

UNITED ARTISTS
ELEPHANT MAN II
aka
NICKEL AND DIME

by

Roy Blount, Jr.

Based on a screenplay by Garry Williams

Story by

Pen Densham

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SHOOTING DRAFT

April 26, 1995 (Pink)
Rev. 5/1/95 (Yellow)
Rev. 5/5/95 (Green)
Rev. 5/8/95 (Goldenrod)
Rev. 5/29/95 (Salmon)
Rev. 5/30/95 (Cherry)
Rev. 5/31/95 (Blue)

ELEPHANT MAN II

DATE: May 5, 1995
TO: ALL CAST & CREW
FROM: Andie Fatool
RE: Name Change

THE NAME ANIMAL ATTRACTIONS HAS BEEN CHANGED TO NATURAL TALENT.

THE 5/5/95 ~~PRESENT~~ REVISION PAGES WILL REFLECT THIS.

THANK YOU



OPENING CREDITS RUN OVER....

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM/BACKSTAGE

1

FROM ABOVE:

JACK CORCORAN pacing, muttering to himself, in half-light, on a small stage. From the other side of the undrawn curtain, we hear muffled conversation and cutlery clicking against plates. Sounds get gradually louder and we begin to hear muffled introductory remarks...

EVENT COORDINATOR (O.C.)
...year has not been an easy one
for our industry...

...as we CLOSE ON Jack. His hair is slicked back, and if it isn't perfectly in place it will do for the venue. The same might be said for the dark suit, the tie, the dress shirt. He shoots his cuffs, and we see cufflinks and an imposing watch, which he checks. He takes a deep breath, does a couple of jumping jacks, then adjusts whatever small rumples the exercise has caused.

EVENT COORDINATOR (O.C.)
...remind ourselves, as we listen
to our speaker's inspiring
words...

JACK
(warming up his voice)
Beed'n beed'n beed'n. Over the
lips, the teeth the tongue. The
tongue the teeth, the teeth the
tongue. Beed'n beed'n. Over the
lips--

The anxious-looking EVENT COORDINATOR appears in the wings.

EVENT COORDINATOR
These people need something.
Their spirit is low. You're
going to give 'em something,
right?

JACK
The teeth the tongue.

Coordinator's head disappears, then pops back in.

COORDINATOR
One thing, and I cannot emphasize
this enough: no jokes about the
magic button!

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

1

JACK

Beed'n... What's a magic button?

COORDINATOR

(stops halfway out, pops
back in)

Revolutionary new development.
Adjusts your recliner at the wave
of a hand. It's a nightmare!
Too sensitive. Fall asleep, your
hand flops down, bang, you're on
the floor. Don't even mention
the magic button.

We hear a peep-peep-peep. Jack reaches into a
pocket and pulls out a cellular phone. The
coordinator steps in front of the curtain again.

JACK

Mom.... Yes, I will, on time.
(checks watch, nervous
habit)

I have to be on time for my
introduction, now. Please don't
call during my speech.

He repockets the phone. We hear the last few words
of the introduction clearly.

EVENT COORDINATOR (O.C.)

Author of the book, "Get Over
It," a rising star in the field
of personal motivation--I'm sure
you'll be glad you got to
know...Jack...Cochran!

JACK

(to himself)

Corcoran.

(a beat)

I'm over it.

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM

2

CLOSE ON JACK stepping through the curtain, to
polite applause.

To his left is a chalkboard. To his right is a
blowup of his bookjacket: Get Over It: Three Steps
to Mastery of Your Life and Work, by Jack Corcoran.
Over his head, a banner reads AMERICAN MOTION
UPHOLSTERY CONFERENCE.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

2

From Jack's POV we see a hotel banquet room in which waiters are clearing dishes from fifty or so round tables, at which conventioners sit.

Jack has stepped into a stark white spotlight. After a dramatic pause:

JACK

Before I was born, my father died. Saving some other kid from drowning in icy water. Do you know how I felt about that, growing up? I resented it.

REVERSE: Audience looking like they wonder whether they need to hear this.

JACK

It was years before I learned to... Get Over It.

REVERSE: audience perking up a bit, applauding lightly...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM

3

Jack at the chalkboard, on which he has written a C over an I.

JACK

When we are Caught In our negatives, we are always saying "See I."
(whiny, apologetic tone)
"See, I woulda, see I coulda, see I shoulda."

He pauses to milk audience chuckles.

JACK

But when we get over those negatives...
(writing an I over a C)
"I See!"
(more)

REVERSE: Audience looking insufficiently motivated.

BACK ON JACK:

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

3

JACK

I thought you'd buy that. See,
I...

Laughter. He steps back behind the lectern,
fingering his tie nervously. He stops, looks into
the audience.

JACK

Uh, excuse me, Mam.

He fixes his eyes on an EMBARRASSED WOMAN in the
audience. Hops down from the stage and walks
toward her.

JACK

Mind if I call you Mam? I mean
nothing by it, except to
establish that you are not a paid
stooge. Have we ever met?
(as she's shaking her
head no)

Ever had a telephone
conversation? E-mail? Fax? Our
eyes ever meet across a crowded
room and, boom, right then, we
knew?

She shakes her head, blushing.

JACK

I haven't captured the attention
of everyone in the audience. Do
you know why?

He wheels on MAN sitting at the next table, who
jumps.

JACK

...it's his fault!

Laughter. Now the man is embarrassed. He has
stacked all the cubes of sugar, from the sugar bowl
on his table, into a neat pile several inches high.

JACK

Blaming the other guy is fun!
Almost as much fun as this
amazing stack of sugar.

(to the man)

No no, don't touch it.

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

3

JACK (Cont'd)
(to the rest of the audience)

Can you all see this? Stand up, crane your necks, climb on one another's shoulders.

Laughter.

JACK

But do you know the one thing that would be even more fun?

More laughter.

JACK

You're right! Mam, will you do the honors? Gently, gently.

She reaches over from her table, flicks her finger against the sugar cubes... they all come tumbling down.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM

4

The crowd is growing restive. They like the fun stuff, but it's hard laying this serious motivational pipe. Which is what he's paid for. He's at the blackboard where he has written "A: ADDRESS THE ISSUES, B: BUILD SELF-ESTEEM, C: CREATE NEW AGENDAS."

Under "C" he has written two columns:

☹
Caretaker
Co-Dependent
Complaining

☺
Caring Person
Co-Equal
Celebrating

*

JACK

Whereas my first wife, Gloria, was my... Caretaker, my fiancée Celeste will be my... Co-Equal. I'm graduating from the ABC's...
(writing DEF)
to De-liberate, E-liminate, and F-Finish.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BANQUET ROOM

5

Audience applauding. They don't look as if their lives have been totally transformed, but they do look as if they have learned some new steps. Coordinator comes in from the wings.

COORDINATOR

So, now, if there are no questions--

MAN IN AUDIENCE

Whattaya think about the magic button?

Coordinator glares at Jack, who appears to be swallowing his immediate reaction.

JACK

I wish I had the expertise to comment, there. But my friend, I'm motivation. You folks are... and never forget this...

(he's trying to remember)

You folks are Motion Upholstery.

Audience applauds; he got it right.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HOTEL, MANHATTAN--DUSK

6

JACK, awkwardly carrying the cardboard blowups of his dustjacket and picture, hailing cab, shoving the posters into the backseat, getting in.

INT. CAB.

7

The CABBIE is a rastifarian with dreadlocks.

JACK

In Brooklyn, 814 Third Street.

CABBIE

(shaking head)

No Brooklyn.

JACK

No Brooklyn. Let's E-- Eliminate that negative.

CABBIE

No Brooklyn.

Jack's phone peep-peeps. He pulls it out, answers.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

7

JACK
Hello. Well, I'm trying Mom.
But the driver says--
(he listens; then:)
Talk to Mom.

Driver takes phone. Listens for a moment.

CABBIE
Okay Mom.

Hands phone back. Pulls out into traffic.

OMITTED

8

INT. HALLWAY

A9

Jack deals with posters and keys.

INT. APARTMENT

9

Not very big, but livable. It's been decorated with a firm lace-curtain hand.

Jack enters. He's still a bit high from the speech. MOM, an Irish/American lady who looks like an iron fist in puff pastry, and CELESTE, an attractive thirtyish version of Mom, stick their heads out of the kitchen. They both check his appearance.

MOM
Change your suit, sweetheart.

JACK
In due time. Right now I want to bask in the afterglow--

CELESTE
I stopped by your place and picked up your grey one.

Both women emerge. Celeste gives him a kiss and gives his somewhat tousled hair a quick brush with her hand. He returns the kiss but pulls back from the grooming. MOM looks at the two of them the way she might scrutinize a table set by someone to whom she has grudgingly delegated authority. She goes back into the kitchen.

CELESTE
You're sweaty.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

9

JACK

You'd be sweaty too if you'd spent an hour fluffing up upholsterers. There was this one guy--

CELESTE

(helping him off with his jacket)
Walter's coming tonight.

JACK

(incredulous)
To our engagement party?

MOM

(emerging with stuff to set out for the party)
Celeste and I agreed he'd be hurt if we left him out.

CELESTE

(taking a tray from Mom)
How'd the speech go?

JACK

Well, Over. It went over.

MOM

Not over their heads, I hope.

Jack tries not to look deflated.

JACK

The chicken cutlet was over their heads. *

MOM

If you're over people's heads, you had better be praying.

JACK

From whom, in your dark past, did you pick up that expression?

CELESTE

Your suit's laid out in your old room.

INT. APARTMENT

10

The party is in full swing--hors d'oeuvres, knots of CHATTERING PEOPLE, even a PIANIST--but Jack, natty in a fresh suit, is being monopolized by his young, prematurely patronizing agent, WALTER.

WALTER (V.O.)

Let's face it, Jack. You're not going to get video interest till you get more books out. And you're not going to get more books out till you pay the publisher.

JACK

I thought books were supposed to make money.

WALTER

For the publisher. The author gets a piece of the action when he writes a book that attracts a publisher that prints books that sell. The publisher you attracted--

JACK

You mean the publisher you dug up.

WALTER

Jack, please, we're on the same side. You have three speech dates coming up: the 18th, Modesto, the Wall Applications Association...

JACK

Is that anything like wallpaper?

WALTER

The 21st, Tampa, the American Sand and Gravel Congress.

JACK

Don't Sand and Gravel have a euphemism? Grit Consulting?

WALTER

Jack, these people are not interested in being goofed on. Their entire focus is expanding market share.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

10

JACK

When are you going to focus on getting me better gigs?

WALTER

I got you one--Investment Strategies Summit. New Orleans, the 24th. Ten grand. This is major. You get established on the Other People's Money circuit, and you can tell Wall Applications to stick it.

Jack gives him a look, then checks his watch.

JACK

Twelve days from now my fee goes up, and down the road: Infomercial City.

WALTER

(handing him a contract)
It's good to have a dream. Sign this.

JACK

What's it say?

WALTER

That the investment folks can sue you if you cancel.

JACK

(signing)
When did I ever cancel?

WALTER

At this level, they don't take chances.

Jack hands the contract back to Walter.

JACK

Well okay Walter, enjoy the party. But try not to get completely deranged, okay?

WALTER

If I may say, I endorse this engagement totally. Without family obligations, you're vulnerable to drift.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

10

JACK

I think I'll drift now.

He extricates himself from Walter. Jack's eyes fall on a seven-year-old BOY sitting in the corner, swinging his feet, bored to death. The kid's in a miniature suit and tie. He's pulling uncomfortably at the collar.

Jack moves quickly to the boy and grabs him by the necktie.

JACK

Step into my office.

The kid's eyes light up as Jack leads him through the throng.

INT. APT./JACK'S OLD BEDROOM

11

In the foreground, we see some beautifully carved animals - but old, some broken, and glued. Jack and Matthew are on their stomachs examining them. Behind them we see Jack's old room: an old Mets pennant, a Rolling Stones album cover, and posters of Walt Frazier, Joe Namath, W.C. Fields peering over his cards. A bookcase full of paperbacks, and on the top of it a waterpipe and a real stuffed woodchuck or something whose head and shoulders are covered by a cowboy hat with a beaded band.

MATTHEW

These are old.

JACK

About as old as I am.

MATTHEW

Wow.

JACK

These are magic animals, Mr. Matt. My father made these.

The door opens. It's Celeste.

CELESTE

Time for telegrams!

JACK

Now?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

11

She kneels beside him and kisses him on the top of the head. She clearly is warm, and fond of him.

CELESTE

Sure, now. Unless you don't want to get engaged.

JACK

Oh I do I do I do I do. See--I'm practicing.

CELESTE

You're so great with kids.

For Jack this seems to take the fun out of it. As he rises:

JACK

(to Matthew)

You can play with these as much as you want to.

MATTHEW

You got Nintendo?

Celeste leads Jack away.

INT. APARTMENT

12

CLOSE ON A STACK OF OPENED TELEGRAMS Jack is sitting on a chair in the middle of the room with Celeste on the arm of his chair, reading the telegrams. Crowd gathered round.

JACK

(reading)

"You've only just begun. A kiss for luck and you're on your way."
From Walter.

ELDERLY RELATIVE

That's lovely!

WALTER

(confidentially)

From a song.

Jack blinks.

DOORBELL RINGS. In the background, Mom scurries over to answer it. She is handed another telegram just as Jack is opening the last one on the table.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

12

JACK

(reading)

"All best wishes in the many years to come, God willing." From Kevin Levin. Who's Kevin Levin?

*

CELESTE

Your insurance man.

MOM

Here, we just got another one.

She hands it to Jack.

JACK

"Dear Mr. Corcoran. We regret to inform you of...the death...of your father..."

Smiles drop from faces of all.

JACK

That's original, I guess.

MOM

I hope no one thought it was funny.

JACK

This says he died a month ago in Maryland.

MOM

(snatching it away)

It's not funny, at all.

Jack snatches it back.

*

JACK

"We have been placed in charge of his effects and a rather large inheritance. We strongly recommend that you come to our offices as soon as possible to claim same. Trowbridge Bowers, Attorney at Law."

There is a long silence. The guests squirm uncomfortably.

WALTER

No joke?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

12

Mom stands up, walks quickly to the wine table.

MOM

It's some kind of bureaucratic bungling. Don't worry, I'll call them tomorrow.

JACK

The last thing you need to do is call some lawyer and tell him your husband's been dead for forty years. I'll do it.

