

"FEAR & LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS"

by

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Based on the book by

Hunter S. Thompson

BLACK SCREEN

A desert wind moans sadly. From somewhere within the wind comes the tinkly, syrupy-sweet sounds of the Lennon Sisters singing "My Favorite Things." A series of sepia images of anti-war protests from the mid-sixties appear one after another on the screen.

In the violently scrawled style of Ralph Steadman, the title FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS splashes onto the screen. A beat, and then it runs down and off revealing:

TITLE: "He who makes a beast of himself
Gets rid of the pain
Of being a man."
Dr. Johnson

The VOICE OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON – a.k.a. RAOUL DUKE:

DUKE (V.O.)
We were somewhere around Barstow on
the edge of the desert when the drugs
began to take hold.

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

A red Chevy convertible – THE RED SHARK – wipes the black screen.

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - DAY

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

THE RED SHARK races down the desert highway at a hundred miles an hour. THE STONES' "Sympathy For the Devil" blares.

AT THE WHEEL

STRANGELY STILL AND TENSE, RAOUL DUKE DRIVES – SKELETAL,
BEER IN HAND – STARES STRAIGHT AHEAD.

BESIDE HIM, FACE TURNED TO THE SUN, EYES CLOSED BEHIND
WRAPAROUND SPANISH SUNGLASSES, IS HIS SWARTHY AND UNNERVINGLY
UNPREDICTABLE ATTORNEY, DR. GONZO.

The music pounds DUKE stares straight ahead. GONZO froths up
a can of beer – uses it as shaving foam.

DUKE (V.O.)

I remember saying something like: "I
feel a bit lightheaded. Maybe you
should drive..."

GONZO starts shaving.

DUKE (V.O.)

Suddenly there was a terrible roar
all around us and the sky was full
of what looked like huge bats, all
swooping and screeching and diving
around the car...

Close on DUKE – shadows flutter across his face. The
reflections of bats swirl within his eyes. We push in close
to one eye ball – SCREECHING SWIRLING BAT-LIKE SHAPES!

AAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHH!!!!!!!

DUKE (V.O.)

...and a voice was screaming: Holy
Jesus! What are these goddamn animals?

CUT TO WIDE SHOT OF CAR –

DUKE, eyes rigid, flails at the air. No bats anywhere.

GONZO casually looks over...

GONZO

What are you yelling about?

DUKE SCREECHES to the side of the road. The sudden wrench
makes GONZO nick his face with his razor.

DUKE

Never mind. It's your turn to drive.

DUKE (V.O.)

No point mentioning these bats. I thought. The poor bastard will see them soon enough.

DUKE hops out of the car, keeping an eye out for bats, frantically opens the trunk to reveal what looks like A MOBILE POLICE NARCOTICS LAB. DUKE desperately rifles through the impressive stash.

DUKE

We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers... Also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of beer, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls.

DUKE, eyes darting madly as he hears what sounds like the SHRIEKS OF BATS returning, grabs an assortment along with another six-pack of beer – slams the trunk shut and dives back into the car.

DUKE (V.O.)

Not that we needed all that for the trip, but once you get locked into a serious drug collection, the tendency is to push it as far as you can.

THE RED SHARK RACES INTO THE DISTANCE... on the ground, weakly flapping is a SEMI-SQUASHED, SLOWLY DYING ANIMAL... A BAT?

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - DAY

IN THE RED SHARK

GONZO grips the wheel – stares maniacally down the road – a lousy driver.

DUKE (V.O.)

The only thing that really worried me was the ether. There is nothing in the world more helpless and irresponsible and depraved than a man in the depths of an ether binge. And I knew we'd get into that rotten stuff pretty soon.

The radio news wars with "SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL" on a tape recorder.

RADIO NEWS

An overdose of heroin was listed as the official cause of death for pretty 19 year old Diane Hanby whose body was found stuffed in a refrigerator last week...

GONZO changes the station – "ONE TOKE OVER THE LINE, SWEET JESUS, ONE TOKE OVER THE LINE" vies with "SYMPATHY"... He sings along – washes a couple of pills back with a new beer.

The RED SHARK fishtails.

GONZO

"One toke over the line, sweet Jesus."

DUKE

(muttering to himself)

One toke. You poor fool. Wait till you see those goddamn bats.

UP AHEAD – AT THE SIDE OF THE DESERTED ROAD

A LONE HITCHHIKER spots them, jumps up and sticks out a thumb. The RED SHARK roars past. Then, fifty yards down the road...

GONZO

Let's give that boy a lift.

GONZO wrenches the wheel – THE RED SHARK swerves to the side of the road.

