

MAKE ME SMILE

Written by
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Based on Actual Events

(Music lyrics used copyrighted by Chicago)

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FADE IN:

INT. NEW YORK RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

A match is struck on the side of an old 60-watt Knight amp.

It lights a cigarette, then is obscured by a cloud of smoke before it's extinguished.

The same hand picks up a guitar pic from a makeshift duck tape pocket at the base of the guitar's neck.

The guitar is a 1966 Ash Fender Telecaster covered in Chicago Black Hawks and Pignose Amp stickers. Its lacquer finish chipped, peeling and cracked around the edges.

The hand boldly strikes ONE ELECTRIC GUITAR STRING-

ONE SUSTAINED NOTE.

We SEE and HEAR the one note played.

The lone string vibrates while the other strings remain still. Quiet. Untapped.

We continue to HEAR the sustained solo note as we travel up the neck of the guitar -

And through the cloudy haze of smoke-

Revealing TERRY KATH, mid-20s, eyes closed and shrouded by a mane of straight blond hair- the man has presence. He doesn't say a word, but doesn't need to, not with the guitar in his hand.

He's not so much listening to, but feeling the energy from the sustained vibration of the string-

There is only the one bold sustained note-

The guitar. And Terry. They are one.

At precisely :38 seconds the sound is killed.

JAMES (O.S.)
(annoyed)
What the hell, Terry-

TERRY
Listen-

JAMES GUERCIO, young music producer, mentor and hungry wolf disguised in denim and rose tinted glasses, pulls his headphones off on the other side of the glass wall.

JAMES

We are listening, that's the problem, man. What are you doing? We talked about opening with a guitar solo-

TERRY

(more to himself)

I am. It is. Just listen-

JAMES

But you know, like we talked about. Something melodic-

TERRY

You want something melodic?

JAMES

Yes.

TERRY

You want something catchy?

JAMES

Yeah, yeah, something catchy. A pop melody, man.

TERRY

A pop melody.

JAMES

Yeah, a 'pop melody'. That's why we're here. Remember?

TERRY

Is it?

He takes a long drag on the cigarette.

ENGINEER

(to James)

He's not going to do it.

JAMES

Okay, Terry- Well, what do you say?

ENGINEER

C'mon, this is wasting our time-

TERRY
You want something soulful?

JAMES
Soulful is good. Yes. And bluesy-

TERRY
You want something memorable?

JAMES
Yes.

TERRY
And something searing?

JAMES
Yes.

TERRY
You want something true, something
that connects with the people?

JAMES
Yes. Something that sells records.
Something fresh. Something new, you
dig?

TERRY
I dig. Something fresh-

JAMES
Something that connects- Give me
some rock and roll-

TERRY
And memorable.

The engineer looks at his watch.

Terry takes a long drag off his cigarette.

TERRY (CONT'D)
(sighs)
Then listen-

He closes his eyes and exhales smoke-

He starts swaying to music only he can hear-

TERRY (CONT'D)
All right, here we go-

He takes his guitar pic and defiantly attacks the same guitar
string as before-

One continuous note- Glorious. Memorable. Soulful. Searing.

Eyes closed-

Terry smiles.

The one note continues to play, but now we hear what Terry hears: with percussion and cowbell added. Then the bass. Then the horns.

Rock and Roll.

Terry finally opens his eyes-

MONTAGE:

WE HEAR THE SONG, *LISTEN*-

*Listen. If you think that we're
here for the money, you couldn't be
right, you know. But the bread is
not too good here, It could be so
natural. I said all you got to do
is listen-*

--as we see the hustle and bustle of the mighty blue collar city, Chicago. The steam from the stock yards. The soot from the rail lines. The blood from the meat packers. The suits at the Mercantile Exchange.

We see the upscale brownstones of Lincoln Park, the affluence of the Miracle Mile, the hopelessness of the Cabrini Green projects, the aspirations of the Art Institute and Soldier Field--

--and the rage of change in Grant Park. Barefoot hippies with peace signs and afros, nose to nose with armed police barricades. College kids and Black Panthers are handcuffed as they sit-in, holding Chicago Freedom Movement signs-

SUPER: CHICAGO, 1967

INT. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC - DAY

Terry, his hair much shorter, hurries down a hallway honeycombed with music rehearsal rooms. The MUFFLED CACOPHONY of student musicians rehearsing can be heard.

JIMMY PANKOW, a lean and charismatic 20 year old trombone player, rehearses in one of the tiny rooms. He plays *Bach Cello Suite no. 2 (for trombone)*.

Bored, he springboards into a fast-paced jazz and blues rift of the baroque music just as Terry hurries past the tiny window in the door.

The music stops him dead in his tracks. He backs up and watches Jimmy play through the tiny door window. He doesn't just play the music, he interacts with it, seduces it.

Jimmy notices Terry, makes eye contact with him- and winks.

Embarrassed, Terry hurries off down the hallway.

INT. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - DAY

Terry sneaks into the half empty auditorium full of bored music students.

LECTURER

As we focus on the theoretical and functional significance of the augmented sixth chord throughout the common practice period-

Terry spots WALTER PARAZAIDER, tall, broad-shouldered, and looking like a misplaced long shore man, slouched forward in his seat, asleep.

He quietly makes his way down the rows toward Walter.

LECTURER (CONT'D)

-Most typically manifesting in a predominant functional position, augmented sixth chords are frequently identified through spurious geographic etymological nomenclature-

Terry quietly slips into the seat next to Walter and watches his friend's head slump lower and lower into his notebook.

LECTURER (CONT'D)

-Hence, the Italian sixth, the French sixth, and the German sixth. Their useful modulatory characteristics have defined the common practice since the Renaissance.

Terry tries to pull the notebook out from under Walter's hands without waking him.

LECTURER (CONT'D)

-Constructed upon the flattened submediant and customarily occurring in the minor, these transitory vessels may also appear in the major through the utilization of "borrowed" notes from the parallel minor.

Walter slumps lower over the notebook as Terry, just an inch from freeing it, gives it a yank.

Walter falls forward with a CLATTER. The professor stops, everybody turns to look.

Walter bolts upright, now awake, tries to recover with a stupid smile-

WALTER

Italian sixths, oh yeah, baby-

LECTURER

Excuse me. Are you a student here?

TERRY

Here? No. More of a student of life and love-

The professor frowns, returns to his notes.

TERRY (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)
Dude, we gotta' go. We're late-

LECTURER

All three of these erroneously labeled constructs include the interval of a major third and an augmented sixth above the aforementioned lowered submediant-

Walter looks at his watch and hastily scoops up his jean jacket, notebooks, and saxophone case as Terry rushes up the auditorium stairs two at a time.

EXT. CORNER OF WABASH AND MICHIGAN AVE. - TWILIGHT

Terry and Walter, both lugging musical instrument cases, run toward a waiting chartered mini-bus. A cheap sign is plastered on the bus's side: JIMMY FORD AND THE EXECUTIVES.
*AS SEEN ON DICK CLARK!

INT. BUS - TWILIGHT

They're thrown into the back seat as the bus lurches forward.

The band leader, JIMMY FORD, late 20s, smug and not really executive material, makes his way to the back of the bus.

JIMMY FORD

This is the third time this week
you guys' been late. You're lucky I
don't stop here in the middle of
Michigan Avenue and throw you both
out on your ear.

TERRY

Have you been thrown out on your
ear? It'd explain why you're always
off key.

Walter laughs.

JIMMY FORD

Watch it wise guy, there's plenty
of cool cats that'd love the chance
to play with The Executives, you
dig?

He hands them both sheet music.

WALTER

What's this?

JIMMY FORD

New Clarence Carter song.

Terry glances at it as he shoves it in his pocket.

JIMMY FORD (CONT'D)

It's on the set list tonight. You
might want to study it-

TERRY

I'm good. Peace of cake. I caught
it on the radio already-

JIMMY FORD

(to Walter)

Bass players-

As he heads back to the front of the bus.

WALTER

Did you hear about the drummer who
locked his keys in his car?

(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)
Took him four hours to get the bass
player out-

The guys laugh.

TERRY BOBBY (O.C.)
Good thing I play the banjo- I heard that!

BOBBY RUFINO, 20, the coolest guy in his own mind, pops his head up from the seat in front of them. He points his drum stick at Walter.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Where would you be without a
drummer?

TERRY
Without you? On time-

Walter mimics a well-timed rim shot-

WALTER
Ba-doom. Cha!

Bobby flips him the bird, turns back, and starts playing on the padded bus seat in front of him.

TERRY
(loud, so Bobby hears)
Hey Walter, what do you call a
drummer that breaks up with his
girlfriend?

WALTER
(mimics Terry)
I don't know, Terry, tell me.

TERRY
Homeless-

Everyone in earshot laughs as the bus heads north up Lake Shore Drive.

EXT. EVANSTON HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

JIMMY FORD AND THE EXECUTIVES perform at a high school sock hop. The band, dressed in identical gray suits, performs an insipid cover of *Slip Away* by Clarence Carter.

Terry absently plays the R&B bass part perfectly, but he's preoccupied with a wallflower picking her nose by the refreshment table.

Walter, on saxophone, plays in the horn section. They play a simple horn backup while Jimmy Ford sings off key.

Walter yawns in between refrains.

EXT. GRANT PARK, CHICAGO - DAY

Terry sits cross legged in the park, his eyes closed, strumming fragments of melodies on an acoustic guitar.

Walter approaches, winded, plops down next to him.

WALTER

Dude, I've been looking everywhere
for you-

TERRY

Been here all day-

WALTER

I never heard you play guitar
before-

TERRY

A stand up bass seemed like
overkill-

WALTER

What's wrong- with your eyes?

TERRY

Nothing. I see better when they're
closed.

WALTER

What kind of shit you smokin'?

TERRY

Seriously- for example, look over
there- see that girl? She's here
everyday. Packs a picnic lunch.
This is the best part of her day.
Shoes kicked off, feeling green
grass through her toes, sunshine in
her hair, the lake breeze and those
kids' playing filling her senses-

WALTER

Yeah, so-

TERRY

So, see how happy she is?

WALTER

Yeah. She's righteous. What else
you "see"?

TERRY

That man selling ice cream-

A hurried wealthy woman stops in front of them, casting a
shadow on Terry.

Her wrist to her ear, annoyed, she interrupts the pair.

WEALTHY WOMAN

My watch is dead. Do you have the
time?

His eyes still shut, Terry still playing, smiles-

TERRY

Always. Right now, it's four-four.

WEALTHY WOMAN

Excuse me?

TERRY

Certainly. But I'm guessing you're
more a six-eight gal-

Walter laughs. The woman grunts her annoyance, marching off-

TERRY (CONT'D)

She's not so happy-

WALTER

Sucks to be her. Square.

TERRY

See that guy over by Michigan Ave?

He nods toward the far end of the park, toward a skinny kid
with a mombo Afro drumming on empty garbage cans and buckets.

WALTER

That homeless guy busking for spare
change?

TERRY

Yeah. Best drummer in Chicago. I
like his style-

WALTER

That'll be us if we're late for
another gig.

TERRY

Everybody's trying to beat the
clock- except that guy. And he has
the best beat in town.

Walter stands up, listens to the busker's beat-

WALTER

Whatever. Just don't be late
tonight. Kay?

INT. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC - DAY

Terry runs down the Rehearsal Room hallway, bass guitar case
in hand.

Jimmy practices his trombone again, shredding the music of
Bach with a jazz machete.

Terry runs by the tiny square window, does a double take and
stops. He listens a few beats, then runs off down the hall.

EXT. CORNER OF WABASH AND MICHIGAN AVE. - TWILIGHT

Terry and Walter hurry down the street, lugging their
instrument cases. They get to the band bus just as it pulls
away.

A BUM approaches them.

BUM

Are you Terry and Walter?

TERRY

Yeah.

WALTER

Yup.

BUM

Here. Fella on the bus gave me a
dollar to give you this.

He hands Terry a folded piece of sheet music and walks off.
Terry and Walter exchange puzzled looks as Terry unfolds it.

Scrawled in thick pencil across the page: YOU'RE FIRED!

EXT. S. MICHIGAN AVE. - TWILIGHT

Terry and Walter walk back toward campus.

TERRY

It's for the better. That cat
couldn't carry a tune in a bucket.

WALTER

Yeah, but work's work. It's - was-
steady dough.

TERRY

Money's not everything.

WALTER

I know, but it puts food in the
fridge-

TERRY

No.
(he lifts his guitar case)
This puts food in the fridge.
Dude. We're good. Better than Jimmy
and his god damn Executives.

WALTER

Yeah, I know-

TERRY

I mean it. We're better than that.
I never want to play a high school
sock hop again.

WALTER

Me neither. I'm tired of the same
old whitewashed R&B. It's
yesterday's pop, it's confining-
it's so-

TERRY

Detroit?

WALTER

It's not *us*.

They walk a bit, thinking.

WALTER (CONT'D)

What do you want to do?

TERRY

You know, nothing much- I just want
to make music. And change the
world.

WALTER

You and me both, brother.

Walter stops. Looks at Terry.

WALTER (CONT'D)
I got this idea-

INT. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC - DAY

Walter and Terry walk down the Rehearsal Room Hallway. Most of the rehearsal rooms are now empty.