*

As he checks his watch, he hears the thunk of a wine bottle she knocks over.

MOM

Let me call them, Jackie. Please.

The gravity in her voice catches everyone's attention. Jack and the perplexed guests look over at her as she sops distractedly at the spilled wine with a napkin.

JACK

Are you all right?

MOM

Of course. I'm always all right.

*

She forces a smile.

*

JACK

You haven't called me Jackie since I was a little kid.

Mom keeps her head down, eyes averted. The room is tense.

*

*

INT. KITCHEN--NIGHT

13

Mom, her face rigid, is washing dishes. Passes one to Celeste, who's drying. Jack is standing behind them, staring at Mom.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

13

JACK

Mom...

(she looks at him
reluctantly)

Mom, you can't just say, "Okay,
so maybe he hasn't been dead all
those years, let's do the
dishes."

MOM

(back to washing)

Well, what can I say?

Celeste hands Jack the dry dish to put away. He
moves in between her and Mom and drops the dish
back in the soapy water.

JACK

What can you say? You can't say
that.

She's washing the dish again. He stops her hand.

JACK

You told me he died. Before I
was born. Saving a little boy
like me from drowning in icy
water, he jumped in through the
ice and-- I can't believe this.
I'm giving my speech.

(stops to think)

My speech is a tissue of lies.

*
*

MOM

Calm down, Jackie--

JACK

I had a father all these years!
And didn't know it! Now that I
do know it, I don't have one.

CELESTE

(slipping her arm
through his)

Jack....

JACK

(appealing to her)

Am I crazy here?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

13

Celeste looks like she's caught between a rock and a hard place.

MOM

I left him, Jack. I left him, and I took you with me, and I didn't tell him where we were going.

JACK

Then... Did he...beat you or something?

MOM

No, he didn't beat me.

JACK

He was a criminal? What?

MOM

He wasn't a criminal. *

JACK

Mom, tell me. What was he?

MOM

He was irresponsible.

JACK

Irresponsible.

MOM

He'd never hold down a job. He was always moving us from one place to another. We had no home. I couldn't count on a man like that when I had a baby.

JACK

He was irresponsible. So you killed him.

CELESTE

Oh, Jack. She didn't kill him.

JACK

She did! She drowned him!

He turns and walks away.

MOM

I couldn't have him influencing you! Boys learn from their fathers.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

13

JACK
I'll just have to take your word
on that.

INT. PLANE--NIGHT

14

Jack is sitting by a window looking moodily out.
Checks his watch. He's still wearing his suit from
the party, cufflinks and all. Sitting next to him
is a SUFFERER.

SUFFERER
I've never known a day when my
stomach didn't hurt. Ulcers
since I was five. Disability
doesn't begin to cover it.

Jack doesn't respond. Lost in his own confused
thoughts.

SUFFERER
People don't know! I'm amazed
I've lived as long as I have.

Jack finally looks up.

JACK
So am I, actually.

EXT. LAWYER'S OFFICE--DAY

A15*

Jack enters office.

*

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE--DAY

15

Enter Jack. He looks pretty well pulled together
for a man who spent the night traveling, but he
doesn't even have a hanging bag. He approaches
RECEPTIONIST, who is busily going through a stack
of mail.

JACK
Excuse me. I'm looking for
Trowbridge Bowers, Attorney at
Law.

RECEPTIONIST
(not looking up)
Mmm?

JACK
Look, I had to fly from New York
with an obsessed stomach.

(CONT.)

REVISED 5/5/95 [GREEN]

17A.

CONTINUED:

15

Pulls telegram from his pocket.

JACK
My name is Jack Corcoran, and I--

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

15

RECEPTIONIST

You're him! Mr. Bowers! It's
the...son! The heir!

BOWERS steps out of the inner office. He looks
relieved, yet nervous.

BOWERS

Yes. Well. At last. Come in,
Mr. Corcoran.

Jack, confused, goes to the inner office door, as:

BOWERS

(to Receptionist, sotto
voce)

Have the, uh...brought round,
now.

INT. BOWERS' LEATHERY OFFICE--DAY

16

Bowers eyes Jack obliquely as they enter, sit...

BOWERS

Sit down. All right, sir. Took
a while to find you. I know this
came as a shock.

JACK

Mr. Bowers, I never knew my
father.

BOWERS

Nor did I. Heart attack. He
happened to be...passing through
town, and since I represent
the... facility where he was
appearing, it fell to me to take
charge of his...effects.

JACK

Appearing?

Bowers get up, goes to something that looks like a
coffee table, with books and papers stacked on it.
He moves the stuff off of it. It's an old trunk.

BOWERS

(opening the trunk)
This should clarify.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

16

Bowers nods and opens it, the lid hiding the contents from Jack's view. He pulls an enormous two-foot shoe out of the trunk. Jack reacts.

JACK

My father was a giant?

BOWERS

We saved his nose. *

Bowers takes out a round red object with a hole in it. Jack sits slowly back. *

JACK

I had a clown for a dad?

(under his breath)

Oh, man!

BOWERS

Very jolly one, I understand.
Traveled with a small circus.
When he passed away, the caravan
move on.

He hands Jack a local newspaper with a photo: clown pall bearers carrying a casket. As Jack studies it:

BOWERS

Now, Mr. Cocoran, as to your bequest. First, I think you should know there's a rather substantial dollar figure involved. *

JACK

My father. The clown.

He shakes his head, as if to clear it. Puts down the newspaper photo.

JACK

I'm over it. How much?

BOWERS

(over intercom)

Marcy. Could you bring in Mr. Corcoran's papers?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

16

Receptionist pops right in, puts a thick binder on the desk.

BOWERS

And linger, if you will.

(to Jack)

Right here, Mr. Corcoran, is the amount.

JACK

Thirty-five thousand. Well! Thanks, Dad, for something! I can get out from behind with that kind of money. Do I have to sign something?

(Checks his watch.)

Friday the 13th! My lucky day!

BOWERS

Yes, right here.

(to Receptionist)

Marcy, if you will witness.

Jack and Receptionist sign. Receptionist looks agitated. She scurries quickly out the door.

BOWERS

(relaxing)

Forgive me for asking, but this is a great deal of money. How will you be paying the thirty-five thousand?

JACK

What? Wait a minute. Me pay you?

BOWERS

Why yes-- medical expenses, burial, my fee, property damages and then there's upkeep.

JACK

Upkeep! Of a trunk?

From outside, a TRUMPETING NOISE.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

16

Through the open window appears the tip of another sort of trunk. It sniffs and makes a pfft noise.

BOWERS

There's your inheritance.

JACK

Oh no, I don't want it!

The head looks insulted. It pulls back from the window. The elephant runs past the next window pursued by a cop.

JACK

Why? Why would the man leave me an elephant?

We hear a loud CRUNCH! (O.S.)

BOWERS

There's your damage. It hates fences.

JACK

Oh no, I'm not paying for what some elephant does. You keep it. I'll take this. My father never gave me enough toys.

BOWERS

Mr. Corcoran, I'm not in the elephant business.

JACK

You ain't much of a lawyer either. This can't be legal!

BOWERS

Signed and witnessed.

CRASH! Jack winces at an undoubtedly elephant-related noise in the distance.

JACK

I'm not responsible! I was misled! I'm out of here!

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET--DAY

17

Jack stalks along with his father's beat-up trunk on his back. An OUTRAGED WOMAN is dealing with the knocked down awning at her shop.

WOMAN

It's out again! Get off the street!

(notices his trunk)

It's yours!

(yelling up the street)

It's him! It's the elephant man!

Other LOCALS take up the cry.

JACK

Oh, good. A lynch mob.

In the space of a block he passes knocked-over trash cans, a parking meter bent over. A boy holding a mangled ice cream cone mutters at Jack as he passes:

BOY

I hate you, mister...

A car is run up against a telephone pole. The car's DRIVER shakes his fist and yells something unintelligible. Jack ducks down an alley, then into a back alley behind row houses.

EXT. BACKALLEY--DAY

17A

Vera is standing there serenely eating the contents of a large flowerbox. Jack freezes in his tracks. Vera looks up. They make eye contact. Neither seems to know what to do for a moment. Then Vera starts coming after him. She steps on a lawn chair, which goes flying. Jack runs back down the same alley toward Main street.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

17A

As she follows she knocks down the timbers supporting a backporch so that it collapses.

EXT. MAIN STREET--DAY

17B

He's back on Main street running. She's gaining on him. Terrified LOCALS -- the same ones Jack just encountered-- flee the beast, glare at Jack.

Jack is running for dear life. He cuts into a very narrow alleyway. Too narrow for Vera to fit into it.

REVERSE on Vera, stranded at the alley's entrance, looking wounded.

EXT. GRAVEYARD--DAY

18

Jack scrambles up a little grassy hill and through some trees. Gasping, he throws down the trunk, sits next to it. He thinks he's lost her.

There's a FPLLT noise behind him! He whips around.

She's coming right at him. He scuttles backward, up against a grave marker. The elephant raises its trunk and lets out an ear-splitting trumpet.

Jack spins away, sure he's about to be trampled. But the elephant just reaches down with its trunk and gently touches the grave marker. It sits down sadly, looking at Jack. Jack looks from the elephant to the stone. His eyes widen.

Kirby Corcoran, 1932-1995, is etched into the stone.

EXT. GRAVEYARD--DAY

18A

A police car drives up. It stops and the COP we glimpsed before climbs out.

COP

You're going to have to get your elephant out of town, sir.

JACK

It's not my elephant! I was defrauded! I want to lodge a complaint!

The passenger door opens and the lawyer stands. Jack's eyes fire up.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

18A

JACK

You! You weasel-faced shyster!

Jack heads toward him, but he jumps back into the car and slams the door. Then rolls the window down a crack.

BOWERS

If you don't take charge of this elephant, you're going to jail!

JACK

I have to make speeches in Modesto, Tampa, and New Orleans. And my apartment has a no-pets clause.

BOWERS

I'll slap a lien on that dwelling and garnish your fees for those speeches. And if you don't pay me thirty-five thousand within fourteen days, you might as well pitch a tent in our little courtroom. Make it thirty-five five, adding in my fence.

JACK

Oh, no. I only agreed to thirty-fi.... You well dressed worm!

He tries to rip the car door open, but it's locked. Bowers is cowering nastily. Suddenly--

The Cop's billy stick is up against Jack's throat, not quite hard enough to throttle.

COP

Folks in this town used to think we hated New Yorkers more than anything. Now they run a close second to elephants. And you are an elephant-owning New Yorker-- who's assaulted a police car and slandered our most prominent attorney.

It's quiet. No one else around but the dead.

Jack's phone peeps. The Cop grabs it, answers it.

COP

Not now.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

18A

Listens, then hands it over to Jack.

COP

It's your Mommy.

JACK

(into phone)

I can't talk now. You don't know him. He's a new friend. I've got to go.

He hangs up, doing his best not to look utterly humiliated.

JACK

Under what rock might I find your second most prominent attorney?

COP

Not any of these rocks around here. I doubt there'd be a public outcry if you and the elephant both never got out of this graveyard.

At that, a trunk enters the frame, and pushes the cop away.

Pull back to include the elephant, quietly exerting a presence. The Cop eases off, backs away.

The elephant's trunk now snuffles Jack's face and neck...

COP

I believe your elephant likes you. I believe you remind your elephant of your old man.

He's batting the trunk away, dancing to keep out of the elephant's reach.

JACK

Didn't my father leave any...instructions?

COP

Ask the well-dressed worm.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

18A

The elephant picks up a whole pot of flowers from the grave and gives it to Jack.

BOWERS

Here's the will. For what it's worth.

Cop hands Jack a wrinkled piece of notebook paper. Then gets back in the car, starts it.

Car starts to drive away.

JACK

Do you know its name?

BOWERS

Vera.

JACK

My God.

EXT. GRAVEYARD

19

The cop car drives off. Jack and the elephant are alone.

JACK

He named her after my Mom.

The elephant makes a putt-putt noise.

JACK

(takes a deep breath, and addresses himself, motivationally))

ABCD: Deliberate. You're standing in a graveyard talking to an elephant. Your father's elephant. You used to have dreams at night, that your father had come back, to make everything right. And now...

Looks at the elephant. He's not getting a motivational handle. Vera blinks at him.

JACK

And now, this.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

19

He looks at the will. We see it, all jumbled capital letters, very messy. Jack can't help being moved, but ambivalently--he's still angry. Vera comes over and sniffs the paper.

JACK

You miss him, huh? Well, I missed him all my life.

(reading)

"I HAVE A SON JACKIE... IN SOMEWHERE N.Y. LAST I HEAR." Last I hear? Dad, did you have to be an illiterate clown? " I WILL HIM EVERYTHING. HIS MOTHER PROBABLY LISTED VERA CORCORAN."

(reflects)

they found me. He could have found me.

(reading)

"OVER."

Turns the paper over.

JACK

"TO JACKIE."

(grimaces, takes in the next sentence very slowly)

"I KNOW I HAVEN'T BEEN THE BEST FATHER." Dad, shouldn't this read "I've been no father at all"? "BUT DO ME ONE FAVOR SON TAKE CARE OF HER."

(looks at Vera)

"Take care of her." Nothing about how to take care of...her. Also no hint of curiosity about who took care of me. What's this at the end? Jeez, he must have been fading fast. All jammed up. "IF STUCK CALL BLOCKHEAD--K.C." Nice, Dad--sign off your last words to me with your initials. If stuck call blockhead--what does that mean? Call Vera Blockhead? Hey, Blockhead!

Looks at Vera. She makes a hurt-sounding noise.

JACK

Well, don't get huffy. That's Dad's sole bit of advice.

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

19

JACK (Cont'd)
What's a good place to dump an
elephant? The zoo!

*

With a show of decisiveness, Jack turns his back,
takes his phone out, punches in numbers.

JACK
Information?
(we see Vera move in
behind him)
Huh? I'm losing you.
(hangs up, dials again)
Hello? Hello?

Jack shakes the phone--then notices Vera's shadow
cast over him.

Turns and glares.

JACK
(pointing the phone at
her)
Back off, blockhead!

Vera deftly filches the phone right out of his
hand, and holds it to her ear.

JACK
Very nice. Is that a trick he
taught you? Now give me the
phone. Come on...Blockhead!

Vera backs a couple of steps away, and stops,
holding the phone.

JACK
This is not a game!

