

PURE EVEL

by

John Logan

Universal Pictures

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I will show you how not to be a dead man in life.

D. H. Lawrence

SETTING

America. Primarily 1967 to 1974.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

EVEL KNIEVEL:

Motorcycle daredevil. Age 29 to 34.

HAWLEY NOWAK:

Evel's ace mechanic. 40's.

GEORGE ZIMMERMAN:

Evel's chief bodyguard. 30's.

LINDA KNIEVEL:

Evel's wife. Age 25 to 31.

KELLY KNIEVEL:

Evel's son. Age 8 to 14.

ROBBIE KNIEVEL:

Evel's son. Age 5 to 11.

TRACY KNIEVEL:

Evel's daughter. Age 3 to 9.

JAY SARNOW:

Owner of Caesar's Palace Casino. 60's.

ROBERT ARUM:

Snake River promoter. 40's.

ROBERT TRUAX:

Skycycle designer. 50's.

PURE LEVEL by John Logan

EXT BUTTE, MONTANA DAY

It is September 2, 1945. V-J Day.

Nestled in the rugged and dramatic vistas of the Rocky Mountains, the small mining town of Butte is celebrating the Allied victory over Japan. A parade is in progress. Banners stretch over the small main street and flags flutter everywhere.

The Butte High School Marching Band proudly plays "STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER" as they jauntily strut down the street. Small floats and cars slowly parade past the lines of spectators who roam with unashamed bravado. A few soldiers are the stars of the show. They wave from the passing cars and floats and smile to the crowd, their medals glistening in the summer sun.

In the crowd we focus on one blond 7 year-old-boy. He grips a small flag tightly in his hand. An older man stands with his hand on the boy's shoulder.

The man leans down to the boy and points to one of the soldiers:

MAN:

Bobby? Bobby? You see that? You know what that is?
That's a hero.

The boy's eyes grow wide with adoring wonder as:

The rocking opening of Bachman-Turner Overdrive's "TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS" explodes and we SMASH to:

CREDITS

CREDITS as the pounding "TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS" continues and we see a motorcycle race. Early 1960's. Muscular, aggressive images of man and machine.

Flickering, grainy, black-and-white visions of the speeding machines as they roar around a dirt track. The motorcycles spin past hay-bales and over hills, taking flight briefly. The riders maneuver for position and cut back-and-forth in dangerous attempts to take the lead. The grandstands around the track are filled with cheering spectators.

Near the end of the contest one of the racers loses control of his bike and slides and spins and dramatically crashes over one of the hay-bales. The topples over the handlebars of his bike, flies through the air and slams to the dirt. Meanwhile, another racer speeds across the finish line. The checkered flag waves.

The rider who has crashed slowly rises and shakes off the spill. We cannot see his face behind his helmet visor.

But he can see the crowd.

They are looking at him; amazed, scared, delighted. And then they are standing. And then they are racing over to him. They surge around the rider in an enthusiastic, cheering mob.

The actual winner of the race is pretty much ignored as the fans favor the rider who provided them with such a memorable thrill. They thrust out hands for handshakes, they pat him on the back, a Kodak instamatic camera flashes.

Slow-motion as the rider finally removes his motorcycle helmet. He is a handsome teenage boy with dirty-blond hair.

He gazes at the crowd around him and suddenly raises his arms in victory. The crowd goes wild. And a daredevil is born.

The CREDITS and "TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS" come to a close as we go to...

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE, PARKING LOT DAY

The same face, the same handsome boy, gazing in wonder.

It is 1967 and the boy is now 29.

He is EVEL KNIEVEL.

EVEL:

God, I've got to jump it...

We pull back to reveal that Evel is standing in the parking lot of Caesar's Palace Casino in Las Vegas. He is gazing at the enormous fountains in front of the casino.

Beside Evel stands HAWLEY NOWAK. Nowak is in his 40's. He is a rugged, good-looking man with a prosthetic right leg. Hawley, a stunt rider himself until an accident cost him his leg, is Evel's expert mechanic and all-around wildman companion.

Title: LAS VEGAS -- 1967.

They stare at the fountains for a moment. Evel is lost in reverie, Hawley is calculating the jump.

HAWLEY:

What do you figure?

EVEL:
60 yards.

HAWLEY:
50.

EVEL:
Maybe.

HAWLEY:
Got maybe 30, 40 for take-off. Safety ramp on the last six feet.

EVEL:
I can make it.

He turns and walks to a battered old pickup truck and trailer that has "BOB KNIEVEL AND HIS MOTORCYCLE DAREDEVILS" painted on it. Hawley limps after him.

HAWLEY:
They'll never let you do it.

EVEL:
Sure they will. You know why? Cause I'm gonna fucking make them famous.

INT SHABBY MOTEL, OUTSIDE VEGAS DAY

Evel and Hawley are in a tiny room in a motel that can only be called "shabby." And that would be generous. Through the tattered drapes the "BOB KNIEVEL" truck can be seen.

Evel is on the phone, Hawley drinks a beer and watches, amused.

EVEL (ON PHONE):
Yeah, this is Gil Rogin from Sports Illustrated, let me talk to Jay Sarnow wouldya, honey?

HAWLEY:
Who's Sarnow?

EVEL (COVERING PHONE):
Runs Caesar's -- (he speaks into the phone) -- Mr. Sarnow, hi, this is Gil Rogin from Sports Illustrated, I heard this crazy kid Bobby Kanoovel -- Kaniival -- whatever the hell he's called, I hear he's gonna jump your fountains Yeah, well, that's what I heard ... Never heard of him? Uh-huh...

Evel winks to Hawley.

CUT TO:

Several days later, Evel is lounging in bed, he is again talking on the phone:

EVEL (ON PHONE):

Mr. Sarnow, this is John Franklin from Life Magazine, so when is Bob Knieval gonna make the jump? ... Uh-huh ... No, but I wanted to send a photographer ... No, Frank Quinn from the Standard was talking to me about it...

CUT TO:

Several days later, Evel is again on the phone:

EVEL (ON PHONE):

Roone Arledge here, Jay. Listen, I'm getting lots of calls on this Bob Knieval jump. You gotta date yet?

CUT TO:

Several days later, Evel is standing, again on the phone:

EVEL (ON PHONE):

Mr. Sarnow, this is Ira Rosenstein, and I represent Mr. Robert Knieval and he would like a meeting with you to discuss--

CUT TO:

INT JAY SARNOW'S OFFICE, CAESAR'S DAY

JAY SARNOW, an exuberant man in his 60's, leaps to his feet and bellows into the phone:

SARNOW (ON PHONE):

You get that Knieval bastard in here! My phone's been ringing off the hook! HE'S GOTTA MAKE THIS JUMP!

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE, PARKING LOT DAY

Evel, Hawley and Jay Sarnow are walking by the fountains. They are pacing off the distance of the jump.

HAWLEY:

47 ... 48 ... 49 ... 50. Call if 50 yards.

They stop.

SARNOW:

And you can really do this?

EVEL:

In my sleep. A few months ago in Carson City I--

SARNOW:

Kid, kid ... Hold on. Now they tell me there ain't no such thing as bad publicity. And I just opened the joint so the publicity would be good, okay, I grant you that. But if you get smashed all across the asphalt and your head gets split open and your brains fly all over the place then that ain't no damn good. Nothing's gonna jinx a gambler like having to step over blood on the way in. No blood on my asphalt, you follow?

EVEL:

Yes, sir.

SARNOW:

Can you make it?

EVEL (SNAPS HIS FINGERS):

Piece of cake.

Beat as Sarnow considers the strange young man before him.

SARNOW:

You're either a goddamn lunatic or a goddamn genius. Either way, you're my kinda cat. Come on.

They move toward the casino. Evel gives a radiant secret smile to Hawley.

INT

CAESAR'S PALACE

FOLLOWING

Evel, Hawley and Sarnow are sitting at a booth in the bustling casino.

SARNOW:

So where the hell you come from?

EVEL:

Butte, Montana. I been jumping for about three years now all across--

SARNOW:

You ever crash?

EVEL:

Never.

Hawley smiles and takes a drink.

Never? SARNOW:

Never. EVEL:

Never? SARNOW:

Once. EVEL:

Sarnow shakes his head.

SARNOW:
You're a piece a' work, I tell ya. Now listen, this is a high class joint. I don't want any white-trash, trailer-park, red-neck crap from you. We do this, we do it with class.

EVEL:
I wouldn't have it any other way.

SARNOW:
I'll handle the promotion. But it's gonna be real tasteful. Hell, my phone's been buzzing like crazy. It's gonna sell itself.

EVEL (PULLING A CONTRACT FROM HIS JACKET):
Now my lawyer, Mr. Ira Rosenstein, from New York City, drew this up. Says I get a \$500 advance.

Sarnow scans the contract.

SARNOW:
Whattaya need an advance for?

EVEL:
Ask Mr. Rosenstein.

SARNOW (CONTINUING TO SCAN THE CONTRACT):
He's from New York City, huh?

EVEL:
That's where his office is, I mean.

SARNOW (CONTINUING TO SCAN THE CONTRACT):
Uh-huh. Whereabouts?

Wall Street.
EVEL:

SARNOW (CONTINUING TO SCAN THE CONTRACT):
Wall Street, my my. Which side of Wall Street?

East.
EVEL:

SARNOW (SMILING AND PUTTING THE CONTRACT DOWN):
And Mr. Rosenstein from the East side of Wall Street in New York City says I gotta give you a \$500 advance, huh?

Yes, sir.
EVEL:

Beat.

SARNOW:
You're not a gambler are you?

No, sir.
EVEL:

Hawley rolls his eyes.

Sarnow beckons to a pretty female dealer. She glides to them with a tray of chips. Sarnow takes one black \$500 chip, raps it on the table twice and tosses it to Evel.

SARNOW:
Let's show these motherfuckers how to put on a show.

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE, PARKING LOT FOLLOWING

Evel and Hawley are leaving Caesar's.

HAWLEY:
"Tasteful"? He wants to do a "tasteful" motorcycle jump?

EVEL:
Whatever the man wants, baby. Hold up a sec, I gotta call Linda.

Evel goes to a pay phone in the parking lot.

EVEL:
You got some dimes?

HAWLEY (HANDING HIM DIMES):
Why don't you cash in your chip, you cheap bastard?

EVEL (PUMPING DIMES INTO THE
PHONE):
That's for something special ... (he dials) ... Linda!
The big man went for it! Grab the kids and get your ass
down here!

INT KNIEVEL HOME, KITCHEN, BUTTE DAY

LINDA KNIEVEL hangs up the phone.

She is a very pretty woman of 25. She has a perpetually serene exterior that only occasionally cracks under the absolute terror brought about by her husband's unusual occupation.

She is standing at a wall phone in the Knievel's tiny home in Butte. Behind her the window over the sink shows a ghastly view of a mountainside ravaged by mining and smoke stacks.

We can also see their sons, KELLY (age 8) and ROBBIE (age 5) playing in the backyard. Their daughter TRACY (age 3) toddles around the kitchen.

Linda sits at the kitchen table and continues to drink her cup of coffee, her face unreadable.

INT CASINO, LAS VEGAS DAY

The loud cha-ching of cash registers and the unmistakable click of plastic gambling chips. The surly din of gamblers winning and losing.

We are in one of the lesser casinos on the Las Vegas Strip. We see roulette wheels spinning and slot machines blinking and dealers flinging cards across blackjack tables. The patrons who haunt this mercenary netherworld joylessly toss money back and forth as cocktail waitresses circulate with drinks.

It is all about money here. We see the pay-out cages and the purchase of chips and quarters shoved into slot machines.

Through the window of the casino we can see a huge billboard showing Evel's handsome face, staring nobly into the distance, his hair slightly tussled by some imaginary breeze. On the billboards are the words: BOB KNIEVEL! FACING DEATH! JANUARY 1! ONLY AT CAESAR'S!

A cocktail waitress stands gazing out the window at the billboard.

WAITRESS:

Oh please God, he's too beautiful to die.

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE, PARKING LOT FOLLOWING

Title: JANUARY 1, 1968

The Caesar's Palace parking lot is almost unrecognizable. Thousands and thousands of spectators now crowd every available inch around the fountains. They hang from balconies and awnings and lightposts.

The crowds entering the actual parking lot area must buy tickets. They shove forward crumpled bills and get cheap paper tickets.

Take-off and landing-ramps that are now in place on either side of the enormous fountains.

For the crowd this is undoubtedly the first time they have seen anything as bizarre as a motorcycle jump. In 1968 this sort of thing was simply unheard of.

INT UNDERGROUND GARAGE, CAESAR'S FOLLOWING

The unmistakable thrum of a motorcycle being tuned echoes.

In the mammoth and deserted garage under Caesar's, Evel stands looking into a hand mirror, smoothing his hair, as Hawley adjusts the bike.

Linda and the kids are behind them.

Evel is dressed in a white leather outfit. It does not yet have all the familiar red-white-and-blue stripes and stars and cape and frills.

HAWLEY:

Now she's running fine, but you got to watch the shift before you hit the ramp--

EVEL:

I got it.

HAWLEY:

If you punch the shift--

EVEL:

Hawley, you worry too much. I done it a thousand times in my head. It's over. I made it. We're rich.

He turns to Linda and the kids.

EVEL:

Come on, honey, give me a kiss.

Linda kisses him.

EVEL:

You go on now. I gotta wait for Mr. Sarnow.

LINDA:

Couldn't we wait here?

EVEL:

No, I gotta do this like he wants. Wants me to come out with him and some folks from the hotel. For the photographers. I'll see you after, okay?

LINDA:

Okay.

He leans down to his kids and hugs and kisses them with comforting quiet words. Linda looks to Hawley. He smiles to her.

EVEL (TO KIDS):

Now you scream real loud so I can hear you.

His daughter Tracy hugs him tightly around the legs.

EVEL (TO LINDA):

Honey...

Linda takes Tracy and the boys and they are about to leave.

Linda turns and returns to Evel. She kisses him deeply and then leaves with the kids.

Hawley finishes tuning the bike and switches it off. Abrupt silence after the humming of the bike.

Evel goes to a tool box and pulls out a bottle of Wild Turkey and two glasses. He pours two shots and gives one to Hawley.

Beat.

HAWLEY:

Don't die.

EVEL:

Never will.

They swallow the shots in unison.

Jay Sarnow enters the garage grandly with two enormously tall showgirls.

SARNOW:

Bobby! How ya feeling? Feeling lucky?

EVEL:

Shit, might jump all the way to the Dunes.

SARNOW:

Fuck the Dunes. This is Midge...

One of the showgirls kisses Evel. Followed by the other. He is surprised.

SARNOW:

And this is Babs. They are the tallest showgirls in Vegas, I shit you not. Sisters. From -- where you from, honey?

MIDGE:

Allentown, Pennsylv--

SARNOW:

Whatever. Anyway, time's here.

Beat.

EVEL:

I'm ready.

One of the showgirls takes Evel's leather gloves and the other takes his helmet. The showgirls leave the garage. Hawley follows.

EVEL (STOPPING SARNOW):

Mr. Sarnow -- I'll never forget this. I want to thank you for the chance. I owe you.

SARNOW:

Don't think I don't know it. You just make the distance, son.

They leave.

INT CAESAR'S PALACE, CASINO FOLLOWING

With the two showgirls leading, Evel, Sarnow and Hawley parade through the casino. Hawley is embarrassed by the proceedings. Evel is enjoying the attention as some of the gamblers gape and whisper to one another.

A few bored gamblers glance up from their slot machines and then immediately return to the machines. Some guy in a white leather suit, big deal.

Evel stops at a roulette wheel.

EVEL:

Hold on.

He carefully places his \$500 black chip on the table. He bets red.

The roulette wheel is set in motion. Evel watches it intently. Hawley watches Evel's intensity, a bit disquieted.

The wheel spins to a stop. Black. The wheel operator sweeps away Evel's chip.

Beat. Evel smiles.

EVEL:

Fuck me.

He strides out of the dark casino and into the sunlight.

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE, PARKING LOT FOLLOWING

Evel stands on a small platform before a standing microphone, addressing the huge crowd on a tinny public address system:

EVEL:

Hello ... my name's Bob Knieval. And first off, I wanna introduce you to my family over there. (He points) That's my wife Linda and my kids, Kelly, Robbie and Tracy. Aren't they great? Hi, Honey ... I'd like to thank you all for coming out today and ringing in the New Year with me. I know 1968 is gonna be a great year for you all and for me -- provided I survive the next five minutes. (He smiles. Laugh from the crowd.) So I guess there's not too much to say other than ... um ... you're going to see me get on my motorcycle and you're gonna see me jump over these fountains. I know I'm going to make it, because I know you're on my side.

I hope you will remember this day for as long as you live. God bless.

The crowd applauds as he turns from the platform and goes to his motorcycle. Hawley makes a final check of the bike as Evel straps on his helmet. "BOB KNIEVEL" is painted on the helmet.

HAWLEY:

Keep the rear tire up, buddy. Just don't hit her on the tire. Don't come down too late no matter what.

EVEL:

They say how many people are here?

HAWLEY:

A shitload. I hear Dean Martin is here.

EVEL:

You're kidding me? How about Sinatra?

HAWLEY:

Don't know. Okay. You're golden.

He slaps Evel's helmet. Evel nods and roars off.

The crowd explodes with a ferocious joy as he swings the bike around and peels past them in a deafening roar of exhaust.

Sarnow stands with Linda and the kids. She is placid. Robbie calls to his father:

ROBBIE:

GO ON, DAD!

Evel waves to Robbie as he drives the distance and prepares for the jump. He stops the bike and stares at the path and the looming take-off ramp and the bubbling fountains. He revs the engine and prepares.

