

JOAN TEWKESBURY

Director/Writer

Critically acclaimed writer/director Joan Tewkesbury has amassed an impressive list of credits in both television and feature films throughout her distinguished career. While beginning her career as a writer of features, Tewkesbury has successfully made the difficult transition to write, produce and direct numerous television projects as well.

She first co-wrote (with Calder Willingham and director Robert Altman) the feature film "THIEVES LIKE US," which starred Keith Carridine, Tom Skerritt and Shelly Duval. The following year, she scripted Altman's classic "mosaic of American life," "NASHVILLE." Starring a highly diverse cast, including Carridine, Lily Tomlin, Scott Glenn, and Michael Murphy, to name a few. The lauded "Nashville" provided Tewkesbury the opportunity to direct her first feature film "OLD BOYFRIENDS," which was presented at 'Director's Fortnight' at the Cannes Film Festival, starring John Belushi, Talia Shire, Richard Jordan and Buck Henry.

For television, Tewkesbury wrote and directed the award winning "ACORN PEOPLE"; directed Lifetimes's poignant movie-of-the-week "SUDIE AND SIMPSON" with Louis Gossett Jr., Sara Gilbert and Frances Fisher; and wrote and directed TNT's telefilm adaption of the Olive Ann Burns novel, "COLD SASSY TREE," starring Faye Dunaway, Richard Widmark and Neil Patrick Harris. In addition, Tewkesbury wrote, co-produced and directed CBS's "ELYSIAN FIELDS;" wrote and directed HBO's "WINDOWS," a short erotic film with Tim Hutton; directed the NBC telefilm "WILD TEXAS WIND" with Dolly Parton and Gary Busey; directed the Disney Channel's "ON PROMISED LAND" written by Ken Sagos and starring Joan Plowright; and co-wrote and directed "SCATTERING DAD", starring Olympia Dukakis and Andy Griffith, a movie-of-the-week for CBS.

Most recently she wrote, co-choreographed and directed "DANCE CARD," for the Oregon Ballet theatre; continues to direct episodic television, currently "THE GUARDIAN", CBS. She wrote and directed "JAMMED", a play, for Frances Fisher, presented at the Edinburgh Festival and wrote and directed "A VISIT", a play for Olympia Dukakis and Harris Yulin presented in January.

Her work has been honored by the Writers Guild, Humanitas, Golden Globes, the British Academy Awards, Cable Ace for directing and the L.A. Critics award for best original screenplay.

Currently:

"IN THE WEEDS", Developing a two hour pilot for SHOWTIME,
Creator, Exec.Producer and writer.

"DANCE CARD"... based on her ballet, she wrote, is in pre-production with SNEAK PREVIEW as an independent feature.

NASHVILLE

by

Joan Tewkesbury

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Perhaps the best thing about World War II was going to Sonja Henie movies, or the local train station to wave good-bye to the recruits as they went off to God knows where, smiling and clean in their new haircuts and uniforms. In 1946 the war ended, and shortly after that my best friend's mother had her picture on the front page of the morning paper. According to Hearst, she was a Communist and was going to be deported for her subversive activities. I worried, not about communism but about my friend; I thought she was too young to be without a mother. I read about Alger Hiss, Richard Nixon, a pumpkin, microfilm and Russians, Helen Keller, Sister Kenny, all of Pearl Buck's books and was taken to see Margot Fonteyn's first performance of SWAN LAKE on the Coast by Eugene Loring. Somewhere between President Eisenhower and my boyfriend's navy blue letter-man sweater, the Rosenbergs were executed, a lot of famous people lost their jobs because of the blacklists, and I couldn't see any of Charlie Chaplin's films because he was subversive, too.

OPERATION ABOLITION was screened, however, showing us college students what happened to uncooperative behavior. As the lights went on, someone handed out literature with "John Birch Society" written on it. A teacher raised the point that the film hadn't expressed the other point of view. "That was a consideration," said one of the literature hander-outers, "but not when one was devoted to the ideas of keeping America safe." A few blocks away, the Bolshoi Ballet gave a premiere performance of STONE FLOWER.

When the Democratic convention convened in Los Angeles, John Kennedy ran for President of the United States and everyone went down to the Biltmore Hotel to watch the action. It was very exciting and he certainly seemed to be having a good time with those crowds at Santa Monica beach and swimming with Marilyn Monroe. Against everyone else, he was Technicolor. When he won, we all cut our hair and tried to look like Jacqueline.

A few weeks before one of my children was born, Kennedy was shot, his shooter was shot, soon after that thirteen nurses were shot then other people bought guns so they could shoot anyone that might try to shoot them, and the SPCA tried to shoot a deer that wandered into my backyard by mistake.

Bobby Kennedy ran for the Democratic presidential nomination and everybody felt reassured. Not too many people asked Opal's offscreen question of Lady Pearl, "What about Cuba?" So he proceeded, drew out well, and was shot and killed just like everyone had been afraid he might be.

The next day I went to London and was asked a lot of questions about the goings-on in the United States. What was I to answer; it was too complicated, none of us knew enough. I wasn't interested in politics even though it had been affecting me all my life. I had a fling at freedom instead and began to comprehend my need to change something hard to define.

A few years later my friend, the one with the subversive mother, and I went to see a film where people moved at random, as people do, talked at the same time, like people do, and made cinema history when one of the actors walked into the football line and said to his opponent, "Okay bub, I'm gonna knock your fuckin' head right off." The audience went crazy. Suddenly there was the permission to say what one felt. The ramifications were endless.

Joan Didion wrote an essay about opposing issues that rub against each other forcing sensibility to waver, pulling first to one opposition and then to the other. Other people wrote things. Timothy Leary said things, Rudolph Nureyev defected to the United Kingdom and I began to teach at the university.

There was a new climate on campus, Angela Davis came and spoke. Abbie Hoffman came and was rude. William Kunstler just was. Exposure. Agnew attacked the universities for being elitist, Nixon proposed his Cambodian gamble, and students everywhere went on the rampage. At Kent State, the National Guard shot and killed four students and wounded eleven. An odd event, like they had been shot for malfunction of communication, as in please pass the sugar and you get the salt. Classes were closed. Our university was officially in mourning, arm-banded in black for Kent and red for Nixon's Cambodian decision. Outside observers crowded onto the campus looking for action, handing out invitations of pornographic intention, secretly hoping for an "incident," and declaring their disappointment when the students settled the issue with a sizable list of alternatives.

In the interim of reconstruction, I became aware of opposing issues happening simultaneously and the more my observer ship expanded, the more the duplicities were revealed, RASHOMON existed not because someone was right or wrong, but because we exist individually and simultaneously on different routes. Sometime that year Charlie Chaplin was reinstated in the annals of American film culture and given an Academy Award.

The day after Nixon was elected for the second time, the campaign where Wallace was shot, I was with Robert Altman and his wife in New York. There had been a storm of extreme proportions the previous night and as we walked down the street through the debris, Altman shook his head and said something about nature's omens. The election had been a lie.

As Watergate began to be an issue there was a small picture story in the morning paper. A young widow with her head on her twenty-five-year-old husband's casket. A secret service agent, he had been killed when a helicopter carrying agents to guard the President had crashed in the Bahamas. That was the day Geraldine Chaplin called Altman from Spain, asked some interesting questions about the CIA, and said yes, she would come to Nashville.

There is no possible way to explain WHY to the structure NASHVILLE. So, like the student who was asked to write about his summer vacation, I have chosen to write about the cow instead. Each actor gave freely of his or her histories, routes, connections, or nonconnections and, stirred by Altman's extraordinary capacities in overview and technical skill, rounded out the RASHOMON of the United States.

The day I left Nashville, Vassar Clemmens, violin case in hand, entered the airplane I was on. He had appeared briefly in the film with unencumbered authenticity. As I watched him I wondered if anyone would recognize him, or he me, or if anyone would wonder what was in his violin case. None of those things happened and when we got to Dallas, he disappeared like the young widow in the morning paper, the students at Kent, Joan Didion's essay the Kennedys, Nixon, Eisenhower, Margot Fonteyn's SWAN LAKE, my friend's mother and all those soldiers on the train -- out of sight but deeply ingrained in mind.

As you read the screenplay, remember this was written for a visual medium capable of giving assorted information to our perception on so many levels and in so many layers that we can't systematically record it. With that in mind, all you need to do is add yourself as the twenty-fifth character and know that whatever you think about the film is right, even if you think the film is wrong.

Joan Tewkesbury, 1975

CAST

Albuquerque
Barbara-Jean
Barnett
Bill
Bud Hamilton
Connie White
Delbert Reese
Frog
Haven Hamilton
John Triplette
Kenny Fraiser
L.A. Joan
Lady Pearl
Linnea Reese
Mary
Mr. Green
Norman
Opal
Pfc. Glenn Kelly
Tommy Brown
Tom Frank
Tricycle Man
Star
Sueleen Gay
Wade Coolidge

Barbara Harris
Ronee Blakely
Allen Garfield
Allan Nicholls
Dave Peel
Karen Black
Ned Beatty
Richard Baskin
Henry Gibson
Michael Murphy
David Hayward
Shelley Duvall
Barbara Baxley
Lily Tomlin
Cristina Raines
Keenan Wynn
David Arkin
Geraldine Chaplin
Scott Glenn
Timothy Brown
Keith Carradine
Jeff Goldblum
Bert Remsen
Gwen Wells
Bob Doqui

AS THEMSELVES

Jonnie Barnett
Julie Christie
Vassar Clements
Elliot Gould
Misty Mountain Boys
Howard K. Smith

Political Campaign by Thomas Hal Phillips

Additional Material by Cast

SPINNING RECORD JACKET

ZOOMS FORWARD and STOPS, showing us twenty-four cartoon faces packed on its confines, one of those hyper, RECORD-SALESMAN VOICES begins his diatribe.

MAN (V.O.)

Now -- after years in the making...

The NAMES OF SONGS run down on the RIGHT SIDE OF the SCREEN as the CAST NAMES ROLL UP the OTHER.

MAN (V.O.)

Robert Altman brings you the long-awaited Nashville -- with twenty-four, count 'em -- twenty-four of your very favorite stars.

The MUSIC COMES IN, loud, SEGUEING FROM ONE SONG to the NEXT, and he continues with a hype on each until everything has whirled and spun and played through your senses.

MAN (V.O.)

And along with the magnificent stars -- the magic of stereo sound and living-color picture -- right before your very eyes, without commercial interruption.

Now the album with all the photos disappears BACKWARD into a block-printed "NASHVILLE" which becomes the ONLY THING ON the SCREEN for a moment as we hear:

P.A. VOICE (V.O.)

Fellow taxpayers and stockholders in America. On the first Tuesday in November we have to make some vital decisions about our management.

EXT. STREET - DAY

PULL BACK FROM "NASHVILLE," we see the sign-covered garage door of the Tennessee State Headquarters of Hal Phillip Walker. The door rises and the Walker truck, the source of the speech, drives out onto the Nashville street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

P.A. VOICE (V.O.)

Let me go directly to the point.
I'm for doing some replacing.
I've discussed the Replacement
Party with people all over this
country, and I'm often confronted
with the statement, 'I don't want
to get mixed up in politics.' Or
'I'm tired of politics,' or 'I'm
not interested.' Let me point out
two things.

The truck now stops for a signal at the intersection of
old music row as MUSIC starts to FILTER INTO the b.g.

P.A. VOICE (V.O.)

Number one -- all of us are deeply
involved with politics whether we
know it or not or like it or not.
And number two -- we can do
something about it. When you pay
more for an automobile than it
cost Columbus to make his first
voyage to America, that's
politics.

The signal changes and the truck continues down the road
as we FOLLOW the MUSIC TRACK TO the inside of a recording
studio.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

We PAN PAST the glass booth containing spectators,
engineers, Haven Hamilton's son BUD, who looks like a
cross between Haven and Glen Campbell. Haven's mistress,
LADY PEARL, dressed in lilac, as usual, of some fifteen-
odd years, and his producer, BOB.

PANNING ON AROUND we hear Haven singing "Two-Hundred
Years" and see some of Nashville's well-known backup
musicians and singers. Finally we see HAVEN HAMILTON
himself dressed in white, as usual, peering out from
beneath his ill-matched toupee. He is one of the kings
of country music, drinks milk, and tries to maintain a
gentle attitude toward everyone, although his temper
often wins out. He has suffered his share of losses and
has learned how to handle all sides of an issue at once.
He takes his work very seriously. His wife started
traveling abroad after their other son was killed in a
senseless shooting accident, so they are a marriage in
name only.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bud has practically been raised by Pearl and was too young to even remember his brother. Haven sings on about why we've lasted two-hundred years.

We LOOK BACK IN the glass booth and see a young woman, OPAL, loaded down with camera and recording equipment, not to mention her own patchwork ensemble topped off by a small hat with a musical rhinestone pin, WANDER UP TO the glass and LOOK AT Haven, as though he were an exotic fish. Pearl, knowing Haven's idiosyncrasies, tries to get the girl's attention, but too late. Haven has seen her and as she sits down, he stops the session and the dialogue and confusion begin, everything running in OVERLAP.

HAVEN

Hold it, hold it, everybody.

BOB

Hold it, everybody.

HAVEN

Bob.

BOB

Yes, sir.

HAVEN

Bob, I want to talk to Buddy.
Buddy!

BUDDY

Ye-yes, sir, Dad.

HAVEN

Buddy -- who is that woman in there with the hat on? Is she a friend of yours?

BUDDY

I don't know, Dad. She's...

And Opal interrupts but it doesn't matter because Haven just talks on.

OPAL

Hello, Mr. Hamilton...

HAVEN

Bob...

OPAL

I'm Opal, I'm from the BBC and I'm doing a documentary on Nashville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAVEN

Bob, Buddy, both of you -- you know I don't allow no people visitin' when I'm recording.

OPAL

Did you hear me?

LADY PEARL

Yes, he heard you, dear.

HAVEN

I want no recording equipment in that studio. Buddy, go on escort the lady out.

BUDDY

Yes, sir.

HAVEN

If she wants a copy of this record, she can buy it when it's released. Would you please ask her to leave.

LADY PEARL

I'm sorry, there's no strangers allowed at all.

HAVEN

She's breaking my concentration.

Opal stands.

OPAL

Mr. Hamilton, I'll be waiting outside for you.

LADY PEARL

That's good.

OPAL

We'll have a little interview.

Finally, she leaves, smiling (Opal almost always smiles), with Bud who takes her into another studio in the building as Haven says --

HAVEN

All right, Bob; I want to do another one. Jimmy, you count off. I want to hear a little more Haven in this one.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO B - DAY

In the b.g. we hear HAND-CLAPPING and GOSPEL SINGING as Bud opens the door for Opal to Studio B. It's smaller than A, so they stagger past the engineers and take a seat on the couch. Opal commenting as she goes.

BUDDY

This is Studio 'B' right here.
And, uh, I think they're doing
some gospel...

OPAL

Oh, how sweeeet!

BUDDY

... recording of some sort. Hey,
Glenn, how are ya?

GLENN (MAN)

Hey, Buddy.

OPAL

It's lovely.

BUDDY

You don't mind if we sit in, just
a little bit, do you?

GLENN

Come on in.

BUDDY

Okay. Careful...

OPAL

It's so little. You know, I've
been to all the important studios
in London. They're all so
enormous and very sort of
impersonal.

BUDDY

We'll have to sort of keep it down
a little bit so they can see,
uh... hear what's going on.

OPAL

It's like a...

BUDDY

This is a black choir from, uh,
part of it from Fisk University
here in town.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see the all-black choir dressed in turquoise robes with gold satin trim, who sing "Do You Believe in Jesus" and answer their one question with "Yes, I do" over and over again. There is one female singer and she is white, LINNEA REESE, somewhere in her mid-thirties.

OPAL

Good Lord, Lord love a duck!

BUDDY

The lady singing is a...

OPAL

A missionary.

BUDDY

No, she's not, she's a gospel singer. She's the wife of our attorney.

Opal gives us a little of her ambiguous history.

OPAL

I was making a documentary in Kenya, and there was this marvelous woman who was a missionary, that's why I thought she was a missionary. She was sensational. She was converting Kukuyos by the dozens and she was trying to convert the Masais, of course they were hopeless, I mean...

(laughs a slight laugh)

... they have their own sort of religion, don't they.

She listens for "Jesus Knows What's in Your Soul" and continues:

OPAL

That really is fantastic. You know, it's funny you can tell that. It's come down in the genes through ages and ages and hundreds of years, but it's there. And take off those robes and, and... and you're in darkest Africa. I can just see their naked, frenzied bodies dancing... dancing... Do they carry on like that in church?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUDDY

Depends on which church you go to.

And they look back at Linnea who bobs up and down, lost somewhere in the rhythm of the song.

INT. STUDIO A - DAY

We watch Haven and the backup as they sing "I've lived through two depressions/and seven dustbowl droughts," when Haven pulls off his headset and shouts:

HAVEN

Hold it, hold it.

The rest of them taper off as he shouts again.

HAVEN

Hold it, everybody. Dammit, Bob.
What's the name of the piano
player, Bob?

We hear Bob on the intercom.

BOB

That's Frog.

We see a young, hair-heavy pianist, FROG, in current torn-Levi fashion, sitting and looking at the piano as if it made the mistake.

HAVEN

That's Frog. He plays like a
frog.

Haven puts the headset back on and, assuming a smile, says:

HAVEN

We'll try it again, Jimmy -- you
count off.

INT. STUDIO B - DAY

The group of gospel singers are rocking out in rhythm and at one point Linnea breaks up and completely disappears. The group continues as the LAST TWO CREDITS COME DOWN.

INT. STUDIO A - DAY

Back in Studio A, Haven reaches for the final crescendo and Frog misses again. Haven takes off the headset and slams it down on the podium.

HAVEN

Dammit to hell.

We hear Bob on the intercom.

BOB

Hold it, everybody.

HAVEN

Bob --

BOB

Yes, sir.

HAVEN

What did you say the piano player's name was?

BOB

Frog.

HAVEN

Yeah. When I ask for Pig, I want Pig. Now you get me Pig and then we'll be ready to record this here tune.

BOB

Yes, sir.

Haven steps out of the booth, displaying his cactus-in-rhinestone-covered outfit, and walks past Frog on his way out the door.

HAVEN

You get your hair cut; you don't belong in Nashville.

And we...

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

With "One I Love You" blaring in Franklin High School band time, we see the "Welcome to Nashville" sign on the airport tower.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the ground we see a three-ring circus of people inside the airport, airport security, people trying to get through the doors and out onto the steaming pavement, TV cameras, reporters, Chamber of Commerce, the high school band, and at least fifty twirling majorettes from the Tennessee Twirling Institute.

Hal Phillip Walker's signs can be seen THROUGH the glass, and all the Airport Traffic proceeds, occasionally DROWNING OUT the sound of the TV COMMENTATOR and all the preparations for Barbara-Jean's arrival.

ANNOUNCER

This is Bill Jenkins on special assignment for Channel Two News here at Metro Airport. We are awaiting the arrival of Barbara-Jean, who, as you know, has been away for special treatment at the Baltimore Burn Center. Already, prior to her arrival, Barbara-Jean fans and other supporters are here at the airport. They are at the moment being held inside the terminal by security police. Other members of the Chamber of Commerce are on the way. Also, at this report, Haven Hamilton will make an appearance here at Metro Airport.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

A lean paratrooper, PVT. GLEN KELLY, somewhere in his late-twenties, and spit and polished to perfection, walks through the confusion at a record booth.

KELLY

Ma'am.

GIRL

Mm-hmm?

KELLY

Excuse me, am I late for Barbara-Jean's plane?