She's a good three feet taller than he is, not
counting her head. He reaches hesitantly for her
trunk. It swings, with the phone in it, away from
his grasp.

JACK
Come on, now.

He reaches again for the trunk, but it swings the
other way. He tries to grab it with both hands,
but she lifts it up out of his reach.

JACK
Dammit. Put down the phone!
Right now! Step on it! Fweet!

*
*

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

19

At the whistle, she does put it down. Then she carefully steps on it. CRUNCH.

JACK

You did that on purpose! Step off it!

No response.

JACK

What is your problem?

He throws his arms wide in a hopeless gesture. She picks her foot up, bending her knee so her lower leg is parallel to the ground.

He darts forward warily and grabs the phone. The phone is flat. Nobody has ever seen such a flat phone.

JACK

Now we're incommunicado. Great.

Checks his watch.

JACK

Hyaaaahh! Come on! Hugga-bugga! Presto! Alley-oop! Move it, Blockhead!

Vera walks in the other direction. *

JACK

Hey!

EXT. STREET--DAY

20

JACK

Stop now! We just went past a phone! Stop!

Jack is dragging the trunk, tired, red-faced, ruffled. They are in a rundown section on the edge of town. A group of three young Black Boys on bicycles now draws up behind Jack.

BOY

I saw your show.

JACK

Not my show.

BOY

You're not the clown?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

20

JACK

He was my f--. Can you direct me to the local zoo.

BOY

You shoulda seen that clown get her to do tricks--just with all different whistles.

JACK

Whistles?

He whistles, Fweet. Vera just continues to walk. Jack looks discouraged.

BOY

The zoo's just a couple of miles from here.

JACK

(encouraged)

Really?

OMITTED

21

EXT. ZOO--DAY

22

Sign says "FREE-RANGE ZOO OF WEE ST. FRANCIS. PETTING, SOFT NICE ONLY, \$2."

Vera is standing enormously amidst tiny lambs and baby goats running all around. She snuffles at them curiously.

The boys, on their bicycles, are still watching Jack and Vera from across the street.

Ducklings and chicks quack and cheep. She delicately avoids stepping on them. WEE ST. FRANCIS, a tiny man wearing shorts, a dog's-face-and-ears cap and a T-shirt that says "SOFTLY NICELY." He is less whimsical than his surroundings, matter-of-factly counting his receipts.

WEE ST. FRANCIS

I don't have the space here.

(with irony)

My "mission" is small animals.

Vera puts her trunk in St. Francis's face. He blows into it. She responds agreeably.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

22

JACK
Is that what she wants?

WEE ST. FRANCIS
S'possedly, once she gets a whiff
of your breath, she don't forget.

A dove flutters up onto Jack's shoulder. He
winces.

JACK
I'm not ready for a long term
relationship. Could you
recommend a facility that could
contain her for the night?

OMITTED

23

EXT. JUNKYARD/OFFICE--DAY

24

Jack is pulling bills out of his wallet, muttering
at the GUY who's behind the counter, eating a
sandwich.

JACK
Three hundred? That's a little
steep for one night, don't you
think?

GUY
Compared to what?

JACK
Compared to the Ritz.

GUY
So go there.

EXT. JUNKYARD/ PHONE BOOTH--NIGHT

25

Jack sits on a junked car seat, near a phone on a
pole. Vera watches as he reaches into his father's
trunk, pulls out the shoes, the nose, a garish
clownsuit. He winces with distaste, sets it on the
ground, digs back into the trunk and pulls out a
jar of greasepaint.

*

*

JACK
"Clown white." I guess old Kirby
looked pretty snappy, all painted
up, huh?

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

25

JACK (Cont'd)

Personally, I'd rather drink
muddy water and sleep in a hollow
log.

He pulls out a wooden animal like the ones he has
at home. It's an elephant. He doesn't have
anything clever to say about this. He strokes its
smooth curves, puts it into his pocket. He reaches
into the trunk, again, and pulls out a book of
maps, with hand written notes in the margins.

JACK

Backroads. All over the country.
What a life. Smuggling an
elephant across state lines.

He reaches in again and pulls out a wooden stick
about three feet long, with a carved, tusked
elephant head on the end of it.

JACK

What's this? Symbol of elephant
power? Ungawa.
(taking out the paper)
And the will. "CALL BLOCKHEAD
K.C." Oh. Wait. Maybe that's
not the old man's initials.

He goes to the phone, dials.

JACK

Mom, Hi. I couldn't call you
till now because --
(he listens)
Oh. So you talked to the lawyer.
(he gets an earful)
I don't know what I'll do about
the \$36,000. Maybe sell Vera for
dog-food. Vera's the elephant...
I don't know how that's supposed
to make you feel. Mom, did Kirby
have a circus friend in K.C.
called -- Blockhead?... Mom, you
owe me this. Aha!

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

25

JACK (Cont'd)
(hangs up, dials,
glances at Vera) *
Vernon, the Human Blockhead. You
three must've been some crew.
(into phone)
Kansas City. A number for Vernon
Sawitsky. ...the usual spelling. *
(hangs up; as he dials:)
Be home now.
(into phone)
May I speak to Mr. Sawitsky?
It's urgent. Well could you ask
him to call 410-555-4108. Tell
him it's Kirby's -- son.

He hangs up. Vera is snoring. He squints at her.

JACK
Z's. Zoos. What zoo would be
open this time of night? West
coast. Three hours earlier.

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO/JUNKYARD--LATE AFTERNOON/NIGHT

26

MO NEWMAN is compact, tan, no-nonsense. She's
filling a huge syringe with fluid when the cellular
phone on her belt rings. We intercut with Jack.

MO
Yes?

JACK
Mo in elephants?

MO
(curtly)
Yes.

JACK
Oh--you sounded like a woman at
first. I mean--look, I'm tired.
I've got an elephant all of a
sudden, and all the other zoos
said talk to Mo in San Diego.

MO
Terry, stop faking that
ridiculous voice.
(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

26*

MO (Cont'd)

I'm not telling you anything, you try to snake every elephant that comes up.

JACK

Who's Terry? Oh my God. Put that down!

Vera has picked an old wrecked VW Bug. Its back wheels are a good three feet off the ground.

JACK

My elephant picked up a VW. Vera! Fweet, Fweet!

MO

I don't have time for this.

JACK

You don't! Oh, she put it down. My name is Jack Corcoran. I have an elephant I inherited from my father...the clown. You know anybody who needs one?

MO

I need an elephant myself.

JACK

You do?

MO

On the 24th of this month, I'm sending a small herd to Sri Lanka. Gene-pool experiment. Do you have a breeding-age female?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

26*

JACK
Female, must be. Her name's
Vera.

MO
Yeah, well, my name's Mo.

Jack, with some reluctance, bends over and peers up
underneath Vera.

JACK
If male elephants are anything
like male police horses, she's a
female.

MO
Now look at the bottom of her
foot. See if it's wrinkled.

JACK
Bottom? How do I do that?

MO
If you don't know how to do that,
you have no business with an
elephant.

JACK
I don't have any business with an
elephant! Hold on.

He drops the phone and approaches Vera. He brushes
her trunk away, and spreads his arms wide. She
puts up her foot the way she did before. He
studies it, warily. Back to the phone.

JACK
Very smooth.

MO
That means she's young enough to
breed. Where are you?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

26*

JACK

A junkyard in Maryland. I can give you directions...

MO

A junkyard! Get her out of there!

JACK

There's no vacancy at the Best Western.

MO

You bring her here, and I'll pay \$30,000 for her.

JACK

You will? Oh. How about \$36,000?

MO

I can't go that high.

JACK

She won't go that far.

MO

Bring her by rail.

JACK

How do you make an elephant take a train?

MO

You don't make an elephant do anything. Treat her with respect. Show her you care about her.

JACK

Yeah, yeah. What I want, is specifics. How, exactly--

MO

I can't teach you by phone. Are you feeding her properly? She needs 200 pounds of fruit, vegetables, grains, hay, and 25 gallons of water a day.

JACK

Uh-huh. How about \$34,000?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (4)

26*

MO

The herd is leaving on the 24th,
with her or without her.

OMITTED

27

OMITTED

28

EXT. JUNKYARD/PHONE-NIGHT

29

JACK

Well, I'm weighing several
offers. Hello?

He hangs up.

JACK

So much for professional
courtesy, Madam Mo.

Vera is poking amid the junk. Jack walks back
toward the junked car seat, near his Dad's trunk.

JACK

Mo. Momentum. Modesto. I've
got to be on the west coast in
five days anyway, for the
wallpaper people. But I'll still
be in the hole six grand.

Suddenly the proverbial junkyard dog appears,
snarling!

JACK

Yiii!

Vera charges up from behind Jack. The dog shrivels
and slinks away.

EXT. JUNKYARD-NIGHT-LATER

29A

Jack, sleeping next to Vera, wakes up as heavy rain
begins to fall. He scrambles into a nearby
(junked) car. He sits in the lopsided driver seat,
glaring at Vera, who continues to sleep peacefully.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUNKYARD-MORNING

30

It has stopped raining. Jack is sleeping in an awkward position in the car. The phone on the pole rings. He splutters awake and rushes from the car to answer it, stepping in a puddle en route.

CUT TO:

INT. BLOCKHEAD'S DEN--MORNING

31

VERNON SAWITSKY is sitting back in a recliner. A John Ford Western is on the TV at low volume. He's setting a cup of coffee down on a TV tray. A toddler is sitting in his lap.

On the wall over his head is an old circus poster, a drawing of a man with nails driven into his head.
"See the Human Blockhead!"

*
*

VERNON

I'm sure sorry to hear it. I knew Kirby well as anybody did, other than Vera.

Toddler bangs its hands on the TV tray.

VERNON

Don't spill Grampaw's coffee, baby-boop.

(to Jack)

Sorry, the grandbaby's here.

JACK (V.O.)

So you managed to have career and family.

VERNON

Wasn't so hard.

EXT. JUNKYARD/PHONE-MORNING

32

BACK on Jack on phone.

JACK

Too hard for my father.

Vera is pacing restlessly.

VERNON (V.O.)

Well, he and Vera went over big with kids. He raised her from a baby, you know, and--

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

32

JACK
Instead of raising me. Look,
just tell me how to handle her.

*
*

VERNON (V.O.)
Can't begin to show you that on
the phone, son. Why don't you
come see us in Kansas City?

JACK
(appalled)
Come see you?
(checking his watch)
I'll just have to cut my losses.

*
.
*

INT. JUNKYARD OFFICE--DAY

33

Jack and the Guy in the office are settling up.
The TV is on in the background, a man in front of
a crowd going on about something, we can't see or
hear it quite clearly.

JACK
She didn't break your fence, she
just bent it a little. And
there's not a scratch on your
dog.

GUY
Yeah, but his spirit's broke.

Shot of demoralized dog.

Jack, exasperated, focusses on the TV. It's a Tony
Robbins infomercial. He's exhorting people to
unleash their hidden potential. He looks extremely
well-dressed and affluent. Envy consumes Jack. He
has to tear his eyes from the TV.

*

GUY
If you're going to travel with
exotic pets--

JACK
Where do I find a freight train
west?

OMITTED

34

EXT. ROADSIDE CAFE--DAY

35

Two big plastic trash cans. Vera is trying to get into the garbage while Jack, fending her off, dumps the trash from one can into the other, jams it down, then sets the empty can under the outdoor spigot and turns the water on.

JACK

Vera, you're going to have to give me some space.

Now he's holding Vera off while can fills up.

JACK

Vera! I respect you, okay? I care about you, okay? Vera!

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE--DAY

36

Jack sitting in a booth, signalling urgently to a WAITRESS who clearly doesn't like the looks of him-- he looks like a businessman who's been sleeping in a junkyard. She comes over to him.

JACK

How much is your salad bar?

WAITRESS

Well, \$4.95, or it comes with the--

JACK

No, the entire salad bar. Everything on it, except the dressing. Lunch crowd's gone anyway, right?

He takes a quick look out the window.

WAITRESS

Thirty bucks.

Vera appears at the window.

JACK

(to Vera)

You finished that already?

Waitress's mouth drops open.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

36

JACK
(to the stunned
waitress)
Twenty bucks. And I'll have...
a meatloaf sandwich.

Vera trumpets impatiently.

JACK
To go.

EXT. ROAD--DAY

37

Jack is herding Vera along walking backwards,
doling out bits of salad from a big garbage bag.
We hear a train whistle blow.

JACK
Let's move it!

Jack starts running with his bag of lettuce, Vera
follows...

INT. TRAIN STATION--DAY

38

Jack and Vera are running for the train. Both
huffing and puffing when they get to the ticket
booth. The TICKET MAN sizes them up.

TICKET MAN
You the guy called about the
elephant?

JACK
Elephant?
(turns around, mock-
startled)
Yiii!

Turns and slaps some money on the counter.

INT. BOX CAR--DAY

39

We see Jack, sweating and frustrated, trying to
lure Vera up a ramp and into a big box car, but
with every whistle and plea she does something new.
One whistle makes her walk sideways, one makes her
sit down, etc. *

JACK
Look, Vera, get into the nice
car, there's hay, there's water.
And I'll meet you in three days.
Respect. Caring. Fwweeeettt!

CONTINUED:

39

This makes her turn around in circles.

JACK
Vera, knock it off!

HURST, wearing a conductor's hat, appears. He's heavysset, black--think Charles Barkley.

HURST
Now what is this here?

JACK
What does this here look like?
This here is an elephant.

HURST
Dead? Not on my train.

JACK
She's not dead! You can see that! She's just--

Vera is lying on her side, looking at Jack innocently. *

JACK
(to Vera)
Vera, dammit!
(to Hurst)
Your train? Who are you?

Hurst pulls a big, official-looking leather wallet from his pocket. The sort of thing a cop might keep tickets in. Hurst flips a couple of pages over. We can also see money sticking out.

HURST
Hurst. I haven't approved this. You got permits? You got a license?

JACK
No, but I called and arranged--

HURST
You arranged with the local fella. You didn't arrange with the train: you didn't arrange with me. *
*
*

JACK
But---

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

39

HURST

You, with no permits, want me to take responsibility for a tipped over elephant, clear to San Diego?

He subtly flicks the greenbacks whose edges are sticking out of his wallet.

Jack gets the drift. He assumes a suave lecturer's air, which contrasts with his appearance.