He sees the billboards with his picture -- he sees the cameras -- he sees his family -- he sees the crowd -- the faces everywhere around him are amused, horrified, indifferent, curious, excited and anxious. Kids eat Sno-cones and munch on popcorn. American flags swirl around the parking lot.

The crowd and engine noise gradually fade. Absolute silence. And then we hear the steady breathing inside Evel's head.

And he is off.

The breathing accelerates as he speeds toward the take-off ramp. He hits the ramp and--

Silence. The breathing stops. Nothing.

In slow-motion we see Evel soar through the air -- the bike hanging ... and hanging ... and hanging ...

In the foreground the crowd silently cheers -- they raise their arms in exhilaration as Evel soars -- like a perfect ballistic missile the bike traces a beautiful arc...

The bike floats down -- but the rear tire is too low -- it hits the landing ramp hard -- Evel loses control -- he flies off the bike, over the handle bars -- he floats toward the asphalt -- he smashes and skids and slides across the asphalt -- his head snaps back -- his body rise and falls, for a moment he appears to be almost standing -- he tumbles for 165 feet -- it is perversely beautiful as his shattered body flips and flops like a grotesque, broken doll--

The crowd is frozen. They are absolutely horrified. Finally a surge of people race over to Evel's limp form -- swarming him--

Silence through this all and then CUT TO:

INT HOSPITAL ROOM DAY

Evel SCREAMING -- full-throated, terrifying screams of agony.

He is in a hospital bed writhing in pain as doctors work in a flurry over his mangled body -- a doctor tries to hold him down - - another doctor furiously cuts away his torn leather suit -- bloody sprays from his shattered body -- another doctor leans down and presses with his hands to try to stop the blood -- another doctor jabs a morphine IV into Evel's arm -- a nurse recoils from the spraying blood -- blood splashes on the walls.

It is a horrible, quick burst of violence and pain.

Hawley drags Linda away from the bed and out of the room.

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT

Later.

Linda, Hawley and Jay Sarnow sit in chairs outside Evel's hospital room. The kids sit on the floor around them. Kelly and Tracy are asleep. Robbie leans against Hawley's prosthetic leg. They are all exhausted and scared.

A weary doctor emerges from Evel's room. Linda stands and faces the doctor.

Jay Sarnow rises and immediately gathers the kids:

SARNOW:

Come on, kids. Uncle Jay'll spring for an ice cream cone.

ROBBIE:

I don't wanna go.

SARNOW:

Whatsamatter, you don't like ice cream? What kinda weird kid are you?

Sarnow drags the kids away and they disappear down the hall.

DOCTOR:

Mrs. Knievel, your husband is in stable condition--

LINDA:

Thank God--

DOCTOR:

But we have a serious problem here. He broke his foot and his wrist and he has a severe concussion. But the real problem is his shattered hip -- this was a compound fracture that pushed the hip right up through the pelvis resulting in another compound fracture of the pelvis that--

LINDA:

What does all that mean? Tell me what that means.

DOCTOR:

Please sit down.

LINDA:

I don't want to sit down--

HAWLEY (GENTLY):

Sit down, Linda.

LINDA (NOT SITTING):

Tell me what that means, please.

DOCTOR:

He may never walk again. I'm very sorry. The pelvic injury--

LINDA:

Can I see him?

DOCTOR:

Yes, but he's heavily sedated. And we've had to restrain him because the morphine has been causing violent hallucinations and--

She turns and enters the hospital room.

The doctor leans against the wall and sighs.

Beat.

HAWLEY:
You a betting man, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
On occasion.

HAWLEY:
I'll bet you ten dollars that he'll be out of that bed
in a month, walking in two and jumping in three.

DOCTOR:
Mr. Nowak, I don't think you understand the
seriousness--

HAWLEY:
No. I don't think you understand Bobby Knieval.

He turns and enters the hospital room...

INT HOSPITAL ROOM FOLLOWING

Evel lies on the hospital bed. He is now lashed to the bed with thick leather straps. He twists back and forth in a morphine hallucination that runs the gamut from writhing violence to gentle swaying.

Linda and Hawley look at him.

She covers her mouth, staring at Evel. Hawley puts his arm around her.

And we go to...

HALLUCINATION SEQUENCE

In the hospital room, the Doctor shows Linda and Hawley X-rays of the steel pins and plates now inside Evel's hips and legs...

The garish blue flash of the X-ray light causes Evel's eyes to flicker, darting back and forth under his eyelids in drug-induced visions...

And in Evel's mind we see the details of the jump. We see the tiny, minute texture of the failed adventure. We see Evel's hands shifting the gears. We see his fingers delicately playing the brake. We see the wheels grinding over the asphalt. We see the jarring lurch as the bike hits

the take-off ramp. We see his arms straining, pulling up the nose of the bike. We see the roulette wheel, spinning and coming up black. We see the crowd as it flies past below...

In the hospital, now day, Evel jerks in the bed. Linda sits in a corner and watches him helplessly. An orderly is washing blood from the walls...

We see the back tire of the bike slamming down on the landing ramp. We see Evel fighting for control -- waging combat with the bike. We see the ungainly, awkward tumble as Evel spills over the handlebars. We see the American flags fluttering around the parking lot, spinning like crazy pinwheels as Evel cartwheels over the handlebars. We see the stunned crowd, paralyzed in shocked disbelief...

In the hospital, another X-ray flash. More pins and plates in Evel's body...

We see the crash, from Evel's point-of-view and from various extreme close-up perspectives. We see the asphalt flying up. We see his hands reaching desperately, poignantly, impotently out to stop his fall. We see his gloves shred when they hit the asphalt. We see his crash helmet bouncing, his neck thrown back, his head snapping. We see the seams of his leathers actually rip as Evel slides across the asphalt, leaving a trail of blood...

...A trail of blood sweeps across Evel's knuckles. He swears and jerks his hand back. He is a teenager and mile down the shaft, deep in a copper mine in Butte. He is absolutely covered in black grim and pounding a jackhammer into a solid rockface. The only light comes from the lamps on the miners' helmets. He wipes the blood from his knuckles, a cut from flying debris. He returns to jackhammering the rock when a subtle vibration shakes the tunnel -- the miners' glance to each other in panic -- cave in -- they drop their jackhammers and race up a side tunnel -- a sudden explosion of water comes pouring over them -- a miner is swept away -- Evel clings to the rockface as water fills the tunnel -- rocks are falling everywhere around him -- the water reaches his chin -- he gasps for air and glares up in terror -- above him is only the blackness of the mine -- the water reaches his mouth--

In the hospital, Evel suddenly snaps awake, gasping for air. It is night. Linda is asleep in a chair across the room. He tries to speak but cannot. There is very little light in the room. A street light outside the window, however, illuminates one patch of wall.

On that patch of wall is a hanging calendar. The calendar shows a majestic picture of the Grand Canyon. Evel stares and stares and stares at the picture.

His eyes are burning.

Now -- unexpectedly, his broken and battered body held immobile by leather restraints, 29 years into his life, unprepared for the enormity of it -- Evel Knievel has an epiphany.

He stares at the Grand Canyon.

INT HOSPITAL DAY

Evel has recovered enough to leave the hospital. Linda and Hawley wait as an orderly gently shifts Evel from the bed to a wheelchair.

Hawley maneuvers the wheelchair to the window. Evel glances out. The street below is crowded with fans and reporters and local TV crews.

Evel looks back to Linda in amazement. He takes her hand.

EVEL:
Honey, we're on our way.

EXT HOSPITAL DAY

Linda and Hawley push Evel on a wheelchair out of the hospital. He is met by the pack of reporters and photographs -- a dizzying flash of cameras and lights. He is surprised but immediately rises to the occasion. He smiles and waves to the cameras.

Hawley pushes Evel through the crowd.

[A word about Evel's physical movement from this point on. After the Caesar's crash, the subsequent operations and insertion of the steel pins and plates, his left leg was an inch shorter than his right leg. This resulted in a rather unique limp. Further accidents and operations accelerated the limp until by the end of the story his left leg is almost two full inches shorter than his right leg. Other accidents resulted in further difficulty in motion. But for all this, Evel is a graceful man who attempts to move easily and with fluid, high-octane energy. He is like a spry crab doing ballet.]

EXT BUTTE EVENING

We see Evel's home, the place that forever shaped him. We see the town of Butte, rustic and hard. We see bars on every corner. Almost as if to confound the natural beauty of the Rockies we see

ugly strip mining and the hideous scar of Anaconda's big open-pit mine. We see the harsh life made from tearing copper from the ground.

EXT

KNIEVEL HOME, BUTTE

EVENING

Evel is in the driveway of his tiny home with his sons Kelly and Robbie.

Everywhere beyond their small tract house we see the industrial wasteland created by copper mining. Smoke stacks belch out black smoke, almost completely obscuring the setting sun. We hear the distant chug and roar of heavy machinery at a strip mining site.

Evel is teaching Robbie how to ride a bicycle, his first without training wheels. Robbie wears one of Evel's crash helmets.

EVEL:

Okay, Robbie -- keep peddling when we start going, okay? Just gotta feel your way through it.

ROBBIE:

Dad -- I can do it! I don't need this damn helmet!

EVEL:

Watch your mouth, son. Nice and easy now. Here we go...

He runs alongside Robbie down the driveway, still holding on to him.

He lets Robbie go. Robbie peddles a bit and then teeters and then tumbles over to the lawn. Evel races to him and cradles him.

EVEL (URGENTLY):

You okay? You okay, Robbie?

ROBBIE:

Dad! I'm fine!!

Linda emerges from the house and calls to them:

LINDA:

Boys, time to wash up for dinner.

ROBBIE:

No Mom! I almost got it!

EVEL:

You scoot now. We'll practice again after.

ROBBIE:

You promise?

EVEL:

I promise.

Robbie and Kelly go into the house.

Evel remains on the driveway and gazes toward the setting sun.

Linda watches him for a moment.

She goes to him. She puts her arm around him and they watch the sunset. They can just make out the crimson glimmering of the sun through the oppressive black smoke and silhouette of the mining towers.

Pause.

LINDA:

You're gonna be jumping again, aren't you?

EVEL:

Yeah.

Beat.

He turns to her.

EVEL:

You and the kids... I'm gonna take care of you. We're not gonna have to live like this anymore.

LINDA:

I get so scared when you jump...

EVEL:

It's what I do, Linda...

Beat.

EVEL:

It's all I can do.

Pause. He gazes again at the sunset for a moment and then he takes her hand and leads her in. We linger for a moment, taking in the ghastly industrial spectacle of the mining everywhere around their home.

INT WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS SET DAY

In a familiar yellow ABC Wide World of Sports jacket, Frank Gifford sits interviewing Evel.

Footage of the Caesar's crash plays on a monitor nearby.

EVEL:

One solid month I was in that coma. I was smashed from hell to breakfast that time.

FRANK GIFFORD (LAUGHS):

It sure was a spill. I felt like that a few times myself. Now before you took up jumping you were a motorcycle racer.

EVEL:

Man, and I was the worst darn motorcycle racer in the history of the planet! But it got me outta the mines, that's for sure.

FRANK GIFFORD:

The mines?

EVEL:

When you're a kid from Butte you got one thing and one thing only to do -- work in the big Anaconda open pit mine. There's nothing else. I tried it, but it wasn't for me.

FRANK GIFFORD:

Why not?

Beat.

EVEL:

The mines are straight hell on earth. You go down a mile into the shaft and you don't see the sky. Not ever. And you're dirty and you can't breath and you die young. That's the mines.

Beat.

FRANK GIFFORD:

Now, Bobby, a lot of people out there must be wondering about you. I mean jumping over things, isn't that kind of a crazy way to make a living?

EVEL:

Maybe it is but I'll tell you what I think is really crazy. I been in Los Angeles for two weeks now and every day I drive down the freeway and I see guys packed into their cars driving to some rat race job they hate. Some job that's killing their spirit a little bit every day. I look at them and I wonder who's the crazy one. You know what I mean?

INT

HOLLYWOODLAND MOTEL

NIGHT

The roar of passing cars on Ventura Boulevard is incessant as Evel and Hawley drink beer in their small, dingy motel room. A green neon sign reading "HOLLYWOODLAND MOTEL" can be seen through the window. Hawley is adjusting the knee on his prosthetic leg as Evel busily paints his crash helmet.

EVEL:

So Frank and me walk out the stage door and there are all these people waiting for my autograph like I'm Charlton Heston or some such! Then we went over to this Chasen's place -- which a real fancy joint for movie people -- and again all these folks come up to me for my autograph. Hey, did I tell you Nabisco called? I gotta put these Chuckles decals on everything--

HAWLEY:

What the hell's a Chuckle?

EVEL:

It's like a candy. I don't know.

He holds up the finished helmet. To the familiar "BOB KNIEVEL" he has added "KING OF THE DAREDEVILS."

EVEL:

Well?

HAWLEY:

Where you gonna put this candy decal?

EVEL:

Who the fuck cares? Let's get blitzed.

INT

SEEDY BAR, HOLLYWOOD

FOLLOWING

At first we are looking through a huge fish tank. Evel and Hawley are holding forth at a seedy bar in Hollywood. They are loud and boisterous and have a crowd gathered around them. The fish tank fills the area behind the bar.

Evel is clearly enjoying his new celebrity.

EVEL:

So this girl comes up to me with a big powder puff and I say, sweetie, none of that shit on me or I'm gonna look like a fruit and I may be many things -- God knows I am -- but I ain't no fruit!

Laughter.

EVEL:

So she says everybody has to wear it, for the cameras, you know. And I figure, hell, if Frank Gifford wears makeup then I can too!

WOMAN 1:

You were great--

EVEL:

And isn't Frank just a helluva guy? I'm gonna be on Joey Bishop next week.

WOMAN 2:

You know Joey Bishop?

EVEL:

Sure. And Jack Paar and me go way back. Sinatra was at the Caesar's jump. Great guy for a dago.

From across the bar, a huge voice bellows:

ZIMMERMAN'S VOICE:

I SAW YOU! YOU'RE THE GUY AT CAESAR'S! IN THE PANSY WHITE SUIT!

Evel slowly turns to take in the imposing frame of GEORGE ZIMMERMAN. Zimmerman is an enormous man in his thirties.

Zimmerman moves unsteadily to Evel and Hawley.

ZIMMERMAN:

THE CANDY ASS WHITE SUIT JUMPY GUY!

Evel stands.

EVEL:

And who the hell are you?

ZIMMERMAN:

My name's George Zimmerman and I think you're a SICK MOTHER.

EVEL:

You a Jew?

ZIMMERMAN:

I AM A JEW AND I THINK YOU'RE A FAGGOT!

EVEL:

Hawley. Educate the man.

Hawley immediately swings his prosthetic leg and slams it into Zimmerman's considerable gut. Zimmerman doubles over but does not fall. Hawley is amazed. Zimmerman straightens.

Evel slams a fist into Zimmerman's face. Zimmerman recoils from the impact but refuses to fall. He spits out blood. Evel shakes his fist in pain.

Zimmerman remains standing, swaying before them.

EVEL:

Hell, I think we oughta buy this man a drink real fast before he whips our asses all over Hollywood Boulevard.

Zimmerman smiles.

INT EVEL'S TRUCK NIGHT

Evel, Hawley and Zimmerman are crowded into Evel's truck as they continue to cruise the glittering and desperate nightlife of Hollywood.

They are all drinking cans of beer.

EVEL:

This whole place is full of nothing but bloodsuckers. Actors and bloodsuckers. Like those little squirmy blood-eating things--

HAWLEY:

Leeches.

EVEL:

A-one right. Those guys. Why don't we hit the road some? Get the hell out of this sewer. Get some fresh air. Go see some mountains. No -- no -- I know where we'll go! Buckle up, kids!

Evel suddenly screeches the truck around and heads out of town.

EXT DESERT ROAD ALMOST DAWN

Evel's truck speeds along a desolate desert road and then spins into a rural truck stop.

EXT RURAL TRUCK STOP FOLLOWING

Hawley and Zimmerman are sitting at the curb by the truck stop. Evel can be seen at the counter inside.

ZIMMERMAN:

So what happened to your leg?

HAWLEY:
Lost it in a crash. Twelve years ago.

ZIMMERMAN:
Bummer.

Beat.

ZIMMERMAN (GLANCING TO EVEL INSIDE
THE STORE):
You don't think he's robbing the joint, do ya?

HAWLEY:
Wouldn't be the first time.

Beat.

ZIMMERMAN:
You're kidding, right?

Evel emerges from the truck stop. He sits with them. He has bought a fresh supply of beer and a package of Chuckles candy.

EVEL:
Okay -- let's see what this crap tastes like.

He gives a section of the candy to each and they begin to munch on it.

Hawley winces and swallows. Evel spits his out.

EVEL:
I gotta talk to those guys about this. This ain't no Bob Knievel candy.

HAWLEY:
Too chewy.

EVEL:
Maybe they do jerky. Bob Knievel jerky would be okay.

HAWLEY (WRYLY):
You think that's "tasteful" enough?

EVEL:
Maybe not.

ZIMMERMAN:
You gonna finish that?

Evel hands him the candy. Zimmerman chews.

'Zgood.

ZIMMERMAN (CHEWING HAPPILY):

Evel laughs and pulls Zimmerman up. They return to the truck as:

HAWLEY:

For Christ's sake, where are we going?

EVEL:

You'll see when we get there.

HAWLEY:

Wake me up when we hit New Orleans.

They climb into the truck.

INT EVEL'S TRUCK NIGHT

Hawley is asleep. Evel leans over to him.