TERRY
You want to start a rock band?

WALTER
Yeah, but with a horn section.

TERRY
That's not that different-

WALTER
No, hear me out. Every R&B band, every rock band, the horns are the same. Just a back up rhythm section- but what if they were indigenous to the melody. No back-up. No afterthought.

TERRY
An 'indigenous' horn section? Yeah, but one saxophone ain't gonna cut it.

WALTER
I know, we're gonna need horn players that can keep up with us-

They pass by Jimmy's practice room and hear his muffled play through the thick door.

Like moths to a flame, they stop and listen. Their heads bobbing in sync with Jimmy's intricate rhythm.

They look at each other and smile.

EXT. ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO - DAY

Terry, Walter and Jimmy sit on the steps under the Lion statue.

JIMMY
An indigenous horn section?

WALTER

Yeah, with a voice equal to the
lead guitar and lead vocal.

TERRY

Nobody's doing that-

JIMMY

An indigenous horn section-

WALTER

The love child of James Brown and
Count Basie-

TERRY

-Miles and Mick-

James stands, smiles at a woman in a mini skirt passing by.
He watches her walk away-

JIMMY

An indigenous horn section-

TERRY

-Baked into rock and roll-

He spins around-

JIMMY

I dig. I'm in. But we'll need a
trumpet player, someone that can
really shred it.

TERRY

You got someone in mind?

James smiles.

JIMMY

I got a guy. He can blow the roof
off of Carnegie Hall. What about
the rest of the band? You know,
keyboard and drums and shit?

TERRY

I got a guy for drums-

WALTER

What guy?

TERRY

You'll love him. He's the best in
Chicago-

JIMMY

Cool.

WALTER

There's a dude in my composition class that play keys. Sings. Pretty intense guy. Let me talk to him.

TERRY

I'm checking out this cat down on the south side tonight. Supposed to be a total bad ass on bass-

JIMMY

(to Walter)

I thought you said he's a badass bass player-

TERRY

I am. But I *play* guitar-

James looks to Walter, concerned.

WALTER

He's also a banjo virtuoso, so I'm told.

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC - DAY

Terry and Walter watch ROBERT LAMM, 20's, thin, reserved but fiercely perceptive, his clothes threadbare, deftly play a few bars of music at a grand piano in a recital hall.

ROBERT

Interesting-

He eyes a bologna sandwich Terry pulls out of a brown bag.

Terry hands him half. It's devoured in seconds.

WALTER

Here's the thing. Do you own your own Hammond organ? Until we get off the ground, we can't afford one.

ROBERT

Is that why you want me to play with you?

TERRY

No, man. Finish playing that song-
(Robert licks fingers and
starts playing)
- who wrote it?

ROBERT

I did.

As he plays, he forgets Terry and Walter, swept away by the power of the music-

TERRY

That's why we want to play with
you. You can't teach that-

WALTER

So, you got a Hammond?

ROBERT

Yeah, of course I got a Hammond.
Don't worry about it. I'm in.

EXT. JOHNNY PEPPERS HIDEOUT - NIGHT

This south loop dive bar is packed.

A sign says: THE EXCEPTIONS - AN EXCEPTIONAL ONE NIGHT STAND

Terry, James and Walter hang near a back wall as the identically dressed foursome perform. They're a mod mashup of the Beach Boys, the Tremeloes and The Hollies.

Walter and James are bored. James smiles at a cute cocktail waitress as she passes by.

JIMMY

I can turn on Dick Clark and hear
this shit without having to pay a
cover-

Terry gives them a nudge.

Terry watches PETER CETERA, boyish 20s, a Hollywood leading man trapped in a high school play type, sing earnestly about young love to swooning young housewives in the front row.

TERRY

Yeah, but he's got rhythm and can
sing and play at the same time- and
look- chicks dig him.

EXT. THE PARAZAIDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An old, beat-to-shit station wagon pulls up to Walter's parents' house in a nondescript working class north side Chicago neighborhood.

INT. THE PARAZAIDER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Walter enters through the front door, lugging large instrument cases.

WALTER
Hey Ma, it's me!

MRS. PARAZAIDER (O.C.)
Hi dear! What brings you home?

WALTER
I invited a few friends from DePaul
over to practice tonight.

Emerging from the kitchen.

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Oh no, sweetheart. Tonight's not
good. We've got pinochle tonight.
The Gagnes will be here any minute.

Walter hustles past her down the basement stairs as Terry and Jimmy enter the front door, lugging more gear.

WALTER
Too late, the guys are already
here.

TERRY
Hi, Mrs. Perazaider-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Hello, Terry. But Wally-

Walter hustles back up the stairs.

WALTER
It's cool, mom-

Terry emerges from the basement and helps Robert, struggling to haul in his Hammond Organ.

ROBERT
Hello-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Hello. Who are you-

WALTER
We'll be in the basement the whole
time-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
I don't know. You know how Mr.
Gagne gets.

WALTER
You guys won't hear a thing.
Promise-

Terry grabs the front of the organ. A new price tag, still
taped to the side, catches his eye.

Robert smiles sheepishly, pulls off the tag and pockets it.

ROBERT
Rent is overrated. Here, be careful
of that rail-

MR. And MRS. GAGNE, 50's, enter, carrying Tupperware.

LEE LOUGHNANE, 20, sporting an effervescent smile wide enough
to dance on, squeezes by the couple, raising a trumpet case
over his head.

LEE
Excuse me-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Who's this?

WALTER
I'm not sure-

LEE
Jimmy's friend. My music teacher
and the good lord himself call me
Gabriel, but my friends call me
Lee.

DANNY SERAPHINE, the skinny street busker with the Afro,
follows, carrying drums, trying to get around the older
couple.

MR. GAGNE
What's all this?

DANNY
Excuse us-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Wally and some friends from DePaul
Music School are home to practice-

MR. GAGNE
Ah, DePaul? How nice. A little
chamber music to serenade us. Here.
Norma made you a cake-

Mrs. Parazaidler reaches to take it, but Walter nabs it and
takes it downstairs-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
How thoughtful-

WALTER
How thoughtful-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
Here, let me take your coats. Help
yourself to a scotch-

She leads them into the living room, away from the chaos of
the band's load in.

INT. PARAZAIDER'S FURNISHED BASEMENT - NIGHT

Terry helps himself to the Parazaidler basement bar, pulling
out a bottle of whiskey and shot glasses.

Peter saunters down the stairs.

PETER
Oh good, whiskey. Looks like the
right place. Sorry I'm late- the
north side freaks me out.

Terry pulls out another shot glass and pours the whiskey as
he talks.

TERRY
Okay, guys. If we're going to do
this. We need some ground rules.
You dig?

Everyone nods.

TERRY (CONT'D)
First, no front man. No lead
singer. Anyone wants to sing, they
sing. This is about the music. Not
egos. Dig?

Everyone nods agreement.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Someone wants to leave, that's cool, but nobody here has the authority to fire anyone. We make decisions by a vote, every vote equal. That means the band and the music comes first. Always.

Everyone nods.

TERRY (CONT'D)
I want to hear you say it. The band and the music come first-

Everyone repeats Terry in unison. Terry holds up his shot glass.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Cool. Then let's make some fucking music!

They throw back their shots and Terry grabs his guitar, plugs it into a beat-up duck taped 60-watt Knight Amp.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Let's see what we're made of- You guys know 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag'?

Jimmy picks up his trombone, grins-

JIMMY
I thought you'd never ask-

TERRY
One, Two. One, two, three-

James, Walter and Lee attack the down beat with a wall of horns-

Peter shreds a driving bass line-

Terry hits guitar, growling James Brown's lyrics with a funky ferociousness that takes Walter and the guys by surprise.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Come here, sister. Papa's in the swing. He ain't too hip. About that new breed thing-

The energy is huge. Contagious. Like a rolling tidal wave-

TERRY (CONT'D)
*He ain't no drag. Papa got a brand
 new bag-*

The half empty bottle of whiskey vibrates with energy-

INT. PARAZAIDER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Parazaiders and Gagnes play pinochle. Their drink glasses vibrate to the beat, the room overwhelmed with music.

MRS. PARAZAIDER
 I am so sorry-

Mr. Gagne grunts, not looking up from his cards.

MRS. GAGNE
 (tapping her fingers to
 the beat)
 I like it. They're actually quite
 good-

Mrs. Parazaiders smiles-

MRS. PARAZAIDER
 They are, aren't they-

EXT. THE ATTIC CLUB, MILWAUKEE - NIGHT

In this working class neighborhood, a neon sign lights up the full parking lot: THE ATTIC. LIVE MUSIC TONIGHT.

INT. THE ATTIC CLUB DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Terry and the guys are crammed in the tiny club dressing room. He ceremoniously sets The Beatles' new album, SGT. PEPPERS LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND on the narrow counter.

TERRY
 It's just out today. This will blow
 your mind- I mean, truly re-wire
 your senses-

He sets seven shots of whiskey and seven bright red pills around the big drum on the album cover photo-

TERRY (CONT'D)
 (tapping the album cover)
 They just changed the entire
 conversation- with music.
 (MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)
This is exactly what we've been
talking about-

He picks up the pill and the shot glass. The others follow,
except Danny.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Danny?

DANNY
No. I'm good.

TERRY
Tonight's the night, gentlemen. The
next big thing is us- here's to
changing the conversation.

WALTER
If the Fab Four can do it, wait
'til they see the seven of us-

JIMMY
Fuck yeah-

They all swallow a pill and chase it with whiskey.

WALTER
Rock and roll, the Chicago way-

JOHNNY DIMPLES (O.C.)
Welcome to Milwaukee, boys.

JOHNNY DIMPLES, the club owner enters, he's way too heavy to
fit into the tiny room and stands in the doorway.

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
Do me a favor, I'm entertaining a
lady friend tonight. I want you's
to go heavy on the belly-rubbers
tonight.

PETER
'Belly-rubbers'?

JOHNNY DIMPLES
Yeah, you know. The slow dancers
the ladies like- make sure you's
hit the Righteous Brothers and The
Supremes hard. And that new Percy
Sledge song-

ROBERT
When A Man Loves A Woman?

JOHNNY DIMPLES

(leans in, serious)

Yeah, that one. My lady friend'll
be doing the Betty Crocker slide,
if you catch my drift.

WALTER

About that. We're thinking of doing
a set of our own songs-

JOHNNY DIMPLES

No, no, no, no. Belly-rubbers and
Betty Crocker slide. Capeesh?

He turns to leave.

TERRY

Hey Johnny. Why they call you
Johnny Dimples?

Johnny turns back.

JOHNNY DIMPLES

On account of my beautiful smile.

TERRY

But I never seen you smile-

JOHNNY DIMPLES

Pray you never do, kid.

Johnny leaves.

ROBERT

Fuck. Righteous Brothers? Again?
Seriously?

LEE

So much for playing 'the Chicago
way'-

ROBERT

That shit got left at the state
line.

PETER

Hey, we got a good gig here. Give
the man what he wants, I say-

JIMMY

Screw that. We came here to rock
and roll-

Terry holds up the *Sgt. Pepper* album.

TERRY

Fuck belly-rubbers. Fuck The
Righteous Brothers. Johnny Dimples
name ain't on the marquee. Ours is.
I say we open their minds and rock
their world-

WALTER

Fuck yeah. We doin' this?

Nobody looks Walter or Terry in the eyes.

PETER

Man, we need this gig. It's good
dough.

DANNY

Dough's dough, man. Give the man
what he wants-

Terry pops another pill and angrily chugs the whiskey bottle-

TERRY

Shit. We're fuckin' better than
this. You know we are-

INT. THE ATTIC CLUB - NIGHT

The band takes the stage. The ballroom and bar are packed.
Mostly younger, 20 - 30 something working class crowd. Terry
feels the energy in the room, grins at Walter.

Johnny Dimples holds court at the end of the bar next to his
LADY FRIEND, a woman half his age.

JOHNNY DIMPLES

These guys are good. You'll like
'em.

LADY FRIEND

What's their name?

JOHNNY DIMPLES

'The Big Thing', cause they're the
next big thing. Get it?

LADY FRIEND

Very clever.

Johnny snaps his finger at the bartender.

JOHNNY DIMPLES
 Another Old Fashioned for the lady-
 I brought 'em in on account of
 their renown for covering your
 favorite group-

LADY FRIEND
 The Four Tops?

JOHNNY DIMPLES
 No, the Righteous Brothers.

LADY FRIEND
 Oh, I like them, too!

Terry starts with a fast hard count-

TERRY
 One. Two. One, two, three, four-

The band slams into Wilson Picket's *Mustang Sally*. Their
 version is more rock than R&B.

The dance floor fills. It's definitely a crowd pleaser.
 Johnny Dimples frowns.

LADY FRIEND
 That's not the Righteous Brothers-

JOHNNY DIMPLES
 I know. They're just warming up the
 crowd. The next one. Promise.

Johnny makes eye contact with Terry, frowns.

Terry smiles back, the drugs starting to kick in, and
 launches the band into James Brown's *I Got You (I Feel Good)*.

The younger crowd loves it. More folks crowd the dance floor-

Johnny marches up to the side of the stage nearest the
 keyboard, gets Robert's attention.

