

"EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS"

a screenplay by

Martin Davidson

and

Arlene Davidson

based on the novel by

P.F. Kluge

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BROOKTON ENTERPRISES  
600 Third Avenue  
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ROLL CREDITS

OVER BLACK

The ROAR of a crowd; steady, prolonged, like some giant prehistoric animal howling from the darkness.

FADE IN:

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

Deep black turns to gray as layers of smoke swirl above the sea of silhouetted heads. Suddenly, a hand reaches up, holding a lit candle; then another, then hundreds, thousands, and finally, 18,000 hands holding candles, lighters, matches and flashlights, all flickering in the dark, like a swarm of crazed fireflies.

ON THE STAGE

A spotlight swings, capturing a ROCK STAR's arm as it shoots toward the sky.

ON THE AUDIENCE

APPLAUDING wildly; a dozen spotlights scissor overhead, slicing the smoky air into confetti.

ON THE STAGE

The Rock Star is asking for quiet.

ON THE AUDIENCE

Responding. He's in charge.

ON THE STAGE

The Rock Star takes his time letting the audience cool out. The BAND begins a quiet, steady bass line--bomp-bop-a-domp-bop-a-domp--as the Rock Star steps closer to the audience.

ON THE AUDIENCE

Sitting motionless, almost reverently, afraid of missing a word.

ROCK STAR

People die, and some die young.  
Some of them we remember.  
Especially the music-makers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2.

ROCK STAR (CONTD)

Janis Joplin with a needle.  
Jimi Hendrix choking on his own  
vomit, Elvis black in the face  
on his bathroom floor. Eddie  
Cochran's car crash, Buddy Holly's  
plane crash, and Otis Redding's,  
and Johnny Ace shooting himself,  
and Sam Cooke getting shot, and  
Frankie Lymon overdosing. John  
Lennon at the hand of an assassin.

He pauses, in complete control. He waits and lets the  
bass beat establish itself again.

ROCK STAR (CONTD)

We remember them all. Some more  
than others and one group more  
than most. You make your choice  
of memories. We've made ours.  
They paid the dues. We pay the  
tribute. Ladies and gentlemen,  
they say we left them down the  
road. Don't believe it. They're  
with us tonight. Living fast.  
Driving hard. Making music.

A lonely voice in the darkness, calling out: "Eddie...!"

ROCK STAR

EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS!

Total bedlam. The throaty wail of the saxophone, plaintive,  
erotic, cries out of the distance as the bass beat throbs.

The Rock Star leads his group into "Far-Away Woman". Their  
performance is electrifying, but there's something special  
about the song itself.

PULL BACK, the scene shrinking, until it is clear that it  
is on a screen in a small, dark room.

CUT TO:

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Faces are not seen. Silhouettes are cast against the  
screen by the brilliant slanting rays of light from the  
projection booth.

The Rock Star and his band build to a powerful close: a  
rip-roaring blowout of a finish that leaves them spent and  
brings down the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

4.

Eddie's Memorial Service. (Black & white) It's a bleak, rainy day. Coming out of the church we SEE the Cruisers, family and friends. There are many other mourners, including hundreds of fans, carrying umbrellas, who have come to pay their last respects. They are held back by police barricades.

SUSAN (V.O.)  
...Eddie's Memorial Service...  
and those are his parents...

The film comes to an end. The lights COME UP.

A large logo on the wall tells us this is the screening room for the TV show, 20/20.

BARRY SIEGEL, the Editor, a balding man with a large protruding stomach and a walrus moustache.

SIEGEL  
Must have been a hell of an  
accident...

GERRY RIVERS. the Associate Producer, is sitting off to the side, wearing Jordache jeans, Lacoste shirt and an Argyle sweater tied around his neck

RIVERS  
Who says accident?

ELLIOT MANNHEIM, the Producer, a tall, good-looking man in his mid-thirties.

MANNHEIM  
(sarcastically)  
Are you saying he was murdered?

RIVERS  
It could have been a suicide...

SIEGEL  
It's weird...first Wendell dies...  
then a couple of months later, Eddie...

MANNHEIM  
Sounds like a CIA plot!

They all laugh.

SUSAN FOLEY, the Anchor Person, a Wellesley graduate, alert and smart, with a style all her own. She has a stack of research material in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN

What about the idea that Eddie's still alive?

MANNHEIM

(turning to her)

You mean: "Eddie Lives"?

SUSAN

They never found his body...

MANNHEIM

I like that. Eddie swam away from the car, had Jim Morrison waiting for him on shore, and then Amelia Earhart flew them both to Paris in her bi-plane, and now they're all living together in sin. Terrific idea, Sue!

Everyone laughs, except Susan.

SIEGEL

So what's our hook going to be?

MANNHEIM

(The Rock Star) said it all! They're dead...all of them. I mean, how come they're all dead before their time?....If we can answer that question, then we've got our story.

SUSAN

Who cares? That's Sunday morning TV.

MANNHEIM

Do you have a better idea?

SUSAN

(shaking her head)

Elliot.....There're holes in this story.....Pieces to the puzzle that are still missing...

MANNHEIM

Like what?

SUSAN

Like.....What happened the night of the accident? Where was Eddie coming from? Where was he going?.....And, tell me, if he didn't swim away... where's the body?.....How come they never found it?

MANNHEIM

It washed out to sea.

SUSAN

Seems rather unlikely...

MANNHEIM

Why's that?

SUSAN

(pointing to a map  
of New Jersey)

Because it would've had to make  
a right turn at Perth Amboy!

Siegel and Rivers laugh. Susan turns the map so they can  
all see it.

SUSAN (CONTD)

Elliot...there was no way that  
body was going to float all the  
way to the goddamned Atlantic  
Ocean!

MANNHEIM

(losing his patience)

It didn't have to. I'm sure  
there're parts of that river at  
least fifty feet deep.....the  
body could be anywhere! Susan...  
what the hell is your point?

SUSAN

(putting down her  
notes)

Okay.....Did you ever hear of a  
poet named Arthur Rimbaud?

MANNHEIM

French Lit. 105...it was required.

SUSAN

Very good, Elliot...I'm glad  
Columbia's turning out such well  
rounded students...

She starts digging into her pile of research material...  
finds a book and holds it up.

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN

Okay kids, sit back in your seats.  
Listen to this...

(putting on her glasses,  
starts reading)

"A SEASON IN HELL".....a spiritual  
and confessional autobiography...  
Arthur Rimbaud was a genius, a  
man who at the age of seventeen  
had already composed a body of  
poetry which today is ranked among  
the classics of the world.....  
His writings are a quest, a search  
for perfection, an attempt to find  
total freedom. Rimbaud is  
remembered as being disreputable,  
mean, ruthless, perverse....In  
reality, however, he was a tortured  
soul...searching....A word that  
turns up consistently in his writing  
is "saison"--season--all periods of  
time have endings, and these fatal  
endings Rimbaud anticipated in  
"A Season in Hell"...

(looking up)

Now comes the good part...

(back to the book)

"At the age of nineteen, Rimbaud  
committed suicide.....not of the  
flesh, but of the mind and soul..."

She puts down the book; looks around.

RIVERS

What's that supposed to mean?

SUSAN

(taking off her glasses)

It means that he never wrote  
another word...He cut himself off,  
not only from literature, but from  
civilization...and disappeared off  
the face of the earth. He was  
never seen nor heard from again  
until nearly twenty years later,  
when he reappeared in a hospital  
in Marseilles...on his deathbed.

MANNHEIM

But what the hell does this have  
to do with Eddie Wilson?

CONTINUED:

8.

SUSAN

.....You know where he was coming from on the night of his accident? From a goddamned recording studio, where he'd just finished taping an album. You know what the name of that album was?...."Season in Hell"!

This stops them all in their tracks.

MANNHEIM

(after a moment)

So what you're saying is...that Wilson's pulling a Rimbaud?... That he's out there somewhere...? Just walking around...La-dee-dah... Just like that?

SUSAN

(throwing up her hands,  
a slight smile)

I don't know. But if he is, we've got ourselves a hell of a story!

MANNHEIM

Do you think we can get our hands on those tapes?

SUSAN

I'm way ahead of you, Elliot...I went to Ekko Records yesterday...I figured the master had to be sitting in their vault. I wanted to find out why they never released that album. You know what I found out? The tapes are gone...they were checked out...on February 16...1964...the day after Eddie supposedly died!

She sits back in her chair and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER, VINELAND, N.J. - DAY

From the RADIO: the Rolling Stones': "...You can't always get what you want...you get what you need..."

FRANK RIDGEWAY, looking young, boyish really, with only a few streaks of gray in his hair to remind him that he's no longer a kid, stands in front of a tiny mirror, knotting his tie. There is humor and strength in his eyes, but if you look more closely, you'll see there's sadness as well.

Behind him, in the tight transient world he has chosen for himself, are a bed, some books and a TV set. A photograph of Frank with his ex-wife and two children sits on a small desk, along with a portable typewriter and a pile of neatly stacked typed pages.

CONTINUED:

9.

Frank switches off the RADIO and takes a last look in the mirror. A NOISE outside!...He pulls aside the curtain covering the tiny window, pries it open, looks out.

FRANK'S POV

The rear of the trailer court...snow covered brush...A branch SNAPS!...Who's out there? Silence.

ON FRANK

Must be some kind of animal...damn stray dogs! He closes the window, draws the curtain. He walks over to the desk, pulls a page from the typewriter, looks at it...Not good enough! He reaches for a pen, crosses something out, scribbles a note in the margin. Looks at it again... Writing's a bitch! He shakes his head, crumples the paper into a ball and does a slam dunk into the nearby waste-paper basket. He grabs a leather briefcase, his sheepskin jacket, and exits.

EXT. TRAILER

The outside of this rusting tin can makes the inside look good. It's a cold, dark, snowy December morning. Frank lifts his collar against the chill and makes his way to his 1977 tan Rabbit parked under an awning which is about to collapse.

INT. FRANK'S CAR

Frank turns the key but the engine won't catch. Figures. He tries again. And again, checks his watch; one more time. Finally, IT CATCHES.

Again, a SOUND, coming from behind his trailer...CRUNCHING SNOW!.....What's going on? He lowers the window, leans out.

FRANK

Anybody there?

Imagination's getting the best of him...been alone too long. The snow's two feet deep....who'd be out there? He quickly closes the window, lights a cigarette, revs a couple of times, and takes off.

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

Heavy snow falls over a water tower bearing the legend: "VINELAND NEW JERSEY".

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

Frank turns on the RADIO, pushes buttons and settles on Springsteen's "The River".

He is driving along the main street of Vineland, N.J., a bastion of small-town America that could be a cover for the Moral Majority Almanac. He wheels the Rabbit with low-key flash, tapping the wheel to the MUSIC, and comes in to harmonize with Springsteen:

FRANK

(singing)

"...Is a dream a lie  
If it don't come true...  
Or is it something worse  
That sends me down to the river,  
Though I know the river's dry..."

As the song ENDS, a commercial sends him to another station. Neil Diamond coming up here. Too soft for Frank. He hits another button and comes in on some Christmas music. No thank you. Starts fiddling with the dial. News, Latin, M-O-R, then hears a few bars of something...passes it...then quickly goes back, finding it.

ON FRANK

It's the final strains of "Far-Away Woman", a song from his past. Frank smiles, remembering.

CUT TO:

EXT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR - NIGHT (1962)

The song ENDS.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

(on radio)

Shades of the summer of '62!  
That was Eddie and the Cruisers  
with "Far-Away Woman"...

TIGHT ON a huge red neon "V", with blinking yellow arrows running through it. PULL BACK to reveal it is part of a sign reading "VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR".

PAN OFF the sign to reveal two cars barreling down the boardwalk. BEEP-BEEP! BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! The lead car is a 1957 pink and black Chevy Bel Air convertible. As the cars screech to a stop in front of the bar, the Chevy's headlights flash high...then low...then high again. The doors are flung open and two guys and a girl pile out. The second car is a Ford "Woodie" filled with musical equipment; three guys get out. As the guys start to unload, the girl walks towards the bar.

## INT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR

It's well after hours and the bar is closed. Chairs are stacked on tables. The place has been swept. The bar has been cleaned, and gleams. Frank, working with a pail and mop, is swabbing down a section of floor.

A SOUND at the door. He looks up.

## FRANK'S POV

JOANN CARLINO has entered the bar. She is a sultry, deeply tanned, dark-haired girl in a pair of white capris that leave no room for underwear. Under a tee shirt a full set stands up high and firm. Her lipstick matches the color of her long nails. She knows how men look at her and she likes it. But she's not a tease. Some people would say she looks cheap, but that's a matter of taste. She's just turned seventeen.

## ON FRANK--INTERCUT

He stands there, mop in hand, unable to move, staring at her.

Joann knows how she has affected him; it happens all the time. She smiles warmly, sincerely.

JOANN

Hi...

FRANK

Hi...

EDDIE WILSON enters. Joann turns to him and wraps her arm around his waist. He's wearing boots, jeans and a black tee shirt with the sleeves rolled up. He's lean and handsome, his wavy black hair waterfalls down his forehead. He's 22, and his eyes are on fire.

Next comes SAL AMATO, 25--"Long Tall Sally"--a Philadelphia Italian. His hair is slicked back, biker-style, and drops over the collar of his black and pink tear-drop jacket.

WENDELL NEWTON comes in next--the oldest Cruiser, mid-thirties--tall, burly, black. He wears a suit with a shirt buttoned at the neck, no tie...the costume of a blues man.

KENNY HOPKINS follows. He's 20, blond, good-looking, well built. He wears a Levi jacket with cut-off sleeves, open in front with no shirt underneath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

12.

DOC ROBBINS is the last one in. He's the Cruisers' manager--the flim-flam man, a barnstorming actor, a snake-oil salesman--he's 30 going on 50.

They stand there together, looking the place over, not saying anything. They're bold, brazen, cocky; a street-wise bunch.

FRANK

Can I help you guys?

Eddie takes a step forward, sizes up Frank. In his right hand he holds a set of car keys. Out of habit he twirls them around his index finger:

EDDIE

Yeah...tell Vinnie that Eddie and the Cruisers are here.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - DAY (PRESENT)

WHAP!! A snowball explodes against the windshield of his car, temporarily blinding him. The wipers work feverishly in an attempt to remove the snow.

FRANK

(lowering his window  
and screaming)

What are you...? Crazy?

A bunch of rowdy teenagers run off laughing and continuing their war against each other.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT

Frank parks in a space designated "FOR TEACHERS ONLY", grabs his briefcase and makes his way towards the side entrance.

There is now a full-scale snowfight being waged; the guys against the girls. Frank holds up his briefcase to protect himself.

FRANK

(still screaming)

If one of those so much as touches my new sheepskin jacket, you won't stand a snowball's chance in hell of passing English!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

13.

As he traverses the war-zone, one of the GUYS yells out.

GUY

Let Ridgeway through!

Frank raises his hand, acknowledging his safe passage and makes his way into the school. As he closes the door behind him, a powerful snowball SPLATTERS against the plate glass window.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY

There is the usual early morning traffic in the corridor; everyone's in a hurry. Lockers are being opened, wet gear stowed, doors slammed shut again. And eventually they all have to make their way past a group of toughs sitting around on the stairway, listening to "Far-Away Woman" on a huge portable RADIO.

Frank passes them, hearing the song for the second time in the past half-hour. He stops and turns to ANTHONY RUSSO, a young Marlon Brando, with a cigarette behind his ear.

FRANK

This song, Anthony...it's been playing a lot lately, hasn't it?

RUSSO

Could you call me Tony, Mr. Ridgeway?

FRANK

Sure, Tony. How come they're playing this song so much?

RUSSO

(almost laughing in his face)

Because it's a big hit!

FRANK

"Far-Away Woman" is a hit?

RUSSO

Hey, Mr. Ridgeway! Wake up! You ever hear of (the Rock Star)?

FRANK

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSO

He played this concert at the Garden last month...said Eddie and the Cruisers were his inspiration.....Well, anyway... Cousin Brucie...you know who Cousin Brucie is, don't you?... the deejay...he was at the concert... he dug the song and started playing the original Cruiser cut, and now it's a hit!

FRANK

You know, if you like that song, you ought to check out the Cruisers' "Down On My Knees". You might like it.

RUSSO

I didn't know you were such a rock 'n' roller, Mr. Ridgeway...

FRANK

I try to keep an open mind.

With that, Frank is gone.

RUSSO

(watching him leave, then, derisively)

"Down On My Knees"?

(turns to the other guys, holding his crotch)

Down on these knees!

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Frank is sitting on the edge of his desk. His jacket is off and his sleeves are rolled up. He is holding a book of poetry.

Written behind him on the blackboard: "LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)".

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

(reading)

"And so I dare to hope,  
 Though changed, no doubt, from  
     what I was when first  
 I came among these hills;  
     when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains,  
     by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers,  
     and the lonely streams..."

