

THE GIFT

Written by

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INT. POOL HALL - DAY

Silhouettes of HUSTLERS hovering over pool tables are scattered across the room. The CRACK of the cue balls pierces muddled conversations.

At the bar, MANNY "plays" three card monte with another PATRON. Manny, 35, not tall or big, but carries himself well. He's quick with the cards and his sleight-of-hand is perfect.

He stares the Patron down, drops the last card in place.

MANNY

Where is she?

The Patron points to a card.

Manny flips it over, reveals the King of Diamonds.

PATRON

Son-of-a-bitch! That's three in a row!

He hands a twenty dollar bill to Manny.

At the corner of the bar a DRUNK makes a commotion.

DRUNK (O.S.)

Horse shit!

Manny raises a glass of water to the Patron's shot of whiskey.

MANNY

No hard feelings.

DRUNK (O.S.)

You couldn't fool me with that crap!

Manny struts toward the Drunk.

MANNY

You find the girl, I buy your tab.  
You lose, you keep your mouth shut  
until I'm gone. Deal?

The Drunk smirks like he's got it in the bag. He's sloppy, about fifty pounds overweight and a comb-over too late.

DRUNK

Do your thing, slick.

Manny shuffles the cards like he's worked in Vegas for the past ten years. He flops three cards on the counter.

He's cocky as he shows the Queen of Hearts mid scam.

The Drunk's swollen eyes can barely keep up.

MANNY

Well?

DRUNK

That one?

Manny flips the card over, reveals the King of Diamonds.

DRUNK

That's Bull--

Manny jerks his hand over the Drunk's mouth.

Manny pulls out a roll of money from his pocket and drops a few bills on the counter.

He steps toward the doors, points his finger at the Drunk, making sure he keeps his end of the deal.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Manny spots a BMW parked in a handicap space. He looks for a proper license plate or placard, but doesn't see either.

He makes his way to a black 1969 Lincoln Continental.

His cell phone RINGS.

The Drunk staggers out of the pool hall.

Manny answers the call, watches the Drunk stumble to the BMW.

MANNY

Can't talk now. Meet me at the hotel in a few hours.

Manny hangs up. He steps in front of the Drunk.

MANNY

There's a hefty fine for that.

The Drunk squints at Manny.

DRUNK

What you talkin' 'bout?

Manny points to the handicap sign.

The Drunk gives Manny a once over.

DRUNK

I don't see any cripples around.

Manny pulls a .38 snub-nose revolver from his back, presses the barrel firmly against the Drunk's head.

MANNY

I'll be collecting that fine now.

The Drunk tries to flee, but he slips and falls flat on his face. Used beer spews from his mouth.

Manny grabs the Drunk's keys and throws them in the bushes. He reaches into the Drunk's back pocket, grabs his wallet.

DRUNK

'The hell's wrong with you?

Manny takes the cash out of the wallet. He throws him a few dollars and walks away.

MANNY

Call a cab.

INT. LINCOLN CONTINENTAL - DAY

Manny peers out the window at the busy street under construction. Everything is in constant change.

At a light, a HOMELESS MAN, missing an arm, begs for money.

Manny pulls out some cash and rolls down the window.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

Manny clutches a couple of fast food bags and a drink.

He spots a WOMAN struggling with her luggage.

He ignores her until her purse falls, scattering its contents across the ground. She mumbles a few choice words.

They make eye contact.

She's in her early 30s, a bit overweight, but it looks good on her - it's a healthy thickness and right now there's a fire in her eyes that could make any man weak.

Manny scurries toward her.

She tries to keep cool, notices his hands are full as well.

WOMAN

It's okay, I got it.

He continues toward the -

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Manny waits for the elevator. He presses the button several times trying to expedite its arrival.

The Woman from the lot fumbles her way into the hotel.

The elevator door finally opens, a crowd exits.

The Woman sidles up to Manny, waits for a clearing.

They proceed into the -

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Manny presses the seven button.

MANNY

What floor?

WOMAN

Seven.

Manny presses the button again for good measure.

Awkward silence. Manny stares straight ahead trying to avoid small talk. She takes notice of his shy demeanor.

The elevator doors open. Manny holds them ajar for her.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They head in the same direction down the narrow corridor.

She stops at her room.

He stops at the adjacent room, unlocks the door.

INT. MANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LIDIA, mid 20s, lies on the bed watching novelas. She's a sexy little thing and she knows it. A bathing suit top and skimpy blue jean short bottoms compliment her frame and go well with her dripping wet hair.

Manny grabs the remote off the bed and turns down the volume.

LIDIA  
I'm watching that!

Manny tosses the fast food bags on the bed.

Lidia rolls her eyes as if she's had the same meal for several days in a row. She opens a bag, pulls out a carton of fries and nibbles on one.

MANNY  
Did you just get out the shower?

She ignores him and watches her novelas.

Manny steps out onto the balcony and looks down at the hotel pool filled with GUESTS laughing and having a good time.

LIDIA  
I'm not just gonna stay in the  
fucking room all day, Manny.

