

Prod.#719

JAILHOUSE ROCK

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3-15-57

JAILHOUSE ROCK

FADE IN:

HOUSING PROJECT - FULL SHOT - DAY

A large tract development in the earlier stages. The foundations have been poured and some frames are up. Grading and leveling is still going on.

THE STREET - DAY

As the PAYMASTER drives up, gets out, carrying an attache case. On seeing him, some fifteen workmen knock off, drift over with ad lib remarks: "The eagle screams...here come the sugar man, etc."

PAYMASTER

(handing out checks)

Hartwell... Donegan... Maxwell...
Quigley... Everett...

(Everett's check is not
taken; the Paymaster
looks up)

Where's Vince Everett?

VOICES

I don't know... around here
somplice... deal'em out...

PAYMASTER (CONT'D)

Rocoff... Williams...

He stops, looks o.s. As he HEARS a wild piercing yell of sheer good spirits. The others look.

LONG SHOT - SKIPLOADER

Coming toward CAMERA, hell-bent, over trenches and down depressions, bucking and rearing, roaring at full speed.

The driver comes right at the men. They scatter, laughing, as, with a flourish, the driver swings the tractor around at the last moment, skids to a stop.

The driver is VINCE Everett, a young man of about twenty-two, amiable, cheerful, well-mannered.

VINCE

(holding out hand)

Give me that fortune.

PAYMASTER
 (handing him check)
 What're you gonna do with all that
 money?

VINCE
 (deadpan)
 I'm gonna buy me a herd of chorus
 girls and make 'em dance on my bed.

He looks at the paycheck, kisses it, and jumps off the tractor.

DISSOLVE:

INT. BAR ("THE WILD GOOSE") - DAY

The bartender-owner is counting out Vince's check, putting the money in his hand.

BARTENDER
 -- a hundred and five, six, seven,
 a hundred and eight dollars. Good
 week, Vince.

VINCE
 You ready?

The bartender nods, puts his elbow on the bar, as does Vince, and they clasp hands for a put-down. The other men gather around to watch.

MEN
 (ad lib)
 Vince like that punishment... Some
 day he'll learn...

Vince and the bartender start the struggle, straining mightily. The men look on silently.

The CAMERA pans slowly away, down the bar, to where a woman is sitting. She will be identified as DOTTY, about 35, a bit seedy, of the species barfly whose natural habitat is saloons. She watches the contest with bored, tired eyes.

From her angle, we watch the bartender slowly but inexorably push Vince's arm down until his knuckles touch the bar. He lets go; Vince massages the muscles in his forearm with a sigh of resignation.

VINCE
 Drinks are on me.

MEN

(ad lib)

That's the kind a athletic contest
I appreciate... He's game, that
boy...

The bartender starts pumping out glasses of tap beer.

VINCE

I'll get you next week.

BARTENDER

You bet.

Now Dotty finishes her drink, and with practised smoothness
moves down, takes the stool next to Vince.

DOTTY

(with a cool smile)

Buy me a drink, cowboy?

VINCE

(startled)

Huh?

DOTTY

(eyeing him appraisingly)

You're buying, aren't you?

VINCE

Oh, sure. Yes, ma'am.

(to bartender)

Jake, draw one for the lady.

DOTTY

I'll have a shot --

(coily)

-- if you can afford it.

VINCE

(hurriedly)

Oh, sure - I can afford it.

(looks at bartender)

One shot.

The bartender regards Dotty sourly, without moving.

DOTTY

You heard the gentleman.

BARTENDER

(warningly)

Dotty - don't give me a bad tip.

DOTTY
 (acid smile)
 I won't give you a bad time and you
 don't gimme any your lip, huh,
 Jake?

With a grimace of annoyance, the bartender pours her a shot. She downs it with one easy gulp, moves her face close to Vince's.

DOTTY
 I saw you here last week when you
 cashed your check.

VINCE
 (uneasily)
 Yes, ma'am.

DOTTY
 (touching his hair.)
 You got nice hair.

Over her shoulder, in the b.g., we see a man approaching, glowering with anger. He's a big man with a cross to bear by the name of Dotty. His name is KEN.

DOTTY
 (softly)
 I get off work at four, and --

She never finishes her declaration. With one irritated sweep of his arm, Ken knocks her off the bar stool. She lands on her rump with a thud.

KEN
 (raging down at her)
 You two-bit tramp, you!

He yanks her, whimpering, to her feet, and is going to rough her up when Vince, recovering from his surprise, touches his arm.

VINCE
 (calmly)
 She didn't mean anything.
 (smiling)
 I just bought a round for the
 house.

KEN
 Keep out of this.

He twists her hand. Vince grabs his arm.

VINCE

She wasn't out of line --

Rightly indignant at this interference, Ken turns, glares at Vince.

KEN

I told you to keep your mouth out of this.

VINCE

Leave her alone.

KEN

You wanna loose some teeth, buster, just keep it up.

VINCE

(easily)

You scare me. Women beaters always scare me.

KEN

(with contempt)

Run along, greaseball, or I'll muss your hair.

He picks up Vince's beer, casually empties it on his shirt front. Then Vince hits him, and the fight is on. They have a grinning and the appreciative audience.

Unwittingly, Ken has tackled a ring-tailed terror. Vince fights with strange and incongruous fury; it is apparent that there are deep wells of hatred and resentment within him waiting to be tapped. He punches with accuracy and jolting power Ken's hands drop as the blows drain his strength. Vince sets him up with a left hand to the belly which goes in wrist-deep. Ken totters, out on his feet.

BARTENDER

(a warning cry)

Vince! He's had enough!

But Vince throws the right with all the leverage and strength. It hits Ken on the side of the jaw, snapping his head around. He goes down, doesn't move.

Vince stands over him, breathing evenly, waiting for the red rage to go away. The bartender kneels down by Ken, frowning at his strangely twisted neck. He feels for the pulse in his throat.

A worker stares at Vince in awe.

WORKER
Kid -- you can hit.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Somebody call the cops.

Vince and the others turn, look at the bartender. He speaks with curious resignation.

BARTENDER
This guy's dead as a doornail.

The CAMERA moves in swiftly to a BIG HEAD CLOSEUP of Vince. His eyes are dark with shock and horror.

DISSOLVE:

MED. SHOT - JUDGE - DAY
A stern, impassive man of fifty.

JUDGE
Will the prisoner step forward.

CAMERA pulls back to reveal:

FULL SHOT - COURTROOM

Vince, his face stiff with fear, approaches the bench his lawyer by his side.

JUDGE
Are you ready to hear pronouncement
of sentence?
(Vince nods)
You have been found guilty, by a
jury of your peers, of the crime of
manslaughter. You are hereby
remanded to the custody of the
sheriff and will be transported to
the State Penitentiary where you
will serve a term of not less than
one, nor more than ten years
imprisonment.

Vince nods again, uncomprehending. There is a silence in the courtroom, as the judge idly shifts the papers on the bench before him. He turns away from Vince, staring out the window.

JUDGE

(conversationally)

Young man - you have fires of violence inside you. I'd advise you to quench them -- extinguish them. This fire has cost the life of one man. Unchecked, it will destroy you. Burn you up.

(turns to Vince)

Do you agree?

(before Vince can answer)

Court dismissed.

DISSOLVE:

ESTABLISHING SHOT - PENITENTIARY (STOCK) - DAY

Grim and cheerless.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Vince is standing at attention before the WARDEN, a blunt, direct official, a man of little humor and guarded emotions. He is looking at Vince's commitment papers. When he speaks it is with disinterest.

WARDEN

A tough woodchuck, huh? Well that's what we're here for, to teach you hooligans. It says here you killed a man with your bare hands.

(looks up; his cold eyes bore into Vince. His voice remains expressionless)

We don't use hands here - we use guns. I tell you another thing we use for cons who don't toe the mark: the whip. Understand?

VINCE

(faintly)

Yes.

WARDEN

Sir.

VINCE

Yes, sir.

WARDEN
You hurt society, boy. You owe society a debt. I'm here to see you pay it with no fuss. Keep your nose clean, we'll get along. Start getting smart, and I'll fall on you.

VINCE
(lowly)
You'll get no trouble from me.

WARDEN
(patiently)
Sir.

VINCE
Sir.

WARDEN
(looking at chart)
I'm putting you in with Hank Houghton. And old timer.
(muttering to himself)
Shame to put a punk like you in there with him, but I can't help it if they won't build me more room. Blame the taxpayers.
(weary wave of hand)
That's all.

Vince stands there, uncertain as to what to do. He swallows hard, then murmurs:

VINCE
Thank you, sir.

The remark is startling to the warden he shows, for the first time, an emphatic reaction. He goggles.

DISSOLVE:

INT. CELL BLOCK - DAY

Vince, in prison garb, walks down the cell block, accompanied by a guard. The guard stops, unlocks the cell, waves Vince in.

VINCE
When do I finish my processing?

GUARD
 (making the old joke -
 humorlessly)
 No hurry. You got plenty of time.

INT. CELL - DAY

Vince looks around as the guard walks away. The cell is neat, clean, and shows that its inmate has lived there a long time. Fan pictures of hillbilly singers adorn the walls: Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubbs, Roy Acuff, Hank Snow, Webb Pierce.

A good guitar hangs on the wall. With mild curiosity, Vince takes it down, twangs the strings a few times.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Put it down.

He turns. HUNK Houghton is being admitted by a guard. In his early forties, he is outwardly surly, uncommunicative, with a glacier-like demeanor. He stands, staring coldly at Vince, who still holds the guitar.

HUNK
 Put it back where you found it.

VINCE
 Oh, sure.
 (hangs it up)
 Didn't know you were touchy about it.

HUNK
 I live here. I'm touchy about everything.

Hunk goes over to the little table, sits down, starts copying from a nearly shredded pocket book. Vince sits down on the lower bunk.

HUNK
 You're sittin on my bunk.

Shrugging, Vince gets up, sits on the concrete floor.

VINCE
 This okay?
 (no answer)
 My name's Vince Everett.

HUNK
 You know my name.

VINCE
Glad to know you.

HUNK
Yeah.
(copying steadily)
You're not through processing.

VINCE
Not yet.

HUNK
What about your haircut?

VINCE
What about it?

HUNK
Want a good one or a fresh fish
special?
(as Vince opens his mouth
to question)
Fresh fish special, they hack it
up. A good haircut'll cost you
three packs of cigarettes.

VINCE
I haven't got three packs of
cigarettes.

HUNK
Got any money?

VINCE
Spent it all on my lawyer.

Hunk goes over to his little commode, opens it, reveals his
treasure - dozens of cartons of cigarettes.

HUNK
I'll loan you three - pay me back
four.

Vince is amused by the boastful gesture. He chuckles about
it.

VINCE
Seems silly - saving up cigarettes
like that.

Hunk snaps the commode shut, nods to himself.

HUNK
You'll learn.

DISSOLVE:

PRISON BARBER - CLOSE SHOT

As he starts to work on Vince. The clippers make a deep swathe. Vince winces.

DISSOLVE:

CELL - DAY

As Vince is let in. He has a prison butch haircut, and it does not show the signs of loving care in the doing. Hunk looks up from his copying, regards him head a tilt. Vince stands against the wall, glaring at him for a moment. Then a slow grin lifts his mouth.

VINCE
Okay. Tell me about the
cigarettes.

With the deliberation of a banker about to discuss big finance, Hunk lays aside his pencil and tablet. He talks swiftly and with the ease of sure knowledge.

HUNK
I run a business, sonny. I'm what you might call one of the top cons in this stir. I got representatives in the tailor shop, commissary, sick bay, the kitchen and the shoe shop. They work for me. You want a good haircut - I fix it. A good pair of shoes, or a nice fittin shirt -- ask me. You like fried eggs? I see to it you get six instead of two when they're served. I deal in comforts. In the can, gettin out, and pure animal comforts is all there is to live for. Like everything else, you pay for it.

(holds up a pack of
cigarettes)
And this here is the coin of the realm.

VINCE

Where do you get the cigarettes?

HUNK

Trade with men that don't smoke.
Buy 'em. Steal 'em. Cheat for 'em.
Fight for 'em. Just like you do
for money on the outside.

VINCE

(concerned)

I'm broke. I'll never get a chance
to accumulate any cigarettes.

HUNK

The state pays you 18 cents a day.
That's a beginning. Play ball with
me and I'll stake you.

VINCE

That's right nice of you.

HUNK

I can't have my cellmate going
around like a bum. I got a
position to live up to. Another
important thing is your job. You
been assigned yet?

VINCE

Not yet.

HUNK

You'll draw the coal yard. New
fish always do. It's hard and
dirty. But I can get you out of
it. Maybe get you assigned to the
print shop where I am.

VINCE

(smiling)

For how many packs?

HUNK

About five cartons. I'll loan 'em
to you.

VINCE

What interest rate?

HUNK

You're learning fast. The interest
rate ain't too high.

(MORE)

HUNK (cont'd)
Do what I say, when I say it.
That's the basis of my
organization.

VINCE
No, thanks.

HUNK
(startled)
Huh?

VINCE
I'll take my chances.

Hunk fixes him with a stern look. Then abruptly, he washes his hand of all responsibility. He returns to his copying.

HUNK
(curtly)
Suit yourself.

VINCE
I sure do thank you, though.

HUNK
No skin off my behind.

A silence ensues, broken only by the whispering of Hunk's pencil.

VINCE
(idly)
What're you copying?

HUNK
That last chapter of this book --
where the detective finally cuts
the buck with the blonde broad.

VINCE
Must be hot stuff.

HUNK
So many guys have read it, the
book's shredded. I copy it and
pass it along --
(looks up, starts to add
something. Vince beats
him to it)

VINCE
I know -- for money.

DISSOLVE:

COAL YARD - DAY

Alongside a railroad siding, there is a large pile of coal - as it was dumped from railroad cars. On the business end of the coal scoop, Vince, and several other inmates, are loading individual wheelbarrows, which are pushed by still other inmates.

Vince, stripped to the waist in the broiling sun as he works, is black with coal dust, with rivulets of perspiration washing white streaks down his face and chest. He finishes loading a wheelbarrow; a convict wheels it toward the boiler room.

A guard, with a sawed-off shotgun, lounges in the shade nearby.

A big con, by the name of SIMPSON, working with Vince, straightens up, yells at the guard.

SIMPSON

Hey, guard! What about a water call?

GUARD

(yelling back)

One water call every two hours. You know the new rules.

SIMPSON

In this heat?

GUARD

Knock it off, mac. Back to work.

Growling with anger, the convict resumes shoveling.

SIMPSON

(to Vince)

That new warden, the jerk! Since he came, this can ain't fit to live in!

