

Misdeal

Written by

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INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

The lively hum of utensils, plates and chatter enlivens the bustling upscale restaurant.

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY 1988
FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO THE LEGALIZATION OF POKER IN ATLANTIC CITY.

JOE MASCARI, fifty-two, not a hair out of place, dressed in \$1,000 suit, signs the check.

NICK DIMARI, fifty-three, well-dressed, but not as upper-end, sits looking at Joe's watch in his hand. Puts the watch down.

There is an empty place setting on the table.

JOE MASCARI

That's a Swiss-jeweled precision timepiece. Gold encased. Accurate to the thousandth of a second.

NICK DIMARI

What time does it say?

JOE MASCARI

(looks at watch)
Nine thirty-four.

NICK DIMARI

(pulls sleeve, shows watch)
Nine thirty-four. Timex. Ol' reliable. Fifty-nine ninety-nine.
(nods to empty seat)
Frank could use a new watch.

JOE MASCARI

Probably has a good excuse.

Nick looks at Joe incredulously. Scoffs. Shakes head.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

(stares at watch)
Twenty-five hundred for a status symbol? Who'd have thought in the old neighborhood?
(puts watch on)
But if image brings in more money.

NICK DIMARI

Wonder what your dad would say?

JOE MASCARI

About the watch?

NICK DIMARI

Either.

JOE MASCARI

No idea with the watch. The deal? Probably would have thought, like everything else I did, not good enough.

NICK DIMARI

For a guy so smart, you sure are one dumb fuck when it comes to people.

Joe smirks at Nick's comments.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

Your success was all he ever dreamed of.

JOE MASCARI

Yeah, I remember those nightmares. Lectures still play over and over in my head.

NICK DIMARI

Only thing from those days that plays over and over in my head are Jennifer Helinski's boobs.

They both smile, amused.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

And the image thing?

Joe raises an eyebrow, unsure of his answer. Exhales.

JOE MASCARI

Don't worry. I'm fine. I just can't let this go right now. Not with where we came from. Not on the rush I'm on. The adrenaline. Pure energy. I just gotta play this out.

Nick looks concerned. Relents. Finishes drink.

NICK DIMARI

Give me the valet ticket.

Joe looks at Nick questioning his request.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

Just give it to me.

Joe gives the ticket. Nick gets up. Walks away. Joe follows.

JOE MASCARI
 So, where are we going?
 (waits for response)
 What are we in high school?

EXT. NEW YORK CITY WAREHOUSE PARKING LOT - EVENING

Nick pulls Joe's Mercedes into a crowded warehouse parking lot on the river front. Parks. Joe and Nick get out.

NICK DIMARI
 I'm just saying, even twirling
 pizza dough all day, I'm leading a
 way happier life than you.

JOE MASCARI
 That's not true. And how would you
 ever prove it, anyway?

NICK DIMARI
 I bowl once a week, play in a card
 game on Wednesdays, have season
 tickets to the Yankees and that's
 only a few. Name one thing you do
 JUST for fun.

They approach the warehouse door. Nick KNOCKS. Leans on the wall. Crosses arms. Looks at Joe. Waits for an answer.

The door opens slightly. A burly man in a suit peeks out.

Nick smiles smugly at Joe, knowing he's right.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
 Is Jimmy here?

Man closes door. Nick loosens Joe's tie and his collar.

The door opens. JIMMY PISCOTTI, twenties and dressed like the gangster he is, appears. Shakes Nick's hand.

JIM PISCOTTI
 Nick! Good to see you. You bring
 some calzones?
 (to Joe)
 This guy's calzones are to die for.

NICK DIMARI
 This is my friend Joe I told you
 about.

JIM PISCOTTI

Oh. Yeah, the money man. Nick talks about you all the time.

(extends hand to Joe)

Jim. Jim Piscotti.

(shakes hands, looks up)

Betterd get inside. Big storm's suppose to be coming.

Jim goes inside. Joe makes a bent nose signal to Nick. Nick smiles. Follows Jim. Joe looks up at clear skies. Follows.

INT. NEW YORK CITY WAREHOUSE - EVENING

A huge warehouse room with five fully seated poker tables, bar, and a cashier's table guarded by two thugs.

Two beautiful women serve drinks to a clientele from sharks with hoodies and sunglasses, to the well-dressed upper class, to people whose dress hints they're playing over their means.

At the cashier, Nick gets his chips. Joe takes in the scene.

NICK DIMARI

(turns toward tables)

Enjoy.

Joe remains frozen.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

Didn't you tell me you used to clean up at the frat house?

Concerned, Joe scans the faces. The looks are serious, unnerving, penetrating and some even frightening.

Nick smiles. Pats Joe on the back. Walks toward a table.

AT THE TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Joe, rack in hand, nervously sits in the three seat.

SUE CLARKE, middle-aged, well-dressed and very attractive, sits in the four seat. MUSTAFA, Middle Eastern, thirties, sits in the nine seat. TEDDY, black, twenties, hoodie and sunglasses, sits in the ten seat.

The cards are dealt. Joe feebly checks with his hand.

SUE CLARKE

Raise. Make it eight.

Teddy and Mustafa call. Joe is preoccupied with Nick's game.

DEALER #1

Sir, it's eight to you.

Joe snap out of trance. Puts out the chips.

SUE CLARKE

Don't you think you should at least
look at your cards?

Joe looks lost. Nods. Looks at the 2 and 4 hearts.

Flop is the 3 and 5 of hearts with the king of clubs. Joe
checks.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)

Make it twenty.

Teddy confidently tosses in chips. Mustafa mucks.

MUSTAFA

Too rich for my blood.

SUE CLARKE

(aside to Joe)

These young kids can't resist a
drawing hand. It's like stealing.

Teddy hears her. Becomes annoyed. Joe calls.

The turn card is king of diamonds. Joe checks meekly.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)

I'm all in.

TEDDY

(hesitates, pushes chips)

Call.

Joe looks nervously at his cards. Pushes his chips in. Sue
looks suspiciously at a very nervous Joe.

River is ace of hearts. Teddy turns a flush over, out of
turn.

SUE CLARKE

No good. Kings full. When you gonna
learn, Teddy?

TEDDY

(throws cards down)

All day. You are one lucky lady.

Teddy storms out mumbling. Joe, unknowing he won, flips his
cards over awkwardly.

DEALER #1
 (pushes up winning cards)
 Player has a straight flush to the
 five.

The dealer pushes the money to a surprised Joe.

SUE CLARKE
 You slow rolling me?

JOE MASCARI
 Uh... Been a while. That's a good
 thing, right?

Sue rolls her eyes. Table tries to hide their laughs.

MOMENTS LATER

Nick, half empty rack in hand, walks up behind Joe.

Joe, jacket and tie off, with stack upon stack of chips in
 front of him, rakes in another pot. Sees Nick.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 Hey, how'd you do?

NICK DIMARI
 I've had better days. I'm ready to
 get out of here. That's for sure.

Nick scans the table. Their looks tell him they're not too
 happy. He looks over Joe's shoulder. Sees his big stacks.

SUE CLARKE
 Please say you're taking your luck-
 box friend.

JOE MASCARI
 Luck-box? Now that doesn't sound
 like a compliment.

Nick grabs empty racks. Quickly starts to rack Joe's chips.

NICK DIMARI
 Second lesson of poker, leave while
 you're ahead.

Nick picks up a some racks. Joe grabs the rest. Gets up.

JOE MASCARI
 Nice playing with you.

There is a collective response of angst from the table.
 Finally, they all bust out in a laugh.

MUSTAFA
 (takes out a business card)
 Hey. You said you live in North
 Jersey, right?

Joe turns. Nods.

MUSTAFA (cont'd)
 If you wanna play in a friendly
 game, we can always use one more.

Joe takes the card. Nick rolls his eyes.

EXT. ST. JOSEPH'S RECTORY - EVENING

Older church and rectory with an adjoining elementary school.

Joe pulls into the parking lot. Gets out. As he walks to the
 rectory, he puts a wad of money in an envelope. At the door,
 he puts the envelope in the mail slot. Turns. Leaves.

Approaching his car, a light goes on behind Joe. He freezes.

FATHER ANTHONY (O.S.)
 Would be a lot happier if you put
 this in the basket on Sunday.

Joe turns back. Sees Father Anthony, sixties, in the doorway.

JOE MASCARI
 I was in the area.

FATHER ANTHONY
 So I'll see you on Sunday, Joe?

JOE MASCARI
 You remember me?

FATHER ANTHONY
 How could I not remember our most
 successful student? Especially,
 when's he's been leaving money in
 the mail slot for years.

JOE MASCARI
 Just trying to pay it back.

FATHER ANTHONY
 We appreciate it, but I'd really
 like to see you in church again.
 What's it been? Fifteen years?

JOE MASCARI

(opens car door)

Love to talk, but I really gotta get going if I'm gonna beat the storm.

FATHER ANTHONY

You know, if you ever want to talk.

Joe nods. Gets in his car.

Concerned, Father watches Joe drive off. Looks up at a clear sky. Back at Joe's car. Goes inside. Light goes off.

EXT. JOE'S ESTATE - EVENING

Overhead of Joe's sprawling estate. Joe's car lights pave a path through the gates and up the winding driveway toward the circle in front of the house.

Skies are ominous as dark dense storm clouds appear overhead.

FRONT CIRCLE AND ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Two FBI agents, in identifying jackets, lean against a black SUV. Alerted, they stand as Joe pulls up. They approach the car. Put hands on their 9mm. Look to the steps.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS, forties, in a suit, smoking, sits on the house steps. Puts out his cigarette. Waves the agents off their guns. Gets up.

JOE MASCARI

(exits car)

Can I help you?

Lightning appears behind Joe. Sound of THUNDER follows. The two agents approach a confused Joe. Detontas waves his ID.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

FBI Special Agent Fred Detontas.
Are you Joe Mascari?

Still confused, Joe stops. Nods acknowledgement.

Agent Detontas nods to the agents. They grab, handcuff Joe.

JOE MASCARI

Wait. What is this? What's going on? Is this one of Nick's sick jokes?

Agent Detontas takes a paper out of his coat. Walks to Joe.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

What's this about? This has to be a mistake.

(yells to side)

Not funny Nick. Had your laugh. You can come out now.

The sky become darker. Larger lightning bolts across it.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

You are the primary owner of Mascari Wealth Management?

JOE MASCARI

Yes. Why?

Agent Detontas starts to speak but a CLAP of thunder delays him.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

And Frank O'Brien is a limited partner and financial planner at your company?

JOE MASCARI

That's right. What did he do?

Multiple streams of lightning illuminate Detontas' and Joe's partially darkened and shadowed faces in a manner resembling a bad flashing neon sign. THUNDER resonates.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

(paper into Joe's jacket)

Mr. Mascari, you, Frank O'Brien, and your firm have been charged with thirty-three counts of financial fraud and seventeen counts of embezzlement.

Rain drops start to fall sporadically. A huge lightning bolt hits nearby, followed by the loud CRASH of thunder. Annoyed at the rain, Detontas looks up. Puts his jacket collar up.

JOE MASCARI

What? I have no idea about...

(looks down, hesitates)

I need to call my wife.

The flashes of lightning quicken. Continue to reflect off their faces. THUNDER sounds.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

We believe that last night your partner, Frank O'Brien, boarded a private jet bound for Miami. The jet refueled then landed in Cuba, a country with no extradition.

(hesitates, clears throat)

There was a female passenger on that flight.

Lightning strikes a tree not far off. Startled, everybody but Joe turns. Joe continues to stare ahead. Rain picks up.

JOE MASCARI

No. You're wrong. She would never. He must have taken her against her will.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

(preoccupied with weather)

We have photographs confirming it was her. As for against her will... well... the pictures definitely refute that.

Joe becomes a beaten man. Rain, pouring down, drips off his face. He sinks to the steps, obvious to the weather. Stares out in disbelief in the dimly lit shadow of his mansion.

INT. JOE'S MANSION - MORNING

FAMILY ROOM

Joe, three day old beard, disheveled, in his pajamas, sits solemnly on the sofa. Watches television.

TV REPORTER (O.S.)

More breaking news today about the multiple charges of fraud --

TV goes off. Joe looks at Nick with the remote in his hand.

NICK DIMARI

You ever gonna shave again?

Joe's look tells Nick it's not his business.

Doorbell CHIMES.

JOE MASCARI

That's Stevens.

NICK DIMARI

I'll get it. He may not come in if he gets a whiff of those clothes.

DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JOHN STEVENS, Joe's lawyer, stands on one side of the table that has papers, a pitcher of water, and glasses on it. Joe and Nick sit on the other side. Nick scans a document.

A large mirror behind John shows Joe's reflection.

JOE MASCARI

Plead guilty? Are you fuckin' kidding me! You know it was all Frank's doing.

JOHN STEVENS

The Frank argument's not gonna cut it. He's not here. You are.

NICK DIMARI

(throws paper on table)
This is a death sentence. Three million in fines. Twenty-two in retribution. Who gets to bronze his balls?

JOHN STEVENS

With the trail Frank left leading back to Joe, this is an open and shut case. He'd lose all that and do time.

NICK DIMARI

Like real prison time?

Joe looks at John, questioning the comment.

JOHN STEVENS

Three to six months on the low end. Three years at max.

(hesitates)

The way the laws are written, it's your company. With the media making this a case of privileged greed, I just don't think it's winnable.

NICK DIMARI

I'm not worth twenty-five million.

JOHN STEVENS

They can only take what you have. The house. The cars. Your assets.

(MORE)

JOHN STEVENS (cont'd)
 The business liquidity that's left
 will be sold off. Even in an
 election year, that's a big enough
 scalp.

Nick turns away exasperated.

JOHN STEVENS (cont'd)
 I'll try the case for you, but in
 the end --

Joe waves John off. Signals for a pen. He looks at the
 disheveled reflection of his beaten image in the mirror.

John gives Joe a pen. Sees him staring. Turns. Sees Joe's
 reflection. Becomes concerned. Points where to sign.

NICK DIMARI
 I don't get it. Frank embezzled
 over sixty million, but the fund's
 only gonna have about fifteen?

JOHN STEVENS
 It'll be scooped up by the bigger
 accounts. As long as they're happy,
 the deal'll get done.

JOE MASCARI
 (looks up, stunned)
 And the small investors? The
 individuals that gave me my start?
 Trusted me with their life's
 savings?

John's facial reaction let's Joe know their fate.

Joe stares at his reflection that shows contempt and anger.

JOHN STEVENS
 (puts the papers away)
 We'll still have to show up for a
 preliminary on Thursday.
 (closes, picks up attache)
 I'd get everything you can out of
 that safe upstairs before the
 Marshals get here. Use it as seed
 money to get back on your feet.

Joe doesn't flinch from his stare in the mirror. John turns.
 Looks at the mirror. Concerned, John looks at Joe. Then Nick.

NICK DIMARI
 I'll walk you out.

ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Nick closes the door behind John.

A loud CRASH of glass breaking. Startled, Nick rushes into the dining room.

DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nick runs in. Freezes. A seething Joe stares at the mirror. The broken pitcher is on the floor with shards of mirror around it. Nick looks at Joe's reflection in the shattered mirror.

EXT. JOE'S MANSION - MORNING

There is a long line of trucks in the driveway. Moving men empty the house. U.S. Marshals oversee.

Joe, scruffy ten day-old beard, sits on steps. A suitcase, garment bag and duffel bag next to him. Stares out.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT (NEW YORK) - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

SUPER: NEW YORK SEPTEMBER 1945

A small, inexpensive, sparsely furnished apartment. There is a small cheap painting of a sailboat over the kitchen table.

Joe, twelve, big bruise on left cheek, takes cold-cuts and bread to the table. Makes a sandwich. Puts it out on table.

MR. MASCARI, forties, a big man, fresh off the boat, enters in his work clothes. Walks to the table.

MR. MASCARI SR.
(thick Italian accent)
What a good boy to have lunch ready
for his poppa.

Joe, hiding the bruise, cleans up. Mr. Mascari sits.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
Come. Sit down. Eat.

YOUNG JOE MASCARI
Already did, poppa.

Mr. Mascari becomes suspicious.

MR. MASCARI SR.
Can you get your father a beer?

Joe gets beer. Keeps bruise hidden. Hands it to his father.
Mr. Mascari grabs the boy. Turns his face.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
How'd this happen?

The boy doesn't answer.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
Tell me. How'd this happen?

YOUNG JOE MASCARI
In the courtyard. It was nothing.

Mr. Mascari thinks for a moment. Gets up. Grabs the boy's
arm. Pulls him towards the door.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Small fenced-in courtyard in the middle of high-rises.

Four boys play stickball. Biggest boy is pitching. Batter
drops his arms. Points with the bat for the pitcher to look.

The pitcher turns. Sees Mr. Mascari pulling his son toward
them. All four boys take a fearful step back.

MR. MASCARI SR.
You do this to my boy?

The scared boys look at each other.

BIGGER COURTYARD BOY
(steps forward, head down)
It was me, sir. We were arguing
over a call. It really was nothing.

MR. MASCARI SR.
My boy fight back?

Joe looks at the boys with fear. The boys look at each other.
The bigger boy puts his head down. Shakes it.

MR. MASCARI SR
(pushes Joe forward)
Go ahead. Go get your pound of
flesh. Stand up for yourself.

Joe, frozen in fear, stares at his father then at the bigger
boy. The bigger boy shakes his head "no" to Joe.

MR. MASCARI SR.
Face your fear, son.

Joe summons all his courage. Charges at the bigger boy, screaming. Arms flail wildly in a poor fighting method.

