

**Making a Killing**

**at the Pokies**

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**PERFORMANCE SCRIPT**

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Written by Hazel Edwards

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## **Performance Script: Making a Killing at the Pokies**

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Pokies gambling satire set in suburbia when the outspoken Ghost of Monies Lost appears from the machine to challenge the woman 'investor' .

Issues relevance:

- Obsessive gambling as a social issue
- Mathematical odds.
- What is the difference between investing in stocks and shares and gambling?
- Leisure and personal enjoyment of activities
- Obsessions; personal or societal responsibility?
- How far should governments legislate on personal use of money or time?
- If you work as a gaming attendant, are you helping people lose?

***Flexibility of Casting: If the number of actors must be limited, the Ghost can be a pre-recorded Voice only and doubling or implying minor speaking or non-speaking roles is possible. Additional gaming roles can be added if many actors wish to be involved.***

*Minimum actors: 1 M, 3 F or 1 F, 3 M or 2 F, 1 M, 1 M/F*

### **CAST:**

WOMAN (40-ish) pokies player (F1)  
GAMING ATTENDANT (20-ish) industry trained, but privately scornful. (M1)  
GHOST OF MONIES PAST Know-All. Irritant-Philosopher-Conscience (M/F) Could be V.O or in black shimmer& black gloves, spotlighted. Against a black background

Minor Roles:

COURIER

WEI WEI big gambler

MONA breaking Gamblers' Anonymous self exclusion program.

PENSIONER COUPLE

EMU scavenger (non speaking) who checks for stray coins or credits left

PATIENT (with white stick) over-excited into heart attack (non speaking)

PARA MEDICS (2) (non speaking)

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### **SETTING**

#### **Lights on**

Suburban Pokies with bank of machines

Outlines of pokies players whenever not in other roles.

#### **SFX**

Escalating music for Jackpot.

#### **PROPS**

Bucket of one dollar coins

RESERVED sign

Stretcher and paramedic gear

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### **SCRIPT:**

#### **Setting: Suburban Pokies**

(SFX Intermittent escalation of pokies sounds)

#### **WOMAN:**

Love the pokies. It's like going on a round- the- world trip at your local shopping centre, without buying the air ticket. Music, stories, Venice on a gondola...Caribbean Pirates.

(SFX Musical crescendo)

#### **WOMAN:**

Someone's won! (rubs hands)

(SFX Tinkle of coins...)

#### **WOMAN:**

(walking between machines like host of documentary) Payout. The BEST feeling. I look forward to the pokies, every day. Especially since the hospital visits started.

#### **ATTENDANT:**

Cappuccino M'am? It's on the house.

#### **WOMAN:**

So attentive. I like that.

#### **ATTENDANT:**

I have to be. I'm gaming industry certified.

#### **WOMAN:**

(musing) If it's a game, I'm a player, not a loser. I know the odds...just a matter of how much but I can afford it. I don't smoke anymore. Or drink.

(SFX Multiple Jackpot noises)

#### **WOMAN:**

That's the thrill. (pause) Before I was retrenched, I was an accountant. Here I just keep going until I've figured it out. When I start rummaging for my emergency \$50, I'm not

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wasting money... I'm sticking there until the end. I'm not a quitter. My family taught me to keep trying, whatever. My husband, my ex is a different matter.

**MONA:**

How's your hubby luv? Still in the cancer hospital?

(SFX Jackpot!)

**WOMAN:**

Yes. Couldn't understand why he didn't give the fags away earlier. QUIT signs everywhere. Thought you were on self exclusion Mona?

**MONA:**

(shrugs) Yeah.

**WOMAN:**

Must admit, those signs in the Ladies do nothing for me.

**MONA:**

Don't want to stare at that GAMBLERS' HELP number every time I go there.

**WOMAN:**

Frustrating. Spins won't come, but I don't have a gambling problem. Others have that. (Points to Courier hitting 200 and then 250 at a time). Now he's gone up to 250.

(SFX Mobile phone rings. All check.)

**COURIER:**

(Bangs machine in temper and glancing at mobile) And now work calls! One Cent Machines!

**WOMAN:**

Put in much?

**COURIER:**

Three (slips in another note)

**WOMAN:**

Dollars?

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**COURIER:**

Hundreds. It owes me. Not even a free game!

