FADE IN: SERIES OF ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY

Exterior scenes of St. Louis, particularly the riverside industrial district. Even more important to establish the place is the time: end of summer, 1936. Election posters would help, with the Republican ones stressing such themes as "Burst the Roosevelt Bubble," "Save the American Way of Life," "Vote for Landon and Knox."

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

One of the most typical scenes of the day: a mass picket line outside a textile or shoe factory. And the picketing is anything but peaceful; the demonstrators are in direct conflict with the police, who are trying to keep an entrance open for strike-breakers. Whatever the general action, this small segment of struggle breaks off from it, and it is that our CAMERA picks up: some police chasing some
or some pickets chasing some strike-breakers, the one
pursuing the other up an alley with violent intent.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A couple of the pursuers catch up to the pursued and
them with clubs or other weapons. The fighting is
dirty and noisy.

INT. KITCHEN IN SLEAZY RESTAURANT NEAR RAILROAD

The eight men gathered here in a game of five-card stud
clearly removed from the struggle outside, even though
SOUNDS of it are very close, coming through window
on the alley. In fact the noise is so loud that the
of the hand in progress reacts in annoyance.

DEALER
Somebody shut the goddam window. Let
a man think.

The player nearest the window shuts it. The Dealer, who
owns the restaurant, is the talkative type of poker
Except for THE CINCINNATI KID, the other men at the
look like hoods of one sort or another: gunmen, labor
extortionists, what have you. The man who fancies
the toughest of them all is named DANNY, and he and The
have almost all the money on the table between them,
hundred dollars in front of each. No other player has
than a few dollars left, and now, as fifth cards are
there is about forty dollars in the pot. Only four men
left in the hand.

DEALER
Possible straight gets a --
(deals the card)
-- lovely little four.

FIRST PLAYER
On the last hand even, you couldn't
give me a break.

DEALER
I put the brakes on your straight,
didn't I?
(he laughs; no one
else does; he deals
to The Kid)
There you are, son, a gorgeous deuce.

KID
Thanks.

DEALER
(deals to Danny)
And our lucky friend from Chicago
gets a queen with his pair of sixes.
Little lady make you happy, Buster?

DANNY
Deal to yourself, clown.

DEALER
Dealer gives himself a --
(deals card and groans)
I might have known.
(to Danny)
Bet your sixes, Buster.

DANNY
I told you not to call me that.
(then as the dealer
turns away)
Cost you --
(counts out his money)
Ninety-four bucks.

DEALER
Biggest pot of the whole game, I got
to drop.

DANNY
(to First Player)
Interested?

FIRST PLAYER
Wouldn't call you if I had a pair
higher'n sixes. Which I ain't.

He turns over his cards, leaving it up to The Kid.

**KID**
Don't seem like he'd bet out without something better than the sixes, does it?
(fingers hole card as if to fold)
Cost me every cent I've won since yesterday afternoon.
(studies Danny's face)
But I tell you, I got this stubborn streak. Call the ninety-four dollars.

He counts out the money, which is almost all he has.

**DANNY**
(indignantly)
You can't have better than a pair of kings!

**KID**
Oh, I'm not claiming anything that fine.
(turns over an eight, making a pair of them)
Just enough to beat the pair of sixes.

**DANNY**
You seen my hole card, you bastard!
(indicating Dealer)
He was dealing them high.

Attending to first things first, The Kid has been pulling in total. The pot, adding it to his own stake, and pocketing the squarely in the face.

**DANNY**
You stole that dough.

**KID**
You better watch those loose lips of yours, you want to have any teeth left behind them -- Buster.
He stands up.

DANNY
You wouldn't of shelled out ninety-four bucks --

KID
I called you on account of I didn't think you had another pair or another six and I know a punk like you would get greedy and try and buy the last hand.

He walks off, disappearing through a door marked "MEN."

INT. MEN'S ROOM - THE KID AT MIRROR

He is waiting when the door opens abruptly, and Danny appears, his right hand in his coat pocket. The Kid's hand goes to his own pocket and as he whirls around, a straight razor appears in it, its blade snapped open. Pushing Danny to the wall with one hand, he keeps him pinned there with the razor in the other, while he bolts the door. Danny gets his right hand out of the pocket with a gun in it, but The Kid moves the razor blade against his neck.

KID
Drop it.

As the gun clatters to the floor, and the others force the door, The Kid takes a step backward to provide enough momentum, then swings at Danny's middle with his left, dropping him, then jumps up on the wash basin and wriggles his way out through a window.

SUPERIMPOSE: MAIN TITLES

Danny recovers his balance and his gun, unbolts the door just before it is smashed in, and runs with the others get out of the building and after The Kid.
EXT. ALLEY BACK OF RESTAURANT - DAY

The conflicting parties from the picket lines have moved on. The Kid drops from the window to the ground and starts to run toward the railroad yards. A few moments later, and four other poker players appear and run after him.

EXT. RAILROAD YARDS - DAY

The chase across the tracks goes on behind the Credits. The Kid's pursuers split into two groups to cut him off, and they seem to have succeeded in cornering him against a track on which a passenger train is bearing down, headed for station. His dubious chance of escape depends on his getting beyond this track in front of the train, which, with a burst of speed, he manages to accomplish just in time. The train divides The Kid from his pursuers, and we PAN train into the depot.

INT. UNION STATION, ST. LOUIS

The train slowly stops. Amid all the atmosphere of arrival in a day when the Pullman car was still the ultimate in travel, LANCEY HODGES appears on a platform, takes his bag from the Pullman porter and passes it on to a Red Cap before he has descended the steps. He walks with other passengers and Red Caps toward the center of the station.

EXT. UNION STATION - DAY

Shooting through the Meeting of the Rivers fountain across Market Street to the Romanesque building with its campanile.

EXT. UNION STATION - TAXI STAND - DAY
Lancey getting into a taxi.

THE CREDITS END

INT. TAXI - PROCESS - DAY

Lancey sits in serene repose in back, watching the sights go by. The HACKIE steals a couple of looks at him in the rear view mirror.

HACKIE
What you looking for, mister?

LANCEY
Do I have to be looking for something?

HACKIE
I can pretty much tell.

LANCEY
You can pretty much tell what?

HACKIE
Some guys come to town, I can tell if they're looking for something.

LANCEY
What do you think I'm looking for?

HACKIE
If you're looking for girls, I can fix you up.

LANCEY
I strongly doubt if you could fix me up. In that department.

HACKIE
Well what are you looking for?

LANCEY
You're looking for a clout in the head if you don't keep your face to the road.

EXT. PLUSH HOTEL - TAXI STAND - DAY

A doorman takes Lancey's suitcase as Lancey pays the Hackie
and walks into the hotel. A SECOND HACKIE whose cab is at the curb reacts to seeing Lancey and steps forward.

SECOND HACKIE
Hey, you know who that is?

HACKIE
No. Who?

But the second hackie has followed Lancey into the hotel.

INT. LOBBY OF PLUSH HOTEL
Lancey crosses to the desk to register as the Second Hackie goes to a row of phone booths and enters one. He dials his eyes on Lancey registering.

SECOND HACKIE
(into phone)
Shorty? Want to hear who just checked into the Park Sherman... Yes, you do. Lancey Hodges.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - ATTENDANT
He is talking on the phone while he hands out score sheets and shoes to some bowlers. He is just as excited by the report as the Hackie is.

ATTENDANT
The Kid know?

INT. BAR - FEATURING THE BARTENDER
He is talking on the telephone behind the bar.

BARTENDER
Somebody sure as hell ought to tell The Kid.
(hangs up)
Lancey Hodges is in town.

INT. BAR - CLOSE SHOT - DRINKING MAN
He reacts to the news in a big way. CAMERA PANS to another
DRINKING MAN, who is equally impressed. They exchange looks.

**FIRST DRINKING MAN**
Kid's been laying for him a long time.

**INT. BARBER SHOP - BARBER AND CUSTOMER**

**BARBER**
You ask me, The Kid'll go after him as soon as he hears.

**CUSTOMER**
Who's got a better right?

**INT. HOBAN'S POOL ROOM - HOBAN AND THE SHOOTER**
We are in the front room where the pool tables are. Through an open door in b.g., we can see the unadvertised but unconcealed other activity of the establishment: a poker game in progress.

**HOBAN**
You going to tell The Kid, Shooter?

**SHOOTER**
Hell, I can't not tell him.

**HOBAN**
It's where he's been headed for years.

The Kid enters the place through the front door, still a little dishevelled from his escape.

**KID**
(in greeting)
Hey!

**HOBAN**
What you say, Kid?

**KID**
Hey, Hoban.

**SHOOTER**
Where you been? Boys been holding a chair for you in back.
**KID**
Business opportunity come along.
Something too good to pass up.

**SHOOTER**
Turn a profit?

**KID**
Yeah, did okay. Except I almost had it took back.

**HOBAN**
Oh, one of those.

**SHOOTER**
(concerned)
You been in too many rough ones lately, Kid. You can't go on forever, coming out in one piece.

**KID**
I got to build my stake, Aren't enough chances in this town to let one go.

**HOBAN**
You're too good, that's your trouble. People who know you're the Cincinnati Kid, they don't want to sit down with you --

**KID**
For nickels and dimes... Thing is I've about used up St. Louis.

**SHOOTER**
(nodding)
The streets are getting full of guys you've hustled.

**KID**
Been thinking about Miami. There's nothing to keep me here.

**SHOOTER**
(after a moment)
The hell there isn't
(as the Kid looks at him)
Lancey Hodges' in town.

**KID**
Yeah?
The Man himself, here in St. Louis --
I might just stick around Shooter.

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

Lancey is on the phone, sitting on the bed.

LANCEY

(into phone)
Mr. Schlaegel? How are you? And your enchanting wife?... Tomorrow is quite convenient... I generally prefer stud but you name it... Your stakes are my pleasure, sir... Thank you, why don't we make it after lunch? My diet these days is enough to spoil anyone else's appetite... A pleasure, sir. Please remember me to your charming wife.

He hangs up and some of the strength seems to go out of him, as if he had been through too long a sustained effort.
His eyes show that he is feeling pain and he breathes deeply.

EXT. HAROLD STREET - DAY

Harold Street leads to the river and we follow The Kid and The Shooter as they walk down it in the gathering dusk.

SHOOTER

(lightning a cigar)
I been seeing it coming for a long time, Kid. Long time.

KID
I ain't exactly been hiding it.

SHOOTER
No, you ain't been hiding it.

KID
Well I got to know.

SHOOTER
Sure, you got to know. We all got to know.
KID
Sometime or other we got to find out how much juice we got.

SHOOTER
That's why I had to tell you.

KID
You ever sit down with him?

SHOOTER
Yes, I have.

They walk along, The Shooter pursing his lips thoughtfully.

KID
Well, what happened?

SHOOTER
Nothing. Nothing at all.

KID
You lost.

SHOOTER
I didn't lose. I'm too good to lose when I set my mind to it. I play poker a certain way, Kid. I've had my Lancey Hodges. Only with me it was Whistling Sam Magee to New Orleans.

KID
(respectfully)
I heard about him.

SHOOTER
Well then you know it all... about 20 years ago it was, maybe more.

KID
What happened?

SHOOTER
Why, I lost it. It dried me up on the inside for a long, a very long time.

KID
Yeah?
I been where I'm going, know what I mean?
The Kid nods as they come to where an old wooden pier extends into the river. Along the river bank can be seen a small portion of the mile-long Hooverville that stretches up and down the Mississippi.

EXT. PIER

They walk out on the pier and eventually stop, look out at the river, watching the working boats. They have their thoughts; The Shooter smoking his cigar.

KID
You think I'm ready?

SHOOTER
(after some time, several seconds of thoughtful puffing)
Kid, I don't think you're ready.

KID
(quickly)
Oh.

SHOOTER
But you're not going to take my word for it, are you? Are you now?

KID
No, I ain't. I can't.

SHOOTER
I know, I know. You got to find out for yourself.

KID
I don't figure to take him right away. But if I can hang in there long enough, I can outlast him. If I can outlast him, I got a chance. You admit that, don't you, that I got a chance?

SHOOTER
I already said I didn't think you were ready.

**KID**
Did you think you were ready when you sat down with Whistling Sam Magee?

**SHOOTER**
Kid, I thought I was the best stud poker player in the world. I'm telling you now, I thought I was the best.

**KID**
Well, I don't think I'm just a cocky square with a fair hand with cards. I got something.

**SHOOTER**
No, you ain't no cocky square. And you probably got something.

**KID**
Okay. And I ain't saying that you was either when you sat down with Whistling Sam Magee.

**SHOOTER**
If you got the stuff, being a little cocky don't hurt you none.

**KID**
Well, would you say if I got any chance at all?

**SHOOTER**
This much of a chance. If Lancey is not right. If he's got a cold, or his stomach ulcer is acting up, or something like that.

**KID**
But then everybody'd see he wasn't right and it wouldn't prove nothing. Listen, we got to have it understood. If he's not right, we call it off till he is.

**SHOOTER**
You're set on a real showdown, aren't you? Your mind's all made up.

They start back off the pier.
KID
I got to. You said yourself I got to. I'm overdue.

SHOOTER
Yeah, you been around a long time -- I was a lot younger than you when I went up against Whistling Sam -- But you'd be kinda young too, to be The Man.

KID
I gotta find out.

SHOOTER
(after a pause)
Want me to set it up?

KID
(gratefully)
I wish you would, Shooter Man.

SHOOTER
All right.

KID
Hey, what if he turns me down?

SHOOTER
He won't, the way I'll spread the word. He'll have to take you on, someone in your class. If he ducked it, that'd make you The Man.

KID
You think he knows I'm around?

SHOOTER
He can smell meat like you a mile and a half up the river. He knows you're around and he'll sit down with you. You want to butt heads with The Man, I'll set it up.

Ahead, on the levee, CHRISTIAN is seen waiting for The Kid. She has not yet seen them as they approach off the pier.

SHOOTER
There's your woman.
KID
I wouldn't want to wait around too long. I want to get in and get it over with.

SHOOTER
He must of come to St. Louis for a big money game. I'll probably get asked do I want to deal it for them. And however long that takes, he'll have to rest up for you.

KID
Oh, well, if he's tooling a dollar, I can understand that. Sure.

SHOOTER
You got much of a stake?

KID
Close to three grand.

SHOOTER
Work on it. But three grand will give you a ride and even if you don't win, why you'll come away with a good idea of what you're made of. But once you go in Kid you can't quit. You get that straight right now. Two of you go in and only one of you can come out.

Christian sees them and moves toward them.

KID
Well, school's out. I damn sure don't want no lessons. I want everything he's got.

SHOOTER
It's the only way to be, Kid.

Shooter turns away abruptly as Christian arrives, giving her a brief nod.

SHOOTER
See you.

The Kid takes Christian's arm automatically; he watches
Shooter walk way down Harold Street. He and Christian in another direction. She is humming a mountain tune.

CHRISTIAN
When we leaving town, Kid? This week?

KID
No, I won't be ready. Not for a while.

CHRISTIAN
I thought --

KID
Might even turn out we don't go.

She is surprised by this and, in her own hesitant way, curious.

CHRISTIAN
You must feel different about it than you did Saturday.

He looks at her fondly and, for one fleeting moment of weakness, is actually tempted to tell her about Lancey. But it is too sharp a break with tradition.

KID
Yeah, I'm feeling a little different.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S BEDROOM

It is night and the room is lit only by a single lamp where Christian sits in her nightgown on a chair by the window, f.g. eyes He catches afraid
act like a cat. You're not bothering me.

CHRISTIAN
You want me to turn out the light?

KID
No. I'm overtired, that's why I can't sleep.
(sits up and swings his feet to the floor)
Why can't you sleep?

CHRISTIAN
(lightly)
Undertired, I guess. If a person rests all day, she doesn't have much to rest up from at night.
(stands up)
Why don't you have a nice hot bath? I could give you a rubdown and then you could have a nice hot bath, and then maybe you could sleep.

She waits at the foot of the bed for him to come slowly to a decision.

KID
'Kay. Can't hurt to try it.

