

CROUPIER

A screenplay by

Paul Mayersberg

Shooting Script

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FADE IN:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

To begin with he was Jack Manfred...

whistling sound takes Jack back in time.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

JACK is walking through a maze of open-plan partitioned
offices. He is casually but fashionably dressed, hair dyed
blond long, a nervous elegance about him, almost

unrecognisable from the croupier's face.

He searches for the right office. He finds it. The name on the open is GILES CREMORNE.

INT. GILES' OFFICE - DAY

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

GILES

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

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

JACK

Three years, two months. March
'93.

GILES

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

JACK

She went back to South Africa.

GILES

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

JACK

We all played the field.

GILES frowns at a memory, an implication. GILES'S mobile phone buzzes. He picks up.

GILES

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

JACK
(suddenly)
I want a job, Giles.

GILES
(cautiously)
All right. As what?

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

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

JACK opens a pack of Gitanes.

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

A WOMAN SECRETARY puts her head into the office.

GILES
Give me ten minutes, Fiona.

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

GILES
Fiona used to read for me.

He winks at JACK.

GILES
Let me tell you about our operation.

We like personality authors. People the public recognises. Celebrity's what sells books. We can always find someone to do the writing. First, we need the face. Then the concept.

(he is reading the fax)

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

(smiles)

With plenty of sex, of course.

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

JACK

Interesting, Giles. I will think about it.

The machine spits out several coins. GILES takes them.

GILES

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

JACK nods, extends his hand. A firm handshake.

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

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

The untidy evidence. To the accompaniment of the music, a discordant version, three dog-eared copies of 'The Invention Of The Wheel', A Novel by JACK MANFRED. Worn furniture. A pile of literary magazines. Two elegantly arranged vases of flowers. Women's fashion magazines. Books everywhere, including 'Scarne on Gambling', 'The Education of A Poker Player', 'Delta of Venus' and other books by Anais Nin. A woman's dress, back from the cleaners. A framed etching of Cape Town, South Africa, in the eighteenth century. Finally...

Beneath the iron barred window, with a view of the iron steps down from the street, JACK sits at the dining table. In front of him is a word processor. He toys with a glass of vodka, smoking a Gitane, and leafing through a soccer fan magazine. He starts to touch-type, looking at the screen, not the keyboard. Words appear, letter by letter... THE BALL... A NOVEL... BY JACK MANFRED. He pauses to drink.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

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

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

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

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

INT. JACK'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

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

MAN'S VOICE

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

JACK hesitates, then picks up.

JACK

Dad, I'm here.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

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

JACK SR.

How's it going?

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

JACK

Great.

JACK SR.

Found a job?

JACK

No.

JACK SR.

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

JACK SR pulls out a cigarette - a Gitanes.

JACK

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

JACK stubs his cigarette out.

JACK SR.

(lighting his
cigarette)

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

JACK

(drinks)

It's not that.

JACK SR.

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

JACK reaches for a cigarette.

JACK

All right, I'll think about it.

I won't. Goodbye, dad.

JACK SR.

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

JACK lights up.

JACK SR.

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

As he speaks, he watches passing WOMEN.

JACK SR.

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

JACK
(exhales)
All right, dad. Yes, I'll call
him.

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

JACK
So how are you doing, dad?

JACK SR.
Great. I've just started a new
company. Solid financing. It's
good.
(pause)
I love you Jacko, you know that

JACK
Yes, I know that.

JACK SR.
Don't let yourself down.

JACK
I won't. Goodbye, dad.

JACK hangs up.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

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

JACK SR.
(smiles)

Sorry to keep you. What'll you have?

INT. JACK'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

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

JACK'S VOICE

Jack knew something was wrong. He'd forgotten Giles' advice. Giles said three words.

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

DRUNK'S VOICE

I want to fuck the whole world over.

INT. CASINO - DAY

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

INT. CASINO - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

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

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

Jack.

REYNOLDS examines a file in front of him.

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

(frowns)

Has he?

REYNOLDS

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

(Jack nods)

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

JACK

No.

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

REYNOLDS

Where did you go to school?

JACK

(surprised)

I was at Beadles.

REYNOLDS

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

INT. CASINO - HALL - DAY

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

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

Do you have a Salon Prive?

REYNOLDS

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

REYNOLDS goes to one of the tables with JACK.

REYNOLDS

Let's see you handle the chips.

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

JACK

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

REYNOLDS

We check every four days.

JACK

Why four? And not three or five?

REYNOLDS

(shrugs)

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

JACK starts to stack the chips in piles from a hundred pounds to five. REYNOLDS watches. JACK'S fingers work fast. In a matter of moments he has the lot stacked.

JACK
Stacks of 20. Rows of 5.

REYNOLDS
Any exceptions?

JACK
25 pounds or 25 pence in fours.

REYNOLDS
Give me 365.

He presses a stopwatch in his hand. JACK quickly sets out four neat piles, three of 100, one of 65. All four piles are in denominations of ten and five.

REYNOLDS
Very good. Now take these colours...

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

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

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

REYNOLDS
(impressed)
Very good.

INT. CASINO - DAY

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

JACK

You use two alternating, don't you?

REYNOLDS

We do.
(hands him a second ball)

JACK

(hesitates)
Where's the magnet?

REYNOLDS

They've been tested.

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

JACK

No more bets.

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

REYNOLDS

Could you stop that for a minute?

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

JACK

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

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

JACK

23 Red. Odd.

He now rakes away the losers' chips and pays out the

smallest first, before getting to the major pay-out on 23.
It's all very efficient and speedy.

REYNOLDS is increasingly impressed.

REYNOLDS
Haven't you forgotten something?

JACK
(thinks)
I don't think so.

REYNOLDS
Wipe your hands.

JACK takes out a handkerchief.

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

JACK
What happens if I want to sneeze?

REYNOLDS
You won't. Not without permission.

JACK laughs. REYNOLDS smiles. They like each other.

REYNOLDS
Fine. Now let's move on.

INT. CASINO - DAY

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

REYNOLDS
How many aces are left?

JACK
Five.

