The Hustler

1 EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

An old Packard coupé pulls up to a roadside gas pump. Two men get out and stretch their legs. The older man, Charlie Burns, a balding, desiccated man in his mid-forties, shambles toward the bar across the street. Eddie Felson remains behind to speak to the attendant.

ATTENDANT
Yes sir?

EDDIE
I think I got a little grease in this lining here.

ATTENDANT
Oh yeah. Well, it will take me about thirty minutes to check it. You want me to fill her up too?

EDDIE
Yeah. You better check the oil too.

ATTENDANT
Yes sir.

Eddie leaves the car parked at the gas station and heads for the bar.

DISSOLVE TO:

2 INT. ARMSTEAD'S BAR - AFTERNOON

Armstead's is a typical small town pool hall. It has a bar, a short order counter, a skee-ball machine, and pool tables for small, friendly games. The few people in Armstead's this day are not playing; they sit and read the papers. Charlie and Eddie are at the bar, drinking straight bourbon.

BARTENDER
Boys just passing through?

EDDIE
Yep.

BARTENDER
Pittsburgh?

EDDIE
Mm hmm.

BARTENDER
Comin' in or goin' out?

EDDIE
Goin' in. We got a sales convention. Gotta be there tomorrow.

BARTENDER
What do you guys sell?

CHARLIE
Druggist supplies. Buster here is gonna get an award.
(Eddie scoffs, as if embarrassed)
No, he sold seventeen thousand bucks' worth of stuff last month. Fastest boy in the territory.

EDDIE
Yep. Fastest and the bestest ... Hey, give us another round, will ya? One for him, one for yourself.

BARTENDER
Thanks. Sure is a hot day for driving. Late afternoon is better. You guys have plenty of time. Make Pittsburgh in two, maybe three hours.

EDDIE
(to Charlie)
Hey, he's right!
(eyes the unused pool table)
Whaddya say, Charlie, huh? Play a little pool? Wait out the heat?

CHARLIE
(laughs)
It's gonna cost ya money. It always does.

EDDIE
Oh, come on, stop stalling. Grab yourself a cue.

Charlie rises from his barstool.

CHARLIE
(to the bartender)
Good thing he can afford it.

Eddie is already at the table.

EDDIE

(to the bartender)
Keep 'em coming, will ya, friend? J. T. S. Brown.

Charlie joins Eddie.

DISSOLVE TO:

3 INT. ARMSTEAD'S BAR - TIME LAPSE

The game is in mid-progress. It's Eddie's shot. He downs his bourbon, weaves a bit, bends over the table, and awkwardly pokes at the white cue ball with his stick, missing an easy shot. Several more townspeople have come in from the street and are following the play. The bartender refills the glasses as soon as they are emptied.

CHARLIE
You miss again, you lose again.

OLD MAN
(at the bar)
What's the kid in hock for so far?

BARTENDER
About sixty, seventy bucks.

EDDIE
(racking the balls, to Charlie)
Next game, ten bucks.

OLD MAN
(to the bartender)
Nice lookin' boy. Clean-cut. Too bad he can't hold his liquor.

CUT TO:

4 INT. ARMSTEAD'S BAR - TIME LAPSE

Two balls lay side by side on the table. Eddie peers at them, trying to figure his shot, blinking his eyes to focus better. Some of the onlookers seem skeptical. But Eddie pats the corner pocket confidently, leans over, and raps out his shot. The ball banks in.

EDDIE
I made it, boy! I finally made it! C'mon, pay up. Pay up, sucker.

He pounds his pal Charlie on the shoulder and collapses into a nearby chair.

CHARLIE
You ought to take up crap shooting. Talk about

luck!

EDDIE
Luck! Whaddya mean, luck?

CHARLIE
You know what I mean. You couldn't make that shot again in a million years.

EDDIE
I couldn't, huh? Okay. Go ahead. Set 'em up the way they were before.

CHARLIE
Why?

EDDIE
Go ahead. Set 'em up the way they were before. Bet ya twenty bucks. Make that shot just the way I made it before.

CHARLIE
Nobody can make that shot and you know it. Not even a lucky lush.

Stung, Eddie lies across the table and sets them up himself.

EDDIE
How's that?
(to the bystanders)
Hm? Is that the way they were before?

MAN
Yeah, that's right.

EDDIE
(to Charlie)
C'mon, put it up.

They toss their money on the table, and Eddie shoots, but his shot is too hard and his ball leaps over the side of the table. The bartender cannot contain his staccato laughter.

EDDIE
Set 'em up again ... C'mon, set 'em up again.

CHARLIE
(putting up his cue)
You're drunk, boy. I'm not gonna bet ya any more.

EDDIE
Whaddya mean?

CHARLIE
Let's get back on the road. You gotta be at that convention in the morning.

EDDIE
Up the flagpole with the convention. C'mon, Charlie. You're into me now. I got my money on the table.

CHARLIE
I don't want it.

BARTENDER
I'll try you.

Eddie pauses, smiling.

EDDIE
Well... well, now.

CHARLIE
Don't be a chump. Don't bet any more money on that damn fool shot.

EDDIE
(to the bartender)
Well, now ... I mean, you figure I'm a little drunk, and I'm loaded on the hip, and you just want in, real friendly, while the money's still floating, huh? Okay ... Go ahead. Set 'em up.

Sheepishly, the bartender replaces the balls in their original positions.

EDDIE
All right, you want some easy money, huh? Here's a hundred and five dollars. That's one week's commission. Now you want to take the whole thing, and then you get a crack at your easy money.

BYSTANDER
I'll take a piece of that action.

ANOTHER
Me too.

EDDIE
(viciously)
No. I want him.

BARTENDER

I'll take it out of the till.

CHARLIE
(to Eddie)
I'll meet you in the car, chump.

Eddie chalks up his cue, waiting impatiently for the bartender to return with the money from the cash register. Then he downs his drink and quickly strokes out his shot, the ball banking crisply and directly into the corner pocket. There is a cocky leer on his face as he reaches for the dollar bills.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

The door of the Packard coupé slams shut. Eddie Felson holds up his stuffed billfold for his pal, Charlie Burns, to see. He tosses it on the seat beside him and turns on the ignition.

QUICK FADE

MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE

6 INT. AMES POOL HALL - MORNING

FADE IN

Henry, the elderly Negro janitor, draws up the Venetian blinds to let the early morning light flood into AMES POOL HALL. Henry is the janitor of Ames, the sexton of this immense, shabby cathedral of pool, in which the pews are pool tables covered with oilcloth slipcovers and the great vault of a room is lit by brass-and-globe chandeliers. Henry ambles through Ames righting overturned ashtrays and replacing yesterday's abandoned cue sticks. The cashier enters. He looks at his watch, then checks his time against that of the clock on the wall.

CASHIER
Morning, Henry.

Henry nods, then steps up on a stool to fix the minute hand of the clock. It now stands at ten o'clock.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 INT. AMES POOL HALL - DAY

It is twelve-thirty when Eddie Felson and Charlie Burns first enter into Ames. Only one table is in use; the hall is empty. In Eddie's hand is his leather cue case. They stand before the swinging doors and look around.

CHARLIE
It's quiet.

EDDIE
Yeah, like a church. Church of the Good Hustler.

CHARLIE
Looks more like a morgue to me. Those pool tables are the slabs they lay the stiffs on.

EDDIE
I'll be alive when I get out, Charlie.

They saunter over to the cashier's cage. A sign on the brass bar reads NO GAMBLING ALLOWED ...

EDDIE
Any table?

CASHIER
Any table.

Eddie's arrival is noted by Big John and Preacher, a gambler and an addict, who hang out at Ames at all hours, waiting for action.

EDDIE
(to the cashier)
No bar?

CASHIER
(with some annoyance)
No bar, no pinball machines, no bowling alleys. Just pool. Nothing else. This is Ames, mister.

Eddie takes his cue ball from the cashier's cage and heads for a table. As he passes Charlie, he mimics the cashier wickedly:

EDDIE
This is Ames, mister.

The two go to a table. Eddie selects a house cue, then rolls it over the table top to test the roll. He seems pleased. He runs his hand over the green felt as if he were caressing it. His last test is to sweep the cue ball into the corner pocket.

EDDIE
Nice clean pocket drop.

Eddie takes some balls out of the return box and throws them on the table.

EDDIE
(chalks his cue)
How much am I gonna win tonight? Hm?

Charlie doesn't reply. But Big John and Preacher lean forward in their

chairs to listen in.

EDDIE
Ten grand. I'm gonna win ten grand in one night.
(Charlie stares at him)
... Well, who's gonna beat me? C'mon, Charlie, who's gonna beat me?

CHARLIE
Okay ... Okay. Nobody can beat you.

EDDIE
Ten grand! I mean, what other poolroom is there in the country where a guy can walk out with ten grand in one night? Jeez, you know, I can remember hustling an old man for a dime a game.

Big John, stubbly cigar between his fingers, drifts over to their table.

CHARLIE
(to Eddie, off Big John)
You got company.

BIG JOHN
(approaching Eddie)
You looking for action?

EDDIE
Maybe. You want to play?

BIG JOHN
No. Hell, no! You Eddie Felson?

EDDIE
Who's he?

BIG JOHN
What's your game? What do you shoot?

EDDIE
You name it, we shoot it.

BIG JOHN
Look, friend, I'm not trying to hustle. I don't never hustle people that walk into poolrooms with leather satchels. Don't try to hustle me.

EDDIE
Okay, I'm Eddie Felson. I shoot straight pool. You got any straight pool shooters in this here poolroom?

BIG JOHN

What kind of straight pool game you like?

EDDIE
The expensive kind.

BIG JOHN
Come up here to play straight pool with Minnesota Fats?

EDDIE
Yeah, that's right.

BIG JOHN
Want some free advice?

CHARLIE
(interrupts, sourly)
How much'll it cost?

BIG JOHN
(turns to Charlie)
Who are you -- his manager, his friend, his stooge?

EDDIE
He's my partner.

BIG JOHN
(to Charlie)
You well-heeled, partner?

CHARLIE
We got enough.

BIG JOHN
Go home. Take your boy and go home. Fats don't need your money, there's no way you can beat him. Nobody's beat him in fifteen years. He's the best in the country.

EDDIE
You got that wrong, mister. I am.

BIG JOHN
Okay, I told you what I wanted about Minnesota Fats. You just go ahead and play him, friend.

EDDIE
Just tell me where I can find him, friend.

BIG JOHN
Comes right in this poolroom every night, eight o'clock on the nose. Just stay where you are.

He'll find you.

As Big John walks off, Eddie smiles at Charlie.

DISSOLVE TO:

8 INT. AMES POOL HALL - NIGHT

Eight sharp. A departing customer holds the door for an incoming one: Minnesota Fats. Heads turn when he makes his punctual appearance. Fats' clothes reflect his high station at Ames Pool Hall: a gray felt bowler hat, and an expensive, tailored overcoat, with a carnation in its lapel and two silk handkerchiefs peeking up from its breast pocket. He moves like a sultan through the room, past Big John, whose eyes dip significantly, and over to the coat rack, where Henry respectfully takes his coat and hat. The buzzard-like eyes of the cashier direct his gaze toward Eddie's table. Fats withdraws a cigarette from his gold case, then casually strolls toward Eddie's table standing apart and quietly observing the sharp, precise movements of his prospective opponent. Even though Ames is filled with players, there is little noise other than the clicking of pool balls.

MINNESOTA FATS
You shoot a good stick.

EDDIE
Thank you. Gee, you shoot straight pool, mister?

FATS
Now and then. You know how it is.

EDDIE
(grinning)
You're, uh, you're Minnesota Fats, aren't you? You know, uh, they say Minnesota Fats is the best in the country out where I come from.

FATS
Is that a fact?

EDDIE
Yes sir, boy, they, heh, they say that old Fats just shoots the eyes right off them balls.

FATS
Where do you come from?

EDDIE
California. Oakland.

FATS
California? Is your name Felson? Eddie Felson?

EDDIE
That's right.

FATS
I hear you've been looking for me.

EDDIE
Yeah. That's right, too.

FATS
Big John! You think this boy is a hustler?

Fats and Eddie regard each other with amusement, sharing the private joke of pool hustlers.

FATS
Do you like to gamble, Eddie? Gamble money on pool games?

EDDIE
Fats, let's you and I shoot a game of straight pool.

FATS
Hundred dollars?

EDDIE
Well, you shoot big-time pool, Fats. I mean, that's what everybody says, you shoot big-time pool. Let's make it two hundred dollars a game.

FATS
Now I know why they call you Fast Eddie. Eddie, you talk my kind of talk ...
(moving to the main table)
Sausage! Rack 'em up!

At his command, Ames comes to life. Players drag their chairs across the floor and position them around the main table. Eddie, hand to his mouth, realizes that the big moment has arrived and beckons to Charlie for his leather cue case. The uniformed maids withdraw the cover off the green felt top, and Sausage, the racker, begins to bang the balls into the wooden racking triangle.

Fats is in the washroom, scrubbing his hands and nails. Eddie stands and screws together his inlaid, ivory-pointed cue as Fats dries his hands. He and Fats eye one another.

CHARLIE
How do you feel?

EDDIE

Fast and loose, man.

CHARLIE
In the gut, I mean.

EDDIE
I feel tight -- but good.

