

Merry go Round

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Characters

The Dealer – Age 50+

Player 1 – Age 30 - 40

Player 2 – Age 20 - 30

The play is set in an in-between limbo world where suicide victims are forced to re-enact their death as part of some sort of atonement. Though he doesn't fully understand what is going on, the Dealer is in charge and does indeed act as a dealer in a simple card game that the players are forced to play and invariably lose. The loss instigates another re-enactment cycle. The characters continue on this merry-go-round until at some point, the dealer loses and the characters move on to the next stage. The introduction of Player 2 sparks a change for all the characters in a way that none of them could have foreseen. The characters are male but all female would work with minor modifications. A mixed cast would not work.

A bare stage. A small table with two chairs centre stage left. There is a narrow tall table upstage right on which an old fashioned black telephone sits. It would be effective if the phone looked like it is floating in mid air. The phone should not have a dialler but is one that is designed to receive calls, not make them. There are suggested exits / entrances at both centre stage left and right.

Appropriate music to start – perhaps fairground music slightly off key. Lights up with the Dealer seated at the table. He is holding a deck of cards. After a few beats, there's a whooshing sound, light up briefly coming from centre stage right as if a door is opening. Player 1 enters from light. Light snaps out.

DEALER: That was quick!

PLAYER 1: Was it?

DEALER: You're obviously getting better.

PLAYER 1: Yeah.

DEALER: Well?

PLAYER 1: What?

DEALER: How was it?

PLAYER 1: Why do you always ask that?

No reply, pause

PLAYER 1: The same shit as usual! What do you expect?
Marching bands!

DEALER: Just trying to make conversation.

PLAYER 1: Yeah? ... well, don't bother!

Long pause.

DEALER: So, do you want another game?

PLAYER 1: Just give it a rest.

DEALER: Come on!

PLAYER 1: No.

DEALER: Any other suggestions?

PLAYER 1: What's the point?

DEALER: Maybe the point is that there is no point.

PLAYER 1: That's deep! Did it take you long to come up with that?

DEALER: Look, we're stuck here. Might as well make the most of it.

PLAYER 1: Make the most of it!

DEALER: Why not?

PLAYER 1: You think this is some sort of party?

DEALER: No, but ...

PLAYER 1: There's nothing here to make anything of anything!
Make the most of it!!

DEALER: No harm in trying.

PLAYER 1: Just leave it. OK.

Pause.

DEALER: So, what do you want to do?

PLAYER 1: Like I have a choice!

DEALER: Well, supposing you did have a choice.

PLAYER 1: What are you playing at?

DEALER: What would you like to do?

PLAYER 1: What's with the nice act?

DEALER: You're the one who wanted something different.

PLAYER 1: You know, I think I prefer you when you're normal.

DEALER: (*Laughs*) Normal! So what would you do?

PLAYER 1: Apart from getting out of here?

DEALER: Of course.

Player 1 softens slightly.

PLAYER 1: I suppose ...

DEALER: Go on.

PLAYER 1: A nice steak dinner with a few beers

DEALER: Wouldn't disagree with you there.

PLAYER 1: A walk on a beach.

DEALER: Watching a sunrise.

PLAYER 1: And a sunset.

DEALER: Gazing at the stars on a clear night.

PLAYER 1: Getting a night's sleep.

DEALER: And dreaming.

PLAYER 1: Yes, dreaming and then waking up. *(Pause)*
Feeling happy.

DEALER: Waking up ... hm ... but in the meantime ...
He holds up the deck of cards.

PLAYER 1: I knew it wouldn't last. Please, no.

DEALER: We have to.

PLAYER 1: Why?

DEALER: That's the way it's always been.

PLAYER 1: That's not an answer.

DEALER: There's nothing else to do

PLAYER 1: Then I'd rather do nothing.

DEALER: You can't do that.

PLAYER 1: So, what are they going to do if I refuse?

DEALER: Things will never change.

PLAYER 1: And playing a stupid game will make a difference.
It's OK for you. You don't have to go through this.

DEALER: I did once so I do know what it's like.

PLAYER 1: That doesn't make it any easier

DEALER: You think I'm having a ball here? I'm still stuck with
you. Not exactly a barrel of laughs.

