

**Mississippi Grind**

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1

**EXT. RIVERBOAT CASINO PARKING LOT - IOWA - NIGHT**

1

Outrageous flashing lights sparkle in the reflection of the windshield of a 2003 Subaru station wagon. Slumped behind the wheel is GERRY KARTWELL (early-40s, mustached). He listens to Joe Navarro's audio book of "200 Poker Tells" on CD.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

Ninety-eight. Furrowing of Forehead. Furrowing of the forehead is a good indicator that something is amiss or the person is insecure. It is also seen when people are concentrating or trying to make sense of something.

CLOSE ON Gerry, glassy-eyed, perhaps fighting back tears.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE (CONT'D)

It is usually associated with doubt, weakness, or concern.

Gerry looks in his rearview mirror, contorts and relaxes his face in a tension-releasing exercise. He does this several times, until he's ready.

2

**INT. CASINO BATHROOM - SAME**

2

We are behind the shaggy hair of a bearded man. He brushes his teeth, leans over the sink and spits.

3

**INT. RIVERBOAT CASINO ENTRANCE**

3

Gerry steps through the entrance, nods to the SECURITY GUARD, who smiles.

GUARD

Hey Gerry. Good luck tonight.

4

**INT. CASINO BATHROOM**

4

Still from behind, we see the bearded man apply deodorant under his shirt, then tuck the stick back into his leather duffel.

5

**INT. POKER ROOM**

5

Gerry enters the casino's poker room, steps up to the CASHIER, hands over his player's card and sixty bucks.

CASHIER

Hey Gerry.

GERRY

Hey Louise. How's the knee?

LOUISE  
It's gettin' there.

She hands him a printed ticket.

LOUISE (CONT'D)  
Good luck.

He glances at his ticket and wanders over to his assigned table, where he joins several players awaiting the start of tonight's low-stakes tournament.

GERRY  
(to the dealer)  
Hey Chuck.

CHUCK  
Whatta ya say there, Gerry?

Gerry nods and Chuck slides over a stack of chips.

Also seated at the table are-- CLIFFORD HOUSTON (40s, wearing a visor and goatee, with a permanent cranky scowl).

WILL (20s, wearing a hoodie and sunglasses, listening to iPod).

"BLOODY MARY" KATE (60s, drinking a bloody mary).

LARRY (30s, black, laid back).

Gerry folds his cards for the first several hands. There is a calm, casual banter at the table.

KATE  
Anyone know the spread on the Hawkeyes game?

GERRY  
Six points.

CLIFFORD  
Gettin' hot out there.

LARRY  
It's just weather.

CLIFFORD  
What does that mean, "It's just weather?"

LARRY  
Hot, cold... it's just weather, baby.

KATE

I like that. "It's just weather,  
baby."

Gerry and the others laugh.

Meanwhile, Clifford has been raising Larry, and they reveal their cards. Clifford wins and reels in his chips.

CLIFFORD

Yeah, well, it's just poker, baby.  
How's that? You like that one?

We ZOOM past Gerry at the table to reveal the bearded drifter approaching in the background.

This man is CURTIS VONN (30s, handsome with a devil-may-care attitude). We reverse ZOOM back to Gerry at the table, where the conversation continues...

GERRY

Anyone see that rainbow yesterday?

CLIFFORD

Missed it.

LARRY

I drove to the end of a rainbow once.

GERRY

Yeah?

LARRY

Wasn't nothin' there. Just faded out  
into the trees.

Curtis has now arrived at Gerry's table, pulls out a chair.

CURTIS

Table seven looks like heaven. How is  
everybody feeling tonight?

Not sure what to make of this guy, most folks just nod.

CHUCK

(passing him chips)  
Have a seat.

CURTIS

What's the word, people?

KATE

It's just poker, baby.

CURTIS

Hey, it's okay with me. Let's play some cards.

Chuck dishes out the next hand; everyone peeks at their cards.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Aces are good, right?

Curtis smiles, bets a stack of chips. Most players fold. Not Gerry. He raises. Without missing a beat, Curtis meets Gerry's raise.

When the flop comes down with an Ace, the one other remaining player folds. But Gerry looks quietly at the still-smiling Curtis and calls bullshit, raising him once again.

Curtis looks Gerry over, zeroing in on a MISSING BUTTON ON GERRY'S SHIRT. (It's an odd detail to focus on in a moment like this, but that's the kind of guy Curtis is.) He mucks his cards, and Gerry reels in the pot.

CLIFFORD

Aces, huh?

CURTIS

Why would I fold Aces?

MINUTES LATER. A waitress comes by.

WAITRESS

Anyone need any drinks?

KATE

Bloody Mary.

GERRY

Bourbon.

CURTIS

What is the bourbon?

WAITRESS

Just the cheap stuff.

CURTIS

Make mine a Woodford.

WAITRESS

I'll have to check if we have--

CURTIS  
(to Gerry)  
--Hey friend, you want a Woodford?

GERRY  
The cheap stuff is fine with me.

CURTIS  
Bring him a Woodford, too.

GERRY  
That's okay.

CURTIS  
Don't worry, it's on me.

Gerry nods thanks. The friendly banter continues over multiple hands...

LARRY  
What's the bad beat jackpot at?

CHUCK  
Ninety five.

KATE  
When's the last time it hit?

CHUCK  
Long time.

CURTIS  
I got a bad beat jackpot story... My  
old buddy, Tony Roundtree-- anyone know  
Tony?

Blank looks and head shakes.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Hosts a high rollers game every other  
month in New Orleans now. But I knew  
him when he was up in Detroit.

LARRY  
You from Detroit?

The bet comes around to Curtis, who nonchalantly bets a large  
stack of chips. The next two players fold.

CURTIS  
Me? I'm from all over, but I knew Tony  
Roundtree up in Detroit.  
(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

He loved to play poker, but he kept dodging my invitations to play in the casinos. Story goes like this...

ON GERRY scrutinizing Curtis for a tell...

CLOSE ON CURTIS' details as he continues with the story: hand gestures, smile, hazel eyes... he shows no signs of stress. Gerry folds his hand, and Curtis rakes in the pot.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Apparently Tony had a little bit of a gambling problem before I met him. You guys know about the disassociated persons list? Not sure you have it in Iowa. But some states you can put yourself on this list if you're trying to quit gambling. Which means you are legally banned from all casinos in the state.

CLIFFORD

For life.

CURTIS

For life. So you know what I'm talking about. It makes sense, right? Well, not to Tony. He put himself on the list to show his girlfriend he was serious about changing his ways. Of course, a few months go by and she dumps him for a guitar player.

KATE

It's always a guitar player.

CURTIS

It is always a guitar player, isn't it?

LARRY

Why is that?

KATE

Nice hands.

CURTIS

So he's lonely and depressed and gets the itch to play poker again. Walks to the MGM-- "Sorry buddy." Greektown-- "no can do, amigo." Motor City-- "no dice, pal." So what does he do?

GERRY

Disguise.

CURTIS

Yes! He puts on sunglasses, fake mustache-- a wig.

KATE

C'mon, a wig?

CURTIS

I've never been more serious. He makes it past security, takes a seat in the poker room, and he's in heaven. What a rush that must have been. He's finally back in action, and--

The waitress returns with a tray of drinks.

WAITRESS

I'm sorry, they don't have Woodford. Our top shelf is Bulleit.

She sets the bourbon glasses in front of Curtis and Gerry.

CURTIS

Okay, fine... but I'm not paying for his.

WAITRESS

I'm sorry?

CURTIS

I said his Woodford is on me. That is not a Woodford.

Awkward beat. Curtis smiles.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'm only kidding... Keep the change, darlin'.

Curtis takes a moment to enjoy the ritual of a toast. He holds his glass up to Gerry, who does the same.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Good luck to you, my friend.

GERRY

Thanks.

They sip their drinks.

CURTIS

Better than the cheap shit, right?

Gerry shrugs, nods politely.



KATE

So what happened?

Beat. Curtis transitions back into story mode.

CURTIS

He's at the table for a couple hours, playing the best poker of his life. Up four, five thousand, when some guy's straight flush beats another guy's four cowboys.

Everyone at the table knows what this means and laughs.

LARRY

Jackpot!

CURTIS

Hundred fifty thousand dollar bad beat jackpot. To be split between all five players at the table.

CLIFFORD

Thirty grand a piece.

CURTIS

Thirty grand a piece. Unless you happen to be a disassociated person who is breaking the law by just being in the room. So while everyone else is high-fiving and back-slapping, Tony jumps up, leaves his chips on the table, and makes a bee-line for the nearest exit... And he hasn't stepped foot inside a casino since.

Curtis sips his bourbon. Gerry smiles.

KATE

And what is the lesson here?

CURTIS

The lesson? Lady, lighten up, it's just a story.

**CUT TO:**

6 **OMITTED**

6

7 **OMITTED**

7

8      **INT. DIVE BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT**

8

Gerry enters the bar with a bounce to his step. A college basketball game plays on the TV. The bartender, DALE, greets him.

DALE

Hey Gerry, how'd it go tonight?

GERRY

Placed third.

DALE

Congrats! What's the payout on that?

GERRY

Nine hundred. What's the score here?

DALE

Not sure. Have a seat.

Gerry straddles a bar stool, scans the TV screen for a score.

GERRY

Oregon up six. Okay. That's okay.

DALE

The usual for ya?

GERRY

Uh... actually, do you have Woodford?

DALE

Yeah.

GERRY

Let's do one of those.

Gerry keeps his eyes on the TV. A player misses a free throw. He winces.

DALE

How much you got on this?

GERRY

Nine hundred.

Dale pours the Woodford and Gerry takes a sip, nods.

DALE

It's a Woodford kind of night.

GERRY

What do you mean?

DALE

That guy over there shooting darts likes it too.

We follow Gerry's gaze over to the dart board, where Curtis tosses a dart, shrugs, and pays his opponent five bucks.

Gerry smiles, calls out to Curtis--

GERRY  
Hey! Woodford man!

Curtis looks over, recognizes Gerry.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Next one's on me!

Curtis (a little tipsy) steps over to the bar, sits next to Gerry. They shake hands.

CURTIS  
Name's Curtis.

GERRY  
Curtis! Like Tony.

CURTIS  
More like Mayfield.

GERRY  
I'm Gerry.

CURTIS  
Like Lewis?

GERRY  
No. Just Gerry. With a G. Short for Gerald... Like Ford, I guess.

CURTIS  
How'd it go for you tonight?

GERRY  
Not bad.

CURTIS  
What's "not bad"?

GERRY  
Second.

CURTIS  
Get outta here. That's great.

GERRY  
Could have finished first if you didn't bully me out of that mountain before you left.

CURTIS

Win some, lose some.

GERRY

Hey, where'd you disappear to anyway?

CURTIS

I can never last through those tournaments.

GERRY

Then why'd you buy in?

CURTIS

I like people.

GERRY

Well you should've stuck it out.  
You're a good player.

CURTIS

For a few hours, maybe, but I don't have the stamina for poker. I get restless.

GERRY

So what's your game?

CURTIS

Darts.

GERRY

You any good?

CURTIS

I can hit the board.

GERRY

Hey, I gotta ask... what were you holding?

Curtis smiles, pauses for effect.

CURTIS

Pair a deuces.

Gerry stares at him, always looking for the tell.

GERRY

No way.

CURTIS

You asked.

GERRY

That's all?

No response. Is this guy for real?

GERRY (CONT'D)

I can usually read people like a damn book. But you were all over the map my friend. I still can't spot your tell.

CURTIS

You know why?

Gerry waits for it.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I don't care about winning...

GERRY

Bullshit!

CURTIS

I just like to play.

Curtis shrugs. Gerry watches him in wonder, then turns back to the TV.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

You see that rainbow yesterday?

Gerry stares at Curtis. Is he serious?

GERRY

Yes! Amazing! It was fucking amazing!

CURTIS

Best - rainbow - ever.

GERRY

Hey, why have I never seen you before?

CURTIS

I'm just passing through town.

GERRY

Headed where?

CURTIS

New Orleans.

GERRY

I love New Orleans! You going to your friend's high roller game?

CURTIS

Tony Roundtree. Nah, I don't have that kind of money.

GERRY

So, what then?

CURTIS

What do you mean?

GERRY

You're just going down to New Orleans for the hell of it?

CURTIS

Pretty much.

GERRY

Damn, that sounds alright.

CURTIS

It's alright with me.

9

**LATER.**

9

Gerry and Curtis are hunched over the bar, drunk as hell, Gerry in the middle of describing a memorable poker hand.

GERRY

I knew he had my two pair beat. But I also knew that he didn't know he had me beat by the way he was betting. I had four or five already on the line, so I figure, what the hell, and I push the rest of my chips in. He sits there for five minutes. Just staring at me. So I say "Tell ya what. For fifty bucks, I'll show you one of my cards, whichever one you wanna see."

Curtis breaks into a smile.

CURTIS

And whichever card you flip...

GERRY

...he thinks I got a full boat.

CURTIS

Beautiful!

GERRY

Yeah, it really was. It was beautiful.

Beat. Gerry takes a quarter out of his pocket.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Twenty bucks... heads or tails?

CURTIS  
Tails.

Gerry flips the coin. It's tails. He hands Curtis a twenty.

GERRY  
Where did you come from?

CURTIS  
I'm from a far away land where rainbows  
run free and whiskey grows on trees.

ON GERRY for a bewildered beat. He almost believes him.

LATER. Gerry and Curtis drunkenly play darts, missing the board entirely, laughing.

10 **INT. CLUTTERED LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY**

10

Gerry is passed out on the couch with a blanket draped over him. Sun shines through the windows.

The sound of silverware clinking stirs him awake. Gerry struggles to open his eyes, and sees a young woman, DENISE (20s) sitting down at the chair opposite him. She's wearing pajamas and sprinkling Quik chocolate powder over a bowl of ice cream as she watches the morning news.

Gerry looks around, struggling to remember where he is, when Curtis passes through the doorway in the bg and stops upon seeing Gerry. He's naked, brushing his teeth.

CURTIS  
(mouthful of toothpaste)  
Oh, good, you're up.

GERRY  
You too.

CURTIS  
Hey Denise, you got any coconut oil?

DENISE  
I have lotion.

CURTIS  
Nevermind.

Curtis disappears into the bathroom.



GERRY  
Are you his, uh...?

DENISE  
Just friends.

GERRY  
Thanks for the couch.

DENISE  
You want breakfast?

Curtis returns in a pink robe.

CURTIS  
Dog races start at one.

GERRY  
What time is it?

DENISE  
Nine-thirty.

GERRY  
Shit.

CURTIS  
What's wrong?

