

IVORY BLACK

Steve Briggs

FADE IN:

INT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A man sits at a round table with five other figures, four of them male, one female. This is DALTON, early 30's, gaunt features, heavy stubble, expressionless. A small crowd of gamblers watch on, chatting light-heartedly, drinking and laughing. Another man leans against the bar, cigarette in one hand, glass of bourbon in the other, watching silently and intently. His pin-striped suit is perfectly ironed and pressed. He wouldn't look out of place in the 1930's. This is FRANK IVORY, mid-40's, owner of the club.

A referee walks up to the table.

REFEREE

Listen up, gentlemen... and lady. Bets have been made on the six of you, some based on who will win, some on who will lose. If the bet placed on you is successful, you will win a percentage.

The referee pulls out a pistol.

REFEREE

If you don't survive to enjoy the winnings, the prize money will be sent to your next of kin.

He slides in a single bullet, before spinning the chamber.

REFEREE

The rules are very simple. Each of you take turns in picking up the gun, pointing it at your head, and pulling the trigger. If the revolver does not discharge you pass the weapon onto the player to your left. The round continues until the revolver does discharge, in which case the round will end, new bets will be made on the remaining players, and the next round will commence. This will continue until there is one player remaining. Any questions?

The table remains silent. The referee places the gun in the centre of the table and spins it. An unusually cheerful male player beside Dalton turns to him, smirking.

PLAYER 1

Good thing this isn't spin the  
bottle!

Dalton turns to look at the man, speechless.

The revolver's rotation slows, eventually coming to stop on Dalton.

REFEREE

Good luck.

Frank takes a sip of his drink, riveted by the situation. Dalton picks up the pistol, pushes the barrel into his temple, and without hesitation, pulls the trigger.

The title:

IVORY BLACK

Crashes on screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAR - EVENING

A considerably brighter, happier, and more colourful Dalton sits at the outside deck of a bar, smoking a cigarette and sipping a pint. He is alone. Movement from the corner of his eye causes him to turn, and he notices a pretty girl struggling to enter the deck area by pulling the door inwards. This is JANE, late 20's, pretty with long brown hair. Dalton gets up and pulls the door outwards.

JANE

(Smiling sheepishly)

Thanks.

DALTON

No problem. Happens to everybody.

Jane smiles at him again before sitting down at a nearby table. Dalton returns to his beer. The girl eventually glances over, before making her way over to him.

JANE

Sorry to bother you, do you mind if I sit here? I don't very often get time to myself, and now I have some, I don't think I want to spend it alone.

DALTON  
Yeah sure, please.

JANE  
Thank you.

The girl sits down opposite Dalton.

JANE  
I'm Jane.

DALTON  
Dalton.

The two sit in silence for a few moments, sipping their drinks. Dalton analyzes the mysterious girl.

DALTON  
What do you do?

Jane gives him a quizzical look.

DALTON  
The thing that takes up most of your time. Do you work?

JANE  
I'm a teacher. Well, a teacher's aid. When I'm not working I'm finishing my teaching degree at university. Plus I have a four year old daughter, so that doesn't leave much room for anything else.

DALTON  
I bet you'll be glad when she starts school and can come along with you! Can I ask her name?

JANE  
Christine.

DALTON  
Lovely.

JANE  
She's a handful at times, but I couldn't imagine life without her. She's at her father's place tonight, and, well, I thought I deserved some relaxation.

DALTON

I'm sure you've more than earned  
the right for a break. Cheers.

Dalton and Jane clink their glasses.

JANE

What do you do, Dalton?

DALTON

I'm a writer. Well, I don't think  
I've fully earned that title yet.  
But I want to be a writer.

JANE

Oh, wonderful. What kind of things  
do you write?

DALTON

Anything, really. Novels, poems,  
movie scripts, short stories. My  
mind's always on overdrive and I  
find the best way to release it all  
is through the end of a pen.  
Doesn't really matter in what  
format it comes out.

JANE

That's great. I've always admired  
people that can follow their dreams  
rather than give in to a standard 9  
to 5 paycheck. Unless that is their  
dream, of course.

Dalton smiles.

DALTON

Thank you, it's a nice change to  
hear that. I'm used to the whole  
"get a real job" spiel. One of the  
reasons my last relationship  
failed. It was a shame, but I  
figured if your partner can't  
support you in what you do, or at  
least tolerate it for your sake,  
you're with the wrong person.