GIRL

No, I don't think so, but they're not gonna let you out there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLY

Thanks, ma'am.

And he continues into the crowd packed against the glass, some of them to see their idol, others just because there is a crowd and they're curious.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - FRONT - DAY

We see the Walker truck move behind a fellow on a black and white, three-wheeled motorcycle. WALKER'S MESSAGE DRONES ON as the praying mantis-looking vehicle stops in front of a limousine being polished by NORMAN, a would-be singer-songwriter in a chauffeur's uniform.

The TRICYCLE MAN climbs off the motorcycle. He is long and thin, looking a little like a praying mantis himself. As he walks into the terminal, he takes off a green scarf and magically turns it red, and to Norman's astonishment ties it back around his neck and goes into the building. During all of this, Walker's truck, with its INCESSANT SPEAKER SYSTEM, spews out a MESSAGE about the government forcing its citizens to swallow a camel.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

Barbara-Jean's blue and white Cessna touches down and starts to taxi toward the anxiously waiting crowd, as the Announcer continues his blow-by-blow account of her arrival.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Her plane has touched down... it's down the taxi-way now... and will be arriving at any moment now onto the ramp area directly here, practically in front of us here at Metro Airport.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT RESTAURANT - DAY

The Tricycle Man is seated at the end of the counter, rearranging the salt for his salad, via the air, in a magic trick that WADE COOLIDGE watches closely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dishwashing is one of Wade's three jobs a day. He's black, spent twenty-seven years in jail, studied law in jail and got himself out with the aid of thirteen lawyers, about four months ago.

An older man sits down at the counter, MR. GREEN. He and his wife live in Nashville, had an antique and fix-it shop before he retired. Now they rent rooms in their house to would-be musicians and Bible salesmen. A little deaf and very tired, he's come to pick up his niece, Martha, whom he last saw when she was about twelve or thirteen.

GREEN

Ahh... Miss... May!

SUELEEN

Hi.

SUELEEN GAY has red hair and is lost somewhere in 1940 and her fantasy about being a singer. One is struck by her wide-eyed innocence and overt sexual display. She reminds you of those girls who came to Hollywood to become movie stars and went home older because of the trip.

GREEN

Hi... a... I'll have a caramel sundae.

SUELEEN

We ain't go no caramel sundae.

GREEN

Butterscotch?

This continues until they arrive at strawberry. Sueleen goes off and shouts her order to the air and Wade pulls her over, points to the Tricycle Man, and they stand watching him do his trick. Wade can't believe it.

WADE

Sueleen, did you see what he just did? Took the thing off the salt and threw it in the air. Did you see that?

Sueleen walks over to the Tricycle Man who smiles behind his yellow glasses and truly looks like a magical bug.

SUELEEN

How'd you do that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the other end of the counter, a local MAN next to Mr. Green crunches his crackers with his fist and talks. Mr. Green, not really wanting to engage but also not wanting to be impolite, tells him that his wife is sick as Sueleen brings his sundae.

MAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

GREEN

Oh, it's just one of those things.

MAN

Happens in the best of families.

GREEN

(slight laugh)

Yea.

Sueleen has wandered back to the Tricycle Man, who doesn't speak but just watches her happily.

SUELEEN

I wrote me this real hot song.
You want to hear it?

He nods.

SUELEEN

It's called 'I Never Get Enough.'

He nods again.

SUELEEN

All right.

She looks around and then begins to sing, not very on-key, and half-does gestures to her song about a girl who "always wants more and more."

On the other side of Mr. Green, DELBERT REESE, Linnea's husband, sits having a cup of coffee. He can't believe his ears, Sueleen is tone deaf, but he can't take his eyes off the translucent-skinned redhead. He's a lawyer for Haven Hamilton, Barbara-Jean and others. He and Linnea have been married about 14 years, just before he started law school. He's younger than he looks and wears clothes that make him look wider than he is. He's engaging, is the caretaker of other people's problems and never asks much from anyone but to be liked. His home is his castle but he doesn't understand it somehow. He and Linnea have two children who are deaf. All of his activities have kept him too busy to learn sign language, so Linnea acts as an interpreter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The voice of the loudspeaker announces the arrival of the plane he is waiting to meet. He rises, puts on his dark glasses, and over tips Sueleen who continues to sing "I Never Get Enough."

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

A group of girls runs past Reese in red, white and blue outfits with Hal Phillip literature in their hands. The thinnest, leggiest girl you've ever seen stands like a stork on a pair of platform shoes made to look like feet. She has hennaed hair. Her short-shorts and tiny strapless bra meet like an eraser at the top of a pencil. She checks out the greeters, but her uncle hasn't arrived yet. Mr. Green is in for a big surprise. An older man walks past Reese and he walks forward.

DEL

John Triplette?

The older man doesn't respond, waves to a friend but a younger man behind him responds.

TRIPLETTE

You looking for me?

Del turns and is surprised by JOHN TRIPLETTE being so young. They've never met before. John is here to put talent together for a televised fund-raising concert for Hal Phillip Walker, the independent presidential candidate whose headquarters we saw at the beginning of the film. Triplette graduated from UCLA somewhere in the mid-fifties. He makes one remember white dinner jackets, Balboa, California, Phi Delta Theta summer dances with paper lanterns, and John F. Kennedy's dynamic smile. He is a lawyer, and his wife has just divorced him because he was never at home, he has no children.

Del sticks out his hand and is bumped by an extremely-beautiful, young woman, MARY, who continues to walk toward the terminal. He looks after her for a moment and then back to Triplette.

DEL

A... oh... John?

TRIPLETTE

Hello. What's your name?

Del comes forward and takes off his glasses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL

Del Reese, I'm sorry. Forgive me these damn glasses. Thanks for coming out.

They both smile and chuckle. Triplette says how much he likes the girls in costumes, which Del repeats as they walk into the terminal.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

Outside, the majorettes trick and twirl as the bands play and more people come toward Barbara-Jean's plane. Haven and Bud and Lady Pearl round the corner in their white Jeep. An ambulance approaches, too, and the announcer announces as Haven steps down into a cluster of gracious businessmen dressed in Dacron summer suits.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Mr. Green has found his niece, the leggy girl, slightly taller than he is and hardly what he expected. She leans over and tells him that she's changed her name from Martha to L.A. JOAN. Mr. Green nods, not having heard at first, then hearing, then not sure that he's heard what he heard, so he continues.

GREEN

Aunt Esther wants to see you.
She's in the hospital. She
doesn't feel too well.

At this point a long, lanky fellow with a beard, guitar and a very friendly attitude toward the four stewardesses who are walking with him, wanders over to a cigarette machine in back of Mr. Green. L.A. Joan has spotted him.

L.A. JOAN

Wait a minute. I think this guy's
a rock star.

GREEN

(not hearing)
And she'd like to see you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

L.A. JOAN

Wait, hang on...

She leaves Green in the center of the floor as she pulls out an album and plops it down on top of the machine.

L.A. JOAN

Hi. Can I get your autograph?
You're Tom, aren't you. Tom,
Bill, and Mary?

TOM FRANK is handsome in a wayward way, and his music-fan following is large and taken care of personally whenever he can tend to it. He looks at her before he signs the album.

TOM

Jesus, you oughta stop that diet
before you ruin yourself.

INT. COUNTRY MUSIC STAND - DAY

We see the beautiful Mary and her guitar-toting husband, BILL. They are the other two-thirds of Tom, Bill, and Mary, and are in Nashville to cut an album. Their last one was a couple of years ago and had a standout single, "It Don't Worry Me." Until Tom got his plane ticket, they hadn't seen each other in a few months and thus far with great forethought has managed to lose them. Bill is extremely ambitious and seems to carry the responsibility of the other two like a stage mother.

He pulls up to a picture of their album in front of the record stand and sees a large picture of Connie White with a Hal Phillip Walker sticker attached to her bosom.

BILL

Hey -- they have our album here.
(to the girl)
How's it selling?

Mary pulls him along.

BILL

I'm the handsome one in the front.
I... I don't have my glasses on
but... Wait a minute. Hal Phillip
Walker looks exactly like Connie
White.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

Delbert and Triplette make their way through the people and doors. A few fans and girls get loose, but armed security stuff them back inside. John tells Del he likes bands. Haven signs autographs as Pearl continues to talk whether anyone listens or not.

LADY PEARL

Little kids, honey -- they practiced every day for a whole month...

HAVEN

Yes, they're so nice.

LADY PEARL

Isn't that cute?

Haven finishes his last autograph.

HAVEN

I think that'll cheer her up and, Pearl, shut up.

Pvt. Kelley, the paratrooper, stands at the window listening to the announcer tell how Barbara-Jean was tragically burned in an accident in a fire as a child, which brought she and Haven together. He wrote his first hit tune for her.

Del and Triplette approach BARNETT, the announcer drones on about, although Barbara-Jean is recovered it requires skin grafts and regular visits to the burn center. Del walks to Barnett, a rotund energetic man, who is Barbara-Jean's husband and manager. Barnett has made her his life. He was an orderly in the hospital where she recovered as a child and stayed until she was 15 when they were married. She wrote songs, met Haven, who introduced her to a public who's adored her ever since. Barnett runs interference for her schedule that is usually too crowded, often making himself appear foolish in his intensity. He has a thick Fu Manchu mustache, a brown, leather jacket, and a soiled necktie. Contrary to the basic convention of Tom, Bill and Mary's hit song, everything worries Barnett.

DEL

Hello, Barnett!

Barnett throws up his arms in dismay --

BARNETT

I got no time right now, Jesus --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Del scratches his head and Triplette, who's never quite seen anything like it, laughs and breaks the tension.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Tom stands near Pvt. Kelly and fends off a cute blonde's plea for him to vote for Walker. He tells her he never votes for anybody. Then, he looks at the paratrooper, who's been saving all his leave time so he could come to see Barbara-Jean at the new Opryland, and says:

TOM

Hiya, sergeant -- kill anybody this week?

THROUGH the glass we see Haven at a podium introducing his son, Bud.

HAVEN

Come on, Buddy, just say hello. My son Buddy. He just graduated from Harvard Law School. We're just trying to give him the breaks we never got. Buddy, say hello to the people.

EXT. AIRFIELD

BUDDY

Hi...

HAVEN

Thank you, Buddy.

LADY PEARL

Oh, that's lovely.

The twirlers complete their routine and the band breaks into Barbara-Jean's theme song as the announcer, Haven, and media people move forward to drink her in. BARBARA-JEAN steps from the plane and starts walking to her waiting fans.

Air traffic continues behind her. There is an intensity about her that is thrilling and terrifying all at the same time. She is small-boned, fragile-looking and beautiful in the sense of 1940's, beautiful movie stars. She would rather cook for 40 than most anything else except singing. She writes her own songs that are full of her philosophy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She is available to anyone who can get near her with a problem, and one can see that Barnett has his hands full.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Bill and Mary watch her as Norman, late, comes up in back of them and taps their shoulders, saying "Hi, Bill" to Mary and "Hi, Mary" to Bill. They moan their responses to the bad joke and start outside as Wade tries to pry Sueleen from the window.

WADE

Are you gonna ride into town with me or not?

SUELEEN

You better go without me. I'm gonna wait 'cause I think she's gonna sing.

WADE

Who, her? She ain't gonna sing. She don't sing unless she gets paid. Now come on.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

Outside, Barbara-Jean has just received a bouquet of flowers from the smallest majorette, who just finished running through a row of flags to get to her.

BARBARA-JEAN

Oh, you little beauty. Thank you so much. Ah...

Now she looks and addresses those adoring fans.

BARBARA-JEAN

I'd like to thank you for coming out to meet me today. It's great to be home. It's hot as a firecracker...

Everyone laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA-JEAN

Me and the boys are goin' to be at the Opry this week. And like my granddaddy always used to say, 'If you're down by the river, I hope you'll drop in.'

She waves and signals off as Lady Pearl says "Isn't that lovely." Then Barbara-Jean looks at the people in the terminal packed behind the glass.

BARBARA-JEAN

Barnett -- who are all those people inside there?

BARNETT

It's just airport security, darlin', because of all the hijackers.

BARBARA-JEAN

Did they come to see me?

BARNETT

They can see you pretty good, darlin'.

BARBARA-JEAN

(not having that)

Well, I'd like to go in and say hello.

Barnett sighs, looks at the crowd, and helps her away from the podium. Followed by Haven and the rest of the news media, everyone talks at once, as usual. The commentator is commenting on her every step and just after Barnett tells her to look out for the water, she turns and collapses.

Everyone screams, closes around her and people break the security guard inside the building, pouring out in curious droves. Pvt. Kelly stands forlornly as three band members and the hospital attendant lift her to the stretcher.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

L.A. Joan and Mr. Green walk to his Nash, Triplette and Delbert to Del's Cadillac, Wade and Sueleen to Wade's on-the-repair pickup, and Tom to a sun-roofed Volkswagen filled with stewardesses. Walker's P.A. voice continues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

P.A. (V.O.)

Who do you think is running Congress? Farmers. Engineers? Teachers? Businessmen? No, my friends, Congress is run by lawyers. A lawyer is trained for two things: to clarify and confuse.

In the b.g., Norman tries to find his keys and sort out the luggage. Bill takes over for a moment with the keys, but finally Mary steps in and finds the correct key as the voice continues.

P.A. (V.O.)

Did you ever ask a lawyer the time of day? He told you how to make a watch, didn't he? Ever ask a lawyer how to get to Mr. Jones' house in the country? You got lost, didn't you? Congress is composed of five hundred and thirty-five individuals -- two hundred and eighty-eight are lawyers.

Now all the cars and Wade's truck proceed to back out of their spaces, accompanied by some FAST-PICKING MUSIC and the inescapable voice of the P.A. At the terminal parking gate, the CAMERA PANS DOWN TO the Tricycle Man, followed by Wade, followed by Tom, Mr. Green, then Delbert, then Norman chauffeuring Mary and Bill, and a bus with a picture of Connie White on the outside and Pvt. Kelly inside, which takes off the parking arm as it leaves the lot. The last car to leave is Hal Phillip Walker's van on which is written "New Roots for the Nation."

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

On the now-deserted airfield, the TV announcer speaks quietly to the viewers as a girl with a Walker poster steps up behind him and smiles into the camera.

ANNOUNCER

She quietly collapsed here on the sidewalk in a sort of a faint; that's all we've been able to determine from Dr. Boulan at this moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A guard steps in and pulls the poster girl out of the frame.

ANNOUNCER

That's it for the moment from
Metro Airport for Channel Two
News. This is Bill Jenkins
reporting.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Walker truck moves on to the freeway.

P.A. (V.O.)

Our national anthem. Nobody knows
the words. Nobody can sing it,
nobody understands it. They
don't --

At this point a yellow couch has fallen from one of the fast-moving vehicles, and as a car with a boat swerves to miss it, the freeway becomes a mass of SCREECHING, sliding and CRASHING, creating an enormous traffic jam destined to make one spend an hour waiting, like it or not.

Haven, in his Jeep with Pearl and Bud, slow to the pile-up, and ahead of them are Pvt. Kelly in the bus, Wade's truck, Delbert and Triplette, Mary and Bill and Norman, Mr. Green and L.A. Joan, and Tom and the stewardesses. The Walker P.A. is still in operation.

P.A.

Let's change our national anthem
back to something people could
understand. Something that would
make a light shine in their faces.

People get out of their cars, first to see if they can help, and then just to walk around. Tom signs autographs through the roof of the car and further back in the traffic, behind a Popsicle truck, sits Linnea in her station wagon with Opal writhing in the front seat.

OPAL

I feel sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINNEA

(rolling down the window)

Just a minute, just a minute,
hello -- would you please go to
the Popsicle truck and get us a
couple of sweet ices.

She hands some money to a passer-by, as Opal exaggerates grotesquely.

OPAL

There must be about twenty cars;
they're all piled up, one on top
of the other. Some are upside-
down. I saw a leg sticking out...
I wish my cameraman had been here.
I need something like this for my
documentary. It's America, all
those cars smashing into each
other and all those mangled
bodies.

Barbara-Jean's ambulance, with SIRENS BLARING, pulls up
on the grass in order to bypass the jam and takes off
toward town.

An old, green Chevrolet pulls out behind and attempts the
same maneuver but it stalls. Delbert gets out of his car
and walks over to it. KENNY FRASIER sits inside, looking
innocent and burned-out at the same time. He is
basically a tourist-drifter who lives at home with his
mother in Terre Haute, Indiana, when he's not on the
road. He sits swearing in his broken car.

DEL

You think you can pull out there?

Kenny looks at him.

KENNY

You want to come in and try it?

Nearby, L.A. Joan, listening to a transistor radio, asks
Mr. Green if there are any rock stations, and he talks
about his wife, Esther.

GREEN

It's hard to really say. You see,
after they opened her up, they
decided they'd do an exploratory,
you know? They ended up giving
her an overhaul...

Bill bargains with a street vendor selling turtle
footstools.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As a dirty stream of water shoots up from Kenny's car, the P.A. says something about 12,000 major crimes committed. He jumps back to avoid getting burned and after a moment slams the hood down on the mistake. Then he walks to his car whose back seat is loaded with Walker posters and literature. He pulls out a jacket that his father gave him a long time ago and a violin case with one of those have-your-picture-painted-for-a-dollar portraits of himself on it. He starts to walk back through the cars and up the hill to an overpass.

Opal sits in the car with her microphone interviewing Linnea.

OPAL

Uh... have you any children?

LINNEA

Yes. I have two children. I have a boy and a girl.

OPAL

Isn't that nice. How old are they?

LINNEA

Twelve and eleven.

OPAL

Do they want to be singers like their mommy?

LINNEA

Oh, well... my, my children are deaf. They're deaf, they were born deaf.

Opal is horrified.

OPAL

Oh, my God! How awful!

LINNEA

No, it's not.

OPAL

It's dreadful!

LINNEA

No, now wait just a minute. That's not so. I wish you could see my little boy. I want you to see my little boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPAL

Oh no, I couldn't. I couldn't
stand to see --

LINNEA

(interrupting)

He has an incredible personality.

OPAL

The sadness of it all.

Inside a bright, red pickup truck, a grisly-looking farmer with a limp named STAR sits beside his wife, Winifred, who looks like she has blonde feathers for hair. More than Sueleen Gay, she would like to be a famous singer and write songs. Star met her when she was 12 or 13 outside a laundromat just after he got out of the Navy. They got married, she had babies, wrote songs, and runs away to Nashville every now and then to cut a demo record with \$25 from the egg money.

She calls herself ALBUQUERQUE and believes in the liberation of women, while Star believes in getting by on what you've got. He hates, absolutely hates, country-western music.

ALBUQUERQUE

... and ya see what happens, he
made a million dollars on a
flyswatter, because it had a red
dot in the center.

STAR

Flyswatter?

ALBUQUERQUE

Yes, sir, that's right. Red dot.
He was sitting in the buffet and
he was eatin' and he saw a woman
an' she was swattin' flies and
she, he said, well what makes the
difference between y'know
flyswatters? Because it was to do
with the industrial revolution...

Nearby Triplette and Del, in Del's car, discuss fans.

TRIPLETTE

See, the thing with these country
people is they have a real grass
roots appeal.

DEL

Oh hell, they got fans alright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

And they're the people that elect the president and if you line up a lot of movie stars... I mean, I think people down here feel that movie stars are eccentric. Crazy. Communists.

DEL

(laughing)

Well...

TRIPLETTE

(laughing)

A lot of them are.

In the truck, Albuquerque makes out her list of things to do.

ALBUQUERQUE

An' then I want to go to the Grand Ole Opry to have...

STAR

God, oh, forget that --

ALBUQUERQUE

No! 'Cause I have to have my record signed...