DISSOLVE:

CELL - NIGHT

Vince, still dirty, climbs into the top bunk.

VINCE

Man - I'm de-creased!

Hunk looks up from his desk, where he is entering items in a ledger, closes it. It is labeled, in big letters: "BOOKKEEPING".

HUNK

Well - laddie. Ready to make a deal for the print shop?

VINCE

I'll stick it out.

HUNK

Admire a man with spirit. But it ain't practical in here.

VINCE

(irritated)

What does it cost 'em to give you water?

HUNK

When a screw sees a con with spirit, it's like showing a baby rabbit to a bobcat.

VINCE

And that chow! Where do they pick up that slush?

HUNK

(musing)

They can't stand a man that won't break. I heard about an old con who doctors canary birds. They heard about him so they gave him the hole.

(slowly, savoring it)

He's been in solitary for forty-four years.

Simpson's voice is HEARD roaring, o.s.

SIMPSON

Hey, Houghton!

HOUGHTON

(calling back)

I hear you callin.

SIMPSON

What're we gonna do about conditions? I got a bellyfull.

HUNK

I got less'n a deuce to go. So
I'll just suffer my little heart
out.

A loud muttering of protest goes up from other prisoners.
Hunk smiles thinly, as he reaches for his guitar.

HUNK

Best quiet the steers down.

He starts playing and singing. The song should be one of the classic old folk songs - probably a love song - like "Barbara Allen" or "The Frozen Girl". The voice, and rendition, while not extraordinary, is recognizably not that of an amateur.

Listening in the upper bunk, Vince becomes aware that the rumble of protest in the cell block is dying away. This he finds interesting.

When the song finishes, the prisoners call out there appreciation - "Mighty pretty, Hunk... give us another... nice going, etc." Hunk, stands, takes a bow - just as though the audience could see him.

HUNK

(very professional)

Thank you a lot, neighbors.
Appearin' before you has given me a
big hunk of pleasure, and I hope to
be around pickin' and singin' for
you again real soon.

He puts aside his guitar, and climbs into his bunk.

On the top bunk, Vince frowns curiously.

VINCE

Whereabouts you learn to sing like
that?

HUNK

Used to be my trade, sonny buck.

(note of pride)

I was singing country music before
the word was invented. I've
appeared on the same stage with the
best of 'em -- Eddy Arnold.... Roy
Acuff... Red Foley...

VINCE

You make good money?

HUNK
As high as two bills a week.
(reveling in the memory)
Man, I was swimming in gravy those
days.

VINCE
Get on to the sad part.

HUNK
A woman and a bank did it. She got
used to bonded bourbon, so I robbed
a bank.

VINCE
Thought you were making two hundred
a week?

HUNK
Well -- booking got thin.

There is a long silence. Hunk clears his throat.

HUNK
(delicately)
Like my rendition?

VINCE
(very thoughtful)
You really made all that money just
for singing?

HUNK
Why not?

Vince climbs down from his bunk, picks up the guitar.

VINCE
Mind if I horse around with it?

HUNK
Don't break any strings.

Vince awkwardly fingers a chord, hits the strings. Then he
looks at Hunk.

VINCE
I can sing better'n you.

HUNK
(sniffing)
Naturally.

VINCE

My uncle used to have a guitar. I
fooled around with it some. He
used to sing this song I remember.

He begins to sing. This song, also, is of the folk variety,
but it is lively and rhythmic. Vince sort of fakes the
fingering on the guitar.

Listening, Hunk is bored at first, his eyes closed. But as
Vince goes on, he cocks one eye open, becomes intent.

When Vince finishes, the prisoners in the cell block respond
much more enthusiastically than they did for Hunk's song. It
is not a crashing ovation, but they are pleased.

Hunk swings his feet down off the bunk. He senses he has
stumbled on to something, but he dissembles.

VINCE

(grinning)

Like my singing?

HUNK

(growling)

You don't know a thing about a
guitar.

VINCE

(nodding with his head)

The boarders liked it.

HUNK

What you might call a captive
audience.

(picks up guitar)

Here - let me show you a few
chords....

DISSOLVE:

CELL - NIGHT

As Hunk patiently tries to teach Vince the fundamentals of
the guitar. Reaching over the youngster's shoulders, he
arranges his fingers on the frets.

HUNK

This one's --- the C major chord.

It's one of the big ones...

(as Vince plunks away)

Now try the G...

Sits down in disgust, waves his hands in dismissal.

VINCE
What's the matter?

HUNK
You'll never make a guitar player.
(with weary emphasis)
You got no rhythm in your bones.

VINCE
I never heard of anybody paying
money to hear a guitar player.

HUNK
(sarcastically)
Well, don't pay no attention to me!
I was only in the business ten
years.

VINCE
(kidding him)
I read you loud and clear.

DISSOLVE:

COAL YARD - DAY

Vince is shoveling coal when Hunk comes hurrying up, in a state of excitement. As he passes Vince, he speaks out of the side of his mouth.

HUNK
Take a water break... hurry up...

He continues on, goes around a corner, where there is a faucet coming out of the wall, and a tin cup hanging on a nail. He waits impatiently. In a moment, Vince arrives, draws a cup of water, drinks thirstily.

HUNK
We're gonna have a prisoner's
show... a committee from the State
Legislature is coming to
investigate and the warden wants to
throw up a smoke screen, so he said
put on a show.

VINCE
(without interest)
He's all heart, that warden.

HUNK
Know who's gonna produce the show?

VINCE
You.

HUNK
Who told you?

Vince smiles crookedly at Hunk, pours a cup full of water over his head.

HUNK
I got a spot for you on the show.
I'll teach you a new song.

VINCE
(without enthusiasm)
Ah, I don't know.
(shakes his head)
What's the percentage in singing
for a bunch of cons?

HUNK
Experience, you lunk! That's the
percentage.

VINCE
I'll consider it.

Hunk eyes him appraisingly.

HUNK
Fine. You do that. And while
you're about it, consider the shows
gonna be on television, coast-to-
coast.

VINCE
(startled)
You're joshin'!

HUNK
(shaking his head
negatively)
On a show called "Breadth of a
Nation".
(an evil grin)
I guess they figure we got color.

VINCE
(promptly)
I considered. I'm on.
(MORE)

VINCE (cont'd)
 (reflectively)
 What do you think is prettier - red
 or blue?

HUNK
 Red or blue what?

VINCE
 Color for a convertible.

DISSOLVE:

THE SHOW - DAY

The auditorium is full of convicts and television equipment.
 As a harmonica player finishes his number, Hunk steps up.
 Naturally, he is M.C.

HUNK
 You guests of the State all gonna
 be sorry this next boy is a short-
 termer. Cause he sure sings
 pretty. Let's hear it for Vince
 Everett!

Vince comes out to polite applause, sits down, starts to
 sing. It's a mournful song about life behind bars.

When he finishes, the inmates give him a rousing hand. Hunk
 steps out quickly, holds up his hands, lest the applause turn
 into ovation.

HUNK
 I dug down deep into the song bag,
 and I came up with a good old one.
 I'd like to try it out on you.

As Hunk starts to sing,

DISSOLVE:

PRISON POST OFFICE - DAY

Hunk is anxiously hovering about as two inmate clerks empty a
 sack of incoming mail.

HUNK
 Hurry it up, boys. I gotta count
 my fan mail.

As the mail cascades out, Hunk grabs a letter.

HUNK
Vince Everett...
(takes another, another)
Vince Everett... Everett...

Feverishly, he snatches one letter after another, throws them back. His facial expression shows the story. All the mail is for Vince.

Hunk does some heavy thinking, after which, he makes his decision.

HUNK
(to clerks)
Hey, you birds --
(as they look up)
Come here.
(they come over)
How'd you like to make five cartons
apiece?

CLERK
(sarcastically)
Who do you want murdered?

HUNK
(smoothly)
The easiest money you made in your
life, boys. All you have to do is
keep your mouths shut.
(as they show their
puzzlement)
About this fan mail. I made a
mistake and gave the kid the best
spot on the show.
(conning them)
If the word got out that all this
mail was for Vince Everett, it
makes me look bad, you follow? Me -
the professional singer.

CLERK
Ah - I see!

HUNK
If in a week's time the word's not
around, you get the cigarettes.

OTHER CLERK
It's Everett's mail. Who'll keep
him quiet?

HUNK
 (smiling)
 If I know the warden, Everett'll
 never get it.

DISSOLVE:

WARDEN'S OFFICE -DAY

Before him, on the desk, several bundles of letters, neatly tied, are sitting. An orderly stands before the desk.

WARDEN
 Let's just file this mail for
 Everett until he's released. The
 kid might get some false ideas
 about his importance.
 (shoots a look at the
 orderly)
 And you keep your mouth shut about
 it - understand?

ORDERLY
 (picking up mail)
 Yes, sir.

DISSOLVE:

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Hunk is putting on a display of enthusiasm as he paces the cell. Vince watches him wearily.

HUNK
 We'd be a natural together. Both
 ex-cons -- the publicity'll be
 sensational.
 (looks at calendar)
 You get out in six months, and I
 follow you five months later.
 (eagerly)
 What do you say?

VINCE
 (dubiously)
 You mean - we sing together?

HUNK
 Together - alone - it make no
 difference.
 (MORE)

HUNK (cont'd)
We hire a couple of other acts, and we got our own show. We play the circuit, and we roll.

VINCE
I don;t know anything about how you get bookings and that stuff.

HUNK
(grandly)
Let me worry about the business end.
(beckoning)
Come here --

Vince come over to hunk's desk. A written paper lies there.

HUNK
I've mad a contract for us. We split everything right down the middle. Sit down, boy!.

Reluctantly, Vince sits down. Hunk hands him a pen.

HUNK
Sign right there.

Vince starts to sign, then changes his mind.

VINCE
How come you're willing to give me 50 percent of your earnings? Like you said, you got the experience and the name.

HUNK
(solemnly)
One simple reason. I got faith in your potential. Sure - you're never gonna command the dough I can, but with training, you'll do all right. Besides - I need a young man to appeal to the kids.
(the picture of honesty)
I'm leveling with you boy.

Some intuition tells Vince not to sign, but he can find no logical reason not to.

HUNK
(clenching it)
Alone, son, you'd be a lamb in a pack of wolves.

Vince nods, picks up the pen, affixes his signature. There is a gleam of triumph in Hunk's eyes.

DISSOLVE:

DINING ROOM - DAY

Seated at the one table are Hunk, Vince, and Simpson. The three of them are staring listlessly at the food in front of them.

SIMPSON

I wouldn't feed this garbage to a razor back hog.

VINCE

I thought that investigating committee was going to fix things up.

SIMPSON

(as his gorge rises)

Investigating committee! What do those jerks see? What the warden wants 'em to see!

He stabs at the food with his fork and his fury mounts.

SIMPSON

Slop. Slop. Slop!
(a sudden scream)
SLOP!

He stands and throws his tin plate as far as he can.

SIMPSON

How long we gonna take this?

His actions, and words, are the trigger needed. With his concerted yell, all the inmates leap to their feet and start throwing their dishes, and the riot is on.

HUNK

(rising hurriedly - Vince)
Come on. Get back to the cell!

Vince follows him through the writhing crowd. Now the inmates are caught up in a frenzy of destruction, smashing tables and benches, hurling cups and cutlery.

Then he loses sight of Hunk. He stops, looks around him. It is a savage, frightening scene, and he watches with fascination.

Gradually, he is infected by the hysteria. Before he, himself, he realizes it, he is part of the mob. The next thing, he is in it, destroying with the rest of them.

At the entrance, a flying wedge of about twenty guards crash in, armed with tear gas guns and clubs. They cut loose with tear gas bombs, begin swinging clubs.

DISSOLVE:

CORNER OF DINING ROOM - DAY

Jammed in the corner, their hands in the air, are about fifteen prisoners, held there by guards with sawed off shot-guns.

Included in the fifteen, is Vince.

DISSOLVE:

WARDEN'S OFFICE -DAY

Vince, flanked by two guards, is standing before the warden. He reads from the book of rules.

WARDEN

(tonelessly)

--- and I adjudge you now a third-class prisoner, by definition an incorrigible, chronic malcontent, with destructive and harmful tendencies. I, therefore, by the power vested in me by the State Legislature, Statute 267 dash 82, rule that for your part in the dining room riot of April four you receive ten strokes of the lash before the prescribed authorities.

(looks up)

That means you must have either the chaplain or a doctor present you when you get whipped. Which one?

VINCE

Suit yourself.

DISSOLVE:

WHIPPING POST - DAY

Vince, his back bare, is tied to the post, his arms aloft. Present are the warden, the captain of the guard, prison doctor, the guard administering the whipping, and two armed guards.

The warden nods to the whipper. He ripples the leather thong a couple of times, and lays the first stroke.

The lash bites into Vince's back. The CAMERA turns away, then, as the shipping continues, the warden counts: "One, Two, Three, etc."

After the tenth stroke, the CAMERA returns to Vince's face. It is set in stern lines of stoicism, with no visible signs of emotion.

One guard cuts him down, another loosens the thongs which tie his hands together

The moment his hands are free, Vince goes after the warden. He is sobbing with rage. The guards intercept him and try to hold him. He continues to fight; they are forced to defend themselves. One guard brings the barrel of his revolver down on Vince's head. He crumples.

DISSOLVE:

INT. CELL - NIGHT

As Vince is returned by guards. His head is bandaged, his legs weak, his body aching. Groaning, he climbs into his bunk.

Hunk watches him impassively, after a moment, speaks.

HUNK

I didn't have enough money to buy the grease, kid. The price was three hundred; I didn't have it.

VINCE

(painfully)
I wish you did.

HUNK

Don't ask me to feel sorry for you. Pit's a commodity in here. You buy and sell it, like anything else.

Vince raises on one elbow, glares at Hunk.

VINCE
(harshly)
What are you? Some kind of animal?

HUNK
(calmly)
That's right, buddy. I'm an animal
in a jungle, and I got a motto: "Do
unto others as they would do unto
you, only do it first."

A cold thoughtfulness comes over Vince's face.

VINCE
Sure. You're right. "Do it
first".

HUNK
And it's just as bad outside.
Worse. Remember that.

VINCE
I don't aim to forget that.

The CAMERA goes in close to Vince's face. In the hard
resoluteness there, we sense that his youth has left him.

DISSOLVE:

CELL BLOCK CORRIDOR - DAY

A guard approaches the cell of Vince and Hunk. He unlocks
the door. It is the same guard who first ushered Vince in
the day he arrived at prison.

GUARD
Everett - you ready?

INT. CELL - DAY

Vince is dressed in a cheap, I'll fitting, prison suit of
clothing. He is putting his few belongings into a duffle
bag. Hunk watches.