Henry helps Fats on with his coat. Sausage finishes racking. Fats carefully extends his palms so that Henry may sprinkle on some talcum powder. They are ready to start. Fats, immaculate in jacket and tie, tosses a wad of bills -- his stake money -- onto the table. Charlie does the same, counting the bills out one by one.

FATS
(off the cash)
Willie, hang onto that.

Willie takes the money. Two balls are rolled to the end of the table, and Fats and Eddie, like two duelers, prepare to shoot for the break. In the silence of the room, they bend over their cues and softly stroke out their shots. The balls roll down the table, bank off the far shoulder, and slowly return toward the two players. Fats' ball hits the closer shoulder.

FATS
You break.

The balls are returned and Eddie makes his break shot, a glancing blow that leaves the pack of balls nearly intact and the white cue ball lying far away at the end of the table. Eddie looks up, with a smile.

EDDIE
Didn't leave you much.

Fats walks around the table and peers at the balls.

FATS
(after a pause)
You left enough ... six in the corner.

Placing his cigarette on the wooden rim of the table, Fats rams the cue ball into the pack, dropping the six ball into the pocket. The table is now his. Eddie sits down unhappily. Fats plays quickly, moving from shot to shot with studied authority, his eyes and hands working fluidly together.

FATS
Fifteen in the corner ...
(shot goes in)
Ace in the side.

The shot goes in. As Eddie watches, the prancing, elegant Fats

maneuvers around the table.

FATS
Eight.
(shot goes in)
Ten ...
(shot goes in)
Eleven.

The shot goes in.

EDDIE
(whispers, to Charlie)
Boy, he is great! Jeez, that old fat man. Look at the way he moves. Like a dancer.

FATS
Twelve. Cross side.

We see Fats' bejeweled fingers curl around the cue stick, the stick then darting out to send a ball caroming off a far bank and into a side pocket.

EDDIE (o.s.)
And them fingers, them chubby fingers. And that stroke. It's like he's, uh, like he's playing a violin or something.

FATS
Nine ball.
(shot goes in)
Three ball.

Fats keeps sinking shots.

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

It is eleven o'clock. Eddie is up. The crowd at Ames sits stolidly in their seats, watching each player, each move.

EDDIE
Four ball.

The shot goes in and he lines up another.

EDDIE
Cross-corner.

The shot is a difficult one involving a combination of balls. As it rolls in, the crowd breaks into applause, and Fats bangs the butt of his cue stick on the floor to show his appreciation.

SAUSAGE
Game.

DISSOLVE TO:

10 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

A high angle of the table. Fats plays defensively, playing a safety, leaving Eddie with little to shoot at.

FATS
Safe.

So Eddie does the same.

EDDIE
Safe.

Fats peers at the pack of balls huddled together, then points to one that lies in the middle of the pack.

FATS
Seven ball in the corner.

Big John looks around -- the shot seems impossible. Fats slams the cue ball into the pack. The balls carom outward in all directions. Only the seven rolls slowly into the corner pocket. Eddie slumps back in his seat as the crowd applauds.

DISSOLVE TO:

11 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

It is twelve o'clock, and Fats dominates the play. As he calls out the litany of his shots, we see, superimposed over his hands and his face and the sound of socking pool balls, the spectators, stupefied by the action; Charlie, swallowing hard; Eddie, looking on, waiting to play; and the bills endlessly unfolding out of Charlie's hands and floating onto the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

12 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

One-thirty and Fats is still shooting.

FATS
Ace in the corner.

The shot rolls in.

CHARLIE
(darkly, to Eddie)

Quit. He's too good.

EDDIE
Charlie, I'm gonna take him.

FATS (o.s.)
Your shot.

EDDIE
You miss?
(goes to the table and chalks his cue)
Well, you don't leave much when you miss, do you, fat man?

FATS
(from his seat)
That's what the game's all about.

EDDIE
Mm hm ... Two ball, side pocket.

The shot goes in. Fats pounds his stick on the floor. No one else makes a noise.

FATS
Very good shot.

EDDIE
You know I gotta hunch, fat man. I gotta hunch it's me from here on in ... One ball, corner pocket.
(shot goes in)
I mean, that ever happen to you? When all of a sudden you feel like you can't miss? I dreamed about this game, fat man. I dreamed about this game every night on the road ... five ball ...
(shot goes in)
You know, this is my table, man. I own it.

Fats allows a perfunctory bow of his head, a courtly gesture, to Eddie's manager. Charlie looks away, avoiding his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

13 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

It is two-thirty. Now it's Eddie's voice we hear calling out the shots. He circles the table, a proud, cocky smile on his face, and superimposed over his movements we see the spectators, hunched up in their chairs, and Fats' face, glowering, hostile.

SAUSAGE

Rack.

The applause grows louder as the balls keep spinning toward the pockets.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

SAUSAGE
Game!

Eddie beams with pride and excitement as he accepts the acclamation of the sharks at Ames. He slaps down the chalk and returns to his seat. It is almost four o'clock.

EDDIE
Pay the man again, Fats.

Fats draws himself slowly out of his chair and hands the money to Charlie.

EDDIE
(to Charlie)
Hey, how much are we ahead?

CHARLIE
Approximately? One thousand bucks.

EDDIE
Fats, let's you and I shoot a game of pool for a thousand dollars a game.

Fats hesitates for a moment, then reaches in his pocket for some bills.

FATS
Preach! Go down and get me some White Tavern whisky, a glass, and some ice.

EDDIE
Preacher! Go on down and get me some bourbon. J. T. S. Brown. No ice, no glass.

FATS
Preach ... get it at Johnny's.
(to Eddie)
You got a bet.

They stand up, remove their jackets, and prepare to play again.

CUT TO:

15 INT. JOHNNY'S BAR, THE BACK ROOM - NIGHT

As Preacher opens the door to the back room, clutching a paper bag

filled with bottles to his chest, we see six men seated around a table, playing poker. Preacher approaches one of them and whispers something hurriedly in his ear. The man is Bert Gordon. Except for his dark glasses, he might pass for a conservative businessman out for an evening with the boys, sipping milk instead of alcohol to soothe an ulcer. He nods to Preacher who then leaves. Bert appears thoughtful for a moment. He rises.

BERT GORDON
Cash me in.

Bert sips his milk.

CUT TO:

16 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - EARLY MORNING

A floor full of cigarette butts surround Charlie's chair. Charlie crushes out another on the floor and immediately reaches for more.

FATS (o.s.)
Two in the corner.
(shot goes in)
Seven.

The shot gos in. Eddie drains the last drips from his bottle of bourbon, then looks jauntily at Bert, who now sits quietly in a chair, watching them both.

FATS
Ace in the corner.

He misses. Eddie squirms out of his seat, eager to play, eager to go on winning. Bert sighs.

EDDIE
Two ball, side pocket.

The shot goes in. Fats opens a fresh bottle of whisky.

DISSOLVE TO:

17 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

The game goes on. The hands of the clock on the wall spin around toward eight in the morning. Ames is empty now, except for the players and the employees. Only the voice of Sausage is heard, signaling the end of a game.

DISSOLVE TO:

18 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

As Fats bends over to shoot, Henry draws the Venetian blinds.

FATS
Will you cut that sunshine out?

Bert holds a hand to his temple, unnerved by Fats' discomposure.

DISSOLVE TO:

19 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

There is a break in the action. Fats and Eddie eye each other coldly, Fats with his glass in his hand, Eddie with his bottle. Eddie takes a swig and returns to the game.

DISSOLVE TO:

20 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

Bert reaches forward to hand Charlie more money. Bert replaces the billfold in his coat pocket.

DISSOLVE TO:

21 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

Eddie, weary now, his hands resting on the table, looks up at the cool, impassive face of Bert Gordon.

EDDIE
Hey, mister.

BERT
The name's Gordon. Bert Gordon.

EDDIE
Mister. You been sittin' in that spot for hours. Would you mind moving? It bothers me.

Bert rises, moves his chair about six inches, and sits down again.

EDDIE
Five ball.

It sinks.

SAUSAGE
That's game.

Eddie goes over to the water cooler for a drink while Fats doles out his losings on the table.

EDDIE
(to Charlie)
How much we got?

CHARLIE
Eleven thousand four hundred, cash. Here in my pocket.

EDDIE
Preacher, go on down and get me some breakfast, will ya? Egg sandwich and a cup of coffee. You want something, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Now wait a minute. You're coming with me. You're gonna eat breakfast at the hotel. Pool game is over.

EDDIE
No, it isn't, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Eddie ...

EDDIE
The pool game is over when Fats says it's over.

CHARLIE
You wanted ten thousand? You got ten thousand.

EDDIE
Ah, get with it, will ya, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Get with what?

EDDIE
You can't see it, can you, Charlie? I mean, you've never been able to see it. I came after him. And I'm gonna get him. I'm goin' with him all the way. The pool game is not over until Minnesota Fats says it's over. Is it over, Fats?

He stands before Fats and Bert Gordon, waiting for an answer. Fats and Bert exchange glances but nothing is said.

EDDIE
(to Bert)
I'm gonna beat him, mister. I beat him all night and I'm gonna beat him all day.

Still no reply, no sign of giving in. Eddie starts to go back to his chair, suddenly turns, a weary, clowning smile on his face.

EDDIE

I'm the best you ever seen, Fats. I'm the best there is. Now even if you beat me, I'm still the best.

Eddie walks over to the water cooler.

BERT
(quietly, to Fats)
Stay with this kid. He's a loser.

EDDIE
(turns to Charlie, off Bert)
What did he say?

Charlie doesn't know and shakes his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

22 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE - NIGHT

Eddie's face buried in his lap as Charlie massages his back. Behind him, in the washroom, is Fats, washing his face and hands.

CHARLIE
Twenty-five hours, Eddie. Twenty-five hours you been playin' straight.

EDDIE
Give me a drink, will ya?

CHARLIE
You don't need a drink.

EDDIE
Will you shut up ... Just give me a drink.

Charlie gets Eddie a bottle. Bert and Henry watch Eddie coldly.

CHARLIE
Eighteen thousand, Eddie. We're ahead eighteen thousand.

A drunken, exhausted Eddie nods, looks up at Bert, grins maliciously, and takes a drink. Charlie starts to put away Eddie's cue stick.

BERT
I thought you said this game was over when Minnesota Fats said it was.

CHARLIE
Now, it's over now.

Fats emerges from the washroom, dries his hands, looks at Eddie and then at Bert who nods. Henry helps Fats into the jacket with the

carnation still in the lapel. Eddie grins at this. So does Bert. Fats opens his palms for the sprinkling of the talcum powder. Fats rubs his hands together, then takes out his cigarette case.

FATS
Fast Eddie, let's play some pool.

Bert smiles in appreciation.

CHARLIE
Let's go, Eddie.

Eddie grabs the leather case out of Charlie's hands. Eddie rises and confronts Fats almost scornfully.

EDDIE
You look beautiful, Fats. Just like a baby ...
all pink, and powdered up.

Eddie looks down at his own dirty, disheveled shirt. He and a smiling Bert exchange glances. Eddie moves to put on his jacket. Charlie confronts him.

CHARLIE
What are you trying to do, Eddie? You beat him.
You beat him bad. You wanna kill yourself?

EDDIE
What are ya, chicken, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Well, maybe that's it. I'm chicken.

EDDIE
Go on home. Just leave me the money.

CHARLIE
Go to hell.

EDDIE
(enraged)
Charlie, boy, you better give me that money.
C'mon now, give it to me. It's mine.

CHARLIE
Okay, here ...
(slaps money into Eddie's hand)
Be a damn fool.

Eddie puts a bottle into the pocket of his jacket and returns to the table to screw together his cue stick. The sight of Fats makes him laugh again.

EDDIE
You know, you really look beautiful, Fats.

Everyone stares at Eddie as he scratches his head, alone with his private joke. Eddie abruptly tosses his cue case away.

EDDIE
(casually)
I'll break.

A worried Charlie picks up the case and stands by mutely, watching Eddie disintegrate. Eddie leans over to shoot, then turns away, laughing loudly to himself. Fats watches him, soberly, patiently.

DISSOLVE TO:

23 INT. THE GAME AT AMES - TIME LAPSE

A high angle. Fats is shooting. No one is really watching any more. Eddie is asleep on a stool against a wall. Even Bert is dozing.

FATS
Nine ball ... fifteen.

The shots go in.

SAUSAGE
That's one twenty-five.

CHARLIE
Eddie. Wake up, Eddie ...
(Eddie awakens slowly)
We lose again.

Eddie bangs his head against the wall. He knocks over a bottle as he tries to get up off the stool. The noise startles him. Charlie watches sadly. Eddie gropes through his pockets and comes up with a few crumpled bills.

EDDIE
Is this all we got left?

CHARLIE
If that's all you got, that's all we got left.

Fats rises and tosses his cue on the table.

FATS
Willie, give me the stake money.

Willie gives him the stake money. Fats confronts Eddie.

EDDIE
Fats, I got about two hundred dollars here.

FATS
Game's over, Eddie.

EDDIE
Fats, look, I got about two hundred dollars here. You can't run out on me.

FATS
You watch me.

Fats steps by Eddie and heads for the coat rack, slapping the stake money into Bert's hand as he goes by. Bert returns the money to his billfold, wordlessly. The blinds are drawn and the light strikes Eddie in the eyes, but still he stumbles after Fats, holding his money out before him, pleading.

