

SYKES AND THE WOMAN THAT MADE HIM

Original Screenplay by
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ONE: IN WHICH we meet our hero -- Diamond Jim Sykes -- finding him in a most unusual condition and situation...

(a production number in the grand manner) .

CREDITS PLAY for a moment over BLACK...

And a SOUND begins -- quiet at first, swelling in intensity: a roaring of engines... the sound of ten... a hundred... five hundred motorcycles winding out in second gear...

The CREDITS END as the throbbing noise reaches its peak and we

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

The CAMERA -- as if from the point of view of a man standing up in an open car -- GLIDES FORWARD, surrounded by, escorted by a huge formation, a vast flying-wedge of cycles and choppers. The bikes closest to the camera are ridden by POLICE and state troopers, but surrounding them, making up the bulk of the giant army, are hundreds of BIKERS, all dressed identically -- in clothes that are a stylized version of prisoners' uniforms.

Cruising slowly, throttles wide open in low gear, growling, the huge V-shaped escort passes through the towering marble gates and down the curving main drive of a large, elegant cemetery.

It is early morning. Crowds of PEOPLE line the road now. They scurry backward out of the way of the bikers' steady, military advance. All are cheering and waving and shouting up toward the camera -- as if the camera were the eyes of a conquering general, some Patton or Caesar.

Some of the bikers grin up at the camera. As they do, we see a flash, then another -- a star-bright reflection of light glinting off the diamond that each of the men wears in the center of a gold-inlaid front tooth. And among the crowd now, too, we see diamonds -- hundreds of them -- flashing as the men smile or shout up toward. the camera.

The crowd breaks, begins running alongside the formation of bikers and police, as the CAMERA CONTINUES TO MOVE FORWARD toward the end of the curving drive where television cameras look down from a half-dozen high metal towers and -- visible now inside a roped-off area below the cameras -- a hearse, six PALL-BEARERS, and a PRIEST stand waiting near an open grave.

Quietly, confidingly, as if narrating the scene to us, a voice begins to speak: the voice of Diamond Jim Sykes:

SYKES' VOICE

Everybody's been tellin' me how
this is my mamma's funeral...
But it ain't my mamma's
funeral... Shit... I don't ever
remember havin' no mamma... I
mighta spent a long time lookin'
for my mamma -- but I never had
no mamma...

The CAMERA PANS SLIGHTLY and we see now, at the center of the mass of motorcycles, a long, black cut-away hearse -- the kind usually used to carry flowers to the burial site. It carries now instead a man-sized cage built of two-inch thick steel bars. Standing alone inside the cage is DIAMOND JIM SYKES. He is 30 or 35, tough and lean and damn good-looking. He is dressed in a prisoner's uniform. A large, blue-white diamond set into his front tooth flashes as he speaks, directly to camera:

SYKES

Hell...I ain't never had nothin'
at the same time -- 'Cept the
diamond in my front tooth and
maybe a Mars bar or somethin'
like that rattlin' around in my
pocket... And a high opinion of
myself...

A cordon of heavily-armed state TROOPERS turns aside the phalanx of bikers, allows only Sykes' cage and its escort of police to enter the roped-off area near the grave.

A black Rolls-Royce limousine is also pulled up nearby. Alongside it, surrounded by REPORTERS, looking up at Sykes in his cage like a huntress eyeing her greatest trophy, is a woman, Sykes' age, imperially, self-containedly beautiful: ELIZABETH.

The police motorcyclists have dismounted now, come to attention m a ring around Sykes' cage, guns drawn and ready.

Sykes glances at Elizabeth, just once, then continues talking to camera:

SYKES (CONT'D)

That's right: I said a high opinion of myself... Now I know I might not look like much of anything or anybody in my present situation... But I can tell ya that by the end of this day I'm gonna be about the most talked about -- the most famous -- the most respected human being in this whole wide world... And along with that and added to it -- Before this day is over, I'm gonna be talkin' ta all the people of this planet earth -- All at the same time...

The roar of the bikers' engines has faded now, and in the relative quiet a new sound is audible: a rushing of air... a wind-sound, rising...swooping down... approaching...

A shadow sweeps by. The guards look up in confusion. Sykes' cage begins to levitate -- to rise, slowly at first, then more quickly.

The CAMERA RISES WITH Sykes. The crowd, below us, begins to run, to overturn the barriers around the grave. The cordon of state troopers raise their rifles, ready to fire.

But a fog or cloud of smoke, dense and white, descends suddenly, obliterates the crowd, the guards, the pandemonium below. Shouts and gunshots are muffled, become faint and distant. The CAMERA SEES only Sykes now, in his cage, suspended in the mist from the end of a thick, black rope.

Sykes, unperturbed, continues to speak to camera:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Now, ya got ta keep in mind that at this particular moment I have no idea as ta what in the Hell is goin' on...or what in the Hell is about ta happen...But it don't scare me none either... 'Cause I just ain't the kinda guy that gets hisself all scared up over any little this-or-that...

(he smiles)

I just think too much of myself ta get scared...And I reckon -- once everything is said and done, and all the details are revealed, and I sit down and think about it -- that'll probably end up bein' the reason I'm bein' kidnapped at the present time...

From the top of the screen now, an OLD MAN appears - - small and wiry, wearing goggles and a leather aviator's cap. He climbs skillfully down the rope, carrying a large, thick blanket, then lowers the blanket in through the bars of the cage. Sykes accepts it without question and smiles at the old man, who climbs back up and out of sight.

The dense white fog still obscures the background. Swirling and eddying, it rushes by us, suggesting rapid movement.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Yep -- ya got ta keep your self-respect intact, Jake...That's the most important thing... More important than high-balls or dogs on leashes...Or even bein' free... Or even livin' sometimes... Ya just can't bird-turd around... Ya gotta speak up -- and do up -- what ya gotta do... No matter what the consequences or the outcome might turn out ta be... You're damned straight, ya do...

(a beat)

Anyway, that sure as Hell is the reason I landed myself up in prison in the first place... Yep...

He smiles, snuggles in to the heavy blanket as the swirling fog becomes whiter and thicker.

SYKES (CONT'D)

That's right...
 (smiling, he closes
 his eyes in ecstasy)
 Lord... Lord... How she could
 dance...

Sykes and the cage disappear in the whiteness. We hear MUSIC now, slow and seductive. The fog seems to part, to disperse as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

TWO: IN WHICH we are taken back to a time eight years earlier and introduced to P. P. Peoria -- the richest man in the world -- who proves to be one of the people responsible for placing our hero in his present predicament... AND IN WHICH we learn that Diamond Jim Sykes is by profession a teller of tales with a far-flung reputation...

(a comedy turn with a fast-action finale)

INT. BUCKTHORN MOTEL - NIGHT

A young WOMAN, exquisitely beautiful, with long black hair and olive skin dances slowly, languourously, with an incredible grace. A filmy veil falls away, then another. And as she dances, her eyes never move, seem fastened longingly on a single spot outside the camera's range -- as if she were performing her dance for just one man.

Sykes voice continues as before, narrating the scene for us:

SYKES'S VOICE

(in a reverie,
 remembering)

I ain't never seen nobody could
 dance like she could dance
 before or since... It was like
 they musta brought her here from
 somewhere far across the sea...

The CAMERA MOVES now, follows the dancer's eyes, sees now what she is seeing. We are inside a motel room. Lying in the large bed is a very old man. The blanket is pulled up to the middle of his bare and scrawny chest. His name is P.P. PEORIA. He watches the young girl's dance with an expression of profound and total boredom.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

And that old man, he just sat there facin' her shimmerin', hardly able ta keep his eyes awake... Heard tell afterwards that he was about the richest man in the whole wide world, and that he hired that lady and lots of other ladies just like her as his "Just-in-Case" girls... Just-in-case he got it up -- they'd be there ready for the event... If ya know what I mean...

The CAMERA CONTINUES PANNING, sees several other young ladies, equally beautiful -- the "JUST-IN-CASE" GIRLS - sitting on a long wooden bench near the bed, as if waiting their turns.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

But it seems that these just-in-case events was movin' more an' more apart... In fact, not hardly at all no more in the frequency of their occurrences...

EXT. WOLF CREEK, MONTANA - NIGHT

A caravan of limousines escorted by two state police cars speeds along a stretch of highway somewhere in Montana. A range of mountains, snow-capped, gleams in the moonlight. The limousines and police cars pull into a small, weather-beaten town at the base of the mountains, stop outside the town's one hotel. Two dozen older cars and pick-up trucks are already crowded around nearby. Several large, heavy-set MEN climb out of the limousines and go into the ramshackle hotel.

SYKES' VOICE

Anyway, about that time, I was workin' a town up there somewhere near a mountaintop in Montana -- about fifty miles from where the old man was situated... And it came ta pass that one night he sent a whole platoon of cars ta fetch me... Sayin' he'd give me the sum of five thousand dollars if I could talk it up for him...

INT. WOLF CREEK MOTEL - NIGHT

The squad of heavy-set men walk down the hotel's downstairs corridor, open the first door they come to.

We catch a glimpse inside of four people -- two COWBOYS and their LADIES -- all of them naked, all squatting on the bed, listening in total fascination to a small loud-speaker -- the kind used in drive-in theaters -- which is suspended just over the bed.

SYKES' VOICE

See, I was known then ta as far away as Chicago, Illinois for bein' able ta stand up the pecker on a door-knob with my stories - if the door-knob had a mind ta listen... I don't know why exactly I'm able ta do that -- I just always kinda had the knack...

The large men trace the wire running from the speaker back out into the hallway. They close the door and follow the wire along the corridor, where it is joined by dozens of other identical wires -- each one coming from behind one of the closed doors along the hallway.

At the end of the corridor all the wires come together, pass under the door to one of the rooms. The men open this door and look inside.

Sitting astride a wooden chair and speaking softly into a microphone, is Diamond Jim Sykes. He is about eight or ten years younger than when we last saw him, but the diamond still gleams in his smile.

He looks up at the men, frowning at first at their interruption. One of the men holds out a huge roll of money. Sykes considers it for a moment, then smiles.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Sykes is riding in the back of one of the fleet of limousines. Ahead and behind, the escorting police sirens wail as the cars speed into the parking lot of a large, isolated motel at the very base of one of the high mountains.

SYKES' VOICE

Well, anyhow, somehow the word
got out that I was on my way
from where I was ta where the
old man was... And in no time
flat, that motel of his was
filled with lines awaitin' --
waitin' for me ta talk 'em
through it -- ta hear what I had
ta say...

Sykes looks out the limousine's window, sees several
MEN -- naked except for their boots and cowboy hats
-- and their GIRLS in black panties and bee-hive
hairdos, clutching their wadded-up clothes and
shouting in outrage as a dozen more large men --
P.P. Peoria's bodyguards -- hustle them out the
doors of the motel and force them, shivering, to
clamber up into their pick-up trucks and drive away.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

But upon arrivin' on the scene,
I could see right away that the
rich man -- he didn't wanta hear
nothin' about sharin'...He
wanted me all to hisself... And
right away I thought to myself--
(getting angry)
There ain't nobody that tells
Diamond Jim Sykes who he's gonna
tell his stories to -- except
Diamond Jim Sykes, hisself! And
I started gettin' mad as Hell...
Like I wanted ta bust everybody
around me in the mouth... But
instead...

Sykes, watching the naked cowboys and their ladies being hustled away, glowers in anger. One of the body-guards opens the door of his limousine for him. Sykes looks at him for a moment, then suddenly smiles sweetly and gets out of the car.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

...I just smiled and kept on
smilin' and sashayed myself into
that room of his...

INT. BUCKTHORN MOTEL - NIGHT

We see the beautiful dark-haired girl dancing and the old man -- P.P. Peoria -- watching, half-asleep, bored -- exactly as we saw them at the beginning of the scene.

Sykes enters the room, smiles appreciatively at the girl, whose eyes smile back at him with a taste more than just the professional seductiveness she's been using on the old man. Sykes says "Howdy" to the bench-full of "Just-in-Case" Girls, then walks over to the bed, pulls a chair up right alongside, and begins to whisper into P.P. Peoria's ear.

SYKES' VOICE

And I set right about to tellin'
him a story -- the one about the
lady in Detroit who screamed so
loud when her little brother was
doin' it to her that she ended
up fuckin' all the firecheifs at
a convention in Indianapolis...
And right away it started
workin'...

P.P. Peoria's eyes glisten. A smile spreads over his face; and beneath the covers, in the center of the bed, something even more wonderful is happening. Peoria looks down, grins in joy. The "Just-in-Case" Girls crowd around the bed, watch in amazement as the blanket begins to thrust slowly upward.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

And I kept on goin' a little
while longer till that old man
was about feelin' that feelin'
that's just about right...

(a beat)

Then all of a sudden I stopped
my story I was tellin'...

Sykes stops talking to Peoria, leans back in his chair, and with great deliberation takes a large white handkerchief from his pocket. P.P. Peoria, stunned, incredulous, stares at Sykes.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

I mean I stopped it just like
that and took out my
handkerchief ta blow my nose and
told him ta take his money and
shove it up his you-know-where
and turned ta leave the room...

Sykes tosses the roll of money onto the bed, onto the now no-longer-elevated blanket. Peoria is purple with frustration and rage, screaming at Sykes.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

Then he screamed somethin'
like...

(imitating an old
man's voice)

"WHERE YOU GOIN', BOY?! YOU
AIN'T GONNA LEAVE ME NOW...!!
YOU AIN'T GOIN' NOPLACE!!"...
And the next thing I knowed I
was tusselin' around with two of
the biggest fellows I ever did
see in my life...

The door to the motel room bursts open to reveal two enormous BODYGUARDS. They advance on Sykes, shove him hard, back into the chair beside the bed.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

...pushin' and shovin' and
pickin' up a cane that was
nearby and hittin' them upside
their heads...

Sykes grabs Peoria's gold-handled walking stick and with two lightning-fast moves clubs the bodyguards over their heads and dashes out of the room.

EXT. MOTEL - MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Sykes leaps into one of the limousines and races off, scattering a crowd of bodyguards and state police who scramble now into their own cars and begin to chase after him.

Sykes, his anger still boiling from the fight at the motel, races the limousine around the tight curves of a dirt road that winds up toward the top of the mountain. The state police cars and other limousines careen along behind him, drawing steadily closer.

SYKES' VOICE

...And high-tailin' it outta there with them chasin' after me just as fast as they could -- I mean pig-tailin' it right up behind me... And me thinkin', "Boy, you might gonna be dead in a minute or two -- but at least if you're gonna be dead an' dyin' it'll be with your high opinion of yourself intact!"

Sirens wailing, the state police cars are almost on top of Sykes now. They careen along just inches from his bumper.

THREE: IN WHICH Diamond Jim Sykes falls, as it were, through a crack in the universe and meets Lastie MoJoe, learning about his connection to P. P. Peoria and the remarkable discovery that Lastie made in his youth...

(a scene of great pathos and skillful tap-dancing)

EXT. DIRT ROAD - HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Suddenly, skillfully, Sykes spins the wheel, sends the limousine crashing through an old and rickety gate and onto a tiny and overgrown road -- little more than a pair of ruts leading up into the wilderness, toward the very top of the mountain.

Sykes battles heroically to keep the car on the road -- but it's no use. After a moment, there is no road anymore -- only the crash of underbrush, tangling and getting thicker till it drags the car to a stop.

Furious, Sykes slams out of the useless car, looks back down the hill. The state police cars and the other limousines have all stopped just outside the weathered old fence. Several of the police and bodyguards are standing - also just outside the fence - shouting and waving angrily for Sykes to come back. But, surprisingly, even though the men are not very far away and one of the police is

shouting into an electric megaphone, their voices are completely inaudible to Sykes -- as completely as if there were a wall of glass between them a dozen feet thick.

Sykes would certainly find this surprising, too, if he were not also confronted now by something even more amazing: his body seems to be glowing -- pulsing with colors that radiate out from a thousand tiny points just like the auras we see in Kirlian photographs. The dominant color is a bright and fiery red.

As Sykes stares in amazement at the light that engulfs his body, a wind begins to rise, to buffet Sykes and everything around him. He looks up. Twenty feet above his head, a sleek, custom-designed helicopter is hovering, its downdraft raising clouds of dust all around Sykes.

But -- just like the policeman shouting through his megaphone -- the helicopter's roaring engines are completely inaudible. Like an apparition, the helicopter hangs there silently suspended over Sykes' head. And inside the chopper, visible now in the passenger seat, P.P. Peoria is shaking his fist down at Sykes, livid with rage.

Surrounded by the choking clouds of dust, Sykes shouts up at Peoria, shouts into the eerie silence. His hands claw uselessly at the glowing light that engulfs his body.

SYKES

(a snarl of fury)

Listen, Rich Man... I don't care
what kinda torture you put me
to... Or how much God-damn money
you wanta give me...You ain't
gonna make me do what I don't
want ta do!! 'CAUSE I AIN'T FOR
SALE!! Did ya hear what I said,
Rich Man?? I SAID I AIN'T FOR
SALE!!!

In the background, distantly, behind Sykes, there is a crackling sound -- like the discharge of huge bolts of static electricity. From over the crest of the hill behind Sykes a pale blue light begins to emanate, to spread through the air. As it touches Sykes, illuminating him faintly, his aura -- an angry, fiery red -- begins to change. Within just a moment it has become a bright powder-blue.

And softly, very softly, from inside Sykes' own mouth, a tiny voice begins to speak: the quiet voice of a very old man:

VOICE

I wish I could say that, son...
But unfortunately, the very same
P.P. Peoria who is pursuing you
at the present time bought me
and all I had to offer to
mankind a long, long time ago...

Sykes looks around him. The voice he is hearing seems to be coming somehow from inside his own mouth. But as Sykes himself speaks now, we see that he has - at the moment that his aura changed from red to blue - undergone a startling and complete change of mood. He is now happy and relaxed and totally care-free. His voice expresses only a natural and calm curiosity:

SYKES

Hey...How the heck are you
talkin' to me, anyway?

VOICE

Through the fillings in your
teeth... The metal in your
mouth...

SYKES

(looking around)
Well, where are ya?

VOICE

Just follow the arrows North,
son... Go North.

A little yellow light in the shape of an arrow appears nearby, pointing up toward the top of the mountain. Above it, Sykes can see a whole line of little arrows pointing the way.

Sykes grins and starts to hike up the hill, leaving the police and P.P. Peoria's silently hovering helicopter behind him without even a second thought.

The tiny voice continues to speak, gently and whimsically, as Sykes follows the trail:

VOICE (CONT'D)

I always go North...I went North
over the North Pole and slid
clear down to the South Pole and
kept on hiking North 'till I
ended up right back here
again... Just like if you go
West as far as you can go, you
end up East again... The world's
not flat, my boy -- it's round.

SYKES

(in the same spirit)
You didn't happen ta see my
mamma on your journey
North...You didn't happen ta
pass her in Saskatchewan, did
ya? She would have been wearin'
a pink flannel nightie...
carrying a sign with the name
"Jim" printed on it in big old,
bold old letters...

VOICE

No, I can't recall that I did...
But I did see a mamma in a
powder-blue nightie around
Sydney, Australia carrying a
sign with the name "John"
printed on it in wee, little
letters...

SYKES

(smiling)
Well, it's been so long that
maybe she forgot my name...

Sykes has been walking, following the arrows
"North." As he approaches the summit .of the hill,
we can see that the trees and plants now are also
glowing -- engulfed in their own bright, powder-blue
auras.

As Sykes reaches the top of the hill, the trees give
way to a clearing; and in its center stands a modest
wooden building in the shape of a hexagon. Its
timbers -- like the rickety fence at the base of the
hill -- are old and weathered-grey. Its construction
seems flimsy - as though its plain, windowless walls
might easily be blown over in a strong enough wind.

Rising up from the center of the building is a slender mast or pole almost a hundred feet high. It is guyed off in several directions by long, black ropes, and at its very top is a tarnished copper ball, only a foot or so in diameter. The tiny ball is crackling with blue, lightning-like discharges of energy. It seems to be the source of the pale blue light that has been filling the sky for the past few moments.

And standing in the building's single doorway is a very old man. He is dressed in a thread-bare tuxedo. His white hair and beard frame a sweetly smiling face. His aura -- like Sykes' -- is a bright, powder-blue.

Sykes strides right up to the old man, greets him warmly, happily:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Jim Sykes... But my friends call me Diamond Jim.

He extends his hand in friendship, but it passes straight through the old man's outstretched hand. Sykes smiles in childlike surprise, reaches out again, and this time passes his hand directly through the old man's body -- as if it were only an image: a three-dimensional projection of some kind.

INT. WOODEN BUILDING - NIGHT

Grinning now, Sykes walks directly through the image of the old man, and into the building. The walls are wound with thick, copper cable into a hexagon-shaped coil around which pulses of intense blue energy are flowing. Inside the coil, filling the center of the large, single room, we can see a raised circular platform. It is loaded with enormous electrical generating equipment. A giant dynamo hums with power. A coil of heavy-gauge wire glows cherry-red. (All this equipment -- despite its impressive size -- appears to be antique: massive cast-iron fittings are decorated with scroll-like designs; coils and transformers are lumpy, imperfect - as if they had been wound by hand at the dawn of the electrical age.)

Into the middle of this huge assemblage, the slim metal pole descends through a cut-out in the roof, connects to a massive wooden column wrapped with thick copper cables.

