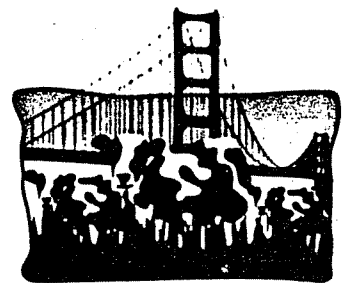


HOWARD HUGHES PROJECT

by

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GARY LUCCHESI PRODUCTIONS
COW HOLLOW INCORPORATED

HBO Pictures
June 26, 1997
1st Draft
2nd Revision

345 N. MAPLE DRIVE #120
BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90210
3 1 0 . 8 8 8 . 3 4 0 0

FADE IN:

DESERT AIRSTRIP - DUSK

The single strip of cracked concrete stretches like an old scar on the desolate terrain. The only sound is the WIND and the HIGH-PITCHED HUM of insects.

SUPER: TONOPAH, NEVADA
January 1957

CAMERA PANS OVER TO:

TWO OLD JEEPS

Parked on the runway. HANK and ED, cracked and weathered like everything else here, lean against the jeeps smoking Luckies.

Hank flicks away his cigarette and climbs into his jeep.

ED

They said to stay out here 'til
they show up.

HANK

They're comin' out here to hunt?
(Ed nods)
From Los Angeles ... to hunt ...
here?!

Ed nods again. Hank starts the engine.

HANK

(dripping sarcasm)
If they want to know where I am,
tell 'em I'm out huntin' flies for
our big bass tournament.

He starts to pull away when they suddenly become aware of a LOW DRONE approaching from the horizon.

THEIR PÖV - SETTING SUN

A beat and then the DARK OUTLINE of a huge four-prop PLANE descending fast for a landing.

As it gets closer we can see a large red TWA LOGO on the gleaming fuselage and tail.

The men stand frozen and slack-jawed as they watch the Lockheed Constellation touch down at the far end of the strip.

As it hurtles toward them, ENGINES SCREAMING in reverse to brake it before it reaches the end of the small strip, they realize they're going to be run over in about 8 seconds.

Ed scrambles into his jeep, as Hank, in a panic, tries to jam his balky transmission into first. They barely manage to peel away as the huge plane roars past.

It stops a few feet from the end of the strip and turns and slowly taxis back to the two men who are staring up at

MEN'S POV - COCKPIT

to make out the pilot. At first, the reflected rays of the sun make it impossible. But then a passing cloud allows us to see

THE PILOT

He is strikingly handsome and is wearing an old leather flight jacket and a battered fedora.

He's HOWARD HUGHES, 51, the richest man in America.

The plane rolls to a stop and the engines cut off. For a few beats the only sound is the freshening wind. Then the MAIN CABIN DOOR swings away and the two men catch their breaths.

JEAN PETERS

Smiles down at them with impossibly white teeth and emerald eyes. She's the most beautiful thing they've ever seen.

Then she turns toward the cockpit and in a beat is joined by Hughes who drops the gangway which stops 4 feet off the ground.

Jean, in a pale silk suit and pumps, walks down and is carefully lowered to the runway by the awestruck Ed and Hank.

Then Hughes exits. When he reaches the last step Hank reaches up to grab his hand to help him down.

Hughes RECOILS as if he nearly touched a high-tension wire. He waits until Hank takes a step back then he jumps to the ground.

ED

You folks got any bags?

Hughes shakes his head without turning and gets into the passenger seat as Jean slips behind the wheel. Hughes motions Ed to jump into the back.

HUGHES

(to Hank)

Watch her (plane) 'til we get back.

Then Jean expertly jams the stick into first and peels out in a cloud of dust and heads toward the two-lane leading to town.

Hank, completely befuddled, stands watching. Then he starts to run after them.

HANK

HEY! TWA KNOW YOU GOT THEIR PLANE?!

INT. SMALL LIVING ROOM - 30 MINUTES LATER

Hughes and Jean are standing in front of Tonopah's justice of the peace as Ed, their official witness, watches proudly.

J.P.

... and do you, Marian Evans, take George Johnson to be your lawfully wedded husband for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, 'til death do you part?

JEAN

(beaming)

I do.

J.P.

(to Hughes)

Did you bring a ring, George?

Hughes fumbles in his jacket pocket then pulls out a spectacular 6-CARAT RUBY RING and slips it on her finger as the J.P. watches stunned.

J.P.

Then, uh ... by the power vested in me by the state of Nevada, I now pronounce you man and wife.

Hughes and Jean look into each other's eyes like there's no one else in a thousand miles. They're truly, deeply in love.

J.P.

She was my wife, I'd kiss her!

Hughes doesn't appear to have heard as he continues staring at Jean as if seeing her for the first time.

EXT. JUSTICE OF PEACE'S HOME - DUSK

Hughes and Jean exit. Ed breaks into applause. When Howard passes him he slips a bill into Ed's shirt pocket.

As before, Jean climbs behind the wheel and Hughes gets in beside her. Ed jumps in back and Jean peels away onto the blacktop and heads back to the airstrip.

ED
(to Hughes)
You ever comin' back?

Jean glances over at Hughes, who continues to stare straight ahead. Finally ...

HUGHES
You'll know it if I do.

ANGLE - JEAN AND HOWARD

Her dark hair streaming behind her, face lit by the red of the dying sun which bounces off the ruby ring, she turns to Howard.

She reaches out for him. She hesitates a beat and then grasps his left hand and holds it tight.

From the back seat, Ed watches transfixed as we hear an OVERLAPPING ROAR and CUT TO:

EXT. AIRSTRIP - EARLY EVENING

The Constellation hurtles down the runway as Ed and Hank watch.

ANGLE - CONSTELLATION

As it lifts off and heads straight into a spectacular red sky.

ED V.O.
He slipped me an extra 50 for
standin' up for him.

HANK V.O.
No shit?

ED V.O.
(smug)
Yessir.

Several beats then ...

HANK V.O.

He gave me a hundred for watchin'
his plane.

INT. COCKPIT - EVENING

Howard is starting his approach to LAX. Jean is beside him in the co-pilot's seat.

It's a clear night and the city spreads out below them in a million sparkling lights.

AIR CONTROLLER V.O.

TWA 1124, you're cleared for
landing on Runway 3-7 North.

HUGHES

Roger. TWA 1124 starting final
approach.

CLOSEUP - JEAN

Her face suddenly tightens as he slowly pushes down on the stick and the runway lights start to appear on the horizon.

She stands and moves behind Hughes and bends over and wraps her arms around him. (NOTE: During rest of scene, the runway lights are rushing toward us closer and closer.)

JEAN

(desperate)

Don't land! Let's keep going!

HUGHES

Where?

JEAN

I don't care! Just keep flying!

HUGHES

(laughs)

We've got to land sometime.

JEAN

I know, it's just ...

HUGHES

What?

JEAN

Up here you're always so happy.
Down there ... something happens.

Hughes' mouth tightens. The only SOUND is the TRAFFIC CONTROL CHATTER over the radio. The GROUND IS RUSHING UP.

EXT. BUNGALOW 9, BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Surrounded by lush plantings. Palms rustle in the night breeze.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Hughes and Jean are about to get into bed. He's wearing pale blue pajama bottoms. She's in a long white negligee.

She's passionately in love but something's troubling her.

JEAN

Are you happy, darling?

HUGHES

(smiles)

What do you think?

JEAN

Will we be really married?

HUGHES

Both names are legally registered,
the license is good. Your own
lawyer checked it out.

JEAN

I don't mean that. I mean ...
Will we live like a real married
couple?

Hughes just stares at her then suddenly GROWLS and pulls her onto the bed and kisses her ferociously. Jean LAUGHS.

As they start to make love the CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES across the room. We continue to hear THEIR LOVEMAKING but it suddenly sounds vaguely DISTORTED/STATICY as the CAMERA GLIDES through the window and into the

ADJOINING BUNGALOW

where Hughes' SECURITY AGENT 1 is listening through earphones as the reels of a large tape recorder slowly turn.

The CAMERA GLIDES out his window and over a BEAUTIFUL KOI POND AND ROSE GARDEN and into the

CORNER BUNGALOW

where YVONNE SHUBERT, Hughes' teenage mistress, is lying on her bed surrounded by STUFFED ANIMALS. Eyes red and swollen, she is talking/sobbing into the phone.

YVONNE

... I feel like I'm some kind of prisoner, Johnny ... that fucking bastard hardly shows his face and...

The CAMERA CONTINUES out her window and into the

ADJOINING BUNGALOW

where AGENT 2, in the ubiquitous earphones, is listening in on her conversation while diligently taking notes: " ... I feel very confined, Johnny ... Mr. Hughes rarely visits and ... "

DISSOLVE TO:

ROBERT MAHEU'S BRENTWOOD HOME - NEXT MORNING

ROBERT "BOB" MAHEU, 40, a stocky ex-FBI agent, was running his own security firm in Washington before he moved his family to California to work full-time for Hughes.

He's playing on the floor with his TWO YOUNG KIDS, ROBERT, 3, and CHRISTINE, 2, who are running around LAUGHING and SCREAMING.

The PHONE RINGS. With his kids hanging on to him, he crawls over to a side table and picks it up.

MAHEU

Hello.

HUGHES

Little twit's running around behind my back! You've got to take care of it!

MAHEU

Hello, Howard.

HUGHES

What's that racket?!

MAHEU

My kids.

HUGHES

Tell them to settle down, will you, please?

Maheu's wife, YVETTE, 38, walks into the room, sizes up the situation and quickly scoops up the kids and exits.

MAHEU

Howard, I have no idea what you're talking about.

HUGHES

Speak up, I'm having trouble with my ears.

MAHEU

(louder)

What are you talking about?!

HUGHES

Yvonne! She's started seeing some hustler!

MAHEU

You think your getting married upset her?

HUGHES

Who knows what could affect a mind like that?!

MAHEU

Howard, this isn't why I moved out from Washington. You've got plenty of guys who can take care of this kind of stuff.

HUGHES

The little shit's carrying a gun! He brags to her about it!

MAHEU

Then call the cops. If he's got a record, they'll put him away for possession.

HUGHES

Are you out of your mind?! I'm not getting the police involved! I don't see what your problem is. You must've taken care of hundreds of punks like him when you were with the FBI!

MAHEU

(angry)
When I was with the Bureau I took care of a lot more --

He stops himself and takes a breath to get back under control.

MAHEU

I'll follow him for a few days and see what he does.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO GUN CLUB - NIGHT

POLICE CRUISERS with FLASHERS ON fill the small parking lot.

Maheu is talking on a pay phone across the street.

MAHEU

There was an accident. The boyfriend was killed 20 minutes ago. Yvonne was taken to the hospital but don't worry, it's just shock.

HUGHES

My God, I ...
(stammering)
... I knew you were good but I didn't know you were *this* good!

MAHEU

It was an accident, Howard! They were at a range in Van Nuys. The poor sap shot himself trying to clean his piece.

HUGHES

(smug)
I understand, Bob.

BOB

I had nothing to do with it!

HUGHES

I understand.

BOB

I have a couple of contacts at the LAPD. I'll try to keep it quiet, at least keep your name out of it.

HUGHES

I'm not worried. I'm sure you'll do whatever it takes.

Maheu doesn't know how to answer. Hughes is convinced Maheu killed the boyfriend and there's nothing he can say to dissuade him. Finally ...

MAHEU

It's important we meet, Howard.

HUGHES

Not now. Maybe later. ...

Before Maheu can respond, Hughes hangs up.

Maheu stares at the receiver as the CRUISERS start to pull out of the parking lot. CAMERA MOVES into A BRIGHT ORANGE FLASHER and we DISSOLVE TO:

MATCHING SHOT - SUN

before PULLING BACK TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAWN

The light is incredibly clear.

SUPER: NEVADA DESERT, SPRING, 1968

BIRDS begin to CHIRP as a family of MULE DEER nibble on cactus sprouts. A hawk rides a thermal then descends and lands on the roof of a SMALL RED SHACK in the middle of the desert floor.

As the deer graze, they step over a THICK STEEL CABLE.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see the cable running into the shack along with bundles of wires and other high-tech gear.

A beat and then there's AN INCREDIBLE ROAR.

For as far as we can see the earth surges violently upwards. The shack and everything around it disappear. A massive dust cloud shoots skyward at 1,000 feet per second. Then the desert floor collapses into a huge moon-lake crater.

A 1.2 megaton hydrogen bomb has just exploded 3,800 feet beneath the desert floor in a steel-lined shaft. This is "Operation Boxcar" -- an underground test for the nuclear warhead designed to ride on Polaris submarine missiles.

And then with a great optical effect the CAMERA climbs up and away from the nuclear blast and flies at supersonic speed over the desert until we see the unmistakable neon outline of Oz on the horizon. Yup, we're heading into Vegas.

We swiftly descend onto the Strip (with flashing SAMMY DAVIS and DEAN MARTIN marquees) and fly through the entrance of the DESERT INN and into the casino where the scene is even more comic and surreal than usual.

The gambling continues almost unaffected by the earthquake-like rolling from the blast: Craps players hold onto the side of the table as they roll the dice; old ladies hang on to slots as they keep pulling the handles.

The CAMERA exits the casino through a back door and rapidly tracks up the exterior of the hotel and into the one lighted room on the 9th (top) floor.

We've just entered the ANTEROOM outside HOWARD HUGHES'S bedroom. The rolling continues as ROY CRAWFORD, one of Hughes' "Mormon Mafia" who administer personally to him, stands spread against a wall trying to keep the collection of 10 TV sets from sliding off the shelves. (Crawford is in the uniform dark suit, white shirt, dark tie worn by all the Mormon aides.)

Finally, the rolling stops. Crawford catches his breath, looks around to see if there's any damage then sits behind his desk and begins typing on the daily schedule already on the roller. (where we see notations like "Bathroom 11:52; Chicken soup 1:03; Bathroom 2:09; Banana nut ice cream 4:24").

He looks up at the clock on the wall and types: "7:02 A-Bomb test." Just as he finishes typing there is SHARP SNAPPING NOISE from the other side of the closed door.

He jumps up and enters the room closing the door behind him so we can't see inside. A beat and the door opens and he emerges with a plain manila envelope.

As he closes the door behind him we can't help but notice he's got both of his hands covered by KLEENEX.

He opens a locked door on the other side of the room and hands the envelope to an ARMED GUARD stationed outside.

WE FOLLOW the guard as he carries the envelope into a private elevator unlocked by a special key, down the nine flights and out a back door and over to a large home constructed almost in the shadow of the hotel.

The single lighted room on the top floor of the hotel seems to loom over them in the b.g.

He RINGS the front doorbell and after a few beats a sleepy Maheu (now the head of Hughes' Nevada operations since his move to Las Vegas in 1966) opens the door.

He nods at the guard who hands him the envelope and quickly leaves. They've been through this routine hundreds of times.

Maheu opens the envelope and as he reads the handwritten message on a single sheet of lined yellow legal paper the front door opens behind him. Yvette steps out in her bathrobe, shivering in the early morning chill.

Through the open door we hear the EXCITED SHOUTS and catch glimpses of their THREE KIDS.

YVETTE

What's he want now?

MAHEU

The president.

YVETTE

(beat)

Of what?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - DALLAS - DAY

CAMERA PANS OVER SKYLINE and STOPS AT

EXT. RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - DAY

The glitziest hotel in town. What else?

INT. RITZ HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Maheu is getting dressed in front of a 3-way mirror.

He is the public surrogate of the world's most legendary billionaire and as he watches himself putting on his custom silk shirt, diamond cufflinks and Savile Row suit (an ironic counterpoint to the dress habits of the real Hughes) we know immediately that it is a role he loves to fill.

As he gives a last pull on his cuffs we hear:

MAHEU V.O.

A few hours after the bomb went off, the Justice Department's Anti-Trust Division announced it would oppose our purchase of the Stardust Casino. Their decision was based on the principle that the law applied the same to Howard Hughes as any other citizen. Clearly, things had gotten out of hand.

INT. LARGE TEXAS RANCH HOUSE - DUSK

Maheu, escorted by TWO MEN IN SUITS (whom we later learn are Secret Service agents), walks down a long hallway decorated with Indian artifacts, mounted steer horns, etc.

In the twilight, we can't quite make out the numerous PHOTOS lining the walls.

The agents lead Maheu to the end of the hallway and stop in front of imposing, elaborately carved double-doors.

Agent 1 KNOCKS, opens one door and nods for Maheu to enter.

INT. LARGE STUDY - DUSK

Maheu enters and the door quietly closes behind him. The room is quiet, no lights are on. The silence is sporadically broken by the MUFFLED RINGING of PHONES and DOORS OPENING and CLOSING elsewhere in the house.

He stops two steps inside and slowly looks around through the gathering shadows.

Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves go halfway around the room. A large desk with three phones dominates the far side. Through the French doors behind it we can see a herd of Texas longhorns grazing on a distant pasture.

MAN'S VOICE

(familiar twang)

Friend of mine told me your boss's gone crazier'n a shithouse rat.

Maheu, startled, turns to the direction of the voice.

MAHEU POV - A LARGE HIGH BACK CHAIR

In the far corner of the study, behind the desk. We can just see the back of it.

It's turned so it's facing the French windows. Through the semi-darkness a trail of cigarette smoke slowly rises above it.

Before Maheu can respond ...

VOICE

I told him Howard Hughes hasn't paid a dime of income tax in the last 10 years -- so he'd better start sippin' that same brand of dumb-ass.

(chuckles)

C'mon over, son, and tell me what's troublin' our richest citizen.

Maheu crosses the room and sees

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON

Even though his face is half-covered in shadow we're still shocked: The skin is pasty and deeply lined. It doesn't appear he's gotten much sleep.

MAHEU

Mr. Hughes asked me to convey his distress, Mr. President, at your decision not to seek another term. He believes it will be an irreparable loss for the nation and the world.

LBJ stares unblinking at Maheu who shifts uncomfortably. Suddenly, LBJ bursts into a RASPY, CHOKING LAUGH.

LBJ

Now sit down and tell me what's really botherin' him.

(before Maheu can reply)

Drink?

MAHEU

(nervous)

Uh, no thank you.

LBJ looks at him quizzically then reaches over to a SIDETABLE where a glass of bourbon and half-melted ice rests next to a LOOSELEAF FOLDER.

He takes a sip, puts it back down and opens the cover of the folder. He scans the first page.

LBJ
You're Maheu?

MAHEU
(reddens)
I'm sorry, Mr. President, I should
have --

LBJ
You run his Nevada operations?
(Maheu nods)
Well, you got yourself a full-time
job there, Bob. Looks like he's
gone and bought up half the
fucking state.

MAHEU
(weak laugh)
Not quite. But he --

LBJ
This about that bomb test?!

MAHEU
Mr. Hughes doesn't think you've
received all of the pertinent
information on the dangers of
nuclear contamination.

LBJ
I got his letter! I sent it over
to the AEC. They say it's
bullshit, none of it's gonna leak
out!

MAHEU
With all due respect, the Atomic
Energy Commission isn't the most
unbiased judge of its own tests.
Mr. Hughes is willing to
underwrite the cost of moving them
to a safer area -- like Alaska.

LBJ
How many casinos he got up there?
Just wonderin'.

MAHEU
Mr. President, the dangers from
radioactivity are real!

LBJ

If we start screwin' with the tests, we'll fall behind the Russians. That's what I'm gettin' from the Pentagon.

(leans forward)

Tell him to stop worryin'. It'll take more'n a coupla atom bombs to scare the suckers away. I do know that about this country!

The last comment -- a reference to his failures in Vietnam -- reveals such bitterness that Maheu knows better than to argue.

LBJ suddenly stands.

LBJ

I wanta show you somethin'.

INT. CAR - DUSK

LBJ, a cigarette hanging from his mouth, is driving fast. Maheu, next to him, is hanging on to the passenger door as the car bounces violently.

AERIAL SHOT - WHITE LINCOLN CONTINENTAL - DUSK

LBJ is driving the Continental across one of his pastures, scattering panicked CATTLE. As we PULL BACK we see an

ARMADA OF BLACK SECRET SERVICE CARS

trailing behind, trying desperately to keep up.

LBJ

(shouting over car
slamming)

I heard a coupla years ago he had some kinda breakdown! That's why he lit out to Vegas and holed up in that hotel!

MAHEU

(shakes head)

It was a business move! He had half a billion in cash from the TWA sale and thought casinos were a good investment. Anyways, he had to cut himself off! He was getting hit with subpoenas by every shyster in the country!

LBJ
How's he look?

MAHEU
(beat)
He's getting up there like all of us, but to me he still looks like he could star in one of his old Hollywood movies!

LBJ
(chuckles)
Howard Hughes's been a good friend to me. Ever since I first ran for Congress.

(turns to him)
But you know that already, don't you?

A long awkward pause. LBJ turns back to his driving.

LBJ
All that's over with.
(bitter laugh)
Now I couldn't run for road commission if he bought me all of Pecos County.

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

He suddenly seems very tense. He takes a deep breath and ...

MAHEU
Mr. Hughes is considering a large contribution to Vice President Humphrey's campaign.

LBJ
You askin' my opinion: That weak pussy ain't worth a bootful of piss.

(beat)
What about Nixon? You'll be takin' care of him, too, right?

Maheu's mouth tightens as he decides what to say.

LBJ
If I was Howard Hughes that's who I'd want runnin' my country.

LBJ suddenly hits the brakes and they stop in front of a

SMALL WOODEN CABIN - LATE DUSK

LBJ steps out and walks to the front and stares at it lost in thought. Maheu, not sure what's going on, stands beside him.

The Pedernales River flows slowly behind it. In the b.g. the Secret Service agents quietly take up positions.

LBJ

I was born in that little chicken shack.

Maheu tries desperately to think of a response. Finally ...

MAHEU

You've got an awful lot to be proud of, Mr. President.

LBJ

(staring at cabin)

It's why I'm puttin' all the time I got left into building my Library. I'll be goddamned if I let Lyndon Johnson's place in history be written by a bunch of Kennedy-lovin' Harvard reds!

LBJ continues staring straight ahead as he takes a long drag.

LBJ

Also startin' an institute in Austin. All the top experts'll come down to lecture on public policy. I want to bring good young people into government so we won't have jackasses like the one runnin' the Anti-Trust Division.

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

Eyes widen. The President of the U.S. is cutting a deal and no one could do it any smoother.

MAHEU

I'm certain that's the kind of project Mr. Hughes'd want to support in any way he could.

LBJ

Then be sure to tell him all donations are tax-deductible.

LBJ CHUCKLES LOUDLY then starts walking back to his car. Maheu hurries after him.

MAHEU

I know he'd prefer giving it to
you personally...as an old friend.

LBJ smiles and puts his arm around Maheu's shoulder.

LBJ

I know he would, son, but things
are different now.

Maheu's face tightens. Things aren't turning out the way he'd
planned. Before he can reply ...

LBJ

Better hurry back. He's probably
already bought himself another
damn casino.

INT. DESERT INN - LATE THAT NIGHT

Maheu, still looking anxious, is starting toward the private
elevator at the rear of the main floor. He's carrying a large
manila envelope just like the one he received from Hughes after
the bomb test.

TRACKING SHOT - MAHEU

As he switches into his gregarious mode and greets PIT
BOSSES, FLOOR MANAGERS and JACK HOOPER, the retired LAPD
detective who heads security for Hughes' Nevada holdings.

He also exchanges blackslaps with a string of CITY and STATE
POLITICIANS (id'd by "Hello Commissioner ... How's it going,
Supervisor? ... etc.) kept on the Hughes' tab.

As he nears the private elevator to the penthouse he is
accosted from behind by a half-buzzed STATE SENATOR in a green
polyester leisure suit.

SENATOR

Hey, handsome, that's one fancy
Hong Kong suit!

MAHEU

(turns with
practiced smile)
Clyde, good to see you. Actually,
I had this made in London.

SENATOR

That's why you're so great for this town, Bob: All that silk shit those dagos walk 'round in ... Christ, ya'd think Vegas turned into a fuckin' cocoon!

MAHEU

(chuckles)

Special Session starting?

SENATOR

(nods)

Wednesday. Committee chairs'll be up early to set hearing dates.

MAHEU

How's our tax credit holding up?

SENATOR

Got nine votes solid on Ways & Means and Garnick's ready to flip just in case. He's ridin' up with me to Carson City.

Maheu nods, slaps him on the shoulder and starts toward the penthouse elevator protected by TWO UNIFORMED GUARDS.

SENATOR

Tell Mr. Hughes I said hello.

MAHEU

I will.

SENATOR

Be sure to mention my name.

Maheu stops and turns.

MAHEU

Of course, Clyde. Of course, I will.

Then he turns and walks to the elevator as one of the guards presses the button.

ANGLE - SENATOR

Walking back to a table to rejoin his YOUNG GIRLFRIEND. As she hands him his drink she nods toward Maheu who's just stepping onto the private elevator.

GIRLFRIEND

Is that Howard Hughes?

SENATOR

(laughs)

Nope, but he's the only
sonovabitch who gets to see him.

(finishes drink)

Be right back.

He walks past several BLACKJACK TABLES and then turns down a hallway until he reaches the

CASINO MONEY ROOM

ARMED GUARDS stand outside the large steel door. The guards smile and exchange greetings with him. Guard 1 knocks on the door. A beat and someone peers through the security eyehole.

The door opens and the HEAD CASHIER lets the senator inside.

CASHIER

How you doin', Senator?

SENATOR

Ain't how you're doin', it's who
you're doin'. Surprised I gotta
tell you that.

The cashier LAUGHS as he shuts the door behind him and leads the Senator to the other side of the room. In the b.g. we see THREE OTHER CASHIERS running the casino's huge cash receipts through counting machines, tallying the results on adding machines, rolling bags of cash into the huge open safe, etc.

In a clearly practiced routine, the Cashier picks up a stack of bills and riffs off about a half-inch. He starts to slip them into an envelope.

SENATOR

I just throw it away soon as I
walk out.

The cashier laughs as the Senator takes the bills and jams them into his inside jacket pocket and exits.

NOTE: The preceding Money Room scene is INTERCUT WITH:

VARIOUS ANGLES - MAHEU

Riding up in the elevator, anxious once again as he runs his fingers around the edges of the envelope; Exiting elevator onto 9th Floor corridor where he walks down the carpeted hallway to the Anteroom where the Security Guard who took Hughes' message in the opening scene is sitting at a desk outside the door.

INTERCHANGE ENDS with Maheu and the Guard exchanging brief greetings as the Guard KNOCKS on the door and then a BUZZER sounds unlocking it. Maheu opens the door and enters.

INT. ANTEROOM - NIGHT

Crawford is on duty with HOWARD ECKERSLEY, another Mormon aide. "ICE STATION ZEBRA" is BOOMING as usual from Hughes' bedroom.

Eckersley sits behind the desk with the daily log in the typewriter. As he reads a book he is mouthing the dialogue a beat before we hear it.

Crawford is in an easy chair with a copy of Life with LBJ on the cover. Neither gets up; they barely bother to look up.

Maheu starts to drop his envelope on the desk, then stops.

MAHEU

There are some important things I have to talk to him about.

CRAWFORD

Are they in your report?

(Maheu nods)

After he reads it, I'm sure he'll call you.

MAHEU

I want to see him!

Suddenly, despite the booming sound track, the room gets very quiet. Eckersley stops reading and looks up.

MAHEU

I want to go in and see him!

No one moves: The animosity between them is apparent.

CRAWFORD

(icy)

It's late. Your wife's probably waiting up for you.

Maheu looks like he's a beat away from slugging Crawford and pushing his way into the bedroom. But instead he throws his report down on the desk, turns and storms out the door.

ECKERSLEY

Think he's been drinking

CRAWFORD

(staring at door)

I have no idea.

A beat, he turns, pulls a couple of Kleenex out of a nearby box and carefully arranges them around the report.

Then he picks it up, walks over to Hughes' bedroom door and KNOCKS. He doesn't bother to wait for a reply before he enters: Hughes would have a hard time hearing it even if the movie weren't blasting.

INT. HUGHES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Our first look and even in the semi-darkness we're instantly struck by the size: It's 10 X 16. The cocktail waitresses downstairs have bigger bedrooms and they're not in them 24 hours a day.

ANGLE - CRAWFORD

As he closes the door behind him, carefully steps around the clutter on the floor and stops next to the screen, facing the unseen Hughes on the hospital-type bed visible in the f.g.

CRAWFORD

(shouting)

Maheu dropped off his report!

ANGLE - HUGHES' HAND

Long, thin fingers with yellowish curling nails suddenly extends into our POV and waves for Crawford to approach.

ANGLE - HUGHES

As Crawford approaches, stepping around the minefield of Kleenex boxes on the floor, we get our first look at Hughes and are stunned by the change in the intervening 11 years.

Even in the darkness we can see he's: Excruciatingly thin, naked except for a scanty loin cloth, bearded and with shoulder-length hair which habitually coils on top of his head and then lets fall.

Hughes carefully takes two Kleenex from a box on a table beside his bed and then takes the envelope. He indicates to Crawford to remove an empty bowl and spoon next to the tissues box.

As Crawford removes two more Kleenex and picks up the bowl ...

CRAWFORD

I'm afraid Bob's becoming more of a problem.

HUGHES
Who makes the Tutti Frutti?

CRAWFORD
Excuse me?

Hughes, annoyed, indicates the bowl Crawford's holding.

CRAWFORD
Oh, uh, I don't know. I'll find
out.

HUGHES
I like the little crunches.

CRAWFORD
Would you like some more?

Hughes shakes his head as he slowly opens Maheu's envelope.

HUGHES
Get my medicine.

He looks back down and resumes opening the envelope with the delicacy and attention of a neurosurgeon.

CRAWFORD
He wanted to walk in here: Bob
Maheu!

Hughes doesn't look up. It isn't the reaction Crawford expected.

CRAWFORD
He insisted on seeing you! I
thought he was going to take a
swing at me!

HUGHES
(shrugs)
He used to work for that crackpot,
Hoover, so all that's a completely
understandable impulse in my book.

INT. ANTEROOM - NIGHT

Crawford enters with the empty bowl and spoon.

ECKERSLEY
What'd he say?

CRAWFORD
 (sardonic)
 He wants to know who makes his
 banana-nut ice cream.

ECKERSLEY
 That's it?!

CRAWFORD
 He wants more codeine.

Eckersley pulls out the bottom desk drawer and removes a small leather case.

ANGLE - CASE

As Eckersley unzips it and lays it open: There are a couple of syringes and several ampules of an amber fluid.

He fills the syringe with 30 cc's of the pure codeine and hands it to Crawford who's already waiting with the Kleenex.

Then he pulls out a bottle of alcohol and cotton swabs from another drawer. He wets a swab and hands it to Crawford who's waiting with Kleenex in the other hand.

CRAWFORD
 Is it Dairy Joy?
 (off blank look)
 Who makes the banana nut?!

ECKERSLEY
 I think it's Baskin-Robbins.

CRAWFORD
 Find out!
 (beat)
 Maheu's getting worse. I'm
 calling Bill Gay tomorrow.

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

Reading Maheu's report of his meeting with LBJ. Using the obligatory Kleenex, he's holding the pages close to his face.

HUGHES
 You and your pals don't go for
 this, do you?

We slowly PULL OUT TO:

ANGLE - HUGHES AND CRAWFORD

where we can now see that Hughes is holding Maheu's report with his right hand while Crawford ties rubber tubing around his skeletal-like left arm.

We can also see that his inner forearm is bruised and scabby from the many previous injections. The syringe and alcohol swab lie on nearby Kleenexes.

CRAWFORD

No, that's Christian Scientists.
Mormons can take medicine, pills,
anything health-related like this.

He starts looking for a useable vein.

CRAWFORD

We believe our body to be a sacred
vessel, so we don't damage it with
alcohol, tobacco, things like
that.

HUGHES

How about LSD? The hippies say it
helps 'em see God.

CRAWFORD

(weak smile)
No, no LSD.

He finally finds a vein. He quickly swabs it and injects.

Hughes puts down the report and starts to HUM as the rush hits.

HUGHES

(voice drifting)
Called my office once on New
Year's Eve ... young kid answers
... said why the hell aren't you
at a party ... he's a Mormon, he
says ... that's why I like you
people ... you're always around.
(long beat)
And Bob ... him, too.

He reaches for the report on the table but in his stupor just
knocks off the Kleenex wrapped around it.

HUGHES POV - FALLING KLEENEX

In his drugged-out haze, they float in SLOW MOTION as we FADE
IN EXCITED CROWD NOISE AND CHEERS and DISSOLVE TO:

FALLING CONFETTI AND TICKERTAPE

coming down in a wild downpour onto

A 32-YEAR-OLD HOWARD HUGHES

He is incredibly handsome. And just as startling, he is happy and animated and wearing his signature lucky fedora.

SLOW PULL BACK TO:

ANGLE - HUGHES AND MAYOR FIORELLO LAGUARDIA

Sitting next to each other on the back of a large open convertible slowly moving down Broadway behind MOTORCYCLE COPS.

Tickertape is pouring down from skyscraper windows; ROARING CROWDS line both sides of the street, some holding signs like "AMERICA'S NEW EAGLE," "HOWARD HUGHES: HERO OF THE SKIES".

It is July 1938 and Hughes has just set a new record by flying around the world in a twin-engine plane in less than four days.

Hughes is waving with his right hand to the adoring masses, exhibiting an easy, natural charisma.

