

Sam Cooke: The Truth

Based on a true story

By

B.G. Rhule

Edited by
Celeste Bedford Walker

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ROLL CREDITS

SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES flash on screen.

Glimpses of SAM COOKE's life. Boyhood. Gospel singer.

Secular sex symbol. Murder victim:

Boyhood Sam with brothers

Teenage gospel singer Sam, in suit, with SOUL STIRRERS gospel group, church crowd

Adult sex symbol, pop singer Sam, in recording studio, on stage, in open collared shirt, smiling, sensuous, women reaching for him

Photograph of SAM COOKE INQUEST

Courtroom picture of an attractive Eurasian woman donning sunglasses and tweed suit, questioned on the witness stand by white haired male JUDGE.

The photograph comes to life

INT. LOS ANGELES COURTROOM - DAY

Dec., 1964, THE SAME COOKE INQUEST

Sensational trial. REPORTERS from around the world.

Every seat filled with SPECTATORS. The judge slams his gavel on the desk amid chaos.

JUDGE

Order! Order in the court!

The Eurasian woman nervously clutches her purse as angry spectators, mostly black citizens, hurl epithets at her.

BLACK CITIZEN

Streetwalker! Liar! Let him question her!

In the seats THE REVEREND COOKE, Sam's father, slides down the bench toward an older black woman named BERTHA FRANKLIN. Next to her, he leans over.

REV. COOKE

Why did you kill my son?

Ms. Franklin, her face expressionless, turns to respond.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO BACKYARD OF SAM COOKE HOME - DAY

Young SAM, his brothers, CHARLES and L.C. arrange popsicle sticks in rows, in the dirt. In the background through a kitchen window, we see Sam's mother, MRS. COOK, robust, cheerful woman, going back and forth preparing dinner. From time to time, she looks out at the children.

SAM

No L.C., don't bunch 'em. In rows,
like an audience. See, these sticks
are my people, my audience. I ain't
gonna work no 9-5 job like Papa. I'm
gonna sing to these sticks--my
audience.

Her husband, REVEREND COOK, handsome, dignified, comes up behind her, allowing us a look inside at other FAMILY MEMBERS around the table, siblings WILLIE, MARY, HATTIE, DAVID, AGNES, and AUNTIE, exiting swinging kitchen doors carrying plates to the dining area.

In the backyard, Sam's friend, LOU RAWLS joins the boys.

LOU

(pretending to be an emcee
holding a mike)

Ladies and gentlemen, Chicago's
newest singing sensation, Saaaam
Cooke!

(The boys clap and feign
audience cheering)

SAM

(smiles, sings)

*There'll be peace in the valley for
me one day...*

L.C. joins in... Lou is singing in a deep bass voice which makes LC laugh.

MRS. COOK calls from window.

MOTHER

L.C. Charles, Sam, come on in and
eat!

LOU
 Hey Sam, can I eat dinner with y'all
 tonight?

SAM
 Mama! Can Lou eat with us tonight?

MRS. COOK
 Of course he can.
 (to husband)
 That poor little Rawls boy again.

REV. COOKE
 Great God in heaven, that's three
 nights in a row.

MRS. COOK
 Brother Cooke, the Lord in his
 goodness has blessed us with more
 than enough food at this table.

AUNTIE
 You know your wife; she would feed
 every child on God's green earth if
 she got the chance.

MRS. COOK
 You must go visit his grandmother
 and see how she is doing. Brother
 Cooke. What with his mother abusing
 drugs and his daddy long gone...

The boys run in the house.

SAM
 (singing)
 There will be peace in the valley
 for me I pray...

INT. CONCERT HALL WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Onstage, a dynamic gospel group of four Negro men, called the SOUL STIRRERS, serve up their polyrhythmic harmonies to a wildly enthusiastic full house. As they conclude their number, they part to let handsome, confident Sam Cooke step to the microphone. Sam Cooke is a wonder. With his tremendous range and joyous smile he blows the audience away.

SECURITY restrains hysterical women, young and old trying to rush the stage. Sam breaks into a quieter hymn.

SAM
(singing)
"There will be peace..."

His eye catches the rapt gaze of a captivating teenage girl.

He favors her with an intimate smile, and notices the middle-aged woman next to her squeezing the teen's leather-gloved hand in almost orgasmic excitement. Sam sings to both of them. He bows and leaves the stage to deafening applause.

The Soul Stirrers break into a faster-paced tune.

THE SOUL STIRRERS
(singing)
Come and go, to that land...

Backstage, Sam waves away other BAND LEADERS as they approach. He grabs the arm of a CHURCH DEACON bobbing to the music, and pulls him to the curtain's corner. He points out the girl and the woman, gathering their belongings, and talking animatedly.

SAM
Brother man, you gotta do me a big
favor, that girl...

In the dressing room, Sam quickly towels off sweat, sprays on cologne, straightens his tie. A little out of breath, the deacon escorts the young girl and older woman into Sam's dressing room.

CHURCH DEACON
Ladies, I present you, Mr. Sam
Cooke.

Deacon tips his hat and leaves. Sam flashes his bright smile, as he and the young lady take each other in.

SAM
So, what are your names?

Caught up in the thrill of the moment, both women speak at once, then laugh nervously. Sam's reassuring manner seeks to set them at ease.

SAM
Okay, okay. Let's start over. So
what are your names? Are you from
around here?

MOM

Yes, we live here in D.C. I'm Mrs.
Holloway, and this is my daughter
Dorothy.

Sam clasps the mother's hand, looking deeply into her eyes
which dance with excitement.

SAM

It is a great pleasure to meet you.
Ma'am. I am so very honored that you
came to hear The Soul Stirrers
perform tonight.

He turns to Dorothy with a courtly bow and kisses her hand.
She blushes and giggles.

DOT

You can call me Dot. My friends do.

SAM

(laughs)
Okay, Dot. I do so love a name that
is easy to remember.

MOTHER

Your family lives in Chicago, don't
they, Mr. Cooke?

SAM

Yes, ma'am, they do. But please,
call me Sam!

MOTHER

Well, then, you best just quit
callin' me ma'am.

They laugh.

SAM

Alright, Mrs. Holloway, no more
ma'am. That's a Mississippi
holdover, you know.

MRS. HOLLOWAY

Oh, my, a Chicago boy with
Mississippi manners. I like that.
Whereabouts, in Mississippi Sam?

SAM

Clarksdale, about 100 miles south of
Memphis.

MRS. HOLLOWAY

I hear that Chicago is a good place
for colored folks to live.

SAM

Yes, my daddy is a preacher and he
and my mama raised seven of us kids
there on the south side.

SAM

Said he moved up North because he
wanted his children to walk down the
street heads held up high, not
cowering in fear like in the South.

MRS. HOLLOWAY

Amen to your daddy. That's the same
pride I want for Dot. She's just
about to graduate high school.

Sam smiles at Dot, mesmerized by her sweet beauty. She smiles
right back.

SAM

Looks like you did a fine job, Mrs.
Holloway, a very fine job. Say, Mrs.
Holloway, we have to travel to New
York tomorrow. I wonder if I might
have your permission to take Dot out
for a bite to eat. I promise to
bring her home before midnight.

DOT

Hey, wait!

SAM

What's wrong?

DOT

You never asked ME if I wanted to
go, Sam Cooke!

SAM

(taken aback)
Well?

DOT

Let's go!

Dot kisses her mother on the cheek.

DOT

Now, don't worry, I'll be just fine.

MRS. HOLLOWAY

Girl, I ain't worried about YOU.
Lord Jesus, it's this young man I'm
worried about.

Holding hands, Sam and Dot exit through backstage. Sam spots his road manager S.R. CRAIN chowing down on turkey legs and greens.

SAM

Say, S.R., we're going out for a
sandwich, don't wait up!

Crain nods his understanding, smiling wryly. He takes a hearty bite of turkey leg which he holds sideways in one hand, so as not to stain his suit.

S.R. CRAIN

Sam, you have a finance meeting at
12 p.m. sharp, in my hotel room,
before we leave for the airport,
man. You dig?

SAM

I'll be the first one there, man.

Crain nods again, still eating.

SAM

Damn, that man loves him some turkey
legs!
(Both he and Dot erupt in
laughter)

INT. D.C. SANDWICH SHOP - NIGHT

Sam and Dot at a table. Sam eyes her with ever growing appreciation. Graceful movements, Slim, sophisticated sense of dress for one so young, She removes her leather gloves.

DOT

That's pretty impressive - a finance
meeting for a gospel group. I
thought all you did was get up in
church and sing.

He takes her right hand, traces tiny circles with his finger in her palm.

SAM

Dot, it's like this: God's music or not, outside of church, gospel music is big business. I learn all about accounting, keeping the books, gross box office receipts, net profit, you name it.

DOT

(nodding)

So you, a young Negro singer, are learning the business as you learn your craft.

SAM

(chuckling)

Damn, girl. You're sharp as a tack. How old are you?

DOT

Seventeen.

SAM

Seventeen! You look more like fifteen...but you think like thirty.

DOT

Is that bad or is that good?

SAM

That's sensational. It means I can really talk to you. There's just one problem.

DOT

What's that?

SAM

You live here in D.C., girl! I live in this - this crazy whirlwind of touring, recording, promoting. Then I have my family back in Chicago. You'd love my family, Dot!

(He looks pensive for a brief moment.)

So you think maybe if I sent you a plane ticket you might consider visiting me in Chicago?

DOT

Sam, you just met me and already you want to fly me home like a souvenir! You're crazy, Sam Cooke!

He touches her cheek, softly.

SAM

I just might get real crazy about you.

DOT

You're sweet. You really are. It's just...well, all those women throwing themselves at you like the Holy Ghost himself got a vise-grip on their souls!

She imitates the women fainting.

DOT

Oh! Oh! Oh!

Sam falls out laughing.

SAM

Well, let's you me and the Holy Ghost get us some food. I'm starving.

DOT

You ever do How Great Thou Art?

SAM

That's a beautiful hymn, but we can't do that song, just can't do it.

DOT

Can't do it?

SAM

Nope.

DOT

What do you mean you CAN'T sing that song? Why not?

SAM

(deadpan)

Our producer's name is Art...and he's not that great!

INT. THEATRE, FRESNO CALIFORNIA

Small, darkly-lit theatre, where the Soul Stirrers run through a raucous medley finale of recent hits, Be With Me Jesus, I'm So Glad, and others.

Sam's soulful voice, loud, and hitting all the right spots, arouse women to scream, throw handkerchiefs and phone numbers on stage. Some faint. Others rush the stage, on him like flypaper. He keeps singing as police peel them off.

Backstage, BUMPS BLACKWELL, light-skinned, hair parted to the side, watches the action and chats with the show's PROMOTER, a tall black man in a cocked Fedora, puffing a cigar.

BUMPS

He's somethin' else, ain't he?

PROMOTER

Is it like this everywhere y'all play?

BUMPS

(laughing)

Hell yeah, it's like this everywhere! They're hangin' on him, following him into the parking lot, lying in wait at hotels, like goddamned German snipers, these broads!

Both laugh, as security fights back the tide of screaming women.

SAM

(singing)

Just another day...

R.B. Robinson and one of the Soul Stirrers exchange disgusted glances. After a moment, they shrug, laughing slightly. Sam's charm with the ladies is also their bread and butter.

Sam focuses on a striking young woman, gazing bashfully at him from the front row. In one sensuous motion he twists the mike from the stand and sits on the edge of stage. Singing directly to her.

SAM

(singing)

Lovable...my God is so lovable...

Applause crescendos wildly, Sam stands up, leans slightly forward, and mouths to the young woman.

SAM

Thanks for letting me sing to you.

She nods, coyly.

BACKSTAGE

Sam grabs a towel, wipes his face. He rolls up his shirt sleeves after taking off his suit coat, tie, and cufflinks, turns on the faucet and washes his face and hands. Grabs for yet another towel when a hand grips his arm. Sam freezes, turns, water dripping from his chin.

SAM

Lloyd Price! Man! How you doin'
Lloyd? I last saw you back in
Chicago at Mr. Lucky's, damn!

LLOYD

Just fine, Sam, just fine. Hey, man,
look, I'm playing at the club down
the block and got to get back there,
but I wanted to check out your act.
Man, you the star now Sam! It is all
'bout Sam "The Man" Cooke.

He slaps Sam good-naturedly on the back as Sam pats his face dry.

SAM

Aw, now, man, uh-uh, the group is a
team effort, you dig? I can't
claim...

LLOYD

(interrupting him)

Say man, I'm sorry, I have to run,
but, before I go... Look...I'll make
this quick, okay. There's this
girl...

SAM

(interrupting)

Girl? Say, didn't you just get
married a while back?

Sam winks at him playfully, knowingly.

LLOYD

Yeah, yeah, yeah, well, I'm staying
married, brother, so I really have
to find someone to take this girl
off my hands. She's a really nice,
nice girl.

SAM

Nice? Man, I've already scoped out a young lady I hope's waiting out there for me. Gorgeous, and I hope not so nice.

LLOYD

Come on Sam.

SAM

...what is she, Lloyd, 200 pounds, face full of cold cream?

Sam cracks himself up.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE THEATRE - NIGHT

Sam takes a drag on a cigarette, dismayed that he'd let himself get talked into this. He starts to walk off, when a woman emerges in the darkness. She stops under a neon sign. He can't believe his luck. It's the girl he sang to.

SAM

I'm Sam Cooke.

DOLORES

Delores Mohawk.

SAM

Are you hungry? Would you like to get a bite to eat?

DELORES

Love to.

INT. COOKE FAMILY HOME

Thanksgiving table. Remains of a repast, cake crumbs, turkey bones. The Cook women clean off the table, taking dishes into the kitchen. Dolores hops up to assist. Sam takes a seat closer to his father. His brothers L.C.

Charles, and younger brother DAVID encircle the table.

DAVID COOK

That's a mighty fine-looking woman you married, Sam. Real pretty.

CHARLES

Yeah, she's real fine. Cute kid too. Ready-made family. Man, you sure surprised us with this one, Sam.

You only knew her what, two weeks? I thought you was going to marry that young girl from Washington you so crazy about - Dot. What happened to Dot?

Charles hits a nerve.

SAM

Nothing happened to Dot. I love Dot. She's still so young, you dig?

CHARLES & L.C.

No!

Sam shrugs his shoulders, exasperated.

SAM

It's a complicated situation. I can't explain it.

SAM

Pops...I have to ask for your blessing on something else that might not make you happy.

REV. COOK

Good Lord, and what would that be, Sam?

SAM

In the future, a few years maybe, I want to leave gospel and cross over into popular music, like Harry Belafonte and Nat King Cole. Please give me your blessing, Papa. It'd mean so much so me.

REV. COOK

Sam, you have a family now, and with that, financial obligations, now. With your talent and drive, when the time comes, you ought to chase it down and see what happens.

SAM

(hugs father)

Thanks Pops, that's such a huge relief, you've no idea.

(pacing excitedly)

SAM

I saw Lloyd Price the other day and
he showed me a check for royalties
for eighteen grand.

Looking out the window, Sam is oblivious to the flurrying
snowfall, his gaze focused on the glow of his future.

SAM

I want to make that kind of money.
You know, someday, I want to open at
the Copacabana, just like Nat King
Cole.

L.C. Tilts his head back in exaggerated disbelief.

CHARLES

Are you outside your mind? The Copa?
Shoot, that's pretty high-toned,
Sam. Whites only, in fact.

SAM

Charlie, I aim to start big and just
get bigger. I want to win over the
white folks AND the colored folks.
And all I have to do is sing.

MONTAGE/INTERCUT

We witness the unraveling of a marriage:

Early summer morning, Dolores, in her bathrobe Joey in his
pajamas, both waving good-bye to Sam through large picture
window.

As a gentle rain falls on him, Sam, in raincoat and fedora,
smiling, waves back.

Dolores, on other end of phone, at coffee shop, sad and
forlorn.

Winter time, Sam snowbound at an unspecified airport, talking
on telephone.

Dolores waitressing at coffee shop on sultry summer day.

Ceiling fans blow hot air on sweltering, demanding PATRONS.

Autumn leaves fall. Sam tosses luggage across the back seat
of cab. He hugs and kisses Dolores who's crying and
desperately clinging to him.

SAM

Baby, now come on. I'm about to be getting a solo career off the ground. It takes a lot of work and that means a lot of traveling. Gee whiz, girl, why you cry like this all the damn time?

DOLORES

Sam, don't be mad at me. I just...I just...just wanted a real marriage, with a man to cook for, to love. You're never here to be that man.

SAM

Never? Never? Well, honey, that can't be true, because I'm here now, and I been here the past two days. I'm in show business. If you wanted some man home for dinner every night, you should have married an insurance agent,
(looks at his watch)
I really have to go, now.

He digs into his pockets, pulls out a wad of cash and puts it in her hand.

SAM

Here, buy Joey some new clothes for school, and make sure he keeps up on his reading. I've got him up to five library books a week now.