And standing at the foot of the huge column is a very old man - an exact duplicate of the image in the doorway.

This old man's hand, too, is extended in friendship; but when Sykes reaches out to shake it -- a little more warily than before - it proves to be solid and substantial.

OLD MAN (LASTIE)
 (shaking Sykes' hand)
 My name is Lastie (for Last) of
 the Mo (for Mohicans) Joe:
 Lastie MoJoe.

Sykes puts his hands on his hips, looks around him, grinning broadly.

SYKES
 Say, ya know something, Mr.
 Lastie MoJoe?
 (grinning at Lastie)
 I feel happy! I feel God-damned
 happy!
 (getting excited)
 For the first time in my life --
 I feel God-damned HAPPY!!

LASTIE
 (softly; smiling)
 Good, son, so do I...
 (raising an eyebrow)
 Would you like to know why we
 feel happy?

SYKES
 You bet your ass.

LASTIE
 Okay. Then I have to ask you a
 question.

SYKES
 (eagerly)
 Shoot.

LASTIE
 Have you ever seen a tap-dancer
 who wasn't smiling when he was
 tapping?

SYKES
 Hell, no!

LASTIE

Of course not... And that was exactly the observation I made when I was your age...

In front of them now, an image appears to solidify from the air itself: we see first one...then two...then three black TAP DANCERS. They are smiling and tapping their hearts out. Sykes watches them tap and Lastie continues to speak:

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Of course at first it was just something I observed but didn't think too much of... But the more tappers I saw...

More and more tap dancers appear: lines of tap dancers filling up the space around Lastie and Sykes -- some of them tap dancing their way right through Lastie and Sykes, as if they were -- like the vision of Lastie in the doorway -- merely three dimensional projections -- full-sized holograms floating in space.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

...the more I became aware of their smiling...

Indeed, all the tap dancers are smiling as they dance.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Then I began to think to myself, "This is no coincidence... This is no accident..."

The tap dancers disappear and we see instead a young man -- Lastie MoJoe at the age of twenty-five. He is wheeling a piece of electrical apparatus down the aisle of a turn-of-the-century vaudeville theater.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

So the next time I went to the theater, I brought along a portable version of my aura-testing machine And sure enough... Just as I had expected...

A line of tap dancers comes out onto the stage of the theater. Each one is enveloped, now, in his own glowing aura, and all the auras are individually different -- reds and yellows and purples and greens. But as soon as they begin to tap, all of their auras turn a bright powder-blue.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
...as soon as they started their tapping, they immediately began to smile and -- to a man -- their auras turned from whatever their auras had been to a happy and peaceful and non-hostile blue...

The tap dancing routine speeds up. Their auras become more intensely blue.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
And the faster they seemed to tap, the mellower their auras and the broader their smiles became...

The dancers finish their act, begin to bow for applause.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
But as soon as they stopped tapping, the blue of their auras disappeared and they returned to their normal state...

Backstage at the theater: we see the tap dancers lounging around between numbers: sad, dejected tap dancers with dark purple auras... hostile, mean tap dancers with fiery red auras... lonely tap dancers with yellow-green auras...

LASTIE (CONT'D)
It was at this point that I purchased a pair of tap shoes for myself, and returned to my laboratory to observe my own aura as I shuffled (not being able to tap) around in them...

We see Lastie (as a young man) shuffling around tentatively inside his laboratory. A larger version of the "aura-testing machine" glows in the background. He is dancing with an endearing awkwardness in front of a full-length mirror, his aura becoming a brighter and brighter blue as he moves faster and faster.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And sure enough: the same that had happened to them, happened to me... But why?

The young Lastie stops shuffling, stands in one spot, lost in thought.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And I thought... And I thought... And I thought... Until I thought... Of course!

We see a bright pattern of parallel blue lines, slightly curved: like lines drawn upon the surface of the earth.

A small closed loop -- the exact shape of a metal tap -- passes through the pattern of lines, distorting them slightly the way a piece of metal distorts the field of a large magnet.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

The Earth's natural electric and magnetic fields... Plus the movement of the metal taps on the bottoms of my shoes... Equals... Total... unabashed... HAPPINESS!!

The image of Lastie leaps into the air, dances through the bright lines of blue force, faster and faster, with more and more excitement and happiness... Then, suddenly, he becomes very serious.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

At which point -- after my initial excitement -- I pulled myself together, poured myself a cup of tea, sat down in my favorite chair... and began to cry...

We see Lastie sitting in an overstuffed armchair. A cup of tea rests on a small table nearby. Tears are rolling down Lastie's cheeks.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

I began to cry... because suddenly I realized that I -- Lastie MoJoe -- in some divine way, I was sure -- had uncovered in a most unlikely fashion a key to a kind of eternal happiness for all of mankind... If I could only find a practical way of creating and sustaining what I decided to call the "Buck-and-Wing Effect"...

Young black tap dancers begin to dance across the young Lastie's laboratory, to circle him in his chair as he sits there, crying in happiness and in awe.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Tap dancing itself, naturally, being impractical in terms of accessibility for all of mankind...What a responsibility I had inadvertantly placed upon myself... But at that time I was young and full of energy... and had nothing but absolute belief in my ability to rise to any occasion...

The young Lastie gets up out of his chair and sets quickly to work. A large apparatus takes shape -- becomes identical in fact to the stout column with its slender mast and copper ball that dominates Lastie's present laboratory.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And sure enough: even after just a little bit, my diligence and my tenacity paid off... The "Buck-and-Wing Effect" -- at least within the confines of my own laboratory -- and for brief periods of time -- had been made practical...

The mast begins to glow, the copper ball emits flashes of bright blue lightning. The young Lastie is standing very still-- not shuffling or dancing at all -- but within a moment his aura begins to change to a bright powder-blue, and he begins to smile.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Now, to go further -- to make happiness available to all who wanted it -- to all who needed it... I needed power -- and lots of it...

Suddenly filling Lastie's laboratory -- towering impossibly far up beyond it -- we see the vast concrete wall of an enormous dam. High-pressure jets of water roar harmlessly through Lastie and Sykes, spinning giant turbines: making power.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

The Boulder Dam, for instance -- or the equivalent of it -- I calculated at the time would work just fine...

The image of Boulder Dam dissolves into the air, is replaced by a projection of a man of thirty or thirty-five. He is dressed elegantly in 1920s-style clothing and appears to be descending a broad, marble staircase, preceded by four baying hounds on silver-studded leashes. The man is none other than P.P. Peoria, as he was forty years ago.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

It was at this point that I decided to contact P.P. Peoria. My reasoning being that if I had all the money in the world, I would gladly use at least a good portion of it to see that others were made happy...

P.P. Peoria, his dogs, his tall, young Negro retainer -- CHARLES -- and a half -dozen gorgeous TOOTSIES enter the young Lastie's laboratory. Lastie throws a switch. The copper ball begins to glow and spark. Peoria and Lastie and Charles and the tootsies all grin happily. Even the dogs cease their snarling and begin to roll around playfully on the floor.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And sure enough: one single demonstration was all that he required...

P.P. Peoria himself opens the switch. The blue glow fades. The dogs begin to snarl once more. Peoria looks at Lastie for a long moment, shrewdly, appraisingly.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

He pondered for a long moment -- as rich men do -- then he said, "I'll tell you what... I shall finance for you -- in full -- no matter what the cost -- your happiness machine... If -- in return -- you take the exceptional mind that God has bestowed upon you, and use it to develop for me a little pill or potion or the equivalent that will guarantee for me eternal life...

Peoria leans closer, whispers into the young Lastie's ear, gesturing over his shoulder toward the beautiful girls who are gawking in wonder at the machines in Lastie's laboratory. As he whispers, the background changes, becomes the interior of a palatial bedroom. P.P. Peoria is lying in bed with one of the girls...

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Then in a whisper he confided that on this very same morning, when he rolled over to hug Rosemary -- his newest and most lovely tootsie -- his "pissing pistol, " as he referred to it, for the very first time refused to stand up and greet the morning sun...

We see the faces of Peoria and Rosemary, looking off and down toward the center of the bed. Rosemary seems surprised and a trifle wistful; Peoria is shocked and dismayed.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Then he winked at me and said, "So you see, son," He called me son. "The sooner the better..."

Inside the laboratory, Peoria produces a sheaf of papers, a bundle of currency, and a broad, ingratiating smile.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And without waiting a moment, he produced a contract for me to sign, took out a huge roll of bills and gave me what I thought was a sizable down-payment, kissed me lovingly on the forehead, patted me on the behind, and bade me farewell...

Peoria and his entourage depart, leaving Lastie alone in his laboratory. He pockets the money and sets immediately to work amid beakers and test-tubes and retorts filled with bright, steaming fluids.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And off I went to work -- cocksure and as cocky as could be -- filled with the confidence that within a month or two I would have invented the eternal life pill for P.P. Peoria -- and be well on my way to making all of mankind happy...

The young Lastie stops his work for a moment. As if perplexed, lost in thought, he begins to pace around in his laboratory. After a moment, he is joined by a second -- and slightly older -- Lastie -- also pacing, perplexed...

LASTIE (CONT'D)

First a month went by... Then a year... Then ten years...

More and more pacing, perplexed Lasties -- each one older than the next -- join the line that is beginning to fill up the laboratory.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

Then another ten years floated by... Then ten more: with still no sign of eternal life in sight... And then for some unknown reason, about midnight one night, I stopped my work and took a look at myself in a mirror...

The last and oldest Lastie in the line stops pacing, drifts away from the others, comes to rest staring at himself in a mirror.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

...and lo and behold I saw that
I had turned into an old man...
What had happened to me...? What
had become of my life...? Of my
dreams...?

The aged face that stares back from the mirror is, in fact, the present-day Lastie who has been relating the story to Sykes. He looks out from the mirror at the slightly younger image of himself with genuine sadness and compassion. As the younger Lastie watches him, wide-eyed and frightened, he speaks, softly and gently.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And then for the first time,
right then and there -- at that
exact moment -- I realized that
I had been side-tracked... That
I had failed... That the divine
potential I had felt in my youth
-- that the gift I so pompously
thought I would leave as a
legacy to mankind would now --
more than likely -- never be
unwrapped...

Suddenly, roaring into the space over Lastie's and Sykes' heads, the sleek, custom-designed helicopter appears. Inside it, waving his fist and shouting into a large, electric megaphone is P.P. Peoria himself -- as old now as Lastie.

LASTIE

(raising his voice to
be heard over the
din)

And I guess it was about the
same time that he...

(gesturing up toward
Peoria's helicopter)

...became certain - beyond any
question of a doubt - that he,
too, was on a collision course
with the great beyond... And
that telegrams and messengers
and ten-times-a-day phone calls

(MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)

to tell me to hurry just
wouldn't suffice... So instead,
the sky above me began to
clatter and echo with his
commands.

(looking up at the
helicopter;
mimicking P.P.
Peoria's voice)

"Where's my pill, Lastie?
Where's my pill??"

The image of Lastie, looking into the mirror, covers
his ears, then walks over to a small black console
containing only a meter -- which is pulsing wildly
as the helicopter clatters overhead -- and a tiny
silver switch.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

But little did he know that with
just a simple little flick of a
switch I was able to obliterate
his threats...

The image of Lastie throws the switch. The deafening
roar of the helicopter's engines disappears
completely. Peoria continues to rant and shout
overhead -- but mutely now.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And then -- having dealt
successfully with this minor
infringement on my nervous
system -- for the second time in
my life, I poured myself a cup
of tea, sat down in my favorite
chair, and began to cry -- and
cry -- and cry...

(a long beat)

And it seems that the only time
that I haven't cried since
then... is just now...

All the projected images have disappeared. Lastie is
looking at Sykes now, his eyes bright with hope.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

...when I heard your shouting,
and saw your fury, and I decided
-- for the first time since I
can't even remember when -- in

(MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 order to ease and soothe your
 anger -- to put my "Buck-and-
 Wing Effect" to work...
 (a gesture toward the
 column that
 dominates the room)
 ...and activate my happiness
 machine... and smile...

But even as he says this, we can see that the blue
 glow surrounding the massive column is beginning to
 fade. Lastie's powder-blue aura is gradually
 changing - becoming darker and more tinged with
 purple. Lastie sees what is happening.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 But my smile isn't going to last
 for very long, son...
 (his smile fading;
 sadness creeping
 into his voice)
 ...because I just don't have the
 power to sustain it...

The blue glow around the column is flickering --
 almost gone now. Tears begin to swell in Lastie's
 eyes.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 I'm a failure, Diamond Jim...
 Your new-found friend, Lastie
 MoJoe is nothing but a damned
 failure...

Lastie is openly crying now. Sykes takes Lastie in
 his arms and begins soothing him, gently patting his
 back.

But Sykes' aura is changing now, too. It is slowly
 becoming again a bright and fiery and angry red.
 Suddenly he lets go of Lastie, takes a step back,
 and stares at the old man, anger building in him as
 Lastie continues to sob.

SYKES

What kinda sad-sack kinda story
is that ta tell me?! Hell-- if I
had what you have, I'd get my
ass up ta some high-on-some-
mountain-top mountain -- and
shout it out just as loud as I
could for all the world ta
hear...

He strides over to the door. A helicopter's down-
draft buffets him, raises silent clouds of dust
swirling all around him. Sykes looks up, sees P.P.
Peoria in his helicopter hovering - eerily silent --
just overhead. Sykes gestures up at Peoria, furious
now, shouting:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And then I'd stand my ground
against him... Or anybody else
who tried ta push me off of
it... I'd be King of the
Mountain, Jake!

He turns on Lastie, the force of his words almost
physically attacking him, stopping for a moment
Lastie's tears as the old man listens, wide-eyed --
frightened by Sykes' outburst of energy.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Shit, old man... You gotta fight
ta be who ya want ta be in this
world!! You can't be runnin' and
hidin' and cryin' in your soup
because things don't go the way
ya want them ta go!! A man's got
ta do what he's got ta do -- and
face what he's got ta face!

Sykes, still in the doorway, is looking now down the
hill. Through an opening in the trees, the cluster
of state police cars and long black limousines are
visible in the distance at the base of the hill.
Their spotlights sweep the area, play across Sykes'
face as he speaks:

SYKES (CONT'D)

'Cause if he don't face it, he's
liable ta end up not likin'
hissself... And for myself -- I
just couldn't stand not
likin'myself... Hell, no! I just
couldn't stand that one bit!!

Sykes begins to stride down the hill now, directly toward the lights of the state police and Peoria's bodyguards.

The helicopter's powerful but totally silent wake raises a storm of dust all around him, makes his gesture seem even more heroic -- like that of a man who has willed himself to do battle with nature itself if need be. Sykes shouts down at the police as he advances on them:

SYKES (CONT'D)

You hear what I said?? You can take me ta jail... You can hit me upside my head... But you can't stop me!! 'Cause I'm a survivor, Jake! Through thick and through thin, I survive!

And Lastie, standing in the doorway to his old and weather-beaten building, watches Sykes go. The tears have welled up in his eyes once more, stream down his face, as Sykes' voice -- more and more distant -- echoes up to him.

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

Here I come, chumps! You better brace yourselves...! You better get yourselves all set...!!

FADE OUT

FOUR: IN WHICH we move forward eight years to view the consequences of Diamond Jim's actions in the previous scenes...AND IN WHICH we are treated to a sample of our hero's story-telling prowess and watch the effect that it has upon a large number of listeners...

(an oratorical stomp performed to the accompaniment of a mighty chorus)

FADE IN:

INT. PRISON CELL-BLOCK - NIGHT

Night-time... Rows of cells... tier after tier up to the bare-light-bulb ceiling... and the sound of a thousand men, talking, shouting to each other, moving inside their cells, pacing...

A half-dozen guards wait clustered around their guard station, casting occasional glances up toward one spot in the uppermost tier of cells -- as if waiting for something to happen...

Overhead now, quickly, the lights go out. And as they do, the prisoners suddenly fall silent... All of them... Almost all at once...

Then, into the sudden silence, one of the prisoners shouts out a word: "Cold!"

A long beat; then another voice shouts from someplace else in the cell-block: "Hot... And humid nights!"

Then other voices are shouting, echoing, competing for attention: "Pussy!... Pussy!... Pussy!" "Lonely" "Butterflies! And Summer!" "Rain!" "Long. black hair!"... until the entire cell-block is a cacophony of shouting, overlapping voices...

Then a single voice cuts through them all: "All right- BUTTERFLIES! You want ta talk about BUTTERFLIES?!" And the other voices become a single cheer, a shout of joy and relief, then fall quickly into silence.

The moment prolongs itself like a deeply-held breath, then the voice begins to speak again -- it is Sykes' voice.

As he speaks the CAMERA BEGINS TO MOVE, TO TRACK ALONG the lowest row of cells, to watch the prisoners as they listen and react to Sykes' story. And as his voice builds in cadence and rhythm, so do the responses of the prisoners.

They begin to react to each of Sykes' phrases -- adding to them, echoing and repeating his words... until they are clapping and shouting in time to his voice, giving him a rhythmic back-up to play against with the melody of his story... Until they are like a black Baptist congregation, wailing and stomping to the words of their preacher, the words of their Gospel...

The CAMERA CONTINUES TO MOVE throughout, TRACKING ALONG the cells, RISING STEADILY toward the highest tier in the cell-block. And Sykes' voice grows steadily louder with perspective:

SYKES' VOICE

It's night-time... And you're fourteen years old... And if you could, you'd roam the streets of your home town naked... And just the thought of stickin' it into something that wiggles drives ya wild with desire... And every window ya look at at night, you're sure has got a lady naked, powderin' her nose behind it... And you look over at your best friend Frankie and you're wonderin' if he's feelin' the same feelin' you're feelin'... And there's this girl you heard about somewhere near where you are who's got brothers who do it to her all the time... And she ain't too bad-lookin' neither... And maybe she would... And you could, too...

(the response of the
prisoners is
building)

So ya ask her point-blank and right straight out... And she pretends she don't know what you're talkin' about. .. So ya push her -- 'cause ya don't know how else ta start it out... And she says somethin' about siccin' her brothers onta ya... So ya shove her again... Ta show that ya ain't scared... And that nothin's gonna stop ya...

(the prisoners are
slamming against
their bars as if
in imitation of
what he's saying)

And she's wearin' one of them cool summer dresses with butterflies all over it... And you unbutton your pants so's she can get a good look at it...

(louder suddenly)

And then ya shove her again... Right up against the God-damned wall... And when ya rip them butterflies offa her ya see that she ain't wearin' nothin'

(MORE)

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

underneath it exceptin' her
Mamma's pink garter belt... And
ya reach in your pocket and pull
out one of them lubricated
Trojan-horse typa things... And
ya tell her ta take it outta the
package and put it on ya...
(a pause)

The prisoners are near to ecstasy. The CAMERA IS TRACKING along the highest row of cells; Sykes' voice is very close, now.

But the stomping and clapping and shouting of the prisoners becomes ragged as the pause in Sykes' story prolongs itself and his voice doesn't return to pick up the beat.

The men are shouting, begging Sykes to continue. We see one of the prisoners rush up to the wall of his cell, begin pounding on it furiously -- as if Sykes were in the very next cell.

And suddenly Sykes' voice rings out, challenging:

SYKES' VOICE (CONT'D)

Butterflies!! Ya want ta talk
about butterflies?!, I'll tell
ya about butterflies!!

And the CAMERA TRACKS to the final cell -- Sykes' cell. Sykes is standing by the bars, surveying the cell-block. He is eight or ten years older than when we last saw him.

The prisoners become quieter now, answering Sykes: "That's right! Butterflies!" "Tell us about them butterflies!"

Sykes smiles and his diamond winks and his voice becomes softer now. The prisoners have to strain at first to hear him:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And that butterfly dress of
hers... I bent down and picked
it up offa the ground... And it
was light -- with no weight
hardly to it at all -- as a
(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)
 feather... And I just held it in
 my hand there for the longest
 time... Thinkin' how this was
 somethin'... And she weren't
 sayin' nothin'... And them
 butterflies... Them butterflies
 sure were pretty...

He sits down on his bunk, props his feet up, and
 continues, still softly:

SYKES (CONT'D)
 And then a little breeze came up
 from outta nowhere... And them
 butterflies started movin'...
 Like they was alive and real in
 my hands... And she started
 shiverin'... And I thought, "I'm
 gonna help that girl on with her
 dress..." And how I knew for
 sure that her brothers never did
 that...

(a beat; louder now)
 And the breeze was a wind,
 now... And we was on the ground
 underneath some big maple
 tree... Huggin'... That's right:
 I said huggin'!... Holdin' on
 for dear life ta one another...
 Groanin', even...

(a long beat; he
 smiles)
 Then after that I sat back a
 tate... And sorta lifted them
 butterflies to a spot just above
 it... And right below her belly-
 button... And stared at it...
 For a good long time... Maybe
 even an hour or two... And
 thought to myself...

(as if marveling)
 Damned... I myself popped outta
 one a them things not too long
 ago...

(another long beat;
 musing)
 Moonlight... and poppin'... And
 leamin' how ta do it right...

The prisoners call out a deeply-felt "Amen!" Sykes
 stands, comes to the bars, speaks --loud now:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Ladies is truly somethin', ain't they?

The prisoners chorus another "Amen!"