The boy puts his hands up. One shot sends Joe to the ground. Joe looks up at his father Eyes plead.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
 What are you waiting for? Get up.
 Again.

Joe gets up. Goes at the boy. A two-handed shove floors him.

The bigger boy signals to his friends. They start to leave.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
 Where are you going? This isn't
 over.
 (to Joe)
 Get up son.

Mr. Mascari reaches in his pocket. Pulls out a ten dollar bill. Holds it up to the bigger boy.

MR. MASCARI SR. (cont'd)
 You want this? Winner takes it.

The bigger boy sees the money. Looks at a fearful, bruised Joe on the ground. Conflict shows on the bigger boy's face.

Mr. Mascari puts the bill on the ground. Puts a rock on it.

MR. MASCARI SR
 This your food money for week. You
 wanna eat, you fight. You quit, you
 no eat.

Mr. Mascari turns. Walks away. Behind him Joe jumps on the back of the bigger boy.

EXT. JOE'S MANSION - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

The sound of a GARAGE DOOR snaps Joe out of his trance.

Three high-priced cars, driven by deputies, leave from the garage next to Joe. Last one has the luxury plate: IMKMONY

Joe picks up his bags. Starts down the long driveway.

INT. SMALL STUDIO APARTMENT (FORT LEE) - AFTERNOON

Small, downtrodden poorly furnished studio apartment.

The SUPER unlocks, opens the door. Lets Joe in. Joe puts down his bags. Looks around. Checks the closet.

SUPER

One fifty a week. Five hundred a month. The sofa pulls out.

Joe looks out the window. Sees a poorer neighborhood with a gas station / convenience store across the street. In the background, New York across the river.

SUPER (cont'd)

You want a view go to Manhattan.

JOE MASCARI

I'll take six months.

SUPER

In advance.

Joe opens the duffel bag.

MOMENTS LATER

Joe closes the door. Locks it. Looks around. Opens the cabinets. Opens the closet. Sees a loose board in the floor. Pulls it up. Looks in the hole. Opens the duffel bag. Takes out banded bundles of cash. Hides them in the hole.

INT. COMPANY LOBBY/WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Joe, clean shaven and in a suit, sits in the waiting room of an office building. SHELLY EASTRUM, middle aged, approaches.

SHELLY EASTRUM

Mr. Mascari?

JOE MASCARI

(Stands, greets her)

Yes.

SHELLY EASTRUM

(shakes hands)

Shelly Eastrum. I'm the head of Human Resources.

(sits down)

Mr. Mascari, I've read over your application and it's very very impressive. MBA. Entrepreneur. Very impressive indeed.

JOE MASCARI

Thank you. So then you have something for me?

SHELLY EASTRUM

Um... Unfortunately not. You see the positions that you're qualified for... well... uh... I have no doubt you'd do a good job, but we tend to promote from inside for upper management. We feel it fires up our people knowing they have a shot to make it here for the long term.

JOE MASCARI

I understand. I don't have an ego.

SHELLY EASTRUM

You're way overqualified for entry.
(stands up)
I'm sorry, Mr. Mascari. I really can't help you.

They shake. Joe picks up his attache. Dejected, he turns to leave.

SHELLY EASTRUM (cont'd)

Mr. Mascari?
(waits for him to turn)
Since eighty-seven, it's hard out there for anybody. Given everything. Good Luck.

She turns. Leaves. Downtrodden, Joe stands alone.

EXT. STREET OF FORT LEE - EVENING

Fall day. The street outside Joe's apartment window. Bus pulls up in front of the gas station / convenience store.

Joe, in his suit and with attache, gets off. A sign in the window of convenience store: "Help wanted. Apply within."

He contemplates it. Decides better. Starts to cross the street. Stops. Looks back to reconsider. Continues across.

Halfway across the street, he veers off toward the tavern.

INT. TAVERN ACROSS FROM GAS STATION - EVENING

Small, fairly empty, neighborhood bar. SULLY THE BARTENDER is behind the bar. Joe enters. Sits at bar.

JOE MASCARI

Tall one.

Joe watches game on TV.

SULLY THE BARTENDER

(serves beer)

Here you go. You new around here?

Joe nods. Doesn't take eyes off game.

SULLY THE BARTENDER (cont'd)

Name's Sully. Burger's the best thing on the menu. Holler if you want anything.

Joe nods. Watches game. Sully goes back to his work.

John, older man, well-dressed, enters the bar. Catches the Sully's eye. Points to the back room.

Sully reaches under the bar. Back door buzzes. John opens it and enters. Leaves door ajar.

Curious, Joe, beer in hand, looks in. He sees a man sitting at a table with cards in his hand. The man notices him. Reaches over. Closes the door.

JOE MASCARI

Poker game?

SULLY THE BARTENDER

Every day. Every night. You play?

JOE MASCARI

A little. Actually, very little

SULLY THE BARTENDER

Well that's not a little type game. You need a big rod and reel for those fish. I'll hook you up though if you want.

JOE MASCARI

(finishes beer)

Waters seem a little too steep for me, but I'll take a refill.

Joe looks out the window at the gas station then to the back room. Contemplates his choices. Takes out his wallet. Counts six hundred dollar bills among other cash.

Tempted, Joe stares at the back. Decides better of it. Smiles. Pays. Leaves. Through the front window, he heads toward gas station.

INT./EXT. GAS STATION / CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

Joe is behind the counter. MRS. LEE, a small older Asian woman, is at the register.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

In the window behind Joe, a car pulls up at the pumps. FRANK and BILL STRINGER, both in their twenties, get out. Bill Stringer goes to the trunk. Opens it. Frank signals him to go around to the back.

JOE MASCARI

That'll be thirty-four seventy-five, Mrs. Lee.

MRS. LEE

And my lottery ticket, Mr. Joe.

Joe moves to the lottery machine. Frank heads for the front door. Enters. Looks around cautiously.

JOE MASCARI

(to Frank)

I'll be with you in a minute.

(hands Mrs. Lee a ticket)

Here you are, Mrs. Lee. One winning lottery ticket.

MRS. LEE

(takes ticket, pays)

You always say that, Mr. Joe. You very unlucky man. Very unlucky!

Amused, Joe smiles. Rings the cash register. Mrs. Lee leaves.

JOE MASCARI

Can I help you?

FRANK STRINGER

Um... Yeah, on my way to see my family.

(MORE)

FRANK STRINGER (cont'd)
 Was gonna use the bathroom to clean
 up a little, but it seems the
 water's off.

JOE MASCARI
 Shouldn't be, but the main valve is
 right under the sink. Just give it
 a turn to the left.

Frank nods. Starts to leave. Turns back.

FRANK STRINGER
 I know you're gonna think I'm crazy
 but you mind coming out? Would hate
 to turn the wrong valve or
 something.

JOE MASCARI
 Sure. Why not?

Joe follows Frank out. Locks the door behind.

EXT REAR OF GAS STATION

Joe and Frank walk around the back toward the bathroom.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 Really pretty easy. There's only
 one valve.

Frank nods. Looks around nervously. Open the door for Joe.

Joe steps inside the restroom. Frank violently shoves him
 from behind. Joe stumbles to the sink.

GAS STATION BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A single stall, single urinal, dark wet dirty bathroom.

Bill Stringer strikes Joe on the back with a bat. Sends Joe
 to the ground in obvious pain. Joe looks up. Dazed, he tries
 to focus. Bill and Frank hover over him. Bill locks the door.

Frank Stringer delivers a hay-maker to Joe's face. Sends him
 under the sink.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 (hands up, protects face)
 Wait. Wait. You can have the money
 in the register. Safe's on a time
 lock. I have no control over that.

Frank Stringer lifts Joe by the shirt. Delivers an upper cut
 to the stomach. Joe doubles over on the ground.

FRANK STRINGER

You think we're here for THAT money. That's not close to what you owe our mom and dad.

Confused, Joe's look pleads for an answer. Bill kicks Joe.

FRANK STRINGER (cont'd)

(pulls him up by shirt)

That's right. Their whole life savings.

Frank delivers a right to the face. Sends Joe sprawling.

BILL STRINGER

Their fucking dreams.

Bill's bat comes down on Joe's arm. The SNAP indicates a break. Joe grabs the arm. Screams in pain.

JOE MASCARI

Please, I don't know what you want.

Frank picks up Joe by the shirt. Punches him in his stomach.

BILL STRINGER

(gets face to face)

You think I'm the district attorney. No fucking deals here.

Bill punches him in the stomach again. Sends Joe to a fetal position. Both brothers start kicking him.

INT. SMALL STUDIO APARTMENT (FORT LEE) - EVENING

The picture of the sailboat from his dad's apartment hangs over the table.

A CLICK unlocks the door. Door opens. Joe, wearing the same bloody clothes, arm in cast and sling, face pummeled, enters, propped up by Nick. Nick helps Joe to the sofa.

NICK DIMARI

Beer?

Joe nods. Nick goes to fridge.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

Cops said you can't remember anything about the robbers?

Joe just shrugs. Shakes head. Nick opens the bottles.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
And they didn't take any money?

JOE MASCARI
I don't know. Maybe they got
scared.
(gets agitated)
How the fuck am I suppose to know
what goes through the heads of
those assholes?

NICK DIMARI
(hands Joe beer)
Just strange. That's all.

Nick sees the picture over the table.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
From your dad's?

JOE MASCARI
To remind me how stupid he was.

NICK DIMARI
Always seemed pretty sharp to me.

JOE MASCARI
Guy's fucking dreams. His high
moral lessons. Fuckin' impossible
standards.

NICK DIMARI
He did like to make a point.

JOE MASCARI
You didn't have to live up to them.
(chuckles)
Thinking he'd sail around the
Galapagos one day.

NICK DIMARI
You think he put up that picture
for himself? That dream was for
him? Look, I'd be the first to
admit he was a little rough around
the edges, but everything he ever
did was for --

JOE MASCARI
-- How'd that turn out?

NICK DIMARI
Jesus Christ. You suffered a
setback.

(MORE)

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
 One that totally wasn't your fault.
 Now, you're gonna blame him for
 that?

JOE MASCARI
 No. This one's totally on me.
 Should have seen it coming. All my
 fault. I deserve everything I get.

Nick looks at Joe incredulously.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 What? You gonna tell me it wasn't
 my fault? You gonna tell me
 everything's gonna be okay? How
 about those people that lost their
 retirements? Are they gonna be
 okay? Are they gonna go sailing
 around the fucking Galapagos?

NICK DIMARI
 Not gonna listen to this nonsense.

JOE MASCARI
 (waves him off)
 I wouldn't wanna be with me either.

NICK DIMARI
 (guzzles beer, gets up)
 Shit happens. You're still the
 smartest guy I know. You'll be
 back.
 (walks to door)
 You gonna be okay?

JOE MASCARI
 (turns away)
 Just get the fuck out of here.

Concerned, Nick stares at Joe. Leaves.

INT./EXT. TAVERN ACROSS FROM GAS STATION - MORNING

Tavern is opening. Sully takes stools off the bar.

In the window, Joe, cast, sling and the bruises, limps across
 the street from the gas station. Upset, he enters. Sits at
 bar.

JOE MASCARI
 Give me a double of... whatever you
 got back there.

SULLY THE BARTENDER
 (walks behind bar)
 Early today?

JOE MASCARI
 When the fuck did you get your
 counseling degree?

SULLY THE BARTENDER
 (pours)
 It's just early, that's all.

JOE MASCARI
 Aah... it's just...
 (looks back at station)
 You know of any jobs?

A young man enters. Points to the back. Sully BUZZES the door. Man enters the back room.

SULLY THE BARTENDER
 Nothing off the top of my head.
 Heard about the robbery. You okay?

Joe nods. Looks at back room.

JOE MASCARI
 They're already playing?

SULLY THE BARTENDER
 As long as people have money to
 give, game never stops.

Joe looks at back room. Ruminates. Takes out a business card. Stares at it. Guzzles drink. Goes to the public phone on the wall. Dials the number from the card.

INT. BACK ROOM OF MUSTAFA'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Two full poker tables and few watchers. Small makeshift wet bar on side. Mustafa sits as the dealer at one table.

Joe, still battered, enters the room. The games stop. All eyes turn to him. Joe looks around, surprised at the size of the game.

JOE MASCARI
 Is Mustafa here?

MUSTAFA
 (leans around to see)
 Joe, my friend. Come in. Join us.

Joe sits down. Sees they're playing with cash. He takes out a wad of money.

JOE MASCARI
Little friendly game?

MUSTAFA
I have a lot of friends.
(looks at Joe)
What happened to you?

Before he can answer, JOI CHOW, a small, loud, fast talking, obnoxious, fifty year-old Asian with an strong accent and a high pitched voice, in the seven seat, speaks.

JOI CHOW
Maybe he got hit by deck.

Nobody but Joi laughs. Joe pulls off two hundred dollar bills. Starts to put the rest away.

MUSTAFA
We are playing two five, my friend.
Buy-in's six hundred to a grand. Is that okay?

Joe is reluctant. Relents. Peels off more cash.

BEGIN MONTAGE - CARD GAME

-- Joe fold first hand.

-- Joe tanks. Annoyed, he folds. Player rakes in cash.

-- There is a blinding array of hands at breakneck speed. Money is bet. Cash is raked in. Cards fly. Players show cards. Muck cards. The lingo of poker and the range of emotions fill the room. Drinks go from full to empty and back to full. Cigarettes become nubs. Ash trays full. Stacks run down. Seats go broke. Some, including Joe, rebuy.

From his stack, comments, mannerisms, Joe is losing.

END MONTAGE

Only one table left with five players. Daylight through blinds. Some players stand and stretch. Beaten and aggravated, Joe is slumped in his seat.

Boards read ace, ace, 7 and an 8 with two hearts. Joe throws in all the cash in front of him.

JOI CHOW
 (mocks, throws cash in)
 You make me rich man. Maybe buy new
 suit tomorrow.

Annoyed, Joe stares at him. Mustafa puts the jack of spades
 out. Joe shows Ace King.

JOI CHOW (cont'd)
 (shows ace, jack)
 You lose again. New suit tomorrow.
 We play for shoes?

Joe takes out the last of his bankroll.

MUSTAFA
 You sure Joe? There's always next
 week.

JOI CHOW
 He wants to give us his money, let
 him. I need new shoes for new suit.

JOE MASCARI
 (puts money down)
 You heard the man.

Concerned, Mustafa looks at Joe as he shuffles.

INT. SMALL STUDIO APARTMENT (FORT LEE) - EVENING

Place is a mess. Joe, unshaven and dressed raggedy, is asleep
 on sofa. A poker strategy book rests on him. His arm is only
 wrapped. His bruises have largely disappeared.

There is a KNOCK at the door that startles Joe. Sitting up,
 the book falls to the floor.

The KNOCKING continues.

JOE MASCARI
 It's open.

Door opens. Nick, heavy coat on, enters with pizza and beer.

NICK DIMARI
 Had to stop in the area. Figured
 I'd bring my best friend his
 favorite pie.

JOE MASCARI
 (hides book)
 Pepperoni and sausage?

NICK DIMARI
 (puts pizza on table)
 Is there any other kind?

Nick sees poker books and a notepad that Joe was using to work poker odds on the table. Looks at Joe concerned. Takes off coat.

JOE MASCARI
 (hustles over)
 Let me get those out of your way.

Joe puts material on a chair. Gets dishes. Nick serves.

NICK DIMARI
 How're you doing?

JOE MASCARI
 (sits down)
 Cast's off. Arm's almost as good as new. It's --

NICK DIMARI
 -- Not talking about the arm.

JOE MASCARI
 (hesitates)
 What do you want me to say? That I spend my days in this dump staring at the walls? Wondering when my sentence ends? I mean look around you. Not even a television.

NICK DIMARI
 (nods toward books)
 And those are gonna fill that void?

JOE MASCARI
 They're filling something. For now... at least.
 (bites pizza)
 Umm, still the best pizza in town.

NICK DIMARI
 You know what the secret is?

JOE MASCARI
 Told me a hundred times. The sauce.

NICK DIMARI
 Nah. Patience. Let the sauce simmer 'til it's ready to absorb all those rich flavors on its own.
 (takes bite)
 (MORE)

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
 You don't mess with the universe's
 timetable for a great pie. You
 don't mess with the universe's
 timetable for anything.

JOE MASCARI
 Guess that's why I would never be a
 great pizza maker.

NICK DIMARI
 And luck? You think that's better?

JOE MASCARI
 Chance can be controlled. It's only
 math.

NICK DIMARI
 Still, would never let my pizzas
 rely on it.

JOE MASCARI
 Like I said, making pizza was never
 my forte.

Nick realizes he's not getting anywhere. Goes back to eating.

NICK DIMARI
 (plops slice down)
 Come on, Joe. You're better than
 that. You're better than this whole
 situation. You could be doing any
 of a million things out there.
 (pick up poker book)
 You don't need this.

JOE MASCARI
 Try saying that to yourself after
 every interview ends with "you're
 way overqualified," when they're
 really saying, "we don't want a
 fucking criminal in our place."
 (puts down slice)
 You know what I dreamt about every
 night since the indictment?

Nick indicates he has no idea.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 Nothing. That's what my life has
 become. Absolutely nothing.
 (hesitates)
 You can never know what I'm going
 through. You just can't. I have to
 figure this one out myself.

Nick hesitates. Nods. Starts to eat again.

NICK DIMARI

(takes bite)

You need good sausage too. Like we use to get down in the old neighborhood.

JOE MASCARI

Stella's Deli. They had the best sausage. The best Italian hoagies. The best everything. God, I miss those days.

They return to eating.