STAR

Goddamn it. I don't like that music.

He opens the door and gets out.

STAR

I'm going up front and see what the hell's going on.

ALBUQUERQUE

(not giving up)

'Cause I've got this gold record and --

She holds up a yellow, plastic single of a Connie White song, as Star, with his cane, makes his way through the stopped traffic, telling people to get away from his truck.

ALBUQUERQUE

Well, shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And stuffing her belongings into her basket, she opens the truck door and takes off in the direction of the hill and overpass, leaving Star behind.

Opal meanwhile has made her way to a large, tan bus that reads "Tommy Brown's Back in Town." She knocks on the door and asks a good-looking beige negro if she can speak with the owner of the bus. She has no idea what Tommy Brown looks like.

We see Haven under a blue umbrella signing autographs and arguing with Pearl, who gets increasingly louder as she tries to make her point. She sings a line, Haven corrects her, Buddy is noncommittal, and Pearl ends up making her point by saying the song was a hit.

In the b.g. we see Albuquerque climb over the bridge railing and walk toward town.

INT. BUS - DAY

Opal sits inside the bus with seven or eight black people. Other than Wade, they're the first blacks we've seen. Unbeknownst to Opal, TOMMY BROWN, the man who let her in, is putting her on.

OPAL

Will Mr. Brown be here soon?

BROWN

Oh, yeah. He's in the back there changing. He has to put his makeup on. Whenever he's having an interview, he likes to get all prettied up.

The people in the bus suppress their laughter.

OPAL

Well, he must be a marvelous person. I mean, to have all you lovely people working for him. I mean I know the problem's in the South.

BROWN

(smiling)

Oh -- well -- he's very, uh, liberal. By the way, I'd like you to meet his wife. This is Joy.

Opal turns to a delicate-looking mulatto and is shocked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 OPAL
Mrs. Brown?

 JOY
 (assured)
Yes...

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

As the wreckers clear up the snarled traffic, the Tricycle Man, accompanied by MUSIC, hops on his MOTORCYCLE, STARTS it up, and with his hat brim flopped back against the wind rides off into town.

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

As the Walker truck passes Barbara-Jean's window, a bevy of busy people does their best to make her feel at home. The whole thing takes on a festive air, like a cocktail party, and well-wishers stream in and out. Bud hangs pictures and Barbara-Jean's cousin, JEWEL, brings in flowers.

 BARNETT
You've outdone yourself, Bud.

 JEWEL
We got pictures just the right height. Look at this.

 BARNETT
Oh yeah, that little bird again.

 BARBARA-JEAN
That's beautiful, Jewel. I remember when you gave that to me.

 BARNETT
I remember I almost threw it out.

INT. HOSPITAL HALL - DAY

Mr. Green plants L.A. Joan in the hall outside Barbara-Jean's room. He tells her to wait while Aunt Esther, across the hall, freshens up. A guard stands at Barbara-Jean's room refusing to let a photographer in. Delbert and Triplette walk in past the official. Pvt. Kelly looks in through the door.

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S ROOM - DAY

The noise level is reaching a new pitch.

DEL
How ya doing?

BARNETT
Del, I got no time...

DEL
I know, I know. I just stopped
by.

Barnett hovers near Barbara-Jean anxiously.

BARNETT
I'm under the gun.

BARBARA-JEAN
Del, how ya doing?

They shake hands and she asks him sincerely.

BARBARA-JEAN
How's lawyerin'?

DEL
Honey, fine, just fine. You get
some rest now.

He sits down on the bed and Triplette leans back against
the wall and watches the circus unfold. More flowers
arrive.

JEWEL
These are from Connie White.

BARNETT
Put them up there with the other
carnations.

BARBARA-JEAN
Del, can you crank me up a little?

DEL
Sure thing.

BARBARA-JEAN
Thanks.

Bud is pounding nails in the wall to hang pictures and
some white, flowered "HH" (Haven Hamilton) horseshoes are
brought in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

White carnations again? If I told him once I told him a hundred times, they're too funereal. Bud, Bud, what're you doing there! This is a hospital: This ain't no construction sight. Come on, no pictures, go out and build a dam, godamit!

Befuddled, Bud leaves, passing Tommy Brown and his wife who enter with an orchid. Opal pulls up in the doorway and is not admitted, much to her verbal disgust.

BARBARA-JEAN

Look who's here -- Mr. Brown.

Brown and Barnett shake one of those soul-brother handshakes that Barnett doesn't know all the words to, so it dissipates clumsily in the air.

BARBARA-JEAN

How do you do? So nice to see you. You look as beautiful as a big, black butterfly I saw out on the highway near my house the other day.

BARNETT

My God, I'm getting jealous. You better get outa here.

A young woman with a white coat and clipboard squeezes through the crowd. She's Barbara-Jean's DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

Barnett, I need to talk to you.

BARNETT

You got it. All right, everybody out, doctor's got to talk turkey.

Everyone starts their good-byes, and Delbert brings Triplette forward.

DEL

Barnett, there's somebody I just want you to meet.

BARNETT

Who's that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL
John Triplette from California.

BARNETT
Triple, nice to...

TRIPLETTE
(sincerely)
Triplette, nice to meet you.

BARNETT
(cutting him off)
Okay, Doctor, come on and give us
some good news so we can get outa
here.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - DAY

As Delbert and Triplette leave. Opal stops them with her
microphone.

OPAL
Are you a relative?

TRIPLETTE
No.

OPAL
Can you tell me how she is?

TRIPLETTE
She's fine. It's her husband I'm
concerned about.

As they pass by Bud, L.A. Joan comes up to him,
introduces herself and asks him for a light, which he
gives her. Mr. Green comes out to get her but she sends
him back, begging his pardon for having interrupted her.
She continues her conversation with Bud and smoking her
cigarette with her blue fingernails.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

In LONG SHOT we see Albuquerque, who, FULL-LENGTH, looks
somewhat like a miniskirted Barbie doll, and Kenny walk
toward us down the highway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENNY

What do you do?

ALBUQUERQUE

Well, I... I'm on my way to town
to become a country music singer
or star.

KENNY

Yeah?

ALBUQUERQUE

Yeah.

KENNY

What're you gonna do if you don't?

ALBUQUERQUE

If I don't? Oh, I can always go
into sales.

KENNY

Like ladies clothes? Like what
you wear?

ALBUQUERQUE

Oh, no. I know all about trucks.
I'd go into trucking. I guess.

She keeps glancing over her shoulder.

KENNY

(laughs)

You're kidding me.

ALBUQUERQUE

No, I'm not kidding you. I'm in a
truck enough, and then I know how
to fix motors and all that, so --

KENNY

Nobody buys trucks from a girl.

ALBUQUERQUE

No, I been fixing motors for a
long... Why do you say that
because now what's happened is if
I can't sell trucks, then I
can't...

She looks behind her and sees Star's truck and starts to
run O.S.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBUQUERQUE

Don't say you saw me.

She is gone by the time Star pulls up, HONKING his HORN before stopping.

STAR

Hey, you haven't seem my wife, have you? Sort of an ordinary-looking lady.

KENNY

No -- you going into town?

STAR

You're not one of them country singers, are you?

KENNY

No. Can you give me a ride?

STAR

All right, get in.

KENNY

(climbing in)

Thank you.

And as they drive off --

STAR (V.O.)

You look like a guy I was in the Navy with. Yeah, he wouldn't take a bath so we peed in his bed to get him discharged.

CUT TO:

INT. SUELEEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

We see Sueleen standing, in front of her closet mirror. She is stuffing white sweat-socks into her push-up bra for padding. She wears a blue, front-zipped jump suit with big cutouts on the side. By looking, we know every cent goes into her career that will never get off the ground because it can't get out of that room. She smiles and practices her introduction into the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUELEEN

Hi. My name's Sueleen Gay and I'm here to sing you all a couple of songs I wrote and I sure hope you're gonna enjoy it, honey -- 'cause I know I'm just gonna enjoy singing 'em to you. The first one is called 'Let Me Be the One.'

She holds up one finger and smiles to her image in the mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

L.A. Joan has donned some kind of India cotton wrapper that matches her fingernails, and she and Bud start toward the elevator as Mr. Green comes from Esther's room.

BUDDY

(politely)

What about your aunt and uncle?

L.A. JOAN

Oh, it's cool. I can see them anytime. What kinda car you got?

BUDDY

(politely)

I have a little one.

Mr. Green calls, "Martha," but it's too late, she's gone down the elevator. He turns away, putting on his most cheerful face to hide his disappointment and walks back into his wife's room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PICKING PARLOR - NIGHT

We see the Picking Parlor sign, some Walker girls, and hear BLUEGRASS MUSIC.

CUT TO:

INT. PICKING PARLOR - NIGHT

The CAMERA PANS ACROSS a huge picture of John Kennedy, TO the four Misty Mountain Boys playing and singing "Mississippi River," and then to the patrons, including Haven and Tommy Brown at one table, and Bill and Mary at another. Mary looks over her shoulder as Bill asks her why she didn't wear an outfit to match his.

MARY

'Cause I didn't want to wear it.

BILL

You're supposed to wear the blue dress when I wear the blue --

MARY

(interrupting)

I don't want to dress like twins any more. We're not twins, we're a trio.

At this point, Kenny, looking wide-eyed, enters the door that Lady Pearl stands guarding.

LADY PEARL

Come in, young stud, and sit down.

She pulls out the empty chair at Bill and Mary's table and plops him down in it. Mary moves closer to Bill and through the applause for the end of the song, Kenny looks sheepish and apologizes.

KENNY

I'm sorry... sorry...

Bill shrugs.

BILL

That's okay.

Mary turns to Bill, saying softly in his ear --

MARY

He looks like Howdy Doody.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEMON'S DEN - NIGHT

L.A. Joan and Bud drive up in his white Volkswagen Jeep to the redwood nightclub with the devil's head on the corner.

BUDDY (V.O.)

This here is the Demon's Den.

INT. DEMON'S DEN - NIGHT

One ever-so-small girl named Sheila and one ever-so-tall girl named Patti introduce themselves as the Smokey Mountain Laurel. In not the same color but matching dresses, they sing, "Troubled Times" in clear as bell voices.

Star is seated at the bar having a beer while Sueleen bobs up and down to the music behind them.

Tom sits at a table with a couple of blondes as Opal, who is trying to snap off a few photos, finds him in the lens and he looks at her oddly.

OPAL
Oh sorry, oh, Tom!

TOM
Yeah?

OPAL
Tom, hello! I was looking for you. This chap told me you were here.

TOM
Who are you?

She shakes his hand.

OPAL
I'm Opal from the BBC.

TOM
Hello, Opal, from the BBC.

OPAL
Good. Ladies, you don't mind if I sit... crowd you a little.

As she slides in, ousting the already-on-the-way blondes --

CUT TO:

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

We see Pearl onstage and a sea of checkered tablecloths and applauding people below.

LADY PEARL
All right. I've got a couple of announcements. We got some stars here tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see Bill and Mary look around.

BILL

Can't be us.

PEARL

Tommy Brown's back in town!

(off applause)

Tommy Brown, stand up and show it
all off.

PANNING, we see Tommy stand and bow, a little embarrassed
by the display. Haven sits smiling and clapping but
Wade, who's had one beer too many at the bar, shouts:

WADE

Tommy Brown's the whitest nigger
in town!

Immediately, Haven rises from his three glasses of milk
and helps Tommy and the others outside.

HAVEN

It's getting late. I'm sorry.
I'm so very sorry.

Kenny watches Wade as Brown and his wife and the people
from the bus get up and start out the door.

HAVEN

This is not typical... Now I
hope --

WADE

He oughta drink some of that milk
-- it fits his personality! Hey
-- he's leaving. Shit, he's still
the whitest nigger in town and I
ain't gonna change my mind about
that... I tell you that right
now --

Wade starts out after the Brown party and Kenny tries to
stop him. Wade throws him to the ground and all hell
breaks loose. Mary and Bill leave and Lady Pearl shouts
above the other two fights that have started as a result
of Kenny falling.

LADY PEARL

All right, boys, cool it. I got
two guns here.

CUT TO:

INT. DEMON'S DEN - NIGHT

Patti and Sheila ask the man at the bar, whose name is TROUT, if they did okay and he nods yes. They walk off to a booth near Opal, who is counting into her tape recorder in French, and past L.A. Joan who enters the bathroom. Trout shouts:

TROUT

Hey, bear, how about a couple of
beers for the Smokey Mountain
Laurel...

He then turns to Sueleen.

TROUT

Okay, honey. What's your name?

SUELEEN

Sueleen... Sueleen Gay.

TROUT

Sueleen Gay? You're on next.

She turns to her accompanist.

SUELEEN

Come on, Bunkie.

Someone in the b.g. talks about Hal Philip Walker smoking funny-looking cigarettes and he's an admitted "homo," as Sueleen grabs the mike and looks directly at the Tricycle Man who sits in a booth.

SUELEEN

Hi, y'all. My name's Sueleen Gay.

She repeats the introduction she did in front of the mirror and begins, with her gestures, to sing "Let Me Be the One." Oozing coy sex, she does. Sing, she does not. Or at least not on pitch.

Star turns away, shaking his head no. Patti and Sheila can't believe their ears. Albuquerque makes her way down the bar in back of Star. She stops to talk to Frog, the piano player from Haven's session. Sueleen continues in the b.g.

ALBUQUERQUE

I'm looking for Frog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FROG

You got him.

ALBUQUERQUE

Oh... well...

FROG

You want a beer?

ALBUQUERQUE

No thanks, this is business. What I was wondering -- I'm making a demonstration record.

FROG

At a recording studio?

ALBUQUERQUE

And... uh...

Star turns, having recognized her voice, and shouts:

STAR

Winifred!

She responds without thinking.

ALBUQUERQUE

What? Oh, you!

She turns and runs. Star limps out after her as fast as he can.

STAR

Goddamit! Come back here!

The PHONE RINGS behind the bar and Trout picks it up.

TROUT

Demon's Den?

DEL (V.O.)

Is Trout there?

TROUT

Yeah, this is Trout.

CUT TO:

INT. REESE HOME - NIGHT

In an entirely beige den, we see Delbert talking on phone. Triplette looks at the pictures on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL

Listen, we're gonna have a little fundraiser.

TROUT (V.O.)

Yeah -- you need some talent?

DEL

Yeah, talent... Uh, tell ya what. The fellow I'm working with is here and I'm gonna put him on. John Triplette's his name. He's from California.

TROUT (V.O.)

Put him on.

Del hands the phone to John.

DEL

Uh, Trout -- this fellow's name is Trout.

TRIPLETTE

(not believing name)

Trout?

DEL

Yeah.

TRIPLETTE

Hello, Trout?

TROUT (V.O.)

Hey, John, how are you?

TRIPLETTE

Ah, fine. Listen, as Del told you, we're putting a smoker together.

TROUT (V.O.)

Right.

TRIPLETTE

Monday night. Anyway, we need a certain kind of young lady to entertain the troops.

The CAMERA PANS RIGHT WITH Del as he crosses into the dining room. Linnea is there with the children. Jimmy is telling in both sign and spoken language about his experience passing his swimming test, as his sister helps set the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Linnea listens intently and Del tries, means well, but is unable to comprehend too much of what's going on. Jimmy is a special child and so is his sister. It is as if their being born with one handicap gave them special capacities in other areas.

DEL

I'm sorry I sprang this on ya, hon. I just asked the man if he wanted to come home to dinner and he said yes. What were you, just out there on the freeway all by yourself?

She is still intent on the story.

LINNEA

Wasn't it hot! I thought I was gonna burn up.

DEL

Yeah, terrible. You learn anything at school today, Jim?

LINNEA

Hush, let him tell it.

DEL

Well...

Jimmy continues, as does Triplette in the other room.

CUT TO:

INT. DEMON'S DEN - NIGHT

We hear Sueleen singing in the b.g.

TROUT

I have a saucy, saucy, redhead who is dynamite, absolutely dynamite.

TRIPLETTE (V.O.)

Saucy --

TROUT

Her name's Sueleen Gay.

TRIPLETTE (V.O.)

Well, listen, if she's half as provocative as her name, we're all home free.

CUT TO:

INT. DEMON'S DEN - NIGHT

Trout moves to Sueleen, telling her that she was dynamite. Her looks have conquered all.

L.A. Joan walks out of the bathroom with a blonde "natural" wig on and taps Bud on the shoulder. He looks at her, doesn't recognize who she is, and steps aside so she can pass. She gives him a look of disbelief, shrugs and walks over to the Tricycle Man who does a magic trick and produces a glass of water.

Trout juices Sueleen for the swell job he got her over the phone.

TROUT

I mean, you knocked 'em out.

SUELEEN

(squeals)

I did?

TROUT

Honey, listen -- you're gonna be a star.

SUELEEN

How do I...?

TROUT

I got you a job while you were singing.

SUELEEN

You did?

Bud gives up waiting and he passes Opal and Tom as he goes out.

TROUT

A friend called, very heavy, and there's a party Monday night. Now the pay isn't much, a low-budget thing. About ten dollars.

SUELEEN

Oh hell, I don't care about the money.

TROUT

That's the attitude. You are. You're gonna be a star.

Tom excuses himself from Opal and goes to the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. REESE HOME - NIGHT

Everyone is seated at the table having supper when the PHONE RINGS. Linnea excuses herself, gets up, and goes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

She picks up the phone as Delbert and Triplette talk about the values of campaigning in the next room.

 LINNEA
Hello?

 TOM (V.O.)
Hi, Linnea?

 LINNEA
Hmm...

 TOM (V.O.)
I'm here.

 LINNEA
Who is this?

 TOM (V.O.)
This is Tom.

 LINNEA
Just a minute, just a minute; I
have something in my mouth.
 (she swallows)
I was eating dinner.

 TOM (V.O.)
You haven't changed a bit, have you?

 LINNEA
Now, who is it...?

 TOM (V.O.)
This is Tom, don't you remember?

 LINNEA
No. I don't believe I do.

 TOM (V.O.)
 (laughing)
We met in the control room at the
recording studio two months ago.

 LINNEA
Oh yes... How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM (V.O.)

Yes, I'm fine. How are you?

LINNEA

I'm just fine. What're you doing in Nashville?

TOM (V.O.)

Recording for a couple of weeks. I'd really like to see you.

LINNEA

Well, why don't you come by the house. The children would like to meet you.

TOM (V.O.)

(slight laugh)

That's not exactly what I had in mind. Look, I find you very attractive and I'd like to see you.

LINNEA

Well, I think it would be fine if we had dinner some night here at the house. You've never met my husband Del, have you?

TOM (V.O.)

I see. You can't talk now. Okay, listen. I'll call you later. I'm going home and I'll call you when I get there.

He hangs up. She continues talking to the DIAL TONE.

LINNEA

Well, I'd like to.. a... well, all right. I'll talk to you later. Thanks for calling.

She hangs up and we PAN WITH HER INTO the dining room as she sits back down. Delbert interrupts John to talk to Linnea.

DEL

Who was that, babe?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINNEA

Oh, down at the recording studio.
Someone, uh.. I left a ... some
music down there.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Barbara-Jean's security guard stands talking with the nurses at the desk about guns and the two or three times he's had to use one, not to kill anyone, of course. Pvt. Kelly gets out of the elevator with a bouquet of flowers he picked from the hospital flower bed. He makes his way down the hall to Barbara-Jean's room.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S ROOM

Pvt. Kelly enters the darkened room which now looks like a funeral parlor. Barbara-Jean looks like Sleeping Beauty. He puts the flowers in her water pitcher, then sits down in the chair beside the bed and writes the following note:

"When I die and go to heaven
I want you to come along
and be an angel with me."

