

Last Hand

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INT. CIRCUS CIRCUS KIDS LEVEL -- DAY

Between the noisy arcade games, a circus performance, and hundreds of screaming kids running around -- this is a horrible place for someone with a hangover.

Even with a pained look on her face, KATIE ZIEGLER is a stunning woman. She holds the hand of MADISON, a tiny darling miniature of herself.

KATIE

He's not coming.

Madison gets up on her tippy toes, bites her bottom lip and scans the mezzanine.

MADISON

He'll be here. Bet you a coke.

A CLOWN trudges up the stairs with great difficulty. There are children hanging on him, tugging at his costume, and basically making it difficult for a guy with size twenty shoes to climb the stairs.

A slot-machine jackpot pings out a stream of coins below and the clown stops and cocks his head. Madison breaks loose from her mother's grasp and runs to the top of the stairs. She pauses for a moment and sniffs.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Daddy!

The clown pulls off his red plastic nose and oversized sunglasses. It's easy now to see by the matching sparkle in his eyes that this is the little girl's daddy, FLIP ZIEGLER.

Flip breaks free of the hanging kids and scoops Madison up in his arms.

FLIP

How'd you know it was me, Pumpkin?

She buries her face in his chest and SNIFFS.

MADISON

English Leather.

She tugs on his big fake clown ear.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You also froze at the ping of a jackpot, your favorite sound.

FLIP

Which means an angel is getting his wings?

Katie crosses her arms and frowns. Flip gives her an innocent look that she doesn't buy.

FLIP (CONT'D)

I also love the sound of my baby girl's voice -- but my all time favorite -- the best sound in the whole wide world is --

Madison SQUEALS in delight as Flip presses his big fat clown lips to her forearm.

MADISON

Razzzzzberries.

He gives her a makeup smeared raspberry with an accentuated wet blowing sound. Katie looks at her watch.

KATIE

You said you'd be here by eleven and don't you think you're enough of a clown without renting a tacky costume?

Flip looks at Katie. There isn't the same sparkle in his eyes anymore. He looks back at an anxious Madison and then leans in close to Katie.

FLIP

Join us for pizza? For Madison?

Katie shakes her head and takes off down the stairs without saying good-bye to either of them.

INT. CIRCUS CIRCUS KIDS LEVEL PARTY ROOM -- DAY

There are a couple half-eaten pizzas on the table, but the main attraction is the card game at the end of the table. Flip deals a game of blackjack to Madison and two other small children.

Madison makes three small TAPS for more cards.

MADISON

One tap for luck, one for respect,
the third tap for the choices we
make.

Flip deals another card to Madison and her two friends decide
to hold. Madison tosses in her cards.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Rotten luck, bad choices.

Flip leans in close to Madison.

FLIP

You've got to slow down -- be calm --
breathe deeply. Get in your zone.

Madison closes her eyes.

MADISON

In my zone.

FLIP

It's just you -- you and Lady Luck.
When you're in your zone, you can
feel if the luck is there.

Flip looks up and sees two WOMEN coming his way.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Last hand, kids.

The women spot Flip and make a huffy beeline to the table.
They pull their kids up and glare at Flip.

MOTHER#1

You're teaching our kids to gamble?

MOTHER#2

It's bad enough that your little
girl is a...

The woman looks at Madison and decides to cut her criticism
short. They both make the normal disgusted sigh as they
drag their kids away.

As a distraction, Flip pushes the cards to Madison.

FLIP

What's the count?

MADISON

Plus thirteen which means that there are more tens and aces left which is good for me as a player and bad for you as the dealer. I should double my bet.

FLIP

Sure?

She's already counting them as Flip digs into his big clown pockets and brings out a stuffed toy tiger.

FLIP (CONT'D)

I'll bet this tiger against you taking out the trash all week.

Madison flips over the last card triumphantly.

MADISON

I won. Exactly thirteen.

Flip spots a massive security guard, BUSTER coming at him at a fast pace. Flip nods and smiles at the wall of solid muscle, but Buster shakes his head as he confronts Flip.

BUSTER

Not good.

FLIP

We were only playing for these.

Flip grabs a handful of candy from the table. Buster looks down at Madison who deals the next hand of blackjack.

BUSTER

(whispering)

He's got the cops, just like I told you he would.

Flip gestures towards Madison.

FLIP

It's her birthday.

Madison squeezes the tiger and closes her eyes.

MADISON

My best birthday, ever.

Flip hands a few bucks to Buster as he looks towards the stairs. Coming up is an amazingly ugly guy, ARNIE PRUETT, who would look better in the clown outfit than his expensive Italian threads.

He's trailed by two Las Vegas COPS. Flip grabs Buster by the arm.

FLIP
Get her some ice cream.

Buster nods. Flip squats down next to Madison.

FLIP (CONT'D)
Daddy has to finish some stuff at work. You go with Buster, okay?

Arnie gets closer, but Flip holds up a hand and looks beseechingly at Arnie.

FLIP (CONT'D)
Give me a sec?

Arnie glares at Flip who hugs Madison. Arnie shakes his head and gestures to the cops. They move in quickly and tear Flip away from his daughter.

FLIP (CONT'D)
Can I see a warrant or something?

ARNIE
Is fifty thousand missing from your table last night "something" enough for you?

Madison looks confused at the men surrounding her father.

Buster swoops her up into his massive arms. The tiger falls to the ground.

FLIP
Get her out of here.

Madison sobs and screams. Buster carries her away down the aisle. Madison kicks and squirms, but she's no match for the big guy.

MADISON
Daddy. Let go of my Daddy. My tiger.
Daddy.

Flip calls after her.

FLIP
Stay in your zone.

Arnie picks up the tiger and LAUGHS -- it's a snorting laugh, like a pig. He roughly tosses the tiger into the trash. Madison bites her lip and tightly closes her eyes. Tears leak out anyway.

MADISON
Zone -- in my zone.

Title: "FIFTEEN YEARS LATER"

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- NIGHT

It's a grown version of the little girl who still bites her lips as her magical hands slide a round of cards to the players at her table. She's in her zone as she deals blackjack -- calm and concentrating on each player's movements.

Even though it's a tacky off-strip joint, Madison wears a pressed, starched, and pure white dealer's shirt. She stands erect with the pride of someone making ten times as much in a fancy super casino up on the strip.

She's young, gorgeous, twenty-one and dealing twenty-one. Better known as blackjack, it's the only game where brains can give you an edge over the house.

It's a simple game. If you get closer to twenty-one than the dealer does, you win. The only problem is that if you go over twenty-one, you're busted and you lose.

MORT and SAMMY, two life-encrusted old codgers peek at their cards. Mort swipes his cards towards him, indicating "Hit Me," while the rest of the table slides their cards under their bets to hold.

Madison deals Mort a nine. Mort GROANS and tosses the cards towards Madison.

MORT
Busted again.

Madison takes Mort's bet, flips over her hole card and finds that she has a total of fourteen.

The better half of the middle-aged COUPLE sitting next to Mort elbows her other suffering half.

WOMAN

She has to hit. I knew it.

Madison deals herself another card and busts. Madison flips each player's hole card and pays out their winnings, pausing at the last player, a handsome high-roller, SLICK.

Madison cocks her head and sniffs, but then turns her attention back to Mort as she leans in close to him and whispers.

MADISON

You should have held.

MORT

I woke up feeling lucky this morning.

MADISON

They built these casinos off of people like you feeling lucky.

Mort slides a chip out for his next bet. Madison notices that Slick hasn't put out a bet for the next hand and waves her hand in front of him. He pushes out five one-hundred dollar chips.

It's almost impossible to clash in Vegas, but these chips stand out amongst the little one and five dollar chips on the table.

MADISON (CONT'D)

That's a pretty big spread.

SLICK

Spread? What's a spread?

MADISON

You've been betting one or two bucks each round and now that the deck is plus eight, you bet exactly our maximum.

SLICK

It's only plus six, you stupid bitch.

Madison leans in close to Slick and stares him down just as her pit boss, CLYDE comes out of the casino office. She waves him over.

Clyde looks at the five one-hundred dollar chips and shakes his head.

CLYDE
You're pretty far away from the strip.

SLICK
This arm-pit of a joint is going to refuse my bet?

Clyde turns to Madison.

CLYDE
You plus on the deck?

MADISON
Six.

SLICK
I told her that it was plus six.
She thought it was eight.

CLYDE
You mean she told you it was eight.
Madison has never been wrong on the count.

SLICK
Dealers can't count and deal.

Clyde nods at Madison.

CLYDE
All yours.

MADISON
Here are your choices. Either you get back to your fancy strip hotel and try this shit with their eyes in the sky...

Madison holds a hand over the chips.

MADISON (CONT'D)
... or you can keep that bet, but I'm going to shuffle first.

Slick snatches his chips and flees the table. Clyde watches him leave and winks at Madison.

CLYDE

I love it when you give him choices.

Clyde smiles at the remaining customers. A new dealer comes up behind Madison.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

I'll get some drinks over here for you and we've got a new dealer coming on.

Mort tosses a fifty-dollar chip on the table.

MORT

Enough for me tonight. Thanks.

Sammy pulls a fifty-dollar chip that was tucked in his sleeve and tosses it close to Madison.

SAMMY

Here's a little something for your college fund.

They both look at the couple. The wife nudges her husband and he slides a ten-dollar chip out of his pile towards Madison.

INT. SILVER BOOT COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

Madison catches up with Mort and Sammy in the coffee shop. She tosses their fifty-dollar chips back to them.

MADISON

You guys shouldn't do that.

SAMMY

If we didn't prime the pump, those grinders would stiff you every day.

MADISON

I saw a five hundred dollar tip yesterday.

MORT

Bali Raja?

Madison nods.

MADISON

No more grinders or worrying about paying rent after I get a job on the strip.

MORT

Speaking of grinders, how were you able to figure out Slick?

SAMMY

You smelled him, right?

MADISON

Lord and Taylor.

SAMMY

Lordy who?

MADISON

The Venetian is the only hotel in town that has Lord and Taylor soap and shampoo.

Sammy pokes Mort.

SAMMY

I told you she smelled him -- pay up.

Mort reaches into his pocket and pulls out a five-dollar chip and tosses it at Sammy. Sammy pulls a deck of cards out of his pocket and shuffles.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Double or nothing, high card wins. You in, Madison?

Mort pulls out another five dollars. Madison angrily pushes the money back at Mort as she pushes her chair back. Mort pats her hand.

MORT

It's okay honey, Sammy forgot.

Madison looks at a contrite Sammy who quickly puts the cards away.

MADISON

You two -- you'd bet on the color of my panties if I'd let you.

Madison grabs her purse and gets up.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Want a ride?

SAMMY
Sure beats the bus, and about those
panties...

Sammy holds up the five-dollar chip and pretends to sneak a peek as Madison fakes anger and pulls him to his feet.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT KITCHEN -- DAY

Madison doesn't look like a morning person as she stares into her cup of coffee. Across the table is a stack of envelopes.

Every few seconds she looks at the pile. She takes a final sip of the coffee and then reaches over and picks up the pile.

She places one envelope at each place at the table. She then picks up deck of cards and deals a hand to the envelopes.

MADISON
Let's see who wins.

She deals a hand of blackjack. She looks at the first envelope's hand.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Three. You have to hit.

Madison deals a face card to the imaginary player.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Busted.

She reaches over and picks up the envelope.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Mastercard. You lose again this
month. Let's hope the rent has better
luck than you.

She deals another hand.

MADISON (CONT'D)
We have a winner.

She grabs the envelope, opens it and then storms towards the door.

INT. THREE PALMS APARTMENTS MANAGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madison stands with her arms crossed while Sammy pulls out a chair for her. Mort holds the letter.

MADISON

My rent is going up to twelve hundred a month?

Sammy takes the letter from Mort and puts it in his pocket.

SAMMY

Let us handle this. Must be a mistake.

