

Big Stakes
By
Stephen Brown

An idea by Stephen Brown

13th February 2008

ste_spike@yahoo.co.uk

FADE IN.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The huge club is filled with COUPLES at tables. A brightly lit stage holds a big band and singer. The Frank Sinatra-like music vibrates through the room.

A WAITER comes to one of the tables and collects the empty glasses and plates. The couple at the table smile at the waiter as he puts the glasses on his tray and walks off.

The waiter turns his back and bumps open the double doors to the -

KITCHEN

where many people are hard at work. The waiter tosses the tray down on a counter.

There is a dark staircase at the back of the kitchen. It gets darker the further you go down. At the bottom -

A DOOR marked PRIVATE.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The dimly-lit room is filled with smoke. Three SUITED MEN and Vinny(26) sit at a large POKER TABLE. Vinny is dressed more casual in jeans and a shirt.

TONY(36) is the largest of the four men. He looks at his two cards with much thought. A smug grin appears on his face as he looks across the table at Vinny.

TONY

You ain't got shit, kid.

Tony rolls his chips slowly between his fingers. His eyes fixed on Vinny intensely.

TONY

You trying to bluff me, huh?

Vinny shifts uneasily in his chair. Sweat drips down his forehead. He flashes a nervous smile back at Tony.

LEO(28) and Donny(35) watch on from either side. They have nothing riding on this hand.

Tony scatters half his stack into the pot.

TONY

Raise. Fifty thousand. Let's see
how much you like those cards kid.

Vinny's eyes meet Tony's smile. He looks at the table.

FIVE OF CLUBS, TEN OF DIAMONDS, ACE OF DIAMONDS, ACE OF
SPADES AND KING OF DIAMONDS.

Vinny takes a long inhale of breath as he views the pocket
aces in his hand.

VINNY(V.O)

The first rule of poker is only bet
what you can afford to lose. I
broke that rule when I said yes.

(beat)

The second rule is knowing when to
call it quits and get off the
table. I broke that rule when I sat
down.

Tony lets out a chuckle and refills his glass with WILD
TURKEY.

VINNY(V.O)

The man sitting in front of me is
Tony Appaletti, he pretty much owns
the place.

(beat)

Shit, he pretty much owns the town.
If you had to pick a guy you would
least like to be in this situation
with, then Mr Appaletti here's that
guy.

Tony stares at Vinny over the rim of his glass as he takes a
long gulp.

TONY

We ain't got till Christmas kid.
You in or out?

Tony holds his arms out wide. He looks to Leo then Donny
with a laugh.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. SAMMY'S BAR - NIGHT

Vinny and MICHAEL(30) sit at a table in the corner. The bar is quiet.

Vinny shakes his head.

VINNY

I don't like it bro. I don't like it one bit.

MICHAEL

It's easy money Vinny. He gets drunk, you stay sober. You'll clean up in a couple of hours.

Vinny can't help but smile. It soon fades.

VINNY

It's not saying easy money to me Mike.

Michael exhales and leans over the table.

MICHAEL

There's no risk, it's not even your money.

Vinny laughs and takes a gulp of beer.

VINNY

No risk!?

He lowers his voice and leans in towards Michael.

VINNY

You rip off the biggest fucking gangster in town Mike and tell me to use his money to play poker with him. You don't see the risk in that?

MICHAEL

(looking over his shoulders)
Shut the fuck up Vinny.

(beat)

You know what kind of money's lying around that place? I could've took five hundred and they wouldn't have noticed.

Michael sits back and looks at his brother. He lets out a cheeky smile.

MICHAEL

You're my kid bro Vinny. I'm not gonna let anything happen to ya.

(beat)

You meet me outside Sammy's with the money. I put the hundred large back in Tony's office. We're away with a hundred and fifty large each. The perfect crime.

Vinny shakes his head again. A smile comes over his face.

VINNY

And what if I lose bro?

MICHAEL

Don't fuckin' lose!

FADE TO:BLACK

END FLASHBACK

TONY(V.O)

Well kid, you in or out?

