



## CAREER: THE JOCKEY

### The nickname

*Hardwire:* As a kid you fell off your horse, and for a few months the only way you could stand on your feet was through a pair of metal 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 nom de guerre stuck was your ability to fix things up even when your assigned ride is a poor old nag. A long time ago, you even thought people would call you that because of your steely moral fibre.

### The lucky charm

*The cap:* Your mother gave it to you when you were little more than a boy and your head hasn't grown much bigger 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 you ride them. Even your dear sister Bianca, who wanted so badly to take a different path, ended up managing the racetrack bar. You can't outrun destiny.

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. You only cared about beasts and competition. No compromises: You loathe the fat cats loitering about the stables and the criminals trying their best to wring 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 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 by then, but you had neither proof nor a wish to die at the hands of dirty bookmarkers, so you kept your mouth shut. As a thank you, those fucking mobsters sent a lawyer your way, 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 was renamed: He's Second Best now. Neither you nor him have managed to achieve anything worth mentioning ever since.

You've long 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, 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 with other folks. You haven't thanked him properly yet, but it really means a lot to you.

Velvet is in with the Punchmen. Not that he's a big shot or anything, he's 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 arrangement and a radio to settle the winner. This might be the bet that gets you back on the saddle. You suggested the fourth race when you heard Second Best would be there. 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 him 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 to influence 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: The important thing is paying attention to the rhythm of the game and stepping in before the tension disappears completely. When you feel like there's not 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 would be tempted to say that the protagonists of the racing world, if not the horses, 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 in sight, and you have a habit of jotting everything down: Horse names, ladies you met, useless sketches, the point is calming your nerves in order to appear 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 what you're dealt has always been your specialty, so you did what you could to find yourself a nice nook in this business. You learnt how to get invited to the right parties by the right people, and you discovered a surprising world hidden behind concrete bleachers and lowly 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 only follow one rule: Be the charmer, not the charmed. Whether it's work or women, you don't like bowing to anyone, much less having your hands tied. You say what's right to say, you do what you want to do, and that is that. Everyone says they want to be free, then they let themselves be chained down when 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 owner of the bar, told you she was pregnant. With your daughter nonetheless. She's a proud type, she 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, act like a good man. It would be the work of fate, wouldn't it?

### The gamblers

Hardwire was a talented jockey, your favourite, until he was accused of doping the horses. 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 clique of bookmarkers; at first you thought him just another thug, but he's a good listener. Considering your great love of talking, the two of you make a good pair. But you can't really

blame Bianca for worrying about him: He's clearly unwell, there are more than a few loose screws in that head of his. You'd like to help him, you're no bastard, but how can you do that when he won't even tell you what's wrong?

### The race

You embarked on a bet with these two: The fourth race, with Second Best the horse deciding who wins and who loses. You certainly don't lack the gall to show up at Bianca's bar, 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 new flame. Second Best's rating is the subject of much controversy, with its great potential and disappointing results, so your lady friend has some leeway there. You think she's smitten enough to tip the odds in your favour, if you so choose to ask. Of course, she'd put her job at risk and the request might offend her... Is it really worth it?

*Before the race begins, decide whether or not to influence 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 midway through it. It's up to you to prepare and read the *Race commentary*, enjoying your role as the voice of the radio broadcast. You're the only player aware of these rules. 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 one marked by the 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 will 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 will be left with a single line of text to read for each *Furlong*.

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

Only after identifying all four lines should you begin your radio 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 on 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 resorting to your gun unnerves you: 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 dislike shooting, but you're used to playing 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, you must always flip a coin: Heads, you pass; 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 something you work with, but you like gambling for fun from time to time. Sometimes you catch wind of a rigged race, sometimes you don't: Truth is, though you work for the clique, you're not really one of them. It doesn't even matter all that much to you, to be honest, all you want is to avoid wind-ing up on the other side of the fence, with the vermin who ruin their lives and start crawling on their knees the moment they see you coming.

Once you heard a guy rave about his shrink,

swearing he was trying to 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, as much as understanding why you stopped giving a shit about your life.

The therapist fixated on your father, she says you put him on a pedestal and never managed to swallow the fact that he was faking his matches. Bullshit. Of course he was your hero, of course you celebrated his victories and cried yourself to sleep over his defeats. Yes, it was all a ruse, and 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. You play your part and you stay on the winners' side, there's not much else you need to know to leave home and 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

Not long ago, Hardwire came under inquiry over a horse doping controversy. He had nothing to do with it, he's just a jockey after all, but he bore with it in silence until they left him alone. As used as you are to pompous mobsters and sore losers, you find yourself admiring him. That's anything but a common occurrence.

Somehow you've become drinking buddies with Heartbreaker, an arsehole commentator who can't keep it in his pants. So 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 his teeth off, but Bianca is 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 frightening 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 found a private arrangement with these two: You'll meet in the private lounge of Bianca's bar, your money at the ready, to listen to the fourth race on the radio. The horse deciding who wins and who loses is a half-breed named Second Best.

It's not one of yours, but another runner, 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, the mob will surely ask you to hurt someone really bad in exchange for this kind 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 to influence 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: The important thing 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.