EDDIE
Fats, c'mon. C'mon. Hey, Fats?

He bangs against the corner of the table and falls onto the floor. Fats hears him go down and pauses, turning to see Charlie rush to Eddie's side. After a moment, Fats continues on toward the door. Charlie slaps Eddie's cheeks.

CHARLIE
Eddie ... Eddie... Eddie ... Eddie...

Bert, Sausage, Willie, Preach step around the body on their way out.

FADE OUT

24 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

FADE IN

Eddie is lying on his bed staring at the ceiling, the crashing of pool balls sounding in his head. He looks over at Charlie, asleep in the next bed. He rolls out of bed and goes to the window. We see a neon sign flashing across the street. It reads AMES BILLIARDS. Then Eddie returns to his bed, leaves the keys to the Packard and some money on the night table next to Charlie. He picks up his valise, his hanging bag, and his leather cue case.

EDDIE
(softly)
I'm sorry, Charlie.

Eddie goes toward the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

25 INT. BUS STATION - EARLY MORNING

As Eddie enters, carrying his bags, a few early morning travelers -- some soldiers and a man in a Stetson hat -- pass him by. He has been up all night. He rubs his grimy face, then heads for the door marked "Gentlemen."

CUT TO:

26 INT. WASHROOM - EARLY MORNING

It is a typical bus station washroom at that time of the morning. The residue of a full day's traveling is in evidence: crumpled paper towels, cigarette butts, etc. Part of the residue is a drunk who sits on the shoeshine seat, fast asleep. Eddie looks at him, shaking his head. A wizened old attendant sits nearby. A sign on the wall reads IS THIS YOUR LUCKY DAY? Eddie laughs to himself, puts his hanging bag and cue case on a chair, then turns to face his image in the mirror.

EDDIE
(to the attendant)
Give me a towel, will ya?

The attendant, whose every move seems to require a tremendous effort, shuffles over and grabs a towel as Eddie removes his jacket.

DISSOLVE TO:

27 INT. BUS STATION - EARLY MORNING

Near the row of coin lockers in the waiting room is a small lunch counter and several tables. At one table, facing the lockers, is a young woman, Sarah: a book is open before her, and a cup of coffee, and an ashtray filled with cigarette butts. She looks up for an instant as Eddie appears. He now has on a clean shirt and is clean and freshly shaven. He locks his bags in a locker. Her eyes return to the printed page. Moving toward the counter, Eddie notices Sarah. He goes to the lunch counter, still looking at her. He sniffs some wrapped sandwiches.

WAITRESS
Can I get you something?

EDDIE
Later.

Eddie wanders over to a table next to Sarah's and sits down. She ignores him.

EDDIE
Long wait for a bus?

SARAH
(looks up)
Yes.

She returns to her reading. Eddie keeps looking at her. Her hair is brown, cut short, practically straight. Her lips are pale and thin, and the bone structure of her face, although delicate, is much in evidence. There is a suggestion of tired wakefulness, of self-sufficiency, about her. And a frank, open regard which has nothing in it to imply flirtation -- or the lack of it.

EDDIE
How long you been waiting?

SARAH
(looking up)
What?

EDDIE
How long have you been waiting?

SARAH
Since four.

Sarah goes back to reading. The waitress arrives to take Eddie's order.

EDDIE
(to the waitress)
Just a cup of black coffee, please ...
(the waitress starts to go)
Hey, ma'am! Wait a minute!
(to Sarah)
Would you, uh, like another cup?

SARAH
(shrugs)
Fine, thanks.

Eddie holds up two fingers to the waitress, who departs.

EDDIE
What time does the bus leave?

SARAH
What bus?

EDDIE
Yours.

SARAH
Eight o'clock.

Eddie sighs.

SARAH
That wouldn't give us much time, would it?

EDDIE
(amused)
Well, you're right. I guess it wouldn't.

The coffee comes.

EDDIE
(making a toast)
Hello and goodbye ...

Eddie leans back against the wall and shuts his eyes.

EDDIE
(after a long pause)
Have a nice trip.

SARAH
Thanks. I will.

He slips off to sleep. The waitress brings a check.

SARAH
Give it to me.

She looks at Eddie anxiously as she digs in her purse for the coins. She pays, collects her purse and book, and rises to leave. Eddie doesn't stir.

CUT TO:

28 INT. BUS STATION LUNCH COUNTER - MORNING

The public address system bleats over the noise of the crowded luncheonette. The waitress leans over and slaps Eddie on the shoulder. He wakes up with a cramped neck.

EDDIE
How much do I owe you?

WAITRESS
It was paid for ... by the lady.

DISSOLVE TO:

29 INT. BAR AND GRILL - NOON

The bar is nearly empty when Eddie comes in.

EDDIE
(to the bartender)
Give me some bourbon. J. T. S. Brown.

BARTENDER
You want a chaser?

EDDIE
No.

As he looks around the bar he sees Sarah, alone at a back booth, sipping a highball. She seems amused by their encounter. So does he. He takes his drink and joins her at the booth.

EDDIE
Have a nice trip?

SARAH
Fair.

EDDIE
Can I sit down?

SARAH
Why not? We already know each other's secrets.

EDDIE
(after he sits)
Thanks for the, uh, for the breakfast.

SARAH
Two ships that pass in the night should always buy each other breakfast.

EDDIE
Can I buy you another drink?

Sarah nods.

EDDIE
(calls to the bartender)
Hey, another one for me and another one for the lady.

BARTENDER
Check!

EDDIE
You look different ... More relaxed.

SARAH
It's the lights. And the scotch.

EDDIE
How come you didn't catch your bus?

SARAH
I wasn't waiting for a bus.

EDDIE

Then why go to the bus station?

SARAH
Same reason you went: at that hour of the morning you haven't much choice. Besides, I only live three blocks from there. Where do you live?

EDDIE
Around.

SARAH
I know where you live: in a locker, in a bus station. What's it like living in a locker?

EDDIE
Cramped.
(she smiles)
You always drink like this, so early in the morning?

SARAH
Do you always ask so many questions?

EDDIE
No, not always.

SARAH
Sometimes I wake up and I can't sleep, not without a drink. The bars don't open until eight. Mack over there has faith in me. When I'm broke, he trusts me. Don't you trust me, Mack?

BARTENDER
Check!

SARAH
When I'm not broke, I usually have a bottle in my room, in which case I sleep very well indeed.

EDDIE
You talk kind of funny, but I like it.

SARAH
I used to be an actress.

EDDIE
Yeah? What do you do now?

SARAH
I'm a college girl. Two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, I go to college.

EDDIE
You don't look like a college girl.

SARAH
I'm the emancipated type. Real emancipated.

EDDIE
No, I didn't mean that -- whatever that means. I mean, you just don't look young enough.

SARAH
I'm not.

EDDIE
So why go to college?

SARAH
I've got nothing else to do on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

EDDIE
What do you do on the other days?

SARAH
I drink.

EDDIE
(to the bartender)
Hey!

SARAH
No. No more. I'm getting sleepy.
(puts a scarf around her head)
Thank you very much, Mr... ?

EDDIE
Eddie. The name is Eddie.

SARAH
(studies his face)
The name should be Eddie. What should my name be?

EDDIE
I don't know. Whatever you like it to be.

SARAH
I like it to be what it is. It's Sarah. That's a biblical name. You want to know its meaning?

EDDIE
I could always get us a bottle.

SARAH
(a little alarmed)
No.

EDDIE
Fifth of scotch?

SARAH
What do you want me to do, just step out in the alley? Is that it?

EDDIE
No. I'll take you home.

There is a long pause as she tries to read his face.

SARAH
All right.

Eddie finishes his drink, rises, crosses to the bar, pays the bill, and returns to the booth. As they go out, Sarah stumbles, and he catches her by the arm.

SARAH
It's all right.
(smiling)
I'm not drunk ...
(serious)
I'm lame.

Eddie pauses a moment to register this as she limps off, then follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

30 EXT. CITY STREET - MIDDAY

Eddie goes into the liquor store. Sarah waits outside, stiff and uneasy. Then he comes out with the scotch and they walk off down the street together. They walk slowly, with their eyes pointed straight ahead. He tries to ignore her halting gait. They pass under the awning of the neighborhood's elegant Parisien restaurant.

DISSOLVE TO:

31 INT. HALLWAY OF APARTMENT HOUSE - MIDDAY

As she searches through her purse for her keys, he reaches out and puts his hand on her shoulder. She closes her eyes, then draws back against the door, fearful, like a threatened animal.

SARAH
Why me?

He takes her head in his hands and kisses her. She responds but, as he holds her tighter, she starts to struggle.

SARAH
Please ... please ... please.

She pushes him away and shakes her head.

SARAH
You're too hungry.

They stand there for a long moment: she looks away; he looks down at the floor. Then Eddie takes the bag of scotch and places it underneath her arm.

EDDIE
Take it. It's yours.

He leaves her there in the hall and walks off.

DISSOLVE TO:

32 INT. FLOPHOUSE - AFTERNOON

A door opens. A hotel manager shows Eddie into a dingy, barely furnished room.

MANAGER
You can have this one for a buck and a half a night, or seven bucks by the week.

EDDIE
By the night.

MANAGER
In advance.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out some bills.

DISSOLVE TO:

33 INT. BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Eddie removes his bags from the locker. The sight of the lunch counter reminds him of Sarah. But the lunchroom is empty; only the janitor is there, mopping up. Eddie picks up his bags and goes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

34 EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Eddie, on his way back to the hotel, stops at the same liquor store for a bottle.

DISSOLVE TO:

35 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

He enters his room, puts down his bags and the liquor, and sits on his rusted brass bed. From his pocket he pulls out the few crumpled bills he has left. He looks at the money, shakes his head disgustedly, and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

36 INT. BAR WITH POOL TABLE - NIGHT

It is a friendly, neighborhood bar for business people and cocktail drinkers. Eddie walks casually by the pool table and over to the bar.

EDDIE
Bottle of beer.

He turns on his stool to watch the game.

EDDIE
Hey, uh, mister? Hey, okay if I grab a cue?

PLAYER
Hey, you're Eddie Felson, aren't you?

EDDIE
Who's he?

PLAYER
Now, look, fella, I saw you playing at Ames the other night.

EDDIE
Hey, I'll tell you what -- I'll play you jack-up pool -- just keep one hand in my pocket.

PLAYER
(returning to his game)
Oh man, you're way out of our league.

Eddie goes back to his bottle of beer.

DISSOLVE TO:

37 INT. ANOTHER BAR - NIGHT

Some bills drop on a ragged, beat-up pool table. Two men, dressed in work clothes, stand around looking disgruntled.

FIRST MAN
What are you stuck for?

SECOND MAN
Three. That's enough for me.

EDDIE
(picks up the cash)
Thanks ... Can I, uh, buy you fellas a drink?

MEN
Okay... Okay.

They go to the bar.

FIRST MAN
You know, you shoot good. But you also shoot lucky.

EDDIE
(nodding his head)
Yeah. I shoot lucky.

DISSOLVE TO:

38 INT. BUS DEPOT - EARLY MORNING

Eddie sits at a table, smoking, waiting. The paper bag with the whisky is on the table. Sarah, dressed in a dark suit, limps toward him. He mashes out his cigarette in the ashtray. When he looks up, he sees Sarah standing nearby. She seems cold and suspicious as she limps toward the table. She pauses and looks at him. They stare at one another for a long moment. He gets up, puts his arm around her shoulder, and walks away with her. As they walk, she hesitantly puts an arm around his waist.

CUT TO:

39 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A hand reaches up to open the wooden shutters. As they open, we see Eddie, in his underclothes, on the bed. Sarah, in a robe, walks up and joins him in bed as they both peer out the window.

SARAH
Why did you do that?

EDDIE
I wanted to see what kind of a day it is.

SARAH
A day like any other. People come, people go.

EDDIE
Give me a drag.

She hands him her cigarette. He starts to put on his wristwatch.

SARAH
What time is it?

EDDIE
Eleven o'clock ... I'll be back later.

SARAH
Why?

EDDIE
Come here.

He kisses her on the cheek.

SARAH
Oh, you need a shave. You mustn't go looking like that. There's a razor and shaving cream in the bathroom. Compliments of the house.

EDDIE
What did you say that for, Sarah?

SARAH
How did you know my name was Sarah?

EDDIE
You told me.

SARAH
I lied. When I'm drunk I lie.

EDDIE
Okay. So what's your name today?

SARAH
Sarah.
(pause)
Eddie, look. I've got troubles, and I think maybe you've got troubles. Maybe it'd be better if we just leave each other alone.

He kisses her again, this time on the lips.

EDDIE
I got my things over at the hotel. I'll bring them over later ...
(shifts position, pulls her close)
Come here.

SARAH
(in his arms)

I'm not sure ... I don't know.

EDDIE
Well, what do you want to know? And why?

He reaches out and closes the shutters.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Sarah emerges from a neighborhood grocery store loaded down with a Cheese Doodles carton full of food. A woman runs out of the store to give her a parcel she left behind.

SARAH
(warmly)
Thank you.

WOMAN
Prego.

She carries the carton across the street to her apartment house, quietly saying hello to a couple of neighbors along the way.

CUT TO:

41 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sarah's apartment is a typical city studio apartment: one cluttered room for sleeping and eating, and a small kitchenette. As Sarah knocks, Eddie is perched on the window sill. He goes to open the door. Sarah enters.