She goes into the bathroom, where she turns the water gently so the tub will take a long while to fill. Then she takes a bottle of alcohol from the medicine chest and returns to the bedroom with it. She stands in front of him waiting for him to move, but The Kid is singularly listless. Not till she sets the bottle down does he respond by turning his face to the pillow. She goes right to work on his shoulder muscles, and she seems to know what she is doing.

KID
What did you do with yourself this time?

CHRISTIAN
Last night I went to a movie with The Shooter's woman. French movie.

KID
In French?

CHRISTIAN
They had the words in English at the bottom of the picture. But The Shooter's woman knew what they were saying without it. Pig's woman or somebody told me she went to college.

KID

CHRISTIAN
I think maybe she really did go. But I never quite dared to up and ask her.

KID
I didn't know you ran with The Shooter's woman.

CHRISTIAN
We got to be kind of friendly when you both were in that three-day game down to Cairo. 'Course she's older'n me.

KID
And been around more. A lot more. What was the movie like?

CHRISTIAN
Weird. It wasn't a straight story where you knew whose side you were on, the way you do in regular pictures.

KID
American pictures.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah. There were lots of things I didn't understand.

KID
What was it about?

CHRISTIAN
Well, there's this town in Europe a long time ago where they get a message from a Spanish general he's coming to spend the night with his troops. So all the men are scared silly about what the soldiers will do to them.

**KID**
Nothing weird about that.

**CHRISTIAN**
But all the wives and daughters tell the men to go hide somewhere and let them bargain with the enemy.

**KID**
That don't make much sense.

**CHRISTIAN**
Wait. The way they handle it is they go to bed with the Spaniards. And the next morning the soldiers go off peacefully and everybody's happy.

**KID**
Including the husbands and fathers? Don't they suspect?

**CHRISTIAN**
That's part of what I wasn't sure of. I guess they know what went on but they care more about their safety and their money than they do about their honor.

**KID**
Then they got their heads screwed on straight. Honor's just an idea. You can't see or feel it and you can't eat it and you sure as hell can't get any mileage on it.

She slaps him on the rump and straightens up.

**CHRISTIAN**
I'll just turn off the bath water.

He doesn't move but just stays relaxed and closes his eyes.

**INT. BATHROOM**
Christian, humming softly, turns off the water, takes a towel from a rack and puts it on a stool by the tub where it will be more convenient for him. She lingers to test water with her finger and do anything else she can to assure maximum comfort for her man. Then she steps into the bedroom. The sight of him makes her advance cautiously and confirm her suspicion that he is asleep.

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

MELBA, The Shooter's woman, is sitting up in bed working on her eyebrows and listening to MUSIC turned up LOUD on a radio. The bedside phone RINGS, barely audible above the noise from the radio. She gets no answer, which is no wonder in view of the noise from the radio. But the radio is across the room and it's slightly easier for her to get out of the side of the bed she's on, and go to the door of The Shooter's room. She opens this and we see The Shooter in bed in his own small quarters, reading a magazine. He turns around inquiringly.

MELBA
(into phone)
Hello... Yes, it is. You want him?
(calling)
Shooter! Telephone! Shooter!

She gets no answer, which is no wonder in view of the noise from the radio. But the radio is across the room and it's slightly easier for her to get out of the side of the bed she's on, and go to the door of The Shooter's room. She does this and we see The Shooter in bed in his own small quarters, reading a magazine. He turns around inquiringly.

MELBA
Phone for you. I always seem to be the one to answer it, no matter who it's for.

SHOOTER
(getting up)
If you'd rather we put it in my room --

MELBA
Are you kidding?
The Shooter picks up the phone but before he speaks he pantomimes to her that he won't be able to hear over radio. She seems to regard the request as an imposition but she does go grudgingly to the radio and turns it down a little before she returns to her bed and her cosmetic chore.

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)
Hello?... Well, hello. What brings you to our fair city? Little action, maybe?

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

Lancey, dressed for bed, is on the phone.

**LANCEY**

(into phone)
How could you guess, Shooter? I was invited by a Mr. William Schlaegel --

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT**

**SHOOTER**

(into phone)
Owns most of the Schlaegel Brewery. Braumeister beer.

The Shooter sits down on the edge of Melba's bed, the movement jostling her so she pricks herself with her tweezers. She exclaims in protest and gives him a dirty look that makes The Shooter stand right up again.

**INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM**

**LANCEY**

(into phone)
As he put it, rather bluntly, I felt, we don't want everyone to have to watch everyone else dealing to see to it they don't make any little accidental errors by mistake. I told him a man couldn't ask for a better guarantee of a fair-and-square game
than having The Shooter deal it. So if you're willing, we're meeting at two o'clock in the afternoon. Ask for Mr. Schlaegel's suite at the Park Sherman... Good. I'm glad you can do it, Shooter. Be a pleasure to see you again...

(then)
Oh pretty much the same... Just have to be a little careful about smoking and drinking and eating -- and breathing. See you tomorrow. Good night.

He hangs up the phone, settles himself in a comfortable chair, and opens a heavy book. CAMERA MOVES in CLOSE enough to reveal the title: Prescott's CONQUEST OF PERU.

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

It is midday outside but the window shades are tightly drawn to keep the daylight from disturbing The Kid, who is still asleep. Christian, dressed for the street, moves from the bedroom to the kitchen-living room which is the remainder of the two-room apartment. Finding paper and pencil, she writes a quick note and leaves it on the kitchen table, then starts out.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE WINDOW - DAY

featuring one bathing suit displayed among others in an end-of-season sale with some such advertising message as "All bathing suits reduced 1/3 for clearance!" The particular suit is a two-piece one, exposing two or three inches of bare midriff -- the first modest forerunner of the trend that led eventually to the bikini.
CHRISTIAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Would you wear it in public?

CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Christian and Melba looking at the display.

MELBA
Wouldn't be much point wearing it in private. Sure, why not, as long as you don't have a bulge to hide?

They start walking.

CHRISTIAN
I don't know, Melba.

MELBA
(looking her over)
My guess is there isn't anything about you needs hiding. But I'll give you a more definitive opinion at the bath.

CHRISTIAN
(startled)
At the what?

MELBA
Turkish Bath. After we're through shopping. I'm treating you, Christian.

CHRISTIAN
I never been. I'm not even sure what you do.

MELBA
You don't do anything. That's what's so marvelous. They do it to you.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. STEAM ROOM

CAMERA finds Christian and Melba among the perspiring females.

CHRISTIAN
The third time I stayed. Never went back to the boarding house except to pick up my things.
MELBA
And that side of it's held up? No complaints in the bed department?

CHRISTIAN
Well, just one.

MELBA
(intrigued)
Yes?

CHRISTIAN
The nights he isn't there.

MELBA
He really does that to you, does he? You got one of the rare ones.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. MASSAGE ROOM

Christian and Melba are on adjoining rubbing tables, a curtain separating them from the waist down only. Their heads are close enough so they can talk without their masseurs necessarily hearing every word they say.

CHRISTIAN
You find a guy, you love him, and that's it. It's supposed to just go on like that for life. Right?

MELBA
According to the propaganda, right.

CHRISTIAN
But it isn't my life, it's his life, with me tacked on. You have any idea what it's like to be a hash slinger in a cheap restaurant?

MELBA
No, honey, the stock crash wafted me right from the daisy chain into unmarried bliss.

CHRISTIAN
It's hell, if you'll excuse the word. But I didn't want to quit. The Kid made me. I felt I ought to hang on
to something that was me away from him. You know what I mean?

MELBA
Sure. Some girls solve the problem by taking on an extra guy.

CHRISTIAN
I'm serious. Having children might take care of it, I don't know. Or -- this is really a terrible thing to admit.

MELBA
Your most sordid secrets are safe with me. Confess.

CHRISTIAN
If he was rich, or famous --

MELBA
Why don't you give him both?

CHRISTIAN
(smiling)
Why not? Well, if he was rich and famous, maybe I wouldn't mind so much just being -- just a woman to him. Do you think that might make it seem more worthwhile somehow?

MELBA
Somehow! Are you sincere, sweetie? (reacting to the masseur's touch)
Oooo -- divine.
(to Christian)
Isn't this heaven?

CHRISTIAN
I'm not sure. In a way it seems soft of --

She is at a loss for a word.

MELBA
Decadent? Depraved?

Christian looks blank.

MELBA
Wicked?
CHRISTIAN
Well, yes.

MELBA
That's what I meant by heaven.

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

Lancey, Shooter and five other men are sitting in comfortably padded chairs around a well-appointed poker table. Everything about the game is in sharp contrast to the one The Kid in. It is played with chips - expensive ones; there are couple of bottles of wine on ice, fine cigars, a tray of sandwiches, etc. Lancey's opponents are all wealthy types; two of them could be Texas oil men. The youngest, a good-looking man of thirty, is BILL SCHLAEGEL. The Shooter, nonplaying dealer, distributes fifth cards to the four remaining players in the hand, and both Lancey and Bill end up with four cards of one suit showing.

SHOOTER
(as he deals)
Still queens -- possible flush -- no help -- possible flush.

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
Queens check to the possibles.

LANCEY
Check.

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Check.

Bill silently tosses in two of the rarest and highest ranking chips on the table.

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
Fold.

LANCEY
And up two.

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Fold.

THIRD WEALTHY TYPE
Biggest pot yet.

A phone RINGS and the Third Wealthy Type answers it.

BILL
Call the two thou.

LANCEY
(turning over queen of his suit)
Queen high.

BILL
(indignantly)
Jack high. Can you beat that?

FIRST WEALTHY TYPE
He just did.

THIRD WEALTHY TYPE
(to Second Wealthy Type)
It's your office.

SECOND WEALTHY TYPE
Dallas or Tulsa?

THIRD WEALTHY TYPE
She just said office.

The Third Wealthy Type takes the phone and speaks on it during the ensuing. The Second Wealthy Type crosses to the bar and fixes himself a drink. Lancey takes in his winnings. He hasn't recovered from the blow. There is a hiatus in the game.

BILL
How the bloody hell did you figure out I didn't have the king or the ace?

LANCEY
I recollect a young fellow putting the same question to Eddie the Dude. It was a game in the grand lounge of the "J.M. White, Third," the largest paddle-wheeler ever built. "Son," Eddie told him, "All you paid was the looking price. Lessons are extra."

(turns to Shooter)
First time I heard of this Cincinnati Kid was in New Orleans, at Yeller's. I knew right away I'd have to play him someday.

SHOOTER
You'll enjoy his game.

LANCEY
I may admire it. But if he's all that good, I doubt if I'll enjoy it.

SHOOTER
The tougher the competition, the better you used to like it.

LANCEY
I've learned to take everything in moderation.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It is early evening. The Kid approaches the restaurant with Christian on one arm, Melba on the other.

KID
(to Melba)
Have a drink with us?

MELBA
Better not. Shooter said they'd break at seven, and he has to have his food first, then his nap.

(looking The Kid over)
You know, there's a day in your life I'm looking forward to.

KID
In my life?

MELBA
The day The Kid becomes The Man.
She smiles at them both and goes off. They move to enter the restaurant.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. RESTAURANT - KID AND CHRISTIAN

The plates with the remains of their main course are in front of them. The Kid pours what's left of a bottle of beer into his glass.

CHRISTIAN
How'd you sleep Kid?

KID
I slept okay.

CHRISTIAN
I hope you don't mind my not being there when you woke up.

KID
No I don't mind --
(then)
What she was talking about, Shooter's woman -- I'm going up against a big game soon.

CHRISTIAN
She told me. It's a very big game, I hear.

KID
Yes.

CHRISTIAN
Will it be long?

KID
Why?
(then)
What's the matter?

CHRISTIAN
I thought --

KID
Thought what?
CHRISTIAN
I'd go home and see Mama.

KID
I wouldn't be able to spare you much change.

CHRISTIAN
Oh, I wouldn't want much. Bus is really the best way to go.

KID
Would a hundred fish do it? For the bus and something nice to bring your Mama?

CHRISTIAN
That would be fine, Kid. Just fine.

KID
When would you want to go?

CHRISTIAN
There's no reason for not going right now unless --

She lowers her eyes, finding it hard to say the words.

KID
Unless what?

CHRISTIAN
Unless you wanted to go to bed first.

KID
Do you want to? Would you like it?

CHRISTIAN
Un-huh. I'd like it.

KID
You want dessert?

CHRISTIAN
No. You?

KID
(shakes head)
Coffee?

CHRISTIAN
I don't need it.
KID
Neither do I.

He looks o.s. raising a hand to summon the check.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT - DARKENED WINDOW

It is dark in the room and dark outside, the street lamps furnishing only enough light for a faint border around window shade. Christian's head and nude back move into Shot; she pulls the shade aside to look out.

LONG SHOT - ILLUMINATED CLOCK - CHRISTIAN'S P.O.V. -

The time is a few minutes before ten.

INT. KID'S APARTMENT - CHRISTIAN

She lets the shade fall back into place. Moving quietly in the darkness, she begins to dress. CAMERA PULLS BACK PANS to include The Kid, lying on the bed with a sheet over him. He seems to be asleep until he speaks.

KID
You still haven't said it.

CHRISTIAN
Said what?

KID
If you're coming back.

Christian abandons the process of dressing herself and sits down in the easy chair to answer this question.

CHRISTIAN
Maybe I ought to stay with Mama and Papa a while, and see.

KID
What's to see?
CHRISTIAN
I never did like city streets.

KID
Oh.

CHRISTIAN
Uh-huh. The promise didn't fulfill itself for me.

KID
Promise?

CHRISTIAN
Come to the city and all. Electric lights and flush toilets. All the pretty dreams -- it was all promise.

KID
Oh, I see.

CHRISTIAN
I don't know if you do or not Kid -- You're city -- and I'm country -- You grew up with it.

KID
I don't think that's why you're going -- because you like it so much better in the country.

She doesn't comment one way or the other, nor does he press the point.

CHRISTIAN
What will you do?

KID
Well, I've got that big game.

CHRISTIAN
I heard he's The Man for you.

KID
Yes. If I won, there would be a lot of money.

CHRISTIAN
You'll win. You been coming on strong a long way. This is your time.
(then after a long moment)
Come home with me to Mama's Kid.

KID
(finally)
I'm sorry.

CHRISTIAN
(gently)
I know you are honey -- I know it.

She gets up and begins to pack her clothes in an old suitcase.

After a moment The Kid gets out of bed.

KID
I'll go down to the bus with you.

CHRISTIAN
You don't have to.

KID
(starting to dress)
I'll go down with you.

CHRISTIAN
(after a pause)
Kid --

KID
Yeah?

CHRISTIAN
This is going to sound kind of funny to you, but I want to ask it.

KID
Sure.

CHRISTIAN
Do you think there's any chance, if you do win this big game, that you might do something else besides cards?
(hastily)
I don't mean never play poker. I just mean not have it be the only thing you do.

KID
Hell, it's the only thing I know how to do. What else is there for a guy
never finished school? College graduates are walking the streets looking for jobs -- trained people, engineers, scientists!

CHRISTIAN
I realize --

KID
(not letting her speak)
When you're The Man, you don't have to hustle -- When you're The Man, The Best, the Big Money comes around on their knees just beggin' to hustle you. I'm not goin' to quit. I'm goin' to win.

CHRISTIAN
Yes, I can see that. Of course I didn't say quit.

KID
Well you see how it is.

CHRISTIAN
That's all right.

KID
(after a moment)
Christian, you aren't doing this to be off my back, in case I lose?

CHRISTIAN
I been thinking about it a long time. I been planning to go home and see how I felt about things.

KID
And this just helped you decide.

CHRISTIAN
That's all.

KID
Then don't go.

CHRISTIAN
(firmly)
No, this is your time -- Now you go on Honey and you play The Man -- I'll be at Mama's.
She closes the suitcase and puts on the one dress she hasn't packed. The Kid, dressed now, watches her for a moment and goes to the bottom drawer of the dresser and opens it to reveal a stack of money under a shirt. He takes five twenty-dollar bills and counts them on to the top of the dresser, snapping the crisp leaves gambler style. Then he stoops down again and takes out two more twenties, adding them to the pile.

**KID**
I wish it could be more.

**CHRISTIAN**
That's all right.

He doesn't actually hand her the money. He leaves it on top of the dresser and she goes over and takes it, folding the bills and putting them in her change purse. The Kid picks up her suitcase, and she leads the way into the other room. At the front door she stops and looks back at the little apartment for a moment.

