

TRICK OF THE TRADE

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

HARRY CARTWRIGHT (11), a thin wisp of a boy, and SUSIE CLEMONS (11), postcard pretty, sit shoulder to shoulder and eat their lunch on the back steps of an old wood frame schoolhouse. Other classmates run around the schoolyard or eat their lunch.

SUPER: OKLAHOMA, MARCH, 1935

HARRY
Mrs. McCain told me my eyes look
like jars of honey.

SUSIE
Jars of honey? Why would she tell
you that?

HARRY
(shrugs)
I don't know...do my eyes look like
honey to you? Like bee's honey?

Susie leans over and peers in Harry's eyes.

SUSIE
I guess. Hard to tell with this sun.
They're pretty, no matter the color.

Harry smiles and takes a bite from his sandwich. A long pause.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
Harry...

HARRY
Yeah?

SUSIE
I need to tell you somethin'.

A worried look from Harry.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
My parents lost our farm. Dad says
somethin' 'bout the bank takin' it.
We have to move in with my Aunt and
Uncle down in Texas.

Harry is crestfallen.

HARRY

What? No!

Harry stares at the ground in dismay.

SUSIE

I'm sorry...

HARRY

This stinks! When do you leave?

SUSIE

Two weeks from tomorrow.

Harry throws his sandwich in his lunch box in disgust. Tears form in Susie's eyes.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Can you do me a favor?

Susie gestures over to the street. A PHOTOGRAPHER with a large box camera makes his way to the school.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

School pictures are being taken today.

HARRY

(puzzled)

I don't understand.

SUSIE

I want you to give me your school picture, so I'll always have something to remember you by.

Harry ponders the idea.

INT. HARRY'S HOUSE / KITCHEN -- NEXT MORNING

Harry sits at a small dining table with his father, PETE CARTWRIGHT (42), cantankerous, with a weather-beaten face.

The two of them eat in silence, until--

HARRY

Dad? Can I buy a class photo from school?

PETE

A photo? Why the hell you need a damn photo?

HARRY
 I just need it for...
 (beat)
 ...can I just have a quarter for
 one, please?

PETE
 A quarter! Hell, son, I can barely
 put two bits together to buy a piece
 of rancid meat for us to eat! And
 you want to waste money on a stupid
 photo? No sir!

HARRY
 Dad, please! It's important to me!

PETE
 I said no! We can't afford it!

HARRY
 But--

His dad slams his fist hard on the table.

PETE
 Are you deaf, boy? I'll hear no more
 of it!

Harry looks likes he's been punched in the gut. He leaps
 from his chair and races out of the house.

PETE (CONT'D)
 Harry!

EXT. HARRY'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Harry runs out the back door into a wheat field that abuts
 the rear of the house. Pete follows him out the door.

KARL
 Harry! Get back here, boy!

EXT. WHEAT FIELD

Harry continues to run through the field. The wheat shafts
 SLAP Harry in the face. Tears fall from his eyes.

EXT. HARRY'S HOUSE

Pete moves quickly to the edge of the wheat field.

PETE'S P.O.V.--Harry's head is barely seen as he disappears
 into the tall crop.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD

Harry runs even faster now. Pete calls after him, but the voice grows fainter.

Harry runs until he reaches the end of the field, then climbs over a barbed-wire fence and runs along an adjoining road, past a mileage marker which indicates: "Ardmore 1 mi."

EXT. TOWN -- LATER

Harry walks through the small town of ARDMORE, a place hit hard by the Great Depression. Many businesses are closed, with the windows boarded up or busted out. PANHANDLERS in ragged clothes wander the streets looking for handouts.

Harry hurries past THE SWINGING DOOR, a bar where several vagabond men stand around and drink low-grade whiskey.

One of them throws a bottle at Harry's feet, where it shatters violently. The men laugh. Harry runs away quickly as the tears return to his face.