INT. TAVERN ACROSS FROM GAS STATION - EVENING

Fairly crowded. Joe sits at the bar. Watches the television.

Backdoor opens. Fred Detontas exits. Counts his money. Joe sees him. Smiles at the irony. Turns back towards the bar.

Detontas sees Joe. Does a double take. Approaches him from behind.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

Least I can do is buy you a beer.

Joe, looks up. Shrugs uncaringly. Turns away.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)

(signals for two beers)

In my job, most nights I put my head on the pillow and I'm out like a light in seconds, knowing I made the world a better place. There are some cases, though, where I just can't sleep.

Sully puts down two beers. Detontas pays. Passes one to Joe.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)

For what it's worth, I always thought you got a raw deal.

Joe turns to him. Pauses. Relents. Takes his bottle. Taps it's neck to Detontas' bottle as a peace offering. Nods to back.

JOE MASCARI

Funny, I always pictured you as the follow every rule type guy.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
That? Everybody has their hobbies.

JOE MASCARI
I thought that was called a vice?
You know, the kind they arrest
people for.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
TV would have a feast seeing my
boss and the mayor led out of here
in handcuffs.

Joe's looks says, "no way."

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)
Sitting back there, as we speak.

JOE MASCARI
And they say I'm the criminal.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
Only thing criminal is me being up
here with those two soft marks back
there.

Joe is amused. Detontas finishes his beer. Puts down his
business card.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)
In case I can ever do anything for
you.

Joe nods. Detontas turns to leave. Joe picks up, looks at the
card.

INT. BACK ROOM OF MUSTAFA'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Two tables with most of the same players. Sue Clarke sits in
the four seat. Joi is in the seven seat. Joe walks over. Sits
in seat five. Sue and Joe exchange looks.

SUE CLARKE
If it isn't the luck box?

JOI CHOW
Him luck box? That funny.

Joe just smiles.

MUSTAFA

Joe's been a regular for a while.
Had some hard luck, but it's all
due to change today.

(to Joe)

Isn't that right Joe?

Concerned, Sue looks at Joe. Mustafa shuffles.

JOE MASCARI

Cards can't run bad forever.

JOI CHOW

Cards? No. But you?

Sue's eyes dart back and forth between Joi and Joe. Annoyed,
Joe stares at Joi. Joi smiles confidently. Mustafa deals.

SUE CLARKE

Fold.

JOE MASCARI

Raise thirty-five.

Everybody folds. Joe rakes in the small pot.

LATER

Players have grown comfortable. Some of those waiting have
replaced busted players. Food carts near some players.

A huge pot in center of table between Joe and Joi. Both have
piles of cash in front of them.

Mustafa deals the river. His eyes dart between Joi and Joe.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

Check to the better.

JOI CHOW

You chase all the way to river? For
what? More pain?

(Sprinkles cash in)

Straight not come. Flush not come.

I told you...

(pushes remaining cash in)

...not your day. All of it.

MUSTAFA

That's a string bet --

JOE MASCARI

(waves off Mustafa)

-- Let it go.

(MORE)

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 (throws money in)
 I got a feeling.

JOI CHOW
 You got feelin? You should get
 room. Not play poker.
 (laughs, shows top set)
 Maybe I buy new car today.

JOE MASCARI
 (feigns, hesitates)
 Maybe you walk home.
 (turns straight)
 No good. I flopped it.

Everybody is stunned. Joe stacks cash. Joi's jaw drops.

JOI CHOW
 (agitated)
 You crazy man. You flop straight,
 you never bet...? You trap me? Then
 you slow roll me?
 (throws his cards)
 You crazy. This not poker. He crazy
 man. He give me free cards. He
 never bet. He trap me.
 (storms out)
 No more. No more.

Everybody is amused by Joi's tantrum.

JOE MASCARI
 (to Sue)
 And that was a slow roll.
 (looks at Mustafa)
 What are you waiting for? Time is
 money. Deal.

MOMENTS LATER

Light shines in. The game is breaking. Joe counts his cash.

SUE CLARKE
 You've been studying.

JOE MASCARI
 You did okay?

SUE CLARKE
 Same as always. Win a little. Lose
 a little. Just here for the fun.

Sue starts to leave. Turns back.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 You know I usually stop for
 breakfast at a little diner down
 the street. Care to join me?

Joe feigns non-interest. He suddenly smiles.

JOE MASCARI
 I'd like that.

SUE CLARKE
 Now you're slow rolling me too?

INT. DINER - MORNING

Joe and Sue sit on opposite sides of the booth. They lean in with fixed romantic stares at each other. Their attraction is obvious and strong.

SUE CLARKE
 You spent all night looking for
 that one hand against Joi and when
 it came... wow... You certainly
 have a lot of gamble in you.

JOE MASCARI
 Didn't you ever dream about that
 one perfect occurrence? The one you
 saw play over and over in your
 mind. It eludes you your whole life
 and then all of a sudden it appears
 out of nowhere at the strangest
 time. The one you instantly know
 you're willing to go all in with.

SUE CLARKE
 I don't need to play every time
 something flashy catches my eye. I
 usually stay to the safer choices.

JOE MASCARI
 So, if that one special... uh...
 situation happened to show up right
 in front of you tonight, you would
 just let it go.

SUE CLARKE
 Oh, I'm interested, but wouldn't
 fall in love with my cards right
 away. Learned a long time ago that,
 no matter how beautiful they look
 at first, they can break your
 heart.

JOE MASCARI

But you'll still give him... um...
the cards a chance?

Sue catches herself. Looks at the clock on the wall. Gets up.

SUE CLARKE

I can't believe we've been talking
three hours. I gotta get going.

JOE MASCARI

(gets up)
Can I call you?

SUE CLARKE

I don't know. I really don't date
poker players.

Joe looks at her quizzically. She puts on her jacket.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)

I know what you're thinking. I just
play occasionally for fun. Great
game, but there's such a seedy
element around it. So I usually
stay clear of the players.

JOE MASCARI

Well you said it yourself, I'm not
a player, I'm a luck box.

She smiles. Hesitates. Takes out a card and pen. Writes.

SUE CLARKE

You're different than most players
I've met. You have this naivety you
don't usually see at an underground
game. I mean that in a good way.

(hands him the card)

And a great smile. You do have a
wonderful smile.

His eyes don't stray from her's. Tension is obvious. Joe
leans in. Kisses her. She responds. Suddenly, she pulls back.

JOE MASCARI

I'm sorry. I overstepped.

SUE CLARKE

(serious)

You do like to gamble, Mr. Mascari.

She turns. Walks away. Joe slumps into the booth, having
blown it.

Dejected, Joe puts his head down in his arm's as Sue walks away. Near the end of the aisle, she smiles. Turns.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
Call me. I'd really like that.

Joe looks up, surprised and confused. Realizes he was slow rolled. Laughs out loud.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - EVENING

Crowded bar in an upscale restaurant. From the people at the coat check, winter has obviously come.

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

Joe sits with PAT "EDGER" DOYLE, flamboyant, slick speaking middle-aged, dressed in his usual black vested suit with red tie and trim. Trademark fedora on bar.

LISA, Edger's "girlfriend," late thirties, attractive, stands. BUDDY, Edger's bodyguard, sits behind.

EDGER
Finally the Prince folds his top set face up. Bobby rakes in the three million and calmly says "you wanna see?"

Joe hangs on Edger's every word.

EDGER (cont'd)
Of course the Prince said "no," but Bobby, ever the showman, had to flip over his four five off.

JOE MASCARI
Wait. Nothing the whole way? No draws? No possible outs? Nothing?

EDGER
He planned to take it away right from the flop. That's why he's the best in the world.

Joe looks off whimsically.

EDGER (cont'd)
(laughs)
Only problem was, it was the Prince's country. He had Bobby thrown in jail.

JOE MASCARI

On what charge?

EDGER

Don't know. Impersonating a hand?
Eventually, the Prince realized
he'd never be able to get into
another high limit game unless he
let him go.

Sue enters. Sees them. Walks toward them.

EDGER (cont'd)

You're thinking about the three
million on the table, aren't you?
Great players don't worry about the
money. It's the same game whether
it's for a penny or millions.

Sue arrives. Buddy stands to block her. Sue is taken back.
Edger signals she's okay. Buddy sits down. Sue kisses Joe.

JOE MASCARI

Sue, this is Pat Doyle and his
friend, Lisa...? I never caught the
last name? --

EDGER

(Holds out hand, shakes)
-- Just Lisa's fine. Call me Edger,
please.

(eyeballs Sue up and down)
So this is the beautiful talisman
you told me about. Sure is a lot
easier on the eyes than a rabbit's
foot.

Sue is taken aback by the statement. Edger offers his stool.

EDGER (cont'd)

Please, we need to get going.
(puts his card on bar)
So you can reach me.

Edger puts on his fedora. Tips it. Leave with Lisa and Buddy.

SUE CLARKE

Talisman? A bodyguard?

JOE MASCARI

You've seen him around the clubs. I
was just waiting for you and they
happened to show up.

Sue picks up Edger's card. Reads it.

SUE CLARKE
(sees them at coat check)
Talent acquirer?

Joe just shrugs.

INT. NEW YORK CITY WAREHOUSE - EVENING

Piscotti's game. Four tables playing. One empty.

Joe sits at a table that include Jim Piscotti. Edger drinks at the bar. Lisa next to him. Buddy stands behind.

Joe is in a massive pot with Jim. Looks at Edger. Winks.

Edger stands. Walks over to table to get a better view.

JIM PISCOTTI
Bet a thousand.

JOE MASCARI
(without hesitation)
All in twenty-seven hundred.

Jim is nervous. Fidgets. Slumps in seat.

JIM PISCOTTI
You know who I am? I mean this is my place.

Joe doesn't flinch. Stares right through Jim.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)
(folds ace, king face up)
Straight's good.

Joe shows the bluff. Jim angrily flips over the empty table next to them. Room stops. Total quiet. Everybody looks on.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)
You throw a fucking bluff in my face? At my game? In my place?

Two thugs rush over.

JOE MASCARI
Just playing the game.

JIM PISCOTTI
(waves thugs off)
He won fair and square.
(MORE)

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)
 (to room)
 It's okay. Go back to playing.
 (to thug)
 Cash me in. I'm done for the night.

AT BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Joe goes up to the bar. Signals for a drink. Edger and Lisa come up next to him.

EDGER
 Let me get that.

Joe accepts. Edger signals the bartender.

EDGER (cont'd)
 That was some move.
 (takes sip, gets it)
 Wait... The Prince story?

Joe smiles smugly. Edger laughs. Looks at Joe's shoes.

EDGER (cont'd)
 Must be awful painful?

Confused, Joe looks down at his shoes. At Edger.

EDGER (cont'd)
 To have balls so big they scrape on
 the ground when you walk.
 (takes another sip)
 Must also be so disappointing to
 play for basically nothing.

Joe looks at Edger, quizzically.

EDGER (cont'd)
 I mean to just come in here every
 night and run over the tables with
 your talent. For what? Scraps?

JOE MASCARI
 It fits my bankroll. I do okay.

EDGER
 I'm sure you do. Given the level.
 (assesses interest)
 You just seem like a guy who wants
 something bigger in life. Someone
 who knows he's destined for
 greatness.

The conversation tweaks Joe's interest. Comes to his senses.

JOE MASCARI

In case you haven't looked, we're
in a two bit underground poker
room. No titles coming out of here.

EDGER

Forget accolades. I'm talking about
money. Real money. The kind you can
live huge with. The kind that takes
care of you for the rest of your
life.

Sue enters. Waves across the room. Catches Joe's attention.

JOE MASCARI

Like I said, I'm satisfied for now.

Edger notices Sue.

EDGER

I understand. Takes a special man
to play with all that money sitting
on the table.

Joe is taken back. Smiles. Starts toward Sue.

EDGER (cont'd)

Still, must be especially tough for
a guy that used to own mansions and
expensive cars.

The comment catches Joe's attention. He stops. Doesn't turn.

EDGER (cont'd)

Can't imagine how that one misstep
is tearing you up inside.

Joe's face contorts. He forces himself not to respond. He
smiles. Walks up to Sue. Kisses her.

SUE CLARKE

Just happen to run into you again?

JOE MASCARI

It's a poker room.

SUE CLARKE

Yeah and I've never seen him play
poker.

INT./EXT. KIDS' HOME - AFTERNOON

EXT

Older row houses on a blustery winter day in New York. Taxi pulls up.

Joe gets out. Looks at a sign at the doors that reads "St. Jude's Home for Special Children." Helps Sue out. Starts up steps.

JOE MASCARI

So this is what you gave up your practice for?

SUE CLARKE

Had enough with rich spoiled athletes whining about endorsements, posses and their mistresses. One day I woke up and realized something was missing. I had all that money and still an empty feeling.

JOE MASCARI

(opens door)

And here I thought enough money --

SUE CLARKE

(walks by)

-- Don't go there.

INT

House is converted to a home for children with special needs. Some children are working with adults. Some are playing. It is very noisy and obviously overcrowded and underfunded.

Immediately JOHNNY, about 5, runs up. Hugs Sue.

YOUNG JOHNNY

Miss Sue. Miss Sue. I love you Miss Sue. I missed you so much.

(sees Joe)

Miss Sue's my girlfriend.

Joe gets a kick out of it.

SUE CLARKE

This is Johnny. I've been working with Johnny for three years now.

(to Johnny)

Johnny, this is my good friend Joe.

JOE MASCARI

(squats down, extends hand)

Hi Johnny.

YOUNG JOHNNY

(shakes, tugs Sue's pants)
Can we play a game? Joe can play
too.

SUE CLARKE

Of course. Go set it up. We'll be
right there.

Happy, Johnny runs into the next room. Joe is overwhelmed by
what seems like chaos in the house.

MARGE SANDLER, home worker, young, modestly dressed,
approaches. Joe and Sue take off their coats.

MARGE SANDLER

Hey Sue. I'll take those. This must
be Joe.

(takes coats, shakes hands)
Marge Sandler. I've heard so much
about you.

SUE CLARKE

The banks?

MARGE SANDLER

Holding them off. If the inspectors
ever find out about the heat and
other problems, we're screwed.

SUE CLARKE

The inspectors aren't due 'til the
early summer. Hopefully, by then we
can figure something out.

A young girl comes up. Tugs on Marge's arm. Whispers to her.

MARGE SANDLER

(leaves with girl)
Nature calls. It was nice meeting
you.

SUE CLARKE

So what do you think?

JOE MASCARI

Guess I pictured heaven a little
different.

SUE CLARKE

These kids, they're my heroes. They
didn't ask for their problems, they
were born with them or into them.
Yet, not a peep of complaint.

(MORE)

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 Makes you wonder how we ever got to
 a place where nothing's ever good
 enough.

A lady hands Sue a clipboard. She reads. Signs it. Hands it
 back. The lady leaves.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 Every day I come here I feel like I
 can't give them enough to balance
 what they've given me.

JOE MASCARI
 Johnny?

SUE CLARKE
 Born to a crack addict mother.
 ADHD. Serious impulse impairment
 problems. Among others. Never had a
 chance... 'Til now.

The comment seems to get to Joe.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 (tugs at Joe's arm)
 Come on. Let's go play a game.

They start towards the other room.

INT. BASEMENT - EVENING

Dark dingy basement with leaky pipes exposed. Two overhead
 lights illuminate two active poker tables. Side cashier's
 table.

Joe sits at the table. Racks his chips.

Edger and Buddy enter behind Joe. See Joe. Walk up. Joe
 doesn't see them. Gets up.

JOE MASCARI
 That's it for me.

Joe turns to leave. Surprised, he is face to face with Edger.
 He freezes.

EDGER
 I see the good-looking leprechaun's
 still working.

JOE MASCARI
 (looks at setting)
 Now, this place, I wouldn't expect
 to see you in.

Joe goes around Edger. Buddy steps in. Blocks Joe for a second. Steps out of the way. Joe walks by. Edger follows.

EDGER
 Just searching for an edge.
 (break)
 You happen to notice the six seat
 at the other table?

Joe hands the cashier his chips. Looks at table. Shrugs.

EDGER (cont'd)
 That's Bobby Fitzsimmons.

JOE MASCARI
 (counts his money)
 Two five seems a little short for
 that kind of bankroll?

EDGER
 Big games aren't that easy to find.
 Word on the street is he's putting
 together a huge one, right here in
 Manhattan. Minimum five hundred K.

Joe's interest shows for a second. He starts to the door.

EDGER (cont'd)
 I can get you a seat. Chance to get
 back that money they took from you.
 That lifestyle that you know is
 rightfully yours.

Joe stops. Looks at Fitzsimmons. Doesn't turn to Edger.

EDGER (cont'd)
 You know what I'm talking about.
 The burn inside you that won't go
 away. That edginess that won't let
 you sleep. Knowing that everything
 you earned, everything you were,
 was taken away from you in an...
 (snaps finger)
 ...instant. And you had no say in
 the matter.

JOE MASCARI
 (hesitates, turns)
 Why do you know so much about me?

EDGER

It's who I am. It's how I survive.
How I got to be where I'm at. It's
why they call me Edger.

(walks toward Joe)

And you're exactly what I've been
looking for, a chance at the big.

Joe is tempted. Hesitates. Starts toward the door.

JOE MASCARI

Unless you're gonna back me.

Edger comes up besides Joe.

EDGER

Back somebody? That's a losing
preposition for suckers. No. I'm
gonna show you how to get that
bankroll. Show you how to get
everything your heart desires. Your
deepest wishes. All you need to do
is say yes and that world will be
yours again.

JOE MASCARI

(at door, turns back)

So let me get this straight. I use
my skills. My bankroll. Take all
the risk. You do like edges.