REYNOLDS

I make it six.

JACK

Five.

REYNOLDS looks down at the table.

REYNOLDS

What makes you so sure?

JACK

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

REYNOLDS

Good call.

JACK pulls out the shoe.

JACK

You want me to check?

REYNOLDS

(irritably)

I said good call.

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. CASINO - OFFICE - DAY

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

REYNOLDS

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

your picture.

JACK

What for?

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

I don't gamble.

REYNOLDS

Ever?

JACK

I don't gamble, Mr Reynolds.

REYNOLDS doesn't pursue it.

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

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

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

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

REYNOLDS

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

JACK

How?

REYNOLDS

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

JACK shakes his head

REYNOLDS

Girlfriend?

JACK

Yes.

REYNOLDS

She's not in the gaming business
is she?

JACK

No.

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

A CCTV Centre over the casino. JACK crosses the room,
looking down through a glass floor at the empty casino
below. REYNOLDS walks over to a series of twenty or more
banked TV monitors with many Video 8 tape decks.

REYNOLDS

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

see it again.

JACK

Very impressive.

REYNOLDS

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

REYNOLDS presses a button. Together they look at a TV monitor which shows an overlook of a roulette table where a WOMAN is cheating. REYNOLDS freezes the frame.

REYNOLDS

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

INT. CASINO - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Again in the office. REYNOLDS extends his hand. JACK shakes it.

REYNOLDS

You can start Monday week.

JACK

Fine.

REYNOLDS

That hair will have to go.

JACK

Fine.

Pause.

REYNOLDS

Are you planning to make a career

in casino work?

JACK'S VOICE

And end up like you?

JACK

I just want the job.

REYNOLDS

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

REYNOLDS

Excuse me...

REYNOLDS picks up and listens. The CAMERA descends.

REYNOLDS

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

(hangs up)

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

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

JACK

Yes. What's the salary?

EXT. CAR - STREETS - TWILIGHT

The street lamps have come on. JACK is at the wheel of a

Sixties Austin-Healey.

JACK'S VOICE

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

EXT. USED CAR LOT - TWILIGHT

Under a canopy of coloured lights A CAR DEALER is walking round jack's car, examining it.

DEALER

(fake American accent)

What kind of deal you looking to?

JACK

What's the Blue Book price?

DEALER

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

DEALER

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

He bends down and looks underneath the car.

JACK

How about fifteen hundred?

DEALER

How about five hundred.

JACK
What?!

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

JACK
Is that your idea of arithmetic?

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

JACK
Eight-fifty.

DEALER
Seven-fifty.

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

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

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

INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE
Jack imagined people reading his
book. One day he would enter their
heads, play with their imaginations,

test their feelings...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

INT. JACK'S BASEMENT FLAT - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

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

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

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

MARION
I couldn't resist them.

JACK
You mean I won't resist them.

JACK goes to her.

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

JACK
You want me drunk?

MARION
(laughs)
I won't be that long.

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

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

JACK sits drinking his vodka. Looking up through the barred

window he sees women's legs passing on the street above.
On the desk beside the computer is the glass of wine.

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

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

JACK

You really are a beautiful woman.

MARION

(pleased)

It's not just inner beauty, is it?

JACK

Turn around.

MARION whirls to show off her dress.

JACK

You're all I desire.

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

MARION

Where did you get it?

JACK

I sold the car.

MARION

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

JACK

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

MARION

Take it back. Till you sell your book.

JACK

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

MARION

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

She raises the glass of wine, drinks.

JACK

I'm not much of a bet.

He drains his glass.

MARION

You are to me.

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

MARION

Come into my world.

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

MARION

(whispering)

You're my prisoner.

JACK

I've got something to tell you.

MARION

I want to hear it.

JACK

I've got a job.

MARION

(startled)

What job?

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

JACK

In a casino. As a croupier. A dealer.

MARION

How did you land that?

JACK

It came my way. 450 a week.

MARION

(sits up)

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

JACK

I had training. In the Republic.

MARION

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

JACK

I start Monday week.

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

MARION

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

JACK'S VOICE

Not an enigma, just a contradiction.

MARION looks deeply into his eyes.

MARION

You sold the car. You got a job.

What's the third thing? Tell me.

JACK

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

MARION

I love you Jack, you know that.

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK

Are you trying to read my palm?

MARION

You've got such beautiful hands.

JACK'S VOICE

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

Their hands interlock. She leads him into the bedroom.

INT. NAIL STUDIO - DAY

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

MANICURIST

What line of work are you in?

JACK

I'm an undertaker.

MANICURIST

Really?

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

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

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

BARBER

Do you work round here?

JACK

My office is in Shanghai.

BARBER

(surprised)

What do you do?

JACK

I'm an arms dealer.

The BARBER stops for a moment, nonplussed.

INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - DAY

In front of the mirror JACK buttons a white shirt and skillfully ties a black bow tie. His short hair is lacquered back. He reaches down for his black jacket... puts it on. The transformation is complete.

As he scrubs his nails, JACK sees a WOMAN in the mirror. She is changing her clothes. She pulls off her Indian cotton dress. She's wearing pants but no bra. Quite unselfconsciously, not looking Jack's way, she dresses in her casino clothes.

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

BELLA

I'm Bella.

JACK

Jack Manfred.

BELLA

Hi, Jack.

(fits herself into
the uplift bra)

Welcome to the cesspit.

JACK
Is it that bad?

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

JACK'S VOICE
Like trouble, Bella. You look fine.

BELLA
The punters love it. Tits in
uniform.

She laughs.

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

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

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

JACK
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

A fat INDIAN PUNTER addresses JACK.

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

JACK
He doesn't work here any more.

INDIAN
Well, let's hope you know your
job.

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

WOMAN
Tens, please.

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

WOMAN 2
Perhaps this man will bring us
luck.

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

WOMAN
(to Jack)
What's that aftershave you're
wearing?

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

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

JACK
Last bets, please.

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

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

The BLONDE puts ,2,500 on red and ,2,500 on black. PUNTERS
round the table are astonished at the size of the bet and
the strangeness of betting both red and black.