JANE

Nobody should be with the wrong  
person.

DALTON  
I'll drink to that.

Dalton and Jane clink their glasses again. Jane finishes her drink and gets to her feet.

JANE  
I should probably get back home.  
Clean the house and do some uni  
work before the little one gets  
home tomorrow.

DALTON  
Well it was great to meet you,  
Jane. Don't work yourself too hard.

JANE  
Thank you Dalton. Good luck with  
the writing.

Jane heads for the door but stops herself. She turns back toward Dalton.

JANE  
This is probably going to sound  
strange, and forgive me if I'm  
being too forward...

Dalton lowers his drink and turns to her.

JANE  
Like I said, I don't get a chance  
to socialise very often. I know  
we've just met, and we've only  
chatted for a few minutes, but it's  
been nice and I was wondering if  
you'd be interested in exchanging  
phone numbers so perhaps we can  
talk again sometime?

DALTON  
I'd like that very much.

They exchange phone numbers. Jane smiles at him and heads for the door.

DALTON  
Pull, don't push.

JANE  
(laughs)  
See you later, Dalton.

Jane leaves. Dalton sits at the table, finishes his cigarette, and smiles optimistically.

CUT TO:

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton sits at his desk, cigarette hanging out his mouth, busily writing. His phone rings and he glances over at it, smiling when he reads "JANE" on the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Dalton and Jane wander through the park, side by side, in no hurry.

DALTON

Can I admit something to you, Jane?

JANE

Of course.

DALTON

I was really hoping you'd call again. I was going to give it a couple more days and call you myself, but I was curious to see if you'd call first, if you were as interested to see me again as I was to see you.

JANE

Playing hard to get, are we?

The couple laugh.

JANE

So what first sparked your interest in writing, Dalton?

DALTON

When I was a kid, I used to create my own comics. They were terrible, but I had fun, it made me happy. I just loved telling stories, and I soon realised that I was better at writing them than drawing them. I'm building a portfolio of work, just need to find out what to do with it all.

JANE

Can I ask what you do for money?

DALTON

I've got a small inheritance in the bank, and I've published a couple of short stories. Nothing great, but they helped pay the rent for a little while. Plus I occasionally play online Poker, which I've become quite good at.

JANE

You a bit of a gambling man, Dalton?

Dalton laughs.

DALTON

I don't have a problem, if that's what you mean! I've won more times than not, wouldn't keep at it otherwise. Anyway, I'm not going to be rich anytime soon, but I'm happy with my life.

JANE

Being happy is the most important thing in this world. Many people take happiness for granted, don't realise how precious it is, how easily it can slip away.

Dalton turns to look at Jane.

DALTON

Are you happy, Jane?

JANE

I'm getting there.

Dalton smiles at her. They continue walking.

DALTON

So how's Christine doing? Staying with her father again tonight?

JANE

Yeah. She's with him a couple of nights a week. As much as I love my little girl, I do enjoy the peace and quiet.

DALTON

You and he still friends?

JANE

No, not really. I wouldn't have him in my life, if it wasn't for Christine. But I have no regrets, without him I'd never have her in the first place.

DALTON

Can I ask what happened?

Jane averts her gaze.

DALTON

I'm sorry, if it's a touchy subject...

JANE

No, it's okay. You have a right to know.

Jane stops walking, facing Dalton.

JANE

I first met George six years ago. He seemed like a decent guy, charming, funny. Next thing I knew I was pregnant with his daughter. As soon as I told him, he changed completely. He became distant, cold, violent. I wanted to leave him but I was determined that Christine have a father. Well, before I had a chance to make a decision either way, George left me for another woman. When Christine was born, he suddenly came back on the scene, as cruel as ever but intent on seeing his daughter. Only on his own terms, mind you, whenever it suited him. Which rarely suited me.

DALTON

I'm sorry Jane. That must have been incredibly difficult for you.

JANE

Well, the worst is over. He'll probably always be a part of my life, but he's backed off quite a

JANE  
bit, I only see him when I pick up  
and drop off Christine. And like I  
said, without him, I wouldn't have  
my little girl.

The two walk in silence for a moment. Jane tries to lighten  
the mood.

JANE  
George Dane. His friends call him  
"Great Dane". He's enormous! If we  
had gotten married, I'd have become  
Jane Dane!

DALTON  
(smirking)  
Jane Dane?