EDGER

You couldn't even get a whiff of a
game like that without me, never
mind win. It's a whole different
animal on that level. A lucky charm
won't do it. No, you need a
somebody like me.

Joe's interest shows. He hesitates.

EDGER (cont'd)

You have a gift. Something you were
born to do. You know I'm right.

Joe smiles. Leaves. Edger smiles confidently.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Upscale restaurant. Joe and Sue sit at a table.

SUE CLARKE

I just hate the fact the fate of those kids is coming down to some asshole's decision at the bank.

Joe is preoccupied. Stares out. Sue waits for a reaction. Annoyed, she bangs a spoon on his glass. Joe snaps out of it.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)

Where are you today?

JOE MASCARI

I'm sorry... I was just... uh... I don't know.

Concerned, Sue looks at him for more.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

What if you suddenly realized your whole life, every you did, everything you thought you were, was one big fat lie?

SUE CLARKE

I'd think that was a pretty big exaggeration.

JOE MASCARI

Then you find something. Something you're really good at. Something that makes you feel whole again. Gives you back the confidence you lost.

SUE CLARKE

I'm listening.

JOE MASCARI

I ran into our friend Edger.

SUE CLARKE

That explains the lack of an appetite. He's not your friend or mine.

JOE MASCARI

You don't even know him.

SUE CLARKE

I know he's at every poker game in this town and he's never played a hand. Pretty easy read.

(hands on Joe's arm)

(MORE)

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
I thought we'd agreed you'd play
out the rush then get a real job.
Something you can use your skills,
make a difference with.

JOE MASCARI
Yeah, make a difference.
(looks to the side)
Just hear me out. He said he can
get me into the big game. One that
can set me up for life. One that
can make everything right again.

SUE CLARKE
Or one that can break you. You have
so much more to offer. You don't
need poker and you certainly don't
need him.

JOE MASCARI
Maybe he's just trying to help?

SUE CLARKE
Jesus, his nickname is Edger.

JOE MASCARI
What would I do out in the real
world? What skills do I have? I
don't even know who I am anymore.

SUE CLARKE
That firm was what you did, not who
you are.

JOE MASCARI
I gotta play this out. Every time I
sit down the adrenaline just... I
can't explain it. I feel like I was
born to do this.

SUE CLARKE
Not worried about you. It's about
the cards. They don't always act
according to plan.
(relents)
But it sounds like your mind's made
up. In the end, it's your life.
Your decision. You know how I feel.

JOE MASCARI
I told him that I would only play
if you agreed. I don't want this
between us. Just think about it.
That's all. Please.

Sue, still concerned, nods. Joe starts eating his steak.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
This steak is outrageous.

SUE CLARKE
(sips wine, stares at
glass)
I came here just for this specific
wine. I've always loved it. The
blend. The body. It's always been
my favorite.
(rolls glass, sniffs)
My anticipation grew all day. Like
a kid knowing she was getting ice
cream for dessert. Not just any ice
cream, but her favorite sundae.
(takes a measured sip)
This time, though, it didn't live
up to my expectations. Don't get me
wrong it's still a great wine, but
it just leaves me a little wanting.
(stares at glass in hand)
Can't figure if my standards have
gotten too high or it's just one
bad bottle.

Joe stops mid-chew, concerned about the comment.

INT. BANK - AFTERNOON

Large New York City bank. Sue and Joe sit at a desk waiting.

SUE CLARKE
And when this one's over, then
what? What's next? When is it ever
gonna be enough?

Before Joe answers, MR. WHITE, the bank manager, approaches.

MR. WHITE
(sits down)
You know I called you here to put
closure on the house. Apparently,
due to your stubbornness that's not
gonna happen today.

Sue exhales, relieved. Joe reaches over. Takes her hand.

MR. WHITE (cont'd)
I must warn you though that you're
already two months behind.
(MORE)

MR. WHITE (cont'd)
 Three months and we can start the
 paperwork. That or any
 unsatisfactory report from the
 state and you'll be served notice.

SUE CLARKE
 Guess we win another day.

MR. WHITE
 Another day? That's a good way to
 put it. You know that house is
 worth three times to us what you're
 paying. It will be closed.

Sue and Joe get up to leave.

SUE CLARKE
 Have you ever stopped over with the
 kids there?

MR. WHITE
 Can't say that I have.

SUE CLARKE
 You should. You'd realize you're
 greatly undervaluing the property.

They turn and leave. Mr. White, annoyed, goes back to work.

INT. BACK ROOM OF MUSTAFA'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Mustafa's game. Joe is in a hand with an elderly gentlemen in
 the five seat. Large pile of cash on the table.

JOE MASCARI
 Call.

Upset the five seat mucks his hand. Joe rakes in the cash.

Edger, Lisa, and Buddy enter. Edger sees Joe. Whispers to
 Buddy. Buddy nods. Leaves. Edger and Lisa go to the bar.

GUY IN SIX SEAT
 (sees Edger, to Mustafa)
 Seems your game just hit a new low.

Mustafa sees Edger. Makes an ugly face. Deals.

Joe folds the next hand. Sees Mustafa's face. Looks over.
 Sees Edger. Starts counting his cash. Gets up.

JOE MASCARI

Just not feeling it tonight. Deal me out.

(looks at annoyed table)

What? I'm giving one of you guys a chance to win for a change.

Edger appears behind Joe.

EDGER

Measly crumbs satisfying you?

Joe stops counting. Looks straight ahead. Smiles. Counts. Concerned, Mustafa eyes dart between the two.

EDGER (cont'd)

Guess I had you wrong, but then again, if I took the beating you did, I probably would never get up off the ground either. I'd probably let my woman run my life.

Joe gets up. Turns. Edger and Joe are face to face. They exchange defiant stares. Joe gives in. Looks down. Walks.

EDGER (cont'd)

That yearning. It's not going away.

JOE MASCARI

(turns to Edger)

What's your problem?

Conversation has gotten loud. Both games have stopped.

EDGER

Me? I have none. But you? You lost your heart. You know you want this, but you can't tell her. Not even man enough to do that anymore.

MAN AT SECOND TABLE

Come on Edger, leave the guy alone.

MAN AT TABLE

Yeah, give him a break.

EDGER

I tried. Put the world at his fingertips. Chance to get it all back. Every last drop. He turns me fucking down.

(MORE)

EDGER (cont'd)

A chance at redemption for everything that's gone wrong in his life and he puts his fucking tail between his legs and runs back to that four-leaf clover of his.

Joe gets angry. Relents. Starts toward the door.

EDGER (cont'd)

He thinks God's going to come down and save him. Hell, this is a poker room. We all know God doesn't work here. No, I'm his only hope. His last hope. I'm his light.

Joe leaves through the door.

MUSTAFA

Or his darkness.

EDGER

And you're one to talk, Mustafa? Gonna tell everybody how you been robbing the rake? Extra dollar here. Dollar there.

Mustafa sits embarrassed. All eyes focus on him.

MAN IN BACK OF ROOM

Why don't you just leave? Nobody wants you here.

Edger scans the room. All eyes are on him.

EDGER

What? You all think you're better than me? Yet, you're here. Feeding that greed, that ego, all those dark desires you refuse to even admit exist.

(walks, chuckles)

Ever think about where that money you win is coming from. Oh, you know it, but you won't admit it. Instead, you keep looking for that easy mark playing over his head with the rent or the baby's diapers. You know exactly the type I mean. You don't care that their addiction is destroying them and their families. You just care about feeding the dark deep hole inside you.

(Meets Lisa at door)

(MORE)

EDGER (cont'd)
No, you're not better than me. You
just wanna be me.

Edger and Lisa leave. The room is silent. A lot of players
show embarrassment. Slowly, some start to get up and leave.

EXT. PARKING LOT ACROSS FROM RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Most of the snow has melted. Joe crosses the street. Goes to
his car. He starts to open the door.

The WHACK of a bat on his back sends Joe sprawling to the
ground. He looks up. Sees Bill and Frank Stringer standing
over him with bats at their sides.

FRANK STRINGER
You think it was over, Joe?

Frank kicks Joe in the side. Joe doubles over. Frank leans
in.

FRANK STRINGER (cont'd)
It's never going away. Your
nightmare is going to go on and on
like our parents'.

WHACK. Bill hits Joe in the side with the bat.

FRANK STRINGER (cont'd)
All the money you won tonight. Give
it over.

Joe takes out the money. Gives it to Frank. Frank counts it.

FRANK STRINGER (cont'd)
This is it? You have got to be
kidding.

Frank and Bill start to kick Joe unmercifully.

The BANG of a single shot. Edger stands, his .45 pointed up.

Startled, Frank and Bill look at Edger. Run off. Edger comes
to Joe. Checks Joe out.

EDGER
You okay?

JOE MASCARI
I think so.

EDGER

Looks like you'll live. Good thing
I showed up when I did. Kind of
like your guardian angel.

(helps him up)

Come on, I'll get you out of here.

INT. SUE CLARKE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sue approaches the door. Opens it. Sees Joe, bloody and
beaten. Edger holds him up.

SUE CLARKE

Oh my God, what happened?

EDGER

He got jumped in the parking lot.
Luckily, I just happened to be
walking by.

She helps Edger take Joe to the sofa.

EDGER (cont'd)

I don't think it's serious. Just
some cuts and deep bruises.

SUE CLARKE

I'll get some ice.

Sue leaves for the kitchen.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sue fixes the ice bag. Starts to return. Overhears.

EDGER (O.S.)

After I stuck my neck out, it's the
least you can do. You owe me.

JOE MASCARI (O.S.)

I don't know. She was pretty
adamant.

Upset, Sue gathers herself. Marches into the living room.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sue enters. Looks disgusted at Edger. Puts the ice on Joe.

SUE CLARKE

So, Mr. Doyle, I guess we're in
your debt for being there.

(MORE)

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
That is right, you just happened to
stroll by?

EDGER
Yeah, that's what happened and
please call me Edger.

SUE CLARKE
And your car just happened to be
parked near Joe's?

EDGER
And?

SUE CLARKE
Nothing. Just thankful how all the
stars lined up so perfectly.

EDGER
Look I don't know what you're
getting at, but I think I should
leave you two alone.

SUE CLARKE
That's a great idea, Mr. Doyle.

Annoyed, Edger gets up. Starts to leave. Sue gets up.

EDGER
See you tomorrow, Joe.
(to Sue)
No need to show me out.

SUE CLARKE
(follows)
Problem with rodents in the
neighborhood. Nasty critters. Walk
right in the front door uninvited
if you're not careful.

Ahead of Sue, Edger's look turns nasty. Forces smile. Turns.
Tips his hat. Turns toward door. Anger appears. Leaves.

Sue closes, locks the door. Turns. Leans against door. Looks
disappointed at Joe. Joe sheepishly shrugs.

Upset, Sue storms by Joe into kitchen. Joe's eyes follow.

INT. NEW YORK DINER - MORNING

Edger, anxious, sits in a booth. Runs a coin through his
fingers. Lisa and Buddy sit at the counter. Joe, bruised and
hurting, enters with Sue. Edger gets up.

EDGER

Morning. You remember Lisa?

Joe and Sue take off their coats. Joe sits. Before Sue can sit, Edger blocks her path. Lisa gets up.

EDGER (cont'd)

I brought Lisa along. Figured you two might wanna go shopping while us men talk.

SUE CLARKE

Afraid I'm just not into shopping today.

Sue maneuvers around Edger into the booth. Lisa looks worried about Edger's reaction. Edger sits.

EDGER

I understand. Not everybody can spot a great deal.

SUE CLARKE

I found spotting the great ones are easy. It's the ripoffs that are tough.

Edger gets visibly upset. Sees a worried Lisa staring at him.

EDGER

What are you looking at?
(gives her money)
Just go buy something.

Lisa takes the money. Leaves.

EDGER (cont'd)

I'll just get down to business.

SUE CLARKE

I've always wondered what your business was.

Concerned, Joe's eyes dart back and forth between Sue and Edger.

EDGER

Joe here is the best player I've seen in years. And trust me I know a great player when I --

SUE CLARKE

-- Because you were such a good player, yourself? He's had a very good streak.

EDGER

What good's a streak if you're not making real money.

JOE MASCARI

Edger says he can get me into the big games. The type that will have millions on the table.

SUE CLARKE

The type you need a big roll for.

EDGER

There's ways to get that.

SUE CLARKE

I assume that those ways in no manner put you at risk.

The waitress approaches.

WAITRESS

Um, Miss Clarke? From the description, I'm assuming that's you. You have a phone call at the host's podium.

Confused, Sue acknowledges. She get's up. Excuses herself.

EDGER

Nice lady. A little stubborn but aren't they all. Works at the St. Jude Home isn't that right? They sure do good work there. Would hate to see anything ever happen to that place.

(drinks water)

Look Joe, the buy-in's not a problem. Game's in six days. We hit some clubs here, Philly, and AC. They're a little higher than what you've been playing, but plenty soft enough.

Joe is preoccupied with Sue on the phone. Her mannerisms indicate something is seriously wrong.

JOE MASCARI

I don't know. It depends on Sue.

EDGER

(turns, looks at Sue)
Seems like she has her own
problems.

(leans over table)

I mean I understand. She's
gorgeous, intelligent. I'd wanna
make sure she didn't leave too,
but, in the end, they all let you
down. They all leave as soon as
something better shows. Nobody
knows that more than you.

(leans back)

This is your chance. Not many men
get a second. Fewer get a mentor.
All you have to do is say yes.

A conflicted Joe looks at Edger. Looks at Sue as she
approaches.

EDGER (cont'd)

(sees Sue returning)

How did the last one end up?

SUE CLARKE

So, has Edger asked for your first
born yet?

EDGER

Only asking for twenty percent of
the final take. That's it. For what
I offer that's more than fair.

SUE CLARKE

Twenty percent? And here I thought
the people from the bank were in
with the devil.

(grabs coat, looks at Joe)

It's your money. Your life.

She starts to put on her coat.

JOE MASCARI

You're leaving?

SUE CLARKE

That was the home. Major problems.

JOE MASCARI

But --

SUE CLARKE

-- This is only about money. That's
about children's lives.

(MORE)

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 Like I said, your life, your call.
 (kisses Joe)
 See you at home.

Edger stands up. Holds out a hand to shake. Sue smirks.
 Leaves.

EDGER
 What's gonna happen when she gets
 tired of carrying the load? It's
 only a matter of time. Like she
 said, "It's your life."

Joe watches Sue hail a cab through his conflicted reflection
 in the window. She gets in. The taxi leaves.

INT. SUE CLARKE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Door UNLOCKS. Joe comes in the front door. Sees Sue sitting
 in the corner of a poorly lit living room. Turns on lights.

JOE MASCARI
 Why are you in the --
 (realizes she's crying)
 What's wrong? What happened?

Joe rushes to a sullen Sue. Sue hands him a paper from her
 lap. Joe reads it. Is stunned.

SUE CLARKE
 I don't know what happened. I was
 sure we had at least three months.
 The kids? Johnny? What's gonna
 happen to them?

JOE MASCARI
 We'll figure this out. There must
 be something? Gotta be a way?

SUE CLARKE
 Maybe a year of fundraising we'd be
 able to buy some time. I just don't
 know why the inspectors showed up
 today. It was like somebody gave
 them a roadmap of the problems.

JOE MASCARI
 (ruminates)
 Maybe there's a way?

SUE CLARKE
 Between the fines and repairs
 needed to keep the license.

(MORE)

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
 Add in the bank pulling the loan.
 You're talking at least a mill --
 (realizes Joe's thinking)
 -- No way. No fucking way am I
 letting you in bed with that scum.

JOE MASCARI
 Maybe he is what you say, but maybe
 we use him like he thinks he's
 using us. That home is your bliss.
 I can't let it go as long as
 there's a chance.

SUE CLARKE
 You've worked too hard for that
 money. It was supposed to get you
 out of poker. Besides, you're not
 even close to the buy-in.

JOE MASCARI
 The way your eyes light up with
 those kids. I can't ever forget
 that. After this, I'm done.
 Promise. The buy-in's been worked
 out already.

Sue relents. They hug. Kiss.

SUE CLARKE
 I'm going, too. Somebody has to
 watch that asshole.

INT. JOE'S HOTEL ROOM (PHILADELPHIA) - EVENING

Overjoyed, Joe enters the hotel room. Sue is packing a
 suitcase on the bed. Joe plops on the bed next to her.

SUPER: PHILADELPHIA, PA THREE DAYS BEFORE BIG GAME
 BANKROLL \$690,000

JOE MASCARI
 Did you see that guy's face when
 I...
 (realizes Sue's packing)
 What are you doing?

Sue doesn't respond. Continues packing. Joe gets up. Puts
 arms around her from behind.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 We're almost to two full buy-ins.
 We'll be done after tonight.

Tears on face, Sue breaks free. Closes the suitcase. Turns.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
Did something happen at the home?

SUE CLARKE
Nothing happened at the home.

Sue walks toward door. Confused, Joe follows her.

JOE MASCARI
What's going on? Is it Edger? Did he say or do something?

Sue stops at the door. Looks back incredulously.

SUE CLARKE
Are you that naive? Edger didn't say or do anything to me.

Joe looks at her, pleads for an answer.

SUE CLARKE (cont'd)
Angling? Playing scams? Who are you?
(looks pathetically)
The home's not worth a person's soul. Besides, this was never about the home in the first place. Just an excuse to feed that adrenaline rush of yours.

JOE MASCARI
Sure I took some liberties, but it's the game. It's part of playing on this level. You don't understand.