JACK

Mr. Hurst. Let's look at it this way. Let's take these negatives one by one.

Hurst takes out a pen and starts jotting figures on one of the pages in his wallet, and making toting-up noises orally.

JACK

First, she's not going to stay "tipped over"

HURST

So you say.

JACK

Second--

HURST

Every state, there's laws, there's inspections. That means every state line, my job is on the line. I get terminated now, my pension's thirteen' five. I make it through to retirement, it's twenty-eight. That's a differential of fourteen-five. Now you take that by a factor of, let's see...

(half to himself)

...Pennsylvania, ...Ohio, ...Indiana, that's a hard one...Missouri, ...Kansas, ...Colorado, ...Nevada.

Shows Jack what he's jotted down.

JACK

Twenty-six hundred--!

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

39

HURST

You got thirty seconds, friend.
We're gonna roll. With him or
without him.

JACK

(overmatched, looking at
Vera)

Her.

(to Hurst)

Look, I have...600 bucks cash.

HURST

To San Diego? An elephant?
Manifestly uncontrollable?

JACK

Vera! Fweeet!

(making up-and-over
motions)

HURST

Why didn't you learn how to
manage her, before you took her
on the road?

JACK

You can't just pick up something
like that over the phone! How
about Kansas City?

HURST

Mmm. All right. If the two of
you hustle in there, now.

JACK

Me? I'm flying!

HURST

Unh-unh. Unaccompanied elephant
would run twice the risk.

JACK

(appalled)

Ride with her? In a boxcar?

Jack walks into the box car like walking the plank.
Vera follows...

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (4)

39

HURST
(counting Jack's cash)
Looks like she likes you...
Keep that door near-bout closed,
Colonel. Anybody sees you two,
you're walking the tracks.

EXT. DAY

39A

The train goes past a rusty bridge.

INT. BOX CAR--DAY

40*

It's stifling, smelly inside the car. Jack is sitting on his father's trunk, fanning his face with his hand, glaring at Vera, who's eating hay.

JACK
I don't respect you, I don't care
about you, I don't like you. I
hate you.

Vera, munching, just blinks at him.

JACK
And most of all, I hate your
master. Kirby. I hate my
father.

He looks back at her. She just blinks again.

JACK
"He and Vera always went over big
with the kids"! But I was his
responsibility! Because of him,
I was born in the hole, and I've
always been in the hole. And now
he's getting me in deeper.
(an annoyed gesture)
In the hole? I'm in a box car!
Talking to an elephant!

She brushes his face with her trunk. But he doesn't respond.

INT. BOX CAR--DUSK

40A*

Jack sitting next to slightly wider door-crack, looking out. Clickety-clack, clickety-clack, noise of the train. Dark shapes go by--factories, smokestacks, heavy machinery. Jack looks at what's in his hands--the little carved elephant.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FREIGHTYARD--NIGHT

42

The train stopping in some dark Midwestern yard. More loading and unloading. Door to Jack and Vera's car opens a crack. Trunk comes out. Jack's arm comes out, his hand grabs her trunk and pulls it back in.

REVERSE: Inside Car. Just a slit of moonlight coming in. Jack is glaring at Vera.

We hear a crunch of gravel. Then another.

JACK
(drily)
Quick. Hide.

But as the steps get louder, Jack gets a little tense. Hurst throws open the door, pokes his head in.

HURST
You two still alive?

Jack and Vera blink.

HURST
If you'd expired, I thought I'd
tip you off into the river.
We're coming into St. Looney.

Jack comes to the door, sourly. Looks out onto the mighty Mississippi. Vera comes up behind and looks out over his shoulder.

HURST
(reaching into a bag)
Be in K.C. in the morning.
Here.

Hands Vera some apples and Jack two cellophane-wrapped sandwiches. Vera swallows the apple with dispatch, seems to enjoy the view. *

HURST
Late-night snack, ten bucks.

JACK
What?

But he looks at the sandwich hungrily. Hands Hurst a bill. Hurst climbs into the car.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

42

HURST

Thought you probably held a little cash back on me. Man of your business expertise and suit.

Hurst is petting Vera. He sniffs-then opens the door wide to air things out.

HURST

I thought about your dinner needs when I began to D: Deliberate.

JACK

(his eyes narrowing)
You what?

HURST

Recognized you right away. You addressed our union convention. What was it we were to put over the what?

Jack gives Hurst a long look. Unwraps a sandwich. Looks at the river. Lights on barges going by. *

*

JACK

I remember you guys. The only audience I've had that threw a boiled potato at me.

A truck, with just its parking lights on, pulls up alongside the track. Hurst points to the last freight car. Men come out of the truck and start carrying boxes from it--stereos, maybe--and loading them on the freight car.

HURST

I never started working little sidelines, here and there, till I heard your talk.

JACK

Little do we know, what seeds we sow.

HURST

So, a man with all the techniques. How'd you wind up like this?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

42

JACK
(irritably)

I never said I was a role model.
How much would it be for you to
call a "colleague" for me in
Kansas City?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KANSAS CITY FREIGHT YARDS--DAY

43

It's sunny here. Train pulls in.

Jack, dragging his father's trunk, leads Vera down
the ramp. She's chipper, he's hanging in there.
In the near distance, we see Hurst making more
deals...

INT. VERNON SAWITSKY'S DEN--DAY

44 *

CLOSE on Vernon, beneath his Blockhead poster,
answering the phone.

*
*

VERNON

Ho! Kirby's boy again! In town,
are you? With Vera? I'll be
right over.

*
*
*

EXT. OUTSIDE FREIGHT YARD--DAY

45

Vera and Jack standing at a curb, expectantly
looking both ways.

Vera snorts in recognition off to the left. We
look with Jack in that direction.

A rickety red-and-yellow van approaches. It's
shaped, improbably, like a circus tent. It wheezes
to a stop. On the side is blazoned: "SAWITSKY'S
LITTLE BIG TOP." In smaller letters: "Animals,
Clowns, Freaks of All Nations."

JACK

Oh, my God.

Vernon throws open the driver's door, steps out.
Vera rushes to greet him, poking and sniffing him
all over. Jack looks on. Vernon, noting his
reaction, slaps him on the shoulder.

VERNON

Well that's the way they are!
How you makin' it, Vera?
(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

45

VERNON (Cont'd)

That's a girl!
(handing her an orange,
which she swallows
whole)

That's the way they greet people,
cause that's the way they greet
each other.

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

45

VERNON (Cont'd)
They'll check each other's feet
to see where they've been. Don't
worry, though, I just shake
hands.

INT. VERNON'S VEHICLE--DAY

45A

Vernon and Jack in the cab of the vehicle. As
Vernon turns the ignition:

*
*

VERNON
I'd've known you for Kirby's boy.
'Cept Kirby always prided himself
on neatness.

Jack flicks at the hay sticking to his suit. Jack
and Vernon shake.

EXT. ELM STREET--DAY

46

The vehicle making its rattling smokey progress up
a street of modest bungalows.

Man raking leaves on the edge of his lawn looks up
in outrage at the racket, then sees the vehicle,
smiles and waves. Vera's trunk waves out the back.

OMITTED

47

EXT. VERNON'S HOUSE--DAY

47A *

Vernon's vehicle pulls into driveway.

*

INT. VERNON'S DEN--DAY

48

A soap opera, muted and unwatched, is on the
television. Circus memorabilia cover the walls.
Vernon's sitting back on his recliner. Jack is
sitting tensely on the edge of a chair, leaning
into and talking on the phone. He's swaddled in a
silk bathrobe, presumably Vernon's, which is a few
sizes too big for him. His hair is wet from a
shower. He looks a bit like a waif who wishes he'd
been taken in by someone else. In the foreground
we get incomplete, shoulder-high glimpses of
LULUNA's housedress as she bustles into the room
with lunch-- sandwiches, potato chips, Pepsis on TV
trays.

VERNON
Here she is. And with lunch.
Meet Luluna, Jack.

(CONT.)

REVISED 5/1/95 [YELLOW]

49A.

CONTINUED:

48

Jack is intent upon his phone conversation. He
nods in Luluna's direction without looking at her.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

48

JACK

Walter, I'll make Modesto. I've
got three days, I'll work it out.
I need the money. Even more, now.

He hangs up. Looks up at Luluna, and his mouth
falls open.

REVERSE on Luluna.

She smiles, and we see her face, and for that
matter hands and arms. And ankles. She's dressed,
coiffed and bespectacled like the midwestern
housewife she is, but wherever we can see skin, she
is extravagantly tattooed. Most noticeable: a big
crescent moon, with facial features, in the center
of her forehead.

LULUNA

Your washables are drying. I did
what I could with your suit.

Luluna sits down on the couch, at her own tray, and
puts a napkin in her lap. She pats the couch next
to her.

LULUNA

Sit on the couch here. You won't
get any circus cooties.

(to Vernon)

He's as particular as his mom.

Jack comes over and sits, looking miserable.

LULUNA

You look beat. Why don't you
stay with us for a couple of
days?

JACK

I have to get going. *

LULUNA

I don't want you to think all we
eat is sandwiches. *

VERNON

Anything you serve up, my love,
goes down with a bang--and that's
coming from a man who ate fire
and swallowed steel.

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

48

VERNON (Cont'd)

(to Jack)

And something you don't often see--
I'd put a spoon up one nostril,
a fork up the other. But I paid
a price.

(sniffs heavily)

LULUNA

Vernon! He doesn't want to hear
shoptalk... He wants to know
about his father.

JACK

No, I'm not interested in him.

VERNON

Funny thing to say, when you've
carried his trunk all this way.

JACK

(defensively)

I just want to know how to deal
with his elephant. And I'm kind
of pressed--

*
*
*

He pushes back the voluminous arm of the bathrobe
to check his watch.

LULUNA

(pointing across the
room)

There he is.

A poster on the far wall. It's varnished onto a
block of wood.

After a beat Jack gets up, with a show of non-
eagerness, and moves over toward the poster.
Camera lingers with him on several other
memorabilia in between. We're getting some period
flavor, and Jack's putting off the long-dreamed-of
moment: seeing his father.

LULUNA

It was old. So I decoupage it.

VERNON

If I let her she'd decoupage me.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (4)

48

It's a relic, all right. "Sawitsky's Little Big Top," with photos of all the acts. And there, in the lower righthand corner, he is: a man maybe Jack's age though it's hard to tell, in a bright red-and-yellow clownsuit, comically astride Vera.

JACK

Dad. Just below the fat lady,
right next to the dancing bear.

Jack looks away, out the window. Over his shoulder we can see Vera contentedly drinking from the grandchild's inflatable pool.

JACK

My mother always said there were
no pictures of him, they were
lost in a fire.

VERNON

Your dad didn't have Vera when he
met your mother. Some town in
New York state.

JACK

(moving around the room,
checking out other
pictures)

Rockport. She was in college.
(embarassed)
She told me he saved a kid's
life.

VERNON

Well, he was a fireman, in the
act. Firetruck, clowns in and
out, and... they threw a
babydoll around.

JACK

Oh.

VERNON

Your mom travelled with us for
awhile. Took tickets.

LULUNA

It looked like she was getting to
be one of us.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (5)

48

VERNON

She had you. Then she was gone.
She and you. Kirby left us for
several years. Then there he was
again. With Vera.

JACK

I don't suppose he sat around
reflecting upon what his wife and
son might be up to.

VERNON

Well, you know your dad.

Jack reacts.

LULUNA

What he means is, your dad wasn't
one to open up much. He'd sit
around carving wood.

JACK

That I do know...

VERNON

Performing, was where he let
himself go. Him and Vera were
some team. Trained her himself.
Don't know how he knew how to.

Toddler comes up to Vernon, thrusting his pacifier
at him. Vernon puts it in his own nose. Toddler
squeals with delight.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (6)

48

LULUNA
Vernon! Don't influence those
children.

VERNON
(removing the pacifier)
Old Kirby died doing what he
loved.
(a beat)
Wanna see my scrapbooks?

JACK
(emphatically)
No. No thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. VERNON'S DINING ROOM

49

Jack sitting at the table with Vernon on one side, Luluna on the other, a big leather scrapbook open in Jack's lap. Jack is like an adolescent who isn't ready to share his parents' treasuring of the past. He shifts in his seat, skittish. And yet he can't help being fascinated. It's as if there's a great revelation at hand that he's always desired but always dreaded. Over Jack's shoulder we see the photos.

LULUNA
There he is!

CLOSE on photo of Kirby, posing beside Vera. Kirby is holding the stick with the carved elephant on the end.

JACK
Hey, what's that thing he's
holding?

VERNON
That's the backscratcher. She
responds to that.

JACK
She does? I have it in the
trunk!

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

49

VERNON

Yeah? Show her that and she'll
lead right along. If you have a
feel for her.

JACK

(seeing something in the
book)

What's that?

Jack has spotted an amazing photo: Vera on her
hind legs pushing a tall white calliope.
Silhouetted in the foreground is Kirby-- making a
distinctive gesture of command with his hand.

VERNON

That's the trick made Vera
famous. She'd push our calliope
uphill, all by herself.

LULUNA

She always led the parade.

VERNON

World's only elephant to walk on
her hind legs.

JACK

(still looking at the
photo)

I'd better get going.

But Vernon flips another page.

CLOSE on an old photo of young Kirby, dapper in a
rakish felt hat, holding young Luluna in his lap.
She's wearing a brief spangled outfit that shows
the glory of her body art.

Her arm is around Kirby's neck. Jack looks
startled.

LULUNA

(hand to mouth)

Oh, I forgot that was in there!

VERNON

Your dad and Luluna were engaged,
before your Mom came along.

Luluna gives Jack a teasing look.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

49

LULUNA

Don't worry--you wouldn't've been
born tattooed.

JACK

(flustered, sits up)

No--I wasn't... Look, I really
have to go.

EXT. SAWITSKYS' FRONT PORCH---DAY

50

Jack comes out the door-- the Sawitsky's follow.

JACK

So if you could just show me a
few of Vera's--

VERNON

We were working the boardwalk in
Jacksonville Beach, Florida. And
a lady came along the boardwalk
pushing a kid in a wheelchair.
Kid had-- what was it, Luluna?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

50

LULUNA

Spina bifida.