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
 Where's my Righteous Brothers?

Robert feigns he can't hear him.

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
 I want my belly-rubbers!

Robert smiles and nods. Terry comes over-

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
Belly-rubbers!

Terry smiles, nods at Johnny. Johnny turns and marches back to the bar. Terry grins at Robert, leans in to him-

TERRY
(in Robert's ear)
Give me a bridge back to the chorus-

Robert abides, and Terry adds a guitar solo-

They finish the song. The crowd loves it.

The drugs in full effect, Terry takes his jacket off, turns it inside out and puts it back on and pushes his hair forward. The rest of the band follows.

TERRY (CONT'D)
This next song we're gonna change
things up. Should make you smile.
It's for a very special young lady-

Johnny takes his perch, leans in close to his lady.

JOHNNY DIMPLES
This one's for you, doll.

The band breaks into Frank Zappa and The Mothers Of Invention, *How Could I Be Such A Fool?*

Johnny is outraged. He storms the stage, grabbing Robert's leg.

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
You sons of bitches! You're fired!

Robert breaks free, keeps playing the Hammond-

JOHNNY DIMPLES (CONT'D)
Did you hear me? You're fired! I
want you off this stage now!

TERRY
(still playing)
What he say?

ROBERT
(still playing)
He says, we're fired-

TERRY
(still playing)
Cool.

Walter steps toward Terry.

WALTER
What he say?

TERRY
(still playing)
He said, we're fired.

He looks at the crowded dance floor.

TERRY (CONT'D)
(still playing)
I think we ought to finish the song
first-

Johnny tries to roll his over-sized frame up onto the stage.
This time, grabbing Walter's leg.

JOHNNY DIMPLES
I want you off the stage now, you
sons of bitches!

Walter kicks his leg free-

WALTER
What'd you say?

JOHNNY DIMPLES
I want you off the stage now, you
no-good, god-damn, amateur-hour
hippies!

WALTER
Amateur hour? Oh, yeah?

Walter hands his saxophone to James and dives at Johnny. The
pair tumble onto the dance floor.

The rest of the band keeps playing.

EXT. THE ATTIC CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Terry and the band sit on the hood of their beater station
wagon. Walter nurses a black eye.

TERRY
That went well.

ROBERT
God, I hope no one we know was
there-

JAMES (O.S.)

Wally, my man!

James Guercio, sporting rose colored glasses and dressed in fashionable fringe and bell bottom jeans, strides up.

WALTER

(under his breath)

Oh God, no.

(looks up, forcing smile)

Jimmy G!

JAMES

Dude. You promised a memorable show. It's not what I was thinking, but certainly- memorable.

They hug.

WALTER

I thought you were out in LA?

JAMES

I am. I'm back in Chi-town for business. Got your note and had some time tonight-

TERRY

What business you in?

WALTER

Damn, Sorry. Guys, this is Jimmy Guercio- Jimmy G. He's with Columbia Records. DePaul music graduate. We were in music theory together-

JAMES

We played in The Missing Links together. Walter's been bugging me to come check you guys out. Said you have a new 'Chicago style' sound.

TERRY

And-

JAMES

And- I'm here to check you out. Like I said. Memorable show.

TERRY

But-

JAMES
But- for all the wrong reasons.

WALTER
This is not typical-

JAMES
Trashing the place or the covers?

James lights a cigarette.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Listen. The wall of horns is
interesting. Fresh. But 'Chicago
style'? Who cares if you're
covering artists from New York and
Detroit?

He starts toward his car.

TERRY
Wait. Are you saying we have a
chance- with original material?

PETER
No club in the Midwest wants
original music.

JAMES
Picasso didn't get famous copying
Monet.
(he stops and turns back)
Who cares what club owners want.
Kids today will not stand for a
second rate group of shuckers. And
that's what I saw tonight. Give 'em
something new, something they can
wrap their heart and soul- and
checkbook- around. That's what I'm
talkin' about. Make 'em feel what
you feel, you dig?
(stubs out the cigarette)
I'm flying back tomorrow. If you're
ever in LA and are serious about
the music, give me a shout.

They watch him drive off. Terry walks moth-like toward the
receding tail lights, until they round a corner and are gone.

He turns.

TERRY

You heard the man. I can be packed
and ready to leave tomorrow
morning.

Danny holds up his drum sticks, sticks them in his pocket.

DANNY

I'm ready to go now-

ROBERT

Wait, hold on. We should talk about
this. What about school?

WALTER

What about it? It's summer break-

JIMMY

I say we go, give it a shot. If it
doesn't work out, we'll be back in
time for Fall Semester.

Turns to Peter and Lee.

TERRY

What'd ya' say?

PETER

What the hell. I'm in.

LEE

Me too. If we killed here in
Milwaukee just think of what we'll
wreak in the city of angels-

They all look to Robert.

ROBERT

I'm pretty much living out of my
car already. Who gives a shit where
it's parked. I'm in.

Everyone is pumped. They high-five.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Hey guys, we're forgetting one
thing.

TERRY

What's that.

ROBERT

Our invitation is contingent on
original music.

TERRY

It'll take a couple of days to drive out there. Shit, we got a whole band here- we'll write some original tunes on the way out-

EXT. COLUMBIA RECORDS - DAY

Robert's beat to shit station wagon sits in front of the iconic record company headquarters.

INT. COLUMBIA RECORDS - DAY

Terry and Walter wander through the busy office, poking their heads in offices full of gold and platinum records hanging on the walls.

A SECRETARY in a mini skirt and see-through blouse with strategically placed daisies interrupts them.

SECRETARY

Can I help you?

TERRY

Absolutely.

WALTER

We're here to see James Guercio.

SECRETARY

Groovy. You have an appointment?

TERRY

No.

WALTER

Yes. Yes, we do.

She doesn't care. She points to a tiny office on the far side of the floor.

SECRETARY

His office is over there. Next to the restroom.

INT. COLUMBIA RECORDS, JAMES OFFICE - DAY

Terry and Walter sit shoulder to shoulder in the cramped, windowless office. James holds up the demo tape.

JAMES

Not bad. Not bad at all. The Chicago Transit Authority?

TERRY

Yeah. You know. The CTA. Because it moves people. Takes 'em to the place they need to be.

WALTER

What'd ya' think?

JAMES

I dig it. Lets us plant our flag in the pop landscape and tell the world there's a whole new music scene outside of San Francisco and LA.

TERRY

So when do we record? What's next?

JAMES

Yeah, about that.

He sets the demo tape down on the desk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. This is good stuff, that's why you're in the building. But-

TERRY

But you're taking a pass.

JAMES

No. Not at all. I just don't think you're ready yet. It's just- I think you'd be better served revisiting this material. You know, writing music that's true to you and the band instead of trying to write music that you think I want. You guys are original. I want to hear your voice, man. Not what you think I want to hear. You dig?

Terry and Walter exchange glances.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not saying no. You got a mighty sweet pie in the oven. It just needs a bit more time to bake. Let's touch base in a month or two, okay?

He stands. Terry and Walter stay seated.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What is it?

WALTER

We just spent all our dough getting out here. Do you mind if we crash at your place?

JAMES

The whole band?

WALTER

Yeah.

JAMES

Yeah, no.

TERRY

Just till the pie's out of the oven-

James sighs. Sits back down.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You said that if we're serious, come out here and you'd help us out. Well, we're here. We're serious. We need your help. And by the look at all the bare space on your walls, you need our help, too.

James absently taps his fingers on the demo tape.

JAMES

I have an idea-

I/E. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - DAY

James' corvette convertible parks in front of a tired bungalow in the shadow of the Hollywood 101 Freeway. The band's van pulls up behind him and the guys pile out.

JAMES

Check this place out. It's perfect. You're gonna love it-

James avoids the weeds and trash in the driveway as he shepherds the guys onto the front porch to unlock the door.

WALTER

Is this your house?

He tosses Walter the keys.

JAMES

No. It's yours. Forty bucks a month. You guys can crash here, practice here. The neighborhood is chill and you're only a few blocks from my office and the clubs on Sunset.

PETER

It's only got two bedrooms-

JAMES

Two bedrooms more than my first place out here-

TERRY

The living room'll get tight fast, once we get our gear stowed. And it's got a great view-

LEE

Of the freeway.

TERRY

Walt's basement doesn't have any view-

WALTER

But it comes with a fully stocked bar-

JAMES

Guys, guys. Are you here to party or to work? This is cheaper than any rehearsal space in Hollywood-specially for a band this big. There's no distractions. You can focus on the music. We'll only get one shot at this, okay? Make the most of it. I'll pay the first six month's rent, until we book you some gigs.

He pulls a \$50 bill from his money clip, hands it to Walter.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Here, buy yourself some groceries and a bag of weed. I gotta get back to work. Next time I'm here, I want to hear you making music when I pull up, dig?

TERRY

We dig, man. Thanks. This is perfect.

INT. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - EVENING

The guys bring in their gear and personal belongings while Terry stacks amplifiers in the dining room.

LEE

These rooms ain't so bad. They're like the dorm rooms at DePaul, but with a more- earthy smell.

DANNY

Earthy? That's what you're going with?

LEE

Yeah, earthy. Like lower Wacker after they power wash all the hobos and hippies.

WALTER

No, it smells more like the L platform in Wrigglyville after a game.

PETER

Like vomit, beer piss and broken dreams?

WALTER

Says the White Sox guy. Yeah, like that.

ROBERT

So you want to draw straws for dibs on the bedrooms?

JIMMY

What about girls?

ROBERT

What?

JIMMY

What if one of us brings home a lady friend or two?

WALTER

Dude. Look around. We should be so lucky.

TERRY

The lady friends come *after* we make music. Not before.

JIMMY

Speak for yourself-

TERRY

Dude.

WALTER

Fuckin' trombone players-

Terry finishes building a wall of amps in the dining room.

TERRY

Why don't you triple up in the bedrooms. I'll crash here in the dining room. I don't mind.

Peter emerges from one of the rooms, planting himself in the doorway.

PETER

I got squatting rights in this one.

Walter, Robert, Lee and Jimmy all shuffle past Peter toward the back bedroom. They all give him the side eye.

PETER (CONT'D)

What? No one wants to bunk with me?

JIMMY

We're all Cubs fans.

Danny, carrying bongo drums, squeezes past Peter into the room.

DANNY

Bro, I'm south side, too. Fuck the Cubs.

PETER

You're not going to play those in here are you?

DANNY

You heard the man, this our rehearsal studio. Brother's got to rehearse when a brother's got to rehearse- and someone has to teach your honky south side ass how to keep the beat.

Terry plops his army surplus duffle bag on the floor, takes his guitar out of the case, and gently cradles it as he sits down next to the duffle.

He plugs in his old Knight amp and leans his head against it, feels the low electric hum - and falls asleep.

INT. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - MORNING

The sun and ocean breeze stream through the open dining room window gently kissing Terry as he sits cross legged on the floor, strumming his acoustic guitar. It's *Beginnings*.

TERRY

(singing to himself)

*Oh oh oh oh oh whoa oh- I should
try and put into words oh, try to
put into words- Oh oh oh oh oh whoa
oh oh oh-*

Danny walks in rubbing the sleep from his eyes-

DANNY

Morning. What's this?

TERRY

(still strumming guitar)

*Bobby's new song. It's- Only the
beginning, Only just the start-*

DANNY

I like. I like a lot. Keep playing
that-

Danny, awake now, hurries back to his room and retrieves his bongo drums.

He sits on the floor next to Terry and starts playing. Hesitant at first, until he finds the right rhythm.

TERRY

*Only the beginning, Only just the
start, oh oh oh oh oh oh whoa oh
oh, Only the beginning, Only just
the start, Oh oh oh oh oh oh, whoa
oh oh-*

Jimmy walks in, scratching at his boxers.

JIMMY

I'm diggin' it. Big time. Keep
playing that-

Jimmy disappears into his room, emerges with his trombone as Peter wanders in, wearing just a towel.

TERRY

Only the beginning, Only just the start, oh oh oh oh oh oh whoa oh oh, Only the beginning, Only just the start, Oh oh oh oh oh oh, whoa oh oh-

Peter grabs his bass guitar and plugs into an amp.

PETER

Dude. Keep playing that line-

He watches Danny and starts playing, adding a layer to Danny's rhythm.

Terry smiles. Keeps playing the same phrase and singing the same line.

TERRY

Only the beginning, Only just the start, oh oh oh oh oh oh whoa oh oh, Only the beginning, Only just the start, Oh oh oh oh oh oh, whoa oh oh-

Lee comes in, just sporting a pair of tighty-whities, trumpet in hand. He and Jimmy start playing off Peter's bass line.

Walter, wearing a silk bathrobe, joins them, saxophone in hand. Listens to Jimmy and Lee. Joins in.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Only the beginning, Only the beginning, Only the beginning, Only the beginning-

They all sit on the floor in their underwear, jamming what will become the ending to the song *Beginnings*.

Robert enters, wearing a threadbare bathrobe, holding a pot of hot coffee strategically in front of his open robe, head bobbing to the beat.

ROBERT

Coffee anyone?