He kisses her on the cheek, gets no response. Exasperated he enters the cab, slams door, immediately flings it back open.

SAM

(pleadingly)
Dolores?

She holds the money in her fist, not responding. Sighing, Sam motions the driver to take off. Dolores watches the cab drive out of sight, tears sliding down her face.

Sobbing uncontrollably, she runs blindly back into their apartment.

INT. HOLLOWAY APARTMENT - DAY

Dot Holloway stretches on sofa in a sexy pose, humming Nearer My God To Thee. Sam stands before an easel, painting a portrait of her. He joins in the song.

SAM

Nearer my God to Thee... Hey, honey,
turn your head just a bit toward me
now... that's right... a bit
more... ah! Perfect!

(continuing to paint)

You got me singing for my supper,
but that sweet potato pie was worth
singing for.

DOT

(thoughtfully, looking at
Sam)

Hey Sam...

SAM

(still painting)

Hmmm?

DOT

I don't mean to pry, but I was just
wondering.

SAM

Well, go on, girl, you never been
shy with me before!

DOT

Have you seen any of your babies?

Sam, wistful, if not sullen, stops painting.

SAM

When their mamas let me.

He puts the brush down, sits beside Dot.

SAM

It looks like I really created a
mess.

DOT

Sam, it wasn't just you. All those
women throw themselves at you. They
don't let you alone! It takes two...

SAM

No Dot - no excuses.

(He takes a drag of a
cigarette)

Barbara and Verna didn't exactly
throw themselves at me.

SAM

Barb and I were high school sweethearts, y'know, but now she's got herself a new man, and I'm worried...he's a pimp. I don't like Linda growing up around all that mess. I wish I could...

DOT

I know what you're thinking, Sam, but Barbara will never let her go, and, anyway, how do you know DeeDee would even be all right with that?

SAM

Dee Dee's cool; she's been a real trooper because the money just isn't in gospel music, these days, and she's worked hard, but I'm never home. That's the problem.

He rubs Dot's knee.

SAM

This feels like home. You feel like home to me, baby. Maybe that's what love is, baby, just moments...lots of moments like bricks, laid end-to-end to create our little love cottage.

DOT

I love how your mind thinks, but is that what I am? Your vacation home? Is that it?

SAM

(pulling her to him)

You're my home - period. You're where I can just be Sam, not Sam Cooke singing sensation. I'm being as honest with you as I can, Dottie.

He strokes her hair, pulls her closer, whispering in her ear. She melts.

SAM

I love you so much, and I think about you all the time. I just have these obligations and I can't pour some fairy dust on the whole damn mess and make it go away. But I do know that for five years now I've loved you.

SAM

And, to be honest, even though I was not planning on leaving my marriage...it seems that it has...

He struggles for right words.

DOT

You mean...your marriage has just about left you?

SAM

Yeah. Every time I come back from the road, I feel like Dee Dee and I are strangers, and we have to start all over again. Yeah, yeah. I think when I go to Los Angeles with Bumps to cut that pop song I been telling you about, a million bucks says Dee Dee gets the lawyer she keeps talking about. And...and...

Tears gather in his eyes.

SAM

But there's Joey - I'm the only father Joey has known, and I can't stand myself for doing this to him. I always wanted to be a good father like my Pops, but...I don't know...I don't know what to do...

He leans back in Dot's lap. Closes his eyes as she strokes his hair, his face, and bends and kisses his lips. The album ends, but they don't hear the needle scratching.

INT. OFFICE DOOR READS "SPECIALTY RECORDS-BUMPS BLACKWELL PRODUCER"

Sam is inside pleading his case to Bumps.

SAM

C'mon man, just give it a listen. It's a sweet little tune. You'll like it.

BUMPS

No man, I done told you Art Rupe does not want to mess with you and any crossover music. All hell will break loose.

He looks at Sam a minute who is humming a tune, and finally raises his hands in surrender.

BUMPS

Okay, okay but only one verse that's it.

SAM

Darlin you send me, I know you send me, you send me honest you do, honest you do, honest you do, whoah-oh-woah...

BUMPS

Oh hell, that is such crap...

Sam is relentless, sits on his desk sings the second verse...

SAM

You thrill me, I know you thrill me, you thrill me, honest you do, honest you do, honest you do, woah-oh-woah

BUMPS stands abruptly pushing SAM out the door, closing it behind him. As he turns to walk back toward his desk, the door opens. Sam's smiling face appears, singing

SAM

At first I thought it was infatuation, but ooh, it's lasted sooo long, now I find myself wanting to marry you and take you home..

BUMPS just stands there stone faced, before breaking into gales of laughter, joined by Sam.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO

Record producer, Bumps Blackwell beams like a proud father as he and record label owner, Bob Keane, listen to Sam's tape of *Summertime*. Keane, a black-haired white man, holds a clarinet.

Musicians CLIFF WHITE, RENE HALL, HAROLD BATISTE, and a trio of attractive, CAUCASIAN BACK UP SINGERS are present. L.C., and Charles stand with Sam, listening.

BOB KEENE

Man, I dig Gershwin! You did that song proud, Sam!

SAM

Thank you, Bob. I appreciate that.

Keane starts to play along, but Bumps taps his clarinet, motioning him to listen.

Summertime finishes and we hear opening chords of *You Send Me*.

KEANE

That's the hit! *Summertime* is the B side.

Sam and Bumps exchange incredulous glances.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

Sam sways at the microphone. Studio musicians play. Keane overdubs voice, adding instrumentals. SONNY BONO is present.

SAM

(singing)

*Darling, you-you-you-you send me, I
know you, you you send me... You-ou-
ou send me, Honest you do, honest
you do, Whoah-woh-oh..*

In glassed-in control room, Bob and Bumps listen with headphones on. We hear a portion of *You Were Made for Me*.

KEANE

Hey, Bumps, is it true there was nuclear fallout when Sam split from the Soul Stirrers?

BLACKWELL

R.B. wasn't happy, but they accepted it eventually. They knew it was inevitable. But the Negro community...that was something else...

FLASHBACK

Sam singing pop at a venue, and getting booed by older elements in the crowd. Sam leaves stage, distraught, followed by CRAIN who tries to comfort him.

BACK TO PRESENT

Sam going over arrangements with Hall.

BLACKWELL

Sam's cool -- told them he's going to help produce their music. Can you imagine that? That's Sam. Ain't nothing that man thinks he can't do.

KEANE

Cream always rises to the top. By the way, I added an "E" to his name -- gives it more glamour, sets him apart.

(no response)

So, I heard a rumor that Rupe was in town?

The engineer hands completed tape to Blackwell.

BLACKWELL

Art? Man, crazy Art's back in Chicago divorcing his wife, his former secretary -- getting ready to marry his current secretary.

Across the room the door swings wide open. ART RUPE enters, hostile and drunk. He glares at the white back-up singers and hurtles toward them. They step back.

ART

What the hell do you motherfuckers think y'all are doin'? Y'all trying to be the damn Dominos?

Wobbling but loud.

ART

You can't have white back up singers mixing with colored singers. I produced this boy! I had a great group going. They sang The Lord's Music -- not this shit.

Sam bursts into the control room, taking Rupe by the arm, shepherding him to the hallway.

SAM

Whoa, Daddy-o! What you trying to do here, Art? I'm tryin' to cut a record here, man. Be cool.

Art tries to pat Sam's face, but can't focus his eyes.

ART

Sam, I gave you the opportunity. I gave you all the damn opportunity.

And what do you do? You pull this mixed race crap...

SAM

Hold on, now, Art. I really appreciate that opportunity, but I'm a grown man, Art; time for me to move on, control my own destiny.

(pauses)

Look, man, I don't care what color these singers are. I'm going for a sound here.

Sam opens door to the street, and gestures for Rupe to leave. Art yells over Sam's shoulder for the control room to hear.

ART

(bitterly)

Sam Cooke- with a "e" you may think you're Harry Belafonte, but you're nothing but a two-bit gospel singer on the chitlin circuit who got lucky when you met me. Fuck all y'all! You're all fired, you...

Art points at Bumps and Sam.

ART

... you, and you- all fired. Blackwell, keep your goddamned tapes of this mess. I don't want 'em, but you're not getting a dime more from me. Tell Sonny Bono he gets to stay.

... And he exits.

A moment of stunned silence. Bono in shock. Sam, despite being a bit shaken, cracks a smile.

SAM

I guess his wife must've hired Perry Mason for an attorney!

They laugh.

SAM

Damn, that was one angry man!

BUMPS

Eh, forget him. Fuck him - and both of those slutty wives of his!

Guffaws.

SAM
 (quietly)
 I know how he feels. Dee Dee's
 lawyer just hand-delivered me her
 divorce petition.

BUMPS
 Aw, Sam, that's a damn shame. I'm
 sorry, man.

Sam throws up both hands, shaking his head.

SAM
 I'm never home.

Rene Hall strums guitar.

RENE
 (singing)
 Loveable...that's why my girl is so
 loveable...

Ruefully, Sam joins in laughter.

EXT/INT DOLPHIN'S OF HOLLYWOOD RECORD SHOP

A predominantly black community. A few palm trees. A street
 sign reads Central Avenue. BLACK PEDESTRIANS stroll down
 sidewalks, drive by in cars. Pat Boone's Love Letters in the
 Sand blares over neighborhood.

Dolphin's of Hollywood comes into view, where a slew of WHITE
 DISC JOCKEYS broadcast live in front of the store.

As Pat Boone's song finishes, Keane slips a DEEJAY a copy of
 Sam's single, along with cash, which DeeJay hastily pockets.

DJ
 That was Pat Boone, and this is
 KRKD, Los Angeles. I'm your Huggy
 Boy, and I got lots of love
 surrounding me here today, baby,
 Hunter Hancock and C.T. Trammell...
 ,

HUNTER HANCOCK and C.T. TRAMMELL clap.

DJ

... All of us broadcasting live,
today, at Dolphin's of Hollywood
Record Shop, right here on Central
Avenue, in Los Angeles playing the
best rock n roll, with a touch of
soul, for all you cool cats and
delicious dolls!. So, c'mon down to
Dolphin's and join us. Now, here's a
new tune for the lovers out there,
by the newest singing sensation, on
the Keen label, the soulful Mr. Sam
Cooke, ladies and gentlemen!

Fanatical WHITE TEENS screech their cars to a halt and stampede into the record store. LAPD squad cars, loaded with POLICE OFFICERS pull up behind them, and pile out wielding nightsticks.

On the radio, Sam croons: You send me... Darling you send me...

More cars pull up with ecstatic white females screaming, clogging the intersection. Curious BLACK PASSERSBY stop, watching white folks go crazy.

EXT. THEATRE

A Marquee reads: "ALAN FREED'S ALL-STAR REVIEW: EVERLY BROS., LITTLE RICHARD, SAM COOKE, LLOYD PRICE, HANK BALLARD, CLYDE MCPHATTER, FATS DOMINO, LITTLE EVA."

INT. THEATRE SAM'S DRESSING ROOM

Sam finishes a craps game with Buddy Holly, who hands over \$5,000, as Sam, humming *It's So Easy*, playfully wags an "I told you so" finger at him, as Holly laughs good-naturedly.

Party-like atmosphere. We see pop stars of the era coming by to shake Sam's hand.

BIG MAMA THORNTON can be heard singing *Rock Me Baby* as Sam takes a few steps toward the stage curtains to hear her, shaking his head in amazement. Lloyd Price watches as a dramatically attractive groupie named, in a low cut gown, straps down, oozes out of a closet and exits giggling, while a musician, zipping up his fly, goes to the bar, pours a drink and walks away with cocktail in hand. Lloyd sips his mixed drink. Sam re-enters the room, pats him on the back before sitting down in front of the mirror..

LLOYD

Man, I dig how you always keep a stocked bar in your dressing room, Sam Cooke. Your friend JAMES BROWN hardly has a glass of water. It's always a party in here, though.

Lloyd checks out Sam, in mirror, primping and combing his hair.

LLOYD

Damn, man how can that man have the energy to get up onstage after 10 minutes with that crazy Lithofayne? That girl will knock anybody the hell out!

SAM

Well, I don't mess with the-uh-ladies before a show, Lloyd. But singing You Send Me for the one thousandth time... Man! I'm gonna do Bandstand and Arthur Godfrey on this road trip, then I just want to get back in the studio and produce

THEATER-ONSTAGE-NIGHT

Entertainer Jackie Wilson singing his hit *Reet Petite*. The audience is clapping and dancing in the aisles.

Backstage, singer Fats Domino waddles past, overhearing conversation.

FATS DOMINO

Produce? Man, you are fucking crazy, Cooke. They just expect us to sing and dance. We can't even eat next to them, how they gonna let you produce?

SAM

(laughing)

Look, New Orleans, it's like I told Lou, you gotta right to pay the bills best you can, cause the church ain't gonna, nor is the man. Free yourself from categorization, brother. I'm gonna get white AND Negro audiences to love me by being who I am. It's that simple.

Sam points to his head, specifically, his hair, a short-cropped natural style, unlike conked styles of stars around him.

SAM

Dig, I'm all natural, too, not some monkey-greased wanna-be white matinee idol, like y'all. No more stinking Pomade for this hair! No sir, I'm proud of my blackness, proud of my hair, and I don't give a good goddamn what anybody thinks.

BIG MAMA comes to greet Sam, and he cavalierly kisses her hand.

SAM

You look beautiful, and your singing knocked me out. Man, I dig me some blues sung like that.

She gushes with a smitten shyness that belied her great girth. She whispers something to him and he nods his approval.

LITTLE RICHARD swishes by, grabs some liquor, gulps it down, runs back toward stage area, screaming out high notes and waving his arms.

RICHARD

OOH! Look out, hide the chil'run,
Mama! That Pretty Man is Loose
again!

FREED rushes after Little Richard, turns back to holler at Sam.

FREED

Richard, you follow Sam. Hank,
you're up!

SAM

I'm going to follow Hank? Aw
man...Hey, Hank? What time is it,
man?

Hank saunters past to join his group, already assembled onstage.

HANK BALLARD

Don't you know, Sam?

Curtain goes up. Hank Ballard, smiles confidently, pure energy.

HANK BALLARD
(singing)
HEY NOW! HEY NOW! HEY NOW! IT'S
FINGER POP-POPPIN' TIME...

Teen crowd roars. SAM joined side stage by LLOYD PRICE, laughs.

Band plays a saxophone solo and HANK BALLARD dances wildly, band in tow. The crowd screams with joy.

SAM
I'm not following that with You Send
Me, Lloyd, hell no! Go down to the
band and tell them I'm singing
"Shake Rattle and Roll" and I want
them to sing the chorus with me.
I'll bring some kids up there, too.
(looking at Hank)
I'm going to take that raw energy
and put a capital R in raw.

As HANK exits stage, he smirks and flutters his eyes at Sam, laughing. Sam takes the stage to ear-splitting screams. Band plays "Shake, Rattle and Roll." Sam turns it into something sexy.

SAM
(singing)
You wearin' them dresses, the sun
come shinin' through...

Lovesick women, throbbing, undulating, passing out dead in their seats.

HANK watches in the wings, speechless.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT HIGHWAY-NIGHT

SAM, guitarist CLIFF WHITE, sax player ELIOT CHAVERS AND BIG MAMA are crowded into Sam's red Cadillac convertible.

BIG MAMA is teaching SAM the lyrics to "Little Red Rooster" when the car's front right tire incurs a flat.

SAM's driver EDDIE deftly swerves to a stop on the roadside, as he gets out to retrieve the jack and spare tire in the trunk.

He has trouble getting the front end jacked up, before he finally, in frustration, calls out to the occupant of the back seat, BIG MAMA,

EDDIE

You gonna have to get up on outta
the car Big Mama, 'cause I can't fix
this tire with your big ass in that
back seat.

BIG MAMA is perturbed at the slight to her weight. She motions for CLIFF to move, which he does quickly, as she slides out from the middle. Rolling up her sleeves, she walks toward the front, shoving EDDIE aside, before she lifts up the front end of the Cadillac with both hands.

BIG MAMA

Now go ahead and fix the goddamn
tire, motherfucker!

Newsreel-type shots of the record *You Send Me* climbing to top of Billboard charts. Sam in concerts, girls screaming, mobbing him.

INT. RESTAURANT-DAY

Sam, with his band, studies menu. After a moment, he tries to get the attention of a WHITE WAITRESS, who refuses to make eye contact.

SAM

Miss, hey Miss, may we please order?

She shoots him a disdainful look and turns away. "You Send Me" plays on jukebox.

WAITRESS

OH MY GOD! SAM COOKE! MY FAVORITE
SONG!

She sprints past Sam to the jukebox. Sam shakes his head.

SAM

Now ain't that a bitch?
(Musicians hysterically
laugh)

INT. ED SULLIVAN THEATRE

Backstage Sam has just beaten singer Eddie Fisher at craps. Eddie shows him his empty pockets. Sam cocks his head to show he is serious and Eddie hands him his car keyes.

