

The Lisa Ann Shekofsky Story

by Phillip W. Weiss

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This play is a work of fiction. Any resemblance between the characters contained herein and any person living or dead is unintentional and purely coincidental.

Characters

Joe – race horse player

Charley – race horse player

Nate – race horse player

Lisa Ann Shekofsky – race horse trainer

Calvin Benchlow - reporter

Ralph Hagenforth – college professor

Steve Watkins – Ralph’s neighbor

Marilyn Watkins – Steve’s wife

Howard Wockenstein – race horse owner

Ellen Wockenstein – Howard’s wife

Ed “Freaky” Malloy – race horse trainer and racketeer

Frank “Ponzo” Libretti – race horse trainer and racketeer

Murray “The Collector” Levitzky. – race horse trainer and racketeer

Jose – stable worker

Pepe – stable worker

Tony O’Rourke - jockey

Herbert Radbourn – race horse owner

J. Farnsworth Jones – Chairman, State Gaming Commission

Dean Covington - reporter

Vern Davenport - reporter

Rick Holmes – newspaper editor

Ted McMahon - investigator

**Bartender, track announcer, television reporter, betting clerk.
betting clerk’s supervisor**

Scene 1

Time: the present

Place: the paddock at Long Shot Race Track.

Two men are on stage. Their names are Joe and Charlie. They are standing next to a fence that encloses the paddock.

JOE

Did you see that number two horse? What the hell was the jockey thinking? He had the race won. Then here comes the number six horse. More money down the drain.

CHARLEY

I guess you bet the number two horse.

JOE

Of course I did. The horse won his last four races.

CHARLEY

You know that doesn't mean much.

JOE

If it's so meaningless, then why do they print it in the program? What's the point of even buying the program at all?

CHARLEY

I don't know. I stopped wasting my money on those programs years ago.

JOE

But how do you know who to bet on?

CHARLEY

You don't. That's why it's called gambling.

JOE

Hey, there's no need to talk down to me. I'm not stupid.

CHARLEY

But you're drunk. And drinking and betting don't mix.

JOE

Like hell it doesn't. I can't even think straight without a couple of shots.

CHARLEY

The track must love you.

JOE

No it don't. It just keeps taking my money.

CHARLEY

Like I said, the track must love you. They want you to drink, don't you get it?

JOE

I come here to have a good time. Don't you?

CHARLEY

Me too. Except I come here not to drink but to win.

JOE

Nothing wrong with that.

CHARLEY

That's easier said than done. You see, I used to be you. Well, not literally you, but a guy like you. I went to the track with my buddies, got pan faced drunk, threw away a ton of money, got rowdy, even got into a couple of scuffles, and thought I was having the time of my life. Then next morning I'd notice my wallet was empty, and I ask myself, what the hell did I do? I'd get so upset that I'd start drinking again and then it was back to the track. That went on for about five years. Good thing I'm retired. If I was still working, forget, they would have fired me.

A black man enters. His name is Nate. He speaks with a Jamaican accent.

NATE

Hey Joe, baby. Good seeing you again. How you doing today?

JOE

Not good. Thought I had a winner last race. That damn two horse should have won.

NATE

I bet the five horse. The damn nag barely finished the race. *Cell phone rings. Nate answers the call.* Yeah ... I know ... How was I to know that the horse would finish last? ... Okay, stop your yelling ... I know I told you to bet the horse ... Okay, Okay ... ten dollars on number 8 next race ... got it. Good bye. *Nate closes the cell phone.* That was my pal, Waldo. He couldn't make it to the track. Had to appear in court. Something about child support. So I'm placing bets for him.

CHARLEY

I never place bets for anyone.

NATE

Who asked you?

JOE

Cool down. Let me introduce you to my buddy. Hey pal, what's your name?

CHARLEY

Charley.

JOE

This is Charley. Charley, Nate.

NATE

I didn't know he was your friend. Okay ... Charley. Nice meeting you.

Nate and Charley shake hands.

CHARLEY

I didn't mean anything by what I said before.

NATE

No problem. I'm just feeling a little touchy right now. I think I need a smoke. Anyone care to join me? I know a nice spot where we won't be caught.

CHARLEY

Caught doing what?

NATE

You know ... smoking.

CHARLEY

I get your drift. Thanks but I think I'll pass on that.

JOE

Me too. By the way, Charley, how'd you do last race?

CHARLEY

I won.

JOE

The horse was six to one. Hadn't won his last five races. Why did you bet that horse?

NATE

Maybe you had some inside info?

CHARLEY

I wish, but no cigar.

NATE

You work for the track?

CHARLEY

I'm just one of the betters, just like you guys.

NATE

Okay, smart guy, so what's the secret?

CHARLEY

No secret. In fact, why I bet the six horse is found right in the program.

JOE

And you told me the program was a waste.

CHARLEY

The way you use it, yes. Because you're looking at all the wrong stuff.

NATE

So, what do you look at?

CHARLEY

I'll tell you. Let's go to race 4. That was the last race. Now, go to the column that lists the names of the trainers.

JOE

Okay. Done.

CHARLEY

What is the name noted next to the two horse?

NATE

Lisa Ann Shekofsky.

CHARLEY

That's right. Lisa Ann Shekofsky.

JOE

Now what?

CHARLEY

That's it. I bet horses trained by Lisa Ann Shekofsky.

NATE

Who cares about who trains these horses?

CHARLEY

I do. In the last four meets, her horses have won nine times, and I have collected every time.

JOE

I never heard of her. Who is she?

CHARLEY

She's the greatest horse racing trainer in the United States today. And also the most courageous too.

NATE

I never heard of her either. Lisa Ann Shekofsky.

CHARLEY

That's right. Lisa Ann Shekofsky. Remember that name.

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: Five years ago.

Place: a coral at a farm. Inside the coral is a horse. A teenage boy and teenage girl are standing next to a fence. The boy's name is Calvin; the girl is Lisa Ann Shekofsky.

School's finally over. CALVIN

Yeah. How'd you do? LISA ANN

I passed all my courses, barely. CALVIN

You can do better. LISA ANN

Oh, who cares about school? I just want to finish and go to work at my uncle's shop. He's offered me a job after I graduate. CALVIN

Is that all you want? LISA ANN

Is that all I want? CALVIN

Yeah. All you want is to be a grease monkey for your uncle? LISA ANN

I love working on cars. You know that. CALVIN

I know that. But what about going to college? LISA ANN

CALVIN

No way. I can hardly get through high school.

LISA ANN

That's because you don't study.

CALVIN

Study for what? So I can become a poet or a writer? I want to make money, fast.

LISA ANN

Writers make money. Who do you think writes the lines for the actors in the movies?

CALVIN

I know who writes them.

LISA ANN

Maybe you can be one of those writers...

CALVIN

Come on. I can't write.

LISA ANN

Oh yes you can. I have your letters.

CALVIN

You didn't throw them away?

LISA ANN

No. I kept them all.

CALVIN

All of them? What a surprise?

LISA ANN

I liked what you wrote.

CALVIN

Aw, I was just scribbling. It gave me something to do when I wasn't doing chores at gramps...

LISA ANN

You know that I missed you.

CALVIN

I was gone for only six months.

LISA ANN

I know. I'm glad you came back.

CALVIN

We had to. My dad lost his job at the factory, and gramp's farm went under, so we came back. Now gramps is staying with us. We're living off my father's savings, but he can't find another job. That's why I want to get a job. We need the money.

LISA ANN

Have a good time tonight.

CALVIN

I want you to join us.

LISA ANN

No, I can't. I have to take care of Big Lou.

CALVIN

But that can wait.

LISA ANN

No, it can't. I have to feed him, brush him down and make sure his shoes are fastened tight. For the race.

CALVIN

Get your kid brother to do that. Come on, let's go out and have some fun.

LISA ANN

I want to, I really do, but I can't go. I want to win that race.

CALVIN

But you're just racing against other farm horses. What's the big deal?

LISA ANN

That's your problem. You don't understand.

CALVIN

Understand what? A horse is a horse. if you like racing horses, fine. But what do get out of it? How much money can you win?

LISA ANN

To you, it's just about money. You wrote such beautiful things. I'd thought you would understand.

CALVIN

I'm trying to understand. Like I said, a horse is a horse. You can ride them, race them. Do whatever you want with them. I have nothing against horses. In fact I like horses. I like riding them, just like you do. But that's it. Big Lou can wait while you and I go out with the gang.

LISA ANN

No, I have to prepare Big Lou for the race.

CALVIN

Lisa. Why are you being so ... difficult?

LISA ANN

I'm not be difficult. Why don't you stay here instead and help me with Big Lou?

CALVIN

But what about the gang?

LISA ANN

Who cares about the gang? I only care about you.

CALVIN

What can I tell them?

LISA ANN

Tell them anything you want.

Silence. Motionless. Calvin and Lisa Ann stare at each other.

CALVIN

Maybe I ought to be going.

LISA ANN

Maybe you should. *Lisa Ann walks away.*

CALVIN

Lisa!

