

## 15. KEEPING SCORE

- Does anyone know the score of the game?
- Army is ahead.
- But Navy is charging back.
- What kind of parking did you have the last time that you went to a game?
- I’m a gold booster so I got to park really close to the stadium.
- I have a friend in silver. But I don’t go to the games a lot. I just like to watch on television.
- These details are all going to become more important later on.
- You bet on the games.
- Sure enough!
- What good is putting money on the games if you can’t influence the outcome?
- How do you do that?
- You need to meet the players.
- And they’re going to place their confidence in judgement.
- I’ve worked as a financial consultant. That is my basis for first making contact.
- But these are amateur players. They’re not supposed to have a lot of money.
- Some are connected. Through their families. Through boosters. You just follow the connections around.
- And you can get players to turn that easily.
- Are you asking me for real advice?
- If you’re willing to give it.
- You’re working on the feelings of inadequacy felt by young men. They want to succeed at the game. But they see how long it takes just to get the smallest of results. And there are people around them for whom things come very easily. They want to share in that kind of success. So you toss them a bone to see if they’ll bite. And if they do, you have people who you can work with. Does that tell you enough.
- I guess I’m a little like that guy who is afraid to take the first step.
- But the player is already playing a game chock full of odds. You just increase how much is riding on each play.
- Isn’t that devilish? You’re turning a good kid into something bad.
- The game does that to begin with. It makes promises to him that it never can fulfill. He gets injured in his first year with nothing to show for it.
- So you get him to shave points.
- If that’s what it takes. And once you get good at this, you move on to other challenges. Like padding a construction contract. Or duping Medicare. It’s all part of averaging. You take something from one place where it has no real function, and you move it to somewhere that it has real significance.
- You are starting to sound like a philanthropist.
- If everyone comes out on top, that is great.
- The winner gets the winner’s share, and the loser gets a share for throwing the game.
- I don’t want to pretend that it’s all rigged.

- But you do your part.
- I create order where there was once chaos.
- You’ve never actually been to a game.
- I have. But I also tell you what you want to hear.
- To get me interested.
- You are interested.
- How did you get started in this business.
- I put myself through school by writing pornographic short stories
- Tell me more!
- What do you want to know?
- Did the characters ever suffer performance anxiety?
- It would be too much of a distraction from the intent of the story if they couldn’t score from a distance.
- Did you suffuse the characters with your own view of women?
- I wanted these girls that I couldn’t have. My stories gave me the power to talk them down to size.
- That sounds pretty invigorating.
- I think that’s how power works.
- So you can translate that kind of feeling into success into the political and business arena.
- I guess so. I was able to get close because of what I was able to promise them. Politics and business is all about making promises.
- Promises that you can’t deliver.
- I learned how to deliver.
- So why are you paying off college kids to throw games.
- I’m not. I was just telling you how to do it. I told you that I’ve learned how to apply those techniques to winning government contracts and the like.
- The sky’s the limit.
- Don’t you know it. I never exaggerate what I can do. It was the same thing with the stories.
- Or the women. You just told them what they wanted to hear.
- I knew what my strengths were and I exploited.
- You never promised what you couldn’t deliver.
- More or less. It’s like a football game. Everything seems so much more important when the clock is running down. The final minutes are like the end of the world.
- The funny part is how we get taken in again and again by the same promises.
- I can’t watch football with the same commitment that I used to bring to the game.
- Maybe you need to have money riding on it.
- Maybe I do!
- So why are you telling me all this?
- You just looked as if some of that magic had come out of your life. I thought that I could inspire you.
- You can. I just wish that I had the kind of confidence that you have.

–I told you that it’s all about believing in yourself. Learning to project your strengths onto the other person’s weaknesses.

–How’s that?

–You have to act like a god.

–Oh yeah!

–I’m trying to help. You have to be a little more courageous.

–Isn’t it all just a front?

–Tell me that after you get the results.

–I’m not sure that I can be that fake.

–It has nothing to do with being fake. Reality is based on what we believe. And if we can make things happen by getting other people to believe, what’s the harm in that?

–Aren’t you afraid of being shown up for what you are?

–What are you looking for? One of those stories from the fifties where the main character gets disappointed with one of his heroes.

–Aren’t you the one who’s messing with our myths? Trying to bring everything down to size?

–I’m not going to get intimidated by something that isn’t real.