EVEL:

Hawley, wake up, we're here.

Hawley awakes and glances out the front windshield. He stares in amazement.

They are parked at the rim of the Grand Canyon.

EXT GRAND CANYON NIGHT

Evel, Hawley and Zimmerman emerge from the truck. They stretch and walk to the rim of the Canyon.

They stand and stare at the majestic, moonlit views of the Canyon.

EVEL:

This what it's all about, boys. Everything. Right here.

HAWLEY:

Mm.

Pause. Evel inhales a pure air and gazes at the Canyon.

EVEL:

You know they're sending up this space rocket with all these pictures of the world. And music and all. For aliens to find, I guess, I don't know. If it were me I'd skip the pictures of New York and the Statue of Liberty and all that crap and just send this ... a picture of this with one word written on it ... America.

He stares and stares at the stunning vistas.

INT _____ EVEL'S TRUCK _____ NIGHT

The trio is back on the outskirts of LA.

EVEL:

It's the whole image, you follow? That's what folks wanna see. They wanna see something special. They're tired of that whole Rebel-Southern-Dixiecrat-redneck-bullshit kinda stunt show. They want something with taste--

Hawley laughs.

EVEL:

I'm telling you. Nabisco's on board. Harley-Davidson is gonna sign on and Mack truck too if I agree to jump some of their rigs. We're getting the endorsements so we buy the image. Something that people will remember.

HAWLEY:

Shit, Bobby, you jump motorcycles. Why you gotta make it the Macy's Parade?

EVEL:

Because all of that is gonna make me money. And that money is gonna let me do something that no one has ever done before! Something that folks will ... remember!

The truck's engine begins to knock and then the speed decreases. Evel pulls it over. The truck comes to a stop.

Beat.

HAWLEY (LACONICALLY):

Before all that, you need some gas.

EXT _____ GAS STATION, OUTSIDE LA _____ FOLLOWING

Evel, Hawley and Zimmerman wander, none to steadily, to an all-night gas station.

They go to the pimply attendant who is safely ensconced in a booth behind bulletproof glass.

EVEL:

Hey, pal, my truck ran out of gas a few miles back. I need some gas.

ATTENDANT:

Yeah, well, good for you. I need the cash upfront and a ten dollar deposit for the can.

Evel roots through his pockets. He pulls out some change and sorts through it.

EVEL:

I got ... about maybe 50 cents.

ATTENDANT:

That ain't gonna do it, sport.

EVEL:

Gimme a hand here, buddy, I just gotta make it back to Ventura Boulevard--

ATTENDANT:

Can't do it without a deposit.

ZIMMERMAN:

DO YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS?! THIS IS BOB KNIEVEL, YOU LOW-LIFE SCUMBALL!

ATTENDANT:

I never heard of no Bob Knievel. Now hit the road 'fore I call the cops.

Zimmerman begins to kick the booth. Hawley pulls him away as Evel moves close to the glass and glares at the attendant.

EVEL (QUIETLY, LETHALLY):

You never heard of me? You will, baby, you will.

Beat.

ATTENDANT (A BIT SCARED):

You're an evil fucker, aren't you?

Evel stares at him. A light has gone on. The final piece has fallen into place.

EVEL:

Why, yes. Yes I am.

He smiles.

The opening chords of "AND WHEN I DIE" by Blood, Sweat and Tears are heard and we are into:

MONTAGE

"AND WHEN I DIE" continues and we see a sequence showing The Rise and Creation of Evel Knievel:

Evel signing his endorsement deal with Nabisco. He smiles and gleefully holds up a package of Chuckles...

Chuckles decals going on his helmet and bikes and truck. We also see "BOBBY KNIEVEL" being replaced with "EVEL KNIEVEL" on his battered trailer and on his crash helmet...

A few quick jumps -- no real detail -- just a flurry of crowds and flashing photos and wheelies and soaring through the air...

Evel and his family move out of their tiny home in Butte and into "Rancho Knievel." Rancho Knievel is a huge spread that rivals Graceland in its single-minded egomania. Portraits of Evel and the family adorn the walls. Linda is thrilled...

We stop for a moment as Evel, now dressed in a groovy leisure suit, conducts another interview with Frank Gifford on ABC Wide World of Sports:

EVEL:

Well, I say that a man has got to make his mark on the world. When he lays his head down at night he should know that he has done something that day to be proud of. That he has challenged himself.

"AND WHEN I DIE" and the sequence continue with:

Evel enthusiastically showing Hawley the walking stick he has had made. It sports an enormous jeweled head with his initials spelled out in diamonds. For the devastating coup de grace, Evel unscrews the head and slides out five long vials that are housed inside the stick: vodka, scotch, gin, bourbon and rye. Hawley can't help but laugh...

We stop for a moment at Rancho Knievel.

Evel is sorting through his closet, which is filled with a variety of bold, colorful shirts.

EVEL:

Linda! Where's that new shirt I got in Memphis? The pink one. Linda! ... Honey?

LINDA (CALLING FROM ANOTHER ROOM):

Bob ... I think you better come out here.

Evel turns from the closet and makes his way to Linda. She is standing, gaping in amazement out the front door.

An ENORMOUS fire-engine red tractor-trailer rig is in the driveway. It is 60 feet long and absolutely stunning in its size and proportions. It is divided up into a driving/living rig and a trailer for bikes and jumping equipment. Various Jumping Evels and Number 1's and Flags and Stars and Stripes adorn the sides of the rig. A silver Mack Truck bulldog shines brilliantly on the hood.

The whole thing is equally beautiful and obscene.

For once, Evel is absolutely speechless.

A driver gets out the cab of the truck and comes to Evel and Linda. He hands Evel the keys.

DRIVER:
Courtesy of Mack Truck. Enjoy.

Evel hollers with joy and swings Linda into a huge hug."

"AND WHEN I DIE" and sequence continues with:

Evel behind the wheel, cruising happily in his new rig. Zimmerman and Hawley lounge in the living section of the trailer. It is very well-appointed with a full bar, shag zebra-striped carpeting, love seat, etc. In a large closet area hangs a huge collection of Evel's jumping leathers and bold, colorful shirts and slacks and jackets...

Evel trying on various leather jumping outfits. Zimmerman and Hawley provide brutal commentary as Evel models them. He can't find quite the perfect look...

"AND WHEN I DIE" and sequence end at:

INT ASTRODOME DAY

Title: HOUSTON ASTRODOME -- JANUARY 8, 1971

The Astrodome is packed. Every seat is filled. The crowd is loud, enthusiastic and ready. A take-off ramp, a landing ramp and 13 cars and a van have been set up in the middle of the huge arena. Evel's red tractor-trailer is parked at one end of the stadium.

EVEL KNIEVEL banners and flags can be seen around the arena.

The crowd chants, over and over, "E-vul" "E-vul" "E-vul"...

INT ASTRODOME. TRAILER FOLLOWING

The steady chant of the crowd is the only sound as Evel prepares.

He stands in his dressing room area and stares at himself in the mirror.

He slowly zips up the famous red-white-and-blue and starred jumping leathers that became his trademark. Then he fastens a brilliant gold chain around his neck and pulls on a collection of large, diamond rings. He picks up his bejeweled walking stick.

And the character of Evel Knievel now is complete. He is resplendent. Like a medieval knight he is now impervious behind his armor.

He looks at himself deeply in the mirror. He is looking for fear, for weakness, in his own eyes. Not a trace.

HAWLEY:

Bobby? Bobby...?

Evel turns.

HAWLEY:

You ready?

Evel pours two shots of Wild Turkey. He gives one to Hawley.

Beat.

HAWLEY:

Don't die.

EVEL:

Never will.

They toss back the drinks.

Then they hear the sound of the public address system:

PUBLIC ADDRESS VOICE:

And now, ladies and gentlemen ... the King of the
Daredevils ... the Last of the Gladiators ...
E-VUL K-NIEVEL!

Evel takes a deep breath, swings the door open and steps out of the trailer...

INTASTRODOMEFOLLOWING

And the crowd goes wild.

Evel emerges from the trailer and waves to the crowd. Evel's enormous glittering rings and gold chains catch the light. He raises the jeweled cane and salutes the crowd.

George Zimmerman waits by the trailer door. He accompanies Evel as he strides toward a small stage with a standing microphone. Evel climbs to the stage and addresses the crowd:

EVEL:

Ladies and gentlemen and boys and girls, I thank you for coming out here today to ride with me. That's how I think of it. That you're on the bike with me when I make the jump. That you're flying into the air and we're enjoying it together. So I want to thank all you who have wished me well and given me your love and support. And I want all of you to remember, it's your country. Keep America clean!

With that Evel waves his cane and moves to his waiting bike as the crowd cheers. Hawley waits with the bike and Evel's helmet. Evel gives Zimmerman the cane and Hawley gives Evel his the helmet.

HAWLEY:

They say this is the biggest crowd in the Astrodome ever.

EVEL:

'Course it is.

Evel mounts the bike and straps on his helmet as:

HAWLEY:

What's that "Last Gladiator" crap?

EVEL:

"The Last Gladiator of the New Rome" -- I just came up with it, you like it?

HAWLEY:

Kinda grand, don't you think?

EVEL:

To hell with that. What are the two oldest professions in the world, my friend? Whoring and spilling your blood for the masses. If I ain't a gladiator then I don't know what the hell I am.

With that, and a cocky grin, Evel guns the engine and speeds off in a cloud of dust -- the crowd explodes at the sudden noise and movement.

And they love Evel's pre-jump show.

We see Evel speeding around the arena...

We see him doing a wheelie that seems to go on and on and on forever...

We see Hawley watching intently. As Evel roars past, Hawley shuts his eyes and listens to the sound of the engine...

We see Evel dramatically leaping up on the seat of the bike and steering as he crouches on the seat...

We see Linda and the kids watching happily from the sidelines and waving. Evel acknowledges them with a jaunty wave...

We see Evel pulling the bike up into a wheelie as he stands on the seat...

We see tricks and dramatic spins and more wheelies and more stunt driving. Evel's cape fluttering behind him all the while...

At last Evel roars to a stop and lines up with the take-off ramp. The crowd roars. He revs the engine a few times and roars off.

Evel makes a run at the take-off ramp -- the crowd is excited -- is this it?! -- but Evel rolls to a stop at the top edge of the ramp -- this isn't it -- practice run -- Evel eyes the distance and the landing ramp and then spins back down the take-off ramp.

He fish-tails around and does another run -- at a slightly higher speed -- he checks his speedometer -- 40 mph -- 50 mph -- the crowd is frenzied -- this has got to be it! -- but Evel gently squeezes the brake and again comes to a rolling stop at the edge of the take-off ramp -- another practice run -- the crowd sighs, ah the sublime, delicious anticipation!

Still at the top edge of the take-off ramp Evel revs the motor loudly a few times -- tossing bones to the crowd -- and pretends to listen to the engine. Then he slowly goes back down the ramp again and pulls up to Hawley. They talk closely. The crowd watches hungrily -- what last minute life-or-death detail is Evel discussing with his ace mechanic?

EVEL:

You really don't like that "Last Gladiator" thing?

HAWLEY:

I didn't say I didn't like it. I said it was kinda grand.

EVEL:

Pretend you're working on the bike or something, would ya?

Hawley bends over the bike and pretends to fiddle with it as:

EVEL:

I think it's ... memorable.

HAWLEY:

Your name's Evel Knievel for Christ's sake, you don't think that's memorable enough?

EVEL:

Yeah, well, it's too late cause I already ordered all this crap with "The Last Gladiator" all over it.

Hawley laughs and stands.

HAWLEY:

Wanna make the jump?

EVEL:

Can I get away with another practice run?

HAWLEY:

Naw, they're ready.

EVEL:

Okay. See ya in a bit.

Evel roars off.

With little preamble he spins the bike around and begins speeding toward the take-off ramp.

Now this is really it! The crowd can tell because the engine is so loud -- the RPMs and MPHs are unmistakable -- the sheer noise is unmistakable -- no way Evel can stop now -- the crowd, primed and teased and ready, ROARS!

On the bike, Evel twists the accelerator for everything the bike can give him -- the speedometer shoots up -- 60 mph -- 70 mph -- the take-off ramp nears -- flying toward Evel -- he shifts and shifts again as the speedometer hits the magic 80 mph -- he is almost at the ramp--

Evel glances up and sees the towering steel girder ceiling looming above like a metal sky.

At the last second before hitting the ramp Evel glances down and sees one of his huge diamond "EK" rings glittering--

A bone-jarring jolt as he hits the ramp -- and flies -- he is airborne--

Suddenly from high above we see him floating over the cars -- in slow-motion we see him sailing effortlessly over the chasm -- it is breathtaking.

A perfect landing. A perfect jump.

Evel swings the bike around and waves to the delirious crowd as he speeds back to the take-off ramp.

A canned version of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" begins to play over the PA system.

In the stands the fans are standing and screaming and applauding -- the waves of sound cascading and echoing and filling the stadium.

Evel pulls to a stop at the top of the take-off ramp. We swing around him. All the way around him -- all 360 degrees -- he is surrounded by the cheering crowd.

He raises his arms in victory.

And the crowd goes wild. It is pure adulation.

INT RANCHO KNIEVEL, LIVING ROOM DAY

Evel sits, drinking, with Hawley and Zimmerman. An artist is busy doing a life-sized sculpture of Evel's face in clay. The sculptor also has a few photos and sketches from which to work. He is unusually exacting in his sculpture, measuring distances on the clay head with calipers. The purpose of the odd sculpture is not immediately clear.

A huge poster of the Grand Canyon fills one wall of the room.

Hawley has various maps and diagrams spread out before him.

Pause as Hawley considers the maps.

HAWLEY:
You're out of your mind.

Beat.

HAWLEY:
You're gonna jump the Grand Canyon?

EVEL:
I am.

HAWLEY:
Narrowest point on the whole Canyon is about a mile from rim to rim. How you gonna jump a mile?

EVEL:
We're gonna build a dirt hill 700 feet long and maybe 200 feet high for the ramp -- biggest take-off ramp in the world -- probably the BIGGEST DIRT HILL EVER! -- and we get two Turbonique jet engines for the bike so I slam the ramp at 120 mph and then -- POW! -- hit the jets. Now I gotta a rocket-powered booster attached to some kinda harness for me and then maybe some additional propulsion from--

HAWLEY:
You're living in Oz, baby.

EVEL:
Come on, show a little imagination here, pal.

HAWLEY:
Imagination ain't gonna help you clear a mile.

EVEL (INTENSELY):
Look, if you're a quarterback you wanna win the Superbowl, right? Well this -- this is the Superbowl. The biggest and the best and the ultimate. I jump over the Canyon and I'm ... legendary. That shit-kicker from Butte is gone forever and it's Evel Knievel forever, you follow? Don't you see the majesty of it?

SCULPTOR:
Mr. Knievel, could you give me your left profile?

Evel turns as Linda enters, carrying beer for the men.

EVEL:
Honey, honey, check it out. How's it coming?
Linda looks at the sculpture.

LINDA:
It looks just like you!

HAWLEY:

Bobby, what the hell you want a sculpture of yourself for anyway?

EVEL:

Shit, it's not for me, old man. That sculpture right there is gonna make me so goddamn rich I just might BUY the Grand Canyon! I gotta see it!

He leaps up and gazes at the sculpture. He inspects it closely. The sculptor watches nervously.

EVEL:

Looks like I'm a chink. Make the eyes bigger.

SCULPTOR:

The eyes are really hard to paint. We, um, don't like to make them too big.

EVEL:

Buddy, you make the eyes bigger. And the color has got to be pure blue. Like the sky over the Canyon. You hear me?

SCULPTOR (PEERING AT EVEL):

Are your eyes blue?

EVEL:

What the hell does that matter?

INT IDEAL TOY COMPANY FACTORY DAY

The sculpture of Evel's head -- now miniaturized and duplicated -- is the mold for the new line of Ideal Evel Knievel dolls.

We see the assembly line chugging along as plastic is poured into the molds -- as the dolls are dried -- as machines paint on hair and lips and eyes -- as thousands of little red-white-and-blue jump suits are shoved onto the dolls -- as the completed dolls roll off the conveyor belts.

At the end of the assembly process the sculptor stands with a designer. The designer picks up one of the completed dolls and studies it.

DESIGNER:

What the hell is with those eyes?

SCULPTOR:

Oh man, don't start.

And the machines chug on.

"FLY ME TO THE MOON" by Frank Sinatra is heard...

MONTAGE

"FLY ME TO THE MOON" continues as we see a sequence of The Selling and Seduction of Evel Knievel:

A toy store. We float past the section of dolls and action figures. We see dolls typical of the period: Donny and Marie Osmond dolls; Six-Million Dollar Man and Bionic Woman dolls; Farrah-Fawcett Majors dolls; Welcome Back Kotter dolls. We finally arrive at the mammoth display for the Ideal EVEL KNIEVEL ACTION FIGURES. A surreal collection of miniature Evels...

Evel and Hawley stand in the desert with a few designers and engineers. They are in front of a very peculiar looking motorcycle with jet packs and rockets attached. The motorcycle is resting on a take-off ramp. An engineer presses a button and the rockets fire -- the motorcycle shoots off the take-off ramp and careens wildly out of control. It smashes and tumbles to the ground. Hawley gives Evel a look. Evel gives Hawley a jaunty thumbs up...

A few jumps -- we see flashes of his rituals -- the toast with Hawley, a speech to the crowd, the wheelies and stunt driving, the practice runs -- and a flurried explosion of great jumps...

During the flurry of jumps we hear:

FRANK GIFFORD (VOICE-OVER):

Evel, do you pray before you jump?