JANE  
Sounds as bad as John Doe, if you  
ask me!

The couple laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Dalton and Jane walk down the street, coming to a stop  
outside her house.

JANE  
Well, this is me. Thank you  
Dalton, I had a wonderful time.

DALTON  
Likewise, Jane. You're an  
incredible girl who deserves all  
the happiness and respect in the  
world, and I'm sorry you've been  
through such a hard time. If I can  
ever do anything for you...

Jane impulsively leans forward and kisses Dalton.

JANE  
Goodnight Dalton.

Jane heads for her front door. Dalton grins to himself.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dalton answers a knock on his front door to find Jane and Christine standing there.

DALTON

Why hello, you must be Christine!  
It's great to finally meet you.

Christine shyly ducks behind her mother. Jane smiles.

JANE

She's always shy with new faces.  
Plus it can be a little confusing  
for her, seeing me with a man who  
isn't her father. She'll get used  
to you.

DALTON

Hey, yeah that's okay. I  
understand.

Christine peeks out from behind Jane.

CHRISTINE

Do you have any cartoons?

Dalton laughs.

DALTON

I think that can be arranged!

Dalton looks at Jane. She smiles at him.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Dalton and Jane are asleep in bed together. Christine waddles in.

CHRISTINE

Mum... Mum... Wake up.

Jane stirs sleepily.

JANE

What is it?

CHRISTINE

I'm hungry. Can I have some  
breakfast?

JANE  
Mummy's sleeping, Christine. Can  
you wait a while?

Christine looks disappointed. Dalton rolls over.

DALTON  
It's okay. I'll get her sorted.

JANE  
Are you sure?

DALTON  
It's fine. I'll keep her company,  
let you sleep in for a change.

Jane kisses Dalton.

JANE  
(smiling)  
Thank you.

Dalton gets out of bed and leaves the room with Christine,  
closing the door behind him.

DALTON  
So, what do you usually like to  
have for breakfast?

CHRISTINE  
Toast and warm milk.

Dalton smiles.

DALTON  
And what do you like on your toast?

CHRISTINE  
Jam.

DALTON  
Good choice, I like jam on my toast  
too. Do you know where your mum  
keeps it?

Christine points to a cupboard.

DALTON  
Okay then. How about you park  
yourself at the table and I'll be  
right there with your order.

Christine climbs up on a chair and waits patiently. Dalton brings over two plates of toast and jam, plus some warm milk for Christine and a coffee for himself. He sits beside her and raises his cup.

DALTON

A toast... to toast! Cheers!

Christine grins and clinks her glass against his coffee. They sit side by side, eating together. After a few moments of silence, Dalton glances over at her, studying her features.

DALTON

Can I ask you a question, Christine?

Christine nods.

DALTON

Is your father good to you?

Christine nods.

DALTON

Do you enjoy going to his house?

Christine nods.

DALTON

What kinds of things do you get up to when you're with your dad?

CHRISTINE

We have a lot of fun.

Dalton takes a bite of his toast, thinking for a moment. He finishes his mouthful and turns back to Christine.

DALTON

Does he tell you to say that?

Christine stops chewing, and remains silent.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jane emerges from the bedroom. Noise from outside causes her to peek out the window. She smiles when she sees Dalton and Christine laughing and bouncing a ball in the yard.

CUT TO:

INT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

There is a loud crack and a mass of blood and brains sprays into the air as Player 2 loses the round. He crumples heavily to the floor. Moans of dismay and cheers of success simultaneously erupt from the crowd. Frank smirks and takes a long drag on his cigarette.

REFEREE

That concludes round 1. Bets are now open for round 2. If those interested would kindly make their way to the bar...

The crowd rushes to the bar and the sound of chatter fills the air. Two employees appear and one of them drags the body away while the other cleans up the mess. Dalton studies the faces of his fellow players.

The referee steps up.

REFEREE

Bets are now closed. If everyone is ready, round 2 will begin.

The referee picks up the revolver, placing a new bullet in the chamber and spinning it. He places the gun in the middle of the table and spins it around. It comes to rest on Player 5, who grabs the gun and after a moment's hesitation, squeezes the trigger. He sighs with relief when he hears a click. It is Dalton's turn again. He presses the barrel against his temple and pulls the trigger.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. JANE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Dalton knocks on Jane's door, a bouquet of flowers in his hand. He is smiling but her sombre expression when she opens the door wipes the expression from his face. She heads back inside, leaving Dalton to let himself in. He follows her, confused.