EXT. PHARMACY -- MOMENTS LATER

Harry comes upon PORTER'S PHARMACY, a mom and pop soda fountain and drugstore. He stares inside for a few seconds.

A few people sit at the dining counter and in booths.

INT. PHARMACY

Harry walks in and goes to a pharmacy aisle that abuts the dining section. He pretends to look at the toy collection.

A SODA JERK (25) behind the counter cleans shake glasses, while a WAITRESS (40) stands at a cash register at the end of the counter. She takes some money from a customer, puts it in the register.

The customer leaves. The waitress takes the dirty dishes from his table to the kitchen.

ON HARRY. He appears to formulate a plan in his mind, and looks around to see if anyone is watching him.

A phone rings at the far end of the counter. The soda jerk walks away from Harry's direction, his back to the register.

Harry seizes on the opportunity. He inches his way to the register. A moment's hesitation, then he reaches up to try and open it when--A LARGE HAND suddenly grabs him from behind and steers him in the direction of the front door.

Harry GASPS audibly.

ROSCOE THORNTON (34) has a handful of Harry's shirt. He is a slim but muscular man with wavy brown hair and two days growth of beard. A cigarette hangs from his lips.

ROSCOE

What do you think you're doin', boy?

Harry doesn't answer. Roscoe leads him outside.

EXT. PHARMACY -- CONTINUOUS

Roscoe towers over Harry, who is a good two feet shorter than him. Harry trembles in his presence.

ROSCOE

Are you stupid or somethin'?

HARRY

I...I was just lookin'--

ROSCOE

I know exactly what you were doin', kid. You weren't payin' attention. You would've been caught before you got three feet.

HARRY

You gonna tell on me?

ROSCOE

Tell on you? Please. I ain't got nothin' against helpin' yourself out when times are tough.

Roscoe takes a long drag from his cigarette, then blows the smoke in Harry's direction.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

But I do have a problem with bein' stupid about it.

HARRY

I just needed a couple of quarters, that's all.

Roscoe laughs derisively.

ROSCOE

A couple of quarters?
(MORE)

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

Son, you don't take a risk like that for only a couple of quarters! You need to pick your targets a little better. Risk versus reward. That's the name of the game. Risk versus reward...

Roscoe tosses his finished cigarette into the street, then puts another in his mouth and lights it.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

What's your name, kid?

HARRY

Harry Cartwright...what's yours?

ROSCOE

(grinning)

Well, here in Minnesota, I go by Roscoe Thornton. In Kansas, I was Ralph Driscoll. In Arkansas, Louis Simmons.

HARRY

Why so many different names?

ROSCOE

Well...when you do what I do, you need to be one step ahead of the law.

HARRY

(suitably impressed)

Wow...what do you do?

ROSCOE

Hmmm. Well, a bit of pickpocketing. Some shoplifting. A con here and there. Whatever it takes to buy some smokes and a shot and get some bread on the table. Got a wife and kids in Nebraska and I gotta provide for 'em. I try to send 'em a little bit when I can, but honest jobs are hard to come by these days, so...

Roscoe points at a bench.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

C'mon, let's sit down.

They both sit. Harry studies Roscoe intently.

HARRY

So...you ever been caught?

ROSCOE

Nope. Had some close calls, but I've always managed to avoid the law. You, on the other hand, would have been nabbed before you had even made it to the front door.

HARRY

Can you teach me? I'm a quick learner, I swear!

ROSCOE

Teach you?

(shakes his head)

Harry, what I do is an art. Took me years to perfect it. You don't just race in, grab some money, and race out. You have to build the deception, the illusion...make people think one thing but see something else. That's the trick of the trade.

Roscoe reaches in to his front shirt pocket. He pulls out a silver dollar. Harry's eyes light up.

HARRY

Whoa...

ROSCOE

For example, take this silver dollar. Lifted it off one of those drunks in front the Swinging Door. Dullards and drunks are easy targets, unlike sharp-eyed kids like you.

