

DOLEMITE IS MY NAME

Written by

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FINAL

IN THE BLACK

We hear Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On" playing softly.

VOICE
I ain't lying. People love me.

INT. DOLPHIN'S - DAY

CU of a beat-up record from the 1950s. On the paper cover is a VERY YOUNG Rudy, in a tuxedo. It says "Rudy Moore - *BUGGY RIDE*"

RUDY
You play this, folks gonna start
hoppin' and squirmin', just like back
in the day.

A hand lifts the record up to the face of RUDY RAY MOORE, late '40s, black, sweet, determined.

RUDY
When I sang this on stage, I swear to
God, people fainted! Ambulance man
was picking them off the floor! When
I had a gig, the promoter would warn
the hospital: "Rudy's on tonight --
you're gonna be carrying bodies out of
the motherfucking club!"

We see that we are in a RADIO BOOTH. A sign blinks "On The Air." The DJ, ROJ, frowns at the record.

ROJ
"Buggy Ride"?

RUDY
Wasn't no small-time shit.

ROJ
GodDAMN, Rudy! That record's 1000
years old! I've got Marvin Gaye
singin' "Let's Get It On"! I can't be
playin' no "Buggy Ride."
(beat)
Look, I have 60 seconds. I have to
cue the next tune.

Hm! Rudy bites his lip and walks away.

Roj tries to go back to his job. He reaches for a Sly Stone single -- when Rudy suddenly bounds back up.

RUDY
How about "Step It Up and Go"? That's
a real catchy rhythm-and-blues number.

Rudy lifts ANOTHER SINGLE, in a plain cover. The label says "Rudy Moore, *The Harlem Hillbilly!* STEP IT UP AND GO"

ROJ
Oh, c'mon, man. For real?

RUDY
It's monumental! That was my biggest selling single. Just slip it into the rotation.

ROJ
It looks like something my grandpa would listen to. NO. 45 seconds.

He goes back to work. Rudy walks away -- then suddenly spins.

RUDY
Okay, I was saving the best for last.

Ta-da! He whips up A FINAL SINGLE. Now Young Rudy is in a TURBAN. "Rudy Moore: *RING A LING DONG*"

ROJ
"Ring A Ling Dong"? That's your best? I never heard of that one!

RUDY
Oh, it's quite catchy.

Rudy starts SINGING it, in a Little Richardesque early rock & roll style. Shout-singing:

RUDY
(SINGING)
Ring a ling dong! Ding dong ding!
Ring a ling dong! Ding dong ding!
Ring a ling dong...!
Ring those wedding bells for me!

Rudy finishes, grinning, pleased. Roj shakes his head.

ROJ
Rudy, man, my job is to play the hits.

RUDY
But, it should have been a hit.
(a poignant pause)
The label, Federal Records, had big plans to promote it. I was primed for stardom. But then... they signed another guy, James Brown, and he sucked up all the attention...

Rudy quiets down, remembering back. Wistful.

Roj feels bad. Then -- he commiserates.

ROJ
 You think I wanted to be a DJ in a
 ghetto record store? Not all of our
 dreams come true.

RUDY
 (bothered)
 They still can...

ROJ
 (he shakes his head)
 No, brother. We missed our shots.

Rudy's face falls. He wants to disagree -- but has no words.

ROJ
 We should both get back to work.

Roj slams the glass booth door in his face, then DROPS the
 NEEDLE.

And -- Sly Stone KICKS IN with "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice
 Elf Agin)."

TITLES BEGIN!

The bass THUMPS. The groove PUMPS. We now see that we are in
 DOLPHIN'S RECORD SHOP, a record store in a black neighborhood,
 early '70s. The DJ BOOTH is in the front window. Rudy works
 in the store.

Roj is heard over the speaker.

ROJ
*S-L-Y spells excitement, soul, and the
 now sound with Sly and the Family
 Stone. Here on the dial in the City
 of Angels, Los Angeles. KRKD.*

INT. DOLPHIN'S

CU on a shipping box. A box knife RIPS it open, removing a
 stack of Stevie Wonder albums. Another box -- the Dramatics,
 in matching suits.

Rudy wipes sweat from his forehead, hard at work. He pins
 albums up on the wall. Ray Charles. Aretha Franklin. Rufus
 Thomas. Ike and Tina Turner. Miles Davis.

Rudy hurries to the register and grabs a CUSTOMER'S album.

RUDY
 Ah, the newest Stylistics. You got
 some good tunes there, brother.
 (he smiles)
 You wanna also get it on cassette or 8-
 track, so you can play it in the car?

Albums get filed in the bins. James Brown. Lou Rawls. In the comedy section, Flip Wilson. Dick Gregory. In jazz, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Herbie Hancock.

A co-worker, THEADORE TONEY, enters -- running late. Toney is black and overtly gay. Rudy shoots him a look: Get to work!

Toney puts singles on display. Diana Ross. The Chi-Lites.

Toney rings up another customer.

TONEY

How 'bout a vinyl brush and cleaner,
to keep it free from static pops and
crackles?

8-tracks get filed. Otis Redding. Sammy Davis, Jr., Bill Cosby. Isaac Hayes. Smokey Robinson.

Rudy and Toney carry empty boxes out the back of the store and throw them into a dumpster.

INT./EXT. STORE - DUSK

Rudy is leaving for the day. He waves goodbye to Toney.

He looks down at the magazine rack, stuffed with CELEBRITY MAGS. He peers at all the MOVIE STARS, happy and glamorous. Their faces carefree.

Rudy's eyes glisten. He stares longingly. Then, he grabs a handful of mags and heads out onto the street.

Sly and the Family Stone continues as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL STREET - DUSK

Rudy walks home through the all-black, working class neighborhood. Squat storefronts with old signs. He passes a TV repair shop with multiple TV's tuned into ABC's "Movie of the Week." He stops and stares through the window on a men's clothing store. Checking out the colorful suits and brims.

Rudy nods at a few BLACK FOLKS who stroll by. He passes gang graffiti. A HOMELESS MAN sleeps on a bus bench.

EXT. RUDY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rudy reaches his run-down apartment building.

THE MUSIC CONCLUDES. END OF TITLES.

CUT TO:

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rudy is alone, in his dingy little apartment. On the stove, franks and beans are cooking in a skillet.

On the wall hangs colorful concert posters, from the old days. "Cleveland Municipal Auditorium, RHYTHM & BLUES REVUE! Two big shows! Big Jay McNeely! Billy Ward and The Dominoes! Jimmy Witherspoon!" Then finally, at the very bottom... "'Prince Dumarr' Rudy Moore!"

Rudy is busy, putting on a TUXEDO. It's old and too tight. He struggles to get the pants up around his waist.

RUDY

C'mon, you mother-fuckin' pants --

Something catches his eye. A small FRAMED PHOTO on the wall -- a scratched-up black-and-white shot of a sharecropper family, circa 1930s. Rudy leans in. It's SEVEN BAREFOOT KIDS and two STERN PARENTS, standing in front of a shack.

He stares, then triumphantly ZIPS UP the pants. He exhales.

RUDY

HA! Look at me now!

EST. LOS ANGELES CLUBS - NIGHT (STOCK FOOTAGE)

Bright lights! NEON SIGNS at the biggest nightclubs of the era. The Coconut Grove! The Roxy! The Whiskey a Go Go! The Comedy Store! Flash, excitement, CROWDS packed outside.

EXT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB - NIGHT

South Central. On a dark stretch of Santa Barbara Avenue is the tiny CALIFORNIAN CLUB. A banner outside the joint says "Entertainment Nitely!" A few dudes hang out.

Rudy passes through the people on his way inside. He stops at the small marquee by the door: "Tonight, THE BEN TAYLOR BAND!" And nothing else. Rudy grimaces and heads inside.

INT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB - NIGHT

It's a small nightclub, with an all-black clientele. The crowd is dressy. Rudy is onstage in front of the curtain, in his tux. He's delivering jokes.

RUDY

It's good to be here. I just came from Broadway. Yes, I was on Broadway for six months!

(beat)

I was standin' on the sidewalk, lookin' for a job!

The crowd laughs. Rudy grins.

RUDY
I ain't lyin'!

Bigger laughs. Rudy sees a signal offstage.

RUDY
 Okay. Well now I'd like to introduce
 our headliner. So put your hands
 together for the hot sounds of... The
 Ben Taylor Band!

Rudy exits stage right. He's just the emcee.

The curtain opens, revealing THE BEN TAYLOR BAND. They launch into a LOUD JAM. Pudgy BEN TAYLOR sings lead, with a big smile.

ANGLE - RUDY

He stands at the edge, looking out at the crowd. All their eyes are on the musicians. Nobody's eye is on him.

Rudy sighs.

INT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB - LATER

Rudy floats past the bar. Back of the club, the OWNER sits at a table, adding up cash receipts from a cigar box.

Rudy forces a jovial laugh.

RUDY
 Hey! Nice crowd tonight, huh?

The guy grunts, eyes on his accounting. Rudy pulls up a chair -- and the guy looks up, annoyed.

CLUB OWNER
 Rudy, you went over your limit.

RUDY
 People enjoy my appeal --

CLUB OWNER
 Our deal is five minutes.

RUDY
 And how come my name ain't out front?
 You forgot to put my name on the
 marquee.

CLUB OWNER
 You're the emcee. Nobody is paying to
 see you!

RUDY

Well maybe they would! Mr. Allen, I need my own slot. I'm a total entertainment package! I can tell jokes. I sing. I dance -- I do adagio dancing! It's very exotic. In a turban, with an African beat!

(he wiggles)

When I was in the Army, I had my own entertainment unit --

CLUB OWNER

Rudy, that was 1950! Vaudeville is dead. I don't need an All-In-One.

RUDY

Hey! I ain't that old! You think I'm Moms Mabley or Bojangles? Well fuck that! I got plenty to offer!

The guy smirks, then goes back to his papers. Rudy is dismissed. He frowns and marches away, muttering to himself:

RUDY

Rat soup eatin', insecure, junkyard motherfucker...!

CUT TO:

EST. DOLPHIN'S - DAY

Dolphin's, standing proudly at Central and Vernon.

INT. DOLPHIN'S - DAY

Rudy and Toney are busy, shelving records. While working, they entertain themselves with a REDD FOXX comedy album, which plays on a turntable in the store. We HEAR REDD FOXX delighting a SCREAMING CLUB AUDIENCE.

REDD FOXX (V.O.)

Friends, I would like to take you to the racetrack again. We are about ready to start the race. And here's a late scratch, ladies and gentlemen. Anna's Ass has been scratched.

(the CROWD LAUGHS)

And it's not the first time Anna's Ass has been scratched.

(louder LAUGHS)

I would have loved to have seen Anna's Ass up against My Dick today!

The CROWD HOWLS with LAUGHTER.

Toney and Rudy laugh along, though Rudy is resentful.

TONEY

That's some funny shit!

RUDY

It's not that funny. He's just cussin' up a storm.

TONEY

But he's not cussing. It's clever. See, "My Dick" ain't his dick -- "My Dick" is actually his horse!

RUDY

I know what the fuck "My Dick" is -- I'm not an imbecile. He's just sayin' it, double entendre, so that he won't get arrested by the police.

(beat)

I knew Redd. We started out together.

TONEY

What? You worked with Redd Foxx?!

RUDY

W-well, not onstage. In the kitchen. We were dishwashers.

(beat)

But then one night he went on, and a promoter saw him, and -- he got the big break.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS

A black WINO is staggering around, heckling the PEOPLE on the sidewalk. He's unusual -- CHATTERING AWAY, gesturing wildly, telling big stories.

RUDY

Oh shit -- Ricco's here.

Ricco extends his hand for money. Some folks give him change. Others flee. He glances into the store... and Rudy grimaces.

RUDY

No, no. Don't come in, Ricco.

TONEY

That man smells like urine. Ech! He's touching the door. Go stop him.

RUDY

ME stop him? Fuck that! I'm the manager. I'm delegating this job: You stop him.

TONEY

I'm not getting near those germs.
 (beat)
 Ricco responds best to authority
 figures. The manager should do it.

WIDE

Ricco weaves in. He makes a beeline over to some CUSTOMERS.
 Ricco gives a big toothless smile, then begins PROCLAIMING:

RICCO

"I was born in a barrel of butcher knives!
 I've been shot in my ass with two Colt 45s!
 I've been slapped by a bear and bit by an eel!
 I chew up railroad iron and shit out steel!"

Rudy runs over.

RUDY

No, no, nobody wants to hear your
 goddamn toasts. You take it outside --

RICCO

"I jumped in the ocean and swallowed a whale!
 I handcuffed lightning and threwed
 thunder's ass in jail!"

The customers start LAUGHING. But Rudy tries pushing him out.

RUDY

Enough of you. Beat it --

RICCO

"I put fear in a gorilla
 and took the sting from a bee.
 You got to be an ignorant, ignorant
 motherfucker to fuck with me!!"

RUDY

Stop! This ain't the place for your
 hobo stories.

RICCO

I ain't no hobo! I'm a repository of
 Afro-American folklore!

A few MORE CUSTOMERS come over.

CUSTOMER

C'mon, man, he's funny! Let him talk.

RICCO

(he leans in to Rudy)
 Brother, I just need some money to
 eat. I ain't got no teeth, so I can
 only drink soup. Gimme a quarter.

Rudy frowns. He reaches in his pocket.

RUDY
Okay. Here's your damn quarter.

RICCO
Why thank you!
(he grins)
And now -- I'll tell you the funniest
fuckin' thing you ever did hear!

The customers HOOT, pleased. They gather closer...

RICCO
"Now some folks say that Willie Green
Was the baddest man the world has ever seen.
But I want you to light up a joint
and screw your wig on tight,
And let me tell you about the little bad
motherfucker called Dolemite!"

The crowd LAUGHS, tickled.

Rudy looks around, surprised. Really??

CUT TO:

INT. SOUL FOOD DINER - LATE NIGHT

Rudy is sitting around with Toney, goofy musician Ben Taylor,
and another pal, hyper comic JIMMY LYNCH, 30s. Four wannabe
showbiz players, tearing into their chicken and waffles.

RUDY
It was crazy! He was just doin' those
shitty old toasts, and folks were
diggin' it.

BEN
I ain't heard those in years.
"Dolemite"... "Signifying Monkey"...

JIMMY LYNCH
My uncle used to do them. But he was
in jail -- there's nothin' else to do
in there.

TONEY
You can fuck.

A beat.

RUDY
Yes, you can fuck, Toney, but that's
not what we were talking about.
(to the group)
See, I wondered...

(MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)
if you could take those toasts, fix
'em up a bit, and do them as an act?

JIMMY LYNCH
And perform where?! On a stoop?

BEN
In a barbershop?!

Everyone CRACKS UP.

JIMMY LYNCH
Damn, Rudy! Those routines are
prehistoric! Plantation comedy! I
wouldn't ever do 'em in my act!

RUDY
(frowns)
Funny is funny.

BEN
They ain't never gonna make the big
time!

JIMMY LYNCH
My Lord! Can you imagine a bunch of
white folk watching that shit? "What
the FUCK is that nigger talkin'
about?!"

Everybody LAUGHS hard. HIGH-FIVES all around.

BEN
When I go out, I always keep "The
Morning After" in my hip pocket, in
case there's some white faces.

TONEY
What the hell is "The Morning After"?

BEN
Don't be ignorant. It's the love
theme to "The Poseidon Adventure."
(he starts to SING)
*There's got to be a morning after,
If we can hold on through the night --*

RUDY
Ecch! Are you serious? Why bother
learning that? You ain't never gonna
play for Whitey.

JIMMY LYNCH
Where do you get off being critical?
(beat)
At least he's not stealing jokes from
HOBOS!

The group GUFFAWS loudly. Rudy retreats, silent.

EXT. SOUL FOOD DINER - NIGHT

Rudy stands in the parking lot, alone.

Jimmy sees him and strides over. He feels bad.

JIMMY LYNCH

Hey, man. Sorry. We were just havin' a little fun.

RUDY

How'd my life get so small?

(he sighs)

I came out here with such big plans.

I was gonna do it all! Like Sammy Davis, Jr.! Concerts! TV! Movies!

(beat)

The record store was supposed to be temporary. My "day job." But a million years later, it's all I got.

JIMMY LYNCH

You still have the Californian Club.

RUDY

Oh, fuck that! That's not gonna lead to nothing.

(walks away)

I'm not what anyone's lookin' for.

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rudy lies in bed, watching TV. It's "The Sonny & Cher Comedy Hour." Sonny, Cher and Paul Lynde are doing a wacky skit.

Disgusted, he CHANGES the CHANNEL. It's an old black-and-white movie. A BLACK ACTOR plays a train porter. He grins at a WHITE ACTOR as he carries his bags.

BLACK PORTER (ON TV)

Yassuh! Comin' right here, wid your bags!

Annoyed, he CHANGES the CHANNEL. Now Jim Nabors in a tux and Barbara Eden in a gown sing a duet. White dancers frolic.

Rudy TURNS OFF the TV. He is silent, stewing. He glances across the room. On a table is a little CASSETTE RECORDER.

Hm. Rudy thinks...

EXT. ALLEY - LATER THAT NIGHT

A few HOBOS sit around, drinking and warming themselves. Shouting stories at each other.

Then, Rudy peers in from Central Avenue. He carries a bag.

RUDY
Yo. Hey, guys, anybody seen Ricco?

HOBO
Who's that?

RUDY
He's an old bum with no teeth.

All the hobos look up. None of them have teeth.

Beat.

RUDY
Guess that didn't narrow it down.

HOBO
Yeah, this neighborhood has really gone to shit. Sad, sad, sad.
(he sighs)
You see that building over there?

Rudy turns. Across the street is the DUNBAR HOTEL, a large 1920s brick building. Once grand, with Spanish arcade entrances, the place is now a boarded-up dump.

HOBO
That's the Dunbar Hotel. It used to be the center of the black arts scene! I saw Duke Ellington there, Billie Holiday...! Damn, it was fine.
(wistful)
But now it's just filled with a bunch of junkies and winos.

He shakes his head, then chugs his Thunderbird. Rudy nods.

RUDY
Well, maybe one day it'll turn around.

WIDE

Rudy looks over -- and spots Ricco. Rudy hurries over.

RUDY
Ricco? Hey Ricco! It's me, man!

RICCO
(on-guard)
I don't know you.

RUDY
Sure you do. I'm your pal, from Dolphin's Records.

RICCO
 (he squints)
 My pal? Ain't you the son-of-a-bitch
 who throws me out?

RUDY
 No, that's the other guy.
 (beat)
 Look, Ricco -- I've got some hooch,
 and I've got some money. How'd you
 like to tell me your stories?

Rudy opens the bag, then holds up a LIQUOR BOTTLE, a roll of
 SINGLES, and the tape recorder.

Ricco's eyes pop. He starts to take a step --

Then the other bums' eyes pop. They all start RUNNING over.

CUT TO:

LATER

Rudy sits in a circle with the guys. They are all laughing,
 passing the bottle, telling tall tales. Rudy's tape recorder
 SPINS.

RICCO
 "Cocaine Shorty is my name,
 and fuckin' is my claim.
 I can line ninety-eight whores up against a
 wall.
 And I bet you a dollar I can fuck 'em all!"

They all chortle with LAUGHTER, elbowing each other.

HOBO
 Hee hee! I can top that shit!

RICCO
 Oh, fuck you, motherfucker! I'm the
 funniest one here --

RUDY
 No no, I got more money. Let's hear
 from all the liquor store wisemen!

INT. RUDY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Rudy is practicing in front of the MIRROR. The CASSETTE
 RECORDER is PLAYING:

HOBO (V.O.)
*"I fucked an elephant and fucked her
 mother.
 The bull, the cow, and her brother!"*

Rudy STOPS the tape. He thinks.

RUDY
 Better punchline. Better punchline...
 (then)
 "I fucked an elephant and fucked her
 mother.
 I can look up a bull's ass and tell
 you the price of butter!"

He laughs. Invigorated, he starts dancing around, AD-LIBBING, his VOICE getting BIG AND BRASSY:

RUDY
 "I fucked another elephant down to a
 coon,
 Even fucked the same damn cow
 that jumped over the motherfucking moon!"

That's right! Rudy struts, feeling a strength coming over himself. Bravado.

LATER - AT HIS CLOSET

He pushes aside his clothes and reaches for his TUX. Hm. He frowns. Then... Rudy spots a BRIGHT GREEN SUIT. Yes!

