

**HARD PLACE**

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**FADE IN:**

**INT./EXT. BIG BLACK CADILLAC SEDAN - DAY**

ROMEO (20s) a dapper wheelman smacks gum.

HENRY (50s) plainly dressed, but clearly the boss flips over an ACE OF HEARTS, he shuffles the deck.

HENRY  
One day I'll tell you the secret to  
gambling.

He looks to the back seat.

JIMMY (40s), sweating in a cheap suit, fidgets with fear,  
tugging at the handcuffs binding his wrists.

JIMMY  
I didn't give 'em anything  
important. They know about Tony  
Christmas' private game and the  
Monday night craps at Benny's  
joint. The rest was petty stuff.  
Hand to God.

Henry laughs and flips over the top card in his deck  
revealing the ACE OF HEARTS.

HENRY  
Doesn't really matter... Do you  
know what your mistake was?

Jimmy shakes his head.

JIMMY  
I shoulda kept my mouth shut.

Henry shakes his head disappointed.

HENRY  
No, no, no. You gambled and lost.

JIMMY  
What can I do?

Henry thinks about it, cuts the deck of cards with one hand.

HENRY  
What we're going to do is drive a  
bit farther into the desert and  
bury you...  
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Of course Romeo here will shoot you  
first... We're not monsters.

Romeo winks at Jimmy. Jimmy winces.

JIMMY  
There's gotta be something... We  
grew up together, Henry. I'm  
beggin' ya...

Romeo nudges Jimmy.

ROMEO  
You thought you could bet against  
the house. You lost, now stop  
whining.

Jimmy snarls at Romeo. Henry looks to Jimmy and grins.

HENRY  
You like to gamble right, Jimmy?  
How about we gamble?

JIMMY  
Cards, dice, ponies, what?

Henry laughs and shakes his head.

HENRY  
Those are all games. How about a  
random game of chance?

Jimmy sits in silence, not sure what to say.

**EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY**

The car flies past a dried shrub and a snake slithers across  
the road.

**INT./EXT. BIG BLACK CADILLAC SEDAN - DAY**

Henry looks at Jimmy boring a hole in him.

HENRY  
Romeo, where we headed after we  
drop Jimmy off?

ROMEO  
Vegas, boss.

HENRY  
Right. A lot of desert between here  
and there.

Henry stops shuffling and sets the cards in the glove box.

HENRY  
I gotta take a piss. Pull over  
somewhere.

ROMEO  
Sure thing, boss.

**INT. BIG BLACK CADILLAC SEDAN - DAY**

Romeo taps his fingers on the steering wheel as he watches Henry climb out of the car.

**EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY**

Henry watches Romeo help Jimmy out of the car. Uncuffs him.

HENRY  
I don't like Casinos. House always  
wins. I'm the kinda of guy that  
appreciates a little less control.

Henry steps up to a large bolder and unzips his pants.

HENRY  
How about we gamble on something  
out of the blue. Something no one  
could predict.

JIMMY  
Sounds fair.

Henry zips up.

HENRY  
Hows about we each pick a rock and  
guess the weight. When we get to  
the next town, we weigh 'em up.  
Closest guess wins.

Jimmy nods his head watching Henry.

Henry looks around and spots a dark weathered rock among a few lighter ones. He reaches down and picks up the dark one.

Jimmy picks his rock and moves to speak, but Henry stops him.

HENRY

Before we do this. I want to make sure you understand the bet.

Jimmy balanced the stone in his palm pondering the weight.

HENRY

If you win, you go free... I think it's safe to assume you can never come back to town.

Jimmy nods.

HENRY

But if you lose, well, when we bury you we won't be giving you a bullet.

This shakes Jimmy.

Henry laughs.

HENRY

That's why I hate gambling... The consequences of losing are always a bitch... You in?

Suddenly he vomits a little. Regaining his composure, Jimmy shakes his head.

JIMMY

Yeah, I'll do it.

Henry nods.

**EXT. DESERT - DUSK**

Jimmy is buried up to his chin leaving just his head sticking out of the sand.

JIMMY

Please no. God no!

Henry hands his rock to Romeo who tosses it in his hand.

ROMEO

One and three quarter pounds. Exactly. That's something.

Henry squats down and looks into Jimmy's eyes.

HENRY

Jimmy, you know what the secret to gambling is? Don't gamble.

Henry takes the rock and sets it next to Jimmy.

HENRY

I've been using that rock for twenty years. Consider it a parting gift.

Henry stands.

Jimmy BEGS AND SCREAMS as Henry and Romeo walk away.

ROMEO

You planted that, boss? Wow. Now that's an angle I never saw that coming. Shouldn't we put the rock back?

HENRY

Doesn't matter. I have rocks all over this road.

ROMEO

You're a genius, boss.

Jimmy's screams fade.

HENRY

Nah kid, I just never gamble.

**FADE OUT.**