DUKE

We can't stop here – this is bat country!

GONZO JAMS THE CAR INTO REVERSE AND ROCKETS BACKWARDS. The HITCHHIKER races to the car. A poor OKIE KID with a big grin.

HITCHHIKER

Hot damn! I never rode in a convertible before!

Then the big grin freezes on the OKIE KID's face at the sight of: DUKE and GONZO looking out at him with HYPER-NORMAL, shit-eating SMILES.

DUKE

Is that right? Well, I guess you're about ready, eh?

The HITCHHIKER hesitates.

GONZO

We're your friends. We're not like the others.

DUKE

(hissing sharply)

No more of that talk or I'll put the leeches on you.

DUKE turns back to the HITCHHIKER – smiles reassuringly.

EXT. EVEN FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - DAY

The HITCHHIKER sits nervously in the back seat as the RED SHARK screams down the road.

GONZO sings along to the tape player.

The HITCHHIKER's eyes go to the door – considers jumping out and taking his chances.

DUKE, sweating bullets, STARES AT THE HITCHHIKER in the rear view mirror.

DUKE (V.O.)

How long could we maintain, I wondered. How long before one of us starts raving and jabbering at this boy? What will he think then? This same lonely desert was the last known home of the Manson family.

The HITCHHIKER's eyes notice a thin line of blood trickling down GONZO's neck.

DUKE (V.O.)

Would he make that grim connection when my attorney starts screaming about bats and huge manta rays coming down on the car?

DUKE's mouth moves intermittently – sometimes in sync with the words, sometimes not.

DUKE (V.O.)

If so – well, we'll just have to cut his head off and bury him somewhere. Because it goes without saying that we can't turn him loose. He'd report us at once to some kind of outback Nazi law enforcement agency, and they'll run us down like dogs...

DUKE

(out loud to himself)
Jesus! Did I say that?

DUKE (V.O.)

Or just think it? Was I talking?
Did they hear me?

GONZO

(reassuringly to
HITCHHIKER)
It's okay. He's admiring the shape
of your skull.

DUKE gives the HITCHHIKER a FINE BIG GRIN and the HITCHHIKER giggles nervously.

DUKE (V.O.)

Maybe I better have a chat with this boy I thought. Perhaps if I explain things, he'll rest easy...

DUKE

(roaring over the
road noise)
THERE'S ONE THING YOU SHOULD PROBABLY
UNDERSTAND –

The HITCHHIKER stares at him, not blinking.

DUKE

(yells)
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

The HITCHHIKER nods – giggles – terrified. DUKE climbs into the back seat.

DUKE

That's good. Because I want you to have all the background. This is a

very ominous assignment – with overtones of extreme personal danger. I'm a Doctor of Journalism! This is important, goddamnit! This is a true story!...

(WHACKS the BACK OF THE DRIVER'S SEAT with his fist)

The CAR SWERVES SICKENINGLY, then straightens out.

GONZO

(screams)

Keep your hands off my fucking neck!

The HITCHHIKER makes a sudden lunge for freedom. DUKE GRABS HIM BACK DOWN.

DUKE (V.O.)

Our vibrations were getting nasty – but why? Was there no communication in this car? Had we deteriorated to the level of dumb beasts?

The HITCHHIKER STRUGGLES IN PANIC.

DUKE

(to HITCHHIKER)

I want you to understand that this man at the wheel is my attorney! He's not just some dingbat I found on the Strip. He's a foreigner. I think he's probably Samoan. But it doesn't matter, does it? Are you prejudiced?

HITCHHIKER

Hell, no!

DUKE

I didn't think so. Because in spite of his race, this man is extremely valuable to me. Hell, I forgot all about this beer. You want one?

(HITCHHIKER shakes his head)

How about some ether?

HITCHHIKER

What?

DUKE

Never mind. Let's get right to the heart of this thing. Twenty-four hours ago we were sitting in the Pogo Lounge of the Beverly Wills Hotel...

INT. THE BEVERLY WILLS HOTEL POGO LOUNGE 1971 - DAY

A uniformed DWARF, carries a shockingly PINK TELEPHONE through the glittering, tranquil POGO LOUNGE CROWD. They are the ELOI. HENDRIX AFROS and DROOPING MUSTACHES and BELL BOTTOMS and LOVE BEADS and BELLS. ACTRESSES sip Singapore Slings and PROMOTERS sip ACTRESSES in this MONIED, SANITISED VERSION OF THE GREAT REVOLUTION YEARS.

DUKE (V.O.)

...in the patio section, of course, drinking Singapore Slings with mescal on the side, hiding from the brutish realities of this foul year of Our Lord, 1971.