JACK spins the wheel. Black 10 comes up. JACK takes the
red loss and moves it across the table to the black win.
The BLONDE picks up the ,5,000 without a reaction and leaves

the table.

JACK notices that she goes straight to the cashier's desk.
JACK clears the chips away, starts to pay out.

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

MAN

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

JACK nods.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

Later. A different set of PUNTERS. The wheel spins. A GREEK
MAN sits at the table. He doesn't attempt to bet. He looks
around to see a CROUPIER in his late 20's waiting to replace
JACK at the wheel. This is MATT. He gives JACK a curious
complicitous smile. JACK collects the chips and pays out.

JACK

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

MATT takes over.

MATT

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

REYNOLDS appears and takes JACK'S arm.

REYNOLDS

(quietly)

Good work, Jack. You handled yourself well.

At the table, MATT glances at the GREEK man.

INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

Suddenly a delayed wave of elation came over him.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Across the casino an Oriental man, MR TCHAI, is walking towards the table with REYNOLDS. Behind him is a 6 foot 5 bulging BODYGUARD. REYNOLDS comes up to JACK's table.

REYNOLDS

Why don't you take a break, Jack.

JACK

(puzzled)

All right, Mr Reynolds.

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

BELLA comes up, smiles sweetly, and takes over from JACK.

BELLA

Good evening, Mr Tchai.

MR TCHAI

Good evening.

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

REYNOLDS
Enjoy yourself, Mr Tchai.

REYNOLDS waves to a WAITRESS who comes over.

WAITRESS
(to Mr Tchai)
Your usual, sir?

TCHAI nods. He hands her a ,50 note.

WAITRESS
Thank you, sir. Enjoy your game.

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

The WAITRESS goes. The other PLAYERS at the table look at
MR TCHAI, wondering who he is.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

REYNOLDS walks with JACK across the casino.

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

JACK
Does he win?

REYNOLDS
(smiles)
He's a good customer.

JACK'S VOICE
A good customer is a consistent
loser. Was that what Mr Reynolds
meant?

INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT

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

MATT

Where do you live, Jack?

JACK

Over the river.

MATT

Have you got transport?

JACK shakes his head.

MATT

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

JACK

Thanks.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

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

MATT

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

JACK

Nice car.

MATT

She's my baby.

JACK

How long have you worked at the casino?

MATT

Coming up to two years now.

(mysteriously)
But I was away for six months.

JACK
You've done pretty well.

MATT
(smugly)
Not bad. I have other interests,
of course.

MATT spins the car round a corner.

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

JACK
No thanks, Matt. I need my eight
hours.

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

JACK
Some other time.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

JACK pours himself a vodka, smoking a cigarette.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

MARION
What's the time?

JACK
I don't know.

Clock beside the bed reads 4.30.

MARION
How did it go?

JACK
Fine.

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

MARION
You're shaking. What is it?

JACK
Tension. It'll go.

MARION
Poor baby. This'll relax you.

She starts to massage his neck, his hair.

MARION
I loved it blond.

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

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

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

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

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

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

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

illuminates the old etching of Cape Town.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JANI
In 20s, please...

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

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

JACK
(frowns)
Place your bets.

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

JANI
5...8...11.

JACK places them for her.

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

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

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

JANI bets again on number 11. The MAN follows suit. The wheel spins. JACK watches the table. JANI glances at him. The MAN moves closer to the table to one side of JANI. Concealed in his hand is a chip. As the ball bounces round and lands again on number 11, the MAN deftly adds the chip to the square. JACK clocks it.

JACK

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

MAN

(in Arabic accent)

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

JACK

(carefully)

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

MAN

I put them on together.

JACK

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

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

MAN

Now look here, you...

REYNOLDS

Is there a problem, sir?

MAN

Yes. This croupier is accusing me of cheating.

JACK

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

The MAN interrupts JACK and touches JANI's arm.

MAN
(to Jani)
Do you think I cheated?

JACK and REYNOLDS wait. JACK glances at JANI.

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

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

MAN
(angrily)
No. I won. I want to be paid.

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

REYNOLDS
Pay the gentleman. In full.

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

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

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

JANI
(surprised)

You know where I'm from?

JACK nods and gives her back the two chips.

JACK
I've lived there.

JANI
(sweetly)
Well, thank you anyway.

JACK watches her leave.

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

JANI heads towards the cashier. JACK sees REYNOLDS arguing with the irate ARABIC MAN near the entrance.

He looks back to the table.

JACK
Place your bets.

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

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

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Again MATT is driving JACK home.

JACK
(hesitantly)
Look Matt, there's something I
have to say to you. I saw you
cheating.

MATT
(violently)
What the fuck are you talking about?

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

MATT
(angry)
I don't cheat, Jack. You've got it
wrong.

JACK
I'm not going to report it.

MATT slams on the brakes. The car comes to an abrupt stop.
MATT turns to JACK, furious.

MATT
What are you, a cop?

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

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

JACK
Because if a supervisor knew I'd
seen you and I hadn't reported it,

I'd lose my job as well. And I can't afford that.

MATT

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

(softens)

I'm on your side, Jack. I don't need an enemy.

JACK

You're talking about complicity.

MATT

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

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

MATT

OK, now let's unwind.

He puts the car into gear and drives off.

JACK'S VOICE

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

EXT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

MATT
Hey, Andros!

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

MATT
This is Jack.

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

INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A smoke-filled private dining room. There is a poker game in Progress. FIVE MEN are playing, a DOZEN GIRLS are dotted about watching. There is a trestle table laden with Greek food, from stews to salad, buffet-style. An improvised bar with ouzo, vodka and wine. It's help-yourself.

JACK
Who are these guys?

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

JACK
And the girls?

MATT
Just girls. What are you drinking?

JACK
Vodka. Straight. On the rocks.

MATT
Good call. Help yourself.

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

JACK
Does Bella come here?

MATT
That bitch? No.

INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

MATT
Hey Jack, join us.

JACK
No thanks.

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

JACK
I don't gamble.