SYKES (CONT'D)

And then I reached down and touched the lightness of her dress again... And she made my hand stop and stay there...

The rhythm is building again now -- faster and louder. The men are clapping along, shouting...

SYKES (CONT'D)

And I could feel her movin'...
And hear her breathin' hard...
And I counted ta a thousand in my mind... Then ta two thousand... Then ta three...

The prisoners are shouting along now: "Then to FOUR thousand... FIVE thousand... SIX thousand..."

The CAMERA MOVES, PANNING OFF Sykes, seeing the prisoners respond, then CONTINUING ITS PAN -- a full 180 degrees -- to a cell on the other side of the block. At first the cell seems empty; but as the CAMERA ZOOMS IN STEADILY, we catch a glimpse of light reflecting off a small glass disc. Blankets have been draped down over the two bunk-beds, creating a hidden space between them. And inside that hiding place, barely visible to us, something is moving.

OUR CAMERA ZOOMS CLOSER... The glass disc is clear now -- it is the lens of a camera, In it, we can see a reflection: Sykes -- talking, gesturing, shouting now, above the shouts of the prisoners:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Till I counted seven thousand butterflies!!... Movin' up and down... And wigglin' all around... And screamin' butterflies!... And yellin' butterflies!... And YELLIN' butterflies!!

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

The sounds of the prison -- Sykes and the prisoners -- continue from the previous scene, but filtered now -- as if they were coming from a loudspeaker.

We see now, the point of view of the hidden camera: The image of Sykes is grainier, harsher, more accidental in its composition -- like a piece of newsreel or documentary film.

The prisoners are clapping and juking and stomping -- screaming out "Butterflies!" And Sykes, at the peak of his energy, is shouting at them:

SYKES

Now if ya want ta talk about
butterflies!... I'll talk about
butterflies!!...

And abruptly, unexpectedly, Sykes' voice and all the sounds of the men in the prison FADE OUT -- as if a hand on some volume control had dialed out the sound track.

A young man's voice speaks from off-screen: quiet, clipped, emotionless -- it is in total contrast to the screaming energy of the cell-block:

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE

We photographed this with the
warden's permission but without
the knowledge of any of the
prisoners -- including the
story-teller...

As he speaks, OUR CAMERA PULLS BACK. We can see now that the shot of Sykes is an image projected onto a screen. We are inside a small, luxurious screening room somewhere inside a large television studio.

The young man who is speaking now, over the silent image of Sykes shouting and the prisoners responding, is standing in a small pool of light alongside the screen. His name is JEFFREY. Several men and women -- only silhouettes in the projector's white beam -- are watching the screen, listening to the young man's presentation:

JEFFREY

He's been telling his stories every night since he was incarcerated... Eight years ago -- for two counts of second-degree murder... At first, the authorities tried to shut him up. They put him in solitary confinement, but the prisoners rioted... So the warden changed his mind -- decided to let the man talk... Since then, this prison has had the lowest crime rate of any in the country... The prison psychologist says that the stories do more than just release sexual tension... He feels that they re-create for the inmates a state of innocence... A state he calls "non-ambivalence"...

He glances over at the screen. It now shows a distinguished-looking older MAN sitting on one of a row of folding chairs set up on a balcony that overlooks the cell-block. He is laughing and clapping his hands along with the prisoners.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Oh... That's Warden Burkholst, there... and his wife, Marie...

MARIE, seated alongside the warden, seems to be enjoying herself even more than her husband.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

We were lucky to find out about any of this... The warden's managed to keep it all pretty well hushed up... He's afraid of anyone finding out about the "unorthodox" way he's managed to keep the peace at his prison...

A woman's voice, strong and used to giving commands and -- at the moment -- filled with impatience, cuts off his dissertation. The image on the projection room screen shows Sykes beginning another rap and the prisoners shouting in response.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Jeffrey, for Christ's sake, tell
us that later. I want to hear
him some more!

Flustered, Jeffrey looks off toward the voice, then quickly reaches down to a small control panel and turns a dial. Sykes' voice and the sounds of the prisoners return with a rush. The CAMERA MOVES BACK IN TO A CLOSE-UP of the screen:

INT. PRISON CELL-BLOCK -NIGHT

Sykes' voice is strutting now. He is in complete control of the men's responses -- taking them wherever he wants to go.

As he speaks, the CAMERA MOVES and we can see that prisoners at each end of the cell-block are repeating Sykes' words -- calling them out through the windows of their cells to the inmates of adjacent cell-blocks, where the stories are repeated and again passed on.

SYKES

...talkin' about self-pride,
Jake!... I'm talkin' about your
self-respect!... You take me,
for instance... I ain't never
had no home ta call my own...
Never had no driver's license or
no God-damned Social Security
Number!... Never went ta school
or never had no small-pox
vaccination... NOTHIN'!... There
ain't no record of me
noplacel...

(The prisoners are
shouting "That's
rightl" at every
phrase)

But if somebody asks me who I
am...

(a long beat)

All I got ta do is smile...

Sykes'diamond flashes as he grins.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Then I become somebody!... I become Diamond Jim Sykes... or Floyd Patterson... or the Ding-Dong-Daddy from Dumas!... I become anybody I damn well choose ta be!... Because I'll tell ya something... Something that everybody knows is that diamonds... that diamonds ain't no just-happen-ta-be-there kinda thing... You gotta be tough and I mean bad-ass as Hell ta sport a diamond out front... Ta advertise your fortune right there in plain sight at night... Otherwise you'd be dead and gone... Or at least you wouldn't have no diamond-studded tooth there... There'd just be a hole there where it used ta be!... And even when you're dead and dyin', Buster, that diamond is gonna tell that ambulance driver or coroner or whoever comes upon ya in that alley downtown somewhere that ya musta been some tough son-of-a-bitch and somebody special, too!... Diamonds are the great divider, Jake!...

(a beat; smiling)

An' if you don't believe me, you just try wakin' up in the mornin' with a God-damn EI Dorado Cadillac stickin' outta your front tooth!

The inmates are laughing and clapping and stomping their approval.

FIVE: IN WHICH our hero's charismatic appeal is brought to the attention of Elizabeth, a woman of great passion and persuasive personal power...AND IN WHICH she enthusiastically declares her intention of making him her lover and a world-famous star...

(a love-song both bawdy and tender)

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

The woman whose voice we heard a moment ago is sitting in the front row of seats, there in the screening room. She is in her mid-thirties, dressed in the very classiest and most elegant of taste. She is, we see now, the coldly beautiful woman we saw -- standing by her limousine, surrounded by reporters -- during the funeral at the beginning of the film. Her name is ELIZABETH.

She is speaking now, quietly -- as if to herself, almost -- but her soft voice brings an instant response from the others in the screening room:

ELIZABETH

Stop it... Stop it... Stop it!

The projector grinds immediately to a stop, holds on a frozen image of Sykes -- a close-up in which the diamond in his smile flares star-shaped and bright in the center of the screen.

Jeffrey and a half-dozen or so other people in the screening room -- anonymous silhouettes in the projector's light -- are all turned toward Elizabeth, waiting for her words as though she were a judge passing a life-or-death sentence.

She speaks in a voice that is quiet but alive with passion.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(staring at the
screen)

I want him. I love him. He's the
man of my dreams. I want him. I
want that man.

She is on her feet now, moving toward the giant image of Sykes, slowly, slowly -- stalking her prey. Her gestures are broad but very deliberate and specific -- as if she were acting out, visualizing her fantasy:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Keep the lights down low...Bring him to me here... Turn the varmint loose... Blow up a million helium balloons and let me hide behind them naked... And call out his name... And woo him... "Find me, Sucker-Sykes Find me and I'm yours," I'll say... Pop -- Pop -- Pop -- Pop -- will go the balloons as he searches... My heart is pounding faster now... Pop -- Pop -- Pop -- Pop --

(serene; cat-like)

You're getting warmer, my Sucker-Sykes...

(imitating heavy breathing)

You're getting closer, now... I'm getting downright hot by now... POP!

(she screams; a soft, willowy scream)

POP!

(another)

POP!

(another)

She is standing at the base of the screen now -- the image of Sykes towering over her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I'm going to make you a star, my Sucker-Sykes...

(very grand; dignified now)

Do you hear me, my celluloid phantom?... My enchanted prince... Your fame will grow and spread throughout all the land... Kings and Queens will quiver in your presence... Women's hearts will swell in pride as they diligently convert their husbands -- lovers -- and sons -- into your image... 'Till there is -- alas -- an entire universe of heavenly dreamers with smiles made star-bright by the diamonds in their teeth...

Caught up in her vision, she closes her eyes now,
speaks softly, intensely -- a whisper -- a prayer:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Star light... Star bright...
First star I see tonight... I
wish I may... I wish I might...
Have the wish I wish tonight...

Jeffrey is standing nearby. He is more than pleased
by Elizabeth's reaction -- he is overwhelmed. He
speaks quietly, timidly, afraid of breaking in on
her reverie:

JEFFREY

Uh... Elizabeth... What we
hoped... Since he's so...
appealing... was to do a whole
hour-long show -- a documentary
-- just on him.

Elizabeth turns, faces Jeffrey now, stares at him
for a moment as if he were a creature from another
planet, then speaks:

ELIZABETH

(despairing of his
pettiness)
You have no imagination...
(then smiling;
speaking quickly
-- conspiratorially)
Tell no one about this man --
you understand? No one!
(her glance travels
to the few other
people in the room)
This will be our little
secret...
(pointing to the
screen)
Go back there at once... I want
him filmed day and night...
Every gesture, every word!
(a beat; Jeffrey and
the others are still
listening)
Now! Quickly! NOW!

Jeffrey hurries off and the others go with him, except for one man -- in his mid-forties, with a set to his jaw that reminds us of a Raymond Chandler detective. He is Elizabeth's "associate"; his name is AAMES. He is smiling faintly, watching Elizabeth, waiting for her orders. The others have gone now, buzzing with excitement. Elizabeth looks at Aames for a moment, smiles.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Find out all you can about him -
- who and where and when and why
-- from the day he was born till
now... If I should turn a
spotlight on him -- bright and
white and hot -- I wouldn't like
to be surprised at what -- or
who -- shows up...

Aames nods, pries himself up out of his seat.

AAMES

Gotcha.

Elizabeth watches him leave. She is alone now in the darkened room. The frozen image of Sykes is still on the screen. Elizabeth turns, looks at it for a long moment. She seems to be trembling slightly. She holds up a hand toward the screen -- as if to show Sykes.

ELIZABETH

Look at me, my Sucker-Sykes...
I'm shaking...

(as if in reverence)

Thank you, my Sucker-Sykes...
Thank you for renewing my needs
and my energy... I feared that I
had lapsed into a purgatory of
boredom... You have saved me
from my own destruction... You
have renewed my strength by
simply giving me something
monumental to look forward to...

She kneels, her eyes locked on Sykes' eyes.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I am at your mercy, my savior...
And you -- I fear -- are at
mine...

She rises, speaks now with an incredible majesty -- as one on whom knighthood has just been conferred, speaking aloud, for the very first time, her new title.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I am, from this day forth, to be known as Elizabeth -- The Woman that Made Him...

The CAMERA RISES. The frozen image of Sykes FILLS THE FRAME.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

SIX: IN WHICH the forces necessary to accomplish Elizabeth's goals are marshalled together rapidly and we see devised and discovered: a man, a plan, and a scheme for attaining great wealth...

(a finger-snapping, hand-clapping chorus-line romp)

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The CAMERA PULLS BACK from a close-up of Sykes' face and we see that it is now an 8 x 10 photograph in the hands of a young, good-looking man -- an ACTOR. He is staring at the photograph fiercely, intently, searching it for vital clues to some hidden truth -- like a spiritualist concentrating upon a dead man's wrist watch, trying to receive emanations from the other world. Pinned to the actor's shirt is a large square of cardboard bearing the number "78".

The CAMERA CONTINUES PULLING BACK. The actor is standing at the head of a line of other young MEN -- also actors. All have cardboard numbers affixed to their chests; all are studying photographs of Sykes. They are inside a vast white-limbo soundstage. The line of actors stretches back and back, receding in a forced perspective into the white-shrouded background - seemingly stretching back to infinity itself.

A voice is speaking, shouting, chanting with the rapid-fire staccato of a carnival barker:

VOICE

Number Seventy-seven! Yes sir,
 boys, we're moving right along -
 - Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir
 -- How about a little diamond-
 studded smile, Number Seventy-
 seven -- Yes sir - Yes sir --
 Yes sir--

The actor at the head of the line -- number "78" --
 steps up to a small table, leans over forward. A
 NURSE reaches up and casually, skillfully measures
 one of Number 78's front teeth. The middle-aged man
 seated next to her, also wearing a crisply starched
 white smock - the DENTIST -- plucks something from a
 set of glittering bins, inserts it into Number 78's
 mouth. The voice is chanting:

VOICE (CONT'D)

Now all there is to do is fill
 in the little paper with your
 little name -- grab yourself a
 Coca-Cola -- and sing the Don't-
 Call-Us-We'll-Call-You-
 Arriverdercci-Roma Boogie -- All
 right -- Very very good --
 Number Seventy-eight! -- Yes
 sir, boys -- Keep the line good
 and straight -- We're moving
 right along!

Number 78 steps forward into a white-hot pool of
 light. Two large television cameras set at a ninety-
 degree angle to each other photograph his full-face
 and profile. An elegantly attired man standing near
 one of the cameras -- the CASTING DIRECTOR -- is the
 source of the machine-gun style patter we have been
 hearing:

DIRECTOR

Number Seventy-eight -- Yes sir
 -- Yes sir -- Maybe you're the
 one, Number Seventy-eight --
 Maybe you're the lucky one! --
 Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir --
 A little smile Number Seventy-
 eight -- Can we have a little
 diamond-studded smile -- All
 right!!

Number 78 smiles, trying to duplicate Sykes' smile in the photograph he has been studying. The diamond that the dentist has just clipped to his front tooth glitters and flares into camera.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - DAY

Number 78's face, glittering and smiling, fills the screen of a studio sized television monitor: full-face and profile, side-by-side, number and all, just like a police mug-shot. It lingers on the screen for only a moment, then is replaced by an identical shot of actor Number 79... then Number 80...

Elizabeth is seated at her desk watching the monitor, silent, intent, only occasionally nodding her head at one of the faces that she likes. Her secretary -- MOLLY -- 20 or 25, fresh, clear-skinned, beautiful -- is seated beside Elizabeth, taking notes -- jotting down a number whenever Elizabeth nods or smiles.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Seated around a large, oval conference table are seven eager and identically dressed bright young EXECUTIVES.

Behind them, dominating the scene, covering one entire wall of the room, is a bank of television monitors, row after row. All the screens show different shots of Sykes inside his prison cell -- standing or sitting, yelling or whispering, but in each of them talking: telling his stories -- a huge video library of Sykes' tales.

The executives constantly glance back at the monitors -- as if trying to draw inspiration and ideas from them -- as they shout words and phrases back and forth to each other: They are trying to come up with a title -- a concept -- for the "Sykes Show." Their dialogue -- fast and rhythmic and charged with energy -- has exactly the cadence of a game of charades:

EXECUTIVES

(1) Title... title... title...
title...

(MORE)

EXECUTIVES (CONT'D)

(2) Prison, right?

(3) Prison... jail... cell-block... inmate...

(4) CELL-BLOCK!...

(5) Cell-block Eleven... "Tales from Cell-Block Eleven"!

(6) No...

(7) No good...

(all) No...

(a beat; then faster)

(1) Title... title... title... title...

(2) Sykes, right?

(3) Sykes' stories... Sykes' tales... Sykes'...

(4) DIAMOND JIM!...

(5) Diamond-Jim Stories...
"Diamond Jim's Stories"!

(6) No...

(7) No good...

(all) No...

(a beat; faster
still)

(1) Title... title... title... title...

(2) Night-time, right?

(3) Night-time...Late-time...Dark-time...Sleep-time...

(4) BED-TIME!...

(5) Bed-time Stories!...
"Diamond Jim's Bed-Time Stories!!"

(MORE)

EXECUTIVES (CONT'D)

(6) "Diamond Jim's Night-time
Bed-time Stories"!!

(7) "Diamond Jim's Late-time
Night-time Bed-time Stories"!!!

(all) "DIAMOND JIM'S LATE-TIME
NIGHT-TIME BED-TIME STORIES"!!!
Eureka!

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Ten of the actors from the endless line are now standing -- minus their number cards -- in the center of the huge soundstage. They are dressed identically in stylized prisoners' uniforms. Their line-up and the nervous glances they constantly exchange remind us of the semi-finalists in the Miss America Pageant.

The casting director moves around them, circling them, examining them, all the while speling a mile-a-minute:

DIRECTOR

Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir!!
All you fellas are the number
one contenders -- the cream of
the crop -- the numero unos of
the lot -- From now on in,
you're in for the duration --
And it's gonna be tough and
rough as Hell -- Mind-boggling
and tongue-tying - You're gonna
be asked to do Cagney with your
pants down, Bogart with your
shirt off, and Brando with your
back turned --

As the casting director moves, the CAMERA MOVES, too. We can see that a portion of the white-limbo has been transformed into a television set representing part of a prison cell-block.

DIRECTOR

Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir!!
You're gonna be asked to walk
the plank, boys -- to stand
straight and not talk back -- to
receive adulation and admiration
(MORE)

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

-- and get a tattoo of a
windjammer beating it to
starboard on your chest -- to
lose your front tooth and
replace it with a diamond -- and
to imitate -- mimic -- and be --
Diamond Jim Sykes in body and in
soul and in full till death do
you part -- Now raise your right
hands and say "I do" if you do -
-

The boys all raise their hands, speak in unison:

THE ACTORS

I do.

DIRECTOR

Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir!
Of course you do!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The room is in semi-darkness. Elizabeth is now seated at the head of the large, oval table. At the opposite end, a small screen has been erected. A slide projector beams white light onto the screen.

One of the bright young executives stands, takes the remote control attachment, stabs the button. The first slide drops into place. It shows a wide shot of the prison set. Two dozen "prisoners" are frozen in poses that simulate rioting. One of the young actors -- imitating Sykes -- is talking to the men, his hand upraised, calming them.

The executive with the slide projector control speaks proudly as he stabs the button several more times. In each slide in the series, the prisoners are more and more calm, until -- in the last slide -
- all the men are squatting on the floor of the cell-block, listening to the actor/Sykes talk.

FIRST EXECUTIVE

(proudly; punching up
the first slide)
"Diamond Jim ...
(the next slide)
...Late-time...
(next slide)
(MORE)

FIRST EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)

...Night-time...
 (next slide)
 ...Bed-time...
 (last slide)
 ...Stories...!"

He looks expectantly at Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(simply; coldly)
 Wrong.

Dejectedly, the first executive sits back down, passes the slide control to the man sitting next to him. The second executive rises, clears his throat, screws up his courage, and stabs the button.

This series of slides shows a different one of the young actors -- imitating Sykes -- in a sequence of poses depicting his encounter with the girl in the butterfly dress. Each slide becomes more self-consciously "artistic" than the one before.

SECOND EXECUTIVE

(stabbing the button;
 proudly -- but with
 less confidence than
 the first)
 "Diamond Jim...
 (a new slide with
 each phrase)
 ...Late-time...
 ...Night-time...
 ...Bed-time...
 ...Stories...!"

ELIZABETH

(very cold)
 Wrong!

The second executive, completely deflated, passes the control on to the third, who rises very timidly, pushes the button: His series of slides shows another young actor -- imitating Sykes -- in a close-up, as if talking to camera, on one side of the screen, while in the background, in a pool of light, we see a story unfolding: a young lady dancing for two dozen fire chiefs at a convention in Indianapolis...

THIRD EXECUTIVE

(very timidly)

"Diamond Jim...?"

(a new slide with
each phrase)

...Late-time...?

...Night-time...?

...Bed-time...?

...Stories...??"

ELIZABETH

(like ice)

Wrong!

The third executive cowers back into his seat, passes the control. to the fourth, who stands, faces Elizabeth and speaks -- without punching up any slides:

FOURTH EXECUTIVE

(quietly;

confidently; ticking
off his points on
his fingers)

Sykes' tales tell all... We have
all of Sykes' tales... We teach
"our" Sykes all Sykes' tales...
Our Sykes tells Sykes' tales...
That's all!

He punches the button now for the first time. The slide shows one of the young actors sitting in his prison cell, his feet propped up just like Sykes, speaking quietly and directly to camera.

Elizabeth looks at the slide for a long moment, then smiles.

ELIZABETH

Right.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Inside three identical prison-cell sets -- side by side -- three of the young actors are imitating Sykes. Their feet are propped up -- exactly as in the slide we just saw -- and they are speaking, quietly and directly, to three television cameras.

In the foreground, the casting director is sitting at a large control panel, watching the actors on three side-by-side monitors.

DIRECTOR

Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir!
Then there were three...

He reaches out and flicks a switch. The lights go out on one of the sets.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Yes sir -- Yes sir -- Yes sir!
Then there were two!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The CAMERA PANS QUICKLY around the large, oval table. All the executives are buzzing excitedly -- repeating to each other a single word -- a question, really. It is like a chant or an incantation:

EXECUTIVES

Sponsor...

Sponsor...

Sponsor...

Sponsor...

