

The Jockey

By
Jerry Bader

Based on the life infamous jockey

Ronny Kleinberg (an alias)

By Jerry Bader

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EXT. RITZY NEIGHBORHOOD, ALLEY BETWEEN TWO HOMES - NIGHT

Two teenagers, Ronny Kleinberg (16, good looking, small slightly built) and Frankie "Fingers" Lewis (17, tall lanky, large hands, long fingers) stand in the alley contemplating how to enter the home. Frankie is rolling a silver dollar between his fingers like a magician.

RONNY

Will you stop playing with that
fucking coin and tell me how
we're supposed to get into the
house.

Frankie tries the door to the side of the house.

FRANKIE

It's locked...

RONNY

Of course it's locked stupid.
Who leaves the doors unlocked
when they go out?

Frankie points to a window above their heads. He looks around and sees a wooden crate, gets the crate, and turns it on its end under the window.

FRANKIE

Here, stand on this and see if
you can reach.

Ronny gets up on the crate and stretches but he's too short.

RONNY

I can't reach the window...

Ronny hops off the crate and motions Frankie to get on. Frankie gets on the rickety crate and signals Ronny to get on his shoulders.

FRANKIE

Come on! Get on my shoulders and
smash the window.

RONNY

What if somebody hears us?

FRANKIE

You got a better idea?

Ronny gets up on the crate that's too small for both of them. He awkwardly climbs up onto Frankie's shoulders while Frankie tries to maintain his balance. The crate creaks and groans under their weight.

FRANKIE

Hurry the fuck up and smash the window, the crate's gonna go..

RONNY

It's not locked.

FRANKIE

Hurry up already!

Ronny opens the unlocked window and crawls inside.

INT. KITCHEN, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

Ronny climbs through the window headfirst landing in a large sink under the window. He hits his head on the tap.

RONNY

Goddamn it!

Ronny sticks his head out the window.

Ext. Alley Between Two Homes, Ritzy Neighborhood - Night

Ronny's head sticks out the window. He calls down to Frankie in the alley.

RONNY

(Stage Whisper)

Stay there. I'll come down and open the door.

Ronny's head disappears back inside. A few seconds later the side door opens and Ronny lets Frankie into the house.

INT. MAIN FLOOR EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

FRANKIE

Check upstairs and see what you can find. I'll search the main floor. It's the 1882 Morgan Silver Dollar that Rosie needs.

Ronny heads up a large winding circular staircase. He checks the rooms...

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

A pubescent boy's bedroom with a poster of *The Avengers*, John Steed in his Savile Row three-piece suit and Bowler Hat; Emma Peel in her black skin tight leathers...

Ronny looks around, nothing worth stealing. He moves on to the next room.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

A teenage girl's bedroom, all pink and frilly with photographs of The Beatles, Tom Jones, and Jay and The Americans taped to the wall.

Ronny looks around, nothing worth stealing. He moves on to the next room.

Int. Up Stairs Hall Expensive Home - Night

Double doors open into a large master bedroom all walnut and rich with a canopy bed and matching side tables and dressers.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

Ronny enters the bedroom. He checks all the bedside table drawers. Nothing.

He spots a jewellery box on the dresser. It's crammed with earrings, a gold necklace, and some silver bracelets. He stuffs them in his pockets.

He turns to leave when he spots it... the 1882 Morgan Silver Dollar in a walnut frame surrounded by an 1883 Morgan and an 1887 Morgan.

RONNY
(Stage Whisper)
Jackpot!

Frankie's head pops around the corner.

FRANKIE
I got cash and a couple of gold
watches from the office desk
down stairs. No Morgan's...

Ronny holds up the framed coins.

FRANKIE
Beautiful!

Sounds of movement out on the street seep into the bedroom,
a red flashing light criss-crosses the ceiling.

Ronny rushes to the side of the big picture window that
fronts the house. He stands just out of sight of anyone
looking up. He looks down. Three cop-cars with red rotating
Cherry Tops bracket the front walkway.

RONNY
COPS!

FRANKIE
FUCK!

Ronny takes the jewellery out of his pockets and dumps it
on the bed. He hands Frankie the framed coins.

RONNY
Put it all back.

Ronny exits the master bedroom and makes a dash for the
girl's back bedroom.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

He looks out the window to see three cops making their way
to the garden patio door. He heads back to the master.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, EXPENSIVE HOME - NIGHT

He enters the master bedroom just in time to see Frankie sticking the gold necklace into his pocket.

RONNY

What the hell are you doing?

FRANKIE

It shouldn't be a total waste...

RONNY

Don't be a schmuck! We're surrounded.

FRANKIE

Come on we'll make a run for it.
We got a nice haul.

Ronny grabs the framed coins from Frankie.

RONNY

Dummy. Put it all back!

Ronny hangs the framed coins back up on the wall.

RONNY

Put it all back... they catch us
with stolen goods it's jail
time.

Frankie groans but nods reluctant acceptance. He watches as Frankie puts the jewellery back in the case.

EXT. ALLEY BETWEEN TWO HOMES, RITZY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Ronny and Frankie exit the side door of the house. Cops are waiting in front and behind them at both ends of the alley. Guns are drawn and aimed directly at the two teenagers.

COP

On your knees!
Hands behind your head!

Ronny and Frankie drop to their knees and place their hands behind their heads.

INT. POLICE STATION, INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

The room is dingy with one overhead metal light fixture and a naked bulb. A scratched metal table sits in the middle of the room.

On one side sits Detective Dennis O'Brien (55, balding reddish-blond hair, 5 o'clock shadow, stocky, scruffy and wrinkled) arms folded, no jacket, sleeves rolled up to the elbow, wearing an empty shoulder holster, leaning back in his chair balancing on the back two legs.

On the other side of the table sits Ronny in a rickety wooden chair with one back leg purposefully shorter than the other.

Behind Ronny stands Detective Paul Scarano (35, a mop of black wavy hair, handsome, tall, dapper) hands on his hips, no jacket, shirtsleeves rolled up to his elbows, wearing an empty shoulder holster.

Ronny is having trouble balancing on the uneven chair.

O'BRIEN

What did you punks steal?

RONNY

Nothing... we didn't steal
nothing.

Scarano slams Ronny's head into the table from behind. The force of the blow opens a cut on Ronny's forehead.

O'BRIEN

Sorry I didn't quite hear you.

RONNY

(Deliberately Slow Mocking
O'Brien)
I... said... we... didn't... steal...
anything.

Scarano slams Ronny's head into the table again. The blood starts to trickle down Ronny's face into his mouth.

O'BRIEN

If you didn't steal anything,
what were you doing there?

RONNY

Just wanted to see how the
other-half lives.

Ronny, his mouth filling with blood, turns his head and spits the blood out missing the floor landing on Scarano's shiny black shoes.

Scarano, furious at the audacity of the young punk, backhands Ronny hard enough on the side of the head to knock him and the chair flying.

O'BRIEN

You got an equilibrium thing
going on there kid. You really
should have that looked at.

Scarano turns the chair back up on its three and half legs. He grabs Ronny by the neck and lifts him up depositing him back on the chair with a thud.

O'BRIEN

You keep falling down like that
kid and you could get hurt...

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The Judge in his black robe sits behind a big podium desk.

An Assistant Crown Attorney/DA sits bored behind a wooden table with a stack of case folders in front of him. Ronny sits by himself behind a second wooden table across the aisle from the Crown/DA.