GIRL appears behind JACK's shoulder.

GIRL
You don't gamble, but do you smoke?

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

JACK
Sometimes.

GIRL
(hands him the
smoking joint)
How about now?

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

INT. RESTAURANT - LAVATORY - NIGHT

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

Marion. I'm on my way...

INT. RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

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

JACK

I'm off. I need to sleep.

MATT

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

JACK

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

JACK turns and leaves, helping himself to another drink.

MATT

Wasn't he the one who shot himself?

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

MARION

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

JACK

Don't play the cop with me, Marion.

MARION

Take that back!

(furious)

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

JACK

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

MARION

Are you drunk?

JACK

Probably.

MARION

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

JACK

Do you have to swear all the time?

MARION

(hurt)

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

JACK

Marion, stop this.

MARION

(near to tears)

What do I mean to you? I want to

know. Tell me.

There is a pause.

JACK

You're my conscience.

MARION

Haven't you got a conscience of your own?

JACK has no answer. He goes into the bathroom.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY

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

EXT. PICCADILLY - EVENING

JACK emerges from the Underground, one of the CROWD.

EXT. PICCADILLY - STORE - EVENING

JACK goes into a large Department Store.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING

MARION is store-walking in the women's underwear department. It is Sale time. Baskets of tights and knickers on display. CUSTOMERS are rummaging. She is on the look-out for thieves. She jumps as JACK places his hand on her hip.

MARION

What are you doing here?

(looks round
nervously)

You know the rules.

JACK

What about a drink on the way home?

MARION

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

JACK

I'm on at nine.

MARION

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

EXT. PICCADILLY - EVENING

JACK pauses in front of an airline office. There is a large picture of Cape Town, and a special ticket offer.

JANI comes out of the office. Her hair, tied back earlier in the casino, is now glamorously fluffed out. She sees JACK. He doesn't see her.

JANI

Thinking of going back?

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

JACK

Oh hello.

JANI

(smiling)

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

JACK

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

JANI

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

JACK

Impossible to calculate.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. RITZ HOTEL - NIGHT

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

JANI

(raises her glass)

To coincidence.

JACK

(drinks)

There's a casino in this hotel.

JANI

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

JACK

So why did you come to my casino?

JANI

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

JACK

First visit to London?

JANI

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

JACK

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

JANI

Near the casino.

JACK

In the casino.

JANI

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

JACK

Your father?

JANI

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

JACK

The debts.

JANI

And the lies. Gamblers are born liars.

JACK

(nods)

And superstitious too. It's like witchcraft.

JANI

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

JACK

We all came from Africa, supposedly.

JANI

Do you believe in astrology?

JACK

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

JANI laughs out loud.

JANI

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

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

JANI

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

(looks at her watch)

I must go. Let me pay for this.

JACK

Absolutely not.

JANI

Toss you for it.

JACK

I don't gamble.

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

JANI

(low voice)

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

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

JANI

I'll understand if you don't.

(smiles)

But I hope you do.

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

In front of a mirror JACK trims his hair with nail scissors. He is dressed in his croupier's uniform. He straightens his bow tie.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. UNDERGROUND COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

JACK sits in the compartment.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

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

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

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

WOMAN

Animal!

JACK

Would you mind being more careful, sir.

MAN

I've got 'flu.

He coughs again, but into a handkerchief.

WOMAN

Then go back home. To the zoo!

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

JACK

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

The SUPERVISOR signals a WAITRESS over.

SUPERVISOR

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

AGNES

Yuck.

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

The last PUNTERS are leaving. The overhead lights come on. A CROUPIER is wheeling away a trolley with thousands of chips. TWO MEN are covering the tables with shrouds.

INT. CASINO - STRONG ROOM - NIGHT

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

MATT

I can't give you a lift back tonight.

JACK

Don't worry.

REYNOLDS places the notes in steel boxes.

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

BELLA

(calling)

Jack. Do you need a ride?

JACK
No. Thanks.

BELLA
My car's in the garage.

JACK
Maybe another time.

BELLA
I'll take you up on that.

JACK
(pleasantly)
Goodnight.

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

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

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

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

JACK
Wait a minute. You got yourself barred.

MAN
It was you, you shit.

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

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

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

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

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

JACK

Now I'm going to kill you.

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

BELLA

Jack!

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

BELLA

Jack. Leave him! Come on!

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

BELLA

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

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

JACK

(coldly)

He won't cheat again.

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

INT. BELLA'S FLAT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Water is running in the basin. BELLA puts JACK'S jacket on

the lavatory seat. She starts to undo his tie. JACK wipes his blood-stained nose with a wet flannel.

BELLA
You're shaking.

JACK
It's the tension.

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

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

INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

BELLA
Excuse the mess.

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

BELLA
Careful.

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

BELLA
Don't tear anything.

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

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

JACK spreads BELLA on the bed. She tugs his trousers down.

He rips her black underwear away.

INT. BELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

BELLA

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

JACK strokes her bottom.

JACK

I hate cheats.

BELLA

All men are cheats.

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

BELLA

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

JACK looks at her.

BELLA

But don't worry, I'm clean as a
whistle. I only did S & M.

(she hands the joint
to JACK,)

No blow jobs. No screwing.

JACK

Why did you quit?

BELLA

I got scared.

JACK

(inhales)

I can imagine.

BELLA

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

JACK

You called the casino a cesspit.

BELLA

Well it is. But I know where I am.

JACK hands the joint back to BELLA.

BELLA

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

JACK

I despise the job.

BELLA

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

JACK doesn't answer.

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

BELLA

What do you really want to do?

She puts the joint in an ashtray.

JACK

The Indian rope-trick.

BELLA

Look, now I'm pumping you. I'm

sorry. It's none of my business.
It's just that you're not like the
others.

JACK

Not like Matt, you mean.

BELLA

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

BELLA touches a bruise on JACK'S body.

JACK

Ouch.

BELLA

Sorry.

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

JACK'S VOICE

Jack could hear Matt saying it...

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

At last he had found what he'd
been looking for. A clear and simple

theme. And a hero to act it out.
Little Matt...
(Pause)
...Chapter One.

