

ELVIS

Screenplay by

BAZ LUHRMANN & SAM BROMELL
and
BAZ LUHRMANN & CRAIG PEARCE
and
JEREMY DONER

Story by

BAZ LUHRMANN and JEREMY DONER

This script is the confidential and proprietary property of Warner Bros. Pictures and no portion of it may be performed, distributed, reproduced, used, quoted or published without prior written permission.

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

Warner Bros. Pictures
4000 Warner Boulevard
Burbank, California 91522

March 5, 2021
© 2020
WARNER BROS. ENT.
All Rights Reserved

FADE IN:

INT. ORDINARY APT. (VEGAS) - LATE AFTERNOON (1997)

The sun-spotted hand of an old man adjusts a radio dial.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(on radio)

It's a beautiful jackpot of a day
here in Las Vegas and, you guessed
it, the biggest song of 1997...

The jaunty Euro hit "Macarena!" plays as a frail,
corpulent MAN ascends a ladder and strains to lift a box
marked, "CHRISTMAS CARDS, 1997."

Annoyed by the music, he flicks the dial again: ear-
splitting white noise.

THUD! He crashes onto the floor. CHRISTMAS CARDS are
splayed around him.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

I know what you're thinking... who
the hell is this Colonel fellow?

The man's fleshy, grey face gasping desperately. This is
COLONEL TOM PARKER (87).

We TRACK ACROSS him to the Christmas cards: a portrait of
Elvis, magnificent, king-like, beside the old man
dressed in an ill-fitting Santa suit. An inscription
reads: "Merry Christmas, from Elvis and the Colonel."

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DUSK

SIRENS BLARE! As an AMBULANCE screams through the neon
heart of Sin City, we hear...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Colonel Tom Parker, legendary
manager of Elvis Presley, has been
rushed to Valley Hospital...

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

LOOKING DOWN ON: Colonel. Eyes closed. Dead-looking.
MEDICS attempt to revive him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 There are some who'd make me out
 to be the villain of this here
 story...

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - DUSK

The ambulance races past the International Hotel.

The CAMERA WHIP PANS TO its towering sign: "THE STAR TREK
 EXPERIENCE: BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE."

The sign SPINS ON ITS AXIS as we JOURNEY BACK TO the
 International of the 1970s. The sign now heralding:
 "ELVIS!"

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - PORTE COCHERE - NIGHT (1974)

We STREAM ALONG WITH the ELVIS FANS pouring out of limos
 and THROUGH the hotel's glass doors...

 OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 Who'd say I exploited the boy and
 stole all his money...

A CAMERA CREW shoots 16MM FOOTAGE of CROWDS being ushered
 through the lobby. QUICK CUTS of every possible
 permutation of merchandise being snatched up by the
 adoring crowds.

 OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 Trapped him in Vegas and enabled
 his drug addiction...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SERVICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

SPLASH! We're UNDERWATER. A DROWNED MAN, pale face
 obscured by long, black tendrils of hair...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

Onstage, a WARM-UP COMEDIAN cracks cheesy gags.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - CASINO - NIGHT

By a roped-off craps table, a gold trolley stacked high
 with chips. A small crowd looks on as a gruff-looking
 security guard, RED WEST, ushers in the beige TOM DISKIN.
 He leans in to the cigar-puffing silhouette of the
 Colonel, whispering in his ear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
And eventually, when I had
squeezed all I could out of him...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SERVICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

SUDDENLY: THE DROWNED MAN is pulled by his hair from a
bucket of ice water! This is ELVIS PRESLEY (38).

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
... I destroyed him.

TILT UP as a still corpulent, but younger, 64-YEAR-OLD
COLONEL enters, brandishing his elephant-headed cane. He
takes in the situation before him.

Elvis has collapsed on the floor. His bodyguards, SONNY
and Red West, hold staff at bay. Childhood friend JERRY
SCHILLING shoots a recriminating glance at the Colonel.

NURSE TISH suppresses panic as DR. NICK holds Elvis' head
above a bucket of ice water. Everyone looks to Colonel.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
That's right. It was me who killed
Elvis Presley.

Colonel's steely gaze. A frightening moment of
consideration as we hear...

COLONEL
Now, you listen up real good. The
only thing that matters is that
that man gets on that stage
tonight!

But then, Nurse Tish pipes up courageously.

NURSE TISH
If he was my son...

She glances to a grey-haired man with a pencil mustache
arriving meekly in the shadows. This is VERNON PRESLEY
(57). Elvis' father.

NURSE TISH
... I'd put him in the hospital.

Suddenly cold, off-handed:

COLONEL
Of course, it's a Presley
Enterprises decision, Vernon...

All eyes on Vernon.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

The comic, running out of gags, stalls for time. The crowd grows restless at their tables.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SERVICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

After an eternity, Vernon mumbles:

VERNON

What can you do for him, Dr. Nick?

Dr. Nick pops open his BAG OF TRICKS. WE GLIMPSE: MEDS, PILLS, SYRINGES. As Dr. Nick prepares an injection...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

DUM! DUM! DUM! DUM! A thunderous drum roll...

As now we see IMAGES in the style of A SUPERHERO DONNING HIS COSTUME: WHITE JUMPSUIT! DIAMOND-ENCRUSTED PRIZE-FIGHTER BELT! 9MM SLIPPED INTO HIS LEFT BOOT, GOLD PPK SLIPPED IN HIS RIGHT! CHRISTIAN, JEWISH, AND BUDDHIST BLING! THE LIGHTNING BOLT NECKLACE ALREADY IN PLACE!!!

AN AMERICAN EAGLE CAPE SPREADS ITS RHINESTONE WINGS!

ELVIS

(sings)

Glory! Glory!!! Halleluuuuujah!!!

The eagle turns to REVEAL: Superhero Elvis, reaching for the final divine notes, spreading his wings up to God...

ELVIS

(sings)

*His truuuuth is maaaarching
ooooonnnnn!!!!!!!!!!*

The ballad crescendos! Elvis' giant band lashes their instruments. Two gospel choirs: one white, one Black.

ELVIS

(sings)

*His truuuuth is maaaarching
ooooonnnnn!!!!!!!!!!*

As the last chords thunder through the night, we GO TO...

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - NIGHT

The Elvis sign has transformed back into "The Star Trek Experience." With a BEEP, BEEP, we--

JUMP CUT BACK TO:

INT. VALLEY HOSPITAL - COLONEL'S ROOM - NIGHT (1997)

The '90s Hilton seen THROUGH the window. Colonel lies in a hospital bed.

The Colonel jolts upward.

OLD COLONEL

No!... It's not true. I didn't
kill him... I loved him. I didn't
kill him. But I know who did.

He looks up to the morphine drip. The BEEP, BEEP of the heart monitor transforms into a MUSICAL PULSE as morphine snakes down a plastic tube into the Colonel's arm.

OLD COLONEL

It weren't me...

Colonel slowly pulls back the bedsheets and stands, taking his IV stand with him. We TRACK ACROSS get well paraphernalia. A red balloon appears, seemingly part of the get well gifts. Colonel is drawn toward it.

OLD COLONEL

And it weren't nothing to do with
what them dirt farmers and
muckrakers wrote up in all them
books.

The beat kicks in, balloon in one hand, IV stand in the other. He shuffles down the corridor to the music.

OLD COLONEL

Evil manager? I wasn't his
manager! I was his promoter! It
was my job to present him to you.
To sell, package, and make money
in every conceivable way! And I
did!

As he glides down the corridor, a photo of Elvis and Colonel appears.

OLD COLONEL

Elvis, the showman, and the
Colonel, the snowman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colonel's elephant-headed cane appears in his hand and he gestures towards the walls, now collaged with snapshots of Colonel and Elvis.

OLD COLONEL

There are thousands of photos of me and my boy...

A collage of a thousand images now sprawls across both sides of the corridor.

OLD COLONEL

Huddled, plotting, planning, and whispering! Only I know what we talked of. I know what was said.

The hospital hallway gives way to a corridor of Elvis merchandise, packed with stuffed hound dogs, calendars, buttons, hats and more balloons.

OLD COLONEL

But I never wrote no book. I never sold my story. I never told the real story. I never told the truth about me and my boy. I never talked...

The Colonel dons a boater hat.

OLD COLONEL

... until now!!

CUT TO a gold curtain rising to reveal: Old Colonel, now resplendent in a striped blazer, every inch the carnival barker, miming along to a contemporary, orchestral version of Elvis' song, "Carnival Time." Colonel sashays and warbles down a staircase into SPACE.

OLD COLONEL

(miming to Elvis)
*Come on kids from eight to eighty
 Hey there, mister, bring your lady
 There's a big show on the inside
 It's carnival time!*

He balances on a tightrope above an abstract Vegas Strip.

OLD COLONEL

(miming to Elvis)
*Popcorn, peanuts, and cotton candy
 Pink lemonade that's dan-dan-dandy
 Be a big shot for a dollar.
 It's carnival time!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Grabbing a bunch of balloons, he glides down off the tightrope. He spins a roulette wheel, taking us back in time...

Colonel, now with a stick-and-bundle over his shoulder, runs along a WIGGLY CARPET that leads to a far-away model of a 1930s carnival.

OLD COLONEL

As an orphan, I ran away to the carnival, where I learned my trade... the snow job.

PUSH IN on a red curtain touting "Tom Parker's Famous Dancing Chickens."

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Tom Parker's Famous Dancing Chickens!

Curtains fly open to reveal Old Colonel in front of a stage on which ordinary chickens cluck about. A band plays side-stage. A group of RUBES watches, intrigued.

OLD COLONEL

Ladies and gentleman, direct from the deepest jungles of Peru... The high-kicking chorus line of the Barnyard Ballet!

CLOSE ON Colonel as he reveals the gas burners, secretly heating the underside of the stage.

OLD COLONEL

(to camera)

Now then... the snow job! The art of emptying a rube's wallet while leaving them with nothing but a smile on their face.

As the plates heat up, the chickens appear to dance. The rubes applaud! A mystical, minor-chord version of "Carnival Time" begins.

OLD COLONEL

It was also in the carnival that I learned from the great Madame Zeena...

Colonel gestures to a caravan and we ZOOM TOWARDS it to find MADAME ZEENA, a fortune teller gazing down into a crystal ball.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OLD COLONEL

The dark arts of hypnotism,
mentalism, and how to read a man's
greatest flaws and desires.

We see Colonel inside the ball, a backdrop of a European village behind him. He waves his elephant cane to the CAMERA, hypnotizing us, and throws cash in the air. As the cash floats downward, it becomes falling snow.

OLD COLONEL

Of course, any promoter is limited
by the draw of his attraction.

We TRACK ACCROSS posters of the carnival oddities....
MERMAID MONSTER, LOBSTER BOY, ALIGATOR MAN.

OLD COLONEL

I had my acts... the Mermaid
Monster, Lobster Boy...

A young man (the silhouette of Elvis) stands in front of
THE GEEK poster.

OLD COLONEL

But the act that always made the
most snow is the one that excited
the audience with what they truly
feared and desired.

Old Colonel's sun-spotted claw reaches out towards the
silhouette...

OLD COLONEL

The Geek...

Colonel pulls a lever and suddenly, jackpot on the slot machine! 'DING DING DING' Elvis and Geek heads. Colonel dances along a HALL OF MIRRORS in which we see reflections of Elvis.

OLD COLONEL

(miming to Elvis)
*Roustabouts are roustabout'n
And there's happy shouts, children
shoutin'
If you've got doubts quit your
doubtin'*

We see teddy bears reflected in the mirrors!

OLD COLONEL

(miming to Elvis)
There's thrills...

Hound dogs reflected in the mirrors!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OLD COLONEL
(miming to Elvis)
It's spice...

Rows and rows of merchandise fill the mirrors!

OLD COLONEL
It's cheap at half the price!

Colonel sings as he bobs along on his Jamboree cart, pulled by elephants. Inanimate merchandise comes to life and marches along behind him! Thanksgiving Day Parade-style hound dog balloons drift overhead.

OLD COLONEL
(miming to Elvis)
*So don't be bashful, buy a ticket
Get the habit never kick it*

CUT TO the band back in the 'Dancing Chickens' tent, who pluck along.

OLD COLONEL
(miming to Elvis)
Hear the band there...

CUT TO the dancing chickens.

OLD COLONEL
(shouting at
chickens)
Don't just stand there!

With a gesture of his cane to the audience:

OLD COLONEL
I was an impresario of
astonishment!

Colonel runs up a wiggly carpet to a Carnival.

OLD COLONEL
It's carnival time!!

He hitches a ride on a tremendous Ferris Wheel, swooping into the sky above the glittering, soft-focused lights of the midway. Hank Snow's country and western ballad, "Fool Such As I" softly begins.

OLD COLONEL
My next attraction was in the
country music business. I
partnered with one of its biggest
stars... Hank Snow!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

The Colonel looks below, where HANK SNOW, a ten-gallon-hatted diminutive country singer, and his troubadours perform on a stage at the Carnival.

HANK SNOW

(sings)

*Pardon me if I'm sentimental when
we say goodbye...*

The country music crowd is delighted.

OLD COLONEL

(miming to Hank Snow)

*Now and then, there's a fool such
as I...*

(speaking to camera)

Prophetic words. Hank Snow, such a fool.

Looking on from the wings: an identically-dressed 19-year-old version of Hank, JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW.

OLD COLONEL

And his hapless son, Jimmie
Rodgers Snow.

An abstract version of Elvis' "That's All Right" begins to overwhelm the sound of Hank's voice. With the turn of the Ferris wheel, night becomes day...

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY (1955)

Carnies pack up the carnival, tawdry in the morning light. The abstract "That's All Right" transforms into the original song, emanating in mono from a car radio.

CRANE DOWN to discover Jimmie Rodgers Snow, clutching a record as he passes a gum-chewing teenager in the cab of a truck. He flashes the record.

JIMMMY

Hot diggity dog, I got one! It
will blow their socks off.

We FOLLOW Jimmie to an open-flap chow tent, pitched amidst the vehicles.

EXT. CARNIVAL - CHOW TENT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

45-YEAR-OLD COLONEL puffs his cigar and points with his cane to a huge map of the South splayed in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Security, Diskin! Tell the mayors of all these towns that we need a police escort when Hank arrives in town.

Colonel points to a couple more engagements on the map. Typing out instructions at a nearby desk, is his impossibly-bland lieutenant TOM DISKIN (35).

COLONEL

In Baton Rouge, we'll stage a carny wedding at the top of the Ferris wheel. Madam Zeena, pick out your next husband. In New Orleans we're going to use a loudspeaker to announce you, Hank.

(to the Little People)

Meaz-y leaz-ittle freaz-iends, you're going to be marching in a parade!

LITTLE PEOPLE

Feaz-uck!/Sheaz-it!

HANK SNOW (O.S.)

And I'll be riding an elephant too?

Next to Diskin, a nudie-suited Hank Snow strums his guitar and half-listens to the Colonel. Around them, a variety of COUNTRY PERFORMERS, as well as the odd SIDESHOW CARNY, Zeena among them.

COLONEL

A man on an elephant seems important.

DISKIN

(sotto)

And taller...

HANK SNOW

But we still need a novelty act to bring in the young folk.

COLONEL

That's why I've got you a meeting with the Duke of Paducah tonight. If we can book the funniest mouth in the South as our opening act, we'll have the best show of the season. We'll be feasting on cake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, we hear Elvis' high-pitched voice cutting off Hank, mid-strum:

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (on record)
That's all right, mama
That's all right with you
That's all right, mama
Any way you do...

All turn to see Jimmie Rodgers defiantly standing next to the portable record player.

HANK SNOW
 Jimmie, turn that racket off!

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW
 But y'all have to hear this! Kids
 all over town are singing it
 everywhere I go.

All present listen intently.

HANK SNOW
 I hear Negro rhythms...

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW
 But with a country flavor!

Diskin picks up the record sleeve.

DISKIN
 Sun Records, that's Sam Phillips'
 label.

COLONEL
 Phillips? That fella who makes
 race records? With all them
 colored singers?

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW
 This fella's on the 'Hayride'
 tonight, after me, in the
 newcomers spot.

COLONEL
 They ain't puttin' a colored boy
 on the 'Hayride'!

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW
 That's the thing! He's white!

The Colonel plucks the cigar from his mouth.

COLONEL
 White...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Suddenly, the voice of radio announcer DEWEY PHILLIPS can be heard wafting in from the cab of the nearby truck.

DEWEY PHILLIPS (V.O.)

(on radio)

What do you think, Memphis?
Should we play it for the 27th
time?

Colonel rests his cane on his shoulder. He's strangely still, which has the effect of drawing everyone in.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

It doesn't matter if you do ten
stupid things... As long as you do
one smart one.

Colonel intones hypnotically:

COLONEL

How far to Shreveport, Diskin?

DISKIN

Two hours.

COLONEL

Send the Duke our apologies. We're
going to the Hayride.

As the Colonel and Diskin make a beeline for their vehicle, Hank catches on:

HANK SNOW

Ahh... A novelty act!

EXT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

HIGH WIDE OVER the Shreveport auditorium. We can hear Jimmie Rodgers Snow singing within:

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW (V.O.)

*How do you think I feel?
I know your love's not real...*

INT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

On stage, six diamond-studded, ten-gallon-hatted COWBOYS croon around a COWGIRL, the object of Jimmie Rodgers Snow's affection.

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW

(sings)

Another's purdy speech,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMIE RODGERS SNOW (CONT'D)

*Has put you out of reach
How do you think I feel...?*

At the back of the auditorium, Diskin and Hank look on as Jimmie leads the delighted audience to clap-and-respond.

HANK SNOW

The apple doesn't fall far from
the tree! Jimmie has them eating
out of the palm of his hand!

(beat)

Where's Colonel?

DISKIN

Making enquiries.

INT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Colonel is behind the backdrop, gathering intel from Hayride founder, HORACE LOGAN. PERFORMERS come and go.

COLONEL

Have you heard that fella singing
'All Right Mama,' the new record
on the Sun Label?

HORACE LOGAN

The pop jocks are playing him,
country deejays, too. Hell, even
the colored kids are buying his
record.

COLONEL

Colored kids? Where might I find
this act?

HORACE LOGAN

Dressing rooms!

As Horace reenters the stage, he gestures in the direction of the dressing rooms from which a YOUNG MAN carrying a guitar appears, heading for the stage door.

The Young Man stops briefly to address the house drummer D.J FONTANA sitting backstage:

YOUNG MAN

Hey, you the house drummer? Just
play the back beat and stay out of
our way!

D.J. nods as the Young Man runs past the STAGE MANAGER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAGE MANAGER

Ellis Presley, Blue Moon Boys,
you're up next.

Colonel follows, watching THROUGH the window as...

EXT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - ALLEY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The Young Man descends the stairs, passing a PICKUP TRUCK, in which good ole boys drink beer and flirt with their gals.

He joins BILL BLACK (28), who cradles a double-bass beneath the stairs. Bill reads a poster for tonight's show. At the bottom, "THE BLUE MOON BOYS" and misspelled, "ELLIS PRESLEY."

SCOTTY

Bill... Go time.

BILL

I know. Ellis Presley... Got a nice ring to it.

The Young Man turns, REVEAL:SCOTTY MOORE (24). He shakes his head. They grab their instruments.

SCOTTY

This thing in tune?

BILL

Close enough.

The beautiful and formidable DIXIE LOCKE (17) joins them, holding a bottle of PEPSI COLA.

SCOTTY

How is 'Ellis's stomach?

DIXIE

Thought I'd grab him a Pepsi, but poor thing's still shaking like a leaf.

BILL

(to Scotty)
What'd they say?

SCOTTY

Newcomer's spot or nothing. We're next.

DIXIE

You better come talk to him,
Scotty. He listens to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They all look up towards the sound of Jimmie Rogers Snow's number, and begin making their way across the alley, towards two PARENTS huddled around a barely visible BOY of around 20 years of age.

NELL (O.S.)

Hey Tommy, that's him over there.

The trio passes a skinny country jock, TOMMY, arm around NELL, his conservatively-dressed girlfriend, in the back of a pickup.

NELL

That boy from Memphis whose record everybody's talking about.

TOMMY

(incredulous)

You mean the white kid that's singing race music?

Tommy addresses Scotty and Bill.

TOMMY

Hey Scotty Moore! You manage him?
(laughing)

Better tell him to watch out. One day somebody's going to beat the hell outta him and peel them Negro outfits right off his hide.

BILL

Sorry fella, the strip show costs extra...

Laughter from Nell sends Tommy seething.

Scotty, Bill and Dixie arrive alongside the family as, THROUGH the steps, Colonel glimpses the unseen Boy's constantly-shaking, pink-trousered leg. The boy's shy, vulnerable voice:

BOY (O.S.)

W-what if I forget the words on live radio? I ain't no Jimmie Rogers Snow...

He hears the father: VERNON (38), good looks faded by hard years and disappointment.

VERNON

No one expects you to be Jimmie Rogers Snow.

BILL

Its just a bit of clowning around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SCOTTY

That's how we got this thing
started in the first place.

BETWEEN THE STEPS, Colonel can now see the mother, GLADYS (43), intense and nervy, with smoldering Clara Bow eyes.

GLADYS

Scotty and Bill are right, Elvis.
You're not out there on your own.
You boys are a band. The Lord gave
us music to bring people together.
We're like a family, and family's
the most important thing of all.

She strokes the Boy's neck as he drinks from a public water fountain, one marked "WHITE," the other "COLORED." Gladys indicates that they should all take up each other's hands.

GLADYS

If the good Lord wants to speak
through song here tonight, we are
but vessels of His will. Come on
now, Booby...

She looks up to the moonlight and intones mysteriously:

GLADYS

Jesse is shining bright tonight.

They all look up. Unsure of what they're doing, the Colonel follows their gaze to see the moon shining above.

Gladys leads the group in song as one-by-one, they all join:

GLADYS/VERNON/DIXIE/SCOTTY/BILL/
BOY

(sing)
Some glad morning...
When this life is over...
I'll fly away...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

From my first encounter, this
insular, strange family was unique
in its closeness.

GLADYS/VERNON/DIXIE/SCOTTY/BILL/
BOY

(sing)
I'll fly away, oh glory...

The CAMERA TRACKS ACROSS their faces, SETTLING ON Vernon.
(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
The boy's daddy had gone to jail.

The CAMERA PASSES ACROSS the fountain marked "WHITE"...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
Leaving the boy and his mama alone
in one of four white houses in a
Black neighborhood.

... and settles on the fountain marked "COLORED."

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SHAKE RAG - AFTERNOON (1947)

An identical "COLORED" sign above a water fountain from which SMOKY BELL (12) drinks. Next to him, a boy sits, face buried in a CAPTAIN MARVEL JR. comic book.

The family's singing transforms into a powerful, spiritual version of "I'll Fly Away" emanating from a distant PENTECOSTAL TENT.

The comic lowers and we see YOUNG ELVIS PRESLEY (12). His hair and a crudely-fashioned cardboard lightning bolt around his neck match the look of his comic book hero.

Young Elvis stands and looks towards the tent.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
It was there he first felt the
pull between the sacred...

A sharp WHISTLE! Smoky and Young Elvis look to their SKINNY AFRICAN-AMERICAN FRIEND, waving them towards a JUKE JOINT that hangs off the road.

BIG BOY CRUDUP (V.O.)
*Whooooooooo, black snake crawlin'
in my room!*

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
... and the profane.

The boys run off towards the juke joint as Young Elvis stuffs his comic in the back pocket of his overalls.

INT. JUKE JOINT - AFTERNOON

YOUNG ELVIS' POV THROUGH A SPYHOLE: A smoky room. The nimble fingers of bluesman BIG BOY CRUDUP work the frets of his weathered guitar. A drunk male CUSTOMER shakes his leg in an erotic dance with a BORDELLO GIRL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG BOY CRUDUP

(sings)

*Whoooooa, black snake crawlin' in
my room!*

*Some pretty mama better come and
get this black snake soon.*

EXT. SHAKE RAG - JUKE JOINT - AFTERNOON

The shocked boys fight over the spyhole.

BIG BOY CRUDUP (O.S.)

(sings)

*That's all right, mama
That's all right with you...*

It's too much for Young Elvis. He pulls away.

EXT. SHAKE RAG - AFTERNOON

HIGH WIDE: The boys give chase as Young Elvis bolts towards the Pentecostal tent where the spiritual version of "I'll Fly Away" swells up.

INT. PENTECOSTAL TENT - AFTERNOON

The other boys watch from the open flap as Young Elvis moves forward, arms aloft, becoming the music.

EXT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT (1955)

The Colonel glimpses just the Boy's heavy-lidded, mascaraed eyes.

ELVIS (BOY)

(sings)

I'll fly away, I'll fly away...

INT. PENTECOSTAL TENT - AFTERNOON (1947)

Smoky reaches for Young Elvis. Suddenly, his hand is stayed by THE PASTOR.

PASTOR

Leave him be; he's with the
spirit.