FADE IN.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Tony looks impatient. He glares across the table at Vinny.

TONY

You playing with the big boys now kid. If fifty G's too much there's a nickel game with the old men around the corner.

Leo and Donny both laugh.

Vinny smiles at Tony and nods.

Tony smiles and reaches over to drag the chips back to him.

VINNY

Hold on Tony. I was just thinking about how much to raise, not whether I'm gonna fold.

Tony leans back and chuckles softly.

TONY
You got balls kid.
(beat)
(to Leo and Donny)
Guess I employed the wrong brother
guys, huh?

The three of them laugh. They watch Vinny.

VINNY
(counting his chips)
Well I'm not too good at maths
Tony, but it looks like I got one
hundred more than your fifty. I
guess I'll just put it all in.

Vinny leans back in his chair.

Tony shakes his head and laughs. He counts out the extra one hundred and tosses it into the pot.

TONY
You got balls kid. Just a shame ya
ain't got the nuts.

A look of confusion comes over Vinny's face. He looks at the cards on the table and shakes his head.

Vinny looks across at Tony in disbelief. Tony nods with sympathy in his eyes.

Tony turns over his JACK and QUEEN OF DIAMONDS.

TONY
Royal flush kid.
(he stands and motions to Leo)
Cash in my chips Leo, I think
that's it for tonight.

Vinny stares at the cards laid out on the table as the cards in his hand fall to the table face up. Leo collects all the chips as if they're nothing.

Tony walks over to the bar and sits down. He knocks back his scotch then loosens his tie.

Tony stares at Vinny who has his head in his hands.

TONY
Donny, bring in the little fuck.

Vinny looks up at Tony then to Donny. His gaze follows Donny who walks towards the back door.

VINNY

Wh..what's going on Tony?

Tony raises a finger, silencing Vinny, as he lowers his head.

Donny opens the door and drags a badly beaten body through. It's Michael.

Donny drags Michael along the ground by his arms. Michael is unconscious.

Vinny's face goes white as he looks down at his brother.

VINNY

Michael? Mike?

(to Tony shouting)

You've fucking killed him Tony!

Leo pulls out a gun and puts it to Vinny's forehead. Tony jumps out of his seat and storms over to Vinny.

TONY

You shouting at me you piece o' shit? You call me Mister fucking Appaletti, and you don't say another fucking word 'til you're spoken to! You got that?

Tony takes his seat at the poker table again. He's calm now. He waves to Leo to lower the gun, who obeys.

Vinny eyes the back door which is still open. The street-light flooding in.

Leo walks over and closes the door. He locks it and puts the key in his pocket.

Vinny looks back at Tony. Panic in his eyes.

VINNY

I swear Tony. I fucking swear I'll get that money back to ya.

Tony shakes his head and smiles. He raises his finger again.

TONY

Now Vinny, I've just asked you a very simple question. When people don't answer my very simple questions I get upset.

(beat)

(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)
 Since we've just had a nice,
 friendly game of poker though I'll
 give you another chance.

Tony takes a deep breath and smiles at Vinny.

TONY
 (whispers)
 You got what I just fuckin said
 Vinny?

VINNY
 (nodding)
 Yes Mr Appaletti, I got it.

TONY
 Well that's good Vinny, 'cos now I
 don't have to get Leo to chop out
 your mother fucking tongue!

Tony laughs. He looks over his shoulder at Leo and Donny.
 The two of them are lying Michael down on the DESK in the-

BACK OFFICE

TONY(O.C)
 Make sure he's awake.
 (beat)
 I want him to feel this.

Leo slaps Michael's face a few times. Michael's eyes open as
 far as the bruises and cuts will allow.

Michael lets out a gut-wrenching SCREAM as Donny uses a pair
 of PLIERS to chop off one of his fingers.

VINNY(O.C)
 Jesus Christ, please Ton...Mr
 Appaletti! I'll get you the fucking
 money back, I swear to ya!

Michael's eyes are nearly popping out of his skull.

BACK TO SCENE

TONY
 Vinny, Vinny, Vinny I know you
 can't get me the money. That back
 there was just to make sure I had
 your attention.