GERRY  
I have work.

CURTIS  
You have a job?

Gerry nods, puts on his shoes.

GERRY  
Where'd I leave my car?

CURTIS  
Hang on... Look who's running in the sixth race.

Curtis hands a newspaper folded on the race schedule to Gerry.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Dynamic Rainbow! Are you kidding me?  
Is that not our dog? Look me in the eye and tell me that's not our dog!

Gerry looks over the schedule, tempted.

GERRY  
It's a good name.

CURTIS  
It's a great name!

Standing up, Gerry instinctively pats his left pant pocket to check for his wallet. Nothing there.

Curtis notices, picks up a wallet sitting on the coffee table and tosses it to him.

GERRY  
Thanks.

Gerry holds his wallet awkwardly, fighting against the urge to look inside.

CURTIS  
Go on. Count it.

Gerry shakes his head.

GERRY  
Naw, I don't--

CURTIS  
C'mon. It's okay.

He opens the wallet, quickly checks his cash and cards, then slips it into his left pocket.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Trusting a stranger, Gerry. It's just one of those things.

11 **INT. GERRY'S HOUSE - DAY**

11

Gerry enters his home through the side kitchen door with a stack of mail. He flips on the light switch, but nothing happens. He turns the switch off and on again. Still nothing. He mutters to himself, but doesn't appear surprised that the electricity has been shut off.

GERRY  
Honey, I'm home.

A cat approaches him, meowing like crazy.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
I know, I'm sorry, sweetheart.

He puts some food in her bowl.

12      **INT. GERRY'S BATHROOM**      12

Gerry sits on the toilet, when he notices the empty roll beside him. Still seated, he leans over, opens the cabinet beneath the sink. No extra rolls.

GERRY.

Shit.

13      **INT. GERRY'S LIVING ROOM**      13

Gerry changes his clothes in a hurry, when his cell phone rings. He checks the number, sees an incoming call from SAM, and declines it.

14      **EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY**      14

Wearing dark shades to conceal his hangover, Gerry fumbles with a huge key ring outside the front door. He can't find the right key for this home's lock.

GERRY

Okay, I think this is it...

He jams the key in and furiously wiggles it, but it won't turn.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Nope. We'll get there.

He tries another one.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I'm finally starting to understand what you're after. And I think this one's a real winner.

A WIDER ANGLE reveals a YOUNG COUPLE waiting on the porch with Gerry as he tries yet another key.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Sorry about this, folks.

They nod, politely.

15      **INT. HOME FOR SALE - KITCHEN**      15

While the newlyweds examine the kitchen, Gerry fixates on their interaction from the hall, trying to get a read on them. The couple speak in hushed tones.

WOMAN

I really wanted gas, honey.

MAN

Well, could we switch it out?

WOMAN

I don't know.

MAN

Where'd he go?

WOMAN

He's over there.

MAN

A gas range would be nice.

ON GERRY as phone vibrates.

He turns away from the couple and checks an incoming text: it's a photo of Curtis at the dog track with the text reading "45 min to dynamic rainbow!"

Gerry smiles, thinks for a beat, then--

16 **EXT/INT. GERRY'S CAR - DAY**

16

Gerry drives on the highway talking to Curtis on his phone.

GERRY

I'm on my way!

17 **EXT. DOG TRACK GRANDSTAND - SAME**

17

We intercut with Curtis at the track.

CURTIS

Our race is up in twenty minutes.  
What's your ETA?

GERRY

About fifteen.

CURTIS

Okay, good. Do you want me to place a bet for you? They're saying Dynamic Rainbow has 48 to one odds.

GERRY

48 to one?! That's terrible.

CURTIS

That's what makes it fun, Gerry. I'm laying fifty to win. What do you want to do?

GERRY

48 to one? Geez, I don't know.

CURTIS

You can bet to place if you want.

GERRY

How many dogs are racing?

CURTIS

Eight. First or second to place.

GERRY

Uh, let me think...

CURTIS

Don't stress, baby; it's just dogs.

GERRY

Put me down for two hundred to place.

CURTIS

Okay, see you soon.

Gerry sets down his phone and turns up his "200 Poker Tells" audio book on the stereo.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

Number nine. Nodding approval when strong. Inadvertently, people will nod affirmatively when they realize they have the best hand. Sometimes it looks like the person is just rocking.

18 **EXT. DOG TRACK PARKING LOT - DAY**

18

Gerry runs through the lot toward the main entrance.

19 **INT. DOG TRACK GRANDSTAND**

19

He enters the grandstand area, where a fantastic assortment of oddball characters are assembled on a weekday afternoon-- most of them over 60 and smoking.

Gerry spots Curtis at the bar holding court with the regulars. He has them laughing and wheezing.

CURTIS

Gerry, you made it!  
(handing Gerry his half  
full cup)  
Have a beer.

GERRY

Thanks. How's it going?

CURTIS

We're up next. Our dog is so beautiful, Gerry. They walked it through, you should have seen it.

GERRY

Good legs?

CURTIS

Great legs. Strong, but agile. He's a real winner.

GERRY

I can't remember the last time I've been to a dog track.

CURTIS

But you love cats. Am I right?

Gerry stares at Curtis. How could he possibly know this? Curtis pinches a clump of cat hair off Gerry's coat. Gerry smiles, tries to brush off the remaining cat hair.

GERRY

I'm more of a poker man. Poker and sports.

CURTIS

It's a sport for dogs. C'mon, let's get closer.

(to the regulars)

Good luck you beautiful losers!

LOSER

Give'm hell, weirdo!

Curtis and Gerry stroll to the seating area.

CURTIS

Did you know Herbert Hoover was the first U.S. President born west of the Mississippi?

GERRY

I did not.

CURTIS

Right here in Iowa.

GERRY

You win anything yet?

CURTIS

I'm only here for one race.

A19 ON THE TRACK. The dogs step into the starting gate.

A19

GRANDSTAND. A commotion erupts behind Curtis and Gerry as betters cheer on a horse from the off-track-betting monitors. Drawn in by the excitement, Gerry turns around to watch. Curtis notices, pulls his attention back towards the dogs.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Be here now, Gerry. This is the only race.

ANNOUNCER

HERE COMES RUSTY!!

A HORN sounds and the dogs sprint out of the gate, chasing a furry lure (Rusty) attached to a mechanical arm.

CURTIS

Here we go!

The announcer provides a moment by moment description of the race as the dogs tear into the first turn.

GERRY

I can't see. Where is he?

CURTIS

C'mon rainbow!

ANNOUNCER

Coming out of the first turn it's Goldilocks followed by Mystery Train.

As the other spectators cheer on their picks, a cacophony of voices shouting out different numbers nearly drowns out the announcer's voice.

GERRY

Where is he? Which number's ours?

CURTIS

Number four!

\*

ANNOUNCER

Coming up on the outside is Dynamic Rainbow.

GERRY

Dynamic Rainbow!

CURTIS

C'mon rainbow!

GERRY

C'mon four!

\*

As the dogs come into the home stretch, we see dog #4 (Dynamic Rainbow) move up into second place. Gerry and Curtis go nuts, urging on their dog.

\*

CURTIS

C'mon rainbow!

GERRY

Hot damn! C'mon rainbow!

Dynamic Rainbow is now even with the leader as they approach the finish line. Gerry lets out a howl.

ANNOUNCER

And it's Dynamic Rainbow by a nose.

Curtis screams, hugs Gerry.

GERRY

What? What did he say?

Curtis doesn't respond, but continues to dance in celebration, breaking into song...

CURTIS

"Somewhere over the rainbow..."

The realization finally sets in and Gerry joins in the celebration dance as if he just scored the winning touchdown of the Superbowl. He screams and points at the other spectators, which may go against proper track etiquette, but who cares?

The triumph is short-lived, however, as Gerry is suddenly overcome with despair.

GERRY

I fucking bet to place!

CURTIS

You still won big.

GERRY

I'm an idiot! Why didn't I listen to you?



CURTIS

Gerry, we won. Let's go celebrate!  
We'll get some drinks, meet some  
ladies, go to a show...

GERRY

Go where? I love this place. We can  
have drinks here, meet ladies here.

CURTIS

Gerry, Gerry, Gerry... It don't get any  
better than this. Let's go have some  
fun!

GERRY

I just got here! Okay, listen to  
this... next person through that door--

CURTIS

Gerry--

GERRY

If the next person through that door is  
wearing glasses, we stay for one more.

CURTIS

You're on.

They look over to the men's room door, where a gray-haired man  
with a cane and glasses, steps out. Gerry smiles.

20

**INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT**

20

Gerry and Curtis drink bourbon at the bar.

CURTIS

I'll tell you what, Gerry... never bet  
on a dog named after a disabled  
president.

GERRY

I thought it was Teddy.

CURTIS

Rollin' Roosevelt?

GERRY

It was a good name.

CURTIS

It was not a good name. Next time  
listen when I say it's time.

Gerry's phone registers a new message. He checks it, then tucks it away, ignoring the text.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

There was this guy back in Kansas City, Archie Hannahan. Never knew when to quit.

GERRY

I know where this is going and you don't need to tell me--

CURTIS

Listen, Gerry.

GERRY

Okay.

CURTIS

Archie owed every poker player in town at least a few hundred bucks. Got to the point where he was asking his little nephews for the change in their piggy banks. One day he's in the poker room at Harrah's. I walk over to say hello, notice he's got a handsome pile of chips, over five grand. Archie starts bragging that he started the night with just sixty bucks-- sixty bucks he borrowed from some new chump, by the way. So I pull him aside, tell him he should cash out now. He's got enough there to pay back everyone he owes and still get a slab at Oklahoma Joe's. "You're right, you're right," he tells me. "I'll stop as soon as the blind comes around." I smile, walk over to my table thinking I'd done a good deed... Next thing I hear is Archie's high-pitched voice saying... "I'm all in!"

GERRY

And then he lost it all.

CURTIS

Of course he lost it all. But you know what he says to me? "Don't worry. It was only sixty bucks."

GERRY

Some guys are just born to lose.

A burst of jubilation from the pool tables nearby draw Curtis and Gerry's attention.

CURTIS

You play?

GERRY

A little, but not in a long--

Before Gerry can finish, Curtis is calling out across the room.

CURTIS

Hey! Twenty bucks on my friend here.

GERRY

What're you doing?

CURTIS

I'm gonna watch you play this big winner here. You said you played.

GERRY

It's been a long time.

CURTIS

So you'll lose.

GERRY

No, you'll lose.

CURTIS

I'm spending twenty bucks to watch you make a fool of yourself. That's not losing; that's entertainment.

Gerry smiles. Who does this guy think he is?

GERRY

Okay. You want entertainment?

Gerry strolls over to the Big Winner's table.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Let's make it a hundred.

Curtis' demeanor suddenly shifts.

CURTIS

Whoa, hey, Gerry! Play nice now.

Big Winner smiles, racks up the balls, as Gerry chalks his cue, and leans over the table. Curtis sips his drink, then--

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Five hundred!

Gerry pauses, looks to Big Winner who is now looking a little less confident. He nods in agreement anyway.

Not to be outdone, Gerry stares down Curtis, then...

GERRY

Let's play for a thousand.

Curtis smiles, loving it, but Big Winner (and his friends) are not amused. OTHER FOLKS at the bar also begin to take notice and step over.

Gerry leans over the table, prepared to break, but Big Winner puts his hat over the cue ball--

BIG WINNER

That's enough. You fellas don't belong here, do you?

GERRY

I'm really not very good at this.

Curtis steps over to the table, pulls Gerry away, while Big Winner and his tough guy friends give hard looks.

CURTIS

Let's go, Gerry. These guys don't want our money.

Curtis and Gerry head for the exit and we HOLD ON A SKINNY THUG watching them go.

21 **EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT**

21

Curtis and Gerry stroll through the parking lot, laughing.

CURTIS

I can't believe you almost blew a thousand bucks of my money.

GERRY

Are you kidding? I just saved you from losing twenty... So what are you up to tomorrow?

CURTIS

I think it's Macchu Picchu time for me.

GERRY

Say again?

CURTIS

Time for me to hit the road.

Gerry tries to conceal his disappointment.

GERRY

Okay. Well, it was great to meet you.

CURTIS

You too, Gerry. Good luck.

They shake hands.

GERRY

You need a ride someplace?

CURTIS

Nah, I'm just gonna steal a bike.

Gerry smiles, watches Curtis drift away, then wanders over to his car. He reaches into his pocket, fumbling with his keys, when the skinny thug from the bar approaches him with a cigarette in hand.

THUG

Hey man, you got a light?

Beat. Gerry looks the guy over.

GERRY

Uh, no, sorry...

Suddenly, the thug pulls out a switchblade.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Aw man, what's that for?

THUG

Gimme the money.

GERRY

I don't have any money.

THUG

Bullshit. Thousand dollar bets? I heard you back there.

GERRY

I can't believe this.

THUG

Just give it to me!

GERRY

I told you, I don't have any money! I lost it on Rollin' Roosevelt.

THUG

Huh?

GERRY

What?

THUG

Don't make me cut you.

The thug threatens him with the knife. Gerry is getting nervous.

GERRY

Okay, just relax.

THUG

Hurry up!

Gerry takes out his wallet. Flashes it. Empty.

GERRY

See?

THUG

Do I look stupid?

A burst of LAUGHTER breaks out from the pool hall exit.

Startled, the thug reacts by stabbing Gerry in the belly (not deep) and booking it out of there. Gerry cups his stomach, then checks his hand, now bloodied by the wound.

GERRY

Damnit!

Gerry realizes the thug dropped his knife before running. He picks it up.

GERRY (CONT'D)

You forgot this, asshole!

He throws the knife. Winces in pain. Gerry gathers himself, then climbs in the car.

22

**INT. BLUEBERRY HILL DINER**

22

Gerry steps into the diner, looks around, and spots SAM (Samantha, a gentle-looking woman in her 50s). She hugs Gerry like they're old friends having a reunion. Gerry hugs her back, but we sense his discomfort.

SAM

It's so great to see you, Gerry. How long's it been?

GERRY

Oh, I don't know. A few months now.

SAM

Too long. It's been too long. You've been avoiding me, haven't you?

GERRY

No, I--

The WAITER steps up.

WAITER

(to Gerry)

Can I bring you anything to drink?

GERRY

Um, coffee, please.

SAM

Forgive me, I got here a few minutes early, and ordered a salad. But order anything you like. It's on me.

GERRY

Oh, no, that's okay.

SAM

Of course, it's okay. I insist.

GERRY

Thank you. I'll have a burger, medium-rare. And fries.

The waiter walks away.

GERRY (CONT'D)

And how are you?