TERRY

(still singing)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah-

Danny keeps playing the bongos while everybody stops playing to grab coffee, everybody sipping their cups to the beat.

TERRY (CONT'D)
(closes his eyes, smiles)
*Only the beginning of what I want
to feel forever-*

EXT. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Jimmy sits on the front porch intently writing music. Terry watches from the front door, lights a joint and decides to join him.

TERRY
What's up?

JIMMY
I got this phrase in my head for my
Ballet- I got to put on paper
before it's gone.

TERRY
Cool. What's the problem-

He offers Jimmy a hit.

JIMMY
Thanks. It's just a transition
between movements, but I can't
quite get the phrasing right- *dah,*
dah dah- but each horn is
responding individually, in
counterpoint to each other, like in
a medieval chant cycle- *dah, dah,*
dah, then *dah, dah, dah-* see?

Jimmy shares the sheet music with Terry. Terry glances at it, hands it back.

TERRY
Uh huh. Cool.

JIMMY
No. It's not quite right. Here. You
take these two lines. It'll help me
if I hear it out loud.

He hands the sheet music back to Terry.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Okay. Start right here- Go ahead.

Terry stares at the paper. Hands it back to him.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Dude. What's wrong? You don't like the phrasing, do you.

Terry takes a long hit on the joint before answering.

TERRY

No, no. It's not that. Medieval counterpunch-

JIMMY

Counter point.

TERRY

Yeah, that's cool. Counter point-

JIMMY

What makes it cool is Danny's part. See?

(he shows Terry the sheet music again)

Just fuckin' intense beat on the kick pedal- *dump, dump, dump, dump, dump* - like a pounding heart-

TERRY

I dig. I dig. Very cool.

Terry takes the music, pretends to study it.

JIMMY

Dude. What is it?

TERRY

I have the same problem. I got these songs, these ideas in my head and I can't get them out. To share with the guys.

Jimmy hands Terry a blank sheet of music paper.

JIMMY

Better commit it to paper before it breaks loose from your brain pan.

TERRY

No. That's not it. That's not the problem. It's - I - don't know how-

JIMMY

Just takes discipline. You just got to sit and fuckin' write it.

TERRY

Yeah, I know. But-

Jimmy hands him his composition, watches Terry's face as he blankly looks at the page.

He leafs through his composition and pulls another page out, hands it to Terry.

JIMMY

Here's the quiet part of the ballet. Do you like the three four time?

TERRY

As Time Goes On?

JIMMY

Yeah, or Colour My World. I can't decide. Does the three four work?

Terry hands it back, avoids Jimmy's gaze.

TERRY

Yeah, sure.

JIMMY

Bullshit.

TERRY

What?

JIMMY

You can't read music.

Terry looks away.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

It's twelve eight time, not three four-

TERRY

Don't tell anyone-

JIMMY

They're going to figure it out sooner or later.

(beat)

How the hell can you even play?

TERRY

I just listen- and it's there. Always has been.

Jimmy sits back in his chair. Takes the joint from Terry and takes a big hit.

JIMMY

Fuck me.

TERRY

Don't tell the guys.

JIMMY

Dude. There's no shame in not being able to read music. It just makes it a wee bit harder in your line of work-

TERRY

No shit-

Terry holds up the blank piece of sheet music.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Will you help me get the music out of my head?

JIMMY

Fuck yeah. You have a special gift. What kind of a dick would I be if I couldn't help you share it?

TERRY

Thanks, Jimmy.

He gives him an awkward hug.

TERRY (CONT'D)

When can we start?

Jimmy picks up a pencil-

JIMMY

Dude. Now. Let's get rolling-

INT. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - MORNING

Walter and Peter sit half awake at the kitchen table drinking coffee.

James rushes in, grabs the cup out of Peter's hand and disappears back out of the room.

PETER

Fuckin' trombone players.

Walter snickers.

Terry rushes in, grabs his cup of coffee out of his hand-

WALTER
What the fuck, Terry!
(to Peter)
Once a bass player-

Peter stands up in mock disgust, takes Walter's toast from his plate and leaves.

WALTER (CONT'D)
C'mon, now! It's the entire bass
clef section-
(shouts out the doorway)
You're all a bunch of fuckin'
heathens!

INT. HOLLY DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - DAY

Seven stacks of handwritten sheet music sit neatly on a table in the middle of the living room turned rehearsal room.

The band gathers around the table-

ROBERT
What's this?

Before Terry can say anything, Jimmy picks up one of the stacks-

JIMMY
This - is frickin' brilliance, is
what it is. It's Terry's. It's on a
whole 'nother level-

The guys each pick up a stack and start reading through it.

TERRY
You know, to tell the world who we
are-

Walter looks up from the music, impressed.

WALTER
You wrote this? 'Introductions?'

Terry smiles, blushes.

TERRY
It's an idea I've been kickin'
around-

WALTER

Dude, you got parts for both a lead and a rhythm guitar.

TERRY

Yeah-

WALTER

You're the only guitarist we got.

TERRY

So-

WALTER

So, who's going to play the other part?

TERRY

I am. I got it.

WALTER

And lead vocals? That's a lot of heavy lifting. You want Peter or Bobby to cover it?

TERRY

No, I'm good.

JIMMY

Listen, guys, *look* at the music. There's enough for all of us. It blends each of our strengths, our personalities, as musicians, man. The musicality is off the charts. It's rock built on classic music archtypes, but totally fresh. It's a frickin' musical manifesto-

DANNY

A manifesto- I never been in nothing with a manifesto before. I'm diggin' it.

Terry starts to talk but Jimmy cuts him off again.

JIMMY

Check it out, there's no one part leading, but each musician is featured.

TERRY

It's about the music, not us-

JIMMY

*It's totally about us. And it's on
a whole 'nother frickin' level-*

Robert flips through the pages, looks up.

ROBERT

There's jazz, blues, samba,
progressive-

TERRY

But it's rock and roll. It's like
all the neighborhoods back home-

LEE

Preach it, brother-

WALTER

I'm diggin' this-

JIMMY

It's of and for the people is what
it is.

ROBERT

Shut up already and let's play it-

The band grabs their instruments. Robert sits at the Hammond
and lays the sheet music out in front of him.

He looks at Danny, already feeling and swaying to the groove.

He looks to Terry-

TERRY

One- two-

Robert raises his hands above the keys-

TERRY (CONT'D)

One, two, three-

Robert smashes his fingers into the keys-

JUMP CUT BEFORE
HE TOUCHES THE
KEYS:

EXT. WHISKEY A GO-GO, SUNSET STRIP - TWILIGHT

A long line stretches down the block as a black limo slowly
drives down Sunset.

Inside the limo, JIMI HENDRIX, sits up, noticing the crowd.

JIMI HENDRIX
Shit. Who's playing the Whiskey on
a Monday?

LIMO DRIVER
Nobody. Mondays are the A Go-Go's
house band.

JIMI HENDRIX
These folk here for a house band?

The limo pulls up at the entrance and stops. Jimi opens his
window a crack. There's a sense of excitement in the line.

SOMEONE IN CROWD (O.S.)
Hey, it's Hendrix! That's Jimi
Hendrix!

The crowd surges toward the limo as it pulls away.

JIMI HENDRIX
Take me round back. I gotta see
this shit for myself.

INT. WHISKEY A GO-GO - TWILIGHT

Jimi Hendrix slips in through the back entrance, to the back
of the packed bar just as Terry and the band crams onto the
tiny stage.

Jimi is surprised to see a horn section on stage.

JIMI HENDRIX
White boy R&B?

BAR CHICK
No, man, this is fresh. They'll
rock your world-

Terry plugs his guitar into his old Knight amp and absently
strums some chords as Robert hits a key on the Hammond. The
horn section tunes their instruments to Robert's key.

The CROWD noise lowers to a MURMUR as the guys tune their
instruments. The vibe is weirdly like a Symphony tuning in a
concert hall.

Hendrix watches bar patrons crowd the stage with anticipation-

Terry, his back to the crowd, casually strums random chords
as he looks to Danny on drums. He smiles, winks-

TERRY
 We're The Chicago Transit
 Authority, let us introduce
 ourselves proper and tell you a
 little about ourselves-
 This is 'Introduction'-

The band explodes with *Introduction*.

TERRY (CONT'D)
*Hey there everybody, Please don't
 romp or roam, We're a little
 nervous, 'Cause we're so far from
 home-*

The crowd is listening. Grooving to the beat-

TERRY (CONT'D)
*So this is what we do, Sit back and
 let us groove, And let us work on
 you, yeah, mmm-*

Not what Hendrix expected. They have his attention.

TERRY (CONT'D)
*We've all spent years preparing,
 Before this group was born, With
 Heaven's help, it blended, And we
 do thank the Lord. So if you've
 nothing to do, Sit back and let us
 through, and let us play for you-*

Instrumental solos from each band member.

Hendrix is completely lost in the music, the moment, the
 intricate blend of rock and jazz and prog and R&B-

-Until Terry breaks into his guitar solo.

Eyes closed. Terry is one with the music. Just him, his
 guitar, both serve the music. He is conscious of nothing else-

Hendrix watches, spellbound, while the audience around him
 dances and grooves to a frenzy, feeding off of Terry's energy-

TERRY (CONT'D)
*Now we put you through the changes,
 And turned around the mood, We hope
 it's struck you different, And hope
 you feel moved. So forget about
 your troubles, As we search for
 something new, And we play for you-*

The CROWD goes wild-

Jimi Hendrix is transfixed, his world rocked.

INT. GREEN ROOM, WHISKEY A GO-GO - NIGHT

After the show, the band, sweaty and spent, pile into the tiny green room.

A BOUNCER pops his head in.

BOUNCER
You guys have a visitor.

TERRY
Is she cute-

ROBERT
No man, not tonight, we're just-

The guys freeze as Hendrix enters and holds court in the doorway.

JIMMY
Is that- Are you- You're-

TERRY
Jimi Hendrix-

Hendrix eyes them up and down as they look to each other.

He breaks the awkward silence-

JIMI HENDRIX
Shit. You guys are motherfuckers.
You guys have a horn section that
sounds like one set of lungs and a
guitar player that plays better
than me. Want to go on the road
with me?

The band is stunned.

JIMI HENDRIX (CONT'D)
I said, do you motherfuckers want
to go on the road with me?

TERRY
Shit, yeah-

Everyone agreeing-

ROBERT
When?

JIMI HENDRIX
Tomorrow.

TERRY
Tomorrow?

JIMI HENDRIX
At the ass crack of dawn-

DANNY
Shouldn't we check with our
manager?

Hendrix grabs a bar napkin and scribbles an address on it.

JIMI HENDRIX
Check with your manager, your
dealers, your sweet mamas, I don't
care. But I leave tomorrow-

He hands Walter the address, turns and strolls away.

JIMI HENDRIX (CONT'D)
-And I want your sweet-playing
cracker asses with me. Dig?

JIMMY
My guess is we're not going back to
DePaul for Fall semester-

As Hendrix leaves, he passes James Guercio in the hall.

JAMES
Hey guys, that was Jimi Hendrix!
What'd he want?

EXT. ARENA STADIUM - DAY

The sell-out crowd CHANTS: HENDRIX, HENDRIX as roadies scurry
equipment onto the stage.

Terry sneaks a peak at the enormous crowd from back stage. He
turns to his bandmates gathered behind him.

TERRY
This ain't no bungalow on Holly
Drive-

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen. It's my
pleasure to introduce to you - The
Chicago Transit Authority!

The guys exchange nervous looks. JANIS JOPLIN sits on an equipment case smoking a joint.

JANIS JOPLIN
It ain't the gallows, boys. Pucker
up, strap on a big one and go make
some music-

As they run out on stage, Terry grabs Walter.

TERRY
That was Janis fuckin' Joplin!!

He takes a look at the enormous crowd and turns his back on them, focusing on Danny and Robert.

The unruly crowd is unimpressed. They want Hendrix.

CROWD
Hendrix! Hendrix! Hendrix!

Rowdy fans BOO. An ANGRY HIPPIE in the front row throws his hackie sack at Peter.

ANGRY HIPPIE
We want Hendrix! Get the hell off
the stage-

A beer can flies on stage, hitting the drum kit. The CHANTING gets louder: HENDRIX! HENDRIX!

WALTER
(to Terry)
Fuck this.

Walter picks up the beer can, takes center stage and heaves it back into the crowd.

WALTER (CONT'D)
(screams into microphone)
Everybody, just chill out! I said,
chill the fuck out!!
(beat as the crowd abides)
You all wasting a good high.
Hendrix ain't coming out till we
play our set so SHUT THE FUCK up,
light a J, and listen to our
goddamn music!

The Angry Hippie is handed a joint. He shrugs his shoulders and takes a hit.

Walter marches back, taking his place between Jimmy and Lee.

Terry laughs. Turns to the crowd while eyeing his bandmates-
He closes his eyes-

And BREAKS INTO A DEAFENING POWER RHYTHM CHORD. The entire band follows, erupting with the tight counter rhythm of 25 Or 6 To 4.

PETER

*Waiting for the break of day.
Searching for something to say.
Flashing lights against the sky.
Giving up, I close my eyes-*

They have the audience's attention.