The CAMERA STOPS on Elizabeth at the head of the table. Silently, and with imperious grace, she waves her hand. The wall behind her lights up: an enormous projected close-up of Sykes begins to speak. His amplified voice booms out, silencing for a beat the chant of "Sponsor... Sponsor... Sponsor"...

SYKES

Diamonds ain't no just-happen-
ta-be-there kinda thing!

(the diamond flashes
as he smiles;
flaunts it)

Diamonds are God's way of sayin'
that you're special, if ya got
'em...

The CAMERA BEGINS TO PAN around the table again. Each of the executives brightens, begins to grin in sudden comprehension. A chant picks up again, growing in energy and excitement as each executive turns to the next and shouts out: "Diamonds!... Diamonds!... Diamonds!... Of course!!..." And Sykes' voice continues, building also.

SYKES (CONT'D)

...And I'm not just talkin' about front-tooth diamonds, neither!... I'm talkin' about rollin'-around-in-your-hand diamonds!... And diamond rings and tear-drop diamond earrings!... And diamonds through your nose and hooked between your toes!

The executives are on their feet now, chanting: "Diamonds!... Diamonds!!... Diamonds!!!..." The CAMERA STOPS on Elizabeth again:

ELIZABETH

Of course!! We own the man -- Every time the man opens his mouth, he sells diamonds -- We sell diamonds!

(All the bright young executives begin to applaud and cheer; Elizabeth speaks over their cheering)

We beg, borrow, buy and steal diamonds...; We get all of them we can at the present market price, then we wrap them up in velvet and store them away in some safe place until we have turned my Sucker-Sykes into a monarch -- an I-want-to-look-just-like-him type of monarch -- An I'll-Pay-Anything-to-have-a-diamond-in-my-front-tooth-to-look-like- Diamond-Jim-Sykes type of monarch...And then we sell.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

The applause continues as Elizabeth and the bright young executives -- still cheering enthusiastically -- enter the soundstage. The two remaining actors are inside their twin prison sets. Elizabeth walks directly up to one of the two actors and - as the lights on the other actor go out -- Elizabeth proclaims with a regal gesture:

ELIZABETH

Davis Burns... By the luck of
God and the whimsy of infinity,
you have the good fortune of
looking like the Man in the
Moon...

The young actor -- DAVIS BURNS -- stares at her, wide-eyed in disbelief. He does, indeed, bear an incredible resemblance to Sykes himself.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're the one, Davis Burns!
You're the one! Give the kid a
quarter so he can call his
mother and tell her the good
news! A star is born! A star is
born!!

SEVEN: IN WHICH an eager and anonymous young man is taught to skillfully imitate our hero, Diamond Jim, to the vast delight of the masses and the enrichment of Elizabeth and her associates...

(a powerful ballad with a diamond-studded refrain)

INT. DENTIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A high-speed drill whines in the highest registers of novocain-damped pain. Little fragments of calcium flyaway -- chips of a tooth being filed down to a point. Davis Bums is having his front tooth capped.

The drill withdraws for a moment, stops. Davis grins sheepishly as the grey-haired DENTIST changes bits. And from very nearby a voice begins to speak -- soft and filtered like a voice from a television set -- Sykes' voice:

SYKES'S VOICE

Rain... You want ta talk about
rain...? I'll talk about rain...

Set up on the white formica counter-top beside the dentist's chair, a portable video tape recorder is playing back into a small television suspended several feet in front of the young actor's face. The set shows a close-up of Sykes -- inside his prison cell -- talking to the other inmates:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Rain buds and hot chili hot dogs... An' bein' broken down and busted on the side of the road somewhere... An' water comin' at ya at a hundred miles an hour, an' you screamin' out for help, an' holdin' onta the roof of your car for dear life... An' knowin' for sure how poor Noah musta felt... An' where is everybody else when ya need 'em...?

The dentist has his new drill-bit ready. He goes back to work on Davis' front tooth -- keeping his head carefully to the side so the actor can continue to watch Sykes on the small television set.

The casting director stands off to one side like a football coach watching his star player getting taped up before a game. As the drill whines louder, the casting director reaches in, turns up the volume on the television:

SYKES (CONT'D)

...Nowhere ta be found, that's for sure... At home probably... Warmin' their tootsie-wootsies an' sippin' hot buttered rum an' singin' Christmas carols an' dreamin' of red Schwinn bicycles an' old Saint Nick... And feelin' how nice it feels ta be holdin' hands -- their only wish bein' that it was snowin' instead of rainin' so Christmas could be just right... And the rain... The rain is rainin' even harder now an' you're about ta be washed away... An' you're thinkin' if ya had just one last thought ta think -- What would it be of?... And knowin' right off for certain exactly what it would be...

On the screen, Sykes pauses a beat, smiles. The dentist glances up at the television, pausing for a moment in his work, letting the drill whine to a stop now, listening to Sykes' voice also:

SYKES (CONT'D)
...Of bein' a kid an' havin'
your face washed clean... An'
settin' down ta breakfast across
from two people who smile and
say good momin' to ya -- just
like everybody else in
America...

The prisoners' voices are laughing and calling out now in the background. The dentist grins and shakes his head and then turns back to his work.

The drill whines, higher, as Sykes' voice shouts out:

SYKES (CONT'D)
So now if ya want ta talk about
rain, let's talk about rain!

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

A hundred small, beautifully cut diamonds are spread across a piece of black velvet on the counter of a large jewelry store. A young man is bent over, a loupe fitted into his eye, scanning the stones, as the JEWELER watches quietly, and in the background wealthy matrons examine brooches and earrings.

The young man straightens, removes the loupe from his eye. He is one of the bright young executives we saw in the conference room with Elizabeth. He smiles at the jeweler, reaches down, flips the edges of the black velvet over -- to cover the diamonds -- to wrap them away -- and nods, once.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Davis Burns and the casting director are riding together in the back seat of a limousine. A large, blue-white diamond now graces the young actor's front tooth.

A cassette tape recorder is lying on the director's lap. Sykes' voice and the responses of the other prisoners -- building as Sykes' story builds in cadence and energy -- continues from the dentist's office -- coming now from the tape recorder.

Davis is mouthing Sykes' words -- practicing, learning his lines, trying to imitate Sykes' rhythm:

SYKES'S VOICE

So now if ya want ta talk about
rain, let's talk about rain!...
And I'll tell ya it don't rain
like it used ta rain when I was
little... It don't ever rain
like that no more... Shit... If
it did, I'd take all my clothes
off, instigate myself a boner,
and run naked through the
streets of St. Louis, Missouri,
till I reached the ole
Mississippi... And then I'd jump
in feet first and float on my'
back ta New Orleans and do a
jig-a-boo Jig through the whole
damned town... And rush around
in circles till a Black Mamma
came calmed me down...

The rhythm and rapid-fire flow of Sykes' words are often too much for Davis to copy. He keeps missing beats and only catching up at the ends of phrases. He looks up at the casting director, who frowns and shakes his head, then stops the tape and begins to rewind it.

INT. DIAMOND CUTTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

A large uncut diamond FILLS THE FRAME. A metal chisel rests lightly on the stone for a long moment, then a hammer strikes suddenly and sharply, cleaving the diamond, exposing its brilliant interior.

The CAMERA DRAWS BACK and we see the second of the bright young executives from the television network watching the diamond cutter work. The executive grins in pleasure and relief.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Davis Burns and the casting director are hurrying down a narrow street between two huge stages. The cassette recorder which the casting director is carrying sends Sykes' voice and the shouts of the prisoners echoing off the high concrete walls. Davis is speaking along with Sykes. His rhythm is better now: more natural -- closer to Sykes' rhythm:

DAVIS BURNS & SYKES' VOICES
(continuing from the
limousine)

...till a Black Mamma came
calmed me down... Black Mamma,
Black Mamma, get outta the
rain... Black Mamma, Black
Mamma, feelin' no shame... Black
Mamma, Black Mamma, playin' my
game in a tar-paper shack across
the street from near where the
son of Blackbeard the Pirate
used ta live...

They reach the end of the narrow street. Davis pauses for a moment, looking up. A large billboard covers one entire wall of a soundstage. It announces the premiere of the "daring new concept in late-night television," and features a large close-up of Davis, his diamond flashing as he smiles.

The voice of Sykes continues for a moment by itself, then Davis catches back up to the casting director and resumes his practicing. He can't help strutting just a little as he speaks, along with Sykes:

DAVIS BURNS & SYKES' VOICES
(CONT'D)

...The same one that went ta
Africa and found her Mamma and
brought her back here and made
her a slave and had a grand-
daughter who had Louis Armstrong
for a son and sent her money ta
move ta the Poconos...

Davis gets it perfectly this time and snaps his fingers, shouting now, along with Sykes:

DAVIS BURNS & SYKES' VOICES
(CONT'D)

Now, if ya want ta talk about
rain...

EXT. DIAMOND MINE - DAY

Attended by a CREW of African blacks, a diamond grading machine rocks back and forth on its heavy steel frame -- sorting diamond-bearing stones from garnet and other minerals. One of the blacks, the foreman of the crew, reaches into the bin, withdraws a small, brilliantly glittering gem, grins broadly. In the foreground now, we see two white men, watching the process, grinning also. One of them is the OWNER of the mine, the other is the third of the bright young executives.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

A large projection screen dominates a portion of a studio soundstage. On it, we see Sykes talking, smiling, continuing the story we have been hearing. The prisoners, off-screen, are shouting along in response.

SYKES

...I'll talk about rain... And
rainy Summer night revival
meetings with the sound of
thunder and the sight of
lightning holy-rollin' ya from
side ta side... And wailin',
Hallelujah out loud as loud as
ya can so's God can hear ya...

The CAMERA MOVES, PANS from the giant projection screen to the prison set that has been built right in front of it. Sitting in a cell, mimicking Sykes' movements perfectly, is Davis Bums. He is dressed now in a prison costume, wearing a pair of earphones, and watching the large screen as he speaks.

As the CAMERA PANS from Sykes to the young actor, Sykes' voice dissolves into the matching voice of Davis Bums:

DAVIS BURNS

...And waitin' and wishin' for
the girl next ta ya ta go inta a
fit and faint and fall against
your shoulder shakin'...And
whisper in your ear hot an'
heavy an' real low-like so's her
mamma won't hear her how she'd
like ta lick your lolly-pop...

EXT. TELEVISION NETWORK BUILDING - DAY

An armored truck is pulled up outside the tall, glass-faced TV network building. As a ring of heavily armed guards keep a curious crowd at bay, two men unload cases and cases of small, cut and polished diamonds. Standing nearby, supervising, beaming with pride, we see the fourth of the bright young executives.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Davis Bums is speaking, mimicking Sykes as well as he will ever be able to do. The earphones are gone now, and he is speaking directly into a television camera whose small, red "on-the-air" light shines brightly.

DAVIS BURNS

...And everybody's hands are
shakin' up there above their
heads except for hers whose are
rummagin' around in your pants
now...And nobody around not
givin' a damn -- mostly figurin'
"It's the Lord's Will..."

INT. TELEVISION NETWORK OFFICES - DAY

An elevator door opens and four armed guards come out, followed by the fifth and the sixth and the seventh of the bright young executives. Each one is pushing a wheel-barrow loaded with rough, uncut diamonds.

INT. "PREVIEW HOUSE" - NIGHT

Davis Burns, as Sykes, is on his feet now, inside the "cell," building the story to its climax.

As THE CAMERA PANS, we can see a full audience inside the "Preview House" watching the show, laughing and clapping along, totally into the show - responding, in fact, just like the prisoners responding to Sykes himself.

DAVIS BURNS

...And repeatin' and repeatin'
 "Thy Will be done on earth as it
 is in Heaven"... And it feels so
 good, too... And ya ain't scared
 one damn bit... 'Cause ya know
 if she bites it offa ya, God'll
 just grow back a new one there
 where the old one used ta be!...

In the control booth at the back of the theater,
 dials and meters are swinging wildly toward the top
 ends of their scales as the audience registers
 overwhelming approval.

And watching the dials, the audience, the response,
 we see Elizabeth. Surrounded by a crowd of wildly
 congratulatory executives and businessmen, she is
 smiling very quietly, very, very privately. Nothing
 about the show's incredible success surprises or
 excites her as it does all the beaming, back-
 slapping men who surround her with praise and
 adulation.

In the background, Davis' voice is audible, shouting
 now, strutting, as the audience yells its approval:

DAVIS' VOICE (CONT'D)

Yes sir, if ya want ta talk
 about rain... I'll talk about
 rain!!

And Elizabeth, amid the noise and the energy and the
 excitement, IS quietly planning her next move.

EIGHT: IN WHICH, amid the clatter of success,
 Elizabeth bares herself to her trusted companion,
 Molly, and we see the fear that lurks within...

(a bittersweet poem of love and need)

INT. TELEVISION NETWORK OFFICES - DAY

The interior of a huge safe: row after row of
 shelves line the walls, form a composition that is
 identical to the cell-block of the prison. But
 instead of cells, each of the tiers is lined with
 cases and boxes and bins of diamonds -- cut and
 uncut, floor to ceiling, a magnificent hoard, a
 miniature sea of glimmering wealth. Moving
 noiselessly on its hinges, the giant steel door
 swings slowly shut.

And watching it close, amid a small army of guards, is Elizabeth. She regards the closed vault door for just a beat, then turns, begins to walk briskly down a long white corridor inside the television network building.

As she walks down the hallway, each of the bright young executives pops out of one of the doors she passes and jogs along with her for a few steps. Each one holds up some chart or graph or strip of ticker tape for her to see.

All of the men now sport diamonds in their teeth. All of them speak with a rhythm and high-powered delivery that is an exaggerated imitation of Sykes:

FIRST EXECUTIVE

Hey! Hey! Hey! We got 'em goin',
baby... The man in the can has
really got 'em... goin'....!

Elizabeth glances at the chart he is holding out but never slows her pace. The first executive is immediately supplanted by the next:

SECOND EXECUTIVE

(waving another
chart)

People are glommin' onta him
like he was the son of God
hissself!...

THIRD EXECUTIVE

(replacing the
second; not dropping
a beat)

And when he says Jump, Chump --
They jump! And when he says
Diamonds is it, Jake -- They is
it!

FOURTH EXECUTIVE

And we mean buyin' an' buyin'
an' buyin' the precious gems...
By the handful, Chump!

FIFTH EXECUTIVE

An' holdin' on ta them for dear
life... Like they was high-
potency vitamins... Like they
was an aphrodisiac for all of
mankind!

SIXTH EXECUTIVE

And people out there ain't just
walkin' down the avenue no more,
Jake... They're struttin'... And
gleamin' and glistenin' in the
sun with their heads held high!

SEVENTH EXECUTIVE

And feelin' good, and tough, and
I mean mean...Like the world was
their oyster...

(takes a shadow
boxing swing at
the air in his
enthusiasm)

Diamonds is it, Jake! And we're
gettin' richer!

Elizabeth is at the end of the hall now. We can see the executives spaced back along the corridor in a row. Each one in turn -- in reverse order, receding from us -- picks up the last executive's words and shouts them down the hall to Elizabeth. Each one has to shout louder than the last: "And richer!!" "And RICHER!!" "AND RICHER!!!" All the way back down the hall to the first executive, as Elizabeth, going into her office at the end of the hall, slams the door, leaving them there in the hallway, glittering in their diamond-studded excitement.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth stands inside the door she just slammed, speaks softly, to herself, really:

ELIZABETH

And that's just the beginning...

She crosses her office to a wall-sized mirror, smiling as she passes her secretary, Molly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I haven't had so much fun since
I stabbed my fifth husband in
the shower with a fondue fork...

Elizabeth stands in front of the mirror. She is dressed elegantly in a black silk pants suit. A long white scarf wraps around her neck. Tiny diamonds are everywhere. Elizabeth is quite pleased at what she sees.

Molly comes up behind her, looks at her image in the mirror. Elizabeth smiles at herself and Molly. She winks. She seems at first as light as air; and her words make a poem -- spoken as much to herself as to Molly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

The temperature in Rome is 45 degrees... I look gorgeous in black and wear white silk scarves... I've been married seven times -- the first time to a guy named Guy, who was the best damned dancer in the whole damned land... I do have children but I won't tell anyone where they are -- because I'm afraid of having them kidnapped...

(suddenly her mood changes; a sadness overcomes her)

Take my children away from me and you'll break my heart...

Molly is completely taken off guard by Elizabeth's sudden change of mood.

MOLLY

Is that true...?

ELIZABETH

(with a little shrug)

Yes...

MOLLY

Why did you tell me that... ?

ELIZABETH

Because I want to talk to you...

A long moment. Elizabeth -- for the first time since we have met her -- seems somehow unsure of herself. She is looking at herself in the mirror; then a little smile comes back to her face and her voice speaks softly and very, very simply:

ELIZABETH

The first time I saw Guy -- it was in a large gymnasium... He was dancing with another girl and I was watching him... He

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 was twenty-one then, and I was
 thirteen... And when he asked
 me to dance...

She smiles and opens her hand. She is holding a
 large, perfect diamond. She rests it on the very
 tips of her fingers.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Everything I felt inside of me
 was like this...
 (looking entirely at
 the diamond)
 Alive... and new... and
 dangerous.

She looks at Molly's reflection in the mirror for a
 long moment.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Remember that feeling...?

MOLLY
 Yes.

ELIZABETH
 My Sucker-Sykes is a dangerous
 man, isn't he...?

MOLLY
 Yes.

ELIZABETH
 Fact is -- he's about the most
 dangerous man in the whole
 damned land...

A beat. Elizabeth's voice is suddenly and totally
 innocent -- defenseless:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Do you think my Sucker-Sykes
 will like me...?

MOLLY
 Yes, I'm sure he would...
 (a beat)
 I think he'd adore you...
 Everybody adores you...

ELIZABETH
 (with a faint smile)
 Really...

She looks in the mirror -- at Molly -- for a good, long moment.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 My Sucker-Sykes would probably
 like you a lot better than he'll
 like me...

MOLLY
 No, he wouldn't... How could
 he...?

Elizabeth is looking at her. Molly is so absolutely young and beautiful...

ELIZABETH
 Because...
 (a beat; she can't
 say the words)
 Because he just would...

MOLLY
 (answering her need)
 All of my boy-friends ask me
 questions about you all the
 time... They find you very
 elegant... very fuckable...

ELIZABETH
 (looking at her own
 reflection again)
 I wish I were with my Sucker-
 Sykes... I wish I were with him
 right now...

MOLLY
 Then I'm sure you will be...

But Elizabeth isn't really listening any more. And as she continues to speak, so her confidence grows. The moment of need -- of fear -- is past.

ELIZABETH
 ...And because I like him so
 much, I'm sure that he'll like
 me... And if he doesn't, then
 I'll make him like me until he
 (MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

loves me... And when he loves
me, then I'll love him...

(she smiles)

Or vice versa...

(she twirls in a
graceful pirouette)

I'm a diamond-studded lady.

MOLLY

(smiling also)

You're a high-steppin' diamond-
studded lady...

ELIZABETH

I'm a high-steppin' diamond-
studded lady, and I'm on the arm
of my Sucker-Sykes, and I'm
strollin' down the avenue -- and
everybody's eyes are following
our every move -- and I'm
lookin' chic -- and I'm
feelin'...

(she does another
perfect pirouette)

dangerous as Hell.

NINE: IN WHICH it is revealed to our hero that his
unique abilities have been exploited for the profit
of others...AND IN WHICH Elizabeth sorely tempts him
with the promise of fabulous future fame...

(a rag-time suite about lust and glory)

INT. PRISON CELL-BLOCK - DAY

The "most dangerous man in the whole damned land" is
strollin' down the "avenue": two GUARDS are leading
Sykes down a walk-way in the cell-block, past a long
row of cells.

The prisoners, seeing him pass, shout and bang on
their bars: "Hey Sykes! Hey Diamond Jim! Where ya
goin' '??' "Where they takin' I you. man?!" "You ain't
fixing to leave us, are ya, Sykes?!" Their shouts
are filled with an obvious love of Sykes, and he
flashes his grin at them as he passes; but there is
a terrible fear and urgency in their screaming,
also. They need Sykes. He's the thread from which
many of them are dangling. So their joking,
shouting, loving voices have an edge of anger, too.

It's a need that Sykes can't soothe: he doesn't know where he's being taken.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth, Warden Burkholst and a guard enter a small room somewhere inside the prison. Elizabeth is still dressed as she was in the previous scene; her elegance is almost startling in this setting.

A one-way mirror is set into the far wall. Elizabeth crosses to it, looks through it and down into another room: plain, white-walled, bare except for a wooden table in the center of the room.

The guard moves a microphone into place in front of Elizabeth. A film projector, already loaded with film, is just behind her.

Sounds are audible in the background now, faint but growing louder: the shouting of the prisoners. The warden looks at Elizabeth for a long moment. She is perfectly still, looking down into the empty room. The warden turns, and he and the guard leave.

A long moment passes, during which the background sounds grow slightly louder, then the door to the empty room opens. The shouts of the prisoners are almost distinguishable for the moment that it takes for the two guards to lead Sykes into the room, then to leave him there, alone.

A small velvet package sits on the center of the wooden table. Sykes walks over to it, opens it. The large, perfect diamond gleams up at him.

He turns, faces the mirror, faces Elizabeth, invisible behind it, and smiles.

SYKES

Thank ya, Ma'am... for whatever
the reason...

