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EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - DAY - 1952

Beyond a boulder painted with the letter "B", lazy waves wash the beach. A distant summer storm rumbles.

A boy HUMS "Happy Birthday" out of tune. RORY, five, shoots marbles behind a 1946 Chevy.

IGNITION.

Rory's focused on a rolling cat's eye.

GEARS ENGAGE.

The boy SCREAMS as the rear tire crushes him!

His father, WILD BILL, thirty-five, lurches from the vehicle! He resembles a moustached Teddy Roosevelt Rough Rider barging up San Juan Hill.

WILD BILL
JESUS CHRIST!

Shaking and teary, he lifts his unconscious son and marches toward the house.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - DAY

Rory's mom SOBS, cradling his bloody head in her apron. BILLIE is thirty, a pretty post-war housewife.

Wild Bill stands tense, austere.

RORY (V.O.)
Wild Bill told me I was lucky that my head sank in sand. That's what saved me. But, I was never the same. They said I was knocked cold for three days, but I remember things.

Brother DARRELL, nine, is BAWLING.

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Like Mom and Darrell crying. Real tears. Nobody ever paid attention to me like that. But not Dad. The lack of remorse always bothered me. You'd think after he'd imprinted Goodyear on the back of my skull he could of, well, lightened up, I guess.

Rory's eyes open.

BILLIE
THEY'LL BE HERE SOON, RORY! HOLD
ON! HOLD ON, RORY! BILL, DO
SOMETHING! GET SOME ICE!

WILD BILL
DON'T WORRY! HE'LL BE ALRIGHT!

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Winter. The icy sea sparkles.

Wild Bill is wearing a robe and slippers. He shoves a giant antique thermometer into the brine.

RORY (V.O.)
Dad was proud of our heritage.
Maybe too proud. You know what they
say about people who talk about
their ancestors. He called us the
"first of the first" - original
Yankee settlers in Rhode Island.
1638 to be exact. He told us we
came from a long line of sturdy,
resourceful people.

Bill takes a long pull from a silver flask, carefully caps it, drops his robe and plunges into the frigid ocean!

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
You'd never know it by looking at
him.

Wild Bill bursts from the rime! He's blue, shivering, groping for the robe.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Summer. Seagulls SCREAM. Fair-haired COUSINS play beachball in the ocean while adult SNOBS orchestrate a picnic.

Rory has a bandage on his head. His family is huddled in a pack when the queen of the brood approaches. AUNT MABEL is an aged, contemptuous blue-blood.

RORY (V.O.)
Some of Dad's family managed to
keep the old money.

AUNT MABEL
Would you care for a toe-mah-toe,
young man?

RORY
A what?

DARRELL
I think she means tomato.

RORY
Oh, no thanks.

Rory offers Darrell a bag of potato chips.

RORY (cont'd)
Poe-tah-toe chip, young man?

Billie hides her eyes from Wild Bill's HORSELAUGH.

Mabel's nose rises as if a plebeian odor has fouled it.

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Yeah, they had airs alright. We
could never measure up. But, Dad's
"other people" didn't know what
"airs" were.

INT. AUNT NELL'S HOUSE - DAY - THANKSGIVING

The table's a mess. Turkey bones and dirty dishes.

Wild Bill's RELATIVES are drinking, loud, carrying on.

AUNT NELL heads the table, ninety-four, oblivious, with a
glass of beer in front of her.

RORY (V.O.)
Dad's real family came over on the
Mayflower. The Billingtons. I
didn't learn 'till later that they
were scoundrels. John Billington
was the first person in the New
Colony to be executed for murder.
"Drawn and Quartered" Dad'd yell!
Wild Bill was real proud of that
one.

AUNT NELL
"She's got rings on her fingers,
bells on her toes, she's got
elephants to ride upon..."

WILD BILL
AUNT NELL! DRINK SOME OF THAT BEER!

AUNT NELL
WHAT?

WILD BILL
HAVE SOME BEER!

AUNT NELL
BEER? GODDAMNIT, THE CRAP TASTES
LIKE HORSE PISS TO ME!

WILD BILL
HOW DO YOU KNOW, AUNT NELL? YOU
BEEN DRINKIN' FROM THE WRONG SPIGOT
IN THE BARN AGAIN?

The raucous HOWLS don't register with the old woman.

Rory squeezes his crotch to keep from wetting his pants.

INT. MAM HOLLEY'S HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Wild Bill's family sits with folded hands on an antique sofa.

Under a picture of Jesus, MAM HOLLEY, seventy-two, plays "The Old Rugged Cross" on an upright piano.

RORY (V.O.)
Then we'd have to go see my
mother's people.

CHURCH-TYPE RELATIVES eat pie, careful not to spill crumbs.

MAM HOLLEY
(quavering warble)
"In that old rugged cross, stained
with blood so divine, a wondrous
beauty I see..."

RORY
Mam Holley, can I please have a
Coke from the icebox?

MAM HOLLEY
It's "may" I. And the answer is no.
You had one the last time you were
here.

RORY
But, that was last summer!

MAM HOLLEY
Do you want your teeth to rot out?

Rory glares at her.

MAM HOLLEY (cont'd)
"For 'twas on that old cross Jesus
suffered and died, to pardon and
sanctify me."

RORY
I hope you drop dead.

The crone SLAMS the piano shut!

MAM HOLLEY
BILLIE, TAKE THIS BOY HOME! YOU,
BOY! YOU'RE GOING TO BURN IN HELL!

Rory's quivering.

EXT. SEASIDE HILL - DAY - 1956

Wind whips off the ocean. Rory, now nine, strikes a wooden
kitchen match, but can't connect with Darrell's Lucky Strike.

The match burns Rory's fingers and he drops it.

RORY (V.O.)
I still don't know if that old
bitch was for real or full of it.

The brush ignites and the boys stomp on it, then flail their
coats, but it only fans the flames!

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Life was scary for me, lots of
fear, then bursts of energy. None
of it made any sense.

A massive fire CRACKLES!

The boys flee the wall of flames!

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Then, bingo, it was handed to me.
Free. Right out of nowhere. I
dreamed I could play music.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rory's sleepwalking, groping. He sits at the piano, closes his eyes and plays beautifully.

RORY

"Love me tender, love me sweet,
never let me go. You have made my
life complete, and I love you so.
Love me tender, love me true, all
my dreams fulfilled. For my darlin'
I love you, and I always will.

Mom's eavesdropping, amazed, adoring, then misty.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, BASEMENT - DAY

"Hound Dog" THUNDERS from a record player. The 45rpm disc revolves under a poster of a wild, contorted Elvis.

Rory squirms and twists, strumming a ukelele. He wears a roomy black leather jacket and sports a greased ducktail.

RORY (V.O.)

It started with Elvis. I loved the
guy. I wanted to be like him. And I
figured I had the right start in
life - a born rebel.

Rory's a tornado, whirling, leaping!

BILLIE (O.C.)

RORY! RORY! TURN THAT DOWN! THE
DISHES ARE GOING TO BREAK!

He stops, then goes back at it, strutting, twirling!

BILLIE (O.C.) (cont'd)

TURN THAT STUFF OFF BEFORE I COME
DOWN THERE AND SPANK YOU!

He shuts the record down and tosses the disc on the sofa.

RORY (V.O.)

But sometimes it was hard being a
rebel.

He gazes into a mirror and creates the Elvis sneer.

Darrel bounds down the stairs, stocky, out of breath!

Rory plops on the sofa, cracking "Hound Dog" into pieces, quickly pretending it didn't happen.

DARRELL
HEY, CLARABELL, WHERE'S MY "HOUND
DOG" RECORD?

RORY
I don't know.

DARRELL
COME ON, RORY! Tommy's sister is
going to show her tits for it! It
was right here this morning! Where
is it?

Darrell spots a broken piece under Rory's butt.

DARRELL (cont'd)
WHAT'S THIS?

He jerks his little brother off the sofa!

DARRELL (cont'd)
OH, SHIT! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO
NOW? MAN OH MAN, I WISH DAD HAD
NEVER SCRAMBLED YOUR BRAINS. MA!
HEY, MA! CAN I HAVE FIFTY CENTS? HE
BROKE MY "HOUND DOG"!

Darrell bolts up the stairs then stops.

DARRELL (cont'd)
I'm going to have to beat you up
later.

Billie descends, frazzled, wearing a dirty apron.

BILLIE
DARRELL! YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO
TAKE FROM THE PENNY JAR! What's the
matter with you?

RORY
I got Elvis in me.

BILLIE
BEND OVER!

They chase each other, cat and mouse, knocking over chairs!

RORY (V.O.)
 She didn't want me to be like Wild
 Bill. I guess Ma figured one rebel
 in the house was enough.

Billie catches him and SMACKS him on the ass. They tumble to
 the sofa, winded, giggling, and she tickles him crazy!

EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - DAY

The wind HOWLS! Salt spray and foam pelt Rory as he dumps a
 keg of nails, spreading them along a path to the heaving sea.

RORY (V.O.)
 But even with Elvis in me, there
 were always forces out of control.
 Sometimes I figured I could
 regulate things.

The screen door SLAMS! Wild Bill struts out, carrying a
 bottle of whiskey, followed by a confused Darrell in trunks.

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Like when Wild Bill went swimming.

WILD BILL
 LET'S GO, BOYS! WE'VE GOT TO CATCH
 HER BEFORE SHE LAYS DOWN!

Wild Bill plods over the nails in bare feet, oblivious.

RORY (V.O.)
 The problem was he only swam in
 hurricanes and regulation never
 worked.

Darrell minces down the path while Rory dogs behind.

EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

The sun shines; but the sea's rough. A .22 caliber rifle is
 propped up against the '46 Chevy, now covered with dents.

A row of empty whiskey bottles line the fence posts.

Wild Bill dispenses bullets to his sons, wet from the swim.

WILD BILL
 We're in the eye now, boys, so you
 have to make it quick.
 (MORE)

WILD BILL(cont'd)
When you're done shooting I'll let
you drive the car.

Darrell's grinning until Dad hands the keys to Rory, but
pulls back at the last second.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Hold it. Look, no more accidents,
you got it? Your mother can't
handle it.

Bill then hands the keys to Darrell, the rifle to Rory.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Hold a gun safe, like there's
bullets coming out all the time.

Rory FIRES the gun by mistake!

WILD BILL (cont'd)
JESUS CHRIST ALMIGHTY!

Darrell's laughing, but Rory's stunned.

RORY (V.O.)
Even the things I could control, I
couldn't control.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

A Halloween party. Rory's trio plays MUSIC for STUDENTS,
PARENTS and TEACHERS, most wearing 1950's costumes.

Darrell's dejected, BANGING a drum, too old for this. He's in
red, made-up like a Devil with aluminum foil horns.

A tiny girl stands on a chair PLUCKING a washtub bass. SUTZIE
GARDNER's in a Black-eyed Susan get-up. She's fixed on Rory,
TINKLING the piano in green tights, dressed as Robin Hood.

RORY
"Be-bop-a-lula she's my baby, Be-
bop-a-lula I don't mean maybe, Be-
bop-a-lula she's my baby, Be-bop-a-
lula I don't mean maybe."

Costumed GIRLS surround the piano, gawking at Rory with open
mouths and dreamy eyes.

RORY (cont'd)
"Be-bop-a-lula she's my baby love,
my baby love, my baby love."

The song ends and Rory's embarrassed, scratching his tights. The girls CLAP and he counters with an Elvis sneer.

Little Sutzie falls off her chair!

Robin Hood comes to the rescue.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Melting snow on the ground. Rory's cross-legged under the American Flag, playing marbles in the mud.

The 1946 Chevy wheels in.

He runs to the car, but his excitement turns to fear when he see's his mother and his brother with frozen expressions.

INT. CHEVY - DAY

Rory slowly climbs in the back seat, packed with suitcases and bags. Billie and Darrell remain still, eyes fixed.

RORY
Where's Dad?

BILLIE
Rory, we have to move. Dad's going to stay in the house. He wanted to give you something. He couldn't, ah, look under the blanket.

A guitar rests under the Army wool.

RORY
Dad's not coming with us?

Darrell holds back tears and shakes his head "no".

As the car pulls away, Rory peers out the rear window.

A tear lands on the guitar.

EXT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE - DAY - 1962

Suburbia. A handsome Italian, TONY, thirty-three, finishes painting his name on a mailbox: Gianfrancesco.

Billie watches Tony from the front steps. Her arm's on Rory's shoulder, now sixteen and skeptical.

BILLIE

Go talk to him, Rory. He's a nice guy. Tony knows he's not going to replace your father.

TONY

MAGGY? CAN YOU GET THE THINNER IN THE BASEMENT?

RORY

How come he's got to call you "Maggy"?

BILLIE

He doesn't like "Billie". Now go on.

She gently pushes Rory, then retreats inside.

Tony wipes paint from his shoe, careful to get every bit.

RORY

That's longer than Mississippi.

TONY

What? Oh. It's an old name. Goes back before Caesar.

RORY

Neat. I thought our family had some history.

TONY

You could put your name on there if you wanted to.

RORY

No. I don't think it would fit.

Tony finishes wiping.

TONY

You want to clean up?

RORY

Ah, okay.

TONY

Your mother says you're quite a guitar player.

RORY
Oh, yeah. At least I think I'm
getting better.

Rory presses the lid on the paint can.

A new car pulls up. Wild Bill's driving. A duffel bag hits
the ground and Darrell emerges in Navy whites.

RORY (cont'd)
HEY, DAD! HEY, DARRELL!

Wild Bill glares at Tony, who turns away.

Darrell throws his bag back in the car and jumps in.

DARRELL
I CAN'T DO THIS, RORY!

A tormented Wild Bill slowly rolls away.

RORY
HEY, DAD! STOP!

Rory runs after them.

WILD BILL
I'm sorry. I can't come here, Rory.

DARRELL
ME NEITHER!

RORY
BUT...!

They leave Rory holding a can of paint.

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Right then and there I figured I
was on my own. The only fix was to
grab onto the only thing I really
knew.

EXT. COUNTRY FAIR - DAY

Rory flatpicks "Wildwood Flower" on his guitar.

He's accompanied by two teens: ALAN, on mandolin, and JEFF,
on banjo. They're performing on a flat-bed truck decorated
with hay bales, pumpkins and Indian corn.

Pot-bellied, overalled FARMERS dance with their chunky WIVES.

Grubby KIDS dart amongst scattering chickens.

Rory finishes the instrumental. A faux cowboy nears. Plenty of sequins and embroidery. FREDDY ZACK, fifty, is plastered with pancake make-up and black hair dye.

FREDDY ZACK

I like your sound, kid. You know who I am?

RORY

Yes, sir. Freddy Zack. I'm Rory.

FREDDY ZACK

Pleased to know you. You got all your chords learned?

RORY

Yes, sir. I know the majors, the sevenths, the minors. I got some leads worked out and I'm...

FREDDY ZACK

Good, good. How old are you?

RORY

I'm, ah, eighteen.

FREDDY ZACK

You sure?

RORY

Ah, yeah.

FREDDY ZACK

You think you could handle a guitar-playin' job while Cousin Roy dries out at the drunk farm?

RORY

I, ah, yeah, I think so.

FREDDY ZACK

Your boys here won't mind?

RORY

No, sir, I'm, ah, the front man.

FREDDY ZACK

The front man, huh?

RORY (V.O.)
 I was the front man, alright. Just
 like Freddy Zack - the local "King
 of Country Radio". I sure hoped I
 wasn't looking at my future.

Zack dabs his sweaty cosmetics with a bandanna.

INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

Rory strums his guitar under a ten-gallon hat. He's wearing a green, heavy suede jacket - stapled, not stitched.