As Young Elvis' rapture builds, the CAMERA ASCENDS and the spiritual is overlaid with:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG BOY CRUDUP (V.O.)
*Whooooooooo, black snake crawlin'
 in my room!
 That's alright, mama, that's
 alright with you,
 That's alright, mama, any way you
 do.*

EXT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - ALLEY - NIGHT (1955)

The shy boy duets with Crudup across time.

ELVIS
 (sings)
I'll fly away, I'll fly away...

SAM PHILLIPS (31), stern, and his no-nonsense secretary
 MARION KEISKER (36) appear at the stage door.

SAM PHILLIPS
 Better get on up! They've just
 made a big announcement about you
 on the radio.

MARION
 Folks are real excited!
 (sotto)
 Sam, don't look so worried.

As Sam and Marion leave, Colonel uses this opportunity to
 follow them back inside the stage door.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 Sam Phillips was on a mission to
 save the world by recording black
 music...

Colonel peels off and finds himself looking through the
 dock door, where he can see Elvis and the boys ascending
 the stairs, the family in tow.

EXT. SUN STUDIOS - DUSK (1954)

A converted shopfront. A neon sign reads: "SUN STUDIOS.
 HAVE YOUR VOICE RECORDED -- ONE DOLLAR!" The music from
 the Pentecostal church continues underneath.

Marion crosses the road to the studio, carrying coffee
 and donuts.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 But it didn't pay, so he tried to
 find a white country-and-western
 star.

INT. SUN STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - DUSK

We follow Marion as she passes Scotty, Bill and the young boy in the studio. Scotty is packing up his guitar.

SCOTTY

Sorry kid, I've got to work tomorrow.

Marion enters the control room and plonks a coffee down in front of Sam, despondent at the control desk.

SAM

I don't know what it is you see in this boy...

Marion looks up. Although they can't hear, she can see Elvis larking around in the studio.

MARION

I just think he's... different.

She flicks a switch. An intrigued Sam looks up and rises to his feet.

INT. SUN STUDIOS - RECORDING ROOM - LATER

Sam, Marion, Scotty and Bill looking at Elvis, a moment of shocked pause. Sam repositions the microphone in front of Elvis.

SAM PHILLIPS

How do you know Big Boy Crudup?

Elvis shrugs. He starts to sing "That's Alright, Mama" over the Pentecostal music. Scotty and Bill join... CUT TO hours later, the musicians are shaping up the track.

INT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (1955)

Elvis and the boys make their way inside. Using instruments being loaded through the dock door as cover, Colonel positions himself to get as close as possible.

As Elvis and the boys prepare to take the stage, Colonel begins to ascend the stairs to the fly tower above.

INT. PENTECOSTAL TENT - AFTERNOON (1947)

The singing reaches a powerful crescendo as Young Elvis is possessed by the sacred and the profane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (V.O.)
(in Sun Studios)
That's all right, mama...

The distant and dreamlike sound of HORACE LOGAN's voice:

HORACE LOGAN (V.O.)
A young man from Memphis,
Tennessee... song on the Sun
label... sky-rocketed right up the
charts... Elvis Presley! Let's
give him a nice hand.

Tepid applause takes us to...

INT. "HAYRIDE" AUDITORIUM - STAGE - NIGHT (1955)

CLOSE ON Elvis' shaking legs. TILT UP to DISCOVER a pink jacket over feminine black lace. A white-hot spotlight REVEALS his face: heavy with makeup, slumberous, piercing, blue eyes stare back. His greasy black hair is an architectural wonder and slashes across his forehead like a scar.

This is ELVIS PRESLEY at 20. He is beautiful, defiant, innocent, strange.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
I cannot overstate how strange he
looked. I'd seen clowns with less
makeup.

The Colonel looks out into the auditorium. Bodies shifting in rickety chairs. Portraits of disdain, disgust, and confusion. The South as it stands, soon to be changed forever.

HORACE LOGAN (O.S.)
Elvis, how are you this evening?

ELVIS
Just fine. How're you, sir?

HORACE LOGAN
Are you all geared up with your
band there to...

ELVIS
I'm all geared up.

HORACE LOGAN
... to let us hear your songs?

Elvis, flustered, realizes he's cut Horace off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

Uh, well, I'd just like to say how happy we are to be down here. It's a real honor for us to be- get a chance to appear on the Louisiana Hayride. We're gonna do a song for you we got out on Sun Records... you got anything else to say, Sir?

HORACE LOGAN

No, I'm ready!

Elvis looks up to the heavens...

ELVIS

It goes something like this...

At the front of the auditorium, an anxious Vernon stares at the floor. Beside him, Gladys stares into the eyes of her son. This does not go unnoticed by the Colonel.

Elvis' chest heaves, mind races, heart pounds.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Ohh, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby
Baby, baby, baby, baby, baby...*

Snickers from the audience.

The Colonel puffs his cigar, eyes narrow. Maybe this boy's not for the stage.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Come back, baby, I wanna play
house with you.*

In the front row, two of the country kids from the side alley: pretty-girl NELL and her skinny country jock boyfriend, TOMMY, chewing gum and smirking--

TOMMY

Get a haircut, fairy!

A flash of anger across Elvis' face. He wails back:

ELVIS

(sings)

*Weeeeeelllll, you may go to
college, you may go to school,
You may have a pink Cadillac,
But don't you be nobody's fool.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A cluster of girls in the front start to clap and wriggle in their chairs excitedly. Colonel climbs the ladder to the gantry.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Now, baby, come back, baby, come.
 Come back, baby come...*

CAMERA CURLS DOWN Elvis' body, revealing what all the fuss is about.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Come back, baby, I want to play
 house with you!*

Elvis' raw nervous energy has caused his habitually shaky leg to go into overdrive! The front of his pleated, pegged pants flaps like a tent in a storm.

Fascinated, Colonel begins to cross the gantry for a better vantage point.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Well, listen to me, baby
 What I'm talking about...*

The unpegged pants seem to suggest, and maybe it's true, that all hell is breaking loose down there.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Come on back to me, little girl
 So we can play some house.*

A GIRL in the audience SCREAMS! Elvis and the band falter, confused by the reaction.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Now baby, come back baby, come
 Come back baby, come...*

Marion Keisker shushes the girl who screamed, beside her.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Come back baby
 I wanna play house with you...*

But then there's ANOTHER SCREAM, and then ANOTHER, mixed with an uncertain laughter. The Colonel takes note.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

During the guitar solo, Elvis, confused, spins and yells to Scotty and Bill:

ELVIS
What are they hollerin' at?

BILL
It's the... wiggle.

ELVIS
The what?!

BILL
The wiggle!

BILL AND SCOTTY
(in unison)
Do more!

Bill slaps out a bass feature, riding Elvis' energy as the singer throws several thrusts out towards the girls. They react in waves of squeals and screams.

Colonel descends the stairs side-stage onto the auditorium floor.

ELVIS
(sings)
*Well, this is one thing, baby
That I want you to know...*

Marion, eyes locked on Elvis, as if suddenly beset by the devil, finds herself standing and screaming, too.

Colonel, now amongst the audience, clocks this reaction as he crocodiles across auditorium.

Gladys and Dixie watch, horrified.

GLADYS
Please, Lord, don't let them hurt
my baby!

VERNON
Hurt him? Looks like they
wanna...

He sees Dixie and coughs, embarrassed.

ELVIS
(sings)
*Well, listen to me, baby
Try to understand...*

Colonel eyes every face in the audience as he makes his way side-stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Nell is drawn toward the stage, Tommy follows her.

TOMMY
(to Elvis)
Pucker up, buttercup.

Elvis, mic in his fist, leans in and enrages Tommy by sing-whispering a capella to sweet Nell:

ELVIS
(sings)
*I'd rather be dead, little
girl...*
(eyes on Tommy)
*... than to see you with another
man.*

Time stands still; a dramatic, tense pause. CUT TO Hank in the wings who, having discovered his son Jimmie, leans in and utters with revulsion:

HANK SNOW
Oh, my Lord... What in God's sweet
name am I looking at?

JIMMIE
Pa...

HANK
What were you thinking, Jimmie?

JIMMIE
I guess I thought... I don't know
what I'm thinking.

Jimmie bites his nail. Hank, in exasperation:

HANK
Where is Colonel?

Jimmie indicates toward the Colonel, watching from the auditorium.

Elvis flicks his hair and a drop of sweat falls across Nell's cheek. It's too much -- she implodes. Nell latches on to Elvis' jacket, then another girl, and another.

ELVIS
(sings)
*Come back, baby, I want to play
house with you!*

Suddenly, Hank appears behind Colonel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HANK SNOW

If we leave now we can still meet
with the Duke of Paducah...

Colonel ignores him, frozen in disbelief at what he's witnessing. Traces of "Black Snake Moan" join the score -- the profane.

ELVIS

(sings)

Oh, baby, baby, baby, baby...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

And there it was. I saw it! They would come to call it 'teenage hysteria.' Whatever it was he was doing, it touched something within her. The urgent, desperate need to consume and be consumed.

Marion and Sam look to each other, witnessing a miracle. Hank witnesses a travesty: his son Jimmie, awestruck.

Elvis sinks momentarily beneath the throng of girls, tearing at him, scratching his skin.

Nell, possessed, rips off Elvis' jacket. Suddenly, she's accosted from behind! Gladys grabs the jacket, screaming:

GLADYS

Why are you trying to kill my son?!

Gladys recoils in shock, holding Elvis' jacket. The curtain crashes closed. CLOSE on Colonel as we see the last glimmer of Elvis, rescued by Scotty, tumbling back through the blue curtains.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

It was the greatest carnival attraction I'd ever seen...

EXT. MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE - DAY

The once-crucial cotton port on the snaking Mississippi River and its triple-spanned bridge.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

He was my destiny.

EXT. LAUDERDALE COURTS (MEMPHIS) - DAY

A large grass courtyard surrounded by a three-story red-brick building. Mothers gossip, kids play football and ride bikes. We catch on the radios all over:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Here's a new one from Memphis'
own... Elvis Presley!

The opening lyrics of Elvis' latest recording "Blue Moon" can be heard, as a Crown Electric truck pulls up.

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*Blue moon,
You saw me standing alone,
Without a dream in my heart,
Without a love of my own...*

INT. CROWN ELECTRIC TRUCK - DAY

We catch a glimpse of Elvis' eyes in the rear-view mirror. CUT TO his hand, taking up his guitar.

EXT. LAUDERDALE COURTS - DAY

As he alights from the truck, we catch Elvis in his two-tone shoes and grey Crown Electric uniform.

He makes his way down the path, through the Courts, as girls and boys look on, somewhat confused by Elvis' sudden notoriety.

MEAN BOY

Hey squirrel, nice sideburns.

COOL GIRL

Hey Elvis.

They stare after Elvis as he crosses the courtyard and enters the building. We GLIMPSE a humble living room THROUGH a second-story window.

INT. PRESLEY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A hand holds back the curtain. The girls can clearly be seen, staring up. The curtain drops. We turn, and it is Gladys inside the Presley's humble apartment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLADYS

Elvis is home! Billy, go wash up
then keep setting the table for
dinner!

Wide-eyed COUSIN BILLY (15) races for the door.

BILLY

Ok, Aunt Gladys! I'm gonna see
Elvis for a second.

Gladys is clearly anxious as she crosses to the kitchen,
where Dixie is helping prepare dinner.

GLADYS

Vernon, Elvis is home.

Passing Vernon on the phone, we catch a few lines of the
conversation:

VERNON

Yeah, well, Elvis done good but...
Jimmie Rodgers Snow, he put on a
real good show.

Gladys takes a bowl of carrots from Dixie.

GLADYS

I'll do that, Dixie, honey. What
you gonna see at the movies?

Dixie rushes to go freshen up.

DIXIE

Um, I'm not sure!

"Blue Moon" continues to play on a radio on the kitchen
windowsill. It's too much for Gladys and she snaps the
radio off, anxiety palpable in her face. We CUT DOWN to
the radio again but strangely, an a capella version of
"Blue moon" can be heard.

ELVIS (V.O.)

(sings)

Oooohhh, oooohhh, eeee-aahhh...

Beyond the radio, through the window, the lights in the
other apartments illuminate, signaling the transition
from day to night.

Neighbors lean out windows, eavesdropping.

EXT. LAUDERDALE COURTS - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Floating through the window and into the stairwell, we discover the source of the music. It's Elvis, later that night, now joined by his girl, Dixie.

Having taken out the trash, he still holds the can in his hand as he serenades Dixie.

ELVIS

(sings)

Without a love of my own...

Their lips almost touch. Elvis stares into Dixie's eyes.

ELVIS

(disbelief)

Hank Snow...

Dixie, a little disappointed, discreetly rolls her eyes. But Elvis is lost in the thought.

ELVIS

I used to play his records every day with Mama and now he's personally asked for me to be on his tour.... I can't believe it.

The trash can clatters to the ground. Elvis scurries down to retrieve it. Dixie, a loving roll of the eyes:

DIXIE

So, is that a yes?

ELVIS

Ahh yes?

DIXIE

Coming with me to Goldsmith's on Sunday to pick out my prom dress.

ELVIS

Oh, sure, baby...

Elvis, having retrieved the can, is ascending the stairs.

DIXIE

Elvis, after prom, all the couples are going to the teen canteen.

She takes the initiative and they kiss...

ELVIS

Wait, Sunday? Hell, we're in New Orleans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dixie is crestfallen.

ELVIS

But I'll be back for the dance and
Mama can help you pick out your
dress.

GLADYS

Elvis, dinner's ready! Better wash
up or you'll be late for the
movies.

ELVIS

Alright, Mama. I'm sorry, baby.
It's just so much, so quick.

DIXIE

You told your parents?

INT. PRESLEY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Out the window, the GIRLS in the courtyard stare up.

GLADYS (O.S.)

So, without so much as a word to
your daddy and me...

Gladys snaps the curtain shut.

GLADYS

You quit your job to run around in
that rickety jalopy, speeding down
dangerous roads, getting girls all
hopped up...

Elvis is now resplendent in a top-to-toe pink suit, his
immaculately quaffed bouffant of hair towering over his
scowling forehead. Clearly, things have not gone well.

Vernon is sitting on the couch as Dixie finishes setting
a makeshift dining table for dinner. Billy fills glasses
with iced tea. GRANDMA DODGER (65) sits silently in the
corner. Tension as Gladys serves up the meatloaf.

GLADYS

Soon, you'll be drinking, going
off to them slut parties--

ELVIS

Mama!

GLADYS

Not keeping the Sabbath...
(to everyone)
Dinner!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLADYS (CONT'D)

(to Elvis)

You just sit down now, eat!

Billy, Dixie and Elvis take their seats.

ELVIS

But Mama, it's only four days!

GLADYS

Yeah, four days! And then what?

VERNON

I knew a fella once, got his record on the radio, and it was all over in a flash.

ELVIS

Mr Phillips says every time I perform onstage, it's gonna help the record sell and we could make some real money! I ain't gonna do that driving a truck for Crown Electric.

VERNON

Electrician is a good, stable job, whereas I don't know a guitar player worth a damn.

GLADYS

You listen to your Daddy.

At the exact moment Gladys speaks, the phone rings. Billy jumps up to answer.

BILLY

It's my mama! She's with Aunt Cletus and all the cousins on a shared line... She wants to talk to you. She heard Elvis on the radio.

GLADYS

I can't right now!

ELVIS

Please, Mama! I'm just trying to take care of my babies, that's all I ever cared about! I ain't ever gonna let us be in a place again where Daddy gets in trouble with the law to put food on the table.

GLADYS

ELVIS!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A tense silence. Vernon hangs his head, humiliated.

GLADYS

As the good Lord warns us, 'Do not wear yourself out to get rich, do not trust your own Goddamn cleverness!'

Overwhelmed, she storms out.

VERNON

I want to work. I do the best I can with my back...

Dixie gestures towards the hallway and Gladys' bedroom.

DIXIE

Elvis, you've upset your mama.

40 Elvis follows Gladys.

40

INT. PRESLEY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A pill being removed from a lacquered medication box.

Gladys gulps it down as Elvis appears in the doorway through the mirror. She's breathing heavily, tears streaming down her cheeks, black with mascara.

ELVIS

(half-jokingly)
I'm going to buy you one of them pink Cadillacs, like you saw back when you was working at the hospital.

Gladys breaks a little. She turns to him, embarrassed.

GLADYS

I don't need no pink Cadillac.

ELVIS

Satnin'...

Elvis takes up Gladys' face in his hands, the tears running from her eyes.

ELVIS

I just gotta be making the most of this thing while I can. It's like Daddy says, this could all be over in a flash.

With this thought, Gladys' mood changes. Still anxious, she sits at the dressing table, somewhat in a dream.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLADYS

I'm not fearful of it being over,
Boobie...

She looks up to him.

GLADYS

It's the opposite...

She looks back to the mirror, messing with her hair.

GLADYS

Oh Lord, I look a frightful mess.

Unconsciously takes up a lipstick.

GLADYS

I don't know how to explain it,
but I saw it in that girl's eyes,
I saw it.

ELVIS

There's nothing to fear. They're
just kids getting all hopped up.

Applying lipstick, as if the very act comforts her.

GLADYS

No, it's more than that. It's
something I don't understand.
It's something beyond us. But I
know whatever it is, it's
something that can come between
us.

Elvis throws his arms around Gladys from behind, nuzzling
her neck as if she were a giant Teddy bear.

ELVIS

No, no, no... ain't nothing ever
going to do that. You're my girl,
my Satnin'. You'll always be my
best-est girl.

Gladys looks up into his eyes.

ELVIS

I'll call you every night.
Nothing, but nothing's gonna come
between us.

Gladys, pleading like a child:

GLADYS

You promise me, Boobie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Elvis, now the adult, reassuring the child that all will be well:

ELVIS

I promise. I promise, I promise, I promise...

EXT. LAUDERDALE COURTS - DAY

As Scotty helps Bill squeeze the double bass into the CHEVY BEL AIR, Elvis gives Dixie a final kiss. The boys tumble into the car. Vernon and Gladys wave with Billy by their side as the car tears off into the future.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

OLD COLONEL

(to camera)

Wanna bet?

He spins the roulette wheel and looks up to see Scotty's car driving away from Lauderdale Courts. To the iconic opening of "Mystery Train," the roulette wheel transforms into a SPINNING CHROME HUBCAP.

MONTAGE - EXT. RURAL ROAD (1955)

It's an AQUATONE BLUE SEDAN emblazoned with "Hank Snow's Jamboree Attractions Tour!" Diskin at the wheel, Colonel beside him. In an almost reckless gesture, the sedan overtakes all the cars in a convoy.

COLONEL

Let's pull over for lunch. What is the name of the next place?

DISKIN

The Tasty Grill.

COLONEL

Tasty Grill.

COLONEL

(over megaphone)

Your attention please, your attention please. We will be pulling over for lunch up ahead at the Tasty Grill. Lunchtime at the Tasty Grill.

They approach Scotty's Chevy Bel Air, double bass squeezed inside. Siting the boy's car, Colonel hurriedly winds the window down and turns to Diskin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Slow down.

The sedan holds alongside the Chevy, Colonel pretending not to notice the boys. A complete transformation, Colonel announces with bonhomie:

COLONEL

(over megaphone)

Can I have your attention, this is your morning bulletin. Colonel's promotional machine never fails! The 'Hank Snow All-Star Jamboree Tour' has completely sold out. That's right. And to celebrate I'm buying all of you great artists complimentary pie at the good old Tasty Grill!

BILL

Who the hell is that?

ELVIS

That's Colonel Tom Parker. He knows all the big wheels in the business. He made Eddy Arnold a movie star.

SCOTTY

I heard he screwed him over.

Bill diffuses the tension.

BILL

I heard there's free pie at the Tasty Grill.

DISSOLVE THROUGH a LARGE POSTER headlined with "HANK SNOW." At the bottom of a long list of supporting artists: "Elvis Presley and the Blue Moon Boys."

EXT. SMALL COUNTRY DINER - DAY

The convoy is parked outside.

INT. SMALL COUNTRY DINER - DAY

Hank at the counter, flanked by Jimmie, performers, and crew. Elvis and the boys, strangers to it all, are relegated to the periphery, by the window.

TAP TAP TAP! Elvis looks up to see the Colonel wagging his cane THROUGH the plate glass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

Here he is. The man himself.

Colonel enters briskly, Diskin keeping pace.

COLONEL

Hello everybody, how's the pie?
It's cheap at half the price!

Everyone is confused at Colonel's sudden generosity.

COLONEL

Hank! I'm here to check your
placement in the jukebox.

Colonel arrives at the jukebox, perusing the singles on offer in the machine:

COLONEL

'Let Me Go, Lover', Hank Snow.
'Conscience I'm Guilty', Hank
Snow. 'Cryin' Prayin' Waitin'
Hopin', Hank Snow.

Everyone applauds as Colonel makes his way over to Hank.

COLONEL

All hit records, all RCA! Can't
beat their distribution.

But Hank is distracted by the sight of Elvis and the boys on the other side of the cafe. He turns to Colonel.

HANK

Colonel, what is that boy doing on
our tour?!

COLONEL

I told you all about him? He comes
from a good Christian family.

HANK

I do not recall.

COLONEL

And more importantly, about him
wanting to record one of your
songs?

HANK

Which one?

COLONEL

All of them! Them young'uns buy an
lot of his records.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIMMIE

That's no lie, Pa. Kids these days
are buying more than adults!

Colonel pats Jimmie on the back.

COLONEL

Think of the money in the bank,
Hank.

JIMMIE

Wouldn't want to miss out.

Hank, confused and bemused, glances towards Elvis and
considers what Colonel has said.

HANK

Well you warn him plenty, none of
those lewd gyrations or sudden
jerky movements.

Colonel, with an ambiguous nod of the head:

COLONEL

I'll speak to the boy
immediately...

CUT TO Elvis at the table, clearly anxious.

ELVIS

You got a dime for the pay phone?
I promised to call Dixie and Mama-

But before he can finish his sentence:

COLONEL

Well, if it ain't the new act...

The boys look up and there, towering over them, is the
Colonel. Elvis nervously leaps to his feet, proffering
his hand.

ELVIS

Colonel Parker, sir? Elvis
Presley.

COLONEL

Right. You're the fella with that
funny new record all the kids are
listening to...

Scotty shifts defensively in the booth.

SCOTTY

It's getting lots of radio play,
sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLONEL

Who are you?

BILL

Blue Moon Boys.

COLONEL

I did not see that record of yours on the jukebox... What label are you on?

ELVIS

Sun... Sun Records. Sam Phillips.

COLONEL

Sun... If I were you, young man, I would have a talk with my manager.

SCOTTY

That's me.

COLONEL

Hmm... Well, if you are his manager I have two words for you: one is distribution, and the other is distribution... The pie is not always free.

Colonel turns to the assembled company.

COLONEL

Alright, remember folks, show time is snow time! Hank Snow time. See you all in New Orleans.

With this, Colonel is gone. CLOSE ON Bill holding yet another forkful of pie.

BILL

Free pie, huh? What's that supposed to mean?

Colonel taps on the glass and reiterates one last time:

COLONEL

Distribution.

ELVIS

It means our record should be on that jukebox.

A glimmer of tension between Elvis and Scotty.

DISSOLVE THROUGH another poster, and another. "Elvis Presley and the Blue Moon Boys" climbing up the bill.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Elvis busts two strings on his guitar! He stands, blue-suited, legs apart, motionless...

Teenage fans sizzling like eggs in a pan.

ELVIS

(A cappella)

*I'm gonna hold my baby
As tight as I can
Well, tonight she'll know
I'm a mighty, mighty, man
I heard the news
There's good rockin' tonight*

Then suddenly, Elvis' body jackknives! Scotty and Bill take their cue. The crowd loses it!

ELVIS

(sings)

*Well, we're gonna rock
We gonna rock
Let's rock
C'mon and rock...*

As Elvis apes fornication, Hank, spruced and ready, joins Colonel and his son Jimmie, now sporting slick pompadour and sideburns, in the wings just in time to observe...

A PAIR OF PANTIES landing center stage!

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're gonna rock
All our blues away...*

To Hank's horror, he sees another PAIR OF PANTIES! And ANOTHER! Elvis caricatures an orgasmic shimmy.

HANK

Colonel, is that a pair of young lady's intimates I see upon the stage?

COLONEL

Yes, I believe it is, Hank.

HANK

That best not happen when he sings one of my songs.

COLONEL

I'm sure it won't.

An apoplectic Hank storms off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INT. MOTEL - ROOM - NIGHT

Elvis is pacing with the phone, just his pants on. A TAPPING at the door, a FEW GIRLS GIGGLE outside.

ELVIS
(whispering)
Baby, no... It's just part of our act. We're savin' ourselves, like we said... Love you...

The CLICK of the phone. He falls back onto the bed. Then there comes a tapping. Softly. Steadily.

ELVIS
Is that a cheeseburger I hear knocking at my door, Scotty?

