

INT. TOW TRUCK -- DAY

Deke drives. Jack sits by the window. Lizzie's between them.

LIZZIE

How long you been back?

JACK

Couple weeks.

LIZZIE

You played hockey with my brother.

JACK

Yeah, we were on the same line.
What's he doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIZZIE

Working in New York. He got a scholarship to Johns Hopkins. It took a lot of courage but he's the first in our family to leave the Res. What happened to you? Did you graduate?

JACK

I left after the last game.

LIZZIE

That's unfortunate. Jon expected to see you in the Stanley Cup.

DEKE

(snickering)

Yeah, we were all betting on Jackie playing in the Stanley Cup.

Jack stares straight ahead.

INT. GARAGE OFFICE -- DAY

Jack and Lizzie stand in the office. In the garage, TWO MECHANICS check out Lizzie's car. Outside, Deke finishes his paperwork on the tow truck hood.

LIZZIE

My grandfather used to say, "the ax forgets but the tree remembers". You should visit the rink.

JACK

I'm through with hockey.

LIZZIE

No, you're not.
(to baby)
Can you wave goodbye?

Lizzie takes the baby's hand and waves to Jack as he exits. Deke picks up the clipboard and they move to their doors

DEKE

We're grabbing a beer.

JACK

I don't drink anymore

DEKE

I wasn't asking.

EXT. CAL BASSO'S BAR & GRILL -- EVENING

The sign's lights flicker on. The Tow Truck's out front.

INT. CAL BASSO'S BAR & GRILL -- EVENING

Deke sits deep in a booth alone while a WAITRESS clears the table. He splits open the Venetian blinds with his bottle.

EXT. ANSEL & SON ELECTRONICS -- EVENING

Across the street, Wayne and Charlie Ansel, still wearing matching glasses, lock up shop and walk from the building. The shop sign comes into view: *ANSEL & SON ELECTRONICS*.

They approach their car.

WAYNE

Think fast.

Wayne tosses the keys which Charlie barely catches. Both laugh as they get in the car.

INT. CAL BASSO'S BAR & GRILL -- EVENING

Jack exits the bathroom and approaches the booth. Deke releases the shade.

DEKE

Hey, Gretsky? Feel like playing some cards?

Jack shrugs.

EXT. CAL BASSO'S BAR & GRILL -- EVENING

Deke and Jack approach the Tow Truck.

DEKE

Think fast, Jackie.

Deke tosses the keys, accidentally hits Jack in the face. Jack throws them back. Deke ducks and they land in the middle of the road.

DEKE

Go get 'em!

JACK

You go get 'em.

DEKE

You threw 'em - you fetch 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

What am I six years old?

DEKE

You wanna walk home?

JACK

You wanna play cards?

Deke's caught, wants to continue the argument but also wants to play cards. He waits for traffic to pass, grabs the keys.

DEKE

You can forget about driving.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Soiled chips land on weathered felt. The once pristine poker table's now uneven, it's green cover torn, worn away. The wood's cracked, split, peeling.

Deke, Jack, Wayne and Charlie play cards beneath the bare light bulb.

DEKE

Call.

He turns to Jack who tosses his cards in.

DEKE

I'm thinking burglar, right? Then I hear the shower. My boy'd come home.

Next up, Charlie folds. Wayne though, matches Deke's bet. Deke and Wayne lay down their cards. Deke smiles, drags the chips in. Jack rises, walks through the living room and out the front. Charlie stretches.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna grab some air.

He rises, follows Jack out. Wayne watches Deke pile the chips.

WAYNE

Cut you for a shooter?

DEKE

You're on.

Deke shuffles, sets down the cards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WAYNE

Uh-uh. You go first.

Deke cuts first - Queen. Wayne picks the next card - Ace.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE - FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Jack leans against a pillar, staring at the endless stacks of cars. Charlie exits the house.

CHARLIE

Kicking it with Mikita?

JACK

Be careful. The wood's -

Charlie's foot goes through the floor boards up to his knee.

CHARLIE

A little help?

Jack pulls Charlie out.

JACK

The pillar's your best bet.

Charlie stands next to the opposite beam, pushes on the board, its sturdy.

In the background, Deke pulls a bottle of bourbon from the top of the fridge, spins off the top.

CHARLIE

You disappeared, Jack. Where'd you go?

JACK

I lived in South Jersey for awhile. Used to hitchhike to Atlantic City. But I'd always leave in a car.

CHARLIE

Why didn't you stay?

JACK

You ever gamble in a Casino?

CHARLIE

I had a bad gambling experience. I was nine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

There's a funny thing about Casinos. They won't flinch if you lose. Start winning? They get real concerned.

CHARLIE

You enter any poker championships?

JACK

Only thing those guys win is a plastic trophy. Nobody'd let a poker champ into a big money private game. That's worse than counting cards. The best won't tell you they're any good.

CHARLIE

You any good?

JACK

You know, when they'd ask The Great One about his goals, he refused to talk about 'em. But he'd talk all night about his assists.

Charlie nods his head.

CHARLIE

I have no idea what that means.

Jack smiles at him.

JACK

I may need your help down the line.

Charlie waves his arms out like he did as a 9 year old.

CHARLIE

Anything!

They share a smile. Charlie motions to the door.

CHARLIE

Coming back in?

Jack glances as Deke chugs whiskey and Wayne reaches for it.

CHARLIE

You can't hate him forever.

JACK

Watch me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack faces toward the front. Charlie enters the house.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jack steps inside. Still jockeying with the whiskey bottle, Deke winks at him. But Jack ignore it, turns left, heads into his room.

Deke lowers the bottle, shoves it into Wayne's chest and follows Jack.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack unbuttons his shirt.

DEKE
You ain't turning in? Come on,
Jackie, just a couple more hands.

JACK
I'm tired.

DEKE
Sit down and play.

JACK
Not tonight.

DEKE
I wasn't asking.

They lock eyes. Jack nods intensely, buttons his shirt.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack sits down as Charlie shuffles the cards. Jack reaches over, takes them away. He cuts the deck with one hand and shuffles them fast.

Staring straight at Deke, he proceeds to place a single card into his hand, face down. He holds a moment before turning it over. Jack continues creating three piles: face cards, aces, everything else.

He stacks the piles together and shuffles them quickly. He slaps the deck in front of Charlie who cuts them. Jack then deals cards face down around the table, except for his own, which are: A, K, Q, J, 10. All hearts.

Deke steams.

DEKE
Shuffle 'em again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack reclaims the cards and shuffles again. He slaps the deck in front of Charlie.

CHARLIE

Jack...

JACK

Cut the deck.

Charlie cuts them. Jack picks up the cards and slaps them in front of Wayne who cuts them a second time. Jack then deals out the cards. This time, Jack receives an A, 2, 3, 4, 5. Deke's ready to explode.

WAYNE

What time we gotta open the store?

CHARLIE

Early.

Their chairs scrape against the floor as they get up.

INT. ROURKE HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Car lights flash across Jack's wall as he packs things from his youth. Deke's footsteps precede him barging in the room.

DEKE

This is my house! I taught you to play. You owe me as much.

Jack continues to pack.

JACK

You taught me how to cheat and how to lose. I taught myself how to play.

DEKE

Don't flatter yourself, kid. You ain't that good.

JACK

Like you'd know.

Jack lifts up the bag.

DEKE

I'm throwing all your shit away.

JACK

No, you'll keep it. Like you kept Mom's. Only she never came back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Deke throws a fist at Jack but Jack blocks it, grabs Deke by the neck and pushes him into the hallway against the wall. Jack cocks his fist, challenges Deke to provoke him. But Deke lowers his gaze. Jack's in disbelief.

JACK

My whole life? All the threats to lose those games? You were bluffing?

DEKE

You wouldn't've made the goal, Jackie. You can bet on it.

EXT. ROURKE HOUSE -- NIGHT

The Volvo's out front on blocks next to the Tow Truck. Jack storms out. Deke follows him, stops on the deck.

DEKE

Jackie, I'm sorry. I got a little steamed is all. Come back inside. Let's play some cards. Jackie.....

EXT. HOCKEY RINK -- NIGHT

The large facility looms in the glowing of the moon. The fluorescent lights suddenly flicker to full blast.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - BLEACHERS -- NIGHT

A zipper slides down Jack's bag. A skate's laced up.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

JACKIE'S HOCKEY COACH, 40's, speaks to the TEAM, including Jackie and JON BLACKFEATHER. The other players are nervous. But not Jack.

HOCKEY COACH

Tonight, you go out on the ice as boys but come back as men. This game decides more than who wins State. It defines how you live the rest of your life. You'll discover if you're a man who reaches deep for his family or a man who turns his back on his dreams. No amount of coaching or rallying can change that. It comes from right here.

The coach taps his heart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOCKEY COACH

For some, hockey's a ticket to college, maybe even the Stanley Cup...

Jon nudges Jackie, smiles.

HOCKEY COACH

But it won't take you anywhere unless you have the courage to go.