Eyes wander from the windows to the clock as the falling snow seems to signal the start of Christmas vacation which is only minutes away. The class is like a time bomb set to go off. Books are stacked neatly on their desks ready for a quick getaway.

The only ones paying attention are a few preppies sitting in the front seats.

FRANK (CONTD)

(reading)

"...Wherever nature led:  
     more like a man  
 Flying from something  
     that he dreads than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved."

He puts down the book of poetry.

FRANK (CONTD)

So.....What's Wordsworth getting  
 at? What's happening?

A PREPPIE breaks the ice.

PREPPIE

He's saying that places stay the  
 same but people change...

FRANK

Do people change or don't they?  
 ...That's something worth talking  
 about...

Frank's eyes find:

Tony Russo slouched in his seat.

ON FRANK--INTERCUT

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

What do you think, Mr. Russo?

RUSSO

What do I think?

Frank nods. Russo slouches even further in his chair, the criminal indifferently awaiting the sentence of the court.

RUSSO

About what?

FRANK

About people...

RUSSO

What people did you have in mind?

FRANK

I'll play ping-pong with you as long as you like, Anthony. You still have to answer the question.

The class senses a showdown building. They get interested.

RUSSO

Wordsworth says he's changed...

(shrugs)

I'll take his word for it...But you know what, Mr. Ridgeway...?

Frank can see it coming. The kid is going for a winner, and there's nothing he can do about it.

RUSSO (CONTD)

...I don't think this guy is in the hills...

(indicating the text)

...like it says here...I think he's over the hill...

The punks laugh first, but the preppies join in once they figure they can get away with it.

RUSSO

(for the kill now)

No question about it. Over the hill, around the bend, washed up. A quart low. Min-i-mum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

17.

More laughter. Point, game, set and diploma to Mister Russo. Even Frank has to smile. The BELL RINGS. They cheer, grab their books, laughingly exchange goodbyes.

FRANK

(shouting over the  
hubbub)

Have a Merry Christmas! And  
remember, I don't want to see  
any of your faces for at least  
ten days!

In a flash they're gone.

Frank heaves a sigh of relief, sits back in his chair, and puts his feet on the blackboard ledge.

We HEAR: Eddie and the Cruisers performing Freddie Cannon's "Palisades Park".

CUT TO:

INT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR - NIGHT (1962)

TIGHT ON Eddie, pounding away on the piano, calling chords over his shoulder, shouting into the mike, slugging away, while keeping time with the stomping beat of his right leg.

Alongside him, Sally, guitar slung low on the hip, driving home the beat.

Wendell, cruising in from the side with his pulsating sax.

Kenny, sitting tall in the saddle, behind a set of drums emblazoned "EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS"; and off to the side, filling in the harmonies, is Joann, "lookin' good".

As the song comes driving to its conclusion, Doc gets up from one of the tables.

DOC

...Take it from me...master of  
voices, maker of choices...unmoved  
mover and man of the hour....You  
guys sure got what it takes....  
But now...it's my turn to curtsy,  
your turn to bow...  
(he curtsies)

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Hey, Big Bopper!...You gotta hear  
my new song...You're the one who  
knows what goes!

DOC

(a big smile)

Hey, man...never bullshit a  
bullshitter!...You make the music,  
I'll make the deals...

He leaves in a breeze.

EDDIE

LET'S GET ON WITH THE MUSIC!

(then)

One, two...one, two, three...

Sally leads off with a rock 'n' roll guitar. The song  
is fast and the rest of the band goes with it.

EDDIE

(singing)

"Betty Lou's got a new pair of  
shoes  
And she wants to go dancin'  
She's all dressed up tonight  
For a little romancin'  
Betty Lou's gonna shake off the  
blues  
In her hot little rock 'n' roll  
shoes  
And she wants to go dancin'..."

As the MUSIC continues, Eddie stops abruptly. He throws  
up his hands.

EDDIE

HOLD IT! Hold it! Wait a minute!

He puts two fingers in his mouth and WHISTLES. The MUSIC  
screeches to a halt.

SALLY

What's the matter?

EDDIE

What's the matter? Where're you  
racin' to? Where's the fire?

SALLY

No fire. That's the way the song  
goes. It's written that way.  
Upbeat. What's the problem?

EDDIE

The problem is I'm just sayin' words. You've got to give me a little room, so they know what I'm singin' about!

SALLY

Like where?

EDDIE

Like after...

(singing)

"Betty Lou's got a new pair of shoes..."

(then)

Pause.

(singing)

"...And she wants to go dancin'".  
Like there.

SALLY

No, man! Don't stop there! It's no big deal. You lose the beat, the people miss a step. We want them to dance!

EDDIE

No big deal?! Don't lose the beat? What are you, a fuckin' moron? I'm singin' a song, not playin' a hula!

SALLY

Hey, who wrote this song?

EDDIE

(pointing at him)

You, pal. You did.

SALLY

(recovering)

Okay. If I wrote the song, then I say how it goes.

EDDIE

No, man, it doesn't work that way.

SALLY

(turning to the others)

Do you believe this guy? He asks me to write a song for him...we need new material, he says...and now he starts jerkin' my chains...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SALLY (CONTD)

(turning to Eddie)

Hey, man...this isn't "Ebb Tide"  
...you know...it's "Blue Suede  
Shoes"!

EDDIE

Sally...Sally...I like it. I love  
you. I love your stuff. I'm just  
not sure it's what I'm lookin' for  
...you understand?

SALLY

(hurt)

Forget it, will ya? You made up  
your mind before ya even started,  
you ain't gonna do my stuff...so  
what am I knockin' myself out for?  
It's not good enough for you! I'm  
not good enough for you!...But I'll  
tell you something...it's what they  
want. Listen, Eddie, you wanna  
make music, I wanna make a buck.  
That's where we part.

EDDIE

(trying to stay calm)

I tell you what, Sally. I don't  
want to argue with you. Let's get  
another opinion on the subject,  
okay?

SALLY

No...no, forget it.

EDDIE

No...no, let's get another opinion...  
Joann...?

SALLY

What the fuck are you askin' her for?

EDDIE

What's wrong with askin' her? She's  
got a brain.

Joann shrugs and turns away; this is nothing new.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

I don't know anything?! She knows, huh? All of a sudden she's a fuckin' expert? Everybody you bring into the band's an expert... except Sally...Sally's just a dumb guinea, huh?

EDDIE

Wait a minute, you dumb guinea!...

He notices Frank leaning up against the bar, watching.

INTERCUT

EDDIE (CONTD)

(pointing at Frank)

Hey, kid.....come here!

FRANK

Who? Me?

EDDIE

Yeah...you...come here!

Frank walks towards the stage.

EDDIE

You heard both versions...Which do you like better?

FRANK

(a little nervous)

...I like the caesura.

EDDIE

(to Sally)

See!...My way, with the Caesurian!

SALLY

The what?

EDDIE

Tell him...

(then)

...What's your name?

FRANK

Frank.

EDDIE

Tell him, Frankie...

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Caesura...it's a phrase used in poetry criticism...a timely pause, a kind of strategic silence.

Eddie leans back triumphantly.

EDDIE

That's just exactly right!

FRANK

I think I can show you what I mean...

He pulls a paperback from his pocket and thumbs through it.

FRANK (CONTD)

(taking a deep breath)

This is from a poem by Rimbaud. I'll read it without the caesura, then I'll read it with.

(looking up)

I think you'll hear the difference. Here it goes...

(reading)

"One evening I took Beauty in my arms and I thought her bitter and I insulted her."

EDDIE

Sounds like shit. Right?

FRANK

Now hear it the other way...

(reading)

"One evening I took Beauty in my arms...and I thought her bitter... and I insulted her."

EDDIE

Now that's got class. Sally, am I right? Does that have class?

Sally shrugs.

EDDIE

Kid.....You can stay.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

TIGHT ON Susan Foley.

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN  
(clearing her throat)  
...Excuse me...?

PULL BACK to reveal Susan standing in front of Frank's desk.

He turns around, surprised. It's not every day that a beautiful woman is standing in his classroom.

FRANK  
Can I help you?

SUSAN  
(smiling)  
Yes, I think you can.

FRANK  
(at his most charming,  
and indicating the  
blackboard)  
Are you interested in Wordsworth?

SUSAN  
(still smiling)  
Well, "Tintern Abbey"'s not exactly  
the lyric I had in mind.

FRANK  
Oh? What is it then?

SUSAN  
"Season in Hell".

The past is rushing in on Frank, washing over him.

CUT TO:

INT. DOM'S VARSITY LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

A classic old luncheonette; gray formica tables, burgundy naughahyde seats with a juke box at each table.

Frank and Susan are sitting in a booth, drinking coffee.

SUSAN  
.....Frank...what happened that  
last night at the recording studio?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Miss Foley...I'm sorry...there's nothing personal in this. I'd like to help you, I really would...

SUSAN

It's just that there are so many unanswered questions...

FRANK

I know what you're up against... but that was then, and this is now.....I'm just not interested in doing an interview...

SUSAN

Look, I'm not here to make a carnival of your life. I have something more in mind...Something like a tribute to a group of guys who were ahead of their time... who had something, something great.

FRANK

Don't you understand?...The night Eddie died, the Cruisers died with him.

Susan holds up a paperback copy of "A Season in Hell" by Arthur Rimbaud.

SUSAN

....Is this what influenced Eddie?

He shakes his head, puts some change on the table, and gets up.

SUSAN

Is it?

FRANK

There's no way on earth that I can go into that with you.

SUSAN

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Maybe it's because Eddie's dead  
...and I'm alive.....He was  
my friend...and you and I just  
met.

After a moment, he turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER COURT - DAY

HIGH ANGLE REVERSE SHOT of "VINELAND TRAILER COURT". A mountain of freshly packed snow lines the highway. In the distance Frank's Rabbit pulls off the road and heads towards the CAMERA. CRANE DOWN and PAN as the car comes to a stop.

Frank gets out, grabs his briefcase and enters the trailer.

ON FRANK

In doorway. The color drains from his face.

FRANK'S POV

The bed has been turned over and the mattress cut; chairs have been slashed and ripped. Records have been pulled from their jackets, books from the shelf. The pages of his manuscript have been strewn across the floor.

He bends down, gathers them carefully, and places them back on the desk.

ON FRANK

He feels violated. He can't breathe. Has to get out.

EXT. TRAILER

Frank exits the trailer, lights a cigarette. He takes a long hard pull. Son of a bitch! There was somebody out there this morning....But who?....and why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

26.

His thoughts are interrupted by the piercing RING of the PHONE.

He quickly goes inside.

INT. TRAILER

Frank grabs the phone.

FRANK  
(into phone)  
Hello...?

He cradles the phone on his shoulder, bends down and picks up an album.

INSERT:

"FAR-AWAY WOMAN"...Eddie and the Cruisers are posed in front of the 1957 Chevy Bel-Air. Standing next to Eddie is none other than the young Frank Ridgeway.

ON FRANK

VOICE (O.S.)  
...Wordman...?

His old Cruiser nickname...a blast from the past!

FRANK  
Who's this?

VOICE (O.S.)  
This is the night-stalker, the blues-talker, the water-walker...

FRANK  
...Doc...?

He places the album on the table.

DOC (O.S.)  
Hey there, Wordman, say there.  
Wordman, whatever happened to you?

FRANK  
(with an edge)  
It's been a long time...what's up?

DOC (O.S.)  
You need me, Wordman. You need me fast and you need me bad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

27.

FRANK  
(looking around)  
Is that right?

DOC (O.S.)  
We gotta rap. How soon can you  
get your ass over here?

FRANK  
Where are you?

DOC (O.S.)  
Right back where we started from,  
kid.

FRANK  
Asbury Park?

DOC (O.S.)  
Just ten miles and ten lifetimes  
away...Rahway, New Jersey...

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

The late afternoon sun has turned the morning snow to  
slush.

Frank is listening to a golden oldies station: "Gone from  
the charts, but not from our hearts"..."The Wanderer" by  
Dion and the Belmonts.

Overhead, a large sign: "RAHWAY - STRAIGHT AHEAD". Next to  
it, with an arrow pointing off the Parkway, "ASBURY PARK,  
JERSEY SHORE".

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

Frank makes a sudden decision...without even signaling, he  
swings into the right lane, exits the Parkway, and starts  
traveling down Scenic Route 9.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

He's getting off on seeing the old pitch-and-putt golf courses,  
surf 'n' turf restaurants, mixed in with MacDonaldis, Burger  
King and Kentucky Fried Chicken places, as if they'd all  
lived side by side forever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

28.

Lots of INTERFERENCE on the RADIO. Frank turns the dial, comes up on WRAY.

DOC  
(on radio)  
This is Doc Robbins...the Voice  
of Rahway...

Frank smiles.

DOC (CONTD)  
...Leading off with something for  
the armchair traveler...From the  
land of Coors beer and condominia,  
a young fellow who's high on life,  
Mr. John Denver...  
(doing a great John  
Denver imitation)  
...and no matter what you hear...  
I'm not Alfred E. Neuman in  
disguise...! Far out!!

"Rocky Mountain High" begins.

On his left, Frank spots a red neon sign: "AMATO'S VILLA NAPOLI". There are blinking, multi-colored lights bordering the building; on the roof a plastic Santa with his reindeer.

ON FRANK

His face indicates he's been here before. It's not a happy memory. He continues driving.

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DUSK

An arched sign over the road: "WELCOME TO ASBURY PARK". The car passes under it and continues down a side street, heading for the beach.

CUT TO:

EXT. ASBURY PARK BOARDWALK

An Art Deco movie house. On the marquee: "CLOSED". The doors leading into the lobby are reinforced with wood to protect it from the wind coming in off the Atlantic.

Frank walks along the boardwalk, past shuttered stores, Playland and Miniature Golf, until he approaches the building that once housed Vince's Boardwalk Bar. It, too, is closed for the winter.

(CONTINUED)

The large neon "V" remains. However, the rest of the sign has been taken down, and is replaced by: "VALENTINO'S PIZZA". The white building has been repainted in the colors of the Italian flag: red, white and green.

Frank shakes his head, then walks up to the window. Using a handkerchief from his back pocket, he cleans off one of the panes, and, cupping his hands over his eyes, looks in. He begins to HEAR: Tchaikovsky's Concerto #1.

CUT TO:

INT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR - DAY (1962)

The MUSIC continues.

It's early morning and the bar is empty. Joann saunters in. She's wearing a one-piece Jantzen bathing suit, a man's shirt knotted at the waist, and high spiked sandals. She takes your breath away.

As she crosses to the bar to retrieve a pair of sunglasses, Joann follows the MUSIC to the stage where Frank sits at the piano, playing. When he sees her, he stops, embarrassed.

JOANN

Don't stop.....I like it.

He smiles and starts playing again. He now has an audience--of one, but a very important one--and he's playing just for her.

A battered paperback sits on the piano. Joann picks it up and looks at it.

INSERT:

"A SEASON IN HELL" BY ARTHUR RIMBAUD.

Frank finishes the piece with great flourish as Joann places the book back down on the piano.

She APPLAUDS him.

FRANK

(smiling)

Thank you...thank you.

JOANN

...A touch of class for Vinnie's.

Frank needs to be doing something to keep from staring at her. He starts playing some typical LOUNGE MUSIC.

(CONTINUED)

He closes with an arpeggio. She smiles, and after an awkward moment, looks back at the book.

JOANN

What's this?...Poetry...?

FRANK

(trying for casual)

Oh...Rimbaud...are you familiar with his work?

JOANN

Sure.

She isn't. She glances down at the jacket of the book.

JOANN

(reading surreptitiously)

"Quite disreputable, mean...and perhaps even ruthless and perverse..."

Frank turns the book around to face him.

FRANK

(catching on, reading)

"...A tortured soul.....But still one of the greatest poets that ever lived."

They burst out laughing. Her laugh is deep, full, rich and infectious. It catches him by surprise. He's knocked out by her.

FRANK

...Would you like it?

JOANN

No...no, thank you...I've gotta go. I'm going to the beach...I forgot my sunglasses...  
(holding them up)

FRANK

(offering her the book)

Here...take it with you...Read it on the beach...

He holds it out to her.

FRANK (CONTD)

...A present...

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

We got musicians, man...  
Wendell...he'll turn it into  
blues...and Sally'll make it  
a cha-cha.....Hopkins'll  
beat the shit out of it any  
which way. You just leave  
that to me.

FRANK

All I did was try to write a song  
about...a woman...

EDDIE

Hey, what say you just read the  
damn thing to me? Then I'll know  
what it's about.

Frank unfolds the piece of paper.

FRANK

(reading)

"Shadows are longer now  
Where I go  
Sun is falling  
Down bloody and low...