EVEL (VOICE-OVER):

Always, but I never pray to God to save me. I pray that He'll help me do my best and that He'll forgive my sins. But I never pray for God to spare my life. Why would I do that? Dying's only a part of living.

Evel signing autographs after a show. He stands patiently in the midst of a crowd and signs autograph after autograph. He signs all of them: "Happy Landings, Evel Knievel." And the sun is brilliant and his dirty blond hair shines. And the crowd adores him. The women are particularly excited. One throws herself on him and kisses him...

And then a series of increasingly ugly and aggressive images of celebrity. Dizzying images of bookies and Vegas and photographers and available women. Of eager new sponsors. Of money and more money. Evel is given free drinks everywhere. He drinks them all.

Evel is at odds with Hawley and Linda. He rages and rampages. He drinks and he struts.

The world is there for the taking.

And he takes it...

"FLY ME TO THE MOON" and the sequence end at:

INT CONVENTION HALL, DALLAS NIGHT

Beautiful women. One after another.

It is the Miss Texas Beauty Pageant, and Evel is one of the celebrity judges.

Miss Austin and Miss El Paso and Miss Dallas parade before Evel.

Evel gives Miss Austin a ruthless and devastating smile.

INT BACKSTAGE LATER THAT NIGHT

Evel pushes his way through the post-show crowd of beauty contestants to find Miss Austin -- now Miss Texas -- surrounded by a sea of admirers.

He grabs her hand and roughly pulls her away from the crowd.

He drags her to a secluded area behind some curtains and slams her into a passionate and almost violent kiss.

Her crown topples from her head and rolls across the dusty stage floor.

INT RANCHO KNIEVEL DAY

Evel sits, unhappy and brooding. A formal looking letter dangles listlessly from one hand. This is the first time in the story we have seen Evel even approaching anything like lethargy.

ABC Wide World of Sports plays silently across the room. Frank Gifford can be seen reporting on some sports event.

Linda sits silently across from Evel.

MAN'S VOICE:

"... in conclusion, we reiterate that under no circumstances can we permit a stunt jump at the Grand Canyon National Park. Obviously we would have no legal recourse if you make your jump on private property outside the Park. Your self-confidence, though admirable, is only mildly reassuring to those of us who

MAN'S VOICE (CONT.):
 have read your plans. You have our best wishes for
 success in your future undertakings. Yours Sincerely,
 Robert E. Vaughan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the
 Department of the Interior."

Beat.

EVEL (SOURLY):
 And they even had to use that word ... "undertaking."

Beat.

He glances at the huge Grand Canyon poster on the wall. He shuts his eyes and for a brief moment in his mind he is there...

Lyrical visions of the Grand Canyon fill Evel's mind. We sweep through the Canyon and fly like a scaring bird of prey in and out of the rocky crags. These glorious vistas continue with lightning quick flashes of sunrises and sunsets and clouds swirling and the Colorado River raging.

A second later. Evel's eyes snap open. He bolts up.

EVEL:
 ROBBIE! ROBBIE! GET IN HERE!

Robbie scampers in.

EVEL:
 Get me the Road Atlas! The big one! And get your Uncle Hawley on the phone!

Robbie scampers out.

Evel stares at the Wide World of Sports broadcast on the TV, his eyes blazing.

INT QUALLS FARMHOUSE DAY

The Qualls farmhouse is dark and cramped. At first we have no idea where we are, or why Evel is here.

Evel is finishing up a rambling, drunken dinner with Hawley, Zimmerman and Farmer Qualls and his wife.

Evel is dressed in a bold pink leisure suit. Farmer Qualls is a quiet man wearing overalls. He and his wife are a bit overwhelmed by the company.

EVEL:

Thing is -- thing is -- I'm gonna be looking right into that big ugly hole in the ground grinning up at me like a death's head. That's just what it looks like, baby. Here in my -- my -- brain. And if things don't go right the second before I slam into that wall I swear to you I'm gonna spit in its eye!

ZIMMERMAN:

You tell 'em, boss!

EVEL:

Shit, we're all going to the same place in the end. I might just get there a little sooner.

Laughter.

EVEL:

Mizz Qualls, I swear this the best strawberry rhubarb I've had since Butte. You gotta--

MRS. QUALLS:

Thank you--

EVEL:

You gotta give me the -- whaddaya call it -- instructions.

HAWLEY:

Recipe.

EVEL:

That's right. I'm gonna give it to Linda and make her cook it every night--

ZIMMERMAN:

Breakfast--

EVEL:

Yeah. I'm gonna have her make it for breakfast. You ever had pie for breakfast?

MRS. QUALLS:

I don't believe so--

EVEL:

Honey, you don't know what you're missing. I snap my fingers -- (he snaps his fingers) -- and I get pie for breakfast -- (he snaps his fingers again) -- that's how it works in my house. Don't hold with this women's lib crap -- excuse my language -- Gloria Steinberg or whatever she's called. Jesus, I just gotta see it again.

Evel rises and goes to the front door as:

HAWLEY (TO FARMER QUALLS):
So we're talking about \$37,000 for a three year lease
on the land.

EVEL:
Hey -- hey -- don't ruin this fine dinner and that fine
pie with money talk now. Don't even think about it. How
could you?

With that, Evel finally opens the door and sunlight streams in.
He stands in silhouette in the blazing sunlight. Everywhere
beyond Evel is the desolate, dusty plot of land leading to the
rim of the majestic Snake River Canyon...

EXT QUALLS FARMHOUSE, SNAKE RIVER CANYON FOLLOWING

Evel leaves the house and wanders toward the rim of the Canyon.

The others follow.

They finally arrive at the very rim of the Canyon. They stare
down.

Evel smiles, a radiant, irresistible grin.

EVEL
Boys, we're gonna make history.

INT REVOLVING RESTAURANT, LOS ANGELES NIGHT

Evel is studying the blueprints of a bizarre cigar-shaped machine
that looks like a tiny spacecraft.

Evel, Hawley and Zimmerman sit with ROBERT TRUAX in a revolving
restaurant near the Los Angeles airport. The restaurant slowly
undulates around as they talk, giving up occasional views of the
city and the airport.

Truax is an aerospace engineer in his mid 50's. He is a compact,
saturnine man with a salt-and-pepper crewcut.

EVEL:
But it's not a motorcycle!

TRUAX:
Motorcycle will never make it.

EVEL (TO HAWLEY):
Another pessimist you bring me, thank you very much.

HAWLEY:

Bobby, listen to the man. He knows what he's talking about.

Beat.

EVEL:

Go on.

Truax draws lines on a map of the Snake River Canyon to illustrate:

TRUAX:

Okay, the Canyon is 1600 feet wide. To have a chance of making it you need a maximum altitude of 2,964 feet at the apogee -- at the top of the trajectory -- to reach that apogee you need a minimum speed of about 400 miles per hour within four seconds of the launch.

To achieve that -- you need a rocket.

Evel studies the blueprints of the bizarre rocket.

TRUAX:

Everything is handled from base, we launch the rocket and deploy the chutes. From that height you'll still hit the ground pretty hard so you'll have to be strapped in practically immobile.

EVEL:

What happens if something goes wrong and I'm all strapped in? Like when I'm taking off? What if the thing misfires and I suddenly stop?

TRUAX:

We're looking at 5,000 pounds of thrust on take-off. That would mean over 4 G's on you. If you were to suddenly stop it would jerk the teeth right out of your mouth.

EVEL:

Now there's a nice image, I thank you for that!

HAWLEY (STUDYING THE SPECS):

Fuel's gonna weigh her down. How much fuel's it gonna take?

TRUAX:

None. It's steam-powered.

Beat.

ZIMMERMAN:

Damn, boss, that's slick.

EVEL:

Hold on. You say I get into this rocket thing and you strap me in so I can't move and then you steam it up and then you fire the thing -- hopefully at which point my teeth won't shoot out of my mouth -- and then you deploy the parachute and watch while I float down, right?

TRUAX:

That's correct.

EVEL:

Well, excuse me for asking, BUT WHAT THE HELL DO I DO?!

TRUAX:

Nothing. Well, I suppose you hold on to the fixed handlebar.

EVEL:

Evel Knieval does not HOLD ON TO A FIXED HANDLEBAR!

HAWLEY (STERNLY):

Now look, Bob, I got Mr. Truax because he's the best there is. He's a goddamn aerospace engineer. If he says a cycle's out, then a cycle is out. Period. You wanna do this crazy thing. You wanna jump that Canyon, all right! BUT DON'T PRETEND YOU KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

Beat. He glares at Hawley. A plane roars past as it descends into LAX. Evel finally turns to Truax.

EVEL:

All right, Mr. Truax, I have one question for you. Will I clear the river? All my life I been terrified of drowning so can you guarantee me I'll clear the river?

TRUAX:

You'll clear the river.

EVEL:

And listen, I have to fire the thing. You gotta put a launch button inside for me. No one but Evel Knieval is gonna punch that button, you follow? And we never -- ever -- refer to this as a rocket. It's a ... a ... Skycycle.

TRUAX:

A Skycycle?

EVEL:

That's right. And no one knows I don't steer it and no one knows I don't pull the chute. And you gotta put some kinda wheels on it.

TRUAX:

But wheels aren't necessary--

EVEL:

Bob, Bob, you're not hearing me. I'm asking for a little vision here to match the enterprise we're contemplating. Forget all those pretty drawings cause you're not building a rocket anymore. You're building Evel Knievel's Number One, All-American, First-In-The-History-Of-Man Skycycle.

And this Skycycle will make you rich. And it will make you famous. And it might, just might, even get you laid.

He leans back and exhales.

EVEL:

Okay, let's talk money.

INT

RANCHO KNieVEL

DAY

Hawley and Zimmerman are carrying suitcases out of the front door.

Evel is talking to Linda as he sorts through some mail. She is tense and scared, but carefully hiding it from Evel.

EVEL:

This one's gonna be a breeze, hon. I done Yakima before. Nice folks there.

LINDA:

Sure.

EVEL:

I'll tell Jay you say howdy. Hey, could you be sure to take that plaid jacket in?

LINDA:

Right. Um, what is it? In Yakima, I mean?

EVEL:

13 Pepsi trucks, I think.

LINDA:

Uh-huh.

He kisses her quickly.

EVEL:

See ya in a week.

LINDA:

Have fun.

Evel leaves.

INT MACK RIG FOLLOWING

Evel is driving. They are just pulling out of the driveway of Rancho Knievel.

EVEL:

Shit. Forgot my briefcase. Hold on.

He leaps out of the truck...

EXT RANCHO KNIEVEL FOLLOWING

Evel marches up the driveway and is about to enter the house when he hears something that draws his attention. It is the sound of crying.

He glances through a living room window and sees Linda, collapsed on the floor.

She is absolutely shattered, terrified and weeping.

He stares at her for a long moment and then turns from the window and goes back to the truck.

INT CAESAR'S PALACE NIGHT

Evel, Hawley, Zimmerman and Jay Sarnow are sitting at a ring-side booth in the large performing room in Caesar's. They each have a beautiful showgirl with them.

Gamblers and patrons occasionally glance over and gawk at Evel.

SARNOW:

I mean the wops are killing me on Circus Circus. Wops run this town. I'm trying to get the permits and the zoning all squared away and they're killing me.

EVEL:

Wops are the worst. Honey, rub my knee would ya? It's a little sore.

Evel's showgirl obliges.

SARNOW:

So where is this Canyon? Arizona, Nebraska, what?

EVEL:

Idaho.

SARNOW:

Where the hell is Idaho?

HAWLEY:

State right above you, Jay.

SARNOW:

Thank you, Mr. Rand Mc-fucking-Nally. Why you doing this nutty thing, Bobby?

EVEL:

A little higher, honey. I'm doing it cause it ain't been done. I mean I been jumping for five years now and there's only so many Pepsi trucks you can do before people get bored. What's next? That's what I'm always thinkin'. What's next? Bigger, higher, longer--

HAWLEY:

That kinda thinkin' is gonna get you real dead, real soon.

SARNOW:

You're the sane one here, Hawley. Why you lettin' him do this?

HAWLEY (SMILES):

Man's got a dream.

EVEL:

A little higher, honey. Yeah, that's the way.

The showgirl is now stroking Evel's thigh.

ZIMMERMAN:

Holy crap! Is that Sammy?! BITCHIN'!

SARNOW (STANDS):

SAMMY! SAMMY! Get your black ass over here!

Sammy Davis Jr. comes to their table.

SARNOW:

Sammy, let me introduce you to--

SAMMY DAVIS JR.:

Not necessary, I know this cat. This is the crazy mother gonna jump the Canyon.

Evel stands to shake hands. Sammy embraces him.

EVEL:

I think you're a wonderful entertainer. A real showman.

SAMMY DAVIS JR. (WRYLY):

And you'd know, baby. Hey, you stay cool. Peace. Love.

He goes.

EVEL (SITTING):

Now that's a real stand-up guy. Go on, honey, nice and deep -- (the showgirl continues to rub Evel's thigh) -- I like that Flip Wilson too--

ZIMMERMAN (IMITATING FLIP WILSON AS "GERALDINE"):

WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET!

EVEL:

I mean most of them are for shit. Real sorry-ass cases but that little fella's made something of himself.

SARNOW:

That's the truth. Now how you paying for this Canyon thing?

EVEL:

Hell, Jay, I got money to burn. I'm making \$100,000 a week from my toy line. You seen my toys?

SARNOW:

You mean like dolls?

EVEL:

Fuck no. Action figures. Georgie, show the man.

Zimmerman removes one of the Evel Knievel action figures from his jacket, hands it to Evel.

EVEL:

Isn't that cool? Even got the little outfit. Georgie, make a note to send Jay the complete line. You got any little grandkids? They'll love 'em. And that's just Ideal. I got endorsements out the ass and the jumps are bringing in heavy bread now. Yeah -- that's right, honey -- Georgie give this broad a C.

Zimmerman pulls a hundred dollar bill from his jeweled money clip and gives it to the showgirl stroking Evel's thigh.

HAWLEY:

Bob, we better get moving.

EVEL:

Come on, Haw, take a pill--

HAWLEY:

We got Yakima tomorrow and you're looking at 13 trucks.

EVEL:

Georgie give Hee-Haw a pill. One of the blue ones.

George pulls a pill from his pocket and offers it to Hawley. Hawley ignores him.

HAWLEY:

Bob, you gotta get some sleep.

EVEL (TO SHOWGIRL):

Coco, that's good. A little higher. Uh-huh.

The showgirl is now giving Evel a handjob under the table.

He leans his head back and sighs as the lights go down around the room. A drum roll...

PUBLIC ADDRESS VOICE:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Caesar's Palace is proud to present ... Elvis Presley!

The crowd screams as Elvis takes the stage and moves to a microphone. He holds his hand up for silence.

ELVIS:

Thank you very much. You're very nice people and I'm gonna sing a bunch of great songs for you but first I wanna introduce you to a real special guest we got here tonight. A great American -- Evel -- where are you, son? -- Evel Knievel!

A spotlight searches out Evel. He half-rises, given his current state with the handjob the only real option, and waves to the adoring crowd.

ELVIS:

This one's for you, buddy.

Elvis launches into a rocking, buoyant version of his immortal "BURNING LOVE."

Evel leans back in his seat and enjoys the song and the handjob as the song continues into...

EXT YAKIMA SPEEDWAY, WASHINGTON DAY

Title: YAKIMA SPEEDWAY, WASHINGTON -- MAY 10, 1971

A grey, overcast day. Indifferent dingy clouds float past the packed grandstand, only occasionally letting a bit of sun through. Flat, ugly scrubland stretches past Highway 82 to the Cowiche mountains in the distance.

13 old, somewhat battered Pepsi trucks have been lined up between the ramps. Huge Pepsi bottle caps rest haphazardly against some of the trucks. Pepsi flags hang limply around the speedway.

A banner reads: "Yakima Washington Pepsi-Cola Bottlers Association Welcomes Evel Knievel."

Unlike the shining Astrodome and the ferociously glittering Caesar's Palace, the Yakima Speedway is a bit tawdry. It is a venue perfectly suited to midget stock car races and demolition derbies.

And the ground is all unforgiving asphalt.

"BURNING LOVE" slowly fades.

INT MACK TRAILER FOLLOWING

Evel is throwing up in the small bathroom. Hawley is with him.

EVEL:
Oh hell...

HAWLEY:
You can't do this.

EVEL:
Shut the fuck up--

HAWLEY:
You are in no shape to do this, Bobby--

Evel swings on him in blind, snarling fury:

EVEL:
MY NAME IS EVEL! STOP CALLING ME BOBBY OR I'LL KILL YOU, I SWEAR TO GOD!

A tense pause.

HAWLEY:

Whoever the hell you are, you can't do this jump.

EVEL:

What do I say to those people out there, huh? What the hell do I say to them?! Those people paid to see me jump those trucks and I am going to do it! And I'm gonna do it great! I'm gonna do it beautiful!

HAWLEY:

You're not ready--

EVEL:

I'll make it. I always make it!

He sloshes some Wild Turkey into two shot glasses and shoves one glass to Hawley.

Beat. They glare at each other.

EVEL:

Say it.

HAWLEY:

This is bullshit.

EVEL:

SAY IT!

HAWLEY:

Don't die.

EVEL:

Never will.

They toss back the Wild Turkey.

They continue to glare at each other.

HAWLEY:

Look at your hand.

Evel's hand, still holding the shot glass, is shaking.

Evel flings the glass away and it shatters.