He slaps his hands together and the team rises from their places. As other players pass, the Coach pulls Jack aside.

HOCKEY COACH

A couple Scouts'll be watching tonight. I'm thinking you've got bigger dreams than driving a tow truck.

Jack nods.

HOCKEY COACH

You don't skate, you don't leave. And you skate like Gretsky. Get out there and show 'em what you got.

INT. HOCKEY RINK -- NIGHT

Pucks fall from a weathered canvas bag, land on the ice.

INT. HALLWAY BY LOCKER ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack exits the locker room, turns into the hall. Standing by the door's Deke. He whistles.

DEKE

Yo', Jackie.

Jack turns, sees his father as the Coach exits.

COACH

Make it quick.

The Coach heads for the ice. Deke steps Jackie to the side.

DEKE

Tonight's not our night, kiddo.

JACK

Pop, the Scouts are here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Deke's silent. Disappointed, Jack tries to walk away but Deke grabs his jersey, yanks him back.

DEKE

I'm gonna put you through that wall.
You hear me? Through the fucking
wall. Now you're gonna avoid one of
your hat tricks or your appearance
is gonna change.

Jack looks up at him, contemplates it. Deke pushes off him walks away.

DEKE

Do what you want.
(under his breath)
Selfish prick.

INT. BLEACHERS - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The whole town's watching. Wayne, Charlie, everyone. Deke finds a seat near two BOOKIES, 50's. Deke gives a wink. Bookie #1 stares at Deke for a moment then motions to Bookie #2 who pulls out a cellphone, walks down the steps.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack sets his stick on the ice.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The face off.

The OPPOSING TEAM's menacing. They want the title. They're ready to fight for it it.

OPPOSING CENTER

You Rourke?

Jack stares at him. Silent.

OPPOSING CENTER

You deaf?

The Ref skates over. Holds the puck over their sticks. Jackie glances to Jon. Jon nods and Jackie turns back to the Opposing Center, smiles at him.

The puck drops.

Jackie gets a stick on it, passes to Jon. They skate up the ice and the puck comes back to him. He reads the defense, is in complete control.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

A line of pucks stretch across the ice. Jacks moves along it, slapping them with confidence. He reaches the last puck and stops. Looks at the scoreboard.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The scoreboard reads 1-3. The clock ticks down to the end of the second period. Jack skates backwards on defense as an opposing player approaches with the puck.

Jack's biding his time, watching, waiting, sees an opportunity, steals the puck, passes it to Jon.

They take off down the ice. The crowd's on its feet, in particular, TWO SCOUTS, dressed in taupe coats, deer skin gloves, sporty hats.

Jon passes the puck and Jackie skates around a Defenseman, past another. A third is racing for him as Jack slaps the puck into the net at the buzzer.

Jon puts a mit on Jackie's helmet.

JON
Rangers or Flyers?

JACK
Black Hawks.

JON
Black Hawks haven't won the Cup
since '62.

JACK
'61.

They race for the bench.

INT. BLEACHERS - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The crowd thins between periods. The Bookies take a seat on either side of Deke.

BOOKIE #1
We need to fix this.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack skates faster, gaining speed.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - BLEACHERS - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jackie rushes with the puck toward the goal, sees Deke standing by the glass with the Two Bookies on either side. Jackie passes off to Jon, but puts it out of his reach. A Defenseman gets the puck and re-directs it the other way.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack and Jon skate toward the box.

JON
What was that?

Jack's silent as he sits on the bench.

HOCKEY COACH
You like the tow business, Jackie?

Jack keeps his head down.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack's picking up speed.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack hops over the partition with the rest of his line.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack's stopped behind his goal.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack rounds the goal and heads the other way. We hear him breathing, panting. The crowd roars as the clock ticks down. Jack passes his team's bench. They jump up, raise their fists, cheer him on.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - BLEACHERS - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The crowd stands as do the Scouts.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack pumps. Breathes heavier, harder, deeper, controls the puck like a pro.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Opposing DEFENSEMEN attempt to check Jack but he's too agile, slips the puck through an opening in their legs,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

hurdles over....his skates land on the ice and he glides forward.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack sees the goal, picks his spot in the top left corner.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack passes the puck to Jon, skates past a defender as Jon slides it back to him. He sees the goal, picks his spot. But behind the net's Deke with the Two Bookies. Jack sees them, has to choose as.....

INT. HOCKEY RINK - SCOREBOARD - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Time's nearly out.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack reaches back for a slap shot.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jackie uncorks his shot.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

Jack does the same - but as he strikes the puck his stick SNAPS!! Wood splinters in every direction.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The puck flies toward the goal. But as the goalie stretches, it sails over the net and shatters the glass in front of Deke. Shards rain upon him.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - SCOREBOARD - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Time runs out.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - ICE -- NIGHT

The puck dribbles along the ice, stops long before the goal. Jack stands breathing hard with the broken stick in his hands. We'll never know what might have been.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - PARKING LOT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The Bookies sit in their car. Deke leans through the window. Bookie #1 hands Deke an envelope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOKIE #2

Don't lose it all in one place.

They pull out. Deke turns and heads for the rink, passes the Scouts on their way out.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Deke walks past various aisles looking for Jack, checks one, another, sees Jon by a disheveled locker.

DEKE

Where's Jackie?

Jon turns his back on him. Deke grabs Jon's shoulder, spins him around.

DEKE

Hey, Tonto, I'm talking to you!

Jon pushes Deke back. Deke glances around the room. All the players stare at him with anger, resentment.

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - BLEACHERS -- NIGHT

Gus stands at the top.

GUS

Those blades still fit?

Jack turns as Gus descends the stairs.

JACK

A little tight.

Jack skates over to the team box.

GUS

What's this wiggling crap with your elbow? That the form of an All-Star?

Gus enters the box as Jack removes his skates.

GUS

I stopped by your house.

JACK

Yeah?

GUS

The past is a nasty mascot.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS (CONT'D)

She never goes away and she changes depending on what you give her. Don't be one of those shlubs caught in what could've been. Acknowledge it, accept it, move on.

Gus picks up Jack's bag.

GUS

C'mon...

Jack grabs his hockey stick.

EXT. HOCKEY RINK - PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Jack and Gus walk for Gus's car.

JACK

I blew it, huh?

GUS

Kid, I knew going into this you'd cowboy out at some point.

Gus sets Jack's bag by the trunk.

GUS

I did say it'd be two shots, remember?

JACK

I wanted to do it on my own. I wanted you to be proud of me.

GUS

I'm already proud of you.

Gus continues to the driver's side, Jack walks to the back, waits by the trunk.

JACK

I'm gonna find the stake money, Gus. On my own. I'm gonna make it right.

GUS

Rule number 5.

JACK

Carry your weight.

GUS

That's my boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus winks, flips him a coin. Jack catches it, realizes it's his double headed dollar. An engine starts and Jack looks up, watches in amazement as Gus pulls out, leaves without him again.

Gus's tail lights disappear in the night.

EXT. JERSEY ROAD -- DAY

A Mack Truck pulls to the side of the road, it's hydraulic brakes hiss to a stop. The passenger door swings open. A duffel bag hits the pavement. Carrying his hockey stick, Jack hops out.

EXT. EMERALD SUITES - INDOOR POOL AREA -- DAY

A shower runs in the background. TWO KIDS tread water in a pool, watching with curiosity.

We TRACK from them, along the ground, pass Jack's duffel bag and hockey stick, see him taking a shower in his boxer shorts.

INT. TAJ MAHAL -- DAY

Carrying his bag and stick, Jack enters the casino and stands in front of the silver dollar game. He slips his coin into an opening.

The coin rolls down the chute, vaults off an incline, knocks off two others. All three fall into the pan below.

The silver dollar clicks back into his belt buckle.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. TAJ MAHAL - ROULETTE -- DAY

The music kicks in.

Jack's bag and hockey stick lay on the ground. His two dollars rest on red. The DEALER spins the wheel and rolls the ball. It bounces around before settling on red. Jack picks up his four bucks.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - BLACK JACK -- DAY

Jack motions with his head for another card. Smiles. He picks up bags and stick, walks to a larger table.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - BLACK JACK - BIGGER TABLE -- DAY

A plaque reads: \$1500 - 3000 TABLE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The DEALER flips over the house's cards. King and a 3. The Dealer hits and receives a 9. Jack smiles as the Dealer turns over his cards - 16. A pile of chips slides over.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - SLOT MACHINES -- DAY

Like a wave, a line of GAMBLERS pull down the machine's arms. Jack walks by. Following closely, a VALET carries his bag and hockey stick.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - CRAPS TABLE -- DAY

A HOT WOMAN steps from the game and we move into her place. At the end of the table, Jack tosses the dice.

We follow them as they bank and roll to a stop. Onlookers cheer. Jack claps as he receives his winnings.

