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# Hard Times

By Walter Hill

Third refill costs a nickle.

Tip.

Twenty-five? Got it.

175 left.

Nobody wants to bet against my hitter?

I might as well sell tickets.

- I've got 3 on my side.

- I've got 10.

- Biggies... Anybody?

- I've got 30.

Real spenders we've got here...

You had your chance.

We're ready over here.

Remember, anything goes,

but no hitting when somebody's down.

Do you want it?...

Go get him.

Get in there!

Get in there!!

Come on, get up!

I think I can do

about six more of those.

And a couple of lemons, too.

- Start any time, pal.

- Chaney.

- So what?

- We can make some money.

I'm all ears.

- You set up that business tonight?

- It happens all the time.

Help yourself.

- You've been down the long, hard road?

- Who hasn't?

- Jail?

- Are you a policeman?

I just like to know

where a man comes from.

You look a little past it.

Besides, I already got a hitter.

- Yes, I saw him.

- He laid down on me tonight.

Every time you go to a bar,

somebody thinks he's tough.

But they all come to Speed for

the dough-re-mi. He's a bum, I lose.  
I don't want your dough.  
I've got six bucks and nothing else.  
You bet it.  
My old friend Speed is back  
with another potential winner.  
My old friend Speed is back  
with another potential winner.  
Anybody want to bet on this man?  
I'll give two to one... three to one.  
Come on, odds like that  
do not come around every day.  
I guess you boys aren't  
as slow as he is.  
There's \$150 in the pot.  
I've got another \$150 for anybody  
who expects a repeat. What do I hear?  
Got it. I'll take it all. Anybody else?  
- You got 15 more. Are you betting that?  
- You're on.  
Wait, we've got another six.  
It's all we've got.  
I did my part, he's all yours.  
Hey, Pops, you're a little old for this,  
aren't you?  
Like everything else in this world,  
it takes money to make money.  
Here's your 12...  
Another 10, just to have some fun on.  
We'll work out a deal later.  
Plenty more where that came from.  
We don't have to worry about that.  
Now, New Orleans...  
Speed's coming home.  
A little taste?  
No?  
- Hello, Sugarplum.  
- How did it go, Speedy?  
A rough start, but a fast finish.  
- How much?  
- Even.  
Always be pleasant around strangers.  
This is Chaney.  
Gayleen Schoonover,

my permanent fiance.

- Pleased to meet you, Mr Chaney.
- There she is, let's go.
- I'll say goodbye right here.
- Wait, we've got some plans to make.
- I want to feel my way around the city.
- What about our partnership?
- I don't like to rush things.
- What?

Always be pleasant around strangers.

Will we see you again, Mr Chaney?

I might turn up.

**- Don't forget:**

- Who was that guy?
- I'll tell you who he was...  
Money on the hoof.  
It looks rougher than it is.  
You get a lot of sun.  
Fix the place up, it could be real nice.  
I've got some furniture  
down in the storage room you can use.  
No, I like it the way it is.  
A buck and a half a week.  
In advance.  
Mind if I sit down?  
Would you like to talk...  
or just sit?  
What's your name?- Who are you waiting for?
- Someone who'll buy me a cup of coffee.

Have mine.  
You live around here?- Didn't take you long to get to that.
- Maybe I can walk you home.

Not likely.  
A girl had two choices in my home town:  
Stay and be bored  
or move out and take your chances.- How has your luck been running?
- How can you ask? Look how I'm living.
- I've seen worse.
- Depends on what you're looking for.

How about you?

I don't look past the next bend  
in the road. Want me to come in?  
No... It's not that easy.  
I've got a husband in jail.  
No job and no prospects.  
- I wasn't planning on bothering you.  
- What was your plan?  
Maybe I'll see you around.  
- Get up.  
- Speed...  
Good to see you, pal.  
Glad you found the time to stop by.  
Come on, get things started right.  
Don't mind Sleeping Beauty here.  
She doesn't rush into the day's work.  
We've got an important guest.  
Why don't you fix us some breakfast.  
I suppose you want to talk deal?  
We'll go 50-50  
on all scratch bets and expenses.  
All side bets, I keep 75 per cent.  
That's how it works.  
60-40 in my favour on scratch,  
side bets down the middle.  
I'm telling you the going rate,  
ask anybody.  
- We'll do things differently.  
- Why should we?  
Because right now,  
you've got a percentage of nothing.  
That makes me even with you.  
I put up all the money.  
I take all the risks.  
All right, all right.  
We'll do it your way.  
Gayleen! ...What does a man have to do  
to get some breakfast around here.  
I've got a good feeling about this.  
I think we'll make real money.  
I've got a couple of things in mind,  
set something up next week.  
We'll go in slow, quiet. About \$4-500.  
I only came down here to make money.  
- And to fill in some in between.

