

Misfire

By

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1 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

February 1995

The room is a dark study. The walls are bare. There are no windows. The only furniture in the room is a solid wooden table in the centre. 6 chairs surround it. A small box of bullets rests on it. There is a brass clock with a glass cover in the centre of the table. A bar with drinks and 6 glasses stands off to the side.

SHOT: Camera on the table. Someone enters. His face is never seen. He wears all black. Black dress pants, a black long sleeved dress shirt, and a black suit jacket. The only part of him we ever see is his hands. They are encased in purple leather gloves. This is THE PIT BOSS.

THE PIT BOSS controls the game. This is his world.

THE PIT BOSS reaches into his jacket and pulls out a .45 Colt Revolver. This is the roulette wheel.

THE PIT BOSS places the gun on the table in the foreground of the shot and walks away.

2 INT. EDWARD'S BEDROOM

All names and dates are shown on screen the first time we see/meet them.

March 1989

EDWARD STEWART is sitting alone in his bedroom. He is holding the same .45 Colt Revolver.

We don't see all of his face until the last shot.

He spins it around his finger flawlessly. There is one bullet standing on the table beside him. He picks it up and loads it into the gun.

He spins the chamber so he doesn't know where the bullet is. He cocks the gun.

EDWARD puts the gun to his head and pulls the trigger.
"Click"

Silence. EDWARD'S mouth twitches.

He cocks it and fire again. "Click" Again. "Click" Again.

We finally see EDWARD'S face. He looks hopeful (of what we don't know). He pulls the trigger.

Gunshot cuts to black. In the darkness, we hear feet running and screaming.

3 TITLE CARD

The noises fade out as the music increases.

4 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

The same shot we left it on. The gun on the table in the foreground. This whole scene is one long take.

No titles on screen. All the characters clothes look worn. A cloth mirror to their souls.

THE PLAYERS enter. THEODOR, AUGUST, CHARLES, STANISLAW, IVAN & ACHMET. The latter enters first. He is dressed in black dress pants, a long sleeved purple dress shirt, a black vest and black fingerless gloves. He picks up the gun and spins it around his finger.

THEODOR enters as this occurs. He wears jeans and a loose fitting black long sleeved shirt. He is carrying a black jacket.

THEODOR

You know they say that only works
in movies.

ACHMET

With practice, anything works.

THEODOR goes over to the bar and pours himself a drink.

THEODOR

And what about the things you can't
practice?

ACHMET

Like hanging yourself?

THEODOR

Or putting a gun to your head. Let
me see.

ACHMET hands THEODOR the gun. THEODOR cocks it back and starts aiming around the room.

CHARLES walks in. He is dressed in a dark brown suit with a dark coloured dress shirt and a muted red scarf around his neck. He walks with an ornate walking stick. CHARLES is a

doctor who has been diagnosed with Fahr's Syndrome. As such, he is often racked with tremors and twitches. He has a constant headache, a mask like appearance, and a nervous habit of flipping a pen across his fingers.

THEODOR aims the gun at him.

CHARLES

I hope that's not loaded.

THEODOR

I haven't checked. But we'll gamble.

He fires. "Click"

THEODOR

You live to see another day, sir.

CHARLES

We'll see.

ACHMET

(to THEODOR)

You're lucky. The longer we all stay alive, the greater the chance we survive.

CHARLES

You've worked the numbers I see.

IVAN enters. He is wearing black dress pants and a black dress shirt under an unbuttoned military jacket. This jacket isn't his. He was ordered to wear it. IVAN pours himself a glass of water He drinks like it's the most delicious thing he's ever tasted.

IVAN

We all have. 16 percent the first round. Slightly less as each player is eliminated. By the end, there's a 3/6ths chance.

THEODOR

Of what?

IVAN

(obviously)
Survival

ACHMET

(excited?)
Death

THEODOR
 (to IVAN)
 Glass half full
 (to ACHMET)
 Glass half empty. Either way, 50%?
 I've bet with worse odds.

CHARLES
 And lost?

THEODOR
 (not correcting)
 And won.

STANISLAW enters. He is wearing black dress pants, a white dress shirt and a dark royal blue tie. He is cloaked in a tan trench coat.

STANISLAW
 What's going on?

THEODOR
 Isn't it obvious?

THEODOR picks up the gun. He spins the barrel, cocks it and fires at STANISLAW. "Click"

THEODOR
 We're gambling.

He goes to spin the barrel again.

ACHMET
 One spin per round.

THEODOR pretends to shoot ACHMET as a way of saying "gotcha"

STANISLAW
 (voice of a man in over his
 head)
 This is unexpected. I mean, I
 didn't know this actually happened.

AUGUST
 (off-screen)
 It shouldn't.

AUGUST enters. She is dressed in a black skirt, grey tights and a grey flannel blouse. A black lace bra is just visible. She carries a light black jacket. Serious and sexy. AUGUST has Cryptococcal meningitis. An opportunistic infection brought on by AIDS. She suffers from seizures and dementia. As such, she often appears to be in another world and detached from herself.

AUGUST

But desperate times... you know how
it goes.

ACHMET

Shall we sit?

THE PLAYERS randomly take seats around the table.
ACHMET-THEODOR-IVAN-STANISLAW-CHARLES-AUGUST. The gun is in
front of ACHMET.

Silence

THEODOR

Looks like you're starting us off.

He motions and IVAN slides the bullets over to ACHMET.
ACHMET opens the gun. He loads one shot and closes the
chamber. He spins the wheel.

ACHMET cocks the gun back and without a second thought, puts
it to his head.

THEODOR

Ah. Dealer goes last.

THEODOR holds out his hand and ACHMET reluctantly releases
the hammer and puts the gun in THEODOR'S hand.

CHARLES

Anti-clockwise it is.

Fade out

5 **THE STORY OF IVAN**

6 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

June 1992

IVAN sits alone at the table under harsh light. He is
dressed in a long sleeved dark green shirt. His hands
(handcuffed) rest on the table. There is a bruise forming on
his cheek. He has been hit recently. IVAN has been accused
of stealing. What THE DETECTIVE hasn't grasped is that the
things he was stealing belonged to him in the first place.

IVAN has always been a jack of all trades and as such, has
never had a steady job. He is currently trying to be a
writer. In fact, it was his own notes that he was caught
with. The same notes that go flying across the table now.

THE DETECTIVE

(throwing pages as he talks)
Chapter 1. Chapter 2. Chapter 3.
Really, Partner? Nothing better for
a teenager to do on a saturday
night than steal someone's
manuscript? Shouldn't you be out
drinking or smoking or something?

IVAN

Have you ever met an intelligent
teenager?

THE DETECTIVE

(pretends to think)
Nope. Never. 'course the only
teenagers I ever see are in this
room, so perhaps I'm missing
something. You tell me.

IVAN says nothing.

THE DETECTIVE

Ah, that's what I thought. No, the
teens I deal with are the kind of
people who break into houses and
then get caught because the drunk
college-boy came home from a party.

IVAN

That is the only reason you caught
me.

THE DETECTIVE

I don't need more than one.

IVAN

Nope.

Silence

IVAN

So why am I here?

THE DETECTIVE

Sorry?

IVAN

You caught me red handed. Why
bother interrogating me?

THE DETECTIVE flips a switch on the wall. Outside the
microphones and cameras shut off.

IVAN

Oh, here we go again. Hit the left side this time. I want to be symmetrical.

THE DETECTIVE accepts the invitation and punches IVAN square across the left cheek. IVAN'S head jerks with the force of the blow. THE DETECTIVE is panting.

IVAN

(looking back at his captor)
Ok. You done? Or do you have a few more issues you'd like us to work out?

THE DETECTIVE (who has been getting progressively angrier this whole time) comes up behind IVAN and whispers in his ear.

THE DETECTIVE

One more word.

IVAN

Try Me.

THE DETECTIVE slams IVAN'S head against the table and walks away. IVAN slowly recovers. He rubs his forehead.

IVAN

Ah! Goddammit! I hope you're enjoying this.

THE DETECTIVE

Not really. Sometimes it's just the only way.

IVAN

The way for what?!

The door opens and THE GOVERNOR walks in.

THE GOVERNOR

The way to be sure. Evening boys. Been watching the interrogation. Ivan, I want to talk to you. But first, Detective, what do you think?

THE DETECTIVE

He's good, sir. He can take it.

THE GOVERNOR
Excellent work, Detective. You're a
credit to your badge. Thanks for
your time.

THE DETECTIVE
Any time, Governor.

THE DETECTIVE leaves, closing the door behind him. THE
GOVERNOR takes a chair across from IVAN

THE GOVERNOR
I think the room's a bit nicer now.

IVAN
We'll see.

THE GOVERNOR
There's no need to be suspicious,
Ivan. We're just going to talk.

IVAN
Some would say that's a greater
cause for suspicion.

THE GOVERNOR
Would you?

IVAN
We'll see.

THE GOVERNOR
(looking at IVAN'S notes)
Is that your name?

THE GOVERNOR shows him a page.

IVAN
Yes.

THE GOVERNOR
(smiling)
I thought so. Stealing your own
notes huh?

IVAN
Stealing them back.

THE GOVERNOR
Ah, you know, most people would
just call the police if they knew
who'd stolen something.

IVAN

I don't have much faith in the police, sir.

THE GOVERNOR

Why not?

IVAN motions to the bruises on his face.

IVAN

They tend to assume things.

THE GOVERNOR

Ah. Well, Ivan, I don't know what you're guilty of. What I do know is that the reason you got caught tonight was chance. Your bloody bad luck. Detective told me your method was perfect.

Silence.

THE GOVERNOR

That was a compliment, Ivan.

IVAN

Then thank you.

Silence falls again. THE GOVERNOR is reading some of IVAN'S notes.

THE GOVERNOR

Interesting. First draft?

IVAN

Plot outline.

THE GOVERNOR

You interested in finishing it?

IVAN

("why not")

I've written thirty pages already.

THE GOVERNOR

That's what I like to hear! Motivation. When you want something, you go and you take it. World needs more young men like you.

IVAN

Your detective might disagree.