**CHRISTIAN**
I don't guess I'll ever forget these rooms, Kid.

**KID**
I don't guess I will either.

**CHRISTIAN**
You going to move?

**KID**
If I win, it won't be good enough. If I lose, I lose it all.

She looks at him for a moment, then exits. He follows.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. TAXI - PROCESS - NIGHT**
The Kid and Christian sit in silence. She puts her hand on his.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BUS TERMINAL

The Kid and Christian sit on a bench in the waiting room, still silent. He has her suitcase between his legs and a pile of magazines on his lap. She looks at a clock and gets to her feet. He follows her to the door, carrying the suitcase and magazines.

EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT

Christian boards a bus that has seen better days. On the steps she turns to take the bag from him, but he follows her on.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Christian takes a seat. The Kid puts her suitcase in the overhead rack and hands her the magazines, none of which would be classed as heavy reading.

CHRISTIAN
Goodbye, Kid. Good luck.

KID
Goodbye, Christian.

They don't kiss. He turns and goes out.

EXT. BUS PLATFORM - NIGHT

There are not many passengers boarding this bus. After a couple of moments, the driver closes the door and starts back. Christian waves from the window, and The Kid waves back.
to her. When the bus has gone, he walks around the outside of the terminal to the front.

EXT. FRONT OF BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

There are a couple of cabs at a taxi stand. One of the hackies offers his services to The Kid, but The Kid declines. He wants to walk.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

It is midday and the poker game is almost twenty-four hours old. Our attention is focused on Bill Schlaegel, who is writing out a check.

BILL

Four stacks? Right, Schooter?

SHOOTER

Four.

The Shooter takes advantage of the lull in the proceedings to move to the telephone.

BILL

Thank you for the entertainment, gentlemen. My particular gratitude to you, Lancey. It's been a rare pleasure to watch a great artist at work. Thank you for the privilege.

Lancey gives him a quick look, finding this a bit thick.

LANCEY

Well now, son, you're quite welcome. Can't say I recall another man, in all my days on the three rivers, who seemed to find it quite so pleasurable losing all that money.

Bill puts his check down in front of The Shooter's place, and gets to his feet.
BILL

Good day, gentlemen. You're welcome to use the premises as long as you like.

CAMERA MOVES with Bill as he passes The Shooter, who is waiting on the phone while the hotel operator dials his number. Bill gives him a friendly pat on the back, and speaks in a low, harsh voice for The Shooter's ears alone.

BILL

I want to see you.

Bill goes out. Shooter looks after him as his party comes on the phone.

SHOOTER

(into phone)
Hi, Kid. Shooter here. Listen, I told the woman I'd take her to the ball park, but I'm still working. How about you and Christian take her out?

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

KID

(into phone)
Christian's gone home to see her folks.

INT. PLUSH HOTEL ROOM

SHOOTER

(into phone)
Oh.
(then)
Well listen, would you mind taking her yourself? The gang'll be there, in the section... Thanks. Appreciate it. See you.

He hangs up, returns to the table and starts to shuffle the cards in his own spectacular way.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. BUSCH STADIUM, ST. LOUIS - DAY
A game is in progress between the Cardinals and another National League club. The batter at the plate connects for a long one. CAMERA FOLLOWS the flight of the ball.

**EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA**

They are making their way to meet their friends in the section they prefer. They stop to watch the ball as the fans around them rise to their feet. The section they have just reached is in the sun, overlooking the outfield.

**EXT. FIELD**

An outfielder races back and makes a difficult catch.

**EXT. STANDS - THE KID AND MELBA**

They start on their way again. CAMERA PANS ahead of a group consisting of Hoban; HOBAN'S WOMAN, still sexy in her forties; PIG, whose name could derive with equal justification from either his looks or his manners; and SOKAL, who talks colloquial American with a Central European accent. The group as a whole is notable because its members have not risen to their feet with everyone else, because all the men are basking in the sun with their shirts off, because they view the action on the field with detachment, and nevertheless, they are constantly placing bets on the game. Now, as people around them resume their seats, Sokal is able to confirm that the fly ball has been caught.

**SOKAL**

(to Hoban)

You owe me two fish on the out, plus three on the inning, minus two on no strikeouts so far.

The Kid and Melba join them.
HOBAN
Hiya, Kid. Getting yourself in shape for The Man?
(to Melba)
Shooter still on the job?

HOBAN'S WOMAN
Where's Christian?

MELBA
(in a whisper)
Lay off that.

PIG
What'd she do, take off? So did mine.
Don't lose no sweat, Kid, there's plenty more where they came from.
All shapes and sizes.

KID
Hi, Hoban. Sokal. Pig.

He and Melba sit down.

HOBAN
(to Sokal)
Boyer. One to two on the sacrifice.

SOKAL
Five to three, I'll give you. Two-fifty against one-fifty.

HOBAN
Mark it.

SOKAL
I figure they'll walk him. Fill up first.

KID
Not with who's coming up. I'll take the same odds.

While he is talking, Melba unbuttons his shirt.

MELBA
Get some of this sun.

SOKAL
(to The Kid)
Mark it.
KID  
(to Melba)  
Guess I will.

He takes his shirt off. Melba finds some suntan lotion in her bag, and applies it to her face and arms, her eyes rarely straying from The Kid.

HOBAN  
Bunting, Sokal.

EXT. BALL FIELD

The bunt is fielded by the first baseman, who throws to second for the out. There is no play at first.

SOKAL  
So they pitched to him. I still win.

PIG  
(to Kid)  
Everybody been on the phone to everybody about coming to watch you and Lancey. Big Spriigi, Yeller to N'Orleans, Old Lady Fingers. They're all coming.

MELBA  
(to Kid)  
Let me give you some of this. Keep you from burning.

KID  
I don't think --

MELBA  
Can't hurt you.

Without waiting for his approval, she goes ahead and spreads the lotion on his skin, painstakingly, as if she were applying paint to canvas, working it in, one area at a time, with her fingertips.

HOBAN  
(to Sokal)
Chance to invest your profits. Bet you an even fin he make first.

**SOKAL**
(looking toward plate)
Who we got -- Warwick? You got yourself a bet, pal.

The men concentrate their attention on the diamond.

MOVES IN to Melba's fingers playing across The Kid's midriff. From the field comes the sharp CRACK of a bat against a ball, followed by a SHOUT from the crowd. CAMERA PANS UP to faces of Melba and The Kid as he looks at her and she meets his gaze with inviting eyes.

**SOKAL'S VOICE**
Not your day, Hoban.
(calling to a vendor)
Hey, beer!

**MELBA**
(softly)
Mais tu es charmant --

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - CLOSEUP - MELBA**

With the same look of invitation in her eyes.

**MELBA**
Charmant. Come here, please.

CAMERA PULLS BACK. Wearing the same clothes as at the park, she is sitting in a chair with her legs tucked under her. The Kid is sitting on a straight chair at a table on which he has a cup of coffee. They are alone in the apartment.

**KID**
Any special reason?

**MELBA**
Me. I'm special.

He stands up but doesn't move toward her.

**KID**
Sure you are. You're The Shooter's woman.

**MELBA**
Right. And maybe I'll go on being The Shooter's Woman, even after you and I have had our little romp. What do you think about that?

**KID**
First place, Old Shooter'll come barging through that door any minute. He said they were winding it up.

**MELBA**
No barging. He doesn't have his key with him.

(stands up)
Have to buzz from downstairs.

(moves toward him provocatively)
So we can treat ourselves to a little sample of things to come.

The Kid stays where he is as she comes up against him.

**KID**
Also it don't mean anything to you, you're Christian's friend?

**MELBA**
Honey, she lost her franchise the minute she got on that bus. You know that.

(her arms around him)
I have a shaky sense of security, Kid. Don't make me feel unwanted.

He kisses her and lets himself enjoy it for a while, then pulls away.

**MELBA**
No good?

**KID**
You know damn well how good it was.
Where's a pack of cards?

MELBA
What do we need cards for?

KID
Gin or casino, you name it. All I know is we're switching to another indoor sport.

INT. ROOM IN PLUSH HOTEL

The poker game is over. Two of the Wealthy Types have already departed; one is finishing a drink on the way out; another is putting his winnings into his wallet; a third is writing out a check. Lancey and The Shooter still sit at the table in f.g.

SHOOTER
Lady Fingers'll want to come, I bet, and she's right on the edge of her stake. She could spell me dealing.

LANCEY
Sure, sure. Haven't seen the dear old bitch in fifteen years.

SHOOTER
Well, that's it, then. Monday night, Room Three-Eleven at the Dorset Hotel. And may the best man win.

LANCEY
Yes, that's how it usually comes out in the long run. You think this boy is going to give me trouble, Shooter?

SHOOTER
Yeah, he's going to give you trouble.

LANCEY
I don't want it to be one of those marathon games. Not any more.

SHOOTER
Like the session with The Portugee at Jolly's in Omaha. Remember?
LANCEY
Sure, sure. Longest game I ever played though, I was a kid on my way to the Klondike gold rush. At Soapy Smith's in Skagway. Four nights and three days.

SHOOTER
You win?

LANCEY
Depends how you look at it. When we wound up, the Yukon River had frozen over and you couldn't get through to Dawson City till the following June. Made myself a Hundred and fifty bucks and missed the gold rush.

SHOOTER
You been around a long time.

LANCEY
That is undeniably true. But it doesn't mean I'm ready to retire. How old is this boy of yours?

SHOOTER
Twenty-six, twenty-eight, something like that.

LANCEY
Well, now, makes me feel a whole lot better, knowing that. I was thirty-six when I sliced up Eddie the Dude. This Kid of yours is just going to have to wait a few years.

INT. CORRIDOR, PLUSH HOTEL - FELIX
He is standing by an elevator in f.g. keeping watch on a row of room doors including the site of the poker game. Felix is an impressive physical specimen whose capacity for brutality is masked by a quiet, deferential manner. When he sees a door open, he moves so as to be out of The Shooter's sight as the latter comes toward him. It isn't until The
rounds the corner in f.g. and presses the button for elevator that Felix makes his presence known.

**FELIX**

Excuse me, Mr. Shooter, sir, but Mr. Schlaegel asked me to remind you how eager he was to see you.

The doors of the elevator open. Felix yields precedence to The Shooter and they enter it. The doors close.

**INT. LOBBY, PLUSH HOTEL - AT THE ELEVATORS**

An elevator opens, and The Shooter and Felix come out.

**SHOOTER**

I ought to call my woman.

**FELIX**

Yes, of course. They always like to know it if you're going to be late for supper.

CAMERA MOVES with them as The Shooter leads the way to a row of telephone booths and enters one.

**INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID**

They are sitting at the table in a game of casino. She plays an ace from her hand, adds a seven from the board, and lays them both on top of a three-card pile.

**MELBA**

Still building eights.

**KID**

Thanks for putting it together for me.

He plays an eight and takes in the whole pile.

**MELBA**

It's not my game.

The telephone RINGS. She stands up.

**MELBA**
Want to know what is?
CAMERA FOLLOWs her to the phone. She picks it up.

MELBA
(into phone)
Hello -- Oh, hi, sugar -- why not?

She reaches a hand around to the back of her neck, with her dress a moment, then beckons in The Kid's direction.

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID
He doesn't understand what she wants but he gets up and comes to her obligingly, CAMERA MOVING with him.

MELBA
(into phone)
What's the switch?

She points to the hook-and-eye fastener at the top of the zipper that runs down the back of her dress. The Kid pantomimes the question "What for?" but she just wiggles her finger impatiently at the fastener while speaking into phone.

MELBA
(into phone)
Whose idea was that?

The Kid still doesn't know what she has in mind but it seems easier to humor her than not. He unfastens the hook.

Melba smiles her thanks and, to his consternation, reaches back and pulls the zipper all the way down. She places her hand over the mouth-piece of the phone.

MELBA
(to Kid)
He's not coming home now.

She steps out of the dress.
MELBA
(into phone)
Whatever you say, Shooter man.

INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER

SHOOTER
(into phone)
Explain to The Kid, will you?

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID

Melba in her bra and panties, snuggles against The Kid.

MELBA
(into phone)
He'll understand.

INT. PHONE BOOTH, PLUSH HOTEL - THE SHOOTER

SHOOTER
(into phone)
Tell him they decided to play a little longer, and I'll call him at his place later when the game's over...
Right. Goodbye, honey.

He hangs up the phone and emerges from the booth.

CAMERA MOVES with him as he joins Felix and they walk toward the hotel entrance.

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA AND THE KID

The Kid, his policy toward this new situation still unresolved, holds her lightly while he tries to think it out aloud.

KID
Listen, Melba --

MELBA
I have to tell you first. You're sitting down with Lancey next Monday night.

KID
I wish it was sooner. I wish it was tomorrow.
**MELBA**

Shooter'll give you all the details later.

**KID**

I don't like waiting that long.

**MELBA**

Let's not kick a gift horse in the teeth, sugar. We've got this time together. Let's try to "fill each unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run."

She invites a kiss and he obliges her. But there is a contrary force at work inside him.

**KID**

Listen, what I was going to say before, I don't want you to think I'm being some kind of jerk or I don't feel you'd be great to sack up with.

**MELBA**

Then let's cut the filibuster.

**KID**

I've made dolls that were friends of mine's wives. I figured if they were willing, they were doing it to their husbands, I wasn't.

**MELBA**

Of course. Any other attitude, you're degrading the woman. You're not treating her as a person with a mind of her own, but as somebody's property.

Again she presses close to him and again he savors her for a moment.

**KID**

Only thing is, it's different with The Shooter than anybody else. He's so straight, I got the obligation to be straighter with him than other people. So do you. On account of we both owe him plenty.
MELBA
I thought we just agreed that what you and I did was strictly between us.

KID
Can't be.
(decisively, pulling away from her with a pat of dismissal)
Shooter's the closest thing to family I got. It's almost like he was my old man. Don't you see how that's got a bearing on us?

He starts out. Melba stares after him, scarcely able to believe what is being done to her.

MELBA
Sure, it means I'm your mother.

EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - DAY
An expensive automobile, with Felix at the wheel and Shooter next to him in the front seat, approaches the house of a lavish estate in a St. Louis suburb. It continues along the driveway past the house.

EXT. AREA AROUND SWIMMING POOL - CLOSE - BILL AND BABY
In swimming trunks, Bill is spoon-feeding a year-old BABY in a highchair. Looking o.s., he waves in greeting to The Shooter.

EXT. SCHLAEGEL ESTATE - THE SHOOTER
He walks from the parked car toward the pool, returning salutation.

EXT. AREA AROUND POOL
SHOOTING from behind The Shooter as he approaches the attractive family group that includes, besides Bill and the baby, a FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL who is having her hair brushed.
after swimming by ROSANNA SCHLAEGEL, her beautiful
mother. A family dog completes the picture. Bill continues to
feed the baby as he hails The Shooter.

BILL
Shooter -- very generous of you to come on such short notice. Rosanna
you know, and I think you've met my daughter June.
(indicating baby)
No point introducing you to William the Fourth. He has a bad memory for
names.

SHOOTER
(greeting them in turn)
Mrs. Schlaegel. How are you, June. What's it all about, Bill?

BILL
Little something I'd like to sound you out on. But the least I can do
is offer you a drink.

ROSANNA
Like me to fix it, love?

BILL
Wonderful. Why don't you do a batch of your Bloody Marys? If that's okay
with you, Shooter?

SHOOTER
Great. Whatever.

As she goes off, Rosanna cautions June about her hair.

ROSANNA
Just don't let it get wet again.

As soon as his wife is gone, Bill goes right to the
topic he doesn't want to discuss in her presence.

BILL
I've been quite busy on the telephone since I last saw you. There's a lot
of interest all over the country in this game with Lancey and The Kid.
SHOOTER
Betting interest?

BILL
Jack Doyle in New York is giving twelve to five on Lancey. Same odds in Reno. I've taken fifty thousand of it so far.

SHOOTER
Fifty thousand!

BILL
I'll probably go for more but I didn't want to rock the odds.

SHOOTER
I knew you liked The Kid's style but why you going in so deep?