He hands the coin to Harry.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

Put that coin in the front pocket of your shirt.

Harry does as he's told.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

Now, I'll have that coin back in less than three minutes, and you'll never know it.

HARRY

No way!

Roscoe smiles. He pulls a flask out of his back pocket and takes a long swig of the contents.

ROSCOE
Ahhh...want a sip?

Roscoe starts to hand the flask over to Harry, who looks at it nervously. Harry slowly reaches for it, but then--

ROSCOE (CONT'D)
Wait a second...how old are you?

HARRY
Eleven.

ROSCOE
Eleven! Are you kiddin' me?

Roscoe DROPS the flask on the ground in front of Harry.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)
Whoops!

Harry and Roscoe both bend over at the same time to grab the flask. As they do, Roscoe reaches in front of Harry with his right arm, while his left arm slides underneath his right and into Harry's pocket as Harry is bent over.

Harry picks up the flask and hands it to Roscoe. As he does, he sees Roscoe twirling the silver coin in front of him.

HARRY
Holy cow! How did you do that?

ROSCOE
(laughs)
It didn't even take a minute before
I had this from you!

HARRY
I can do better, promise I can!

Roscoe rubs Harry's head, then slips the coin into the front pocket of his shirt.

ROSCOE
Harry, you're better off not gettin'
mixed up with a two-bit con man like
me. Need to finish your schoolin',
get an honest job. You'll sleep easier
at night, that's for sure.

Harry gets a crestfallen look on his face.

HARRY

But I need twenty-five cents by tomorrow! They're taking the school pictures and I need the money to buy a picture to give to my girlfriend Susie! She's moving to Texas and--

ROSCOE

Whoa, whoa. Hold on, slick. *That's* why you were tryin' to break into that register? Of all the numb nut things...Son, rule number one in my line of work is that you don't break the law because of some dumb broad. Because let me tell you, it ain't worth it. Not by a long shot.

HARRY

But don't you do that?

ROSCOE

Do what?

HARRY

Steal because of your wife and kids.

ROSCOE

What? No! That's different!

HARRY

(perplexed)
Why?

ROSCOE

It just is, you dumb kid. You'll understand when you get older.

HARRY

Please--I'll do anything.
(thinks)
I can be a lookout!

ROSCOE

(mainly to himself)
And rule number two is, you don't get mixed up with kids. They're plain bad luck.

Roscoe stands up, annoyed.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

Forget about her kid. You'll be better off, I promise ya.

He starts to walk away.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)
Oh--and forget you met me, too, you hear?

HARRY
(calls after Roscoe)
Please!

ROSCOE
Go home, Harry.

EXT. CITY STREET -- LATER

Roscoe looks in the window of a BANK that sits on one corner of a busy intersection. Suddenly Harry appears at his side.

HARRY
(excitedly)
Gonna knock off this bank?

Roscoe almost jumps out of his skin.

ROSCOE
What the...? Don't you have some rows to plow, farmboy? I thought I told you to scram!

HARRY
Let me help you just once--I promise I'll never bother you again!

ROSCOE
No way, runt. Now beat it!

Harry looks in the bank window. He points to an armed POLICE OFFICER (45) standing near a teller window.

HARRY
You let me help you just once--with anything--and I won't tell that cop in the bank that you stole off some drunk guy.

ROSCOE
(startled)
You son-of-a-bitch! You pint-size, connivin' son-of-a-bitch!

A long pause. Roscoe then GROANS with helplessness.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

Jesus. A con man getting sucker-punched by an eleven year old.

(thinks)

Okay. If I let you do something, *just this once*, you promise to leave me the hell alone?

Harry nods vigorously.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

And you'll do everything I say, exactly the way I tell you to do it?

HARRY

Yes! I promise!

ROSCOE

And you won't say a word to anyone, not even your friends at school? Not even the love of your life Susie?