JACK

I hate to run, but--

VERNON

And the kid wanted to play the games--throw balls at the bottles, rings at the pegs... And your father happened to notice. And your father followed that wheelchair. And somehow or another, every game the kid played, he won. Wheelchair had teddy bears all over it. And the mother noticed your father. And she took him aside. And she said, "Look, I don't know what you're doing, but I don't want any special favors for my son. I want him to earn things in life." And your father said: "You stay out of it, lady. You're not one of us. He is."

CLOSE ON Jack, reacting. He's managed to resist Vernon's reminiscences up to now, but this story hits him hard.

EXT. SAWITSKYS' LAWN--DAY

51

Vernon is showing Jack how Vera will respond to various whistles.

VERNON

She'll bow.

(a conducting gesture
with the backscratcher)

Fww-eet-weet.

Vera bows.

VERNON

She'll salute.

Another whistle, another gesture. Vera salutes.

VERNON

She knows how to skip.

He whistles and Vera skips. Jack watches with obvious pleasure.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

51

JACK

But I need to know the basics.
You know, stop. Go. Get in the
car.

*
*
*
*

VERNON

Simplicity itself. "Go": Fweet.

Vera starts walking.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

51

VERNON

And "Stop": Fwee-weet.

Vera stops.

VERNON

There, see, she's a pleasure.

Jack whistles something like the "go" whistle, but it's not quite right, Vera salutes. He tries again. She wiggles her ears.

*
*
*

Vernon gives her the "go" whistle again, and she starts walking. Jack tries the same whistle again, and she stops.

VERNON

You've just got to develop a feel for each other. If she's sure you know what you want, she'll get it.

*

Vernon whistles "go" again and she walks toward the vehicle.

JACK

(feeling a bit put down)
What about the famous trick?
How'd my father--

VERNON

She wouldn't do that trick for nobody else.

Vernon sees how dissatisfied Jack looks.

VERNON

I'll give it a try.

He directs Vera to the vehicle and gives her a couple of long whistles and a flourish with the backscratcher. She gives the vehicle a little nudge, but she won't get up on her back feet.

VERNON

That trick must have died with your dad.

JACK

...Oh...

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

51

VERNON

So--you going to work up a show,
take her on the road?

JACK

No.

VERNON

What is your intention toward
her?

JACK

Free her.

VERNON

Do what?

LULUNA

Oh, mercy.

JACK

Well, there's a woman at the San
Diego zoo taking elephants to Sri
Lanka, for a breeding project.

LULUNA

Sri Lanka! Who would she know
there?

JACK

She'd have a real life. In the
rain forest.

VERNON

Rain forest! That's just another
word for jungle! This is some
kind of animal lib marlarkey.
Vera's not just an elephant,
she's a trouper. Think of all
the time your dad put into her.
And you want scientists to do
research on her, while she
breeds, like some kind of wild
animal?

His sinuses start acting up.

LULUNA

Don't get excited, Vernon.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

51

JACK

She'll be with other elephants.
Have babies. Also--I need the
money. I'll get \$30,000 for her.

VERNON

\$30,000! Oh, say, kid, lemme
tell you something-- People
insure performing elephants for
a million bucks!

*
*

JACK

They do?

VERNON

That's considering future
earnings, but still--I know an
outfit out in Hollywood that'll
pay you a whole lot more than
\$30,000 for her. They provide
animals for the movies. They'll
make Vera a star. I tell you
what we'll do! You need to
appreciate your father's way of
life more! I'll drive you out
there in the vehicle!

*
*

LULUNA

Now, Vernon.

VERNON

"Now Vernon, now Vernon." Don't
try to stop me, Luluna!

EXT. HIGHWAY--DAY

52

The vehicle rattle-banging along.

CLOSE on:

INT. VERNON'S VEHICLE

53

Vernon and Jack in the cab of the vehicle. Vernon
is flushed with enthusiasm.

*

VERNON

This is the life, kid. We'll put
on a show along the way. You've
got the clown suit, and the
backscratcher, and I can still do
fire! You know what your dad
used to say? When you're not on
the road, you're in a rut.

*

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

53

JACK

I'm kind of a performer myself.
I make motivational--

VERNON

Airports and Hyatts and rent-a-cars, right? Naw. I mean the real road. Coming up with a way when there ain't no way. It's tough. But you're MOVING. You're not...STUCK somewhere!

As Jack reflects on this, we hear a noise from under the hood.

VERNON

Your father was a man who hated to feel stuck. He was a carny to the bone.

JACK

So...who are these people outside L.A.? I should call them first.

VERNON

Nahh. We got to deal with these people face to face or they'll take us for rubes-- bumpkins-- suckers from the sticks. I'll do the negotiating. One time I traded a blind lion for a flatbed, ten dancing chickens and a trampoline. See--

A louder noise from under the hood.

JACK

That noise, what is that?

VERNON

(making a terrible sinus noise himself)

Our polar bear got arrested, for breaking and entering. It wasn't really a polar bear per se-- what we'd done was, we had taken a regular bear, and we'd--

An even louder noise, and smoke. Then a terrible grinding, a jolt, and the vehicle coughs and dies.

VERNON

--we'd bleached him.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

53

Vernon sits silently for a moment, then sighs, mutters, hits the steering wheel with his fist.

EXT. REST AREA--DAY

54

Vera pushing the vehicle into the parking area, Jack steering, Vernon morosely walking behind carrying the backscratcher. Smoke coming out from the engine. They stop. Vernon comes around to the front, with Vera, and looks at the vehicle as if it's a friend in the coffin. Vera nudges him and makes sympathetic noises.

A station wagon pulls up. Luluna sticks her head out.

LULUNA

(to Vernon)

Last time you took off, you got three miles further.

(to Jack)

I called ahead to Polk City, that's just eight miles ahead-- there's a truck rental yard there. Wish we could drive you both there.

(to grandchild in carseat)

No, you can't get out. Wild Indian.

JACK

(to Vernon)

If you could give me the name...

Vernon, broken-hearted, hands Jack a business card.

CUT TO:

EXT. REST AREA--DAY

54A *

Vernon's in the car, which is already idling.

Vera is tossing dust over herself.

VERNON

Just don't send her to the jungle. She never got along with monkeys.

JACK

Who does?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

54A*

VERNON

You know what else your dad always said? Everywhere you go, every line of work, there's two kinds of people. There's carnies and there's rubes. Don't be on the rubes' side, kid. Don't live the life of a rube.

The car drives off.

EXT. HIGHWAY--DAY

55

Jack walking the shoulder, Vera following. He takes a handkerchief out and wipes his brow. She reaches over his shoulder, takes it from him and wipes her own brow.

JACK

I've got the wall application gala in three days. How am I going to make that? What's the carny move here.

She waves the handkerchief.

JACK

You better be worth a lot of money! That's a \$2000 gig! I've got to call Walter. Make excuses! I hate that.

She goes pfft, and blows the handkerchief into the air. A breeze catches it so that it hangs in the air. Jack deftly catches it.

JACK

The hell with Walter. Walter's a rube.

OMITTED

56

EXT. HIGHWAY--DAY

57

They come over the crest of the hill. A sign: "Ugly Truckling. Affordable Rentals." A little concrete office and a yard full of every kind of unshiny but serviceable heavy-duty truck.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCKYARD OFFICE--DAY

58

Jack dealing with TRUCKYARD GUY. Vera's head is in the door, she's sniffing around.

TRUCKYARD GUY

Two major credit cards...

Jack puts them on the counter. Vera gets wind of the rack on the counter, replete with packages of cheese crackers, candy bars, peanuts, snack-cakes.

JACK

Stay Vera!

He whistles the appropriate whistle but Vera keeps at it, trying to get to the snacks!

JACK

Stay!

He whistles again to no avail. He's getting irritated.

TRUCKYARD GUY

And a trucker's license.

JACK

The highjackers took that too!
That's how these people work!

TRUCKYARD GUY

No license, no truck.

Vera's trunk extends in that direction and she trumpets, as if Jack doesn't have enough problems.

JACK

(exploding)

Do you really think I would be going through Kansas with a freaking elephant on foot?

Truckyard Guy slides the charge-card form across to him. Vera trumpets again.

JACK

And add the contents of your snack rack!

EXT. TRUCKYARD--DAY

59

Truckyard guy showing Jack and Vera what he has. They stop next to a cab-over tractor hooked to a 24-foot shag trailer. It's facing out toward the highway-- wouldn't require any backing up.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

59

And it has "Jack's Hauling" painted (fadedly) on the cab.

JACK

Here, this one's got my name written all over it.

TRUCKYARD GUY

Seat's a little loose.

JACK

No problem.

INT. TRUCK CAB--DAY

60

In this flat-faced truck, the driver's seat is way over to the side (he'll be looking almost over the white line when he gets on the highway) and forward. The sleeping area is just behind the driver. Jack has stashed his father's trunk there, and we can see some old bedding there, too, from the previous owner. Jack stares at a daunting display of knobs, gauges, levers. Rubs his hands together.

*
*

JACK

Ohhh...kay.

EXT. TRUCK LOT--DAY

61

The truck's ignition starts. Gears grind. A terrible backward-forward lurching begins.

BACK TO:

INT. CAB

62

The forward lurch causes Jack to pull his foot off the accelerator, which causes him to be thrown forward, which causes his foot to hit the accelerator again. And the seat is going back and forth with him. Finally he throws it into neutral.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE TRAILER

63

Vera serenely eating snacks and spitting out the wrappers.

INT. CAB

64

Jack fishing around until he finds a gear that feels right. Eases out of the lot onto the highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY

65

BACK OUTSIDE

...climbing...another gear...climbing...another gear...

BACK OUTSIDE

INT. CAB

66

...Jack looking pleased with himself... ...and losing speed.

He's trying to find a lower gear he can get into. A bad grinding noise. Another bad grinding noise. Losing speed. He still can't find a gear. And the farther along uphill he goes, the further away from the wheel the seat moves.

EXT. HIGHWAY

67

Slower, slower, by degrees. The sound and torque of uncontrollable DE-celeration. Other traffic piling up behind, honking, pulling around, yelling at him.

INT. TRAILER

68

Vera serenely, with a delicate touch, unwrapping a twinkie.

INT. CAB

69

Jack still getting gradually slower and slower and further and further away from the steering wheel. Another truck--a lighter one--pulls up alongside. DRIVER looks at Jack incredulously.

INCRECULOUS DRIVER

Put it in the granny hole!

Front of the other truck goes on past.

JACK

Yeah? Same to you!

Evidently the guy heard that, because his truck stops, its trailer still alongside Jack's window.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

69

Jack catches up with it, gradually--he's still perceptibly decelerating.

The driver slowly comes back into view.

INCREDULOUS TRUCKER

The granny hole is first gear,
asshole!

He shows Jack how to shift. Jack does it. His truck stops slowing down, settles into a slow but steady grind: Wurrrrrrrr.

The seat is so far back now, though, that Jack is almost sitting on the edge of it to reach the wheel.

INCREDULOUS TRUCKER

Ought to be a seat-lever under
your left butt-cheek. Just don't
hit the magic button.

The lighter truck pulls on ahead and is gone. Jack is reaching around tentatively under the seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY

70

Jack's truck about to reach the crest of the hill.

INT. CAB

71

JACK

Ohhh...kay.

Reaching the crest.

EXT. HIGHWAY

72

Going over the crest. And speeding up.

INT. CAB

73

Jack's frantically trying to get a gear. And now: uncontrollable AC-celeration.

JACK

Ohhhh...God.

Furthermore the seat is now sliding the other way, toward the dash, so Jack is not only hurtling along the highway but about to get smushed against the steering wheel. He's frantically trying to find the seat-adjuster.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

73

He finds what the trucker must have meant by the magic button. *

That is, he trips the hydraulic jack, which causes the whole cab to trip forward, to a 45-degree angle. The bedding from the sleeper is falling down on him. And when he reaches up to grab something to keep himself from being flung out of his seat, he grabs the wire that blows the deisel horn; and pulls it too hard; it sticks. A terrible noise. Now he's hurtling downhill in a preposterous posture--scrunched way down so that he can see the road ahead--and also going WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOP.

EXT. HIGHWAY

74

The truck hurtling downhill, the cab tilted forward, the horn blaring.

INT. TRAILER

75

Vera, surrounded by wrappers, serenely munching.

EXT. HIGHWAY

76

Now the cab tilts all the way forward, so that the windshield is facing straight into the pavement.

INT. CAB

77

Jack's view: nothing but asphalt going by, rapidly, a couple of feet in front of his face. Oh, and there's the white line! The yellow line! He steers frantically to the right, and hears the roar and feels the rush of a heavy vehicle going past, inches to his left. The seat has slid all the way forward and his father's trunk is on his back. Desperate, he jams the gearshift as hard as he can into...something. From the transmission, a terrible noise.

EXT. HIGHWAY

78

Jack's truck reaching the bottom of the hill and rolling along a flat stretch, slowing down. Horn still blaring. *

EXT. GARAGE ADJOINING TRUCKSTOP--DUSK

79

Jack is standing outside the garage talking to a mechanic. We can see the tilted truck affixed to a huge tow truck. *

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

79

MECHANIC

I don't know what you did to that transmission, but that truck ain't going anywhere for a couple weeks.

EXT. OUTSIDE TRUCK STOP--NIGHT

80

Vera is slurping water from a running faucet. Jack looks tired but wired, rallying in the face of disaster. He's on a pay phone, holding the business card.

JACK

Natural Talent? May I speak to Terry Bonura? Well, when will Terry be there? Tomorrow--
(checks his watch)
Look, I have to make a speech in three days, and--

*

He grabs a FAT TRUCKER walking by.

JACK

(to trucker)
Headed west?

FAT TRUCKER

(barely slowing down)
East.

JACK

(back into phone)
The thing is, I have a highly trained elephant, and I've had several offers for her but I thought I'd give you people a shot.

He grabs a SKINNY TRUCKER walking by.

JACK

(to trucker)
Headed west?

SKINNY TRUCKER

That your elephant?

Jack holds up a finger, signalling trucker to wait.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

80

JACK

(back into phone)

Right now, I'm somewhere west of Kansas City. With her, yes. We're on foot, but-- No, this is not a joke. I doubt your superiors will appreciate your flipness.

He hangs up.

JACK

You heading west?

SKINNY TRUCKER

Yeah.

JACK

Take some more cargo?

SKINNY TRUCKER

Hell I'm about an elephant and a half's worth overweight now. Is he scared of mice?

JACK

(irritated)

You hauling mice?