THE GOVERNOR

Now, Ivan. I'm going to offer you a choice. I need some breaking in done. Elections are coming up and my friends and I want to stay in office. But there's this man, you see. He's an old soldier. Still working part time for some obscure government agency. Anyway. He's gotten a hold of some certain information that could be very damaging to a very many people come november. I need him to lose that information. And I need it done quietly. You are young, skilled and pro-active. You do this you go free. Finish your book. Get drunk. Smoke. Whatever it is you teenagers do.

IVAN rolls his eyes. THE GOVERNOR smiles.

IVAN

Ah, you know, Sir, most people would just call the police if someone was blackmailing them.

THE GOVERNOR

I don't have much faith in the police, Ivan.

Pause.

THE GOVERNOR

Or, I can let

He motions toward the door.

THE GOVERNOR

(cont)

back in here, he can hit you a few more times, then transfer you to a cell until your arraignment.

IVAN

I could just keep writing in prison.

THE GOVERNOR

True, but then there's the whole "inmates can't profit while incarcerated" thing and by the time you get out in twenty years...

IVAN

One minor breaking and entering. First offence. One year at most.

THE GOVERNOR

Yeah, but not when a well known government official is good friends with the judge. Takes it up as a political cause. Gets on TV. Calls you a vigilante. Taking the law into your own hands, etc. Ivan, Robin Hood is dead. You know why? We stabbed him. You know why? Not huge fans of that.

Silence. The Governor's grin is sickening.

IVAN

What choice do I have?

THE GOVERNOR

You are a smart teenager.

THE GOVERNOR walks out the door.

IVAN sits there for a minute. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

Fade out.

7 EXT. THE GENERAL'S HOUSE- NIGHT

September 1993

A modest suburban house. The camera pans around and zooms in on a living room window as we enter

8 INT. THE GENERAL'S LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Everything is quiet. We pan around until we see a basement door. As we move in, the door opens and a shadow dressed in dark green (IVAN) slips in.

He moves past the camera to the right as the camera continues out a second window.

9 EXT. THE GENERAL'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Outside again, we pan away from the window and focus instead on an upper floor window. We zoom in and enter

10 INT. THE GENERAL'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

The bedroom is in disarray. The sounds of fitful sleep fill the room.

Papers are strewn across the floor.

We pan over and see THE GENERAL sleeping badly in his bed. There is a pillow over his face, but he is tossing and turning fitfully.

The door knob turns silently. IVAN enters. He moves noiselessly around the room to THE GENERAL'S desk. After silently searching it, he notices THE GENERAL'S coat. IVAN finds a small notebook in the inside pocket. He opens it and flips through it.

What he reads shocks him. He silently puts the notebook down and paces about the room. Finally, he realises he can't complete this mission and walks out.

He leaves the door open.

11 INT. GENERAL'S KITCHEN

As IVAN makes his way back to the basement door. He is suddenly attacked by THE DAUGHTER.

THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER is a teenager with short hair and military training. Like her father, she is a fully trained member of the military and specifically of the "attack first, ask questions later" mindset.

She gets IVAN in a headlock and they struggle around the kitchen for a few seconds before IVAN is able to drop to his knees and throw her over his head and onto the floor.

She rolls over and charges at him again. He counters her attack and throws her to the floor.

They continue to fight. IVAN pulls a knife on her.

Eventually, she disarms him and knocks him to the floor.

She pulls his hands behind his back, puts her knee on his wrists to hold him there.

THE DAUGHTER
(whispering in IVAN'S ear)
If you thought that hurt...

Close on IVAN'S face

A mixture of pain and foreboding. The same one he had at the beginning of his interrogation. He knows he did nothing wrong, but can't do anything and the worst is yet to come.

Fade out

12 INT. MILITARY BUNKER- DAY

October 1994

We are underground. Light streams in from a few windows placed along the ceiling. Shadowy figures in the background talk quietly and move about.

A man's hands enter the frame. They are clean and neat. His index finger bears a skull ring. This man is THE JAILER.

He is mid-conversation with a second man. The two are walking down the hallway. We do not hear what they are saying, but the second man is wearing a memorable set of purple gloves. THE PIT BOSS.

THE JAILER
We'll see if he qualifies.

The two men exit the frame as we fade out.

13 INT. MILITARY BUNKER- NIGHT

Sparse lighting. Different room. Further underground.

Close on THE JAILER'S hand. That same skull ring is still on his finger. In his hand is a gallon jug of dirty water. He is pouring it.

Muffled screams can be heard from off-screen.

After a few seconds, he stops.

A wide shot (long take) shows us the scene.

THE JAILER steps down from the step-stool he was standing on. Next to him is an inclined table. On top is a man with a rag over his face. The man is bound tightly to the table.

THE JAILER'S accent will slightly vary throughout this scene so knowing his origin is impossible.

THE JAILER
 Been almost a year now, comrade.
 What did you used to do on saturday
 nights?

THE JAILER pulls the rag off to reveal IVAN gagging and gasping for breath. He is still dressed in the dark green as before but now the clothes are raggedy and disgusting.

THE JAILER
 Time.

THE GUARD
 (off-screen)
 Eight seconds.

THE JAILER
 Ooh. So close, Ivan. You almost
 broke the record.

THE JAILER laughs. An unnatural laugh.

THE JAILER
 (in control)
 Now, Ivan. I will have to ask you
 again. Are you now or have you ever
 been a member of the communist
 party?

IVAN is still coughing.

THE JAILER
 Let's go again then.

He drops the rag back over IVAN'S face and stands over IVAN'S head while he pours the water. IVAN writhes and tries to escape. After 6 seconds THE JAILER stops and takes the rag off.

THE JAILER
 We are having fun tonight aren't
 we?

IVAN
 (crying)
 What do you want?

THE JAILER
 Honestly? Information.

IVAN

I've already told you..!

THE JAILER

I know, you broke into the general's house at the threat of some politician, caught by the daughter, boy that had to be embarrassing, you were born in august, you want to be a writer, you love Voltaire, and aren't a big fan of chocolate. So...yeah, I guess that is it.

IVAN doesn't answer for fear of being mocked and tortured more.

THE JAILER

You want a reason, Ivan? You really want one?

He leans in close and whispers.

THE JAILER

("it turns me on)

It fascinates me. I love watching people react. Tells me so much about them.

(stops whispering)

Also, it's fun. No one knows we're here. No rules. I can do anything I want.

As if to say "like this" He precedes to waterboard IVAN a third time. This one lasts for a long time. Finally, he stops and removes the rag.

THE JAILER

Now that I think about it, there is still quite a lot you haven't told me. Who was your first crush? What was she like? When did you first masturbate?

IVAN

Go to hell!

THE JAILER

Aw! Come on! Tell me. Pleeeeeease! I really want to know.

Silence.

THE JAILER

Come on! Tell me and I'll hold off on the water for a few minutes.

IVAN

I was twelve.

THE JAILER

Ooh! Early bloomer! I was too. Started at thirteen, but oh god. Once I started, I couldn't stop. Mommy even caught me one day in bed with a vacuum cleaner. Ahhhh. Best suck of my life. Then there were the pets. One day, I...

A door opens. A man in purple gloves pulls THE JAILER aside.

Whispers. IVAN tries to hear what is going on. Eventually, THE PIT BOSS leaves and THE JAILER comes back.

THE JAILER

(claps hands together)

Ha HA! Ivan. I have one more question for you! What do you have to live for?

IVAN

Wha?

THE JAILER

There's a certain experiment that you are just perfect for. A game. A deadly game. And who knows. If you play your cards right, you just might walk away from all this. What's it worth to you Ivan? Is 16 percent enough to risk your life on?

IVAN

I don't...

THE JAILER

16 percent, Ivan. You win, you walk away. You lose, well... You say no, and you and I really get to know one another. Up to you, Ivan. What do you say?

IVAN tries to comprehend what's happening. THE JAILER stands off in the corner whispering "please say no" to himself over and over.

IVAN
 (through clenched teeth)
 I'll do it.

THE JAILER signs.

THE JAILER
 Fine. Put the gun to your head and
 bite the bullet, Ivan. We just
 signed you up for a game of
 roulette.

Fade out

14 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

THEODOR takes the gun from ACHMET and looks at it for a second.

CHARLES
 What are you thinking?

THEODOR
 How I should hold it.

AUGUST
 Depends. Open or closed casket?

THEODOR
 Ok. Where are you putting it?

AUGUST holds out her hand and he slides the gun to her. She puts it against her temple.

AUGUST
 Closed casket.

CHARLES
 You're so certain of death?

AUGUST
 For a long time now.

AUGUST slides the gun back to THEODOR. He catches it.

AUGUST
 It's heavier than I expected.

ACHMET
 Me too.

STANISLAW

There's a lot more weight on it
than usual tonight.

IVAN

Yeah. A lot more.

THEODOR

It's the weight of your life.

Everyone looks at him.

THEODOR

What do you have that's worth dying
for? You wouldn't be here if that
weight wasn't pressing down on your
shoulders.

Silence.

THEODOR

Doesn't matter. Long as you can
lift it.

THEODOR lifts the gun off the table and cocks it again.

Fade out.

15 **THE STORY OF STANISLAW**

16 INT. THE CHURCH- MORNING

May 1994

The sanctuary. A congregation of Catholics are singing the
last few lines of "Take Up Thy Cross"

STANISLAW is standing in the front row. He is dressed in an
impeccable suit. Black with a matching tie and a blue shirt.
He is a man who has believed in God all his life, though is
now beginning to question his faith because of all the evils
he sees in the world.

A man's hand turns the page of a large bible. This man is
THE PRIEST. He is devout in his belief that God tests
everyone and only the righteous will be saved. From the
pulpit, he begins his sermon.

THE PRIEST

Be seated. I notice that the pews
in the back of the room are far

(MORE)

THE PRIEST

emptier this week. This, the second Sunday after Easter should be a time of new life. Jesus is risen! There should be dancing in the aisles. Instead I see empty rows. During that last hymn, I thought about why that was. Could it be the increased crime rate? The construction of the new prison down the road? The wars around the world? Now I look back and see that it is all of the above. We see horrible acts around the world and around our town and we wonder where God is. How he can allow such atrocities. He is where he has always been. A caring father, allowing us to make our own mistakes and to learn from them. But I remind you, as the Lord himself reminded Job. It is not the duty of the creation to question the creator. God has a plan for each of us. We have to trust that it will come to us in time. This is called faith...