HARRY

Cross my heart!

Harry and Roscoe STARE HARD at each other.

HARRY (CONT'D)

And in return, you'll give me that silver coin you showed me earlier?

ROSCOE

What? You nuts? I thought you only needed a quarter! No deal, sport!

HARRY

Okay.

Harry heads towards the front door of the bank. Roscoe knows exactly why.

ROSCOE

Dammit, Harry!

Roscoe grabs Harry by the arm and drags him back.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

You're a little prick, you know that?

Harry smiles. Roscoe looks again inside the bank.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Okay. Listen, here's what we do.

Roscoe bends over and talks close to Harry. Harry nods on several occasions as Roscoe points and gestures.

INT. BANK -- MOMENTS LATER

HATTIE DONALDSON (66), a rotund woman, stands at the teller window. The bank teller, MADELINE JENKINS (25), counts out several small bills, lays them on the counter before Hattie.

ON THE BANK WINDOW--Roscoe takes notice of Hattie.

MADLINE

Here you go...eight, nine, ten dollars--
(now some coins)
and twenty-two cents. Will there
be anything else, ma'am?

HATTIE

No, thank you. Have a good day.

Hattie heads for the exit. She stops to talk with an employee along the way.

EXT. BANK -- CONTINUOUS

Roscoe motions to Harry, who stands near the entrance.

ROSCOE

All right. Here comes our mark.
Old fat lady in the flower dress.
You ready?

HARRY

(nods)
Yeah.

ROSCOE

Go stand a few feet away. When I
take a drag on my cigarette, you
make your move and take the fall
right at the entrance, got it?

HARRY

Got it.

ROSCOE

(to himself)
I can't believe I'm doing this.

Harry walks several few feet past the entrance. Roscoe keeps an eye on Hattie as she makes her way to the exit.

Roscoe takes a drag on his cigarette. Seeing that, Harry makes his move toward the bank entrance.

ON THE BANK DOOR -- Hattie exits and is shocked when Harry takes a spill right across Hattie's feet and falls face first to the concrete. He cries out in agony.

HARRY
OOOWWWWWWWW!!!! My leg!!

Hattie's face registers concern. She bends over Harry to check on his condition.

HATTIE
Oh my goodness, child! Are you okay?

HARRY
(grimaces)
Ahhhhhhhg!! I...I twisted my knee!!

HATTIE
Can you stand up?

HARRY
I don't know...it...it hurts so much!!

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

The police officer has noticed Roscoe. The officer watches as Roscoe moves toward Hattie and Harry. The officer walks over to a window to see what is happening.

EXT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

Hattie struggles to get down on one knee. As she does, she sets her purse down next to her.

HATTIE
Oh, young man...I don't know if I can help you get up...let me get someone in the bank to help!

ROSCOE (O.S.)
No need for that, ma'am. Allow me.

Roscoe comes over, then bends down next to Hattie. He fakes concern for Harry.

ROSCOE (CONT'D)
Hey kid, where's it hurt?

HARRY
My leg...oh, geez!

A MAN IN A SUIT and HIS WIFE walk by and stop to see what is happening. A COUPLE OF TEENAGE GIRLS also stop and watch.

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

The police officer makes his way along the window towards the front entrance. He can't make out what's happening.

EXT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

Roscoe feels around on Harry's knee with his right hand for a few seconds.

ROSCOE
Well, it feels okay...doesn't appear to be broken...Probably just a sprain. What do you say? Think you can stand?

HARRY
(nods)
Maybe...

MAN IN SUIT
Here, let me help.

The man helps Harry up. While Hattie is distracted, Roscoe swiftly snatches Hattie's purse and slides it under his untucked shirt.

MAN IN SUIT (CONT'D)
Are you okay, son?

HARRY
I think...yeah, I think I'll be okay.

He walks around, a little bit gingerly.

ROSCOE
Good boy. Your parents around to take you home?