MADISON

You bet it's a mistake. It says that my rent is going from nine hundred to twelve hundred. Stupid company. Stupid letter. I only pay six hundred a month in the first place.

Sammy guides her into the chair while Mort pours her a cup of coffee.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I can barely afford that.

MORT

They are only trying to scare people into leaving. We think the casinos want to buy it, but the new city ordinance says it has to be less than fifty percent occupied to tear it down.

MADISON

What would a casino want with some worn down apartments?

MORT

Parking garage. They make their employees park out here and take a shuttle bus to the casino. Leaves more room for the gamblers to park.

SAMMY

Don't you worry, some day me and Mort are going get lucky, hit it big and we'll buy this place and make it into a condo paradise. New swimming pool, lush gardens...

MADISON

You two just don't get it. Gambling is for losers and suckers. The only ones who come out ahead are the casinos.

Madison shoves her chair back and gets up to leave.

MADISON (CONT'D)

We make our own luck and mine is about to change.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

The super casino is alive with the excitement of a weekend crowd. Madison watches the blackjack tables. A heavy-set guy in a tuxedo comes over.

It's not easy for us to tell that this is Arnie, the same guy who had Flip arrested fifteen years ago. Time has not been kind to his waist or hairline. Madison obviously doesn't remember him either.

ARNIE

My pit boss says you've been hanging out every day.

Madison doesn't take her eyes off the tables.

MADISON

Have your pit boss give me an audition and I'll be here every day dealing for you.

ARNIE

Most of those dealers out there had at least ten years experience before coming to a super casino. You're not old enough to have that kind of experience.

MADISON

Experience that let's me notice that the high-roller on seventeen is betting five big ones now that the table is plus eleven?

Her eyes move around the room.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Experience to know that there's a four to one betting spread on table seven?

Arnie looks in that direction.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Or that your dealer on fifteen pocketed that lady's room key? Yeah, that's experience I just don't have.

Madison gestures at a table to their right.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I've been watching your tables for a year now -- I know everything that goes on. When are you guys going to give me that audition?

Arnie takes a step down from the rail level, but turns his head back and gives Madison a look from head to toe. He looks back at the sleazy dealer at table fifteen.

ARNIE

Come by tomorrow at six -- we might be looking for a new dealer.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

Madison has Mort and Sammy at her table. The rest of the casino is pretty sparse.

MORT

If you've got to be there at six, you better leave a little early.

Sammy nods.

SAMMY

With all the traffic and giving yourself time to shower and get on a fresh shirt...

MORT
 (interrupting)
 Blouse, you moron -- can't you tell
 she's a girl?

Madison taps the table.

MADISON
 Bets, guys. We don't have any eyes
 in the sky here, but Clyde is still
 over there trying to stay awake.

Mort turns around and glances at Madison's very bored boss.

MORT
 Are you sure you want to leave? You
 must have the easiest job in Vegas.

MADISON
 Easiest isn't always the best. Did
 you want to marry the easiest girl?

Mort pushes Sammy.

MORT
 Sammy would have married any girl --
 easy, sleazy, or Sneezy.

Madison looks over at a sleepy Clyde and then gives Sammy a
 kiss on the cheek.

MADISON
 I would have married you. You two
 are the best.

Sammy sits proudly.

SAMMY
 You go to Bali Raja and show them
 you're the best.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

It's her big audition and Madison deals blackjack to FOUR
 PLAYERS as Arnie stands slightly behind her.

MADISON
 Bets?

The chips move forward and Madison is in the zone with her magical hands - dealing, flipping, taking the bets or paying out the wins.

After a few hands, a DRUNKEN PLAYER sits down at the table. He fumbles with his pocket but manages to come up with a couple of five-dollar chips to bet. Madison taps the sign on the table.

"\$100 MINIMUM"

DRUNKEN PLAYER

If I put out a hundred bucks, then I'm going to want to see more than just my cards.

The drunk punches the guy next to him.

DRUNKEN PLAYER (CONT'D)

Ever seen a set like that? Aces the both of them.

MADISON

You in?

DRUNKEN PLAYER

I'd like to be in you.

The drunk fishes into his pocket and tosses out two hundred dollars in bills.

MADISON

Changing two hundred.

DRUNKEN PLAYER

Let's you and me take this little transaction upstairs and see how much I can change you.

He places his hand on her wrist. Madison looks around at Arnie. He's talking on his cell phone. She looks for security. No guards in sight. She leans in close to him.

MADISON

You like to make choices? I have an easy "yes or no" question for you.

She looks down at his hand.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Would you like to remove that hand,
or would you like me to remove it
for you?

The drunk tightens his grip.

DRUNKEN PLAYER

Now we're talking. You just move
that hand wherever you'd like. Down
your pants would make me real happy.

Madison reaches over and grabs the metal handle that is used
to push cash into the lock box. She smashes down on the
drunk's hand. He grabs his hand and SCREAMS.

DRUNKEN PLAYER (CONT'D)

You bitch.

Finally, two GUARDS appear and whisk the drunk away from the
table. Madison gets a tap on the shoulder by another DEALER
and she reluctantly stands back from the table.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- NIGHT

Madison sits across from Arnie as he studies the papers in
front of him.

ARNIE

Players are different over here than
at that grind joint of yours.

MADISON

Why didn't security come over the
moment he touched me? Even at the
Silver Boot...

ARNIE

If you can't handle some drunken
slob who brushes up against you,
then you better go back to the Silver
Boot.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- NIGHT

Madison catches the eye of TOMMY, the gorgeous gay bartender.
His tip goblet is stuffed full. Tommy pours a drink for her
in one fluid movement.

TOMMY

Ginger ale with a twist of lime.

Madison plops down on a barstool. Tommy studies her sad face.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Unless you'd prefer something stronger?

Madison shakes her head.

MADISON
News travels fast.

Madison looks over at the blackjack tables and notices that the drunk who harassed her is playing again.

MADISON (CONT'D)
That drunk is back. I better go tell security.

Tommy grabs her hand.

TOMMY
That drunk is security. Arnie wanted to make sure that Flip Ziegler's daughter never came back here looking for a job.

MADISON
Arnie knew about my father? Why didn't you tell me?

TOMMY
Would it have stopped you?

Madison grabs Tommy's hand and smells it.

MADISON
I knew I smelled oranges on that drunk. You guys use a hand soap that smells like oranges.

Tommy smells his hands and nods.

TOMMY
It's a disinfectant. Arnie's campaign to cut down on people calling in sick. Over there at the sink, in the employee breakrooms, the counting cages and the employee restrooms.

MADISON
He'll want to bathe in that stuff
when I get done with him.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- NIGHT

Madison goes back to Arnie's office and confronts him.

MADISON
You set me up? This was all about
my father?

ARNIE
Father? Who's your father, kid?

MADISON
My last name is Ziegler.

Arnie looks up at the ceiling.

ARNIE
Ziegler, Ziegler. Doesn't ring a
bell.

MADISON
Flip Ziegler? You think I'm a
gambling thief like him -- so you
got that drunk to attack me?

ARNIE
You're just like your dad, trying to
blame someone else.

Arnie gets up and comes around the desk and looks down at
Madison.

ARNIE (CONT'D)
Ever since your dad got out of prison
you been hanging around my casino.

Madison can't hide her shock.

MADISON
He's out?

ARNIE
Like you didn't know. What's the
game? Is this some twisted plan for
revenge?

Madison jumps up and runs towards the door of the office. She pauses for a moment at some photographs on the wall, glares back at Arnie and then leaves.

EXT. BALI RAJA -- NIGHT

As Madison leaves, she walks underneath a banner being strung across the entrance that says:

"ONE MILLION DOLLAR BLACKJACK TOURNAMENT"

She walks towards the parking lot. A MAN comes out of the shadows to get a better view of her progress towards her car. He notices a flyer that dances across the sidewalk. He reaches down and picks it up.

INT. THREE PALMS APARTMENTS MANAGER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Mort and Sammy have their heads down as Madison points at a photograph on the wall.

MADISON

That's him. That's my dad in this picture with you. My dad who is out of prison, right?

MORT

Could have been taken years ago.

She grabs the frame and rips it off the wall and tosses it on the table. The glass shatters.

MADISON

I gave you that shirt for Christmas last year.

SAMMY

I told you not to put that picture up.

MORT

I look good and you can't hardly tell it's him.

Madison grabs Sammy and Mort and pulls them to the door.

MADISON

Take me to him.

EXT. THREE PALMS APARTMENTS -- NIGHT

Madison opens the car door for a reluctant Mort and Sammy to get in.

SAMMY
He's not going to like this.

The two get in and Madison leans into the car.

MADISON
Either you tell me where he lives or we'll just drive around all night until we run into him.

SAMMY
It's Friday night. Flip likes the downtown joints on Fridays.

INT. FREMONT CASINO -- NIGHT

The trio walks through the blackjack tables. Mort and Sammy shake their heads each time Madison points at a player.

As they walk by the buffet line, Sammy and Mort try to get Madison to stop, but she drags them away.

INT. GOLDEN NUGGET CASINO -- NIGHT

They rush through the blackjack tables until Sammy spots a COWBOY. They move a little closer.

SAMMY
It's hard with all his disguises.

MADISON
Disguise himself -- why?

MORT
Part of his probation was to never gamble again.

MADISON
Like part of the divorce was to never contact me. Why did he stick to one and not the other?

Sammy concentrates on the cowboy.

SAMMY
It's not him.

INT. FRONTIER CASINO -- NIGHT

Again, they walk through the casino, but none of the players look like Flip. They start to leave, but Madison passes a PRIEST and freezes. She SNIFFS.

She moves into a better angle and studies how he plays. The priest makes three small TAPS for another card.

MADISON (CONT'D)

One tap for luck, one tap for respect,
the third tap for the choices we
make.

Madison pushes past Mort and Sammy and approaches the table.

MADISON (CONT'D)

G'day, Father. This seat taken?

FLIP

It is now, my child.

He pulls out the stool for Madison. She doesn't take the seat.

MADISON

Let's go, Padre. Outside. I want
to talk to you.

FLIP

Even a priest needs a few moments of
relaxation. Maybe you could come by
the church tomorrow?

MADISON

There ain't no church and priest
don't wear English Leather, Father --
or should I say "Daddy?"

Flip gets up.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I thought that would get your
attention.

Madison heads for the door pulling along Flip with Mort and Sammy trying to keep up with her pace.

EXT. FRONTIER CASINO -- NIGHT

Madison still has Flip by the arm.

MADISON

What is your game? You've been out of prison -- hanging around these two? Are you following me around?

Flip nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You left me alone for fifteen years so it shouldn't be too hard for you leave me alone now.

Two OLD WOMEN walk by and GASP at Madison's outburst.

FLIP

I'll do whatever you want, Pumpkin.

This endearment hits Madison hard. She drops her head.

MADISON

How come you never came to see me?

FLIP

Out of respect.

MADISON

Mom's been dead a long time. Exactly how long have you been out of prison?

FLIP

Two years. I was there your first day at the Silver Boot.

He turns to Mort and Sammy.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Remember how she sent the whole deck flying across the room?

The pair GIGGLES.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Then, the first time I told the guys to give you that big tip -- the look on your face.

MADISON

That was your idea? Where were you?

FLIP

The next table, over at the slots --
I could even watch you from the Keno
tables. I've been there.

Madison grabs him by the arm.

MADISON

You weren't there when I broke my
leg, you weren't there when I
graduated from high school, you
weren't there when I buried Mom.
I've gotten along fine without you.
Leave me alone.

She storms away leaving her dad with Mort and Sammy.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

Madison deals to Mort and Sammy, but the silence is painful.

MORT

Hit me.

MADISON

(under her breath)
Wouldn't I like to.

Madison tosses out a card. Mort looks at it and GROANS.

MORT

You can't blame us, Flip would have
been so pissed if we had let you
know.

