

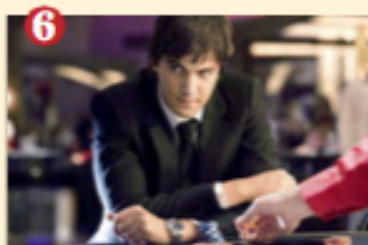
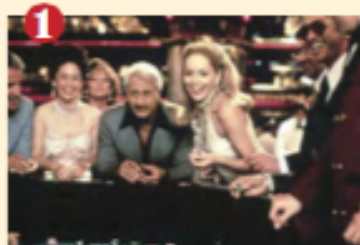
My next call is to Frances. "Sorry," she says, "I can't talk right now. I'm in line for the bathroom, and if I miss my turn, I'm looking at a good 40 minutes before I can...well, you get the picture." The picture isn't pretty. My friend with a Ph.D. and the very grown-up job of running a big department at a major New York City hospital lives in a tiny one-bedroom, one-bathroom rental with her son, her daughter, and her wonderful, albeit perpetually under-employed, graphic designer husband. "How would you like to make a little extra money?" I ask. She is at my front door practically before I can hang up the phone.

Jill, Frances, and I meet Duke for lunch at a quiet little diner near Frances's office. Though I've known both women for years, this is the first time they're meeting each other, and God knows nobody has ever met a character like Duke. "I take out casinos, and I'm very, very good at it," he declares, pausing for a swig of iced tea. His confidence is impressive. "If you ladies are prepared to do the work, I can transform you into a moneymaking machine."

We nibble our Cobb salads as his words hang in the air. We are women who look after our parents, send kids to college, take a meeting, plan and execute a lovely Thanksgiving dinner for 16 people who can't stand the sight of one another. We floss, we add flaxseeds to whole-grain cereal, we shop sales, we serve jury duty. The man is offering us a new set of skills and a fresh stream of revenue, but we've got questions. We all remember that Kevin Spacey movie called *21*, or we've read *Bringing Down the House*, the book on which the film was based.

Frances is the first to put words to our fears. "Duke, do you remember that scene in the movie where one of the card counters is escorted to a back room and beaten senseless?" Frances leans in. "I'm not even sure what I'm doing here," she says in a tone usually reserved for people at a Times Square peep show. "I mean, I've got children!"

That card counting is legal, as Duke points out, mollifies us somewhat, but not completely. Backroom beatings



Who Said It?

Test your intuition and memory with our quick casino-movie quote matchup

- A)** "What was I supposed to do—call him for cheating better than me, in front of the others?"
- B)** "Listen, here's the thing. If you can't spot the sucker in the first half hour at the table, then you are the sucker."
- C)** "Francie, dear, when the stakes are right, you'll gamble!"
- D)** "The cardinal rule is to keep them playing and to keep them coming back. The longer they play, the more they lose, and in the end, we get it all."
- E)** "I'm shocked, shocked, to find that gambling is going on here!"
- F)** "Now I shake your hand!"
- G)** "You guys are pros. The best. I'm sure you can make it out of the casino. Of course, lest we forget, once you're out the front door, you're still in the middle of the [expletive] desert!"
- H)** "I made hundreds of thousands of dollars counting cards. And then I had it all stolen from me. Twice.... How's that for life experience, Professor?"

- ANSWERS**
- 1-D: RUBEN TISHKOFF, OCEANS ELEVEN
 - 2-H: MIKE MCDERMOTT, ROUNDERS
 - 3-H: BEN CAMPBELL, 21
 - 4-C: FRANCIS HORN, TO CATCH A THIEF
 - 5-A: BOYLE LONNIGAN, THE STING
 - 6-F: TOMMY KORBMAN, HONEYMOON IN VEGAS
 - 7-C: CAPTAIN RENALTE CASABLANCA
 - 8-D: ACE ROTHSTEIN, CASINO