Step to the dark side...  
Who needs light?  
Gonna feel my way, baby  
And it's gonna feel right..."

Frank waits for Eddie to crack up. He doesn't.

EDDIE

Where's the rest of it?

FRANK

You want me to continue?

Eddie stands up, flicks away his cigarette.

EDDIE

Might as well.

He turns and walks away, removing his car keys from his  
pocket.

FRANK

(shouting)

JUST A DAMN MINUTE!

(CONTINUED)

Eddie stops, turns, looks at Frank.

FRANK

I'm working the bar. A college drop-out. You come to me and say, "Hey, kid...since you're here... while you're restin'...why not write me some songs? Something special...just for the Cruisers."

(then)

That's not much to go on, you know? I sit down and I put out. I really try. And I don't care if this is the worst thing you've heard since "The Purple People Eater". I want some feedback. I want to know what you want from me.

Eddie stares at Frank. He's hard to read; it looks like he might slug him. But then he puts a hand on each of Frank's shoulders and hunkers down in front of him.

EDDIE

(laughing)

HOLEE SHIT!...the things she gets me into! First time outta the gate, I get me a prima donna wordman.

FRANK

She got you?

EDDIE

Just be quiet, Wordman.

He puts a finger over his mouth to show what quiet means.

EDDIE

We've got this mutual friend who thinks you could be good. She told me to try you. I listened to her. Now don't start askin' me what I want from you. I don't know yet. The question is...what do you have to give?....Let me tell you about the Cruisers....Every night I'm up there working, three, four sets... and I look down on people dancin', and drinkin', which is fine by me. But what I want is...

He stops, twirls his keys around his index finger.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE (CONTD)

...is songs that echo. Most of the stuff we're singin' now, they're like the sheets in somebody's bed. Spread 'em and soil 'em and ship 'em out to the laundry ...You know?...But our songs...I want us to be able to fold ourselves up in them forever...

Eddie stays crouched a moment longer, head down. To Frank it feels like a confessional; it embarrasses both of them.

EDDIE

That's as much as you're gonna get out of me, Wordman. Ever.

With that, he gets up, and makes his way across the beach towards the boardwalk.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STATION WPAY - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The station is desperately small-time, just a cut above the places that sell live chickens and Jesus pictures over the air. The dime-store Christmas decorations don't help.

A hyper-active Doc Robbins sits behind the console. He hasn't aged well. He compensates for his baldness by letting his hair grow longer on the sides. If a cigarette leaves his lips it's only to crush it out before starting another.

DOC

(into mike)

Okay, you near-beer fans. Remember Mock-bird-ing-bird? Charley and Inez Foxx, summer of 'sixty-three? James Taylor and Carly Simon are betting you don't...

Doc snaps off the mike, places the needle on the record, and offers Frank a chair beside the console.

DOC

Howdy, Wordman. Long time.

FRANK

(shaking his hand)

Doc...how've you been?

(CONTINUED)

DOC

(shrugging)

The hits just keep on coming...  
You haven't changed much...Still  
a kid....And don't bother  
returning the compliment.

Frank sits down and looks around the joint.

DOC (CONTD)

Hey, don't be fooled. This place  
isn't as bad as it looks. Pay's  
not bad, and you can't beat the  
hours. Besides, there's a state  
college in town and the kids love  
my irreverent wit. They tell me  
I'm becoming quite a cult figure  
around here.

FRANK

That's great.

Doc leans back in his chair, puts both hands behind his  
head.

DOC

So.....did you write that book yet?

FRANK

No...I never got around to it.

Doc gets serious for a moment.

DOC

You should...Eddie always expected  
big things from you, kid...

FRANK

Yeah...I know.....

(then, a little  
annoyed)

But I still don't know why you  
wanted to see me...? What was so  
urgent?

DOC

Calm down. I've got your best  
interests at heart. I guess you  
know what's been happening with  
the Cruisers lately? Well, the  
way I see it, Eddie's my ticket  
out...and yours...

FRANK

Eddie....? Ticket to where...?

DOC

Anywhere we wanna go! Eddie's gonna be big! Bigger than ever!

FRANK

He's dead.

DOC

Doesn't matter. This is larger than life. Let me ask you something, kid...Did you ever tell anyone you were a Cruiser?

FRANK

No.

DOC

Not even your wife?...or your kids?

FRANK

No.

DOC

It's like I figured. You're just sitting on it, letting it happen. Well, not me...my mind doesn't work that way.

FRANK

We've got one album. Twelve cuts. The kids will buy them for a while and that'll be the end of it. You're making a big deal out of nothing!

DOC

I'll tell you about nothing! Nothing's what we got on the reissue of the old album! Right after Eddie died I sold all the rights back to Ekko Records...to that bastard Lew Eisen. Shit! I could kick myself! But there's nothing I can do about that now.

(then)

Anyway...this movie deal is something else again. I'm looking into it. You've heard about the movie, right? "The Eddie Wilson Story"? You're with me so far?

Frank nods.

DOC

The way I see it, they gotta have a script--right?--and locations, and period stuff. That's where we come in. Technical Consultants. They gotta come to us! Who else they got?...Eddie's parents...? It's money in the bank!

FRANK

(sarcastically)

Suppose they fake it? Set it in California, turn us into a surfer group?

DOC

Let 'em try! Beautiful! We'll sue--libel, invasion of privacy, abuse of copyright! We'll get lawyers!...And there's more... there ought to be a part for both of us. Not that we should necessarily play ourselves.....

Frank wants out. He wants no part of these schemes.

FRANK

It sounds like you can't miss. I wish you all the luck in the world.

Frank rises, turns to leave.

DOC

(laughing bitterly)

Guess I've lost my touch...If I can't convince you, who can I convince?

FRANK

(charitably)

You never know...the movie people... they might be interested...

DOC

Sure. A trip to the coast and a chance to meet the stars. Thanks a lot.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOC (CONTD)

(then)

Thanks for dropping by. I knew you would. You always were a decent kid...

Through the glass partition we SEE a large, barrel-chested MAN enter the studio. He has a crew cut; the look of an ex-drill instructor.

DOC (CONTD)

...How about a lift home? It's not far. There's something I want to show you.

FRANK

What?

DOC

All in due time...

FRANK

Sure, Doc. Any way you want to play it.

The door to the booth OPENS.

HICKEY

Hiya, Doc... (a gruff voice)

(offering his hand to Frank)

Edsel Hickey...news and weather...

They shake.

FRANK

Frank Ridgeway...

Doc turns on the microphone and goes into his closing rap:

DOC

And now darkness settles over the land of ooh-baa-dee and the Voice of Rahway sinks below the level of a lover's whisper. Are you listening? Till rosy-fingered aurora streaks the morning sky, this is Doc Robbins sneaking into the night with a smile on my face and a dollar in my wallet and a song in my heart. For the Wordman,

(winking)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOC (CONTD)

"Down On My Knees" by Eddie and  
the Cruisers!

(snapping off the mike)  
Let's blow!

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

As the engine turns over, the RADIO comes on. "Down On My Knees" is still playing. Frank turns on the defroster and the windshield wipers. In the b.g. we SEE that the radio station sits off the highway, flanked by a drive-in movie and a finish-it-yourself furniture place.

DOC

Make like a Cruiser!

They drive in silence until the MUSIC ENDS. Edsel Hickey comes on with the NEWS. Doc snaps off the RADIO.

DOC

Know what I was wondering? It's  
just an idea...I know you're  
gonna hate it.

FRANK

What is it?

Doc reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handbill.

DOC

I was thinking of bringing the  
group back together.

Frank takes his eyes off the road and gives him a look.

DOC

(reading)

"Let the Good Times Roll"...  
Eddie and the Cruisers...  
Featuring Sal Amato...  
Appearing nightly at 8 and 11...  
Holiday Inn, Margate City,  
New Jersey...

Frank glances at the handbill in the dim light of the  
dashboard.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

I checked him out last weekend. He's got this Eddie Wilson look-alike, who ain't half bad. They're starting to make a little noise... But you know Sally...a nickel and dime operation. Now...here's my plan: I figure we'll get rid of the losers and bring on the Cruisers! ...You, the Clone, Sally, Kenny, some spade on sax, and the chick...

FRANK

...Joann...

DOC

Yeah, Joann...I hear she's back, you know...

Frank looks at him.

DOC

...She was dancing...in Vegas... Caesar's Palace...!

FRANK

Where is she?

DOC

Not that far...Lakehurst...

FRANK

Have you seen her?

DOC

No...but I hear she's looking good...  
(then)

...At any rate, we get her and the others together...I put up a little seed money, get you some publicity... the right clothes...open you in the right joint at the right time...and we come back BIG! Eddie and the Original Cruisers!.....So whaddya think?

FRANK

What the hell do you think I think?

DOC

I think you hate it.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Why not do a James Dean? Hit the junkyards and blowtorch the car Eddie died in into little pieces for the tourist trade. Or better still...pass the word: he's still alive, he had plastic surgery... he froze himself. Only do me a favor.....leave me out of it.

DOC

Oh, shit, kid...I'm sorry.

FRANK

It's okay. Forget it.

They sit back and once again drive in silence. The glow of the dashlights and oncoming traffic cast eerie shadows on their faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN COURT - NIGHT

A sad little place with individual cabins and a "VACANCY" sign that nobody ever bothers to turn on.

Frank's car pulls up in front of one of the cabins; both men get out and walk towards it.

DOC

(opening the door)

They may look like shacks on the outside...

(motioning Frank through the door)

...But you'd be surprised at the interior.

INT. CABIN

When the lights COME ON. we SEE that the place has been ransacked.

DOC

Maid's day off....This was waiting for me when I got home last night.

FRANK

Looks like we have the same decorator....They got my place this morning.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

It's like the old joke: "We might be paranoid, but that doesn't mean they ain't after us".

FRANK

Who's after us?

DOC

Music lovers.

FRANK

Why?

DOC

We must have something they want.

FRANK

What's that?

DOC

Can't you figure it out?

FRANK

No.

DOC

Try. What could we have that's worth stealing? My Robert Hall suit? Your Wilkinson blades?

FRANK

Doc, for Christ's sake! What are they after?

DOC

The tapes... "Season in Hell".

Far off in the night we HEAR a high-pitched wail.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT (1964)

TIGHT ON a large speaker.

Eddie's falsetto voice has taken on the quality of a street-punk gone to heaven and reincarnated as a choir-boy. The lyrics are poetic and haunting, the music a cross between jazz, blues, rock and classical: we are listening to a playback of the completed mix of "Season in Hell".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

43.

PAN DOWN and PULL BACK to reveal a small but efficient recording studio, separated from the control booth by a glass partition.

Eddie's a caged animal, pacing back and forth, a cigarette in one hand, a bottle of beer in the other. His eyes are darting all over the place.

Kenny's straddling his chair, tapping out a rhythm with his feet.

Sally's standing at a large table, eating non-stop from a tray of cellophane-wrapped cold cuts.

Frank's standing off by himself, drinking a beer, watching Eddie...waiting.

Joann's sitting on the floor, legs crossed, eyes shifting nervously from Eddie to Frank to the control booth.

ON CONTROL BOOTH

On the wall, a large neon record with the logo "EKKO RECORDS"; seated in front of it is LEW EISEN, President of Ekko Records, short, balding, nattily dressed. He gets up from his chair and starts prowling about the tiny confines of the booth.

With him are his two associates, a couple of engineers and Doc.

ON EDDIE

Continuing to stalk, eyes fixed on the control booth. He can't hear a word, but he senses all is not going well.

ON BOOTH

Eisen grows more and more agitated. Doc gets up, goes to him, puts his arm around his shoulder, trying to pacify him. Eisen shrugs him off, points to one of the engineers.

EISEN

(running his finger  
across his throat)

Kill it.

The MUSIC STOPS abruptly.

Eddie goes crazy. He flings open the door to the control booth.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

What the fuck are you doin'?

EISEN

I've heard enough. Sit down, kid.

Eddie remains standing.

DOC

(to Eisen)

Lew...there's nothing can't be fixed. You get wrapped up in a project, you get too close to it, you need someone to kind of stand back and take a fresh look. Am I right?

EISEN

This won't fix. This is a disaster. "Season in Hell"! Well, I got news....Hell isn't in season. Eight minute cuts? Monologues? Choruses?

(turning to Eddie)

You want to be a poet? Try Greenwich Village.

DOC

(trying to save the deal)

Another coupla weeks, we could...

EISEN

Doc, Doc...I don't mind skating on thin ice with you. But your tiger here wants to walk on water. This isn't songs...this is a suicide note! Take six weeks, I still wouldn't know what to do with it...

EDDIE

You wanna know what you can do with it? I'll tell you, you son of a bitch! You can take it and shove it up your ass! That's what you can do with it!

Eddie reaches behind Doc and pushes Eisen out of the side door, and goes for him. The rest of the Cruisers rush into the control room; Joann tries to pull Eddie off Eisen.

INT. HALLWAY

EISEN

(breaking away)

I put up a hundred grand, I  
expect something for my money!  
This is what I've been waiting  
a year for? A bunch of jerkoffs  
making weird sounds? You're not  
going to see a red penny!

Eisen turns and runs down the long flight of stairs, his  
boys following. Doc's right behind them.

EDDIE

(yelling after them)

You know what you can do with  
your hundred Gs? We got our guts  
wrapped up in this! You hear me?  
Get the fuck out of here, you  
little prick!

INTERCUT

DOC

(to Eisen)

Lew, he's been under a lot of  
pressure since Wendell died...I'll  
talk to him...

EDDIE

(still yelling down)

You ain't talking to nobody!  
They're all scumbags!

DOC

(to Eisen)

We'll work something out...

EDDIE

Bullshit!

EISEN

(to Doc)

Don't do me any favors. I don't  
need this.

Eisen and his flunkies leave. Doc comes bounding back up  
the stairs.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

DOC

You're crazy! Shit! We had the  
money in our hands!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOC (CONTD)  
 (grabbing Eddie  
 by the shirt)

You blew it, man! You blew it!

Eddie throws Doc across the room. Doc bounces off the wall and starts coming back at him. Eddie hits him, knocking him to the floor, goes after him. Sally reaches for the back of Eddie's shirt and pulls him off.

SALLY

Eddie...you're wrong. You're wrong.

(throwing him up  
 against a wall)

I love ya...I've known you longer than anyone else, but you're fuckin' wrong! We just play music, man. We play rock 'n' roll! We ain't no poets!

Kenny and Doc grab Sally; Joann and Frank pull Eddie away. The engineers are between them.

SALLY

I'm playin' this stuff, and I don't even know what I'm playin'. They want "Far-Away Woman", and what're we givin' em, some goddamn opera!

(then)

It ain't your fault, Eddie. I know it ain't your fault.

(gesturing at Frank)

It's the kid...it's Wordman puttin' that shit into your head...That's what killed Wendell, I swear to you...that's what did it! Tryin' to satisfy you! Nothin's good enough for you...don't you understand? I don't even know what the fuck you're after!

EDDIE

...Something nobody's ever done before...something great!

SALLY

Why?...We ain't great. We're just some guys from Jersey...

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

(pouncing on Sally  
again, shaking him)

Don't ever say that to me, Sally!  
Never! Because if we can't be great  
there ain't no sense in ever  
playin' again!

Sally reaches out, grabs Frank, pulling him to Eddie.

SALLY

It was you! I blame this on you!  
It's your fault, man. We were  
doin' good until you came along!  
You got us all screwed up!

Eddie swings wildly, landing a punch to Sally's chin. The brawl escalates into a knock-down, drag-out, free-for-all, growing more intense until sheer exhaustion takes over. Then tempers subside and the dust starts to settle.

Eddie pulls away, turns and goes out of the door. After a moment, Joann chases after him.

ON FRANK

He just stands there, devastated, accepting all the blame.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN COURT - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Frank's behind the wheel of his car, his window down. He's leaning back against the seat, eyes closed, hands tightly clutching the steering wheel.

DOC

(leaning in the window)

Lemme tell you something....A  
day hasn't gone by that I haven't  
relived that night...Did I say a  
day?...Shit...lately there hasn't  
been an hour...

FRANK

(relaxing his grip on  
the wheel)

Eddie wanted songs that would echo...  
songs we could wrap ourselves up  
in...like clean sheets...

(with a self-mocking laugh)

We didn't make it...did we, Doc?

(CONTINUED)

DOC

I don't know...maybe Eisen was wrong...maybe we were all wrong... maybe you guys really were on to something...

FRANK

...Eight minute cuts...monologues... weird sounds...?

DOC

It's just that "Season in Hell" wasn't like anything we'd ever heard.....Maybe you guys really were great...

FRANK

(unconvinced)

Yeah...maybe...

DOC

Look...somebody's going to a whole lot of trouble to find those tapes. They must be worth something.

FRANK

Who.....? Pirates?