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

It's after midnight and we see the Tricycle Man drive around the hospital's circular drive and stop at Mr. Green's Nash.

Green sits waiting for her on the porch. L.A. Joan is in back of him and swings her legs over the Tricycle Man's head.

L.A. JOAN

See you later, alligator.

She waves good-bye as he leaves and walks to Green who stand and walks to her.

L.A. JOAN

Am I too late?

GREEN

Well, Esther's asleep now. She's looking forward to seeing you, but we'll see her in the morning.

EXT. INTERSECTION ROUTE 10 AND 40 - DAY (DAY TWO)

It is early morning and the Walker van is in the gas station being filled. The P.A. system is on. We see the Tricycle Man move along the highway and stop at an intersection. PANNING AROUND, we see a white, abandoned car parked in a lot. CONTINUING the PAN, we see Star in his red truck, craning out the window as he drives, looking in all directions at once for Albuquerque. As he passes the white car, the form asleep in the back, under a Walker poster, moves and gets up. It is Albuquerque. She looks around for a moment and as Star heads back into town, she gets out of the car and makes her way across the street, intent only on getting to the gas station bathroom. Two cars, in maneuvering to avoid her, collide, and their drivers start their day with a string of obscenities and a fistfight, while Albuquerque, unaware of the chaos she has caused, makes it safely to the other side of the street.

P.A. (V.O.)
If the chairman of the board or the president of your company had been running your business the way Washington has been running our business, you'd be asking a lot of questions. And you would find out what you already know. We have some problems that money alone won't solve. Now I know something about money. Anybody who grew up without it knows a lot about money. I know more about money than some of the rich because I never had any until I was twenty-seven. I know something of what money can do and more important, I know something of what it can't do. Does it make sense to let the petroleum industry boost their prices at will? The little filling-station owner out there in his khakis -- he can't charge a penny more. To tax the salary of people at poverty-level income, they turn around and give back in food stamps twice the amount of taxes...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Kenny walks along a residential street lined with "Room for Rent" signs. The Walker truck passes by with its ongoing dialogue as he looks for an address in the paper. He finds it and turns up the walk. Mr. Green is having a snooze on the front porch swing. Kenny hesitates for a minute and then knocks on one of the porch columns waking him up.

P.A. (V.O.)
If there is any cleaning up to be done, we're going to have to do it. The Lord is not going to do the replacing and the powers that be are certainly not going to replace themselves. The old truth remains -- there is no such thing as a free lunch; if the books are balanced, we're going to have to balance them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENNY

Hello --

GREEN

Oh, yes, sir.

KENNY

You got a room for rent?

GREEN

Oh yeah, I'm Mr. Green. That's me, I'm Mr. Green.

KENNY

I'd like to see it.

GREEN

You'd like to see it?

KENNY

Yeah.

GREEN

What's your name again?

KENNY

Kenny, Kenny Frasier.

GREEN

All right, Kenny, right this way.

He opens the screen door and they go inside.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

It's Esther's house, really; dark wood walls, old-fashioned, sliding wood doors, flowered wallpaper -- everything has a place and is in it. Kenny is shown the front bedroom and comments softly that it looks like his room at home. The picture on the wall even looks like Kenny. Green shows him the toilet down the hall, and tells him that his wife is in the hospital nearby.

After asking him if he is a musician, Mr. Green introduces him to his niece, L.A. Joan, who is dressed in gold satin hot pants, top, and is trying on yet another wig. The HEADSET she has on BLARES OUT a RAUNCHY ROCK TUNE.

GREEN

She's from California.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kenny nods to her. She shakes his hand in rhythm to the SONG and gives him a smile.

KENNY

Thirteen-fifty?

GREEN

That's right and you can have breakfast with me if you want. Of course, you'll have to help me with the dishes.

KENNY

(smiling)

Fine. Let me put this down and I'll pay you.

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Pvt. Kelly is asleep in the chair where we left him last night. When the NURSE comes in to awaken Barbara-Jean, she startles him and he leaves very quickly, saying he must have the wrong room. The Nurse watches him leave as Barbara-Jean stirs.

NURSE

Time to get up, Barbara-Jean.

BARBARA-JEAN

(stretching)

Good morning, Louise.

NURSE

How are you? Did you have a nice rest?

BARBARA-JEAN

Yeah, I was having a dream.

CUT TO:

INT. REESE HOME - DAY

As Delbert stands in the kitchen about to hard-boil himself an egg, Linnea sits with the children in the den teaching them the hand gestures for "Sing, Sing a Song."

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

We see Opal's clothes in a heap on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM's "It Don't Worry me" PLAYS on the TAPE RECORDER. The television set is turned to a Saturday morning children's show and Tom sits sullenly in bed smoking, next to Opal who is still asleep. He nudges her roughly.

TOM

Wake up.

She rolls over, looks at him, and then back over to her tape recorder, which has been running. She says something into it and turns it off.

OPAL

Oh, God. For a moment I thought I was in Israel. I don't know why. Certainly not the decor. I must have been dreaming.

Tom moves his lanky frame to the phone and searches for a number among an array of others. His SONG continues in the b.g. as Opal, in toeless red socks, moves across to her clothes next to a tray of dirty dishes.

OPAL

I spent about a year on the kibbutz... I was very romantic about that sort of socialism at the time.

She gathers her clothes and Tom dials the phone as his recorded voice sings:

TOM (V.O.)

(song)

'Say this train don't give out
rides
Well, it don't worry me.
All the world is taking sides,
But it don't worry me.
Economy's depressed, not me,
My spirit's high as it can be.
And you may say that I ain't free,
But it don't worry me.'

CUT TO:

INT. REESE HOME - DAY

The PHONE RINGS by Delbert in the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL

Hello.

TOM (V.O.)

Hello, can I talk to Linnea please?

LINNEA (V.O.)

Uh, this... Del, I'm on the phone.
This is Linnea.

DEL

Okay.

He does not hang up. He continues to listen and watch the water he's boiling.

TOM (V.O.)

How are you? Listen, I'm sorry I didn't call sooner but I got tied up.

LINNEA (V.O.)

Who is this?

TOM (V.O.)

This is Tom.

LINNEA (V.O.)

Tom who?

TOM (V.O.)

Oh, come on.

LINNEA (V.O.)

Look, I don't know who you are and I don't know why you're callin' me but I want you to stop!

TOM (V.O.)

Oh, come on, honey. You know you want to see me.

LINNEA (V.O.)

I never said any such a thing and I don't want you ever calling here again and I'm not fooling with you! I mean it and don't you ever call here again. Good-bye.

We hear the CLICK ON Linnea's PHONE and Del hangs up on --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM (V.O.)
Linnea... hello?

Del steps back to the stove, picks up an egg, drops it into the water and burns his fingers. The mystery hangs in the air for a moment and then he calls to his wife.

DEL
Who was that, babe?

Linnea still sits with the children at the table in the den.

LINNEA
Just some crazy person been calling here, and the next time he calls I want you to get on the phone and tell him you're gonna get the police on him.

Del looks at his egg and replies as though nothing has happened.

DEL
Okay.

As Linnea and the children go back to singing "A Simple Song."

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Pvt. Kelly stands at the hospital desk writing a postcard to his mother to tell her that Barbara-Jean is recovering. Mr. Green and L.A. Joan get off the elevator with a bunch of homegrown daisies. L.A. Joan looks like something out of Paris Vogue.

As Mr. Green and the nurses exchange amenities, she peruses the desk, sees Kelly, smiles and walks over to him with her sunniest...

L.A. JOAN
Hi.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAVEN HAMILTON ESTATE - DAY

The Tricycle Man MOTORS his way along a gravel road that leads to Haven Hamilton's rambling log estate, situated in one of the more picturesque tree-filled knolls of Nashville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind him we see Opal and Albuquerque, who is speaking into the tape recorder over the ROAR of the BIKE. A party is in progress and Lady Pearl (in pink today) announces their arrival from a side patio.

LADY PEARL

Holy dogshit! Will you look at that! Must be some friends of Buddy's.

Linnea on the terrace, comments to a WOMAN nearby.

LINNEA

Ever since that ol' Easy Rider movie, that's the kind of bike everybody's been driving. Those long, low, laid-back in the front.

WOMAN

They're so dangerous, aren't they?

LINNEA

They are. Over there at the Baptist hospital, there's a whole ward full of the cutest, best-lookin' boys you'd ever want to see, just paralyzed from the waist down.

Opal disembarks from the bike with all of her gear and grandly thanks the motorcycle man, calling him "da-ling." She tells Albuquerque, in yesterday's clothes and newly-torn nylons, to "break a leg," and leaves them all behind as she goes off to trench in with Bud, who steps forward to greet her. She gives him a show-biz kiss.

OPAL

Well, well, well, young Hamilton!

BUDDY

Fine, come on in.

OPAL

Is your dad around? I'd like to have a little chat with him.

BUDDY

Well, he's kinda tied up right now... maybe later.

OPAL

Is your mom around?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUDDY

No, as a matter of fact, my mom's
in Paris right now.

They walk past Albuquerque, Opal not seeing her at all,
as Albuquerque heads for the table where Wade stands
serving food and proceeds to load a paper plate with
baked beans until it collapses. Opal looks at the Cries
and Whispers surroundings.

OPAL

This is Bergman.

BUDDY

I like it here so much. It's
kinda nice, Dad --

OPAL

Pure unadulterated Bergman! It's
so beau-ti-ful. Do you live here?

BUDDY

We do. We been here for quite a
while, I guess.

OPAL

It's beautiful. It's so gorgeous.
Of course, the people are all
wrong for Bergman, aren't they?

They sit on the edge of a stone wishing well.

BUDDY

(not sure of what
she's talking about)

Oh, yeah...

Off around the other end of the house, Lady Pearl and
Haven talk to Triplette.

LADY PEARL

Haven breeds those famous
Tennessee Walkers you've heard
about.

TRIPLETTE

Oh, really?

HAVEN

Oh, Mr. Triplette, he knows all
about Walkers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

John laughs politely.

LADY PEARL

That's not the kind of Walker I
had in mind.

TRIPLETTE

That's very fast.

HAVEN

(laughing politely
back)

Yeah, we have to be.

On the terrace, Linnea is still into hospitals.

LINNEA

Well, she had this most horrible
accident... a... she got a lick on
the head, you know, getting into
one of those tiny little cars, her
daughter's car and this happened
almost a year ago and no one had
any idea that this was gonna
develop into such a horrible
thing.

Lady Pearl continues around the corner.

LADY PEARL

Now, I'm real sorry old Delbert
went and told you that Haven would
appear at the political rally. He
knows better than that. We never
let Haven Hamilton take sides
politically.

Haven interrupts.

HAVEN

Understand, we give contributions
to everybody, and they are not
puny contributions.

LADY PEARL

Only time I ever went hog-wild and
round the bend was for the Kennedy
boys. But they were different.

TRIPLETTE

Oh yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am, they
were.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

For a moment, Triplette's looks take on a number of Kennedy characteristics. A large black limousine drives up as Pearl excuses herself and Haven accepts a glass of milk from one of the maids.

Norman is at the wheel. We hear the conversation between Haven's public relations girl, SUE BARTON, and another of her clients, ELLIOTT GOULD.

SUE

Haven's singing at the Grand Old Opry and this is just a sort of pre-party. I'm sure you've seen Haven Hamilton.

GOULD

No, I never heard of him.

SUE

He's been a country western star.

Norman, running to open the door for them is late, so he interrupts as they step out of the car.

NORMAN

Lemme get that... oh, well listen, I wanted to ask Mr. Gould...

Gould and she wait for his question.

NORMAN

Would it be alright if I asked him...

GOULD

You want to ask me something?

NORMAN

Yeah.

SUE

Well, we'll be riding back with you, Norman. Could we wait until then?

GOULD

Okay. Whatever you want.

NORMAN

I just wanted to know what you were doing here in Nashville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOULD

I'm just coming to a party. What are you doing here in Nashville?

NORMAN

(scratches head
and wonders)

Well, I'm stuck here... ah...
I'm...

SUE

See you in a bit, Norman.

They walk down into the party where someone asks Gould if he's making a film.

GOULD

No, I'm promoting a movie, not making one.

GIRL

Are you a personal friend of...

GOULD

(interrupting)

Oh yeah, we're very good friends.

Albuquerque is seated on the ground near a tree. Wade comes over to her.

WADE

What're you doin' here anyway?

ALBUQUERQUE

Um... I came on a date and now I'm going to the Grand Ole Opry.

He knows she is lying.

WADE

How?

ALBUQUERQUE

How?

WADE

Yeah -- is your date gonna take you?

She looks around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBUQUERQUE

Huh...? Ah... no, he, they left.

Opal still sits on the wishing well talking with Bud,
only now she holds a mike.

BUDDY

No, I'm not a singer. I'm a
businessman. I take care of all
Dad's business.

OPAL

(shocked)

You, a businessman?

BUDDY

Yeah.

OPAL

(laughing)

With that face? You can't be a
businessman.

BUDDY

Oh yeah! All his business,
records, you know, anything that
comes in through the...

OPAL

Do you like it?

BUDDY

(lying)

Oh yeah, it's great. It really
is. You know, Dad's wanted me to
do that all his life.

On the patio, Haven listens to Triplette's calculated
sell.

TRIPLETTE

Haven, listen, I'd be the last guy
in the world to try and change
your mind about something you
don't want to do, but I'd like to
explain a couple of things we're
trying to do in this campaign
before you discount it altogether.

Linnea continues with the details of her aunt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINNEA

And somehow the blood began to drain into behind her eyeball, you know, and the pressure just caused the eye to bulge out.

WOMAN

Ohh...

LINNEA

And it was all red and just looked awful. Everybody thought she was gonna lose her eye. We still don't know how it's gonna come out.

Triplette reinforces his sell.

TRIPLETTE

I don't know how you're gonna feel about this, but Walker thinks you'd make a fine governor in this state. He thinks the time's right. He thinks the people of Nashville love you. He knows they do. Knows how you feel about them. And he wants you to know should the time come and you want to run, he'll be there with his organization to back you all the way.

Haven lets all that settle in for a moment before he answers.

HAVEN

You gonna be at the Opry tonight?

TRIPLETTE

Well, I hadn't thought...

HAVEN

Well, I'm gonna be at the Opry tonight.

TRIPLETTE

Oh, well sure, then I'll...

HAVEN

(smiling)

Yes, I guess you will. And that's when I'll give you my decision.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

Thanks so much for thinking about it.

Sue Barton has been introducing Elliot Gould around, and now sends Delbert over to see if it's all right to meet Haven.

Opal, on her wishing well perch, raises Bud's chin with her finger.

OPAL

You want to sing? Look at me.

BUDDY

Oh, I...

OPAL

Look at me!

BUDDY

I think everybody... Dad wouldn't hear of it. He really wouldn't, he --

OPAL

But you want to be --

Delbert conveys his message to Haven.

TRIPLETTE

I know him; it's Elliot Gould. He's a very well-known actor.

DEL

Who --

HAVEN

Oh yes, Elliot, with the curly hair.

DEL

Yeah...

TRIPLETTE

Yeah. He was married to, uh... Barbra Streisand and...

DEL

You're kidding me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

.. that girl that sang 'People.'

DEL

(embarrassed)

I just shook the man's hand like
he was somebody on the street.

HAVEN

Delbert, now look, you go over
there and bring him on over.

DEL

Yes, sir, I'll...

TRIPLETTE

(laughing)

We all walk down the street,
Delbert.

Delbert walks to Gould and takes him warmly by the hand.

DEL

Listen, you all come over here.
Haven wants to meet you right
away. I'm so sorry... I didn't
realize who you were when we were
first introduced.

GOULD

(getting him
off hook)

Oh yeah? Well, I ain't changed.

Opal continues her investigation of Bud.

OPAL

You wrote a song?

BUDDY

Yeah, I wrote one song in my life.

OPAL

(gently)

I'd like to hear it.

BUDDY

You sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She gives him her softest eyes and fullest attention.

OPAL

Um-hummm.

BUDDY

Okay.

He begins to sing, "The Heart of a Gentle Woman." He sings softly so no one will hear. It's a sweet, sincere song, and Opal soaks it in like a sponge. She turns and faces the party for the first time in a while. Somewhere around the most tender phrase, she sees Gould go around the corner to meet Haven.

OPAL

(squealing)

Elliot Gould! Why... it's Elliot Gould!

She bends over and picks up her equipment with nary a look back to Bud, who's sorry he ever began in the first place. Elliot approaches with Sue.

LADY PEARL

Well, let me meet the movie star!

SUE

Lady Pearl...

LADY PEARL

(gives his hand
a handshake)

Howdy.

GOULD

Lady Pearl.

SUE

Haven Hamilton.

HAVEN

(as they shake hands)

Well, how do you do, Mr. Gould?
It's so nice to meet you, and
welcome to Nashville and my lovely
home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From around the corner comes Opal with her microphone extended and shouting --

OPAL
Elliot! Elliot!
Elliot Gould!!
Hello.

GOULD
Oh, hello.
Oh, just a...

HAVEN
What brings you here?

Gould stands caught between the two currents.

OPAL
How are you? You look
marvelous! It's Opal from
the BBC. Don't you
remember... the Cannes Film
Festival? Well, no, of
course you wouldn't
remember. How silly of me.

HAVEN
Sue, another unexpected
guest. You can't do that
to me twice in one day. Is
she connected to Mr. Gould?

SUE
No, she's not.

GOULD
I'm not giving any interviews.

OPAL
What are you doing in
Nashville? What am I doing
in Nashville is more like
it.

HAVEN
Well, in that case, we're
not and I'm not going to
permit her to stay here.

SUE
(to Opal)
Excuse me.

OPAL
I'm doing a documentary.

SUE
Excuse me, but Mr. Gould does not
give interviews.

OPAL
My machine's not on! Mr.
Gould happens to be a
friend of mine, Mr.
Hamilton! My machine is
not on.

HAVEN
(interrupting roughly)
I don't know who you are or
what you're doing here, but
I will not tolerate
rudeness in the presence of
a star -- two stars.
Delbert, would you take
her? Thank you so very
much. So nice, that's
right, good-bye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Delbert puts his arm around Opal and cheerfully leads her off in another direction.

DEL

Listen, it's gonna be all right.

Opal looks at him as if he were a bug.

OPAL

Who are you?

We HOLD ON Haven and Gould for just a moment as Haven smiles.

HAVEN

Well, that's the price of success,
I guess.

And Gould smiles back.

GOULD

It certainly is.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Tricycle Man drives through a patch of trees and onto the highway past a red, white and blue sign that reads "Connie White, Haven Hamilton, Tommy Brown -- Home of Country Music -- Opryland USA." In the b.g. we hear the THEME MUSIC for WSM RADIO'S GRAND OLD OPRY.

OPRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Go get a Goo-Goo, friends, and
settle back for thirty of the
goodest minutes in radio...

INT. GRAND OLD OPRY - DAY

We see an audience, packed in floor-to-ceiling, before a red velvet curtain which raises, revealing the musicians playing onstage and the ANNOUNCER who stands at the podium.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPRY ANNOUNCER

... The Grand Old Opry, and it's
sent your way by the makers of
Good-Goo, the goodest candy bar in
the world. And King Leo pure
stick candy, the candy that roars
with flavor.

We see Tommy Brown, his wife, family and friends standing
backstage.

OPRY ANNOUNCER

Now a big welcome if you please
for the Goo-Goo man of the
hour -- Tommy Brown!

The Announcer signals the audience to applaud as the
MUSIC COMES UP and Tommy walks out onstage. His family
go and sit in the historic church pews, from Ryman
Auditorium, also...