SKINNY TRUCKER

If you're an entertainer, I'd think you'd be better at dealing with the public.

Trucker goes inside. Warily, Jack dials another number.

JACK

Mo?

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO-DAY

81

Mo at the zoo, portable phone between ear and shoulder. She's putting salve on an elephant's ear.

MO

Yeah?

JACK (V.O.)

This is Jack Corcoran. Look, I've had a much more attractive offer for my elephant.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

81

MO

That so? Who from?

JACK (V.O.)

From Terry Bonura at Natural Talent.

*
*

MO

I thought you were someway hooked up with Terry. You're some kind of middle man, aren't you?

JACK (V.O.)

That's the Terry you thought I was?

MO

Don't kid a kidder, Jack. She wants to get a hold of every available elephant. You tell her, thirty grand is all I have in the budget. Do the right thing--get your elephant to the San Diego airport by eight p.m. on the 24th.

JACK (V.O.)

But this is not just any elephant. She's highly trained.

MO

I don't care if she can play the banjo. Healthy and fertile is all I care.

JACK (V.O.)

That's not the point. Vera's a trouper. My father put a lot of himself into her, and--

MO

Yeah, your father was God's gift to elephants.

EXT. OUTSIDE TRUCKSTOP-NIGHT

82

JACK

You don't know anything about my father. He and Vera were beloved by children everywhere... Hello?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

82

He hangs up on her. Looks at his watch. Looks over at Vera. She's ambling over his way, finished drinking the water. He squares his shoulders.

JACK

Over the lips, the teeth the tongue.

As he dials, he draws a candy bar from his clothes, (left over from the snack rack) and tosses it to Vera.

JACK

Mom? I'm fine. Look, will you do me one favor. Call Walter and tell him I can't make the Modesto speech. I know, I know. But I will make the other two. Especially the--both of them, but especially the New Orleans one. I know, I know I know I know. And tell Celeste-- Oh. She's there.

Through the window we can see the fat and skinny truckers at the counter, looking out at Jack and laughing.

JACK

Hi, honey. No, not yet. I'm in Kansas. Uh-huh. Well no, looks like I won't make that one.

Vera is snuffling and poking at him.

JACK

(covering the phone)
Just hold on a minute.

(into phone)
What? No, not you. I'm not with anybody!

From his clothing he takes another candy bar and flips it to Vera.

JACK

Sure I miss you. No, I'm not upset. I-- You sound like Gloria!

(a beat)
No, you know I didn't mean that. I'd never compare you to her.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

82

But we can tell his heart was in the outburst, not in the disavowal.

A BURLY TRUCKER walks by. Jack puts his hand out to stop him.

JACK
(into phone)
Please forget I said that. That marriage was in a completely different lifetime.

Reluctantly, he makes kissing sounds. The burly trucker looks at him with disdain and goes on past.

JACK
Okay. Sweet dreams.

He hangs up. He can see the Burly Trucker next to the two Other Truckers saying something that makes all three laugh. Jack stands there.

Shifts into a breathing exercise. Looks at the business card again. Dials. Vera is snuffling him again. Agitated, Jack flips her another candy bar...

JACK
Natural Talent? I am on the verge of selling my elephant to Mo at the San Diego Zoo. Now--
(writing on the back of the card)
That's better.

Tensely, he punches in another number.

JACK
Hello? Gimme Terry Bonura.

CUT TO:

INT. L.A. SPORTS ARENA--DAY

83

It's a film set. Motorhomes; people talking into headsets.

TERRY, a lissome tan honey-blonde in a short skirt, boots and a halter top, is carrying a baby chimp by the waistband of the pants it's wearing. With her other hand, she takes her phone from her hip and answers. Her voice is calm and pleasant.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

83

TERRY
You've already got her, my man.
Whom do I have the distinct
privilege?

MAKEUP PERSON comes up to her.

TERRY
(to phone)
'Scuse me just a minute.

She half covers the phone.

MAKEUP PERSON
We see you in this scene, Terry
darlin'. Better rub a little
toner on those lovely legs of
yours. Your thighs are kinda
ivory.

TERRY
Well, just up to the thong line.

EXT. TRUCKSTOP/INT. L.A. SPORTS ARENA--DAY

84

BACK ON JACK. As they talk, his tenseness
gradually goes away. He casually dips into his
clothes and flips candy bars to Vera at intervals.

JACK
I thought you were going to be a
man.

BACK ON TERRY, SMILING The makeup person is doing
her thighs.

TERRY
And are you just crushed?

BACK ON JACK

JACK
No, I'm...Jack Corcoran, and--

BACK ON TERRY

TERRY
Aries, right?

BACK ON JACK

JACK
No, Pisces, but thanks.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

84

BACK ON TERRY

TERRY
Because you sound so firm.

*

BACK ON JACK

JACK
(blushing)
Well, I, uh--and I have an
elephant.

BACK ON TERRY

TERRY
Not many people can say that.

BACK ON JACK

JACK
She's trained, she was a
circus... And Mo, there, at the
San Diego Zoo, wants to take her
to Sri Lanka, but I thought...

*

*

BACK ON TERRY An A.D. or someone is beckoning her.
She waves the chimp at him, unhurriedly.

TERRY
Hey, Jack, I'm very interested.
Can you call me back?

BACK ON JACK

JACK
I was wondering, what sort of
dollar figure-- Mo offered 30...

*

*

BACK ON TERRY

TERRY
Well at least 40, I'll tell you
that. Let's talk, okay? Got to
go do a scene. You sure you're
not an Aries?

*

BACK ON JACK

JACK
Well...on the cusp.

BACK ON TERRY

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

84

TERRY
(humorously flirtatious)
He's on the cusp and he's too
modest to claim it. Very
interesting. Call me.

EXT. OUTSIDE TRUCKSTOP-NIGHT

85

BACK ON JACK

He hangs up, looking refreshed. Vera nudges him.

JACK
I must be in love, Vera. I just
lied about my sign.
(He sags.)
But how do we get to L.A.?

With this, he stands by the trash can, lifts up his
shirt and lets a load of candy bars rain into it.
Vera's trunk immediately goes into the can.

INT. TRUCK STOP--NIGHT

86 *

Jack enters, goes to the counter--several stools
past the three truckers he's met, who look at him
and chuckle when he goes by.

CLOSE on Jack, lost in thought.

TRUCK STOP WAITRESS's hands, check-pad, pen appear.

JACK
(abstractedly)
Coffee. Scrambled eggs.

WAITRESS (V.O.)
Bacon, sausage, ham?

JACK
Uh. Sausage.

Waitress scribbles, moves off.

GRATING VOICE (V.O.)
Know what you just ordered, don't
you? Govment waste.

One-shot becomes two-shot to include, on the next
stool, TIP, an intense-looking, bone-thin trucker
wearing a tractor cap.

There's a cellular phone on the counter next to
him. Tip leans toward Jack confidentially.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

86

TIP

School lunch program. Kids don't eat that free lunch--some retard on the govment teat scrapes it into a garbage can, pig farmers in with the FDA haul it off for free, slop their damn hogs with it, then shoot 'em up with every antibiotic known to man--cause the AMA is in on this too, and grind up those hogs into meat--snout, ears--you ever see a pig's weenie? Shape like a damn corkscrew.

Jack just looks at him. He illustrates the screw of a pig's weenie with his finger.

TIP

That's what they're doing to you when you eat that pork. So. Anyway.

(taps his phone)

Soon as this rings I'm picking up a load of bowling pins over here hauling them things clear to L.A. Then turn right around, pop another greenie, and-- my name's Tip.

Tip extends his hand. Jack shakes it reluctantly. But an idea is formulating in his mind.

TIP

Then redballing back this way with a load of avocados. A-vo-ca-do, that's Spanish for lawyer. Think about it. And had the balls to claim I pilfered some of them things. I'd just as soon drink the pesticide straight.

He does that screwing thing with his finger again. Drains his coffee cup. Turns in the other direction, trying to get the waitress's attention.

TIP

Sweetie! Hit me again.

Jack takes a quick look at the number on the phone. Tip turns back.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

86

TIP
You know how long ground-up pig
stays in your system, don't you?

JACK
(to waitress)
Be right back.

TIP
Twelve to sixteen years!

Jack goes outside.

TIP
(to no one in
particular)
You know?

Turns to the man to his right, who's being served
a piece of pie.

TIP
You're not going to eat that, are
you?

EXT. PHONE BOOTH--NIGHT

87*

JACK
(putting on an
officious, corrupt-
sounding voice)
That bowling pin load, we're
going to have to cancel that.
Termites.

INT. TRUCKSTOP--NIGHT

88*

BACK INSIDE DINER

TIP
(on the phone, furious)
Termites! My ass! Like I don't
know who's behind this? Them
butt-buddies of the trucking
commission! Hello?

He slams the phone down on the counter, cracking
the case. Tries to make it work. Nothing.

TIP
Now they've broke my damn phone!
Cancel my load and break my
phone!

EXT. PHONEBOOTH--NIGHT

89 *

BACK ON JACK

Hangs up phone, turns to Vera, who's still rooting through candy bars.

JACK
You're the lucky one. I have to ride up front with him.

INT. TRUCKSTOP--NIGHT

90 *

BACK INSIDE

Jack comes back in, sits down, takes a sip of water, as Tip is expostulating.

TIP
I don't believe this. Now, I got to deadhead clear to California!

JACK
(innocently)
Maybe I can help.

INT. CAB OF SEMI--NIGHT

91

ON JACK, looking tormented, as we hear:

TIP
Rats in those places, of course. They just let 'em run right on in the grinder, chase 'em in there. It's all meat to them-- rats and excreta--and they have the balls to call that hamburger! You know?

Jack doesn't respond.

TIP
So is an elephant a clean animal? They eat out of the dirt--

JACK
She's clean.

TIP
She? How do elephants do it? You know? I can't see a big old flumpy thing like that down on her back goin' give-it-to-me, give-it-to-me...

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

91

TIP (Cont'd)
(he does a bad elephant-
trumpet imitation)

JACK
(irritated)
I don't know how they do it.

INT./EXT. SEMI ASCENDING INTO ROCKIES--EARLY MORN 92

The scenery is splendid, but Jack looks like he has *
spent the worst night of his life.

TIP
The Rockies! Clean spring water.
Right?
(makes a jacking-off
motion)
Riiight. The govment don't want
it clean! People drinking lead,
mercury and decayed fish slime *
don't make trouble.

JACK
Do you ever sleep?

TIP
I slept last week. Look! The *
Continental Divide! It's all *
downhill from here. You know?
So. Here.

Hands Jack a pill, some kind of upper. Jack
accepts it, but doesn't put it in his mouth.

TIP
Know what that dude is? That
dude is a magic button.

JACK
(looking at it)
We meet again.

TIP
That dude will keep you up after
you die.

JACK
Doesn't the government put any
kind of filth in this?

TIP
I'm surprised at your naivete.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

92

That's all he says. An awkward pause.

JACK

I think I might spend some time
back there with Vera. She'll get
lonesome.

TIP

Lonesome? Jack. It's an animal.
Get ahold of yourself.

Jack doesn't say anything.

TIP

So. Anyway. I'd like to see
some of her tricks.

EXT. REST AREA IN COLORADO--EARLY MORNING

93

It's a scenic lookout--a sheer cliff, and in the
distance an impressive vista. No one else in
sight.

Vera is looking at the scenery. Jack is checking
his watch and his father's book of maps. Then he
looks at the vista.

*
*

JACK

That must be Grand Junction. I
figure at this rate we'll be in
L.A. tomorrow night easy.

CUT TO:

Tip at a payphone, dialing.

CUT TO:

Jack and Vera.

JACK

Maybe I'll have dinner with
Terry. We'll go clubbing.

Back to Tip on phone.

TIP

(sullenly)

I didn't get the bowling pins.
They told me...

Back to Jack and Vera

JACK

Maybe she has an elephant friend
for you.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

93

Jack looking at the maps, doesn't see Tip as he slams down the phone and comes out of the booth in a silent fury. He opens the door of the truck, grabs a tire tool and comes after Jack making animal sounds. Now Jack sees him. He holds up the up the backscratcher. Gives the "stay" whistle.

JACK

Tip. Get over it.

TIP

You don't do that to me! You don't do that to me!

Tip swings the tire tool, Jack blocks it with the backscratcher.

JACK

Tip, I had to do it.

They fence. Jack is holding his own, but just parrying and blocking. He spins, throws Tip a hip fake, makes him lunge off balance.

JACK

City boy. Grew up on the playground. I got game.

Tip takes a wild swing that catches Jack's suitcoat as he spins and pulls it down over his right arm. Jack's tangled up in his coat. He's dancing, but he's trying to get untangled and can't keep the backscratcher up. He's vulnerable as Tip makes a wild rush at him--

TIP

Hwufffffff!

Vera has grabbed him by the foot and pulled him straight up in the air. He's hanging upside down, swinging at her now with the tire tool.

Jack gets his jacket back straight, steps forward and cracks Tip's hand with the backscratcher, making him drop the tire tool. Tip is hanging there raging and kicking and waving his arms. Vera lets him down, his face in the dirt. He lies there seething, looking at the drop.

JACK

I guess that's one of her tricks. *

Tip tries to kick loose. *

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

93

TIP

I'm going to kill you!

Jack tosses the tire tool off. We hear it drop, clang, clang, clang, all the way down the cliff.

TIP

The only reason you're doing this is, I'm not popular with people. There's nobody'd even do for me like that elephant just did for you.

JACK

Don't make me feel bad about this.

TIP

I hope you do feel bad.
(still upside down)
So. Anyway. Does she do whatever you ask her to do?

JACK

(gazing at Vera)
She never does what I ask her to.

TIP

She's not going to kill me. She don't have the character.

Shot of Jack reflecting.

TIP

And you're not going to steal my truck, either. That's grand theft.

CUT TO:

EXT. REST STOP

94

Jack and Vera standing in the rest area. Vera's eating from her last bale of hay from the truck. Beside her is Jack's father's trunk.

Tip's truck is pulling away. He leans out the window, yelling back, the volume of his imprecations fading as he goes.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

94

TIP

You hijacked me! Your animal
tried to kill me! I'll get that
old baggy dirty thing destroyed!
And you're an interstate felon!
I'll be back, with the law!

Jack and Vera watch the truck disappear over the
hill.

JACK

Did we make a rube move, Vera?