EDDIE
Where you been all day?

SARAH
At school. It's Thursday.

EDDIE
Oh, I forgot.

He pulls her schoolbooks out of the carton and takes her purse.

SARAH
You were asleep when I left. I didn't want to wake you. Did you go out?

EDDIE
Yeah, I went out for a couple of hours.

She unloads liquor and canned goods from the carton, then goes to join Eddie by the window. Sarah takes a cigarette lighter out of her purse

and hands it to Eddie.

SARAH
(off the lighter)
Present ...

He takes it.

SARAH
You know, I've been living here for almost three years. Now in three days it seems as if I know everybody. When I pass people on the street I want to stop and say, "Listen, I got a fella."

EDDIE
(strokes her hand)
Thanks.

SARAH
Eddie, where do you go when you go out?

EDDIE
Museums ... art galleries ... concerts.

She smiles, then she gets up and returns to the kitchenette.

EDDIE
Well, I believe you when you say you go to school.

SARAH
You want to go with me?

EDDIE
What, are you kidding? See that book?
(holds up a book)
I've been trying to get through that book ever since I first got here. I haven't finished the first chapter.
(off her bookcase)
Did you read all them books?

SARAH
Mm hmm.

EDDIE
You got it all in your head?

SARAH
When I'm sober. They get a little mixed up when I'm drunk. Most of the time they're mixed up.

EDDIE
(angrily)
Oh, stop talking about yourself like you're a lush or something. I don't like it.
(genuinely concerned)
Maybe you ought to go to a clinic, get some treatments.

SARAH
I'm getting treatments right here.

He comes up behind her and puts his arms around her.

EDDIE
I'm hungry.

SARAH
Take your choice. I've got enough so we won't have to go out of the house till Tuesday.

EDDIE
What did all this stuff cost you?

SARAH
When you've got money, you'll pay.

EDDIE
No, c'mon, I wanna know. I wanna keep score.

SARAH
The bills are right here. You didn't say what you wanted.

EDDIE
(off the canned goods)
Don't you ever cook anything?

SARAH
Eggs. How do you like them?

EDDIE
Raw.

She cuts her hand opening a can.

SARAH
Oh, cut my finger.

EDDIE
I've got something in my bag.

SARAH
Oh, it's not bad.

As he rummages through the closet for his bag he pulls out his leather cue case.

SARAH
Eddie, what's in that case?

EDDIE
Haven't you opened it?

SARAH
No, why should I? It's yours.

EDDIE
It's a machine gun. This guy told me when I came to the big city I'd have to have a machine gun, so I bought one.
(bandages her finger)
Where do you get the money? To pay for all this? I mean the liquor, and the groceries, and the rent?

SARAH
From a rich old man who used to be my lover.

They kiss. Someone knocks on the door. Sarah goes to open it. We stay on Eddie, who examines the lighter in his hand.

CHARLIE (o.s.)
Hello, Eddie.

He enters the room, awkwardly, toying with the rim of his hat.

EDDIE
Hello, Charlie ...
(turns)
C'mon in ...
(off Sarah)
That's my girl.

CHARLIE
(to Sarah)
Hello, Eddie's girl ...
(to Eddie)
I looked all over for you.

EDDIE
Oh yeah? How'd you find me?

CHARLIE
I asked around.

There is a long silence.

SARAH
(to Eddie)
Do you want me to go?

EDDIE
No, stick around.
(to Charlie)
Can I get you something? Drink? Coffee?

CHARLIE
Oh, I don't want to be no bother to nobody.

EDDIE
Oh, don't play it small, Charlie. It don't look good on you.

CHARLIE
How do you want me to play it? I'm broke.

EDDIE
So am I ... Sit down.
(to Sarah)
Would you get us a couple of drinks?

She starts to make the drinks. Charlie sits.

CHARLIE
You walked out on me like that. No goodbye, no nothing. Like a thief in the dark. We were partners. We were more than partners.
(to Sarah)
He was like a ... like--

EDDIE
A son.

CHARLIE
Yeah, yeah, like a son.
(to Sarah who brings drinks)
I've known this boy since he was sixteen. The first time I saw him, back in Oakland, I said, "This is a talented boy. This is a smart boy."

EDDIE
Talk to me, Charlie.

CHARLIE
I want you to come back on the road with me.

EDDIE
Aah! I've got no stomach for that any more. I've had that kind of life.

CHARLIE
What kind of life have you got here? Scufflin' around the small rooms, picking up eight, ten bucks a day?

EDDIE
I'll connect. I'll get you your money back.

CHARLIE
Are you figuring on going back to Ames to play Minnesota Fats again? Is that what's on your mind?

EDDIE
Never been out of it. I'm gonna beat that fat man ... with that curly hair, and those diamond rings, and that carnation.

CHARLIE
(to Sarah)
This boy's crazy. They wiped the floor with him. They beat his brains out and he wants to go back.
(to Eddie)
What for? To take another beating?

EDDIE
I told you you'd get your money back.

CHARLIE
(to Sarah)
He thinks I care about the money.
(to Eddie)
I care about you. Do you care about me, Eddie? We're together a long time, night and day. So how do you say goodbye?
(rises)
You gimme the car and a hundred bucks. You think I care about the dough, the car? I care about you.
(to Sarah)
This boy is the greatest pool hustler you ever saw. A real high-class con man. He can charm anybody into anything. Did he ever tell you how well we were doing on the road? We had everything: we ate good, we slept late, we had money to burn. Whisky, dames ...
(apologetic, to Sarah)
Excuse me ...
(to Eddie, off Sarah)
I'll tell you what -- take her along.

Eddie leans up against the wall, listening. Sarah watches them both, curious, confused.

CHARLIE
I'll tell you what else: you don't want to start right away, we won't start right away. We'll get in the car and drive down to Miami, get all this crud out of your system, have a few laughs, lie in the sun for a couple of weeks.

Suddenly Eddie becomes tense.

EDDIE
With what?

CHARLIE
Don't worry about it. I'll raise the money.

EDDIE
Oh yeah? Where?

CHARLIE
What's the difference where? I'll raise it.
(to Sarah)
Is it all right if I have another drink?

Sarah turns to fix the drink. Eddie signals her to stay where she is. He moves forward, confronting Charlie.

EDDIE
Did you hold out on me, Charlie? ... How much?

Charlie doesn't answer, so Eddie snatches hold of his jacket and shoves him back into a chair.

EDDIE
HOW MUCH?!

CHARLIE
My twenty-five per cent. Approximately fifteen hundred bucks.

EDDIE
Oh, you crumb. With that fifteen hundred I coulda beat him. That's all I needed, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Aw, Eddie.

EDDIE
C'mon, c'mon, just give me the money.

CHARLIE
What for? To play Fats again?

EDDIE
Yeah, to play Fats again.

CHARLIE
You wanna come back on the road with me, okay, the money's yours. But if you wanna give it to Minnesota Fats ... nothing doing. What do you say?

EDDIE
(viciously)
You still don't see it, do you, Charlie? You are nothing but a small-time Charlie. You'd love to keep me hustling for you, huh? Wouldn't ya? I mean, a couple more years with me, scuffling around them little towns and those back alleys. You might make yourself enough to get a little poolroom back in Oakland. Six tables and a handbook on the side. Is that when you say goodbye to me, Charlie?

CHARLIE
Is that what you think?

EDDIE
Yeah, that's what I think.

CHARLIE
All right. That's what I want. Poolroom with a little handbook on the side. Getting old.

EDDIE
Lay down and die by yourself. Don't take me with you.

Eddie walks off. A pause.

CHARLIE
Just like that?

EDDIE
Yeah. Just like that.

A tear rolls down Sarah's cheek as she hears this. She stands near the door, with her back to both of them. Charlie gets up and moves toward the door.

CHARLIE
Thanks for the drink, Eddie's girl.

Sarah, her cheek wet, says nothing. Charlie puts on his hat and leaves. Eddie empties his glass and slaps it on the shelf next to Sarah.

EDDIE
Give me another drink.

She pours it out, saying nothing.

EDDIE
Boy! Everybody, everybody wants a piece of me!

Sarah hands Eddie his drink without looking him in the eye.

EDDIE
Aren't you gonna have one?

She pours herself a very stiff drink as Eddie moves about restlessly.

EDDIE
What did he have to come back here for anyway?

Sarah drinks her drink.

EDDIE
C'mere.

She keeps drinking.

EDDIE
Come here!

Still drinking, she turns to him. They embrace and kiss one another without putting down their glasses.

FADE OUT

42 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

FADE IN

The room is a mess and Sarah is drunk. She sits on her knees on the floor, pecking at the keys of her typewriter with one finger. Her bottle and her glass are beside her. A bare-chested Eddie is in the kitchen behind her, tossing empty cans and bottles from the sink into a garbage bag. He carelessly wipes the sink, then throws down the dishrag and goes to the closet, pulling out his leather case.

SARAH
You going out?

EDDIE
Yeah. For a little while.

Reaching for the bottle, Sarah abruptly lurches forward over her typewriter, and knocks the bottle over.

SARAH
(atop the typewriter)
Ohhhhh ...

Eddie quickly moves to help her.

EDDIE
Hey!

He helps her up.

EDDIE
Okay?

She doesn't answer. Eddie stares at Sarah as she sways limply on her knees, unmindful of her open robe. Eddie picks up the bottle and sets it before her. Taking her ashtray, Eddie rises, runs his hand through her hair for a moment, and then carries off the ashtray and empties it in the garbage bag.

DISSOLVE TO:

43 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - TIME LAPSE

Sarah, still hopelessly drunk, is sprawled out on her bed, futilely attempting to dial a telephone. Eddie, in a clean shirt and pants, watches her. He sets the bottle down near the typewriter and notices the sheet of paper stuck in the typewriter's carriage. He bends down to read it.

EDDIE
What are you writing?

SARAH
(looks up from the phone)
Oh, it's a story. A story I'm making up.

She falls back on the bed. Eddie pulls the paper out of the carriage and reads it.

SARAH
Give it to me.

EDDIE
What's this supposed to mean?

SARAH
Give it back to me.

EDDIE
What's this supposed to mean: "We have a

contract of depravity. All we have to do is pull the blinds down."

She doesn't answer. He thinks for a moment, then angrily crumples the paper in his hands and throws it at her.

EDDIE
Write yourself another story.

Eddie walks off.

SARAH
(with a sardonic laugh)
Well, what else have we got? We never talk about anything. We stay here in this room, and we drink, and we make love.
(sits up in bed)
We're strangers. What happens when the liquor and the money run out, Eddie?

Eddie gives her a look, then lowers his eyes.

SARAH
You told Charlie to lay down and die. Will you say that to me too?
(rises and stumbles over to him)
What happens, Eddie?

EDDIE
You'll find yourself another rich old lover.

SARAH
That's right! And I'm sure you'll help me.

Eddie turns and slaps her on the cheek.

SARAH
You waiting for me to cry?
(stares at him coldly)
You bum ... You poolroom bum.

He reaches for his jacket.

CUT TO:

44 INT. JOHNNY'S BAR - NIGHT

As Eddie pushes through the glass doors to the front room of Johnny's bar. He looks around at the unused pool tables, then goes to the bar.

EDDIE
Give me a bottle of beer.

BARTENDER

Right.

A man in a business suit comes out of the back room and joins him at the bar.

BARTENDER
How did you make out?

MAN
I made a couple of bucks.

EDDIE
Poker game?

MAN
Yeah.

EDDIE
Is it open?

The man looks to the bartender for his answer.

EDDIE
(to the bartender)
Huh?

BARTENDER
It's open ...
(to the man)
What'll you have?

MAN
Gimme a beer.

Eddie takes his beer to the back room.

CUT TO:

45 INT. JOHNNY'S BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The poker game is in progress. Four men are playing. One of them is Bert Gordon. His glass of milk is beside him on the table. He takes note of Eddie's presence with a quick dart of his eyes.

EDDIE
Okay?

BERT
Sit down.

He takes a seat next to Bert.

EDDIE
What's the limit?

PLAYER
Half and a dollar.

EDDIE
Gimme ten bucks.

PLAYER
Ten dollars.

He takes the chips, then throws out another bill.

EDDIE
Make it twenty.

BERT
(to Eddie)
Cut.

EDDIE
Deal.

As the cards are dealt Eddie steals a glance at the man he has come to see.

DISSOLVE TO:

46 INT. JOHNNY'S FRONT ROOM - TIME LAPSE

The game is over. Bert is already in the front room. He sits at a table with a drink, and watches Eddie pass him by on the way to the bar.

EDDIE
Bourbon. J. T. S. Brown.

BERT
(to the bartender)
Two.

Eddie looks at Bert.

BERT
(pleasantly, to Eddie)
I'm buyin'.

EDDIE
Thought you only drank milk.

BERT
Only when I work.

EDDIE
Yeah? Why?

BERT
I like it. It's good for you. Besides, you start drinking whisky gambling and it gives you an excuse for losing. That's something you don't need -- an excuse for losing. How did you make out in the poker game?

EDDIE
I lost twenty bucks.

BERT
Poker's not your game.

EDDIE
What is?

BERT
Pool.

EDDIE
You being cute?

BERT
I don't think there's a pool player alive shoots better pool than I saw you shoot the other night at Ames. You got talent.

EDDIE
So I got talent. So what beat me?