INT. CASINO - WASHROOM - NIGHT

MATT is shaving.

MATT
I look like shit.

JACK is scrubbing his nails at a basin.

JACK
Rough day?

MATT
Rough life, Jack.

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

PAT
Hi. I'm Pat.

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

JACK
(to Matt)
What happened to Bella?

MATT
I'll tell you later.

JACK is mystified.

INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT

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

MR TCHAI
What happened to Bella?

JACK

She was re-assigned.

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

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

JACK

(formally)

Good evening.

JANI nods impassively.

JACK'S VOICE

Jack knew this was no coincidence.

Why had she come?

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

JANI

One thousand even. In fifties.

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JANI
In fifties.

The MEN at the table look at JANI.

JACK'S VOICE
Or did she think he would help her
win?

INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT

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

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

JACK glances at the MEN at the table.

JACK'S VOICE
He could see Mr Tchai was counting.
He couldn't risk it.

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

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

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

JANI
Good night. Thank you.

She walks away from the table.

JACK
Good night.

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

TCHAI looks at JACK.

MR TCHAI
Pretty woman.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM/SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

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

The phone rings. In the bedroom JACK picks up.

JACK
Hello...

EXT. SOUTH AFRICA CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK SR
How's it going, Jacko?

INTERCUT between JACK and JACK SR.

JACK
Fine. I took the job.

JACKSR
Good for you. I was wondering what happened.

JACK
I tried to call you, dad, but they

said your line was disconnected.

JACK SR

(jovially)

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

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

JACK

I'm getting there.

JACK SR

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

(pause)

There goes my other phone.

JACK

Goodbye dad.

He hangs up. MARION turns the last page of the typescript. She's finished.

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

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

MARION gets off the sofa.

MARION

I don't like it.

JACK

Why not?

MARION

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

JACK

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

MARION

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

JACK

(interrupting)

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

MARION

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

JACK

Marion. It's a book.

MARION

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

(softens)

There's no hope in it.

JACK

It's the truth.

MARION

Without hope there's no point to anything.

JACK

Now wait a minute. What's so hopeful about your job? Spending the day catching poor people stealing. You said yourself the organised gangs get away with it. At least in the

casino everybody gets caught. Rich or poor, the odds are the same. It's all relative.

MARION

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

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

JACK

(coldly)

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

The doorbell rings again.

MARION

The door, Jack.

JACK

Leave it.

MARION

No. Answer it!

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

BELLA

You fucking little shit! You shopped me.

JACK

What are you talking about?

MARION watches, numb.

BELLA

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

JACK

I don't know anything about it.

BELLA looks over to MARION.

BELLA

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

(to Jack)

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

JACK

(firmly)

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

BELLA

You're all scumbags.

MARION

I agree.

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

EXT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

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

JACK

Bella!

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

MARION

Go on. Go after her!

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

EXT. PICCADILLY DEPARTMENT STORE - EVENING

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

JACK turns and walks away.

JACK'S VOICE

But Marion wasn't his mother...

INT. CASINO - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

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

JACK

He's paying out in stacks of 25.

REYNOLDS

I can see.

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

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

REYNOLDS

Little shit.

JACK'S VOICE

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

REYNOLDS looks up from the screen.

REYNOLDS

(grudgingly)

Thanks for the information.

JACK

A pleasure. Pity about Bella.

REYNOLDS

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

JACK lights a cigarette.

REYNOLDS

(shakes his head)

Sorry. No smoking in the Nest, Jack.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY

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

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

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

Across from the cash desk near the entrance a book signing is in progress. A small crowd surrounds a Middle Eastern author called HABIB dressed in a kaftan. GILES is with him. A PHOTOGRAPHER is there. A few camera flashes.

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

GILES
(calling)
Jack!

Hearing his name, JACK turns. GILES comes over.

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

JACK
(touching the back
of his neck)
I'm working on that soccer story.

GILES
(vaguely)
Right.
(suddenly)
Look, I must get back to Habib.

JACK
Habib?

GILES

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

(puts his hand on
Jack's shoulder)

Take care.

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

GILES

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

(removes a card
from his pocket
book)

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

(conspiratorially)

Bring a friend. I've plenty of
room.

JACK

(looks at the card)

I'll try and make it.

GILES

Looking forward!

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

A camera flash.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE
Chapter Four...

INT. HONDA - NIGHT

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

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

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

JACK
How did you hurt your hand?

JANI
Just an accident. Nothing.

JACK
Turn left ahead.

The car turns into a lane.

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

JANI
That's fine.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

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

INT. HONDA - NIGHT

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

JANI

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

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

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - TENNIS COURT - NIGHT

A floodlit tennis court. A racquet smacks a tennis ball. JACK sits with GILES drinking Bloody Marys watching a game of mixed doubles.

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

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

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

GILES

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

JACK

South African women are very sporty.

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

GILES

I can see. How did she get that
shiner?

JACK has been waiting for this.

JACK

I found her in bed with someone.

GILES
(surprised)
Who was he?

JACK
She.

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

On court, Jani delivers a winning overhead smash. The four PLAYERS shake hands across the net. They come off the court. GORDON puts his arm around JANI. His girlfriend CHLOE notices. JACK is irritated. GILES catches the moment.

GORDON
(to Jack)
You don't play tennis?

JACK
I don't play anything.

GORDON
How boring for you.

JANI moves deliberately away from GORDON, who clearly fancies her, and sits down beside JACK. She pointedly kisses him on the cheek. GILES glances at GORDON, who shrugs. FIONA comes up to GILES.

FIONA
Where's our drinks?

CHLOE
They're so bloody selfish.

JANI
(to Jack)
I'm so glad you brought me.

JACK'S VOICE
Jack wouldn't have come without her.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

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

JACK
I don't gamble.

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

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

GILES looks to JANI to persuade him.

JANI
He doesn't gamble.

JACK
I'll watch.

GORDON
(insinuatingly)
Jack likes to watch.
(to Jani)
Does he like to watch?

JACK is getting angry. JANI is calm.

