

The Return  
an original screenplay by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. EAST FREMONT STREET - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Infrequent drops of rain hit the glistening archway for East Fremont in Glitter Gulch. The street is full of New Years Eve party goers, but not sardine like. There are quite a few buskers and street performers.

BRAND CONLEY, maybe early 30's, English, a few days stubble, is one of those performers. If he was actually doing something.

He sits behind his crappy portable card table and stares at another magician across the street who has a nice crowd.

Brand constantly shuffles and moves his deck of old cards deftly across his little table with out even watching.

He takes a drag of his smoke. Looks down at his money box. Pretty damn dry. Back to the magician.

BRAND

Wanker.

A kid, ALFRED, maybe 15, skinny, slurps from a Slurppie, eyes wide with sugar behind his glasses, bumps into Brand's little card table. Cards go flying.

BRAND (CONT'D)

OI!

ALFRED

Sorry, mister!

BRAND

You gonna stand there gawking or help me out, eh?! Can't even see over your straw.

Brand flicks his smoke into the street and gets down on his knees. He stares at the kid as they pick up cards.

The kids face suddenly goes fuzzy, and has a slight aura around his whole body. Brand blinks, shakes his head. Alfred is back to normal.

BRAND (CONT'D)

Bloody hell.

Alfred puts the table upright and puts a few cards back. He turns to leave.

BRAND (CONT'D)

Oi! Hold up!

ALFRED

What?!

BRAND

You go and nick some of me cards?

ALFRED

What's that even mean?

BRAND

Stealing from a poor street magician?  
That's low, lad.

A few people walking by slow down, curious. Brand races through his deck, holding back a cough.

ALFRED

I didn't!

BRAND

Then where is my king of hearts?  
And, bloody hell! My ace, jack and  
queen of hearts as well?!

All the cards he mentions are gone. Brand slams the cards down and gets up, stifling a cough. He walks around, corralling more people to see the show.

BRAND (CONT'D)

You've got some balls, kid. Now  
hand them over. You too miss, sir.  
Every one of you better check your  
pockets, or there'll be hell to pay!

Startled, Alfred and the other people watching start to check their pockets. A few more people draw near.

Alfred's eyes go wide as people pull out cards. Brand wipes his mouth with an old bloody hanky.

ALFRED

Wow.

Brand gathers the cards from the audience.

BRAND

Ah ha! Thank you! And Thank you!  
And what about you --

ALFRED

Alfred.

BRAND

Alfie. Your empty?  
(MORE)

BRAND (CONT'D)  
I swear I saw -- Nothing up your  
sleeves -- Under your hat -- In your  
slurpee? Eww. That bloody card's  
around here somewhere. Ah HA!

Brand claps his hands together like he's squashing a bug,  
and also coughs up a bit of chunky goodness.

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Think I caught him?

ALFRED  
No way.

BRAND  
Take a look.

Alfred slowly peels Brands hands apart. Sure enough, the  
card is there. Some applause. The rain begins to fall a  
bit harder.

Suddenly the card leaps out of Brands hand! Brand catches  
it again. Brand fights to keep it contained.

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Steady now!! Anyone know why he's  
called the Suicide King?

ALFRED  
Because his sword goes through his  
head.

BRAND  
For a dead king, it sure is feisty!  
Lets see if we can calm it down.  
Now, I need a bit of lovely lady  
luck.

Brand finds an attractive woman in the now dwindling crowd.  
Her face does the same as Alfred's: Blurs, a shifting Aura,  
then back to normal.

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Go on then! For luck.

She blows on his hands. He opens them. Sitting there is a  
butterfly. It flies away. Applause!

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Well, that's a one time use only.  
Thanks for that, lass. Now, Ladies  
and Gentlemen, plenty more where  
that came from, with the right  
donation.

THUNDER!

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Don't you mind a wee bit of rain!  
With the right word, I can make the  
King reappear!

Brand covers his mouth with a hanky as he coughs harder.  
The crowd quickly dwindles as no wants to catch the plague.  
In the rain.

It's down to just Alfred. Brand looks at his donation box.  
Some change, a few bills, and a condom.

BRAND (CONT'D)  
Bloody wankers.

Brand slips his cards into a pocket. Pours the money into  
another. Pops up the table, folds it in half.

ALFRED  
You ok, mister?

BRAND  
Best get outta the rain, lad.

ALFRED  
Did you really turn that card into a  
butterfly?

BRAND  
Do you believe I did?

ALFRED  
Yeah.

BRAND  
Then I did.

Alfred turns away. Stops. Turns back. Hands Brand some  
pennies and pocket lint.

ALFRED  
Sorry I don't have much money for  
you mister.

BRAND  
Go on, get.