*I am considering his revelations as a clue to a deeper understanding of how the world works. It appears that his method is all about knowing the results in advance and betting on that insider knowledge. I contemplate all those situations where we seem to lack sufficient information to start out ahead. Pretending to know something when you’re that much in the dark seems like the perfect road to disaster.*

*–This story is about people who get things done.*

*–By knowing how to wait for the right moment.*

*–And sometimes you have to create your own opportunities.*

*–A lot of good that is going to do!*

*–People are weak. They are waiting for an answer.*

*–And I’m the one to lead them.*

*–This is your moment of truth.*

*–But how can I get people to do what they don’t want to do?*

*–You have to show them that they can win something if they go along with you.*

*–Can they really all win?*

*–It’s all about making promises. Getting them to believe in themselves. They have to take it from there.*

*–That’s magic.*

*–Right! You have a power to convince people. And you have to use that skill to your advantage.*

*–I feel as if I’m working at a carnival.*

*–You want things to be better than they really are. It’s never going to turn out the way that you want it to.*

*–What are you telling me?*

*–Don’t worry about what you can’t do. Find comfort in what you can.*

*–That sounds really carnival!*

–*You are in the business of telling fortunes.*

–*And people are stubborn.*

–*Stubbornness only stops people in their tracks. Then you can bet on their intransigence.*

*All to your advantage.*

–*You're saying that you're encouraging people's inaction. Doesn't that contradict your earlier remarks?*

–*Inaction is a fact of life. And you can use it to your advantage.*

–*Did it work?*

–*What are you asking me?*

–*We had problem. And you were going to make it go away.*

–*Have it cosmetically removed.*

–*Right.*

–*So is it still there.*

–*The offending object.*

–*Whatever! Did you take care of the problem?*

–*I did what needed to get done.*

–*So the problem has gone away.*

–*There is nothing else that we need to discuss.*

–*Is that based on a belief or on facts?*

–*We make the facts.*

–*You're not providing me with enough information to go on.*

–*Do you really want me to spell things out for you?*

–*What you say may change my liability.*

–*I'm not saying that directly.*

–*So the job was completed.*

–*We did what we needed to accomplish.*

–*The file is closed.*

–*The file is not closed. But your interest in the matter is finished.*

–*But if the file is not closed, who's to say that the problem won't crop up again.*

–*It may come up again. But there is nothing more for you to concern yourself about.*

–*I can go public on this.*

–*There are already press reports. You can indicate our interest in the matter.*

–*That it was our action that caused the resolution.*

–*You only want to take credit for a positive resolution. You do not want accept the blame for any associated damage.*

–*Am I exposed here?*

–*It depends on what the press reports say. Have you read the stories?"*

–*I glanced at them?*

–*Do they increase your liability?*

–*I think that I'm in the clear.*

–*So you have nothing to worry about.*

–*That is what I'm asking you.*

–*What exactly are you asking?*

- I don't want to be left in the dark.
- That may be the best option under the circumstances. The less said the better.
- But we will claim that we made the killing happen.
- It was a clean shot.
- That's how it was sold.
- Other victims aren't going to turn up in the next week or so.
- I think that you are in the clear.
- So I am going to go public.
- Isn't it strange how confusion only delegates more power to those in higher places.*
- Explain!*
- The mere inference is enough to make the world quake.*
- Suggestion or inference.*
- It's all pretty much the same.*
- The same how?*
- The less that is said, the more likely that the desired result will occur.*
- Power radiates.*
- You are explaining the topology to me.*
- For what it's worth. There is an underlying continuity, but the appearance is one of total disconnectedness.*
- Alienation?*
- No. That may be the effect felt by some. But in this case there really is something that is occurring. It's just that the lines of power all work beneath the surface. Nothing is said directly so those at the top reduce their liability. Everyone contributes a few grains of sand. Eventually the beach is full of sand.*
- Just in time for the tidal wave!*
- You're grasping it. And the wave always seems to be a product of some other forces.*
- So those in power appear surrounded by chaos. And the full brunt of the storm is way more intense than something that they could have dreamed up.. But they did dream up something this intense.*
- Putting aside the deeper question of whether actual support of this ally may be detrimental to American interests for peace and freedom, specifically, was your inability to offer a condemnation of their brutal military actions because their military policy was essentially a carbon copy of the methods employed by the United States in West Asia?
- Your question is exceedingly confusing.
- Why did you offer no condemnation of their brutal policies?
- You are missing the real question here. The government in question was responding to attacks on its national security. If there were abuses, such cases would have to be examined individually.
- So you are saying that defensive action justifies any level of brutality?
- I am saying that protection of the citizenry requires an unambiguous response.
- Your silence is still deafening!
- That is what really turned me against the man. I jumped up and down in anger. I wanted him punished for what he did!*

–We believed that we killed him.

–Good job! Am I allowed to say that.

–Everyone needs someone like me to get ahead in the world.