SAM
The Maseratti?

Eddie nods his head forlornly.

SAM
Cheer up, Ed, i'll take you for a
ride anytime you want.

Sam gets up, humming "Oh My Papa" a Fisher hit, and walks to the curtain. He peers out at audience, anxiously searching the crowd until he spots Dot and her mother in second row. He takes a deep breath, calmer now. Ed Sullivan strolls to microphone in front of the curtain.

Behind the curtain, a staffer ushers Sam to a spot. A boom microphone descends from ceiling.

ED SULLIVAN
And now, ladies and gentlemen, the
newest pop singing sensation from
Chicago, Illinois, singing his #1
hit song You Send Me,

Squeals.

ED SULLIVAN
Let's give a fine round of applause
for Mr. Sa-a-a-m Cooke!

Loud applause. Hysterical shrieks.

SAM
(singing)
Darlin', you send me...

EXT. CHICAGO

Sam drives his red Cadillac convertible, with nieces and nephews packed inside. On the horizon a sign reads Riverview Park. Radio plays "You Send Me" and kids squeal with pride and delight at their Uncle Sam's voice.

The car approaches an amusement park with a giant-sized, turban headed Aladdin, named Aladdin's Castle. Sam gives parking lot attendant a large bill, waving off the man's attempt to give him change. Attendant nods understanding, gesturing Sam's car through for special parking.

After parking the vehicle, Sam gathers his younger family members around.

SAM
Okay now what's our name?

EVERYONE
(in unison)
The Gashouse Gang!

SAM
And what's our motto?

EVERYONE
(in unison)
Anything goes!

SAM
That's right, Gashouse Gang! No holds barred! You can ride as many times as you like. Okay, Gashouse Gang, are we ready?

EVERYONE
(in unison)
YES!

SAM
Let's take over this park-now!

They storm the gates, screaming.

TONI
Wait for Uncle Sam! He can't run as fast as we can!

SAM
Oh, the hell I can't!

He chases them, as they scatter toward the roller coasters.

INT. AMERICAN BANDSTAND

On TV Show American Bandstand, a cameo of Sam singing "You Send Me."

Short montage of concert footage across country, singing "You Send Me" in various venues.

MONTAGE

Song Hold On, by Sam Cooke.

Dot flying to different cities for rendezvous with Sam.

Sam calling Dot from airport phone booths.

Sam talking on phone to Dot, reclining in socks on couch.

Sam bringing Dot flowers.

Dot with sweet potato pie in hands. Sam carries it past her to table, pretending to ignore her. She strikes a pose, hands on her hips. Sam scoops her up and kisses her. They fall to floor in gales of laughter.

INT. NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER RESTAURANT

The city's landscape visible in background, frames exquisite décor of the room, packed with a late night crowd of Hollywood/New York show biz types, as well as regular folks.

Dot and Sam share a table, wrapped in each other.

Acquaintances stop to shake Sam's hand, pat him on the back.

A WAITER rolls a cart to their table with chilled champagne bottle in a bucket.

Waiter pops cork, pours the bubbly. Sam slips a fifty dollar bill in man's hand.

WAITER

God bless you Mr. Cooke. My wife
likes your new single.

Waiter exits.

SAM

(to Dot)

It's always the wife, you know.

DOT

Well, now Sam, how'd it sound if he
said, 'Oh Mr. Cooke I'm one of your
biggest fans. Can I have your
autograph? You'd think he was...
well...you know.

SAM

(teasing)

You can't say the word, can you
Dottie? That's so damn cute, girl.

Sam raises his champagne glass. Dottie follows suit.

SAM

Here's to loving you always, and...
forever.

Sam takes a ring box from his jacket pocket and places it on table.

SAM

And here's to you marrying me.

With trembling hands, Dot takes a ring out of its case and slips it on her ring finger, overwhelmed.

DOT

Oh Sam, it's just so beautiful.

His face just inches from hers, they fall into a rapturous kiss.

DOT

I love you, too, you know that.

SAM

I'm moving you out to Chicago. My family is crazy about you.

Sam turns serious for a moment.

SAM

Let's just hope my attorney can settle with Dee Dee. She's asking for ten thousand dollars a month alimony now.

DOT

(almost yelling)
Ten thousand a month!
(she lowers her voice as he shushes her)

DOT

Are you kidding? Who does she think you are, Nat King Cole?

SAM

She thinks I'm on my way to being Nat King Cole. Look, she helped me when things weren't as good, but I ain't gonna let nobody enslave me. We'll try to work something out with her, but I don't want you to worry your pretty self about it, okay?

DOT

That woman is part Apache. You don't
wanna mess with her.

SAM

Yeah, well I'm 100% Southside
Chicago Negro. Something tells me
I'll come out on top.

Dot nervously twists the ring and sips her champagne, not as
assured as Sam.

INT. DEE DEE'S HOME - NIGHT

Dee Dee answers a phone call from Barbara Campbell. Dee Dee's
surprise, but obviously these two have spoken before.

DEE DEE

(into phone)

Barb, Sam's not here, anymore. He's
in California for good now.

INT. BARBARA'S HOME

Barbara smokes a cigarette. In background her boyfriend
smokes a joint.

BARBARA

Is his next Mrs. Cooke moving out
there with him?

INTERCUT with Dee Dee's apartment.

DEE DEE

(into phone)

Excuse me? Who are you referring to?

BARBARA

(into phone)

Oh, come on Dolores, he's had some
woman in Washington, DC for years
now. The whole family knows about
it.

Barbara guzzles brandy.

BARBARA

Light-skinned young thing. The word
is, they gonna get married as soon
as you dry the ink on them papers
you about to sign.

DEE DEE

Oh, hell no!

(thinks for second)

But I'm getting a lump sum, Barbara,
and Joey and I need that money. I
can't turn it down.

BARBARA

Okay, then. Just giving you heads up
is all. Good-bye Dolores and... good
luck, honey.

Click.

Joey enters the room.

JOEY

Was that Daddy?

DEE DEE

No, sweetheart, it wasn't. Now you
get back into that bed.

She sighs, dazed for a moment. Impetuously, she picks up the
phone.

DEE DEE

Hello, Sam? Yeah, it's Dee Dee...
Okay, I'm taking your lawyer's offer
and I'll do whatever you say, but
here's the thing...are you sitting
down? I mean -
(she feigns a laugh)
- of all times, but, honey I'm
pregnant! Yes! Oh, I understand it
doesn't change things. I just...
thought you'd like to know. Yes,
Sam, I know you'll take care of it.
You ALWAYS do!

Dee Dee slams phone down.

INT. SAM'S HOME

Sam drops ice cubes in a glass, fills glass with scotch,
which he quickly belts down. Fortified, he reaches for the
telephone.

INT. DOT'S BEDROOM

Dot asleep in her nightie. The night stand next to her bed
has a phone on it and a photograph of Sam. Phone RINGS.

DOT
(groggily into phone)
Hello?

INT. SAM'S HOUSE

SAM
(in phone)
Baby, it's Sam.

INTERCUT

DOT
(in phone)
Hi, Honey, what's wrong? You sound
upset.

SAM
I am Dot, it's Dee Dee.

DOT
What's wrong? Is she still fighting
for more money?

SAM
No, she agreed to the cash. It's
worse than that, baby.

DOT
Sam, what is it? Are you all right?

SAM
I'm...look, Dottie, Dee Dee says
she's pregnant.

DOT
(gasps)
Oh, Lord! Sam!

SAM
Baby, this isn't going to change a
thing. We're still getting married
and move on with -

DOT
(interjecting)
Sam! No! Listen, this is your baby!
This is Dee Dee's baby, and she's
still your wife. You need to be with
her. Sam, we CAN'T get married just
now. How would it look?

You have your career to think about,
and how will you explain to the
press that you have all these kids
and now you're abandoning your wife
who is having a baby?

SAM

Just as long as you say you still
love me. That's the most important
thing in the world to my
heart...Dot?

DOT

(crying now)

Sam, baby, I do love you. I will
always love you, no matter who
you're with, or...but I-I just don't
know how much more of this I can
take.

SAM

Dot...

DOT

(crying)

I have to go, Sam, I have a modeling
job in the morning.

SAM

Dottie...

DOT

Goodnight, Sam.

She hangs up, emotions clashing within -- despair, yearning,
love, anger -- while Sam's photo smiles from the nightstand.
Finally, she removes his ring and gives in to tears.

INT SAM'S HOME-NIGHT

Miserable, Sam pours another drink, sits down at piano
tinkling the keys...

SAM

(singing)

I'm in a sad mood tonight, oh, my
baby done gone away and left me, my
baby done gone...I don't know why
she left me, I don't know why she's
gone, but if my baby comes back home
again, I'll never, ever do her no
wrong...

I'm in a sad mood tonight, oh, my
 baby done gone away and left me, my
 baby done gone...

Head hung down, drink in hand, cigarette burning.

INT. REV. COOKE'S HOME

Nov. 1958. Sam and siblings around dinner table.

DAVID COOKE

I swear Sam if I didn't know better
 I'd think you had a hollow leg where
 all Mama's food ends up. How you
 stay so thin when you are eating
 like that?

CHARLES

He doesn't eat like that on the road
 because Mama's not doin' the
 cooking!

Whole table laughs.

SAM

Charles is right; for the most part,
 Hotel food ain't all that. Fats
 cooks for us sometimes. And...
 occasionally... someone's mama takes
 me in and cooks me a meal -

A few um-hms.

SAM

But none as good as yours, Mama.

He winks at his mother; her face glows with love.

MRS. COOK

Well, just fill up, son. I've cooked
 all your favorite foods.

Telephone RINGS. Rev Cooke gets up, but Agnes beats him to
 it.

MARY COOKE

(to Sam)

I don't understand why Dot won't get
 married now that you...

CHARLES

(irritated)

Mary!

SAM

No, no, it's okay. Mary...I love
Dot...I want her to be happy.

Family looks at him with pity and confusion.

AGNES

(interrupts them)

Sorry, Sam but there's some bad
news. Mary, please take the kids
into the living room.

GWEN

Aw, I wanna be with Uncle Sam! He's
gonna be gone again.

Sam puts an arm around his niece and whispers to her:

SAM

Sweetie, how about you be my camp
counselor, okay? Organize all the
campers in the living room, sitting
in a circle on the floor, and I'll
be there in five minutes to tell you
all a story!

GWEN

Okay!

She jumps up and gathers her cousins and brother.

AGNES

Sam, it's Dee Dee. I'm afraid she
had an automobile accident...a bad
one... Sam, she's passed on.

Shocked gasps. Sam hangs his head, undone.

SAM

I'll take care of her burial. Where
is Joey?

AGNES

Her brother flew in from out of the
state and took Joey back to live
with him.

SAM

Thanks, Agnes...

Sam slowly walks into the living room where his nieces and
nephews are sitting in a circle. The oldest, GENE, puts his
hand on his uncle's back in empathy.

SAM

(struggles with tears, as
he sits cross-legged
before his nieces and
nephews)

Out of the lodge at even tide,
across the sleepy lagoon, Indian
maiden by his side, the Indian
maiden Pale Moon. All the Indians
dancing 'round the teepees at night,
except the one who lost the
fight...The Indian maiden Pale Moon,
The Indian maiden Pale Moon...

He flees from the room.

MARY

Charles, I worry about Sam driving
through the south now. This is a bad
note to start a road trip on.

EXT. HIGHWAY DAY

Windshield wipers keep time with soft rain falling on Sam's
Cadillac convertible, driven by Sam's valet EDDIE CUNNINGHAM.
Wind gusts shake trees along the highway.

A sign up ahead reads Arkansas County Line, and another Hwy.
61. CLIFF WHITE pounds out a rhythm on dashboard. In the back
seat, Sam strums guitar, singing with his friend, LOU RAWLS.
Sam teaches them a new song: *Wonderful World*.

SAM

(singing)

I don't claim to be an A student,
But I'm trying to be
But maybe by being an A student,
baby, I can win your love for me...

(talking)

Okay, sing don't know much about
history...

EVERYONE

(singing)

Don't know much about history, don't
know much geography.

Abruptly, Cliff stops drumming.

CLIFF

Eddie, look out for that stopped
truck!

SAM
Go for the ditch! Go for the ...

TIME SLOWS DOWN

Car hits the truck with such force the car goes under it.

Silence. LOU is motionless, thrown from the vehicle. Sam manages to crawl through a shattered window.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM MORNING

Sam, bandaged. Visited by Charles.

SAM
So, let me get this straight,
Charlie. My man Eddie is dead; Cliff
has a broken collar bone and poor
Lou is still in a coma? God spared
my ass, Charles. He truly did.
Man...

Sam stares off in the distance, still in shock.

Unnoticed, a little boy wanders in.

CHARLES
You have to cancel some dates, Sam.
Take some time off. This is some
kind of sign...first Dee Dee, now
this. Someone is trying to tell you
something.

SAM
No, man, this had nothing to do with
anything other than the fact I
allowed my fate to be in the hands
of a man whose real job was pressing
my pants, but who drove one hundred
forty miles per hour and could have
killed all of us. Look, brother, you
and Phyllis have to travel with me
from now on.

CHARLES
Now, look, Sam...

SAM
No, you and Phyllis need to be on
the payroll, Charles. I won't take
no for an answer. I need family with
me, it's that simple.

CHARLES

All right.

SAM

Maybe I don't want to go back on the road for a while. I need to get in the studio with better material, and another label, like RCA. Then, I want to line up some new soul acts for our SARS label, too. That's what this was a sign of, Charles. That life is to be lived, but you have to pay attention to shit, understand? You can't let others control your destiny.

CHARLES

(nodding)

Amen to that. Amen to...

Sam reaches for the phone with Charles' help.

SAM

Hi Barbie. I'm okay. Lou is in bad shape, though. We gotta get him to a white hospital as soon as possible.

He calls BARBARA instructing her to meet them at the airport in Chicago in three days, and to call a local hospital and make arrangements for Lou to be transferred there to get the best care possible.

SAM

(to little boy)

Hey, where'd you come from?

BOY

I'm gonna be a singer like you.

SAM

Sensational. What's your name so I can be on the look out for you?

BOY

Issac. Hayes.

SAM

Issac Hayes, I'll remember that. Maybe I'll sign you on my label one day.

INT. BARBARA'S APARTMENT DAY, 1959

Messy place. Barbara, in her robe, her hair wrapped in a scarf, drinks coffee. Linda colors in a book on kitchen table. Barbara's boyfriend, DIDDY, blasting music in living room, while rolling joints.

BARBARA

Damn, Diddy, do you have to do that right there?

DIDDY

Baby can you get me another beer?

BARBARA

(laughs)

At 10 am?

DIDDY

That's what Saturdays are for.

She hands him a fresh bottle after popping the cap.

From an open window, they hear the SOUND OF A CAR below and stop what they're doing.

DIDDY

Shit! That's Big Daddy again, Let me get the hell out of here. I'll be back later.

He heads for the door.

DIDDY

Tell that fucker to call first.

BARBARA

I would have, but you didn't pay the damn phone bill.

Diddy slams door. Moments pass. Barbara watches Linda, neither of them speaking.

A light perfunctory knock, then Sam enters, removing his hat.

SAM

Hi.

Barbara grins like a fourteen year old girl.

BARBARA

Hi.

SAM
Just getting up?

Sam kisses the top of Linda's head and sits next to her.

BARBARA
Very funny.

SAM
(sniffing)
Man, this place smells, and it's not just the dope.
(glances at Linda)
This is no kind of place to raise a little girl and your boyfriend's not father material.

BARBARA
(defensive)
So you are?

SAM
Barbie, it's different with us. I know where you came from, and I know this ain't been easy, but you can do better than this. Since my accident, I been thinking I want to be a better father, especially to Linda. The least you can do is let me start by putting you in a better place. By yourself.

BARBARA
You jealous of Diddy?

SAM
Hell no, I ain't jealous of him!

Barbara takes a drag off her cigarette, stiffening.

BARBARA
You will be when I tell you I'm carrying his baby.

SAM
Well, in that case, we have nothing more to discuss, do we?

BARBARA
(to Linda)
Baby, can you please take your coloring book to your room for a bit?

Without a word Linda leaves the room.

SAM

I ain't taking care of some other
man's child. It's just not in me to
do that again.

BARBARA

What if I... what if I made it go
away?

SAM

I never would tell you to do that in
a million years. You do what you
need to do for you. Leave me out of
your decision.

Sam goes in Linda's bedroom.

Barbara stares out the kitchen window, arms wrapped tightly
around her slim waist, thinking hard. She doesn't even turn
as Sam quietly dons his hat, and leaves.

Sam and Dot enjoy a romantic weekend in New York, taking in
the sights like two tourists.

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE-DAY: STATUE OF LIBERTY; BROADWAY;
EMPRE STATE BUILDING; BROOKLYN BRIDGE;/NIGHT: QUIET
RESTAURANT

Sam's voice singing *Unchained Melody*.