They hear the public address system:

PUBLIC ADDRESS VOICE:

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the Yakima Speedway and the Yakima and Greater Washington Pepsi-Cola Bottlers Association is proud to present ... the King of the Daredevils ... the Last Gladiator ... Mr. Snake River Canyon himself ... E-vul K-nievel!

EVEL:

Q. You with me Hawley? Cause if you ain't with me then you're against me.

Dear,

HAWLEY:

I'm with you.

Dear,

EVEL:

Then let's jump some trucks.

HAWLEY:

You're the boss.

Evel strides out of the trailer. And the crowd roars.

EXT. YAKIMA SPEEDWAY FOLLOWING

Evel is busying doing his pre-show routine of wheelies and standing on the seat of his bike.

The crowd is particularly restless and eager. They are not enjoying the tease. They scream for the jump already!

Hawley stands with Zimmerman. Zimmerman wears sunglasses and looks decidedly unwell. Evel roars up to them. Zimmerman covers his tender, hung-over ears.

HAWLEY:

Jesus, you been vamping for twenty minutes, when you gonna jump?

EVEL:

I'm trying to sober up.

He holds up his hand. It is still quavering. He slaps it on this thigh.

HAWLEY:

11-22-21.
Come on, man, get it under control or call it off and let's get the hell out of here.

ZIMMERMAN:

Whatever you do, could you do it quieter?

EVEL:

All right, friends, let's jump and split. Jump and split.

He speeds off. Zimmerman recoils from the roar.

Evel pulls to a stop and goes to a standing microphone to make his prejump speech. He is unsteady and having great difficulty focusing.

EVEL (INTO MICROPHONE):

Hello, ladies and gentlemen when I'm flying out there today I want you to remember that -- I mean the Wright Brothers and Lindbergh, those guys, they started off what I'm doing right now. But the Wright Brothers had it easy, right? What the hell did they do? They had a damn airplane ... (He laughs) ... Where's the challenge in that? I just hop on this bastard and go, man. Just me and my machine and my ... helmet. Hey, you kids out there, always wear a helmet, huh? Yeah.

The crowd watches curiously as Evel stumbles away from the microphone and climbs on his bike.

Hawley watches nervously.

Evel glances at one of his glimmering diamond rings for a moment and then spins his bike around and races toward the take-off ramp.

The crowd leaps up and screams in joy -- finally!

From Evel's perspective we see the ramp speeding closer and closer and closer the roar of the engine building and building and building...

We see the bike's tachometer, the needle quivering up...

We see the sweat stinging Evel's eyes...

We see the bike's engine growling and the wheels spinning...

Evel brutally twists the accelerator as the bike hits the take-off tramp--

We see the shocks recoil, absorbing some of the bounce...

We see the sun momentarily glinting off Evel's visor...

We see the Pepsi banners hanging limply...

Evel tugs violently back on the handle bars as the bike starts to come down toward the landing-ramp--

And we see the crowd. It is as if they have turned into a grotesque pack of cannibalistic gargoyles. We see blood-lust in their eyes. It is as if they are not cheering for Evel's success but screaming for his blood. Which, after all, would be a bigger thrill? To see him make it, or to see him die?

Evel crashes down on the landing ramp and fights for control of the bike. He loses control--

As if from under the asphalt, looking up, we see Evel tumbling over the handlebars and SLAMMING to the ground in a horrific crash -- the bike tumbles and spins and Evel tumbles and spins -- he flips and rolls and slides across the asphalt -- he slides and slides and slides as if he is never going to stop -- he rolls and tumbles and finally flops to a stop.

Motionless.

We freeze on this ghastly image and slowly fade to...

INT RANCHO KNEIVEL, BEDROOM DAY

We float past the staggering array of pain-killers spread out on Evel's dresser. We also see fresh bandages and crutches and IV packs.

We finally settle on Evel in bed, talking on the phone. He is in a neckbrace and wears casts and bandages all over.

He flips through a very crowded calendar as he talks:

EVEL (ON PHONE):

The doctors say two months ... uh-huh ... no, that's Santa Fe on the 12th ... How much they offering? ... Jesus ... Okay I'm getting some steel pins in my arm next week, so how's about three weeks ... Yeah, I can do it with the pins ... No, I'll be there. Three weeks from today ... Yes, you can guarantee it. I gave you my word, goddamn it.

He hangs up.

EVEL:

LINDA! LINDA! I NEED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM!

Beat.

EVEL:
LINDA! GODDAMN IT I HAVE TO GO TO THE--!

Linda, Robbie and Kelly come to the bedroom quickly. This is a practiced routine. They gently help slide Evel off the bed and onto a blanket that lies by the bed.

EVEL (SHARPLY):
Jesus -- careful, Robbie!

Linda and the boys pull Evel on the blanket into the bathroom.

Once in the bathroom they tug him from the blanket to the toilet. They help him stand then shut the door and wait outside.

Beat.

KELLY:
How long's Dad gonna be sick?

LINDA:
He'll be better soon.

KELLY:
He gets so mad.

LINDA:
He's in a lot of pain, sweetie.

Pause.

ROBBIE:
He's a real prick when he's hurt.

From inside the bathroom we hear Evel calling:

EVEL:
Okay, I'm done!

Linda and the boys open the door and prepare for the return trip.

INT PALATIAL SUITE, CAESAR'S PALACE NIGHT

Evel and Hawley sit in their immense suite at Caesar's. It is beyond ornate. It is a sweeping, cavernous palace. The penthouse affords a stunning view of the blazing lights of Las Vegas.

Zimmerman enters with ROBERT ARUM.

Arum is a well-dressed man in his early 40's. He is smart and ambitious, high-energy and slick. It seems as if he is constantly in motion, even when he is standing still.

ZIMMERMAN:
Boss, this is Mr. Arum.

ARUM:
Hello.

He shakes Evel's hand.

ARUM:
Thank you for seeing me Evel, I know you're a busy man
but I am confident that--

EVEL:
Hold on, Mr. Arum.

Evel rivets him with a steely gaze.

EVEL:
I gotta tell you first off that there are three things
I truly hate in this world. Those three things are
Jews, lawyers and New Yorkers. Now from where I'm
sitting, you're all three. What do you say to that?

Beat.

ARUM:
I'd say this Jew New York lawyer has a check in his
pocket for six million dollars with your name on it.

He pulls out a check from his jacket. He sets it on the table
before Evel.

Beat.

EVEL:
You have my attention. You got one minute.

ARUM:
I need twenty seconds. I've promoted some of the
biggest boxing events in the history of this planet.
You saw it, I probably made it happen. I wanna handle
promotion for your jump because a.) you can't do it all
yourself and b.) this could be big beyond your dreams
of big and c.) I wanna make a pile of money and so do
you.

Beat.

EVEL:
Sit down, Mr. Arum.

ARUM (SITTING):

It's all out there. It's just waiting to happen. It's big already. I can make it bigger. I can get everyone in this nation talking about one thing and one thing only and that is you. Forget about Vietnam. Forget about Tricky Dick. People are sick to death of all the depressing shit, it's all a real downer. But you, you make folks forget all that. You walk into an arena and you make people smile. Just like all the great showmen. Just like Sinatra. And that -- that, my friend -- is money in the bank.

EVEL:

How?

ARUM:

What are you planning for TV rights?

EVEL:

I've been talking to ABC about a special Wide World of Sports live broadcast--

ARUM:

Fuck ABC.

EVEL:

ABC has been real good to me over the years--

ARUM:

People will pay to see this. Haven't you realized that yet? People will pay to see you die.

Pause.

EVEL (EVENLY):

I'm not going to die.

ARUM:

Yeah, big fucking deal. The point is people don't know whether you're gonna live or die. You don't know. They don't know. And in that doubt -- in that question mark -- we can make millions.

HAWLEY:

Jesus, people don't come to see him die--

ARUM:

Okay, okay. So they come to see him live. They come to see him cheat death one more time. Point is, with the right promotion, they'll come.

EVEL:

There isn't that much room at the Canyon site. Even with the largest grandstands we're only looking at a capacity crowd of--

ARUM:

Pay-per-view.

Those should be the three most precious words in the English language to you right now. Just like the big boxing matches in Vegas and the Garden. People love to watch that stuff but they can't afford to wing into Vegas for a night like we can. So what do they do? They watch it pay-per-view. Dead bang done. We charge a top ticket of maybe twelve bucks and we're looking at revenue of...

Well, mucho.

Beat.

ZIMMERMAN:

How much?

ARUM:

Total gross income ... when we add it all up, gate receipts, concessions, merchandizing, pay-per-view take ... call it 25 million.

Beat.

HAWLEY:

Now listen, we've already had some preliminary talks with ABC about broadcasting the jump live on Wide World of Sports. We planned the damn thing on a Sunday so we could do that.

ARUM:

This hasn't been announced yet, though?

HAWLEY:

No, but they're looking to front \$250,000 for the jump and supply the TV equipment.

ARUM:

Fine, we'll use the ABC crews to broadcast the pay-per-view. This is great.

HAWLEY:

And why would they do us this favor?

ARUM:

Because on the Sunday following the jump they can broadcast it to the world right there on Wide World of Sports.

ZIMMERMAN:

Then why would people line up and shell out money for the pay-per-view if they can just sit in their own living rooms and see it free a week later?

ARUM:

Because--

EVEL:

Because they won't know they can see it free a week later.

Pause.

ARUM:

That's right.

HAWLEY:

Jesus Christ...

ARUM:

But who gets hurt, really? So we have a few sad-sacks pissed off they paid ten bucks for an "exclusive" pay-per-view event that didn't turn out to be so exclusive. What, are they gonna complain? They got to see the world's greatest daredevil risking his life LIVE -- right before their eyes. They oughta feel blessed to have had the privilege to see this ... this ...

Hero.

Beat as Evel stares at him.

Silence.

HAWLEY (QUIETLY, TO EVEL):

Think about what you're doing here.

Evel slowly pulls himself to his feet. Arum also stands.

A beat as they face each other.

EVEL:

Mr. Arum, let's do business.

They embrace and laugh.

EXTTHE STRIP, VEGASFOLLOWING

Evel and Hawley take a slow walk down the Strip. The nocturnal life of Vegas buzzes and flashes around them.

They walk silently for a moment. Then:

HAWLEY:

You should have told him to take a hike. You should have kicked his ass right out the door.

EVEL:

I need the money. You know how much the Canyon's costing me.

HAWLEY:

The guy's nothing but a pimp.

They continue to walk silently.

Then Evel stops.

EVEL (QUIETLY):

You know what this jump is for me? It's the end of my life. No more Bobby, no more Evel. Nothing. Not that I think I'm gonna die. I don't. No damn way. But after the Canyon jump I mean ... what is there? What do I do to top that? Jump two canyons? Jump to the moon? I'll make the jump and I'll be 34 years old and my life will be over. Nothing left. Zero.

And then folks will be sayin' "Oh yeah, he's that crazy bastard who jumped that Canyon in Wyoming or Nebraska or something. I remember him."

But they will remember me.

Pause.

He looks at Hawley deeply.

EVEL:

Whattaya say, buddy? Let's just have one great ...

Adventure.

Pause.

Hawley smiles.

HAWLEY:

You're gonna get killed, you know.

EVEL:

Not this time, sport.

Evel slaps an arm around his shoulder and they walk back into Caesar's, over the same parking lot where it all started years before.

The opening chords of "YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE DANCING" by Leo Sayer are heard...

MONTAGE

"YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE DANCING" continues as we see a sequence showing The Excess of Evel Knievel. And the power of so ... much ... money:

The famed ABC Wide World of Sports credits, the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, the familiar image of the skier slamming into the wall and cartwheeling crazily. We see Frank Gifford interviewing Evel...

Evel posing with Arum's six million dollar check as cameras flash...

Quick flashes of various successful jumps. The LA Coliseum (actual date, February 1973) where Evel leaps a pyramid of crushed cars. The Portland Memorial Coliseum. (actual date, March 1973) where Evel jumps as hundreds of dazzling flashbulbs explode in the darkened stands...

Evel posing for publicity shots at the Snake River. He struts around like the king of the world and blithely conducts a TV interview. He is practically dancing. We can see the take-off ramp and constructions around the Site growing...

Evel trying to pass through a metal detector at an airport. It beeps and beeps every time he goes through. He angrily points out the many metal plates and pins in his body...

Evel modeling various groovy 70's outfits -- a dizzying flurry of bold leisure suits and platform shoes and gold chains and rings and pukka shells and huge-collared shirts - - one outfit after another...

Evel drinking a lot and arguing with Linda...

The prototype Skycycle takes shape in Truax's workshop. Evel tries sitting in it and immediately starts complaining to the long-suffering Truax...

A shiny new Evel Knievel Pinball Machine being delivered to Rancho Knievel. Evel plays on his new toy with equal amounts of joy and violence...

Evel with Linda in a fur salon. He buys her an armful of mink coats...

"YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE DANCING" and sequence stop for a moment at:

Evel, Zimmerman and Linda are in the study at Rancho Knievel. They are busy opening and sorting through stacks and stacks of mail. Cards and letters are scattered everywhere around them, as are boxes and presents and good luck tokens.

Evel unwraps a box. Inside the box is a rock.

EVEL:

Now what's this supposed to be?

ZIMMERMAN:

It's a pet rock. It's the newest thing.

EVEL:

What the hell do I do with it?

ZIMMERMAN:

Nothing, it's kinda a jokey thing.

EVEL:

Jesus Christ! What is with this country? Pukka shells and mood rings and pet rocks. I mean people will just fall in love with any passing, crazy fad, won't they?

Zimmerman glances wryly to Linda and raises his eyebrows.

"YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE DANCING" continues as:

Evel in Vegas. He is with Telly Savalas and gambling away huge chunks of money. Even high-roller Telly is amazed as Evel loses tens of thousands of dollars on a single blackjack hand and doesn't care a bit...

New Ideal Skycycle toys being snapped off the shelves of a toy store...

Finally we see the Snake River Jump Site. The take-off ramp is fully built and the prototype Skycycle is in place. Technicians scurry about it as Evel surveys his triumph.

"YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE DANCING" and sequence end at:

EXT GAS STATION. OUTSIDE LA NIGHT

Evel and Zimmerman roar up to a quiet gas station in Evel's new bronze-colored Ferrari. It is the same gas station they visited years before.

The same pimply attendant, behind the same bulletproof glass booth, stares in awe.

Evel goes to the attendant.

EVEL (SMILES):
Hey, son, you know who I am?

ATTENDANT:
Sure -- you're Evel Knievel!

EVEL:
That's right. Could I talk to you for a second?

The attendant emerges from the booth.

ATTENDANT:
Hey, what can I do for you, Mr. Knievel?!

EVEL:
Come here, would ya? I wanna show you something.

They walk toward Evel's Ferrari.

Zimmerman grabs the attendant and tosses him into the car. The attendant yelps. Evel leaps behind the wheel and races off in a screech of rubber...

EXT SUNSET BOULEVARD FOLLOWING

Evel slams the Ferrari to a halt off Sunset Boulevard.

Zimmerman drags the terrified gas station attendant out of the car.

Evel grabs him and points to the sky:

EVEL:
YOU SEE THAT! YOU SEE THAT UP THERE?!

Evel is pointing to a HUGE billboard on Sunset Boulevard with his picture on it and the words: SEPTEMBER 8. SNAKE RIVER CANYON. ONLY ON PAY-PER-VIEW.

EVEL:

Three years ago I came to you and asked you for a few gallons of gas for my truck and you told me to take a hike! You said you never heard of me! WELL, HAVE YOU HEARD OF ME NOW!? YOU HEARD OF ME NOW?!

Evel shoves the attendant away from him.

EVEL:

Beat the shit out of him, George.

Zimmerman obligingly advances on the weeping attendant.

EVEL:

Oh, never mind. Piece of shit's not worth it. I gotta pee.

Evel and Zimmerman return to the Ferrari. They roar away.

The attendant remains cowering under the enormous Evel Knievel billboard.

EXT

GOLF COURSE

DAY

Evel, Hawley and Zimmerman are playing golf. Or at least Evel and Zimmerman are. Hawley is just along for the ride. They are a rather boisterous golf trio. They drink and hoot and holler and tear over the fairways in their golf cart.

The hooting and hollering, to be sure, does not endear them to the other players on the course. Golfers are, by nature, rather quiet types. Disapproving looks flash their way.

Currently, they are zooming along in their golf cart. Evel is, of course, in the midst of a story:

EVEL:

Right, so there wasn't a room in the whole hotel. And I'm with this absolutely gorgeous broad. She's panting for me -- AND WE GOT NO PLACE TO DO IT! So I look over into the harbor and there's this yacht with a light on. So we go on down there and I pound on the door and I start hollering "Wake up, you bastards, I'll give you three million dollars for your boat right here, right now! I got a woman with me and she's exuding that magical female scent hormone all over me AND I GOTTA HAVE HER!"

They laugh..

EVEL:

And that is the story of my three million dollar lady. Shit -- we missed the seventh hole -- well, eight'll be good.

They roar up the eighth hole and stumble from the cart. Evel grabs his driver and prepares to tee off as:

EVEL:

Christine her name was. Great lady. But she was obsessed with this G-spot thing. You heard of that? It's all the newest thing, apparently. You gotta find their G-spot or you're a lousy lay.

A thousand on this hole, Georgie?

ZIMMERMAN:

It's your money, whadda I care? So did you find her G-spot--?

EVEL:

WOULD YOU SHUT UP WHEN I'M TEEING OFF!

Evel lines up, very quickly, and swings. It is a powerful drive that sails straight down the fairway.

EVEL:

Come on, baby, come on... YES!