Shirtless, Elvis gets up and opens the door to find a doe-eyed FEMALE FAN...

She walks past Elvis, into the room. The fan lowers of the strap of her dress and they fall to the bed together.

We PAN OFF TO a map of Florida.

INT./EXT. CHEVY BEL AIR - DAY

Scotty drives. Elvis looks despondent.

SCOTTY
Aw, come on, EP. Life on the road ain't the concern of folks back home.

BILL
Why don't you try one of these?

Bill offers up a small, white pill. Elvis considers it...

BILLY
Put the pep back in your step.

Elvis takes it with a swig of coke and we CUT TO:

EXT. DAYTONA CARNIVAL - STAGE - NIGHT

In a shower of panties, Elvis and the boys scuttle off stage, past Colonel. Jimmie follows Elvis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMIE

Elvis! Elvis! I told them. I told them but they didn't wanna believe me! You're one of a kind! You're something else and I promise, I'll put my heart in it. I wanna be just like you!

Colonel looks to ashen Hank, trembling with rage.

HANK SNOW

I can no longer in good conscience appear onstage with that boy!

COLONEL

(nonplussed)

It is a conundrum, a conundrum...

HANK SNOW

After I perform, I shall spend the night in prayer.

COLONEL

And I will do what needs to be done.

EXT. CARNY CAMP - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Music, laughter. Through the doorway of Hank Snow's trailer, we see Hank in silent prayer. Emerging from the trailer, he discovers a backstage petting party and slams his door shut in disgust.

Scotty and a showgirl make their way through the party, past pompadoured Jimmie performing on top of a table. They tumble past Colonel, and into one of the trailers.

Elvis apart, gazing at the Ferris wheel, perturbed.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

OLD COLONEL

I saw him alone, lost. A good promoter knows the perfect moment...

We FOLLOW Old Colonel's sun-spotted claw as it almost comes to rest on Elvis' shoulder.

SCOTTY (V.O.)

Elvis!!!

EXT. CARNY CAMP - NIGHT (1955)

Colonel, unseen, is standing behind Elvis.

Scotty, Bill, Jimmie and a bevy of girls are making their way towards an enormous, illuminated clown's mouth.

BILL
Elvis, let's go!

Elvis runs after them.

EXT./INT. CARNIVAL - HALL OF MIRRORS - NIGHT

Trailing the rest of the gang, Elvis enters the Hall of Mirrors under the watchful gaze of ROY LUMOUS, the carny fixer, lurking in the shadows.

We see Colonel appear in the reflection of a mirror. He passes Lumous, speaking in a secret carny language:

COLONEL
You ceaz-ould get leaz-ost in heaz-ere.

LUMOUS
Yeaz-ou ceaz-ould.

Lumous pulls a lever.

INT. CARNIVAL - HALL OF MIRRORS - NIGHT

The whole party reflected in the mirrors. Lumous' tattooed hand closes a mirrored door. As if by magic, Scotty, Bill, and the others disappear before our eyes, leaving Elvis alone.

ELVIS
Fellas?... Bill?... Quit fooling around.

COLONEL (O.S.)
Lost, my boy?...

Elvis spins, surprised by the apparition of the Colonel.

ELVIS
Colonel Parker, sir...

COLONEL
You look lost.

Elvis looks around, but he cannot even guess the way out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

(laughing to self)

Well, I was with the guys, then they just... Yeah, I guess I am.

COLONEL

The roar of the crowd, life on the road. Then calling home, pretending to loved ones nothing has changed, when everything has... Lost.

Elvis tries to laugh it off.

ELVIS

I'm sorry, sir. I meant I don't know the way out.

Colonel jovially concurs.

COLONEL

That's precisely what I am saying. I saw you, standing apart from the others, burdened... Like you 'don't know the way out of this.'

Colonel pushes a mirror in which Elvis is reflected. It swings open, revealing a shadowy world behind the midway.

COLONEL

But I do... Allow me to show you.

ZEENA (V.O.)

(sings)

Snowman's comin', yes, he's comin'...

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Elvis follows the Colonel as he skirts the canvas backs of the tents, greeting roustabouts and freaks warmly as he goes. Leaning into a group of LITTLE PEOPLE:

COLONEL

Miss Becky, Miss Kathy. A reaz-ed one with the reaz-ubes?

The group giggles and nods.

COLONEL

(to Elvis)

Snowfall.

Colonel takes in their surroundings with a gesture of his cane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

The language of the carnival. I'm one of them. I came into this world an orphan, you see, in Huntington, West Virginia... But I ran away, to join the circus.

ZEENA (O.S.)

(sings)

To sprinkle you with snow...

COLONEL

You're either circus, or you're not. It's in your nature.

ZEENA

(sings)

*He'll say 'one, two, three,' and you'll be...
In cotton candy land...*

They come upon Zeena on the steps of her trailer.

COLONEL

(to Zeena)

Al-A-Ga-Zam.

ZEENA

Al-A-Ga-Zam.

COLONEL

(to Elvis)

Madam Zeena and I had a mentalist act together.

(to Madam Zeena)

Madam Zeena, young Mr. Presley.

ZEENA

Poor, white boy from Mississippi, sings and the very rocks and stones stand and follow...

ELVIS

And some of the girls, too, ma'am.

ZEENA

(to Colonel)

You'll go far with the Colonel.

Elvis looks confused as he and the Colonel move off.

COLONEL

I saw you perform at the 'Hayride.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS

You were there?

COLONEL

Yes, I was. And seeing you there made me realize it was our destiny to be together.

They stop walking and Colonel looks Elvis in the eye.

COLONEL

I wish to promote you, Mr. Presley.

Without missing a beat:

ELVIS

My brother told me you would come one day.

Colonel was not expecting this. Colonel brings his cane slowly to his forehead, and punts on what he saw outside the "Hayride."

COLONEL

Ahh... Jesse?

They have arrived alongside the GEEK TENT.

ELVIS

Yeah, Jesse. He died when we were born.

COLONEL

Twins...

ELVIS

But he's with me, always. Mama says when Jesse died, I got the strength of two men.

COLONEL

That would explain your tremendous energy on stage.

We follow Colonel's gaze to Hank and his band, signing autographs at a distance. We see Bill, Scotty and Jimmie searching around the carnival, presumably for Elvis.

COLONEL

The very same energy that upsets Mr. Snow so very much.

ELVIS

Sir, the way the kids react? It's not my fault...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLONEL

It is your fault.

Elvis, his attention caught by the performance of the Geek, is lost in reverie. Colonel leans over to Lumous, positioned in the ticket booth. He whispers into his ear:

COLONEL

Nobody on the Erie...

With this, Lumous dispatches two BOY CLOWNS towards a GRIZZLED TATTOOED CARNY at the base of the Ferris Wheel.

Eyes locked on Elvis, Colonel indicates with his cane towards the Ferris wheel and intones with gravity:

COLONEL

Mr. Presley, are you afraid of heights?

The Grizzled Tattooed Carny pulls a lever, halting the great wheel.

ELVIS

No, sir. I'm not.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Colonel and Elvis swish into the air. Colonel looks out over the SPARKLING MIDWAY.

COLONEL

Your future, Mr. Presley, blazing before you. Recording contracts, television, even Hollywood.

ELVIS

You're great, Colonel. The best person I could ever hope to work with. I ain't never said this to anybody before, but I believe I can be great, too.

COLONEL

We can be great together. But to achieve this, I will need to represent you exclusively.

ELVIS

What about Hank Snow?

COLONEL

Hank wants you off the tour.

CREAK! The wheel stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

I will have to leave Hank. We will
both have to make sacrifices...
You will need a label with
national distribution.

The implication sits heavy with Elvis.

ELVIS

RCA?

Colonel nods.

COLONEL

RCA.

ELVIS

Sam Phillips discovered me.

COLONEL

I know we have a way to help Sam
understand that it would be
foolish of him to hold you back.

FLASH FORWARD - INT. SUN STUDIOS - NIGHT

We come down onto Sun Studios late at night. Through the
neon-lit shop window, we see Elvis slumped in a chair.
Marion serves him hot cocoa. Sam leans on Marion's desk.
There's a feeling of sadness and finality in the air.

Sam, as if picking up the Colonel's cue:

SAM

RCA does have the distribution...

ELVIS

(sincere)

I just need to know that you'll
still be there with me as friends.

SAM

Hey, don't doubt that. We're not
going anywhere. Marion and I just
don't wanna stand in your way,
that's all.

Marion leans forward, hand on Elvis's shoulder.

MARION

The world needs to hear you sing,
Elvis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 And you needed the highest payment
 in the history of music to save
 your business.

END FLASH FORWARD.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

COLONEL
 It's just business, show business.
 To be truly great requires truly
 great sacrifices. You will need to
 be free of any entanglements...

As the CAMERA TILTS UP TO the stars, the haunting sound
 of Elvis' "Tomorrow Night."

FLASH FORWARD - EXT. TEEN CANTEEN - NIGHT

We TILT DOWN to discover a row of parked cars. We reveal
 Elvis in his pink tux. Dixie, in her prom dress, crying.

ELVIS
 (burdened)
 Colonel says that with all the
 publicity that's gonna be comin',
 well, he might have to put it out
 there that...

He's nervous to say this next thing, guilty...

ELVIS
 I don't have a girl...

DIXIE
 (hurt)
 Colonel says, Elvis? Or you say?

Elvis stares into her eyes.

ELVIS
 I love you, Dixie Locke. I always
 will...

END FLASH FORWARD.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Elvis still in a reverie, imagining Dixie's feelings.
 Colonel leans in and breaks him from his reverie with:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

And then we will need your parents' legal commitment. They may need a bit of convincing themselves...

FLASH FORWARD - INT. SUN STUDIOS - DAY

As Marion ushers Gladys and Vernon towards a table of paperwork, Gladys whispers to Vernon.

GLADYS

Sam Phillips is a good man, who we can *trust*; we don't know this Colonel from a nail in the wall...

COLONEL

I am of the firm belief that family is the most important thing in the world. With that in mind, I've taken the liberty of making these contracts out in the name of 'Elvis Presley Enterprises,' a family business.

Colonel gestures in the air.

COLONEL

And I was thinking... 'Vernon Presley: Business Manager!'

The room applauds. Vernon is dumbfounded by the status bestowed upon him.

ELVIS

What do you think, Daddy?

VERNON

I like it very much, son.

Colonel notices Cousin Billy, excitedly looking on.

COLONEL

You know Billy, Elvis is going to need a lot of help on the tour...

ELVIS

Hell, you could be my road manager one day, Billy!

Billy beams, and all laugh. Colonel solemnly signs and offers the pen to Gladys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Mrs. Presley, your son has a unique gift. It's as if he has the strength of two men inside of him.

Elvis clocks this unspoken moment of collusion between them. Gladys stares, pen suspended above the contract.

END FLASH FORWARD.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Elvis looks away from the Colonel, out over the midway.

ELVIS

You know, Colonel, I'd do just about anything to make sure my mama and daddy never have to live in no poverty ever again...

FLASH FORWARD - INT. SUN STUDIOS - DAY

Gladys looks at all the beaming faces in the room. Elvis tucks Gladys' hand inside of his.

ELVIS

Say yes, Mama. It's gonna turn out so nice.

Then, ever-so-slowly, Gladys puts pen to paper.

END FLASH FORWARD.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

ELVIS

I wasn't foolin' when I told those other kids I was gonna buy 'em a Cadillac one day.

COLONEL

With me, my boy, we could buy them two Cadillacs.

ELVIS

A hundred...

COLONEL

Two hundred. A thousand...

ELVIS

(enjoying the game)
A million...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

An aeroplane?

ELVIS

A rocket ship!

(as they laugh)

Well, maybe not a rocket ship;
Mama don't like me to fly. But me,
I've always wanted to fly. Fast.
Faster than the speed of light to
the Rock of Eternity...

COLONEL

The Rock of Eternity?

ELVIS

(slowly revealing)

Captain Marvel Jr. He's my
favorite comic book hero. He
flies.

COLONEL

What about you, Mr. Presley? Are
you ready to fly?

Elvis turns back and looks Colonel directly in the eye.

ELVIS

Yes, sir, I'm ready. Ready to fly.

FLASH FORWARD - INT. SUN STUDIOS - DAY

With a FLASH, the iconic photograph of Elvis Presley and
Colonel Tom Parker's union.

END FLASH FORWARD.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

As the wheel turns, Elvis and the Colonel do, indeed,
appear to be flying...

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

To a "DNA" track, we APPROACH a noir-lit Elvis caged in
an abstract thicket of microphones.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

My boy's gift was to understand
how young people felt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

(sings)

*Weeeeeeeell since my baby left me!
I found a new place to dwell...*

The voices of gray-suited EXECUTIVES in the shadows:

EXECUTIVES (V.O.)

Morbid. Odd. We can't release
this.

ELVIS

(sings)

*It's down at the end of lonely
street at heartbreak hotel...*

We DISSOLVE THROUGH HEADLINES: "First No. 1!" "The King
of Western Bop!" "First Gold Record! "

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

It was a hit. After hit, after
hit.

EXT. GRACELAND - GATES - DAY (1956)

CLOSE ON an Elvis number plate.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Together, we made a blizzard.

We see a candy-pink Cadillac swing through a wooden gate,
a sunglass-ed Dodger hanging out a window. They pass
grazing cattle and a sign: "SOLD! GRACELAND FARM."

MONTAGE - INT./EXT. GRACELAND - DAY

In front of a white-columned 1930s Colonial mansion,
Elvis bounds from the car, beaming as he holds out the
keys to Gladys. Gladys crosses the threshold in tears.
Vernon hangs back in awe.

Before our eyes, the interior of Graceland transforms
into all that money can buy!

As televisions and phones are being unpacked, we see
Gladys, now in a different costume, standing with her
newly introduced MAID.

A little flummoxed, Gladys follows the maid as she
carries a brand new MIXER to the kitchen. We WHIP PAN to
Gladys, now in a different costume on a different day,
chasing chickens past the maid who is laying out fine
china on the dining table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gladys herds the chickens into the front yard and through a dozen Cadillacs, finally mustering them towards Dodger.

A football suddenly smashes amidst the chickens. Irritated, Dodger hurls the football back to the horse yards where Elvis catches it and is crash-tackled by the West cousins as Jerry looks on. A noisy GO-CART driven by Billy cuts through the fray and through the Cadillacs, almost colliding with Gladys and the chickens.

WIDE SHOT: a portrait of the mayhem. CRANE DOWN through the trees to discover the rickety wooden fence is now replaced by the famous music gates, fans gathered around, opening as delivery trucks make their way through.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
I booked him on television, I got
him that screen test, and a seven-
picture deal with Paramount!

END MONTAGE.

INT. GRACELAND - DAY

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
But most importantly...

We follow the boxes as they're unloaded from the truck outside and carried into Graceland by two workmen.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
I created something never before
seen. One day it would become
known as...

CAMERA moves to a box that explodes open with hundreds of 'Loving You' cushions with Elvis' face on it.

COLONEL
Merchandise! Your face on every
conceivable object!

Colonel scoops the cushions up, throwing them towards Vernon, Elvis, Dodger, Gladys, and Cousin Billy.

COLONEL
Teddy Bear perfume, Elvis
lipsticks...

Diskin takes a plaster bust from its box.

COLONEL
And plaster busts!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DISKIN

... of questionable likeness.

Colonel scoops up one of the 'I Love Elvis' pins.

COLONEL

Something for everyone to show
their love... Oh look, Dodger,
what's that behind your ear?

Colonel leans in and does a magic trick, pulling the pin
from behind Dodger's ear.

GLADYS (O.S.)

I hate Elvis?

Colonel's face darkens. Gladys is holding one of the
other 'I Hate Elvis' pins.

COLONEL

Yes, I hate Elvis. To my way of
thinking, 'I Love Elvis' is easy
to sell, but those that hate your
son will do so whether we profit
or not.

He takes the pin from Gladys and turns to Elvis.

COLONEL

After all, what is hate worth if
it's free?

Elvis takes the pin and examines it while considering the
Colonel's point. After a heavy moment, Elvis cracks a
smile. He stands and pins it on his lapel.

ELVIS

The snowman strikes again...

They all laugh. CUT AWAY to Gladys, a look of concern.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

But what was it people hated
exactly?

We ZOOM down on the 'I Hate Elvis' pin.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Even in high school, Elvis was
listening to Black radio, going to
their churches, and hanging out on
Beale Street...

EXT. BEALE STREET (MEMPHIS) - DAY (1954)

The 'hate' badge blossoms into a flower, pinned to the lapel of a dapper African-American gent painted on a mural on the side of LANSKY BROS. clothing store. We pan off the building to reveal:

HIGH WIDE OVER the two miles of Beale Street, a thriving, densely-packed hub of Black culture.

INT./EXT. CLUB HANDY - CONTINUOUS

Through a second-story window, BIG MAMA THORNTON, a dynamic singer with a deep, rich voice, rehearses with her BAND.

BIG MAMA THORNTON
(sings)
*Youuuu ain't nuthin' but a hound
dog! Been snoopin' round my door!*

The camera descends...

EXT. BEALE STREET (MEMPHIS) - DAY

... as the Crown Electric truck pulls up to the curb.

BIG MAMA THORNTON (V.O.)
(vocal)
*You ain't nuthin' but a hound dog!
Been snoopin' round my door!*

We PICK UP ON the legs of Elvis as he alights in his uniform, pink socks, and two-tone shoes. He walks through the bustling crowd as we see portraits of life on Beale.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
Elvis wasn't just into the music.
It was the look...

INT./EXT. LANSKY BROS. - CONTINUOUS

Elvis stops, admiring a peacock-dapper gentlemen's store, resplendent with the styles of the Black music scene.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
Bernard Lansky dressed everyone
from Duke Ellington to B.B. King.

THROUGH the window, B.B. KING is fitted by LANSKY amidst bright, Lifesaver colors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Elvis sought out the styles and
the stars of the beating heart of
Black music in the South...

Elvis, face against the glass, gapes in admiration.
Lansky shows B.B. to the door.

LANSKY

We'll have everything ready for
Chicago.

B.B. KING

Well I hope Chicago is ready for
these nice threads!

LANSKY

Knock 'em dead.

Elvis watches as B.B. jumps in his car and disappears
down the street, then turns back to Mr. Lansky.

ELVIS

That was Mr. B.B. King.

LANSKY

Indeed it was. And you would be...
eyeball buying?

Elvis' eyes turn back to a particularly suave pink suit
displayed prominently in the window.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

... and pretty soon, they sought
him out, too.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. LANSKY BROS. - DAY (1956)

The same pink suit in Lansky's window and now beside it,
a photo of Elvis wearing the suit on stage.

LANSKY

Son, ever since you first came in
here, you've been saying you're
gonna buy me out but I told you...

We push past the window to where Elvis is now together
with B.B. and Lansky, buying up the store. Clerks' arms
are piled with Elvis' purchases: brightly-striped shirts
and jackets of every description.

LANSKY

Buy from me, don't buy me out!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

Mr. Lansky, it's Milton Berle. The whole of America will be watching!

LANSKY

I don't watch television.

B.B. KING

So what's it gonna be? How are you gonna blow their wigs off?

ELVIS

Well the network wants me to do a ballad... but I was thinking of cuttin' it up with 'Hound Dog'.

B.B. contemplating the enormity of it all:

B.B. KING

Elvis Presley. 'Hound Dog'. Uncle Miltie. Strange things happening every day...

As Elvis riffs, starting to give B.B. King a sneak peek of his performance, we MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NBC STUDIOS (LOS ANGELES) - DAY

ON Elvis, cutting the music into half time.

ELVIS

(sings)

*You ain't nothin' but a hound dog!
Cryin' all the time!*

Colonel watches from the studio floor, Diskin beside him.

COLONEL

Behold. Tomorrow all of America is going to be talking about Elvis Presley.

Elvis launches onto his toes, thrusts his pelvis out towards America, and BOOM!

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Suddenly, he became a gateway to Black culture, beamed out into every living room in America...

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Elvis' body and sound ripples out through 50 MILLION TVs!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*You ain't nothin' but a hound dog!
Cryin' all the time!*

As one TV FILLS THE SCREEN, we find ourselves in...

INT. SENATOR EASTLAND'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

An ideal American family: MOTHER, THREE DAUGHTERS, and a SON sit around the television, watching Uncle Miltie.

Behind them, we glimpse the FATHER in his study, reading the paper, surrounded by SUITED COLLEAGUES.

INT. NBC STUDIOS (LOS ANGELES) - DAY

Elvis' performance sends a ripple of laughter out through the predominantly female audience.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GRACELAND - DAY

-- another screen, as we find ourselves with Gladys, Vernon, Dixie, and the extended Presley family, all crowded around the television set.

GLADYS

Even as a little one, he made me
laugh so! He's so funny!

INT. SENATOR EASTLAND'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

A newspaper headline: "Segregation Unconstitutional: Supreme Court Strikes Down Mississippi Bus Law."

The paper lowers to reveal the all-American father, SENATOR "BIG JIM" EASTLAND, chomping a cigar.

EASTLAND COLLEAGUE (O.S.)

And for the next leg of your
Racial Integrity tour, we've
booked the Overton Park Shell in
Memphis...

But Eastland doesn't hear him, distracted by the sound of his children's laughter. He rises, moving towards the television.

SENATOR EASTLAND

What are they laughing about?

INT. NBC STUDIOS (LOS ANGELES) - DAY

Elvis pushes his gyration further and further. The whole experience has taken on a more raw and intense tone.

INT. SENATOR EASTLAND'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

The blue light of the television dances across Eastland's disturbed face, boiling with rage.

SENATOR EASTLAND

Who the hell is that?

MRS. EASTLAND

(unsettled)

It's that boy from Memphis.

Eastland glances to his besotted daughters, barely able to conceal their desire.

EASTLAND'S DAUGHTER

Elvis Presley...

Eastland does a double-take, catching the same look on the face of his son. A rising, volcanic revulsion as Elvis comes back to real time:

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

And you ain't no friend of mine!

INT. GRACELAND - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Presley family whoops and hollers as Berle kids around with Elvis, pretending to gyrate.

INT. SENATOR EASTLAND'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Eastland strides aggressively toward the television, face contorted in a white rage, body shaking with hate.

SENATOR EASTLAND

A white boy from Memphis... moving like a goddamn--?!

The screen snaps black! A dark chord. The fun is over.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Eastland, isolated. He speaks from behind a desk:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR EASTLAND

The obscenity and vulgarity of
this rock and roll music is
obviously a means by which the
white man and his children can be
driven to the level of the Negro!

We PULL BACK and Eastland is on a 1950s TV.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

It was putting it on the
television that caused the
problem... It became politics.
And politics ain't good for
business.

Another TV, and another, until the SCREEN is FILLED with
1950s TVs on which outraged critics decry:

VARIOUS CRITICS (V.O.)

Vulgarity!/Mongrel music!/Bebop is
Communism!/Ask Your Preacher about
Jungle Music!

POLITICIAN (V.O.)

The subversives who own, control,
and dominate the entertainment
industry...

We PUSH THROUGH a headline: "Public Outcry: Steve Allen
under pressure to cancel Elvis."

EXT. HUDSON THEATER (NEW YORK) - DAY (1956)

TRACKING DOWN the neon-lit "NBC TELEVISION" sign that
precedes the Steve Allen "Tonight Show."

POLITICIAN (V.O.)

... are determined to spread
Africanized culture, influencing
your children to accept Negroes!

CAMERA GLIDES OVER the massive crowds of reporters,
rubber-necking pedestrians, and Black and white teens
spilling over the sidewalk outside.

As we start to hear the sweet sound of Elvis' voice
singing a gospel song to a simple piano accompaniment, we
GO THROUGH the stage door window...

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*I ask the Lord for everything,
I count my blessings each day...*

INT. HUDSON THEATER - REHEARSAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

We DISCOVER Colonel's cane and feet walking across the newspaper-strewn floor. A copy of *The Memphis Press-Scimitar* is dropped on the ground.

Above a photo of Elvis at the fairgrounds on "colored night," a headline reads: "Rock 'n' Roll Phenomenon Cracks Memphis Segregation Laws." The CAMERA TILTS UP...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

We had to change course fast.

... and we FIND Elvis at a piano in the corner.

ELVIS

(sings)

*And he'll come to you,
If you'll ask him to.
He's only a prayer away.
Is your heart filled with pain?
Shall I come back again?
Tell me dear, are you lonesome
tonight?*

Elvis stops, sensing the Colonel's presence. He looks down at one of the headlines at his feet: "Elvis the Pelvis belongs in the Jungle!"

ELVIS

(shaking his head)

Elvis the Pelvis... That's one of the most childish expressions I ever heard coming from an adult.

Elvis looks up to see Scotty and Bill at the other end of the room, reading the papers. Everyone is on eggshells.

ELVIS

Mr. Allen gonna cancel me from the show?

COLONEL

(somber)

Yes.

