



## CAREER: THE JOCKEY

### The nickname

*Hardwire:* As a kid you fell off your horse, and for a few months they kept you on your feet with a pair of obnoxious leg braces. After that you still managed to have a long career as a jockey, which meant you had to stay as thin as a wire. But maybe the reason your battle name stuck was your ability to fix things up even when your assigned ride is a poor old nag. A long time ago, you even hoped people called you that because of your steely moral fibre.

### The lucky charm

*The flat cap:* Your mother gave it to you when you were little more than a boy, and your head hasn't grown much since. A man with a hat must always know when to keep it and when to tip it, never allowing other people to disrespect him.

### The game

Horses are in your blood: Your grandfather bred them, your father trained them, and now you're riding them. Even your dear sister Bianca, who wished so hard to walk her own path, ended up owning the racetrack bar. You can't outrun fate.

This fatalistic attitude helped you accept life's beatings without ever getting knocked down: A good jockey makes a good horse and a good horse makes a good jockey. No compromises: You only cared about the beasts and the competition. You hate the fat cats loitering about the stables, you hate the criminals trying their best to eradicate

every ounce of sportsmanship out of the riders. You never got your hands dirty. It wasn't enough.

One day your horse collapsed under your arse right after the starting signal: Second Wind, a lively half-breed, one of your favourites. That was no random fatality, some bastard had pumped him full of betamethasone before the race. The poor beast almost died and you ended up under inquiry. You'd been seeing Punchmen lurking around the racetrack for a while, but you had neither proof nor a wish to die at the hands of dirty bookmarkers, so you kept your mouth shut. Those fucking mobsters sent a lawyer your way as a thank-you, and all charges were dropped.

That's only in the eyes of the law, of course. As for the racetrack, nobody ever dared to put a decent horse under your care again, the friends of a lifetime all turned their backs on you, and even your horse got renamed: He's Second Best now. Neither of you has managed to achieve anything worth mentioning ever since.

Now you've given up on your career as a jockey. You just bet on the races, hoping one day Lady Luck will start giving back to you. With enough cash you could buy off Second Best, as well as a few more good beasts, and take up breeding like the rest of your family.

### The gamblers

You'd always thought Heartbreaker, the radio commentator, was a boisterous braggart only good at airing his mouth. But he's one of the few who never stopped defending you, both in his broadcast and in polite company. You haven't thanked him yet, but it really means a lot to you.

Velvet is in with the Punchmen. He's not a big shot or anything, more like an enforcer, but they're all the same to you. You don't mind being seen around him, you want to show them you're not afraid of anyone. Your reputation is compromised anyway, and who knows? Fate may finally give you the revenge you crave. They might think you're even now, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

### The race

The private lounge of Bianca's bar, two other gamblers, a private agreement and a radio to settle the score. This might be the bet that gets you back on the saddle. You suggested the fourth race when you heard Second Best would be running. You want to see whether your little half-breed will go back to winning or if he's just waiting for you to start anew.

The favourite is still Kings' Politeness, a magnificent mare. Her jockey is Madeye, an old friend with a bad drinking habit. He would never refuse a night at the bar before the race, not even with an outcast like you. The same goes for Second Best's jockey: He was brought in from another city, all in a rush. He offered you a drink in exchange for a few tips on his ride, as he hasn't had the time to get acquainted with the beast. You could fill his head with bullshit and he wouldn't know until it was too late. You've never liked playing dirty, but you could make an exception...

*Before the race begins, decide whether or not you want to mess with it. If you want the competition to be fair, keep the coin in your pocket; otherwise, place it on the circle with your name on the Race commentary sheet.*

### Narrative task

*Timing the Ante:* The scene set before the race should last less than an hour, and it's up to you to control its pace. You don't have to keep glancing at the clock: What matters is paying attention to the rhythm of the game and stepping in before the tension disappears completely. When you feel like there isn't much left to say, remind the others that the race is about to begin, leave them a few minutes so that any stragglers have a chance to place their coin, and finally move to turn up the volume of the radio. The time has finally come.