LAGUARDIA

(over noise)

This is bigger than Lindbergh's!

HUGHES

All I did was sit on my ass! The engine did the work!

LaGuardia laughs and starts to turn back to wave to the crowds when he suddenly notices something.

LAGUARDIA

What's that?!

We FOLLOW LAGUARDIA'S GAZE to:

HUGHES' LEFT ARM

which had been tucked between them, hidden from view.

The sleeve is rolled above the elbow, the RUBBER TUBING is still tied around it.

Before Hughes can reply a PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN breaks out of the crowd, jumps on the running board and before he can react she kisses him full on the mouth.

ANGLE - HUGHES

Startled, he pulls back from her and puts his fingers on his lips. A beat and

A LARGE COCKROACH

scurries out of his mouth and onto his hand. Horrified, he throws it down. The girl LAUGHS and jumps off the running board and disappears into the crowd.

LAGUARDIA

(chuckling)

Damn things're all over the place!

~~FADE TO BLACK~~ for a couple of beats and then hear ~~A PHONE START TO RING~~. Then A LIGHT SUDDENLY GOES ON and we see

INT. MAHEU BEDROOM - NIGHT

He has just turned on the light on the small table beside his bed. As he picks up the phone he checks the clock: 3:45 a.m.

MAHEU

Hello, Howard.

HUGHES

(angry, emotional)

Those germs get out, they can't be stopped! Should be easy to understand even for a fool like him!

(NOTE: Hughes' amplifier on his phone to help him hear causes an eerie "reverb" effect sort of like the Wizard of Oz.)

Yvette, lying next to him, starts to stir.

MAHEU

Howard, hold on, I'm going to switch phones.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Maheu as he turns out the light, exits the bedroom and pads in his pajamas down the hallway to his

STUDY

where he turns on the light and sits behind his large mahogany desk and picks up the phone.

(NOTE: On the wall behind him is a map of Las Vegas titled: "Hughes Holdings". Red marker covers casinos, office buildings, etc. comprising 20 percent of the map. Over the course of the movie, the red spreads over the map like a tide.

On his desk is a GOLD-FRAMED PHOTO OF A DASHING HUGHES in his 30's. When Maheu's at his desk he can't help but stare at it.)

MAHEU

(calm, soothing)

The problem is he's getting pressured by the Pentagon and he's too beaten down to fight back. You should have seen him: He looks awful! Worse than on TV.

HUGHES

This war's hurt me more than him! I lost 50 million on that helicopter contract, but I don't go around poisoning the country!

MAHEU

Uh, Howard, could you turn down your amplifier?

We hear a SERIES OF POPS AND WHISTLES.

HUGHES

How's that?

The REVERB is WORSE THAN BEFORE.

MAHEU

Uh, fine. Like I said in my report, as far as moving the test site we'll be better off investing in Humphrey and Nixon. But he seemed willing to help on our antitrust problem if we kick into his library and institute.

HUGHES

Tell him we'll give him 1 million.

MAHEU

I checked when I got back: Donations are capped at \$25,000.

HUGHES

Then I'm not handing that sonovabitch a dime! I can't control him with \$25,000!

HUGHES (CONT.)

(beat)

Something else: I'm buying the Silver Slipper.

MAHEU

Howard, I think we should hold off on that -- at least 'til the Stardust thing's resolved.

HUGHES

(angry)

Know what I think?! You're not the same brass-balls operator I used to know!

MAHEU

I've always given you 110 percent, Howard. I hope you believe me and not your palace guard up there.

HUGHES

All I want is to get back to the way things were.

MAHEU

I want to make things better than they were. But, Howard, you make it awfully difficult.

HUGHES

(beat)

They did tell me about that little scene the other night.

MAHEU

All the things we've gone through together ... in all those years I've never seen you! It's getting harder and harder for me to keep on like this.

A very long silence. We're not sure if Hughes is still on the other end. And then ...

HUGHES

If you saw me ... as I am now ... you would lose all the respect you ever had for me. I never want to discuss this again.

Then a CLICK and DIAL TONE.

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

as his family LAUGHS in the b.g., he looks as if he may burst into tears.

EXT. DESERT INN TENNIS COURT - NEXT DAY, DUSK

Maheu and GOV. PAUL LAXALT towel off between games as a WAITER drops off a couple of bottles of beer.

LAXALT

... Christ, how many'll that make?
Four?

MAHEU

Five, but who's counting?

LAXALT

The Justice Department.

MAHEU

Won't be a problem.

LAXALT

(shrugs, laughs)
If you say so ...

MAHEU

They catch Lansky skimming from the Flamingo, announce they want to kick the Mob out of Vegas, and then they try to screw the one guy who can solve all their problems. It's nuts.

LAXALT

(laughs)
Bob, have another drink: You're preaching to the converted.

An AIDE suddenly walks up and whispers briefly in Laxalt's ear.

LAXALT

Sorry, we'll have to skip the next set.

He hands his tennis gear to his aide.

MAHEU

Your support means a lot, Paul.

LAXALT

Whatever I can do.

They both stand. The NEW ANGLE discloses the shadow covering them is from the D.I.'s looming hotel tower.

MAHEU

If you ever decide to run for president, Howard'll be there for you from Day One.

LAXALT

That's a way's off, but when you see him please tell him I deeply appreciate it.

MAHEU

I will, I will.

AIDE

Governor, we're really going to be late.

LAXALT

I'll speak to the Gaming Board and see what we can work out.

They shake hands. Maheu anxiously drains his bottle as he watches him leave. As he signals the waiter for another he suddenly hears the LOUD SOUND OF APPROACHING SIRENS.

ANGLE - FIRE ENGINES AND POLICE CRUISERS

racing down the Strip past Maheu who's run out to see what's going on.

Standing beneath the Desert Inn's 50,000-bulb marquee advertising SAMMY DAVIS JR., he turns to where they're heading.

MAHEU'S POV - HORIZON

Smoke is curling up beyond the glitz of the Strip.

INSERT - HUGHES' PERSONAL TV (ID'D BY FEDORA HANGING ON THE RABBIT-EAR ANTENNA)

NEWS CLIPS of BUILDINGS SET AFIRE, CARS OVERTURNED, RIOT POLICE SHOOTING TEAR GAS AT BLACK CROWDS as we hear

WALTER CRONKITE V.O.
 ... triggered by outrage over Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in Memphis last night, rioting has erupted in black urban areas all across the country. From the nation's capital in Washington to Miami, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago and now just over the wires, reports of arson and looting breaking out in Las Vegas.

ANGLE - MAHEU ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE RIOT

Still in his tennis whites standing with Security Chief Jack Hooper (whom we met earlier) as they watch HELMETED COPS ducking rocks and Molotov cocktails while trying to clear streets. A NERVOUS DRIVER stands with their limo in the b.g.

Maheu keeps turning back to check through all the smoke

THE SILHOUETTE OF THE DESERT INN HOTEL

Looming like a watchtower over the distant neon-lit Strip.

INT. LIMO - DUSK

Maheu and Hooper are returning to the Desert Inn. As they swing onto the Strip the phone starts to RING.

They exchange a tense glance before Maheu finally picks it up.

MAHEU
 Hello, Howard.

HUGHES
 (panicky)
 Where've you been?! They're burning down the city!

MAHEU
 That isn't true. I've just been --

HUGHES
 Goddamn black lunatics can destroy the whole country -- I'm flying out tonight!

MAHEU
 What'd Crawford and the others say?

HUGHES

It was their idea! The situation's out of control!

MAHEU

Howard, I've been down there! The cops have roadblocks all over the place, Laxalt's got the National Guard out patrolling the streets!

HUGHES

Whole thing's being run by the Commies! Who do you suppose is their number one target?! They burn me down and it's great propaganda: they've wiped out the King of Capitalism! I've put out a national alert: Triple security, shoot to kill!

CUT TO QUICK NEWSREEL-STYLE CUTS to show the size and scope of the Hughes Empire: Squads of HEAVILY-ARMED SECURITY GUARDS pour off buses, erect barriers, lock gates, etc. in front of the Hughes Tool Co. in Texas and Hughes Aircraft and Hughes Electronics in California.

MAHEU V.O.

Howard, leaving the country would be a mistake!

BACK TO MAHEU

as the limo turns into the Desert Inn entrance and he suddenly notices THE MARQUEE ADVERTISING SAMMY DAVIS JR.

MAHEU

(hesitates, then)

Do you know that we've got Sammy Davis Jr. taking care of us here?

HUGHES

(intrigued)

How's that?

MAHEU

Well, uh, as a personal favor to you he's putting the word out that all Hughes hotels and casinos are off-limits. With King gone, he's one of the biggest Negroes in the country right now.

HUGHES

Thank God there's one with half a brain.

(beat)

It still doesn't change the contamination problem! It's getting worse by the minute! I can't keep my food down!

CLICK. Hughes hangs up. One crisis averted; two more take its place. Just another day in Oz.

Hooper is still stunned by the Sammy Davis story.

HOOPER

How'd you come up with that Sammy Davis thing? I'm in the presence of genius, that's the damn truth!

But Maheu is in no mood to savor his victory as he stares out his window up to the top floor of the hotel.

HOOPER

What's the matter?

MAHEU

The Mormons want to get him out of the country.

HOOPER

Why?

Maheu, lost in thought, just stares up at the 9th floor.

INSERT - HUGHES' TV (FEDORA HANGING ON ANTENNA)

Black-and-white footage of Martin Luther King's funeral in Atlanta. His coffin, borne on a mule-drawn sharecropper's wagon, is carried past grieving crowds.

(We can also hear Hughes SPOONING his ice cream o.s.)

ANNOUNCER V.O.

A grieving Atlanta jammed sidewalks and rooftops to witness the final return of its son, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., shot down at the age of 39 while pursuing his dream of racial equality.

The procession is led by his widow, CORETTA SCOTT KING, their children, JESSE JACKSON, RALPH ABERNATHY, et. al.

ANNOUNCER V.O.

His funeral was held at the Ebenezer Baptist Church which he attended as a boy and where he delivered his first sermon. The pews were filled with the poor and the humble to whom he had dedicated his life, along with the powerful and famous who ...

Cuts of LBJ and LADY BIRD, BOBBY AND ETHEL KENNEDY and finally, HUBERT AND MURIEL HUMPHREY before DISSOLVING TO:

ANGLE - BURNT-OUT COMMERCIAL BLOCK, LAS VEGAS

Maheu is walking with a REALTOR past the mom-and-pop stores destroyed in the riot. They're the only white faces on the block. Maheu's limo and DRIVER are in b.g.

REALTOR

... were way underinsured, at least the ones that had any to begin with. Southwest Savings holds most of the paper, and they'll --

MAHEU

He wants it.

REALTOR

(uncomprehending)

What?

MAHEU

This! The whole block!

REALTOR

Uh, sure, I can get you a good price. The bank sure as hell doesn't want to get stuck with it.

(beat)

So what's he gonna do with it?

MAHEU

What do you mean?

REALTOR

(indicates block)

Ain't exactly prime territory for high-rollers. So what's he gonna do with it?

MAHEU

Nothing.

(beat)
He just wants it.

Just then Maheu's driver runs up.

DRIVER
You've got a call from Mr. Gay.

EXT. MCCARREN AIRPORT, LAS VEGAS - DAY

Maheu's limo drives past the MAIN TERMINAL and continues to the far side reserved for CORPORATE PLANES.

The limo drives up to the largest plane parked in the taxi area (with stairs already positioned outside the open cabin door): A JET with a Hughes Corp. logo.

INT. HUGHES JET - DAY

Maheu is seated in the plushly appointed cabin facing Bill Gay, now the head of Hughes' Los Angeles headquarters.

Gay indicates a PRETTY STEWARDESS standing by a wet bar at the other end of the cabin.

GAY
Would you like a cocktail?

MAHEU
(edgy)
A little early in the day, wouldn't you say, Bill?

GAY
(shrugs)
Is it? I don't drink, myself.

MAHEU
I know.

A tense silence. They're rivals for Hughes' favor and influence. More than that Maheu is the physical and emotional opposite of the reserved Gay, a Mormon elder. Finally,

GAY
No one else knows I'm here. Not even my office in L.A.
(no response)
I'd appreciate your keeping our meeting confidential.

Maheu stares at him, then slowly nods.

GAY

I've been privileged to work for Howard Hughes almost my entire adult life.

(deep breath)

In the last few months, his mental state has deteriorated so markedly ... I've been forced to conclude -- and I think you'll agree -- he should, for his own good, be declared incompetent.

MAHEU

What are you trying to pull?!

GAY

Not permanently. Until he bounces back.

MAHEU

How'd you come up with this?! You suddenly become a psychiatrist?!

GAY

His mother acted the same way: Same obsession with germs.

(beat)

Anyways, I see him!

Maheu instantly reacts to Gay's unsubtle shot.

MAHEU

You actually thought I was gonna go along and let you take over?!

GAY

Calm down, Bob. No one's taking over anything.

MAHEU

That's why you were so hot to get him out of the country!

All pretense is dropped. The animosity is out in the open.

GAY

I understand your feelings but I'm afraid they're clouding your judgment.

MAHEU

Nothing's clouded. I can see right through you.

GAY

This is what I see: You in your fancy clothes palling around with the high and mighty. Come quite a ways for a poor boy from Maine.

MAHEU

It's what he wants! To be him on the outside!

GAY

To represent him on the outside. I believe that's what you meant.
(beat, sardonic)
Or aren't I seeing through you?

Maheu, abashed, doesn't respond.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

The FOREMAN is studying BLUEPRINTS on a makeshift table as in the b.g. his CREW is laying the foundation for what will apparently be a very large mansion.

INT. HUGHES' DESERT INN BEDROOM - DAY

Dark and tomb-like as always. Hughes is propped up in bed studying a file.

CLOSEUP - FILE

It's a DAILY SURVEILLANCE LOG of Jean Peters' activities and movements. She's being treated the same as his teenage mistress 11 years before.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Xanadu-West in Bel Air.

INSERT - UNKNOWN POV - GRAINY TELEPHOTO SHOT - JEAN PETERS

In her bathing suit, still as beautiful as when she was a new bride, she's reading a book on a chaise next to a huge pool. A MAID brings out a phone and plugs it in.

(NOTE: Following conversation is metallic/staticy to convey that it's being heard on a wiretap.)

HUGHES

I can't stop thinking about you,
honey, I miss you something awful.

JEAN

Me too, darling! Are you feeling
any better?

HUGHES

A little.

JEAN

(sits up)
That's wonderful! You sound
better!

HUGHES

I've got a surprise for you.

JEAN

(laughs)
Am I supposed to guess?

HUGHES

Go ahead, you'll never get it.

JEAN

OK, I give up, then!

HUGHES

I'm building your dream house!

JEAN

Oh, Howard! Where is it?!

HUGHES

Las Vegas. It'll be finished by
fall and you can move in. I
designed the whole thing myself.
Even put in a wine cellar like in
those French chateaux!

JEAN

It's not going to look like one of
those dark, stone castles, is it?

HUGHES

(chuckles)
It's gonna look just like Tara
except not so cramped.

JEAN

(laughs)
Are you going to carry me up the
stairs?!

HUGHES

Matter of fact there's a beautiful winding staircase in the foyer. I made everything just the way you like it: All the rooms are bright and sunny!

CLOSEUP - JEAN

Her face tightens. All her high spirits have just evaporated.

JEAN

(choking)

You're not going to live there with me, are you?

HUGHES

Not right away. When I feel a little stronger.

CUT TO AERIAL SHOT

of Hughes' SURVEILLANCE TEAM watching her from the trees/roof of the adjoining estate. Their telephoto was the UNKNOWN POV.

Several beats of static-filled silence then we hear what sounds like a SOB.

HUGHES V.O.

(shouting)

Speak up! You know I have trouble hearing!

MOTORCYCLE SQUAD OF NEVADA STATE POLICE - THAT NIGHT

Roaring down the Strip. As CAMERA PULLS BACK we see they're leading a line of FOUR LIMOS. The first has a pair of NEVADA STATE FLAGS on both front bumpers.

The procession pulls into the Desert Inn driveway and stops at

EXT. DESERT INN MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

where Maheu is waiting to greet them. Gov. Laxalt exits the first limo and 9 MIDDLE-AGED MEN emerge from the other three.

From the AD-LIB FIRST-NAME GREETINGS, it's clear Maheu knows them -- but their occupation/purpose isn't revealed. Maheu quickly leads them into

INT. DESERT INN

where they cross the casino floor to the guarded elevator. They all manage to squeeze in and Maheu hits the button for the

SECOND FLOOR

where he leads them to a large door at the end of the hallway that opens to the casino's

EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM

where exactly 11 leather chairs are spaced around the large oval table in the center of the room.

Through the soundproof plate glass on the far side, the casino action transpires silently on the floor below.