PLAYER 1: I'm sorry I'm not more entertaining. I'll have to try
harder!

DEALER: There's nothing I can do to change any of this! So
going on and on about it doesn't help.

PLAYER 1: Maybe it makes me feel better.

Pause.

DEALER: Come on, let's play.

PLAYER 1: Why? We know what's going to happen.

DEALER: It's all we've got. It has to change sometime

PLAYER 1: When?

DEALER: It did for me. We could sit here and look at each other for eternity or have hope. I play and I hope!

Pause

PLAYER 1: I don't know how much more of this I can take.

DEALER: Just keep playing, then at least, we'll have a chance. You win, then I'll move on and you get my job. You won't have to go through the routine.

PLAYER 1: No, I'll sit here waiting to lose and watch some other poor fucker go through it all.

DEALER: We've had this discussion hundreds of times and no doubt we'll have it many more hundreds of times but ...

PLAYER 1: Beats playing that stupid game

DEALER: Does it!

The phone rings. Both men look surprised

PLAYER 1: What? Never heard that ringing before! I didn't even think it was real.

DEALER: Only happened once in my time.

PLAYER 1: When was that?

DEALER: Just before you arrived.

PLAYER 1: Who was it?

DEALER: I don't know. It's something different, at least.

Pause

PLAYER 1: Are you going to answer it?

DEALER: Maybe it's a mistake.

PLAYER 1: Answer it!

DEALER: What do I say?

PLAYER 1: How should I know? You're the dealer.

Dealer hesitates

PLAYER 1: Go on!

Dealer goes to phone and tentatively answers

DEALER: Yes? yes yesno when Ok.

Hangs up

PLAYER 1: Well?

DEALER: There's a new player on the way.

PLAYER 1: What?

DEALER: Coming soon.

PLAYER 1: What does that mean?

DEALER: I don't know.

PLAYER 1: What else did he say? It was a he?

DEALER: Yes. A man.

PLAYER 1: What did he sound like?

DEALER: Sounded normal. That's all he said. This could be good news. Maybe things are going to change.

PLAYER 1: Do you think?

DEALER: What else can it mean?

PLAYER 1: So, how long do we wait?

DEALER: You know as much as I do

PLAYER 1: The last time it rang ... before I ... how long then?

DEALER: I can't remember. It was so long/

We hear the same whooshing sound and Player 2 enters centre stage right. He looks lost and disorientated

PLAYER 2: Where am I?

DEALER: Well

PLAYER 2: How did I get here? *(No response)* What is this place?

DEALER: Try to relax.

PLAYER 2: Relax! What are ...

DEALER: What's the last thing you remember?

PLAYER 2: What sort of ... where am I?

DEALER: What's your last memory?

PLAYER 2: What kind of game are you playing?

DEALER: Answer the question.

PLAYER 2: I was .. standing on the bridge ... on the wall of the bridge.

Hesitates.

DEALER: Go on.

PLAYER 2: What is this place?

DEALER: You were standing on the wall of a bridge? What then?

PLAYER 2: Then the cold shock of water all around me ... dragging me down.

PLAYER 1: Drowning? Ooh! No, wouldn't like that!

DEALER: *(To Player 1)* Quiet. *(To Player 2)* Do you remember anything else?

PLAYER 2: Everything went dark and I woke up here ... or did I wake up? Maybe I'm dreaming ... I must be .. Can someone just tell me what's going on?

PLAYER 1: Basically, you're fucked mate!

DEALER: *(To Player 1)* I said shut it! *(To Player 2)* Do you remember anything from before the bridge?

PLAYER 2: What? ... I don't know ...

DEALER: What do you remember?

PLAYER 2: I was with my girlfriend..... We had some sort of row.. I was angry.... she left me.. I wanted to I don't know will someone please tell me where I am?

PLAYER 1: You've just arrived in one big sick fucking joke.

DEALER: *(To Player 1)* I'm not going to tell you again. *(To Player 2)* Come on over here and sit down.

PLAYER 2: Where is this place?

Dealer sits Player 2 down

DEALER: You say you were in water so how come you're not wet?