MADISON

You lied to me to protect an old
gambling buddy?

Both guys drop their heads.

SAMMY

You make us seem so disgusting.

Madison softens as she pats Mort on the hand.

MADISON

It's hard when a memory becomes a
reality.

Madison looks around the casino.

MADISON (CONT'D)

He could be anywhere -- that old guy at Keno, that cowboy by the cashier, or even that fat lady.

Mort and Sammy look around.

SAMMY

Nope, that's not him. Flip disguises himself, but he always looks good.

Madison stares into the distance.

MADISON

He was good, wasn't he?

MORT

Best dealer in town. You're just like him -- those hands, your concentration. Lots more super casinos in town. Let Flip help you.

Madison shakes her head, no.

EXT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- NIGHT

Madison searches for her keys, digging down to the bottom of her purse.

MADISON

Damn, damn, damn.

She turns to head back into the casino, but Flip stands in her way JINGLING the car keys.

FLIP

You left them in the ignition. Third time this year, but I always sneak them into your locker.

He has been transformed from an elderly Catholic priest into a handsome man in his late forties. He tries to put a hand on her arm, but she pulls back.

FLIP (CONT'D)

I would have done anything to have seen you, heard your voice, read a poem or story that you wrote. Your mom made the rules and I honored them.

MADISON

You caused the rules. She didn't want me to spend my weekends hanging around a prison.

FLIP

After you were eighteen, you could have come on your own.

Madison pushes him hard in the chest. He stumbles backwards.

MADISON

Don't try to make me the bad guy -- you gambled, you lost, you cheated, you got caught. I was a chip on the table when you bet it all and lost.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Madison drops her purse on the table and presses the play button on her answering machine.

FLIP

(on the answering machine)

It's your fa -- I mean Flip. Can we...

Madison hits the fast forward button.

MALE VOICE

(on the answering machine)

This is Star Finance calling regarding your payment that was due...

She presses fast forward again.

FEMALE VOICE

(on the answering machine)

Could you please call me about your Mastercard statement...

ANSWERING MACHINE VOICE

You have no more new messages.

Madison walks over to the kitchen table and picks up a stack of envelopes. She grabs a deck of cards, but they flip out of her hand and scatter across the floor.

Madison squats down to pick them up and slips. She throws the envelopes across the floor and SOBS.

INT. FLIP'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Flip answers the door. Madison stands with a look that is part contrition and the rest anger. He gestures for her to come in. She stands her ground.

MADISON

I'll give you a choice - you help me get ready for my next blackjack audition and I might give you a second chance.

Flip nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Here are the rules. No more disguises, no more following me around, no more secrets.

Flip shakes his head, no.

FLIP

My parole. I can't gamble. I need the disguise.

Madison crosses her arms.

MADISON

We'll practice here.

Again, Flip shakes his head.

FLIP

You have to watch the players, it's not in the cards, it's not in the counts -- it's the other players you have to beat.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

Flip sits next to Sammy and Mort as Madison deals another round. He's disguised as an old man, but we know him by his voice.

FLIP

Deal them a little closer to the player. Don't make them reach.

Madison corrects on the second round.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Look at Mort, he's playing with his chips.

Mort pulls a guilty hand back.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Look at your cards, drop your head. Let him think you've got a bad hand. Don't smile.

Madison's face is stripped of emotion.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Slowly move your hand over the cards for bets. Slower, next time. Don't push. He wants to bet more -- he needs to bet more -- he's feeling lucky.

Mort pushes all his chips in. The table breaks out in LAUGHTER.

MORT

What?

EXT. APARTMENT POOL AREA -- DAY

Madison deals blackjack to Flip with lightning speed at one of the patio tables. There is no conversation between them. A pile of candy mints is growing in front of Flip as he wins another hand.

A young COUPLE, passes by the table and stops to watch the action for a few minutes. They start kissing and then take off to their apartment. Madison doesn't notice -- she is in full concentration, but Flip watches them go.

FLIP

You date?

Flip does a triple tap for more cards. Madison deals them.

MADISON

Don't try to distract me. I'm in my zone. Those mints will all belong to the house in three more hands.

Flip pushes all the mints across the table to Madison. He takes the cards from Madison and tosses them into a pile.

FLIP

For three days you haven't said anything other than "bets and last hand."

MADISON

Our deal was that you'd help me get ready for my next audition and I'd let you.

FLIP

You were ready a long time ago. You're the best I've seen.

Madison gets up and hastily gathers the cards.

MADISON

What was all this about? A trick? Control?

FLIP

Confidence. If I had told you that you were ready three days ago -- would you have believed me?

Madison slumps down into the patio chair.

MADISON

Do I date? I don't date. During high school I was afraid kids would find out my dad was in prison, and Mom moved us a lot -- she drank and got kicked out of apartments. All she left me after she died was a ton of bills. I get asked out at the casino, but I turn them down.

FLIP

Not good looking enough?

MADISON

They're gamblers.

INT. VENETIAN BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

Madison watches the blackjack tables. A gorgeous cocktail waitress, POKEY comes over to Madison. She hands Madison a ginger ale.

Madison takes a sip without taking her eyes off of the tables.

POKEY

A "thank you, Patricia" would be nice.

MADISON

Thanks, Pokey.

POKEY

Patricia. Don't call me Pokey.

MADISON

The day you can go into a bathroom and come out in less than thirty minutes, I'll call you Queen Mother.

Pokey smooths her hair.

POKEY

You can't rush a look like this.

Pokey follows Madison's eyes to one of the tables.

POKEY (CONT'D)

What do you think of those two?

As if on cue, two GUYS with fake bake tans turn around and wave at Pokey.

Now she has Madison's attention.

MADISON

No, no, no.

POKEY

Come on -- a little water skiing, they're bringing steaks and beer.

Madison turns back to the tables.

MADISON

They've got to be forty.

POKEY

Mid-thirties -- forty at the tops.

MADISON

Is that a comb over on the fat one?

POKEY

You owe me. I got you that audition last month.

MADISON

Except they weren't hiring.

POKEY

They're hiring tails. I made two thou last night at the baccarat tables. I bet you haven't gotten two thousand in tips for the whole month.

MADISON

More like the whole year.

Madison sits the empty glass on Pokey's tray.

POKEY

Meet me at the lake? Saturday morning?

Madison gives Pokey the same look you give a small child who just spilled her milk.

MADISON

Tell them to bring lots of beer.

POKEY

Since when did you start drinking?

MADISON

Never. I'm hoping they'll drink enough to pass out and leave us alone. I've got lots to tell you.

INT. MONTE CARLO BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

Although still considered a super casino, the Monte Carlo is no longer the shiny penny in town. Madison stands a few feet between two blackjack tables. A hefty man, JACK, comes up to her.

JACK

What's the count?

MADISON

Plus ten. You've got a bad moon out there tonight, Jack.

JACK
Anybody up on it?

Madison nods at the other table.

MADISON
That table is plus fifteen and both
of those guys are doubling their
bets.

JACK
You're counting both of them?

Madison smiles, but keeps her eyes on the tables.

MADISON
If you'd move table six a little
closer I could do three.

Jack shakes his head.

JACK
You're better than your dad was.

MADISON
How about letting me have his old
job -- or at least a shot at it?

JACK
You know I would if I could, but
these guys don't forget.

MADISON
Is it that way everywhere?

Jack nods.

INT. FLIP'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Madison sits across from Flip. There is a prolonged silence,
but it doesn't stop the blackjack game going on between them.
Flip taps three times for a hit and Madison tosses another
card his way. He holds.

Madison freezes. Flip turns over her hole card.

FLIP
You've got to hit, Pumpkin.

Madison looks down at her cards and then at the deck. She
squeezes it so hard that the cards spray across the table

and onto the floor. Flip starts picking them up. Madison does the same, but slams each card onto the table.

MADISON

I've spent my whole life training to work in a super casino.

He grabs her hand to stop the smashing of cards.

FLIP

You could try Reno. Atlantic City.

MADISON

I don't have the money to move. I can't even pay my rent.

FLIP

Let me help you.

MADISON

Depend on you? Depend again on your gambling? Pray to Lady Luck? Forget it. I make my own luck.

Flip pulls out the flyer from the Bali Raja and hands it to Madison. She studies it and frowns.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Blackjack tournament?

Flip points to the flyer.

FLIP

The player with the most chips at the end wins one million dollars.

MADISON

I don't play blackjack.

FLIP

You deal and you count cards better than anyone I've seen. If you focus, stick to the basic strategy, learn the other players -- nobody can beat you.

Madison looks at the flyer and almost goes into a trance.

MADISON

A million dollars.

FLIP
A million dollars won from Arnie's
casino by my daughter.

Madison grabs the flyer and crumples it into a small ball
before leaving.

MADISON
I don't gamble.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

It's a quiet Sunday morning in the casino and only Sammy and
Mort are at Madison's table.

MORT
Wave him over. He won't come here
unless you ask him to.

SAMMY
He knows you're mad.

MADISON
Who?

She deals out the cards.

MORT
Flip. He's over at the slots.

MADISON
I don't see anyone at the slots except
some stupid cowboy.

SAMMY
You can't blame him. It's a fool
that doesn't hire someone as good as
you just because of what their dad
did a long time ago.

MADISON
It's what my dad didn't do. He's
never been there for me.

Mort gets up and tosses down his cards.

MORT
Been there? Sure he wears those
disguises so he can come in here and
watch you but he needs to gamble to
get the money...

Sammy jumps up and grabs Mort's arm.

SAMMY

Shut up!

MADISON

What?

MORT

Your rent. It's been going up for years, but your dad pays the difference. That good deal you got on your car, Flip. When it broke down and we got it fixed for twenty bucks, who did think would replace an engine for...

Madison doesn't hear as she tosses down the deck and walks away.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO BREAKROOM -- DAY

Madison storms into the breakroom and opens up her locker. As she pulls out her purse, the crumpled flyer falls out. Clyde comes out of the office.

CLYDE

Don't bother coming in tomorrow night.

MADISON

Have you heard something that I haven't?

CLYDE

You mean about your job interviews all over town?

Madison is excited.

MADISON

Someone called? The Venetian? I knew they'd reconsider.

CLYDE

Nobody called. Nobody is going to call. The only reason why you got this job was because nobody owns us.

MADISON

Then why aren't I coming in tomorrow?

Clyde just shakes his head.

MADISON (CONT'D)
You're firing me? I'm the best dealer
in town.

CLYDE
I don't want the best dealer, I need
a dealer that wants to work here.

MADISON
But if nobody will hire me then why
are you firing me?

CLYDE
Even a grind joint like this has a
little pride.

Clyde walks out of the room leaving a shocked Madison. She
picks up the crumpled flyer and smooths it out.

INT. THREE PALMS APARTMENTS MANAGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Madison sits at the table taking notes as Mort scratches his
head in thought.

MADISON
That's everything?

MORT
Every penny.

MADISON
Sixteen thousand, three hundred and
twenty-seven dollars. I'm going to
pay him back and then get out of
here.

Sammy comes up behind Madison and places his hand on her
shoulder.

SAMMY
First and last month's rent, movers,
utility deposits. You're going to
need another couple thousand. How
are going to get that kind of dough?
Mort and me are on Social Security.

Madison shows the flyer for the tournament to Mort and Sammy.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
One million bucks.

MADISON
Playing blackjack. Gambling.

SAMMY
It's not really gambling -- it's a
tournament.

Madison looks at the flyer.

MADISON
It is a tournament. A contest. No
risk. Happens only once.

Mort and Sammy get excited.

MORT
You could win this. You could show
everyone that you're the best. Those
super casinos would be breaking down
your door offering you a job.

SAMMY
She wouldn't need a stinking job and
she wouldn't need to eat at the ninety-
nine cent buffet anymore.

Madison studies the flyer again.

MADISON
The best. The best dealer isn't
enough, I'll have to be the best
player.