A black phone is on the table in front of each chair. Maheu steers Laxalt to the head of the table. He takes the seat to Laxalt's right as the others sit down.

Maheu takes his phone and dials a number. A few beats, then ...

MAHEU

Hello, Howard, I'm here with Gov. Laxalt and the members of the state Gaming Control Board. They assure me they're all eager to cut through the formalities and get down to business. So without wasting any more time, I'm going to hand this over to them.

Maheu nods and they all take up their phones.

LAXALT

Good evening, Mr. Hughes, this is Paul Laxalt.

A SQUAWKING "HELLO THERE!" REVERBS out of the phones as Laxalt and the commissioners yank the receivers away from their ears.

MAHEU

Howard, the volume on the amp's a little high ... thanks.

He nods and the others cautiously move the receivers to an inch or two from their ears.

LAXALT

As Bob has indicated, in light of your singular contributions to the economic and moral climate of Las Vegas and the state of Nevada, we see no reason not to proceed as expeditiously as possible. Now I'm going to turn the rest of this hearing over to Chairman Crosley.

He nods across the table to The COMMISSION CHAIRMAN.

CHAIRMAN

The requirement of a personal appearance by the applicant has been waived by unanimous vote of the board. We will now proceed to question the applicant as to his fitness to hold the gaming license to operate the Silver Slipper Casino in the city of Las Vegas, Clark County.

(beat)

You are Howard Robard Hughes, born December 24, 1905 in Houston, Texas?

In another GREAT OPTICAL EFFECT we shoot from the Chairman's phone down the wire, through the jack and into the wall where it disappears into A THICK BUNDLE OF WIRES.

We shoot up with incredible speed along the bundle up to the ninth floor, where we follow the single phone line as it splits off and enters

HUGHES' BEDROOM

and we ride along it from the jack all the way to

CLOSEUP - PHONE RECEIVER

just in time to hear

HUGHES

That's correct.

And the CAMERA PULLS BACK to

ANGLE - HUGHES

He is naked, grimy, unwashed hair hanging past his shoulders, lying in the dark on his Kleenex-covered bed (with filthy sheets) staring at "Ice Station Zebra" as it continues to run with the SOUND TURNED DOWN.

He occasionally dips his spoon into the bowl of melted banana-nut ice cream that's on the bed next to him, spilling most of it before it gets to his mouth.

As the CAMERA MOVES AROUND HIS ROOM, we see the mind-boggling collection of Kleenex boxes, the hundreds of pads of yellow legal-size paper he keeps stacked for his memos, and the dozens of Mason jars where he stores his urine.

We also see that his bed is encircled by an outer ring of 3-foot-high stacks of old newspapers and aviation magazines -- except for a paper towel-lined pathway leading to the bathroom.

The only sound is an occasional "yes" or "no" and the sporadic SLURPING of his ice cream.

INT. DESERT INN CONFERENCE ROOM - 10 MINUTES LATER

The "hearing" is over. Maheu is standing by the door shaking hands and thanking the departing commission members for their unanimous affirmative vote.

Laxalt waits by the table until he is alone with Maheu. His smooth, assured demeanor suddenly disappears.

LAXALT

(anxious)

Heard the latest story going 'round about him?

MAHEU

(shakes head)

I've stopped trying to keep up with 'em all.

LAXALT

He died last year! And you've kept everything running without missing a beat. Just come up with a voice over the phone and no one knows the difference.

MAHEU

(laughing)

That's pretty good!

LAXALT

(angry)

It ever gets out I've been handing
over licenses to a dead man ...

MAHEU

Paul, c'mon, you're not *serious*?

LAXALT

He's OK?! Tell me the truth!
You've seen him?!

MAHEU

He's got more energy than you and
me put together! Jesus, that
really had you going!

Maheu laughs and slaps Laxalt on the back. The relieved Laxalt
smiles, shakes his hand and exits.

Maheu stands alone in the conference room thinking about what
just transpired as -- through the window behind him -- the
casino action silently continues.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Maheu is sitting in the back seat. HIS DRIVER is in front.
They're parked in front of the Desert Inn. Maheu stares out
the window then holds his watch up.

MAHEU POV - WATCH FACE

It's 12:01.

MAHEU

Let's go.

The limo starts to pull away and we PULL OUT TO:

EXT. DESERT INN - NIGHT

and see that the limo is leading a procession of SIX IDENTICAL
DARK SEDANS. They pull out of the Desert Inn entrance and head
across the Strip and into the driveway of the

EXT. SILVER SLIPPER - NIGHT

Maheu jumps out and leads TWO DOZEN MEN in dark suits into

INT. SILVER SLIPPER - NIGHT

They spread out swiftly and efficiently. Most taking up strategic spots around the floor while a GROUP OF SIX walks swiftly to the back and the LEADER flashes IDENTIFICATION to a GUARD who swiftly unlocks a door and they enter the

CASH ROOM

where STARTLED CLERKS look up from the piles of bills they're processing.

LEADER

Since 12:01 all of you have been working for Howard Hughes.

CLERK 1

We getting a raise?

LEADER

You're getting out. You're all fired.

INT. SILVER SLIPPER EXECUTIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

HENRY, 38, the Mob-appointed general manager, is working at his desk. The neon along the Strip blinks through the huge window behind him. A beat and the phone RINGS.

HENRY

Yeah? ...

His expression changes to surprise as he listens. He glances at his gold Rolex for a beat, then ...

HENRY

No, it's OK.

He hangs up and his door opens and Maheu walks in. They know each other. The tone is amicable.

HENRY

I thought the hearing was supposed to be the end of the month.

MAHEU

There was an unexpected opening in their schedule.

HENRY

I bet there was.

(beat)
I haven't cleaned out my office
yet.

MAHEU
I have someone outside who'll help
you pack.

HENRY
You don't have to bother.

MAHEU
No bother at all.

They smile. They're two pros who know the drill: The takeover
was earlier than expected to try to head off cash, tally
sheets, etc. from moving out the door.

Maheu nods, turns and starts out the door.

HENRY
You used to be in the FBI, right?

MAHEU
(stops, turns)
That's right.

HENRY
Then tell me somethin'. You know
how we started all this ...
(indicates Strip
behind him)
... how we do business. Why they
suddenly so hot to kick us out?

MAHEU
Who'd you want running your town:
Organized Crime or Howard Hughes?

HENRY
That's what I don't get: With us
you know who you're dealin' with!

ANGLE -- DETAILED MAP OF LAS VEGAS

A beat and then a GREEN-STENCILED OVERLAY MAP headed
"Development 1958-63" is laid on top.

A couple of beats and a RED-STENCILED OVERLAY headed
"Development 1963-68" is then placed on top.

CAMERA PULLS OUT until we can see the loin-clothed HUGHES bent
over studying the maps which nearly cover the top of his bed.

A beat and his PHONE RINGS. He doesn't appear to notice it then finally tears himself away and picks it up with a Kleenex.

HUGHES

What is it?

MAHEU

It's me, Howard. Our people are in place; it couldn't have gone smoother.

HUGHES

In what place?

MAHEU

The Silver Slipper! We took control at midnight!

HUGHES

What about the goddamn bombs?!

MAHEU

That's why I'm going to Denver, remember?

HUGHES

Government calls 'em "explosive devices!" Kill you just as quick!

MAHEU

(beat)

Uh, Howard, there's something else that you should know. Bill Gay flew out here to get me to go along with a scheme he cooked up to have you declared incompetent. I told him to go to hell, of course.

Hughes suddenly jumps off his bed and, still holding the phone, walks over to a window, draws back the heavy curtain and with his long nails scrapes off enough of the black tape covering the glass until he can peer down and see

HUGHES POV - MAHEU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark except for the light in Maheu's study.

MAHEU

Howard?

HUGHES

As long as we keep talking to each other, nothing will happen.

Hughes hangs up. His eyes appear moist.

MAHEU'S STUDY - NIGHT

Maheu has just put down the phone. He looks up and sees Yvette standing in her nightgown in the doorway.

YVETTE

You wish you were him?

MAHEU

(defensive)

What do you mean?

She walks over to him. He sits frozen.

YVETTE

(playful)

You know ... all the beautiful women he had.

She LAUGHS and leans down. Maheu smiles slightly as she hugs him and we DISSOLVE TO:

EST. SHOT - DENVER - DAY

The city skyline framed by the still snow-capped peaks of the surrounding Rockies.

INT. DENVER HILTON HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Large, lavishly furnished. A beat and the door opens and Maheu walks in with HUBERT HUMPHREY.

MAHEU

Mr. Vice President, if you don't mind sitting right there ...

Maheu guides Humphrey to a chair against a blank wall.

MAHEU

Please just relax and I'll be right with you.

HUMPHREY

(cheery)

Take your time!

Maheu turns and walks directly toward us and then continues OFF CAMERA. A beat and we hear A CLICK and then A LOW HUM and then, still holding on Humphrey looking right at us, we hear

MAHEU O.S.
 Could you speak as to how a
 Humphrey Presidency would be
 beneficial to Mr. Hughes?

Humphrey stares at him for a beat. We're not sure if he's
 about to storm out. Then ...

HUMPHREY
 Do you want me to talk about the
 anti-trust situation or the
 underground testing?

MAHEU O.S.
 Why don't you start with the
 testing?

Humphrey nods, CLEARS HIS THROAT, and then breaks into his
 SIGNATURE GRIN as we GO TO:

SAME ANGLE - INSERT MOVIE SCREEN- HUMPHREY

Now the SHOT is in BLACK & WHITE and we hear in the b.g. the
 WHIRRING of a PROJECTOR.

HUMPHREY
 Hello, Howard, I want you to know
 that I've long shared your concern
 about the dangers of atomic
 testing. And one of the first
 initiatives of my Administration
 will be to call for an immediate
 moratorium on all testing within
 1,000 miles of a population
 center. That would be a minimum.
 We may extend it further. Let me
 spell out for you just a few of my
 thoughts on ...

And as Humphrey continues to expound we PULL BACK TO:

INT. HUGHES BEDROOM

where Hughes is lying on his bed, spooning his banana-nut ice
 cream (the consistency of soup) as he watches Hubert grovel.

He finishes the bowl and BANGS it several times with his spoon.
 A beat and GEORGE FRANCOM, another Mormon aide, enters. Hughes
 indicates he wants more.

INT. ANTEROOM

Francom enters with the empty bowl sheathed in Kleenex as we continue to hear HUMPHREY'S VOICE BOOMING out from the bedroom.

Crawford is dozing in the easy chair, a paper over his stomach with a headline about growing U.S. casualties in Vietnam.

Francom opens the refrigerator/freezer and pulls out the ice cream carton. He spoons out a couple of scoops, leaving the carton a little less than half full.

FRANCOM

Ice cream's getting low. I'm gonna get some more.

Crawford, eyes closed, GRUNTS and turns on his side.

INT. MAHEU HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Maheu, sipping a scotch, is working at his desk. His face is tired, lined as looks up and sees the photo of Hughes staring enigmatically at him.

The map behind him is redder than before. The door opens and Yvette leans in.

YVETTE

How's it going?

Maheu manages a weak smile and shrugs.

YVETTE

You look tired.

MAHEU

I'm fine ... really.

YVETTE

Glad to hear it.

She suddenly tosses him a set of CAR KEYS.

EXT. BASKIN ROBBINS STORE - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

A beat and George Francom comes flying out of the store in a panic, jumps into his car and ROARS out of the parking lot.

NIGHT SKY

The moon's full, the stars are incredibly bright. PAN DOWN TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Maheu and Yvette are sitting on an old blanket in front of a campfire sipping cups of hot chocolate from a thermos. They're not talking; Maheu still seems preoccupied.

Their three kids are in the b.g. throwing a fluorescent frisbee to their BARKING DOG.

YVETTE

Remember those nights in Washington when it got so bad we couldn't breathe? And we'd drive out to the Maryland shore ...

MAHEU

... and sleep on the beach.
(indicates sand)
Is that what made you think of this?

YVETTE

No.

The kids run up, LAUGHING and YELLING and pour themselves hot chocolate and then run off again.

MAHEU

It's a different world out here.

Yvette stares at the lights of the city on the horizon.

YVETTE

It's a better world out here!
(long beat)
Are you OK, Bob? You're gone so much ... And when you're back, it seems like ...

She doesn't finish. Maheu nods to go ahead.

YVETTE

... like you're under a lot more pressure.

MAHEU

You mean all the phone calls? I know that he --

YVETTE

Not that, it's always been like that. It's ... maybe it's me!

Maheu puts down his cup, reaches over and puts his arm around her and squeezes her tight.

YVETTE

You've got a lot on your mind, I know that! And I don't want to --

MAHEU

What is it?

(she hesitates)

It's OK.

YVETTE

I've been thinking ... that we should get another house.

MAHEU

Are you serious?!

YVETTE

It doesn't have to be fancy. Just to move! So it won't feel like he's ...

(reacts to Maheu's quizzical look)

Don't you have any idea at all what it's like?!

MAHEU

(softly)

It's harder for you because you don't know him. He's a brilliant man!

(looks up)

See that?!

Yvette follows his gaze up to the BRILLIANT NIGHT SKY.

MAHEU

There!

He points to A SMALL POINT OF LIGHT directly overhead.

YVETTE V.O.

You mean that star?

MAHEU V.O.

It's his! Hughes Electronics!

And we notice that it is slowly moving across the black sky.

MAHEU V.O.

It's a spy satellite for the CIA. He helped design it and he never even went to college!

BACK TO MAHEU AND YVETTE

YVETTE

It's taking pictures right now?!

Maheu nods solemnly and suddenly grabs her and plants a big kiss. They both laugh.

EXT. HUGHES' CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - NIGHT

A forbidding concrete "fortress" commanding an entire block in a seedy Hollywood (Romaine Street) neighborhood. Dark except for a few lights on the second floor.

ANGLE - SECOND-FLOOR WINDOW

The DARK SHADOW OF A MAN is passing back and forth. CAMERA MOVES up and into

INT. BILL GAY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gay is talking on the phone while anxiously pacing.

GAY

Of course, he'd know the difference!

(beat)

You want him to go to Maheu?! Is that what you want?!

(beat, explodes)

This is the last time I'm saying it: Banana Swirl is not Banana Nut!

EST. SHOT - LARGE HOUSE - SACRAMENTO, CA - NIGHT

A quiet, suburban street.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

A phone on a side table starts to RING. A TEENAGE BOY enters and picks it up.

BOY

Hello ... yeah, he's down the cellar ... hold on.

He puts the receiver down on the table and walks over to a nearby door, opens it and leans down the stairway where we can hear a BANDSAW running in the b.g.

BOY
DAD! PHONE!

A beat and the bandsaw STOPS. The boy exits. We hear FOOTSTEPS coming up the stairs and then ANDREW BRANAGAN, West Coast Production Manager for Baskin-Robbins, appears still wearing his fancy woodworking apron.

BRANAGAN

Hello ... no, not all operations,
I'm in charge of production ...
yes, that's correct ... because it
wasn't meeting its sales target.
Not much of a call for it.

(long beat)

No, that's not possible, we're in
a high-volume business ... I
appreciate it, I happened to like
the flavor myself, but we wouldn't
be able to do any kind of special
order for less than ...

(calculates a beat)

... five hundred gallons.

QUICK CUTS OF BASKIN-ROBBINS FACTORY: 1. Hundreds of pounds of bananas and chopped nuts being unloaded; 2. They pour down stainless steel chutes into huge vats and are mixed into the swirling ice cream; 3. The last of the 500 gallons is wheeled into a Baskin-Robbins tractor-trailer truck.

ANGLE - TRUCK

As it pulls out of the factory gate and turns onto the highway passing several CAMPAIGN BILLBOARDS for Humphrey, Kennedy and McCarthy, reminding us that the California Democratic Primary is in full swing.

INSERT - COLOR TV - BOBBY KENNEDY

Bobby, standing next to ETHEL, waves to a CHEERING CROWD.

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

Propped up in bed watching the TV. His face suddenly CONTORTS and he CRIES OUT IN PAIN.

EXT. NINTH-FLOOR CORRIDOR

The guard outside the Hughes' suite is dozing in his chair when the door suddenly bursts open and Roy Crawford runs out and races to the door at the end of the hall and starts POUNDING.

OLDER MAN O.S.
 (groggy)
 It's open!

Crawford opens the door and we see in

INT. SUITE - NIGHT

Hughes' personal PHYSICIAN, 55, who resides here on 24-hour call, stretched out in his underwear on the couch, rubbing his eyes and yawning while a GAME SHOW BLARES on the TV.

CRAWFORD
 Something's happened!

INT. HUGHES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The physician, in a Desert Inn bathrobe, is listening to Hughes' heart as he holds (with a couple of Kleenexes) his stethoscope to Hughes' concave chest. (The NEWS REPORTS on the California primary continue on the TV in the b.g.)

Hughes is propped against his pillows. Crawford and Eckersley are at the foot of the bed. Finally, the physician pulls off his earpiece.