SUE CLARKE
(opens door, in tears)
What I do understand is you actually believe you're winning.

She shakes her head. Turns. Leaves. Closes the door. Joe, back against the door, sinks to the floor, dejected.

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - EVENING

SUPER: WILTMORE HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY THE BIG GAME
BANKROLL \$960,000

HALLWAY

Two bouncers, by the door, frisk HARRY WILLIAMS, middle-aged, British, in a three-piece tweed suit.

Elevator BINGS. Doors open. Edger, attache in hand, and Joe get off. Harry sees Edger. Nods. Enters the room. Edger pulls Joe aside. Bouncer takes in Harry's attache.

EDGER

That's Harry Williams. The third,
as he likes to say. English
aristocrat. Born with a lot of
money. Trying like mad to die
without it. Not many softer marks.

The second elevator BINGS. Doors open. JOHN "BUCK" RUSSELL, a large man in a cowboy hat and boots, tips his hat and storms past Joe and Edger. Hands bouncer attache. Gets frisked.

EDGER (cont'd)

But that's the softest. Buck
Russell. Family's been in oil since
Texas was founded. Shouldn't really
be playing at this level, but then
again it's only chips to him.

Russell enters. Joe and Edger approach the bouncers.

INT PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Upscale penthouse. Out the window is New York City lit up. Poker table with nine seats in the center of the room.

Joe and Edger enter. Scan room. Bouncer gives a dealer Edger's attache.

EDGER (cont'd)

Welcome to the richest poker game
this side of the Mississippi.

At a side table, two dealers count Edger's money. Bob Fitzsimmons oversees.

One of the dealers comes over and hands Joe two slips.

Edger and Joe head to the bar. Joe looks back at Bob with a cocky smirk.

EDGER (cont'd)

There's a lot of easier prey.

In walks Cho Min Wang, small Chinese man, late sixties, smoking, escorted by his huge Chinese bodyguard.

EDGER (cont'd)
 Chin Min Wang. Don of Chinese
 underground gambling, but makes a
 lot more from the heroine trade.
 He's the nit at the table. Gonna be
 hard to take his money.

Cho goes over to the table. Examines the table thoroughly.
 Picks up the unopened packs of cards. Sniffs the packs.
 Confused, Joe looks at Edger.

EDGER (cont'd)
 Old timer. Doesn't leave anything
 to chance. He's trying to smell for
 fresh glue on the wrappers.

SALLY CHINISKI, tall stunning blonde, stands on the balcony
 with PAUL GERALD, Twenties, Black, and well-dressed. She sees
 Edger. Walks up. Grabs his crotch.

SALLY CHINISKI
 (Serbian accent)
 And here I was hoping to find that
 you grew a pair.

Gives Joe a sexy look. Walks away. Joe tries to hide smile.

EDGER
 Pure evil. She's good too. Has a
 number of backers so it's not
 really her money. Plays a lot
 looser then she should because of
 that.

Bob Fitzsimmons goes to the table. Gets people's attention.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
 Like to thank you for coming. For
 the new players, the game is No
 Limit Hold 'Em with a minimum buy-
 in of five hundred thousand. You've
 been given vouchers for the amount
 you bankrolled. Rebuys and topping
 off to starting stacks are allowed
 as long as your account has money
 in it. Remember, though, what gets
 put in play, stays in play.

Door opens. Jim Piscotti, drink in hands, enters.

JIM PISCOTTI
 Miss anything?
 (looks at an annoyed Bob)
 (MORE)

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

What? You come to my game. It's
only fair I get to play in yours.

Bob looks to Paul, who shrugs. Bob nods to the bouncer. Jim's case is brought to the side. Bob points at the five seat. All the players sit down.

A dealer gives Piscotti his receipts. Other dealer sits. Opens pack of cards. Shuffles. Paul is in the nine and Bobby in the one seat.

Door opens. PRINCE SALAAM, young, well-dressed and handsome, walks in with a stunningly beautiful young sexy woman. The second dealer quickly takes his case from the woman.

Joe is mesmerized and confused by the beautiful women.

HARRY WILLIAMS

(British accent, to Joe)

Forget it. She's the Prince's
bodyguard. She'd rather cut your
balls off then win your heart. Kind
of reminds me of my third wife.

Joe is surprised and amused. Salaam sits down. The dealer returns with Salaam's receipts.

BUCK RUSSELL

Jesus and George! Can we get
started? Down where I come from
we'd could have had three lynchin's
already.

PAUL GERALD

And you want me to play at your
game?

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Blinds are four hundred eight
hundred with a two hundred ante.
Shuffle up and deal.

MOMENTS LATER

Russell lights up a cigar. Sally cringes at smoke. Board shows king of hearts, king of diamonds, jack of diamonds, and 7 of hearts. 6 of clubs is the river. Fitzsimmons checks as does the Prince.

JOE MASCARI

Forty thousand.

FITZSIMMONS
Busted flush draw, Joe? Raise one
fifty.

The Prince folds. Joe thinks. Folds his king face up.

JOE MASCARI
Boat's good.

Fitzsimmons' jaw drops. Looks at 7 7 in the hole.

LATER

Dealers have rotated. Cigarette butts in Cho's ashtrays.
Russell's cigar's is half smoked. Ties are loosened. Jackets
off. Trivial conversation fills the room.

BUCK RUSSELL
(pushes all his chips in)
Be careful, darlin'.

SALLY CHINISKI
Another one of your bluffs? I call.

Frustrated, Jim mucks his cards. Sally rakes in the chips.

BUCK RUSSELL
(takes out slip)
Can I get a reload here.
(to Sally)
You know I CAN have it.

Sally smirks. Buck looks annoyed. Extra dealer brings chips
to Buck. Takes receipt. Sally waves at the cigar smoke.

SALLY CHINISKI
Don't know what I want more? You to
rebuy or you to just bust out and
get rid of that shit stick hanging
from your lip.

Russell blows smoke in Sally's direction.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
Blinds up five one. Antes stay.

LATER

Dealers have rotated again. Dress has become disheveled. Half-
eaten food plates on carts next to some players. Some
players, not in the hand, are up and stretching.

On the river, Fitzsimmons stares at Joe. Frustrated, he mucks
his cards. The Prince does the same.

Dealer pushes the chips to Joe. Cocky look, he stacks them.

FITZSIMMONS
Did you have it?

JOE MASCARI
That kind of information costs.

Fitzsimmons looks at Gerald concerned.

LATER

Cho Min Wang rakes in a pot. Jim Piscotti has just busted. Harry is not in the room.

JIM PISCOTTI
Well, at least I wasn't the first
to bust. Thank God for Englishmen.

Jim gathers his stuff and leaves.

CHO MIN WANG
It's getting late. May I suggest we
retire until tomorrow. Say noon?

BUCK RUSSELL
How in the hell are you tired? You
only played four pots.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
Noon tomorrow it is.

All the players count their chips. Edger comes over to Joe.

EDGER
How'd we do?

JOE MASCARI
We? That's funny. Up seven-fifty.
I'm starving.

Edger stares at Bob, who nods Paul toward the bedroom. Edger cuts in front of Joe. Racks Joe's chips.

EDGER
Lisa said she'd meet us at the
diner. Why don't you go on ahead?
I'll clean up here.

Joe nods. Walks to door. Concerned, Edger stares at Bob.

JOE'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Joe sits at his bed. Phone receiver at his ear.

JOE MASCARI

It's me again. I know I'm a pest
but I really miss you. I was
foolish not to trust your judgment.
I get it. I really do. I just never
realized how much you mean to me. I
love you and... I really could use
just hearing your voice. Please
call me. I'm staying at the
Wiltmore. Room five three four
seven. I --

PHONE OPERATOR (O.S.)

(computer voice)

-- Your message has reached the --

Sullen, Joe holds the receiver in his lap. Hangs up. Lays
down on bed in fetal position. He closes his eyes.

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - MORNING

PENTHOUSE

Through the window, the New York City skyline in daylight.
Game already in progress. Dress is toned down from day one.

SUPER: DAY TWO OF THE BIG GAME

Paul is wearing sunglasses. Edger is at the bar with Lisa and
others. Hand between Sally and Buck.

BUCK RUSSELL

Hell, darlin', I'm all in.

SALLY CHINISKI

With your rep, gotta call. Nut
flush.

BUCK RUSSELL

No good, darlin'. Full house.

Sally gets up. Stares at cards in disbelief.

SALLY CHINISKI

Hmm... Two buy-ins. Backers aren't
gonna be too happy.

(looks at table, leaves)

Gentlemen.

PAUL GERALD

Didn't the glare on the cards from
these lights bother anybody else?

(MORE)

PAUL GERALD (cont'd)
 Gave me a brutal headache last
 night.

SALAAM
 And I thought my play gave you that
 headache.

Bob gets up. Walks over to the desk. Opens draw.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
 Now that you mention it, doctor
 said, if I still wanted to be able
 to see at sixty, I should start
 wearing these when I play.

Bob takes out sunglasses. Puts them on. Returns to table.
 Concerned, Joe looks at Edger. Edger takes sunglasses out of
 his pocket. Offers them to Joe. He refuses.

Buck goes into his jacket pocket. Turns away.

BUCK RUSSELL
 If you're all into intimidating
 looks. Might as well join the
 group.

Turns back with ridiculous Rhinestone Dolly Parton
 sunglasses.

Everybody gets a laugh. Antes and blinds are posted.

MOMENTS LATER

Dusk has fallen. Raindrops TAP on the window. Dealers have
 rotated. One of the dealers brings chips to Cho and the
 Prince. Players put up blind and antes. Dealer shuffles.
 Deals.

CHO MIN WANG
 (stares at Bob, disbelief)
 You just keep playing those draws.
 (looks at cards)
 Call.
 (to Bob)
 Run can't last forever.

SALAAM
 Raise. Twenty-four thousand.

The dealer innocently fans the back edges of the next four
 cards very slightly with his thumb. Paul mucks his cards.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Call.

(to Cho)

Such a pessimist, Cho. Don't need it to last forever, just 'til I get all your money.

Dealer puts down flop of king, queen, and a 7.

SALAAM

Seventy thousand.

(puts in chips)

Speaking of which, what's the definition of a pessimist?

Bob hesitates. The dealer again slightly fans the edges of the next two cards.

SALAAM (cont'd)

Just throw the draw away. You don't want any of this.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Call and I give up.

Turn is a 7.

SALAAM

An optimist leaving a poker room.

(cuts out chips)

Two-eighty.

Players are amused. Dealer has the next two cards' edges fanned in preparation to deal.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

I'm all in.

SALAAM

(anxious, flips Queen, Queen)

Not this time. I call. Boat.

Bob looks at his Ace King in the hole. Joe and Cho look concerned at Bob. River is a king giving Bob a bigger boat. Bob casually flips his hand.

SALAAM (cont'd)

Are you fucking kidding me? Let me see that deck.

The Prince grabs the deck. The bouncers start to the table. So does the Prince's bodyguard. Bob smirks at the Prince's accusation. The Prince examines the cards. Throws cards down.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Satisfied? Another rebuy? Or did daddy put a limit on his little boy?

SALAAM

One more.

CHO MIN WANG

I don't know about you guys but I'm famished. It also looks like some of us could use a break to cool down.

PAUL GERALD

It's six o'clock. We take an hour?

HALLWAY TO JOE'S ROOM

The elevator door opens. Lisa, Joe, and Edger get off. Doors close. Joe grabs Edger. Throws him against the wall.

JOE MASCARI

They're fucking mechanics.

EDGER

Who? What are you talking about?

JOE MASCARI

The dealers. They're mechanics. They're in on it with him.

EDGER

With who? What are you talking about? I've been watching. It's a clean game. No mechanics grip. Nothing. A little nervousness and anticipation by the dealers, but that's it. You really think Fitzsimmons needs an edge. He's taken down chumps like you for years.

Joe lets him go. Looks at him incredulously.

EDGER (cont'd)

What the fuck's wrong with you? You're losing everything. Now you're making excuses for your bad play. What did I see in you anyway?
(fixes jacket)
You've already given back what we won.

(MORE)

EDGER (cont'd)
 If you don't get your head together
 quick, we're gonna lose everything.
 Everything.

JOE MASCARI
 Well if they deal, I don't play.

Joe goes into his room. Slams door. Edger walks by a worried
 Lisa.

EDGER
 Fuckin' loser.

INT. SUE CLARKE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sue enters. She hangs her coat. Puts her keys down next to
 the phone. Sees there's a message on machine. Plays it.

JOE MASCARI (O.S.)
 It's me again. I know I'm --

She quickly turns off the machine. Conflict on Sue's face,
 she stares at the machine. Sits down. Replays the message.

JOE MASCARI (O.S.) (cont'd)
 It's me again. I know...

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - EVENING

EDGER'S ROOM

Edger sits on the bed. Lisa comes out of the bathroom.

LISA
 Ready.

EDGER
 You need a little sexier dress if
 you're gonna do your part tonight.

Confused and fearful, Lisa looks at Edger.

EDGER (cont'd)
 God, you didn't really think you're
 only here to play my girlfriend?
 (gets up)
 It's time for you to take that
 sweet little ass down to Joe's room
 and do what you do best.

LISA

But... You said I wouldn't have to do that anymore. You said --

EDGER

-- When did you ever know me to keep my word. When tonight's session is over, you're gonna take those heavenly charms of yours down there and give the performance of a lifetime.

LISA

No. No more. I can't. I won't.

Edger's eyes become pure evil. He delivers a backhand to Lisa's face. Send her flying to the bed. Lip bleeds.

EDGER

You can and you will. Or you'll find that old dried up body of yours back where I found it.

(walks to door)

And, we both know, you're a little too old and too worn for that life.

(opens door)

Make sure he doesn't leave the room or have any contact with that lucky charm of his. She can fuck up everything.

Edger leaves. Tearful, Lisa looks in the mirror. The lighting makes her look older and less attractive.

PENTHOUSE - LATER

It has stopped raining. Five people at the table. Paul and Bob continue to wear sunglasses. Two new dealers.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

(to Joe)

Is the situation to your liking?

Joe looks at each of the new dealers. Nods acceptance.

The dealer shuffles. Deals. Cho, in discomfort, rubs the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger.

PAUL GERALD

Telling you Cho, you should start wearing shades in these long games. Good sight isn't something to waste.

CHO MIN WANG
Something I ate. Allergies.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
That's what you people get for
eating all that raw fish.

CHO MIN WANG
(annoyed)
That's Japanese. I'm Chinese.

PAUL GERALD
Thought it was all the same.

Cho's bodyguard stands up aggravated at the comment. Upset,
Cho waves him down.

Paul shrugs sarcastically.

CHO MIN WANG
Perhaps some day I can introduce
you to some of our country's
delicacies.

PAUL GERALD
Doubt that.

Dealer fans the small corner of the back of the next four
cards.

Joe looks down at two aces. Bob and the Prince fold. Joe
raises. Cho folds. Paul hesitates. Looks at two queens.
Folds. Frustrates Joe.

LATER

Lightning illuminates the New York skyline. Cigarette butts
fill Cho's ashtray. Paul goes to the bar for a refill. Bob
rakes in a pot. The Prince gets up from the table.

SALAAM
That's it for me.
(hesitates, amazed)
Never saw that coming. Not one bet?
All those draws on the board didn't
concern you?

BOB FITZSIMMONS
Why should I bet when you'll do it
for me?

The Prince, disappointed and annoyed, starts to the door with
his bodyguard.

BOB FITZSIMMONS (cont'd)
 Have fun explaining the loss to
 daddy.

From behind, the Prince flips Bob the finger.

BOB FITZSIMMONS (cont'd)
 I saw that.

The Prince leaves. Everybody chuckles. Cho rubs eyes and
 temples.

CHO MIN WANG
 Would anybody have a complaint if I
 asked for an early break? My head
 is killing me. We can resume
 earlier tomorrow.

Nobody answers. They look at each other. Shake their heads.
 Start to count their chips.

JOE'S HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JOE MASCARI
 (on phone)
 It's... uh... me again.

KNOCKING at the door. Joe looks at the door. Hangs up.
 Gathers himself. The KNOCKING is louder. Joe's goes to the
 door.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
 Okay, okay.
 (opens it, dejected)
 Oh, it's you.

Lisa appears in a mink coat that she holds closed with one
 hand. Joe turns. Walks to the bed. Plops down dejected.

LISA
 Expected a little warmer welcome.
 (approaches bed)
 It's her, isn't it?

Joe turns away from Lisa. Sits facing the mirror.

Lisa climbs on bed. Kneels behind Joe. Puts hand on his
 shoulder. Comforts him. Reaches around. Rubs his chest.

LISA (cont'd)
 Why do you put yourself through
 this? She's not here. I am.

Joe looks incredulously at Lisa in the mirror.

LISA (cont'd)
 That's right, Joe. I'm here. I can
 make you forget a lot of things.

Joe turns toward Lisa. Breaks her hold. She steps off the
 bed. She lets the coat open and fall. Reveals very sexy,
 skimpy lingerie.

LISA (cont'd)
 She didn't know what she had, but I
 do. Let me help you.

Joe is confused. Tempted. Lisa walks next to him. He turns
 away sharply.

LISA (cont'd)
 She left you when you needed her
 most. You deserve better.
 (arms on Joe)
 You don't need her. I'm here for
 you. I can do whatever you want. Be
 whoever you want.

He turns to her, his face contorted. She runs her hand on his
 face. She pulls his face to her's. Kisses him passionately.
 He doesn't resist. He pulls away. Turns away.

JOE MASCARI
 What the... But Edger?

LISA
 (rubs his arm)
 Don't worry about Edger. It's you I
 want. It's you I've always wanted.
 (whispers in his ear)
 An hour from now you won't even
 remember her name.