The Zack band consists of Freddy on mandolin, three buckaroo SIDEMEN (fiddle, bass and drums), and two OLD BROADS with fringe vests and fancy boots. Freddy and the Broads must spend a fortune on make-up.

Drunk NAVY SWABBIES close-dance with LOOSE WOMEN smeared with red lipstick and black eye shadow.

FREDDY ZACK
 "When tears come down, like fallin'
 rain, you'll toss around, and call
 my name. You'll walk the floor, the
 way I do, your cheatin' heart, will
 tell on you."

APPLAUSE. Rory sips from a bottle of Narragansett beer.

FREDDY ZACK (cont'd)
 Kid, the strongest thing we're
 drinkin' this month is coffee.
 Cousin Roy'll be back soon enough.

Rory sets the beer aside.

The Old Broads grin with leathery jaws.

OLD BROAD ONE
 You're hot tonight, kiddo.

RORY
 Thanks.

He removes the ten-gallon hat.

OLD BROAD ONE
 What kind of jacket is that?

OLD BROAD TWO
 It's nice.

RORY
It's a, ah, welder's coat. My
brother kind of took it from the
Navy figurin' it would make me look
older.

OLD BROAD TWO
Can I touch it?

RORY
Sure.

OLD BROAD TWO
Nice.

OLD BROAD ONE
You must get a lot of girls, hey
pardner?

A handsome, young Navy Sailor strolls by.

RORY
Ah, yeah, yeah, I get my share, I
guess.

The sailor winks at Rory. He bristles.

OLD BROAD ONE
Take it easy, kiddo. You meet all
kinds in the music business.

Two burly SHORE PATROL police enter twirling blackjacks. They
spot Rory sneaking a beer into his stolen welder's jacket.

SHORE PATROL ONE
HEY! You got your I.D.?

Rory stalls, so the military cop searches him.

OLD BROAD ONE
What's wrong? He's with us.

SHORE PATROL ONE
What's this? A driver's permit?
What are you, about sixteen, kid?

SHORE PATROL TWO
Where'd you get the jacket?

SHORE PATROL ONE
Come on, buddy. Let's go.

The S.P. grabs Rory's arm.

RORY
I can't leave my guitar here!

OLD BROAD TWO
You can't take him!

SHORE PATROL ONE
Step outside! Come on!

FREDDY ZACK
Howdy, boys! What's the matter?
He's my guitar player tonight.

SHORE PATROL ONE
Sorry, Mr. Zack. He's underage.

SHORE PATROL TWO
And he's got Navy property that
don't belong to him!

FREDDY ZACK
Come on, boys. One more set. We'll
be gone by one.

SHORE PATROL ONE
Sorry, Mr. Zack.

FREDDY ZACK
Come on! We're all havin' a good
time!

SHORE PATROL ONE
Sorry!

Rory resists and they drag him out.

RORY
DON'T FORGET MY GUITAR! MY MOTHER
WILL COME AND GET IT!

The pickled swabbies HOOT!

INT. CIVILIAN POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Red-eyed Rory is rumpled, gripping the bars.

In the corridor, Tony fumes as he deals with a brush-cut
DETECTIVE in a suit.

TONY
He told us he was going to the
library every night!

DETECTIVE

Well, you know these kids. And this music. They got a new thing now, the bugs, the beetles, I don't know what it is. My daughter's a mess.

TONY

Why can't they appreciate Sinatra, you know? Tony Bennett. That's real music!

DETECTIVE

You got me.

He scans the paperwork.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

Okay, Mr. Gee-ah...

TONY

Gianfrancesco.

DETECTIVE

Yes, sir, I, ah, can release the boy into your custody, and,...

TONY

What these kids need is a real job, you know? These kids today don't know how to work!

Two HOOKERS sashay by.

Rory catches mom's new boyfriend checking them out.

RORY (V.O.)

Forces were beyond my control again.

He pukes.

EXT. MANSION LAWN - DAY

Rory's sweating, sweeping grass clippings off a walkway.

Tony's cousin MARIO smokes a cigar as he pushes a CHUGGING lawn mower. He's beefy, hairy, with connected eyebrows.

MARIO

HIT IT! HIT IT! HIT IT! SHE'S HAVIN' A PARRTTEEEE!

RORY
Oh, God.

MARIO
GET THEM COUPLE A TREE SHRUBS! JEW
DO DA DRIVEWAY?

Rory pretends he's deaf.

MARIO (cont'd)
HEY! LISTEN TO ME! NEXT TIME YOUSE
COME TO WORK, YOUSE BRING A RAIN
COAT, SO IF YOUSE CATCH AN IN-
BETWEEN SHOWER, YOUSE CAN CHANGE!
YOU UNNERSTAN' ME? HEY! COME'MERE!

Mario idles the mower.

RORY
WHAT? I mean, what?

MARIO
Unnerstan' I'm tryin' to do my
cousin Tony a favor by havin' youse
work here. Youse were late today. I
don't wanna hear no excuses.

RORY
Mario, I had to...

MARIO
No excuses!

RORY
Okay! I get it!

He continues sweeping.

MARIO
HEY! What's your excuse?

The broom handle SNAPS!

MARIO (cont'd)
HO! JESUS MOTHER MARY IN HEAVEN! I
CAN'T HAVE THIS! DAT'S DA SECOND
TOOL YOUSE BROKE!

RORY
WILL YOU QUIT YELLIN'! WHAT ARE YOU
YELLIN' ABOUT ALL THE TIME?

MARIO
I NEED A HUMAN BEIN'! DAT'S WHAT
I'M YELLIN' ABOUT!

Rory poses with the broken broom like a guitar.

RORY
I can make more money playin' music
than this shit!

MARIO
MUSIC? YOUSE DUNNO WHAT MUSIC IS!
GO GET ME THE CULIVATOR. I GOT TO
CULIVATE!

RORY
I gotta go, Mario.

MARIO
YOU LEAVIN'? GOOD! AND YOUSE STAY
AWAY FROM MY DAUGHTER, YOU JICKEY
BASTARD!

Rory threatens with the broom, then thinks better of it.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Underwear hangs off a guitar neck. Rory's in bed, humping a
girl, her face hidden by the covers.

Outside, tires CRUSH a shell driveway.

Mario's daughter ROSE pops up! She's sixteen, chubby, buxom,
with eyebrows like her father.

RORY
What's wrong?

ROSE
My father's home!

Rory leaps out of bed, struggles with his jeans and dives out
the window.

Naked Rose shoves the guitar and underwear under the bed. She
covers herself with a sheet.

KNOCK, KNOCK.

ROSE (cont'd)
Yeah?

Mario lumbers in, chewing his cigar, searching, as if he's done this before. He sees Rory's shoes.

ROSE (cont'd)
Cousin Sorzio came over for a swim.
I let him change in here.

MARIO
Remember what I told youse about
the crabs?

ROSE
Yes, Poppa.

MARIO
The only crabs I wanna see around
here are them blueshells we get at
the fish market. You got that?

ROSE
Yes, Poppa.

MARIO
Where's your mother? I'm hungry.

ROSE
She left some ravioli in the
fridge.

Mario looks around one more time and exits.

Rory peeks in the window. Rose hands him the guitar and his shoes and he runs off. She's left holding the underwear.

EXT. NAVY BASE - NIGHT

A sign enshrouded in fog: Groton Naval Submarine Base.

Rory scales a lofty chain-link fence topped by three taught strands of barbed wire. He vaults over, ripping the seat of pants, exposing his white ass.

He tumbles to the ground and escapes into the mist.

EXT. SUBMARINE - NIGHT

Distant FOG HORNS.

The pea soup clears enough to reveal the deck of the U.S.S. Skate. Rory's creeps along the top.

He peers into an open hatch.

A .45 Caliber revolver pops out!

MILITARY POLICEMAN (O.C.)
WHO GOES THERE?

The MILITARY POLICEMAN emerges.

RORY
Whoa! Sorry! It's just me, I'm...

MILITARY POLICEMAN
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOIN'?
THERE'S A COLD WAR GOIN' ON, BUDDY!
I COULD'VE BLOWN YOUR HEAD OFF!

RORY
I'm Darrell's brother.

The M.P. lowers his weapon and smiles.

MILITARY POLICEMAN
Darrell's brother? You the guy that
plays guitar?

RORY
Yeah. I'm Rory.

MILITARY POLICEMAN
Well, come on in, Rory! It's
goddamn cold out here!

Rory's trapdoor falls open.

RORY
I know.

He holds the flap with one hand as he descends.

INT. SUBMARINE - NIGHT

Darrell, fellow SAILORS and the M.P. lounge on torpedoes,
eating shrimp, sipping beer, listening to Rory play a
borrowed guitar. SAILOR ONE sews Rory's bluejeans.

RORY

"Oh, yeah, I'm the type of guy that likes to roam around, I'm never in one place, I roam from town to town, and when I find myself, fallin' for some girl, I hop right into that car of mine, and drive around the world, 'cause I'm the wanderer, yeah, the wanderer, I roam around around around around."

The Sailors APPLAUD!

SAILORS

Yeah! Alright! Yeah, man!

SAILOR ONE

Man, you're good!

SAILOR TWO

Where do you play, Rory?

RORY

Dances, stuff like that.

SAILOR THREE

Remember us when you get big!

DARRELL

Hey, Rory, you know I'm gettin' out?

SAILOR THREE

Yeah, son-of-a-bitch.

SAILORS

BA-RELL! BA-RELL! BA-RELL!

DARRELL

Last time we dove my ears popped. Blood came out. THEY'RE LETTIN' ME OUT!

MILITARY POLICEMAN

Quiet!

They hush and hide the beer. The M.P. peeks out.

MILITARY POLICEMAN (cont'd)

Alright. I thought it was Grabowski.

SAILOR TWO

Fuck him.

DARRELL

These crazy bastards don't care if Khrushchev comes aboard.

SAILOR ONE

He can bring Castro with him for all I care. Play some more, Rory!

MILITARY POLICEMAN

No, no. We got to clean up here.

SAILORS

Oh, man. Okay, Mommy. Come on.

DARRELL

Rory.

RORY

What?

DARRELL

I'm gonna live with Dad when I get out. It'll be cool. Why don't you come?

RORY (V.O.)

The invitation was a Godsend. School wasn't for me, and I really needed to get away from those crazy Italians. Most of all, I had to get my career jump-started. I was playin' music and I felt like I was finally goin' places.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Overcast sky. Rory finishes a guitar instrumental, "Walk, Don't Run", with former sidemen Alan and Jeff. HERBIE, the drummer, has "The Passing Tymes" written on his bass drum.

They are set up at the end of the midway, far from the Ferris Wheel and Dodge 'Em cars, performing for a sparse CROWD.

A tall, boyish, MASTER OF CEREMONIES is bored under his top hat and wrinkled tux.

Rory hits the last note, then fixes on a GIRL IN THE AUDIENCE. She's brown-eyed blond knockout.

WEAK APPLAUSE. The M.C. grabs the microphone.

M.C.
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! THE PASSING
TIDES!

RORY
It's times. The Passing Tymes. With
a "y".

M.C.
Yeah, okay. THE PASSING TYMES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! WITH A "Y"!

A few LAUGHS and CLAPS.

M.C. (cont'd)
THEY'LL BE BACK AT FIVE! GREAT JOB,
BOYS! NOW, DON'T FORGET ABOUT OUR
LIVE SHOW AT THE OPPOSITE END OF
THE MIDWAY. ONCE IN A LIFETIME
CURIOSITIES AND WONDERMENTS! JUST
TWO BITS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, TWO
THIN QUARTERS FOR THE MOST
MYSTERIOUS, INDESCRIBABLE SIGHTS
EVER ASSEMBLED IN ONE PLACE! THREE
O'CLOCK! YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS IT!

The Girl in The Audience approaches Rory.

SUTZIE
You're really good.

RORY
Thanks.

SUTZIE
Do you still sing?

RORY
Sure, I'll be singing next set. So,
you've heard us before?

SUTZIE
You don't remember me.

RORY
I don't think so. I'd remember you.

SUTZIE
We went to grade school together. I
even played in your band, Robin
Hood.

Sutzie's smiling, but Rory still doesn't get it.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
I'm Sutzie. You don't remember me?

RORY
Oh, man! You fell off your chair!
You're the girl that played the
washtub!

SUTZIE
I was faking! I just kind of pulled
at the wire.

THUNDER RUMBLES.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
You just disappeared from school
one day, and I never saw you again.

RORY
Wow. Yeah. My, ah, my parents got
divorced. I had to go with my
mother. Hey, I'm gonna come back
and stay with my Dad!

SUTZIE
You going to the Folk Festival?

RORY
That's all I been thinkin' about!

Awkward silence.

SUTZIE
Maybe I'll see you there.

It begins to drizzle.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
I confess. I heard you were playing
here today.

Rory clams-up.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
Okay, then. Take it easy.

RORY
Boy, you sure changed!

He looks her over. Now Sutzie's stuck.

SUTZIE

Okay, then. Nice to see you, Rory.
Take, take it easy.

Beautiful Sutzie walks away.

Rory's crestfallen, hanging on every step. He then becomes alarmed and runs after her.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK TENT, FREAK SHOW - LATER

Sutzie and Rory pass NICOTINE NICK, a gaunt Abraham Lincoln look-alike in a top hat. He's smoking a PALL MALL beside a black plywood coffin brimming with cigarette butts.

Next is LIZARD WOMAN, a lipstick-smeared crone with a pint of vodka. She unbuttons her green-sequinned blouse, revealing a layer of encrusted psoriasis.

Lizard Woman slaps a fly on her scaly thigh, places it on her yellowed tongue and swallows it like fine caviar.

Sutzie pulls Rory, but he urges her on.

They walk by ELEPHANT WOMAN, propped up on two chairs. Her black, tree trunk legs are anchored by massive pink feet, toenails the size of poker chips.

ELEPHANT WOMAN

I was born in nineteen-thirty-two
outside Durham, North Carolina to
normal parents. My sisters were all
normal, as was my brother. All
normal.

Elephant Woman lifts her skirt, exposing a massive, pitted thigh, pockmarked from elephantiasis.

SUTZIE

Oh, God.

Rory can't look either.

RORY

Okay, okay. Ugh. Let's just see
what this, then we'll go.

They wander on to a midget hawker, HEEBIE JEEBIE, four foot tall with an enormous cranium.

Heebie's backdrop is a painted canvas depicting animal freaks of nature: a six-legged cow, a two-headed sheep, and a pig "too weird for words".

HEEBIE JEEBIE

Fifty-cents, folks. Two bits. The most fantastic oddities of nature ever assembled on the face of the Earth. One thin dollar will show you and your girl things unimaginable.

RORY

Let's do it.

SUTZIE

No. It's too creepy.

RORY

Come on.

Rory pays and Sutzie scuffs along.

INT. AMUSEMENT PARK TENT, FREAK SHOW - DAY

A two-headed sheep BLEATS in intervals. Rory dances to the beat as Sutzie holds her nose - the stall's not mucked-out.

RORY

I could make a song out of that.

SUTZIE

Stop it!

A cow with six legs is munching hay.

SUTZIE (cont'd)

Oh, no! That's disgusting!

A sign hangs above a lone pig in a pen: "God broke the mold when He made this porker".

Heebie Jeebie waddles up and climbs in with the pig.

SUTZIE (cont'd)

This place really stinks, Rory. Can we go?

RORY

Yeah, alright.

HEEBIE JEEBIE
Allow me to reveal to you the
Eighth Wonder of the Universe.

Sutzie tugs Rory's arm.

RORY
Wait, Sutz. Just a second.

Heebie Jeebie lifts the pig's hind. SQUEAL!