The two lovers are drinking wine and holding hands by
candlelight, staring into each other's eyes. Sam leans over
and whispers something to Dot; she responds with gales of
laughter, he joins in.

SAM

Dotti, two things I love to watch
you do.

DOT

What?

SAM

Laugh, cause you laugh from the
inside out.

DOT

And?

SAM

You walk the same way. You got more
soul in your ass than most people
have in their entire body.

She has just taken a sip of wine and tries hard not to spray
it, as both laugh together.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sam and Dot exploding into each other's arms. Afterwards,
snow on TV set, as they cuddle. Sam speaks softly.

SAM

It's nice to be away from audiences
and crowds for now and just be close
to you.

DOT

It's a dream when we're together.
You are here and the world just
slips away, then you slip away and
the world comes back, like you were
never here.

SAM

It doesn't have to be that way
anymore.

SAM

Things didn't happen the way I
wanted...but I'm free now. Why won't
you marry me?

(no response)

Is it your modeling? I wouldn't
interfere-

DOT

It's not that.

SAM

What is it? Don't you love me?

Deeply moved, Dot props up on her elbow, and looks into his
eyes.

DOT

I love you so much.

SAM

You love me...but you don't need me.

DOT

I do need you! I need you so much it hurts.

She strokes his face with her palm.

SAM

(kissing her ear)

No, that's wanting me, not needing me. There's a difference.

DOT

Sam, I don't want to be like Dolores - needing you to come home, needing you to call when you're late, needing you to need me more than I need you!

He takes her face in his hands.

SAM

Okay.

He kisses her tenderly.

SAM

If this is how you want things to be...okay...for now. You're still in my life. That's all that matters. But I do get so blue when I want you and you're not there.

DOT

Sam, you have a lot of women who easily fill that void. And I'm sure each one of them thinks that she's the only one...even though she knows better.

SAM

I don't give a damn about those other women, Dot. You're my woman. I want you. Just you...

Sam kisses her. With his soul.

INT. CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

Barbara enters smoky room, searching for Sam. He sips a drink at the bar, preoccupied.

Barbara plops on stool next to him, hyped up.

SAM
(coolly)
Hey, what's new Barbie?

BARBARA
Hi. Well, I did it.

SAM
What? You did what?

BARBARA
I did it. I had it. Remember, you
told me that you...

She searches his face for cues. Disappointed at his lack of enthusiasm.

BARBARA
I'm free now.

SAM
Well, if that's what you wanted,
Barbie...so, is that what you came
to tell me?

BARBARA
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

SAM
(sighing)
What do I think? I think we should
take things slowly and remember that
this is all about Linda, what is in
her best interest. When I return
from the road we can talk about your
apartment.

He stands up, placing a bill on the bar.

SAM
I have to go. I have a session this
afternoon then I head out to LA
before going to Detroit. Maybe you
can meet me there. The family will
be out there, too. You can drive out
with them and bring our daughter.
She's never seen me sing live.

He lands an uncomfortable kiss on her cheek.

ESTABLISHING

Front office door reads "KAGS PUBLISHING: HOME OF DERBY AND SARS RECORDS SAM COOKE, J.W. ALEXANDER PARTNERS"

SAM stands before the door smiling, admiring its visage, as he shakes hands with J.W. ALEXANDER

INT SAM'S CAR - NIGHT

He speeds down highway. *Trouble in Mind* plays on radio.

He looks overwhelmed, wrestling with a decision.

EXT. COOKE FAMILY HOME

Barbara and Sam stand before Rev. Cooke as he marries them in a small family affair.

REV. COOKE

I now pronounce you man and wife.

The family gathers around the smiling couple, offering congratulations. Barbara takes a picture of Sam with his parents and siblings. She gives camera to family member who takes pictures of her and Sam. The two appear happy...

INT. COPACABANA/ BACKSTAGE

A frenzied scene of musicians looking for missing reeds and pics, roadies testing sound, clanging glasses and chatter of audience heard off-mic.

SAM

The bow tie look all right, brother?

CHARLES

(imitating Rochester on the
Jack Benny Show)

Yessir, Mr. Benny.

CHARLES

Jess Rand get you this gig?

SAM

He's a good P.R. man, Charlie. Maybe too good!

CHARLES

Oh, now you're worried this was a bad idea?

SAM

Maybe. Just a bit premature. I'm worried that Bumps is over his head with those arrangements. The rehearsal sounded flat, didn't it?

Charles says nothing.

SAM

Well, didn't it?

CHARLES

I've heard better, my brother, but, c'mon, shake all that off, man. You gonna shine tonight!

SAM

(glumly)

Why do I suddenly feel like I'm singing at The Alamo, instead of The Copa?

On stage, the emcee, takes the standing microphone...

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentleman, the Copacabana Nightclub is proud to present a new talent, from Chicago, Illinois, the newest singing sensation with the golden voice of a California Sunset, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Soul, Saaaam Cooke!

The set proceeds shakily, Sam visibly nervous.

Arrangements sound off-kilter, but Sam's voice gains strength in song. Lukewarm reception, until he switches to something bluesy, then crowd reacts more warmly. He finishes, in a tremendous sweat, with a smile that belies his disappointment, but his band knows. After an encore of You Send Me, he exits and falls into Charles' arms.

SAM

Don't say nothing here. Let's go into the dressing room.

Charles follows him, closing the door behind them.

SAM

(humiliated)

I feel as though I just escaped Death Row. Man! Those folks looked at me like I was a waiter who'd gotten lost.

Comedian Nipsy Russell, slips in, feeling for Sam.

NIPSY

Sam, man, listen, it'll get better, man. You got the makings of a great singer and don't let these motherfuckers like Myron Cohen tell you other -

SAM

Myron Cohen? Now, what the hell did he have to say about it?

NIPSY

Not worth repeating. He just decided to rip the shit out of you in his act.

SAM

Man! They're crucifying me, Charlie!

Charles puts a hand on Sam's forearm.

CHARLES

Ehh, fuck him. That old bastard is just jealous. You're on the way up and he's ready for the glue factory.

SAM

Maybe so, Charlie, maybe so...

Well wishers enter. Sam puts on his party face.

SAM

Hey, y'all! I got fifty cases of whatever you want, floating on the rocks tonight. Let's toast to good times!

DISSOLVE

Sound of Sam Cooke's *Chain Gang*.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Sam's red Cadillac convertible races past a sign that reads: Shreveport Three Miles.

Sam drives through a rural community of shacks. The mood in the car festive, chatty, despite distressing scenes of BLACK MEN working along the highway on notorious chain gangs. Sam hears an inaudible song.

He stops car, motions LEAD WORKER over. Sam hands him a carton of cigarettes with a small box of sandwiches and sodas. Convict nods his appreciation.

CHARLES

Hey that was our lunch, man!

SAM

We can always get more. They can't.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - DAY

Sam's Hollywood Blvd. offices. We hear footsteps of a young man running down the hall before bursting in the office. We see a partition in the background. J.W.

Alexander looks up from his desk. The man, JERRY FULLER hands him a demo tape.

JERRY FULLER

I was looking for Sam Cooke. I'm
Jerry Fuller, and I wrote this song
for him.

ALEXANDER puts his cigar down, picks up the tape, stands and threads it through the reel-to-reel. We hear the song's first verse...

"I'm a travelin man, made a lot of stops, all over the world,
but in every port I own the heart of at least one lovely
girl..."

J.W. suddenly rips the tape from the machine, and tosses it in the wastebasket. Fuller storms out, and after a moment, J.W. grabs his hat, and walks out the door. A short pause and then we see a head pop up over the partition. He rushes over to the wastebasket, retrieves the tape, and picks up the telephone.

MAN

Lemme speak to Rick Nelson it's
urgent...Rick! Man, I just found you
a #1 hit song. You are going to love
it!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Two-storied Structure. Flower beds, shuttered windows.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

In the lobby, a BLONDE TEENAGED GIRL flips mindlessly through a magazine. Sam and Charles walk up to the front desk, where a MIDDLE AGED WHITE MAN with a beer gut and a cigarette, eyes them with suspicion.

MAN

Now look, we don't rent rooms to colored folks here.

The girl bounds up to them, breathless.

GIRL

Oh my gosh, Daddy! That's Sam Cooke!
He sings songs on the radio! You
just have to give him a room! Can I
have your autograph, Mr. Cooke?

She grabs paper and pen from desk.

SAM

Why of course, young lady!

Sam scribbles his name and hands paper back with a dazzling smile, which he subdues slightly for the father.

Resigned to his daughter's wishes, the man hands Sam a set of keys. Sam's entourage take their suitcases upstairs.

TWO-ROOM SUITE

Sam throws open windows. Washes his hands. He takes a roll of quarters from his pocket and pops most of them into a coin-operated television. Flipping channels, he stops at the news.

S.R.

Aw, c'mon Sam. Why you wanna watch
the damn news? It's never anything
good.

ON TV

A lunch counter demonstration. Sam watches intently.

SAM

You got that right S.R. Look at
this.

They hover around for a few minutes, viewing blacks beaten with billy clubs and dragged into police paddy wagons.

A HORN BLARES from outside.

CHARLES

Aw. Man!

SAM

I thought we got that thing fixed?

S.R.

I took it in, Sam. I thought the motherfucker fixed it. Goddamn it!

Horn still blaring. Manager pounds on door, yelling.

MANAGER

Mr. Cooke, turn that damn horn off or I'm going to have to call the police.

SAM

(bristling)

Damn, I am not a mechanic.

MANAGER

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT YOU ARE OR AREN'T! JUST FIX IT!

SAM

I can't fix it. Don't yell at me like that either. And I don't appreciate you yelling my name all over the hotel.

Red faced with anger the manager huffs off.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cops handcuffing Sam and Charles.

Convoy of police cars transporting a glowering Sam, and group, to jail:

INT. POLICE STATION/ JAIL

Sam's men locked in cells. Police Chief opens up a suitcase, stocked with thousands of dollars.

Cop hands briefcase to Crain through the cell bars. S.R.

takes out money and hands it to chief.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Musicians hurry to their cars, wordlessly. Sam turns to Crain.

SAM

This doesn't bother me half as much
as hearing that some guy wrote
Travelin' Man for me and JW threw
his ass out the office. Man, he
doesn't know shit about music and
when I get back, I'ma have to
straighten him out. Ricky Nelson has
himself a number #1 hit!

CRAIN

J.W. is not about loyalty, Sam.
Watch him.

Sam looks at Crain with a disturbed look but says nothing;
sneers.

INT. COOKE HOUSE

A children's birthday party. Cake and presents on dining room
table. Sam dances with nieces to his hit *We're Having a
Party.*"

*The cokes are in the icebox
Popcorn's on the table,*

*Me and my baby are out here on the
floor...*

A celebration of life. Mama in the kitchen cooking; she even
shuffles a bit with Rev. Cooke. Pure joy.

In living room Barbara bottle feeds her and Sam's new baby
boy. BARBARA'S SISTER and Barbara's daughters, Linda and
Tracey look on as the last bars of music play...

INT. NIGHTCLUB

Dark, smoke-filled, packed room. Sam finishes a song, takes
his bow, and then as he is about to exit, J.W.

Alexander approaches him, and leads him to a table with two
gentlemen, one of them MORRIS LEVY, gangster record label
owner, and his protégé, accountant ALLEN KLEIN.

They half-stand and shake Sam's hand. He sits and lights up a
cigarette. J.W. hands him a fresh scotch on the rocks.

We see Klein do all the talking, takes out some accounting sheets, and we hear the word "Copacabana." SAM appears eagerly interested...

INT. SAR RECORDS STUDIO

A large group of artists assemble, including WOMACK BROTHERS. Sam gives direction in control booth.

SAM

(to engineer)

Bones, man, let me have more bass on Bobby's mic. Rene, it's okay to go loud. The Womack's voices are strong enough to get through. I want a kind of wall-of-sound, real loud. Okay?

BONES HOWE (ENGINEER)

Got it, Boss.

BOBBY

(to Sam)

Man, Sam, you like a king, man.

BOBBY

You have all these hit records and you producing gospel AND pop for colored folks, like it's nothing, like it happens all the time with us.

SAM

Bobby, if you just sing you will never make any money. You want to own your songs and then turn around and help others eventually own theirs. That's the only way we as a people will ever move on up out of financial exile. Self-empowerment, baby!

(slaps Bobby on the back, laughs)

BOBBY

Well, I ain't sure what you just said but..okay... let's go! I'm ready, man.

Womack Brothers singing. J.W. ALEXANDER answers a phone and closes a door behind him.

In control room, Charles whispers to L.C.

CHARLES

L.C., something ain't right with JW.

L.C. looks at the office door.

L.C.

Maybe he's just making side deals.
The man loves him some money. Why?

CHARLES

I don't trust him. I think he's a
gangster-straight up.

L.C.

Ain't nothing can be done. He's
Sam's labels partner. And Allen
likes him.

CHARLES shoots a dagger of a look to his brother.

CHARLES

(exhales cigarette)
Hello?

INT. TV STUDIO-DAY

Sam sings *Twisting the Night Away* on American Bandstand.

From the audience, white and black teenagers jump up to dance
around Sam. The audience is highly enthused.

FOOTAGE

Two thirty- something WHITE MEN in control room direct
cameras.

MAN

(under breath)
Look at this! Negro kids dancing
with whites! Dick's gonna have to
explain this in Mississippi and
Alabama.

MAN

TV, rock n roll, and civil rights;
It's an earthquake that no one can
stop, man, and we have a front row
seat.

(laughs)
Long live Dick Clark!

MONTAGE

Sam's hits - Another Saturday Night, Cupid, Wonderful World, juxtaposed with his shows, appearances: Ed Sullivan, American Bandstand, Steve Allen, Johnny Carson.

Sam on glamorous Hollywood evenings with gorgeous actresses on each arm, random beautiful women, men in fedoras with cigars, counting cash.

Sam at car dealerships, buying cars for staff and family, recording new acts, Sam, life of the party, except...

INT. SAM COOKE HOME-NIGHT

Barbara, late at night, drinking, smoking a joint with an unidentified lover. We see their shadowy profiles hot and heavy.

INT. AIRPORT DAY

Sam boarding a plane for England. A reporter shoves a mike in his face.

REPORTER

Mr. Cooke, are you planning to meet England's newest group, the Beatles, when you are there?

SAM

I would love to meet them, but so far I'm scheduled to tour with Little Richard. I think we also have a gig with a group called The Rolling Stones...

INT. ENGLAND/ CONCERT HALL

Sam singing something bluesy, taken by surprise when British teens go crazy for him.

Backstage, adoring British pop stars trip all over each other to meet Sam.

MICK JAGGER

Sam, this is Keith...

KEITH RICHARDS pumps Sam's hand.

MICK JAGGER

... Keith loves the blues, man. Tell him Keith.

KEITH

Got all your records, man... I have the early gospel ones and Cupid, Sad Mood...love the way you sing, man.

MICK

So, Keith and I want to write and publish our songs like you do, and, well, we could use some expert guidance. We're stayin' at the same hotel...

SAM

(touched)

Sure, leave me your phone number and when I get back to the room, I'll call you guys.

MICK

Thanks, Sam.

Keith can't stop staring at Sam. Awestruck.

Mick finally hands Sam his hotel number.

SAM

Rick Nelson! Is that you? Man, we share office space in LA, and I never see you.

(laughs)

What are the odds, man?

Sam hugs him, as he spots two of the Beatles.

PAUL MCCARTNEY & JOHN LENNON

LENNON

Sam, man you were amazing.

SAM

Hey, Paul, John, when you guys coming stateside, already?

JOHN

In February to do the Ed Sullivan Show.

Sam eyes line of voluptuous beauties leading to his dressing room.

SAM

Say, excuse me, boys, but I need to
meet me some fresh-faced and eager
fans here!

Sam works the crowd of adoring women, while younger musicians
marvel.

MICK

(To Keith)

Shit, man, never mind Roger Miller;
Sam Cooke is King of the Road.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Sam and Mick, with Keith playing guitar and Mick on
tambourine. Sam shares a road tale. Rock stars convulse in
laughter.

MICK

That's fucking hilarious. So the
husband never knew?

SAM

No clue, man. He was a racist. Hated
black artists. I did it for them!

They nod knowingly, and snicker, but still in awe. Sam strums
guitar.

SAM

Bobby wrote this song about his
uncle and aunt. I worked on the
music and phrasing with him. See,
fellas, a song tells a story. This
could even be mine.

(singing)

Because I used to love her but it's
all over now.

Keith plays along, Mick beats tambourine.

Intercut Barbara, late at night, and unidentified lovers with
Sam singing...

SAM

(singing)

*Baby used to stay out all night
long, she made me cry, she done me
wrong. She hurt my eyes open that's
no lie, tables turned now it's her
turn to cry...*

(turning to Mick)
Who's this?

MICK
Your girl?

SAM
Nah, my girl would never do me
wrong. My WIFE, on the other hand...

They fall out laughing.