(his smile
broadening)

Thank ya, Ma'am...

A long beat; Sykes is scrutinizing the diamond.

SYKES (CONT'D)

I knew this guy who was cooped up in this prison over there in Oklahoma for twenty years... And when they finally came ta get him out -- and when they were runnin' him inta town in that grey car with the name of the state written on the side of it -- he said that all of a sudden when they was about two miles outside the first town they was comin' upon -- he started smellin' somethin'... And he said stop the car -- And they did -- And he got out and waffed the air real good . And then he said -- "Them Bitches... Shit! Them Bitches sure do smell good."

A beat; Sykes looks up at the mirror again.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Fact is, Ma'am, I can smell ya sittin' out there watchin' me... Fact is, I could smell your smell from the time you walked through them gates separatin' us from the rest of them out there...

(he smiles; turns away)

Diamonds -- and pretty-smellin' ladies... And tryin' ta torture a poor man ta death... And makin' him remember that he hasn't made love to a body since his flossie got run over by a locomotive outside of Plainfield, New Jersey in 1978... But I ain't complainin' neither... 'Cause that smell of yours, Ma'am -- That a-little-older-smellin'-kinda-rich-smellin' kinda smell -- Well, it sure does smell good...

A long beat; Sykes grins directly at the spot in the mirror behind which Elizabeth is standing. She is invisible to him, and she knows it, but she takes a little involuntary step backwards, anyway -- suddenly very naked, very vulnerable.

SYKES (CONT'D)

And, Ma'am, if you don't think I
ever get a hankerin' for a rich-
kinda-older-lady kinda lady --
Then you're dead wrong -- 'Cause
I do...

Elizabeth turns very slowly away, takes a step,
LEAVING SHOT. Sykes continues to speak to the spot
in the mirror where she was standing.

SYKES (CONT'D)

So, Ma'am, if you care ta be
with me -- you just tell them ta
unlock that door and let ya in
here... And as soon as you come
through that door, well the
first thing I'd do is pull them
panties you're wearin' offa ya -
- and stand ya upside down and
cross your legs and prop ya up
against a wall so's you'd be
comfortable... And then I'd
fiddle with that little button a
yours till thoughts of age --
and who you are -- or used ta be
-- mean no never mind -- and
screams of lovin' presently fill
the air -- and make ya holler
with joy--

There is the sharp click of a switch. The lights in
Sykes' room go out. The projector's motor whirs;
then suddenly the image of Davis Burns stabs out
into the room -- covering Sykes' face, and past him,
filling the white wall behind him.

From a speaker somewhere, a loud, strident voice
fills the air. Sykes turns, slowly, looks at the
images covering the nearby wall. His shadow -- his
silhouette -- covers part of the image, but he makes
no move to get out of the way.

In a series of shots projected on the wall: Davis
Burns sitting inside the prison set, talking,
imitating Sykes, flashes his diamond at a television
camera as it dollies in for a close-up. The voice
narrating the film speaks with the inflated rhetoric
of a Howard Cossell:

NARRATOR

There he is, Ladies and Gentlemen -- Finally -- and justifiably -- and it's about time -- America -- in fact the world by and large - has a new hero. Not since the likes of Will Rogers and Babe Ruth has a man of this caliber -- of this wide appeal -- graced American soil -- A man of high self-esteem and self-pride -- A man - as in an Horatio Alger tale -- who started with nothing -- and using only what God had given him as a gift: his knack for spinning a yam -- and turning that knack and that inspiration into a cultural phenomenon...

We see Davis Bums, outside the television studio now, moving amid crowds of people -- crowds of admirers who swarm around his limousine as it passes, desperate for just a glimpse of their hero - - crowds that scream and overturn police barriers and strain forward, arms outstretched, hoping for just the briefest touch: hands that for a moment now, seem to be reaching out toward the silhouette that still blocks part of the image -- toward the real Sykes inside the tiny room, watching.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

...Into an actual revolution of sorts in which people everywhere -- both young and old alike -- have embraced his image -- and - - in this reporter's opinion -- are justifiably emulating their hero...

We see the people in the adoring crowds more closely now: almost all have diamonds flashing from somewhere on their bodies -- a glittering sea that surrounds the black and motionless silhouette of Sykes.

NARRATOR

Diamonds have been made into a symbol of another kind -- and I quote -- "Diamonds are the great divider, Jakel" "Diamonds are
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

it!" they scream out as does
 Diamond Jim Sykes with passion -
 - and a lust for life - and
 continuation -- and never giving
 up - and being vital -- And
 that's some symbol -- That's
 something to embrace -- And most
 definitely something to write
 home about.

Davis Bums, grinning, flashing his diamond, moving
 through the crowd, surrounded by a tight knot of
 guards -- for a long, eerie moment -- is exactly
 hidden behind Sykes' motionless black silhouette.

The shadow of the real Sykes is surrounded by the
 guards, moved forward, it seems, against his will --
 into the heart of the screaming crowd.

Then the small white room fills with light; the film
 is over. A long moment: Sykes doesn't move or react.

Elizabeth is watching him, from behind the mirror.
 His back is turned. There is no clue to what he is
 thinking now -- no clue to what he is feeling.

At last, Elizabeth breaks the silence. Her voice --
 cold and bitterly ironical -- comes from a
 loudspeaker nearby:

ELIZABETH

I thought you'd like to know...
 (a long beat)
 My name is Elizabeth; and I'm
 the woman that made you...

A long pause; Sykes remains silent, seems still to
 be looking at the now blank white wall in front of
 him.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(a soft, cruel smile
 in her voice)
 Isn't it marvelous...? Aren't
 you thrilled...?

Another long pause;.. The CAMERA -- inside the room
 with Sykes now -- can see his face, but no hint or
 trace of emotion.

Elizabeth's voice is soft now, tempting:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

No one knows that you exist, you know...They think that I invented you...But I could tell them that you're real... I could make you famous...

(a long beat)

Shall I...?

A long moment -- completely motionless -- completely silent -- until Elizabeth speaks again:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Shall I...?

Now Sykes moves, strides to the door through which he entered, pounds on it hard. It flies open and the two guards are there, alarmed, guns drawn and ready.

And Sykes simply takes his place between them and begins to walk, back down the corridor, back toward his cell.

The CAMERA HOLDS for a moment on the room -- empty now, except for the plain wooden table, and on it, the large, perfect diamond.

TEN: IN WHICH Diamond Jim responds to Elizabeth's cruel temptation in the most dramatic fashion available to him, wreaking great havoc upon others but failing to dissuade her from her announced intentions...

(a rock-'em, sock-'em free-for-all and death-defying boogie)

EXT./INT. PRISON - NIGHT

Night-time... and rain... a hard, steady downpour that washes across the concrete prison yard, glistens on the squat, grey walls of the cell-blocks... Inside, the lights are still on... row after row of small, barred rectangles shining out into the dark and the rain. Two guards in heavy yellow slickers scurry across the otherwise empty yard...

The CAMERA DRAWS BACK. We are inside the warden's office. Elizabeth is standing by the window, looking out at the prison. She is still dressed as we last saw her.

She turns from the window, glances over at a clock: five minutes until eight. The warden is seated at his desk, pretending to occupy himself with a stack of paperwork. But he, like Elizabeth, is really just waiting -- marking time.

A large television monitor in the corner of the room is the real focus of their attention. It shows Sykes, lying on his bunk with his arms crossed and his feet propped up and his eyes focused quietly on the small barred window as if the only thought in his mind is of the rain outside -- steady and hard and cold.

Elizabeth turns back to the warden's window...and waits.

INT. CELL-BLOCK - NIGHT

Superficially, the cell-block is just as we saw it before. But the mood is different now: the men are quieter -- moving and talking less -- like men at the end of a day that has been filled with rumor and speculation: "Where was Sykes taken earlier that day? And why was he so strangely and fiercely quiet after he returned? And when the lights go out, will he tell us?..."

And the guards, at their guard station, are nervous now, tonight, as they glance up toward Sykes' cell, and wait.

The lights go out. A long moment passes: silence. No one tonight will suggest a word -- a subject. Then Sykes, still lying quietly on his bunk, begins to speak. There is a powerful tension at the core of his voice:

SYKES

It's raining outside,
tonight...You hear it...?

And the rain is the only sound now, for a long, long moment.

SYKES

Rain!!... Don't that make ya
feel cozy as Hell...
(a long pause)
Listen to it...!! Doesn't the
(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

sound of it make ya just want ta
crawl into bed... And pull the
covers up... And snuggle up...!

(a long beat; loud
now)

Do it!! Go on -- I said... DO
IT!!

And quietly, all over the cell-block, the men do as
Sykes says: they crawl into their bunks and pull
their blankets up cozily.

Sykes waits until the muffled sounds of their
movements subside, leaving only the steady sound of
the rain. Sykes' voice is soft at first, but the
anger and the tension within it is only thinly
disguised:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Now just think about your Mamma
comin' in and givin' you a nice
gentle kiss on your forehead...

(a beat)

Don't that feel good!...

Damn!!... You got just about
everything, don't ya?... Three
squares a day...! A nice dry
place ta sleep...! And me ta
tell ya stories... Life's mellow
as Hell, ain't it...! The sun
seems ta somehow always come up
in the morning... And it takes
an awful lot ta kill a being.

(a long beat)

You take the dyin' of Jerry
Jeffries and how he about almost
didn't slip away... Even though
he was filled with ten or more
45- calibre handgun bullets...
That's 'cause he was so fuckin'
dumb, Jerry Jeffries was, he
even needed someone ta tell him
he was dyin'... He just couldn't
figure it out by himself... Fact
is, he never did nothin' 'cept
when somebody told him what ta
do first... Sittin' and starin'
was his delight... "Sometimes I
sit and think," he said, "But
mostly, I just sit"... Damn old
dumb old Jerry Jeffries got

(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

plugged outside an airplane
factory in Tuscaloosa, Idaho...
I know 'cause I was there with
him that day on my way ta
someplace near a mountaintop in
Montana... When I said, "Go on
inside that grocery store over
there... Take out your pistol
and ask 'em for the day's
receipts... You do that for me,
Jerry Jeffries, and I'll be your
friend forever ..." And away he
went on that cold an' rainy
sundown eve... Lookin' like a
charcoal ghost of a coal miner
on relief... And from across the
street I saw him take out his
gun and enter that store... And
through the plate-glass window I
saw a man behind him shoot him
in the back... Once... Twice...
Three times... I heard the gun
go off... But Jerry Jeffries
kept right on standin'... and
askin' for the cash... Nobody
told him ta get shot... And
nobody told what ta do if he did
get shot... So he just kept
goin' about his business as
though nothin' unusual had
happened... The gun went off
again and again... And then the
man behind the counter opened
fire... "Poor fool... Lie down
and die," I thought ta myself...
But he didn't... And so a while
later... a long good old while
later... I crossed the street
and told him he'd been shot...
"You've been shot, Jerry
Jeffries... You've been shot a
number of times and it's time
for you to die," I said... "I
want you ta lie down and die,
Jerry Jeffries... Life ain't
worth livin' for you," I said.
"You don't know how ta use it
right... So die, Jerry Jeffries,
die"... And so he did...

A long, long pause filled with the silence of the
other prisoners until Sykes breaks it. He stands

now, and screams out -- wails out as though his last words were a key that has unlocked all his tension and anger:

SYKES (CONT'D)

(a torrent of rage,
of pain)

SHIT!!! We're bleedin' ta death
on these cement floors right now
and we don't know it -- 'Cause
blood ain't red no more -- it's
invisible!! It's been invisible
for a long time now but nobody
from out there ever took the
time ta tell us so -- WASTE,
JAKE!! I can't help myself no
more -- I'm talkin' about
WASTE!!

(a beat)

WASTE is fuckin' invisible!
Hours and days passin' away are
invisible! Seconds and minutes
and years passin' away are
invisible!! Look at us....!!
Livin' yesterday all over again
and again and again....!! What
about today?! What about
tomorrow?! We're all gonna
die!!! We're dyin'!... That's
what I learned today...! And
that's my story for tonight...!

A very long silence: so long that it seems that Sykes has finished. Then suddenly he shouts out, in a bitter self-parody:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Death is it, Jake!!

A beat; Sykes is looking off, up toward a corner of the cell-block, as if speaking now, not to the prisoners, but to someone else, someone unseen -- to Elizabeth:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And bein' famous -- If anybody's
listenin' -- I want ta tell ya
that famous don't mean nothin'
ta me!.. Famous is a word that
old men with sons, and thirteen-
year-old girls own up to... Now
(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

if ya would have said fat --
that rhymes with cat and hat --
and fat -- if I think about it
just right -- can make me come
in my dreams -- but famous...!
It's all alone and lonely as a
word . Fact is, it's about as
forlorn a word as a man could
ever hope ta hear...

(a beat)

I ain't never gonna be no rock-
and-roll star...! I ain't never
gonna be nothin'!!

(loud --loud as can
be; to all the
prisoners now)

Did ya hear what I said...!!! I
said -- I SAID WE AIN'T
NOTHIN'!!

Sykes' voice echoes in the cell-block, is lost at last beneath the steady sound of the rain outside. Then, from very far away, as if from the other end of the cell-block, one of the prisoners calls out, pleading:

PRISONER'S VOICE

Why you say them things ta us,
Diamond Jim...? We know all
about them things... And we know
not ta pay 'em no never-mind...

Silence again, for a long, long time... Then movement... and a sudden sound... a crash from somewhere down among the cells... The guards seem frozen to their spots, useless now, as from somewhere else in the cell-block another sound explodes, mixed this time with a cry of rage, of dumb, helpless pain so intense it has no words, is just a noise in a throat strangled by frustration and fury...

And again... And more... And more...until the entire cell-block is a single trapped animal screaming and thrashing...tearing at itself... a thing of self-destruction and revenge...

The guards are running now, and more guards are pouring into the block... Valves twist open and a dozen fire-hoses stiffen... Gouts of water stab in through the bars... And shouts and threats and commands are lost in the single greater scream of riot...

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Elizabeth is seated in the back of a limousine. She is silent, her face emotionless, as the car glides across the prison yard. Outside, in the rain, men are running, carrying tear gas and riot guns, converging on the now brightly-lit cell-block that is visible in the background.

The car is stopped for a long moment, idling near the main gates as a truckload of soldiers or National Guardsmen lumbers past, and then another. Elizabeth watches them, then speaks quietly, to herself:

ELIZABETH

If this were a war, I'd say I won the battle... If this were a battle, I'd say I still had the war to win...

The limousine begins to move again, flagged forward by several frantic guards. It turns onto the State highway and begins to pick up speed, disappearing into the night and the rain.

FADE OUT

ELEVEN: IN WHICH Elizabeth -- in an act of unparalleled present day prestidigitation-- causes to be conjured up -- before the eyes of millions -- the one and only: Tillie Torlini Sykes...

(a feat of magic -- swift and bold)

FADE IN:

EXT. MOTEL - MORNING

Aames -- the "associate" that Elizabeth sent off to track down the complete history of Sykes - is inside a phone booth near the entrance to a large, isolated motel. He has a thick note-pad in his hands and is

flipping through its hundreds of hand written pages while speaking over the phone to Elizabeth:

AAMES

I got a couple hundred pages here, Elizabeth'... I could write a novel about your God-damned "Sucker-Sykes"... And that's just what it'd be -- fiction... rumors, lies, stories, bullshit...

(a beat; listening)

Does he have a what?... A mother? No, Elizabeth', he don't have no mother... At least not one that could prove it...

(another beat)

Yeah, sure I'm sure...

(flips the notebook closed)

Okay, look, I got one or two more leads ta check out, then I'm wrappin' it up... What?... No, Elizabeth', none of 'em involves no mothers...

He hangs up and steps outside the booth. We can see now, as he moves, that the motel he was calling from is situated at the base of a very familiar mountain in Montana.

A roar of engines approaches rapidly, sweeps by overhead. Aames looks up, sees the sleek, custom designed helicopter of P.P. Peoria cruising by, heading toward the top of the mountain.

Aames stares after it for a moment, then frowns and starts off toward his car.

INT. ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A huge, high contrast photograph of Sykes, grinning as he talks, covers one entire wall of Elizabeth's bedroom. Elizabeth is lying in silk and satin, smiling quietly to herself. A MAID enters, takes the telephone that is lying on the bed beside Elizabeth and sets it on its table, then crosses to the windows and opens the curtains, flooding the room with yellow morning light.

Elizabeth looks at the photo mural of Sykes for a long moment, then lets her head drop back luxuriously into her pillows, closes her eyes and speaks -- as if revealing a wonderful and perfect vision:

ELIZABETH

I had a dream last night... that my Sucker- Sykes had a long-lost Mamma... And that she died... And that she left a note by her side -- telling the whole world so...

EXT. BUNGALOW COURT - DAY

The bright, noon day sun shines down on a heavy-set LADY in her late fifties, wearing a kerchief over her thinning hair, a faded house dress, and slippers. She is standing in front of a small bungalow court somewhere in a forgotten corner of Azusa. An aging chihuahua is running around in tiny frantic circles near her feet, barking angrily.

In the background, an ambulance is visible, pulled up into the driveway alongside the small cottages. The lady is speaking directly to camera, and is being photographed in the casual, hand-held style of on-the-spot news coverage:

LADY

I've been livin' here in this same court next door ta Tillie since I moved here from Shreveport, Louisiana in 1947, and I never knew that she had no child 'till I heard Old Chipper barkin' and causin' a ruckus this mornin' and moseyed over next door ta see what the matter was... and found old Tillie dead...

Little Chipper's barking becomes louder and the lady begins to cry. A man speaks from just off-screen, and the CAMERA HASTILY PANS OVER to show a REPORTER, in his early thirties, trying futilely to shield his microphone from the dog's noise. He looks a little bored, as if he really isn't sure why his editor sent him to cover this story.

REPORTER

Ma'am... And what else did you find, Ma'am...?

The lady holds up a note.

LADY

This note...
 (still tearful)
 ...this note was by her death-bed side...

REPORTER

Can you read it...

But Chipper's barking and the lady's crying are growing out of control. She shakes her head and hands the note to the reporter.

LADY

You...
 (sob, sob)
 ...read it...

The reporter scans the note, then suddenly his eyes light up with an uncontrollable excitement. He drops the note and screams out -- almost jumping into the air:

REPORTER

OH MY GOD!! THIS IS NEWS!! THIS IS REAL NEWS!!!

(as unable to control himself as the reporter describing the crash of the Hindenburg)

Why didn't someone tell me this...?? This is incredible! It could make my career!!

He runs frantically toward the ambulance, into which a stretcher is now being put, screams at the body in the stretcher:

REPORTER

Ma'am!! Ma'am!! Is it true?? Is it really true?? Is there really a real Diamond Jim Sykes??

The doors to the ambulance slam shut, and as the reporter calls out a last, confused "Ma'am?" it begins to drive away. The reporter looks back toward the camera, suddenly aware that he's still being filmed. He opens his mouth to say something, but the words don't come.

After a brief and awkward, moment, the cameraman PANS back to the lady. She is holding the note again, and after a short, dagger-like glance toward Chipper -- which immediately silences him - she begins to read aloud.

LADY
(reading slowly and
carefully)

"To whom it may concern... I, Tillie Torlini Sykes, am proud to confess to the world on my death-bed that I am the true, long-lost mamma of Diamond Jim Sykes... And as my last request on this earth, I request that my son, Diamond Jim, be standin' by his mamma's side as she's bein' laid to rest... I love that boy of mine and even if he did do wrong and you got him locked up in Anaconda State Prison and everything I'm sure that it weren't his fault and I knowed that you done him wrong... With a good-bye to the world and ever-lasting love to my Diamond Jim, I say: So long... Tillie Torlini Sykes... P.S. That boy you got imitatin' and pretendin' that he's my son sure ain't near as good-lookin' as the real Diamond Jim that he's pretendin' to be..."

TWELVE: IN WHICH, while thousands cheer, Elizabeth achieves her fondest wish but finds the taste of victory less than sweet...AND IN WHICH we learn that, while Sykes has languished and Elizabeth plotted, other forces -- strange and wonderful - have also been at work...

(a symphony of sensuality and surprise)

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAWN

A pale pre-dawn light filters into the prison yard, barely outlines the massive concrete cell-blocks. A small funeral caravan is drawn up in the center of the yard -- a hearse, a long, cut-away hearse, and a single Rolls-Royce limousine. The cars' engines, idling quietly, send a white, fog-like haze drifting across the otherwise empty yard.

Appearing through the haze, marching toward us down a long, tunnel-like corridor, like an army moving into battle, we see dozens of guards carrying rifles and shotguns. And in their midst, gliding forward on a large electric, moving dolly, is a cage the size of a man, made of two inch thick steel bars. Inside the cage is Sykes. His hands and feet are chained and hand-cuffed. He is staring blankly, expressionlessly ahead.

The procession is met, near the center of the yard, by the warden. He speaks briefly, inaudibly, to the leader of the platoon of guards, then watches, silently, as the guards open Sykes' cage, drag Sykes out of it, and carry him to the limousine.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAWN

The door of the limousine opens and Sykes is forced inside, into the back seat, where heavy steel manacles have been specially installed. The guards remove Sykes' shackles, pass the thick chains through the manacles in the car, then snap the locks shut again -- chaining Sykes securely, all but immovably, to his seat.