PHYSICIAN
 It wasn't an attack.

HUGHES
 It was something!

Before the doctor can reply ...

CRAWFORD
 He's has been under a great deal of stress, lately.

The doctor shoots him a look. They've been through this before.

PHYSICIAN
 We can try Valium.
 (beat)
 In addition to the codeine.

Crawford turns to Eckersley.

CRAWFORD
 (sotto)
 Get the blue bombers.

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

The room is dark. His face is lit by the reflected light of the TV screen as (clutching a Kleenex) he pops two LARGE BLUE 10 MG. VALIUM TABLETS while we hear UPDATED REPORTS on California's Democratic Primary which CONTINUE OVER:

CLOSEUP - DESERT INN HEAD CHEF

Face contorted with RAGE. The TV NEWS V.O. CONTINUES as we PULL BACK TO:

DESERT INN KITCHEN - NIGHT

And we see him screaming helplessly at Eckersley as OTHER CHEFS pull out steaks, chickens, etc. from the HUGE WALK-IN FREEZER while TWO BASKIN-ROBBINS TRUCKERS wheel in hundreds of gallons of banana-nut ice cream.

The TV NEWS V.O. CONTINUES as we GO BACK TO:

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

Even in the reflected light of the TV screen, we can see his pupils have constricted into black pinpoints -- the Valium and codeine have worked their magic.

And as we PUSH INTO one of the black holes WE HEAR:

TV ANCHOR V.O.

... and now that a clear trend has emerged, let's go back to Los Angeles where almost the entire Kennedy clan has gathered at the Ambassador Hotel to ...

Until we finally GO TO COMPLETE BLACK as we hear the SOUND OF A CAR PULLING UP and STOPPING and then PULL BACK until we see that the BLACK was the rear PASSENGER DOOR of a:

EXT. BLACK LIMO - NIGHT

and we see Howard step out with Jean looking beautiful in a silk cocktail dress.

It's June 1960. Los Angeles is hosting the Democratic National Convention which is about to nominate John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson as its Presidential-VP ticket.

Howard and Jean head into

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - NIGHT

Packed with excited CONVENTION DELEGATES (ID'd by their Kennedy-Johnson 1960 pins). Howard and Jean are effusively greeted by the STAFF before heading into the hotel's renowned

COCOANUT GROVE NIGHTCLUB

THE MAITRE D' shows them to a primo table.

EXCITED CROWD NOISE continues to drift in from the hotel. The CROWD NOISE remains a LOW RUMBLING in the b.g. through the rest of the scene.

AN OLDER MAN (JOSEPH KENNEDY) in his signature wire-frame glasses enters with a LARGE, NOISY GROUP. He spots Howard and Jean and heads to their table.

HUGHES

Shit!

JEAN

Who is it?!

HUGHES

Joe Kennedy!

JEAN

Oh, he must be so proud!

HUGHES

(growls)

I met him in this place 30 years ago and he's still a slimy sonovabitch!

Just then Kennedy arrives. During the AD-LIB GREETINGS AND INTROS the tension between Hughes and Kennedy is clear.

Kennedy's group beckons him as they head to a large banquette. Kennedy waves to indicate he'll be right along. Then he turns back to Hughes and stares at him for a beat.

KENNEDY

Christ, you look like hell.

Then he bursts into LAUGHTER and plunks himself down at their table. He turns and motions to the WAITER who wheels over an ornate silver ice bucket crammed with bottles of Dom Perignon. He POPS a bottle and pours out three glasses.

KENNEDY

To sons!

JEAN

To sons!

Hughes is conspicuously silent. He and Kennedy stare at each other before Hughes finally lifts the glass and takes a sip.

Kennedy leans across the table.

KENNEDY

You know that's your biggest mistake. You don't have to grease every politician to run the country. Just throw in enough to put your son in and have him run it for you!

Hughes doesn't reply. Kennedy looks over at Jean.

KENNEDY

It's not too late!

HUGHES

My kid'd be the only sonovabitch I couldn't buy -- maybe I'll adopt yours!

Kennedy laughs so hard he nearly chokes. The waiter hurries over and refills their glasses.

HUGHES

You sure he can pull it off?

KENNEDY

He's got the most money and he's got Larry O'Brien handing it out. That little mick's the best political mind since FDR.

Kennedy raises his glass.

KENNEDY

To good times! Grab 'em while you can!

Suddenly the happy crowd noise in the b.g suddenly turns to SHRIEKS AND SCREAMS and we DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT - TV SCREEN - BOBBY KENNEDY

The classic footage of Kennedy, a pool of blood spreading around his head, lying on the kitchen floor of the Ambassador Hotel (ID'd by REPORTER'S COMMENTARY) as PANDEMONIUM swirls around him and DISSOLVES TO:

CLOSEUP - LARRY O'BRIEN

The face is a little pudgy, eminently nondescript.

MAHEU O.S.

Mr. Hughes wants you to work for him.

O'BRIEN POV - MAHEU

Pausing in front of the map of Las Vegas, the red tide of Hughes' holdings radiates around his head in an eerie echo of Bobby's death scene. It's July 4, 1968.

MAHEU

~~Between you and me, he's been very affected by what's happened. He's known Joe Kennedy more than 30 years.~~

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show we're in

INT. MAHEU'S STUDY - DAY

O'Brien is sitting on a couch in the corner. Maheu, holding two drinks, walks over and hands him a glass. O'Brien takes a long swallow as he tries to assess what's going on.

O'BRIEN

Humphrey's asked me to take over his campaign.

MAHEU

We're aware of that.

O'Brien registers an involuntary look of surprise.

MAHEU

He's willing to wait 'til after the election before you begin work.

O'BRIEN

Here?

MAHEU

(shakes head)
In Washington -- as his lobbyist.
You'd be paid \$15,000 a month.

O'Brien's eyes widen.

MAHEU

He's been putting together some plans.

O'BRIEN

Like what?

MAHEU

He's always regretted selling TWA. He wants to get his feet wet again. There's a little outfit he's been looking at: Air West.

(beat)

He wouldn't have to appear before any hearings, would he?

O'BRIEN

(beat)

I think we could get around that.

MAHEU

(smiles, nods)

Good. Naturally, you'd also spend quite a bit of time on tax legislation.

O'Brien nods. He takes another drink.

O'BRIEN

Am I going to meet him?

MAHEU

No.

O'Brien seems almost relieved. He takes another drink.

O'BRIEN

Back in '60, when I was working for Jack, I was the one who leaked the story about Hughes' loan to Nixon's brother. I kind of wondered if he ever found out about it.

MAHEU

(shakes head)

But he wouldn't give a damn even if he did.

(off look)

The only thing he remembers is he didn't cover the action. That it actually made a difference who ended up President of the United States.

(beat)
That won't happen again.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

A couple of beats then a SPECTACULAR ERUPTION OF FIREWORKS followed by YELLS AND CHEERS.

CAMERA TRACKS A DESCENDING ROCKET until we finally see the HUGE CROWD jammed along the Strip watching the 4th of July show (ID'd by STREET VENDORS selling holiday sparklers, etc.).

CAMERA continues SLOW DESCENT until we see

ANGLE - DESERT INN TOWER

A SKYBURST EXPLODES directly overhead. And as A RED-WHITE-AND-BLUE SHOWER seemingly pours down all over it we hear A DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE, FOOTSTEPS and then

HUGHES V.O.

Get me some ice cream.

CRAWFORD V.O.

Right away, Mr. Hughes.

FOOTSTEPS as he starts to leave, then

HUGHES V.O.

Vanilla.

The FOOTSTEPS stop.

CRAWFORD V.O.

Excuse me?

HUGHES V.O.

I'm tired of that Tutti Frutti.
Can't get the damn crunches out of
my teeth.

EXT. CENTURY PLAZA HOTEL, L.A. - NIGHT

HUBERT AND MURIEL HUMPHREY in formal dress emerge from a fund-raising dinner and are greeted with SHOUTS and APPLAUSE from SUPPORTERS. Across the street, police are holding back a CROWD OF CHANTING PROTESTORS.

The Humphreys, doing their best to ignore the demonstration, shake hands and smile before entering their

LIMO (WITH THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SEAL)

Maheu is seated in the far corner. AN ALLIGATOR BRIEFCASE is on the seat beside him.

HUMPHREY

Wonderful to see you again, Bob!

MAHEU

Good evening, Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Humphrey.

HUMPHREY

Muriel, this is Bob Maheu.

MAHEU

(smiles, nods)

That's a beautiful gown you're wearing, Mrs. Humphrey.

MURIEL

Thank you.

The limo starts to slowly pull away with its motorcade (MOTORCYCLE COPS with FLASHERS ON, security vans, etc.).

HUMPHREY

Nixon hates all this: flying around the country, meeting the people. Can't stand it. I love it! That's why I'm going to win!

MAHEU

Mr. Hughes is behind you 100 percent. He feels it's vital to have someone in the White House who understands the dangers of nuclear contamination.

Muriel stares with a "What the hell's he talking about?" look.

HUMPHREY

Please tell him for me, Bob, I appreciate his support.

CLOSEUP - HUMPHREY'S RIGHT HAND

Pressing a button on a panel next to his door.

EXT. AVENUE OF THE STARS - NIGHT

The motorcade slows down and stops.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT jumps out of the front of the limo, opens the rear door and Maheu steps out. Without the briefcase.

The agent shuts the door, jumps back into the front and the motorcade pulls away in FLASHING BLUE AND RED LIGHTS.

Maheu stands on the side of the road (the Century Plaza visible in the b.g.) and watches it disappear. Then he turns and slowly walks back to the hotel.

INSERT - HUGHES' TV SCREEN

Classic stock FOOTAGE of CHICAGO POLICE battling DEMONSTRATORS outside the Democratic Convention in August 1968.

Then we hear SOUNDS o.c. of a telephone receiver being yanked off the hook, followed by DIALING. A few beats then ...

HUGHES O.S.

Even O'Brien won't be able to save him after this!

EST. SHOT - WASHINGTON, D.C. - MORNING

The Capitol dome, Washington Monument, etc.

EXT. DUKE ZEIBART'S RESTAURANT - MORNING

POWER BROKERS hurry inside to deal over breakfast.

A limo pulls up and A TANNED, MIDDLE-AGED EXECUTIVE (BEBE REBOZO) steps out. We FOLLOW HIM into

INT. RESTAURANT

where the MAITRE D' rushes up to him.

MAITRE D'

Mr. Rebozo, you brought up all the hot weather from Florida!

As Rebozo laughs we FREEZE FRAME him and hear

MAHEU V.O.

Bébe Rebozo is Richard Nixon's closest friend in the world. He runs a bank in Key Biscayne and manages all of his finances.

We UNFREEZE REBOZO and he finishes laughing as the Maitre D' whispers briefly in his ear and then points to a table across the crowded dining room.

We FOLLOW REBOZO as he winds his way between tables to a primo spot near the window where TWO OTHER MIDDLE-AGED MEN (RICHARD DANNER, ED MORGAN) are already seated having coffee.

Danner and Morgan spot him just before he arrives and they stand up to greet him.

The SOUND MUTES as Danner welcomes Rebozo (it's clear that they know each other) and introduces him to

CLOSEUP - FREEZE - MORGAN

as we hear

MAHEU V.O.

Ed Morgan and I go back to when we were both FBI agents. He's a big-time Washington lawyer now but I use him sometimes on certain sensitive deals.

UNFREEZE ACTION and the three men sit down and continue to chat (SOUND REMAINS MUTED) and we go to

CLOSEUP - FREEZE - DANNER

as we hear

MAHEU V.O.

Dick Danner's sort of the "go-between." He's a pal of Ed's and goes way back with Nixon and Rebozo -- I think he even introduced 'em to each other.

UNFREEZE ACTION for several beats as the three resume chatting (SOUND STILL MUTED) and then as they all LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY at an apparent joke we FREEZE ALL THREE as we hear

MAHEU V.O.

It didn't take long. The deal was pretty straightforward: Nixon'd get a hundred grand. Same as Humphrey.

(beat)

We didn't tell him about the last part.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANGLE - MAHEU - DAY

Lost in thought as he is walking with his briefcase. He suddenly stops and looks at something o.s.

MAHEU POV - JEAN'S "DREAM" HOUSE CONSTRUCTION SITE

The Foreman is staring at a set of blueprints as the crew toils in the b.g.

BACK TO MAHEU

~~He resumes walking for a couple of steps then stops. He turns~~ and heads over to the site, gingerly stepping over boards, around debris, etc. in an attempt to protect his fancy suit.

He walks over to the Foreman.

MAHEU
(shouts over noise)
Who's this for?!

FOREMAN
(shrugs)
I just build 'em!

Maheu chuckles and looks down at the blueprints. One sheet has an artist's sketch of the completed house.

MAHEU
Looks like a Taj Mahal for Colonel Sanders!

The Foreman shakes his head and LAUGHS and we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MORMON TABERNACLE, SALT LAKE CITY - NIGHT

Huge, impressive, illuminated. A large sign in front reads:

MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR FALL CONCERT
9 P.M., TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

A beat and then A BLACK LIMO speeds past the Tabernacle.

EXT. SALT LAKE CITY AIRPORT - NIGHT

A HUGHES JET is on the tarmac, gangplank down. A beat and the limo screeches to a stop beside it. Howard Eckersley jumps out with a GRAY METALLIC SUITCASE and runs into the plane.

The gangplank is immediately raised and the jet begins to taxi to a runway for takeoff.

INSERT - TV SCREEN - WALTER CRONKITE

Anchoring CBS's Election Night coverage. The eastern and central states on the map behind him are almost evenly divided between RED (Nixon) and BLUE (Humphrey).

(The CRANKED-UP VOLUME clues us that this is Hughes' set.)

CRONKITE

... and with it now 11 p.m. here on the east coast, it's clear this election won't be decided until results come in from the western states whose polling places have just closed. And, of course, Richard Nixon is hoping that his home state of California, with its huge bounty of electoral votes, will finally give him the victory he first sought eight years ago and lost in a razor-thin race much like the one we're seeing unfold tonight ...

INT. TABERNACLE - NIGHT

LAST FEW AUDIENCE MEMBERS filing into the hall packed with fresh-scrubbed MEN in short haircuts and WOMEN in modest dresses and skirts.

EXT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - NIGHT

The Hughes jet taxis to a stop. The gangplank is quickly lowered and Eckersley, clutching the metallic suitcase, races down the stairs and into a WAITING LIMO which speeds away.

INSERT - TV SCREEN - CRONKITE

The map behind him has a few more states filled in but is still almost evenly divided between blue and red.

CRONKITE

(checks watch)

... and it is now after midnight Eastern time and the election to decide who will lead this country, wracked by deep and turbulent division over its role in the Vietnam War, is still too close to call.

(is handed papers)

Based on updated returns, we are now projecting that Hubert Humphrey will win Oregon and that Utah, as expected, will go to Richard Nixon by a margin of more than 60 percent ...

INT. TABERNACLE - NIGHT

The concert has just started and the AUDIENCE is standing and singing "GOD BLESS AMERICA" with the CHOIR.

CHOIR/AUDIENCE

... and guide her to the right
with the light from Above. From
the mountains to the prairies to
the oceans white with ...

INSERT - TV SCREEN - CRONKITE

The map behind him is nearly all colored in. Except for California.

CRONKITE

... and now let's go back to Roger Mudd to talk about some of the key Senate races and how ...

The sound of a DOOR opening and closing o.s. and then Eckersley, breathing hard, crosses in front of the screen with the suitcase.

ANGLE - HUGHES' BEDROOM

Hughes is propped up in bed watching the returns surrounded by his personal physician and the other two members of the Mormon palace guard, Crawford and Francom.

An I.V. STAND has been placed next to Hughes.

As the election coverage continues in the b.g., Eckersley carefully opens the suitcase and we see

FOUR PINT BAGS OF BLOOD

stored inside the special refrigerated case. The doctor hurriedly takes one and starts to hook it up to the I.V. stand.

HUGHES

Looks like regular blood to me.
You sure it's Mormon?

ECKERSLEY

(unsure if joking)
I was right there when it was
taken.

~~The doctor takes Hughes' scrawny arm and proceeds to insert a
needle to receive the transfusion.~~

HUGHES

Who were they?

ECKERSLEY

One's a co-ed at Brigham Young.
The other's a housewife from Salt
Lake. Neither with a history of
contagious disease; Mormon
bloodlines on both sides.

HUGHES

You sure this is the first blood
they've ever given out?

ECKERSLEY

(nods vigorously)
Asked each one myself.

The doctor has attached one end of a clear plastic tube to the
syringe in Hughes' left arm and attaches the other end to the
suspended bag of blood.

HUGHES

(to Crawford)
Will this make me a Mormon?

CRAWFORD

Uh ... not quite.

