

Good one

#40

BLAZE

by

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Son of a gun we'll have big fun on the bayou.

Hank Williams
"Jambalaya"

BALTIMORE 1960

A crummy saxophone plays "Ebb Tide" in the distance...

1 EXT. THE "BLOCK" - DUSK 1

A dismal row of strip clubs and bars on a street full of derelicts, sailors, and sideshow barkers. It's still early and the neon flickers to life as...

A BIG BUICK CIRCLES THE BLOCK slowly. The car hangs a looping U turn and stops at the corner. The driver is--

A 65 YEAR OLD MAN in a Panama hat and an ill fitting suit. His face is tired and his collar is askew--only his darting blue eyes reflect the life inside his tired frame. Though we don't know it yet, this is EARL K. LONG, the ex-three time Governor of Louisiana, arguably the most powerful political figure in the deep South for 25 years. He sits next to--

A STUNNING 28 YEAR OLD WOMAN with flaming red hair in a dazzling bouffant. She nervously touches up her hair. It's BLAZE STARR in the prime of her life--buxom, brassy, and fearless. They both look down the street:

P.O.V. THE BLOCK - An ominous landscape of garish neon.

EARL

Anybody gives you any trouble in there--I'll take care of 'em.

She touches his arm gently before getting out of the car.

BLAZE

I know you will, honey...

BLAZE STRIDES DOWN THE SIDEWALK - Precariously balanced on pointy heels, shimmying in a tight skirt, she heads down the block into a group of derelicts, hustlers, and drunks. A threatening jungle of low lifes. But as she shimmies down the block--people come to life.

DERELICT

Blaze!

BLAZE

Hiya, Tommy. How're ya, sweetie?

THE DERELICT LIGHTS UP as she heads down the block.

BLAZE (cont'd)

You're lookin' good...

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

TWO WINOS ON A STEP look up and recognize her.

WINO

Mish Shtarr! Where ya been?

BLAZE

Been busy, boys...kinda busy...

WINO

Show me somethin'!

BLAZE SHIMMIES AND SHAKES for the man without breaking stride. The Wino loves it.

BLAZE

How's that, you handsome hunk
o' love?

And as the bums and winos climb to their feet in her wake, she enters:

THE TWO O'CLOCK CLUB - A strip club under a clock shaped neon sign in the middle of the block.

CUT TO:

2 INT. TWO O'CLOCK CLUB - DUSK

2

TWO THUGS SIT AT A TABLE in the corner of the club which is empty save for a SAX PLAYER rehearsing on stage-- he's struggling with "Ebb Tide". Blaze marches right up to the Thugs, the owners of the club.

THUG OWNER

Miss Starr...

BLAZE

You got the papers ready?

A thick contract is placed before her. One of them opens to the right page, hands her a pen.

THUG OWNER

Aren't you gonna read it?

BLAZE

Aww, you'd never try to screw me.

SHE SIGNS THE PAPERS quickly, then reaches into her purse, pulls out a flower vase, and dumps it on the table.

STACKS OF CASH TUMBLE FROM THE VASE onto the table.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

BLAZE
And I'd never try to screw you.
(smiles)
It's all there.

ONE OF THE THUGS RISES as the other counts the cash.

THUG
Well then, Miss Starr...you are
now the proud owner of your
own strip joint.

BLAZE
I like to think of it as a theater.
Thank you.

THEY SHAKE HANDS - She picks up the contracts and
heads out of the Two O'Clock Club.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. TWO-O'CLOCK CLUB - DUSK

3

EARL IS WAITING WITH THE BUICK out front. She climbs
in and they head off.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. DREAM HOUSE - DUSK

4

The car cruises slowly along a row of quasi-antebellum
houses on a street with giant willows.

EARL AND BLAZE STUDY THE HOUSES carefully as they drive,
looking for something. Finally he stops at:

A "FOR SALE" SIGN sticks in the overgrown lawn of one
oversized house in need of some repair.

The car stops. They each get out, stare at the house.

EARL
Is this a dreamhouse?

BLAZE
Looks like one to me.

BLAZE REACHES IN THE BACK SEAT and pulls a guitar case
out. Earl reaches in the back seat and pulls out a
STUFFED BOBCAT, mounted on a board. It seems very routine
to them as they head for the house.

EARL KICKS OVER THE "FOR SALE" SIGN on the lawn, and--

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

THEY CLIMB THE STAIRS to the large front porch. He sets down his stuffed bobcat, and rights a porch chair. Blaze dusts off another old chair, and they sit down together.

And as this strange couple sits in the twilight--

EARL
Sing somethin' to me, honey...

BLAZE PULLS OUT HER GUITAR, tunes it awkwardly, briefly, and begins strumming and singing "Mockingbird Hill".

BLAZE (singing)
When the sun in the morning,
Peeps over the hill--"C" chord,
And brightens the flowers,
Round my window sill..."G" chord...

As she sings, he rocks quietly in the twilight, and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

5 Blue smoke spins lazily up from the hills of Appalachia... 5

Twelvepole Creek, West Virginia 1950

A GIRL'S VOICE struggles with a song and guitar chords...

BLAZE (BELLE cont'd)
Then my heart fills with gladness,
There's peace and good will,
You're welcome as flowers -- "D",
On Mockingbird Hill -- "G" again...

6 EXT. THE FLEMING HOUSE - DAY 6

A YOUNG GIRL sits on the porch singing, struggling with a beat-up guitar. A couple YOUNGER SIBLINGS are listening.

BELLE FLEMING, 15, is an extraordinary sight. Her hair is flaming red, her face sweet and child-like, her body that of a woman. Even at 15, she has a more than ample bosom that her simple outfit barely hides.

BELLE (cont'd singing)
Tra la la, tweedle de de day -- "G-G-G",
It gives me a thrill...

THREE CHILDREN RUN excitedly up the dirt road toward us. They are followed by an old Greyhound style bus.

CHILDREN
Belle! Belle! It's coming!

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

BELLE'S MOTHER, FANNIE, 40, appears on the porch.

FANNIE

You ready, honey?

BELLE

Ready. Gonna get me a good job
and send you half o' my paycheck
every week--take care o' everybody...

FANNIE

Baby doll...you'll be careful,
won't ya? I mean you do unnerstan'
all 'bout life, doncha?

BELLE

Momma! I'm fifteen.

FANNIE

And you're real growed up too...
but you gotta understand that
puppies and calves aren't hatched...

BELLE

I know all about boys, momma...

FANNIE

But you gotta be careful of men.

BELLE

I thought I was lookin' for a man?

FANNIE

You is. It's complicated...there's
not too many good ones out there
like yer Daddy...Ya just gotta
sort if out fer yerself, but I can
tell ya one thing--

(beat)

Never trust a man who says "trust me."

BELLE

I won't.

A SEVEN YEAR OLD BROTHER LUGS A SUITCASE out the door,
dragging it toward the road.

FANNIE

Got yer new shoes?

BELLE

They're in my suitcase.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

FANNIE
Got yer twenty-five dollars?

BELLE
(feeling her bosom)
I got everything.

FANNIE
That's what worries me.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. THE ROAD IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - DAY 7

THE OLD BUS pulls to a stop.

BELLE KISSES HER FAMILY GOODBYE and climbs on.

THE BUS RUMBLES off up the road, chased by kids and dogs. Fannie waves goodbye to her oldest daughter.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. PASSING LANDSCAPE OF THE VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 8

The bus rumbles through the Blue Ridge Mountains, out of the hollows into increasingly open landscapes.

CUT TO:

9 INT. THE BUS - DAY 9

BELLE STARES OUT THE WINDOW with fascination, while nearby:

A YOUNG MARINE STARES AT BELLE, fascinated with her own landscape. Her guitar case sits next to her.

MARINE
Where ya headin', sweet thing?

BELLE
Washington District of Columbia.
I'm looking for a job. Where
you going?

MARINE
Overseas. Goin' to Korea to
fight the Yellow Peril...

BELLE
I never heard of it.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

MARINE

I got a couple nights off in
D.C. before the boat leaves.

(no response)

I could show you the sights,
give you a place to stay...

BELLE

Well...

MARINE

Look me in the eye, honey...

She does--her face is all innocence, but her cleavage could
launch a thousand ships.

MARINE (cont'd)

Trust me.

She wants to, but her mother's words linger.

BELLE

I think not...

MARINE

Maybe we should talk things over...

THE MARINE RISES AND TRIES TO SIT next to her, but--

BLAZE NEATLY BOPS HIM ON THE HEAD with her guitar--a warning
shot across the bow. The Marine quickly retreats.

MARINE

Awright, awright, jeez...
crazy girl here...okay...

BLAZE JUST SMILES and starts to strum and hum the
only song she knows, which becomes the hit song:

Patti Page sings "Mockingbird Hill" on the radio.

CUT TO:

10 INT. CAFE - WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

10

BELLE IS IN THE KITCHEN trying to play the guitar chords
as she listens to the radio.

VOICE (O.S.)

The donuts, where's the donuts?!

Belle puts down the guitar, picks up a tray of donuts,
and heads out to the counter, coming head to head with:

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

RED SNYDER, 40, IN THE LATEST SUIT AND TIE - Sits at the counter. The fanciest guy she's ever seen. He smiles.

RED

Did I hear you playing the guitar back there?

BELLE

Yessir. I play a bit. Long as the chords is G-C-D-A.

RED

Amazing. G-C-D and A?
You ever think about getting into the entertainment field?

BELLE

Show business?

RED

How much you make here?

BELLE

Thirty dollars a week.

RED

How does thirty dollars a night sound? Plus--I'll buy you a brand new outfit.

CUT TO:

11 INT. THE QUONSET HUT CLUB - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

11

BACKSTAGE - BLAZE STANDS LIKE A CHILD in her new outfit. A white, fringed cowgirl suit with vest and boots. She's thrilled and Red touches her up, calming her down.

TWO NEARLY NUDE STRIPPERS pass. We hear boos and catcalls and raucous music from through a door.

BLAZE

What kinda place is this?

RED

It's a variety type situation we got here...they love "Mockingbird Hill"...

BLAZE

That's 'cause it's a fabulous tune.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

RED

--a fabulous tune, right,
and you need a fabulous stage
name to go with the fabulous tune.

(suddenly a poet)

Your hair is like fire...your
eyes are like the stars...

(voila)

Star Blaze--your new name.
How ya' like it?

BLAZE

It ain't me--I'd feel like an imposter.

RED

(impatiently)

Got somethin' better?

BLAZE

(slowly, proudly)

Yeah...Blaze Starr. With
two r's.

She's very pleased with herself. Red stares back flatly.

RED

Fabulous. Blaze Starr--you're
on in five minutes. Tell the
people a story.

CUT TO:

12 INT. THE QUONSET HUT STAGE - NIGHT

12

THE CURTAINS OPEN--BLAZE STANDS IN HER COWGIRL outfit
looking fresh, white, and too sweet. She begins strumming
and singing with increasing speed.

BLAZE

When the sun in the morning,
Peeps over the hill,
And brightens the flowers,
Round my window sill--

VOICES FROM THE CROWD

Take it off! Show us something, honey!

13 INT. QUONSET HUT - BACKSTAGE - Red watches Blaze struggling.
She looks at him then runs behind the curtains in a panic.

13

BLAZE

I ain't takin' nothing off!

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

RED

Sweetheart, calm down an' listen to me--it's dancing, that's all.

(beat)

Plus--with a set of honkers like that, it's got a chance to be art. You like art?

BLAZE

I like art, but...what about my singing career?

RED

You just had it. Ya need a new career.

BLAZE

You brought me here to take off my clothes!

RED

No! I thought it was a "Mockingbird Hill" crowd tonight. I was wrong.

BLAZE

They're animals out there!

RED

Animals?! Those are our fighting boys. Those young men are going off to Korea to fight the Red Peril for you and me!

BLAZE

I thought it was the "Yellow" Peril?

RED

It's both. Ya gotta realize that these boys are about to give their lives for you, Blaze. The least you can do is give 'em a little titty, eh?

(beat)

For some of 'em it'll be the last titty they ever see, honey...you being selfish?

BLAZE

No.

RED

Well then...if you don't do it for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

RED (cont'd)
 yourself, if you don't do it for
 thirty dollars a night, and if you
 don't do it for me, god damn it,
 Blaze, sweetheart...will you do it
 for our boys going off to defend
 the tired, the poor, and the huddled
 masses yearning to breathe free?

BLAZE
 I would never take off my brassiere
 in public!

RED
 Do you love America?

CUT TO:

14 INT. QUONSET HUT CLUB - ON STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

14

THE MUSIC STRIKES UP from a loud, five-piece band playing
 a sleazy version of "Mockingbird Hill". Blaze walks on
 stage stiffly. The crowd cheers.

CLOSE ON BLAZE'S FACE--Her eyes are closed in terror.

BLAZE BEGINS STRIPPING for the first time--for America. She
 takes off her cowboy hat and tosses it aside. Cheers.
 Unsurely, she wriggles out of her vest.

BLAZE UNBUTTONS HER COWGIRL SHIRT revealing her chest
 held precariously in place with a bra.

CLOSE ON BLAZE'S FACE--She peeks at the crowd.

BLAZE'S P.O.V. THE CROWD--The Fighting Boys are going
 crazy--they love her.

BLAZE SMILES SLIGHTLY and reaches to unbutton her bra,
 and as the sailors stomp and shout--

BLAZE FLINGS HER BRA into the crowd--and runs offstage.

CUT TO:

15 THE QUONSET HUT - BACKSTAGE

15

BLAZE COVERS HER CHEST and runs into the arms of Red Snyder.

RED
 Oh baby, baby--what a debut!

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

BLAZE

I felt such a rush of love and
warmth from our fighting boys...
I felt such--

RED

--respect...

BLAZE

Yeah, that's it. Respect.

Blaze pushes away from Red and slips on a robe.

RED

Honey, with the right career
management--which I'd be more
than happy to provide--you can
go all the way.

(excitedly)

The Gayety Club in D.C., the
Black Cat in Philly, Bourbon
Street. Major joints!

BLAZE

And lotsa money?

RED

Untold wealth...partner.

BLAZE

Partner?

RED

Step inside my office and we'll
work up a little contract--

16 RED SHOVES THROUGH A BEADED CURTAIN into a cramped office.

16

RED (cont'd)

--and I figure if we're gonna
be partners, we're gonna be
partners all the way.

RED TRAPS BLAZE against the wall.

BLAZE

I'm fifteen years old.

RED

With titties like that?

BLAZE

And I'm a virgin.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

SHE SLIDES OUT FROM HIS GRASP and is momentarily free.

RED

That's a problem I can take care of...

BLAZE

My momma told me there'd be men like you.

HE GRABS FOR HER - She deftly slides away.

RED

What's your problem, huh?! This morning you're dipping jelly donuts and tonight you're inspiring the national war effort. Who discovered you, eh?

BLAZE

Thank you for giving my singing career a start, Mr. Snyder...

RED

God damn it baby, trust me!

RED LUNGES FOR HER AGAIN - Again she dodges him, and this time quickly gathers her clothes and guitar.

BLAZE

I'm sorry...

BLAZE RUNS FOR THE DOOR - Out into the night, half dressed in a robe, dragging her things with her.

RED

You'll never work in show business again!

CUT TO:

17 EXT. THE TWO O'CLOCK CLUB - NIGHT - 1950

17

CLOSE ON "TWO O'CLOCK SIGN" - PAN DOWN to Blaze in her cowgirl outfit with guitar and suitcase. She surveys the club, and heads inside.

A grinding version of "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody".

THROUGH A MONTAGE OF BLAZE'S EARLY CAREER:

18 ONSTAGE--TWO O'CLOCK CLUB--a comic squirts himself in the face with a seltzer bottle. The audience is bored.

18

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- 19 BACKSTAGE--TWO O'CLOCK CLUB--Blaze sits at a sewing machine attaching sequins to her outfit. 19
- 20 BLAZE IN HER ROOM AT NIGHT--practicing in her underwear, dance moves and bumps and grinds. 20
- 21 PHOTO--BLAZE SEMI NAKED--Blaze tears out the naked portion of the photograph. 21
- 22 EXT. FLEMING HOUSE PORCH - DAY - 1951 - Blaze's mother and family pull the "innocent" picture of Blaze and a handful of cash from an envelope. They're all very excited. 22
- 23 BLAZE GETS MARRIED - 1953 - She and her unidentified husband pose for wedding pictures. The bridesmaids are all strippers. 23
- 24 WEDDING PARTY - 1953 - Her new husband stands with his arms around Blaze and another stripper. HIS HAND SECRETLY CUPS THE BREAST of the other stripper, the bridesmaid. 24
- 25 DIVORCE COURT-1955-BLAZE IN TEARS as the judge's gavel comes down. 25
- 26 BLAZE EXITS PET SHOP WITH 2 TOY POODLES on leashes-1957. 26
- 27 BACKSTAGE-BLACK CAT CLUB-1959-BLAZE pours bottles together from a chemistry set. An explosion--smoke and flames. And: 27
- CUT TO:
- 28 INT. THE BLACK CAT CLUB - ONSTAGE 28

AN EXPLOSION OF SMOKE AND FLAME as Blaze sheds another layer of her costume. The audience gasps, then applauds.

END MUSIC OVER MONTAGE AS:

A POLICE CAPTAIN, 30, CHARGES INTO THE CLUB followed by five cops and a couple reporters. The show stops. The Police Captain climbs onto the stage and flashes a badge.

RIZZO

Captain Frank Rizzo, Philadelphia Police Department...I hereby place you under arrest under authority granted me by Municipal City Code, chapter 42, paragraph 16 B--lewd and lascivious conduct in a public place.

Blaze is shocked, then tries to put her arms around him.

BLAZE

Frankie?! I thought we had an understanding?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

RIZZO

Don't call me "Frankie". Call
me Captain.

BLAZE

I didn't have to call you "Captain"
last night?

Rizzo turns to his police officers and the Press.

RIZZO

I don't know what she's talking
about. Lock her up.

Rizzo leans in close to Blaze.

RIZZO

(confidentially)
You stood me up last night.

BLAZE

I was tired...

RIZZO

(loudly)
Yeah? Tell it to the judge.

She quickly rebounds, and turns to a portly gentleman
sitting in the front row of the club.

BLAZE

Well I think I will!
(to the gentleman)
Judge Maxwell Kelly is here
tonight, a wonderful fella.
Your honor?

THEY ALL TURN TO SEE the judge in the front row.

JUDGE KELLY IS SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED but can't escape.

JUDGE KELLY

My God...

HE RISES reluctantly. Rizzo removes his hat formally.

RIZZO

Evening, sir. I think it's pretty
obvious that this woman is demented.