BILL
Two reasons. First, I want to see that smug old bastard gutted worse than he gutted me. Second, as long as that's going to happen, I don't see why I shouldn't make some money out of it.

SHOOTER
But how can you be so sure? The Kid could do it, we both know that, but --

BILL
"Could" isn't good enough for a man who hates to lose money as much as I do. He's going to need help -- from the best man with a pack of cards between Omaha and New Orleans.

SHOOTER
Not a chance, Bill. You ought to know I never ever use what I got with the cards for nothing but tricks and dressing up a game.

BILL
Sure, I know it. That's why you're the man they choose to give them a square deal. That's what makes it so perfect. Nobody'll be looking for it.
SHOOTER
It's out. Out.

BILL
The great thing is they'll be so close, The Kid won't need much. Three or four key hands.

SHOOTER
Understand this, Bill. I'd like for The Kid to win, and I sure as hell don't want to see you lose all that money --

BILL
If I did, I'd have to collect that twelve grand you owe me. Not myself. My collection agents. You knew poor Wildwood Jones, didn't you?

SHOOTER
OK but I'm paying it off! It's comin' in ain't it? Six grand already.
(then as Bill just looks at him)
Bill, you got to listen to me --!

BILL
No, I don't. It's quite the other way around. You have some delusion you're a free agent, but you're not. I own you.

SHOOTER
For God's sake --!

BILL
Shut up. I'll cross the twelve off the books and give you ten thousand dollars in cash. And you can tell The Kid if he needs more of a stake, I'll put it up.
(looks o.s. and smiles)
Marvelous. Here's Rosanna with what you need.

CAMERA MOVES to include Rosanna carrying a tray with glasses and a pitcher full of Bloody Marys.

BILL
-- for that dry feeling on the roof of your mouth.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT - CLOSE SHOT - WINDOW - DAY

It is raining dismally.

MED. CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

He is lying on one half of the bed, with the covers thrown back, his hands clasped behind his head, wearing pajama bottoms. He turns his head and stares at the white expanse of unoccupied bed.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAY

The weather is clear as The Kid wanders idly along a residential street of well-kept nineteenth century buildings.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BAR - THE KID

He is drinking a bottle of beer slowly. CAMERA PANS to another bar stool where a customer is having his shoes shined by a NEGRO BOY who slaps his rag against the shoes with a fine sense of rhythm. Finished, he collects his dime and nickel tip, and moves to The Kid.

BOY
Shine them up for you sir?

KID
No, thanks.

BOY
Fetch you a newspaper maybe?

KID
No.

BOY
How about a singy-song then? I play good.

**KID**

Play what?

The Boy takes out a tobacco can with the lid torn off
and
like
can
the top flattened down and shakes it, producing a sound
like
the rustle of dry leaves. Then he produces a similar
that makes a rattling noise when he shakes it.

**BOY**

Dry corn in this one. Blue shale
stone from the river in this one.
You ready?

**KID**

Yes, I'm ready.

The Boy looks at the BARTENDER, who has moved closer to
see
what's going on.

**BOY**

(to bartender)

You ready?

**BARTENDER**

Hell, I'm ready for anything.

The Boy stands perfectly still for a few seconds, then
begins
in
accent
begin
in
accent
pure,
and
hum.

At the same time he begins to sing a simple song in a
delicate voice. It is catfish music created on the spot
sounds strangely like the idle tunes Christian likes to

**KID**

(when the song is
over)

Thank you very much. That was nice.
Where did you learn to do that?

BOY
I picked it up from Herman.

KID
Who is Herman?

BOY
My friend I pick it up from.

KID
Is he a good friend?

BOY
I don't know 'bout that suh. He just a frien' who teach me some things.

KID
Well, I don't want a shine, but here's fifteen cents.

BOY
Thank you, sir.

BARTENDER
And here's another dime for you, fella.

He rings up a NO SALE and flips a dime to The Boy, who is astonished and then worried by this munificence. Suddenly he grabs his tobacco cans and his shoe-shine kit, and runs out into the street.

BARTENDER
Nice little colored kid.

KID
(mostly to himself)
-- Yeah.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. STEAM BATHS - THE KID AND JANSEN

JANSEN, a masseur, is at work loosening up The Kid's neck and shoulders.
JANSEN
Monday night, uh, Kid?

KID
Monday night.

JANSEN
I sprung for some of the action. A yard and a half of that five-to-two.

KID
Thanks, Jansen.
   (in pain)
Hey!

JANSEN
We got to get you loosened up. I never felt you this tight.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. BUS TERMINAL - PHONE BOOTH - THE KID

He is in the middle of a call.

KID
(into phone)
Just tell The Shooter I'll be there on the dot Monday night.

MELBA'S VOICE
(over the phone)
And until then?

KID
He doesn't have to know.

INT. THE SHOOTER'S APARTMENT - MELBA

MELBA
(into phone)
I'm not asking for him.

INT. BUS TERMINAL - THE KID

He hangs up the phone, rather than continue the discussion. CAMERA FOLLOWS him as he comes out of the booth, picks up a small duffel bag, and walks to the door that leads to busses. He goes out into the night and gets into a bus.
(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

A bus drives along a main road in the Ozarks, heading toward CAMER. As it comes close, the name of its destination: "FAYETTEVILLE" can be read.

EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - DAY

The bus stops momentarily at a small cluster of buildings around an intersection. The Kid is the only passenger to get off here. As the bus continues on its way, he goes to an attendant in a gas station on one corner, and asks a question. Referred to a general store and post office on another corner, he crosses and goes into it. The STOREKEEPER comes back outside with him to point out the route to where he wants to go. It is along a dirt road that winds uphill behind the store. The Kid starts up the road.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CREST OF ROAD - DAY

The Kid reaches the summit of the hill directly behind the crossroads, and looks down into the valley between this and the next one. He starts down an even narrower road leading to a little farm on a hillock in the valley. It consists of a modest cabin, a single barn, a fenced cow pasture, and a few cultivated fields.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CRAIGIE FARM - DAY

Christian comes around a curve in a path on one side of the hill leading to the farm.
yoke
front
unlatches
hesitation, the

house, carrying two five-gallon milk cans slung in a yoke over her shoulder. A little dog YAPS and runs from the door of the house to the front gate. She looks in that direction and CAMERA MOVES to include The Kid as he unlatches the gate and walks toward her. After a moment's hesitation, she moves to meet him, gliding on her bare feet to keep water in the cans from slopping out.

CHRISTIAN
Hello, Kid.

KID
Can I help you with those?

CHRISTIAN
Taking if off is harder than taking it on in.

She turns toward the side of the house and walks to the kitchen door. The Kid follows.

CHRISTIAN
How's The Shooter?

KID
Fine.

CHRISTIAN
You haven't played yet?

KID
Monday.

INT. CRAIGIE KITCHEN - CHRISTIAN, THE KID AND MRS. CRAIGIE

MRS. CRAIGIE, Christian's mother, opens the door for them, giving The Kid a sharp, appraising glance.

CHRISTIAN
This is Eric, Mama. He's come to see me.

MRS. CRAIGIE
How do, Eric.
Christian crosses to the drain sink near the pump and turns her back. Mrs. Craigie lifts the cans off the yoke on the drain board. She and Christian each take a can and pour water from it to prime the pump.

**CHRISTIAN**

We lost suction on the pump right in the middle of canning.

The Kid looks at the stove with a couple of large steaming pots on it, and the table alongside with a half-dozen hampers of green beans.

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

There's coffee. And sour ham and bread in the warmer, if you're hungry Eric.

As soon as they are finished with the pump, Mrs. Craigie and Christian turn to the table, where they begin to snip stems and cut beans before putting them into the pots on the stove.

**MRS. CRAIGIE**

You know anything about canning, you know we can't stop now. If we'd been looking for company, we never would have started.

**CHRISTIAN**

Spring beans, you have to cook them fast. But you find yourself some breakfast.

**KID**

I'm all right. Bus stopped for doughnuts and coffee.

**CHRISTIAN**

You can stay with us tonight and still make it back to St. Lou on the Sunday schedule by about midnight. I told Mama and Papa about The Man. And all.
**KID**
Where is Mr. Craigie?

**MRS. CRAIGIE**
To the barn. Why don't you go down and introduce yourself? Christian and me'll be at this another hour or two.

**KID**
I think I will. I think I'd like that.

(to Christian)
Okay?

**CHRISTIAN**
Sure. And I'll see you a little later on.

(then, as he starts out)
Papa don't know everything. About you and me.

The Kid looks quickly at her and then at Mrs. Craigie, who keeps her gaze fixed on the beans.

**EXT. CRAIGIE BARN - CRAIGIE - DAY**

He is pitching manure from all over the cow-lot into a piled banked against the side of the barn, working a long-handed shovel with practised ease. He looks o.s. and sees The Kid approaching but continues his work as The Kid enters the talking,

**CRAIGIE**
Hello.

**KID**
How do you do, Mr. Craigie. I'm Eric Stoner.

**CRAIGIE**
Christian's Eric.

**KID**
That's right.

CRAIGIE
You seen her?

KID
She's helping her mother can.

CRAIGIE
You minding to marry Christian?

The Kid looks at him a long moment then --

KID
You got any objections if I do, or if I don't?

Craigie takes a couple of steps toward The Kid, his boots sucking in the muddy ground.

CRAIGIE
Son, that's what I call a sharp answer.

KID
It was what I call a sharp question.

CRAIGIE
We don't know much about you, Christian's mother and me.

KID
I'm what's known as a three-river man. Which just means I go around playing stud poker wherever I can find the kind of action I'm looking for.

CRAIGIE
You met Christian when she was working to Hot Springs?

KID
Yeah. I was playing in this game in the hotel and she was a waitress in the coffee shop. We went out. I told her I thought she could get a better job in St. Louis.

CRAIGIE
Now how did you happen to tell her
that? Maybe you run some kind of employment service on the side?

KID
I said it because I wanted her in St. Louis. Anyway, she made it there and she called me and we been seeing each other ever since.

CRAIGIE
Living together?

The Kid takes his time before deciding how to answer this one.

KID
Yeah, living together.

CRAIGIE
How come she come home now? She going to have a baby?

KID
Not that I know of.

CRAIGIE
You two have a fight?

KID
No.

CRAIGIE
She must have had a reason.

KID
Think so? Well, you've known her longer than me.

(then)
Look, Mr. Craigie, let me and Christian find out a few things then maybe I won't have to answer your questions.

CRAIGIE
I never run across anybody like you. I guess I don't understand gamblers.

KID
That's all right. I don't understand farmers.
CRAIGIE
You say things that sound smart alecky. But I'm not sure if they really are smart alecky.

KID
Well I can't take into account what somebody's going to feel every time I say something.

CRAIGIE
Are you a believer?

KID
In some things.

CRAIGIE
I mean in God.

KID
That's a tough one. I don't disbelieve in Him, but I couldn't say I believed in Him either. I guess I just never paid Him much mind. Didn't seem important.

CRAIGIE
God not important?

KID
I don't mean what He does isn't important -- if He exists. I mean it's not important to me whether He exists or not.

CRAIGIE
Christian was raised in a Christian home.

KID
Is that so? I didn't know ---
(then)
I'm not aware of the difference.
(pause)
I'm not asking permission to marry Christian, you know.

CRAIGIE
I know.

KID
If I was, the only person I'd be
asking it from is her.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
(after a moment) \textit{Who is this fella Christian says you're going to play that's so important?}

\textbf{KID} \\
He's the king of the stud poker players.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
And you're going to play him.

\textbf{KID} \\
Yes.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
Are you any good?

\textbf{KID} \\
I'm this good. The Man has got to play me.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
What happens if he don't?

\textbf{KID} \\
Then I'm The Man.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
That important to you?

\textbf{KID} \\
I been trying to figure that out ever since I set it up.

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
You playing because of money?

\textbf{KID} \\
(after a moment) \textit{Not really.}

\textbf{CRAIGIE} \\
Christian said you never was much worried about money -- I been worried about money most of my life -- up until I figured out it wasn't so important.
KID
No, it's necessary, but it isn't so important.

CRAIGIE
Well how come you want to play this King fella?

KID
Ambition -- maybe security, like that.

CRAIGIE
Is it aspiration to be the King or just uncertainty about the future?

KID
I ain't looking for security if that's what you mean.

CRAIGIE
Not trying to lock something up tight and nail it down?

KID
That would figure into it. But that isn't all of it. -- It's important to me.

CRAIGIE
Now son which is more important to you, this king business or Christian?

KID
If you got the guts to ask that question, Mr. Craigie, I guess I got the guts to answer it. Christian, if you came right down to it, is not as important as doing what I have to do.

Craigie has finished piling the manure. He puts away his shovel.

CRAIGIE
Well son, I had to know.

KID
Know what?

CRAIGIE
There never was a man worth a damn, to my mind, who let his woman stand in the way of the thing he had to do.

(then)
I got to go now -- see what I can do for a sick heifer. Why don't you take Christian, when her Mama lets go of her, and tell her I said you should go to the old spring. It's a good place.

KID
Thanks. I'll tell her.

Craigie walks away.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. SPRING - DAY

It is a small shack against a rocky bluff. CAMERA PANS Christian and The Kid as they come down the path and enter.

CHRISTIAN
It stays warm all winter.

DISSOLVE:

INT. SHACK

CAMERA MOVES to reveal Christian and The Kid, who are in the pool without clothes, treading water.

CHRISTIAN
Papa's mama used to bring her wash up here.

KID
We liable to draw an audience?

CHRISTIAN
Don't worry. It's on our land -- Nobody uses it.

She starts to swim, CAMERA MOVING with her upper back as she reaches the side of the pool and pulls herself on to the
bank, lying on her stomach. The Kid joins her, first
drawing himself up on his stomach alongside her, then turning
back to look through the slats at the sun.

CHRISTIAN
You must have said something to Papa
gave him the picture on us in St.
Lou. Else he never would have spoke
to you about this place.

KID
I told him on account of he already
knew. Never any sense feeding a man
a lie he's not going to believe.

CHRISTIAN
Even if he did know, I'm glad you
told him.

She raises herself up so that she is directly above
him.

KID
(in mock protest)
Hey, you're all wet!

CHRISTIAN
So are you, foolish.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CRAIGIE PORCH - CRAIGIE AND THE KID - NIGHT

The two men are sitting just outside the kitchen, where
Mrs. Craigie and Christian are pasting labels on the mason
jars they filled earlier. The paste and some of the jars are
just inside an open window on a shelf behind the men's
heads. The light comes from a kerosene lamp inside.

CRAIGIE
Let me get this straight in my head.
Cards is all a matter of luck, who
gets dealt the best ones.

The Kid stands up and selects six playing cards from a
in his pocket. During the next few lines he uses the paste on the shelf to stick together three pairs of them so as to form three double-thick cards. One of these has two faces, another two backs, and the third a back and a face.

CRAIGIE
So when one of you professional gamblers sits down with a bunch of your -- what do you call them -- customers, clients?

KID
The technical term is "suckers." Or "marks."

CRAIGIE
Their chance of winning is just as good as yours, except if you got a way to control it, who gets what cards. Right?

KID
Not right. That's cheating and it's not any part of what we're talking about.

CRAIGIE
Then how do you win?

KID
I'll show you.

He displays his three cards.

KID
You see one of these cards is white on both sides, one is red on both sides, and the other is white on one side, red on the other.

CRAIGIE
What about it?

The Kid lifts a straw hat off a peg on the porch wall.

KID
This. I put the three cards in a hat and shake them up, and then I ask you to draw one card out blind. Put
it face down on the table so neither of us can see the bottom side.

Craigie does as instructed. The ensuing dialogue assumes the "red" card he picks is red on top; if it's white the words and "white" will be reversed in the dialogue.

KID
Okay, red on top. That eliminates the all-white card, right. So the card you've picked is one of two -- the all-red or the red-and-white. One out of two is an even chance, an even-money proposition. Right -- you follow me?

CRAIGIE
I think so.

KID
So if I said I'll bet you a dollar to seventy-five cents the other side of that card is red, you'd take the bet wouldn't you?

CRAIGIE
Seems like. Yeah.

KID
And that answer makes you a sucker. Because the odds are two to one, the other side of that card is red, and I ought to be offering you a dollar to fifty cents instead of seventy-five.