The DWARF reaches DUKE – T-shirt, levis, sneakers and shades. GONZO – white rayon bellbottoms and a khaki tank top undershirt. They are in the middle of a serious conversation.

DUKE

I'm telling you, the Salazar story is getting too complicated. The weasels have started closing in.

The DWARF sneers.

DWARF

Perhaps this is the call you've been waiting for all this time, sir...

DUKE lifts the receiver – listens...

DUKE

Uh-huh... Uh-huh... Uh-huh...

DUKE hangs up the PHONE with the DEAD-PAN EXPRESSION OF A MOVIE SPY.

DUKE

That was headquarters. They want me to go to Las Vegas at once and make

contact with a Portuguese photographer named Lacerda. He'll have the details. All I have to do is check into my sound proof suite and he'll seek me out.

GONZO, says nothing for a moment, then POUNDS the table!

GONZO

God hell! I think I see the pattern!
This one sounds like real trouble!
You're going to need plenty of legal advice before this thing is over. As your attorney I must advise you that you'll need a very fast car with no top and after that, the cocaine. And then the tape recorder, for special music, and some Acapulco shirts...

(GONZO tucks his khaki undershirt into his white bellbottoms – he means business!)

This blows my weekend, because naturally I'll have to go with you – and we'll have to arm ourselves.

DUKE

Why not? If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing right.

DUKE and GONZO are up and off. The DWARF chases after them with the (very large) check in his hand.

They sweep out through the Lounge door, unaware of it swinging back into the face of the pursuing DWARF.

DUKE

I tell you, my man. This is the American Dream in action! We'd be fools not to ride this strange torpedo all the way to the end.

GONZO

Indeed. We must do it. What kind of story is this?

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

DUKE and GONZO emerge.

DUKE

The Mint 400! The richest off-road race for motorcycles and dune-buggies in the history of organized sport!

(handing parking ticket to Valet)

– a fantastic spectacle in honor of some fatback grossero who owns the luxurious Mint Hotel in the heart of downtown Vegas... at least that's what the press release says.

Their car arrives – rusted out, smashed door panels. They jump in.

DUKE

We're going to have to drum it up on our own. Pure Gonzo Journalism.

And they're off in a cloud of black exhaust as the nose-bleeding DWARF stumbles out with the unpaid bill in his hand.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - DAY

The PINTO races through shot.

DUKE (V.O.)

Getting hold of the drugs and shirts had been no problem...

EXT. POLYNESIAN BAR - DAY

The PINTO skids to a halt outside Polynesian bar, the back window full of Hawaiian shirts.

DUKE (V.O.)

...but the car and tape recorder were not easy things to round up at 6:30 on a Friday afternoon in Hollywood.

INT. POLYNESIAN BAR - DAY

TORN YELLOW PAGES with dealer's ads ticked off lie in a pile as GONZO yells into a PAYPHONE. DUKE carries over four Singapore Slings.

GONZO

O.K., O.K., yes. Hang onto it. We'll be there in thirty minutes.

(to DUKE – hand over
the PHONE)

I finally located a car with adequate
horsepower and the proper coloring.

(into PHONE)

What?! OF COURSE the gentleman has a
major credit card! Do you realize
who the fuck you're talking to?

DUKE

Don't take any guff from these swine.

(GONZO slams the phone
down)

Now we need a sound store with the
finest equipment. Nothing dinky. One
of those new Belgian Heliowatts with
a voice-activated shotgun mike, for
picking up conversations in oncoming
cars.

GONZO

We won't make the nut unless we have
unlimited credit.

DUKE

We will. You Samoans are all the
same. You have no faith in the
essential decency of the white man's
culture.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - DUSK

The PINTO races down street.

DUKE (V.O.)

The store was closed, but the salesman
said he would wait, if we hurried...

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - TRAFFIC JAM - DUSK

They're stuck in a traffic jam – clouds of exhaust. DUKE
BANGS ON THE HORN IN FURY.

DUKE (V.O.)

But we were delayed en route when a
Stingray in front of us killed a
pedestrian.

Directly in front of them: BLOODY CARNAGE – a covered corpse
is loaded into an ambulance by PARAMEDICS.

EXT. CAR RENTAL AGENCY - NIGHT

DUKE (V.O.)

We had trouble, again, at the car rental agency.

Behind the wheel of the RED SHARK: DUKE grins with satisfaction – checking it out. A nervous AGENT holds out a clipboard. DUKE signs without looking at the rental papers.

AGENT

Say... uh... you fellas are going to be careful with this car, aren't you?

DUKE

Of course.