INT. UPSCALE MEN'S STORE -- DAY

Jack walks out the store carrying his hockey stick. The Valet's behind him carrying the equipment bag, ANOTHER VALET carries boxes and bags.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- DAY

The door opens and the BELLBOY escorts Jack inside, followed by two Valets.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

The shower turns off.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

The curtains open. Wearing a new suit, clean shaven and groomed, Jack steps up to the window. His reflection stares at the city. The Music fades out.

END MONTAGE:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALLEY - BLACK & WHITE CLUB -- NIGHT

Jack approaches a BOUNCER. No sign, no neon. Only a street light, curtained entrance way and the Bouncer's bar stool.

BOUNCER

This is a black and white club,
fella. You need a sheriff's card to
enter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack takes out his wallet, hands him a Sheriff's Card identification for dealers.

BOUNCER

This is from '98.

JACK

New one must've got lost in the mail.

The Bouncer laughs, hands it back, opens the curtain.

INT. BLACK & WHITE CLUB -- NIGHT

Uncharacteristically downplayed, especially by gambling standards. Low light, jazz music, smoking, drinking. Nearly all the PATRONS wear black and white dealer uniforms from every casino in town.

Jack enters, looks around the place, finds Sasha sitting alone at the bar. He takes a seat next to her as the BARTENDER approaches.

JACK

Whatever the mechanic's having.

The Bartender nods, walks away. Sasha glances at Jack. Smirks. Then turns to face him, awaiting the inevitable inquisition.

SASHA

C'mon. Let's hear it.

JACK

That was some nice work. And I should know.

SASHA

My job's to keep money from leaving the casino. I did say I'd take your money at the table.

The Bartender sets a glass in front of Jack. He raises it.

JACK

To losing fifty grand.

Sasha doesn't budge. Jack smiles.

JACK

C'mon, Sasha.

Still nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
To losing Fifty Grand to Taylor.

Sasha grins.

SASHA
To losing fifty grand to a fucking
bozo.

JACK
Ouch. You know, you really should
take off the bracelet before ramming
your fist -

SASHA
Why are we talking?

JACK
I need a favor.

SASHA
I don't make deals with players.

JACK
Then let's wager. My cards still
here?

SASHA
Your cards?

JACK
Yeah, my initials are inside the
box. That makes 'em my cards.

SASHA
Really?

Jack nods.

SASHA
(to Bartender)
Gimme the cards.

The Bartender pulls a small wooden box from the counter, tosses it to Sasha. Jack catches it, opens the top. Five dice with various card insignias on their sides rest in velvet slots. On the inside of the lid are Sasha's initials.

JACK
Unbelievable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SASHA

Listen to me. Every day, marks, gamblers and fools lay down money for the big score. Some try and work me, hoping to make it back. I tell them all the same thing.

JACK

Which is?

SASHA

I don't make deals with players.

JACK

It's not a deal. It's a wager.

SASHA

It'll become a deal when you lose.

JACK

I'm not going to lose, Sasha.

SASHA

Roll the dice, Jack.

Jack shakes the dice, rolls them on the counter.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Gus inspects the raising of a banner. It reads:

"KEYSTONE CASINO WELCOMES THE WORLD SERIES OF POKER"

Nipper approaches him. Breathless, nervous. He speaks in broken sentences.

NIPPER

Gus, you gotta help me. They're gonna audit my safe. They're -

Gus continues staring at the banner.

GUS

One thing that's always bothered me. It's never the Stanley Cup of this, the Stanley Cup of that. Hell, I'd even settle for the *Super Bowl* of Poker.

(shakes his head.)

Baseball....

Gus walks away from Nipper.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Gus enters. Not far behind, Nipper pushes through some Patrons, catches up.

NIPPER

They're gonna audit the safe in a week and I ain't got the scratch.

GUS

That's too bad.

NIPPER

That's too bad?!? Your kid fucked me and if I go down I'm gonna fuck you!

Heads turn. Gus leans in toward Nipper, whispers.

GUS

You kiss your stock boys with that mouth?

Again, Gus walks away. Nipper exhales, falls into step.

NIPPER

Gus, I need to cover the scratch.

GUS

Tell you what. Hit the safe up for a couple hundred grand. Place a bet on Jackie.

NIPPER

I can't do that.

GUS

I think you're gonna have to.

Nipper slows down.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO-- NIGHT

The doors slide open and Nipper exits. Jack walks right by, doesn't notice him. Nipper steams, glances back, storms off.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Jack passes the Cashier Cage, a CASHIER does a double take, quickly picks up the phone.

Jack turns into the poker area, traipses by the Pit Boss and Dealers, turns toward the bar where Taylor sits drinking with TEX HARRIS, 50's, oil tycoon, big hat, bolo tie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Taylor glances at Jack, smirks, shakes his head.

Leaning against the rail of the balcony, Gus sees Jack move by Taylor. The walkie talkie Gus holds begins to squawk.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
GUS! I SEE YOU LEANING ON THAT
GODDAMN RAILING NOW ANSWER ME!

Gus exhales, raises the walkie talkie.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Dieter and Wallace rush from Michael's office, leaving him staring at the security monitors.

GUS (O.S.)
What can I do for you, Michael?

INT. DIETER AND WALLACE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Dieter drives while Wallace loads their guns.

INT. JACK'S TAXI -- NIGHT

Jack glances back, smiles, turns back around.

EXT. COCKFIGHT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jack gets out of the cab, enters the door.

INT. COCKFIGHT BUILDING -- NIGHT

The same scenario as before. People cheering, people betting, birds fighting. It's very loud in here.

Jack steps over to Birdy, the cockfighting assistant. Says something and Birdy shakes his head, motions to the cages. Jack pulls out his wallet, sticks some bills in the kid's hand, points at his watch.

Confused, Birdy stands still as Jack pushes through the crowd. Exits out the back. Birdy turns to the front door as Dieter and Wallace enter.

EXT. COCKFIGHT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Scores of police cars pull in.

INT. COCKFIGHT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Two birds fight in the arena. Dieter and Wallace search for Jack as Police burst into the barn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chaos erupts as Cops funnel and chase.

TRAINERS exit the arena and run for it. Cages are turned over, birds escape, feathers fly. Birdy stands in the middle, people rush past in panic.

The two razor birds fly over the barriers, chase spectators with their shiny blades.

EXT. COCKFIGHT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jack uses a coat hanger to pop the door of Dieter and Wallace's car. He opens it as police horde them out of the barn and toward a paddy wagon.

Wallace stops. Sees Jack waving from across the street.

WALLACE
Motherfucker.

The Cops push him to move forward.

WALLACE
Jack you MOTHERFUCKER!!!

Jack flips him off as he peels out.

EXT. USED CAR LOT -- NIGHT

Jack and the Used Car Dealer exit the office. The Dealer gets in Dieter's car, drives around back.

INT. MEADOWLANDS RACE TRACK -- DAY

Bets are placed at booths. Horse odds juggle on the displays. A bell sounds.

EXT. MEADOWLANDS RACE TRACK -- DAY

The starting gate opens and the horses rush out.

EXT. MEADOWLANDS MEZZANINE -- DAY

Gus eats from a box of popcorn as he walks with Jack.

GUS
That was pretty cute, busting the cockfighting place with Dieter and Wallace inside. Only temporary, you know. Be back in business under a week.

Gus and Jack head for the box seats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

They'll lose their Sheriff's Cards. Not to mention their vehicle. They were only doing their jobs.

JACK

There's doing your job. And there's enjoying doing your job.

Gus laughs.

GUS

I missed you, Jackie. I really did. I ever tell you about Clear Intent?

Jack's silent.

GUS

Clear Intent hooked me. I was about your age, maybe a little younger. We'd finished out of the playoffs so the first two lines hit Vegas. All week I'd been losing big, so I bet heavy on a long shot.

JACK

Clear Intent.

GUS

Sagebrush. Listen to the story, Jack. It came in. I was a rich man, let it ride. Lost it all on Clear Intent. Been chasing that score ever since.

They sit down.

GUS

I'm thinking when this is over, it might be time to get out of the racket. What's that Ben Hogan line? The practice line.

JACK

The more I practice the luckier I get.

GUS

That's the one. The Gambler's yin yang. Everything rides on it and each side can out do the other. It's a lot like romance. Except the odds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The horses finish. Gus checks his ticket. No winners. He lets them fall to the ground.

GUS

We have Nipper's tit in the ringer.
That electronics guy coming out?

JACK

Tonight.

GUS

I'm grabbing a corndog. You good?

JACK

I'm good, Gus.

Gus rises, pats Jack on the shoulders, walks away.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack lays on the bed watching Celebrity Poker.

JACK

Fold, asshole. Fold.

CELEBRITY ON TV

I'm gonna raise.

The phone rings. Jack picks it up.

INT. SASHA'S CHEVETTE -- NIGHT

Sasha sits in the driver's side, talks on a cellphone as the car idles.

SASHA

Feel like going to the movies?

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

JACK

What's playing?

INT. SASHA'S CHEVETTE -- NIGHT

SASHA

You are. I'm downstairs.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack sits up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SASHA
You just sit up?

Speechless, Jack glances around.

JACK
Uh...