- That's no kind of living.  
It suits me. When I get enough change  
in my pocket, I'm gone.  
We just mark this one down to research.  
Part of your education.  
I want a long talk  
with anybody betting against me.  
A hundred dollars against Curly.  
On a marker.  
No markers.  
Take it.  
Who's the smoothie over there?  
That's Chick Gandil,  
one of the big moneybelts in town.  
Son of a bitch  
has broken me off three times.  
He's the one we're going to shake.  
Somebody help this kid up.  
That's why he's the best.  
Nobody ever beats him.  
Not many want to try.  
What were you doing back there?  
I've always been a student of  
comparative religion.  
The Pentecostals present  
a number of points of interest.  
How much dope are you doing?  
This month my financial condition has  
prevented journeys of the imagination.  
We're back in business.  
I really got somebody for us.  
Chaney, meet my old friend Poe.  
Fix up your cuts, bruises,  
all sorts of good things.  
- I have two years in medical school.  
- Two years doesn't make a doctor.  
In my third year, a small black cloud  
came on campus, and I left under it.  
- He's trying to say he's a hophead.  
- I have a weakness for opium.  
It's a hard habit to quit.  
Some are born to fail,  
others have it thrust upon them.  
Could I see your hands?

No protruding knuckles.

No calcium deposits.

Make a fist.

More area to absorb the concussion  
of a blow without breaking.

A simple matter of engineering stress.

Reasonably thick skin.

I'd say there's a good chance you're not  
what Speed refers to as a "bleeder".

I told you he's good.

- How much?

- Ten per cent of what we win, expenses.

Standard.

Is Mr Le Beau here?

I need a short-termer

for a thousand?

- That's a heavy taste. How short?

- A day or two.

- I've done business with you before.

- Yes, about a year ago.

- You got your money back.

- Yeah... you paid back my 300.

But you had to borrow from Abboar  
to do it, you didn't cover so well.

- Three weeks over, big deal.

- Closer to three months.

He got paid. What's the difference?

There's a big difference  
between me and Abboar.

I'll take your word for that.

Okay, Speed.

- That's \$950.

- I said \$1,000.

That's 50 for the loan, and 50  
for every day until it comes back.

You really put the Jesse James to me.

You wait here.

How long will you be?

I won't sit here all day.

- Don't complain.

- Don't get caught up in any kind of game.

It's business.

- Hello, Speed.

- Good seeing you, Chick.

- How's my personal pigeon?  
- Just stopped by to pay off my money.  
That's all right. We all make mistakes.  
- Guess you heard about my new hitter?  
- Yes, word gets around.  
He's good.  
Might even work him up with the ape man.  
There's no mystery about it.  
It's my standard deal, but...  
You do have to have \$1,000 upfront.  
Are you making an offer?  
My man is just starting out.  
He's good, but I have to have long odds.  
Assuming you did have the money,  
what kind of odds are you talking about?  
- Five to one.  
- Three to one.  
Deal.  
- Did somebody die and leave it to you?  
- Three to one. Money's on the table.  
I don't like being hustled.  
You're not getting in that cheap.  
The pot bet just went up to \$3,000...  
You come back when you get that rich.  
- So, we don't have a deal?  
- Not for \$1,000.  
I'll see you soon, Dempsey.  
I'm feeling quite fine, Mr Pettibon.  
We've got a boy  
who can make an interesting contest.  
That's quite a bit of money.  
I don't know if he's up to it.  
He's just starting out, he's green.  
Nobody takes advantage of you bayou  
people. We'll be there, Mr Pettibon.  
I told you it would be a fat one.  
- How high?  
- 2,000 George Washingtons.  
It'll pay some bills.  
The dun at the door, the wolf  
at the gates shall be held in abeyance.  
You're that sure of Mr Chaney?  
Does a goose go barefoot?  
I'll get some cigars.