LISA ANN

Please leave.

Calvin exits.

LISA ANN (*To Big Lou*)

Men are so stupid. That's why I love you, Big Lou. Tomorrow we're going to win that race and after that, you're going to get a special treat. This.

Lisa opens a box and takes out a carrot.

LISA ANN

Now let me groom you down. We have to prepare for tomorrow.

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: Four years later.

Place: A stall inside a stable at Northern Range Agricultural College. Inside the stall is Lisa Ann. She is brushing a horse.

LISA ANN (*To the horse*)

Such a good boy. (*Lisa Ann continues brushing the horse.*)

A man enters. His name is Ralph Hagenforth. He is a professor of veterinary medicine.

RALPH

Ah, Lena. How are things?

LISA ANN

Just fine, professor.

RALPH

Good ... good. I thought I'd find you here.

LISA ANN

Were you looking for me?

RALPH

Yes, as a matter of fact I was. I read your term paper on the psychology of horses and found it quite original.

LISA ANN

Thank you, professor.

RALPH

I was intrigued by your thoughts on the inner workings of the horse's brain.

LISA ANN

I'm glad you found my paper interesting.

RALPH

I found it to be more than just interesting. Lots of papers are interesting. Yours was unique.

LISA ANN

Well, professor. ...

RALPH

Call me Ralph.

LISA ANN

Well ... Ralph, I've been around horses all my life. I grew up on a farm where we kept horses, which gave me the opportunity to observe their behavior.

RALPH

I see. Well, I wanted to share my impressions with you, and now that I did. What are you up to now?

LISA ANN

I'm just brushing down Big Guy.

RALPH

Big Guy, a wonderful horse. Did you know that he used to be a race horse?

LISA ANN

No, I didn't, though that doesn't surprise me.

RALPH

How does it not surprise you?

LISA ANN

He has the look of a competitor in his eyes.

RALPH

He does?

LISA ANN

Yes, he does.

RALPH

Where?

LISA ANN

I can't show you. It's something I just know intuitively.

RALPH

Lisa, you are a very special person. I've been teaching for over twenty years and you are the first student of mine to say such a thing.

LISA ANN

Thank you, but I didn't say that to impress you.

RALPH

Oh, please, don't take what I said the wrong way.

LISA ANN

What are you talking about ... Ralph?

RALPH

Oh, just forget it. I just wanted to pay you a compliment.

LISA ANN

Thank you.

RALPH

What are you up to now?

LISA ANN

I'm just brushing down Big Guy.

RALPH

Yes, he is a charming creature.

LISA ANN

I agree. How come you didn't tell the class that he was once a race horse?

RALPH

I didn't think it mattered. I horse is a horse, as the saying goes.

LISA ANN

I've heard that saying before, but to me a horse is not just a horse. They are something more.

RALPH

Yes, perhaps they are. Now you've gotten me to start thinking about this entire subject in a whole new way. Thank you.

LISA ANN

You're welcome, professor.

RALPH

Ralph.

LISA ANN

Excuse me ... Ralph.

RALPH

Here I am, a full professor, yet with you I feel like I'm the student. Odd. Your age belies your wisdom.

LISA ANN

Thank you, Ralph. Have you graded my paper?

RALPH

Not yet, but you don't need to worry about that.

LISA ANN

Oh, I'm not worried. It's just that I want to graduate on time.

Oh, you're graduating?
RALPH

Yes, I'm a senior.
LISA ANN

Maybe we should go somewhere and celebrate.
RALPH

That's not necessary.
LISA ANN

I insist.
RALPH

That quite alright, professor.
LISA ANN

It's Ralph, and I do insist.
RALPH

Ralph grabs Lisa Ann and tries to kiss her.

Professor, Ralph, stop!
LISA ANNA

*Ralph continues grabbing at Lisa Ann. Lisa Ann kicks Ralph in the groin.
Ralph collapses in pain.*

You bitch!
RALPH

It serves you right. I told you to stop, but you didn't listen.
LISA ANN

I was just trying to be nice.
RALPH

LISA ANN

I thought you had more sense than that. But you don't. All you men are alike. Just looking out for yourselves. I guess this means I won't be passing the class.

RALPH

I meant what I said about the paper. Is it okay if I stand up?

LISA ANN

Sure. Why not. You learned your lesson.

Ralph stands up.

RALPH

Well, okay. I hope all my parts are still working.

LISA ANN

Don't worry, they're still working. It's take more than a kick to de-man a man.

RALPH

That's easy for you to say. You weren't the one who got kicked. But I guess I asked for it.

LISA ANN

You know, professor ...

RALPH

Ralph.

LISA ANN

Please stop insisting that I call you Ralph.

RALPH

Okay, okay. Professor it is.

LISA ANN

Okay then. Professor, I'm actually starting to like you. You're like a big old horse, rumped looking, looking the worse for wear, but cuddly.

RALPH

My wife says the same thing.

LISA ANN

You're married? Maybe I should give you another kick.

RALPH

Yes, I'm married. I also have two children; my oldest is about your age.

LISA ANN

My, you're rocking the cradle.

RALPH

I still would like to take you out to dinner, as friends.

LISA ANN

Of course, as friends.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: One hour later.

Place: a restaurant. Lisa Ann and Ralph are seated at a table. They are having dinner.

RALPH

So after I got my Veterinary degree, I got a position at the Veterinary hospital in Cleveland.

LISA ANN

How was it?

RALPH

It was okay. Mostly pet animals. Nothing special.

LISA ANN

How long did you work there?

RALPH

Four years. Then I got another job in Amarillo, Texas.

LISA ANN

Amarillo. I heard that's quite a nice town.

RALPH

It is. That's where I started treating barnyard and grazing animals. That was a challenge.

LISA ANN

I'm sure it was.

RALPH

Dealing with a cow that's in labor is a lot different than treating a dog.

LISA ANN

But at least the cow won't bite.

RALPH

But they kick, like you.

LISA ANN

So now you're comparing me to a cow?

RALPH

I was just trying to make a joke. I guess it didn't come out too good.

LISA ANN

That's okay. We're just talking.

RALPH

And what about you? What brought you to veterinary school?

LISA ANN

I've always loved horses. I especially like watching them run. They are so graceful.

RALPH

Yes, they are. So what did that have to do with you going to veterinary school?

LISA ANN

I wanted to learn everything I could about horses, and I heard that Northern Range had the best program in the country for the study of horses, so I applied and was accepted.

RALPH

That's very good. Like I said earlier, you are an exceptional student.

A man and woman enter. They are Professor Steve Watkins and his wife Marilyn.

STEVE

Ralph! We didn't know you were here. Glad to see you.

RALPH

Oh, hi, Steve. Nice seeing you again, Marilyn.

STEVE

I hope we're not interrupting anything.

RALPH

No, you're not. This young lady here happens to be one of my students.
(*To Lena*) I'd like to introduce you to Steve and Marilyn Watkins. They are my next door neighbors.

LISA ANN

Nice meeting you. I'm Lisa Ann Shekofsky. Would you care to join us?
We have room at the table.

MARILYN

Oh, no. Not really. We don't want to impose.

RALPH

At this point, you won't be imposing.

STEVE

Well, then yes, we'll join you. Thank you.

Steve and Marilyn sit down at the table.

MARILYN

My, that looks good. What are you having?

LISA ANN

A tossed salad.

MARILYN

And you, Ralph?

RALPH

Sirloin steak, medium rare.

MARILYN

So, Lena, what are you majoring in?

LISA ANN

Veterinary studies, with a major in horses.

MARILYN

Oh, is that so? It just so happens that we have a friend who owns a two-year old horse.

LISA ANN

That's nice.

MARILYN

They bought the horse from a breeder and now they really don't know what to do with it.

LISA ANN

Maybe they can race it. Is it a filly or a colt?

MARILYN

I don't know. Steve, do you know?

STEVE

I think it's a colt, but to tell you the truth, I never bothered to look.

RALPH

Lisa is very good with horses.

MARILYN

Oh, is that so? Maybe you can go by there sometime and take a look at the horse.

LISA ANN

I'd be glad to.

MARILYN

Later on I'll call my friend and make sure that it's okay with her and her husband, and then I'll call you.

LISA ANN

Fine. Let me give you my number. *Marilyn takes out a pen.* 417-645-4762.

MARILYN

Got it! I'll call her later and then tell you what she says.

LISA ANN

I'm looking forward to hearing from you. (*To Ralph*) Before I forget, I want to apply for a trainer's license. If I need your help, could I call on you?

RALPH

Absolutely, my dear. Anything I can do to help. In fact, the school routinely helps students obtain the credentials they need to start their careers. And besides, I have friends on the gaming commission.

LISA ANN

Thank you, Ralph. I hope your wife appreciates how wonderful a person you are. I know I do.

STEVE

And I do too. After all, Ralph and I are buddies. Isn't that right?

RALPH

Yes, it is.

STEVE

And buddies always cover for other buddies, even when they're out on the town while their wives are at home.