CRAIGIE
But if there are just the two possibilities.

KID
There are three possibilities. (indicating card on table) That can be the red side of the red-and-white card, or it can be either side of the all-red card. In two cases out of three the other side is red. And I'd win the bet from you two out of every three times we made
it.

CRAIGIE
(dubiously)
You would?

KID
Sure. It's obvious when I explain it, isn't it?

CRAIGIE
Reckon so. Except if there's only two things that the bottom side can be, red or white --

KID
Take my word for it -- the odds are two to one. And knowing that is the difference between your gambling man and your sucker. Not who gets the better cards but who knows what the proper odds are. In a poker game there can be a million different situations, each with a different set of odds to figure. The man who ends up winners is the man who knows when to bet and how much...

CRAIGIE
The sucker is still took advantage of, isn't he? The gambler knows something he don't know.

KID
Sure -- like if you grow better corn or raise a cow that gives more milk than the other guy's. Or two business men are in competition, or two lawyers are up against each other in a courtroom. Whatever your line is, the one who wins out is the one who knows his job better.

CRAIGIE
Seems like there should be something else to it --

KID
There is -- Making the man you're playing against think he's got the best hand -- and making him pay to find out.
(TIME LAPSE)

INT. CRAIGIE KITCHEN - THE KID

He is lying on a cot in the darkness, next to the big wood-
burning stove. Christian enters the SHOT and slips
under the covers with him.

CHRISTIAN
I can't stay long. Papa'll be getting
up to milk.

KID
I'm the one can't stay. I got to
head for that bus.

CHRISTIAN
Why did you come, Kid?

KID
Well, hell, I don't know. I had kind
of a rough time after you left.

CHRISTIAN
Rough how?

KID
Tuesday there was a ball game, but
then the Cardinals went on the road.
I never known time to drag so; I was
all torn apart --

CHRISTIAN
Because of the poker game coming up?

KID
That's how I read it, but I was
reading it wrong. It wasn't Lancey
or the game that was chewing at my
insides --

CHRISTIAN
What else is there could give you
such a bad time?

KID
I finally figured it. I located where
the trouble was. It was you.

She is genuinely surprised at this and at first a bit
dismayed. But her more considered reaction is one of pleasure.

CHRISTIAN

Oh, --

She kisses him.

KID

When you talk about doing something besides poker if I get to be The Man, you don't mean pass up the chance to make some dough from it for a while?

CHRISTIAN

I sure don't. I told Papa, wherever money comes from, it feels the same when you spend it.

KID

You were going to do some thinking down here.

CHRISTIAN

I done some.

Then they both react as Craigie can be heard getting up.

KID

I'll be back after the game Christian -- You wait here for me and I'll let you know.

CHRISTIAN

All right Eric -- Good luck Monday.

She gives him a quick kiss and stands up.

KID

I got that made now. You said it right. My time's come.

(TIME LAPSE)

EXT. CROSSROADS COMMUNITY - NIGHT (PRE-DAWN)

The sun hasn't risen yet as The Kid boards the bus for St. Louis outside the general store.
EXT. HIGHWAY IN MISSOURI - DAY

The Kid's bus crossing the endless plain in the afternoon sun.

EXT. ST. LOUIS BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The clock above the loading platform says it is a little after two in the morning as the bus pulls up, and The Kid, groggy from the long ride, gets out.

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

He enters wearily, goes straight into the bedroom and collapses on the bed. After a moment he summons the energy to loosen his shoelaces and kick his shoes off. But that completes his preparations for sleep.

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

The Shooter is awake because he can't sleep, and Melba is awake because she is trying to persuade him to do what she considers prudent. He sighs deeply as she solicitously pours him a cup of coffee.

SHOOTER

Twenty-five years I been building a reputation.

MELBA

Handle this thing right and your reputation will be better than ever.

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

Lancey is also awake, confronting a row of medicine bottles. He finishes laying out an assortment of four different pills and capsules, pours himself a glass of hot milk from a carafe, and proceeds to take the pills one at a time, with a sip of milk after each.
(TIME LAPSE)

INT. KID'S APARTMENT

The Kid, looking completely refreshed, is readying himself for the game. He has chosen casual, comfortable clothes, and now he collects three items to take with him: a large bottle of mouthwash, a green sun-vizor, and finally, his stake. When he withdraws the money from the dresser drawer, we see the pile has increased in size. The Kid finds an envelope to put it in, and he is ready to go. He starts out but in the middle of the kitchen he stops to look at his watch. It is too early. He crosses to the stove, pours himself a cup of coffee, and sits down to drink it.

INT. LANCEY'S HOTEL ROOM

Lancey has decided on a change of costume from his last game, and this time he goes for the old-fashioned velvet smoking jacket and silk foulard. Over this he puts on a light overcoat. Then he assembles medicines, toilet articles and money, putting them all into a small satchel. Finally, he puts on his hat and goes to the door.

INT. PLUSH HOTEL CORRIDOR

We follow Lancey's progress as far as the elevator.

INT. SHOOTER'S APARTMENT

Melba and Shooter have finished dressing, and he waits by the door while she does the inevitable last-minute things to her makeup.

SHOOTER

I made up my mind to this. I ain't
going to give him any help till he needs it.

MELBA
I'm glad you're taking a stand.

SHOOTER
Hey, what if he starts off lucky and stays ahead of the game the whole way. It could happen, you know.

MELBA
You'll make it happen, Baby. I've got faith in you --

EXT. CLOCK TOWER – NIGHT

The hands are at 7:25.

INT. TAXI – THE KID AND DRIVER – NIGHT

The Kid is looking at the clock tower.

KID
Once more around the square.

EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE DORSET HOTEL – NIGHT

The taxi drives away from CAMERA following The Kid's instruction. CAMERA PANS to the front of the Dorset Hotel, which they have just passed. It is fifty years old or more, no longer elegant but still respectable.

INT. POKER SUITE – LANCEY

He is standing at ease among old friends, sipping a creme de menthe frappe.

LANCEY
It's a friendly town, St. Louis. I've always said that.

CAMERA MOVES to take in the people around him, one after another. The Shooter is there, and Pig and Sokal and Hoban, and Melba and Hoban's woman and a couple of other women
main attributes are physical, and Bill Schlaegel. Out of town representatives include LADY FINGERS, who is about fifty, down on her luck but still cheerful and remarkably energetic; and YELLER, a light-skinned Negro who has achieved stature in what is mainly a white man's world, through diplomacy and a quick wit. The room is the large living-room of a splendid suite; there are enough chairs and couches around the walls to accommodate a good many spectators, while middle of the room has been cleared for a round table with seven chairs.

SHOOTER
We ain't seen much of you though, last seven, eight years.

LANCEY
Climate, Shooter. In my declining years, I spend more and more time in Florida and the Gulf Coast.

LADY FINGERS
Lot of folks been figuring another reason you was keeping clear of the three rivers.

LANCEY
What reason is that, Lady Fingers?

LADY FINGERS
Cincinnati Kid.
(laughs)
That the way it is, Lancey? You been scared of The Kid?

LANCEY
Should I be scared of him?

LADY FINGERS
Damn right you should! I'm telling you, that boy going to make your stomach ulcer bleed before the night is out. He's close to murder. I seen him give a fella the shakes so bad
on a fourth card, it took a pint of corn liquor to settle him down.

**LANCEY**

Thanks for the warning.

Lancey notices that most of the people around him have turned to look at the doorway. He glances in the same a casual sort of way.

**FEATURING THE KID**

He saunters toward Lancey. Almost everyone greets him, and he responds to as many as he can. Melba intercepts him.

**MELBA**

Mow the man down, sugar pie, make it quick and bloody. Been too many lean years for all of us.

**KID**

I intend to take Shooter right along with Lancey.

**MELBA**

I'm not talking about the old Shooter. He's been factory rebuilt. A new spirit dwelleth in him, and his gaze is on distant hills.

The Kid would like these cryptic words explained, but Lady Fingers descends on him.

**LADY FINGERS**

So you showed up after all. You're a braver boy than I thought, so much the worse for you.

**KID**

You think I'll be sorry I come?

**LADY FINGERS**

Bound to. That Lancey ain't human, he's one of them barracuda fish. He's liable to bleed to death, right on a flush hand before he give up to you. I seen him gut a fella so bad, the fella quit and got up and spit
red in the john and went square.

The Kid sees Lancey approaching, and turns to him.

**LANCEY**
Hello, Kid. Pleasure to know you.

**KID**
Lancey. I been looking forward a long time.

**LANCEY**
Sure, sure. You seem to know about everybody. Yeller from New Orleans?

**KID**
What do you say, Yeller? Still feeling salty with me?

**YELLER**
Forgiven long since.
(to Lancey)
We had a little jurisdictional dispute.

**KID**
I hustled a couple of boys, right in his territory.

**YELLER**
So I tried to tell him our rules down there. Colored marks are for colored hustlers.

**KID**
And I tried to tell him how I got no prejudice. When I'm on the edge of my stake, I hustle anybody at all, regardless of race, creed or color. Anybody at all.

**YELLER**
Including my girl.

**KID**
Hell, I figured I was doin' you a favor.

**YELLER**
You did.
Suddenly they both laugh over a private memory and shake hands, obviously old friends.

**LADY FINGERS**
(to Lancey)
Did you know Old Cottonhead died?

**LANCEY**
No, I hadn't heard.

**LADY FINGERS**
Heart give out in a high-low game.

**LANCEY**
(turning to The Kid)
How you feel, Kid?

**KID**
Great. You?

**LANCEY**
The best. You think maybe we ought to see if we can stir up some action?

**KID**
Whatever you say, Lancey. You're the --
(correcting himself)
You're our guest in this town.

**LANCEY**
Well, I'm kind of in the mood to play a little cards.

**KID**
I think we ought to be able to get a game together in this crowd.

**LANCEY**
But first you take a look at things -- make sure everything's the way you want it. I already been around.

**KID**
Thanks. I'll do that.

He turns toward the center of the room. The Shooter follows him.

**MED. SHOT - AT POKER TABLE - KID AND SHOOTER**
The old, solidly built wooden table has been covered with a white linen cloth on top of a blanket. The cloth is tied down under the rim so that the surface of the table is flat, tight and cushioned by the blanket. The Kid presses his fingers into it to test these factors.

**SHOOTER**
It's an old table. Everything's pretty old in this hotel.

**KID**
It's solid, that's what counts. And you got the top fixed perfect.

Lancey comes into the SHOT behind them.

**LANCEY**
Light all right for you?

**SHOOTER**
Two hundred watt bulb.

**KID**
Fine, excellent. Okay with you?

**LANCEY**
Sure, sure. Shooter's set us up just great.

**KID**
Sure has.

**SHOOTER**
Thank you, gents. Tried to do the best I could. (looks from one to the other)
Cards?

**LANCEY**
Why not?

**KID**
Good a time as any.

**SHOOTER**
(calling)
Hoban! Okay! (to Kid and Lancey)
You both know Joe Hoban. He's a draw poker man, but clean and straight as they come.

Hoban comes into the SHOT with a dispatch case, which he sets on the table. He unlocks it with a key and turns it upside down. Thirty sealed decks of cards spill on the table.

**HOBAN**

They come from the St. Louis Bridge Club, but they're poker size cards. They been bonded by the club steward and I seen him take them out of the safe. Shooter, Lady Fingers and me pick them up and come straight here with them.

**SHOOTER**

Hoban's selling them to us at five dollars a pack, with the usual guarantee. If it's proved any deck is spooked, he pays off the losers.

**LANCEY**

St. Louis Bridge Club, eh? Steward still that old yard bird Okra?

**HOBAN**

(disturbed)

That's him.

**LANCEY**

(not noticing; to Kid)

Old stud man, Okra.

**KID**

I don't know him.

**LANCEY**

Quite a character. Quite a character.

**HOBAN**

(anxiously)

Nobody heard from me what the cards were for, Kid.

There is a quick exchange of glances all around as the other
three realize what the imaginary suspicion is behind Hoban's defensive reaction.

LANCEY
(to Kid)
Been ten years since I seen or spoke to Old Okra.

KID
'Kay, fine. Don't worry about it, Lancey. Who's sitting down with us, Shooter?

SHOOTER
Four of us. Me, Pig, Yeller and Doc Sokal. If that's all right with you both?

KID
'Kay, fine.

LANCEY
Sure, sure.
(to Kid)
Shall we have a look at the decks?

CLOSE SHOT - KID AND LANCEY

with the pile of decks and the empty dispatch case on table in front of them. They start checking the decks one by one, each putting the ones he has covered in a pile for other's consideration. They examine the seals and the cellophane visually, and they also sniff both ends for odor of a hot iron. By the time they are through with this process; The Kid has found three decks he isn't satisfied with, and Lancy two. The Kid passes his three rejects to Lancey, who tosses them back into the dispatch case without looking at them. Then Lancey tries to submit his two to Kid, but The Kid waves them away, and Lancey throws too, into the case.
LANCEY
Well, Kid, what's your game?

CAMERA PULLS BACK to include the other four players, who have come up to the table, still not taking chairs until Lancey and The Kid have chosen theirs. Though Lancey's question is purely ritualistic, they look to The Kid for his reply.

KID
I don't mind stud poker if that's okay with you.

LANCEY
I got no objections to stud.
(to the others)
Gentlemen?

Consulting the others is a formality, but all four of them -- Yeller, Shooter, Pig and Sokal -- nod or grunt or otherwise indicate assent.

MED. SHOT - FEATURING BILL
across the room, he is indicating to The Shooter that he'd like a word with him before play begins.

MED. SHOT - FEATURING SHOOTER
He detaches himself from the group and sidles inconspicuously over to Bill.

BILL
Tell The Kid I have a suite on the fifth floor. He can drop up during the breaks. Bedroom all for him any time he wants a nap.

SHOOTER
That's thoughtful of you, Bill.

BILL
I'm a thoughtful man. I hope you are.
The Kid gestures to Lancey to choose his seat. Lancey acknowledges the courtesy, glances at the window and picks himself a chair facing away from it.

LANCEY
Privilege of age. Can't take the glare of the morning sun in my eyes.

The Kid, following protocol, moves to a seat directly across from Lancey's. The Shooter takes his place at the table halfway between The Kid and Lancey, and pulls the twenty-five eligible packs of cards to him.

SHOOTER
You want to have the usual brandy and coffee on hand, Kid? Anything special for you, Lancey?

LANCEY

SHOOTER
(glances around)
You got that, Hoban?
(to the table)
Gentlemen, if there are no objections, I'm the dealer. These rooms have been contracted for, and there will be an ante of ten dollars per chair, per day. During the breaks for me, Old Lady Fingers has agreed to deal, but she don't care to be a player --

LADY FINGERS' VOICE
Do too care!

CAMERA PANS to reveal Lady Fingers as she steps from among the spectators to a place behind Lancey.

LADY FINGERS
Can't afford to play, that's the real truth. Had a bad year and I'm way over my edge.

SHOOTER
Lady Fingers will get three dollars an hour from the ante, plus her room and food, and a five-minute break every hour. Gents?

**LANCEY**

Fine, Shooter man.

**KID**

'Kay with us.

**LADY FINGERS**

If you don't see me when you need me, call room three-oh-eight.

(taps Lancey's shoulder)

You know who else ain't with us no more? Miriam, widow used to run the kitchen game to South Chi. Lost two month's Relief at blackjack, coal dealer cut her credit, and she froze in her bed.

**THE PLAYERS - FEATURING THE KID**

The Kid has taken his roll from his pocket and is counting it out rapidly. The other players watch, interested to see how much he is putting out. After counting out one stack of thirty hundreds, he distributes the rest in stacks of twenties, tens and fives, folding each bill over once as protection against picking up more than one at a time.

**SHOOTER**

Gentlemen, this is a game of five-card stud poker. There is no limit. A dead man has one half hour to raise his roll outside and get back in the game.

The Kid has completed his count.

**REVERSE ANGLE - FEATURING LANCEY**

He takes the money from his satchel.

**LANCEY**

Five grand? Nice, tidy sum. I'll put out the same.
CAMERA PANS to Yeller.

**YELLER**
I swear I don't know what I'm doing sitting down with you titans, but maybe it's worth putting up five thousand for the educational value.