SAM

Oh, you know, same old grind. I'd love to retire soon, but it feels like a long way off. How's the real-estate?

GERRY

Slow and low.

SAM

That's too bad. I'm sure it'll pick up.

GERRY

Yeah. Eventually.

A long, awkward pause. Gerry tunes in to the details of Sam's behavior: her nail CLICKING against her coffee mug, her FALSE SMILE, the narrowing of her eyes as she stares at Gerry.

SAM

Don't make me ask, Gerry...

Gerry straightens up, as the waiter returns with a salad.

SAM (CONT'D)

Unbelievable. Excuse me, I asked for the dressing on the side.

WAITER

Oh, I'm sorry. Do you want me to take it back?

SAM

I want you to hold it between your knees.

The waiter stares at her, confused.

SAM (CONT'D)

(to Gerry)

He doesn't get it... Yes, take it back, please.

The waiter takes off with the salad, and Sam calls after him.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm here three days a week and every time with the dressing. Oh, boy. What're you gonna do?

GERRY

What're you gonna do?

Another odd beat. An uncomfortable tension is mounting.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Okay, look-- I had eight hundred last night and some meth head robbed me by knife point and stabbed me in the gut.

He lifts up his shirt, revealing the blood-stained bandage.

GERRY (CONT'D)

See?



SAM

Oh, god, you should have that checked out. Are you okay?

GERRY

Yeah. Thankfully.

SAM

I can't imagine.

GERRY

It was pretty scary.

SAM

Well, at least you're okay.

GERRY

Just a scratch.

SAM

Could have been a lot worse ya know?

Beat. Gerry sips his coffee, recognizing Sam's veiled threat.

SAM (CONT'D)

So what did you bring me today?

Gerry nervously opens his wallet, hands over everything in it.

GERRY

That's about eighty. I'll have more for you next week. I mean I had eight hundred, but--

SAM

--the meth head.

GERRY

The fucking meth head.

SAM

It was a bad beat.

GERRY

The worst.

SAM

Things'll look up.

GERRY

They always do.

SAM

Well... not always.

Another threat. Another tense beat. The waiter returns with Sam's salad.

WAITER

Sorry about that.

SAM

That's okay. I'm sorry about that knees comment. It's from a movie. I couldn't resist.

Sam's phone RINGS.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you mind?

Gerry shakes his head. Sam answers.

SAM (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yeah... Oh geez, c'mon Laura... I can't bring it to you at school, I'm in a meeting right now... Call your dad... How should I know?... It's not my fault you forgot it... Maybe you shoulda thought about that before you went out last night...

She covers the phone and whispers to Gerry.

SAM (CONT'D)

Teenagers.

Gerry puts on a false smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Okay, you know what, I'm gonna do this for you, but this is the last time... Do you hear me?... Okay, sweetie, I'll be by in half an hour... Don't keep me waiting out front either...

Sam hangs up, returns her gaze to Gerry.

SAM (CONT'D)

You're lucky you don't have to deal with this shit, Gerry, I tell ya.

GERRY

I hear ya.

SAM

What am I gong to do with you?

GERRY

Next week, Sam. Don't worry about it.

SAM

Tomorrow, Gerry. I'll have Tim drop you a visit.

GERRY

Oh, hey, that won't be necessary... No need to bring him into this. If you could just give me a few more days, I have a commission coming in--

SAM

--Get it together, Gerry.

Sam stands up and lays \$40 of Gerry's money on the table. Gerry puts his hand over hers.

GERRY

I had the money.

SAM

I'm sure you did.

GERRY

This time it wasn't my fault.

SAM

I understand.

Sam yanks her hand back and starts walking away.

GERRY

Just a few more days! Things are turning around for me. You'll see...

But she's out the door. Gerry slumps back in his seat.

23

**INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY**

23

An open area office with about a dozen desks stationed around the room. Most people are gone for the day, but Gerry and a secretary are still there. The secretary packs up her bag.

SECRETARY

I'm gonna head out now, Gerry.

GERRY

Okay, see you tomorrow.

The secretary leaves Gerry alone in the office. He finishes scribbling some notes, then files them away in his drawer. He sits alone. (This is no kind of life.) Hold.

24      **SECRETARY'S DESK - SECONDS LATER**      24

Gerry opens the top drawer and removes a petty cash box. He pockets the cash, then heads to the...

25      **OFFICE SUPPLY CLOSET**      25

Gerry grabs several rolls of toilet paper, stuffing them into his briefcase.

26      **INT. HOME CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT**      26

Surrounded by hanging tarp and construction materials, SIX MEN sit around a card table, playing poker, Gerry among them.

The other players banter back and forth, relaxed and friendly, but Gerry sits low in his chair, playing quiet and tense.

He watches as another player collects a pile of chips.

New cards are dealt, and Gerry takes a peek. He folds his hand immediately, slouches deeper into his chair.

27      **INT. BAR - NIGHT**      27

Gerry drinks, slumped over the bar-- the same bar he met Curtis in. He's been there awhile, but orders another bourbon. He mumbles to himself as he pulls a crumpled single and a handful of change from his pocket, counting out the last of his cash.

He stares at the pile of change on the bar counter, thinking, then takes out his phone, dials...

GERRY  
(trying to sound upbeat)  
Hey, Curtis!

CURTIS  
(muffled through phone)  
Gerry!

GERRY  
I know you're probably halfway to New Orleans by now, but--

CURTIS  
Crazy day, Gerry! I went to Chicago.

GERRY  
Chicago?

CURTIS  
Yeah, I won a ticket to a Bulls game shooting dice this morning. So I went.  
(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

But I'm back in your neck of the woods now.

GERRY

(perking up)

You are? Where?

In the bg, we see Curtis enter the bar in a Chicago hat.

CURTIS

Same place we met the other night.

Gerry and Curtis are now staring at each other across the bar.

GERRY

What place?

Curtis smiles and Gerry shouts with excitement.

CURTIS

Two Woodfords!

GERRY

Yes! This is good. This means something.

CURTIS

What's that?

GERRY

You walking in the door just as I was calling you... It's a sign.

CURTIS

Okay...

GERRY

Last night, after you left, some guy cut me in the parking lot.

CURTIS

Cut you?

Gerry raises his shirt, revealing gauze bandaged over the wound.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

What the hell?

GERRY

I know.

CURTIS

You should get that looked at.

GERRY

It's not serious.

CURTIS

Did you know the guy?

GERRY

Yeah, we play softball on weekends. No, I didn't know him. He was mugging me.

CURTIS

Okay, take it easy.

GERRY

Listen, what I'm getting at here--

CURTIS

Does it hurt?

GERRY

No-- it stings a little. What I'm getting at, Curtis... Good things happen to me when you're around. Bad things when you leave.

ON CURTIS. Where is this going?

GERRY (CONT'D)

I was just sitting here thinking before I picked up the phone. I was thinking about that big home game in New Orleans. The disassociated guy.

CURTIS

Tony Roundtree?

GERRY

I want in.

CURTIS

That game has a twenty five thousand dollar buy-in.

GERRY

Okay. That's a lot... That's a lot. But I have a plan.

CURTIS

I'm listening.

GERRY

We head down the Mississippi.

CURTIS

Okay.

GERRY

We head down the Mississippi like Huck fucking Finn and Jim.

CURTIS

On a raft.

GERRY

In a car. My car. We hit up all the action along the way. I know some weekly home games. Riverboats. Memphis. Vicksburg.

CURTIS

Tunica.

GERRY

Absolutely, Tunica!

CURTIS

I'm still listening.

GERRY

I'm in a hole now, but I'm climbing out. All I need is for you to stake me five hundred out the gate.

CURTIS

Oh boy, here we go...

GERRY

No, it's not-- look, it's an investment. I'll play.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

You'll be my lucky charm. We split the winnings even-stein.

Curtis takes a beat to think about it.

CURTIS

What about your job?

GERRY

They won't miss me.

CURTIS

Can I ask you a personal question?

GERRY

You may.

CURTIS

How much money do you owe?

GERRY

A lot.

CURTIS

To who?

Gerry thinks of the best way to answer this, then--

GERRY

Everyone.

CURTIS

I gotta be honest with you, Gerry... I don't think this is realistic.

GERRY

I'm a damn good poker player.

CURTIS

That may be true--

GERRY

--this is very realistic.

CURTIS

I don't think so.

GERRY

It is. It's extremely realistic.

CURTIS

Not with five hundred...



GERRY

You'd be amazed what I can do with--

CURTIS

I'll stake you two thousand. Your car,  
my cash.

Hold on Gerry-- a little stunned, as if he'd never expected  
Curtis to go along with his plan. Then...

GERRY

Hot damn. That's what I'm talkin'  
about.

28 **INT. GERRY'S HOUSE - MORNING**

28

Gerry fills a second cat bowl with food. The cat meows her  
disapproval, so Gerry takes down two more bowls and fills them  
next to the others.

He opens his dark refrigerator and dumps the rotting food into a  
garbage bag.

Gerry picks up his cat, gives her a kiss.

GERRY

Wish me luck.

29 **EXT. GERRY'S CAR - OUTSIDE DENISE'S HOUSE - DAY**

29

"200 Poker Tells" plays on the stereo, as Gerry taps the horn.  
Curtis comes out with his leather duffel bag, climbs in the car.

CURTIS

Where's your cat?

GERRY

My house.

CURTIS

You just left her all alone?

GERRY

She'll be fine.

CURTIS

Uh-huh...

Curtis slams the door, and they pull away.

30 **INT. GERRY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER**

30

Heading southbound on the highway.

CURTIS

Tony Roundtree once had a pet tiger.

GERRY

A pet tiger?

CURTIS

He won it playing baccarat with an Arab prince. Cleans the guy out, the prince doesn't want to stop playing so he puts his tiger on the table-- not literally, but you know.

GERRY

Yeah.

CURTIS

Joke was on Tony, though. Didn't know he'd be hemorrhaging money on the thing. He's got to register it with the federal government, get a special permit. Costs a fortune. And he can't leave it alone for more than a few hours or it rips up his furniture. Not easy to find a pet sitter for a carnivorous tiger, so what's the guy do when he travels?

Curtis pauses for effect. Smiles.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

First time I met him was on the bar car of an Amtrak train from Denver to Albuquerque. I remember he wore a blue velvet smoking jacket and drank from a copper flask.

Gerry nods, developing a picture of Tony Roundtree in his mind.

GERRY

And the tiger...?

CURTIS

Tranquilized and checked with the other cargo.

GERRY

He checked a tiger? On an Amtrak train?

CURTIS

Apparently they have a policy. But wanna know what it costs to check a 600 pound animal?

Beat. Gerry shrugs, waiting for it. But Curtis's attention is suddenly drawn to the car radio.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

Number twenty-three: Dilated Pupils...

CURTIS

Hold on-- what're we listening to?

GERRY

This is "200 Poker Tells" by Joe Navarro. It relaxes me.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

When we are comfortable or like something, our pupils dilate. We have no control over this and with players that have blue or green eyes, it can be quite visible. Remember, sudden pupil dilation says, "I like what I see."

CURTIS

Are you serious?

GERRY

What?

CURTIS

How often do you listen to this?

GERRY

Whenever I'm driving.

CURTIS

Are you gonna make me listen to this all the way to New Orleans?

GERRY

We don't have to listen to it.

CURTIS

Thank you.

Curtis ejects the CD, hooks up an AUX cable to his iPhone. A funky blues song begins to play. At first hesitant, Gerry begins to bob his head, enjoying the music.

31 **EXT. CORNFIELD HIGHWAY - DAY**

31

Gerry's car cruises past a highway sign: "St. Louis 211 miles."

32

**EXT/INT. GERRY'S CAR - LATER THAT DAY**

32

The music didn't last long, as Gerry has "200 Poker Tells" back in play. Curtis is asleep next to him. Gerry's phone rings and he checks the call. Declines it. Curtis stirs awake.

CURTIS

Who was that?

GERRY

Nobody.

CURTIS

You bring any snacks?

GERRY

I have some jerky in the backseat.  
Grab me some too.

Curtis leans into the back seat, comes back with a plastic grocery bag and a cigar box.

CURTIS

Nice! You brought cigars?

GERRY

Oh no that's not--

Curtis opens the box to find a random assortment of items.

CURTIS

What's all this?

GERRY

Nothing. It's an emergency fund. Just  
in case.

CURTIS

In case of what?

GERRY

Emergency.

Curtis looks through the box, finds a couple watches, several rare coins, vintage baseball cards, and--

CURTIS

This a wedding ring?

GERRY

Yeah.

CURTIS

Get outta here; you were married?

GERRY

Hard to believe, huh?

CURTIS

I didn't mean it like that... What happened?

GERRY

She left.

Before Curtis can respond, Gerry turns up the car radio volume. Curtis watches Gerry, who stares straight ahead, trying to focus on Joe Navarro's voice. Clearly, this is still a sore subject.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

False smiles are used by bluffers. They look odd because sometimes only one side of the face is involved or the smile goes towards the ear rather than the eyes. It is an obvious sign of weakness and lack of confidence...

33

**EXT. ST. LOUIS STEAMBOAT - SIDE DECK**

33

Gerry waits behind Curtis as he KNOCKS on a cabin door. A sexy redhead, (SIMONE, 30s) answers.

SIMONE

Can I help you?

CURTIS

Hi.

She stares at him, smiling.

SIMONE

Hello.

CURTIS

I'm Curtis.

SIMONE

Simone.

CURTIS

I'm wondering if you might be able to help me find a woman?

SIMONE

What sort of woman you looking for?

CURTIS

Oh, about this tall...

He extends his hand to her height, then describes her features.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Cinnamon hair... soft pale skin...  
devastating blue eyes...

They exchange long, familiar grins. Gerry looks on, waiting for the payoff.

SIMONE  
Hmm, I think I've seen this woman  
you're looking for.

CURTIS  
(leaning in to her)  
I know she's close. I've been tracking  
her sweet scent for miles.

SIMONE  
(pulling away)  
They say working class hound dogs have  
the best sense of smell.

CURTIS  
Woof woof.

SIMONE  
Well don't just stand there barking,  
little doggy. Come inside and get  
yourself a treat.

We hold on Gerry wondering what the hell is going on.

34

**INT. PRIVATE CABIN DRESSING ROOM**

34

Gerry and Curtis enter the tight cabin, which is being used as a dressing room.

CURTIS  
Gerry, meet Simone.

Simone hands them each a coat on a hanger.

SIMONE  
These were the best I could do.

CURTIS  
Did I ever tell you you're amazing?

SIMONE  
Too often to feel sincere.

As Curtis begins to disrobe, Gerry looks for a private place to put on his suit.