**WOMAN:**

Yeah. Hate to leave before a free spin.

(Man hits higher multiples then thumps machine and leaves as EMU hovers, puts in a single coin and then leaves shrugging, empty handed too).

**WOMAN:**

(continuing on her machine) If I leave, it's beaten me. If I keep ploughing in money, in a way I've won, even though it pays a dollar and I've put in \$100. Part of my brain knows that, but I don't care.

(SFX Rising pokies noises)

**WOMAN:**

(watching spins) Didn't pay much. (hits keys) All gone.

(peers at other machines) Ah, a new game. How do I play that? (hits INFORMATION button. Her mobile rings. Checks. Missed Call. Peers at display.)

**WOMAN:**

Not the hospital this time. (She dials, annoyed at the interruption.) I'll ring back later. Now I want Information (presses button on pokies)

**GHOST:**

Department of Losses.

**WOMAN:**

Who are you?

**GHOST:**

Information. I'm the Ghost of Monies Lost. I can morph into whatever you desire. I'm a holiday in the Pacific. Sun, surf, white beaches, cocktails. Do you want me?  
(Hula across stage)

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**WOMAN:**

Frankly no. I get sunburn. I'm off the booze and one of the good things about sitting here is I don't eat so much.

**GHOST:**

Don't move much either. Fat Arses propped on stools ...or Asians like that woman over there. Only her wallet is big.

**WOMAN:**

That's racist. You can't say that.

**GHOST:**

I'm a ghost I can say what I like. What are you going to do, sue me?

**WOMAN:**

Listen Ghost, Information or whatever you call yourself. I'm not playing YOUR game. Had enough of doing things for other people. Brought up four kids. Looked after my elderly father until he died. Now there's Ray, my Ex in the hospital up the road. Worked hard all my life. Won last week so I'm playing with THEIR money, not mine.

**GHOST:**

Kidding yourself. What about the hundreds that weren't theirs. And the extra you fiddled from the housekeeping?

**WOMAN:**

I'm dieting. If I'd signed up for one of those dieting courses, it would have cost me more than I've INVESTED here.

**GHOST:**

Invested? Not like the Stock Exchange HERE you know...At least you get bits of paper from them. Certificates and stuff...to pass onto your children.

**WOMAN:**

About time my kids looked after themselves.

**GHOST:**

What about leaving it to charity?

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**WOMAN:**

Why? I'm past that. I've done the school lunches and run-around for kids' sports and geriatrics. Here the machine decides. That's a relief when you've been deciding everything for a family for years. In here is NO time. Slip in for 15 minutes, and then I win a few spins, get on a roll, and last Monday I was here for over an hour.

**ATTENDANT:**

Excuse me M'am. Is that blue car yours? The parking officer is booking them all again.

**WOMAN:**

(puts RESERVED sign on her machine) Back in a minute.

(She leaves and the ATTENDANT obviously doesn't see the GHOST who does some 'business' around the machine to convey being nosy but at ease and not 'seen'.)

**GHOST:**

Now we'll see some fun...

(EMU walks around in a predatory way and checks the scoop underneath for any stray coins, finds one, pockets it, lifts the RESERVED sign to check on money in machine.)

**MONA:**

Hey, that's HER machine!

(EMU shrugs and leaves as returning WOMAN stuffs a fine notice into her purse, removes RESERVED sign and settles expectantly with her bucket of coins and starts pressing.)

**WOMAN:**

Another \$100 fine. Object to paying that.

**GHOST:**

(shrugs)

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**WOMAN:**

Moved my car into the 4 hour zone now. That Grey Ghost. One of your lot?

**GHOST:**

I'm a professional ghost. On the game fulltime. Not a council hack paid by quota.

**WOMAN:**

Whatever. Get abused in that job... not like these nice young men in here...call me M'am and ask if I'd like a cappuccino...with two sugars...and bring me those little pies about 5 o'clock...like having a cocktail party with my date, Pokie.

**GHOST:**

Talking of giving things away... of donating.

**WOMAN:**

I wasn't.

**GHOST:**

What about the Salvation Army?

**WOMAN:**

Don't mind the Salvos. Always give them something, if they come in here.