SAM
(singing)
*She used to run around with every
man in town, she spent all my money
playin' a high class game. She put
me out, it was a pity how I cried,
tables turned now it's her turn to
cry...*
(talking)

SAM
Now the hook.
(singing)
Because I used to love her...

They sing along.

EVERYONE
(singing)
But it's all over now.

SAM
Okay here comes the last verse, men,
ready?
(singing)
*I used to wake 'n the morning, get
my breakfast in bed. When I'd gotten
worried she'd ease my aching head.
But now she's here and there, with
every man in town. Still tryin' to
take me for that same ol' clown...*
(talking)
Drive it home now.

They sing.

EVERYONE
(singing)
*Because I used to love her, but it's
all over now.*

Scene concludes with Barbara seducing a terrified, quivering but very willing Bobby.

MICK

That's a fantastic song, Sam.

SAM

Yeah, listen, I'm going to give you that song Bobby helped write, in all honesty, so his name goes on it.

MICK

That's so cool of you, Sam. He's got to feel as grateful as we do, man.

SAM

Oh, he's grateful all right...so goddamn grateful....

Sam slips on his raincoat on and opens the door a crack before turning to Mick and Keith.

SAM

... That he sure as hell won't even stop fucking my wife. But I don't blame him, I know it's all her. Good night fellas.

He waves and takes off down the corridor, leaving Mick and Keith open mouthed.

EXT. STOREFRONT STUDIO - DAY

Makeshift, frame-structured, storefront studio. Sign out front: SAM COOKE'S SOUL WORKSHOP. A late model sedan parked a few yards down the street. TWO DANGEROUS LOOKING WHITE MEN with dark suits and hats in front seat, window rolled down, watching Sam and Charles enter the building.

MAN 1

So this nigger's trying to run shit like he's a record producer.

MAN 2

He is - been producing these other colored kids for months now. He's talking 'bout going national with these crazy Soul Station Workshops of his.

MAN

The fucking Pied Piper of Crenshaw Blvd.

They laugh maniacally.

EXT. SOUL WORKSHOP - DAY

The same two goons high-tailing it out of building.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE

Small, crowded.

CHARLES

Brother, you gotta watch out for them thugs. You know you don't mess with them.

SAM

FUCK THEM MOTHERFUCKERS! Ain't nobody gonna stop me or tell me what the fuck to do artistically. This is MY life and I'ma help my little brothers if I damn well want to.

JOHNNY MORISETTE rushes from bathroom.

JOHNNY MORRISSETTE

Damn Sam! You sure handled them motherfuckers! Damn!

SAM

While your scared, shaking little ass was hiding out in the damn bathroom!

Laughing, Sam grabs Johnny's arm, and motioning to arranger LOU ADLER standing nearby.

SAM

Lou, listen to this kid sing.

He motions to Johnny to sing; he complies with a few bars of "Hey Little Girl."

LOU ADLER

He sounds great. Good-looking kid.

SAM

(shaking his head)
NO! Here -

He turns LOU around, his back to Johnny.

SAM

NOW listen! People buy records for sound, not looks! To them all we are is a cold, hard piece of wax, you dig? Come on, let's all head out to the studio in North Hollywood. Rene and Cecil are already over there. Bobby's over there too. His car broke down and he asked Barbara for a ride.

Johnny lights up a cigarette with shaky hands.

CHARLES

(narrowing his gaze)

Uh-huhhh...A ride? Why did you marry her, Sam? You two have nothing in common, and she's like Runaround Sue.

SAM

It seemed like the right thing to do at the time.

CHARLES

Sam, you know what, brother? Forgive me for saying this, but you should have married Dot.

SAM

LOOK, DOT'S MARRIED!

Sam glances downward, sideways, then back at Charles, allowing a smile to creep across his face.

SAM

But...I love her. I do. And we still..keep the pilot lit!

Sam laughs and swings out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDIO

Sam singing, as the Womacks and Johnny Morisette watch him through glass, impressed.

BOBBY

(to Johnny)

Sam's going to try the Copa again next year...gonna bring in some of his people so it's not just fake record company crackers. He be talking 'bout singin' some more gospel and doin' some blues like this here.

Sam, singing: 'Little Red Rooster.'

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM SQUARE CLUB

Sam singing Little Red Rooster, whipping women into a frenzy.

SAM

Awww, thank-you! You are so kind. And now Miami, I'd like to bring on up here my childhood buddy, my fellow Gospel Highway traveler, and a great, great talent, MR. LOU RAWLS, ladies and gentlemen!

Thunderous ovation as Lou and Sam do a bit of a soul shake, quiet anticipation, as the two stand side by side each holding a mike.

SAM

We've been in the studio with this one and hope y'all like it.

SAM & LOU

(singing)

If you ever change your mind, About leavin', 'leavin' me behind, Oh-oh, bring it to me, bring your sweet lovin', Bring it on home to me, yeah, yeah, yeah...

EXT: LOS ANGELES-BALWIN HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD. MORNING.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE

Spacious ranch style house in Baldwin Hills section of Los Angeles. Tastefully decorated in Danish modern furniture. In adjacent study hundreds of hardbound books displayed on built-in shelves... Artwork on walls.

In the kitchen, Barbara takes coffee cake out of the oven, slices it, carries plates to her husband and Sam's fiery Puerto Rican administrative assistant, ZELDA, engrossed in a road story Sam tells.

SAM

(imitating James Brown)

"I demand to close the show! I demand to close the show!" I said
 "Ok, James." Finished my set, departed the venue. By the time James came on, the audience is gone. Gone! James had to close to an empty house. Next show, James says, "Uh Sam, bro, you can close tonight, it's ok."

Zelda and Sam laugh heartily, while Barbara smiles wanly.

Her wifely tasks completed, she sits down, crosses her legs and lights up a cigarette.

Disinterested in the story, she exhales smoke, takes a large gulp of champagne, checks her watch.

ZELDA

Mmm! Very delicious cake, Barbara...

BARBARA

I'll be sure to pass on the compliments to Miss Sara Lee.

Barbara takes another drag, then impatiently squashes cigarette out. The housekeeper, NINA enters holding Sam and Barbara's toddler son, VINCENT. Sam and Barbara jump up simultaneously.

SAM

(holding baby)

There he is, daddy's little man!

BARBARA

I have to go now. I have a date.

Barbara snatches her purse and hurries out front door.

Zelda taken aback. Sam shrugs.

Sam's daughters run in to say goodbye to him, raising her arms for a hug.

TRACEY

Daddy...leaving?

He picks her up.

SAM

Yes sugar, Daddy has to go to work.
You be good and watch your brother
until mama comes home. Nina is here
if you need anything.

He tries to kiss Linda, but she turns her head away.

SAM

Hey, what's wrong with Little Bo
Peep here?

TRACEY

(slowly)
She lost her sheep!

The adults laugh at this bit of cuteness.

LINDA

Daddy, we were gonna practice the
Hully Gully and The Monkey! How will
you ever learn in time for
Bandstand?

SAM

Oh, now, I've been doing my
homework, Miss Linda!

He sings few bars of The Hully Gully while dancing, segueing
into Mickey's Monkey...

Smiling at Sam trying to dance, Zelda taps her watch as a
gentle reminder. Sam hugs the girls.

SAM

Daddy's gotta go.

TRACEY AND LINDA

(in unison)
'Bye, Daddy.

ZELDA stops to admire a painting of the women's suffragette
movement, nodding her head in approval.

SAM

Always did like strong women.

ESTABLISHING SHOT OF SAM'S FERRARI.

In the car, ZELDA divulges information.

ZELDA

Sam, Dot called the office this morning. She wanted to talk you.

SAM

(brightening)

Yeah? I'll be damned.

ZELDA

She was crying, said her husband left her.

SAM

Aw, she don't deserve that.

ZELDA

Said he was tired of trying to compete with you.

SAM

(grinning proudly)

Well...I got to admit I'm selfishly happy. Hell yeah, I am! And I don't want her to shed one tear over that mother — make reservations for two for Puerto Rico.

ZELDA

(quiet for a moment)

Okay. So, besides Curtis, and Billy Preston on organ, I heard that Lou was going to be here to put down some tracks with you, and oh, you got a call from Johnny Carson's people about doing The Tonight Show. I think after you get back from England next winter there are about 4 shows Allen has lined up.

SAM

(slight irritation)

Allen needs to speak with me before booking. Man, he is always running shit...

ZELDA

I think he wants to fire me.

SAM

What? No, Zel, you ain't going anywhere, lady. Uh-uh.

INT. SAM'S STUDIO/OFFICE

The usual work and party scene. Sam excuses himself and enters his office, closing door behind him. A full size poster of Mel Carter plastered on his door: Mel Carter sings "When a Boy Loves a Girl." Sam picks up telephone receiver, smiling in anticipation. Rene Hall interrupts.

RENE

Hey, c'mon, Curtis has to leave in two hours and James is sending that bass player from the Upsetters back to us. He should be here any second. Mel Carter's in town, too.

SAM

Yeah, I guess a month in the James Brown Army Band will have him ready to play taps and dance like David Ruffin all at the same time. It worked for Bobby.

MEL CARTER AND SAM IN STUDIO

Mel is directed by Sam to do multiple takes, until he finally hits pay dirt.

SAM

Ooh, you have a real pretty voice there, Mr. Mel Carter...
(joking)
But you're no Sam Cooke!

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Tracey sits on a tricycle, singing The Piper. In the background, is an uncovered kidney-shaped pool.

TRACEY pedals alongside swimming pool. Just then we see NINA, the maid, storming outside holding Vincent's Teddy bear, as he tearfully trots behind her, arms outstretched. She is muttering angrily in Spanish as she tosses the bear into the pool. VINCENT screams as TRACEY looks on horrified, NINA swoops him up, storming back inside the house. WE FOLLOW them inside as she sits him down in his toddler chair at the kitchen table.

NINA

Now, Mijo, you will sit her until you finish your lunch. Then, I'll have your mother get your bear back. When she's ready.

WE HEAR muffled laughter coming from the bedroom. VINCENT hurriedly eats his food, then shows her his plate. She smiles, motions for him to go as she cleans the kitchen. As she is placing the dishes in the dishwasher, she does not see him slip out the front door, making a beeline for the pool.

TRACEY
No, Vincent!

VINCENT
Beaw! Beaw!

TRACEY
No!

VINCENT sees the bear floating at the edge as he tries to grab it, but falls into the swimming pool, where he quickly sinks to the bottom.

TRACEY, in shock, stares helplessly at her brother for a moment.

Takes off running.

TRACEY
Mommy, mommy!

INT. COOKE HOME - DAY

Barbara in mirror, modeling dresses. Shopping bags and boxes on king size bed. Tracey runs up to her.

TRACEY
Mommy!

BARBARA

She puts her hand over the phone.
Tracey, didn't i tell you to knock?

TRACEY
Mommy, Vincent wanted teddy, and I
said no, and he fell.

Barbara shakes her head, starts to return to her phone call, before turning to Tracey, suddenly alarmed.

BARBARA
What? He fell?

TRACEY
He's all wet Mommy, he's wet!

Confused, Barbara looks around for the boy.

BARBARA
Tracey, where is Vincent? Where did
he fall?

TRACEY
Poo..pool..

Screaming, Barbara flies out the door...

BARBARA
OH!! MY BABY!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Followed by Nina and Linda, Barbara spots Vincent's limp body resting on the bottom of the shallow end of the pool. She jumps in, takes him out, and lays him out on the lawn. Shaking and crying, she frantically tries to revive him.

BARBARA
MY BABY MY! BABY! OH GOD! OH
VINCENT! VINCENT! NO! NO!

NINA
I called the rescue squad, Ms.
Cooke. I'll call Mr. Cooke...

Mournful sight of Vincent's teddy bear floating atop pool.

EXT. COOKE HOME

Police, fire and ambulance personnel present. Sam brushes past them to get to Vincent, lying on a blanket on the grass. NEIGHBORS commiserate, members of Cooke family comfort Barbara sobbing on the porch. Sam's sisters comfort his daughters.

MEDIC
I am so sorry Mr. Cooke, we tried,
we did everything, but...

Heartbroken, Sam picks up his son's tiny, lifeless body, cradling him. He kisses his forehead and gently places him back on the blanket. Saying nothing, he stumbles past Barbara into the house, where Charles consoles their mother. They embrace Sam. All three weeping in each other's arms.

SAM
(anguished)
It's all my fault.

I didn't cover the damn pool. We used it all weekend... Why didn't she do it? Why wasn't she watching him! Who lets a two year-old and a four year-old play near a pool unsupervised?!

Like an old man, Sam drags into his den office, shutting the door. At a desk full of family photos, he numbly dials telephone.

SAM
(into phone)
Dot, baby, it's me...Not good, not good...we have to cancel Puerto Rico...Vincent...the baby...drowned in the swimming pool today.
(quivering)
I-I was in the studio and got a call, and I...I know you are...honey, I have to go now...

Clutching photograph of baby Vincent to his heaving chest, Sam breaks down in agonizing cries.

MONTAGE

Sam in month-long depression, in darkened room with bottle of Scotch, buried in armchair staring vacantly at photos, including a hidden one of him and Dot, and then, shuffling past Barbara, neither speaking.

Barbara drinking, smoking weed. Barbara tormented with nightmares of Vincent staring up at her screaming face from the pool bottom.

Finally, Reverend Cook slips into den.

REV. COOK
Sam? Samuel. I hate to disturb you son, but are you all right?

SAM
Papa, I'm all right.

REV. COOKE
You have to forgive her.

SAM
Forgive her? Yeah, I'm trying, but it's no use. It's over between us. You know how you always preach that we reap what we sow?

I reaped what I sowed, and
now...now, it's time to move on.

(brightening)

But you know what else, Papa? You'll
like this.. I want to record some
gospel and blues and maybe do
something to help Dr. King.

REV. COOK

You mean the old dentist on Addison
Street?

SAM

No, Papa, The Dr. King. Martin
Luther King.

Sam laughs. Rev. Cooke pats his back.

REV. COOKE

It's good to hear you laugh, son.

DISSOLVE TO:

Newsreel clip footage of President Kennedy's speech on civil
rights, late June, 1963; Medgar Evers' assassination in his
driveway a tearful Myrlie Evers; Dr. King's arrest and
imprisonment in Birmingham; finally Bull Connor's dogs
walking up theatre aisles, ensuring segregation.

INT. DRESSING ROOM BIRMINGHAM, AUGUST 1963

Sam back at work, but party scene is subdued. People silently
hug him, kiss him. Dressing table crowded with flowers. He
tries to put on a happy face, but atmosphere hangs heavy.
National news plays on a small color TV, which Sam watches
intensely.

BOBBY

Sam, that shit is depressing, man.
You should just change the station.

SAM

News is important, Bobby. It's
reality. They say 100,000 people are
marching on Washington today to hear
Dr. King. Odetta is singing, and
maybe Harry, I'm not sure.

Charles enters, places a hand on Sam's shoulder.

CHARLES

We got an hour 'til they get this
thing going tonight.

Sam, still fascinated by the news, doesn't turn around.

SAM

Okay.

On TV Bob Dylan, with guitar, singing:

BOB DYLAN

(singing)

How many roads must a man walk down
Until they call him a man? How many
seas must a white dove sail before
he sleeps in the sand? And how many
deaths will it take til we know that
too many people have died? The
answer my friend, is blowin' in the
wind. The answer is blowin' in the
wind...

SAM

Dig, man. Can you believe this?
Imagine a white boy singing these
lyrics for the whole country to
hear. That's some shit. Wish I'd
wrote that.

BOBBY

He sound like he singin' through his
nose.

CHARLES

Bobby, man, shut up!

CLIFF

Is that dumbass Bobby poppin' off
again like a damn fool?

SAM

Hey, c'mon, ease up on the kid. Oh,
look...

(watching TV intently
again)

Pete Seeger! Remember we met him up
in San Francisco and he knew all
that shit about the movement? Hates
these crackers with a passion, man.
They clubbed his ass and sent him to
jail, called him 'nigger lover,' and
he went right back out and kept on
keeping on. He's really an
intelligent guy.

BOBBY

What's so smart about that? He blew his damn career.

CHARLES

(angered)

Boy, I'm getting ready to slap you upside your ugly head.

Charles picks Bobby up and pushes him out the door, but Bobby eases back in, standing near Sam, for protection.

CHARLES

Damn, Sam, that boy is just retarded.

He doesn't get a response from Sam engrossed by Pete Seeger singing If I had a Hammer.

Sam unbuttons the top button of his shirt.

CHARLES

Sam, you ain't gonna wear no jacket?

SAM

Nope.

Charles raises his eyebrows.

SAM

The SOBs who don't like to pay royalties are not getting any more sweat than I have to give them by entertaining folks as hard as I do. Besides, dig, this is a \$500 shirt.

S.R. CRAIN.

(out of breath)

Sam, Connor's men are here with the damn dogs enforcing Jim Crow shit with the audience, man. Negroes have to sit up in the balcony tonight.