His eyes stop on a cracked curtain, where a topless woman (20s) is applying makeup in front of a vanity mirror. He stares for a beat too long, until she notices and he looks away. She smiles and slides the curtain shut.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

Don't be shy, Gerry, we're all friends.

Gerry smiles awkwardly, starts unbuttoning his shirt.

GERRY

You guys play poker?

SIMONE

No, we just work here, honey.

GERRY

What is it you do?

SIMONE

Vanessa and I get paid for our companionship.

GERRY

Oh... Got it.

VANESSA-- the woman from the bathroom-- emerges in a gown. Gerry is now topless.

VANESSA

Hi.

GERRY

Hi.

VANESSA

(re: his gut bandage)  
What happened there?

GERRY

It's nothing.

VANESSA

Doesn't look like nothing.

GERRY

I'm Gerry.

VANESSA

Vanessa.

Vanessa and Gerry shake hands.

CURTIS

Gerry saved my life in a knife fight.

GERRY

That's not true.

VANESSA

Hi Curtis... How was Peru?

CURTIS

Not yet, sweetie. But it's on the horizon, I promise.

VANESSA

(to Gerry)

You can change in there if you want it.

GERRY

Thanks.

35 **BEHIND THE CURTAIN**

35

Gerry shuts himself in the dressing area, looks in the mirror. He pulls back the bandage to reveal a red and swollen wound. He grimaces, then replaces the bandage.

Gerry scrunches his face to release tension like we saw him do in the opening scene.

36 **EXT. MOVING STEAMBOAT DECK - SUNSET**

36

From the front deck, we see clearly for the first time that we are floating down the Mississippi River on a private steamboat. Suited up in cheap ill-fitting coats and sipping champagne, Curtis and Gerry stare at the St. Louis skyline drifting by.

CURTIS

First thing when we get to New Orleans we buy new suits.

GERRY

I don't really wear suits.

CURTIS

Well we can't go to Tony's dressed like this.

GERRY

In that case, I've always wanted a white suit.

Beat. Curtis and Gerry look out at the sunset, fantasizing about what their futures hold.



CURTIS

Mental note: next trip, open sea.

GERRY

What's this about Peru?  
(off Curtis's look)  
You told Vanessa...

CURTIS

It's kind of a joke. Like when I'm done with a place or a person. When it's time to move on, I'll say, "It's Machu Picchu time."

GERRY

Machu Picchu time?

CURTIS

You might say it's the end of my rainbow... A place so exotic and mysterious, I could get lost and never come back... And it's fun to say... Machu Picchu. Try it.

GERRY

Machu Picchu.

CURTIS

Machu Picchu.

GERRY

Machu Picchu.

They laugh.

37 **INT. STEAMBOAT BALLROOM**

37

Curtis and Gerry enter the ballroom, where a PIANO MAN is playing on a small stage. Six poker tables are spread around the cabin. The well-dressed guests (all of them men) play poker at various tables, while about a dozen sexy servers and escorts mingle on the perimeter of the cabin-- some of these servers provide table massages to players who don't want to leave their games.

Curtis stops to admire the music for a moment. Drops a \$20 bill into the pianist's tip jar.

CURTIS

I'll be at the bar if you need me.

As Gerry takes his assigned seat, Curtis wanders to the empty bar. While he waits for the bartender, he watches Gerry...

38 **AT THE TABLE**

38

Gerry checks the pair of cards he's dealt and puts in a couple chips to meet the blind. As the flop is dealt, Gerry slouches in his chair ever so slightly. When the betting comes around to him, he thinks for a beat, then folds his hand.

39 **BACK AT THE BAR**

39

Curtis looks around, but still can't find anyone to get him a drink. IT'S THE FIRST TIME THAT WE'VE SEEN HIM ALONE, WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE, AND HE DOESN'T QUITE KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIMSELF.

He scans the room, notices Simone giving a massage to one of the players. He watches for an extended beat, until she looks up, making brief eye contact. Curtis motions for her to come over, but she turns away.

Desperate, Curtis stands up, starts slow dancing with an invisible partner until Simone can't ignore him anymore. She laughs. Curtis smiles, takes a bow.

40 **EXT. SIDE OF THE BOAT - LATER THAT NIGHT**

40

The steamboat cruises up a desolate section of the river. Curtis leans against the railing, while Simone sits on a bench, smoking.

CURTIS

Tell me something I don't know about St. Louis.

SIMONE

I've only been here a few months.

CURTIS

That's no excuse. I was in Iowa for a few days and I can tell you that Marion Robert Morrison was born in Winterset, Iowa, 1907.

SIMONE

Am I supposed to know who that is?

CURTIS

You probably know him by his stage name: John Wayne. I can also tell you that Iowa is the only state in the country that begins with two vowels. And that the National Balloon Museum in Indianola chronicles more than 200 years of ballooning history--

SIMONE

Okay, fine. I don't know if this is true...

CURTIS

(sitting next to her)

Doesn't matter. Lay it on me.

SIMONE

You know how some hotels put little chocolates on pillows for their guests? That was started in St. Louis by... You're supposed to guess who.

CURTIS

Ben Franklin.

SIMONE

Close. Cary Grant. Apparently, he was staying in the Mayfair and wooing a certain lady friend with chocolates on her pillows.

Curtis smiles at first, but then...

CURTIS

Who told you that?

SIMONE

A friend.

CURTIS

Who?

SIMONE

I don't remember.

CURTIS

C'mon, think about it.

SIMONE

What are you getting at?

CURTIS

Were you in a hotel room when this friend told you about Cary Grant's chocolate seduction technique?

SIMONE

I don't remember, but so what if I was?

Beat. Curtis lets it die.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

Six months is a long time, Curtis.

CURTIS

Six months? It hasn't been six months.

SIMONE

Yes.

CURTIS

No.

SIMONE

September, October, November, December,  
January, February, March... Seven  
months.

Beat. Curtis looks out over the water.

CURTIS

Tell me something else about St. Louis.

41 **INT. STEAMBOAT BALLROOM - LATER**

41

Gerry, now with a large stack of chips, goes head to head with a guy in a bow-tie... Let's call him THE PROFESSOR. Vanessa gives a neck massage to a different player at the table, watching as the tension mounts.

On the table, the Ten and Nine of spades are displayed alongside the King of diamonds. A significant mound of chips is already in play.

Gerry, holding two spades (the King and Four) has a pair of Kings with a good chance for a flush. There is also a straight opportunity on the board, if his opponent can make a Queen/Jack.

Gerry places a bet for five hundred dollars, and the Professor raises the pot to a thousand. Gerry quietly meets the bet.

The TUXEDOED DEALER lays down the turn... the three of hearts... which can't help anyone.

Gerry studies his opponent. Could he have the straight? Gerry doesn't bet this time around, checking to the Professor...

...who confidently tosses in a thousand dollars in chips.

Gerry meets the thousand, and everyone at the table waits for the last card... A seven of hearts.

Gerry doesn't make his spade flush. With only the pair of Kings, he checks.

The Professor calmly counts out his chips and...

...pushes all of them towards the center of the table. Hold on Gerry looking for the tell.

GERRY

How do you get a sweet, little old lady  
to shout, "Go fuck yourself!"

Some players smile or chuckle, but Gerry focuses his attention on the Professor.

GERRY (CONT'D)

You get another sweet little old lady  
to shout, "Bingo!"

Vanessa and the other players genuinely laugh. Gerry's opponent attempts to give a carefree chuckle, however it comes off as fake. He's got him. Gerry meets the bet, calling the Professor's bluff.

The Professor mucks his cards to the dealer, frustrated. Gerry rakes in the pot, giving Vanessa a wink.

42 **INT. RIVERSIDE TAVERN - LATER THAT NIGHT**

42

A few locals play pool, while Simone/Vanessa select and discuss songs on the jukebox. Still in their elegant evening wear, the ladies stand out in this low-key dive.

AT THE BAR. Gerry and Curtis, jackets off and ties loosened around their necks, sip bourbon side by side.

CURTIS

Did you hear the one about the gambler  
and the mugger?

Gerry nods, yes.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Are you sure? Let me tell it. A  
gambler is walking down a dark alley,  
when a guy steps out with a gun, says  
"Your money or your life." The gambler  
shrugs, "I'm sorry I'm a gambler, so--"

GERRY

"--I have no money and no life."

CURTIS

You've heard this before.

Gerry laughs.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I was once mugged by an old lady in a wheelchair.

Gerry laughs even harder now. Simone calls to them from the jukebox.

SIMONE

You boys just gonna sit there all night?

VANESSA

Come dance with us.

Gerry and Curtis exchange grins. Curtis hops off his ass and joins the ladies in dance.

We hold on Gerry watching them for a beat, until Vanessa motions him over. He downs his drink and joins them.

43 **INT. SIMONE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

43

Our gang of four play drunken Trivial Pursuit in the living room: boys vs. girls. They each have a stack of dollar bills, but the girls' is significantly larger. Simone stops her wheel on a blue square.

CURTIS

What city created a museum in the three-story home where Sigmund Freud lit up his last cigar?

SIMONE

I know this, I think... London?

CURTIS

(checking the answer)  
Yes! How did you know that?

Gerry hands the ladies another bill.

GERRY

I would have guessed Vienna.

VANESSA

Simone's so smart. I never know anything.

GERRY

You knew Joe Piscopo.

VANESSA

Everyone knew Joe Piscopo.

SIMONE

I didn't know Joe Piscopo, baby.  
Curtis, will you come to the bedroom  
and rub my feet?

Curtis and Gerry exchange smiles. Curtis follows Simone.

CURTIS

Duty calls.

VANESSA

Should we keep playing?

GERRY

That's okay, I think I've had enough  
trivia for one night.

VANESSA

Do you know any magic tricks?

GERRY

Not really. Do you?

VANESSA

You wanta see?

GERRY

Yeah!

VANESSA

Okay, I'm still learning so you can't  
make fun of me.

GERRY

I won't make fun of you.

Vanessa smiles and gets up to prepare her trick while Gerry  
pours them two more drinks.

44 **INT. SIMONE'S ROOM**

44

Simone and Curtis lie in bed as he massages her feet.

SIMONE

Where'd you find him?

CURTIS

Poker tournament with a sixty dollar  
buy-in. He was wearing a collared  
shirt with a missing button.

SIMONE

And you ordered him a Woodford.



Curtis smiles. She knows him too well.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

What's he need the money for?

CURTIS

He believes it will set him free.

SIMONE

I'm asking a serious question.

CURTIS

I'm giving an honest answer.

SIMONE

I just want to make sure you know what you're getting into.

CURTIS

Don't worry, he's a good guy.

SIMONE

That's what you said about George.

CURTIS

You mean Jorge? What do you have against Jorge?

SIMONE

His name was George. And he was a liar and a thief.

CURTIS

He was not.

A beat.

SIMONE

What's in this for you?

CURTIS

The journey is the destination, sweetheart.

SIMONE

That's not an answer. It's a bumper sticker.

CURTIS

There's nothing in it for me.

SIMONE

So what then? After New Orleans. What's next?

Curtis thinks for a beat, then--

CURTIS  
You should come with us.

SIMONE  
Shut up.

CURTIS  
I've never been more serious.

SIMONE  
You know I have school.

CURTIS  
So play hooky.

SIMONE  
Curtis...

CURTIS  
We could have a great time.

SIMONE  
I have different priorities now. I  
can't just hit the road on a whim.

CURTIS  
Didn't your mama ever tell you you can  
do anything you want?

SIMONE  
No. She didn't.

CURTIS  
Well then I'm saying it for her.

Beat. Simone decides to call his bluff.

SIMONE  
Okay.

CURTIS  
Okay?

SIMONE  
I'll come with you.

CURTIS  
Great.

Simone yanks a suitcase out of the closet, tosses it on the bed.

SIMONE

What should I pack for this little mystery tour?

CURTIS

Whatever you want.

SIMONE

Jackets? Will I be cold? How bout a bikini? I love the beach. Will you help me pick out some dresses? Is there a gym where we're going? Suppose I'll need my running shoes.

She starts throwing everything into the suitcase. Manic. Curtis just watches.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

Oh, can't forget my heels. What about condoms? Will I have to work on this journey, or will you be providing a per diem?

CURTIS

That's enough.

Simone tosses another stack of clothes onto Curtis. They sit facing opposite directions on the bed.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'll come back.

SIMONE

Don't bother. I'll be gone.

CURTIS

Where?

SIMONE

Not sure yet. Maybe Peru. It's the one place I know you'll never be...

45 **INT. SIMONE'S LIVING ROOM**

45

Now wearing a long coat, Vanessa struggles through her trick for Gerry. The build up is not very impressive, however, she eventually reveals a small kitten up her sleeve.

Gerry is genuinely stunned.

GERRY

Hot damn! What the fuck is that?

She hands him the kitten.

GERRY (CONT'D)

That was amazing!

VANESSA

You liked it?

GERRY

Are you kidding? I loved it. Where did this thing come from?

VANESSA

It's Simone's. I was hiding him earlier so I could show you guys my trick tonight.

GERRY

Don't you know magicians never reveal their secrets?

She blushes.

VANESSA

I'm still learning, I guess. Don't tell anyone, okay?

GERRY

Your secret's safe with me.

VANESSA

Your turn.

GERRY

I told you I don't know any tricks.

VANESSA

Well, I showed you mine, you have to show me yours. It can be anything.

Gerry looks around the room, sees an old upright piano.

GERRY

Okay, but you can't make fun of me.

VANESSA

I promise.

Gerry sets the cat down, moves over to the piano bench. He begins to play a beautiful and haunting classical piece.

Vanessa watches him for a beat, then sits next to him on the bench. She stares at his fingers in wonder, while Gerry plays with his eyes closed.

46 **INT. SIMONE'S ROOM**

46

Curtis is putting Simone's strewn clothes back into the closet, when he pauses upon hearing the piano from the other room. He gets lost in the music for a moment.

CURTIS  
Is that Vanessa?

SIMONE  
Must be your friend.

Curtis looks off, the piano triggering something in him.

CURTIS  
I didn't know Gerry played.

SIMONE  
Why would you? You met him two days ago.

CURTIS  
He's not bad.

Curtis listens by the door.

SIMONE  
Curtis Vonn, you're a little boy living in a grown man's body. One day you're gonna wake up old and realize you blew your last nickel on a deadbeat loser don't even know your last name.

Curtis hears this, but pretends not to.

47 **INT. SIMONE'S LIVING ROOM**

47

After finishing the short piece, Gerry looks to Vanessa.

VANESSA  
I liked that.

GERRY  
Yeah?