PLAYER 2: I don't know.

DEALER: And you don't feel cold?

PLAYER 2: No. What are you talking about?

PLAYER 1: Are you going to tell him?

PLAYER 2: Tell me what?

DEALER: Why were you on the bridge?

PLAYER 2: I was.... I don't know.... I wasn't thinking straight ...

DEALER: But why? What did you intend to do?

PLAYER 2: I told you, I don't know..... I just wanted to...

DEALER: What if I told you that you succeeded?

PLAYER 2: What do you mean?

Pause

DEALER: What you set out to do, you succeeded.

PLAYER 2: I don't understand.

PLAYER 1: Just tell him!

DEALER: There's no easy way to say this.... but, you're dead.

PLAYER 2: What? This is a joke right?

PLAYER 1: No joke.

PLAYER 2: Then I am dreaming or I've wandered into some kind of institution and you guys are out of your fucking minds!

DEALER: It can be hard to accept at first but the facts are that you took your life. You're dead and now you're here to I don't know atone or ... whatever.

PLAYER 2: Can you hear yourself? That is crazy. You're a pair of psychos and I've been kidnapped or....

DEALER: Ok then, leave.

PLAYER 2: What?

DEALER: You're free to go. No one is stopping you.

PLAYER 2: OK

Player 2 moves around the room looking for an exit but is unable to step outside the lighted area

PLAYER 2: Where's the door?

DEALER: There's no way out.

PLAYER 2: But, I came in over here.

DEALER: There's nothing there now. None of us can leave.

PLAYER 2: Enough is enough. How do I get out of here?

PLAYER 1: Like the man said. None of us can leave.

PLAYER 2: Do I look stupid? Just let me go!

PLAYER 1: I can't!

PLAYER 2: Can't or won't. *(He grabs Player 1)* Just tell me how I get out of here.

PLAYER 1: Hey!

PLAYER 2: What have you done to me?

PLAYER 1: Don't take it out on me. I didn't make the rules. I don't even know the fucking rules! I can't help you.

Player 2 punches Player 1 knocking him to the ground and continues to beat him on the ground

PLAYER 2: Tell me ... tell me...

DEALER: Stop that!

PLAYER 2: Did you drug me? Is that it?

PLAYER 1: No listen ..

PLAYER 2: Just tell me how to get out

The Dealer grabs Player 2 from behind to restrain him

DEALER: Get off him!

PLAYER 2: Bastards! What did you do to me?

DEALER: Calm down

PLAYER 2: I just want to go home!

DEALER: I know.

PLAYER 2: Please ... *(beginning to crumple)*

DEALER: If I let you go, will you try to calm down.

PLAYER 2: Please

The Dealer releases his hold and Player 2 falls to his knees

PLAYER 2: *(Crying)* I just want to go home.

Pause

PLAYER 1: *(Standing up)* Thanks. I didn't expect that.

DEALER: You weren't much better at the beginning.

PLAYER 1: This fucking place!

PLAYER 2: Help me!

DEALER: Believe me, I would if I could. There's nothing any of us can do. We're all stuck here. Come on. I can help you up at least.

Dealer offers his hand and helps Player 2 up.

PLAYER 2: I don't understand any of this.

DEALER: There's no other way I can tell you this you remember you were on the bridge?

PLAYER 2: Yes.

DEALER: And you know exactly why you went there?

No answer

DEALER: Well?

PLAYER 2: Yes.

DEALER: Now you're here. How else can you explain it?

PLAYER 2: Maybe I've just gone crazy ... this doesn't make any sense.

PLAYER 1: He's telling the truth. We've all done ... a stupid thing ... spur of the moment.. a brief period of madness call it what you like. And this place is our punishment.

PLAYER 2: What?

PLAYER 1: It's the only thing that makes sense. You play a silly game. You lose and you have to go back and relive it all over again. The outcome is the same and you end up back here and the merry-go-round keeps turning.

PLAYER 2: You believe all that?

PLAYER 1: I've lost count of the number of times I've gone back.

PLAYER 2: Then you must be crazy! (*Pause, thinks*) If it is true, why don't you just change things when you go back?