Brand watches Alfred walk away. Then down at his hanky.  
It's spotted with blood, old and new. He concentrates for a  
moment.

BRAND (CONT'D)  
OI! Alfie!

Alfred turns. Brand taps his pocket. Alfred raises an eyebrow. Checks his pocket. Pulls out the King of Hearts. Alfred's jaw drops. He looks back up.

Brand is gone.

INT. FAST FOOD JOINT - NIGHT

The Open Late neon sign BUZZES as the rain pours outside. It casts a pink glow on Brand.

He sits alone, soaking wet. As he eats his burger, he spins a coin under his hand. He looks around. Place is a ghost town.

Slowly he makes the coin float, still spinning.

THUNDER.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lightning. Brand clunks his exact change into the machine.

The bus is almost empty. Two kids in the back making out. A homeless man, could be 20, or 50, slumps against a window, eyes closed. Ragged beard stuck with dried vomit.

Brand takes a seat near the front, away from vomit beard.

JERRY, 50's, portly, sips from a mega huge jug of soda in the drivers seat. Pictures of his family are tacked all over.

JERRY

Lovely evening, am I right?

BRAND

That you are, mate. Who'd you piss of to get this shift, Jerry?

JERRY

Another bun in the oven. Got to provide.

BRAND

What's that? Number three?

JERRY

Four.

BRAND

Christ!

JERRY  
Got any new years plans? Hangin'  
out with the family?

Brand taps a brown paper bag with a small bottle of vodka.

BRAND  
Just me and me mate Popov are going  
to take it easy and get shit faced.

THUNDER. Lightning. Suddenly, the homeless man is right across from Brand. Eyes wide, boring into Brand. His pupils are saucers. His accent is thick, voice horse. Brand stares back, expecting his face to blur. It doesn't.

HOMELESS MAN  
I've been down your road, son.

JERRY  
Sounds like a good time.

HOMELESS MAN  
Trying to block her out. Keep her  
out of your head.

JERRY  
Had to stop all that crap.

HOMELESS MAN  
But you can't stop seeing things.  
What's not there can't exist can't  
be real just close my eyes just drink  
it away.

JERRY  
Drink almost took it all away. Rehab  
was an eye opener for sure.

THUNDER and lightning. The old man is now next to Brand. Smiles a swiss cheese grin. His breath would kill a roach.

HOMELESS MAN  
But she keeps calling.

JERRY  
It's a fight everyday, am I right?

HOMELESS MAN  
Singing her siren song.

JERRY  
Like she's calling to me.

HOMELESS MAN  
Will you answer? Or let it go?

JERRY

You gotta let it go. Gotta great  
mentor if you need one.

The old man takes a swig from his paper bag wrapped bottle.

HOMELESS MAN

Can't fight her. She'll burn you up  
and spit you out.

JERRY

This is you.

The bus SQUEAKS to a stop in a shit part of town. Jerry  
pops open the doors. The cold air rushes in. Brand grabs  
his table and exits.

He glances back. Jerry give a big smile, as his head blurs  
and glows. The homeless man just laughs.

HOMELESS MAN

Just give in. Better that way.

JERRY

Have a better one, Brand!

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

The rain pours as the bus pulls away. The homeless man raises  
his bottle to Brand.

Brand holds the table over his head as he walks down the  
street towards his apartment.

Down the street, a dilapidated sign blinks. It reads: Aces  
and Eights. Hourly, daily, weekly. Abandon all hope ye who  
gamble, unless you gamble here!

EXT. ACES AND EIGHTS MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby makes dingy look good. Thick plexiglass encased  
front desk. A flat screen TV covered in barbed wire hangs  
from the wall, Harry Potter playing behind it's static.

BOB, 60's, headphones on too loud, bobs his head to Death  
Metal. He sits at a row of three old slot machines, pulling  
away. Kicks one when it's doesn't pay out.

BOB

Sum'bitch.

MIHIR, 30's, Afghan, hair slicked back, collar open a bit  
too much, showing off his gold chains, pops up behind the  
plexi, yells at Bob. He got a bit of coke on his nose.

MIHIR  
Hey shit head! Stop --

A DOOR CHIME cuts Mihir off. Brand trudges in, the rain pelting him. His face is wet from rain and sweat, his skin a bit pale.

MIHIR (CONT'D)  
My main man! It's not even midnight!  
Get the fuck back out there and make  
some money!

BRAND  
You my pimp and my landlord now?

MIHIR  
Not if you've got rent?

Brand slaps a wad of bills on the counter. Mihir's eyes go wide. He grabs it, licks a thumb and counts it.

BRAND  
Should cover it.

Brand sniffs and wipes his nose, nodding to Mihir. Mihir quickly wipes his nose clean.

