

**LIKE RAGS TO RICHES**

written by

RobbieD

Inspired by the funk / hip-hop album: 'The Hustlers  
Convention' by Jalal Mansur Nuriddin (AKA Lightnin' Rod)

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FADE IN:

**EXT. THE 8-BALL - NIGHT**

A full moon hangs low over THE 8-BALL - a dilapidated Billiards Club in a seedy part of town.

Two white men step out of a shiny black Merc.

MR. EVANS (50), wearing a sharp suit and a tidy white beard, locks the car and nods in the direction of the entrance to the club.

BILLY-RAY (30), all t-shirt and muscle, nods at Evans.

They head for the DOORMAN. Billy-Ray carries AN EXPENSIVE LOOKING POOL CUE over his shoulder like a riffle.

**INT. THE 8-BALL - NIGHT**

It's dark. Cigar smoke and chalk-dust fill the room, along with Lloyd Price's version of 'Stagger Lee'.

Evans and Billy-Ray survey the scene - rogues, sharks and gangsters - before their entrance the clientele was entirely black.

Suspended downlights hover over pool tables which extend into the darkness like a run way.

Evans makes his way over to 'the action' - a small crowd gathered around one of the pool tables. At all times Billy-Ray has his back.

**POOL TABLE**

Evans draws A COIN from his pocket as he absorbs the lay of the land: 8-ball top-right; white dead-centre; piles of cash line the side-rails both sides.

A gigantic smoke-ring rolls in from the darkness and through it emerges MAC (65), larger than life, chewing on an even larger cigar. MAC slaps the shoulder of one of the players.

This player is SPORT (22), young and cool. Sport scratches his chin with the tip of his POOL CUE, a mean looking rod.

MAC

Can't win 'em all Sport. It's on you Spoon.

A circular shadow closes over the white ball as the unkempt afro of Sport's opponent leans in for the closing shot. This player is SPOON (21).

Spoon moves to SMASH the cue ball when -

EVANS

Too late to place a side-bet?

Evans places the coin on the side of the pool table. Spoon backs away from his shot.

SPOON

Mac, who dis fool?

MAC

Maybe the white gentleman knows something we'all don't?

The crowd laugh.

MAC (CONT'D)

Whacha sayin' Spoon? You dogging this shot?

EVANS

I'm saying, gentlemen, that white is most certainly going in-off.

Evans pats the middle-left pocket. Spoon re-assess the angles, now clocking the potentially dangerous rebound.

Sport ROLLS HIS EYES.

MAC

(to Evans)

All bets gots to be in the rack at the start of the frame, Jim. Keep yo money. Spoon, play on.

Evans respectfully removes the coin from the table. Spoon leans back into position, now more carefully checking the side pocket as he takes aim.

SPOON

(sucking his teeth)

Whitey ain't going nowhere.

Spoon plays a gentle shot and the 8-Ball drops comfortably into its pocket.

The white ball bounces off the head cushion and rolls back towards the side pocket, the same pocket Evans had called.

CROWD

(crescendo)

Wooo..

The cue ball stops just shy of the pocket.

CROWD (CONT'D)

..ahh!

MAC

Commiserations and bad luck to ya  
Sport.

(to the crowd)

Winner's Spoon, this way  
gentlemen and ladies.

Mac scoops up the cash from one side of the table and leads  
the side-betters away to settle up.

SPOON

(to Sport)

Nothing 'bout luck.

Sport doesn't bite. Evans steps in, gesturing to Spoon's  
winnings still sitting on the other side of the table -

EVANS

I, don't suppose I can interest  
you in leaving that where it is?  
I match whatever's there, winner  
takes all?

SPOON

Jim wants shot at the title huh?  
Hmm.

(beat)

Not this day old man, you need to  
work your way up. Now ma'Man  
here, look like he could use the  
cash tho..

(mockingly to Sport)

..now.

Spoon collects his winnings and walks away in the direction  
of the bar, counting it as he leaves.

EVANS

That's too bad.

Sport takes a step forward.

SPORT

(to Evans)

Y'all owe me.

EVANS

Oh. How so?

SPORT

We both know that white was going  
in.

Evans looks Sport up and down, he notices Sport's cue.

EVANS

Hmm, maybe I do? A point thirty-  
eight steel-piece eh?

(MORE)

EVANS (CONT'D)  
 A nice looking stick you got son.  
 Now mine here..

Evans holds out his hand, Billy-Ray fills it with Evan's cue.  
 Their movements appear well rehearsed.

EVANS (CONT'D)  
 ..is a 'Bushka. The Stradivarius  
 of billiard cues. Only twenty-  
 five on this planet. Number  
 seventeen.

Evans points out the serial number on the side of his cue.  
 Behind him Billy-Ray has already started to re-rack the table  
 into a diamond.

EVANS  
 Sport right? What do you say to a  
 little 9-Ball?

Evans gestures to both cues.

EVANS (CONT'D)  
 Winner gets to take both these  
 fine ladies home? Call!

Evans tosses the coin into the air.

SPORT  
 'eds.

Evans catches and flips the coin onto the table. He removes  
 his hand and a face on the coin stares back at him.

EVANS  
 Go easy on me son, I'm a little  
 rusty.

Sport chalks his stick as he approaches the table. He draws  
 his cue waaaay back and -

The break is so loud it hushes the crowd and Sport makes  
 three straight off the break.

FAST MONTAGE - SPORT'S 'BAD' GAME OF POOL

-- Balls CRASH into pockets;  
 -- Sport SHOWBOATS;  
 -- Spectators gather with interest;

END MONTAGE

Only the white and nine remain on the table and all the time  
 Evans hasn't moved an inch.

Sport lines up for an easy finale.

SPORT

Top left.

EVANS

Well now that was quite a show,  
what do you think Billy?

Billy-Ray steps into the light and stuffs two fat fingers  
into the top-left pocket.

EVANS

Oh dear, looks like you might  
need a different pocket?

Billy-Ray grins. Sport shakes his head. Evans taps the top-  
right pocket - an *almost* impossible shot.

EVANS (CONT'D)

This one's less busy.

Sport's eyes dart around the table, tracing imaginary lines  
that finish top-right... maybe.

SPORT

I make this shot and number  
seventeen's mine right?

EVANS

Ha. You make this shot and I'll  
give you a ride home too.

Sport takes aim. Sport SMASHES the white -

- the white SMASHES the nine - the nine smashes Billy-Ray's  
fingers.

BILLY-RAY

FUU..!

Billy-Ray goes for Sport -

Spoon emerges from the darkness grabbing Billy-Ray. Spoon  
holds a knife to Evans' throat.

SPOON

(whispering in Billy-Ray's  
ear)

Whitey's not going anywhere.

Evans reaching for his jacket pocket. Spoon notices.

SPOON

Sport!

Sport swings the butt of his cue, his movements are as fast  
as lightening knocking Evans clean out with a-right-and-a-  
left.

Two Doorman relieves Spoon of his knife and Billy-Ray,  
dragging him to the exit.

Sport bends down to Evans sprawled on the floor.

SPORT

A ride woulda been awfully good  
of ya Jim, but..

Sport stands now holding the George Balabushka No.17.

SPORT (CONT'D)

..s'all good, we can walk from  
here.

(to Spoon)  
Split?

SPOON

Split.

END