JANI
(to Gordon)
One more remark like that and I'll break your balls.

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

GILES
(laughs)
I'll bet she could, too.

JACK defuses the atmosphere.

JACK

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

He sits down, picks up the cards.

GORDON

You sure you know how?

JACK takes the pack of cards, splits it expertly into two, shuffles by pressing the two halves together open-palmed. There is a rattling noise as the cards fold mechanically into one another, leaving the pack as if it hadn't been shuffled. FIONA and CHLOE are fascinated.

FIONA

Do that again.

JACK gives the cards to his right, GORDON cuts them. Another immaculate professional shuffle, and out come the cards from JACK'S right hand, flicking across the table.

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

CHLOE

That's sexy.

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

FIONA

Don't they look pretty.

They all pick up their cards.

GILES

(frowns)

There's nothing pretty about this hand.

CHLOE

You're not supposed to talk, Giles.

FIONA

He's probably lying. He does that.

JACK catches JANI's eye. She winks.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Later. JACK deals the cards.

JACK

Last hand.

GILES

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

FIONA

(sharply)

No! No stripping.

CHLOE

Right. We're not having that again!

(glances at Jack)

Although...

GORDON

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

JANI smiles, says nothing. JACK slides the pack to JANI. She looks up at him and cuts the cards. JACK deals the cards deftly. The FIVE PLAYERS pick up their cards.

Before each player calls we hear Jack's voice. In the end he correctly predicts their call. Is it telepathy? Or something else?

GORDON

I'll stick.

FIONA

Two cards.

GILES

One card.

CHLOE

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

JANI

Three cards.

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

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

FIONA

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

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

GORDON

Beat that.

CHLOE turns over a Flush.

CHLOE

Ha. Ha. Ha.

GORDON

Shit.

FIONA turns over a Full House.

FIONA

Not so fast, darling.

GORDON

(disbelieving)

Hang on, chaps. That's impossible!

GILES turns over four of a kind.

GILES

How's about that for impossible.

Laughter, cries of amazement.

GORDON
What's going on?

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

CHLOE
Wow. What are the odds for this happening?

More laughter, cries of amazement.

FIONA
Thousands to one.

JACK
42,300,000 to 1.

JANI
Approximately.

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

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

GILES
I get it.

JACK
Get what?
(smiles)
Are you accusing me of cheating?

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

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

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

JANI

What happened?

JACK

Remember the guy who cheated at
the table?

JANI

You don't like cheats, do you.

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

JANI

Which side do you like?

JACK

(calling)
You choose.

They get into bed.

JANI

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

JACK

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

JANI

I didn't.

JACK

Then you're not a pro.

JANI leans over and turns off the lamp. Her hair brushes
JACK'S face.

JANI

Goodnight.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

In the deserted hall is a nineteenth century painting, a
copy of Gericault's 'Raft of the Medusa'. The picture light
illuminates the group of men and women, clinging to the
raft and to each other.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JANI'S VOICE

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

JACK wakes drowsily.

JANI

I'm in trouble.

JACK

What kind of trouble?

JANI

I owe a lot of money.

JACK

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

JANI

I know that. But you can now.

JACK

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

JANI

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

JACK sits up, turns on the lamp.

JACK

You don't mean that.

JANI pulls up the bedcover around her body.

JANI

They mean it.

JACK

Who's they?

JANI

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

JACK

(interrupting)

Forget it, Jani. It'll never work.

JANI

The point is, they want a man
inside.

JACK

(laughs)

And I thought you were a bright
woman.

JANI

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

JACK
(smiles)
Robbery's not criminal?

JACK gets out of bed, tours the room.

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

JACK
You're serious.

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

JACK comes right up close to JANI in bed.

JACK
And I thought you were only after my body.

JANI
I've come to know you. You're honest.
(takes his hand)
I trust you.

JACK
What'll you do when it all goes wrong?

JANI
It won't.

JACK
But if it does.

JANI

You keep the ten thousand pounds.

JACK

What ten thousand pounds?

JANI gets out of bed.

JANI

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

JACK

Reynolds? You've done your research.

She puts her hand on his.

JANI

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

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

JANI

Next time it'll be my neck.

JACK

What about my neck?

JANI is close to breaking down. Her toughness evaporates.

JANI

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

JACK

I can't do it, Jani.

JANI

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

friend.

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

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - PASSAGE - STAIRS - NIGHT

JACK comes out of the bedroom in his pajamas, wearing his hat. He walks slowly down the passage. He hears the sounds of love-making coming from one of the rooms. He passes 'The Raft of the Medusa' as he goes down the stairs.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

JACK comes into the kitchen, switches on the light. He goes to the refrigerator, takes out a bottle of vodka. He washes a dirty glass and pours himself a drink.

JACK'S VOICE

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

He downs his drink, and leaves the kitchen.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - PASSAGE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

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

JANI
I want you to forget what I said.

JACK
Wait a minute...

JANI
No, forget it. The bet's off.

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

JACK
What about your father? Can he help?

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

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

He leaves the bathroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

JACK
How much do you owe?

JANI
Let it go.

JACK
Did they tell you to sleep with
me?

JANI
I told you, all bets are off.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

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

JANI
I'm sorry.

JACK
What for?

JANI
I have to take the car.

She looks at him then leaves the room

JACK'S VOICE
Hang on tightly... let go lightly.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

JACK comes into the kitchen. GILES is making coffee. CHLOE
is sitting at the table, half-asleep in her nightgown.

GILES
Good night?

JACK
Not particularly.

GILES
And your lady?

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

GILES

A bit unexpected, wasn't it?

JACK

Not entirely.

GILES

How's that football story coming along?

JACK

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

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

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

JACK is touched.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

JACK

It's beautiful. Thank you.

MARION

I hope it brings you luck.

JACK

It will.

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

JACK

That girl, she works at the casino –

MARION

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

JACK

You're entitled to your opinion.

MARION

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

JACK takes her in his arms.

JACK

I'll leave the casino soon.

(he strokes her
hair)

I promise.

MARION

You will?