MIHIR  
Gonna have to pimp Bob out soon.  
His wrinkly ass hasn't paid up yet.  
Hey, since you're back, you wanna  
maybe hang out, do some blow? Watch  
some Harry Potter? Fucking love  
those movies.

BRAND  
I'll take my calls in my room.

MIHIR  
You doing ok? Look like shit man.  
Too much of them tasty treats I got  
you?

BRAND  
I'm good.

MIHIR  
Alrighty! Man, some of that would  
knock a horse off it's feet! Oh!  
This arrived for ya.

Mihir pulls out a plain brown box.

BRAND  
I didn't --

MIHIR  
Of course you didn't. I know nothing!  
Especially if its porn!

Mihir winks and grins wickedly as he shoves the box through the package door in the plexi.

Brand stares at it. Sure enough, his name is printed on the label. Brand Conley. He takes it. It's light. He shakes it gently. Nothing inside.

BRAND  
You look inside?

MIHIR  
Who do you think I am?

BRAND  
A guy who opens peoples mail.

MIHIR  
That hurts, man.

Brand heads up the stairs, passes by Bob, who is slowly loosing his rent to the one armed bandit.

Bob catches eye of Brand, yells over his music, but keeps headphones on.

BOB  
Poppa needs to pay the rent damnit!!  
Hey ya, Brand!

The slot machine BUZZES.

BOB (CONT'D)  
SUM'BITCH!

Bob kicks the machine. Mihir yells.

MIHIR  
Don't be kicking my bitches!

BOB  
Then you better make them put out!!

Brand stifles a cough as he waves his hand at the slot machine. The machine DINGS. And lights up WINNER!

Brand swears he feels the box shiver.

BOB (CONT'D)  
Winner winner chicken fucking dinner!

MIHIR  
Mother fucker.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Brand kicks the door shut, drops his soaking wet table and peels of his jacket. He flicks the locks, then turns on the light.

A dingy studio apartment would be an understatement. Clean, but age hasn't done it any favors. A thread bare futon, dilapidated coffee table, kitchenette, small TV. And stacks of library books on magic tricks.

Brand tosses the box on the coffee table. Grabs a kettle, fills it. His breath is a bit labored, like an asthmatic.

His eye's keep going back to the box. He shakes it off. Plugs in the kettle, and opens up a cabinet.

It's a bloody apothecary. You name it, he's got it. He grabs some red pills, some blues, and some oxy, and horse tranq.

He pulls out the fifth of vodka. Cracks it open, drops the pills in, closes it. Shakes it real hard while concentrating.

The bottle glows like a firefly. He grabs his hanky and coughs up a lung. More blood.

The vodka is now a glowing swirl of drugs and alcohol.

He collapses on the futon. Turns on the tv. Fireworks spark and BOOM over some city as the announcer drones on.

BRAND  
Happy bloody new years.

He chugs half the vodka. The glow of the drink gently spreads through his body. His breathing becomes easy and free. He relaxes, a junky getting a fix. His eyes flutter closed.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dirt floor, stone walls, thatch roof. Outside the wind howls and rain pelts the cottage.

A fire smolders in a corner fire place, a large pot steaming over it. The smoke is heavy and otherworldly.

A woman tends to the pot, cast in shadow. She tosses another hunk of peat on the fire. It sizzles and belches out more smoke. She coughs.

A boy, more dirt than skin, sits near by, staring at a softball sized Celestial Sphere in his hand.

It's pristine metal glows in the firelight. It is out of place in this hovel of a home.

BOY  
It's not working.

The woman kneels and gently touches the sphere. A moment later, the sphere sputters to life. A few of it's bands glow and begin to turn as it slowly levitates.

The boy stares, concentrating on it.

WOMAN  
Listen to its music.

He focus' more on the Sphere. More bands spark to life. The sphere spins faster. Begins to float.

The woman coughs, wipes blood away.

The sphere is a rainbow blur, casting flickering fireworks of shadows. Trails of vibrant energy weave outwards from it, snaking around the boy's hand.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Now, be careful. The Weave is not a gentle mistress.

Suddenly, The boy YELPS in pain. The Sphere wobbles and sparks. It launches itself into the fire.

BOY  
Sorry, mother.

With out thinking, the boy reaches in and grabs it.

He screams.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

THUNDER! Brand wakes with a start. He wipes the drool from his face. Outside, it's pissing down. The TV flickers with an infomercial.

He blinks his eyes into focus, rubs his hand. Stares at the scars that zig-zag across it. Then focus' on the box.

Someone BANGS on a door down the hall.

BRAND  
So if I didn't order you, who did, eh?

He picks it up. Nothing on it. Plain brown box. Handwritten address. Then the words start to squiggle and move --