DOC

You got it, kid....and we spend the rest of our lives trying to get what's rightfully ours. And it is ours! That's what gripes me.

FRANK

If you ask me, the master is probably still at Ekko Records, collecting dust in some storage bin...

DOC

That's what I figured...so I paid them a little visit the other day... and you wanna hear something cute? The tapes were gone. Somebody walked off with them back in '64...the day after Eddie died!

FRANK

(taken aback)

Who the hell would've done that?

(CONTINUED)

DOC  
(matter of fact)  
I kinda thought it might've been  
you...?

FRANK  
Why would I have taken them?

DOC  
A little momento...? I don't  
know. Maybe you wanted to destroy  
the evidence...? Who's to say?

FRANK  
(hard, firm)  
I didn't take those tapes, Doc.

DOC  
.....Then...who?  
(after a moment)  
Good old Doc Robbins...as usual, a  
day late and a dollar short...  
(banging his fist  
against the car)  
Damn it! Those tapes belong to us!  
I didn't wait seventeen years to  
get hosed!....Kid, I'm broke. I  
barely beat the checks to the  
bank each week. I need your help.

FRANK  
How?

DOC  
You've got a car...a little time  
off...Go around to the Cruisers...  
and see if you can get a line on  
those tapes...

FRANK  
I wouldn't know where to start...

DOC  
Pay Sally a visit...go see Joann...  
check around...I hear Kenny's  
dealing blackjack in Atlantic  
City.....Go on, kid...see what's  
left of Eddie out there...

FRANK  
I don't know Doc...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

50.

After a moment, Frank turns on the engine.

DOC

Give it a shot. What's to lose?  
(stepping back  
from the car)

...And..Wordman....Merry Christmas!

FRANK

Merry Christmas, Doc.

He hits the accelerator and takes off. PULL UP higher and higher; Doc's left standing there, a desolate figure in the night, as Frank's car disappears into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

A few flurries of snow start to fall. Traffic is light. Frank's car makes its way onto a ramp leading to Route 9, heading back towards the Jersey Shore.

ON FRANK

His face looks tired and drawn as he is blinded for a moment by the lights from a passing car. His eyes are on the road, but his mind is elsewhere.

In the distance a sign blazes like a beacon in the night: "AMATO'S VILLA NAPOLI". It's the same restaurant he passed on the way to Doc's.

CUT TO:

EXT. "VILLA NAPOLI" RESTAURANT

Frank pulls into the parking lot, and is met by a gust of wind as he dashes into the restaurant.

INT. "VILLA NAPOLI" RESTAURANT

He blows on his hands, stamps the snow from his shoes, takes off his coat and hangs it up. Off to the side is a PAY PHONE. He goes to it, digs into his pocket, pulls out a dime, deposits it, and dials information.

FRANK

(into phone)

Do you have a listing for Joann  
Carlino?...Lakehurst...

Nervous already...? It's just the operator!

FRANK

...(201) 659-6178...thank you.

The coin comes back. He takes a deep breath. Here goes... He re-deposits the dime and dials. The phone rings... rings again...a click.

JOANN (O.S.)

I'm not at home now. If you  
like, leave a message when you  
hear the beep. I'll be back soon.

FRANK

(almost relieved)

Joann...this is Frank Ridgeway...  
from the Cruisers. Remember?  
I've got to talk to you, the  
sooner the better. Please call  
me at (609) 203-8270.....See you.

He hangs up the phone; makes his way over to a small table.

There's a godawful room-length mural of the Bay of Naples, a tiny bandstand, and a couple of naked statues that piss whiskey sours. The tables are set with red and white checked cloths and chianti bottles with half-burned candles.

He sits down and glances around the room.

(CONTINUED)

Behind him, FOUR MEN are standing at the bar, watching a football game on a large Advent TV screen. As the food arrives at their table, one of the men claps his hands together.

A MAN

Hey, you guys! Let's eat!

Frank quickly turns towards them.

CUT TO:

INT. "VILLA NAPOLI" RESTAURANT - DAY (1964)

TWO WAITERS place trays of hot pasta, veal and chicken on the table.

Dressed in dark clothes are Sally, Frank, Kenny, Doc and Joann. Her eyes are red and swollen.

SALLY

(a napkin tucked  
in his shirt)

Kenny, you better watch out for  
the garlic. It's an aphrodisiac,  
you know.

KENNY

Thanks for the warning.

SALLY

Hey, Wordman, Wendell woulda  
loved this Guinea soul-food, huh?

FRANK

Yeah.

(a beat, then)

I sure miss that guy.

KENNY

Best goddamned sax I ever heard...

SALLY

(after a beat)

Hey, everybody! Dig in!

They all pick at their food, except Sally, who starts putting it away real good.

After a moment, he looks up and sees that he's the only one eating. He removes the napkin from his shirt, and wipes his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Okay...let's talk.....This morning we said goodbye to Eddie. He was your friend and my friend. Mine first. I got nothin' to prove in that department. Understand me? Anybody got any doubts along those lines, say so, and we'll clear it up right now.

(then)

The question is...and Eddie would want us to ask it, with no delay, and no screwin' around...what next for us?

He glances around the table, allowing time for the question to sink in.

SALLY (CONTD)

Doc...why don't you pick up on what we talked about earlier?

DOC

Okay. Sally and I figure we've still got a good basic group. We've already got a solid replacement for Wendell.....And now...we're gonna need a lead singer. I say, let's not rush it. Nothing permanent till we find somebody enough like Eddie so we can hold onto the old crowd. But different, too, so we can build on what we had. What do you say?

No one says a word.

SALLY

I'm tellin' you guys, we got to take our shot now, before they forget us. They forget fast, you better believe me. So, what do you say? DO WE GET ON WITH THE MUSIC?

Frank sneaks a glance around the table. The others are sitting with their heads bowed, like students who don't want to be called on.

SALLY (CONTD)

I don't believe this!

He slams the table so the dishes rattle.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

It's like I'm pullin' your fuckin' teeth! Do I get a response from you guys? What d'ya say? A little table talk? Dinner conversation? You, Hopkins, how about it.

KENNY

(softly)

No, Sal.

SALLY

I beg your pardon?

(cupping his hand  
to his ear)

Could you speak a little louder, please. These drum solos you been playin' must be goin' to my brains.

KENNY

I'm thinking of making some other plans.

SALLY

Other plans, huh? That's nice. You mind tellin' me? In case somebody asks me whatever happened to you, I don't want to look any dumber than I have to.

KENNY

I'm not sure, yet, but...this was just a phase for me...With Wendell and Eddie gone...the fun's kinda over...

SALLY

(staring at him,  
long and hard)

...Just a phase...

(turning to Joann)

...Joann...?

She shakes her head, hardly able to speak.

JOANN

...Not without Eddie.

SALLY

I understand.

(then)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SALLY (CONTD)

How about you, Wordman? Care to spend the summer tourin' with the Cruisers?

FRANK

(shaking his head)  
There's too much I'd miss.

SALLY

(nodding, understanding)  
Looks like an eat-and-run situation, don't it?

(holding back tears)  
Well, nobody ain't gonna keep you where you don't wanna be. I ain't beggin'. Unless this was beggin'. Which it was.

He pushes a napkin around his eyes, fighting hard not to reveal his tears.

SALLY (CONTD)

What do you say, Doc? Still with me?

DOC

Just Long Tall Sally and the Big Bopper, huh?

(shaking his head)  
I don't think we're gonna make it, kid.

SALLY

(pissed off)  
I'm gonna miss you guys. But do me one little favor, okay? Don't come back at me a year from now... 'Cause there's gonna be some kind of a band called the Cruisers. And I'm gonna be the leader of that half-assed outfit. And I'm gonna give it my best shot. So I'm askin' you nice to stay away, okay? No droppin' by to say hello, no old-timers' day or auld lang syne. Because I'm not too sure I could handle that. Deal?

Everyone nods.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOBBY - NIGHT (PRESENT)

TIGHT ON a glass-enclosed shadow box. In script: "LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL"....."EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS, FEATURING SAL AMATO". Under that, a large glossy photograph of Sally and the new Cruisers, all of whom bear a remarkable resemblance to their original counterpart.

ON FRANK

Looking at the photograph.

Susan Foley approaches from behind.

SUSAN  
Trying to spot which one's you?

FRANK  
(turning around,  
surprised)  
...Oh...hi...

SUSAN  
Hi...

Neither knows what to say next; there's a moment of awkwardness, then Frank looks back at the photograph.

SUSAN  
(after a moment)  
Have you seen him yet?

FRANK  
No...I'm not sure what his  
reaction would be...

SUSAN  
I interviewed him between shows...  
he said nice things about you...  
that you were some kind of genius  
with words...a regular whiz kid...

Frank smiles, a little embarrassed.

SUSAN  
Would you like me to tell him you're  
here?

FRANK  
No...no...If he knows I'm here he's  
just crazy enough to call me up on  
stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

57.

She smiles. In the b.g. we HEAR an instrumental version of "Betty Lou".

SUSAN

The show's about to begin...  
we're sitting ringside...  
(peering into the  
lounge)  
...Care to join us?

FRANK

No.....thanks, anyway...I think  
I'll just catch the show from  
the bar.

She nods, turns and walks towards the lounge; stops, turns back.

SUSAN

(gently)  
Frank.....Why did you come  
here tonight?

FRANK

(after a moment)  
I wanted to see how things turned  
out for some old friends of mine.

SUSAN

(softly)  
Is that all?

FRANK

No.....I guess I also wanted to  
see...how things....how things  
might have turned out for me.

SUSAN

(touched)  
I know this is difficult for  
you....but could we talk about  
it later?

FRANK

(relenting)  
What do you want to know?

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN

I've heard the words to "Far-Away Woman", and they are special. I know that.... Something happened, and those words stopped coming..... I'd like to know why...

(then, after a moment)

.....Frank, can I buy you a drink after the show?

Frank nods.

FRANK

...I'll see you later.

She smiles, turns and goes into the lounge.

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOUNGE

The room is dark. A baby SPOT falls on the M.C.

M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Holiday Inn is proud to present a group that's been bringing us hits for seventeen years. A big hand for some Jersey boys who made good... EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS, featuring Sal Amato!

APPLAUSE.

The SPOT WIDENS, picks up Sally and the CRUISERS. The GUYS are all dressed in formal suits; as an added touch Sally wears a long white silk scarf. A sexy dark-haired GIRL in white treader pants stands off to the side, with a tambourine in her hand.

Sally's hair is combed Bill Haley style to cover the thin spots. The years of pizza and lasagna have stuck to his ribs, but he's still Sally--no fuckin' around.

He takes a deep bow.

SALLY

(singing)

"Betty Lou's got a new pair of shoes

And she wants to go dancin'..."

ON ENTRANCE TO LOUNGE

Frank enters, heads for the crowded bar. He orders a beer, grabs a handful of peanuts and turns to face the stage.

FRANK'S POV

Sally brings "Betty Lou" to a close; segues into "On the Dark Side".

From stage left, bright LIGHTS go ON as the TV CREW from 20/20 starts filming.

A KID, who could be Eddie's double, steps forward and plants his feet on both sides of the mike.

KID  
(singing)  
"Shadows are longer now  
Where I go  
Sun is falling  
Down bloody and low..."

ON FRANK

He closes his eyes. He could be listening to Eddie.

KID (CONTD)  
(singing)  
"Step to the dark side  
Who needs light?  
Gonna feel my way, baby  
And it's gonna feel right..."

CUT TO:

EXT. CRUISERS' BOARDING HOUSE - DAY (1962)

The MUSIC continues.

CAMERA PANS a long row of weathered brown clapboard houses, settles on one, travels up the stairs, on to the porch and in through an open window.

INT. CRUISERS' BOARDING HOUSE

A large bright room, white-washed wood walls, sparsely furnished, a few wicker pieces. The afternoon sun blasts in.

Frank's at the piano, playing "On the Dark Side". The Cruisers stand around, listening.

FRANK  
(singing)  
"Gonna feel for the dark side  
Don't care what I find  
My love's gonna guide me  
Gonna help me go blind..."

(CONTINUED)

His singing sucks.

Behind his back, Sally gives Eddie a look that says: "Do you believe this guy?" No response. Doc shrugs: he can't figure it out either.

The song comes to an END.

EDDIE

Not bad.

SALLY

(incredulously)

What?

EDDIE

I said, not bad.

DOC

(throwing up his hands)

Not bad! What's with you? I mean, the kid can't play, he can't sing, and he can't write! So what's "not bad"?

EDDIE

Something the kids' got, we need.

DOC

Like what?

SALLY

(laughing)

Sounds like "The Voice of Firestone" to me!

The others laugh. Eddie runs his fingers through his hair and turns away. After a moment he turns back to face Doc.

EDDIE

...The way he reacts...the words he uses...the way he comes at songs. Like they're not dance music, they're lyrics.

SALLY

He can't dance worth a damn, that's for sure!

DOC

Sounds like you're trying to carry six pounds of shit in a five-pound bag!

EDDIE  
Words and music, Doc...  
(crossing his fingers,  
showing how they go  
together)  
...Words and music...

He sits down beside Frank, looks over the words and starts  
pounding out some basic chords in a rock progression.

EDDIE  
Just do like I'm doin'...

Eddie shows him.

EDDIE  
...like that...

Frank is embarrassed. He tries to play; the chords are  
hesitant.

EDDIE  
No.....like this!

FRANK  
They're right...I can't do this!

EDDIE  
It's easy. Like gettin' laid.  
Or ridin' a bike. Just do like  
I'm showin' ya.

Frank starts again.

EDDIE  
Relax.....loosen up!

Wendell starts blowing on his sax: a wonderful rich melody.  
Frank goes with it. Eddie starts singing. Kenny slides  
his chair over to his drums and starts playing.

Joann comes up behind Frank and Eddie, puts her arms around  
both their shoulders and starts to hit some of the higher  
notes.

EDDIE  
(to Sally)  
You on vacation?

Sally picks up his guitar and begins banging out the rhythm.  
Frank's getting more courageous, starting to have some fun.  
Sally plays a powerful riff; Kenny slugs away. Wendell's  
sax gathers momentum. Rock 'n' roll!

CONTINUED:

62.

EDDIE  
LET'S GET ON WITH THE MUSIC!

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOUNGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The audience APPLAUDS as Eddie's clone bows.

SALLY  
That was the Memory-lane voice  
of Eddie Wilson...the original  
sound of the Cruisers! And now  
I'd like to take you on another  
little journey. You remember that old  
feeling.....? Sand in your  
shoes...ants in your pants...and  
a secret weapon in your wallet?  
How many of you out there can  
remember that magic night...that  
first time?  
(then)  
COME ON!...I wanna see a show of  
hands!

Some of the audience, embarrassed, raise their hands.

SALLY (CONTD)  
Slow-dancin', hickies and sub-  
marine races...that's the  
inspiration behind "It'll Happen  
Tonight"...

The MUSIC starts.

CUT TO:

INT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR, FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT (1962)

His room is backstage. Through the walls we can HEAR the  
tumult and excitement coming from the bar.

Frank's dressed in black chinos and tee shirt; his hair is  
Cruiser-style, with a pompadour and duck-tail. He pours  
himself a shot of Wild Turkey.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

FRANK  
Who is it?

The door opens.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL  
(peeking in)  
...Wordman...?

FRANK  
Yeah...

CAROL  
(sexily)  
...I'm Carol...

She's dressed in tight short-shorts and a bra-less tee shirt. She has long blond hair and soft skin that still looks warm from the beach.

CAROL  
Eddie suggested I come by and say hello. He said tonight's gonna be your first performance...

He looks at her.

CAROL (CONTD)  
...He said you're a little nervous...

FRANK  
I am.

CAROL  
You must be good if he let you join.

She walks over to the cot, slipping off her tee shirt on the first step, her shorts and sandals on the second, and sits down next to Frank. He can't believe his eyes.

CAROL  
I hear you play the piano.

She starts undressing him.

CAROL (CONTD)  
Well...

FRANK  
...the piano...?

She removes his shirt.

FRANK (CONTD)  
...Yeah...I play a little...

She undoes the buckle of his belt.

CONTINUED:

64.

CAROL

Do you now?

Before he knows it, his clothes are off.

FRANK

...and I sing background...

She pulls him on top of her.

FRANK

...behind Eddie...

She winds her legs around him.

FRANK

I also write lyrics...

Her heels move up and down the small of his back.

CAROL

Terrific...

FRANK

This is my first night...

CAROL

Think you're ready?

FRANK

I've rehearsed.

CAROL

You feel ready.

He starts rocking.

CAROL

Oh, yeah, I think you're ready.

He rocks harder.

CAROL

Oh, for sure.

Suddenly life comes tumbling down.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOUNGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The room has turned into a high school reunion: everyone's dancing. The Cruisers finish "It'll Happen Tonight". Everyone APPLAUDS.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY  
(shouting)  
HOLD ON EVERYBODY! Time to light  
a candle.