SAM

(angered)

Oh, hell no! I ain't going on then.

Charles gasps.

S.R. CRAIN

Sam, you gotta be kidding, they'll lynch your ass.

SAM
For what - not singing?

S.R. CRAIN
Sam, this is Birmingham. That
somabitch runs the show and he'll
put a bullet in your head before he
lets you fuck with their system.

J.W. Alexander, Sam's partner runs in.

J.W.
Sam -

SAM
I heard. Look, J.W. I'm just not
singing. Let's get our shit and go.
It's about time I stood up to this
bullshit.

J.W.
So that's what you want me to say?
Sam Cooke ain't going on unless you
ignore Jim Crow just for one night?

SAM
I don't give a damn what you tell
them.

J.W.
Sam! This ain't like you! You always
so professional and all. You never
fuck with these people.

Sam starts packing things.

SAM
I am now. This time they went too
damn far.
(singing)
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me
'round...

J.W. eyes Sam a bit contemptuously, but Sam doesn't notice or
care.

J.W.
(muttering)
Allen's not going to like this.

J.W. walks over to a phone booth. Charles watching with
suspicion.

CHARLES

Sam, man, how come you put that
Klein guy in charge?

SAM

All roads lead to the Copa, baby...

CHARLES

And then what?

Sam shrugs, slaps his brother playfully on the back.

SAM

We'll cross that ugly-ass bridge
when we get to it. One step at a
time.

Charles stares at J.W.

CHARLES

Just don't take your eyes off the
horizon, as Papa says.

EXT. SOUL WORKSHOP

Sam and Bobby working. Sam singing, tuning his guitar,
writing down chords.

BOBBY (SHIVERS)

Man, those lyrics scare the shit out
of me.

Sam not looking up, acknowledges with a laugh.

SAM

Me, too.

BOBBY

You gonna sing these at the Copa?

SAM

No. I'm not singing this for any
money. I'm putting it on an album
for Dr. King; all the proceeds go to
the movement. Okay, I think I'm
ready to sing it through. I'm going
to let Rene Hall do all the
arrangements, punch it up big, lotta
strings.

BOBBY

I heard Allen is trying to keep Rene
out of the studio.

Sam shoots quizzical look at Bobby.

SAM

C'mon, lets go 'round one time.
Ready?

Bobby nods.

SAM

(singing)

I was born by the river in a little
tent, oh, and, just like the river,
I been runnin' ever since. It's been
a long, a long time coming, and I
know, a change gonna come...

MONTAGE

Change arrives. Sam works with new found energy and purpose.
In studio recording for SARS, at home in his office writing,
going over arrangements with Rene, working with his protégés
at the Soul Workshops.

Sam, leaving home late at night, drinking with associates in
bars.

Sam constantly tailed by underworld music business THUGS,
which confuses and angers him.

INT STUDIO

Sam smiles at Rene Hall, his arranger.

SAM

Give me the best arrangements the
Copa will ever hear! Just like you
did on "Change is Gonna Come." Don't
worry about Allen. He doesn't know
shit about music. This is our gig,
man. I need you to be part of my
resurrection at the Copa. I only
need Allen to get the booking and
fill the seats. After that, we'll
deal with him. C'mon. Let's get that
Basin Street Blues track down. I
want to try that number on the
Tonight Show.

INT. SAR OFFICE

Zelda huddled in corner of SAR office conferring with MEL CARTER, a thinly handsome young man in suit and tie. He holds papers.

ZELDA

So what you're telling me, Mel, is that Allen Klein went behind your back, told your manager that he was fired and that ALLEN was now managing you...while you knew nothing about it? Are you kidding me? You're kidding me, right?

MEL CARTER

I wish I were. I'm about to go in there and tell him to leave me the hell alone. I would rather wait tables all my life than have that motherfucker managing my career.

J.W. ambles toward them from opposite corridor, smiling.

Mel clutches Zelda's arm, speaking urgently.

MEL CARTER

Zelda, I need you to be my manager. You know this business, you have Sam's respect, Zelda, please!

He shuts up as J.W. approaches.

J.W.

Mel motherfuckin' Carter!

J.W. slaps Mel on the back before extending his hand.

J.W.

What's shakin' and bakin', my man?

MEL CARTER

I got some business with Allen-serious business.
(to Zelda)
Excuse me, please.

Mel hurries off.

J.W.

That was strange, don't you think?

ZELDA
(sighs, smiles)
Well, now. J.W., you know, this is a
strange business, sometimes.

J.W. eyes her warily.

J.W.
Maybe so, maybe so...

Johnny Morisette, runs up to Zelda, troubled.

JOHNNY
You know where Sam is, Zelda?

ZELDA
He's going over arrangements for the
Copa show with Rene, why?

JOHNNY
Does he know Allen dropped me? Does
he?

ZELDA
Allen did what?

Zelda looks at J.W., who looks away.

ZELDA
Johnny, go home, have a drink and
calm down. I'll call you later.

JOHNNY
I ain't never gonna be calm 'bout
this shit.

Johnny eyes J.W. and walks off. Shouting from Klein's office.

ALLEN
Get the fuck outta here, you sorry-
ass loser! You'll never be anything
without me. And stay the hell away
from Sam's studio or I'll find your
family.

Mel stomps out of Allen's office. From the doorway, Allen
summons J.W.

ALLEN
J.W., I need to speak with you, in
my office, please.

In her office, Zelda shudders. She moves to pick up the phone, thinks better of it, rapidly jotting down notes instead. Her office door bursts open.

ALLEN

Zelda, I understand Mel Carter offered you a job as his manager. Is that true?

ZELDA

Well, Allen, I mean...He just kicked the idea around.

ALLEN

(callously)

Yeah? Well, kick this around, honey: You can go ahead and manage Mel, but then you can't run SAR. You choose. You can't do both.

He closes door. Stunned, then angry, Zelda picks up phone.

ZELDA

Mary? It's Zelda. Listen, when Mel comes home tell him I am taking him up on his offer. I want to manage him...Yeah, Allen released his contract.

ZELDA

No, act like you didn't know, and just tell him to call me ASAP. Right. Thanks a lot Goodbye.

She grabs a nearby box and flings random items in it.

Gathering her purse and keys, she storms down the hallway and opens Klein's office without knocking. Interrupting him in deep phone conversation.

ZELDA

(sarcastically)

I'm sorry, Allen, but you didn't make the final cut. I'm afraid SARS will have to find another manager.

She marches off, but with tears in her eyes.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY

Sam, on cloud nine, looking up at billboard with a giant picture of himself, captioned: "There's a New Cooke in Town!"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEW YORK CITY DELI

Sam and Charles wolfing down sandwiches.

CHARLES

So, Sam, man, here you are, goin' back to The Copa, finishing what you started.

SAM

Yep. Remember what Papa used to say?

SAM/CHARLES

(through mouthfuls)

Once a task has begun, Never leave it til it's done, Be the task great or small, Do it well or not at all...

CHARLES

Guess who else is here?

Sam looks at his brother as a wide grin spreads across his face.

SAM

My Dottie Baby?

CHARLES

That's right, bro. She's sitting almost across from Barb.

He giggles contagiously as Sam joins him.

SAM

She's so loyal, so cool but clear. I love that about her.

CHARLES

Everybody loves that about her.

SAM

Man, so glad you are here, Charlie. I'm startin' to get a bit nervous, you know? I don't think I could handle bombing like last time.

CHARLES

Sam, now, c'mon, you ain't gonna bomb. Trust me.

SAM

Yeah, y'know I loved Bumps, but this is Rene's strong suit. I feel like we've got this down.

CHARLES

You both killed it on Johnny Carson. Long as you sing YOUR songs and have YOUR people here, you cool. And with that sexy shirt of yours...

They both laugh.

SAM

Hey, Belafonte just wears a calypso shirt, so I can just wear a silk shirt, right?

CHARLES

Oh, definitely. But Sam, all respect to Debbie Reynolds, none of that Tammy shit, okay? Goddamn, man!
(He starts singing a few bars of the Debbie Reynolds' hit)

.

Sam laughs at the ribbing. He takes a deep breath.

SAM

I know it's another half year off, but 1965 is going to be a whole new year for us all. You know what Charlie? I want first place now! I want to be the producer, not just sing for The Man. No more second-rate bookings, no more second-rate marriages. I'm gonna marry the woman I really love. I don't want to live out of suitcases and miss seeing my kids growing up. That's why this show is so important; I make it big here, I'm golden.

EXT. COPACABANA NIGHTCLUB

SIGN: WORLD FAMOUS COPACABANA NIGHTCLUB.

INT. COPACABANA NIGHTCLUB/BACKSTAGE

Flurry of activity; stagehands, managers, technicians scurrying around. Sam, dressed in his signature cream-colored silk shirt, black slacks and shiny black shoes, paces, looks at his watch.

Sam in the wings ready to go on stage, looking over audience. Prominent on both sides of front row, he spots familiar thugs in suits, carnations in lapels.

He decides to focus on family, and friends. And Dot. In first row, glamorous and glowing with excitement and pride.

SAMMY DAVIS JR.

Ladies and gentlemen, MR. SAM COOKE!

INTERCUT: Sam performing a medley of the songs: *The Best Things in Life are Free*, *Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey*, *Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out*, *You Send Me*, *When I Fall in Love*, *Twistin' the Night Away*, *This Little Light of Mine*, and *Blowin in the Wind*."

A Standing ovation. Sam's face, glistening with sweat and satisfaction.

INT-HIGH RISE OFFICE, CHICAGO LOOP SKYLINE

WE SEE back of man's head, as he sits in a wooden swivel chair, reading *Variety Magazine* in the light of the large picture window, as he smokes a cigar. He is wearing a sharkskin suit, shiny alligator leather shoes, expensive jewelry. He swivels back around to face us, inhaling thoughtfully. WE SENSE he is a high-ranking mobster, in dress, speech, and mannerisms. WE SEE *Variety* close up: "SAM COOKE SELLS OUT COPA. Cooke, relaxed, melts audience's heart like butter." He picks up the phone receiver.

SPLIT-SCREEN

SUNSET- CHICAGO LAKEFRONT HIGH RISE/INT. LIVING ROOM BALCONY

EXT./INT.FEDERAL PRISON

WE SEE a guard walk toward a cell block. A large Italian man is smoking a cigar, obvious contraband. A guard approaches his cell, they make eye contact, The man tosses another cigar to the guard, as both laugh.

GUARD

Mr. Genovese, you have a phone call.
It's your cousin Mr.
Giancana...again.

He accompanies the prisoner, VITO GENOVESE, to the glass-partitioned phone cubicle, stands guard nearby.

GENOVESE

Cousin Sammy, what's news?

GIANCANA

Got a new puppy. A Copa. Talented
puppy, he's going places.

GENOVESE smiles broadly as he recognizes the coded language.

GENOVESE

What'd ya name the puppy?

GIANCANA

Sam C. He's what's cookin,' alright.

GENOVESE looks momentarily puzzled, then suddenly brightens as he recognizes just who GIANCANA is referencing.

GENOVESE

Good puppy or problem puppy?

GIANCANA

Problem. Getting too big for his
box. Feisty. Needs reeling in.
Morris' friend Allen *trains* him

GENOVESE

Get the grocery bag boy, Johnny.
Make our puppy an officer, not a
director. Call Sid, first, though.
He'll make all the arrangements for
the...the training.
(Chuckles.)

GIANCANA

I'm on it, Cousin. Ciao.

GENOVESE

Ciao.

WE SEE GIANCANA buzz the intercom on his desk.

GIANCANA

Honey, get me Sidney Korshak. Watch the lights. As soon as the call ends, get me John Montague.

WE SEE a tall thin man, in a shiny gray suit, donning sunglasses. He has the look of a lower-level mob affiliate, as he is entering GIANCANA's office. He stands before his boss, ready for assignment.

GIANCANA

That guy you met who told you he's Sam Cooke's labels partner? What's his name?

JOHN MONTAGUE

Alexander. J.W. Alexander.

GIANCANA

Get him on board.

He hands MONTAGUE a briefcase, a large envelope filled with papers, and a piece of paper, presumably containing instructions. MONTAGUE appears familiar with the procedure.

GIANCANA

15 grand. The envelope goes back to our boy, Klein, his manager. You know him, Morris Levy's guy. Go get 'em, Johnny.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA-WILSHIRE BD. OFFICE BUILDING-INT. SAM COOKE OFFICE

MONTAGUE spots J.W. ALEXANDER, shake his hand, whisper in his ear. Others are Cadillac, where quietly slip outside, walk to a parking lot behind the building, sit in MONTAGUE's '64 Fleetwood Cadillac, where MONTAGUE places the briefcase on J.W.'s lap. He instructs J.W. to open it, which, after a moment of apprehension, he does, revealing the \$15K in neatly bundled cash. His eyes grow wide, as he brightens.

MONTAGUE

And there's plenty more where that came from. See this car? This suit? \$800 Italian shoes. This can be you, too, man. Dig? Just keep your mouth shut. Simple, right?

J.W. nods wistfully.

MONTAGUE

All you gotta do is take these papers to the state courthouse in Reno tomorrow. Say you work for Allen Klein. Then, you come back and see me. I'll be here two days from now, same time.

J.W. nods, exits the car, walking around to shake MONTAGUE's hand. He smiles, but appears a bit stunned, like a man who suddenly feels like a winner, oblivious that he is not only being made complicit to a crime but being recruited as a bag man for the mob.

MONTAGUE

Hey, you deserve to get yours, man.

J.W. Alexander appears reassured, departs with envelope, briefcase, and directions. MONTAGUE grins broadly at his easy con.

EXT./INT. RENO, NEVADA COURTHOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WE SEE a glass door labeled in bold, black letters, "ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING." J.W. ALEXANDER opens it, walks to the front counter. A gray-haired woman rises from her desk and saunters over to assist him. He hands her the papers inside the envelope. She takes a few moments to peruse them. He tries not to be nervous, smiling.

J.W. ALEXANDER

I work for Mr. Klein.

She looks at the papers again, briefly, then walks over to her desk, where she commences to type a carbon-copied form. She gets up after a time, stamps both with the state seal, hands him a copy. He immediately hands her a \$10 bill. She nods, writes a receipt from a tear-off booklet. He tips his hat and thanks her. As she turns around to retreat back to her desk, WE SEE a sinister smile creep across his face, self-satisfied in admiring the fruits of his duplicitous deed.

INT. ALLEN KLEIN'S OFFICE.

He appears out, as J.W. searches for him. A secretary enters the room.

SECRETARY

Hi, Mr. Alexander. May I help you?

J.W. ALEXANDER
 Iris, can you see that Allen gets
 these?

He hands her the envelope with the papers, and appears in a hurry, presumably to report back to JOHN MONTAGUE.

J.W. ALEXANDER
 Thanks. I...I have a meeting. I'll
 be back in tomorrow.

He departs abruptly. She opens the envelope, looks at the papers, not comprehending their magnitude, and takes them next door into the file room. WE SEE her place these papers, identified as TITLES OF OPERATION, under the file "TRACEY LMTD."

EXT. FOUNTAINBLEAU HOTEL/ MIAMI

Palm trees swaying in the breeze. A Cooke tune playing in background. Marquee reads: "Liston vs. Clay heavyweight fight tonight"... Sam swarmed by fans. He autographs all the way to...

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Sam closing door on unrelenting fans. Striping off clothes, goes to shower.

Barbara rushing in with packages. Sam fresh out of shower, towel wrapped around him. As they talk, he gets dressed; she strips off her clothes to shower.

BARBARA
 Hey, I'll be ready in 30 minutes.
 I'm wearing an outfit I'm sure
 you'll approve of this time.

SAM
 Barbie, you don't need to ...

BARBARA
 I'll sit behind you...

SAM
 (rolling his eyes)
 Jesus, Lord, have mercy! When can we
 stop the damn charade?

BARBARA

There's never no pleasing you, is there? No matter what I do it's never enough.

SAM

Maybe we weren't meant...

BARBARA

It's your damn family. They never liked me.

SAM

This isn't about my family. It's about us, Barbara.

BARBARA

It's about those two fur coats I bought. You still mad I spent thirty thousand dollars. Or, is it the other women?

SAM

(quietly)

Barbara, c'mon, You don't want to go there. Look, we're going to the fight tonight, then Alex is going to fly you and the girls home.

BARBARA

(as he puts on clothes)

And where're you going?

SAM

To the bar.

BARBARA

I mean after you leave here? You know what the hell I mean.

SAM

I'm going to D.C. and have a meeting with Cassius and Malcolm.

BARBARA

You're going to North Carolina with that woman!

SAM

Look, Barb, we tried. You know this simply ain't working between us - it's over. Look, you can have Bobby, okay? I don't give a damn.

But the girls are going to grow up
right. And you can't give them that.

BARBARA

NO! I don't want to hear it!

Barbara slams into bathroom. Sam quickly pulls on pants,
buttons his shirt, and grabs his suit jacket, calling as he
leaves.