A few people are scattered throughout the almost empty courtroom.

O'Brien stands at the back of the courtroom hands folded across his rumpled chest. Scarano, dapper, stands posing beside his partner with one hand in his pocket.

The Bailiff motions Ronny to stand up. The bored Crown/DA also stands.

JUDGE

I'm told you had some trouble.

RONNY

No sir... no trouble.

JUDGE

How'd you get those bruises?

RONNY

I just fell down Your Honor. I think I've got an equilibrium problem or something...

O'Brien and Scarano smirk at the exchange.

JUDGE

Seems like there's a lot of that going around lately.

RONNY

Yes sir, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Well... nothing was stolen or damaged so I'm letting you off the hook... this time... but don't let me ever see you in here again, or you'll pay a very steep price.

RONNY

Yes sir, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Case dismissed. Next case...

Ronny heads to the back of the courtroom. O'Brien and Scarano follow him with their eyes. When he reaches the door O'Brien speaks...

O'BRIEN

You're a smart kid Kleinberg, keep out of trouble and that equilibrium problem might just clear up all by itself.

Ronny doesn't answer. As he opens the door he hears the Judge questioning Frankie. Ronny leaves, Frankie is on his own.

INT. RONNY'S PARENT'S HOME - NIGHT

Ronny enters the front door of the small cosy home where he lives with his parents. He hangs up his jacket.

The home is small but well kept.

His hard working shoemaker father sits in the front room watching the evening news in a big overstuffed fabric chair.

His shirtsleeves are rolled up to reveal a concentration camp tattoo.

His mother is in the kitchen making dinner.

MOTHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Ronny, sweetheart, come have some *kasha varnishikas*. I made them just the way you like'em with the bow-tie *lokshn*. You'll feel better after you eat.

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Zetsn zikh avek...

Sol motions for Ronny to sit in the chair beside him.

MOTHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Sol, leave the boy alone... he's had enough today.

Sol jabs an angry finger at the chair beside him.

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Zets avek!

Ronny sits down as ordered by his father.

RONNY

What's wrong Pop?

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

The *politsay* were here today about you. They said you got into trouble. It upset your mother.

RONNY

Don't worry Pop it's all been looked after.

Sol gets increasingly angrier as he speaks.

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

I didn't survive the camps so your mother and I could raise a *gonif*. You want to be a *farshtunkina farbrekher* go live some place else, cause this won't be your home.

Ronny's Mother in an old fashion apron stands in the kitchen holding a ladle watching her husband berate their son.

MOTHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Sol enough... let the boy come and eat.

RONNY

It's okay Ma, Pop is right, I've got to get my act together... to make something of myself.

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Listen boy... remember this: life is hard, and it's short. Take advantage of your opportunities, when and if they come along.

He pauses for a second to gather his thoughts in English.

FATHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Everybody's got an alarm clock
shoved up their *tokhes*, and when
it goes off, you're done,
gustorbin, toyt!

MOTHER

(Yiddish Accent)

Sol enough already!
Ronny, come and eat.

RONNY

It's okay Ma, I'll grab
something while I'm out.

Ronny grabs his jacket from the hall hook and leaves
heading for Donny's Place.

EXT. QUEEN STREET DONNY'S PLACE, A SLEAZY POOL HALL - NIGHT

It's raining. A short drunken man and a taller hooker
stumble out the front door of Donny's Place. They careen
down the street in their trendy mid 1960s clothes.

A black limo pulls up in front of the pool hall. The rain
on the limo's hood reflects the light from Donny's colorful
neon sign.

A very large ape-of-a-man, Pooch, (early 30s) in a dark
suit and tie gets out of the front passenger side door. He
opens a black umbrella and then the back passenger door.

An expensively dressed man, Rocky, (mid 40s) in a black
Vicuna topcoat, dark pinstripe suit, narrow-tie and
Borsalino fedora steps out under the umbrella.

Pooch opens the door to allow Rocky to enter. He closes the
umbrella and follows.

INT. DONNY'S PLACE (POOL HALL) - NIGHT

The two men are greeted with a cacophony of sounds: pool
balls banging against one another, short tough-looking men
laughing, arguing, discussing, seedy characters talking to
cuff-shooters and wannabes, guys wearing too much
jewellery, gamblers, mingle, party, and talk privately in
corners.

A small seedy man with thick glasses runs over to take Rocky's coat and hat.

Ronny Kleinberg barely 5'2" tall, weighing 105 LB sits quietly at one end of the bar leaning on a pool cue, sipping a Coke.

At the opposite end of the bar are two men: a rumpiled slob, Paulie "The Weasel" Landau (mid 40s), the agent, and a worn weary weathered gentlemen, Jack Snider (early 60s), the trainer. The two men look in the kid's direction as if they're talking about him.

Frankie "Fingers" Lewis fresh from his run-in with the cops stands impatiently at a pool table, cue in one hand, watching his opponent, a thirty-something jockey, run the table while taunting him none stop.

Two other jockeys laugh and joke as they watch their friend hustle Frankie.

JOCKEY ONE

You're playing with the adults
now kid. (Bang! Plop!)

He surveys the table lining up his next shot.

JOCKEY TWO

How long will Williams be away?

Jockey One leans over the table to make his next shot.

JOCKEY THREE

At least a week...

JOCKEY ONE

Six ball, side pocket... (Bang!
Plop!)

JOCKEY THREE

...there's some filly he wants to
check out.

JOCKEY ONE

Teach you punks a lesson to play
with the grown-ups... seven ball,
corner pocket... (Bang! Plop!)

JOCKEY TWO
A broad or a horse?

They laugh.

Jockey One walks around the table eyeing the angles for the kill shot. Frankie frustrated by being hustled.. fumes.

JOCKEY ONE
Eight ball... side pocket... (Bang!
Plop!)

Jockey One straightens up to his full 5'3", his buddies who were watching all laugh and slap him on the back.

JOCKEY TWO
Easy money Tommy, easy money...

JOCKEY ONE
Game! Set! And Fucking Match!
Pay up kid... the party's over,
and the fat lady done sung her
last serenade.

Frankie reaches into his pocket, pulls out a \$10 bill, and throws it on the table.

Jockey One looks over at Ronny sitting quietly at the bar.

JOCKEY ONE
What do you think kid? Want to
give it a try? I could use
another ten spot?

Ronny ignores the taunt...

Rocky and Pooch have three small men backed up in a corner of the pool hall in what appears to be a tense conversation.

The gorilla pushes one of the small men hard, knocking him against the wall, rattling a framed photo of some famous pool player.

Ronny takes it all in quietly observing, listening to the snippets of conversation all overlapping and chaotic: men making deals, hookers working the room, money changing hands, tough little men, gamblers, mobsters, sexy women, all argue, laugh, and generally have a good time.

ASSORTED CHARACTERS

How the hell did you make that
shot.../Did you hear the Mexican
got set-down.../Jose?/Na stupid
he's Cuban, the Mexican...
Alvarez/Ya and Johnny got caught
with Mr. Edison/Fucking
stewards/...

Ronny notices the gorilla in the corner hand one of the
small men an envelope.

The kid's eyes move to the opposite end of the bar. Paulie
The Weasel and Jack Snider are looking right at him. He
glares back.

From behind the bar, Donny, the pool hall's namesake,
interrupts Ronny's stare..

DONNY

Why don't you three get a room?

RONNY

Funny... very funny...

DONNY

Tommy clean you out like your
friend?