BLAZE

Please, your honor, does this look
like the body of a demented woman?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

BLAZE STRIKES A POSE for the Press and the crowd. A pin-up male fantasy cheesecake pose--pure fifties.

Flash bulbs everywhere. The Judge wishes he wasn't there.

RIZZO

Take her away!

HIS HENCHMEN GRAB HER and she's swept out of the building.

DISSOLVE TO:

29 INT. A PHILADELPHIA HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

29

BLAZE WRITES A LETTER in a room full of her costumes and props. Her two poodles sit on the desk--one wears a pink ribbon, the other wears a blue ribbon.

BLAZE (V.O.)

Dear Momma...

(beat)

You were right. It's not easy to find a man you can wake up next to. I'm thinking of heading down to New Orleans...it's rumored that there's a higher class of people down there, 'cause of France and all.

(beat)

Bridget and Go-Go say "hi."

BLAZE PICKS UP THE PAWS of her dogs and waves to the letter, and as she does, we hear:

Fats Domino singing "Walking to New Orleans."

DISSOLVE TO:

30 EXT. SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE - DAY

30

BLAZE IN A LATE 50'S CHEVY CONVERTIBLE - Heading south.

CUT TO:

NEW ORLEANS, 1959

31 EXT. NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - DUSK - ESTABLISHING

31

32 EXT. BOURBON STREET - THE SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

32

Hawkers, nightclubs, tourists, music, noise. A marquee reads: TAMARA KNIGHT, DELILAH DOUGH, AND BLAZE STARR at the bottom of the sign.

CUT TO:

33 INT. SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

33

A HISPANIC COMIC-EMCEE FINISHES a bad routine. JOSE, 35, the strippers' ally and an all-purpose Sho-Bar operator.

JOSE

Marriage is like a three-ring circus -- first ya got the engagement ring, then the wedding ring, then the suffering.

(the audience howls)

Okay, okay...ladeez and gen'mun... from Baltimore, Maryland, by way of the Philadelphia City Jail... Miss Blaze Starr!

The CURTAIN PARTS to reveal Blaze's basic set--a street lamp with "Passion Street" sign, a red couch, a red scarf, a table of candles, an evening bag with large powder puff, a long cigarette holder, a red light.

A drum roll, and a small band hits "Night Train" as Blaze shimmies out in a fur coat, a rosebud in her cleavage.

BLAZE

(picks out a man)

Hey, cutie -- wanta do some berry pickin' in my hills?

SHE PULLS A SPRIG OF BERRIES from her cleavage and tosses it to the man--he's delighted and embarrassed.

BLAZE (cont'd)

There's an ambulance out back, in case any of you boys have a heart attack...or a hard-on attack...did I say that? What got into me?

(bumps and grinds)

Not you, sailor...

And as Blaze discards her next level of clothing--

A GREY-HAIRED MAN MARCHES INTO THE CLUB--He's surrounded by SIX STATE TROOPERS AND TWO CRONIES. He has fire in his eyes, a hat on his head, and snorts arrogance. It's EARL K. LONG, looking more fiery than we've seen him.

EARL'S PERSONAL CHAUFFEUR, BOBBY, 25, enters with them. He carries a big camera inconspicuously, routinely.

JOSE QUICKLY CLEARS A TABLE for Earl and his men.

ONSTAGE--Blaze continues her act, glancing at the man, even addressing his group with her monologue.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

BLAZE HOLDS HER LEGS OVER THE STAGE onto a table where one of the men removes her red stocking. Blaze wraps it around the man's neck and gives it away as a souvenir.

BLAZE (cont'd)

The po-lice! I love a good cop...
and I've loved a few bad ones. 'Course,
a good cop is hard to find...and a hard
cop is better to find...You come to
bust me, fellas?

(cups her breasts)

Is this a raid? You call this lewd?

Blaze drops the bra--she's down to G-string and tassels--and shakes her tits in opposite directions. One tassel goes clockwise, the other counter-clockwise.

BLAZE HOLDS OUT A LARGE POWDER BAG for the sailor, who powders her ass. She squeals and runs off-stage.

EARL LONG RISES AND APPLAUDS WILDLY--His troopers follow suit. They all stand and smile and whistle.

CUT TO:

34 INT. BACKSTAGE SHO-BAR - NIGHT

34

Blaze is greeted by Jose.

BLAZE

Who's the guy with the cops, Jose--
we gettin' busted?

JOSE

We ain't gettin' busted--that's the
Governor--and he wants to meet you!

BLAZE

The Governor wants to meet me!

TAMARA

Honey...the Governor's met all the
girls on Bourbon Street. Dinner with
ol' Earl might be worth a fur coat.

BLAZE

To obtain such a coat, might a lady
be asked to compromise her integrity?

TAMARA

No. But a lady might be asked to
sleep with the old fart.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

BLAZE

Oh.

Music strikes up, Tamara heads out the runway, and Blaze slips on a see through wrap and a feather boa.

CUT TO:

35 INT. SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

35

EARL HOLDS COURT AT HIS CORNER TABLE--BLAZE ARRIVES. In the b.g., another stripper performs, largely ignored. Earl rises, all his troopers rise. He takes off his hat--they all do. Earl kisses Blaze's hand as a gentleman would a lady.

EARL

Miss Starr...

(beat)

Earl Kemp Long. Some calls me Earl
"unkempt" Long. You be the judge.

BLAZE

It's a great pleasure, your honor.

EARL

You got yourself some kinda show
there, girl...a pow'rful expression
o' the basic human needs.

BLAZE

I think of myself as a storyteller.

EARL

Me 'n the boys can always use a
good story...

(to his troopers)

That right, boys?

STATE TROOPERS

Oh yeah...love a story, Governor...etc.

EARL

I s'pose you heard all about me?

BLAZE

I heard you own half the Senators
and Congressmen in Louisiana.

EARL

A damned lie! I never bought a
Congressman in my life.

(beat)

I rent 'em. It's cheaper.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

Earl and his troops all laugh.

BLAZE

And that way you don't waste the taxpayer's money?

EARL

You got a fine grasp o' politics, Miss Starr.

BLAZE

I got a soft spot for politicians, I guess...

EARL

The Fine Guvnor o' the Gret Stet o' Loosiana would be honored to have one of your stockings as a souvenir.

BLAZE

Only if I can tie 'it around your neck.

EARL

Like a noose?

BLAZE

Yeah...but a pretty one.

EARL

I got enough things 'round my neck already.

BLAZE

In that case...would the Fine Governor of the Great State of Loosiana be interested in powderin' my behind?

Earl is a little taken aback--he's also intrigued.

EARL

Well damn, boys--

(slightly flustered)

I believe there's a proposal on the floor--maybe a vote would be in order...

BUT BLAZE WHIRLS and snatches the powder puff from Earl.

BLAZE

I'm sorry, Governor--I didn't think a man of your position would take so long to make up his mind--bye bye...

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

Blaze starts to leave--then stops when he speaks.

EARL

Wait! Miss Starr.

(she whirls)

Ahh'd like to see you again?

BLAZE

Well...can I trust you?

EARL

Hell, no!

BLAZE

(hesitating)

"No"? What a wonderful thing
to say!

BLAZE RUNS BACK to the dressing room, leaving Earl standing with his troopers. She turns and waves back to the Governor just before disappearing backstage. The troopers all look to Earl for a response.

BOBBY

Well, Mister Earl, what'ya think?

EARL

Boys, I got a weakness for tough minded, iron willed, independent women with big hooters.

(beat)

Let's go.

EARL WHIRLS AND LEADS them out of the club.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. THE SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

36

AS EARL AND HIS TROOPERS EXIT and head for the state car which waits in the street--

A voice interrupts.

A MAN WITH HIS OWN ENTOURAGE angrily crosses the street towards Earl. It is ARVIN MACAFEE, 45, federal congressman from Earl's home town of Winnfield.

MACAFEE

Governor! Damn it, Earl, I'm talking to you! They say you backin' that damn Nigger Rights Bill--that true?

(CONTINUED)

EARL

MacAfee you little pissant, you
a Federal Congressman--that Votin'
Rights Bill's a state matter.
Get your nose outta my business!

MACAFEE

Only reason you backin' it's cuz
they vote for you--you a God
damn nigger lover.

EARL

I don't believe you unnerstan'
the issues o' this campaign!

MACAFEE

Awright, let's talk issues!

EARL

I b'lieve you got a sister, two
cousins, and a granddaddy on
the state payroll, that right?
(MacAfee nods reluctantly)
You wanta keep your family tongue
in the public trough, you better
damn well remember who fills it
with slop! That's an issue.

MACAFEE

There's only one issue--niggers!

EARL GRABS THE MAN BY THE EARS AND BITES HIM ON THE FOREHEAD,
snarling as he does. MacAfee is shocked.

MACAFEE (cont'd)

Damn!

EARL

We got a fine State Health Care
Program case you need a rabies shot.

MACAFEE

(feeling the blood)
You bit me?

EARL

I did. And now I want you to make
a public contribution to the war chest
of Earl K. Long, the Fine Guvnor o'
the Gret Stet o' Loosiana.

(smiles)

I'll be happy to keep nibbling till
I get you down to size.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

MacAfee hesitates, looks around, then reaches into his wallet and holds out some bills for Earl.

EARL REACHES OUT AND SHAKES hand of MacAfee.

BOBBY FLASHES A PICTURE with his giant, ever-present camera--it is done effortlessly--a well-oiled routine.

EARL (cont'd)
I graciously accepts this gen'rous
contribution. You got a fine
unnerstandin' o' the issues, boy.

EARL CLIMBS IN HIS CAR triumphantly, and his state car roars out of Bourbon Street with a motorcycle escort.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. THE CAJUN ARMS HOTEL - DAWN - ESTABLISHING

37

Jose drops Blaze off and she enters a medium to low-rent hotel off the French Quarter.

38 INT. CAJUN ARMS LOBBY - DAWN - BLAZE enters, hotel clerk.

38

39 INT. BLAZE'S ROOM - DAY

39

BLAZE SITS AT A TABLE writing a "Welcome to New Orleans" postcard, surrounded by her outfits and her two dogs.

A BLACK AND WHITE TELEVISION in the corner of the room shows KENNEDY on the news.

BLAZE (V.O.)
Dear Momma...
(beat)

I think my singing career is about to take off. Tonight, for instance, I met the fine Governor of the Great State of Louisiana. He's a little older than the pretty Catholic boy running for President, but they tell me he's a real gentleman, a wonderful speaker, and even a gourmet cook...

CUT TO:

40 INT. EARL LONG'S SUITE - ROOSEVELT HOTEL - NIGHT

40

EARL HOLDS UP A SOUP SPOON at the head of a banquet table. FIVE POLITICOS and their WIVES are dressed for dinner, served by TWO BLACK SERVANTS. The main guest is a young, good looking, slickly dressed State Senator, ELDON TUCK, 35.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

EARL

Slide on into some "Chicken
ala Earl" with Vienna sausage,
ladeez and gen'mun--your tongue'll
slap your brains out...

(sees Blaze enter)

Well look't this--

THE DOOR OPENS - BLAZE ENTERS in fur and flowing taffeta,
wildly mis-dressed.

EARL (cont'd)

My friends, this is Miss Blaze
Starr, a performing artist on the
local cultural scene...

(beat)

Miss Starr, allow me to introduce
you to some of my Yes Men and their
lovely wives. J. W. La Grange and
Chester Thibodeaux here...

LA GRANGE, 40, AND THIBODEAUX, 50, RISE and acknowledge
Blaze. The wives fake polite smiles.

BLAZE

Bon soir.

LA GRANGE AND THIBODEAUX

A pleasure, ma'am...bon soir, etc.

EARL

And this here's State Senator Eldon
Tuck who I've invited here tonight in
order to show him the error of his ways.

THEY SIT DOWN and begin eating.

SEN. TUCK

We've got a tiny little problem
here, Governor--the Downstate Catholic
Democratic Regulars are having
a rough time committing to your
re-election campaign at this point--
as we all know it's illegal to
succeed yourself.

EARL

Of course it's illegal! I'm gonna
resign the day before my term ends
and my Lt. Guvnor's gonna take over
for 24 hours--that way I won't
be succeedin' myself.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

SEN. TUCK

Sorry, Guvnor, but the Senate got wind o' that and is in the process of sneakin' through a bill makin' it necessary for the Guvnor to resign 9 months before his term ends.

(beat)

They got ya this time.

EARL

Haa! Good! They shot the damn wooden duck again--they dumber than I thought.

(beat)

What I'm really gon' do is run for Lieutenant Guvnor, and on the same ticket we put up some broke down claiming horse for Guvnor--some complete hack like, say...

(motions to Thibodeaux)

...my good friend Thibodeaux here.

HE SLAPS THIBODEAUX, a crony and Long supporter who is equally shrewd and ineffective.

THIBODEAUX

Me, as Guvnor?

EARL

Well, for 24 hours.

(beat)

'Cuz the day after we win--you resign, I become Guvnor again, and everybody's happy.

(beat; proudly)

I know that ain't been done.

Everybody's quite pleased with the scheme, and Blaze turns politely to one of the wives.

BLAZE

'Scuse me...y'all know where the ladies room is?

WIFE

For whatever reason might you be needin' a "ladies" room?

BLAZE

Because I need to take a pee.

Heads turn--everyone hears, Earl smiles and points.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

EARL
 (gentlemanly)
 Miss Starr, the Ladies' powder
 room is thataway.

BLAZE SHIMMIES FROM THE ROOM--the discussion continues.

THIBODEAUX
 I'd like to be Guvnor for a day.

SEN. TUCK
 I think it's a damn good plan.
 On behalf of my constituents, we
 would be proud to commit our support
 to the fine Guvnor, Earl K. Long.
 (a toast; a condition)
 ...and we ask only one thing in return.

EARL
 What?

SEN. TUCK
 Go a little light on the nigger issue.

EARL
 I don't make deals. What the hell
 kind of a Guvnor you think I am?

CUT TO:

41 INT. THE BEDROOM

41

BLAZE COMES OUT OF THE BATHROOM and wanders through the
 bedroom studying some photographs on the wall.

CLOSE ON PHOTO - FORMER GOV. HUEY P. LONG, the "Kingfish".

A voice interrupts--Earl.

EARL
 That's mah brother, Huey.

She whirls around.

BLAZE
 Oh -- I'm sorry...

EARL
 A great man. Coulda been President
 o' the United States, but he run
 into a small problem in the State
 Capitol in 1935.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

BLAZE
What small problem?

EARL
A bullet. God rest his soul.

BLAZE
Oh. I'm sorry.

SHE PETS A LARGE STUFFED BOBCAT sitting on a table.

BLAZE (cont'd)
What's that?

EARL
Biggest bobcat ever shot in Loosiana.

BLAZE
Shouldn't kill animals.

EARL
But this is mah lucky cat.

BLAZE
Don't matter. God made it.

EARL
(defensively)
God damn, I'm sorry--I didn't know
you was one of them animal types.

BLAZE
Maybe we should go back into the other room
so people don't get the wrong idea about us.

EARL
Suit yourself, honey.

EARL SHOWS HER GALLANTLY BACK INTO THE DINING ROOM, but:

42 INT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL SUITE - MAIN ROOM

42

P.O.V OF THE EMPTY ROOM--Only the debris from the meal
remains. It's obvious that they're alone now.

BLAZE
Where'd everybody go?

EARL
Into the great Loosiana night.
(stares at her chest)
My, my...them's a coupla big
rascals ya got there, child.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

BLAZE

You talkin' 'bout my eyes?

EARL

I'm talking 'bout yer titties.

BLAZE

Oh...those...

(beat)

Now, Mr. Governor...

EARL

Call me Earl.

(beat)

Honey...you ever make love with
a Governor before?

BLAZE

Not that I know of.

EARL

I'd like you to think about it.

BLAZE

Well, I'm thinking...

EARL

Good...and while you're thinking,
lemme put my arms around ya--

HE REACHES FOR HER - His hands touch her shoulders, she
hesitates, then withdraws.

BLAZE

Oh, Earl! I don't wanna be just
like all the other girls you've had!

(beat)

I wanna be...special.

(suddenly soft)

And yet--I wanta please the
fine Guvnor of the great state
of Loosiana--

EARL

Damn.

BLAZE

I'm sorry.

(sobbing)

I feel like such a C-U-N-T.

BLAZE STARTS TO SOB and Earl leaps to her defense.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

EARL

You ain't no such thing. Now,
stop crying, honey--I lose all
perspective 'round a cryin' woman.

BLAZE

(sobbing)

I've ruined your evening.

EARL

No, no, I've sniffed around you
like a bear in heat, 'tramplin'
on your dignity, acting like a
Eye-talian gigolo or somethin'...

BLAZE

No, no, no, Guvnor, it's me,
maybe I'm just too...shy...

EARL

"Shy"?!

EARL PLUNKS DOWN ON THE COUCH - Bewildered, he sighs.

EARL (cont'd)

God damn it, you got me
spinnin', girl.

But as Earl backs off, Blaze comes on.

BLAZE

Oh Mr. Guvnor, maybe it's not too
late to have a good time--

BLAZE TOUCHES HIM GENTLY on the cheek. Earl groans.
Clearly aware that this is not an ordinary stripper.
In gentlemanly fashion, he calls a truce.

EARL

I think this evening's gone far
enough.

BLAZE SITS DOWN ON THE COUCH next to Earl. And for the
first time in the evening, neither flirts with the other.
They sit there awkwardly for a few beats.

She sighs. He sighs. The opening round is a draw.

EARL

Well, hell, girl...we can still
salvage the evening. May I ask
you a personal question?

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

BLAZE

Yessir.

EARL

Are you registered to vote?

BLAZE

Nossir. I just got to Louisiana.

HE PULLS A STACK OF PAPERS from his pockets.

EARL

Wunnerful -- sign this--

(beat)

--you definitely looks like
a Democrat to me...BLAZE SIGNS THE VOTER REGISTRATION FORM as Earl holds it.
She smiles nervously--she's never done anything like this.

CUT TO:

43 INT. BACKSTAGE SHO-BAR CLUB - NEXT DAY

43

BLAZE AND THE OTHER STRIPPERS are working on their stage
props. Blaze sews "flame strips" to her exploding couch.

TAMARA

Well, did ya get a fur coat?

BLAZE

No.

DELILAH

Whooooee...you didn't fork it over
for nothin', did ya?

BLAZE

We had a lovely dinner. I expect
there will be more lovely dinners.

TAMARA

Don't count on it, honey--the
Governor only started hanging
around Bourbon Street recently and
so far he never asked anybody
out twice.

BLAZE

Well I'm sure he's gonna call--

TAMARA

Uhuh...and so will his wife.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

BLAZE
He's married?