GUARD
(grinning)
Be sure to drop in on us when
you're in this part of the country.
(MORE)

GUARD (cont'd)
Always glad to put you up for the
night.

VINCE
(without looking at him)
Just go away, screw. I want to say
goodbye to my friend.

Chuckling, the guard retreats a few steps. Vince turns to
Hunk, puts out his hand.

VINCE
I'll see you in about five months.

HUNK
(eagerly)
That's right, boy. Together we'll
knock 'em over. Don't forget the
name of the joint, now: "The
Florita". I wrote a letter to Sam
Brewster, the owner. He's an old
buddy of mine. I'm positive he'll
give you a job.

VINCE
Okay. So long.

HUNK
Take it easy.

Vince walks out of the cell without a backward look.

DISSOLVE:

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

The warden counts out some money for Vince.

WARDEN
This is what the State owes you.
Fifty-four dollars.

VINCE
(pocketing the money)
Do I have to pay income tax on it?

WARDEN
(coldly)
Don't give me any sass, bub. And
get out of here.

VINCE
I'll try not to break down.

He turns, reaches the door when the warden stops him.

WARDEN

Oh - wait a minute.

(Vince turns)

Here's some mail belongs to you.

He goes to a small chest in the corner, takes out the tied package of fan mail, hands it to Vince.

VINCE

What's this?

WARDEN

Letters you got after that television show.

(mockingly)

You're a regular star, Everett.

VINCE

How come I didn't see these before?

WARDEN

Cause I didn't want you to.

VINCE

That's against the law, holding mail from an inmate.

WARDEN

Have me arrested.

(with a vague gesture of his hand)

Beat it. And don't come back.

VINCE

(softly, with hatred)

You been like a father to me, warden.

They stare at each other for a moment, then Vince exits.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

As the clerk ushers Vince into the cheaply furnished room. The clerk, a fat, unshaven man with a dead stub of cigar in his mouth, indicates the unmade bed.

CLERK
 (grating voice)
 I'll send a woman up to make the
 bed directly.

VINCE
 Okay.

He sits down on the bed. The clerk lingers, obviously
 waiting for a tip.

VINCE
 What do you want?

CLERK
 It's custom to tip a man when he
 brings you to your room.

VINCE
 I'm starting a new custom. No tip.

CLERK
 (shrugging)
 No law against trying.

He leaves. Vince gets up, goes over to the window, looks
 down, is depressed by what he sees. Then he returns to the
 dresser, picks up the package of fan letters, unties it, sits
 down on the bed, begins reading. As he reads the first one,
 we HEAR the voice of the teen-age girl who sent it.

VOICE
 (slowly, haltingly,
 jerkily)
 "Dear Vince: I saw you on
 television today singing from the
 jail and thought you sing really
 cool. My name is Marijane
 Hamilton, and I am fifteen with
 blue eyes and brown hair. My
 measurements are 33-25-26. Do you
 think I should reduce? Ha! Ha!
 If you ever come to Riverport, how
 about giving me a blast in the
 phone? My number is Lockwood 4-3-5-
 7 --- "

The voice fades over the telephone number. Vince stares
 thoughtfully at the letter. He is neither amused of
 flattered, he is calculative.

The door opens and the CLEANING WOMAN enters. She is weary and bored, which may be why she didn't bother to knock. Without looking at Vince, she starts making the bed.

Still thinking about the fan mail, Vince make a decision.

VINCE
(to woman)
Where's the nearest pawn shop?

WOMAN
Down the street two blocks.
(mirthless chuckle)
Gonna buy yourself a diamond ring?

VINCE
(putting on coat)
Honey - I'm gonna buy a guitar and
sing love songs to you.

The woman looks up, blinking, as Vince laves.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. "THE FLORITA" - NIGHT

A good-sized bar brilliantly and garishly illuminated on the outside with miles of neon tubing.

INT. "THE FLORITA" - NIGHT

Vince is seated down at the end of the bar, sipping a beer. Right beside him, against a partition, is a juke box.

Above the level of the bar, to the rear, is a small platform for the three-piece combination which is presently furnishing the accompaniment for the stripper at work. The stripper's stage is the runway, which goes the length of the bar, and above it. She is a woman of about thirty, with a good figure, but a face frozen in sullen lines of resentment. There is a remote, detached quality about her acting; she perhaps has other things on her mind. A curious thing about her performance: no one pays it particular heed.

Vince glances up at her unenthusiastic gyrations from time to time without interest.

Then PEGGY VAN ALDEN enters the saloon. She is young, about twenty-one, well-dressed, attractive. She greets the two bartenders cheerfully:

PEGGY

Hi, Jerry --- Shorty --

BARTENDERS

(pleased to see her)
Peggy! --- Hello, sweetie.

She takes a seat next to Vince, right next to the juke box. She looks up to the guitar player, winks at him. The stripper goes on with her work.

Vince regards her with cool curiosity; she seems out of place in this joint. Aware of his scrutiny, Peggy smiles briefly at him. His expression doesn't change. Shorty, the bartender, place a drink before her; she thanks him with a nod and a smile.

The stripper finishes, to a faint rustle of applause, and the trio hurriedly leaves the platform.

Peggy now goes to work. She takes a pencil and a notebook from her purse, turns to the juke box, deftly takes off a plate inside the machine, revealing counters. She begins jotting down figures in her notebook. Vince's curiosity grows. Shorty drifts down, watches.

SHORTY

How's your boy doing?

PEGGY

Large. He's on top. "Crying to the Stars" got 84 plays.

SHORTY

Yeah. I'm getting sick of it.

PEGGY

Watch your tongue, Shorty.

She finished her notations, puts the machine back in working operation, turns to finish her drink. Vince still watches her, unblinkingly, and she becomes slightly nettled by his stare.

PEGGY

Tell me what you see.

VINCE

About five-four, weight 115.
Pretty well stacked.

PEGGY
(flustered by his
bluntness)
I'm glad you find me pleasing.

VINCE
I don't find you nothing.

PEGGY
(irritated)
Then why are you staring?

VINCE
(indicating with a nod)
I'm interested in that juke box.

PEGGY
I'm sorry. I don't know about the
mechanics.

VINCE
I don't either.
(points down to the
guitar, which is at his
feet)
I'm a singer.

PEGGY
Indeed.

VINCE
I saw you puttin' down figures. I
wondered what they were so don't
get any fancy ideas about yourself.

Peggy is somewhat taken aback by his hard forthrightness.
She smiles weakly.

PEGGY
I - I see. I'm afraid I
misunderstood.

VINCE
I'm afraid you did.

PEGGY
(friendly)
Well - you buy me a fresh drink,
and I'll tell you about the
figures.

VINCE
(casually)
Buy your own drink.

At the second rebuff, Peggy examines him thoughtfully. She cannot help but be intrigued.

PEGGY
Is yours the approved manner with
the ladies in the backwoods?

VINCE
Tell me about the figures.

PEGGY
(with a gesture indicating
she gives up trying to
diagnose him)
All right. I'm an exploitation man
in the record business. I work for
Mickey Alba. You've heard of him.

VINCE
(nodding)
Word sometimes gets to the
backwoods.

PEGGY
I plug his records with the disc
jockeys... juke boxes... stores...
(she looks o.s., smiles)
Hello, Sam

SAM, the owner of "The Florita", walks into the scene. Sam is a chronically unhappy man, and he enjoys it.

SAM
Hello, kid.

PEGGY
(to Vince)
This is Sam Brewster, the cheerful
owner.

VINCE
(putting out his hand)
Vince Everett. Did you get Hunk
Houghton's letter?

SAM
(nodding)
You wanta job, huh?

VINCE
When do I go to work?

SAM
Whenever you want.

VINCE
Tonight's as good as any.

SAM
It's up to you.
(sits down, beckons to
waiter)
Give me a seltzer.

VINCE
(a bit nervously)
Can - can the - those guys -
(indicating bandstand)
-- play with me when I sing?

SAM
(grunting)
Sing? What sing?

VINCE
Sing. You said I can start
tonight.

SAM
As barboy. Make setups. Bring
ice.

VINCE
(bridling)
Hunk Houghton said you'd give me a
job singing.

The bartender brings the seltzer. Sam sips on it
distastefully.

SAM
What do you think I am -- a mental
case?
(indicating saloon)
This ain't no hobby, you know.

VINCE
All I want's a chance.

SAM
Save yourself grief, kid. So Hunk
taught you a couple songs. Swell.
(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
 Be the life of the next party you
 go to. But I don't have
 Opportunity Night here.
 (wearily)
 You want the job or don't you?
 (stands)
 Barboy.
 (to Peggy)
 I'll see you, honey.

He walks away. Vince looks after him with smoldering eyes.

PEGGY
 Hunk Houghton? That name sounds
 familiar.

VINCE
 An old hillbilly singer. I met him
 in the penitentiary.
 (muttering to himself)
 Make setups. Bring ice.

As the trio climbs back up on to the bandstand, Vince makes
 up his mind. He picks up his guitar, vaults up on the
 runway.

VINCE
 (loudly)
 Ladies and gentlemen!
 (when he gets their
 attention)
 I'm not part of the show, so don't
 encourage me or pay me any mind at
 all.
 (strums guitar a few
 times)
 The man who owns this place don't
 think I can sing so I gotta prove
 it to him. It won't take long, so
 you go right ahead with what you're
 doing.

Sam is looking at Vince, eyes bugging. Peggy is excited with
 the prospect of a new talent. Vince turns to the trio.

VINCE
 I'd like to do a chorus of "
 (title)___", for your pleasure.

He begins the song. The trio behind him, faintly interested,
 sort of noodles along with him.

After only a few words of the lyrics, a man - somewhat drunk - seated with his girl in a booth, laughs loudly. Vince stops, addresses himself to the man.

VINCE
(confidently)
Don't let me interrupt you, mister.

MAN
I won't.

He laughs again. Vince resumes the song, calmly, without a sign of misgivings.

Peggy realizes at once that Vince is not succeeding. She looks around, sees people doing precisely what Vince, in his brashness, dares them to do. They are going on with what they were doing, not listening. It is reminiscent of the strip-tease reaction.

Vince, struggling a bit with finding the right chords on his guitar, is not aware of it at first. Then, he, too, knows.

The man in the booth is the principal offender. He talks loudly, laughs, clatters glasses.

Abruptly, Vince breaks off in the middle of the song. The fury leaps up in him, and he jumps off the runway, strides over to the loudmouth, and with one violent swing of his guitar, clears the booth of bottles, glasses ashtrays. In doing so, he breaks his guitar. He hurls it from him, and hurriedly stamps out of the saloon.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Vince is steaming up the sidewalk, heedless, when Peggy runs up, catches him.

PEGGY
Hey, you forgot something!

VINCE
What?

PEGGY
Me.

Vince growls something indistinguishable, keeps doggedly on. Peggy has to half-run to keep up.

PEGGY

That was quite a temper tantrum
back there.

VINCE

The creep had it coming.

Peggy stops, points to a convertible at the curb.

PEGGY

Why don't you get me off the
streets? I'm bushed.

Vince stops, looks back. She tilts her head roguishly
towards the car.

PEGGY

Do fifty-five on the straightaway.

With a sigh of resignation, Vince turns, gets in the car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

As Peggy gets in. She doesn't start the engine.

PEGGY

You always bust guitars on talking
customers?

VINCE

I wasn't that bad.

PEGGY

Oh?

VINCE

(challengingly)
Do you think so?

PEGGY

(gently)
I didn't think you were very good,
Vince.

VINCE

(heavy sarcasm)
Well, of course after listening to
Mickey Alba all day.

PEGGY

All right, you tell me. Why didn't
they listen to you?

Vince thinks about it for a moment.

VINCE
You got me. I'm not worse than a
lot of 'em.

PEGGY
And no better.

VINCE
(harshly)
Okay. You're used to the best
talent. Why're you wasting your
time working me over?

PEGGY
I like the way you swing a guitar.

Slowly, a grin comes to his face; she smiles, and in a
moment, they are both laughing.

VINCE
I did get a lotta wrist action in
it, at that.
(nods his head in good-
humored resignation)
Well - that's all she wrote. My
musical career started and finished
with one song.

PEGGY
I don't know why - not until you've
given yourself every chance.

VINCE
If they won't listen, I can't hold
a gun on 'em.

PEGGY
Did you ever listen to yourself?

VINCE
How can I listen when I'm singing?

PEGGY
Make a tape recording. Maybe when
you hear yourself, you can discover
what's wrong.

VINCE
(slowly)
Not a bad idea
(MORE)

VINCE (cont'd)
(reflects on it)
How much will it cost?

PEGGY
About twenty dollars, I think -
with a recording studio.

VINCE
I haven't got a guitar.

PEGGY
I'll borrow one for you.

VINCE
It can't hurt.

DISSOLVE:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Vince is alone in the recording studio, restlessly pacing. Behind the glass, in the control room, two engineers are reading - a newspaper and a comic book respectively - and drinking coffee. Vince looks at the clock on the wall, hits a fist into a palm with impatience.

Then the door opens and Peggy enters, carrying a guitar. She is out of breath, and apologetic.

PEGGY
Sorry I'm late.

VINCE
(growling)
Just pay no attention to my nerves.

Now the three musicians seen at the "Florita" enter, carrying their instruments.

PEGGY
I thought you might want some
background.

VINCE
Who's gonna pay 'em.

PEGGY
(winking at base player)
It's on the house. Have you picked
a number?

VINCE
You guys know this one?

As he starts to pick at tune.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Over the shoulders of the engineers, through the glass, we see Vince and the musicians in position. Vince speaks into the microphone:

VINCE

Guess I'm as ready as I'll ever
be.

The engineers put down their reading material. One starts the machinery going, and the other speaks into the microphone.

ENGINEER

Stand by, please.
(after a couple beats)
Everett demonstration number on,
take one.

He signals to Vince, and he starts singing the song. After about eight of ten bars,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Drinking cokes, Vince, Peggy and the musicians are listening to the playback. Vince keeps up a running commentary:

VINCE

(scowling)
Man, that's just nowhere --- ain't
that pitiful -

He looks around for reactions. The musicians listen, deadpan. In the control booth, the engineers have gone back to the newspaper and the comic book.

The playback finishes. Vince looks at Peggy, shakes his head.

VINCE

I owe that man in the Florita a
couple of drinks.

PEGGY

(thoughtfully)
It's a nice tune, though.

VINCE
Nothing wrong with the tune, it's
the way I sing.

PEGGY
How do you mean?

VINCE
(disgruntled)
Ah, it sounds like a million other
singers.

PEGGY
(calmly)
Then sing it different.

VINCE
Like what?