Fade to

The congregation walking out of the sanctuary. STANISLAW is one of the last to leave. He is sitting in his pew reading the Bible. As he leaves the room, we see that it is The Book of Job that he has been perusing.

17

EXT. THE CHURCH- NIGHT

STANISLAW (in a blue suit) is walking home past the church. He looks over at the new prison that is being built and shakes his head. As he passes the building, he hears a banging from inside. STANISLAW stealthily moves around the church until he comes to an open door. He enters and finds THE INVADERS.

THE INVADERS are two teenagers. They wear jeans, and long sleeved shirts. Both are wearing ski masks.

THE INVADERS too are busy stealing from the office to notice STANISLAW. After a minute, he summons up his courage.

STANISLAW
What are you doing?

THE INVADERS stop what they're doing immediately. Both look at STANISLAW. For a second, no one moves.

One INVADER takes off through another door with the bag of stuff they've taken. The other jumps over the desk at STANISLAW.

STANISLAW tries to escape, but THE INVADER catches him and stabs him in the chest.

STANISLAW falls to the ground as the INVADER runs out to join his partner. Blood spreads across STANISLAW'S shirt as he and the scene blackout.

18 EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

July 1994

STANISLAW is sitting on a table exercising his arm. There is a sling next to him. He touches a nerve and he suddenly winces with the pain. A permanent memory of what's past.

He sits still for a moment. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

19 INT. THE CHURCH- EVENING

September 1994

STANISLAW (dressed in black pants with a blue shirt) walks down the aisle to the confessional. He stops, sits in the front pew and bows his head.

Elsewhere in the church, THE PRIEST is preparing to receive confession when he is pulled aside by someone wearing purple gloves.

STANISLAW puts down his bible, enters the confessional and sits down. We hear another person enter the other side.

STANISLAW
Forgive me father, for I have
sinned. It has been one week since
my last confession.

THE PRIEST
Stanislaw.

STANISLAW

I have completed the penance you set me last week father, but the same question still bothers my mind. You say God allows us to make our own mistakes and to learn from them, but Father, people have been killing each other for thousands of years and no one seems to be learning. I know that it is not my job to question the Lord, but I cannot help wondering if he hasn't given up on us.

THE PRIEST

You are doubting The Lord, my son?

STANISLAW

Not his existence, only his intentions.

THE PRIEST

Like Thomas, you are doubting. You see the horrors, and wonder "where can our protector be?" "How could he allow this to happen?" The answer is he doesn't. The first time God's children lapsed into evil, he sent the flood. The second time, he sent Jesus, who himself, asked the same question while on the cross. "Why have you forsaken me?" Today, the lord sends us. His disciples. His faithful disciples.

STANISLAW

You know, father that I have never wavered in my belief. I look not to challenge God, but I want to know if he loves me.

THE PRIEST

My son, four months ago, you were stabbed. The wound should have been fatal, but by some miracle, the knife missed all your major organs. Is that not proof enough?

STANISLAW

But Father, the only reason I was stabbed was because I chose a different route home than usual and by some **mis**fortune, happened to

(MORE)

STANISLAW
 pass the church at that time. How
 am I to know which chance God was
 controlling?

THE PRIEST
 Have you considered that perhaps it
 was both? God chose that night to
 test you so he created the
 situation where you would have to
 endure pain in your pursuit of him.
 Like Jesus and Job before him, you
 pulled through and are stronger for
 it.

STANISLAW
 Am I? Since that night, for the
 first time in my life, I have
 questioned my faith. I feel that if
 I passed God's test and he truly
 loves me, that I would know.

Silence

Outside the confessional, THE PIT BOSS places a bookmark on
 STANISLAW'S closed Bible.

THE PRIEST
 My son. I do not know if what
 happened to you was God's test.
 Your recovery certainly seemed to
 be speeded by some unknown force,
 but as you say, your injury was by
 chance as well. What I do know is
 that God loves only those who prove
 themselves. Perhaps this doubt in
 your mind is simply another
 obstacle to overcome, and you will
 do that by devoting yourself to him
 as you have always done.

STANISLAW
 Thank you, Father. Do you believe I
 will ever have the answer to this
 question?

THE PRIEST
 In time, Stanislaw. All questions
 will be answered once you are a
 true disciple. Give thanks to the
 Lord for He is good.

STANISLAW

For his mercy endures forever.

STANISLAW exits the confessional and begins for the door. He stops to pick up his Bible on the way and notices the bookmark. He picks it up.

It reads: James 1:3. Find The Answers You Seek. 684-0256

STANISLAW looks at the card a long while. The confessional looms in the background. He suddenly turns and looks up at the altar. It's as if Jesus on the cross is looking back at him. He knows what he must do.

STANISLAW exits the church, the camera pans down to an open bible. James 1:3 "Because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance"

20

INT. ROULETTE ROOM

THEODOR is still looking at the gun.

AUGUST

We don't have all night.

THEODOR

(winking)

You got the rest of your life
darling.

Holding her gaze, he puts the gun to his head the same way she did and fires.

CLICK

THEODOR

My chances just got worse.

He passes the gun to IVAN. IVAN cocks the gun quickly, downs what's left of his drink and puts the gun to his chin. He seems calm, but as his finger tightens on the trigger, there are tears in his eyes.

CLICK

IVAN exhales and passes the gun to STANISLAW. STANISLAW places it on the table in front of him and bows his head. After a few seconds, he crosses himself, picks up the gun, places it to his heart and fires.

CLICK

STANISLAW drops the gun and it lands on the table. CHARLES picks it up and cocks it. He puts the barrel against his head and pauses. He is relishing the feel of metal against his skin. Trying to understand. He takes a deep breath and fires.

CLICK

ACHMET looks surprised. CHARLES sighs and puts the gun down. He tries to pass the gun, but his hand is shaking too much.

AUGUST picks up the gun. It is heavy in her thin hands. She shivers as she pulls the hammer back. She clearly doesn't want to put the gun to her head, but after a moment (of considering the alternative) she does. Her finger tightens. She bites her lip and fires.

CLICK

AUGUST slowly puts the gun down. ACHMET looks beyond terrified.

THEODOR takes the gun from AUGUST, cocks it and hands it to ACHMET

THEODOR
Sorry, friend.

ACHMET
(in shock)
This wasn't supposed to happen

THEODOR
(almost empathising)
Any time before now would've been a
better time for that thought.

THEODOR places the gun in ACHMET'S hand.

THEODOR
You'll see four of us soon.

ACHMET takes a deep breath and resigns himself to his fate. He puts the barrel in his mouth, closes his eyes and fires.

CLICK

Silence.

ACHMET takes the gun and opens the chamber. The bullet is there. It misfired.

IVAN
(realising what this means)
A misfire?

ACHMET nods.

AUGUST
(to THEODOR)
Looks like your odds haven't
changed.

THEODOR (annoyed) takes the gun from ACHMET. He removes the bullet and examines it. After a few seconds, he throws it on the floor, takes a new bullet from the other end of the box and loads it. He's about to spin the chamber when ACHMET stops him.

ACHMET
I'm still the dealer.

He takes the gun and spins the barrel. After cocking it, he hands it to THEODOR.

THEODOR
Round 2.

He puts the gun to his head and without a second thought, pulls the trigger.

CLICK

Smiling, THEODOR puts the gun on the table and slides it over to IVAN.

THEODOR
You're up, partner.

IVAN is reminded of the reason he's here and the horror of his situation. He takes a deep breath and puts the barrel under his chin. Looking down at the table, he blinks tears out of his eyes as he fires.

BANG

IVAN'S head snaps backward. The gun drops violently onto the table. His head bounces off the back of the chair and he slumps forward.

Silence.

AUGUST is startled. CHARLES is observant. THEODOR is surprised. ACHMET is stunned (he's never seen a man die for real before). STANISLAW is praying.

THEODOR reaches over to slide the gun to STANISLAW.

THEODOR

Load it.

STANISLAW ignores him and keeps praying. THEODOR takes a bullet and puts it in the chamber. He leaves the spent shell casing in. He doesn't spin it, but gets up and slams it on the table in front of STANISLAW. The vibration of the table causes IVAN'S body to fall from his chair. This silences everyone.

STANISLAW

(finishing last rites)

Rest in peace, Amen.

THEODOR goes back to his seat. STANISLAW and ACHMET look around. Both of them want to end this, but after a second, realise that they need to be there.

STANISLAW picks up the gun, and brings it down into his lap.

ACHMET

Above the table.

THEODOR

(watching STANISLAW)

Don't worry, man. Let him spin it
how he likes.

ACHMET becomes fearful. STANISLAW closes his eyes. With the gun under the table, he is making sure no one can see it. We hear the barrel spin and lock into place.

STANISLAW places it back on the table and CHARLES reaches for it.

Fade out

21 **THE STORY OF ACHMET**

22 INT. BACKSTAGE

December 1990

A cluttered backstage. Costumes and props lie everywhere. The debris of a show well-performed. Cheers and applause from an unseen crowd fill the room as ACHMET and THE CONJURER charge backstage. Both are on a spectacular high. Both are wearing masks, though ACHMET soon takes his off.

THE CONJURER

Ha Ha! Whoa! How fantastic was that?

ACHMET

I've never seen a reaction like it.

THE CONJURER

I should catch fire every night.

ACHMET

Yeah. Do I get your job when that happens?

THE CONJURER

Tired of just shifting props?

ACHMET shrugs and the two magicians grin.

THE CONJURER

I'm serious though, we should do more of this stuff. Maybe a bullet catch, or a water tank. You know?

ACHMET

I don't know man, I'm still getting used to the fire thing. Let's leave the...leave the cheesy prop tricks to amateurs. There's no skill in it.

THE CONJURER

There's danger though. Audiences love the danger.

THE CONJURER'S ASSISTANT pokes her head backstage.