RONNY

I always pay my tab. You know
that.

DONNY

Sure kid, sure. So pay..

Ronny reaches into his pocket and pulls out some loose
change and some lint. He starts to count out the change but
is interrupted by Rocky and the gorilla.

Rocky tosses a ten-dollar bill on the bar..

ROCKY

Give the kid whatever he wants..

DONNY

Sure Rocky, whatever he wants..

Rocky looks Ronny right in eye. Rocky's face is marked from years of wear and tear... neither say a word.

A folded newspaper wrapped around a thick envelope magically appears on the bar. Pooch picks it up.

ROCKY

See you around kid.

Ronny watches as the two men turn and head for the door.

The seedy little man with thick glasses runs over to Rocky holding up his Vicuna topcoat and Borsalino. Rocky slips on the coat and takes the hat. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a wad of cash. He peels off a ten-dollar bill, and stuffs it in the little man's shirt pocket.

Rocky and Pooch exit to the waiting limo.

Frankie, still hot over being hustled, comes over to Ronny. He takes a silver dollar out of his pocket and starts manipulating it around his long fingers.

FRANKIE

Did you see that son-of-a-bitch?
He's like a midget Minnesota
Fats or something.

RONNY

I told you not to play him. He
beat me for twenty bucks last
week.

FRANKIE

Doesn't matter, I heard them
talking about that William's
guy. He's going to be out of
town all week. Easy-pickings...

RONNY

Are you fuck'n nuts? Didn't you
have enough of the cops this
week? My old man read me the
riot act, if I don't get my act
together, I'm out on my ass.

FRANKIE

Don't be a pussy.

RONNY

You want to be the next Mickey
Cohen be my guest, I'm out.

FRANKIE

Your loss...

Frankie wonders off to try and find someone he can beat at
pool.

Jack Snider, the trainer, puts down his drink and
approaches Ronny.

SNIDER

Kleinberg... right?

RONNY

Who wants to know?

Snider sticks out his hand to shake, Ronny hesitates, but
reluctantly accepts his hand.

SNIDER

Jack Snider, I work for Conrad
Stoker, you know the Jam-Man.

RONNY

You make jam?

SNIDER

Na... I train horses...

RONNY

You train horses to make jam?

SNIDER

Are you always such a smart ass?

RONNY

Usually...

SNIDER

Look... are you interested in
making some real money?

RONNY

Is it legal?

SNIDER

You heard of Navarro and
Dittmar?

RONNY

The jockeys?

SNIDER

I've been watching you kid.
You've got the size, and the
balls. But do you have the
desire?

RONNY

Be famous and make a shit pile
of dough? Yeah, I might be
interested.

SNIDER

Be in front of Donny's tomorrow
morning at 5 AM. A car will pick
you up... if you show up.

Ronny watches as Snider turns away and leaves.

INT. JOCKEY'S ROOM - DAY

The jockey's room is filled with open wooden lockers,
divided into three cubicles each, one cubicle per jockey
for their clothes. In front of the cubicles are wooden
benches for the jockey's to sit and dress.

Off to one side is a rack with the colorful silks for each
stable carefully arranged under the number of the gate
assigned for the next race.

Off in the corner is a lounge area with a number of
jockey's sitting watching a big black and white television.

Snider and Ronny enter the room. Several jockeys
acknowledge Snider's presence. Ronny's impressed, maybe
this is his big break, his father's words echo in his head.

FATHER (V.O.)

(Yiddish Accent)

Listen boy... remember this: life is hard, and it's short. Take advantage of your opportunities, when and if they come along.

SMITTY

Hey Jack how's it hanging?

SNIDER

Can't complain Smitty, all the parts still work... sort of...

SMITTY

Who's the kid? Another cherry for the Jam-Man's jelly?

Snider just smiles and waves Smitty off.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Today's 1 O'Clock Movie is "On The Water Front" starring Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, and Eva Marie Saint...

Snider nudges Ronny in the side.

SNIDER

Listen-up kid...

Snider looks at the jockeys watching television.

SNIDER

Hey Navarro when does the 1 O'Clock Movie start?

NAVARRO

Don't know Jack. Check the TV Guide.

SNIDER

Dittmar you know when the 1 O'Clock Movie starts?

DITTMAR

Not sure Jack, I think they keep moving it around.

Snider guides Ronny off to a corner.

SNIDER

Those two numskulls are the two top riders in the country, only a handful better in the whole continent.

You got brains and guts, if you're prepared to work hard and pay your dues you could be better than any of them.

RONNY

You think I got a shot to make it big.

SNIDER

Only time will tell kid. It ain't glamorous, at least not to start, \$25 and a free meal a week, plus a new pair of jeans every month. Everyone starts at the bottom.

RONNY

It ain't much but at least there's potential.

SNIDER

Conrad isn't the most generous of bosses but he's one of the top three owners in the country.

RONNY

Why not? What the hell else have I got go'n?

SNIDER

Okay I'll get the papers for you and your parents to sign. Oh I forgot... you get to live here on the grounds in the tack room.

RONNY

Sounds okay, what's a tact room?

EXT. TRACK, VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

MONTAGE - HOT WALKER SEQUENCE

Ronny bolts upright from a single bed cot in a small tack room filled with various gear and racing paraphernalia. He looks at the clock on the bedside table it's 5 AM; he grabs his boots. (Cut)

Ronny grabs a bucket of oats and gives each horse (4) a handful. (Cut)

Ronny shovelling horse manure to clean the stall. (Cut)

Ronny walking a horse to cool it down after being breezed. (Cut)

Ronny removing tack and equipment from one of the horses. (Cut)

Ronny bathing, grooming & blanketing a horse. (Cut)

Ronny feeding and watering a horse. (Cut)

MONTAGE - GROOM SEQUENCE

Ronny bolts upright from a single bed cot in a small tack room filled with various gear and racing paraphernalia. He looks at the clock on the bedside table it's 5 AM; he grabs his boots. (Cut)

Ronny grabs a bucket of oats and gives each horse (4) a handful. (Cut)

Ronny shovelling horse manure to clean the stall. (Cut)

Ronny cleaning the tack and the equipment. (Cut)

Ronny bathing, grooming & blanketing a horse. (Cut)

Ronny feeding and watering a horse. (Cut)

MONTAGE - EXERCISE SEQUENCE

Ronny bolts upright from a single bed cot in a small tack room filled with various gear and racing paraphernalia. He looks at the clock on the bedside table it's 5 AM; he grabs his boots. (Cut)

Ronny grabs a bucket of oats and gives each horse (4) a handful. (Cut)

Ronny breezing a horse in an early morning exercise. (Cut)

Ronny monitoring horse's condition, temperament, and movement. (Cut)

Ronny training for how to enter and leave the starting gate. (Cut)

Ronny cleaning & conditioning the tack after use. (Cut)

Ronny shovelling horse manure to clean the stall. (Cut)

Ronny bolts upright from a single bed cot in a small tack room filled with various gear and racing paraphernalia. He looks at the clock on the bedside table it's 5 AM; he grabs his boots. (Cut)

INT. KITCHEN EATING AREA - DAY

Ronny and fellow jockey Billy Wild stand in the entrance several feet behind Owner Conrad Stoker (the Jam-man) who has one finger raised in the air signalling to the kitchen staff serving breakfast to a group of young jockeys.

Ronny looks at Wild questioning the Jam-man's not so discreet signal to the kitchen staff. Billy puts his finger to his lips.