(Puts notes into machine and hits COLLECT to get coins in change out. Drops bucket of coins) Losing money doesn't matter. Losing control does. What I fear is the sense of a loss of control. So I go higher. And then I put in a big note, and take out the extra cash in coins, so I feel that I'm still in charge and there's still money in my purse. Not like poor old Mona over there. Mona's on Voluntary Exclusion but she's always here when I come. She just watches for a bit, and then she slips in a dollar, and then a few notes, and there you go. She's lost it.

**GHOST:**

Don't you feel you should offer some to a charity...save the starving hordes in India?

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**WOMAN:**

No. That's somewhere else or on the T.V. news screen. I'm here now.

Listen mate, the Indian IT guys probably programmed this computer...only 85% ever comes out, they claim. I reckon it's less than that. For once in my life I want to do what I like, in the moment. Isn't that what the Buddhists say? Live in the now.

**GHOST:**

No, they believe in reincarnation...moving up the foodchain...if you do good works.

**WOMAN:**

Don't be so smug. Don't they play pokies in Heaven...or Hell or Nirvana or where ever you come from?

**GHOST:**

Out of the slot actually. You pressed for INFORMATION and you got me.

**WOMAN:**

I wanted info not a Conscience.

**GHOST:**

I'm an expert on lost dreams. I have a PHD in gambling.

**WOMAN:**

One of those doctorates you buy online. Oh yeah. (ignoring him) Ray used to say I was clever. Never says much at all these days inbetween coughing and sucking on the oxygen. (shrugs then deliberately changes subject)

I love playing the pokies. You're not supposed to admit to that are you?

**GHOST:**

So why tell me?

**WOMAN:**

Not many talk in here. Except creeps who like to pick up older women.

**GHOST:**

You wish!

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**WOMAN:**

(ignores) Or fake-experts who've been here so long, they reckon they can pick sequences. Fools. Sometimes I prefer being anonymous, and just slipping into my favourite machine. (others respond to noise) I've got the Free spins! Still going!

(SFX Pokies crescendo...payout.)

**WOMAN:**

A compliments message! Magnificent win! Brilliant playing. Who gives me compliments like that in my life now? No-one.

**GHOST:**

You're having an affair with a machine?

**WOMAN:**

Who else cares?

**GHOST:**

Not your neighbour there with the thick glasses

**WOMAN:**

10 % vision. Playing on sound. Doesn't see you're only a ghost.

**GHOST:**

Vision impaired. Some disabilities are just more obvious.

**WOMAN:**

You're dead money and can't have an opinion.

**GHOST:**

I've got opinions, and feelings. Look at the Love Birds. So romantic. Pension Day Date at the Pokies taking it in turns to press the button. The couple that loses together stays together.

**WOMAN:**

At least I'm losing my own money without having to share it, or report back. (points to Wei Wei) Even if I haven't as much as her, she's a big player.

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(SFX Machine Jammed Noise from Wei Wei's machine. She presses SERVICE)

**WOMAN:**

Risky. Ah, you're lucky. He's real. Industry certified.

**ATTENDANT:**

Has the machine jammed? I'll...oh it's Mrs Wei Wei. Thought I recognised you on the security monitor. Didn't you used to teach me maths?

**WEI WEI:**

Mistake.

**ATTENDANT:**

Sure?

**WEI WEI:**

If I had, you wouldn't be working here. Now can you unjam this?

**ATTENDANT:**

That's my job. Part time only. I'm studying psychology at uni. Rats and Stats.

**WEI WEI:**

Of course.

**ATTENDANT:**

See you later. Have a good one.

**GHOST:**

(to Wei Wei) Were you really his maths teacher?

(Wei Wei ignores him)

**WOMAN:**

(laughs) How come Wei Wei doesn't hear you? Hasn't she lost enough money yet?

**GHOST:**

(annoyed) I'll wait. Information Malfunction.

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**WOMAN:**

A lost cause? (Peers at screen like a mirror) That's what I like about the pokies...can't see your reflection in the screen. Don't care whether you dress up or are naked...except security, the web cam watchers who can even read your spins.

(SFX: Emergency noise. Paramedics race in with breathing gear to Patient. Wei Wei glances and keeps playing.)

**GHOST:**

Paramedics.

**WOMAN:**

Heart attack.

**GHOST:**

Odds are in his favour.

**WOMAN:**

They're putting the paddles on his heart...giving him a charge. I'll just go to the Ladies. Never did like blood or reality TV.