PLAYER 1: But that's the catch. When you go back, you forget all about this place. You're back in the exact same time and place. So you have no reason to change. But when you're back here, you remember everything. You remember the first time and every little detail of every time you're forced to repeat it. When you think about it, it's brilliant, genius design!

PLAYER 2: But ... I can't be I didn't really want to ... but ... I was just

DEALER: It's true. It will take a while to sink in.

PLAYER 2: Who are you people?

DEALER: We're just like you. Names mean nothing here. I'm the dealer and he's a player. You're a player now too. It doesn't really matter. I was a player myself for a long time so I had to go through that ritual. Then I won and ... things changed.

PLAYER 2: I still can't ... I don't I can't be ...

DEALER: It's a lot to take in.

PLAYER 2: I must be crazy even thinking this ... but if it is true, let me go back.

PLAYER 1: You won't feel like that after you've done it!

DEALER: Don't worry. You'll get your chance.

PLAYER 1: Yeah, you'll get plenty of chances

DEALER: *(To Player 1)* Come on. We've waited long enough. It's time.

PLAYER 1: *(Resigned sigh)* Watch and learn.

Both Dealer and Player 1 sit at the table. Dealer starts to shuffle the cards

DEALER: Ready?

PLAYER 1: Just deal the cards.

PLAYER 2: What's going on?

DEALER: This is how it starts. Just watch.

Dealer starts to deal. The game will be 21 or Pontoon. He deals two cards to Player 1 and two cards to himself

PLAYER 1: Hm! Fourteen. Hit me.

Dealer turns over another card

PLAYER 1: Five ... that's 19. I'll stick. OK, let's see yours.

DEALER: A king and ...

PLAYER 1: Another colour .. right?

DEALER: An eight.

PLAYER 1: Eighteen, right ... well, you have to go again. Let me guess, the next card will be an ace, a two or a three.

Dealer turns over the next card

DEALER: A two. Twenty. I win

PLAYER 1: Surprise, surprise!

Player 1 is obviously upset

PLAYER 2: Is that it?

PLAYER 1: That's it. Great , isn't it!

PLAYER 2: What happens now?

PLAYER 1: We wait.

PLAYER 2: But, you go back?

PLAYER 1: Yes I go back! You know, I've lost count of the number of times I've done this. And I know that I'm always going to lose but I still can't help feeling

We hear the whooshing sound again accompanied by the light off stage right.

DEALER: Go on.

Reluctantly Player 1 moves towards the exit

PLAYER 1: I wasn't perfect but I don't deserve this.

He exits, light goes off. Player 2 rushes over to where the exit was

PLAYER 2: He's really gone?

DEALER: He's gone back. Yes.

PLAYER 2: (*Realisation*) What you've said. It's all true.

DEALER: Unfortunately, yes.

PLAYER 2: But how ... why?

DEALER: You'll get used to it.

PLAYER 2: Send me back.

DEALER: Don't be so eager.

PLAYER 2: Play the game and send me back.

DEALER: You'll get your chance.

PLAYER 2: When?

DEALER: We have to wait until he comes back.

PLAYER 2: How long will that take?

DEALER: How long? Time means nothing here. Sometimes he comes back almost instantly. Other times, it takes I don't know. We have no day or night. No sleeping, waking, eating. Perhaps we're just stuck in a moment. What seems like a lifetime here may be just a blink back there.

PLAYER 2: But you've been here a long time?

DEALER: Certainly seems that way. Although sometimes it just feels like yesterday.

PLAYER 2: How can you just accept it?

DEALER: Believe me, I wasn't always like this.

PLAYER 2: But, you must miss it?

DEALER: All the time ... but I've learned to cope.

PLAYER 2: What did you do? How did you do it?

DEALER: I'd rather not say. *(Pause)* Do I regret it? Of course! Would I change things? If I got the chance, I would.

PLAYER 2: But you do get the chance.

DEALER: It hasn't really sunk in has it? You go back to the exact same time and place but you have no knowledge of this place. So what's going to make you change what you did?

PLAYER 2: I have to try.

DEALER: Just don't expect too much.

PLAYER 2: I can't just give up.