INT. SASHA'S CHEVETTE -- NIGHT

SASHA
Put your face on and get down here.

She hangs up.

SASHA
Guys.....

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

The door shuts. Jack's left the tv on. The Celebrity who raised loses, sits back and watches the chips move to someone else.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

An old theater. Wood, stiff seats, classic films. On the screen - THE CINCINNATI KID.

Jack and Sasha follow an USHER down the aisle, head for the door in the back of the auditorium. A few PATRONS are sprinkled about. Film buffs. Two YOUNG KIDS making out. A HOMELESS MAN snoring.

Sasha helps Jack slip on a coat.

JACK
What's this?

SASHA
You're in from Detroit.

She slides a boarding pass into his breast pocket.

SASHA
I fished you from the bar.
(whisper)
You're the mark.

She winks at him. The Usher unlocks the door. He and Jack steps aside to let Sasha enter. She doesn't move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SASHA

Good luck.

She gives him a reassuring kiss on the cheek.

SASHA

I'll be in the balcony.

Sasha walks away.

USHER

Man, she's got a great ass.

Jack laughs, enters the door.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Sasha descends the stairs, finds a seat near the front.

Above the screen, an upper room with sound proof glass can be seen. Jack enters, shakes hands with various players.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

Cards fall through the air. Hands pull money over the felt.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Sasha sits with her feet on the railing. THE HUSTLER's playing now.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - BACK ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack's pile of cash grows. He looks around the table. Some men are lost in thought, some dismayed. Jack sets down his cards, drags in the chips.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - BALCONY -- NIGHT

The movie's over. The running lights are on, though it's still dim. Sasha's asleep. She slowly wakes. Jack's sitting next to her with a popcorn bucket in his lap.

SASHA

Hey....

She stretches her arms out, sees the bucket's full of money, quickly sits up.

SASHA

Jesus, Jack!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

I watch a lot of Celebrity Poker.

She looks at the private room, pulls on Jack's arm.

SASHA

We should get out of here.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL -- NIGHT

Jack and Sasha get out of a cab. Jack extends the popcorn bucket full of money. Sasha pays the Cabbie.

SASHA

Hang on a second.

She turns back to Jack.

SASHA

Isn't it expensive to stay here?

JACK

I have a thing for the Taj Mahal

Sasha laughs. Jack doesn't.

SASHA

You're serious.

JACK

I liked it as a kid. That's all.

SASHA

No, tell me. I want to hear.

JACK

When I was little, before my mom took off, she kept the house spotless. After my dad's all night poker games, she'd send me with the empties to the recycling plant, then brush and bucket the floor. I'd come back with the money and she'd always make me keep it by saying, "you don't need money when you live at the Taj Mahal". Anyway, staying here keeps me from forgetting what it's all about.

SASHA

And what's it all about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
The rules of the game.

SASHA
The rules. Yeah. That number six is
a bitch with wings.

JACK
The heart is deceitful above all
things.

She stares straight ahead, tries to read him. Jack wants to kiss her. And Sasha's not exactly opposed to it. They hold the moment. But neither makes a move and it dissipates.

They don't trust each other.

JACK
Listen, I'm gonna be tied up
tomorrow. Can you run an envelope
over to a friend of mine around one
o'clock?

SASHA
Sure.

He removes an envelope from his jacket. Hands it to her.

JACK
The address is on the front. It's a
present, will mean a lot to him.

SASHA
Enjoy the popcorn.

JACK
We should split this. If it weren't
for you -

SASHA
I take your money it'll be at the
tables.

He nods. She gets in the cab.

INT. TAXI -- NIGHT

As the cab pulls out, Sasha smiles, puts a hand over her face, glances back. He's still standing there.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jack enters the room. Charlie's stringing cables across the bed, through walls, under carpet.

JACK
Jesus Christ, Charlie!

CHARLIE
Relax, Jack.

Charlie sees the bucket.

CHARLIE
Holy shit! Is that full of -

Jack hands it to him. Charlie sits on the bed, sticks his hands in the bucket. Jack leans on the desk.

CHARLIE
I thought you said you sucked at gambling.

JACK
I said I don't talk about it.
(waving at wires)
So how's this gonna work?

CHARLIE
Only thing you gotta do...

Charlie picks a red electronic button off the floor.

CHARLIE
...is push this.

He hands it to Jack.

CHARLIE
It's wireless. Put it anywhere you want.

Jack studies the switch, glances around the suite, focuses back on Charlie sitting on the bed.

JACK
Crawl into the middle.

CHARLIE
Excuse me?

JACK
Crawl into the middle of the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Reluctantly, Charlie crawls into the middle. Jack glances in the mirror, moves to the side. He slips the trigger beneath the table top.

JACK

Right here.

Charlie sits up, looks jokingly seductive on the mattress.

EXT. CAESAR'S PALACE -- DAY

Sasha approaches the fountains, stops and looks at the envelope Jack gave her. She opens it. A Hockey Card from the 60's. Stan Mikita. Black Hawks.

SASHA

Oh-kaayy....

She slips the card back into the envelope, continues on.

INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - HALLWAY -- DAY

A door opens, revealing Tex. In the background, two KNOCKOUT SUPER MODELS have a pillow fight on the bed.

SASHA

I was asked to deliver this.

Tex takes the envelope, turns to the girls.

TEX

Baby, toss me my billfold.

SASHA

No, that's okay.

TEX

I know what you make.

One of the girls grabs Tex's wallet, throws it to him.

SASHA

I take your money, it'll -

Tex peels off a couple hundreds, hands them to her, winks, closes the door. Sasha studies the bills, contemplates, then wedges them into the key card slot.

INT. TANNING SALON - JENNY'S BOOTH -- DAY

UV tubes bronze Jenny's skin. They suddenly dim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY
Hello.....HELLO!

She pushes the lid up with one hand, holds a towel over herself with the other. On a nearby stool are a hotel keycard and Jack's double headed silver dollar.

The UV tubes blink on. Jenny smiles, lays back down.

INT. NEWARK AIRPORT -- NIGHT

Sasha sits in the airport bar. Travelers blur past, up and down the hall. Lost in thought, Sasha pays no attention.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Curtains billow in the breeze from the balcony.

Jack enters from the hallway and shuts the door. To the side, he steps on a floor switch to turn up the light. On the ground are a pair of women's shoes. On the bed, a purse.

Jack turns to the balcony and sees Jenny. She steps into the room, holds up a cigarette.

JENNY
Got a light?

JACK
I don't smoke.

Jenny slips off her dress, crawls on the bed. Jack leans on the desk, taps the red button.

JENNY
You could've avoided a great deal of unpleasantness if we'd done this before.

Jenny lays seductively on the covers.

JENNY
How do you want me first, Jack?

JACK
Alone. I want to watch you alone.

Jenny smiles, unhooks her bra.

JENNY
Do you like my breasts, Jack?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY (CONT'D)

I had them lifted after my last trip to Hawaii. They're all I've ever needed so I protected my investment.

JACK

They're very nice.

Jenny purrs, slides her hands along her thighs.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - ENTRANCE -- DAY

Sasha strolls through the doors.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - BLACK JACK TABLE -- DAY

Charlie sees Sasha enter the casino. But they've never met. He continues playing cards.

CHARLIE

Go fish. I mean hit me.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - ELEVATORS -- DAY

As Sasha pushes a button, the doors open. Jenny exits. Pissed off. Pushes past Sasha. Sasha watches her walk away, angrily looks upward to the elevator numbers.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- DAY

Jack snaps a CD into a jewel case. There's a knock on the door. He opens it. FOUR POLICE OFFICERS stand in the hall.

FADE OUT:

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Gus picks up a shot glass, downs the whiskey, sets it on the bar next to a videocassette, CD and manilla envelope. The BARTENDER stands with the bottle, pours more in the glass.

BARTENDER

Is it true you played with Gretsky?

GUS

This is Atlantic City. Everything's true.

Gus downs the shot, leaves with the CD, cassette and envelope.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gus knocks on the open door, steps inside. Michael rises to meet him. Sitting on the couch are Harry the Sheriff from the Von's game, Tex, Jenny, Dieter, Wallace and various police and official looking personnel.

MICHAEL

He finally did it, Gus. He's gonna take you down in his flames.

GUS

Yeah, yeah...

TEX

You got caught backing the wrong horse.

Michael sits at the desk. Gus remains standing.

GUS

What are the charges?

DIETER

Grand theft.

WALLACE

Auto.

Gus tosses the CD to Dieter.

GUS

Put that on for us will you?

Static fills the television screen. The image appears - Jenny on the bed, Jack with his back to camera.

JACK

Why did you tell them I stole money?

JENNY

Because Michael doesn't run the casino. I do. And you didn't appreciate that.

MICHAEL

Turn it off!

Gus hits the pause button. The image freezes.

JENNY

I was drunk. He took advantage of me. Practically raped me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus hits the play button. Jenny touches herself, moans.

GUS

Pretty powerful the way he holds you on the bed, forces your hands in your panties - all from the other side of the room. I haven't seen his act, but can David Copperfield do that?