MORT
Flip.

Madison nods.

MADISON
Flip.

EXT. APARTMENT POOL AREA -- DAY

Madison deals to Flip. He does his triple tap.

MADISON
Luck, respect and choices. We had
them all. It was magical.

FLIP

I know you don't believe in luck anymore and I don't expect any respect.

She sets down the cards.

MADISON

I make the choices.

FLIP

I'll take any part of your life that you're willing to share with me.

He picks up the cards and hands them to her. She starts dealing.

MADISON

With that settled, I've got good news and bad news.

FLIP

Let's have it.

Madison sets down the cards, reaches into her pocket and hands the crumpled tournament flyer to Flip. He reads it and smiles.

FLIP (CONT'D)

What's the bad news?

Madison points at the flyer.

MADISON

Twenty-five hundred dollar entrance fee.

INT. BALI RAJA BETTING CAGES -- NIGHT

Madison stands at one of the cashier cages that has a big banner across the top that says "PLAY FOR A MILLION." A bored CASHIER pushes a form back towards Madison and points to a section.

Madison takes a folded check from her pocket and slowly pushes it back to the cashier. The cashier studies the check and picks up the phone.

A few seconds pass before Arnie comes up beside Madison. He takes a long drag from his cigarette.

ARNIE

It's good?

The cashier nods. Arnie smiles at Madison.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

Easiest two bits the casino ever made.

MADISON

What did I ever do to you?

ARNIE

I help put your dad in jail fifteen years ago and now you start hanging out around here. Looks like another Ziegler with a gambling problem trying to rob me. How does someone come up with twenty-five hundred dollars so easily? Who did you steal it from?

Madison pushes Arnie and his cigarette drops to the plush casino carpet.

MADISON

I am not my father.

With a slow and deliberate motion, Arnie brushes off his perfect suit and stomps out the cigarette. Within seconds, a casino EMPLOYEE rushes over and cleans up the mess.

ARNIE

Is the little girl going to try and get even with me?

MADISON

I don't get even...

Madison takes her receipt from the cashier and puts it in her purse.

MADISON (CONT'D)

... I win.

He LAUGHS his snorting laugh as he spins around and leaves. Madison starts to follow him, but is frozen in her tracks at the sound of that laugh.

MADISON (CONT'D)

My tiger.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT KITCHEN -- DAY

Madison sits across from Flip staring into her coffee cup.

FLIP

Why is it important? It happened a long time ago.

MADISON

I want to know how you did it. How much did you steal?

FLIP

I was convicted for being short in the drawer by fifty thousand.

MADISON

Is that how you helped us out for years?

Flip shakes his head, no.

FLIP

I gambled in prison. You can't win a lot, but it was enough to send something to your mom every month.

MADISON

My tiger. Remember my tiger?

Flip drops his head but manages a slight nod.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I remembered every detail about that day, the count, my dress, your silly clown outfit -- everything except the tiger. The one Arnie took away.

FLIP

It all happened so fast, I can't believe you remember him now.

MADISON

He didn't have to arrest you on my birthday, did he?

Madison picks up the deck of cards and starts dealing to Flip.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I'm going to win that million and
make him eat that tiger.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- NIGHT

Arnie walks into his office and is surprised to find a tall
and muscular young man in a dark business suit, BRAD, sitting
in his chair.

Brad reaches into his pocket and pulls out a flyer.

BRAD

Let's talk about this tournament.

Arnie takes a chair across from Brad.

BRAD (CONT'D)

A million dollars. Limit of two
hundred players paying twenty-five
hundred dollars to play. Your math
is off.

ARNIE

Since when does the gaming commission
care if I lose money?

Brad gets up and pokes Arnie in the chest.

BRAD

I care about everything that you do.

INT. FLIP'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Madison and Flip sit at the dining room table. Flip deals a
hand. Madison slides the card under to hold.

FLIP

No.

MADISON

There are three face cards left, the
queen of clubs, the king of spades,
and the king of hearts.

FLIP

Only three. The dealer has a four
showing. You have fifteen. Luck is
on your side.

MADISON

I hold.

Flip pushes his chair back and shakes his head. Madison flips over the next card. It's a three.

FLIP

That would have been your card. There were seventeen cards left that wouldn't have busted you. Get in your zone. Feel the luck.

MADISON

I make my own luck. I use the count to size my bet. I use the basic strategy to hold or hit.

FLIP

You're wrong. It's the luck that makes a winner. A third of the players will know basic strategy and the count.

MADISON

Nobody will be able to count like I do. I'm the best there is.

FLIP

Some will be good enough and we need to figure out who they are. The rest will feel the luck and they will win.

MADISON

Like you always said, "I'd rather be lucky than good?"

FLIP

Exactly!

MADISON

But trusting in luck lost you your family, your job, your freedom. I've been a quart low of luck most of my life. I'm not trusting luck.

FLIP

Then trust me. I know how to win.

Flip deals another hand while Madison studies him without responding. Flip notices the silence.

FLIP (CONT'D)
 I guess the trust will take some
 time. Let's work on the other
 players.

INT. BALI RAJA BALLROOM -- DAY

Sammy, Mort, Madison and Flip stand along with a crowd of a
 couple of hundred. A small stage has been set up and an
 ANNOUNCER in a tuxedo approaches the microphone.

ANNOUNCER
 Welcome to the million dollar
 blackjack tournament.

The crowd CHEERS.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
 In a few minutes, I'll announce your
 table and seat positions. In two
 days one of you will walk out of
 here a millionaire.

The crowd CHEERS. Madison turns towards Flip.

MADISON
 That's what we're here for? Table
 numbers? I don't have time for this,
 I'm going to watch the tables and
 practice my count. *

As she turns around to leave, Flip grabs her by the arm.

FLIP
 You're not here to find out your
 table number. You're here to confront
 your enemy. Look at the guy over
 there in the hat.

All three turn their heads back towards an older GENTLEMAN
 in a plaid hat.

FLIP (CONT'D)
 What's his story? Why would he put
 up twenty-five hundred to win a
 million?

MADISON
 You already made your point; there
 are only two types here -- those who
 (MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

feel lucky and those who are smart enough to know that luck has nothing to do with it.

FLIP

Okay, don't trust me, but you've dealt cards long enough to know that the other players can ruin your game. If they are frantic about winning, they'll suck up the good cards. Frightened players don't take the cards they should. Being a dealer, this is something you know -- you've seen it happen.

MADISON

I need to trust me?

Flip nods.

FLIP

Get to work.

INT. BALI RAJA BALLROOM -- LATER

Madison approaches a group of three JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN. They make a little bow as she joins them. She holds up a card.

MADISON

Table sixteen.

One of the men, Yoshi, holds up his card.

YOSHI

Sixteen.

MADISON

You guys here on business?

YOSHI

We came for the tournament.

MADISON

Professionals?

The trio smiles at each other.

YOSHI

Pleasure.

MADISON
Twenty-five hundred each in this town could buy you a lot more pleasure than playing blackjack.

YOSHI
Only I am playing. These two gentlemen work for me.

The other two make another slight bow.

MADISON
I get it. These two watch the other tables and report back to you.

YOSHI
They watch only me.

MADISON
Weird.

YOSHI
If I win, they will admire my skill.

Madison taps one of the two guys on the arm and LAUGHS.

MADISON
If you lose, this guy gets your job, right?

YOSHI
If I lose, hopefully they will respect my graciousness.

MADISON
So this whole thing is like some super mental motivational seminar?

Yoshi bows at Madison.

YOSHI
You will excuse us please. We must check into our rooms.

As the trio leaves Madison searches the room for the rest of the crew. She spots Flip talking to a couple of PLAYERS across the room.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT KITCHEN -- DAY

Flip makes notes on a legal pad while Madison, Mort, and Sammy look at their own notes.

MORT

I'm surprised this kid found his way to Vegas. All that interbreeding of rich folks sure left this sucker a few cards short of a full deck.

SAMMY

Not the sharpest tool in the shed, but let's hope he's feeling lucky.

Sammy winks at Madison.

MORT

We also have two professionals at Madison's table. Don't know their names, but I nicknamed one of them Fast Money and the other Professional.

MADISON

Fast Money?

Sammy nods.

SAMMY

I followed both of them to the playing floor. Fast Money pushes his money out so fast that I thought he'd get whiplash. Professional is just that - so very professional and polite.

MORT

I asked around and Fast Money is the biggest winner and loser in town. He married the richest and ugliest woman in Philadelphia and he can't wait to go through all her dough so he can dump her.

SAMMY

Professional shouldn't even be here -- he's an accountant. Don't think either of them are a threat. Your problem is Yoshi.

MADISON

One problem, I can handle that.

FLIP

They are all your problems. Round one. Only the top two players at each table advance.

SAMMY

Soon as they do, we'll start our homework on the round two players.

FLIP

You can't. There isn't enough time.

Flip turns to Madison.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Look at this list I made of the regulars.

MADISON

Regulars?

FLIP

About twenty that I recognize from the old days. Another ten or so that I heard are the new guys.

MADISON

You circled Jim and Slim and this Robbie? Why?

FLIP

Hottest players on the floor last night. Robbie bet big -- he's a producer from Los Angeles and his film is over budget. Jim and Slim are deep in debt in Atlantic City.

MADISON

Frantic or Frightened?

FLIP

That's for you to figure out.

Madison holds her head.

MADISON

I need a break.

Madison gets up and starts packing a small cooler with sodas from the refrigerator. Flip get up and joins her.

FLIP
We need to practice.

Madison shakes her head, no.

MADISON
I'm going to the lake.

FLIP
Good idea. Fresh air. We'll get a
table at the marina.

Madison gestures between Flip and herself.

MADISON
A break -- from this.

EXT. LAKE MEAD MARINA -- DAY

Madison walks up to Pokey who is putting water skis into her boat.

MADISON
Where are the two Prince Charmings?

Pokey looks at Madison and frowns. She tugs on the wide swimsuit strap that shows out of Madison's tank top.

POKEY
Your swim team suit?

MADISON
We going water skiing or not?

The two guys from the casino, JEFF and MIKE come out of the marina store carrying a cooler. They are wearing expensive golf attire. They take an appreciative look at Madison.

MADISON (CONT'D)
So which one of you is the married
one?

JEFF AND MIKE
(in unison and pointing
at each other)
He is.

They realize they've been made and shake their heads.

POKEY
You guys are married?

They shrug but hold up their cooler and look hopeful.

MIKE

Free beer.

JEFF

We filled your tank.

Pokey looks over at Madison for approval who pulls out her cell phone.

MADISON

I'll give you guys a choice. I call your wives and if they are okay with it, you're in.

The guys look at each other and turn around, leaving the dock.

EXT. POKEY'S BOAT ON LAKE MEAD -- DAY

Pokey helps Madison adjust her ski boot.

POKEY

How did you know?

MADISON

How didn't you figure it out? The Venetian isn't the most popular hotel for singles looking for a good time. Look at what they are wearing. It looks like their mother dressed them -- or their wives.

POKEY

Just like the other tails say, "the odds are good in Las Vegas, but the goods are odd."

MADISON

What about Sean? He fixes your boat for free, fills it every week, hauls your shit back to the car...

POKEY

He sells bait at a Marina. What do you think he makes? I want a guy who has something.

MADISON

We promised each other that we'd never be taken care of. This town is too easy for that.

POKEY

After ten hours on my feet holding that stupid tray, some of those rich guys start looking better and better.

Pokey pats on the ski boot to let Madison know it's done. Madison tests the fit.

POKEY (CONT'D)

It wouldn't be so bad for you to let your dad take care of you after all these years.

MADISON

How did you hear?

POKEY

For a million residents and visitors, it's a small town.

Madison pulls her ski over the side of the boat and sits on the edge.

MADISON

The cove?

Pokey shakes her head, no. Madison jumps into the water as Pokey takes the wheel.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Please?