PEGGY
Like the way you feel it.
(urgently)
Just put your own emotions into the
song. Make it fit you.

VINCE
The first thing is that guitar! It
bothers me, trying to get the right
chords. I'll just hold it and go
through the motions.

PEGGY
Sure! Nobody cares.

VINCE
(determined)
Let's do it again.

PEGGY
Good!

VINCE
See if we can get a little smoke in
it.
(to trio)
Burn me, now.

He starts tentatively, feelings his way with the number.
Then as his confidence mounts, he launches a bold, aggressive
attack. It is the birth of his new style, a reading of
violence and passion and rebellion.

The first chorus is "live" and

DISSOLVE:

THE PLAYBACK

With the second chorus. Listening, Vince keeps beat with his body, grinning with pleasure. And this time, as he looks around for reaction, he sees the trio going along with the rhythm. And even the engineers are listening along with a sense of discovery.

When the playback is through, the engineers signal their approval with nods and pantomime applause.

Vince turns to Peggy.

VINCE

What do you think?

PEGGY

Wonderful, Vince!

VINCE

It's good.

(reflectively)

It's good enough for a record.

PEGGY

It sure is!

VINCE

Then let's go ahead.

PEGGY

(soberly)

With a record?

VINCE

Why not? How do you go about it?

PEGGY

(smiling at his naivete)

It's not that easy, Vince. You have to go to a record company, sell them on the idea...

VINCE

Let's do it, then. You know the business. I wanta cut in on some of that loot.

PEGGY
 (doubtfully)
 Gee - I don't know -- We might try
 Geneva Records --

VINCE
 (with a crooked smile)
 What can they do? Send me to jail?

DISSOLVE:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A tape recorder is playing the song recorded by Vince.

The CAMERA angles to JACK LEASE, Artist and Repertoire man for the record company. He is a sleek, fleshy man with a lot of jewelry in evidence: diamond ring, tie clip, cuff links, etc. He is puffing a cigar of impressive dimensions as he listens, his eyes carefully hooded.

Peggy and Vince sit in front of the desk. Prominent on the wall, is a large picture of Mickey Alba, with the name printed in huge letter. It has characteristic information, viz, "Mickey Alba, Geneva Recording Star."

Lease hears through a chorus of the song, then gets up, turns the machine off.

LEASE
 (to Peggy)
 Thanks, Peg, for letting me hear
 it.

PEGGY
 I think he's got a very distinctive
 style.

LEASE
 (with a tired smile)
Everybody's got a distinctive style
 these days. I'd like to hear
 somebody sing a song straight for a
 change.

PEGGY
 Jack - you know they're going for
 the new sounds.

LEASE
 Honey, I wish I could do something
 with it.

(MORE)

LEASE (cont'd)

But you know your program this year. No experiments. We're sticking with established record sellers.

He flicks a glance at Mickey Alba's picture for emphasis.

PEGGY

(to Vince)

We'll have to let MGM Records have it, I guess.

LEASE

(chuckling at the feeble thrust)

I wish you luck.

PEGGY

(rising)

Thanks, anyway, Jack.

VINCE

(muttering)

Let's get out of here.

LEASE

Tell you what, Peg --

(with the weary air of a man being imposed upon)

Leave the tape overnight. I'll play it over the phone to D.L. In New York.

(shrugs)

That's the best I can do for you.

PEGGY

(happily)

That'll be wonderful! We appreciate it.

LEASE

(standing, extending his hand to Vince)

I don't promise anything. Nice to have seen you, son.

VINCE

Likewise.

His eyes fall on the cufflinks on Lease's sleeve. He holds Lease's hand momentarily while he looks at them. They are dazzlers, all right - about the size of a small calling card.

VINCE

Those sure are pretty cufflinks,
Mister Lease.

(grins at him)

I'm gonna have me some like that
some day.

LEASE

(pleased)

Mickey Alba made me a present of
those links when we gave him his
eighth gold record.

(with a bland smile)

Maybe one day you'll make me that
kind of present.

VINCE

That'd be nice.

DISSOLVE:

INT. VINCE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Vince is still reading his old fan mail when the wall
telephone rings. He answers:

VINCE

Hello.

We HEAR Peggy's voice.

PEGGY

Hello, Vince.

(a pause)

I'm afraid I have bad news.

VINCE

You saw Lease, huh?

PEGGY

He said the man in New York didn't
like the tape.

VINCE

(gruffly)

Well - what do we do now?

PEGGY

Keep on trying other labels, I
guess.

VINCE
Okay, you do that.

PEGGY
I'll meet you at that same
restaurant, huh? About seven?

VINCE
Okay, goodbye.

As he hangs up,

DISSOLVE:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Seated alone at the booth, Peggy is glancing at the menu. She is becoming edgy, looks at her watch, taps the menu with her fingertips.

Vince enters, sauntering casually, hands deep in his pockets.

VINCE
(as he slides into booth)
Hi.

PEGGY
(frostily)
You've kept me waiting twenty
minutes.

VINCE
(yawning)
I been sleeping.
(glancing idly around the
restaurant)
You eat yet?

PEGGY
Certainly not! Vince - don't you
know the meaning of the word
"courtesy?"

VINCE
(bored)
We don't use it much in the
backwoods.
(picks up menu)
Let's eat.

PEGGY
You might at least ask me what
happened this afternoon.

VINCE
(yawning again)
What happened this afternoon?

PEGGY
(hard, angrily)
I sold the record, that's all!

VINCE
Swell, I could tear into a good
steak.

PEGGY
Brother, you're really something!
You'd think I just brought back
you're shirts from the laundry!

VINCE
(innocently)
What should I do - call a press
conference? You sold it. Okay.
That's your job. I make the
records, you sell 'em.

PEGGY
Would it hurt you just to say
you're happy about it?

VINCE
It wouldn't be easy. When the cash
starts rolling in I'll say I'm
happy.

Peggy lapses into a hurt silence. Vince continues to
scrutinize the menu.

VINCE
What label'd you make the deal
with?

PEGGY
Royal Records.

VINCE
Never heard of 'em.

PEGGY
It's fairly new.
(cannot restrain her
enthusiasm)
They're crazy about it. They say
they'll push it hard.

VINCE
Swell.

PEGGY
Let's celebrate, Vince! Let's have
a bottle of wine and a wonderful
meal. And after dinner, we'll
drive out and see my father and
mother.

Vince looks askance at her.

VINCE
I didn't know you had a father and
mother.

PEGGY
(in good spirits again)
They didn't win me on a quiz
program.
(looking at menu)
Do you like sparkling burgundy? It
goes wonderful with steak.

VINCE
I like anything goes with steak.
(throwing it away)
I'm broke.

PEGGY
(embarrassed for him)
Well -- I'll -- I mean if it's all
right, I'll pay for the meal.

VINCE
You will if we're gonna eat.
(looks o.s., beckons)
Hey waiter...

DISSOLVE:

EXT. VAN ALDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

As Peggy and Vince drive in the driveway, stops. The house appears fairly large and comfortable. Several cars are parked on the grounds.

VINCE
(looking at house)
Not a bad pad. What's your old man
do for a living?

PEGGY
He's a professor at Bertrand
College.

As they approach the house, Vince gets a wary look; he senses he's walking into something formidable. They enter.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A small party is in progress, with perhaps ten guests present. AUGUST VAN ALDEN, standing, drinking with his wife, MRS. VAN ALDEN, and a couple of other, sees Peggy.

VAN ALDEN
Peggy!
(cuts through to her)
Hello, darling!

PEGGY
Hello, daddy.
(they kiss)
Please meet my friend, Vince
Everett.

VAN ALDEN
Welcome, young man.

As they shake hands, Vince sizes up the father. He is a good figure of a man, about fifty, charming, sophisticated, equable. Vince merely nods as he shakes hands. Mrs. Van Alden come up. She is distinguished, handsome.

VAN ALDEN
Mother - this is Mr. Everett, the
young singer Peggy's been working
with.

Mrs. Van Alden murmurs "how do you do", shakes hands with Vince.

VAN ALDEN
Can I fix you people a drink?

PEGGY
Not right now, thanks.

VAN ALDEN
(to Vince)
Scotch? Bourbon?

VINCE
You got any beer?

VAN ALDEN
Coming up.

He moves away. Vince stands stiffly, ill at ease, between Peggy and her mother.

MRS. VAN ALDEN
We're very happy to see you, Mr. Everett. Peggy has told us about you.

VINCE
(glancing sharply at Peggy)
She didn't tell me anything about you.

VAN ALDEN
(returning with beer)
Here you are, sir.

VINCE
(taking beer)
Thanks.

VAN ALDEN
I heard you sold your first record today.

VINCE
(smiling malevolently at Peggy)
You seem to hear everything about me.

VAN ALDEN
How long have you been in the music business, Mr. Everett.

VINCE

About a week.

VAN ALDEN

What did you do before that?

VINCE

(again the evil grin at
Peggy)
Peggy didn't tell you that?

PEGGY

Mr. Everett was in the
penitentiary.

Mrs. Van Alden starts, but her husband doesn't even blink.

VAN ALDEN

(calmly)
Oh, is that so? What was the rap?

VINCE

One to ten. I did fourteen months.

MRS. VAN ALDEN

(hurriedly)
August - why don't you put on that
new record by Stubby Rightmire?
I'm sure Mr. Everett is interested
in jazz music. After all it's his
profession.

VAN ALDEN

Righto.

He moves over to the hi-fi set. Mrs. Van Alden smiles at
Vince.

MRS. VAN ALDEN

Excuse me. I'm making some
sandwiches.

She leaves. Peggy sits down on a sofa, motions Vince to join
her. She smiles serenely.

PEGGY

Your bomb kinda laid an egg, didn't
it?

VINCE

What bomb?

PEGGY

About the penitentiary. I'm afraid
its shock value isn't worth much.

The music starts. It is avant-garde jazz at its most
obscure. Everyone listens for a time, then discussion
starts.

MAN

I think Stubby's gone overboard
with those altered chords, don't
you?

WOMAN

I agree. Brubeck and Desmond went
as far with dissonance as I care to
go.

2ND MAN

(scoffing)

Nonsense. Have you heard Lenny
Tristano's latest recording?

(laughing)

He reached outer space.

Vince listens to this talk in kind of a fog.

2ND WOMAN

Some day they'll make the cycle and
get back to pure old dixieland. I
say atonality it is just a passing
phase of jazz music.

A moment of silence. Then one young woman, in an effort to
include Vince, turns to him.

3RD WOMAN

What do you think, Mr. Everett?

All turn to him questioningly. He looks coldly around the
room, then fixes bleak eyes on the 3rd woman.

VINCE

Ma'am - I don't know what the hell
you're talking about.

In the stunned silence that follows, Vince gets up, walks
through the door and out of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Peggy comes running out, catches up with Vince. She is blazing with anger.

PEGGY
Well, you finally got your sensation! I hope you're satisfied.

VINCE
(warningly)
Get off my back, kid. They had it coming.

PEGGY
You insulted my father, my mother, and me, and it's just unforgiveable

VINCE
(storming)
What'd you expect? I come out, have a little beer, and the first thing an old broad's pushing me in a corner with some stupid question.

PEGGY
They were just trying to bring you into the conversation.

VINCE
They can shove their conversation. I'm not sure they were even talking English.

Peggy, pale with fury, takes a deep breath, trying to control her emotions.

PEGGY
I'll drive you back to your hotel.

VINCE
I'll walk.

PEGGY
(sputtering anew)
Oh, I - I think I'm going to just hate you!

VINCE
 (a sardonic smile)
 No, you ain't. You ain't gonna
 hate me.

He suddenly grabs her, takes her in his arms, kisses her hand and long on her mouth. Gasping with indignation, she jerks away from him.

PEGGY
 How - how dare you think such cheap
 tactics would work with me?

For reply, he kisses her again. Her struggle, this time, is less vigorous. Vince lets her go, grinning at her.

VINCE
 That ain't tactics, honey. That's
 just the beast in me.

He turns, swaggers off in the darkness, very male, very sure of himself.

Watching him go, Peggy glares for a moment, finds herself softening - just a trace of a smile - then she draws herself up, becomes aloof and haughty, the offended grande dame as she turns toward the house.

DISSOLVE:

INT. DOORWAY - RECORD HOP - DAY

Peggy and Vince stop in the doorway. They are quiet, subdued. Vince, has something to say, and he finds it difficult.

VINCE
 (muttering)
 Before we go in -- something I
 better say.
 (scowling fiercely)
 About the other night --- I maybe
 got outa line a foot or two -- I
 gotta dose of my big mouth -- Well -
 - will you tell your old lady I'm -
 I'm--

PEGGY
 (helpfully)
 Sorry?

VINCE
(relieved)
Yeah. Let's go in.

He goes in, Peggy follows, smiling, pleased.

INT. RECORD SHOP - DAY

They approach the counter. A teen-age girl clerk comes up.

CLERK
May I help you?

PEGGY
Today is the release date for "
(title)". Do you have it?

CLERK
We sure do. The kids in the store
are going crazy about it. It's the
largest.

Vince and Peggy exchange quick, delighted smiles.

VINCE
Think I'll take about a half dozen.

CLERK
Yes, sir.

She goes off after records.

PEGGY
(awed)
How do you like that? They're
crazy about it!

VINCE
(in a reverie)
I think I'll start off with a red
one.

PEGGY
Red what?

VINCE
New convertible.

The clerk returns with the records, starts wrapping them up.

CLERK
That'll be six dollars plus tax.

Peggy is staring, horrified, at the records. Vince notices her look.

VINCE
What's the matter?

PEGGY
(choked)
May -- I -- see the records?

The clerk hands them to her for inspection. Vince frowns curiously at her obvious shock, takes a record from her, reads the label aloud.

VINCE
Geneva Records.... "(title)" by
Mikey Alba...
(looks at Peggy in
bewilderment)
What's going on? I don't get it.

PEGGY
(grimly)
I do.
(to clerk)
Which booth can we use?

CLERK
Any of them.

Peggy starts for the booth. Vince, all at sea, follows.

INT. BOOTH - DAY

Peggy starts the phonograph, puts on the record.

PEGGY
(moaning)
Of all the low, filthy tricks --

VINCE
Peg -- will you tell me --

PEGGY
Sshh!

The music starts and we hear "(title)", sung by Mickey Alba. But the startling thing is that he sings it precisely as Vince did - the same arrangement, backgrounding, phrasing - the entire attack.

VINCE
(aghast as it dawns on
him)
Why the dirty thief he stole my
style - my arrangement - everything

PEGGY
(nodding wearily)
Lease copied your tape and gave it
to him.

VINCE
What about my record?