- Mr Pettibon, good to see you again.  
- Look what we did for your little visit.  
- Mighty fine.  
- I knew you'd like it.  
This is my fiance,  
Miss Gayleen Schoonover.  
- You remember Mr Poe here?  
- Sure, nice seeing you again.  
That's Chaney. He doesn't say much.  
If things go as planned,  
he won't say much at all later.  
- It's your plan, Mr Pettibon, not ours.  
- You said he was green.  
Third time out.  
He doesn't look unpicked to me.  
I'll let my man be the judge of that.  
That's him right over there.  
He looks like he's up to the mark.  
He'd better be.  
Goddamn!  
Very pretty, very nice.  
- You'd better get the money.  
- You don't have to ask me to do that.  
That's how it's done, Mr Pettibon.  
I guess it just wasn't your day, was it?  
Damn small question about that.  
What the hell are you doing?  
This has been a big set-back for us.  
I didn't think anybody could do that.  
- That was your error of judgement.  
- It was too damn easy.  
There are no rules about that,  
except who wins. That money's ours.  
Something wrong, Speed?  
We've got a problem. You're a ringer.  
You give us our goddamn money now!  
You want that money? Take it.  
Somebody always shows up with a gun.  
- Goddamn sack of country shit.  
- Steady on, these boys are not refined.  
I think you folks better  
get in your car and drive home.  
I think that's pretty good advice...  
He isn't going to pay.

Next time I come back  
to this coon-ass place, I'll bring a gun!  
You do that. Make sure it's a big one.  
Now, get on out!  
That's how it's done.  
A sorry spectacle. Very poor example of  
southern sportsmanship.  
All this driving for nothing.  
My God, it breaks your heart.  
Breaks my butt, that's what it breaks.  
Why don't we take it easy, drive down  
the country roads and see the sights?  
- What the hell are you talking about?  
- Business.  
They went away just like that,  
nothing to it.  
- Now I've got the gun.  
- I guess you do.  
Anybody else?  
What about you?  
I don't think you want to use it.  
That's one way.  
You want to see another?  
Gayleen!  
Is this your place, Pettibon?  
Is this where you live?  
- I'll see you in a couple of days.  
- You know who we're going after next.  
If this isn't your place,  
who's the lucky lady?  
Have a real big time now, you hear.  
- Who is it?  
- Chaney.  
- What do you want?  
- I thought you might like to come out.  
- You treat me to a champagne breakfast?  
- Whatever you feel like.  
It's 5 am.  
Christ, I barely know you.  
But would you like to?  
I guess I can make you some coffee.  
You haven't gotten around to  
telling me what you do.  
It's something people generally ask.

- Worried I can't pay the check?

- No.

I'm worried because

you never answer any questions.

Now, tell me. How do you make money?

I knock people down.

- You mean like a prize-fighter?

- No, they're pick-up fights.

The money is made on bets.

It's something I do just for a while.

Funny way to make a living.

Better than working at the bus station  
changing tyres for two bucks a day.

What does it feel like

to knock somebody down?

It makes me feel a hell of a lot better  
than it does him.

That's a reason?

There's no reason about it.

Just money.

Hello Chick! Good to see you.

This is a private gathering.

You're not invited.

You remember Mr Poe...

This'll only take one minute.

You remember those special numbers  
you quoted me on that three to one?

- I'll take you up on that bet.

- First you have to have \$3,000.

Otherwise it's just  
an academic question.

You want to count it?

Okay, you're on.

- Hello, Doty.

- Speed.

- We haven't seen you around town.

- I've been busy.

You're doing anything in the eighth?

A man who can afford a shoeshine  
ought to be able to pay his debts.

I have to keep up appearances.

The way we figure it, you're overdue.

Overdue for what? You're pushing me?

You'll get your money.

Sure we will.  
I've got \$200 I'll lay on you right now.  
Steal it.  
Sell your sister. Borrow it.  
Get it all. Now!  
I need some time, a couple of days.  
Two days and everything's working.  
Come on, two days.  
- That had better be a promise.  
- You can bank on that.  
Quite a few unfortunate fighters busted  
their knuckles on that hard head of his.  
That's it. Time. All bets in.  
Hey, old man. I'll end it for you.  
Keep smiling while you still have lips.  
- When he's done, I'm coming after you.  
- You'll only be coming after a doctor.  
Jesus. \$9,000 in the man's hand...  
Enough to take your breath away.  
Get them going.  
We're ready over here.  
Come on, Chaney, goddammit.  
You're pretty good.  
My, my, look at that,  
lying there like a dead man.  
Should we call for an ambulance or a  
hearse? No, let's get a wheel barrow.  
You've always had  
an unfortunate way of putting things.  
Nothing personal, Chick.  
Look at that.  
I got a message from Chick Gandil.  
He wants a drink with us.  
- You handle it, I'm not interested.  
- No, he said us.  
It never hurt anybody to be polite.  
- I saw you out there. Real smooth.  
- Thank you, it's all in the partner.  
I would like to propose a toast.  
I propose a toast to  
the best man I know.  
To the Napoleon of southern sports.  
Me.  
Come on, Gayleen. Let's get with those