Some dancers remain on the floor, leaning against each other. Others retreat to their tables, holding hands. The Cruisers begin playing "Those Oldies But Goodies Remind Me of You".

SALLY  
I wanna say a word about the past.  
The past's not gone!

The audience CHEERS for the past.

SALLY (CONTD)  
The past's not dead!

SOMEONE shouts, "You bet your ass it ain't!"

SALLY  
Not as long as we carry the music  
in our hearts.

A hush falls over the Holiday Inn; the LIGHTS DIM.

SALLY  
Eddie Wilson's a part of yesterday,  
sure. But he's as much a part of  
this group today as I am. We're  
still together, him and me. Never  
a day passes, I don't think he's  
around somewhere. Down the road a  
ways. Around a corner. In the  
neighborhood. Not far away at all...

The black dude takes a lick on his sax, leads into  
"Far-Away Woman".

CUT TO:

INT. VINCE'S BOARDWALK BAR - NIGHT (1962)

It's Friday night and the joint is jumping. The action flows out into the parking lot.

ON STAGE

Frank's at the piano, nervous, tentative--it's his first time on stage as a Cruiser. Wendell floats in alongside him, smiles, giving him courage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

66.

Kenny behind the drums, laughing, having fun. Sally, workman-like, steady, building a beat. Joann, sexy, hot, beautiful.

Eddie with his back to the audience. Suddenly, he turns, facing them; they CHEER--he's a local hero. He steps to the mike, grabs the top with his right hand and the stand with his left, his legs are spread. The Cruisers, as we know them, are born.

EDDIE

(singing)

"Far-away woman  
Passing out of sight  
Which way you movin'  
Into the night?  
Comin' toward me  
Or runnin' away..."

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO (1962)

The Cruisers, wearing earphones, stand in a semi-circle.

CRUISERS

(singing)

"Why are you runnin' so hard, girl?  
I just want some of your time  
Who is the man in your heart, girl?  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign..."

CUT TO:

INT. DICK CLARK SHOW (1962)

The familiar set. The Cruisers in black leather jackets. The song is becoming a hit.

EDDIE

(singing)

Maybe a woman like you  
Could be mine  
But you keep fadin'  
Away all the time.  
Comin' toward me  
Or runnin' away..."

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKLYN PARAMOUNT (1962)

A crowd, 5,000-strong; they're dancing in the aisles, pressing up against the rim of the stage, loving Eddie, making him a star.

EDDIE

(singing)

"Why are you runnin' so hard, girl?  
I just want some of your time  
Who is the man in your heart, girl?  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign..."

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S CHEVY - TRAVELING - NIGHT (1962)

As the car passes over the George Washington Bridge, in the b.g.: the incredible Manhattan skyline. The Cruisers are laughing, boozing and smoking, having a good time. On the RADIO, "Far-Away Woman".

CRUISERS

(singing along)

"Night after night now  
Awake in my bed  
Tell me who's winnin'  
This race in my head.  
Am I gettin' closer  
Or are you runnin' away?..."

CUT TO:

INT. ED SULLIVAN SHOW (1962)

The Cruisers in black pants and white silk shirts, bringing the song to a rousing conclusion.

CRUISERS

(singing)

"Why are you runnin' so hard, girl?  
I just want some of your time  
Who is the man in your heart, girl?  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign..."

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN LOUNGE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The audience CHEERS. Sally and the Cruisers bow deeply and run off stage.

(CONTINUED)

M.C.

...Stick around...There'll be dancing till the wee hours of the morning to the keyboard sounds of our own Roger Lewis...

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN, SALLY'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tacky-Town, USA. Hardly enough space to hold Sally, a tiny Christmas tree, a pizza and some beers.

Sally takes off his jacket and removes his cummerbund, releasing his sagging gut. He reaches for a slice of pizza and a beer.

The door to the room is ajar. There is a KNOCK and Frank peeks in.

SALLY

(shouting)

SON OF A BITCH! Look what comes walking through the door! Wordman himself!

Sally grabs Frank in a bear hug and spins him around the room.

SALLY (CONTD)

It's like I've been tellin' everybody. When you're hot, you're hot!

(then)

Beer?

FRANK

Sure.

Sally opens a can and hands it to Frank.

SALLY

Where you been hidin', Wordman?

FRANK

Teaching high school...in Vineland... same place ever since I got out of college.

SALLY

No lie! I used to wonder about you. I figured you moved to California, maybe. Writin' for movies under an assumed name.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

I never left the Garden State.

SALLY

I been playin' the shore spots pretty regular through the years. How come you never stopped in?

FRANK

I was married for a while. Had a couple of kids...just didn't get around to it.

SALLY

So why now?

FRANK

...Christmas vacation...nostalgia time...you know.

Yeah, Sally knows.

SALLY

Sure.

FRANK

...I heard from Doc Robbins.

SALLY

Where'd you dredge him up? Outta what sewer?

FRANK

He's a deejay now...in Rahway.

SALLY

That son of a bitch sold us down the river.....You think you might be in touch with him again? 'Cause if you are, remind him I got the name Eddie and the Cruisers sewed up tight. Copyrighted and paid for. I hear he's screwin' around--it's his ass. You tell him that.

FRANK

That's between you and him. You guys fight it out.....There's something else...somebody broke into Doc's place.....I saw it...

SALLY

My heart bleeds.

FRANK

...They wrecked my place too.  
Doc think's they're after the  
tapes... "Season in Hell".

Sally laughs. Then, without warning, he picks up the coffee table and heaves it across the room. Empty beer cans and newspapers crash to the floor. He gestures to Frank to sit.

FRANK

They got your place too?

SALLY

Let's just say I've been gettin'  
some funny phone calls lately.

Sally sinks into a chair, either laughing or crying.

SALLY

So the chick from 20/20 was right...  
that is what they're lookin' for!

FRANK

What did she say?

SALLY

She said something about those tapes  
being missin' from the recordin'  
studio...She wanted to know if I  
knew where they were...

FRANK

What did you tell her?

SALLY

I told her I haven't got a fuckin'  
clue...For all I care, they coulda  
gone down with Eddie.

FRANK

You really don't care?

SALLY

I got a simple little act. Twelve  
songs. Run through 'em in forty-  
five minutes, with time-outs for  
wet hankies and under-the-table  
feels. They find those tapes,  
what's in it for me? I just about  
broke my fingers tryin' to play  
that stuff.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

They're worth money...Right now they'll pay anything.

SALLY

Sure...that's what the chick said. But we ain't gonna see a dime from that. They'll find a way to screw us. They always do! Guys like you and me, they strike oil under your garden, all you get is dead tomatoes!

Sally takes a long swallow from his beer. Frank sits back and lights a cigarette.

SALLY

(shaking his head)

You know, it's amazin', Wordman. It cracks me up, it truly does. They start playin' our stuff again, and I really believed that this time, after all these years of just makin' it, it was my turn. What a fuckin' dummy I must be!

FRANK

Ah, Sally...

SALLY

No, don't "Ah, Sally" me. I get the picture now. It's still Eddie, isn't it? They couldn't care less about me. It's more Eddie they want.

FRANK

(leaning forward)

Do you ever wonder how things might've turned out if he had lived?

SALLY

I used to wonder. It ate me up. I figured Eddie was my one shot at The Bigs. I thought we could go all the way together. After he died, I got crazy. Still do, sometimes...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

72.

SALLY (CONTD)

(then)

...Some nights it's like Eddie was still alive. I get mad at him all over again. I'm mad at him for livin' and I'm mad at him for dyin' the dumb way he did. Yeah, it gripes me when I think how big we coulda been...

CUT TO:

INT. EKKO RECORDS, LEW EISEN'S OFFICE - DAY (1963)

Flashbulbs POP as pictures are taken. Eddie sits behind Eisen's desk, pen in hand, contract in front of him. The Cruisers, Doc and Eisen are gathered around smiling; it's a great moment.

FRANK (V.O.)

...We signed a \$100,000 contract with Ekko Records to do another album...They gave us a \$10,000 advance...

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Frank and Susan sit at one of the booths. The place is almost deserted. A waiter takes away two empty glasses and gives them each a refill.

FRANK

...and then the offers started pouring in. They all wanted the Cruisers! We were on such a high... We thought we'd never come down....We were stars! But after a while...do you know what it's like to do sixty cities in sixty nights?

Susan pulls out a cigarette.

SUSAN

I can imagine.

Frank reaches over and lights it for her.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Well, one night Doc was reading off a list of potential dates, and I heard him mention Drew University, my old college. Nobody wanted to go...the money was short.....and it was a long trip, and somehow Eddie felt that it wasn't our kind of place...that we wouldn't fit in. But I wanted to go. God, how I wanted to go!

(then)

So I persisted, and I guess Eddie saw how important it was to me, so he said, "The hell with it...let's go." He read me perfectly. Somehow he knew...he knew that I wanted to snow that group of college snobs... blow them away! Show them I was a Cruiser! "Oh yeah, Ridgeway. Crazy son of a bitch. Lit out of here and joined a rock 'n' roll band."....

CUT TO:

EXT. PULASKI SKYWAY - DAWN (1963)

A spring morning. Polluted marshes turning gold, a convoy of early morning garbage trucks waking hundreds of birds from their night's sleep on a mountain range of trash.

Eddie's Chevy and Kenny's "Woodie" play cat and mouse along the deserted highway. Joann and Frank sit next to Eddie. Sally and Wendell ride with Kenny. Little Eva's "Loco-Motion" blasts from both cars.

INT. EDDIE'S CHEVY

Eddie removes both hands from the steering wheel and stretches them wide.

EDDIE

The Garden State! I love it!

Off the highway we can SEE the "BALLANTINE BREWERY". Eddie waves at the three-ring sign.

EDDIE

This is where we're from, Wordman. People drive through here, they roll up their windows so they don't have to breathe none of the air. Not me.

He takes a deep gulp of New Jersey and pulls out into the lead.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

I thrive on it! It knocks me out!  
You got miles of swamp and  
mountains of dumps and all different  
colored rivers. You got automobile  
graveyards and radio transmitters  
and ball parks and breweries all  
mixed up. HOLEE SHIT, man! No  
wonder the Statue of Liberty faces  
the other way!

EXT. KENNY'S "WOODIE"

The "Woodie" pulls alongside on the right.

KENNY

Hey, Wordman! How's the trim where  
we're going?

FRANK

It's an all-male school, dork!

KENNY

Terrific...we play "Down On My Knees"  
while they pull out their yearbooks  
and beat off!

The "Woodie" bullets ahead.

INT. EDDIE'S CHEVY

FRANK

...Take the next exit...

Eddie slams down on the accelerator, zooms back into the  
lead and heads for the off-ramp. The "Woodie" follows.

FRANK

You're going to love it! I  
know you will...dance weekends  
are incredible...the whole place  
goes crazy. Six hundred guys  
haven't seen a girl since New  
Year's...They bring them in by  
train, by car, by the busload...  
cattle-cars, they're called.  
It's like they were dropped into  
a prison.

EDDIE

Sounds like it belongs on "Zoo  
Parade".

CUT TO:

EXT. DREW UNIVERSITY - DAY

Violets dapple the grass. The bright forsythia explode out of sunlit walks as GUYS promenade their DATES around the ivy-covered campus. MUSIC blares from open windows and beer kegs are being rolled out on the sloping lawns.

The two cars make their way up the winding hill...BEEP-BEEP! BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! The Cruisers are here! They come to a stop outside the college guest house, a shaded brick building with an open porch.

The doors of both cars are thrown open. The Cruisers jump out and look around. They appear very shaky and out of place. Eddie stands there, twirling his car keys around his finger, watching as young collegiate types parade past them, checking out the riff-raff that's just hit their campus.

Frank looks around, taking it all in...How could he have gotten them into this?...How could he have forgotten what it was all like?

SALLY

Hey, Wordman. This shindig tonight, how we supposed to dress? I mean, what should we look like for these people?

FRANK

Eddie decides what we wear. You know that. Why should this be any different?

SALLY

Eddie, how do we dress tonight?

KENNY

(grabbing Sally's  
cajones)

Put a sock in your crotch and make sure nobody grabs it.

Sally slaps Kenny's hand. Everybody laughs, except Eddie.

EDDIE

It's your college, Wordman. What's the dress code?

FRANK

Wait a minute! Why is this suddenly such a big issue? We've played colleges before.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

Sure we have. We played Saint  
Something down in Delaware, where  
the dropouts from barber school  
get scholarships, and Fairly  
Ridiculous up in Madison, where  
you go if the army won't take you,  
but we never played this kind of  
finishing school.

He looks around at the passing parade of collegiate types.  
He then looks at Joann; turns back to face Frank.

EDDIE

This was a mistake...  
(twirling his keys)  
...We don't belong here...These  
people are...different.

FRANK

Don't worry about it, Eddie.  
They'll eat us up. They're just  
college kids...no better than you,  
they just...

EDDIE

I didn't say they were better! I  
said different. You wanna remember  
that.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Susan is leaning back against the booth. She takes a deep  
drag on her cigarette and slowly exhales.

FRANK

...Eddie was right. It was a  
mistake; we didn't belong there.  
But I didn't care...All I cared  
about was strolling across that  
campus with Joann Carlino on my  
arm. Was that so much to ask?  
There'd be six hundred guys eating  
their hearts out as Frank Ridgeway  
and Sophia Loren walked The Path  
together, and in that one moment  
I could prove that the dropout who  
became a drifter, who became a  
Cruiser, was a winner...

CUT TO:

EXT. DREW UNIVERSITY, THE PATH - DUSK (1963)

Frank and Joann are walking along a broad gravelled path that runs through the heart of the campus. Frank's wearing tan chinos, blue Oxford shirt and cordovan loafers. Joann's wearing a tight black sweater, silver crucifix and bluejeans.

FRANK

...What do you think?

JOANN

What do I think? I'm scared to death!

FRANK

Aw hell, Joann...

JOANN

When I graduated from high school I asked my guidance counselor what he figured I should do. He talked about being a beautician, or a typist...or a nurse, but that was already reaching for the moon. And all the time he was checking me out: "There's a ripe one. Doesn't matter what kind of a job you get, because in a year you'll be married and pregnant with the first of six, and they won't be college material any more than you are, cookie. Case closed."

FRANK

Listen, these people are way behind you...

JOANN

I don't think they think so...

Suddenly, Frank's freshman roommate, KEITH LIVINGSTON, stands before them.

KEITH

Ridgeway!

Frank introduces Keith and his girlfriend LOIS to Joann.

KEITH

You back for the weekend? The rites of spring?

FRANK

Yes.

KEITH

That's perfect! Know who's playing tonight? They got the Cruisers! Mean-assed black group out of Newark!

(CONTINUED)

Frank and Joann exchange a look.

KEITH  
Have you eaten dinner?

FRANK  
Not yet.

KEITH  
Then come on, Ridgeway. Join us  
for an elephant scab.

FRANK  
(aside, to Joann)  
Breaded veal cutlet.

KEITH  
You've never had an elephant scab?

Keith's stare isn't subtle. He's playing imaginary "motor boat" between Joann's breasts.

KEITH  
Come on! Let's eat!

As they move along The Path, Joann stops traffic. Guys' heads swivel as she passes. Lois starts chatting with Joann to draw some of the attention to herself. Keith pulls Frank back a couple of steps.

KEITH  
Ridgeway...where did you find  
that...piece? She's incredible.  
Where were you hiding your talent  
last year?

FRANK  
I've been working on it.

KEITH  
I'd eat her on credit.  
(then)  
You know Mike Henderson? Sigma  
Pi? He was saying he thought he  
saw you on some television show,  
singing or something.

FRANK  
Me? Sing?

KEITH  
I know. I told him he was out  
to lunch.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KEITH (CONTD)

(then)

Is she...what?...Puerto Rican?

FRANK

Italian.

KEITH

A-fuckin-mazing. We don't get many like her around here.

As they approach the Dining Hall, Keith holds the door open and they all enter.

INT. DINING HALL

You know the walkway that leads out into the audience at the Miss America Pageant? And you've heard about the main street of Pamplona, when they run the bulls? Put them together and you're entering the Dining Hall on that Friday in April of 1963.

The SLAM of trays, WAITERS asking how many bug juices, how many milks. The BANGING of utensils, sugar bags flying through the air like rice at a wedding.

Keith drapes his arm around Lois' shoulder and leads her down the long long aisle. There are HOOTS and WHISTLES for Lois. Joann watches, hesitant, a little scared.

FRANK

We can skip it....It's no big deal.

Keith looks back at them, waving them on. Joann cradles her hand on the inside of Frank's arm and draws herself so tight to him that her breasts brush against his chest.

As they make their way down the aisle, an amazed, breath-holding, eye-popping silence, until they are half-way down the hall: Frank Ridgeway and Joann Carlino, in that incredible black sweater, her arm entwined around his.