BERT
Character.

EDDIE
(laughs)
Yeah. Sure, sure.

BERT
You're damned right I'm sure. Everybody's got talent. I got talent. You think you can play big-money straight pool, or poker, for forty straight hours on nothing but talent? You think they call Minnesota Fats the best in the country just 'cause he's got talent? Nah. Minnesota Fats's got more character in one finger than you got in your whole skinny body.

EDDIE
I got drunk.

BERT
He drank as much whisky as you did.

EDDIE
Maybe he knows how to drink.

BERT
You bet he knows how.
(sips his drink)
You think that's a talent too, huh? Knowin' how to drink whisky? You think Minnesota Fats was born knowin' how to drink?

EDDIE
Okay, okay ... What do I do now, lie down on the floor and, uh, bow from the ankles? What do I do, go home?

BERT
That's your problem.

EDDIE
So I stay. Stay until I hustle up enough to play Fats again. Maybe by that time I'll develop myself some character.

Amused, Bert gets up and joins Eddie at the bar.

BERT
Maybe by that time you'll die of old age. How much do you think you'll, uh, need?

EDDIE
A thousand.

BERT
No, three thousand at least. He'll start you off at five hundred a game -- he'll beat the pants off you. That's the way he plays when he comes up against a man who knows the way the game is. He'll beat you flat four or five games -- maybe more, depending on how, uh ... steady your nerves are. But he might -- he just might be a little scared of you, and that could change things. But I wouldn't count on it.

EDDIE
How do you know? Huh? When nobody knows that much?

BERT
See that big car parked out by the fireplug on the way in? Well, that's mine. I like that car. But I get a new one every year because I make it my business to know what guys like you and Minnesota Fats are gonna do. I made enough off

of you the other night to pay for it twice over.

EDDIE
In that case, you owe me another drink.

Bert laughs and signals the bartender for another round.

BERT
Eddie, is it all right if I get personal?

EDDIE
Whaddya been so far?

BERT
Eddie, you're a born loser.

EDDIE
What's that supposed to mean?

BERT
First time in ten years I ever saw Minnesota Fats hooked, really hooked. But you let him off.

EDDIE
I told you. I got drunk.

BERT
Sure, you got drunk. That's the best excuse in the world for losing. No trouble losing when you got a good excuse. And winning! That can be heavy on your back too. Like a monkey. You drop that load too when you got an excuse. All you gotta do is learn to feel sorry for yourself. It's one of the best indoor sports: feeling sorry for yourself -- a sport enjoyed by all, especially the born losers.

EDDIE
(slaps down his glass and rises)
Thanks for the drink.

BERT
Wait a minute. Maybe I can help you.

EDDIE
To do what?

BERT
Get the three thousand. Play Minnesota Fats again.

EDDIE

Why?

BERT
Ten reasons. Maybe fifteen. And also there's something in it for me.

EDDIE
Oh yeah, I figured that. How much?

BERT
Seventy-five per cent.

EDDIE
For who?

BERT
For me.

EDDIE
That's a -- that's a pretty big slice. Who do you think you are, General Motors?

BERT
How much you think you're worth these days? I'm puttin' up the money, I'm puttin' up the time. For that I get seventy-five per cent return on my money -- if you win.

EDDIE
You think I can lose?

BERT
I never saw you do anything else.

EDDIE
You saw me beat Minnesota Fats for eighteen thousand dollars.

BERT
Look, you wanna hustle pool, don't you? This game isn't like football. Nobody pays you for yardage. When you hustle you keep score real simple. The end of the game you count up your money. That's how you find out who's best. That's the only way.

EDDIE
Why back me then? Why not back yourself? Go find yourself a big fat poker game and get rich You know all the angles.

BERT
I'm already rich. But I like action. That's

one thing I think you're good for is action. Besides, like I say ... you got talent.

EDDIE
(pleased)
Yeah, you already told me that. You cut that slice down to bite-size and maybe we can talk.

BERT
No, we don't talk. I don't make bad bets. Seventy-five, twenty-five. That's it.

EDDIE
Kiss off.

He starts to go.

BERT
Hey, wait.
(beat)
What are you gonna do about the money?

EDDIE
There are places. I'll scuffle around.

BERT
Word's out on you, Eddie. You walk in the wrong kind of place and they'll eat you alive.

EDDIE
Now, when did you adopt me?

BERT
(with a friendly grin)
I don't know when it was.

Eddie exits.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Sound of ship's horn. Eddie walks past the piers and warehouses toward a small waterfront bar called Arthur's Pool Hall.

CUT TO:

48 INT. ARTHUR'S POOL HALL - NIGHT

The atmosphere at Arthur's is stifling, oppressive. A few lonely drinkers, dock workers, sit stooped over their beer bottles at the bar. In the back is a pool table. As Eddie enters, we see two burly men, cue sticks in hand, watching as a pale, skinny young man lines up his shot.

EDDIE
(to young man)
Hi.

YOUNG MAN
Hi.

They exchange glances, sizing each other up. Then the young man puts in his shot.

PLAYER
(throwing money on the table)
You lucky punk. I quit ya.

YOUNG MAN
(to Eddie)
You want in, friend?

EDDIE
How much you playin' for?

YOUNG MAN
A dollar on the five, two on the nine.

EDDIE
Yeah, I'll play you a couple. Just for kicks.

YOUNG MAN
Okay, friend.

Eddie goes over to the rack and takes a cue.

DISSOLVE TO:

49 INT. ARTHUR'S POOL HALL - TIME LAPSE

One of the other players is putting away his cue.

PLAYER
That's it for me.

ANOTHER PLAYER
Well, I guess that does it for me too.

YOUNG MAN
(brashly, to Eddie)
You quittin' too?

EDDIE
You're a pretty good player.

YOUNG MAN
How much are you ahead?

EDDIE
Couple of bucks.

YOUNG MAN
I guess it's just you and me, huh?

EDDIE
Yeah, I guess it is, boy. Just you and me.

YOUNG MAN
You wanna raise the bet? Two on the five, five on the nine?

EDDIE
You know what, kid? I think maybe you're a hustler.

YOUNG MAN
Try me.

EDDIE
Shoot.

YOUNG MAN
Okay.

The young man makes his break shot, slamming the nine into the pocket. He looks up at Eddie, grinning snidely. The other two men, the losers, stand around, mutely following the play.

YOUNG MAN
You sure you don't want to quit, friend?

EDDIE
(suddenly irked)
Let's cut out the small stuff, huh? Hundred dollar freeze-out. Ten games, ten bucks a game, winner take all. And then we'll see who quits.

YOUNG MAN
Okay, friend. You're on.

EDDIE
(pulls out a coin)
Call it.

YOUNG MAN
Heads.

Eddie tosses the coin on the table.

YOUNG MAN

You win.

Eddie collects his coin while the young man racks up the balls. Preparing to break, Eddie chalks his cue.

YOUNG MAN
You better not miss, friend.

EDDIE
(savagely)
I don't rattle, kid. But just for that I'm gonna beat you flat.

He rams the cue ball into the pack. The nine drops in. Everyone is stunned, particularly the young man.

EDDIE
That's one.

DISSOLVE TO:

50 INT. THE GAME AT ARTHUR'S - TIME LAPSE

Eddie has lost control of himself. He is shooting as he did at Ames, rapping in his shots with perfect control. He is completely oblivious to the glowering faces of the group of men who have gathered around the table to watch.

EDDIE
That's five.

Eddie makes a tough shot. The men exchange uneasy glances.

EDDIE
That's six.

More tough shots: tricky combinations, etc.

CUT TO:

51 INT. THE GAME AT ARTHUR'S - TIME LAPSE

Eddie finishes up with yet another combination shot.

EDDIE
That's ten. You punk, you two-bit punk. C'mon, pay up. A hundred bucks.

The young man digs nervously into his jacket for the money. All eyes are on Eddie. The young man sets down his cue.

EDDIE
You quittin', friend?

YOUNG MAN
Yeah, I'm quittin'.

Sensing what is about to happen, the young man pays up. He drops the cash on the table and leaves quickly. Then one of the other men steps forward, a thick-fleshed, obscene-looking man named Turk. His mouth twists into a mock smile. As Eddie looks about him at the circle of silent men, each one glaring at him, his fury gives way to fear.

TURK
Why, you're a pool shark, boy. A real pool shark.

EDDIE
Well, so's he.

TURK
But you're better than he was. Much better.
(points to bills on the table)
There's your money, boy.

Eddie wipes his mouth with his sleeve and nervously backs away.

TURK
There's your money, boy.

Eddie tries to back off but there is nowhere to go, so he makes a casual movement toward the table.

EDDIE
Okay.

Suddenly, the men grab Eddie and pin his arms. One man grabs him around the throat.

TURK
(sardonically, to the men)
Wait a minute! Let's give this boy his money.
(to Eddie)
We always pay what we lose, boy.

Turk takes the bills from the table and stuffs them into Eddie's breast pocket.

TURK
(to Eddie)
We got no use for pool sharks around here.

They drag Eddie into the men's room and shove him up against the ground-glass partition. We see his cheek pressed against the glass, and the foggy silhouettes of the others behind him. Eddie, his mouth open, screams horribly. There is a pause. He screams again. They let go of his arms and he slumps to the floor. The bartender turns and goes back

to the bar in the front room. The ship's horn is heard again.

CUT TO:

52 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah sits alone in the darkened room, dressed in her robe and slip, lost in a drunken half-sleep. There is a knock at the door.

SARAH
Who is it?

EDDIE
Me. It's Eddie.

She goes to the door and opens it. Her eyes are puffy, her face is covered with perspiration. She opens the door, then looks up to see him leaning against the wall, his arms tucked into his chest, with one hand covering the other.

SARAH
What happened?

EDDIE
I got beat up. They ...
(beat)
They broke my thumbs.

Sarah is stunned and moves to him.

SARAH
Oh, God!

She takes him in her arms. He starts to cry.

EDDIE
Oh, they broke my thumbs. Broke my thumbs.

She holds him.

DISSOLVE TO:

53 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah watches as Eddie, both hands now encased in plaster casts, tries to sleep. He tries to move his arms, as if trying to defend himself. Sarah rises, joins him, and strokes his head.

SARAH
It's all right. I'm here.

DISSOLVE TO:

54 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

They are seated at the breakfast table. Sarah pours him some coffee and he tries to bring the cup to his lips, but he cannot manage it. Disgusted, he drops the cup on the floor and gets up from the table. Sarah bends down and patiently wipes up the spilled coffee.

DISSOLVE TO:

55 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is now clean and neat. And Sarah is sober. She is at her table, typing, while Eddie stands at the window, trying to reach over his shoulder to scratch his back. He comes over to the table and, with his mouth, picks a cigarette out of the pack. He looks quickly at her, without asking directly for the match. She lights it and, as she does, he glances at the sheet in the typewriter.

SARAH
You can read it, if you want to.
(Eddie shrugs)
You want to go out for a while? To a movie?

EDDIE
(pacing restlessly)
You wanna drink?

SARAH
No. You?

EDDIE
(suddenly opening the door)
What's it so hot in here for?

He starts to unbutton his shirt and Sarah immediately gets up to help. But he holds her off.

EDDIE
Please!

She watches him struggle with the button for a while then spread his arms in a gesture of helplessness. As she unbuttons his shirt for him, he takes her face in his hands and kisses her.

DISSOLVE TO:

56 EXT. SARAH'S APARTMENT HOUSE - MORNING

Sarah and Eddie emerges from the doorway. It is a warm, beautiful day, and Sarah has a basket with her. Eddie seems happy to be out with her, almost as if he has forgotten the casts on his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

57 EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

They stop at a spot that overlooks the river and spread out a blanket.

CUT TO:

58 EXT. PARK - DAY

Eddie leans back on the grass and looks at Sarah. They both seem easy and relaxed in the sunshine together.

EDDIE
Sarah, do you think I'm a loser?

SARAH
A loser?

EDDIE
Yeah. I met this guy -- Gordon, Bert Gordon. He said I was. Born loser.

SARAH
Would he know?

EDDIE
He knows. A lot.

SARAH
Why did he tell you?

EDDIE
I don't know. I'm not sure. He said there are people who want to lose, who are always looking for an excuse to lose.

SARAH
What does he do, this Bert Gordon?

EDDIE
He's a gambler.

SARAH
Is he a winner?

EDDIE
Well, he owns things.

SARAH
Is that what makes a winner?

EDDIE
Well, what else does?

SARAH
Does it bother you? What he said?

EDDIE

Yeah.

(after a pause)

Yeah. It bothers me a lot.

(pause)

'Cause, you see, twice, Sarah -- once at Ames with Minnesota Fats and then again at Arthur's ...

(sits up)

... in that cheap, crummy poolroom ... Now, why'd I do it, Sarah? Why'd I do it? I coulda beat that guy, I coulda beat him cold. He never woulda known. But I just had to show 'em, I just had to show those creeps and those punks what the game is like when it's great, when it's really great. You know, like anything can be great -- anything can be great ... I don't care, bricklaying can be great. If a guy knows. If he knows what he's doing and why, and if he can make it come off. I mean, when I'm goin' -- when I'm really goin' -- I feel like...