HEEBIE JEEBIE
This here pig is one of the
weirdest specimens known to man.
Look closely. Here you have, in
descending order, an anus, a vagina
pussy, a penis, and a testicle sac
holding one pig ball.

SUTZIE
Oh, Rory! I'll be outside! This is
perverted!

She bolts!

RORY
WAIT! HOLD ON! Geez, I don't get
it.

HEEBIE JEEBIE
You'll never understand women, kid.

RORY
No, I mean what makes this the
Eighth Wonder of the World?

HEEBIE JEEBIE
Don't you see, buddy? This pig is
the only mammal on Earth that can
doodle itself!

RORY
Man! I paid a dollar for this?

HEEBIE JEEBIE
Hey, ain't you with the band?

RORY
Yeah.

HEEBIE JEEBIE
What's your name?

RORY
Passing Tymes.

HEEBIE JEEBIE
No, your name.

RORY
Rory.

HEEBIE JEEBIE
Rory? I'm Heebie Jeebie. Listen,
that Passing Tymes thing is too
bizarre. T.Y.M.E.S. That shit is
out.

RORY
Bizarre? How about Heebie Jeebie?

HEEBIE JEEBIE
You think that's my real name? It's
made up for show business. I'm
Herbert Henry Matney. Boring, huh?
But, everybody knows Heebie Jeebie
alright! Coast to coast on buttered
toast, baby. And you're playin' old
shit! You better get with it. If
you want to be in show biz, kid,
you better get yourself a name.

A flash, then deafening THUNDER!

HEEBIE JEEBIE (cont'd)
WOOO! YEAH, MAN! THAT'S GOD TALKIN'
TO YOU, MAN! GOD JUST SPOKE TO RORY
THUNDER!

Rory's pushes his temples, astonished.

RORY
I've got to go play! I've got to
find Sutzie!

HEEBIE JEEBIE
HA! HA! HA!

He bolts for the exit!

HEEBIE JEEBIE (cont'd)
RORY THUNDER! REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAW
HERE! DON'T GO SCREWIN' YOURSELF!
HA! HA! HA! HA!

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK TENT, FREAK SHOW - DAY

Heavy downpour! The M.C. under the top hat guards the entrance with a transistor radio in his ear. Rory bursts out, but is halted by the heavy rain!

RORY
Did you see a girl come out here a few minutes ago?

M.C.
Lot's of girls come out here.

RORY
I'm talkin' about that girl I was with! That beautiful blond girl!

M.C.
I'm listening to the radio!

RORY
YOU WERE STANDING HERE WEREN'T YOU?

M.C.
LOOK, PASSING TIDE. YESTERDAY THEY KILLED SOME GUY DOWN IN MISSISSIPPI BECAUSE HIS SKIN AIN'T WHITE AND A MONK SET HIMSELF ON FIRE IN SOME SHITHOLE CALLED SAIGON! THE WHOLE WORLD'S GOING NUTS AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT SOME STUPID GIRL AND WHETHER YOUR GUITAR'S IN TUNE! GET OUT OF HERE!

Rory tenses, ready to fight, then runs off dodging puddles.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Heavy rain! Rory's soaked, running, searching concession booths, games, rattletrap rides.

He finds Sutzie with cotton candy, sheltered, dry, smiling.

RORY
I'm sorry! I'm sorry, Sutzie!

SUTZIE
It's okay. I'm fine.

RORY
I'll never do that again. Okay?

SUTZIE
It's alright. Want some cotton
candy?

Rory doesn't hear. His eyes well-up with tears.

RORY
I thought I lost you.

SUTZIE
You didn't lose me. I was right
here waiting for you.

He blinks, holding back the tears, until she realizes they
aren't raindrops. They embrace.

EXT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Billie, stoic but trembling, helps Rory load his jalopy.

Tony appears at the door, glances about for neighbor
reaction, then withdraws inside.

Mother and son hug before Rory pulls away. Billie sobs,
gazing at the car, then at the house, then back at the car.

The door SLAMS. Tony broaches.

TONY
It's okay, Maggy. He doesn't want
to go to school; he doesn't want to
work. He 's got to learn the hard
way. I just hope he finds something
before these Kennedy's ruin the
whole country.

Tony scans the neighborhood before escorting her inside.

EXT. NEWPORT BOULEVARD - DAY

The sidewalks teem with BEATNIKS, STUDENTS and FOLKIES
lugging blankets, pillows, guitars, banjos and bongos.

OLD BLACK MEN with name tags play BLUES MUSIC on the park
benches, surrounded by young WHITE ADMIRERS. The tags read:
SON HOUSE, MEMPHIS SLIM and REV. GARY DAVIS. Their shoes have
holes, the guitar cases are worn, but the instruments shine.

Rory holds his guitar, on a bench with MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT,
a blood-shot, wrinkled sixty-five. Hurt picks "Candy Man".

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT
 "Well, come all you ladies, gather
 'round, the good sweet candy man's
 in town. He's the candy man, sweet
 candy man."

Rory attempts to play along, but flubs it. Hurt stops.

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT (cont'd)
 Here. Try it like this.

The blues man's long fingers caress the guitar neck. Rory
 lights up - he gets it! They pick together.

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT (cont'd)
 "Well, hey there candy man, you
 gettin' mighty slick, mmm-hmm, you
 must be stuck on the candy stick,
 mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm." That's it boy.
 You learn quick.

Hurt hands him a bottle wrapped in a paper bag. Rory gulps a
 couple slugs and hands it back.

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT (cont'd)
 Yeah, boy. You sure do learn quick.

EXT. NEWPORT BOULEVARD - THE NEXT MORNING

Thick mist. FOG HORNS MOAN.

CONCERT FANS sleep under trees, mummies in blankets, circled
 by the garbage of the night before.

Rory rubs his eyes, slumped on the same bench he shared with
 Mississippi John. The bottle's tipped; his guitar's dewy.

A young man appears through the haze, smoking a cigarette.
 BOB DYLAN doesn't look much older than Rory with his tousled
 hair and smooth face. Dylan wears a denim workshirt and has a
 bullwhip wrapped around his shoulder.

Rory wipes his guitar.

BOB DYLAN
 You know how to play that thing?

RORY
 I'm tryin'. I'm tryin' folk music,
 but the blues is what I feel. I got
 that Elvis thing in me.

BOB DYLAN
Ha, ha, ha! Me, too, man!

Rory stares long and hard at Dylan.

BOB DYLAN (cont'd)
Choose your idols well, man.

Dylan drops a guitar pick before he melts into the mist.

EXT. NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL - NIGHT

The CROWD gathered around the Narragansett Beer tent BUZZES - there's electricity in the air!

A sign reads: Welcome to the Newport Folk Festival.

Rory cuts through the THRONG, lost, grasping a blanket and guitar, a refugee disconnected from the middle-class fans.

Sutzie appears in front of him, radiant in a white outfit.

SUTZIE
Come on! Dylan's going to play!

Through the smoky air, she leads him down an aisle packed with anxious FANS. Sutzie's so pretty that the crowd parts. They reach the stage and kneel.

APPLAUSE and HOLLERS as an ANNOUNCER appears at the mic.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, Bob Dylan.

LOUDER APPLAUSE, HOOTS, HOLLERS! Dylan ambles up with an acoustic guitar and harmonica around his neck.

Rory's stunned!

BOB DYLAN
"Oh my name, it ain't nothin', my age it means less."

RORY
That's the guy I met this morning!

BOB DYLAN
"The country I come from, is called the Midwest. I's taught and brought up there, the laws to abide. And that the land that I live in, has God on its side."

Rory's dazed, as if he's encountered his Messiah.

Sutzie leans in and gives him a kiss. Dylan sees it, flashes a quick smile, but Rory's paralyzed.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The seaside home is now a bachelor pad with a built-in television, wet bar and dirty clothes.

Darrell beats a drum. Rory plays solitaire. Both sip beer.

Wild Bill mixes a drink.

WILD BILL

I had a dream last night. I was planting potatoes with JFK. I couldn't believe it was him. He had on a bright white shirt, kneeling in the dirt, planting potatoes. I looked down and saw he was actually placing marshmallows in the furrows.

Laughter!

WILD BILL (cont'd)

So, I figure, now wait a minute, this guy is the President of the United States, he must know what he's doing. So, we're going along, I put in a potato, he puts in a marshmallow, potato, marshmallow, and he turns to me and says, "you know, Bill," I can't do the accent, "you know, Bill, the beauty of this thing is that when they come up, the bag's already on 'em!"

More laughter, then Wild Bill sobers.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

Did you make arrangements with school about the make-up time?

RORY

No, I, I forgot about it.

WILD BILL

Rory, you should be...

RORY

Dad, we practice every day!

WILD BILL

You've got to have something to fall back on in case this music thing doesn't work out. At least get your diploma.

DARRELL

Why don't you join the Navy and get your ears blown out? You'll be set for life.

RORY

I am set for life. I'm gonna make it. We're gonna make it.

WILD BILL

And you shouldn't be drinking beer.

RORY

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE RULES ALL OF A SUDDEN? MAN, THIS IS WHY I LEFT MA'S HOUSE!

WILD BILL

Don't call me "man". Please, Rory. If she ever finds out you're drinking here she'll kill me.

RORY

Boy, you sure have changed!

He flings the playing cards!

RORY (cont'd)

And Ma won't kill you, Dad! Believe me, she's not even interested!

Wild Bill grips his drink and glares at the ocean.

INT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Billie vacuums wearing a robe and slippers, her hair in rollers, tied in a scarf.

Rory peeks in the open front door.

RORY

MA!

BILLIE

Rory! God, you scared the bejesus
out of me!

RORY

Sorry!

BILLIE

My heart's going a million miles an
hour!

RORY

Ma, I'm sorry! I should call first,
I guess. Geez. Look, I want you to
meet someone.

Sutzie enters, young and lovely.

SUTZIE

Hello.

RORY

Mom, this is Sutzie.

BILLIE

Hi. Oh, my, I wasn't expecting
anyone! I'm a mess!

SUTZIE

Oh, you look just fine.

RORY

You're not going to believe this.
This is the girl that played
washtub in my Robin Hood band.
Remember?

BILLIE

Oh, my gosh. How pretty you got!

RORY

You sound like Tony. That's the way
he talks.

BILLIE

Rory.

RORY

Sutz is going to help me catch up
on the schoolwork.

BILLIE
Jeepers, I forgot to tell you. They
called. There's some papers to sign
and...

Tony bursts in, breathless!

TONY
DID YOU HEAR?

BILLIE
WHAT?

TONY
KENNEDY GOT SHOT!

BILLIE
OH, MY GOD!

RORY
NO!

SUTZIE
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!

TONY
IN DALLAS! THEY SHOT HIM IN BROAD
DAYLIGHT!

SUTZIE
Is he dead?

TONY
YEAH HE'S DEAD!

RORY
Who did it?

TONY
THEY DON'T KNOW. WHOEVER DID IT IS
ONE SMART SON-OF-A-BITCH!

The words shock Billie.

Sutzie crumples, holding onto Rory for support.

INT. THEATER, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A BATTLE OF THE BANDS!

IMITATION BEATLE MUSIC leaks through the stage curtains,
followed by high-pitched SCREAMS!

Wild Bill is arguing with the COORDINATOR, a frantic man squeezing a clipboard.

Rory paces. Darrell twirls his drumsticks. Band members Alan and Jeff chew gum and tap their feet. Surrounding them is a confusion of instruments: guitars, Beatle-basses, drum kits. Rory and the boys wear bluejeans, contrasting the faux, backstage BEATLE BANDS - mop-tops with matching suits.

WILD BILL

Rory! How about trying that "yeah, yeah, yeah" song? The girls love that one.

RORY

Dad. Come on. We're stickin' to the roots.

DARRELL

This kiddie-shit music isn't going to last six months.

LOUD GIRL-SCREAMS!

Four fired-up, black-haired MOP-TOPS run from the stage.

An ITALIAN MOBSTER tries Bill for some sympathy.

ITALIAN MOBSTER

Twelve years of piano lessons for this?

COORDINATOR

NEXT! RORY THUNDER AND THE THUNDERBIRDS!

Rory's frozen. Darrell slaps him on the back.

DARRELL

Let's go!

He shoves Rory up the stage steps.

INT. THEATER, STAGE - NIGHT

The ornate ex-vaudeville palace rocks with three-thousand FANS, mostly SCREAMING TEENAGE GIRLS.

Seven JUDGES scrutinize from the front rows.

Sutzie's behind them, pressing her ears from the SCREECHING.

Rory's planted in front of the mic. The band fumbles with electrical chords and amps. Darrell knocks over his cymbal and it CRASHES on the boards.

The Coordinator elbows Rory away from the microphone.

COORDINATOR
AND NOW, THE NEXT ACT, NUMBER
SIXTEEN FOR OUR JUDGES, HERE'S RORY
AND THE THUNDERBOLTS!

Girls SCREAM!

RORY
NO, IT'S THE THUNDERBIRDS!

The Coordinator exits behind Rory.

COORDINATOR
Just play the song.

Rory's hands shake as he starts a weak "I'm a Man" blues riff. The SCREAMS DIMINISH. The girls expect Beatles music, Mersey beat, not this old blues crap.

Then, Rory revs it up, stronger, faster, until it drives!

RORY
"As I was motorvatin', back into
town, I saw a Cadillac sign say, no
money down."

Jeff fills in on bass.

RORY (cont'd)
"So, I ease on my brakes, I pull
into drive, I gunned my motor
twice, then I walked inside."

The audience squirms with interest. Alan's guitar fills in.

RORY (cont'd)
"The dealer came to me, said trade
in that Ford, I'll put you in a
car, that'll eat up the road. Just
tell me what you want, sign that
line, I'll have it brought to you,
in an hour's time!"

Darrell kicks in a heavy DRUM BEAT! SCREAMS!

RORY (cont'd)
"I'm going to get me a car!"

SHRIEKS!

RORY (cont'd)
 "I'm going to move on down the
 road!"

EAR-SPLITTING SCREAMS!

Sutzie's got golf ball eyes!

RORY (cont'd)
 "And I won't have to worry, about
 that broken-down ragged Ford!"

The palace is berserk! TOTAL BEDLAM!

RORY (cont'd)
 "Oh, mister, I want a yellow
 convertible. Four-door Deville.
 With a Continental spare, and wide
 chrome wheels. I power steerin',
 and power brakes, I want a powerful
 motor, man, with a jet off-take. I
 want air conditionin', automatic
 heat, and a full roll-away bed in
 my back seat!"

PEELS OF SQUEALS!

RORY (cont'd)
 "I want a short-wave radio, a T.V.
 And a phone. You know I got to talk
 to my baby when I'm ridin' alone!"

Sutzie SCREAMS, then covers her mouth!

RORY (cont'd)
 "I'm gonna get me a car...."

In the wings, Wild Bill shakes his head, baffled.

INT. THEATER, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Distant APPLAUSE and RACKET. The band's hugging in a knot.

A suit and tie approaches Wild Bill. BEN SOLOMON's bald,
 adjusting his sunglasses, flashing an enormous pinky ring.

BEN SOLOMON
 Excuse me. Are you the manager?

WILD BILL
I'm Rory's dad.

BEN SOLOMON
Good job out there. Listen, I'm
representing an English band that's
in the same groove as you fellas.

WILD BILL
Uh huh.

BEN SOLOMON
They're coming over in the spring
and I need an opening act. If you
guys, maybe, did something with
your stage clothes, would you be
interested?

WILD BILL
Well, where is it?

BEN SOLOMON
Rhode Island Auditorium.

WILD BILL
Huh. How much are we talkin'?

BEN SOLOMON
The usual.

WILD BILL
What's the "usual"?

BEN SOLOMON
I'll take care of you, don't worry.
It'll be more about exposure. These
guys are big, they're chartin' over
there.