Then...a dropped tray, a flying elephant scab, another... the place turns into a zoo. HOWLS, WHISTLES, GROANS, SCREAMS and CHEERS...Drew University has found its new Homecoming Queen.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PATH - NIGHT

Frank and Joann walk arm in arm towards the guest house. They're a relaxed couple, strolling home at the end of a nice evening.

(CONTINUED)

JOANN

...When that Lois girl asked where did I go to college, I didn't know what to say.

FRANK

You told her you worked in the city. Fine!

JOANN

...And whether we were pinned or lavaliered...

Frank steps in front of her, places a hand on each shoulder, looks deep into her eyes.

FRANK

You're good enough to be here. You could make it in a place like this.

JOANN

You mean I'm good enough for you. That's it, isn't it?

FRANK

Sometimes I think you're too good.

JOANN

How do you know I'm not?

FRANK

I didn't mean...

JOANN

Eddie said different.

They resume walking.

FRANK

Thanks for a lovely date.

JOANN

Are you being sarcastic?

FRANK

No.

JOANN

You're welcome, then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

81.

She laughs and takes his arm. God he wants to kiss her. The guest house looms closer and closer...he may never have another opportunity...It's now or never! He turns, opens his arms and his mouth is on hers; nothing she can do about it! She opens her mouth, just a little, just a moment, just touches his tongue with hers, and it ends. The kiss stops there.

JOANN

(softly)

Let's go back.

CUT TO:

EXT. GUEST HOUSE PORCH

The guys are slouched in their chairs, feet up on the furniture. Wendell is wearing a 3-piece suit; the others are wearing tee shirts, jeans and leather jackets.

They can't help but see as Joann gently pushes Frank away. Sally busies himself lighting a cigarette; Wendell and Kenny begin to clear leftover trays of elephant scabs and mashed potatoes. Eddie just sits there...watching...as Frank and Joann slowly make their way back towards the guest house.

Frank and Joann walk up the stairs to the porch; she slips off and heads upstairs.

FRANK

(uneasy)

Show time yet?

No one answers.

FRANK (CONTD)

...I'll get my other stuff on.

He starts to go inside.

EDDIE

No!

FRANK

Only take a minute.

EDDIE

I said no! You stay like that!

Frank looks into Eddie's eyes; there's nothing he can do.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Loud APPLAUSE as Eddie and the Cruisers bolt on stage. The guys are dressed as they were earlier, in black leather jackets. Joann is now wearing skin-tight black toreador pants and a fitted halter top. Frank, in his chinos and button-down shirt stands out like a preppie in a world of greasers. The crowd CHEERS. A couple of ex-classmates spot him...word passes quickly through the audience.

EDDIE  
LET'S GET ON WITH THE MUSIC!

More APPLAUSE.

Eddie lifts the mike off the stand, walks deliberately to the rim of the stage and looks into the sea of upturned faces.

EDDIE  
You got some fine college here...  
all the advantages...ivy walls...

Kenny hits the drums.

EDDIE (CONTD)  
...lecture halls...

Another hit.

EDDIE (CONTD)  
...full-dress balls...

Drums and guitar. Eddie leaps into the air.

EDDIE  
(singing)  
"And you got the Cruisers  
For the nasty stuff...  
For the get-down music  
And the hangin' tough...  
Better grab a woman  
Don't mention your name  
'Cause after tonight  
She won't be the same..."

Eddie lurks around the shadow of the stage as Wendell builds a kinetic rhythm on the sax. He then slouches towards the mike, eyes lidded, head low on one shoulder.

EDDIE  
(singing)  
"Hand-holdin' women are not my style...  
Hand-holdin's fine, but just for a while..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

83.

Frank glances over at Sally. Sally shrugs. They're both hearing these lyrics for the first time.

EDDIE

(singing)

"When the lights go out  
When the clock winds down  
Got to find me a woman  
Who'll go down town  
No hand-holdin' baby  
Who'll nip and tuck  
Want a girl off the streets  
Who knows how to..."

Kenny hits the drums as soon as he hears what's coming.  
Sally hits the guitar.

EDDIE

(singing)

"Maybe she will, maybe she won't  
The girl says take it easy  
And I see her point  
But I want some more than kiss and tell  
Want to ball that baby  
Want to ring her bell  
Want to know that woman  
Stop her talk  
Want to groove my baby  
Till baby can't walk..."

The audience is silent...stunned. They don't know how to react. Suddenly, Eddie and the Cruisers explode into a rocking, nasty version of "Down On My Knees".

The audience responds immediately to the power and energy of the music.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Frank signals the waiter to bring another round of drinks.

FRANK

...We played for nearly two hours,  
no breaks, no patter, just Eddie  
rushing from one song to another;  
and the way he pounced on the songs,  
the way he explored, prolonged, the  
way he teased.....he was...fucking  
those songs! We all knew it...  
Something about that night and that  
audience of elite snobs seemed to  
bring out an angry genius in Eddie...  
an anger like nothing I'd ever seen  
before.....The difference between  
what that crowd expected, and what

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

84.

FRANK (CONTD)

they got was like the difference  
between a swimming pool and a  
tidal wave!...

He lights a cigarette and leans back in his chair.

FRANK (CONTD)

...To this day I don't know why I  
chose that place and that time to  
kiss Joann Carlino...but I do know  
that somehow that fleeting moment  
of passion changed the course of  
all our lives...

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (1963)

It's been a long, hot night. The audience and the Cruisers  
are nearly satiated. Just room for a little bit more.  
The Cruisers begin a steady bass beat.

EDDIE

(sweating, out of  
breath)

Wanna thank you people  
For makin' the scene...  
Now the show's about over  
And I'm gonna come clean...  
Gonna present the Cruisers,  
one by one...  
On drums...just "goin' through  
a phase"...Kenny Hopkins...  
On sax..."The Bruiser"...Mr.  
Wendell Newton...  
On guitar..."Long Tall Sally"  
Amato...  
And last, but not least, your  
favorite, and mine....Joann  
Carlino!

WHISTLES, CAT-CALLS and SHOUTS from the audience...she's  
knocked out this group of college boys.

The noise starts to die down.

KEITH LIVINGSTON

(from the audience)

You forgot somebody!

EDDIE

(straightfaced)

Who'd I forget?

(CONTINUED)

KEITH  
Over there. Playing the piano.

Eddie turns as if he'd never seen Frank before.

EDDIE  
Oh...oh yeah...on piano we got  
Toby Tyler.

Everyone laughs. Frank sits there, praying the joke will soon end.

EDDIE  
(having fun)  
Stage name. Show business nom de plume. Toby Tyler. He's the little boy who ran away from home and joined the circus, isn't he? Snuck into the tent without a ticket so he could see the wild animals inside. The savage beasts, the clowns, the freaks. Let's hear it, everybody, for Toby Tyler!

ON FRANK

Wishing he was dead.

APPLAUSE and laughter, mingled with a few SHOUTS of "asshole".

ON EDDIE

Giving the downbeat.

ON WENDELL

His sax launching "Far-Away Woman".....passionate, soulful, soaring.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

A green peaceful spot on a sloping hill, overlooking The Path. Frank's sitting on the grass, smoking and drinking from a bottle of bourbon. Joann walks toward him. He pretends he doesn't see her coming, but watches her every step.

JOANN  
Are you drunk?

FRANK  
I wish.

(CONTINUED)

JOANN

....He didn't mean it...

Frank looks away; he's obviously hurting real bad. Joann goes to him, kneels down and takes him in her arms.

JOANN

...Frank...I'm sorry.....  
I'm sorry...

FRANK

(holding back)  
Don't sweat it. You've got your own problems.

JOANN

(looking into his eyes)  
What do you mean?

FRANK

How did it go?...."Fuck that woman till she can't walk"....?

Without thinking, Joann delivers two fast slaps, one on the left, one on the right. Frank's face turns red; he sits there, devastated, but fighting back the emotion.

JOANN

(after a moment)  
Eddie's up there crying...He's been crying all night.

FRANK

....Because of us?

JOANN

There's nothing between us...

FRANK

(choked up)  
Well, I guess you cleared that right up!

Joann touches him where the slaps had landed.

JOANN

Oh, Frank...please...help me. He's acting crazy...I can't reach him anymore.....Please help...he needs you.

FRANK

Toby Tyler?

JOANN

He's your friend.

CONTINUED:

87.

Frank takes a deep breath. He looks at her.

JOANN

...Please.....?

FRANK

.....I'll try.

Tears come pouring down her cheeks. She smiles. Frank holds her face in his hands and gently wipes away the tears.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The place is empty. Susan is leaning forward with both elbows on the table, chin in hand.

SUSAN

You were in love with her, weren't you?

FRANK

.....Yes.

SUSAN

Did you ever tell her?

FRANK

(smiling)

There's no way I could've done that...She was Eddie's girl.

SUSAN

Did you and Eddie ever talk about that night?

FRANK

The next day....I know I'd promised Joann I'd try...but I just couldn't stand the thought of getting into that car with the two of them...So I told Eddie I was leaving...that I'd take the bus back...

SUSAN

What did he say?

FRANK

He said, "Sure...okay...go ahead.... I'll just call up the union and have them send somebody else over...like we got some busted plumbing...."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (CONTD)

Then he asked me to take a walk with him...he didn't say anything for the longest time.....Then he stopped, looked at me, and said, "Wordman...we need each other.... Words and music..." and he crossed his fingers, showing how they go together, "...remember, words and music..."

SUSAN

So you stayed?

FRANK

Yeah...but things were never the same again...

He looks around; off to the side the waiter and bartender have their coats on...waiting. All around them chairs are stacked on tables.

FRANK

You think they're trying to tell us something?

SUSAN

They'll wait...

FRANK

Susan...you've got it all, believe me.

He gets up.

SUSAN

(urgently)

But .."Season in Hell"...? What about "Season in Hell"?

FRANK

It didn't work...the record company hated it...they wouldn't release the album...

SUSAN

I know...I've heard that....But does that mean they were right? Who cares what they thought back then? Frank, I'd like to get my hands on those tapes...play them on my show...let them be heard....and let the people out there decide if they're any good...

FRANK

I don't know where they are...

She looks at him.

FRANK

Honestly...I'd like to find them as  
much as you would...

She gets up.

SUSAN

....I guess we keep looking...

He places some money on the tray; they start walking out.

SUSAN

(after a moment)

Is that why you stopped writing?  
Because they told you that you  
weren't any good?

FRANK

(crossing his fingers)

Words and music, remember...?  
Without Eddie, there was no more  
music.

They exit the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN, FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is BLACK. A match FLARES, illuminating Frank's  
face as he lies in bed, unable to sleep. He takes a deep  
drag on his cigarette. Smoke swirls above his head as his  
thoughts continue taking him back.

FLASHCUT TO:

JOANN AT VINCE'S BAR--She's wearing a tight tee shirt and  
white capris, and she's smiling...the kind of smile that  
rocks a man to the core of his soul.

FLASHCUT TO:

JOANN IN A BATHING SUIT--She's leaning against a piano,  
laughing her deep, full, rich, infectious laugh.

FLASHCUT TO:

JOANN ON STAGE AT VINCE'S--She's dancing...sexy, hot, beautiful.

FLASHCUT TO:

FRANK AND JOANN ON A COLLEGE PATH--They come together in a  
kiss...the kind of kiss that you remember for a lifetime.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLIDAY INN, FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Frank takes one last puff on his cigarette and stubs it out. He lies back on his pillow and drifts off to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK - DAY

It's a bright, crisp winter day. Kenny and Frank are walking, bundled against the cold.

The years have been good to Kenny: he's still blond, trim and good-looking. The boardwalk is packed with gamblers moving from one hotel to another in the endless pursuit of the almighty American buck.

KENNY

...Old songs...old memories...  
They'll drive you crazy.

FRANK

Just a phase, huh, Kenny?

KENNY

(smiling)

Sure. We had fun for a while. I liked being on top. Who wouldn't? I'd be out there in the convertible, ballin' some chick...and "Far-Away Woman" would come on the radio.....Who was better than me?

FRANK

There was a special feeling to that time...and whatever it was, I miss it.

(CONTINUED)

JOANN (CONTD)

...Last week my house was broken into. They tore the place apart.

FRANK

They got my place too!...and Doc's!  
.....Joann....they killed him!...  
Doc's dead!

JOANN

Oh my God!

Her face turns ashen; she looks faint. Frank reaches for her, grasps her hands in his.

FRANK

Are you okay?

She nods, reaches for a cigarette. He lights it for her.

JOANN

I'm scared...whoever it is, they're out there..watching me...there's someone around...

Joann starts to crumble...she breaks down. Frank goes to her, takes her in his arms.

JOANN

(slowly)

...Last night...after the calls...  
I thought I heard something...  
There was a car sitting in the  
driveway with the parking lights on  
...First off, I think it's some kids  
making out. Then I look closer...  
know what kind of car it is? A pink  
and black Chevy....like Eddie used to  
drive!

The waitress brings Frank's beer and leaves.

JOANN (CONTD)

(wiping her nose  
with a tissue)

Anyway...I'd turned on the  
lights so I'm silhouetted  
against the window. Whoever  
it was out there...he saw me.  
And then you know what  
happened? He blinked the  
headlights high...and low...  
and high again...just like Eddie  
used to do.

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Don't fuck with the memories...

FRANK

I'm not so sure I can stop.

KENNY

Okay, okay. But if you go back into the past, at least be sure you see the whole story. There were bad times, too...Hassles... arguments...Things I'll bet you've forgotten....."Toby Tyler"...? Eddie played hell with you that night, didn't he?

FRANK

Yeah.

KENNY

Do you remember when Doc and Sally were at each other's throats?... Remember when Eddie and Joann couldn't talk to one another any more?...Do you remember when Wendell died...?

FRANK

I remember.

KENNY

He died of a heart attack, right?

Frank looks at him quizzically.

KENNY

(smiling, shaking his head)

You still don't know what went down, do you?

FRANK

What are you saying?

KENNY

Heart attack...my ass! You always lived in a dream world, kid. Well, it's time you grew up...

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY (1963)

Kenny KNOCKS on the door. No answer. He KNOCKS harder.  
Still no answer.

KENNY  
Wendell!.....WENDELL!!

He BANGS again.

KENNY  
HEY, MAN! YOU IN THERE?

There's a window next to the door. Kenny pushes in the screen and holds the curtain aside.

KENNY'S POV

The bed's unmade; there's open luggage on the floor...an empty bottle of vodka.

ON KENNY

He climbs into the room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Kenny looks around, then crosses to the bathroom, throws open the door.

ON KENNY

He looks as if he's going to throw up.

KENNY  
Oh, shit!

KENNY'S POV

Lying on the tile floor is the naked form of Wendell Newton, a trickle of blood running from his mouth and nose. Clenched in his hand is a rubber tube and protruding from his thigh, a syringe. Wendell was never one to leave tracks where they'd be seen. The rest of the paraphernalia, the spoon, the matches, the empty glassine envelope, lie blood-spattered just inches from his face.

ON KENNY

KENNY  
(choking)  
Wendell.....you son of a bitch!

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK - DAY (PRESENT)

Kenny and Frank continue along the boardwalk.

KENNY

...Yeah...Wendell died of a  
heart attack...and fish don't  
fuck in water!

FRANK

(visibly shaken)  
I didn't know...I really never  
knew.

They continue walking in silence.....Then:

KENNY

Lemme level with you. The chick  
from 20/20 was already here...I  
talked to her. I know what's  
going down. I know why you're  
here...You think I might have the  
tapes, right?

Frank is taken aback.

KENNY (CONTD)

...The fact is, I don't.

FRANK

Would you tell me if you did?

KENNY

Let me ask you something: Do you  
think I'd be dealing blackjack if  
I did? Lots of people been callin'  
me up...lot of people lookin' for  
those tapes...includin' some real  
hardball players...

FRANK

Who are they?

KENNY

You think there's a shortage of  
crooks in the world?

He stops, turns to Frank.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

94.

KENNY (CONTD)  
(intimately)  
Do yourself a favor, kid...Go  
home...I'd hate to see you get  
hurt...

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

It's been a tough day; he's on his way home. As usual the  
RADIO is playing.

DEEJAY  
(on radio)  
...Three weeks in a row...King  
of the Road...Eddie and the  
Cruisers!

ON FRANK

The sax fills the car with memories.

CUT TO:

INT. THE STEEL PIER, ATLANTIC CITY - NIGHT (1963)

The big time. New Jersey's answer to the Copacabana. It's  
date night and they're here, 2,000 strong, ready for a good  
time. They CHEER like crazy as the sax leads into "Far-Away  
Woman".

ZOOM IN ON Eddie, all in black. He's draped over the mike,  
holding on tight.