She nods. They stare at each other for an extended beat. This is the moment he should lean in for a kiss, but...

...he turns away.

VANESSA  
Are you married?

Gerry shakes his head.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
Girlfriend?

Gerry just stares at the piano keys.

GERRY  
I have a little girl.

VANESSA  
Yeah? That's cute. Do you have a picture?

Gerry shakes his head, ashamed that he doesn't.

GERRY  
She lives with her mom in Little Rock.

VANESSA  
That's not so far away.

Beat. Gerry runs his fingers across the piano keys as if to change the subject.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
Do you wanta kiss me?

Gerry nods, then--

GERRY  
I have problems with money.

VANESSA  
(offended?)  
Did I say anything about money?

GERRY  
No. I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that. It's just the first thing that came to mind, so... I said it.

Vanessa nods.

VANESSA  
I'm gonna do something with my life. I may not have it all figured out yet, but... I'm gonna do something.

Beat.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
It's the first thing that came to my mind.

Gerry smiles.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Will you play another song?

Gerry begins to play another song. Vanessa rests her head on his shoulder, while he plays. Hold.

48 **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**

48

Gerry's car speeds by a sign reading, "Memphis 190 miles."

49 **EXT. GAS STATION - DAY**

49

Curtis pumps gas.

50 **INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM**

50

Gerry listens to his voicemail message as he tends to his stomach wound in front of the mirror.

GERRY'S BOSS (O.S.)

Gerry, we hope you're okay. A little concerned that we haven't heard from you. It's all a bit awkward, but I feel I need to mention that some of the petty cash seems to have gone missing-- Not that I'm accusing you of taking it... but Janice says there was a hundred fifty there when she left on Tuesday... Also a friend of yours named Tim stopped by? Said he's been looking for you too...

51 **EXT/INT. GERRY'S CAR**

51

Gerry looks a little stressed as "200 Poker Tells" plays.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

Number 118. Sitting Lower and Lower. Players who slip lower and lower in their chairs during a hand, are progressively revealing their weakness. Most players are not aware of how low or high they sit. It is a very accurate tell on some players whose posture is governed by their emotional state.

CURTIS

That's yours, ya know?

GERRY

What?

CURTIS

You're a sloucher. It's your tell. You slouch when you're worried.

GERRY

Get outta here.

CURTIS

You're doing it right now.

Gerry sits up, correcting his posture.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Ever considered Yoga?

GERRY

Shut up.

CURTIS

I'm just saying, helps with the posture.

Gerry shakes his head.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Seemed like Vanessa really liked you.

GERRY

Yeah, we had a nice time.

CURTIS

Did you sleep with her?

GERRY

No.

\*

Curtis just stares at him.

GERRY (CONT'D)

What?

CURTIS

Why not?

\*

\*

GERRY

I don't know. It wasn't that kind of thing between us.

\*

\*

\*

CURTIS

Are you kidding? I thought you knew how to read people.

\*

\*

\*

(MORE)



CURTIS (CONT'D)

She was sending signals all night.

\*

GERRY

Maybe I didn't feel like it.

CURTIS

Do you like women?

GERRY

Yes.

CURTIS

It's okay if you don't.

GERRY

What's going on with you and Simone?

CURTIS

We had sex last night.

GERRY

That's not what I asked.

CURTIS

Why are you changing the--

GERRY

--Your voice goes up an octave when you talk to her.

CURTIS

Okay okay...

GERRY

All soft and dreamy. You must really love this girl.

CURTIS

You're avoiding the subject, Gerry.

GERRY

And what are you doing?

CURTIS

What are you afraid of?

\*

GERRY

Afraid? I'm not afraid... What are you talking about?

\*

\*

\*

Curtis thinks this over for a second. Something clicks.

CURTIS  
Your ex-wife.

GERRY  
Hm?

CURTIS  
That's what this is all about. She left you and you want her back. I should've known it was about a woman.

GERRY  
It's not about-- a woman.

Curtis stares at Gerry for a beat.

CURTIS  
Yes, it is. You know how I know? You're slouching.

GERRY  
You don't know anything.

CURTIS  
I know a little bit.

GERRY  
You know how to bullshit, I'll give you that.

CURTIS  
I've met a lot of people on the road, Gerry. I know what makes them tick.

GERRY  
Yeah, you're just a regular Dr. Phil.

CURTIS  
I'm just saying that my experience has given me certain insights into human behavior.

GERRY  
How old are you?

Beat. Curtis knows where he's going.

CURTIS  
Forget it.

GERRY  
Forget what?

CURTIS

I see what you're doing and it doesn't matter. Age is not the only indication of life experience.

GERRY

I'm forty-four.

\*

They drive in silence for a beat.

CURTIS

I'm thirty-nine.

\*

GERRY

No you're not... Hundred bucks I can guess your age though.

CURTIS

You're on.

Beat. Gerry milks the moment.

\*

GERRY

Let's see... I'd have to say you're thirty... five.

\*

\*

CURTIS

I'm thirty-five. How'd you know that?

\*

GERRY

I'm good with ages.

CURTIS

Good with ages, my ass.

GERRY

I looked at your driver's license.

CURTIS

When?

GERRY

This morning. You were in the bathroom.

\*

\*

CURTIS

Why did you do that?

GERRY

Just making sure you're who you said.

CURTIS

And what did you learn?

GERRY

You're Curtis Vonn. Thirty-five with an expired North Dakota driver's license.

\*

CURTIS

That's it?

GERRY

Something else you want to share?

Curtis smiles, looks out the window. This guy may be trickier than he thought.

52 **INT. WEST MEMPHIS DOG TRACK - OTB AREA - DAY**

52

CLOSE ON an OLDER GENTLEMAN speaking to Curtis who is just off-screen.

OLDER GENTLEMAN

Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, Aretha Franklin, Al Green, Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, John Lee Hooker, Booker T and the MGs...

53 **INT. WEST MEMPHIS DOG TRACK - BATHROOM - DAY**

53

Gerry on his phone pleading with another bookie.

GERRY

Hey J.P. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just listen, listen-- put me down for five on Hawaii over Gonzaga tonight... Bullshit! I literally have the money right now, as we speak. In my hands... Hello? Hello?

Gerry swears under his breath and pockets his phone.

54 **BACK TO THE OTB AREA**

54

The Older Gentleman continues rattling off names to Curtis, as Gerry approaches.

OLDER GENTLEMAN

There's even some famous white folk from Memphis you mighta heard of... Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Sam Phillips-- he founded Sun Records...

CURTIS

All those people are from Memphis?

OLDER GENTLEMAN

And don't forget Justin Timberlake.

CURTIS

Very impressive, my friend.

GERRY

(re: previous races)

How we doing?

CURTIS

Won forty on Heart and Soul.

GERRY

Nice.

CURTIS

Lost fifty on Domino Effect.

An OLD COUPLE bickers at a nearby table. Gerry and Curtis exchange smiles with the Older Gentleman.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

How long were you married?

GERRY

Eight years.

CURTIS

That's a long time.

GERRY

Was supposed to be longer.

CURTIS

I like women too much to marry one...  
I'm going to get a burger. Want  
anything?

GERRY

(checking watch)

No. I should head over to this game  
soon.

CURTIS

(to Older Gentleman)

You married, pops?

OLDER GENTLEMAN

I was married six times. But not at  
present.

CURTIS

Wow. Well, here's looking to lucky number seven.

They toast and drink.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Do you miss the married life?

OLDER GENTLEMAN

Do I miss it? Well, let me put it like this... I just know it's better to not be alone...

Another eruption breaks out near the monitors as the dogs cross the finish line. Gerry and Curtis calmly turn their heads to observe the winners' and losers' reactions.

55      **INT. LIVING ROOM HOME GAME - NIGHT**      55

Gerry plays poker with a group of six other players. Round and round they go... Gerry wins hand after hand.

56      **MEMPHIS BLUES BAR - NIGHT**      56

A sweaty, smoky, cramped juke joint. Perched on a bar stool, Curtis watches a lean and mean Blues band play on stage. Locals dance and sway in front of the musicians.

A CURVY WOMAN in a tight dress saddles up next to Curtis, smiles.

The music continues over...

57      **INT. LIVING ROOM HOME GAME - LATER**      57

Gerry continues to clean up at the poker table. His only competition is DONNA (a cigar-chomping southern diva, 50s), who is doing almost as well as Gerry in chip count.

On the muted TV in the background, Gerry sees college basketball scores on ESPN.

GERRY

Shit!

Dennis turns to see what Gerry's responding to.

DENNIS

Wow. Hawaii beat Gonzaga? I didn't even know they had a basketball team.

DONNA

That's a bigtime upset. You have money  
on the Zags, Gerry?

ON GERRY. He shakes his head.

GERRY

Hawaii. The name of their team is the  
Rainbow Warriors.

The other players stare at Gerry waiting for an explanation.

58 **INT. MEMPHIS BLUES BAR - NIGHT**

58

Curtis and his new friend are now dancing in front of the stage.  
She appears to be teaching him a few new steps.

59 **INT. LIVING ROOM HOME GAME - LATER THAT NIGHT**

59

Gerry peeks at his cards: an Ace and a Jack. He raises a modest  
amount. Two players fold, but Donna calls.

The flop comes down with an Ace, a Jack and Three, giving Gerry  
two-pair on the flop.

He studies Donna, who takes another peek at her cards, which  
Gerry interprets as insecurity. Gerry raises a full grand.

Donna looks at Gerry, trying to read him. Her eyes search his  
face. Gerry remains impassive, however Donna calls his raise  
again.

The dealer discards the top card, then lays down the turn.  
Another Ace. Gerry notes a glimmer in Donna's eye when the card  
is laid. She must also have an Ace, giving her three of a kind.  
But Gerry has a full house, all face cards.

Certain he has the best hand, Gerry does not want to appear  
overconfident. He takes his time, plays with his stack of  
chips, then finally checks, not betting any money.

Donna looks him over. Gerry's face reveals nothing. After a  
beat, Donna pushes all of her chips (about 10K) into the pile.  
She's all in.

Gerry smiles.

GERRY

Call.

She looks to Gerry, a little less confident now...

60 **MEMPHIS BLUES BAR**

60

The song ends and folks applaud. The woman leans close to Curtis.

WOMAN

Wanta go back to my place?

CURTIS

Thank you. I would love to see your place. I really would. But I'm just here for the music tonight.

61 **INT. LIVING ROOM HOME GAME**

61

We pick up with Gerry and Donna in the same hand... As per the rule, Donna turns over her cards... Ace/Queen. Gerry smiles. He was right. Three of a kind. He flips his cards.

The other players gasp. Donna winces.

With "the river" card still out, Donna can only win if a Queen is dealt. A tense silence comes over the room as the dealer burns the top card and...

...lays the "river" card face up. A Queen of spades. The room gasps again.

Gerry can't believe his eyes.

Donna lets out a huge sigh of relief.

DONNA

I did not deserve that. Sorry, Gerry.

She collects her huge stack of chips.

DENNIS

Tough break, Gerry.

A long beat.

GERRY

Let's go again.

DONNA

Call it a night, Gerry, you don't have enough to meet the blind.

GERRY

I'm good for another grand. C'mon, Dennis, tell her I'm good.



DENNIS

It's a bad beat, Gerry. Throw in the towel.

Gerry leans close to Dennis, speaks softly.

GERRY

I've been takin' her all night, man, I can get it back. Just loan me a few hundred.

DENNIS

I can't do it. I'm sorry.

GERRY

Dennis. It's me you're talking to. How long have I known you?

DENNIS

A few years.

GERRY

A few years? C'mon, I've known you at least six years. Six years how many times have I asked you for money?

DENNIS

Once.

GERRY

Once. Wait once? Are you counting now as the one time?

DENNIS

No.

GERRY

No?

Gerry racks his brain, trying to remember.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Did I pay you back?

Dennis shakes his head no.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

62 **EXT/INT. MEMPHIS RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT**

62

Gerry climbs in the driver's seat, shuts the door. He closes his eyes. A quiet rage simmers as he grips the wheel tight.

We watch him tumble through a range of emotions, from anger to laughter to despair, and then his phone vibrates...

Insert: a text message from SAM, featuring a photo of a THICK-NECKED TOUGH GUY in Gerry's home, posing with his cat. Below it, the text reads, "Get home soon. Kitty misses u."

Gerry starts the ignition.

63

**MEMPHIS BLUES BAR**

63

Curtis chats up a motley crew of locals at the bar.

CURTIS

Hundred thousand dollar bet. The deal was Slim had to get C-cup breast implants and leave them in for exactly one year. No less.

LOCAL

Woman titties for a whole year?

CURTIS

Not only did he win the bet-- and he was paid, I can vouch for that. He met a woman-- a straight woman-- that loved his fake tits so much, she married him. And to this day, six years later, he's still got'm, perky as ever.

Everyone cracks up and cries bullshit, just as Gerry enters in the background.

LOCAL

(shaking his head)

There's someone out there for everyone. That's what they say.

We HOLD ON Gerry watching Curtis from afar, struggling with how to tell him what happened.

Gerry scrunches his face, loosening the tension, psyching himself up. He stands up straight as an arrow, slowly starts bobbing his head to the music, and...

...breaks out into a big smile. Curtis sees him approaching.

CURTIS

Gerry! How'd it go?

Gerry leans close to Curtis.

GERRY

I won seven thousand.

CURTIS  
Holy shit! You sonuvabitch! Seven?

Curtis embraces Gerry in a big hug.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
C'mon, have a drink! Meet some people.

GERRY  
Hang on a second--

CURTIS  
C'mon, let's celebrate--

GERRY  
There's something I have to tell you.

CURTIS  
What?

GERRY  
Can we talk in private?

64 **EXT. MEMPHIS BLUES BAR - NIGHT**

64

They step into an adjoining alley behind the bar.

GERRY  
I don't know what it means.

CURTIS  
What what means?

GERRY  
Tonight. I was all-in on this monster  
pot. Dead in the water. Over my head.  
Down to the river I needed a queen.  
Only a queen could save me and I made a  
promise. I promised myself if I got a  
queen, I'd go to Little Rock and make  
things right.

ON CURTIS, wheels turning.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
Make things right with my queen. You  
know what I mean?

CURTIS  
Your ex-wife...

GERRY  
You were right.

CURTIS

A woman. Didn't I tell you it was a woman? It's always a woman.

GERRY

I don't know what to do.

CURTIS

We go to Little Rock, that's what we do.

GERRY

But it's like two hours out of the way. Maybe it's crazy. Am I crazy?

CURTIS

You're a lunatic. But I love it.

GERRY

You don't mind?

CURTIS

A beautiful woman asked me to come home with her tonight, Gerry.