The guards leave; the car door slams shut. Sykes continues to stare straight ahead. Nor does he turn or look when the opposite side door opens briefly and a figure slips inside, into the shadows, into the seat next to Sykes.

The door closes quietly and the limousine begins to move. It moves only a short distance; then a gigantic searchlight is turned on, illuminating a building just inside the walls of the prison: a house in the early stages of construction.

The light also spills inside the car, fills the shadows, reveals Elizabeth seated beside Sykes. She is wearing a full-length mink coat, and is looking now, past Sykes at the partially built house.

ELIZABETH

I'm having a house built here --
within these walls -- so we can
be together...

(a beat)

It'll have every conceivable
luxury -- and it'll be ours to
share...

She pushes a button set into the armrest. Mirrors
glide up, covering all the windows, darkening the
interior of the limousine, leaving only faint images
of Sykes and Elizabeth, floating in an infinity of
reflections.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

We're in limbo, now - Just you
and I -- suspended in space...

She opens her hand -- a million Elizabeths open
their hands -- displaying a key -- a million keys.
Then simply, wordlessly, she reaches over and
unlocks the chains, the handcuffs, that imprison
Sykes. The chains, sliding through the steel
manacles, make a marvelously decadent sound.

Sykes remains staring straight ahead, does not
acknowledge in any way that he's been set free.
Elizabeth reaches up gently, turns Sykes' head to
face her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(softly)

Look at me...

Sykes doesn't turn away, but his eyes seem to stare
right through Elizabeth, to stare past her
expressionlessly.

Elizabeth's mink coat is open now, and beneath it we
can see she is wearing a thin silk dress, a tiny,
light summer dress -- a "butterfly" dress... She
takes one of Sykes' hands.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Touch it...

She runs his hand slowly, seductively, over the
butterflies.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

It's light as a feather -- Just
the way you like it -- As soft
as can be...

Sykes makes no move to retract his hand. Elizabeth
slides forward, kisses him gently on the forehead;
her fingertips stroke his hair.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

This is happening to you, my
sweet Sucker-Sykes -- so don't
you pretend that it isn't...

Her lips brush along his face, to his mouth; she
kisses him, gently.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(very softly)

How shall we do it...? Should I
leave my dress on or take it
off...? And my coat... Isn't it
glorious...?

She touches a sleeve of her coat to the side of his
face; then she kisses him again, just as softly. Her
eyes stay fixed on his as she reaches down --
obviously to unbutton his fly -- to release its
prisoner...

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Listen to me, my Sucker-Sykes --
Listen... We'll have silk sheets
-- and mink blankets in our
little bungalow -- And rare
wines -- And Nubian slaves to
bathe us -- And lace -- I'll
wear lace and have my hair
curled just right -- And in
summer we'll lie nude on our
veranda in the hot noon-time sun
and bake - Our eyes will be
closed -- And I'll listen to
your breath -- And listen to it
-- 'Till it says -- the time is
right for me to roll over and
sit on top of you - And we'll
stay that way forever, it'll
seem like - On into the night -
And the air will turn chilly -
but we won't feel it... And

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I'll start counting backward
from ten -- nine -- eight --
seven -- six...

She moves on top of Sykes.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Five -- four -- three -- I hope
you don't mind -- Two -- one...

She is sitting on top of Sykes now; he's inside her.
Her face is relaxed -- angelic; she smiles...

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

How long has it been for you, my
Sucker- Sykes...?

(almost to herself;
feeling him inside
her)

Oh my God...

Her eyes close. Sykes continues to stare past her --
through her.

She barely moves. The movement of the car on the
road provides the needed motion. And the sound of
the air, rushing by outside, is -- for a long moment
-- the only sound.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The sun is up now -- low on the horizon. The
limousine is racing along a broad highway, entering
the outskirts of a vast city sprawl. Buildings and
houses are reflected off the smooth, black panels
that still cover the car's windows. The wind rushes
by, faster and louder...

The CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL BACK

now...slowly...steadily...We see first one, then
several, then a dozen policemen on motorcycles
surrounding the car, racing forward alongside it in
a tight, precise, military formation...

The CAMERA CONTINUES TO MOVE -- TO PULL BACK...

Ahead of the limousine, leading the caravan, we can
see the hearse now...And behind the limousine,
Sykes' cage, empty, rides in the long, open, cut-
away hearse...

We are in the city now. Small knots of people are lining the avenue, shouting or waving as the caravan rushes past... At each intersection, police are holding back traffic, keeping the broad avenue clear...

And the sounds -- throughout this sequence -- build in intensity as the scene widens in scope...

A roaring of engines swells now, as a squadron of bikers appears, racing along the boulevard, catching up to the caravan, fanning out to engulf it, to surround the police escort with a giant flying wedge of cycles and choppers. Polished chrome gleams in early morning sun. The bikers are all dressed identically -- in clothes that are a stylized version of prisoners' uniforms.

The police eye the bikers nervously, and the bikers grin back at them, and diamonds flash and sparkle in their smiles...

The CAMERA IS RISING now, looking down at the swelling procession, at the mass of cycles, at the cheering crowd also dotted with the flash of diamonds...

The CAMERA CONTINUES TO RISE...an aerial shot now, soaring along above the caravan... And as the sounds of the cycles' engines fade now, with perspective, another engine becomes steadily louder instead...

A bi-plane sweeps into the foreground, flying low, scarcely higher than rooftop level, cruising directly over the caravan... It trails behind it a long canvas streamer -- a banner that proclaims in huge letters: L.M. Bubble-Gum Says, "Hi, Diamond Jim!"

Then suddenly, all at once, all the sounds of the engines FADE OUT -- are replaced by the sharp, close-up sound of chains pulling through metal loops, pulling closed and locking shut...

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Elizabeth snaps the last lock shut. The chains again bind Sykes in place. The mirrored panels are still closed -- still create their limbo of infinite, faint, reflected images...And inside the car, inside the dark, closed space, the sounds of the engines and the shouts of the crowd are all but inaudible.

Elizabeth leans back into her seat.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

There... Now you're all locked
back up... for me to have and to
keep and to keep... Because I
know that if I let you go --
you'd just fly away...

A long beat. .. Tears begin to swell in Elizabeth's
eyes; she speaks softly, barely loud enough for us
to hear:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

It takes time for people to get
used to one another -- doesn't
it, my Sucker-Sykes... Even
under the best of circumstances
-- it takes time...

(a beat)

But I did excite you...

(she smiles; as if to
reassure herself)

I had to have...

Then suddenly she slaps Sykes, once, hard, and
screams:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Talk to me!!

She stares at him, intense, electric, for a long
moment, waiting... Sykes makes no movement, no
response...

Again, Elizabeth smiles to herself, then reaches
over to the armrest, pushes a button.

The mirrored panels slide away, and outside the
thick glass windows the full scope of the procession
is now visible. And the cyclists, and the crowds,
seeing Sykes now, smile and cheer, and the sun darts
a thousand tiny sparkles from their diamonds into
the car, across the faces of Elizabeth and Sykes...

Elizabeth waits a long moment -- as if to give Sykes
time to comprehend the spectacle. When she speaks,
at last, there is no hint in her voice of anything
but confidence and calm control:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Yep -- They're all here because you're here... They're on their way to your mother's funeral -- the same as you are... You're their hero, now...

Elizabeth watches the spectacle for another moment.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

But don't let what you see fool you, my Sucker-Sykes -- because we're all the same in one respect -- the world will go on with us -- or without us...

(a beat)

We're all victims in one way or the other, my Sucker-Sykes -- It's just that some of us have been given a more developed capacity for exploiting life -- And for those of us who have -- it seems a pity to suppress it...

Sykes is still silent, motionless; he has given no hint that he is even aware of the incredible sight outside the car -- no hint that he has even heard Elizabeth's words...

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Actually -- at this point -- what's the difference -- whether you talk -- or you never talk again -- It's news either way.

EXT. FUNERAL PROCESSION - DAY

In AN EXTREME LONG-LENS SHOT, WITH TV SCAN-LINES like a close-up of a television screen -- we see the limousine slow to a stop, along with the entire caravan surrounding it.

As the bikers and the crowd lining the boulevard watch in growing excitement, the police cyclists dismount, draw their guns, and form a tight blockade around the car.

The chief of the prison guards gets out of the passenger seat of the hearse, hurries to the limousine, then opens the rear door and begins to unlock Sykes' chains. The other guards unbolt the door to the empty cage, preparing to receive Sykes - to execute this unexpected transfer of their prisoner as quickly as possible.

As Sykes is dragged out of the limousine and the crowds shout and try to press forward, a voice begins to speak -- in an intense whisper, breathless with excitement -- like a sportscaster describing a crucial putt on the eighteenth green. It is the same Howard Cossell-like voice that we heard earlier, narrating the film that Elizabeth showed to Sykes, describing the world's reaction to the young actor (now seemingly forgotten) who plays Sykes on television.

NEWSCASTER'S VOICE

And there he is. Ladies and Gentlemen, for the first time ever -- a live-action photograph of the real -- and I repeat -- the real Diamond Jim Sykes --

Our CAMERA DRAWS BACK now, sees that this image is being transmitted over a television monitor. We are now high above the large, elegant cemetery -- the destination of the still-growing funeral procession. Perched atop one of the tall, metal towers surrounding the open grave that awaits Sykes' "mother," we see the NEWSCASTER, watching the monitor and whispering frantically into his microphone.

The image on the large television screen shows Sykes now, being locked into his cage.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Look at him, Ladies and Gentlemen, look how tall and proud he stands -- in his specially designed travel-all - Look how bold and defiant and sad he looks -- And he's not talking, either! It's been said that he has not uttered a single sound since he heard the news of his poor mamma's death and caused that severe commotion at Anaconda State Prison just three short days ago --

The procession begins to get under way again. The camera that is photographing it PANS WITH ITS EXTREMELY LONG LENS, gives a nervously bumpy full-shot of Sykes in his cage floating past the cheering crowds. The nervous excitement and rapid-fire whisper of the newscaster augments perfectly the rough, catch-as-catch-can quality of the scene:

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

It's hard to fathom, Ladies and Gentlemen a rough-and-tumble cookie like Diamond Jim -- reacting to his mother's death so severely -- taking it so hard -- But it's true -- It's been confirmed -- checked and double-checked and it's a fact that it's true -- Oh yes he is -- Oh yes -- Oh yes -- He's the strong and silent type -- holding it all in within himself until he bursts rather than saddle anyone else with his heartfelt grief -- Oh yes -- That's a man we see before us, Ladies and Gentlemen -- A real man -- A shut-up and button-up-lip type of man -- A man like we'd all like to be like --

In the background -- in the extreme distance -- the actual procession that the TV camera's telephoto lens is showing us is visible now, approaching the cemetery -- although still a great distance away. The crowd below the newscaster's tower catches a glimpse of the distant caravan and a cheer goes up. The newscaster's voice rises also -- almost out of control with excitement:

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

(louder; impassioned)

And I say -- Mercy -- Mercy -- Mercy for the man who loves his mamma -- kind and gentle mamma -- And this reporter maintains that if we were at war -- instead of at peace -- the government would gladly commute this gentle and compassionate soul's sentence -- and he would be made into a handsome young

(MORE)

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

lieutenant in the suicide
brigade -- and he would survive
as survivors do -- and return
home a hero! -- And be freed --
and be free to walk the streets
just like you and I!!

Suddenly realizing that he is out of control, he
stops, drops his voice back to an impassioned
whisper, and reads from a slip of paper:

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

(reading; in an
emotion-charged
whisper)

"We all have or have had mammas
at one time or another in our
lives - So certainly the world
will understand my leniency in
this situation." And that,
Ladies and Gentlemen, was a
direct quote from the warden --
Clancy Burkholst -- Warden of
Anaconda State Penitentiary --
and at the present time the
keeper of our Diamond Jim -- and
the man responsible -- more than
any other man -- for what you
see before you today!

But as the newscaster was reading his quotation, the
television CAMERA has PANNED from Sykes in his cage
to the limousine -- so that as the newscaster speaks
his last words, the image we see on the monitor is
not the warden, but Elizabeth -- seated serenely in
the back of her car -- gliding past the swelling
crowd -- her eyes alive and proud.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

A small glass tube in the shape of an arrow FILLS
THE FRAME. It appears to be floating in space. Then
a man's hand ENTERS SHOT, touches the arrow, gives
it a spin. Like the needle of a compass, the arrow
swings in a lazy circle, then quivers and comes to
rest still pointing in its original direction.

Aames -- Elizabeth's "associate" -- stares at the
arrow, frowns, puzzled, then shrugs and trudges on
up the steep, overgrown trail, following the arrow
"North"

Just ahead of him now, the underbrush parts, reveals a clearing at the top of the mountain. Dust is beginning to rise - to chum and swirl silently all around him. Aames looks up, sees P. P. Peoria's helicopter, hovering in complete and eerie silence just over the clearing ahead. Aames squints and pulls his snap-brim hat lower over his eyes to shield him from the dust, then steps forward into the clearing.

The old and weathered hexagon-shaped building still stands as we saw it before -- but a trifle older and more weathered. And standing in front of it, shaking his fist up at the helicopter, is Lastie MoJoe. He is still dressed in his thread-bare tuxedo and -- unlike the building -- seems not to have aged at all in the last eight years.

Aames approaches Lastie and shouts out an uncomfortable and unnecessarily loud "Hello there!" But Lastie merely turns away and, without even a glance in Aames' direction, goes back into his laboratory. Aames frowns again, casts a quick glance up at the strangely silent helicopter, then squares his shoulders and follows Lastie inside.

INT. LASTIE'S LABORATORY - DAY

Lastie is pacing back and forth behind his work bench, seemingly lost in thought. Aames tries another awkward "Hello!" then, deciding that the old man must be deaf, walks around the work bench and places himself directly in Lastie's path.

Lastie, however, continues pacing and walks straight through Aames.

Aames whirls, stares at the figure, then watches, slack-jawed, as it turns and paces back and straight through him a second time. Aames takes a nervous step to the side now, to get out of the figure's line of march, to avoid a third encounter. He looks around him at the laboratory.

All of Lastie's apparatus -- his tools and machines and experiments are covered with dust and cobwebs. The entire lab is as though it had been deserted or abandoned for years.

As Aames watches, the pacing image of Lastie strides back outside and -- framed in the doorway -- raises his fist again and begins shaking it at the silently hovering presence of P.P. Peoria.

Aames goes back to the work table, scans it quickly. Racks of test tubes and other apparatus appear to have been brushed aside in haste to clear a working space in the center of the table; and in that space is a litter of paper. Aames picks up one of the sheets of paper, blows the dust off it.

It -- and all the other papers -- is covered with what appear to be sketches - designs for a kind of logo or symbol. The drawing on top -- the most finished in appearance -- shows the head of a Mohawk Indian inside a circle and superimposed over a bold and jagged streak of lightning.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BI-PLANE - CEMETERY - DAY

The Indian-and-lightning-flash logo again FILLS THE FRAME -- but in color now: red and gold. The CAMERA DRAWS BACK, sees that the design is painted onto the side of the bi-plane we saw cruising over the funeral procession, trailing its long canvas banner: L.M. Bubble-Gum Says, "Hi, Diamond Jim!"

Below us now, we can see the glittering crowd swarming over the cemetery, and the procession coming to a stop near the open grave. The PILOT of the bi-plane is a small and wiry old man wearing goggles and a leather aviator's cap.

He pulls a cord now, and the long canvas banner is cut loose, floats in a graceful serpentine toward the ground.

Then the pilot guns his engine, drops into a steep, fast dive and aims his plane directly toward the group of cars around the grave -- toward the cage in which Diamond Jim is held prisoner.

A long, black rope unreels with a huge grappling hook at its end.

The pilot cuts his engine. In a swooping rush of air, the plane plummets toward the crowd - toward the guards who, looking up, begin to dive for cover -- toward Sykes' cage itself.

Then, at the last possible moment, the pilot restarts his engine and pulls up sharply. The hook swings in a wide arc, grabs Sykes' cage perfectly, and begins to pull it up, into the sky and away from the guards, the police, who raise their guns now, recovering, ready to fire.

But the bi-plane -- like a crop duster making his run -- releases a huge cloud of fog or smoke. It engulfs the crowd, and the cemetery, and the guards with their guns, and Elizabeth -- who stands now, perfectly still, amid the shouts and gunfire and chaos, staring up into the swirling white cloud.

Sykes is gone.

THIRTEEN: IN WHICH many secrets are revealed and our hero learns -- from the very lips of his kidnapper -- the details of a conspiracy desperate, titanic and bold...AND IN WHICH, many thousands of miles away, Elizabeth uncovers a mean and terrible truth...

(the sweetest shufflin' tap-dance you ever did see)

EXT. SYKES' CAGE - DAY

Sykes' cage, at the end of its thick black rope, is floating through a dense and billowing cloud. Above, we can see the bi-place, its engine straining under full throttle, racing through the whiteness. Sykes is holding onto the bars of his cage, watching the bi-plane. His eyes are alive and amused and curious, but not at all afraid.

Then, as Sykes watches, the pilot appears, climbing nimbly out of his cockpit, walking back along the wide, stubby bottom wing, and lowering himself skillfully onto the rope that is supporting Sykes' cage. The pilot is carrying a large thick blanket.

He slides down the rope and with a quick grin passes the blanket in through the bars to Sykes, who accepts it with a smile of thanks and watches as the pilot scrambles back up the rope and into his cockpit again.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Sykes, bundled now in the blanket, is hunkered down in the bottom of his cage. Beneath us, the landscape races by -- dangerously close by -- as the plane barely skims along above the ground.

Snow-capped mountains race by below... then snow-clad mountains... then the ice of glaciers... then solid, endless fields of ice...

Snow swirls around the cage, around Sykes, who is shivering... then beating at himself frantically for warmth... then stiff and motionless beneath the blanket -- as if frozen into a solid block of ice...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE NORTH POLE - DAY

A field of white... ice and snow... bright and almost featureless except for -- at its center -- a single black dot...

The CAMERA -- inside the bi-plane now -- APPROACHES, sweeping forward, still low to the ground. The black dot swells, resolves into a shape -- and we begin to grasp its scale...It's enormous -- a structure built of tar-blackened timbers into the shape of a hexagon that stands out sharply now against its gleaming white background.

And from the center of the building, soaring up over two hundred feet into the sky, a slim metal mast supports a bright and shining copper ball.

The plane soars past the huge building. The pilot is watching the terrain closely now. A huge drift of soft snow looms up ahead. The pilot pulls a lever and Sykes' cage is suddenly cut loose, drops the few feet down into the snow, bounces twice, then comes to rest half-buried in the powdery snow bank.

The bi-plane disappears into the whiteness, and suddenly other shapes appear -- from every direction, converging, dozens of OLD MEN and WOMEN running and hobbling forward on snowshoes.

They reach the cage and paw the snow away. Sykes is motionless inside. The old people exchange brief frightened glances, then scurry back out of the way as two very strong old men appear, plodding forward, carrying tanks of oxygen and acetylene. They quickly and nimbly fire up a searingly hot torch and set to work cutting open the bars to Sykes' cage.

INT. THE HEXAGON BUILDING - DAY

The interior of the building is a giant-sized replica of Lastie's laboratory in Montana -- dynamo and condensers and coils: all are the same but much, much larger. And in the space surrounding the huge electrical equipment, long work tables have been arranged into a kind of assembly-line -- stacked high in places with cardboard cartons all bearing the same simple design: the Mohawk Indian and the jagged bolt of lightning.

Sykes is rushed inside and the large door is quickly pushed shut against the cold, snowy wind. A brass bed has been set up in one corner of the single huge room. Sykes is lowered gently into the bed and covered with piles of thick, warm blankets. The old people fuss and hover around him, massaging his hands and face and exchanging looks that are almost frantic in their fear and concern.

Then several of the old people step aside to make room, and there appears now, at the foot of the bed, a very old man. His face is thinner and more wrinkled than when we saw it last, and he is wearing not his thread-bare tuxedo but a checkered flannel work-shirt and overalls with suspenders instead -- but he is nevertheless clearly recognizable. It is Lastie MoJoe.

He looks at Sykes with eyes that are filled with concern, and the other old people are all watching Lastie now, as if looking to him for some word or feat of magic that will restore Sykes to life.

And suddenly, as though Lastie's presence had somehow worked a miracle, Sykes' eyes pop open and his body leaps bolt upright. The old people gasp and dart backwards in fear and awe.

Sykes' eyes are fixed straight ahead as if at some hallucination or incredible vision that he is seeing, and he immediately begins to speak -- to shout out, breathless, and filled with passion:

SYKES

L.A.!! You want ta talk about
 L.A.?! I'll talk about L.A., and
 how I seen a Cadillac on the
 freeway in L.A. with the
 happiest man I ever seen in my
 life drivin' it!... And as I
 started ta pass him on by, I
 looked over an' saw the
 prettiest -- I mean the cutest
 blond head movin' up an' down
 there where his lap would
 normally be -- And I just rode
 .. on next ta that Cadillac for
 a while and that guy's
 expression drivin' it -- it
 never changed!...Then the next
 thing I knowed, he was pointin'
 ta the exit sign up ahead and we
 pulled off the road together and
 I stopped behind him right off
 the ramp there -- and that
 driver's-side-door of that
 Cadillac opened up all of a
 sudden and that blond curly head
 wrapped in a soft furry coat was
 walkin' my way!...And without a
 whimper or a sigh, she sat down
 beside me and I began ta smile
 and that Cadillac drove away!
 Then instead of sittin' she
 curled up like a kitten on the
 seat beside me and undid my
 whachamacallit -- and I stepped
 on the accelerator and pulled
 back on the freeway -- and drove
 -- and FLOATED -- and DROVE!...