HUGHES

(needling)
Just a blood brother, is that it?

CRAWFORD

Uh, right.

They all LAUGH as we CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - I.V. STAND

and see the first drops of blood start to trickle down the tube and then CUT BACK TO:

QUICK CUTS OF Hughes and the Mormon aides staring intently at the slowly moving red stream. And as we CUT BACK TO:

CLOSEUP - BLOOD

slowly descending until it enters the syringe and Hughes' vein.

THE MORMON AIDES

exchange barely-concealed smiles across Hughes' bed.

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

as he watches the blood entering him, he seems to perk up as if he's already feeling its hoped-for rejuvenating power.

INSERT - TV SCREEN - CRONKITE

Cronkite is handed a piece of paper. He scans it and looks up excitedly.

CRONKITE O.S.

CBS and the New York Times' Poll is now projecting that Richard Nixon will win California and become the 37th president of the United States. We'll now go to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City where the former vice president and his family have been up all night awaiting ...

TIGHT CLOSEUP - HUGHES

His eyes are wide, bright, the most animated we've ever seen.

INSERT - TV SCREEN - RICHARD NIXON

Standing with a big grin and both arms raised in his signature "V" for Victory pose. A beat and then we hear A BOOMING AND MELODIC "HALLELUJAH!" and CUT TO:

THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

in the middle of the "HALLELUJAH" CHORUS.

CHOIR
 ... HALLELUJAH! HAA ... LAAAAY
 ... LUUU ... JAH!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - DAWN

SAME SHOT as the OPENING SCENE.

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

A few beats and then we see the SAME EXPLOSION SHOT as the opening except everything (ground convulsing, dust cloud rising, etc.) is in SLOW MOTION.

We continue into the SAME OPTICAL EFFECT of flying into Vegas at SUPERSONIC SPEED. But this time the CAMERA DESCENDS TO:

JEAN'S "DREAM" HOUSE

The framing is nearly finished. Her refusal to move into it without him hasn't deterred Howard. It's proceeding full speed ahead. As it rolls with the tremors

A LARGE CROSS BEAM

SNAPS OFF its bolts and FALLS IN SLOW MOTION until it hits the bottom of the foundation with a LOUD CRACK.

INT. HUGHES BEDROOM

He's writing furiously on one of his yellow legal pads while Francom -- who snaps on a pair of surgical gloves -- prepares to give him an enema.

INT. MAHEU HOUSE - DAY

Maheu walks into the kitchen reading Hughes' note while we hear

HUGHES V.O.

Why would Johnson have gone out of his way to rub it in? I'm emotionally reduced to a nervous wreck and life is too short for that. And I must say I have the feeling that you no longer have the same zest that I sensed at the start of our relationship.

MAHEU

is infuriated. He wheels around and marches to the other end of his house and enters his

STUDY

where he pulls open a file drawer and deposits the note inside one of TWO DOZEN FOLDERS BULGING WITH HUGHES' MEMOS on identical yellow legal paper. (In the b.g., the map of Hughes' Las Vegas holdings is redder than ever.)

He SLAMS the drawer shut and sits down at his desk. He starts scrawling a reply on a white sheet of paper as Hughes' gold-framed portrait stares enigmatically.

HUGHES ANTEROOM - DAY

Eckersley is at the desk silently mouthing the dialogue of "ICE STATION ZEBRA" that's BOOMING out of Hughes' bedroom.

Crawford is on the easy chair, his feet up on a side table, face hidden behind the LAS VEGAS SUN with the headline: "ANOTHER A-BLAST ROCKS CITY"

A KNOCK on the outer door. Crawford nervously eases around her and opens it to receive a manila envelope from the guard containing Maheu's response.

He grabs a couple of Kleenex to hold it, then takes it into Hughes' bedroom.

HUGHES

Propped up in bed reading Maheu's reply (while holding it with Kleenex, naturally). On the screen in the b.g., Jim Brown and Lee Marvin are racing across the polar ice.

MAHEU V.O.

First of all, Howard, I hope you understand that you do not have an exclusive to sleepless nights. I try so damned hard to please you and meet all of your demands. The only conclusion I can reach is that you don't believe me. I am committed to you but it's clear you are not to me.

MAHEU (IN TENNIS OUTFIT)

~~Reading Hughes' reply on the Desert Inn court as Laxalt waits in the b.g. for him to resume their game.~~

HUGHES V.O.

Well, Bob, I will be very happy to believe you about everything. I think a good starting point would be for you to affirm your original promise to stay with me permanently, and without the necessity of my getting down on my knees and begging you to do it.

HUGHES

is on the toilet reading Maheu's response.

MAHEU V.O.

For God's sake, Howard, when will you realize that I truly don't know where in the hell I'd go or what I would do if you decided to kiss me off. I'm sorry we don't have an opportunity to discuss this and other things in person. For instance, Yvette wants us to move to another house. I hope we can resolve this reasonably. In any case, let's forget who's to blame for what and move forward.

SCREEN IS BLACK for a couple of beats and then as we hear ...

NIXON V.O.

I, Richard Milhouse Nixon do solemnly swear ...

We FADE IN:

EXT. NIXON INAUGURATION (JAN. 20, 1969) - DAY

Nixon is standing on the Capitol steps, his right arm raised, taking the Oath of Office from the Chief Justice.

CHIEF JUSTICE

That I will to the best of my
abilities ...

NIXON

That I will to the best of my
abilities ...

~~INT. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OFFICE - DAY~~

A DOZEN YOUNG LAWYERS, the vanguard of the new regime, are moving in. The large office which houses the Anti-Trust Division is filled with packing crates, folding files, etc.

ANGLE - LAWYER 1

Standing at a huge metal file cabinet marked "CASES PENDING" as he scans the drawer stuffed with bulky CASE FOLDERS.

As he starts to riff through the folders (in alphabetical order by case name) we notice each is stamped either: "RECOMMENDED ACTION: APPROVE" or "RECOMMENDED ACTION: OPPOSE"

When he gets to the "H. HUGHES ACQUISITION OF LANDMARK HOTEL" folder we see that it is stamped: "RECOMMENDED ACTION: OPPOSE" But this folder -- unlike the others -- has a bright yellow tag attached to the top that reads: "Forward to JM for review"

He starts to pull it out as we hear ...

CHIEF JUSTICE V.O.

Preserve, protect and defend ...

NIXON V.O.

Preserve, protect and defend ...

EXT. ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY

In freshly painted letters over the door: OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, JOHN MITCHELL

Lawyer 1, carrying the Hughes folder, enters the office, shutting the door behind him. We HOLD ON

DOOR

as we hear

CHIEF JUSTICE V.O.
The Constitution of the United
States ...

NIXON V.O.
The Constitution of the United
States ...

The door opens and Lawyer 1 exits with the Hughes folder. As he walks down the corridor we MOVE IN TO:

CLOSEUP - FOLDER

The original stamp has been blacked out. Next to it is now stamped: "RECOMMENDED ACTION: APPROVE"

CHIEF JUSTICE V.O.
So help me, God.

NIXON V.O.
So help me, God.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - EST. SHOT - THAT NIGHT

All lit up. Some event going on inside.

INT. WHITE HOUSE STATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Fancy black-tie reception celebrating Nixon's inauguration.

ANGLE - MAHEU

In his tuxedo, drink in hand, having a great time in his role as one of the high and mighty. A MARINE BAND plays in the b.g.

A MARINE GUARD in his dress blues walks up to him and whispers in his ear and then points o.s.

WHITE HOUSE ANTEROOM

Maheu enters and picks up a phone receiver. The MUSIC, LAUGHTER, CROWD NOISE spills into the small room.

MAHEU
(high spirits)
Hello, Howard!

We INTERCUT with

HUGHES

On his bed getting another transfusion of Mormon blood. Crawford and Eckersley are standing in the b.g.

HUGHES

Sounds like you're having a grand time.

MAHEU

Magnificent, Howard! You got my message about the Landmark?

HUGHES

I got it.

MAHEU

I've more good news. I was going to call you when I got back to the hotel. They're backing us on the Air West buyout. Howard, there's nothing like having a real friend in the White House!

HUGHES

I wish I did.

(NOTE: For rest of the scene, we move in until we're on a TIGHT CLOSEUP of Hughes. At the same time, the unsettling CRUNCHING SOUND associated with his germophobia/madness GROWS LOUDER.)

MAHEU

I don't understand.

HUGHES

I have to read in the papers that he's picked a Secretary of the Interior! I wasn't consulted! I wasn't even extended that small courtesy!

MAHEU

Howard, please listen for a second, this guy is --

HUGHES

And to top it off, he's appointing a new AEC commissioner without any notice to me, whatsoever!

MAHEU

That isn't quite true. Right after the election, they --

HUGHES

And now I'm told he's going ahead with that anti-ballistic missile program! This is where my money's going: More radioactive bombs exploding outside my window!

MAHEU

I don't have to guess where you're getting your information! The truth is the decision isn't final. I've got all our people here working overtime to derail it.

HUGHES

Makes me wonder if Nixon's even aware of my donation ... or if maybe somebody forgot to make it.

Hughes' parting shot -- so vicious and personal -- stuns Maheu. His emotions have swung 180 degrees in the last 10 seconds.

INT. MADISON HOTEL LOBBY (WASHINGTON, D.C.) - NIGHT

Maheu, still angry and hurt, picks up his room key at the FRONT DESK and heads for the elevator. He suddenly stops and slowly turns to his right

MAHEU'S POV - HOTEL BAR

Dark, half-empty, inviting.

INT. BAR - 20 MINUTES LATER

Maheu is alone at the end of the bar knocking back a scotch and we can tell it ain't his first.

Suddenly, a HAND SLAMS DOWN on his shoulder. Maheu turns and sees LEONARD KEILSON, 55, a CIA analyst.

MAHEU

Sonovabitch, you spilled my drink!

KEILSON

(brushes sleeve of his silk tuxedo)

No problem, sir, Banlon is guaranteed alcohol-safe.

Maheu smiles. It's clear they're old friends but he still seems subdued.

KEILSON

I thought you'd be in town for the coronation. Hughes must be doing handsprings -- or does he pay you extra to do it for him?

Maheu manages a weak smile.

MAHEU

How've you been, Len? Still got you out in the field?

KEILSON

(shakes head)

Too damn old. Been riding a desk at Langley since '65.

MAHEU

Caribbean Section?

KEILSON

(mordant)

I got yanked so I could grind out V.C. troop estimates.

(leans closer)

This kid called Tet! I knew they wouldn't listen, but I called it!

A TABLE OF THREE MEN on the other side of the room starts to CALL FOR Keilson.

MAHEU

Boys night out?

KEILSON

(indicates one)

You know Stan Colla?

(Maheu shakes head)

He was in Miami when you worked that job for us.

(starts for table)

Come on! The bright-eyed lad in the blue suit's my nephew: starting out at the Bureau and all excited to meet you. I told him you were the one who capped Dillinger.

Maheu smiles but hesitates a beat. Then he slides off his stool and follows Keilson.

TABLE - 15 MINUTES LATER

A WAITER delivers a fresh scotch to Maheu and picks up his empty glass. Besides Maheu and Keilson are STAN COLLA, 52, also a CIA agent, and JOHN O'LEARY, 29, an FBI agent.

The waiter asks the agents if they want another round. They decline; they can't keep up with Maheu.

MAHEU
(to waiter)
Go ahead, put it on my room.

COLLA
Thanks ...
(holds up glass)
To Uncle Howard.

The others LAUGH and join in the mock toast. Maheu doesn't crack a smile. This ain't turning into a happy drunk.

KEILSON
Hell, he should pick up the tab
after all the dough we've slipped
him.

MAHEU
Wanta start gettin' your
satellites from Sears, you go
ahead!

From Maheu's tone, and without the hint of a smile, the others aren't sure if he's making a joke or an issue out of it. Suddenly, it's very quiet.

O'LEARY
(to break tension)
How'd you meet my uncle? Were you
still with the Bureau?

Maheu starts to answer when Keilson jumps in.

KEILSON
Bob'd already left. He was doing--

MAHEU
Consulting.

KEILSON
(nervous laugh)
Right before he signed up for the
big pesos.

Keilson exchanges a quick glance across the table with Colla. They sense Maheu's mood fueled by the alcohol is potentially nasty and they're nervous about what he might say.

O'LEARY

Consultant for the CIA -- that'd
look cool on a resume.

Keilson and Colla force a laugh.

COLLA

Yeah, very cool. It's --

MAHEU

(to O'Leary)

I did "cut-out" jobs for 'em ...

Keilson and Colla visibly tense as O'Leary looks puzzled.

MAHEU

Can't be traced back.

Keilson jumps in to end it.

KEILSON

We can tell you what they were,
but then we'd have to kill you.

Keilson, Colla and O'Leary LAUGH. Maheu finishes his drink and looks around for the waiter.

KEILSON

Want another one?

Maheu nods. Keilson stands.

KEILSON

I'm going to the can. I'll grab
one for you on the way back.

MEN'S ROOM - DOOR

It opens and Keilson exits. He starts back to the table when he runs into Colla heading into the bathroom.

COLLA

What's his problem?

Keilson shrugs as he stares at Maheu at the table in the other end of the room, talking to the waiter.

COLLA

He always been a heavy hitter?

KEILSON

Not when I knew him.

Colla turns and looks at Maheu along with Keilson.

COLLA

I mean, Christ, working for Hughes's gotta be like getting your ticket punched on a 10-year cruise.

EXT. JEAN'S "DREAM" HOUSE - DAY

About half-finished and already massive. A CACOPHONY OF POWER SAWS, NAIL GUNS, etc. as the construction crew toils.

CAMERA PULLS BACK RAPIDLY to a point high over the city and then ZOOMS DOWN TO:

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL/CASINO (UNDER CONSTRUCTION) - DAY

About 95 percent completed as CONSTRUCTION CREWS apply the finishing touches. It'll be the biggest in town.

And what makes things dicey is that it's owned by Hughes' arch-rival, Vegas' other wacky zillionaire: KIRK KERKORIAN.

CAMERA PULLS BACK RAPIDLY TO:

INT. LANDMARK HOTEL TOP (31ST) FLOOR "BUBBLE" - DAY

Maheu and Security Chief Jack Hooper are staring down at the International from the glass-enclosed restaurant of the hotel that Hughes has just acquired.

All around them WORKERS are laying rugs, installing new fixtures, etc.

HOOPER

When Kerkorian builds one, he doesn't screw around.

Maheu continues to stare at the building without answering.

HOOPER

I heard he pushed up the opening.

MAHEU

First week of July.

HOOPER

Same as us?!

Maheu doesn't respond.

HOOPER
He signed an act yet?

MAHEU
(beat)
Barbra Streisand.

Hooper can't contain an ADMIRING WHISTLE as he stares with the grim Maheu at the huge complex across the Strip.

HOOPER
Who're we gettin'?

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

In full frenzy.

HUGHES
Dean Martin!

INTERCUT WITH Maheu on the car phone in the back seat of his limo with Hooper heading back to the Desert Inn.

MAHEU
You said you wanted Hope and Crosby!

HUGHES
I just found out they've never played in Las Vegas.

MAHEU
I told you that!

He takes a breath to regain his composure as Hooper watches.

MAHEU
When do I tell Martin's agent he's supposed to show up? We're mailing out the invitations soon. We've gotta put a date on 'em!

HUGHES
Have you considered that when you have two events one right after the other, it's the second one everybody remembers. The first's as old as yesterday's news.

MAHEU

Howard, I still think we should beat Kerkorian to the punch. But if you want to come after him, then let's fix a date now.

HUGHES

You have a list yet of who we're inviting?

MAHEU

I just put one together.

HUGHES

Send it up and I'll look it over now to save us some time. And then I'll pick a date.

Maheu hangs up and stares up at the 9th floor as the limo pulls into the Desert Inn. He can feel through his skin that the shit's gonna fly.

EXT. MAHEU HOUSE - DAY

The Penthouse Guard is heading to the front door carrying the familiar manila envelope with another memo.

He suddenly notices A MESSENGER in a fancy uniform carrying a LARGE EMBOSSED ENVELOPE who is also heading to the front door. They reach it at the same time.

The guard seems nonplussed -- this has never happened before. The messenger flashes a bright smile and presses the DOORBELL.

INT. MAHEU'S OFFICE - DAY

Maheu is at his desk opening the embossed envelope. The unopened manila envelope is next to it. He pulls out a

FANCY GOLD-LEAF INVITATION

to the opening of the International Hotel and Casino on July 4.

Maheu rubs his eyes. They're up against a real first-class operation. As if he had any doubts.

Then he opens the manila envelope and pulls out the

INVITATION LIST (5 TYPED PAGES)

he'd sent up to Hughes to look over. He's crossed them all out. Occasionally scrawled next to one of the hundreds of names he's rejected is a note like: "No Way! ... I want to think more about this one ... Is he really necessary?"