The front row fans grove to the rhythm-

PETER (CONT'D)

*Sitting cross-legged on the floor.
25 or 6 to 4-*

The CROWD is theirs-

Hendrix watches discreetly from back stage, lost in the music.

JIMI HENDRIX

(to himself)

Shit. That cracker can play-

PETER

*Staring blindly into space
Getting up to splash my face
Wanting just to stay awake
Wondering how much I can take-*

MONTAGE AS SONG CONTINUES:

Different concert stages, some indoor, some outdoor - all sold out. Different venues connected by Terry's powerful guitar virtuosity-

PETER (CONT'D)

*Should I try to do some more
25 or 6 to 4
Oh yeah*

Terry effortlessly switches from rhythm guitar to guitar solo. It's familiar at first, but mounts into an intricate, jazz-like amp-distorted guitar improvisation.

He's completely lost in the music-

In each city, the audiences groove, one with the music.

In each city, Joplin and Hendrix watch from backstage, awestruck.

PETER (CONT'D)
*Feeling like I ought to sleep
 Spinning room is sinking deep
 Searching for something to say
 Waiting for the break of day
 25 or 6 to 4, 25 or 6 to 4,
 Alright.*

MONTAGE ENDS:

We're back on the original stage as the song ends.

Terry opens his eyes, looks at the audience-

-And they EXPLODE WITH DEAFENING APPLAUSE.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

The band and their entourage are exhausted. Terry and Peter sit in the back of the plane doing lines of coke.

James strolls down the aisle, scotch in hand, talking to no one in particular.

JAMES
 Limos will pick us up and take us
 directly to the stadium when we
 land in Tokyo in six hours so try
 and get some rest now-

Terry finishes another line of coke-

TERRY
 Great. Now he tells us-

PETER
 So, Tokyo time. Is that, like
 tomorrow or yesterday? I forget.

TERRY
 God, who knows. I don't even know
 what day it is.

James stops in front of them.

JAMES
 It's pay day, boys. Pay day.

INT. NEW YORK RECORDING STUDIO

The band, their hair longer now, same as the opening scene, is recording the *To Be Free* and *Now More Than Ever* tracks from the *Ballet For A Girl In Buchannon*.

James watches through the sound booth window as the ENGINEER monitors sound levels.

As the song builds momentum with Danny's drum solo, other musicians and record execs are drawn into the booth to listen. All are swept away with the music.

James smiles.

The song crescendos with a syncopated horn flourish and the impromptu audience bursts into applause.

ENGINEER

That's great, guys. Let's take ten and regroup.

Everyone is abuzz as they file out of the studio - except Terry.

Once he's alone, he plugs the Fender Telecaster into his small Knight amp and pulls his stool in close to it. He feels it's ELECTRIC HUM and closes his eyes.

James enters the sound booth, is curious, and brings up the sound levels in the booth.

Terry starts playing *Free Form Guitar* - to the amp.

The dissonant screech rattles water glasses on a nearby stool.

James has never heard anything like it and quickly hits the record button on the console, careful not to let Terry be distracted by him.

INT. NEW YORK RECORDING STUDIO

James sits, his legs kicked up on the audio console, and absently taps a pencil as the sound engineer enters and sits.

JAMES

Answer me this- how long is Jimmy's *Ballet For A Girl In Buchannon*?

ENGINEER

Longer than the time he actually dated the girl-

JAMES

No seriously.

ENGINEER

It's over twenty-eight minutes long. Why?

JAMES

It's broken into what, twelve movements?

ENGINEER

Twelve, thirteen. Something like that-

JAMES

Which rocks when they perform live, but no radio station is going to play a twenty-eight minute song.

ENGINEER

Yeah-

JAMES

But there's at least four of the movements that would make great stand alone singles. See where I'm going?

ENGINEER

Sure do. Let me get to work and start cutting-

JAMES

Thanks. Speaking of cutting-

He picks up the phone and dials a number.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey, Walter. Jimmy G. Hey, can you round up the guys an hour before tomorrow's recording session?... Yeah, no, it's all cool. Just want to show you new artwork for the album.... Great.

INT. COLUMBIA RECORDS - DAY

The band sits at a massive conference table in one of the top floor suites. You can see the Hollywood sign out the window. James sits at the end, a draped display easel behind him.

WALTER
Why all the mystery?

JAMES
We've got some new concept art for
the next album that I'm real
excited to share.

TERRY
Well, let's see it.

ROBERT
Yeah, let's see it.

JAMES
It's a refinement, an evolution, of
sorts.

TERRY
(suspicious)
An evolution to what?

James looks around the room, everyone anxious for him to
continue.

JAMES
To this-
He pulls the drape off the easel-

JAMES (CONT'D)
To Chicago.

-Revealing logo artwork containing just one word: Chicago.

TERRY
Where's the rest of our name?
Where's 'Transit Authority?'

JAMES
That's just it. The marketing
department wants you to drop
'Transit Authority' and just go
with 'Chicago.'

TERRY
Why? Didn't we just spend the past
year putting Chicago Transit
Authority on the map?

JAMES
That's just it. You did. But
Chicago is already on the map.

WALTER

Yeah, I don't get it-

JAMES

So, the label wants the name to work for you, not the other way around.

WALTER

I still don't get it.

TERRY

Our name means something.

James grabs artwork from behind the new logo. It's the band's first album cover. He sets it next to the new logo.

JAMES

I know. Hear me out. Imagine you've just heard your favorite new band on the radio and you walk into your neighborhood record store. Imagine this room is that store. There's a big promo display set up - which of these do you see first?

LEE

Chicago. I can't even tell what the other one says from this far away.

JAMES

Exactly. We want to make sure that everything we do commands the attention of fans. Chicago is a quicker read- both on the album covers and also for DJs playing your songs. It also fits better on tee shirts, key chains and belt buckles-

TERRY

Key Chains- is this for real?

ROBERT

Do we get money for each belt buckle and tee shirt sold?

JAMES

Absolutely.

ROBERT

Then I'm all for it.

PETER

Me, too.

DANNY

Me, three.

TERRY

I don't know, Jimmy-

JAMES

Terry. What's your original goal for this band?

TERRY

To change the world.

JAMES

We are changing the world, man. But you also told me you wanted to make music unique from the sounds of Detroit, New York or San Francisco, right? What says that better than this?

WALTER

Makes sense to me. I say we vote. Who's in favor of keeping Chicago Transit Authority?

Terry raises his hand.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Who's in favor of changing it to Chicago?

JAMES

(looks at Terry)

We're not changing it. We're refining it.

TERRY

Refining it. Like Texas crude or a debutant. Great.

WALTER

Who's in favor?

Everyone else in the room raises his hand.

JAMES

Chicago it is. Good call. I'll let Marketing know.

EXT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Terry sits cross legged on the deck facing the ocean. Leaning against his amp. His eyes are closed.

We hear the ocean waves, the subtle hum of the amp- and a STONE hitting and ricocheting off the deck.

Terry doesn't notice.

Another stone hits the deck. And another, this time hitting Terry in the forehead-

TERRY
What the fuck?

He opens his eyes and sees CAMELIA ORTIZ, standing on the beach below him in a tiny bikini, hand full of small stones. In a town full of charm and allure, hers is incomparable.

CAMELIA
Sorry. What are you doing?

TERRY
I'm working.

CAMELIA
Doesn't look like it.

TERRY
What are you doing?

CAMELIA
I'm on summer break. From school.
I'm here visiting.

TERRY
Doesn't look like it.

CAMELIA
What do you mean?

TERRY
Looks like you're assaulting
strangers-

CAMELIA
Oh these. Sorry.

She drops the stones and smiles. It's the warmest, brightest smile he's ever seen.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
I was wondering if I could use your
bathroom. I have to pee like a
racehorse.

TERRY
C'mon in. Consider me casa your
personal stable.

CAMELIA
What? Oh, thanks! I really
appreciate it.

She hurries up the stairs and Terry, still sitting on the
deck, points her inside the house.

TERRY
It's straight ahead on the left.

She hurries past him into the beach house.

CAMELIA
Thanks!!

Terry closes his eyes, presses his hand against the amp-

CAMELIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey, can I have this banana?

TERRY
What banana?

She emerges onto the deck, already eating the banana.

CAMELIA
The one on the counter. Thanks!

She sits down next to Terry.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
I'm starving! So, seriously, what
are you doing?

TERRY
Seriously, I'm - was - working.

CAMELIA
Cool. Does it pay well?

TERRY
Sometimes. But it's not about the
money.

CAMELIA
Looks like a job I can do.

TERRY
Does it?

CAMELIA
Yeah. I'm good at not making any money.
(she points to his hand on the old amp)
I'm not sure what this is all about, but I think I'd be good at it.

TERRY
You don't even know what I do?

CAMELIA
Yeah, but you look happy. Content. I like that. It means you're successful. This is good, you want some?

Terry shakes his head and watches her devour the banana. He's enchanted.

TERRY
And what about you? Are you happy? And content?

CAMELIA
I am now. An empty bladder and this banana goes a long way. Thanks. God, what a beautiful view. Reminds me of my grandmother.

TERRY
Your grandmother?

CAMELIA
Yup. When I was a little girl, she'd take me for walks on the beach in Puerto Rico. And we'd pick bananas from the trees in El Yunque on the way home.

TERRY
You're a long way from Puerto Rico-

CAMELIA

Sure am. I couldn't decide what to major in, in school, so I'm taking time off to see the world and major in life. And I wound up here - peeing in your house.

TERRY

Very cool.

CAMELIA

Yeah, right on.

(takes a deep breath,
smiles)

I think so, anyway. My family? Not so much. They'd much prefer a smaller classroom, with walls. I guess that works for some people, but it's way too confining for me. So, what is that?

She points to the old amp.

TERRY

This? I guess it's my security blanket. Helps me think straight.

CAMELIA

While you're working-

TERRY

Yup. While I'm working. I've had it since I was a kid.

CAMELIA

But what is it?

TERRY

Oh, it's an amp. A 60-watt Knight Amplifier. Total old school fuzz and scuzz-

CAMELIA

Ohhh. Impressive.

She has no idea what that means.

TERRY

Yeah, it's pretty tasty.

CAMELIA

What are you working on?

TERRY
Changing the world.

CAMELIA
Changing the world?

TERRY
Yup. Making people smile one song
at a time.

CAMELIA
What are you, some kind of rock
star?

TERRY
Actually, yeah.

Camelia starts laughing.

CAMELIA
Yeah, right.

TERRY
I am!

CAMELIA
Sure you are. What are you, like,
the singer?

TERRY
Yes. And lead guitar and rhythm
guitar, too.

CAMELIA
Okay, sure. Well I got to be going.
It's been real- until now. I'll see
you around, okay?

She starts to get up.

TERRY
No, wait. Seriously. Wait here.

He disappears inside. She's stands up, deciding whether to
bolt or wait when he hurries back out.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Here.

He hands her a ticket.

CAMELIA
What's this?

TERRY

A free pass to the show tomorrow
night at the Hollywood Bowl.

CAMELIA

It's for Chicago- This is the
hottest ticket in town.

TERRY

You like Chicago?

CAMELIA

Who doesn't. They're awesome!

TERRY

Well you're in luck.

CAMELIA

Are you, like, the opening band or
something?

TERRY

Something like that. If you come,
great. If not, that's cool, too.
But either way, consider my
bathroom your bathroom.

CAMELIA

Right on. Thanks!

She starts off down the beach. Terry watches- he can't take
his eyes off her.

She turns-

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

Hey, you never told me your name?

TERRY

Terry.

CAMELIA

That doesn't sound like a rock star
name-

TERRY

Maybe not. But it's the name of the
guy whose world you just rocked-

CAMELIA

See you around, Terry.

She turns back down the beach. She smiles.

EXT. THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL - NIGHT

Crowds pack the legendary outdoor venue. The band is playing *Saturday In The Park*, but Terry is distracted. He scans the empty seat in the front row for Camelia as Robert sings.

ROBERT

(singing)

*Another day in the park, I think it
was the Fourth of July, Another day
in the park, I think it was the
Fourth of July, People talking,
really smiling, A man playing
guitar, And singing for us all.*

There's no sign of Camelia. Terry is heartbroken.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

*Will you help him change the world,
Can you dig it? Yes, I can, And
I've been waiting such a long time,
For today-*

INT. THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL - NIGHT

Backstage after the show. There's the usual celebration and emotional release as the guys come off their performance high-all except Terry.

Roadies are packing gear, one bangs Terry's Knight amp into a crate as he hurries by.

TERRY

Hey, hey, hey. Be careful with that.

ROADIE

Sorry-

DONNIE JOHNSON, another roadie, scurries up, grabs the amp.

DONNIE JOHNSON

Be careful with that!

(nods toward Terry)

I got you, boss.

Terry, uncharacteristically quiet, shuffles into the Green Room and grabs a beer.

DONNIE JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(pops his head in)

Hey T-Man. Great show tonight.

TERRY

Thanks.

DONNIE JOHNSON

There's a big after party at the Marmont. You coming?

TERRY

Maybe later.

He watches the roadie leave.

CAMELIA (O.C.)

You look like you could use a banana.

He looks up, surprised.

TERRY

What?

CAMELIA

They're high in potassium. They'll give you energy. I figured you'd need it after that amazing performance.