*Consider that a few millions dollars are going to be spent completing this stretch of interstate. It will allow goods to be carried from Nashville to northern Kentucky.*

–We are not meddling in the affairs of other countries as long as American access to their markets remain intact.

–So what is your definition of meddling.

–There were things done under past administrations that may qualify as meddling if the term is defined with more precision.

*–Quit bitching, April and do something for a change*

*--I'm complaining because I still haven't figured out what there is to do. And I'm not going to get led astray by the first thing that comes along. At the same time, I realize that things are shit. So I'm not going to shut my mouth. And then maybe someone who's just as pissed as I am will realize that it's hitting us in the same way, and that we can work on it together.*

*I take particular offense that you're using the word bitch here in reference to me as a woman.*

*Almost to say that it's in my feminine nature to complaining just to let off steam, but just accept things in the end. Which is the farthest from the truth that you can get.*

–I don't even feel as I'm part of the game anymore.

–You're still our go-to-guy.

–I like the vote of confidence.

–You're going to have to do some time.

–I've been the one playing by the rules. I've worked hard. I've spent my money wisely. What's the problem.

–You may have spent too wisely. No one knows who you are.

–I'm a careful consumer. I recycle. I eat healthy food. What am I doing wrong?

–There's too many others just like you. We've messed up, and the only way to move on is if someone accepts full blame.

–Why me?

–You have a trusting face. When you go before the judge, you can say that you were acting alone, and he'll believe you.

–I was acting alone. I never did anything.

–That's not the way that it looks. People got hurt. The company has taken a hit.

–Couldn't you just fire me? Give me severance.

–No. Someone has to spend some time inside. Think of it as a job. You can be our man inside.

–If I do this, you owe me plenty.

–Or course, we do, assuming that you'll still be around to collect.

–What?

–I'm just kidding.

*April is working her way back into the story.*

*–Those in power have their own logic.*

*–What are we talking about, the head of a fast food franchise?*

- More of a potentate of an oil rich empire.*
- What are you going to do to help?*
- I don't want to start this game on the bottom.*
- So how are you going to get the boost that you need?*
- I've always tried to look the part.*
- A lot of good that's going to do these days when every other girl is trying to cop a cut-rate version of your mug.*
- It's not as if I'm looking to pay full price.*
- So you're going to try to undercut those Phillies and still come out ahead in the race.*
- I'm number one in the will department.*
- Every hillbilly from Lower Alabama thinks that she is going to be the Queen of Shiba when she makes her way to the city. The suburban greasy spoons are littered with talent of a forgotten yore.*
- April, the real question is if you have any heart for this kind of thing.*
- I can be as cool as a cucumber when it's comes to serious biz.*
- So what's deal about.*
- State secrets. I can deliver them your way.*
- And what good is this going to do me?*
- You're are an artist. Don't you know how you can fit this in those schemes of your.*
- Do you really think that there's anything that I want to know that I don't know already?*
- This is really for me to know and for you to find out.*
- You want money for this kind of childish set.*
- Knowledge is power.*
- I can buy the blueprints for a small country, so what good is this going to do me.*
- It's the complete assassin network for the company.*
- And you think that it has a dollar amount.*
- For anyone who might be on the party list.*
- Anyone who's out to party is willing to pay his weight in gold to be included on the list.*
- You're trying to tell me that it's a privilege to be a marked man.*
- April, you are playing so far behind the curve. Don't tell me that they had you working at that spin off from the NSA. You might as well have been working at the Holiday Inn.*
- You're telling me that my info is useless.*
- If you stayed in, then maybe you could do something. Don't tell me that you stole files from your agency.*
- I just held on to my work computer.*
- You don't even have the current codes. What good are you now?*
- I can still penetrate their computers if I want to.*
- And one of our boys can't do the same. April, you're like a bloody dinosaur.*
- You just resent a woman's touch.*
- Not at all. Any computer is put together using a dash of female intuition. April, your problem is that you think that you can outwit us.*
- April is becoming quite the independent contractor. The only problem is that she has run out of things to contract*

