

Again they are seated in the same positions. Both Eddie and Sarah are wrapped up in their own thoughts. Bert seems to ignore their mood. He feels secure. He feels that they are both people that he can completely manipulate.

BERT

The clutch. That's where your born loser loses. The clutch.

(a pause. He gets no response)

But you got to know when the clutch in the game is. You gotta know and you gotta bear down, no matter what kind of voice is telling you to relax. Like when you were playing pool with Minnesota Fats and you had him beat and you were so tired your eyeballs were hanging out and when something was going to have to give somewhere. Either you or Fats.

(pauses)

You know when that was...when it was Fats knew that he was gonna beat you?

(Eddie is still silent)

Okay, I'll tell you. It was when Fats went to the toilet and you flattened out in the chair. Fats knew the game was in the clutch. He knew he had to do something to stop it and he played smart.

When Fats went back to the john, washed his face, cleaned his fingernails, made his mind a blank, combed his hair, and then came back ready, you were through. You saw him, you saw how he looked...clean, ready to start all over, ready to hold tight and push hard. And do you know what you were doing?

BERT

You were waiting to get beaten. You were flattened out on your butt swimming around in glory and in whiskey and probably you were deciding how you could lose.

I know.

(a pause)

I've been there myself, Eddie.

(looks back at Sarah)

We've all been there, haven't we,

*The Hustler*