WILD BILL
No kiddin'.

Ben lifts the sunglasses and offers his hand, but Bill's
stuck on the pinky ring.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

A bleak side street.

Darrell tosses a football with musicians Alan and Jeff.

A sign on a tall iron gate: No Admittance. Wild Bill's peeking in as Rory shuffles back and forth, agitated by a BANGING dump truck.

The football's in the air as a black limo wheels up to the curb. The ball THUDS off the roof.

The limo door swings open. KEITH RICHARDS springs to the sidewalk, shaggy-haired, jewelry, vivid clothes - he looks like a gypsy rooster before a cockfight.

KEITH RICHARDS
HEY! YOU LOOKIN' FOR A BOTHER?

The footballers are mute.

KEITH RICHARDS (cont'd)
Fuckin' dustbin lids.

MICK JAGGER slithers out, a preening peacock with eyeshadow.

MICK JAGGER
Hey, mate, open it up!

WILD BILL
Hey, mate, we're waiting for a
soundcheck!

Keith grabs the football and tosses it across the street.

Rory's mesmerized by BRIAN JONES, snaking from the limo with bloodshot, distant eyes. Jones wears a feather boa around his ruffled shirt, matching his blue bell-bottom pants.

BRIAN JONES
How do we get in?

RORY
I don't know. My band's going to
open for you guys. Rory Thunder and
the Thunderbirds.

MICK JAGGER
COME ON! LET'S FIND THE FILTH!

Mick and Keith pile into the limo.

KEITH RICHARDS
WHERE'S ME GOLD WATCH?

BRIAN JONES
So, you're the opener?

RORY

Yeah.

BRIAN JONES

Good luck, man. Ha, ha, ha!

Brian slides into muffled CACKLES and SLAMS the door.

Wild Bill's roused as the black rocket speeds off, but his band's agape, catching flies.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Five-thousand ROLLING STONE FANS cram the CLAMORING arena.

COPS block the unruly crowd with little success.

On stage Rory and the Thunderbirds perform "No Money Down," but no one's listening. Most are concentrated on a jumbo, bouncing beach ball.

A stocky COP drags a FIGHTING KID out by the hair.

A bearded BIKER pummels a skinny STUDENT.

TEENAGE BOYS smash seats.

A GIRL has her top ripped off by FOOTBALL PLAYERS.

A sign reads: We Want A Lock Of Mick's Hair - held up by two WAIFS, one snipping giant scissors.

A CHANT arises, slowly at first, building...

CROWD

WE WANT THE STONES. WE WANT THE
STONES. WE WANT THE STONES! WE WANT
THE STONES! WE WANT THE STONES!

Rory's shaken, yet perseveres. Darrell goads the wide-eyed Thunderbirds on by POUNDING his drums.

More CHANTING, BOOING and JEERS!

The number ends. Rory's drenched. He bangs out a new riff, but Ben Solomon, in the wings, is waving his arms. Rory takes his guitar off and the crowd CHEERS! An airborne cup of beer hits him! He throws the finger, then stomps off to BOOING.

The curtain ruffles. The fans catch a glimpse of Mick Jagger. They ROAR, then surge, busting through the cops. Girls faint!

Mick's smiling as Rory passes him.

MICK JAGGER
Maybe you should go back to playing
football!

RORY
HEY, FUCK YOU, YOU JICKEY FAG!

INT. AUDITORIUM, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Two GIANT SECURITY GUARDS hustle Rory and the Thunderbirds, Wild Bill and Ben Solomon past GROUPIES, PIMPS, WISE GUYS, WHORES and FREAKY HANGERS-ON.

Rory gets a rotten look from a ROADIE having sex with YOUNG GIRL between a stack of amplifiers.

INT. AUDITORIUM, WAITING AREA - NIGHT

When Rory and the frazzled entourage are whisked into the empty room, they confront Ben Solomon.

JEFF
They hated us!

WILD BILL
We should have never played this
circus.

RORY
They kept chanting, "Stones,
Stones, we want the Stones!"

DARRELL
I thought they were going to attack
us! Bastards!

BEN SOLOMON
I'm sorry, guys. These things
happen. Bill, I'm going to make it
up to you and the boys. We've got a
sold-out crowd here, you're going
to very happy with the gate.

RORY
So, how much are we gonna get?

BEN SOLOMON
Rory, I haven't got the numbers
yet, I'm going to...

A massive SECURITY GUARD darkens the door.

SECURITY GUARD
Rory Thunder?

RORY
Yeah?

SECURITY GUARD
Mr. Jones wants to see you.

WILD BILL
Who?

SECURITY GUARD
Brian Jones, the guitar player.

BEN SOLOMON
Beautiful! I've got to have a word
with Brian myself!

SECURITY GUARD
Sorry, sir. Mr. Thunder only. After
you.

Rory looks to the guys before exiting with the Guard.

BEN SOLOMON
Make sure you tell him Ben
Solomon's here, Rory! Don't worry,
kid! Everything's going to be
alright!

Wild Bill exhales, shaking his head.

INT. AUDITORIUM, BACKSTAGE, PERFORMER'S SUITE - NIGHT

The huge Security Guard averts his eyes as he escorts Rory
into an orgy: FREAKS and GROUPIES drugging and groping.

BILL WYMAN, the Stones' bass player dry humps a GIRL.

Keith Richards snorts cocaine.

CHARLIE WATTS, the drummer, goggles Mick with one hand up a
BLACK MODEL's skirt, the other in his pants.

A NAKED GROUPIE lays on a cot fingering herself.

Pretty-boy Brian Jones chats with BLONDE TWINS, busty, with a
hard edge. He has a coughing jag before speaking to Rory.

BRIAN JONES

Hey, man, for a white kid, you play alright. Look, all our openers get the same shit. Don't worry about it.

RORY

Man, it was tough out there.

BRIAN JONES

If it was easy, everybody would be doing it. It looks easy on the telly. Here.

Jones hands Rory a lit reefer he's had cuffed.

Rory burns his finger.

RORY

Ow!

BRIAN JONES

You've never smoked grass, man?

RORY

No, I, ah...

BRIAN JONES

Far out.

The Twins giggle.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)

Do it, man. Join the club.

Rory inhales, but coughs it out.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)

Hold it in. It doesn't work unless you hold it in.

Rory tries again and keeps it down.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)

You got it.

TWIN ONE

Groovy.

BRIAN JONES

So, what is it? Rory what?

RORY
Thunder.

TWIN TWO
Wow.

BRIAN JONES
You doin' any recording?

RORY
Our first session is coming up.

BRIAN JONES
Stick with the blues, man, the old stuff. That's what the kids want.

RORY
Yeah, I...I can't believe I'm actually talking to you.

BRIAN JONES
Everyone's writing new stuff, but it can't compare with the old stuff, man. And get some session guys. That band of yours is going to hold you back.

RORY
But, those guys have..., the drummer's my brother.

Brian puts his hand on Rory's shoulder.

BRIAN JONES
Look, I started the fucking Rolling Stones.

Rory can't get over the hand.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)
I know what the fuck I'm talking about.

Brian squeezes.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)
You nervous?

Rory's frozen.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Don't worry about me, man! I've got about four kids!

TWIN ONE
That you know of!

BRIAN JONES
Ha, ha, ha, ha! I want you chicks
to show this cat you appreciate his
music.

TWIN TWO
Right here?

BRIAN JONES
No, I've got to warm up. Take him
in the loo.

The Twins wrap their arms around Rory.

BRIAN JONES (cont'd)
He wants to be a rock n' roller.

RORY
I, I don't know. I've got a girl.

BRIAN JONES
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, now you've
got two more, mate! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
Go on, now!

TWIN ONE
Come on, baby.

TWIN TWO
We're not going to bite.

TWIN ONE
Don't listen to her. He, he, he!

They lead timid Rory into the bathroom.

Brian Jones coughs deeply, then manipulates his inhaler.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO, CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

A cigarette-smoking ENGINEER fingers the board as Rory,
isolated behind glass, struggles to SING a new song.

Note: This is an original song. For the purposes of this
script, we'll call it "Shockwave".

Wild Bill, Darrell, Alan and Jeff listen to a monitor. Rory
continues singing "Shockwave" after the Engineer lowers it.

ENGINEER
He's not on it.

WILD BILL
Let him go. He'll do it.

Ben Solomon enters.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Did you get it?

Solomon hands Bill an envelope.

BEN SOLOMON
It's not quite what we expected.

WILD BILL
THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE
DOLLARS?

ENGINEER
SHHH!

DARRELL
What?

BEN SOLOMON
That's what they sent, Bill. After
fees, expenses...

Rory's SOUR NOTE produces a collective grimace.

ENGINEER
He's not cutting it!

WILD BILL
At a hundred bucks an hour he'd
better cut it!

DARRELL
Dad, we can't use this! He stinks
today!

ALAN
This is bad.

WILD BILL
Alright, alright! Start it over!

ENGINEER
(into mic)
Rory, the, ah, tone is a little off
in here.

(MORE)

ENGINEER(cont'd)
Take a break while I rewind. Let's regroup, we'll catch it.

WILD BILL
Can he hear me?

ENGINEER
No.

WILD BILL
Don't say anything about the money.
We'll tell him later.

BEN SOLOMON
Sorry, guys. Wish it could have been more.

Wild Bill glares. Rory lumbers in, pale, clammy.

WILD BILL
Sit down and have a soda. Take a break.

BEN SOLOMON
You sound great, Rory!

Rory slumps on the sofa.

RORY
Shut up, Ben. Please.

JEFF
You're off, man.

RORY
You shut up, too.

The door opens.

SUTZIE
Hi! Hi, guys!

WILD BILL
Hi, Sutz.

RORY
You're back, huh?

She kisses Rory.

SUTZIE
Are you okay?

RORY

I'm fine.

DARRELL

How was the trip?

SUTZIE

Oh, God, my mother for a whole week. She drove me nuts. So, I'm dying to find out about the concert!

RORY

They booed us!

SUTZIE

No!

DARRELL

It was awful!

ALAN

It stunk!

RORY

There were all kinds of fights. It was horrible.

BEN SOLOMON

They got exposure! That's what counts.

WILD BILL

They got exposure all right.

SUTZIE

Wow, I thought...

DARRELL

Tell her about the stuff backstage.

RORY

She doesn't want to hear that.

SUTZIE

What?

RORY

Nothing.

SUTZIE

Come on! I want to hear all about it! Tell me about the Stones!

RORY

They were crazy, it was just a bunch of nuts going crazy. I don't feel like talkin' about it now.

ENGINEER

Okay, we're ready to roll.

RORY

Just a second. Sutz, come here.

They retreat to a quiet corner.

RORY (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I don't feel so good.

SUTZIE

Can I get you anything?

RORY

No, I'll be okay.

SUTZIE

I missed you so much. I was worried something might happen. Hey, I got the book report done. The algebra's a different story. We're going to have to cram for that.

WILD BILL

Let's go, Rory.

RORY

I have to go back to work.

SUTZIE

If we don't study, you're not going to graduate!

RORY

Hey! Last week I opened for the fucking Rolling Stones, okay? Jesus Christ!

He storms into the main studio, SLAMMING the door!

Darrell sees Sutzie's upset and follows Rory.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

Darrell's right on his brother's ass.

DARRELL
What's the matter with you?

RORY
Why'd you bring this backstage
stuff up? Leave her out of this!

DARRELL
Man, you're fuckin' up! We got a
good thing goin' and you're fuckin'
it up!

Rory seizes a music stand and hurls it at him!

DARRELL (cont'd)
AH! YOU LITTLE ASSHOLE!

RORY
WITHOUT ME THERE IS NO BAND,
SHITHEAD!

Darrell charges! He slams Rory to the floor and tries to punch him, but it's blocked and Rory gets his hands around Darrell's neck! Wild-eyed Rory strangles until Darrell's red!

Wild Bill bursts in!

WILD BILL
HEY! CUT IT OUT!

He wrestles his two sons apart!

DARRELL
HE TRIED TO KILL ME!

RORY
HE STARTED IT!

DARRELL
YOU CRAZY ASSHOLE!

WILD BILL
HOLD IT! Calm down! You guys aren't
kids anymore, cut it out! Now,
you've got to sing!

The brothers scowl at each other, burning with anger.

As Darrell exits, he notices blood flowing from his ear.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO, ISOLATION BOOTH - NIGHT

Wild Bill hands Rory a beer.

WILD BILL
You alright?

RORY
Yeah. Where's Sutzie?

WILD BILL
She left. She's okay.

RORY
You sure?

WILD BILL
Yeah.

Wild Bill glances out to the control room. Everyone's occupied. He places a 1/2 pint of whiskey on the stool then hands Rory the headphones.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Aim true. You'll get it.

Rory turns his back as his father exits. He removes two Black Beauty pills from his jeans and swallows them with his beer. He follows with some whiskey, then more beer chaser. One deep breath and he faces the control room.

RORY
Okay. I'm ready now.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The immense, beachfront dance club throbs! Two-thousand REVELERS CHEER as Rory and the Thunderbirds perform "Shockwave". Rory twists and gyrates, creating PEELS OF SCREAMS from the girls!

A NEW DRUMMER has replaced Darrell.

Sutzie's alone behind BOUNCERS restraining SINGLE GIRLS riveted on Rory. One is dark-haired, buxom Rose, Mario's daughter, grown-up now, minus the baby-fat.

The song ends. A DISC JOCKEY takes the microphone.

DISC JOCKEY
RORY AND THE THUNDERBIRDS!

The crowd ERUPTS!

DISC JOCKEY (cont'd)
THEY'LL BE BACK!

Monstrous OVATION!

Rory lingers, signing autographs, planting kisses. Wild Bill attempts order, but Rose breaks through and wet-kisses Rory on the lips. Rory pinches her ass.

RORY
Oh, my God! Rose?

ROSE
YOUSE WERE GREAT!

RORY
Wow! Hey, Dad, this is Rose, Tony's niece!

ROSE
Hi!

WILD BILL
Hi, Rose.

Wild Bill's eyes are on her breasts.

A FAN hands Rory a bottle. FAN TWO slips him a reefer.

Offstage, Sutzie wipes her eye.

INT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rory's on the couch holding a beer, his arm around Sutzie, shifting in her seat. Tony's resting on his recliner, eyes barely open. Billie's cleaning, removing empties.

They're watching television, a show like American Bandstand.

BILLIE
Why haven't you gone to see your brother?

RORY
When's he getting out?

BILLIE
A few more days. The doctor said...

RORY
Turn it up! They were playing it!
This is it!

The Dick Clark HOST interviews three TEENS.

HOST
(on television)
Okay guys, that was "Shockwave" by newcomers Rory and the Thunderbirds. Kim, how would you rate it?

KIM
(on television)
I'll give it an eighty-five. It was kind of hard to dance to.

RORY
Boo!

HOST
(on television)
Joey?

JOEY
(on television)
Ninety-five. It's groovy.

HOST
(on television)
Sharon?

SHARON
(on television)
I'll give it a ninety-two. Rory Thunder is cute!

RORY
YEAH! DID YOU HERE THAT?

Billie frowns while Sutzie fakes a smile. Tony snores.

HOST
(on television)
Okay, boys and girls, cats and chicks, to lead us out, more Rory and the Thunderbirds with "Shockwave"!

The television audience dances to the MUSIC.

RORY
Hey, Ma, you got any more beer?

BILLIE
No. You've had enough.

RORY
What are you talkin' about?

Sutzie picks up a tray of tiny hot dogs.

SUTZIE
These are good.

RORY
I don't want food, I'll go to
sleep. How about out in the garage?
There must be some beer out there.

BILLIE
Rory! You've had enough!

RORY
Jesus Christ, what's the matter
with you?