MARILYN

Oh, stop it, Steve. He's just teasing you.

LISA ANN

Professor and I are just friends.

RALPH

Yes. Just friends.

LISA ANN

And I hope we keep it that way.

RALPH

Me, too.

STEVE

And me three. Here comes the waiter. Let's eat.

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: One month later.

Place: A coral at the Wockerstein Ranch. Lisa Ann is having a discussion with a man and woman. They are Howard and Ellen Wockerstein.

HOWARD

Thanks for coming out to look at Super Charger.

LISA ANN

The pleasure was all mine.

ELLEN

He seems to have taken to you. With us he's skittish.

LISA ANN

Sometimes you just have to know how to handle the horse.

HOWARD

We're still trying to figure that one out.

LISA ANN

How long have you had him?

HOWARD

Almost a year and a half. We bought him when he was still small. The breeder said he'd make a great investment.

ELLEN

So we bought him and now he's gotten big. Then Marilyn called and told us about you and now here we are.

LISA ANN

I'm glad she called.

HOWARD

So what do you think of him?

LISA ANN

I think you have quite a horse. He has real potential to be a winner.

ELLEN

So, you think you could train him?

LISA ANN

Yes, but before we continue, let me be honest with you. I've trained lots of horses, but never any thoroughbreds.

HOWARD

So, you have no experience as a trainer?

LISA ANN

No formal experience. However, I have lots of experience working with horses. I have spent most of my life around horses. I grew up on a farm that had horses, plus I worked conditioning horses at the school.

HOWARD

Thank you for letting us know now.

LISA ANN

Maybe I should have told you this before coming out here.

ELLEN

Oh no, that's okay. We're glad that you're here.

LISA ANN

Okay. So, what do you want to do? Do you want me to train him?

HOWARD

So, what do you think, Ellen?

ELLEN

I say yes.

HOWARD

That's good enough for me. So we're unanimous.

LISA ANN

Thank you. This is very exciting.

ELLEN

And for us too.

LISA ANN

Yes, it is. I brought some paperwork. It's in my car.

HOWARD

Good. Let's go into the house. We're off to the races.

End of scene 5

HOWARD

Only the best for our horse.

LISA ANN

The horses are now approaching the starting gate.

ELLEN

Look! There's Super Charger!

HOWARD

Went right into the gate, like he was meant to be there.

LISA ANN

Okay. All the horses are set. (*Pause*) They're off.

HOWARD

Come on, boy! You can do it!

ELLEN

Go, Super Charger, go!

HOWARD

How long is this race?

LISA ANN

Six furlongs.

HOWARD

Super Charger is trailing.

ELLEN

That's not good!

LISA ANN

Don't worry about it. He's saving himself for the stretch.

HOWARD

Well, I hope he makes a move soon. Come on, boy! Move!

LISA ANN

They're coming down the stretch.

HOWARD

Here comes Super Charger! Look at him go!

ELLEN

He's coming on fast! Come on, baby doll! You can do it!

(Silence) All are watching the screen.

ELLEN

He won!

HOWARD

Oh, my! Our baby won! I can't believe it. Our very first race and we're winners! Lisa Ann, you did it! How can we thank you?

LISA ANN

Watching your reactions is thanks enough.

HOWARD

We're going to be celebrating on the town tonight. Wow! It sure feels good to be a winner!

LISA ANN

Let's go upstairs to the winner's circle.

ELLEN

Absolutely. After all, that's where we belong.

LISA ANN

That's right, because we're winners.

All three hug each other and exit, laughing.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

Time: Same as scene 5.

Place: Saddle Horse Lounge at Long Shot Raceway. Three men just finished watching the same race. They are Ed "Freaky" Malloy, Frank "Ponzo" Libretti, and Murray "The Collector" Levitzky. They're trainers.

MALLOY

That damn jockey. I told him to keep the horse back until he reached the half mile post, but no, he breaks fast from the starting gate.

LIBRETTI

You have no cause complain. Your horse cut off my horse. You deserved to lose.

MALLOY

Why, you have some nerve. If I wasn't a gentleman, I'd sock you right in the mouth.

LEVITZKY

Can that crap. You two guys make me sick. Squabbling like a couple of old ladies. My horse lost too. You don't hear me complaining.

MALLOY

That's because you can afford to lose. I can't. I need the money. You know how it is. Expenses.

LEVITZKY

I do know how it is. That's why there's no use complaining. When we became trainers we knew the risks involved.

LIBRETTI

I don't need you or anyone else lecturing me about horse racing. Okay. All I want is that the races be run fair and square and may the best horse win.

MALLOY

I want that too.

LIBRETTI

So, what are we arguing about?

MALLOY

My horses aren't doing as well as the used to. I don't know why that is. If I keep on rolling up loses I may have to call it quits.

LIBRETTI

How long have you been in the game?

MALLOY

Thirty five years.

LIBRETTI

I've been in for going on twenty years now.

LEVITZKY

I remember when the tote machines were set by hand. Boy, those were the days. Things were really wide open then.

LIBRETTI

Like how?

LEVITZKY

Like we used to sneak into the other stables and feed the horses turnips. Boy, did that make them run, if you know what I mean, and then sometimes we'd switch a three year old winner with a ten year old maiden who couldn't win in a one horse race, you know, stupid stuff like that.

MALLOY

Then the papers got wind of it and that was that.

LEVITZKY

It wasn't that bad. The guys upstairs knew all about it. In fact, some of them even joined in. It was all innocent fun.

MALLOY

And also as crooked as loaded dice. It almost killed the sport.

LEVITZKY

Nothing will ever kill horse racing. It's the sport of kings, and everyone wants to be a king, or at least feel like one.

LIBRETTI

Well right now I'm not exactly feeling like a king. I'm feeling more like a serf or even worse, a loser, and I can tell you when this started.

MALLOY

When?

LIBRETTI

When this Lisa Ann Shekofsky showed up, that's when.

MALLOY

She has a lot of wins.

LIBRETTI

That's my point: how come she's winning so many races?

MALLOY

I never really thought about that.

LIBRETTI

Well, think about it. Look, she shows up, enters all kinds of scroungy horses, like this horse Super Charger, and wins more than what I would consider a fair share of races.

MALLOY

I think you're on to something. Our horses are just as good as hers, in fact, even better. I remember two weeks ago in the Mutual Stakes Race her horse, a twenty to one shot that had never won anything, beat my horse, Stallion, a five-time stakes winner by seven lengths. Boy, was I shocked, not to mention how the crowd felt. They were screaming, at me.

LIBRETTI

And remember a month ago when she had three winners in one day and four winners the next? What are odds of that happening?

LEVITZKY

What do you want her to do? Not win?

LIBRETTI

I didn't say that.

LEVITZKY

So what are you really trying to say?

LIBRETTI

Oh, I don't know. I'm just totally disgusted. Ever since she showed up, everything's been going downhill for me. Six months ago my horses were the leading money makers in this country and now I can barely score a win. I don't like it.

MALLOY

I don't like it either. Other trainers are complaining too, about her. Who does she think she is anyway? One day she shows up at the track, starts entering horses, and the next thing she's the leading money maker. There's something fishy going on.

LEVITZKY

Could also be that she's just training better horses.

LIBRETTI

No way. My portfolio includes at least eleven former stakes winners and thirty other horses that have earned at seven hundred fifty thousand dollars. Her horses don't even come close to that.

LEVITZKY

So what do you propose we do?

LIBRETTI

I really don't know. Maybe we need to meet with some of the other guys and hear what they have to say.

MALLOY

I already spoke with the guys. They're not happy about her either.

Lisa Ann enters.

LISA ANN

Hi, guys. Good seeing you all.

LIBRETTI

Same here, Lisa.

MALLOY

Congratulations on your wins today. How many does that make this year?

LISA ANN

Forty-nine.

MALLOY

Forty-nine wins. Phenomenal.

LISA ANN

Thanks. Coming from you, that's really appreciated.

LEVITZKY

You know, Lisa, you're really quite a person.

LISA ANN

Excuse me?

LEVITZKY

I was trying to pay you a compliment.

LISA ANN

A compliment? What for?

LEVITZKY

It's just that you're now the leading trainer at the track.

LISA ANN

So, what of it?

LEVITZKY

So ... congratulations.

LISA ANN

Okay. Thank you. (*Pause*) Look, fellas, I'm just doing my job.

MALLOY

We know that. It's just that the more you win the more we lose.

LISA ANN

What do you want me to say? That's horse racing.

LIBRETTI

You do have an awful lot of winners.

LISA ANN

Look, guys, I feel you're trying to pressure me.

LEVITZKY

Oh, no, not at all. We want you to feel comfortable, make you part of the crowd. After all, we're all friends here.

LISA ANN

If you say so ... friend.

LIBRETTI

How about all of us going to Angelo's for some drinks?

MALLOY

I'm in.

LEVITZKY

I can fit that into my schedule.

LIBRETTI

How about you, Lisa Ann? Care to join us?

LISA ANN

Sorry, fellas. I have other plans.

LIBRETTI

Okay then. If you change your mind, you know where to find us.

Malloy, Libretti and Levitzky exit.

LISA ANN

(Thinking aloud)

Some friends.

End of scene 6

Scene 7

Time: One week later.

Place: A stable at Long Shot Race Track. Lisa Ann is with two men, Pepe and Jose. They are grooms. Both are in a stall brushing down a horse. Hiding offstage is Libretti who is eavesdropping.

LISA ANN

Hello! Jose? You wanted to see me?

JOSE

Ah, senorita, how good of you to come by.

LISA ANN

It's nice seeing you too. What's up?

JOSE

Busy. Lots of horses to care for.

LISA ANN

I know. You guys do a great job.

JOSE

Thank you, senorita. That is nice of you to say that. *(To Pepe)*
Pepe, stop what you're doing and say hello to the senorita.

Pepe stops working.

PEPE

So much work to do. It's nice seeing you again. How are things with you?

LISA ANN

Things are going well. Winning lots of races.

PEPE

Yes, we know. Good for you.

LISA ANN

Thank you. *(Pause)* I don't want to keep you guys from your work. So what do you guys want to talk about?

JOSE

We just wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed working for you

LISA ANN

Thanks. I appreciate that. I had a hard time replacing you guys.

JOSE

We had to leave. You know how it is. The other trainers were paying more money.

LISA ANN

Yes, I know. If I could have, I would have matched their offers. Is that all?

PEPE

There is something else.

LISA ANN

What is it?

JOSE

Pepe and I would like to take you out to dinner. You were so good to us, so we thought we should return the favor.

LISA ANN

That's not necessary.

PEPE

You know the horse we're working on now?

LISA ANN

Yes. Roman Emperor.

PEPE

Si. Roman Emperor.

JOSE

Well, let me tell you something. The horse has a bad left leg. We thought you would like to know that.

LISA ANN

That's too bad. Maybe he should be seen by the vet.

JOSE

I agree. He's supposed to be racing tomorrow in the futurity.

LISA ANN

Yes, I know. My horse is entered in the same race.

JOSE

Oh, one other thing. Could you spare us a few dollars, enough for to get us home? We were drinking some cerveza and ran out of money.

LISA ANN

I told you guys all the time that you have to be more careful with the booze.

PEPE

Yes, you were right, but ...

LISA ANN

I guess you didn't listen. So, how much you need?

JOSE

Ten dollars.

Lisa Ann removes a ten-dollar bill from her wallet and hands it to Jose.

JOSE

Thank you. You are so kind.

LISA ANN

Is there anything else you want to talk about?

PEPE

No... That's it.

LISA ANN

In that case, hasta manana, and good luck with Roman Emperor. I got to get back to my horse, Gladiator.

Lisa Ann exits. Libretti joins Jose and Pepe.

LIBRETTI

You guys did great.

JOSE

What you asked us to do isn't right.

LIBRETTI

Well, what she's doing isn't right either. Going around collecting information on other horses.

PEPE

She never asked us for information.

LIBRETTI

So what? It's enough that she showed up and paid you money.

JOSE

That was a gift.

LIBRETTI

No, it was a bribe. I witnessed it myself.

PEPE

Okay, senior. Whatever you say. Now, do you have our money?

LIBRETTI

I do, and remember: not a word of this to anyone, or you two guys will be out of job. You comprende?

JOSE

Si, we comprende.

Libretti hands Jose money.

LIBRETTI

That's for you and Pepe. Now, get back to work. We have a race to win tomorrow.

Libretti picks up a telephone.

LIBRETTI

Hello, Malloy? ... Boy, do I have news for you!

End of scene 7

Scene 8

Time: Late afternoon, the following day.

Place: The winner's circle at Long Shot Raceway. Onstage is Lisa Ann, a jockey named Tony O'Rourke, an owner, Herbert Radbourn, and J. Farnsworth Jones, chairman of the state gaming commission. They are surrounded by reporters. Three of the reporters are Dean Covington, Vern Davenport, and Calvin.

JONES

I want to congratulate all of you on Gladiator's victory in today's futurity stakes. It was a thrilling race and one that will long be remembered.

RADBOURN

Thank you. It feels great to be here in the winner's circle. However, credit must go to Tony and to Lisa Ann for their outstanding work which made this victory possible today.

COVINGTON

Dean Covington, Thoroughbred Times. Tony, how did you manage to keep Gladiator close to the rail?

TONY

Actually, it wasn't hard at all. He knew where he wanted to run so I let him have his way, and he took care of the rest.

DAVENPORT

Vern Davenport, Race Track News. Lisa Ann, did you give Tony any special instructions prior to the race?

LISA ANN

My plan was to have Gladiator lay back through the first half mile and then at the back stretch begin to make his move on the inside. I learned early on that he likes hugging the rail, so I went with that, and it worked.

COVINGTON

Any future plans for Gladiator?

LISA ANN

Right now, we're going to let him rest and then from there decide.

DAVENPORT

What do you think about the status of horse racing in the United States today?

LISA ANN

I think it's never been better. The horses are better trained, better conditioned and they all want to win. That makes for exciting races, like the one you saw just a few minutes ago.

RADBOURN

As an owner, I couldn't be prouder of Lisa Ann and Tony. I never thought I'd live to see the day when one of my horses actually won a major stakes race, but here I am today. It just shows, that in this great country of ours, anything is possible.

CALVIN

Sir?

RADBOURN

Yes.

CALVIN

Calvin Benchlow, sports reporter for the Stallings, Missouri Gazette. How good was the competition for this race?

LISA ANN

I don't understand your question.

CALVIN

There are rumors that the outcome of this race was a foregone conclusion.

LISA ANN

That's news to me.

JONES

Sir, that's a serious allegation. Let me assure you and the public that our races are clean, and that there is zero tolerance for cheating or for any other improper acts that may produce an unfair advantage.

CALVIN

Hearing that is reassuring, but still there are certain rumors ...

LISA ANN

What rumors?

CALVIN

Rumors that maybe you knew that one of the other horses, which happened to be the heavy favorite, actually was not fit to race.

COVINGTON

Is that true?

DAVENPORT

You mean the race was fixed?

COVINGTON

Was anyone paid off?

DAVENPORT

Was the commission in on this?

COVINGTON

Lisa, are you part of a scam?

LISA ANN

No, I am not. The race was run fair and square.

JONES

These are serious charges. They will require further investigation.

COVINGTON

Meanwhile, does the victory stand?

DAVENPORT

Is the public being cheated?

COVINGTON

Should the police be called?

DAVENPORT

Has the DA been notified?

JONES

It is my ruling that for the time being the results of this year's futurity stakes will stand, pending further investigation by my office.

CALVIN

But how do we know you're not involved too?

JONES

That question does not warrant a reply.

COVINGTON

What are you trying to hide?

DAVENPORT

What about transparency? Doesn't the public have a right to know whether these races are legitimate?

JONES

Right now I have nothing further to say about this matter.

(To Lisa Ann)

Ms. Shekofsky. I want to meet with you in my office, now!

End of scene 7

Scene 8

Time: Fifteen minutes later.

Place: The office of the Chairman of the State Gaming Commission.

Lisa Ann and Jones are standing at opposite sides of a desk.

JONES

What in tarnation was that reporter talking about?

LISA ANN

I don't know.

JONES

Well, I'm going to get to the bottom of this, if it's the last thing I do. Lisa, you are the leading trainer at this track. If you're screwing things up, then we might as well go out of business right now.

LISA ANN

Sir, I am not screwing things up, and you know I wouldn't do anything to jeopardize this track or make you look bad.

JONES

I was planning to make you the face of the horse racing industry. Try to broaden our appeal; make it more attractive to women. And now this! I can almost cry!

LISA ANN

I don't know what to say.

JONES

Say it isn't true! Say you didn't do anything wrong!

LISA ANN

I said that already.

JONES

I want to believe you, but now I can't.

LISA ANN

Sir, you have my word that this race, to the best of my knowledge, was not fixed.

Sound of knocking on the door.

JONES

Please see who that is.

Lisa Ann opens the door. Calvin enters.

JONES

This is a private meeting. So please leave.

CALVIN

I have important information.

LISA ANN

Don't listen to him. *(To Calvin)* Haven't you caused enough trouble already?

CALVIN

Years ago you told me to become a writer, so now I'm a writer.

JONES

You know him?

LISA ANN

Yes, I know him.

JONES

What in blazes is going on here?

LISA ANN

We grew up in the same town.

CALVIN

And then she gave me the brush off, and wouldn't talk to me again.

JONES

So, because of that you're now trying to bring down an entire sport? Somehow I fail to see the logic in that.

CALVIN

Look, I'm a reporter and I got a tip that somehow the race wasn't legitimate, so I checked it out.

JONES

What you've done is spread a rumor and once a rumor starts, it takes on a life of its own.

LISA ANN

I don't know what I saw in you that made me actually care about you, but what I see now is something that I definitely do not like.

CALVIN

Why? Because I'm trying to uncover the truth? Because I'm trying to do my job? Because I actually listened to you? This is the thanks I get?

LISA ANN

Stop being so smart. It's unbecoming, even for the likes of you. And you're no writer. You're a reporter, a smut-peddler.

CALVIN

Wow, are we being proud. Remember that pride is one of the seven deadly sins.

LISA ANN

Don't preach the Bible to me, okay? You've come here to try to ruin me.

CALVIN

I came here because I care.

JONES

Look, you two can settle this squabble later. Right now, I want to know who you talked to about this race.

CALVIN

I cannot reveal my sources. However, suffice to say that it came from inside this track.

JONES

I knew it. Leaks. No one can be trusted. It's outrageous. No one has filed any formal complaint. Instead, I'm being bombarded with innuendo. What exactly were you told?

LISA ANN

Yes, tell us.

CALVIN

According to my sources, Lisa Ann went over to Roman Emperor's stable where she spoke with two persons, who will go unnamed. These two persons gave her information about Roman Emperor in exchange for money. That's it.

JONES

Is that true, Lisa?

LISA ANN

Yes, I went there but ...

JONES

You should have never gone there.

LISA ANN

Sir, please let me finish. Two grooms called me and asked me to come to the stable. They said they needed money to get home. While I was there they told me that Roman Emperor had a bad foot. I gave them the money and left. That's all.

JONES

Is there anybody working at this track or associated with this track who for some reason has some kind of grudge against you?

LISA ANN

I don't know. Maybe. Some of the other trainers don't seem too fond of me.

CALVIN

That doesn't surprise me. In a matter of weeks you have become the leading trainer at this track.

LISA ANN

Too bad you didn't report that instead.

CALVIN

That wasn't news, at least not to me.

LISA ANN

So you're no different than all those other reporters. You're just another rumor monger who wants to whip up trouble to sell stories. And to think that I once actually cared about you. I won't make that mistake again.

JONES

Okay, listen, both of you. Stop this childlike banter now. *(To Calvin)* As for you, this entire conversation is off the record. Do you understand that? If even one word of this is reported or printed I promise that I will hunt you down to the ends of the earth. Is that clear?

CALVIN

It's all off the record.

JONES

Good. Now please leave my office. I have work to do.

End of scene 8

Scene 9

Time: Later that night

Place: Downtown. A place named Horse Shoe Bar. Lisa Ann is seated at the bar. She is drinking a soda.

BARTENDER

You seem a little down tonight. Everything all right?

LISA ANN

It's been just one of those days. First, I'm accused of being a cheat and then I find out that this guy I used to hang out with is the snitch accusing me of being a cheater.

Calvin enters

CALVIN

Is that you, Lisa?

LISA ANN

Talk about who the wind just blew in.

CALVIN

It's the only bar in town. If you want me to go somewhere else, I will.

LISA ANN

I don't know if I should even talk to you. Anything I say, or should I say allegedly say, may wind up in tomorrow's paper.

CALVIN

You said I should be a writer.

LISA ANN

I specifically remember saying a poet, not a rat. Watch, now you'll report that I think all journalists are rats.

CALVIN

I put my pen away.

LISA ANN

Reporters never put their pens away. You know, in the space of less than one minute I have already said too much. If this is an interview, at least show me the courtesy of notifying me at least ten seconds in advance.

CALVIN

Lisa, my editor sent me here to do this story.

LISA ANN

I'm sure after you told him you knew me.

CALVIN

That had nothing to do with it.

LISA ANN

So the fact that we know each other is purely coincidental.

CALVIN

Yes, you have to believe me.

LISA ANN

Apparently the term conflict of interest means nothing to you.

CALVIN

Nor does it to you.

LISA ANN

What does that mean?

CALVIN

You go to another trainer's stable, talk to their people; solicit information ...

LISA ANN

I didn't solicit information.

CALVIN

Okay, they volunteered it. Still you were there and maybe ...

LISA ANN

Maybe what?

CALVIN

Maybe this is something you do all the time, to win races.

LISA ANN

Who's paying you to say that?

CALVIN

Nobody's paying me.

LISA ANN

Why don't you just leave?

CALVIN

There's no place else to go.

LISA ANN

Sit at a table. Somewhere as far away from me as possible. What I saw in you I just don't know. Maybe that's where you really do belong, in a garage, messing with cars, not with people.

CALVIN

I thought you would be glad to see me.

LISA ANN

See you! No way.

CALVIN

Didn't you ever think about me?

LISA ANN

Not a bit. I was too busy building a career for myself to have time to mess around with the likes of you.

CALVIN

What did I do to make you so steamed at me?

LISA ANN

I'll tell you what you did. First, you acted stupid when I knew you were smart. Second, you knew that I cared about you and instead treated it like it was a game. Third, you barge back into my life like a steamroller looking to flatten me. Fourth, you're totally oblivious to my feelings. Do you want me to go on? There's more.

CALVIN

Am I that bad of a guy?

LISA ANN

No. You're just a first class jerk. You and every man on this planet. All you think about is yourself. That's it.

CALVIN

No wonder you don't get along with the other trainers.

LISA ANN

Now where did you get that tidbit from? Your paid informants who are snooping on me?

CALVIN

Maybe I ought to be going.

LISA ANN

May be you should. I've given you enough material to write a bio about me.

CALVIN

I don't know what to say.

LISA ANN

It doesn't matter what you say. What matters to you is what you can write and then publish, especially if you think it will sell. You'd rat out your own mother if you'd thought it would sell. You're nothing but a whore.

CALVIN

Okay, I don't need to hear this.

LISA ANN

Too bad. You just heard it. Now you can write that in your gazette, about the nasty and corrupt trainer who uses inside info to win races and calls reporters whores.

CALVIN

You're talking to me like we're still on the farm. Well we're not.

LISA ANN

And you still sound like what you are, a jerk.

CALVIN

Quit the name-calling, please.

LISA ANN

Wow. You actually said the word please. How decent of you.

CALVIN

Lisa, please stop, if I hurt you in any way, I'm sorry. I hope you believe me.

LISA ANN

How can I believe you? You're a reporter and reporters have no feelings. The more you go on talking, and writing, the more you prove it. Why couldn't you have been a poet?

CALVIN

I wrote poetry. In fact, I had a book of poems published. But it didn't sell.

LISA ANN

So you sold out and became a rumor monger.

CALVIN

I have to make a living somehow.

LISA ANN

Dumb platitude. You can do better than that, Mister Reporter.

CALVIN

I want to tell you a little secret.

LISA ANN

Let me turn on my tape recorder. I want to make sure you're not setting me up.

CALVIN

You're wearing a wire?

LISA ANN

You really are a jerk, grease monkey.

CALVIN

All these years I always thought about you.

LISA ANN

Okay.

CALVIN

I never stopped caring about you.

LISA ANN

What are you doing? Coming on to me?

CALVIN

No. I just want to let you know how I feel about you.

LISA ANN

You are more messed up than I thought.

Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky enter. They are intoxicated. They sit at the bar.

LIBRETTI

Hey, look who's here. The reporter and our favorite trainer, the lady who keeps showing us up.

MALLOY

Aw, leave them be. Bartender, three scotches on the rocks.

BARTENDER

I think you guys have had enough.

LEVITZKY

What? You're refusing to serve us? Outrageous.

MALLOY

(To Lisa Ann)

So what's new?

LISA ANN

Get lost.

MALLOY

Why are you being so touchy?

LIBRETTI

She wants to be alone. She's too good for us. *(To Calvin)* You see, Mister Reporter, what happens when we try to be nice to her?

CALVIN

Come on, guys. Knock it off.

LIBRETTI

Knock what off? All I'm doing is trying to be sociable.

LISA ANN

No you're not. You're trying to provoke me, to get more dirt on me.

LEVITZKY

My dear young lady, that statement is entirely false and I object to such insinuations.

LISA ANN

Object all you want. But if you think you're going to run me out of town, you have another thing coming to you.

LIBRETTI

Now who's trying to provoke who ... or is it whom?

MALLOY

I think it's whom.

LIBRETTI

Whatever. Meanwhile where's our drinks?

LEVITZKY

The bar keep refused to serve us.

LIBRETTI

You have to be joking.

BARTENDER

No joke. I want you guys out of here now.

MALLOY

You have some nerve not serving us. (*To Lisa Ann*) You're to blame. You're the blame for everything. Ever since you showed up at this track, nothing's gone right. We were here before you and now you act like you own the place. Well, you don't.

CALVIN

Hey, you have no call to talk to Lisa like that.

LISA ANN

Aw, leave them be. They're leaving anyway. And besides, I don't need you sticking up for me. I can fight my own fights.

CALVIN

No, Lisa Ann, I can't leave it be. They have no right to personally insult you.

LIBRETTI

What are you going to do about it? Write us a nasty letter? Call us names? Remember: we're the ones who gave you the story.

LISA ANN

Why you low down pieces of cow dung! So it was you who sic'd a reporter on me.