A VOICE SHOUTS OUT - Full of piss and vinegar.

VOICE OF EARL
Blaze Starr!

THEY ALL WHIRL - Earl is standing inside the back doorway.

HE OFFERS HER A SINGLE ROSE - A simple gesture.

EARL (cont'd)
Would a newly registered virgin
Democrat like to see how the wheels
of Guvmint are kept finely tuned?

BLAZE
(triumphantly)
She would.

CUT TO:

44 EXT. HIGHWAY IN RURAL LOUISIANA - LATER - DAY

44

CLOSE ON A PLAQUE ABOVE A BRIDGE--"Orleans Bridge--Built
by Huey Long--1929." PAN DOWN as the GOVERNOR'S LIMO races
past, ONE MOTORCYCLE in front, and ONE MOTORCYCLE in back.

CUT TO:

45 INT. THE LIMO - DAY

45

BLAZE AND EARL SIT IN THE BACK SEAT as Bobby drives. The
stuffed bobcat sits on the front seat. Earl's reading
several folded RACING FORMS.

EARL
Hey Bobby--you got bets down on
the first five races at Jefferson
Downs?

BOBBY
Yes, sir. Two dollars a piece.

EARL
How'd we do yesterday?

BOBBY REACHES IN A BAG and pulls out a handful of cash.

BOBBY
Did good.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

EARL

Haa! Here, honey--pick me a coupla winners at Hialeah...

HE HANDS BLAZE a racing form. She barely reads it.

BLAZE

I thought we was goin' to your office?

EARL

This is mah office.

BLAZE

Oh. I been askin' around, Earl... people says you married.

EARL

So they tell me.

BLAZE

Ya got a bad marriage, Earl?

EARL

You can stick a fork in my marriage. It's pretty well done.

BLAZE

Your wife don't understand ya?

EARL

My wife does understand me. That's the crux of the problem...

CUT TO:

46 EXT. A TINY RURAL GAS STATION - DAY

46

SEVERAL REPORTERS LOUNGE AROUND smoking, drinking soft drinks--they appear to be waiting for something. As--

THE GOVERNOR'S LIMO ROARS PAST - They spring to life.

REPORTER #1

There goes Earl!

They all hop in their two cars and give chase.

CUT TO:

47 INT. GOVERNOR'S LIMO - DAY

47

BOBBY NOTICES THE PRESS in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

BOBBY

'Scuse me, Mr. Guvnor, but we got
the reporters with us now...you
want me to lose 'em?

EARL

Let 'em follow us--I could use
a laugh.

BLAZE

You gon' get in trouble 'cause of me?

EARL

'Course not, honey -- I'm proud of
bein' in your company.

(beat)

But you gonna have to stay outta
sight 'till I can work up a proper
introduction.

BLAZE

That's not consistent.

EARL

Consistency's overrated.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. THE BATON ROUGE/NEW ORLEANS HIGHWAY - DAY

48

EARL'S CAR ROARS THROUGH RURAL LOUISIANA - We hear
Earl and Bobby laughing as the Press gives chase.
Blaze smiles, she didn't know politics was this fun.

CUT TO:

49 EXT. MAIN STREET OF MAGNOLIA, LOUISIANA - LATER

49

SMALL TOWN in the Deep South. The Governor's entourage
pulls up outside a rickety row of stores. Earl gets out
the Press follows, Blaze remains in a car, out of sight.
SEVERAL LOCALS sitting in front of the store come to life.

EARL

Hiya, boys.

LOCAL #1

Mister Earl! What you doin'
in Magnolia?

EARL

Came up here to invest in the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

EARL (cont'd)
 local economy--don't trust
 them damn stores in Baton Rouge
 and Nawlins...

(motions to Bobby)
 Bobby--go to it!

BOBBY LEADS THE OTHER STATE TROOPERS into the tiny store,
 carrying Earl's sack of horse racing winnings. As they
 do, a reporter speaks up.

REPORTER #1 (PICAYUNE)
 Mr. Governor, is it true you're
 still planning to back the Voting
 Rights bill against the will of
 the State Legislature?

EARL
 What paper you with?

REPORTER #1 (PICAYUNE)
 New Orleans Times Picayune.

EARL
 (nastily)
 Picayune. Mighta know'd.
 (to the locals)
 Y'all hear about the Times Picayune
 reporter who fell in a ditch with a
 hog? Stranger comes by, looks in
 the ditch and says -- "I always
 heard you could tell about a man
 from the company he keeps."
 (beat)
 So the hog got up and left.

Earl laughs, they all laugh--a ritual and one of his old
 jokes. Earl heads inside--they all follow.

REPORTER #1
 You haven't answered my question.
 Are you backin' the Votin'
 Rights Bill?

EARL
 You're with the "Picayune" eh?
 Oughta be called the "Pick-on-you"!

The locals laugh in response as Earl toys with the press.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. DOWN THE STREET - DAY

50

BLAZE SLIPS QUIETLY OUT OF THE CAR - She sees something.

P.O.V. THE "HEART O' DIXIE PETTING ZOO" - A ragged collection of worn-out animals with a handful of sad-looking exotics.

BLAZE ENTERS the "zoo".

CUT TO:

51 EXT. THE GENERAL STORE - DAY

51

EARL SEES BLAZE in the distance, but carries on, as:

THE TROOPERS START COMING OUT OF THE STORE - Their arms laden with watermelons, turkeys, hams. And Earl addresses the locals by name--J.O. and RATHBURN, each about 60.

EARL

Give one to J.O. there--

A TROOPER HANDS J.O. A WATERMELON - It seems routine.

EARL (cont'd)

--and a turkey there to

Rathburn...ohyeah...

(to the press)

My wealth spreadin' program...

BOBBY EMERGES WITH TWO CHEAP LINEN SUITS on a hanger.

BOBBY

Got a sale on suits, Governor--

EARL

Those're nice lookin'--I'll
take a couple o' those, too.

(to the press)

Give these fine boys a hand here...

THE TROOPERS HAND WATERMELONS and brooms and hams and whatever to the Press corps. As in the background--

A CAR PULLS UP - Several well dressed Black people emerge.

BOBBY

Uh, oh...trouble, Governor.

P.O.V. THE FIVE BLACKS IN SUITS HEAD toward him.
Three men, two women, dressed as if going to church.

REV. MARQUEZ

Governor...you know my son
here? And my fine staff--

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

REV. MARQUEZ'S SON, 30, nods a hello. He's all business.
The ladies in the party do likewise.

EARL
Reveren' Marquez, 'course I know
your boy. My pleasure ladies.
(they all nod)
Have a watermelon --
(shouts to the press)
Bring a couple o' them watermelons
over here!

REV. MARQUEZ
Governor, no watermelons.

EARL
Then how 'bout a turkey--Bobby,
bring a turkey over here!

REV. MARQUEZ
Don't want no turkeys either.

52 INT. GENERAL STORE - MAGNOLIA - DAY

52

EARL
Well, what do you want?

REV. MARQUEZ
(introducing his group)
This man right here's a doctor, and these
ladies here are all qualified nurses...

EARL
Congratulations.

REV. MARQUEZ
Mr. Governor...Loosiana has the
biggest state hospital system in
the United States--but there
are no coloreds working in it.

EARL
Damn shame.

REV. MARQUEZ
I promise you we will withhold our
vote for Earl K. Long...unless...
you integrate the medical staff of
the state hospital system.

It is clearly a threat and the press corps takes notice.

EARL
You try prayin'?

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

REV. MARQUEZ
We're done prayin'. Now we're
waitin' for God to do somethin'.

EARL GLANCES AT THE PICAYUNE REPORTER - The reporters all
gloat over Earl's dilemma. He looks around at the locals,
at the zoo where Blaze disappeared. Another political
dilemma--he's right at home.

EARL
You gimme about five minutes
alone--I got a feelin' God's
'bout to speak to ol' Earl...

EARL HEADS OUT BACK OF STORE - As the troopers continue
streaming out with armfuls of goods.

PICAYUNE REPORTER
They got Earl on this one. There's
no way he an integrate the hospital
and keep the segregationists happy.

BOBBY
Don't bet against it.

BOBBY HANDS THE PICAYUNE REPORTER A CHAIR and they
all head out to load up the cars.

CUT TO:

53 INT/EXT. ZOO - MAGNOLIA - DAY

53

EARL EMERGES FROM STORE and heads into back of zoo:

THE ZOO - It looks even flimsier from this side.

EARL FINDS BLAZE at a panther cage.

EARL
Miss Starr, what's the problem?

BLAZE
Lotta men like to be spending an
afternoon with me, but apparently
you ain't one of them.
(beat)
Blaze Starr will not be ignored.

EARL
We both know it would be a pow'rful
boost to your career to be seen
havin' a scandalous and lurid affair
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

EARL (cont'd)
 with a man of my position.
 (beat)
 Yet a man in public office has ta
 be discreet in his indiscretions.

BLAZE
 I am not an indiscretion. And,
 anyway, you're the one seducing me.

EARL
 No, no, girl--you the one hotter
 'n a depot stove just wonderin'
 what it would be like to make love
 with an older and mature man.

THE PANTHER LASHES OUT AGAIN--Earl jumps. Blaze coos.

BLAZE
 Calm down, baby, he can't hurt ya.
 (to Earl)
 I'd like to own a panther like this
 for my act...I got ideas.

Earl looks at her strangely, then pulls a wad of loose cash
 from his very deep pockets and waves it at a ZOOKEEPER.

EARL
 Hey, boy! Wrap this cat up and
 send it to Baton Rouge.

Blaze smiles.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. MAGNOLIA, LOUISIANA - DAY

54

THE EARL LONG ENTOURAGE ROARS OUT - Chairs, brooms, water-
 melons, turkeys, dry goods--all tied to the cars and
 flapping in the breeze.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. FRONT OF THE STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

55

EARL SHAKES HANDS WITH THE HOSPITAL DIRECTOR as the
 principle hospital staff lines up. The Press has followed
 in its now laden cars, as has the Rev. Marquez group.

EARL
 It's mah great pleasure to introduce
 an authentic show business genius
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

EARL (cont'd)
 who has graciously volunteered her
 time to drop in on the unfortunate
 sickly in hopes of bringing a little
 light to their day.

(beat)

Ladies and gen'mun...Miss Blaze Starr.

BLAZE STEPS OUT as Bobby opens the car door. The Press,
 the Hospital Staff, and Rev. Marquez and Co. just stare.

BLAZE

Hello, everybody--nice hospital.

CUT TO:

56 INT. THE STATE HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

56

EARL LEADS THE ENTOURAGE down a hallway. He stops in a
 door and waves to a roomful of bedridden WHITE PATIENTS.

EARL

Get better so you can vote
 for ol' Earl, eh?

The patients come to life and wave back weakly.

WHITE PATIENT

Howdy, Earl!

EARL

Brought ya a treat.

(to Blaze)

Go cheer 'em up, honey.

Blaze, unfazed, begins working the room.

BLAZE

Hiya, fellas...

EARL LEADS HIS CROWD down the hallway as Blaze stays
 and entertains the sick. They stir to life.

CUT TO:

57 INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY - DAY

57

EARL

What's down here?

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

Niggers.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

EARL LEADS THE GROUP down the hallway into:

58 THE BLACK WARD - He stops--his entourage stops. The room is overcrowded with black patients being tended by white doctors, nurses and orderlies.

58

EARL

This is an outrage!

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

We're a bit overcrowded, sir.

EARL

I ain't talkin' 'bout that.

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

What, then?

EARL

You got these fine white women, 'n fine white doctors, 'n fine white orderlies--an' they all waiting hand 'n foot on a buncha negrahs!

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

Yessuh.

EARL

You got white folks emptying colored bedpans?

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

Yessuh.

Rev. Marquez leans in to Earl--

REV. MARQUEZ

(aside to Earl)

Governor, you're pushing it--

EARL

You want me to get polite or you want me to get it done?

EARL GRABS THE HOSPITAL DIRECTOR by the lapels.

EARL (cont'd)

An' what're you gonna do?!

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

What'm I supposed to do?

EARL

You tell me!

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

Are you ordering me to hire a buncha
colored doctors and colored nurses?

Earl turns to the Picayune reporter who is writing this all
 down as fast as he can.

EARL

What d'you suppose this great man
 of medicine--whose contract is about
 up, I might add--should do about this
 grave problem?

(turns to Picayune)

You gettin' this down, Picayune?

PICAYUNE REPORTER

(to Hospital Director)

What're you gonna do?

The Hospital Director knows he has no chance against Earl.
 He turns to Rev. Marquez very reluctantly.

HOSPITAL DIRECTOR

I don't imagine you would have a list
 of any qualified medical personnel
 who might, as fate would have it, be
 similarly colored and unemployed?

Rev. Marquez's son produces a thick file.

REV. MARQUEZ

Here are six hundred resumes...

Earl slaps the Director on the back, playing to the reporter.

EARL

This man's a courageous, innovative,
 daring social reformer. Very
 progressive--I'm a coward next to
 him. You can quote me on that.

BLAZE SHIMMIES INTO THE ROOM--all heads turn.

BLAZE

Everybody feelin' better?

CUT TO:

59 EXT. RURAL LOUISIANA HIGHWAY - LATER

59

EARL'S LIMO AND TWO MOTORCYCLE COPS wander through the
 Louisiana countryside; the cops cut off Press Cars and Earl's
 limo goes on alone.

CUT TO:

60 INT. LIMO - RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

60

BLAZE STARES WIDE EYED at bridges, hospitals, roads, all proudly displayed by Earl.

EARL

Havin' a good time, ain't ya?

BLAZE

Wonderful.

EARL

Me an' Huey built this bridge...

(points to a road)

Built all these roads. Got more roads than cars.

BLAZE

I don't quite understand that?

EARL

Sure ya do, honey -- we gotta be prepared for the future down here. The future is coming soon.

BLAZE

I know that.

EARL

I wanna show ya something special.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. THE PEA PATCH FARM - DUSK

61

A tiny ramshackle farm in Central Louisiana, Earl's home. Earl gets out of the car proudly and opens the door for her.

BLAZE

Are we gonna visit some coloreds?

EARL

Coloreds? Damn. This is mah home. Call it the "Pea Patch".

BLAZE

Oh. Sorry.

EARL

Ah'd like to show you the inside.

He looks at her for a response. Blaze smiles.

CUT TO:

62 INT. THE PEA PATCH FARMHOUSE - DUSK

62

Not much late afternoon light gets through the curtains. Blaze peeks in the kitchen. Everything is funky and un-gubernatorial.

EARL GOES TO THE MIRROR, slaps Aqua-Velva on his face. He's a little nervous and tentative, trying to be bold.

EARL

Miss Starr...do you realize that makin' love to an older man is like partakin' in a vintage wine?...

(stares in the mirror)

Ah realize you probably never had the opportunity o' makin' love with a man o' mah power, mah clout...mah leverage...the mos' pow'rful man in the South, after all...

(beat)

So you jes' relax an' let ol' Earl take care of ya...tell me if I'm goin' too fast.

He turns around--Blaze is in his room. SHE LETS HER DRESS FALL TO THE GROUND--and stands in her underwear.

BLAZE PUCKERS HER LIPS AND COCKS A POSE - Awesome.

EARL GASPS - Her pose knocks the wind from his frame.

EARL (cont'd)

Oh mah Gawd, girl...

He props himself up on the bureau, nearly falling over.

BLAZE

You all right?

EARL GRABS FOR HIS PILLS and swallows a handful from several bottles, washing them down with a bottle of Coke he seems always to have by his side.

EARL

Ya scared me there...

BLAZE LIES DOWN ON HIS BED and pats the pillow next to her in an invitation. Earl stares--his heart races.

EARL (cont'd)

Ahh gonna take you to the land o' milk 'n honey, honey -- you never had a lover like ol' Earl!

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

He pulls off his suspenders, takes off his shirt, and drops his pants, kicking them to the side. He stands there in enormous boxer shorts, socks and shoes.

BLAZE

You like to F-U-C-K with yer shoes on?

EARL

I gets better traction that way,
but if ya find it aest'etically
unpleasant, I be happy to take 'em
off for ya.

BLAZE

Well...if ya get better traction,
ya can keep 'em on.

EARL STUMBLES TO THE BED with inelegant charm.

EARL

Tie a rope aroun' mah ankles, boys,
and jes' give it a couple yanks if
I disappear completely outta sight!

EARL PULLS A QUILT AROUND HIS SHOULDERS and climbs
on top of Blaze. For all his bluster, clearly he's
the nervous one.

BLAZE

It's okay to go slow...

EARL

Damn...

BLAZE

What's wrong?

EARL LOOKS DOWN behind the blanket. He can't get it up.

EARL

Nothing's happenin' down here.

BLAZE

Don't I do nothing for you?

EARL

Don't worry 'bout that little guy --
he's a slow starter, kinda like a
Ford.

(talks to his cock)

C'mon, boy, le's go.

(beat)

Damn.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

BLAZE

Here ya go. This always works.

SHE SHAKES HER TITS. Nothing. She takes off her bra and shakes her tits again--an awesome sight.

EARL

Once that little rascal's clicking
on all eight cylinders ya jes'
cain't stop the sumbitch.
(beat; to his cock)
C'mon, big fella...damn!

BLAZE

It's all right...

EARL

Ain't all right!
(desperately; to Blaze)
I'd fire the damn freeloader if I
could!
(to his cock)
You on the state payroll, boy--wake up!

Nothing. Earl whirls and sits on the edge of the bed. Humiliated, he runs his hands through his wild hair.

BLAZE

Sometimes, we just don't come through
like we want, Earl...don't matter.

EARL

Ahh feel Ahh owes you an apology on
behalf of mah family name and on
behalf of the Gret Stet of Loosiana.

BLAZE SITS NEXT TO HIM ON THE BED--Earl is depressed.

BLAZE

I know just what you need.

BLAZE LEANS OVER EARL and seems to be reaching for his loins, but instead reaches past him, grabbing her guitar.

DISSOLVE TO:

63 INT. EARL'S ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

63

BLAZE SINGS TO EARL--Picking out chords carefully...

BLAZE (singing softly)

Oh when the Saints go marching in,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

BLAZE (cont'd)
 Oh when the Saints go marching in,
 Lord, I want to be in that number,
 When the Saints go marching in...

Earl relaxes.

BLAZE (cont'd)
 Is this good?

EARL
 Mmm...s'wunnerful...could ya possibly
 sing somethin' without God in it...
 'cause of the particular circumstances
 of the moment, y'unnerstan'?

BLAZE
 How thoughtless of me--of course.
 You like the Fleetwoods?

EARL
 They ain't beatniks, are they?

BLAZE
 Oh no...

She begins picking out the chords to "Come Softly to Me."