DEALER: But you did give up!

Long pause

PLAYER 2: Do you have a name?

DEALER: It seems like a long time since I used my name.

PLAYER 2: My name is Kevin.

DEALER: Names mean nothing. I find it best to try and forget. It makes it easier to cope

PLAYER 2: But how can you forget?

DEALER: No, forget is wrong. I could never forget! I suppose I mean ... try not to remember.

PLAYER 2: Not me. I'll fight this!

DEALER: You can try but ...

PLAYER 2: I have to. I'm not ready. I had so many plans

Long pause

DEALER: (*With great sadness*) You remind me of my son.

PLAYER 2: What?

DEALER: He was stubborn and hot headed. We always seemed to be arguing.

PLAYER 2: Your son?

DEALER: Not much older than you are now. I wasn't there when he needed me most.

PLAYER 2: What?

DEALER: I let him down.

PLAYER 2: So how can you give up?

DEALER: But I loved him more than anything else in the world.

PLAYER 2: All the more reason to keep fighting this.

DEALER: It's in the past. We can never go back. We can only look forward to what's coming next. I don't know what it is but it has to be better than what we have now. It's pointless hoping for anything else and you'll realise that before too long.

PLAYER 2: No! My name is Kevin. I have a job, a family, a brother, 2 sisters. I had .. I have a life *(Cries)*. I have a life!

Player 2 sobs quietly. The Dealer looks on for a while

DEALER: Mike.

PLAYER 2: What?

DEALER: My name. It was Mike.

Pause

PLAYER 2: Tell me about your son.

DEALER: No. I can't. I've said too much already.

PLAYER 2: I can't believe that you've all just given up.

DEALER: Accepted it. In time, you will come to accept it too.

PLAYER 2: Never!

DEALER: Believe me. If there was anything I could do to help you, I would but this place ... all you can do is play the game and hope for a change.

We hear the whooshing sound again accompanied by the light off stage right. Player 1 enters from light. Light snaps out.

PLAYER 1: Don't!

DEALER: What?

PLAYER 1: Don't ask me how it went.

DEALER: OK.

PLAYER 1: Has our friend calmed down?

PLAYER 2: I am here, you know!

PLAYER 1: Just don't want a repeat performance.

PLAYER 2: You came back?

PLAYER 1: Of course I came back! I always come back! It's not as if I have a choice. *(To Dealer)* He believes us now?

DEALER: I suppose.

PLAYER 2: *(To Dealer)* Well?

DEALER: What?

PLAYER 2: Let me play. Send me back.

PLAYER 1: Eager!

DEALER: Give it time.

PLAYER 2: You said I could play when he came back. I want to play.

PLAYER 1: Do it. Anything to shut him up. It'll give me a break.

PLAYER 2: Please!

DEALER: OK. Sit down.

Both men sit.

DEALER: Have you played this game before? 21? ... Pontoon?

PLAYER 2: I don't think so.

PLAYER 1: I'll help you. Whoever gets closest to 21 wins. Deal.

Dealer shuffles cards and starts to deal

PLAYER 1: Hm! Fourteen. Take a hit.

PLAYER 2: OK

Dealer turns over another card

PLAYER 1: Seven ... that's 21. This happens all the time. He always wins anyway. Just a little twist of the knife. Building up expectations and knocking them down again.

PLAYER 2: But, I can't lose now!

PLAYER 1: Yes, you can. It's stacked against the player. There

are no draws. He just has to score the same as you to win. Let's see what he has.

DEALER: A king and ...

PLAYER 1: An ace .. right?

DEALER: An eight.

PLAYER 1: Eighteen, right ... well, he'll have to go again. Let me guess, the next card will be a three.

Dealer turns over the next card. Looks at it, looks at the two men in amazement

DEALER: A seven! You win. I lose.

All are stunned

PLAYER 1: What!

PLAYER 2: I win! But I'm supposed to lose!

PLAYER 1: How can he win? It's only his first time

PLAYER 2: What does it mean? Can I still go back?

PLAYER 1: *(Getting agitated)* No, no, no, no. This can't happen. It's my turn to win and move on. Come on. This is not fair!