Elvis looks up, ashen. Scotty and Bill are on their feet. They expected as much, but it still stings.

COLONEL

He's replacing you with America's greatest singer...

A rack of tail suits is wheeled in, followed by a tailor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

Mario Lanza...?

COLONEL

Someone greater!

Elvis stands to examine the suits.

COLONEL

The new Elvis Presley! I snowed him! I snowed him. You wear these here tails, it's a custom job; sing the hound dog; it will be a light-hearted, sophisticated family show.

ELVIS

I can't move in one of these.

COLONEL

That's the whole point.

Colonel stops, sudden gravitas:

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Allen's only agreed as long as there's no wiggling of the hips.

ELVIS

I can't figure it out. What am I doing wrong? My own mother approves of what I'm doing.

Colonel points at all the papers on the ground.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Have you seen the papers?

ELVIS

Yeah, the papers say I shot my mother and smoke marijuana...

COLONEL

The papers say your movement has the style of a colored man.

Colonel picks up the copy of *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, featuring Elvis breaking segregation laws.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

And that you are breaking segregation laws.

Colonel leans in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL (CONT'D)

It's a simple plan. A good plan. You do the Allen show, family style. Tomorrow, we'll return to Memphis and snow them with a 4th of July children's charity concert. Then we can put this unfortunate misstep behind us.

Colonel holds the tails up to Elvis. He looks at them.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Now, do we want to go into politics or stay in show business?

Elvis has no comeback.

SCOTTY

Hey Colonel, what do the light-hearted, sophisticated, Blue Moon Boys wear?

COLONEL

(dismissive)
We didn't discuss it.

As Colonel snaps the gap in the clothes rack shut, the CAMERA rushes through black and discovers...

INT. STEVE ALLEN STUDIOS - STAGE - NIGHT

Steve Allen, introducing Elvis. Elvis turns to camera, now dressed in the tails. His face is a mask of horror. Staring back at him: a live BASSET HOUND in a top hat. The Blue Moon Boys look on.

An abstract nightmare of images: the dog barking; a flat audience not reacting; Steve Allen laughing.

A keening scream of humiliation.

CUT TO: Elvis rushing from the stage, pushing past Scotty and Bill who follow.

INT. STEVE ALLEN STUDIOS - REHEARSAL ROOM - LATER

Elvis bursts into the room tearing off the tails--

ELVIS

God damn it... damn it!

He hurls the tails on the ground, turning to Scotty and Bill who are right behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

He could have given me some warning. I know how to do a skit. I could have made it funny.

SCOTTY

It weren't meant to be funny. It were meant to make fun of us and it did. It were the most stupid, embarrassing, humiliating thing I ever did.

ELVIS

What the hell do you want me to do about it?

Scotty, totally out of character, yells:

SCOTTY

We're musicians!

All three of them are silenced by the thought.

SCOTTY

Well, we used to be. We used to be a band, now we're... I don't know what we are.

He looks at Elvis and turns to go.

SCOTTY

I'll... see you back in Memphis.

Only Bill now, he nods his head with deep affirmation.

BILL

You looked good in them tails...

He turns and leaves.

EXT. GRACELAND - FRONT GATES - DAY

Elvis' purple El Dorado arrives at the front gates, thronged as usual with fans.

Vernon drives, Elvis beside him. Elvis is visibly shaken as he sees that some of the fans hold signs that read: "No New Elvis," "We Want Old Elvis," etc...

VERNON

Not signing today, son?

Elvis just stares ahead, despondent.

INT. GRACELAND - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The family are mid-argument. The news plays on the television. Vernon changes the channel.

VERNON

These bus boycotts aren't doing nothing for nobody far as I can see.

(to Elvis)

I like what you done with the TV thing. I like the bit with the dog... I like dogs

THROUGH the window, Billy can be seen playing in Elvis' eccentric German MESSERSCHMITT CAR.

Dodger sits at the dining room table while Gladys prepares for dinner. Strewn around the house are teddy bears, fan mail, and new appliances.

GLADYS

Those New York people were using you to poke fun at the whole South! Getting a laugh outta putting the hillbilly in a tail coat and singin' to a dog.

ELVIS

God damn it, Mama, it were either that or get canceled! Then that's it for television. And Colonel says we running outta states I'm welcome in, and they don't pay unless I can perform. Colonel says I play the charity concert tomorrow night...

Elvis can't bring himself to say "the new Elvis."

ELVIS

... family style. Then everybody calms down and we can get back on track.

VERNON

Someone's gotta think about keeping a roof over our heads.

GLADYS

We've always managed a roof over our head, Vernon!

ELVIS

Daddy's business manager, Mama, it's his job.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLADYS
We was doin' just fine, before
that man came along.

ELVIS
(defensive)
Colonel's got us all this.

GLADYS
I don't want all this! You're
unhappy...

ELVIS
(tries to deny it)
I'm not...

GLADYS
You're losing yourself, baby. The
way you sing and move, it's God-
given, so there can't be nothin'
wrong with it. Satnin' knows...

Suddenly, Billy and a tangle of muddy cousins burst in!

BILLY
Hey, E.P., can we close down the
movie house and see Godzilla
tonight!?

ELVIS
No! And don't tramp mud in the
house, Billy!
(back to Gladys)
You ain't never happy! No matter
what I do, no matter how much I
give you, it ain't never enough!

He's looking at his family. They love him dearly, but
they can't relate to the life he leads.

ELVIS
(making for the door)
And I wish you wouldn't drink so
much! It ain't good for ya!

GLADYS
Baby! Come back!

But he's gone.

EXT. GRACELAND - DUSK

Elvis peels out in his PURPLE CADILLAC EL DORADO.

EXT. GATES OF GRACELAND - CONTINUOUS ACTION

He negotiates the car through fans gathered at the gates.
From a spot across the street, a BLACK SEDAN follows.

INT./EXT. EL DORADO - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis punches on the radio. "Hound Dog" plays. He flips through the stations: another Elvis track, and another. He changes the station again, landing on "Rip It Up."

The song invades the soundtrack and the El Dorado tears off as we TILT UP TO downtown Memphis.

EXT. BEALE STREET - NIGHT

HIGH, OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN THROUGH the second-story window, above which hangs the neon sign of "Club Handy."

CRANE DOWN to see a sharply-dressed B.B. King leaning on the sill. He sees the El Dorado squeal to a halt across the road.

RACK DOWN THE LINE. Break, grind, switch off, key out, slam door. Elvis is out, collar up.

B.B. KING

E.P.!

Elvis spies the long line outside the door and a couple patrons pointing in recognition. B.B. mimes 'I got you.'

CAMERA JAMS UP TO the other window and THROUGH INTO...

INT. CLUB HANDY - NIGHT

Elvis and B.B. are now outside the upstairs doors to the club. They're greeted by the owner, SUNBEAM MITCHELL.

B.B. KING

Listen man, if you're sad and you wanna be sad, you're at the right place. If you're happy and you wanna be happy, guess what? You're at the right place. What you need is the tonic that ails you.

LITTLE RICHARD (O.S.)

Let it all hang out!

The many patrons inside the club repeat the call.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

B.B. KING

Listen to the man. Let it all hang
out. Come on, let it all hang out.

Memphis photographer ERNEST WITHERS shakes hands with B.B. and Elvis. Then as the doors swing open, B.B. King leads Elvis through the ecstatic throng. As usual, Elvis the only white face in the room.

A flash of lightning on stage in the form of a rouged and lipsticked face beneath a towering bouffant: 19-year-old wild-child LITTLE RICHARD.

LITTLE RICHARD

(sings)

*A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-
boom!*

Tutti Frutti, good booty!

Tutti Frutti, good booty!

To the delight of the crowd, Little Richard bangs the piano like a percussive instrument.

LITTLE RICHARD

(sings)

I got a girl named Sue

She knows just what to do

I got a girl named Sue

She knows just what to do

Elvis follows B.B. snaking through the crowd, as Sunbeam Mitchell guides them across the room.

ELVIS

Man, he is cuttin' it!

B.B. KING

Sister Rosetta found this kid in
the backwaters of Georgia.

ELVIS

I should get the Colonel to book
him on 'Steve Allen'... they gonna
love his moves.

On top of the piano now, Little Richard pulls open his shirt to the delight of the crowd.

LITTLE RICHARD

(vocal)

*A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-
boom!*

A constant flutter of girls surround B.B. and Elvis as they slide into their corner table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS

(sings)

*A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-
boom!*

(speaks)

Man, he sings the hell outta that
song. I'd love to record that.

B.B. eases back, cigarette dangling from his fingers.

B.B. KING

If you do, you'll make a whole lot
more money than that kid could
ever dream of...

Little Richard's voice cuts through raucous applause:

LITTLE RICHARD

She's a sister of the Lord and a
sister to all of us, without whom
we would not even be here...
Sister Rosetta Tharpe!

Elvis perks up as SISTER ROSETTA THARPE takes the stage,
electric guitar slung over her shoulder.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

(sings)

*Up above my head, I hear music in
the air...*

The energy irresistible, Elvis and B.B. get up from their
table and join the audience.

A guitar solo takes us outside, where we can see the
parked car that tailed Elvis.

B.B. KING

Friends of yours?

EXT. BEALE STREET - CONTINUOUS ACTION

From the car, two SHADOWY FIGURES look up at the window:
the silhouette of Elvis dancing with a young girl.

The lights of Beale Street go off, and as the noise and
energy of Club Handy dissipates, we hear the strains of
the Gospel classic "Working On A Building."

INT. CLUB HANDY - LATER

Through the window, we can see the crowd has gone,. The
club's staff puts chairs on tables.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elvis, B.B., Sister Rosetta, Little Richard and the house band hang around for a final drink and a late-night Gospel session.

As a song concludes, Elvis and B.B. wander to the bar.

B.B. KING

That's a nice ride you rolled up
in tonight.

ELVIS

It's no giant B.B. King bus!

Beside the bar, B.B. deftly hoists himself through an open window onto the fire escape, Elvis follows.

B.B. KING

Big Red! Yeah, I can go where I
want, play where I want, and if
they don't like it, I can go
someplace else. It's about
control, man. It's like having my
own label: if you don't do the
business, the business will do
you.

ELVIS

(brushing it off)
I leave all that to the Colonel.

B.B. KING

So it's his idea, this "New
Elvis"?

Elvis nods as B.B. lights a cigarette.

B.B. KING

I don't get it, man. Cats buy your
records because they like what you
do, not 'cause you're dressed up
like some... butler! You really
think those kids want to see
"Elvis the butler" at this
Russwood Park gig tomorrow?

ELVIS

I ain't wearing no tails. I just
got to back off the moves, is all.
Colonel says if I don't, they
gonna put me in jail.

B.B. laughs at the prospect.

B.B. KING

C'mon man, they're not gonna put
you in jail.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

B.B. KING (CONT'D)

They might put me in jail for walking down the street, but you a famous white boy! Too many people are making too much money outta you to put you in jail.

The truth of this hangs heavy with Elvis as, from inside, Sister Rosetta develops the jam into one of her songs.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

(sings)

Every day... yes! There are strange things happening every day!

ELVIS

You think so?

B.B. KING

I know so. Colonel's too smart. There's got to be another reason.

Just then, Ernest Withers calls out through the window:

ERNEST WITHERS

Hey, Elvis, B.B.! Give us a smile!

The FLASH BULB BURNS the SCREEN while the unanswered question is memorialized in Elvis' eyes. "Strange Things" takes on a sinister undertone...

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

We PULL OUT from the photo of B.B. and Elvis, arm-in-arm, now on the front of page of THE MEMPHIS WORLD.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE (V.O.)

(vocal)

Every day... every day...

More photos: Elvis at the WDIA Goodwill Revue. Elvis at the fairgrounds on "colored night."

SENATOR EASTLAND

Elvis and B.B. King at Club Handy, with Rufus Thomas and some colored children at the WDIA Goodwill Revue. Your boy on colored night at the Memphis fairgrounds...

Senator Eastland stands over Colonel. Through Rosetta Tharpe's high-pitched keening, we catch only snippets:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR EASTLAND
 ... found your records... unfit
 for military duty... acute
 psychopathic state...

COLONEL
 I was pretending to be crazy, I
 wanted out! I was just a boy from
 Huntington West Virginia.

SENATOR EASTLAND
 ... before the Army, we found no
 record of you at all...

Colonel looks up, ashen. Caught.

SENATOR EASTLAND
 You were never a Colonel, never a
 Tom, never a Parker.

EXT. RUSSWOOD PARK BASEBALL STADIUM - NIGHT (1956)

As the VICE SQUAD installs movie cameras, POLICE erect a
 barrier separating BLACK and WHITE TEENS. On the open
 stage on the field, a 4th of July kick line number...

As "Strange Things" builds menacingly, CRANE HIGH...

A WHITE PATROL CAR makes its way through the crush of
 people and traffic outside.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Eastland appears, orating before a Confederate flag.

SENATOR EASTLAND
 The South will retain segregation.
 The governor of a sovereign State
 can use the force at his
 command...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 That very night of the charity
 show, Senator Eastland was holding
 a segregationist rally not 3 miles
 away at the Memphis bandshell.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT (1956)

A PATROLMAN and a POLICE CHIEF in the front. Elvis in the
 back, head-to-toe in jet black, but for red tie and
 socks. Colonel, beaming, leans on his cane beside him.
 Fans press against the windows. The tension is palpable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

The mayor loved you on the 'Steve Allen' show. All the important people did. What are you singing tonight?

Elvis, still not looking at him:

ELVIS

I made no decision. I'll feel it.

COLONEL

Pay no mind to the big cameras. That's just our friends in the Vice Squad. They don't mean nothin.

(to the Police Chief)

Ain't that right, Chief?

The Police Chief, a stone cold affirmation:

POLICE CHIEF

As long as you don't so much as wiggle a finger.

The car pulls up at the back of the open stage and Colonel laughs as they alight.

EXT. RUSSWOOD PARK BASEBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Colonel guides Elvis through a corridor of police. Elvis approaches his family.

GLADYS

Jesse's with us tonight, baby.

VERNON

Play it smart out there, son.

BILLY

Give 'em hell.

DEWEY PHILLIPS (O.S.)

I know a lot of the young people are excited for our next act...

THE CROWD GOES BESERK. Scotty and Bill take the stage. Before Elvis follows, Colonel leans in for a final word.

COLONEL

All you gotta do is stand there, sing the nice song, smile the nice smile, no wiggling! And then we can get back to our show business. And have fun!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Elvis stares opaquely back.

DEWEY PHILLIPS (O.S.)
AND HERE HE IS... ELVIS PRESLEY!!!

102-103 To deafening applause, Elvis runs on stage.

102-103

EXT. RUSSWOOD PARK STADIUM - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Arriving at the microphone, he holds his hand up in the air to quiet the audience. The crowd settles, immense tension in the air.

Colonel and the police, Gladys, Vernon, Dodger, and Billy, all look on anxiously from the roped-off area.

ELVIS
(humble)
There's been a lot of talk about
the New Elvis.

The crowd boos.

ELVIS
And you know, that other guy.

Elvis can see the cameras of the Vice Squad and with a smirk, he raises his pinky finger into the air.

The perplexed and bewildered faces of THE CONVALESCENT CHILDREN'S HOME CHARITY COMMITTEE, sitting side-by-side with THE MAYOR, THE MINISTER, and the Police Chief as well as VARIOUS DIGNITARIES.

Elvis suggestively wiggles his finger towards the camera.

ELVIS
(sings)
*You ain't nothing but a hound dog
crying all the time...*

A squall of ear-shattering screams and laughter as he mocks the surveillance. CUT TO the stony faces of the Mayor and dignitaries, appalled.

After a moment, Elvis looks up and can just hear Senator Eastland's rally on the wind:

EASTLAND (O.S.)
... civil and other, to maintain
public order, and prevent crime
and riots...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

There's a lot of people saying a
lot of things.

Elvis looks to the Colonel. They hold each other's gaze
for what seems like an eternity.

ELVIS

You gotta listen to the people you
love.

He looks to Gladys and Vernon.

ELVIS

But in the end you gotta listen to
yourself.

Elvis places his guitar down.

ELVIS

You know, those people in New York
are not gonna change me none.

He glances to Scotty and Bill and whispers to their
incredible excitement and delight:

ELVIS

Trouble.

Then, in a building crescendo, he virtually screams.

ELVIS

(yells)
I'm gonna show you what the real
Elvis is like tonight!

The band kicks in like a Molotov cocktail.

ELVIS

(sings)
*If you're looking for trouble
You came to the right place!
If you're looking for trouble
Just look right in my face!
I was born standing up
And talking back...*

14,000 white and Black teenagers thunder the chorus!

ELVIS/CROWD

(sing)
*My daddy was a green-eyed mountain
jack!
Because I'm evil, my middle name
is misery!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The place goes bananas! The rope fence is CRUSHED under the jitterbugging, jiving, writhing youth. The line between Black and white bleeds together in the mayhem.

ELVIS/CROWD

(sing)

I'm evil, evil, evil, as can be!!!

He dances and grinds, exploding with sexuality.

ELVIS/CROWD

(sing)

*So don't mess around, don't mess
around,
Don't mess around with me!*

He staggers around the stage as if drunk. Falling to the ground, grinding on the mic stand as if making love.

Amidst the hysterical youth, a WHITE GIRL deliriously dances with a HIP YOUNG FAN.

ELVIS/CROWD

(sing)

I'm evil, evil, evil as can be!

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

SENATOR EASTLAND

He can use these forces to prevent the racial integration of schools if this is necessary under the police power of the States to prevent disorder and riots. In fact it is his duty to preserve order and prevent turmoil and strife within the state.

Eastland stops and slowly turns toward the overwhelming din of the hysterical fans.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

That night, the noise was so great it could be heard at Eastland's rally.

Eastland, as he realizes that the hordes are coming.

EXT. RUSSWOOD PARK STADIUM - FIELD - NIGHT (1956)

Police try to press the crowd back. Colonel turns to the family. He can see things are getting out of hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Now, I know that Elvis would want me to look after your safety and I think now would be a very good time to get back into the car.

VERNON

What? Now?

Colonel makes his way over to Diskin. Elvis becomes wildly provocative with RCA's mascot, Nipper the dog.

COLONEL

Our friends at RCA are not gonna be too happy when they hear about that.

The sergeant's men begin to move the family towards their waiting vehicle. As Colonel repositions himself beneath the stage, it is clear to him that things have gotten completely out of control. He barks to the sergeant:

COLONEL

Get him off the stage!
(to Diskin)
Protect the merchandise!

ELVIS/CROWD

(sing)
*SO DON'T MESS AROUND, DON'T MESS
AROUND, MESS AROUND...*

But before Elvis can finish, THE CROWD RUSHES THE STAGE and the sergeant's men surround him. He drops the microphone. The boys abandon their instruments. The police throw a wall around Elvis, dragging him away, as Scotty and Bill are sucked back into the melée.

INT./EXT. PATROL CAR/RUSSWOOD PARK - NIGHT

The police sergeant and his men try to hustle Gladys into the car. She stops, seeing Elvis is not yet safe.

GLADYS

Elvis! Elvis! Get in the car!

Elvis gets thrown into a police car as Gladys is dragged by Vernon into the family car. THROUGH the rear window, Elvis glimpses their car and the vehicle with Scotty and Bill departing in different directions.

At the center of it all, the Colonel stands with the stage collapsing behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elvis drops his head back, looking up as 4th of July fireworks explode all around him. He closes his eyes.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

OLD COLONEL
He didn't listen...

Colonel UPTURNS the table!!

OLD COLONEL
HE DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME!!

A dramatic, operatic version of 'Jailhouse Rock' builds as we hear the BING-BING-BING of the slot machines, infused with Colonel's heavy breathing.

OLD COLONEL
The charismatic child had no idea
of the terrible price we would
both pay for his glorious tantrum.
I had to find a way out, a way to
save him.

EXT. GRACELAND - DAY (1958)

Drizzle smears the lonely Cadillacs in the driveway.

INT. GRACELAND - LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's gloomy and cold. Gladys sits with Vernon around the fire, Colonel nearby. Elvis on the lounge, singing.

ELVIS
(sings)
*Well, I went to the bayou just
last night
There was no moon, but the stars
were bright..*

Gladys holds a drink, shaking. Vernon stares blankly ahead. Elvis in shock.

GLADYS
No, there's no way I'm letting my
baby go to Germany for *two years!*

VERNON
Your cousin all but lost his mind
when they sent him to Korea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

It is either the army or jail. There's something else, Vernon. I vouched for your integrity, but they've been poking in your background.

GLADYS

He passed a bad check to put food on the table. They were hard times...

ELVIS

We don't have nothing to be ashamed of! My daddy's a good man.

COLONEL

But your papa did go to jail. And if you go, too? Well, you know how they are with their flashy headlines. Elvis the draft-dodger, a family of delinquents. We may never book another date or sell another record!

ELVIS

This is my fault.

COLONEL

My boy, don't blame yourself. I was partially responsible.

Colonel takes an "I Hate Elvis" pin from his pocket.

COLONEL

But when I tried to warn you, you made your own choice. Now, to my way of thinking, the Army can be a new beginning for us all. Let them cut your hair, prove that you're a clean-cut, all-American boy, a patriot. Do your two years and when you come back, I promise you, I will have done everything to make you the biggest star in Hollywood! And you will choose your own pictures.

ELVIS

It's gonna be ok, Mama...
(turning to Colonel)
Do you think they'd let me do the movie before I ship off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL
(reassuringly)
I could get a deferment. So you
will do the 'King Creole' picture
and then we'll be off.

Colonel nods, holding up the pin.

COLONEL
But no more of this.

He throws the "I Hate Elvis" pin into the fire and the
word "hate" shrivels and melts in the flames.

Gladys' desperate sobs are drowned out by the angry growl
of HAIR CLIPPERS as we--

TRANSITION TO:

INT. BARBERSHOP (FORT CHAFFEE) - DAY (1958)

Clippers cleave Elvis' rich, dark locks, sending them
cascading onto the cold, cement floor.

ELVIS
Hair today, gone tomorrow.

INT. GRACELAND - NIGHT

A glass tumbler falls from Gladys' hand. She crumples to
the ground, distraught. Vernon stands, helpless.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

A choir sings a dark version of "Heartbreak Hotel" as Old
Colonel turns to see Gladys' casket in the distance.

OLD COLONEL
She had fretted losing her second
son her whole life.

As he gets closer, Elvis appears, crying over his mother.

OLD COLONEL
I had to let the world know that
my boy was a good, dutiful son,
and nothing like the rebel
delinquent they feared.

INT. GRACELAND - MUSIC ROOM - DAY (1958)

The extended Presley clan gathers round the casket. Elvis wails from the back of the house.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
I couldn't let a good funeral go
to waste.

Colonel sees Vernon, destroyed, sitting at the foot of the stairs. He moves towards him.

COLONEL
There are some fine folk from the
press out front... a few words,
pictures... then they will leave
us alone.

Vernon cuts him off, shaking his head. He nods towards a back room and the sound of Elvis' inconsolable sobs.

VERNON
He won't. I can't get him to do
anything. I keep asking myself,
what would she do?

COLONEL
Yes, he trusted her like nobody
else and now she's gone and what
does he have now?

This thought cuts through to Vernon.

VERNON
He has you... He trusts you! Talk
to him.

Colonel, as if the thought had never occurred to him:

COLONEL
It ain't my place...

VERNON
Can you do it? Please Colonel, we
need your help...

Colonel nods his head, making his way down the hall.

INT. GRACELAND - GLADYS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Colonel enters. Elvis, inconsolable, curled up in the closet with one of her dresses. After a moment...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

(ever-so-softly)

All this has been for my Satnin'.
And now she can't even enjoy it.

COLONEL

(warmly)

Your poor Daddy is doing the best
he knows how but he is
overwhelmed. He just keeps asking
himself over and over again, what
she would have done? He needs your
help... out there.

ELVIS

No, I can't go out there. I just
want to stay here forever.

COLONEL

My boy. No one could never replace
her, but listen to me. From this
moment on, anything she would have
done, I will carry out in her
name. While you are overseas I'll
stay home and I will work and I
will worry while you serve your
time in the Army. Trust me.

The Colonel takes Elvis, guiding him gently to his feet.

COLONEL

Now come, go stand by your Papa,
comfort him, comfort your friends,
family, and even your fans.
Because if you don't, then all
your Mama sacrificed for you will
have been for nothing... Trust me.

Elvis nods his head gently and then, unexpectedly, lays
his head on the Colonel's shoulder and whispers:

ELVIS

No matter what happens, stay with
me through thick or thin, okay?

Colonel's hands move ever-so-slowly toward Elvis'
shoulders, barely touching them in a strange, suspended
gesture as Elvis weeps into his shoulder.

ELVIS

You're like... you're like...

EXT. GRACELAND - FRONT STEPS - DAY

The popping of FLASHBULBS. Elvis and Vernon sit on the steps amidst a scrum of newspapermen and photographers.