SAM

I'll be at the damn bar!

EXT. FOUNTANBLEU HOTEL. WE SEE SHADOWY FIGURES OF A MOB
MEETING ABARD A SMALL YACHT.

INT. BOXING RING-CLAY-LISTON FIGHT FEB. 1964

CASSIUS CLAY has just defeated Sonny Liston in the 7th round
for the heavyweight championship. The crowd cheering wildly.
Sam, deliriously happy, applauding his friend, as he walks
toward the ring where the announcer is holding up Clay's hand
proclaiming him the new champ.

CLAY spots SAM and beckons him into the ring, where they hug,
as CLAY yells into the microphone

CLAY

I am the greatest fighter that ever
lived...and Sam Cooke is the world's
greatest rock 'n roll singer!

SAM

(Sotto voce into CLAY's
ear)

I knew you'd kick his drunken ass
into kingdom come!

INT. COOKE HOME - NIGHT

Children in bed, lights down low. Barbara answers front door.
Bobby slides in.

BOBBY

Barbara, I wanted to hear Sam's last
tape on the reel-to-reel so I can
hear where the guitar comes in.

I think I have it down, but I'm
missing a few riffs.

Barbara holds a cocktail in one hand, a joint in the other.
She extends the joint.

He takes a hit, then another, coughing a bit.

BOBBY
Whoah, Barbara, this here's some
strong shit.

Barbara eyes him, with a stoned grin.

BARBARA
Can I get you a drink?

BOBBY
No, I'm okay...
(fidgeting)
Um, so don't he keep the deck in the
den?

BARBARA
What's wrong with you tonight?

He turns on deck. Sam's voice singing. Barbara gently
massages his shoulders.

BOBBY
It's just...well, I don't feel
right, you know Sam and me...He's
like an older brother to me.

Her hands and lips all over him.

INT. TV STUDIO

Lively set of TV Show Shindig! Logo hangs center stage.

GO-GO DANCERS take positions atop large blocks of different
colors. The studio audience of teenagers applaud and cheer.
Sam takes his place behind curtain, wearing familiar silk
shirt. Host, corner stage, holds microphone.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Sam Cooke!

SAM
 (singing)
*How many roads must a man walk down,
 Before they call him a man?...*

Two RCA promo henchmen in suits we saw earlier.

FIRST MAN
 What's he doing playing a folk
 guitar like he's Bob Dylan?

SECOND MAN
 Cooke's out of control. Just does
 what he feels like doing.

FIRST MAN
 Doesn't know his place.

SECOND MAN
 They're not getting the message
 through to this sonofabitch.

They look at each other and grin in sadistic anticipation.
 Sam exits to dressing room. The goons lean in shadowy hallway
 exuding menace. Defiant, Sam slams the door in their faces.

EXT. SMALL NORTH CAROLINA RESTAURANT

Sign out front reads MARY'S PLACE.

Inside, Sam crooning lead vocals, and his gospel-days FRIENDS
 singing "Meet Me at Mary's Place", a festive song matching
 the mood of the PATRONS, dancing and clapping in
 accompaniment. A celebration of friends.

Dot, looking at Sam adoringly, happily clapping along with,
 MARY, the owner.

After the show, Sam lounging in booth, arm around Dot,
 affectionate, totally relaxed. She leans on his shoulder, a
 man and woman very much in love.

INT. DOT'S APARTMENT

Darkened room. Dot and Sam in bed, under tangled sheets.

They kiss languidly, as though they had all the time in the
 world.

DOT

Hmmm...I had such fun tonight. And Mary and the gang just love you.

SAM

You know what?

DOT

Hmm?

SAM

I love you. We've loved each other all this time, imagine that. You're one of the people I trust most in my life, you, my family, people who have my back, not backstabbers.

DOT

(slightly alarmed)

Who's stabbing you in the back?

Debating within himself.

SAM

Some of the record company corporate thieves, who'd as soon lynch my ass as give me my money. And then there's Klein...

DOT

Who's Klein?

SAM

(serious)

Allen Klein. A money guy. He is basically managing me. And J.W. man...

(shakes his head)

I don't know, I guess I got kinda bamboozled, you know?

SAM

My mind was on poor little Vincent, and J.W. worked me pretty good, telling me Klein got some back money. He worked for Buddy Knox. Now, Buddy was managed by that mobster Levy on Roulette Records. You see where this is going baby?

DOT

Did Klein audit Roulette?

SAM

(laughs)

Not with Levy knowing he did. No, he is Levy's boy. I don't know, I mean, while he is making some things happen for me...

DO

You don't entirely trust him?

SAM

No.

DOT

(fearfully)

You have to be careful, darling, please be careful.

SAM

Don't worry about me, baby. I'm a Southside Chicago boy. I can take care of myself.

Sam kisses her hand. Suddenly, Dot holds him to her tighter and tighter. She can't let him go, and she can't stop the tears pouring down her face.

INT. APOLLO THEATRE

Sam in heated discussion with the MUSICIANS UNION GUMBAS.

SAM

Why are you charging me, Ray Charles and these other black artists more than you're charging the white cats?

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Still angry, Sam prepares for the show, warming up voice. STAGEHAND charges in, flinging around expletives.

STAGEHAND

You damn niggers always got a damn problem!

CHARLES

You damn flunky, who you calling a nigger!

Charles beats hell out of stagehand. Sam, with fist doubled, ready to jump in if he has too.

The stagehand finally escapes Charles' fists and runs out. Horrified, Sam points at a widening red stain on Charles's side.

Charles discovers a stab wound in his side.

EXT. CHICAGO PARK

SAM'S GASHOUSE GANG EATING BARBECUE SERVED UP BY REV. COOK. MRS. COOKE STIRRING POTATO SALAD, L.C. SLICING MELON, WHICH AGNES PUTS ON PLATES. A RADIO PLAYING NEARBY; ROY ORBISON SINGING "IT'S OVER.Ó

REV COOK

(upset)

Son, that can't be how folks do business. Now look Sam, Barbara's one thing, but Klein got you into the Copa. You can't just walk out on him, that seems so ruthless.

SAM

(almost yelling)

You just don't understand! This ain't no chitlin circuit, this is the music industry in America and it's rotten and corrupt. They want to dictate what, how, and where I sing. Not going to happen.

CHARLES

That's right Papa. You have to understand. I've seen these cats up close and personal. They're tryin' to steal what Sam's worked for all these years.

REV. COOK

What about that Rolls Royce Klein bought you?

SAM ()

That lame stunt. Now I'm stuck with this big-ass-I mean, this car in my garage. You know I'm a sports car kind of guy. Fast! Vroom - There go Sam! Ha!

Sam takes a bite of barbecue chicken.

SAM

Wow, Papa, this chicken is so damn good. I've missed it all these months on the road. Hey gang, know what else? We all gonna be independently wealthy. It's about this family, not just Sam Cooke, you surely must know that, Papa. You always taught us Cooks to stick together. To stick up for each other and for ourselves.

FLASHBACK CHICAGO EXT. COOK APARTMENT

Police officer with hands on Sam. Rev. Cook comes out, door, seething.

REV. COOK

Take your hands off him. You don't touch my kids. If they do anything wrong, you come tell me.

Officer puts his hand near holstered gun. Rev Cooks runs down steps.

REV. COOK

I'll beat that pistol off you!

BACK TO PRESENT

SAM

Remember that Papa?

His father, listening intently.

SAM

I'm going to set up companies for all y'all.

He motions to Charles, Hattie, Mary, Agnes and David.

SAM

So, Papa, please, please don't preach to me how I owe the man something.

SAM pats his father's shoulder, kisses his head. Then, clapping his hands to the music emanating from the nearby radio, he dances toward his nieces, who giggle.

REV COOKE

I'm going to have to pray extra hard
for that boy. He just ain't the same
since Vincent died.

INT. STUDIO- NIGHT

Sam recording, headphones on.

SAM

(singing)

Shake!

(dancing)

Shake! Aw, don't it look good now!

Allen and engineer, AL SCHMIDT, at engineering board.

ALLEN

I'm going to cut this single and
throw Change is Gonna Come on the
flipside. Al, but don't tell Sam
just yet.

AL

What? Allen, Sam didn't want to
commercialize that song. You know
that was a civil rights song.

ALLEN

(icily)

He can send them a check. I'm
putting it out as a single flip side
and that's the end of the
discussion, Al. Got it?

Allen walks out, leaving Al puzzled.

INT. SAM'S HOME

DEC. 10, 1964

Mid-morning, a weekday, Sam at home alone, in pajamas, lies
in bed, looking very ill. His bedroom strewn with piles of
books, music sheets, newspapers, cold/flu medicine, teacup
and saucer.

He tries to stand up, dizzy, falls back down on bed, holding
his head. He tries again, holding onto the wall for support,
shuffling in slippers to living room.

Living room decorated for Christmas with lavishly wrapped gifts piled under Christmas tree. Reminders of Vincent around. Sam eases down into armchair and dials telephone.

SAM

(on phone)

Snags? Hey sis, happy birthday. I will always call you by your baby name. Tell Gwen I'll sing at her wedding this spring, ok. What? What? How'd you hear the news already? Damn girl! You get the news faster than Walter Cronkite. Let me get the divorce through first... Yes, I'm finally marrying your best friend, Dot...Mama cried when I told her, too. Hey, gotta split, lots to do...Love you too, sis. And I appreciate how you are always there for me. You take care. See you soon... 'bye.

Sam stands up and the phone rings again. It is one of the Soul Stirrers.

SOUL STIRRER

Sam, man, I hate to disturb you but I'm desperate...

SAM

(interrupting)

Just a second..

Sam sees Barbara staring at the now enclosed pool before finishing a cigarette and entering the house in close proximity to the living room. He takes the phone into the bathroom and closes the door.

SAM

I am sorry, but I didn't want to talk in front of Barbara, y'know how it is.

SOUL STIRRER

Look man, our van caught fire. If you can see your way clear to help us out, maybe ten grand, I'd-

SAM

Hey, man, say no more. I'll always be there for the Stirrers. I told you that when we split, my brother.

SOUL STIRRER

You've always been here for us, Sam.
Look, I'm not going into the office
today, caught some kind of flu bug,
but tomorrow when I go in, I'll
check the files, see what kind of
cash we got stashed, and I'll give
you a call. But don't worry, I'm
gonna take care of you.

INT. SAM'S HOME

Sam walks through the house touching toys and reminders of
Vincent. Lonely and sad, he crawls back into bed and pulls
covers over his head.

INT. SAM'S HOME. THE NEXT DAY

Sam, in sweater and khakis, finishes reading *The Pied Piper*
to Tracey.

SAM

Hi everybody, I didn't come to stay.
I just came to let you know that the
piper's on his way...

He kisses her forehead and hugs her close.

SAM

Okay you little mouse, Nina's going
to fix you a snack, now. Daddy,
meanwhile, has to drive to the
office for just a bit.

TRACEY

Hug me again, Daddy!

He squeezes her until she giggles.

INT. OFFICE

Sam walks quietly past secretaries typing, waves. He goes
into file room, in the back. Searching for stash of cash he
can't find, he tears up the place, but it's not there.

Finally, he takes a folder into his office, closes the door.
Still sniffing, he takes a swig from a small bottle of
ginger ale. He skims papers, putting them face down, one by
one.

Something catches his eye, and he flips back to previous paper then holds up both, his expression changing from shock to disbelief.

One of the papers shows his Tracey Lmt'd. company billed for Copacabana musicians, the billboard and the Rolls Royce.

SAM

That shady fucker! All this shit coming out of my back pocket! That sonofabitch.

He reads on.

CLOSE UP on two documents: One showing the original incorporation of Tracey dated Sept. 27, 1963, signed by Sam, J.W. and S.R. Crain in New York. The other document reads TRACEY UNLMTD JAMES ALEXANDER, PRESIDENT ...ALLEN KLEIN, SECRETARY AND TREASURER... OFFICER, BUT NOT DIRECTOR: SAM COOKE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD.

April 27, 1964 Las Vegas, Nevada. Sam can't stop shaking his head.

SAM

Wow! That jackass has removed my daddy's name and put his in there? He forged my damn name!

He blinks away tears of rage.

SAM

I sweat and work my fingers to the damn bone and suddenly everything I worked so hard to leave my family is gone...all gone...How did I not see this?

INT. FORMER MGR. JESS RAND'S OFFICE/ HOLLYWOOD

Sam, downing scotch, still fuming. Rand looks through the papers, shaking his head. RENE HALL sits quietly, listening.

RAND

I tried to tell you, Sam.

SAM

The Copa! He took advantage of my being distracted...he fires Zelda and Johnny, 'cause he knows they'll spill, and then has his foot up Alex's ass all the way to Vegas.

I know what's next - he'll twist
Alex's arm and get his own name on
this shit as President. The question
is, what does he do with me?

RAND and HALL look at each other with horrified expressions.

RAND
(looking over bifocals)
He won't let you go.

Takes his glasses off. Leans in.

RAND
He's not going to let you just walk,
Sam. You're his meal ticket.

SAM
Let the fucker try and stop me. I'm
going back to you.

Sam shakes his head repeatedly, hurt, angry, bewildered.

RAND
Betrayal always comes from those
closest.

SAM
(plaintively)
All I want to do is write songs, to
sing, and help other young cats get
started. This isn't just about me.

He paces, his face tightening into a mask. He gathers
himself, stiffening his chin.

SAM
Jess, my man, get me the names of
two New York attorneys. Sam Cooke
will be making a fresh start come
1965.

RAND
Why two?

SAM
One, I need an entertainment
attorney who specializes in
contracts, the other, a divorce
attorney. May as well kill two birds
with one stone.

JESS
Wow.

He simply stares at Sam for awhile, dumbstruck.

SAM
You ever hear that song Hotel
Happiness?

JESS
Sure, Brook Benton.

Sam scribbles something on a calling card and hands it to Jess.

SAM
From now on, Jess, that's where you
can find me.

JESS
RCA won't be on your side, either.
After Joe D'Imperioli got you back
those residuals from Keane, the
\$300,000 check they had to write,
totally pissed them off.
(He stops to think for a
moment))
Look, I'll set up a presser for
Monday. Keep this close to the vest
like you always do. We'll find out
if RCA still owes you anything else,
then your lawyer can help extricate
you contractually. Meanwhile, be
careful, Sam. He swims with some
pretty vicious sharks.

They shake hands, Sam suddenly brightening.

SAM
I'm heading over to Martoni's,
tonight. Stop by if you get bored.

JESS
You should get some rest Sam. You
don't look so hot.

SAM
(laughs)
I'm still cuter than you.

Jess slaps him gently on the back, shakes his hand.

JESS
I'll call you in morning. Take care,
Sam.

Troublin' Mind plays:

INT. OFFICE

Allen Klein walks in with briefcase. Secretary calls him aside.

SECRETARY

Allen, Sam was here this afternoon. He walked out with the titles of ownership. He appeared extremely upset. I thought you should know.

ALLEN

(grim-faced)

He did? Where did he go?

SECRETARY

I don't know, Sir.

ALLEN

Thank you. Oh, you can go now, and don't worry, honey, I made extra copies.

When she leaves he picks up telephone.

ALLEN

J. W.? You idiot. You were supposed to hand me the titles. Sam came and took them. Yeah. Call Barbara, see if she knows where he's going tonight. I'll pick you up at 7. Call Pete Bennett and have him deliver the girl. You know, the EurAsian one from RCA.

EXT. LA HOUSE.

Inside, we see SAM and LOU RAWLS shooting pool and laughing. LANA RAWLS picks up the trays from their prior snack, preparing to take the beer glasses.

LANA

Refills anyone?

SAM

No, sweetie. Have to split. Sure wish you two could come with. Give my Godson a kiss for me. Hope he feels better in the morning.

LOU

Oh, I'm sure he will be. Hey, Bro,
Les McCann's playing at the
Lighthouse tomorrow night.

Sam brightens, nods in affirmation of the plan. He kisses
Lana goodbye on the cheek, and playfully slaps Lou on the
back.

SAM

Yeah, buddy! Take good care of my
little Godson now. See you tomorrow.

LOU

(Watches Sam walk down the
porch steps to his car,
waving goodbye))

'Bye Sam.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE

A goon holds a gun to Johnny Morisette's head. Johnny on his
knees, begging.

JOHNNY

Please, don't make me do it - I love
Sam!

INT. MARTONI'S BAR

Sam sitting alone at the bar. A man approaches him.

STAN

Hey, Sam, you remember me?

SAM

You look familiar.

Sam scrutinizes him. The man extends his hand and they shake.

STAN

Stan Ross. I produced you on
"Shindig."

He extends his hand. Sam shakes it in recognition, laughing.

SAM

Of course, Stan, how you been? Have
a seat. What you drinking tonight?

TIME LAPSE

The two men sharing drinks, talking and laughing from 10:30 until 12:30...