BILLY

Later...

Billy and Ronny nod good morning to the Jam-man.

They proceed to the cafeteria style serving area where Ronny is served one egg, one piece of bacon, one slice of toast, and coffee. Billy is given two eggs, two pieces of bacon, two slices of toast, and coffee.

Ronny's meal is free. It's part of his deal with the Jam-man. Billy is a licensed veteran jockey who pays for his breakfast. They move along to a table and sit.

Ronny looks at his breakfast and then at Wild's.

RONNY

What the fuck is this?

Billy laughs.

BILLY

You think he got to be one of the richest men in the country by giving rookies extra eggs.

One finger in the air means rookies get one egg, one piece of bacon, and one piece of toast.

RONNY

That's bullshit!

BILLY

What do you expect, he's a cheap bastard.

Ronny steams for a second as he stares at his meagre breakfast. He takes a fork and jabs the one lonely slice of bacon and waves it in the air.

RONNY

Hey Mr. Stoker... what the hell... you trying to starve us, or something?

THE JAM-MAN

What's your problem Kleinberg?

RONNY

Can't you count? How we suppose to shovel your shit on one egg and one piece of toast.

The rest of the jockeys' in the room all turn and look at the Jam-man.

THE JAM-MAN

I don't want you rookies to get
fat.

Everyone turns back to their breakfasts.

RONNY

(Under his breath)
Cheap asshole.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE BARN - DAY

Ronny's on a bale of straw with a sawed-off broomstick shoved in the back for a tail and the rest of the broomstick stuck in the front for the head. A racing saddle sits on top of the bale and leather reins are wrapped around the broomstick head.

Ronny is in racing position on his toes standing in short stirrups leaning forward imitating the up and down rhythm of a horse in full flight.

Ronny is holding a whip in the down position. His trainer, Jack Snider, is coaching him while veteran jockey and friend, Billy Wild, sits on a nearby fence watching, getting a kick out of Ronny's training.

SNIDER

It's like screwing a broad. It's
all about the rhythm. You got to
be in sync with the animal.

Ronny is moving up and down, back and forth, his elbows pushing back parallel to his knees as he balances precariously on his toes in the short stirrups of the racing saddle mounted on the straw horse.

SNIDER

That's it... Up Position! Now!

Ronny tries to twirl the whip around to the up position like a majorette twirling a baton. The whip goes flying in the air landing at Snider's feet.

Billy applauds mocking Ronny.

Snider picks up the whip.

SNIDER

You got to get the whip in the
up position by the horse's ear...
then bring it back to the
hindquarter close to the tail.

Snider throws Ronny the whip.

SNIDER

Do it again...

Ronny gets up in the riding position and begins his
simulated rhythmic ride.

SNIDER

Position UP! NOW!

Ronny successfully twirls the whip to the up position.

SNIDER

Good! Down Position! And Whip!

Ronny twirls the whip to the down position and whips the
broomstick tail knocking it out of the straw. Ronny keeps
on his rhythmic ride.

SNIDER

Let the horse react to the whip.
Now switch hands.

Ronny tries to take the whip from his right hand to his
left but again the whip goes flying out of his hands.

Billy is laughing at him.

Ronny stops.

SNIDER

Keep practicing. You want your
apprentice license you got to
learn how to switch hands. Clean
up and get some rest.

Snider heads off.

Billy hops off the fence and goes over to Ronny.

BILLY
You'll get it. It just takes
time.

Ronny jumps out of the saddle. Grabs his gear and heads for
the tack room with Billy. They talk as they walk.

RONNY
About that money I owe you...

BILLY
Don't worry about it...

RONNY
I always pay my debts...

BILLY
I said don't worry about it.
We'll work it out.

RONNY
What is that suppose to mean?

BILLY
Listen kid being a jockey is
more than learning how to come
out of the gate and switch hands
with your stick.

RONNY
I know...

BILLY
Actually you don't.

INT. THE PADDOCK DINER - NIGHT

Ronny and Billy are sitting in an old style diner, one of
those long narrow rounded metal trailers attached to a
shack that serves as a kitchen. A jukebox plays some hit
from the middle sixties. They're having dinner.

BILLY
You want to make money in this
business you got to know how the
game is played.

RONNY

You don't win you don't get paid... I get it.

BILLY

You win a race you make ninety bucks. After you spiff your valet, maybe you end up with eighty. You hold a horse you make five hundred, easy, and it's all yours. You make the arrangement... maybe you clear a thousand.

RONNY

I don't know...

BILLY

You want to put your ass on the line for peanuts that's your decision.

I'm just telling you how things work. The rest is up to you.

Billy pushes his plate aside and leans across the table closer to Ronny, almost in a whisper.

BILLY

Listen... everybody's in on it, trainers, owners, officials... everybody... everything at the track is bent. They all got their eye on the prize... don't be a schmuck...

RONNY

Ya but...

BILLY

Look... It isn't rocket science.

INT. ROCKY'S LIMO - NIGHT

BILLY (V.O.)

Somebody will tell you which horses need to be held...

Ronny in the back of a limo squeezed between Rocky on one side and Pooch on the other. Rocky circles the names of three horses on a racing form and hands it to Ronny.

INT. JOCKEY'S ROOM - DAY

BILLY (V.O.)

Then you approach each rider to
see if he's in...

Ronny standing beside a jockey facing the open cubicle pointing to a circled horse on the racing form.

The jockey nods.

BILLY (V.O.)

If they're in, you slip \$500
into his locker...

Ronny slips an envelope between some t-shirts in the open cubicle.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

BILLY (V.O.)

If everything's arranged you
give the Man a signal...

Rocky watches Ronny dressed in his silks standing in the paddock between races rubbing his nose (a signal).

RONNY (V.O.)

What if it can't be arranged?

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

Rocky standing in the paddock area waiting, no one appears, he crosses the race off in the racing form, and walks away.

INT. THE PADDOCK DINER - NIGHT

RONNY

And what if a jockey can't hold
the horse?

SEQUENCE OF QUICK CUTS

Ronny tied to a chair getting beat-up (Groan) by Pooch...
(Cut)

Ronny gets his arm broken (Groan) by Pooch... (Cut)

Ronny gets his leg broken (Groan) by Pooch... (Cut)

Ronny hit by a car (Groan) driven by Pooch... (Cut)

Ronny pushed down a flight of stairs (Groan) by Pooch...
(CUT)

Pooch shoots (Bang) Ronny in the head. Ronny falls (Plop/
Cut...)

Pooch pushes Ronny into a shallow grave. Ronny falls
(Plop/Cut)...

Pooch shoots (Bang) Ronny in the grave...(Cut)

Pooch shovels dirt (Sound of Dirt Hitting Ronny) on Ronny
in the grave (Cut)

Rocky lights (Sound of Match Being Struck) a big cigar
(Cut)

INT. PADDOCK DINER - NIGHT

Ronny and Billy are still having dinner.

Ronny is staring at Billy.

BILLY

Well, let's just say if you're
suppose to hold the horse... you
fucking hold the horse...

RONNY

It's that serious?

BILLY

As a fucking heart attack!

A good-looking sexy waitress, Angie, (mid 20's) dressed in
a short tight mini skirt uniform comes over and hands the
two men their bills. She assumes they're talking about the
food.

ANGIE

You got complaints about the
food, take'em up with Gus.

She turns and points to a greasy chef (mid 50s) flipping burgers and plating dinners.