THE ASSISTANT

Achmet, the crowd's heading out if you want to go for it.

ACHMET

Absolutely.

ACHMET quickly strips off his costume and throws on a very casual and wrinkled suit.

ACHMET

Time to garnish my wages.

THE CONJURER

Why do you do this?

ACHMET
Practice makes perfect.

He heads for the door.

THE CONJURER
You know, some day you're gonna
have to stop stealing from the
audience.

ACHMET
When my fingers lose their magic.

ACHMET ducks out the stage door. THE CONJURER looks over at
a semi-automatic pistol that sits on a prop shelf. He sighs.

23 INT. BACKSTAGE

January 1991

ACHMET enters wearing a different suit. He's carrying a
small wad of cash and counting it.

THE CONJURER
How much tonight?

ACHMET looks over. THE CONJURER, in a different costume, is
sitting against the wall. The semi-automatic pistol is in
his hand.

ACHMET
Oh, about the usual. Half of what
you made tonight.

He notices THE CONJURER'S demeanor.

ACHMET
What's wrong?

THE CONJURER
You really couldn't drop it?

ACHMET
Huh?

THE CONJURER
The blade! You couldn't drop the
blade?

ACHMET
It was too dangerous.

THE CONJURER

Too dangerous!? Achmet, how the hell is that trick dangerous?

ACHMET

That blade is razor sharp.

THE CONJURER

And my head was nowhere near it!

ACHMET

Yes, but if something went wrong...

THE CONJURER

Goddammit Achmet! That is the point! Take a risk! The more danerous the trick looks, the better the illusion!

ACHMET

No. The illusion comes from the skill of the trick. Not the spectacle of it.

THE CONJURER

We're magicians, Achmet. Spectacle is what we have! You think the audience is gonna...

ACHMET

Will you take off the damn mask!?

THE CONJURER

No! I won't! You still don't get it. Magic is not a job. Magic is not just something you do on the weekends! Magic is a constant performance and a real magician lives that performance!

ACHMET

So live it! Perform it! Just don't die doing it!

THE CONJURER suddenly levels the gun at ACHMET.

ACHMET

What? You're gonna shoot me?

THE CONJURER

(quickly tinkering)

Yeah catch.

He pulls the trigger. Click.

THE CONJURER
See. Nothing. What the hell's so
dangerous about that?

THE CONJURER throws his gundown. ACHMET stands stunned.

THE CONJURER
I'll get an assistant who wants the
audience to cheer, rather than look
for their wallets.

As he leaves. He turns to ACHMET.

THE CONJURER
And by the way, here's your wallet
back.

THE CONJURER throws ACHMET'S wallet to the floor and storms
off. ACHMET sinks to the floor and sobs.

24 INT. SMALL STAGE

December 1993

ACHMET stands on the stage. Small tables stand on either
side of him. ACHMET is a magician. Performing since a young
age he is a master of sleight of hand and misdirection. His
tricks, however, have begun to seem old. In an age of
daring, death-defying magicians, ACHMET is finding his
audiences keep getting smaller.

The room is large, but it is not a theatre. The wooden stage
seems out of place and the audience (half filled) sits on
folding chairs.

ACHMET is holding a set of three large rings. He flourishes
them as he shows the audience that they are real.

ACHMET
Now, ladies and gentlemen. Though
these rings might seem sinister

Chuckles from the audience.

ACHMET
(cont)
There is nothing to fear. This
illusion...

Cut to

25 INT. MASSIVE STAGE

Same night

ACHMET'S main competition, THE CONJURER is performing to a packed auditorium. Lights stream down on him from above and his voice booms through the theatre. He wears a gold Venetian bird mask.

THE CONJURER
(finishing his sentence)
Has never been done before!

The crowd cheers. THE CONJURER takes a semi-automatic handgun from his gorgeous assistant and shows it to the audience.

More cheering.

THE CONJURER
Since time began, Conjurers have faced danger. From Merlin and his wizards. Men toying with magic that could easily destroy them. To the Alchemists of legend whose creations led them to persecution. Yet still they practised because of their love of wonder. The essence of magic...

Intercut the rest of the scene as THE CONJURER and ACHMET finish each other's conversations.

ACHMET
is illusion. Nothing dangerous, nothing evil. Just simple illusion. And misdirection. You'll see that as I've been talking to you here, the rings have decided to hook themselves together.

He holds up the rings to show he's telling the truth. The small audience applauds. No cheering.

ACHMET
Now, for my next trick, I'll need a volunteer from the audience.

As ACHMET selects his volunteer and pulls a deck of cards from his table. He explains the nature of card tricks.

ACHMET

A deck of cards is an incredible thing. First created in China in the year six hundred seven, playing cards have been used by magicians for almost as long to astound audiences. The relationship between the magician and his volunteer, formed and broken in an instant is magic at it's purest form. In other words...

THE CONJURER

Danger! Magic at it's most basic is danger. What I can promise you is that all my challenges are almost 50% safe. Please.

THE CONJURER'S assistant opens a box of bullets, slides the tray of bullets out and walks into the audience with them.

THE CONJURER

Bullets. The modern design was created in 1823 by a British army captain. As you can see, tonight, we've modified them.

Close up on the bullets reveals half of them are black, half red. Each has a white tip with a symbol on it in either red or black.

THE CONJURER

52 Bullets. 52 unique markings. Like a deck of playing cards. Now, I need a volunteer to select one as tonight we present to you: The World's Most Dangerous Card Trick.

The applause deafens the room as THE CONJURER removes his cloak. The shifting of the fabric fades to ACHMET spreading his deck of cards out before his volunteer.

ACHMET

Pick a card any card.

THE CONJURER

Be sure not to show me what it is. Have you picked it?

ACHMET

Good. Look at it, show it to your friends, but make sure

THE CONJURER
Neither I, nor my beautiful
assistant see what it is.

A man selects a bullet from the box. The six of spades.

A woman draws a card from the deck. The six of spades.

ACHMET
Remember it? Good, now slip it back
in the deck.

THE CONJURER ejects the magazine on the gun he's holding and
passes it to his assistant who hands it to the volunteer.

THE CONJURER
Load the bullet into the magazine.

ACHMET
(handing the deck to an
audience member)
Would you shuffle this for me
please?

The audience member proceeds to shuffle.

THE CONJURER hands the gun to his assistant

THE CONJURER
Load the gun, please.

Without looking, the assistant slides the clip into the gun
and cocks it.

ACHMET takes the deck back. He cuts it (three way cut) then
holds it up to the light.

ACHMET
In this deck

THE CONJURER
Is your bullet. Is that correct?

ACHMET'S volunteer nods.

THE CONJURER
Excellent. Now, before I do this,
ladies and gentlemen: I would tell
you not to be alarmed, but as I
have never tried this before, you
may have good reason.

ACHMET
Are you ready?

THE CONJURER
Cover your ears.

Silence.

THE CONJURER
Fire!

ACHMET throws the deck down the aisle. Cards fly everywhere.

THE CONJURER'S assistant fires the gun. The sound of the shot silences and slows down the film.

Cards slowly fall. The entire audience watches.

THE CONJURER moves his hands quickly but is knocked off his feet by the force of the bullet. He doesn't move for a second.

Then his hand launches up. There is blood in his palm, but he is holding a bullet. The Six of Spades.

In ACHMET'S hand, he is holding one last card. He flips it up. The Six of Spades.

ACHMET
Is this your card?

THE CONJURER
Is this your card?

Both audiences applaud. THE CONJURER'S cheers and gives a standing ovation.

ACHMET'S begins to filter out. He begins to pack up his tricks.

THE CONJURER continues to bow. Finally, with a wave of his coat, he vanishes from the stage.

ACHMET walks off the stage.

THE CONJURER'S applause finally dies down.

26

INT. SMALL STAGE

February 1994

ACHMET is performing for a much smaller crowd. He's flustered. For the first time in his life the audience has "boo"ed

He throws his cards into the air.

ACHMET
Is this your card?

THE AUDIENCE
No!

ACHMET freezes.

ACHMET
Take anther look.

THE AUDIENCE
It's not the card, you idiot. You
screwed up!

ACHMET stands stunned. Just like when THE CONJURER "shot" him.

Finally, he plasters on a fake smile.

ACHMET
Well, in that case, Ladies and
Gentlemen, you wouldn't be
interested in...

THE AUDIENCE
Do something interesting!

THE AUDIENCE continues to shout. "Bury yourself alive"
"Catch a bullet" "Light yourself on fire" "Yeah, shoot
yourself"

ACHMET
(losing control)
Ladies and Gentlemen, if you quiet
down, I have a trick that's...

THE AUDIENCE
We wanna see real magic!

ACHMET
This is real magic!

THE AUDIENCE
This is boring! Get off the stage!

THE AUDIENCE'S voice sudenly morphs into THE CONJURER'S

THE CONJURER
Take a risk!

ACHMET closes his eyes and tries to drown out the crowd for a moment. Something hits him on the side of the face. The cheering of the crowd comes back louder than ever.

ACHMET

Get out! All of you! Go! Get the hell out of my theatre.

THE AUDIENCE cannot leave quickly enough.

ACHMET drops and sits on the edge of the stage. He is fighting back tears.

ACHMET

I can't do this anymore. I can't take it. I can't...

ACHMET stays there for a minute. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

Fade out.

27

EXT. ACHMET'S THEATRE

Same night.

As the last car leaves the parking lot, the camera pans over to show that ACHMET'S theatre is part of a shopping centre and many of the other buildings are for rent. A series of desperation and desperation. We zoom in on one of the "For Rent" signs. Beside it, a familiar pair of purple gloves enter the frame and tape a flyer advertising a test of skill for those who want a new lease on life.

The wind blows through the emptying parking lot. Outside the stage door, ACHMET exits the building. He is shivering.

One of the flyers blows from the window and out of the frame.

The wind surrounds ACHMET as scraps of paper fly past him. One brightly coloured one catches his attention. He grabs it.

It is a flyer inviting him to the game. It shows a picture of a revolver and offers him a new outlook and the ultimate test of bravery.