Vera pushes her trunk into his face. Jack blows
into it, naturally, without thinking, and she purrs
with pleasure. He's left with hay on his face.

He checks his watch and flips through his father's
map book.

JACK

We better change course. Dad's
got a southerly route here,
backroads through New Mexico.

CUT TO:

EXT. REST STOP--LATER

95

Jack takes the clown suit out of his father's
trunk. He lays it on the ground, next to the
backscratcher and his dad's maps, then hoists the
trunk.

DOWN ANGLE

The trunk is heaved over the precipice.

Jack watches ruefully as it goes down. He picks up
the backscratcher, the maps, tucks the clown suit
under his arm, approaches Vera. He spreads his arm
wide. She puts up her foot.

He plants his foot on hers, and vaults on her back.
He looks like he feels good up there. He whistles
"go." She doesn't.

He can't help but laugh.

Vera lumbers forward now, so unexpectedly Jack
almost loses his balance. Then he finds his
balance, sits up tall, and rides down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY--DUSK

96

Jack is standing in front of a billboard that says "Smokey Bear says, Don't Light Fires in These Hills." A car stops. He waves it away. He looks back toward the billboard. Vera's head comes out. She's chewing on something. A truck's coming. He sticks out his thumb. The truck stops. But then Vera steps out. A beat. The truck pulls away. No more cars in sight.

Jack and Vera looking at each other. We see the flashing light of a highway patrol car coming from the other direction. Jack hustles Vera back behind the billboard.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE--NIGHT

97

Jack and Vera walking through a field, mountains all around, under a big full moon. Jack's trying to read his father's book of maps in the moonlight. He shivers. Absently takes the clownsuit from under his arm, and wraps it around his shoulders like a shawl.

Vera makes a long, pleased noise, pokes Jack in the ribs.

He looks up. Realizes he's wearing his father's clownsuit, sort of.

EXT. A POND IN THE FOOTHILLS--DAY

98

Jack and Vera are swimming together.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE--DAY

99

The terrain has changed. It's lower, browner, drier. Hotter. Jack and Vera are trudging along.

Jack is studying the map book, searching the horizon....

JACK

I don't know where we are. We're off dad's map.

But he looks determined. Checks his watch.

*

JACK

I'm due in Tampa day after tomorrow.

EXT. DESERT--DAY

100

Jack is studying his father's maps, wearing his sport coat tied around his head like a burnoose. He's riding Vera, trudging along a dry arroyo in terrible sun. They are both seriously parched.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT--DAY

100A *

Them walking left to right across screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT--DAY

100B *

Them walking right to left across screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT--DAY

100C *

Jack trudging alongside Vera, slightly deranged.

JACK

Damn it! We're never going to get to L.A.! This is not happening!

(looks around)

Yes, I guess it is.

(reflects for a moment)

I think I just went through all the stages of death. Rage, hopelessness, denial, acceptance. What's the other one?

A big ugly vulture lands nearby, and shrugs its wings slowly the way they do.

JACK

Yii!

He waves the backscratcher at it. It's not impressed. He watches it pass out of frame as they trudge along

Vera makes a dry grumbling noise.

JACK

Yeah, you want some water too. But you're the reason I don't have any water.

(more)

(CONT.)

REVISED 5/8/95 [GOLDENROD]

85A.

CONTINUED:

100C *

JACK (Cont'd)
You carried back and forth across
the country for years with him
while I was stuck in Brooklyn.
So get me out of this.

The vulture reappears.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

100

Jack attempts to stare it down. He almost throws the book of maps at it, but restrains himself. Glares at it as, again, they trudge on past. Vera mutters.

JACK
Speak ENGLISH, just once.

She makes a putt-putt noise.

JACK
That's no help! Why aren't you a camel? I don't want an elephant! Why don't you ever obey my whistles? Was Kirby so much more commanding? I wouldn't know. I had Mom and then Celeste. I got out of the house for one minute but now filthy birds will gnaw my bones. Jesus I sound like Tip! I want... water! There's a log! Maybe it's hollow. Maybe it's got muddy water in it!

Jack drops to his knees. The log is dry as a bone. He lies down, exhausted, his cheeks against the sand.

JACK
Keep walking, Vera. It's over for me. I didn't mean what I said - About not wanting an elephant...

His sunburnt eyelids close... Then open...

JACK
Why didn't Mom tell me it was the performing I loved, like my dad... Maybe I'd've been somebody... instead of dying in the desert alone...

A shadow falls across him: Vera's.

JACK
Right Vera. Not alone.

His eyes close, again, a sad smile on his lips.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT--DAY - LATER

100D *

A high, wide shot of Jack lying in the sand, Vera lying next to him, beneath the blazing white sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT--DAY - LATER

100E *

We are tight on Jack as a fat raindrop lands on his cheek. Then another... and another...

JACK
Rain!... Vera, rain!!!

Jack and Vera embrace. Vera trumpets. It's coming down now, and they're both absorbing it with deep pleasure.

JACK
I'll never complain about anything again.

EXT. SAME COUNTRY--DUSK

101

Water is pouring down. They're up on the ridge of the arroyo, which is swollen with rushing water. Now they're slogging along soddenly.

JACK
Will this eternal rain never end?

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE--NIGHT

102

TIGHT ON a wooden Madonna in an adobe niche. Lightening flashes over the painted statue; it seems to rock from on its perch.

*
*

EXT. VILLAGE--NIGHT

102A

WIDE ON an unpaved New Mexican village, Indian mixed with Catholic, poor adobe buildings, cottonwoods alongside a river, and above all, an historic adobe church. The river is overflowing: we see panicked activity near the church.

EXT. VILLAGE--NIGHT

102B

We track along, waist high, with sandbags, as they are handed from hand to hand, up a slow knoll to:

THE CHURCH

CONTINUED:

102B

The Villagers are up to their calves in water; the knoll is washing away. Villagers stack up sandbags in front of the church, but the water keeps rising. The bell tower is slightly atilt: in its niche rests the wooden Madonna.

Small chunks of the adobe facade wash away as the ground beneath it erodes. The villagers are trying to shore up the bell tower with beams. A PRIEST approaches. A VILLAGER speaks to him in Spanish.

VILLAGER

(subtitles)

Is help on the way?

PRIEST

(subtitles)

The phone lines are down.

VILLAGER

(subtitles)

There is no village without the church.

A large cornerstone of church breaks away. Cracks appear in the adobe where the bell tower is separating from the building. A beam propped up against it snaps. The Madonna tilts precipitously, threatening to fall from her niche.

The frantic Villagers now throw their weight against the tower, pressing against it with shoulders, palms, backs. But the tower groans, leans, separates from the wall some more... Faces register the impending disaster.

Then, mysteriously, the tower begins to right itself. The Villagers drop back to see something miraculous.

AN ELEPHANT has appeared in the middle of the desert in the middle of the night. Her massive head is pressed to the wall. A Gringo is next to her, throwing his shoulder against the wall.

But the joy is short-lived: even an elephant is not strong enough. The tower groans, begins slowly to tilt again. The elephant's feet slip in the muck. The Gringo steps away from the tower, worried it will fall on his elephant -- and everybody else.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

102B

Jack's mind works frantically. A BOY speaks to him.

BOY

Isn't there anything you can do?

Jack stares at Vera as she tries, futilely, to brace the building. He mutters to himself.

JACK

"That trick must of died with your Dad."

(shouting now)

Vera!

He whistles, and imitates the high hand movements Vernon showed him when he tried to get Vera to do the famous trick. Vera just looks. The wall slips some more.

Jack moves into a more decisive posture: now he is silhouetted, just like Kirby in the photo on Vernon's wall. He raises his hand, just like Kirby, and whistles more decisively.

Slowly, Vera steps away from the tower, then heaves herself onto her back legs. She presses her huge front feet into the tower.

She takes one step forward on her back legs, then another... the tower begins to right itself.

We push in on Jack, staring up at Vera, tremendously moved... Behind him, the Villagers hoist timbers into place, bracing the bell tower.

TIGHT ON THE MADONNA as Vera's trunk comes into frame, sets the statue just so on its perch again.

SHORT FADE:

OMITTED 103

OMITTED 104

EXT. VILLAGE--DAY 105

It's sunny now. Next to a sign that says SITE OF HOLY DIRT, a new hand-lettered sign goes up: SITE OF ELEPHANT MIRACLE. Villagers are putting things back after the deluge.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

105

Jack is sitting at a refectory table, outdoors, on which sits an abundant New Mexican spread -- fruits, cheese, desserts, things wrapped in tortillas, coffee in a tin pot... Jack eats with gusto, winks at a couple of Boys who watch him worshipfully from afar. An Old Woman and a Young Woman serve him. Behind, Vera frolics in the river with Children.

The LOCAL ARTISAN approaches. Hispanic accent.

ARTISAN

Mister Cocoran, this is the plan for the shrine to Vera.

He shows Jack a lovingly executed drawing.

JACK

This is fantastic. *

ARTISAN

I can work from memory, but I prefer her to pose for me for two hours every morning.

JACK

(thoughtfully, gingerly)
That'd be great. But you know, I have to take Vera somewhere else.

The Artisan looks upset. So do the serving Women, the Boys watching.

ARTISAN *

She's the savior of our village. We want her to stay. Her and you. *

Jack looks at Vera in the water, mutters the first part:

JACK *

I'm not too sure where I belong anymore --

(turning to the ARTISAN)
But Vera has a calling. She's the elephant of my father, and he has charged me with getting her into the movies.

The Boys, anyway, look delighted. The Artisan is still not sure.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

105

ARTISAN

And you will be in the movies
with her?

JACK

With her? Me?

ARTISAN

You are a performer, no?

Jack smiles. In fact, he beams:

JACK

Is there a phone I could use,
some place?

CUT TO:

INT. L.A. SPORTS ARENA/EXT. VILLAGE--DAY

106 *

It's the same film set. Terry is dressed now in
Levis and a cowboy shirt, but the latter is
unbuttoned quite a bit and the former are tight.
She's making an ocelot hold still while she brushes
it--no small feat, of course, and she's handling it
with aplomb. Phone rings. She slings the ocelot
up on her shoulders as if it were an ocelot stole.
Holds it there with one hand while she deftly
answers the phone with the other.

TERRY

You promised me you'd call. I
waited and waited, I thought you
had dropped off the face of the
earth..

JACK

Vera and I were perfecting some
of our tricks...

TERRY

I can't wait. We're shooting
commercials till the end of this
week at the L.A. Sports Arena
downtown. I'll be the blonde
with the tigers and bears. Oh,
listen, Jack-- one favor. Call
Mo in San Diego, and tell her you
and I are definitely doing
something? She's called me twice
now, and I don't know how well
you know Mo, but--

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: 106

JACK
Consider it done. *

OMITTED CUT TO: 107

EXT. SAN DIEGO ZOO/EXT. VILLAGE 108

Mo at the zoo, going down a line of elephants, inspecting them as if they're troops. Answering phone with one hand.

MO
What?

BACK ON JACK, standing near the church, giving a young village lady a wink and a nod of thanks for having handed him a glass of juice. *
*
*

JACK
Jack Corcoran. Mo, I tried to let you down easy, but I hear you've been harassing Terry.

BACK ON MO, looking inside an elephant's mouth.

MO
That would be like harassing a wolverine.

BACK ON JACK, looking at a map.

JACK
Just because she has a bigger budget....

BACK ON MO, moving to another elephant.

MO
So that's what it comes down to for you, huh?

BACK ON JACK, with his maps.

JACK
To the contrary. I'm not unsympathetic to this gene pool thing, whatever it is, but you don't know Vera. I think she can do more for the elephant cause here at home, than off in some backwater rainforest.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

108

BACK ON MO, holding the phone between shoulder and ear. Lifting the next elephant's ear, looking inside it.

MO

Isn't that what Ronald Reagan said, when he begged them to let him spend World War II in Culver City?

She hangs up.

EXT. VILLAGE

109

BACK ON JACK

JACK

(hanging up)

Glad I dodged that bullet.

He hangs up. Looks at the map thoughtfully.

Artisan reappears, with the priest.

PRIEST

The movies will be Vera's shrine.
How may we help?

JACK

(showing the priest his
father's map)

The movie people are in downtown
L.A. - two state lines away.
And I'm kind of...

PRIEST

Wanted?

JACK

Yes. Now I notice there's a
reservation along here that
overlaps into Arizona...

PRIEST

We'll fix it.

JACK

Also... I feel that I've gotten
just about all the wear out of
these clothes.

The priest calls to the BOY, who spoke to Jack at the church. He speaks to him in Spanish. The boy runs away, and we follow him to a building.

INT. OLD SMALL ADOBE--DAY

110

Obviously someone lives here, yet a sign says "Admission \$1."

The boy runs in, past a velvet rope and a nondescript exhibit: an old stove, an old lantern, an old miner's pick. A table with a script of "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" on it and a still of John Wayne on the wall above it. And a glass cabinet with a suit of clothes, torso high, on a mannequin. As the boy opens the cabinet...

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHN FORD COUNTRY--DAYBREAK

111

Classic redrock Western movie terrain. Over a rise comes the priest on a horse. Then the BOY on a horse. Then Jack on Vera. She's wearing garlands, and a yellow ribbon around her neck. Jack is wearing the outfit that John Wayne wound up wearing in "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon": suede jacket with fringe over blue cavalry pants with yellow stripe down the side, black boots, big white hat. Another villager on horseback. Another.

EXT. SAME COUNTRY, FURTHER ALONG--DAY

112

Down angle on the long procession snaking through a canyon, against the sky.

*
*

EXT. BLUFF, SAME COUNTRY--DAY

113

Silhouette of the procession meeting a party of NAVAHOES, also on horseback, in contemporary clothes, but with ceremonial accessories. Handshakes and introductions all around.

*

EXT. RAILROAD TRACK, SAME COUNTRY--DUSK

114

Train slowing, grinding to a halt. It's being stopped by our little party of villagers and Navahos.

A NATIVE-AMERICAN CONDUCTOR, wearing the same clothes and carrying the same wallet of forms as Hurst steps off the train. He leads Jack to a caboose with seats for train personnel. Jack peers at the comfortable seats.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT--NIGHT

115

Jack and Vera are riding on a flat car together, rattling along down the track.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

115

They see lights ahead.

The lights get larger--we see they are a line of pickup trucks with headlights on, to one side of the track. Word has spread among the Navahos. Families, kids, all gathered to see the elephant go by. This audience waves silently, the trucks blink their lights.