Jack turns toward the camera, smiles. Gus hits the pause again, tosses Wallace the videocassette. Wallace glances at Michael, gets the nod, puts the tape in. Surveillance of Sasha handing Tex the envelope.

TEX

It was a hockey card.

GUS

Really? You sure it's not a check from Michael. He does set up profitable matches for Taylor which you underwrite?

HARRY

It doesn't change the car.

GUS

Well, it might. Seeing as a few weeks back he was gambling with the Sheriff, a pedophile, a drug runner and the head of security for a reputable casino. Can't imagine the Gambling Commission being too understanding. Let alone the Registered Voters.

HARRY

He can say what he wants. No one'll corroborate the story.

GUS

I will. And so will the Auditor's coming down to Nipper's.

MICHAEL

Gus, as chief of security, I'm disappointed in what you've exposed the casino to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

We've been friends a long time,
Michael. We're all we've got, you
and me. When one of us dies, the
other'll be alone in the world. But
it's time you knew what everyone
else does. You're pussy whipped.

MICHAEL

Dieter. Wallace. You can go.

Dieter and Wallace exit. Michael rises.

MICHAEL

Care to join me for a cigar, Gus?

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - PATIO BY OFFICE -- NIGHT

Michael smokes a cigar. Stares at Gus.

MICHAEL

Did Stan Mikita ever do this to
Bobby Hull?

GUS

He might've had Bobby insisted Jenny
skate their line.

MICHAEL

What's Jack want?

GUS

Full retraction. Reinstate his
Sheriff's Card. Drop all charges. A
spot in the championship.

MICHAEL

Spot in the championship.

GUS

Yes. And I want him to have this.

Gus hands him a piece of paper with a number on it.

MICHAEL

That's a lot of money.

GUS

It's what he would've made had this
whole thing not happened. Includes
pay raises, promotions. I did you
the courtesy of deducting taxes,
living expenses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

You really think I'm gonna go for this?

GUS

Yes, Michael. I do. Legally, its dick. But the next ten years the Gambling Commission'll have you shit through a strainer all the same. And with the Keystone hosting the World Series of Poker, how's it gonna play out on ESPN? Your wife lied about Jackie. Just like I explained all those years ago. I will say this for her: she kept with Rule #7.

MICHAEL

What's that?

GUS

Don't ask anyone to do something you ain't willing to do yourself.

Michael nods, looks off at the skyline.

MICHAEL

Tell me, Gus. Straight from the old days. How do we get back to the old days, you and me?

GUS

You broke the rules, Mike. You tell me.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Jenny stands facing the glass doors.

Gus and Michael continue to speak on the patio, though we can't hear them. As they finish their conversation, Jenny steps back, allows them to re-enter.

JENNY

Well, I think -

MICHAEL

Jenny, shut up.

JENNY

I will not shut up.

MICHAEL

Shut! Up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her mouth drops. She looks at Gus who nods.

GUS

Shut up.

Michael exhales.

MICHAEL

Jenny. I think it's time we re-evaluate our relationship. I suggest you retain counsel and...

Michael sighs. Gus and Tex eye each other, begin staring like prize fighters waiting for the bell.

MICHAEL

...come up with a number. Harry, you and your boys should drop all the charges. Let the car go and I'll settle the specifics with Gus.

TEX

You played with Gretsky, huh?

GUS

If you sit at the bar downstairs, yeah, I did.

TEX

You miss the game?

GUS

I miss stealing the puck back.

TEX

Care to water on our boys?

GUS

If you're predisposed to losing money I'd hate to disappoint you by not taking it.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HALLWAY BY MICHAEL'S -- NIGHT

Gus exits the room, walks up to Dieter and Wallace, stops inches from them. Stares from one to the other.

GUS

You should've gotten him that breakfast.

They cower, move aside. Gus continues down the hall.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - ELEVATORS -- NIGHT

Gus pushes the elevator button. Jenny's waiting next to him. She's burning with anger, suddenly turns, raises her hand to slap him. He catches her wrist, applies a little pressure, brings her to the knees.

JENNY

Gus, all you had to do was ask.

GUS

Stay away from my kids.

He applies more pressure. It's starting to hurt her. She nods. He slowly releases, helps her up. The elevator opens, he motions for her to enter.

GUS

Take care of yourself, Jenny.

Gus remains in the hallway as the doors close.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Gus steps onto the sidewalk, lights a cigarette, looks toward a group of Street Kids hustling tourists.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

17 year old Jack hangs outside with TWO OTHER STREET KIDS, RAZOR, 17 and SKY BOY, 17. Gus walks by wearing a less weathered Black Hawks jacket.

JACK

Holy shit! You know who that is?

RAZOR

Yeah. A mark.

Razor taps Sky Boy's arm, pushes off the ledge. He bumps into Gus as Skyboy picks his pocket. Gus keeps walking. Razor and Sky Boy rifle through the wallet, throw it into the bushes.

Walking away, Razor counts the money.

RAZOR

175!

SKYBOY

(skeptical)

Hey...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SKYBOY (CONT'D)
 (to others)
 It's 200 even!

Jack steps over, retrieves the wallet from the brush, smiles.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack stands against the railing with Dieter and Wallace as Gus approaches them. Jack tosses him the wallet.

GUS
 How'd you know I lost it?

JACK
 Saw the guy steal it.

Gus opens the wallet. Full of cash. He smiles, looks up at Jack, waves him to walk with him. They stroll away from Dieter and Wallace.

GUS
 Gimme the pitch.

JACK
 I need a job.

GUS
 How do I know I can trust you?

JACK
 You don't. That's why you start me off cleaning bathrooms and someday I get a shot at dealing cards.

GUS
 You any good?

Jack smiles.

JACK
 I make a few assists.

GUS
 You know what Ben Hogan says about luck?

JACK
 Who's Ben Hogan?

GUS
 Come back when you find out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus walks away, passes Dieter and Wallace.

GUS
Set him up with a breakfast meal
ticket.

They glance at Jack - dirty, disheveled.

DIETER
Fuck him.

They leave Jack empty handed.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - VALET PARKING - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

A VALET brings Gus's car forward. Gus hands him a tip and gets in. He pulls forward when Jack appears. Gus slams on the brakes.

JACK
The more I practice, the luckier I
get.

GUS
Tomorrow. 7 AM. Show up on time or
look for another wallet.

Beaming, Jack steps aside. He watches Gus drive off then turns around to where Razor and Sky Boy sit. They hop off the ledge, scowling, and walk away. He's on his own.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - VALET PARKING -- NIGHT

Sasha steps up to Gus, holds a cigarette.

SASHA
Got a light?

Gus turns around. Flips open a zippo.

GUS
I wish you'd quit.

Gus puts his Zippo away.

SASHA
I saw Jenny crying. Did Michael
cancel her Platinum Card?

GUS
Something like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SASHA

I'm sorry about calling the cops. I thought he and Jenny -

GUS

What do you want from me, Sasha?

SASHA

All I'm saying is he seems like a nice guy.

GUS

Just like Taylor. And your father before him.

SASHA

That's pretty mean, Gus. What happened? Michael making you watch the Stanley Cup from the sports book?

For a moment, Gus is taken aback. He shakes it off.

GUS

I can't keep worrying about you kids. My best friend's getting a divorce, I'm always broke, and why? 'Cause I keep taking in other people's problems.

SASHA

Is that what I am to you?

GUS

You and Jackie both. I teach you the rules but you forget 'em first chance. Why do I bother, tell me why. Go on and get out of here. I gotta figure how to plug up the shitter before it ruins the carpet.

Sasha backs off from him. Gus pulls out his pack, lights a cigarette.

GUS

And stop smoking!

She throws her cigarette aside.

EXT. GUS'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The other side of the tracks. Not what we'd expect, not what he'd like us to see, but it's his.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus parks in the driveway next to an old Chevette.

INT. GUS'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

We TRACK INTO Sasha as she's curled up sleeping in a chair. Light from the television flickers upon her face.

Gus gives her a kiss on the head, continues past a display of his hockey awards, into the hallway, passes a pink bedroom with feminine items, girl things, then into his room. He closes the door behind him.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY -- NIGHT

From far away, we see Gus's neighborhood. Panning across the lights, we find our way to the glitz, the skyline of Atlantic City and the neon of the Taj Mahal.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Exhausted, Jack sluggishly enters. The electronic equipment's disassembled on the table. Charlie stands facing the mirror. He talks a mile a minute while winding a cable.

CHARLIE

Man, this place is incredible. You know, I lost a lot of money, but the drinks are free and the ladies, Jackie, death by sexy, if you know what I mean...I feel like the king of Siam.

Jack pulls down the bed, lay down and pulls the covers up.

CHARLIE

I got everything broken down. A couple trips we'll have it all in my car. I'm assuming you're on schedule for -

Charlie turns around. Jack's asleep. Pausing, Charlie smiles, shakes his head. He grabs his coat and walks for the door. He turns off the main light, slips on the coat, gives Jack one last glance and smiles before leaving.