Zimmerman grabs a golf club and prepares to tee-off as:

EVEL:

Why don't you play with us, Haw?

HAWLEY (SMILES):

'Cause golf is a game for dickless pussies.

EVEL:

Come on, I'll stake you five thousand that you'll beat Georgie even though you've never touched a club. Hey -- Georgie -- what are you using there?

ZIMMERMAN:

Four-wood.

EVEL:

This is a driver hole, dipshit. Get your driver.

ZIMMERMAN:

I like the four-wood.

EVEL:
It is a driver hole, Georgie.

HAWLEY:
Leave him alone.

EVEL:
He's gonna get nothing with a four-wood.

ZIMMERMAN:
I can use a driver...

HAWLEY:
Use what you want, George.

ZIMMERMAN:
I'll stick with the four-wood.

Evel grabs Zimmerman's driver and stalks to him:

EVEL:
GODDAMNIT, USE THE RIGHT CLUB YOU MORON OR THIS AIN'T
EVEN GONNA BE CLOSE! I KNOW I'M GONNA BEAT YOU BUT AT
LEAST MAKE IT A GAME!

ZIMMERMAN (TAKING CLUB):
Driver's great, really...

Hawley shakes his head.

Zimmerman gets set over the ball. Evel talks to him as he back away:

EVEL:
Now listen, don't rush it. Bend over the club. Take
your time. Line up the shot...

Evel has reached his golf bag, he winks to Hawley and reaches into his golf bag as he talks to Zimmerman:

EVEL:
That's good. Bend your knees, bend your knees, good...

Evel pulls up a .44 automatic from his golfbag. Evel motions for Hawley to keep quiet as he aims the gun toward Zimmerman. Hawley bolts up and watches in mute horror as:

EVEL:
Great. Now keep your shoulders perpendicular ... good
... take a deep breath ... good ... now a nice easy
backswing...

Zimmerman slowly begins his backswing and Evel fires -- a deafening roar that echoes around the course -- he blows away Zimmerman's golf ball -- is disintegrates -- terrified birds take flight -- Zimmerman screams in terror and collapses to the ground.

Evel explodes in laughter. Hawley swings around to him:

HAWLEY:

What the hell are you doing?!

Evel collapses, laughing.

ZIMMERMAN:

You ... you ... you ... SONOFABITCH!

Zimmerman begins to laugh.

Evel and Zimmerman are helpless with laughter. The laughter finally sputters to giggles and then stops.

Beat. Hawley stands in disgusted disbelief.

EVEL:

Oh, Haw, lighten up. Your gonna get an ulcer you're so serious all the time.

Evel looks at the huge hole made by the gunshot.

EVEL:

Georgie, fix your divot, would you?

INT HOSPITAL, SAN FRANCISCO DAY

Evel and Zimmerman stalk into the emergency room of a San Francisco hospital. Evel wears a bold yellow leisure suit with a big-collared shirt. And diamonds. And the cane. Zimmerman is dressed similarly.

EVEL:

Who's in charge here?!

A concerned and busy nurse goes to them.

NURSE:

This is the emergency room -- you can't--

EVEL:

Hello, sweetie. I'm Evel Knievel and I'm jumping at the Cow Palace tomorrow and I wanted to check out your emergency room.

A doctor comes to them. The nurse returns to a patient.

DOCTOR:
Say, you're not really--?

ZIMMERMAN:
He's the man.

EVEL (SHAKING HANDS):
Evel Knievel, pleased to meet you, Doctor...?

DOCTOR:
Madden -- Doctor Madden.

EVEL:
Well, mighty glad to make your acquaintance. Hope you don't mind me looking around but I always check out the hospitals beforehand, you know, just in case.

DOCTOR:
Sure, sure. That's makes sense. Wow.

EVEL:
This is a real nice joint you got here. Much better than that Catholic place.

DOCTOR:
St. Mary's? Oh, God, yes, we're much better.

EVEL:
Less dago doctors, for one.

DOCTOR:
I guess ... I guess so. We don't have a lot of ... dagos, I guess.

The concerned nurse calls to Doctor Madden:

NURSE:
Doctor, we need you over here--

DOCTOR (TO NURSE):
In a second...

EVEL:
You got an orthopedic and arthroscopic surgeon on call 24 hours?

DOCTOR:
Yeah, yeah, Doctor Branson.

EVEL:

He good?

DOCTOR:

Oh yeah, he's terrific. He's Swedish. I mean he's not from Sweden but he's of Swedish descent.

EVEL:

You have on-site MRI and CAT facilities?

DOCTOR:

Yeah.

EVEL:

Full stock of plasma? I'm O-negative.

DOCTOR:

Sure, sure.

NURSE (CALLING TO DR. MADDEN FROM A
PATIENT):

Doctor! We need you over here -- stat!

DOCTOR:

Okay, okay -- Gosh, it was really nice meeting you, I
... I hope you'll choose our hospital. Not that I hope
you need it--

NURSE (CALLING, PANICKED):

Doctor!

EVEL:

You go on now, and thanks.

Dr. Madden smiles and moves to the patient, who is dying for all
we know.

Evel and Zimmerman continue to stroll around the emergency room.

EVEL:

Whattaya think?

ZIMMERMAN:

Nice.

EVEL:

Nurses are a buncha dogs.

ZIMMERMAN:

Maybe the day staff is better.

EVEL:

Yeah, they always put the pretty ones on day shift.
Okay, you draw up the ambulance routes and get them to
the drivers. Is that blood on my shoe? Shit!

INT ELEGANT RESTAURANT, SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT

A string quartet plays a lovely tune in San Francisco's poshest restaurant. Huge picture windows show the flickering lights of Fisherman's Wharf and the Bay.

Evel troops in with Hawley, Zimmerman and a crowd of women and loud hangers-on. Evel wears a flashy silk shirt open to his ribs and a plethora of gold necklaces and diamond rings. He is exceedingly drunk.

EVEL (TO MAITRE D'):

Gimme a table by the windows.

MAITRE D' (SNAPPILY):

Yes, of course, Mr. Knievel! This way please!

He leads the rowdy gang through the pristine restaurant as:

Evel studies a particularly cheap-looking ring on one finger.

EVEL:

It's still black!

WOMAN 1:

You gotta give it time you find your mood. See, mine is blue, that means I'm serene.

EVEL:

Piece of shit's broken.

ZIMMERMAN:

Maybe you're just not a serene guy, boss.

EVEL:

Fuck that.

They are seated at a large table. Evel hands the maitre d' a hundred dollar bill.

EVEL (TO MAITRE D'):

Get us some drinks, wouldya, buddy?

The maitre d' artfully pockets the bill and glides away.

HAWLEY:

Bobby, can't we get something at the hotel? It's too late for--

EVEL:

I'm hungry!

HAWLEY:

Come on, Bob. This is a tough jump, you never jumped at the Cow Palace and you need to be focused on--

EVEL:

I said I was hungry!

WOMAN 3:

Eve, you scared about tomorrow?

EVEL:

No way. Evel Knievel never gets scared. Though every now and then he does get a tad concerned.

Laughs from the group.

EVEL:

But I'll tell you, honey, my mind does get filled up. There's a lot to this jumping business. It's like rocket science or landing a big jumbo jet--

Hawley snorts.

EVEL (CONTINUING):

I gotta add everything up. If I'm one inch off on the take off -- I mean one inch off dead center -- by the time I've gone the fifty yards or whatever I'll be off by six feet. I'll miss the ramp. So I really gotta figure out the trajectory. Gotta hit the apogee just right--

WOMAN 1:

I never knew there was so much to it!

EVEL:

Shit, yeah. I don't just climb on that 300 pound monster and jump. There's a lot of science involved.

ZIMMERMAN:

We're working with a guy now from NASA on the Canyon jump.

HAWLEY:

Truax's not from NASA.

EVEL:

The hell he's not. Worked on the Apollo program. Jim Lovell's a very dear friend of mine. Introduced me to the guy.

HAWLEY:

I introduced you to the guy and the closest he got to Apollo was watching it on the TV.

EVEL:

I mean to hell with those friggin' astronauts anyway. I mean what the hell do they do anyway? They sit there and the guys in Houston press all the buttons? Where's the glory in that? Where's the human element?

HAWLEY (TOASTING WRYLY):

Hear hear.

Evel spins to the waitress, who has been waiting.

EVEL:

Get us a bunch of lobsters.

WAITRESS:

Do you want--?

EVEL:

Lobsters, honey. And a lot of booze, now scoot.

The waitress goes.

WOMAN 2:

I think that Neil Armstrong is awfully cute.

EVEL:

Neil Armstrong!? Who the hell knows Neil Armstrong? Neil Armstrong got a toy line? Neil Armstrong even been on the cover of Sports Illustrated? I'm more famous than Neil Armstrong! I'M MORE FAMOUS THEN ALL OF THEM!

His outburst draws some disapproving looks from around the restaurant.

EVEL:

AND THOSE JOKERS CAN KISS MY ASS 'CAUSE I'M EVEL KNIEVEL AND I'M GONNA JUMP THE SNAKE RIVER CANYON, BABY!

A well-dressed couple at a nearby table shake their heads. Evel notices, bolts up and bears down on them:

EVEL:

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU LOOKING AT?! YOU KNOW WHO I AM?! YOU KNOW WHO I AM?! I AM THE MOST FAMOUS MAN IN THE WORLD! YOU KNOW WHY?! YOU KNOW WHY!? CAUSE I GOT BALLS THE SIZE OF AN ELEPHANT AND NO FEAR AND I GET THE JOB DONE--

He rampages around the restaurant as:

EVEL:

AND THAT JOKER DEATH CAN KISS OFF BECAUSE HE AIN'T GONNA GET ME -- CAUSE I'M GONNA JUMP RIGHT INTO THE SUN AND EXPLODE INTO AN ASTEROID AND THEN ALL OF YOU CAN KISS MY ASS!!

Cheers from all of Evel's party but Hawley.

ZIMMERMAN (TO HAWLEY):

Jeez, you'd think he had no idea he's jumping 13 cars tomorrow.

HAWLEY (WATCHING EVEL):

He knows.

Evel stumbles back to the table.

EVEL (GLANCING AT MOOD RING):

Fucker is still black! Fuck it. WHERE'S MY LOBSTER!

INT

COW PALACE ARENA

DAY

Title: COW PALACE, SAN FRANCISCO -- MARCH 3, 1972

The huge Cow Palace arena is packed with a mob of spectators. They are a particularly volatile bunch, edgy and rowdy.

Evel is on a platform giving his pre-jump speech. Behind him a row of 13 cars (and a few vans at the end for good measure) is waiting between two ramps. The take-off ramp rises steeply into the arena and disappears into a high tunnel.

Linda and the kids sit nearby and watch.

The actor George Hamilton sits with them and watches Evel closely, taking notes.

Evel can see a rough group of Hell's Angels in the front of the stands. Evel blinks in the harsh lights. He is sweating and clearly suffering a bit from the previous night's excess. He glares at the Hell's Angels.

EVEL (INTO MICROPHONE):

You know, a lot of people ask me why I wear this white leather outfit. I'll tell you why. It's because I think those jokers in the Hell's Angels with their black leather jackets have done more to contribute harm to the sport of motorcycle driving than anything in this world. My good friend Lee Marvin told me that he is ashamed of having done that picture THE WILD ONE because that picture glamorized them. Lee is proud of being a motorcycle driver. And so am I. Because it is something to be proud of. It is honorable. And those damn Hell's Angels will never be able to stain the thing I love most.

Cheers from the crowd. Fierce boos and catcalls from the Hell's Angels. One of the Hell's Angels flips Evel the bird.

This is too much ... Evel glares at the fat biker with a look of death and then stalks away from the microphone:

EVEL:

With my family here you DO THAT TO ME!??

He races toward the Hell's Angel biker -- Hawley tries to stop him -- Evel shoves past him--

HAWLEY (CALLING TO ZIMMERMAN):

Come on, Georgie!

Zimmerman and Hawley race after Evel -- Evel reaches down as he strides and snatches up a two-by-four from the ground -- he reaches the fat biker and SLAMS him across the face with the two-by-four -- the biker spurts blood and falls -- Evel LEAPS into the mob of Hell's Angels, swinging the two-by-four -- Hawley and Zimmerman dive into the melee, punching and kicking and fighting like mad--

Other audience members jump into the fight and a near riot ensues -- police race into the battle -- Hell's Angels and audience members and Evel and Hawley and Zimmerman and the rest of Evel's crew and police -- a twisting, confusing mass of violence--

Hawley finally pulls Evel from the melee.

Evel is laughing, blood streaming down his face. It is a terrible image that strikes Hawley cold.

EVEL:

Flipped me the bird -- right there in front of my wife and my children --

He spits out blood.

EVEL:

Shoulda broke his hand. Shoulda snapped his fingers.

Police whistles blow.

CUT TO:

Later.

Evel is on his bike in a darkened tunnel at one end of the Cow Palace. He looks down the long, sloping take-off ramp toward the jump. It is a terrifying, vertiginous perspective. Evel's face has been bandaged a bit. He revs his bike a few times. He is ready to make the jump. Hawley is with him.

HAWLEY:

Look, you're hurt and you're stoned and there's no way you should do this!

EVEL (SMILES):

Yeah, but you shoulda seen the other guy!

HAWLEY:

This crowd wants blood, man. They tasted it already.

Beat. Evel looks at him.

EVEL:

Well, you know what I always say: give the people what they want.

He pulls on his helmet and roars away, leaving Hawley standing in a cloud of swirling exhaust.

And Evel suddenly emerges from the tunnel and zooms down the steep take-off ramp. A terrifying descent down the treacherously precipitous ramp and then up--

Evel zooms off the ramp -- and flies into the air over the cars -
- he soars -- and then stops -- frozen -- in mid-jump --

The world is frozen.

We spin up and around the cycle, it makes us dizzy as we sweep behind and above Evel and see the landing ramp so far below and so far away...

We hear Evel being interviewed by Frank Gifford:

FRANK GIFFORD (VOICE-OVER):

Were there times you thought you weren't going to make it?

EVEL (VOICE-OVER):

Sure, sometimes right in the middle of the jump I just looked down and thought, shit, not this time, pal. Those times ... on the way down ...

Buddy, those are the longest three seconds in the world.

The screen explodes into sound and action as Evel descends and crashes -- he slams down on the landing ramp and loses control of the bike -- he spins over the bike and crashes to the concrete floor -- the bike crashes almost right on top of him -- he slides violently across the floor -- the bike slides alongside him and sends up a shower of white sparks -- he slams into the tunnel at the far end of the Cow Palace and bounces off a concrete wall -- the bike bounces and smashes with him every inch of the way.

EXT SNAKE RIVER CANYON DAY

Title: ONE MONTH LATER. FIRST SKYCYCLE TEST SHOT.

A beautiful sunny day on the rim of the Snake River Canyon.

Evel is on crutches with one arm in a sling. He is, in a word, battered.

Hawley, Zimmerman, Robert Arum, Linda and the kids stand with him.

George Hamilton also stands next to Evel.

They are on the rim of the Canyon, watching steam hiss from the tail of the prototype Skycycle as it vibrates on the take-off ramp. Robert Truax stands near the Skycycle with a group of bustling engineers and technicians. He holds a stopwatch and a clipboard filled with engineering specs.

GEORGE HAMILTON:

This is a great location. Think we could get some kinda camera in the Skycycle?

EVEL:

Might weigh it down too much but I'll talk to Truax.

Truax turns to Evel and nods.

Evel gives him the thumbs up with his good hand.

Truax nods, presses a button and the Skycycle fires.

They watch as the Skycycle soars up the take-off ramp and into the sky -- then begins to quake and shake -- then begins to spin out of control -- then spins and floats and spins and floats -- and falls and falls and falls -- and finally smashes into the Snake River in a huge explosion of water. It swirls in the water once, twice, and then sinks.

George Hamilton turns to Evel:

GEORGE HAMILTON:

You know it'd be better for the ending of the picture if you make it.

Evel turns away and stalks toward the Canyon rim.

Linda is about to follow, but Hawley indicates that she should wait. Hawley limps after Evel.

Evel sits with difficulty at the rim of the Canyon and stares down into the water. Hawley sits next to him.

Long Pause.

HAWLEY:

So I was in Long Beach, you know, outside LA. I was with the Joey Chitwood and I was the motorcycle guy and I was strong and pretty and I was gonna jump to the moon and I didn't give a damn. So in Long Beach there was this girl in the stands, a redhead she was. Gorgeous in this periwinkle blue summer dress. And I looked at this redhead and she looked at me. You know the drill. Never so much as said two words to her. Ever.

So I'm jumping, this was five or six Chevys -- Impalas -- and that girl was looking at me and I was the King of the Daredevils, the Last of the Gladiators. So I'm making the Impalas -- I mean I'm clear, right? -- but there's this redhead. So right at the top of my jump, I gave the bike a little extra tug, just a pull, just to get the wheel a little higher, just to show my redhead how perfect I could be.

Bike went out from under me. I landed on my back on the ramp and the bike landed right on my leg. Crushed it. I stopped dead on the ramp. Didn't even slide.

And they cut off my leg.

Beat.

HAWLEY:

Bobby, you look at the whole goddamn world and you see that redhead. And she's smiling at you. And she's beautiful. And you will never speak to her. And she will kill you.

Pause.

EVEL (GRIMLY):

This is no way to be talking to me now.

HAWLEY:

It's about time someone did--

Evel jerks himself up and tries to storm away.

Hawley grabs him.