DUKE throws the car into reverse – roars backwards past the gas pumps to where GONZO is unloading their rusted out car.

AGENT

Well, good god! You just backed over that two foot concrete abutment and you didn't even slow down! Forty-five in reverse! And you barely missed the pump!

DUKE

No harm done. I always test the transmission that way. The rear end. For stress factors.

GONZO transfers boxes of new sound equipment and a large box of rum and ice into the RED SHARK.

AGENT

Say. Are you fellows drinking?

DUKE

Not me. We're responsible people.

He JAMS the car into LOW GEAR and lurches into traffic. The AGENT runs into the street and helplessly watches them go.

GONZO

There's another worrier. He's probably all cranked up on speed.

EXT. RUNDOWN BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

STRANGE AND MAGICAL. In the moonlight: the silhouetted figures of DUKE and GONZO as they pack the RED SHARK.

DUKE (V.O.)

We spent the rest of that night rounding up materials and packing the car. Then we ate some mescaline and went swimming.

The surf crashes in the distance...

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT

DUKE cries out as he dives into the ocean. He lets himself float up through the silvery bubbles...

DUKE AND GONZO FLOAT BEATIFICALLY IN THE GLOWING, SHIMMERING MOONLIT SURF.

DUKE (V.O.)

Our trip was different. It was to be a classic affirmation of everything right and true in the national character; a gross, physical salute to the fantastic possibilities of life in this country. But only for those with true grit...

EXT. AND EVEN FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - DAY

DUKE's intense face.

DUKE

...and we're chock full of that!

GONZO

Damn right!

DUKE

My attorney understands this concept, despite his racial handicap. But do you?!

The HITCHHIKER nods – giggles – petrified.

DUKE (V.O.)

He said he understood, but I could see in his eyes that he didn't. He

was lying to me.

GONZO

My heart!

GONZO clutches his heart. The car veers off the road and screeches to a halt. He slumps over the wheel.

GONZO

Where's the medicine?

DUKE

The medicine? Yes, it's right here.

DUKE spills out 4 AMYL CAPSULES from a tin.

DUKE

Don't worry, this man has a bad heart... Angina Pectoris. But we have a cure for it.

DUKE and GONZO break 2 AMYLS apiece – INHALE DEEPLY. GONZO falls back on the seat, staring straight up at the sun. The HITCHHIKER looks petrified.

GONZO

(suddenly flailing
his naked arms at
the sky)

Turn up the fucking music! My heart
feels like an alligator! Volume!
Clarity! Bass! We must have bass!
What's wrong with us? Are you goddamn
old ladies?

DUKE

(turns up music to
full volume)

You scurvy shyster bastard! Watch
your language! You're talking to a
Doctor of Journalism!

GONZO

(laughing
uncontrollably)

What the fuck are we doing out here?
Somebody call the police! We need
help!

DUKE

(to HITCHHIKER)
Pay no attention to this swine. He
can't handle the medicine.
(he begins laughing)

GONZO
(to the HITCHHIKER)
The truth is we're going to Vegas to
croak a scag baron named Savage Henry.
I've known him for years but he ripped
us off – and you know what that
means, right?

GONZO pulls out a .357 Magnum – waves it around.

GONZO
Savage Henry has cashed his check!
We're going to rip his lungs out!

DUKE
And eat them! That bastard won't get
away with this! What's going on in
this country when a scum sucker like
that can get away with sandbagging a
Doctor of Journalism?

GONZO cracks ANOTHER AMYL.

The HITCHHIKER SCRAMBLES OUT OF THE CAR, DOWN THE TRUNK LID,
AND FLEES.

HITCHHIKER
Thanks for the ride. Thanks a lot. I
like you guys. Don't worry about me.

DUKE
(yells)
Wait a minute! Come back and have a
beer!

The HITCHHIKER RUNS from car.

GONZO
Good riddance. That boy made me
nervous. Did you see his eyes?
(laughing)
Jesus, this is good medicine.

DUKE glances back at the running HITCHHIKER.

DUKE
(suddenly clambering
into the front seat)
Move over!! We have to get out of
California before that kid finds a
cop!

DUKE GUNS THE RED SHARK – TAKES OFF DOWN THE ROAD...

EXT. UNBELIEVABLY FAR DOWN THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - DAY

THE RED SHARK races – DUKE at the wheel – straight ahead
driving.

DUKE (V.O.)
It was absolutely imperative that we
get to the Mint Hotel before the
deadline for press registration.
Otherwise, we might have to pay for
our suite.

GONZO wrestles with a shaker of COCAINE. The top comes off
and the powder swirls away on the wind.

GONZO
Oh, Jesus! Did you see what god just
did to us?