The old people are tittering and looking at each
 other and at Lastie -- simultaneously confused and
 embarrassed and intrigued by the story. They try to
 push Sykes back under the covers, but his body is
 rigid and unyielding, so they settle for draping the
 blankets around his shoulders, as -- all the while -
 Sykes continues to shout in a voice charged with
 passion:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And about twenty-five miles up
 the road, from outta the comer
 of my eye I noticed a plumber in
 one of them high-off-the-ground
 (MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

kinda plumber's trucks smilin' and lookin' down on me -- An' I smiled back on over ta him and pointed ta the next exit and pulled off the road! . . . And the same as it happened ta me, it happened ta him!... And I began wonderin' if she ever stopped -- If she ever had a place ta light -- Or if she just did what she did day an' night -- And I thought -- if she's doin' what she's doin' in L.A., then she's probably not the only one that does it -- And I started wonderin' what the other ones looked like and if they'd be as pretty -- So I stayed on that freeway all day an' all night long lookin' an' searchin' in every car I passed -- And figurin' out -- That's the reason -- THAT'S THE REASON there's so much God-damned traffic on them freeways in L.A.!!

At which exact point -- to the astonishment of Lastie and the others, who despite themselves are chuckling and laughing at the story, Sykes simply closes his eyes and collapses backwards into the bed.

INT. LASTIE'S LABORATORY IN MONTANA - DAY

The hologram -- or three dimensional image - of Lastie, as he was eight years ago, is pacing back and forth inside the dusty, abandoned laboratory. All around him, investigators and POLICE are swarming in frantic activity -- dusting for fingerprints, examining the pages of notes and designs through high-powered magnifying glasses, and trying -- amid the chaos -- to avoid the eerie and unsettling experience of having the image of Lastie walk straight through them.

The CAMERA MOVES, and we can see, in the foreground, P.P. Peoria, watching the activity with a senile and pleased and spaced-out smile. He is tucked into his wheelchair with a bright plaid blanket. Charles, his

Negro retainer, very tall and also very old, stands dutifully behind him. A new set of gorgeous (and obviously untested) "Just-in-Case" Girls are clustered around nearby.

Elizabeth and Aames are standing, a few paces off, watching quietly.

When P.P. Peoria speaks now, it is in a very high, quavering voice, and although he never turns towards him, he is talking to Charles:

P.P. PEORIA

I was a mean son-of-a-bitch when
I was young...Wasn't I,
Charles...?

CHARLES

(Just like Uncle
Remus)

Yes, sir, Masta Peoria. You
sunly was mean.

P.P. PEORIA

And everybody hated me, then...
Didn't they, Charles...?

CHARLES

Yes, sir, Masta Peoria... They
sunly did.

P.P. PEORIA

But when Lastie MoJoe gives me
my eternal life pill, and I give
the world happiness, then
everyone will love me... Won't
they, Charles...?

CHARLES

Yes, sir, Masta Peoria... They
sunly will.

P.P. Peoria smiles reassuringly to himself. A beat; he's trying to remember something.

P.P. PEORIA

Is it Christmas yet, Charles...?
I can't remember...

CHARLES

Yes, sir, Masta Peoria... It
sunly is Christmas.

Charles' answer seems to have put P.P. Peoria into a peaceful swoon, and he instantly nods off to sleep. Charles -- his duty performed turns and smiles warmly at Elizabeth.

CHARLES

And that's the way it's been
every day for the last twenty-
five years or more, now...

(sadly)

He's just been waitin' around
here for that old eternal life
pill that he wants so bad... So
he won't die...

The hologram of Lastie paces over and walks straight through P.P. Peoria, asleep in his wheelchair. Elizabeth watches it walk outside, then turns back to Charles.

ELIZABETH

And you had no idea that Lastie
MoJoe had gone away...?

CHARLES

(scratching his head;
watching the holo-
gram; perplexed)

That's right, Ma'am...That old
Lastie MoJoe done fooled us real
bad...

ELIZABETH

And the "happiness machine"...
Did you ever see it work...?

Charles' face lights up. His smile broadens and he speaks now with a genuine enthusiasm:

CHARLES

Yes, sir, Ma'am. I sholy did!
And it sunly was somethin'!

(a beat; remembering)

And yes, sir, Ma' am, I sholy
did feel genuinely happy. I
didn't feel no oppression or
nothin' when it was on... It was
just like bein' a little boy
again -- shufflin' around an'
tappin' around at one a them
dances we used ta have back
then...

He leaves his position behind the wheelchair. His smile becomes dreamier, and broader, and he begins to do the sweetest shuffling tap dance you ever did see.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 (shufflin' and
 tappin')
 And smilin' an' bein' filled
 with nothin' but the sweet,
 sweet feelin' of joy!. .. An'
 Masta Peoria - there weren't no
 way on God's good earth that he
 was gonna give Masta MoJoe the
 money ta buy the power ta run
 that happiness machine of his by
 -- 'till -- he -- got -- his --
 pill!

He is still dancing and floating and lapsing further into the joy of remembering:

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 (really Uncle Remus-
 like now)
 Then one day Ole Masta Diamond
 Jim came shufflin' along...An'
 man, o'man -- I can tell ya
 rightly, Ma'am, that the shit
 sunly did hit the fan!

He laughs -- a high shrill remembering laugh -- shaking his head as though he's seeing it there in front of him. He continues dancing:

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Tusselin' -- an' fightin' -- an'
 chasin' -- an' screamin' -- An'
 Masta Diamond Jim thinkin' he
 killed a body -- when rightly he
 didn't kill a body at all!

Elizabeth, startled by this, looks at Aames. Aames shrugs; it's news to him, too.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 (dancing; starry-eyed
 with remembering)
 An' all of us laughin -- till I
 thought I'd die as they carried
 his wise-ass ass off ta
 prison... Yes, sire, Ma'am, we
 (MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 sunly did have ourselves a time
 that day...
 (his biggest,
 broadest grin)
 We sunly was mean!

INT. THE HEXAGON BUILDING - NIGHT

Lastie is sitting on the edge of the big brass bed, anxiously watching Sykes, whose eyes are still closed in sleep. The other old people -- including now the pilot of the bi-plane -- all are sitting or squatting around nearby. They all seem tired or nervous - as if their vigil has been a long one. They cast worried little looks off toward a clock that ticks away loudly somewhere across the room -- the only sound in the entire cavernous laboratory.

Then Sykes begins to stir; his eyes begin to open. The old people draw closer, and as Sykes' eyes focus on them, they smile at him sweetly and reassuringly.

Sykes' eyes come to rest on Lastie, who smiles, hopefully and gently, and begins now to speak:

LASTIE
 Do you remember me, son...? I'm
 your long lost friend, Lastie
 MoJoe... I'm sorry that you got
 so cold -- but I couldn't think
 of any other way of getting you
 here...

Sykes is looking at Lastie with clear eyes that seem to register what he is saying, but Sykes makes no response at all. Except for his brief and hysterical outburst after he was first brought in out of the snow, he seems to be maintaining the silence he began several days before.

Lastie waits hopefully for a long and uncomfortable moment, then clears his throat nervously and continues:

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 Now, I know that you've made the
 decision not to talk again...
 And I'm sure that you have your
 reasons for making that
 (MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 decision... And I want you to
 know that no matter what those
 reasons are... I respect them...
 Because I respect you...

Having said this, Lastie, pleased with himself,
 turns to his friends for approval. They all nod and
 smile encouragement to him, and he turns back to
 Sykes and continues, really sweetly now:

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 I just wanted you to know how
 important that little pep talk
 you gave me eight years ago was
 to me...
 (a beat)
 Everything you said about me was
 true, son... I was feeling sorry
 for myself -- and forlorn and
 dejected... And if it hadn't
 been for you -- I'm certain that
 I would have given up the ghost
 and the world would have never
 known what it felt like to have
 everybody in it happy and gay --
 all at the same time...

All the old people smile happily and proudly.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 But since that day when Fate,
 I'm sure, brought us together,
 everything has changed...

Lastie stands now, and begins to walk out toward the
 center of the huge laboratory. Several of the old
 people begin to push Sykes' brass bed, to roll it
 along, across the creaking floorboards, beside
 Lastie.

Lastie, still speaking softly and gently to Sykes,
 waves his arm in a broad arc to encompass his new
 laboratory:

LASTIE (CONT'D)
 First, I moved my whole
 operation North -- to free
 myself from the confining
 presence of P.P. Peoria....

He puts his arm across the shoulders of one of the sweet old people who are trailing along, beside Sykes' bed, as it is rolled around the laboratory.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And then I advertised in the papers and found a wonderful group of people just like myself who needed to continue to do useful and exciting things with their lives...

They are cruising along beside the crude assembly line of long work tables. We can see now that some of the tables are piled high with rectangular sheets of pink bubble-gum, while others are covered with stacks of colorful cardboard pictures.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And then, together with my new-found friends and associates -- and in order to achieve financial independence -- I established the Lastie MoJoe Bubble-Gum and Baseball Trading Card Corporation of America...

They pass a table that almost sags beneath the weight of a miniature mountain of bright, shining pennies.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And it's worked... Kids just love bubble- gum... And they desperately need heroes...

He picks up one of the small colored cardboard rectangles; a picture of Babe Ruth smiles heroically back at him. Lastie continues:

LASTIE (CONT'D)

And we've been able to raise enough capital to at least buy the cable to hook up to the power that I needed to functionalize my "happiness machine"...

They have reached the other side of the laboratory now. Two massive 1940s vintage television sets with tiny circular screens have been placed on a raised dais -- one on either side of a stately

Grandfather's clock. Lastie goes up to one of the sets and pushes a button on a black box that has been bolted to the top of the television.

A full-color three-dimensional image appears in the air right over the set. It shows a band of four old men creeping stealthily along a ridge that overlooks the vast concrete wall of Boulder Dam. The old men are dragging a thick electrical cable, at the end of which is attached a gigantic version of a conventional two-prong plug.

Lastie watches their progress for a moment, then smiles with satisfaction and turns back to Sykes. A huge switch is mounted on the wall beside him.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
(still filled with
enthusiasm)
And now we're all set and ready
to pull the switch -- and
enchant the world with happiness
-- and to leave Old Man Worry
and strife and woe behind...

The other old people become so excited, they can no longer contain their enthusiasm. They begin to applaud.

And Lastie is almost in tears now; his voice becomes very nostalgic:

LASTIE (CONT'D)
...And you're the true
inspiration behind us, son --
You're the true Father of
Happiness... I'm the Mother
because I gave birth to it...
(a fond glance at the
others)
And they're the mid-wives that
helped deliver it... But you,
son, sired and inspired it --
You are it's Father.

The old people applaud again, genuinely moved. But as their applause dies, they begin to exchange worried glances. It is as if they realize that there is still one more thing that Lastie must tell Sykes -- the most important thing of all...

Lastie clears his throat again; his air of nervousness has returned:

LASTIE (CONT'D)

(sitting again on the
edge of Sykes' brass
bed)

But there's still one itsy-bitsy
problem yet to be solved, son...
When I pull the switch, for a
long ten minutes -- as the power
in these coils is building, and
the fields are intensifying and
reaching their peaks -- the
world will go completely dark...
And no one will know why... And
they'll need an explanation...
And they'll need to be soothed,
and calmed, and told not to
panic, until the joy of
happiness comes to them, and the
dark cloud of despair is
lifted...

(looking at the still
unresponding Sykes
with a terrible
urgency now)

And it's those very same ten
minutes, son, that frightens us
so terribly... That could ruin
our project so thoroughly...
That you can do something
about...

A long, long pause. Sykes makes no response at all.
Lastie pulls his resolve together and plunges on.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

As the sun sets in the West, the
moon rises in the East and sets
in the West -- and rises again
in the East tomorrow... And when
Full and the sky is clear, a
face the size of a planet could
be projected there -- Your face,
Diamond Jim -- And your familiar
voice -- transmitted through the
fillings in their teeth -- could
soothe them -- and orient them
toward their happiness to
come...

(his nervousness at a
peak; after a long
beat and no
response)

(MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)

I know that it's a chance in a million, son, that you'll break your vow of silence and accept the challenge, and do us the favor of helping us...But in the words of your words: "A man's got ta do, What he's got ta do..." And for most of us, this is our last chance -- our last opportunity to do something significant with our lives... We're all so tired, son... We've all worked so hard...

Lastie and all the other old people are almost in tears.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

(a last plea)

Please... Help us...

Another long and -- for Lastie and the others -- sadly silent moment. Lastie pulls himself together enough to stand, to walk over to the second old television and activate its floating. three-dimensional image:

The sun is almost down, and we see an old Indian -- a Mohawk Indian -- WILL-HOOK -- scaling the side of the Empire State Building. He is wearing a breechclout and carrying a bulky piece of electrical apparatus strapped to his back. A plug at the end of a long wire dangles down behind him. He is about at the level of the eightieth floor now, pulling himself impossibly upward with the aid of large suction cups -- the kind that "human flies" used fifty years ago.

Lastie looks from the image of Will-Hook to the Grandfather's clock nearby.

LASTIE (CONT'D)

(to Sykes)

It's eleven 0' clock now...And in just one hour, Will-Hook -- that's the Indian you see there climbing the Empire State Building -- will hopefully have plugged us into the tower and -

(MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)
if you agree -- we'll be ready
to transmit your image onto the
moon... It'll be twelve o' clock
then, and -- one way or the
other -- time for me to pull the
switch...

Lastie looks at the others, as if to make sure there isn't something more he can say or do to persuade the still unresponding Sykes. No one can think of anything else, so Lastie looks at Sykes again, with eyes filled with hope and fear and simply says:

LASTIE (CONT'D)
Now, we'll leave you in peace to
think it over... May God protect
you always, and fill your heart
with nothing but joy...

Lastie moves away and the others follow him, leaving Sykes alone in his brass bed in front of the Grandfather's clock and the image of Will-Hook -- old and proud and brave -- climbing slowly and steadily toward the top...

FADE OUT

FOURTEEN: IN WHICH potent appeals are made to our hero's passion and pity, while a clock ticks inexorably onward and the happiness of the world dangles by a thread...

(a heart-pounding, pulse-popping fusillade of action and suspense)

FADE IN:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Elizabeth is standing in the middle of an open field. The first stars are beginning to shine. From behind a row of distant trees, a silvery light is glowing: the moon, still hidden, is rising.

Elizabeth looks particularly beautiful. She is wearing her long mink coat. Shafts of white light, coming from somewhere just off-screen, touch her face and hair softly and perfectly.

Her speech is passionate and alive; her gestures are grand, dramatic -- but always in complete control. She is, at this moment, the perfect match for Diamond Jim.

ELIZABETH

(shouting; as if to
the heavens
themselves)

I'm sorry, my Sucker-Sykes....!!
That's what you'd like to hear
me say -- isn't it...?! But
sorry for what...?! For seeing
you -- And wanting you -- And
knowing that you were someone
special -- And doing something
about it. .. ?? Bullshit!! I'm
not sorry for that! Because if
it wasn't for me, my Sucker-
Sykes, you would have never
discovered how big of a sucker
you really are! All that's
happened to you, Chump, is that
you've had your eyes opened
up...And if I'm responsible for
that -- Then that makes me happy
and proud -- Not sorry!

(a beat)

And now if you want to hear
something else that might shock
you -- That might throw you into
another self-pitying catatonic
rage-- Hold on tight --

The CAMERA WIDENS now, and we can see that Elizabeth is not alone in the open field. Aames is standing nearby, his hands gripping tightly the arms of two huge men. The men are handcuffed together; their clothes are torn, their faces bloody and bruised -- as if they had just been taken prisoner after a tremendous battle. They are the two enormous and hulking bodyguards that Sykes was supposed to have killed when he clubbed them with P. P. Peoria's gold handled walking-stick.

Aames shoves the two men and they stumble forward toward Elizabeth and into the slanting white light that is coming from a pair of large arc lights. A battery of television cameras is photographing the scene -- photographing Elizabeth as she speaks:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You're innocent, my Sucker-Sykes! You never killed anybody!

INT. THE HEXAGON BUILDING - NIGHT

Inside the huge laboratory, Lastie and the other old people are gathered around a third 1940s-style television set. On its tiny circular screen. we can see Elizabeth and the two bodyguards.

Lastie and the others, watching, are gasping in surprise. Quickly, excitedly, they drag the television across the laboratory and set it right next to Sykes' brass bed as Elizabeth's voice --loud and clear and strong -- continues:

ELIZABETH

(from the television)

If these men are dead, how can they be alive and standing by my side...? You're not a murderer, my Sucker-Sykes... You're a fool.

And as Sykes turns toward her voice, Lastie pushes a button atop the set and Elizabeth suddenly appears as a full sized three-dimensional image floating in the space over the television.

The old people gather around to watch also. Sykes in his bed is now completely surrounded -- by Lastie and the others; by the hologram of the band of old men dragging their giant plug steadily closer to Boulder Dam; by the Grandfather's clock ticking off the minutes 'till twelve o'clock; by Will-Hook as he scrambles upward toward the top of the Empire State Building; and now -- completing the circle around the bed -- by Elizabeth as she continues, building now in passion and energy:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

...But that's not so bad -- Look at me standing out here and making a fool out of myself -- So what!! Who in the Hell cares who I love or who I don't love...? That's right!! I said I love ya, my Sucker- Sykes...!! And I'm not afraid ta yell it

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

...But that's not so bad -- Look
at me standing out here and
making a fool out of myself --
So what!! Who in the Hell cares
who I love or who I don't
love...? That's right!! I said I
love ya, my Sucker- Sykes...!!
And I'm not afraid ta yell it
out again just as loud as can be
-- for all the world ta hear --
I LOVE YOU, MY SUCKER-SYKES!!
(turns in a
pirouette)
I love ya.

She is smiling broadly now, enjoying her own energy,
her freedom, her outburst. And the old people
gathered around near Sykes are smiling and
tittering.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(beginning to strut)

There -- I said it... A woman's
got ta do what she's got ta do!

She points a finger outward now, directly toward the
camera that is photographing her. Her three-
dimensional image, floating there in Lastie's
laboratory, is pointing its finger directly at Sykes
who is motionless in his bed, watching.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

And if you don't do anything
about it, chump -- then you
really are a fool -- 'Cause we
could be "hot shit" together,
Jake -- And I mean somethin'
special -- A sparkling diamond
on the end of a rainbow --

Suddenly there is a loud gasp from several of the
old people around the bed. Lastie whirls, sees what
they are reacting to: Will-Hook -- ten stories from
the top now -- is slipping, beginning to lean out
terrifyingly backward into space.

Lastie stabs a button on Elizabeth's television,
cutting off her sound, leaving her mute image to
continue its passionate appeal, but unheeded now as
Lastie and the others focus on the image of the old
Indian, swaying desperately, frighteningly, out into
the void.

A long, heart-stopping moment... Then -- as if summoning up incredible reserves of strength - Will-Hook screams -- a blood curdling war-cry-- lunges out, and grasps another hand-hold. The suction cup finds a smooth spot on the sheer wall and holds fast.

The old people cheer in joy and relief. Will-Hook, grinning and trembling from his exertion, reaches down into a pouch that dangles from his belt, retrieves a pint bottle of Red-Eye, and takes a long, thankful slug.

But as his still trembling hand goes to replace the bottle in its pouch, it slides between his fingers and plummets down -- down ninety-five stories to the sidewalk below.

The bottle smashes, splatters on the pavement right at the feet of a passerby who whirls angrily, stares up the face of the towering building, then gapes in astonishment as he spots the tiny figure of Will-Hook perched near the top.

As Lastie and the old people watch in dismay, a crowd begins to form now on the street, and Will-Hook - clearly visible in the glare of the spotlights that bathe the top of the Empire State Building at night -- begins to climb again -- desperately now, faster than it seems he possibly can -- toward the still distant top and its broadcasting tower.

Lastie looks over to the hologram that floats on the other side of the Grandfather's clock: the band of men approaching Boulder Dam. They are just outside the giant power station now. Still unseen by the guards who patrol the area, they drag their cable and its giant plug inside.

The Grandfather's clock ticks on -- eight minutes 'till midnight.

Lastie turns, his eyes framing a sad and fervent appeal to Sykes.

And Sykes -- surrounded by the images, and by the old people who now turn toward him also, their eyes begging him for help -- begins very slowly to draw his knees up -- to draw himself tighter and tighter into a ball.

His eyes dart back and forth - to the image of Elizabeth, still silently pleading -- to Lastie, on the other side of the bed, and the old people all around him -- all pleading for Sykes' help.

Silently -- like a little child -- Sykes begins to rock slowly, forward and back...forward and back...

Inside the power station at Boulder Dam, floating there in the air at the end of Sykes' bed, the images of the old men plug their giant cable into a huge, perfectly matching socket.

Four minutes to go: the switch at Lastie's laboratory begins to spark and glow with power -- alive now -- ready to go -- waiting only for Lastie's hand to throw the switch -- to activate the giant coils and bring the happiness machine up to full power -- and, during those ten long minutes that it will take to reach its operating power, to throw the world into blackness and fear and confusion.

