What Happens in Scene Three?

Scene One
Dark stage except for a small area lit by a single spot upper right. The edges of the spot vaguely pick up the sitting room of a gentlemen’s club. Center of the spot, in a leather easy chair, facing stage right is a man with elegant silver hair. There is no reason to conclude he is old: just dignified, and apparently wealthy. The light, in any case, is not strong enough to reveal other than hazy details. What is clear, however, is the white, business-size envelope in his left hand, stuffed to the maximum and secured with cellulose tape. The man holds what may be a glass of wine, or more likely sherry, in the other hand. His legs are crossed at the ankles, underneath a small, rectangular coffee table.

The man on the other side of this table is standing, so that his face is above the light. He is wearing a three-piece suit, gray pinstripe. Over a slight but visible paunch, a gold watch chain loops across his vest.

No dialogue is heard in this scene, but over its twenty or so seconds’ duration, it is apparent that the man in the chair is talking, for his hands move in a gesticulatory fashion. In the final seconds, he places the envelope on the coffee table. The other man picks it up slowly. His right hand lingers at the table long enough for his ring to be obvious. The principal stone is a large ruby set in a circle of diamonds.

Start chamber music just before he picks up the envelope. Bring up music; fade to black, and hold music into Scene Two.

Scene Two
Almost immediately, a spot comes up downstage from Scene One, and somewhat stage left. The lit-up area is larger this time, but still does not pick up walls or anything that might suggest the confines of the stage.

The gray-suited man from Scene One is now standing in front of a small bar in a luxuriously appointed private library. He’s facing slightly stage left, because the bar runs upstage-downstage. The watch chain and ruby ring clearly identify him, but his face is about the light. This time, he is holding a gun with a silencer on the barrel.

The weapon is casually pointed at GEORGE FEWSTER, standing behind the bar. He’s shorter than the gunman [Note: If necessary, use altered stage floor levels to show height differential] and unlike the gunman, his face can be seen. FEWSTER’s mustache and hair are streaked with gray. He’s wearing a smoking jacket, and has just poured a drink which he places on the bar. Fade music but hold softly throughout.
GUNMAN: You’re not joining me?
FEWSTER: Hardly a celebratory occasion, wouldn’t you say?
GUNMAN: Depends on your point of view, Mr. Fewster. Now, your partner, I’m sure is quite likely enjoying a libation or two, in anticipation of the outcome of this, ah, how shall I say, event?
FEWSTER: What I don’t understand is, why didn’t you just shoot me when I came into the library? That’s what you’ve been paid to do. Why prolong the matter? Or is this some sort of perverse pleasure you have arranged for yourself?
GUNMAN: Perverse, Mr. Fewster? Surely not perverse. No, I see it as an exploration – how shall I call it? – a probing into the human spirit.
FEWSTER: You want to see how I conduct myself, knowing that I’m about to be, er….
GUNMAN: Precisely!
FEWSTER: …. perhaps to see what steps I’ll take to thwart you.
GUNMAN: Oh really, Mr. Fewster! A man of your perspicacity! Thwart me? I really do know how to use this weapon. It has served me well. And you must have deduced by now, that inasmuch as I knew the balcony doors were not locked, I also know you are alone tonight. The silencer is merely a precaution. And the drink here? Now that was just a trifle amateur, Mr. Fewster. When I leave, I’ll take it with me. DNA and all that. It is good Scotch, nevertheless. A single malt, I assume. A bit peaty for my taste, but elegant.
FEWSTER: So the conclusion here is foregone, in your opinion.
GUNMAN: Oh, without question. It’s only an issue now of assessing how you approach the inevitability of it.
FEWSTER: I see.

In a very natural move, and without looking up to note the gunman’s quick flinch, Fewster reaches under the bar for the Scotch and pours himself a drink. Then he looks up. Changed my mind. A legitimate, last-minute prerogative, I’m sure you’ll agree. By the way, have you ever given thought to examining your own motivations, Mr. …
GUNMAN: Smith will do.
FEWSTER: It usually does.
GUNMAN: When you say “motivations,” surely you’re not thinking of some trite concept like morality or ethics?
FEWSTER: Actually, I was thinking of something a touch more fundamental. Like greed.

Other than the reaction seconds before, the gunman has not moved until this point. Now he rotates slowly left then right, but only a few degrees.
GUNMAN: A reasonable ploy, sir. You were thinking of offering me a better proposition that your partner has, perhaps one of the paintings in here? I did recognize a Corot in the hallway and a Monet.
FEWSTER: There’s a Picasso in the foyer.
GUNMAN: Indeed! A Picasso! Tempting! But, you see, I lead such a peripatetic lifestyle that, well, portability is essential. Liquidity even more so. I’m sure you understand. It’s a disadvantage in my calling. Now, your partner. He would be the one to listen to such an offer, wouldn’t he? A most greedy man, as you have apparently discovered. It’s why he can’t afford to let you live.
FEWSTER: No doubt he's given you cash.
GUNMAN: A commodity for which there is no substitute.

This time the gunman does not move as Fewster reaches unhesitatingly toward a glass case at the end of the bar and removes one of several very ornate eggs. Whether it is genuine, or a replica of one of the famous bejeweled eggs made for the Russian royal family by Peter Carl Faberge’, it is incredibly beautiful.
GUNMAN: I must admit, sir, I did allow myself to examine them before you came in. Jewelry is one of my very few… They are especially exquisite, aren’t they? I, er, I’ve always wanted to hold one of them. I – goodness!

Fewster tosses the egg to the gunman, who catches it instinctively with his free hand. He raises the gun at Fewster slightly and, for what seems like an inordinately long time, examines the egg from every angle before handing it back.

A sore temptation, I admit. And I do confess to an extraordinary fondness for precious stones. But then, surely you realize I could just avail myself in any case, after we conclude here?

As Fewster delivered his next line, he turned to a wall safe behind him and opens it. The gun rises only slightly.
FEWSTER: The truly beautiful ones in my collection are in the safe here.
GUNMAN: Indeed? Perhaps there’s time – WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Continuing the fluid motion that opened the door to the safe, George Fewster sets the Peacock inside, closes the door, and twirls the dial.

GUNMAN: That was regrettable, Mr. Fewster! Almost juvenile! I’m surprised. Now open the safe, or I’m afraid I will have to fulfill my contract immediately!
FEWSTER: Come, come, Mr. Smith. Such impulsivity in a student of human behavior! If you shoot now, you’ll be missing a potentially inspiring opportunity.
GUNMAN: To what?

Fewster holds his drink to the light and examines it.
FEWSTER: To analyze your behavior over the next hour. After all, the outcome of this, er, event, is foregone, isn’t it? At the very least, you might try to examine your motivations as it proceeds. It’s just short of ten. I believe my partner’s club is open till eleven.

Immediate fade to black.

Scene Three

From the gunman’s perspective, and George Fewster’s too, there is only one way now that Scene three can play out and bring this issue to a final close.

Explain how you believe Scene Three will play out. You may choose to describe Scene Three in dialogue form or you may choose to describe what is going to happen.