(beat)

... like a jockey must feel. He's sittin' on his horse, he's got all that speed and that power underneath him, he's comin' into the stretch, the pressure's on him -- and he knows -- just feels -- when to let it go, and how much. 'Cause he's got everything workin' for him -- timing, touch. It's a great feeling, boy, it's a real great feeling when you're right, and you know you're right. It's like all of a sudden I got oil in my arm. Pool cue's part of me. You know, it's a -- pool cue's got nerves in it. It's a piece of wood -- it's got nerves in it. You feel the roll of those balls. You don't have to look. You just know. Ya make shots that nobody's ever made before. And you play that game the way nobody's ever played it before.

SARAH

You're not a loser, Eddie. You're a winner. Some men never get to feel that way about anything. I love you, Eddie.

Eddie lowers his eyes and leans back.

EDDIE

You know, someday, Sarah, you're gonna settle down. You're gonna marry a college professor,

and you're gonna write a great book. Maybe about me, huh? Fast Eddie Felson, hustler.

SARAH
(after a pause)
I love you.

EDDIE
You need the words?

SARAH
Yes, I need them very much. And if you ever say them I'll never let you take them back.

Eddie just stares at her.

DISSOLVE TO:

59 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eddie is about to knock on the door to Sarah's apartment. He stops for a moment to look at his hands. The casts are off. He knocks on the door with his wrist, as he would if he still had them on. When she opens the door he holds them up boyishly before her face.

EDDIE
You glad?

SARAH
Yes, I'm glad.

She kisses his hands.

CUT TO:

60 INT. JOHNNY'S PLACE - DAY

Eddie flexes his fingers, then tries out a shot on one of Johnny's pool tables. He uses the simpler, open hand bridge to support his cue. Bert Gordon enters, and watches him play.

BERT
Hello, Eddie.

EDDIE
Hi. How's business?

BERT
Ahh, slow ... Why the open hand bridge? Something wrong with your hand?

EDDIE
(continues to shoot)
Yeah. Had a little accident. A place called

Arthur's.

BERT
Oh. You seem to do all right that way.

EDDIE
I'd say my game is about twenty per cent off. Maybe more.

BERT
What happened? Somebody step on your hands?

EDDIE
Yeah. Big creep. Broke my thumbs.

BERT
Man named Turk Baker?

EDDIE
You know everybody, don't you?

BERT
Everybody who can hurt me, everybody who can help me. It pays.

EDDIE
Maybe you oughta give me lessons.

BERT
Sign up.

EDDIE
Where do I sign?

BERT
The first match I got in mind for you is in Louisville, Kentucky.

EDDIE
You name the place, boss. I'll be there.

BERT
What happened to you anyway?

EDDIE
Like I told ya. My thumbs.

BERT
No, I don't mean the thumbs. You already told me about the thumbs.

EDDIE
I been thinking.

BERT
Thinking about what?

EDDIE
Maybe I'm not such a high-class piece of property right now. And a twenty-five per cent slice of something big is better than a hundred per cent slice of nothin'.

BERT
(to the bartender)
Hey, get us a couple of drinks here, will ya? J. T. S. Brown.

Bert smiles at Eddie.

DISSOLVE TO:

61 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It is a quiet, elegant restaurant, one with soft piano music and subdued lighting. Eddie and Sarah had walked past it the first day they met. Eddie and Sarah enter. She has on new dress and Eddie, looking a little ill at ease, has on a suit and tie.

HEADWAITER
Good evening, sir.

EDDIE
Good evening.
(digs into pocket and hands him a bill)
Give use a nice, quiet table.

HEADWAITER
Yes, sir. Right this way.

The headwaiter seats them at a table. Eddie and Sarah exchange smiles. A waiter approaches.

WAITER
Would you like a drink before dinner, sir?

EDDIE
(to Sarah)
Hey?

SARAH
Sherry.
(to the waiter)
Very old, very dry.

EDDIE

(to the waiter)
Two.
(the waiter leaves)
Sherry? ... Nice joint. You look very pretty.

SARAH
I feel pretty.

Suddenly she breaks into laughter.

EDDIE
Well, what's so funny?

SARAH
Your tie. I never saw you wear one before.

EDDIE
(touches the knot self-consciously)
First time for everything.

The waiter returns with the bottle of sherry and holds it out to Eddie for his approval. There is a long pause as Eddie looks from the bottle to the waiter. Finally, Eddie realizes he must respond.

EDDIE
Oh. Yeah. That's great.

The waiter pours out the sherry as Eddie and Sarah stare at each other over their glasses. Then Eddie looks away. Sarah proposes a toast.

SARAH
To you, Eddie.

They touch glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

62 INT. RESTAURANT - TIME LAPSE

The waiter brings the check.

WAITER
Thank you, sir.

Eddie nods and drinks down the last of his brandy as the waiter leaves. Sarah sees that Eddie seems somber, preoccupied.

SARAH
What is it, Eddie?

EDDIE
Nothin'.
(looks at the check)
Want another drink?

SARAH
What do you want to tell me?

EDDIE
Well, I, uh, I'll be leaving town for a little while.

SARAH
(stunned)
For how long?

EDDIE
Oh, I don't know.

SARAH
A week? A year?

EDDIE
More like a week. Look, I'll be back.

SARAH
Sure. Let's go home.

She picks up her purse and gloves and leaves.

CUT TO:

63 EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It is raining heavily. Sarah emerges from the building and leans wearily against the awning. Eddie, having hurriedly paid the bill, follows after her. He catches up with Sarah, taking her by the arm, and stepping out into the street to hail a cab.

EDDIE
Taxi.

She angrily breaks away from him and walks out into the rain.

SARAH
No, I want to walk.

EDDIE
(running after her)
Come here. Come on, now.

Eddie grabs Sarah and starts to pull her back under the awning.

DISSOLVE TO:

64 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door opens and the two of them enter, thoroughly drenched.

EDDIE
You better get some dry things on.

She walks to a chair, limping noticeably.

EDDIE
Don't you want to know where I'm going?

SARAH
No.
(collapses into a chair)
Yes, I want to know what for. But I don't want to ask.

EDDIE
(sits)
I'm going to Kentucky. To Louisville. With a friend. Try to make some money. I need it, the money. I'll be leaving early in the morning.

SARAH
Leave now.

EDDIE
Oh, grow up.

SARAH
Why should I?

EDDIE
Sarah, I'm going to Kentucky to play pool, with a guy by the name of Findley. Now, I need the action and I need the money. I told you I'd be back.

SARAH
If you were going to come back you wouldn't have taken me out tonight. You wouldn't have bought this dress. You're hustling me, Eddie. You've never stopped hustling me.

EDDIE
Now, I never hustled you. Even when I thought I was. You know it.

SARAH
What do you want me to do? Just sit here and wait? Faithful little Sarah. Pull the shades down and sit. When you feel like coming back, you'll come back. And you'll love me. And then you'll go away again. Is that your idea of love?

EDDIE
I got no idea of love. And neither have you. I mean, neither one of us would know what it was if we saw it coming down the street.

SARAH
I'd know it, Eddie. I'd know. For God's sakes, what are you trying to do to me? I love you.

EDDIE
Well, what's your idea of love? Chains?

SARAH
No.
(long pause)
I made you up, didn't I, Eddie? You weren't real. I made you up, like everything else. There was no car crash, Eddie. When I was five, I had polio. I was never an actress. The rich old man is my father. He walked out on us when I was seven. He sends me a check every month. That's how he buys his way out of my life. The men I've known ... after they left, I'd say they weren't real, I made them up. But you, Eddie. I wanted you to be real.

He reaches across and pulls her to him, burying his face in her head.

SARAH
I'm so scared, Eddie ... I'm scared.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. STREET - MORNING

Bert Gordon leans on the hood of a cab. His face drops when he sees Eddie and Sarah walking toward him. Eddie cares two suitcases and his leather cue case. He sets the suitcases on the curb and the cab driver moves to take them. Courteously, Bert opens the door of the taxi for Eddie and Sarah.

EDDIE
Sarah Packard ... Bert Gordon.

BERT
Miss Packard. How do you do?

Sarah eyes Bert distrustfully and starts to get in the cab.

DISSOLVE TO:

66 INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

Eddie, Sarah, and Bert squeeze through the door of the train compartment.

BERT
(to a redcap, off luggage)
That brown one's mine. It goes in drawing room A, huh? Thanks.

The redcap exits, carrying the luggage.

EDDIE
(to redcap, off compartment door)
I got it, I got it.

Eddie shuts the door. Bert and Sarah sit across from each other.

BERT
You sure you going to be comfortable enough there, Miss ... ah ... ?

SARAH
(loudly)
Packard. Sarah Packard.

BERT
It always takes me a little while to get a name fixed in my mind. Are you sure you don't want anything?

SARAH
No, I'm fine.

BERT
You, uh, you ever been to Louisville during Derby week, Miss, ah, Packard?

SARAH
I've never been to Louisville.

BERT
Lots of action. Lots of money.
(to Eddie, seated beside him)
Lots of class. You'll see some of the best-dressed and most beautiful women in the world at the races. Knock your eye out.

DISSOLVE TO:

67 INT. TRAIN DINING ROOM - MORNING

The Kentucky-bound train rolls down the track. Bert and Eddie finish their breakfast coffee in the dining room. Sarah is in the washroom.

BERT
James Findley is a very rich man. Grandfather left him twenty per cent of a tobacco company.

EDDIE
What? And he -- he hustles pool?

BERT
(chuckles)
He's a gentleman. Gentleman gambler. He gets his kicks playing with hustlers. He's got an old Southern mansion with a pool table in the basement, drinks eight-year-old bourbon, smokes cork-tipped cigarettes.

EDDIE
How good is he?

BERT
I don't know. Never saw him play. They say he's one of the best.

Sarah makes her way down the aisle and joins them at the table.

SARAH
(brightly)
I'm ready.

BERT
Soon as I finish my coffee.

She stands there, lips pursed, absorbing the insult.

EDDIE
(to Bert)
You must have a lot of confidence in me.

BERT
I don't. But I got confidence in Findley.

EDDIE
What's that supposed to mean?

BERT
Means I got confidence that he's a loser. All the way a loser. You happen to be about only one-half loser -- the other half, winner.
(off his coffee)
I'm finished.

Bert gets up and reaches in his pocket for his billfold.

EDDIE
Here, I got it.

BERT
No, no. When you play for me, I pick up all the tabs.

Eddie and Sarah just stare at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

68 INT. TRAIN CLUB CAR - NIGHT

They are at a table, sipping drinks. Bert shuffles a deck of cards as he talks. Eddie, like a schoolboy, listens intently. Sarah sits apart, watching them both.

BERT
Fats knew the game was in the clutch, knew he had to do something to stop ya. He played it smart.

EDDIE
I played that game, Bert. In my head I played it a thousand times.

BERT
Play it again. Learn something.
(laughs, to Sarah)
Fats went in the john, see? Washed his face, cleaned his fingernails, made his mind a blank, combed his hair, came back all ready to go.
(to Eddie)
You were through. You saw him, you saw how he looked. Clean, all set to start all over again. Hold tight and push hard. You know what you were doing? You were waitin' to get beat. Flattened out on your butt, swimmin' around in glory. And whisky. Probably deciding how you could lose.

SARAH
What makes you know so much? How do you know what Eddie was thinking?

BERT
I know. Been there myself. We've all been there, haven't we, Miss Packard?

Eddie glances at Sarah who stares mutely at Bert.

BERT
(takes a cigarette)

Got a match, Eddie?

Eddie reaches across to light Bert's cigarette with the lighter Sarah gave him. Bert's own lighter is on the table, before him. Sarah sees it, picks it up, and sparks it into flame.

SARAH
Doesn't your lighter work, Mr. Gordon?

BERT
(smiling politely)
Oh, I forgot all about it.
(to Eddie, who still holds the flame)
How's the hands?

EDDIE
Fine.

BERT
Good. I'd hate to think I was putting my money on a cripple.

EDDIE
(angrily)
Hey, whaddya say something like that for?

SARAH
It's all right, Eddie. I'm sure Mr. Gordon meant no offense. It was a figure of speech.

BERT
That's right, Miss Packard.

SARAH
And a fact is a fact.

BERT
She's a smart girl, Eddie.

Bert goes back to shuffling his deck of cards.

DISSOLVE TO:

69 INT. LOUISVILLE HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is thronged with gamblers and their women, sportsmen, tourists, all there for the Derby. A jazz combo can be heard over the din of their voices. Eddie, looking excited, leads Sarah through the crowd. Behind them is Bert, his face now shaded by dark glasses, following a bellhop to the main desk.

BELLHOP
Right this way, Mr. Gordon.

He forces his way through some people to get to the desk.

BELLHOP
Here you are, Mr. Gordon.

CONCIERGE
Suite fifty-six.

BERT
Look, I-I wired ahead for two suites adjoining.

CONCIERGE
I don't recall.

BERT
Well, I do. I want two suites.

CONCIERGE
Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Gordon. We're filled up. This is Derby week.

Bert displays a neatly folded wad of money in his hand.

BERT
Look, son, you've got it all wrong. You must have gotten my wire. Look through your reservations, huh?

CONCIERGE
(artfully accepts cash bribe)
I'll see what I can do ... You were right, Mr. Gordon. I mislaid your wire. Uh, two adjoining suites?

Eddie laughs and moves toward the open door leading to the billiard rooms. His face glows as he watches the flow of men moving in and out of the crowded room, and hears the sound of clicking pool balls. He tucks his cue case under his arm and turns to Bert and Sarah who join him.