GUARD

You need a pass to get backstage.

CUT TO:

INT. SUELEEN GAY'S ROOM - DAY

A whole Jesus, Mary, and Joseph creche sits next to a
hairdryer, an array of dime store makeup, a live
goldfish, a stuffed frog, card pictures of some more
saints, and one or two pictures of Sueleen lean on the
playing radio atop her dresser.

In the mirror we see Sueleen in blue rollers and a pole-
green kimono shaking her bosoms as she sings through the
commercial.

SUELEEN

(singing)

'Even if we stay together
Our whole lifetime through,
I'll never get enough
I'll never get enough
I'll never get enough,
Of you.'

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

A Goo-Goo's the perfect
answer when you need a
quick pickup --- Go get a
Goo-Goo, the South's
favorite piece of candy for
sixty-two years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She does several bumps, none of which please her, so she starts in again.

CUT TO:

INT. OPRY STAGE - DAY

OPRY ANNOUNCER
Ready to do the song?

HAROLD
Right.

OPRY ANNOUNCER
Okay.

And they sing.

OPRY ANNOUNCER
Go get a Goo-Goo -- it's good.

The Goo-Goo sign lights up and the audience applauds. Behind the Announcer's curtain, Tommy passes Haven and his entourage in the wings and smiles, saying:

BROWN
I don't know about killin' them,
Haven, they're already dead.

HAVEN
(smiling back)
Yeah. He's lucky to be alive.

OPRY ANNOUNCER
Mr. Nashville himself... Haven --
Hamilton!

The audience bursts into applause as Haven walks out, both arms raised to the mass of faces who feel he is their own somehow. He thanks them and proceeds.

HAVEN
And I'm sure you meant to share
that welcome with Bud Hamilton, my
son, who's here. Stand up, Bud.

Everyone applauds as Bud rises and nods from the packed pew including Pearl, Sue Barton, Delbert and Triplette, not to mention two ogling girls who sit behind Bud.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAVEN

Ain't he somethin' else? Yes,
indeed. God bless you. I thank
you for that warm welcome. I'd
like to do a brand-new song...

In the pew, Triplette whispers to Del.

TRIPLETTE

How tall is that guy?

DEL

Who?

TRIPLETTE

(laughing)

Haven.

DEL

(also laughing)

Don't ever ask him that.

And as Opal creeps around taking pictures, Haven sings,
"For the Sake of the Children," and the audience
applauds, as led by the Announcer.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Albuquerque still stands holding her ground as the Guard
continues to hold her. She turns and spots CONNIE WHITE,
an ash-blond, kitten-face in a red tulle dress. Her
torso looks like a heart-shaped box of chocolates.
Connie's rise to stardom has been apart from the
camaraderie of discovery. She wrote some songs and
pedaled them any way she could until finally one of them
emerged as a hit. In the performing community, she is a
bit of a loner, devoting her time to her mother and her
work. She gives little time to things that interfere
with work.

We continue to hear Haven sing in the b.g.

SPLIT SCREEN

ALBUQUERQUE

Oh! There's Connie White!

Connie smiles one of her fixed smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

Hi ya, honey.

Albuquerque, still struggling with the Guard, tries to become Connie's best friend.

ALBUQUERQUE

Hi ya. Listen, you know what?
You remember you signed my album?

Connie presses on.

CONNIE

Well, thank you for comin', dear.
Thank you for comin' to the show.

She crosses behind the Guard and gives him her best "get rid of her" smile.

ALBUQUERQUE

I have a song I wrote and I'll
give you a call tomorrow, okay?

CONNIE

(dismissing her)
That's fine, dear.

ALBUQUERQUE

You know 'cause we'll just chat,
you know --

Connie starts to move toward the stage.

CONNIE

Do you remember what I wrote on
the program? Do you remember?

ALBUQUERQUE

Yeah. You said, 'You were my
friend -- Connie White.'

We hear applause in the b.g. Connie pats her hand and
sails off followed by her manager and hairdresser.

CONNIE

That's right, 'Your friend --
Connie White.'

The Guard tightens his grip as Albuquerque continues:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBUQUERQUE

I like your dress. I'm gonna get one, too. But you know I like the gold one with the... you know, the belt... you look like you have no waist...

INT. STAGE

As Haven announces his next song, Star gives the audience another go 'round, passing the Tricycle Man first, then Kenny. As he does, Triplette checks out the back of Haven's shirt.

TRIPLETTE

He's got the entire galaxy on the back of his shirt.

Del chuckles. It's true; the sun, moon and stars glitter across Haven's frame as he sings, "Keep a-goin'."

Star goes down the center aisle searching for his wife and we see L.A. Joan and Pvt. Kelly for a moment. In the wings, Connie petulantly primps, and grabs off quick smiles for photographers.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Barnett sits fiddling with the radio and finishing his second box of Kentucky fried chicken, while Barbara-Jean sits on the bed painting her nails with clear polish. There are still more flowers in the room and they seem to take the air away. We hear HAVEN'S VOICE singing on the RADIO.

INT. GRAND OLD OPRY - STAGE - DAY

Haven finishes his last "Keep a-goin'" with a "Yes, sir," that gets swallowed up in the applause.

HAVEN

Thank you, and God love you.
'Course we wanta send very special
greetings to our own Barbara-Jean.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAVEN (CONT'D)

I know most of you read she collapsed out at the airport. She's in Vanderbilt Hospital recuperating and Barnett tells me she cried real tears because she couldn't be here tonight. So, I hope you'll send some letters and best wishes and prayers to her, Vanderbilt Hospital -- Nashville, Tennessee 27322, and tell her Haven told you to write. Now as a special stand-in for her we have her dear friend Connie White, who got out of the dentist's chair this morning where she was having some root canal work done and came all the way out here to sing for you. Miss Connie White, friend of yours and mine, and a wonderful singer in her own way -- Connie White.

As Connie sweeps out in a flurry of red tulle, Pvt. Kelly gets up, excuses himself from a startled L.A. Joan, and leaves. No one can replace Barbara-Jean for him. Connie's on-stage entourage exchanges places with Haven's, and when Triplette gets to the wings he whispers to Del again.

TRIPLETTE

I haven't seen a dress like that since the junior prom.

DEL

(laughing)

Yeah...

TRIPLETTE

My date fell out of the car.

Connie is downstage talking to a cluster of children at the footlights. Several of them say their names and ages into the microphone. Connie signs autographs and gives a word of advice before she starts singing.

CONNIE

I want you to study real hard because just remember: anyone of you can grow up to be the president.

Someone in the audience applauds; we see Kenny for just a moment and then her song, "Memphis," begins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When it's over she bows and segues into the next tune, "I Know You Love Me."

CUT TO:

INT. BARBARA-JEAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Barnett is now into the apple turnover, and Barbara-Jean gives her nails a second coat as CONNIE'S VOICE fills the room with her song. Finally, Barbara-Jean has had enough.

BARBARA-JEAN

Turn that off.

BARNETT

Okay, one more minute, darlin'.

BARBARA-JEAN

Right now!

BARNETT

Honey, she'll be through with the song in a moment, right?

BARBARA-JEAN

I want you to turn it off right now! It bothers me.

BARNETT

It bothers me too, but I got to listen to her, don't I?

BARBARA-JEAN

Why?

BARNETT

Come on now. Gotta go over to The King of the Road and thank her personal-like for you, don't I?

BARBARA-JEAN

Thank her?

BARNETT

I gotta know what song she sang, don't I?

BARBARA-JEAN

You can ask anybody. You can call. You can send flowers. You can send a message --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Oh, come on, don't get upset.

BARBARA-JEAN

You're makin' me ruin my nail
polish job.

BARNETT

Do I tell you how to sing,
darlin'? Hmm? Have I ever told
you how to sing a song?

BARBARA-JEAN

That ain't the point. Goin' over
there...

BARNETT

Don't tell me how to promote.

BARBARA-JEAN

I know why you're goin' over
there.

BARNETT

Don't tell me how to run your
life, I've been doin' pretty good
with it.

BARBARA-JEAN

You do, uh; well...

BARNETT

All right, let's just calm down;
we're both getting on each other's
nerves.

BARBARA-JEAN

You're goin' over to King of the
Road and I know why. So you can
hobnob with everybody.

BARNETT

So I can do what?

BARBARA-JEAN

And I ain't got no friends; I got
to sit here in this...

BARNETT

So I can hobnob?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA-JEAN

... goddam hospital and they're
all gonna talk about...

BARNETT

I don't even like the word hobnob;
I ain't doing no hobnobbin'.

BARBARA-JEAN

... how I'm a nut!

BARNETT

(turning OFF RADIO)

Ho, ho, ho, now...

BARBARA-JEAN

And how I got a... I had...
Barbara-Jean had another collapse.

She changes course midsentence.

BARBARA-JEAN

You know what? While you're at
it, why don't you take some
flowers? You can take her some of
my flowers.

She gets up off the bed, picks up a yellow mum wreath
with black ribbons and plops it down near Barnett.

BARBARA-JEAN

Why don't you take her this nice
black one? That'll cheer her up.

BARNETT

Are you through?

BARBARA-JEAN

No, I ain't through!

She picks up a bouquet of carnations and plops them down
on the table next to Barnett.

BARNETT

Are you through?!

BARBARA-JEAN

And these -- why don't you try these?

She comes twice more with flowers and bangs them down on
the table next to Barnett. The last bouquet she throws
on the floor, breaking the container, spilling water and
flowers everywhere. Barnett, having lost patience,
stands shouting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Are you through, I said.

Barbara-Jean drops to the floor at the foot of the bed and begins to tremble, holding her head in her hands. Barnett kneels beside her.

BARNETT

Are you goin' nutsy on me; is that what you're doing? 'Cause I won't stand for that, Barbara-Jean, huh? You having one of them nervous breakdowns? Huh?

She raises her head and shakes her head no.

BARBARA-JEAN

No, no...

BARNETT

Well, you coulda fooled me, 'cause it looks like you're ready for it. Now you just settle down and shape up, you understand? The only reason I'm going over there is 'cause I love you. I don't love to go over there and hobnob with them phonies.

Barnett dissolves for just a moment, making one wonder who is really in control.

BARNETT

Why do you make me raise my voice to you? Huh? Why do you put us through this?

She begins to sob.

BARNETT

You all right?

Unwilling to let her get too far into crying, he takes her hand as he cajoles.

BARNETT

Come on, honey, let's have a little smile for Barnett.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA-JEAN

(crying)

I'm tired of this place --

He starts to rise, bringing her up with him.

BARNETT

Come on -- come on, now, get up.
You help me and I'll help you, all
right? Come on, now... come on,
now.

She is up, drops his hand, and walks zombie-like to her bed.

BARNETT

Now, where's Barnett going? Where
am I going? Hmm?

BARBARA-JEAN

(barely whispers)

King of the Road...

BARNETT

And why am I goin' there?

BARBARA-JEAN

(barely whispers)

To see Connie...

BARNETT

And why am I doing that?

BARBARA-JEAN

Thank her for singin' for me...

BARNETT

Now who am I doin' that for?

BARBARA-JEAN

(like a puppet)

Doin' it for me...

BARNETT

That's right.

She sits on the bed and can't stop crying but tries to.
Barnett tries to believe he's doing the right thing and
they are caught in real time acting out a fantasy.

BARNETT

(smiles cheerfully)

Now, I'm walking out now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA-JEAN

Um huh.

BARNETT

(as to a child)

Now, what do you say when I walk out? You say, 'bye-bye.'

Barbara-Jean mimics him, barely able to get it out.

BARBARA-JEAN

(softly)

'Bye.

BARNETT

Bye-bye.

BARBARA-JEAN

'Bye.

The door closes and he is gone. Barbara-Jean holds on to herself for a minute, as if to not lose any more than she already has. Then, fearful that he might really leave her, she calls out.

BARBARA-JEAN

Barnett?... Barnett!

But it's too late, as he's off to execute his errand of good will.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Inside the King of the Road, we see at a long row of small tables Haven, Connie, their respective entourages, Opal talking to Lady Pearl, Delbert and Triplette.

Vassar Clemens is playing his fiddle onstage, and at another table in the corner Bill sits with NORMAN, waiting for Mary.

BILL

I'm really upset.

NORMAN

What're you upset about?

BILL

She's really late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORMAN

(looks at his
watch)

Hell, she's not that late.

BILL

No, she's late.

In the doorway we see SUE BARTON, the P.R. girl, with a young, tousled-looking woman. Sue leads her to Haven, who has just said "Thank you so much" for the nine-hundredth time this evening. Sue leans down, whispers in his ear and he stands.

SUE

I'd like you to meet Julie
Christie.

HAVEN

Well, it's so nice to see you.
Welcome to Nashville.

Julie smiles, lighting everything up around her except Opal and Lady Pearl, engaged in a conversation so intense that Opal doesn't even see Julie.

JULIE

Hello.

Everyone nearby stands up
except Connie.

DEL

(aside to Triplette)

Is she the one that got off
the train in the snow?

HAVEN

Won't you sit down?

JULIE

Oh, no thanks.

SUE

This is Connie White.

CONNIE

Hi there.

OPAL

Oh, a Hal Phillip Walker
button -- no, it's
Kennedy. Isn't it rather
ancient? I thought
everyone in the South
didn't go for Kennedy.

LADY PEARL

John Fitzgerald Kennedy;
he took the whole South
except for Tennessee,
Kentucky, and there's a
reason he didn't take
Tennessee. But he got
481, 450 votes and the
asshole got 556, 577
votes.

Connie looks at Julie,
unable to find a frame of
reference for the way she
looks.

PANNING PAST Opal's
interest, we see Bill
and Norman again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIE

Hello.

CONNIE

(based on Julie's
accent)

You're English, aren't
you?

JULIE

Unhuh.

HAVEN

Look at her... isn't she
lovely. This is such a
coincidence.

DEL

(shaking her hand)
I'm Del Reese.

HAVEN

I was talkin' about the
Christie Minstrels just
this morning and now we
have Julie Christie
here...

TRIPLETTE

Hi. We met at Peter
Finch's.

JULIE

Oh, yeah?

HAVEN

Won't you sit down?

SUE

No, Julie has a friend
who's playing at the
Exit Inn. We just stopped
in to say hello.

HAVEN

Well, I hope your stay
here is very nice and I
hope you'll remember
what film facilities
we have here in
Nashville.

JULIE

Oh, yes. Sure. Good-bye.

BILL

I can just tell. There's
something in the way she
looks at me. It's that
feeling you get that you
know something 'else's'
going on.

NORMAN

No...

Lady Pearl picks up again.

LADY PEARL

Well, now the problem we
got here is anti-
Catholicism. These
dumbheads around here,
they're all Baptists and
whatever, I dunno. Even
to teach 'em to make
change over the bar ya
gotta crack their skulls.
Let alone teach 'em to
vote for Kennedy, because
he happens to be the
better man. Then, I don't
remember the next few days
were... I just remember
that T.V. set on an'
seeing it all. Seeing
that fat-bellied sheriff
sayin', 'Ruby, you
sonofabitch.' And Oswald
and her in her little pink
suit.

Lady Pearl begins to cry
and Opal looks around
uncomfortably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everyone says good-bye as they leave, and resume their seats.

HAVEN

Well, isn't that an honor. What a surprise! Julie Christie.

CONNIE

Who's she?

HAVEN

You know, Julie Christie, she's a famous star. She got one of those Academy Awards.

CONNIE

(shocked)

No!

HAVEN

Yes, I'm not kidding. She got it for one of those pictures. I don't know which one, she's done so many.

CONNIE

(laughing)

Isn't he awful? Haven's got the worst sense of humor.

HAVEN

No, she's lovely, just a beautiful girl.

CONNIE

Come on, Haven, she can't even comb her hair.

Barnett comes through the door carrying a single orchid corsage wrapped in cellophane, and makes his way to Haven's table where someone says, "Look who's here." There is no chair and no one offers to get him one, so he stands uncomfortably behind Connie as Vassar finishes playing and the applause begins.

CONNIE

(dimly)

Hi, Barnett.

BARNETT

(politely)

How are you, Connie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He extends the flower, which she ignores.

BARNETT

It's just a little something that
Barbara-Jean told me to pick up
for you.

CONNIE

Oh, Barnett, you shouldn't have
done that.

BARNETT

I know I shouldn't have,
but she told me; I told her
I shouldn't have.

He laughs, trying to make a
joke of the whole thing.

CONNIE'S MANAGER

Did you get the flowers
we sent to you?

VASSAR

Thank you, thank you very
much. And as most of you
might've already noticed,
we have a celebrity in the
house with us tonight. And
if we can put our hands
together, we might be able
to get a song.

There is applause and
cheers. Haven starts
to rise.

VASSAR

Miss Connie White!

Haven changes gears quickly and turns to Connie, who
reacts to the unexpected announcement with surprise and
then poise. As she leaves, Barnett and his corsage sit
down in her chair. Connie makes her way to the stage and
begins to sing "Rolling Stone." Lady Pearl tearfully
begins again with Opal.

DEL

That was a nice gesture.

BARNETT

Hmm?

DEL

A nice gesture.

BARNETT

What was a nice gesture?

DEL

Bringing that.

LADY PEARL

And then comes Bobby.
Well, I worked for him... I
worked here...

Opal interrupts partly
because she doesn't want her
to cry again and partly
because she has her own
feelings about Bobby.

OPAL

A... don't you think
that... what about Cuba?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Barnett looks around for a moment.

Lady Pearl hasn't heard. She continues with the recreation as the song continues in the b.g.

BARNETT

But it don't seem to be appreciated, do it?

LADY PEARL

I worked all over the country. I worked in California, out in Stockton where Bobby came. He came here and spoke and went down to Memphis, and when he went out to Stockton, California, he spoke off the Santa Fe train at the old Santa Fe depot.

Opal looks around for a way out, but she can't find one.

LADY PEARL

(tearfully)

Oh! He was a beautiful man. He... was not much like, uh, John, you know; he was more -- puny-like. But all the time I was workin' for him, I was so scared, inside, y'know? So scared.

At the other end of the table, Barnett sits in defensive verbal combat with a member of Connie's coterie. The song continues and Triplette leans into Haven.

TRIPLETTE

Haven, you think we can get Connie out to the rally, too?

Haven smiles and leans back.

HAVEN

Connie White and Barbara-Jean never appear on the same stage together. Connie might replace Barbara-Jean but that's it.

Then he smiles and adds:

HAVEN

And as for Haven Hamilton, well -- I'll appear wherever Barbara-Jean appears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He leans back and takes a drink of milk as Triplette nods to himself and says resignedly.

TRIPLETTE

Okay.

Across the table, Barnett storms on.

BARNETT

I got a good mind to take you outside. With my wife in the hospital, you puttin' that shit on me?

Connie's Manager, who perhaps provoked the outburst, wraps it up.

CONNIE'S MANAGER

Calm down, Barnett. Calm down and enjoy the show.

Right or wrong who knows, but for Triplette this is just another indication that his job will not be easy. Somewhere behind Triplette, Bill continues to wait for Mary as Connie continues to sing "Rolling Stone."

BILL

I... I think she's... uh having an affair here.

Norman is a little bleary with tequila, but definite:

NORMAN

Oh God, are you off. You're way off.

BILL

No.

NORMAN

You are way, way off. Are you kidding?

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Starting with the turning spools, we hear Tom's voice singing, "I'm Easy," on the tape; PAN DOWN TO a clump of clothes on the floor, then ACROSS TO the bed where two pairs of feet stick out at the bottom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONTINUING the PAN, we see Mary tucked in Tom's arm. He is asleep, she is not, and she quietly tells him what she could never tell him if he were awake.

MARY
I love you...

MARY
I love you...