STAN

Man, I have to split, Sam. Get home to the wife, you know how it is. It's been great seeing you again. Come over to the studio, I'd love to help you produce that blues and gospel project mentioned.

Sam nodding wistfully, a bit sad, drinking alone. Stan departs. Sam's eyes following him. Bartender taps Sam on shoulder.

BARTENDER

Telephone for you, Sam.

SAM

Thanks.
(into receiver)
Hello? What!? I'll be right there.
Stay calm, man. I'll be right there!

Sam leaves a hundred-dollar bill on the bar, hustles into his coat and walks outside.

EXT. P.J.'S RESTAURANT

COUPLES leaving, A FEW arriving at one am. One of the thugs from the Copa performance greets Sam at the door, not smiling. He makes a grab for Sam.

MAN

Cooke, I need you to come with me to that room to your right. Boss wants to talk business with you.

SAM

Man, you better take your damn hands off me. Where's Johnny?

The man motions with his head cocked to his right. Sam enters a closed door, stunned to discover two more armed goons, one a massively large, off-duty policeman standing before a draped window with his hands clasped. Seated around a table is a smug-faced Klein, a smirking J.W., a security detail behind Klein, and an ashen-faced Johnny Morisette, who looks downcast the entire time, even after Klein nudges him, motioning for him to leave the room, which he complies with. Sam watches him, piecing together the set-up scenario, as he prepares to exit, as well.

ALLEN
What's the matter Sam?

SAM
I don't do business like this,
Allen.

He prepares to leave, causing some "what do-we-do-now" looks on the faces of the goons. Allen smiling places a hand up to stop them from responding further.

ALLEN
Sam, c'mon, man. You just got here.
I promise this won't take but a
minute. Don't pay these guys any
mind. They're here to protect and
serve. C'mon, c'mon, have a seat.
Just hear me out for a New York
minute.

Sam looks around the room, feeling uneasy but belies his fears by sitting down, car keys on the table in front of him.

ALLEN
All right, see? That wasn't so bad.
Now, first things first. PJ's wants
to book you for a gig next Thursday
night. 10K up front is what I got
you, and you get that tonight. Sound
good?

Sam nods, awaiting the other proverbial shoe to drop.

ALLEN
See? I always take care of you Sam.
Get you the most dough at the
hippest joints. Got you the Copa
like I promised, didn't I?

SAM doesn't respond, continuing to allow him to speak.

ALLEN stares at SAM for a bit, then stands up, hands in pockets, pacing before stopping just a few feet from SAM.

ALLEN
Okay. Okay. I'm not going to sugar
coat your medicine anymore. Look, we
have no contract, I'm not stupid. I
know that you know what I want and
what JW wants, too. We deserve it.

SAM looks at J.W., who does not make eye contact.

ALLEN

Look, I'll spell it out for you. The next step is Hollywood and then Vegas, but no one does Vegas without a chaperone, you dig? From now on all your cash goes to me. You will make millions upon millions, I guarantee you that. But you have to go with the program, understand?

SAM stares at him, bristling at what he is hearing, a crooked white street-wise con artist dictating terms for him. He shakes his head.

ALLEN

This isn't up for debate, Sam. I gotta answer to Levy, he answers to Geno, and you answer to me, pal. It's done. Like it or not, this is the only meal on the menu, no substitutions allowed.

Just then there is a brief knock and SAM recognized RCA's

A & R man, PETE BENNETT, who pops his head in, hands KLEIN an envelope of cash, which he slides down the table toward sam, who picks it up and places inside his suit jacket. SAM and PETE nod their acquaintance before BENNETT abruptly turns to KLEIN and gives him the "A-OK" hand signal with his thumb and index finger. KLEIN motions for him to leave, which he does. SAM decides to no longer be a part of their scheme, and stands to depart.

ALLEN

So what's it going to be?

SAM

After all this time, Allen, you have no clue who I am or what I stand for as a man.

ALLEN

(sneering haughtily)
And what might that be?

An independent black man whose only concern for money is his family. My songs are under Tracey, Lmted., Named for my baby daughter. I started in gospel and I can always go back to gospel.

SAM lights a cigarette and continues.

SAM

Look, I am nothing if I am not free
and what you're proposing is not
freedom, but a slow death of my
soul. God blessed me with a voice
and talent, and the ability to spot
that talent and lift these young
kids out of poverty. Neither you nor
RCA or anybody else gonna derail
that train from movin' on down the
line. You two will get all the money
you deserve. But you ain't gettin'
this black man in chains. I am my
own man; I will live free and die
free.

He picks up his keys, nods to all, and abruptly departs.

KLEIN is furious, banging the table with his fists, foaming
at the mouth with rage.

ALLEN

YOU OWE ME MOTHERFUCKER! I PAID FOR
THAT FERRARI! I GOT YOU MIKE DOUGLAS
AND CARSON! YOU'RE GONNA PAY ME,
COOKE! I'LL SEE THAT YOU DO! AND
FUCK THAT MALCOLM X BULLSHIT! I OWN
YOUR ASS NOW!

SAM, stopping momentarily to listen while on the other side
of the closed door, raises his eyebrows a bit, shakes his
head the proceeds toward the bar before finally deciding to
get a drink. Part of him wanted to leave, but a quick drink
to relax seems all right. He slides onto a stool Just then a
Eurasian woman sits beside him, giving him a come-hither
sideways glance. SAM recognizes her.

SAM

Weren't you at Martoni's earlier
this evening?

The girl tosses her head back and laughs. She is scantily
dressed, her hair piled atop her head in a dated early 60's
beehive do, now the style of loose party girls. As she laughs
her gold earrings dangle in movement. SAM forgets his
troubles for a moment and laughs at her silliness. He takes a
sip of his drink.

SAM

You get around, don't you?

GIRL

You should know.

SAM laughs again.

SAM
What are you drinking?

GIRL
Nothing yet. But I'll have what
you're having.

SAM
Barkeep, please two Jacks on the
rocks.

The bartender nods.

SAM
Where do you live?

GIRL
Hollywood.

SAM
Hollywood, huh? Actress?

GIRL
Something like that.

SAM smiles knowingly.

Just then SAM spots JOHNNY MORISETTE as he slides down the
opposite side of the bar and whispers in SAM's ear.

JOHNNY MORISETTE
Sam, man I know she fine and all but
don't fuck wit' her. I'm telling
you.

SAM looks perplexed.

JOHNNY MORISETTE
Sam, I know my hoes, okay? This one
is with LAPD. Don't fuck with her.

SAM
Man, go on and get out of here with
your bad self.

The drinks arrive and SAM places a \$20 bill on the bar,
motioning for the bartender to keep the change. The GIRL
watches the money exchange with interest. JOHNNY spots WALTER
WARD, lead singer of the Olympics across the room, jumps up
to greet him.

JOHNNY MORISETTE

Hey, Walter! Hey!

SAM

I am sorry. My boy here is always clowning me. What did you say your name was?

GIRL

Elisa Boyer. I'm...

SAM winks at her.

SAM

I know, baby.

EXT. PJ'S PARKING LOT. LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

SAM and ELISA walk toward his Ferrari. He opens the door for her. WALTER WARD suddenly runs toward SAM, almost delirious. He embraces SAM.

SAM

Walter, calm down, brother. What...

WALTER

Sam, you got to get that bitch out yo car.

SAM

What? Not you too? Listen, I'm giving her a ride home, just relax. I never let myself get played, okay? I'll be fine.

SAM walks quickly to the driver's side door, opens it and waves to WALTER. JOHNNY runs up to where WALTER is standing, and both worriedly watch SAM quickly peel out of the lot.

WALTER

Man, Johnny, I tried. I tried.

We see Sam's car pull into the parking lot of the Hacienda Hotel. We see his sport jacket, on the back seat. The Ferrari is still running as he opens his car door to traverse to the passenger door so as to open it for the girl. Just then he is met with the same burly man and security goons who screeched up to his car in Klein's white limo. They club Sam over the head, and across the knees, landing heavy blows, as he crumbles to the ground in a heap, his hands trying to protect his face, also being clubbed. The limo door opens, and he is thrown inside, which no one outside the altercation can see as the open doors hide this.

Inside the limo, a man with a silencer on his .22 pistol lifts the unconscious Sam's arm and fires a deadly bullet under his armpit. SAM's car still running, they pull up to the hotel office, knock the door down and begin to stage a fake murder scene, moving furniture around to resemble a scuffle. ELISA BOYER is inside the limo, fearful but compliant.

ELISA

So, what do you want me to do?

MAN

Take all his clothes off, just put his jacket back on and one shoe, no socks. Run to the motel down the street and hide the bloody clothes under the stairwell. Fast bitch!

She complies and walks out the door with one of the thugs behind her. Doors slam and curtains pull shut. Fear oozes from the motel walls. WE SEE a man resembling KLEIN grab money from SAM's jacket inside the running Ferrari and enter the motel office, waving it at the woman as he tells her what her story is going to be. Another man fires a bullet at the ceiling as the manager makes a phone call to the owner who is now an audio witness. Yet another thug purposefully and delicately is dabbing his bloody fingers onto old woman's blouse.

Finally, they prop SAM's lifeless body against a wall, rip his clothes off except for the sports jacket and one shoe. The deed done, it is quiet except for a distant wailing of sirens in the background.

ALLEN KLEIN leans forward and smirks at SAM's dead face.

KLEIN

Who works for who now, nigger?

Down the street, ELISA walks to phone booth having disposed of Sam's shirt and pants under a motel stairwell. She dials phone.

Soon, red lights of police cars surround hotel.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLOWAY APARTMENT

Dot watching TV with her mother. News footage of Sam singing You Send Me. A picture of Sam comes on screen, with caption 1931-1964. Dot can't catch her breath.

TV REPORTER

...In what has been called by Los Angeles Police 'a bizarre circumstance,' pop singer Sam Cooke was apparently shot and killed in self defense by Mrs. Bertha Franklin after allegedly kidnapping a young woman...

Franklin's smugly defiant face stares back at Dot.

Dot doubles over, rocking, moaning in pain, sobbing. Her mother tries to comfort her distraught daughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. COOKE FAMILY HOME

Charles recklessly swerves into drive way, leaving sedan haphazardly parked with door wide open. He sprints into the house through back door. In the hallway, Mrs. Cooke holds her face in her hands. Rev. Cooke removes his glasses, wiping away tears. Charles runs to his parents, as Mary, Hattie and Agnes arrive. They encircle their patents, crying.

HATTIE

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

INT. KITCHEN

On the phone, crying softly.

GWEN

(softly)

How will we live without Uncle Sam?

EXT. CHURCH

Sam's Funeral in Los Angeles. Lines of cars, limos, for miles. Zelda smashing into a parked car in front of church.

INT AIRPORT

Dot, upset and frustrated, snowbound at JFK International...aboard a plane...rushing to get a cab...

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - FUNERAL

Police barricades attempt to hold back overflow crowd.

INT. CHURCH

All of Hollywood and record industry bids farewell to Sam. His body lies in a plastic-covered open casket, adorned with dozens of floral wreaths.

Ray Charles takes a seat at the piano, singing "Angels Watching Over Me."

EVERYBODY

Brother Ray! Brother Ray!

The Gashouse Gang holding one another, softly crying.

Much weeping, and fainting in huge crowd.

Ray Charles finishes. A moment of silence before the Rev.

Cooke speaks. On the altar we see other show business colleagues of Sam's.

The sound of SCREECHING TIRES rudely shatters the silence.

Barbara and Bobby get out of Sam's Rolls Royce, with his daughters. Barbara walks up church steps on Bobby Womack's arm. Bobby dressed in Sam's familiar concert shirt and slacks.

There are audible gasps. Rev. Cooke forced to stop abruptly. Barbara takes a seat. Gwen shoots daggers at her. Barbara looks over her shoulder at Gwen.

BARBARA

(muttering)

What the fuck you lookin' at?

Bobby visibly embarrassed, escorts her down in front of the Cooke family.

CUT TO:

Lou Rawls, crying, stands up to sing. When he finishes, the final prayer.

Barbara and Bobby walk down the aisle with Tracey and Linda to the casket. For a final goodbye to their father.

Tracey stands beside Linda, holding her hand, and staring quizzically at her father.

TRACEY

Daddy, Daddy, why don't you wake up?

LINDA

He's not going to ever wake up
again, Tracey. Our daddy is dead.

This is too much for Barbara. She grabs Tracey and Linda and races headlong down the aisle, out of church. Bobby trailing helplessly behind.

Johnny Morisette throws himself atop the coffin, obviously drunk, crying.

JOHNNY

Oh, Sam, I'm so sorry, man. I'm so
sorry.

As the last visitors file out Dot, crying, scampers, breathlessly up the church steps. The Cooke family women – especially Phyllis, Sam's sisters – encircle her with hugs and kisses.

AGNES

Shh, it's okay now, honey. Go ahead
on in.

Ushers open the casket for Dot. Others depart to allow her a moment of privacy with Sam. Dot runs her hand down his face and hair, her tears falling on his body, before collapsing her head on his chest, overcome by the sight of his broken fingers, knotted forehead.

DOT

Look what they done to you, baby...

She reaches deep inside herself, and manages to pull up a smile for Sam.

DOT

Always and forever, my darling.

FADE OUT

AFTER FUNERAL DINNER

Long tables pushed together, displaying an abundance of Sam's favorite foods, Mama Cooke's fried chicken, roast beef and gravy, ham, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, collard and turnip greens, sweet potato casserole, corn bread, etc.

Wide-eyed CHILDREN grab plates, wondering where to start.

ONE MOTHER gently reminds her son of his manners, as he puts back a piece of corn bread. Mama Cooke tries to find room for a cake brought by a WELL-WISHER.

MAMA COOKE

I've cooked all of Sam's favorite foods. So, now, go ahead on, there's more than too much!

INT. REV. COOKE'S HOME

WE SEE Christmas decorations abound, and the tree is up. DECORATIONS AND TREE ARE UP. unopened gifts to nieces and nephews signed "Love from UNCLE SAM". CHARLES, AGNES, MARY, DAVID, HATTIE AND REV. COOK in the den, somber, subdued, sitting on the couch beneath Sam's, photographs, gold records, and mementos. MAMA COOKE turns pages of a scrapbook

CHARLES

It didn't happen that way, Papa. It didn't. Cassius said as much, swore he was going to hire a detective.

AGNES

Of course, Charles. We know Sam was too smart to get himself into a situation like that.

MRS. COOKE

(sobbing quietly)

Why did they have to kill my precious Sam?

Hattie comforting Mama Cook. Rev. Cook goes over to Mama Cooke.

COURTROOM: INQUEST HEARING

BERTHA FRANKLIN turns to Sam's anguished father, answering the heart-wrenching question he posed in the opening scene of the film.

BERTHA FRANKLIN

I didn't kill your son.

Judge pounds gavel ending hearing. Emotional utterances, chaotic, unsettling, muttering, grumbling suspicions, dissatisfied with the proceeding

SPECTATORS

Con job! Cover up! We ain't in Mississippi!

Courthouse hallway. ZELDA is powdering her nose, when through her compact mirror she views Klein's men escorting ELISA BOYER to the elevator. She drops the pad...

INT. COOKE LIVING ROOM, FAMILY SEATED AROUND SCRAPBOOK.

REV. COOKE

I always raised y'all to stand on principles. Sam was fine-lookin,' and he was sweet, but he wouldn't go down without a fight.

CHARLES

(crying softly)

They murdered my little brother, Papa. We just can't let them get away with it...we got to set the record straight.

REV. COOKE

We best let that idea rest now. I don't want no more violence.

He pauses, dabs his eyes with a hanky.

REV. COOKE (CONT'D.)

Nobody knew Sam like we knew Sam.

(sighs)

And we know he'd want us to be moving on... 'cause he's moved on... to a new address... and now that beautiful voice of his is soothing the angels...

PHOTOS OF SAM IN SCRAPBOOK FLASH ON SCREEN.

THE END.

CREDITS ROLL

THE SONG "KEEP MOVIN' ON" PLAYING. SAM'S FAMILY, HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN VISITING HIS GRAVE, PLACING FLOWERS.

Allen Klein, has been a defendant in over 100 lawsuits by various groups he represented, including 17 by the Rolling Stones, and ongoing lawsuits by The Beatles' estates. He served a year in a federal penitentiary in the 1980s, having been caught red-handed by federal agents with Pete Bennett, illegally selling promo copies of Beatles records.

The inquest by the Los Angeles County Coroner and the LAPD into the cause of Sam Cooke's death was both rushed and covered up; evidence suggests that Sam's beating prior to his being shot to death was not noted in the autopsy, as to this day, LAPD has refused to investigate the Sam Cooke murder.

Sam Cooke has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was inducted into the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. "A Change is Gonna Come" is among the most downloaded songs in the world, second only to "White Christmas."

SAM WAS THE PROUD AND LOVING FATHER OF SHARON COOKE, PAULA COOKE, THE LATE DENISE COOKE, KEITH BOLLING, LINDA COOKE AND TRACEY COOKE.