INT. GUS'S HOUSE - JACK'S ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The room's filled with posters and the like of someone 21. Music, hockey, chicks. Gus enters as Jack packs his things into a duffel bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

I know what you're gonna say, Gus. I broke a rule, let a player blind side me. *"Play your same game, no matter what the stakes."*

Gus sits down, closes the suitcase.

GUS

It's okay, Jackie. This Taylor, he's a gambler. You're a player. Gamblers win big hands, players win big games.

JACK

I didn't do it, Gus.

GUS

Kid, I believe you. It's important for you to hear it: I believe you. Now tell me about this plan. What's it involve?

JACK

Seven years, clockwork odds and your championship ring.

GUS

My ring?

Gus looks at his ring.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - VALET PARKING - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The ring's pulled back. Along with Gus's fist. Jack falls onto the pavement. A crowd gathers. Gus picks Jack up, hits him again, beats his way down the street.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - SIDEWALK - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

They've arrived at where they first met. Jack's face is bruised, his nose bloody.

GUS

Get out of here.

Jack rises, walks down the street. Dieter and Wallace step up behind Gus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIETER

Michael just sent word for us to do
the same thing.

WALLACE

We still get paid, right?

DIETER

Thank God we didn't get him that
breakfast.

Dieter and Wallace laugh, head back for the casino.

INT. GUS'S CAR - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack's walking along the road. It's minutes after the
beating. His shirt's ripped, he's bleeding.

Gus drives up, honks the horn. Jack gets in.

JACK

How do I look?

Gus won't look at him.

JACK

Try and hit a little harder next
time.

GUS

Stick to the plan there won't be a
next time.

JACK

And what's the wriggling arm? That
the form of an All Star?

GUS

Did you hear me?

JACK

I heard you, Gus.

GUS

This con. It ain't a given. You're a
sharp kid and a smart gambler. Get
ahead of yourself, I'm the one who
does the hurting.

Gus takes out a bandana, motions for Jack to wipe the wound.

EXT. NEWARK AIRPORT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack grabs his duffel bag, turns and faces Gus. They don't say a word. There's some emotional reticence between them. Delicately, Gus reaches out, gives Jackie a hug. Lets him go. Jackie glances at the airport. Gus nods.

Jackie heads for the entrance. Gus remains by the car, watches him like a father about to lose a son.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- DAY

The curtains are pulled back. Daylight streaks in. A MAID cleans the empty room.

INT. TAJ MAHAL - HALLWAY -- DAY

The Maid shuts Jack's door; pushes a cart down the hall.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - BOARDWALK -- DAY

It's cold out. No one on the Jersey shore. We do a 180, find Jack and Charlie staring at the Keystone.

CHARLIE

You nervous, Jackie?

Jack turns to him.

CHARLIE

Sorry...

They step forward. In contrast to the structure, its David vs. Goliath.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- DAY

It's even more crowded. Velvet ropes surround the main area. Poker tables fill the carpet, all with PLAYERS trying to get through the initial rounds.

Jack and Charlie enter, then part ways. We follow Charlie as he disappears into the crowd.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- DAY

Gus watches the controlled mayhem from his normal post. Sees Jack entering the poker area, being led to his table. Jack pauses, glances up. Gus smiles, give him a wink.

Behind Gus, a camera pans.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

The monitor displays Gus at his post. The room is uncharacteristically dark. Michael sits in his chair, staring out the window. He holds the deed to a house.

MICHAEL
He loves this house.

Sitting on the couch is Del.

DEL
He shouldn't've used it as collateral.

MICHAEL
When's it called in?

DEL
Tomorrow.

Michael nods.

DEL
You gonna cover it?

Michael glances at the monitors.

DEL
Face. Plus 10.

On the monitor, Gus walks away from his post.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Michael closes a financial binder, hands a check to Del.

MICHAEL
I don't suppose you could tell me which way Gus is betting?

Del smiles, walks to the door.

DEL
Enjoy the house.

MICHAEL
Yeah, fuck you, too.

Michael taps the intercom button.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Get me Sasha.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- DAY

Tex stands at the end of the bar, Gus a foot or so away. Both watch the poker floor. Taylor rises, pumps his fists in the air, drags his chips in.

TAYLOR

Circle of life, boys and girls.
Circle of life.

Tex snickers.

TEX

Kinda makes me wonder about my DNA.

Gus remains silent.

Taylor approaches. Tex smiles, walks him to the other side of the bar. A moment later, some excitement erupts at a far table. Full of energy, a PLAYER vaults up at Jack's table.

PLAYER #1

Unbelievable!!!

Gus watches Jack slowly stand, extend his hand.

PLAYER #1

You better win this, man. I don't
want to lose to just anybody.

Gus sighs in relief. Jack weaves through the crowd.

JACK

You okay?

GUS

Tonight's not our night, kiddo.

Jack smiles at him.

GUS

We're a team, right?

For a moment, it eels like Gus is pulling the same shit on Jackie as Deke. Until they both slowly crack and laugh.

JACK

You're getting better. I'll give you
that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

Let's get something to eat.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - RESTAURANT -- DAY

Gus and Jack work on a pair of steaks.

JACK

You gave her my room, didn't you?

Gus continues eating.

JACK

Did she paint it pink? Please tell me she didn't paint it pink.

GUS

She didn't paint it pink.

JACK

Really?

GUS

No.

Gus continues eating.

GUS

You told me what you wanted to hear. Made it clear if I didn't, your mood would change. Rule number 8, Jackie. Don't stray from the program.

JACK

There's no rule number 8.

GUS

Don't stray from the program.

JACK

There's no rule number 8, Gus.

GUS

Okay, there's no rule number 8.

JACK

I didn't think so.

GUS

Don't stray from the program.

JACK

Gotcha.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - SPORTS BOOK -- DAY

Del and Bates, the resident asshole from the grocery store game, stride through the rows of chairs and tables.

BATES
This is the guy.

Charlie rises with the gym bag.

DEL
You Charlie?

CHARLIE
Yes, sir.

Del nods. Pulls out a small notebook, scribbles something and rips out a piece of paper.

DEL
Give him the bag.

Charlie hands it to Bates, takes the note from Del.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- DAY

The action's fast, intense. Cards are dealt, picked up, set down, drawn. Chips slide across the table, PLAYERS fold, rub their temples, curse.

A BALD MAN loses, grabs a handful of chips and makes a dash for the door. SECURITY apprehends him.

An OLDER GAMBLER on oxygen sets his cards down, smiles, only to see his dreams dashed by an OLDER WOMAN with a full house. His WELL ENDOWED NURSE rolls him away.

Taylor coolly wins match after match after match. His COMPETITION morphing from one DISAPPOINTED PLAYER to ANOTHER, rising from the table angered by Taylor's snide disregard and "circle of life" asides.

Jack sets his cards with near stoic empathy.

WAITRESSES carry drinks in and out of the poker games, PIT BOSSES prowl the tables, television cameras roam the floor and security monitors pan back and forth.

VALETS and BAR BACKS move the extra tables from the floor. Through a series of DISSOLVES, the competition's thinned out. The crowded circle of tables begins to shrink.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - LATER -- NIGHT

We're down to two tables: Taylor's and Jack's. Taylor's up against an ASIAN MAN, 40's, with sunglasses. Jack plays an OBESE MAN, 50's.

TAYLOR

Call.

Taylor lays his cards down followed by the Asian Man. Taylor smiles, stands.

TAYLOR

Feels like Hiroshima, don't it?

ASIAN MAN

I was born in Vermont, white boy.

Taylor passes Jack's table.

TAYLOR

Don't blow it, pal.

Jack ignores him.

JACK

Call.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Taylor receives another whiskey coke. Tex slides it away.

TEX

Slow it down there, son. The horse ain't in the barn, yet.

Tex leans back, sees Gus and Jack walk from the velvet rope.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Gus drapes a protective arm around Jack.

GUS

Took a lot out of ya', huh, kid?

JACK

So what happens now?

GUS

The talk.

JACK

The talk?

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

A large pine table's in the middle of the room. Michael sits at one end, Dieter and Wallace behind him. A POKER OFFICIAL's at the other end, a group of GAMBLING COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES stand behind him. Gus and Tex are not here.

On opposite sides of the table are Jack and Taylor. Jack's looking at Taylor, not in anger or ego, but observation. Taylor displays his perpetual smirk.

The Poker Official spews out the rules, but Jack and Taylor aren't really listening.

POKER OFFICIAL
Head up. No shills. Straight poker.
Dealer rotation at 15 minutes
intervals...

We slowly PUSH IN on Jack as he continues to study Taylor. The Poker Official's voice trails off.

JENNY (O.S.)
What time's your relief? Jackie, I'm
talking to you. What time's your
relief?

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Jack wears a black and white uniform, sails cards onto the felt in front of Jenny.

JACK
Excuse me?

JENNY
What time's your relief?

JACK
Be here any minute.