JACK

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

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

MARION

Then you can dye your hair blond again.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

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

JACK
What?

MARION
You were talking in your sleep.

JACK
Not talking. Writing.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY

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

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

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

INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

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

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

He takes out a notepad and writes down the address.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

INT. HOTEL. STAIRS - NIGHT

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

JANI

Come in.

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

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

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

JANI

It's not the Ritz this time.

She switches on a standard lamp, looks at him.

JANI

Is it yes?

JACK

Yes.

JANI

Thank you.

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

JACK

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

JANI

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

JACK

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

JANI

Do you?

JACK

Yes.

JANI

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

JACK

(looks at her face)

That bruise has cleared up nicely.

JANI

Bruise?

(touches her eye)

Oh, yes. It's better.

JACK

(touches his chest)

I've still got mine.

JACK looks at her hand.

JACK
And your hand too.

JANI
(coolly)
I took the bandage off yesterday.

She crosses to pick up a bottle of Scotch.

JANI
Would you like a drink?

JACK
No thank you.

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

JACK
I don't think we should meet again.

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

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

JACK'S VOICE
There was a part of Jani he really
liked.

He turns and leaves the room.

EXT. HOTEL - STREET - NIGHT

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

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN is sweating. He fingers his last 2 chips. He reaches for a number, hesitates. JACK sees that the MAN's hand is shaking.

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

WOMAN

Bring me some luck.

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

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK
No more bets.

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

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

The ball bounces into 21. The WOMAN gives a cry of joy. She grips the YOUNG MAN's hand. He leans over to her, eyeing her diamond necklace, and whispers something seductive in her ear. She stiffens with apprehensive pleasure.

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

JACK sweeps away the lost chips, pays out five minor winners. He calmly counts a small pile of chips and slides them to the MIDDLE-AGED MAN by sleight of hand. Then he prepares to pay out the WOMAN.

No one has noticed the pay-out to the MIDDLE-AGED MAN. The MAN looks at JACK incredulously. JACK smiles mechanically. The MAN mouths the words 'Thank you' to JACK.

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

YOUNG MAN
How about a drink to celebrate?

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

MAN
(to Jack)
Cash me in.

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

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

JACK'S VOICE
Jake's experiment with the man
would prove the point.

The MAN hesitates. He can't resist.

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

JACK'S VOICE
People don't change.

INT. JACK'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

She goes on to JACK'S drawer and pulls out a shirt. She unfolds it. Out drop the four packets of ,2500.

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

INT. CASINO - BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

JACK'S FACE as he deals.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

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

ON JACK'S FACE:

JACK'S VOICE

Without emotion he watched them go. Jake stayed.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

MARION is lying awake alone in bed. The phone rings. She

leans over to pick it up, then doesn't. From the sitting room comes the message:

JANI'S VOICE

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

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

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAY

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

MARION

Aren't you ever tempted to gamble?

JACK

(looks up)

Never. Why do you ask?

MARION

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

JACK

Gambling's not about money.

MARION

Really?

JACK

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

She takes her hands away from his neck.

MARION

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

The sound of an underground train.

INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

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

INT. CASINO - CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE
Chapter Twelve...

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

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

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

JACK is coolly winning for the house. REYNOLDS looks on impassively in his Santa Claus suit. Three or four PUNTERS are watching the CHINESE lose heavily. MR TCHAI and his friends occasionally exchange a phrase in Chinese but they show no emotion as they lose. With each hand they prepare to lose even more. JACK pushes hundreds of pounds into the box beneath the table.

REYNOLDS signals a SECURITY MAN to collect the cash which

is building up. He comes over with a safety cart. During a short break the money is taken from under the table in a box, loaded into the cart and wheeled away.

INT. CASINO - BAR - NIGHT

TWO COLD-LOOKING MEN in suits are drinking mineral water at the bar. They watch the SECURITY MAN with the cart pass by and disappear through a green baize door marked PRIVATE. One of the SUITS looks at his watch: five minutes to midnight.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

SUIT
Fifties. Ten of them.

JACK
What colour chips?

SUIT
Whatever.

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

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

JACK Sees the obvious cheat. So do other PUNTERS.

JACK
(stiffens)
Sir, I can't accept that bet.

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

SUIT
Are you calling me a cheat?

PUNTER
You are a cheat. I saw you.

SUIT
(grabbing Jack's
lapel)
I'm talking to you.

JACK pushes him away. The SUIT hits JACK'S face with his fist. Uproar around the table. JACK hits the man. The SUIT grabs JACK and pushes him backwards across the table, knocking all the chips over. The PUNTERS start shouting. They grab their chips, especially the losers. One PUNTER tries to restrain the SUIT. JACK kicks the SUIT hard. They fight, trading blows.

At the blackjack table MR TCHAI and the other CHINESE see the fight. MR TCHAI barks at the BODYGUARD in Chinese. The BODYGUARD heads for the fight at the roulette table.

TWO DEALERS rush over to stop the fight. Somewhere in the distance there is the sound of a gunshot. PEOPLE start screaming. The SUIT punches JACK in the stomach. JACK doubles up. The SUIT breaks away, rushes across the casino, pushing screaming WOMEN aside, heads for the door. MR TCHAI's BODYGUARD blocks his way and fells the SUIT with a hammer blow to the head.

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

REYNOLDS

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL - CASUALTY - NIGHT

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

The NURSE finishes the job, smiles.

NURSE

There you go.

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

There is a pause. Then the curtain is pulled back. MARION enters. She carries a bottle of wine and two cartons of Chinese take-away. JACK is surprised.

JACK

How did you know I was here?

MARION

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

She starts to pour wine. JACK is still puzzled.

JACK

Did you go to the casino?

MARION hands him a glass of wine.

MARION

Happy Christmas.

They touch glasses and drink.

MARION

Now...noodles or rice?

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

MARION

(quietly)

I don't want a criminal for a boyfriend.

JACK

(suddenly)

There was a message, wasn't there?

MARION

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

JACK

Marion! What did you tell the police?

MARION

Nothing about you.

JACK

Then what?