DALTON

Hey... Hey, what is it?

Jane reluctantly turns to him.

DALTON

Jane, what's wrong?

Jane hesitates for a moment. She leans against the kitchen counter.

JANE

It's George.

DALTON

George... Your ex? What did he do?

JANE

Nothing... Well, not much. He knows about you, about us. I don't know how, maybe he saw us together, or perhaps Christine said something to him.

DALTON

Well... Why does it even matter? He's seeing other people, you and him are history. He doesn't own you, you can do what you want, see who you want.

JANE

I know, I know. He doesn't see it that way. He's... He's been coming around, saying he wants me back, that he can't bear the thought of me with anybody else. He's being very persistent.

Dalton's expression turns grim.

DALTON

Is that what you want to do?

JANE

No... No, of course not! I just wish he'd leave me alone. But he's always there, and he's always going to be there because of Christine. He's never going to give me any peace.

Jane looks at Dalton, tears in her eyes.

JANE

I'm sorry Dalton, it's not fair on you to have to deal with all my... baggage.

DALTON

It's okay. You, Christine, you both mean the world to me. Besides, you shouldn't have to go through this alone. I'll do what I can to help, whatever you need.

JANE  
Well, there is one thing...

DALTON  
Anything.

JANE  
I'm really sorry, Dalton...

Dalton gives Jane a quizzical look.

JANE  
Uni's getting really busy,  
Christine is a handful, and now  
with George pressuring me... I'm  
sorry Dalton but I think we need to  
take a break.

DALTON  
Jane, I-

JANE  
It's not you, it's nothing you've  
done. I just need some room to  
breathe. George will let up  
eventually, but I don't think you  
being around is going to help  
matters. I just need some time to  
deal with him.

DALTON  
What if he turns violent again? I  
really don't think this is the best  
way to handle things. It would be  
much safer if I were around, just  
in case-

JANE  
Dalton, please.

Dalton sighs. He puts the flowers down on the bench.

DALTON  
Well, I guess I'll see you when  
you're ready.

Dalton heads for the door. Jane, tears now running down her  
cheeks, rushes up behind him. They embrace, the hug turning  
into a passionate kiss, which leads them to the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dalton lies in bed with Jane asleep in his arms, deep in thought. The bedside clock reads 2AM. A sudden incessant banging on the front door startles him. Jane sits up sharply.

JANE

Oh shit, it's George. You can't be here. You... You need to hide.

DALTON

This is ridiculous. You shouldn't have to-

JANE

Dalton, he can't know you're here. You have to hide.

DALTON

Jane, you stay here and I'll go talk to him.

JANE

Dalton, please!

Dalton sighs in frustration and heads for the bathroom, keeping the light off and the door ajar. Jane quickly rushes to the front door and opens it. GEORGE DANE bursts in, mid-30's, bulky and unkempt. His eyes give the impression of having a low IQ. He grins at Jane.

GEORGE

Hey, beautiful. Did you miss me? I've missed you!

JANE

What do you want, George? It's late.

GEORGE

Why, to see you of course! And my darling daughter.

JANE

She's asleep. We both were. Go away, you're drunk.

GEORGE

Alone?

JANE

What?

George's expression becomes much harsher.

DALTON

Are you here alone?

JANE

That's none of your business.

George lunges forward and grabs Jane by the hair, the sudden movement causing her to gasp.

GEORGE

You better not make me search the place, you bitch.

Dalton, overhearing the conversation and commotion, makes an appearance.

DALTON

Take your hands off her, and leave. Right now.

George turns to face him. Smiling, he lets go of Jane and takes a step toward Dalton.

GEORGE

So you're the new guy? Dalton, eh? You think you can just come along and steal my family from me?

DALTON

It's not stealing when they don't belong to anybody.

GEORGE

What's that supposed to mean?

DALTON

It means that you had your chance, you blew it, and you should leave her the hell alone.

GEORGE

And what the fuck are you going to do?

George steps closer to Dalton, who reaches over to the kitchen bench and slides a large chopping knife out of a wooden knife block. George pauses. Jane watches on in stunned silence.

GEORGE  
You going to use that?

DALTON  
You willing to find out?

George doesn't move. He looks over at Jane, then back at Dalton. He grins and takes another step towards Dalton, who pulls his phone out of his pocket.