Something else catches his eye. A BOX. He opens it -- revealing a full AFRO wig. He gazes, then slowly HOLDS IT UP. He smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB - NIGHT

Rudy enters, empowered in his green suit and afro wig. Bouncing on his feet, in back with the Owner.

CLUB OWNER
 Where the fuck is your tux? And what
 happened to your hair? You look like
 a pimp.

RUDY
 I worked up a new character, with new
 material. Well actually, it's old
 material --

CLUB OWNER
 Oh for fuck's sake.

RUDY
 It'll slay. Though I gotta warn you,
 it's a little blue.

CLUB OWNER

(on guard)

I don't need this. Just stick to your regular set.

The guy walks away. Rudy frets.

ONSTAGE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Rudy steps on-stage. Nervous.

The crowd peers back at him. Waiting.

This is THE MOMENT OF TRUTH. Rudy takes a nervous gulp. He doesn't have the swagger anymore.

He glances to the rear. The Owner is busy.

Okay. This is it. Here we go.

RUDY

Way down in the jungle deep,
The badass lion stepped on the
signifying monkey's feet --

He STOPS. Unsure whether to continue. People wait.

RUDY

The monkey said,
"Muthafucka, can't you see?
Why, you standing on my goddamned feet!"

IN THE CROWD

Eyebrows go up. A few women are shocked.

IN THE BACK

The Owner reacts: WTF?

BACK ON RUDY

RUDY

The lion said, "I ain't heard a word
you said.
If you say three more, I'll be
steppin' on your muthafuckin' head!"

The crowd ERUPTS. What?! A WAVE of SHOCKED LAUGHTER.

In the HOUSE BAND, the DRUMMER does a RIM SHOT.

Rudy reacts, displeased. He turns back and SNAPS.

RUDY

Don't give me that Buddy Hackett shit!

The Drummer jerks, shocked. Rudy makes a gesture: Gimme a catchy beat.

THE DRUMMER

nods. He starts a RHYTHM going, with snare and brushes.

RUDY

is pleased. He catches the groove and turns up the swagger:

RUDY

But the monkey got wise and started using
his wit,
Said, "I'm gon' put a stop to this ol'
ass kicking shit!"
So he ran up on the lion the very next day.
Said, 'Oh Mr. Lion, there's a big bad
muthafucka comin' your way.
Baby, he talked about your people in a
helluva way
He talked about your people 'til my hair
turned gray!

(BIGGER, FULL ATTITUDE)

He said your daddy's a freak and your
momma's a whore!
Said he spotted you runnin' through the
jungle sellin' asshole from door to door!
Said your sister did the damndest trick,
She got so low she sucked a earthworm's dick!

The CROWD SCREAMS with shock and delight. A wave of laughter.

The Owner gapes, flabbergasted.

The band is grinning, KEEPING THE GROOVE. Rudy smiles and takes it home:

RUDY

Said he spotted yo niece behind the tree,
Screwin' a muthafuckin' flea!!!
He said he cornholed your uncle and
fucked your aunty and your niece.
And next time he see your grandma,
he gonna get him another good piece!!!

The ROOM BURSTS into APPLAUSE. The Owner looks around, wowed.

Rudy is tickled, amazed at this response. He basks in the LAUGHING and CLAPPING, as it washes over him.

Then, in a daze, he starts to exit. A few FANS run to the stage and reach up, to grab him. To shake his hand. Rudy is confused, then pleased. He reaches and shakes their hands.

CUT TO:

INT. AUNTIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rudy's elderly AUNT is in her kitchen, making dinner. Frying some pork chops in a skillet. Rudy hovers over her.

RUDY
Smells good.

AUNT
Just like back home.

He nods, smiling. She gives him a skeptical look.

AUNT
When's the last time you went back to Arkansas?

RUDY
Oh. Uh, it's been a loooong time.
(a guilty beat)
I never really fit in back there. Not a lot of good memories.

Hm. Auntie goes back to her skillet. Rudy makes his move.

RUDY
So Auntie, I'm thinking of making another record!

She winces. She glances into the living room.

There's a STACK of Rudy's old records on a cabinet.

AUNT
Well... Rudy, boy, I'm not sure you really a singer.

RUDY
Oh, I agree. That's why I'm gonna make a comedy record.

AUNT
"Comedy"? Since when? You've been a singer, a shake dancer, one time you even called yourself a fortune teller!

RUDY
You got a good memory.
(he laughs)
You know, it's hard breakin' in. I'll do whatever it takes.

AUNT
Hm. Well I guess you could always make people laugh.
(she thinks)

(MORE)

AUNT (CONT'D)

Is it gonna be like that cute little Bill Cosby? He's sweet. When he tells those family tales, with the kids sittin' in the street, playin' jacks and such.

Beat. Rudy tries to duck and hide.

RUDY

Uh, yeah, they'll be family tales. With grandma, grandpa... sister, brother...

(he CLAPS)

So anyway, here's the thing. I'm trying to be entrepreneurial with this one. You know, make the record myself. So I need to pay for the recording equipment --

AUNT

Huh?! No no --

RUDY

C'mon, Auntie, you're rich!

AUNT

I ain't rich --

RUDY

You've got all that money from the city, from when you fell off that bus!

AUNT

That's my money! And the man only gave me \$250!

RUDY

Well, that's exactly how much I need to be a star!

He gives her a big ingratiating smile.

Auntie frowns.

He smiles harder.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUDY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ben escorts a PRETTY GIRL down Central Avenue. She's done up, in a flashy miniskirt. He's in a silk shirt. They get to Rudy's building, and there are other DRESSY PEOPLE outside.

PRETTY GIRL

Why the hell is there a line? You told me we were going to a party.

BEN

We ARE goin' to a party. A party record.

She gives him a look: Huh? Then Jimmy pops out a door.

JIMMY LYNCH

Welcome everybody! It's time for the big show!

INT. RUDY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The place has been turned into a recording session. A RECORDING ENGINEER has a FOUR-TRACK RECORDER. He is hooking up mikes. Folks straggle in, blinking at the folding chairs.

At a table, Rudy and Toney are feverishly pouring CHEAP GIN and ORANGE JUICE into a punchbowl. Toney peers at the booze.

TONEY

Fedco Gin? I didn't even realize they made alcohol.

RUDY

We're not going for flavor.

TONEY

I just don't see how this is gonna work. We should be in a real club.

RUDY

I don't wanna hear that. We got what we got and we gotta make it work! You're my producer, right?

TONEY

I am?

RUDY

Hell fuckin' yes, Tone. What the hell you think, we produc'in' an album! Now get these people lubricated and loose!

Rudy walks away. Toney takes in his new title --

TONEY

Producer.

TIME JUMP:

JIMMY LYNCH

bounds out, in front of the seated crowd. Toney nods to him -- time for the show. Everyone has paper cups of booze. The whole situation is odd -- a couple dozen people turned into a studio audience in a tiny living room.

JIMMY LYNCH

Okay! We want everyone to have a good time tonight, cause we're making an ALBUM! We have a real recording engineer over there, with some fancy equipment. So we need this place to sound like a nightclub! We need a lot of yelling and laughing.

HECKLER

I'll laugh if the shit is funny.

JIMMY LYNCH

No, brother! You will laugh even if the shit ain't funny! Or give me back that drink!

The guy chuckles and nods: FINE. He chugs his booze.

A GORGEOUS GIRL stands.

GORGEOUS GIRL

C'mon let's go! Let's get this party started!

She drops her top, flashing her breasts. The crowd APPROVES and claps hard. Jimmy whistles.

JIMMY LYNCH

That's right, Sharline! You've got the spirit!

She parades around. Jimmy smiles, then signals: Time for the show. He nods at the engineer, who starts the TAPE PLAYER. Jimmy leans into a mike, with a BIG VOICE:

JIMMY LYNCH

Okay then! Ladies and Gentlemen, here he is! The NOW comedian, for the NOW generation! Mister... Rudy Ray Moore!

The bedroom door opens, and Rudy struts out in a flowing dashiki. The crowd LAUGHS, astonished: "What the fuck? Look at him!" Rudy takes it in, then swells up IN CHARACTER:

RUDY

I AIN'T LYIN'!!

Some raucous CLAPS. Rudy smiles, pleased.

RUDY

glides over to a PODIUM. Yes, an actual podium in his living room. He cocks an eyebrow, then launches into the "Dolemite" toast, with his BIG DOLEMITE VOICE:

RUDY

Now some folks say that Willie Green,
Was the baddest motherfucker the world
has ever seen!
But I want you to light up a joint
and take a real good shit
and screw your wig on tight,
And let me tell you about the little
bad motherfucker called Dolemite!

Yes! Folks HOOT in delight. Rudy grins. This is cooking!

MUSIC comes up, a JAZZ COMBO GROOVE, kicking up the energy.

RUDY

Now Dolemite was from San Antone,
A rambling, gambling motherfucker
from the day he was born!
The day he was dropped from his
mammy's ass
He slapped his pappy's face,
and said "From now on, cocksucker,
I'm running this place!"

People's eyes pop. Folks SHRIEK with laughter.

TONEY

(astonished)

Can you believe this? It's like he's
possessed! All macho and shit...!

BEN

He got the goods, Toney. He got the
goods.

INT. CRUDDY HALLWAY - DAY

A beat-up door is stenciled "LAFF RECORDS."

INT. LAFF RECORDS - DAY

The walls are decorated with nutty albums from BLACK
COMEDIANS.

Rudy sits at a beat-up desk with the owner, LOU DROZEN, a
tired middle-aged Jew. They listen to Rudy's recording on a
reel-to-reel player.

RUDY (V.O.)

*"Ya'll can suck my dick, my nuts,
and ass down to the muthafuckin' bone.
Because I ain't never comin' back,
to San Antone."*

We hear the CROWD LAUGH. Rudy chortles along with the
recording, enjoying it. Until Lou STOPS the player.

LOU
Ok, I've heard enough.

RUDY
But you haven't even --

LOU
It's filthy! Jesus, you can't play it on the radio. And you can't sell it over the counter, in most cities. Record stores don't want to be raided.

RUDY
Raided? That's crazy. Times have changed! "Deep Throat" is a big hit -- the lady sucks a cock in every scene!

LOU
Yeah, in porno houses! But record stores are a family business. Kids go in. On vinyl, you can call a guy a cocksucker, but you can't say he sucks a cock! Do you grasp the distinction?

RUDY
No. If I wanna say a woman got a pussy so hot it makes a motherfucker's asshole burn... I'm gonna say it.

LOU
Then say it! But you've got a product you can't sell or promote!

Rudy's face falls.

INT. LAFF RECORDS WAITING ROOM - DAY

Rudy shuffles out, demoralized. The reels under his arm. Toney is waiting for him outside in the waiting area.

TONEY
What'd the man say?

RUDY
We got into some legal semantic argument about cocksucking.
(he gets a STEELY LOOK)
You know what? Fuck him! We're gonna put out the record ourselves!!

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rudy has set up a homemade RECORD FACTORY!! Rudy and his pals are hand-assembling the albums! They have a little assembly line on folding tables: The white sleeves are printed in blue ink: *"The Rudy Ray Moore Album - EAT OUT MORE OFTEN"*

Then a little leering DEVIL gets hand-stamped, in red ink. Below, it says "*Underground Series, Adults Only*" The albums get slid into sleeves. Ben peers at one.

BEN

Rudy, what's with the devil face?

RUDY

I want it to feel illegal. Naughty.
(he grins)
Like something people shouldn't have.

SERIES OF SHOTS: INT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB

At the Californian Club, Rudy PERFORMS his act. People are laughing.

RUDY

I want you to listen well,
I'm the bad motherfucker that drove the devil out
of Hell!
I walked from New York to the deepest south,
Just to punch a son-of-bitch in his motherfucking
mouth!

EXT. CALIFORNIAN CLUB - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Afterwards, Rudy sells albums out of his car trunk.

RUDY (V.O.)

Mules have kicked me and didn't bruise
my hide.
Rattlesnakes have bit me and crawled
off and died.

INT. DOLPHIN'S - DAY

At Dolphin's, Rudy sells the records, bundled in discreet brown paper bags. \$5 bills change hands.

RUDY (V.O.)

I can walk the desert sand and never leave
a track,
fucked the hump out of a camel's back!

EXT. WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT

Rudy hands out records at a whorehouse.

RUDY (V.O.)

I've fucked bitches and paid my rent,
I don't owe a living ass a
motherfucking cent.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - POOL - DAY

At a party, the record plays. All the black partygoers are laughing and shouting.

RUDY (V.O.)
 So motherfucker can't you see,
 I pity the son-of-a-bitch that fucks
 with me!

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Black high schoolers sit on a bed, listening to the mysterious album. They squeal with laughter.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Rudy performs in a barbershop. Customers are laughing, slapping their sides in disbelief. He FINISHES big and loud.

RUDY (PERFORMING)
 I said, "You don't come up this
 mountain, givin' me yo sass!"
 Gave him one more smack before I drop-
 kicked his ass!!!
 (laughter)
 Cause Dolemite is my name, and fuckin'
 up motherfuckers is my game!

INT. KENT RECORDS - DAY

Another regional record label. The walls are covered with R&B ALBUMS. The place is run by four HUNGARIAN BROTHERS, the BIHARIS. They are all squabbling, yelling excitedly.

JOSEPH BIHARI
 Shut up! QUIET!

Rudy's ALBUM plays on a record player.

RUDY (V.O.)
*"I rode across the ocean on the head
 of my dick!
 And ate nine tons of cat shit and
 ain't never got sick!"*

JULIUS BIHARI
 What the hell is this?

JOSEPH BIHARI
 Every black hipster is listening to
 it! You go down Crenshaw, South
 Central, Baldwin Hills... this is
 blasting out of every door!

JULIUS BIHARI
 It's insane.

JOSEPH BIHARI
The guy is actually selling it out of
his car trunk.

Lester is the oldest brother. He looks at Saul who shrugs. He then turns back to Joseph.

LESTER BIHARI
You think it can cross over?

Beat.

JULIUS BIHARI
To who? Whites?

LESTER BIHARI
No! To blacks who don't shop out of
car trunks!

CUT TO:

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Rudy is asleep. Suddenly, the phone RINGS. He answers it.

RUDY
Comedian International!
(beat)
HUH?

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY HOUSE - DAY

It is a PHOTO SHOOT. The living room is decorated with cheesy Egyptian motifs -- a gold day bed, a Cleopatra statue, striped throw rugs.

A PHOTOGRAPHER adjusts the lights. A PRETTY BLACK GIRL walks around in a robe. Rudy puts on an AFRO WIG, checking himself out. It gives him a blast of attitude. He beams at one of the Bihari Brothers.

RUDY
Mr. Bihari, I just cannot tell you how
ecstatic I am! Whatever you and your
brothers need -- I mean anything! --
I'll do what it takes to move this
album up the charts!

JOSEPH BIHARI
Ok, Rudy, I'm glad to hear that --

RUDY
You want me to hit the road? I know
the Chitlin Circuit: Do the clubs, the
radio stations --

JOSEPH BIHARI

Right, right, we have a crack marketing and promotion team. We'll figure this out --

RUDY

Cause I've spent my whole life dreaming of being famous. But it's more than that -- I want to connect with the people. Inspire 'em! That's what it's about. This is my moment...

Rudy is utterly sincere. The Photographer is getting antsy. Lester takes over.

LESTER BIHARI

So anyway, the album's called "Eat Out More Often." I thought we'd have the girl lying on the day bed, then you're sort of sneaking in, standing above her spread legs... if you catch my meaning --

RUDY

(he smiles)

Yeah, Crystal and I worked this out. Honey, show 'em what we talked about.

The girl DROPS HER ROBE, revealing she's completely naked.

The men react, stunned. Nobody knows what to say.

LESTER BIHARI

Uh... that's a bit extreme. Usually we have the girl in a modest state of undress. Then on the cover, we block her nipples with a sticker --

RUDY

No no! I'm like Muhammad Ali -- we're gonna shock the world! We need to be utterly outrageous.

Rudy suddenly DROPS HIS OWN CLOTHES. BAM! He's completely naked. He stands there, in all his middle-aged, paunchy glory.

Bihari gasps.

JULIUS BIHARI

We're gonna need a mighty big sticker.

CUT TO:

INT. AUNTIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

CU - THE FINISHED ALBUM

"EAT OUT MORE OFTEN" is a shocker. The naked girl is splayed on the bed, as naked Rudy sneaks up to her. A BLACK STRIPE is slapped across the nasty parts -- it says "Rated XX For Strictly Mature Audience."

Rudy's elderly aunt gapes at this in disbelief.

Rudy grins and SLAPS \$250 into her hand.

CUT TO:

CHITLIN CIRCUIT MONTAGE: EXT. CAR LOT

Rudy slaps the last of a few \$100 bills in a MAN'S hand. The Man hands him keys. Rudy turn to his new car -- a black Cadillac. He beams with pride. Then, determination crosses his face. Time to get to work.

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT

RAUNCHY BLUES SOUNDS as Rudy sits at his kitchen table in his apartment. He draws lines on a map with a red marker. The path leaves California, then DROPS SOUTH. Crossing Texas... Louisiana... Alabama... Georgia... Florida... Mississippi...

INT./EXT. CADILLAC - CHITLIN CIRCUIT MONTAGE

Rudy drives his Cadillac over a train track surrounded by cotton fields. He looks at his map while driving and eating a bologna sandwich. A sign reads, WELCOME TO MISSISSIPPI.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI MOTEL - CHITLIN CIRCUIT MONTAGE

Rudy parks his Cadillac at a shabby Mississippi motel. He carries his bags to a lobby window. Rings the bell.

RUDY (V.O.)

When I was a little boy in school, my teacher say to me, Rudy, I want you to spell Mississippi. I said, "Teacher, I don't know, but I can try." I stood to spell Mississippi and say,

(in HEAVY SOUTHERN accent)

"M come first... and then I come."

INT. MISSISSIPPI MOTEL ROOM - CHITLIN CIRCUIT MONTAGE

We hear LAUGHTER. In a MOTEL ROOM, Rudy stands in drawers, pulling on an afro wig. Then striped pants. Then a red fur coat and hat. He smiles at himself in the cracked mirror.

EXT. "CLUB EBONY" MISSISSIPPI - CHITLIN CIRCUIT - NIGHT

Rudy crosses from his car to a MISSISSIPPI JUKE JOINT, CLUB EBONY.

INT. "CLUB EBONY" MISSISSIPPI - CHITLIN CIRCUIT - NIGHT

Inside Club Ebony, Rudy finishes the act to a slammed house.

RUDY
 "S come twice more... and I come
 again."
 (laughter)
 "S come-a twice more... and I Pee-
 pee... then I come again."

The crowd ROARS with laughter and applause.

EXT. MAIN STREET - INDIANAPOLIS - CHITLIN CIRCUIT - DAY

Rudy drives down a SOUTHERN MAIN STREET, shouting into a BULLHORN out the window. A cafe of confused white patrons watch his Cadillac pass by.

RUDY
 Mr. Rudy Ray Moore, tonight!
 Appearing at the big R&B Revue, at
 Club 360! Half-price well drinks
 until 9pm.

EXT. RADIO STATION - MACON GEORGIA - CHITLIN CIRCUIT - DAY

THUNDER! Rudy parks at a Macon Georgia Radio Station. It's pissing rain. He holds his fur coat over his head as he rushes inside.

INT. RADIO STATION - MACON GEORGIA - CHITLIN CIRCUIT - DAY

BLACK DJ #1
 We're sitting with Mr. Rudy Ray Moore,
 who will be appearing here in Macon,
 Georgia this Saturday night...

RUDY
 That's at Jasper's over on Fifth
 Street. Ladies is half off and free
 if they fine!

INT./EXT. RUDY'S CADILLAC - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Rudy sleeps in his car on a country road. A truck goes barreling by and wakes him up. He checks his watch.

EXT. BATON ROUGE MOTEL - DAY

Rudy hurries into a Baton Rouge Motel looking raggedy.

BLACK DJ #2 (V.O.)
 We welcome the uproarious Rudy Ray
 Moore, Mr. Dolemite himself, who's in
 Baton Rouge this weekend...

EXT. BYRD'S SATELLITE LOUNGE - BATON ROUGE - NIGHT

Rudy slams his car trunk outside a club, Byrd's Satellite Lounge. Rudy's name is HUGE above: He's now billed as "Rudy Ray Moore - MR. DOLEMITE!" He's about to enter, when he sees three worn-out hookers on the street. Hmm...

INT. BYRD'S SATELLITE LOUNGE - BATON ROUGE - NIGHT

Rudy enters the club, with the girls on his arm. He's dressed to kill, in white fur. A camera FLASHES. He beams. He's the MAN. He struts onstage. The crowd screams with delight.

All cocky, he points to a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN A DRESS --

RUDY

Ooo! My-my-my woman cross your legs!
Good God almighty! That chick sittin'
over there in that green is built like
a brick shit house, ya dig?

(beat)

You know I asked a young lady the
other night, I said, young lady, you
got a cherry? She said, hell yeah I
gotta cherry... but it's been pushed
back so damn far you could use it for
a goddamn taillight!

The crowd roars.

INT. BYRD'S SATELLITE LOUNGE - BATON ROUGE - NIGHT

End of the night. Rudy sits at a card table in a club, selling records. Putting the cash into a cigar box. The last CUSTOMER steps up, grinning nervously, holding an album.

CUSTOMER

Hey, Dolemite! Can you autograph it?
I think you're the fuckin' funniest
person in the world!

Rudy lights up, gratified. These words mean everything to him. Happy, he autographs the album.

INT. TALLAHASSEE JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

We go to a colorful TALLAHASSEE JUKE JOINT. The BLUES music we've been hearing comes from a singing BLACK PERFORMER (BOBBY RUSH). He is flanked by two BIG-BOOTY WOMEN who shake their asses to the beat. Patrons dance and sweat.

Rudy is backstage, getting ready. He peeks out at the crazy scene. Then, someone catches his eye: LADY REED, a heavy-set woman in her 40s, does not look happy. She's not looking at the stage. She's looking at a MAN kissing a WOMAN.

Rudy watches. Lady Reed pulls the Man from the Woman and starts shouting in his face. We can't hear, but she's pissed.

Bobby Rush places the mic against his lady's ass. It bounces and claps to the rhythm as the band kicks in: *BAP-BAP-BAP-BAP!*

SLAP! Lady Reed slaps the Man. Then the Woman! A fight breaks out. Rudy can't help but smile at the crazy scene. And then --

BOBBY RUSH

And now... The moment you've been waiting for! Here he is! The now comedian, for the now generation! Mr. Dolemite himself! RUDY! RAY! MOORE!

The spotlight hits Rudy. The crowd screams.

END OF MONTAGE.

LATER

The club is shutting down for the night. Rudy packs up his merchandise. He's about to head out -- but stops upon seeing Lady Reed sitting alone at the bar, looking low.

He sits at a stool and motions to the bartender.

RUDY

Bartender! Get a drink for this pretty girl.

LADY REED

Now c'mon. I ain't pretty and I sure as hell ain't no girl.

She gives him a look -- then turns to the bartender.

LADY REED

I'll have a daiquiri.

RUDY

(sits)

Are you headlining tomorrow night with that right hook? POW! That was quite a fight.

LADY REED

Fight? Shit. That skinny bitch couldn't bust a pimple on my tit.

(Rudy chuckles)

She can have his sorry ass and his danglin ball sack and breath smell like a mildewed garlic.

(Rudy chuckles again)

(MORE)

LADY REED (CONT'D)

But maybe he shouldn't be spending his paycheck on run-a-round hussies, when our son got holes in britches and shoes.

Rudy doesn't laugh. He can see her pain. Rudy studies her. There's something special here. He extends his hand.

RUDY

I'm Rudy.

LADY REED

(takes it)

Lady Reed.

RUDY

Lady Reed.

(thinks)

You ever get up on stage?

LADY REED

I ain't no show folk.

RUDY

Some folks got a light in em. Like a spotlight of their very own. I saw it in you just before you popped that bitch in the jaw.

Beat. There's a connection between them. She softens.

LADY REED

I used to be a backup singer, in New Orleans. But I was terrible. I got so nervous! I'd have to hang onto the mike, so I wouldn't fall over. Butterflies in my stomach. Once I even shit on stage.

Rudy CACKLES, amused.

RUDY

You're funny. You should do standup.

LADY REED

Are you hittin' on me?! Cause I just broke up five minutes ago with my cheatin' ass man --

RUDY

What? NO. I'm being serious. Maybe, you belong onstage just like me.

LADY REED

Sweet Jesus.

(thinks)

(MORE)

LADY REED (CONT'D)

I can make my son laugh, but -- What would I do?

RUDY

Look. I ain't really a pimp! I don't have whores! I don't have no stable. But I created a character.

(proud)

I've done it before! I was Prince Dumarr. I was the Harlem Hillbilly! And now -- well look, check this out:

He takes her hand and puts it on his head. On the afro. He whispers gleefully.

RUDY

It's a wig!

She laughs, surprised.

RUDY

It's all pretend. It's magic! You put on a cape and turn into a fuckin' superhero! You go on the stage and leave your old self behind.

Her skepticism drops -- and she smiles.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Angle on a BARN in a field. It is lit up, with a "Revue Tonite!" banner. Dozens of cars park in the dust. BLACK CUSTOMERS are going in. COWS graze nearby.

Rudy and Lady Reed stand nearby, gaping.

LADY REED

God-DAMN! Rudy, this is a barn! We're standing in a cow pasture.

RUDY

Well, it's a theater too. This is why it's called the chitlin circuit! Named after parts of the hog that the white folk won't eat.

LADY REED

And theaters that the white folk won't set foot in.

They cross through the cars. Lady Reed stops and looks inside a car as a couple fucks in the back seat.

RUDY

I'll play any joint. There's a miraculous joy to being onstage.

(MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)

Hell, even if it's just one guy out there, it's worth it. You'll see. You'll see what I mean.

(sincere)

You're on the bill. You'll succeed. Just get your confidence, hold onto the mike, and go kill 'em!

She gives him a look.

INT. BARN THEATER - NIGHT

Lady Reed stands on the stage, clutching the mike. Motionless. A scared wallflower.

She glances down at Rudy, in the front row. He looks up at her, offering an encouraging smile: You can do it.

She looks out into the darkness, gulps, then speaks.

LADY REED

Girls, I just need one good righteous fuck! One that'll exercise the jewels of my pussy!

The crowd GASPS, astonished.

Rudy's eyes pop.

LADY REED

Some men think they have golden dicks! But let me tell you: Dicks are like buses! You can get one on every corner! All sizes! All shapes!

(she goes FULL THROTTLE)

You've got to fuck that man! Drop your drawers if it's necessary! You've got to keep his dick limber and his mind on you!

(beat)

Fuck him! Yes, fuck him! Poison pussy that motherfucker! Pussy all over him! Fuck him until it comes out of his ears!

The audience ROARS, LAUGHING. A RUMBLE of laughter. Guys and girls are falling out of their chairs, in disbelief.

Lady Reed winks at Rudy. He looks about, amazed.

RUDY

This bitch is dirtier than I am!

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER JUKE JOINT - ANOTHER NIGHT

Rudy is on stage. He introduces Lady Reed.

RUDY

Thank you! And now the First Lady of
Comedian International. Queen Bee!

Rudy and Lady Reed are singing a playful dirty song -- "Ballad of a Boy and Girl" (off the Eat Out More Often record).

It is a delightfully dirty duet. We see that the two have chemistry and timing. After the first verse the crowd cheers. We CROSS CUT to:

-- Rudy and Lady Reed sitting at a table going over jokes.

-- Lady Reed on stage doing a bit while Rudy watches.

LADY REED

Y'all know me! Queen Bee. Chicken shit
whores come get advise from me.

(laughter)

My drawers might be raggedy. But they
sho is clean. And it's got some of the
best stuff in em you've ever seen.

The women in the crowd cheer and shout! They love her!

Rudy and Lady Reed finishing the second verse of the song.
The crowd goes crazy. CUT BACK TO LADY REED'S ACT.

LADY REED

Pick the trash outta your gardens,
girls, and water your grass. And when
you go to the supermarket, put a
little wiggle in your ass. Parting
brings such sorrow and I must be on my
way. But I do hope you whores paid
attention to what I had to say. Thank
you!

Cheers! Lady Reed winks at Rudy watching off stage. She mouths the words: "thank you". She beams. A sweet moment.

EXT. TALLAHASSEE MOTEL - MORNING

Rudy is packing up his costumes in the back of his car. A
MANAGER calls out to him from the lobby door.

MANAGER

Rudy, you got a phone call.

RUDY

Really? Nobody knows I'm here!

INT. TALLAHASSEE MOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

The manager points at the dangling PAYPHONE. Rudy glances at a TV, where an old WESTERN is playing -- a smirking BAD GUY shoots his rifle at the feet of three men, who dance in fear. Rudy grabs the phone.

RUDY

Yeah...?

JOSEPH BIHARI

Rudy? Rudy! It's Saul Bihari! I've been looking for you! Have you seen "Billboard"?

RUDY

"Billboard"?! What, are you crazy? I'm somewhere outside Tallahassee. The nearest "Billboard" is a 100 miles away!

JOSEPH BIHARI

Well, you're on the charts!

RUDY

WHAT?

JOSEPH BIHARI

Seriously, my friend! Shooting straight up with a bullet!

(beat)

So get your ass back to L.A.! We need to record some more albums!!

Rudy reacts, shocked.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLPHIN'S RECORDS - DAY

Rudy takes over the world! Toney beams with pride as one Rudy ALBUM after ANOTHER drops into frame. Cover after insane cover of nude people:

"This Pussy Belongs To Me" -- A cat, a tiger skin, naked Rudy, and naked girls. Rudy points coyly at the tiger.

"The Rudy Ray Moore Christmas Album" -- Naked Rudy, five naked girls, and a Christmas tree.

"The Cockpit" - Naked girls in pilot caps, and naked Rudy with a plastic airplane over his privates.

"Dolemite for President" - the American eagle, naked people, and red-white-and-blue hats.

"I Can't Believe I Ate The Whole Thing" - Lots of naked people, lion statues, and a bunch of meaty beef bones.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLPHIN'S - DAY

Rudy strolls into the old record store -- and the place ERUPTS, excited. He's a star!! Toney is there, passing out Rudy Ray Moore headshots and t-shirts. It's an event.

The customers BREAK INTO APPLAUSE. It's electric. They storm him, to shake Rudy's hand and congratulate him.

Rudy takes it in, overwhelmed. He's made it! He looks up at a wall of the store -- now filled with his albums. He looks over at Toney, who smiles at him.

Then Rudy gets a mischievous look and whirls at Roj in his glass booth.

RUDY

Now you'll play one of my tracks,
motherfucker!

ROJ

You're right! Sure I will, Rudy. I
owe you my apologies.

Roj rummages through his vinyls, then pulls out a record. He puts it on the turntable, drops a needle, then... a SONG BLASTS out. Rudy's young voice shout-sings:

RUDY'S VOICE

(SINGING)

Ring a ling dong!
Ding dong ding!
Ring a ling dong!
Ding dong ding!

RUDY

(he reacts)

Why you son of a bitch --!

Roj laughs his head off. The Little Richardesque tune rocks away. Rudy runs over and tries breaking into the booth, banging on the glass, but Roj has locked the door.

RUDY'S VOICE

Ring a ling dong!
Ding dong ding!
Ring a ling dong!
Ring those wedding bells for me!

Rudy can't help but bust up laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

It's Christmas time. Christmas decorations and lights.

Rudy celebrates with Jimmy, Ben and Toney. They are finishing off a big dinner with fine whiskey. Rudy hands out presents to the gang. Toney opens his -- a beautiful silk scarf.

TONEY
Oh, it's gorgeous! Thank you, Rudy!
Merry Christmas.

RUDY
Merry Christmas to you too, Toney. To
all y'all.

The WAITRESS brings over the check. Rudy makes a show of reaching for it.

RUDY
I'll get it.

JIMMY LYNCH
You better fuckin' believe you will!

They all laugh. Happy.

RUDY
I always see a movie on Christmas.
Which one you wanna see? On me.

TONEY
How 'bout "Blackenstein."

BEN
I wanna see "Shaft in Africa."

RUDY
Hey, what about "The Front Page?"

Stupefied looks.

JIMMY LYNCH
What the HELL is that?

RUDY
I dunno. But the marquee said it's
the funniest film of the year!! Let's
go laugh!

We hear a ROAR OF LAUGHTER.

INT. HOLLYWOOD FIRST-RUN THEATER - NIGHT

The movie "THE FRONT PAGE" is playing. ON the SCREEN, in a newsroom, Walter Matthau is barking at Jack Lemmon.

WALTER MATTHAU (ON SCREEN)
 For fifteen years, I've been trying to
 teach you how to write a lede! Do I
 have to do everything myself? Get the
 story? Write the story?

JACK LEMMON (ON SCREEN)
 Listen, Saphead! I could blow a better
 story out of my, uh --
 (beat)
 nose, than you can write!

WALTER MATTHAU (ON SCREEN)
 Goddamn dilettante! Maybe Philadelphia
 is where you belong! Making up jingles
 for Burmashave!

The audience LAUGHS.

IN THE THEATER

The audience is VERY WHITE. Then we find our guys, flummoxed.
 Jimmy leans to Rudy.

JIMMY LYNCH
 What is this shit? This ain't funny!

Toney is SNORING. Out cold.

BEN
 What the fuck are they talking about?
 Who's Herbert Hoover?

JIMMY LYNCH
 I don't get it. Ain't one brother
 anywhere.

IRRITABLE WHITE LADY
 Shh!

JIMMY LYNCH
 Oh, "SHH" yourself!

ON THE SCREEN

Susan Sarandon plays ORGAN and SINGS a cutesy 1920's song in a
 silent movie theater.

SUSAN SARANDON (ON SCREEN)
 (singing)
*"Button up your overcoat
 When the wind is free.
 Take good care of yourself,
 You belong to me!"*

Then a BOUNCING BALL appears on the screen. The happy white
 audience sings along with it.

MOVIE AUDIENCE (ON SCREEN)

*"Eat an apple every day,
Get to bed by three.
Oh take good care of yourself,
You belong to me!"*

Rudy GAZES at the screen.

Then -- he turns and looks back at the PROJECTION BOOTH. He stares at the FLICKERING WHITE LIGHT BEAM.

Rudy is fascinated.

EXT. THEATER - LATER

The crowd of white people are exiting, delight on their faces.

WHITE CROWD

Oh, what a charming film! Just marvelous! It was even better than the Rosalind Russell version!

Rudy slowly exits, like he's in a dream. His expression far off...

Then his buddies stagger out. In shock.

JIMMY LYNCH

What the FUCK.

TONEY

That was some bullshit!

BEN

Nobody was even nekkid! Was that even a real movie?

TONEY

I told you to see "Blackenstein"!

BEN

Why do these creaky old people get to star in a movie?

TONEY

White folks get all the breaks.

The group notices that Rudy is silent. Something on his mind.

JIMMY LYNCH

Hey man -- since when don't you talk?!

RUDY

Well... I was thinkin'... this movie is playin' all across the country... and it's got no titties, no funny, and no Kung Fu.

ALL THE GUYS

(adlib)

Well that's true! You got a point there! Yeah, that sure was strange!

Rudy gets a look in his eyes. He speaks intensely.

RUDY

I was looking at that light. From the projector. It shoots across a theater and hits an 80-foot tall screen and then POW! Magic! You know how many mule miles I drove cross the country to get my name in people's mouths?

(inspired)

But if I could get up in that light... if I could be in a movie of my own... I could be everywhere... Everywhere all at once.

The guys are awed. Mind whirling, Rudy peers up at the marquee -- a magical glow of neon and colors.

TIGHT - RUDY

Lights bounce off his face. Transfixed, he slowly smiles...

CUT TO:

INT. AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES - OFFICE - DAY

A small, scrappy independent studio. A plaque reads: AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES. The walls are filled with framed crazy blaxploitation posters: "Blacula," "Coffy," "Black Caesar," "Black Mama, White Mama."

We hear Rudy pitching to black executive WALTER CRANE, who sits at his desk, looking at Rudy's dirty album covers.

RUDY

I have a gigantic fanbase. I just finished a national tour. I had two albums on the Billboard chart at the same time!

We then reveal Rudy is dressed in full PIMP REGALIA -- a three-piece suit, a wide-brimmed hat, a cane.

RUDY

And now, I think it's time for me to move up... to the big screen!

Rudy smiles. Walter Crane adjusts his tie.

WALTER CRANE

Right. But, here's the thing. When you say "gigantic fanbase," I think we're talking about a small passionate group of brothers and sisters. Hitting number 49 on the Soul chart is nice... but...

RUDY

My first album hit 24!

WALTER CRANE

Congratulations. But, Rudy, your appeal is limited. You're not playing the Apollo. You can't expect American International to go spend \$300,000 on a major production.

RUDY

What?! I see your posters! Black folk love me! I'd fit right in.

(he goes into character)

"Dolemite is my name, and fuckin' up motherfuckers is my game!"

Rudy chuckles at this. The guy stares.

WALTER CRANE

The thing is... we do a certain kind of black picture. The guys we hire -- Fred Williamson, Jim Brown... they shoot a gun, they kick some ass...

(awkward)

And, that's -- not you. You're a bit... doughier than those guys.

RUDY

"Doughier"?!

Rudy is insulted. Then he recovers.

RUDY

Well, I can wear a girdle!

(beat)

C'mon, man -- we gotta bring Dolemite to life! In Technicolor!

WALTER CRANE

Also... and seriously... I don't know how much longer we'll be making these pictures. The NAACP has been raising hell about blaxploitation. They've been complaining that the characters -- pimps, whores, drug dealers -- aren't positive role models.

RUDY

Aww, that's bullshit! It's fun!
You're putting Whitey in his place!

WALTER CRANE

Well, times are changing. The guys upstairs don't want to deal with picketing. So we're trying a new approach. We have a nice one coming up, "Cornbread, Earl and Me"... about a black boy who's the first kid from his neighborhood to go to college!

Huh? This lands like a fart. Rudy is baffled.

RUDY

Ah c'mon! Seriously?
(he leans in, confidential)
Brother, nobody wants to see that shit.

The guy reacts, hurt. What?!

Rudy grimaces: Oops. The meeting is over.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL SIDEWALK - DAY

Rudy and Toney walk, carrying some groceries. Rudy is upset.

TONEY

Aw, Rudy, c'mon! Be realistic. You ain't no movie star! You're not an actor. You're not Billy Dee Williams.

(beat)

Mm! He is a good-lookin' man. And he doesn't have to talk about monkeys and boobies.

(beat)

You're a comedy star! Be happy with that.

RUDY

I want more. People have been tellin' me "no" my whole goddamn life.

(sullen)

My daddy always told me I was a piece of shit. Just another dirt-poor country nigger. Expected me to be a sharecropper, like he was.

TONEY

I can't picture you plowin' fields --

RUDY

Fuck him! Wasn't even my real daddy, anyway. He was rotten. Used to whoop me...

(pause)

So I ran away when I was fifteen. To make somethin' of myself.

Rudy is bothered by these memories. Toney is gentle.

TONEY

Brother, we all had shitty childhoods. But you can't just will yourself into being a movie star.

RUDY

Why not?! I willed myself into being a singer. I willed myself into being a comedian. I recorded a record in my goddamn living room. So why can't I be in movies? Toney...

(a profound beat)

I want the world to know that I exist.

EXT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DUSK

A Sunday BARBECUE, in the yard of Jimmy's small house. About twenty folks hang out, enjoying themselves. Drinking beers. Ben grills meat. Kids run around, playing.

JIMMY LYNCH

You can't just make a movie in your living room!

RUDY

Why not?! What do I actually need?

JIMMY LYNCH

Well... you need a director! He's the guy who says "Lights, camera, action!"

(beat; he thinks)

So you also need lights and a camera.

BEN

And action!

Lady Reed is with her 15-year-old-SON. He whispers to her -- and she gestures, sure -- go ask! He runs over.

SON

Mr. Rudy? Don't you need that guy you always see -- he holds that board up, then smacks it in front of the camera?

RUDY

Why?

SON
Uh, I don't know.

RUDY
Well fuck that! I'm not payin' for a
guy who nobody knows what he does.

The kid reacts, startled.

JIMMY'S WIFE chimes in. Attitude already popping.

JIMMY'S WIFE
How much are you gonna pay Jimmy to
work on this?

RUDY
Huh? Er, I haven't figured that out --

JIMMY'S WIFE
Well my man doesn't work for free!!

JIMMY LYNCH
Baby don't embarrass me. We'll work
somethin' out --

TONEY
How much total cash are you thinking
on spending, Rudy?

RUDY
I've got money saved up from my
records. And my label can throw in
some money. So, hm -- I think I can
total up sixty or seventy thousand.

The crowd reacts, impressed.

CROWD
Whew!!

BEN
Is that really enough to pay for all
the people you need? At the movies, I
always sit through the closing
credits, and there's a lot of folks.
Key grip... best boy...

TONEY
I'd like to have me a best boy.

RUDY
Damn, Toney! We're at a barbecue.
Keep your dick in your pants.
(beat)
Besides, no one's gonna be called
"boy" on my set.

Beat. Rudy turns to the CROWD, rallying them.

RUDY

Look! This only works if everyone chips in! Toney's receipts always add up everyday! To the penny! So he's in charge of watchin' the money.

(Toney reacts, happy)

Jimmy's act always has great props and costumes, so he's in charge of that shit.

(Jimmy reacts, pleased)

And Ben writes the funkiest tunes of anybody! So he's GOT to do our music!

Ben is touched. He, Toney and Jimmy are all grinning.

LADY REED

But who's gonna write the movie, Rudy?

RUDY

"Write"? Naw, I don't need that. I'm just gonna show up and do my shit.

LADY REED

Mm-mm. I don't know. On the Oscars, they always say, "It starts with the word." So who's gonna write that word???

Hm. Rudy is taken aback by this. He thinks...

CUT TO:

INT. INNER CITY CULTURAL CENTER - LATER

A play is in progress. The audience is all-black, dressy. The actors on stage are black as well. They project their drama.

MAMA

My baby! The needle took my baby!

(weeping, lip quivering)

Sweet Jesus, when will it all stop??

AGITATED YOUNG MAN

I'm gonna kill that pusher. I'm gonna make him pay!

MAMA

No! No no. More death won't solve our problems.

Rudy watches this, face tight.

AGITATED YOUNG MAN

Then what will?

MAMA

*I am not about to lose another son.
God help me, I can't take it.*

AGITATED YOUNG MAN

*Then what? We just sit here and cry?
Pray? Keeping it inside, letting it
build up --*

MAMA

Clifton, no --

AGITATED YOUNG MAN

*Day after day, night after night --
you don't think he felt this too?*

MAMA

Don't put this on me.

AGITATED YOUNG MAN

Waiting to explode, or worse!

INT. INNER CITY CULTURAL CENTER - LOBBY - LATER

The CAST is hanging out, hugging, chatting away.

SERIOUS ACTRESS

*I thought your monologue was super
strong tonight. It wasn't about the
text -- it was about the emotions.*

Then, Rudy enters. Out of his element. Intimidated.

RUDY

*Jerry Jones? Excuse me, I'm lookin'
for Jerry Jones, the writer of the
play? I heard he's back here..?*

Beat -- then a man turns. This is JERRY JONES, 50. He is distinguished, professorial, barrel-voiced. And reticent.

JERRY

Uh, yeah. I'm Jerry.

Rudy grins and extends his hand.

RUDY

*Happy to meet you, brother! I'm Rudy!
Rudy Ray Moore! I sent you my albums
and called you up?*

JERRY

*(taking Rudy in)
Yes... yes...
(shakes his hand)
A pleasure, Mr. Moore.*

RUDY
 (looks around)
 I never knew about this theater. It's mighty fine.

JERRY
 There's a lot of talented brothers and sisters who want to act, but nobody's hiring them. No TV or movies. So this gives them a place to show off their craft.

Rudy nods, appreciatively. Jerry leads Rudy through the lobby.

JERRY
 So -- regarding your albums. I gotta be honest, I listened to them. They're not really my bag.

RUDY
 That's okay. You don't have to be funny. I just need you to tell the story -- you know, the things that happen. Cops and robbers, a car chase, that kinda thing.
 (beat)
 I'll supply the comedy.

Jerry nods to a patron as he walks with Rudy.

JERRY
 Oh, I can be humorous.
 (stiff; not humorous)
 But my work has to inform as well as entertain. For example, my next play, "The Devil's Cotton Field," is a piece of black history. Set in the country town I grew up. Varner, Arkansas.

RUDY
 Wait -- you're from Varner? Shit, I'm from Fort Smith! We've got somethin' in common!

JERRY
 What? We're both from Arkansas?

RUDY
 No! We're both smart enough to leave Arkansas! That place was painful poor. Nothin' but canned mutton!

Jerry chuckles in acknowledgement. The actor (JOSHUA) playing the AGITATED YOUNG MAN approaches Jerry.

AGITATED YOUNG MAN
You ready to give notes, Mr. Jones?

JERRY
One moment, Joshua...

Jerry leads Rudy outside.

EXT. INNER CITY CULTURAL CENTER - NIGHT

They move underneath the marquee that reads "A CALL FOR PEACE,
LET THE KILLING CEASE" - Then underneath, "Save our youth"

JERRY
Rudy, I admire your tenacity. But,
I'm about my art. I write my plays.
I teach in an acting school. I'm
trying to uplift the community.

RUDY
(he slowly grins)
Brother, now c'mon now. Cut the shit!
We both traded Arkansas for L.A. We on
to a whole new hustle out here. Now,
I dig what you're doin'. You got the
folks working together. Well, that's
what I aspire to! Nobody ever did
that for me.
(selling)
But what I'm offering is something
bigger. A way to take your message to
all the people! With Movies, Jerry!
Movies!

Jerry gives him a look. It's a compelling argument.

INT. RUDY'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Rudy and Jerry are hard at work. Rudy is pacing. Jerry is
scribbling on a legal pad.

JERRY
We want this thing to be raw. Tell it
like it is on the streets.

RUDY
Yeah! Sure. Lots of pimps and whores
and cussin'.

Jerry raises an eyebrow.

RUDY
And Kung Fu! Brothers love that Kung
Fu shit! Karate shit! Bruce Lee! We
gotta put that all in.

JERRY
Do you... know the martial arts?

RUDY
Huh? No -- but I'm a quick learn.

Rudy JUMPS UP and starts doing jerky KUNG FU MOVES.

RUDY
HAW! KYAAAAAA!
(beat; satisfied)
I'm putting my own money into this movie. So it's got to be successful. Let's have an all-girl Kung Fu army.

Jerry wipes his brow. He scribbles some notes.

JERRY
There's plenty of story opportunity. Across this nation, inner cities are plagued by violent crime. I feel that government hasn't stepped up --

RUDY
(he SNAPS his fingers)
Definitely! Right! It's Whitey's fault! The Mayor doesn't care. He's just corrupt -- a Nixon kind of motherfucker. Yeah, that's good.

Beat.

RUDY
Plus there's an exorcism!

JERRY
(startled)
An "exorcism"?!

RUDY
Yeah!
(he IMPERSONATES Linda Blair, possessed)
Blahblhbblahablah!!! Your mother sucks cocks in hell!!! Blahhhla!

Rudy SHUDDERS and FLAILS about. Jerry chooses his words.

JERRY
Uh...I don't know how that fits into our urban motif.

RUDY
Okay. Yeah, you're right. I don't wanna be cleaning up green vomit all over the set. We'll do the Devil in another film.

JERRY

Hey, what about a preacher? He's fighting for the community. Give him some powerful, inspiring speeches?

RUDY

(he frowns; but polite)
Sure, that's fine. Put in a preacher. But give him some machine guns!

Jerry sighs. He stares at his notes.

JERRY

Rudy, in storytelling, it's always best to write what you know.

RUDY

"What I know"? What does that mean?

JERRY

What does that --?
(puzzled himself)
It means -- huh --
(thrown)
It means, you've lived a life. Things you've done. So you tell stories about your own experience.

A flicker on Rudy's face. We SLOWLY PUSH IN on him.

RUDY

Well, my personal life ain't that appealing. There's nothin' there. I'm all about the professional. I've spent most of my time in nightclubs. That's the world I know: Promoters. Mobsters. Cash business, so the money's always disappearing. Front of the house, back of the house. Drunks gettin' in fights. Girls turning tricks in the walk-in freezer.

JERRY

(he LAUGHS)
That's good! Okay then! Yes, we can use all that!

Jerry smiles at Rudy. Rudy is pleased.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHITTY SHOPPING CENTER - DAY

Rudy, Ben and Jimmy Lynch hurry across a parking lot.

BEN

This is very exciting! Can I write the theme song? Shaft has a theme song. Superfly has a theme song. Ours could be like...

(sings)

He's bad... he's a tough son of gun, y'all...

RUDY

I'm a tough son of a gun? That's it? Shaft's a bad mother, shut your mouth!

BEN

(still singing)

Dolemite... Dolemite....

RUDY

Stop! You can write whatever you want, if you'll shut up!

They walk up to a low-end STRIP JOINT. Rudy steps around the BOUNCER, then approaches the LADY inside the box office cage.

RUDY

Excuse me, Ma'am. We're here for a casting session.

BOX OFFICE LADY

A what?

(annoyed)

I don't care who you are. Everyone pays.

INT. STRIP JOINT - LATER

Beautiful skinny STRIPPERS shake their naked breasts in the guys' faces. Ben is agog. Jimmy is smirking.

JIMMY LYNCH

Wow. Look at her titties!

A TOPLESS STRIPPER strolls over. Sexily licking her lips.

STRIPPER

Any of you boys interested in a dance?

RUDY

(he smiles warmly)

No. We're here casting parts for a major motion picture.

The girl peers -- then SNAPS angrily.

STRIPPER

NO! No, I ain't doin' porn! You porn motherfuckers always come down here --

RUDY

What! Sweet, it's nothin' like that --

STRIPPER

You say you got a fancy studio, then it ends up being a warehouse in Van Nuys! I ain't doin' it! No bottomless audition. Forget it.

RUDY

No! No no! It's nothin' like that. We're makin' a real movie. Yes, nudity is required, but so is talent!

The stripper shoots him a look -- then storms away.

Rudy's mood deflates. Then, Jimmy squints -- and discreetly points.

ACROSS THE ROOM

in a booth is a black guy in a leather jacket, sitting with his HOT DATE. He's laughing, whispering to her.

JIMMY LYNCH

Hey -- is that... D'Urville Martin?

RUDY

No way. Why would he be here?

BEN

Who's D'Urville Martin?

JIMMY LYNCH

Damn, chump -- he's huge! He's the sidekick in everything! He's in "Nigger Charley"! "Black Caesar"! "Hell Up In Harlem"!

Rudy turns and stares.

The guy is indeed D'URVILLE MARTIN, 30s. He's small, with a round face, but he's got charisma and confidence to burn.

Rudy stands.

RUDY

Yeah, that is D'Urville Martin. We should go talk to him.

JIMMY LYNCH

(worried)

What?! You can't do that. He's a big star!

RUDY

Fuck you, Jimmy! I'm a big star, too!
This is what stars do -- they hang
with each other.

Rudy puffs himself up, then strides over to D'Urville.

AT THE BOOTH

D'Urville is leaning in to his date, trying to charm the girl.
Until -- Rudy strides up.

RUDY

Hey, D'Urville?

D'Urville turns, annoyed. He whispers.

D'URVILLE

Brother, not now. I'm with my honey.
(irked)
I'll give you an autograph later.

RUDY

What? No no! D'Urville, I'm Rudy Ray
Moore!

(beat)

You probably don't recognize me, cause
on my albums I wear a big afro wig,
and then I also wear, or, uh, I
actually don't wear anything else.

D'URVILLE

Yeah. That must be the reason.

Snide, D'Urville pounds his vodka. Rudy proceeds --

RUDY

D'Urville, what we're having here is a
professional situation! I'd like to
offer you a part in my new motion
picture film.

D'URVILLE

What's the part?

RUDY

I don't know! It's not written yet.
But we are open to your input. If you
want to be heroic, that's great. If
you want to be the villain, we can
accommodate that too!

D'Urville sighs.

D'URVILLE

Look, motherfucker. I've worked for
Paramount Pictures.

(MORE)

D'URVILLE (CONT'D)

I've worked for Columbia. I'm not gonna go work on your raggedy bag-of-bones independent junk!

RUDY

(hurt)

My, you don't have to be critical --

D'URVILLE

I'm goddamn legit! I've got an agent! I've got an entertainment lawyer! This is embarrassing -- you think you can make me a deal, just cause you were lucky enough to spot me in a strip joint?!

RUDY

Well... you know, they say luck is opportunity meets preparation.

D'URVILLE

Oh fuck that! What the fuck does that mean?! I was directed by Mr. Roman Polanski! Damn! If I were white, would you walk up to me like this and think you could just hire me?!!

Rudy is tongue-tied. He's stumped. It's a fair point.

Jimmy and Ben glide up in the b.g.

BEN

Hey! You're that guy. You were in "Rosemary's Baby"!

D'URVILLE

Goddamn right I was!

BEN

But you were just the elevator operator. That was a small part.

D'Urville's eyes pop.

JIMMY LYNCH

See, that's what happens when you work for the white man. You should be more careful.

D'URVILLE

Wow! You are the worst producers I've ever met in my life! You think you can engage a piece of talent by belittling, insulting and annoying him?

Long beat.

RUDY
What if we let you direct?

CLOSEUP - D'URVILLE

He reacts. What?!

CUT TO:

INT. KENT RECORDS - DAY

Rudy is dressed-up. He's meeting with the four Bihari Brothers. Rudy is very excited.

RUDY
So we've got D'Urville Martin directing and co-starring! We've got Jerry Jones writing the script! And Ben Taylor's written a theme song.
(he sings it)
*"He's baaad!
The man is out of sight!
He's a tough son of a gun, y'all!
The man's name is Dolemite!"*
(he grins)
So what do you think?

The Biharis shoot glances at each other.

JOSEPH BIHARI
Rudy -- what you've just said is very persuasive. We admire your passion.

LESTER BIHARI
But -- you better understand: You're not asking us for a loan. You're asking for an advance on future royalties. We'll do it, because it's no risk to us! If you blow it, we'll own your records til the end of time.

JULIUS BIHARI
Personally, I think it's idiotic. I don't know why the fuck you'd throw your money down this sinkhole. It's a terrible decision.

Whew. Rudy bites his lip, considering all this. Then --

RUDY
I know all that.
(genuine)
But I'm happy to bet on myself. Ain't nobody gonna put me on screen except me! And everyone I talk to says they want to see a Dolemite movie!

JULIUS BIHARI

Well, you understand, you're not supposed to make a movie for the five square blocks of people you know.

Rudy gets a look. He believes.

RUDY

Yeah. But every city in America has those same five blocks. And all those folk are gonna love it.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNBAR HOTEL - DAY

Rudy comes strolling up with Jerry. The faded old hotel is covered with graffiti and boarded-up doorways.

Rudy grins naughtily, like a kid pulling an illicit activity. He wiggles his eyebrows, then pries off a loose board.

JERRY

Oh, what the fuck? Really --?

Rudy winks, then kneels and crawls into the dirty space. Jerry frowns, glances at his nice jacket, then follows --

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - SAME TIME

The hallway is dusty and dark. There are NUMEROUS JUNKIES huddled inside, shooting up. Jerry's eyes widen. Jesus. Rudy motions -- don't worry!

RUDY

Back in segregation days, this is where the fancy blacks stayed. All the musicians and poets and writers.

JERRY

So this was the center of the black Renaissance?

RUDY

And we're gonna bring it back.

They move toward a bright area, finally stepping into

THE LOBBY

And -- WOW! It is spectacular. It is preserved in time -- a fabulous two-story Art Deco space, with a huge chandelier, along with Spanish touches like tiled walls, arcade windows, and elaborate grillwork.

JERRY

Holy shit.

RUDY

Behold the Dunbar! You want to talk about black pride? Look at this!

JERRY

It's overrun with junkies.

RUDY

We'll clear 'em out! See, you got MGM Studios. Universal Studios. Well, this is gonna be Dolemite Studios!

Jerry's eyebrows go up. Rudy starts gesturing, excited.

RUDY

It's got room after room. We can decorate the shit out of this place, turn it into everything we need. Build all our sets! The warden's office... Queen Bee's whorehouse... Willie Green's massage parlor... hell, it's even got a nightclub...

Jerry looks around. Admiring the decor. Slowly smiling.

JERRY

You can't afford this place.

RUDY

I'm not gonna buy it! Hell, I'm not even gonna rent it! I went to the landlord -- he's got the BVD's up his ass about all the dopeheads livin' here. So I offered to clear 'em all out! I said I'd work for free as the caretaker!

Jerry starts LAUGHING. He's impressed.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - ANOTHER DAY

ALL OF RUDY'S PALS are cleaning up the place. Hauling out the debris. Sweeping up the floors. The junkies are gone.

There's a dozen black men working hard.

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - SAME TIME

A cute little VW BUG comes driving along.

INT. VW BUS - DRIVING

It's four TERRIFIED YOUNG WHITE GUYS. They are all UCLA students, shaggy-haired, early 20s. They peer around.

WHITE BOY
Jesus Christ, this can't be right.

Their leader, NICK VON STERNBERG, a sweet-looking kid, points.

NICK
I think it's a couple more blocks.

WHITE BOY #2
Nick, when you said black neighborhood, I thought you meant Inglewood! Fuck dude, I've never been to South Central. They got gangs down here!

They see a LUMP of a guy laying on the sidewalk, facing away.

WHITE BOY
Holy fuck! Is he dead???

WHITE BOY #2
I don't know.

The lump of a man turns to look at them. A stream of piss arcs as the boys freak out.

WHITE BOYS
Oh my God... Just keep going!

They all hastily LOCK the car doors.

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

The crew is busy working and cleaning. A COSTUME RACK, with outlandish men's suits and skimpy women's outfits, rolls by.

Upstairs, Jimmy Lynch and Rudy walk past a series of hotel rooms. Jimmy is the art director. He gives orders to PAs.

JIMMY LYNCH
Okay. I'm gonna decorate this to be the warden's office. So let's make it official. I'll put in wood paneling, then draw some "wanted" posters...

They reach an empty room, beat to shit. Holes in the walls.

RUDY
Now this is the most important room. It's Dolemite's bedroom and my bedroom. So it has to be all-style! Red walls. Red sheets --

JIMMY LYNCH
What do you mean, it's both bedrooms?

RUDY

I mean -- I'll be shooting here by day and sleeping here at night. After I pay for film and the camera, I can't afford an apartment. So I'm movin' in!

INT. LOBBY

The front door OPENS. A sharp shaft of sunlight -- as the four young white guys nervously enter. They are bewildered.

They slowly enter... gaping at this large, dusty space. The commotion of black workers. The white guys step into the middle -- and all eyes go to them. The activity STOPS.

An awkward moment. The boys WHISPER.

WHITE BOY

You said we were going to a soundstage.

NICK

I don't know what the hell this is...
(he peers, then GASPS)
Hey, Jerry! JERRY!

Nick shudders with immense relief. He runs over, heart pounding, to Jerry.

JERRY

Hey, you made it! RUDY! These are the kids I was tellin' you about.

Rudy comes over. He puts on a big smile for the boys. He grabs Nick's hand in a hearty handshake.

RUDY

"Dolemite is my name, and fuckin' up motherfuckers is my game!"

Rudy grins. The guys are wide-eyed.

NICK

Um... right. Uh, my name is Nick von Sternberg. I'm a senior at the UCLA film school. I met Jerry in his acting class --

JERRY

(cutting him off)
This kid is the real shit! You should see his short films!

NICK

Thanks, Jerry. That's cool of you.
And these are my pals from school:
Isaac, Max, and Tom.

He points at the other kids. Nobody really cares.

NICK

So, um... who's the UPM? Who's the
AD? Is it Panavision or Arri?

Rudy blinks. He purses his lips.

RUDY

Look, son. We don't know a lot of
that "technical" stuff. We've got a
very dedicated crew here... but you
see, they've never been on an actual
film set. So things like cameras...
sound... lights... we don't know that.
We need your help.

ANGLE - BEN

has been watching this from the sidelines. He slinks over.

BEN

Excuse me -- what's the deal? Why do
we need these honkies tellin' us what
to do? I thought this production was
about uplifting the brothers --

RUDY

Damn, Ben. Use your head! None of us
know what the fuck we're doing! We're
lucky to have them!

BEN

I ain't takin' orders from them.

RUDY

No one's askin' you to! Look, we'll
have the white boys show us what to
do, so that next time, the brothers
can run the show.

This soaks in. Ben gets it.

EXT. DUNBAR - REAR ALLEY - ANOTHER DAY

A MOVIE TRUCK is parked. Rudy's pals stare in amazement, as
BIG MOVIE EQUIPMENT gets unloaded. Lights, reflectors,
cabling, it's the real deal. The circus is coming to town.

It's a spectacle. Some LOCALS stand to the side, holding
their kids, gawking at all this.

LOCALS

Damn! They're makin' a movie down here?! That's crazy, nobody's ever done a movie in South Central!

A HONKING, then a shiny red 1974 Duster pulls through the commotion. The driver is D'Urville.

D'URVILLE

Hey! Where's my parking spot?

BEN

Your what? Uh... why don't you park in front of that dumpster?

D'Urville turns -- and gasps at the dirty alley, trash, and torn mattresses. He frowns.

D'URVILLE

Jesus Christ.

D'Urville glances down at the floor of the car, where a fifth of VODKA rolls around. He grabs the bottle and takes a swig.

INT. DUNBAR - SAME TIME

A WORKER rolls a giant LIGHT into the lobby.

WORKER

Where's the elevator?

TONEY

(he laughs, cackling)
"Elevator"?! That thing hasn't worked in forever. You're taking the stairs!

The guy's eyes bulge. The staircase is HUGE. Other crew are LUGGING HEAVY EQUIPMENT up the stairs.

UPSTAIRS

Young Nick and his pals are inside a MIRRORED ROOM. It's a jumble of cables and light stands.

Nick looks around, his face tense.

NICK

There's mirrors on every wall! Where am I supposed to hide my lights?

JIMMY LYNCH

Why do you want to hide them?

NICK

Huh?
(losing it)
So you don't see them in the movie!

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
 Oh my God -- it's mirrors everywhere!
 And the ceiling is only eight-feet
 high! It's impossible!

Nick's UCLA buds try plugging in a light. Nothing happens.

WHITE BOY
 Nick, there's no juice.

NICK
 (starting to freak)
 Okay, check the panel downstairs. See
 if --

Rudy walks in with Toney.

RUDY
 No no, there's no electricity.

NICK
What?!

RUDY
 That's how I got such a good deal on
 the building! There's no electricity.
 And no running water.

Nick's UCLA boys glance at each other. They whisper.

WHITE BOY #2
 Oh my God.

Nick is trying not to lose it. He's feeling very insecure.

NICK
 So, Rudy, how do we power the lights?

TONEY
 Will batteries work?

RUDY
 Can't we just steal it from next door?
 Climb up a pole?

AT THE DOOR

D'Urville enters, a tad lubricated. He watches the crew, then slowly realizes that Nick is in charge.

Worried, he storms over to Rudy.

D'URVILLE
 I sure hope that's not the DP?

RUDY
 Uh... yeah.

D'URVILLE
What the fuck! How old is he?

RUDY
Uh, I don't know. 16? 20?

D'URVILLE
Shit, Rudy! Do you have any idea what you're doing? You need a DP who knows how to light black folk.

RUDY
Hey, that's racist shit --

D'URVILLE
What? No, fool! I'm saying that cause it's true! Brothers absorb light! Whites reflect light! You understand? It takes experience to do this shit! When I was working for Mr. Polanski, he had me in a scene with John Cassavetes, and Billy Fraker spent hours lighting that two-shot, getting it perfect...

D'Urville trails off. He realizes nobody cares.

D'URVILLE
This room is giving me a headache.
What else do we got here?

INT. HALLWAY

D'Urville steps out -- and CRUNCH! -- his FOOT goes through the floorboard. The wood is rotten.

D'URVILLE
Are you fuckin' --?

D'Urville is ready to explode. He whirls to Rudy.

D'URVILLE
This is a disaster. Is anything usable? What about the basement?

RUDY
Eh, it's flooded. And there's rats.

D'URVILLE
(he groans, pained)
This location could not be worse.

Suddenly -- a loud BLAST!

Everyone whirls and looks UP.

UP IN A HIGH WINDOW

A loud BOOM -- then SCREAMS! Two of the UCLA Boys are up on top of an electrical pole, trying to tie-in to the power. They ZAP and LIGHT UP like electrocuted cartoon characters, screaming crazily.

And then -- the building FLASHES. The LIGHTS turn on!

WIDE - LOBBY

The giant chandelier LIGHTS UP, brilliantly. It's magical. All heads turn up, awed by the beauty of the space.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR LOBBY - DUSK

The crew is leaving. Rudy thanks them on their way out.

RUDY

We're gonna have a fantastic first day of filming. Everybody get some sleep.

Lady Reed approaches Rudy.

LADY REED

Rudy. I'm scared about tomorrow.

RUDY

Don't be. It's just like what we did up on stage.

LADY REED

I don't like havin' my picture taken. I'm always suckin' in my gut, trying to look the best I can. But that long-haired boy with the camera told me that with movies, you're gettin' your picture took 24 times a second.

We see Rudy begin to feel a pit of dread in his gut.

LADY REED

24 times, Rudy! And those pictures gonna last forever and ever. Long past when I'm dead and gone.

RUDY

It's gonna be... it's gonna be just fine. Good night.

Lady Reed takes a breath, shakes her head, and walks away.

We can see it on Rudy's face. He just got scared.

INT. DUNBAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rudy wanders across the quiet lobby, alone, staring at all the equipment. A shelf of wigs. He touches a rack of costumes...

Then, he thinks of something. He opens his desk drawer -- and inside is his old FAMILY PHOTO. The black-and-white shot of the seven barefoot kids and two parents. He stares hard at his FATHER'S FACE. Severe. Doubting. Rudy glares back.

RUDY

Fuck you.

Apprehensive, Rudy grabs a photocopied "Dolemite" script. He flips through the pages. We PUSH IN to him, as he stares at the words. This is what it has all been building to.

RUDY

Fuck you, you no-business, born-insecure, junkyard motherfucker!

Rudy is distracted by the photo. The eyes of the abusive step father staring back at him from his desk.

RUDY

Thought I wasn't shit, huh -- look at me now, motherfucker. Tell me I ain't nothin'. Fuck you! You ain't nothin'!

He gets angrier. HUSKIER. LOUDER.

RUDY

You ain't NOTHIN'! You no-business, born-insecure, junkyard motherfucker!!

Emotion pours out. Rudy takes off his BELT and BEATS the photo on his desk. WHACK!! WHACK!! Then, FULL-ON, THE BALLS-OUT DOLEMITE VOICE:

RUDY

Who do you think you are?! WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!
(full throttle)
I'M DOLEMITE! YOU NO-BUSINESS, BORN-INSECURE, JUNKYARD MOTHAFUCKA!!!!

Rudy's voice echoes through the Dunbar. He stands tall and strong. Ready.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR - "WARDEN'S SET" - MORNING

First day of shooting. The CREW is setting up the scene. The set dec is ridiculously minimal -- fake wood paneling, a desk, an American flag.

Nick's small crew adjusts the camera and lights.

Off to the side, we reveal... Rudy alone. Just staring at the activity. His face filled with wonder.

Then -- Jerry quietly walks over. He smiles.

JERRY

You're really doing it, aren't you?

Rudy doesn't speak. He just nods.

ON SET

Sitting in their positions, waiting, are Lady Reed on a couch and a white MIDDLE-AGED ACTOR playing the Warden. She looks around, a bit overwhelmed by all this activity. He smiles.

MIDDLE-AGED ACTOR

So, how'd you find yourself on this production?

LADY REED

Oh! Well, I'm Rudy's protege. He discovered me on the road, and he's giving me my big break!

(coy)

I guess I'm what you'd call a Hollywood ingenue.

She bats her eyes, a little absurdly.

LADY REED

And how did you get cast?

MIDDLE-AGED ACTOR

Well, I sort of specialize in playing the bad white guy, around town. All the black shows need a heavy! I played the plantation owner at the Ebony Showcase. I played a Southern lyncher at the Cultural Center. I played a rapist at the Wilshire Ebell.

LADY REED

(her eyebrows go up)

Sounds like you figured out what you were good at.

IN THE CORNER

D'Urville is huddled with Rudy and Jerry. D'Urville is upset, waving script pages at them.

D'URVILLE

This scene makes no fuckin' sense!

RUDY

Why not?

D'URVILLE

Why not?! Why the fuck would a prison warden release a prisoner, so he can go undercover?

JERRY

(indignant)

Because there's a drug issue in the neighborhood! We're dealing with society. Keepin' it real.

D'URVILLE

Oh c'mon! That's a bullshit answer. You guys are pretending like the warden is the same as a policeman. He's not! Wardens don't investigate!

RUDY

You're forgettin' that the warden is working with the governor.

D'URVILLE

WHO GIVES A SHIT? How's that make sense?

RUDY

Cause the governor is friends with Queen Bee.

D'URVILLE

That's jibber-jabber! So you're saying cause the governor is pals with a lady who runs a whorehouse, he's making the prison spring her friend?!

RUDY AND JERRY

YES!

D'Urville's eyes pop. He wipes his face, frustrated.

D'URVILLE

Fine. Fuck it. Whatever you guys want.

D'Urville staggers away, freaked.

ON THE SET

NICK

Hey D'Urville, are you happy with how the set looks?

D'URVILLE

No. Why don't you just turn off all the lights. That way we won't have to look at the scene!

D'Urville chuckles grimly -- when a HAND grabs him.

D'Urville spins -- and it's Rudy. Unamused.

CLOSEUP - RUDY

He pulls him tight and leans into his face. Deadly serious.

RUDY

Hey man. That ain't cool. Cause this is a big fuckin' deal to us. You might be Mr. Big Time, but the rest of us ain't never done nothin' like this. I'm payin' for the goddamn thing, but I got no ego! You need a box moved, I'll pick it up! You need to feed the crew, I'll go make sandwiches!

(beat)

Cause we're here to work together and make a movie. OKAY? Got it, brother?

D'Urville gulps. Then -- chastened -- he nods.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR - "WARDEN'S SET" - LATER

The cast and crew are frozen, WAITING. Rudy in his "Dolemite" wig and prison outfit. The Warden and Lady Reed in their places. Nick at the camera. The boom operator. The focus puller. Nobody is moving. They're all staring --

At D'Urville, who is drinking straight out of a bottle of vodka. Just drinking and drinking. Then, calmed -- he caps the bottle and looks up.

D'URVILLE

Action.

And, the scene begins.

MIDDLE-AGED ACTOR (AS WARDEN)

Sit down, Dolemite. You know Mama Queen Bee here, I'm sure? For damn near two years, she's been bugging me about your innocence. And you know the funny thing? I believe her. We've stumbled onto some facts that may set you free.

(he lights a cigarette)

Now you're a gambling man, aren't you?

RUDY

*It depends on the game, Warden.
(dramatic)
And how high the stakes are.*

MIDDLE-AGED ACTOR (AS WARDEN)

*Well, I might as well level with you.
The game is rough... and the stake is
your life.*

They glower at each other. Until -- Rudy suddenly BREAKS CHARACTER and turns to the crew.

RUDY

*DAMN! That was so real! The way he
was staring into my eyes. Shit! That
gave me the chills.
(enthused)
This is gonna be a good scene! I
can't wait to watch the movie. Hey,
when can we watch the movie...?!*

D'Urville shakes his head, annoyed.

D'URVILLE

Cut!

CUT TO:

EXT. "PRISON EXTERIOR" SET - DAY

PRISON GATES slide open. We PULL OUT, revealing we're actually at a high school.

The crew is FILMING. Black extras play prisoners.

Rudy appears, in a country-bumpkin suit and a straw hat. ACTORS dressed as PRISON GUARDS open the gate, as he strolls cockily out of the fake prison. The Guards snarl.

ACTOR (AS PRISON GUARD)

You'll be back, Dolemite.

Rudy smirks, defiant. Awaiting at his CADILLAC are three pretty BLACK ACTRESSES, dressed as Dolemite's Whores. He beams, his energy electric, full throttle Dolemite mode.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)

Damn! Look like my women is on time!

WHORE #1

*You've been gone so long, you've got a
whole lot of warming up to do!*

WHORE #2

No shit, baby!

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)

I can dig it!

Rudy enthusiastically starts UNDRESSING! The jacket comes off. The shirt. The girls pull off his pants. He strips to his underwear. A girl hands him white drawers, and he snaps.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)

Bitch! You bring me these Goddamn cotton drawers. You know I don't wear no fuckin' cotton drawers!

IN THE BACKGROUND

Suddenly, a YOUNG UPTIGHT BLACK MAN in a cheap suit comes running up. He is the school PRINCIPAL.

PRINCIPAL

Whoa whoa WHOA! What is going on here?! Who are you people?

WIDE - Everybody FREEZES.

Nobody knows what to do. The cast and crew are scared.

D'Urville hears the FILM still running. He ELBOWS Nick.

D'URVILLE

Psst! Dummy! You're wasting film. Cut the camera.

Nick turns it off. Everyone's head swivels -- to Rudy. He feels all eyes on him. He's in charge. Rudy straightens up, faux-dignified, then strides over. In his white underwear, he shakes the man's hand.

RUDY

Well yes! It's a pleasure to meet you. We're making a major motion picture here. I'm R.R. Moore, president and chairman of Comedian International Films.

PRINCIPAL

Ok. I'm Roy Seeger, principal of this high school! And you can't just set up shop and do...

(gesturing helplessly)

whatever it is you're doing here! There are rules! You need to go downtown and file paperwork!

Rudy is stymied. He has no idea how to respond to this.

Until, Jimmy suddenly pipes up:

JIMMY LYNCH

We did!

Jimmy rustles through some papers, then magically pulls out a sheet that has the word "PERMIT" hand-written in pen.

The Principal stares at this in disbelief.

Everyone is still -- wondering if this trick will work. Then:

PRINCIPAL

Aw, c'mon now...

RUDY

(he throws his arm around him)

Look, brother. I understand you have a job to do... but we got one too! We're making a movie. Here, in the hood! Ain't nobody else doin' that! We're offering folks opportunity.

(a cagy beat)

Like you, sir. You're an attractive man. Have you ever considered an acting career...?

Really? The Principal groans.

LATER

The camera is rolling. The Principal is now playing a Guard.

Rudy grins, as the girls redress him in a crazy baby blue pimp suit. A wide-brim hat. A massive collar-cape.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

D'Urville covers his face. Miserable, he whispers to Nick.

D'URVILLE

In the next scene, he takes off his fancy blue suit and screws the whores.
(beat)

So why's he getting dressed in the first place? Just follow me here, for a second. Why would a man strip down and put on a ruffled suit, if he knows he's about to take it right back off?

NICK

I dunno. Maybe Rudy just likes costume changes. He's like Diana Ross -- or Cher!

D'Urville stares morosely, unsatisfied. He empties his vodka into some orange juice, then drains it. Looks around.

D'URVILLE

How am I gonna survive this? It's goddamn amateur hour. Nobody's ever even been on a soundstage before.

NICK

Well, I've been on a soundstage. Many times.

D'Urville perks up. Nick squirms, trying not to brag.

NICK

My Dad... he's uh... Josef von Sternberg. He directed Marlene Dietrich, John Wayne, Robert Mitchum... he's kinda famous.

Rudy, now fully pimped out in his new threads, tosses his old clothes at the principal playing the prison guard.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)

You guard! I want you to take these cheap motherfuckers and wipe your ass with them!

Rudy walks away laughing. D'Urville drinks.

NICK

(he points to the scene)
You might want to say cut.

D'urville forgot he was filming. He whirls and calls out.

D'URVILLE

Cut! Cut...

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNBAR - REAR ALLEY - LATER

The Dolemite cast and crew are eating LUNCH, at rows of folding tables, behind the hotel. Ben is proudly serving spaghetti and garlic bread. People are enjoying it.

In the b.g., a few of the Hobos from before sneak up. Hungry, they casually pick up paper plates and join the food line.

BEN

Are you workin' on this picture?

HOBO

I'm the Executive Producer.

AT A TABLE

Jerry is eating with Lady Reed and Toney.

LADY REED
Where's Rudy?

TONEY
Inside, helping Jimmy paint the set.

LADY REED
Damn! The man is sure committed.

TONEY
The man believes.

Some young black ACTORS in Prisoner costumes chat.

ACTOR #1
Think this picture is gonna be any good?

ACTOR #2
Judgin' by the food -- spaghetti and Kool Aid -- I doubt it!

ACTOR #1
Yeah, I've worked on porn loops with bigger budgets!

They LAUGH and slap hands. But Jerry is unamused. He slowly looks up... then gives them a stern rebuke.

JERRY
Listen here, young dummies! You don't appreciate what Rudy is doing! He's giving us all opportunity.

The guys' eyes widen. They go silent.

JERRY
You don't know what things used to be like. When I first came out here, I thought I'd knock the talent agents on their ass! But all I got was extra work -- to be a Jungle Native! A savage! A spearchucker! Dance around an iron pot with war paint on my face!

ACTOR #1
For real?

JERRY
Yeah! For real, goddammit! I attacked Tarzan! I saved Tarzan! I ran around the Panther Girl of the Kongo! All that shit!

LADY REED

I can't picture this. You are the least tribal-looking brother I've ever seen in my life!

JERRY

Tell me about it! But that was the only job I could get! The only job any of us could get.

The young actors are mortified. They go silent.

JERRY

So just be grateful, little motherfuckers. What Rudy is creating here is magnificent.

INT. DUNBAR - SAME TIME

Rudy and Jimmy are busy painting. Rudy is wearing a spangly Dolemite outfit.

JIMMY LYNCH

Rudy, I'm gonna need another \$1500 for the sets.

RUDY

What the fuck?! Jimmy, I already gave you a thousand!

JIMMY LYNCH

Man, you got no idea! There are twenty locations I gotta dress. I've been crawlin' through dumpsters, scavenging cardboard to build shit out of it -- but c'mon! I can only do so much! Then we got all those big nightclub scenes comin' up --

RUDY

I'm tapped out! I've spent everything I got...

JIMMY LYNCH

Shit, man. Movies cost money. What do you expect people to do?

Rudy sighs, overwhelmed.

RUDY

I'll go sell my car this weekend.

Suddenly -- GUNSHOTS outside!

A window EXPLODES! Glass flies! The guys whirl.

EXT. ALLEY - SAME TIME

More GUNSHOTS!!! BANG! BANG! BANG!

All the cast and crew scream, startled. A BEAT-UP CAR screeches by, in the street. GUNS FIRE.

ON THE CREW

All the WHITES leap under the tables, to hide.

All the BLACKS jump up and run down the alley, wanting to check out the action.

INT. DUNBAR - SAME TIME

Glass SHATTERS. A BULLET pierces the new paint job. Rudy reacts, irked. He marches out --

EXT. DUNBAR - SAME TIME

The front door flies open, and Rudy storms out.

YOUNG PUNKS in t-shirts are SHOOTING HANDGUNS at each other.

Rudy is unafraid. He barrels straight into the shootout, in his full Dolemite regalia, fur and cape. He's IN CHARACTER.

RUDY
LISTEN, you pigeon-toed, cross-eyed
sons-a-bitches!!

The gangbangers freeze up, astonished.

One gapes.

GANGBANGER
Oh shit. It's Dolemite!

RUDY
Yeah! I'm Dolemite, motherfucker.
We're trying to make a motion picture
here, starring ME, Rudy Ray Moore!
And that bad D'Urville Martin as
Willie Green!
(crazed)
I'm the one that killed Monday.
Whooped Tuesday. Put Wednesday in the
hospital!!

GANGBANGER
What happened to the rest of the week?

RUDY
 DON'T FUCK WITH ME. From the first to
 the last, I'll give you the blast so
 fast that your life is past before
 your ass has even hit the grass!!!

The guys are awed. Standing there frozen, holding their guns.

GANGBANGER #2
 Damn.

RUDY
 Look, brothers. This may normally be
 your turf -- but not today. We have a
 very tight production schedule, and so
 you gotta split!
 (beat)
 But you can have the 'hood back next
 week.

Rudy spins and exits. He marches back into the Dunbar --

INT. DUNBAR - SAME TIME

Rudy strides in -- and SLAMS the door shut. He collapses, his
 confidence melting. Jimmy runs over.

JIMMY LYNCH
 What the hell were you doing?! You
 could have gotten killed.

RUDY
 (gasping)
 I dunno. I guess I was in character!

He grins at Jimmy in disbelief.

Then -- a KNOCK! KNOCK! at the door.

The guys peer at each other, uncertain.

Then ANOTHER KNOCK. On-edge, Rudy opens the door. Standing
 there are three of the young gangbangers. They force a smile.

GANGBANGER
 Excuse me. Can we work on the movie?

Rudy reacts.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR - RUDY'S ROOM - DAY

Rudy is training with HOWARD JACKSON, 25, a black world-
 champion kickboxer. Howard is serious and soft-spoken.

Rudy is chopping his arms. Trying to look intimidating.

RUDY
Kya! KYA! KYA!

Rudy's moves are absurd. He snaps his head from side to side.

RUDY
Oogie oogie!

Howard winces.

Rudy impulsively tries a spinning side kick. It's ugly.

Howard stops him. He speaks -- gently, kindly.

HOWARD
Rudy. Rudy, hang on. Remember to
keep your body in a straight line.
You want tension at the hip, then an
elastic release in your foot.

Howard whirls and executes a FLAWLESS SIDE KICK. His foot
snaps just inches from Rudy's head.

Rudy smiles. Got it! He tries to copy Howard, but he SLIPS.
Howard has to grab him, so he won't fall.

HOWARD
Ok, stop! Stop a second. You just
can't become a Martial Arts master
overnight. What you desire... takes
years of training.

RUDY
I understand, Howard. I just want to
look a little like Bruce Lee.

HOWARD
Brother, if you want to look like
Bruce Lee, first thing you gotta do is
drop 60 pounds.

Rudy chuckles.

RUDY
Well that ain't happening!
(he winks)
It just has to look good on camera.
KYA!

Rudy whirls and fakes a PUNCH.

Howard covers his face. Rudy sees this disappointment.

RUDY
How's my all-girl Kung Fu army coming
along?

HOWARD
 My guys are training with them now.
 Let's take a look.

INT. DUNBAR - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Rudy and Howard step out on the landing above the stairs and look down at the lobby, REVEALING ten HOT CHICKS in TRAINING.

In unison, they all execute spinning ROUNDHOUSE KICKS.

HOT CHICKS
 KYA!!!

Rudy smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICE HOUSE - DAY

The crew is FILMING. The gang kids are now working as security guards, down the sidewalk. An OLD LADY WITH A DOG walks up, curious.

OLD LADY
 What are they doing over there?

GANGBANGER
 We making a movie. All the sidewalks are shut down. You gotta go around.

ON SET

TWO OVERWEIGHT FBI AGENTS confront Dolemite near a blue Cadillac in the driveway.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
There's nothing in my trunk, man.

Rudy pops open the trunk. It's filled with stolen furs. He feigns surprise.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
That shit ain't mine! I don't know how it got there.

The Agent rummages and pulls out TWO BAGS OF COCAINE.

WHITE ACTOR (AS FBI AGENT)
You're under arrest, Dolemite.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
 (explosive)
You're gonna have to TAKE ME! You no business, born insecure, junkyard mother FUCKER!

A THIRD AGENT runs at Rudy with a GUN, and Rudy stiffly THROWS him into a bush and onto the lawn.

A FIGHT ENSUES! Rudy snarls, then jumps and does a flying KICK at the other Agent's head. He gets nowhere near him -- two feet of air -- but the actor goes down.

TO THE SIDE

Howard shakes his head.

ON SET

Rudy fakes a sloppy PUNCH at Agent 2. Rudy then tries another head-kick, but there is a huge gulf. The actor winces anyway, then HITS the ground.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

D'Urville is despondent. He covers his face.

D'URVILLE
Can't you get his foot any closer?

HOWARD
I'm not a wizard.

D'Urville gives him a "fuck you" frown. He turns to Nick.

D'URVILLE
Can you shoot it from an angle where
it looks like he's hitting him?

NICK
(beat)
There is no such angle.

Rudy does a final move, "kicking" the last guy so hard he pretends to roll into a car trunk. It's ridiculous.

WIDE

Rudy comes striding over. He's grinning, sweating, feeling great about the scene. He takes a big breath.

RUDY
How was it?!!

A long pause.

D'URVILLE
I see no reason to do it again.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSIC STUDIO - DAY

A BLAST OF HORNS! FUNK EXPLODES, as Ben grins and belts into a mike. He's recording the DOLEMITE THEME SONG with his band:

BEN

(SINGING)

*Oh he's bad! The man is out of sight.
Mnhmm, he's a tough son of gun.
The man's name is Dolemite!
Yeah I heard of his coming,
even before his time.
And I ain't lyin'.
On the day that he was born,
His pappy wore a sign
Sayin' Dolemite is here,
and this bad little brother is mine!*

The rocking R&B PLAYS OVER the FOLLOWING SCENES...

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A steep hillside street. Suddenly, the new Cadillac comes FLYING over the top! It SMASHES on the pavement -- CRUNCH! -- and SCREECHES by.

A WAILING POLICE CAR chases it.

INT. CADILLAC - DRIVING

Rudy is in the back seat, SCREAMING, half-dressed.

We SWISH PAN to the front seat... revealing JIMMY driving the car! He's terrified, covered in sweat.

RUDY

Faster, Jimmy! Step on it!

JIMMY LYNCH

My cousin let me borrow this right off the car lot. I gotta bring her back without a scratch.

RUDY

Don't scratch it then. Just go fast!
We rollin!

Rudy picks up the SLATE and cracks it into the camera that is on a tray out the window.

RUDY

Car chase scene! Take one!

Jimmy looks down at the terrified SOUND OPERATOR in the floor boards of the front seat.

JIMMY LYNCH
I don't know nothin' about stunt
driving -- so hang on!

Jimmy floors it, careening around corners.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*Step on it, and step on it quick!!
Burn some rubber cause we gonna deal
with that prick.*
(he SHOUTS)
Drive nigga drive! Drive nigga drive!

OUTSIDE

The Cadillac SQUEALS around a turn. The cop car ROARS after it.

The Caddy SLAMS the ground and hits a puddle. D'Urville, Nick, and the whole camera crew are sprayed with muddy water.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - SECONDS LATER

A crew member puts a DUMMY into the parked car, the one that Jimmy borrowed. Rudy stands in the road in a white suit, waiting with a shotgun as the crew is preparing a shot.

Jimmy is flirting with one of the more attractive PAs, not realizing that they are about to blow up his cousin's car.

JIMMY LYNCH
So... you ever think about getting in
front of the camera with your fine
lookin' self?

The cameras are rolling. Rudy COCKS the shotgun.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*He think he's bad and he ain't got no
class. I'm gonna wrap this shotgun up
his mother-fucking ass!*

Rudy BLASTS the gun. We watch the TECHNICIAN trigger the pyro.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD

The car EXPLODES in a GIANT FIREBALL. KABOOM!!!!!! Smoke and flames BURST into the sky.

WIDE

The CREW jumps, startled.

LADY REED
SHITTTT!

People RUN, discombobulated. The Cadillac is ablaze.

ANGLE - JIMMY

He stares in horror. Then, a whimper.

JIMMY LYNCH
My God. My cousin's gonna shit!

EXT. DUSTY ROAD

Rudy stands posed, BLASTING a semi-automatic rifle. BOOM!

Across the street, three WHITE GOONS spin and go down.

Rudy turns -- and notices a final goon still standing. A shaking HAPLESS WHITE GUY. Rudy grins at his group of women.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*I've been wantin' see me a honky
dance.*
(to the guy)
DANCE, motherfucker, DANCE!

The white guy trembles and attempts a pathetic, jerky hop. Rudy barks.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
DANCE!

He FIRES the rifle. The guy JUMPS and dances like a puppet as the Technician cues the squibs in the dirt and dust.

INT. DUSTY ROAD - LATER DAY

RUDY DRESSES IN VARIOUS COSTUMES while doing his own special brand of Kung Fu toward camera (opening credits of Human Tornado).

Howard can barely watch anymore. He takes some of D'Urville's vodka and shoots it out of the bottle.

Toney, on the other hand, cheers Rudy on.

TONEY
Yessss, Rudy! Yesssss! Karate chop
those mother fuckers!

RUDY
It's Kung Fu, Toney! Kung Fu!

D'urville watches the insanity from his director chair. He pours Howard another drink. Drunk, he mutters to himself.

D'URVILLE
I just don't understand this guy.
He's a 50-year-old pretending he can
do Kung Fu. Pretending he can be a
sex machine.

(MORE)

D'URVILLE (CONT'D)

(beat)
He's like a little kid, playin' dress-up. Shit, man. What reality is he living in?

END R&B MONTAGE.

EXT. DUNBAR - DUSK

The crew is wrapping for the day. The guys lug the equipment into the Dunbar.

Rudy stands in the doorway, paying cast and crew as they finish. He has a roll of TWENTIES.

RUDY

Thanks so much. Beautiful work today.
Happy fourth everybody...

Rudy sighs, glancing down at the little cash left in his hand.

Outside, the young crew and some of the actors and actresses are setting off SPARKLERS and FIREWORKS. It's the Fourth of July. Rudy finds comfort watching them have fun. He smiles.

Then, Ben strides up, a big cat-that-ate-the-canary smirk.

BEN

So! Tomorrow's the big day!

RUDY

Huh?

BEN

Your big sex scene!

Ben laughs, delighted. He leans in.

BEN

You're slick, man. Puttin' that scene into the movie, just so you can fuck the white chick!

(he winks)

I guess that's why you're the boss!

RUDY

I ain't really fuckin' her, Ben. It's pretend.

Jerry walks by with a Sparkler and nods, pleased.

JERRY

It's going to be very erotic. Like "Last Tango In Paris."

Rudy reacts, disturbed.

EXT. DUNBAR - LATER

Lady Reed walks up and sits next to Rudy on an APPLE BOX. They watch as Ben, Jimmy, the crew and Lady Reed's son set off fireworks.

LADY REED
Happy Fourth, Rudy.

RUDY
Happy Fourth, Lady. Your boy having a good time here in California?

LADY REED
He loves it. Look at him. So happy.

Lady Reed can see something is troubling Rudy.

LADY REED
You okay?

Rudy tries to cover, but relents. He's anxious.

RUDY
I-I'm feelin' awkward about tomorrow. What am I supposed to do, with all those people watchin'? I mean, why the hell did Jerry have to write a big serious sex scene into the movie?

LADY REED
You the leading man with a whole bunch of half-naked girls. Folks watchin the movie gonna wanna watch you fuck one or two.

RUDY
It's just a lotta pressure to put on a man. Any man.

LADY REED
Well... whenever my ex climbed on top of me to bust a nut, I tried to check out till it was over. So I just tried to amuse myself. I'd picture him fuckin this mangy-ass donkey we had. I would just laugh and laugh... but he didn't know the difference.

Rudy smiles, but is still anxious.

Then Lady Reed gets an idea.

LADY REED
Hey. Maybe it don't have to be serious or sexy at all. What if it was... a joke?

Rudy looks up.

INT. DUNBAR - RUDY'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Rudy and the WHITE ACTRESS stand by the bed, both wearing robes. Lady Reed gives Rudy a reassuring nod. Everyone takes their places. Tension builds as...

Jimmy holds a rope attached to a pulley. Waits...

Ben grips a MOVING DOLLY under the bed. He waits...

The Technician is holding a handful of fire-crackers and a lit match.

Rudy nods to the White Actress. They both disrobe and take their positions on the bed.

LADY REED

Ready?

BEN AND JIMMY

Ready.

D'URVILLE

And... action!

The scene plays out. Rudy athletically fucks the Actress so hard, it is completely insane. Dolemite's sexual prowess is making the room literally explode.

The actress is SHRIEKING in pleasure.

ACTRESS

OH OH OH!!

The bed is SPINNING back and forth. Ben is sweating below.

Jimmy lowers a broken ceiling, made to look like the roof COLLAPSED on top of them. The Technician tosses the fire-crackers on the roof. Mirrors FALL off the walls.

SMOKE sprays into the room. The room BLOWS UP as the woman wails in ecstasy.

Rudy and the girl are rolling around, under bright red covers. We can barely tell where they are or what they're doing.

Behind the camera, Toney gapes.

TONEY

Is that how straight people have sex?

I can't even tell what's goin' on.

(perplexed)

Looks more like wrasslin'. Is she behind him?

Jerry peers, in his own confusion. He holds his script.

JERRY

What happened? I wrote a tender love scene. My goal was that this movie would tell it like it is.

LADY REED

Yeah, well Rudy and I changed it. We turned it into "Earthquake."

Rudy makes crazy expressions and bounces on the bed. He spots Lady Reed and gives her a winning thumbs-up. Rudy lurches and accidentally elbows the girl. Oops!

TO THE SIDE

D'Urville stares, amazed. Then he slowly, reluctantly breaks out in a big smile.

D'URVILLE

It ain't sexy... but it sure as fuck is funny! CUT!

The room breaks into APPLAUSE. Everybody on the crew starts LAUGHING at the craziness.

Rudy peeks out from the covers. He has a shit-eating grin.

RUDY

If you crave satisfaction, this is the place to find the action!!!

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Howard is rehearsing a stunt fight with some of the Kung Fu * Girls and actors.

Nick pulls Rudy aside.

NICK

Rudy, we've got a problem.

RUDY

I know, I know. I just gotta rehearse my kung fu some more --

NICK

No, Rudy. Worse than that.
(grim)
We've run out of film.

Rudy is thrown.

RUDY

What do you mean? Can't you use those little short pieces you had?

NICK

"Short ends"? We used all those too.

(a breath)

The crew's working for below their rate. I've been working for free these last few weeks. We're on your side. But if there's no film in the camera... then we don't have a film.

Rudy frowns.

EXT. DUNBAR HOTEL - DAY

Rudy is discreetly meeting with the Bihari Brothers outside the Dunbar near the alley.

LESTER BIHARI

Another ten grand isn't so simple, Rudy. It's a lot. If this thing flops, you're gonna be working for free the rest of your life.

RUDY

(dour)

So I'll be like your slave.

JULIUS BIHARI

H-hey! You created this situation. Don't you go there.

(beat)

Did you put in any contingency for overruns? Editing? Post?

RUDY

I don't know what that is. If it's more money, then no. I'm busted.

(impassioned)

Gentlemen... we're so close. We're crawling across the finish line. If I stopped now... it would crush them.

(he points around the crew)

Everybody here, all my cast and crew, has put in so much. I just can't let them down...

The Brothers glance at each other. A beat -- and then they reluctantly nod.

Rudy smiles, relieved.

We see that D'Urville was standing behind the wall, listening to the whole thing. He's troubled and moved.

INT. DUNBAR - NIGHTCLUB - LATER

The crew preps to shoot the final scene between Dolemite and Willie Green. The men gaze warily at each other. Then, D'Urville pulls Rudy close and whispers:

D'URVILLE
I worked with this actor on Rosemary's Baby. John Cassavetes. He makes movies. Down and dirty just like you.

RUDY
(distracted)
I get it, D'Urville. You're big time.

D'URVILLE
He puts up every last dime he's got. Mortgaging the house. Struggling to get it done...

RUDY
(defeated)
Yeah... let's get it done...

D'Urville grips Rudy by the collar.

D'URVILLE
Listen! This is our final moment. Whatever you're dealing with, put it into this fight.

Rudy is struck silent. He's finally being directed.

D'URVILLE
Think about me, the money men, anybody who ever doubted you. Use it now! Put it on camera! You dig?

Rudy reacts, impressed. Not expecting this. He nods.

MOMENTS LATER

They are **FILMING** their big confrontation.

Willie and his **HENCHMEN** are seated at a club table. Rudy strides up, in a ruffled white tuxedo with a huge burgundy bowtie. D'Urville simmers, glaring at him.

D'URVILLE (AS WILLIE)
Brother Dolemite! Sit down! Join the party!

The animosity is mutual. Dolemite gives him a steely glare.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
Willie Green, I want you out of here in 24 hours.

(MORE)

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE) (CONT'D)
 (beat)
And 23 of them are already gone!

D'URVILLE (AS WILLIE)
You cheated me.
 (he glowers)
*So why don't we make another deal?
 Partners! You take care of the
 business... I take care of the heat!*

The men stare at each other. Then Rudy WHIRLS on him.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
FUCK you, man!

Rudy jumps up and swaggers away.

D'Urville stares, temper building. Then -- it explodes.

D'URVILLE (AS WILLIE)
Give me the gun. Give me the gun!
 (upset)
I'M GONNA KILL DOLEMITE!!

D'Urville grabs a GUN and starts CHASING after Rudy! The nightclub ERUPTS into a crazed fight!

EVERYBODY starts PUNCHING EVERYBODY.

Tables flip over. Bottles get smashed on heads.

The All-Girl Army starts doing karate chops on everybody.

THE ACTION IS CROSS-CUT with D'Urville racing backstage and cornering Rudy in a small...

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Rudy spins, then starts THROWING JABS! POW! They begin BATTLING to the finish. PUNCH! KICK!

Suddenly, D'Urville pulls out his GUN and SHOOTS it.

BAM! Rudy gets hit in the chest. SQUIBS go off. He's bleeding!

D'Urville tries firing again, but the gun jams. So Rudy lunges and PUNCHES D'Urville hard. Suddenly, he goes crazy and starts PULLING OUT HIS GUTS!

D'Urville's eyes explode in agony.

What?! It's insane.

Rudy winces, freaking out, as he PULLS ALL THE GUTS OUT OF D'URVILLE. D'Urville's shirt is filled with a long trail of gooey bright red innards! D'Urville collapses.

Jerry strides in. Shocked, he looks at bloody Rudy, then down at dead disemboweled D'Urville on the floor.

JERRY (AS BLAKELY)
God damn, Dolemite!

Jerry points his gun at D'Urville, then FIRES a final shot.

BANG!

A solemn moment. It's over. Nobody speaks. The two men peer down at the dead guy below them.

Until... D'Urville slowly cracks a smile. He opens his eyes.

D'URVILLE
 CUT!
 (looks at Nick and Rudy)
 WE ARE DONE WITH THIS MOTHERFUCKIN'
 PICTURE! Yeah?

RUDY
 Yeah... that's it.

D'URVILLE
 Ok. I'm gone, y'all.

D'URVILLE SITS UP, like a bloody zombie. LEAPS to his feet, then MARCHES out, defiant, still covered in blood and guts.

D'URVILLE
 And if I never see you morons again,
 it won't be too soon! This has been a
 total living hell! I'd say see you at
 the premiere, but there won't be one!
 And if there is -- I won't show!! God
 damn, I have no idea how the hell to
 manage my career!

D'Urville storms through the destruction of the massive fight scene in the lobby. With a string of guts trailing behind him, D'Urville exits, SLAMS the door, and is GONE.

The group is astonished. Nobody knows what to say. Rudy is silent. Then, Ben pushes his way in and BLURTS out.

BEN
 Well fuck him. I like the movie!

JIMMY LYNCH
 Yeah, me too. Four stars!!

NICK
 Me too. Fuck that rat-soup, eatin'
 mother fucker!

The mood starts brightening. Cast and crew start APPLAUDING and hugging each other. Toney embraces Rudy.

TONEY

We did it, Rudy! We really did it!

NICK

Wait, wait! It's not over till you say "that's a wrap," Rudy.

RUDY

(brightening)

That's a wrap...

NICK

Hell no! Give us a Dolemite wrap!

RUDY

That's a mother-fuckin wrap!

(cheers)

That's a no business...

BEN

Born insecure!

LADY REED

Barnyard!

RUDY

MOTHER FUCKIN' WRAP!

(cheers)

CUZ DOLEMITE IS MY NAME!

THE CAST AND CREW

AND FUCKIN' UP MOTHER FUCKERS IS MY GAME!

CUT TO:

CU OF A PROJECTOR

A reel is locked in place. Fingers slide film through the gate and lock it down. A switch turns. Light hits the lens. The Countdown numbers hit the screen: 5... 4... 3... 2...

The fingers turn off the projector.

INT. UNIVERSAL EXECUTIVE BUILDING - DAY

Three white execs stroll down the hallway. Posters from Universal films line the walls: "The Sting"... "Charley Varrick"... "Breezy"...

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1

Christ, did you see the cost reports on the Zanuck-Brown Picture?

UNIVERSAL EXEC #2

It's out of control. Whose idea was it to put a mechanical shark, a water shoot, and Robert Shaw in the same film?

They enter a screening room --

INT. SCREENING ROOM

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1

So what is this thing we're looking at?

UNIVERSAL EXEC #2

I don't know. Some blaxploitation number that came in over the transom.

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1

More blaxploitation? We already did "Willie Dynamite."

UNIVERSAL EXEC #2

That was cheap. It recouped. Who made this one?

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1

I think it's directed by the guy who played the elevator operator in "Rosemary's Baby."

Beat. The mood lightens.

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1

Hm! Well, that was a nice little moneymaker.

(to the booth)

Okay, roll it!

The fingers flip the switch. The movie begins.

LATER

The Execs gape at the screen. They're bewildered.

ON THE SCREEN

"Dolemite" is unspooling. In the scene, some LOCAL STREET GUYS are hanging out on a corner. They glance over -- and are EXCITED to see Rudy, in his outrageous Pimp suit. "It's Dolemite! Look! It's him!"

STREET GUY #1

Say, brother! Hey! Will you tell this man you Dolemite?

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
Yes, brother, I'm Dolemite.

STREET GUY #1
You gotta prove it! I bet him five dollars.

THE UNIVERSAL EXECS

are lost.

UNIVERSAL EXEC #1
 I don't understand. It's people in the movie "Dolemite," and they're recognizing the character Dolemite, and then they're asking him to prove he's Dolemite? Why?!

ON THE SCREEN

The street guys get indignant. Rudy cracks a smile.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
Oh all right. I'll give y'all a taste. How about I do "Shine and the Great Titanic"?

GUYS
Right on! Yeah, do "Shine"!!

Rudy lights up. He clears his throat, then launches into one of his beloved toasts:

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*One beautiful day in the merry month of May,
 Great Titanic, sailed away.
 The captain and the lieutenant was
 havin' a few words,
 When the great Titanic hit that mighty
 iceberg!
 (he grins)
 Shine was in the boiler room eatin'
 black-eyed peas,
 And the water came damn near to his
 knees!*

INT. DIMENSION FILMS - DAY

In another studio, two LOW-BUDGET WHITE DIMENSION EXECS watch the movie.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*Years later, there was Shine, damn
 near drunk,
 tellin' every motherfucker how the
 Titanic sunk!*

(MORE)

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE) (CONT'D)
*When a whore said, 'Shine, darlin',
 why didn't you drown?'
 He said, 'I had a cork in my ass,
 baby, I couldn't go down!'"*

The execs are baffled.

DIMENSION EXEC #1
 What the hell is this? I don't
 understand this Titanic subplot.

DIMENSION EXEC #2
 I don't even think it's a real movie.
 Was it shot in Super 8?

DIMENSION EXEC #1
 Whatever it is, it's a waste of our
 time.
 (he PRESSES A BUTTON)
 Okay! You can stop the film.

The projector STOPS. The room lights come UP.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - DAY

The hotel is strangely empty. The production is cleared out,
 and nobody is there. We DRIFT through the empty lobby. The
 decor is crazed -- a mish-mash of half-sets and random
 furniture left over from different scenes.

We move upstairs... into Rudy's bedroom, which has half-strips
 of red wallpaper on some of the walls. Rudy is asleep.

Then, he hears PHONE RINGING downstairs.

Rudy's eyes pop open. He quickly jumps up, in his jockey
 shorts, then BOLTS OUT. It's the PAY PHONE, down in the
 lobby. Rudy RUNS FURIOUSLY down the stairs, racing to get to
 the phone. He SNATCHES it --

RUDY
 H-hello! Comedian International!
 (out of breath)
 Uh, yes -- Mr. Moore is here. Uh,
 please hang on one moment.

Rudy drops the receiver, letting it dangle. He catches his
 breath -- then he loudly STOMPS AROUND, to make his footsteps
 heard. He picks the phone up, in a clipped, formal voice.

RUDY
 Yes, this is Rudy Ray Moore. With
 whom do I have the pleasure of
 speaking?
 (upbeat)
 (MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)
 Ah! Why, yes, of course! Did you
 have time to review my production?

A long beat.

It's bad news. Rudy's face drops, hurt.

RUDY
 Well YES, it's a real movie! It's
 professional. People got paid!!
 (irked)
 No, I do not have formal Kung Fu
 training! I learned it for the movie!
 (beat)
 No, Lady Reed has never been in a film
 before! This was her debut!

The bad news gets worse. Rudy gets desperate.

RUDY
 Look, we could change things, do some
 retakes, if that would --
 (beat)
 Oh, course, I see. Yes, I
 understand. Yes, of course.
 (a strained pause)
 Thank you for your consideration.

Rudy SLAMS down the phone.

He stands there, shaken.

Then, he goes and picks up a legal pad.

INSERT - PAD

It is a written LIST OF STUDIOS, all with lines drawn through
 them. "UNIVERSAL"... "MGM"... "COLUMBIA"... "ALLIED
 ARTISTS"... "DIMENSION PICTURES"... "BRYANSTON"... "AVCO
 EMBASSY"... The last name is "CROWN INTERNATIONAL." Rudy
 sighs, then crosses it out too.

CLOSEUP - RUDY

He stares, the sadness engulfing him.

INT. SOUL FOOD DINER - NIGHT

Rudy sits in a booth with Jimmy, Ben, Toney and Jerry.

Nobody is speaking. The mood is grim. The guys are all
 shellshocked. Finally --

BEN
 Well at least we had fun...

RUDY

Oh fuck you, Ben! Sure, you had fun, cause you weren't payin' for this motherfucking thing! I'm in debt up to my ears, I gave away all my album royalties to the Bihari Brothers, and nobody wants the goddamn movie!

(he loses it)

Well I'm sure as hell not paying for this table! Everybody can buy their own chicken and waffles!!! And YOU, you had a side of greens, so you can cover your own ass! I'm not some endless faucet of money!!

The guys all glance at each other. Jimmy squirms.

JIMMY LYNCH

Rudy, I don't understand your attitude. You've heard "no" before.

(helpful)

Man, you always bounce back.

RUDY

(hurt)

That's cause I knew what I was doing! Nightclubs... records... those are my worlds! If a man slammed the door in my face, I'd go find another door! If nobody wanted my record, I'd just sell it out of my car trunk!

(frustrated)

But shit, I don't know what to do now.

(sad)

I thought anybody could be a star. But nobody wants to see our ugly black asses on the screen.

Rudy goes silent.

The guys all look around. Nobody knows what to say.

Rudy sighs, then bolts up from the table and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Rudy walks down the street, the THEATER MARQUEES and NEON flashing around him. It's not pleasant -- the clicking of the lights and the buzz of the neon is an assault.

He looks up and around at all the oversize theater signs, the billboards, the movie posters everywhere.

The faces of MOVIE STARS surround him. All white and beautiful. Paul Newman... Robert Redford... Jane Fonda... Faye Dunaway... Warren Beatty... Raquel Welch...

Rudy shakes his head. He goes into a liquor store.

INT. DUNBAR HOTEL - NIGHT

Rudy is alone in the lobby. Drinking.

Feeling sorry for himself. A solitary figure in the big empty joint.

Then... in the distance... he hears VOICES. Curious, he staggers to his feet, then peers out of the barred window.

OUTSIDE

It's the Hobos from before, in the alley across the street. They're sitting around an oilcan fire, talking sass.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

Rudy has joined Ricco and the Hobos. Rudy sits, slumped over.

RUDY

It's all gone shitty.

He passes the bottle. They eagerly take it.

HOBO

Sure sounds that way.

RUDY

I'm a fifty-year-old man, and I've got nothin' to show for it.

RICCO

Well, I coulda predicted that. I had those toasts for years, and you seen what it did for me.

Another bum HITS him -- shut up! That ain't nice.

Rudy ignores all this. He's in his own space. Introspective.

RUDY

I'm just livin' by myself in a condemned building. Lady Reed has her boy. Jimmy's got his family...

(beat)

I've got nobody. Never have. I just go home alone...

He trails off, feeling terrible.

RUDY
I've given it all to Dolemite. He's
all I got.... And he's worth nothing.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CHICAGO JUKE JOINT - DAY

We're outside a dinky club in Chicago. Rudy steps into view -- he looks around the empty club. A man mops the floor. Rudy sighs.

INT. CHICAGO JUKE JOINT - DRESSING AREA - NIGHT

In a cramped dressing area in a hall, Rudy puts on the wig and the suit. The joy is out of his eyes.

INT. CHICAGO JUKE JOINT - STAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Then onstage, Rudy entertains. Forcing a big smile and false bluster.

RUDY
*I was born in a barrel of butcher knives,
I been shot in my ass with two Colt 45s.
I been slapped by a bear and bit by an eel,
I chew up railroad iron and shit out steel!*

The drummer gives a simple rim shot -- ba-dum-bum. Rudy looks at him, disappointed, but too weary to correct him.

INT. CHICAGO JUKE JOINT - LATER

Rudy sells albums at a card table afterwards.

INT. CHICAGO JUKE JOINT - LATER

A club MANAGER pays Rudy in cash. A handful of 10s and 20s. Rudy stares at the money, then pockets it.

He turns -- as two PRETTY YOUNG WOMEN (DONNA and MONIQUE) smile. They've got the hots for him.

DONNA
Hey Dolemite. Whatcha doin' later?

MONIQUE
You wanna party...?

They are aggressively coming on to him. Rudy pulls away.

RUDY
Sorry, girls, I'm -- kinda tired.
Another time...

Rudy awkwardly backs off. They are confused.

INT. CHICAGO MOTEL - NIGHT

Rudy goes to sleep, alone, in a shabby motel room.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. CHICAGO MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Rudy sits on the bed, on the phone.

RUDY
I just can't fuckin' believe it... I'm
back on this grind...

INTERCUT:

LADY REED ON THE PHONE

LADY REED
I know it's hard.

RUDY
I'm worse off than I was before. I
don't even own my goddamn records
anymore.
(pause)
What kind of fool works years to build
somethin' up, to just throw it all
away?

LADY REED
You ain't a fool, Rudy.

RUDY
I thought the movie would change
everything...

She tries to console him.

LADY REED
You're still a star to me.

He smiles bittersweetly.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

INT. INDIANAPOLIS RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

Rudy sits with a gushing black DJ, BOBBY VALE.

BOBBY VALE
Bobby Vale in the Morning, WKFF. We
are so excited to have Mr. Rudy Ray
Moore, the legend, the phenomenon, in-
studio! He's right in front of me!
I'm sittin' with him!

(MORE)

BOBBY VALE (CONT'D)
He's here in Indianapolis, performing
all week at Gordy's Lounge!

RUDY
(listless)
Thank you for having me here today.

BOBBY VALE
Rudy, okay, I gotta ask you -- cause I
am a bigtime fan -- I heard a story
that you made a "Dolemite" movie! Is
that true? And when can we see it?

Rudy pauses, uncomfortable.

RUDY
Well, the particulars of the film
business are very tricky. I'm not
sure when exactly it's showing up.

BOBBY VALE
WHAT? Oh, c'mon, man! You can't have
no secrets. People here in Indy love
your stuff! We can't wait to see that
movie!

RUDY
I'd love to give you an answer, but I
just don't know at this time...

Bobby stares strangely at Rudy. He can't figure this out.

BOBBY VALE
Folks, we're gonna take a quick break!
We'll be right back with Mr. Rudy Ray
Moore. You're listening to Bobby
Vale...WKFF, Indianapolis.

Bobby PUNCHES a button on the board. Then, angry, he pulls
off his headphones and snaps at Rudy.

BOBBY VALE
Brother! What's your fuckin' problem?
I'm tryin' to help you out, promote
you and all, and you won't even answer
my fuckin' questions!

RUDY
(irritable)
Look, Bobby. I can't answer your
fuckin' questions, because the movie's
never comin' out! OKAY? I just don't
know nothin'.

BOBBY VALE
What! That's crazy --

RUDY

Well it's true. It's done! Nobody wants to show it, so I don't know what to do.

The ENGINEER gestures from behind the glass: "10 seconds"

Rudy is now downcast. Bobby peers at him, bothered by this situation. He thinks.

BOBBY VALE

Hey -- my cousin manages a movie theater here -- the Uptown. Maybe you should talk to him.

RUDY

Why? What's he gonna do?

BOBBY VALE

Well I dunno! Maybe he could run it. Fuck, it couldn't hurt!
(he PULLS BACK ON the HEADPHONES)
And welcome back! Today, we have Mr. Rudy Ray Moore...!

EXT. UPTOWN THEATER - DAY

The UPTOWN, a mid-size neighborhood movie house. Rudy stands out front, with savvy DEMOND, 30s, the manager.

DEMOND

We don't have a midnight movie this Saturday. So I suppose we could do it then. How does... \$500 sound?

Rudy's eyes widen. Taking all this in.

RUDY

Well, that sounds like a fair amount. When would I receive my advance?

DEMOND

(confused)
Huh? What advance?

RUDY

My money? When do you pay me?

Now they are both confused. The Manager tries to clarify.

DEMOND

What -- no. You pay me. The money goes the other direction.

RUDY

I don't understand --

DEMOND

Brother, it's called four-walling.
You pay me, and then you keep all the
ticket sales.

(beat)

We did it with "Billy Jack." I think
we also might have done it with
"Grizzly Adams." You can clean up, if
you're successful.

RUDY

So I gotta PAY to show my movie?

The manager nods. Rudy's head is spinning.

RUDY

God DAMN!

(beat)

Do I... get to keep the popcorn money?

DEMOND

Nope! That's mine. You only get the
boxoffice. But if you promote the
shit out of the show, you could make
some serious bread...!

ANGLE - RUDY

His wheels start spinning. Calculating this.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Rudy is SHOUTING into a pay phone.

RUDY

Toney! You gotta break into the
hotel! Right now! In the Dunbar, in
my bedroom, in the armoire, is the
only print of "Dolemite"!

(emphatic)

Yes! Are you listening? OKAY! You
get that print, all five reels, and
you put it on a plane tonight!! Cause
I need that movie in Indianapolis!!!

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS - DAY

Rudy promotes the hell out of the screening. He passes out
FLYERS. He tapes them up in barbershops and poolhalls.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS - DAY

He drives his car, BARKING into his BULLHORN. His AMPLIFIED
VOICE BOOMS crazily, bouncing off buildings.

RUDY (AMPLIFIED)
 Exclusive World Premiere Engagement!
 Direct from Hollywood! At the Uptown
 Theater! "Dolemite"! Starring ME,
 Rudy Ray Moore! "Dolemite"! Free
 autographs for the first 100 patrons!

People step out on the street, pointing, curious.

INT. INDIANAPOLIS RADIO STATION BOOTH - DAY

BOBBY VALE (ON AIR)
 We're givin' away two tickets to
 "Dolemite," to the tenth caller!
 You're insane if you don't grab your
 phone! It's like Christmas morning!
 Except your daddy ain't drunk and your
 momma ain't cryin'!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rudy keeps SCREAMING from his mobile bullhorn.

RUDY (AMPLIFIED)
 If you crave satisfaction, this is the
 place to find that action! Coming to
 the Uptown as its next attraction! My
 picture will put you in traction!!
 (insistent)
 "Dolemite"! "DOLEMITE!"

EXT. UPTOWN THEATER - NIGHT

A THEATER USHER hangs the letters on the marquee: *"DOLEMITE"
 WORLD PREMIERE! RUDY RAY MOORE IN PERSON! MIDNIGHT!!"*

INT. UPTOWN THEATER - NIGHT

Rudy paces by the concession stand. The place is empty. He
 looks anxious and nervous. He checks his watch. And then...

MOVIE GOER (O.C.)
 Dolemite!

Rudy looks over at the boxoffice. A half a dozen young
 brothers are buying tickets.

MOVIE GOER
 One ticket for Dolemite.
 (protest from his buddies)
 Ok, ok... six tickets.

A car CUTS OFF another driver, to grab a parking spot.

Rudy watches a long LINE begin to form at the boxoffice.
 Everybody is black. Demond, the theater manager, approaches.
 They both stare in amazement.

RUDY
I think you're gonna sell a lot of
popcorn, Demond.

DEMOND
And you're gonna make a whole lot of
green!

Rudy cracks a smile.

INT. UPTOWN THEATER - LATER

The MOVIE is playing. The crowd is going crazy.

ON THE SCREEN

Rudy FIRES the rifle at the Hapless White Guy.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
Dance, motherfucker, dance!

The white guy attempts his pathetic hop. Rudy FIRES again.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
DANCE!
(he laughs)
*Girls, this motherfucker's got rhythm,
hasn't he?!!*

THE CROWD

SCREAMS and LAUGHS.

IN THE BACK OF THE THEATER

Rudy stands in the darkened doorway, watching the movie with
immense satisfaction and pride.

There's ROWDY HOOTING and CLAPPING all around him.

Rudy takes it in -- and gets hit by a wave of emotion. After
all these years... the hard work has paid off.

ON SCREEN

Rudy is in the karate studio, in his all-white suit and hat.

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
*Dolemite is my name, and fuckin' up
motherfuckers is my game!*

THE AUDIENCE

yells "Whooo!" Rudy chuckles.

ON THE SCREEN - LATER

Rudy and a buxom BLONDE LADY are both naked in bed, messing around.

Suddenly a WHITE DEPUTY bursts in. He gasps, appalled.

Embarrassed, the Blonde lies.

BLONDE
He made me do it!

RUDY (AS DOLEMITE)
(outraged)
Bitch, are you for REAL?!

The audience ROARS.

The Deputy fires a RIFLE at the woman. She gets BLASTED, bloody, against the wall.

Rudy pulls out a GUN and BLOWS AWAY the Deputy.

Rudy jumps up and runs from the room. He tears out, naked.

THE AUDIENCE

shrieks. They are going crazy at the naked stuff.

ANGLE - RUDY AND DEMOND

The manager scratches his head. He whispers --

DEMOND
Rudy, I'm confused. Is this movie supposed to be funny? I was expectin' a "Shaft" kind of a thing.

RUDY
Yeah, of course it's funny!
(he gestures at the crowd)
They get it. That's why they're laughin'! It's a comedy. It's action. It's sexy. It's a total piece of entertainment!!

ON THE SCREEN

Naked Rudy suddenly JUMPS OFF A HILL!

Suddenly -- the image FREEZES, and "INSTANT REPLAY" appears.

RUDY VOICEOVER
*So y'all don't believe I jumped, huh?
So watch this good shit!*

The film image BACKS UP, then the scene RESTARTS.

Rudy does it again -- jumping off the hill naked, then rolling down the mountain, his ass flashing.

THE CROWD

breaks into CRAZED applause.

Rudy laughs, delighted. So pleased. He looks up at the FLICKERING LIGHT from the projector. It's magical. There are tears in his eyes. This is what it's all about.

CUT TO:

INT. DIMENSION PICTURES - DAY

A low-end B-movie company. We move past walls of sludgy movie POSTERS: "Gator Bait," "Lady Cocoa," "The Doberman Gang"...

Sitting at a cheap desk is LAWRENCE WOOLNER, 60, a shrewd grindhouse vet. He flips through "Variety," reading the numbers -- when suddenly he STOPS.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER
What the fuckety fuck??

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Rudy is packing up his costumes in a suitcase. He's also got the film print in two huge cases. The phone rings.

RUDY
(answers)
Hello? I gotta run. Make it quick --

INTERCUT:

INT. DIMENSION PICTURES

Woolner grins a toothy smile.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER
Is this Rudy? Rudy Ray Moore? The man who four-walled the Uptown in Indianapolis and set the house record???

Rudy is taken aback.

RUDY
Who is this? Man, I'm in a hurry. I got a five-hour drive to my next gig --

LAWRENCE WOOLNER
Whoa! Hang on! It took me all day to find this number. Is this your office?

Rudy glances at the motel.

RUDY

Uh, sure.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

Well I'm delighted to finally speak!
My name is Lawrence Woolner. I run
Dimension Pictures --

RUDY

(indignant)

"Dimension"? Dimension! I know you.
You fuckers rejected me!

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

You're right. We did! But Hollywood
is a fickle mistress.

(beat)

Today I've got a pitch that'll blow
you out of your seat: Me and my people
want to buy "Dolemite."

Rudy's face freezes. WHAT?

CUT TO:

EXT. DIMENSION PICTURES - DAY

A cheap office building on Sunset Boulevard. Rudy walks up,
in one of his over-the-top outfits. He is nervous, but wants
to project confidence. Following him are Lady Reed, Ben,
Jimmy and Toney. They are all dressed to impress.

INT. DIMENSION PICTURES - DAY

They walk through the lobby past the secretary.

BEN

So what are we supposed to say?

RUDY

NOTHING! You keep your mouths shut!
You're just here to give me more of
a... legitimate organization.

Beat.

RUDY

And for fuck's sake, there's sauce on
your shirt. Button your jacket!!

BEN

Okay, okay! Man...!

INT. DIMENSION PICTURES - LATER

A cheap room, with a handful of white DIMENSION EXECs, led by impresario Lawrence Woolner. People are shaking hands.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

Gentlemen, we are thrilled to meet.
I've brought in the whole Dimension
Films team.

RUDY

And these are my associates from
Generation International: Mr. Jones,
Mr. Lynch, Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Toney.

DIMENSION EXEC #2

A pleasure.

Beat. The Dimension Exec is unclear. He checks his papers.

DIMENSION EXEC #2

Uh... sorry, I'm confused. What is
Generation International? I thought
your production company was Comedian
International.

RUDY

Ah. Well, Comedian International is a
subsidiary of Generation
International. Comedian International
focuses more on the live bookings and
audio recordings, while Generation
International handles the cinematic
output.

Everybody pretends to understand and nods. They all sit.

Beat. There is definite tension. Both sides are suspicious.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

So! Your movie. We think there's a
big opportunity here...

RUDY

Fuck YES, there's opportunity! But
you need to explain one thing to me:
Why do I need you? The way I see it,
I'm doin' pretty good by myself --

TONEY

Yes, he is.

DIMENSION EXEC #2

Well, Rudy, there's a certain
"professional" way to --

RUDY

(he snaps)

Cause we all know there's a HISTORY to this show business. Where the nigger makes the art, and then the white man steals all his money!

TONEY

That's right. Over and over.

RUDY

And you ain't gonna do to me what they done to Chuck Berry!! No fuckin' way!

The Dimension execs stiffen up, nervous.

Rudy's buddies glance at each other, not sure what they're supposed to do.

Finally, Woolner frowns, unintimidated. He's the boss.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

You know what? You wanna do it your way, be my guest. Go hit the road and personally introduce your movie in every theater in America. Knock yourself out! You'll be releasing "Dolemite" for the next five years.

(beat)

But if you want it done right, then here we are. We passed before? Okay, we fucked up. I admit it.

Rudy's team erupts.

LADY REED

You don't gotta tell us! We put a fat pearl in your palm and you fuckin' dropped it!

TONEY

To say the least. To say the least!

BEN

Uh, YES! Yeah, you did fuck up --

JIMMY LYNCH

Stepped in shit, brother. You lost out on all that money...

Rudy silences them all with a raised hand.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

Ms. Queen Bee...

LADY REED

That's Lady Reed. Queen Bee is my stage and screen name.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

Yes, Ms. Lady.... Reed. Mr. Toney.
Mr. Taylor. Mr. uh... Lynch... I
sincerely apologize.

They all don't know how to take it. But they do.

LADY REED

Ok.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

But please, allow us to now sell
ourselves. This company has two sweet
spots. One: Redneck pictures.
Moonshine, hillbillies, and sheriffs.
Those play the Southern drive-ins.
(he winks)

But our second sweet spot... is
Blaxploitation. Pictures about
blacks, for blacks. And where do we
play them? In GIANT theaters. Every
downtown in America has big,
beautiful, resplendent palaces. They
were built in the 1920s, and they're
huge -- 2000, 3000 seats! They were
popular, until all the whites fled to
the suburbs. So who's left? The
black urban audience! And if we book
the right movies into these giant
houses... we can make a fortune.

Jimmy, Lady Reed, Ben and Toney jump at this word: "Fortune!"
They look at each other, like the money just rained down.

But Rudy isn't getting suckered. He narrows his eyes, then
suddenly STANDS. Towering over everybody. Lowering his
voice. Going into his badass persona.

RUDY

You know... there's a scene in my
motion picture, where bad Willie Green
has come into town and stolen my
nightclub. He kept my receipts... my
girls... everything I spent my life
buildin' up. And he thinks he can
just take possession and keep all the
money, cause I don't know any better!

(beat)

Well -- then I take charge and show
him who's boss. Cause Dolemite don't
get ripped off.

LAWRENCE WOOLNER

You're not gonna pull our guts out,
are you?

A long beat. Then Rudy lightens. His eyes twinkle.

RUDY
We'll talk after the first profits
statement.

They shake hands. BOOM! Music sounds as we:

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

The MARKETING machine takes over!

POSTERS get printed, rolling off the presses. They're excessive and crazy. The "DOLEMITE" letters explode, like an earthquake. Rudy's FIST juts out, slamming right at us.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

The insane, frenetic TRAILER plays on a SCREEN. It's non-stop PUNCHING and CHAOS. In the booth, Rudy barks into a mike and RECORDS the narration:

RUDY
I've got an all-girl army that knows
what to do! They're foxy as hell and
practice Kung Fu!
(he SPEEDS UP)
See me uptown, downtown, crowned and
renowned! Delayed, relayed, mislaid,
and parlayed! Hatched, matched,
snatched and scratched!
(even FASTER)
Whack, jack, smack, crack, hoop black
blackjack racetrack and flapjack and
STILL comin' back!!

He LAUGHS. Behind the glass, the ENGINEER is bewildered. But the Dimension guys grin and give him a big thumbs-up.

INT. MPAA - DAY

The MPAA RATINGS BOARD. A dozen MIDDLE-AGED BORING WHITE PEOPLE sit in a screening room, confused. Arguing.

BORING WHITE LADY
I just can't understand what he's
saying half the time.

BORING WHITE MAN
So do we give it an "X" rating?

The lady consults a script TRANSCRIPT.

BORING WHITE LADY
I'm not even sure it's swearing. I
know what "motherfucker" means.
(MORE)

BORING WHITE LADY (CONT'D)
 But what is a "rat-soup-eatin', pepper
 gut junkyard no business barn
 lowlife"?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Rudy records a series of RADIO spots.

RUDY
 I put my finger in the ground and
 turned the whole world upside-down!
 DOLEMITE!! Rated "R"! Under 17 not
 permitted without a parent or
 permission from your warden!
 (beat)
 Opening at the Woods Theater on
 Friday!

A BEEP! over his headphone. Then --

RUDY
 Opening at the Avon Theater on Friday!

BEEP!

RUDY
 Opening at the Moonlight Drive-In on
 Friday!

BEEP!

RUDY
 Opening at the Cameo on Friday!

CUT TO:

INT. KENT RECORDS - DAY

A Bihari brother opens an envelope... and removes a CHECK. He
 stares at it in disbelief -- then waves over his brother.

JULIUS BIHARI
 You're not gonna believe who paid us
 back!

INT. DOLPHIN RECORDS:

Toney proudly fills the magazine racks. "JET" MAGAZINE, with
 Diana Ross on the cover. He FLIPS to an article, "PARTY ALBUM
 KING RUDY RAY MOORE MAKES HIS FILM DEBUT!" Underneath, Rudy
 grins, leaning against a Cadillac.

"EBONY" MAGAZINE, with Muhammad Ali on the cover. INSIDE,
 Rudy swaggers in a pimp outfit. "DOLEMITE SMASHES ONTO THE
 BIG SCREEN."

"PLAYERS" MAGAZINE, with a sexy black girl on the cover. INSIDE, Rudy strikes a Kung Fu pose with two TOPLESS BLACK GIRLS. "YOU THINK HIS ALBUMS ARE DIRTY? WAIT TIL YOU GET A LOOK AT HIS MOTION PICTURE!"

CUT TO:

INT. LADY REED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lady Reed is wearing a spangly, tight dress. She stands in front of a mirror, adjusting her wig. Checking her makeup. She is very excited.

Then, a CAR HONKS. BEEP! BEEP! Her son runs in.

SON
MOM! Your car's here!
(beat; he reacts)
Whoa! What happened to you?

LADY REED
(pleased)
You're lookin' at a movie star.

He grins.

SON
Hey, do you think Pam Grier will be there tonight? Cause she is HOT! I'd sure like to meet her --

LADY REED
You ain't meeting nobody! You go and watch TV!
(beat; proud)
This is my night.

EXT. LADY REED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The two of them step out -- and there is a waiting LIMOUSINE.

Both of their jaws drop. Rudy is standing there in an outrageously awesome suit and hat, while Jerry, Ben, Toney and Jimmy wave from the window.

Rudy approaches to escort Lady Reed to the car.

LADY REED
It's a long road since that club in the cow pasture.

RUDY
Yes, it is. Yes it is.

She takes his hand, then turns quiet. Private.

LADY REED

Rudy. I just want to say... I'm so grateful that you put me in this movie. Cause I ain't never seen a woman who looks like me, up on that big screen.

(touched)

You know what I'm saying. I ain't sexy. But I'm a real woman. And I truly appreciate what you did for me.

Rudy offers his arm and starts singing "The Ballad of a Boy and Girl." She joins in as they walk together to the limo.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

The limo waits in front. Jimmy comes rushing out of the store, carrying BOTTLES of champagne and a handful of NEWSPAPERS.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DRIVING

They are all giddy, drinking champagne, truly amazed.

JIMMY LYNCH

Opening night! Opening night, baby!!

They all CLINK glasses.

Ben searches through the NEWSPAPERS. They thumb through them, reading the movie sections.

LADY REED

Whooo! Look at your ad, Rudy! You look hot!

RUDY

Ha!!

Rudy stares at himself -- in the AD, punching his way out. Like he can't believe it.

BEN

Hey hey! I found a review!

Ben starts READING it... then his face falls.

RUDY

What?

(curious)

What is it? Oh, just spit it out.

Ben doesn't want to continue.

BEN

(READING)

"Dull-emite is a more apt title. This could be the lamest film of the year.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

The plot is vague, and the actors scream their lines. Its only touch of originality is in the introduction of the fat man as romantic hero."

RUDY

So? What's wrong with being heavysset?

LADY REED

I got no problem with a few extra pounds.

Jerry reads another review. He winces.

RUDY

Jerry, what's that one say?

JERRY

(reading, reluctant)
Uh, "Dolemite is dreadful, humorless, and a technically terrible movie --"

RUDY

Good thing we didn't invite D'Urville!

They all LAUGH.

JERRY

(still reading)
"In the guise of blaxploitation, a corrupt white establishment versus a ghetto anti-hero, it spews hatred and debases human beings."

RUDY

"Debases"? What the hell does that mean?

JERRY

(sulky)
It means, we failed in our attempt to show the gritty truth of the streets.

RUDY

Oh, fuck that, Jerry! Nobody cares what critics say! Critics don't even like to have a good time! Why they bother goin'?

(knowing)

All the brothers care about is shit blowing up, and jokes and titties and the good guys win and the bad guys lose. That's it! Nothin' else matters. And we delivered.

Defiant, Rudy grabs a paper. He flips to a review... then grins.

RUDY

HA! See? This one is superb!
"Dolemite is not fit for a blind dog
to see. He's coarse, bold, crude, and
rude."

The group looks at him, baffled by his glee.

JERRY

And why do you like that one?

RUDY

(he smiles broadly)
Cause it's gonna make folks say,
"We're goin'! We want to see how rude
and crude this Dolemite is!"

The spirit of excitement has been extinguished.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The limo drives down the main drag. All the old theaters are
huge -- the marquees lit up...

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

The mood in the car goes silent. Rudy sees that Lady Reed
looks worried. He takes her hand and clears his throat.

RUDY

Don't nobody worry. This evening is a
VICTORY! No matter what happens.

(earnest)

We made it this far! We're in a
fuckin' limousine, driving to the
opening night of our movie. Goddamn,
I started my life barefoot in a cotton
field, and here I am! I'm just so
proud of everybody, and me, and the
whole thing. You guys are my family,
and we really did it. We made a
movie! And now we're about to go see
it! So no matter what happens, no
matter WHAT, let's just promise
ourselves we will have a great time.

Everybody nods. Jimmy, Ben, Lady Reed, Toney, Jerry. They
give Rudy hopeful smiles.

And then the driver slams on the brakes. Everyone flails.

RUDY

What the hell?

Jimmy looks out the window.

JIMMY LYNCH

Sweet Jesus!

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

There are a THOUSAND PEOPLE outside, fighting to get in! It's mayhem.

And smack in front of them is the jumbo "DOLEMITE" MARQUEE at an old-time MOVIE PALACE! It's eyepopping! The signage is three stories tall. A King Kong size cut-out of Rudy towers above the street. The sign screams "DOLEMITE! Bone crushing, skull-splitting, brain-blasting action!"

IN THE LIMO

They all gasp.

RUDY

Holy fuck!

LADY REED

Rudy. They all here to see you.

She smiles, heartfelt. Rudy looks back at her, awed, and a little overwhelmed. The whole street is RUMBLING.

JIMMY LYNCH

Shiiiiit!

Around them, the mob is chanting "DOLEMITE! DOLEMITE!!"

All eyes go to Rudy. Toney gives him an endearing smile.

TONEY

Rudy, you got what you always wanted.
They know you! They all know you!

RUDY

(in shock)

I guess they do. They sure as hell do.

Quiet, Rudy puts on his hat, to complete his outfit, then --

EXT. MOVIE PALACE - SAME TIME

The limo doors open, and the crowd EXPLODES. Rudy steps out, in his fur-lined extravaganza.

Cameras FLASH. The sidewalk flickers bright RED and YELLOW, from the theater bulbs above.

It's madness.

Lady Reed slowly steps out, blinking in disbelief. Then the rest -- Jimmy, Ben, Jerry, Toney, slowly exit.

PEOPLE immediately surge forward, thrusting out papers and albums, for autographs. Astonished, Rudy quickly starts signing one, then another, then another --

FAN

Rudy! You're so funny!

FAN #2

Dolemite, will you sign my album --

The THEATRE MANAGER, a harried middle-aged man in a brown suit, pushes through. He leads a few USHERS and struggles to get to Rudy.

THEATRE MANAGER

Mr. Moore! It's an honor to have you here, but we need to move you inside. We're not equipped for this kind of crowd! It's crazy. If I could get you in, before a riot breaks out --

Suddenly, a SQUEAKY VOICE, as a little BLACK BOY, 12, breaks through. Slipping between people. Grabbing Rudy's arm.

BOY

Rudy! Rudy, man! I'm your biggest fan!

Rudy grins, surprised. Then the Manager pulls Rudy inside.

INT. MOVIE PALACE LOBBY - SAME TIME

The Manager pushes the group through the bustling lobby.

TONEY

This place is nuts!

THEATRE MANAGER

(freaking)

Let's all keep moving! We have to start! We've already sold out the 10 o'clock and midnight shows. I might even have to add a 2 a.m., to keep everyone happy --

RUDY

(surprised)

"2 a.m.?" Damn! These people are gonna stay out there, til then?

In the jostle, Rudy turns -- and something catches his eye.

At the lobby doors, the little Boy is peering in, sad. Face against the glass.

CLOSEUP - RUDY

He stares back. A moment between them. Until -- his friends TUG on him.

JIMMY LYNCH

Rudy! Man, what are you doing?! I don't wanna miss the credits!

BEN

Seriously, dude. We gotta go in! I wanna hear my song...

But Rudy is in his own space. He ignores them. Then softly --

RUDY

I'll be right back.

WIDE ANGLE - LOBBY

Rudy is framed against the glass wall. With the throbbing crowd and the Boy out front.

In silhouette, he fixes his Dolemite coat. He adjusts the brim of his hat, just so. And then -- he moves out.

EXT. THEATRE - SAME TIME

Rudy pops back outside. And the crowd ERUPTS! He strides up to the boy.

RUDY

Hey, Little Man! You old enough to be out this late?

The boy reacts: Wow! The kid's FATHER steps through.

BOY'S FATHER

Aw, he just can't stop talkin' about you. He's always doin' your shit.

BOY

I love your rhymin', Rudy! It's so bad!

RUDY

(playful)
I ain't bad! YOU bad!

BOY

I do your rhymin', just like Dolemite!
But then I make it about me!

The kid starts doing a HUMAN BEAT BOX sound. Boom, ba-da-boom! Boom, ba-da-boom!

And then, he BEGINS RAPPING --

BOY

*You've heard about Dolemite and Shine
and the Titanic,
But there's a new kid around who's
gonna be gigantic!
I live in the hood, but that can't
hold me,
I'm gonna move to Beverly Hills,
and don't you try to scold me!*

Rudy grins and JOINS IN. They start circling each other.

RUDY

*Hey boy, who do you think you are?
Don't you know you can't topple the
world's greatest star?!*

BOY

*Ha! When it comes to rhymin',
I was through with it,
before you old chumps
ever knew what to do with it!!*

RUDY

*Oh yeah?! I chained down thunder and
handcuffed lightning!
I'm so damn strong it's sometimes
fright'ning!!*

BOY

*I use an earthquake to make my
milkshake!*

RUDY

*(startled)
Hey! That's my line!*

BOY

*No more!
Cause Mighty Donald is my name --*

RUDY AND THE BOY

*(gleefully together)
And fuckin' up motherfuckers is my
game!!*

Rudy and the kid BREAK INTO LAUGHTER. Rudy is delighted. He winks at the boy and pats him on the back.

RUDY

*Son, you got the gift! Don't let no one
tell you you can't be whatever you want.*

The kid lights up. Rudy leans in to the dad.

RUDY

You done good.

AT THE DOOR

Lady Reed steps out. She hurries over to Rudy.

LADY REED
Hey! C'mon now! You gotta go in.

RUDY
But they're gonna be out here all night!

CLOSEUP - RUDY

He peers around, overwhelmed. By the yelling, the cacophony, the lights, the chaos.

And then -- he smiles beatifically at her. His voice drops to a hush.

RUDY
You know what? You just go back in. Enjoy yourself. Have a blast.

LADY REED
But Rudy, that ain't right...

RUDY
Aww, I've seen the picture. It's great. I've enjoyed it with an audience.
(he gestures to the mob)
But all these folk have come out to see me... and they're gonna be here all night, and maybe I should respect their loyalty.

(beat)
You know, just hang with them. Give 'em a little show while they wait.

He grins down at the boy. The boy grins back.

LADY REED
Now baby, that's crazy.

RUDY
(he smiles)
Nah, I'm serious. So you go in now! Eat some popcorn and have fun at the movie.
(he gestures: Go!)
I'll be good.

Lady Reed shakes her head, incredulous. Then, she gives a reluctant nod: Okay. She walks back to the theater. She turns and gives Rudy a final look... then goes inside. The ushers pull the glass doors shut.

ANGLE - RUDY

He is left alone with the mob. They gape at him in disbelief.

And then... Rudy jumps up onto a pole. He holds out his arms and SHOUTS OUT TO THE MOB.

RUDY
HELLO, MOTHERFUCKERS!!!

The CROWD excitedly ROARS BACK.

CROWD
DOLEMITE!!!!

Jesus! The street THUNDERS.

There he is on the posters, and there he is, standing in their midst. Like some magic has occurred.

Rudy peers around at all their faces and smiles joyfully. This is what matters. He hops down, then starts WALKING DOWN THE SIDEWALK. The line is thick, people four, five across, spilling into the street.

RUDY
Ladies and gentlemen, it's such a
pleasure to have you all here tonight!
I'm sorry, it's gonna be a bit of a
wait.

Rudy just gently pushes his way through. The crowd mystically parting, faces smiling, as he gladhandles his adoring fans, giving friendly hugs, shaking hands.

RUDY
But don't worry -- don't you leave!
Cause I can promise you, it's worth
it! Oh yes it is. This movie is a
full evening of entertainment!

Rudy turns the corner -- and we SEE that the LINE goes all the way down the block, truly as far as the eye can see.

But Rudy doesn't flinch. Enraptured, he keeps walking, giving people hugs, shakes, signing autographs. Caught up in this, full of emotion, he begins RHYMING a TOAST:

RUDY
Cause you know what they say...?
(he launches in)
Dolemite is my name,
And rappin' and tappin' is my game.
I'm young and free, and just as bad as
I wanna be.
Look at me, I'm a rare specimen of a
man, don't you agree?

(MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)

Every night I sign my own autograph
book,
And never pass a mirror without taking
a second look...

We slowly CRANE UP and AWAY... Rudy getting smaller, swallowed
up into the sea of people... until, finally, the massive
"DOLEMITE" MARQUEE COMES INTO VIEW...

RUDY

Live the life you love, and love the
life that you live.
From the frantic Atlantic to the
terrific Pacific,
Be the best of whatever you are.
Reach out for the moon,
but if you miss it...
(beat)
Cling to a star.

The marquee FILLS THE FRAME. The King Kong-sized painted
cutout of Rudy is triumphant, fist punching into the sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

"RUDY RAY MOORE 1927-2008"