## CAREER: THE COMMENTATOR

### The nickname

*Heartbreaker:* One might think that the protagonists of the racing world, if not the horses themselves, are the jockeys and stable owners. But no midget or fat cat could keep up with you: If you're the one chronicling the race, the ladies will swoon for your voice and your voice only. And you know how to take advantage of that. This world is your oyster; you've made a name for yourself and you work hard to live up to it.

### The lucky charm

*The notebook:* You always keep it within sight, and you have a habit of jotting everything down: Horse names, ladies you met, little useless sketches, its actual job is calming your nerves so that you can look as smooth you possibly can.

### The game

At first, you just wanted to understand what gamblers got out of betting on a horse. It wasn't really by choice that you ended up on air, watching the racetrack: Without the helping hand of fate, you'd just be reporting on boxing matches for some no-name newspaper. But making the best of the hand you're dealt has always been your forte, so you did what you could to find yourself a nice little nook in this business. You learnt how to get invited to the right parties by the right people, and discovered a surprising world hidden behind concrete bleachers and pitiful bets. A world just waiting for you.

Soon you became something of a celebrity, with many friends, a host of girlfriends and an addiction to the thrill of gambling. You gave yourself a single rule: Be the charmer, not the charmed. Whether it's work or women, you don't like bowing down to anyone, much less having your hands tied. You say what's right to say, you do what you want to do, and that's that. Everyone says they want to be free, only to let themselves be chained down once they find out that freedom is no walk in the park. It takes a lot of guts to question everything and accept the whims of fate.

Though you must admit you felt your knees give out when Bianca, the cute little bartender, told you she was pregnant. With your daughter, no less. She's a proud type, wants nothing from you, but from time to time you find yourself mulling over it. What if you hit it big this time? With the prize, maybe you could finally do the right thing, be a good man for once. Winning would be a sign from fate, right?

### The gamblers

Hardwire was a talented jockey, your favourite, until he was accused of doping his ride. You always took his side, both in public and in private, but even after the charges were dropped things were never quite the same. The way he let people bring him down and strip him of his destiny truly disappointed you.

Velvet is the perfect drinking buddy. He works for a cartel of bookmarkers; at first you thought he was just another thug, but he's a good listener. Considering how much you love talking, you make a great pair. But you can't really blame Bi-

anca for worrying about him: There are more than a few loose screws in that head of his. He's not well. You're no bastard, you'd love to help him out, but how can you do that when he won't even tell you what's wrong?

### The race

So here you are, gambling your life away with these two. All your fates hanging on the shoulders of Second Best, who's set to run in the fourth race of the day. You have enough guts to show up at Bianca's bar even after what happened, and everyone knows that fortune favours the bold.

Speaking of fickle women, the race-track's handicapper, the girl who decides what weights to give the horses to ensure a fair competition, is your newest flame. Second Best's rating is the subject of much controversy, with disappointing results that never live up to its great potential, so your lady friend has some leeway there. You think she's smitten enough to tip the scales in your favour, if you ever chose to ask. Of course, she'd be risking her job and the request might offend her... Is it really worth it?

*Before the race begins, decide whether or not you want to mess with it. If you want the competition to be fair, keep the coin in your pocket; otherwise, place it on the circle with your name on the Race commentary sheet.*

### Narrative task

*Race commentary:* The race is the climax of the game, set to happen about mid-way through. Your duty is to prepare the *Race commentary* at the end of the *Ante*, then have fun with your role as the voice of the radio broadcast as you read out the sheet. Afterwards, the *Payout* will begin. The *Race commentary* is split in five parts: a *Start*, three *Furlongs* and a *Finish*.

The *Start* is an introduction with no changes from game to game, but the other sections have multiple possible results.

Each *Furlong* features a circle (where a coin may or may not have been placed) and three lines of text, each marked by a letter: H(eads), T(ails) or V(oid). If the circle is empty, cross out the H and T lines, leaving only the V line: This is what you'll read. Otherwise, cross out the V line and flip the coin, crossing out H if the result is tails and vice versa. In any case, you'll be left with a single line to read for each *Furlong*.