Cut to

28 INT. MASSIVE STAGE

Flashback

THE CONJURER

I would tell you not to be alarmed,
but as I have never tried this
before, you may have good reason.

Flash

THE CONJURER

All my challenges are almost 50%
safe.

29 EXT. ACHMET'S THEATRE

ACHMET nods to himself, crumples up the flyer and walks away
with new confidence.

Fade out.

30 INT. ACHMET'S WORKSHOP

A tv remote presses play.

Suddenly an old tv's static screen comes to life. We see a
vhs of one of THE CONJURER'S shows playing on the screen.

The camera pans down to show a revolver sitting on a table.
ACHMET'S hand enters the frame and picks up the gun.

ACHMET (dressed in jeans and a purple shirt) loads a bullet
into the gun and spins the barrel. He aims at a target on
the wall and pulls the trigger.

Click

Again

Click

Again

BANG

He ejects the shell casing and loads another one. He has
more work to do.

THE CONJURER

(with a noose around his neck
on tv)

Sorry, I'm late. It took me a while
to get down from my last show.

The audience laughs

ACHMET loads a bullet and spins the barrel without closing
the gun. He watches to see where the bullet will end up.

ACHMET is firing again.

Click

BANG

THE CONJURER

(on tv)

Magic is risk.

ACHMET

How does he do it?

ACHMET is sitting in front of the TV spinning the empty
cylinder.

ACHMET loads a bullet and spins the chamber loads and fires
without looking. Click

ACHMET

Dammit!

He throws the gun down. The audience on TV roars with
laughter.

ACHMET storms off.

THE CONJURER is tied up and handcuffed and pushed into a
pool of water.

ACHMET

(spinning the cylinder)

Just you wait.

THE CONJURER comes out of the pool with handcuffs in his
hands. Applause.

ACHMET spins the chamber and the bullet ends up at the top.

THE CONJURER

(over the applause)

Well that didn't take long did it?

Laughter.

ACHMET
No. No it did not.

He snaps the gun closed, cocks it and fires.

There is a smoking hole in the target. Bullseye.

ACHMET practices three more times. Each time, the bullet ends up at the top of the cylinder.

He spins it and closes the cylinder without looking.

ACHMET
Four!

He fires four times. On the fourth shot, the gun goes off. ACHMET smiles.

THE CONJURER catches a bullet in his teeth.

ACHMET
Six!

Five clicks. Bang

ACHMET
Three!

Two clicks. Bang

ACHMET
One!

Bang.

ACHMET spins the gun around his finger and catches it flawlessly.

THE CONJURER
I am the most dangerous magician alive.

ACHMET
Ha! Not any more.

THE CONJURER
My illusions are 50% safe.

ACHMET
50%? Try 0%. Never tested. Never tried. Let's see you pull this off.

He loads a bullet and with his eyes closed, he spins the chamber.

ACHMET

Two!

Click. Bang.

ACHMET

Thank you and good night

ACHMET walks out of his workshop, leaving the gun behind.

THE CONJURER

(on tv)

and, hey! If I die, at least it'll
be entertaining, right?

The applause and the scene fade out.

31 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES picks up the gun. He balances it in his hands. To everyone in the room, the simple device now seems much heavier. The weight of one death weighs heavy on their shoulders.

CHARLES

Round 2.

THEODOR

(pointed at AUGUST)

We haven't got all night.

AUGUST ignores him. CHARLES nods. He puts the gun to his head. Feels the metal against his skin, and fires.

CLICK

CHARLES carefully places the gun on the table and passes it over to AUGUST. He has a look on his face of mixed emotions. As if he can't decide to be happy or sad about the outcome.

AUGUST picks up the gun. After a moment, she quickly brings the gun to her head and fires.

CLICK

In her relief, her hand twitches dropping the gun suddenly onto the table.

ACHMET is silently counting to himself.

AUGUST
Your turn.

ACHMET finishes counting. Satisfied. With renewed confidence, he spins the gun around his finger and holds it to his head, upside down.

He winks at THEODOR and without a second thought, pulls the trigger.

BANG.

ACHMET'S body is thrown sideways into THEODOR who reflexively pushes ACHMET off onto the floor. The gun has dropped onto the floor. AUGUST picks it up.

AUGUST
(to THEODOR)
How are your odds now?

CHARLES
Still one in six.

THEODOR
Doesn't matter. It's not like I'm leaving.

AUGUST
I expect not.

AUGUST slides the gun across to THEODOR. He loads a new bullet. Very quickly and determinedly, THEODOR spins the cylinder and snaps it into place.

He basically throws the gun down the table to STANISLAW.

THEODOR
Place your bets.

32 **THE STORY OF AUGUST**

33 EXT. ALLEY BEHIND A SCHOOL

June 1987

A driver's license fills the screen. On it is a picture of the 18 year-old AUGUST. This shot is the pov of THE CLIENT.

THE CLIENT
Eighteen, huh?

AUGUST

Yes sir.

THE CLIENT

And you've been doing this...?

AUGUST

(hidden by the license)

Two years. Saving up money.

THE CLIENT lowers the license to reveal AUGUST. She is standing against the wall (shorter than the camera) and is dressed in a white blouse with a small grey tie and grey wool mini skirt. Her blouse is almost entirely unbuttoned. Her hair is in pony tails. She looks like a 12 year old.

THE CLIENT

Wanna buy yourself a car right?
Drive to hollywood?

AUGUST

(giggling)

No. I wanna start my own business.

THE CLIENT

Really? What kind of business?

AUGUST

(reaching down on THE CLIENT)

Take off your pants.

THE CLIENT

Oh, ho ho. Yes, **Madam**.

AUGUST unbuttons THE CLIENT'S pants.

THE CLIENT

Well, somebody's ambitious.

AUGUST

Baby, more than one of us has dreams of "bigger" things. Now, how do you want it?

THE CLIENT

Whatever you're comfortable with sweetie. **You're** not new to this.

AUGUST pulls a condom from her pocket.

AUGUST

Ready when you are.

THE CLIENT takes the condom, opens the wrapper and puts the condom on. He backs AUGUST into the wall and she gasps as he drops the condom wrapper. The camera follows its descent where it lands on the ground.

Moaning is heard off-screen and time is shown passing as the condom wrapper is caught by the wind and blown off-screen.

Camera pans up as THE CLIENT steps away from AUGUST. Both are breathing heavily.

THE CLIENT
I'd forgotten what that felt like.

AUGUST
Your wife has a headache?

THE CLIENT
No. Something's been up with her lately. I don't understand it. Woman stuff, I'm sure.

AUGUST
(running a hand down his shoulder)
Why don't you take one more, just to keep you going for a while.

THE CLIENT
Could we do it...um...without a condom?

AUGUST
Sorry, dear. I'm not ready for that yet.

THE CLIENT
It's just not the same with it on. I'll pay you double. No, tell you what: how much do you need to open your own place?

Before AUGUST can answer

THE CLIENT
Never mind, whatever it is, I'll pay it. If you do this for me.

AUGUST turns away and takes a long time to think about it. She isn't comfortable with the idea, but the thought of having her years of work be finally complete is too tempting.

AUGUST
 (slowly)
 Ok. But you have to pay now.

He pulls his wallet out, removes many bills from it and hands them to her. She takes them and tucks them into her pocket.

THE CLIENT
 Thank you so much. You'll never know how much this means to me.

AUGUST tries to rationalise what she's just accepted.

THE CLIENT
 Turn around please.

AUGUST turns her back on him and he suddenly pins her against the wall from behind. Both of them gasp and sigh as the waves of unblocked feeling overtake them.

The wind blows and the camera follows it up to the night sky.

34 INT. AUGUST'S BATHROOM

August 1987

AUGUST is sitting on top of the toilet. The seat is down, she is fully clothed and her knees are drawn up to her chest. She has been crying. She is wearing a black T shirt and grey sweat pants.

The voices of THE FATHER, THE MOTHER, & THE BROTHER can be heard arguing in the room on the other side of the wall.

THE BROTHER
 Irresponsible!?

THE FATHER
 Well, what would you call it?

THE BROTHER
 Criminal? Evil? Appalling? Take your pick, Dad.

THE FATHER
 I won't have you talk about your sister that way!

THE BROTHER

Someone has to. Look at the paper.
H.I.V. Positive. Know what that
means?

THE MOTHER

(trying to stop a flood)
Son...

THE BROTHER

(ignoring her)
August. has. AIDS.

THE FATHER

We were all there. We all know.

THE BROTHER

Then why am I the only one yelling?

THE FATHER

Dammit, we're all sickened by this.

THE BROTHER

Ha!

THE FATHER

What do you think will happen when
people find out that our girl is...

THE BROTHER

Is what? Say it dad.

THE FATHER

(stuttering-hyperventilating)
A hooker! Dammit. My daughter is a
hooker!

THE BROTHER

Good. Now get used to saying it.

THE FATHER

Why?

THE MOTHER

Because we'll be saying it to
everyone. And we'll have to explain
why we allowed her to live under
our roof. What we did wrong. What
will they think of us? What kind of
parents will they say we are?

Silence.

THE FATHER

What can we do?

THE BROTHER

Disown her!

THE MOTHER

Throw her out.

Silence.

THE FATHER

(controlling himself)

How can you say that?

THE MOTHER

What else can we do? It's bad enough that it happened under our roof, but what will become of us if word gets out that we allowed it to continue? Letting it happen is just as bad as if we were doing it ourselves.

THE BROTHER

Look here, dad. Your family pictures. Mother, Father, Son, Daughter. This is who we were. This is who we should be.

Sounds of a picture tearing. THE FATHER gasps.

THE BROTHER

(yelling to make sure his sister hears him)

But, thanks to August, we can't ever have this again.

AUGUST begins to cry again.

THE BROTHER

So we get rid of her and keep what's left of our dignity.

He throws the picture at his father and starts pacing.

THE MOTHER

She's eighteen. She's old enough to live on her own. It's not like we're killing her.

THE FATHER

Aren't we?

THE MOTHER
 No. She killed herself. Her choices
 are to blame.

THE FATHER
 (after a second)
 You're right. She did it to
 herself.