CAMERA PANS to Pig as he brings out a roll and drops it casually in front of him.

**PIG**
I'll play with what I have in my pocket till I have to send out for more. Twenty-seven, twenty-eight hundred, I don't know.

CAMERA PANS past The Kid to Sokal, who is counting out bills from an impressive roll.

**SOKAL**
Five G's, I'm with it. Don't mean I'm goin' blow it all, though.

CAMERA PANS to The Shooter, who is counting out a smaller stake than anyone.

**SHOOTER**
Last and certainly least --

He puts his money out without counting it, takes a deck of cards, rips the cellophane off it, takes the jokers and tosses them offhandedly to one side, not seeming to take aim.

**FEATURING THE JOKERS**

Heads turn as the cards sail through the air in unison, landing inside The Shooter's familiar hat, which is resting crown down on the mantelpiece. The spectators gape at display of dexterity.

**FEATURING THE SHOOTER**

He begins to shuffle and all eyes are upon him, not suspicion but from pure admiration. He is in peak form,
shuffling six times, once for each player and then the cards down before Lancey, who is to the right of him, with an empty chair in between.

CLOSE - LANCEY

He waives his privilege of cutting with a barely perceptible nod.

THE POKER TABLE

The Shooter acknowledges the compliment with the same sort of gesture. Then he begins to deal in his magnificently precise way, pitching each card so that it comes to a stop six inches in front of the player's money and in clear view of everyone at the table.

CLOSE SHOT - SHOOTER'S HANDS

With Sokal in b.g. It is notable that as The Shooter completes dealing hole cards and switches to the first up card, there is no visible difference in the motion of his hands. He calls the cards as he deals them.

SHOOTER
Seven, nine, trey, nine, ace, and The Shooter guns up a ten. Ace bets.

LANCEY
Ten dollars.

SHOOTER
Dealer folds.

SOKAL
Call the sawbuck.

CLOSE SHOT - FROM BEHIND KID

He looks at his hole card: an ace.

KID
I'm in.
PIG'S VOICE
Call.

YELLER'S VOICE
Call.

THE POKER TABLE
The Shooter deals again.

SHOOTER
King to the seven, pair of nines, deuce to the trey, queen-nine, ace-eight.

KID
Nines bet twenty bucks.

Each other player folds in turn. The Shooter pulls in the cards, and The Kid pulls in the seventy dollars. The Shooter shuffles and deals again.

SHOOTER
Queen, ten, king, four, ace again, and a king for The Shooter.

LANCEY
Ace bets ten dollars

SHOOTER
King over.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL
They are perched on the back of a love seat at the far end of the room, with their feet on the arms. This gives them a view of the table through a pair of opera glasses they share, but they are far enough from it to be able to discuss hands freely.

HOBAN
Shooter won't stay on a king or an ace if there's another one showing.

BILL
What's he have to have in the hole?

**HOBAN**

Ten or better. With no other ten showing.

**THE POKER TABLE**

The second round has been dealt. Sokal has a queen-eight, The Kid a pair of tens, Pig a king-seven, Lancey an ace-five. Yeller, like The Shooter, has folded on the first card. The Kid makes the same bet of twenty dollars, and the other three remaining players drop.

**LANCEY**

New deck.

Unhesitatingly, The Shooter pulls in the cards, separates them into four or five piles, and tears each pile in glances around, and Hoban comes up behind him. The Shooter hands him the torn-up cards and unseals another pack, going through the same routine of throwing the jokers into his hat.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - AT THE POKER TABLE**

It is around midnight, and there is a more settled look to the game; some of the players have removed their coats, and there is a good deal of smoke in the air. The Kid has a cup of coffee by him, presumably with brandy in it; Lancey has his frappe; Pig is drinking whiskey; the Shooter and Yeller have bottles of bear. It is the end of a hand. With about six hundred dollars in the pot, Pig, who has been called, turns over his hole card triumphantly.
PIG
Aces over eights.
(wait for a challenge,
but the others turn
their cards)
Thank you, gents.
(as he pulls in money,
to Yeller)
Be a laugh if the two champs ended
up cleaned.

CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY
He barely notices Pig's remark.

CLOSE SHOT - KID
He barely notices Lancey's reaction to Pig's remark.

CAMERA MOVES among the spectators, who also have a more
settled look about them. There is a bar, attended by a
uniformed HOTEL BELLMAN, and most of the people are
drinking.

We see in passing a couple go through the door to the
bedroom
and close it behind them. CAMERA HOLDS on the love seat
as
Bill rejoin Hoban on their perch.

BILL
Any action?

HOBAN
(shrugs)
What do you expect first five or six
hours?

BILL
Still feeling each other out?

HOBAN
Pig's ahead about a grand, Shooter
maybe three hundred.
(TIME LAPSE)

CLOSE SHOT - CARDS BEING DEALT
Sokal gets a nine of clubs, The Kid a six, Pig a queen,
Yeller a king, Lancey a jack, and The Shooter a four.
SHOOTER'S VOICE

King bets.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show the players. There is less oral accompaniment to the betting now.

YELLER

King says twenty.

Lancey calls, Shooter drops, Sokal calls, The Kid drops.

PIG

In for twenty.

SHOOTER

(dealing)

To the nine a ten, to the queen a seven, to the king a jack, and to the jack a jack.

LANCEY

Pair of jacks will venture a hundred dollars.

SOKAL

(who has the nine and ten of clubs showing)

I'm in.

PIG

(after studying the board)

Up two hundred dollars.

YELLER

(folding)

Leave it to the rich folk.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL

BILL

Lancey could be laying for him with three jacks.

HOBAN

Pig don't think so.

LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Call the two hundred.
Lancey puts in his money and so does Sokal.

SOKAL
I'm sticking.

The Shooter deals another round: an eight of clubs to Sokal, a second seven to Pig, a ten to Lancey.

SOKAL
Likewise.

PIG
(trying to be casual)
Bet the size of the pot. Nine hundred and eighty dollars.

LANCEY
In for nine eighty.

SOKAL
I'll play.

TWO SHOT - HOBAN AND BILL

BILL
What's with Lancey? I thought he'd raise with three jacks or drop with two pair.

HOBAN
He probably thinks Pig's faking the queens. Anyhow, Doc's liable take them both with a straight or a flush.

There is a good deal of suspense hanging on each card as The Shooter deals. Sokal gets a five of diamonds, and his disappointment is too great to conceal.
SHOOTER
Busted, no flush, no straight. Pair of sevens with a queen gets a nine. To the pair of jacks, a trey.

PIG
(counting his money, trying to be calm)
Pair of sevens will bet whatever I got here. Twenty-four hundred bucks.

LANCEY
I'll call your twenty-four hundred --

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID

He watches Lancey, puzzled; this isn't what he had expected.

LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)
-- and raise you whatever I have left.

The Kid relaxes; this is more the way he figured it.

THE POKER TABLE

Lancey is completely calm. Pig is shattered, his whole world suddenly blown apart.

LANCEY
Comes to fourteen hundred fifty dollars, Pig. Don't imagine you'll have any problem promoting that much in half an hour -- plus whatever you care to raise me.

All eyes are on Pig, which doesn't make it any easier for him. He just sits there, his hands shaking.

SHOOTER
Fourteen fifty to the queens. You want to take your half hour, Pig?

There is another long moment before Pig flips over his cards.

PIG
No, I'm out. Out of the game.

He looks at Lancey with malevolence. Lancey turns over his up cards and tosses them in front of The Shooter. Pig suddenly lunges toward the cards, wanting a look at Lancey's hole card, but Lancey is too quick for him and pushes the cards into the pack The Shooter is assembling.

**SHOOTER**

(to Pig)

You Tap City?

Pig is suffering, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of making the dread admission. Finally he nods. The Shooter takes a ten dollar bill from his own stake, and the other four remaining players each add a ten. The Shooter pushes the money toward Pig.

**PIG**

I got a woman.

**SHOOTER**

I thought you and Hilda were quits.

**PIG**

We're back.

The other players look at The Shooter to see if he is going to accept this statement at face value. He nods, that he does, and each man contributes another ten. The Shooter passes the second fifty to Pig.

**SHOOTER**

See you around, Pig.

**PLAYERS**

(ad lib)

So long, Pig -- See you -- 'Night.

**PIG**

(getting up)
So long.

CAMERA FOLLOWS him to the door. The spectators make room for him, no one saying anything. At the door, Pig turns back for his valedictory gesture.

**PIG**

Good luck -- Kid.

He goes out.

**CLOSE SHOT - LANCEY**

He has been rearranging his money, but Pig's words make his head jerk up and toward the door.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the other players, who react in dismay to the breach of form.

**SHOOTER**

He shouldn't have said that. Not after taking Tap City from the table.

**KID**

His woman's been giving him a rough time. Wants him to quit and go square.

**SOKAL**

At his age? Crazy.

**LANCEY**

He wants to wish anybody luck, doesn't bother me. Personally, I don't figure The Kid needs it.

**KID**

Thanks, Lancey.

With that, the tension is gone. But just to make sure, The Shooter pushes his chair back.

**SHOOTER**

I know it's early, men, but what about taking a little break?

*(TIME LAPSE)*
INT. POKER SUITE - BILL, MELBA AND THE SHOOTER

Melba fills a beer glass from a bottle and serves it to The Shooter.

BILL
(to Melba)
It always distresses me, a man reaching his middle years and still having no assurance of next week's income.

MELBA
I know what you mean. I like a man to have plenty of assurance.

The Shooter's gaze wanders o.s. CAMERA MOVES to FEATURE objects of his attention, who are Lady Fingers, Lancey and The Kid. The two men would like to talk to each other, but Lady Finger's is monopolizing Lancey, and he doesn't want to offend her.

LADY FINGERS
Spider Man died kind of slow. First he give them a kidney, then his gall bladder, and then they taking his whole damn stomach. You remember Spider Man, run the dice table down at Turk's Club to Memphis.

LANCEY
Who? Oh, Spider Man, sure, sure.

LADY FINGERS
He died kind of slow.

The Shooter comes to Lancey's rescue.

SHOOTER
Need your help, Lady Fingers... to make arrangements for food and shelter.

He whisks her away. Lancey and The Kid, finally facing each other alone, don't quite know how to begin.
LANCEY

Good crowd.

KID

Yeah. Nice-looking broads.

LANCEY

That's a fact.

KID

That was a pretty thing to watch what you done to Pig with those jacks.

LANCEY

Thanks, Kid. From you, that's nice to hear.

KID

When he bet out first, he was ready to think you had them back to back. Even when he bet the size of the pot, he figured there was still a chance you were laying for him. But when you called him, I could see it in his eyes he thought you had jacks and tens, and I knew you had him hooked.

LANCEY

You knew, did you? Before I raised?

KID

Oh, sure, I seen what you were pulling all along.

Lancey is a bit taken aback by The Kid's confident assertion, but he manages a smile.

LANCEY

You been to Miami, Kid?

KID

Not yet.

LANCEY

Beautiful town, lot of loose money around. You ought to come down some time.

KID

You mean it?
LANCEY
Sure, sure. Lot of room down there. Another spot you ought to work someday is Reno, Nevada.

KID
I heard.

LANCEY
You got to have nerves though. So much going on. Action everywhere you turn. You lose the feel of the cards when you're in so much action day in, day out.

KID
I'd like to make it out there.

LANCEY
There's different levels of action there -- you'd find yours, any kind you could ask for.

KID
I generally stick to stud.

LANCEY
Sure, sure, for eating money. But you know how it is, I like to lay off once in a while and try craps. Nothing serious -- I don't even think of it as work.

KID
Oh, I do that. I'll take a night off and shoot a little casino. Or even blackjack.

LANCEY
Your age, you don't need a regular vacation every year. But me, I have to forget the grind for a couple of weeks. I go to this place near Delray Beach, and the whole time I don't play anything but bridge.

KID
That's interesting. I could go for bridge if there was a way to do it without partners.
LANCEY
I'm not keeping you from your woman, am I?

KID
(after a slight hesitation)
No. We're -- she's gone away for a while. We're not sure we're looking for the same thing.

LANCEY
I'm sorry to hear that.

KID
I was hoping Christian would run with me and wouldn't try to make a big deal out of it.

LANCEY
But she tried?

KID
Yeah, and now I don't know. I don't figure a man can change his way because the way I see it a man's lucky he's got something going for him that he can hold on to. A man can't change his way for a woman.

LANCEY
Nooo, a man can't do that.

KID
I been wondering if it isn't maybe a better idea not to look for a fixed thing. Just tie in to something nice when you're away from the action, and enjoy it, and let it wear itself out.

LANCEY
(after a long moment)
That's very interesting you should say that. You're pretty young to have figured things out already.

KID
Well she didn't understand how it was with me and ---

LANCEY
(warmly)
Between us?

**KID**
There ain't but a few people, I guess who would understand --

**LANCNEY**
(as The Kid doesn't finish)
Kid, you're the best stud man I've seen in 35 years of action. You know that?

**KID**
Well -- thank you.

**LANCNEY**
And when it comes to broads, which is getting to be an academic problem --
I can look back now to the two or three I ever considered I might want to spend the rest of my life with, and you know what? I like it...
looking back on them, that is --

(then)
I always got a lot of companionship out of a good book.

**KID**
It's very educational, hearing what it's like for a man your age.

**LANCNEY**
Glad to be of help. And it's good we had this little talk so I know we can be friends regardless what happens.

**KID**
That sounds good to me. I didn't think you was coming in at me like a grudge match.

**LANCNEY**
No room for any kind of emotion in a fair game of stud. I learned that a long time ago.

**LADY FINGERS' VOICE (O.S.)**
Ready for some action, gentlemen.
They look at each other and then exit.

**ANGLE INCLUDING THE POKER TABLE**

Lady Fingers is sitting in Shooter's place, rippling and shuffling the cards. Yeller, Sokal, and The Shooter are either sitting at the table or standing near it. followed by The Kid, returns to the table.

**LADY FINGERS**

It's a whole New Deal. Good hands all around. Prosperity for everybody.

**LANCEY**

You're still good, Fingers.

**LADY FINGERS**

Getting crippled up, Lancey. Not many of the old gang left. You heard Whistling Sam was gone?

**LANCEY**

No, I didn't hear.

**LADY FINGERS**

I was the one got called to the morgue to identify him. I don't suppose you seen anybody been run over by a twelve-ton bulldozer.

**LANCEY**

No, can't say that I have.

**LADY FINGERS**

Don't go out of your way.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**INT. POKER SUITE - TOWARD WINDOWS**

Morning sunlight is streaming in.

**THE POKER TABLE**

The Kid, facing the sun, wears his eyeshade. The Shooter has resumed the deal and now hands out last cards to Sokal, The Kid and himself.
SHOOTER
Bet the pot. Four hundred and twenty dollars.

SOKAL
Fold.

KID
It's yours.

SHOOTER
Thanks, gents. Makes me exactly even. This kind of a game, that's a smart place to quit.
(takes his money off the table)
Just do the dealing, if that's all right with everybody.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

It is later in the morning. Three players are left in the hand on the last card: Yeller with nothing higher than a jack, Lancey with a king-queen showing and Sokal with an ace-king.

SHOOTER
Ace-king is the high man.

SOKAL
Shoot the works.
(counts it out)
Nine hundred and thirty bucks.

YELLER
I'm over.

LANCEY
(putting out the money)
What have you got?

SOKAL
(unhappily)
Doesn't matter. If you can call me, you beat me. Ace-king high.
LANCEY
(turning an ace)
Ace-king-queen high.

YELLER
(to The Kid)
I had them both with a pair of fives.

SOKAL
Winds it up for me, men. And I can't say it's been a pleasure.
(despairingly)
That one I was sure I could steal.

YELLER
Lancey has a built-in burglar alarm. I'm also withdrawing from the field of battle, gentlemen. Settle for the seventeen hundred I've already dropped.

Yeller pulls in the money in front of him. There is now about $19,500 left on the table, $11,500 in front of Lancey, $8,000 in front of The Kid.

LANCEY
(to The Kid)
Well, just the two of us.

KID
Yeah, just the two of us. Deal them, Shooter Man.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

There is around $1,500 in the pot. Shooter deals an unhelpful card to Lancey's pair of aces, and a nine to The Kid's king-queen-ten.