ON SAX PLAYER

Wendell's replacement...tall, thin, black...He's good, but  
it's just not the same. He finishes the introduction,  
giving Eddie his cue.

ON EDDIE

He doesn't move...Once again, his cue.....Nothing.

ON THE AUDIENCE

They APPLAUD. They think he's teasing them. Okay, they can  
wait!

ON EDDIE

He looks up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

95.

ON THE BAND

The sax tries again.

ON EDDIE

He throws his hands to the sky, legs spread apart. More APPLAUSE.

EDDIE

(to the crowd)

Please...PLEASE!....Don't applaud  
...listen...

(to the band)

Stop, you guys...STOP THE MUSIC!...  
STOP THE FUCKIN' MUSIC!!

ON THE AUDIENCE

Slowly...ever so slowly...quieting down...Silence.

ON EDDIE

EDDIE

A coupla days ago I buried one of  
my best friends...the best sax I  
ever heard...

From the audience: a little foot-stomping.

EDDIE (CONTD)

(choking)

...and they tell me I gotta come  
up here and entertain you...

A voice: "Sing the fucking song!"

EDDIE (CONTD)

...I'm not very good at this...

More foot-stomping...rhythmic APPLAUSE. It's building...  
they're very impatient. Eddie can't move...can't sing.

EDDIE (CONTD)

...WENDELL NEWTON IS DEAD! Do  
you hear me?! You fuckers...he's  
dead! He's never comin' back...

(choking)

...my friend is dead!

ON FRANK

He's at the piano. He signals the sax.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

96.

FRANK

One, two...one, two, three...

He leaves the piano, goes to Eddie, and holds him in his arms.

FRANK

(singing)

"Far-away woman  
Passing out of sight  
Which way you moving  
Into the night...?"

They can barely carry the tune; fighting back the emotion they feel.

ON JOANN

Tears streaming down her cheeks. She's dying! She goes to Eddie and Frank, puts her arm around Eddie.

JOANN, FRANK & EDDIE

(singing)

...Comin' toward me  
Or runnin' away.....  
Why are you runnin' so hard, girl?  
I just want some of your time  
Who is the man in your heart, girl?  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign  
Give me a sign..."

ON THE AUDIENCE

They've caught on. They know this is for real. They're moved.

ON JOANN, FRANK & EDDIE

Eddie stops singing. He just can't remember the words.

JOANN & FRANK

(singing)

"...Maybe a woman like you  
Could be mine  
But you keep fadin'  
Away all the time.  
Coming toward me  
Or runnin' away..."

ON THE BAND

There isn't a dry eye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

97.

ON THE AUDIENCE

As the song comes to an END, they all rise. Not a sound in the house...they do care.

ON EDDIE

He's lost.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY (PRESENT)

CLOSE ON Frank; we can SEE the memory has moved him.

CUT TO:

EXT. VINELAND TRAILER COURT - DAY

The car pulls off the highway under the sign: "VINELAND TRAILER COURT" and comes to a stop in front of the trailer.

Frank gets out of the car and HEARS the PHONE RINGING. He quickly puts the key into the door and enters.

INT. TRAILER

The place is still a mess. He grabs for the phone, and on the other end we HEAR a gruff, rural voice.

HICKEY (O.S.)

Frank Ridgeway?

FRANK

(out of breath)

...Yes...?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Edsel Hickey here...

FRANK

Who?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Ed Hickey...WRAY...Remember?

FRANK

Oh, sure.....What's up?

HICKEY (O.S.)

I've been trying to reach you...

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

I've been out.

HICKEY (O.S.)

I didn't know who else to call...

FRANK

What is it?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Doc Robbins...I'm sorry...hate to be the bearer of such bad news... But.....Doc Robbins is dead...

The color drains from Frank's face.

FRANK

Dead?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Yes, sir. We put him to rest this morning.

FRANK

What happened?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Two nights ago...he was on the air when somebody walked in and shot him...

FRANK

Just like that?

HICKEY (O.S.)

Doc was such a good guy...who would want to shoot the poor son of a bitch?...All anybody knows is that when the record was over, it just kept going around and around.... Whoosh...Whoosh...Whoosh! After a while, people started calling the station. No answer. They called the cops. The cops called me since I had the keys.....I follow Doc, you know, with the news, weather and stock prices...

FRANK

(stunned)

Anything I can do?

HICKEY (O.S.)

...Everything's been taken care of.

FRANK  
Doc's dead...I can't believe it.

HICKEY (O.S.)  
Son, I cleaned up the place. Take my word for it, he's dead. I got the mops and pails to prove it.

FRANK  
(weakly)  
Thank you for letting me know...

He hangs up and puts his head in his hands. After a moment he gets up, pours himself a stiff drink, and downs it. He doesn't know what to do with himself; frustrated, he begins straightening up the trailer.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

It's early morning. Frank opens the door; he's still dressed as he was the night before...needs a shave real bad. He retrieves his newspaper from the snowy steps, and goes back inside.

INT. TRAILER

He sits down at the kitchen table, his cup of coffee in front of him. He thumbs through the paper...no mention of Doc in the main section...Try the obits....There it is!

INSERT: "NEW JERSEY DEEJAY DEAD AT 46"

Eight lines of copy of a local newspaper...Not even a picture... Great! Frank puts down the paper, leans back in his chair, lights a cigarette and starts drinking his coffee. The PHONE RINGS, and he's out of his seat in an instant, all nerves.

FRANK  
(into phone)  
...Hello?

JOANN (O.S.)  
Frank?

FRANK  
Joann?

JOANN (O.S.)  
You remember my voice?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

100.

FRANK  
How could I forget it?

JOANN (O.S.)  
I got your message.....  
(a sob)  
...Frank...?

FRANK  
What is it, Joann?...What's wrong?

JOANN (O.S.)  
I need to talk to you...I have to  
see you.

FRANK  
(sensing the urgency)  
Where are you?

JOANN (O.S.)  
...Can you meet me at the "Airship  
Tavern".....Just down the road  
from the old Hindenburg hanger...

FRANK  
I'll leave right away.

JOANN  
Hurry...!

He hangs up the phone, takes a last pull on his cigarette  
and stubs it out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Frank exits a gas station, and he's back on the road again.

It's New Jersey all the way...nothing pretty, nothing planned.  
On the RADIO, back-to-back classics: first we get no satis-  
faction from the Stones, then right into the Beatles wanting  
to hold our hand.

BEATLES  
(on radio)  
"Ooo-oo-oooh...I wanna hold your  
ha-a-a-and..."

CUT TO:

INT. CRUISERS' BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT (1964)

The SONG continues. History is being made. It's the  
Beatles' first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show...an  
incredible 77.7 Nielsen rating...and even the Cruisers are  
watching.

(CONTINUED)

Sally and Kenny can't believe these guys are for real. They're clowning, wearing mops in their hair, mocking them. But Eddie doesn't think any of this is funny. As he watches that small black and white TV set, seeing the future, he's scared of what it's saying: "Move over, Eddie...the Beatles are here...The Cruisers are on their way out."

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY (PRESENT)

Pretty snow-covered suburbs; winding roads, humungous pines; maples; oaks; a slow, dark river, chunks of ice floating.

Worn and rusting, the Hindenburg's ten-story high hangar looms out of the scrub pine, a dark colossus against the black sky. Lakehurst.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING - DUSK

Just ahead...the "AIRSHIP TAVERN", a long, narrow, red building; tar paper, shingle siding and a huge neon SIGN shaped like the Hindenburg.

EXT. "AIRSHIP TAVERN"

Frank gets out of his car and stands there for a moment... his stomach's turning...his palms are sweating... He walks to the door--You can't go back, Wordman!... Don't risk it!...What the fuck--go for it! He pushes the door open.

INT. "AIRSHIP TAVERN"

He's blinded momentarily by the dark, squints, adjusts to the new light...there she is...waiting, a drink in front of her, watching as he walks up to her.

He leans over, kisses her cheek; she hugs him back. He sits down opposite her.

ON JOANN

A few streaks in her hair...maybe five pounds heavier, but even in jeans, a turtle-neck sweater and boots, she's still a knockout.

ON FRANK--INTERCUT

He smiles. It's all been worth the wait.

JOANN  
(gently)

...How come I never heard from you?

FRANK  
I wanted to call...

JOANN  
I used to figure it was Eddie got  
in your way...Even after he died,  
I guess I was still Eddie's girl  
to you...But I never forgot you...  
I used to...I don't know...root for  
you, wherever you were...hoping you  
were up to something big. Something  
I might hear about. Funny, huh?  
Me sitting around waiting to hear  
about you...on the Academy Awards  
maybe...I'd watch for you...look  
for your name...

FRANK  
It didn't turn out that way, did it?

She shrugs; they exchange a warm smile.

She pours a shot of brandy into her coffee.

JOANN  
Frank, things have been happening  
lately. I'm frightened.

The WAITRESS comes and hands Frank a menu.

FRANK  
(waving it aside)  
Just a beer.

The waitress leaves.

FRANK  
(to Joann)  
Tell me...

JOANN  
(nervous)  
The past few days...I've been  
getting phone calls...I pick  
up the phone and someone plays  
"Far-Away Woman". Then they  
hang up...not a word...a couple  
of times a day!...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

She grabs Frank's hand and holds it tight.

JOANN (CONTD)

Frank, I think I'm going crazy!  
You're the only one I can turn  
to. I'm terrified! I can't  
believe what I'm thinking! It's  
Eddie! It's gotta be!

(breaking down again)  
It's gotta be!

FRANK

Joann...that car was destroyed  
in the accident...you don't  
really believe it's Eddie?

JOANN

I don't know.....Who else?

FRANK

I'm afraid it's someone we  
know....Someone who knows us.  
It's gotten personal.

JOANN

...A Cruiser?

FRANK

...Has to be.

JOANN

...Sally...?...Kenny...?

She looks at him with sudden fear.

JOANN (CONTD)

Could it be you, Frank?

He looks at her. Shakes his head.

FRANK

(softly)

No.

JOANN

But why? Why're they doing  
this?

FRANK

It's got to be the tapes...  
It's got to be "Season in  
Hell"!

FRANK (CONTD)  
(then, directly)  
Do you have them, Joann?

There's something that she knows that she's afraid to tell.

FRANK (CONTD)  
(losing his patience)  
Joann...Doc's dead...you understand? Someone's willing to kill for those tapes! I don't know who's next....As long as the tapes are out there, we're in danger! Where are they?

Joann's resistance breaks down.

JOANN  
...Did you ever hear of a place called "Palace Depression"?

He looks at her.

JOANN (CONTD)  
...Eddie took me there once... the night he died...

CUT TO:

EXT. EKKO RECORDS, MANHATTAN - NIGHT (1964)

It's late; West 47th Street is almost deserted. Clouds bury the moon; thunder ROLLS like a bowling ball down the lane and cracks a strike overhead.

The door swings open and Joann races out of the building. She sees Eddie's car at the curb; he's about to take off.

JOANN  
(calling out)  
EDDIE!.....Wait!

Eddie throws open the door to the passenger side. Joann gets in. Twin four barrels surge. Glass packed duals rumble. Tires squeal. The car lurches forward.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

Eddie's in no mood for conversation. Joann sits back, takes out a cigarette, lights it, and hands it to him. She lights one for herself.

EXT. HOLLAND TUNNEL

106.

A few drops of rain fall. The Chevy slides to a halt as Eddie reaches out and pays at the toll booth...and the car is swallowed up by the Holland Tunnel.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

The white tiles of the tunnel race by like a speeding train. Eddie straddles the center line; he's driving much too fast.

EXT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

The car comes flying out of the tunnel as lightning SHATTERS the sky, overexposing images..

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

The speedometer flirts with 80 as they quickly leave the city behind. Joann looks at Eddie, but he's somewhere else.

He takes a turn too fast; feels the car go into a spin. He finesses the brakes. Works the wheel. Powers out of it. If there's one thing Eddie can do, it's drive.

EXT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

Clouds move quickly, suddenly exposing a full moon. A final BOLT of lightning fizzles out like a damp fire-cracker.

They're on a dark country road, mailboxes dotting the highway. They pass a Russian church with a huge gilt onion-dome.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING

Eddie makes a turn onto a one-lane unpaved driveway.

JOANN

Where're we going?

No answer.

JOANN

Eddie...the music's great! It really is!

The car continues slowly along the pitted driveway. The rainstorm has left tiny rivers in its wake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

107.

JOANN

...Those guys...they were  
wrong...They don't know...

He passes a rickety old house and drives into a huge junkyard. A mountain of wrecked cars; a rusted old truck off to the side. Old beds, baby carriages, TV sets, you name it...and in the middle, set apart from the rest, a bizarre playground.

EXT. "PALACE DEPRESSION"

Bathtubs set into the ground for fishponds, birdbaths made from toilets, sidewalks lined with upside down beer bottles. The "castle"--three stories of hubcaps, carhoods and refrigerator doors. It's a joke...a goof...an incredible piece of art..

Joann can't believe her eyes.

JOANN

Eddie! What is this place?!

EDDIE

I used to hang out here when I was a kid. There was this old guy who owned the place... what a dreamer! He'd sift through the garbage and put aside bits and pieces...

Two old barber chairs sit in front of the "castle": chipped porcelain, green bronze, cracked leather seats. Eddie walks over to one, and sits, a king surveying his wrecked kingdom.

EDDIE (CONTD)

"These are antiques," he'd tell me. "People gotta be crazy throwin' away this kind of stuff." He really believed he could make a castle out of a bunch of junk!...What a crock!

He gets off his throne, bends down and picks up a broken mirror.

EDDIE (CONTD)

(looking at himself)  
HOLEE SHIT! What a fuckin' phony!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

108.

He throws the mirror against the "castle", the breaking glass his dying scream.

JOANN

Eddie...it's not your fault...  
Why're you doing this to  
yourself?...Don't blame  
yourself for Wendell...

She goes to him. He's drained of emotion, feeling nothing. She takes his face in her hands, kisses him.

JOANN (CONTD)

I love you, Eddie. I believe  
in you.....These things take  
time...

Eddie wants no part of her...not now...not tonight. He pushes her away.

EDDIE

(arms outstretched)

Hey, you guys, here we are...  
right where we belong...  
together at last...We got  
Edsels...Norges...Dumonts...  
and Eddie Wilson! Last year's  
models, write-offs, rejects  
and throw-aways...all together  
at last in our rightful resting  
place! It's "Palace Depression"  
fellas! Here we are, creating  
our own incredible monument...  
to nothing! Let's hear it for  
nothing, you guys!

He applauds, the hollow SOUND ricocheting against the empty night. He stops and looks around, then turns and goes to the car, Joann following.

CUT TO:

INT. "AIRSHIP TAVERN" - NIGHT (PRESENT)

JOANN

...There were so many things  
I wanted to say to him...  
questions I wanted to ask...  
What now? What next, Eddie?  
...But Eddie and I...we had a  
deal...we never talked about  
the future...We thought the  
present was so fine, why ruin  
it by planning ahead?

CUT TO:

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT (1964)

The car stops in front of the Cruisers' boarding house. Eddie's tense, uptight. He's barely holding it together. He gets out of the car, goes around to the passenger side and opens the door for Joann.

EXT. CRUISERS' BOARDING HOUSE

HIGH ANGLE showing them bathed in the harsh glow of an overhanging street light. Eddie throws his arms around Joann, burying his face in her hair. They're two lost figures clinging to each other, holding on for dear life.

Without a word, he releases her and quickly makes his way back into his car. Joann's standing there, freezing, numb. The night is cold and Eddie's not coming in...

He guns the motor, and as the car speeds off, the convertible top glides down. The spectral glow of the tail lights fades into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. "AIRSHIP TAVERN" - NIGHT (PRESENT)

JOANN

(tears welling in  
her eyes)

...As Eddie drove off, I felt  
a chill...I knew...I knew it  
then...there wasn't going to  
be any future!

(wiping her eyes)

And then... that memorial  
service!...What a farce!...  
everyone standing around...  
crying...and Eddie wasn't  
even there!

FRANK

He's dead, Joann... believe me...  
whoever it is that's watching  
you...IT'S NOT EDDIE!

JOANN

I couldn't stand it...I had  
to say goodbye in my own way...  
I went to the record company,  
and got the tapes...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

110.

FRANK  
(almost to himself)  
It was you...

JOANN  
...and drove back to "Palace  
Depression"...

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

What a night! Bad enough Frank and Joann don't know where they are,..but the road's a sheet of ice, and the car's sliding all over the place.

JOANN  
...I keep thinking it's  
somewhere around here...but  
the snow makes everything  
look so different...

They continue driving. Then, in the distance, a church with a tarnished gilt onion-dome.

JOANN (CONTD)  
(pointing to it)  
THAT'S IT! That church!  
Just ahead...somewhere to the  
right of that church...there  
should be a little road...