Maheu holds the penciled-out list in one hand and the invitation in the other. He looks like he may weep.

The PHONE RINGS. Maheu stares at it without moving, then finally picks it up.

MAHEU

Howard, please listen to me: I just got the invitation to the opening of the International. It looks like it came from Buckingham Palace! We've got to pick a date now, we can't delay it a second longer!

HUGHES

After we take care of one detail.

MAHEU

What?

HUGHES

Categories! You've got to divide the list into movie people, old friends, local businessmen and so forth. And then you have to be consistent in inviting people in each category who have equal qualifications.

Maheu is too beaten down to argue. He looks like he's being chipped away inch by bloody inch.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME ANGLE - MAHEU

Except MUCH darker. And the CRUNCHING noise in the b.g. is LOUDER -- all contributing to the sense of imminent breakdown.

He's opening a new MANILA ENVELOPE and pulls out his LATEST LIST. As he flips through the carefully TYPED PAGES of hundreds of names we see Hughes' scrawled pencil lines through all of them -- except for THREE he has scratched "OK" next to.

EXTREME CLOSEUP - MAHEU

Illuminated by a single, dim light. On the phone to Hughes.
At the end of his rope.

MAHEU

Maybe we need to hash it out face
to face ... maybe *that's* been our
problem.

(no response; tries
to "joke")

Haven't you ever wondered what I
look like?

As the silence from the other end continues, Maheu looks like
he might shatter right there.

EXT. LANDMARK - NIGHT (JULY 1, 1969)

GUESTS pour out of a long line of cars and limos and enter for
the opening party.

Maheu is standing by the door greeting them as Hooper runs up.

HOOPER

The air conditioning's back! It
was just a fuse!

Maheu continues to smile and greet the guests. Hooper stares
at the line of cars that are still pouring in.

HOOPER

(stunned)
How'd you get 'em all?

MAHEU

I had five secretaries working the
phones since Tuesday.

Hooper laughs and follows Maheu as he enters

INT. LANDMARK - NIGHT

Packed with hundreds of guests, WAITERS with trays of food,
drinks, etc. As they push their way inside, slapping backs,
shaking hands, etc. we start to hear a WOMAN singing Cole
Porter's "BETWEEN YOU AND ME" ...

WOMAN O.S.

*Between you and me, you're
something spectacular. Between
you and me, you're a prize ...
Between you and me, to use the
vernacular, you've got what they
call "oomph" in your eyes ...*

In the next beat, they enter the

LANDMARK MAIN BALLROOM

Maheu and Hooper stare over the packed CROWD to a Beautiful Woman Singer in a shimmering gown in front of a piano.

HOOPER

She's incredible! She some big name I'm supposed to know?

MAHEU

(shakes head)
Just got into town ... but I like her a lot. She's signed exclusive for all our hotels.

As they stop and chat with A GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN the Penthouse Guard walks up and hands Maheu a manila envelope.

Maheu's expression tightens. As the others look on, he forces a smile and manages to open it and he pulls out a

SHEET OF YELLOW LEGAL PAPER

with the familiar penciled scrawl: "Bob, you and your people have my wishes for good luck tonight in every way. Is there anything further I can do to be helpful? Howard"

As he stands staring at it incredulously ...

WOMAN O.S.

*'Til I make you mine, your heart
I'll bombard to get. No matter
how hard to get it may be ... So
why not combine and chuck the
formality between love and between
you and me?*

CUT TO;

A LARGE UPHOLSTERED COUCH

All we can tell is that it's moving until we PULL BACK TO:

EXT. WIDE SHOT - MOVERS - DAY

and see that it's on a dolly being wheeled in a long line of other furniture, packing crates, etc. by an ARMY OF MOVERS on a 200-yard path from Maheu's old house to

A HUGE TARA-STYLE MANSION (WITH LARGE WHITE COLUMNS)

and we suddenly realize that they're being installed in the dream house Hughes built to entice Jean. Of course, it's also in the looming shadow of the Desert Inn tower.

INT. MANSION FOYER -- DAY

Yvette stands in the chandeliered entryway grimly directing the movers as they stream in with their loads. She looks very unhappy -- she got her wish but clearly not how she expected.

She happens to glance up the WINDING, MARBLE STAIRCASE.

YVETTE'S POV - MAHEU

Alone at the top of the stairs. He seems lost in thought then looks down and sees her.

Neither says a word. Finally ...

MAHEU

(yells over noise)

I JUST HAD A GREAT IDEA!

PANORAMIC NIGHT SKY

The stars are breathtaking. Several beats of silence, then ...

MAHEU O.S.

Do you see it?

Several beats, then ...

YVETTE O.S.

No ... do you?

CAMERA PANS DOWN TO Maheu and Yvette

LOOKS

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

staring up at the sky.

MAHEU

I guess we were just lucky before.

He takes her hand and they walk over to a fire they've made at the same spot they were when they saw the satellite.

The kids are sitting around the fire, staring at the flames. Maheu and Yvette, still holding hands, sit down with them.

No one speaks. Just the sound of the wind and the CRACKLE of the dry wood. Maheu turns to Yvette and smiles reassuringly: A new house, a fresh start, things will be better.

She smiles back and they turn back to the fire when ...

The ground starts to SHAKE! Yvette and the kids SCREAM as the fire sends up an EXPLOSION of SPARKS!

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

His expression isn't shock, it isn't fear -- it's pure panic! He scrambles to his feet.

MAHEU

GET OUT!

He starts for the car and Yvette and the kids jump up and run after him. Then Yvette stops and starts back for the blanket.

MAHEU

LEAVE IT, FOR CHRISAKE!

The ground finally stops shaking, but Maheu, running/stumbling toward the car, doesn't stop.

But Yvette and the three kids pull up, relieved that it's over. As they watch Maheu still running toward the car, they start to smile about good ol' overprotective dad.

But then he turns back and sees them standing there ...

MAHEU

GET IN THE CAR!

Yvette and the kids are startled and a little frightened.

YVETTE

Honey, calm down, we're OK.

MAHEU

BASTARDS RAN A SECRET TEST!

And then he turns and bolts into the car and jams the key into the ignition, missing it a couple of times, before he finally gets it in and turns over the engine with a ROAR.

MAHEU

GOTTA GET BACK AND EXPLAIN!

Yvette and the kids exchange a frightened look: They better get in the car, they can't reason with him.

They scramble inside

INT. CAR - NIGHT

and he PEELS DOWN the dirt road toward the two-lane blacktop.

Maheu's staring straight ahead, breathing hard, his mind racing. Yvette's scared but doesn't know what to do.

Finally, she reaches out and turns on the RADIO. We hear the final few bars of a POP SONG and then ...

DISC JOCKEY

Now didn't Big Daddy tell you we were really gonna rock tonight?! Those crazy lab rats over at the National Geological Service are tellin' us we just had a 4.5 shaker, the epicenter -- that's the center of all the gyratin' -- was about 30 miles east of Fremont. So now that us cats 'n' kittens are all cool, calm and collected, how 'bout we all climb "Up On the Roof?"

Maheu doesn't seem to have heard as he keeps speeding down the road. No one says a word as the SONG starts and then he suddenly pulls over to the shoulder and stops.

He's still breathing hard, staring ahead at the neon skyline of Vegas on the horizon.

MAHEU

(emotional)

If I could see him! Then he'd understand!

EXT. PALATIAL MANSION - EST. SHOT - DAY

Ringed by palm trees, overlooking the ocean.

Super: KEY BISCAYNE, FLORIDA

INT. MANSION - STUDY - DAY

Bebe Rebozo, in a tropical silk shirt, is working at his desk when the door opens and a MAID shows in Maheu and Danner.

As Rebozo stands and they exchange AD LIB GREETINGS we can't help but notice that Maheu is holding a briefcase identical to the one he brought to meet Humphrey.

REBOZO

Can I get you fellas something to drink? Pepsi?

The two men nod and Rebozo opens up a cabinet revealing a small wet bar. As he pours out the drinks...

REBOZO

The AEC's going to conduct a small test next week.

MAHEU

In Alaska?

REBOZO

Nevada.

Maheu and Danner look stunned.

MAHEU

I thought we had an understanding.

REBOZO

We do, Bob.

He hands out the two glasses. Maheu takes his without releasing his grip on the briefcase.

MAHEU

Then how can they run a test that --

REBOZO

A small test! The President is committed that every major test of a megaton or higher be moved to Alaska.

MAHEU

How big'll this one be?

REBOZO

(beat)

Nine hundred kilotons.

Danner takes a breath. Maheu looks like he's about to explode.

MAHEU

So you slip one in just under the door?! This is how you treat a friend?!

Danner pales. This might be crossing the line.

REBOZO

That was uncalled for! This is all on the up-and-up! The President stands by his concerns conveyed to you on the dangers of testing. He's received assurances from the highest levels that these don't pose the same risks as large ones.

A tense silence. Maheu is so furious he's almost trembling. Danner gives him a look that says: "Don't say a damn thing!"

REBOZO

Bob, your misgivings were understandable. I hope I relieved them.

He lowers his gaze until he's staring at the briefcase.

Maheu doesn't move a muscle. Danner flashes him another look: "Give it to him!"

Another beat and he hands it over to Rebozo who places it on his desk, opens it and pulls out stacks of \$100 bills. Then he matter-of-factly proceeds to count them. He looks up.

REBOZO

There's fifty thousand.

MAHEU

We decided to split it up -- for security. I'll be in touch about the rest.

The meeting's over. They all smile and exchange quick goodbyes. It could have gone better.

As Rebozo leads them out they make conversation about the weather, golf, etc.

They reach the front door, more quick goodbyes, and then as Maheu and Danner start to head out ...

REBOZO

I almost forgot! The President has a personal message for Mr. Hughes.

EXT. GAS STATION PHONE BOOTH - MAHEU

Maheu is talking as Danner sits in their car a few feet away.

MAHEU

He wants to send Kissinger to Vegas to meet with you!

HUGHES V.O.

What the hell for?!

MAHEU

To brief you on the importance of the tests to national security. It's also a chance for you to convince him he's wrong.

HUGHES V.O.

This idea that it affects our security with Russia is an insult to my intelligence! I want you to see Nixon personally. If this is the way the U.S. pays off one of its citizens who's given a lifetime of service toward the strengthening of its defense plus half-a-billion in taxes, then we might as well pitch our tents now. Tell him I'll pay to move every goddamn test to Alaska if that's what it takes!

MAHEU

Howard, Rebozo feels it would be a serious mistake to try to see the President without going through Kissinger first.

(no response)

I'm sure we could arrange a phone hookup.

HUGHES V.O.

I don't want a goddamned conversation! I want it stopped!

Hughes SLAMS his phone down.

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

Expression rigid, but his eyes showing the incredible strain.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - DAWN

IDENTICAL SHOT as the previous two.

A few beats and then we see the SAME EXPLOSION SHOT as the opening except everything (ground convulsing, dust cloud rising, etc.) is in SLOW MOTION.

We continue into the SAME OPTICAL EFFECT of flying into Vegas at SUPERSONIC SPEED. But this time the CAMERA DESCENDS TOWARD:

EXT. MAHEU'S NEW MANSION - DAY

And then we quickly CUT-TO:

INT. MAHEU'S HUGE WINE CELLAR

The floor is rolling and Maheu is frantically running back and forth trying to keep the expensive bottles from sliding out of the floor-to-ceiling wine racks.

But despite his efforts, two or three bottles slide out and smash on the floor. Meanwhile, the CLATTER from the HUNDREDS OF RATTLING BOTTLES is ear-splitting.

Finally, the ROLLING STOPS. And as Maheu, breathing hard, stands and stares at the mess on the floor, we hear

MAHEU V.O.

I tried to focus on the positive. Larry O'Brien was accomplishing great things in Washington. Like with the new Tax Reform Act: Half of Howard's holdings were classified a charity and the rest as a small business -- tax-exempt.
(beat, emotional)
But I couldn't stop the bombs! No matter what I tried, I couldn't stop the bombs!

As he bends down and starts to pick up the broken glass we FADE IN "O, LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" and DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT INN - NIGHT

CHORUS BOYS and GIRLS, costumed as 19th Century English carolers, are SINGING in front of the Desert Inn.

The CAMERA PANS UP to the top of building and we CUT TO:

INT. HUGHES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hughes is propped up in bed; "Ice Station Zebra" running in the b.g. A HAND COMES INTO FRAME holding a sheaf of PAPERS with the standard Kleenex "mitten."

MAN'S VOICE O.S.

I feel you should see it for
yourself.

As Hughes takes the papers and starts to scan them, the CAMERA PULLS BACK to show

BILL GAY

standing at the side of the bed with Crawford and Eckersley.

GAY

That's why I flew out.

Hughes continues to read without responding.

GAY

It's just a preliminary estimate.
There's still a week left before
the books close.

HUGHES

(looks up)
Where's the juice?

Gay tries to figure out what he means when Crawford pops up.

CRAWFORD

It's on the way up!

Hughes nods and goes back to the papers.

GAY

When all's said and done, our net
loss on the casinos is gonna run
eight to nine million dollars!

Hughes shows no reaction as he flips through the pages, then without looking up ...

HUGHES

He said not to buy some of 'em.
You were all for it.

GAY

Because they were all Grade-A
investments! But they still have
to be managed properly!

Hughes continues to look at the papers.

Gay looks despairingly at Crawford: His attack doesn't seem to have made much of an impression. He turns back to Hughes.

GAY

They're already planning another test, that's what I heard.

Hughes throws down the papers and looks up panicked.

HUGHES

When?!

GAY

In a couple of months.

HUGHES

I can't go through that again!
I'll leave the goddamn country!

GAY

It's like they're on some kind of vendetta.

HUGHES

I told him to meet with Nixon.
Offer him a million if that's what it takes!

GAY

All the money we've poured in, all of his government contacts and he still comes up with a big zero.

HUGHES

No excuses this time! He's gonna walk in there and offer him one million in cash!

GAY

Maybe because he worked for the government for so long it's a case of divided loyalty. That's what it looks like, I'm afraid.

Hughes is all worked up. Gay is relieved. A KNOCK on the door.

Eckersley opens it and Francom enters with the GRAY METALLIC SUITCASE used to transport Mormon blood.

Right behind him is Hughes' personal physician pushing the I.V. unit. Hughes' mood immediately brightens.

HUGHES
Fresh off the farm!

The doctor takes his arm and starts to swab it as Francom opens the suitcase and starts to hook up the first pint of blood.

HUGHES
No germs in the juice?

FRANCOM
The donors were screened: Only housewives under 25.

Hughes nods as the doctor inserts the syringe and starts to hook it up to the I.V. line. He leans back against his pillows and shuts his eyes. Then they suddenly snap open.

HUGHES
(to Francom)
Call Mrs. Hughes and remind her today's my birthday!

He falls back on his pillow and shuts his eyes. His face instantly relaxes as if he's dreaming about a romantic birthday with his beautiful wife.

As the CAMERA PUSHES IN on his CLOSED RIGHT EYE and goes to BLACK we hear "BEGIN THE BEGUINE" by the Beautiful Woman Singer who performed at the Landmark opening.

WOMAN V.O.
When they begin the Beguine it brings back the sound of music so tender. It brings back a night of tropical splendor. It brings back a memory evergreen ...

The SONG CONTINUES OVER a MONTAGE OF STOCK FOOTAGE: Ball dropping on Times Square and "1970" lights up; GI's fighting in Vietnam; Surveillance photos of Jean Peters leaving the Los Angeles County Courthouse with a man in a dark suit.

WOMAN V.O.
I'm with you once more under the stars and down by the shore, an orchestra playing. And even the palms seem to be swaying when they begin the Beguine.

MORE MONTAGE: Subway commuters grab Daily News late editions headlined: "Jean Peters to Hubby Hughes: Sayonara, Howie"; A pipe-smoking John Mitchell sits beside a smiling Richard Nixon in an Oval Office photo op.

WOMAN V.O.

*To live it again is past all
endeavor. Except when that tune
clutches my heart and there we are
swearing to love forever and
promising never to part ...*

MORE MONTAGE: The Chicago Seven are convicted of inciting to riot; John Mitchell's office door opens and the same anti-trust lawyer we saw in Act 2 exits and walks quickly down the hall carrying a manila folder stamped: "H. HUGHES ACQUISITION OF DUNES HOTEL AND CASINO ... RECOMMENDED ACTION: APPROVE"; Antiwar demonstrators clash with police.

WOMAN V.O.

*What moments divine, what raptures
serene 'til clouds came along to
disperse the joys we had tasted.
And now when I hear people curse
the chance that was wasted, I know
too well what they mean. So don't
let them begin the Beguine ...*

FADE TO BLACK for several beats and then FADE IN:

CLOSEUP - MAHEU - NIGHT

Face dimly lit by moonlight but enough to see he's crying.