She nibbles on his ear. He pulls away. Turns. Stares at her.

LISA (cont'd)
 Don't deny it. You've wanted me for
 a long time. I've seen it in your
 eyes.

Joe backs up. Looks around in conflict.

JOE MASCARI
 Is he behind this? Is he that
 sick...? Are you that sick? What
 kind of game are you playing?

LISA

It's no game. I'm real and I want to be here. I'll handle Edger.

Gathering all his courage, Joe walks around Lisa. Picks up coat. Holds it out for her.

JOE MASCARI

You need to go.

LISA

You sure Joe? Might be lonely by yourself.

Joe nods toward the door. Lisa takes the coat. Tears come to her eyes. She crumples to the bed.

LISA (cont'd)

Why? Why did you have to be so good? I told him. I told him this wouldn't work. You have no idea how evil that man is. What he'll do to me when he finds out I failed.

EXT VALET STATION - CONTINUOUS

Car pulls up. Nervous and unsure, Sue gets out. Looks at the hotel. Takes a deep breath. Gives the valet her keys. Walks in.

LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Sue walks through the lobby. Goes to the elevators. Presses a button. Nervously waits.

JOE'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LISA (cont'd)

I've seen it. I've seen the horrors. What he'll do to get what he wants. What he'll do if he knows I'm of no use to him anymore.

JOE MASCARI

You should have thought of that before you came here.

Tearful, Lisa gets up. Puts on her coat. Starts to the door.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

Why don't you just leave him?

Lisa stops. Looks in the mirror. The lighting makes her look older and disheveled.

LISA

What would I do? Where would I go?
Who'd want me? My only skill was my
body. Now that's not even good
enough. It's too late for me.

(at door, fixes coat)

For appearance's sake, can we at
least make like this happened?

Joe nods. Lisa leaves.

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lisa comes out of Joe's room. The elevator PINGS. Sue gets out. Sees Lisa leaving his room. Shocked, she freezes. Looks at the door with "ROOM 5347" on it.

Lisa and Sue stare awkwardly at each other. Lisa looks back at the door. Lets her hand drop. Coat opens. Body exposed, she stares at Sue defiantly.

Sue tries to keep composed. Hustles into the elevator. Pushes lobby button. Waits a second. Pushes it again. Breaks down. Starts frantically hitting all the buttons.

Lisa looks at the door. Toward the elevator. Eyes tear up. She puts her head down. Turns the other way. Walks away.

MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Elevator door opens. Sue gathers self. Exits. Walks through the lobby. Glances toward the bar. Freezes. Walks up. Spies.

BAR - CONTINUOUS

Edger, Bob, and Paul at bar. Buddy sits on the side. Paul and Bob pass sunglasses to Edger. He looks at playing cards with and without the glasses. They laugh. Celebrate.

Edger looks up. Sees Sue. Surprised, his look changes to pure evil. Fearful, Sue hustles through the lobby.

Edger walks to Buddy. Whispers in his ear. Nods toward the lobby.

EXT VALET - CONTINUOUS

Sue nervously waits. Repeatedly looks into the lobby. Sue's car pulls up. She exchanges a tip for the keys. Gets in.

Through the glass doors, Edger's bodyguard hustles to the lobby. Looks around. Hustles through the door as Sue drives away. He watches her with a look of evil intentions.

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - MORNING

PENTHOUSE

SUPER: DAY THREE OF THE BIG GAME

Game is on a break. Joe is on the side with Edger.

EDGER

You're blowing it. Our rebuy.
Everything. Should have never got
involved with a loser like you.

JOE MASCARI

I'm telling you, there's something
going on. I just... I can't put my
finger on it.

EDGER

Only thing going on is your bad
play. Just go give the rest away.

PAUL GERALD

Let's get this show on the road.

Defeated, Joe turns. Walks to the table.

Buddy enters. Walks up to Edger. Whispers in his ear. Edger
looks surprised. Looks at Joe. Hesitates. Grabs Buddy's arm.
Leads him out of the penthouse.

Paul and Bob put their sunglasses on.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Paul scoops a pot pre-flop.

PAUL GERALD (cont'd)

You guys are making this way too
easy.

-- Joe looks down at his shorter stack. Looks at two queens
in the hole.

JOE MASCARI

Raise eighty-five thousand.

PAUL GERALD

(flips up pocket jacks)
I fold.

JOE MASCARI

Why the fuck would you fold that?

PAUL GERALD

You know, once in a while, you
should study yourself. Those tells
are gonna kill you.

Upset at the comment, Joe looks at Bob. Then Cho. Cho shrugs.

PAUL GERALD (cont'd)

Like you would say anything, Cho?

-- Hands at breakneck speed. Trays with food become empty.
Dealers rotate. From the action and talk, Joe is obviously
losing, but holding on. Cho goes on a run. Starts to lose to
a series of coolers.

Talk becomes very acidic. Indicates Paul and Bob are running
extremely lucky. Light outside turns to dusk then evening as
the New York skyline lights up.

END MONTAGE

Dealer deals. Edger returns alone.

CHO MIN WANG

(looks at two kings)

Raise three-sixty.

Dealer innocently fans the corners of next four cards. Paul
folds. Bob hesitates. Calls. Joe looks at ace and 5 of
diamonds. Calls out of the big blind.

The flop is the king of diamonds, jack diamonds and king of
hearts.

CHO MIN WANG (cont'd)

Figures. Check.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

(pushes in two stacks)

Bet. Think you're about to get
another headache, Cho.

JOE MASCARI

How much?

BIG GAME DEALER #2

(counts chips)

Two ninety-five.

JOE MASCARI

(counts his chips)

Doesn't leave me with much.

(hesitates, puts in chips)

Call.

Cho, feigns weakness. Calls. Turn is the 9 of diamonds. All three check. Suspicious, Joe eyes dart between Cho and Bob. The river is the six of spades.

CHO MIN WANG

All in.

Edger and Cho's bodyguard get up. Approach the table.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Paired board? Aah... Played for it, so I gotta call.

JOE MASCARI

Two all-ins and you both have me covered?

(looks at chips then cards)

And here I thought I was way ahead.

He mucks cards face down. Paul's and Bob's jaws drop.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

Why are you shocked? You have no idea what I had.

CHO MIN WANG

Whatever it was, it was a great fold.

(flips cards)

Quads.

Cho starts reaching for the chips. Bob reaches over. Grabs Cho's arm. Shows queen and 10 diamonds for straight flush.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Straight flush.

Cho is shocked. Then suspicious.

CHO MIN WANG

This hand happens in my casinos there would lots of questions to answer in the back alley.

Cho's bodyguard reaches to the empty holster on his waist. The two bouncers come over with hands on .45s in waistband.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

(waves off bouncers)

I think your man forgot we took his gun at the door. So, unless he's a relative of Bruce Lee, I suggest he stand down.

(stares at Cho)

(MORE)

BOB FITZSIMMONS (cont'd)
Looks to me you're out of rebuys.
Have a nice flight.

Angry, Cho relents. Backs his bodyguard down. Walks to the door.

CHO MIN WANG
You'll find I have a very long reach.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
So does my dick.

Cho and his bodyguard leave. Edger walks toward the bedroom.

EDGER
Have to make a phone call. You mind if I use the one in the bedroom?

BOB FITZSIMMONS
Have a day. Your man already paid for it.

PAUL GERALD
(to Joe)
How much you got there?

JOE MASCARI
About five twenty-five.

MOMENTS LATER

Edger is back. Joe stands over the table, shoulders slumped in defeat. Jaw is dropped in disbelief.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
Is there anything you guys don't hit?

PAUL GERALD
You've played long enough to know it comes in streaks.

JOE MASCARI
(walks toward door)
I'd get it if you were playing every hand, but you seemed to always fold when I hand it.
(to Edger)
You coming?

EDGER
For what? You already lost everything we had.
(MORE)

EDGER (cont'd)
You got nothing I want.
(turns to game)
No, think I'll stay and watch a
couple of good players. Thanks to
you, I already paid for the seat.

PAUL GERALD
Maybe you should go play at Cho's
place?
(turns to Bob)
You ready?

Joe looks back at the game. Hesitates. Closes door behind him
as he leaves.

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - MORNING

JOE'S HOTEL ROOM

Hungover, Joe wakes up in the same clothes from the game. The
bright light of day through his window forces him to put his
hand up.

Something on the bed bothers him. Reaches under with his
other hand. Takes out an empty whisky bottle. Puts it on the
night table.

Joe hesitates. Looks at his watch on the table. Gets up.
Heads to the door.

PENTHOUSE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Joe exits the elevator. Sees the door ajar. Starts toward the
penthouse. Hears voices. Cautiously, moves forward. Stops and
listens.

PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Through the window the New York skyline in morning.

Paul counts, wraps and stacks cash. Bob and a bouncer pack
the money in suitcases. Other than that, no remnants of the
game. Other bouncer sits by the door.

Edger walks from the bar. Hands Paul a drink. Lisa sits on
the sofa.

EDGER
What's the total take?

PAUL GERALD

After we pay off the dealers and our friends... gonna be over five eight.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Your buddy cost us an extra two hundred grand having to get those extra dealers.

EDGER

Stop your whining. You're beginning to sound like him. Besides, Piscotti's money more than offset the loss.

The door SLAMS open. Joe enters. Scans the room. Confusion sets in. He freezes.

Bouncer, near the door, puts his hand on his .45. Edger waves him down. Lisa sits up. Surprised, she turns to Edger. Becomes worried. Her eyes dart between Edger and Joe.

EDGER (cont'd)

Sleep good champ?

JOE MASCARI

I knew something was up. You sold me out.

Concerned, Paul and Bob look to Edger.

EDGER

There you go again with your excuses. You're really becoming quite boring in your predictability.

JOE MASCARI

The whole game was a setup.

Bob and Paul's eyes dart between Joe and Edger. Lisa becomes increasingly worried. Edger walks to the bar.

EDGER

Setup? Nah, it was a fair game. Me? Just playing the edges like I always do. If you find out the horse you bet on is lame, bet another post, only bigger. And you were a very lame horse.

(tops his drink)

(MORE)

EDGER (cont'd)

Once I saw the loser you really were, I just took a piece of Bob and Paul. Just leveraging my bets.

JOE MASCARI

No, you said it yourself, I'm better than them. You know it.

EDGER

When you gonna learn, Joe. Life doesn't go to the brightest or more talented. It goes to those who can play in the grey area. Push the envelope. Step on the lines. Most of all it goes to those who understand the rules of the game.

(turns to Joe)

You had this notion you were playing to be the best in the world. Look around, see any trophies. Ah, but your ego wouldn't let you see that.

(points at Bob and Paul)

Them? They just wanted to make money. They stayed focused while you drifted off imagining some mythical crown on your head.

(Takes a sip)

In the end, they were smart. Chopped it up. Why bust heads when you could each make half. Minus my nice cut of course.

JOE MASCARI

(at Bob)

No, I heard you. What was in play, stayed in play --

BOB FITZSIMMONS

-- 'Til the end of the game. I just never said when the game ended.

Distraught, Joe sinks to the couch. Tears run down an upset Lisa's face.

JOE MASCARI

Even Cho thought something was up.

EDGER

(Looks out window)

Shame about Cho. FBI picked him up right as he boarded his private jet at Teterboro. Seems they got an anonymous phone call.

Bouncer closes the last suitcase. Nods to Edger. Edger signals the bouncer near Joe. He pistol whips Joe. Sends Joe to the ground. Stands over him. Points gun at him.

EDGER (cont'd)
I'd like to stay and chat, but I
have bigger plans.

Bob, Paul, Edger and one bouncer head to the door with the suitcases. Edger turns. Sees Lisa crying on the sofa, looking at Joe.

EDGER (cont'd)
Give me a fucking break. Tell me
you've developed a soft spot for
him?
(picks up hat)
Well, if that's what you want.

Edger leaves. Lisa looks at Joe compassionately. Hesitates. Gets up. Runs after Edger. Bouncer backs out. Keeps gun pointed at Joe.

INT. NICK'S PIZZERIA - EVENING

Small typical pizzeria / restaurant in Brooklyn at closing.

Nick, apron on, sits at a table. Reads the newspaper. Others clean. Joe, in extreme distress, enters.

NICK DIMARI
(sees Joe, gets up)
That face can't be good.
(helps Joe to chair)
Sit down.
(to back)
Two coffees.

JOE MASCARI
I lost it all.

Waitress puts two coffees in front of them.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)
I lost everything. My bankroll. The
money for the home. Most of all, I
lost Sue.

The mention of Sue causes concern in Nick's face.

NICK DIMARI
Should have figured this was about
what happened to Sue.
(MORE)

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
I'm really sorry, Joe, but we have
to keep up hope.

Joe looks at Nick confused.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
God, you don't know, do you?

JOE MASCARI
What? What about Sue? Tell me.

NICK DIMARI
Last night, she was going home on
the Saw Mill and... Police say
somebody, probably a drunken
driver, forced her off the road and
into a pole.

Joe's eyes widen. His facial expression and body are frozen
in shock.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
She's at St. Mary's. Doctors had to
induce a coma. It doesn't look
good, but there's a chance.

Beside himself, Joe's head drops into his arms at the table.

JOE MASCARI
God, what have I done?

NICK DIMARI
You know she's a fighter. If
anybody can make it through this,
it's her, but, most of all, she
needs you to be strong.

Joe looks around. Searches for an answer. Gets up.

JOE MASCARI
Let's go. I need to be there.
(waits for Nick)
Come on. What are you waiting for?

Nick gets up. Takes off his apron.

INT. ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL - EVENING

SUE'S ROOM

Intensive care. Dual room. Curtain is open. Other bed is
empty.

Sue is in a coma. Tubes and needles hook her up to a number of monitors and drips. A nurse at the end of the bed scans her chart.

Joe and Nick enter the room. Joe falls on his knees next to Sue. In tears, he grabs her hand. Nick waits at door. Joe looks at the nurse.

ROOM NURSE

No change, but we didn't expect one. Not for a week at least.

(puts chart down)

In some situations they can hear you. A positive voice can go a long way.

Joe nods. The nurse leaves.

NICK DIMARI

Um... Saw a coffee machine. I'll leave you alone.

Nick leaves. Joe stares at Sue. Her hand in both of his.

JOE MASCARI

I'm so sorry. I screwed up. I love you so much. I don't care about the money. I don't care about anything. I just want you back. That's all. Just you. Nothing else. You're all I need.

(more tears, desperation)

I can understand if you never talked to me again and that wouldn't matter. Just to see your smile again would be enough.

(breaks down)

Oh God, what did I do? Please. Forgive me.

MOMENTS LATER

Sunlight as a nurse pulls the curtains open. Joe wakes up startled, having fallen asleep half on - half off the bed. He sees Nick sitting in a chair.

NICK DIMARI

Morning.

JOE MASCARI

You've been here the whole night?

NICK DIMARI

Coffee's not too good, but
 (holds up *Vogue*)
 the reading's great.
 (gets up)
 However, I do need to go open the
 stores.
 (starts to leave)
 I'll be back later with some food.
 You really should try the chair.
 It's much easier on the back.

Joe nods. Nick and the nurse leave. Joe gets up. Fondly wipes Sue's hair. Gazes at her. Sits in chair. Stares at Sue. Eyes slowly close.

MOMENTS LATER

Startled, Joe wakes up in the chair. There is a commotion outside the room. He gets up. Walks to the door.

INT HALLWAY OUTSIDE SUE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marge Sandler, visibly upset, stands with a tearful Johnny in hand at the nurses station.

ST. MARY'S STATION NURSE

I'm sorry miss. Unless he's
 immediate family, no one under
 twelve is allowed to visit.

MARGE SANDLER

But --

JOE MASCARI (O.S.)

-- It's okay. It's her son.

Johnny breaks Marge's grip. Runs to Joe. Hugs his legs. Joe acts awkwardly. Finally, Joe hugs Johnny.

The nurse looks at Marge waiting for a response. Marge looks thoroughly confused. Over the nurses shoulder. Joe winks at Marge. Nods it's okay.

MARGE SANDLER

I think given the circumstances
 it's okay to let it out. It's not
 something that she really wanted
 anybody to know. I'm sure you can
 understand.

The nurse hesitates. Looks at Joe. Joe nods. The nurse relents.

ST. MARY'S STATION NURSE
 Given the circumstances, but you'll
 have to keep a close eye on him.

Marge nods. The nurse returns to her desk.

SUE'S ROOM

Joe enters holding Johnny's hand. Johnny pulls away. Runs to Sue's bed. Lays his head next to her. Hugs her with one arm.

YOUNG JOHNNY
 I love you, Miss Sue.

INT. NICK'S PIZZA RESTAURANT - EVENING

Joe, cleaned up, sits in a booth. Drinks coffee. Reads the newspaper. Nick works behind the counter.

JOE MASCARI
 (to Nick)
 We need to get going soon. Marge
 needs to get Johnny home.

NICK DIMARI
 In a minute.

Joe sees something in the newspaper that catches his attention. Folds it. Puts it next to him to read.

CLUNK

Startled, Joe looks. Sees a .45 on the table. Eyes rise. Sees a tearful, distraught Lisa backing away from the table. He is both confused and angered.

Worried, Nick comes out. Freezes when he sees the gun. Joe waves him down. Nick calms the other people in the place.

Joe stares at Lisa. Anger starts to show. Eyes dart between Lisa and the gun.

LISA
 Go ahead. I deserve it. God knows
 I've stood on the edge of just
 about every bridge in this city,
 trying to get the courage.