GUS
Order Up Table 6...

The Waitress turns to go. Ronny focuses in on the Waitress's ass as it strains against the thin uniform fabric.

RONNY
Hey gorgeous... want to go for a ride? I'm told I got rhythm...

The Waitress turns back and flashes Ronny the finger. Both men laugh.

INT. JOCKEY'S ROOM, WASHROOM - DAY

Ronny is standing at one of the urinals peeing. Beside him is Navarro. Dittmar is washing his hands. They're all wearing their white racing pants and white sleeveless turtleneck undershirts. Sounds of someone throwing up can be heard coming from the last stall at the far end of the washroom.

NAVARRO
Jesus Christ Kleinberg what is that, the tenth time you've taken a piss in the last fifteen minutes? You got the prostate of an eighty year old.

DITTMAR
Leave the kid alone Navarro, I remember your first race...

NAVARRO
Just try not to kill anyone today Kleinberg.

More sounds of someone throwing up in the last stall at the far end of the washroom. The stall door flings open; the sign on the door reads "Heave Bowl". A jockey stumbles out of the stall his face flush and pasty.

Dittmar turns to speak to the jockey.

DITTMAR

Think you'll make weight Flip?

FLIP

I better...

NAVARRO

Try laying-off the booze. That
shit will kill you if the nags
don't get you first.

RONNY

You okay Flip?

FLIP

Don't you worry about me rookie.
Wait a couple of years and
you'll be flipping just like the
rest of us.

Ronny finally finishes urinating.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

Ronny's horse Sweet Thing is led to the saddling paddock by
a Groom where the Identifier checks the tattoo on the
inside of the upper lip to make sure the horse in the race
is the horse listed in the program.

Jack Snider and the Valet saddle Sweet Thing while Ronny
watches wearing the Jam-man's orange silks with white
diamonds across the chest.

PADDOCK JUDGE

Riders Up!

Snider holds out his cupped hands to give Ronny a leg-up
onto Sweet Thing.

SNIDER

When you're in the gate loosen
the reins and let Sweet Thing's
head drop so you come out
straight.

SNIDER (CONTINUED)

And don't listen to anyone;
don't trust anyone... especially
that asshole Navarro.

After a couple of turns around the walking-ring so the spectators can get an up-close look; Ronny and Sweet Thing are led on to the track for the parade to the post. Each horse is accompanied by a lead pony and rider.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Sweet Thing like the rest of the horses in the race warm up with a light trot to loosen up their muscles.

All the horses in the race gather behind the starting gate. Some are calm while others are frisky. Sweet Thing seems anxious to run.

Assistant Starters load each horse one at a time into their gates. Some go in easy while others are a bit truculent.

One of the Assistant Starters loops a strap around Sweet Thing's bridle and guides the horse into the gate. He hops up onto a ledge in the narrow gate provided for him to stand on. It is cramped quarters.

The Assistant Starter holds both ends of the strap in one hand keeping the horse's head straight. The same procedure is followed for each horse in the race.

There are sounds of horses snorting; the tension in the air is thick; it's race time. Navarro is in the 8th-hole right beside Ronny. Navarro turns to Ronny.

NAVARRO

My horse lugs-in, so stay the
hell out of my way.

Ronny is scared, but a challenge requires a response.

RONNY

Go to hell Navarro... You stay out
of my way if you know what's
good for you.

ASSISTANT STARTER

You got this kid. He's just
trying to psych you out.

RONNY

Jesus Christ, I got to take a piss.

Sweet Thing backs her rump into the back locked-gate creating leverage for her opening lunge forward; her ears react to the inaudible (to humans) sound of the magnetic release on the front gate door. The gate springs open with the sound of metal on metal; the bell rings... they're off!

Sweet Thing leaps out of the gate. She breaks like a bat out of hell and takes the lead. The force of Sweet Thing's start almost knocks Ronny off the horse.

He grips as hard as he can with his knees and his calves. The horse is on it's own. Ronny is just a passenger holding on for dear life scared shitless anyone gets close. This isn't like practice. This is racing.

Sweet Thing maintains the lead down the backstretch.

As they approach the final turn Sweet Thing is flying, working hard, but Ronny can hear the thundering hooves of what sounds like the Charge of The Light Brigade closing in.

As they make the final turn Ronny is still in the lead, but the others are right on this ass. Ronny's training clicks in; he has the presence of mind to use his whip: left side... (Smack!)... wait for the horse to react... switch hands... (Smack!)...

He could win his very first race. He could actually win. He could win his first goddamn race. It's a fucking miracle... the sound of hooves is almost deafening... but he could win... he could fucking win this thing...

Navarro goes wide; Dittmar hugs the rail. Whips are flying; jockeys are urging their horses to go faster.

Sweet Thing is loosing steam. Navarro passes Ronny on the outside. Dittmar flies past on the rail. Flip edges him at the wire. Ronny and Sweet Thing finish fourth.

The race is over, a Hot Walker takes Sweet Thing to cool her down. Snider approaches Ronny.

SNIDER

Well you didn't kill yourself,
or anybody else... all in all it's
a good day. Go celebrate.

INT. PADDOCK DINER - NIGHT

Ronny enters the Paddock Diner to grab some dinner. Sitting in the last booth at the far end of the diner is the familiar silhouette of Pooch. Across the table is Rocky.

Ronny sits down by himself in an empty booth. Angie, the sexy waitress, approaches Ronny with a menu.

ANGIE

How's my little jockey this evening?

RONNY

Not bad Angie, how about you?

ANGIE

Feeling kind of frisky if you really want to know.

RONNY

Didn't get killed today.

ANGIE

Calls for a celebration.

RONNY

Got something special in mind?

ANGIE

I might.

RONNY

What time you get off?

ANGIE

I'm done soon. I'll get you the special. You're going to need your strength.

RONNY

Sounds like a plan.

ANGIE

I'll meet you in the parking lot
when you're done.

Angie turns to face the open kitchen.

ANGIE

Order-up Gus: one big-boy
special for little Ronny, and
pile on the gravy... my boy needs
his oats.

She turns back to Ronny

ANGIE

We're going to ride tonight.

She turns back to the kitchen almost bumping into Pooch who
seems to have appeared from nowhere.

POOCH

The boss wants to see you.

RONNY

Yeah?

POOCH

It's not a request. Move. Now!

Ronny gets up and moves to the back table where Rocky is
sitting drinking coffee accompanied by the remnants of what
looks like a piece of Gus's homemade cherry pie.

Ronny takes the seat opposite Rocky. Pooch pushes in beside
Ronny pushing him hard up against the side of the diner
wall next to a table-style jukebox.

ROCKY

You should try the cherry pie.

RONNY

I haven't had dinner yet.

Rocky looks at Pooch.

ROCKY

Get my friend a nice big piece
of cherry pie.

Pooch shifts his large carcass out of the tight cubicle and goes to the open kitchen where Angie is standing.

ROCKY

Heard you did okay for yourself today.

RONNY

Finished fourth. I could've won.

ROCKY

Could'a, would'a, should'a... winning isn't everything.

RONNY

So I understand.

ROCKY

So Billy gave you the talk?

RONNY

He told me some things.

ROCKY

So you ready to make some real money?

RONNY

I don't know? I just got my feet wet.

ROCKY

You think the Jam-man's going to come through for you. It ain't go'na happen. He uses kids like you, like the cherries he crushes to make his cheap shit jam.