BILLIE
You better not get too big for your
britches!

Tony wakes up.

TONY
What's the matter, Maggy?

RORY
Her name is Billie.

TONY
This is my house, Rory.

RORY
Fuck you. Fuck your house. Come on!

Rory grabs Sutzie's arm!

SUTZIE
No! I don't want to drive with you
when you're like this!

RORY
Well, you drive then!

SUTZIE

No!

RORY

Good! Stay here in the wop's house!

Rory storms out, SLAMMING the door!

Mom and Sutzie are helpless as Rory PEELS OUT in the street.

Tony boils.

EXT. NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - 1965

The THRONG is restless. PERFORMERS, MANAGERS, PROMOTERS, GROUPIES, REPORTERS and PARASITES, the privileged with special passes, circulate like bees.

ROADIES muscle large amplifiers onto the stage.

Rory and Wild Bill are glowing, wearing backstage badges, drinking Narragansett Beer.

JOAN BAEZ strolls by, beaming, with the young folksinger DONOVAN on her arm.

A gang of hip, young white musicians, THE PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND, with AL KOOPER, huddles with nervous excitement.

Beyond the stage, 15,000 FANS CHANT.

FANS

WE WANT DYLAN. WE WANT DYLAN. WE
WANT DYLAN. WE WANT DYLAN.

Two overweight males argue. ALAN LOMAX, the folk purist, and ALBERT GROSSMAN, Dylan's manager, are in each other's face.

LOMAX

What do these white kids know about
the blues? You can't bring all
these amps up there! This is the
FOLK FESTIVAL, GROSSMAN!

Folk icon PETE SEEGER stalks about, kicking the groundwires.

PETE SEEGER

IF I HAD AN AXE, I'D CUT THE CABLE!

Suddenly, all eyes are on Bob Dylan. Wearing an orange shirt and black leather jacket, he carries a Fender Stratocaster. The backstage BUZZ calms, as does the CHANTING.

The Butterfield Band climbs the stage steps, with Dylan behind. Bob pauses when he sees Rory.

BOB DYLAN
Hey, man, I remember you.

RORY
You gonna rock 'em tonight, Elvis?

BOB DYLAN
Just tryin' to be honest.

Dylan walks onstage and TUNES his electric guitar. The CHEERS turn into a crescendo of BOOS.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
BRING BACK COUSIN EMMY!

CROWD
PLAY FOLK MUSIC! SELL OUT! SELL
OUT! THIS IS THE FOLK FESTIVAL! GET
RID OF THE BAND!

Dylan faces the Band.

BOB DYLAN
Let's go!

The Band launches into a rocking, electric version of "Maggie's Farm". LOUD BOOING!

BOB DYLAN (cont'd)
"Well, I ain't gonna work on
Maggie's farm no more."

Rory's amazed!

BOB DYLAN (cont'd)
"No, I ain't gonna work on Maggie's
farm no more".

RORY
YEAH!

BOB DYLAN
"Well I wake up in the morning,
fold my hands and pray for rain, I
got a head full of ideas that are
drivin' me insane. It's a shame she
makes me scrub the floor!"

Wild Bill's laughing!

BOB DYLAN (cont'd)
 "I ain't gonna work on Maggie's
 farm no more!"

Pete Seeger faces off with the SOUND MAN.

PETE SEEGER
 TURN IT DOWN!

SOUND MAN
 THAT'S THE WAY THEY WANT IT!

BOB DYLAN
 "I ain't gonna work for Maggie's
 brother no more. No, I ain't gonna
 work for Maggie's brother no more!
 Well, he hands you a nickel, he
 hands you a dime, he asks you with
 a grin if you're havin' a good
 time. Then, he fines you every time
 you slam the door. I ain't gonna
 work for Maggie's brother no more!"

RORY
 I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm
 either! He's talkin' to me, Dad!

Wild Bill takes a slug from a flask. MUSIC CONTINUES.

WILD BILL
 At least you listen to someone.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Rory's hamming it up, lip-synching "Shockwave" to a camera.
 The studio's empty, except for the CAMERAMAN and DIRECTOR.

DIRECTOR
 CUT! Good job!

Rory HOWLS like a madman!

RORY
 Man, this pretendin' shit is so
 weird!

DIRECTOR
 Don't worry, Rory! This is showbiz,
 it's all an illusion! We'll do one
 more and wrap it up.

RORY
I'm goin' out for a smoke. You guys
want some?

He winks at the technicians, but they beg off.

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Rain. Distant flashes. Rory exits a steel door and negotiates electrical cables before reaching an aluminium trailer that shields him.

He attempts to light a hash pipe, fumbles with matches, but it's too wet.

The steel door opens an inch.

DIRECTOR
Hey, Rory! We're almost ready!

RORY
Okay! I'll be right there!

He tries to light the pipe again. No luck. He glances back at the door, then unzips his pants to urinate. With his shoes in a puddle, Rory braces himself with one hand on the trailer.

Flash! ZAP! He's been shocked! The hair stands up, the skin's florescent, and he flops to the asphalt!

Rory's rigid. All's still, except the FALLING RAIN.

One eye opens. Now two. He grins!

RORY (cont'd)
WOOHOO! HOLY SHIT, WHAT A RUSH! HA,
HA, HA, HA!

EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, BEACH - NIGHT

PARTY PEOPLE in costumes encircle a barnfire. Multi-colored sparks POP from the flaming driftwood.

Away from the party, Rory and Sutzie sit crosslegged in the sand. She's dressed as a Black-eyed Susan; he's Robin Hood.

SUTZIE
Remember when the whales washed up?

RORY

Sure. I was the first one down here.

SUTZIE

It was so sad. Some of them were still alive.

RORY

I tried to talk to the one near the breakwater. His eye was moving. He was watching me.

SUTZIE

Do you remember what you said?

RORY

Yeah. I think about it sometimes. I told him I kinda knew how he felt.

SUTZIE

What do you mean?

RORY

Even as a kid, I knew if I couldn't play music, I might as well go somewhere and die.

SUTZIE

Wow. You knew even then?

RORY

Oh yeah. I came down a day or two later and his eye wasn't moving anymore. I wanted to take him home, maybe stuff him and put him in the barn.

SUTZIE

You're so weird!

She kisses him on the cheek.

SUTZIE (cont'd)

Well, what do I expect? Our first date was a freak show.

Ben Solomon nears, robed like an Arab sheik.

BEN SOLOMON

Robin Hood! Are you ready for the studio next week?

RORY

Yeah, I think so. Ben, I've got a couple songs I wrote, I'd like to...

BEN SOLOMON

Rory, Rory, let's stick to what the record company wants for now. Okay? We've got a contract. I just went over it with your father. By the way, you'd better check up on him. He's getting a little...

Solomon's index finger circles his temple.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

DRUNK PEOPLE in costumes (Astronaut, Hippie, Beatle, Soldier, Cher, etc.) are making out, smoking grass and dancing to "We Got to Get Out of This Place" by Eric Burdon and the Animals.

No one notices Rory except Jeff, dressed as Father Time.

RORY

Where's my father?

JEFF

I don't know, Rory. He's bombed. I don't know where he is.

Rory stomps off.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

A couple necks in the corridor: the guy's dressed as SUPERMAN; the girl as LITTLE BO PEEP.

Rory brushes by them and KNOCKS on the bedroom door.

SUPERMAN

I wouldn't disturb him if I was you.

Rory ignores him and POUNDS LOUDER.

RORY

DAD! HEY, DAD! YOU IN THERE?

LITTLE BO PEEP

Why don't you leave him alone?

RORY
Shut up, will you?

He opens the door.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT
Wild Bill's naked, on top of Italian Rose.

ROSE
HEY!

RORY
OH, JESUS!

Wild Bill flips off and covers up.

WILD BILL
WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH
YOU?

Rose is frantic, grasping for her clothes.

ROSE
Don't you ever tell anyone!

RORY
GET OUT OF HERE!

Rose runs out, half-naked.

WILD BILL
YOU GET OUT OF HERE!

Father and son glare at each other.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT
Rory bolts from the hallway, mad as hell!

RORY
GET OUT! EVERYONE!

SUPERMAN
TAKE IT EASY, MAN!

Rory hurls the Man of Steel against the wall!

RORY
GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!

The Party People are indifferent, staring at Rory.

RORY (cont'd)
Alright, *I'll* get out of here.
Fuckin' assholes.

Darrell rushes in, made-up like the Devil with aluminium foil horns. He's grown a goatee and wears a large hearing aid.

DARRELL
WHAT'S WRONG?

RORY
It's Dad. HE'S CRAZY!

Rory runs out the door.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

The house is quiet after the cyclone: overturned chairs and ashtrays, empty bottles and cans, even a smashed guitar.

Rory and Wild Bill gaze at their hot coffee.

WILD BILL
I want to tell you something I've
never told anyone. Not even your
mother.

He takes a long drag from a Lucky Strike, then pours a shot of whiskey into his coffee.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
After the War, I came home for a
few weeks and I couldn't be around
people. I was nerved-up, having
nightmares, afraid of myself. A
cousin of mine had a farm down in
Arkansas, so I wrote a letter. Two
weeks later I was on his doorstep.
I knew I'd done the right thing
when his kids took one look at me
and ran.

Bill smiles, but his joke's not appreciated. He sips.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
Hiram had a pig farm in the Ozarks
and owned land on the other side of
his mountain. I bought a tent,
supplies, and went off on my own.
Six months in that tent.
(MORE)

WILD BILL(cont'd)

Snow, hail, lightning, rain, no electricity, no running water, no heat, no nothing. Bears at night, owls hooting, copperheads, rattlesnakes, goddamn insects as big as birds.

RORY

How, ah, how'd you eat?

WILD BILL

I had rice, beans, shot game, even stole a pig once. Hiram knew, but he never said anything. Most days I didn't want to eat. Just drink. I found a moonshiner that'd leave me bottles in a tree stump. Corn liquor. I started seeing things. Faces in trees. Things in the sky. Then I'd snap-to. It scared the hell out of me. I figured one day those faces weren't going away.

Rory leans in.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

One day Hiram came. I was passed out. He'd brought his little daughter with him. Jeannie, I think her name was. I was dirty, had a beard, sick from the moonshine. She had a dress on, a clean little dress with flowers on it.

Bill wipes his eye.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

She asked me to come to her birthday party. Hiram walked her all the way out there for that. Right then I decided I didn't want to live like an animal anymore. I needed people.

Bill sighs.

WILD BILL (cont'd)

Rory, I hate the hold liquor has on me. When it's in me, I forget about it. The next day I usually don't want it. I swear off. But, it's always there, tappin' me on the shoulder.

RORY
I know what you mean.

WILD BILL
Son, when I see it in you, it's
like a mirror. You don't want to
turn out like me, Rory.

The clock strikes three times.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
It's always 3 a.m. in my soul.

Rory breathes deeply and presses his temples.

WILD BILL (cont'd)
So, what are we going to do? Can
you forgive me?

RORY
I don't know. Dad, you freaked me
out. I never want to see that
again. Ugh.

WILD BILL
I'm sorry.

RORY
You know, I've been thinking about
goin' somewhere myself. Some place
clean, fresh air, where I could get
some exercise and eat good food. I
want to get strong before we go
into the studio again.

WILD BILL
Are you serious?

RORY
Yeah. Sutz and I have been talking
about it.

WILD BILL
I've got a buddy of mine from the
service that has a farm in upstate
New York. Hundreds of acres; guest
cottage. He's got a son about your
age. Maybe I could give him a call.

RORY
You sure?

WILD BILL

I could push the studio date up a month. Whatever you need.

RORY

Hmm. Okay. Yeah, alright, that'd be good.

WILD BILL

I love you, Rory.

RORY

I love you, too, Dad.

WILD BILL

I'm sorry about last night. And I'm, I'm sorry I ran you over.

RORY

It's okay, Dad. I forgot all about it.

They rise, attempt to hug, then shake hands.

INT. FARMHOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Sun washes the country kitchen. BIRDS SING.

Rory and Sutzie are tan and fit. He's washing vegetables while she sprinkles seeds on a salad.

RORY

Isn't that the same shit you feed the birds?

She cuffs him on the shoulder.

SUTZIE

What if it is? It's good for us! Birds are just like us.

RORY

They are not. You have to have tits to be a mammal.

SUTZIE

I'm a bird and I have tits.

RORY

Yeah, but you're different.

They kiss and Rory feels her up.

Outside, a mail truck pulls in.

SUTZIE
What's this?

RORY
An interruption.

The DRIVER's carrying a large box.

RORY (cont'd)
Oh, I think my new hobby arrived!
You told me I should have a hobby,
right?

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

DRIVER
Mr. Thunder?

RORY
Yes, sir.

DRIVER
Hi. Sign here, please. Alright! I
got Rory Thunder's autograph! Love
your music, Rory. Thanks!

RORY
Hey, thank you buddy! I appreciate
it.

Rory plops the box on the wooden table.

SUTZIE
Morse Biological Supply Company?
What's this?

Rory opens the box and a giant African bullfrog leaps out!

SUTZIE (cont'd)
AHHH! OH, GOD, THIS IS YOUR HOBBY!

RORY
TAXIDERMY! IT'S BETTER THAN
DRINKIN', ISN'T IT?

SUTZIE
YOU'RE GOING TO STUFF THESE THINGS?

RORY
YEAH!

Another bullfrog springs from the box!

SUTZIE
EEEEEE! YOU'VE GOT TO KILL THEM,
DON'T YOU?

RORY
Oh, shit. I didn't think about that
part.

One frog bounces toward Rory.

RORY (cont'd)
WHOA!

The laughing lovers scurry from the room!

INT. FARMHOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

A long trestle table is crammed with taxidermy books,
stuffing, clay, wire, fake eyes and chemicals.

Frogskins soak in a plastic bucket.

Rory's packing wet clay into a frog's mouth. Two have been
completed, with eyes, smiles and fat bellies.

BOB PHIPPS, early twenties, carves a tiny piece of balsa
wood. He smokes a cigarette, still in his robe and slippers.

BOB PHIPPS
These are going to be red, right?

RORY
Yeah.

Bob dabs red paint on the tiny piece of wood.

RORY (cont'd)
We've got to position these while
they're still wet. How do frogs
look? They kind of crouch, right?

BOB PHIPPS
Well, they're frogs, you know?
They're waiting for a fly.

Rory bends his frog so it's squatting.

BOB PHIPPS (cont'd)
That's good. How about this?

Bob places the red balsa tongue in his frog's mouth, creating a lecherous hang. He then positions his frog behind Rory's as if they're humping.

RORY
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Porno taxidermy!
Ha, ha!

BOB PHIPPS
Man, there could be money in this!

Sutzie opens the door.

SUTZIE
Hey, Bob, there's some weird people
out back!

RORY
Look at this!

She looks at the humping frogs, but it doesn't register.

Bob gazes out the window.

BOB PHIPPS
Check this out, man.

Outside, twelve FREAKY PEOPLE in strange hats march along the ridge. A SMALL HIPPIE GIRL leads, waving a homemade flag.

RORY
Who's that?

BOB PHIPPS
Leary's freaks. They're over at
Millbrook.

SUTZIE
Timothy Leary, right?

BOB PHIPPS
Yeah.

RORY
We heard he lives around here.

BOB PHIPPS
He's a pretty good guy. We'll go
over for a visit sometime.

Rory rubbernecks, but Sutzie's frowning.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

Bob downshifts while approaching a stone, Bavarian-style gatehouse. Sutzie's apprehensive, but Rory loves it.

RORY
Look at this place.

Cars are parked outside the entrance. TOURISTS take pictures of the Freaky People guarding the gate. The Freaks hold large mirrors. When the Tourists click their cameras, they're taking shots of themselves.