HARRY
(points down the street)
My dad's over at the pharmacy.

ROSCOE
Why don't I walk you over there, just to make sure you're okay.

HARRY

Thanks.

Roscoe turns to leave. His left arm holds the purse in place under his shirt. Harry follows after him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(to Hattie)

Oh, and thank you, ma'am.

HATTIE

(smiles)

Certainly, son. You take care now.

Roscoe and Harry are about five steps away when the Bank door opens. The police officer steps outside.

ON HATTIE. She looks down, realizes her purse is missing.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Roscoe and Harry continue up the street. Suddenly:

HATTIE (O.S.)

MY PURSE! MY PURSE IS MISSING!

ROSCOE

(in a low voice)

Just keep walkin'...don't look back...

Hattie is in a panic. The police officer looks around, and spots Roscoe and Harry as they walk away.

HATTIE

Someone help! My heart medicine is in there!! And my money! Dear Lord!

MAN IN SUIT

Are you sure you didn't leave it in the bank?

HATTIE

No! I sat it down right next to me--

She points down the street at Harry.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

--when I bent down to help that boy!

The police officer has heard enough. He quickly follows after Roscoe and Harry.

POLICE OFFICER
HEY!! YOU TWO!!

EXT. CITY STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Roscoe grimaces.

ROSCOE
Dammit! Knew you were bad luck, kid!

POLICE OFFICER
STOP!!

Roscoe takes a quick look over his shoulder, then takes off in a sprint up the street, dodging people as he runs. The police officer runs after him. Harry doesn't move.

Roscoe takes an immediate left between two parked cars in an attempt to run across the street. He shoots out quickly into the street from between the cars. As he does, he looks back to see how far away the police officer is.

In his haste, he fails to see a pickup truck moving rapidly down the street, and he runs right into its path.

TIGHT ON HARRY. A sickening THUD as body and truck collide.

HARRY
NO!!!

Roscoe's body is sent a good twenty feet down the street, ending up close to where Harry is standing. As Roscoe's body careens to a stop, Harry notices something roll away from Roscoe and right to the sidewalk where Harry stands.

A crowd of people rush into the street and surround the body.

The police officer runs down the middle of the street towards the crowd. The TRUCK DRIVER (45), stops the vehicle. He jumps out YELLING FRANTICALLY at the police officer.

BUS DRIVER
DID YOU SEE THAT? HE RAN RIGHT IN
FRONT OF ME! OH, SWEET JESUS!

POLICE OFFICER
Yeah, yeah! I saw it! Stay there!

The police officer fights through the crowd. He bends over the now dead Roscoe.

Harry looks down. On the ground in front of him, the SILVER DOLLAR COIN. His eyes widen.

He looks around, sees that everyone's attention is on the accident, and not on him.

Harry reaches down, picks up the coin, and stuffs it in his pocket. He takes one last look at the crumpled, bloody body of Roscoe, then quickly departs up the street.

EXT. RESIDENCE - DAY

Susie and Harry sit in the front yard of her parents' home. They watch as the last of the family's belongings are loaded into a pickup truck. Sad expressions on their faces. SUSIE'S DAD waves to her.

SUSIE'S DAD

Susie! Time to go!

Susie gives Harry a quick hug, and turns to leave with tears in her eyes. She climbs into the truck, along with her parents, and the truck slowly pulls away.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

As the truck makes its way away from the home, SUSIE'S MOM hands her daughter an envelope. Susie looks puzzled.

SUSIE

What's this?

SUSIE'S MOM

I don't know. Harry just said to give it to you after we'd left.

Susie quickly opens the envelope, and inside is the thing she wanted most of all--Harry's school picture.

INSERT: A small black and white head and shoulder's photo of a grinning Harry.

Susie climbs over her mom's lap and leans out the window, looking back to see Harry standing in the middle of the road. She waves frantically at him, but he fades into the distance with each passing second.

FADE OUT: