

# 21

The Abridged Script

written by

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Movie:

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**FADE IN:**

## **INT. HARVARD ADMISSIONS OFFICE**

JIM STURGESS is meeting with some ADMISSIONS GUY.

JIM STURGESS

As I was saying, I am extraordinarily gifted, to a point where I will obviously be unbelievably rich and successful. But because Harvard is hard to get into, I want to go here, and I believe not only do I deserve it, but I deserve a free ride. That's how awesome I am.

HARVARD ADMISSIONS GUY

That's all well and good, but to get a scholarship, you will need to write an admissions essay that really jumps off the page. Like maybe a story about love, loss, and ultimately redemption. Perhaps you could tell this story in obnoxious, narrated movie form.

JIM STURGESS

Funny you should mention that overused storytelling technique. You see...

DISSOLVE TO:

## **INT. MEN'S CLOTHING STORE**

JIM works as a salesman selling men's clothing. He oozes cockiness on a few HAPLESS PATRONS.

HAPLESS PATRON

Hey, how much will this tie cost me?

JIM STURGESS

Well, the tie is marked down by the square root of 182 dollars, which of course means that it's \$13.49 off, bringing the total to \$36.51.

HAPLESS PATRON

HOLY SHIT YOU CAN DO SIMPLE MATH IN YOUR HEAD?!

JIM STURGESS

I'm pretty good with numbers. But I'm even better at explaining my own bland characterization to cast members with virtually no lines.

JIM is approached by his fat friend, JOSH GAD.

JOSH GAD

You seem almost as bummed as you are gifted, Jim. What's wrong?

JIM STURGESS

I want to go to Harvard medical school, but it costs \$300,000! How can I possibly afford that?!

JOSH GAD

Um, student loans?

JIM STURGESS

No! I need some kind of magic pile of money to fall into my lap in a manner that compromises my morality and makes me learn a lesson about life! I knew you wouldn't understand!

JIM goes off to pout about being ridiculously gifted without parents who are already ridiculously rich.

## **INT. MIT CLASSROOM**

KEVIN SPACEY gives a traditional college movie lecture filled with accessible anecdotes rather than actual information.

KEVIN SPACEY

So I'd like to pose an interesting problem to you all. Let's say you choose one out of 26 cases and then oogle a bunch of women in low-cut dresses while some bald guy with a soul patch makes shitty jokes and picks up a fake phone. Are you on a challenging game show, or are you doing something a trained monkey could do?

JIM STURGESS

The question is impossible to answer, as an untrained monkey could do it as well.

KEVIN SPACEY

Good. Most people would have gotten emotional in their response, but Jim here kept his cool. Alright class, any questions?

JIM STURGESS

Um, yeah: why are you talking about high-school level probability in the middle of your senior-level MIT class on nonlinear equations?

KEVIN SPACEY

CLASS DISMISSED!

## **INT. LIBRARY**

JIM is doing homework when suddenly he is approached by JACOB PITTS.

JACOB PITTS

Hey asshole. My stupid professor wants to talk to you about how dumb you are or whatever. Follow me.

JIM follows JACOB to find KEVIN SPACEY in a room with a bunch of other students, playing BLACKJACK.

JIM STURGESS

What's going on? Why is Lois Lane here?

KEVIN SPACEY

You're looking at the infamous MIT Blackjack Team.

JIM STURGESS

No I'm not. The MIT Blackjack Team was a whole bunch of male Asian kids. You're a group of ethnically and sexually diverse students headed by two white kids.

KATE BOSWORTH

Welcome to Hollywood.

KEVIN SPACEY

Join our team as we count cards and make millions of dollars.

JIM STURGESS

No.

*(pause)*

Okay. But only until I learn a valuable lesson.

KATE BOSWORTH

Okay, here's what you have to know. There are two types of team members: boring secondary characters and obnoxious lead characters. The secondary characters tell the leads when a table is hot, and then the lead characters come over and make huge bets, attract an unhealthy amount of attention from the casino, then walk away with millions.

JIM STURGESS

What? Card counting only increases your odds 1 or 2%. This isn't magic, it's math.

KATE BOSWORTH

In movies, those are the same thing. Now, we communicate with each other using a system of subtle hand signals, with the exception of one really obvious hand signal for the most common thing we need to tell each other.

JIM STURGESS

Sounds great. When do I start my downward spiral?

KEVIN SPACEY

Just as soon as we have you play blackjack in an illegal, underground casino in the back of a Chinese restaurant, which actually turns out to be an elaborate ruse meant to see if

you can keep your cool under pressure, but will actually only illustrate that you are willing to sell us out if your life is in danger.

That HAPPENS. Then everyone goes to LAS VEGAS!

## **EXT. LAS VEGAS**

We are treated to the customary CHARACTER WHO HAS NEVER BEEN TO VEGAS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW OF A MOVING CAR AT ALL OF THE EXTRAVAGANTLY DECORATED CASINOS montage.

KEVIN SPACEY

Now, it's very important that you don't let the floor managers realize you all know each other, so make sure once you enter the casino you only give each other suspicious, knowing looks without ever directly conversing.

KATE BOSWORTH

Is it alright if we all enter at the exact same time with our arms around each other while laughing loudly?

KEVIN SPACEY

Sure, that's fine. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go fire my agent.

KATE, JIM, JACOB PITTS, AARON YOO, and LIZA LAPIRA all enter the casino and play some BLACKJACK.

JIM STURGESS

Hit. Stay. Stay. Stay. Hit. Split. Hit. Hit. Stay. Stay. Hit.

KATE BOSWORTH

Finally, a movie that's willing to capture all of the excitement of blackjack.

Meanwhile...

## **INT. POORLY-LIT SECURITY BASEMENT.**

LAURENCE FISHBURNE paces around, scowling at security cameras and grimacing.

LAURENCE FISHBURNE

Keep your eyes on these college-aged kids, men. We need to find a cheater, since casinos throughout the city are replacing our antiquated methods of loss prevention with biometric software.

LAURENCE'S PARTNER

Is that why we can't afford a fucking lamp for this room? Seriously, why are we working in a cave?

LAURENCE FISHBURNE

I dunno, why is this movie taking place in present day even though the real-life events it is based on happened in the 90's, before casinos starting reshuffling the deck between every hand and completely obliterating any advantage card-counting affords? Some things are just mysteries.

#### **INT. CASINO FLOOR**

LIZA LAPIRA signals JIM STURGESS over to her table, but JACOB PITTS comes over as well.

JIM STURGESS

What the hell? You are not following the protocol! There's nothing a rebellious youth like myself respects like rules!

JACOB PITTS

Hit! Stay! Stay! Hit! Hit! Split! Stay!

LIZA LAPIRA

You're out of control, Jacob!

JACOB loses!

KEVIN SPACEY

That's it, Jacob! I've had it with your arrogance! From now on, only Jim's equally obnoxious arrogance will be tolerated! You're off the team!

JACOB PITTS

Damn you, Spacey! If only there was some way I could seek revenge for this humiliation! Like, for example, telling the casino about your plans, or telling the school,

or writing a book about your secret strategy, or calling the local newspaper and explaining what is going on! But I'm powerless! FUCK!

JIM grows obsessed with his LAS VEGAS LIFESTYLE and eventually alienates his friends at MIT.

JOSH GAD

You're off our robot team, Jim! You've changed!

JIM STURGESS

What? No I haven't. I'm exactly the same whiny, arrogant little douchebag I've always been. I'm just hanging out on campus less.

JOSH GAD

Yeah, but now you are recognizing the essential worthlessness of our robot, so we're punishing you by denying you the ability to work on something which you are clearly uninterested in!

JIM STURGESS

For some reason, this upsets me! I'll have to comfort myself by winning thousands of dollars and fucking Kate Bosworth up against a window.

JIM and the TEAM go back to VEGAS, but then JIM LOSES!

KEVIN SPACEY

*(leaving angrily)*

What is it with you people? It's like you're a bunch of college kids or something! I'm out of here.

JIM STURGESS

Whatever, fuck him. We can do this on our own.

KATE BOSWORTH

No we can't.

*(pause)*

Okay, we can.

They go back to the casino, but attract the attention of LAURENCE FISBURNE, who abducts JIM and beats the shit out of him in a back room, because CASINOS are not bound by LAWS.

JIM STURGESS

Please stop! I promise, I'll never gamble in the one casino in Vegas that you still work for ever again!

LAURENCE FISHBURNE

That's not good enough! If you want to count cards, do it in Atlantic City!

JIM STURGESS

Er, wait, why DON'T we do it in Atlantic City? It's like 2,500 miles closer.

LAURENCE FISHBURNE

Now I'm going to finish mercilessly beating you, except that I'm going to very clearly pull my punch, making the surprise ending unbelievably obvious.

## **INT. MIT CAMPUS**

JIM returns to MIT only to find that he is failing KEVIN SPACEY'S CLASS on NONLINEAR EQUATIONS USING PLUSSING AND MINUSING. Also, all of his winnings have been stolen!

JIM STURGESS

Kate Bosworth, you have to help me. Kevin Spacey stole all of the money I was going to use for Harvard. Without it, I'll have to settle for Johns Hopkins or Yale!

KATE BOSWORTH

Wait, how did he steal all of your money?

JIM STURGESS

I was hiding it in the ceiling above my bed in my dorm room.

KATE BOSWORTH



...

JIM STURGESS

I would frequently place it up there without locking the door, thereby allowing other students to walk in on me while I was suspiciously tampering with my ceiling tiles.

KATE BOSWORTH

Jesus Christ, you ever hear of a safe deposit box? The "brightest student at MIT" doesn't know how to use a fucking bank?

JIM goes to see KEVIN SPACEY at an ALUMNI EVENT.

JIM STURGESS

I realize now that, while my cockiness and arrogance were a virtue up to a point, there was a certain arbitrary line I crossed where I became too cocky and therefore worthy of your abandonment. Please work with me again.

KEVIN SPACEY

Okay, but only if we stupidly go back to the same casino in order to maximize our chances of being caught.

They go back to VEGAS and count cards together. Eventually, LAURENCE FISHBURNE catches them and abducts KEVIN SPACEY.

LAURENCE FISHBURNE

So, I've finally caught you. And now I'm going to beat the shit out of you, get you fired, report you to the IRS, kill your cat, rape your wife, shit in your kid's Frosted Flakes, and stuff dynamite in your mother's grave. All so that Jim can get his fantasy happy ending.

KEVIN SPACEY

Jim? You mean the character that's almost exactly like me in every way, but younger? Why the fuck am I the bad guy in this movie?

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. HARVARD ADMISSIONS OFFICE**

JIM STURGESS

...and that's my story. So do I jump off the page now LOL?!

### HARVARD ADMISSIONS GUY

I guess. But you're also a cheater and kind of an asshole, plus your story has absolutely nothing to do with medicine. Admission denied, chump.

END