PEGGY
(defeated as she turns off
phonograph)
You can forget it. It's done.

She opens the door to the booth, goes out.

INT. RECORD STORE

As they come out. Peggy is desolate. But in Vince's face we
see the beginning of the old fury.

VINCE
(lowly)
I'll see you later.

He starts off. Alarmed, Peggy hurries after him.

PEGGY
Vince! Where're you going?

But she can't catch him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK LEASE'S OFFICE - DAY

Coiled with anger, Vince stands before Lease's desk. The A&R
man spreads his hands in a gesture of innocence.

LEASE
But, son - you don't own the song.
It's a published tune. Anyone can
record it.

VINCE
You turned it down. You said you
didn't like it.

LEASE
We simply didn't want to record it
with an unknown.

VINCE
What about my arrangement?

LEASE
(shrugging)
See your lawyer. You can't
copyright an arrangement.

VINCE
You're a thievin pig.

LEASE
(standing)
Now listen, sonny --

In a quick, violent motion, Vince is around the desk, grasps
Lease's lapels with one hand.

VINCE
Don't "sonny" me, louse!

He slaps him hard with his open palm. Lease gasps, tries to
get away. Easily, Vince holds him, slaps him twice more,
teeth-rattling slaps with his open hand. Then he hurls him
into his chair.

VINCE
Go back under your rock.

He leaves.

DISSOLVE:

INT. VINCE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Vince is lying on his bed, hands under his head, staring at
the ceiling. There is a knock at the door.

VINCE
Come in.

Peggy enter's. Slowly, she comes over, sits on the edge of
the bed.

PEGGY
What'd you do to him?

VINCE
(grunting)
Nothing. Slapped his face.

PEGGY
Isn't that dangerous? I mean he
might have you arrested or
something.

VINCE
Why're you scared? It's not you.

PEGGY
(with a fond smile,
patting his hand)
I don't want anything to happen to
you.

(no response from him.
After a moment she speaks
softly)
I'm terribly sorry, Vince.

VINCE
(reminiscing bitterly)
He gave me the message, old Hunk
Houghton in the pen, he said watch
out for the teeth, it's a jungle.
Yeah, he had it taped. Inside,
they're cub scouts compared to Jack
Lease. You make something and they
might steal it, but they'd be too
honorable to claim they made it
themselves.

PEGGY
It was a vile thing --

VINCE
(interrupting)
And now the crying's over. I want
to make another record.

PEGGY
Gosh, the same thing might happen
all over again.

VINCE
(irked)
You got no guts.
(MORE)

VINCE (cont'd)
So if they steal, there's only one thing. Start your own record company.

PEGGY
(startled)
Your own company!

VINCE
Certainly. What's the mystery?
(stands, paces, glowing
with the thought)
We'll find out the details from a lawyer or something. You don't have to own a factory, I found out, you contract for the pressings.

PEGGY
(dismayed at his audacity)
But Vince -- you can just go out and start a record company just like that.

VINCE
(bluntly)
Why not? It's done every day. We're just as smart as the other birds. Look -- I make the decisions now. I can't foul things up any worse than you did.

Watching him, Peggy suddenly realizes he is serious. And she begins to think about it.

PEGGY
Distribution -- I know a little about that --

VINCE
(selling her)
Sure you do. And exploitation. That's your racket! What do you say! We'll be partners. Sixty-forty.

PEGGY
Sixty-forty?

VINCE
I'm the artist, don't forget. You with me?

It's a moment of utter decision for Peggy, and she knows it. If she throws her lot in with Vince now, she understands clearly she is truly cutting off the past and everything she has been. Emotionally, it means everything to her.

PEGGY
 (a little dazed)
 Yes - yes, I guess I am. I'll quit
 my job tomorrow.

Solemnly they shake hands. Then Vince hurls himself headlong onto the bed, dreaming fiercely of the future.

VINCE
 My own company! I can smell the
 money already!

Peggy lies down on the bed beside him, on her stomach, her face close to Vince's, studying him. Now that the die is cast, she feels warm, close to him.

PEGGY
 This really calls for a
 celebration, doesn't it?

VINCE
 (mile away)
 You know a lawyer?

PEGGY
 Do you dance?

VINCE
 Need a good one - a guy with an eye
 to a buck.
 (directly)
 Do you know a lawyer?

PEGGY
 (exasperated)
 I know one who's retired -- Mr.
 Shores. But he's a cold-blooded
 old fish.

VINCE
 Good. How's he fixed financially?

PEGGY
 They say he's got the first dollar
 he ever earned.

VINCE
Sounds like my man. Interested
only in money.

PEGGY
Is that all you're interested in,
Vince?

VINCE
(surprised at this
question)
What else?

Peggy resignedly stands up, sighs.

PEGGY
Nothing.

VINCE
When can we see this Mr. Shores?

PEGGY
(dully)
Tonight, if you want.

DISSOLVE:

MR. SHORES' STUDY - NIGHT

MR. SHORES is a cold-eyed, unemotional little man, as cold-blooded as a turtle, and just as hard shelled.

He is talking with Vince and Peggy. He speaks drily, precisely.

SHORES
--- and incorporation papers will
cost you one hundred dollars.

VINCE
We'll raise it. What else?

SHORES
Registering your trademark, twenty-
five dollars.

VINCE
Mr. Shores, are you interested in
show business?

SHORES
Not in the slightest.

VINCE
How'd you like to come out of
retirement and be my manager.

Peggy reacts with surprise and some hurt.

SHORES
(not in the least
surprised)
I should first ascertain what your
earning potential will be.

VINCE
(pleased)
Mr. Shores - we're real kinfolk.
(stands, Shakes hands)
Peg and I are going to earn some
money now. When we get it, we'll
make another record, and we'll be
in business.
(turns, goes to door,
turns)
You know something? I'm going to
make you rich.

SHORES
(drily)
I am already rich.

VINCE
You'll be richer. Good night.

Shores blinks owlishly as Vince and Peggy leave the room.

DISSOLVE:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Vince and his boys signal their readiness to the engineers.
The engineer's voice is heard over a speaker.

ENGINEER
Stand by, please --
(smiles at Vince)
What's this new label of yours?

VINCE
(grinning back)
Laurel Records.

ENGINEER
Laurel Number 101, take one.

Vince gives them the beat, and sings the song.

DISSOLVE:

MONTAGE - RECORD PROCESSING - DAY

Quick cuts of how a record is made... transfer from a tape to a master record... The master being set up as the mold... the actual pressing of the copies. (Further technical details to be incorporated). Dissolve through to the Laurel Label and title being affixed... then we see Vince and Peggy putting the records in their envelopes, wrapping them, addressing and mailing them.

DISSOLVE:

MONTAGE - SELLING THE RECORD

Vince and Peggy, on the road, in her convertible. Dissolve through to scenes in record stores, with both Vince and Peggy both personally delivering records. The record shop owners show their doubt, take only three or four at a time. Our characters react with discouragement... Dissolve to a small office, where a dubious character gives them a jaundiced eye. He is a distributor.

DISTRIBUTOR

I'm not about to pay you for a shipment that got here broken, bent, not fit to sell. I'm a distributor - not a magician.

PEGGY

(disconsolate)

But we wrapped and mailed them ourselves!

DISTRIBUTOR

I can't help that.

VINCE

(to Peggy)

Come on -- this jughead can lie faster than you can talk.

DISSOLVE:

MONTAGE - THE DISC JOCKEYS

Perhaps the disc jockey cuts can be superimposed over a road map, showing the travels of Vince and Peggy - through states like Kansas, Oklahoma, the Texas panhandle, Arkansas.

The disc jockeys are seen at work - to establish their profession - before turntables, reading copy. The first three react to Peggy's blandishments with boredom and indifference.

The fourth jockey is caught by Peggy at the water cooler. She hands him the disc, he looks at it casually. Vince is not present.

JOCKEY

"Treat Me Nice," Yeah. I know the number. It's minus.

PEGGY

But, Bert -- it was received well in Amarillo and Topeka.

JOCKEY

Ah, it's a dog and you know it.
(goes back in studio)

PEGGY

I know nothing of the sort! With just a little push, it can be a big hit.
(Peggy glares angrily after him)

DISSOLVE:

INT. ANOTHER RADIO STATION - DAY

Peggy is waiting outside the studio as the local disc jockey, TEDDY TALBOT, comes out. He is young, personable, greets Peggy warmly.

TALBOT

Hi, darling! What's this I hear about you quitting Alba and becoming a recording tycoon.

PEGGY

(laughing as she hands him record)
(MORE)

PEGGY (cont'd)
That's right. And here's my first offering.

TALBOT
(reading label)
" (title) ", by Vince Everett.
(looks to Peggy)
How is it?

PEGGY
Good enough to make me quit my job.

TALBOT
And you'd like me to give it a few shots?

PEGGY
(thrilled)
Oh, if you only would, Teddy. It would mean so much to us.

TALBOT
We'll try it, see how the cookie crumbles.

PEGGY
Gosh - thanks a lot, Teddy.

TALBOT
(more than professional curiosity)
How long you going to be in town, Peg?

PEGGY
A day or two.

TALBOT
(smiling fondly)
Let's get together - split a herring.

PEGGY
I'd like that.

DISSOLVE:

CLOSE SHOT - TWIN TURNTABLES - DAY

Both turntables are spinning with records on them; the pickup is just finished one record, and we HEAR the music, which should be any distinguishable song in our catalogue.

A hand reaches into the scene, lays the pickup arm on the other record, so that as one selection finishes, the other begins. It is Vince's record.

CAMERA pulls back to reveal Teddy Talbot before the microphone. Advertising copy is in front of him. Now he fades down Vince's record, reads a commercial over it.

TALBOT

Folks, does your dog turn up his nose at the same old canned dog foods and dried preparations? Then why don't you try fresh meat? Cy's Pet Shop will deliver fresh, red, juicy horse meat, wrapped in the size package you demand, right to your door.

(he pauses, slightly
nauseous at the thought,
goes bravely on)

It only costs pennies more, but the treat for your dog will be worth dollars in health and vigor. Remember - Cy's Pet Shop, telephone Mammoth 6-2480 -- that's Mammoth 6-2480.

Relieved at finishing the grim commercial, he increases the gain on Vince's record.

DISSOLVE:

TALBOT BEFORE MICROPHONE - DAY

He is ad libbing.

TALBOT

Friends, I owe our listeners an apology. So many calls have come in complaining they couldn't hear all of the new Vince Everett record, because of the commercial, that we're going to play it again.

(looks at notes)

We are doing it for Betty, Maryjo, Linda, Julie, the gang down at Ray's Auto upholstery, and --

(throws up his hands)

-- the list is too long.

Apparently, just about everyone wants to hear this new platter.

(MORE)

TALBOT (cont'd)
 And here it is, Vince Everett
 singing " (title)" on the new
 Laurel Label.

He plays the record.

DISSOLVE:

ALLEY WAY - DAY

Peggy has her convertible packed in the back of a store. A sign over the back door identifies it: "PLATTER HOUSE".

Lolling in the front seat, his eyes closed, is Vince. In a moment, Peggy comes out of the record store, goes to the open turtle back, where cartons of records are stacked. She picks up several cartons, starts back in the store.

VINCE
 (not opening his eyes)
 How many more you got to carry in,
 doll?

PEGGY
 (acidly)
 Only a hundred, lover.

VINCE
 (lazily)
 Don't get yourself overheated.

PEGGY
 Oh, shut up!

Vince opens his eyes, turns his head, regards her with wide, innocent eyes.

VINCE
 Think you'd be happy - get a order
 for five hundred records from one
 store.

(grins at her
 exasperation)
 When they gonna be ready for me to
 start autographin?

PEGGY
 Pretty soon?

VINCE
 Big crowd in there?

QUICK DISSOLVE:

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Vince is autographing records as fast as he can write. The store is jammed with teenagers. They press in on him, holding their records.

VINCE
(as he signs)
There you are, honey ---- What's your name? Jean? Okay -- This one's for you --

A male hand reaches in with a record. Vince looks up. It is Mr. Shores.

VINCE
(startled)
Mr. Shores!

MR. SHORES
(coldly)
I have confidence in your earning potential now, Mr. Everett.

VINCE
Good. You're in.

MR. SHORES
For ten percent of the record company and five percent of your earnings.

VINCE
(amused)
Nine percent of the company, Mr. Shores. That leaves me 51 percent and controlling interest.

MR. SHORES
Agreed.

VINCE
And four percent of my personal take.

MR. SHORES
I have the papers already prepared.

VINCE
With those figures?

MR. SHORES
(nodding swiftly)
I anticipated you, Mr. Everett.

He leaves. Peggy pushes her way through the crowd, sees him leaving.

PEGGY
(to Vince)
He smelled the money from four
hundred miles away.

VINCE
(staring after Shores)
I think I got it made.

DISSOLVE:

HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

There is a knock on the door. Peggy comes out of the adjoining room, brushing her hair. She is dressed in a gown which displays her figure to good advantage. She opens the door, admits Vince. He is dressed for the evening ahead, and is full of good spirits.

VINCE
I just checked the record shop. We
sold 425 copies.

PEGGY
That's great!

VINCE
We got a hit, kid!

Peggy has drifted over to a wall mirror, continues brushing her hair. Vince follows her.

VINCE
Stick with me, and like they say,
I'll put diamonds in your teeth.

PEGGY
Nice.

Vince follows her, pulls up his coat sleeves to reveal a pair of cuff links of monstrous size.

VINCE

How do you like the cuff links?
Two dollars down and a dollar a
week.

PEGGY

What do you intend doing with them -
use them for a landing strip?

VINCE

Mark of a man's success.
(he becomes aware of her
dress)

You look sexy tonight. You set the
hammers pounding inside my skull
(puts his arms around her
from behind, nuzzles her
neck)

You read my mind when you put on
that dress.

PEGGY

What's on your little mind?

Slowly, Vince turns her around and takes her in his arms and
kisses her on the mouth. She offers no resistance. On the
contrary. After the kiss, they cling to each other for a
moment.

VINCE

(softly, intimately)
A celebration. This is the night
for the real celebration.

PEGGY

(getting her breath)
I - I like the idea.

VINCE

We'll send up rockets.

PEGGY

(weakly)
But not with you.

VINCE

(unhearing)
Soft music and loud champagne --
we'll charge it to Laurel Records'
expense account.
(then it registers)
Not with me!

PEGGY
No, not tonight.

VINCE
Then who with?

PEGGY
I have a date with Teddy Talbot.

VINCE
(aghast)
That record spinner?

PEGGY
(nodding)
That record spinner who made a hit
for you.

VINCE
(hurt)
But I had it all planned. I made
reservations at the local night
swamp and everything.