GERRY

Yeah?

CURTIS

I turned her down.

GERRY

You did?

CURTIS

Yes.

GERRY

Why?

CURTIS

When you come to a fork in the road, take it...

Gerry isn't sure what that means.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Let's go to Little Rock.

65

**EXT/INT. GERRY'S CAR - NIGHT**

65

Gerry stares straight ahead behind the wheel while Curtis slumps against the passenger seat window.

66 **EXT. VARIOUS LITTLE ROCK STREETS - DAWN** 66

The sun rises over downtown Little Rock landmarks and suburban area homes.

67 **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DOROTHY'S HOUSE- EARLY MORNING** 67

A modest one-story ranch-style home with rain-stained aluminum siding and an American flag in the window. Gerry's car is parked out front.

Gerry steps up onto the porch. Knocks. Waits.

After a few beats, DOROTHY (tired, 40s) opens the door and a stunned recognition sweeps over her.

DOROTHY

Gerry?

GERRY

Hi Dorothy.

DOROTHY

What're you doing here?

GERRY

I was just passing through town.  
Thought I'd stop by to say hello.

DOROTHY

You were just stopping through Little  
Rock?

An awkward beat as they stand in silence.

GERRY

I don't have to stay. I just thought  
it would be nice to see you, even for a  
minute.

DOROTHY

(reluctant)

Sure. Um... Come in, I guess.

WITH CURTIS IN THE CAR. He watches from the driver's seat as Gerry disappears inside the house. He smiles.

68 **INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY** 68

Dorothy gestures for Gerry to sit at the table.

DOROTHY

Have a seat. I was making some tea.  
Do you want some?

GERRY

Sure.

Dorothy goes into the kitchen.

Gerry pulls out a chair, which gets stuck on a stuffed animal on the floor. He picks up the stuffed animal and sits, nervously fidgeting with it as he glances around the room. He sees a family photo of Dorothy and another man posing with a little girl-- Gerry's daughter, WENDY (6, adorable with curls).

69 **EXT. INSIDE GERRY'S CAR** 69

Inspired by Gerry, Curtis picks up his phone, begins to dial.

70 **INT. DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM** 70

Dorothy returns with the tea.

GERRY

Where's... where is Wendy?

DOROTHY

At school.

GERRY

That's good... And how are things with Gary?

DOROTHY

Things are good.

Beat. They sip their tea. Gerry focuses in on little details of Dorothy's body, as if looking for "tells" in a poker opponent.

Gerry's POV: her tight pursed lips, tense jaw, blinking eyes, her hand fidgeting with her wedding ring...

She notices him looking at her hand.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

We got married.

GERRY

Congratulations.

It's even more awkward now.

71 **EXT. GERRY'S CAR** 71

Curtis holds his cell phone to his ear. We hear muffled ringing, followed by Simone's groggy voice--

SIMONE

Curtis?

CURTIS

Hey darlin'.

SIMONE

What time is it?

CURTIS

Did I wake you? I'm sorry.

SIMONE

It's okay. Where are you?

CURTIS

We're on a little detour in Little Rock.

SIMONE

What happened to New Orleans?

CURTIS

I'm sitting in a car outside Gerry's ex-wife's house. He's in there right now trying to win her back. And it got me thinking... about you, me, St. Louis, Kansas City... all kinds of places, really.

72 **INT. DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM**

72

With Gerry attempting to break the awkwardness.

GERRY

Do you ever think it's funny you traded me in for a Gary?

She doesn't. Gerry plots his next move, as Dorothy begins to lose patience.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Where is he now?

DOROTHY

He's working.

GERRY

Oh... what does he do?

DOROTHY

He's an electrician.

Gerry nods. Then he notices another photo on the wall.

It features his daughter Wendy-- about 2 years old, sitting next to a birthday cake, hugging a kitten (Gerry's cat, a few years younger). It's a lovely photo, but something is amiss to Gerry.

GERRY

Wait a second...

He moves over to the photo, takes it off the wall.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I was in this. You cut me out of this. That's my hand. Right there. You can still see my hand.

DOROTHY

I didn't want you on my wall, Gerry.

GERRY

So you just erase me from my daughter's life?

DOROTHY

Is that a joke? You erased yourself years ago.

GERRY

No--

DOROTHY

When's the last time you visited or sent a present on her birthday?

GERRY

You know I've been having a hard time with money, but--

DOROTHY

It's not about money. How about checking her homework or making dinner or, or just calling to say hi?

A long pause. Gerry doesn't have any answers, so...

GERRY

Thanks for the tea. Can I use the bathroom before I go?

Dorothy rolls her eyes, exasperated. Picks up his mug, brings it to the kitchen.

Gerry sets down the picture on a shelf (balanced precariously) as he makes his way down the hall. Before entering the bathroom, he turns back to make sure she isn't watching, then ducks through the bedroom door on the right.



73

**EXT. GERRY'S CAR**

73

Curtis continues on phone...

CURTIS  
You sound sleepy, darlin'.

SIMONE  
I was up late studying.

CURTIS  
What for?

SIMONE  
Test today.

CURTIS  
That's cute.

SIMONE  
Shut up.

CURTIS  
Teach me something.

SIMONE  
I'm tired, Curtis.

CURTIS  
C'mon... I just want to hear your  
voice. Sing me a song.

SIMONE  
I'm not going to sing you a song.

CURTIS  
Please.

Simone sings the alphabet song. Then silence.

SIMONE  
Hello?

CURTIS  
What if I came back?

SIMONE  
What?

CURTIS  
After New Orleans. What if I came back  
and stayed with you for awhile? What  
would that look like?

SIMONE

What would it look like? I don't know.  
Normal. We'd look like normal people.

CURTIS

Normal people?

SIMONE

Like everyone else. Eating and  
sleeping and fucking and fighting...  
Watching TV. What do you want me to  
say?

Beat.

CURTIS

You said it.

SIMONE

Is that what you want?

74

**INT. DOROTHY'S BEDROOM**

74

Gerry rummages through dresser drawers, looking for something specific. After a few beats of searching, he finds it. A purple stocking. He smiles, amused that she keeps the same hiding place after all these years.

Gerry digs into the stocking, comes up with a wad of cash and quickly counts out a stack of \$100 bills. He puts the rest back in the stocking, returns it to its hidden position, and closes the drawer. He pockets the cash and turns toward the door, when--

--He's busted. Dorothy is perched in the doorway watching him. A long awkward beat, but Dorothy doesn't seem surprised.

Ashamed, Gerry takes the cash out of his pocket and puts it on the dresser.

GERRY

I was going to pay you back.

DOROTHY

Get out.

Gerry slowly squeezes past Dorothy, into...

75 **THE HALLWAY**

75

Gerry stops, turns to Dorothy. He wants to say so much, but all he can manage is a pathetic shrug.

Enough is enough. Dorothy shoves Gerry out of the hall and he accidentally knocks over the photo of Wendy and his cat.

GERRY

Shit!

The glass SHATTERS on the floor, and Gerry kneels down to pick it up, but slices his hand in the process. He's bleeding on the floor and broken picture frame.

DOROTHY

Leave. Now.

Still holding the photo, Gerry hurries towards the door. He stuffs the bloodied photo in his pocket.

76 **EXT/INT. GERRY'S CAR**

76

Still on the phone with Simone.

CURTIS

Simone...

SIMONE

Yeah?

A long beat. It feels like Curtis wants to say something, when he notices Gerry come out of the house.

CURTIS

Good luck on your test, today.

SIMONE

Thanks.

CURTIS

I have to go now... But I'll call you  
soon-- from New Orleans. Okay?

Curtis ends his call as Gerry gets in the car, slams the door.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

How'd it go?

GERRY

As expected.

CURTIS

She was happy to see you?

GERRY

I wouldn't say that.

CURTIS

Are you bleeding?

GERRY

C'mon, let's go...

Curtis starts the car, and they pull away.

77 **INT. LITTLE ROCK DINER - DAY**

77

Gerry sips coffee, stares out the window. Curtis takes a bite of his eggs, watching Gerry.

CURTIS

You wanta talk about it?

Gerry shakes his head. They sit for a long moment, not talking. \*  
And then... \*

GERRY

I fucked up. \*

CURTIS

It's okay. \*

GERRY

No... \*

CURTIS

Look, I don't know what happened back there. Maybe it didn't work out this time. Maybe it's not my business. But you took your shot and I'm proud of you... You hear me? \*

Gerry stares at Curtis for a beat. Nods. \*

78 **EXT. TUNICA CASINO STRIP - NIGHT**

78

Various shots of Tunica's casino lights.

79 **EXT. GOLDSTRIKE CASINO PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

79

Gerry and Curtis carry their bags toward the sparkling entrance. Gerry has a bandage on his hand.

CURTIS

This place loves me, Gerry. I'm like  
the Moe Greene of Tunica, Mississippi.  
We'll be comped for days.

80      **INT. GOLDSTRIKE CASINO LOBBY**

80

Curtis and Gerry step up to the front desk. Curtis presents his  
V.I.P. card. DORA (30s) speaks with a Mississippi accent.

DORA

Welcome back to Goldstrike.

CURTIS

(reading her name tag)  
Thank you... Dora.

She swipes his card.

DORA

I'm sorry, this expired in 2009.

CURTIS

No.

DORA

I'm afraid so.

CURTIS

I don't see how that's possible. Try it again... Go easy now.

She swipes the card again.

DORA

I'm sorry.

CURTIS

(flirting)

Well, Dora, I have to say I am very disappointed in you.

Dora stays professional.

DORA

We do have some suites available for three ninety five a night.

Curtis leans close, while Gerry looks on, uncomfortably.

CURTIS

(whispering)

Don't you think you could just push the right buttons and comp me one of those suites for old times sake?

DORA

I'm sorry, sir.

Curtis stares at her with a seductive grin, whispers...

CURTIS

What time do you get off work?

DORA

I'll be here til eleven.

CURTIS

Perfect. I'll meet you in the player's lounge at eleven fifteen?

DORA

I got a man.

CURTIS

What's your man have to do with me?

She smiles, shows him her wedding ring.

DORA  
(leaning in, quiet)  
I can give you the AARP discount.  
That's ten percent off.

Curtis smiles to Gerry as if he's just managed to move mountains with his charm.

CURTIS  
What do ya say, Gerry?

GERRY  
Forget it, let's go somewhere else.

CURTIS  
It's fine, we can afford one night.

GERRY  
(to Dora)  
How much is a regular room?

DORA  
Ninety-nine dollars.

GERRY  
Little steep, don't you think?

CURTIS  
Give me the money, Gerry.

GERRY  
(to Dora)  
Excuse me miss... This man is the Mel  
Greene of Tunica, Mississippi. Do you  
have any idea what that means?

Dora stares at him. She doesn't.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
He has a V.I.P. card. Can you please  
just comp us for the night? Please?

DORA  
I'm sorry, sir. I don't have the  
authority--

GERRY  
Well, that's just not acceptable. Can  
I speak to your manager?



CURTIS

Hang on, Gerry.

(to Dora)

I'm sorry, will you excuse us a moment?

Curtis escorts Gerry away from the desk and into the...

81 **INT. GOLDSTRIKE CASINO MEN'S ROOM**

81

Gerry paces in front of the sinks, while Curtis interrogates him.

CURTIS

What happened?

GERRY

Nothing.

CURTIS

Where's the money?

GERRY

What money?

Curtis stares at Gerry, who stops pacing, slumps against the sink counter.

GERRY (CONT'D)

We're going to be all right.

CURTIS

What does that mean?

Gerry doesn't respond.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Gerry, your lips are saying we're all right, but you're slouching like a kid who just pissed his pants in the sandbox.

Gerry straightens up. Still no response.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Where are we at, Gerry!?

GERRY

(finally)

Ground zero. I tried to tell you before.

CURTIS

You tried to tell me?

GERRY

Fucking cunt! I was nailing her all night and she lands a queen on fifth street.

CURTIS

Are you telling me you lost in Memphis?

GERRY

I didn't know how to break it to you.

CURTIS

What were we doing in Little Rock?

Gerry looks away, ashamed. Curtis is piecing it together.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

No...

Gerry shrugs.

GERRY

I'm sorry.

Curtis turns away from Gerry toward the mirror, makes eye contact with himself. We hold on him for a long beat as he examines his reflection.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I can win it back. I can get us to twenty-five.

CURTIS

It's not about the money, Gerry.

GERRY

Of course it is! Do you think this is a vacation for me?

CURTIS

You're a piece of work, you know that?

GERRY

I played it right. It wasn't my fault. I can't catch a break. I just - can't - win!

Curtis rubs his head, exasperated, then--

CURTIS

This story doesn't have a happy ending. I think you should go back to Iowa.

GERRY

No way. I can't go back empty-handed.  
I need this. Don't you see? I can't  
go back!

Gerry kicks a bathroom stall door and slips on his ass to the floor. He's a pathetic sight.

CURTIS

You're trying to lose.

GERRY

Yeah right, I'm trying to lose.

Curtis stares at him.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to lose!

CURTIS

Gerry... You're sitting in piss on the floor of a Mississippi casino bathroom stall. Now be honest with yourself...

Gerry suddenly HOWLS from the depths of his soul, when...

THREE FRATTY TYPES (20s) enter the bathroom and approach the urinals.

FRAT BOY

What's up faggots?

His buddies laugh as they line up to PISS.

CLOSE ON CURTIS. He looks over to Gerry on the floor. He shrugs as if apologizing in advance for what he's about to do.

Curtis takes his time walking over to the homophobic Frat Boy, stopping directly behind him. He lifts his leg and firmly nudges the Frat Boy in the ass until he is wedged up against the urinal, thus pissing on himself.

FRAT BOY (CONT'D)

Get off me!

Curtis steps back and walks out of the bathroom, as Frat Boy spins around, piss all over his pants.

Before he even thinks to zip up, the Frat Boy starts towards the exit door to chase after Curtis, when Gerry jumps to his feet to distract him.

GERRY

Hey! Right here, tough guy. Let's go!

Now confused, the Frat Boy turns his manly aggression toward Gerry. Charging forth and tackling him to the tile. His buddies zip up and join in.

82      **INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM - SAME**      82

CLOSE ON CURTIS listening to the fight on the other side. We PAN off of him to the door labeled "MEN". HOLD for a beat before Curtis bursts back through the door, coming to Gerry's aide.

83      **EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT**      83

Gerry's car speeds by a sign, "New Orleans 310 miles"

84      **EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT**      84

A cheap motor inn with a flickering vacancy sign. Gerry, his face showing some wear and tear from the fight earlier, fills an ice bucket and hobbles back to the room.