POKEY

I'll give you a choice. We'll go to the cove, but you stay behind the boat.

Madison smiles as she grabs the rope.

EXT. WATER OUTSIDE POKEY'S BOAT -- DAY

Madison is a fantastic water skier cutting back and forth across the boat and taking air whenever she crosses the wake. Madison pulls out to the right of the boat coming even with it as Pokey cuts the boat sharply to the left.

Madison leans heavily back into her ski and causing a tall rooster tail of water. Pokey makes a circular gesture and points to the right as she steers the boat into a cove.

Madison moves behind the boat and they enter a cove with glassy water and a wide sandy beach. On the shore is a boat filled with some TEENAGE BOYS. As Pokey makes the turn, the boys HECKLE Madison and make obscene gestures.

As she turns the boat to leave the cove, Pokey looks back at Madison who is making a circular motion while holding the rope with one hand. Pokey shakes her head, no. Madison keeps making the motion.

Pokey shrugs and turns the boat around. As they near the boat with the teenage boys, Madison pulls out to the right as Pokey cuts the boat sharply to the left.

Madison leans heavily back into her ski and causing a tall rooster tail of water. She cuts back into the turn and the spray covers the boys with a sheet of water. They YELL as their drinks are saturated.

Pokey cuts back right and Madison repeats the trick for one last drenching. They both make a ROOSTER CALL. As the boat leave the cove, Madison is not back behind the boat, rather enjoying one more jump across the wake.

Pokey looks around alarmed just as Madison loses control and hits a shallow area at the entrance to the cove.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -- DAY

Madison sits on an examining bed while a DOCTOR looks at his handiwork.

DOCTOR

Two stitches. Won't even be a scar.

Madison gently touches her forehead.

MADISON

Do I need a bandage?

The doctor shakes his head.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Can I have one anyway?

EXT. BALI RAJA -- DAY

Flip stands outside the casino and glances at his watch while Mort and Sammy pace back and forth, barely missing each other.

Madison crosses the parking lot, wearing an enormous bandage on her forehead. Flip rushes to her.

FLIP
What happened?

Madison touches her bandage.

MADISON
I'm fine.

FLIP
It's almost five. We said three.

Madison studies her father.

MADISON
For a moment, I thought you were concerned.

She starts towards the entrance, but Mort and Sammy have spotted her and start fussing over the bandage. Madison pulls it off and stuffs it in her purse as she goes into the casino.

INT. ENTRANCE TO THE BALI RAJA CASINO -- DAY

Madison heads over to the bar as Mort and Sammy turn towards Flip.

MORT
Where do you want us?

Flip scans the tables.

FLIP
Over there by that railing. Got your notepads?

The pair nod.

FLIP (CONT'D)
I want a record of every hand -- what she hits and holds, the cards, and the bets.

SAMMY
Where are you going to be?

FLIP
If I do my job right, you won't see
me until it's all over.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY
Brad walks up to Arnie who watches his tables.

BRAD
Did he show up?

Arnie nods.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Registered?

ARNIE
His kid is.

BRAD
This tournament is too much of a
temptation for Flip.

ARNIE
Technically it's not gambling. The
chips aren't real.

BRAD
It's not gambling because you guys
already know the winner, right?

Arnie smiles at Brad.

ARNIE
We'd never do that -- it would be
against gaming commission rules.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- DAY

Madison jumps on her stool and spots Tommy talking to Brad. Tommy glances nervously at Madison. Puzzled, she starts to move in closer, but the look in Tommy's eyes tells her to stay put.

She waits impatiently for Tommy and then proceeds to empty the peanut bowl onto a napkin and starts counting them.

MADISON

One hundred and thirty-two. Two off.

Tommy finally breaks away and comes down to her - empty handed.

MADISON (CONT'D)

What? No ginger ale? Don't you love me anymore? Who's that cute guy?

He looks cautiously toward back towards Brad.

TOMMY

Outside. Five minutes.

EXT. BALI RAJA -- DAY

Madison sits on a planter as Tommy comes out the casino door. He sits down next to her and puts his arm around her.

TOMMY

Sorry, Precious -- but I didn't want that guy to see you.

She rubs his cheek affectionately.

MADISON

Why not? Want me all to yourself?

Tommy shakes his head.

TOMMY

Gaming commission. They got Flip gambling on tape.

Tommy gestures toward the ceiling.

MADISON

Arnie. We've got to warn my dad.

Tommy grabs her arm.

TOMMY

If you warn him and he runs, they'll come after you. You could lose your license.

MADISON

Then he goes back to jail?

Tommy nods.

Madison sinks back onto the planter and SOBS. Tommy hugs her and she brushes away the tears.

TOMMY
Don't blame yourself.

MADISON
Blame?

She gets up and stands tall.

MADISON (CONT'D)
I'm not the one who violated my parole. I'm not one who cheated and got caught. You tell him if you want, but it's his choice whether he stays or runs. This is my time, my moment and I'm not going to let you or Flip distract me from my game. I've got to concentrate, stay in my zone.

She leaves and Tommy smiles as he watches her go.

TOMMY
(to himself)
You go, Girl.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

Madison finds her table with a number "16" sign on it. Yoshi bows to her and the rest of the players -- the KID, PROFESSIONAL, and FAST MONEY.

MADISON
Anyone want to change seats?

The DEALER settles into her spot.

DEALER
That's not allowed.

Madison winks at the dealer.

DEALER (CONT'D)
Have a seat players. Thirty hands, single deck, and the two with the most chips at the end advance.

Fast Money reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a handful of hundred dollar chips.

FAST MONEY
Looks like I'm the winner already.

The dealer reaches into her rack and sets five neat stacks in front of each player.

DEALER
These are special chips. You start with one thousand and you give back all the chips at the end.

FAST MONEY
A thousand? I thought we'd be playing with twenty-five hundred?

The dealer shakes her head.

DEALER
That was your registration fee. Consider that gone right now.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- DAY

Mort picks up a drink from Tommy.

TOMMY
Give the darling my love.

MORT
What she needs is luck.

Tommy shakes his head.

TOMMY
If I had luck, I sure wouldn't be bartending.

MORT
Speaking of luck, you see Flip go by?

Tommy just wipes down the counter and smiles.

MORT (CONT'D)
I get it. Convention of blind men and the bartender is the only one who didn't see the murder.

Tommy nods as Mort takes a sip of his drink and leaves.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

Mort joins Sammy along the rail. Sammy looks at the drink that Mort finishes.

SAMMY

Where's mine?

MORT

Still in the bottle. This is how it works -- when I say, "I'm going to get a drink", you say "Bring me back something too." Then you hand me a few bucks.

SAMMY

A true friend would just know.

MORT

I know that one of us has to stay sharp.

Mort takes another sip.

MORT (CONT'D)

I can't think this early without my medicine.

He looks towards the tables.

MORT (CONT'D)

Did they start yet?

SAMMY

You idiot -- they've already played three hands.

Sammy shows Mort the notepad.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

She's low man.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

Madison turns her cards over and tosses them towards the dealer.

MADISON

Busted again.

KID

You should have stayed. You ever hear of basic strategy? I bought this book at the airport.

He pulls out a tiny book.

KID (CONT'D)

Too bad it was the last one.

He pats it like it was made of gold, then returns it to his pocket.

DEALER

Two more hands -- bets?

Madison looks at her small pile and pushes half of them in. Fast Money looks at her.

FAST MONEY

You know something we don't?

MADISON

I'm just tired of it all.

The cards are dealt and Madison is dealt a nine. The dealer has a ten. Madison flips her other card over. It's also a nine.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Split.

Yoshi leans in close to Madison.

YOSHI

If I may...

Madison cuts him off by holding up her hand.

MADISON

I know how to play this game.

The dealer gives Madison a five and a face card.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

Sammy GROANS as he frantically writes in his notepad.

SAMMY

She's going to give me a heart attack.

Mort covers his eyes.

MORT
I can't watch.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

The dealer flips over her hole card. It's a four. She deals herself a face card.

KID
Dealer busted -- I should have stayed.

The kid looks over at Madison whose pile of chips are now closer to the stacks in front of the Professional and Yoshi.

MADISON
Can't learn everything from a book, kid.

The dealer taps the table.

DEALER
Last hand. Bets.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

Sammy tries to count up the amounts on his notepad.

MORT
Hurry, hurry.

SAMMY
Seven hundred, seven hundred fifty, fifty-five, six, seven.

Sammy looks up.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
She's short.

Mort looks over at the table.

MORT
If she bets the same as Yoshi and the Pro -- she'll be short?

SAMMY
Go, go, go.

Mort dashes around the railing.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- DAY

The other players have pushed in their bets. The dealer has her hand out in front of Madison.

DEALER

Bet?

Madison slowly moves her chips towards the circle. She looks over at Yoshi's and Professional's bets and then spots Mort waving from behind the dealer. He gives her a "thumbs up."

Madison pushes all her chips in. Mort frantically shakes his head, and makes a cutting motion across his neck.

It's too late -- the cards are dealt. The kid has a face card showing.

KID

Hit me.

Another face card. The kid GROANS. Busted.

Madison has a five showing. A triple tap for a hit. She gets a three. She takes a deep breath.

MADISON

Choices.

Another triple tap. She gets a six. Another triple tap for a hit. She gets another six. Madison shoves her cards under her chips -- she's finally holding.

Yoshi taps his seven that is showing. He gets a face card and carefully slides his cards towards the dealer with a slight bow of his head.

Fast Money stares at his face card and then over at Madison.

FAST MONEY

You sucked them all up, didn't you?

Madison smiles. Fast Money taps his cards and gets another face card. He flips over his cards and tosses them at the dealer.

FAST MONEY (CONT'D)

You busted me, you little bitch.
(MORE)

FAST MONEY (CONT'D)

You could have stayed with that ace,
but you wanted to grab any cards
that would have made our hands.

The same thing happens to Professional.

The dealer has a face card showing. She flips the hole card,
it's a four. She deals herself a six for twenty. She pays
out a stack of chips to Madison.

Yoshi, the Professional and Fast Money stand up from the
table. The dealer flips over Yoshi's hand, revealing
nineteen. The dealer sweeps in Yoshi's chips. Fast Money
glares at Madison.

FAST MONEY (CONT'D)

Screwed us all.

Fast Money points to the kid.

FAST MONEY (CONT'D)

You and brain dead go on to the next
round.

The kid is surprised.

KID

I won?

The dealer points to the kid's lone chip.

DEALER

Everyone else was all in. You and
Madison advance.

She takes in Madison's chips and the kid's chip. She hands
them each a voucher. The kid looks at it, grabs Madison and
kisses her.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- DAY

Madison, Mort, and Sammy are in a group hug -- jumping up
and down.

MORT

I don't know how you did it.

Sammy breaks away. He pulls out his notes.

SAMMY

Your ace in the hole gave you nineteen after your first hit. You should have stayed.

MADISON

A new deck and a lazy shuffle. The cards were clumped.

Mort shakes his head.

MORT

I almost joined Gerda up there when you pushed all them in. Didn't you get my signal? A thumbs up means to up the bet. A fist is all in.

MADISON

Maybe I was feeling lucky?

SAMMY

No way. Wait until Flip hears that.

An old man sits on a bar stool behind them. He doesn't turn around. It's Flip in a new disguise.

FLIP

She was due for a little luck.

SAMMY AND MORT

(together)

Flip.

Madison grabs him.

MADISON

Didn't you talk to Tommy?

Flip nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You need to go.

FLIP

I've been gone too long.

MADISON

I can do this on my own. I don't want to be the reason why you go back to jail.

She crosses her arms.

MADISON (CONT'D)
I don't need you here.

FLIP
I need to be here.

He kisses the top of her head.

FLIP (CONT'D)
For luck.

MONTAGE - MADISON WINNING THE NEXT FEW ROUNDS

-- Madison does her triple tap.