THE BROTHER
 ("now he gets it")
 Finally!

THE FATHER
 (convincing himself)
 As long as she stays here, she's
 just a liability. Our medical
 insurance will cost more and we'd
 be forced to waste money caring for
 her.

THE BROTHER
 Yes!

THE FATHER
 It's decided then.

THE MOTHER
 Should we tell her now?

THE FATHER
 No, let's wait till the morning.
 Tell her she has to be packed and
 ready by tomorrow night.

AUGUST, still sobbing, runs from the bathroom and we hear a
 door slam off-screen.

Fade to

35 EXT. DOWNTOWN SIDEWALK

It is a few days later and a tired and starving AUGUST
 (wearing black jeans, a grey t-shirt and a black sweater) is
 walking along the road. She is carrying a duffel bag over
 her shoulder and it seems to get heavier with every step.

She walks for a long time, then looks over at an abandoned
 building. It used to be a house, but has since fallen victim
 to the evils of the world. She can relate. She notices a for
 sale sign with a number on it.

AUGUST reaches into her jacket pocket and pulls out an envelope labelled "My Future". It is thick with money and as she considers her situation, a thought comes to her.

She can still accomplish her dreams.

36

INT. THE SUMMER HOUSE

July 1988

AUGUST is now a madam in her own brothel. She has been open for only a month, but business has been good. She is adamant about safety and treats her girls like the family she and most of them never had.

It's almost opening time.

AUGUST walks down a hallway knocking on the doors that lead to the bedrooms beyond.

AUGUST

Girls and boys, we open in five minutes and tonight's guest book is full.

Cheers can be heard from inside the rooms.

AUGUST

Everybody looking clean and pretty tonight?

THE PROSTITUTES

(in unison)

Yes, ma'am

AUGUST

Everybody have the accessories they need?

THE PROSTITUTES

Yes, ma'am

AUGUST

Quiet!

Complete silence falls

AUGUST

Is everybody protected?

THE PROSTITUTES

Yes, August.

AUGUST

Ok.

Pause. AUGUST reflects back to that night outside the school and curses herself once more for the decision she made. She does this every night when she asks that question.

AUGUST

We're opening up. Everybody get ready to shake these beds.

AUGUST walks out of frame past the camera and the scene fades out as doors begin to open.

37

INT. AUGUST'S BEDROOM

December 1994

AUGUST is sitting on her bed while THE PHYSICIAN paces around the room. She wears a grey blouse and black skirt. She is buttoning her blouse up after having her breathing checked.

AUGUST'S disease has progressed and her nervous system has faded greatly. She is thin and pale and shivering. She doesn't have much time.

AUGUST

(impatient)

Doctor, whatever it is just tell me.

THE PHYSICIAN

It's hard to say August. The tests were inconclusive.

AUGUST

Doc, you've been taking samples out of me for a month now. You must know something.

THE PHYSICIAN sighs.

THE PHYSICIAN

From what I've seen, you appear to have a severe case of cryptococcal meningitis.

AUGUST doesn't move.

AUGUST

Well, that explains it.

THE PHYSICIAN

It's an infection of your brain. There's a fungus that...it doesn't matter. The point is it matches all your symptoms. Fever, headaches, vomiting, confusion...it's all there.

AUGUST

(showing slight fear)

So, what's next.

THE PHYSICIAN

Seizures, fainting, memory loss. If left untreated, it can be lethal.

AUGUST

(suspecting)

You don't want to treat it, do you?

THE PHYSICIAN

The drug regime would ordinarily take two weeks, but in your condition...

AUGUST

(finishing the thought)

it'd be a waste of good medication.

Silence.

THE PHYSICIAN

I can give you something to suppress the symptoms.

AUGUST

(asking a different question)

How much will you prescribe me?

THE PHYSICIAN

(answering the different question)

Three months.

AUGUST nods. THE PHYSICIAN scribbles on a notepad and hands it to her.

THE PHYSICIAN

I'll see you when this needs refilling.

AUGUST

Too bad I won't be there to pick it
up.

THE PHYSICIAN exits and AUGUST lies back on her bed. Is she
732-298-4326defeated, scared or resigned?

Fade to:

38 INT. AUGUST'S BEDROOM

AUGUST is sitting in bed reading a book when a seizure
suddenly overtakes her. She falls off the bed and onto the
floor as she tries to control her spasms.

After what doctors would call a "mild attack", AUGUST gets
up panting and sweating.

She can't take this anymore. She runs to her dresser and
grabs a bottle of pills. She pours a large amount into her
hand and is about to take them before realising what she is
about to do.

She stops. The pills weigh heavy in her hand.

Silence.

AUGUST breaks. She puts the rest of the pills back in the
bottle and swallows 2 whole.

She stumbles back to her bed, collapses onto it and cries
until the sleeping pills take hold and the scene fades out.

39 INT. SUMMER HOUSE

5pm

AUGUST walks through the front door carrying the mail.

She walks to the end of the hallway and sorts through the
mail.

One letter catches her attention. From a pharmaceutical
company. Addressed to her. She opens it.

We flash betwixt close ups on her face and lines in the
letter.

"Experimental New Treatment"

"Selected to take part in"

"84% chance of success in phase 1"

"Patients successful in phase 1 move onto phase 2"

"Guaranteed to give you a new perspective on your condition"

The final flash sends us to:

40 INT. DARK OFFICE

An envelope addressed to AUGUST and bearing the letterhead "Candid Pharmaceuticals" is lying ready to be mailed.

We pan across the desk and see a typed letterhead being signed and placed in the envelope.

The signer wears purple gloves.

41 INT. SUMMER HOUSE

9pm

AUGUST is still sitting at the end of the hallway. She is stunned and has been locked in indecision for hours. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

As the camera pulls back, she looks down the hallway. We see girls in lingerie and men in suits entering and leaving rooms along the hall.

As AUGUST looks at them, the self-sustaining world she's created, she knows what her decision is.

The girls have all exited the hallway and once again, AUGUST is alone. She stands up, takes the letter, and walks off screen.

Fade out.

42 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES screams. He begins having a seizure. STANISLAW jumps up and tries to restrain him.

STANISLAW
(to theodor)
For God Sakes, help me hold him.

THEODOR gets up, runs over and gets CHARLES in a full nelson. AUGUST watches as the two men keep CHARLES still while the seizure passes.

CHARLES fumbles in his pocket and pulls out some medicine. He swallows 2 pills (AUGUST watches intently) and takes several deep breaths.

CHARLES
Thank you.

STANISLAW
Of course.

AUGUST
What was that?

CHARLES
Fahr's Syndrome. It gets worse every time.

THEODOR
enh, don't worry. It'll all be over soon.

CHARLES looks at him.

THEODOR and STANISLAW return to their seats.

THEODOR
Game on?

No one wants to answer him.

STANISLAW picks up the revolver. It is heavier in his hands. The instrument of 2 deaths. He says a quick silent prayer and cocks the hammer.

STANISLAW puts the barrel against his chest. He takes a deep breath and pulls the trigger.

CLICK

STANISLAW places the gun back on the table before bowing his head again and giving thanks.

AUGUST
Who are you praying to?

CHARLES picks up the gun and cocks it.

STANISLAW
It's not important, who. It's for what.

AUGUST

What then?

STANISLAW looks at the two bodies on the floor. He is praying for them.

STANISLAW

You must find that out for yourself.

THEODOR

Well, give it a few more rounds.

CHARLES, ignoring the conversation, puts the gun to his head. He is lost in his own world. He squeezes.

CLICK

Again, CHARLES makes no indication that this was the outcome he wanted. He simply accepts what happened and passes the gun to AUGUST.

AUGUST has been shivering. Her condition is taking hold and she is already living on borrowed time. She tries to cock the gun, but her twitching hands don't allow it.

THEODOR reaches across the table and picks up the gun.

THEODOR

Need a hand?

He cocks the hammer back and hands her the weapon. AUGUST looks at him with a mixture of surprise, anger at the condescension, and gratitude. She looks at the gun.

AUGUST rubs her temple, wondering what a bullet will feel like. After a long moment, she can't take the waiting any longer. She puts the barrel to her temple, closes her eyes and fires.

CLICK.

A wave of shock washes over her. She feels a calm she hasn't felt in years. She reaches out and hands the gun to THEODOR.

THEODOR, surprised by her reaction, cocks the gun without looking at it.

THEODOR

Let's see if I make it to round four.

He puts the gun to his head and fires.

CLICK.

CHARLES and STANISLAW immediately know what this means. One of the two of them will die. Both close their eyes. STANISLAW is praying, CHARLES is searching for something within himself.

THEODOR walks over.

THEODOR
 (to STANISLAW)
 Thinking about them? The last words
 of Christ? "Why Have You Forsaken
 Me"

THEODOR cocks the gun and puts it in STANISLAW'S hand.

AUGUST
 (sincere/mocking)
 Godspeed.

STANISLAW, who stopped praying when THEODOR placed the gun in his hand, crosses himself and places the barrel against his heart.

THEODOR and AUGUST look relaxed. CHARLES looks worried, but he is ready to accept the outcome.

STANISLAW looks around the table. None deserve to live more than he does. He fires.

BANG

The force of the bullet propels STANISLAW'S torso back and his head forward. Like he'd just been punched in the stomach. He collapses onto the table with the gun underneath him.

Silence for a moment. AUGUST shuts her eyes. Is she praying for his soul?

THEODOR gets up and pushes STANISLAW to the floor as he reaches for the gun. At the same time, CHARLES pulls the box of bullets toward him and pulls one out. AUGUST goes to the bar for a drink.

AUGUST
 What are our chances now?

THEODOR
 33% each. Two clicks around if
 we're lucky.

CHARLES
You rely on luck?

THEODOR
I rely on whatever seems most
viable. Load it.

THEODOR slides the gun across the table. CHARLES loads the bullet, spins the chamber and closes the gun.

He places it on the table in front of AUGUST.

AUGUST picks it up and, though it's a struggle, cocks the gun herself.