HAWLEY:

You haven't put in the prep time and you don't know the specs -- you're too goddamn busy with that actor--

EVEL:

He's gonna be playing me in the movie! I gotta make sure he does it right--

HAWLEY:

You're drinking too much and you're whoring too much--

EVEL (DEFIANT):

So I ain't no Joe Ice Cream! Shit, Joe Ice Cream never would have done the things I did! Joe Ice Cream is a big, fat nobody who never did a goddamn thing!

HAWLEY:

What does all that shit matter if you're dead?!

EVEL:

Don't you say that! Don't you ever say that!

HAWLEY:

Bob -- you're acting like a goddamn idiot--!

EVEL (TURNING AWAY):

To hell with you, old man--!

HAWLEY:

You wanna die?!

Evel spins on him in blind fury:

EVEL:

You're just so goddamn jealous it's me and not you. WHY DON'T YOU JUST ADMIT IT?! You see my picture all over the place and the TV and the broads and the money and you wish it was you. WELL, IT'S NOT! YOU FUCKED UP -- YOU LOST YOUR LEG -- SO IT'S ME! AND NO CRIPPLED FUCK IS GOING TO TELL ME HOW TO MAKE A JUMP!

They stand. Glaring.

Then:

HAWLEY (QUIETLY):

I wish you Godspeed, Evel Knievel.

He turns and walks away.

Evel watches him go. He then turns and gazes across the Canyon. Alone.

INT RANCHO KNIEVEL, DEN NIGHT

Evel sits alone in the darkened den, drinking. The only light comes from the flickering light of a TV.

Evel is watching old footage of his crashes. His face is void of emotion, drained, as he watches the seemingly endless series of violent, ugly crashes.

We watch Evel's face in the blue light as his past literally flashes before his eyes.

EXT SKYCYCLE, COCKPIT DAY

Evel is crammed into the tiny Skycycle cockpit as Truax works behind him. Evel is strapped into the Skycycle with thick nylon belts that cross over his chest. He can barely move. The take-off ramp is set at an extremely uncomfortable 56 degree angle. The Skycycle itself is only 13 feet long.

Beyond the Skycycle we can see the Jump Site itself: flimsy grandstands, concession booths and a thin chain-link fence at the rim.

Inside the Skycycle cockpit there is a fixed metal handlebar and a button that is labeled (with duct tape) "FIRE" and a push lever for the parachutes. And that's all.

Evel shifts uncomfortably as the water tank behind him heats.

We take all this in as:

In the Skycycle, Evel explodes at Truax:

EVEL:

Jesus Christ, Bob! I'm burning up here!

TRUAX:

Just a few minutes more...

EVEL:

This parachute release lever -- how in hell am I suppose to push it forward with all the backward thrust?

TRUAX:

I told you, we're gonna deploy the chutes from base. If you need to hit the silk in an emergency you gotta wait until you reach apogee to push the lever.

EVEL:

And how am I supposed to hold on to the damn thing?

TRUAX:

We're gonna strap your hand to it.

EVEL:

More straps, great. And if I'm strapped in like this -- my hand, my chest -- how am I ever gonna get out if I go into the river?

TRUAX:

If you're not strapping in like that the G's will snap your neck.

EVEL:

But what if I go into the river!? WHAT IF I GO INTO THE RIVER LIKE THE FIRST TEST -- AND THE SECOND TEST!!

TRUAX:

You won't go into the river--

EVEL:

If I do I'll just drown, you know that, don't you? What a way to go! Evel Knievel DROWNS?!! DROWNING IS FOR PUSSIES! JESUS CHRIST GET ME OUT OF THIS THING!!

Truax begins to unstrap him as Evel writhes.

INT

RANCHO KNieVEL, DINING ROOM

NIGHT

Evel and his family are having dinner. It is 1974. Linda is 31. Son Kelly is 14. Son Robbie is 11. Daughter Tracy is 9.

Evel Knievel is 34. And he is tense.

The phone rings. Tracy runs to get it.

Tracy:

Dad, it's for you.

Evel tosses down his fork and stalks to the phone.

EVEL (ON PHONE):

What?! ... Oh, yeah, sorry ... (he turns away from Linda and the kids and lowers his voice) ... No, not tonight ... Maybe tomorrow at Red's ... uh-huh ... no then I gotta go back up to the Canyon ... uh-huh ... (he laughs) ... you just keep it that way till then, sweetie.

He hangs up and returns to the table.

Silence as they eat. Then:

LINDA:

During our dinner. They call during our dinner.

EVEL:

Linda...

LINDA:

Those bitches call during our dinner?!

EVEL:

That's enough!

She stands abruptly.

LINDA:

Let me tell you something -- when you're a goddamn cripple -- when you can't piss without someone to drag your ass to the bathroom and pull out your dick -- when you gotta be pushed around in a wheelchair FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE WHO DO YOU THINK IS GONNA DO THAT?

Evel stands in fury:

EVEL:

THAT'S ENOUGH!

LINDA:

IT'S NOT GONNA BE THOSE WHORES!

He stalks after her, she retreats around the table:

LINDA:
IT'S GONNA BE ME! AND KELLY, AND ROBBIE, AND TRACY!

He has caught up with her. He grabs her.

She stares at him. Her anguish kills his anger cold.

LINDA:
It's not gonna be them, Bobby ... It's gonna be ...
Me.

She collapses in sobs.

He helps her into the bedroom. She falls on the bed weeping.
Shattered. He tries to sooth her and stroke her hair. She pushes him away.

He stands for a awful moment and then returns to the dining room.
The kids are sitting, stone-faced.

EVEL (SITTING):
Your Mom's okay. She's just tense about the Canyon. She just needs a little time.

ROBBIE:
You make her like that.

EVEL:
What did you say, young man?

TRACY:
Robbie, don't.

ROBBIE:
You make her like that, you treat her like shit.

EVEL:
You think I'm hard on her, huh? That right? THEN WHY
DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?!

Robbie jumps to his feet.

EVEL:
Anytime you think I'm being too tough on her -- or Kelly or Tracy -- you try to stop me. I'll give you a hundred bucks if you can hit me and I'll give you two hundred bucks if you can knock me down. Whattaya say, boy? YOU WANNA DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW?! BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T THEN YOU SIT DOWN AND SHUT THE FUCK UP!!

A tense pause.

Robbie is crying.

Evel glares at him.

Finally, Robbie sits. Or seems as if he is about to sit. At the very last moment he grabs his chair and swings it wildly and furiously at Evel. The chair slams into Evel and sends him crashing to the floor.

Evel shakes his head. Robbie is weeping. Evel rises and hugs him deeply.

Robbie clings to him.

EVEL (OVER ROBBIE'S SHOULDER):
Kelly, get me my wallet.

EXT CAESAR'S PALACE NIGHT

Title: SEPTEMBER 4 -- FOUR DAYS BEFORE THE JUMP

We see Evel emerging from the casino, he is absolutely swarmed by press and the crowd. Zimmerman has to work harder than usual to keep them away. He elbows and shoves the fans as they crowd in on Evel. Evel is surly and not enjoying the adulation. A woman tears the collar right off his shirt. He jerks away from her. It is a scary mob scene.

Evel has finally arrived at his enormous stretch limo. He is about to enter the limo when a familiar figure appears near him. It is Jay Sarnow.

EVEL:
Jay -- where the hell you been?! Get in.

They slip into the limo with Zimmerman.

INT LIMO, LAS VEGAS FOLLOWING

The limo speeds down the blazing, neon Strip as Evel catches up with his old comrade. Sarnow does not look well. Times have been tough for him.

EVEL:
Jesus, it's good to see you! You wanna drink? George, get Jay a drink, whattaya want?

SARNOW:
You got scotch in this pimp mobile?

EVEL:

Fix the man a scotch, Georgie. Shit you look awful.
What is with you? You need a pill to open your eyes.
Get Jay one of those blue ones.

George hands Sarnow a pill and a Scotch.

EVEL:

Don't worry, it's prescribed. It's like a pain-killer
but it'll give you a burst of energy which is just what
you're gonna need cause I'm gonna buy you every long-
legged whore in this town. You still like them long-
legged broads?

SARNOW:

Sure -- hey, Bobby, can we just talk for a minute--?

EVEL:

You booked for the Canyon jump yet? Don't worry, I'll
send one of my planes -- you still got your planes or
did the IRS take them? -- anyway, I'll book you a VIP
spot right next to Steve McQueen. You know Steve? He's
one of my dearest friends and a great guy--

SARNOW:

Bobby -- Bobby -- hold on -- can we just talk?

Evel leans back, considering this odd request.

EXT

DESERT

SUNRISE

The limo sits parked on a isolated expanse of desert.
Zimmerman and the limo driver lean against the limo and drink.

Evel and Sarnow sit in the sand some distance away. Everywhere
around them the desert stretches aimlessly to the horizon.

The sun is just rising.

SARNOW:

I brought them Caesar's when the whole place was a
bunch of dago, mob joints with a few slot machines and
flashing lights and fat whores. Real bum joints. I
brought 'em something with a little taste. I brought in
the big acts, I mean the biggest names, right? Then I
built Circus Circus -- the largest gambling palace in
the world. You were there at the opening, right? Circus
ain't no casino. It's a ... a ... palace.

SARNOW (CONT.):

So now I'm broke. Flat snapped, baby. I cannot walk into my own casinos. They will not extend me credit in my own houses. Hey, fine, you win some you lose some, no tears for the fat kike, sure, but I have got to gamble. You know what I mean...

Without the juice everything's just ... (he picks up a handful of sand) ... dirt.

He lets the sand slip through his fingers.

Pause.

EVEL:

Georgie, come here!

Zimmerman obediently trots to Evel and Sarnow.

EVEL:

Gimme the checkbook and beat it.

Zimmerman hands him a checkbook and a pen and trots away.

Evel scrawls a check to Jay Sarnow in the amount of \$500,000.

He hands it to Sarnow.

EVEL:

You ever -- ever -- talk to me about payin' this back and I swear I will ride right into Caesar's on my loudest Harley and I will piss directly on your leg.

Sarnow looks at the check. He begins to weep. Evel puts a gentle arm around him and holds him tenderly.

We hear the soaring opening of "LAY DOWN (CANDLES IN THE RAIN)" by Melaine with the Edwin Hawkins' Singers.

Then we go to...

EXT SNAKE RIVER JUMP SITE SUNSET

Title: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 -- THE DAY BEFORE THE JUMP

"LAY DOWN (CANDLES IN THE RAIN)" continues to play as we tour The Glorious Jump Site with Evel.

It is a bizarre, surreal, sad trip.

Evel is completely surrounded by mean-looking bodyguards who tote shotguns, Zimmerman is nowhere to be seen. We have no doubt that the shotguns are loaded and we have no doubt that the guards would use them.

In slow-motion we watch as:

They pass adoring fans who reach for Evel, they can't even get close. He stretches out his hands to them, can't reach...

They pass the jutting Skycycle take-off ramp. More shotgun-toting guards keep the curious away from the Skycycle and the ramp. They push the spectators away. Evel tries to signal to the guards to take it easy, to not be so brutal. He can't get through to them. Or they ignore him...

They pass by a clean-cut blond teenager tuning his motorcycle. He glances up. He smiles, stands and starts to wave, but Evel is hustled away...

They pass a seemingly endless series of plywood concession stands selling Evel Knievel merchandize.

They see money changing hands everywhere -- crumpled bills thrust forward for merchandise, for beer, for hot dogs, for drugs...

They pass through a silent and brooding pack of scumber Hell's Angels...

They go into the huge MEDIA ONLY tent. Evel is not attacked for interviews. The reporters know they could never get close. A few snap bored and distant photos...

"LAY DOWN (CANDLES IN THE WIND)" and slow-motion stop for a moment as:

We see John Chancellor, in black-and-white, on one of the TV monitors:

JOHN CHANCELLOR (ON TV):

"If he makes it he'll be many times a millionaire, if he doesn't, he'll be dead. And either way what's happening at the Snake River Canyon this weekend is one of the most grotesque spectacles in our history..."

Evel stares absently at the TV.

JOHN CHANCELLOR (ON TV):

"This event, it seems to me, calls for some personal comment. It's one thing for a man to risk his life -- foolishly or courageously. That's human nature. But it's another thing to exploit it for money or to travel hundreds of miles and pay admission to see him do it. That's not human nature. That's barbarism. Goodnight from NBC News."

"LAY DOWN (CANDLES IN THE WIND)" and slow-motion continue as:

Evel turns from the TV and leaves the media tent with his guards...

They pass by an Evel Knievel Impersonator in ghoulish makeup doing a slow, wild, drunken dance...

They pass by a pretty girl who smiles at Evel, sweetly...

They pass a beer tent. Spectators crowd in and slam the counter rhythmically for more beer...

They pass a blond seven year old boy who holds an American flag. It could be Evel Knievel as a child. He waves shyly at Evel. Evel tries to wave back but is hustled away...

Finally we pull away and take in the whole mad scene as the sinking sun paints the world a garish blood red.

We linger on this image as "LAY DOWN (CANDLES IN THE RAIN)" ends.

EXT SNAKE RIVER, CANYON RIM FOLLOWING, SUNSET

Evel stands alone on the very rim of the Canyon. Behind him the chaos and depravity and celebration and merchandizing goes on.

Unreal silence.

Evel is alone with his Canyon as the sun sinks.

INT RANCHO KNIEVEL THAT NIGHT

Rancho Knievel is very quiet. An understandable melancholy pall hangs over everything. Zimmerman sits quietly in the living room, playing solitaire.

We float through the silent house and finally go into the master bedroom.

Evel is nestled in bed with Linda and his kids. They talk quietly:

EVEL:

Now you know Mr. Swanbeck will take care of everything. He's a stand-up guy and knows what I want done. You're looked after, all of you.

TRACY (IN TEARS):

You don't have to do it, do you? Couldn't you tell them you got sick?

EVEL:

Honey, I gave my word to a lot of people. You wouldn't want your Daddy to break his word. Could you look up to me if I did that? Could you?

She shakes her head.

EVEL:

Robbie? Kelly?

ROBBIE:

No, Dad.

He pulls them close to him.

EVEL:

Listen, I know people say a lot of bad things about me. That's I'm a crazy old so-and-so. I know. But I just want you to know...

He proceeds with difficulty:

EVEL:

I never meant to be too hard on you or your Mom. I just tried to get by as best I could doing what I do. And if the Lord takes me tomorrow you gotta know ... my last thoughts will be of you guys ... right here, right now.

Pause as he hugs them.

Zimmerman knocks and enters.

ZIMMERMAN:

Boss, I think you better come here.

Evel rises and accompanies Zimmerman to the living room.

Hawley Nowak is waiting there.

Pause.

HAWLEY:

On the other hand, that redhead was pretty sweet.

Evel embraces him in a joyous, tearful hug.

EVEL:
Goddamn, I knew you wouldn't leave me. You look great, it's great to see you, buddy. Here let me get you a drink. Man, do we need to talk...

Evel goes to the bar and begins to pour two drinks.

HAWLEY:
Bobby, we got a jump tomorrow.

Evel stops and looks at him. A moment. Then Evel pours the brandy from the glasses back into the decanter.

EXT RANCHO KNieVEL NIGHT

Evel and Hawley stroll around the grounds of Rancho Knievel. It is a night that threatens storms and tempests. Black clouds shoot across the full moon and lightning occasionally crackles in the distance over the Rockies.

EVEL (QUIETLY):
I don't know where it went bad. The whole thing just turned into a monster. And I couldn't stop it.

HAWLEY:
Walk away, man. It's not too late.

EVEL:
So many people are counting on me. I gotta responsibility to them. I walk away now and what am I? I'm dirt-poor Bobby Knievel back in the copper mines. In some dark hole never seeing the sun. I walk away and I'm nothing.

Pause.

EVEL (WITH DIFFICULTY):
But the thing is ... you know ... the people ... the people who are gonna be watching ... For the first time I know they're not coming so see me make it...

They're coming to see me die.

EXT SNAKE RIVER CANYON DAY

Title: SEPTEMBER 8, 1974 -- 2:52 pm.

At last.

From far atop the opposite bank of the Canyon we see the frenzied activity at the Jump Site across the way.

We see an enormous crowd gathered and pushing, ebbing and flowing toward the chain-link fence that separates the crowd from the chasm. We see the concession stands and the speaker's platform. We see the huge media tent and the jutting take-off ramp and the sun glinting off the Skycycle itself. We hear the dim buzz of the crowd.

We take in this distant panorama and then we slowly float across the Canyon and approach the Site.

The buzz from the crush of wild humanity grows as we near. It builds to a cacophonous roar.

Finally we breeze over the chain-link fence and we are at the swirling, chaotic, beautiful and totally insane Site.

And it is immediately obvious that the day is hot. Sweltering. High 80's. Bikers swig beer and people shuck off shirts and jackets.

And it is windy. The American flags everywhere around the Site snap in the relentless wind. Dust swirls around and little dust devils shoot here and there.

We float through the crowd:

We pass the Butte High School Marching Band warming up.

We pass the VIP grandstands where spectators fan themselves in the heat.

We float on and then stride alongside:

Bob Arum, who is waving a newspaper and furiously talking to Zimmerman as he stalks through the site:

ARUM:

He had to pick today! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!? TODAY OF ALL DAYS HE PARDONS NIXON!? THIS IS GONNA PUSH US OFF THE FRONT PAGES, MAN!

We see the "FORD PARDONS NIXON" headline on the newspaper.

ZIMMERMAN:

Bob, why do you think he picked today? He's hoping we'll push him off the front pages!

Arum stops, we don't, we circle him.

ARUM:

My God! You're right! What a cagey scnofabitch! We gotta get this to the media tent!