DEALER: I don't understand

PLAYER 2: Can I go back?

PLAYER 1: Will you just shut up about going back. You're not supposed to win!

PLAYER 2: I didn't want to win.

PLAYER 1: I thought things couldn't get any worse.

DEALER: Just relax ... there has to be there must be ..

PLAYER 1: You're the dealer! What happens now?

DEALER: I don't know!

Phone rings

PLAYER 1: Well answer it.

Again hesitantly, Dealer picks up phone

DEALER: Yes I know how? OK Oh Oh ... yes.

Hangs up

PLAYER 1: Well?

DEALER: I'm moving on. *(To Player 1)* You're taking over as dealer.

PLAYER 1: *(Relieved, speechless)* Oh ... well ah ... I suppose that's OK then.

PLAYER 2: What does that mean?

DEALER: Things are back to ... I was going to say normal ... I'm moving on. He'll be the new dealer and you'll still be a player.

PLAYER 2: So I can go back?

PLAYER 1: How am I supposed to cope with this *(Indicating Player 2)*. Yes, you can go back if you lose ... when you lose *(To Dealer)* What happens now?

DEALER: He just said I was to move on. I'd know when it happens.

PLAYER 2: What's going to happen?

DEALER: You know as much as we do. So, we just wait.

PLAYER 1: That's something we're good at.

PLAYER 2: Can I play again?

DEALER: Wait.

We hear the whooshing sound and a light snaps on from the opposite side - stage left as if a door suddenly opens

PLAYER 1: That didn't take long. So is this it?

DEALER: I guess so. *(Handing the cards to Player 1)* Here. You're the dealer now.

PLAYER 1: What do I do?

DEALER: You'll figure it out. You've been on the other side long enough. I reckon it's goodbye.

PLAYER 1: I've been waiting for something like this for ... I don't know how long. I didn't expect that when it happened, it would be so fast.

Dealer shakes Player 1's hand

PLAYER 1: I suppose I'm going to miss you.

DEALER: Me too. You weren't all that bad! Maybe we'll meet again, in another room. A better room! *(Pause)* Go easy on him. He's still very upset and confused. Good luck.

PLAYER 1: Yeah. Good luck.

DEALER: *(To Player 2)* Goodbye Kevin.

Dealer walks into the light and off stage. Light snaps off

PLAYER 1: Kevin?

PLAYER 2: That's my name.

PLAYER 1: What went on when I was gone?

PLAYER 2: Nothing.

PLAYER 1: Well, that's that.

PLAYER 2: Where is he gone?

PLAYER 1: I hope it is a better place.

PLAYER 2: Let's play.

PLAYER 1: What? Now?

PLAYER 2: Play that game and send me back. I know I'll do things differently. I know it. I can't be here.

PLAYER 1: Take your time.

PLAYER 2: Do it please.

PLAYER 1: I don't think I'm ready yet and you really don't want to do this.

PLAYER 2: Please!

Pause

PLAYER 1: OK. Don't blame me when you land back here. Sit down.

Player 1 sits in the Dealer's seat and shuffles the cards.

PLAYER 1: You know the game by now?

PLAYER 2: Yes.

Player 1 deals two cards to each of them

PLAYER 1: What have you got?

PLAYER 2: Two kings

PLAYER 1: And I've got two queens. So what do you know, the dealer wins!

Pause

PLAYER 2: So what next?

PLAYER 1: Give it a second.

Whooshing sound and light comes on from stage right

PLAYER 1: There you go. Have a nice journey! *(Pause)* Just walk into the light.

Player 2 tentatively walks into the light and off stage. The lights dim on Player 1 and come up on a neutral area downstage centre. Note: this will be a different light and lit from the front. Player 2 now walks slowly back on from downstage left and stands downstage centre. He is now back on the bridge. He is visibly upset, paces about, then makes a decision. He goes to the "wall" and stands there nervously for a while. Suddenly we hear a voice from off stage right. It is the Dealer.

DEALER: *(Off)* Hello

Player 2 looks around, doesn't answer. The Dealer enters.

Player 2 obviously doesn't recognise him.

PLAYER 2: Stay back!