-- Mort holds up a fist and Madison shakes him off. He holds up a thumb, she shakes him off again. He throws both his hands up in frustration.

-- A dealer pushes a big pile of chips towards Madison.

-- Madison leans over and hugs the dealer while another player throws his cards down in anger.

-- Sammy and Mort hug each other.

-- Arnie and Brad watch Madison move to another table closer to the front.

-- Sammy and Mort try to do a "high five" and miss each other's hands. Sammy grabs his back in pain.

INT. BALI RAJA BALLROOM -- DAY

The announcer stands on the stage. The crowd presses closer.

ANNOUNCER
Two hours until the semifinal round
and good luck to all of you.

The crowd CHEERS.

Madison, Mort, Sammy, and Flip stand off to the side in the ballroom. Madison looks at her voucher.

MADISON
Position three, table two -- right
up front.

SAMMY

Going to be hard for you to see us.

MORT

What difference does that make? She ignores us anyway.

Mort gives her a little boy pout. Madison pulls Mort towards her, rubs his arm and kisses him on the cheek. Sammy leans over and does a little triple tap on his cheek. Madison delivers a big kiss on Sammy's cheek.

Flip ignores them as he studies the ballroom. It's a much smaller crowd.

FLIP

Only one player from each table advances to the final round. Five tables, five finalists. There's Slim and Jim -- just like I thought. Damn. Robbie is over there too.

MADISON

I can do this.

Flip shakes his head.

FLIP

Only thirty hands in this round. Counting isn't going to help you. We need to talk about the regulars.

He looks down at his watch.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Not enough time.

Madison pats him on the arm.

MADISON

Relax. We all have the same amount of chips, cards, and talent. With all things equal...

Flip pulls her close. He's angry.

FLIP

It's never equal. Learn that now or go home and sign up for beauty school.

Flip storms away.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- DAY

Brad leans across the desk and pushes a list towards Arnie.

BRAD
She's in the semifinal round, you
idiot.

ARNIE
I can only control so much. I put
in new decks, called the shuffles,
ordered a flash. She's good.

Arnie shakes his head.

ARNIE (CONT'D)
If only there was an honest gaming
commissioner around...

Now Arnie smiles at Brad.

ARNIE (CONT'D)
... I'd be in here getting my ass
chewed.

BRAD
It's a tournament. The players don't
need protection from the house.
It's them against each other.

Brad gets up.

BRAD (CONT'D)
You got your guy at her table this
time?

Arnie nods.

ARNIE
With her temper, she'll be out after
four hands. It's her old man that
I'm starting to worry about.

BRAD
Leave Flip to me.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- DAY

Madison sips her ginger ale and watches the blackjack tables.
As she sets her glass down, Tommy tops it off.

TOMMY
You ready, Sweetie?

Madison picks at the peanuts.

MADISON
He didn't go. Did you tell him about
the tape?

Tommy nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)
How can they even tell it's him on
the tape? I can barely recognize
him.

Madison scans the room, then turns towards Tommy.

MADISON (CONT'D)
I asked you a question. How did
they recognize him?

Tommy doesn't answer as he dries some glasses.

MADISON (CONT'D)
It was you. You pointed him out.
What's in it for you -- a better
location? Arnie?

Madison jumps off stool and pushes her glass towards Tommy.
He catches it before it falls off the bar.

TOMMY
All that glitters is not gold. All
who wander are not lost.

MADISON
Get lost!

EXT. BALI RAJA -- DAY

Madison sits on a planter box outside and watches the SUNSET.
Pokey almost walks past her and then turns around and joins
Madison.

POKEY
Semifinals. Big time.

Madison rest her head on Pokey's shoulder.

MADISON
Thanks for coming.

POKEY
Don't think I'm getting all soft on
you. My date is meeting me here.

Madison GROANS.

POKEY (CONT'D)
Sean. Maybe you're right about those
casino rats.

MADISON
You were major wrong about letting
my dad take care of me.

POKEY
You still a quart low in the trust
department?

MADISON
What do you mean by that?

POKEY
Come on, Maddie. You not called
second date death for nothing. You
make every guy pay for your dad
running out on you.

MADISON
You fix me up with these losers and
you want me waste my time on a third
date?

Madison storms into the casino as the sun makes it final
beam over the pink mountain tops.

POKEY
(to herself)
Still Daddy's little girl.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE#2 -- NIGHT

Madison takes a seat at position three at her table. She's
the first one there. She shakes her head at the dealer,
PAUL, as he walks up.

MADISON
It had to be you.

PAUL

Only the best for tournament play.
It's a honor to deal to two
generations of Zieglers.

MADISON

Only difference is that you won't
catch me cheating.

PAUL

No matter what you think, no dealer
likes to deal a guy his last hand.
I'm on your side.

MADISON

Then tell me about my table.

Paul looks down at a list.

PAUL

Big loudmouth brute of a Texan, a
smooth talker from Atlantic City, a
retired dealer, and some stupid kid.

Madison looks around and the Kid is chatting with a cocktail
waitress. Madison smiles.

MADISON

The kid. One down, three to go.

She turns her attention back to Paul.

MADISON (CONT'D)

The retired guy -- anybody we know?

Paul shakes his head. As if on cue, a white-hair elderly
man, MR. TERRYFIELD approaches the table. He tips his hat
to Madison, then takes it off and sets it on the position
one seat.

MR. TERRYFIELD

Good day, madam and kind sir.

He's quickly followed by a large mass, the TEXAN. He glares
at Madison.

TEXAN

You're in my seat, Sweet Cheeks.

Paul looks down at his list.

PAUL
You're in position two, sir.

TEXAN
How the hell do you know who I am?

Paul smiles politely.

PAUL
I checked you in earlier.

TEXAN
Hell, you penguins all look alike.

The Texan looks Madison up and down.

TEXAN (CONT'D)
But you, Sweet Cheeks...

Madison shakes her head and gets up from the table.

MADISON
Be right back Paul.

She winks at the Texan.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Got to go powder my cheeks -- I mean
nose.

INT. BALI RAJA LADIES RESTROOM -- NIGHT

Madison washes her hands and takes a cloth from the pile. She pauses a moment and then cups her hands and fills them with water. She throws them both into her eyes, then dabs the remainder from her face.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES#2 -- NIGHT

Madison takes a seat back at the table. There is a new player, SMOOTHIE in the fifth position. Paul studies Madison.

PAUL
You okay?

Madison shakes her head.

MADISON
My boyfriend just broke up with me.

Mr. Terryfield pats her hand.

MR. TERRYFIELD
Probably wasn't worthy anyway.

The Texan puts his arm around Madison.

TEXAN
You gotten give 'em a little to keep
'em, baby.

Both Smoothie and Mr. Terryfield glare at the Texan. Paul looks at his watch, then over at the kid.

PAUL
Five minutes.

MADISON
I'll get him.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES --
NIGHT

Madison walks up to the kid who moves in closer to the cocktail waitress.

MADISON
Time to go, loverboy.

The kid looks at his watch.

KID
Two more minutes.

Madison shakes her head and heads back to the table.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES#2 -- NIGHT

The other three have taken their seats and Paul starts the shuffle. Madison pops into her seat. Paul looks over at the kid who finally tears himself away from the waitress.

TEXAN
Why the hell did you do that?

Madison ignores him.

TEXAN (CONT'D)
Listen Sweet Cheeks, if he had missed
the start time, he was out.

Madison counts her stack of chips. The Texan puts his fat face in front of her.

TEXAN (CONT'D)
You are now first on my list. I'm
getting you out of the game.

Madison smiles sweetly at the Texan.

MADISON
Bring it on, big boy.

Madison pushes out a small stack of chips in a bold move for
the first hand. The Texan matches them, but the others only
bet about half.

The cards are dealt. Madison gets a blackjack and the others
hit or stay -- enough to win -- except the big Texan. He
busts and the dealer rakes in the Texan's chips.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Tough start, Sweet Cheeks.

INT. BALI RAJA HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Arnie pokes his finger into the chest of a gigantic SECURITY
GUARD.

ARNIE
You lost him again?

The guard sadly nods.

ARNIE (CONT'D)
How fast can he run or how slow are
you?

SECURITY GUARD
It's not that he runs away...

The guard pulls out a notebook.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
... he disappears. Fifteen-twelve,
suspect at bar. Fifteen-seventeen,
suspect heads towards restroom.
Fifteen-twenty, suspect enters stall
three.

The guard looks up.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Gone. He never came out.

ARNIE
Of the stall?

SECURITY GUARD
Of the restroom. I searched it twice.

ARNIE
He's getting out the window.

SECURITY GUARD
Second floor?

ARNIE
This guy will do anything. He's got
a million disguises.

Arnie picks up the phone and dismisses the guard with a wave
of his hand.

ARNIE (CONT'D)
Get out. I've got an inside track
on Flip.

SECURITY GUARD
You want me to keep on...

ARNIE
Get out.

The guard quickly backs out of the room.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES --
NIGHT

Mort and Sammy maneuver into a position as close as they can
get to Madison's table.

SAMMY
Can you see how she's doing?

Mort shakes his head.

MORT
Between that fat ugly guy next to
her and that slick guy on the other
side...

Mort stretches his neck.

MORT (CONT'D)
I can't see anything.

SAMMY

This is driving me crazy.

Sammy flags over a COCKTAIL WAITRESS. The beautiful buxom blonde slides up to Sammy.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

What can I get you handsome?

Sammy is smitten.

SAMMY

You can get us away from this place.

Mort jabs him to life. Sammy pulls a fifty out of his pocket.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

A ginger ale for position three over there on table two and keep the change.

The waitress smiles at the fifty.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

For that fifty I'm going to need a little something else.

The waitress shakes her head and hands the fifty back.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

Wrong store, honey. I can recommend a few...

Sammy blushes.

SAMMY

No, no, no. I need you to give me a chip count at table two in the tournament.

She smiles as she takes the fifty back.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES#2 -- NIGHT

Madison studies her hand and the faces around the table. She does her triple tap for a bet. After receiving a card, she slides them under the chips to hold.

Paul finishes dealing. Madison's hand is the only one that beats the dealer's hand.

MADISON

Yes.

Paul pays out.

PAUL

Two more hands. Bets?

The Texan looks over at Madison, then pushes his whole pile of chips into the circle.

TEXAN

Let's see who's got balls.

The kid pushes all his chips in and so does Mr. Terryfield. Both Smoothie and Madison count their chips.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

The cocktail waitress hands Sammy a napkin with some notes. Sammy takes a quick look.

SAMMY

She's ahead.

MORT

As long as she plays the system and doesn't do anything stupid...

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES#2 -- NIGHT

Smoothie pushes only half of his chips into the circle. Madison hasn't made a move.

PAUL

You have to either bet or leave.

Madison moves a single chip into the circle.

TEXAN

I knew it -- no balls on the little girl -- just like her old man.

Madison holds onto the chip and glares at the Texan.

MADISON

How do you know my father?

The Texan smiles.

TEXAN

I did my homework.

He gestures to Paul, as Madison starts to push the rest of her chips into the circle.

TEXAN (CONT'D)

Little girl can't decide? Want me to go find your daddy to get you some more lessons?

Madison pulls her pile of chips back and instead flips in just the single chip.

MADISON

I'm in.

TEXAN

Just what I hoped for. If I win this hand, no way for you to catch up.

Paul deals the cards. Almost all the players except Madison takes a hit. Paul hits blackjack and all chips are forfeited.

The Texan throws his cards down in disgust.

TEXAN (CONT'D)

How the hell did you know that?

MADISON

I'm sorry -- but I don't have time to give you lessons right now.

For the first time Smoothie speaks. He smiles warmly at Madison.

SMOOTHIE

Just you and me.

Madison studies Smoothie's stack and hers. They appear close. Madison pushes the stack towards the circle but keeps a hand on them. Smoothie does the same.

SMOOTHIE (CONT'D)

Are we going to have to count to three?