His face is suddenly lit by the HARSH GLARE of a HIGH-INTENSITY SPOTLIGHT as we become aware of the ROAR of a HELICOPTER ROTOR and from overhead over a LOUDSPEAKER we hear

COUNSEL
ANDERSON

PILOT

You're trespassing on federal property! Move away from the fence or you'll be placed under arrest!

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to show Maheu

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Sitting on a rock shivering in the frigid night air. He's next to a BARBED-WIRE FENCE stretching to the horizon. A large sign on the fence reads: "WARNING: RESTRICTED AREA, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, TRESPASSERS SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION, U.S. CODE 2156"

Maheu looks up at the hovering chopper, shielding his eyes from the intense light.

END
SPOTLIGHT
END

PILOT

Return immediately to your car,
sir, and drive back to the highway
or you'll be detained and charged!

Maheu slowly stands up brushes off the back of his pants and
stumbles as he walks over the rough terrain back to his car.

INT. MAHEU'S WINE CELLAR

Every space in the floor-to-ceiling racks filled with hundreds
of expensive bottles. The only sound is the HUM of the state-
of-the-art climate control system.

Several beats then a LOW RUMBLE and the floor begins to
VIOLENTLY ROCK. The bottles cascade down with a TERRIFYING
CRASH and 30 or so gallons of vintage wine start to surge back
and forth like a burgundy-colored riptide.

CAMERA PUSHES IN on the roiling pool of wine and DISSOLVE TO:

EST. SHOT - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Over the rolling swells we SUPER: PACIFIC OCEAN

ANGLE - RUSSIAN NUCLEAR SUB - UNDERWATER

ID'd by the large RED STAR on the conning tower. Slicing
through the ocean at 25 knots.

Then it's rocked with an EXPLOSION from somewhere inside the
hull and starts a wild descent before we CUT TO:

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

His face illuminated by the REFLECTED IMAGES of "Ice Station
Zebra" which we hear playing in the b.g.

A KNOCK and then the SOUND of the door OPENING and CLOSING.

HUGHES

What are you doing here?

GAY O.S.

What I have to tell you I wanted
to say in person. The Russians
just lost one of their new subs
three miles down on the bottom of
the Pacific. The CIA wants us to
come up with a system to raise it
-- be worth 150 million, minimum.

HUGHES

They contacted you?
 (Gay nods o.s.)
 Why didn't they call Maheu?

GAY O.S.

They don't want to deal with him anymore. That's all they said but it was enough. Is this who you want representing you? Why couldn't he ever manage a simple thing like moving a bomb test? Now it's all starting to be clear.

(beat)

And it's why I'd like you to take a look at this.

A TYPED LEGAL DOCUMENT comes into frame as it's handed to Hughes who starts to read it.

GAY O.S.

It gives power-of-attorney over your Nevada holdings to the head of Hughes Tool Company, your lawyer in New York ... and me. I think it's the best way to protect yourself before this guy gets completely out of control.

As Hughes reads the document we FADE IN the LOUD, EERIE CRUNCHING NOISE representing Hughes' madness.

INT. MAHEU'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Maheu is working at his desk while sipping a scotch. He picks up his phone and starts to dial then notices there's no dial tone. He presses the hook up and down, but still nothing.

He puts it back and exits his office and starts down the hallway when he runs into Yvette.

MAHEU

The phones in the house OK?

YVETTE

As far as I know.

MAHEU

My line to Howard's gone dead.
 I'm gonna try --

The FRONT DOORBELL RINGS. Maheu walks over and opens it.

MAHEU'S POV - CRAWFORD, ECKERSLEY, 3 SECURITY GUARDS.

The guards are holding empty cardboard boxes.

CRAWFORD

May we come in, Bob?

MAHEU

What's this about?

CRAWFORD

(indicates hotel
guests walking by)

I think we should talk inside.

Maheu hesitates then lets them in and shuts the door.

MAHEU

OK, what's going on?

CRAWFORD

He's decided he wants to take
control of all his memos and
correspondence.

MAHEU

What for?!

CRAWFORD

He'd just feel more comfortable if
they're stored in the penthouse
where there's a 24-hour guard.

MAHEU

Get the hell out of here! I don't
believe a goddamn word of it!

No one moves. They stare at each other with pure hatred. Just
the sound of LAUGHTER from people passing outside.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a sheet of Hughes'
yellow legal paper and hands it to Maheu.

Maheu reads the brief scrawled message and looks up shaken.

CRAWFORD

Can we get this over with?

Maheu starts an angry response then notices Yvette and the kids
standing in the b.g. watching.

INT. MAHEU'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Maheu and Crawford watch Eckersley and the guards pull folders from two file cabinets and cram them into the boxes.

MAHEU

You bastards cut my line.

CRAWFORD

His doctor felt he should be disturbed as little as possible.

MAHEU

What's the matter with him?!

CRAWFORD

Anemia. He's getting transfusions.

Eckersley and the guards empty the last file drawer.

CRAWFORD

Is that all of them?

Maheu nods. Crawford hesitates as he decides whether to believe him. Finally ...

CRAWFORD

(quietly to others)

OK.

They pick up some of the boxes and start out of the room.

MAHEU

How am I supposed to talk to him?

CRAWFORD

Ring whoever's on duty and we'll forward the message. He'll get back to you when he can.

MAHEU

But you'll still send all my memos through?

CRAWFORD

Of course we will, Bob.

He grabs a box of folders and exits. A beat and Yvette enters and notices Maheu's eyes are wet.

YVETTE

What's going on?

MAHEU

He's in trouble, Yvette!

FADE TO BLACK and then FADE IN TO:

INT. HUGHES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francom swabs Hughes' scabby arm (already tied off with rubber tubing), finds a useable vein and injects codeine.

As he removes the tubing and puts the syringe in the case, Hughes' eyes suddenly light up through the spreading drug haze.

HUGHES

Hold on!

He reaches OVER to his CLUTTERED SIDE TABLE where we see

THE POWER-OF-ATTORNEY DOCUMENT

lying next to a Kleenex box and the space for his signature over the typed name of "HOWARD R. HUGHES" is blank.

We (and Francom) think he's reaching to sign it. Instead, he grabs a half-dozen sheets of his yellow legal paper that are lying on the other side of the box.

HUGHES

Take care of this!

Francom grabs some Kleenex, takes the paper and exits into

INT. ANTEROOM

where he sits behind the desk and starts to read the papers. Crawford is on the easy chair watching a football game on TV.

CRAWFORD

What's that?

FRANCOM

(reading aloud)

"Special Preparation of Canned Fruit" ...

(scans for a beat)

"The man in charge should first soak and remove the label, and then brush the cylindrical part of the can over and over until all particles of dust, pieces of the label, and, in general, all sources of contamination have been removed."

(beat)

Want me to read you the rest?

CRAWFORD
 (eyes glued on TV)
 I'll look at it later.

Francom skims the memo, flipping through the pages, then walks over to a FILE CABINET and pulls out the TOP DRAWER which is packed with identical LOOSELEAF BINDERS labeled "HH SANITATION PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES" each one for a different year.

He pulls out the 1970 BINDER that's stuffed with hundreds of sheets of scrawled legal paper. He opens it, carefully inserts the latest memo and starts to put it back in the drawer when the phone RINGS.

FRANCOM

Hello ... no, but I'll tell him
 you called ... he's sleeping right
 now.

INT. MAHEU'S STUDY - DAY

Maheu is at his desk writing, sporadically sipping a scotch.

(NOTE: Each scene of Maheu in this sequence gets progressively darker to indicate both the passage of time and his deepening depression.)

OVER

MAHEU V.O. (1)

Howard, is there some reason I
 can't be trusted with those
 documents? Whether you realize it
 or not, you cut and cut deep ...

Maheu's V.O. continues over QUICK INTERCUTS OF:

INT. PENTHOUSE ANTEROOM

Eckersley is at the desk when the Guard enters with a manila envelope. Eckersley opens it and reads Maheu's memo (ID'd by distinctive color of the stationery) and then opens a desk drawer and tosses it inside.

(NOTE: We see a different aide with each successive scene of this sequence -- and also show the desk drawer getting progressively stuffed -- to underscore the passage of time and that the V.O. is from parts of different memos.)

OVER

MAHEU V.O. (2)

... Howard, if I can't get answers
 from you in several important
 matters, I really don't know why I
 should continue worrying about
 these things alone ...

MAHEU V.O. (3)

... In the last analysis, the only person who stands to get hurt is yourself. And ultimately, however devastating the results may be, they'll have very little to do with me personally or my future life.

The INTERCUTTING ends with Francom forcibly jamming the drawer, now overflowing with unanswered memos, in order to close it.

We CUT TO BLACK for several beats as we hear APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS down a hallway. Then a light goes on showing

INT. MAHEU'S STUDY - NIGHT

Maheu, holding his empty glass, had been staring at his silent phone in the dark. Yvette, frozen by the door, is horrified.

Before she can speak, Maheu staggers to his feet and rushes past her and down the hallway toward the front door.

MAHEU

I'M KILLIN' THOSE BASTARDS!

Yvette, crying, runs after him.

YVETTE

I'm glad he doesn't call anymore!

I'm glad!

MAHEU

THROW 'EM OUT THE WINDOW ONE BY ONE!

He throws open the door and runs toward the hotel. Yvette stops at the open doorway and watches him helplessly.

INT. DESERT INN CASINO - NIGHT

Maheu runs through the crowded main floor to the private elevator. He rushes past the TWO GUARDS and gets into the car and starts to go up.

Guard 1 exchanges a look with Guard 2 and reaches for the security phone.

CUT TO:

I.V. TUBE

Bright red blood starts to run through the clear plastic.

CUT TO:

NINTH-FLOOR HALLWAY

The elevator doors open and Maheu charges out and sees the Guard in the middle of the hallway waiting for him.

And Eckersley's also standing outside the door to the suite.

ECKERSLEY

What do you want, Bob?

MAHEU

I'M NOT TALKIN' TO ERRAND BOYS!

CLOSEUP - HUGHES

Eyes in a blissful haze as he gets his transfusion, then he is startled by the sound of MAHEU'S ANGRY SHOUTS penetrating from the hallway.

He looks both angry and frightened as he stares in the direction of the commotion.

GAY O.S.

You thought I was exaggerating?
Listen for yourself!

Clearly upset, Hughes motions for Gay to bring him something.

BACK TO MAHEU

Shoving the Guard aside and charging for the door. Eckersley, bigger than the Guard, grabs him.

ECKERSLEY

GET OUTTA HERE, YOU'RE DRUNK!

They start wrestling with each other. The Guard runs up and grabs Maheu from behind, but through sheer rage, he's still pushing closer to the door.

Then the door opens and Gay steps out with a leather attache. Maheu is so surprised to see him that he stops struggling and stands there disheveled and panting.

GAY
(cool)
What do you want?

MAHEU
Your game's over! I'm tellin' him
the truth!

GAY
He already knows it, I'm afraid.

MAHEU
Get out of the way!

GAY
Or what? You'll kill me?! There
are two others in there. Going to
kill them, too?!

Maheu stands almost trembling in a cold rage.

MAHEU
I'm not gonna disappear, you're
gonna have to deal with me!

GAY
(deep breath)
You're right ...
(beat)
But right now I think we both need
some sleep. Tomorrow we'll be
with our families, and then we'll
settle this once and for all.

Maheu stares at him trying to judge his sincerity then reaches
into his jacket.

Gay shrinks back, thinking he's going for a gun, but Maheu
pulls out an envelope.

MAHEU
Make sure he gets this! Tonight!

Maheu jams it into Gay's hand then turns and walks down the
hallway and gets into the elevator.

As the elevator doors shut, Gay rips open the sealed envelope,
coolly reads his note to Hughes.

Then he puts his attache case on the guard's table, opens it
and drops Maheu's note inside.

Before he shuts it we can't help but notice that the
distinctive POWER-OF-ATTORNEY writ is also inside.

EXT. MAHEU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

He slowly climbs the stairs. The door flies open and Yvette runs out and hugs him and doesn't look like she'll ever let go.

INT. MAHEU KITCHEN - NEXT DAY (THANKSGIVING)

Maheu is carving a huge turkey as Yvette bustles around checking the different pots on the stove.

A FOOTBALL GAME is on the TV in the next room and we can hear the kids running around CHATTING and LAUGHING in the b.g.

The mood from last night is changed 180 degrees. Maheu is upbeat and enjoying the holiday with his family.

BILLY O.S.

I'm Squanto! Hurry up with the grub, my tribe's starved!

They turn to see their 11-year-old son with an Indian headdress made with elaborate feathers. They both burst out laughing.

MAHEU

Where'd you get the feathers?

BILLY

The girls in the Riviera show gave 'em to me!

(starts grinding his hips)

Boom-a-boom-a-boom!

Maheu starts laughing harder.

YVETTE

(rolls eyes)

That's lovely, Billy.

Billy races off as Maheu, still laughing, resumes carving. Yvette starts ladling gravy into a tureen when the PHONE RINGS.

Yvette walks over and grabs the wall receiver.

YVETTE

Hello ... just a second, Jack, he's right here.

(turns to Maheu)

Jack Hooper.

Maheu puts down the knife and walks over to the phone.

MAHEU

Hey, Jack, Happy Thanksgiving!

CLOSEUP - MAHEU

His smile collapses as he listens and then hangs up. He's ashen. Yvette is too frightened to ask what's happened.

INT. NINTH FLOOR CORRIDOR

The elevator doors open and Maheu exits in a daze and heads to the suite.

CAMERA TRACKS behind Maheu as he sees the Guard's desk is deserted and the door to the suite is open. He enters

THE ANTEROOM

It's been hurriedly cleared out. The file cabinets are gone; the desk is there but some empty drawers are still pulled out.

He walks to the door to Hughes' bedroom. He grabs the doorknob. It's what he's dreamed of doing for the last four years and now he hesitates. Finally, he opens it and enters

HUGHES BEDROOM

and he stops cold and stares.

It's completely empty except for the dust balls blown across the floor. The bed's gone, the Kleenex boxes, piles of legal pads, newspapers, mason jars ... everything.

For a long time, Maheu stands there without moving. Finally, he turns and starts out when he hears something and turns around.

A HUGE COCKROACH

runs across the floor and disappears behind a baseboard.

INT. DESERT INN CASINO - DAY

Private elevator doors open and Maheu exits as if in a dream. We start to hear "FROM THIS MOMENT ON" by our Beautiful Woman Singer.

WOMAN O.S.

*From this moment on, you for me,
dear. Only two for tea, dear,
from this moment on. From this
happy day, no more blue songs,
only whoop-dee-doo songs, from
this moment on ...*

He stumbles through the MOB OF TOURISTS playing the games and slots as he heads toward the main entrance.

WOMAN O.S.

*... For you've got the love I need
so much, got the skin I love to
touch ...*

He suddenly stops and looks to his right and sees the entrance to the CASINO LOUNGE.

INT. DESERT INN LOUNGE

Dark, smoky, the tables and banquettes half-filled. A beat and Maheu enters and is quickly taken by the MAITRE D' to a table next to where the Woman is singing.

WOMAN

*... Got the arms to hold me tight,
got the sweet lips to kiss me
goodnight.*

A WAITRESS hurries over with his usual scotch and he stares at the woman as if he can't quite place her from somewhere else.

He takes a drink. And then he drops his head.

WOMAN

*... From this moment on, you and
I, babe, we'll be ridin' high,
babe. Every care is gone from
this moment on.*

DISSOLVE TO:

EST. SHOT - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Traces of snow on the ground. It's January 1972.

INT. WHITE HOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

A door opens and a concerned Chief of Staff H.R. HALDEMAN steps out. Before he closes the door behind him we recognize that it is the OVAL OFFICE.

As he walks toward his office he runs into Special Counsel CHARLES COLSON. As they walk ...

HALDEMAN

The Old Man's pissed as hell.

COLSON

About what?

HALDEMAN

Larry O'Brien.

COLSON

'Cause he took over as Democratic chairman?

HALDEMAN

Not just that. He's worried he's going to spring another Hughes surprise like in '60.

COLSON

What kind of surprise?

HALDEMAN

(shrugs)

All that time working for that nut, who knows what he dug up?

Haldeman reaches his office and they pause at the entrance.

COLSON

(smirk)

I could call his office and ask him.

Haldeman manages a weak laugh.

HALDEMAN

Yeah, why don't you?

(starts into office)

He must think he's still working for Hughes. I heard he had their headquarters moved to some fancy address.

COLSON

Yeah, they're over at the Watergate, I think.

Colson turns and continues down the hall and we FADE TO BLACK and read the following CRAWL:

Howard Hughes fled Las Vegas for the Bahamas. Over the next six years, he lived secluded in various hotels outside the United States.

He died in 1976 on a flight from Acapulco to Houston. He weighed 93 pounds. Broken-off tips of hypodermic syringes were found in his arms.