PEGGY
(resentfully)
Well, you should have made
reservations with me. I still have
a life of my own, you know!

VINCE
(getting angry)
This is one night I didn't think
you'd let me down.

PEGGY
(also angrily)
Vince, I don't understand why
you're so upset. You told me
yourself. I asked you if money was
all you were interested in. And
your answer was, and I quote: "What
else?"

VINCE
Ah, that was different!

PEGGY
Was it? Vince -- I will not be a
subject to your beck and call.
(knock on the door)
Come in!

Teddy Talbot enters.

TALBOT
Hi, Vince!
(sees Peggy)
Hmm! You do look scrumptious.

PEGGY
Be right with you.

She goes into the other room. Teddy lights a cigarette, speaks amiably to Vince:

TALBOT
Seeing much of our little metropolis?

VINCE
(sourly)
Seen all I want.

Peggy re-enters, a wrap around her.

PEGGY
(to Vince)
Did you thank this nice man for all the help he's given us?

TALBOT
That's not necessary.

PEGGY
(to Vince)
Thank the man, Vincent.

VINCE
(growling)
Thanks a lot.

TALBOT
You're welcome.

He takes Peggy's arm, ushers her to the door. She turns, smiles at Vince.

PEGGY
'Night, Vince.

Vince waves a hand at her in disgust as she goes out.

DISSOLVE:

MED. SHOT - MR. SHORES - DAY

Seated at a roll top desk, he is dictating into an old-fashioned dictograph - the kind using wax recording.

MR. SHORES
 (dictating in a flat,
 toneless voice)
 As accountant, business manager,
 and partner of Mr. Everett, I want
 a record of all transactions. My
 experience as an attorney,
 dictating legal briefs, indicated
 the form of this record should be -
 a voice recording. For reasons of
 tax and legal protection, I shall,
 therefore, dictate this summary of
 my client's progress. After the
 success of his initial record, Mr.
 Everett as enabled to command more
 advantageous contracts.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

A much better place than we have seen, it is still far from being a top night spot.

Vince, with his combo, is singing a new song. His dress is informal. After a few bars.

DISSOLVE:

RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

As Vince continues same song for a record session. On completion of the song,

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - RECORD PRESSING

Showing the records being processed, coming off the presses, and piling into big stacks, being shipped, etc. Mr. Shores' voice comments:

MR. SHORES' VOICE
 Gross receipts from record sales
 continued to mount.
 (MORE)

MR. SHORES' VOICE (cont'd)
 I was told the adolescents found
 Mr. Everett' unique style of
 singing quite titillating. Since I
 never listened to the recordings
 myself, I could not judge. I
 continued to prefer Sibelius.

DISSOLVE:

CURB - DAY

A dazzling Lincoln convertible is parked at the curb. A
 salesman is just handing Vince the keys. He gets in, smiling
 happily, lays a little rubber as he guns off.

MR. SHORES' VOICE
 Our expenses, however, increased
 with gross income. I found
 transportation costs to be
 particularly high. This, however,
 was a deductible item. His choice
 of color was red.

DISSOLVE:

HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vince is throwing a little party. Attending are the
 musicians, several hangers-on, and a new acquisition, LAURY
 JACKSON, a cute Southern girl. Again, Mr. Shores reacts.

MR. SHORES' VOICE
 Entertainment expense, while
 partially deductible, was a little
 high. I doubted I could convince
 the Internal Revenue department
 that all of Mr. Everett'
 entertaining was for business
 purposes only.

Vince, over above, takes a swig from a highball glass,
 nibbles on Laury's ear. She giggles.

MR. SHORES' VOICE
 On the other hand, my client felt
 extremely elated over his latest
 good fortune. He had been invited
 by the National Broadcasting
 Company to participate a nationwide
 television extravaganza.

In the hotel room, there is a knock on the door. Vince, nuzzling Laury, pays no attention, but one of his lieutenants goes to the door.

It is Peggy. She stands in the doorway, surveying the scene - particularly noting Vince at work. Finally, he looks up, sees her

VINCE

Pard! Hi, Pard!
(gets to his feet, hauls
her in)
I guess you heard the news about
the TV show.

PEGGY

Yes - Mr. Shores told me.

VINCE

Pard - I want you to meet a new
member of the troupe, Laury
Jackson. Laury, this is Peggy Van
Alden.

LAURY

(heavy accent)
Pleased to make your acquaintance,
ma'am.

PEGGY

(frostily)
How do you do?

VINCE

(taking Peggy aside)
Laury can sing up a real storm.
I'm taking her with me to New York
City.

PEGGY

(icily)
In that case, I don't think I'll
go.

VINCE

(wide-eyed innocence)
Oh, were you planning to go? What
for?

PEGGY

No reason I can think of now.

VINCE
Got nothing to do with the record
business.

PEGGY
Of course.

VINCE
Like you said that night in Joplin.
You and me - it's strictly
business.

PEGGY
Let's keep it that way, shall we?

She turns, walks to the door, throws it open.

PEGGY
Let me know when you want to cut
another record, Pard!

VINCE
Peg!
(she waits, he goes up to
her. Emotion is working
within him, and he is on
the verge of relenting)
Peg -- I --

He looks at her for a beat with a trace of appeal. She
returns his look, her face unyielding. Vince sighs, drops
his hands, nods once.

VINCE
Okay. I'll see you.
(as she turns back)
You gonna wish me luck?

PEGGY
Luck.

VOICE (O.S.)
Howdy, son.

They look up. Standing in the hall, seen through the open
door, is Hunk Houghton. He is dressed in slacks and a
dazzling sport jacket.

HUNK
(smiling thinly at Vince's
shock)
Remember me?

VINCE
(recovering)
Hunk! Come on in!
(hauls him in, turns to
others)
Folks - meet Hunk Houghton, the
toughest con in cell block 21.

Hunk waves to them like an entertainer taking a bow. He sees
Peggy, goes over to her.

HUNK
I'll bet you're Peggy Van Alden,
the gal started the record company
with Vince.

PEGGY
How do you do?

HUNK
I'm the bird got old Vince started,
huh Vince?

VINCE
That's right. How'd you know about
the record company?

HUNK
Gotta keep up on the activities of
my partner.

PEGGY
(to Vince)
You have more partners than a
square dance.

HUNK
(expansively)
Yeah - I taught the boy plenty.

PEGGY
(coolly)
You'll find out just how well you
taught him. Goodnight.

She leaves.

HUNK
Purty little thing.
(turns to Vince)
Well, boy -- I'm rarin' to go.
(indicates jacket)
(MORE)

HUNK (cont'd)
How do you like it? Cost me thirty
cartons of cigarettes.

VINCE
(grinning)
Cigarettes. You old stud.
(goes over to bar)
How about a drink?

HUNK
Sing it to me - in the key of G.

VINCE
(holds up bottle)
"Uncle Matthew" bonded bourbon.
(squinting at Hunk)
You know how old this bourbon is?

HUNK
How old?

VINCE
(with import)
Twelve-- years -- old.

HUNK
(awed)
Heavens above! Pour me a gourd
full.

(Vince pours, hands him
glass. Hunk tastes it)
Like an angel dancin' on your
tongue.

(smacks his lips)
Almost a shame to digest that
bourbon.

(gets down to business)
So you made it, huh, boy? I read
about you and I'm proud for you.

VINCE
Been lucky so far.

HUNK
Not luck - talent. I knew it the
moment you opened your mouth. And
now you're goin' on TV.

VINCE
(admiringly)
Man, you know everything.

HUNK

Wow! I do feel good!
(intimately)
What are your plans for me, boy?

VINCE

(hesitantly)
Well - I ain't exactly got any.

HUNK

(pretending hurt)
No plans for Hunk? Your old partner.

VINCE

What do you wanta do?

HUNK

(pretending surprise)
What we agreed to. Go in business together.

VINCE

We talked about doin' a double.
(helplessly)
I'm a single. I can't start all over.

HUNK

(ponders this with mock solemnity)
Ummh. I see what you mean.
(makes decision)
Okay forget the double. Just work me into your show. I'll do a single.

VINCE

(worried)
I - I guess I could do that. When we go back on the road.

HUNK

(shaking his head)
Uh-uh.
(now he levels)
I want a spot on that TV show.

VINCE

(startled)
Hunk! You're talkin' crazy! You better think it over.

HUNK
 (softly)
 I been thinkin' about it - for
 eighteen years.

VINCE
 (trying not to hurt Hunk)
 But -- times have changed -- styles
 have changed. You might fall on
 your face.

HUNK
 I might get lucky, too. Like you
 did.

VINCE
 I tried your style - like you
 taught me. I laid a bomb.

HUNK
 You ain't me.
 (swiftly, persuasively)
 Look, kid. I want just one good
 shot. You can give it to me on
 that TV show.

VINCE
 (reluctantly)
 All right. I owe you that much.
 (looks evenly at Hunk)
 But I'm scared for you.

HUNK
 (confidently)
 You let me worry about it.
 (hugs him)
 You're a good boy.

DISSOLVE:

CLOSE SHOT - VINCE EVERETT

He is talking into a microphone.

VINCE
 (tongue-in-cheek)
 Ladies and gentlemen -- A while
 back, I had a little vacation with
 a bunch of men in a big place out
 yonder.

(MORE)

VINCE (cont'd)

While I was there, these men - kind of guests, you might say - these men and me would get together and sing and horse around -- you know, because we were having such a good time. And we used to have a lotta fun with this one - the Jail House Rock!

OUR CAMERA pulls back to reveal:

FULL SHOT - TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Vince, and the male ensemble of dancers and singers comprising the production number, are in costume. As we watch, we see the television cameras and booms moving in and out in an orderly fashion and should not be aware that it is a rehearsal.

Then, on completion of the number, a voice is heard over the loudspeaker:

VOICE

Thank you, Mr. Everett. Very good, Jack --

CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Where the producer, director, and several well-tailored gentleman are watching through the glass panel.

DIRECTOR

(continued, into microphone)

--- some of your dancers missed their marks and we lost them. All right - let's go ahead with the hillbilly number - what's his name - Houseman?

VOICE

(in control room speaker)

Hunk Houghton

DIRECTOR

All right, Mr. Houghton.

(to assistant)

Cut to Number 4.

On the monitor, we see Hunk Houghton with a hillbilly trio of guitar, violin and bass. They give him the introduction.

DIRECTOR
Dolly in ---- hold.

Hunk starts singing. The well dressed gentlemen listen for a few bars, then react unfavorably. Their spokesman, whom we shall call Mr. Bardeman, speaks:

BARDEMAN
Where'd he come from?

DIRECTOR
He's some pal of Everett'.

They listen for a few more bars. Then Bardeman reaches out, turns off the sound in the booth. The director looks up, surprised.

BARDEMAN
(exasperated)
What's going on here?

DIRECTOR
Don't blame me, Mr. Bardeman. It wasn't my idea. He came as part of the Everett deal.

BARDEMAN
I'm sorry - deal or no deal, he's off the show.

DIRECTOR
(shrugging)
Everett might bellyache.

BARDEMAN
(coldly)
Compared to the sponsor's pain, his would be as nothing.
(looks at monitor, where
Hunk is seen singing
soundlessly)
I wonder what he did for Everett?

DIRECTOR
Okay, Mr. Bardeman.
(into microphone)
Freddy -- we're way over length.
We've got to trim four minutes.
We'll go right from the Jailhouse
Rock to the film clip. Cut the
hillbilly number.

Through the glass, we see the the television camera move away from hunk and the trio.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vince and Hunk are alone on the room. Hunk, drinking steadily, is getting drunk, a mood of bleak depression riding him.

Vince paces the room with nervous anger and frustration. As he passes a desk, he picks up a sheaf of telegrams, slams them down.

VINCE

I get calls and wires from everyone in the country. But not her! Not Peg! I'll bet she didn't even tune me in.

(touches telephone)

Okay, babe. You wait for me to call you. It'll be a long night in November.

Paces again, looks irritably at Hunk, who is pouring himself another drink.

VINCE

That ain't gonna help.

HUNK

(tonelessly)
It always helps.

VINCE

I warned you. You wouldn't listen.

HUNK

Don't rub it in.

VINCE

(angrily)
And don't ask for pity. You taught me that.

HUNK

(blustering)
Don't worry about me, sonny. I'll get along.

VINCE

How?

HUNK

One flop ain't a man's whole life.
How'd you expect me to follow that
three-ring circus you put on.

VINCE

(wearily)

Ah, stop it! You couldn't have
followed a juggler.

HUNK

(acidly)

Naturally, I ain't got the talent
you got.

VINCE

That's right. You haven't. And
what I wanta know is -- what're you
gonna do?

HUNK

I don't see as it's any of your
business.

VINCE

Look - I'll be honest with you,
Hunk. I ain't gonna put the brakes
on my career now.

(flatly)

I don't want you as part of my
troupe. You're not good enough.

(feeling the twinge of
conscience, he tries to
take the sting out)

It's been a long time, Hunk. Music
changes every six months. You
gotta change with it.

Hunk drains his glass, pours another, the while glaring
stonily at Vince.

HUNK

I was in show business when you
were running around with your pants
wet. I'll be in it when they won't
remember your name.

VINCE

Fine. But not with me.

HUNK

(with a crooked smile)
Ain't you forgettin' something,
boy?

VINCE

(same smile)
I was wondering when you'd bring it
up.

HUNK

Right down the middle. Fifty-
fifty. It's a legal contract.

VINCE

(gently)
No, Hunk. It ain't. I turned Mr.
Shores loose on that contract.
It's not worth the ink you took to
write it. You should have checked
with a lawyer, Dad.

HUNK

(shaken)
Well - I always figured it was a
contract of good faith more'n how
legal it was.

VINCE

(coldly)
Is that what you figured, Hunk?
Even when you knew about the fan
mail I got in the can.

HUNK

(doggedly)
A contract's a contract.

VINCE

(relaxing)
Let's level, huh? You did me a
favor. You got me into music, then
tried to rob me. But I haven't
forgot you tried to buy me out of
that whipping. So I'm gonna honor
that contract provided I don't hear
anymore of this jazz about good
faith. I'm gonna honor it --
(pauses, smiles)
But not for no fifty percent.

HUNK

How much?

VINCE

Ten.
(looks at his watch)
I wonder if Shorty checked those
airplane reservations. Call up and
see, will you, Hunk?

HUNK

Ten percent, huh?

VINCE

Ten.

HUNK

(musing)
You know -- a punk like you might
just get lucky enough to make a
million dollars a year.

VINCE

I intend to.

HUNK

Ten percent of a million - that's a
hundred thousand dollars.

VINCE

You were always good at arithmetic.

Grinning malevolently, Hunk saunters over, picks up the
telephone.