43 **THE STORY OF THEODOR**

44 INT. PANGLOSS CASINO HOTEL

November 1990

It is the final round of the final night of a poker championship tournament. The championship. At the table, surrounded by fans are 2 men. THEODOR and THE OPPONENT. THEODOR is clearly winning the game. His chips outnumber THE OPPONENT'S but this game is by no means over. THEODOR is wearing a fully black suit (including shirt and tie)

The table shows three cards. A five of spades. A four of hearts. A two of spades.

THE DEALER deals the turn card. A nine of diamonds. There is no reaction on either face.

THE OPPONENT
You can drop out now.

THEODOR
With half your chips in the pot?

THE OPPONENT
Then what would you like to do?

Silence.

THE OPPONENT
I know what you're going for. The straight draw. You're not going to get it. Bite your lip and let's move on.

THEODOR bites his lip.

THEODOR

Sure, I'm not going to get what I'm drawing for. But that hasn't worried me all night. Worries you though. You've been clenching your fists under the table since you lost the first hand. Don't tell me you need the money. I don't care. But I need the win. And no amount of money you could ever give me would equal that.

Silence

THEODOR

What? Haven't you noticed me gritting my teeth every time someone turned over a better hand? I'm not going to lose, because I can't. Because you're scared of what might happen if I do.

Pause

THEODOR

How many chips are in front of you?

THE OPPONENT

There'll be time for counting once the dealing's done.

THEODOR motions to a spectator with a notebook. He's been writing down all the amounts as the game progresses.

THEODOR

Hey, how much does he have left?

THE COUNTER

Two hundred thirteen thousand seven hundred fifty.

THEODOR

(to THE OPPONENT)

You heard him.

THEODOR slides a good chunk of his chips to the centre then sits back and watches THE OPPONENT.

THE OPPONENT looks at his cards. He looks at his chips. He looks at THEODOR, who is biting his lip.

THE OPPONENT takes all his chips and slides them to the centre.

Silence. THE DEALER deals out the river card. The six of spades.

THEODOR slides his hand out to the centre of the table and flips it over. Jack and Queen of Spades. Flush.

THE OPPONENT, having lost gets up, throws his cards to the floor and storms off. We see his cards face up on the floor. Ace of diamonds. Three of clubs. Straight.

THEODOR doesn't celebrate save a small smirk in the corner of his mouth. He calmly gets up and walks away from the table.

45 INT. PANGLOSS CASINO HOTEL

October 1993

As if the scene was continuous, THEODOR (now three years later) has just been turned away from competing at another tournament. He is wearing a grey shirt and black pants with a black tie. THE MANAGER calls after him:

THE MANAGER

I'm sorry, sir. But you must qualify for the tournament before you can play.

THEODOR waves it off in a "yeah, I got it" way and makes his way through the throng of people to get out of the room. As he exits, a spectator yells:

THE SPECTATOR

And stay out.

As THEODOR walks away, he is approached by THE JOURNALIST and her cameraman.

THE JOURNALIST

Excuse me, sir. I'm with The Utopia. We're a local news station here covering the tournament.

THEODOR

And you're talking to me because...?

THE JOURNALIST

Because you won three years ago and I would love to do a piece on you. Sort of a "Winners through History" story.

The word "winners" catches THEODOR off guard. For a second, he remembers what sitting at the winning table felt like.

THEODOR
Ok. When and Where?

THE JOURNALIST
Would 1:30pm tomorrow at the El Dorado Diner work for you?

THEODOR
(no hesitation)
Perfectly.

THE JOURNALIST
Great. We will see you then.

THE JOURNALIST and her cameraman exit. THEODOR is left standing there for a second, then he too leaves.

As he exits, he passes someone wearing a pair of purple gloves. This person waits for a second, then turns and walks away.

Fade out

46 EXT. EL DORADO DINER

THEODOR and THE JOURNALIST are sitting in chairs outside. They are both drinking. An appetiser sits on the table between them.

THEODOR is dressed in jeans and a black T-shirt. There is a light coloured jacket on his chair. THE JOURNALIST wears black dress pants and a white open necked shirt.

THEODOR
Enlightened. Brilliant. A little guilty.

THE JOURNALIST
How about after you walked away from the table?

THEODOR
The full effect didn't sink in until a few days later.

THE JOURNALIST
And what did you do then?

THEODOR
 (in a "what do you want to
 hear" way)
 I bought a car?

THE JOURNALIST
 Now, you haven't been at the final
 table since that night. In fact,
 you haven't qualified to compete in
 any tournament since then, is that
 correct?

THEODOR
 You know that already, or you
 wouldn't have been waiting for me
 outside the room last night.

THE JOURNALIST
 (laughing)
 Fair enough. Shouldn't try to fool
 a poker player.

THEODOR smiles. He knows something she doesn't.

THE JOURNALIST
 So, any theories as to why you've
 been on this losing streak? Are you
 distracted? Something else on your
 mind?

THEODOR
 Maybe I've gotten cocky. Maybe the
 stakes aren't high enough.

THE JOURNALIST
 I'm sure you still have fans.

THEODOR
 It's been three years. People
 stopped caring about me the first
 hand I lost, the next time I
 played.
 (getting to a point he's been
 itching to make)
 Which makes me wonder what you're
 doing here.

THE JOURNALIST
 (reaching for her drink)
 I'm doing a story on you.

THEODOR
 ("I know that")
 In what capacity?

Silence

THEODOR
 (giving up)
 Ok, since you sat down, you have touched your drink six times. Each time was only a second after I did because you've been so engrossed in your story, you forgot you had a drink and my movement reminded you. Just now, you reached for your glass of your own accord which tells me you want to divert attention away from the subject at hand. So tell me, darling, what you don't want to tell me.

Stunned Silence

THEODOR
 (explaining to an idiot)
 I haven't been winning, but I can still play.

THE JOURNALIST
 (laughing it off)
 That's quite impressive, apparently your talents are still sharp, why do you think they are failing you at the poker table?

THEODOR
 (leaning forward)
 Well. In all honesty, if I knew that, I wouldn't be a part of your

THEODOR has leaned in far enough to read the top of the page on THE JOURNALIST'S notepad. She quickly covers it up as THEODOR leans back. His questions answered.

THEODOR
 "How The Mighty Have Fallen" Story.

THE JOURNALIST
 It's not exactly what you think.

THEODOR
 Correction. You've been asking questions, writing down answers, at
 (MORE)

THEODOR
this point, that story is exactly
what I think.

Pause.

THEODOR
So, in order to end this quickly
and get you the hell out of my
sight, I'll round out your article.

THE JOURNALIST doesn't move. THEODOR picks up her pen and
forcibly puts it in her hand. She starts writing.

THEODOR
(in a louder voice)
I don't know why I've been losing
at the table, but at this point,
that doesn't matter, because you
do. Everything I've said, you've
written down and then you've drawn
arrows all over the paper. You're
connecting evidence to theory
trying to figure out why the former
poker champion is sitting here
talking to the condescending
journalist from the idealistic
newspaper. Of the twelve questions
you've asked today, ten of them
have been about my losing streak
and the fact that you were waiting
outside the door last night for
someone to be kicked out like the
ballpoint pushing vulture that you
are, tells me that you're more
interested in trampling someone
people used to care about than
actually reporting any relevant
news because we both know that
sells better. So thank you for
killing an hour of my time and
please don't come to the funeral.
Get out.

THE JOURNALIST finishes scribbling and stands up. She
quickly walks away.

THEODOR
(calling after her)
"Theodor" doesn't have an "e" on
the end.

THEODOR finishes his drink and starts to nibble at the
appetiser. THE WAITER shows up to refill his glass.

THE WAITER
Can I get you anything else, sir?

THEODOR
(obviously)
The check.

THE WAITER, having seen what THEODOR acts like when angry, says nothing and quickly moves away.

From a distance, we see THEODOR slump in his chair. Some part of what THE JOURNALIST said registered with him.

THE WAITER returns and hands THEODOR the check. THEODOR waits until he leaves before opening it. He looks at the amount and begins fishing around in his pocket. He pulls his wallet out of his jacket. No bills, no credit cards. He puts it away and begins digging through his pockets. He eventually puts together a few bills and a bunch of coins. He doesn't have enough. He puts as many as he can in the folder and pockets the check.

Underneath the receipt is a business card. It says "Win At The Ultimate Game/ highest stakes possible/ Russian roulette/ 684-0256" THEODOR sits there for a minute. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

Finally, THEODOR after checking that THE WAITER is somewhere else, gets up and hurries from the restaurant.

The distant shot pans down and we see that it is near a table a row or so away. The person at the table is wearing purple gloves.

47 INT. THEODOR'S LIVING ROOM

THEODOR has been pacing for the last few hours. His jacket, shoes, and socks are thrown about the room. A deck of cards was dropped and spread across the floor. He is flipping the business card in his fingers just like he has been since he got it.

Throughout the scene, THEODOR argues with himself about whether or not he should play.

THEODOR
Damn it!

He throws something.

THEODOR

How can I even be considering
this!?

C'mon man when was the last time I
backed down from a challenge?

This isn't a challenge, it's
suicide. The stakes are too high.

Maybe that's what I need. Maybe
that's the thing that's going to...

No, stop. What am I doing? Am I
insane?

Probably. In that case, maybe I
have nothing to lose.

No. I have everything to lose. I
don't need to do this. I can win at
poker, I just need to concentrate.

Then why haven't I been winning?

Because I'm not taking it
seriously.

And why not?

Because the stakes aren't high
enough to motivate me.

So, go skydiving, ride a
motorcycle,

I can't afford those!

It just has to be something.
Anything other than this.

Silence as THEODOR realises why the idea attracts him. When
he next speaks, there is awe in his voice

But this...this is Russian
Roulette. Actual, live bullet
Russian Roulette. The fascination.
How can I pass this up?

THEODOR snaps back to reality.

I'm being stupid. I'm not thinking.
This is Russian Roulette. This is
suicide. There's gotta be something
else. There has to be.

He stops pacing, rubs his chin and takes a deep breath. Trying to figure out if the past hours have gotten him anywhere.

THEODOR
I don't know.