KID
Cost you a grand.

LANCEY
Compulsory call, Kid.

The Kid turns up a jack and pulls in the money.
(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

The last bet has been made and there is about $3000 in the pot. Lancey exposes his hole card.

LANCEY
Two pair, jacks up.

KID
Kings up.

He takes in the money.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

There is $2500 in the pot. Lancey shows a pair of kings, The Kid an ace and three odd cards. The Shooter deals a nine to Lancey.

THE KID
He is watching The Shooter intently.

FEATURING THE SHOOTER'S HANDS - KID'S P.O.V.

The dealing motion looks perfectly legitimate as The Shooter gives The Kid an ace. Lancey's hand reaches into the SHOT to turn over his up cards.

LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Studded again.

THE KID
He takes the money in slowly, his eyes on The Shooter. Now the distribution of money has been reversed. The Kid has something under $12,000, Lancey something under $8,000.

THE SHOOTER
He avoids meeting The Kid's gaze.

**(TIME LAPSE)**

**THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID**

On the fourth card Lancey shows a pair of sevens, The Kid a pair of eights and a ten.

**LANCEY**

Two thousand dollars.

The Kid lifts his hole card and we see it is a ten.

**KID**

Call two thousand.

He turns to watch The Shooter.

**FEATURING THE SHOOTER'S HANDS - KID'S P.O.V.**

Again there is no indication of improper dealing as The Shooter gives Lancey an odd card and The Kid a ten, completing his full house.

**LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)**

Two thousand more.

**THE POKER TABLE**

**KID**

Take it. I can't beat three sevens.  
(then as The Shooter's eyes flicker with surprise)  
I'd like a break to get some food and sleep -- I'm winners so it isn't up to me to say it but I'm saying it anyway.

He exits. After a moment The Shooter follows. Lancey watches them go then rises, apparently still fresh and strong. Lady Fingers joins him.

**LANCEY**

(pleasantly)  
My dear, that young man is a stud poker-playing son-of-a-bitch.
LADY FINGERS
Gettin' to you, Lancey?

Lancey looks at her a moment, then smiles.

LANCEY
(softly)
Not yet he isn't.

He moves through the crowd, then exits.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - BILL'S SUITE - THE KID & SHOOTER

They are alone in the room. Shooter is uncomfortable and would like to be elsewhere but The Kid is standing in front of the closed door.

THE KID
Now, just what the hell are you trying to pull?

SHOOTER
(trying to bluff it)
Nothing -- what are you talking about?

The Kid grabs him and slams him against the wall.

THE KID
You, Shooter Man -- you been feeding me cards for an hour.

SHOOTER
(angry and ashamed)
The hell I was.

(he waits a brief moment then eases away from The Kid)

Christ, Kid, even if I was you couldn't spot it -- I'm too good a mechanic for anybody to spot it.

THE KID
(grabbing him and slamming him against the wall again)
But I was looking for it, Shooter --
four times you give me the cards I need.

SHOOTER
(a little shrill)
You seen it before often enough. One player draws four good ones.

THE KID
Never in a game when I been told ahead the dealer has a stake in my coming out on top.

SHOOTER
(slumping)
My woman told you.

THE KID
She told me enough to make me start thinking.

SHOOTER
(almost pleading)
Why should you bitch if I give you a little help?

THE KID
Why, you dumb bastard? -- You have to ask me why.
(ready to hit him)
I could break you apart for what you've done.

SHOOTER
(backing off)
Kid, you got to understand. It wasn't my idea --

THE KID
Well who the hell's was it then -- Schlaegel? --

SHOOTER
He's got the squeeze on me Kid and he's meaner than hell. He'll cut me up if I don't come through.
(then)
You think I wanted to deal a phony game? You think it don't mean something to me? I never done a crooked thing before in my life.
THE KID
My ass bleeds for you -- Now you get straight on this. No fix. You come along straight or I blow it wide open.

SHOOTER
He's liable to kill me.

THE KID
He ain't goin' to do nothin' to you except pay off because I'm goin' to win.

SHOOTER
It is a hell of a chance to take.

THE KID
You got no choice.

SHOOTER
He ain't goin' to like it.

THE KID
(almost yelling at him)
He ain't goin' to know.
(then quietly)
Shooter, I'm goin' to win this one -- win it my way -- and you ride with me or you're out, finished.

SHOOTER
I ride with you.

THE KID
You better not forget it -- now beat it. I need some sleep.

Shooter looks at him, then moves towards the door.

THE KID
Tell Mr. Schlaegel I accept his offer to use the room.

The Shooter goes out. The Kid crosses to the phone.

THE KID
(into phone)
I want to be called at 4 p.m. on the nose. For sure -- Thanks.
CUT TO

INT. LANCEY'S ROOM

In the privacy of his room he shows how close he is to exhaustion. Wearily, he sits on the bed and begins to remove his shoes. Then, catching his reflection in the mirror, straightens.

LANCEY
Not yet he isn't. But he damn well might.

CUT TO

INT. BEDROOM, BILL'S SUITE - CLOSE SHOT - MELBA

She is in the final stages of undressing. CAMERA MOVES with her as she steps to The Kid's bedside and gets into bed with him. Having accomplished this without waking him, she speaks into his ear in imitation of a hotel phone operator.

MELBA
Good afternoon, sir. It's exactly four o'clock.

He awakens in considerable confusion. Melba is amused by his difficulty in adjusting to his circumstances.

MELBA
It's really only about twenty-five to four. You can stay right where you are.

THE KID
I don't want you to think I'm getting too personal, but you mind telling me how the hell you come to be here?

MELBA
You mean you don't remember last night? We drank all that champagne and you said "Let's get married right away," and we chartered a plane to --
THE KID
Can it --
   (then)
Where's Shooter?

MELBA
I locked the door. It's incredible
the way you invariably worry about
The Shooter.

THE KID
It's incredible the way you invariably
don't.

MELBA
Worrying takes time and we don't
have a lot.

THE KID
We're supposed to sit down again at
half past four.

MELBA
Does it really matter so much to you
now, that sense of obligation to The
Shooter?

THE KID
   (thinking about Shooter)
I got no obligations to The Shooter.
   (then to Melba)
Or to you.

MELBA
Obligations are not what I have in
mind.

CUT TO

INT. LANCEY'S ROOM

He is shaving. Apparently much stronger but his hand is
shaking. He looks at it. It steadies. After a moment he
smiles
a little.

CUT TO

INT. BATHROOM, BILL'S SUITE
CAMERA is on the shower door as the SOUND of running water ceases. The Kid can be seen indistinctly through the door.

**THE KID**
Reach me a towel?

Melba, who is dressed again and applying her lipstick, comes into the SHOT, takes a towel from a rack and hands it to him after he opens the shower door. He gives himself a quick once-over with it, the secures it around his waist, steps out of the shower stall, and begins the process of shaving. Melba meanwhile finishes restoring her makeup.

**MELBA**
You any idea how much The Shooter has involved in this game of yours?

**THE KID**
If Schlaegel bet as much on me as I heard, I guess he'd pay a nice piece of change to be sure I won.

**MELBA**
It's worse than that. Schlaegel staked him for three years. He has his hooks so deep in Shooter Man, he'll take out his liver when he pulls them out.

The Kid stops shaving and looks at her.

**THE KID**
You asking me to go along with the fix?

**MELBA**
I'm asking you to consider whether your ego is worth destroying another man's whole life.

**THE KID**
You're still working for him. On my time you're still working for him.

**MELBA**
What kind of switch is this? You criticize me for trying to chippie on him, then I get a little loyal and you're at me for that.

THE KID
No -- I don't hold it against you. You wanting to make things right for him -- but this game I handle my way -- win, lose, or draw.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

MELBA
Rolls and coffee for the hard-headed hero.

CAMERA PANS to take in the view of the bedroom as she crosses it to the door, talking as she goes.

MELBA
Believe me Kid there is too much at stake for us to rely on your doing it on your own.

She has paused at the door to finish her sentence. Now she unlocks and opens it -- to Christian. Melba is so taken she can't do anything but stand there holding the door open. The Kid, in the bathroom in f.g., is similarly frozen in his tracks. After a moment Christian advances into the

REVERSE ANGLE - CHRISTIAN IN F.G.

The scene as it looks to Christian is circumstantially incriminating. CAMERA MOVES with her gaze from The Kid to the one mussed bed, to Melba. The faces and the silence of the two people are even more incriminating than the circumstances.

CHRISTIAN
Hello, Kid. Hello, Melba.
(a pause)
You said wait home 'til you let me know.
THE KID
Yeah, that's what I said. We took a break in the game to catch some sleep. Shooter sent his woman up here to wake me up.

MELBA
Yeah, I woke him up.

CHRISTIAN
It don't take much.

MELBA
No, I didn't find it any trouble. (awkwardly)
Well, you children don't need me, that's for sure. See you downstairs. (to Christian)
You, too, honey, right?

CHRISTIAN
I'll be around if The Kid wants me.

THE KID
See you, Melba. Thanks.

MELBA
Por nada, as they say. It was nothing.

She walks past CAMERA and a moment later comes the SOUND of the door closing behind her. The Kid, who has moved into the bedroom, crosses to his clothes on a chair, and picks up his undershorts and trousers. He returns to the bathroom, using the door for partial concealment as he removes his towel and puts on his shorts and trousers.

THE KID
You been to the place?

CHRISTIAN
No, I've got my bag downstairs. Maybe I'll take it over later on tonight.

THE KID
How's your Mama and Papa?
CHRISTIAN
Fine. How's the game going?

The Kid fastens his trousers and returns to the basin to
give his face a last few strokes with the razor and
wash off
the soap.

THE KID
It's come to be just me and Lancey.

He comes back into the bedroom to finish dressing. As
his movement brings him fairly close to Christian, he
realizes
he hasn't kissed her, and repairs the omission before
putting his shirt on.

CHRISTIAN
(after the kiss)
I was wondering.

THE KID
I got my mind on the cards.

CHRISTIAN
I know. And I don't want to rattle you. We got plenty to talk about,
but it can all wait. Except I want to say this. I came back because I
figured if it was going to work with us, it's silly me sitting home with
Mama while you're playing your big game. I mean if I'm any use to you
at all, this is when it's most important.

To The Kid preoccupied by the game and the fix, feeling
both affection and guilt. The idea that she can be any use
against Lancey is one he can't grasp.

THE KID
I'm glad you came, Christian. You
got as much right here as anybody.
(them)
More right, I should have said.

CHRISTIAN
Should you?

**THE KID**
Hell, yes. The change I come out with when I win this one, you're going to be the one to spend it.

He moves toward the door.

**CHRISTIAN**
Eric --

**THE KID**
(turning back)
Look, I said I'm glad you came -- and that's all until I wrap this up -- I'm a poker player, remember?

She looks at him. After a moment he exits. She follows.

CUT TO:

**THE POKER TABLE**

It is evening. Lady Fingers deals a first up card to the two players. The Kid gets an eight, Lancey a jack.

**THE KID**
The eight'll try two bills.

**LANCEY**
(turning his card)
No stay.

Lady Fingers scoops up the cards, shuffles them into the rest of the deck, submits it to Lancey for his cut, and deals them another two cards apiece -- all in the space of seconds. The Kid gets a queen, Lancey a nine.

**THE KID**
Two hundred.

**LANCEY**
(turning his card)
No stay.

INT. POKER SUITE
loveseat
sits
speaks

CAMERA starts on Yeller, who is stretched out on the loveseat with his eyes closed and PANS UP to INCLUDE Hoban, who sits at the observation post with the binoculars. Yeller speaks without opening his eyes.

YELLER
Anything?

HOBAN
Naaa, Kid paired kings. He wins a hundred.

CAMERA MOVES on PAST a window, showing it is night outside; past a group of other spectators; past Bill, Shooter and Melba who watch the game grimly; and finally to the table, where The Shooter is dealing again. The Kid is down to his undershirt, and even Lancey has made a few concessions to comfort. The players have just been dealt their third cards. Christian moves up to stand behind The Kid.

LANCEY
Queen bets another C-note.

THE KID
(folding)
Take it away.

He looks up at Christian.

THE KID
Go read a magazine, honey.

She hesitates. Then moves away. Lancey watches this.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - CHRISTIAN

It is later at night. The magazine lies open on Christian's lap; she is staring absentely into space.
**LADY FINGERS' VOICE (O.S.)**
All right, gents. I'm declaring a break.

The announcement rouses Christian from her reverie.

**THE POKER TABLE**
Lady Fingers is in the dealer's chair. The two players look pretty weary.

**LADY FINGERS**

I break.

**THE KID**

I don't want a break.

**LANCEY**

Well, I don't either.

**THE KID**

Deal.

Lady Fingers puts down the deck. Picks up a new one.

**LANCEY**

(snapping)
Same deck is good enough.

**THE KID**

I want a new deck.

**LANCEY**

Alright, alright -- A new deck then, Jesus.

**THE KID**

Deal.

Lady Fingers looks at the two men for a long moment. Puts the cards down.

**LADY FINGERS**

You want to deal? Then deal them yourselves. I'm going to the john. I'm going to get something to eat, and I'm going to take a nap. You barracudas can snap all you want but at each other -- I'm taking a break and if you don't like it you can
both go to hell.

She turns and stalks off. Lancey and The Kid look at each other for a moment, then both grin.

THE KID
I guess we been told.

LANCEY
Looks that way.

THE KID
(rising)
See you in about 3/4 of an hour, Lancey, right?

LANCEY
Make it an hour. Old bones need a little more time to loosen up.

THE KID
(meaning it)
Listen, I think it is amazing you've been able to keep going this long.

As he heads for the door, Lancey reacts to this. Then stands the not nobody is door.

by the

INT. POKER SUITE

CHRISTIAN
(taking his hand)
Eric --

SHOOTER
(simultaneously)
Your fan on the fifth floor wants you to have a bite with him. Alone.

KID
There's nothing to talk about.

**SHOOTER**
You better, Kid. You don't, you're only making worse trouble.

Christian scans both their faces as they talk... concerned.

**THE KID**
If you think so.
(to Christian)
Sorry.

**CHRISTIAN**
What's wrong?

**THE KID**
Nothing, Nothing you have to worry about. I'll see you later.

He heads for the door. Christian looks after him.

**THE KID**
Get something to eat.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BILL'S SUITE**

Bill and The Kid are sitting at a room-service table. Bill nibbles at some cheese and crackers while The Kid tackles a large steak. Felix, the chauffeur, stands in attendance on them.

**BILL**
I thought it would be better if you and I sat down together to see if we couldn't work out our differences. Felix!

He motions to Felix, indicating a wine bottle on the table. Felix steps over and refills The Kid's glass.

**THE KID**
What I told The Shooter goes.
BILL
Are you saying no before we've even discussed it? Am I to feel all my arguments will be wasted?

The Kid just looks at him -- then returns to his meal.

BILL
I'll skip to the final argument.
(then)
More salad, perhaps?

He makes a peremptory gesture to Felix, who springs forward to offer the salad bowl to The Kid.

BILL
The Shooter will be back dealing when you start again. He will give you an occasional helpful card.

THE KID
That's an argument?

BILL
That's a fact. I'm coming to the argument.

THE KID
I'll give you a fact. I won't let it happen.

BILL
Is that knife sharp enough? Felix.

Felix jumps into action again. He moves to The Kid's side, reaches into a breast pocket and takes out a switch blade, which he clocks open an inch or two from The Kid's neck. It is an extremely ugly-looking and menacing weapon.

BILL
See if it cuts better with that.

Felix hands the knife to The Kid, who tries it on his steak.

BILL
Sharp?
THE KID
Very. But it don't cut any ice with me.

He jams the knife in the table and snaps off the blade.

THE KID
(rising)
Not this time. He exits.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR

As The Kid exits Christian is waiting for him. He moves down the corridor, preoccupied. She follows.

THE KID
Did you eat?

CHRISTIAN
No.

THE KID
(stops, looks at her irritated)
Why not, for Chris sakes?

CHRISTIAN
Eric --

THE KID
(moving away)
You should eat something.

CHRISTIAN
(loudly, stopping)
I've got to talk to you.

He stops, looks at her.

THE KID
Talk.