LIBRETTI

That's right, dolly. Now why don't you haul your pretty little butt out of here and take your boyfriend with you.

CALVIN

You asked for it.

Calvin punches Libretti. A brawl ensues. Soon, from offstage, comes the sound of sirens.

End of scene 8

Scene 9

Time: The following day.

Place: A living room in Lisa's house. Calvin and Lisa Ann are having a discussion.

LISA ANN

Thanks a lot for nothing. Now, in addition to me being considered a cheater, now I'm accused of inciting a riot, and I didn't even start the fight.

CALVIN

I'm gonna make it up to you. I'm gonna write an expose on those guys and how they tried to manipulate the press ...

LISA ANN

You mean you.

CALVIN

No, I mean the press, to drive you out.

LISA ANN

Please don't. The more you write the more I get into trouble. There's only one way for me to get back at these guys, and that is to keep on winning. They hate that.

CALVIN

This is gonna make a great story.

LISA ANN

You see? What do I have to do to get you to stop treating this as a story? This is not a play. We have to return to court next week. Luckily, I'm friends with the bartender who was willing to post a bond and told me that he'd be willing to testify on our behalf, otherwise we'd still be in jail.

CALVIN

I had no idea the depth of the animosity people harbor toward you, just because you're successful.

LISA ANN

Who cares? All I know I have to make a living and this is the only way I know how to do that.

CALVIN

That's exactly what I told you when you started ragging me about being a reporter. Slight double standard?

LISA ANN

No double standard. This is all I know. You however have options.

CALVIN

Yes. I have options, I can teach English lit or get a job as an auto mechanic. To that I say no thank you. My work takes me all over the world. I have reported on wars, crime, natural disasters, politics, you name it. I'm not about to give that up.

LISA ANN

Fine. But just don't treat me as one of your stories.

CALVIN

You're not just one of my stories. But, still, you're part of a story, one that is special and needs to be written.

LISA ANN

All you reporters are the same. Always angling to get people to spill the beans, and then use it against them.

CALVIN

Do you see me holding a pen, taking notes or recording your comments?

LISA ANN

No. But that doesn't mean that the tape recorder in your head isn't operating.

CALVIN

Maybe I should go back to Stallings to re-charge my batteries.

LISA ANN

The judge ordered you not to leave town. So you're not going anywhere. I have an extra room that you can use.

CALVIN

I don't want to put you out.

LISAENA

You already have, the moment you showed up in town. Besides I want to keep you around so I can keep my eye on you. Otherwise you'll just get us into more trouble.

CALVIN

I'll go to the hotel and get my things.

Calvin heads to the door.

LISA ANN

Hey, come over here.

Calvin turns around and walks to Lisa Ann.

CALVIN

What is it?

LISA ANN

This!

Lisa Ann embraces Calvin and kisses him.

CALVIN

What was that for?

LISA ANN

For being a jerk.

Lisa Ann kisses Calvin again. This time Calvin responds. They continue kissing.

End of scene 9.

Scene 10

Time: Two weeks later

Place: An office at the Stallings Gazette. Seated are Calvin and Rick Holmes, managing editor.

RICK

You've done a great job on the Shekofsky story. Since you broke the story of how they tried to frame that girl, it's gone national. Now horse racing is the talk of the country.

CALVIN

It's a great story. Girl versus the horse racing establishment. They're doing everything they can to stop her but she won't back down. The more they push the more she pushes back, by winning. The other trainers hate her.

RICK

Maybe we can develop the story even more. Take it to the next level.

CALVIN

What's the next level?

RICK

I don't know. I'll tell you when we get there. That's what happens when a story takes on a life of its own.

CALVIN

Horse racing gets a bad rap. Everyone thinks it's crooked. Well, it's not. Now the biggest race of all is coming up. The Grand National Race. Ten million dollar purse.

RICK

Who do you have your money on?

CALVIN

Lisa Ann Shekofsky, of course.

RICK

Amazing young lady. Resilient.

CALVIN

The commission exonerated her.

RICK

But they still ordered her to take a one-month suspension.

CALVIN

Which she's doing, with no complaints. It's giving her a chance to re-charge her batteries.

RICK

You dug up the facts and set things straight.

CALVIN

And then got myself run out of town by those three trainers who fed me the scoop.

RICK

A good reporter is the reporter that makes enemies. It shows that he's doing his job, uncovering the truth.

CALVIN

Some people call that snooping.

RICK

I call it discovering. Like how those other trainers tried to set up Lisa to make it look like she was a cheat.

CALVIN

They were upset that they were being upstaged by an upstart.

RICK

What's the situation at the track now?

CALVIN

I don't know.

RICK

Aren't you and Lisa Ann ... close?

CALVIN

We're friends but I haven't been in contact with her recently.

RICK

Maybe, I should assign another reporter to do the follow up.

CALVIN

Hey, what minute. That's my story.

RICK

I know it is, but you're already too enmeshed. You plowing her for information and then her finding out what you're doing could become messy. I don't want you to become the story.

CALVIN

Don't worry about that.

RICK

Okay. Fine. When you go back there, all I want you to do is collect information. Don't send me any copy, just provide information.

CALVIN

You mean you want me to spy?

RICK

No. I want you to collect information, but just don't be obvious about it.

CALVIN

That could get me into a lot of trouble if I'm found out.

RICK

Then be careful. I can't believe that the same cabal of trainers who targeted Shekofsky won't be up to no good. With ten million dollars on the line, they're liable to do anything. What's the name of horse Lisa Ann is entering?

CALVIN

I don't know.

RICK

Find out. In the world of horse racing anything can happen and I want you to be there when it happens.

End of scene 10

Scene 11

Time: One week later

Place: A stable. Lisa Ann is feeding a horse.

LISA ANN

That's right, boy, eat all you can. You earned it.

Calvin enters.

CALVIN

Hey, Lisa.

LISA ANN

Hello to you too. What brings you here?

CALVIN

I just want to see how you're doing.

LISA ANN

That's very thoughtful of you.

CALVIN

I thought you got railroaded.

LISA ANN

Didn't surprise me. To them I'm nobody. Don't matter that I produce winners. I guess I'm just not one of the boys.

CALVIN

That's not fair.

LISA ANN

Listen to you! When did you acquire a conscience? You're the one that started all this.

CALVIN

Come on, now. I admitted the errors of my ways.

LISA ANN

But you never cleaned up the mess. Now, I'm suspended. Well, good, it'll give me a chance to recharge my batteries.

CALVIN

I said the exact same thing to my editor. Now, what about filing an appeal?

LISA ANN

Appeal what? The commission's decisions are final. Period. Says so in black and white.

CALVIN

But you're being denied the right to earn a living.

LISA ANN

Just temporarily. I'll be back in time for the Grand National.

CALVIN

But right now you're not making any money.

LISA ANN

So what? That will pass. Let me tell you something, I know how to get back at those guys.

CALVIN

How?

LISA ANN

By winning the Grand National. And I have the horse that will do it.

CALVIN

You found an owner who wanted to hire you while you're on suspension?

LISA ANN

Yes, but it's all under wraps.

CALVIN

What's the name of the horse?

LISA ANN

I'm still not sure if I can trust you with that information.

CALVIN

I give you my word that I won't share it with anyone.

LISA ANN

Okay. The horse's name is King's Ransom. I've been training him at a secret location. Don't bother to ask me where because I won't tell you.

CALVIN

My editor likes you.

LISA ANN

Does he own a horse?

CALVIN

No, but he's written editorials defending you.

LISA ANN

Tell him to save his news print. His readers are probably wondering how much I paid, or, since I'm a woman, how many sick and perverted sexual acts I performed, to get your editor to write nice things about me.

CALVIN

Who's been saying that?

LISA ANN

I didn't say they've been saying it. I said they're wondering it.

CALVIN

So, now you're a mind reader.

LISA ANN

No. Just someone who knows about how rotten people can be, especially when they feel threatened.

CALVIN

You think I'm rotten too?

LISA ANN

Oh, please, don't start getting all touchy with me. I already showed you what I think about you.

CALVIN

I hope you're not gaming me.

LISA ANN

Why would I want to do that?

CALVIN

To keep me on your side.

LISA ANN

Boy, are you full of yourself. I show you that I like you. We do nice things together, and that's the best you can say? Look, if you want, write whatever you want about me, good or bad. Don't matter.

CALVIN

Come on now. I'm not going to do that.

LISA ANN

Don't do me any favors. I know you stuck up for me that night and for that I'm thankful. I really am. And you know that I like you, we've had some nice times together, but business is business and I can't let anyone or anything stand in the way of my doing what I have to do in order to right a wrong. Do I make myself clear?

CALVIN

Perfectly.

LISA ANN

Good. Now let me get back to work, I've got to take Hero for a ride then bed him down.

CALVIN

Okay. I'll see you later.

Calvin turns to leave.

LISA ANN

Oh, and before I forget, one other thing.

CALVIN

Yes?

LISA ANN

What really brought you back here?