REVERSE to Navahos' POV

Jack waves back, and Vera trumpets. They go by. We watch with the Navahos as the waving man and his elephant recede into the distance...

EXT. FREIGHT YARD, L.A.--MORNING

116

Jack and Vera disembark in a vast freightyard.

We begin to hear salsa music.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROADWAY & 6TH, DOWNTOWN L.A.--NOON

117

The salsa music swells. Jack and Vera come down a wide sidewalk. The street is teeming.

EXT. L.A. SPORTS ARENA--DAY

A118

Jack and Vera approach the Sports arena.

JACK

That's where Terry is. I better make a couple of calls.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH, L.A. SPORTS ARENA--DAY

118

CLOSE ON Jack, on the phone.

In the background, there's a parked schoolbus. Vera is giving some little inner-city kids the Rip and Skiffle, and they're eating it up.

JACK

Mom? Yeah, I know, but I'm missing the speech. But-- Mom! Jesus, Mom! Haven't you ever thought...

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

118

JACK (Cont'd)
there's something more to life
than keeping a schedule, and
keeping house, and keeping...I
don't know?

CUT TO:

INT. MOM'S PLACE IN BROOKLYN/EXT. PHONEBOOTH L.A.-DAY 119

Mom's in in the kitchen, putting groceries away.

As she and Jack talk, we cut back and forth.

MOM

Jack. I ran away and joined the
circus.

JACK

You did. That's right. And you
won Dad away from the tattooed
lady. So what happened? Why did
you leave?

MOM

In a way, the story I told you
was true. Kirby always WAS
saving some other kid from
drowning. Giving himself away to
strangers. It was up to me to
save us.

Jack is watching the kids enjoying Vera.

MOM

Somehow, when I took you away...
I always thought he would try to
find us.

JACK

(very quietly, looking
at Vera)

In the long run, he did find me.

CUT TO:

INT. CELESTE'S N.Y. APT./EXT. PHONEBOOTH L.A.-DAY 120

Small pre-war-building, one-bedroom place--of a
working woman who has a modest flair for budget
decorating.

Celeste is sitting at a little desk covered with
papers-- she's been doing her accounts.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

120

CELESTE

At least you could have had the
decency to let your mother break
it to me.

BACK ON Jack

Looking at Vera. The kids are climbing on the
schoolbus.

JACK

Yeah? What would Mom have said?

BACK ON Celeste.

CELESTE

That boys learn from their
fathers.

BACK ON Jack.

Vera, firmly linked with Jack by now, calmly
wanders back over his way. Jack trying to think
what to say.

BACK ON Celeste

CELESTE

Is there someone else?

BACK ON Jack

Vera comes up to him now, and gives him a couple of
nudges with her trunk. Jack scratches her where
she likes it.

He's looking at the auditorium, in the distance.

JACK

No.

(but, then, feeling less
than honest)

I mean--that's why I'm calling
you now, before my life gets more
complicated.

CELESTE

(managing to sound
strong)

I hope your mother and I can
still be friends.

She hangs up. Jack hangs up. He exhales.

INT. L.A. SPORTS ARENA--DAY

121

A flurry of trained doves released by the dove wrangler.

Trucks, cables, people diverting traffic and talking into headsets. It's a car commercial, a 3-ring circus, a car in each ring...

Terry is dressed as a circus bareback rider. She's grooming an elephant, near a trailer and a flatbed truck. Both have "NATURAL TALENT" written on the side. *

She looks up, toward us. *

TERRY

I bet I know who you two are.

Jack leads Vera inside.

TERRY

The big one would be Vera, and the little one would be Jack. You look like you've been through the wringer.

REVERSE ON: Jack, smiling. She's already bringing him out of his funk.

JACK

You just don't know.

REVERSE:

He takes Terry's hand rather shyly. On the other hand, he doesn't turn it loose. She's poised as always. Gives him a good straight cheerful look in the eye. Vera and the other elephant are smelling each other's feet.

TERRY

And this is Ginger. Vera, Ginger; Ginger, Vera.

She looks at Jack again. He's sweet, almost shy.

JACK

You look as good as you sound.

TERRY

Uh-oh, this is trouble--doing business with a man who knows what to say to a girl.

(more)

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

121

TERRY (Cont'd)
(giving Vera an expert
look-over)
Will she sit?

Jack does the "Down" whistle, Vera sits.

TERRY
Mmm. You've got a way with her.
You never wanted to put an act
together yourself?

JACK
(grinning)
Funny you should say that.

TERRY
(intrigued)
You, me, Vera: a threesome?

Jack all but blushes.

TERRY
Come into my parlor here. Manuel
will look after Vera.

Terry's assistant, MANUEL, enters as Jack and Terry
head for her trailer.

TERRY
We'll do Vera's deal first, then
talk about your future, okay?

Jack nods. His eye lights up on the Natural Talent
truck, a trailer attached to a pick-up with manuel
transmission. A key with the Natural Talent's logo
hangs on the door. *
*

JACK
That's the truck Vera and I
should've had.

INT. TRAILER--DAY

122

Jack and Terry sit at a desk littered with papers.

TERRY
(teasingly)
You may have your wife insured
for a million dollars. That
doesn't mean you can sell her for
that.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

122

JACK

I don't have a wife.

Terry twinkles. Jack grins.

JACK

And I'm not asking for a million.
But I owe a lawyer \$36,000, I had
to blow off two \$2000 speeches,
I had travel expenses-- I'd have
to get fifty just to break even.

*
*

TERRY

(with a twinkle)

Fifty! Jack, I believe you want
to take advantage of me.

He looks at her.

*

JACK

Terry, there are two kinds of
people in the world, carnies and
rubes--and only a rube would walk
out of here with less than he's
got invested.

*

Terry gives him a long, candid look. For the first
time it's carny-to-carny.

TERRY

Fifty it is. Here. Here's the
papers. Lemme find a pen.

She's digging through the papers on her desk. Her
search uncovers a wooden stick.

JACK

A backscratcher!

He picks it up. Instead of a carved elephant on
the end, this has a sharp metal point and a sharp
metal hook.

TERRY

A backscratcher? Honey, that's
a goad.

JACK

A goad?

*
*

She hands him a pen. He puts it down. Looking at
the goad. Her phone rings. She reaches for it.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

122

TERRY
(to Jack)
Don't tell me you got her here
all the way from Maryland without
giving her a jab or two.
(into the phone)
Animal Attractions. Yeah. No.
No, I told you--I want you to
bring them out to the ranch.

Jack looks up from the goad. He's putting a lot of
things together. Turns and looks out the window.

TERRY
(still into the phone)
No, no, the point is--they need
to come to us. Yeah, I hear what
you're saying. Now you hear what
I'm saying.

While she talks, we're looking out the window with
Jack.

EXT. TRAILER

123

An A.D. beckons to Manuel. Briskly, offhandedly,
Manuel gives Ginger a poke in her tender spot, to
get her to leave Vera. Ginger drags heavy chains.
And he's got Vera's foot chained to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER

124

Jack goes to the door, right past Terry without
looking at her.

TERRY
(still on phone)
Jack! Checking on Vera? She's
fine. Why don't you sign the
papers first. We'll make it
fifty-five. *
*

Jack doesn't answer. Goes out the door.

TERRY
(continuing her phone
conversation)
When can you get-- how many
spider monkeys are we talking
about?

O.S. we hear a truck engine turning over. Terry
looks perplexed, but continues to negotiate, shifts *
gears, purring into the phone...

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

TERRY 124
I'd really like to make this
work, cookie.

EXT. HIGHWAY--DAY 125
Highway 5 with L.A. in the background. The
Natural Talent truck barreling along. *

INT. CAB OF TRUCK--DAY *
126
Jack checks his watch. Next to him on the seat is
the book of maps. He checks it quickly. He looks
in the rearview mirror.

JACK
No law yet.

EXT. HIGHWAY--DAY 127
The truck barreling along. To the west we see the
sun gleaming over the Pacific.

EXT. SKYLINE-DAY 128
To the south we see the skyline of San Diego. *

EXT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT--DUSK 129
The truck pulls up to a gate leading to the tarmac
area.

GUARD steps out. Jack leans out the window.

JACK
I've got an elephant here for Sri
Lanka-- the gene pool project.

GUARD
The what for what?

JACK
This is approved. We're in a
hurry.

GUARD
Nothing on the sheet about
another elephant.

JACK
You just didn't get the word.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

129

GUARD

The sheet is the word.

JACK

I'm not going to get this far and
be stopped by you!

Guard unsnaps his holster.

GUARD

Turn this vehicle around now,
sir.

EXT. AIRPORT LOADING ZONE -- DUSK

A130

The truck pulls up curbside, amid red caps and
rental car vans. As Jack jumps out and races back
to unload Vera, we hear, "The white zone is for
immediate loading and unloading of passengers
only."

INT. AIRPORT--NIGHT

130

The automatic doors swing open. Vera and Jack
burst through. All heads in the airport turn to
look. Vera and Jack run past an AIRPORT SECURITY
OFFICER.

JACK

Got to catch--Sri Lanka.

They're past the astonished officer.

Vera veers off to the right. An airport shop
called Cinnabar--cinnamon buns and coffee. Vera
can't resist the smell, she's sniffing and poking
her trunk at the dumbfounded people behind the
counter.

JACK

(holding some money out)

Dozen of those cinnamon buns.
Hurry.

Vera isn't waiting, she's reaching around behind
the glass case.

JACK

You can't blame her. Who can eat
that airplane food?

INT. METAL DETECTORS

130A

SECURITY MAN AND SECURITY WOMAN gape.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

130A

JACK

Just run the wand over her!
Quick!

SECURITY WOMAN

Hey! You part of Mo's bunch?

JACK

Yes--quickly, please.

SECURITY WOMAN

(wandering Vera)

Mo's a character. *

SECURITY MAN

The other elephants didn't have
to come through here.

JACK

I guess this one looked
suspicious.

SECURITY MAN

(severly)

No jokes here.

JACK

(going throught the
radar)

Okay, okay.

The radar beeps.

SECURITY WOMAN

Change, keys.

Jack dumps out everything metal he can find--even
his watch--in the little plastic container she
offers him.

JACK

(going back through)

Keep 'em!

INT. CORRIDOR--NIGHT

131

Jack and Vera running for the plane.

EXT. TARMAC--NIGHT

132 *

Jack and Vera running for the plane.

And there is Mo. Holding a clipboard. Hands on
hips.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED:

132

JACK

You Mo?

MO

This Vera?

JACK

We on time?

Mo smiles, realizing he's on board. Vera is sniffing Mo. Likes what she smells. Mo gives her a practiced pat.

MO

Nice animal. Terry wouldn't meet your price? Because mine is still the same.

JACK

Yeah. Terry came up a little short.

MO

You're not kidding. With all the terrific animal trainers in the world, how did you ever settle on Terry?

JACK

She knows how to talk on the phone, I guess... where are the other elephants?

MO

In the plane. We better get Vera crated. *

JACK

Crated? Now wait a minute.

MO

Cool it, animal lover. *

Vera begins to coo a fuzzy indistinct tone, her trunk vibrating with the sound. Then her trunk is vibrating but there's no sound.

Then her ears lift dramatically. The air seems charged.

JACK

Vera?

(to Mo)

What's she doing?

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (2)

132

MO

Exchanging ultrasonic elephant
greetings. Too low for our ears.

But we're looking at the plane from Vera's POV now,
and we're hearing what she hears. And what she
hears is...extraordinary.

*
*

REVERSE to:

Vera looking over her shoulder at the plane, as an
ASSISTANT leads her into a shed. In a moment she
comes rolling out. She's standing in an aluminum
box that comes up only to her knees, and rolling
along on a wheeled cart.

MO

Each of them flies in one of
those. They're patient animals.
And they're company for one
another. She'll be fine.

Jack follows along beside Vera as she rolls toward
the plane. She sniffs at him. She's distracted by
the emanations from all those animals of her own
kind. But she's distracted from that by the sense
that she and Jack are parting ways. Her head moves
heavily back and forth, her trunk trailing
delicately along with it.

JACK

It's okay, Vera.

Her eyes stop roaming, come to rest on Jack. She
extends her trunk to him. He blows into it.

The cart stops at the cargo door. A hydraulic lift
elevates Vera slowly. She looks back at Jack and
emits the same grief-stricken noise she made at his
father's grave. He feels the same way, but manages
to sound strong.

JACK

Have a lot of little elephants.
Your carny days are over.

As she reaches the level of the cargo door, we rise
and see the other elephants on the plane from
Vera's POV.

*
*

He turns as Mo comes up next to him.

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (3)

132

JACK

And my father would say I'm a rube.

MO

Your dad wanted you to sell Vera to Terry? So--you're finally standing up to him after all these years.

JACK

Only I had to squeeze all those years into twelve days.

*
*

MO

Huh?

JACK

Nothing.

The plane is starting up.

Mo hands Jack a check. He looks at it. Takes the carved elephant out of his pocket, shows it to Mo.

MO

This is nice work.

JACK

My father carved it. I want you to have it.

MO

Aw, no, you don't. You're emotional and not thinking clearly. Elephants get a person that way.

Jack looks at the far-from-emotional-looking Mo, blinks, and takes his carved elephant back. The plane begins to taxi.

JACK

I guess they must. Because right now I'm missing the biggest speech of my life, I'm fifteen thousand in the hole, I stole a truck, and no one's going to visit me in prison, because my fiancée and I have...Gotten Over It. And all I can think about is how much I'm going to miss her.

*
*

(CONT.)

CONTINUED: (4)

132

MO

Your fiancée?

Jack just keeps staring at the plane.

MO

Oh.

(a beat)

They always say an elephant never forgets. What they don't tell you is, you never forget an elephant.

We pull back to see Jack and Mo walking down the tarmac together--buddies--as the plane rolls on up the runway, picks up speed, lifts into the air, and vanishes into a cloud.

And the following begins to scroll:

Jack Corcoran's motivational book, Get Over It! never went into a second printing.

His one-man-show, "On the Road with Vera," ran Off Broadway for 26 weeks. *

Then it moved to Broadway. *

On his hiatus, Jack visited Vera in Sri Lanka--he could afford it. *

She remembered him.

Vera is carrying her second calf.

She's not a carny anymore.

She's no rube either.

THE END