- Only the cops are driving around at this time of night.
- So it's a sure thing that you're going to run in to them.
- I guess.
- They had him on a routine traffic stop. And the let him go. Don't think that they're going to get a chance like that again.
- How are we going to find him again? It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack?
- We know his habits.
- Him and a million like him.
- He is kind of unique.
- That only makes him harder to find.
- He'll eventually show himself.
- We do have to entertain the other option. If he knows that we're following him, he may go deeper underground.
- How's that? He's already untraceable.
- He may assume a type. Adopt an ethnic style.
- Is there anything in his background to support such a choice.
- No, it's all pretty vanilla. But he is also clever. He could just descend into the depths. Learn a new language. Adopt all the mannerisms.
- Fuck the law. I'm taking matters in my own hands.*
- You've spent a lot of time looking at your neighbors.*
- I'm just looking.*
- You're not going to cross the property line.*
- And where does that line begin.*
- I figure that we're ready to create a character list.
- We haven't heard from HM in a while.
- He's always on the job.
- Then there's April.
- Is that the name that she's using. She's quite a gold digger.
- Sound like a version of HM.
- And her friend Sybil.
- If that's what friends are for.
- And the man, whatever is his name.
- And the guy that they're chasing.
- You've made your point.
- What is that?
- We have a story!
- What about May and June?
- Didn't someone take care of them.
- No, they're still playing. There just on the disabled list.
- I thought those two always play hurt.
- Are they on the playoff roster?
- I'm not sure. What is this about?
- The money to finish that highway job has gone missing.



- Federal money?
- This is a real mess. Treasury agents are going to be conducting the investigation.
- This was a small problem that could have been brushed under the rug. Who was the mother fucker that let the highway fund disappear?
- That gambler guy.
- He has no link to the campaign.
- I'm afraid to admit that he has some links to the man himself.
- Illinois politics is still quite a mess.
- I can tell what you're thinking.
- Something about Maryjane.
- Do me a favor. If you run into those two, tell 'em hello from me.
- What are you saying?
- Spread the love.
- I never pay for it.
- Either do we. April's got to get that in that thick skull of hers.
- Who let her on the loose anyway?
- How did you get this number?
- Off the computer. Where did you get yours?
- Off of a government list.
- How did you get access?
- I have an insider.
- Isn't he the guy that everyone is looking for?
- Practically every guy has his eyes glued for that June girl.
- Without May.
- May is a new wrinkle in the genetic spiral.
- Sounds like a physics problem.
- This light appears from the sky and shines brightly on the ground. It burns everything in its wake.**
- I can't even move.**
- The bad guys are going to get out and they're going to come to my house and scream we are the bad guys, and I'm just going to fall to the ground.**
- They're going to get you too.**
- Who are they?**
- They're not American**
- Whatever I do I need to shut my mouth. They figure that they have me on the run. I have already blended with the population. I have left no trace. I am waiting for the time when I will be called upon again.*
- We've got your dream. A new luxury car for you!**
- That's a pretty car. Maybe you could give me a ride in it.**
- You have heard about Sodom and Gomorrah.
- It is so shocking!
- Yes, it is.
- Something has to be done.

- You have the button. You are willing to press it.
- Of course I am. I’ve already watched what has happened in Fallujah and Gaza. I am ready to make the decision.
- You’ll be far enough away that you won’t have to listen to their cries. This will make your Presidency. You will be a god!
- An eye for an eye!
- An eye for an inner eye. He uses the leaves of trees like wings.
- I am afraid for our freedom.
- Put all your money in gold.
- I have. It is increasing. We are in a state of permanent crisis.
- The price of orange juice is going up as well.
- Just don’t drink the gasoline.
- Who are you?
- I am HM!
- You’ll be getting some hot young things.
- Everyone wants to be with the HM!
- But you need none of them.
- I am almost there.
- Whenever the hour, whatever the day, whatever year, he will be ready.
- HM!
- It is GAME SEVEN!
- I have a fortune riding on this.
- How much?
- Twice the amount of the budget last year. I have to win big to get back in this game.
- You have a nice ass!*
- I wanted to get a head start on this game.*
- I feel as if I am starting the game as if I am already ahead.*
- This is a terrible way to die.
- A real miscarriage of justice!
- It must be creating satisfaction for someone.
- The anti-hero! He lives for suffering!
- Are you trying to poison my food?*
- You were going to go over the whole story for me.*
- Leaving out the dirty parts.*
- Isn’t that how you made a name for yourself?*
- Keeping it up all night.*
- Someone is on your side.*
- We all want a big poof!*
- Presto!*
- You are...*
- HM!
- Is this about aliens?
- You’re talking about the light from the sky.

- It was a crushing blow.
- I don't even have a bank account.*
- Your reserves.*
- All in gold. All hidden away.*
- What's the score?*
- She's young and improving her game.*
- She doesn't have to be that good. She just has to inspire me to the heights.*
- She is a looker.*
- I need a star.*
- Have you briefed her on the lines?*
- She's good at improve.*
- Can't she squeal.*
- Like a pig. Is that a big deal?*
- The more noise that she makes, the more money she gets.*
- One problem: she has a weakness for junk food.*
- That could be a problem.*
- She could enter a program.*
- We need her now. You know that there are other girls who can easily do the job.*
- You want her.*
- What is her name?*
- You've met her before. She is the missing lynx. May!*