He closes the balcony door and heads to the

BATHROOM

Manny washes his face. He stares at his muddled reflection in the foggy mirror. He removes his jacket and dress shirt. He undoes his belt and unzips his pants.

He sits on the toilet. As he pulls down his pants, he is without legs - real legs. Both are missing from the knees down and are replaced with shiny, black and silver metal prosthetics.

He massages his lower thighs and adjusts the prosthetics.

MANNY  
Put some clothes on.

LIDIA (O.S.)  
I'm wearing clothes.

BACK TO THE BEDROOM

Manny grabs some clothes from a black duffle bag and throws a shirt on the bed for Lidia.

MANNY

Your tits are hanging out. Joe's coming by.

LIDIA

So. Joe likes my tits.

Manny knows she is just trying to get a rise out of him.

LIDIA

Let's go out tonight.

MANNY

You've already been out.

LIDIA

No. Out, out.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

MANNY

Not tonight. Put the shirt on.

Manny opens the door.

JOE

Hey, kiddo.

Joe is in his mid 50's. Most of his hair is gray but he wears it well. His attire matches his robust personality. He looks around at the blandness of the room before seeing Lidia on the bed nibbling her fry.

JOE

How you doing beautiful?

Joe reaches across the bed to give her a kiss on the cheek. He stares at her in the skimpy outfit and helps himself to a few of her fries.

JOE

I could've used a swim today - it's hot as shit out there.

MANNY

Let's get this over with.

JOE

Why such a sour puss? I thought we could go out. I need a drink. There's not even a mini bar in this dump. Let's get out for a minute. I'll buy you a Shirley Temple.

LIDIA

I'll go out with you, Joe.

JOE

Just for a couple hours... come on?

Lidia grabs the shirt and her purse and heads for the door.

MANNY

Where do you think you're--

The door slams shut behind her.

JOE

(to Manny)

After you.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Joe eats from a plate of nachos while Manny sifts through floor plans and surveillance photos of various men hanging around what appears to be an abandoned warehouse.

Lidia is at the bar making up for lost time. Her flirtatiousness with the bartender grabs Manny's attention.

Joe licks his fingers clean and grabs one of the photos.

JOE

This is our guy - Eddie Ramirez. There's about fifteen to twenty regulars. The spot used to change about every six weeks, but it's been here for about three months now.

Manny looks concerned.

JOE

What's wrong?

MANNY

Twenty guys in one room? That's a lot of ego.

JOE  
Nothing an old man and a cripple  
can't handle.

Manny doesn't react. It's a joke only Joe can get away with.

JOE  
I wouldn't be asking if I wasn't a  
hundred percent on this though.

MANNY  
It's more than we're used to.

Lidia is taking shot after shot with complete strangers.

JOE  
The take could set you up for a  
while. These guys are high rollers.

MANNY  
What's the number.

JOE  
Twenty guys with bank rolls of ten  
to fifteen g's each. Not to mention  
the house money. You're the smart  
one, you do the math.

Manny gazes at Lidia. Her hands are all over a BIKER.

MANNY  
Give me the address.

JOE  
I knew you wouldn't pass this up.

MANNY  
I didn't say yes. And if I do say  
yes we're gonna need another pair  
of hands.

JOE  
No! No way, Manny! That's too many  
slices out the pie.

MANNY  
I'm not asking you for permission,  
Joe.

JOE  
You're a real fucking asshole you  
know that?

Joe watches Lidia put on a dance show for GUYS at the bar.

JOE

She could come in handy this time.  
She's the perfect distraction.

MANNY

She's the perfect liability.

JOE

That twinkle in your eye you used  
to have... not there so much now.

Manny turns away from watching Lidia.

JOE

I've been working with someone  
since you've been gone. He's a good  
kid - nothing like you.

Lidia gazes at Manny, tries to evoke an emotion out of him.

MANNY

I'll talk to Shawn. He knows the  
routine and I trust him.

JOE

Yes, your majesty, but just in  
case, my guy's always up for  
something.

INT. MANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Manny lies awake in bed. The light from the television washes  
over him, but there is no sound.

Lidia, wearing only her panties and still tipsy, climbs into  
bed. She kisses Manny's neck, but he doesn't budge.

LIDIA

I'm horny.

MANNY

You're drunk.

LIDIA

I can be both.

MANNY

I'm tired.

LIDIA

Too tired for this...

She puts her hand down his pants.

MANNY  
I'm not in the mood.

LIDIA  
I can get you in the mood.

Manny pushes her hand away.

MANNY  
Not tonight.

LIDIA  
What the hell, Manny?! "Not  
tonight. Not tonight". That's all  
you fucking say.

Lidia turns over and covers herself up.

Manny turns off the television, darkness fills the room.

INT. MANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Manny dresses. He looks at Lidia, still passed out in bed. He  
grabs his deck of cards and steps out to the -

BALCONY

His neighbor, the Woman from the parking lot, is on her  
balcony, gazing at the sunrise.