85      **INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT**      85

Shirtless in his boxers, Curtis, who has somehow managed to make it out of the brawl unscathed, sits with his phone on the closed toilet. We hear muffled ringing, then Vanessa answers.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
(muffled through phone)  
Hello.

CURTIS  
Vanessa. It's Curtis.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
Hi Curtis.

CURTIS  
Is Simone there?

VANESSA (O.S.)  
Sorry, she's not home.

CURTIS  
Where is she? Her cell went straight to voicemail.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
I don't know.

CURTIS  
You don't know? It's almost midnight.

86 **MOTEL ROOM**

86

Gerry wraps ice in a hand towel, hears Curtis through the door.

CURTIS (O.S.)  
Is she with someone?

ON CURTIS IN THE BATHROOM.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Don't say you don't know. I know you  
know. Is she with someone?

VANESSA (O.S.)  
I promise I really don't know.

CURTIS  
Just tell me. I'll stop asking if you  
tell me.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
I don't know. I don't know. Maybe  
she's studying.

CURTIS  
She's not studying.

Long pause.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
I'll tell her you called.

CURTIS  
No, you know what, forget I called.

VANESSA (O.S.)  
Curtis.

CURTIS  
I'm serious. Please. Don't tell her I  
called. Can you do that for me?  
Vanessa? Don't tell her. Okay?

VANESSA (O.S.)  
Okay.

CURTIS  
Are you gonna tell her?

VANESSA (O.S.)  
No.

CURTIS  
Thanks.

Curtis hangs up, rubs his head in anguish. (He's not accustomed to whatever he's feeling now).

87 **MOTEL ROOM**

87

Curtis comes out of the bathroom, falls onto his bed.

GERRY  
Everything okay?

No response. Gerry watches him for a beat, notices a missing pinky toe on Curtis' left foot.

GERRY (CONT'D)  
You're missing a pinky.

CURTIS  
Mm-hm.

GERRY  
What happened?

CURTIS  
Some crazy bastard bit it off in a bathroom brawl.

Gerry disappears into the bathroom. After a few beats...

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
When I was eight, my sister and I went to live with our grandparents for a couple years.

Gerry reappears, sits on the edge of the bed.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Old house on a hill. It was my job to mow the lawn. It was one of those old rusty rotating blade manual mowers. I can barely even push the thing but there I am, doing my best like Sisyphus up the hill... My little sister steps in front of me, starts screwing around, taunting me like kid sisters do... Whatever she's doing, she's not getting out of my way, so I tell her she has til the count of three...

GERRY  
Fair warning.

CURTIS

I thought so. But one, two, three come and go and she refuses to move, so I ran over her foot with the lawn mower. She lost three toes.

Gerry winces. Curtis sips from the flask, when Gerry asks the obvious...

GERRY

So how'd you lose a toe?

CURTIS

My grandfather's brilliant idea of justice... He drank a fifth of Jack, held me down and sliced it off with a weed clipper.

Gerry let's that sink in for a beat.

GERRY

Where was this?

CURTIS

Minnesota.

GERRY

Not North Dakota?

CURTIS

I've lived all over.

GERRY

Where's your sister now?

No response. They sit in silence, until...

GERRY (CONT'D)

This morning, my ex-wife caught me stealing money from her sock drawer. And it wasn't the first time. Purple sock. Same one she kept her cash in when we were together.

Gerry pauses for a response, but doesn't get one.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I'm not a good person, Curtis... I don't deserve you. But it's like you were sent to me. Like a leprechaun. A fucking handsome leprechaun dropped down in the middle of Iowa. And the reason I lost in Memphis is you weren't there with me. I can't do it alone.

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

We're in this together. And I want you to know-- I didn't follow you down this damn river to lose.

HOLD ON CURTIS processing. After a long beat.

CURTIS

Long way down, ain't it Gerry?

88     **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**     88

Gerry's car exits the highway in New Orleans.

89     **INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY**     89

The PAWN BROKER examines Gerry's items, punching numbers into an old adding machine. Gerry intently watches his small box of possessions (wedding ring and all) being valued one by one.

90     **EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY**     90

The car SALESMAN counts out bills into Gerry's hand.

91     **EXT. FAIR GROUNDS HORSE TRACK PARKING LOT - DAY**     91

Curtis and Gerry make their way to the grandstand.

92     **EXT. HORSE TRACK PADDOCKS**     92

Gerry and Curtis look over the schedule and horses before the next race.

GERRY

This is the horse. Number three, "Toto's Revenge."

CURTIS

Seven to one. I don't know.

GERRY

It's Toto's fucking Revenge.

CURTIS

I say we go with the favorite here. Number one.

GERRY

Mississippi Grind?

CURTIS

Just feels right.



GERRY

It's Toto, Curtis! Dorothy! Rainbows!  
This is our pony. THIS feels right.  
This feels more than right.

CURTIS

You want to blow it all on a long shot.

GERRY

I want to win it all on a long shot.

Curtis looks at Gerry for a long beat.

CURTIS

Okay. Toto's Revenge.

GERRY

C'mon, Curtis, I need you to be with me  
on this.

CURTIS

I'm with you, I'm with you.

GERRY

Are you feeling it?

CURTIS

(he isn't)  
I'm feeling it.

GERRY

No. I need you to really feel it.  
I'll ask you again-- is this our horse?

CURTIS

This is our horse.

GERRY

Is this our horse, Curtis?

CURTIS

This is our horse, Gerry.

GERRY

Say it again.

CURTIS

Toto's Revenge is our horse.

GERRY

Thank you.

Curtis takes a few steps away towards the betting window, while  
Gerry watches him.

93

**GRANDSTAND - MINUTES LATER**

93

They both sit down in the sparsely populated seating area. Gerry anxiously bites his lip, as the horses step into the starting gate.

GERRY

She's a winner. I can feel it.

Curtis nods. A bell sounds and the horses fly out of the gate.

GERRY (CONT'D)

C'mon three!

Curtis remains silent, as the horses pull into the first turn.

ANNOUNCER

And it's Toto's Revenge breaking out into the lead with Sweet Feet and Mississippi Grind on the outside.

GERRY

Hot damn! C'mon Toto!

Gerry leaps to his feet, while Curtis stares straight ahead, unable to watch.

ANNOUNCER

Toto's Revenge loses steam with Sweet Feet moving into the front of the pack. And here comes Mississippi Grind on the outside!

GERRY

No! C'mon Toto! Damn it, c'mon you stupid horse!

ANNOUNCER

Mississippi Grind and Sweet Feet are neck and neck--

GERRY

Run! Run! Don't stop!

The horses cross the finish line.

ANNOUNCER

And it's Mississippi Grind at the finish line!

Gerry and Curtis both stare at the track in shock. Gerry can't believe it. He lowers his head, closes his eyes.

CURTIS

It had to end like this, Gerry. Here's a hundred bucks. Get yourself a bus ticket and go home.

Gerry perks up.

GERRY

You didn't bet it all?

CURTIS

I saved us a hundred each. Just in case.

GERRY

So we have two hundred.

CURTIS

No. You have one hundred. I have one hundred.

Gerry fumbles through the schedule, looking at the lineup for the next race.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Stop it.

GERRY

Thunder Clap!

CURTIS

Stop it, Gerry.

GERRY

Forty to one. We lay the two hundred and we're back in business.

CURTIS

We're done.

GERRY

What about Tony Roundtree? My white suit? We can still make it.

CURTIS

It's over Gerry.

GERRY

But we're so close.

CURTIS

It was a fantasy.

GERRY

We just need to believe--

CURTIS

It was never going to happen for us,  
Gerry.

Beat. Gerry looks Curtis over, as if searching for a tell. Did he find it?

GERRY

So that's that.

CURTIS

Thanks for the ride. I'm sorry it  
didn't work out.

Gerry nods. He gives a false smile and heads for the exit.

We HOLD on Curtis for an extended beat, until he finally stands up, slowly strolls to the...

94 **INT. HORSE TRACK BETTING WINDOWS**

94

Curtis calmly steps up to the teller, hands her his ticket.

She processes the ticket, then proceeds to count out a large sum of cash. Curtis stares at it without emotion.

The teller loads a stack of \$100 bills into an envelope. Curtis takes the envelope and turns around to find...

...Gerry. Standing a few feet back. Watching him.

The two stare at each other for an extended beat, then...

GERRY

I thought you didn't care about the  
money.

CURTIS

I don't.

GERRY

Then, why?

CURTIS

It's not fun watching you lose.

Gerry looks away, unsure what to say. Then...

GERRY

How'd you know it was Mississippi  
Grind?

CURTIS  
He was the favorite.

GERRY  
But how'd you know?

CURTIS  
I didn't. It's not magic, Gerry.

Curtis lets this land, then hands over the envelope of cash.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Here, take it.

Gerry stares at the money, but shakes his head.

GERRY  
I'd just blow it anyway, right?

He walks away, leaving Curtis with the cash in his hand. HOLD ON Curtis, watching Gerry go.

95     **EXT/INT. STREETCAR - DUSK**     95

CLOSE ON Gerry staring out the window.

96     **EXT. ANOTHER HOOD - DUSK**     96

Curtis strolls down the street in a rougher part of town with a cigarette hanging between his lips. He gets strange looks from the LOCALS as he swigs from a flask.

97     **EXT. STREETCAR - DUSK/NIGHT**     97

Gerry dials 4-1-1 and an operator answers.

GERRY  
New Orleans, Louisiana... Last name  
Roundtree. First name Tony.

98     **EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT**     98

A dimly lit court, where a two-on-two basketball game is taking place among some rough and tumble LOCALS. Curtis approaches the court.

CURTIS  
You fellas know where a guy can shoot  
some darts around here?

The tough-looking players stop their game and size Curtis up.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'll play your best guy for a hundred bucks.

99 **EXT. ALGIERS NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT**

99

A cab pulls away, leaving Gerry standing in front of an ordinary single-story house, dwarfed beneath a lit-up bridge. Less than glamorous. He checks the address in his hand. This is not how he imagined Tony Roundtree's home.

Gerry cautiously approaches the front door. Knocks. He looks both ways down the street.

100 **EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT**

100

Curtis is doing his best, but he is extremely overmatched by his opponent, who dunks over him.

101 **EXT. TONY ROUNDTREE'S HOUSE**

101

A disheveled man (late 60s) opens the door. An e-cigarette between his lips. He is TONY ROUNDTREE. He stares blankly at Gerry.

GERRY

Tony? Tony Roundtree?

Tony sizes Gerry up, says nothing.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I'm Gerry. You don't know me, but I'm a friend of Curtis.

Nothing.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Curtis Vonn.

Tony sucks on his e-cig. His silence is unnerving.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Is there a poker game here tonight?

Still nothing.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Are you the Tony Roundtree I'm looking for? You met Curtis on an Amtrak train to Albuquerque?

(suddenly uncertain, even as he says it...)

(MORE)

GERRY (CONT'D)

He said you were wearing a Blue Velvet smoking jacket and traveling with a tiger you won from an Arab prince?

Tony stares at Gerry. The ultimate poker face.

102 **EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT**

102

Curtis' opponent hits a fade-away jump-shot.

BALLER

That's game... Hundred bucks.

Curtis stares at the guy, smiling.

BALLER (CONT'D)

Something funny?

CURTIS

I don't have it.

BALLER

You don't have the money?

Curtis shrugs as the other players converge onto the court, surrounding him.

CURTIS

What're you gonna do about it?

And WHACK! He is immediately punched in the face. Falls down.

103 **EXT. TONY ROUNDTREE'S HOUSE**

103

Gerry pleads with Tony.

GERRY

You lived in Detroit, right? That's where you became a disassociated person who couldn't collect on a bad beat jackpot. Please, tell me you know what I'm talking about. There can't be two Tony Roundtrees in New Orleans.

A long, excruciating beat. Then finally...

TONY

You know Curtis?

GERRY

Yes! Yes, I know Curtis. He's a friend. A close, personal friend of mine.

Tony continues to look Gerry over.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Are you hosting a poker game here tonight?

TONY

Curtis with you?

GERRY

No. He couldn't make it. But he wanted me to let you know that you should let me in.

TONY

Let you in?

GERRY

Okay, full disclosure-- I'm a little short on the buy-in. I'm a little short. But you seem like a reasonable guy and I'm willing to bet we can work something out. You know what I mean? Some kind of financial agreement-- like say sixty/forty... or seventy/thirty?

There is a long awkward pause between them. Tony starts to laugh. So Gerry does the same. Both men are laughing, then--

TONY

What's your name, man?

GERRY

Gerry.

TONY

And you say Curtis is a close friend of yours?

GERRY

Yes! Very close. Extremely close. We go back-- oh, I don't know...

TONY

Gerry, can you give Curtis a message for me?

Before Gerry has time to respond--

WHACK! Tony socks Gerry in the face. Gerry stumbles back. And before he knows what hit him, Tony goes inside, SLAMMING THE DOOR behind him. HOLD ON Gerry rubbing his jaw.



104 **EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT**

104

Curtis' nose is swollen and bleeding. His opponent hovers over him, grabs him by the collar, and digs into his jacket pocket. He comes up empty, then digs into the other pocket.

CURTIS

Bingo.

The baller's hand comes out of Curtis' coat with the envelope.

BALLER

(seeing the cash)

What's wrong with you, man?

CURTIS

I had it coming.

BALLER

There's like five grand in here.

CURTIS

So take it.

BALLER

You're a crazy son of a bitch, you know that?

The baller peels off two hundred dollar bills, pockets them, and tucks the envelope back in Curtis' jacket. He and his friends leave the court, shaking their heads.

Curtis stands up, dusts himself off.

105 **EXT. CANAL STREET - NIGHT**

105

PAN off of a receding streetcar onto Gerry looking off-screen. We follow him as he approaches the downtown New Orleans casino.

106 **INT. CRESCENT LOUNGE - NIGHT**

106

An OLDER WOMAN, life experience etched on her face, sings and plays the piano in the corner with a three-piece band. The bar patrons chat quietly and listen to the music. No tourists in sight-- this place is a far cry from the French Quarter.

Curtis pauses as he steps through the door, watches the jazz singer for an extended beat before making his way to the bar.

Curtis sits down and the bartender (PETE, 50s) seems to recognize him. They shake hands.

PETE

It's been too long, man. How ya been?

CURTIS  
Livin' the dream.

PETE  
What happened to your face?

CURTIS  
You should see the other guy's hand.  
Gimme a bourbon.

PETE  
What kind?

CURTIS  
Cheap stuff.

The bartender pours some cheap shot of bourbon for Curtis who continues to watch and listen to the woman performing.