Madison pulls her hand back.

MADISON

No little kid games for me. I'm here to win.

Smoothie pulls his hand back.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

Sammy has a pair of opera glasses and leans over the rail.

MORT

What do you see?

Sammy almost collapses and makes a Catholic sign of the cross.

SAMMY

She's all in -- but so is Smoothie.

The cocktail waitress stops by again and hands a napkin to Sammy. He's delighted and gives her his best wink as he reaches for his wallet. She stops him.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

No charge, Handsome.

Mort grabs the napkin from Sammy and makes some notes.

MORT

Okay -- if Madison gets blackjack and Smoothie just beats the dealer -- Madison wins. If they both beat the dealer, Smoothie wins. What's she got showing?

Sammy shakes his head.

SAMMY

Can't see.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #2 -- NIGHT

Madison looks over at the four that the dealer has showing. She has a three showing and Smoothie has a five.

MADISON

You got any more just like that in there?

PAUL
If you'll shut up and play, we'll
all get to see what I've got -- and
in this lifetime.

Madison peaks at her hole card. It's a face card.

MADISON
Shit.

PAUL
You say hit?

Madison tucks her cards under the chips.

SMOOTHIE
You're holding on thirteen with a
new deck? What kind of strategy are
you using?

He snaps his fingers at Paul.

SMOOTHIE (CONT'D)
Hit me.

Paul deals Smoothie a face card.

SMOOTHIE (CONT'D)
You busted me -- that was supposed
to be your card.

Paul flips over his hole card. It's a face card. He deals
himself another card - it's another face card. Busted.

PAUL
Congratulations, you're in the finals
Madison. Two hour break and we'll
see you back here.

Paul starts to clean up, but Madison grabs his arm.

MADISON
Let me see.

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL
Let it go or you'll end up like him.

Madison reaches over and flips the next card. It's a seven.

MADISON

So that's how it was meant to play out? Smoothie and me bust and you get blackjack. How did you switch decks?

Arnie walks up behind Paul. He looks at the table and smiles at Madison.

ARNIE

You know the rules, if both of you bust with no money -- there's no player from this table.

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL

She won.

ARNIE

What?

PAUL

She won -- he busted, I busted.

Madison pokes Arnie in the chest.

MADISON

I messed up your little plan, didn't I? Never dreamed I'd hold on thirteen. You think that I can't see a flash and a stacked shuffle? I'm a dealer -- the best there is.

Arnie rubs his chin.

ARNIE

You might as well come with me over to table five. I'm sure you'd like to see your competition. I think they're about to deal their last hand.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #5 -- NIGHT

All five PLAYERS are still in for the last hand at table five. Four of the players are down to a handful of chips while the elderly MAN at the end has a huge stack of chips.

Arnie practically drags Madison within view of the activities.

ARNIE

Amazing to see one player do so much better than the others in tournament play.

Madison studies the man as he does a triple tap for a hit. He gets a three. Madison GASPS.

ARNIE (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Arnie nods at two security guards standing to the side. They come up to the table and grab Flip by the arms.

SECURITY GUARD

Let's go, Flip.

Flip ignores them as the dealer turns over Flip's cards, he has twenty-one. The guards pull Flip out of his chair and stand him directly in front of Arnie.

ARNIE

Gambling is a parole violation, Flip. I've got some people waiting for you over there.

Arnie nods at some Las Vegas POLICE OFFICERS waiting by the door.

FLIP

You're mistaken. My name is Thomas Perryton. Let me show you my ID.

Madison sticks a finger in Flip's chest.

MADISON

You wanted it all for yourself, didn't you? You figured if I was in the final round with you, then there would only be three others to beat, right?

Flip continues the act.

FLIP

There must be some mistake. I don't know you.

Madison shakes her head.

MADISON

You never did.

Madison bites her lip to hold back the tears. She walks away.

INT. BALI RAJA LADIES RESTROOM -- NIGHT

Pokey stands at the mirror putting on a little more makeup. Madison walk in and sees Pokey and SOBS. Pokey holds her.

POKEY

I heard. I'm so sorry. You were right about him.

MADISON

Fuck him. I didn't mean to yell at you.

POKEY

It's okay. You can buy me a new boat with those million bucks.

MADISON

I can't win. My dad was in the tournament. He never wanted me to win, he was using me to play off of and win himself. It was all a head trip -- he made me think I was good -- He made me think that I can win. I'm not. I'm barely hanging on.

POKEY

Sorry, Kiddo.

Madison SOBS again.

MADISON

It's worse, I thought he was willing to go back to jail for me. Now he's going to jail anyway, but not because of me -- because he wanted that money again.

POKEY

Listen, Maddie. You are the best. You can win this. I know you -- you've never given up and never lost at anything. Remember the swim meet against Jefferson?

(MORE)

POKEY (CONT'D)
Remember the power suit? You walked
out of the locker room in that bright
red swimsuit and...

Pokey holds Madison out at arms length.

POKEY (CONT'D)
That's it. We just need a power
face.

Pokey grabs her bag and dumps a mountain of makeup out on
the bathroom counter.

POKEY (CONT'D)
How much time do we have?

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- NIGHT

Arnie sits at his desk. Flip sits across from him, slowly
removing his fake mustache.

FLIP
No deal.

ARNIE
Technically you're still in the
tournament. Whether you get to play
or not is up to me.

FLIP
All those theatrics out there were
for Madison's benefit?

Arnie shakes his head.

ARNIE
You're still going back to jail,
Flip -- I get to decide when.

FLIP
Just like the last time.

Flip pulls out a mirror and rubs a little makeup off with a
tissue.

ARNIE
Forget the makeup -- I need an answer.

FLIP

Just checking first to see if I have
the word "stupid" written on my
forehead.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES --
NIGHT

The other tables have been cleared out and a large banner
that says; "ONE MILLION DOLLAR TOURNAMENT FINALS" hangs above
the lone table. Jim and Slim are already seated.

Along the railing a large crowd starts forming. Sammy and
Mort have staked out a position close to the table.

MORT

Where is she? We should have followed
her instead of stuffing your face at
the buffet.

Madison enters through the opening close to the table. She
glows.

SAMMY

You look like a million bucks.

MADISON

That's right - that's what I'm taking
home tonight.

SAMMY

I mean you look like...

She leans over and kisses him on the cheek. Mort leans in
for his kiss.

MORT

You ready, Honey?

Madison looks over at the table.

MADISON

I've been ready my whole life. You
got some notes?

Sammy flips through a notebook.

SAMMY

Slim and Jim, just like Flip said.
(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Not only are they deep in debt in Atlantic City, but kicked out -- banned for electronic card counting. Don't let their country bumpkin act fool you -- they are technology experts.

MADISON

Won't help them tonight.

MORT

Flip also predicted that Robbie would be in the finals. That's him over there with the overly white teeth. He's compulsive. Either on the phone or at the tables. He should be easy for you to lead around -- but watch him -- he's desperate for the money.

MADISON

Bring it on.

Mort hugs her.

MORT

Go get 'em.

Madison breaks away and turns towards the table.

She freezes as she sees Flip pull out a player's chair. Mort and Sammy point.

MORT (CONT'D)

How can Flip be here? They didn't arrest him?

Madison turns back to Mort.

MADISON

I'm going to find out.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #1 -- NIGHT

Madison walks up to the table and grabs Flip by the arm.

MADISON

Let's go.

Flip nods towards two security guards standing to the side.

FLIP
Buff and Puff over there go where I
go.

She pulls him to the side away from the other players who
are arriving.

MADISON
What's the deal?

FLIP
Not a good time.

Flip looks back cautiously towards the dealer and other
players.

FLIP (CONT'D)
You're going to have to trust me.

MADISON
You're about two quarts low in the
trust department.

FLIP
I'm doing what's best.

MADISON
As always, best for Flip -- you'll
win, take the million, and then it
will be another ten years before I
see you again.

Paul comes up to the pair and taps on his watch.

PAUL
You two want to take your seats?

Madison and Flip follow Paul back to the table and sit down.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Quick intros...

Madison looks around the table.

MADISON
Let me. I'm Madison, a local dealer.
This here is Flip Ziegler -- a local
legend. We round out the table with
Jim and Slim from Atlantic City and
of course, Robbie -- fresh in from
Los Angeles.

Jim punches Slim in the arm.

JIM
Bet you can't guess which of us is
Slim.

Robbie glares at Madison.

ROBBIE
How come you know everyone?

MADISON
Are we going to open up a chat session
or play cards?

Paul starts the shuffle.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES --
NIGHT

Sammy leans over the rail.

SAMMY
That's him.

MORT
I can't believe he's playing against
Madison.

SAMMY
Can't tell with Flip. Could have
something up his sleeve.

Mort nods.

MORT
He's going back to jail anyway.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #1 -- NIGHT

Paul deals the next round of cards. Madison looks over at
Flip's stack of chips.

FLIP
Don't worry, an early lead can
sometimes be misleading.

MADISON
I'm not afraid of you.

FLIP

Good.

Flip does a triple tap for a hit.

MADISON

I wish you wouldn't do that anymore.

FLIP

One tap for luck, one tap for respect,
the third tap for the choices we
make.

Paul pauses the deal at Madison.

PAUL

You going to do a triple tap too?
Sure can tell you two are related.

Madison looks at her dad and then back at Paul.

MADISON

It was you. You spotted Flip on the
tape.

She tucks her cards under to hold. Paul deals to the rest,
turns over his cards and then deals himself a card that causes
him to bust. He pays out the winning bets around the table.

Madison pushes a large stack of chips into the bet circle.
Flip shakes his head.

FLIP

Lose the count?

Madison pulls half of her chips back just as Paul deals the
cards.

All the bets look even, except Slim's large stack. Jim looks
at Slim's large bet and shakes his head.

JIM

Way too early.

SLIM

Time to shake things up.

Slim hits blackjack. The dealer has nineteen. All the rest
lose. The dealer pushes a large stack of chips to Slim.
Slim puts most of them in the bet circle.

SLIM (CONT'D)
I'm out of here -- anybody else
coming?

Madison looks at her stack.

FLIP
Don't take the bait. Play your own
game. The zone.

MADISON
Play the basic strategy, play your
own game, play the house, play the
other players.

Madison pushes half of her stack in.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Can't you shut up and play?

Robbie looks at the large amount of chips put out by Slim
and Madison. He pushes almost all of his chips in. Paul
deals the cards and himself blackjack. He rakes in the
losses.

PAUL
Five more hands. Ten minute break.

Slim gets up and stretches as Robbie frantically counts his
last few chips.

SLIM
Damn, I can't believe you losers
have made it this long.

Slim tugs at his pants.

SLIM (CONT'D)
Better go water the plants before it
starts flooding in here.

Madison shakes her head as Slim ambles away.

MADISON
Just when you think the guy couldn't
be more shallow, he manages to drain
just a little more water out of the
pool.

INT. BALI RAJA LADIES RESTROOM -- NIGHT

Madison pushes the door to the restroom open and runs into a yellow sign. A guy with a mop frantically tries to stop the mess from an overflowing toilet.

MOP GUY
Closed, madam. There's a restroom
in the lobby.

Madison looks at her watch.

MADISON
I don't have time to make it to the
lobby and back.

The guy notices the stress on her face.

MOP GUY
Come with me.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICE -- NIGHT

Brad paces back and forth.

BRAD
I can't believe you're not out there.

Arnie taps his earpiece.

ARNIE
Just like being there, plus my guys
are winning.

BRAD
If you mess this up, they'll kill
both of us.

Arnie pats Brad on the back.

ARNIE
They won't kill us when I hand them
one million clean dollars. I'm going
to have one of these tournaments
every month. Who'd ever suspect
that we were laundering money with
this kind of publicity?

BRAD

You should have hired that kid last month and she'd be dealing tonight instead of causing me to pop Tums.