RONNY

We'll see.

Rocky looks up across the diner. Pooch is standing in front of Angie near the kitchen holding a piece of cherry pie. Rocky motions Pooch to come over with the pie.

ROCKY

I've seen a lot of kids come through here. You're smarter than most. You could earn some real money when you're ready.

Rocky takes a white card out of his pocket. The only thing on the card is a phone number. He pushes the card across the table in front of Ronny.

ROCKY

When you're ready, just call.

Pooch drops the pie down in front of Ronny.

ROCKY

Enjoy the pie kid. It's fucking good pie.

EXT. THE PADDOCK DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ronny comes out of the Diner after finishing his meal. Angie is waiting leaning up against a car.

ANGIE

Where we going?

RONNY

My place.

ANGIE

And where's that?

RONNY

The tack room.

ANGIE

Isn't that where they keep the whips and the stirrups?

RONNY

Yup.

ANGIE

Sounds like fun.

RONNY

One thing. No women allowed. I've got to sneak you in.

ANGIE

And how you going to do that?

Ronny opens the trunk of his brand new Oldsmobile.

ANGIE

You're fucking kidding?

RONNY

Nope. Get in.

Angie in her tight mini skirt awkwardly climbs into the trunk of the Oldsmobile. Ronny slams the trunk closed.

ANGIE

FUCK IT'S DARK!

INT. RONNY'S TACK ROOM - NIGHT

The tack room is really nothing more than a six by nine wooden shack used to store all the racing gear. It has a single army style metal cot for the jockey and a small wooden cubicle for some clothes.

Ronny and Angie are naked having sex. Sex Sequence.

INT. RONNY'S TACK ROOM - DAY

Ronny and Angie are curled up together on the single metal cot. The alarm on the bedside table goes off. It's 5 AM.

Ronny gets out of bed and starts to dress. Angie throws the covers back. She's stark naked.

ANGIE

Where you going?

RONNY

I got to go to work.

ANGIE

You sure? Come back to bed.

RONNY

I can't now, but I'll come back as soon as I can and sneak you out.

ANGIE

Okay but you don't know what you're missing.

RONNY

Believe me I know... listen whatever you do, don't open the door for anybody... Understand... nobody! I'll knock three times so you know it's me. Got it?

ANGIE

What's the big deal?

RONNY

Track security comes around in about an hour to make sure we got up and went to work. They catch you here we're both up shit's creek.

ANGIE

All right already, I'm going back to sleep. You have fun playing with your horsey.

An hour later, Angie is asleep in bed. There's a knock on the door. Angie awakes. There are two more urgent knocks on the door. Angie jumps out of bed. She runs to the door and flings it open-wide. She's stark naked. Standing in front of her is a middle-aged man in a security uniform.

Over the Security Guard's shoulder thirty yards away, Ronny preparing to breeze Sweet Thing, turns in the saddle to see Angie standing naked in front of the Security Guard.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Race Track Security is a small room with a desk and two metal chairs. The Head of Security is sitting behind the desk tapping a pencil staring at Ronny and Angie.

They're sitting in the metal chairs opposite; both are in handcuffs. The middle-aged Security Guard that discovered Angie is standing behind them fidgeting. The Head of Security looks up.

ANGIE

Can I leave?

HEAD OF SECURITY

No, you can't leave. Just shut-up and sit there.

He turns to Ronny.

HEAD OF SECURITY

You can't have women in your room.

RONNY

I didn't have women in my room. I only had one.

ANGIE

What are you the sex police?

Head of Security looks at Angie, then Ronny, and back to Angie.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Yeah... that's exactly what I am. This isn't a joke. You and lover-boy here are in deep shit!

RONNY

Okay Officer Krupke we get it.

HEAD OF SECURITY

My name's Carson, who the fuck is Krupke?

Ronny shakes his head in disbelief.

RONNY

Go figure a rent-a-cop doesn't have a sense of humor.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Rent-a-cop ay... While this here rent-a-cop is picking up the telephone to call the police.

He reaches for the black dial telephone on his desk.

HEAD OF SECURITY

This little tryst of yours is going to cost you your licence, your career, and maybe some jail time.

RONNY

I really wouldn't do that if I were you. Not if you like your job.

The Head of Security freezes with the phone halfway to his ear.

RONNY

You know I work for Conrad Stoker, as in Stoker Farms, Stoker Jams and Jellies, and Stoker Investments.

And Mr. Stoker doesn't like to lose the services of his employees, especially the ones that he spent years training to ride his horses.

So I'd say, if anyone here is at risk of getting his ass canned, chances are, it isn't me.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Is that so?

RONNY

Give him a call... why don't you? Let's see what he has to say.

The Head of Security dials Stoker's private emergency phone number.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Mr. Stoker, it's Sergeant Carson at the track. I have your boy Kleinberg here. (pause)

Well he had a girl in his room. I was about to call the police. (pause)

Angry noises are heard over the phone.

HEAD OF SECURITY
Yes but... but... but... the rule
says...

More angry noises are heard over the phone.

HEAD OF SECURITY
Yes Sir Mr. Stoker... no Sir Mr
Stoker... I do like working here...
immediately Mr. Stoker...

He hangs up the phone. His face is flushed. He's
embarrassed. He looks up at his assistant.

HEAD OF SECURITY
This is your lucky day.

RONNY
No... this is your lucky day...
asshole!

HEAD OF SECURITY
Release them.

The Assistant uncuffs Angie and Ronny.

HEAD OF SECURITY
Get the fuck out of here.
Now!

EXT. TRACKSIDE - DAY, EARLY MORNING

Stoker and Snider are each holding a stopwatch. They're watching
Navarro breeze a big brute of a horse, Bill Daly. The horse is
chestnut in color, has a large Roman nose, and is a pain-in-the-
ass to handle. Ronny is breezing Sweet Thing.

Navarro finishes breezing Bill Daly. He trots the horse back to
where Stoker and Snider are standing. A Hot Walker takes control
of the horse. Navarro hops off.

SNIDER

Good time.

NAVARRO

He's fast all right... but he's nuts, and he lugs-in.

STOKER

So is he ready for Saturday?

NAVARRO

Ya he's ready, but I'm not riding him.

STOKER

Why the hell not?

NAVARRO

He's fucking crazy. You should have heard Dittmar after he rode him last month. I don't know German, but he wasn't yelling terms of endearment.

STOKER

What the hell do I pay you for?

NAVARRO

You don't pay me to get killed.

STOKER

So who's going to ride him?

NAVARRO

Put the punk on him.

Navarro turns and directs his gaze to Ronny breezing Sweet Thing. Stoker turns to Snider.

SNIDER

I don't know Conrad. He's only had a couple of races.

STOKER

Teach the kid a lesson. I'm still pissed about that broad he had in his room.

INT. JOCKEY'S ROOM

Ronny is sitting in front of his cubicle relaxing after working out Sweet Thing. He's waiting for Billy so they can go get breakfast.

Flip is on the bench next to him nursing a bottle of vodka wrapped in a towel. Flip motions to Ronny offering him a swig.

FLIP

A little morning pick me up?

RONNY

A little early for me Flip.

Flip motions with the bottle of vodka like a toast, takes a swig, then hides the rest in his cubicle between some shirts and underwear.

Navarro comes in from the track after his workout with Bill Daly. He walks over to Ronny all smiles.

NAVARRO

Congratulations kid, I heard they put you on Bill Daly for Saturday's race.