Frank continues, ever so slowly.

JOANN (CONTD)  
HERE!...Turn here!

He turns, the car barely finds the untraveled driveway beneath the snow. Owls hoot. A small animal, maybe a squirrel, darts in front of the car.

A light FLASHES behind them...Joann jumps.

JOANN (CONTD)  
(turning)  
...I thought I heard something...

Nothing there! The road stops dead...a six-foot fence:  
"DO NOT ENTER"... "DANGEROUS"... "KEEP OUT"...

EXT. FRANK'S CAR

Frank grabs a flashlight as he gets out of the car. He's cautious...who knows what he's going to come up against! He sinks into icy snow a foot deep. He goes up to the fence, pulls out a few slats, and signals to Joann to join him.

Reluctantly she gets out of the car and they continue on foot.

JOANN

This place gives me the creeps!

EXT. JUNKYARD

Every step they take something gives way. The icy snow crunches under their feet. The wind makes weird sounds as it whistles through the deserted place. A rat runs in front of them.

Joann grabs Frank's hand.

FRANK

What are we looking for?

JOANN

A "castle"...a hobo's castle...  
the most incredible thing  
you've ever seen...!

A SOUND behind them. There's someone there! Joann screams...Frank's flashlight finds it!...A cat!

They continue searching.

JOANN (CONTD)

(pointing)

THERE IT IS!

EXT. "PALACE DEPRESSION"

Disneyland...a hobo's San Simeon...the "castle"...  
Eddie's Monument! She stands there, looking, remembering.  
Another SOUND!

JOANN

(whispering)

Someone's here! I know it!

Frank swings the flashlight slowly...searching...Nothing!  
Silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

112.

FRANK

...Just a cat.

Joann moves towards the entrance.

JOANN

(still whispering)

...In here...!

They enter the "castle".

INT. "PALACE DEPRESSION"

The place is dying. They have to bend over to make their way. Joann signals Frank to follow her into a small alcove. An old potbellied stove is welded into the framework.

JOANN

(pointing)

...In there!...in the stove...

Frank tries prying open the heavy grill. It's frozen solid. Won't budge. He looks around and finds a glass brick; he bangs it against the ice, chipping it away.

It's free! He pulls the grate open, and turns to Joann.

JOANN

...It's okay...go ahead...

FRANK

(reaching into the stove)

I've got it!

He removes a small metal box.

FRANK (CONTD)

Let's go...

Crouched low, they quickly make their way out of the "castle", then run in the direction of the car.

INT. FRANK'S CAR

They get in and lock the doors. Frank revs the engine and backs out of the narrow driveway.

EXT. ROAD

He reverses onto the icy road, floors it, spinning rubber.

HOLD. Somewhere in the shadows, the SOUND of snow crunching underfoot. A car door OPENS. It SHUTS.

PAN OVER

An engine STARTS. A match FLARES. A cigarette is LIT. The car pulls out of the darkness, headlights off, and follows them.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING

ON JOANN

She takes the box, sets it on her lap and slowly opens it.

JOANN'S POV

Inside are two tape cannisters...and a copy of the book, "A Season in Hell" by Arthur Rimbaud.

ON JOANN

JOANN  
(almost to herself)  
...seventeen years...

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANK'S CAR - TRAVELING SHOTS

Past refineries and marshes; onto the Parkway; finally down the shoreline to Lakehurst. And all the while, barely visible, a '57 pink and black Chevy convertible follows at a safe distance.

INT. FRANK'S CAR, LAKEHURST SUBURBS - TRAVELING

Past the "Airship Tavern" Joann directs Frank up a long winding road, then onto a circular driveway. They stop in front of a red clapboard house with a porch running along the front. A sign: "JOANN CARLINO - BALLET AND MODERN DANCE".

Frank looks at her...so that's what she does!

EXT. JOANN'S HOUSE

They get out of the car. Clutching the box, Joann unlocks the front door. They go inside.

INT. JOANN'S HOUSE

She bolts the door. To the left, a studio: wood floors, mirrored walls, a ballet bar and a baby grand piano. To the right, the living room: nice, comfortable.

JOANN

Hungry?

FRANK

Starved.

They walk through the living room to a large open kitchen. They pass a wall lined with photographs. Frank stops, taking it all in: Joann as a showgirl...chorus lines... New York...California...Vegas...

Joann turns on the kitchen light, places the box on the table, throws her coat over a chair. She takes coffee out of a cabinet and starts preparing bacon, eggs and toast.

JOANN

(over her shoulder)

There's some of you, you know...

FRANK

I see...

FRANK'S POV

Photographs of Eddie and the Cruisers performing; one of Eddie, Joann and Frank in front of the Chevy, arms around each other, happy.

JOANN (O.S.)

It'll give me the willies,  
listening to those tapes  
again...

ON FRANK--INTERCUT

FRANK

(coming into the  
kitchen)

Tomorrow, I'll rent a recorder...

(CONTINUED)

JOANN  
New Year's Day?

FRANK  
Oh...

Joann laughs...and it's still deep, rich, wonderful...  
Some things never change.

FRANK  
(laughing too)  
What's so funny?

JOANN  
I was just thinking...who  
would've believed that Frank  
Ridgeway would be my date  
for New Year's Eve!

FRANK  
"Should old acquaintance be  
forgot..."

Their laughter is interrupted by the phone RINGING.  
Joann turns to Frank.

FRANK  
...Go ahead...

He goes to her as she lifts the phone, holding it so  
they can both hear. On the other end, the saxophone  
leads into "Far-Away Woman".

Joann crumbles. She's had enough! Frank takes the phone.

FRANK  
(into phone)  
WHO THE HELL IS THIS?

The SONG continues.

FRANK  
GODDAMN IT! WHO IS IT?

The line goes dead.

Joann's crying. Frank goes to her, holds her, protecting  
her.

FRANK  
It's okay...I'm here...  
I'm with you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

116.

The phone RINGS again. Just once. Stops. Joann stands there, watching, waiting. It RINGS again. Once. Stops. That's all.

JOANN  
THAT'S IT!! Swear to God,  
that's Eddie! One ring.  
That's our signal. It means  
get ready. He's coming over!  
He'll be here any minute!

Joann rushes upstairs, leaving Frank alone in the kitchen. Happy New Year!...Eddie-my-love is on his way! No way! ...he's dead! But who is it? Who's out there?

The phone RINGS again. Frank goes to the stair landing, listening.

JOANN (O.S.)  
...Eddie!....It is you!

Silence while she listens.

JOANN (O.S.)  
...Yes...yes...Sure I have them...  
I'll be waiting...Yes, yes...  
Eddie...I'll be alone...only  
hurry!...Please...hurry!

It can't be Eddie! Or could it? At any rate, whoever it is, he's on his way. Frank makes a decision, and runs out of the front door.

EXT. JOANN'S HOUSE

Frank runs down the porch steps, looks around, opens the garage door. It's empty. He jumps into his car and quickly swings it into the garage. He gets out and closes the door.

The full moon reflecting on the snow illuminates the night. In one corner of the porch Frank finds a pocket of darkness and crouches...waiting.

INT. JOANN'S HOUSE

Joann comes down the stairs...fresh lipstick, hair combed, a flush to her face.

JOANN  
(calling out)  
FRANK! You still here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

117.

She goes to the kitchen.

JOANN

Frank?

He's gone! Just like that! She grabs the tapes and her coat and heads for the front door.

EXT. JOANN'S HOUSE, PORCH

Frank's still waiting, ready.

FRANK'S POV

Joann comes out of the house. She stands on the porch, staring at the empty driveway. Frank's gone. But that's okay. Eddie's coming! She paces up and down... Where is he? Eddie....! Eddie's coming! She goes back inside.

INT. JOANN'S HOUSE

A last look in the mirror: not bad! Then a SOUND...a car approaching.

EXT. JOANN'S HOUSE, PORCH

Frank tenses, looking down the driveway.

FRANK'S POV

The '57 Chevy comes jolting down the road, RADIO blaring, and then into the driveway. BEEP-BEEP! BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! Like old times! It comes to a stop. Eddie's back!

Joann rushes out of the front door, looking out.

ON CHEVY

Sitting there in the moonlight, waiting for Joann. The headlights flash high...and low...and high again!

ON JOANN--INTERCUT

She's frightened. She can't move. The RADIO lowers, the door on the passenger's side swings open...a familiar voice calls out.

VOICE

Hey, baby! What's the holdup?

(CONTINUED)

JOANN  
(whispering)  
...Eddie...?

VOICE  
Come on, honey! LET'S GET ON  
WITH THE MUSIC!

That's it!.....Eddie! Joann runs down the porch steps, racing towards the Chevy.

ON FRANK--INTERCUT

He's about to lose Joann for the second time...No way! Not again! Not this time! He leaps over the porch railing and runs to the driver's side of the car.

As Joann is about to get in, Frank opens the other door and grabs the driver by the jacket, pulling him out of the car. He throws him up against the front fender.

JOANN  
(running towards  
them)  
FRANK!...FRANK! What're you  
doing?

The brights are on; she's blinded, throws up her hands to shield her eyes. Frank's got the guy pinned against the car; he releases his grip, pulls off the shades. Joann sees him. Screams.....It's Doc!!

FRANK  
(stunned)  
Son of a bitch!

Joann loses control. In a rage she starts pummeling Doc...in the face, arms, chest...anywhere she can. There's no way Doc can stop her...he doesn't even try to protect himself.

FRANK  
(trying to pull  
her off)  
Enough...no more...Joann...

Finally there's nothing left; she's exhausted, spent. Frank takes her in his arms; she breaks down, cries.

FRANK  
It's okay...it's okay...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

119.

Finally he looks at Doc.

FRANK  
Why'd you do it, Doc?

ON DOC--INTERCUT

His shoulders slump. His eyes glaze. All the years of indignities, slights, all the near-misses, all the might-have-beens have piled up on him. They've taken their toll.

DOC  
Hey...shit...

FRANK  
Why?

DOC  
...Shortcuts, kid...I saw an opportunity...went for it...

FRANK  
But why...why this way?

DOC  
...Never could do things the easy way....But I coulda made it...all I needed was a second chance...This time I'da made it work.

FRANK  
...But... Edsel Hickey ?

DOC  
(a gruff rural voice)  
"With the dawn hog-belly prices"?  
Hey...master of voices, maker of choices...!

JOANN  
(looking up)  
...and "Eddie"?

DOC  
So long as you didn't ask me to sing, I was okay...

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

(indicating the car)

But why the whole game...why  
this car business...?

DOC

I figured Joann had the tapes...  
I knew she wasn't about to  
give them to me...Maybe you,  
Wordman...maybe she'd give them  
to you...but you weren't willing  
to play ball...So then I  
figured I only had one card left...  
I went for it...! Eddie! It  
coulda worked!

JOANN

What would you do if you had the  
tapes, Doc?

DOC

(smiling, relishing  
the thought)

Oh...try me! Just try me!...I'd  
have them by the balls and no  
lettin' go...just where I want  
'em. They'd come to me, man,  
they'd offer me the world! And  
I'd just smile and listen and  
say, "Maybe so...I'll get back to  
you...I'll think about it...Hey,  
let's have some lunch...Keep in  
touch...Ciao, asshole, ciao!"  
One time in my life, man, I'd  
bring home a winner...

(smiling)

I'd like that!

JOANN

I once asked Eddie why he kept  
you around...and you know what  
he said?.....He said, "Doc's a  
dreamer...and the world needs  
dreamers."

DOC

(moved)

He was the only real friend I  
ever had!

Joann looks at Frank. He sees what she's thinking. He  
nods. She turns back to Doc and offers him the tapes.

JOANN

Go do it, Doc...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

121.

Doc doesn't believe it.

DOC

You serious?

He turns to Frank.

FRANK

Go on...take them...your  
ticket to the Bigs...

Doc just stands there, stunned.

JOANN

Go...take them...

Doc takes the tapes and straightens himself up.

DOC

I'll do it for all of us!  
I'll make you proud of me...  
You'll see!

With that he starts to get into the car. He stops.  
Turns back.

DOC (CONTD)

I'm gonna make the sweetest  
deal you ever heard! 'Cause  
they don't know it yet, but  
they're gonna be dealin' with  
Doc Robbins...the "Big Bopper"!  
And I promise you...I'm goin'  
to be comin' on strong, stayin'  
long, talkin' loud and drawin'  
a crowd!

He gets behind the wheel and starts the engine.

DOC (CONTD)

(through the open  
window)

I'll be in touch, you two...  
Eddie and the Cruisers! Coast  
to coast! I'm not just talkin'  
Jersey!

He takes off.

DOC (CONTD)

(leaning out, waving)  
Happy New Year!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

122.

FRANK  
(waving)  
Make it good, Doc.

They watch as the car drives off.

JOANN  
Not too many people get second  
chances...

FRANK  
...I'll be listening to the radio.

JOANN  
We never got to talk...Has it  
been good for you?

FRANK  
...No Academy Awards...

JOANN  
(smiling)  
Maybe this year...

She cradles her hand inside Frank's arm.

JOANN  
Still hungry?

FRANK  
Starved.

They walk, arm in arm, up the steps and into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. "VILLA NAPOLI" RESTAURANT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Advent television screen

The Rock Star and his band performing on stage at Madison  
Square Garden.

ROCK STAR  
People die, and some die young.  
Some of them we remember.  
Especially the music-makers.

INSERT: Photograph of Janis Joplin.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...Janis Joplin with a needle...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

123.

INSERT: Photograph of Jimi Hendrix.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...Jimi Hendrix choking on his own  
vomit...

INSERT: Photograph of Elvis Presley.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...Elvis black in the face on his  
bathroom floor...

INSERT: Photograph of Eddie Cochran.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...Eddie Cochran's car crash...

ON TABLE

Frank, Joann, Doc, Sally and Kenny are sitting, watching  
the TV screen. In front of them, an Italian feast.

ROCK STAR (O.S.)  
...Buddy Holly's plane crash...  
and Otis Redding's...

ON TV Screen

INSERT: Photograph of Johnny Ace.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...and Johnny Ace shooting himself...

INSERT: Photograph of Sam Cooke.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...and Sam Cooke getting shot...

INSERT: Photograph of Frankie Lymon.

ROCK STAR (V.O.)  
...and Frankie Lymon overdosing...

INSERT: Photograph of John Lennon.

ROCK STAR  
...John Lennon at the hand of an  
assassin...

ON ROCK STAR

ROCK STAR  
We remember them all. Some more than  
others and one group more than most.

(CONTINUED)

Black & white footage of Eddie's Chevy convertible being lifted by a huge crane from the Raritan River.

## ROCK STAR (V.O.)

You make your choice of memories.  
We've made ours. They paid the  
dues. We pay the tribute. Ladies  
and gentlemen, they say we left  
them down the road. Don't believe  
it. They're with us tonight.  
Living fast. Driving hard. Making  
music....EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS!

A high-pitched wail, as Eddie's falsetto leads us into  
"Season in Hell".

EXT. RARITAN RIVER BRIDGE - DAY (PRESENT)

The MUSIC continues. HIGH ANGLE looking down into the  
swirling water of the Raritan River. PULL BACK to  
reveal Susan Foley on the bridge. She turns to face  
the camera.

## SUSAN

The innocence of the 'fifties was  
over...so was rock 'n' roll as we  
knew it. We were entering a new  
age...an age of confusion...an age  
of passion...of commitment.....  
And Eddie Wilson knew it...he saw  
it coming. "Season in Hell" was a  
total innovation for that time...  
it was a signal of greatness yet to  
come. Eddie Wilson was a step  
ahead of us...and I don't think  
we've caught up with him yet...

The SOUND of "Season in Hell" grows louder. It is  
penetrating...thrilling...exciting...

INSERT: A montage of photographs of Eddie and the Cruisers.

## SUSAN (CONTD) (V.O.)

...Eddie's been dead for almost  
seventeen years, but his music is  
as alive today as the day he  
recorded it. For me, and for  
everyone who listens to music,  
Eddie Wilson lives...and always  
will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

125.

The MUSIC soars.

ON TABLE

Frank, Joann, Doc, Sally and Kenny raise their glasses high  
...and toast Eddie.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, 49th STREET, MANHATTAN - NIGHT

LOW ANGLE shot of the RCA Television Showroom. In the window, twenty television sets of all shapes and sizes; on each of the screens we SEE a continuation of the photo montage.

The SOUND of "Season in Hell" explodes through the speakers.

PULL BACK to reveal a half-dozen people watching the show. The CAMERA COMES AROUND and PANS the faces: a husband, wife and child; an old bum; a messenger; a black teenager, carrying a huge portable radio; and finally, a dark, bearded man, about 40...twirling a set of car keys around his index finger.

The CAMERA CONTINUES AROUND and UP, higher and higher, until the small group begins to disperse into the anonymity of the night.

END CREDITS.