ELVIS (V.O.)
... a father to me.

REPORTER (V.O.)
Young Mr. Presley, a rock and
roller no more...

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

THE *U.S.S. Randall* sails past THE STATUE OF LIBERTY...

REPORTER (V.O.)
... is doing his duty and joining
the ranks of the U.S. Army...

INT. *U.S.S. RANDALL* - CABIN - DAY

Elvis lies in his bunk, in uniform.

REPORTER (V.O.)
... to serve like any ordinary,
patriotic young American.

Tears streaming from his eyes as he sings to himself:

ELVIS
(sings)
*I get so lonely, I get so lonely,
I get so lonely...*
(whispers)
I could die...

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The *U.S.S. Randall* is tiny against the horizon. We TILT UP INTO the starry, black night and --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

The artificial fiber-optic starry night of the casino ceiling. The Colonel is lying on his back, between the endless blackjack tables, relieved. Rain begins to fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL

I had done it; Elvis Presley would return a clean-cut, all-American boy. But I failed. I did not consider the most dangerous thing of all... love.

Colonel stands, now holding an umbrella, and looks out to the misty streets of Bad Nauheim as a car drives past.

EXT. ELVIS' HOUSE (BAD NAUHEIM) - DUSK (1959)

An unprepossessing two-story cottage. Fans cluster around the fence, craning their necks.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

... love!!

SLOW CRANE UP OVER the front of the house, as we GLIMPSE a party through the ground floor windows.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Suddenly, no one else existed but the pretty teenage daughter of a United States Air Force officer.

PUSH PAST leaves, THROUGH to a second-story window, where we discover a beribboned ponytail against the glass.

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

The second I walked in the door they started bombarding me with all these questions and I just said 'Excuse me if you don't mind, please, I'd like to go to bed.' And then he said to me...

The girl turns. Doll-like, with cool, turquoise eyes: PRISCILLA BEAULIEU. She looks down on the fans below.

PRISCILLA

(imitating a man)

'You know Priscilla, he's got girls all over the world, okay? Girls that are waiting outside his house. Girls that are writing him endless fan mail.' And then Mommy says to me, 'Oh my goodness, what could he possibly see in you? What do you two do up there all night?' And I just said...

INT. ELVIS' HOUSE (BAD NAUHEIM) - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peculiar bric-a-brac fills Elvis' room. Bags of fan mail, piles of stuffed animals. THROUGH the open door, we see several other officers and their dates milling around.

PRISCILLA

'We talk and listen to music, that's all. The fan mail and those other girls, that's just his job.' And then they were going on about that photo of you and Natalie Wood riding around on that bike in Memphis...

We FOLLOW Priscilla as she gets down to join Elvis, sitting on the floor in his military uniform.

PRISCILLA

But then I said, and I said this very calmly: 'Listen, he's just lonely and quite frankly, so am I.' And they didn't have anything to say to that, so I just went to bed.

ELVIS

I've never met anyone like you.

PRISCILLA

I hope not...

ELVIS

You understand it all.

PRISCILLA

I don't think I understand it all, I think I just understand you.

(then; masking
jealousy)

What is Natalie Wood like?

ELVIS

She's nice. She's been writing to me about acting. You know, I'm making a study of Marlon Brando and James Dean. Natalie writes about working with him, and 'Rebel Without a Cause.'

PRISCILLA

'Rebel'?

ELVIS

You've never seen 'Rebel Without a Cause'?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (CONT'D)

Oh, that's one of my favorite movies. James Dean, he's a genius at acting. God, I just hope to one day be as good as him. The Colonel's promised me that when I get back, he's gonna set me up in Hollywood to be a serious actor...
(suddenly shy)
It's really what I dream of.

A young sergeant, CHARLIE HODGE, appears at the doorway.

CHARLIE

E.P., you promised the Captain you'd have her back by 7.

ELVIS

Hey Charlie, what's that behind you?

Charlie turns away as Elvis slams the door shut.

ELVIS

He don't boss me around.

Elvis looks out the french doors, onto the street where fans are still staring up. He closes the curtains.

Priscilla, now standing by Elvis' side, looks up to him and fills him with confidence as she says:

PRISCILLA

Well, I think if you dream it, you'll do it.

ELVIS

You do?

PRISCILLA

I really do.

ELVIS

Yeah?

PRISCILLA

Yeah.

For the first time since Gladys' death, someone believes in him. They look at each other and kiss.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY (1960)

Elvis appears behind a tangle of microphones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

I understand you want to become a dramatic actor, is that right?

ELVIS

Well, sir, that's my big ambition. It takes a lot of time, a lot of experience, but I hope I make it. That's what I wanna do.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

He was as good as Brando. But you didn't want to see him in movies where he didn't sing!

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE MONTAGE - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE (1960S)

We see a TRAILER-STYLE MONTAGE of 60s ELVIS FILMS as he's hidden away in a Hollywood bubble.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Thanks to me, his life became one big Hollywood movie!

INT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - DAY

Elvis and Priscilla, lying on a bed in an oddly-shaped room, swathed entirely in red velvet.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Starring Priscilla!

As the intro to 'Viva Las Vegas' kicks, Elvis pulls a curtain to reveal they are in fact on his decked-out VISTALINER BUS as it speeds through the desert. Suddenly, Priscilla has her iconic beehive and a glam 60s look!

ELVIS

(sings)

*Bright light city gonna set my
soul, gonna set my soul on fire!*

They sashay down the bus, as members of the Memphis Mafia pop their heads out of every nook and cranny.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

And a cast of his buddies and cousins, his 'Memphis Mafia'!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bus hurtles through an abstract, neon Vegas as their Hollywood romance plays out through clips from 60s Elvis films and realist Super 8 footage.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The gang all attend Elvis and Priscilla's wedding.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 There was a fairytale wedding. And
 a honeymoon, on Frank Sinatra's
 jet!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Now Priscilla cradles newborn baby LISA MARIE.

OLD COLONEL ICE (V.O.)
 And introducing baby Lisa Marie!

INT. SOUNDSTAGE (REAR PROJECTION) - DAY

Elvis water-skis with THREE BIKINI-CLAD GIRLS in front of a rear-projected body of water.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 I made him the highest paid actor
 in Hollywood history. We had a lot
 of fun! But Elvis was a young man,
 and of course, he got distracted.
 So we made them faster and
 cheaper. Is it my fault the world
 changed?

BANG! The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. provides an abrupt gear shift into "Edge of Reality."

We GO WIDE to reveal the back projection set surrounding Elvis as he water skis. PRODUCTION CREW hurl buckets of water across Elvis' face.

INT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - DAY

Elvis is learning his lines. Jerry, fielding a phone call further down the bus. Suddenly, Elvis notices over Jerry's shoulder on the TV, Walter Cronkite with a news bulletin: the shocking reality that MLK has been assassinated in Memphis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*I walk along a thin line darling
Dark shadows follow me...*

Rising in disbelief, Elvis slowly makes his way towards the television as Jerry turns up the volume. Both men are completely numb.

INT. MGM SOUNDSTAGE - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

Elvis, clad in a blue pajama suit, films the "Edge of Reality" number from *Live a Little, Love a Little*.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Here's where life's dream lies
disillusioned,
The edge of reality...*

We continue to INTERCUT between the back projection, ridiculous films, and archival footage of Vietnam, the Beatles, the Civil Rights movement, etc.

Headlines appear: "NEW ELVIS STINKER BOMBS!" "ANOTHER FLOP!" "THERE'S NO MORE APPETITE FOR PRESLEY PICTURES!"

EXT. MGM BACKLOT - DAY

We come off the sign on the water tower that reads, "MGM Studios." We pick up a golf cart traveling through the MGM backlot Western set.

It quickly veers towards Elvis' Vista-Liner surrounded by an assortment of cars, a mirror image of the 1950s carny camp. As the golf cart pulls to a halt, the Memphis Mafia can be seen having a water fight.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

It don't matter how hard I worked,
how many snow jobs I came up with,
how much snow I made them. My boy
loved to spend and with them
hillbillies around him, the money
would just melt away...

Billy, alighting from the golf cart, is carrying Elvis' blue pajama costume. He passes Vernon and Priscilla, talking quietly:

VERNON

With the sale of Circle G, horses,
vehicles...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERNON (CONT'D)

that will cover the payroll. But that new security at Graceland is gonna have to wait.

As Billy enters the Vista-Liner...

INT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - DAY

He can see Walter Cronkite on the television behind the driver's seat.

WALTER CRONKITE (V.O.)

(on TV)

Dr. Martin Luther King, the apostle of nonviolence in the civil rights movement, has been shot to death in Memphis, Tennessee...

BILLY

They need you on set, EP.

Billy looks around and can see Elvis, collapsed on the banquette, devastated. Jerry sits next to him.

ELVIS

(in disbelief)

Dr. King. He always spoke the truth.

"Edge of Reality" reaches its finish, and we hear...

COLONEL (O.S.)

(singing)

*Here comes Santa Claus
Here comes Santa Claus
Right down Santa Claus lane...*

EXT. MGM STUDIOS - DAY

TRACK ACROSS a table with models of a European village, Santa's sleigh, dancing girls. A festive-sweatered Elvis figurine receives a little nudge from Colonel's cane.

COLONEL

'Elvis Presley's Wonderful World of Christmas!' A television special like the world ain't never seen before... Three days to tape, no audience, no music to learn and every one of them Christmas carols is a solid-gold hit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vernon and the Memphis Mafia admire Singer sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, and more. Priscilla stands at a distance, watching a Singer portable television as it plays news of riots back in Memphis.

Elvis holds baby Lisa Marie, looking upon all the standees with his image, holding Singer products.

COLONEL

And for this, the sponsors at Singer Sewing Machines will give us... unprecedented what, Diskin?

Diskin dutifully makes a show of checking his notes.

DISKIN

Unprecedented profit participation. Provided you appear in at least one knitted Christmas sweater.

COLONEL

Made on one of these here home-kitting apparatuses! No more knit one, purl two!

Elvis joins Priscilla, handing her Lisa Marie. They glance at what's playing out on the television.

PRISCILLA

Memphis is burning...

Vernon looks to Elvis for his approval.

VERNON

'Elvis Presley's Wonderful World of Christmas.' I like it very much!

COLONEL

It's gonna be a lot of fun. I hope Presley Enterprises are dreaming of a white Christmas because it's definitely gonna snow!

ELVIS

A Christmas special? Is this really the best you can do, Admiral?

PRISCILLA

We came to Hollywood, Colonel, so Elvis could be a serious actor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL

My dear, for the last 5 years,
your husband has been the highest
paid actor in Hollywood!

ELVIS

And now I'm unemployable.

COLONEL

We took these Hollywood phonies
for every nickel they had. It's
time to pack our tent and move on
to greener pastures. We've had
Elvis the rebel. Elvis the movie
star. Now we're going to see
Elvis, the family entertainer.

Jerry pipes up.

JERRY

And appliance salesman?

Big laughs. Elvis looks to Jerry with a face like
thunder.

ELVIS

You think that's funny? I don't
need you to question me about what
I gotta do to support my family
and every person here. Is that
goddamn clear?

Elvis slams into the Vista-Liner.

COLONEL

(to Priscilla)

I'm sorry, my dear.

(to Jerry)

Well, Mr. Schilling, Elvis'
audience is no longer screaming
teenage girls. They are grown-ups;
they are wives and mothers and
they watch television and they buy
sewing machines.

(remembering)

Ah, the radio promotions... Would
you take that in to Mr. Presley
and play it for him to get his
approval?

JERRY

Colonel, I don't work for you.

(indicating the bus)

I'm just a friend of that guy in
there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Colonel, a murderous look. He turns to Vernon.

COLONEL

Well, Vernon, shall we begin to draw up the contracts?

VERNON

Let's do it.

INT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - DAY

Elvis, fuming, storms in and rips off his collar. The aftermath of the Dr. King assassination plays on the TV.

BILLY

Hey EP, do you wanna run lines?

ELVIS

Mhmm.

BILLY

Okay. So uh... Greg walks up to the receptionist dressed in a lingerie cat costume. 'Aren't you cold?'

ELVIS

Huh? No I'm fine.

BILLY

No, that's the line.

ELVIS

Oh.

(with a smarmy wink)
'Aren't you cold?'

A KNOCK.

BILLY

(seductively)
'Only from nine to five.'

Billy returns to his bunk as Jerry enters.

JERRY

I'm sorry.

Elvis refuses to acknowledge him.

JERRY

(treads cautiously)
I've been offered a job here in L.A. I'm gonna take it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elvis is suddenly at a loss.

ELVIS

Hey, man... I wasn't angry at you.
Let me make it up to you. There's
a new Shelby Cobra coming out.
I'll buy you some new wheels.

JERRY

It's got nothing to do with money.

Elvis lets this sink in; no one talks to him like this.

ELVIS

Man, I need you here as a friend.

Jerry stops, the anger has abated. He nods his head to the TV, where James Brown and the Rolling Stones perform.

JERRY

These TV guys. They're the ones
that put James Brown and the
Rolling Stones on the T.A.M.I
Show. They're really plugged in, I
met them.

Elvis nods.

JERRY

I could set up a meeting.

Elvis is interested, but he masks it flippantly.

ELVIS

To see what they can do with 'Here
Comes Santa Clause?'

JERRY

(playing along)
Peace, love, and Christmas
cookies. Could be crazy...

Suddenly, Charlie's voice:

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Colonel's already got the guy who
does all the Singer specials.

Elvis and Jerry turn to see Charlie in the doorway. He is delivering the tape recorder with the promotion tape already loaded, setting it down on the bed. We don't know how long Charlie's been listening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLIE

He did Bing Crosby, I loved that.
Colonel wants you to listen to
this and approve it. Then they
want you back on set in five.

Charlie leaves as Billy enters to start dressing Elvis.

JERRY

I'm just saying, you should work
with new people...

Jerry's words hang in the air, clearly about more than
just the TV special. Before he leaves, Jerry turns back
to Elvis.

JERRY

Its like you always say, EP.
Colonel's got a lot of ideas.

EXT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - NIGHT

It's late. Priscilla sits in the limo, amidst a convoy of
cars idling outside the Vista-Liner. Billy packs away an
Elvis standee in the boot of a car.

BILLY

That's the last of it.

Charlie approaches Priscilla's window, leaning in.

CHARLIE

He's just laying in there,
watching the Reverend's funeral...

PRISCILLA

I'll go check on him. Thank you.

Priscilla exits and approaches the bus.

INT. ELVIS' VISTA-LINER BUS - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

What a beautiful rendition of
"Here Comes Santa Claus" that was!
With all the sparkle and magic
that the season brings!

On the back television, sound muted: somber images of
Reverend Martin Luther King Jr's memorial.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And you'll be even warmer this season in a 12-gauge, cable-knit woolen sweater, made right at home on the Singer Sewing's SK155 Home Knitter! And now...

Discover Elvis, sprawled on the red velvet bed. The tape recorder next to him. His blank stare illuminated in the dark by the blue light of the television.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

... heeeeere's Elvis!

CLICK. The tape recorder stops.

Elvis stares blankly at the television. His breathing heavy. Tears begin to form in his eyes. Suddenly, the sound of the door opening.

PRISCILLA

(quietly)

Satin'. Can I watch the memorial with you?

ELVIS

Please.

Priscilla slides into the bed beside him.

ELVIS

I'm so tired of playing Elvis Presley.

PRISCILLA

You don't have to. We could run away to France or Italy and live off the land. Eat baguettes, snails, and cheese. Little Lisa could learn French.

Elvis breathes deep, fighting for control.

ELVIS

I wish we could. Too many people rely on me.

PRISCILLA

I love you. Your daughter loves you. We don't care about the money or anything else. We just want you to be happy. You're only really happy when you sing the music you love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ON THE SCREEN: MAHALIA JACKSON steps up to the microphone and begins to sing "Take My Hand, Precious Lord."

ELVIS

(distant; broken)

That's Mahalia Jackson... I used to hear her sing at East Trigg Church. That's the music that makes me happy.

Elvis eases the sound of the television up on the remote. With this, a MATCH SHOT as...

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Mahalia and CHOIR now appear. In front of them at the pulpit, the fiery REVEREND BREWSTER:

REVEREND BREWSTER

Many have lost their lives for this cause, so remember, when things are too dangerous to say... sing!

The choir lifts Mahalia's voice higher.

MAHALIA

(sings)

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho

MAHALIA AND CHOIR

(sing)

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down!

A sudden blast of HEAVY ROCK MUSIC.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - AERIAL SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON (1968)

The rock continues as a convoy of 2 BLACK CARS and a BLUE LIMO cuts through the Hollywood Hills.

INT. LIMO - LATE AFTERNOON

MUSIC LOUD as inside one of the cars, two groovy hepcats, STEVE BINDER (35) and BONES HOWE (35), sit facing backwards. They stare intensely, barely breathing.

Seated opposite, Sonny and Red West stare blankly back.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - AERIAL SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Music builds as the convoy threads the road that traces up to and above the derelict Hollywood sign.

EXT. LOOKOUT ABOVE THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN - LATE AFTERNOON

The convoy squeals to a dusty halt near Jerry, who has been waiting for them. Memphis Mafia jump out and open the door of the limo. Binder and Bones get out.

JERRY

Mr. Binder, Mr. Howe, thanks for coming... One thing, gentlemen: don't call it a Christmas Special.

Binder and Bones nervously glance at one another; the whole thing feels like some kind of elaborate Mafia hit. The Wests stay back as Jerry leads Binder and Bones down a dusty dirt track.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIGN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

As they round a bend, DISCOVER Elvis, haloed by the setting sun, sitting on part of the dilapidated sign and gazing across the valley toward Griffith Observatory.

Jerry hangs back, but motions that Binder and Bones should approach. They do so...

Elvis continues to stare as he senses their presence.

ELVIS

When I first came to Hollywood, I'd come up here and sit for hours. Right over there is where they shot *Rebel*. I dreamt of being a great actor like Jimmy Dean. This sign was beautiful then, and now... It feels as though lots of things are like that these days; broke down, beat-up, rotten.

(turning to them)

I really liked what you guys did putting James Brown together with the Rolling Stones.

BINDER

(extremely nervous)

We're big fans of yours, too. It's, just, uh, Mr. Presley...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

Elvis.

BINDER

Elvis. Christmas specials aren't
our thing, man.

Elvis looks at them sharply-- then, that charming smile.

ELVIS

I know. But tell me honestly,
where do you boys think my
career's at right now?

BONES

(slow; nervous)
Ah, well, it's...

BINDER

(direct)
In the toilet, Elvis.

Elvis, half a beat of shock. And then he laughs, really
laughs, like he hasn't in years.

ELVIS

(to Jerry)
You hear that Jerry?
(to Binder and Bones)
I knew you were the right guys for
this job!

He jumps down from the sign.

ELVIS

When I was starting out, some
people wanted to put me in jail,
hell, even kill me, 'cause of the
way I moved. They cut my hair,
put me in uniform, and sent me
away. It killed my mama... And
ever since, I been lost. When
you're lost...

(a cautious thought)

People take advantage. I thought
you fellas might help me get back
to who I really am.

Binder and Bones are affected by Elvis' honesty.

BINDER

(probing)
Who are you, Elvis?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS

I sure as hell ain't somebody who
sings Christmas songs by a
fireplace for an hour.

BINDER

(cautiously)
What does the Colonel think?

Suddenly, Elvis flares up.

ELVIS

I don't give a damn what the
Colonel thinks.

BONES

I see... Well, if you want to find
yourself, first thing you do is to
go home.

Binder picks up the cue.

BINDER

Metaphorically speaking. You know,
get back to who you really are,
musically.

Elvis is not sure, Bones chimes in:

BONES

Yeah, we could get your old band
back together...

BINDER

Play the tracks that made people
call you the devil and trash your
records in the street.

BONES

A leather jacket; raw and dirty!

BINDER

But first, you need an audience.

Elvis smashed by nerves, barely able to say the word:

ELVIS

Audience?
(tries to laugh it
off)
No, man... I haven't played in
front of an audience in ten years.

BINDER

That's my point.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Elvis looks out over the L.A. grid as lights turn on and sparkle.

ELVIS

You think we could do some Gospel?

Binder and Bones look at each other, blindsided, as the decrepit Hollywood sign transforms into...

EXT. NBC STUDIOS - DAY

A sign: "NBC COLOR CITY."

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - DAY

Elvis stands on the stage steps with Priscilla and Jerry, looking out at the studio and its empty bleachers.

JERRY

The Blossoms are set to tape the Gospel sequence tomorrow, but first it's you in the round, the acoustic set with Scotty and DJ, everything with the audience. Colonel won't give us any static so long as we do the two Christmas numbers in the...

PRISCILLA

... understated sweaters?

Jerry looks up. Elvis seems disturbed.

JERRY

He's got to keep the Singer execs happy.

PRISCILLA

What's the matter, honey?

ELVIS

Audience... I didn't exactly agree to that. I think I'd be better without an audience.

Jerry looks to Priscilla, tense.

JERRY

They're already here.

ELVIS

Send them home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRISCILLA

We can do that.

JERRY

We could send them home.

ELVIS

I like that.

Priscilla moves closer to Elvis.

PRISCILLA

Honey, Binder's whole idea was that the world sees you how I see you at home. Making jokes with your friends, laughing, having fun, playing the music you love.

ELVIS

My hands are sweaty.

PRISCILLA

Look at me. I know you're scared. It's scary, but the man I love has never done anything extraordinary without fear.

ELVIS

Yeah, you know, I just... I don't know if I can be that without a script.

Elvis walks to center stage, looking around.

ELVIS

What if nothing comes?

As he turns, we PUSH IN, the roar of the crowd audible...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - LATER

Bones stands in Elvis' place, warming up the LIVE AUDIENCE who fills the bleachers. Applause sign flashing.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - DAY

Stoic-looking SINGER SEWING EXECUTIVES follow behind Colonel as he speaks, Diskin dutifully behind him. A Christmas Sweater is wheeled past by an assistant.

COLONEL

Mr. Presley is interested in a few of Mr. Bindle's ideas but... Ahh, the Christmas sweater!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL (CONT'D)
 (to the assistant)
 Into Mr. Presley's dressing room.
 (to the Singer Execs)
 We will be singing at least three
 spectacular Christmas songs in
 that very sweater. To the control
 room.

Colonel ushers the group to the stairs.

COLONEL
 It was knitted on the SK551-

DISKIN
 (whispers)
 The SK155.

COLONEL
 Oh the SK155. Thank you, Mr
 Diskin.

The group continues up the stairs...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

... and arrives in the control room where Binder and AN
 ASSISTANT sit behind the desk.

COLONEL
 There will be 'Silence is the
 Night,' 'Here Comes Santa Claus.'
 And Diskin what's the one about
 the boy?

DISKIN
 The Little Drummer Boy.

COLONEL
 Yes, the Little Drummer Boy.

SENIOR SINGER EXEC
 Ahh... yes.

The Singer executive mimes drumming.

COLONEL
 We're going to be starting with
 'Here Comes Santa Claus.' Isn't
 that right, Bindle?

BINDER
 Absolutely, the Christmas numbers
 will come later in the show.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - DAY

FAST TRACK WITH and UP Elvis' black-leather-clad legs, FOLLOWING him as he charges through the corridor.

BONES (V.O.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE/CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

As we ENTER the studio, Priscilla touches Elvis' hand discreetly. The FLOOR MANAGER guides her to her place.

BONES

... here's Elvis Presley!

Elvis takes the stage like a boxer entering the ring, met with polite applause. These aren't the adoring fans he once knew. He nervously clears his throat.

ELVIS

Well, I gotta do this sooner or later, so it might as well do it now, baby...

He cues the band-- a mistimed opening stab and Elvis misses the cue. A ripple of confusion through the audience.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Bones enters the control room and shares a worried look with Binder. The Colonel can see Elvis' face on all the monitors, sweating, insecure. He hisses to Binder:

COLONEL

This is precisely why he shouldn't be in front of a live audience.

BINDER

(over intercom)
Sorry, E.P., technical problem...

COLONEL

Get them out now, and let's get on with the Christmas number!

The hard-faced SINGER EXECUTIVES are confused. Binder looks to Bones, and then to the monitors.

BINDER

(a second intercom)
Standby for 'Here Comes Santa Clause.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Colonel pretends to be in control. Diskin nods along.

COLONEL
 (to Singer Execs)
 Technical difficulties... Please
 standby.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The DANCE CAPTAIN leads a posse of DANCING SANTAS,
 stretching and preparing to go on.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis looks to Priscilla in the shadows, sensing a do-or-
 die moment. He cracks a joke with a wry smile:

ELVIS
 How do you like it so far?

The audience laughs, a sudden connection.

We PUSH IN ON the monitor of one of the TV cameras as
 Elvis throws back his head, cues the band, and... music
 and voice come together in a tremendous, rocking entry:

ELVIS
 (sings)
*Well, since my baby left me...
 I found a new place to dwell
 It's down at the end of lonely
 street
 At Heartbreak Hotel...*

He connects with the audience as only Elvis can. Elvis
 Presley is reborn.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Binder and Bones look on with pride. Colonel's face
 falls. The Singer Executives seem uncertain.

JUNIOR SINGER EXEC
 Well, that was... energetic.

SENIOR SINGER EXEC
 Is 'Here Comes Santa Claus' next?

COLONEL
 Absolutely! I see no reason why
 not.

He thunders out of the room, Diskin in tow.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

ELVIS

(sings)
*You ain't nothing but a hound dog,
 cryin' all the time.*

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Colonel hurtles down the stairs, huffing and puffing.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis launches into "Jailhouse Rock."

ELVIS

(sings)
*Warden threw a party in the county
 jail,
 The prison band was there and they
 began to wail...*

The crowd erupts into applause. Priscilla can't believe her eyes.

ELVIS

Thank you! It's been a long time,
 baby! My boy, my boy!

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Colonel bounds down the stairs with Diskin.

COLONEL

I do not know what is going on.
 Sweating in black leather, singing
 'Hound Dog,' what does that have
 to do with Christmas?

They reach the corridor and suddenly, Scotty Moore and D.J. Fontana cross Colonel's path. He turns to Diskin:

COLONEL

The Blue Moon Boys?! What are they
 doing here?!

Colonel follows them towards the stage.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - LATER

The musicians are now gathered on the stage to do the sit-down section.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

My boy, my boy!

CHARLIE

My boy, my boy.

ELVIS

OK... Well goodnight...

Elvis jokingly pretends to leave.

ELVIS

Uh, are we on television? Are we on television?

CHARLIE

No, we're on a train to Tulsa.

ELVUS

Let's see, what do I do now folks?

SCOTTY

Why don't you play that 'Trying To Get To You' one time?

ELVIS

Twelve years he played guitar for me man, didn't say anything. Now let me swap that axe with you, champ.

With this, they exchange guitars and settle in. Elvis launches into "Trying to Get to You," raw and intense, while staring at Priscilla.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Ever since I read your letter,
Where you said you loved me true,
I've been traveling night and day
I've kept running all the way
Baby, trying to get to you.*

Everyone in the control room watches on with delight. Colonel watches from the shadows, the realization dawning that they've all been conspiring against him. He leaves in a fury.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Diskin is offering refreshments as Colonel thunders in, out of breath, barking at Binder:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

I think it is time for 'Here Comes Santa Claus.' Is that understood, Mr. Bindle?

BINDER

Absolutely...

BONES

Right after 'Elvis Talks.'

COLONEL

Talks? No, no, no. What does Elvis talk about?

BINDER

About himself.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - DAY

ELVIS

Alright, give me that piece of paper, man. I'm gonna see what I'm supposed to do next here.

Charlie hands Elvis the cue sheet.

ELVIS

It says here, 'Elvis will talk about first record...'

CHARLIE

Little late.

ELVIS

It says here, 'Elvis will talk about shooting from the waist down and not being able to touch hands with body-- body with hands.'

(laughs)

I just got this show off the air, boy, I tell you.

The boys laugh at the ludicrous suggestion. Elvis looks around and tosses the cue sheet aside. The audience laughs. After a moment, Elvis speaks from the heart:

ELVIS

Anyway... I'd like to talk a little about music... Very little. There's been a big change in the music field in the last ten or twelve years. And uh, I like a lot of the new groups, the Beatles and the Beards, and the whoever...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (CONT'D)

But a lot of it is basically, our music is basically... rock 'n' roll music is basically, uh... Gospel or rhythm and blues. People have been adding to it, adding instruments to it, experimenting with it. But it uh, it all boils down to just uh... I don't know what I'm talking about really, I'm just mumbling, man.

SCOTTY

Hey, Elvis, why don't you talk about, uh... little finger?

They share a look-- connecting.

ELVIS

The little finger. Yeah that's all I could move at Russwood.

Elvis thinks back...

ELVIS

The uh, the police filmed the show on the 4th of July in Memphis because the PTA or the YMCA or somebody, they thought I was uh... something.

As the audience chuckles, Elvis' eyes flick up to Colonel in the control room.

ELVIS

So uh, the police came out to film the show. So they told me I couldn't move, I had to stand still. The only thing I could move was my little finger like that, man.

(wiggles finger)

*You ain't nothin' but a hound dog
Crying all the time...
If you're looking for trouble, you
came to the right place...*

The band and audience crack up as the soulful strains of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," sung by Darlene Love begins...

ELVIS

But, uh, that's one thing about this TV special that I'm doing. They're gonna let me do what I wanna do...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Elvis looks up into the camera.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

On the monitors, Elvis is in closeup. It's almost as if he is looking straight at Colonel.

ELVIS (V.O.)
(on monitor)
Sing the music that I want. Music
that I love...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis looks to Priscilla.

ELVIS
The music that makes me happy.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Binder looks from the control desk to the Colonel watching Elvis on the monitors, who is clearly taking this personally.

MATCH TO:

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Old Colonel watching Elvis, the control room now on the carpet in Space with rows of monitors.

OLD COLONEL
Those know-it-all hippies poisoned
Elvis. And now my boy, mocking me!

ELVIS
(on monitor)
I was supposed to turn my back on
my fans, but I didn't. And
because of that, they sent me to
the Army.

OLD COLONEL
Blaming me?! When I saved him?

ELVIS
(on monitor)
And ever since then, I lost
everything I ever cared about. My
friends, loved ones, my music...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - DAY (1968)

Back in reality, Elvis stares at the Colonel, who watches from the control room.

ELVIS (V.O.)
 And most of all, I lost my dear,
 sweet mama... My Satnin'...

A spotlight reveals African-American dance legend CLAUDE THOMPSON as he begins an exquisite solo.

DARLENE LOVE (V.O.)
*Sometimes I feel like a motherless
 child.
 Sometimes I feel like a motherless
 child...*

Elvis watches from the shadows, singing to himself.

ELVIS
 (sings)
*Sometimes I feel like a motherless
 child...
 a long way from home...*

Claude continues dancing his solo.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)
 Singer were about to walk out; I
 had one final chance...!

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CORRIDOR - DAY

Colonel yells at the Floor Manager:

COLONEL
 Young man, you tell them it's time
 for 'Here Comes Santa Claus.' I
 said so. Now, now!

FLOOR MANAGER
 First positions! Not here, out
 there! Go, go. Sleighs! Where's
 the sleigh?

Santas stub out cigarettes and don their hats! A large wooden sleigh is dragged into position.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

THROUGH the glass at the back of the room, we see Colonel barrel along the corridor...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He bursts in right as Binder pushes the intercom.

BINDER

Cue the gospel and then we'll
segue straight into the whorehouse
and kung-fu spectacular. Go!

The Singer Executives stare with unforgiving horror and head for the exit. A final word to Colonel.

SENIOR SINGER EXEC

You'll be hearing from our
lawyers. Santa Claus is bringing
you a lawsuit!

COLONEL

But we have 'Little Drummer Boy'!

Colonel turns. Through the monitors, we--

MATCH TO:

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Colonel is surrounded by monitors showing Elvis in the different dance numbers. As he spins:

OLD COLONEL

Kung-fu fighters! An all-colors-of-
the-rainbow ballet!

Colonel keeps spinning around to see the monitor with Elvis in the bordello number.

OLD COLONEL

This was not part of the plan! And
it was a good plan!

TOP SHOT: Suddenly Colonel is revealed on the NBC stage amongst a flower of fans and bordello dancers.

OLD COLONEL

Street whores... To sell sewing
machines at Christmas time!

He's aggressed by multiple gospel singers, kung-fu fighters, bordello girls. The music intensifies into an orchestral cacophony, the memory of the comeback takes on a nightmarish quality.

ELVIS

(sings)

*If you ever take a trip down to
the ocean
Find yourself down around Mobile*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL

Singer wasn't going to sell a
single sewing machine!

ELVIS

(sings)

*If you got a little time to kill
Just follow that crowd of people
You'll wind up out on his dance
floor*

OLD COLONEL

We would be in breach! Sued by our
own sponsors for breach of
contract.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Diggin' the finest little five
piece group
Up and down the Gulf of Mexico
Guess who's leadin' that five-
piece band,
Well, wouldn't ya know, it's that
Swingin' little guitar man.*

OLD COLONEL

We were going to be ruined in this
town! We'd be laughed right out of
show business

ELVIS (V.O.)

(sings)

*Ha, ha, ha, ha!
Ha, ha, ha, ha!*

OLD COLONEL

Everything was going backwards.

PULL OUT to reveal Elvis and the Blue Moon Boys sitting
on the stage.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Well, I'm the king of the jungle,
They call me the Tiger Man.
And if you cross my path,
You take your own life in your
hands.*

As the nightmare Elvis mash-up begins to peak, multiple
Elvises now join the ensemble.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OLD COLONEL

I betrayed you? You betrayed me!
This television broadcast was our
last chance! I'd given my word to
our sponsors! Something had to be
done!

SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF A GUNSHOT!

YOUNG STAGEHAND (V.O.)

They shot him! Bobby! Kennedy!!!

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - NIGHT (1968)

The tragic news tears through the cast as they rush from
the stage.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Old Colonel, once again alone on the carpet of Space,
stares at thousands of 1970s televisions on which the
Kennedy tragedy plays out.

PUSH IN on a screen: images from the Ambassador Hotel.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The whole cast and crew, many in tears, gather around the
TV, which plays news of the Robert Kennedy assassination.
Elvis' eyes are glued to the screen.

NBC FLOOR MANAGER

Steve, we gotta get back to work.

Binder stands:

BINDER

Listen... I just want to say that
I'm looking at all of us...

(re: himself)

Jewish director, black
choreographer, Puerto Rican
choreographer, dance sections of
black, white and you know, purple.
And of course...

(to Elvis)

Our gentleman from Tupelo... And
to me, this is the kind of nation
we are. Right here. In this room.
And we cannot end this show with
'Here Comes Santa Claus.' We have
to say something. You have to make
a statement, E.P.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL (O.S.)

Mr. Presley does not make
statements.

The curtain that hides Elvis' bedroom is slowly drawn back. It's the Colonel. He walks in and stares the entire room down.

COLONEL

He sings 'Here Comes Santa Claus',
and wishes everyone 'Merry
Christmas' and 'Goodnight.'

Colonel's jabs at the dial; the screen goes black.

COLONEL

The show must go on.

The West cousins and the Floor Manager move everyone out of the room. Elvis says nothing. Faces fall, disgusted by the cowardice of the King.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM

It's late and Bones is making coffee for himself and Binder as they watch coverage of the Robert Kennedy shooting on the monitors. PUSH IN ON: a monitor.

INT. NBC - DRESSING ROOM - LATER

MATCH SHOT: pull out on a miniature TV in Elvis' dressing room. Billy helps Elvis into his robe.

COLONEL

Poor Mrs. Kennedy. A tragedy, a
tragedy... But it has nothing to
do with us.

Suddenly, Elvis bursts through the curtains.

ELVIS

It has everything to do with us...

COLONEL

I just do not think we should be
making speeches about politics and
religion.

ELVIS

Dr. King was shot eight miles from
Graceland, while I was out here
singing to turtles. And now this,
and all you can think about is how
many goddamn sweaters I can sell?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

This wounds Colonel's pride.

COLONEL

I'm a promoter, that's what I do.

But Elvis does not back down...

ELVIS

Well I'm Elvis Presley. That's what I do.

The Colonel's eye takes on that crocodile gleam.

COLONEL

Well, Mr. Bindle has really gotten inside your head with all of his hippy friends. You actually think that singing your old songs dressed in black leather, sweating, mumbling incoherently to the audience, was a good show?

ELVIS

Colonel, I know when I've excited an audience.

The Colonel rounds on him.

COLONEL

That was not a real audience my boy. There was a sign flashing 'applaud' telling them when to clap for you.

This touches Elvis' Achilles heel. The Colonel knows he's landed a blow and drives in, brandishing his cane.

COLONEL

This entire jamboree is an embarrassment!

(thud goes the cane)

You have embarrassed the sponsors...

(off thud)

You have embarrassed yourself...

(off thud)

And you have embarrassed me...

(off thud)

Now, you can sing whatever songs you and Mr. Bindle choose for 55 minutes, but at the end of the show there will be a Christmas song.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Or we will be sued-- no, you will be sued for breach of contract, because I will no longer be the promoter your career... I will have to leave you.

Elvis takes this in. Colonel makes his way to the door.

COLONEL

I have convinced our friends at Singer to come back tomorrow for 'Here Comes Santa Claus.' I'll see you in the morning, Mr. Presley.

(turning before he exits)

Oh, and as I recall, Dr. King said rock and roll contributed to juvenile delinquency.

Elvis turns back to the television. PUSH IN ON: L.B.J. on the television and MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM/STAGE - NIGHT

L.B.J. on the monitor in the control room. Binder turns off the three monitors with a 'click, click, click.' Bones behind him. He notices Elvis down in the studio.

CUT TO: the abandoned studio floor. A stark work light slashes the Santa set, where Elvis stands in deep contemplation. He sings a couple of melancholic lines from "Here Comes Santa Claus."

BINDER (V.O.)

(intercom)

We're set for the number tomorrow right E.P?

Elvis looks up to Binder in the control room.

BINDER

It's pretty familiar territory... Is it okay if we just run through it in the morning?

He looks to Bones, pulling on his jacket to leave, weary with disappointment. Elvis stares back at Binder and Bones, defiance in his eyes...

ELVIS

A reverend told me once: 'When things are too dangerous to say... sing.'

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Binder ponders. He turns to Bones, who has stopped putting on his jacket. Binder looks down at the script he was about to throw out. We hear simple piano chords.

CLOSE ON Binder's script as we match cut to...

INT. NBC STUDIOS - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

TOP SHOT: Elvis, lying on the floor, holding Binder's script. He moves the paper to reveal the lyrics to 'If I Can Dream' on the flip-side. Binder, Bones and BILLY GOLDENBERG are around the piano, shaping up a song.

ELVIS

(sings)

*There must be lights burning
brighter somewhere
Got to be birds flying higher in a
sky more blue...*

Time passes and the piano chords transform into a warm, stirring brass section.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

We once again see Colonel barreling along past the window at the back of the room, wearing a Christmas sweater. Diskin, also in sweater, and Charlie Hodge in tow.

CHARLIE

They were in there all night...

COLONEL

Doing what?

CHARLIE

Working on the new song. He says he's singing it...

COLONEL

New song? No.

Colonel enters the control room.

COLONEL

Oh, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! Mr. Bindle... You and I are on the same page at last.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Binder looks up. Eight monitors hold a wide shot of the Santa set with dancers and a choreographer rehearsing "Here Comes Santa Claus."

Colonel turns to the Singer Executives, but before he can speak, we hear the stirring brass, and the Singer Executives' faces turn ashen.

BINDER

Bring up the lights on the sign.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The West cousins pull back a curtain to reveal a white-suited Elvis. Priscilla kisses him before he takes the stage.

PRISCILLA

Good luck, baby.

Suddenly, the TV cameras turn away from the Santa set and towards the giant "ELVIS" letters illuminated in red.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The Colonel moves in disbelief to the window as a crane with a CAMERAMAN sweeps in front of his reddening face.

INT. NBC STUDIOS - STAGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis, now fully revealed in the spotlight, sings as if speaking to the whole world from the depths of his soul.

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're lost in a cloud!
With too much rain!*

The cast looks on, moved by the power of the message and the voice.

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're trapped in a world!
That's troubled with pain!
But as long as a man
Has the strength to dream... He
can redeem his soul
And fly!*

INT. NBC STUDIOS - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Colonel's face is like thunder. Diskin, inscrutable, yet an undeniable inner approval.

Just then, Priscilla walks in. She shares a look with Binder and stands by him.

ELVIS (V.O.)
*Deep in my heart there's a
 tremblin' question
 Still I am sure that the answer,
 answer's gonna come somehow
 Out there in the dark, there's a
 beckoning candle
 And while I can think, while I can
 talk*

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

ELVIS (V.O.)
*While I can stand, while I can
 walk
 While I can dream, please let my
 dream
 Come true, right now!!!*

Colonel, now walking away from the Elvis set, back into the ghostly casino whence he came.

OLD COLONEL
 I was certain it was going to be a
 disaster.

We STAY ON Colonel's face as it transforms.

OLD COLONEL
 (a tepid whisper)
 But I was wrong.

Never before have we seen the Colonel so vulnerable.

EXT. GRACELAND - DAY (1969)

A lively picnic to the sounds of Elvis' 'Memphis Tennessee.' Elvis and Priscilla race around on a golf cart. A new era at Graceland.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Old Colonel sits ever-so-slowly at the roulette table, his face frozen in catatonic despair. He SCREAMS...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL

Wrong!

His breath heavy, full of self-pity.

OLD COLONEL

All those years I stood by him.
One little mistake and he leaves
me?!

INT. GRACELAND - MUSIC ROOM - AFTERNOON (1969)

Graceland, completely reimagined in a hip, sixties look, with an equally hip cocktail party in swing. Elvis, Priscilla, Jerry, and a cool, rangy character, TOM HULETT, look over the plans for a touring plane.

JERRY

Air Presley's new wings.

ELVIS

(sings)

*I'll fly away, oh glory
I'll fly away, in my Convair 880.*

HULETT

With a state room in the back,
extra seating in the front.

PRISCILLA

You mean we can sleep on the
plane?

HULETT

That's the whole point! When you
play stadiums, it's like a week of
shows in just one night. So when
it's done, you hop on the plane
and go where you want...

ELVIS

"Go where you want, play where you
want, and if they don't like it,
go some place else." B.B. King
told me that.

HULETT

B.B. knows, man... I've been doing
some research. Last year alone,
you turned down two offers in
Germany and Japan for a million
bucks... for one night! You know
who gets offers like that?

Elvis shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HULETT

Nobody... Nobody except Elvis.
Aaron. Presley. Just last week,
with our newest group, Led
Zeppelin, they sold out the
Coliseum in Vancouver. Just
imagine what you could do. Why the
Colonel turned them down is beyond
me.

JERRY

Well if you figure it out, let us
know.

A tense moment. Elvis spies little LISA MARIE and picks
her up.

PRISCILLA

We should call it the "Lisa
Marie." Are you guys hungry? Let's
eat.

Joining Vernon, his new wife, DEE, Charlie, Lamar and
girlfriends, they hold court like the Kennedys.

They all sit down for dinner. A phone RINGS. Charlie pops
out, and back in.

CHARLIE

Hey EP, it's the Colonel.

ELVIS

Not now, Charlie. I'm sitting down
to dinner with my family.

CHARLIE

(into the phone)
You're gonna have to call back
later.

ELVIS

(to the table)
I want you to get me some songs. I
want you to get me some songs,
too. I want every one of you, if
you know somebody, to get me some
songs.

LAMAR

Hey, I got something from a young
guy, Eddie Rabbitt: "Kentucky
Rain" You've got to do it. It's
just that good.

We PAN to the dining room chandelier as the lights turn
on, signaling the transition to night.

INT. GRACELAND DINING ROOM - LATER

PAN off the chandelier to find STAFF clearing away the last of the plates at the meal's end. It's a warm atmosphere and spirits are high. Elvis' end of the table is abuzz with talk of the new album:

JERRY

You know E, I love the new song,
man it's--

ELVIS

(interrupting)
It's unlike anything I've ever
sung before.

PRISCILLA

The first time Elvis played it for
me, I cried.

CHARLIE

I don't know about the title: "In
The Ghetto"...

DEE

"In The Ghetto?" That's going to
put a lot of people off.

CHARLIE

Well it's a great song but, you
know, it might...

JERRY

Have you settled on a name for the
album?

ELVIS

From Elvis... in Memphis. Going
back to my roots recording here in
my home town. And then we take it
to the world with our new wings.

Priscilla summons the maid who brings a tray of jewelry boxes with a tag reading: "From Elvis." She hands them out around the table.

PRISCILLA

And in honor of that, Elvis and I
have organized a little surprise.
It's nothing crazy.

ELVIS

To celebrate this new chapter, the
new album, and the tour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vernon, now a few drinks past his limit, attempts an aside to Dee.

VERNON

And if the tour doesn't go off as planned, those costs, the musicians, that airplane, that's gonna be on my head, yeah.

A tense silence, as if Colonel's presence is suddenly felt.

HULETT

Mr Presley, with all due respect, man, there's no way this tour won't bring in mucho dinero.

VERNON

Well son, I'm sorry, but it's my job to worry about these finances because I am business manager.

PRISCILLA

Vernon, we're all taking care of business now.

Hulett opens one of the boxes, holding up a lightning bolt necklace, emblazoned with "TCB".

ELVIS

That's right. We're gonna TCB around the world... but that don't mean nothin' without a little tender loving care at home.

One of the women at the table opens her box to find a matching "TLC" necklace inside.

PRISCILLA

You can't have one without the other.

ELVIS

To TCB and TLC.

Glasses are raised as the guests respond, some trying on their new necklaces with a laugh. Vernon looks on incredulously.

VERNON

(to Dee)
And how much did these cost?

Priscilla looks to Elvis, catching a flicker of self-doubt.

EXT. GRACELAND - DAY

An RCA MOBILE RECORDING VAN is parked in the driveway. We FOLLOW cables running from the van to inside the house.

INT. GRACELAND - JUNGLE ROOM - DAY

Elvis, backup singers, and band are recording. Priscilla descends the stairs and watches.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Well, the world turns
And a hungry little boy with a
runny nose
Plays in the street as the cold
wind blows
In the ghetto
And his hunger burns
So he starts to roam the streets
at night
And he learns how to steal, and he
learns how to fight
In the ghetto*

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

The SCREEN FILLS with archival images of riots in Chicago, Newark...

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*Then one night in desperation
A young man breaks away
He buys a gun, steals a car
Tries to run, but he don't get far
And his mama cries
As a crowd gathers 'round an angry
young man
Face down on the street with a gun
in his hand
In the ghetto*

INT. GRACELAND - JUNGLE ROOM - DAY (1969)

Charlie answers the phone and mouths to Jerry, 'It's the Colonel.' Priscilla shakes her head at Charlie. Elvis imbues the last lines with authentic emotion.

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)

*And as her young man dies
(MORE)*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*On a cold and gray Chicago mornin'
Another little baby child is born
In the ghetto
And his mama cries*

INT. ALADDIN CASINO (VEGAS) - GAMBLING FLOOR - DAY

The CROUPIER deals a card and Colonel taps the table, requesting another.

COLONEL

Hit me.

But to his surprise, the Croupier does not deal him another card. Colonel taps the table again.

COLONEL

Hit me.

CROUPIER

(nervously)

Mr. Parker, Mr. Kohn would like to see you.

COLONEL

Colonel Parker. Hit me.

The Croupier just stares back while the FLOOR MANAGER beside him shakes his head. Colonel drags himself from the table, taking a basket of fried chicken with him.

INT. CASINO - MEYER KOHN'S OFFICE

MEYER KOHN and his INTIMIDATING ASSOCIATE stare the Colonel down from across a desk.

MEYER KOHN

You've run up quite a tab,
Colonel, and now we hear your boy
is working with new people. You've
lost your meal ticket.

Kohn rises for emphasis.

MEYER KOHN

You better settle up, Colonel,
before we have to make things...

With an ominous knuckle-crack, Kohn's Associate finishes his sentence.

INTIMIDATING ASSOCIATE

...Uncomfortable.

INT. GRACELAND - ELVIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elvis brushes his teeth while Priscilla brushes her hair, getting ready for bed.

ELVIS

I have to see him in Vegas. He's hurt his back...

PRISCILLA

Satnin', you know what he's like. The moment you get near him, he'll have you under 10 feet of snow before you know what's happened.

Elvis looks to her, knows where she's going.

ELVIS

Baby my mind's made up. Business is business, but I owe it to him to tell him to his face.

PRISCILLA

Just be careful he doesn't clip your wings.

Elvis slides into the bed, cuddling her.

ELVIS

He won't. I'm gonna go see him in Vegas, look him in he eyes and tell him it's over.

PRISCILLA

I actually feel sorry for him.

ELVIS

Me too.

We can tell by the way Elvis gently nods that his feelings for the Colonel still run deep. Priscilla clicks off the TV remote and we go to black.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Colonel's eyes bulge, a dismissive smile as he intones...

OLD COLONEL

Sorry for me? She feels sorry for me?

Colonel, IV in tow, walks into the model of the European village we saw in the Christmas special.

A YOUNG WOMAN'S laughter echoes from a shopfront.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He moves to get out of bed, Diskin rushes to support him.

NURSE TISH

You've just had a heart attack;
you're not to get out of bed.

ELVIS

A heart attack? You said your
back.

But Colonel is already out of bed, Nurse Tish stabilizing
him with his walker.

COLONEL

Stop making such a fuss. Diskin,
get the lights. My heart just
stopped is all... I fell and put
my back out. It was just all the
excitement over your Christmas
special; but I shouldn't have
worried any.

He stops and looks Elvis directly in the eye.

COLONEL

You came through as you always do.
I may have very small ideas, but
no one can sell a show to an
audience like you can. I admit it,
I was wrong.

It's almost as if there's an invisible tear in Colonel's
eye. Elvis strengthens his resolve.

ELVIS

Colonel, I want to tell you in
person. As far as business is
concerned, I think we need to go
our separate ways.

But Colonel is all enthusiasm.

COLONEL

Well, you may be right. It may be
time for me to retire.

Elvis chuckles.

ELVIS

Come on Colonel, quit snowing me.
You ain't retiring.

The Colonel seems hurt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL

I will miss the circus. I can't keep up with this young fella Hulett is putting on your new show, an international tour in stadiums and the Olympia in Paris and the Sydney Opera House and what's that one Diskin? "Boukin?"

DISKIN

The Budokan in Tokyo.

COLONEL

The Budokan in Tokyo... But creating a show worthy of an international tour is very, very expensive. All those costs eat into the artist's profits and I worry that the financial risk would put a strain on your father. I've been thinking, as your former technical advisor and as an old friend...

The Colonel looks to Elvis, looking for reassurance.

COLONEL

What if your show didn't cost a single cent? Then it would be all profit! Every dollar you make would be a dollar profit! And I think your daddy would like the sound of that very much.

Colonel touches a button and the drapes rush back to REVEAL: the International Hotel, vaulting skywards!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - LATER

A late-'60s red-and-white extravaganza. Colonel at one end of the auditorium. Nurse Tish by his wheelchair. Elvis examines the cavernous stage.

ELVIS

It's a mighty big stage. Remember when we saw itty bitty Barbara Streisand? It ate her alive.

COLONEL

She worked out the bugs for us.

Colonel dismisses Nurse Tish and walks toward Elvis as he examines the Versailles-like ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

You can get lost in a place like this.

Colonel has now arrived at the front of the stage.

COLONEL

When you started performing, you always said something was wrong. Your hair, your costume. But you was just afraid. Afraid of being Elvis, and if you weren't, you wouldn't be a great artist.

Elvis considers. He knows there's a truth here.

COLONEL

Now yours and Mr Hulett's international tour can't be nothing less than great. Nothing less than Elvis Presley.

ELVIS

(tentative)

I've been experimenting with a new, big sound.

Colonel waves his cane towards the stage.

COLONEL

You can fill this stage with every musical idea inside...

(feigns tapping
Elvis' head)

... that head.

ELVIS

It would cost.

Colonel leans into Elvis. There's an intimacy in their closeness in this vast space:

COLONEL

Yes! That's the beauty of it. This here International Hotel needs a mighty big draw card to bring in the boobs... So they will cover the costs of putting together that show of yours. You play here for six weeks and then, off you go! Touring around the world! With no financial risk to Elvis Presley Enterprises. None.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

With this, the Colonel TAPS his cane, adopting that strange, internal stare, drawing Elvis in for what feels as though it could be a moment of hypnotism.

Elvis breaks the moment with a laugh.

ELVIS

God damn... The snowman strikes again.

COLONEL

We are going to make it snow!
There will be so much snow, we'll be able to ski down the Vegas Strip.

ELVIS

So much snow, we'll be able to ski off the top of the International!

COLONEL

So much snow, there'll no longer be a desert! And you'll take this show and ski around the entire world! All the way straight to the Rock of Eternity!

They laugh. Then, Elvis' mind racing with creativity:

ELVIS

(sings)
Bright light city gonna set my soul, gonna set my soul on fire.

ELVIS

We're gonna need the Sweet Inspirations!

FOLLOW Elvis' gaze and the famed soul sisters appear.

COLONEL

Done!

ELVIS

And the great Imperials.

COLONEL

Of course!

ELVIS

... and a 30-piece orchestra!

COLONEL

Strings, brass, a hundred pieces!
(to himself)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLONEL (CONT'D)

And buttons, pins, calendars,
posters, photographs, scarves,
hound dogs. Giant stuffed hound
dogs. The biggest stuffed hound
dog on the planet earth.

Full brass section, rhythm, percussion, and male choir
appear alongside the Sweet Inspirations. Colonel, gone.

We are in a full-blown rehearsal. Elvis on a stool at the
center is trim, tanned, and terrific, mic in hand.

ELVIS

You know, the first thing I ever
recorded, the very first thing,
was "That's All Right Lil Mama"
but it was back in 1927, I think
it was. Let's see. I was quite
young, but we only had two or
three instruments at the time. We
had a guitar, a bass, and another
guitar. And well, now...

He whistles.

ELVIS

We're gonna make something new
here... Listen, I want to try
something. Glenn, why don't you
take the intro? 2, 3, 4...

Piano starts.

ELVIS

Alright, bring that bass up Jerry.

Bass joins.

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

Colonel, Diskin at his side, watches as a crane places a
GIANT, GLITTERING "ELVIS!" MARQUEE.

He turns to gangster GOOCHERA and businessman MEYER KOHN.

COLONEL

If you don't sell any tickets,
don't blame me none; even the
gophers in the desert will know
about this show!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - DAY

ELVIS

Now Inspirations, on the answer.
(sings)
That's all right!

SWEET INSPIRATIONS

(sing)
That's all right!

ELVIS

(sings)
That's all right!

SWEET INSPIRATIONS

(sing)
That's all right!

ELVIS

Boys?

IMPERIALS

(sing)
That's all right!

ELVIS

With me.

ALL

(sing)
Any way you do!

He turns to the Memphis Mafia.

ELVIS

What are you looking at back
there?

He takes a sip of water, then throws the rest at the
Mafia. He turns around and sees Charlie Hodge bugging
James Burton.

ELVIS

Hey Charlie, get back, he ain't
gonna teach you the guitar in five
minutes.

Guitar joins.

ELVIS

Play it James! Horns? Ba-da-da, ba-
da-dow!

Horns join.

INT./EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - DAY

As rehearsal builds, INTERSPERSE SNAPSHOTS of Colonel's marketing madness: hats, bunting, billboards. Radio ads simply repeating, "Elvis! Elvis! Elvis!"

Colonel oversees the installation of an endless army of GIANT, STUFFED HOUND DOGS!

COLONEL

They need to be bigger!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - LATER

Diskin presents Colonel with a bigger hound dog.

COLONEL

Still not big enough. Go bigger!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - DAY

ELVIS

Up the octave!

They up the octave. Trumpets wail... As music builds, Elvis throws in karate moves, experimenting with his unique style of movement.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - FOYER - DAY

Just when we think the hound dogs can't get any bigger... Colonel stands in front of: "WORLD'S BIGGEST HOUND DOG!"

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - DAY

Rehearsal reaches new, dizzying peaks.

ELVIS

Bones, give me something strong on the one.

Trombones join. Elvis walks over to RONNIE TUTT.

ELVIS

Alright, take it home, brother. Do it to me. Come on.

Drums go wild. Elvis wiggles in rhythm, as Ron Tutt's thunderous drum solo from outer space begins...

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - NIGHT

THE "ELVIS!" MARQUEE. Rich and famous alight from limos.
MERCHANDISE SELLERS hawk to CROWDS.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The drum solo, LOUDER and LOUDER. MASSIVE BRASS CHORDS.

Elvis and his entourage walk around the back of the stage, he tunes his guitar. Elvis takes a moment, summoning all his strength.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

To deafening applause, the ornate showroom explodes into a million flashbulbs as Elvis takes the stage and launches into a super-fast up-tempo vocal:

ELVIS

(sings)

*Well, that's all right, mama,
That's alright for you,
That's alright, mama, any way you
do...*

In one booth, Colonel sits with stoic Goochera and Meyer Kohn. In another, Priscilla, next to a proud Vernon and Dee.

INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT (1947)

The juke joint's on fire to Arthur Crudup, leaving no doubt as to the influence on Elvis on stage.

BIG BOY CRUDUP

(sings)

*Well, my mama, she done told me,
Papa told me, too,
'This life you're living, son, now
women be the death of you,' now
that's alright.*

YOUNG ELVIS' EYE peers in through the peephole.

INT. SUN RECORDS - STUDIO - NIGHT (1954)

19-year-old Elvis rocks out with Scotty and Bill.

ELVIS

(sings)

But that's all right,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS (CONT'D)

*That's all right now, mama, any
way you do...*

INT. JUKE JOINT - DAY (1947)

BIG BOY CRUDUP

(sings)

*Now, if you don't want me, why not
tell me so?
You won't be bothered with me
round your house no more.*

Young Elvis mouths the words.

INT. SUN RECORDS - STUDIO - NIGHT (1954)

CLOSE ON 19-year-old Elvis, singing the words.

ELVIS

(sings)

*But that's all right, that's all
right...
That's all right now, mama, any
way you do...*

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT (1969)

ELVIS

(sings)

*Dee dee dee dee, Dee dee dee dee,
Dee dee dee dee dee dee dee dee
Dee dee doo, well, that's alright,
that's alright...*

INT. JUKE JOINT/SUN STUDIOS/SHOWROOM - SPLIT SCREEN

The three performers across time now appear in a '70s-
style split screen. All now merge into the BIG FINISH!

BIG BOY CRUDUP/19-YEAR-OLD

ELVIS/34-YEAR-OLD ELVIS

(sing)

*That's all right now, mama, any
way you do!
That's all right now, mama, any
way you do!*

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

The audience erupts. Even Kohn and Goochera cannot
contain their excitement as we SETTLE ON the Colonel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

He put everything he knew about
music into that show.

Elvis banters with the audience between numbers.

COLONEL

Ain't nobody gonna do a better
show than that! If I was you, I'd
book him for the next hundred
years!

KOHN

Well, no better time than the
present.

GOOCHERA

We'd like to make him part of the
family, Colonel.

There is something chilling beneath Goochera's bonhomie.

COLONEL

Well, I think Mr. Presley could be
persuaded to make the
International his home...

Suddenly, Elvis calls for a spotlight on Colonel.
Colonel waves to the audience, and with the spotlight
still on him, he says out of the side of his mouth:

COLONEL

Providing of course, he was paid
pretty well.

KOHN

What did you have in mind?

Colonel takes out his pen with a flourish as Elvis moves
into "Suspicious Minds."

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're caught in a trap
I can't walk out
Because I love you too much, baby
Why can't you see
What you're doing to me
When you don't believe a word I
say?*

COLONEL

Well, for an attraction as
tremendous as Mr Presley...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As we INTERCUT with Elvis' intensifying physical routine, Colonel scrawls directly onto the tablecloth: "ELVIS PRESLEY, \$500,000 PER ENGAGEMENT FOR FIVE YEARS..."

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

I couldn't let him leave. I had to keep him home, keep him safe.

ELVIS

(sings)

*We can't go on together
With suspicious minds
And we can't build our dreams
On suspicious minds...*

...1969 - 1970 - 1971 - 1972 - 1973 = \$5,000,000 PLUS \$100,000 SIGNING BONUS."

COLONEL

That's what my boy would expect.

Colonel presents the pen to Kohn who considers, signs the tablecloth, and hands the pen back.

COLONEL

Now what are you going to pay me?

KOHN

If there's one thing I've learned, it's never bet against the Colonel. Your sideshow is the jackpot.

Kohn can't help admire the Colonel's unfailing chutzpah as he scribbles on a COCKTAIL NAPKIN, shows it to Goochera, who nods, and then slides it over to Colonel...

It reads, "THE UNDERSIGNED, COLONEL TOM PARKER, IS A 'SPECIAL GUEST' OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL. HE HAS UNLIMITED CREDIT AT ALL TABLES."

Colonel signs the napkin and snatches it up, before easing himself out of the booth.

COLONEL

Oh, and of course I'll reserve the right to sell calendars, pictures and such on the side.

Kohn rolls his eyes, and nods.

Colonel crocodiles through the audience, eyes locked on Elvis' incredible performance. Entering the wings, he sees Jerry between vaulting curtains, staring at the apparition of Elvis. Colonel places a hand on Jerry's shoulder and he turns around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JERRY

Elvis really wants to announce
tonight.

The Colonel peers at Jerry and raises a finger.

COLONEL

An announcement?

JERRY

The tour, at the press conference.
He's gonna set E.P. up with his
own plane.

COLONEL

Or perhaps a rocket ship?

Jerry half-laughs at Colonel's strange joke. Without
taking his eyes off Elvis, Colonel leans in:

COLONEL

Just one thing. Keep in mind...
security. Security.

JERRY

Hulett knows what he's doing.

Colonel fades back to join Diskin at the legs of the
proscenium, the red floor lights flickering on them both.

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're caught in a trap
I can't walk out
Because I love you too much, baby*

Colonel halts abruptly, cane before his eyes, staring
inward. Suddenly, intense:

COLONEL

Diskin, have we discussed with Mr.
Hulett? Pertaining to the death
threats?

DISKIN

(unsure)

Death threats?

Colonel unconsciously taps his cane, deep in thought.

COLONEL

(mouthing the words)
Death threats...

FLASH FORWARD INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - NIGHT

A door cracks ajar to reveal a Showroom menu on the floor outside. The photo of Elvis' face is scratched out. Scrawled across it: "I am going to kill you."

END FLASH FORWARD.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

Back in the present, Elvis has the audience spellbound, as he repeats the final verse over and over...

ELVIS

(sings)

*We're caught in a trap
I can't walk out
Because I love you too much, baby*

A tap from the Colonel's cane sends us into a stylized, operatic bubble of Suspicious Minds.

FLASH FORWARD INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

Elvis, in a different jumpsuit, is performing 'Never Been to Spain.' FOUR MEN charge the stage, sending Elvis to one knee, reaching for a holster in his boot. The Memphis Mafia rush to stop him, dragging him from the stage.

The crowd applauds, thinking it is part of the show, until Elvis returns.

ELVIS

*I'm sorry ladies and gentleman.
I'm sorry I didn't break his
goddam neck! If he wants to shake
my hand I'm fine, if he wants to
get tough I'll whoop his ass...*

Elvis charges into 'Polk Salad Annie.'

END FLASH FORWARD.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

The audience cheers Elvis, as Suspicious Minds reaches its thundering climax. As the stage lights drop to black, the reaction is rapturous.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

*That night he went from a man, to
a god...*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From his vantage point by the stage, Colonel looks over to Priscilla, sat with Vernon and his new wife, Dee.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

She had never seen him perform
live, and in her face I saw a
familiar expression. The same fear
I had seen in the face of his
mother. The realization that he no
longer belonged to her...

Dee turns to Priscilla, almost yelling amidst the fervor.

DEE

You must see this all the time!

But a clearly astonished Priscilla is slow to respond, a thought dawning on her.

PRISCILLA

Never...

DEE

Never what?

PRISCILLA

I've never seen him perform a live
show before.

DEE

You're the lucky one, you get to
take him home!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

Yes, he was once again Elvis,
making love to a live audience.

More cheers.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Wise men say, only fools rush
in...
But I can't help falling in love
with you...
Shall I stay?
Would it be a sin...
If I can't help falling in love
with you?*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Colonel has moved back into the auditorium. Leaning down from the stage to kiss a woman in the audience, Elvis looks up and connects with Colonel. They share a smile; once again great together.

Elvis unexpectedly walks down into the audience, as if offering himself as sacrifice. Colonel directs security to throw an instant ring around Elvis.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

That's what was great about Elvis.
He'd get an idea and take it to
the rock of eternity...

Placing his hands on Elvis' waist, the Colonel guides Elvis through the melée and an orgy of kisses.

Colonel shares a look with Priscilla.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

In this, his greatest moment, she
could see the nature of his love.
A love that we mere mortals could
only glimpse from the shadows.

Giftng Elvis back to his audience, Colonel saunters back through the showroom in a victory lap.

ELVIS

(sings)
*For I can't help falling in love
with you...*

The enormous golden curtain falls. The crowd rises in unrestrained adoration, while Jerry guides Priscilla, Vernon, and Dee backstage.

JERRY

He did it! Next stop: the world!

Priscilla manages an insecure smile.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Behind the curtain, the Memphis Mafia gather around and swathe Elvis in towels, moving him towards Jerry, Priscilla, Vernon, and Dee. The Colonel looks on from the shadows on the other side of the stage. Priscilla unabashedly throws her arms around Elvis.

PRISCILLA

I don't know who that was out
there, but I sure am glad I'm
married to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elvis looks up and can see his father, proud and beaming. Vernon's warm and steady hands clasp his.

VERNON

Son, Mama was looking down on you, clapping and celebrating with all of us.

DEE

Oh, you were wonderful! Do you mind signing these for my boys?

But Elvis is staring towards the Colonel, isolated, alone. Priscilla, sensitive to this:

PRISCILLA

Mr Presley... I see that's your new manager over there.

With this, she and Jerry guide Vernon and Dee away.

PRISCILLA

We'll see you at the party.

But Elvis has already begun to cross the stage.

COLONEL

Tremendous triumph, greatest show on earth! My dear boy, this brainchild came from you and me. But you above it all made it work with your talent and dedication. We did it, my boy. We did it.

ELVIS

We did it. I can't wait to show the world what you and I can do.

Colonel's eyes drift towards the napkin gripped in his hand. Like Judas clutching 30 pieces of silver...

COLONEL

Yes, the world will see your show. I guarantee it. Whatever I have to do I will carry it out... Whatever it takes.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

... As long as they bought a ticket to Vegas.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - PRESS CONFERENCE - LATER

The post-show press conference. Elvis glows with pride in an all-black ensemble as he is introduced to the room:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Elvis Presley.

The room applauds.

ELVIS

Thank you. Thank you very much. Gentlemen, how are ya? Would you like me to sit down? First of all, I plead innocent of all charges!

Laughter from the reporters. Elvis sits down.

REPORTER

We love you Elvis!

ELVIS

Thank you dear, I love you too. Thank you.

REPORTER

Mr Presley, why do you think you've outlasted every other entertainer from the fifties and for that matter the sixties as well?

ELVIS

I take vitamin E. Uh no, no I was only kidding. I don't know. I just embarrassed myself, man. Uh I don't know dear. I just enjoy the business. I like what I'm doing

REPORTER

Are you satisfied with the image you've established?

ELVIS

Well, the image is one thing and the human being is another, you know, so...

REPORTER

How close does it come? How close does the image come to the man?

ELVIS

It's very hard to live up to an image, you know, I'll put it that way.

REPORTER

How does your wife feel about you being a sex symbol again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS

I don't know... you would have to ask her.

REPORTER

Elvis, what finally made you come out of seclusion and decide to make personal appearances again?

ELVIS

I just missed it. I missed the closeness of an audience, of a live audience. So just as soon as I got out of the movie contracts, I started to do live performances again.

REPORTER

Will you be continuing to do more live work in the future?

ELVIS

I think so. There's so many places I haven't been yet. I'd like to go to Europe, I'd like to go to Japan and all those places. I've never been out of the country except in the service, you know.

LORD SUTCH

One million pounds sterling to make two appearances at the Wembley Empire Stadium in England!

ELVIS

(gesturing to
Colonel)

You'll have to ask him about that.

COLONEL

Just put down the deposit.

REPORTER

How do you feel about being called the 'King of Rock and Roll'?

ELVIS

No, I'm not the King.

Elvis scans the room.

ELVIS

Fats! Hey man; come up here, would you?

As Fats Domino makes his way up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELVIS

Mr. Fats Domino, ladies and gentleman. This is the *real* king of rock n roll!

As Fats reaches Elvis, Elvis puts an arm around him.

ELVIS

He was a real big influence on me.

FLASHES light up a beaming Fats and Elvis.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - COLONEL'S SUITE - MORNING

Hotel staff unload boxes of merchandise onto the table, as Colonel points to the brick-a-brack displayed throughout his vast new offices. He turns to Jerry:

COLONEL

I snowed them, I snowed these hotel people! Not just for the office but the entire floor for Jamboree Attractions. We're setting up shop.

JERRY

(incredulous)

But I thought we were going on tour in two weeks...

Colonel's face suddenly darkens, as a rage unlike any other comes upon him. He spits with terrifying vitriol:

COLONEL

Oh, the tour... have you thought about security? Have you thought about security? Security, Jerry! SECURITY, SECURITY. There is nothing more important than security! Am I the only one who ever thinks about Elvis' security! 'GODVERDOMME'

Furious, Colonel hurls his cane.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - NIGHT

It's late. Still buzzed from that night's show, Elvis swallows a handful of pills. He cradles the phone against his ear, speaking softly as he did with Dixie, years ago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

Little Lisa's so funny. She's figured out how to put the records on herself and she has a great ear. The first one she picked was Sweet Caroline. She was trying to sing along with it, but she didn't know any of the words. It was so cute. You should have been there, Satnin'. When are you coming home?

ELVIS

I don't know, 'Scilla. There's a lot going on. We just added a couple extra shows a week, plus more press calls. It's a lot. I gotta stay focused.

INT. GRACELAND - CONTINUOUS

Priscilla on the other side, crestfallen.

PRISCILLA

I know, baby. Just promise me things'll be different when we're on the tour.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The silence hangs in the air.

ELVIS

(to Priscilla)

I-- I gotta go. Will you give my baby girl a big hug for me? Okay, bye bye.

He hangs up the phone. A woman beside Elvis, DIANE (late 20s), stirs at the noise. She starts to get up.

ELVIS

Hey, stay with me.

Diane sits on the side of the bed.

DIANE

I have to go.

ELVIS

No you don't.

DIANE

I really have to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

Don't leave me alone. Buntyn needs
a little extra lovin' tonight.

Diane laughs. But then she sees that he's serious.

DIANE

What?

Elvis sits up. There's a thump upstairs.

ELVIS

What was that?

Fearful paranoia overtakes Elvis' face. Diane starts to
pull on her clothes.

ELVIS

(to himself)

I don't want no sonofabitch
walking around saying he killed
Elvis Presley...

DIANE

What did you say?

ELVIS

Nothing, baby...

Elvis checks behind the door and finds nothing there. He
regains his fragile composure.

ELVIS

C'mon baby, take your pants off.

DIANE

I have to go to work.

ELVIS

No you don't, come sit down. Come
watch some television with me.

Diane starts to leave. Elvis' words begin to slur as the
pills take effect.

ELVIS

You know, there's a kind of bird I
read about somewhere, that don't
have any legs... so it can't land
on nothin'.

Diane doesn't know what to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS

It lives its whole life on the wing, and when it gets tired, it just spreads its wings and goes to sleep on the wind, and if it ever does land, even but one time, that's when it dies. I just gotta keep flying round and round.

(sings)

*I'll fly away, oh glory
I'll fly away
When I die...*

Elvis looks to Diane.

ELVIS

Hey, you want to fly away with me?

DIANE

I need to go.

ELVIS

Please stay.

But Diane grabs her shoes and exits. Elvis looks around the room, scared. There's a KNOCK on his door.

ELVIS

I knew you'd come back.

No answer. He takes his gun, walks over to the door, peers through the hole. An empty hall. He opens the door. There's a showroom menu on the ground.

The photo of his face has been scratched out. Scrawled across it: "I am going to kill you."

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - DAWN

OFF the vaulting International Hotel marquee shimmering in the golden light. Workmen lower the "ELVIS!" sign.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

He gave his all to the show, but the threats on his life had left him paranoid and exhausted.

INT. HOSPITAL (VEGAS) - DAY

Billy covers the windows with tin foil as we TRACK ACROSS a Polaroid of Lisa Marie, holding a finger painting that says "I miss you daddy!" taped to the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL (O.S.)

What is happening to law and order! These radical hippies are threatening and killing popular entertainers...

The Colonel slaps down newspaper articles about the Manson Family slaying of Sharon Tate.

COLONEL

Hulett's security is not what it needs to be and he knows it. An international tour is out of the question!

Elvis lies in the bed. Priscilla, Vernon, and Charlie around him.

ELVIS

What are you talking about Colonel? I ain't gonna let any sonofabitch push me off the stage.

He takes a handful of pills from Dr. Nick.

COLONEL

Precisely, you're not one of Hulett's long-hair Zeppelins, you're Elvis Presley! And you are beloved. I told him: 'I need to look Priscilla in the eye and promise her that little Lisa's daddy will be safe.'

ELVIS

We gotta take this show to the world. I can't disappoint the fans.

COLONEL

Well, if you want to book more dates, we can do an *American* tour? 15-cities-in-15-days.

PRISCILLA

How's that going to be any safer?

COLONEL

Because here, I can handle every aspect of security.

A darkly orchestral version of "Burning Love" slowly builds...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL

I'll get guarantees from every
mayor...

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Elvis' jet taxis to a halt. "Burning Love" builds...

COLONEL (V.O.)

We'll double the police
presence...

EXT. STREETS - DAY

A presidential-scale motorcade. Dozens of police cars,
sirens blaring. "Burning Love" continues.

EXT. VENUE - STAGE - NIGHT

COLONEL (V.O.)

You'll have more security than the
President!

TWO ROWS OF COPS flank the stage. Elvis on stage
performing "Burning Love," jittery as hell.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Lord almighty, I feel my
temperature rising.
Higher, higher, it's burning
through to my soul.
Girl, girl, girl, you're gonna set
me on fire...*

A girl rushes the stage. The West cousins take her out.
Elvis shoots them a thumbs-up.

ELVIS

(sings)
*My brain is flaming,
I don't know which way to go...*

INT. VENUE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

COLONEL (V.O.)

We can have Sonny, Red and Charlie
hustle you to the motorcade...

Elvis being swooped into a car as "Burning Love" powers.

INT. ELVIS' LIMO (AMIDST THE MOTORCADE) - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Elvis has left the building!

Elvis, squeezed between Memphis Mafia, gulps down pills.
He lies back, as Dr. Nick injects him.

EXT. TARMAC - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the Memphis Mafia as they usher Elvis from his
limousine and up the stairs of his waiting jet.

COLONEL (V.O.)

And when you're on the plane,
safe, in the air, you'll rest...

INT. HOSPITAL (VEGAS) - DAY

Elvis slowly nods; so far, he is good with the plan.

ELVIS

And then we go international.

COLONEL

Yes, yes, the Tokyo Opera House!
But before that we'll put on a
good show.

(to Charlie)

And do what, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Have a lot of fun.

COLONEL

Taking care of business.

VERNON

Taking care of business.

Nurse Tish places a wet cloth over Elvis' eyes.

INT./EXT. TARMAC/MOTORCADE/VENUE/BACKSTAGE

We ENTER MULTI-SPLIT SCREEN as the cycle repeats in
Detroit, San Antonio, Jacksonville...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSED IMAGES: The International sign: "WELCOME
BACK FOR YOUR SECOND YEAR"...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elvis performs karate against phantom attackers. The number becomes more intense. We see Elvis performing, practicing karate, bedding groupies.

ELVIS

(sings)

*Just a hunk, a hunk of burning
love!*

"THIRD YEAR"... Drugging, performing, groupies, drugging, karate. It's clear he's not in the same reality.

We see Elvis change from jumpsuit to jumpsuit after each refrain, moving forward through concert after concert in one seamless performance.

The SPLIT SCREEN becomes a wall of TV monitors that multiply until BANG! BANG! BANG!

INT. GRACELAND - BEDROOM/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON jewelry being placed into a small valise. The sound wakes Elvis, still in bed, groggy, discombobulated. Priscilla, agitated, is packing.

ELVIS

What the hell are you doing?

She closes the valise and, without looking up:

PRISCILLA

I'm leaving.

ELVIS

What time is it?

PRISCILLA

I wanted to wait for you to wake up so we could talk about it, but you're never awake and you don't like to talk, so I'm leaving.

ELVIS

What do you mean leaving?

Elvis pulls himself out of bed.

PRISCILLA

I'm leaving this marriage, and I'm taking Lisa with me.

Suddenly alarmed and defensive, Elvis follows her towards the en suite bath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

What is this about? Is this about...

(looks for the right word)

What happens on the road? You know that means nothing to me.

He follows as Priscilla grabs her makeup off the vanity.

PRISCILLA

You think I care about the girls you sneak in through the side door?

She stops, looks down at the myriad bottles of medication. She starts throwing them at Elvis.

PRISCILLA

It's this... and this, and this, and this. And those has-been leeches sucking you dry. You're strung out!

ELVIS

Strung out? It's my medicine. I'm in the best shape of my life!

PRISCILLA

The best shape of your life? The only time you're alive is when you're on stage and in between, you're a ghost. We can't keep waiting around for you like one of your boys.

She heads into the hall, as Elvis chases after her.

ELVIS

I've given you everything you could want!

INT. GRACELAND - HALLWAY/STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

As Priscilla descends the stairs, she turns on Elvis.

PRISCILLA

What I want is a husband. I am your wife. I am your wife. Lisa is your daughter, and she needs a father. You know, I don't remember the last time that we laughed together. When was the last time we sat down and had dinner together the three of us?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)

You don't even make love to me anymore. I've given you my life. I have nothing left to give you.

This cuts deep, silencing Elvis.

ELVIS

Is there another man?

Priscilla says nothing. But her silence says everything.

ELVIS

I've lost you.

She stops, shakes her head.

PRISCILLA

We lost you a long time ago.

ELVIS

'Scilla, do you still love me?

When she doesn't answer, Elvis crumples on the stairs.

ELVIS

When you're forty and I'm fifty, we'll be back together. You'll see.

After a moment, both their defenses are down. She throws her arms around him. They cling to each other, crying.

PRISCILLA

I have to go. If I stay now, I'll never leave.

And with this, she's gone.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - COLONEL'S SUITE - DAY

Jerry confronts the infuriatingly blank Tom Diskin.

JERRY

This is killing him! Vegas, the repetition. He needs to be on a professionally-run international tour. He needs time to rest between shows, not rely on some doctor to get him on stage every night. You know what Elvis is like when he has a challenge. He gets fit, focused, gets off the pills. Why won't Colonel let him go overseas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DISKIN
Security, Jerry, you--

JERRY
(angrily cutting him
off)
That's bullshit! The Colonels' a
businessman, I get it, but what I
don't get is why he's killing his
greatest asset without a reason.
So, what's the reason?

Diskin retreats behind his trademark bland expression.

DISKIN
I'm a little busy right now.

Reining in anger, Jerry leans forward, trying to connect.

JERRY
C'mon, Tom, we all owe E.P. for
taking us on this ride with him.
And I've seen you, standing in the
wings when he's channeling that
gift. You think no one's watching,
but it's the only time I ever see
you smile; you love him as much as
the rest of us.

Diskin, for a moment, can't look at Jerry.

JERRY
Tell me the reason.

DISKIN
(choosing words
carefully)
Colonel always has *reasons*. I'm
not always aware of them, but even
if I was, I wouldn't be at liberty
to divulge personal information
about Mr. Parker.

A long moment. Jerry looks at him with cold, hard hatred.

JERRY
Y'all are killing Elvis Presley.

He rises to leave...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - JERRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's obviously the end of a long night. Jerry, coat off,
looking exhausted, enters his room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns on the light and stops. On the bed, a single envelope. He picks it up. It's addressed to "Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis Presley Fan Club, Memphis." It's been stamped "Fan Mail," and has already been opened.

Jerry takes out the letter and, as he begins to read, we hear the sound of a young man speaking in lightly accented English:

THEO JR. (V.O.)

Dearest Uncle Andreas, I hope this letter finds you well. I did not have an exact address, but after reading the letter you sent to my father, I felt that I must ask you some questions. You write of mistakes, 'that someone may have made without meaning to do so.' Are these 'mistakes' the reason you left Holland all those years ago?

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

As we continue to hear the letter, Colonel walks into the life-sized model of BREDA, as if reliving the past.

THEO JR. (V.O.)

People whisper that it was because of the woman who was murdered the night you disappeared. I do not believe it, but please, why do you not return home to clear our family name...?

OLD COLONEL

(directly to us)

Is it fair that the mistake that someone might have made without meaning to do so, should damn them for the rest of their lives? Yes, I was born in Holland. People say 'well why didn't you say so?' Well I say they didn't ask. I work, I wake up at five A.M. every day for one man only. I am *taking care of business.*

INT. INTERNATIONAL - SERVICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT (1974)

An exhausted and slightly discombobulated Elvis, guided by the Memphis Mafia, makes his way down the backstage corridor of the International Hotel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jerry has drawn in behind. As they move forward he urgently intones under his breath.

JERRY

He lied! There was never gonna be an international tour because he can't leave the country. He doesn't have a passport, no citizenship, no identity...

Elvis stops, unsteady, trying to comprehend.

JERRY (CONT'D)

He doesn't exist...

ELVIS

What the hell are you talking about, Jerry?

JERRY

There never was a Colonel Tom Parker.

Before Jerry can get out the last line, Elvis collapses to the ground. The mafia rush to his aid. Sonny and Red hold staff at bay.

COLONEL (O.S.)

The only thing that matters is that that man...

As Colonel charges in, Nurse Tish suppresses panic and Dr. Nick holds Elvis' head above a bucket of ice water.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

... gets on that stage tonight!

This is the exact IMAGE FROM THE OPENING.

NURSE TISH

If he was my son...

She glances to Vernon hiding meekly by the window.

NURSE TISH

I'd put him in the hospital.

Colonel's eyes bore into Elvis' father.

COLONEL

Of course, it's a Presley Enterprises decision, Vernon...

All eyes on him. After an eternity, he mumbles...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VERNON

What can you do for him, Dr. Nick?

Dr. Nick pops open his BAG OF TRICKS. WE GLIMPSE: MEDS, PILLS, SYRINGES. As Dr. Nick prepares an injection...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT

AN AMERICAN EAGLE CAPE SPREADS ITS RHINESTONE WINGS!

ELVIS

Glory! Glory!!! Halleluuuuujah!!!

The eagle turns to REVEAL: Superhero Elvis reaching for the final divine notes, spreading his wings up to God...

ELVIS

(sings)

*His truuuuth is maaaarching
ooooonnnnn!!!!!!!!!!*

The ballad crescendoes, band lashing at their instruments, two gospel choirs, one white, one Black.

ELVIS

(sings)

*His truuuuth is maaaarching
ooooonnnnn!!!!!!!!!!*

The last cymbal crashes, Elvis is showered with applause.

ELVIS

Thank you! Thank you very much!

Elvis waits for the applause to settle. The music always transforms him. He may be slightly pale but he holds himself strong, proud...

ELVIS

*I'd like to turn the house lights
up, ladies and gentlemen. Now
you've seen me, I'd like to take a
look at you. You're beautiful...*

The lights go up. Charlie Hodge at his usual position on stage, battle-weary from Elvis' erratic behavior. Jerry, Billy, and the West cousins in the wings.

ELVIS

Thank you, leave them up for a minute, man. Oh, boy, we got some high-rollers in here tonight... Mr. International Hotel himself!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the crowd applauds, the SPOTLIGHT searches, finding Meyer Kohn. Colonel sits beside him.

ELVIS

And right next to him... my so-called manager, *Colonel Tom Parker*.

Colonel, puffing on his cigar as Elvis continues with drug-addled, unnerving humor:

ELVIS (O.S.)

But I hear rumors... that Colonel is an alien... from outer space.

The crowd laughs.

ELVIS

Someone call the FBI and tell them he's abducted me, locked me in this golden cage, to keep me here, forever-- with you, ladies and gentlemen, and all these funky angels on the ceiling...

The crowd applauds.

ELVIS

(sings)
*So I'm caught in a trap, I can't get out...
 'Cause Colonel's got some big debts, baby...*

Colonel excuses himself from the booth and heads towards the wings.

ELVIS

But this is the last show I'm ever playin' here...

Audience, a collective sigh of disappointment...

ELVIS

I'm gonna get in my jet plane, the *Lisa Marie*, named after my beautiful daughter, and fly away... Fly, fly away...

Colonel arrives in the wings, next to the stage manager.

COLONEL

Stop the show, stop the show.
 (to Diskin)
 We've got to do something!
 (to the Mafia)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Get over to Sonny and Red. Bring
the curtain down!

A strange mix of nervous laughter and confused applause.

ELVIS

*Fuck the International! Fuck Las
Vegas! Ain't no one gonna stop me,
man!*

Colonel approaches Jerry.

COLONEL

What the devil is going on, Mr.
Schilling?

JERRY

I think that's what he wants to
know.

Elvis spies Colonel in the wings and mocks him angrily,
microphone still in hand:

ELVIS

*Oh, security, security!! 800
shows!! You don't have a goddamn
passport, you son of a bitch...*

Elvis finds strength to say the words that have eluded
him since he first met Colonel. A gut-wrenching scream:

ELVIS

You're fired!!

The audience continues to laugh and applaud.

ELVIS

Fired!!

The audience laughs louder. Elvis, in a demonic rage:

ELVIS

FIRED!!!

The golden curtain crashes down. All on stage in shock,
as Elvis and Colonel stare at each other. As the applause
dies, the silence seems to last an eternity.

The panicked Memphis Mafia goes into their post-show
routine. Towels appearing, they move towards Elvis. But
he stays them with his hand. Everyone freezes.

Then, as if sanity, clarity, and dignity have re-entered
his soul, Elvis says one final time:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELVIS

You're fired.

He turns, walks across stage, past Jerry, into shadow.

Colonel's eyes are cold as we have ever seen.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

The Geek... The Geek...

Colonel slowly walks back over to Diskin. He shoots Vernon a grave look.

COLONEL

Diskin, pull out all the contracts and agreements since 1955..

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

Old Colonel watches *Nightmare Alley*. The movie shows an alcoholic carnival performer sunk so disgracefully low that he will do anything for a drink.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

... when he ran, as he always did, it was my job to take a bottle and bring him back.

PULL OUT to see the movie playing on endless televisions.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

The Geek lived in Hell, but every night, before the cheering crowd, he was resurrected. Perfect. Forgiven. Some called it cruelty, but I called it kindness. The Geek *needed* to perform... And to perform, he needed his bottle.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - COLONEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

We find ourselves in Colonel's Vegas office. He stands at his desk in front of the same Snowman's League banner.

COLONEL

(into telephone)

This is Colonel Tom Parker. I wish it to be known that Dr. Nick's services are no longer required. Thank you.

He hangs up and turns to Diskin, at a typewriter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Well Tom, if the boy wants to set out on his own, that's alright by me, but Presley Enterprises must cough up what it owes... Are you ready?

DISKIN

(solemnly)

Ready.

Colonel begins to dictate...

COLONEL

Gasoline for my first trip to the 'Hayride': one dollar...
 Unrecouped promotional costs pertaining to souvenir calendars: one hundred dollars; collectible trading cards: one hundred dollars; flyers, posters, programs: one hundred dollars; balloons: fifty dollars.
 Untabulated royalties, prior advances, shared rights and commissions on all television specials...

EXT. AIRSTRIP - TARMAC - DAY

TOP SHOT: The *Lisa Marie* drifts INTO FRAME...

COLONEL (V.O.)

...inclusive of 50% back end participation in MGM multi-picture contracts in perpetuity...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - DAY

A clean, morning sunlight slashes across the Nevada desert and into Elvis' suite. Drop cloths over furniture, gold records removed from the wall. We follow luggage on a gold bellman's trolley being pushed by Cousin Billy. He gives a final look over their home of the past few years.

BILLY

E.P. says we need to hurry up.

CHARLIE

I know. You got the coats, that's all tour, and everything on this side is going to Graceland.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Billy exits, the door opens to reveal the ashen face of Vernon. He enters past Charlie without acknowledgment, and sets down a letter onto the piano.

VERNON

Where's Elvis?

CHARLIE

Oh, Vernon... He's downstairs.

VERNON

Tell him I need to talk to him.

Vernon pours himself a drink and stares out blankly over the desert vista.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

An endless stream of luggage is ferried into limousines in the parking garage. FOLLOW the luggage to find...

INT. ELVIS' LIMO - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis in the back of his limo, a little jittery from withdrawal. But if anything, this energizes him, making him even more determined to leave, no matter what.

ELVIS

What's the hold-up?

Charlie enters the garage, leans into Elvis' window.

CHARLIE

Sorry, E.P. Your daddy won't come down, says he needs to talk...

Elvis exits the car and heads back toward the hotel

JERRY

You alright?

Elvis waves him back. OFF Elvis' concerned expression...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - DAY

Elvis enters the suite and Vernon gestures toward the letter on the piano. ANGLE ON A "PRESLEY ENTERPRISES" BALANCE SHEET WITH A BIG TOTAL CIRCLED IN RED: "\$9,800,099."

ELVIS

Daddy... What is this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vernon stands there looking like a dead man.

VERNON

Son, we owe Colonel. We're broke...

ELVIS

I been playing this mausoleum for a hundred years! How could we be broke?

Vernon is shaking his head, eyes filled with tears.

VERNON

You spend so much. The cars, the clothes, the girls, the new airplane, everything.

ELVIS

Daddy, you're my business manager, you're supposed to be taking care of business!

VERNON

I don't know what to tell you, son. We're broke, just plain broke...

His eyes raise to meet Elvis.

VERNON

We gotta take Colonel back.

ELVIS

I'm not taking him back.

VERNON

We'll lose Graceland.

ELVIS

He has taken fifty percent of everything I make. And now he wants to take the house that we bought for Mama? The old bastard can sue if he wants, but I'm flying away, with or without you, Daddy...

Elvis storms out of the suite...

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator descends. Elvis -- a powder keg of emotions. He takes deep breaths, reining himself in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELVIS

I'm gonna fly away, fly, fly
away... just you watch me...

BING! The elevator halts. The doors open to reveal...

INT. INTERNATIONAL - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Colonel waiting in the empty concierge area. Beyond the glass, Elvis can see the waiting cars.

A beat. Is this a set-up? He steps out of the elevator.

ELVIS

You blood-sucking old vampire; you
bled me dry, but still you want
more.

COLONEL

I'm not an uncaring man, Mr.
Presley.

ELVIS

Don't you 'Mr. Presley' me, you
toad.

COLONEL

If you are so determined to get
out of our contract...

ELVIS

Goddamn right I want out!

COLONEL

Then I will personally loan you
the money you owe to Jamboree
Attractions.

ELVIS

Yeah, and you'll still have your
claws in me. Still have me workin'
here like a slave in a salt mine,
you phony, no-good piece of trash.
Who are you, Colonel from outta
space?

COLONEL

Colonel from outta space, and
Captain Marvel Jr. Has a nice ring
to it, don't you think?

ELVIS

I oughta shoot you in your fat,
goddamn face...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL

Remember, you were so ready to fly
'faster than the speed of light
straight to the Rock Of Eternity.'

ELVIS

(intense)

Who are you?

COLONEL

I, am you. And you, are me.

ELVIS

Cut the horseshit...

COLONEL

Everyone else you're associated
with lives from you. Even
Vernon...

Elvis, shocked. The realization dawning.

COLONEL

That's right, even your own daddy
looks after himself, before he
looks after you. Yes, I lived from
you, too. But the difference is
that you also lived from me. Since
that first night on that big,
beautiful wheel, lookin up into
the moon and the stars, we
understood that we are the same,
you and I: we are two odd, lonely
children, reaching for Eternity.
And to my way of thinking, we
traveled beyond our wildest
dreams. Perhaps you should find
another manager to replace me.
But what cannot be replaced is the
20 years together, more than 20
years. Someone may promote you
better, but no one will ever
understand you better. And if you
do choose to leave, I for one will
be very lonely. Very lonely

Colonel makes his way over to the elevator. Elvis,
battling his emotions within. Beyond the glass, the cars
waiting to leave.

COLONEL

But, I think you may be lonely,
too. You know, my boy, the truth
about the Rock of Eternity, is
that it is forever just beyond our
reach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Elvis looks back to Colonel as the elevator doors close. We hear the melancholy opening notes of "Are You Lonesome Tonight":

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (vocal)
*Are you lonesome tonight?
 Do you miss me tonight?
 Are you sorry we drifted apart?*

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SUNSET

VERY WIDE: As "Are You Lonesome Tonight" builds, the elevator travels up the huge, brutal facade of the hotel.

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (vocal)
*Does your memory stray,
 To a brighter summer day?
 When I kissed you and called you
 sweetheart?*

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - SUNSET

As Elvis enters, "Are You Lonesome Tonight" plays.

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (vocal)
*Honey, you lied when you said you
 loved me,
 And I had no cause to doubt you*

Elvis stands, staring out the hotel window as the sun sets over Vegas... The loneliest man in the world.

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (vocal)
*But I'd rather go on hearing your
 lies,
 Than go on, living without you*

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - COLONEL'S SUITE - SUNSET

Colonel sits in his suite, staring at the telephone.

ELVIS (V.O.)
 (vocal)
*Is your heart filled with pain?
 Shall I come back again?*

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - ELVIS' ROOM - SUNSET

Elvis sits behind the piano, he plays a few notes and sings, barely audibly, to himself.

ELVIS

(sings)
*Tell me, dear, are you lonesome
 tonight...*

Vernon approaches timidly, just looking at Elvis. A long moment. Elvis doesn't turn to him, but speaks with heartbroken disgust:

ELVIS

Daddy, tell that sonofabitch I
 want things to go back to the way
 they were.

As Vernon heads to the door, Elvis gathers up two remote controls, closing the curtains and clicking on the TVs.

ELVIS

And, Daddy...

Elvis flops down into the sunken lounge.

ELVIS

Tell the Colonel to send up Dr
 Nick.

ELVIS (V.O.)

(vocal)
*Tell me, dear, are you lonesome
 tonight...*

EXT. TARMAC - YEARS LATER

Vernon stands outside Elvis' limo, watching as Priscilla's car pulls up. The Lisa Marie jet nearby, engines roaring.

Taking Lisa Marie in his arms, Vernon heads towards Priscilla. Lisa runs to her mommy and after a moment, Priscilla hands her to a nanny.

Vernon looks to Priscilla as she passes.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS ACTION

A knock. Elvis glances up as Priscilla gets in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After a long, taut silence, Elvis, discombobulated, does what he always does in moments like this. Without looking up to Priscilla, he sings under his breath.

ELVIS

(sings)

*If I should stay I would only be
in your way
And so I'll go, but I know I'll
think of you each step of the way
And I will...*

He stops, unable to complete the line from this now very famous song.

PRISCILLA

That's beautiful.

ELVIS

(weakly)

Dolly Parton wanted me to record it.

PRISCILLA

And?

ELVIS

(unengaged)

Publishing and what not. It's not gonna happen.

She reaches across and touches him gently.

PRISCILLA

How are you doing?

Elvis doesn't respond.

PRISCILLA

Honey, there's this place you can go in San Diego where you can rest.

Elvis looks up, connecting with her for the first time.

PRISCILLA

Heal. After the show, you can fly there directly, and be in the clinic before anyone knows. It's all been arranged.

ELVIS

'Cilla I'm gonna be forty soon. Forty. Forty years old. And people are not gonna remember me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELVIS (CONT'D)

I've never done anything lasting,
never made a classic film that I
can be proud of.

PRISCILLA

What about 'A Star is Born'?

ELVIS

Well, you know, Barbara and the
Colonel...

They laugh together.

PRISCILLA

Please go... For Lisa. Promise me?
If you dream it, you'll do it.

But Elvis cuts her off:

ELVIS

I'm all out of dreams.

She's done her best. A knock at the door.

EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Elvis gets out of the car, Priscilla gets out on the
opposite side. They're about to part, but instinctively
stop for a moment, looking to each other across the roof.

Elvis' voice is lost to the roar of the engines as he
mouths the final lyric to the song he could not sing: "I
will always love you."

They part, and Elvis heads for the plane as the song
"Separate Ways" begins.

INT. CASINO (GHOSTLY VEGAS) - NIGHT (1997)

HIGH CRANE DOWN as Old Colonel wanders into an infinite
row of slot machines...

OLD COLONEL

The day he died...

Colonel settles into a chair at a favorite machine.

OLD COLONEL

First thing I did was pick up that
phone to the record company, and
tell 'em they'd better print more
records.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD COLONEL (CONT'D)

And at the funeral when everyone was crying, I said to his father Vernon, 'let's get to work.' Do you know why? I had to keep him traveling endlessly toward the Rock of Eternity-- because that's what he would have wanted. The only relationship to which he was forever true, was to you, his audience.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - NIGHT (1977)

Elvis performs his final concert.

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

The very last time I saw him sing, he could seldom stand...

He's shockingly overweight, heaving for breath, slurring.

ELVIS

This song is uh, I just recorded it... I don't know h-h-h-ahhh. Is it out?

CHARLIE

About two weeks.

ELVIS

Two weeks it'll be out? 'Unchained Melody'... from an album called *Unchained Melody*...
(jokes)
Makes a lot of sense...

He sits at the piano, mops his brow. Even though he hasn't started yet, he yells out to the audience:

ELVIS

How do you like it so far?

Cheers and laughs. Then Elvis' fingers hit the ivories...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

But without fail, that voice rang out!

Elvis' vocal begins to soar:

ELVIS

(sings)
*Woah, my love, my darling
I've hungered for your touch,
A long lonely time...*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IN FLASHBACK WE REVISIT: The beauty and greatness of the tragic American opera of Elvis' life...

ELVIS

(sings)
*And time goes by so slowly
 And time can do so much
 Are you still mine?*

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

I didn't kill him. It was love.
 His love for you...

Despite his bloated look and discombobulation, Elvis hits the high note with impossible vocal beauty and strength.

ELVIS

(sings)
*I need your love
 I need your love*

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

And yours...

ELVIS

(sings)
God speed your love...

OLD COLONEL (V.O.)

... for him.

ELVIS

(sings)
... to me!

Elvis, profusely sweating, manages to smile back one last time at the wave of adulation and love coming to him from the audience as he slowly fades into inky BLACKNESS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Elvis has left the building!

BEEEEPPPPP. The sound of a FLATLINE.

FADE OUT.

THE END