107     **INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO**     107

Gerry strolls past the slots, but stops upon seeing a bedazzled slot machine with a blinking rainbow theme. He thinks for a beat, then digs into his pocket for a quarter.

He deposits it into the machine, pushes the spin button, and the reels start spinning... one, two, three, they come to a stop with no winning combination. The rainbow magic is gone. Gerry thinks for a beat, then walks away.

108     **INT. CRESCENT LOUNGE - NIGHT**     108

The jazz singer finishes her set to mellow applause and steps off the stage. She notices Curtis and approaches the bar, where the bartender has a mint julep waiting for her. Curtis smiles.

SINGER  
Thanks, Pete. You got my smokes?

Pete, the bartender, passes her a handbag from behind the bar, and she takes out a pack of cigarettes. Curtis lights her up.

SINGER (CONT'D)  
Thanks darlin'.

CURTIS  
Happy birthday, mom.

109     **INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO**     109

CLOSE ON a roulette wheel spinning. We TILT up to reveal Gerry watching a few steps away from the table.

Gerry steps up, lays down his \$100 bill. He takes a seat as the croupier changes his bill, handing him a stack of chips.

Gerry places ALL OF HIS CHIPS onto the "double zero" square with 37-1 odds, one of the least probable bets on a roulette table. Then steps back and nods to himself, resigned to lose.

110

**INT. CRESCENT LOUNGE**

110

Curtis' mom, CHERRY VONN, sits down beside him. Years of smoking and drinking and crooning have taken their toll on Cherry's voice, which is rough and tough.

CHERRY

A little late, aren't ya?

CURTIS

Just a day or two.

CHERRY

Was beginning to think you might not make it this year. Where ya been hiding, baby?

CURTIS

Not hiding... traveling.

CHERRY

Uh-huh... travelers have a destination, honey.

CURTIS

The journey is the--

CHERRY

--journey is the destination?

She rolls her eyes. This woman has zero tolerance for bullshit.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

Well, it's good to see you, anyway. You bring me anything?

CURTIS

Didn't have time to stop.

CHERRY

I know the feeling...

Cherry points out a missing button on Curtis's shirt-- a result of his earlier scuffle.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

You lost a button, baby.

CURTIS

Will you sew me a new one?

CHERRY

You came alone?

CURTIS

All by myself.

CHERRY

You should find somebody. A man alone is half a man.

CURTIS

I think I'm doin' all right.

CHERRY

Uh-huh...

Cherry takes a long drag on her cigarette.

CHERRY (CONT'D)

Listen, baby, this year's been unkind to your mama...

Curtis smiles like he knew this was coming.

CURTIS

How much do you need?

Cherry shrugs.

CHERRY

It don't really matter. Life's a long grind, ain't it? I gotta get back to work, darlin'... Stick around for the next set, I'll buy you a drink.

She gives Curtis a wink as she slides her handbag toward Pete and saunters back to the stage.

111 **INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO**

111

The croupier spins the wheel and drops the ball in. We slowly ZOOM IN on the ball spinning around the wheel.

Gerry watches without emotion.

112 **INT. CRESCENT BAR - NIGHT**

112

Cherry begins to perform again on stage. Curtis watches her for a beat, then reaches into his envelope, takes out a single \$100 bill. He folds it, keeps it for himself, then slides the rest across the bar to Pete.

CURTIS

Make sure she gets this.

CHERRY (O.S.)

This one's for my little boy over there...

Pete nods, stashes it safely behind the bar. Curtis turns back to the stage, listens to his mother sing. Slow and haunting.

Cherry sings a cover of an old song about RAINBOWS.

Curtis smiles. (There's only one person could truly appreciate the serendipity of this moment.) With purpose, he stands and exits as Cherry's singing carries over...

113     **INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO**     113

CLOSE ON the little white ball spinning round and round... Gerry takes a deep breath, ready to start life again with absolutely nothing.

CLICK. The ball drops into the "double zero" slot and the small group of onlookers ERUPT. Gerry stares at the ball, as onlookers cheer and slap him on the back.

114     **EXT. BOURBON STREET - NIGHT**     114

We follow Curtis pacing down the middle of the street as festive tourists pass in and out of frame.

Cherry's rendition of "The Rainbow Song" ends to mild applause.

115     **INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO - HIGH LIMIT ROOM**     115

Gerry sits alone at a \$100 minimum bet Blackjack table. He has a hefty stack of chips in front of him, and he's playing large bets on multiple hands... And he's winning.

Someone steps into frame and lays \$100 on the table. Gerry looks up, watches as the new player takes a seat. The dealer passes a single \$100 chip to the man, and we discover...

...the new player is Curtis.

Curtis and Gerry check each other out silently, both noticing the other's new bruises. But they don't acknowledge each other.

Curtis places his only chip in the betting circle.

Gerry pushes a stack of chips in each of his three betting circles.

The dealer dishes out the cards, and Gerry waves his hand, sticking with his dealt cards on all three hands.

Curtis taps the table, and the dealer flips over another card: a Queen. Curtis busts and the dealer collects his only chip.

Curtis watches as the dealer also busts.

Curtis nods to Gerry as he stands to go, when Gerry tosses him another chip. Curtis smiles thanks to Gerry and retakes his seat.

For the next hand, Curtis bets his single chip again, while Gerry lets the winnings from the previous hands ride.

The hands are dealt. This time, both Gerry and Curtis stick with their cards. The dealer busts with a king. He passes a single chip to Curtis and doubles Gerry's giant stacks. Curtis tosses the borrowed chip back to Gerry. Gerry smiles as a waitress steps up to the table.

GERRY

Two Woodfords.

Another hand is dealt. They both win.

A rapid-fire series of cuts propel us through several more hands. Curtis manages to double his winnings with each hand. So does Gerry. They are on fire. A small group of onlookers has gathered around their table. They cheer with every win.

As the waitress arrives with their Woodfords...

GERRY (CONT'D)

(indicating Curtis's  
broken nose)

I was planning to give you a message  
from Tony Roundtree... but looks like  
you already got it.

CURTIS

(bewildered)

You saw Tony?

GERRY

He was just like you described him.

Curtis shoots him a sly grin. The two men raise their glasses and...

116 **THE CRAPS TABLE - LATER**

116

We PUSH IN on Gerry and Curtis SCREAMING after a roll of the dice. They are men possessed. Chips coming out of their ears.

Gerry rolls again. Another ERUPTION. The atmosphere is insane. It feels like half the casino is gathered around their table.

Gerry is visibly manic with conflicting emotions. Giddy with joy one moment, spooked with fear the next. (In many ways, this is his worst nightmare. Is he capable of walking away from the streak of a lifetime?)

Curtis' phone RINGS and he checks the incoming...

CURTIS

It's Simone! I have to take it.

GERRY

You can't leave!

CURTIS

I'll be right here. I'm not going anywhere.

GERRY

Make it quick.

Curtis takes one step away from the table, while Gerry continues to win behind him.

CURTIS

(into phone)

Do you hear this? That is the sweet sound of success! Pack your bags tonight! We did it!... I don't know where we're going, but we want you there with us. Vegas, Monte Carlo, fucking Salt Lake City, I don't give a shit! Hello?

(pause)

I'm sorry it's loud. I just wanted to tell you... I love you!

(beat)

Did you hear me? I LOVE YOU! Okay, okay. Call me tomorrow!

Curtis hangs up, rejoins Gerry at THE CRAPS TABLE.

GERRY

We can't lose.

CURTIS

We can't lose.

They smile at each other. A long beat. Gerry surveys his surroundings. Smiling faces, stacks of chips, blinking lights.

GERRY

One last roll. All or nothing.

Curtis stares at Gerry. Is he serious?

GERRY (CONT'D)

I'm serious.

CURTIS

Wait, Gerry, hang on a sec.

GERRY

It's okay. We can't lose.

CURTIS

We can't lose.

GERRY

We can't lose.

Beat. There's a strange tranquility between them.

CURTIS

We made it.

GERRY

We made it.

CURTIS

I'm not afraid.

Gerry pushes their mountain of chips towards the betting area.

CROUPIER

Everything?

Gerry nods. The croupier hesitates, then calls over a MANAGER to approve the massive bet. The manager watches with a silenced crowd as the croupier stacks the chips into piles... fifty thousand, hundred thousand, one fifty, up and up until...

CROUPIER (CONT'D)

Two hundred eighty five thousand.

The manager looks at Gerry and Curtis, who are patiently waiting. He speaks into a walkie talkie, then finally...

...nods his approval.

CROUPIER (CONT'D)

Your roll.

The crowd around the table remains tense as Gerry holds the dice up for Curtis, who gives them a blow.



Gerry shakes the dice in his hand... and let's them fly.

We rapidly PUSH IN on their faces as Curtis and Gerry both lean forward in anticipation--

117 **INT. CASINO STEAKHOUSE**

117

Curtis and Gerry sit across from each other in a restaurant overlooking the casino floor. They are both emotionally dazed.

We PULL BACK to reveal a table filled with champagne, steak and lobster.

CURTIS

I love this country.

GERRY

(still processing)

I just bet two hundred eighty five grand on a roll of the dice.

CURTIS

A hero is nothing more than the guy who pulls off what the rest of us are scared to do. I was wrong about you. I thought you were a sick pony that I was going to have to put down. But you're a hero, Gerry. A new American legend.

Gerry takes a few bites. Chews. Something isn't right.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

GERRY

I don't know. Try it.

Curtis samples a bite of Gerry's steak. Curtis melts.

CURTIS

Oh my god...

GERRY

See?

CURTIS

That is delicious.

GERRY

You can't taste it? Something's off.

CURTIS

There is nothing off about this steak,  
Gerry.

Gerry looks around, calls for the waitress.

GERRY

Excuse me!

CURTIS

Gerry--

WAITRESS

Yes, sir?

GERRY

Could I get a cheeseburger?

WAITRESS

I'm sorry, is there something wrong  
with your steak?

CURTIS

No, don't worry, it's perfect. I'll  
eat it.

WAITRESS

Okay. I'll be back with that burger.

An awkward beat.

GERRY

It has a funny taste.

CURTIS

What's the matter? You should be  
walking on sunshine right now.

GERRY

I am. I'm walking on sunshine.

CURTIS

And don't it feel good? Here, try some  
lobster.

Gerry declines the bite.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Gerry, you just won half a million  
dollars. Cheer the fuck up... Tell you  
what I'm gonna do.

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

First thing tomorrow, I'm gonna head over to the Cadillac man and buy me a shiny new white Caddy. What do you want, Gerry? You want a new Cadillac?

Beat.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

After you pay off your debts. Your ex wife. Tell me what you want. What you really really want. Could be anything. First thing you think of. Hit me, Gerry. What do you want? One, two, three lay it on me! Gerry! What do you want?

We sit with Gerry, uncertain, wondering if his wildest dream come true might also be his worst nightmare. Now he must face the responsibilities he's had an excuse to avoid all this time.

GERRY

I want to do something nice for Wendy.

CURTIS

Great! Who's Wendy?

GERRY

My daughter.

Beat.

CURTIS

Your daughter? Holy shit, man! You never said you had a kid!

GERRY

(genuinely surprised)  
I didn't?

CURTIS

No. But that's great. How old is she?

GERRY

Um... Seven? No, six. Six. I think.

CURTIS

You think?

They both look off for an introspective beat. Hold on a WIDE of these two bruised and beaten winners.

GERRY

She's six.

CURTIS

So there you have it. Tomorrow's a new day. And so's the next.

118 **V.I.P. SUITE LIVING ROOM - DAWN** 118

Gerry stares out the giant windows at the sun rising over the Mississippi. He is freshly showered, wearing a towel around his waist. A new bandage covers his stomach wound.

119 **MINUTES LATER** 119

Gerry kneels in front of the safe. He punches in the code and opens the door. The safe is completely filled with neatly stacked piles of mint \$100 bills-- roughly half a million. Gerry stares at all the cash...

120 **V.I.P. SUITE BEDROOM - MORNING** 120

A RINGING cell phone stirs Curtis awake. Curtis reaches for his phone, sees Simone's name. He thinks for a beat, tormented, but...

...he declines the call.

He stares at the ceiling, and WE REVEAL A NAKED WOMAN as she rolls over in bed beside him.

He sits up on the edge of the bed, rubs his head.

121 **V.I.P. SUITE LIVING ROOM** 121

Curtis wanders into the living room, calling into the adjoining bedroom.

CURTIS

I had a dream we were on a steamboat.  
And river bandits stole our money.

Silence.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Gerry?

Curtis looks into the adjoining room. It's empty.

He leans back against the wall, thinking.

After a beat, Curtis goes to the safe. He punches in a four-digit code and opens the safe to find...

...it is half-filled with cash. There is a handwritten note where Gerry's half used to be: "It's machu picchu time. Give'm hell, you beautiful loser!" Curtis smiles, bittersweet.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Machu Picchu.

122	<b>OMITTED</b>	122
123	<b>OMITTED</b>	123
124	<b>INT. DOWNTOWN CASINO HOTEL LOBBY - DAY</b>	124

Curtis approaches the front desk, his bag in hand.

CURTIS

I'd like to check out of my V.I.P. penthouse suite... Alice.

He hands the cute receptionist, ALICE, his key. She smiles and types on her computer.

ALICE

Looks like everything's been comped, Mr. Vonn. How was your trip?

CURTIS

My trip was spectacular, thank you very much.

ALICE

You heading home today?

Curtis thinks for a beat, smiles.

CURTIS

Peru. I'm off to Peru.

ALICE

Peru? Wow. That sounds nice.

CURTIS

Wanta come with me?

She smiles, blushes.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I've never been more serious...

125	<b>EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY</b>	125
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Gerry reaches into a bag, full of cash, grabbing a roll of bills.

He counts out hundreds to the same used car salesman who bought his car yesterday. Gerry notices the salesman looking at his cash.

GERRY

I got lucky.

126 **INSIDE THE CAR**

126

Gerry climbs in. Sits. With his bandaged hand, he reaches into his pocket, removes the partially bloodied photo of Wendy and his cat. (Is he ready to face what he's been running from all these years?) He clips the photo to the visor above his head.

And starts the ignition. Joe Navarro's "200 Poker Tells" begins immediately.

JOE NAVARRO'S VOICE

Number one hundred twenty: Relaxed and Squared. Shoulders that are suddenly relaxed and squared are saying, "I am confident." If someone goes from slumped shoulders to squared relaxed shoulders I would be concerned as they are likely to be strong.

Gerry, slumped back in his seat, straightens up, squares his shoulders. He looks at himself in the rearview mirror. He scrunches his face. Then relaxes.

CUT TO BLACK.