RONNY

I just heard myself. How did you find out about it?

NAVARRO

I'm the one that recommended you. I told Stoker and Snider they should give you a shot.

Billy has just come out of the washroom and is standing watching the exchange between Ronny and Navarro. He just stands there shaking his head.

Ronny notices Billy. Billy motions with his left hand in a slashing movement across his neck.

NAVARRO

It's a nice horse... enjoy the ride.

RONNY

Ya, thanks.

Navarro heads off to the washroom. Billy approaches.

BILLY

Don't trust that asshole; in fact, don't trust anybody. Whatever he told you, it's probably bullshit.

Come on let's grab some breakfast before Stoker shows up waving his finger in the air.

RONNY

I've been meaning to ask you, how the hell can Flip ride when he's bombed all the time?

BILLY

Listen Flip is the best technical rider in the country. He may be drunk most of the time but when he's in the irons he's stone cold sober. You want to learn how to ride, listen to Flip.

RONNY

That reminds me... yesterday when Flip was weighing in, he just stepped right over the scale. The Scale Judge didn't say a goddamn word; he just marked down a weight.

Billy smiles.

BILLY

I told you, everybody's bent. For a little cash you can weigh whatever you need to weigh.

EXT. TRACK, STARTING GATE, RACE DAY - DAY

The horses are loaded into the starting gate. Ronny is in the 14th hole on Bill Daly. The horse can barely contain itself.

Navarro is in the 5th hole. He looks down the line at Ronny who is trying to calm Bill Daly. Navarro smiles.

Dittmar is in the 4th hole he just shakes his head.

DITTMAR

Arschloch!

Bill Daly leans back into the locked back gate leveraging itself for the start. It snorts in anticipation of the inaudible (to humans) sound of the magnetic gate release.

Bill Daly's ears react to the magnetic release. The gate opens with the sound of metal on metal. The bell rings.

Bill Daly leaps out of the gate, both front legs off the ground. Its hoofs hit the track; its knees buckle, her head drops; Ronny is coming out of the saddle; he's coming over the top.

Bill Daly rights itself. Its head comes up knocking Ronny back into the saddle. Ronny is last.

Bill Daly snorts as if angry at the embarrassment of stumbling out of the gate. Ronny tries desperately to regain control.

The horse doesn't like to be last. It starts running like someone lit its tail on fire. Ronny is on the far outside pulling on the reins but with no effect.

Bill Daley passes five horses on the far outside before they reach the Grandstand. As they start to make the first turn Bill Daly starts to lug-in. Ronny has lost control.

The horse is lugging in hard. Ronny is only a few yards from Navarro. Ronny turns to Navarro...

RONNY

I can't hold him! I can't hold
him! Get out of the way!

Navarro looks at Ronny and just smiles. Ronny passes Navarro like he's standing still. Bill Daly is still lugging-in hard. Ronny is straining to control his horse.

RONNY

Get out of the way! Get the fuck
out of the way!

Bill Daly hits the 2-Horse. Bang! The jockey starts to go over into the 6-Horse. Bang! The 6-Horse tries to avoid the collision but fails. Bang! It smacks into the 3-Horse coming up the rail. All three jockeys go down. The three riderless horses continue running. Three jockeys lay prone on the track.

It's mayhem.

Bill Daly takes the lead ignoring the chaos it left behind. Ronny crosses the finish line. He wins the race.

The order of finish goes up on the tote board:

1st: 14

2nd: 7

3rd: 1

The "Inquiry" sign flashes continually.

An ambulance arrives on the track two paramedics load one of the jockeys who has broken his leg into the ambulance. As it leaves for the hospital two other ambulances arrive, one for the jockey with what appears to be a broken arm and the other with various lacerations, cuts, and bruises.

INT. HEAD STEWARDS OFFICE - DAY

The Chairman of the Stewards sits behind a long table flanked by two other Stewards. The room is crammed with eleven of the jockeys who survived the race.

NAVARRO

I want that little shithead
suspended for life before he
kills somebody!

STEWARD

Take it easy Navarro, everyone knows there's no love lost between you two.

NAVARRO

I'm telling you he's going to get someone killed!

STEWARD

What happen Kleinberg?

NAVARRO

He's incompetent, that's what happened!

STEWARD

Will you shut the fuck up all ready! We know what you think.

RONNY

The horse is crazy. I couldn't control him. It wanted to get to the front no matter who or what was in its way.

NAVARRO

I told you the kid couldn't ride.

DITTMAR

Layoff Navarro. The horse is nuts. I rode it last month and I could hardly keep it under control.

The kid's just a rookie. He's only had a handful of races. He should never have been put on that horse. Don't take it out on the kid.

NAVARRO

I want him suspended!

The three Stewards put there heads together.

EXT. RACE TRACK STABLES

Stoker and Snider are at the stables checking on the horses and discussing Ronny's future. They talk as they walk checking each horse.

SNIDER

Considering the fuss Navarro made, thirty days isn't too bad.

STOKER

That means he's out for the rest of the meet.

They stop at one of the stalls. Snider checks on one of the horses.

SNIDER

He's not going to be happy shovelling shit and exercising horses for a month.

STOKER

We're going to need him ready for next year. I never should have listened to Navarro. Those two got some kinda mad-on.

SNIDER

The kid's a natural, and Navarro doesn't like rookies. But he needs experience, and someone to teach him the technical stuff.

They stop at another stall. Snider checks the horse.

STOKER

Bouchard has a few horses he's running at Decarrie. He asked if I've got someone we'd lend out for the rest of the year.

SNIDER

That's perfect. We send Ronny to Montreal and let him ride for Bouchard. Flip's got a gig with the old Bootlegger so he can keep an eye on him while he's there... teach him technique.

They stop at another stall. Snider checks the horse.

STOKER

When he's sober.

SNIDER

The guys a drunk, but nobody knows the game better than Flip.

INT. RONNY'S CAR, ON THE ROAD TO DECARRIE - DAY

Ronny and Flip are on the road to Decarrie. The car is loaded down with various racing paraphernalia, clothes, and other essentials.

Flip is nursing a flask of vodka. He offers Ronny the flask.

FLIP

Want a snort kid?

Flip's words are slightly slurred, a seemingly permanent condition for Flip Reynolds. The only time he appears sober is when he's in the irons on the back of a horse.

RONNY

Na, I'm driving. I'm already in enough trouble. I fuckup in Decarrie; I'm done for sure.

FLIP

Not to worry my boy, Andre will keep an eye on both of us.

RONNY

Who's Andre?

FLIP

Andre is Andre. He used to spar with Ali. He's my agent. He'll get you some extra rides. There's some moneybags from Kentucky looking for a jock and I'm all booked. Maybe Andre can hook you up.

RONNY

So tell me, what's the deal with the thumb in the neck? I've seen you do it but why?

FLIP

That my boy is when you want to change leads in the final turn. It makes your horse drift to the middle of the track forcing everyone else wide.

RONNY

Interesting.

Flip pulls a small black device out of his pocket to show Ronny. It's about the size of two Double A batteries wrapped in black electrical tape with an exposed lead.

FLIP

Not as interesting as Mr. Edison.

EXT. PARKING LOT DECARRIE DOWNS - NIGHT

Ronny exits the Jockey's Room and heads for the parking lot. His car is boxed-in by a familiar black limousine with blackout windows. Andre, the agent, and Flip exit the back of the limo and approach Ronny.