DEALER: That looks like a dangerous spot you're standing on. You might fall.

PLAYER 2: Just keep away from me.

DEALER: You're not going to do anything foolish are you?

PLAYER 2: Don't come any nearer. Just go away.

DEALER: I can't.

PLAYER 2: Leave me alone.

DEALER: I'm committed now. If you fall in, I'll have to go in after you and to be honest, I'd rather not do that. Just take a few steps back and we can have a talk.

PLAYER 2: Will you please just go.

DEALER: You don't know me and I don't know you but I don't think you really want to do this.

PLAYER 2: You know nothing.

DEALER: I know more than you think.

Pause

DEALER: What do you hope to achieve? I'm just asking you to give yourself time to think this through. Are things really that bad?

PLAYER 2: Just go!

DEALER: I told you, I'm not moving. *(Pause)* You don't have to do this. You're young. You have options, choices. I know things might seem bad now but just give yourself time. Talk to people, your family, your friends.

PLAYER 2: Who are you?

DEALER: Does that matter? I'm ... nobody. Just passing by.

PLAYER 2: Do I know you?

DEALER: I don't think so. *(Pause)* So, what do you say?
Come on. Step back from the edge.

PLAYER 2: I can't.

DEALER: Course you can. Do you want me to help you?

PLAYER 2: No. Keep back. Give me time to think.

DEALER: Plenty of time. All the time in the world. *(Pause)*
This is a nice spot. I've never been here. I can see why you're
drawn to it. *(Pause)* It reminds me of where I come from a
long time ago. You know, I'd forgotten all about it. It's a long
time since I've seen so many stars. They're really beautiful.

PLAYER 2: Why are you here?

DEALER: Just out for a walk.

PLAYER 2: At midnight? Why here? Why now?

DEALER: I'm just passing through. Fancied a bit of night air.
(Pause) Look, do you really want to do this?

Pause

PLAYER 2: I ... I don't know.

DEALER: I know you don't. Come on, let's call it a night and
we can all go home. It'll look a lot different in the morning ...
Kevin.

PLAYER 2: How do you know my name?

DEALER: *(Evasive)* You told me earlier, didn't you?

PLAYER 2: I don't remember.

DEALER: You must have. How else would I know? So what do
you say Kevin?

PLAYER 2: I

DEALER: Please. This is not your time.

PLAYER 2: But ... what ...

DEALER: This'll be just between you and me. Trust me. I know

you don't want to do this.

*Long pause as Player 2 considers. His breathing quickens.
He tentatively takes a small step backwards*

DEALER: That's it. Take it slowly. No rush.

*Player 2 takes another few steps back and when safe slumps
and sobs, realizing the enormity of what he tried to do. The
Dealer embraces and supports him*

DEALER: Good lad. OK ... OK ...

Player 2 still sobbing

DEALER: Everything is going to be fine now. How do you feel?

PLAYER 2: (*Dazed*) I don't know.

DEALER: Just relax. Take it easy. Will you be OK?

PLAYER 2: I think so. Who are you?

DEALER: I told you, I'm just passing. Is there any one at home?

PLAYER 2: Yes

DEALER: Then promise me you'll go straight there.

PLAYER 2: Yes.

DEALER: Promise.

PLAYER 2: I promise.

DEALER: Tell you what. I'll walk some of the way with you.

PLAYER 2: That would be nice. (*Looking closely at the Dealer*)
I have a feeling I've met you before.

DEALER: I have that kind of face! Go on.

PLAYER 2: Thank you.

*Player 2 exits followed slowly by the Dealer. The lights
crossfade to the room with Player 1 who has been quietly
sitting at the table. We hear the whooshing sound again
accompanied by the light off stage right. The Dealer steps*

into the light. Light snaps off.

PLAYER 1: You?

DEALER: Did you miss me?

PLAYER 1: You can't be ..

DEALER: Couldn't keep away.

PLAYER 1: But how ..?

DEALER: It's a long story and we've all the time in the world.

Player 1 is lost for words

DEALER: So, are you going to deal those cards or not?

Both men look at each other in silence as the closing music fades in and the lights slowly fade out.

END OF PLAY