MARY
I love you...

As the song continues, she looks up at him, wishing the lyrics were true.

CUT TO:

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY (SUNDAY)

Christ on a stained glass window looks down on us and the singing choir in the balcony, which includes Sueleen Gay. Spread out through the rest of the singing congregation are Star, Lady Pearl, and Wade.

CUT TO:

INT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

Haven stands in the middle of his church choir.

Off to the side we see a woman conducting the hymn in sign language for the deaf members of the congregation, including Reese's children. Delbert stands beside his children and we HOLD ON Jimmy's sunny face for a moment before we --

CUT TO:

INT. BLACK BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

A black minister and young girl stand knee-deep in the baptismal font. He performs the words to the ritual, submerges her completely in the water, stands her back on her feet, and says "Amen." The all-black choir, including Linnea break into song. Tommy Brown and his wife sing in the congregation.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - DAY

Barbara-Jean is seated in a wheelchair singing "In the Garden" to a small congregation of hospital inmates. PULLING BACK, we see Barnett sitting in the first pew, and further back Mr. Green sits next to Pvt. Kelly. At one point Green turns and whispers to the soldier.

MR. GREEN

You know, my wife, Esther, is on the same floor with Barbara-Jean.

Pvt. Kelly smiles and nods politely, caught completely up in Barbara-Jean.

MR. GREEN

Oh, a... Esther and I had a son in the service, too.

KELLY

Yes, sir.

MR. GREEN

Well, not in the Army; he was in the Navy.

Pvt. Kelly nods again.

MR. GREEN

And... we lost him in the Pacific. We don't know how.

KELLY

I'm sorry to hear that, sir.

MR. GREEN

(not hearing)
World War Two, that's right.

Kelly nods to him reassuringly, as Barbara-Jean finishes the hymn.

KELLY

Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

With Sunday CHURCH BELLS CHIMING behind her, Opal speaks oratorically into her machine. She walks through a graveyard of wrecked cars in multicolored, four-story-high stacks. She is insulated from the nearby freeway, the supply source for the wreckage on display.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPAL

I'm wandering in a graveyard; the dead here have no crosses, nor tombstones, nor wreathes to sing of their past glory. But lie -- in rotting -- decaying, rusty heaps. Their innards ripped out by greedy, vulturous hands. Their vast, vacant skeletons sadly sighing to the sky. The rust on their bodies is the color of dried blood. Dried blood... I'm reminded of -- of an elephant's secret burial ground. Yes. Le val de mystere. C'est l'estompe de gloire.

Kenny moves out of the wreckage, gathering parts for his broken car. He watches Opal privately for a moment.

OPAL

These cars are trying to communicate. O, cars, are you trying to tell me something?

KENNY

What?

OPAL

Are you trying to convey to me some secret --

KENNY

What?

Opal discovers she is not alone and walks over to Kenny.

OPAL

Oh! Excuse me. I thought I was completely alone here! How embarrassing.

Kenny picks up the pieces he's chosen and, with his violin case in hand, he starts to walk down the path away from the car graveyard, telling her you can take the whole place for fifty cents. Opal follows quickly. Seeing the violin case, she says:

OPAL

Oh! You're a classical musician!

EXT. STOCKCAR RACEWAY - DAY

The HIGH-PITCHED WHINE of a CAR REVVED UP to full throttle connects with its image as it rounds the corner and comes down the grandstand stretch. In the infield, a talent show is in progress with a contestant singing "It Don't Worry Me." We can't hear, though, because the race is in progress.

Also in the infield, we see cars being unloaded that bear the names of Haven Hamilton and Tommy Brown, who own them.

The singer finishes, and next up to try for the \$20 first prize is Albuquerque, still wearing her small skirt and running hose. She makes her way to the microphone with Frog.

In the stands Haven prepares to give Tommy a large piece of watermelon from his picnic lunch. Lady Pearl intervenes, however, handing Tommy the grapes and Haven a look to kill.

Meanwhile, Albuquerque has begun her song "with a gestures," but she can't be heard. Between the CAR NOISE and the ANNOUNCER, it seems hopeless. We last see her, hands on hips, watching a gray car and Car #48 battle it out for first place.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL AND MARY'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

In his orange bathrobe, Bill sits on his dirty dish-and-newspaper-covered bed, absently working out a chord on the guitar.

Mary is in the other bed, back to him and buried under the covers. All that is visible is some dark hair. THROUGH the window we see the Nashville skyline. Bill's anxiety gets the better of him and he begins to end the silence.

BILL

Do you want to talk about
yesterday?

There is no answer.

BILL

Goddam it!

He has a lighted cigarette stuck in his guitar, which he uses to pop a balloon tied on her headboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Get up, goddamn it!

Mary, in T-shirt and bobby socks, gets up and thrashes out of bed, walks across his, stepping in the tray of dirty dishes, which crash into Bill.

MARY

Fucker!

She walks through the room and enters the bathroom, slamming the door behind her. Bill follows, banging on the door.

BILL

Do you want to talk about yesterday.

(off no response)

Shit! Come outa there.

She BANGS from inside.

MARY (O.S.)

(yelling)

Leave me alone!

BILL

Come outa there!

He hits the door again.

BILL

Look, I know what's going... Come on!

She opens the door and comes out, crossing to a chest of drawers. She pulls them out and dumps the contents into the already debris-decorated space: old food, toys, recorders, records, souvenirs.. behind her, the TV set that is still ON from last night. She sits on the floor and picks through the clothes.

BILL

Oh that's terrific, great, that's just terrific. She pushes the turtle stool out of the way.

BILL

Oh, thanks. My turtle, thanks a lot. Just relax, would ya? Look, I know what's going on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is a KNOCK at the door.

BILL

Oh great! House detective.

He goes to the door and opens it on Triplette in pale blue Brooks Brothers.

TRIPLETTE

Bill, hi. I'm John Triplette. Am I early? I called you this morning.

As Bill lets him in, Mary gets up, walks into the bedroom, and shuts the door.

BILL

Oh, yeah. The guy from TV. Come on in.

TRIPLETTE

Thank you.

Bill starts trying to clear a path.

BILL

Just... uh... cleaning up here.

TRIPLETTE

(laughing)
Sunday morning blues.

BILL

Right. Uh, hold this for a second.

Bill hands him the turtle while he clears a spot on the purple couch.

TRIPLETTE

(amiably)

Sure.

BILL

Just sit -- over here.

Triplette sits, packed next to the open guitar case and more, partially-consumed food and drink. He picks up an album.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

This is your new album?

BILL

Our only album.

TRIPLETTE

It's a very good one, though.
I've heard it.

BILL

Oh, thank you.

TRIPLETTE

Terrific.

The fight lingers in the air.

BILL

Yeah.

He tosses some things from the chair to the floor.

BILL

I'm really sorry about the mess.
We had a little party last night.

TRIPLETTE

Oh, that's all right. You oughta
see my room.

And without further amenities:

TRIPLETTE

I wanted to tell you a couple of
things about what we're trying to
do... this show.

BILL

Can I get you a drink?

TRIPLETTE

No, no, fine.

BILL

I could call downstairs.

TRIPLETTE

No, listen, I don't want to take
up much of your time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE (CONT'D)
(not really wanting
to take up much
of his)

I just want to tell you a little
bit about what we're trying to do.
I know you're astute, politically,
and I'm certainly not here to sell
you a bill of goods.

BILL
Don't care... don't care about
politics.

TRIPLETTE
No politics.

BILL
No.

TRIPLETTE
Okay, great. Well, I've got a
problem that I think could work to
your advantage. As you know, this
uh... redneck music is very
popular right now and, uh, I've
got an awful lot of those local
yokels on the bill, y'know,
singing...

BILL
Your basic country-folk...

TRIPLETTE
Crapola, right.

BILL
Right.

TRIPLETTE
I think -- what I'm gong for is a
broader appeal, you know --

BILL
Which is where we would fit in.

TRIPLETTE
More than just this, this Southern
thing. And, uh, I think that, you
could really really hit -- A group
like yours could walk off with the
evening, y'know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Yeah. Probably be the only rock group on the uh... bill?

TRIPLETTE

Absolutely.

BILL

Sounds good, sounds inviting.

TRIPLETTE

Yeah. And I think you do get a lot of big audience from these country guys.

BILL

Is this just network or is it, uh --

TRIPLETTE

No, it's better, it's really better than network. It's going to be syndicated. It'll show all over for almost a year and a half.

Mary comes out of the bedroom, combed and dressed in a dark blue caftan. Suddenly, the colors in the room spring together as if someone had planned it. The men stand as she enters and smiles sweetly.

MARY

Here are your glasses, sweetheart.

BILL

Oh, thanks. This is John Triplette. My wife, Mary.

She and Triplette shake hands.

BILL

Why don't you sit down, dear?

She sits gracefully in his chair and he stands behind.

BILL

He's the fella from that television thing that they're doing for Hal Phillip Walker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY
(lights cigarette)

Mmmm.

BILL
He's offered us a spot.
(to Triplette)
You're doing some great promotion
for that guy.

Triplette smiles, part from the compliment, part because
of Mary's beauty.

BILL
Anyway, we got a great spot on
this gala and we're gonna walk
away with the show, John says.

She picks up a jar of face cream and begins to apply it
thickly. Triplette watches as her unencumbered beauty
disappears under a few swift strokes of cold cream.

MARY
We can't vote for him. We're
registered Democrats. Besides,
he's a little crazy, isn't he?

TRIPLETTE
(laughing)
Well... a... they're all a little
crazy, Mary. That's the name of
the game. I think the thing you
should consider is your future. I
think it would give you...

MARY
(interrupting)
But, you see, it really does make
a difference because we are
registered Democrats.

TRIPLETTE
(laughing)
Well, I'm a registered Democrat.

Mary, her face now completely cream-covered, puffs on her
cigarette.

BILL
The only reason we're registered
Democrats is because your father's
a registered Democrat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then Mary looks up at him and says finally:

MARY

Well, Tom's a registered Democrat
and he wouldn't do it.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Tom sits on the bed, working out some chords. His mirror is newly-inscribed with "I love you," written in lipstick. The shades are pulled back and reveal smiling Norman as he knocks at the door. Tom tells him to come in and he sits down on the foot of the bed, discovering a pair of girl's underpants. As he does, he stuffs them under the covers.

NORMAN

Hi, Tom.

TOM

Hi, Norman, how you doing?

NORMAN

Oh good... Sure glad you called.
Is there anything I can --

TOM

You don't have any speckled birds,
do you?

NORMAN

What?

TOM

L.A. turnarounds, uppers?

NORMAN

No, no -- but I can get you some
grass. I know where --

TOM

No thanks, I don't want any grass.

NORMAN

Okay. Uh... can I ask you a
question?

TOM

Hmm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORMAN

Is there something... Are you
angry at Bill?

TOM

No.

NORMAN

Oh... 'Cause I... I, you know, I,
uh, Bill and Mary... Bill, I
mean... seems to be...

(sighs)

I'm just confused.

Tom hands him the guitar as he rises and goes to the
phone.

TOM

Here. Write yourself a hit.

Norman picks up the instrument and runs through a series
of simple chords, making them seem more difficult than
they are, as Tom tries to call a girl named Cherry on the
telephone.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Walker truck drives, with its P.A. going, to the
headquarters garage (known as the Walker-Talker-Sleeper)
and goes inside. As the door slides closed, Kenny and
his violin case, with his self-portrait on the lid, walk
by, stop, and look up at the source of the sound.

P.A. (V.O.)

Does it make sense that the
churches should remain untaxed on
their vast holdings of land and
corporate investments? Does it
make sense that a multimillion-
dollar income should go untaxed
year after year? No, all will not
be easy, but we will bask in the
satisfaction of having done what
we should have done -- and if we
don't, we may run out of
tomorrows.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS YARD - DAY (MONDAY, FOURTH DAY)

LOOKING DOWN, we see row after row after row of parked yellow school busses, waiting for summer to be over. Opal walks down one of the rows, expounding again.

OPAL

The buses? The buses are empty and look menacing, threatening as so many yellow dragons. Watching me with their hollow, vacant eyes, I wonder how many little black children and little white children have yellow nightmares, their own special brand of fear for the yellow peril. No... one can't say that -- damn it. I've got to be more positive. No, more negative.

She turns a corner, and the Tricycle Man stands, shaving at one of the bus's mirrors. His laundry is strung out on a line between two of the buses. He watches her go by, but she's too involved to notice.

OPAL

Start again. Yellow is the color of caution. No. Yellow is the color of cowardice. Yellow is the color of sunshine and yet I see very little sunshine in the lives of the little black children and the little white children. I see their lives rather as a study in grayness, a mixture of black and white... of Christ, no, that's fascist. Oh, yellow, yellow, yellow fever...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Delbert stands, talking to Triplette on the phone at the hospital desk. Pvt. Kelly stands by the mailbox, writing his mother another postcard to tell her of Barbara-Jean's health.

DEL

Well, what about the place?

TRIPLETTE (V.O.)

Not bad, not bad at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL

Think it'll work out?

TRIPLETTE (V.O.)

Yeah, they've got some sort of
bizarre stage that drops out of
the ceiling.

There is an oncoming wave of NOISE and activity at the end of the hall. Barbara-Jean is leaving with nurses, well-wishers, a bouquet of flowers, her hairdresser, Jewel, and Barnett leading the pack. He seems anxious to get her out of there and back to work. We hear Barbara-Jean's voice over everything.

DEL

There's no getting there this
morning. Wait a minute; here
comes Barnett.

BARBARA-JEAN

Bye-bye, bye. I hope you get out
soon, too.

As the ensemble reaches the elevator, Del signals Barnett to the phone. Mr. Green steps off the elevator with another bouquet of hand-picked flowers and bumps into Barbara-Jean and Pvt. Kelly who stands, beaming, close enough to touch Barbara-Jean but just taking her in instead.

MR. GREEN

How are you? You just goin' home?

BARBARA-JEAN

I'm goin' home.

MR. GREEN

Well, I'm glad to hear that.

BARBARA-JEAN

Thank you. How's Mrs. Green?

MR. GREEN

She's fine and she's going to be
so thrilled to hear I saw you
again.

BARBARA-JEAN

Oh, good. Give her my very best.
Is she takin' her Vitamin E?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. GREEN
(patting his pocket)
Got 'em right here.

BARBARA-JEAN
All right. Good for you.

MR. GREEN
You take care.

BARBARA-JEAN
I will, darlin', bye-bye.

Barnett reprimands Delbert for putting him on the phone with Triplette, and then moves in without missing a beat as Barbara-Jean sings her way onto the elevator.

BARNETT
All right, come on, come on. We
gotta go with those white
horseshoes, huh? We're gonna live
with those for infamy. Delbert,
take that cortege on the other
elevator.

Which Delbert does with a sigh, leaving Pvt. Kelly at the mailbox and Mr. Green at the desk, talking to the head nurse.

NURSE
I'm really sorry I have to tell
you this. Mrs. Green expired this
morning.

MR. GREEN
(not having heard properly)
What?

NURSE
Mrs. Green died this morning.

He looks at her blankly; he heard correctly the first time.

NURSE
Wait right here. I'll get the
doctor.

Mr. Green stands in shock as an enthusiastic Pvt. Kelly comes to him at the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PVT. KELLY

Mr. Green, you know my momma saved her life. They used to live next door to each other. My mama's the one that put out the flames. She always loved Barbara-Jean more 'n anything; she's still keepin' a scrapbook on her. Only thing she said to me when I joined up was 'Son, when you're doin' your travels, I want you to see Barbara-Jean. You don't have to say nothin' about me or nothin' like that, I just want you to see Barbara-Jean.' So that's what I'm doin'. Now I'm going to go over to Opryland and hear her sing. You give my best to your wife, now.

Then he darts into the elevator as Mr. Green bows his head and sobs.

CUT TO:

INT. RED BARN DINNER SHOW THEATER - DAY

Red-and-white checkered tables ring a stage. Bentwood chairs are stacked on top of the tables, and Triplette stands, laughing at Opal in a corner by the telephone. She has just turned off her machine.

OPAL

No, now wait a minute, don't laugh. I don't -- let me I have a theory about political assassination. You see, I believe that people like Madame Pearl and all these people here in this country who carry guns are the real assassins. Because they stimulate the other innocent people who eventually are the ones who pull the trigger.

INT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

Kenny stands in the hall, talking long distance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

L.A. Joan, in a tiny top and underpants, makes her way down the hall, circling around him like a skinny cat. She comes up and stops by him, he turns his back, and she moves into his bedroom.

KENNY

Ma?

MOTHER (V.O.)

Kenny, Kenny, where are you, Kenny?

KENNY

I'm in Nashville; how are you?

MOTHER (V.O.)

I've been so worried. I'm all right, haven't been able to sleep. I had to take some of that Nyquil, so I could go to sleep. It puts you right out -- where are you?

KENNY

Did it help?

MOTHER (V.O.)

Yes, it did, but where are you, in Nashville?

L.A. Joan circles around him again and stops for a question.

KENNY

In a rooming house.

L.A. JOAN

Who are you talking to?

MOTHER (V.O.)

... A rooming house?

KENNY

To my mother.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Who're you talking to, Kenny?

KENNY

A girl who lives in the rooming house. Her uncle owns it.

L.A. Joan goes back into Kenny's room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER (V.O.)

A man owns the rooming house?
Well, it can't be very clean.

KENNY

Don't be silly.

MOTHER (V.O.)

I'll bet the sheets aren't very
clean, and you know this is a
terrible time in the South. You
can pick up this parasite fungus.

L.A. Joan picks up the violin case. Kenny sees her.

KENNY

Put -- Joan -- put that down!

MOTHER (V.O.)

Kenny, listen to me, you can pick up --

KENNY

(into phone)

Just a minute.

L.A. JOAN

Okay. I just wanted to look at
your fiddle.

She puts the case down and sits on the bed.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Kenny! You can get this
parasite --

KENNY

(into phone)

What?

MOTHER (V.O.)

... fungus in the South, and it's
very difficult to get rid of. Now
when are you comin' home?

KENNY

I don't know, a couple of weeks.

MOTHER (V.O.)

You left your blue suit hanging in
the closet; what are you wearing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENNY

I don't need my blue --

MOTHER (V.O.)

I would really like you to come home as --

KENNY

(firmly)

Mother, now listen to me.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Kenny, don't talk to me in that tone of voice.

L.A. Joan sits, watching from the bed. She doesn't see his hand disconnect the call.

KENNY

(into blank receiver)

I love you, too, Mama. I really do; I'll see you soon. Bye-bye.

He hangs up and she smiles at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPRY BELLE - DAY

Triplette and Delbert climb onto the replica of a riverboat stage at Opryland. They pass the Opryland dancers and make their way to Barnett, who is in combat with the stage managers as Delbert approaches him.

BARNETT

What do you want now?

Del slaps him on the shoulder.

TRIPLETTE

How you doing?

BARNETT

This guy wants her to do four shows today. What do you want?

DEL

Don't let her do too much now. How you hangin'? You feelin' better now that she's feelin' better?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Yeah, fine.

DEL

I gotta talk to you. We're gonna do a show, John, here...

BARNETT

Uh huh.

DEL

Haven's gonna do it. We want Barbara-Jean to headline it.

Barbara-Jean, dressed in a pink and white pinafore with pink ribbons, comes toward them, stopping to have her picture taken, talking rather loudly about being rushed.

DEL

... for this candidate, Hal Phillip Walker.

BARNETT

No -- absolutely not.

TRIPLETTE

(interrupting)

Listen, Barnett, we don't want her to make a political statement.

BARNETT

What do you think her bein' there's gonna be?