galloping dominoes. We'll see you later.  
I assume you realize the blood of Edgar  
Allan Poe courses through my veins.  
No, but it sure sounds like  
I'll hear about it.  
"Hear the sledges with the bells.  
Silver bells.  
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle  
in the icy air of night.  
While the stars that oversprinkle  
all the heavens, seem to twinkle -  
- with a crystalline delight."  
You get the whole 400, four on a line.  
Get them over there.  
Come on, dice!  
Son of a bitch!  
- Pass the dice, he's through.  
- Not yet, pal. Shoot it all.  
Got it all?  
Point six.  
Everything in there?  
- Six is point.  
- Come on, make that six.  
All right,  
I'm looking for a big pair of threes.  
He loses. Next lucky goer.  
- Put on your coat.  
- You lost all of it.  
- Shut up.  
- Well, excuse me, Mr High Roller.  
- How long an arm has he got?  
- Gandil's a businessman.  
He's worried about his reputation.  
He's not going to try any muscle play.  
There is one thing  
we'll have to live with, though.  
Since you beat old Jim Henry like that,  
fights are going to be harder to find.  
And we'll have to give odds  
which can be very expensive.  
Would you tell Gandil that Mr Chaney  
and Mr Weed are here to see him?  
- Just go right on in.  
- Thank you, Ma'am.

How's your jaw?

- Glad you could drop by, Speed.

- Always a pleasure.

You remember Mr Chaney here.

- Well, sit down, get comfortable.

- Thank you.

- You care for a drink?

- No, too early for me, thank you.

- All business, huh?

- That's right. Well, let's have it.

You've got a direct way of speaking.

I like a man who's direct.

Makes everything easy to understand.

- Like the old days.

- We didn't come for a history lesson.

- Let's get down to cases.

- Maybe we should do that.

There's \$5,000 in that envelope.

It's yours.

- I don't believe I follow the drift.

- I'm buying half of Chaney.

You talk to me, not him.

I used to have the best street fighter  
in the city, now I don't.

I don't like that at all.

We can get along without you.

I'm sorry to hear that, Mr Chaney. Hope  
you come round to my way of thinking.

Well, look who's here: Speed.

You come to your Mama Louis's  
for a really good time.

I sure did, Mama.

- I've got myself some lovely new girls.

- Let's have a look.

Girls! ...Each one has been  
especially trained to suit your fancy.

I don't need no sales pitch.

I've just come to get my hat blocked.

- How about a drink, Mister?

- Sure, bourbon.

- What did you say your name was?

- Carol.

What did you think about that, Carol?

It was terrific. You were really great.

You know something?  
That's just exactly  
what I thought you'd say.  
What the hell are you doing?  
Hey, Doty! Come on!  
- Is that okay, Doty?  
- Talk to him.  
Mr Le Beau says he's got some business  
with you. He don't want no trouble.  
Just you pay your debts.  
Okay, Mister.  
- Good seeing you gentlemen.  
- Likewise, Speed.  
We've got a few things to talk about.  
A couple of problems.  
I've got to get something going fast.  
I've been thinking about Gandil.  
Maybe we should reconsider his offer.  
- Why the change of mind?  
- I'm flat-ass broke, I need money fast.  
I don't like Gandil.  
- That's no reason.  
- It's enough reason for me.  
That's fine for you,  
but it doesn't do much for my case.  
If we don't go for Gandil,  
I have to borrow...  
My credit's not worth a damn  
all over town. Can you loan me \$2,000?  
Speed, you made as much as me.  
Dollar for dollar.  
The way I look at it, you owe me.  
We used my bankroll to begin with.  
My contacts.  
You were a bum when I met you.  
You're nothing without me.  
I figure you owe me.  
- Dumb.  
- Are you saying no to me?  
Hell, Speed, now we're both finished.  
Welcome to New Orleans, Street.  
I don't do that.  
Do you ever get scared  
when you do your work?

- I don't think about it.  
- You only care about the money.  
Isn't that right?  
Just as long as the money's good.  
Have you got any more questions?