HUNK

(into phone)
Gimme airlines reservations.
(to Vince)
You're gonna have the most
expensive flunkey in show business.

DISSOLVE:

AIRLINER IN FLIGHT - NIGHT AND DAY (STOCK)

Over the shots, Mr. Shores narrates:

MR. SHORES (O.S.)

After the television show, the
flood gates opened wide. We had
appointments at the best paying
recreation centers in America.
Receipts doubled, redoubled. Our
tax situation became acute.

(MORE)

MR. SHORES (O.S.) (cont'd)

(pause)

The record business was neglected in this phase, much to my regret. However, my hands were tied. There seemed to be emotional difficulties between the two principal stockholders. The forty percent participant refused to contact the sixty percent partner. It was an impasse, and highly un-businesslike.

(pause)

Finally, there was only one phase of the entertainment industry left. So we went there.

INSERT - STREET SIGN

It reads: "Hollywood and Vine".

MR. SHORES' VOICE

We signed a non-exclusive contract with Pacific Studios --

DISSOLVE:

BEVERLY HILLS MANSION - DAY

Vince's entourage - one Imperial Limousine and two Lincoln convertibles, pulls up into the driveway. We see Hunk is driving the limousine.

MR. SHORES' VOICE

-- Housing thereupon became a formidable figure on the balance sheet and food costs weren't minor either. Mr. Everett's friends increased in direct ratio with his earnings.

Everyone piles out, looks at the house.

Calmly, Hunk starts unloading the luggage. Vince looks at him, grins.

VINCE

Heavy?

HUNK

(imperturbable)

Not for a hundred grand, it ain't.

They go into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

One of the entourage has come on ahead to open the house. He is waiting as they come in. The others exclaim their admiration at the interior, but Vince goes straight to the man who was waiting for them.

VINCE

Any telephone calls for me?

MAN

(without expression)

She ain't called, Vince.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. PICTURE STUDIO - DAY

An established shot.

INT. OFFICE OF STUDIO HEAD - DAY

In a splendid office, Vince, with agents and Mr. Shores, is listening to a welcoming address by the head of the studio, a handsome, silver-haired man of charm and assurance.

STUDIO HEAD

-- we welcome you here, Vince, with all our hearts. Now you may find Hollywood to be a lonely town. You're new here, and good friends are hard to find --

(chuckles)

-- just as in any other industry. And I just want you to know you may regard my home as your own. Feel free any evening to come to me and discuss your problems.

Vince nods in boredom. He half-closes his eyes because he has a hangover, and the light bothers him.

STUDIO HEAD

We have a great future mapped out for you, and you can achieve that future if you will only cooperate with us.

VINCE
 (stifling a yawn)
 I sure will cooperate, sir.

STUDIO HEAD
 And don't forget, loneliness can be overpowering here. But there is no need for you to feel alone. Come to me --
 (intercom buzzes)
 Yes -- send them in please.
 (to Vince)
 We want to get the publicity campaign under way immediately, so a studio photographer is coming in.

The door opens and a photographer enters. Vince glances briefly at him, closes his eyes again, then opens them wide.

SHERRY WILSON enters. Nature has been more than bountiful with Sherry. Her physical endowments are truly startling. While subjects intellectual are not her forte, she does have a shrewd, calculating little mind.

STUDIO HEAD
 Mr. Everett - meet Miss Sherry Wilson, your leading lady. We thought some photographs together --

VINCE
 (quickly)
 Sure thing.

He stands, poses with her. The photographer snaps away busily, interjecting terse commands like "a little closer, please... nice smile, please, etc." The studio head poses several times with them, flashing a wide, patronly smile. Then the photographer says "thank you" and leaves.

STUDIO HEAD
 (chuckling)
 Now we have a little chore for you two young people. We want you --

VINCE
 (protesting mildly)
 I'll be pretty busy getting settled --

STUDIO HEAD
 -- to be seen with each other.

VINCE

(quickly)

Not doing a thing next couple days -
- and nights.

STUDIO HEAD

And you Sherry? Remember the old
cooperation, dear.

SHERRY

(grudgingly)

Of course.

(regarding Vince with
faint distaste)

A job's a job.

VINCE

(eyeing her lustfully)

You'll find I grow on you.

DISSOLVE:

THEIR DAY (AND NIGHT) - MONTAGE

A quick sequence of scenes with two points of view dominating: Vince, like a kid, is enjoying himself immensely, not making a move toward Sherry, content to bide his time before striking; Sherry is bored stiff.

1. Knott's Berry Farm. Here, Vince pans for gold, goes into the mine tunnels with the other kids, and rides the train. Sherry goes along with him in each thrilling adventure, but it hurts her deep inside.

2. Griffith Park Zoo. Sherry's irritation grows. And when we dissolve to them eating hamburgers at a lunch stand, she wails her complaint.

SHERRY

I thought we would have lunch at
Romanoff's!

VINCE

(contentedly)

You can only eat so much.

3. The Drag Strip. In the stands, Vince watches the dragsters roaring down the strip. The noise hurts Sherry's ears.

SHERRY
(gritting her teeth)
Who's going to see us here?

VINCE
(concentrating on races)
I got my eye on you every minute.

4. Sight Seeing Bus. Cutting inside, we see Vince and Sherry. The bus driver speaks through his microphone.

BUS DRIVER
And on your left, the home of
Robert Taylor (or whomsoever).
Next, you will see the mansion of
Jack Benny.

Sherry slaps the side of her head with her palm.

VINCE
Sensational, huh?

SHERRY
(hoarsely)
Oh, it's a smash.

DISSOLVE:

CURB - NIGHT

As Vince pulls up in front of Sherry's apartment house.
Gasping with relief, Sherry jumps out before Vince can move.

SHERRY
Don't bother seeing me to the door.

VINCE
I could make it.

SHERRY
(she's had it)
I asked for nothing, I expected
nothing, and I got nothing.

She walks swiftly away. Vince shrugs, speeds away.

DISSOLVE:

STUDIO GATES - DAY

As Vince's caravan - limousine and three other cars - pours through the gate. The gateman dashes out of his cubicle too late to stop them, stares after them in bafflement.

DISSOLVE:

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

As Vince makes his entrance. He is followed by Hunk Houghton, who is walking a brace of basset hounds.

VINCE
(loudly, cheerfully)
Let's go! Everybody up! Let's get
at it!

Near the set, Sherry is going over the script with the director, Mr. Drummond. Hearing the entrance, she winces.

SHERRY
(pleadingly)
Mr. Drummond - do we have to do the
love scene the very first shot?

DRUMMOND
We can't change the schedule now,
Sherry.

SHERRY
I wanted to sort of work myself up
to it. Making love to that rube
won't be easy.

DRUMMOND
(patting her shoulder)
You'll be fine, dear. You're a
trouper.
(calling out)
Let's rehearse it.

DISSOLVE:

THE SET - DAY

A living room set of a modest home. The director is explaining the scene to Vince and Sherry.

DRUMMOND

The situation is a simple one.
 Vince - you're just coming home.
 You've got this great news about
 your promotion. But your wife is
 lying on the couch with a bad
 headache. You are bursting with
 happiness as you come in, but when
 you see she isn't feeling well,
 you're concerned for her. You kiss
 her tenderly, and then tell her.
 Got it?
 (they nod)
 Let's run through it.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(yelling)
 Quiet down for rehearsal!

Sherry takes her place on the couch. Vince goes outside,
 closes the door behind him.

DRUMMOND

All right, Vince. Come in --

Vince enters, beaming with simulated elation.

VINCE

Hey, baby! Listen to --
 (he sees her, becomes
 solicitous)
 Honey - what's the matter?

SHERRY

(wearily)
 It's another one of those terrible
 headaches.

VINCE

(moving over, sitting down
 beside her)
 Ah, I'm sorry, dear. You take any
 aspirin?

SHERRY

It doesn't do any good.

VINCE

Let me rub your temples.

Gently, he begins to massage her temples. He does it
 tenderly, expertly. Sherry like it.

DRUMMOND

Good -- now kiss her - gently --

Vince brushes her lips, continues the head rubbing. Then he kisses her again. But this time, it locks. What, in the script, was supposed to be an insignificant husband and wife kiss, starts to build up.

The director watches, and a grimace of disappointment creases his forehead.

DRUMMOND

No, Vince - let's try it again --

They hear not. Chemicals are reacting, and blood pressure is rising. Gradually, Sherry's arms go around his neck. He forgets her temples, puts his arms around her, and the kiss develops real amperage.

DRUMMOND

Vince --

The crew becomes interested. All work stops as they watch. Everyone is amused and perhaps a little awed at this elementary display. One man glances at his wrist-watch, wide-eyed. The director folds his arms, strokes his chin, looks on thoughtfully.

Finally the oxygen demand of both participants prevails, and they break. Still in each other's arms they smile dreamily.

VINCE

(murmuring)

How's your headache?

SHERRY

(breathless)

I'm coming all unglued.

DISSOLVE:

SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

In the lighted pool, Vince and Sherry float in their reverie. Vince takes her in his arms, kisses her.

VINCE

I wanna throw a party.

SHERRY

What for?

VINCE
To celebrate.

DISSOLVE:

MED. SHOT - VINCE - NIGHT

He is singing with his combination backing him. The CAMERA pulls back to reveal:

THE PARTY - NIGHT

It is a garden party, and everyone has turned out to see the new singing sensation. Vince is on a small, portable platform. There is a bar and a huge snack table.

As he sings, the CAMERA looks around, sees Sherry Jackson, watching with admiring eyes. Off to one side, Hunk is sitting in a deck chair, the two bassets lolling beside him.

Vince finishes to applause, steps down into the crowd, receiving ad lib congratulations: "Wonderful, Vince... great number," young girl in bathing suit moves toward Vince.

GIRL
Gee, Vince, when you sing, it's
real gonesville.

VINCE
All for you, doll.

Vince makes his way through the crowd, moves to where Hunk is sitting.

VINCE
I didn't see you applauding. You
didn't like me?

HUNK
(musing)
You come a long ways since cell
block 21.

VINCE
Yeah. And it's been a tough row to
hoe.

HUNK
Oh, I don't know. You haven't
hardly touched the ground at all.

VINCE
What's the meaning of that crack?

HUNK
You walked most of the way on
somebody else.

VINCE
You're getting bitter, old buddy.

HUNK
Not me. I just want you to enjoy
it while you got it.

VINCE
I got it, and I keep it.

HUNK
Put some dough aside, son. You
won't be up here long.

VINCE
(unruffled)
You can bet me.

HUNK
(philosophically)
I won't bet you. I'll just watch
you slide.

VINCE
How come you're so sure?

HUNK
(steadily)
Because the people who buy the
tickets gonna find you out. Sooner
or later, they'll spot you for a
phoney.

Something in what Hunk says causes Vince momentary
uneasiness. But he quickly brushes it aside.

VINCE
(sardonically)
Well -- ten percent of nothing, old
cellmate.

Sherry comes up, takes his arm.

SHERRY
Doll, where you been?

VINCE
(absently)
In your heart, doll

SHERRY
(piqued)
You didn't say anything about my
dress.

VINCE
Flippy.
(looks down at her)
Real flippy.

Preoccupied, (this idyll is over) he leans down and kisses
her lingeringly on the neck.

Then, still bent over, he becomes aware of a pair of shapely
legs within his field of vision. Slowly, he straightens up,
the CAMERA rising with him to reveal Peggy Van Alden,
regarding him with cold, cold eyes.

A look of great elation sweeps over Vince's face.

VINCE
(yelling)
Peg! Sweetheart!

He almost brushes Sherry aside in his eagerness to get to
Peggy. He throws his arms around her, but she avoids his
kiss.

VINCE
Ah, Peg! I thought you'd never
come.

Sherry, cut to the quick events, strides off.

PEGGY
(quietly)
Hello, Vince. Every time I see
you, you're working a neck.

VINCE
(ignoring the remark in
his happiness)
I kept waiting, wondering if you
missed me like I missed you.

PEGGY
There was always the telephone,
Vince. It would have been nice if
you called.

VINCE
I been up to my ears in work, Peg.
No foolin'.

PEGGY
I understand.
(bright smile)
The real reason I came was about
the record company. Isn't it about
time you cut a few sides?

VINCE
(frowning)
Records? Is that why you came?

PEGGY
No one gets so big they can ignore
the records. Not even Crosby.

Vince looks at her, his joy evaporating. He takes a breath
to say something, changes his mind. The old mocking mask
appears.

VINCE
Sure. I'll make records. You set
up a date, huh, kid? Now if
you'll excuse me, I'll see to it my
guests are happy.

As Vince walks away Hunk joins Peggy.

HUNK
How do you like our movie star,
Peggy?

PEGGY
He has adapted very quickly.

HUNK
Not much oxygen up where he is. A
man gets light-headed.

PEGGY
(with a sigh of
bafflement)
Most actors, when they become a
star, go through a brief period of
being modest.

HUNK
Not our boy. He turned into a heel
overnight.

(MORE)

HUNK (cont'd)
(frowns at her)
Why'd you come tonight, Peg?

PEGGY
Maybe I like punishment.

HUNK
You don't have to take it, though.

PEGGY
I'll learn.

HUNK
(fondly)
Sure - you're too smart a kid to
let him cut you up.

PEGGY
Sure I am.

Mr. Shores comes in, in a great hurry, his spectacles
glittering with excitement.

MR. SHORES
Where's Mr. Everett?

Peggy indicates with her head.

Mr. Shores hurries off, the CAMERA following him. He pushes
through the crowd. He finds Vince, tugs at his arm.

MR. SHORES
Follow me, Mr. Everett. I have
startling news.

Vince follows him to a spot under a palm tree where they are
alone.

VINCE
What's up? Hit Uranium?

MR. SHORES
(solemnly)
I have just received a most
impressive proposition from Geneva
Records.

VINCE
(growling)
Don't mention that clip joint to
me.

MR. SHORES
Even though it involves three-
quarters of a million dollars
capital gains?

VINCE
Mention it.

MR. SHORES
They want to buy Laurel Records.
In addition to the sale price, they
want you under exclusive contract
for recordings.

VINCE
For which they'll pay?

MR. SHORES
Seven and one-half percent of all
the records you sell. No artist
has ever received an offer that
big.

VINCE
Man!
(thinks about it)
What about Peggy?

MR. SHORES
I haven't discussed it with her.

VINCE
Good. Let me talk to her.

DISSOLVE:

INT. LIVING ROOM - VINCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

On the living room floor, Vince is playing with the basset
hounds. Hunk enters.

HUNK
(looking at his watch)
You're due to shoot that last scene
in half an hour.