EDDIE
(to Bert)
You know, that's real sweet music in there. You can almost smell the action and the money. You know, I can feel it right down in the bottom of my shoes.

BERT
(laughs)
Come on, let's go...

Before they can head to their rooms, a small, neatly groomed man

approaches Eddie.

BILLY
Eddie!

EDDIE
(shaking his hand warmly)
Hey, Billy, how are ya?

BILLY
Fast Eddie. I didn't know you were here. Everybody's here. It's like a hustler's convention. The Whetstone Kid, Johnny Jumbo. C'mon in. The guys'll be glad to see you. C'mon.

EDDIE
(to Sarah)
What room are you in?

SARAH
Fifty-seven.

EDDIE
I'll be up later.

Sarah turns toward the elevators, with Bert behind her, jiggling his keys.

DISSOLVE TO:

70 INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The bellboy unlocks the door and Sarah enters. The doors to the other suite are open. As she catches sight of Bert arranging things with the bellboy she closes one door. The bellboy leaves as she moves to close the other.

BERT
Oh, wait a minute, Miss Packard.

SARAH
We're neighbors now. You can call me Sarah.

He comes to the door, holding it open.

BERT
I want to talk to you.

SARAH
Do we need words?

BERT
Yeah, I think we do. We could try to cut each

other up. But that would be bad for everybody. Bad for me, bad for you. And worst of all, be bad for Eddie.

SARAH
You know what's good for him?

BERT
To win.

SARAH
For whom and for what?

BERT
For what makes the world go round. For money, and for glory.

SARAH
You didn't answer my first question. For whom?

BERT
All right. Today for me, tomorrow for himself.

SARAH
No, there's no tomorrow. Not with you. You own all the tomorrows because you buy them today, and you buy cheap.

BERT
(nods)
Well, nobody has to sell.

He turns away.

SARAH
You bastard.

BERT
(turns back to her, savagely)
Listen, Miss Ladybird, you're here on a rain check and I know it. You're hanging on by your nails. You let that glory whistle blow loud and clear for Eddie and you're a wreck on a railroad track. You're a horse that finished last. So don't make trouble, Miss Ladybird. Live and let live. While you can.

There is a long pause as he glares at her.

BERT
I'll make it up to you.

SARAH

(weakly)
How?

BERT
You tell me.

He goes back into his room. She closes the door and leans against it.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

Screams are heard as the horses jerk out of the starting gate to begin their runs.

CUT TO:

72 INT. RACETRACK BAR - DAY

Eddie cashes in a winning ticket

EDDIE
(to the cashier)
Thanks.

Eddie moves through the ornate racetrack bar to join Sarah at a table. Sarah has been drinking.

EDDIE
(excited)
Where's Bert?

SARAH
He went off someplace.

EDDIE
Well, that old lovin' horse paid twenty-two forty.
(counts his money)
Let's see ... two hundred I won from the jockey last night. And today at the track ... I got five hundred and forty bucks.
(folds it up)
Here, you hold it.

SARAH
(takes it)
Why?

EDDIE
Just for luck.

As she puts the money in her purse, Bert sits down.

BERT
Hey, Findley's here.

EDDIE
Where?

BERT
Over there by the bar.

We see Findley, studying his program and holding a drink in his hand. He is tall and refined, with a pale, debauched, yet oddly youthful face that some men of forty or more sometimes have. A cork-tipped cigarette dangles from his fingers.

EDDIE
Aren't you gonna go over and talk to him?

BERT
Nah. Sit tight. He'll be over here.

Findley spots Bert, takes a long drag on his cigarette, and saunters toward them.

BERT
(to Sarah)
Are you ready for another?

SARAH
Thank you.

Bert points to Eddie.

EDDIE
No, no more for me.

FINDLEY
(joins them, speaks in a soft Southern drawl, to Bert)
Well, hello. Haven't seen you in a long time.

BERT
Well, hello. Haven't been here for a long time.
(makes introductions)
Ah, Miss Packard, Eddie Felson ... James ...

Bert snaps his fingers, pretending to forget Findley's name.

FINDLEY
Findley.

EDDIE
Glad to meet you.

FINDLEY

And I you.

(shakes Eddie's hand)

I think I've heard about you, Mr. Felson. You play pocket billiards, don't you?

EDDIE

(playing along)

Now and then. Why, do you?

FINDLEY

A little, although I'm afraid I generally lose.

BERT

So does Eddie.

EDDIE

Well, I win sometimes.

FINDLEY

(smugly)

I'll bet you do, Mr. Felson. I'll just bet you do.

EDDIE

How much?

FINDLEY

Bert, I believe Mr. Felson's making a proposition.

BERT

Could be.

FINDLEY

Well, Mr. Felson, maybe you could come out to my place some evening. We could play a few games of billiards.

EDDIE

When?

FINDLEY

You're very direct, Mr. Felson.

EDDIE

That's right. When?

FINDLEY

Would you like to come out tonight?

EDDIE

What time?

FINDLEY
I'm having some people over for drinks right after the races. Why don't you all come over? Then about nine, ten o'clock we can play.

BERT
We'll be there.

FINDLEY
Good, good.

He nods to them all, and leaves.

SARAH
If you don't mind I think I'll stay at the hotel.

EDDIE
Well, what's the matter?

SARAH
(her voice slurred)
I'm a little tired.

BERT
C'mon, there'll be a lot of laughs. Findley's parties are famous. He invites everybody from top to bottom, from high society to every tout, hustler, and tramp in town. That's another way he has of gettin' his kicks. It excites him to be around what he calls the criminal type. Some men are like that.
(beat)
Some women too.

Sarah gives Bert a look.

DISSOLVE TO:

73 INT. FINDLEY'S PARTY - NIGHT

The camera tilts upward from a Dixieland combo blaring out a bouncy tune to find Sarah, descending the stairs, looking on at the party below. Holding the rail with one hand, and a champagne glass in the other, she maneuvers her way down the steps. She stops a waitress on the way upstairs and exchanges her glass for a new one. We follow her unsteady, doll-like descent. She moves slowly, dreamily past the combo; past Eddie, who is cornered by a chic blonde in a low-cut dress; past Findley, alone with his drink, observing his guests; past the bleary-eyed couples on the dance floor, until she comes to the bar. Bert is there too, his head bobbing to the Dixie beat, his eyes running over her body so plainly covered by a cotton print dress. Spinning away from him, she takes her glass and goes to a corner of the room. Bert

walks casually to her side. He leans over and whispers something in her ear. Her face hardens. Angrily she turns and throws her champagne in his face and smashes her glass on the floor. Then she starts to cry and starts to fall, but Bert holds her up by the shoulders. The music stops. The dance couples strain to get a look at what has happened. Eddie shoves through the gawking crowd.

EDDIE
What's the matter? What happened?

BERT
It's all right. She had a little too much to drink, that's all. Forget it.
(to Sarah)
Go upstairs and sleep it off.

Eddie tries to take her in his arms, but she beats on his chest, sobbing, unable to make words.

EDDIE
Hey, c'mon. Cut it out! Do what he says. Come on upstairs.

Eddie drags her limp, trembling body across the dance floor to the stairs. Bert watches them go, wiping the champagne off his coat lapels. The music starts up again.

DISSOLVE TO:

74 INT. AN UPSTAIRS COAT ROOM - TIME LAPSE

A Negro maid sits patiently in the room, watching over Sarah and the coats that Sarah is lying on. A woman enters and, disgusted, pushes Sarah off her fur coat. Eddie appears in the doorway. The woman takes her coat and leaves. Eddie looks at Sarah for a moment, then turns and walks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

75 INT. BILLIARD ROOM AT FINDLEY'S - NIGHT

Findley, drink and cork-tipped cigarette in hand, escorts Bert and Eddie down the stairs to his game room. It is a beautifully appointed salon, wood-paneled, filled with plush divans and decorated with terra-cotta Roman statuary. In the center of the room is the billiard table, now covered by a cloth. Findley goes to the bar.

FINDLEY
You gentlemen care for a drink?

EDDIE
(steps briskly into the room)
No, none for me. Come on, let's play.

FINDLEY
By all means.

Eddie eagerly pulls back the cloth that covers the table. But it's not a pool table -- it's a billiard table.

EDDIE
I thought we came here to play pool.

FINDLEY
I don't play pool, Mr. Felson. I play billiards. My house, my game. You don't have to play if you don't want to.

BERT
Well, we won't.

EDDIE
C'mon, Bert. Let me play him.

BERT
(to Findley)
How much?

FINDLEY
Oh, we'll start small ... a hundred dollars a game.

BERT
(to Eddie)
You ever played billiards before?

EDDIE
Sure.

BERT
You hustlin' me?

FINDLEY
I'm sure Mr. Felson knows what he's doing. Certainly you can afford a hundred dollars to find out.

BERT
Deal the cards.

Eddie finishes uncovering the table. Bert takes a seat. Findley has a mischievous look on his face as he brings out a cloth bag and pours out the three billiard balls on the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

76 INT. BILLIARD GAME - TIME LAPSE

Eddie shoots. His red ball ricochets off the shoulder and returns to kiss the third ball.

FINDLEY
Beautiful shot, Felson. Beautiful. You've played billiards before, Mr. Felson. Ah, you gentlemen sure you don't care for a drink?

EDDIE
Oh no, nothing for me.

Findley steps up to the bar, leaving Bert and Eddie alone.

EDDIE
(to Bert)
How do we stand?

BERT
'Bout even.

EDDIE
When do I raise the bet?

BERT
I don't know.

EDDIE
Bert, if that's his best game, I can beat him.

BERT
Level with me, Eddie. You ever play billiards before?

EDDIE
What's the difference? You got a pool cue, balls on the table. All you gotta do is get the feel of it.

FINDLEY
(returns with a fresh drink)
Like to raise the stakes, Mr. Felson?

EDDIE
(to Bert)
Okay?

BERT
How much?

FINDLEY
Oh, about five hundred.

BERT

(to Eddie)
Do you really think you can beat him?

FINDLEY
Of course he thinks he can beat me, Bert. He wouldn't be playing me if he didn't. Right, Felson?

BERT
I didn't ask him can he beat you. I already know he can beat you. I asked him will he? With Eddie, that's two different things.

EDDIE
I can beat him.

BERT
All right. Five hundred.

Findley points to a statue on a table behind the couch. It is a figure of Pan, with horns sticking up through his curly head, and the legs of a goat extending down below his waist.

FINDLEY
Have you noticed, Bert? This fellow here bears a striking resemblance to you. It seems as though you might have modeled for the artist.

BERT
(nods)
It's possible.

DISSOLVE TO:

77 INT. BILLIARD GAME - TIME LAPSE

Findley completes a shot, then lays his cue gently on the table and goes to the bar.

FINDLEY
Mark that one up too, Bert.

Eddie, his coat off, rubs his hand nervously.

EDDIE
I'll beat him the next game.

BERT
(toying with his billfold)
How're the hands?

EDDIE
They're fine.

BERT
Well, rack up your cue. We're leavin'.

FINDLEY
That seems a shame. The night is young.

BERT
The night is two thousand dollars old.

EDDIE
Hey, Bert. Wait a minute!

BERT
I said we're leavin'.

Bert turns his back on Eddie and joins Findley at the bar. Eddie stands helplessly for a moment. Findley pours a drink as Eddie approaches.

EDDIE
I can beat him, Bert. Now he suckered me 'cause he knows how to hustle. I didn't think he did. But I can outplay him. I can beat him.

BERT
I don't believe you, Eddie. I think you're still a loser.

EDDIE
All right, then. I'll play him with my own money.

He reaches in his pocket, then remembers that he gave his money to Sarah.

EDDIE
I'll be right back.

He bounds up the stairs.

CUT TO:

78 INT. UPSTAIRS COAT ROOM - NIGHT

He bursts into the room, goes past Sarah, stretched out on the bed, and takes the money out of her purse. She is facing away from him but her eyes are open. She listens to him as he shuts the door loudly on his way out.

CUT TO:

79 INT. THE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

Eddie leaps down the stairs, two at a time.

EDDIE
Okay, c'mon. Let's play.

Bert eyes Eddie with controlled rage as the two get ready to play again.

DISSOLVE TO:

80 INT. BILLIARD ROOM - TIME LAPSE

A game has just ended as Sarah quietly descends the stairs. She stands at the rail, listening.

EDDIE (o.s.)
There it is. I'm broke.

FINDLEY (o.s.)
Ah, that's unfortunate, Mr. Felson.

EDDIE (o.s.)
For who, Mr. Findley? ... Bert, he only beat me by one point. Now, you can't get off me now.

BERT (o.s.)
The bank is closed.

Bert sits with his shoes up on the couch.

EDDIE
Please don't get off me now.

BERT
I know when to quit. You don't. Win or lose, you don't know when to quit.

EDDIE
(down on one knee)
What do you want me to do, huh? What do you want me to do? Just say it and you got it but PLEASE don't get off me now.

SARAH
(from the stairs)
Don't beg him, Eddie.

Eddie turns and sees her.

EDDIE
Go on back to the hotel.

SARAH
Please, Eddie, don't beg him.

EDDIE

Would you go on back to the hotel? Take a cab, go on back to the hotel.

SARAH
Doesn't all of this come through to you, Eddie? Doesn't any of this mean anything to you? That man, this place, the people. They wear masks, Eddie. And underneath the masks they're perverted, twisted, crippled.