Manny pretends not to see her.

She peeks over at him.

WOMAN  
Morning.

MANNY  
Hello.

She waits for Manny to speak. He doesn't.

WOMAN  
Nice day.

Manny struggles with his words.

MANNY  
So far.

WOMAN  
I'm Anna by the way.

MANNY

Manny.

ANNA

Nice to meet you, Manny. Well I know we met yesterday, but it's nice to put a name to a face.

She waits for Manny's turn to talk. He doesn't take it.

ANNA

On vacation?

MANNY

No. Why?

ANNA

Well. This is a hotel...

MANNY

I'm here on business.

ANNA

That's no fun?

MANNY

No it isn't.

ANNA

I live here. My apartment flooded so they set me up at this "paradise" until it's fixed. I wish it was a vacation.

MANNY

You get a break from your normal routine, that's a vacation to me.

ANNA

Yeah, I guess you're right. Didn't think of it that way. How long you in town for?

MANNY

Not sure yet. How long are you staying in "Shangri-la?"

She giggles.

ANNA

They said a few days, but who knows.

Manny can't decide what to say next. Anna make him nervous. Maybe it's her looks, maybe it's all the questions, but his lips tighten up.

ANNA

Well, I should get going before I'm late for work.

MANNY

Okay.

ANNA

It was nice to meet you. Maybe I'll see you around?

MANNY

Okay.

She smirks at his shyness.

ANNA

Okay then.

She heads into her room.

Manny shuffles the cards. He turns the deck over to reveal: The Queen of Hearts.

INT. MANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Manny rummages through his duffle bag. He grabs a stack of money and leaves a single twenty dollar bill on the table before walking out.

Lidia opens her eyes. She's been awake the entire time listening in on Manny and his new friend.

EXT. EMPTY PARKING LOT - DAY

Manny cautiously looks around at his surroundings before exiting his car. He opens the trunk and pulls out a wheelchair and takes a seat.

He removes his prosthetics and throws them in the trunk.

He puts on a pair of black framed eyeglasses and wheels away.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

The barbershop is relatively empty except for a solitary BARBER cutting a MAN'S hair.

BARBER  
Be with you in a second.

MANNY  
I'm looking for Eddie.

The barber pauses, looks Manny up and down before making his way to the back of the shop.

It's a typical barber shop with photos of cars and half-naked women on the walls.

The barber returns. He points to the back of the shop.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

EDDIE is on the phone. It's not clear what he's talking about, but it has nothing to do with hair. He's a large man in his late 30's, but his heft is more muscle than fat.

Manny looks around at the tiny, messy office. He notices a photo of Eddie in army fatigues with a couple of buddies.

Eddie hangs up the phone.

EDDIE  
Can I help you?

MANNY  
I'm looking for a game. I heard you have one of the best in town.

Eddie's defenses are up.

EDDIE  
Who told you to come here?

MANNY  
A guy who knows a guy - who knows a guy. Does it matter?

EDDIE  
I don't know you from fucking Adam. So, yeah, it does matter.

Eddie looks down at Manny's missing limbs.

EDDIE  
You a vet?

MANNY  
I don't like talking about it.

Eddie looks at the picture from his Army days.

EDDIE

I don't blame you. Listen, brother,  
I don't mean any disrespect, but  
why don't you take a trip to  
Louisiana or something. They got  
pretty girls in short skirts and  
drinks with lil' umbrellas in 'em.

MANNY

I don't drink. What's the buy-in?

EDDIE

Too rich for your blood, man.

Manny pulls out a roll of money.

MANNY

Two hundred? Five hundred?

Eddie is taken aback by Manny's cocky behavior.

MANNY

An even grip.

Manny lays out one thousand dollars on the table.

EDDIE

I wish I could help you out--

Manny counts out another five hundred dollars.

MANNY

For your hospitality.

Eddie lets out a laugh as big as he is.

EDDIE

You're a tenacious son of a bitch!

Eddie pauses, reluctant.

EDDIE

I'll give you one shot, then we'll  
go from there.

Eddie scribbles an address on a piece of paper.

EDDIE

Ask for me at the door. You better  
be as good as you think you are!

MANNY  
I don't like to lose.

EDDIE  
Who does.

Manny wheels away.

EDDIE  
Hey, what's your name?

MANNY  
Clark.

EDDIE  
Clark? You don't look like a Clark.

MANNY  
You don't look like an Eddie.

EXT. SHAWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Manny stands on the porch of an old nineteen-sixties style house. He raises his hand to knock , but he holds back. After a brief moment of contemplation he knocks.

MARIA answers the door.

MARIA  
(happy)  
Manny!

Maria opens the door and gives Manny a big hug.

MARIA  
Oh my God! Come in, come in. Shawn!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SHAWN enters the living room. He's a skinny black guy and it looks like he's finished a hard days work.

SHAWN  
Holy shit! Manny?

Shawn rushes towards Manny and embraces him in a bro-hug.

SHAWN  
Damn it's good to see you, homie.

MANNY  
You too, man. You too.