The doorbell rings. THEODOR answers it. Lying on his doorstep is a copy of the evening edition of "The Utopia". The paper's motto is "The Best of all Possible News". He looks for the person who left it, but sees no one. He opens the paper and soon finds what he's looking for. The article has been circled. The headline reads, "From Silent Winner to Sore Loser: How far the mighty have fallen and how casinos pushed them"

THEODOR throws the paper down and goes inside. He looks again at the business card.

THEODOR
"Win at the ultimate game"?

THEODOR clamps a hand to his chest, his heart is fluttering just thinkin about it.

THEODOR
How can I not?

His decision is made at this point. He paces a time or two more, muttering to himself, but in the end, he picks up the phone and dials.

48 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

AUGUST has the gun cocked. She puts it to her head and waits.

THEODOR
It's not going to shoot itself
honey.

AUGUST
What's your rush?

THEODOR
I'm curious to see which of us I'll
be hanging out with in the
afterlife.

AUGUST ignores him. She takes a deep breath and pulls the trigger.

BANG.

AUGUSTS'S weak hand (propelled by the recoil) sends the gun flying across the room. Her head falls the other direction and her body falls off the chair. She hits the ground with a light thud.

CHARLES and THEODOR look at each other. The final two. Each has an even chance of surviving, but on the other hand, their chances of death have never been higher.

THEODOR
(whistles)
First bullet. What are the odds?

CHARLES
At this point, 50/50.

THEODOR
Well then...

THEODOR pulls a bullet from the box. The Bullet.

THEODOR
This is a very special bullet. My deal.

He loads the gun, spins the chamber, and snaps it shut.

Looking CHARLES in the eye, he slides the gun across the table.

THEODOR
Bet's to you.

CHARLES picks up the gun and cocks it.

49 **THE STORY OF CHARLES**

50 INT. EDWARD'S BEDROOM

March 1989

EDWARD puts the gun to his head and pulls the trigger.
"Click"

Silence

He cocks it and fire again. "Click" Again. "Click" Again.

We finally see EDWARD'S face. He looks hopeful (of what we don't know).

The camera watches him through his open doorway. As he puts the gun to his head, it moves down the hallway. We come to another open door. CHARLES (dressed in a red long sleeved shirt) is sitting in the den reading a book.

BANG

CHARLES drops his book and runs from the room, past the camera.

Inside EDWARD'S bedroom, we see his dead body lying on the ground. CHARLES runs in. He screams and cries and tries to help EDWARD, but his brother is gone.

51 EXT. MARTIN CEMETERY

April 1989

CHARLES walks from the cemetery. He is wearing a black suit with a long black coat. It is a dreary day.

He stops and looks back at the newly filled grave. He stands there for a minute. Alone. Lost. No way to escape.

He walks past the camera and disappears.

52 INT. EDWARD'S BEDROOM

June 1989

CHARLES is sitting up late in the floor of EDWARD'S room. He hasn't been sleeping. He can't think.

CHARLES is a psychiatrist who has always been able to interpret the actions of others. This time, the death of his brother has him confused. The confusion, plus the grief have conspired to keep him up every night trying to understand.

He's holding a picture. He and EDWARD a few years back. They are standing up on a mountain and grasping wrists. CHARLES looks at his wrist. Along the inside of his forearm, there is a long white scar. He flips the picture over. On the back, in CHARLES'S handwriting are the words "Blood Brothers" and underneath in EDWARD'S handwriting is the word "Forever".

CHARLES breaks down crying again. He quietly sobs as he looks around the room.

CHARLES

What happened to you? What happened
to you?

He has been writing in a notebook. As he flips through it we see pages with notes and sketches on them.

A sketch of the gravestone "Edward"

Pages covered in the word "why"

"I must understand" and under that "Human depravity,
desperation, and depression"

The later pages have pictures on one side and notes about the person on the other. Their motive titles each page.

IVAN (motive: freedom)

ACHMET (motive: triumph)

STANISLAW (motive: faith/belief)

AUGUST (motive: nothing to lose)

THEODOR (motive: pride/winning?)

We see a page that reads, "Charles (motive:
knowledge/understanding) but it has been crossed out.

Eventually, CHARLES closes his notebook and puts his head down on the desk. He tries to sleep. The notebook is labelled "Misfires".

53 INT. CHARLES'S OFFICE

December 1994

CHARLES (in a tweed suit and red dress shirt) is screaming. During the middle of a session with a client, he fell victim to his condition, Fahr's Syndrome. He suffers from painful dementia and his disease is progressing.

THE PATIENT is supporting him and trying to relax him. After a few seconds, the pain subsides and CHARLES looks around.

CHARLES

Tuesday?

THE PATIENT

Thursday.

CHARLES notices a calendar on the wall. He looks carefully at it. Days are crossed off. Each event on a day crossed off as soon as it happens. He sees that at this time on thursday, he is meeting with THE PATIENT. He checks his watch.

CHARLES
My apologies.

THE PATIENT
Are you ok?

CHARLES
Soon. It takes a while for the world to come back.

THE PATIENT
What did you say this was again?

CHARLES
Fahr's Syndrome. Genetically dominant. Causes dementia, seizures, involuntary spasms. Look

CHARLES holds up his hand with a pen in it. His fingers constantly flip the pen around them.

CHARLES
Ticks. I can't control it. My father had it too. And my brother.

He stops and looks at THE PATIENT.

CHARLES
Look at me, doing this backwards. You're supposed to be telling me about your parents.

CHARLES and THE PATIENT both smile.

CHARLES
Listen, would it be ok if we finished this next session. I'm...

THE PATIENT
Of course. You'll be ok?

CHARLES
(smiling)
If not, I know who to call. Thanks.

THE PATIENT leaves CHARLES'S office. CHARLES'S knees almost give way as soon as the door is closed. He stumbles over to his couch and begins to spasm.

Fade to.

54 INT. CHARLES'S HOUSE

CHARLES comes home. He sits at his desk. He pulls out a calendar and crosses off what has happened since he left. Keeping things up to date is the quickest way to recover from his bouts of confusion.

The camera pans down as CHARLES writes on his calendar. At the edge of his desk sits a pair of purple leather gloves.

55 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES reaches for the gun. He picks it up and takes a deep breath. He cocks it. CHARLES places the barrel to his temple.

CHARLES fires

CLICK.

CHARLES sighs. He has still not felt what his brother felt.

THEODOR looks down at the table. One of his three chances is gone. For a second, he imagines himself at the poker table.

56 INT. PANGLOSS CASINO HOTEL

There is a stack of chips in front of him. As he watches, someone takes a few away.

57 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

The gun slides across the table to THEODOR. He picks it up. 1 in 5 chance. He cocks the gun, puts it to his head.

THEODOR fires.

CLICK

THEODOR puts the gun down. He exhales heavily.

CHARLES thinks to himself.

58 INT. CHARLES'S NOTEBOOK

We see his notebook. The pages with the players on them are being ripped out. His experiment is about to end without him learning why his brother died or what made him want to.

59 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES'S thoughts are interrupted by the revolver hitting his folded, shaking hands. THEODOR is watching him.

CHARLES picks up the gun. He clears his mind. He cocks it. He hopes for release. 1 in 4 chance. He fires.

CLICK

60 INT. PANGLOSS CASINO HOTEL

The person's hand removes more chips from in front of THEODOR.

61 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES, tears in his eyes, reaches over and hands the gun to THEODOR. THEODOR cocks it and places it to his head.

THEODOR nods. 1 in 3 chance. He puts the gun to his head. Let's a long whistle escape his lips as he exhales. He fires.

CLICK

62 INT. CHARLES'S NOTEBOOK

The notebook is thrown to the floor. Years of work might amount to nothing. The pages float through the air.

63 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

THEODOR lowers the gun. He and CHARLES look at each other. Only one safe chamber now. They are both more than aware of it.

THEODOR gets up and walks over to CHARLES. He places the gun in CHARLES'S hand and for a second, both men are holding the weapon.

THEODOR
 (whispering)
 River Card.

CHARLES cocks the gun and THEODOR lets it go.

THEODOR walks back and sits down as CHARLES holds the gun in his hand. He is shaking. This could be the end. But he realises that whatever noise comes from that chamber, he will find what he is looking for.

CHARLES calmly puts the gun to his head. He looks at THEODOR.

His finger tightens on the trigger.

The chamber rotates into position.

He fires.

C.L.I.C.K.

64 INT. PANGLOSS CASINO HOTEL

The person's hand takes the last of THEODOR'S chips.

65 INT. ROULETTE ROOM

CHARLES lowers the gun. For the first time in years, he is in control of things. He slides the gun over to THEODOR. It stops right in front of him.

CHARLES
 Game over.

Silence.

THEODOR picks up the gun. He looks at it.

CHARLES says nothing. THEODOR holds the gun in his hand for what seems like hours. Finally, he grits his teeth. He has never walked away from a game and his final act will not tarnish that.

THEODOR puts the gun to his head. He closes his eyes. His finger tightens.

CHARLES
 Wait.

THEODOR opens his eyes. He looks at CHARLES.

CHARLES

I have to know. What does it feel
like?

THEODOR thinks. He thinks about death and where he's going
in the end. He thinks about the cold steel to his head.

THEODOR

(resigned)
Like this.

THEODOR fires.

CHARLES, hit in the chest slumps back in his chair. His eyes
open and a look of pleasant surprise on his face. He finally
knows what his brother felt.

THEODOR drops the gun. It lands on the table with a heavy
thud.

THEODOR stands up. He walks out of the room.

He comes back.

THEODOR stops. He fights with himself. He is alive, but he
didn't win. He lost the game. Almost all the others in the
room got what they wanted. They got answers. He has nothing.

He turns back to the table. He picks up the gun and opens
it. There are five spent shell casings inside and one left
empty.

THEODOR pours out the contents of the bullet box and chooses
a bullet at random.

He loads it.

THEODOR closes his eyes, spins the gun and snaps it shut.

He sits back down in his seat.

The gun comes up to his head. He cocks it with his thumb.

He fires.

CLICK.

He fires again.

CLICK.

66 BLACK
 He fires again.
 CLICK.
 He fires again.
 CLICK

67 THE END