He smiles at Vinny, who's eyes are welling up with tears.

TONY
Believe me, this is only going to
get worse.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael's limbs are now tied to the legs of the desk, his
body pinned to the desk top.

On a table next to the desk is a small hacksaw. Donny stands
next to the table.

Leo counts out the chips for Tony and Vinny at the poker
table.

Vinny is staring at Tony in disbelief.

TONY
This is the only way you're going
to get out of here alive Vinny. You
and your no-good fucking brother.

Both sets of chips are separated into four piles.

Tony plays with the chips in front of him slowly, he eyes
Vinny like prey.

TONY
You understand the rules Vinny?

VINNY
I understand you're fucking insane.

Tony laughs out loud. He pats Leo on the back.

TONY
I fucking love this guy Leo, he
cracks me up.
(to Vinny)
Deal!

Vinny shuffles the deck of cards and deals them out to Tony
and himself face-up.

Tony tosses one of the small piles of chips into the pot.

Vinny does the same reluctantly.

Both men just stare at each other. Vinny deals the 5 centre
cards.

VINNY

You're going to kill the two of us anyway Tony. Just get it over with and quit this shit.

TONY

It's Mr Appaletti.

VINNY

Fuck Mr Appaletti. You gonna shoot me? Just shoot me. I ain't playing your twisted fucking game.

Tony refills his glass again. He looks across at Vinny with a twinkle in his eye.

TONY

You forfeiting the hand son?

Vinny eyes Donny in the background with unease as he picks up the hacksaw.

Vinny shakes his head at Tony.

They both look down at their cards and the five in the middle.

Tony shrugs.

TONY

Not your lucky day, is it kid?

Tony looks over his shoulder at Donny and gives him a nod.

VINNY

(staring at Tony)

Please Tony, you don't have to do this.

Tony returns the stare without emotion.

TONY

Leo, get over their with the salts. I don't want that punk missing one second of this.

Vinny moves to get up but Tony pulls out his GUN. He sits back down.

What sounds like an animal's HOWL fills the room. The howl only partly drowns out the SAWING sound of metal on bone.

Tears rush down Vinny's cheeks as he stares in anger and horror at Tony.

The howl stops for a couple of seconds then begins again louder and more intense.

There's a THUD on the floor.

TONY

It's only fair he takes the rap
kid. I know it was him who took the
money.

The sound of a BLOWTORCH then a SCREAM drowns it out.

TONY-CONT.

Deal.

Tony turns around to Leo and Donny.

Vinny stares at Tony with murder in his eyes.

TONY

Donny, gag that piece of shit will
ya? I'm getting a fucking headache
here.

Vinny lunges over the table at Tony.

Tony, Vinny and the table all crash to the floor.

A GUNSHOT breaks through the noise. The bullet hits the wall.

There's a struggle on the floor as Leo and Donny run towards them.

Another GUNSHOT and Vinny raises the gun..

As he lies on top of Tony's dead body he blasts out two more shots.

Two loud THUDS on the floor.

Vinny stumbles to his feet. He walks towards the desk, stepping over the amputated leg on the floor. Michael is unconscious. The stump where his leg was is badly burnt.

VINNY

Michael? Michael?
(untying the ropes)
Michael, stay with me bro.

There's no sign of life.

Vinny runs over to the bodies and hunts in Leo's pockets. He pulls out the key and opens the back door.

Vinny runs back to Michael and lifts him up onto his shoulder and carries him through the door.

EXT. STREET - CONT.

Vinny struggles to hold Michael's weight as he carries him across the deserted road.

The neon light for Sammy's Bar is ahead of them. A car is parked outside.

Vinny opens the back door of the car and lays Michael down on the back seat.

Michael's eyes half open. He looks up at his brother.

MICHAEL

I'm...I'm sorry bro.

Vinny pauses for a moment and looks down at Michael. Vinny nods and closes the door. He opens the front door and gets in.

The car races away with a SQUEAL of the tyres.

FINAL FADE OUT