DALTON  
Not enough? What if I add police to the mix?

George pauses. Dalton begins dialing. George takes a step back, pointing a threatening finger.

GEORGE  
I'll be seeing you again.

George heads for the door. He pauses beside Jane, glaring at her.

GEORGE  
You fucking whore.

George exits, slamming the door behind him. Dalton puts the knife back and rushes over to comfort Jane.

DALTON  
Fucking hell. Are you okay?

JANE  
Yeah. Yeah I'm fine.

DALTON  
You shouldn't put up with that, Jane. He's dangerous. He can't just burst in like that. You should get a restraining order, or-

JANE  
I think it's best if you go.

DALTON  
What?

JANE  
In case he comes back. You should leave.

DALTON

In case he comes back? You can't be serious. That's more reason for me to stay!

JANE

Please, Dalton. Do it for me. Just go.

Dalton gives Jane a look of disbelief but he sees the pleading look in her eyes so reluctantly heads for the door. He opens it and pauses.

DALTON

I love you.

Jane doesn't reply. Dalton leaves, closing the door behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dalton stares back at the house, before heading down the dark street. He lights up a cigarette, frustration in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Player 3's head sprays blood with a sharp bang and he slumps across the table. The crowd emits a mixture of cheers and cursing. Frank nods approvingly. The two employees quickly remove the body before the blood pool spreads too far, wiping down the table with a damp cloth.

REFEREE

That brings round 2 to a close.  
Bets are now open for round 3.

The crowd approaches the bar. Dalton studies the remaining players again, particularly Player 4, a young woman who couldn't be much older than 20. She has fear in her eyes.

The referee steps forward.

REFEREE

Bets are now closed. Time for round 3. Good luck to you all.

The referee picks up the revolver and prepares it for the new round. He places it on the table and spins it. The gun comes to rest on Player 4, who points the gun at her head and squeezes. She is lucky, as is Player 5. Dalton is next. He pushes the barrel against his temple and pulls the trigger.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Dalton tries to write, but can't concentrate. He paces the floor of his lounge room, deep in thought. He stops, concentrating intently.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dalton stands at the end of George's driveway, looking up at the house, his eyes wide and nervous, gripping a crowbar in his right hand. He takes a deep breath, and slowly makes his way up to the front door. After a few moments of hesitation he finally knocks, and George opens the door. He stares at Dalton, the crowbar, and back at Dalton, disbelief on his face.

GEORGE

What the fuck-

Without warning Dalton strikes George in the head with the weapon. George goes down heavily in the doorway and Dalton leans over him, laying blow after blow into George's face, beating his head to a pulp and reducing it to mush. Dalton finally ceases and leans against the doorway, breathing heavily. Blood trickles down the front steps.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dalton snaps back to reality, realising he is still standing at the end of the driveway. He gathers himself before heading up to the door, taking a deep breath and knocking. George answers and stares at Dalton, amused.

GEORGE

You've got to be kidding... and what the hell do you plan on doing now, tough guy?

Dalton freezes. He attempts to raise the crowbar but is too slow and George smacks him in the face with a powerful fist. Dalton drops the crowbar and clutches his nose, and George grabs him by the shirt and tosses him into the driveway. He collapses heavily on the concrete. George throws the crowbar after him and Dalton clammers sideways to avoid being struck.

GEORGE

Don't waste my fucking time,  
asshole. If I see you again I'll  
kill you.

George slams the door and Dalton drags himself to his feet, clutching his bleeding nose. He picks up the crowbar and stares at the house before limping away, deflated and humiliated.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Dalton sits on his couch in a daydream, with a black eye and a dressing over his nose. The TV is on in the background, and Dalton pays little attention when a news report comes on.

NEWS REPORTER

A young woman was found severely beaten in her suburban home early this morning. Neighbours heard raised voices and sounds of a struggle around 2AM and called the police. The young woman was taken away in an ambulance but died from her injuries before reaching the hospital.

Dalton raises his head.

NEWS REPORTER

The woman's four year old daughter was asleep in bed at the time of the incident and is unhurt. The person believed to have been responsible for the savage attack, the ex-partner of the woman and father of the child, is in custody.

Dalton stares at the TV in disbelief. He gets to his feet, stunned, but his legs give in and he drops to his knees, vomiting violently. He stays on the floor, hyperventilating and sobbing hysterically, before releasing a scream of frustration and horror.