JENNY
This is a dangerous city. You'll be
escorting me home. You drive a
stick?

She pulls a cigarette out, holds it to be lit.

JENNY
Life can be difficult without a
Sheriff's card.

Taylor steps up, pats Jack on the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAYLOR
Break time, buddy.

Jack walks away. Taylor extends a zippo.

TAYLOR
Need a light, Mrs. Seaver?

She places the cigarette in the flame, exhales smoke.

JENNY
What do you want most out of life?

TAYLOR
Be a champion.

Jenny watches Jack leave.

JENNY
Help me with a small problem.

She turns to Taylor.

JENNY
And I'll make that happen.

EXT. BLACK & WHITE CLUB - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack and Taylor sit at the bar, play with the card dice.

TAYLOR
Gus got you these, huh?

JACK
Yeah, I was complaining how we all suspect each other of cheating so no one plays here. Gus being Gus, he found a solution.

Jack places the dice in a designer wooden box. His initials are on the inside. He snaps the lid closed, calls to the Bartender.

JACK
Hey!

The Bartender turns. Jack tosses him the box.

JACK
In case someone wants to play.

The Bartender sets them behind the register.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAYLOR
You always win, Jack?

JACK
I always try to.

A PRETTY BLONDE and a CHUBBY BRUNETTE 20's, enter the bar.

TAYLOR
You see 'em?

JACK
I see 'em.

The girls notice the boys. The Pretty Blonde whispers to the Brunette then leads her over. Taylor swivels around in his bar stool, really has his eye on her.

TAYLOR
Hey.

She walks past him, stands in front of Jack.

PRETTY BLONDE
Wanna dance?

Jack looks around the room. No one else is dancing. There's not even a designated dance area. He turns back to her. She's smiling.

TIME CUT:

INT. BLACK & WHITE CLUB - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Later.

Taylor and the Brunette sit at the bar. She's trying to get his attention but he's watching Jack and the Pretty Blonde play with the dice at a floor table.

PRETTY BLONDE
Where'd you learn to gamble?

JACK
Took a home course.

She laughs. The Brunette tries to interest Taylor.

BRUNETTE
Where you from?

TAYLOR
Dallas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUNETTE

Nice.

TAYLOR

Not really.

BRUNETTE

You work in a Casino?

TAYLOR

An Uncle of mine invested some oil money in a casino.

She perks up.

BRUNETTE

Oil money?

TAYLOR

Yeah. Oil money.

Brunette motions toward Jack and the Pretty Blonde.

BRUNETTE

What about your friend? Is he from oil money?

Taylor laughs.

TAYLOR

He's a street kid with a hard on for the big time. If it weren't for some has been hockey jockey he'd be selling blow out of a motel.

They watch as Jack makes the Pretty Blonde laugh.

BRUNETTE

You like her better than me, don't you?

Taylor furrows his brow, doesn't look at her.

TAYLOR

I don't like fat chicks.

This stings the Brunette. She rushes out of the room, catches the Pretty Blonde's attention. Both she and Jack turn to Taylor. He shrugs, takes a sip from his drink.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack, in his uniform, stands in front of Michael's desk.
Dieter and Wallace relax to the side. Gus steps up to him.

GUS

Jack, this is serious. Now, I'll
only ask you once. Did you take the
money?

JACK

No.

Gus wants to believe him.

JACK

I've been a fan of yours since the
Black Hawk trade in '85.
(pulls out necklace)
This coin here? Me and my mom used
it as a puck when we'd play hockey
on the kitchen floor. You've been my
idol since I was 8. I wouldn't let
you down.

WALLACE

A witness says different.

Dieter opens the office door. Jack turns as Taylor enters.

TAYLOR

Sorry, pal.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - HALLWAY - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Dieter slowly closes the door.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - CONFERENCE ROOM -- NIGHT

Empty. The talk's over.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

A new pack of cards SLAPS against the table. We TILT UP.
It's Sasha. She peels off the cellophane, tosses it into a
receptacle with the box, proceeds to shuffle. She starts
slowly, then speeds up, gets her shit together.

Raising the cards, she glances at the clock: 9:59:55, 56,
57, 58, 59 - 10:00 PM. Like a crash of lightning, she
begins the game.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cards fly on the felt. Jack and Taylor pick them up, discard, toss in chips, call. Taylor rakes in the winnings. More cards fly, more chips tossed, another call. Taylor rakes in the winnings.

Jack slows the game, folds on a few consecutive hands. Jack glances at the clock. 10:15. Sasha sets the deck down as ANOTHER DEALER steps in.

A new pack of cards SLAPS against the table. The NEW DEALER begins his shift. Jack and Taylor accept their cards.

TAYLOR
Guess she misses me.

Jack's silent. Continues the game.

TAYLOR
You know you got a guy when he
doesn't respond to bitch ragging.

Taylor throws some chips in the pot.

TAYLOR
Call.

Jack sets down his cards. Taylor leans back, laughs, drags in his chips.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Gus sips from his glass. We RACK FOCUS to the Stan Mikita hockey card.

TEX
1962. This card books for \$175. I
looked it up.

Gus ignores him.

TEX
Say, just between us Boy Scouts, did
you retire 'cause you were ready to
move on, or 'cause the other players
knew you couldn't keep a secret?

Gus doesn't say a word. Tex rises, walks toward him.

TEX
Seems to me, no one in a pair of
Wranglers'd walk out of the lime
light just 'cause someone said they
spit on the sidewalk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tex tosses the hockey card down on the bar.

TEX

But then again, I ain't never been
to Canada. Much less Chicago.

Tex sets his drink on the card, walks away. Gus stares at it, and, despite himself, removes the drink, wipes the water ring from Stan Mikita, slips it in his pocket.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor rakes in another pile. Tex passes him, whispers in his ear.

TEX

Put your dick back in your pants
before we lose the odds.

Taylor shoots a look at Tex then over to Jack.

Another deck of cards slams on the table. Taylor picks up his cards, Jack his. Jack exhales, tosses his cards down.

JACK

Fold.

Taylor frowns, drags the chips in. Another set of cards are dealt. Both ante up.

JACK

Fold.

Taylor stares at Jack. Drags his chips in. More cards dealt. Jack folds again. Taylor steals a look at Tex who's glaring at him. Both ante up. More cards are dealt. They both toss them into the middle.

JACK & TAYLOR

Fold!

Taylor slides the pot toward Jack. Jack slides them back. Taylor pushes the table to the side and the two begin fighting.

Like the hockey player he was, Jack instinctively pulls Taylor's shirt up from the back, over his head, throws a few punches before Pitbosses rush in with Security.

The Poker Official shakes his head as the table's picked up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POKER OFFICIAL

Jesus Christ! What do they think
this is? Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots?
It's not, it's...it's...Hungry
Hungry Hippos!

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Gus and Jack ascend the stairs.

GUS

We're talking five in the box,
Jackie!

Gus glances at Jack, the two share a smile.

GUS

How's your fist? You didn't hit him
with your dealing hand?

They reach the top of the stairs. Michael approaches.

MICHAEL

You wanna tell me how a hockey match
breaks out on a poker table?

Gus and Jack are silent.

MICHAEL

That's what I thought.

Michael pushes past them, descends the stairs.

JACK

I better get back before Taylor
calms down.

Jack walks away. A moment later, Nipper appears. This guy
looks *worked*. Nervous, scared, anxious - you name it.

NIPPER

He's gonna pull it out right? Got an
Ace up his sleeve?

Gus heads for the stairs.

NIPPER

Gus?!? Gus?!?

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Gus reaches the bottom of the stairs. Harry, the Sheriff,
stands on the floor. He's staring at Nipper, glances at Gus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY
For the kids.

GUS
For the kids.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - VALET -- NIGHT

Walking toward the road, Tex takes it to Taylor.

TEX
You're letting a dime store loser
bring you to his level. He's beating
you! Beating you!

TAYLOR
He kept folding!

Down the road, the group of Street Kids hang out.

TEX
Go on!

He pushes Taylor toward them.

TEX
That's your destiny.

Tex shoves Taylor hard, forces him to the ground.

TEX
This ain't family, Taylor. This is
money. You ain't making it for me,
then you ain't family.

Tex leaves him on the sidewalk. The Street Kids notice,
point at Taylor, laugh.

STREET KID
Jack kick your ass!?

Taylor rises, straightens out his shirt.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

A new pack is slapped open by the Dealer. He shuffles the
cards and passes them out. Jack picks up his cards: 5, 6, 7.
Headed for a straight.

Jack looks up at Taylor, grins. He gently taps his dwindling
stack of chips.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

On the monitor, Jack rakes in a big pot. Taylor rubs his brow. Tex steps up in front of the screen, angrily turns to Michael.

TEX

I need you to be as straight as six o'clock.

MICHAEL

He could have Jackie win to prove he's the best.

TEX

That's what I want to hear.

MICHAEL

Or he could have him dump.

TEX

My comfort level's in the red.

MICHAEL

He's pissed off, alright? We're gonna have to wait it out.