BOB PHIPPS
This farm is about twenty-five
hundred acres. The main house has
sixty-something rooms.

Bob's waved through the gate.

RORY
Wow! Did you feel that?

BOB PHIPPS
Ha, ha! Everyone feels a rush
coming through here. Strong energy
field, huh?

RORY
Amazing.

SUTZIE
I didn't feel anything.

EXT. MILLBROOK MANSION - DAY

A massive, wooden Queen Anne/Victorian wrapped with a porch.

Bob, Rory and Sutzie exit the truck.

RORY
This place is somethin'.

BOB PHIPPS
Cool, huh?

The porch is enclosed by French windows and doors. One pane is hand-lettered: Dogs Live, In This House, Keep Your Mind, In Your Feet.

INT. MILLBROOK MANSION, GREAT ROOM - DAY

Twenty-foot gold-leafed ceilings. No furniture, just mattresses and pillows covered in intricate Eastern prints. A fireplace blazes, along with a hundred burning candles.

Fifteen FREAKS (Ivy-League acid heads, goofballs and space-cadets) sit in a circle, eyes closed, chanting "AUM" (OM).

The Head Freak wears a Nehru shirt and strings of beads. TIMOTHY LEARY has a great smile and twinkle in his eye when Bob, Rory and Sutzie enter.

TIMOTHY LEARY
WELCOME, ROBERT!

BOB PHIPPS
Hey, Tim!

The Small Hippie Girl offers Bob brownies.

BOB PHIPPS (cont'd)
No, thanks. I'm just giving the tour today. Rory, Sutzie, this is Tim.

RORY.
Hi. Great place here.

SUTZIE
It's beautiful.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Welcome. Have a treat.

SUTZIE
These look good.

She takes a bite.

BOB PHIPPS
Did you swallow that?

SUTZIE
Mmmm. I haven't had chocolate in so long.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL
She's on the path!

BOB PHIPPS
Well, Rory, we'd better have one,
too.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Please do.

BOB PHIPPS
Here's to your health.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Good, Bob!

Leary smiles as Rory eats his brownie.

RORY
Mmm, mmm. We've been eating bird
seed for a month.

INT. MILLBROOK MANSION, GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Rory, Bob, Sutzie and the Freaks are planted on the floor.
With bloodshot eyes, they write on small pieces of paper.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL
Okay, let's see yours.

Sutzie hands over her scrap of paper.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL (cont'd)
Okay. Fish. Pond. I thought we were
only doing one word? Oh, that's
okay. Fish. Pond. Frogs. Eyes. Red
tongues. Ha, ha! That's a good one!

SUTZIE
Ha, ha, ha. Why is that funny?

FREAK
I think Rory Thunder is funny.

Rory's confused.

FREAK (cont'd)
I mean the name.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL
Is that your real name?

RORY
Yeah.

FREAK
But, what's your real name?

RORY
Rory Thunder. I think that's my name.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL
Show me the face you had before you were born.

SUTZIE
I don't feel good.

RORY
Rory Thunder. It sounds stupid, doesn't it?

SUTZIE
Why are we, the walls are moving.

SMALL HIPPIE GIRL
They're breathing.

SUTZIE
Oh, God.

Timothy Leary glides into the massive room.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
Rory, I've got to, I'm sick.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Relax and enjoy. We're fine.

SUTZIE
You all look like you have masks on.

BOB PHIPPS
We do.

RORY
I'd go, but I don't know if I have feet.

Laughs!

RORY (cont'd)
I wonder if Elvis ever did this?

TIMOTHY LEARY
I think Elvis is on a whole Judeo-Christian original sin bad trip.

SUTZIE
Everything is swirling.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Chaos is good. Relax. What do you see?

SUTZIE
Colors, circles. The candles look like they're exploding.

TIMOTHY LEARY
It's beautiful, isn't it?

SUTZIE
I feel crazy.

RORY
The pillows were scaring me, but now I see.

TIMOTHY LEARY
Yes. All the beauty, the history of the past, God, the devil, they're all inside your mind.

RORY
Wow. Rory Thunder. Is that me?

Leary smiles.

TIMOTHY LEARY
God is inside you.

SUTZIE
Honey, can we go home?

Rory rises and floats out, ecstatic, mystical, with Sutzie on the verge of tears.

INT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Billie has a bandage on her hand as she shakes a frying pan full of Italian sausages. Rory wolfs bacon and eggs while Sutzie plays with her hash browns.

RORY

Ma, this is the best breakfast I ever had! Look at how yellow these eggs are!

BILLIE

Glad you like it, Rory.

RORY

You don't want yours?

SUTZIE

I'm not really hungry.

RORY

I'll take it.

Rory scrapes her food onto his plate.

RORY (cont'd)

Did you smell the grass this morning? It must have rained last night. Oh, yeah, that's right, I heard it on the roof! When I went out, every blade of grass had one droplet on it. A single, perfectly formed little bead. Every blade, every single blade shined. It was beautiful!

Tony enters wearing a suit and a sour expression.

BILLIE

Do you want scrambled eggs and sausage, honey?

TONY

I don't have time.

Rory giggles.

RORY

What is time?

Sutzie and Billie are perplexed. Tony scowls.

RORY (cont'd)

You know, human consciousness is so complex. There's the inner world, the outer world, the normal world, the abnormal world, all kinds of worlds! Imagine if we were like, you know, atoms and molecules.

(MORE)

RORY(cont'd)

Imagine if we were like, if our
Earth was just one tiny little
molecule on the hair of a flea.

TONY

You been drinking again?

RORY

No, man, booze is a downer. You
know what I'm sayin', though. If
the whole Earth was just a little
molecule on a flea, and that flea
is one little spec in its world,
and on and on and on forever!

TONY

Maggy, I'll be late.

BILLIE

Okay.

Sutzie's mouth is open, staring at Rory.

Billie's downcast, fussing with the sausages.

INT. BEN SOLOMON'S OFFICE - DAY

Photographs of musicians hang on the wall. The shot of Rory
and the Thunderbirds is one of many.

Ben's gained weight and wears a hairpiece. Across his desk,
Darrell and Wild Bill fidget, as if waiting for a dentist.

Rory enters, upbeat, out of breath.

RORY

Sorry, guys. I got lost.

BEN SOLOMON

Come in, Rory. Have a seat.

RORY

Man, this is bigger than your last
place.

BEN SOLOMON

Rory, take a seat, please.

WILD BILL

Ben's got some business.

Rory's still standing, checking out the photographs.

DARRELL
Sit down, will you?

RORY
Okay, okay.

BEN SOLOMON
Alright, gentlemen. Thanks for coming. Let's get to the point. Rory, the record company doesn't want any of your original stuff. It sounds too much like "Shockwave", it's old, it not hip anymore!

RORY
Who cares what they say?

WILD BILL
What do you mean, who cares?

DARRELL
We care, for Christ sakes!

BEN SOLOMON
Rory, listen to me. The whole world is exploding with music and you're not on board!

RORY
So what?

BEN SOLOMON
Oh, God. Bill, talk to this kid.

Wild Bill takes a deep breath.

WILD BILL
Look, Rory, it's nice to "do your own thing", but, ah...

DARRELL
Your thing isn't making any money!

BEN SOLOMON
That's right! The label wants to drop you.

RORY
So, I guess this whole trip has been about money, right?

BEN SOLOMON
No! No, no, no.

DARRELL

It makes the world go 'round,
doesn't it? Cut the hippie shit.

RORY

Dad?

Wild Bill shakes his head.

RORY (cont'd)

Money, huh? The root of all evil.
Man, I'll tell ya, this is
somethin'. Well, I got some
business, too. I'm goin' solo.
Promoters, managers, drummers,
you're all a dime-a-dozen!

WILD BILL

But, Rory...

RORY

Dad, I'm goin' alone from here on
out! Even Brian Jones told me the
band would bring me down.

BEN SOLOMON

You'd rather listen to a stranger
than your own father?

RORY

He's no prize, Ben. You're not
either.

Rory turns to leave.

RORY (cont'd)

Sorry, Darrell. I wish it could
have worked out.

DARRELL

You can't do this.

WILD BILL

You need us, Rory!

RORY

Bullshit! We come into this world
alone, and we go out alone!

He leaves, never turning his back.

EXT. NEW YORK HIGHWAY - DAY - 1969

Short-haired Rory gazes out the window of a creeping Yellow Cab. Thousands of long-haired HIPPIES trudge along the roadside carrying blankets, backpacks and food. Usual hippie garb: tie-dyed shirts, bellbottom jeans, granny dresses, etc.

INT. YELLOW CAB - DAY

The TAXI DRIVER slows for two New York State TROOPERS.

TAXI DRIVER

Hi. I've got Rory Thunder. He's got to be on stage later.

The Troopers peer into the rear window at Rory, wearing an out-of-date Nehru shirt.

TROOPER ONE

May I see your pass, Sir?

TROOPER TWO

That's him. I've still got "Shockwave" on a forty-five.

RORY

Hold on to it! Probably be a collector's item someday!

TROOPER ONE

We'll run you up to the heli-pad. They'll fly you in, Mr. Thunder.

RORY

Great! Appreciate it!

Trooper One climbs into his cruiser. The beanie's activated.

TAXI DRIVER

Son-of-a-bitch. He's really going to do it.

The taxi follows the Trooper, beanie flashing, occasional SIREN BURSTS. Hippies stare inside. Some are angry. A SKINNY GIRL wearing a "Woodstock" tee shirt (a bird perched on the neck of a guitar) throws the finger.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Rory boosts himself into the WHIRRING chopper. He's astonished to see JANIS JOPLIN and JIMI HENDRIX!

RORY
Wow! Janis, I met you once at
Newport. Rory Thunder.

JANIS
Oh, yeah, baby. You were fantastic.
Ha, ha, ha!

She shrugs at Jimi. Rory's embarrassed. They ride in silence.
The chopper passes over a SEA OF PEOPLE.

JIMI
Cool.

JANIS
We'll be partyin' tonight, baby!

Rory shrinks, out of his element.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - NIGHT

Hippie WAVY GRAVY clowns beside the Hog Farm's bus, "Road Hog", painted in psychedelic colors.

MUSICIANS pass joints and sip off wine bottles.

The natural amphitheater is loaded with half-a-million FANS.

Promoter CHIP MONCK runs around with a clipboard, organizing the bands. He scopes out Rory, alone with a bottle.

RORY
Hey, man, when am I going to play?

Chip looks at his name tag.

CHIP
Rory Thunder. Ah, not sure right
now.

RORY
Well. I'm here, man.

CHIP
I'll see what I can do.

Chip's perplexed by Rory's short hair and out-of-date shirt.

EXT. WOODSTOCK STAGE - NIGHT

Massive Sea of Love. The ANNOUNCER recites messages.

ANNOUNCER TWO

Linda from Ohio, your medicine is in the bumper's tent. That's Linda from Ohio. And this note, beware of the brown acid going around. It's your trip, but be careful. And, a programming note, before Mr. Jimi Hendrix takes the stage, we have the group Sha Na Na to perform. Our apologies to Rory Thunder, we just couldn't fit him in. Again, we're sorry. Maybe next year, Rory.

A CHANT arises, small at first, then louder.

CROWD

RORY THUNDER, ONE HIT WONDER, RORY THUNDER, ONE HIT WONDER, RORY THUNDER, ONE HIT WONDER!

The CHANTING subsides.

Offstage, Rory gulps from his bottle, weakly smiling at anyone who'll notice.

INT. GIANFRANCESCO'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - 1972

Rory's watching the Watergate hearings on television.

Tony enters wearing business clothes.

TONY

Look at those sons-of-bitches. The biggest thieves that ever lived.

No response from Rory.

TONY (cont'd)

When your mother gets back, tell her don't wait up. I'll be late.

He looks in a mirror, fixes his hair, then exits.

A CAR PULLS IN. Rory rises to look, then back to the sofa.

YELLING outside.

A CAR SPEEDS OFF.

Billie walks in, worn, with heavy make-up around the eyes.

RORY
What's going on?

BILLIE
Oh, nothing. I paid a doctor's bill
from the wrong account. You know
him, he yells.

RORY
Are you alright?

BILLIE
I'm fine! Is this Watergate thing
on again?

Rory rises.

RORY
You've got some stuff on...

He touches her temple.

BILLIE
Ow!

RORY
What happened?

BILLIE
I bumped myself in the cellar. The
damn ceiling is so low near the
furnace.

RORY
Ma.

BILLIE
What? Oh, come on. We're fine,
Rory. Tony's under a lot of
pressure. Don't worry! He's
Italian!

Rory smells a rat.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The marquee reads: BOB DYLAN.

Rory drags Sutzie past CONCERTGOERS crowding the entrance.

SUTZIE
How do we get in?

RORY
Don't worry!

He tugs her down an adjacent alley.

EXT. STAGEDOOR - NIGHT

Two burly GUARDS man the rear door. One is the massive Security Guard from the Rolling Stones concert.

SECURITY GUARD ONE
Hey! Rory Thunder, right?

RORY
Yeah! Hey, buddy, how you doin'?

SECURITY GUARD ONE
Real good, man. Good to see you.

SECURITY GUARD TWO
He's not on the list.

SECURITY GUARD ONE
Mr. Thunder, we'll have to get you a pass.

SECURITY GUARD TWO
Excuse me.

RORY
Great!
(to Sutzie)
See, I told you. They know me.
Look, I brought Bob's guitar pick,
the one he dropped. He's going to
laugh his ass off when I remind
him!

The stage door opens. Inside, Bob Dylan, in white pancake make-up, plays "Be-Bop-A-Lula" on a piano. He's surrounded by assorted FREAKS in costumes, including Joan Baez and RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOT in an exaggerated cowboy hat.

Rory waves. No response. The door closes.

SECURITY GUARD ONE
I'll never forget the night you
opened for the Stones, Mr. Thunder.
That was quite a...

RORY
What a zoo, huh?

SECURITY GUARD ONE
Sure opened my eyes.

Security Two comes back.

SECURITY GUARD TWO
Sorry, Mr. Thunder, we can't help
you tonight.

RORY
What?

SECURITY GUARD TWO
Maybe you should contact Mr.
Dylan's management. We've got
strict orders, if you're not on the
list, we can't let you in.

RORY
What the hell are you talkin'
about? Dylan knows me! Didn't you
tell him I was here?

SECURITY GUARD TWO
Yes, sir. I'm sorry.

SECURITY GUARD ONE
Sorry, Mr. Thunder.

RORY
WHAT DID HE SAY?

SECURITY GUARD TWO
Maybe you should...

RORY
WHAT DID DYLAN SAY?

SECURITY GUARD TWO
He said he never heard of you, sir.

RORY
Never heard of me? I'M RORY
THUNDER, FOR CHRIST SAKES! Jesus!
Come on, let's get out of here!
Fuckin' assholes.

He pulls Sutzie down the alley.

RORY (cont'd)
See what happens. They get too big
for their britches. They forget.
Choose your idols well. That's what
he told me. Yeah, right. Fuckin'
piece of shit.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Rory's slumped over a boilermaker, hardly paying attention to
the HIPPIE beside him or the BARMAID listening.

HIPPIE
All kinds of freaks are doin' it,
man. Back to the land, that's where
it's at. We got to get back to the
garden. Fuckin' Altamont did it for
me. I'm out, man. I got my spot
picked out already.

BARMAID
Where?

HIPPIE
Appalachians. North Carolina. My
buddy showed me how to grow pot.
He's fuckin' rich!

Rory perks up.

RORY
No shit.

HIPPIE
It's the females, man. I never knew
that. You got to separate the
females from the males to get the
good bud. If you don't, it gets all
seedy.

BARMAID
How do you tell the difference?