EDDIE
Shut up.

His eyes are shut tight; his balled-up fists rub against his temples.

SARAH
(moving to him)
Don't wear a mask, Eddie. You don't have to.
(points to Bert)
That's Turk, Eddie, the man who broke your thumbs. Only he's not going to break your thumbs. He'll break your heart, your guts. And for the same reason -- 'cause he hates you, 'cause of what you are. 'Cause of what you have and he hasn't.

EDDIE
(rises)
Would you get off my back, Sarah? Once and for all, will you get out, will you GET OFF MY BACK?!

There is a long pause.

BERT
Go ahead and play him, Eddie. Play him for a thousand dollars a game.

A stunned Eddie moves to the billiard table. Defeated, Sarah turns and goes up the stairs. The men return to the table to continue their game. Bert, deeply satisfied, puts on his coat and sits to watch the action.

DISSOLVE TO:

81 INT. FINDLEY'S DEN - TIME LAPSE

A shaken Findley flops into a leather swivel chair. A bucket of iced champagne sits on the desk, ready to be emptied. Findley puffs on his cigarette as he looks at the impatient face of Bert, slouching in the chair across from him. Eddie leans against a wall nearby. He is quiet, morose.

FINDLEY

Will you take a check, Bert?

BERT
(pause)
Cash.

FINDLEY
How much do I owe you?

BERT
Twelve thousand.

Findley reaches nervously for the bottle, gulps at his drink. Then he unlocks his desk drawer and takes out the money. Eddie looks on as Findley gives the money to Bert.

FINDLEY
Here.
(to Eddie)
Been an interestin' evening.

EDDIE
Yeah, sure has.

FINDLEY
(to a valet)
Charles, will you call a cab for these gentlemen, please.
(to Eddie)
I'd show you to the door, but I ...

EDDIE
Oh yeah, yeah. You're tired.
(to Bert)
And beat.

FINDLEY
Yeah. You must come again.

EDDIE
Yeah. Sure.

Eddie moves to leave. Findley and Bert watch him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

82 INT. FINDLEY'S FOYER - NIGHT

Eddie waits for Bert to come down the stairs.

BERT
There's your share. Three thousand.

CHARLES

The cab's waiting.

BERT
(tips him)
Oh, yeah. Here. Thanks ... C'mon, Eddie, let's go.

EDDIE
I wanna walk.

BERT
It's a long walk.

EDDIE
I got time, Bert.

BERT
You want me to tell her for you?

EDDIE
Tell her what?

BERT
You gotta be hard, Eddie.

Eddie abruptly turns and walks out of the house. Bert watches him for a moment then follows.

CUT TO:

83 INT. BERT'S HOTEL SUITE - LATE NIGHT

Bert enters his suite, removes his overcoat, then looks at the door that divides his room from Sarah's. He seems hesitant, unsure of himself. He pours himself a drink and downs it in one gulp, walks to the door, listens, and opens it himself without knocking. Sarah is there, seated primly on the bed. There is a drink in her hand, and a suitcase beside her on the bed. Bert enters her suite and confronts her.

BERT
When are you leaving?

Sarah's voice is subdued, controlled.

SARAH
In a little while. That's what you want, isn't it?

BERT
It's what Eddie wants. He, uh, told me to give you some money.

He stands over her, pulling a wad of bills from his pocket.

SARAH
Put it on the bed. That's the way it's done, isn't it?

BERT
(tossing it there)
That's the way it's done.

SARAH
And the way you're looking at me, is that the way you look at a man you've just beaten? As if you'd just taken his money, and now all you want is ... his pride?

BERT
All I want's the money.

SARAH
Sure, sure, just the money, and the aristocratic pleasure of seeing him fall apart. You're a Roman, Bert. You have to win them all.

He picks her up and tries to kiss her but she is cold and limp in his arms, so he lets go and she drops back on the bed. Then he turns and walks back into his room. She waits for a moment. Then she takes a cigarette out of a pack, gets up, and goes into his room.

SARAH
(at the door)
You got a drink?

DISSOLVE TO:

84 INT. BERT'S HOTEL SUITE - TIME LAPSE

In the bathroom mirror we see Bert asleep on his bed. The sheets are rumpled and tossed about. Then we see Sarah, in her slip, enter the bathroom and shut the door. She takes out her lipstick and scrawls across the image of herself in the glass "Perverted, twisted, crippled." She underlines the word "crippled."

DISSOLVE TO:

85 INT. HOTEL LOBBY - EARLY MORNING

Eddie is just getting back. He walks through the lobby, ignoring the uniformed policeman standing nearby, and stops at the desk.

EDDIE
Give me my key, please. Room fifty-seven.

The concierge stares dumbly.

EDDIE
Well, c'mon, give me my key.

The concierge hands it to him. Eddie walks quickly toward the elevators.

DISSOLVE TO:

86 INT. HOTEL SUITE - TIME LAPSE

He enters, sees the money on Sarah's bed, puts down his cue case, and turns to see a crowd in the adjoining room. Bert, laying in bed, talks to a plainclothesman who stands over him, taking notes. A photographer with a flash camera stands by the bathroom.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN
Now, let's go over this again. You say you were in the other room...

BERT
No, she closed the door. I told you she closed the door. I was in the other room. She closed the door, went in there, maybe, I don't know, ten minutes, five minutes...

Bert stops when he sees Eddie through the open door. A uniformed policeman bars Eddie's entrance.

BERT
(to the policeman)
Hey. Let him come in, huh?

Eddie comes in. He looks at the detectives around Bert's bed.

BERT
Eddie?

The photographer's bulb flashes as he takes a picture of the bathroom. Eddie pushes by the photographer, then stops as he sees Sarah's body laid out on the tiled floor. He drops to his knees beside her.

BERT
Eddie?

Eddie reaches out to touch her, then pulls back his hand. Bert appears at the bathroom door behind him.

BERT
Eddie? She come in here, Eddie. She asked me for a drink. I give her one. We had a few more.

Eyes closed, he writhes as he listens to Bert.

BERT

Eddie, she came in here.

Suddenly he uncoils and lunges at Bert, grasping him by the throat and pushing him back. A policeman untangles them, but Eddie breaks free. We hear Bert scream as he squirms along the floor trying to avoid Eddie's fists.

FADE OUT

87 INT. AMES POOL HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

FADE IN

Minnesota Fats sits in his chair, engrossed in the afternoon paper. Big John is at a pool table, trying out a few shots. Bert, in dark glasses, stands near the cashier's cage, chucking dice into a leather shaker. The noise of the dice echoes in the slow, late afternoon gloom of Ames. When Bert sees Eddie push open the glass doors, he draws himself up fearfully like a turtle, and motions with his eyes to his men for protection. Eddie, his cue case tucked under his arm, walks straight toward him. He stops, stares at him for a moment, then turns and walks over to Minnesota Fats.

EDDIE
I came to play pool, Fats.

FATS
(after a glance at Bert)
That's good, Eddie. For how much?

EDDIE
You name it.

FATS
Thousand dollars a game.

EDDIE
Let's make it three thousand dollars a game, Fats. C'mon, three thousand dollars. That's my bankroll, my life's savings.
(beat)
What's the matter, Fats? All you gotta do is beat me the first game and I'm on my way back to Oakland.

FATS
Let's go.

Fats rises, ready to play. Eddie starts to screw his cue together.

EDDIE
Get on me, Bert. I can't lose.

He turns to join Fats at the table. The balls are already racked and ready.

FATS
Willie.

Willie collects their stake money and prepares to toss the coin. Preacher, Big John draw up their chairs around the table. Bert also takes a seat, but far away, near the coat rack.

WILLIE
Call it.

EDDIE
Heads.

Willie taps Fats on the lapel. It's his break. Sausage sends the cue ball down the table and the game begins at once. Fats makes a good break, leaving the cue ball teetering over the far corner pocket. He looks up at Eddie, and steps back. Eddie looks at the lineup of the balls. Then he sets down his cue and walks over to the washroom. He glances at Bert as he sprinkles the powder on his hands.

EDDIE
How shall I play that one, Bert? Play it safe? That's the way you always told me to play it, safe, play the percentage. Well, here we go ... fast and loose.

He turns and snatches up his cue.

EDDIE
One ball, corner pocket.
(chalks his cue, lines up his shot)
Yeah, percentage players die broke too, don't they, Bert?

He rams a bank shot into the pack. The one ball rolls in, while others scatter about the table. The crowd applauds. Eddie moves swiftly to his next shot. As he plays, he talks to Bert.

EDDIE
How can I lose? Twelve ball.
(shot goes in)
I mean, how can I lose? Because you were right, Bert. I mean, it's not enough that you just have talent. You gotta have character too. Four ball.
(shot goes in, a pause)
Yeah and I sure got character now. I picked it up in a hotel room in Louisville.

Bert and Fats exchange glances.

FATS
(from his seat)
Shoot pool, Fast Eddie.

EDDIE
I'm shootin' pool, Fats. When I miss you can shoot.

Eddie returns to his game and Fats waits for his turn, puffing steadily on his cigarette. Bert shifts uneasily in his chair and we hear the pool balls knock together, then slowly roll down the track through the belly of the table.

EDDIE
Five ball.
(shot goes in)
... Fourteen ball.
(shot goes in)
... Four ball.

The shot goes in. Eddie looks significantly at Fats who lowers his eyes and puffs on his cigarette.

DISSOLVE TO:

88 INT. THE GAME - TIME LAPSE

A VOICE
That's game.

The balls are racked. Eddie sinks shots right and left -- some tricky, some not. Bert and Fats exchange uneasy looks. Eddie circles the table like a hawk. Then, Fats is up; his jacket is off, his tie is pulled loose. He makes a shot, chalks his cue.

FATS
Eight ball.

It's a hard shot and he misses. Eddie moves to take his shot, ignoring Fats altogether.

EDDIE
Thirteen ball.

Bert looks on. But Eddie is shooting pool now, making all his shots quickly and accurately. A depressed Fats watches him shoot.

DISSOLVE TO:

89 INT. THE GAME - TIME LAPSE

The clock over the door reads six o'clock. Fats is still in his seat. He has a drink in his hand.

FATS
I quit, Eddie. I can't beat you. Willie, give him the stakes.
(rises, to Bert)
You got yourself a pool player.

EDDIE
(softly, as he counts his money)
Preacher, gimme my coat, will ya?

BERT
Where do you think you're going?

Eddie slips into the jacket, helped by Preacher.

BERT
Eddie? ...
(loses it)
YOU OWE ME MONEY!

EDDIE
(calmly)
And just how do you figure that, Bert? What do you figure I owe you?

BERT
Half.

EDDIE
In Louisville it was seventy-five per cent.

BERT
Well, here it's half.

EDDIE
What if I don't pay ya, Bert?

BERT
(chuckling)
You don't pay me? You gonna get your thumbs broken.
(stands up and paces)
And your fingers. And if I want them to, your right arm in three or four places.

FATS
Better pay him, Eddie.

Eddie unscrews his cue, thinking it over. Bert's bodyguards stand around, waiting for the word.

EDDIE

So you figure you're still my manager, huh?

BERT
I'm a businessman, kid.

EDDIE
Well, you got a lot of games lined up for me?

BERT
Yeah, we're gonna make a lotta money together, from now on.

EDDIE
Fifty per cent?

BERT
No, it don't have to be fifty. It can be thirty ... twenty-five.

EDDIE
We really stuck the knife in her, didn't we, Bert?

BERT
(disgustedly)
Aaaahhhh!

EDDIE
Boy, we really gave it to her good.

BERT
If it didn't happen in Louisville, it'd happened someplace else. If it didn't happen now, it'd happen six months from now. That's the kinda dame she was.

EDDIE
And we twisted it, didn't we, Bert? Course, maybe that doesn't stick in your throat cause you spit it out just like you spit out everything else. But it sticks in mine. I loved her, Bert. I traded her in on a pool game. But that wouldn't mean anything to you. Because who did you ever care about? Just win, win, you said, win, that's the important thing. You don't know what winnin' is, Bert. You're a loser. 'Cause you're dead inside, and you can't live unless you make everything else dead around ya.

Fats listens, his head bowed.

EDDIE
Too high, Bert. Price is too high. Because

if I take it, she never lived, she never died. And we both know that's not true, Bert, don't we, huh? She lived, she died. Boy, you better ... You tell your boys they better kill me, Bert. They better go all the way with me. Because if they just bust me up, I'll put all those pieces back together again, and so help me, so help me God, Bert ... I'm gonna come back here and I'm gonna kill you.

Bert's men start to move forward but he stops them with a gesture of his hand. He tries to smile. A friendly smile.

BERT
All right ... All right.

Eddie puts away his cue.

BERT
Only, uh, don't ever walk into a big-time pool hall again.

Eddie just stares at Bert, then looks over at the downcast face of Minnesota Fats.

EDDIE
Fat man ...

Fats looks up at Eddie.

EDDIE
... you shoot a great game of pool.

FATS
(saluting him with his glass of whisky)
So do you, Fast Eddie.

Eddie takes his cue case and heads for the door. He stops for a moment, looks around at the rows of empty tables, and goes out. Then Ames returns to normal. Fats puts on his coat; Henry sweeps up. And Bert takes his seat again on his throne overlooking Ames, sipping his glass of milk.

FADE OUT