Joe eyes dart down to the gun. Back to Lisa.

LISA (cont'd)

Had that gun to my head... least a dozen times, but I was always too weak to pull the trigger. So go ahead, do it. I deserve it. Nobody deserves to do it more than you. You'd be doing me and the world a favor.

Nick look on incredulously. Looks to Joe. Lisa looks around at the fearful customers in the place. Joe looks back down at the gun.

LISA (cont'd)

But if you're not gonna do it, I'm gonna sit down in that very booth and explain everything I know. You deserve that.

JOE MASCARI

And I'm just supposed to believe you?

LISA

Either way, I get what I came here for.

There is a tense pregnant pause. Lisa cautiously inches toward the booth. Slides in.

NICK DIMARI

(to customers)

Everything's okay. You can relax. Everything today is on the house.

Some customers leave. Joe and Lisa stare at each other awkwardly. Nick hesitantly makes his way to the booth.

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)

I'll bring some coffee.

(meekly grabs gun)

Let me... I'll just put this in the back.

Nick leaves. Joe's and Lisa's stare continues. Lisa takes out a page ripped from a magazine. Puts it in front of Joe.

MOMENTS LATER

Disbelief showing, Joe looks around. He picks up the page. Looks at it again.

INSERT: Page from kid's magazine with ad for magical disappearing ink and special reading glasses.

INT. WILTMORE HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - EVENING - FLASHBACK

The big game is in progress. Salaam and Bob are in a hand.

SALAAM
 (pushes chips out)
 Two-eighty.

Bob, with sunglasses on, looks at his cards.

Through the glasses, he sees a very small A and K on the back corners with the suits that match the cards underneath. He looks at Salaam's two queens, similarly marked.

Underneath the sunglasses, Bob's eyes tilt down toward the dealers hands without moving his head.

The dealer casually fans the edges of the next two cards exposing the K in the corner of the second one.

INT. NICK'S PIZZA RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOE MASCARI
 It was the dealers.

LISA
 Yeah, but they weren't mechanics. Edger, Paul and Bob have been using the glasses for years.

JOE MASCARI
 A fucking kid's magic toy. And the others never caught on?

LISA
 Except for Cho and Salaam there were no others. Third rate actors, hired at an overprice. They had no idea. They're just there to give their stacks to Paul and Bob.

JOE MASCARI
 Actors? Piscotti was in on it?

LISA
 Wild card. Never invited. Edger didn't like it, but he never saw a bankroll he didn't think was worthy of a scam. If you remember, he didn't use the glasses 'til after Jim busted. He likes money, but his head being attached a lot more.

JOE MASCARI

And me. I was just there to collect money from the other games for them?

Lisa's look tells Joe he's right. Joe looks off in thought.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

What a fool I am. He played me the whole time.

LISA

You're not the first and you probably won't be the last. Edger has a knack for getting into a person's dark side.

(hesitates)

There's more though. It's complicated and it's just a feeling, but I think Edger is behind Sue's accident. After all she was at the hotel that night.

Joe looks at her in disbelief.

LISA (cont'd)

Yeah, she was. I drove her away.
(grabs his arm)

You gotta believe I didn't know anything about the accident. What I did was horrible. The worst thing I've ever done in my life, but I would never...

(hesitates)

She was in the hotel that night. Buddy, Edger's bodyguard, hasn't been seen since and Edger's never gone anyplace without him. There's too much coincidence.

Joe's look goes from disbelief to anger.

LISA (cont'd)

Yeah, I hit a new low even for me, but you gotta believe me. I had nothing to do with her accident.

Nick comes over. Looks at the tension between Joe and Lisa.

NICK DIMARI

So, what are we talking about?

Without turning from Lisa, Joe hands Nick the ripped page. Nick reads it. Looks at Lisa in disbelief.

EXT. WASHINGTON BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

A view of the dark deep waters of the Hudson from the bridge.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (O.S.)
I hope you didn't call an FBI Agent
to witness a suicide.

Joe, looking over the rail, snaps out of his stare. Turns.
Looks at Detontas. Shakes his head.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)
That's a relief. I'm glad you
believed me about you getting a raw
deal.

(hands Joe a file)

The people you were interested in.
They leased a private jet that
leaves Teterboro this Saturday.
Destination's listed as Miami, but
we both know these kind of flights
plans can change quickly.

(break)

Agency's been looking at this group
for years, but always came up
short. Gonna tell me why you're so
interested?

Joe doesn't answer. Shakes his head.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS (cont'd)
(starts to leave)
You were right about the phone call
on Cho. It originated in the
Wiltmore penthouse. If there's
anything else you need.

JOE MASCARI

Fred
(waits for him to turn)
Thanks. I'll be in touch.

Detontas nods. Turns and leaves.

INT./EXT. NEW YORK CITY WAREHOUSE - EVENING

EXT PARKING LOT - IN CAR

Parking lot outside Piscotti's game.

NICK DIMARI
You know you're gonna get yourself
killed doing this?

JOE MASCARI

Yeah, well, it's the only way I can live.

The get out of the car.

PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Nick walk toward Piscotti's warehouse.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

Would have given me a beating and then laughed at me.

Nick looks at Joe, totally confused by the statement.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

The first night you took me here. You asked me what my dad would have thought about the whole image thing. He would have given me a beating for being so superficial and then laughed his ass off for me being so insecure.

NICK DIMARI

He was a prick at times.

JOE MASCARI

No, he was right. He was right about a lot of things.

They approach the door. Nick looks at Joe. Joe gathers his courage. Nods. Knocks.

WAREHOUSE INTERIOR - CONTINUOUS

Joe, Nick, Jim and CARMINE PISCOTTI, the godfather, sixties, dapper dresser, sit at a table in the back. Two thugs stand nearby. Carmine looks at the ripped magazine page. Annoyed he stares at Jim for a moment.

CARMINE PISCOTTI

So, not only was my son stupid enough to play over his head, it was a fixed game?

Guilty, Jim looks away. Joe nods.

CARMINE PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Give me a reason why I wouldn't handle this my own way? Keep it close to the vest?

(MORE)

CARMINE PISCOTTI (cont'd)
 After all, what you're asking, one
 two, is a big risk and you have no
 collateral.

Throws FBI file labeled "Pat 'Edger' Doyle" on the table.

JOE MASCARI
 The FBI is on to Edger. You really
 want to risk being exposed like
 that? Lose everything for a two-bit
 thug when's there a safer answer?
 (leans forward)
 My way, you get Jim's money back
 plus. Nobody knows you're involved.
 Nothing comes back to you.

CARMINE PISCOTTI
 And this Edger just walks?

Joe shakes his head with a dominant "No."

CARMINE PISCOTTI (cont'd)
 (to Jim)
 And you can pull this off?

Jim looks at Joe. Both turn back. Nod to Carmine.

CARMINE PISCOTTI (cont'd)
 (ruminates)
 I just can't. I'm a businessman and
 that means collateral on any loan.

JOE MASCARI
 You have me. I guess my life's on
 the line.

CARMINE PISCOTTI
 That part's a given. Need something
 more. Something financial.

NICK DIMARI
 Two of my three pizzerias. The
 property alone is worth a million.
 In two years you'd have a profit on
 your loss. I keep the one by the
 bridge.

JOE MASCARI
 That's not happening. It's not your
 battle.

NICK DIMARI
 We've been together since we were
 six. It is my battle.
 (MORE)

NICK DIMARI (cont'd)
 (to Carmine)
 So we have a deal?

CARMINE PISCOTTI
 If you're dumb enough to back it.
 (starts to get up)
 We're done here then.

JOE MASCARI
 There is one more item that only a
 man like you can handle.

Slightly annoyed, Carmine looks at Joe. Sits back down.

INT. UPSCALE BAR, NEW YORK - AFTERNOON

Edger, Bob and Paul sit at the bar in a fairly empty upscale sports bar. Watch the Yankee game on TV. The two bouncers from the game sit in the background.

A Yankee strikes out. Edger winces.

EDGER
 How much we laying on this game?

BOB FITZSIMMONS
 Ten grand. Getting one twenty eight
 on a hundred.

EDGER
 And who the fuck picked this one?

Paul tries to hide, meekly. Edger scoffs. Shakes head. Lisa enters. Sits next to Edger.

EDGER (cont'd)
 Decided to join us.

LISA
 While you guys were playing, I was
 working.
 (hands Edger business card)
 Big roller at Jim's game. Gonna be
 here this weekend. Looking for
 something big. Very big.
 (to bartender)
 Johnny Walker neat.

EDGER
 (reads card)
 Game's already full.

LISA

Guy lost fifty grand in two days at
Piscotti's. Drinks like a fish.
Call the company. He has an office
in town. These import export guys
are worth millions.

(guzzles drink)

Go ahead. I already checked him out
myself.

PAUL GERALD

(not looking back)

I bet you did.

Lisa gives Paul the finger. Edger puts the card away. Returns
to the TV.

EDGER

If something comes up.

INT. FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION - EVENING

Cho sits in his cell reading. Door is open. Two Asian inmates
on guard outside the open door.

One reacts as a Caucasian inmate approaches. Cho looks at the
inmates talking. Asian guard enters.

ASIAN INMATE

((Chinese, subtitled))

There is a man here who says he has
a message from Carmine Piscotti in
New York.

Cho hesitates. Nods. Asian inmate calls the other inmate in.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - MORNING

Agent Detontas and Nick enter. Head toward the front desk.

NICK DIMARI

You really think this is gonna
work?

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

I am FBI. At least until my boss
finds out about this shit.

(flashes ID to desk)

I need to see a manager.

INT. BELLAIRE HOTEL - MORNING

A nondescript hotel hallway. Mustafa, dressed to the nines, knocks on a guest's door. A businessman in a white dress shirt answers.

MUSTAFA

Mr. Doyle thought you'd like a ride and additional security to the game.

The man looks at his watch. Looks back concerned.

MUSTAFA (cont'd)

New York traffic.

The man nods. Goes back in the room. Mustafa waits.

MOMENTS LATER

The man reappears in a suit and tie. Attache case in hand, he nods he's ready. They leave.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - MORNING

LOBBY

Mustafa and the man enter the hotel. Head toward the elevator. Pass Detontas and Nick at the front desk waiting for a manager.

HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Two well-dressed men sit on the sofa. Fear on their faces. Piscotti's thugs watch over them. Two attaches on the coffee table.

The door opens. Mustafa ushers in the businessman. Man sees the setup, stops in his tracks. Mustafa urges him on with his hand. Closes door. Signals man to the sofa.

MUSTAFA

Now, I know you're wondering what just happened? Are you going to be robbed? Killed maybe?

The three men's eyes get big at the word "robbed." Jaws drop with the word "killed."

MUSTAFA (cont'd)

While it is very tempting to a man like me, the complete opposite is actually true. We're saving you from yourself. Consider yourself blessed.

(MORE)

MUSTAFA (cont'd)
 Take your suitcases and get the fuck out of here. If I was you I'd disappear as far as I can from this place. Do you understand?

All three men quickly nod their heads. Sit frozen.

MUSTAFA (cont'd)
 Well, what are you waiting for? Go Get out of here before I change my mind. Scram. Vamoose.

The three men scurry to take their briefcases.

MUSTAFA (cont'd)
 (heads to wet bar)
 Remember, this never happened.

The door closes behind the three men.

MUSTAFA (cont'd)
 (to thugs)
 Make sure they leave immediately.

The thugs nod. Leave.

PENTHOUSE - LATER

Edger stands at the bar making a drink. Buck, Sally and Harry sit at various spots in the room. Two dealers look bored. Two bouncers near the door.

Bob is on the phone. Upset, Paul comes in.

PAUL GERALD
 He left. Checked out.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
 (hangs up)
 Same. Front desk said he left an hour ago.

Comment makes Edger concerned.

EDGER
 Didn't you say your friend was still in town?

LISA
 Yeah, but you said --

EDGER
 -- That was then. Not missing an opportunity. Not taking a loss.

Edger goes to the phone. Takes the business card out of his pocket. Dials the number.

EDGER (cont'd)
Yes, hello. I'm trying to reach Mr. Stout. It's very important.

INT. ST. JUDE'S HOME - OFFICE - MORNING

Marge nervously sits in the office, alone on the phone.

MARGE SANDLER
I'm sorry, both Mr. Stout and Mr. Brewer are out. Can I help you with anything?
(waits nervously)
Yes... um... I have that number right here.
(shuffles papers for affect)
Here it is. Last year our volume of export was two hundred and twenty and import was one forty.
(listens)
No, sir. That's millions not thousands.
(listens)
I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to give that information out.
(listens)
Even if it is that important I couldn't help you. Mister Stout usually plays cards all day on Friday, but I have no clue where.
(listens)
Okay. And if I could just have your name and number?

Marge looks at the receiver after an abrupt hangup. Puts it down. Exhales. Looks at a piece of paper. Dials the number.

MARGE SANDLER (cont'd)
We're on.

Hangs up. Puts head in harms on the desk, relieved and exhausted.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - AFTERNOON

PENTHOUSE

Edger, receiver in hand, thinks. Hangs up the phone.

EDGER

He's probably at Piscotti's.

LISA

I'll go get him.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

We never go in without thoroughly researching a mark. It's your rule.

PAUL GERALD

I don't like this.

EDGER

What the fuck's wrong with you guys? You wanna take the loss out of your shares? Fine, but I'm not dropping a dime on this setup.

(waits for answer)

I didn't think so.

(to Lisa)

Take one of the guys. Go pick him up. Just get him here.

LISA

I should go myself. Your name's not too good at Piscotti's right now and if he sees force, he may get jumpy.

Edger thinks. Relents. Lisa leaves.

MOMENTS LATER

Some of Edger's crew are eating food. A KNOCK at the door.

Everybody freezes. Bouncer checks. Turns. Nods. Everybody scrambles to make the place look like a high end game.

Lisa enters alone through the open door. Edger is confused.

JIM PISCOTTI (O.S.)

Wish I could say it's great to see you guys again.

Surprised, all eyes look up. Piscotti appears in the doorway. Angered, Edger looks at Lisa. She shrugs. Jim walks in.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Truth is, it's not.

EDGER

This is a private game, Jim. I'm afraid you weren't invited.

Jim casually walks over to the table. Takes a chair to the middle of the room. Places it down. Sits on the backwards chair.

JIM PISCOTTI

Wasn't the other one private? You let me play in that.

(looks at Buck, Sally, Harry)

Same cast of characters. Buck, Sally, Harry, or whatever your names are. You get paid for the last one yet?

Concerned, Buck, Harry, and Sally look to Edger. The three sheepishly put their head down.

EDGER

I don't know what you're talking about. Sounds like gibberish to me.

JIM PISCOTTI

Come on. I know the whole routine. I'm not mad at you. You just took an acting gig for the money. You get paid yet?

Buck, Harry and Sally all start to make excuses. Jim cuts them off.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

You did a good job. Hopefully, you were paid well. Now get out of here before I change my mind.

Harry, Sally and Buck scamper out. The dealers start to leave also. But Jim's hand action cuts them off. Shakes head. Points for them to sit on sofa. They do.

EDGER

Like I said, I'm gonna have to ask you to leave or be thrown out. Choice is yours.

JIM PISCOTTI

Don't worry. I'm not here to play.

(pause)

I'm here to collect the one point two you scammed off me last time... Among other things.

Bob and Paul look to Edger with deep concern.

EDGER

I have no idea what you're talking about, but if you insist.

Edger signals for the bouncers to throw Jim out.

The two bouncers step toward Jim. Look at each other. Then at Edger. One nods toward the door. They turn and leave.

EDGER (cont'd)

Where the fuck do you think you're going? I paid you. You'll never work in this town again.

JIM PISCOTTI

Considering what you make off these elaborate shows, you really should pay the help more.

Jim gets up. Walks toward the desk. Everybody's eyes follow.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Guess I'll just take my one two.

He takes a case from under the desk. Opens one. It's empty.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Ah, would you look at that. Where's the money gone?

(repeats with 2nd case)

But then again, why would you need money here when you know you're gonna win.

Opens the rest of the cases. All are empty.

EDGER

(inches toward credenza)

Guess you're totally out of luck, but, to show you I'm a good sport, I'll mail it to you.

Jim smirks. Goes back to the chair. Sits down.

JIM PISCOTTI

I'll just wait.

EDGER

Okay, I'll play along.

A KNOCK at the door startles Edger.

JIM PISCOTTI
Anybody order room service?
(waits for reply)
No? Then that must be for me.

Lisa opens the door. Two bellboys enter with four suitcases.

Edger, Bob and Paul are stunned, confused.

EDGER
(to bellhops)
Now you just stop right there. I
didn't tell you to bring those
cases up here. You bring those
right back down to the safe. I'll
sue this fucking hotel if you
don't.

Bellhops don't stop. Jim takes a case as they pass him.

JIM PISCOTTI
Put one under each of the first
three seats at that table.
(shakes case)
What? About one five in each?

INT. THE REGIS - HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING - FLASHBACK

SUPER: THREE HOURS EARLIER

Nick and Detontas at the front desk. Heated talk with the
manager.

HOTEL MANAGER
We can stay here for another two
hours, but there's no way I'm
returning the valuables that are in
our safe.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
It's not like we're asking you to
turn the valuables over to us. We
just want you to return them to
their owners. We need the suspect
to be in possession.

HOTEL MANAGER
You produce a subpoena, we'll hand
the materials over.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
Even specific items? We're only
talking about four suitcases. It's
a matter of national security.

HOTEL MANAGER
Not without a warrant or subpoena.
It's a matter of hotel security.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
And there's nobody else I can talk
to?