BLAZE (cont'd)
 Come, come -- softly to me-e-e-e,
 Dum, dum -- softly to me-e-e-e,
 I need your kissin', a-and your
 lo-o-ove...

EARL MOANS and slides over next to Blaze, rubbing against her.

DISSOLVE TO:

64 INT. EARL'S ROOM - THE BED - LATER THAT NIGHT

64

EARL AND BLAZE FUCK AS THE FLEETWOODS SING. Earl is on top
 and moves slowly--Blaze is a handful, younger and stronger.

THEY MAKE LOVE ENDLESSLY--Until Blaze explodes in a shrieking
 orgasm, nearly throwing Earl off, who clings on for dear life.
 When she calms down, ol' Earl keeps fucking--slow and regular.

BLAZE
 Home yet, honey?

EARL
 Not yet, Miss Starr...

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

BLAZE
(amazed)
Damn...

DISSOLVE TO:

65 LATER IN THE SAME ROOM - NIGHT - They make love forever,
until:

65

BLAZE EXPLODES AGAIN, shouting and whooping. Earl hangs
on like a rodeo rider on a bucking bronco.

BLAZE
You ain't gon' have no heart
attack, are ya?

EARL
(panting)
Like a Sunday drive to ol'
Earl, honey...

Endlessly making love...

DISSOLVE TO:

66 BLAZE ON TOP - LATER - NIGHT

66

She comes again, shaking wildly over ol' Earl.

BLAZE
Didn't hurt ya, did I?

EARL
I'm beyond pain, sweetie...

Earl just keeps on fucking.

BLAZE
You amazin', Mr. Guvnor...

EARL
Ya just gotta call me Earl, honey...

As they make love all night--

DISSOLVE TO:

67 INT. THE SAME ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

67

EARL AND BLAZE ASLEEP in each other's arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

68 EXT. THE CAPITOL BUILDING IN BATON ROUGE - DAY

68

A STATUE OF HUEY LONG in front of the 34-story building.

We hear voices--angry, demanding, impatient.

VOICE (O.S.)

Where the hell is Earl?

CUT TO:

69 EXT. REAR ENTRANCE TO CAPITOL - DAY

69

The voices continue as Earl arrives in his car. He gets out and hurries inside, past several Reporters.

VOICE OF SEN. TUCK

We gotta talk some sense into him
before he flushes the Democratic
party down the crapper!

CUT TO:

70 INT. THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - THE CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

70

TEN POLITICOS PACE AROUND EARL'S OFFICE waiting for him. A map of Louisiana covers one wall. A fan blows--a muggy day. Through the scene, La Grange, Thibodeaux, and others count out money on the table. None of this business is ever referred to or explained--business as usual.

VOICE OF SEN. TUCK

I b'lieve all the fried food is
startin' to clog Uncle Earl's brain...

LA GRANGE

We just got to talk to him--he'll
understand--he ain't crazy, y'know...

EARL STRIDES INTO THE ROOM carrying an ancient briefcase overflowing with papers. The door is held by Bobby.

EARL

Start talking.

SEN. TUCK

God damn it, Earl--you got problems.

EARL

Name one.

SEN. TUCK

(knowingly)
There's a rumor circulating that you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

SEN. TUCK (cont'd)
are involved with a certain stripper
name of Miss Blaze Starr.

EARL
(staring him down)
Damned lie.

La Grange continues counting out money; Earl and Tuck
stare at each other--they both know his denial is a lie.

LA GRANGE
(calmly)
If Earl says it's a damned lie,
then it's a damned lie.

THIBODEAUX
I agree. It's a damned lie.

EARL
Thankya kindly.

SEN. TUCK
Well--that's not the real problem.

EARL
Then what is?

WILEY BRADEN, 50, a second level crony, speaks out:

BRADEN
Taxes. We got word from the I.R.S.
that they're about to crack down on
you real hard. Terrible scandal...

EARL
"Scandal"? People identify with
tax troubles. Everytime I get
audited I pick up 50,000 votes.
(beat)
I'm the most investigated man
in Loosiana history an' proud of it!

EARL'S SECRETARY, JOHNNIE MAE, 45, ENTERS with a CAJUN
COUPLE, 35, who are scared to be in this private chamber.
They are led behind Earl's desk where they place their feet
onto two of many PAINTED FOOTPRINTS ON THE FLOOR. They wait,
utterly ignored by the politicians. Business as usual.

THIBODEAUX
The Governor's right.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

EARL

Now I was led to believe we had a crisis. Whut is the problem?

Silence. The real problem.

SEN. TUCK

Earl--if you back the Nigger Rights Bill--you're gonna lose the election. I got no personal problem with the colored race, but...I'm one hundred percent for segregation.

BRADEN

I'm a thousand percent for it.

(beat)

A million per cent for it.

EARL PACES THE ROOM AND POUNDS ON A SIDE DOOR as he strides up behind his desk, next to the Cajun couple.

A SHORT, BALDING STATE PHOTOGRAPHER EMERGES from the side room with an enormous camera and positions himself.

EARL GOES BEHIND THE DESK with the couple, shouting.

EARL

What's the deal?

EARL EXTENDS A HAND and shakes hands with the couple. Flash. Johnnie Mae escorts the couple from the room, Earl continues on. The photographer heads back into his private side room.

SEN. TUCK

Next week we're going to bury the Nigger Rights Bill in the Legislature. All you got to do is shut up for one day--I know that's a tall order--and let that bill die a quiet little ol' death.

EARL

In exchange for what?

SEN. TUCK

We pull all the support we can away from Davis and Morrison and give it back to you.

Earl looks around the room. His colleagues nod in agreement.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

LA GRANGE

You's our favorite Guvnor, Earl...
and we'd dearly love to stay in
business with ya.

EARL POURS COKE ONTO HIS HANDKERCHIEF AND MOPS HIS BROW
with it, thinking over the proposition.

EARL'S SECRETARY ENTERS THE OFFICE WITH A BLACK QUARTET,
silently again, and positions them on appropriate footmarks
behind the desk. Again, nobody pays attention to them.

EARL

You all askin' for a con-fron-tation
in the Legislature?

SEN. TUCK

God's will be done, Guvnor.

Johnnie Mae stands to the side, needing Earl's attention.

EARL

You all tryin' to mix antediluvian
and I might add impractical social
attitudes with vicious, unverifiable
rumors 'bout my personal life --
(to Johnnie Mae, gentlemanly)
Yes, ma'am?

JOHNNIE MAE

Excuse me, Governor, but a Miss
Starr called. She insisted I
interrupt you to thank you for
the roses.

Earl's collar gets tighter.

EARL

That all?

SECRETARY

No.

(beat)

She says she has a surprise for you.

THE BLACK QUARTET WATCHES silently, curiously, unaware of the
issues at stake. Here comes the photographer on cue. He
flashes a picture of the quartet.

EARL SMILES LAMELY to his colleagues and mops his brow again.

CUT TO:

71 INT. BLAZE'S ROOM AT THE CAJUN ARMS - DAY

71

THE PANTHER NUZZLES UP TO BLAZE - The giant cat takes a bow on Blaze's shoulder into its mouth. It eats the bow--

AND HER CLOTHES FALL OFF - She stands smiling in a slip, and Earl sits in a chair, staring in awe.

EARL
Gawd almighty...

BLAZE
I tied a little piece of meat
to the bow--pretty good, huh?

A knock at the door. Blaze and Earl are nervous.

Blaze quickly pulls a blanket off the panther cage.

BLAZE
Get in here!

EARL CLIMBS IN THE EMPTY CAGE--She shuts the cage door and covers it with the blanket.

BLAZE ANSWERS THE DOOR--the Picayune reporter stands there.

PICAYUNE REPORTER
Miss Starr--I'm looking for Earl Long.

BLAZE
Nobody here but me and my dogs.

The panther emits a low growl from behind the door.

PICAYUNE REPORTER
(knowingly)
I'd know Earl's voice anywhere.

BLAZE
That ain't no Governor, that's a
panther.

PICAYUNE REPORTER
Well, if that's all it is, why
don't you let me see him, and I'll
be on my way.

BLAZE THROWS OPEN THE DOOR--The panther snarls and roars.

PICAYUNE REPORTER (cont'd)
Jesus Christ, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

THE REPORTER RUNS AWAY FOR HIS LIFE. Blaze bolts the door behind him and returns to the cage.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

BLAZE

Good panther. Good doggies.

She pulls the blanket off the cage. Earl sits there.

EARL

Damn Picayune. Open the door.

BLAZE

(smiles; he's trapped)

Now, where did I put that key?

EARL

Open this damn door!

BLAZE

You're kinda cute in a cage.

THE PANTHER STARES THROUGH THE BARS at the Governor.

EARL

Awright, awright--what'ya want?

BLAZE

Well...maybe you could help me
find a place to stay that's
safer than this--where the
reporters'll leave us alone?

EARL

Y'know, honey, if you ever wanted
to change jobs, I believe you could
go far in politics.

BLAZE

Well whaddya know--here's the key...

CUT TO:

72 EXT. THE FLAMINGO MOTEL - DAY

72

TROOPERS CARRY THE CAGED PANTHER into a room at a '50's
style motel on the New Orleans/Baton Rouge highway.

CUT TO:

73 INT. THE FLAMINGO MOTEL - DAY

73

EARL POURS A GLASS OF BOURBON - She's a little concerned.

BLAZE

You okay, honey? You're drinkin'
more than you used to--

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

EARL

I'm fine...

BLAZE

I'm becoming a problem for ya,
aren't I?

EARL

Now don't go pushin' me about my
problems, child...

BLAZE

A woman's got to push. No offense.

EARL

"Pushin'" I respect, but...a man
shouldn't share his problems with
a woman no how. It demeans both
sides of the equation.

BLAZE

(pulling away)

Well...I guess I just underestimated
the Fine Governor of the Great State
of Loosiana... I guess I just thought
that going to bed with a man could
mean cuddling and toasty warmth and
sharing one's innermost needs and fears...

(beat)

That's what getting naked truly means...
that's what sex truly is...y'know...
I'm sorry. It's too bad.

(sadly)

I guess you don't ever want to get
totally naked with me. I guess--

EARL

Stop!

(she does)

There is somethin' I wanta talk about.

BLAZE

Anything, honey...

Earl struggles with the words and ideas.

EARL

Whatya think about coloreds votin'?

BLAZE

Votin' for you, y'mean?

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

EARL

Preferably. But if there's a law that protects 'em, fact is, someday they might even vote for another colored.

BLAZE

Well...the Civil War's over...I think...

EARL

Would you ever vote for a negrah?

BLAZE

If they wouldn't order the police to raid my club, I would.

Earl appreciates the pragmatic answer--but there's more:

EARL

I mean...someday I believe a colored might even become Mayor--

BLAZE

Or Governor!

EARL

Damn, girl! Not so loud...

Silence. Earl's desperately trying to sort it out.

EARL (cont'd)

Sometimes I think I shoulda been born in another century when I wouldn't o' had to be so God damn enlightened...

BLAZE

Oh Earl, sit down, sweetie...

EARL

(trying to convince himself)
A politician needs votes. I'm a politician. It's simple.

BLAZE

Simple. Plus, when ya think about it, backin' the coloreds votin' right now'll probably just open the floodgates! They'll be running for everything. Won't that be amazin'?!

Earl stares--just what he wanted to hear--Earl throws down a heavy swig from a bottle of bourbon.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. REAR ENTRANCE - STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

74

EARL'S LIMO PULLS IN - Earl leaps out, charges into:

CUT TO:

75 INT. STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER - DAY

75

HE ENTERS, looks around, a bit lost. The session is crowded with volatile Senators. Sen. Tuck cuts him off--

SEN. TUCK

Earl, you shouldn't be here...

EARL

You afraid of ol' Earl?

EARL PUSHES HIMSELF FREE OF TUCK and strides into the center of the chambers and surveys the room. His presence sends waves of concern throughout the chamber.

STATE SENATOR WILLIE RAINACH has the floor. Rainach, 35, with slick black hair and a broad tie covered with Confederate flags, is in the middle of a speech.

RAINACH

The Voting Rights Bill is socialistic,
un-Christian, Communist, Liberal,
AND lousy... furthermore, it ain't
part of God's law...

Earl approaches Sen. Tuck as Rainach continues his tirade.

EARL

I would like permission to speak
on the floor o' the house, Mr. Speaker...

SEN. TUCK

Willie Rainach has the floor, Guvnor...

RAINACH

I have the floor!

EARL

An' I'm requestin' the floor for
myself!

SEN. TUCK

With all respect--there is no law
that allows the Governor to speak on
the floor of the Legislative chamber.

EARL

Then let's write us up a new law

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

EARL (cont'd)
real quick--can be done in 2-3
minutes easy, pass the sumbitch
with a voice vote...

SEVERAL LEGISLATORS START SHOUTING at Earl to sit down.

SEN. TUCK
Governor, I must ask you to leave
or declare your intentions!

EARL
My intentions don't mean a damn
thing--I'm here pushin' God's
intentions.

SEN. TUCK
Outta respect for this chamber,
I must ask you to leave!

EARL
I tell you what to respect--
every man in this room owes me
somethin'! You gotta respect that!

EARL HOOKS A SENATOR BY THE LAPEL smoothly and whispers
in the man's ear. There is no response, so he moves on.

EARL CORNERS ANOTHER SENATOR, moving now throughout the
chamber, occasionally glancing up as Rainach or some other
Senator denounces the Voting Rights Bill.

RAINACH
...an' God's law has clearly bred
intelligence into the white people
of this world for thousands of years--

EARL GRABS ONE OF SEVERAL MIKES in the room.

EARL
Looks like God clearly took a day
off wi' you, boy--

RAINACH
I have the floor.

Earl gets tougher and snarls into the mike.

EARL
That's 'bout all you got!
(playing to the crowd)
After all this is over, this boy
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

EARL (cont'd)
 Rainach here probably go up there
 to his summer cottage, get up on
 his front porch, take off his
 shoes, wash his feet, look at the
 moon an' get close to God!

Earl expects a big laugh--he gets none. Frustrated, he
 adds the moral of his story in a cackling, taunting tone.

EARL (cont'd)
 And when you lookin' at the moon
 gettin' close to God--then you got
 to recognize that niggers is
human bein's!

A hush falls over the room--Earl has gone too far. Even he
 seems to know it. The room buzzes, and--

EARL WHIRLS AND STARES INTO THE T.V. LIGHTS--The glare
 throws him off, he covers his eyes.

EARL (cont'd)
 Damn television...

EARL STAGGERS TOWARD RAINACH - Ranting and railing.

CUT TO:

76 INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM AT THE SHO-BAR - DAY

76

Blaze and Jose watch the proceedings on a black-and-white
 television. Blaze is confused. Jose is upset.

DELILAH
 Ol' Earl has flipped his wig!

BLAZE
 (defensively)
 He's always right about these
 things--just shut your mouth
 and watch.

CLOSE ON THE T.V. - SEN. TUCK GRABS a mike and tries to
 seize control.

CUT TO:

77 INT. THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER

77

SEN. TUCK TRIES IN VAIN to still the storm as Earl wanders
 around, working the room.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

SEN. TUCK

I must ask the fine Governor of
the Great State of Louisiana to
leave the premises.

EARL

Mah brother built these premises!

As Earl stops to buttonhole another Senator--

SEN. TUCK

The chair recognizes Senator Kennon.

AN AGELESS SENATOR RISES across the room.

KENNON

I'd like to place before this house
a motion for a vote on the pending bill.

A DOZEN VOICES

Second.

EARL

Bible says that before the end of
time, billy goats, tigers, rabbits,
and house cats all gonna sleep together...

Behind Earl, the SECRETARY OF THE SENATE rises to
formally read the bill as Earl desperately works the room.

EARL (cont'd)

You for me or agin' me?

No answer is his answer as the formal verbal voting begins.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Senator Alexander.

SENATOR ALEXANDER RISES TO VOTE across the room - Earl
watches hopefully.

SENATOR ALEXANDER

Nay.

EARL CHARGES FOR A MIKE, seizes it, launches in again--and as
he rants and raves, THE VOTING CONTINUES, ignoring him.

EARL

I had a uncle in ought six
got drunk one night...ol'
boy went down to the colored
quarters in Winnfield,
(MORE)

SEN. DAVIS

Nay.

SEC'Y OF SENATE

Senator Elfin.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

EARL (cont'd)
 kicked a nigger outta bed
 an' got in with the woman...
 Nigger got enraged, came
 back with a shotgun and
 killed my uncle...
 (another swig)
 Fact is--we gotta stop
 sleepin' with 'em at
 night and kickin' 'em
 in the daytime!

SENATOR ELFIN
 Nay.

RAINACH
 I would like to make a formal
 apology to the gallery and
 to the State o' Loosiana for
 the behaviour of our Guvnor--
 (beat)
 This is a sorry day for
 this proud body of state
 Legislators--

EARL STARTS TOWARD RAINACH ANGRILY and is restrained by
 several Senators.

EARL
 Willie, you nothing but a
 chicken shit yellow bellied
 cocksucker!

LA GRANGE LEANS IN AND WHISPERS to Earl with concern.

EARL (cont'd)
 I'd like to make a correction
 for the Senate Record--I called
 this boy a chicken shit yellow
 bellied sapsucker--I didn't
 call him no cocksucker--

SEN. TUCK
 If the esteemed Governor will not
 leave the room we will continue
 with the floor vote.
 (beat)
 Senator Hebert?

THE GAVEL POUNDS and the vote continues:

SENATOR HEBERT
 Nay.

SENATOR JOHNSON
 Nay.

Earl is overwhelmed by the Legislature.

EARL
 The Civil War is over, ain't you
 heard?!

CUT TO:

78 INT. DRESSING ROOM - SHO-BAR CLUB - SAME TIME

78

BLAZE IS SHAKEN--Jose sits with her; they watch silently.

CLOSE ON T.V.--The Legislative body begins jeering Earl.

BLAZE TURNS OFF THE TELEVISION--It's too painful to watch.

CUT TO:

79 INT. THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER - SAME TIME

79

ALL HELL HAS BROKEN LOOSE--Earl is blinded by the lights--he waves helplessly in the air to stop the brightness. He shouts at everybody, at everything. He steadies himself.

EARL

The future's comin', God damn it!
An' it's gonna run over all o' us!

EARL LASHES OUT AT A T.V. CAMERA as he's led off the floor by La Grange, Thibodeaux, Bobby and other cronies.

EARL (cont'd)

Get that damn thing outta here!

CUT TO:

80 INT. BLAZE'S ROOM - FLAMINGO MOTEL - NEXT NIGHT

80

EARL IN HIS UNDERWEAR--HIS HEAD IN BLAZE'S LAP - She is also in her underwear as she fans his head and mops his brow.

BLAZE

Maybe the Civil War ain't over.

EARL

I underestimated mah opposition.

BLAZE

You gonna be okay...still got me...

Earl smiles and seems to relax. Blaze continues fanning him and begins to softly hum "Mockingbird Hill". When--

CRASH - THE DOOR IS SHATTERED in a terrifying, ripping splinter of wood and suddenly--

HALF A DOZEN MEN ARE IN THE ROOM - The door's been broken down with a huge beam.

BLAZE AND EARL LEAP UP, but there's nowhere to go.

EARL

Damn Bobby musta fallen asleep!

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

A PHOTOGRAPHER STEPS INTO THE ROOM--Cameras flash.

EARL (cont'd)
Get outta here, you dirty sons of
bitches! I'll have every damn one
of you thrown in jail!

THE PICAYUNE REPORTER is there, enjoying it all. In
seconds, they are gone.

EARL PULLS A SHOTGUN FROM THE DRESSER, throws in a couple
shells, and hurries outside.

BLAZE
Earl!

But Earl has charged outside, screaming invectives.

CUT TO:

81 EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - NIGHT

81

A FLEET OF CARS PULLS OUT - Earl leaps in the back
seat of his limo, waving his shotgun.

82 INT. EARL'S LIMO - NIGHT

82

EARL
Wake up, Bobby! Huntin' season
just opened on Newspaper boys!

THE DRIVER TURNS AROUND--it's not Bobby.

EARL (cont'd)
Bobby, God damnit, where is he?!

TWO MEN IN WHITE COATS ENTER the back door of the limo.

EARL (cont'd)
Whut's goin' on?!

THE DOCTOR
You're a very sick man, Governor...

EARL
What're you--buncha damn Com'nists?

EARL TRIES TO STRUGGLE but as he does--

A LARGE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE IS JAMMED INTO HIS ASS and
the car roars away, led by the flashing lights of
a police car. And as they streak away, sirens blaring--

CUT TO:

83 EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - NIGHT

83

BLAZE STANDS IN THE DOORWAY SCREAMING into the night
as the cars disappear.

BLAZE

You can't do that to a Governor!

Then a voice. She turns--

THE PICAYUNE REPORTER stands there with a triumphant grin.

PICAYUNE REPORTER

You don't believe in a free press?

BLAZE

Me an' Earl are none of your business!

PICAYUNE REPORTER

Honey, this got nothing to
do with you.

BLAZE

Well what's it got to do with?!

PICAYUNE REPORTER

Niggers.

CUT TO:

84 MONTAGE OF NEWS HEADLINES, MAGAZINE COVERS, NEWSREELS

84

BLAZE AND EARL ON A FRONT PAGE NEWS PHOTO--SCANDAL.

ATLANTA CONSTITUTION--WOMEN AND LIQUOR DESTROY LONG.

LOOK MAGAZINE--"CLOWN, COMPLACENCY, CORRUPTION" headlines
a wild-eyed photo of Earl Long.

Headlines spin and flash, national magazines, national
papers--an old fashioned sequence of lurid revelation.

CUT TO:

85 EXT. FLAMINGO MOTEL - DAY

85

BLAZE CROSSES THE PARKING LOT TOWARD BOBBY'S CAR--Bobby,
in street clothes, holds the door open. A scarf hangs over
her face, hiding her from--

THE PRESS CORPS which assaults her with microphones,
notebooks and cameras.

PRESS

Miss Starr, Miss Starr, would you
like to comment...

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

Blaze refuses to talk and climbs in Bobby's car.

THE CAR STREAKS AWAY. The press gives chase.

CUT TO:

86 INT. BOBBY'S CAR - DAY

86

A THREE-HUNDRED POUND MAN, "DOC" FERRIDAY, 40, and Earl's frightened crony, THIBODEAUX, share the car with Blaze. Bobby drives. Doc wheezes and sweats, a physical wreck.

DOC

I'm Dr. Ferriday, Miss Starr--
Earl's personal physician.

BLAZE

They sayin' he's crazy--you
believe that?!

DOC AND THIBODEAUX

Hard to believe, ma'm...

BLAZE

Where they keeping him?

BOBBY

Up at Mandeville State Mental
Hospital...take us 'bout an hour.

CUT TO:

87 EXT. MANDEVILLE STATE HOSPITAL - LATER IN THE DAY

87

BOBBY'S CAR PULLS UP and stays off to the side. A press vigil is gathered in front, waiting, watching, as:

A HOSPITAL SPOKESMAN COMES TO A MIKE and reads a prepared statement.

HOSPITAL SPOKESMAN

Governor Long is suffering from
bronchiectasis, arteriosclerosis,
oscillatory blood pressure, an
occluded ventricle, and general
exhaustion. His condition is guarded,
he remains in intensive care...

BOBBY'S CAR GLIDES around to the back of the hospital.

CUT TO:

88 EXT. BACK OF HOSPITAL - DAY

88

BLAZE, BOBBY, THIBODEAUX AND DOC carry turkeys, hams, and watermelons through the back door of the hospital.

CUT TO:

89 INT. MANDEVILLE STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

89

TWO SECURITY GUARDS ARE LADEN DOWN with the hams, turkeys and watermelons. More of the loot sits on a counter, where Bobby, Thibodeaux and Doc remain, armed with watermelons.

PAN PAST THE TABLEAUX into:

90 INT. A HOSPITAL OFFICIAL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

90

BLAZE AND THE OFFICIAL face off.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

Under no circumstances can you see the Governor. None.

BLAZE TAKES OFF HER SCARF, shakes out her hair, and removes her dark glasses. With one simple shifting of her hips she converts to the theatrically sexual version of herself.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL (cont'd)

--and I will not be bribed by sexual favors.

BLAZE

Then, you are the sickest man in the whole damn state of Loosiana.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

Perhaps. But I am under very strict orders to protect the Governor.

BLAZE

From what?

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

From people like you.

BLAZE

Shit. I could cure everybody here in a week.

(beat)

Look, mister--I just wanta visit him...see how he's doing.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

You'll have to leave.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

She hesitates, thinks about it for a minute, and--

BLAZE

You'll find me in the back seat of
a green Chevrolet over thataway--
case you change your mind.

BLAZE HAUGHTILY WALKS OUT, gathering Bobby and her
small entourage on her arm as she does.

CUT TO:

91 INT. MANDEVILLE HOSPITAL - DAYROOM - NIGHT

91

EARL SITS WITH A MENTAL PATIENT in a roomful of 20 others
gathered haphazardly in front of a T.V. playing Gunsmoke.
They're all wearing pajamas. Earl collars one of them:

EARL

Ah got me a girlfriend.
(no answer)
She thinks I'm a gentleman.

MENTAL PATIENT

I'd like to meet her.

EARL

Ah can't introduce her to a buncha
nuts. She's a lady.
(beat)
You a Democrat?

MENTAL PATIENT

At the moment I'm without a party.

EARL

You know who Ah am?

MENTAL PATIENT

No.

EARL

I'm Earl K. Long, the fine Guvnor
o' the Gret Stet o' Loosiana.

The mental patient pats Earl on the knee patronizingly--

MENTAL PATIENT

Don't worry about it, mister --
when I got in here I thought I was
Dwight D. Eisenhower...

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

EARL
(miffed)
You don't unnerstan' a word Ah'm
saying, boy...

TWO ORDERLIES ENTER THE ROOM, spot Earl, and gather him up.

ORDERLY
You ain't supposed to be in here!

THEY DRAG EARL AWAY - He kicks and protests to no avail.

CUT TO:

92 EXT. MANDEVILLE HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - LATER - NIGHT

92

INT. BOBBY'S CAR IN THE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

BOBBY AND BLAZE SIT IN THE FRONT SEAT - The press
in the distance is disbanding its nightwatch. She's
feeling melancholic, frustrated, philosophical.

BLAZE
My momma says the hardest thing in
the world to find is a man you
can wake up happy next to. It sounds
easy, but it's not.

BOBBY
No, ma'am.

BLAZE
I feel safe with Earl.

BOBBY
Me too.

BLAZE
You think he's coming unglued?

BOBBY
No, ma'am.

Silence. She seems reassured to hear him say it.

BLAZE
You find me attractive?

BOBBY
(nervous)
Everybody does.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

BLAZE

Don't worry--I ain't gonna do nothin'.

P.O.V. THE HOSPITAL OFFICIAL APPROACHES through the lot.

BOBBY

I think he had second thoughts.

BLAZE

(watching the man approach)

The flesh is weaker than any of us
give it credit for.

As he approaches, Bobby is worried for her honor.

BOBBY

Don't do nothin' wouldn't make Earl
proud of ya. Please...

BLAZE

That camera still up there?

BOBBY

Yes.

THE MAN STICKS HIS HEAD in the car. Bobby and Blaze exchange a glance, and Bobby gets out of the car as the Official gets in.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

Let's get down to it, ma'am, I
haven't got much--My Gawd...

Blaze has her blouse off already. The man is in awe.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL (cont'd)

I seen 'em in the Sho-Bar once but
never personal and close up...

BLAZE

C'mere...

THE OFFICIAL EMBRACES BLAZE--It appears she's going through with it when, suddenly:

BLAZE WHIRLS--A CAMERA FLASHES IN THE WINDOW. The man tries to cover his eyes too late.

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

What the hell?!

BOBBY OPENS THE DOOR and pulls the negative plate from the camera and HANDS IT TO BLAZE. She holds it up for the man, and:

CUT TO:

93 INT. MANDEVILLE STATE HOSPITAL - SHORT TIME LATER

93

THE PLATE IS HANDED TO THE OFFICIAL--THE HUGE STEEL DOOR OPENS, and Blaze walks inside. Through several steel doors, past a number of serious MENTAL PATIENTS, to the final door.

GUARD

Five minutes.

CUT TO:

94 INT. EARL'S ROOM - NIGHT

94

EARL LOOKS LIKE DEATH--he sits in his pajamas on a cot. He looks frail, weak, even more disheveled than he normally does. Blaze enters. He looks up and has trouble focusing.

EARL

Who dat?!

Blaze goes over and puts her arms around him.

BLAZE

Baby, what they doin' to you?

EARL

Miss Starr?

She tries to push his hair into place--it's hopeless.

BLAZE

It's Blaze...ya don't look so good,
Earl...

EARL

Aww...they stickin' some poison in
mah system...foreign, evil stuff...

Blaze reaches into her purse and pulls out a flask of bourbon and some pills.

BLAZE

I brought ya your pills and
somethin' to wash 'em down with.

EARL

You an angel of mercy, sweet thing--
but somethin's gone terrible wrong.

BLAZE

Who'd do this to you?

EARL

Plenty o' people...plenty...
they all turnin' against me.

(CONTINUED)

BLAZE

Maybe...but you're still Governor.

EARL

Naw, I ain't...they lock me in here...

BLAZE

No! All the papers say it even--
you're still Governor till they figure
out a law to pass that says it ain't
legal to be in the nuthouse and be
Governor at the same time.

EARL

Ah'm still Governor?

BLAZE

Yeah, I swear...

EARL

Ah'm still Governor?

BLAZE

Mighty and pow'rful as ever--
for the moment at least...

Earl runs his hands through his hair, trying to make sense
of it. Some spark of life comes back into his weary eyes.

EARL

Can you help me?

BLAZE

Of course.

EARL

(slowly at first)
There's a whole buncha people I want
ya to get into mah office t'morrow --
(struggling but coherent)
One of 'em's named Cheeseborough--
he's the head of the State Hospital
System...get him...an' all the
important people workin' for him...

BLAZE

What do I tell 'em?

EARL

Tell 'em ol' Earl wanta make a deal.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - NEXT DAY

95

BLAZE, DRESSED AS HER OLD SELF--Tiny, pointy shoes, tight skirt, and bulging sweater, her red hair flying--Blaze marches in the front door of the Capitol building.

CUT TO:

96 INT. CORRIDOR IN THE CAPITOL - DAY

96

CLOSE ON SIGN ABOVE DOOR.

Dr. Jake Cheeseborough
Director--State Health Care Department

BLAZE BUTTONHOLES VARIOUS POLITICAL LEADERS beneath the sign, moving down the corridor with Earl's skill and powers of political persuasion.

CUT TO:

97 INT. EARL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME - DAY

97

CHEESEBOROUGH AND THE ENTIRE GANG OF RANKING EXECUTIVES of the State Health Care System are gathered. The Press is there as well, Earl's friends and foes alike, including Doc, Thibodeaux, La Grange, and Tuck, who watch curiously.

Earl's phone is hooked up to a crude squawk box, and his voice comes crackling through.

CHEESEBOROUGH
Hello, Governor, this is Dr.
Cheeseborough--I've got my
staff here as you requested.
(beat)
We're concerned about ya.

EARL'S VOICE
I'm sure you are...
(beat)
Ahh unnerstan' Ah'm still the actin'
Governor...

Cheeseborough surveys the room.

CHEESEBOROUGH
Well, yeah, I s'pose you is still
the Guvnor, Guvnor...

INTERCUT WITH:

98 INT. MANDEVILLE STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

98

EARL IS ON THE PHONE in the hospital official's office.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

EARL

Good, good...

(beat)

Well since you all there, I'm
ready to make a statement.

CHEESEBOROUGH'S VOICE

What is it, Governor?

EARL

You're fired.

Earl smiles.

INTERCUT WITH:

99 INT. EARL'S OFFICE

99

The room is stunned.

CHEESEBOROUGH

What'd he say?

EARL'S VOICE

You heard me. I appointed ya, I
can fire ya. Check the constitution...

CHEESEBOROUGH

Mr. Guvnor?!

EARL'S VOICE

You got twenty minutes t'get your
desk cleaned out.

(beat)

Doc Ferriday? You there?!

DOC

I'm here, Earl--

EARL'S VOICE

I imagine the newspapers is there --
ol' Cheeseborough's a clever boy --
Hey, Picayune! You there?

The Picayune reporter looks around the room.

PICAYUNE

(chagrined)

I'm here, Mr. Governor...

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

EARL'S VOICE

Good. Ah need some witnesses to this.

(beat)

Ah hereby formally announce my appointment as the new Di-rector o' the Loosiana Hospital and State Health Care System -- a fine, fine, man, dedicated public servant, wunnerful humanitarian, and a close, personal friend o' mine -- Doc Ferriday!

The room is a mixture of outrage, befuddlement and respect for ol' Earl.

Thibodeaux excitedly shakes Doc's hand in congratulations, and Doc, as if on cue, rises precariously from his chair and waddles over to the desk and telephone.

DOC

(wheezing)

Ah humbly accepts this honor, and as my first duty as State Director --

(beat)

I hereby orders the release from the Mandeville State Hospital of Earl K. Long...

(dramatically)

...the fine Governor o' the Great State o' Loosiana.

CUT TO:

100. EXT. MANDEVILLE STATE HOSPITAL - NIGHT

100

EARL KEMP LONG WALKS OUT THE FRONT DOOR of the State Hospital, through police, troopers, press and the gathering curious. He looks slightly disoriented, but there's fire in his eyes. He sees the bank of microphones--

AND EARL GRABS THE MIKE and barks to the gathered--

EARL

Ah wanta thank ya all for bein' here, 'n use this occasion to officially open my campaign for re-election.

(beat)

The people o' Loosiana can sleep tonight! Earl K. Long is back-- get outta my way!

EARL CHARGES DOWN and pushes and waves his way through the small crowd to his waiting limo.

CUT TO:

101 INT. THE LIMO - NIGHT - BOBBY HOLDS OPEN THE DOOR 101
 BLAZE IS WAITING - Earl climbs in. They kiss.
 And the limo roars away...

DISSOLVE TO:

102 MOVIEZONE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE 102

INT. DC-3 - DAY - EARL AND HIS CRONIES are seated on a crowded DC-3.

The Voice of Movietone News describe the campaign.

MOVIEZONE NEWS VOICE
 ...rocked by scandal, scarred by a
 stint in a mental institution,
 publicly linked with a strip tease
 dancer, and leader of a badly divided
 Democratic party, the powerful Earl
 K. Long fights for his political life--

Earl puts a pillow case cover from the back of the airplane seat over his head, La Grange tears eyeholes out for him, and Earl and his entourage rise to leave the plane.

EXT. DC-3 AT AIRPORT - DAY

Earl and his cronies leave the plane and fight their way to his car amidst a shoving crowd of reporters and cameramen.

MOVIEZONE NEWS VOICE (cont'd)
 Technically Earl Long is running for
 Lt. Governor on a ticket with Elton
 Thibodeaux, one of Earl's many
 associates, running for Governor...
 but there is little doubt that this
 is a lightly veiled scheme wherein
 Long can succeed himself by reclaiming
 the Governor's mansion...

SUDDENLY THE HUGE SHADOW OF A MAN waving his arms is projected across the newsreel footage, and we start hearing the full voice tirades of Earl himself.

PAN OFF THE NEWSREEL - We realize it's on a huge screen. A drive-in movie screen. PAN ACROSS parked cars at the drive-in theater, as--

103 EXT. THE DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT 103

EARL IS STANDING UP in a convertible, using the projection of light as a spotlight to both preach to the crowd and offer an alternative to the crazed newsreel Governor.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

The Fine Governor is an eerie, crazed, impressive figure in the projected, flashing light.

EARL

You gonna believe those damn pictures?! Or you gonna believe the food in your belly, the free lunches and textbooks, the fine roads...

PEOPLE IN CARS get out in disbelief and wonder, staring at Earl. Clearly, he's back.

EARL (cont'd)

Ohyeah! If I was crazy then, I'm crazy now! Christ on the cross never suffered worse than ol' Earl--not that I'm able to walk in Christ's shoes!

VOICE OF A LOCAL

Get 'em, Earl!

EARL

Fact is, my opponent won't say nothin', won't promise nothin', an' if he gets into office, he won't do nothin'! Ohyeah!

ANOTHER VOICE OF A LOCAL

What about Blaze Starr, Governor?

EARL

What about her?! One helluva woman--ya agree with me?!

Blaze shrinks down in the seat next to Earl.

EARL (cont'd)

But we ain't here to talk 'bout my private life, we here to talk 'bout the rich and the poor! We here to talk about the Bible--

DISSOLVE TO:

104 EXT. HOUMA, LOUISIANA - DAY

104

EARL PREACHES FROM THE BACK OF A PICKUP TRUCK - To a hundred people, black and white, mostly poor.

EARL (speech cont'd)

--Bible says in First Corinthians Verse 13--"and now abideth faith,

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

EARL (cont'd)
 hope, and charity--but the greatest
 of these is charity"--Ohyeah...

(beat)
 That's why we got so many "Fresh
 Water Oyster Inspectors" up here
 in this fine parish!

BLAZE WATCHES FROM THE LIMO - Out of sight, peering from
 a partially opened window. Bobby stands nearby.

A PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER SPOTS BLAZE - And pulls out a long
 lens camera. He aims it at Blaze.

CAMERA P.O.V. BLAZE ROLLS UP THE WINDOW as Bobby notices
 the photographer. Earl rails on in the b.g.

CUT TO:

105 EXT. NAPOLEONVILLE, LOUISIANA - DAY

105

EARL PREACHES FROM THE BACK OF A FLATBED TRUCK to fifty
 locals and the usual entourage of Press and Cronies.

EARL (speech cont'd)
 Some of you here 'cause you never
 seen a man fresh outta the nuthouse
 before--well do I look crazy to you?!

(beat)
 Do I? Ohyeah! You got better roads,
 schools, an' hospitals than you had
 four years ago! You like 'em?!
 Vote for this crazy Guv'nor again.
 You don't, vote for one of them
 other hoodlums!

VOICE FROM THE CROWD
 What about taxes, Earl?!

EARL
 I love 'em! An' if you like your
 old age pension, you love 'em too!

CUT TO:

106 EXT. A CITY PARK ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

106

A PHOTOGRAPHER SPOTS BLAZE in the park. Aims his camera.

CAMERA P.O.V. BLAZE AND HER TWO DOGS with a couple
 state troopers in the park.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. WINNFIELD, LOUISIANA - DAY

107

A GIANT POLITICAL RALLY in Earl's home town. The three main candidates sit on a platform--JIMMY DAVIS, the country western singer with his musical group, D'LESSEPS MORRISON, the slickly dressed Mayor of New Orleans, and Earl. Each is seated with their cronies at the back of the stage while Federal Senator Arvin MacAfee has the mike. Hot. Sweaty.

MacAFEE

I have come back from Washington
to campaign for Jimmy Davis because
this wreck of a man--
(motions to Earl sweating)
--this public embarrassment here...
this proven nigger lover, this
shameless chaser of young women,
this time honored crook, this danger-
ous thinker--when he's able to think
at all--with tendencies toward
socialism, this outrageous affront
to the people of Louisiana--
(beat)
--this last gasp of Longism...must
be defeated! Vote for Jimmy Davis!

Three hundred gathered people applaud from the street.

JIMMY DAVIS STANDS UP - A guitar around his neck. He gives his c/w group a downbeat and starts singing and playing.

JIMMY DAVIS

You are my sunshine, my only
sunshine, you make me happy...

THIBODEAUX LEANS OVER TO EARL at the back of the stage.

THIBODEAUX

I'm a big fan of Miss Starr,
Guy'nor--she's a fine woman...
(beat)
...but she's hurtin' ya.

Earl knows it's true, but would never admit it.

EARL

No such thing. My progressive
ideas is hurtin' me.

THIBODEAUX

Blaze Starr is the most progressive
idea you got, sir...but even your
home parish is running against ya.
(beat)
Look at 'em.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

P.O.V. THE CROWD - Enjoying Jimmy Davis's music.

EARL

Don't mean nothin'. The day before
an election you can't find nobody
say he's gonna vote for me--the
day after you can't find nobody
admit they voted for me...

(beat)

But in the privacy of that votin'
booth--they know what they gotta do.

CUT TO:

108 INT. A SECOND STORY WINDOW ACROSS THE STREET - DAY 108

BLAZE WATCHES FROM A NEARLY EMPTY ROOM - As the band
continues playing "You Are My Sunshine".

109 P.O.V. THE PLATFORM AS JIMMY DAVIS FINISHES his song. 109

110 THIBODEAUX GETS UP TO MAKE HIS SPEECH - He approaches 110
the microphone with false bravado.

THIBODEAUX

My name is Chester Thibodeaux and
I'm running for Governor on a ticket
with your own Earl K. Long. There's
a few remarks I'd like to make...

EARL RISES AND NEATLY SHOVES THIBODEAUX aside. He's
heard enough.

EARL

Thankya very much, Mr. Thibodeaux.
Fine speech. Make a fine Lt. Governor--
(quickly correcting himself)

--Governor--whatever ya want...

(beat)

So here I am so the fine people from
my home Parish can judge for yourself--
Do I look crazy? Huh?!

Stares from the usually loyal crowd.

EARL (cont'd)

Jimmy Davis is a fine country singer
but he ain't no damn Governor!

(turns dramatically)

And as for the Mayor of New Orleans,
ol' Dellasoups here--

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

P.O.V. MAYOR MORRISON - Beautifully dressed, great looking.

EARL (cont'd)

Look't that 400 dollar suit--
he's a pretty thing, ain't he?
A 400 dollar suit on ol' Earl'd
look like socks on a rooster!

Laughter from the crowd. Earl's off and running. And as he rants and raves and begins stirring his home crowd...

111 BACK TO BLAZE watching from the room across the street. Behind her, La Grange enters the room and approaches. He stands behind Blaze, watching Earl through the window.

111

LA GRANGE

He's a great speaker, ain't he?

BLAZE

He is...

LA GRANGE

You do realize, however, do you not, that accordin' to the polls he's running a badly beaten third behind that country singer and the pretty boy from New Orleans...

BLAZE

Earl loves to come from behind...

La Grange squirms uncomfortably.

BLAZE (cont'd)

Besides, he says I'm an asset to his campaign.

LA GRANGE

Assets are like nitroglycerin, Miss Starr--if they ain't handled properly they can blow up in your face.

BLAZE

What're you saying?

LA GRANGE

I'm saying for an asset you spend a lot of time hiding out.

(tough)

Miss Starr, for 30 years I've had one finger on the pulse of the votin' public and another in the air to see which way the wind's blowing...

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

BLAZE

Earl told me once that you all had
your fingers in the air...

(La Grange smiles)

...your thumbs up your ass, and your
tongue in the public trough. Must
be hard to walk like that.

LA GRANGE

Let's try to keep an element of
taste in this, Miss Starr. I am
as great a believer in Earl K. Long
as ever lived...I love the man...

(beat)

...but if you keep seeing him--
he'll lose.

BLAZE

But we're in love.

LA GRANGE

We're all in love...

(beat)

...am I to guess your affair of the
heart is more important than the
hungry, ill clothed, shelterless
poor white and poor colored folk
who desperately need Earl in office?

BLAZE

I deeply care about them types.
My family's among 'em.

LA GRANGE

Then I don't have to tell you about
the tired...the poor...the huddled
masses yearnin' to breathe free?

112 P.O.V. TO THE STREET - A photographer spots Blaze in the window. He turns, aims a camera up at her.

112

113 BLAZE STEPS OUT OF VIEW - She leans against a wall. Sighs.

113

CUT TO:

114 EXT. THE PEA PATCH FARM - WINN PARISH, LA - DUSK

114

EARL'S LIMO MOVES DOWN THE LONG DIRT DRIVEWAY leading his
entire entourage of police cars, campaign trucks, and cars
full of Yes Men and Cronies. The weather is overcast.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

LA GRANGE AND HIS CRONIES get out of a car and stay in the distance with the rest of the entourage, smoking, talking. Bobby carries the stuffed bobcat to the porch.

EARL GETS OUT OF THE LIMO and heads to the porch as Blaze comes out of the house to meet him. They embrace.

BLAZE

We can't go on meeting like this.

EARL

Like what?

BLAZE

With the whole world watching.

Earl can't quite figure her out, but shouts at his cronies.

EARL

Take a hike, boys!

THE CRONIES TAKE A HIKE - Wandering off down the road.

EARL (cont'd)

One great thing about havin'
cronies--you tell 'em to take
a hike...they take a hike.

TWO BLACK SERVANTS COME OUT with Earl's Wellington boots and a levi jacket. He starts putting them on.

BLAZE

We gotta talk.

EARL

First we feed the hogs. It clears
the brain.

(to his servant)

Arthur, got some boots for the lady?

THE SERVANT SORTS THROUGH A PILE OF JUNK on the porch and retrieves a second pair of boots, which she puts on.

BLAZE

It's all over, Earl.

EARL

Over hell! Mah campaign's jes'
slippin' into high gear...

EARL HEADS OVER TO THE HOG PEN - Blaze follows in her dress and boots.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

BLAZE
I mean us, Earl.

EARL
Whut?!

BLAZE
(rapid fire)
You gotta move back into the
Governor's mansion, you gotta patch
things up with your wife and all your
pals in the legislature, you gotta
be buddies with your cronies again--
(beat)
There's cryin' babies an' starvin
folks and huddled masses yearning to
breathe free--

EARL GRABS A BUCKET OF SLOP and heads into the pen full of
langorously lounging full grown hogs. She follows.

EARL
(half accusatory)
You been talking to La Grange?!
(to the hogs)
Good looking hogs, ain't they?

BLAZE
Earl, listen to me! You gotta
leave me and save your career.
I've ruined it!

EARL
(softly)
You jes' need a little Sunday drive,
tha's all...

BLAZE
Damnit Earl, I'm tellin' you we can't
see each other no more!

EARL CONTINUES THROWING SLOP to the hogs.

EARL
And I'm choosin' to ignore ya 'cause
I don't like what you're saying!

Thunder and lightning rip through the sky.

They both look up and--

CUT TO:

115 INT. THE PEA PATCH HOUSE - NIGHT

115

More thunder. And now rain. Frustration, love, anger.
Earl sets down the bobcat.

EARL

Damn it, woman, we got a future
together--after I win you can
buy your own nightclub an' we
can buy us a dreamhouse an' we
can settle down to a life o'
domestic tranquillity.

BLAZE

Your political instincts is being
clouded by the aroma of my perfume.

EARL

Come on over here an' cloud mah
instincts some more...an' quit
occupying the high moral ground--
it's frankly unbecoming.

(beat)

You fallin' outta love with me?

BLAZE

No! I love you! And if you win
we can be together again 'cause
it won't matter what people think.

EARL

What you mean "if" I win?

BLAZE

(defensively)

I mean to say "when" you win.

EARL

Would ya still love me if I was
no longer the Fine Guvnor o' the
Gret Stet o' Loosiana?

BLAZE

Would ya love me if I had little
tits and worked in a fish house.

EARL

Ain't the same.

BLAZE

Is so. You're scared.

EARL

Oh yeah.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

BLAZE
Of losing.

EARL
Of losing you.
(beat)
Y'see...me an' Huey been Guvnor
between us since before you was
born...I can't imagine wakin' up
an' not being Guvnor. whut do
people do who ain't Guvnors?

BLAZE
Things.

EARL
Things?
(beat)
If I lose, God forbid, I'll just
be one more loud mouthed old
man couldn't get re-elected--
(beat)
I'd be nuttin'!

BLAZE
You'd be the ex-Governor--that's
something.

EARL
(shouting)
I don't wanta be no ex-Guvnor! I
ain't ex-Guvnor material!

Silence. He calms down a bit.

EARL STROKES THE BOBCAT - Blaze strokes Earl's forehead.
He knows she's right--and gives in slowly.

EARL
This old stuffed bobcat is magic.

BLAZE
I like stuffed magic bobcats.

EARL
It'll take care of ya whenever we
can't be together. I want you to
take it with ya.

BLAZE
I have a saying on my wall...it's printed
on a beautiful picture of two doves
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

BLAZE (cont'd)
 flying away after a storm. It
 says--"If you love something,
 set it free. If it comes back--
 it's yours.
 (beat)
 If it don't--it never was."

EARL
 Bible?

BLAZE
 Woolworths.

Earl sighs.

BLAZE (cont'd)
 It ain't too late for a Sunday
 drive, honey...

Blaze begins unbuttoning her blouse...

And we hear "You Are My Sunshine" as the storm grows.

DISSOLVE TO:

116 INT. PEA PATCH HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

116

EARL AND BLAZE IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS - Wrapped in sheets
 and blankets, embracing to the sound of falling rain.

DISSOLVE TO:

117 INT. PEA PATCH HOUSE - DAWN

117

A cock crows outside.

BLAZE GETS OUT OF BED QUIETLY and gets dressed. She picks
 up the bobcat--it's heavier than she thought--and slips out
 the door as Earl sleeps.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. PEA PATCH HOUSE - DAWN

118

It's stopped raining. Mud and puddles everywhere. Much
 of Earl's entourage has spent the night in or around
 their cars. They look rumpled and cold around a small fire.

BLAZE AND THE BOBCAT head toward her car, precariously
 balanced in her high heels, carrying the heavy cat.

LA GRANGE AND HIS PALS WATCH - They smile victoriously.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

A PUDDLE OF MUD stands in her way. Blaze stops. Her pointy shoes begin sinking--the cronies enjoy her plight.

BLAZE LOOKS AT THE MUD PUDDLE, at her sinking shoes, at her car. Determined not to be defeated further--

BLAZE LOOKS AT LA GRANGE - He turns away uncomfortably. Her stare is riveting--she'll wait forever. She looks back at the mud puddle, then back at La Grange.

LA GRANGE REMOVES HIS OVERCOAT, goes over to Blaze, and lays it across the mud for her--as a Southern Gentleman.

BLAZE WALKS OVER THE MUD ON LA GRANGE'S COAT and never looks back. She is indomitable and utterly formidable.

CLOSE ON BLAZE - Tears run down her face...silently. She climbs into her car, and pulls away.

CUT TO:

119 EXT. APPALACHIAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

119

BLAZE STEERS HER CONVERTIBLE through the bridges and highways built by the Longs, out of Louisiana across the border into Mississippi...Tennessee...Kentucky...to:

TWELVEPOLE CREEK, WEST VIRGINIA

120 EXT. THE APPLACHIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

120

BLAZE'S CAR DROPS down into the poor coal country of Appalachia, through a company town, onto a dirt road. Dark glasses, red hair flying, scarf in the breeze--she's the most exotic thing ever seen in these hollows.

121 EXT. THE FLEMING HOUSE - DAY

121

THE FLEMING CHILDREN SEE BLAZE COMING - They run down the dirt road, shouting and hollering with excitement.

FLEMING CHILDREN

Belle! She's here! Belle's here!

BLAZE GETS OUT OF THE CAR - Wearing a mink coat. The children gather around.

HER MOTHER FANNIE APPEARS on the porch--they stare at each other.

FANNIE

You look different--but good...

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

BLAZE AND HER MOTHER EMBRACE warmly, and almost at once
Blaze bursts into tears.

BLAZE
I've gotta talk to you, Momma...
I've bungled everything!

FANNIE
Nobody bungles everything.
(pushes back for
another look)
That's quite a coat, honey...

BLAZE TAKES OFF THE MINK COAT - Hands it to her mother who
holds it up strangely.

BLAZE
I brought it for you...
(to the children)
...and I got something for
everybody!

CUT TO:

122 INT. THE "BIG ROOM" OF THE FLEMING HOUSE - LATER

122

FANNIE WEARS THE MINK COAT which is clearly worth ten times
as much as all the other Fleming property combined.

BLAZE PULLS GIFTS FROM HER SUITCASE for her younger brothers
and sisters, who gleefully open each gift.

DEBBIE
Momma says you a big singing star!

BLAZE
I'm doing okay...

DEBBIE, 15, is built like Blaze at that age--ALL THE FLEMING
WOMEN ARE BUXOM. She struggles into her new blouse and looks
admiringly at Blaze.

DEBBIE
I been practicing my singing a
and thought maybe you could maybe
introduce me to all the right
people in show business. Ya think?

BLAZE
Well, we'll see...

AND BLAZE DISTRIBUTES wrapped gifts from her suitcase to
her younger brothers and sisters.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

FANNIE

You wanta help me with supper...
and tell me all about it?

CUT TO:

123 INT. FLEMING HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

123

FANNIE IN HER MINK COAT prepares a big pot of stew. Blaze helps her, nervously trying to tell her tale.

BLAZE

(sighs)

Well...I left my boyfriend 'cause
this is a big week for him an' I
was gettin' in the way...

FANNY

You leave him for good or for
temporary?

BLAZE

That's the sort of thing I came
home to get advice about.

(beat, nervously)

Y'see...I'm not exactly a singer
in the normal use of that term...

(awkwardly)

...and my boyfriend, besides being
legally married, is a important man
in the public eye...So...the two
of us make an unusual couple...
or so I'm told...

DEBBIE BURSTS INTO THE KITCHEN with a new radio still
half wrapped. Her gift from Blaze.

DEBBIE

A radio! I never had a radio!
Momma, look! Can we listen?

FANNIE

Sure can...

BLAZE

My boyfriend's runnin' for Governor
today, Debbie...you think you can
find some election news and let us
know if they start talking 'bout
Louisiana?

DEBBIE

Sure!

CUT TO:

124 INT. FLEMING HOUSE - THE BIG ROOM - NIGHT

124

FOLLOW DEBBIE BACK TO THE BIG ROOM - She plugs in the radio and dials for news. All her brothers and sisters, putting on their new gift clothes over their old ones, gather around the radio.

FROM THE RADIO
...election results from the
South, starting with Alabama...

125 BACK TO THE KITCHEN - Blaze looks at her mother.

125

BLAZE
Aw, Momma, I don't know how to
explain it to ya but the rest of
the world is more complicated than
Twelvepole Creek...

FANNIE
(calmly)
I know. C'mere, baby...

Fannie retrieves a thick scrapbook, places it on the table.

SHE OPENS A SCRAPBOOK OF CLIPPINGS ABOUT BLAZE - The most lurid headlines, pictures of Blaze nude and semi-nude, pictures of her and Earl--SCANDAL, INSANE ASYLUM, STRIPPER.

FANNIE
I get 'em from the bus driver.
He sees 'em up in Huntington.

BLAZE IS EMBARRASSED - Perhaps for the first time.

BLAZE
Why didn't you ever say anything?

FANNIE
I didn't want to embarrass you.

BLAZE
Well...I don't know if it matters
to you...
(defensively hopeful)
But...what I do , I try to do
artfully.

Fannie turns to a lurid headline, Blaze acknowledges--

BLAZE (cont'd)
You had to be there. To understand.

FANNIE
I don't want to know the details...

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

BLAZE

You disappointed with me?

FANNIE

I would have preferred a different
profession but if this is wherein
your talent lies, then the Christian
thing to do is make the most of it.

(beat)

You love Earl Long?

BLAZE

Yes I do.

DEBBIE'S VOICE interrupts shrilly from the other room.

DEBBIE

Loosiana! Loosiana! Loosiana!

BLAZE AND FANNIE HURRY in to listen to the radio.

CUT TO:

126 INT. THE "BIG ROOM" - NIGHT

126

The Family is gathered around a radio listening to a static
filled broadcast, barely intelligible.

WE HEAR static filled news, then--

FROM THE RADIO

...in the Gubernatorial primary
from Louisiana, the winner is
New Orleans Mayor D'Lessups
Morrison, second place going
to country western singer Jimmy
Davis, third place to Willie
Rainach, and a badly beaten
fourth the curious ticket of
Chester Thibodeaux and Earl Long.

(beat)

This stunning defeat for Gov. Long
surely spells the end of the line
for the family dynasty that began...

BLAZE REACHES OUT AND TURNS off the radio.

DEBBIE

Which one was your boyfriend?

Blaze just smiles weakly.

DISSOLVE TO:

127 EXT. FLEMING HOUSE - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

127

The door squeaks open and clacks shut. Blaze emerges and heads out into the scruffy yard, joining her Mother who's feeding the chickens.

BLAZE
I prayed last night...

FANNIE
Me too...

BLAZE
Things is unclear...but I gotta be with Earl...now, anyway...

FANNIE
Then it must be the Lord's will for you to make him happy...
(beat)
Can I ask ya somethin'...personal?

BLAZE
Anything, Momma...

FANNIE
Is Earl Long crazy?

BLAZE
No he ain't--I'd swear it on a Bible...

Silence. Except for clucking chickens.

FANNIE
Then there's a Bible verse that may be of some help to you--

BLAZE
What is it?

FANNIE
"Do what you gotta do." God works in mysterious ways...

Blaze nods thoughtfully, taking it all in, as--

The rackety saxophone of Bourbon Street takes us to:

CUT TO:

128 EXT. BOURBON STREET - NIGHT

128

The sleazy hawkers and sideshow barkers, lights, tourists.

CUT TO:

129 INT. THE SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

129

A NUDE WOMAN IN A GIANT CONCH SHELL on stage. She removes a layer of sea-weed. The crowd goes wild.

130 BACKSTAGE - THE SHO-BAR CLUB - SAME TIME

130

EARL BURSTS INTO THE DRESSING room from the alley entrance. He's carrying a shotgun.

EARL

Blaze Starr! Where are you?!

Bobby hurries in, trying to restrain Earl.

JOSE

She's not here, Mr. Governor--
she went home to see her mother
a week ago! She ain't back yet!

EARL

You been carryin' on with her?!

EARL FIRES THE SHOTGUN into the room. A mirror shatters. Strippers scatter. Jose cowers in the corner of the room.

BOBBY

Governor! Please! Jose didn't
do nothin'!

JOSE

I voted for you, Mister Earl!

EARL

I need Blaze!

EARL SHOVES HIS WAY through the curtains, and suddenly, waving the shotgun, fire in his eyes, he is--

131 INT. SHO-BAR CLUB - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

131

Earl is blinded by the lights but charges onstage anyway.

THE WOMAN IN THE CONCH SHELL climbs out and runs offstage. The music stops. Earl looks around, slightly lost. The crowd is stunned as the Fine Governor stares back. And in the rear of the club, the Picayune and other reporters begin appearing.

CUT TO:

132 EXT. THE SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

132

BLAZE PULLS UP TO THE REAR ENTRANCE and runs inside at the urging of Tamara, who clearly has summoned her.

CUT TO:

133 INT. SHO-BAR STAGE - NIGHT

EARL FIRES A SHOT into the ceiling for good measure. And in his desperate raving, the heart and vision of his political beliefs is made clear.

EARL

Some people say I got whupped--
maybe I did...but I want ya'll to
understand what ya voted against!

(beat)

I believe in taxes! Taxes are
the price of civilization. They say
I invented the free lunch but the
fact is there ain't no such thing
as a free lunch!

(beat)

Lunches cost money and fire departments
cost money and roads and hospitals
cost money and somebody got to pay!

BLAZE APPEARS on the back of the runway.

EARL SPOTS THE PICAYUNE REPORTER and fires a shot
well over his head.

EARL (cont'd)

Hey "Pick-on-you"! Write this down!
Only two kinds of people in the
world--Rich and Poor. The rich
say they overtaxed. Fact is,
they undertaxed. Only way a big
oil executive can get hurt is by
tripping over a bag of money. Ohyeah!

BLAZE MOVES SLOWLY down the runway as Earl rants and raves.

EARL (cont'd)

People always investigatin' me--
they think I'm linin' my own
pockets. Money bores me! If I
get to Heaven I don't need money
and if I go to Hell the damn
stuff'll burn.

(beat)

You listen to this--I consider it
a privilege to pay for civilization!

BLAZE TOUCHES EARL who turns with a jerk to see her.

EARL (cont'd)

Whatchyou doin' here?!

BLAZE

I heard you were lookin' for me.

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

EARL
You the prettiest damn thing
I ever saw...

BLAZE
Let's go home, baby...

HE LOOKS AT HER, then back at the frightened crowd.

EARL
I love this woman...

BLAZE
Earl--we really oughta go!

EARL
(to the crowd)
You all invited to the mansion
on my last day in office to help
celebrate the last term of the
Fine Guvnor o' the Great State
of Loosiana.
(with dignity)
Under the bludgeonings of fate--
mah head is bloody but unbowed.

EARL STAND WITH BLAZE, shotgun in hand, on the runway
of the Sho-Bar Club. Proud, defiant, defeated.

CUT TO:

134 EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

134

All lit up. Cars coming and going. Music blaers from
the mansion like some drunken party, which it is.

CUT TO:

135 INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

135

Absolute chaos. The place is jammed with a mixture of
political hacks, cronies, sailors, and people off the
street. Music is blaring. Strippers from the club
are dancing on the table. One of them strips. And--

LA GRANGE IS PULLING SILVERWARE from a dresser, passing
it out to the partygoers.

LA GRANGE
...Governor wants to give a
little somethin' back to the
taxpayers...ya like this?

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

THIBODEAUX GRABS A PAINTING and offers it to a Sailor.

THIBODEAUX

Governor wants to thank you for
your support...nice picture here, eh?

EARL STANDS SEVERAL FEET AWAY with a group of cronies,
drinking but sober, letting the party get out of control.
He spots Rev. Marquez's son nearby, with some other young
blacks.

EARL

You havin' a good time there, boy!

His intentions are innocent and well meaning, but
Rev. Marquez's son flares defiantly.

REV. MARQUEZ'S SON

Governor--don't you ever call me that.

EARL

(confused)

Call you what?

REV. MARQUEZ'S SON

You know what you called me.

AND REV. MARQUEZ'S SON TURNS and walks away. Earl is
baffled. The world is starting to change on him. And--

BLAZE PUSHES THROUGH THE CROWD, finding Earl.

BLAZE

How ya doin', baby?

EARL

(staring at Marquez's son)

He's actin' funny--what's wrong?

BLAZE

Oh you know young people, Earl--

(whispering)

C'mon, let's go somewhere else...

EARL

But it's my party?

BLAZE

Naw, honey...it's their party...

EARL LOOKS AROUND - She's right. So they leave.

CUT TO:

136 EXT. THE MANSION - NIGHT

136

EARL AND BLAZE HEAD OUTSIDE where Bobby, as always, dutifully and soberly waits for them. They get in and the car roars away as carloads of partygoers continue arriving.

CUT TO:

137 EXT. TOP FLOOR OF THE STATE CAPITOL TOWER - NIGHT

137

EARL AND BLAZE COME THROUGH A DOOR onto a narrow walkway 40 floors up the tower. They stand and look out over--

P.O.V. OF LOUISIANA from the top of the Capitol. The Mississippi wanders slowly beneath them.

BLAZE

It's beautiful from up here...

EARL

Somethin', ain't it?

P.O.V. THE SPOTLIT STATUE OF HUEY LONG in the gardens.

EARL (cont'd)

That's Huey...

BLAZE

I heard people say he had his statue facing the building so that the people of Loosiana could kiss his ass. That true?

Earl smiles.

EARL

Sounds like Huey. Him and me didn't agree on everything...

(beat)

Y'know something, honey...when that sun comes up--I'm finished.

P.O.V. THE HORIZON - NIGHT

BLAZE

Maybe not...

EARL

Losin's like dying...

BLAZE

The world don't appreciate style anymore. You lost 'cause of me...

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED:

137

EARL

Naw...I lost 'cause my political
views was too futuristic...

(beat)

That and T.V. I hate T.V.

BLAZE

I like T.V.

138 P.O.V. THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT - The party continues 138
all through the night. Distant music fills the air.

139 EXT. STATE CAPITOL TOWER - JUST BEFORE DAWN 139

EARL PULLS A TINY BOX from his pocket and hands it to her.
She opens it, finding a GIANT RING.

EARL

Marry me.

BLAZE

My God...it's a monster.

EARL PUTS THE RING on her finger and gently kisses her
hand. They embrace.

EARL

Maybe we can buy us a dreamhouse
up there in your neck o' the woods--I
got lucky with the horses lately--

BLAZE

And I can buy my own nightclub, honey--

EARL

I need ya...

BLAZE

I need you too, Earl...

EARL

Maybe it's time for Ol' Earl
to become domesticated...

(beat)

Might be a humblin' experience...

P.O.V. THE SUN APPEARS ON THE HORIZON - Lighting the
river and all of Louisiana with magic.

BLAZE (cont'd)

Sun's coming up...

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

EARL

Naw, honey, it's going down...

BLAZE

Shhh, shhh...thing's gonna be okay...

EARL AND BLAZE WATCH THE SUNRISE from the top floor of the Capitol building. And when the sun is up, they turn and leave...

And we start hearing "Mockingbird Hill"...

When the sun in the morning,
Climbs over the hill,
And brightens the flowers,
'Round my window sill...

DISSOLVE TO:

Baltimore, 1960

140 EXT. THE DREAMHOUSE IN SUBURBAN BALTIMORE - DUSK

140

The "Dreamhouse" has been partially fixed up, the lawn is partly mowed, the house painted--a few months have passed. Blaze sits on the front porch alone in the late afternoon sun, softly singing "Mockingbird Hill".

BLAZE

...then my heart fills with gladness,
Da, da, da, da, dum...

SHE RISES and heads inside the house.

CUT TO:

141 INT. THE DREAMHOUSE - EARLY EVENING

141

BLAZE ENTERS AND STUDIES EARL - She hides her concern.

EARL SITS ALONE WATCHING TELEVISION - It's an odd, even disturbing sight. He looks tired. She breezes in and kisses him on the forehead.

BLAZE

Hi baby, how ya doin'?

EARL

I like this "Father Knows Best"--
damn good show...this Jim Anderson's
got a real nice family...

(beat)

You know what I think I need
here in my retirement?

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

BLAZE

What, honey?

EARL

A T.V. tray. I seen 'em advertised.
You can put food right on the damn
things.

BLAZE

(pointing to T.V.)

Oh, there's Jack!

CLOSE ON T.V. - JACK KENNEDY IN A CAMPAIGN SPOT

EARL

That pretty little ol' boy's
got a chance to beat this Tricky
Dicky guy, y'know...
(amazed)
I'm gonna actually vote for a
Cath'lic--hard to believe, ain't it?

BLAZE

They say he's a progressive thinker--

EARL

Yeah, like I used to be...

EARL RISES, stretches, howls...

BLAZE

Wanta go for a Sunday drive?

EARL

Aww, nah...think I'll get some sleep.

This isn't the old Earl and she knows it.

EARL (cont'd)

Besides, Life Magazine called up
today--said they're sending up
a coupla guys to do a interview
tomorrow and I wanta look fresh.

BLAZE

Life Magazine? That's wonderful!
What's the angle on their story?

EARL

I'm gonna suggest that it's the
story of a great thoroughbred
turned out to stud pasture in
his golden years.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

CLOSE ON BLAZE as she stands there, watching with some concern as Earl turns and heads off to bed alone.

CUT TO:

142 EXT. DREAMHOUSE - NEXT MORNING

142

TWO LIFE REPORTERS at the front door. Earl opens the door and greets them with a smile. He's "dressed up"--a big, new, baggy suit, tie, the works. He's charming and genial--uncharacteristically so.

EARL

Top o' the morning to you,
gentlemen! Life magazine?
Wunnerful. Can I show you
into our little love nest?
(extends his hand)
Earl K. Long...ex-Guvnor of
the Great State of Loosiana...

LIFE REPORTER

My pleasure, sir...excuse me, but
is Blaze Starr here?

BLAZE STEPS OUT onto the porch.

BLAZE

I'm right here, fellas.

LIFE REPORTER

Good morning, Miss Starr--we're
here from Life Magazine to do
a story about you.

CLOSE ON EARL'S FACE - It hits him like a ton of bricks. They're not here to see him. For a moment we think he's going to lash out in anger--but he recovers with grace.

EARL

Oh...of course...
(forcing a smile)
She's expecting you.

He presents her to the Reporters with great style.

EARL (cont'd)

She's a masterpiece, ain't she
boys?

BLAZE

I want Earl to be part of this
story too...

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

EARL
 No, no, no--wouldn't think of it.
 (awkwardly)
 Think I'll go...mow the lawn.

Earl wanders off and Blaze heads inside with the Reporters.

CUT TO:

143 INT. THE DREAMHOUSE - LATER - DAY

143

BLAZE FINISHES POSES for endless pictures--domestic
 cheesecake--at the stove, with a broom, etc.

PHOTOGRAPHER
 How 'bout one looking out at
 your garden, Miss Starr?

BLAZE LOOKS OUT HER KITCHEN WINDOW - She forgets all
 about the Life Reporters as she watches:

144 P.O.V. EARL LONG STRUGGLING WITH A LAWNMOWER - His coat
 is off, his hat is on. A tiny swath has been cut through
 an immense lawn. He looks terribly out of place.

144

CLOSE ON BLAZE as she studies Earl.

BLAZE
 Tell me somethin', fellas...
 when's the next national
 Election for Congress?

LIFE REPORTER
 I believe some states have
 primaries comin' up soon...why?

P.O.V. EARL LEAVES THE LAWN MOWER and heads for the garage.

BLAZE
 How 'bout Louisiana?

LIFE REPORTER
 You...uh...wouldn't be thinkin'
 'bout Earl, would ya?

BLAZE
 And what if I was?

P.O.V. EARL RETURNS TO THE LAWNMOWER with a shotgun.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

LIFE REPORTER

Well, no disrespect intended,
ma'am...but he's not exactly
deali' off the top of the deck
anymore, is he?

BLAZE

Earl K. Long is the sanest man
I've ever known.

P.O.V. EARL K. LONG BLASTS THE LAWNMOWER with the shotgun.

BLAZE (cont'd)

Interview's over, boys. G'bye.

LIFE REPORTER

But Miss Starr--

BLAZE

(tough)

Goodbye.

SHE SHUSHES THEM OUT THE DOOR and picks up a phone.

CUT TO:

145 EXT. STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - LOUISIANA - ESTABLISH - DAY

145

146 INT. LA GRANGE'S OFFICE - STATE CAPITOL - DAY

146

A smoke filled, crowded office somewhere in the bowels
of the building. Earl's cronies are lounging, playing
cards, b.s.'ing--their political futures on hold.

The phone rings--La Grange answers. His face sinks.

LA GRANGE

Hello...

(to his cronies)

It's Blaze.

(disbelief)

He wants to what?!

INTERCUT WITH:

147 BLAZE ON THE PHONE - As she watches Earl on the lawn.

147

BLAZE

Earl wants to make a comeback.

LA GRANGE

For Godsakes, what's he wanta
run for?

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

BLAZE

Well...I been told that Federal Congressman Arvin MacAfee from Winn Parish is doin' a mighty crummy job in Washington representin' the tired, the poor, an' the huddled masses yearnin' to breathe free.

LA GRANGE

MacAfee?! He owns the parish in a way that only Earl himself could truly appreciate.

(beat)

Miss Starr, please...it's all over for Earl down here...

BLAZE

Earl's ready for national politics.

LA GRANGE

Why ain't Earl makin' this call?

BLAZE

He's gettin' back in shape for his big comeback.

P.O.V. OUTSIDE - EARL SITS under a tree with a bottle.

BLAZE (cont'd)

Besides, if he wins for national office then we can both drive to work from here. It's very convenient.

LA GRANGE

My God...

BLAZE

And of course he'll be needin' your support and the support of all his ol' cronies...

LA GRANGE

Earl's been disgraced, ma'am, where'm I gonna find any of his..."cronies"?

BLAZE

Earl used to say if ya go upstate and start turnin' over rocks you'll find plenty of 'em.

LA GRANGE

I have this terrible feeling that you're serious...

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

BLAZE

If Kennedy wins, he's gonna
need some help.

(beat)

You with us or against us?

LA GRANGE

The answer is no.

BLAZE

I take that as a yes. Look
forward to seein' you fellas.

La Grange hangs up the phone and stares at the cronies.

CUT TO:

148 EXT. THE BACKYARD OF THE DREAMHOUSE - DAY

148

BLAZE HURRIES OUTSIDE to join Earl.

BLAZE

Earl, Earl, guess what?! Your
cronies just called! They desperately
want you back to run for national
office! They're beggin' for ya!

Earl is skeptical at first.

EARL

Ahhh...I'm through down there...

BLAZE

I don't wanta hear no self-pity.
It don't look good on ya...

EARL

(testing)

They want me to run for Congress?

BLAZE

Yeah! La Grange, Thibodeaux,
all of 'em!

Life is breathed back into Earl's frame. He rises
to his feet. The flames are being fanned.

EARL

They beggin' for me?

(she nods enthusiastically)

God damn it--it's about time!

Hit "Jambalaya" and head for Louisiana.

CUT TO:

149 EXT. WINNFIELD, LOUISIANA - DAY

149

EARL'S GOT NEW FIRE IN HIS EYES as he embraces Bobby and shakes hands with his cronies, all lined up in a row. Across the street he spots MacAfee with his own cronies.

EARL

Hey, MacAfee--don't get too close--I bite!

MACAFEE

Be interestin' to see how the parish warms to a socialistic, nigger lovin', woman chasin' lunatic from the mental hospital, eh?

EARL

Most of 'em say it'll be an improvement!

Earl cackles and climbs in a pickup truck. He and his entourage head out into battle.

CUT TO:

150 EXT. RURAL WINNFIELD - DAY

150

EARL PREACHES FROM THE BACK OF A WATERMELON TRUCK - But this time his political support group is small--as are the crowds at first.

POSTERS OF MACAFEE on a nearby fence.

EARL

Look't that high hat sweet
smellin' silk stocking MacAfee!
He's one of them rich types who
love to complain--so tight you
can hear 'em squeak when they
walk! They wanta cut expenses!

(beat)

Where they gonna start cuttin'?
On the spastic schools? The
dirt poor? The crippled?

(spots Picayune Reporter)

Hey "Picayune", you can start
writin' that bullshit again!
Ohyeah!

Earl's storming back into the game.

