

Prologue

Unreserved seating area of the racetrack. VINCENT is seated, watching a race-in-progress. The thundering sound of the HORSES' HOOVES can be heard. The CROWD NOISE begins to rise as the horses pass the stretch. A muffled ANNOUNCER'S VOICE can dimly be heard, mixed in with the noise of the CROWD. One of the horses makes a sudden move (off-stage) and the CROWD reacts. VINCENT stands, watching the race with full attention. JOE enters. He observes VINCENT, unseen. The CROWD NOISE, ANNOUNCER'S VOICE, and HORSES' HOOVES combine to create a cacophony of SOUND which reaches its final peak as lights and sound abruptly cut out.

Scene One

Same. JOE is studying the race card. VINCENT enters, holding two beers and his own copy of the racing form.

JOE How much I owe you?

VINCENT Ten.

JOE Must be imported.

VINCENT Not the beer. My cut.

JOE We'll split it later.

VINCENT Give it to me now.

JOE What did I just say?

Silence. VINCENT sits, opens the form.

VINCENT I didn't like the guy.

JOE What's to like?

(Pause.)

Guys like that, they're looking for ways to lose. You know why?

VINCENT Why?

JOE Because deep down they hate themselves.

VINCENT He went for it all the way.

JOE After the Third Race, I knew we had him.

Pause.

VINCENT If I tell you something, do you promise not to get angry?

JOE Why? What'd you do?

VINCENT The Fifth Race ... I only bet one ticket.

JOE You were supposed to cover the spread.

VINCENT I know. I only bet one.

JOE Jesus. You could have blown the entire / fucking —

VINCENT I knew which horse was going to win. Seemed like a waste.

JOE Christ.

(Pause.)

You're one lucky bastard, you know that?

(Pause.)

Alright ... fuck it. The guy had it coming. Time for the *next* race.

(Pause.)

Who do you like in the Seventh ... ?

VINCENT The Two Horse. Regicide.

JOE The system has the Four. Unbridled.

(Pause.)

What's so spectacular about Regicide?

VINCENT Only horse in the race to finish first her last three starts. And she's got class. The owner wanted to dump her so he ran her at twenty-four, where she gained two lengths in the stretch and ran wide.

JOE Alright. You got it all figured out.

JOE looks out at the tote board.

Morning line has her at ten to one.

VINCENT She'll drop.

Pause.

JOE Heard you hit a nice little winner in the Ninth yesterday.

VINCENT I usually get lucky in the Ninth.

JOE Someone told me you put down five thousand.

VINCENT Who told you that? Carter? You trust what he says?

Pause.

JOE Horse paid eleven even. So you must have taken home, what ... over twenty grand ... ?

VINCENT More like sixteen.

JOE And you weren't going to tell me about it?

(Pause.)

Answer me.

VINCENT I was going to tell you.

JOE Uh-huh.

VINCENT This was just a spur of the moment thing. I had a hunch.

JOE A hunch.

VINCENT I figured you wouldn't have been interested.

Pause.

JOE Do me a favor. Next time you get a hunch, tell me about it. You understand?

(Pause.)

Do you understand?

Pause. VINCENT nods.

We're all set, by the way, the other thing. Carter's got the mark all picked out. He says this one's perfect.

VINCENT What does he do?

JOE Don't worry, we'll get to all that.

VINCENT I thought we only took down blokes who deserve it.

JOE They all deserve it.

(Pause.)

Know what I think? They *want* to lose. They see themselves as victims. And so, they *become* victims. Reminds me of you. Just looking for an excuse.

VINCENT I'm not a victim.

JOE You're the worst kind of victim, you don't even know it.

VINCENT That's why I'm getting out.

JOE This again.

VINCENT Yeah, this again.

(Pause.)

Someday I'm going to be an owner.

JOE You're going to buy a thoroughbred?

VINCENT Be on the other side of things for once.

JOE Most owners go under the first year.

VINCENT I know what I'm doing.

JOE You're a handicapper, kiddo. I hate to break it to you but that's what you are. You have a skill. Something even I haven't got. Like it or not, you're in the exact place you belong.

The BUGLE CALL, signaling approximately ten minutes until the next race.

VINCENT You betting the Two?

JOE I'm still deciding.

(Pause.)

The system likes Unbridled.

VINCENT The system's wrong. It's a bad bet.

JOE I can see how, from your perspective, it might seem like a bad bet.

VINCENT My perspective ... ?

JOE Your *limited* perspective.

VINCENT rises to leave.

Where you going?

VINCENT Make a bet.

JOE Put me down for a hundred.

VINCENT On the Four?

JOE The Two. What's she called ... Regicide.

VINCENT You've got the cash?

JOE *(with a wink)* I'll pay you out of my winnings.

VINCENT Give me my cut and I'll take it out of that.

JOE Hey.

(Pause.)

Don't fuck with me.

JOE looks out at the tote board, checks the odds.

Eight-to-one. You're right, she's dropping.