VINCE
(standing, yawning)
Okay. You have the booze delivered
so I can pour a few drinks for the
crew?

HUNK
(throwing it away)
Yes, your majesty.

VINCE
(looking at dogs
critically)
You know those hounds don't get
enough exercise. They're gettin'
fat.

HUNK
Why don't you hunt 'em.

VINCE
I gotta better idea. Why don't you
take 'em for a walk.

Hunk doesn't move, the rebellion surging up in him. Vince
glances at him.

VINCE
What's the matter?

HUNK
My contract doesn't call for
walkin' dogs.

VINCE
(innocently)
Contract? What contract?

Hunk swallows hard, fighting for self-control. Then he nods.

HUNK
Okay. I'll walk your dogs.

VINCE
You know I ain't askin' you to
shine my shoes, or anything.

HUNK
(levelly)
A man just takes so much. Keep it
in mind, sonny.

He leaves the room. Vince shrugs. Why the grouch?

DISSOLVE:

HUNK

Partly. The other reason is I'm scared.

PEGGY

Of what?

HUNK

I got no trade anymore. That night on the television proved it to me.

PEGGY

Surely there are other jobs.

HUNK

For a man my age spent all that time in the penitentiary?

(shakes his head)

No - I'll stick with him and take it and save my money. Later on, who knows? Maybe I can start a troupe of my own -- manage it, or something.

(glances at Peggy)

That's why I'm with the punk. Why are you?

PEGGY

I don't know.

HUNK

You love him?

PEGGY

(thoughtfully)

I'm not sure. I think I did once.

HUNK

How come?

PEGGY

I think it was the challenge. He was wild and violent and just daring anyone to love him.

(smiles at Hunk)

I sort of asked for it, too.

HUNK

(frankly)

From what I've seen of you, he was a fool to ever let you go.

PEGGY
(touched)
Thank you, Hunk. That's a nice
compliment.
(after a moment)
How would you like to work
for Laurel Records?

HUNK
Vince'd have something to say about
that.

PEGGY
I've got wonderful plans for our
record company. I've been scouting
the country music business. It's
growing so fast that I realized
we've got to get into it. You know
that end of it and I think you'd
fit in very effectively.

HUNK
That record company means a lot to
you, doesn't it?

PEGGY
Right now, it's my whole life.
(sighs)
Gosh, it's an exciting business!

HUNK
But Vince -- he doesn't seem much
interested.

PEGGY
Well -- I have hopes. Maybe we can
work together again sometime - like
the old days.

HUNK
Vince finishes the picture tonight.
He's throwin' a little party. You
goin'?

PEGGY
(nodding)
He insists. Says he wants to talk
business.

HUNK
(looking at watch)
You better hurry.
(MORE)

HUNK (cont'd)
(gets out of car, regards
dogs sourly)
I've got to give these mutts a
workout.
(hauls at leashes)
Get up, you sausage grinders!

The dogs reluctantly get to their feet. Hunk reaches his hand out to Peggy. She shakes it.

HUNK
Thanks for stopin' to talk.

PEGGY
What about the job?

HUNK
(melancholy)
Thanks anyway, honey. But you'd
just be askin' for trouble with
Vince. He'd say no, and there'd be
a big hassle.
(sighs)
Besides it's a gamble. I got a
sure income the way it is. See
you.

He walks up the street, the hounds padding before him. Peggy watches him go, her eyes soft with compassion.

DISSOLVE:

THE SET - NIGHT

On the sound stage, utilizing the same living room set seen previously, Vince's little party is just breaking up. A small portable bar is there. Crew members, actors are leaving, ad libbing their thanks: "Thanks for the drinks, Vince... think we got a good show... hope we can do another one together," etc.

VINCE
(ad libbing)
Thanks for everything... I hope so,
too, etc.

EXT. SOUND STAGE - NIGHT

As Peggy, alone, walks up, opens the heavy door, enters.

INT. SOUND STAGE - NIGHT

Peggy walks toward the living room set, her heels echoing in the vastness.

THE SET

Vince and a few of his cronies are having a nightcap. He hears the footsteps, calls out:

VINCE
Is that you, Peg?
(as she walks into scene)
Where you been? Everybody's gone.

PEGGY
(drily)
I missed a streetcar.

VINCE
Let me fix you a blast.
(as he pours drink.)
We were lookin' for you.

PEGGY
(as he hands her drink)
What did you want to talk about,
Vince?

VINCE
(suddenly serious)
Oh, yeah.
(turns to others)
See you fellows later, huh?

Without a word, the other people leave. Vince rubs his head nervously.

VINCE
It's about the record company.

Before he can go on, a loud voice rings out:

VOICE
Mush, you coyotes!

Into the scene walks Hunk Houghton with two very weary and footsore Basset hounds. Hunk is boiled.

HUNK
(owlishly)
Vince kneels down to look at the
dogs, looks up angrily at Hunk.

VINCE
Whatta you been doing to these
dogs?

HUNK
Damned near walked the legs off'n
'em.
(proudly)
We covered about eight miles and
four saloons.

VINCE
(yelling)
What's the idea?

HUNK
You said exercise 'em.
(chuckling)
I was afraid the Injuns were gonna
cut us off at the pass.

VINCE
(coldly)
I don't see anything funny.

Hunk turns a look of malevolence on Vince. Peggy hurriedly
breaks in.

PEGGY
What about Laurel Records, Vince?
What is it?

VINCE
(tentatively)
Peg - we got an offer for the label
that's just too good to turn down.

PEGGY
(uncertainly)
An offer? What kind of offer?

VINCE
To sell out. To Geneva Records.
(quickly)
Now before you answer, listen to
the deal. 750,000 dollars. A
capital gain.
(MORE)

VINCE (cont'd)
That means 225,000 dollars in cold
cash for you - after taxes.

Peggy is stunned, dismayed.

PEGGY
But Vince - I don't want to sell!

VINCE
(with pained reluctance)
I'm afraid you got no choice, kid.
I own --

PEGGY
-- I know - sixty percent.

VINCE
(shrugging)
That's the way the mop flops.
(seeing her distress)
- You'd think I was robbin' you!
After all, you're gettin'
practically a quarter of a million
dollars.

Despite her efforts, Peggy can't help it. She starts to weep. And this makes her angry.

PEGGY
Dollars, dollars! Is that the
beginning and the end of the world
for you? Is there no emotion left
in you but the lust for money?

VINCE
What emotion? It's strictly
business between us. That's what
you said.

PEGGY
I don't care what I said. We
started this thing together. We
nursed it and brought it up. You
and I. Maybe it's just a ledger
page to you and Mr. Shores, but
it's part of my life!
(with an inarticulate,
painful cry of defeat)
Oh -- go ahead and sell it! I
don't care what you do!

With that, she runs out of the stage and into the night.
There is a moment of silence. Vince is upset, distraught.

He looks at Hunk, looking for a sign of understanding. Hunk returns his gaze icily.

VINCE
(muttering dispiritedly)
Nothing but a record company.

HUNK
(stonily)
It's not losing the record company
bothers her.

Another silence. Hunk sighs, carefully takes off his coat, puts it to one side. Something in his expression tells Vince this is a showdown.

VINCE
(quietly)
Don't get any ideas, Hunk.

HUNK
(softly)
Trampin' me is one thing, sonny.
Hurtin' a nice kid like Peggy is
another.

VINCE
Don't push, Hunk.

HUNK
(gently)
There comes a time when you gotta
take a hand. That's now.
(slowly, deliberately
rolls up his sleeves)
I'm just gonna beat hell out of
you.

VINCE
(showing signs of alarm)
You're crazy, don't try it.

HUNK
On your feet, sonny.

Vince stands, retreats slowly. Hunk comes in inexorably.

VINCE
Stop it, Hunk!

Hunk's answer is to lash out with his right fist. The blow hits Vince in the face, knocks him reeling against a wild wall. It crashes down beneath him. He gets to his feet, bleeding from the mouth. Hunk bores in, swinging hard.

Vince tries to fend off the blows, but doesn't hit back. Hunk knocks him down again, flattening another section of the set.

As Vince gets up, and the one-sided fight continues, Hunk realizes Vince is not hitting back. He stops, beckons, panting.

HUNK
Fight, you yellow punk!

VINCE
(pleading)
I don't wanta hit you, Hunk.
(looks at his fists)
I can't.

Hunk, tears of anger and frustration and pain in his eyes, cries out hoarsely as he comes in again, throwing punches.

Finally he hits Vince in the throat, a vicious blow. Vince goes down, doesn't get up. The set is demolished. Hunk stands over Vince, gasping. Then he goes over to his coat, takes out a folded piece of paper, come back to Vince, tears it up, drops the pieces on him.

HUNK
There's your contract.

Vince claws weakly at his throat. Hunk becomes aware that he is hurt. Vince make choking, gurgling sounds as he fights for breath.

Hunk drops to his knees, picks up Vince's head.

HUNK
(frightened)
Vince! You all right?

Vince only points to his throat as he tries to draw breath. Suddenly terrified, Hunk runs for the stage door, throws it open.

HUNK
(screaming)
Ambulance! Somebody call an
ambulance!

DISSOLVE:

AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Speeding, siren howling.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SOUND STAGE - NIGHT

As Vince is carried out on a stretcher, an oxygen mask on his face. They put him in the ambulance, and Hunk gets in after them. As the ambulance pulls out,

DISSOLVE:

HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Hunk and Peggy are waiting, badly worried. Shortly, a surgeon come in, the surgical mask hanging around his neck. Hunk stands quickly, goes to him.

HUNK

How is he, doc?

SURGEON

It was a close call. The blow hit him in the larynx, or Adam's Apple, causing it to swell and cutting off his wind pipe. We had to do a tracheotomy --

(pointing to his own throat)

Cut a hole in his wind pipe down here, so he could breathe.

HUNK

(with great relief)

Ah, I'm glad!

SURGEON

(frowning)

This big thing is his voice. A blow like that could change the whole structure of his voice box.

PEGGY

(haltingly)

And -- he might not be able to sing?

SURGEON

He might not be able to sing like he used to. We'll have to wait for a few days for the swelling to go down.

(smiles in an attempt at reassurance)

We'll see. You can visit him in about twenty-four hours. But don't let him talk.

He walks off. The CAMERA goes in close to Hunk's face. It is stiff with agony.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Vince is lying awake in the darkness, staring at the ceiling. Thoughts of disaster are running through his head, and we HEAR them on the sound track:

VINCE'S VOICE

Is this the way it ends? Vince Everett. Back to the skip loader for you. Without your voice, you're another guy walkin' the streets. You're just nothing.

In a moment, the door softly opens, and Hunk comes tip-toeing in, to his bedside. Vince sees him, motions for him to pull up a chair. Hunk sits down by his bedside, his eyes mutely tormented.

HUNK

How do you feel?

(vince nods "okay". Hunk now speaks his contrition in words of pain)

I want you to know -- I feel terrible, son. I can't hardly find any words to tell you how bad I feel. It was a awful thing I did.

(starts to choke up)

If I could take it back, I'd cut my two arms off at the elbows, and that's no lie. I can't ask you to forgive me. I just want you to know I ain't ever gonna forget it.

Vince smiles at him for a moment, then reaches up, pulls his head down in a gesture of forgiveness.

When Hunk straightens up, he swallows hard, tears in his eyes. He sniffs, and runs the back of his hand across his nose.

Peggy enters. Hunk stands.

HUNK
Can I bring you anything? A bottle
of whiskey, or something?

Vince shakes his head negatively, smiles again, and Hunk leaves. Peggy sits down.

PEGGY
You're looking fine.
(Vince nods)
I talked to the surgeon about the
operation. He thinks it was a
success.

Vince holds up crossed fingers. Peggy is silent for a moment. Vince reaches out, takes her hand, gently kisses it.

PEGGY
(moved)
Hunk told me what happened in the
fight, how you wouldn't fight him.
I think it was fine, Vince. It was
an act of true love.
(Vince shakes his head
"no")
Yes, it was. Don't be afraid to
love, Vince.
(she bends down, takes his
head between her hands)
Because I love you.

She kisses him tenderly. The emotion wells up in Vince, and he hugs her to him, his heart aching for her.

DISSOLVE:

CLOSE SHOT - VINCE

The doctor, seen previously is examining his throat. As the CAMERA retreats we see Hunk and Peggy watching anxiously. The doctor completes his examination. The scene takes place in Vince's living room.

VINCE
(with great concern)
Yeah, doc? How's it look?

DOCTOR

(putting away instruments)
It looks just like it did last week, Mr. Everett. Completely healed.

VINCE

(uneasily)
Doesn't feel too good yet.

DOCTOR

(bluntly)
The injury has healed. The surgery was successful. Your larynx looks as good as it ever did. Whether or not, your voice will sound as it did before can only be determined by trying it.

VINCE

Sure. That's easy to say. Try it. But what if it isn't there?

DOCTOR

Look, Mr. Everett. These morbid fancies of yours are doing you no good. Unless you get hold of yourself, you'll be a psychological mute - musically speaking.

PEGGY

(gently - as she comes forward)
Why don't you try. You have to find out sometime.

VINCE

(jittery)
I - I don't know.

DOCTOR

(pointing to piano)
Now's as good a time as any.

VINCE

But - I - I got nobody to accompany me.

The doctor turns, nods to Peggy. She goes to the door to the adjoining room, throws it open.

PEGGY

Come in, fellows.

Vince's entire organization troops in. All exude forced cheerfulness, calling out: "Hi, Boy... let's get to work," etc.

Vince is truly frightened now. They smile at him expectantly. He swallows hard as he looks around.

VINCE
(with a wan smile)
Pretty big audience... Give a man
stage fright.

Peggy goes up to him, kisses him tenderly.

PEGGY
Now, Vince.

Vince nods, reaching for courage.

VINCE
Okay. But just with a piano. The
rest of you --

PEGGY
(brightly)
We'll wait in the next room

She herds everyone out of the room, save the piano player.

NEXT ROOM - DAY

As they come in and Peggy closes the door. They wait nervously. In a moment, they hear the piano playing the introduction to "(title)". Nothing happens. The piano vamps a few bars, goes back to the introduction. This is repeated. The tension grows in the listeners.

The third time, they hear Vince start to sing. It is very soft, almost inaudible. Peggy catches her breath. Then the song comes louder, more clearly. Peggy exhales with tremendous relief, and everyone beams with happiness.

Peggy throws open the door and goes in, followed by Vince's outfit, who are already picking up the accompaniment.

Hunk, deeply moved, goes outside the house. The song is now riding high.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The two Basset hounds are lying on the lawn. Hunk looks down at them, grinning.

HUNK
Well, boys -- we're back in
business.

As the music swells,

FADE OUT.

THE END