TEX

For suspense I go to Vegas. I'm in Atlantic City for results!

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

A crowd surrounds them.

It's getting intense. Taylor's feeling the pressure. Where he was calm and cool earlier, now his eyes dart up to Jack after each movement.

TAYLOR

Call.

Jack fans his cards on the table, reaches for the chips.

TAYLOR

Wait!

Both Jack and the Dealer turn to Taylor as he double checks the cards.

TAYLOR

Shit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack sorts the chips. His pile doubles Taylor's.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Gus sits at the bar. Tex passes him, takes a seat on the other side. The Bartender sets a napkin on the counter.

TEX

Double Jack and coke.

Tex and Gus lock eyes.

TEX

You ever hear the phrase "conflict of interest"?

GUS

One of my favorites. Next to Gretsky's "you miss 100% of the shots you don't take". He told me that before my hat trick in '85.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Michael steps up to the railing, watches from Gus's perch.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jacks takes a card and discards one.

JACK

Call.

Taylor sets down his cards. A flush. Jack lays his down. Also a flush. There's a collective "whoa" from the on lookers. The Dealer observes the cards.

Jack has a king, Taylor a queen.

DEALER

(pointing at Jack)

High card wins.

Taylor's agitated, squirms as Jack rakes in the pot.

TAYLOR

You can't win class, Jack. Buy as many new shirts as you want. It don't mean that old one ain't stained.

Jack pushes all his chips into the middle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
Whaddaya say?

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

We PUSH IN on Gus and then Tex. It's up to the players, their skill and the charity of Lady Luck.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

A new pack slaps against the table. Sasha's back.

Taylor's wicked nervous, wipes the sweat off his forehead. He stares at the cards as they're removed from the deck.

Jack watches too, but with more self control.

GUS (V.O.)
Rule number one...

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack and Gus watch from the stands.

GUS
You're gonna get hurt.

Trainers remove the birds from the cages.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

In slow motion, Sasha slings out the cards.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The trainers attach the razors to the bird's feet.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jack picks up his cards. Taylor does the same.

GUS (V.O.)
Rule number two...

EXT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack stands by Gus's car. Gus sits in the driver's seat.

GUS
Don't lose your pride

Gus drives away.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The Trainers walk their birds around the ring.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jack fans out his cards.

GUS (V.O.)
Rule number three...

INT. VON'S - REFRIGERATION AREA - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Jack and Gus stand with a milk and beer.

GUS
Take what they give you.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The Trainers toss the birds, let them go.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor holds his cards, his eyes darting back and forth to Jack.

GUS (V.O.)
Rule number four, Jackie...

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Dieter and Wallace hold Jack as Gus rolls up his sleeves.

GUS
Don't forget who you are. Or where
you came from.

Gus throws a fist right at us. His Hockey Championship ring fills the frame.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The birds attack. The audience stands, roars.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jack looks at his cards. Three queens, a pair of Threes.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The birds are a ball of scraping. Feathers fly.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor's hand is worse. A pair of 5's, a pair of Jack's.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Gus and Tex watch.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

One bird has gained the advantage, the other continues to fight, however much in vain.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor sets two cards face down. Jack does the same.

GUS (V.O.)
Rule number five...

INT. HOCKEY RINK - PARKING LOT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Gus and Jack stand by Gus's car.

JACK
Carry your own weight.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

The Dealer looks to both men.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - PARKING LOT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Gus flips Jack's coin to him, drives away.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The dying bird has a few moments left, in vain tries to crawl away.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Taylor's hand is the two pair. He looks at the cards. His eyes light up. Jack smirks at him.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The bird is dead.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jack's hand is the one pair, but only one queen.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BAR -- NIGHT

Tex smiles. Glances over to find Gus's seat vacant.

INT. COCKFIGHTING BARN - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The trainer holds up the winning bird.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Relieved, Michael hunches over at the railing.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Jack's smirking. Taylor's taken aback, glances at the two face down cards, back to Jack. Jack rises, walks around the table to Taylor, extends his hand. Taylor has no choice but to shake it.

JACK

Only big money game you're gonna see's on Celebrity Poker.

Taylor swallows hard, looks to the side, sees Tex approach.

JACK

Enjoy the trophy.

Jack walks from the table, into the crowd.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - POKER TABLES -- NIGHT

Sasha picks up Jack's two face down cards, sees the pair of Queens, turns to Michael.

SASHA

I did my job. I gave him good cards.

From her other side, Gus removes the cards from her hands, slips them in a pocket.

GUS

Shhh....

Michael stares hard at Gus, watches him walk away.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Jack watches as Taylor's awarded the small plastic trophy. Gus steps up next to Jack.

GUS

It's over, son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Through the crowd, they see Sasha.

GUS

She's a great girl. Let me tell you, I watched her for months. Never gave in to a buck. And she had offers, Jack. Lots of them. That's why I sent her to Casino School. She's funny, smart. Easy on the eyes.

Jack takes this all in, looks at her.

JACK

You set me up to fall for her didn't you? The meal tickets, the Black & White Club...

GUS

You keep forgetting who's teaching the rules of the game. Well, here's a secret Jackie. They apply to love. Not gambling.

Sasha approaches, stands next to Jack.

SASHA

You boys talking about me?

Gus steps over so he's opposite them both.

GUS

Take it from an old man who's lost more than you'll ever win. Get out. Before you wake up in your 40's wondering where it all went wrong.

SASHA

Where're we going?

GUS

Not we, kid. I'm too old for adventure. And I'm not missing the Stanley Cup.

Gus tosses his car keys to Jack.

GUS

Leave it at the dock.

JACK

I don't understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

You learned to sail while you were away. And I set up an offshore account so you can get by if you live smart. I expect a post card now and again. Bottle of rum around Christmas.

Sasha steps up to Gus, hugs him.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO - BALCONY -- NIGHT

Michael watches Jack and Sasha walk away from Gus.

INT. KEYSTONE CASINO -- NIGHT

Gus glances up at the balcony. Michael's gone.

INT. GUS'S CAR - VALET PARKING -- NIGHT

Jack and Sasha get in Gus's car. Jack turns to her. Extends his hand.

JACK

Jack.

SASHA

Not buddy?

Sasha smiles, leans over, kisses him.

EXT. KEYSTONE CASINO - PATIO BY OFFICE -- NIGHT

Gus takes a seat next to Michael. Michael slides over the deed to Gus's house.

MICHAEL

You knew I wouldn't keep it. Don't try and deny it, Gus. That house is the only thing you've bought with clean money. Hockey money. I can't believe you bet it.

Gus picks up the deed.

GUS

I didn't bet it. I traded it for a boat.

Michael sighs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

I'm not lying to you, Mike. Did Del say different?

Michael stares at the deed. Gus laughs.

GUS

You ain't getting it back.

MICHAEL

Keep it.

GUS

I plan to.
 (sticks it in his
 jacket)
 Where's this leave us? You and me?

MICHAEL

Guess we'll have to keep drinking until we find out.

Gus pulls a deck of cards from his pocket.

GUS

Crazy eights?

Gus starts shuffling.

MICHAEL

If you're predisposed to losing money I won't disappoint you by not taking it.

Gus begins dealing.

MICHAEL

Let's get a bottle of Jagermeister.

GUS

We ain't co-eds, Mike.

MICHAEL

Life's changing, Gus. We gotta try new things.

GUS

Are we back on for the Cup or am I watching from the Sports Book?

MICHAEL

We're back on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Michael takes out a pack of cigarettes, offers one to Gus.

GUS

I quit.

MICHAEL

Again?

Gus nods, stares at the pack.

GUS

Gimme one

INT. TAJ MAHAL - JACK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

We're looking at Charlie's blissful expression. PULLING BACK, we see a BEAUTIFUL GIRL kissing his cheek, further back reveals another, and another, even further, we see most of the room, bucket stands chilling champagne are sprinkled throughout the room as more BEAUTIFUL GIRLS dance to music, move in and out of the deck.

EXT. MARINA -- DAY

It's a beautiful day. Clear blue sky, light breeze. The only thing more exotic than the weather is the yacht we're looking at. Duffy, from the Von's poker game, moves into frame, unties the rope, throws it to Jack.

Jack secures it on the deck, steps over a bikini'd Sasha, takes the Captain's Wheel.

INT. GUS'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

We're looking at Gus's trophy case. The awards have been moved over. The cards Jack dumped are in the middle, along with the Stan Mikita hockey card. We TRACK past them, through the living room.

GUS (O.S.)

Careful of the floor, son.

We venture into the hallway, approach the extra room, see newspaper on the floor, white paint on the walls. Birdy's helping Gus redo the room.

BIRDY

Any color I want?

GUS

Yep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIRDY
You got black?

GUS
Any color but black.

EXT. CAR JUNK YARD -- DUSK

An orange-blue sky looms over row upon row of stacked cars. We move along the road, as if we were following Mikita in the first scene, find out way to the house. Grass has grown over the burnt out dirt and there's a new Tow Truck on a proper driveway. Life goes on...