(Ghost put up her RESERVED sign and Paramedics remove patient by dragging)

**WOMAN:**

(returns) Seen the graffiti in the Ladies?

**GHOST:**

Er no.

**WOMAN:**

Oh sorry...Are you a bloke?

**GHOST:**

Not now.

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**WOMAN:**

Someone wrote. She played here, for far too long. That'll be me. Only the hard core players are still here at 1am. Shift workers. My favourite time. I can wander from machine to machine and not have to queue up.

**GHOST:**

People QUEUE to lose their money?

**WOMAN:**

New games. Favourites. Or ones where someone has put in a lot of money and it hasn't paid out. That Emu reckons it will pay once the fool leaves.

**GHOST:**

Ah, so you're a fool?

**WOMAN:**

No I always stay until it pays out with the free spins.

**GHOST:**

So the person who leaves is the fool, not the stayer?

**WOMAN:**

(getting annoyed) You're just trying to play with words.

**GHOST:**

Got to do something... a lot of time to kill.

(SFX Mobile rings but she doesn't notice)

**WOMAN:**

Get lost.

**GHOST:**

Your wish is my command. I'll leave.

**WOMAN:**

So you are like one of those genis out of the bottle on that old TV show. Aren't you supposed to offer me three wishes?

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**GHOST:**

Not in my job description. Genis are in another department. I'm just the Ghost of Monies Lost. All I can do is morph into whatever you could have bought.

**WOMAN:**

(still hitting keys) Do you disappear if I win?

**GHOST:**

Hasn't happened yet.

**WOMAN:**

So what are you good at?

**GHOST:**

Figures. I can estimate well. (pauses) In the last month, you've lost the equivalent of the cost of a romantic dinner out with your husband, your grocery bill and ... a year's supply of Chanel No 5 perfume.

**WOMAN:**

He's my Ex. I'm on a diet. I can't afford that perfume, always buy fake.

**GHOST:**

Get real.

**WOMAN:**

Like the other night? I was worried about Ray. The hospital hadn't called so I kept playing. I felt that the machine owed me something because I'd put so much in. I started at 5 and then I went up to 20 and then 25 at a time. The figures didn't seem to mean anything. In five minutes I lost \$1000 I felt sick to the stomach.

**MONA:**

(nods, knowingly)

**WOMAN:**

So I went onto multiple lines. I knew if I hit one big one it would compound, and I'd get it all back in one go but I didn't. I'd try a 25 by 5 lines and it would start to make noises. What's the good of getting a free spin which can be multiplied by 300 when it doesn't

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pay out AT ALL. I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT...Next I thought it must pay AFTER the free spins...so I went up another line. And then I dropped back to one just for a few goes, and it PAID...on 1. That didn't even pay for itself. I could hear my heart beating...my blood pressure was probably rising like the poor guy the Paramedics treated. Forget his medical history. Ask about his gaming history. Instant diagnosis. Loss.

(SFX Music escalates. Jackpot noises.)

**WEI WEI:**

I'VE GOT IT. I'VE HIT THE JACKPOT I'VE MADE A KILLING...It's going up and up and up and

(Light off. Power goes off, darkness.)

**WEI WEI:**

I've lost a fortune. In a power failure.

**ATTENDANT:**

No. The back up generator will kick in soon. Machines will reprogramme to where they were.

**WEI WEI:**

I failed you at maths. What makes you think you know the answers now?

(Lights up.)

(WOMAN wanders back to machine and presses information)

**GHOST:**

You're back? Got more time to kill?

**WOMAN:**

I'm a widow now. I reckon the Pokies news killed my ex-husband.

**GHOST:**

Which news?

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**WOMAN:**

Missed the call from the hospital at first. So many beeps in here when Wei Wei made that killing. When I got to the hospital, Ray was completely out to it. For the first time I tell him about the Pokies...like a confession of how much has been lost... I reckon the news killed him because when I looked, he'd passed away.

I miss him. Once his will was settled, there was money coming to me, so I decided to invest in WORLD POKIES UNLIMITED. Fantastic profits, just as I predicted. But so boring. I missed the sound of the pokies, so I'm back.

**ATTENDANT:**

Back again M'am?

**WOMAN:**

Just investing. Until I make a killing, again.

(Blackout.)