The *Finish* has only two possible lines, as Second Best will either win or lose. The outcome depends on the three *Furlongs*: Ignoring Void lines, are there more Heads (victory) or Tails (defeat)? In case of a draw, or if there are no coins on the *Race commentary*, the only thing you can do is leave the choice up to another coin flip.

Only after identifying all four lines should you begin your commentary.





## CAREER: THE CRIMINAL

### The nickname

*Velvet:* Your father was a good boxer, strong enough to gain the moniker Iron fist. You got stuck with the Velvet glove, not in the ring but on the streets, collecting money for the Punchmen: bookmarkers and loan sharks, the lot of them. You don't come to blows as often as your old man used to, and pulling out your gun gets on your nerves: If you make everything run smoothly, it's because there's something about you that makes people want to stop pushing their luck.

### The lucky charm

*The gun:* You only shoot when you need to, but you toy with it as if it was an old handkerchief. *You can use it as many times as you want, but only during the Payout. Before pulling the trigger, always flip a coin: Heads, you let it go; tails, you shoot. Only give up your weapon if you want to, or if the others team up to disarm you.*

### The game

From a certain point of view, bets are your day job; still, you like gambling for fun. Sometimes you catch wind of a rigged race, sometimes you don't: Truth is, though you work for the cartel, you aren't truly one of them. You don't even care, really, you just want to avoid being on the wrong side of the fence, with the ruined wretches who start begging the moment they see you.

Once you heard a guy raving about his shrink, swearing she was going to help him quit gambling. The idea piqued your interest, so you flipped a coin:

Heads to stop beating the crap out of him and call this doctor yourself, tails to stick with the routine. Fate decided on therapy; though your problem isn't gambling, so much as understanding why you stopped giving a shit about your life. The therapist is obsessed with your father, she says you put him on a pedestal and never managed to cope with the fact that he was faking his matches. Bullshit. Of course he was your hero, of course you cheered for his victories and cried yourself to sleep over his defeats. Yeah, it was all a ruse, so what? Learning the truth was a stroke of luck, who knows how much it'd have taken you to see how the world really works otherwise. Play your part and stay on the winners' side, there's not much else you need to know before venturing out to face the streets. But what the hell does she know? Does she want to see you cry over your sad childhood? No, you'd already run out of tears by the time of your old man's funeral.

### The gamblers

Wasn't too long ago Hardwire came under inquiry over a doped-up horse. He had nothing to do with it, he's just a jockey after all, but he silently endured until they let him be. Used as you are to pompous dicks and sore losers, you find yourself admiring him. That doesn't happen often.

Somehow you've become drinking buddies with Heartbreaker, an asshole commentator who can't keep it in his pants. You started following him around after he dumped Bianca, the owner of the bar and the prettiest woman in the world. Every night you toy with the idea of knocking out all his teeth, but Bianca's a decent

girl, you'd scare her off instead of making her happy. She's the stake you've never dared to bet on, the proof you can't get close to people without terrifying them. Just like a monster.

### The race

No small-time bookie would gladly take your money, and it's best not to play in the plate you eat from, so you reached a private agreement with these two: You're meeting in the private lounge of Bianca's bar, cash at the ready, with a radio to listen to the fourth race. The horse deciding who wins and who loses is a half-breed named Second Best.

It's not one of yours, but one of the other runners, Grasshopper, is in the Punchmen's hands. You just need to ask and its jockey will get in the way of whomever you choose, even the great favourite, Kings' Politeness. Of course, you're sure the mob will ask you to hurt someone real bad in exchange for this sort of favour. You're so tired, maybe you should be done with this life... You'd better think twice about it.

*Before the race begins, decide whether or not you want to mess with it. If you want the competition to be fair, keep the coin in your pocket; otherwise, place it on the circle with your name on the Race commentary sheet.*

### Narrative task

*Timing the Payout:* The scene set after the race should last less than an hour, and it's up to you to control its pace. You don't have to keep glancing at the clock: What matters is paying attention to the rhythm of the game and stepping in before the tension disappears completely. Once the outcome of the bet and its immediate consequences are clear, it's time to leave the bar. Don't let anyone find an easy way out or a convenient compromise: The ingredients to a satisfying ending are tension and resolution, for good or ill.