CHRISTIAN
(fumbling)
It's -- about us. What's going to happen?

THE KID
(interrupting)
What's going to happen? What's going to happen for Chris sake is I'm going
to win the game.
   (then more softly)
You go back to the apartment, honey,
this might take two more days.

   CHRISTIAN
   (flatly)
If I go, I'm not going back to the
apartment. If I go -- I'm just going.

   THE KID
   (after a long moment)
Well, that's up to you, Christian.

He looks at her a moment longer then moves up the
corridor.
She watches him, then turns. Standing in the open door
some
distance away are Schlaegel and Felix.

   CUT TO:

   INT. POKER SUITE - THE SHOOTER'S HANDS

Shuffling the cards. CAMERA PULLS BACK enough to see
his
CLOSE
on
The Kid. Finally CAMERA PANS back to The Kid.

   THE KID
   I told you, Shooter -- I won't go
   for it.

   THE POKER TABLE - INCLUDING BILL

Both The Shooter and Bill are aware of a portentous
note in
The Kid's tone.

   LANCEY
   What's up?

   THE KID
The Shooter's not well. He didn't
want to spoil the game, but he ought
to be resting... He ought to be in
the hospital.
LANCEY
Well, we got Lady Fingers. Or we can deal ourselves.

SHOOTER
I'm okay. What The Kid's talking about is nothing. It's just not important.

THE KID
It is to me... You want to kill yourself, do it on your own time.

Lancey looks from The Kid to The Shooter, sensing that there may be something more behind this, but not knowing just what.

LANCEY
I got to go along with that, Shooter. Lady Fingers! You ready?

CLOSE SHOT - LADY FINGERS
Rising from her chair.

LADY FINGERS
Like Eddie the Dude said on his deathbed, I'm as ready as I'll ever be.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - CLOSE SHOT - THE KID AND POKER HAND
The four cards showing are the ace, ten and two little clubs. As CAMERA PULLS BACK we also have time to note The Kid's stake. He is still ahead. Lancey counts out five hundred dollars from his stake, leaving about thirteen thousand, and puts it into a pot that already contains around a thousand.

LANCEY
I can't persuade myself you have the flush.

The Kid turns up the jack of clubs.
LANCEY

Now I can.

The Kid pulls in the money.

(TIME LAPSE)

INT. POKER SUITE - THE KID - LANCEY - AND POKER HANDS

Both men are showing the strain. Perhaps Lancey the most as he appears to be consistently losing. Showing are two nines and two odd cards.

LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)

I'm going to pay the price to look at that third nine.

The kid turns up another nine and reaches for the money.

LANCEY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Caveat emptor. New deck, please.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE - FROM BEHIND THE KID

Lancey's pair of eights and two odd cards against his pair of queens. He takes another look at his hole card, and we see that it is of no help to him.

THE KID

Pair of eights bets an even thousand dollars.

HOBAN AND YELLER

They are both sitting on the back of the loveseat now. The binoculars pass from one to the other. Both men are tense over the growing excitement of the game.

YELLER

Ten bucks and my notoriously fallible instinct tells me the boy is bluffing this time.
HOBAN

Mark it.

CAMERA MOVES to the other four remaining spectators: Christian, Melba, The Shooter and Bill. They are close enough to see the cards but too close to discuss them.

THE POKER TABLE

The kid has almost half the money in front of him now, and is playing with increasing assurance and pressure.

LANCEY

(turning his cards)
I'm not that curious.

HOBAN AND YELLER

HOBAN

(excitement in his voice)
The Kid is pushing it and making it stick.

CAMERA MOVES to the other four spectators as they react to The Kid's successful streak.

SHOOTER

(in a low voice)
He's getting to him.

And it looks that way. Lancey appears old and unsure. The Kid sharp and cold. A young barracuda moving in for the kill.

CAMERA MOVES in close to Christian as she tries to catch The Kid's eye. Thinking she has it, she smiles her encouragement.

FEATURING THE KID

He looks right at her and doesn't seem to see her. Lady Fingers has dealt the first up cards of a new hand, and Lancey is high.
LANCEY
Two hundred.

THE KID
And up five.

LANCEY
Fold.

CLOSE - CHRISTIAN

Amid the growing excitement and tension she is a complete outsider.

(TIME LAPSE)

THE POKER TABLE

The Kid shows two jacks and two odd cards; Lancey a pair of aces and two odd cards. Lancey puts about eight hundred dollars into the pot.

LANCEY
Betting the jack isn't there, Kid.

The Kid exposes his hidden jack.

SHOOTER, BILL AND MELBA

Greed and an almost vicious satisfaction marks their faces as they watch Lancey falter. The Shooter whispers to just loud enough for the girl to hear.

SHOOTER
We're in -- I think he's got him.

Christian looks at them, then at The Kid. Hesitates a moment then suddenly gets to her feet and starts for the door. Melba notices her, and even she doesn't have time to question where she goes. CAMERA FOLLOWS Christian to the suite entrance, she picks up her bag then turns to look back at the

FEATURING THE KID
The place where Christian was sitting is right in his line of vision but he hasn't observed her departure.

CLOSE SHOT - CHRISTIAN

She goes on out the door.

INT. POKER SUITE - ANGLE INCLUDING WINDOW

The second dawn of the contest is near at hand. The room, continuously lived in for so long by so many people, is a shambles of dirty glasses and plates, empty bottles, wastebaskets and ash trays, and frayed people. At the poker table, Lady Fingers is dealing a new hand.

LADY FINGERS
A jack and a ten. Jack bets.

CAMERA MOVES in close enough for us to see the cards. Lancey has the jack of hearts, The Kid the ten of clubs.

LANCEY
Jack is willing to wager two hundred dollars.

The Kid takes his first look at his hole card.

CLOSE SHOT - SHOWING FACE OF HOLE CARD

It is the queen of hearts.

THE KID
And up five hundred.

Lancey looks at him a long moment. His face pale and shaken, pressing badly, are a strong handicap for the long pull. Then his face settles as he considers.The Kid is beating him. Pushing -- buying -- always and Lancey knows he is losing one hand at a time, not but consistently and inevitably. His age and fatigue
if he had come to a decision. He smiles lightly summoning some last reserve of strength, almost as if he knows this will be the last hand, win or lose.

LANCEY
Call your five hundred and five hundred more.

THE KID
(after a brief hesitation)
Call.

HOBAN AND YELLER

HOBAN
Fifty to one hundred says Lancey paired his jacks.

YELLER
Mark it.

THE POKER TABLE
Lady Fingers deals the ten of diamonds to The Kid, giving him a pair, and the ten of hearts to Lancey.

LADY FINGERS
Pair of tens. Jack, ten of hearts.

THE KID
Five hundred.

LANCEY
Your five hundred -- and up one thousand.

The raise is a surprise. The Kid's eyes go up to study Lancey's face, even though he knows what a futile effort that is.

HOBAN AND YELLER

HOBAN
Fifty to seventy-five he's got the jacks wired.

YELLER
Mark it -- Could be a high heart. Queen's the best, but that old man can be cocky with an ace or a deuce. 'Specially having one of The Kid's tens.

**THE POKER TABLE**

**LADY FINGERS**

One thousand to the tens.

**THE KID**

Call.

**LADY FINGERS**

(dealing)

A third ten, and a nine of hearts to the ten, jack.

**SERIES OF ANGLES**

The Kid, Lancey, Shooter, Melba, Schlaegel, Yeller, Hoban and others as they realize this could be the big hand.

**HOBAN**

He'll run. He's beat on the board anyway you look at it. Even if he has the jacks it is better than eight to one against improving.

**YELLER**

He won't run and I don't think he's got the jacks. I think he's going for the flush.

**THE KID**

(after a moment)

Two thousand, five hundred dollars.

Lancey looks at him, then at the cards. The moment stretches.

**LADY FINGERS**

(finally)

Two thousand, five hundred dollars to the three hearts.

Lancey looks at her. His face briefly showing his anger. The Kid notices this and reacts.
LANCEY
(finally, casually)
Reasonable bet. Two thousand five hundred.
  (he counts out the money to Lady Fingers)
Deal them.

SHOOTER
(knowing this is it)
He's going for it and The Kid's got him. He's going all the way.

LADY FINGERS
(dealing)
A queen of diamonds to the three tens.
  (a note of excitement in her voice)
And an eight of hearts to the possible flush. Possible straight flush. Three tens bet.

The Kid checks the amount of money in front of him.

THE SHOOTER AND BILL
They exchange a quick look of satisfaction, and then their eyes go back to the cards.

HOBAN AND YELLER
They each take a quick turn with the binoculars.

HOBAN
If The Kid bets into the flush he's filled up with a queen in the hole.

YELLER
If The Man has a flush or a straight, he goes under.
  (then)
  But not with both.

FROM BEHIND THE KID
He looks at his hole card. It is still the queen of hearts.
He has a full house, which has to be the winning hand unless Lancey had the audacity to bet out with a jack-seven of
hearts, and to raise The Kid with a jack-ten-seven.

THE KID
Bet what's in front of me. Make it fifty-four hundred bucks.

He counts out all his money except a few smaller bills.

THE WATCHERS
Reacting.

FEATURING LANCEY
He takes his time before he responds.

LANCEY
Fifty-four hundred bucks is a nice piece of money.
(counting it out)
I see the bet and raise sixty-seven hundred.

Slowly and deliberately, revealing nothing in his face, he reaches into his breast pocket and takes out a slim wallet and begins to let the bills flutter out on the table. The Kid looks at him frozen.

THE SHOOTER AND BILL
Bill hisses softly into The Shooter's ear.

BILL
Kid has him, doesn't he?

But The Shooter, like the Kid, is white-faced and frozen by the raise.

THE REMAINING SPECTATORS
They crowd in close to the table: Hoban, Yeller, Bill, The Shooter, and Melba.

KID
(after a long moment)
I'm taking my half hour to raise my stake.
LADY FINGERS
I declare a thirty-minute break.
Leave your cards and money on the table. The game will start again at five forty-five.

LANCEY
I'll take your marker, Kid.

KID
I can raise it.

LANCEY
I know you can.

KID
Long as you know.
(he raps the table)
-- Call.

LANCEY
(turns up a heart seven)
Straight flush to the jack -- That's $6700 you owe me, Kid.

CLOSE SHOT - THE KID
There is nothing to be gained from a poker face now, and he reacts with a stunned expression in which all the accumulated strain and fatigue is beginning to show. CAMERA MOVES among the spectators: Hoban and Yeller, who are sorry for The Kid and admiring of Lancey; Bill, who is all the more angry at his defeat because his hopes were up; The Shooter, who is a very unhappy man; and Melba, whose anger at the Kid is balanced by her fear of Schlaegel and what will happen to The Shooter and possibly to her.

THE POKER TABLE
Lancey pulls in the money while The Kid stares at him dumbly. Lady Fingers riffles the cards.
LANCEY
New deck.

LADY FINGERS
Are you playing, Kid? You got a half an hour to raise your stake.

KID
No -- I'm through.

LADY FINGERS
(formally)
Gentlemen, this game is over.

LANCEY
You're one hell of a poker player, Kid. That was a rough hand.

KID
Thanks.

LANCEY
What's the tab for the whole show?

As he settles up, the CAMERA follows The Kid to his brandy bottle. As he pours himself a slug, Melba and Shooter join him.

CLOSER ANGLE

MELBA
You had to do it, didn't you -- you had to go for it your own way.
   (then, as The Kid doesn't answer)
Well, sonny, I hope you learned something. I know we sure as hell did.

KID
Where's Christian?

MELBA
She's gone. She's got too much sense to stick with a two bit loser.

SHOOTER
Shut up.
   (then:)
Sorry, Kid.
KID
Yeah.
(then:)
I should have known he had it, Shooter Man. I walked into it.

SHOOTER
(trying to grin as Schlaegel and Felix move up)
Well, Kid, it's like I said -- you just wasn't ready.

BILL
(to The Shooter)
Are you ready, Shooter Man? We're having a meeting and I suggest you join us.

Shooter looks at him a moment and nods, and taking Melba by the arm, moves toward the door followed by Felix.

MELBA
Why me -- I'm not part of this.

SHOOTER
(jerking her forward)
Oh, yes you are -- you and your big mouth -- you're part of it all right.

SCHLAEGEL
He's right, my dear. Now run along with Felix. We're going to have a long talk about that big mouth of yours.

Melba starts to protest, but Felix jerks her out the door.

Shooter hesitates, then follows.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Schlaegel turns to The Kid.

SCHLAEGEL
I was wrong. I figured you for brains. But you're a loser, Kid. You had a chance to play with grownups and you ran.

(then, as Lancey and
Lady Fingers approach
They weren't playing your game. They were playing mine. Think about that while you find a place to hide. But hide good, Kid -- because I got a message for you and I'm going to see it delivered.

The Kid looks at him, looks at Lancey and Lady Fingers, wondering about what Schlaegel has said, angry about it.

THE KID
Any time.

Schlaegel nods, moves to the door.

NEW ANGLE
Lancey and Lady Fingers join The Kid.

LADY FINGERS
Never thought I'd see the day. You raising tens on a lousy three-flush.

LANCEY
Gets down to what it's all about, doesn't it? Making the wrong play at the right time.

THE KID
(sharply)
That's what it's all about?
(then, as Lancey looks at him and doesn't answer)
You were crazy -- odds are three hundred to one against.

LANCEY
(after a moment)
I don't play a percentage game. I play stud poker my way. And I got the money and you got the questions. Figure that out.
(then, not unkindly)
You're good. But as long as I'm around, you're second best, Kid... and you might as well learn to live with it.

The Kid looks at him and doesn't answer.
LANCEY
Look me up if you're in Miami after Christmas. Stillson Hotel.

He smiles his very pleasant smile and goes out the door.

SCENE

Lancey stops surrounded by a crowd of admirers offering their congratulations. The Kid watches for a moment then takes a long drink out of the bottle and eases through the crowd and out the door.

INT. CORRIDOR

as The Kid moves down the hall and enters the elevator.

INT. LOBBY

as he moves through the almost deserted lobby into the street.

EXT. ST. LOUIS STREET - DAWN EFFECT

SERIES OF ANGLES of the Kid walking alone through the city. During the above there is an impression someone is following him.

EXT. DESERTED STREET NEAR THE KID'S APARTMENT

He turns a corner and there is a man blocking his path. Suddenly three men move in behind him. He turns,

CLOSER ANGLE

The men are four of the original seven players he hustled in the opening scene.

NOTE: During the progression of the game first one, then two, then all four men will be included among the observers.
Always in the background, never positively identified. Their presence should be felt if not recognized.

**DANNY**

So it ain't Eric Stone, from the foundry. It's the Cincinnati Kid, King of the stud poker players.

**THE KID**

No -- not the King -- not much of anything right now.

**DANNY**

(moving towards him)

We'll start with giving you back what you gave me.

He moves toward The Kid.

**CHRISTIAN (O.S.)**

Eric --

The men hesitate.

**NEW ANGLE**

as Christian gets out of a taxi.

**DANNY**

(as she moves toward them)

Tell her good-bye, sport. You ain't going any place.

**THE KID**

I know that.

He crosses to Christian.

**CHRISTIAN**

Are you all right?

**CLOSER ANGLE**

**THE KID**

I'm fine.

(then)

Weren't you going to say good-bye?

**CHRISTIAN**

I said good-bye.
THE KID
Yeah, I guess you did.
(then)
You don't know if I won or lost do you?

CHRISTIAN
No -- it doesn't really matter.
(then after a long moment)
I love you, Kid -- and it's not enough.

THE KID
Yeah, I know.

TAXI DRIVER
(calling)
Listen, Lady, it's coming on the morning rush. I got to have one fare after another or I'm behind for the day.

Christian doesn't answer. She looks at The Kid for a long moment, then turns and goes. He watches her. She enters the cab and it leaves. The Kid just stands there.

DIFFERENT ANGLE
Danny and the others move up around him. The Kid ignores them. After a moment Danny swings from behind and knocks him to the pavement. He lies there stunned for a moment. They look down at him. Then he comes up. He flattens two in the process of being badly beaten. They leave him.

DIFFERENT ANGLES
as the city awakens. Finally, he stirs, stands and walks away.

FADE OUT

THE END