HIPPIE

I'm not sure, but I know its the
males that fuck it up.

Sutzie returns from the Ladies Room.

SUTZIE

I called Darrell to come and get
me.

RORY

What'd you do that for?

SUTZIE

I can't sit here and watch!

RORY

Watch what?

SUTZIE

YOU!

RORY

Well, FUCK IT THEN! GO ON!

SUTZIE

He wants me to wait outside.

RORY

GO ON, FOR CHRIST SAKES!

Rory rises too fast and spills his drinks!

RORY (cont'd)

Oh, shit! Sorry!

BARMAID

It's okay.

Sutzie's crying.

SUTZIE

You're always sorry, but you keep
on doing it.

RORY

GET OUT OF HERE!

BARMAID

Sir, please.

Sutzie slowly walks out, sobbing.

RORY
ROBIN HOOD IS DEAD!

BARMAID
Sir.

RORY
No more Robin Hood.

He weaves to a pay phone.

RORY (cont'd)
(into phone)
Hey, Dad. Hey, ah, I'm going to
take off for awhile. I don't know
yet. Somewhere. I just got to go.
Cancel that. Yeah, cancel all of
it. And, do me a favor, will you?
Call Ma. Come on! Dad, do it for
me, will you? I'm worried about
her. She looks terrible. Will you
do it? You promise? Alright, good.
And, and tell Sutzie I love her
when you see her, okay? Yeah, I'm
fine. I'm okay. I love you, too,
Dad. Thanks. I'll call you. Bye.

He tramps back to the bar, almost knocking over a table.

The Barmaid finishes wiping up his mess.

RORY (cont'd)
Cash me out. Give one to my pal
here.

BARMAID
You got it.

HIPPIE
You leavin'? Where you headed, man?

RORY
Somewhere nobody knows me.

Rory wanders to the door.

HIPPIE
Take it easy, man. Thanks for the
brew!
(to Barmaid)
Who was that guy?

The Barmaid shrugs.

EXT. ARKANSAS, LITTLE ROCK AIRPORT - DAY

Bleary and flush, Rory lugs two suitcases, clenching a map in his teeth. He approaches a BLACK CABBIE leaning on his vehicle: Black and White Taxi Company.

RORY

Excuse me. They told me no buses run up to Newton County.

BLACK CABBIE

You got that right.

RORY

How much would it cost to take a cab up there?

BLACK CABBIE

Don't know. Never been there.

RORY

I'll pay whatever you want.

BLACK CABBIE

My people don't go up that way. You know what I'm sayin'?

RORY

Whatever you want, man. Cash.

BLACK CABBIE

A man with a plan, huh?

The Cabbie thinks hard on it.

BLACK CABBIE (cont'd)

I ain't gonna be up there at night. You got that?

RORY

Cash, man.

BLACK CABBIE

Alright. Get in.

MONTAGE - THE CAB RIDE

A) EXT. GHETTO - DAY. The Cabbie kisses his WIFE and KIDS at his door. They wave as if he's headed for the Moon. Puppies scamper out. One runs to Rory. He takes a shine to it.

B) EXT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - DAY. Rory exits carrying large canvas bundles. As he stuffs them into the trunk, the puppy peeks out the rear window.

C) EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY. The Cabbie carries canned beer, cigarettes and whiskey. The bottle drops on the asphalt. Cabbie quickly swipes it up. Parched Rory's been saved.

D) CAB, TRAVEL SHOT - DAY. The Black and White Taxi Company rolls into the wild Ozark Mountains. Rory and the puppy peer out the back window. Both look petrified.

E) INT. CAB - DAY. Rory's in the front seat drinking, bopping to music, as the cab twists along steep mountain roads. He passes a reefer to the Cabbie.

F) INT. CAB - NIGHT. Rory's driving half-cocked, leaning into the curves. The Cabbie's laughing, drunk in the back seat with the puppy.

G) EXT. OLD FARM - DAWN. The homestead has been abandoned, the buildings dilapidated. Cabbie leans on his taxi while Rory and the puppy inspect the grounds. As they leave, the faded mailbox reads: Hiram Billington.

BACK ON SCENE

EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS - DAY

The sun rises over the green wilderness.

The Black and White Taxi wheels onto the shoulder with the red-eyed Cabbie driving and Rory gazing from the back seat.

They crawl out and start emptying the trunk.

BLACK CABBIE

Sure you want to get out here?

RORY

Yeah, I think this is about where my Dad came. Doesn't matter really; looks all the same to me. Well, it's been good ridin' with you.

BLACK CABBIE

Yeah, man. Wasn't as bad as I thought it'd be.

RORY

You sure you got enough money?

BLACK CABBIE
We're cool. Hey, ah, you ever want
a real job, ah, maybe you cut that
hair and, you know, drive.

They both laugh!

BLACK CABBIE (cont'd)
Is that it?

RORY
Let me get my buddy.

Rory lets the puppy out. He and Cabbie shake hands.

BLACK CABBIE
You one crazy bastard.

The dog follows Rory into the woods.

EXT. OZARK CAMPSITE - DAY - MONTHS LATER

A panoramic view of mountains, buttes and valleys.

A tent is perched on a slope beside a rushing stream. Pots
and pans hang from trees. Animal skins dry. It's hot, it's
buggy and it's silent.

Rory's bronzed and bearded. He sits on a homemade chair,
reading an astronomy book, allowing bugs to crawl on him.

Happy, the pup, now about six months old, pants in the shade.

Rory closes a book and turns on a transistor radio.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)
"And she's got, ah, let's see,
seven or eight baby chicks down in
Jasper. Says she'll trade 'em for a
cook pot. Seems the handle broke on
her old one. If anyone can fix it,
they're welcome to it. So, that's
Earlene in Jasper with baby
chicks..."

He turns it off.

A huge beetle plods out of the woods. Rory watches it creep
over twigs. Suddenly, a lizard darts out and snatches the
beetle, swallowing the hind end, leaving the beetle's eyes
bugging out!

Then a green snake zips out and gulps the lizard! Now, the lizard's going down the snake's throat as the beetle disappears into the lizard!

Happy BARKS at the snake!

RORY
No, Happy. NO! Let's get some
water. Come on!

Happy wags as his master gathers buckets.

EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS, POT PATCH - DAY

Fifty marijuana plants bake in the sun. They's about four feet tall, green and healthy.

Rory slogs from the woods with slopping buckets.

RORY
Hey, girls.

He prunes as he waters, caressing the plants.

Distant THUNDER RUMBLES. He looks to the sky.

RORY (cont'd)
Happy! HAPPY!

He WHISTLES. Happy prances up with the snake in his mouth.

INT. OZARK CAMPSITE, TENT - NIGHT

THUNDER! Rain PELTS the canvas roof as water soaks the floor.

The stream is RUSHING. Bright lightning! THUNDER!

Rory's on his sleeping bag, patting the shivering dog.

CRACKING, DEAFENING THUNDER!

A blinding flash, then... the shadow of a BEAR on the wall!

RORY
Oh, shit.

Happy WHIMPERS, tail between his legs.

Rory scrambles, grabs his .22 rifle and a bicycle horn!

More WHIMPERING.

RORY (cont'd)

Shhh.

The Bear rubs against the tent wall. Rory TROOTS the horn! The Bear scratches the tent-flap! TROOT! TROOT! TROOT! TROOT!

Rory FIRES the rifle through the roof! Rain streams in! TROOT! TROOT! TROOT! TROOT! TROOT!

FOOTSTEPS FADE as The Beast wanders back into the woods.

Rory's shaking; Happy's cowering.

EXT. OZARK CAMPSITE - DAY

Bright sun. Rory's scrubs pots and pans, dripping sweat, while trying to fend off insects.

FOOTSTEPS and TALKING in the woods. Happy BARKS!

Rory hides his gun.

Two guys carrying inner tubes emerge from the bush. VERNON is twenty, tall, skinny, with a goatee and confidence. TRAVIS is fifteen, pimply, gawky and nervous.

VERNON

Howdy!

RORY

How you doin'?

VERNON

Campin', huh?

RORY

Yup.

VERNON

We're headed down to the river.
Gonna float back to town. Been here
awhile, huh?

RORY

Yup. You're the first people I've
seen out here.

VERNON

Well, not many people come way out
here.

TRAVIS
That's for sure.

An awkward moment as they check each other out.

RORY
You guys want a beer?

VERNON
Beer! Yeah, man! How'd you get
beer?

RORY
Drove into Missouri.

TRAVIS
Cool.

VERNON
You got a car?

RORY
Yup.

As Rory unflaps the tent for the beer, Vernon sniffs the air
and winks to the kid.

RORY (cont'd)
Here you go.

VERNON
Thanks, man.

TRAVIS
Thanks.

VERNON
By the way, I'm Vernon and this
here is Travis.

RORY
I'm, ah, Bill.

VERNON
So, you ain't from around here,
right?

RORY
Nope. From back East.

VERNON
I could tell by the way you talk.
It's okay out here, hottern' hell
now, but you get used to it.

TRAVIS
I like it. The hotter the better.

VERNON
Yeah.

Another uncomfortable pause. Vernon sips his beer.

VERNON (cont'd)
Ahh, that's good. You don't mind if
we take these with us?

RORY
Go ahead.

VERNON
Alright, man. We gonna have a nice
float. Come on, Travis. Thanks.

Vernon and Travis head down the pot patch pathway.

RORY
Hey, ah, it's easier if you go down
that other way.

VERNON
We're okay, man.

Rory grabs his gun.

RORY
Go down the other way.

VERNON
Hey, man, take it easy! I don't
want to get into your business, but
we could smell your pot about a
mile away!

Rory's shocked!

VERNON (cont'd)
They got National Guard out here,
man. All they do this time of year
is look for weed. They're gonna
start usin' helicopters!

Rory lowers his gun.

VERNON (cont'd)
We ain't the enemy, man. Me and him
is doin' the same thing. We
wouldn't be caught dead near it.

RORY
So, ah, what do you do?

VERNON
We stay in town. It grows by
itself. This time of year I get the
hell out of here. Go up to Iowa and
detassle corn for a few weeks. It
gets me away from here until
harvest. You stay out here, man,
they'll get you.

RORY
No shit.

VERNON
Either that or some asshole
hillbilly'll come along and hurt
you. I'm serious, man.

RORY
I'm not worried about that. It's
the bears.

TRAVIS
The bears are cool.

VERNON
The bears ain't gonna rip you.
Neither are we. You gotta worry
about the Man.

Rory sighs.

VERNON (cont'd)
You got a car, right? I'm takin'
the kid here to Iowa this year. I
usually hitchhike. If you wanna
come, we'll pay for your gas and
oil. We get there in a day. About
eleven hours. It's hard work, but
the money's real good.

Rory's muddled, scratching his beard.

RORY
Look, ah, now you got me worried. I
don't know.
(MORE)

RORY(cont'd)

I did all this work, I don't want to blow it. Why should I trust you? I've got enough trouble trusting people I know.

VERNON

Up to you, man. You stay here, you're gonna get busted. Or worse. Some of these good 'ol boys around here don't give two shits about slittin' a Yankee throat.

EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS, COUNTRY STORE - DAY

Rory's at a pay phone beside an idling, smoking Cadillac. He picks up the phone, places it back in the cradle, then takes a deep breath before going through with the call.

RORY

(into phone)

Darrell? Hi. I'm okay. How about you? Good. Ah, I don't know. Hey, happy, ah, belated birthday. Thanks. Okay, ah, is Dad there? I'll see ya. Dad? You okay? You sound tired. Oh. Did you get my card? Good. Dad, did you call Ma? Oh. What'd he say? Well, do you think you could try again? Alright. I get it. Hey, I get it, okay? Have you seen Sutzie? Yeah, I wrote her two letters. I don't know, I haven't been to the post office in a month. I don't know. I'm better off out here for right now. Look, I'll, ah, I'll call you when I can. Okay. I love you, too, Dad. Okay, bye. Hey. You'd better get some rest. I don't think "the hair of the dog" is the answer anymore, Dad. Oh. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, don't go buyin' any green bananas. Bye.

A muddy junker pulls in beside the smoking Caddy. Vernon and Travis jump out with knapsacks. The driver's a WORN WOMAN, forty, wearing a wrinkled aloha shirt, puffing a Camel.

VERNON

Hey, man! You ready?

WORN WOMAN

You drivin' this to Iowa?

RORY

Yeah.

WORN WOMAN

My boy's never been away from home.
He's all I got. I want you to...

RORY

Excuse me, I'm a taxi. I'm no
babysitter.

WORN WOMAN

I give him twenty-eight dollars for
his share of the gas money up and
back.

RORY

Look, mam, I, I can't take
responsibility for...

WORN WOMAN

We're countin' on that corn money.
We ain't hardly got food in the
winter.

Rory glares at Vernon.

RORY

Alright. Get in.

Travis climbs in the back seat and Happy licks his face.

MONTAGE - THE TRIP TO IOWA

A) INT. CADILLAC - DAY. Rory wheels down winding mountain roads. Vernon passes him a joint. When he passes it back, the kid grabs it from the back seat, takes a toke and blows it in Happy's face. Rory's annoyed, shaking his head.

B) EXT. HONKY-TONK HIGHWAY - DAY. The Caddy passes dilapidated liquor stores, cocktail lounges and seedy strip joints. Rory pulls over and chats with a PROSTITUTE. He points to Travis. The kid freaks before they pull off, Vernon and Rory laughing.

C) EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY. Rory finishes gassing when Travis exits the store. The kid hands Happy a chew toy, then pulls three cans of beer from his pants.

D) INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY. Rory, Vernon and Travis stroll the sporting goods aisle - long hair, jeans, just out of the mountains. They round a corner and confront a family of straight-arrow MIDWESTERNERS.

The flat-landers stare at the freaky trio long enough to prompt Rory into making an ape face. Vernon and Travis howl when Rory scratches his armpits.

E) EXT. IOWA CAMPSITE - NIGHT. The Caddy rolls into the labor camp, past tents with campfires. MIGRANT WORKERS are resting, some with CHILDREN, but mostly males: down-and-outers, Hispanics, young, old - the fringes of society.

BACK ON SCENE

EXT. IOWA CAMPSITE - NIGHT

WORKERS ring a fire, drinking, sharing food, laughing, listening to a GUITAR PLAYER.

An ICHABOD CRANE look-alike juggles oranges.

One Worker gives another a haircut.

A MEXICAN WOMAN offers a communal pot of beans.

Rory and Vernon eat while Travis plays ball with Happy.

A Worker signals for quiet. A police cruiser creeps into camp and circles the perimeter. The Workers stare back at the COPS - an Us versus Them atmosphere.

The Cops leave and the BOSSMAN emerges from the dark. He looks like a tall, aging California surfer.

BOSSMAN

CAN I GET YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE?
EVERYONE, LISTEN UP! FIRST, I
SIGNED THE PAPERS TO MOVE ON TO THE
BLUEBERRIES. I'LL KNOW ABOUT THE
APPLES IN A COUPLE WEEKS. NOW, IT
HASN'T BEEN HOT ENOUGH TO START
DETASSELING. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO
HOLD OFF FOR AWHILE. I'VE BEEN
LOOKING AT THE WEATHER REPORTS AND
IT COULD BE A WEEK. SO, YOU FOLKS
THAT HAVE BEEN WITH ME FOR AWHILE
CAN GET ADVANCES IF YOU NEED IT.
THE NEW PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO HOLD
ON. WE'VE GOT PERMISSION TO STAY
HERE AS LONG AS IT TAKES, THE
LOCALS KNOW HOW IMPORTANT WE ARE TO
THEIR ECONOMY. BUT, I ASK THAT YOU
NOT GO INTO TOWN AND RAISE HELL.