TRIPLETTE

Well, it's --

BARNETT

Ain't that gonna be a political statement?

DEL

Barnett...

BARNETT

No! Don't take it personal, but no, fellas. No politics, no government, no nothin'. All right?

DEL

All right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Okay? I heard you out, right?

Barbara-Jean comes to them and says hello to the men, who look a little buried right now. Barnett and she sweep off, Barnett doing combat now against the members of the entourage who follow behind like sheep. Delbert turns to Triplette.

TRIPLETTE

The hell with it. We don't need her.

DEL

No, John, no. Now leave it to me.
I'm gonna stay with this thing.
I'm gonna follow him like a
rodent, man.

Triplette laughs and onstage, Barbara-Jean walks down the ramp, takes the microphone, and begins to sing. Pvt. Kelly stands in front of the grandstand and Opal enters, looking for a seat in the front row. Finally, she sits in the aisle by Pvt. Kelly and several Shriners. The grandstand is full and quiet through the next two choruses of her song, "Tape Deck In His Tractor."

As she comes to the end, the applause starts and lasts as the musicians segue into the next song, "Careless Disrespect." As she starts to sing again, Kenny enters and stands next to Pvt. Kelly, as there are no seats left. He watches Barbara-Jean intently. Opal leans over to Pvt. Kelly with her microphone.

OPAL

Have you been in Vietnam?

PVT. KELLY

(nodding to music)

Huh?

OPAL

Oh yes, you have. I can tell by
your face. Was it awful?

PVT. KELLY

(shakes his head)

It was kinda hot and wet.

OPAL

Being a trained killer, do you
carry a gun?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PVT. KELLY

Just airborne is all. You think
maybe I could hear Barbara-Jean sing?

OPAL

Oh, excuse me.

The song continues to the end. The music goes out, the
applause comes up, and she begins to talk to the
audience, while the musicians vamp.

BARBARA-JEAN

Last night I thanked my lucky
stars that I could be here to sing
for you. And I heard on the radio
the cutest little boy.

The musicians stop vamping and she continues.

BARBARA-JEAN

He was nine years old and you know
how sometimes the DJ'll play a
tune and ask everybody to phone in
and say how they like it, you
know? And, uh, I was listening to
it and, uh, they asked for callers
to call in, this little nine-year-
old boy called in an' the song had
voices in the background like the
way they usually back up voices
these days sometimes, you know.
Sounded like little munchkins? He
called up and the DJ said, 'And
how old are you, son?' An' the
boy said, 'I'm nine and I think
it's gonna be a hit.'

She laughs.

BARBARA-JEAN

And I thought that was so cute.
Because -- well I can sing like a
munchkin myself. I don't know
about you, and I'm real fond of
the Wizard of Oz an' plus I live
out y'know just a ways out here
on -- offa Highway Interstate 24
on the road to Chattanooga so you
can see why I kinda related to
that and I -- I dunno, I think me
and the boys are gonna strike up
another tune for you now. Let's
go, boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns to the band and they begin again. Barbara-Jean looks up at the sky and puts her hand to her head.

BARBARA-JEAN

I think there's a storm a-brewing.
That's what my granddaddy used to
say before he lost his hearin' and
sometimes he'd say, 'Oh gosh,' or
'Durn it,' or 'My word.'

The musicians stop again and look at one another like she's gone round the bend. Barnett lifts his glasses to his forehead and watches her. He doesn't know what to make of it. Del and Triplette watch her behind Barnett.

BARBARA-JEAN

My granny, she'd go round the
house clickin' her false teeth to
the radio all day. She was a lot
of fun and always cooked my
favorite roast beef and she was a
sweetheart. She raised chickens,
too. She, uh -- in fact, did ya
ever hear a chicken sound? You
know how chickens go?

She makes a chicken sound.

BARBARA-JEAN

Here chick, chick, chick, chick,
chick, chick, here chick, chick,
chick. Well, anyway I guess we
better strike up this tune before
it's too late. Okay, boys --

The music comes in. She starts to talk again.

BARBARA-JEAN

I'm thinkin', y'know, about the --
first job I ever really got was
when Mama --

The music stops.

BARBARA-JEAN

... my grandma, she, she's the one
who clacked her false teeth to the
radio all day. She taught my mama
how to sing an' Mama taught me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA-JEAN (CONT'D)

One time she took me down 'cause
we was gonna get a new Frigidaire,
an' she took me down to the
Frigidaire store where the man was
doin' the advertisin', this little
record was goin' round and round
an' my mama told him that I knew
how to sing.

The audience begins to react, as do Barnett, the band,
Triplette, and Delbert.

BARBARA-JEAN

He said if she can learn this tune
and comes down and sings it to me,
I'll give y'all a quarter. So Mama
and I went home and then what
happened -- let's see, I think --
oh, yeah -- we went home and I
learned both sides of the record
in half an hour and we went back
there and pranced in real fancy
and I told 'im that I'd learned
'em and he said, well, let me hear
this, so I sang 'im both sides of
the record instead of just one, so
he gave us fifty cents and we went
across the street and had us a
soda.

She laughs.

BARBARA-JEAN

Ever since then I been workin', I
don't -- I think ever since then I
been workin' and doin' my...

At this point, Barnett, deeply concerned, starts down the
ramp with two of the dancers to get her. Triplette and
Delbert keep watching onstage as Barbara-Jean continues,
lost in her mind somewhere.

BARNETT

Come on, boys, come on.

BARBARA-JEAN

... supportin' myself -- anyway.

BARNETT

(kindly)

Hey, hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks at him and cowers slightly, then looks away from him.

BARBARA-JEAN

Am I all right?

BARNETT

Gonna get you some lemonade, darlin'... You're fine, darlin', fine. It's the microphone. Gimme the mike --

BARBARA-JEAN

I ain't done.

BARNETT

I know, I know.

BARBARA-JEAN

I ain't done.

BARNETT

(gently)

Go get a glass of water. Boys, help her off, all right? You'll come back, okay, darlin', come on.

The boys come forward and start her up the ramp and offstage. She turns and waves to the audience, but the reaction is grim. They catcall, and boo, some even throw things out onto the stage. Pvt. Kelly, heartbroken, shouts to the audience to be still, but to no avail. Barnett talks to the disappointed crowd.

BARNETT

Aw, come on now, have a heart now.

He is interrupted by a holocaust of boos, which continue as he speaks.

BARNETT

You don't mean that, do you?

The orchestra starts to play, but Barnett tells them to stop.

BARNETT

That little girl just came out of the hospital -- did you know that? That little girl's in there cryin' her eyes out 'cause she didn't want to disappoint you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sounds against her are more than he can bear. He looks around him and panics, not wanting to cause a breach between the fans and his fragile wife. He makes a desperate move to pacify them.

BARNETT

(abruptly)

You all show up at Centennial Park tomorrow at the Parthenon -- you'll see her for free as our guest. How's that, huh?

The boos continue, but the cheers and applause that filter in lead him to believe that it was the right thing to do.

BARNETT

All right, let's hear a welcome -- a get-well welcome for Barbara-Jean.

And as the boos change to applause, Barnett makes his way up the ramp to Delbert and Triplette, who stand, concerned.

BARNETT

Ingrates is all they are... ingrates... and you guys know it. They got me trapped out there.

TRIPLETTE

I know you did, Barnett.

BARNETT

I want some ground rules.

TRIPLETTE

(sincerely)

You name it.

BARNETT

(perspiring heavily)

She's gonna sing first, right?

TRIPLETTE

Right.

BARNETT

She's gonna be off before that man of yours even shows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT TRIPLETTE

I never should have brought her here in the first place.

Fine. Whatever you want, Barnett.

BARNETT

No paraphernalia, no literature
being circulated, you understand?

Right. TRIPLETTE

BARNETT

And never in any way or shape or form is she to be associated with Hal Phillip Walker... whatever his name is --

CUT TO:

INT. REESE HOME - DAY

Linnea sits, talking on the phone.

LINNEA
 Hello.

TOM (V.O.)
Hey, guess who... Linnea?

Yes, it's me. LINNEA

TOM (V.O.)
Hi. This is me. Listen, I'm
playing a gig tonight, downtown;
you wanta come and meet me?

Linnea seems unable to answer.

TOM (V.O.)

It's called the... uh... No Exit or the Exit Out, something like that. Anyway, it's right across the street from Friday's on Church. You know where that is, don't you? Anyhow, I'll be there at eight and... uh, why don't you meet me there? Okay?

Ummm... LINNEA

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before she can make up an excuse, he hangs up, leaving her caught up in the cross-current of her fifteen-year marriage and how to cope with her body which has just come to life.

CUT TO:

INT. EXIT INN

An intimate home away from home for musicians and their friends, who come out of the audience to perform as often as from the stage. Norman, Bill, Mary and Opal sit at a table near the stage drinking champagne, as gravel-voiced Johnny Barnett performs, "My Baby's Cookin' In Another Man's Pan."

OPAL

Driver -- Driver, could I have a wee bit more champagne?

Bill leans over and whispers to her --

BILL

His name is Norman.

OPAL

Norman, oh yes, Norman...

He pours her glass full as Johnny continues his song.

OPAL

Oh, thank you so much, Norman.

Linnea enters the room from the other side. She stands in the corner trying to adjust to the light and sees Tom. She spots him in a direction away from Bill and Mary. She works her way through the crowd to Tom, but from yet another direction L.A. Joan, in black wig and gypsy skirt, darts in and sits down next to him. Linnea turns, goes to the back of the room, and sits down in a wooden booth. Wade sits nearby and talks to the WAITRESS who turns to take her order.

LINNEA

I'll have a cider.

WAITRESS

Cider?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WADE
(leaning in)
Put it on my bill.

LINNEA
Oh, no --

L.A. JOAN
Hi...

WADE
Yes.

TOM
Hi...

LINNEA
All right, would you
Put it in a wineglass
for me?

L.A. JOAN
You know what it says on
the ladies' room mirror?

WADE
(to waitress)
Put it in a wineglass
and put it on my bill.

TOM
No.

L.A. JOAN
It said, 'I'm stuck here at
the exit and with no place
left to go.'

WADE
My name's Wade Coolidge. What's
yours?

LINNEA
(not quite knowing
what to do)
Oh, my... ah... Linnea's my name.

Across the room Opal holds forth as Johnny's song
continues.

OPAL
Traveling in cozy quarters, I mean
you sort of have to camp in one
room. Obviously, yes.

BILL
Well, Mary and I camp in one room
and Tom camps in a lotta rooms.

OPAL
Actually, I shouldn't ask you
this, Mary... well, he is so
attractive. Shall we say that Tom
and I were...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPAL (CONT'D)
(giggles inanely)

La-de-da.

Mary turns away from Opal's bluster and watches the stage. Bill pursues, wanting to find out where Tom is.

BILL
You sang together.

OPAL
Oh no... I mean... we sort of got
to know each other in the biblical
sense, if you know what I mean...

BILL
You went to bed with him, right?

Mary continues to look at the stage as Bill drives on.

OPAL
Oh yes, I thought you understood
that.

BILL
Uh huh. Where did you go to bed
with him?

The vocalist onstage has finished, and through the applause he announces that his friend Tom Frank is in the audience and has agreed to do a couple of numbers. Bill and Mary look amazed and Opal is thrilled.

OPAL
Speak of the devil!

BILL
Well, I'll be damned!

Tom makes his way to the stage as the audience continues to clap. Wade, in his enthusiasm, splashes a little beer on Linnea who tries to brush it off casually.

TOM
(from stage)
Thank you. Uh... you may remember
I used to be part of a trio...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

(from table)

Used to be?

TOM

I've been hiding from them all week, but it seems they found me here tonight, so we might as well have them up here, too.

Opal leads the applause and pats Mary enthusiastically.

OPAL

Oh, you must.

As they get up and make their way to the stage, the audience breaks into a ragged version of "It Don't Worry Me." Tom nods at Bill, and Mary's eyes bore through him. They take their positions and begin "Since You've Gone," with Mary playing most of the song to Tom. Wade talks to Linnea.

WADE

All I need is fifteen minutes a night.

LINNEA

Fifteen minutes?

WADE

Sleep. That's all I need. Don't want to waste no time sleeping.

LINNEA

Oh.

Wade hums with them for a moment and Linnea buries a smile.

WADE

I was in prison for twenty-eight years... You married?

LINNEA

Uh... uh, yes I am.

Across the way Opal has stuck her microphone in a candle. Norman leans in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORMAN

Listen, when this is over I'll be taking them back and after that we could ride around and I could tell you things that would send you around the corner.

OPAL

(interrupting)

Uh... oh, what is your name?

NORMAN

Norman.

OPAL

Norman. Please, Norman, I make it a point never to gossip with servants.

CUT TO:

INT. RED BARN DINNER THEATER - NIGHT

Delbert stands in his beige plaid suit and white shoes inside the ring of red-and-white-checkered tables talking to an all-male audience. Behind the highest level of tables, we see Albuquerque hiding behind a red velvet curtain. Outside she saw a sign that said "Benefit" and figuring it was for her, she entered through the kitchen and now stands eating some of the leftovers.

DEL

Okay, fellas, I think you know we got a good man to get behind here, and I don't want to take a whole lotta your time because we have some entertainment for you. You got pledge cards on the table. Pledge anything you want to and I'll be sure and make you pay it. You got a check in your pocket, don't be afraid to write it out. I'll get it to the banks quick before you can stop it. Cash, anything, don't be humble or shy, and so you won't get bored there's something coming to keep you occupied.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And as he tells them to keep their eyes up, a stage slowly descends from the ceiling carrying a playing band and Sueleen Gay, dressed in green complete with mask, hood and green beauty mark. Whistles and applause greet her entrance.

SUELEEN

Hi, y'all -- I'm Sueleen Gay and
I'm here to sing you a song about
a girl who never gets enough...

The men "ooh," and after too many vamps, she slips into the song, about a tone and a half under pitch. She dances around the stage for a full chorus of "I Never Get Enough of the Love I'm Hungry For." Triplette leans into Delbert, who sits next to a drunk Bud Hamilton, and says:

TRIPLETTE

Worst singer I ever heard.

DEL

(laughing)

She cannot sing a lick, can she?

Bud wads up some dollar bills and starts to throw them at the stage, but Sueleen continues singing off key.

CUT TO:

INT. NO EXIT INN - NIGHT

Bill and Mary, having finished their song, make their way back to the table through the applause. Wade pounds his beer on the table in approval, and as Tom tosses Mary her jacket from the stage, Wade excuses himself to Linnea and heads for the men's room.

TOM

All right, if you want more it's
gonna have to be me alone, 'cause
I just been deserted.

He sits down.

TOM

I'm gonna play something I wrote
recently and came down here to
record. I'm going to dedicate
this to someone kind of special
who just might be here tonight.
It's called 'I'm Easy.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He begins to play the introduction as Opal looks down shyly and smiles, sure that he intends it for her.

Mary shifts in her seat.

L.A. Joan from her part of the room sits and smiles.

His focus goes into the audience and, now all alone in the booth, Linnea watches him.

A particular kind of quiet takes over in the room, and Tom caresses the notes as he sings.

For a while, each of the younger women in Tom's life takes the song in as being meant for her. But about midway through, Mary detects another stakeout.

She looks back, which causes Opal to peer around looking for the receiver.

L.A. Joan looks around, saddened by his lack of interest.

As he continues the song, it becomes a quiet dialogue between he and Linnea, who now sits motionless, her eyes soft with tears.

CUT TO:

INT. RED BARN DINNER THEATER - NIGHT

The applause is loud for Sueleen, no doubt because she has stopped singing. Unfortunately, this encourages her and she moves into the next song quickly. As she does, she removes her cape.

There are a few cheers hoping that she is getting on with the business at hand. Instead, she continues singing the too-slow tempo, no-pitch rendition of "One, I Love You."

The men are no longer polite and begin to boo and throw things onto the stage. She sticks it out for what seems an inordinately long time.

Triplette, who's afraid they will lose pledges, turns to Delbert, who answers his look.

DEL

Did you tell Trout exactly what
you wanted?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE
(bristling and
passing the buck)
Did I tell Trout? It was your
job, Del.

DEL
(shaking his head)
Well, I didn't think there was
going to be...

At this point, Sueleen tearfully puts the microphone down on the piano and runs up the stairs toward the curtains where Albuquerque continues to stand and eat unseen.

Delbert comes to Sueleen. The men have started to clap in time and shout for her to "take it all off."

DEL
What's the matter, honey?

SUELEEN
I don't know what's goin' on here.

DEL
Now listen, didn't Trout tell you
you're supposed to strip?

Sueleen ignores the possibility that a striptease was ever intended.

SUELEEN
I'm a singer.

Triplette's eyes roll back in his head. Then, he reaches over and grabs her by the arm and lies to her sincerely.

TRIPLETTE
Listen -- you go on down and
finish the show like you told
Trout you would and I'll set it up
so you can sing at the Parthenon.

SUELEEN
(tempted)
I get to sing at the Parthenon
with Barbara-Jean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

Yes, now go on down and finish...

SUELEEN

(defensively)

Someday I'm gonna be a bigger star
than Barbara-Jean.

TRIPLETTE

Aw, I know you are. You can't
miss.

DEL

These fellows really like you,
honey.

She walks down the stairs accompanied by cheers and
applause. For the first time, she determines it wasn't
her singing they liked at all.

The band goes into some basic "take-it-off" music and she
starts with the gloves and tosses them to the audience.
Not knowing exactly what to do next, she undoes the top
of her gown which falls to her waist revealing her peach-
colored brassiere, and suddenly she knows that she isn't
in a dream, that St. Theresa won't save her and that in
order to survive she must proceed.

From the bra she pulls out first one sweat sock and then
the other. Both go out into the surprised audience.
Angry and scared, she slips the dress to the floor and,
half stumbling, tosses it to the eager crowd of men, who
couldn't like her more if they tried.

Next comes the bra itself, revealing very innocent
breasts. As she continues to circle the stage, a slim
piano fanfare begins. She doffs her yellow nylon panties
and walks buck naked up the stairs to a cheering,
standing ovation.

Albuquerque, who is overjoyed by the unexpected
performance, stands outside the curtains clapping as
Sueleen passes by her numbly, her dignity left out there
in the middle of the floor somewhere.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Once again, we see the turning spools on the tape deck
and hear Tom's voice singing, "I'm Easy."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In bed, Tom lights a cigarette and Linnea watches him for a moment quietly.

LINNEA

You want to learn how to say
something in sign language?

He turns and smiles at her.

TOM

Yeah. How do you say I love you?

LINNEA

(demonstrating)

Well, you could say -- well you
could say it in shorthand. This
is shorthand.

He imitates her gesture and they look at one another.

LINNEA

Or you could say I love you...

TOM

(repeating)

I love you.

LINNEA

Mmmm, or you could just say -- I'm
happy I met you...

TOM

I'm happy I met you.

They look at one another again as he imitates the gesture, then she waves the smoke away from his cigarette.

LINNEA

Phew! How can you smoke those
things?

TOM

Oh.

LINNEA

Let me have a drag.

TOM

Do you smoke?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINNEA

No.

TOM

What do you want to do that for?

She takes a puff of the cigarette and exhales the smoke like a woman in a "bad woman" movie. He takes the cigarette away from her and kisses her on the cheek.

LINNEA

No?

TOM

Mmm.

LINNEA

So what?

She smiles and they look at each other again, then she reaches over, picking up her watch from the bedside table. The tape deck stops and begins to rewind.

LINNEA

I have to go.

TOM

Oh -- can't you just call them or something?

LINNEA

No, no I can't.

She puts on her watch, gets out of bed but doesn't move for a moment as Tom runs his hand down her slip-covered back.