ANDRE

Salut mon ami?

RONNY

Hey Andre, what's up?

Ronny glances at the limo that hasn't moved. Flip takes his flask out of his back pocket and takes a swig. He offers it to Ronny and Andre, they both decline.

FLIP

Good news kid. Tomorrow's your big day.

RONNY

How so?

ANDRE

I've got you four rides. Time to show *les gros bonnets* what you got...

He hands Ronny the following day's race schedule. He sees horses in the first, the fourth, the sixth, and the eighth races all circled.

ANDRE

Let's celebrate. Steaks at Ruby's... I'm buying?

RONNY

Steak at Ruby's, I'm in. I'll meet you there.

Andre and Flip head for Andre's car. Ronny approaches the black limousine blocking him in. The back window of the limo rolls down. It's Rocky.

ROCKY

Hey kid, how's it going?

RONNY

Good Rocky... everything is good.

ROCKY

Tell me, was the cherry pie as good as advertised?

RONNY

Ya... it was pretty good cherry pie.

ROCKY

Stick with me kid and life can
be as sweet as that nice big
slice of cherry pie.

RONNY

I appreciate the offer Rocky,
but I'm concentrating on keeping
a low profile. Trying to stay
out of trouble.

ROCKY

I get it kid. Nobody likes
trouble, especially me. But it's
always good to have friends.

Billy's words about Navarro echo in Ronny's head. Do they
apply to Rocky as well?

BILLY (V.O.)

*Don't trust that asshole; in
fact, don't trust anybody.
Whatever he told you, it's
probably bullshit.*

RONNY

Sure Rocky everybody needs
friends.

ROCKY

Still got that card?

Ronny reaches into his pocket and pulls out a rumbled
business card with only a phone number on it.

ROCKY

Whenever you're ready kid.

Life can be hard, and racing can
be cruel, but if you play your
cards right... it can be as sweet
as that cherry pie.

EXT. DECARRIE DOWNS RACE TRACK

The horses are loaded into the starting gate. Ronny is in the 1-hole on Gewiss. A French Canadian rider is in the 2-hole on Chronic. The Assistant Starter is having trouble keeping Chronic's head straight. The horse is not cooperating.

Ronny has become familiar with the procedure. Gewiss leans back into the locked back gate. His ears perk-up. The gate opens with the sound of metal on metal. The bell rings.

TRACK ANNOUNCER

And they're off.
Stella Bay takes the lead,
Carson's Lady is second, and
Easy Pick'ins is third..

Chronic comes out of the gate lugging-in bumping Gewiss knocking her off stride.

TRACK ANNOUNCER

Chronic stumbles coming out of
the gate.. Gewiss is bumped..

Both horses recover. In about ten yards Chronic takes a three-quarter-length lead over Gewiss.

Chronic's head twitches awkwardly. Chronic keels over in front of Gewiss forcing Ronny and Gewiss into the rail.

TRACK ANNOUNCER

Chronic is down..
Chronic is down..
Gewiss hits the rail..

Ronny is propelled over the infield fence into the infield. He lands hard on the infield. Everything goes black.

Ronny's eyes open slowly. Everything is a blur.

An abstract Picasso-esque face appears suspended in the clouds over Ronny's head. The face slowly comes into focus. It's a track paramedic

PARAMEDIC

Peux-tu m'entendre?

RONNY
I don't understand.

PARAMEDIC
Can you hear me?

RONNY
Am I dead?

PARAMEDIC
Ne bougez pas!

RONNY
I don't understand. What are you saying?

PARAMEDIC
You've had an accident. Don't move!

RONNY
Fuck it hurts.

PARAMEDIC
We're taking you to the hospital.

The Paramedic and his partner carefully get Ronny onto a flattened gurney. He's loaded into one of the two waiting ambulances. The other jockey is placed into the second ambulance.

The paramedics close the back doors of the ambulance, get in the front, put on the siren and the rotating Cherry Top, and head for the hospital.

Int. Hospital Room, *Hôpital Saint Jean de Lalande* - Night

Ronny is in bed in a private hospital room.

Flip is sitting in the one visitor's chair, half asleep with his flask cradled in his arm.

Behind the bed is a cheap framed printed lithograph of the Virgin Mary. Opposite the bed is a large wooden-cross mounted on the wall under a large clock.

Everything else in the room is starched sterile white.

Ronny's eyes open. Everything is blurred. As they slowly come into focus all he sees is the upside down image of the Virgin Mary behind the bed.

RONNY

Jesus Christ... Where am I?

Flip is awakened from his half-sleep. He gets out of the chair and approaches the bed.

FLIP

You're in the hospital my boy..

Ronny spots the giant cross hanging opposite the bed.

RONNY

They couldn't take me to Mount-Sinai?

FLIP

This is Quebec my son. It wouldn't surprise me if the law says they got crosses there too.

A pretty young nurse in a tight starched white uniform, and old-fashioned nurse's cap comes into the room.

NURSE

Bonjour, comment allez-vous ce soir?

RONNY

Excuse me?

NURSE

How are you this evening,
Monsieur Kleinberg?

RONNY

Everything hurts.

NURSE

You have a ruptured spleen. You are lucky to be alive. Can I get you something to make you more comfortable?

RONNY

You could get rid of the cross?

NURSE

Excusez-moi?

FLIP

Don't mind him Sweetie, He's
still delirious.

She smiles not really understanding what either man is
talking about. She adjusts Ronny's pillow.

NURSE

I'll bring you something for the
pain.

She turns and leaves. Both men follow her tight white
starched uniform as it leaves the room.

Flip takes a swig from his ever-present flask.

FLIP

Well my son, I must be off. I'll
report to those that care that
you are still breathing, and as
big-a-pain-in-the-ass as ever.

Flip offers up his flask. Ronny shakes his head. Flip goes
to the door to leave.

RONNY

Hey Flip...

Flip turns.

RONNY

Thanks...

FLIP

For what my boy? I had nothing
else to do this evening.

RONNY

Thanks anyway...

Flip waves a nonchalant hand in the air and leaves.

Ronny's alone in the room.

He thinks of his near death experience and wonders if this horseracing thing is worth it. The dream of becoming the next big-time jockey has faded and life has become a game of survival. He needs to decide if the jockey's life is for him? He sits up in bed and swings his feet over the side. It hurts. It hurts a lot. The only sound in the room is the clock above the cross. His father's words ring in his head.

FATHER (V.O.)

(Yiddish Accent)

Everybody's got an alarm clock
shoved up their *tokhes*, and when
it goes off, you're done,
gustorbin, toyt!

The accident is a sign. It points him in a direction. He gingerly allows his feet to drift towards the floor. He gently eases himself off the bed but he's short, so he lands harder than expected.

RONNY

FUCK!

He manages to make it to the closet where Flip has hung his street clothes. He's hurting. He searches in the pockets till he finds the rumpled white business card Rocky gave him at the diner. It seems like it was ages ago, but in reality, it was only a few weeks ago.

He struggles to get back to the bed. He leans the card up beside the black dial telephone. He manages to get back up onto the bed with his feet dangling over the side. He stares at the card.

He looks out the window. It's raining. He glances down at the street below. Across the street he notices a dive with a large colored neon sign *La Salle de Billard* glistening in the rain. He realizes he's come a long way, but nothing has really changed. He looks back down at the card. He picks up the receiver and dials...

ROCKY (V.O.)

Speak...

Ronny hesitates.

To Be Continued