(MORE)

BOSSMAN(cont'd)
WE'VE GOT SOME TIME TO KILL AND, AS
USUAL, WE'LL STICK TOGETHER AND
HELP EACH OTHER OUT. OKAY, HAVE A
GOOD NIGHT.

A few Workers CLAP as the Boss leaves.

Rory picks up the guitar.

RORY
"Big Boss Man, don't you hear me
when I call? Big Boss Man, don't
you hear me when I call? Well, you
ain't so big, you just tall, that's
all!"

APPLAUSE!

RORY (cont'd)
"You got me workin' Boss Man,
workin' 'round the clock. I want me
a drink of water, but you won't let
me stop. Big Boss Man, can't you
hear me when I call? You ain't so
big, you just tall, that's all."

APPLAUSE! SHOUTS!

RORY (cont'd)
"Gonna get myself a Boss Man, one
who'll treat me right. Work me hard
in the daytime, but I'll rest easy
at night! Big Boss man, don't you
hear me when I call? Oh, you ain't
so big, you just tall, that's all!"

CHEERS!

VERNON
You sound like a professional,
Bill!

TRAVIS
That was cool!

The kid runs off with Happy.

VERNON
Did you bring some extra cash?

RORY
Some.

VERNON

That's okay. We'll be alright.
Travis! You better eat some beans!
It's gonna be slim pickins' around
here for awhile.

EXT. IOWA HIGHWAY - DAY

Cars WHIZZ by. Vernon's twirling two hubcaps on his index fingers like pie plates. He tosses one frisbee-style toward the parked Caddy where Happy's fogging the rear window.

Travis and Rory are collecting cans and bottles, stuffing them into garbage bags.

A HORN BLARES. Passing TEENAGERS YELL at them.

TRAVIS

So, how'd you learn to play so
good? I wish I could play like
that.

RORY

When I was a kid, I dreamed I could
play the piano. Just took to it.

TRAVIS

Wow. You should be in a band or
something instead of out here. This
stinks.

RORY

There's one.

Travis picks up a bottle, then throws it back.

TRAVIS

No refund. They don't take these.

RORY

So, your mom was serious about not
having food in the winter.

TRAVIS

Yeah.

RORY

Where's your father?

TRAVIS

He took off before I was born. A
truck driver, you know?

(MORE)

TRAVIS(cont'd)

I mean, I never blamed him. Look at my Ma. Would you want to wake up next to that?

RORY

Boy, you're a hot ticket, alright.

TRAVIS

How about you?

RORY

What?

TRAVIS

You got a family?

RORY

Yup. Father, mother, brother. I have a girl, but things are kind of on the rocks right now.

TRAVIS

So, where you from?

RORY

Rhode Island.

TRAVIS

What's that, like Long Island?

RORY

No. Everybody says that. It's the smallest state. Everybody there has inferiority complexes.

TRAVIS

Ha, ha. You're funny, man. Must be nice to have a real family.

RORY

Well, my folks got split up when I was a kid. It never felt like a, a real family.

TRAVIS

You got more than me. Hey, look, I was savin' this up for a rainy day. I think we could use it now.

Travis produces a fifty-dollar bill.

RORY

Where'd you steal that?

TRAVIS
I DIDN'T STEAL IT! I made it
sellin' eggs. Let's get some
groceries, some steaks and beer and
shit. And dog food!

RORY
You little bastard. I guess things
are lookin' up!

Vernon holds up a third hubcap and twirls it on his finger.

EXT. IOWA CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Smouldering campfire. Rory's playing an instrumental on
guitar. Workers eat, drink and rest.

WORKER
Want more rice, Bill?

RORY
No, no, all set.

WORKER
Beer?

RORY
Sure, I'll take one of those. HEY,
EVERYBODY! Hey, ah, I wanted to say
something to all you guys. You
know, I've been by myself for
awhile now, up in the Ozarks. I got
a hold of this astronomy book and I
started looking out at the night
sky trying to figure what's out
there. We're on this planet, alone,
we've got water and air and we're
just the right distance from the
sun so we don't fry, but nobody
knows we're here. That's what I
came up with. There's nothing going
on out there. Just a bunch of dead
planets and burned up stars. So,
one day, I'm sittin' there with
bugs all over me and I see this
beetle come crawling out of the
woods. Then, quick as shit, a
lizard darts out and snatches it
up. The lizard's chompin' down on
the beetle, and bingo, a snake zips
out and grabs the lizard!

(MORE)

RORY(cont'd)

The beetle's goin' down the
lizard's mouth, the lizard's goin'
down the snake's mouth, and later,
Happy eats the snake!

LAUGHTER!

RORY (cont'd)

That's when I figured there's
REALLY nothin' goin' on, we're all
here eatin' each other!

LAUGHTER! Rory picks Happy up.

RORY (cont'd)

It wasn't 'till I came out here
with you people that I realized
we're, we're all on this ride
together.

WORKER

No, Bill, you had it right the
first time! WE ARE ALL HERE EATIN'
EACH OTHER!

LAUGHTER! MUSIC!

EXT. IOWA CORNFIELD - DAY

Strong sunlight. Rory's dripping, popping tassels from the
corn tips, slogging along the muddy path like a machine.

POP. POP. POP. POP.

Happy's panting, exhausted, shading under the sharp leaves.

Distant THUNDER.

Rory squints skyward, is blinded, but presses on.

POP. POP. POP. POP.

He's startled by two sneakers protruding from the stalks.
Travis is lying face down in the mud!

RORY

Oh, Man!

Rory flips the kid over! His eyes are half shut.

RORY (cont'd)

Travis. Hey!

He shakes him!

RORY (cont'd)
TRAVIS! WAKE UP!

Rory pours water on his face!

RORY (cont'd)
TRAVIS! TRAVIS!

THUNDER!

RORY (cont'd)
JESUS!

He pumps his chest!

RORY (cont'd)
HEY! COME ON, MAN! TRAVIS!

Rory attempts mouth-to-mouth! More chest-pumping!

RORY (cont'd)
WAKE UP! Oh, God. TRAVIS! WAKE UP!

THUNDER!

RORY (cont'd)
VERNON! VERRRRNON! HELP!

Rory's trembling, unraveled, looking up and down the corn maze. He leaps up and runs down the row!

RORY (cont'd)
HELP! HELP!

THUNDER!

As Rory fades away, Happy pads to Travis's face and licks.

It starts to rain and the kid wakes up.

EXT. IOWA CAMPSITE - DAY

Light rain. Rory, Vernon, Travis and Happy are huddled under a tarp tied to the muddy Cadillac.

VERNON
We gotta get a big cooler, fill it
with ice and water, and squeeze
about a dozen lemons into it. We
gotta get the Vitamin C.

RORY
And salt. Don't football players
take salt tablets?

TRAVIS
Ugh. I hate salt. Can't we put
sugar in it?

VERNON
If we leave it up to you, we'd fill
it full of beer, you little toad.

A new pick-up rolls in and the Bossman gets out.

BOSSMAN
You boys better clean up your site
and follow the others. We're movin'
to higher ground. They say a
levee's weakening upriver! If I
were you, I'd do it now - the sky's
going to open up!

Distant THUNDER. The Bossman leaves.

VERNON
That there's a bunch of shit. Last
year, the same thing happened.
These local guys told me there's
never been a flood here in the
history of floods!

Rory reaches from the tarp and watches the rain on his hand.

INT. IOWA, RORY'S TENT - NIGHT

RAIN PATTERS off the canvas roof. Rory's half-asleep,
restless, rolling in his sleeping bag. He wakes and picks up
the soggy bag. The floor is soaked.

VRROOM! VRROOM!

A basketball-sized headlight shines through the tent wall.

A motorcycle REVS! VRROOM! VRROOM!

THUNDER!

Rory slips and falls on the slippery floor!

EXT. IOWA, RORY'S TENT - NIGHT

Rain. An idling Harley RUMBLES, mounted by an ELVIS look-alike: leathers, coal-colored locks and handsome face.

Wide-eyed Rory crawls out of the tent into the mud.

ELVIS
SON, YOU BETTER MOVE ON! THE LEVEE
BUSTED WIDE OPEN AND IT'S ALL
HEADED THIS WAY!

Elvis REVS it up! VROOM! VROOM! The King engages the clutch.

ELVIS (cont'd)
MOVE TO HIGHER GROUND, SON! AND
TAKE CARE OF YOUR PEOPLE!

RORY (V.O.)
It started with Elvis. And it ended
with Elvis.

Elvis wheels his bike around and slowly rides away.

RORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
The son-of-a-bitch looked just like
him: jet-black hair, sideburns,
even the ducktail. He even had that
Southern drawl. And those words
"take care of your people" kept
ringin' in my head like a song. You
know, when I was alone in the
Ozarks, I did a lot of readin'. I
remembered a thing from Tolstoy, I
think it was. He said something
like true life begins where the
tiny bit begins. What seems to us
minute and infinitely small -
that's where the alterations take
place. True life isn't lived where
great external changes take place -
the massive migrations where people
move about, clash, fight and kill
each other. True life is lived
where these tiny, tiny,
infinitesimally small changes
occur. I guess it was my soul
tellin' me a rebel makin' noise by
himself ain't worth a damn.

The motorcycle tail light fades into the dark.

EXT. IOWA, HIGH GROUND, CAMPSITE - DAY

Rory's perched on a bluff above the campsite, now flooded under seven feet of water. Only the tent ridgepoles remain.

RORY

Hey, guys. Hey! Wake up!

Vernon crawls out from his sleeping bag. Travis and Happy emerge from a pup tent. They gaze down on the deluge.

TRAVIS

Wow.

VERNON

Man, we're lucky we got out of there.

TRAVIS

What are we going to do now?

RORY

Look, ah, I've got to go home. I'm going to hit the road.

VERNON

What?

RORY

I'm going to give you guys the car. I wrote up a bill of sale to make it legal. You can have all my stuff in Arkansas, including the pot patch. But, I've got to leave Happy. I can't travel with him. Come here, boy.

He hugs the dog.

TRAVIS

Are you sure?

RORY

Sure about leavin', or sure about Happy?

VERNON

Either one.

RORY

Yeah, I have to go. Travis, you're great with him. It's the best thing.

Rory shakes hands with his two confused buddies.

RORY (cont'd)

I left some cash in the glove compartment. Now, you guys get that money you're after. And make sure you put oil in the car.

Rory walks away with only the clothes he's wearing.

Happy follows him.

RORY (cont'd)

Go on. Go on, Happy.

The dog doesn't get it.

RORY (cont'd)

Hold him, Travis!

At the edge of the rise, Rory stops to wave.

VERNON

See you, Bill!

TRAVIS

We ain't gonna see you again?

Teary Travis holds Happy's paw and flaps it.

EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - NIGHT

Taxi headlights flash on the boulder painted with the "B".

Rory climbs out, scruffy, bearded, in his labor camp clothes.

Darrell exits the house with a flashlight and spots his brother. They hug, almost to tears.

DARRELL

We've been tryin' to find you for a couple weeks now. Dad's in the hospital.

RORY

What's wrong?

DARRELL

They operated on his liver. He's okay. We saw him this morning. Ma's here.

RORY

Holy shit.

DARRELL

He called her just before he went in. Tony's been hittin' her. Guess it's been going on for awhile now.

RORY

I knew it. That son-of-a-bitch. I'm gonna get that motherfucker.

DARRELL

Hold on. Hold on. She's alright. She's going to stay here. Okay? She's alright. We've gotta get Dad better now.

RORY

Whew. Oh, man. Where is he?

DARRELL

Newport Hospital. We'll go in the morning. All of us. It's too late now. He's probably still sedated.

The front door opens.

BILLIE

Who is it, Darrell?

Darrell steps aside.

BILLIE (cont'd)

Rory? Is that you?

They rush into each other's arms.

RORY

Hi, Ma.

BILLIE

Oh, God, Rory! You're the best medicine in the world.

INT. NEWPORT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The corridor is darkened, only faint sounds of medical equipment BEEPING. Rory's creeping along, still in his work clothes, unshaven, checking rooms.

He comes to a door labeled "William Billington".

Rory opens the door and there's no one there. The bed is made, the floors are polished, ready for the next patient.

INT. NEWPORT HOSPITAL, NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT

The lone NURSE is frightened by the disheveled young man marching toward her.

NURSE

You're not supposed to be here.

RORY

I'm looking for my father.
Billington. 207.

NURSE

You'll have to come back in the morning, sir, and talk to the doctor.

RORY

I just want to see if he's okay.

NURSE

I'll have to call security if you don't leave now.

Rory takes off running, opening doors!

RORY

Dad! Dad! Wild Bill!

A SECURITY GUARD appears at the end of the corridor. Rory runs the opposite way, throwing doors open!

RORY (cont'd)

DAD! WILD BILL! DAD! DAD!

Another SECURITY GUARD.

Rory's trapped.

He bolts out a stairwell exit.

EXT. NEWPORT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rory bursts out the ground-floor exit, sweating, out-of-breath, frantic. He runs to the front entrance.

Sutzie's there, KNOCKING on the locked glass doors.

They cling to each other.

SUTZIE
He's gone, Rory.

RORY
No.

SUTZIE
Your Mom called. They just found out.

Rory sobs.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
I know, honey. Let it out. I love you so much.

He tries to control himself, but can't.

SUTZIE (cont'd)
Let's go home, Robin Hood.

She leads him off into the night.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, BASEMENT - DAY

The Elvis poster is still on the wall. A few weeks have passed. Rory's clean-shaven, in fresh clothes, hunting through boxes. He finds the old 45rpm record player. Underneath is the broken "Hound Dog" disc he sat on.

He finds a new "Hound Dog" in a small stack and spins it.

ELVIS
"You ain't nothin' but a hound dog,
cryin' all the time. You ain't
nothin' but a hound dog, cryin' all
the time. Well, you ain't never
caught a rabbit and you ain't no
friend of mine!"

BILLIE (O.C.)
RORY! THERE'S SOMEONE HERE FOR YOU!

Rory climbs the stairs as the music continues.

ELVIS

"They said you were high class, but that was just a lie. They said you were high class, but that was just a lie. You ain't never caught a rabbit and you ain't no friend of mine!"

EXT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE - DAY

Vernon and Travis are leaning on the Arkansas Cadillac talking with Sutzie and Darrell.

Rory exits the house and Travis opens the rear door.

Happy leaps out and jumps into Rory's arms!

TRAVIS

He went into a depression!

Happy almost licks Rory's face off.

INT. RORY'S OCEANFRONT HOUSE, BASEMENT - DAY

In a finished corner, Rory Thunder paraphernalia is arranged like a shrine: pictures, albums, guitars, awards, etc.

Darrell, Sutzie, Rory, Vernon and Travis are seated.

Happy's sniffing everything.

VERNON

We found out who you were when they stopped us for a busted taillight.

TRAVIS

It was unreal. Rory Thunder.

VERNON

The one, the only.

SUTZIE

The only one.

RORY

Well, that's not who I am. I thought I was this guy Rory Thunder, but, I'm just me. Rory David Billington. Just me.

The basement lights flick on and off.

BILLIE (O.C.)
OKAY GUYS! I THINK WE'RE READY!

RORY
Okay, let's go. Come on, Happy!

EXT. BEACH - DAY

It's sunny, but the wind's whipping whitecaps!

Rory's marching to the sea in Wild Bill's old robe.

Darrell, Vernon and Travis, all in bathing suits, follow.

RORY
LET'S GO, BOYS! WE'VE GOT TO CATCH
HER BEFORE SHE LAYS DOWN!

Rory steps on a nail.

RORY (cont'd)
OW!

He tosses it into the rose hips and continues on.

From the house, the two women watch. Sutzie has her arm around Billie, holding Happy and smiling.

FADE OUT.