TOM

Can't you stay another hour?

LINNEA

No, no...

Then gently with her back to him still.

LINNEA

I just can't.

She rises and makes her way to the closet where her clothes are hung. He watches her for a moment. She's touched him, but he decides on his usual way out and picks up the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Linnea begins to dress and continues to do so as he makes his long-distance telephone connection.

GIRL (V.O.)
Hello?

TOM
Hey --

GIRL (V.O.)
Oh, wow... I...

Tom interrupts, telling her he's sorry he left the way he did, but because the girl has lived with him through thick and thin, mostly thin, she steers the conversation away from recrimination. Linnea washes in the basin.

TOM
Listen, can you come down here?

GIRL (V.O.)
When?

TOM
Tonight.

GIRL (V.O.)
Oh, Tom, I can't do that.

They discuss her job, his wanting her to quit her job, her reasons for not wanting to, as Linnea searches under the covers for and finds her underpants tangled on Tom's foot.

She smiles at him and puts them in her purse. Then she walks to Tom, who leans forward to her, shielding the mouthpiece for a moment, and then they kiss.

GIRL (V.O.)
When are you coming home?

TOM
'Bout a week.

LINNEA
Bye.

Linnea moves to the door with no regrets, having taken the best Tom has to offer. She turns before she leaves, and makes the "I'm happy I met you" sign. He signs back.

GIRL (V.O.)
I miss you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL (V.O.)
New York's missed you, too.
Weather's been terrific.

TOM
Yeah?

Linnea closes the door behind her.

GIRL (V.O.)
What's that?

TOM
(lying)
Just room service... uh, there's
fifty cents on the desk there,
just pick it up.

GIRL (V.O.)
(laughing)
Big tipper.

The walls seem to push in a little on Tom.

TOM
Well, times are hard you know.

GIRL (V.O.)
All that money. You can really
afford to bring me down, I see.

TOM
(suddenly impatient)
Well, never mind. I'll see you in
a week.

GIRL (V.O.)
I love you, Tom.

He hangs up abruptly and contemplates his first night in Nashville alone and his basic fear of falling asleep and never waking up.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUELEEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wade walks downstairs to his room in the basement of the Bell Apartment-Hotel, across the street from the bus station, Sueleen lives on the second floor. Delbert's yellow Cadillac pulls up in front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEL

This it, honey? Just be careful getting out.

Sueleen, in a raincoat, gets out of his car, dragging her green dress on the ground behind her. She enters the lobby to collect her key at the desk, comes back out and without a word starts up the stairs to her door. Delbert jumps out of the front seat and places his half-finished drink on top of his car.

DEL

Hey! Hey, wait just a minute.

She runs up the stairs, but so does he, and he grabs her arm, stopping her at the door.

DEL

Just hold it, will ya? Now --

He moves close to her and she stiffens. Somehow, one gets the feeling that she is still a virgin and he is still a gentleman.

DEL

Now, I know you don't do that all the time, and I... I'm gonna tell you that I just mean -- me personally, boy I -- you know I'd just like to -- I'd like to kiss you every place, you know what I'm telling you? I think you...

Wade sticks his head around the stairwell and starts up.

WADE

Sueleen? You okay?

Delbert drops her arm and starts down the stairs quickly like a child caught at the cookie jar.

DEL

Shit, man...

Wade continues up the stairs as Sueleen studies them both in silence. Delbert gets into his car and as he drives off we hear:

DEL

Didn't your mama teach you no manners!

WADE

Who was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sueleen doesn't answer.

WADE

What's the matter with you? Ain't
you gonna talk to me?

She looks down at the ground.

WADE

Did it go all right?

SUELEEN

Oh, Wade.

WADE

What?

SUELEEN

I had to do me a striptease in
front of all those men in order to
get to sing to the Parthenon with
Barbara-Jean.

WADE

(shocked)

Aw, shit, Sueleen -- that's
dreadful, that's terrible, girl!
I mean -- look -- I don't know how
to tell you this but I been
tryin'. I been meanin' to tell
you this for a long time. You --
you can't sing, Sueleen, you may
as well face the fact that you
cannot sing; you ain't never gonna
be no star; I mean, I wish you'd
give it up now. I mean, they
gonna kill you; they gonna tear
your heart out if you keep on.
They gonna walk on your soul,
girl!

SUELEEN

(defensively)

I don't know what you're talkin'
about.

WADE

But you can't sing, do you
understand that?

She laughs. If anything has happened as a result of
tonight, it is her determination that she has not shucked
down in vain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUELEEN

Yeah? You wanta make a bet? You wanna just come to the Parthenon and watch me sing with Barbara-Jean?

WADE

Listen, I am leavin' for Detroit Wednesday.

She turns and opens her door.

SUELEEN

You just come an' watch me.

WADE

Listen, I am leaving for Detroit on Wednesday and if you wanna go you just come on. They gonna kill you in this town, girl!

SUELEEN

Yeah, well you come an' see.

WADE

They gonna use you, you know that.

SUELEEN

Bye, Wade.

She turns and walks inside. Wade starts down the stairs shaking his head.

WADE

Shit. Don't know why I stick around when she makes me so goddamn mad I could spit.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Flashing across the sky, we see "New Roots for the Nation -- Hal Phillip Walker" appear, one letter at a time, on a news blimp. We hear Howard K. Smith in the b.g.

HOWARD K. SMITH (V.O.)

Little more than a year ago, a man named Hal Phillip Walker excited a group of college students with some questions. Have you stood on a high and windy hill and heard the acorns drop and roll? Have you walked in the valley beside the brook, walked alone and remembered --

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSEUP - HOWARD K. SMITH - DAY

(TUESDAY, FIFTH DAY)

On television we see Howard K. Smith, as a woman and her family sit in the f.g., waiting for the festivities to begin at the Parthenon in Centennial Park.

HOWARD K. SMITH

Does Christmas smell like oranges to you? Well in the commencement speech such questions were fitting perhaps, but hardly the material with which to launch a presidential campaign.

EXT. PARTHENON (CENTENNIAL PARK) - DAY

Now we see a large stage platform in front of a huge American flag. Under the flag, a long Hal Phillip Walker banner and a podium with a "New Roots for the Nation" poster on it. The large tents along the side provide food and drink and shelter for the hundreds of fans, who are starting to make their way to the park. Sound and equipment men crawl over the stage and lawn, setting up apparatus, as the Walker truck pulls up and parks next to Tommy Brown's large van. In back of all this stands the Parthenon itself. At either end of it are machines whereby, for a quarter, one can hear a complete dramatization of how they came to build it in the first place, affording Nashville with the title, "The Athens of the South."

HOWARD K. SMITH

Hal Phillip Walker is in a way a mystery man. Out of nowhere, with a handful of students and scarcely any professionals, he's managed to win three presidential primaries and is given a fighting chance to take a fourth -- Tennessee. A win in that state would take on added significance, for only once in the last fifty years has Tennessee failed to vote for a winning presidential candidate. No doubt, many Americans, especially party-liners, wish that Hal Phillip Walker would go away, disappear like the natural frost and come again at some more convenient season. But whatever he may be doing, it seems sure that Hal Phillip Walker is not going away. For there is genuine appeal and it...

HOWARD K. SMITH

... may be related to the raw courage of this man running for president --

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD K. SMITH (CONT'D)

-- willing to battle vast oil companies, eliminate subsidies to farmers, tax churches, abolish the electoral college, change the national anthem, and remove lawyers from government, especially from Congress. Well, at this point it would be wise to say most of us don't know the answer to Hal Phillip Walker. But to answer one of his questions: as a matter of fact, Christmas has always smelled like oranges to me.

On the back side of the Parthenon, we see an official-looking cavalcade of black limousines, police cars and motorcycles enter the park with their lights on. One of them has small American flags on the fenders.

The Tricycle Man drives into the park past Opal and a throng of people hurrying to get a place.

On the other side of the park we hear Wade in his truck, yelling to the oncoming traffic that they're going the wrong way. In the b.g., we hear the song -- "There's Trouble in the U.S.A."

The cavalcade pulls up and stops behind the Parthenon, their lights continue to flash and Triplette gets out of the car with flags on the fenders and talks to its other occupant, Hal Phillip Walker, whom we cannot see.

TRIPLETTE

You may have to sit out here for an hour or so; I hope not --

WALKER (O.S.)

That's all right, John; it'll give me time to work on my speech.

TRIPLETTE

Okay, thank you --

Triplette shakes hands with several police and plainclothesmen who stand beside the car. Then he spots Delbert coming across the lawn.

DEL

Hey, John, how are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

How are you?

DEL

A... can I say hello to --

TRIPLETTE

He's working on his speech. Come on, I want to get this going. We'll do that later. Is Barnett here?

They climb the high steps of the Parthenon, looking like two ants approaching a hill for just a moment, and then disappear behind the columns. When they reappear near the busy stage, Delbert is telling the building's history.

DEL

This was originally made of lumber and plaster of Paris. They built it for the Centennial Celebration in 1876 and the people liked it so much they didn't want it torn down. Then Nashville got to be called 'Athens of the South.'

(as Triplette laughs)

People sort of took to that. Then they rebuilt it.

TRIPLETTE

This building?

DEL

Right before I was born.

They have reached the platform and Barnett, in his usual attire, greets them, perspiring.

BARNETT

Whoo! It's gonna be a scorcher.

TRIPLETTE

(to Delbert)

Will the park police control all this?

DEL

Right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Delbert, hey, Delbert, get over here. Come on, we don't need all these chairs, do we? This ain't no band here.

By now the red-white-and-blue buntinged platform has filled with Chamber of Commerce people, media people and photographers. Suddenly, Barnett stops dead in his tracks. He has seen the Walker banner and is stunned.

DEL

What's the matter, man?

BARNETT

I don't -- I don't believe it!

DEL

What's the matter?

Barnett points to the banner and begins to shout.

BARNETT

Are you guys jerkin' me around?
Do you see what I see or not?

DEL

What are you talking about?

Barnett move to Triplette.

BARNETT

What the hell is that sign doin' up there, Triplette, huh? Now, come on we had some ground rules, am I right? No political signs, no advertising, no nothin' -- What the hell are you doin'?

A photographer comes in and snaps a picture, as Triplette tries to pacify him with "We'll take care of it." Barnett knows better. He pushes the photographer aside roughly.

BARNETT

Go about your business! Now come on, lemme hear it --

TRIPLETTE

I have abided...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

(irate)

I laid down some ground rules...

TRIPLETTE

(loses his temper)

I have a man running for the
presidency of this country sitting
out there in his car like a fool
because of your ground rules.

BARNETT

He can sit out in the sun and
parch for all I care! My wife
ain't well, is she? And I brought
her out of the hospital bed to be
here. And you gave me some ground
rules. Well, you're full of it
just like your, your man!

Triplette loses control.

TRIPLETTE

I have abided by every ground rule
that you laid down!

BARNETT

Except one. What is that thing up
there, huh? What is that? She
ain't gonna appear here with that
sign up!

TRIPLETTE

I have busted my ass for you this
last week, Barnett.

BARNETT

Well, I'm gonna bust your ass,
too --

TRIPLETTE

And I'm through with it! Now you
can take your wife and you can
take a walk...

BARNETT

I'll give you a...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIPLETTE

And I'll get on that microphone
and I'll tell these people that
she's not going to appear.

TRIPLETTE

That's right!

BARNETT

You will huh? Well, go on
and do it!

TRIPLETTE

Take a walk and I'll do it!

BARNETT

You'd do that, huh?

TRIPLETTE

I'll do it!

BARNETT

You'd put a knife in my wife's
back like that, man?

TRIPLETTE

You're putting the knife in her
back, buster! You're doing it!
Now I have not got time to take
the goddamn sign down and put it
back up.

Barnett pulls in and reverses rationales.

BARNETT

What the hell are you hollerin'
about in front of all these
people, huh? You trying to
embarrass me?

And Triplette regains control of the issue --

TRIPLETTE

(quietly)

I'm trying to be heard. Just
trying to be heard.

As Barnett discusses moving the chairs off the stage, one
wonders how many times in how many situations he has
reversed original issues, or if this is the first time.
Triplette tells him not to worry, as Barnett turns to
find Delbert.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARNETT

Where is that rat? What're you
hiding back there for, you little
rat, huh?

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Atop a very green, tree-covered hilltop, a small group of people sit at graveside listening to Esther Green's eulogy. A mist has gathered around them and they seem cut off from the rest of the world.

MINISTER

.... and grant us all to serve
thee by day that we may find
eternal fellowship with them
through Him who died and rose
again for us all, Jesus Christ,
our Lord. Amen.

Kenny is there. Last night, before he went to bed, he made Mr. Green supper and brought it to him on a tray in bed. L.A. Joan didn't come home, so she isn't at the funeral. Suddenly, Mr. Green stands and starts down the hill. Kenny gets up and tries to stop him.

KENNY

Mr. Green, where are you going?

GREEN

To find Martha.

KENNY

What for?

GREEN

She needs to show some respect to
Esther!

MINISTER

Our help is in the name of the
Lord. In heaven and on earth...

Mr. Green breaks from Kenny's grasp and continues down the hill. Kenny follows him.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARTHENON (CENTENNIAL PARK) -DAY

For just a moment the huge American flag FILLS the SCREEN and we hear the announcer.

VOICE (V.O.)

Now, ladies and gentlemen,
Barbara-Jean and Haven Hamilton!

There are cheers and applause as they break into the song, "One, I Love You." Haven's white rhinestone-on-white tailored Western suit stands out against the American flag, as does Barbara-Jean's demure, white, organdy pinafore.

She is, in fact, radiant, doing what she does best -- safe for as long as the song lasts from any of the conflict that plagues her, supported by her friend, Haven, who shares her ability to awaken people's hopes and dreams, allowing them to bask for those same few minutes in optimism.

In the audience, the Tricycle Man moves down to the platform and people look at him curiously.

Star pushes his way through the crowd in another direction, still in pursuit of Albuquerque, who sits curled up on the edge of the platform unnoticed.

Behind her stands Linnea, whose legs feel a little weak this morning, her at place in the choir.

Further back stand Tom and Mary, who can't find Bill.

Sueleen Gay, dressed in pink satin, Martha Washington-style, stands firmly against one of the pillars, mouthing the words as Barbara-Jean sings.

Wade makes his way through the audience as does Opal, craning her neck and still trying to find the truth.

Pvt. Glen Kelly stands front and center to the platform.

L.A. Joan, now in a platinum wig and turban, holds Bill's hand and leads him through the crowd.

Mr. Green has arrived with Kenny who is pessimistic about finding L.A. Joan in the crowd. But Green, having had a belly full of Martha's disrespect, strikes out alone. Kenny gives up and with his ever-present violin case walks through the applauding audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On stage, Haven kisses Barbara-Jean's hand and the band segues into the next song, "My Idaho Home." Barbara Jean thanks everyone and starts to sing by herself.

Bud and Lady Pearl stand onstage busily putting several bunches of white carnations together to give to Barbara-Jean.

Tommy Brown and his wife stand between members of the Chamber of Commerce and Triplette who makes some sort of remark that they both laugh at.

Delbert is there, but has swallowed himself up in the city fathers to avoid confrontation with anyone on any level, especially Barnett who stands behind the platform looking out into the audience of ingrates who picked up on his free invitation.

Kenny stands watching Barbara-Jean as intently as he did at the Opry, and reaches for key he wears around his neck as Pvt. Kelly shifts his duffel bag from one hand to the other.

Opal, having run out of film, has found a television truck and is inside putting a new roll of film in the camera while chatting it up with the boys.

Kenny hurriedly opens the violin case and takes something out. For a moment he watches the huge flag billow softly behind Barbara-Jean as a cloud passes over the sun.

As the sun comes out again, she closes her eyes and is lost in her own reveries, not seeing Pvt. Kelly, who stands mesmerized.

Or Kenny, who can't take his eyes off the stage.

Or the rest of the audience, who breaks into deafening applause as she says.

BARBARA-JEAN

For Mamma and Daddy. Thank you.
Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you.

Haven walks out onstage, arms raised. The carnations are in one hand and he takes hold of Barbara-Jean with the other. They make a wide-sweeping bow, as people on stage and in the audience express their love for her the only way they can.

Then she drops, like a beautiful bird shot in mid-flight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Haven falls too, punctured by two SHARP CRACKS through the sound of the applause, making it seem arbitrary.

In the moment when everyone must try and comprehend what has happened, Pvt. Kelly has turned, seen the source of the gunshot, and forces the THIRD SHOT airborne as he grabs the assassin's arms.

It is Kenny, who is unconvinced somehow that he has killed the right enemy.

Whatever Kenny says is obliterated, as other men and police rush forward to help Pvt. Kelly, swallowing up Kenny and his broken vision.

Onstage, there are screams and stunned silence, all of it confused and chaotic.

Barnett makes his way to her crumpled form pathetically, as Haven, who has lost his toupee in the melee, takes charge with extraordinary gentleness.

HAVEN

All right now, you get her. Get her here, Bud, help her up now. Come on, I'm all right, here we go.

Bud, Tom, Barnett, Tommy Brown, members of the choir, and others pick her up with care and walk through the columns as if their mission had hope -- somehow knowing better.

BARNETT

(quietly)

Oh, man, I can't stop that blood, man.

Haven is onstage, oblivious to his blood-soaked arm. He talks into the microphone to try to cut through the chaos in the audience.

HAVEN

Y'all take it easy now.

Police security has suddenly increased and Hal Phillip Walker and the black limousine cavalcade exit at high speed behind a police car whose SIREN SCREAMS into the continuing chaos.

HAVEN

This isn't Dallas, this is Nashville... You show 'em what we're made of. They can't do this to us here in Nashville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The crowd responds a little but not much. Delbert comes up behind him.

HAVEN

Okay, everybody sing! Come on now, sing...

(aside)

I wish they had --

DEL

I think you... Let, let me help you.

HAVEN

(looking around)

No I'm fine... I'm -- you sing. You stay here and sing.

DEL

Haven, I think you've been hurt.

Haven turns around and thrusts the microphone into the nearby hand of Albuquerque.

HAVEN

Sing!

DEL

Haven --

HAVEN

I'm all right...

And Delbert leads him off the stage.

DEL

Is there anyone down here can help us?

Albuquerque begins to sing tentatively, still caught up in the event that's just taken place.

Somehow, in the scramble, Green runs into L.A. Joan who is crying, and he grabs her arm roughly and leads her out of the crowd.

Bill rushes onto the stage to Mary and they leave immediately.

Opal wanders through the crowd asking if anyone can tell her what happened -- she was in the truck talking when the shots were fired.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Triplette stands looking out somewhere, guilty, hollow, finished before he has begun.

Albuquerque has found her voice and talks to the audience as the choir trickles in and joins her.

ALBUQUERQUE

Come on, everybody, sing. Come on!

(singing)

'It don't worry me. It don't worry me...'

They start slowly with her voice soaring out, giving them strength. Finally they respond and their panic turns around on itself.

Linnea stands devastated, somehow unable to reconcile any of it with the song.

Triplette starts offstage past Albuquerque who scoops up the white carnations and throws them into the audience, past Sueleen Gay, who still waits in the wings, and silently past Delbert, who pushes by Sueleen to get to Linnea so he can take her home to the children.

DEL

Come on, honey, come on.

Pvt. Kelly, who has been numbly standing next to the platform, turns and walks out through the crowd. He has to catch a bus back to Fort Campbell -- his five-day pass is up at six.

By now, Albuquerque, the choir, and the audience are singing, "It Don't Worry Me." For a moment, we see the faces of mothers and fathers and children and babies. Then we PULL BACK and see the whole event as the CAMERA PANS UP TO the sky signifying...

THE END