CUT TO:

INT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Player 5's brains exit his cranium with a loud crack and he slumps back in his chair, a crimson puddle spreading on the floor beneath him. More groans and cheers from the crowd. Frank sips his drink, satisfied. The two employees carry the corpse away and mop up the blood.

REFEREE

That's the end of round 3. Bets are open again. Please make your way to the bar. Thank you.

Conversation fills the air as new bets are made by the excited crowd. Dalton eyes off the young female player. She stares at the table, her expression blank.

DALTON

How old are you?

The girl looks up.

PLAYER 4

Huh?

DALTON

I asked you how old you are.

PLAYER 4

I'm 22.

DALTON

Then what the fuck are you doing in this place?

PLAYER 4

What's it to you?

DALTON

You're a child. You have your whole life ahead of you. Why are you doing this?

PLAYER 4  
I have my reasons.

DALTON  
Are they good enough to die for?

PLAYER 4  
Are yours?

Before Dalton can respond, the referee steps forward.

REFEREE  
Round 4, only two rounds to go.  
Bets are closed, the round will now  
commence.

The referee carries out the usual steps. The revolver comes to rest on Player 1. He pulls the trigger and laughs when there is no outcome. Player 4 picks up the gun. Dalton stares at her, and she notices this.

PLAYER 4  
Don't look at me.

Dalton averts his gaze. The girl's turn ends with a sharp click, and she passes the gun to Dalton, their eyes meeting again.

Dalton grabs the revolver, aims it at his head, and pulls the trigger.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKNESS - UNKNOWN

An elephant with sinister features and menacing eyes leans forward out of the darkness.

ELEPHANT  
Go for it.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton snaps out of sleep, gaunt, unshaven, a shadow of his former self. He appears depressed, unmotivated. Another day, so what? He eventually but unhurriedly drags himself out of bed.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton stands under the shower, enjoying the scalding water, probably the highlight of his day. He leans against the shower wall, eyes closed, barely moving, in no hurry.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton prepares himself a coffee, generously shoveling in the brown contents.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton heads outside his apartment with his mug and a cigarette, inspecting the day. It is bleak and overcast, and there is no optimistic view in sight. He parks himself in a fold-out chair. Dalton takes his time with his two vices, and when finished he sits for a few more moments, no motivation to get up.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Dalton glances around his small dank apartment for a few seconds, eventually sitting down on his couch, staring at the wall. The day passes slowly. Dalton spends most of it in a daydream. He tries to keep himself busy by writing, watching some TV, doing some housework, but nothing draws him in.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

The sun has finally gone down. Dalton slowly gets to his feet, switches on a blues CD, opens up a liquor cabinet and pours himself a shot of scotch, throwing it back before pouring himself another, and another. When suitably drunk he heads into the bathroom, carrying the bottle with him. He runs himself a bath and opens the bathroom cabinet, grabbing a pair of scissors. Undressing, he climbs into the bath and submerges himself in the warm water. He has an abnormally large swig of the scotch, before dropping the bottle into the bath and bringing the scissors towards his wrist. As the

blues grows louder, Dalton pushes the scissors hard against his vein. He grits his teeth, trying to gather the courage to slice open his flesh. The music grows to a crescendo as he grasps the death device tighter, but dies down as Dalton loses the nerve and lowers the scissors. Tears flow instead of blood.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dalton sits at the outside deck again, his face a mask of misery. He clutches a scotch and smokes a cigarette, staring out into the darkness. Glancing over at where Jane had sat a few weeks ago doesn't help his frame of mind. The door opens behind him and Frank Ivory, as well-dressed as ever, walks out, leaning against the railing and admiring the scenery. He eventually turns to look at Dalton, staring at him intently before approaching the table. Dalton doesn't look up.

FRANK

Mind if I have one of your  
cigarettes, friend?

Dalton passes him the packet. Frank takes one and lights it.

FRANK

Much appreciated.

Frank stares at Dalton again, who still doesn't raise his head.

FRANK

You seem a bit down in the dumps.  
Can I be of any help?

DALTON

You could put me out of my goddamn  
misery. I'd really appreciate it.

Frank smiles.

FRANK

Am I correct to assume that you  
want to die?

DALTON

Spot fucking on.

Frank takes a sip of his drink. Dalton turns to look at his drinking companion for the first time.