**Try this one:**

Are you going to stay the night?  
Not this time.  
All right, let's get it out.  
What's bothering you?  
Hell, yes, something's wrong.  
A lot of things. The rent.  
The price of groceries. Clothes  
I can't buy. A few items like that.  
- How much do you want?  
- I want my own, I won't depend on you.  
You're not reliable.  
You come when you want,  
you go when you want.  
You never mention  
what comes in the middle.  
Suit yourself.  
Can I buy you one?  
How have you been?  
- You want to talk about sporting life?  
- I'm out of it.  
That's too bad. I had to give up on you  
and bought myself another hitter.  
The best.  
Must make you very happy  
to get what you wanted.  
I'll tell you what I want.  
You must have quite a stash saved now.  
- How about \$5,000? Him against you.  
- I don't need any more money.  
- There's no point in avoiding this.  
- He's right.  
- You want it that much?  
- I'm getting paid.  
- I can reach over and start things now.  
- But you won't.  
You don't think so?  
You're not going to do it for free.



Who the hell are you?  
Son of a bitch. Help!

- Hey, this is your lucky night.
- Depends on how you look at it.

I'll tell you how to look at it.  
Right about now I'd be deciding  
whether to bust your legs or your back.  
But... somebody just paid  
the interest on your debt.  
Just for one week.  
Your man fights Mr Street  
and I'll handle your whole mortgage.  
My man?...

He won't even speak to me.  
We'll put you on ice for a while...  
and see if he'll speak to me.  
I don't want to interrupt anything...  
Gandil came to see me.  
We have got a problem.

- You and me haven't got any trouble.
- I'm afraid we do. It's about Speed.
- He sent you?
- Doesn't even know I'm here.

Me and Speed aren't related any more.

- He's in a lot of trouble.
- I am not interested.

Speed owes a ton to a local riff-raff.  
They're putting the arm on him.  
Gandil will pay his loan off, if you  
take on his man. No crowd, just business.  
I won't bet my \$5,000.  
I don't owe that goddamn Speed anything.  
That's not the point.  
It's real simple.  
He's in the wringer.  
Only you can get him out.  
Money's hard to come by, Poe.

- Anybody got a cigarette?
- I don't use any.
- I'll go and get some.
- You're not going anywhere.

If things don't work out tomorrow night,  
which one of you gets to do the job?

- We both do.

- Not this time. I'll take him.

You haven't won one in a while,  
have you?

Three cards.

- He really cleaned your plough, huh?

- Shut up and play cards.

- You think he'll show up?

- I sure hope not.

I've got a visitor.

- Some other time.

- No, wait.

I'll walk you down.

Well, how have you been?

- How do I look?

- I've got no complaints.

There's something I've got to tell you.

I don't think

you should drop by any more.

Things have changed.

I think I'm moving.

I'll get a better place.

I got a better offer.

Someone that spends the night.

He's even got a steady job.

Looks like you've got

things all figured out.

Is that all you've got to say?

- Gentlemen.

- Good evening.

- Will your man show up?

- We'll just have to wait and find out.

- Let's get started.

- Why not?

- Where are they?

- Upstairs.

- Go up and get them, Doty.

- I'll do it.

We won't wait here all night!

Thank you, pal.

Just like old times, huh?

We did add a couple of new wrinkles.

Did you see him fight?

No, but they didn't bring him

all the way from Chicago to lose.

Let's do it.  
All right, you big shots, we're ready.  
Anybody else got anything to say?  
Glad you could make it.  
Things have a way of coming around.  
Mr Chaney, I envy you.  
It must be exciting to bet  
more than you can afford to lose.  
Who's going to hold it?  
He is.  
It doesn't matter what you do, -  
- you're always going to smell like fish.  
Use them.  
- Foul! Get those palmers out of here.  
- Use them, goddamn, use them.  
Forfeit, by God!  
You owe me money.  
You cost me a great deal.  
You'll live with it.  
Mr Chaney...  
it's been a pleasure watching you work.  
You know, Chick, like old mama said:  
Next best thing to playing and winning  
is playing and losing.  
- I'll see you around.  
- Adios.  
- Sure this is as far as you want to go?  
- Yes, I'm sure.  
Hey, Poe...  
I've got a cat back at my place.  
- I want you to take care of it for me.  
- That's a lot of money.  
You take care of Poe.  
For a man who came to town  
to make some money, -  
- you're sure giving a lot of it away.  
You're forgetting about the inbetweens.  
I guess you fill them out all right.  
Where are you off to?  
North.  
Chaney?  
You've got to say something.  
We ought to head on down to Miami.  
Get in on some of the action down there.

It's a hell of a town, you know.  
Right on that warm ocean front.  
Fine, salt sea air.  
It would be good for our health.  
He sure was something.  
Let's go get the cat.