ARNIE

I should have had them kill her old man fifteen years ago instead of letting the gaming commission lock him up. That won't happen again.

BRAD

You're going to have him killed?

Arnie opens the door and steps into the hallway. Brad follows him.

INT. BALI RAJA HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Madison comes out of the employee restroom and freezes when she sees Arnie coming out of his office, followed by Brad.

BRAD

That was never part of the deal.

ARNIE

Cut the sentimental crap and come watch the last few hands. Nothing in the world like watching your enemies lose in front of a crowd.

They turn the corner and Madison throws her hands over her mouth to prevent a GASP. She SNIFFS.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #1 -- NIGHT

Madison is in trouble. She looks at her chips. There are only a handful.

PAUL

Two hands left. Bets?

She looks over at Robbie. He has only one chip left which he moves into his circle. Slim has a large stack and so does Flip. They look back and forth at each other. Jim has a modest stack which he pushes forward.

JIM

Time for me to catch you guys.

Flip moves almost all of his stack to the bet circle.

FLIP

No way to catch me unless I stop to rest.

Slim taps nervously on the top of his stack. Madison picks up a lone chip and looks at it.

PAUL

You have to bet each hand to stay in.

Madison tosses the chip forward and Slim also tosses a lone chip forward.

INT. RAILING ALONG BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLES -- NIGHT

Sammy shakes his head.

SAMMY

Our girl can't win. Slim held back. After this hand it's basically just Slim and Flip.

Mort looks at his notes and does some calculations.

MORT

If Flip wins this hand, he'll have enough to take out Slim in the last hand.

Sammy looks over at Madison.

SAMMY

If she wins, she'll have enough chips left to stay in.

Mort does a few more calculations.

MORT

But they can hold out enough chips to beat her. Her luck just ran out.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BLACKJACK TABLE #1 -- NIGHT

Paul deals the cards. Flip, Slim and Madison hold. Jim and Robbie take hits and bust. The dealer busts. He pays out to Flip, Slim and Madison. Jim and Robbie get up from the table and stretch their legs.

Madison looks at her meager chips.

MADISON
Enough for me to play the last hand
but not much more.

She looks over at Flip.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Plenty enough for you to beat Slim.

FLIP
Is that what you want?

MADISON
What I want? You're asking me now?

Flip nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)
I want you to eat shit and die.

FLIP
In that order?

Flip pushes all his chips into the bet circle. Slim looks at Flip's chips. Flip watches him counting.

FLIP (CONT'D)
That's right. We have exactly the
same amount of chips. It's all or
nothing.

Madison pushes all her chips in. Flip GASPS and grabs her arm.

FLIP (CONT'D)
Hold back, Pumpkin.

She pulls her arm lose and lets go of the chips.

MADISON
Don't you ever call me that again.
You tell me to trust you and I'm
playing against you! If knowing the
other players is so important, then
how do I overcome that you are the
one person who knows exactly how I
play? You tell me to trust in luck.
Me? What kind of luck do I have? I
was raised by a drunk and deserted
by a cheater.

(MORE)

MADISON (CONT'D)

My only luck in this life has been to be the best dealer and card counter, but you've ruined that for me. Nobody will hire me and now I've lost the count. I don't know if that deck is plus two or twenty.

Slim smiles and pushes all his chips in. Paul deals. Flip holds. Madison does a triple tap for her hit. She's dealt a face card. She flips her cards over -- busted. Flip drops his head.

FLIP

The count was fifteen.

Madison tosses her cards in. Paul finishes the dealer's hand -- he has blackjack. Slim shakes his head at Flip.

SLIM

I win unless you're hiding a blackjack in there?

Slim pulls out one chip that was hidden under his arm.

SLIM (CONT'D)

Lucky for me, I always keep back a little something for the dealer.

MADISON

That's cheating!

Madison looks towards Paul, but he shakes his head.

PAUL

Chip was on the table.

Flip turns his cards over -- they add up to thirteen.

MADISON

You held on thirteen?

FLIP

It's your lucky number, isn't it? Looks like Slim won.

From the side, Arnie and Brad move in with two security guards who grab Flip and head towards the office.

FLIP (CONT'D)

It was all in the cards, Pumpkin.

Madison looks back at the deck and then grabs the cards from the table and runs after them.

INT. BALI RAJA OFFICES -- NIGHT

Two security guards restrain Flip as Madison confronts Arnie. Brad sits behind Arnie's desk.

MADISON

He wasn't gambling. It wasn't even a tournament. Nobody won.

ARNIE

Wrong. Read the rules. Slim was the last one to have a chip left. He wins.

She shakes her head.

MADISON

Slim is disqualified. Nobody wins.

Madison deals out the cards that she took from the tournament table.

MADISON (CONT'D)

That stack there -- those were my father's cards.

Brad flips them over and then grabs the next pile.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Those were mine.

Madison grabs another pile.

MADISON (CONT'D)

These were Slim's. Smell them.

Brad SNIFFS.

BRAD

Smells like oranges.

MADISON

Exactly. Slim left the table to use the restroom right before the last hand. Only problem is that he used the restroom that he's been trained to -- the employee's restroom with their orange disinfectant soap.

She points at Arnie.

MADISON (CONT'D)
Arnie makes all his employees use
it.

ARNIE
You can't prove that.

BRAD
But I can.

ARNIE
What the hell are you pulling?

BRAD
It's over.

Brad pulls open his shirt to show a wire.

ARNIE
You lying sack of shit. They're
going to kill me.

BRAD
I think we can make you a deal that
will allow you to live a long safe
life in your government's protection.

FLIP
Three free meals a day.

Flip pats him on the back.

FLIP (CONT'D)
There's even a few old friends in
there that will remember you fondly.

BRAD
One of the conditions will be that
you come clean about all the dealers
that you set up over the years to
save your own ass.

Brad nods at the security guards who then drag Arnie out of
the office.

MADISON
You were set up? You never stole
that money?

Flip nods.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell us? You rotted in prison, Mom died.

FLIP

You would have grown up hating Arnie, seeking revenge, and eventually got yourself killed. Brad suspected Arnie of money laundering by shorting the dealers' tables and contacted me after I got out of prison. This was my battle, but in the end, you ended up being the winner.

Flip looks over at Brad.

FLIP (CONT'D)

Right Brad?

MADISON

I won?

BRAD

The rules say that the last qualified player with chips wins. Slim and your dad were disqualified, but you must have known that to push all your chips in, right?

Madison thinks about this for a moment and smiles.

MADISON

I was feeling lucky.

She runs into her father's arms and hugs him.

INT. BALI RAJA CASINO BAR -- NIGHT

Madison hops on a bar stool. Tommy slides a glass of ginger ale towards her. Madison stares at it for a moment and pushes it back.

MADISON

Make it champagne -- I feel like celebrating.

As Tommy picks up the glass, Madison grabs his hand.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell me that it was Paul that spotted Flip?

TOMMY

You look sexy when you're pissed.

MADISON

Now that I'm rich, maybe you'll go out with me?

Tommy freezes and then recovers as he takes her hand and kisses it.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I know that whole gay bartender act gets you better tips, but I'm the best there is at spotting a cheater.

She pulls her hand back, grabs him by the chin and kisses him. When he comes up for air, she holds onto him by the chin.

MADISON (CONT'D)

You know how to water ski?

EXT. LAKE MEAD MARINA -- DAY

Madison and Tommy walk up to Pokey who is climbing all over a bright red new boat. She spots them and makes a ROOSTER CALL.

POKEY

You shouldn't have.

MADISON

I figure it's going to be hard to get Sean to fix that old boat anymore.

POKEY

That's what I hear married life. Once the ring is on the finger, no more free drinks.

She winks at Tommy and then hugs Madison.

POKEY (CONT'D)

Seriously, I don't know how to thank you.

Madison reaches into her pocket and pulls out a flyer and hands it to Pokey.

MADISON
Help me win this one.

Pokey studies it.

POKEY
Five thousand dollars? What do you need with five thousand dollars?

MADISON
It's the getting ready that's fun. I learn a lot about myself and my teacher.

She puts her arm around Pokey, but Pokey is all business as she starts pacing.

POKEY
We're talking practicing seven days a week. You're going to need a new custom fitted ski, a new suit, waterproof makeup and a lot better moves than that old rooster tail.

MADISON
Deal me in.

INT. FLIP'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Madison looks at the beautifully framed photographs of herself on the shelf.

MADISON
I didn't notice these before.

FLIP
You were pretty angry each time you visited me.

Madison picks up one of the photographs of a teenage version of herself playing soccer.

MADISON
You couldn't have taken this.

FLIP

A couple of old pals of mine needed some extra money. They looked after you while I was in prison.

MADISON

You had me followed? My whole childhood?

Madison stares at the photograph.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I know where I've seen this same photo.

FLIP

You go easy on the boys, they're getting old. What about us?

Madison sinks into a chair.

MADISON

I try to shake it off, but it's hard to think of you as anything but the clown that left me.

FLIP

Give it time. Give us time. I can wait until you're ready.

He kisses her on the top of her head.

FLIP (CONT'D)

You won't even know I'm around.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

Madison deals blackjack to Mort and Sammy. She looks at her watch.

MADISON

Last hand, boys.

SAMMY

I can't believe Clyde gave you your old job back.

MADISON

He had no choice, I'm the new owner.

Mort and Sammy look around in shock.

MORT
The whole casino?

MADISON
The new ninety-nine cent buffet and all. Finally found out a way to get a job in a super casino. Buy a dump and make it the best.

SAMMY
It must have cost a lot more than a million.

MADISON
Which means that I'm going to have to work my tail off to make the loan payments. I'm also going to need some extra help.

Madison rakes in their bets.

MADISON (CONT'D)
I thought since you two lost your old job, you'd like to come work for me.

Mort and Sammy look at each other.

MORT
Our old job?

MADISON
The photos of me in your office? You both have spent the last seven years following me around for Flip.

The guilty pair hold their hands up in surrender.

MORT
Sure was easier when you got this job. Instead of sitting in the hot bleachers watching soccer and softball, we got to sit in nice air conditioned comfort.

MADISON
Pit bosses have to stand most of the day.

The two are excited.

SAMMY

Us?

MADISON

Pays good and sometimes you do get to sit and play.

MORT

We're going to get paid for gambling?

The two jump up and hug each other.

SAMMY

It's better than heaven!

Madison looks across the room at her casino with pride. Her eyes meet those of an ELDERLY MAN playing bingo nearby. He tips his hat at her and Madison whispers to the pair.

MADISON

Flip?

Sammy and Mort look around and shake their heads, no.

A COWBOY passes slowly by Madison's table and sits down at the Keno tables nearby. Madison nods towards the cowboy and again Sammy and Mort shake their heads.

INT. SILVER BOOT CASINO LOBBY -- DAY

Madison holds the first set of doors open for a young WOMAN and a little GIRL. Madison looks at the little girl.

MADISON

Did you have a good time?

LITTLE GIRL

We just come here to eat.

YOUNG WOMAN

The buffet. I know I shouldn't bring her to a casino, but...

Madison holds up her hand to interrupt the woman.

MADISON

Don't ever be ashamed. Best times of my life happened in a casino.

EXT. PARKING LOT SILVER BOOT CASINO -- DAY

Madison opens up her car door and there sits a proud stuffed tiger in the driver's seat. She picks it up and hugs it.

MADISON

My tiger.

She looks around. There is a city worker picking up trash on the sidewalk. He stops and waves at her.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Daddy?

The man doesn't hear her and goes back to his job. Madison looks at the elderly man from bingo who waits at the bus stop. She looks back towards the casino and notices the cowboy getting into his truck.

She looks back and forth at the three men until she notices the same young woman and little girl also waiting at the bus stop. Madison watches them for a moment and then gets into her car.

As she drives away, she HONKS at the little girl and tosses the stuffed tiger out the window into the little girl's arms.

FADE OUT: