

DEATH AND LIFE

to be played by

ALAN

DEADHEAD MILES

FADE IN:

over SOUND of DAVE DUDLEY tuning up guitar.

1. EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

1.

White and yellow center stripes flash monotonously past our view. It is night. There are no lights or shoulder markers visible at the edge of the frame. ON SOUND: the hiss and thump of tires on wet asphalt. Dave Dudley begins to sing "There Ain't No Easy Run", a song about a greenhorn driver who walks into his terminal and announces that he wants to quit. The foreman, a retired driver, tells him that "there ain't no easy run, but now I drove for..." and proceeds to catalog nearly every transcontinental outfit in the country. As he names them, their trademarks occupy the screen in quick succession: RED BALL EXPRESS, DALLAS AND SOUTHWESTERN, NAVAJO, TRANSAMERICA, GENERAL STRICKLAND, BEAVER, etc. Toward the close of the song the CREDITS appear, half confused with trademarks, over the continuing onrush of center stripes.

REVERSE TO:

2. A SEMI

2.

A semi, gearing down on its approach to an underpass. At first, in the dark, we see only the winking flame of its stack and a shower of sparks that its ground chain raises on the pavement in its wake. ON SOUND we hear the breathing of airbrakes. The last stanza of Dudley's song is repeated in afterthought. Then as the truck clears the underpass, the CAMERA TILTS to reveal a man standing on the road above with a walkie-talkie.

CUT TO:

3. SKETCH OF DESERTED HIGHWAY IN THE NEW ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE

3.

A band of thugs is preparing to hijack a semi. COOPER and DURAZZO are sitting out of view beside a culvert at the edge of the highway. A car passes them on the right of way above and they rise to their feet. Another thug, the PINEAPPLE or PINA, ducks out onto the road and puts his ear to the ground. When he hears nothing, he wraps the ground with his knuckles to see if the trouble lies in his method.

3. (Cont'd)

3.

Cooper speaks with a drawl that is higher than his birth and he is courtly as a matter of genuine principle. Though advancing in his thirties, he has the vague and vaguely startled manner of a quiet child; anything can arrest him and his face is always full of notions.

COOPER

Now I want out of here. Never want to come back here.

DURAZNO

You, you just sit tight and pull the car over to where we said.

COOPER

Who you telling what? Boy, you don't know a thing about me... Talk like that.

But Durazno is distracted when his walkie-talkie comes to life.

FIRST VOICE

You there? Had a Schneider Associates' semi on the way past me with two miles of empty road behind him.

DURAZNO

Great. How's it look at the other end?

SECOND VOICE

Nothing in sight down here, not that I can see.

DURAZNO

Okay, anyone comes up fast from your direction, you fake a flat and wave them down. Or whatever. Incidentally, I got to say the cowboy here is acting like a hero, a real hero.

PINEAPPLE

That's right, that's right.

COOPER

Now I never bargained for any rough-house. You telling me about rough-house, but I never bargained.

DURAZNO

Into the car, quick. Get on out there. You, quick.

(Continued)

3. (Cont'd)

3.

Protesting, then cursing, Cooper runs to the car, a battered '53 Nash. Its roof is crushed and its fenders gone.

The gang now sets about staging an accident scene. Cooper pulls the car over to the spot that Durazno has designated. Durazno pours half a bucket of ox blood down his own shirtfront, then throws the rest over the windshield, splattering Cooper. The Pineapple takes a fender and headlight from the trunk and arranges them on the roadway, then retreats from sight behind the car. Durazno holds a teargas gun. He licks his lips and takes a practice shot into the weeds, then moves to the shoulder as the lights of the semi first reach him.

COOPER

I'm not going to talk or move.
I'm here is all.

He is slumped over the steering wheel with his eyes closed, playing the victim of the accident, we guess. He seems to be counting to himself.

DURAZNO

Shut up, 'cause I'm gonna kick ass.
No hero's gonna screw me out of
what's mine. Please be quiet.

COOPER

Wait, just a minute. There'll be
another one.

The semi is now only a few hundred yards from them. Durazno flags it down, all the time whispering out the side of his mouth at Cooper.

DURAZNO

Keep your head down or I don't know.
Jesus Mother, I don't.

COOPER

Listen, I'm scared. You have the idea
not to listen to me?

DURAZNO

You've got one last warning.

COOPER

Listen, I'm still scared and you can
shoot me, I'll still be scared.

DURAZNO

Okay, you got the last warning. I'm
gonna kick ass now.

4. SEMI'S POV

4.

We see Cooper, covered with blood, get out of the car and remonstrate with Durazno, who pushes him back in the direction of the car. Unsuspecting, though the TRUCKER stops.

5. EXT. HIGHWAY

5.

The Pineapple ducks under the trailer while Durazno runs to the rider's door and fires the tear gas gun into the cab. The Trucker stumbles out on his side of the cab, but the Pineapple is waiting on the running board, now wearing a gas mask. The rig lurches forward a bit, then dies. The Pineapple saps the Trucker and leans him back into the cab; Durazno gets in the other side, slides a gunny sack over him, hauls him out of the truck, and binds the sack with steel bands, using a cotton baling device. Then he kicks him down into the culvert. Cooper looks down at the sack from the edge of the culvert and shakes his head. Throughout the foregoing, his argument with Durazno has continued unabated, and Durazno is hot under the collar now. Cooper emits a guttural noise in proof of his odd discomfort.

DURAZNO

You want to take bread out of
my family's mouth... You want
my baby to choke on herself.

COOPER

Well, if you want to know, that
ain't my idea at all. Not at all.

Durazno fires the three remaining tear gas rounds at Cooper's feet. Cooper stops arguing and backs the car abruptly off the shoulder onto an access road where a bobtail trailer is waiting. A ramp leads down from the bed. He drives up the ramp and Durazno closes the door behind him. The semi and the bobtail then drive off in procession, just as the lights of another car appear on the horizon.

CUT TO:

6. EXT. BED OF BOBTAIL TRUCK HIGHWAY

6.

The man whom we saw on the overpass, hereafter THE HOSTLER, climbs into the open bed of the bobtail truck, which is now moving at 60 mph. Cooper is sulking inside the Nash. The Hostler drums on the hood to get his attention.

6. (Cont'd)

6.

HOSTLER

What's the matter with you? We gonna have a piece of the action.

COOPER

Piece of nothing. You got a insurance policy?

HOSTLER

No, not right now.

COOPER

Didn't think so. Well, you hit me here,

(he points to
his ear)

I could sue you silly. Same goes for that fellow back there.

HOSTLER

Yeah, so what.

COOPER

Boss Fulano has got a nice business but he's gonna make a mess of himself, thievin'.

HOSTLER

Yeah, Boss has got a nice business, got a real sweet finger.

COOPER

I'm talking to some kind of stump, I can see.

HOSTLER

Watch out you don't ruin the deal for the rest of us. You be nice.

COOPER

You get back, leave me alone.

The Hostler climbs over the high sides, back into the cab.

CUT TO:

7. EXT. DESERTED LOADING PLATFORM - LATER

7.

The thugs are nearly finished unloading the semi. Cooper sits to one side, depressed. BOSS FULANO, a bearish man with rough manners, opens a crate and lifts a small machine into view. He studies it for a while, completely puzzled. Then, suddenly, he kicks the crate over the side of the dock in disgust.

(Continued)

7. (Cont'd)

7.

BOSS

Jesus, it's carburetors and who wants a million of them?

DURAZNO

You can't depend on pot luck.

BOSS

Yeah, I guess that's right. Never have luck. Durazno, you put this stuff in the other wagons.

Boss Fulano is alone with Cooper now. He nudges him with the butt of his loading hook.

BOSS (Cont'd)

I'm sorry, but we're all in this together. Yeah, yeah I'm talking about how we're like cousins with the same blood. Perhaps you heard the saying, "Blood runs thicker than water"? You can never think enough about that.

COOPER

Uh huh, still you're never going to be driving a hot rig, you.

BOSS

You tease me about that but I don't mind. Listen, mister, the Latin fellows will change everything, file off the numbers, change everything. Won't look like it belongs to anyone.

COOPER

You file everything, but they come back at you with ultraviolet lights can see funny numbers.

BOSS

You don't worry about that. And another thing: you don't fool with Durazno. He don't like anyone but me.

COOPER

Your Durazno's going to find himself in Bridgewater one of these days. They gonna give him twenty years. They gonna take the laces out of his shoes, have him playing checkers with his nose. Hell, you tell me about Durazno!

The Boss chuckles with delight.

7. (Cont'd)

7.

BOSS

Sometimes I'm afraid of him, too.
But he wouldn't hurt a dog if it
wasn't biting on him.

Durazno appears, and the Boss becomes cagier with
Cooper.

DURAZNO

Where are we going to sell them?

BOSS

We don't have to sell all of them.
Some we can trade at the depot in
Buffalo. But we got to move fast.
They gonna be looking, maybe around
here.

DURAZNO

Okay, we'll be finished by dawn.

BOSS

Listen, you come back tomorrow and
see what the dealers have done. They're
gonna be looking at all night. Change
the trucks. Don't come back then.

COOPER

Who's going to run for Buffalo?

BOSS

You and Durazno. You gonna get
right with one another.

Cooper walks to the far edge of the platform, looking
to find there a position of clear dramatic advantage.
He turns and states his closing thoughts on what has
gone before.

COOPER

Not in this life, next life maybe.

8. EXT. MECHANIC'S SHED

8.

The Puerto Rican mechanics stand inside the entrance
with their children. The shed's automatic door des-
cends to conceal the hijacked rig. Crates of fruit
stand in the foreground.

CUT TO:

9. EXT. MECHANIC'S SHED - NEXT EVENING

9.

Cooper watches as the truck moves silently into the
middle of the yard, completely done over. "JIBARO

(Continued)

9. (Cont'd)

9.

BROS." has been painted on the side panels and bright piping laid down the belly. The cabover of the previous night has been exchanged for a Peterbilt conventional. The tractor carries a blown Cummins 335 Diesel, oil filters above the running boards, a double stack and a sleeper with an exterior entrance. A tandem 40' Fruehauf trailer stands in tow.

Cooper walks around the rig, shaking his head in awe. The Boss follows, aching with expectation. Then the Hostler and Durazno, who is eating a half grapefruit and drinking a beer.

HOSTLER

We put a governor on the pump so she can't be run above 2200, which in tenth should give you about 65, even with a heavy load.

BOSS

Wha? Won't that be tough?

COOPER

No, no it won't.

HOSTLER

Now we got the trailers mounted on a long tongue, so we can pull, well, near 70,000 (lbs.) and not be overweight in our area.

BOSS

Now you listen: this rig isn't licensed for but New England and New York. The Latins painted on some permit numbers for the other states, but the numbers aren't real. They copied them off candy machine down the road.

HOSTLER

You pull 70,000 on 30% grade...

BOSS

Now everybody listen: this is the first but someday we're gonna put together a whole fleet. Be licensed for every state. We never haul beets and fertilizer any more. We throw the beets in the garbage. We'll haul nothing but steel and electronics and stuff: high revenue is what. Won't that be tough? Won't that be like mashing your hand in a tub of butter? You tell me what it will be like.

9. (Cont'd)

9.

No one answers him.

COOPER

We say uncle but what happens
meantime?

BOSS

That's a good question to ask.
You gonna take the carburetors
to Buffalo and some other things
to Redhook.

COOPER

What things?

BOSS

You don't worry about that.

COOPER

Okay, I don't want to know.

BOSS

Anybody wants to know, you show
them the invoice.

Cooper winks at the others.

COOPER

Hell, when you start giving out
invoices? You steal a book of them
from the library?

BOSS

You confuse me when you talk,
mister. It's buzzbuzz.

COOPER

Well hell, I got my logs and grip.
I'll roll out of here tonight.

BOSS

There something you haven't told me?
Huh?

COOPER

No. Well, personal things.

BOSS

You don't feel worried about anything?

COOPER

No, not at the moment.

BOSS

You look worried.
(points to forehead)
You gonna get a line.

(Continued)

9. (Cont'd)

9.

COOPER

That's not my fault.

BOSS

You're a big man, mister. No-body'll ever get the papers on you.

Fulano is having some fun. He winks and pinches Cooper's cheek, then he leaves. Cooper spits on his hankchief and wipes his cheek once certain he is alone.

CUT TO:

10. EXT. FREIGHTYARDS AND INDUSTRIAL SETTING BEYOND

10.

In the freightyards, beyond the docks, hundreds of semi trailers stand on flatcars, piggybacked. An industrial whistle SOUNDS in the distance, marking the midnight shift. The CAMERA descends to reveal Cooper, transfixed by the noise.

11. EXT. LOADING PLATFORM - LATER

11.

Durazno, now drunk, tries to sleep on his arms in the cab. The Hostler sits on the dock fender, finishing a coke, as Cooper prepares to leave.

COOPER

Come over here. Just to the gate.

HOSTLER

What for?

COOPER

Listen, friend, I want you to unhookle that governor or show me how. One or the other.

HOSTLER

Sure, but you be careful. Boss told Durazno to look out for you.

He nods at Durazno and Durazno wakens to look back at them.

COOPER

Yeah? Well, look at him. He couldn't suck his fist.

They raise the hood and work at the pump, uncoupling the governor, so that Cooper can get as much speed as he wants.

11. (Cont'd)

11.

COOPER

That's good. I'll be seeing you now.

HOSTLER

Yeah, be see. You be careful.

COOPER

Hey, Boss don't know a thing. Once he took a packed lunch onto the airplane. He admitted that, I mean, he admitted that.

HOSTLER

So what, I don't care.

Cooper redlines the engine and nods with satisfaction. Durazno starts awake, then goes back to sleep.

CUT TO:

12. EXT. STREET

12.

Cooper accelerates down an empty street and starts to roll. Dave Dudley sings the theme song as we watch the truck move through a span of five hours, leaving the industrial wastes of the seaboard and debouching into the open countryside. The music continues through the half following sequence. Here as elsewhere, Cooper half sings his narration to the accompanying melody.

COOPER V.O.

I'd come East to try to make a dollar, but things just didn't work out. Feature me with the blue eyes and a Sunday Section in my shoes! You draw a blank.

He laughs out loud and hisses at the darkness around him.

13. EXT. DISCOUNT GAS STATION - DAY

13.

George Raft and Ida Lupino pull into the discount station in their Buick from "They Drive By Night". Cooper's rig follows them in, blocking off a row of pumps, to the manager's chagrin. Two boys sit on the tire rack watching them. Cooper goes out of his way to approach them.

COOPER

Hey, you boys want to steal some melons off my truck? Well I don't have any.

13. (Cont'd)

13.

BOY

We don't know what you're
talking about, mister.

COOPER

(to Durazno)

Look at them. Honest to God.

Cooper locks Durazno in the men's room and ambles back to the rig. By the time Durazno crawls out the transom, Cooper is pulling onto the right of way. So, with the curtest of apologies to George Raft, Durazno commandeers the Buick, which is being filled at one of the pumps. He pulls away, snapping the pump hose off at the base, and gives chase. He has caught up with Cooper and is passing him when he realizes, too late, that there is nothing he can do. Cooper edges him off the road onto the shoulder. Durazno jumps out of the car and escapes into the neighboring fields.

14. EXT. RIG - LATER

14.

It is raining. Cooper runs alone down a wide road, through the salt marshes of New Jersey.

15. INT. TRACTOR

15.

Cooper takes a small packet out of the sleeper, holds a CO₂ cannister in his mouth and inflates a lifesize vinyl doll, a woman doll, the kind that one sees advertised in magazines for outdoorsmen.

COOPER

Lookit here, what you get. That's
for doing good by me.

He sticks a wig on her head, slightly askew. Except for the wig, she's naked. In the following, Cooper imitates the woman's voice, in falsetto and, each time he does, the CAMERA shifts behind him, a party to the illusion.

COOPER (cont'd)

(natural)

Hi there.

(falsetto)

Hi there, fella.

(natural)

Don't you worry about anything,
baby. Ole Cooper's in charge
here. He's the one. He's the
one they're talking about, crossed
(more)

15. (Cont'd)

COOPER (cont'd)
 the Jibaro Brothers. Crossed
 'em, and you want to know what
 happened? Nothing happened, that's
 what happened. Well, that's one
 thing and here's another: I'm not
 the kind of fellow has time to sit
 around and have other people snooker
 him. Oh, you listen to me: we're
 going to drink Bacardis in Mexico
 and we're going to silly bet on
 the dogs at Harolds Club in Reno.
 And that's not all. We're gonna
 take in the West Coast and I'm
 going to show you Frederick's of
 Hollywood. Just watch and see.
 Don't think I'm telling you the
 truth?

(falsetto)

No, not one word.

(natural)

Don't think so?

He has begun deflating the woman, little by little,
 regulating the loss as her attitude pleases him.

COOPER (cont'd)
 Still don't think so?
 (amused now)
 Hey, you gonna talk sense to me?
 I give you 50¢, you gonna give
 me two bits back in change? You
 gonna play your song on my guitar?
 That won't work, Miss Deluxe. No,
 you been on the gravy train too
 long. Gravy, gravy, gravy. You
 gonna look good to me? That's
 better now. Come on over here.
 (falsetto)
 Hands belong in pockets.

He pulls her over to him and puts her in a Half Nelson.
 She deflates faster under the pressure of his hug. The
 rig passes a sign that indicates we're entering Virginia.

16. EXT. HIGHWAY, NEAR THE COAST - AFTERNOON

16.

Cooper spots two HITCHHIKERS at the edge of the road.
 One stands thumbing while the other (hereafter: HITCH-
 HIKER) kneels beside him in an attitude of silent prayer,
 facing the traffic. From behind the windshield Cooper
 tries to explain that he cannot pick them up, that he's
 going to take the next exit, an outright lie. They see
 only his wild gesticulations and shrug. He feels that

16. (Cont'd)

16.

he must now stop to explain and once he has stopped he feels that he can't refuse them entirely. We are left with the impression that if they hadn't shrugged he would never have stopped.

We hear the vinyl woman deflate completely now. As Cooper pulls over to the shoulder, he stows her in a brown paper sack with the rest of his personal effects.

The Hitchhikers walk toward the CAMERA and when the CAMERA returns to Cooper, he is outside the rig, pretending to examine a detail of the oil filter; paying no attention to them, pretending in fact to be surprised when they approach.

COOPER

One only, I can't take both of you, because I hate Hitchhikers. They're a waste of time.

HITCHHIKER

You go then.

HITCHHIKER'S FRIEND

No, you.

COOPER

Get in before ole Barker catches me.

HITCHHIKER

Okay. Take care, John.

He climbs into the cab and they take off. He's a wary, receding fellow and he looks to be in his late twenties. Neither his clothes nor his accent place him, though.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

Thanks. Yeah, thanks.

Cooper nods but continues to look straight ahead out the window. They are silent for a while.

COOPER

There's no such person as Barker. I said that.

17. - INT. TRACTOR

17.

The very latest afternoon sunlight falls on their faces. Neither turns to address the other. Each looks out the front windshield as he delivers his line, so that we catch his face in full profile, side by side with the other's.

17. (Cont'd)

17.

HITCHHIKER

What you hauling?

COOPER

Well, a whole jag of carburetors,
for one thing.

HITCHHIKER

Oh yeah?

COOPER

Yeah. Then there's some important
things. Government.

HITCHHIKER

Headed where to?

COOPER

New Mexico and places.

HITCHHIKER

There's some good stuff in New
Mexico.

(he is silent for
a moment)

You independent or what?

COOPER

I've got my own rig, if that's
what you mean.

The Hitchhiker whistles.

COOPER

I got a silver badge somewhere,
says "Independent Licensee", but
that doesn't concern you.

Again, they are silent for a moment.

HITCHHIKER

It's hard work, I mean it's hard
stuff, this is.

COOPER

I'm not sure what you're saying.

HITCHHIKER

It's just... hard work.

COOPER

What you mean is that it ain't
interesting work.

HITCHHIKER

No, that's not what...

17. (Cont'd)

17.

COOPER

Well, it ain't... You ask me,
though, you'll find I love engines.
Ever' aspect of them from aspect one.
I'm an Engine Man, then.

HITCHHIKER

Oh, yeah?

18. EXT. RIG

18.

Cooper spots a drive-in theatre, winds down through
the gears and pulls onto the shoulder across the way.

19. EXT. ROADWAY BESIDE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

19.

They sit on top of cab, watching "The Ten Commandments",
though they're too far from the screen to follow the
story. A couple of indigent families are strung out
along the shoulder also watching the movie. A night-
hawk tilts through the sky in pursuit of insects, its
wings flashing like a mute's hands.

COOPER

Yeah. But let me tell you, I'd
need quite a bit before I'd turn
this rig around. Need me some
real estate and some business.
Ironwork, maybe welding, I've
thought about that. Got to make
a dollar to spend. I've also
thought about offshore diving.
That's the deep kind of diving:
"offshore" is what it's called.

HITCHHIKER

How do you keep yourself inter-
ested in the meantime?

COOPER

Well, you'll find I read from the
Almanac now. Facts, no opinions.
That way I'm doing two things at
once, learning and driving for
money... Yeah, and listen to radio
too. That keeps me informed about
current events, most of which aren't
in the Almanac.

HITCHHIKER

You said Almanac, huh?

19. (Cont'd)

19.

COOPER

Yeah. But main thing I'm interested in now is starting a business on the right foot.

HITCHHIKER

You know, in a way everything's interesting.

COOPER

That's right.

He has no idea where they're in agreement, but will be the one who decides.

HITCHHIKER

I mean, that pole's interesting and so is that pasture, I'm not special about which.

Cooper doesn't answer. He's not happy to have lost the initiative.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

It's as interesting as you are interested. You see...

The Hitchhiker tries to add some flesh to this thought but gives up, without minding.

COOPER

By the way, did you know what is the biggest soybean state in America?

HITCHHIKER

No.

COOPER

Well there!

HITCHHIKER

What's the answer?

COOPER

Kansas. That's the answer. Look at Jesus. He's letting them know.

Cooper hoots encouragement to the figure on the screen. We hold on the screen, where the Parting of the Waters is shown. The Children of Israel dash across the floor of the Red Sea with the Egyptians in hot pursuit.

20. EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

20.

As Dave Dudley sings "Six Days on the Road", we see Cooper hailed to the side of the road by the Virginia Highway Patrol. He greets the PATROLMAN and opens his logbook for him.

COOPER

First week back from Vietnam, and
I get a ticket.

They chat as the music continues. Cooper angrily interrupts a minute later.

COOPER

You see the first one run, you
get worried. And you see the
second one run, brother you
better be the third, 'cause
otherwise you gonna be the last.

The Patrolman tears up the ticket and stuffs the shreds in Cooper's pocket. The music continues through the following sequence.

21. SERIES OF ANGLES

21.

Cooper determines from a sign that he is nearing a weight station at the North Carolina line. He turns back and re-enters the last city he was through. There he rents a U-Haul trailer on credit. He hires a couple of packers in the lobby of the State Employment Office and with their help transfers his overweight cargo to the rented truck. Then, with the Hitchhiker following in the rented truck, he passes through the scale house without any trouble. A few miles beyond, on a side road, he rejoins the Hitchhiker and they transfer the overweight back to his own rig. Down the way, the drop off the rented truck.

22. EXT. HIGHWAY - MONTAGE

22.

In the spill of Cooper's headlights, closeups of the following signs develop: TURKEY TUMBLE, GRUKNEY ROAD, DANGEROUS CURVES, FICKLE WADLEY, PEE DEE, CARTOOGECHAYD, BASOOMVILLE, LUGS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN, CARODELPHIA, TUCKASEEGEE, and finally a bronze plaque on a bridge over the Raritan River commemorating a Master Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor on Guadalcanal, then was killed with the Fifth Marines off Iwo Jima. We want the sense that he is passing through a mythical landscape.

23. INT. ROADHOUSE DINER

24.

Cooper and the Hitchhiker watch a RED BALL RIGOR, wearing a necktie, approach a booth near their table. Two other trallermen sit in the booth. One of them is shirtless, a BAD CHARACTER. He inverts a full glass of water on the table, usi an envelope to keep the water from spilling out, then withdrawing the envelope when the glass rests upside down on the table. The following conversation, to the first cut, is nearly inaudible.

RED BALL

By God, you ain't gonna be there
when they call the roll.

BAD CHARACTER

Hey, fella, I wouldn't have give
five dollars to see you. Where
you headed?

RED BALL

Kansas City. They got us on the
sleeper board now. It's longer
away from home, but they're no
layovers, so I don't mind.

BAD CHARACTER

Ole Gunner here has found ways to
interest himself during the layovers.
He got a case and's gonna have to
stay away from home till he cures.

RED BALL

That right, Gunner?

BAD CHARACTER

Drink out of his glass, you don't
believe me.

24. COOPER AND HITCHHIKER

24.

COOPER

If I don't smile now, it's be-
cause I'm upset.

HITCHHIKER

Why?

COOPER

(whispering)

That's the Duke of Interstate 40.
Everyone knows him, so nobody
ever passes him, since he is hot-
head, mean and lives off a lady's
insurance.

25. BOOTH

25.

WAITRESS

Clear the table?

BAD CHARACTER

Sure.

She starts to clear the table, then notices the inverted glass of water.

WAITRESS

You jokers are pretty funny.

BAD CHARACTER

Lucky for you. When I'm not funny, I'm mean and hotheaded.

Cooper shrugs with modesty at seeing his earlier remark confirmed so soon. The waitress slaps the glass over and it spills on the trailer men.

WAITRESS

I'm kind of on the mean side, too.

Bad Character returns to his meal; the other two leave the table.

26. COOPER

26.

COOPER

(to Hitchhiker)

Get up and walk past him. Just walk past him and don't talk... Lookit, I always have to give you instructions.

The Hitchhiker complies, but doesn't feel the electricity and shrugs. Cooper has forgotten about him, though. He flexes his neck in the Bad Character's direction and smiles with the thought that they're thick as thieves.

COOPER

Hi there, Duke.

He looks away from him, hoping that impishness will make the best impression.

COOPER (cont'd)

I seen how you done the water.

BAD CHARACTER

Oh yeah?

26. (Cont'd)

25.

COOPER
(helpfully)
Why didn't you tell her that it
was the fella before you left
it there?

BAD CHARACTER
Guess I wasn't thinking fast
as you.

Cooper continues, intent only on saving face now.

COOPER
That your Jimmy Eight out there?

BAD CHARACTER
Which one?

COOPER
The kind of silver one.

BAD CHARACTER
Yes.

COOPER
Well you know something, it's
a big mother.

It mortifies him to say something so insipid, particularly in front of the Hitchhiker. In any case the Bad Character doesn't answer.

COOPER (cont'd)
Got that RoadRanger transmission.

BAD CHARACTER
You askin' me or tellin' me?

COOPER
Askin', I guess.

BAD CHARACTER
Well, it don't.

Cooper expects that he will warm to them. When he doesn't, Cooper picks up his meal and moves to the adjacent booth so that he now sits back to back with the Bad Character, each unable to see over the barrier between them. The Hitchhiker's sense of courtesy is awakened; he leaves to play the pinball machine.

COOPER
(whispering)
Pssst, hey. You ain't friendly.

25. (Cont'd)

25.

BAD CHARACTER
Meanin' what?

COOPER
Meaning that you're unfriendly.

BAD CHARACTER
Oh yeah?

COOPER
... Plus which you don't have a
sense of hospitality.

BAD CHARACTER
Okay, gypsy, you know better than
me.

COOPER
That's right. I know better.

The Bad Character studies his plate with a glum look
but doesn't speak.

COOPER (cont'd)
Listen, you go ahead and say what-
ever you want, you hear now?

BAD CHARACTER
You can count on that.

COOPER
On what?

BAD CHARACTER
On that I'll go ahead... like you
said.

COOPER
You can count on nothing, mister.

Cooper looks at his watch and leaves. The Hitchhiker
joins him. At the cashier, they see an old man walk
out the rear door.

27. EXT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

27.

During the following sequence, Red Simpson sings "Old
Sam", a song that tells about "a trucker's trucker".
Sam appears from the dark behind the roadhouse with the
line: "Now you may laugh at that fellow just walked out
the door, but...". He wears baggy overalls and looks
mischievous. With his good arm, he pockets a strange
object that he has been dragging behind him on a piece

27. (Cont'd)

27.

of twine, then he makes for one of the teamsters' trucks a cabover, looking neither right nor left. He cleans his shoes on the running board and kicks one of the tires. He measures the front grill with a retractable tape that he carries in the bib of his overalls. He double checks the measurements and snaps the tape smartly back into his hand. Then for the longest time he examines the large beetles and moths and other mysteries stuck in the windscreen. We view some of them in EXTREME CLOSEUP. As Cooper and the Hitchhiker appear at the door of the roadhouse, he ducks underneath their first trailer and climbs onto the tire rack for a free ride to his next destination.

28. INT. TRACTOR - NIGHT

28.

Cooper, on the verge of sleep, holds a comb between his teeth. At length the comb drops in his lap and he comes awake with a start.

COOPER

The throw of that Cummins engine
wants to put you to sleep.

HITCHHIKER

It does that.

COOPER

You driving a machine, though,
don't you ever fall asleep.

HITCHHIKER

How you stay awake?

COOPER

It comes normal, I guess.

He holds his fist out to the Hitchhiker, but the Hitchhiker doesn't understand. He makes a peephole in the fist and motions for the Hitchhiker to look inside. The Hitchhiker shakes his head, unable to see anything, and Cooper opens up his fist to expose two white tablets.

COOPER (cont'd)

Sometimes, though, I just roll
down the windows, sit back and
let Benny drive.

He pops the tablets into his mouth.

HITCHHIKER

Don't they affect your brain?

COOPER

Sometimes I wish they could but
I like to save my wishes.

29. EXT. RIG

29.

The car in front of them is moving slowly, holding them up. Cooper blinks his lights but the driver refuses to move onto the (paved) shoulder. He thinks of honking but is content to beat his hand on the steering wheel.

30. INT. TRACTOR

30.

Cooper honks again and shakes his head as he does.

COOPER

That fella don't like me. He's probably had a bad experience somewhere in his life and drinks a lot of beer, don't want to get caught with liquor on his breath here, so he travels slow.

HITCHHIKER

Maybe he don't have any place to get to in a hurry.

COOPER

There's a maybe for you.

31. EXT. RIG

31.

Cooper passes the car easily now.

32. INT. TRACTOR

32.

COOPER

He don't know that I'm a maker of widows and orphans. And him running a 327 under there! Out of the tub with him, out of the tub with his 327.

Cooper winks at the Hitchhiker and the Hitchhiker smiles.

33. COOPER

33.

pulling off the main road at the Fishimingo (North Carolina) exit, with the Hitchhiker now in the sleeper. Fishimingo is a town that was once on the right of way but now, bypassed, is sunk in ruin. Weeds grow amid the shells of old motels. The wind has thrown the houses out of plumb and the streets are empty. There is no sign whatsoever, not in anything from the car models to the price of gas, that the town has advanced beyond its state in the early fifties.

33. (Cont'd)

33.

COOPER

You'll have to stay back there tonight. I'm going to visit Donna James... She's this girl.

Cooper takes off his gloves and steps high through the grass to a boomer shack thrown together out of scraps of plywood and rusty signs, then covered with creosote. He goes to the side window, satisfies himself about something, then knocks on the door.

34. A YOUNG WOMAN

34.

evidently a deficient, who sits in one corner of the barren room. She wears a clerk's smock and pink mules. There are dishes and newspapers strewn on the floor. A dismantled television stands on the table.

GIRL

What do you want?

COOPER

That all depends.

GIRL

What? On what?

COOPER

Oh, I'll be good.

He tries a laugh but it fails.

COOPER (cont'd)

Hey, how nice is a girl like you anyway?

GIRL

Oh, real nice.

COOPER

Real nice, well I caught every bit of that in the way you said hello. You talk pretty.

GIRL

What's your name anyway?

COOPER

My name's not a matter of particular concern, but people call me Nellie Fox.

He sits on her bedroll, waits for her to answer, then licks his hand and squeezes his knee.

34. (Cont'd)

34.

COOPER (cont'd)
How does that feel here, muffin?
Does it hurt?

GIRL
Not a lot, not a little.

She refuses to take her eyes off him.

COOPER
Hey, lookie over there.

As she looks, he grabs her around the waist and kisses her neck, stalling for time. She remains dazed. During the remainder of the scene Cooper does nearly everything he can to her without actually baring her skin.

COOPER (cont'd)
You're real nice. Say 'purty'
to me. Teach me how.

GIRL
Purty. Think I can remember.
Where you from, mister?

COOPER
Lufkin, Texas.

35. EXT. SHACK

35.

An OLD MAN with an angry face and raw turkey neck emerges from the shadows. He darts from window to window, loading a tiny revolver while he spies on the scene inside, then withdraws to a discreet distance and sits on the ground, waiting for Cooper to conclude his business.

36. INT. SHACK

36.

GIRL
Don't know about Lufkin but
it sure can be hot here...
Look at you're sweating.

She reaches down for his face. He touches her neck to stop her short.

COOPER
Sorry. Can I put my hand here?

GIRL
Yes.

He touches her breastbone.

36. (Cont'd)

36.

COOPER

Here, though?

GIRL

Fine.

COOPER

Does it hurt any?

He kisses her before she can answer. He must get her to seem more normal to him before he can seduce her in good conscience.

GIRL

No.

COOPER

I knew... Where does it feel good?

GIRL

Where you're touching.

COOPER

That's here. It's sure here.

GIRL

Your friends can't hear us?

COOPER

What friends?

GIRL

Never mind, I wasn't paying any attention...

(pause)

Are you through?

COOPER

Not yet.

Cooper does a magic trick for her; perhaps he extracts a quarter from her ear. They start giggling and slapping at one another. Cooper takes this as some kind of sign and starts to undress her. As he does, he notices that a leash leads up under her smock. Further investigation shows that she wears a harness, presumably to keep her confined to a limited area of the shack. Cooper is baffled. Impulsively, he winds a sheet around her. She looks like she is sitting in a barber's chair.

Cooper goes to the table, sits and tries to fit some of the television parts to one another. It is not clear why he is staying on at this point, though it may be to

36. (Cont'd)

36.

give himself enough time with the girl to keep from arousing any suspicions in the Hitchhiker. In any case he does not mean to press on with the seduction.

37. INT. SHACK - SLIGHTLY LATER

37.

His first line memorized and already in his mouth, the Old Man crashes into the room. He blinks with dismay.

OLD MAN

Well, son, what you need is some
killin', and... right here!

COOPER

Hey, listen.

OLD MAN

Oh, yeah, it is very easy to take
advantage of this little girl.
Let me ask you something, though.
You think you can take advantage
of me? I want to know, I really
want to know.

He surveys the room for support.

COOPER

I'm sorry.

OLD MAN

Yeah, I bet. What I'd like to
know is just what you thought
you were doing to this little
girl. Don't say, though. Re-
member, I'm not used to being
aroused this time of night.

(he waits)

You know what?

COOPER

What?

OLD MAN

You should have your ducts
tied.

Cooper waits.

COOPER

You gonna shoot me?

37. (Cont'd)

37.

OLD MAN

Well now! Let's see here! Yes!
We got some possibilities to consider. I won't say which. Maybe not shoot, just squeeze a little.

He does a theatrical turn around the room, sucking his lips, more interested in his victory than in Cooper's offense. To Cooper the whole thing begins to look vaguely like a racket.

OLD MAN

You scared?

COOPER

I am technically, I guess.

OLD MAN

Well you give me a hundred dollars and I tell you what, I won't kill you. And I should have my head examined.

COOPER

Don't have but ten.

The Old Man contemplates the offer.

OLD MAN

Ten equals zero. What else you got? You got any tires?

Cooper nods.

OLD MAN (cont'd)

Okay. Fifteen and two tires?

COOPER

Fine, but you're gonna have to find a cheater bar to pull them loose.

OLD MAN

Maybe I'm gonna find the bar but I damn sure ain't gonna pull 'em loose. You're the fellow is going to do that, number one.

COOPER

Well, you doin' the talking, guess you say what.

38. COOPER AND THE OLD MAN

33.

walking back to his truck to collect the tires. The street is dark and overgrown with weeds.

OLD MAN

Where you from, mister?

COOPER

East Texas. Lufkin, Texas.
I'm Cooper from East Texas.

OLD MAN

Your people in cattle?

COOPER

No, hell, that's not your cattle area. You look around Ft. Worth.

OLD MAN

What kind of people are they?

COOPER

General Motors, most of them.

OLD MAN

We're Ford people around here.
I got a Mercury that's still mine.

COOPER

Well, you take the Mercury but we just can't be moved, if you know what I mean.

OLD MAN

Yeah... Listen, I don't want to take your absolutely last tires.

COOPER

Hell, I'll pick up some more...

OLD MAN

Really? Well, don't let me have but one. I don't know what would happen to me. I had two.

Cooper nods, puts on his gloves and pulls a tire off the rack for their joint examination.

OLD MAN

It's a recap... well.

COOPER

It's a \$200 Sumimoto tire is what.

38. (Cont'd)

38.

OLD MAN

Yeah, Japanese. Maybe this
will save your life, who knows?

Though the Old Man still keeps the gun on Cooper, they
shake hands. Then, with a flourish, he bows and hops
off down the road, rolling the tire in front of him.

39. INT. TRACTOR - NIGHT

39.

COOPER

I don't have to worry about
nekid ladies.

HITCHHIKER

How was it?

COOPER

Felt like I had my hands on
two nekid 'lectrical wires.

HITCHHIKER

I was joking. Me you don't
have to tell.

40. INT. TRACTOR

40.

Cooper has moved into the opposite lane to pass the rig
on ahead. They jockey for position.

COOPER

This is a Kenworth we're going
to pass. We've been running
with him since Jagerstown.

Cooper feints into the Kenworth's lane. It audibly
misses its shift, allowing Cooper to pull ahead. He
does a mock double take at his own finesse.

COOPER

Hell, I didn't pass him. I
sucked him up...

(pause)

... It's going to be a different
story when we hit the grade.

41. INT. TRACTOR

41.

Cooper is gearing down on his approach to a Carolina
roadhouse called El Roy's Sunken Sisters' Home.

COOPER

Wake up now.

41. (Cont'd)

41.

He parks at the edge of the apron beside an Armand's
Boxline Freight double and sits to enjoy the sudden quiet.

42. EXT. ROADHOUSE

42.

Cooper jumps down from the cab and slaps his ears. He
weaves a bit from the bucking of the cab.

COOPER

That wind can make a deaf mute
out of you in nothing flat.

HITCHHIKER

You want me to stay here?

COOPER

Instead of that, you go stand in
the dark over there and whistle
a signal if anyone comes lookin'.

HITCHHIKER

I'll just say instead.

Cooper takes a pair of wire cutters from under the seat
and tries to remove the Armand's license plates but
fails.

COOPER

(shouting to
Hitchhiker)

Gonna have to use the torch.
Wow!

He gets a portable acetylene outfit and a pair of goggles
from his cab, then returns to the Boxline and cuts its
plates from their studs -- this in full view of the
highway, though not of the roadhouse.

COOPER (cont'd)

They won't miss them until we're
west of Memphis, I mean, I want
to tell you that it's safe...

(pauses)

Them studs don't want to come
loose.

Cooper kicks at an imaginary antagonist and with this
they come loose. The Hitchhiker appears and his appear-
ance puts a scare into Cooper. Cooper points at the
plates that he has left on the Boxline.

42. (Cont'd)

42.

COOPER (cont'd)

I used to make these things.
When you're working the big
press you get a new perspective.
There you have a plain sheet of
metal and blam!: you're talking
about something a fella would pay
a month's wage to have.

Cooper takes the plates to the rear of his own truck
and mounts them on some available bolts. Cattle low
and kick at the sides of their trailers in the background.

COOPER (cont'd)

Used to have to zigzag across the
country because I didn't have the
right ones. Cut through Nevada
to get from Texas to Minnesota.
I've had up to here of that, though.
You can't make any time.

HITCHHIKER

You going to solder them plates
on? Reason I ask is solder prob-
ably won't hold.

Cooper doesn't answer but continues about his business.
The night is full of the lonely baritone noises of
fading traffic.

COOPER

We got the plates, we're gonna
need to have the permit papers
too, goes without saying.

With the Hitchhiker following, he goes to collect the
papers. The ones for the trailers he finds in a cabinet
in the lower left corner of their front panels; the one
for the tractor he finds inside the shotgun door.

COOPER (cont'd)

Sometimes you can find a dirty book
or two back here.

He kicks the Boxline's second axle and gives the Hitch-
hiker a heavy wrench.

COOPER (cont'd)

Listen, Hot Rod, take this wrench
and loosen every eight bolts right
here.

HITCHHIKER

I'll loosen, just you don't
call me Hot Rod.

42. (Cont'd)

42.

Cooper takes a length of plastic hose and runs one end into the Boxline's tank. Vapor rises from the diesel fuel. He sucks on the other end to produce a siphon, which he inserts into his own tank, spitting out the fuel that reached his mouth. During one of the brief moments of the siphoning that we see, he knocks on the side panel of the rig and listens for the echo.

COOPER (cont'd)

Hello there, baby. You gonna wait on me?

He hangs his head, feigning disappointment when there's no response. Another trucker, returning to his rig, sees them at work. Everyone is silent for a minute but he says nothing and continues on his way.

HITCHHIKER

There.

COOPER

Where?

HITCHHIKER

I'm done here.

Cooper walks over and extracts the axle from the Boxline, then puts it in the sleeper.

COOPER

We'll slip it in later. Let's move. Let's move out of here.

He looks around, for the first time, really, to see if anyone other than the one trucker has noticed them.

COOPER (cont'd)

Heh, you don't think anyone been watching us?

He makes a pair of eyes, feigning fear.

HITCHHIKER

Not a chance of that... I see what you're doing.

Cooper winks and puts his arm over the Hitchhiker's shoulders.

COOPER

We're cousins, fella. You're Cousin Bill and I'm Cousin Bob.

43. INT. TRACTOR

43.

The radio is playing softly in the background. Cooper is drinking from a milk bottle full of coffee.

COOPER

(to radio)

He don't know squat, fella.
You better ask me.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Chief, what's it like down there
after TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY NINE
hours?

RADIO INDIAN

There are water drops on the lid
of the box, but it's very dark and
hard to see. As a result.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

What does it look like from down
there? What would you most like
to take with you down there? What
do you think about down there?

COOPER

That KOMA radio in Oklahoma City
has this real Osage Indian, you
know what I mean, and they buried
him underground, six feet under,
in a coffin... and every hour on
the half hour they get a report
from him.

HITCHHIKER

They're just probably putting his
voice on the air. You see him?

COOPER

Yeah, well he says that he's having
some hallucinations and that it's
dark and hot and that there!: He's
been sweating a lot. hell, any
given individual would sweat down
there. But, anyway, there's not
that much to say, so he keeps
saying the same thing, so lately
they've just been playing what he
said the first time over and over
again, every hour on the half.

HITCHHIKER

He could be running out of air and
them not know it. See? Because
it's on the radio, it's not real,
not necessarily.

43. (Cont'd)

43.

COOPER

About the air, that's something they must take into consideration. But, you know, when I was a kid my father used to bring me with him on trips and we would listen to that KOMA.

The Hitchhiker moves to interrupt.

COOPER (cont'd)

You shut up for just a second and let me tell you something. The whole car smelled of fruit and he'd be analyzing the rattles and we would listen to KOMA!... Hell, I'd wake up late at night and he wouldn't as usual have been paying attention and two other stations would have run on top of KOMA.

Cooper tries to imitate the sound of this but can't.

COOPER (cont'd)

He would only be looking out the window. Then I'd go back to sleep and, next thing, we would be in some town and him going to half a dozen bungalow courts, looking for the best price. You know, at night the towns would seem real big and goosebumpy with all the lights, but the next morning when you woke up it was different. It was like anywhere else you've seen.

HITCHHIKER

Where's your father? Mine's sick in Kansas.

COOPER

Him? He got hit by a fast moving vehicle, had a nervous breakdown. We'd come down for breakfast and find the newspaper in the icebox... I mean he put it there. He died at breakfast and when they buried him I kept thinking, maybe he's not all dead.

The CAMERA moves onto the road ahead.

COOPER O.C.

I tell you this because we're comparing notes.

44. EXT. RIG ON HIGHWAY

44.

The rig swings onto the truck route into Memphis. They pass a family of Indians with an overheated radiator.

COOPER O.C.

Then I run for Memphis, put her into Memphis next morning.

45. EXT. CITY STREET

45.

Cooper has put on a rumpled blazer and clip bowtie. He is slicking down his hair with shaving lotion. The rig looks as though it must be parked illegally.

COOPER

She ain't gonna believe it's me, I swear. Want some?

HITCHHIKER

That's okay.

COOPER

You come with me.

HITCHHIKER

Really? I'm not dressed.

COOPER

Yeah, but we'll get a taxi and you can tell her I been developing some land in Arizona.

46. EXT. CAB STAND

46.

They roust a sleepy cab driver.

47. INT. TAXI

47.

They are sitting in the back seat smoking big cigars. Cooper hands the Hitchhiker the band from his cigar.

COOPER

You keep a lot of these, they'll give you a prize. Okay now, (we're going to do) just this and then we're going to get to work on the business side of things. Now as I see it, we got to first of all create a reputation for speedy delivery. You know what I mean: speedy?

47. (Cont'd)

47.

He laughs and slaps the cab driver on the back.

COOPER (cont'd)

Hey there, slow down a bit.
We're paying for this.

He returns to the Hitchhiker with a histrionic expression.

COOPER (cont'd)

About my wife. I want you to
know that I didn't exactly marry
Eleanor Roosevelt.

48. EXT. SHABBY TRAILER PARK

48.

No one is in sight. Cooper approaches a vacant plot
and shrugs to indicate that his (former) wife's trailer
is gone.

COOPER

Well, this is where it used to
be.

HITCHHIKER

Maybe she moved. It happens.

COOPER

No, she wouldn't have moved and
not tell me.

Cooper tests the firmness of the turf. It should now
be at least ambiguous whether or not Cooper ever had a
wife and knew her to be here. The Hitchhiker turns to
look at Cooper who seems to be speaking with someone
in the neighboring trailer.

COOPER

Did you ever know someone who
said we'd be wild and crazy and
free, and then you find out she's
been using the imperial we?

The Hitchhiker looks and sees to his surprise that there
is no one inside the trailer. Cooper gives him an empty
smile.

49. EXT. UNFINISHED STREET NEAR OUTSKIRTS OF MEMPHIS -
DAY

49.

Cooper walks into an auto parts store. The store is
set by itself in an open flat of unclaimed land, full
of burnt brick and rotting paper. Manifolds and genera-

49. (Cont'd)

43.

tor belts hang from the darkness near the ceiling. Cooper tinkers with items on the display racks until a salesman approaches him.

COOPER

Let me talk to your man back there.

SALESMAN

I'm the only one here now. Can I help you?

COOPER

Yeah, two things... Well, one thing. You got any stuff that needs hauling down Interstate 40 West?

SALESMAN

No, don't think so. Why?

COOPER

Well, I'm just now getting into the freight business and I have some cheap rates.

SALESMAN

It's wholesalers haul for us. So no is the answer, I guess.

COOPER

That's okay.

He retreats from the counter and is halfway to the door before he summons the courage to return and ask:

COOPER (cont'd)

Another thing, you in the market for carburetors? Someone give me 10,000 of them in payment on his job there. I'll trade, I'll take cash: whichever.

SALESMAN

No, I don't think so.

COOPER

Okay, okay. Hmm, where might I try? Where's best?

SALESMAN

Guess you could try the gas stations around town.

49. (Cont'd)

49.

COOPER
I could, I could.

SALESMAN
We don't have the demand right
here, you see.

Cooper makes a vague pass at his nose and shies toward
the entrance.

COOPER
I'm with Bingo Freight Company
if anyone wants to know.

SALESMAN
Thank you there, Bingo.

COOPER
Okay! That's right.

On the way out, Cooper replaces an article that he'd
thought to buy.

50. EXT. STREET

50.

Cooper notices a patrol car moving down the street.
He retreats into the nearest doorway and holds his
breath.

51. EXT. GAZEBO IN CITY PARK - DAY

51.

An elderly loafer is seated beside Cooper. His pockets
are stuffed with sandwich papers and he wears a large
rosette in his lapel. Cooper is showing him pictures
of his family.

COOPER
They was taken eight years ago
and it ain't the same now. You
can't judge.
(and though he
holds the photos)
Give 'em here.

He reflects a bit.

COOPER (cont'd)
She had a kind of... smokey voice.
She thought I'd be great at posing
on album covers.

52. THE HITCHHIKER

52.

approaching them, hesitating lest he interrupt their conversation. He carries a newspaper.

53. HITCHHIKER'S POV

53.

COOPER

Oh. This here is Edward.

HITCHHIKER

(off)

Hi there.

Edward nods but says nothing. Cooper is abruptly full of good cheer. Edward gives him a leaflet.

COOPER

Edward here used to be mentioned on the City Limit signs.

HITCHHIKER

That right?

Cooper turns to Edward and says of the Hitchhiker:

COOPER

He's not a social talker...
Listen, Edward, we got to move.
I'd invite you to come on along
but we got to move.

EDWARD

That's right.

COOPER

So say hey, fella.

He moves awkwardly off with the Hitchhiker. With him, we inspect the leaflet in extreme closeup. It reads:

"You in trouble? You looking
for a friend and don't know
what's the matter? Call GUIDE-
LINE and kick it around with
them. WE'LL listen if THEY
don't. That number is TA 65000
and we're right here in Memphis."

COOPER (cont'd)

He ain't half bad. No he ain't.

HITCHHIKER

Any luck?

53. (Cont'd)

53.

COOPER

No. Hell, I don't know about stuff to say.

HITCHHIKER

Maybe we could sell just the components, not the whole carburetor. That happens, you know.

The Hitchhiker doesn't take the idea seriously, of course. He simply wants to show Cooper that Cooper would be completely helpless without him.

COOPER

No, that's no good.

HITCHHIKER

Doesn't make any difference, anyway: I got us a haul.

He waves the newspaper at Cooper. Cooper doesn't answer. He is interested but wary that the Hitchhiker didn't mention this at first.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

There's a brick plant outside of town that makes bricks but it wants some sewer tiles hauled. That's what they said, 4000 hexag tiles. Fees is half in advance, half on delivery. Papers got to be in order, though.

COOPER

Who's doing the loading if I may ask?

HITCHHIKER

They got two hands that will load but we got to help because otherwise they'll run into overtime.

COOPER

Guess it beats waiting around here.

HITCHHIKER

And another thing. There's a chicken farmer name of John Parker down the way's got sixty coops of chickens he needs sent to Tulsa. He works on and off at the plant.

COOPER

How much he give us for the ride?

53. (Cont'd)

53.

HITCHHIKER

You want to know, he give us
forty dollars.

COOPER

We'll haul them for sixty
dollars, more than likely.

HITCHHIKER

I don't know.

Cooper is embarrassed that he must depend on the Hitchhiker to find a haul.

COOPER

Well, it don't make a helluva
lot of difference if you consider
that our planet looks like a thin
dime from the moon.

Cooper and the Hitchhiker walk through the park past the County Courthouse. The CAMERA is still tracking with them. As they pass the jail, Cooper shouts up toward the windows. He can't see anyone but he shouts anyway, knowing the cons are watching.

COOPER

Hey, you big buzzards, what're
you doing up there?

FIRST CON

We cleaning the paint off our
shoes. What you doing?

COOPER

Well, you can see. I'm just
cuttin' down the boulevard here.

He imitates his own walk and smiles at the absurdity of the very idea.

SECOND CON

Yeah, you lookin' pretty, too.

COOPER

Why don't you come on down here.
Just tell them you're tired of
sittin' around and cleanin' off
paint.

SECOND CON

That Mr. Key Man won't let us.
Yeah, ain't a chance of that.
Yeah.

53. (Cont'd)

53.

COOPER

And who's he that he won't let
you?

SECOND CON

He's Gautama Jack Geeter and you
can't do anything right to please
him.

COOPER

Oh yeah?

SECOND CON

He's the Sun of Hope.

COOPER

That's funny. Must be a Marine
in there. Okay, you be careful
now.

SECOND CON

You be careful, too. Gautama Jack
gonna be lookin' to break your head.

THIRD CON

Hey, man, what's the number? You
know my cousin?

COOPER

No. I don't even know you.

FOURTH CON

Hey, man, you know Jerry the Mars?
You tell her that Billy's gonna
die of heartache. 3725 South 4th.

Cooper is too polite not to respond to each of the
requests.

COOPER

I don't know her or where she
lives.

THIRD CON

Hey, man, what's the number?

Cooper waves his arms. He is amused.

COOPER

Can't answer any more questions.

54. EXT. CITY STREET

54.

COOPER

We get us some supplies, though,
and we don't have to leave the
road for pit stops. We have every-
thing we need, like the Boxcar Kids.
We can move.

55. EXT. STREET

55.

They are walking and come across a sad man dressed,
evidently to advertise a sporting goods store, in the
form of a huge baseball. Cooper addresses the man.

COOPER

You get hot in there?

BASEBALL

Sometimes.

He motions them away, then withdraws his arms into the
papier mache shell.

COOPER

It's probably better business
for your store, looking like a
baseball.

BASEBALL

Please leave me alone. Don't
ever touch me.

COOPER

It's only something I said.

Mortified, the man moves for the corner of a building.
Cooper blocks his retreat, still curious. Unexpectedly,
they have a private moment.

BASEBALL

Forget about me. I'm nothing
to you.

COOPER

Okay, I'm sorry.

56. EXT. LOADING PLATFORM AT MEAT PACKING PLANT

56.

While the Hitchhiker distracts the boss, Cooper steals
a pork shank. The workers see them and don't care,
though they aren't amused either. Dave Dudley begins
to sing Tom T. Hall's "Anything Leaving Town Today."

57. SERIES OF ANGLES 57.

that show them wandering through the city.

58. EXT. GROCERY STORE 58.

The Hitchhiker snatches a case of cokes off a truck parked in front of the store.

59. EXT. CITY PARK 59.

The two return through the park, past the benches of old men in faded denims who sit in detached silence. They pass a group of policemen sitting on the steps of the Courthouse. Cooper sits right in front of them. He winks at the Hitchhiker, then turns to face them.

COOPER

Can you give me proper directions to the Courthouse?

POLICEMEN

You're sitting on the Courthouse, fella.

COOPER

Well, so I am. Look at there.

He surveys the building with mock surprise, then gets up and walks off.

60. EXT. BRICK PLANT OFFICE 60.

COOPER

I don't know.

FOREMAN

You fellas haul me, you have to do it for less than it cost me to run them piggyback on the train. I'm not on go higher than eighty dollars.

HITCHHIKER

How much does each of the tiles weigh? Tell it true.

FOREMAN

A tile will go 2½ pounds.

COOPER

Look, this rock weighs three pounds, and it's not as heavy as your tile.

60. (Cont'd)

60.

Cooper drops the rock and winks at the Hitchhiker.

FOREMAN

Okay, even, a hundred ten dollars. Out back will take care of you.

COOPER

You got yourself a deal.

Cooper would like to mark the moment with a bit of ceremony but the Foreman turns to something else, completely businesslike.

61. EXT. BRICKYARD

61.

The Hitchhiker is not present. The FIRST HAND has an alcoholic look.

COOPER

These tiles get away from you, they take you hand off, I always said.

FIRST HAND

Hold on to them, then.

COOPER

I aint' a packer. Want a packer. Want a packer, not a lush.

FIRST HAND.

There's an insult if I ever heard one. I've had enough of this.

COOPER

You and me both.

But they keep stacking as before.

SECOND HAND

If I know anything, I know you fellas gonna be running overweight.

COOPER

Looks like it.

Cooper looks straight at the sun.

COOPER

(joyously)

What do you think's happening, man? We're loading the tiles, getting loaded here.

61. (Cont'd)

61.

No one else finds this nearly as surprising.

FIRST HAND

You (won't) get a packer fine
as me.

62. EXT. CHICKEN FARM

62.

Cooper and the Hitchhiker load the chickens. Though he finds the work distasteful, Cooper stacks the coops with obvious expertise. The chickens protest every time a new coop slams into place. The FARMER, a short man with a senseless face, has shouted himself hoarse.

FARMER

You wait 'til sunset, hear?
Them are friers and I don't
want any problem of shrinkage
on them, can't lose more than
four per cent of their total
weight. And hygiene? What
about hygiene?

The farmer motions Cooper to his side.

FARMER (cont'd)

You got to ventilate them good.
You have them in Tulsa before the
sun gets high tomorrow... Other-
wise there's going to be the
shrinkage. You understand me
here? You even want to kill them?
What's with you? You guarantee live
delivery?

Cooper is transfixed once again.

63. EXT. TRACTOR - LATE AFTERNOON

63.

They are underneath the first trailer at the edge of the road, waiting for dusk. Heat waves rise from the pavement behind them and the chickens cluck softly in the background. Reclining, Cooper reads from the Almanac.

COOPER

It doesn't say about chickens
but listen to this one. "Lich-
tenstein's Oracle. Very similar
to the Hooded Oracle, but consider-
ably larger and usually a more in-
tense orange. The points to look
for are the bill and the wing bar,
which is yellow, not white..."

63. (Cont'd)

63.

Cooper chuckles in the Hitchhiker's direction.

COOPER (cont'd)

"... Repeat: not white. Sexes are similar." Okay now, here's the voice: A harsh, rasping fuss note, ike-ike-ike, kree-kree-kree (that's according to Ernest Kincaid), often punctuated in the evening by piping whistles, a chut chut chut, whew whew. Boy, that's one you don't hear every day. Ike ike ike.

Cooper points at one of the birds, sitting on a fence wire.

COOPER (cont'd)

You see that little fella? He picks himself a wire and it's his.

64. EXT. ROAD SHOULDER

64.

Cooper, who stumbles through the grass with the book open in front of him, shrieking as he tries to read: Chut chut chut chut chut chut chut, kree kree, ike ike ike. The birds scatter.

65. EXT. TRACTOR RUNNING BOARD

65.

HITCHHIKER

Those weren't orioles. Those were magpies.

COOPER

They talk bird, don't they?

HITCHHIKER

Hmm. You talk bird?

COOPER

'Pon occasion. You think we can move now? Boy howdy, I can't wait on you.

They leave in tremendous haste.

66. SERIES OF ANGLES

66.

On the road.

67. EXT. ROADHOUSE

67.

The roadhouse steps are occupied by waifs and tramps and travelling jokers, with no world to themselves. Each seems to disappear before the CAMERA can get an even shot at him.

68. INT. ROADHOUSE

68.

Cooper enters the roadhouse and smiles like Gary Cooper, anxious not to inconvenience anyone. The Hitchhiker follows. The other drivers ignore them.

COOPER

I'm gonna have a ribeye steak
and some coffee.

HITCHHIKER

And me, I'm gonna have a sheep-
herder's sandwich.

WAITRESS

(suspiciously)
What's that?

The waitress leaves to attend to another customer.

HITCHHIKER

You want me to say?

COOPER

I don't care.

HITCHHIKER

Well, it's a piece of ewe.

He looks at Cooper but Cooper registers nothing.

COOPER

Don't talk bad to her. You
listen to me, how I talk.

69. THE DINER'S MANAGER

69.

stands behind the kitchen counter, daubing at his neck with his apron.

COOPER

Hey, lookit.

Cooper leaves his seat and walks back to the kitchen.

70. A GROUP OF DRIVERS

70.

Most of them in uniform, approach the waitress and ask to buy four raw potatoes. The Hitchhiker watches them.

71. COOPER AND MANAGER

71.

COOPER

How's it going, Mr. John? You tell me.

MANAGER

Okay. Police have been coming around asking questions about your description. They've got complaints.

COOPER

Well, how about that? Why didn't you come tell me?

72. THE DRIVERS

72.

MANAGER O.C.

I was going to here but I didn't.

The drivers get the potatoes and leave the diner. Curious, the Hitchhiker moves to the window. He sees them approach Cooper's rig.

73. MANAGER, COOPER, HITCHHIKER

73.

MANAGER

You gonna be okay? I know you're gonna be okay.

COOPER

Yeah, sure.

He leaves the kitchen.

HITCHHIKER

Hey, mister, they're going to put the spuds in our stack.

COOPER

Well I'm going right out there and clean some plow.

Cooper goes to the cashier and asks for a roll of nickels. As he waits, he winks at the Hitchhiker and explains with a clenched fist:

73. (Cont'd)

73.

COOPER

Wrist pin.

He pays with two dollar bills from his paper sack.

74. EXT. ROADHOUSE APRON

74.

There are at least thirty rigs on the apron, their coolers humming in unison.

COOPER

Now hold on there.

Cooper is anxious to dismiss the whole business as clean fun. Nowhere in the following is he as serious as the other drivers.

FIRST DRIVER

Don't come no closer than that
there line, Gypsy Joe.

He gestures vaguely at the area in front of Cooper. But Cooper comes ahead and the other drivers withdraw, rather embarrassed, except the one with the potatoes, who looks confused. Cooper moves into a boxer's dance, sketching out punches and retreating from imaginary thrusts.

COOPER

Throw a handful of dust through
there, I'll give you five dollars.

MAN WITH POTATOES

Never mind, never mind.

Near exhaustion, Cooper pauses to wipe his brow.

COOPER

Never mind, never mind, never
mind, never mind.

MAN WITH POTATOES

Here, catch.

He tosses two of the spuds at Cooper, and when Cooper tries to catch them, hits him in the Adam's Apple, then backs off quickly. Cooper coughs but apart from that gives no indication that he has been hurt.

COOPER

That's stupid. I don't want
to fight, not now I don't.

74. (Cont'd)

74.

FIRST DRIVER

Well you're gonna have to fight Frank. Because he's lonesome.

COOPER

I got to go. Mess around with my rig, though, that's no way to do.

He runs and jumps on the spud holder, who has turned his back, knocking him over. Cooper bites him on the nape of the neck. The other drivers haul him off and pin him to the ground. They hesitate to strike him again.

COOPER

You fellas don't want to be hitting me. You know? You gonna hit me because I tell the truth?

A TROUBLEMAKER has brought a gas hose over to the group. He squirts it in Cooper's direction.

COOPER (cont'd)

You want me to stay here?

Cooper makes no protest as he is soaked to the skin with gas except literally to give the Troublemaker the evil eye. He feels insulted more threatened. But the Troublemaker pays no attention. He stands back from the group and lights a match with his fingernail.

TROUBLEMAKER

Hey, watch out here. Look at here.

COOPER

Hey, Cowboy? You want to put out that match.

The Troublemaker keeps feinting in Cooper's direction, but Cooper won't budge.

75. THE HITCHHIKER

75.

at the back of the rig, edging into the darkness, alarmed.

HITCHHIKER

Leave him alone. Hey, you bastards. Hey over there.

When they look up, he runs off.

76. COOPER

75.

With the crowd dwindling, the situation has reached a stalemate. Cooper retreats in the Hitchhiker's direction.

FIRST VOICE

You there. You think about what we could have done. It could have been picante.

SECOND VOICE

You want him?

THIRD VOICE

If he wasn't good for you, I don't want him.

COOPER

Damn, damn, damn.

He takes off his shirt and leaves it behind him. Before he leaves the SHOT he notices the plates on the back of one of the rigs, and among them Arizona 41450.

77. EXT. FREIGHT-YARDS

77.

Cooper, standing beneath a jerkwater in the local freight-yards, prepares for the shock.

COOPER

Go ahead now.

The Hitchhiker pulls the release. Cooper is covered with a torrent of water but makes no sound. He tries to rinse himself off with his pants. He takes his shoes in one hand and walks out of the FRAME.

COOPER

(off)

You go back (to the sleeper) and get me some more clothes.

78. COOPER

78.

sitting on a stack of ties, shivering. The Hitchhiker approaches and gives him the clothes. Cooper starts putting them on.

COOPER

We gonna have to be more careful about the company we keep...

78. (Cont'd)

78.

He has doubts about whether his was the most effective approach to the truckers, and so now, even afterwards, he tries others and imagines to himself what their effect would have been.

COOPER

Cowboy, you and me gonna tangle.
Tangle our tools... You done one
thing wrong. You stepped on my
property.

He strokes the back of his ear and sees that his fingers are covered with blood.

COOPER

Well, look at that. One of
those boys went and tore my
head... You know, I'll just
bet it was old Arizona 41450.
What do you think?

HITCHHIKER

It sounds right to me.

COOPER

Everything sounds right to you.

HITCHHIKER

Why shouldn't it?

79. COOPER AND HITCHHIKER

79.

They are walking back to the rig. Cooper is glad to have the Hitchhiker with him.

COOPER

All of them cowboys and jokers
just worried about making their
runs inside of eight hours and
getting on home. Yeah, well
who cares about that? When we
can put our feet on the chairs
and see the country like we was
somebodies in the parlor car?

The Hitchhiker is surprised at this new philosophical mood.

HITCHHIKER

They don't mess around, do they?
You see that fellow with the
match? He had a mind of his own.

79. (Cont'd)

79.

Cooper walks ahead in silence.

COOPER

We gonna have to find us some
paint shop and change the rig
(so) it looks different.

80.

EXT. PAINT SHOP

80.

We hear the rig's engine ON SOUND in b.g. Cooper uses
a hammer to break a lock on the supply shed. Inside,
he sniffs at the pots of paint.

COOPER

Here's some paint and brushes.
Find a ladder.

HITCHHIKER

Where's a ladder?

COOPER

Hell, I don't know. Just find
one.

He surveys the interior at a standstill but makes noises
of activity.

COOPER (cont'd)

It's scary in here. Let me out
of here.

No one is keeping him there.

81.

THE HITCHHIKER

81.

is standing on a ladder, painting sloppily over the
"JIBARO BROS." inscription, while Cooper stands below
and watches.

COOPER

She's gonna need another coat.
Then we'll put a distinctive
stripe down the middle of the
cab.

HITCHHIKER

That sounds okay... I'm getting
stuff on me, though.

COOPER

You scared about getting caught
with me?

81. (Cont'd)

81.

HITCHHIKER

No, I don't think so because
I don't think it will happen.

COOPER

Thanks for the confidence but
you get caught with me, some
they'll blame on me but some
on you.

The Hitchhiker has no reaction to this. Once again
Cooper is full of mischief and unsettled arguments.

COOPER (cont'd)

Another thing: I got a right
to be scared of getting caught
with you. Since you could be
Charles Whitman, who was bonkers,
period.

82. INT. TRACTOR

82.

They pass a sign which reads: "SCALE HOUSE AHEAD, ALL
VEHICLES WITH MORE THAN TWO AXLES MUST STOP FOR WEIGHING,
etc." Cooper gears down and pulls onto the shoulder.
They are at the crest of a hill, looking into a wide
valley. "JIBARO BROS." shows through the new coat of
paint.

COOPER

Forgot about this house. It's
not my memory but it is my me-
mory. Strange, so strange, I
oughta be writing some of this
down.

HITCHHIKER

What should we do? I'm tired.

COOPER

You wait right here.

Cooper gets out of the tractor and walks across the
road to wave down a car coming from the direction of
the scale house.

DRIVER

Trouble?

COOPER

Listen, mister, did you see
any police down the way? We
want to ask them a question.

82. (Cont'd)

82.

DRIVER

Don't remember seeing anyone.
Wait now...

COOPER

Well, did you or didn't you?

The driver shrugs and pulls away. Cooper braces against the undertow of other cars, passing within a few yards of him on the right of way, a simple blur in the FRAME.

COOPER

(shouting)

Well, you go on and don't
worry about us.

Cooper tries to flag down a second car, headed in their own direction. One slows down. He turns to address the Hitchhiker.

COOPER (cont'd)

This here's a flare gun and you
just give me a big flare if the
scale is closed.

The car is stopped, waiting for them.

COOPER (cont'd)

Hitch a ride with this fella and
have him drop you a mile past the
house in question.

HITCHHIKER

I understand. You don't have to
tell me if I understand.

Cooper points at his head to signal that he is thinking.

COOPER

Wait... or half a mile. Just watch
for any parked car along the way
and use some judgement, whatever's
available.

The Hitchhiker leaves the tractor. He tries to conceal the gun in his jacket.

COOPER (cont'd)

You mind now! From ten feet that
thing can kill and burn a man to
death.

83. INT. TRACTOR

83.

Cooper is sitting on the running board, cleaning his nails with the tines of a fork.

RADIO

Plus one thousand free gladiola bulbs, plus a handy fence arm, plus three coops of Rhode Island Red Chicks, plus a footprint of John the Baptist direct from the Holy Land. And listen, folks, Sunday afternoon at 1:30 PM there is a AA Fuel Action at Tulsa's Mingo Valley Dragway. Don Garlitz will be there, looking to even the score with Benny LaHoud (APPROPRIATE NOISES)... We have a winner, we have a winner!

84. FLARE

84.

In the distance a flare lofts over the countryside and falls to earth, down and down and still down, violet then white.

85. EXT. RIG

85.

Cooper is coming toward us when suddenly we see him flip off his lights and pull onto the shoulder. The CAMERA PANS to the scale house, a rural Victorian structure, where the attendant is just opening up for the night. We see him flip on the exterior floodlights. A police car appears from the darkness.

86. INT. TRACTOR

86.

Cooper shakes his head and rolls downhill, with his engine off, into a rest area. He thinks for a moment, then jumps out of the cab, mumbling to himself.

COOPER

I'm stretching my legs, that's all.

87. EXT. SCALE HOUSE

87.

Cooper comes running up to the scale house wearing a pair of very dark glasses. The PATROLMEN stand inside with the ATTENDANT. Cooper is panting so hard he starts to cough.

87. (Cont'd)

87.

FIRST COP

What's the trouble? Huh?

COOPER

Excuse me but it's horrible.
I swear to God.

FIRST COP

What's horrible? Come on and
say.

COOPER

My partner, that's Gary Wells,
he's out to kill me. He's drunk
up top the second hill with that
.32 and says he's killed Earl,
he's just gonna wait till I come
back and kill me the same way he
done Earl.

FIRST COP

What?

COOPER

But come back I ain't gonna.
That's what. You go on up there,
come back and tell me that a .32's
pretty but it can't stop anything.

FIRST COP

What's your name? Where's this
fellow name Wells?

COOPER

I said already. Up top the second
hill, on the feeder road there. I
don't have to say it twice.

SECOND COP

Let's take a look.

COOPER

He's only half a friend, as you
can see.

They walk out onto the scale, everyone a little confused.
The cops get in their car.

FIRST COP

You. Get in here.

COOPER

(shouting)

Nossir. Not me. Gary is all
you got to know.

87. (Cont'd)

87.

FIRST COP

You do like I say.

COOPER

I ain't gonna go back, get shot
at more than twice. I got sense...
I'm not bank president, but I got
sense.

FIRST COP

Well, wait right here then.

COOPER

(to Attendant)

You better go along, though.

ATTENDANT

No, I'll stay right here.

They take off, leaving Cooper alone with the Attendant.
It is quiet.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

You want a smoke or something?

COOPER

Sure. Listen, I'm sorry to
bother you this way. They
gonna send Gary down, though,
it'll all be over.

ATTENDANT

That's all right. I understand.

COOPER

What kind of wage does a fella
get around here?

ATTENDANT

Well, I can't say but I can tell
you this: it ain't as bad as
you'd think.

They sit in silence for a while, then Cooper whispers...

COOPER

You hear that?

ATTENDANT

What?

COOPER

Out in the weeds. Out there,
where the weeds.

87. (Cont'd)

87.

ATTENDANT

What do you mean?

COOPER

Jesus, I bet that's ole Gary.
What do you say?

The Attendant is suddenly alert with responsibility. He goes to his locker and fetches a pistol.

ATTENDANT

Don't tell anyone I got this,
okay?

COOPER

Sure.

The Attendant gets his flashlight, flips off all the lights and walks outside. Cooper takes a gooseneck lamp off the desk and conceals it inside his coat. He dogs the Attendant's heels to keep him from seeing.

ATTENDANT

Now out where did you say?

COOPER

Out there. Where I said.

ATTENDANT

You know, we better go back inside. If he's out there, we're in plain view. Anyway, I'm cold.

Before he turns, Cooper clubs him with the lamp. Ineptly, but he falls like a stone. He then sets about concealing any evidence of the crime. He picks the pistol up with his handkerchief and runs it into the weeds. Then he gets down on his hands and knees and whispers into the Attendant's ear:

COOPER

It was Gary got the drop on us. Gary Wells. It was Gary got the drop on us. You hear?

He drags the Attendant over the rise of the shoulder toward a nearby grove of trees, whispering to him the whole time. When the Attendant comes to again, he gives him an ineffective but theatrical karate chop and takes his wallet, which briefly fills him with confusion. He continues to drag the body toward the woods but the whole business begins to seem absurdly troublesome. He snatches together handfuls of grass and flowers to make a bower in which he rests the Attendant's head.

87. (Cont'd)

87.

He hasn't taken two steps from the Attendant when he realizes he will have to make some decision about the wallet. He stops dead. Without turning to look at the Attendant he throws the wallet, unopened, over his shoulder back in the Attendant's direction, but the whole business begins to seem absurdly troublesome. He curses and heads back to his rig with a Buster Keaton face.

88. COOPER

88.

returns to the scale house with the rig. He parks on the scale, goes to the trailer and gets one of the chickens. ON SOUND, he wrings its neck. Then he spreads its blood on the walkway in front of the house. He sits on his haunches and first with a ballpoint (his shirt pocket is lined with them), with his finger spells out the following message in the blood, all of this to throw the cops off his scent.

MESSAGE

HELP I'M...

(he erases the
"I'm" and thinks)

... GARY WELLS SNUCK UP AND...

He describes a long arrow in the direction the cops have gone. Imagination fails him and he sighs. He looks around for other enemies, then starts back to the rig. He notices that some of the blood has gotten on his soles and he is leaving tracks, so he takes a slight detour, actually a run, through the weeds. Now he remembers the chicken, runs back and picks it up. He spots the loose head, digs a hole for it in the shoulder with his heel and buries it; this isn't a precautionary measure but a simple amenity.

Then he gets in the cab and takes off. As he does, we see that Old Sam, now perhaps forgotten by the audience, has chosen this place to descend and seek his fortune. He steps from the tool bay, stretches and inspects his new surroundings, with no idea of what awaits him.

89. EXT. HIGHWAY

89.

Cooper's headlights pick up the eyes of the Hitchhiker glowing in the tall grass beside the shoulder. Cooper stops. The Hitchhiker opens the shotgun door and Cooper throws the dead chicken at him. He hesitates, puzzled, then clambers into the cab. Cooper swats him on the shoulder in anger. The Hitchhiker doesn't dare ask him why he is upset.

90.

EXT. ROADHOUSE

95.

Cooper is parked across the way from a small roadhouse. Dozens of rigs stand on the apron, loaded with cotton from Texas and crude oil from Wyoming, with beef and cement. A fat man sits in his accustomed chair in the bed of an ancient pickup, eating his dinner. Half a dozen dogs lie at his feet, one with a large ruffle collar in the Elizabethan mode.

HITCHHIKER

Why we stopping here?

COOPER

Hello! There's them company drivers was having a lot of fun with me. Oh, it's cute and they can talk about me far as Albuquerque, have a lot of fun.

The Hitchhiker is embarrassed.

COOPER (cont'd)

They're probably sitting in there now, thinking that fella we seen in the pretty Peterbilt, he's a pistol, a real pistol.

Cooper gets out of the cab and crosses the road, heedless of passing traffic. The Hitchhiker follows. They approach a Navajo tandem. Cooper easily dismantles its alarm system.

COOPER (cont'd)

Well, it's likely old Arizona won't be laughing because...

And in the spirit of an illustrated lecture, Cooper performs the following acts of sabotage as he announces them.

COOPER (cont'd)

... these inside tires are going to be only slightly flat to where he won't notice them till they catch fire.

He stops work to explain:

COOPER (cont'd)

Innertubes rub against the tire or one tire on another and there you've got a fire... oh, yeah.
FIRE!

Full of bluff, he looks around to see if anyone has heard him.

90. (Cont'd)

90.

COOPER (cont'd)

It'll maybe spread to the van
and then he'll be lucky to get
away with just his tractor.

The Hitchhiker has walked around behind the rig to compose himself.

COOPER (cont'd)

Then, let's see, we gonna have
to open the cockpits on his (diesel)
tanks. That oil will coat the tires
after he gets moving and maybe he'll
wonder how he ever jackknifed... like
that! And if the flat tires catch
right, the oil will just have to be
flammable and make the whole thing,
you know, complicated... Yeah, and
it won't help, not having any spares.

He pulls two spares from the Navajo's rack and puts them
on his own. Then he walks to the rear of the rig.

COOPER (cont'd)

But in case his van don't burn we'll
make sure his jackknife spreads the
pharmaceuticals all over the road.

He breaks the seal and unlatches the rear doors. A bad
jolt would throw them wide open, it should be clear.
A sign on the bumper reads: "CAUTION. REFRIGERATE AT
40 DEGREES. PHARMACEUTICALS". Now Cooper notices that
the license isn't the same as the one he spotted at the
previous roadhouse but he says nothing. Instead, he
moves to another rig, perhaps a Transamerica, on the
runway beyond the apron.

COOPER (cont'd)

Now his friend here, he's never
gonna have a chance to jackknife
because we're gonna have to pull
the pin on his fifth wheel, so he's
gonna take off without his trailer.
You don't look if you're scared.

Cooper pulls the pin that attaches the trailer to the
dolly tongue.

COOPER (cont'd)

It'll fall on its face and they
won't find a crane strong enough
to couple them back up. Hell,
they'll be all day humping the
pharmaceuticals...

90. (Cont'd)

90

They start to walk back across the road to their rig. Cooper turns back to the Hitchhiker, in light traffic, and says:

COOPER

Boy, and I got more twists in me than a barrellful of snakes.

HITCHHIKER

You want to leave a mark? You could leave a mark.

COOPER

Let's get some dinner.

HITCHHIKER

Okay, but let's cook some of the pork.

COOPER

Naw, hell. Come on. We'll do that later.

They walk toward a hamburger stand down the road. The Hitchhiker, unobserved, cuts a step.

91. EXT. MOTEL

91.

They pass a motel with only a single customer. A Chevrolet with a whip antenna, evidently a honeymooner's, is parked in front of the furthest cabin. "HOT SPRINGS TONITE" is written in tempera on the side. Cooper studies the inscription and a swell of unfamiliar music accents the moment.

92. EXT. HAMBURGER STAND

92.

They stand at a tray, occupying one of the car berths for themselves. Highschool cowboys are cruising in the background.

COOPER

My record on this stretch is, oh, four hours and twenty minutes. we got time.

HITCHHIKER

I'm not worried about your record. Worried about my ass.

COOPER

Worry like that, you get a line on your forehead.

92. (Cont'd)

92.

HITCHHIKER

You just crazy?

COOPER

(evasively)

Not any more than the next fellow.

He looks around for a next fellow. From the car in the neighboring booth, three girls watch him.

HITCHHIKER

(off)

The very day after I left the service I met someone like you. A crazy quilt.

GIRL

Where's your car?

COOPER

I got a truck.

GIRL

Why didn't you bring it?

COOPER

It wouldn't fit. That's all.
End of conversation.

93. INT. TRACTOR

93.

Cooper and the Hitchhiker sit in the cab, eating from a tub of fried chicken. Across the way people are milling around the Transamerica; the tractor has driven out from under the trailer, which rests on its chin. The Navajo is gone.

Cooper prepares to roll and for the first time we see all the motions and postures associated with this: checking the oil, revving the engine in neutral to build pressure in the brakes, releasing the trailer brake, etc. With a solemn glance at the scene across the way, he moves into the right of way. The dash lights give a macabre cast to their faces.

COOPER

Hell, they gonna be trying but they'll never, nobody ever, take us. Which is why I used to drive the Utah line for one of the majors and loop them drivers once a month,
(more)

93. (Cont'd)

93

COOPER (cont'd)

get four Ashfork runs to their three, because they would never take me. The dispatcher was giving me the heaviest hardware loads he could find because he knew that I was the haulinest.

Here Dave Dudley begins singing, "I Washed My Face in the Morning Dew." Cooper holds his nose and blows his ears clear.

COOPER (cont'd)

It was okay. I got a teamster's wage and never had any chargeable accidents, I want you to know. We had to pay our own fines but we never had to mess with livestock and produce, like the gypsies; then they stopped the long runs and had us beating down to the train depots for the piggyback hauls. That laid off most the line drivers and the transcontinental runs were over boy howdy. Me, I was kept on because I'd given them a good week and took some care about my appearance. Fact, they even gave me my own rig, and damn I was proud. Proud, oh: like (I was) the first time I ever saw the ocean.

HITCHHIKER

What happened?

COOPER

Well, one time out by Salt Lake, I forget exactly when but the county was hanging a man if that's any help. I was running late, pulling a whole load of whiteface heifers out of Idaho.

Cooper sings this last line to Dudley's melody.

94. EXT. HIGHWAY

94.

A station wagon pulls up beside them in the opposite lane, blinking its lights. A man leans out the shotgun window and whistles at Cooper. There is oncoming traffic in the distance. Cooper leans out his window and the man winks at him, then flips on a floodlight that harshly

94. (Cont'd)

94.

illuminates a mattress in the rear of the station wagon.
A naked woman lolls on the mattress, shading her eyes.

MAN

Hurry.

COOPER

No thanks. We got our own deal
here.

The man salutes and the station wagon pulls ahead
Cooper turns to the Hitchhiker.

COOPER

Road whore.

95. INT. TRACTOR

95.

COOPER

Well, fellow had come into the
office, wanted five men to work
a heifer sale down in Nampa and
they'd given me the job. Well,
I was coming off the Wasatch Cut,
off the mountain there... Now I
would have hung some chains but
someone had stole mine. They
start the stealing whenever you
get close to the mountains...
Look at that.

He points out the view. The Hitchhiker is impatient.

HITCHHIKER

Yeah, I understand.

COOPER

Anyway, I was coming down off the
Wasatch Cut -- did I say that? --
and I had her rolled out all the
way and I hit some black ice, you
know, a thin little sheet of ice
that you couldn't even look to see.
And I started getting this shot.

(he moves his rump
around on the seat)

I had this feeling that I wasn't
there, that I could take the whole
thing over again and it would come
out different... Well, I'll save the
theory for when I'm dying. Here's
the thing: when I got crash to
the bottom, I sat there a half hour
and thought about the room I had
for improvement.

95. (Cont'd)

95.

HITCHHIKER

Were you hurt?

COOPER

No, but within half an hour
I was back there, you know:
out ahead of the play.

The Hitchhiker doesn't understand him.

HITCHHIKER

You have any trouble from the
police (if) you drive like you
say?

COOPER

What? What is that? That rear
bumper's covered with stickers
that support them. They go to
look at my plates, they have to
keep from smiling.

Cooper is winding out of second gear.

COOPER (cont'd)

Boy, I got this hill by the ass.

96. EXTREME CLOSEUP - MAP

96.

in the trucker's Atlas, too close for us to identify the
state. A pen marks off the towns on their main route.
ON SOUND the Hitchhiker recites their names. Then he
flips a page and a map of Arkansas comes into view.

97. OPEN HIGHWAY - DAY

97.

As they pass a sign we see Cooper, from behind the rig,
pitch a coke bottle over the top of the cab. It inter-
cepts a farm road sign with a crash.

98. INT. TRACTOR

98.

Cooper has a case of empty coke bottles on the seat
beside him.

99. EXT. TRACTOR

99.

The Hitchhiker leans out of the cab and tosses at one
of the larger signs, but the bottle lands with a clink
in the bar ditch.

100. INT. TRACTOR

100

COOPER

You have to lead them, it's like doves. Just lay into the path, don't think about anything else.

Again, the Hitchhiker leans cautiously out the window, and this time he scores a hit. He drums on the door with excitement.

COOPER

(sternly)

Don't jerk, you want a natural motion.

101. EXT. REAR OF RIG

101

We SEE three bottles sail out the shotgun window, toward a sign they never reach. Cooper, moments later, tosses one straight up to intercept the clearance sign on an underpass.

102. COOPER

102

has turned the rig around and is dangling a bottle on the right clearance baton. He is momentarily arrested by the strange hobo graffiti on the overpass. He makes a point of touching the cool stone. Above he sees a railroad semaphore. He sighs and gets in the cab, then heads back toward the underpass.

COOPER

Boy, I never had so much fun.

He passes close enough to the underpass to smash the bottle to smithereens without brushing the truck against the concrete.

HITCHHIKER

That was something.

103. EXT. HIGHWAY

103

A sign indicates that they have reached the top of Adolph Sutro Pass and are headed down the far side.

SIGN

ADOLPH SUTRO PASS ELEVATION
5,600 FEET GRADES OF 16% NEXT
21 MILES.

CAUTION

TRUCKS USE LOW GEAR.

103. (Cont'd)

101

COOPER

Just hit it a little bit.
Just a bit.

He points to the stickshift and the Hitchhiker knocks it out of gear.

104. VARIOUS SIGHTS

104

along their descent. The Hitchhiker reads from the Almanac.

HITCHHIKER O.C.

"The Arkansas flag contains a white diamond outlined in blue, for one reason: because at Murfreesboro the state contains the only diamond mine in the United States. Popularly called the Wonder State, it is full of other wonders, too. There are caverns and medicinal springs that gush piping hot out of the earth, bayous and cotton fields, clouds of ducks and even a church in the valley at Eureka Springs which has a hillside entrance into its steeple. There are minerals. Hence its nickname: The Land of Opportunity."

COOPER O.C.

I already knew about that church.

During the Hitchhiker's reading, we have become aware that Cooper is coasting down a long hill, gaining tremendous speed. This while the engine is hardly kicking over: in fact it sounds no louder than at idle. The Hitchhiker is alarmed.

105. COOPER

105

In his side mirror, Cooper notices the lights of another car. It draws up beside him but makes no attempt to pass. He raises his hand for silence and floors the accelerator but leaves the clutch disengaged.

HITCHHIKER

What's the matter?

COOPER

It's cops.

105. (Cont'd)

105

HITCHHIKER

What are they waiting for?
Maybe it's the naked lady,
you know. I'm getting in
back.

The Hitchhiker makes no move for the sleeper, though.

COOPER

(whispering)

They know they got me on the
speeding. They listening to
see if I'm in Mexican Overdrive.
That's worse: That's a ten-
fourteen.

HITCHHIKER

What's Mexican Overdrive?

COOPER

Let's take a rain check on
that one. I believe you'll
find a logbook under your seat
there.

The Hitchhiker looks idly through the book. Cooper
snatches it out of his hands and turns to the proper
page. Taking a pen and ruler from the dash, he tries
to mark his line while steering.

The cops signal for him to move to the side of the road.
He does. They get out of their car. The FIRST COP in-
dicates that Cooper should stay in the cab; the SECOND
rolls a set of portable scales under Cooper's third
axle. Cooper, still in the cab, lights a cigarette.

COOPER

Mexican's where you kick her
out of gear going downhill to
get more speed than you could
even in high. That cop was
listening. But I keep the gas
down, RPMs around (oh) 1700 so
they can't hear to prove anything.

The Second Cop motions for Cooper to pull onto the scale.
Once he has, he jumps down from the cab, rummaging in
his paper sack for his licenses and logbook. While in-
specting them, the First Cop nods at the rig and says:

FIRST COP

You're moving fast. You in
love?

10-7-70

(Continued)

105. (Cont'd)

105

COOPER

No.

FIRST COP

I'd have thought so, fast as you was moving... And now we come to the question of the logbook, which is way behind, I regret to say.

COOPER

Well it's partly that, but then I don't get as much work as you'd think.

Cooper acts dumbly solicitous, hoping the cops' contempt for him will distract them from a thorough examination of the rig, most of which fortunately is caked with red clay. The First Cop leafs through the license book, unmoved.

FIRST COP

I'm saying it fast and I'm saying it sweet: those plates aren't yours.

COOPER

No, they belong to Armand's Boxline Freight. They leased me to take some number five sewer tiles to Amarillo. See where it says Boxline?

FIRST COP

If that's so, there ought to be a lease paper here, too.

The Cop walks off like a matador having passed a bull.

COOPER

Well, I'll have to look for a second, right?

FIRST COP

Wrong, it should be right here.

But Cooper returns fearstricken to the cab. He shuffles randomly through his papers, feigning an earnest search.

106. THE HITCHHIKER

106

who has walked to the fence and is looking into the neighboring field. He wants no part of the whole business and has positioned himself so that their conversation will be barely audible.

107. THE FIRST COP

107

who has become impatient.

FIRST COP

You boy there, come over here.

Cooper comes, with a flashlight and a sheaf of meaningless papers, which he offers up limply to him. Cooper notes that the cop is angry and puts his flashlight on the papers; the gesture is courtly. The First Cop knocks the flashlight from his hand and the papers scatter across the highway. Cooper picks a few up and returns them, without resentment.

FIRST COP

I'll do the shining around here.

The Second Cop returns from his business at the scales. He is younger.

FIRST COP

There's a lot of ICC in white cars around the valley. You're having lots of luck that we're not ICC. And I tell it true.

COOPER

What's going to happen to me?

FIRST COP

Well, according to our readings, you been runnin' around four ton of overweight on your wagon. Now that ain't fair to the taxpayers or to yourself. I don't have to explain.

COOPER

Nossir.

FIRST COP

So we're going up here to check on Sonny Womack's place.

SECOND COP

He don't know Sonny.

FIRST COP

Yeah, and when we come back we want to see four ton of overweight on the shoulder... which is there.

107. (Cont'd)

107

He points. The First Cop exits from the FRAME. Cooper retrieves his flashlight and flips it into his back pocket.

COOPER

Can I choose which four?

FIRST COP

Yeah, and we're gonna come back see you around dawn (time to finish) and the shoulder's gonna be clean on account of someone glad is going to clean off the shoulder. People around here's gonna be talking about the johns done all the packin' and cleaning.

He hands Cooper a ticket, and Cooper tries to show by his look that there is absolutely no harm done.

COOPER

That's fine.

FIRST COP

I want to see goods... on the shoulder. Which is where?

He looks over his shoulders, first one then the other.

COOPER

You mean here.

He points to the shoulder.

FIRST COP

Okay.

He walks off. The Second Cop toes the ground in front of him.

SECOND COP

He's not in a bad mood some days. He's in a bad mood every day.

108. EXT. ROADSIDE

108

Cooper and the Hitchhiker are breaking down the overweight. Cooper stands in the trailer, the Hitchhiker on the ground.

10-7-70

(Continued)

108. (Cont'd)

108

COOPER

Sure wish we had an International forklift. We could pull those little tiles out of here like we was crazy.

HITCHHIKER

Hell, I don't know why I'm fooling with this stuff.

COOPER

You know, when I was a kid, I used to wonder about getting sucked into the sewer. Jomeday I'd just disappear down that pipe and no one would know where I was. Just THUPPP!, like that. I tell you! I could stand on the grate and hear the water gurgle down in there. I knew it was dead pups and catfish in there, all of them blind. Inside I felt something, I can't say.

HITCHHIKER

You lose me, buddy.

Impatient, Cooper starts to push the racks of tile out of the rear end. They come out faster and splinter on the ground, but finally even this effort proves too much. Cooper sits, panting, his arms folded tight in someone else's attitude of thoughtfulness.

HITCHHIKER

You want me to run up front, dump the clutch on this mother? We could throw out one whole jag of tile.

COOPER

That's okay. I'll do it.

Cooper goes to the cab and pops the clutch. Tiles and several chicken coops cascade from the open rear.

HITCHHIKER

Looks like more than four to me.

COOPER

(off)

Let's be on the safe side.

HITCHHIKER

Why don't you come look?

108. (Cont'd)

10

COOPER

Quick, close the doors,
close the doors quick.

Cooper drums on the motor casing. The Hitchhiker close the rear doors, which are seen to carry the inscription "THIS VEHICLE PAYS MORE THAN \$4,167 IN ROAD TAXES EACH YEAR." He runs to the cab, boarding as Cooper pulls onto the right of way. In the foreground, a dozen chickens wander among the broken tiles, recovering their wits, while others are still trapped in their coops. The shank of pork is smothered in the debris.

109. INT. TRACTOR

10

HITCHHIKER

That copper didn't pay much
attention to your bumper stickers,
I might remark.

COOPER

They were good ole boys, though.
Didn't write me for but 64 MPH.
Now I thought the mean one had
me on the plates, but when he
asked whether I stupid had any
hot freight in the wagon, then
I knew he was just fishing around
... By the way, you ever pulled
any time?

HITCHHIKER

No.

COOPER

Me neither.

HITCHHIKER

Hey, where we headed?

COOPER

Out of state. We don't have
but sixty miles to run.

HITCHHIKER

What's going to happen to the
tile?

COOPER

Someone will tell the brick
buy. I don't know.

There's no response from the Hitchhiker.

109. (Cont'd)

109

COOPER (cont'd)

What's your view?

HITCHHIKER

Guess we can't hang around here,
have those jokers from the road-
stop catch us.

They pass a long string of abandoned motels and hamburger stands. The radio plays, low but clearly audible.

RADIO:

That's Crazy Chris Caraman-
zeenee and Don Garlitz, their
reputations on the line at
Tulsa's Mingo Valley Dragway.
That's double fuel drama...

Cooper puts a fancy move on the gearbox. He is silent for a moment.

COOPER

This is the best time, when
your shirt's wide open and
your rig rolls easy, so easy.
Can you feel us setting her
into the wind? Can you feel
the wind out there? It's
lovin' us.

HITCHHIKER

• Don't feel anything.

COOPER

It's there and we're just
setting into it.

He downshifts and talks to the engine as he does.

RADIO

This is Country Don, inviting
all you people out there to
come in and visit us sometime
at KOMA Studios right here in
Moore, Oklahoma. You can visit
our 500,000 watt clear-channel
installation and see for your-
self. Yes, we're true.

110. EXT. RIG - NIGHT

11

The truck is seen gearing down on its approach to a
detour, marking the beginning of an unfinished stretch

110. (Cont'd)

110.

of the main road. Smudge pots and yellow barriers block the access ramp. Beyond them, nothing can be seen; a mist lays a hand deep on the ground. ON SOUND: Cooper cuts off the engine. A sign reads:

INTERSTATE 22 UNDER CONSTRUCTION
NEXT 30 MILES. YOUR TAX DOLLARS
AT WORK, etc.

111. EXT. TRACTOR

111

Cooper jumps down and studies the small print on the sign. He begins to move the barriers.

COOPER

Leave me alone. I'm reading
a sign.

The Hitchhiker has said nothing to him.

COOPER (cont'd)

We can take this road another
40 miles, maybe more. There's
one lane that's done all the
way. It says here in code.

HITCHHIKER

You sure it's okay? I know
some code.

COOPER

Thirty miles will put us out
of state. What's more, those
coppers won't look for us here.

HITCHHIKER

Well, if you're sure.

The Hitchhiker kicks one of the smudge pots off to the side.

112. EXT. DETOUR

112

They have brought the rig through the barrier and are replacing the signs. The noise of the engine is magnified in the evening stillness.

COOPER

Please hurry on along now.

HITCHHIKER

I know.

113. EXT. ROADSIDE ON UNFINISHED HIGHWAY

113

The outlines of earthmoving devices and concrete piling shift lazily through the FRAME like sea creatures.

114. INT. TRACTOR

114

They have come a distance. The Hitchhiker has crawled into the sleeper.

COOPER

Hey, you like a particular kind of girl?

HITCHHIKER

Huh? Yeah.

COOPER

Well, I'm going to show you one.

He turns onto a quiet side road, first gravel, then dirt.

115. EXT. DIRT ROAD

115

Cooper parks the rig at an angle to the shoulder. He cuts the engine but leaves on the headlights. They illuminate a vintage billboard edged with gingerbread. On the billboard a reclining woman is shown, dressed in silks, roughly in the style of Cleopatra. She is exoticly beautiful but it is some rural painter's idea of beauty that she represents. A conventional Mark Antony stands off behind her, looking coy, though about nothing in particular. The inscription on the sign reads "GENERALLY'S PEAS... one of many."

Cooper walks toward the sign through the sunflowers, full of awe and fascination. He stops at the fence, which borders an open pasture. Bright animal eyes are visible in the distance.

COOPER

You ever seen a rabbit freeze in your headlights? Well, that's how I feel around her.

HITCHHIKER

She knows what she wants, mainly. Look at her hog down on the peas.

COOPER

She knows me how and she knows me when, Buddy. I freeze like a rabbit around her.

115. (Cont'd)

115.

Cooper reaches out toward the sign, still ten feet away.

COOPER (cont'd)

You know what?

HITCHHIKER

What?

COOPER

If she was alive, the whole world would look to her like peas... Anyway, she's imaginary, entirely imaginary. There's no one like her in the world.

HITCHHIKER

You don't bet.

COOPER

She reminds me of someone. I won't say who but you ever see Jane Keaton, tell her that I said hello.

Cooper picks up a piece of wood and throws it at the sign. It hits with a loud thud. Then he leans on the fence and stares. For a moment, the world seems uninhabited.

116. SERIES OF ANGLES

116

Further vistas along the main road.

117. INT. TRACTOR - DAY

117

Cooper starts the engine a couple of times but it won't turn over.

COOPER

Well it ain't the gearbox.
Must be pump trouble.

HITCHHIKER

What's the matter?

COOPER

Look at that oil pressure is
what's the matter.

HITCHHIKER

Where?

Cooper sighs. The Hitchhiker dismounts and kicks at the truck.

118.

EXT. TRACTOR

118.

The Hitchhiker stands at the edge of the road, looking into the passing cars.

COOPER

Just move them on past. We
can do this ourselves.

It is clear that he has been working on the engine for quite a while. He bangs futilely at the block.

COOPER (cont'd)

Try to start her again.

HITCHHIKER

Think you got her now?

COOPER

No, I don't think anything.

He hops in the cab and tries to start the engine himself. But it won't even kick over now. He gets back down, stares at the engine from ten feet away, walks in circles, then spins and throws his wrench away in disgust.

COOPER

It may be the pump. I don't
know. I'm going down the road
and buy some stuff.

HITCHHIKER

What stuff?

COOPER

Necessary stuff. Get that wrench.

He walks to the edge of the road and starts to hitch.

119.

EXT. REAR OF RIG

119.

The Hitchhiker is dozing against one of the axles. He looks up to find a TALL MAN, dressed in black, with a black stetson and dark glasses, standing above him.

HITCHHIKER

Where did you come from?

TALL MAN

That's my rig up ahead of you.

He points to the rig. It is black from stem to stern, with no visible lights or permit numbers. The bumpers are covered with crepe.

119. (Cont'd)

119.

TALL MAN

You've got a mechanical problem,
I can see.

HITCHHIKER

We sure have one. The other
fellow went up the road, so
I'm here.

TALL MAN

I'll take a look.

But he makes no move in the direction of the engine.

HITCHHIKER

Sure, go on ahead but it looks
pretty serious to me.

TALL MAN

Well, I'll take a look.

He walks over to the engine. He pulls the cap from the
turbo charger, then stops to think.

TALL MAN (cont'd)

You lose oil pressure fast? You
did, so don't tell me different.

HITCHHIKER

Yeah, I think so.

TALL MAN

That's right, you did. Here's a
blown Cummins 335 and she's a grand
lady. But you got to remember that
each one of your big rear ends is
going to suck off 70 horsepower, so
you won't develop but say 200 at the
wheels. You understand now?

He speaks against no one, with great solemnity, like a
delegate from another world. The Hitchhiker is trans-
fixed, though not suspicious.

TALL MAN (cont'd)

Now someone's been overdriving.
Diesel's not like gas. You can't
run downhill against the compression
without you gonna pay a price. I'll
fix her but you back off for a while.

He sticks his head under the hood for a moment, long
enough for only a minor repair. The Hitchhiker hears
him mumble to himself.

119. (Cont'd)

119.

TALL MAN (cont'd)

Okay, it was your piston seized.
You understand?

HITCHHIKER

Yessir.

The tall man starts back toward his rig but turns back to stare at the front tire.

TALL MAN

Another thing. You get on that limiting valve and take about ten pounds out of those front tires. Otherwise you gonna jackknife, lose your average... Jackknife is serious business, son.

The last line costs him something.

HITCHHIKER

Sure. By the way, what's your name, mister?

TALL MAN

I'm Johnny Mesquitero, if you want to know.

HITCHHIKER

Well, thanks. I mean it's a terrific thing what you done for us here.

The Hitchhiker watches him take off.

120. EXT. TRACTOR - A MOMENT LATER

120.

The Hitchhiker, on his way back to the cab. He gets in the cab and with a look of pessimism sets about starting the engine. It starts. Suddenly Cooper appears at the shotgun window.

COOPER

What happened? What did you do?

HITCHHIKER

Some other fella did it, don't blame me.

COOPER

Who? Who you talking about?
What was his name?

120. (Cont'd)

120

HITCHHIKER

Johnny Mesquitero was what he said.

Cooper looks disturbed as he circles around the front of the tractor to the driver's side. He closes the hood panels on the way, without even glancing at the engine. Then he looks back down the road. From the rear we see the Hitchhiker lean out his window and do the same.

121. BLACK RIG

121

pulling into the distance, silhouetted against the sunset. A long plume of smoke trails behind.

122. COOPER

getting back into the driver's seat and staring out the windshield.

HITCHHIKER

What's the matter?

Cooper doesn't answer but continues staring out the windshield.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

Come on, what's the matter?

COOPER

That Johnny Mesquitero...

HITCHHIKER

Yeah... what?

Cooper fires the engine.

COOPER

Well, six years ago that fellow died in a jackknife off the Four Rivers pass. Died at the Emergency Hospital actually but he lost his brakes on the grade. He could have jumped but the rig would have taken out four lanes of traffic, so he rode her on down. Funny. Every now and then you'll see him again, not too often. He helps out stuck and lonesome drivers and then he keeps on rolling. That's what they say.

122. (Cont'd)

122.

The Hitchhiker smiles and tries to get Cooper to smile.
But Cooper remains sober.

123. PLUME FROM CARBON BLACK PLANT IN BORGER, TEXAS

123.

A plume of smoke, evidently from Johnny Mesquitero's
stack, now lies across the whole horizon, impossibly
long.

124. EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE DRAG STRIP - DAY

124.

Cooper has changed into some fancy duds for the occasion.
He is sitting on the running board, pulling on a new
pair of boots. His face is gray with fatigue. The
Hitchhiker has taken off his shirt and wrapped it around
his waist.

HITCHHIKER

Hadn't we ought to be moving
on with the load that we got
left?

COOPER

We will, in just a second.

125. HITCHHIKER AND COOPER

125

They walk briskly toward the strip. The Hitchhiker
dances on ahead, impatiently. He spots a monogramming
booth.

HITCHHIKER

Hey, give me some money. I want
to buy a patch.

COOPER

Look, fella, my money ain't yours.
You find your own but I'm going to
hang onto mine. I've got business
considerations.

Although he knows the Hitchhiker is offended, Cooper
won't say anything to console him.

HITCHHIKER

You keep your money. For every
dollar you were going to give me
I was gonna give you one. You see
what I mean?

COOPER

That sounds okay to me.

125. (Cont'd)

125

HITCHHIKER

And you can forget I asked.

Cooper smiles. He is puzzled by this reaction. They continue. A hundred feet from the gate, perhaps five hundred feet from the strip, Cooper stops short.

COOPER

We can't go in there and see Don Garlitz like I've waited to for a year. We got a job to finish like you said.

HITCHHIKER

Well, I take it back now that we're here.

Cooper paces, searching for a compromise with their negligence.

COOPER

Still... Tell you what, let's watch from here.

HITCHHIKER

You watch from here. I'm going inside.

COOPER

No, you nor me.

HITCHHIKER

Well, there's nothing nicer than a nice disposition.

He paces angrily.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

You think Don Garlitz would mill around outside the track with the cowboys and riffraff?

In point of fact they are virtually alone outside the track. Cooper brushes his ear and puts on his dark glasses, which make it easier for him to lie:

COOPER

He's a personal friend of mine, Garlitz. Thing about him, he keeps his eyes wide open all the way. And part way isn't all the way.

The Hitchhiker doesn't see this.

125. (Cont'd)

125

COOPER

You go on ahead if that's what
you want.

126. DON GARLITZ

126

who yells at one of his assistants. The assistant lifts a chamois off the nitromethane tank at the front of the Garlitz fueler and wipes the tires. This, like all of the scenes on the strip, is seen through a link fence and sometimes through the bleachers. ANNOUNCER'S spiel is heard in the distance.

ANNOUNCER O.C.

That was Thomas Wagner of Randall County, Texas doing the winning in the last round, ladies and gentlemen. Tommy, you're sounding double tough out there in your big punched-out chrysler engine. Yes, sounding tough enough... Okay, all street eliminator cars report to Staging Lane One at this time to receive their prizes. Do not, repeat do not come to towerside... Who's that down there?

127. LINK FENCE AND PARKING LOT

127

The Hitchhiker watches the action from the fence behind the bleachers, while Cooper puzzles around the parking lot, paying no attention to what's happening inside.

128. THE FUELERS

128

are wheeled into their starting positions. Clorox is poured onto the tires. The noise is deafening.

HITCHHIKER O.C.

Engine Man, I'm sorry I got sore.

129. OFFICIAL STARTER

129

in mouse ears, jumps his '55 Chevy back and forth off the line to clear any gravel from the surface. His biceps is flattened against the door for effect.

COOPER O.C.

Don don't care about the throttle.

To him it's just a stick.

(more)

129. (Cont'd)

12

COOPER (cont'd)
(and venomously)
I don't reckon the throttle's
got nothing to do with it by
any chance!

130. ONE DRIVER

13

flips an asbestos mask down over his face. His eyes are
invisible behind two plexiglass slits; an air filter is
fixed over his mouth.

COOPER O.C.
Sure. Fire Ball Roberts said he
never would put on asbestos and
he burned to death at Chattanooga
(or) somewhere.

131. THE CHRISTMASS TREE

13

as the amber lights descend toward the green. An
Accutron beat is buried into SOUND track. An official
spins out of the starting house, giddy with the roar.

132. MS OF CARS

13

off the line and into their wheelies, for a brief moment
out of control, then settling onto the macadam.

133. EXT. PARKING LOT

13

Now we see that Cooper has been looking through the link
fence, too. He hoots.

COOPER
Whew! When's it going to be
over in there? I'm not going
to wait.

He starts back toward the rig. The Hitchhiker follows
a few paces behind him and must strain to make himself
understood.

HITCHHIKER
It's nice here but you walk
around and you look at the sun
and then it's Friday again.

Cooper kicks aimlessly at the gravel.

133. (Cont'd)

133.

HITCHHIKER O.

I got tired of the sun ning
every thing till it s
as aga.

C
m e i ng exc

ven sees a doll on the
him

COOPER ont'd
like to buy thin
one there on left.

drop change over e edge ne counter and
n the dor stoops to etriev he snatches a
ge do ff one of the elves pitches it over
shou into the arr f the hiker.

134. VING E OF RIG

134

HITCH

What going to with that?

COOPER

You see sc ng.

for fetch knife under the seat. Sitting on
nning l, he the doll's head off and throw
the gr The hiker picks it up absent-
ly, th ops i looper cuts a hole the size of
in th of t oll's head, then gets inside
o, fet his t pushes the doll's head down
he cab shift melts the plastic to the floor
cab. Hitch has moved to the shotgun do
face ow FR with the doll's at floor level
maneu the g ift and as he does the impale
anges ssio The Hitchhiker is amazed.

COOP

Told you would something.
The woman is bigger than you know.

He doesn't deign to look at his handiwork.

135. OPEN HIGHWAY

135

Rolling on the open highway now, Cooper passes roadside
stands with dollar melons, a man asleep in a red ditch-
bank, a telephone lineman and some convicts working on

135. (Cont'd)

135.

the county road. Next he is seen by himself, happily shaving beside a river, hanging from a nearby tree. Except for the rig in the background there is no sign of civilization for miles.

Finally he is seen passing a train that is piggybacking several dozen trailers on flat cars. During this sequence, Dave Dudley sings "One More Mile".

136. INT. TRACTOR

136

HITCHHIKER

You can't deliver half a load
of tile or it will make them
hot under the collar, so where
you going to make any money?
You're not thinking.

Cooper is shocked that the Hitchhiker should be so forward with him, at least in this area.

COOPER

We'll see what happens. We'll
watch and see.

HITCHHIKER

Nothing's going to happen that
you don't make happen.

COOPER

We'll see what happens.

HITCHHIKER

Not me. I'm gonna be gettin' off
up on the way here in Oklahoma City
or whatever's convenient... Appreciate what you've done for me. All the more I need is some money. Wished I had some money. That way, I could take my time about finding a job and not have to take the first thing come along. That's the line I'm thinking along.

COOPER

Where do you figure on gettin' the
money?

The Hitchhiker does not return his glance.

HITCHHIKER

That's a problem. I'm going to
have to put a gun on you, mister.

136. (Cont'd)

136.

He points the flare gun at Cooper, but moves it off him now and whenever Cooper looks at him.

COOPER

Well; I didn't know you was bad, fella. Now that's interesting.

Taking the whole business in stride, Cooper pokes at the windshield. A turtle is crossing the road.

COOPER (cont'd)

See that turtle? He's out there because the pavement keeps his little belly warm.

HITCHHIKER

So what?

COOPER

Well, now, I'm gonna have to blow him out of the tub.

The vacuum of the rig sends the turtle skittering off the road.

COOPER (cont'd)

I didn't kill him but I nicked him so he's safe and sound there in the bar ditch.

He smiles at the Hitchhiker, who can find no moral in this.

HITCHHIKER

Think the best way to handle this, let's see, would be to pull over to the side of the road. Know what I mean? Then we drive into the city.

But Cooper keeps moving, hoping the Hitchhiker will change his mind.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

(more curious than threatening)

You gonna pull over or aren't you?

COOPER

Hell, yes.

He pulls abruptly onto the shoulder, nearly toppling the rig. He doesn't care that the Hitchhiker has be-

136. (Cont'd)

136.

trayed him, not yet; he only wants the Hitchhiker to show more pain at betraying him.

HITCHHIKER

No reason to get mad about it.
Mad don't help... You better
do something about that person-
ality!

The rig stops. Now he is angrier than Cooper.

COOPER

Look, I don't have but nineteen
dollars.

HITCHHIKER

What happened to your fee on the
tile and stuff.

COOPER

I buried at a place in Memphis.
But I got a friend in Amarillo
owes me forty dollars: W. L.
Longberry.

HITCHHIKER

Well, hell, your nineteen dollars
isn't hardly enough to take.

But he takes it anyway.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

You got anything in the first wagon
worth anything? You never said
about the important stuff.

COOPER

You can look.

The Hitchhiker gets out of the truck but Cooper is slow.
The Hitchhiker kicks a shred of retread off the shoulder.

HITCHHIKER

Some fella blew out over here.
See here the skid marks where
he came off the road?. Must have
give out right here.

COOPER

Listen to how you talk once in
a while.

HITCHHIKER

Yeah, well, I only did all that
packing and unpacking and left a
paint stain on my best shirt.

135. (Cont'd)

136.

He smiles. Cooper gets out of the cab but doesn't say anything. They're in full view of the passing cars.

HITCHHIKER

You got insurance on this stuff
or someone does always, so don't
worry.

Cooper doesn't answer and this gives the Hitchhiker renewed confidence. Cooper breaks the seal on the rear door, a steel curtain, raises the door and climbs into the van, flashlight in hand.

HITCHHIKER

Listen, wait a minute.

He climbs into the van after Cooper, to help in the search, but in particular to declaim:

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

I'm a hoodlum, I can't deny, and
I'm not good for anything except
to get sick and die.

While he is still engaged with this thought, Cooper pushes him into the front of the trailer and pulls a shelf of boxes down between them, then jumps out the rear, tripping the curtain as he does. It falls with a crash. We hear a vague thumping and the Hitchhiker, very remote, shouting: "Wait a minute." Cooper can only hear because his ear is pressed to the van. He mocks the Hitchhiker with a show of concern.

COOPER

(shouting)

What? How's that... exactly?
Well if that's all you got to
say.

He gets back into the cab and jumps the rig back and forth violently. There is a faint rumble from inside the vans as the cargo settles out.

137. OPEN HIGHWAY

137.

Late at night the lights of different Oklahoma cities on Cooper's route glow like embers in the distance. Dave Dudley begins to sing Tom T. Hall's "That'll Be All Right With Me".

The rig moves down a treacherously narrow road with a lip shoulder. Cooper has reinflated the vinyl woman;

137. (Cont'd)

137.

she rests on the seat beside him.

COOPER O.C.

Cacti of the American Desert;
pincushion, sinota, drumwheel,
saguaro, needlehead, Charlotte's
prickler, the latter identifiable
by its delicate spines... When
in Yuma, Arizona, watch for the
Satan's Bed, a garden of hellish
delights.

Cooper abandons the reading with a sign. He nudges the
vinyl woman.

COOPER (cont'd)

Can you see Ft. Smith? Over
there?... Okay, let's get real
low now. Baby, let's hug real
tight because now's the lovin'
hour.

138. EXT. TURNER TURNPIKE, OKLAHOMA - DAY

138

Cooper cuts off the turnpike and drives into Moore,
Oklahoma. On the outskirts of Moore, completely isolated
he finds a rundown brick building that serves as KOMA's
main headquarters. He surveys the antenna, which towers
a thousand feet above the building, then enters.

139. INT. KOMA STUDIOS - DAY

139

COOPER

Can you tell me where I can
find Uncle Juicy Brucey?

RECEPTIONIST

He's upstairs, but wait.

She flicks on the intercom.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Bruce, you got a visitor.

She nods at a staircase. Cooper walks down a long row
of offices, trying to quiet his body with his hands. He
spots BRUCE inside the control booth and waves to him.

COOPER

(through the glass)
Hi, there.

139. (Cont'd)

139.

Bruce opens the door and ducks back to his seat. He spins a record and delivers a fast introductory spiel. He ends by reading the weather report off his watch.

BRUCE

And, let's see, the temperature is seventy-seven, a pair of sevens, while the forecast for Oklahoma City and general vicinity is continued fair and cloudy through Thurrssssdday.
(tremelo)

Bruce is a short man. He wears a chantung suit and ventilated shoes.

BRUCE

I don't think I know you.

COOPER

No way you could. Actually...
(pause)

Bruce's diminutive appearance has not diminished Cooper's evident respect for him. But he feels, out of respect, that it is up to Bruce to ask the questions.

BRUCE

What is it you want, exactly?
You got a knife?

COOPER

(laughs)
Well, hell, I was out... where? I guess it was Fayetteville, and a friend told me Country Don said for anyone out there to come on in and visit.

BRUCE

Yes.

COOPER

Well, so here I am.

BRUCE

You from around here?

COOPER

Not really.

BRUCE

Where you from?

139. (Cont'd)

139.

COOPER

Texas. There are different parts but Texas, yes.

BRUCE

You on vacation?

COOPER

No.

BRUCE

What took you to Fayetteville, then? Just a second here.

Bruce jams several cassettes onto his tape deck. Tropical noises and electronic wheeps fill the room. Cooper waves to some stranger outside the booth.

COOPER

Business really. What business?

BRUCE

Yeah, what kind of business?

COOPER

Well, I have a rig (it's a double) over here outside the building. Guess you could say that I'm in the truck business.

BRUCE

What do you haul?

COOPER

Hell, anything you can name. Try me.

BRUCE

No, that's okay. You must listen to the radio a lot.

COOPER

There's not a whole lot else to do, particularly on the road.

BRUCE

That's true.

COOPER

You know something's gonna surprise you quite a lot?

BRUCE

Once I heard you far away as Holbrook, Arizona.

139. (Cont'd)

139.

BRUCE

I didn't know we ever reached that far.

COOPER

You wasn't up very early. That's the 500,000 clear channel watts you're talking about.

He winks and shoots his cuffs.

BRUCE

They can hear us in Indiana, too.

COOPER

Hey, one main thing I want to ask is this: that Osage Indian around here?

BRUCE

That one that was in the coffin?

Cooper chuckles his assent.

BRUCE (cont'd)

No. Hell, I don't know where he's gone.

COOPER

That goes double for me. He even exist?

Bruce winds another record on the turntable and fires some patter into the mike. His voice is made to reverberate over the monitor.

COOPER (cont'd)

He was something, wasn't he? Who ever thought of that thing?

BRUCE

Fellow around the station here. Which I don't remember.

COOPER

Well, I guess I'd better be moving out of here. You hear of anyone wants to make an investment, you let me know. You take real good care now, hear?

BRUCE

Okay, mister.

(Continued)

139. (Cont'd) 139.

Expressionless, he watches Cooper move down the hall.

140. INT. RECEPTION ROOM 140.

Visitors sit around the room looking at limp magazines.

COOPER

Beat the drum, sound the
brass. I'm going to Amarillo.

He leaves the room, satisfied with the confusion he's
caused.

141. EXT. STREET 141.

Without other resource, Cooper wanders through the streets
of Moore. As night falls, the streets empty and he re-
turns to his rig.

142. EXT. OPEN HIGHWAY - NIGHT 142.

A sign indicates that Cooper is now within a few miles
of Tucumcari, New Mexico. His head nods with sleepiness.
He spits the comb out of his mouth and sighs. His rig
drifts out into the middle of the road as a car appears
at the top of the next ridge. We think he will recover
but he doesn't. The car tries to avoid him, ricochets
off the side of the second trailer and careens into the
drainage ditch. On the SCREEN it happens in even less
time than it would actually take.

COOPER O.C.

There I sat with nothing more
could happen in the luck depart-
ment -- except this, that is.

143. EXT. HIGHWAY AND CAR 143.

Cooper stops and approaches the car with a flashlight.
Loose steam rises from the motor. The DRIVER and his
companion, a young couple, are trapped inside. Cooper
inspects them with the flashlight and turns off the
radio, which is playing a medley of stations. The
driver, covered with blood, is pinned to his seat by
the steering column.

COOPER

This does it, it sure does.

143. (Cont'd)

143.

DRIVER

That's okay, honest... What's the matter? That's okay, but what's the matter? Get the dogs off me. I can't move my wrist.

COOPER

Hold on here, just hold on.

Another truck passes but though they're in plain view, does not stop. Cooper circles the car, looking for an opening through which they can be withdrawn. He is panicky.

COOPER (cont'd)

You know, you're locked in here kind of tight. The steering column has you pinned flush to the seat.

DRIVER

Oh yeah?

COOPER

I'm gonna find my torch, though, cut you loose.

He strokes the man's hair.

144. HIGHWAY AND CAR

144.

He fetches his torch and returns to the car. He lights the torch, adjusts his goggles, then puts it out and throws it on the ground.

COOPER

There's too much gas to do any cutting around here, mister. If you made more sense, I could explain.

DRIVER

I should have known about this from the Minister. He knows what will happen to me.

COOPER

How does he know?

The driver doesn't answer. His face is covered with oil and his jaw works purposefully. Though he doesn't know what he's saying, he seems alert. The woman is unconscious but not dead.

144. (Cont'd)

144.

Cooper gets into the car. There is virtually no clearance for him, but he manages to squeeze between the two occupants, touching both. He tries to avoid getting their blood on him.

DRIVER

I'm still alive. I'm doing okay.

145. INT. CAR

145.

He tries to extricate the driver by pushing off the shotgun door against the steering wheel. The driver continues to mutter. Cooper at last gives up and sits between the couple, resting. Another car passes. He kisses the woman on the cheek in a gesture of repentance.

COOPER

Listen, mister, I'd better find someone who knows how to do this.

DRIVER

What's the matter?

COOPER

I feel real bad about this. I can't tell you. It should be me right there. I've caused the most trouble.

He pulls himself out of the wreck, wipes his fingerprints off the door and returns to the rig, forgetting his torch. He hammers on the first trailer with his fist to let the Hitchhiker know he's there. Then, despite his haste, he stops and looks down the road.

146. HIS POV ON ROAD

146.

should register some special appeal in Cooper's heart. Shifting discs of orange lights are visible in the distance. It seems quiet at first but the night is alive and crackling like a shortwave band.

147. THE RIG

147.

He sases the rig onto the right of way and starts to roll. A moment later a patrolcar passes him, headed toward the wreck.

COOPER

Good, that's good.

147. (Cont'd)

147.

His fancy shirt is bloodstained. He takes it off and throws it out the window. The sun is rising.

148. DESERTED SPACES

148.

at the margin of the highway. Cooper on the road.

149. EXT. ROADHOUSE IN AMARILLO, TEXAS - DUSK

149.

Cooper drops from the cab and pretends to buckle at the knees. He is barefoot. Another driver is returning to his rig, adjacent to Cooper's.

COOPER

Boy if I don't get me some sleep, something out of the ordinary's gonna happen.

In the distance some idiot is racing a motor.

COOPER (cont'd)

Hey, blow some horn on me, will you?

FIRST DRIVER

What do you mean?

COOPER

I hadn't slept in 80 hours.

The First Driver gets into his cab; Cooper climbs onto the hood. He puts his jacket over his head and hangs his arms over the airhorns. The First Driver gives him several blasts and shrugs. A SECOND DRIVER approaches them.

SECOND DRIVER

Hey up there, you want to help us dig a grave?

COOPER

I got to move. But what happened?

SECOND DRIVER

One of the truckers here died and the widow don't have the money except to cremate him. Well, we bought a plot and we're hiring some fellows to dig the hole. It's going to be a surprise.

149. (Cont'd)

149.

COOPER

Okay, I have time to get my shoes?

Dave Dudley begins to sing Tom T. Hall's "The Ballad of Forty Dollars". While he sings, we see, in succession:

- A. The truckers bargaining with a hardware store owner for some shovels. Cooper remains aloof.
- B. Working at the grave by moonlight, digging and bringing up chairs, a case of beer quarts nearby.
- C. Cooper stands idly outside a bar with a can of hot coffee in his hand. A neon sign winks on and off in the b.g.
- D. At dawn, tatters of paper rise like frightened birds in the windy streets. A funeral procession moves down the Route 66 Bypass in Amarillo: first the hearse, then a car with the widow.

Cooper sits in his tractor. At one point he is strangely impressed by an ordinary blonde waitress who watches the procession from the window of a neighboring cafe, at another point by a Sanitation Dept. employee sweeping papers into the storm sewer. Dudley's line, "I'll have to go to work and mow the grass," is faded in deference to Cooper's hoots of delight. And sometime before he delivers the last two lines of the song, we hear:

COOPER

What's his name?

SECOND DRIVER

W. L. Longberry.

150. INT. BAR

150.

He sits a few stools down from a large brunette WOMAN wearing a beret. Cooper studies her but she ignores him. She breathes her dress and sighs with boredom.

COOPER

That's some kind of hat.

LADY

You see, I'm French.

COOPER

You a spy?

150. (Cont'd)

15

LADY

No. But I'll bet you a
dollar I can look at you
from the bottom of my glass.

COOPER

What you mean? Just a second.

LADY

I just bet.

COOPER

Okay, I bet.

She leans over her beer, squints and a glass eye falls
to the bottom of the mug. She shakes the mug until the
eye faces Cooper.

COOPER

That ain't working. I'll give
you the dollar but that's not
what you meant by looking.

The BARTENDER takes Cooper into his confidence once
they are out of earshot.

BARTENDER

I see you been talking to Dale
Evans. For Christsakes, they're
55% of the population and they
got all the pussy.

The MINNIE moves past him halfway through his speech to
pictures of Webb Pierce in his prime, pasted to the
mirror behind the bar.

COOPER O.C.

Listen, buddy, leave me alone.
I'm talking about a fair shake
and here you talking about pussy...
I got to move.

He bolts out the door. This by now has become a habit
with him, to waste hours then become filled with sudden
urgencies.

151. EXT. BAR

16

Cooper snatches a loading sign off his rear door and
boards. The rig is completely grimey; it looks like a
wild animal in with the city traffic.

152. COOPER 152.

takes off down a dirt road. He drives quite fast and eventually his rear doors pop open.

153. RIG 153.

His cargo spreads over the road. He notices this and stops. He tries to close the doors but they stick. Wild with frustration he walks to the nearest fence and rests his elbow on a post, in the confidence that an attitude of thought may help him collect his thoughts.

154. EXT. BARN 154.

He returns to the truck and drives on down the road until he notices a large solitary barn, weathered and grey, that stands at the edge of the road. A hundred yards down the fence line there is a gate. He opens the gate and drives through a serene field up to the barn. He opens the doors of the barn and moves a haywagon out of the entrance, then backs his rig into the barn, tail first.

Next he disconnects the dolly tongue and glad hands from the trailer, then pulls the tractor, separate now, ten yards away. He dismounts and shakes himself like a wet dog.

He surveys the yellowing landscape around him but to his surprise there seems to be no one for miles.

155. REAR OF TRAILER 155.

The Hitchhiker has tumbled from the rear of the trailer and stumbles about trying to get his legs. He looks blanched and his face is lacerated in places but apparently he has no serious injuries. He approaches the front of the rig and there finds:

156. COOPER 156.

with a pitchfork, trying to cover the outjutting trailer with hay from the rick. He has put on his dark glasses and pulled his fedora down over his eyebrows in a hasty effort at disguise.

COOPER

You gonna give me back my gun?

HITCHHIKER

I'm sorry. Listen, I'm sorry.

156. (Cont'd)

156.

He is dazed but as he gets his wits back he becomes more and more resentful.

157. COOPER

157.

who is tearing license plates off the trailer and stuffing them into his paper sack, all of this in as gentlemanly a way as possible.

HITCHHIKER

I was locked in the dark, back of the trailer. The hands on my watch stopped glowing... so I could've been back there a week and not know it was time to get out.

Cooper pushes the haywagon directly in front of the trailer.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

What do you say?

COOPER

I got to move.

Cooper gets into the tractor and starts back toward the road. The Hitchhiker limps after him, shouting:

HITCHHIKER

Hey, hey, hey.

Cooper slows down but doesn't stop. The Hitchhiker is furious now.

HITCHHIKER (cont'd)

Hey, you ever hear (the one) about the truck driver who shot himself in the head?

Cooper considers this to release him and accelerates onto the road.

158. EXT. GAS STATION IN ALBUQUERQUE - MORNING

158.

A sign beside the station reads like a poem.

FREE SHOWERS WITH GAS
BLOWER ICE TO SPARE
BUNKHOUSE
REFRIGERATED AIR
NO ONE BUT JANE.

158. (Cont'd)

158.

A YOUNG MAN works on an engine that sits between two sawhorses in the center of the apron. He keeps a cautious distance from Cooper, who walks around in perfect circles. He is worried. At length the young man approaches.

YOUNG MAN

You want some gas?

COOPER

Don't want gas. Want a phone.
Understand?

YOUNG MAN

Yes. It's over there.

COOPER

Okay.

Cooper goes to the phone booth. He checks the leaflet that Edward gave him in Memphis, puts a bandana over the mouthpiece and makes a long distance call to the GUIDELINE number. The operator asks him for three minutes in charges but he insists on paying her for ten. We HEAR a cheerless VOICE answer at the other end.

VOICE

Hello, this is the listener.

COOPER

Hi, I got your number somewhere and I have to call.

VOICE

You lonesome?

COOPER

Well, I don't know. I'm over here in Albuquerque, New Mexico, though.

VOICE

If you are, that's fine. You're only the third caller I've had so far today and I was lonesome, too. It's tough for us here because we're so short on help.

COOPER

Hey, yeah, listen, I'm in trouble.

VOICE

What kind of trouble? I've been in trouble before.

153. (Cont'd)

152.

COOPER

Well, you know. An accident.

VOICE

What's up? Did something happen?

COOPER

Yes, in answer to that last question.

VOICE

What happened?

COOPER

Well, I'd rather not talk about exactly that.

VOICE

What's the matter then?

COOPER

Well, I don't want to talk about that, you know, right now.

VOICE

Maybe I can say the reason why not. Maybe you're thinking: we don't know one another that well.

COOPER

Hey, partly that.

VOICE

Well, the exact reason we have this service is because I'm supposed to be someone you can talk to, fella. Like a voice in your lonesome head. I could be your brother or your best friend, whichever you choose.

COOPER

What's your name, by the way?

VOICE

That, of course, I can't say. If I said, it wouldn't be the same. You think about this.

COOPER

Yeah, well I'm in trouble and I don't know exactly how to be...

(pause)

You know, I should think about this some, call back.

158. (Cont'd)

158.

VOICE

If you could say what's the matter...

COOPER

Never mind. Hey there, thanks for the talk. It was nice and I'll be in touch just real soon.

VOICE

Hope so. You know, the trouble with this job is that it's like reading only a little way into a book.

Cooper bangs the receiver around the booth, shouts, mumbles and hums -- all this to create an impression of confused activity in the background and an excuse to get off the phone.

COOPER

That's right. Excuse me but something is happening.

Here Cooper hangs up. He looks outside the booth to see if anyone might have overheard him, then heads straight for his tractor.

On the way he notices a boar hog chained to the water spigot at one edge of the station. The hog appears sick; it may have an infected foot. Cooper looks to the young man for some explanation.

YOUNG MAN

That pig eats snakes.

Cooper nods, mounts his tractor and drives a block or two down the street.

159. EXT. REAR AREA OF USED CAR LOT - DOWN THE STREET

159.

Cooper stands beside the tractor, negotiating with a jaylike salesman. His eyes are red and swollen with fatigue.

COOPER

How much you give me for it?
It's a nice one.

SALESMAN

Give you nothing. We don't handle the tractors. We don't handle the trailers but we don't handle the tractors either.

159. (Cont'd)

159.

COOPER

How about \$200 in cash?

SALESMAN

No, like I say.

COOPER

Well, can I leave it here
a while? Out back here.

SALESMAN

For a while would be fine.

Cooper returns to the tractor and collects his (grocery) bag. He checks to see if the salesman is watching, then ducks down the street. He makes a point of touching the door before he leaves.

160. EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - TOWARDS EVENING

160.

Cooper walks through a pleasant residential neighborhood toward the highway. There is no sign of life around most of the homes, only the intimate hum of air conditioners and the sense of a place completely at rest in itself on this single afternoon. Cooper has no real face for the occasion, but he is visibly stunned by what he sees, by all this he hardly guessed was there and now guesses himself to have missed.

161. SERIES OF ANGLES

161.

The lawns are shaded by oaks and lush catalpas. Some are strewn with discarded toys. Yellow leaves stir in the gutter and the insects fall silent at the first hint of wind. From time to time we hear the faint ticking of sprinklers.

162. EXT. HIGHWAY - MONTAGE

162.

Cooper is seen struggling up different embankments until he reaches a mall beside the highway, where he stands trying to hitch. Only a few cars pass him, and they could not know that he was hitchhiking, for he does not make the conventional signals.

He motions the final car past him and follows its course down a long, unending stretch of pavement. Then he returns back over the side of the mall, onto a slope of institutional grass.

162. (Cont'd)

162.

He sits and looks at the strange no man's land around him. He takes a sandwich from his sack and begins to eat his lunch.

FADE OUT

THE END