MARION

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

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

MARION
Here...use a spoon.

JACK
Leave me alone, Marion.

MARION
You're already alone.

JACK'S VOICE
He had always been alone. He had always believed it would make the decisions easier.

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

MARION kisses him.

MARION
Why did you take the money?

JACK
I hate public transport.

MARION
What?

JACK
I want to buy a car.

MARION
(laughs)
How can anyone be that naive?

INT. CASINO - REYNOLDS'S OFFICE - DAY

JACK sits in front of REYNOLDS.

REYNOLDS
How do you feel, Jack?

JACK
Bruised.

REYNOLDS

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

He hands JACK an envelope.

JACK

What's this?

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

REYNOLDS

(smiles)

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

Chapter Thirteen...

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

JACK goes to the door.

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

POLICEMAN

Mr Manfred?

JACK

Yes...

The sound of the roulette ball bouncing against the numbers.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

MAN'S VOICE

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

JACK

No. She wasn't.

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

JACK'S VOICE

Marion had been visiting his

mother...no, no, not his mother -
her mother.

JACK
(to Ross)
She was visiting her mother. Her
mother.
(suddenly)
Who are you?

ROSS
Detective Inspector Ross.

JACK
Who...

ROSS
Ross.

JACK
Who did it? Tell me!

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

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

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

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

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

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

casino.

JACK'S VOICE

What had that got to do with her death?

ROSS

You didn't recognise the man who attacked you, did you?

JACK

(loudly)

Of course I recognised him!

ROSS

(surprised)

You did?

JACK

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

ROSS sighs, looks at MARION.

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

JACK

(to Ross)

Do you gamble?

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

ROSS

If anything occurs to you, call me.

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

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

ROSS

I was in love with her, you know.

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

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

(quoting)

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

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

INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

JACK sits alone at a corner table, drinking, watching the fun, unsmiling. One plate cracks into a wall behind him. A MAN stumbles backwards into JACK's table. JACK swiftly moves his drink out of the way. The MAN apologises, turns to JACK. It is MATT.

MATT

Jacko! How're you doing?

(shakes Jack's hand
vigorously)

I heard about the raid. Pity they didn't pull it off. I wish I'd been there.

MATT has to shout above the noise and music. JACK smiles.

JACK
(quietly)
But you were there Matt.

MATT doesn't hear.

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

JACK
I'd like to buy you a drink.

MATT
Cheers. Happy New Year. I really like you, Jacko, you're so fucking straight.
(suddenly)
Hey, you haven't changed your clothes!

INT. GREEK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

JACK is still there, drunk now.

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

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

LUCY
You've been avoiding me.

JACK
(blearily)
Have I?

LUCY

I'm Lucy.

JACK

And what do you do, Lucy?

LUCY

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

JACK

Are you going to put a spell on me?

LUCY

I might.

EXT. GREEK RESTAURANT - DAWN

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

JACK

Nice car. How much did you pay for it?

LUCY

Too much. Eighteen hundred.

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

LUCY

Where to?

JACK

Turn left at the lights.

They drive off.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

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

INT. CAR - DAWN

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

LUCY
Hey! I saw her!

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

LUCY
You don't trust women drivers, do you?

JACK'S VOICE
Jack didn't trust anyone. Except himself.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAWN

JACK sits at his computer. He is watching the printer unloading page after page. JACK assembles the typescript.

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

CLOSE UP: The dedication: 'To Marion'.

The sound of the ball bouncing against the wheel.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

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

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

A Blackjack table. The bets are placed. JACK turns over

the bank's cards: a KING and an ACE. He takes all the chips from the five PUNTERS.

PUNTER

(to Jack)

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

EXT. STREET. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

JACK comes up to a bookstore window. A sticker reads: 'IT'S A WINNER'. There are quotes blown up from the reviews: "AN INCREDIBLE INSIDE JOB...IT'S ALL HERE, THE SYSTEMS, THE SCAMS, THE SLEAZE...A TALE OF TRIUMPHANT DISGUST...OF EXHILARATING CONTEMPT..." The display is just one book: 'I, CROUPIER'. Number 1 Bestseller.

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. REYNOLDS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE

...It gave him an exquisite pleasure, being an underground man. With all his money, he hadn't

even bought a car. Jack knew the truth about himself, he was a one-book writer. A one time winner who had quit while he was ahead...

INT. JACK'S FLAT - DAWN

Five in the morning.

JACK'S VOICE

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

JACK comes in. The phone rings.

INT. SUN CITY. CASINO - NIGHT

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

JACK hesitates, then picks up.

JACK

Hello...

JANI

Jack! It's Jani.

The following conversation is INTERCUT.

JACK

Jani! Where are you?

JANI

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

JACK

(smiles)

How are you?

JANI

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

JACK

Did you solve your problems?

JANI

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

JACK waits.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

A MAN'S hand takes the phone from JANI.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

JACK SR'S VOICE

Jacko - how're you doing?

JACK

Dad!

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK SR

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

INT. JACK'S FLAT - NIGHT

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

JACK SR'S VOICE

The woman thinks I'm going to marry her. But you know me. It's a shame things didn't work out. But we saw

you all right. You didn't gamble the ten grand, did you?

JACK

(huskily)

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

JACK SR'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

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

JACK'S VOICE

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

INT. JACK'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

JACK

To you. To both of you.

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

BELLA

What are you laughing at? Who was that on the phone?

JACK

A couple I know are getting married.

BELLA puts her arms around him lovingly.

BELLA
Fools.

A whistling sound...

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

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

JACK'S VOICE
Now he had reached the point where he no longer heard the sound of the ball...

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

JACK'S VOICE
...the spin of the wheel had brought him home to the place where he was born.

JACK'S face. A hint of a smile.

JACK'S VOICE
The croupier's mission was accomplished.

The ball falls into green Zero. JACK rakes all the chips off the table. There are no winners. The film ends on a

CLOSE-UP of JACK'S face. A look of calm satisfaction.

JACK'S VOICE
At last he was Master of the Game.
He had acquired the power... to make you lose.

FADE OUT:

THE END