DALTON  
She's dead because of me.

FRANK  
Who is?

DALTON  
I had a chance to save her, but I was a coward. Now she's dead, her daughter is an orphan, and I don't deserve to live.

FRANK  
I'm sorry to hear that, friend. Why don't you kill yourself?

Dalton is a little surprised by Frank's response.

DALTON  
What?

FRANK  
If you can't live with the guilt, if you want to die, why not simply take your own life?

DALTON  
I tried. I'm too much of a coward even for that.

Frank takes out a business card and slides it across to Dalton.

FRANK  
I might be able to help you.

Dalton inspects the card. It reads "IVORY BLACK" with an address, phone number, and a small logo of an elephant's silhouetted head.

DALTON  
What's this?

FRANK  
Are you a gambling man, Dalton?

DALTON  
Occasionally. Why?

FRANK  
My name's Frank Ivory. I own a small nightclub. Not many people know about it, only the right sort of people.

DALTON

I highly doubt there'd be anything at your club that's going to help me.

FRANK

I think you'll find you're mistaken. You say you want to die. How would you feel about making some money in the process? Go out with some purpose. Perhaps use the profits for the child's future?

Dalton looks at Frank again.

DALTON

Who are you?

FRANK

I already told you. Frank Ivory. I own a club. Does my offer sound like something you could be interested in?

DALTON

Is this some sort of a joke?

FRANK

I never joke when it comes to business. Think about it. If you decide it's for you then come on by anytime. What do you have to lose?

Frank finishes his drink and strands up, patting Dalton on the shoulder and leaning in close.

FRANK

Go for it.

Dalton freezes. Frank smiles, and heads for the door. Dalton spins around.

DALTON

Hey.

Frank turns around.

DALTON

So... You just wander around bars at night in search for sad individuals who might want to top themselves for profit?

Frank smiles.

FRANK  
Bars, clubs, diners, alleyways...  
You'll be amazed at just how many  
eager clients I discover each and  
every night.

Frank leaves. Dalton takes another sip of his drink, and examines the business card again.

CUT TO:

EXT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Dalton walks up to the front entrance of the Ivory Black nightclub, a subtle building with unobvious advertising, down a small alleyway. A bouncer blocks the way, but stands aside when Dalton shows him the business card. Dalton heads inside.

CUT TO:

INT. IVORY BLACK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The revolver fires and a bullet rips through Player 4's skull, followed by a geyser of blood and brain matter, some of which splashes Dalton's face. She only has time for one quick look of surprise before her lights go out. The gun clatters to the floor. The crowd goes wild. Frank Ivory smiles behind his glass. The two employees cart away the body. Dalton watches in dismay. His gaze falls upon Player 1, who isn't smiling anymore.

DALTON  
Still glad we're not playing spin  
the bottle?

The referee steps forward.

REFEREE  
That concludes round 4. Bets are  
now open for the fifth and final  
round.

As the bets are made, Dalton looks at Player 1 again.

DALTON  
What do you plan to do with the  
money if you walk out of here?

PLAYER 1  
Hookers and whiskey, what else?

Dalton can't help but smile. The referee steps up.

REFEREE  
Round 5, final round. Bets are now closed for the last time. Two players remaining. One of you will leave here on foot, the other in a bag. But you'll both be leaving with a considerable amount of money. Good luck to the both of you.

The referee prepares the revolver, places it on the table, and gives it a spin. It lands on Player 1. He picks up the gun and aims it at his head, pulling the trigger to hear a satisfactory click. Sighing with relief, he passes the revolver to Dalton. Dalton picks it up, studying it.

PLAYER 1  
Hey.

Dalton looks up.

PLAYER 1  
How about you? What are you going to do with the money?

Dalton smiles.

DALTON  
I'm going to save a life.

Dalton presses the barrel against his temple and squeezes the trigger.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANDPARENT'S HOUSE - MORNING

Christine's grandparents converse happily and prepare food in the kitchen while she sits on the lounge room floor, busily drawing with crayons. A noise outside causes her to get up and peek out the window. She sees a figure approaching the mailbox, producing a fat envelope with an elephant's silhouetted head printed in one corner. The figure puts the envelope in the mailbox, glances at the house, and heads down the street. Christine stares after them.

GRANDMOTHER

Christine, dear. Lunch is ready!

Christine exits the room to be with her grandparents.

THE END