CALVIN

I told you. To see how you are doing. That, and to attend the Grand National.

LISA ANN

You on the clock or off the clock?

CALVIN

This is strictly personal. I wanted to see you.

LISA ANN

Did I tell you that I think you're a jerk?

CALVIN

Yes, you did. Thanks for reminding me.

LISA ANN

Don't thank me. I was wrong. You're worse than a jerk, you're a liar. I just fed you bunch of inside information and you're not going to go behind my back to share it with your boss? You must think I'm a chump. You're just trying to con me, take advantage of my good and caring nature, to pump me for information. You can't help it. All you reporters are the same. And what's so sad is that I feel I helped to ruin you. I should have never put you down for wanting to work in a garage. Now I feel responsible for you becoming a reporter, a pathetic suck up who will do anything to get a scoop, even if means acting like you care.

CALVIN

But I do care.

LISA ANN

Spoken just like a jerk who thinks he's dealing with a fool. For all I know you're in cahoots with that clown Libretti.

CALVIN

You have everything figured out. Everything's a con and you're nothing but a fool.

LISA ANN

I didn't say I'm a fool. I said you think I'm a fool. For a reporter, you don't listen too carefully.

CALVIN

Oh. I forgot. You're also a mind reader.

LISA ANN

That's right, mock me.

CALVIN

I was just joking.

LISA ANN

Now you're trifling with me.

CALVIN

Holy smokes! Everything I say to you, you tear apart.

LISA ANN

That's right.

CALVIN

At least in that respect I'm batting a thousand.

LISA ANN

Said like a true jerk. Now, I have some work to do. Go in the house. Maybe, after I'm finished here, I'll be nice to you, provided you don't later write about.

End of scene 11

Scene 12

Time: One week later.

Place: Living room in Lisa Ann's house. Lisa Ann is reading a book. She is alone. Suddenly there is knocking on the door. Lisa Ann puts down the book.

LISA ANN

Who is it?

From offstage comes Libretti's voice.

LIBRETTI

Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky.

LISA ANN

What do you guys want?

LIBRETTI

We want to talk to you.

LISA ANN

About what?

LIBRETTI

The Grand National.

LISA ANN

I have nothing to talk to you guys about. Get lost.

LIBRETTI

We're not leaving until we talk to you. It's very important.

LISA ANN

Haven't you guys caused enough trouble already?

LIBRETTI

That's in the past. We have business to discuss with you. Let us in.

LISA ANN

Well... okay.

Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky enter.

LIBRETTI

Thank you.

LISA ANN

You're welcome. Now what's so important that you disturb my peace and serenity?

LIBRETTI

Me and the boys have been doing a lot of thinking.

LISA ANN

You guys actually think?

MALLOY

Already starting in with the insults. I don't need to hear this. (to Libretti) I think we ought to leave.

LEVITZKY

No. We're here already, so we might as well stay and say what we have to say.

LISA ANN

Have to say what?

LIBRETTI

It's about the Grand National. We heard that you'll be entering a horse named King's Ransom. Is that true?

LISA ANN

Maybe it is, and maybe it's not.

MALLOY

Listen, Lisa, stop playing games with us. For a long time now we've been trying to be nice to you, to work cooperatively with you, and to date all you do is give us the cold shoulder. You know, we're not such bad guys once you get to know us.

LISA ANN

I know enough about you guys already. How you used a reporter to try to destroy me and my career. That was rotten.

LIBRETTI

Didn't we run that reporter out of town?

LISA ANN

Only after he got the facts and started writing the truth about you guys.

LIBRETTI

We understand that the reporter is back in town. We're not happy about that.

LISA ANN

I couldn't care less if you're happy or not.

LIBRETTI

Anyway, we just wanted to warn you that he's around.

LISA ANN

Okay. Now I'm warned. Is that your only reason for barging in on me?

MALLOY

Actually, no.

LISA ANN

You guys are really something. With all your plotting and meetings, where do you find the time to train horses?

LIBRETTI

We're not here to talk about us. We're here to talk about you. Now, this is the deal. We're going to give you one hundred thousand dollars. In return, you will make sure that your horse does not come in the money. Meaning that your horse is to finish no better than fourth. (*To Levitzky*) Give her the envelope.

Levitzky takes out an envelope and offers it to Lisa Ann.)

LEVITZKY

Take it. It won't bite.

LISA ANN

I don't want it, and besides I want to level with you. I have no plans to enter a horse, so you have nothing to worry about.

LIBRETTI

Look, we know you. There's no way you're gonna miss this race. So take the money and spend it in good health.

LISA ANN

Get out of here!

LEVITZKY

Sweet heart, there's no need to get emotional. This is business. Take the money.

LISA ANN

No. I won't take it. Now scam before I call the police.

MALLOY

On what grounds? That we paid you a visit?

LISA ANN

Just take your money and leave. I have work to do.

Levitzky tosses the envelope on a table.

LEVITZKY

I can assure it's all there.

MALLOY

I believe our business here is concluded.

LIBRETTI
(To Lisa Ann)

If you had played ball with us from the start, none of this would be necessary. All of us could have taken turns winning. Instead you decided to make us look bad, which, besides costing us money, just was poor public relations. *(To Malloy and Levitzky)* let's go.

Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky exit. Calvin enters.

LISA ANN

What are you doing here?

CALVIN

And hello to you too. I saw your pals Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky leaving your house.

LISA ANN

They're not my pals. Did they see you?

CALVIN

No. I hid behind a tree. What did they want?

Calvin points to the envelope on the table.

CALVIN

What's that?

LISA ANN

Nothing.

Calvin snatches the envelope.

LISA ANN

Don't open it!

Calvin opens the envelope. It is crammed with cash.

CALVIN

What is this? Are you on the take?

LISA ANN

Put it down and stop asking questions.

CALVIN

I can't help asking questions. How much money's in there?

LISA ANN

I don't know.

CALVIN

Let's find out.

Calvin opens the envelope.

CALVIN

It's a stack of one hundred dollar bills. (*Calvin counts the money out loud.*)
One thousand ... two thousand ... three thousand ... four thousand ... five
thousand ... six thousand ... seven thousand ... eight thousand ... nine thousand
... ten thousand ...

LISA ANN

Quit your counting. There's one hundred thousand dollars.

CALVIN

Holy Gee Wilikers. This is some story! Huge headline: Corruption rampant
in the horse racing game. Wow!

LISA ANN

They knew the name of the horse I'm training. Gee, I wonder where they got
that information from.

CALVIN

Not from me.

LISA ANN

But now you're so excited. I thought you're off the clock.

CALVIN

I am, please believe me, but this is a block buster story. I break this story
and I could win the National Press Association Award.

LISA ANN

Is that all you care about? Some crummy award? What about me?

CALVIN

What about you? Either you're on the take or you're part of some extortion racket. Either way, all I know is that I am staring straight in the face of the story of the year or maybe even of a lifetime.

LISA ANN

Do you know what will happen to me if this gets out?

CALVIN

If you've done nothing wrong, then you have nothing to worry about.

LISA ANN

You are so wrong.

CALVIN

If they've threatened you then call the police.

LISA ANN

The police are in on this too.

CALVIN

In on what? I see those three guys leaving your house, obviously up to no good. Then, I come in here and find you with an envelope crammed with a wad of cash, and then you tell me not to ask questions. You're not being forthcoming, and I don't like that.

LISA ANN

Look, I'm telling you, if you report this story they will kill me. Don't you understand? These guys are tied in with the mob. Levitzky is a hit man for Morris Liebling, who runs the biggest policy racket in the country. Libretti and Malloy are lieutenants in the Ragatti crime family. They use the track as a cover to operate a protection racket.

CALVIN

So who's protecting whom? You didn't pay them; they paid you. Maybe you have your own racket.

LISA ANN

Me going around hitting up gangsters for money. Stop your fantasizing. I told them to leave and take the money. Instead of taking the money they left it where you found it.

CALVIN

And you kept it.

LISA ANN

And you counted it. Calvin, I'm not on the take. You have to believe me.

CALVIN

It doesn't matter what I believe. The only thing that matters are the facts. What do they want you to do that means so much to them that they would give you one hundred thousand dollars?

LISA ANN

Please don't go snooping around. Last time you did that these guys let you off easy. This time they won't be so nice. There's millions of dollars on the line.

CALVIN

Nobody bullies the press.

LISA ANN

You don't know what you're saying. You can get yourself killed.

CALVIN

What do you want me to do? Ignore the story? I'm a reporter.

LISA ANN

And I'm a human being, not just a story.

And I have a job to do. CALVIN

Spoken like a true jerk. LISA ANN

Stop calling me a jerk! CALVIN

That's what you are. Now, get out! And don't come back! LISA ANN

End of scene 11

Scene 12

Time: Two months later.

Place: The track. Lisa Ann is standing next to a betting window. In her hand is the envelope with the money. Lisa Ann goes to the window.

LISA ANN

I want to bet on the Grand National.

CLERK

Okay.