Will-Hook is scrambling madly upwards -- almost to the top now. A police helicopter roars into the picture. And just below the Indian, a tiny window in the observation tower is forced open and a policeman with a rope tied around his waist begins to climb outside.

Two minutes to go: Inside the laboratory, a strange contraption that resembles a television camera descends from the ceiling at the end of a long cable. It is aimed directly at Sykes, who is still rocking back and forth, still silent.

Atop the Empire State Building, as Lastie and the old people watch, breathless with fear, Will-Hook puts on a last burst of speed. The helicopter is close now, and another policeman is descending from it at the end of a rope -- his descent matching perfectly the descent of the camera over Sykes' head.

Will-Hook reaches the top, grabs the electrical apparatus from its sling on his back and plugs it into the metal mast of the transmitter's antenna.

Lastie turns, his hand on the switch, looking at Sykes. All the old people are watching Sykes now.

The clock begins to strike.

And softly -- almost inaudibly beneath the sound of the clock's chime -- Sykes is whispering:

SYKES

I'll talk... I'll talk to ya...

I'll talk ta everybody...

Lastie throws the switch.

FIFTEEN: IN WHICH the Man in the Moon tells all...

(a lunar lament with cosmic consequences)

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - NIGHT

As Will-Hook -- clinging to his tiny perch at the base of the antenna watches: all the lights of the city below fade instantly into darkness. The hovering helicopter, plunged also into darkness, speeds away to avoid colliding with the now almost invisible tower. The policeman below slips in the darkness, dangles by his rope, then is pulled inside to safety. And in the black canyons below, the sounds of thousands of car horns echo and blend -- as if into a vast shout of panic and confusion.

And above the horizon -- startlingly bright as it floats over the vast and darkened city -- the full moon shines with Sykes' face.

Will-Hook smiles and listens to the voice inside his mouth that begins, now, softly to speak:

SYKES

(slowly at first and
sad; as sad as
only a child can
sometimes be...)

If ya want ta talk about bein'
little... I'll talk about bein'
little... And of bein' about
twelve or thirteen or so... And
of bein' all alone and lonely in
this world...

Will-Hook's smile has faded now, as he listens there high above the darkened city, and sees the sadness on Sykes' face as it floats ghostlike in the sky. And below, the sounds of the car horns and chaos are fading -- slowly, very slowly -- as if more and more

people were beginning to listen also to the tiny and familiar voice:

SYKES (CONT'D)

...And sellin' balloons at a parade somewhere where it was cold and it was winter... And meetin' this other little boy about my same age whose father owned all the balloons that I was sellin'... And he weren't too rich -- and his Mamma was real nice and a little heavy-set. .. And after the parade was over, they put me in the back of their wooden-sided station wagon and carted me off to their house for lunch... And it was so clean there -- And it smelled so good -- And we had tuna fish casserole and Coca-Cola -- And it started ta snow outside... And they said ta me -- "Please don't go ..." They didn't say "home" - 'cause they speculated that I didn't have no home ta call my own ta go home to... And so I didn't... And night-time came -- and the sheets were crisp and white -- and I felt so dirty slidin' myself in between 'em -- but I didn't care -- 'cause I couldn't help it -- And I couldn't sleep at all, not one bit, that whole night -- 'cause I was feelin' so cozy...

Will-Hook is leaning back against the antenna, his arms wrapped around a pole to keep himself from falling. The moon is large and bright as it carries Sykes' face out over the darkened towers of the New York skyline. And from far below, the sounds of the car horns have faded as the still city listens to Sykes' quiet voice. Will-hook listens, too, as if enchanted, and closes his eyes.

And the CAMERA PANS A WAY from the old Indian atop the tower, until the moon is alone now, in the frame. And Sykes continues, softly and hypnotically, to speak:

SYKES (CONT'D)

Then along about when it was
real late - and my bedroom door
was open just a crack -- I
looked up -- and seen his Mamma
standin' there in the hallway --
naked as the day she was born --
by the bathroom door -- lookin'
straight down the way ta where I
was...

The CAMERA PULLS BACK, PANS SLIGHTLY, and we realize
that we are no longer high above New York, but are
now, instead:

EXT. BOULDER DAM - NIGHT

The moon with Sykes' face skims just above the
trees, along the ridge that overlooks the vastness
of Boulder Dam.

In the foreground, FOUR GUARDS are standing near the
cable that the old men dragged here -- the cable
that is now glowing with power as it sends its
currents North to Lastie's laboratory.

But the guards are making no move to cut the cable
or to trace it in either direction. They, like Will-
Hook, are listening in total fascination to the
voice that is coming from inside the mouths of three
of the guards (the fourth, with no fillings in his
teeth, has to lean in close in order to listen) --
and watching now, as the Man in the Moon floats
above the trees and continues to speak:

SYKES

Then a good long time went by
when I realized that her husband
was standin' there close-up
behind her -- And she was bent
over -- just a tate, now... And
I started shakin' ta myself --
And she stayed that same way --
Starin' at me -- not movin' --
not one bit -- with him behind
her movin' back an' forth and up
an' down again and again -- and
again... And then he was gone -
And she stood up straight - And
she started feelin' herself all
over - And she started makin'

(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

all kinds of faces now -- and
breathin' -- real heavy now --
And moanin'... Then she reached
out - and opened up the bathroom
door and without goin' in it --
slammed it shut again... And the
hallway turned dark and I
couldn't see her no more -- And
I was shakin' some more -- And I
took the covers offa me -- and
just layed there on my back with
everything about me pointing
Heavenward...

One by one, the guards have squatted down onto the
ground, listening, watching Sykes' face, totally
absorbed -- with no thought at all of doing anything
about the strange cable that glows steadily brighter
as it sends its power North.

The CAMERA MOVES again 'till the moon FILLS THE
FRAME, as Sykes continues:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And my eyes were closed and she
slipped on top of me and we was
so silent and still you coulda
heard a pin drop... And then I
reached up and touched her bosom
and brought it down ta where my
mouth was and I began ta
cry...And I began pretendin' ta
myself that she was my Mamma --
instead of that fella's Mamma
who was snoozin' by my side...

The CAMERA PULLS BACK; we are now:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Aames and the two huge and handcuffed bodyguards are
sitting in the open field, watching the moon and
listening to Sykes' voice.

And grouped around their television camera, the
TECHNICIANS and cameramen are sitting or squatting
also, listening -- almost as if hypnotized -- to
Sykes' story.

Only Elizabeth is standing -- there in the middle of the field, in the silvery, slightly shimmering light, listening. And if it seemed, earlier, as if Elizabeth were shouting her love to the heavens, then it must surely seem, now, that the heavens themselves are answering her:

SYKES

...and pretendin' that I didn't have ta stomp my feet -- or tell no dirty stories -- Or sport a diamond in my front tooth -- or nothin' -- for her ta love me... 'Cause she just plain old loved me --loved me... 'Cause I was her son...

(a long, sad beat)

And then it was over -- And the next mornin' -- early -- before breakfast even -- I left that house...

(a longer, even sadder, beat)

And that's the closest I can ever remember comin' ta ever bein' loved...

INT. THE HEXAGON BUILDING - NIGHT

Sykes is sitting on the brass bed, just as we last saw him. His knees are still drawn up to his chest. He is looking into the lens of Lastie's camera and smiling -- the saddest smile in the world.

A long moment passes, then his smile twists just barely perceptibly with irony:

SYKES

Fact is: the Man in the Moon is lonely...

(a beat)

The Man in the Moon is sad...

And somehow these words -- the speaking of these words -- the articulation of the idea itself -- lift the veil of sadness from Sykes' eyes. It is as though he understands something for the first time -- something he has never understood before...

But as Sykes pauses to let this thought fill him, the air inside the laboratory begins to glow with an intense and bright powder-blue light. The massive coils that ring the laboratory are fully charged now -- pulsing with inconceivable power.

All around Sykes, the old people are dancing with joy -- with success -- with total, unabashed happiness.

SERIES OF SHOTS

In the field: In the moonlight, the blue glow spreads through the air, touches Aames and the bodyguards, touches the technicians and cameramen, touches Elizabeth... And all of them smile...

Just above Boulder Dam: The blue glow spreads across the sky, and the four guards grin with happiness...

High above New York City: The blue glow lights the air, touches Will-hook on his lofty perch, brings to his face the biggest, happiest smile of all...

And from high above the Earth: As if from the point of view of the moon, itself -- the blue glow spreads and circles the globe. The entire planet Earth shines with a soft powder-blue light...

The CAMERA TURNS now, from its vantage point out in space...The moon ENTERS FRAME... Sykes' face -- also touched by the blue light -- is moving violently... It is as if he were shaking his head back and forth -- trying with all his power to avoid the effects of Lastie' s machine -- trying not to be changed by the blue glow... But it's no use. A large, warm, sweet smile spreads across Sykes' face. The Man in the Moon isn't sad anymore. And when he speaks now, it is with a voice that is gentle and filled with joy:

SYKES

Oh, shit... I feel happy... For the second time in my Goddamned life, I feel happy...Wouldn't ya know...? Just as I was startin' ta feel happy feelin' sad... Just as I was startin' ta figure it out all by myself why I felt so sad -- so I wouldn't have ta feel so sad no more - and I could make my own self feel happy... I get made happy in some other way!

Sykes' face turns in profile for a moment, as if he were speaking to someone standing next to him -- outside the range of the camera that is broadcasting his image onto the moon:

SYKES (CONT'D)

(laughing)

That's not fair, Mr. Lastie MoJoe...Nobody has got the right ta take my own happiness or sadness or whatever away from me and give me this fake stuff... A man's got ta huff and puff his own mighty cloud of joy -- otherwise it don't mean nothin'.

Sykes' face -- still grinning with happiness -- turns back to face the camera -- as if to look out at the Earth, itself, there from his vantage point on the moon:

SYKES (CONT'D)

And a man's got ta be who he's got ta be... Not what some other chump is, chump!

(he starts to laugh and laugh)

Shit... Look at ya all out there buyin' diamond-studded diamonds just because some fool tells ya that they're it..! And thinkin' now, because ya got some, that you're somethin' more than special...

(he winks and his voice drops to a happy whisper)

(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)

Well, now, I'm gonna let ya in
on a little private secret of
mine... Somethin' I ain't never
told a livin' soul before...

(he laughs, and his
hand appears,
pointing to the
diamond in his
tooth)

This ain't no real diamond.

(he pops it right out
of his tooth!)

It's a fake, Jake!

A beat; his face grins out from the moon now, for
the first time without its sparkling diamond -- with
just a little hole there in his tooth...

SYKES (CONT'D)

A piece of glass or plastic or
somethin' that I slipped on
there ta fill up the hole that
was there so's I wouldn't look
like no ordinary gutter-bum or
nothin'...

(he laughs)

It's the truth... How about
that...? And as long as we're on
the subject of the truth...I got
ta tell Elizabeth, if she's out
there listenin'...

(he laughs again;
gleeful, filled
with mischief)

...that I got myself a hard-on
THIS BIG for ya, sweetcakes...

His hands, held up in front of his face to show her
how big, exactly span the width of the moon.

SYKES (CONT'D)

And I'm not talkin' about a
used-ta-be kinda hard-on -- I'm
talkin' about a right-now kinda
hard-on...

(a big, big smile)

You're damned straight I do!

The CAMERA PULLS BACK now, and we see Sykes' face
grinning there on the moon from the point of view of
Elizabeth, standing in the open field, grinning up
at Sykes' face with a smile that matches his own.

SYKES (CONT'D)

And if you're still interested
in testin' it out some -- why
don't you just metriculate your
ass on up here ta the North Pole
ta fetch me! 'Cause I'm tellin'
ya, Honey, with both of us
participatin' with all of our
might -- you're right - we'd be
nothin' but hot shit together --
And HAPPY -- You bet your ass
we'd be happy -- And I'm talkin'
about happy -- happy - I'm not
talkin' about this machine kinda
happy --

(a big grin)

I'm talkin' about happy!

But as Sykes continues to talk -- to grin and laugh
with joy -- a sudden and surprising change takes
place: the blue glow that fills the sky, that
touches the faces of Elizabeth in the field and
Sykes on the moon, quickly fades and disappears.

In the field: Aames, the bodyguards, the cameramen
and technicians -- all begin to stir now -- to look
around in confusion - as if a spell had been
broken... Their grins have faded with the fading of
the blue light -- all but Elizabeth's grin, that
is...She and Sykes (his face still shining out from
the moon) seem oblivious to the change...

Above Boulder Dam: The blue glow fades, and the four
guards frown, then seem to notice -- as if for the
first time -- that mysterious cable that leads
toward the power plant. They leap to their feet and
begin to trace the cable...

And high above New York City: Will-Hook's smile
disappears and in the shock of the change he almost
loses his balance and falls. As he scrambles back up
to his perch, the sounds of thousands of car horns
begin to echo again from the black canyons below...
The noises become louder and louder -- angrier, more
hostile -- as the blue light disappears over the
horizon and the city returns to its normal self...

And through it all, Sykes -- his own face no longer
glowing with blue light -- continues to grin and
laugh and shout with happiness -- as if he were
totally unaffected by the change that is taking
place...

SYKES (CONT'D)

I'm talkin' about the kinda
happy that I've never been --
that I've only heard about --
but that I feel like now -- The
kinda happy, that makes ya want
ta twist an' shout with joy --
An' do a high-steppin' stomp --
and SCREAM...!!

He yells out -- a whoop of purest joy that is almost
buried now, beneath the car horns and sirens -- the
angry noises from the city below... And then -- as
Sykes is screaming and laughing with the very purest
of joy -- all the lights of the city come back on.
Sykes' whoop of joy fades and is lost beneath the
noises of the city's angry chaos...

And his face disappears from the moon.

INT. THE HEXAGON BUILDING - NIGHT

Inside Lastie's laboratory, Sykes is screaming with
happiness. Then suddenly he turns, away from the
camera that had been broadcasting his face onto the
moon.

In confusion now, Sykes looks at the old people in
the laboratory. They are all clustered together now,
sobbing and sniffing and crying.

SYKES

(still happy; but
baffled now, too)
Hey -- what the Hell's goin' on
over there...?! You put away
them handkerchiefs of yours --
You're supposed ta be happy!

The cluster of old people breaks apart now, and
through the opening we can see Lastie. He is sitting
in his favorite chair. A cup of tea rests on the
table beside him. He seems suddenly, terribly, old.
His voice is weak and faint as he looks up at Sykes
and forces a sweet smile despite his tears:

LASTIE

I'm happy that you're happy,
son... But I'm not very happy...

SYKES

(climbing out of the
bed)

What're you talkin' about that
you're not happy...? Of course
you're happy -- everybody's
happy!

LASTIE

No, they're not, son... Not
anymore... Not everybody...

SYKES

You mean I'm makin' my own self
happy by myself...? That that
happiness machine of yours
busted down an' broke...?

LASTIE

Not quite, son... I turned it
off myself...

A long moment as the realization of what Lastie said
sinks in fully. Sykes stops, looks at the other old
people crying, at the huge coils - no longer glowing
with power -- and at the switch -- open now, no
longer sparking with energy...

SYKES

(perplexed; petulant)

Well, then... I ain't happy no
more.

LASTIE

And as you so wisely said -- and
as it should be -- it's your
decision: To be happy or not to
be happy...

A long moment. Lastie seems frighteningly weak and
frail and old. He looks lovingly at Sykes... at the
old people who surround him... at his laboratory...

His tears are gone now, and his voice is very faint
and very gentle:

LASTIES (CONT'D)

And how long does it take to
travel from A to B...?

(a beat; answering
his own question

(MORE)

LASTIE (CONT'D)

smile)

As long as it takes... And if you're tired, it sometimes takes even longer... And if you're terribly sad, you might not ever get there... And even if you are there, you might not even know it... And what about if when you get there, you find that you still have further to go, but you don't have the strength to continue on...

(a beat)

Then you stop where you are and you look around and you say, "Adieu"...

All the old people are crying now. Lastie looks at them all. He speaks to Sykes, at last, but his words are really for all his old friends and associates -- to give them strength... and make them understand that it hasn't all been a waste... it hasn't all been in vain...

LASTIE (CONT'D)

...But that's okay, and fine and dandy, because I feel I've accomplished what I set out to do with my life...Because at least people know now that my "Buck-and-Wing Effect" exists...And maybe in an emergency sometime - when all other avenues of communication have failed -- as an alternative to total destruction -- in order to give people a short reprieve and time to think -- my happiness machine might be of some use...

His eyes travel for a last and loving time across the faces of the old people -- the pilot, and the two strong men who carried the torch, and all the others -- rekindling there the faint and magic light of hope...

LASTIE (CONT'D)

...And just that thought makes me more than pleased... And allows me to feel that I have not lived my life in vain...

His eyes come to rest again, and for the last time,
on Sykes.

LASTIE (CONT'D)
(even weaker now)
You are quite special, you know,
Diamond Jim... And I want you to
know that I've enjoyed being
your friend... And I hope you've
enjoyed being mine...

Sykes kneels by Lastie's chair. He is crying now,
too -- really crying.

SYKES
And I just want you to know...
before you die...Mr. Lastie
MoJoe... That if I had a
Mamma... And when I think of her
in my head... I'll always think
of her as being you...

And Lastie's face becomes a peaceful smile, and he
closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

SIXTEEN: IN WHICH all ends, after all, as it must
end -- happily...

(tappin' and poppin' and burstin , with joy)

EXT. THE NORTH POLE - DAY

The CAMERA DRAWS BACK -- higher and higher - above
Lastie's laboratory -- a huge black hexagon in the
middle of a field of ice... Snow is falling...

The laboratory dwindles as the CAMERA CONTINUES TO
RISE, then a motor sound approaches and a wind
begins to stir, and first one, then another large
military style helicopter glides into frame and
begins to descend, through the drifting veils of
snow, down toward the laboratory...

And from off-screen, quietly and gently, Sykes'
voice begins to speak:

SYKES'S VOICE
And then that was that...
(a beat)
(MORE)

SYKES'S VOICE (CONT'D)

And then some government people came on up ta the North Pole, and took a look around, and said to themselves, Yep... In an emergency, this sure would be a hell of a gadget ta have hold of... Sort of as a 'Just-in-Case' button -- for them that needed it -- ta have next ta that other button..." So they made a deal -- and they gave us a little plaque -- sayin' how Mr. Lastie MoJoe was a real hero and everything -- and then the President of the United States and everybody came ta his funeral...

The helicopters and Lastie's laboratory are tiny black specks, lost in the whiteness and we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The large, elegant cemetery that we saw at the beginning of the film is filled again with a crowd of people:

Off to one side -- surrounded by a group of Secret Service MEN -- his hat in his hand as he watches Lastie's coffin being lowered into the ground -- we see the PRESIDENT of the United States.

And by his side, an AIDE stands, quietly and reverently, holding in his hand a little black box, on which we can see two buttons. One of them is a fiery, angry red; the other -- labelled "Buck-and-Wing" -- is a bright, powder-blue.

The CAMERA MOVES, GLIDES FORWARD through the crowds of people who surround the grave:

The little group of identically dressed bright young executives (each of them has only a small, round hole in his front tooth now)...

P.P. Peoria (his dream of eternal life gone now, along with Lastie) surrounded by his gaggle of gorgeous "Just-in-Case" Girls, and Charles, his old and faithful retainer...

Closer to the grave now: Lastie's band of associates -- old and brave and sad -- and Will-Hook -- the saddest and bravest of all...

And among the old people, surrounded by their tears and sweet words of consolation, we see Sykes and Elizabeth... From off-screen, narrating the scene, Sykes' voice continues:

SYKES'S VOICE

...And I was there with my new girl-friend -- and everybody was wantin' ta pat my back and, for a moment or two there, it was like God pinched my heart... But I didn't cry... 'Cause I knew that my Mamma -- (That's what I'll always and forever think of Mr. Lastie MoJoe as) -- had already done what he had ta do. .. and would be real happy and proud ta know that his Buck-and-Wing Effect would live on -- and last forever...

We see the massive granite stone that marks Lastie's grave now. The CAMERA MOVES CLOSER until the little statue atop the column FILLS THE FRAME:

An old man in tap shoes, with his hands spread wide, dancing, and smiling with joy...

SYKES'S VOICE (CONT'D)

...And then the next thing I knew, I was in a room filled up with what seemed ta me a million helium balloons... And she was laughin' and callin' out my name -- and I couldn't find her...

From off-screen -- quietly at first -- we can hear a balloon pop...then another... and another...

And as they pop, the screen begins to darken: POP -- a little darker... POP -- and darker still...

SYKES'S VOICE (CONT'D)

...But I kept on tryin' with all my might -- 'Cause I knew when I did that it surely would be something special...

(MORE)

SYKES'S VOICE (CONT'D)
(a long beat; as the
last light fades)
... And I wasn't lonely any
more...

In the darkness now, a spotlight is turned on. It illuminates, standing there exactly where the statue of the old man tap dancing had been, Lastie himself.

Again: the sound of a balloon popping: and he does a little tap step...POP: and he does another...a "buck-and-wing"...

CREDITS ROLL UP as Lastie continues to dance -- sweetly and gently and perfectly radiant with joy.

THE END