CUT TO:

151 INT. SHO-BAR CLUB IN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

151

BLAZE SHIMMIES OUT TO A LAMPPOST that reads "Passion Street", making immediate eye contact with a sailor.

BLAZE

Anchors aweigh, m'boy...

(beat)

This sailor's gonna buy me
a new fur coat and he's gonna
make me work real hard for it,
aren't ya, baby?

BLAZE PULLS A ROSE FROM HER CLEAVAGE and puts it into her mouth. She bites the petals off and blows them onto her boob, then flips them off toward a grinning man.

BLAZE (cont'd)

Who ya gonna vote for from
the 8th Congressional District?

GRINNING MAN

Gonna vote for Earl!

CUT TO:

152 EXT. THE HOLINESS CAMPGROUND IN RURAL WINNFIELD - DAY

152

EARL PREACHES IN A BRUSH ARBOR for a small crowd. These are his people. Rural, poor, God fearing--and Earl's back.

EARL

Bible says "There's not a man
in the world that's blind as
a man who don't wanta see"--

(beat)

My mother was a rock-ribbed
Baptist an' I'm a rock-ribbed
Baptist but I got my law degree
from Loyola University so I
guess that makes me part
Catholic and if ya don't like
it don't vote for me an' don't
vote for Jack Kennedy an' fact
is I had two Jewish secretaries
an' I don't give a good God
damn 'bout none o' that!

(beat)

Just ask yourself one thing--you
want that slicker representin'
you up in Washington or you
want Ol' Earl!

Though he's showing his age, he's full of fire. And the locals are stirring once again.

CUT TO:

153 INT. SHO-BAR CLUB - NIGHT

153

BLAZE ONSTAGE - She sticks her leg into the first row.

BLAZE

See if you can take this off...
I'm having such a hard time...

A MAN REMOVES HER STOCKING - She ties it around the man's neck.

BLAZE (cont'd)

I don't even have to ask who
you're votin' for...keep these
as a souvenir...vote twice!

SHE SPINS AND STRIDES DOWN THE RUNWAY - The crowd loves her and she's completely in control.

SHE REMOVES MORE CLOTHING - Down to G-string and tassels.

BLAZE (cont'd)

And some for you...little bit
for you...you don't need a
whole lot...you couldn't
stand a whole lot...

CROWD

Take it off, honey! We want
all of ya!

BLAZE

Ohhh--a roomful of Democrats!

CROWD

Earl! Earl! Earl!

DISSOLVE TO:

154 INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

154

BLAZE WRITES A LETTER TO MOMMA over some final images of Earl's congressional campaign.

BLAZE (V.O.)

Dear Momma...We postponed the
wedding again so Earl could
make a comeback...

155 EXT. DIRT ROAD NEAR WINNFIELD - DAY

155

EARL AND HIS CRONIES ARE ON FOOT passing out turkeys,
followed slowly by his vehicles, loaded down with goods.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

BLAZE (V.O. cont'd)
Most of the important people in
Louisiana don't speak to him
anymore, and the Press just laughs...

THE PICAYUNE REPORTER and a photographer snap pictures
of Earl--and Earl waves back happily. Though increasingly
exhausted, he's once again full of himself and his causes.

BLAZE (V.O. cont'd)
Don't be disappointed if he
doesn't win. He's happy, or at
least as close to happy as he gets...
(beat)
I'll be heading up to Winnfield
next week to vote. You might
pray for me...it's my first time
and I'm pretty nervous...

DISSOLVE TO:

156 EXT. WINNFIELD, LOUISIANA - DAY

156

ELECTION DAY - The town is decked with political banners
and American flags. Trucks blaring P.A. HORNS for
Long or MacAfee parade up and down.

157 MACAFEE'S ELECTION HEADQUARTERS - Arvin MacAfee and his
cronies stand on the sidewalk greeting well-wishers.

157

158 EARL LONG'S ELECTION HEADQUARTERS - An old hotel, about
as old as Earl, draped with banners and a sign:

158

"Free Watermelon with Voting Stub"

CUT TO:

159 EXT/INT. POLLING PLACE #1 - DAY

159

BLAZE LEADS FIVE OTHER STRIPPERS into the polling place,
up to a desk run by a Daughter of the Old South.

BLAZE
Here's our stubs. We're Democrats.

DAUGHTER OF OLD SOUTH
Aren't we all...
(checking registration)
You ladies are residents of the
8th Congressional District?

BLAZE
Our official address is "The Pea Patch".

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED:

159

DAUGHTER OF OLD SOUTH
Of course...

THEY ALL STARE AT THE CURTAINED BOOTHS - Slightly lost.

BLAZE
(to her friends)
This election ain't just for Earl,
y'know...it's for America. It's for--

TAMARA
--the huddled masses yearnin'
to breathe free, we know, we know...

BLAZE ENTERS A BOOTH - The other strippers try to
crowd into the same one.

BLAZE
Get your own.

They scurry off, each finding her own booth.

160 INSIDE BLAZE'S BOOTH - She looks at the machine and
consults her notes, then hollers out:

160

BLAZE (cont'd)
Find the handle next to number
nine--that's Earl.

OTHER STRIPPERS' VOICES
Okay, got it! Nine you said?

BLAZE
(nervously)
Okay...okay...now--
(beat)
Pull it down!

Ka-chunka-ta--The sound of the voting machines.

BLAZE (cont'd)
Also numbers 22, 30, 31 and every
number after 57...the whole ticket.

OTHER STRIPPERS' VOICES
Ticket? What's a ticket?

BLAZE
Just pull it down. Pull 'em all.

Ka-chunka-ta, ka-chunka-ta, ka-chunka-ta - A symphony.

161 THE GIRLS ALL EMERGE FROM THEIR BOOTHS - Proud but exhausted. They hug each other like school girls. 161

DELILAH
I never did anything like that
before in my whole life!

BLAZE
It gives you quite a feeling,
don't it?

CUT TO:

162 EXT. IN FRONT OF POLLING PLACE #1 - DAY 162

The strippers all hurry down the street looking for a drink. And Blaze heads for--

EARL STANDING NEXT TO HIS OPEN CAR DOOR - He smiles at Blaze. He looks exhausted--and pleased. They get in the car and it pulls away, followed by the everpresent carload of cronies.

CUT TO:

163 INT. EARL'S CAR - DAY 163

EARL AND BLAZE IN THE BACK SEAT as Bobby drives. Earl hands some marked racing forms up to Bobby.

EARL
Coupla horses runnin' tomorrow
up at the Fairgrounds that I like,
Bobby--get somethin' on 'em.

BOBBY
Yes, Mister Earl.

BLAZE
You look tired, honey?

EARL
Awww...I got this election
in the bag. How're things
goin' at the club?

BLAZE
Fine, I guess...there's a lotta
new pressure for me an' the rest
of the girls to...well...
(beat)
...drop our G-strings. It's
the wave of the future, they say.

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

EARL
Disgustin'.

BLAZE
Yeah...I would personally never
stoop to such a level, of course--
but there seems to be a collision
on the horizon between...well...
art and money.

EARL
Damn civilization's at the crossroads
in every department...

(beat)
Givin' the people what they want
and givin' the people what they
need is the most difficult decision
that people in public service
such as ourselves ever have to make.

BLAZE
I love you.

EARL
I love you too.

The car passes last minute campaigners on all sides. They
also pass a WATERMELON STAND draped with election bunting.

EARL
One more watermelon, Bobby.
Me an' Blaze wanta pass out
one last watermelon for good luck...

The car pulls to a stop in front of the watermelon stand.

CUT TO:

164 EXT. THE WATERMELON STAND - DAY

164

Earl, Blaze and his cronies mill around the melons.

EARL
This looks like a dandy...

EARL THUMPS AND PICKS UP A WATERMELON - He can barely
lift the giant melon, but nobody pays attention.

BLAZE
(quietly, to La Grange)
How's Earl doin'?

(CONTINUED)

164 CONTINUED:

164

LA GRANGE

The newspaper hates him, MacAfee
produced proof of Earl's tax
problems, the state Democratic
machine didn't give Earl a nickel,
and the opinion polls got him behind
by twenty points...

(smiles)

Things are looking pretty good.

SMASH - THE WATERMELON CRASHES TO THE GROUND and splatters.
A groan of pain, and everybody whirls to see:

EARL LYING ON THE GROUND - In deep pain, still conscious,
he clutches himself desperately. They rush to his help.

BLAZE

Earl!

DOC

What is it, Earl?! Governor?!

Earl struggles to talk, for the first time in his life.

EARL

(holding his heart)

Bad chili for breakfast...tha's all...

DOC

It's his heart. Take these!

DOC PULLS A HANDFUL of pills from his pocket and somebody
produces a coke. He shovels them all down.

BLAZE

You gotta get some help, baby!

LA GRANGE

We gotta get him to the hospital.

EARL

If you take me to the hospital I'll
fire all of ya...

DOC

Somebody call an ambulance.

EARL

(speaking with difficulty)

God damn it! I'm okay...if I'm
in the hospital it could mislead
the public into thinkin'--I ain't
fit for office.

(CONTINUED)

164 CONTINUED:

164

The cronies discuss the situation briefly.

THIBODEAUX

You need to go to the hospital, Earl.

EARL

Honey, tell 'em where I gotta go.

LA GRANGE

He'll listen to you, Blaze, tell him he has to go to the hospital!

THEY ALL TURN TO BLAZE for guidance. She's scared.

BLAZE

Earl says he wants to go to the hotel--then take him to the hotel.

DOC

Miss Starr!

BLAZE

He's right, y'know. If he wins he'll fire all of ya.

Earl manages a tiny smile. And the cronies lift him up.

CUT TO:

165 INT. THE HOTEL LOBBY - SHORT TIME LATER - DUSK

165

EARL, UP RIGHT, IS CARRIED into the hotel by the cronies. A hat is propped on his head as he tries weakly to wave to his supporters.

166 THEY CARRY EARL INTO HIS CAMPAIGN OFFICE facing the street off the lobby. He's propped upright in his chair. A wet rag is placed on his forehead. Doc takes his pulse as his cronies hover helplessly around.

166

BOBBY CARRIES THE BOBCAT into the room and places on a shelf next to an old Elk's Head and a Stuffed Leaping Trout.

BLAZE

How ya doin', baby, ya okay?

EARL NODS - Raises his hand. He wants to speak. Silence.

EARL

We gettin' a good turnout up in Goldonna?

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED:

166

THIBODEAUX

We're checking it for ya, Earl--
now you just get some rest.

EARL

East of the river there's a guy--
what's his name?

BLAZE

Joe Lee Jackson...

EARL

Yeah...he owes me...

Earl can barely speak, so Blaze starts finishing his sentences and his thoughts.

BLAZE

He owes Earl a favor...Earl wants
you to call him up and get him to
send out his trucks to pick up
voters and take 'em to the polls--
I know, we did this before...

(to Earl)

Everything's gonna be alright....

LA GRANGE

(to his own crony)

Call him up.

THE LOW LEVEL CRONY HURRIES from the room at once.

BLAZE

And there's a couple guys that own
a gravel company up in Chatham that
came into the Sho-Bar last week--
look 'em up and make sure they voted.
(beat)

Make sure their wives and girlfriends
voted too.

CUT TO:

167 EXT. THE STREET - DUSK

167

THE PICAYUNE REPORTER stands with several other reporters
watching from across the street.

P.O.V. THROUGH THE WINDOW into Earl's office. The crowd
gathered around Earl looks strangely suspicious.

PICAYUNE REPORTER

Things look okay to you?

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

167

PHOTOGRAPHER

Kinda hard to tell with Earl, ain't it?

THE PHOTOGRAPHER RAISES HIS CAMERA to snap off a picture when one of Earl's cronies pulls the blinds, shutting him off from the street.

THE REPORTER AND PHOTOGRAPHER head toward the hotel.

CUT TO:

168 INT. EARL'S OFFICE - DUSK

168

A flurry of activity around Earl as they continue trying to get out the vote.

EARL

What time's it?

LA GRANGE

'Bout five...

EARL

Polls still...

(nearly losing his breath)
...open.

BLAZE

(to cronies)

Then get out there and do somethin'!

THE CRONIES HURRY OUT - Leaving Blaze and Earl alone.
Without the crowd, Earl tells her the truth.

EARL

(touches his heart)

It's my ticker.

BLAZE

(she knows she's lying)

Oh Earl...it ain't your heart...
you just gotta stop eatin' chili
for breakfast...

(beat)

Now after we get married I'm
gonna start makin' you some
good, healthy breakfasts so you
can be full of energy when you
go down to Congress everyday...

The words don't matter and they both know it. It's
the talking that keeps them connected.

CUT TO:

169 INT. THE HOTEL LOBBY - DUSK

169

A flurry of activity from Earl's supporters, on the phones, running hams, watermelons and turkeys in and out, a last ditch effort to get out the vote.

CUT TO:

170 EXT. POLLING PLACE #2 - GAS STATION - CLOSING DOWN - DUSK

170

171 EXT. POLLING PLACE #3 - BAPTIST CHURCH-TAKES IN FLAG - DUSK

171

172 EXT. POLLING PLACE #4 - BARBER SHOP - PULLS SHADES - DUSK

172

CUT TO:

173 INT. EARL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

173

DOC ENTERS AND BRINGS SOME MORE PILLS to Earl. Blaze helps him take them.

DOC

Polls closin', Earl...I bet ol' MacAfee's scared to death, eh? Let's lie you down on the couch here...

DOC AND BLAZE HELP EARL onto a beat up couch in the room.

BLAZE

Could ya leave us alone, Doc? And bring us the news whenever ya get any?

She goes to the door with Doc, speaks softly.

BLAZE (cont'd)

If the news is bad, just forget it.

DOC

Don't worry, Miss Starr--we ain't gonna upset him...

Doc leaves them alone, shutting the door. Blaze goes to Earl, sits down on the couch, and he rests his head on her shoulder.

BLAZE

Want me to sing to you or somethin'?

Earl nods and grunts a foggy Yes, and--

BLAZE STARTS SINGING - Softly, slowly, "Jambalaya".

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED:

173

BLAZE

Goodbye Joe, Me gotta go, me oh my oh,
 Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the bayou,
 My Yvonne the sweetest one, me oh, my oh,
 Son of a gun we'll have big fun on the bayou...

INTERCUT WITH:

174 EXT. ELECTION HEADQUARTERS IN A BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

174

175 INT. ELECTION HEADQUARTERS IN A BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

175

A Baptist church where the votes are counted on a stifling hot September night. Cronies of both candidates come and go, along with ELECTION OFFICIALS, Daughters of the Old South, and assorted locals. Overcrowded mayhem.

OLD PAINTED WOODEN NUMBERS are mounted above the only race anybody cares about--Long vs. MacAfee--though dozens of other races are charted on chalkboards. A LOCAL is handed a tally sheet and hangs the evening's first numbers.

MACAFEE - 439

LONG - 405

EARL'S CRONIES LOOK AT EACH OTHER with surprise.

DISSOLVE TO:

176 LATER THAT NIGHT - MACAFEE AND HIS PALS WATCH from the back of the room.

176

New numbers are mounted--

MACAFEE - 1245

LONG - 1260

The MacAfee camp is concerned. The Long camp cautiously optimistic; they can't quite believe the numbers.

DISSOLVE TO:

177 MUCH LATER THAT NIGHT - Nobody has gone home. A roomful of coffee cups, cigaret butts, and sweat stained shirts. As:

177

MACAFEE - 8,509

LONG - 9,311

EARL'S CRONIES SMELL VICTORY but are afraid to celebrate.

MACAFEE'S CRONIES ARE IN SHOCK - How could Earl come back?

CUT TO:

178 INT. EARL'S OFFICE - VERY LATE AT NIGHT

178

Earl's head is in Blaze's lap. He looks up at her smiling face and wild red hair. She's still singing.

BLAZE
(singing)
Pick guitar, fill fruit jar, and be gayo,
Son of a gun we'll have big fun on the bayou...

She looks down at Earl.

BLAZE (cont'd)
I love you.

EARL
(barely audible)
I love you.

BLAZE
You gotta promise me something,
Earl...

He manages to nod slightly.

BLAZE (cont'd)
...that we're gonna finally get
married after this election's over.

Earl stares blankly. Perhaps he can no longer understand what she's saying. Even talking, his great strength, seems impossible now. But he tries--

EARL
Trust me.

A trace of Earl's famous smile crosses his face. She smiles in return, and...

Earl K. Long closes his eyes...and dies.

A TRAIL OF PURPLE MASCARA runs down Blaze's cheek. She knows at once that he's gone, and strokes his head, as:

LA GRANGE AND THE CRONIES BURST INTO THE ROOM like wild schoolchildren, shrieking and laughing.

LA GRANGE
Earl won! Ya won, Earl! We're
back in business!

THEY STOP in mid-exaltation as they see Earl lying peacefully in Blaze's lap.

Silence. They all take off their hats.

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED:

178

BLAZE
 (quietly)
 Of course he won...what'dya expect?
 (beat)
 Now we'd like to be alone for a
 bit if ya don't mind...

With great reverence, they leave the room.

179 THE BOBCAT WOBBLER ON THE SHELF AND FALLS to the floor,
 crashing untouched nearby. The rotten, old taxidermied
 animal has split apart. Money and jewels spill out.

179

CUT TO:

180 EXT. STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - BATON ROUGE - NIGHT

180

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE LINED UP, filing past the body
 of Earl K. Long lying in state in the Capitol foyer.
 Rich, poor, black, white, State Troopers, Cajuns,
 Baptists, Catholics, and all the Politicians we know.

DISSOLVE TO:

181 EXT. STATE CAPITOL BUILDING - DAWN

181

THE PEOPLE HAVE GONE HOME - The lights still shine, the
 troopers still stand guard, as Earl lies in state.

A LIMO PULLS UP AT THE BASE OF THE 48 STEPS - Bobby
 gets out, opens a door, and--

BLAZE GETS OUT - Dressed in black, a tight skirt, a
 simple veil, a red rose tucked neatly in her cleavage.
 She starts the long walk up the Capitol steps.

182 INT. STATE CAPITOL FOYER - DAWN

182

BLAZE WALKS STRAIGHT into the immense foyer. A couple
 of State Troopers do not blink, standing guard.

SHE WALKS UP TO EARL'S CASKET - He looks restless
 and unkempt, even in death. She tries to straighten
 his hair and tie, but of course it's hopeless. She smiles.

SHE REMOVES THE ROSEBUD from her cleavage and places
 it on his chest, turns and walks back out.

183 EXT. STATE CAPITOL - DAWN

183

BLAZE WALKS DOWN the long steps of the Capitol, to the
 waiting limo.

And the sun rises over the Mississippi River, lighting
 the Capitol of the great state of Louisiana...

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