LISA ANN

One hundred thousand dollars, number one, to win.

CLERK

You have the cash?

LISA ANN

In this envelope.

CLERK

Will you please excuse me for a moment? I have to talk with my supervisor.

LISA ANN

Any problem?

CLERK

No. Just a formality.

The clerk exits. Soon the clerk returns with a supervisor.

SUPERVISOR

How can I help you?

LISA ANN

I want to make a bet.

SUPERVISOR

How much do you want to bet?

LISA ANN

One hundred thousand dollars on King's Ransom, horse number one, to win. I'm feeling really lucky today. King's Ransom is a twelve to one long shot. Two months ago he was considered a sure bet, but then he started getting a lot of bad press, especially from that newspaper guy Calvin what's his name, you know, who started writing all kinds of bad stuff about the horse and about the trainer, you know, Lisa Ann something or other. Well, I'll tell you, I think the horse is gonna win, big time.

SUPERVISOR

Let's see the money.

LISAENA

Absolutely.

Lisa Ann gives the envelope to the supervisor. The supervisor counts the money.

SUPERVISOR

It's all here. One hundred thousand dollars.

LISA ANN

Good. Now please give me my ticket and I'll be on my way. The race is about to start.

SUPERVISOR

Here's your ticket.

LISA ANN

Thank you.

SUPERVISOR

Good luck.

LISA ANN

Thank you.

From offstage comes the voice of the race track announcer. Lisa Ann is watching the race on a closed circuit television.

ANNOUNCER

It is now post time for race number ten, the one we've all been waiting for, the ten million dollar Grand National Classic. First prize is six million dollars. The horses now are in the starting gate. ... And they're off. Fast And Clever takes the lead followed by Nice Guy Jones. Two lengths back is Color Me Blue followed by Dawn To Dusk and at the rear is King's Ransom. As they reach the back turn, Fast And Clever is still maintaining a lead while Color Me Blue has moved into second, with Nice Guy Jones a close third followed by Dawn To Dusk and still trailing in last place King's Ransom. As they head into the back turn Color Me Blue and Fast And Clever are now running neck and neck. Both horses are maintaining a furious pace. As they pull into the stretch Color Me Blue now has taken the lead and is starting to pull away. Wait a minute! Here comes King's Ransom! He's moving like a locomotive. He's now in third place, four lengths in back of the leader Color Me Blue. King's Ransom continues to gain ground fast. He's now three lengths back; now two. Coming down the stretch Color Me Blue and King's Ransom are now neck and neck. They cross the finish line! **TOO CLOSE TO CALL.** It's a photo finish. The crowd is ecstatic! They know when they've seen a great race. In the stands, Color Me Blue's trainer, Frank Libretti, appears to have lost control of himself and has to be physically restrained. Ed Malloy and Murray Levitzky, the trainers for Dawn To Dusk and Fast And Clever, seem to be conferring ... and are now throwing punches! Pandemonium is spreading in the stands as both men continue to brawl. Meanwhile, King's Ransom's trainer, Lisa Ann Shekofsky, is nowhere to be found.

LISA ANN

(To the supervisor)

Look at the way those guys lost control of themselves. Pathetic.

End of scene 12

Scene 13

One week later.

Place: The office of the gaming commission. Onstage is Lisa Ann and an investigator for the gaming commission. His name is Ted McMahon.

TED

My name is Ted McMahon. I am a senior investigator for the state gaming commission. One week ago, you allegedly bet one hundred thousand dollars in cash on King's Ransom, a horse that you trained, to win the Grand National Derby. King's Ransom won the race and your winnings totaled one point four six million dollars. So far, is this correct?

LISA ANN

Yes.

TED

Why did you do it?

LISA ANN

I didn't like the idea of anyone trying to push me around.

TED

You knew it was a violation of regulations to make that bet.

LISA ANN

What I knew was that I wanted to use someone else's money to win more money.

TED

And that you knew the penalty for violating the regulation.

LISA ANN

It never even crossed my mind.

TED

Yet you did it anyway.

LISA ANN

That's right, and I'd do it again. Any time. Those three bozos thought they could buy me off. Instead I showed them.

TED

You realize that you are subject to criminal prosecution.

LISA ANN

Go ahead. Prosecute me. In fact, if you want me to plead guilty, I'll do that right now.

TED

That you do before a court. Right now I'm just collecting facts.

LISA ANN

I've heard that line before.

TED

Excuse me?

LISA ANN

Never mind. I bet on my own horse, which was supposed to lose, and now I'm treated like a criminal, while the likes Of Libretti, Malloy and Levitzky, the scum of the earth, are foot loose and fancy free. Typical double standard.

TED

They're in deep trouble too.

LISA ANN

Meanwhile I'm the one in this room, not them.

TED

That's because trainers, like yourself, are not allowed to bet on races. It creates an appearance of a conflict of interest which can undermine the public's confidence in horse racing.

LISA ANN

There was no conflict of interest. I bet on my own horse to win, period.

TED

Further, you conspired with your boyfriend to plant false stories about your horse to hike up the odds.

LISA ANN

Ever hear of freedom of the press? He had a right to write whatever he wants.

TED

Lisa, if you're willing to cooperate, we'll go easy on you.

LISA ANN

Don't do me any favors.

TED

We know about the extenuating circumstances.

LISA ANN

You mean how I "took" the money?

TED

Yes. How you took the money and how you bet it, won the race and collected almost one and half million dollars.

LISA ANN

And, boy, did it feel good.

TED

So where did you stash money?

LISA ANN

Somewhere between here and Shangri-La.

TED

Stop being cute. That money is ill-begotten.

LISA ANN

I won that money fair and square. I didn't ask those thugs to give me money. They left it with me and I invested it. Now I'm being penalized, again, for being a winner. By the way, I want you to convey a message to those guys: anytime they want to have a match race, my horse against one of theirs, let me know, and I'll be more than glad to oblige, after I leave an imprint of my foot on their butts. They started with me.

TED

I think their days as trainers are over.

LISA ANN

I'll believe it when I see it. All you men stick together. Anything to keep a woman down. The more winners I produce, the more my reputation is smeared. I'm the bad guy for being good at what I do, and because I don't have a man helping me to do it, people think that I must have some unfair advantage.

TED

You've had your say. Now, tell me where we can find the money.

LISA ANN

That's all you're interested in, finding the money, especially since I possess it. What's become of all the real men who made this country great, who built things, and who knew how to treat a lady?

TED

I don't have the time to debate you on this.

LISA ANN

And I don't have time to sit here and listen to you. I have other horses to train and other races to win, that is, if that's not a crime. And if you think I'm returning the money, you have another thing coming to you. Now, is there anything else you want to talk about?

TED

We're finished for now.

LISA ANN

For now? You mean I may hear from you again?

TED

That's right.

LISA ANN

No surprise there. Good bye.

Lisa Ann exits. Ted takes out his cell phone and makes a call.

TED

Hello, Mister Jones? ... I interviewed Ms. Shekofsky ... I recommend that the commission fine her one thousand dollars for violating the regs and then close the investigation I asked her about the money ... She knows where it is but she's not talking ... Frankly, sir, we don't have a case ... There is no evidence that she colluded with anyone ... The fact is that her horse won the race ... As for the other trainers involved, I recommend that the commission revoke their licenses and refer their cases for criminal prosecution ... Okay, if that's what you want ... I'll continue making inquiries ... Yes, sir ... If I uncover any new information, I'll immediately contact you ... You have a good day too, sir ... Good bye.

Scene 14

Time: Two weeks later

Place: The living room in Lisa Ann's house. Lisa Ann and Calvin are sitting on a couch. They are watching television. On the table in front of them is a bottle of wine and two glasses.

From offstage comes the voice of the news reporter.

NEWS REPORTER

And now for an unusual story. Save the Charities, a private watch dog group that monitors charitable organizations throughout the United States, reports that within the past week fifteen charities have received donations from an anonymous source. These donations total one point four six million dollars. The fifteen charities are The National Children's Foundation, Veterans for a Peaceful World, Women Unite, Stop Global Warming, Save the Sharks, the National Art Endowment, Protect the Lions, the National Association of Botanists, Help the Homeless, the Peoples' Justice Consortium, Down With Guns, Free the Horses, the Universal Health Care Initiative, No More Nukes, and the LGBT Council. Law enforcement authorities, citing national security concerns, continue their efforts to track down the source of these mysterious contributions. Now to other news ... *Lisa Ann shuts off the television.*

CALVIN

Congratulations. You did it. Your creativity never fails to impress me. You have transformed money laundering from a seedy operation into an art.

LISA ANN

Thank you. Coming from you, that really means something to me. And thanks for coming back.

CALVIN

I'm glad you let me back in.

Calvin picks up the bottle and fills the glasses. Lisa Ann and Calvin pick up their glasses and make a toast.

CALVIN

Cheers!

LISA ANN

Cheers.

They clink glasses and smile.

LISA ANN

Now drink up fast. I have no time to waste. I have more work to do and more races to win.

The End.