They race off as we move on:

We float up to pass one of the towering ABC cranes filming the spectacle. The cameraman blinks sweat from his eyes and focuses his camera on the Skycycle.

We float down again to pass a boy, clutching his Evel Knievel Action Figure to his chest as if it were the Holy Grail.

We float to and then circle:

A Young Christian group singing an a capella version of "I'D LIKE TO TEACH THE WORLD TO SING (IN PERFECT HARMONY.)" And, indeed, their harmonizing is lovely. Nonetheless...

We quickly move on:

We pass the Butte High School Marching Band striking up a tune -- "GOD BLESS AMERICA" -- and trying to march through the crowd. The crowd does not part the way they are supposed to. It is all rather jumbled. A tuba player falls but the band plays on.

We float to:

George Hamilton giving an interview:

GEORGE HAMILTON:

It's an honor for me to be playing this man in the movie. I see him sorta like George Washington on a motorcycle, you know?

We move on:

We float over to the take-off ramp. We pass Truax and his engineers as they watch the water temperature needle climbing ... 721 degrees ... 722 degrees ... 723 degrees... Shimmering heat waves ripple off the water tank.

We slowly climb the ramp and we are at the Skycycle itself.

We float lovingly over every inch of this shining, stunning, red-white-and-blue monstrosity. We savor the Mack Truck decal on the back dorsal fin of the rocket. A priest stands precariously next to the Skycycle and anoints it with holy water while mumbling something pious and inaudible.

We finally swing high around and we are facing the point where we started, the opposite bank of the Canyon. We notice that someone has painted a huge bull's-eye on the opposite wall of the Canyon. It is a truly chilling sight.

This entire sequence, from the opposite bank of the Canyon, should be one uninterrupted shot.

INT EVEL'S TRAILER FOLLOWING

Title: 3:15 pm.

The hum, the buzz, the building roar of the crowd can be heard as Evel stands with his family, Hawley and Zimmerman.

We can also hear the Butte High School Marching Band playing a series of patriotic songs.

Evel is fully dressed and ready to go.

He carefully pours a series of shots of Wild Turkey. He hands one to each child.

EVEL:

Kelly.

He and Kelly drink.

EVEL:

Robbie.

He and Robbie drink.

EVEL:

Tracy.

He and Tracy drink. She sputters a bit. He smiles.

EVEL:

Now you kids wait outside for your Mom and I'll see you after. (He smiles.) You can't miss me, I'll be the one in the rocket.

They hug and kiss. Robbie puts his arms around Tracy and Kelly and leads them out.

EVEL:

That Robbie's a good kid. He's gonna be okay.

Beat.

EVEL:

Georgie, you go make sure they don't get into any mischief.

ZIMMERMAN:

Okay, Boss.

He starts to go.

EVEL:

Hey ... Take care of this, would ya?

Evel hands him his bejeweled cane.

Zimmerman stares at it. And then at Evel. He cannot speak. He bolts from the trailer.

Linda and Evel look at each other.

EVEL:

It's gonna be okay, sweetie.

LINDA:

Uh-huh.

Beat.

EVEL:

Would you give me a kiss?

She kisses him and then looks at him deeply.

LINDA:

After this ... I want Bobby back.

She goes.

Evel sits. Hawley sit as well.

Silence.

Evel hands him a slip of paper.

EVEL:

Read it.

HAWLEY:

"I'd rather explode into the wind like a meteorite, than just fade away to dust. God made us to live, not just exist. Evel Knievel."

Hawley looks at him.

EVEL:

For my tombstone.

HAWLEY:

Kinda long, isn't it?

EVEL (TAKES THE PAPER):

You think? Maybe I could just use "God made us to live, not just exist. Evel Knievel."

HAWLEY:

I think that's better.

EVEL:

Damn, I like that meteorite business. I mean how big is the writing on a tombstone anyway? You don't think they could fit it all?

HAWLEY:

Maybe.

EVEL (HANDS THE PAPER BACK TO HIM):

Well ... you just ...

Beat.

EVEL (QUIETLY):

Take care of it, okay?

HAWLEY:

Sure.

Long Pause.

HAWLEY (WITH DIFFICULTY):

It's been a hell of a ride, Bobby.

Truax enters.

TRUAX:

We have a problem.

EVEL (EVENLY):

This is not the time for problems.

TRUAX:

We got a thirty knot head wind.

HAWLEY:

Jesus...

TRUAX:
I can't guarantee anything with a thirty knot wind. The
schematics are for nothing higher than 15. Everything
was planned for--

EVEL:
Can I clear the river?

Pause.

EVEL:
Can I clear the river, Bob?

TRUAX:
I don't know.

EVEL:
If I go into the river I'm going to drown.

TRUAX:
I know.

Pause.

EVEL:
So what do we do?

TRUAX:
Cancel. Scrub it.

Beat.

EVEL (WITH RISING PASSION):
I got maybe 20,000 people out there, my friend, and
about 500 reporters and another million or so watching
me on pay-per-view and you want me to call it off?!
What in the Sam Hill are you talking about?! I CAN'T
CALL IT OFF NOW! SO YOU GET YOUR ASS OUT THERE AND YOU
GET THAT MONSTER FIRED UP! LET'S GET THIS SONOFABITCH
OVER WITH!!

Truax retreats.

HAWLEY:
Bobby ... Bobby--

EVEL:
No!

HAWLEY:

Just listen to me. You don't have a goddamn chance out there. You wanna drown?! You wanna go into the drink with Linda and the kids and the whole world watching?!

EVEL (DESPERATELY):

What else can I do?!

HAWLEY:

You walk out to that microphone and you tell the folks that the conditions aren't right. Everyone can see the goddamn wind out there. You just tell them you have to postpone it because today ain't the day. You walk out to the microphone and say that.

It'll be the bravest thing you ever done.

Pause.

Evel slowly stands.

And they leave the trailer.

EXT SNAKE RIVER, JUMP SITE FOLLOWING

Evel marches through the crowd, his face dark and tense.

The crowd parts for him like magic.

Zimmerman and Hawley walk behind him.

The crowd grows silent directly around him and the silence cascades back through the crowd until an eerie quiet hangs over the entire Site.

Evel arrives at the speaker's platform and strides up the stairs. Hawley and Zimmerman wait below.

EXT SNAKE RIVER, SPEAKER'S PLATFORM FOLLOWING

Evel stands before a microphone on the speaker's platform.

Behind him a thousand flags are snapping in the wind. It is a field of undulating stars and stripes.

Evel gazes over the silent crowd.

He sees the opposite bank of the Canyon and the ghoulish bull's-eye...

He sees Linda and the kids in the grandstands...

He sees Truax shaking his head sadly and gazing at a snapping windsock...

He sees the faces in the crowd. Expectant...

He sees Hawley staring at him, silently pleading with him...

He takes a deep breath and leans to the microphone:

EVEL (INTO MICROPHONE):

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for coming out here today ... I just want to say ... um ... that ... um ...

That I am proud to live in this great country. And no matter what happens here today I will always have been proudest of that above all. This great country made me what I am. You allowed me to do what I do. AND I THANK YOU FOR THAT AMERICA!

With that, Evel SHOOTS his arms high above his head in a FIERCE victory-V and, on cue, the crowd ROARS and the Butte High School Marching Band EXPLODES into "THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER."

EXT SKYCYCLE, COCKPIT FOLLOWING

Title: 3:34 pm.

Evel is sitting in the cramped Skycycle. Robert Truax is busy strapping him in. Truax tightly fastens the two nylon straps across Evel's chest. Behind them other technicians work on filling the Skycycle with steam.

We swing around them. Beyond and below Evel and Truax we can see the people and the press and the flags and the concession stands and the VIP grandstand and, finally, the gaping chasm of the Snake River Canyon.

Then:

TRUAX (FASTENING STRAPS):

Sorry they gotta be so tight--

EVEL:

My teeth, I know--

TRUAX:

Now remember, you're probably gonna black-out for a second on take-off and you're gonna have a "red-out" when the chute deploys and you jerk forward, blood vessels will burst in your mouth and nose--

EVEL:
Right--

TRUAX:
But this is normal and it's just a little ancillary blood, no big deal.

EVEL:
"Ancillary blood?" Easy for you to say, pal.

Truax starts wrapping duct tape around Evel's right hand, strapping to the parachute release lever.

TRUAX
And remember you won't be able to push the parachute lever until--

EVEL:
Look, you just make sure I don't go into the river, you hear me? I can't drown!

TRUAX:
We'll do our best.

EVEL:
YOU'LL DO YOUR BEST?! JESUS CHRIST, BOB, CAN YOU DO A LITTLE BETTER THAN THAT?!

TRUAX:
You'll be fine. Okay. We're set. You hit the button whenever you're ready.

Truax straps on Evel's helmet and slaps it once:

TRUAX:
Good luck.

Truax starts to climb down from the Skycycle.

EVEL:
Bob--

Truax turns back to him.

EVEL:
If I end up in that river you better be sure I'm gonna come back and haunt you for the rest of your days and, believe me, I'll make your life one long, friggin' nightmare!

Truax smiles and climbs down from the Skycycle. The technicians scurry away and disappear into the safety of the Control tent.

And Evel is alone.

He rests his head back. He tries to breath steadily. He tries to glance around, from his strapped-in position he has a limited view, he can just see bits and pieces of:

Linda and the kids in the grandstands...

The towering ABC cranes filming every moment...

Shotgun toting guards pushing the crowd back...

Zimmerman clutching the jeweled cane to his breast...

The Butte High School Marching Band members watching eagerly, one of the girls weeping...

A spectator turns to another spectator and makes a throat slitting gesture...

Flags snapping in the brisk wind...

The FIRE button in the Skycycle...

A beautiful redheaded woman in the crowd in a periwinkle blue dress, smiling...

Evel finally finds Hawley's face in the crowd. Hawley looks at him. Hawley nods. Evel nods back.

Then he carefully shuts his eyes.

And we are again soaring over the Grand Canyon. We soar and sweep through and up and around the crags and dizzying precipices. Faster and faster, in another moment we will achieve escape velocity and soar right to the moon--

Evel's eyes snap open.

EVEL:

Get ready God, here I come.

And he slams the FIRE button with his fist.

CUT TO:

The tail of the Skycycle EXPLODES with steam--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel is SNAPPED back--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle RACES up the take-off ramp--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel FIGHTS against the G's and blacks-out for a second, his head lolling to one side--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle still RACING up the take-off ramp--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel JERKS to consciousness again and looks around in absolute panic--

CUT TO:

As it speeds up the take-off ramp the Skycycle's drogue chute deploys, pulling the main chute with it -- DISASTER -- we see the chutes emerging through the blast of white steam--

CUT TO:

In the Control tent, Truax doubles over in agony:

TRUAX:
THE CHUTES HAVE GONE!

CUT TO:

A reporter on the Site, blurts into a microphone:

REPORTER:
THERE'S A PROBLEM!

CUT TO:

The Skycycle SHOOTs off the take-off ramp--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel BATTLES to hold on to the handlebar--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle FLIES into the air --

CUT TO:

In the grandstand, Linda folds herself into Hawley, not daring to watch--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle begins to SPIRAL around as celebratory red smoke begins to billow from the tail--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, from Evel's perspective, we see the air whizzing by as the Skycycle pinwheels around and the clouds SPEED closer--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle chutes are now SNAPPING open--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel laughs, the Skycycle is SOARING up, he is going to make it! Across the Canyon! Across the world! To the moon!

CUT TO:

The Skycycle chutes are now billowing fully OPEN -- in midair the Skycycle SLAMS to a halt -- the giddy ascent BRUTALLY stopped--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel SNAPS forward, a thin spray of blood SHOOTS from his mouth, red-out--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle seems to hang in the air frozen for a split-second and then tilts over -- nose down -- and begins to FALL--

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel is facing straight down -- he SHOVES himself back, blood trickling from his nose and mouth--

CUT TO:

The Skycycle floats ... and floats ... and floats ... down.

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel spits out blood and wipes away the blood on his face with his left hand.

And he now seems to have all the time in the world. After the rush of the take-off the gentle, parachute descent is almost serene.

He stares forward in moment of absolute dumbfounded amazement.

CUT TO:

The Skycycle continues to descend, lazily drifting down toward the inevitable conclusion of this magnificent and absurd adventure: the rampaging waters of the Snake River.

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, from Evel's perspective, we see the river below. Closer ... closer ... closer ...

EVEL:

YOU SONOFABITCH!

He writhes angrily, violently, desperately to free himself. No good. He can barely move with the tight cross straps. His right hand is useless, still taped to the impotent parachute release lever.

With the one thing he can move, his left hand, he grabs the visor on his helmet and pulls at it. Finally, it breaks free. He uses the sharp edge of the shattered visor to begin cutting at the nylon straps across his chest--

CUT TO:

And the Skycycle continues to float toward the river. It indolently twists and spins as it drifts down ... down ... down...

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, Evel sees the raging waters of the Snake River nearing--

He continues to hack and saw at the nylon straps -- one of them finally snaps -- he begins sawing at the other one -- then he glances up one last time--

The river is impossibly close now -- he can't make it -- he throws his head back and ROARS in agony and frustration--

CUT TO:

And then, magically, at the very last possible moment, in an act of pure grace, the parachutes billow as a delicate wind gently blows the Skycycle toward the bank of the river.

The Skycycle SMASHES -- nose down -- to the bank of the Snake River and then topples over.

The tail of the Skycycle actually splashes into the river.

CUT TO:

In the cockpit, on impact, Evel is thrown forward and SLAMS into the tiny windshield in front of him. Since he no longer has a visor on his helmet the windshield slashes into his forehead.

He tumbles with the Skycycle as it topples over.

He lays there. Immobile.

EXT SNAKE RIVER. JUMP SITE FOLLOWING

Back on the rim of the Canyon, chaos.

Reporters and spectators and engineers and technicians hurry everywhere -- they still don't know whether Evel is alive or dead. The crowd pushes dangerously at the chain-link fence at the rim of the Canyon. Is he alive?!

Zimmerman races to Arum and they both run toward the media tent to try to find out something, anything:

ZIMMERMAN:
IS HE ALIVE?! IS HE IN THE RIVER?!

ARUM:
I DON'T KNOW--!

Meanwhile, Hawley is pushing through the crowd with Linda and the kids as they fight to get to the rim.

EXT SNAKE RIVER. BANK FOLLOWING

And 600 feet below, Evel slowly opens his eyes. He can see the rushing waters of the river.

Only seven feet away.

EXT SNAKE RIVER, CANYON RIM FOLLOWING

Above, the crowd is gathered at the very rim of the Canyon. They see Evel pulling himself from the demolished Skycycle.

A beat. One beat. A collective intake of breath. And then...

A roar builds ... and builds ... and builds ... a cheering roar the like of which we have never, ever, heard!

The crowd and the engineers and the Butte High School Marching Band and Linda and Evel's kids and Hawley and Zimmerman and Truax and Arum and even the reporters holler and cheer and stamp and applaud...

EXT SNAKE RIVER, BANK FOLLOWING

Below, Evel stands next to the shattered Skycycle. The bright amber sunlight illuminates him. If he has ever been truly heroic in his life, it is this moment.

He has blood streaming down his face from the cut on his forehead. He tries to wipe the blood away. Eventually he gives up and just lets it bleed.

He can hear the cheer from above.

He looks up and shuts his eyes, letting the golden sunlight warm his face. He opens his eyes and sees the rim of the Canyon filled with thousands of screaming fans.

Blood trickling down his face, Evel looks at the fans.

That cheer makes it all worthwhile. Doesn't it?

Slow fade to:

INT EVEL'S JET DAY

Title: ONE WEEK LATER.

Evel and Hawley are together in one of Evel's private jets as it soars through the clouds. A beautiful blue sky can be seen beyond the windows.

HAWLEY:
You know they'll be asking.

EVEL:
Uh-huh.

HAWLEY:
They're asking me already. When's he gonna jump again?

EVEL:
I'm asking myself the same question.

HAWLEY:
And?

Pause.

EVEL:
What do you think I should do?

Pause.

HAWLEY:
Honestly, Bobby, I think you should hang it up. You've had a great run. You've made some bread but, you know, you can't do it forever.

EVEL:
Yeah. I hear you. But it's like I got this little voice in my head that keeps pestering me. This echo ... keeps saying ... over and over ...

"What Next?"

Pause.

He looks at Hawley.

EVEL:
You know what I mean, buddy?

HAWLEY:
I know.

Beat.

Evel gazes out the window of the plane.

He smiles.

EVEL:
And you know, I'll jump that sonofabitch yet.

CUT TO:

Exterior.

Evel's jet -- with "EVEL KNIEVEL" painted in sparkling gold on the side -- banks high in the sky. The sun flashes through the clouds and blazes across his name.

And the jet soars over the Grand Canyon.

"SUNSHINE" by Jonathan Edwards explodes as the jet shoots into the heavens:

"SUNSHINE":

"Sunshine go away today,
I don't feel much like dancing,
Some man's gone, he's tried to run my life,
He don't know what he's asking.

When he tells me I better get in line,
I can't hear what he's saying,
When I grow up I'm gonna make it mine,
These ain't dues I been payin'.

Well how much does it cost, I'll buy it!
The time is all we've lost, I'll try it!"
He can't even run his own life,
I'll be damned if he'll run mine!"

The screen snaps to:

X-rays. A series of X-rays and CAT scans and MRI's showing shattered bones and metal pins and replacement hips and bone grafts. The final testimony on a daredevil's life.

"SUNSHINE" continues:

"Sunshine!
Sunshine go away today,
I don't feel much like dancing..."

"SUNSHINE" and the X-rays continue through the END CREDITS.

THE END.