TERRY

You were here? You liked it?

CAMELIA

Yeah! Oh my God, it was incredible. You- were incredible.

TERRY

I was looking for you up front- I thought you didn't come.

CAMELIA

I watched from the back. I wanted to soak in the vibe from the crowd. You know, really feel it.

TERRY

And?

CAMELIA

And, it was fantastic. You made a lot of people very happy tonight.
(beat)

You made me very happy. Thank you.

Terry blushes.

TERRY

You're welcome. Hey, there's a big
afterparty at the Chateau Marmont.
Want to check it out?

CAMELIA

Will there be food?

TERRY

(grins)
And a bathroom-

CAMELIA

In that case, I'd love to-

Terry takes her hand and tosses the banana in the trash as
they head out together.

EXT. CHATEAU MARMONT - NIGHT

The band and VIPs party on the rooftop terrace overlooking
Sunset Blvd. Food, booze, drugs- lots of beautiful young
Hollywood hopefuls. It's what every band ever hopes for.

Terry, Camelia, Walter and WALTER'S GIRLFRIEND sit at a
secluded table off to the side. Dirty plates, empty wine and
tequila bottles litter the table.

WALTER'S GIRLFRIEND

So then what happened?

WALTER

So I'm thinking, we need to leave
now. We're in a bad part of town.
We're outnumbered. We're going to
get our asses kicked-

TERRY

It wasn't our asses you were
concerned about, it was our hands-

CAMELIA

Your hands?

TERRY

Can't play the sax with your
fingers wrapped in splints-

Walter holds up his hands, wiggles his fingers.

WALTER

Hey, these moneymakers pay the
rent!

(MORE)

WALTER (CONT'D)

So, I'm ready to high tail it. I ain't proud, I want out of there now and what does this guy do?

CAMELIA

What?

WALTER

Tell her-

TERRY

Nah, it's nothing-

WALTER

Nothing? He pushes the drunk Irish bastard with the knife up against the wall, and tells him, "shut up and listen, you bastard!" And he pulls out his guitar and starts playing him a song.

CAMELIA

No way-

WALTER

Yeah, way.

CAMELIA

What happened?

WALTER

The bastard shut up and listened to Terry's song.

CAMELIA

No way! Did he like it?

TERRY

Course he did! He's been one of our biggest fans ever since!

They all laugh.

CAMELIA

Oh my God, you could have been killed-

WALTER

Not Terry. If he didn't have the gift to play, he'd be a street thug or long shore man.

CAMELIA
That's not true at all. He's no
thug. His soul is gentle.

WALTER
To shred a guitar the way he does,
he's got to have a little thug in
him-

CAMELIA
Don't we all. 'Scuse me. I gotta
pee.

She squeezes by Terry and nonchalantly kisses him as she
passes.

WALTER
You got her fooled-

CAMELIA
(walking away)
I heard that!

Terry, enchanted, watches her cut through the crowd.

When she's out of earshot, Walter nods approvingly to Terry.

WALTER
Dude.

TERRY
What?

WALTER
She's out of your league.

TERRY
(as he drains his glass of
tequila)
You think?

WALTER
Yup. I think.
(pouring him more)
Don't fuck it up.

EXT. CHATEAU MARMONT - NIGHT

Later, Camelia weaves her way back to the table. It's now
full of groupies. Terry, inebriated and slurring his speech,
holds court.

CAMELIA

Terry?

TERRY

Hey, babe. So, I tell Walter,
someone's got to protect your candy
ass from those fightin' Irishh
Blarney-kissin' White Sox fans.
Move over, thers' a new Sheriff in
town.

He points his index finger, as if it's a revolver, at his
imaginary foes.

CAMELIA

Okay, Sheriff. Time for you to go
work-

She gently, but firmly, helps him to his feet.

TERRY

Work?

CAMELIA

Yup. You gotta escort this farm
girl back to the ranch and protect
her from the dangerous desperados.

TERRY

God damn dangerous desperados-

CAMELIA

Yes! And they're horny bastards
that want to rape and pillage-

He leans on her, as she helps him through the crowd.

TERRY

Hey, hey, hey. There'll be no
raping and pillaging on my watch
unlesh- unlesh you want to be raped
and pillaged. Then I'm your man.
I'd like to be your man. I'm your
man- not for the raping. That'd be
very bad. But the pillaging, but
only if you want to be pillaged.
And even if you don't want to be
pillaged, I'm your man- 'cause I'm
the new Sheriff in town.

CAMELIA

Yes you are, and we gotta get you
back to the ranch-

TERRY

(starts singing)

*Where the deer and the antelope
sing- Do they sing or play? Or
pillage? Where the deer and the
antelope pillage! You're cute. I
dig you a lot.*

CAMELIA

I dig you a lot, too. Now, let's
keep going. It's gonna be a long
drive back to Malibu-

TERRY

No, no, no. We're shaying here.
You're with a rock star now,
remember? Hey, hey, hey, you,
mister-

He points to well dressed man at the Terrace entrance.

HOTEL MANAGER

Yes, Mr. Kath.

TERRY

Prease set us up in a suite for the
evening. I'm too drive to drunk.
One with finery and such. I don't
care, 'cause I'm drunk, but my
friend here deserves the very best.

(whispers loudly)

I got to impress her. She's totally
hot and out of my league.

HOTEL MANAGER

Yes, Mr. Kath. Ma'am. Here, let me
give you a hand.

INT. CHATEAU MARMONT SUITE - MORNING

Terry wakes up, fully clothed, on the floor next to the king
size bed.

TERRY

Oh dear God-

He sits up, looks over: he's face to face with Camelia,
sleeping comfortably in the overstuffed bed. She awakens,
stretches, smiles seductively.

CAMELIA

Morning, sunshine-

She leans forward to kiss him, but he pulls away.

TERRY

Wait. No. I can't-

CAMELIA

What?

He gets up, sees she's laying naked on the bed.

TERRY

Hold on. I got the zacklies.

He stumbles into the bathroom. She hears him bang around.
Gargle.

CAMELIA

What?

He emerges, grin on his face.

TERRY

The zacklies. You know. After a
night of partying, when your mouth
tastes zackly like your ass.

CAMELIA

What a romantic image-

He stops. Frowns.

TERRY

Yeah, you're right. Hold on. Need
more mouthwash.

He disappears back into the bathroom. Gargles more. He
reemerges- to an empty bedroom.

In the main suite, the French windows open, he sees Camelia,
clad in a bathrobe, staring out over Sunset Blvd. She doesn't
notice him.

He drinks in her beauty silhouetted in the morning sun.

He steps toward her, sees her face clearly, stops - surprised
to see she looks sad.

She turns, sees him, and instantly hides behind a warm smile.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Everybody's born to sing the blues,
but rock and roll? Rock will set
you free.

He embraces her. They kiss passionately.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I don't think I've ever been alive
until now.

CAMELIA

Are you going to write a song about
me?

TERRY

I think every song from now 'til I
die-

She kisses him.

CAMELIA

I like that.

He kisses her.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

I'm not some toy for a summer fling-
Promise you won't break my heart.

TERRY

Promise you'll share each sunrise
and won't leave my side-

She smiles and kisses him and leads him into the bedroom.

Beginnings (now fully recorded), plays from the beginning-

MONTAGE:

They lay down on the hotel bed. They kiss passionately.

TERRY (V.O.)

(singing)

*When I'm with you, It doesn't
matter where we are, Or what we're
doing, I'm with you, That's all
that matters-*

Terry sits cross legged on the hotel suite floor, playing
acoustic guitar. As he sings she throws grapes in his mouth-

Terry and Camelia play in the Malibu surf. He watches her
every move as she ventures into the cold water. She splashes
at him-

Terry chews grapes and sings, then spits one out, hitting her
arm. She goes for the big guns, shoves a banana in his face-

They drive through the Malibu mountains in Terry's Porsche convertible, sunshine glistens off chrome and sunglasses. Camelia lovingly wipes hair away from Terry's eyes-

TERRY (V.O.)
*Oh oh oh oh oh oh, woah oh oh oh,
 Oh oh oh oh oh oh, woah, oh oh oh,
 Mostly I'm silent, hmmm, Silent-*

Terry and Camelia sit crosslegged on his Malibu deck, their eyes closed, listening- their pinky fingers entwined.

Terry performing at an outdoor arena. Camelia watches adoringly from the back of the crowd.

Camelia sleeps naked in bed. Terry tenderly runs his fingers down the curve of her spine.

A night time camp fire on the beach. Camelia sits in Terry's arms. She rests her head on his shoulder. Content.

TERRY (V.O.)
*When I kiss you, I feel a thousand
 different feelings, A cover of
 chills, All over my body, And when
 I feel them, I quickly try to
 decide which one, I should try to
 put into words, Woah oh, Try to put
 into words-*

They kiss in the afternoon ocean surf-

They kiss in the Porsche convertible as Terry emerges from a mountain tunnel-

They kiss in the glow of the campfire-

Terry playing guitar in a sold out arena. Camelia watches from the front row. His eyes open, only on her as he plays.

TERRY (V.O.)
*Only the beginning, Only just the
 start-*

INT. COLUMBIA RECORDS - DAY

James gives a press conference. He's surrounded by reporters and three framed Double Platinum albums.

JAMES
 We're here to celebrate firsts. And
 seconds and thirds.
 (MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm proud to announce that Chicago's first three albums are all certified double platinum.

REPORTER #1

The first three releases for the band all going double platinum is quite a feat. What's the band's secret?

JAMES

It's about the music. These are serious musicians with something serious to say and CBS/Columbia Records is proud to be able to offer them a platform to say it.

REPORTER #2

Their first three albums- all double albums. No other band has released such a sheer volume of music in such a short amount of time - except for maybe The Beatles-

JAMES

Wow. Comparing Chicago to The Beatles. Your words not mine, but I'm okay with that. Listen, there is simply no other band like Chicago. Like jazz and classical music before them, they've elevated rock into the realm of serious music.

REPORTER #2

Can you elaborate on that?

JAMES

Like I said, it's about the music. If Mozart or Beethoven were alive today, this is the music they'd be making. Rock and roll, but it's symphonic in nature. It's safe to say it's not your parent's rock and roll. Chicago is purely an American original.

INT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Camelia smokes a joint as she waits up for Terry. We hear his Porsche skid into the driveway, knocking over garbage cans.

We hear keys fumbling at the door before Terry enters. He can barely stand, he's so stoned.

TERRY

Hey, babe. Whass up?

She ignores him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I love you, babe. I mish- mish-
miss you big time-

He steps toward her, but trips and takes a header into the shag.

She steps over him on her way to the bedroom and slams the door.

TERRY (CONT'D)

(still laying on the
floor)

Hey, what I do? Where'd you-

He loses his train of thought staring at the stucco ceiling and passes out.

EXT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Camelia sits on the deck drinking tea when Terry enters, still wearing the same clothes as last night.

He kisses the top of her head, her neck stiffens. He sits next to her, avoiding eye contact.

TERRY

I'm, um, sorry, babe.
(long beat)
One thing led to another-

CAMELIA

One thing leads to another a lot
now, doesn't it.

She looks straight at him.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

I don't mind getting high once in
awhile, but you?
(MORE)

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
You're out of control. Look at you.
(beat)
Is it me?

He stares out toward the ocean, lost.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
Talk to me. You could've hurt
someone last night!

She waits a beat. Nothing.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
I said, talk to me!

TERRY
(quietly)
No, it's not you, not this, at all.
(beat)
My whole life, I just wanted to
play music. To be taken seriously.
My old man, he never got that.
Callouses from guitar strings don't
count. It's not real work. But it's
the only thing I'm good at. At
least, that's what I keep telling
myself. The other guys- they're
smart. They went to school for
this. I don't know any of that. I
just fake it till it sounds good.

CAMELIA
You're not like any others. You
have a special gift. And you're
choking on it.

TERRY
This is all I've ever wanted, but
the farther we go, the more dread I
get.

CAMELIA
Dread? About what?

TERRY
That I'm not good enough. Sometimes
I feel so overwhelmed, like a tidal
wave, and I try to ride the wave
and write it down or play it - and
nothing comes out. Nothing good
anyway. And I think, what about the
people listening? Do they know?
(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)
 That we got a lucky break and this
 is all some kind of a fluke, that
 I'm a fraud?

Camelia doesn't know what to say. She rests her hand on his
 shoulder and they stare out over the water together.

TERRY (CONT'D)
 We got invited to play Carnegie
 Hall-

CAMELIA
 Oh my God! That's fantastic, baby!

TERRY
 Is it? Maybe this'd make the old
 man proud. Carnegie fuckin' Hall.
 I'm sorry, babe. I really am. I
 need you.

I'm scared shitless.

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL - NIGHT

Crowds of long haired counter culture mix with well dressed
 New York elite as they file in beneath the blazon marquee:
 CHICAGO - ONE WEEK ONLY!

Over the MURMER we HEAR INSTRUMENTS TUNING: a piano, an organ-
 then drums, bass and electric guitar-

The tuning turns into a GENTLE JAZZ RIFT on piano-

INT. CARNEGIE HALL - NIGHT

As the JAZZ RIFT continues, A SPOTLIGHT pierces the darkened
 stage, lighting a long haired, bearded man in a tuxedo.

ANNOUNCER
 Good evening. Success- success
 speaks for itself and I'm humble to
 be on stage, opening night at
 Carnegie Hall, with Chicago!

The stage lights BURST ON and the jazz rift EXPLODES into the
 beefy brass and rock opening of *In The Country*.

TERRY
*Oh my reasons
 And my ways
 Keep on changing
 From day to day.*

Terry's not used to the smaller venue. He can see everybody. He closes his eyes so he can see the music-

*As I grow
It becomes so clear
Why I'm here.
It's all here
For you and me
The beauty of life
Someday you'll see.*

*Then you'll join in
And sing along
And you'll understand why I sing
this song.*

*Let me tell you now
I do love you-*

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The show's over. Terry, drenched in sweat, rushes out the back stage door, leans against the cold brick wall and gasps for air.

Donnie Johnson, the roadie, hurries out the same door.

DONNIE JOHNSON
Dude. You okay?

Terry's hands shake uncontrollably.

TERRY
Do I look okay?

Donnie looks around and pulls out a baggie of pills and a vial of cocaine.

DONNIE JOHNSON
Here. The doctor is in. This'll help.

Terry pops a handful of pills and sets up a line of coke on the hood of a rusty dumpster.

DONNIE JOHNSON (CONT'D)
We good?

Terry snorts and nods.

TERRY
We good.

INT. NEW YORK RECORDING STUDIO

The band - minus Terry - sits in the console room as James plants himself in the middle of the group.

JAMES

So the good news is Columbia is pulling out all stops for us. We're at the top of their list for their marketing budget. The Carnegie concert is being released as a four album set, which is unheard of.

JIMMY

(high-fives Walter)
Yeah, baby!

JAMES

They are fully behind everything we do here.

The guys all nod enthusiastically.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But, they have made a couple of requests.

WALTER

What's that?

JAMES

First, the next studio album. They want shorter songs. In the three minute range.

ROBERT

Why?

JAMES

Easier to package. Easier to keep in rotation on the radio.

WALTER

What else?

JAMES

Nothing big, but the label wants you to set the pace for music fashion.

WALTER

What the hell does that mean?

JAMES

It means the long hair is out. The summer of love is ancient history. Shorter hair is in. And clothes with a more disco or western flair-

DANNY

That's crazy.

JAMES

It won't cost us anything. The label is paying for a band stylist. Plus, I already agreed to the terms. It's not a big sacrifice to keep the wheels rolling. Speaking of western flair-

WALTER

What-

JAMES

We're not recording in LA or New York anymore.

PETER

What?

JAMES

It's no big deal. But we're going to be recording at a brand new, exclusive studio. Our flight leaves on Friday.

ROBERT

Flight where?

JAMES

Colorado.

WALTER

We're recording in Colorado?

JAMES

In the mountains, on a ranch.

DANNY

A ranch? With cows and shit?

JIMMY

And cowshit?

JAMES

Yes. It's a working ranch.

JIMMY
(sarcastically)
How rock and roll-

JAMES
Listen, it has a state of the art
recording studio. Private cabins
for each of you. Practice studios.
A chef. No expense has been spared.

PETER
What's wrong with LA?

JIMMY
Yeah. It's home now.

JAMES
There's no distractions. It's a
place to be totally creative. It's
frickin' beautiful. It won't be a
sacrifice at all-

Terry saunters in. He's strung out.

TERRY
Sorry, I'm late. What's not a
sacrifice?

PETER
Recording at a ranch-

JIMMY
With cow shit-

DANNY
And a band stylist.

TERRY
What the fuck for?

JAMES
Thanks for joining us. The guys can
fill you in later-

JIMMY
The label wants shorter songs and
shorter hair-

TERRY
Fuck that.

ROBERT
Jimmy G. already signed the deal.

TERRY

Fuck that.

JAMES

C'mon. This isn't helpful.

TERRY

And a band 'stylist' is? Fuck that.

JAMES

Listen, we can talk about this later. Alright? There is one more-

TERRY

What more could there possibly be?

JAMES

(back to group)

I got you booked on the New Year's Eve Ball drop show.

TERRY

What?

JAMES

It's the hottest ticket in town-

TERRY

Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's?

LEE

I loved Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve as a kid-

JIMMY

Yeah, and then you grew a pair-

JAMES

Guys. You'll be hosting with Olivia Newton John and The Beach Boys.

WALTER

The Beach Boys?

TERRY

No.

JAMES

What do you mean?

TERRY

No fucking way.

JAMES

It's one of the highest rated shows on television. Literally, the entire country watches it.

PETER

I think we should do it. We'll reach a whole new audience.

TERRY

Don't care. It's not going to happen.

Terry storms out of the room. James follows.

JAMES

Terry, do you know how many people I had to blow to make this happen?

TERRY

Funny, your knees aren't all that dirty. I ain't doing it.

JAMES

Why?!

TERRY

It's Dick fuckin' Clark!

JAMES

Yeah, so?

TERRY

The whole reason we started this band was to get as far away as possible from Dick Clark, Jimmy fuckin' Ford and his imposter Executives and all this candy-ass Top 40 bullshit!

JAMES

In case you haven't been paying attention, Chicago and your candy ass have been living in the Top 40 for over three years now-

TERRY

Because Mohammed moved the mountain to Mecca.

JAMES

What the fuck does that even mean?

TERRY

It means I ain't shuckin' no corporate song and dance show to shill denture cleaners and toilet paper.

JAMES

Since when does your vote count more than the rest of the band's?

TERRY

It doesn't. But I know they won't agree to it.

JAMES

I'm betting they'll agree to the piles of cash they'll make from it.

TERRY

You mean the piles of cash you'll make from it-

JAMES

Really? Maybe you should pull your head out of that bag of coke more often and look around.

TERRY

What are you sayin', James-

JAMES

I'm saying I've invested a lot of time and money in you guys- in you- and I haven't steered you wrong yet. So get your shit together and get with the program. You dig?

James storms out.

Terry takes a moment, reenters the studio and grabs his guitar and plays a few chords. Looks up, sees the band looking at him.

TERRY

What?

WALTER

You good?

TERRY

Yup.

WALTER

We all voted while you were out and think the New Year's show is a good idea. It's a shit ton of money for a one hour gig.

TERRY

Great.

WALTER

So you good with that?

TERRY

Guess so.

WALTER

We also want to check out this ranch. Doesn't have to be a permanent thing-

LEE

It'll be like band camp-

WALTER

We check it out for a week or so, see what kind of vibe we get and if it sucks, we're back here. Plus, the fresh air'd do us all good-

He stops playing.

TERRY

No compromises on the music. And no fuckin' stylist.

The guys all nod in agreement.

WALTER

Never.

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH - DAY

High up in the Rocky Mountains, the ranch is nestled among aspens and pine that stretch for as far as the eye can see. It's made up of a main lodge and a number of log cabins.

James has converted a rustic barn into a state of the art recording facility.

INT. GUEST CABIN - DAY

Terry, dressed in jeans and an old Chicago Black Hawks t-shirt, dumps his duffle and guitar case and checks out the rustic accommodations.

In the bedroom, he opens the closet. It's full of brand new western style shirts and a note: WELCOME TO THE CARIBOU. - JIMMY G.

He grabs the shirts and tosses them out the front door in a heap.

He turns back inside as a RANCH HAND saunters by, a SHOTGUN in hand. Curious, he follows.

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH - DAY

Terry follows the ranch hand toward the horse paddock.

TERRY
What 'cha doin'?

RANCH HAND
Raccoon with rabies is pestering
the horses.

TERRY
You gonna shoot it?

RANCH HAND
That's the plan.

They enter the paddock. The erratic raccoon, foam at the mouth, is harassing a palomino.

TERRY
I never shot a real gun before.
Mind if I try?

RANCH HAND
Be my guest.
(hands him the rifle)
You can get closer. It got no fear,
once the rabies took.

Terry takes a few hesitant steps toward the animal. Points the rifle. Hesitates-

RANCH HAND (CONT'D)
Trust me, you're doing that coon a
favor. And the horses, too.

Terry closes his eyes and fires. And misses.

RANCH HAND (CONT'D)
First time's a bitch.

The Ranch Hand takes the shotgun, quickly disperses the rabid animal and turns back toward the main compound.

TERRY
Hey, can you teach me how to shoot?

INT. CARIBOU RANCH RECORDING STUDIO

The band is rehearsing *Feelin' Stronger Every Day*, minus Terry. James paces in the sound booth, hovering over the recording engineer. He looks at his watch-

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH, MEADOW - DAY

The Ranch Hand and Terry target shoot at bottles and cans set on a fallen aspen. After a few shots with the shotgun, the ranch hand gives Terry a hand gun to try-

INT. CARIBOU RANCH RECORDING STUDIO

James mics into the studio-

JAMES
Okay, guys, that's a wrap for today. Chow's being served in an hour in the main cabin-

As they leave, Terry arrives, hand gun strapped to his belt.

TERRY
Hey guys-

JAMES
(passing him by)
Nice of you to show up.

PETER
Hey, T-man. I got some ideas I want to run by you for *Feelin' Stronger*. Maybe after dinner?

TERRY
Sure. No problem.

Terry stands alone in the empty studio. He looks around- and like the Sheriff in an old western, quick draws the gun.

INT. GUEST CABIN - NIGHT

Terry sits at the end of his bed staring at his open closet. All of the western shirts have been cleaned and re-hung.

He grabs the western shirts and marches out the door-

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH, CAMPFIRE PIT - NIGHT

Terry dumps the clothing in the fire pit, douses it with kerosine and lights up a fat joint.

He tosses the match in the pit, takes a seat and watches the clothing go up in flames.

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH - MORNING

Terry drinks a vodka screwdriver while looking out over the lush valley and distant mountain range. He's sporting a Pig Nose Amp tee shirt, the gun strapped to his side.

James, in full-on urban cowboy gear, approaches, steaming thermos of hot coffee in hand.

JAMES

May I?

He takes a seat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's beautiful.

TERRY

Yeah. It really is.

JAMES

It's a special place- to be creative.

TERRY

It's a place to squeeze every penny out of your investment you can.

JAMES

Terry-

TERRY

You want to know the best creative place? That little shit hole bungalow on Holly Drive. God, I miss that place.

JAMES

When you landed on my doorstep, you and the guys didn't have a pot to piss in. Now you do. Look around. Two thousand acres of privacy, state of the art recording studios, the top engineers in the country-

TERRY

It's a factory farm. Just take us to the barn and hook us up to be milked. Make sure you squeeze every last drop from us. Then put us out to pasture. Literally. Wait. That leaves money on the table. Better send us to the slaughter house while there's still meat on our bones. And don't forget our hides. I hear you can get top dollar for the hide of a rock star.

JAMES

That's not fair-

TERRY

Not fair? You've got your own fiefdom here while Jimmy's busting his ass writing songs in a tiny house in Encino.

JAMES

Jimmy is the highest paid trombone player in the world. He'd be teaching high school band if it weren't for me.

TERRY

What's wrong with that? It's honest.

JAMES

Listen. If you want to go make art. Go make art. See how that's working out for Syd Barrett. But for now, this thing we all do- this thing called show business? It ain't called show fuckin' around. It's show *business*. Pop Music is a business, my friend. And it's a business that if you're really lucky, on occasion, you might stumble upon a masterpiece- and sell art. But make no mistake, the product here is not art.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Have I made money developing and managing your career? You bet I have. Am I ashamed of that? Fuck no. It's not like I'm selling arms for a living. I won the lottery. I stumbled upon the Wolfgang goddamn Amadeus Mozart of our age, and I bet a few hundred dollars of my own money that paid off big. I'm proud of that. I'm proud of the music we created and sold to the world. And I deserve this fiefdom. We deserve this fiefdom. But I don't deserve your arrogant, junkie contempt.

(starts to leave, turns)

You want to know who's milking the creative cow dry? All your drug dealers. That's who. Sober up and lose the drugs or you won't have a hide worth selling.

He leaves, passing a sleepy Walter.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now would be a good time. At this rate, he'll be dead in six months.

Walter sighs and plops down next to Terry.

WALTER

God, it's beautiful here.

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH - DAY

The band sits uncomfortably in a semi-circle on a deck overlooking ponderosa pine. Their backs are turned to the beautiful setting.

Terry saunters in.

TERRY

Sorry I'm late- Who died?

Nobody says anything - or gives him eye contact.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Seriously, what's going on? What is this? Some kind of 'intervention'?

WALTER

Why don't you take a seat.

TERRY

No. Not until you tell me what the fuck this is about?

WALTER

We're concerned about you-

TERRY

This *is* an intervention. What are you going to do? Kick me out of the band?

JIMMY

No, man, it's nothing like that. We're all concerned about you, brother, that's all.

TERRY

Concerned about me? Why the fuck for?

PETER

You gotta lay off the drugs, man.

WALTER

Yeah.

TERRY

Lay off the drugs? Lay off the drugs? That's rich, coming from you.

WALTER

Listen, man-

TERRY

No. You listen. Fuck all y'all. You do more drugs than I do. Bunch of goddamn hypocrites. Get off the drugs- You guys, every last one of you, with the exception of Danny over there, fuckin' party it up. Who the fuck are you to tell me to lay off the drugs?

WALTER

You're right. We all party too much, but dude, you're out of control. For the sake of the music-

TERRY

The music. Bullshit. You're all worried about our next big contract-

[illegible]

DANNY
Terry. You're our fucking brother.
We family. We love you. You don't
see it- that's the drugs. They
don't want you to see it- you're
slave to the demon, man.

TERRY
What the hell you talking about?
This demon bullshit. Did Jimmy
fuckin' G. put you up this? Did he?

WALTER
No, man-

TERRY
Fuck all y'all. And fuck all your
bullshit. I'm out of here.

WALTER
What about the album?

TERRY
Whatever-

He storms out leaving the band slack jawed.

LEE
That went well.

INT. CARIBOU RANCH RECORDING STUDIO

Terry is alone in the studio. He sits in front of Robert's piano surrounded by empty bottles of vodka and tequila.

Strung out, he tentatively hits a pair of dissonant keys—

He stops, does a line of coke, and stares at the keyboard.

He hits the same dissonant keys again, feels the melancholy rhythm, closes his eyes, and sings *Beyond All Our Sorrows*.

TERRY
(singing)
*Do you know that I, Really love
you? Do you know that I, Really
want you? Do you know I feel, I'll
never have you? 'Cause I've always
hurt, The ones I've loved.*

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

*So now my mind, Holds back my
feelings, Oh, yes it does, It's
lost all faith, Towards love, But
still it feels loves presence all
around, That means there's still
hope that my love, Will be found-*

He pounds fiercer on the keys as he sings-

TERRY (CONT'D)

*Please can you help me, Restore the
faith in myself, oh, ooh, Is it
you, Who will help me find myself?*

He stops playing, spent, laying his hands on the piano's side, and places his ear to the piano, hoping to feel the last vibrations of its strings.

He hits 'stop recording' on a cassette tape recorder, grabs a vodka bottle, and stumbles out of the studio-

EXT. CARIBOU RANCH - NIGHT

Terry stumbles to the horse paddock and tries climbing onto the little palomino.

He manages to pull himself onto the saddle, but the horse bucks, throwing him to the ground.

Laying in a crumbled heap, he stares up at the horse's ass. It lifts its tail and takes a huge dump.

INT. MALIBU BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Terry sits staring at his guitars, drinking a scotch. His trusted Fender Telecaster is mostly hidden by newer, shinier electric guitars.

Terry has no urge to play them. Instead, he picks up his gun, swirls it around his trigger finger.

He grabs a handful of pills from a plastic baggy, washes them down with the scotch and aims the gun at the closest guitar.

He takes careful aim, concentrates on steadying the tremor in his hand-

The PHONE RINGS.

He lets it ring, keeps the gun trained on the guitar.

Finally-

TERRY

Pow!

He tosses the gun down, answers the phone.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Yeah.... Nothing. Just hanging...
yup...writing some new music.

(swallows the sentence)

Something like that. What?

Nothing... Shit yeah, a good part-
tay would do me some good.

He stands up. Has to steady himself. Holsters the gun in a shoulder holster, struggles to put on his cowboy hat and fumbles his car keys off the counter.

EXT. MAILBU HILLS - DAY

Terry races his Porsche convertible through the twisting turns of Malibu Canyon.

He's all over the road, kicking up rocks along the guard rails as he hugs curves way too fast-

He turns on the radio. 25 Or 6 To 4 is on.

He crosses lanes to take the curve-

Just misses an oncoming car-

He hears his guitar solo-

Cranks the volume up and hits the gas-

He closes his eyes. Smiles-

A HORN BLARES

As a truck barely misses him-

The guitar solo fills his senses.

His takes his hands off the steering wheel-

To play the chords, to feel the music-

As the Porsche SLAMS into the rocky canyon wall.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

We hear CRASHING WAVES OF SURF intro the song, *Wishing You Were Here*, as we FADE UP TO MONTAGE:

Terry's POV:

Everything's a blur: Red flashing lights. Medics racing him into the ER. Camelia - now 6 MONTHS PREGNANT - pushes past a medic- her eyes desperate. She's crying.

CAMELIA

He can't die. Don't let him die.
We're having a baby-

He reaches out to her as a nurse pulls her away. She reaches for his hand. Fingers touch. She's gone. Masked ER staff put an Oxygen mask over his face- the overhead light is blinding-

FADE OUT.

EXT. MALIBU BEACH - DAY

Camelia, on their deck, sees Terry sit on the beach.

SUPER: One Year Later

She joins him, takes a seat in the sand.

TERRY

I'm thinking of going solo. Putting James and the band, the guys, behind me. I got some ideas I'd like to explore for a new album- 'Cook County'.

CAMELIA

That's exciting.

TERRY

Is it?

CAMELIA

Somebody once told me- Everybody's born to sing the blues, but rock will set you free.

TERRY

Freedom. It's constraining, you know. As long as I can remember, people want to define you by the boxes they put around you.

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

By their small minded limitations they place on what you've done. They can't see what you're doing, or where you're going, or what you're capable of. I mean, isn't that how we should define people? By their aspirations and gifts, not by their failures and past work? I hate that everybody tries to pigeon hole us. To put a label on the work- 'Oh, you're an artist, what kind of art do you make?' Or, 'oh, you're a musician, what kind of music do you make?' Why is the *kind* of art more important than the act of creating it? If the music moves you to think and feel and know that you're alive and the guy or gal next to you is your brother or sister, than why does it matter what kind of music it is? There's too many managers and executives and suits - all trying to package and sell, taught nothing but the importance of the transaction and the market, but never taught the value of the gift. The value ain't in the sale, it's in the connection with another living, breathing, *feeling* human being-

He stares out over the waves, closes his eyes. Feels the sunshine on his face.

TERRY (CONT'D)

They all *say* they want you to be creative, to be an original. But that's a lie. True originality scares the hell out of people. Everybody wants the same old thing, just in shiny new packaging.

He opens his eyes, looks pleadingly at Camelia.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Look at me. I still got a lot to give, but shiny new packaging ain't one of them.

CAMELIA

I don't buy that for a second. You're trying to tell me the packaging is more important than the gift?

(MORE)

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

That, that the sizzle is more important than the steak? That's bullshit.

TERRY

That bullshit is the American way-

CAMELIA

It's not your way. Since when do you give a flying rat-ass fuck about 'packaging' and what other people think? I mean look at you. You're wearing the same wrinkled tee shirt and jeans you wore when I first met you.

(beat)

I didn't fall in love with- with 'packaging'. I fell in love with the guy inside. The guy that channels all the chaos and beauty and anxiety and love in the universe into beautiful music.

She kisses him.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

You be you, hear me? You be you.

(pause)

If that means getting a new producer, or going solo, or getting a new band, who cares? Just don't forget to be you.

She stands, wipes the sand off her butt.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)

I got to check on the baby. You good?

TERRY

Yeah, I'm good. Thanks.

She heads back toward the beach house.

CAMELIA

(over her shoulder)

For what it's worth, Cook County rocks-

Terry closes his eyes, but can't see the sunshine.

A CAR HORN blares, echoing off the palisade cliffs. Donnie Johnson pokes his head over the cliffside above.

DONNIE JOHNSON
Hey T-man! Dude. I got a trunk full
of Maui Wau. You want to party?

TERRY
No man, not today.

DONNIE JOHNSON
Dude. This cannabis is fresh off
the boat-

INT. KATH MALIBU HOME - DAY

Camelia changes baby Michelle's diaper. Terry appears in the doorway, holding a kitchen garbage bag full of trash.

TERRY
I'm heading over to Donnie's-

CAMELIA
Terry.

TERRY
It's all good. I'm good. We're
good. Here, toss that diaper in
here.

He holds the trash bag open for her.

TERRY (CONT'D)
I'm good, really. I'm here for you.
For the baby. We're going to move
forward. You'll see.

He leans down, nuzzles and kisses Michelle. He blows on her tummy, making her laugh.

TERRY (CONT'D)
I love you happy little girl.
(looks at Camelia)
I'm good. Really.

EXT. DONNIE JOHNSON'S HOUSE, WOODLAND HILLS - DAY

Terry and Donnie are both stoned out of their minds. They lounge on a trashed back deck littered with drug paraphernalia, pizza boxes and empty bottles of tequila.

DONNIE JOHNSON
Cook County? Ain't that a prison?

TERRY

What the fuck? No, it ain't a prison. I mean, it has a prison. It's where they sat Al Capone's ass down to chill. But no, it's not a prison. It's, it's where you go when you need to get out of the city.

DONNIE JOHNSON

And do time-

TERRY

-And expand your horizons.

Terry spins a semi-automatic 9mm pistol on his finger as he unsuccessfully tries to sit up and grab a slice of pizza.

DONNIE JOHNSON

Dude. Whoa with the firearm-

TERRY

What? This?

He waves it toward Donnie.

DONNIE JOHNSON

T-man- the fuck, yeah. That thing. You're killing the vibe, dude. Why you even have that?

TERRY

'Cause I'm a fuckin' cowboy livin' on the edge-

DONNIE JOHNSON

Yeah, but we're in Woodland Hills. This ain't on the edge of nothing, man.

TERRY

Be that as it may, a fuckin' cowboy does what a fuckin' cowboy does-

Donnie takes a drag off a roach, passes it to Terry. He declines.

TERRY (CONT'D)

No, man. I got to set limits-

DONNIE JOHNSON

That's cool. Dude, that doesn't- I mean, I don't- fuck. What the hell are we even talking about?

TERRY

I don't know. What? Prisons?
You ever fire one of these?

Donnie shakes his head.

DONNIE JOHNSON

Be careful with that thing. You
might hurt somebody.

TERRY

Nah, it's not even loaded, see-

He pulls the clip out, sets it on the table.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Wanna' play a little Russian
roulette?

He points the gun at Donnie's head.

DONNIE JOHNSON

Fuck no! Dude. Please.

TERRY

Look, the clip isn't even in it-

DONNIE JOHNSON

Still, be that as it may, packing
that kind of heat, waving it around
- you look like the Man-

TERRY

I am the man-

DONNIE JOHNSON

Not the man, THE man- Johnny
fuckin' law-

He lights up another joint.

DONNIE JOHNSON (CONT'D)

It scares the living piss out of me-

Terry shows him the empty magazine-

TERRY

Chill, dude. It's all good. What do
you think I'm gonna do? Blow my
brains out?

He nonchalantly puts the gun to his temple-

TERRY (CONT'D)

See, it's--

He pulls the trigger-

BANG!

The back of his head splatters on the upholstery.

-His body slumps against the cushions in slow motion-

-His hand and gun drop to his lap.

Donnie, frozen, still holds the joint to his lips, lit match in the other hand-

DONNIE JOHNSON

What - the - fucking shit -

The match burns his finger-

-And snuffs out.

INT. DANNY SERAPHINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Danny is on his drum set rehearsing when the phone rings.

DANNY

Yeah... What?... Donnie, slow down.

What happened?... No-

No, no, no, no, no. no....

Yes, call the cops. No, I'll call

Camelia... I'll be right over-

EXT. DONNIE JOHNSON'S HOUSE, WOODLAND HILLS - LATE AFTERNOON

Police Cars crowd the narrow street in front of Donnie's house. An ambulance waits in the driveway, the only vehicle not flashing lights. Not in a hurry.

The cops question Donnie as Danny emerges, shell shocked, on the front steps of the house.

With a SQUEEL, Camelia pulls onto the lawn in Terry's new Porsche.

Clutching baby Michelle in her arms, she races the front door-

CAMELIA
(screams)
Terry!!!

Danny grabs her, pulling her into his arms.

DANNY
Camelia. No. You don't want to go
in there.

CAMELIA
(sobbing)
But he said everything would be
okay! He promised me. He promised!

DANNY
Shhhhhhh, darling-

CAMELIA
(sobbing/pleading)
He promised me he was okay. He
promised-

She catches a glimpse inside the house- Donnie, crying, his
head in his hands, as police continue to take his statement.

She defiantly pulls away from Danny.

CAMELIA (CONT'D)
He promised me he'd be okay!

She turns and races away from the scene, holding her baby
close to her, wiping the tears from her eyes-

Local Media vans zoom past her-

The farther away from the house she gets, the faster she
picks up her pace.

She spots a nearby park-

She races in.

She takes a deep breath, gasping for fresh air.

She hugs baby Michelle, looks around-

Somewhere, someone clicks on a radio: *Make Me Smile* is
playing.

Children play in the park, they don't know. She's alone in
the dark, even though-

Time and time again, she sees his face smiling inside-

SUPER: To date, Chicago, the band Terry Kath co-founded, has over 47 gold and platinum albums spanning over 50 years on the Billboard Charts. Seventeen of their first twenty albums were certified platinum.

SUPER: In 2020 Chicago was given the Life Time Achievement Award by the Grammys.

SUPER: In 2016 Chicago was enshrined in the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame, with Terry Kath's daughter, Michelle, making her father's acceptance speech.

SUPER: Terry Kath's one note guitar solo on *Listen* is the only one note guitar solo to ever go platinum.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.

XXX