HOTEL MANAGER
You've climbed the whole chain.

NICK DIMARI
Now you listen to me. You're gonna
take everything out of the safe and
return it to the proper guest, so
Agent Detontas can catch the threat
redhanded.

Stunned, the hotel manager and Detontas look at Nick.

HOTEL MANAGER
In case you're deaf, for the last
two hours I just told your partner
that's not possible.

Nick grabs, pulls the manager over the counter towards him.

NICK DIMARI
But I'm talking now and here's why
it's possible.
(whispers in ear)
I'm from the N P O A. Now I know
that doesn't mean anything to you,
but just think what branch of
homeland security would start would
the letter N?
(man's eye's widen)
And if that... um... device happens
to go off, I'm gonna make sure that
you're held personally responsible
for the deaths of... Let's just say
it'll be a very large number.
(lets him go)
Now unless you like being butt
fucked everyday in a black hole in
Madagascar, I suggest you return
the materials to their owners
immediately.

Agent Detontas looks on, bewildered and amused by Nick's talk.

HOTEL MANAGER
 (fear-filled wreck)
 Yes sir. Immediately. Why didn't
 you say it was --

Nick cuts him off. Puts finger to mouth for him not to mention the word.

HOTEL MANAGER (cont'd)
 It'll take about two hours to
 complete. Is that okay?

Nick looks at Detontas. Detontas nods. The manager scurries away, Nick and Detontas start to leave.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
 N P O A? Nuclear device?

NICK DIMARI
 National Pizzeria Owners
 Association. And he brought up the
 idea of a nuke, not me.
 (break)
 You know my calzone won the
 association's best in the nation
 two years ago?
 (at exit)
 I gotta get back to the hospital.
 You think you can handle this
 without me?

AGENT FRED DETONTAS
 (amused)
 I think maybe.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - AFTERNOON - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

PENTHOUSE

Edger inches closer to the credenza.

EDGER
 One four. That's what's in there.
 You got your money. There's nothing
 more for you here.

Jim puts the briefcase next to his chair. Gets up. Starts to turn the chair around. Puts his back toward Edger.

Edger quickly opens the draw on the credenza. Reaches in. Shocked. The draw is empty.

JIM PISCOTTI

Told you. Among other things.

Jim turns back around. Has Edger's .45 in his hand.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Looking for this.

Jim looks at Lisa. Winks. Infuriates Edger. Jim sits.

EDGER

You have all the cards. It's your game.

JIM PISCOTTI

You know it would be just so easy to take the rest of the money and have your bodies disappear. My dad really liked that idea.

EDGER

Now, why would you wanna do that? You can have all the money. We can't call the cops. Why put such a damper on your odds with something stupid where they might find the bodies?

JIM PISCOTTI

Wasn't too worried about the bodies. It was what to do with the heads?

Bob and Paul cringe in total fear. Paul rubs his neck.

Jim signals Edger over to the table. In the background, Lisa goes over to the desk. Makes a call.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Yeah, it would be so nice just to take the money and do the world a favor at the same time, but my partner has other ideas.

Lisa hangs up. Nods to Jim. Confused, Edger looks at Jim.

JIM PISCOTTI (cont'd)

Since this was all his idea, guess he gets his say too.

(to the door)

It's open.

Bob, Paul and Edger look at each other, bewildered. Joe enters.

JOE MASCARI
(to Edger)
Hey partner.

Joe walks by. Jim holds out the case. Joe takes it. Continues to the table.

JIM PISCOTTI
Seems all my partner wants is another game with you three. A fair game this time. I don't understand it, but that's it.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
You want us to play him in a game?

EDGER
You know I don't play.

JOE MASCARI
Oh, I checked into you, Edger. You did play, back when you were George Simpson, but you weren't very good. Matter of fact, all three of you were pretty bad until you started rigging the outcomes. It doesn't matter, all I want is a fair game.

Joe sits at the table. Motions for a Edger to join them.

PAUL GERALD
This is stupid. We play. We win. You still kill us and take the money.

BOB FITZSIMMONS
It's a no win situation.

Edger holds his hand out to tell Bob and Paul to be quiet.

EDGER
Is that what you want? A rematch? Your ego needs to be filled again?

JOE MASCARI
Yeah, but not for my ego. It's time I did something worthwhile for somebody else.

EDGER

Should have figured. It's for the little lucky charm and her home for wayward waifs, isn't it? Heard she ran out of luck on the parkway. Shame. Such a nice piece of ass.

The comment gets to Joe. He catches himself quickly.

EDGER (cont'd)

And, if we win, we just leave. We have your word.

Joe looks back at Jim. Jim nods.

JOE MASCARI

That's right. And, if you lose, you can leave too.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Come on Edger, you don't believe them. We're dead no matter.

Edger looks at Joe. Turns to Jim. Ruminates. Sits down.

EDGER

Guess you got yourself a game.

Dealer sits at table. Opens pack of cards. Shuffles.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

This is stupid.

EDGER

What makes you think you can beat us this time?

JOE MASCARI

Just a hunch.

A KNOCK at the door. Lisa answers.

EDGER

Now who?

PAUL GERALD

Are you crazy, Edger. They're gonna kill us, no matter what.

Lisa takes a box from the bellhop. Tips him. Walks to table.

EDGER

No, we have Joe's word. He's just foolish enough to follow it.

Joe smirks.

EDGER (cont'd)
 Besides I own him. I owned him
 since the day he said yes.

Lisa grabs the deck out of the dealers hands. Dumps box containing packs of cards. Takes the original packs away. Takes the chips off the table.

JIM PISCOTTI
 Just in case the lighting in here
 causes the need for sunglasses. And
 we play with cash.

Dealer looks tentatively at Edger. He nods. The dealer opens the pack. Shuffles. Mascari opens his suitcase. Takes out cash.

JOE MASCARI
 Shall we get started?

The other players pick up suitcases. Open them. Dealer deals.

INT. ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Johnny sits in a chair. Colors in his book. His eyes rise and fall from the book to Sue. Marge sits in the other chair. The curtain, half pulled, blocks Sue from the door.

Marge sees Nick enter. Goes over to him at the door.

MARGE SANDLER
 How'd it go?

NICK DIMARI
 Guess okay. How's the kid doing?

MARGE SANDLER
 Johnny? He's a trooper. Just afraid
 what happens to him if Sue doesn't
 make it. He's so attached.
 (looks at Johnny)
 Doctor was in. Said this is the
 critical time. If they don't get a
 response soon, they don't think
 they ever will.

YOUNG JOHNNY (O.S.)
 She moved. She moved.

Stunned Nick looks at Johnny pointing at Sue.

MARGE SANDLER

Probably just an involuntary
twitch. Been getting them all day.
Gets the kid's hope up for nothing.

YOUNG JOHNNY

(stands, points, jumps)
She's moving. She's moving.

Nick and Marge hustle to the bed, Pull the curtain back.
Sue's fingers in both hands are twitching. Her eyes start to
rapidly flutter. He body starts to shake violently.

Nick runs to the door.

NICK DIMARI

I need a doctor in here right away.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - EVENING

Outside the window, the George Washington Bridge is lit up in
the evening. Dress at the game has become slightly disheveled
except for Joe. He looks calm with every hair in place.
Dealer puts down river card.

EDGER

You really think you can beat three
players teaming up on you? Ego's
even bigger then I thought.

JOE MASCARI

Bet forty-five.

Bob hesitates. Folds. Joe shows bluff face up. Annoys Bob.

JOE MASCARI (cont'd)

Been working on those tells.

EDGER

Tells don't matter, You're just a
born loser. Your firm. The people
that trusted you. The home.
Everything you touch dies off. Even
that talisman of yours.

Dealer shuffles. Deals. Joe stacks cash. Glares at Edger.

JOE MASCARI

You know why I'm gonna beat you?

Bob and Paul's eyes rise quickly from their cards to listen.

EDGER

Oh, this is gonna be good. Do tell.

JOE MASCARI

(looks at cards)

You remember the courtyard story?

(throws in cash)

Raise twenty-five.

EDGER

Yeah, I remember it. The one where you got your ass kicked?

Edger folds. Paul and Bob call. Flop out. Bob checks.

JOE MASCARI

Well, I never told you how it ended.

(puts out cash)

Beat thirty-five.

EDGER

You got the shit kicked out of you, what's there to tell?

JOE MASCARI

When I saw my father walk away, I didn't know what to make of it. I was alone and scared.

PAUL GERALD

(hesitates)

Call

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Fold

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Young Joe, on the ground looks up at his father leaving, the money and the big kid between them.

JOE MASCARI (V.O.)

My dad was always trying to get across these hard lessons of life, but this one? I had no idea.

Joe gathers his strength. Gets up. Jumps on the boy's back. The boy throws him off. Joe falls to the ground.

BIGGER COURTYARD BOY

(MOS)

Stay down.

JOE MASCARI (V.O.)
I really thought I might die. I
couldn't go home and face my dad
empty-handed and there was no way I
was gonna win.

The boy turns. Starts towards the money. Joe scrambles.
Sweeps the boy's legs out from under him.

JOE MASCARI (V.O.)
Either way I'd be dead. So, I
figured I'd die an honorable way.
Make my dad proud.

The boy kicks Joe off of his leg. Joe gets up. Charges him
again. The boy shoves him to the ground.

JOE MASCARI (V.O.)
Suddenly, I felt free. Knowing the
outcome was basically
predetermined, there was no worry.
No fear. Bet sixty-five.

The boy leans over Joe. Delivers a right that sends Joe
rolling over. The boy stands over Joe in a threatening pose.
He looks to his friends. They look away embarrassed.

Joe feels his bleeding lip. Looks at blood on his hand.

JOE MASCARI (V.O.)
So, I kept getting up. Over and
over, until finally...

The boy turns to the money. Joe gets up. Yells. (MOS)
Charges. The boy steps out of Joe's way. Joe crashes into the
fence.

Boy takes one step toward the money. Joe stands defiantly in
his way.

The boy turns to his friends. They shake their heads. Turn to
leave. The boy stares at Joe. Stares at the money. Relents.
Turns. Walks off with his friends.

Exhausted, Joe exhales. Sinks to the base of the fence.
Smiles. Reaches for money.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - PENTHOUSE - EVENING - BACK TO PRESENT
DAY

Dealer puts down the river. Joe's look becomes cautious.

EDGER

So you're a martyr that a kid took pity on. In my book, you still got your ass kicked. Same loser then as now.

JOE MASCARI

Check.

(to Edger)

You're missing the whole lesson.

Paul mulls over his decision. Counts his remaining money.

PAUL GERALD

I'm all in.

JOE MASCARI

I thought it was about facing my fears, but it wasn't. Then last week it hit me.

(ruminates, looks at cards)

No matter how many times you knock me down. No matter how bad you beat me up. No matter how big I fuck up.

(shows top hand)

Call. Nuts. It's not over 'til I say it's over.

The confidence sags off of Edger's face.

INT. SAILBOAT GALLEY - AFTERNOON

JOE'S POV - Joe walks down the steps of the boat into the galley. He opens the fridge. Takes out a pack of ground meat. Looks at the date. Tosses it in the garbage. Grabs another.

INT. THE REGIS HOTEL - EVENING - FLASHBACK

PENTHOUSE

Game has broken. Edger sits on the sofa. Jim, .45 on the table, counts, bands the money. Joe packs it in suitcases. Lisa sits by the desk.

EDGER

You really think this is gonna quench that thirst of yours? Fill that hole? This is only the start. The cravings will just get greater and greater. You'll never satisfy the beast.

JOE MASCARI
 Made a promise. Run's over. I'm
 done.

EDGER
 (chuckles)
 If I had a dime every time I heard
 that.

Jim grabs four packs of banded money. Goes to Lisa. Hands her
 the money.

JOE MASCARI
 Get as far away as you can. Start
 new.

Lisa, tears in her eyes, hugs Joe. Gives him a huge kiss.

EDGER
 (disgusted)
 Two fucking losers.

Joe looks at Edger. Looks at Lisa.

LISA
 I'm so sorry --

JOE MASCARI
 -- Didn't force me to do anything I
 didn't want.

Lisa looks at Edger. Heads to the door.

EDGER
 You know there's no place far
 enough.

Joe returns to the table. Jim hands Joe the .45. Takes two
 suitcases. Leaves two for Joe.. Heads toward the door.

JIM PISCOTTI
 Hundred and fifty percent in twelve
 hours. You got a gift. If you ever
 need a backer.

JOE MASCARI
 Like I said, I made a promise.

JIM PISCOTTI
 (at door)
 Do whatever you want with the
 trash. I got your back.

Jim leaves. Joe picks up the suitcases. Heads to the door.

EDGER

So what now, Joe? You just leave
and the world suddenly becomes a
happy place.

JOE MASCARI

(at door)

Something like that.

EDGER

It's not over. It'll never be over
between guys like you and me.

Joe smirks. Sees Edger's fedora on the stand next to the door. Edger sees what he's looking at. Takes one step forward in a defiant motion.

Joe smiles. Reaches for the hat.

EDGER (cont'd)

Don't even think about it. That's
my fucking lucky hat and you know
it. You'll never get out alive with
that hat.

Joe puts the hat on. Edger continues his rant.

EDGER (cont'd)

You can't leave. Not with my hat.
No. Get back here. This isn't over.
I...

Joe smiles. Tips the hat. Leaves.

Edger's voice trails off as he slumps to the sofa, a beaten man.

INT. SAILBOAT - GALLEY - AFTERNOON - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOE'S POV - Joe rolls the meat. Flattens out three burgers. Place them on a grilling pan. Places them in griller.

EXT. THE REGIS HOTEL - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Through the glass doors, an angry and worried Edger storms through the lobby. Anxiously looks around. He exits.

Outside the hotel Edger looks around searching. A taxi pulls up. The back door opens. Bob is in the back seat with Paul in the front.

BOB FITZSIMMONS

Get in.

Edger gets in. The taxi pulls away.

Watching the car pull away, Joe and Detontas appear out of the shadows.

JOE MASCARI

You think he has any idea?

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

He will in about an hour.

JOE MASCARI

Well, at least he won't be able to prey on suckers like me anymore.

AGENT FRED DETONTAS

(extends hand)

I don't think anybody thinks you're a sucker anymore.

Nick drives up next to them. Passenger window down.

NICK DIMARI

It's Sue. Get in.

Joe gives Detontas a smile that says, "Thanks." They shake. Joe gets in the car. Speeds off. Detontas watches.

INT. SAILBOAT - GALLEY - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOE'S POV - Joe carefully places the burgers on the three buns. Grabs three sodas from the fridge. Picks up the tray. Starts out of the galley.

INT. AIRPORT HANGER - EVENING - FLASHBACK

A private jet in a hanger at Teterboro airport. A young ASIAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT stands at the foot of the steps to the plane.

A taxi pulls up. Edger, Bob and Paul get out. Nervously approach the steps. Constantly look behind them.

ASIAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Good evening gentlemen. If we're all here.

She makes a hand gesture toward the steps. The three men hustle up the steps and into the plane.

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - EVENING - FLASHBACK

The flight attendant help Edger, Bob and Paul buckle themselves in. She sits in front of them. Relieved, the men look at each other. Exhale. They relax as the plane starts to taxi.

PILOT (O.S.)
 (intercom, Asian accent)
 Good evening gentlemen. As this will be a long flight, just sit back, relax and enjoy. We will be making a number of refueling stops and then it's on to mainland China. Enjoy.

Confused, Edger, Bob and Paul look at each other.

EDGER
 China? What the --

Confusion turns to fear. Panicked, they try to unbuckle their seat belts. Suddenly, all three looks up to see the flight attendant in the aisle with a 9mm pointed at them.

ASIAN FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 If you would, please leave your seat belts alone. We wouldn't want you getting hurt before your arrival. That would upset Mr. Wang greatly.
 (hesitates)
 Oh, Mr. Fitzsimmons, Mr Wang says your dick's a lot shorter then you think.
 (sits down)
 And Mr. Gerald, you may like to check out the menu. Mr. Wang made sure there are a number of Chinese delicacies available, but no raw fish.

Fearful and panicked, Edger, Bob and Paul give in to their fate. Sit back, beaten men. Plane takes off.

EXT SAILBOAT DECK - MORNING - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JOE'S POV - Joe exits the cabin to the ship's deck. Walks around the housing to the front of the boat. Sees Sue smiling at him and sitting next to a happy Johnny in his life vest.

END JOE'S POV

FEMALE TV REPORTER (V.O.)

In a total surprise development, Interpol agents arrested accused financial scammer Frank O'Brien in southern France. Mr. O'Brien admitted to running the entire operation himself, exonerating Joe Mascari more than one year after he was found guilty. Mr. O'Brien will be extradited to the United States later this week.

Joe serves the burgers. Sits between the two. Johnny hugs Joe. Joe turns. Kisses Sue.

BEGIN QUICK MONTAGE

MALE TV REPORTER (V.O.)

In another surprise twist, Joe Mascari, recently refunded a large portion of his fines and forfeitures, has donated the majority of it to the smaller clients of his former firm.

- Nick wipes his hands on his apron. Stands outside pizzeria with banner that reads: DIMARI'S PIZZA NEW FOURTH LOCATION NOW OPEN.

- Scaffolding and construction material around the St. Jude Home. Marge in hard hat directs foreman.

Sign reads: CURRENT RENOVATIONS FOR THE ST. JUDE HOME FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN.

END QUICK MONTAGE

EXT. SAILBOAT - DECK - MORNING

Sail up. Joe behind the wheel with Johnny. Sue sunbathes, smiles nearby.

View pans out to an overhead of the sailboat in the middle of the Galapagos Islands.