DUKE
God didn't do that! You did it! You're
a fucking narcotics agent, that was
our cocaine, you pig!

GONZO
(waving his .357 Magnum
at Duke)
You better be careful. Plenty of
vultures out here. They'll pick your
bones clean before morning.

DUKE
You whore!

GONZO tears up a BLOTTER OF ACID.

GONZO
Here – chew this. It's your half of
the acid.

DUKE takes his half – chews it.

DUKE

How long do I have?

GONZO

Maybe thirty more minutes. As your attorney, I advise you to drive at top speed. It'll be a goddamn miracle if we can get there before you turn into a wild animal. Are you ready for that? Checking into a Vegas hotel under a phony name with intent to commit capital fraud and a head full of acid.

DUKE (V.O.)

Thirty minutes. It was going to be very close.

The RED SHARK screams along the highway past a billboard:

"DON'T GAMBLE WITH MARIJUANA! \ IN NEVADA: POSSESSION - 20 YEARS; SALE - LIFE!!"

EXT. LAS VEGAS MINT HOTEL - DUSK

The RED SHARK pulls up outside the MINT. A great banner spanning the street announces the MINT 400.

DUKE can feel the drug surging up inside him. Clutching a buckled beer can, sweat pouring, he stares fixedly at the TICKET the ATTENDANT gives him.

DUKE

I need this, right?

ATTENDANT

I'll remember your face.

DUKE stares – losing it...

DUKE (V.O.)

There is no way of explaining the terror I felt.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

DUKE waits in line at the front desk – RIGID WITH PENT UP ENERGY. GONZO's ahead of him – muscling in – trying to queue jump and failing.

DUKE (V.O.)

I was pouring sweat. My blood is too thick for Nevada. I've never been able to properly explain myself in this climate.

A COUPLE move off and DUKE jerks forward – stops – eyes fixed on the stony FEMALE RESERVATIONS CLERK.

DUKE

Be quiet, be calm... name, rank, and press affiliation, nothing else...

DUKE moves ANOTHER RIGID STEP CLOSER to the desk – the tension almost snapping him in two. GONZO's FLAPPING AROUND – absolutely no success.

Something catches DUKE's eye... He REMAINS ROOTED – his eyes turning to the VEGETAL PAISLEY PATTERNS ON THE CARPET

WHICH ARE SHIFTING – UNDULATING. THE CARPET PATTERNS ARE INEXORABLY CREEPING UP THE WALLS...

DUKE

...ignore this terrible drug, pretend it's not happening...

The LAST PEOPLE leave – with A FINAL, STIFF MOVE, DUKE comes face to face with the RESERVATIONS CLERK... AND EXPLODES!

DUKE

HI THERE. MY NAME... AH, RAOUL DUKE... ON... ON THAT LIST, THAT'S FOR SURE. FREE LUNCH, FINAL WISDOM, TOTAL COVERAGE... WHY NOT? I HAVE MY ATTORNEY WITH ME, AND I REALIZE OF COURSE...

As DUKE stares at her, BABBLING, her FACE BEGINS TO MORPH.

He tries to stop it happening by TALKING FASTER.

DUKE

...THAT HIS NAME IS NOT ON THE LIST, BUT WE MUST HAVE THAT SUITE. YES. JUST CHECK THE LIST AND YOU'LL SEE. DON'T WORRY. WHAT'S THE SCORE HERE? WHAT'S NEXT?

DUKE sags – grips the desk – WHITE KNUCKLES.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
(hands him an envelope)
Your suite's not ready yet. But
there's somebody looking for you.

Her face is CHANGING – SWELLING – PULSING...

DUKE
(shouts)
NO! WHY? WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING
YET!

The FACE OF THE RESERVATIONS CLERK TURNS GREEN & GROWS FANGS.

DEADLY POISON! DUKE LUNGES BACK at GONZO, who GRIPS his arm
intensely – REACHES OUT to take the ENVELOPE.

GONZO
I can handle this. This man has a
bad heart, but I have plenty of
medicine. My name is Dr. Gonzo.
Prepare our suite at once. We'll be
in the bar.

GONZO maneuvers DUKE away from the desk. DUKE looks back –
the RESERVATIONS CLERKS is now a MORAY EEL – green jowls
and fangs.

INT. NAUTICAL BAR - DAY

The bar – OILY PEOPLE – quiet music – nautical theme.

DUKE and GONZO at the bar, a marlin spike hanging on the
wall behind them. DUKE has turned to stone...

GONZO
(to the bartender)
Two Cuba Libres with beer and mescal
on the side.
(opens the envelope)
Who's Lacerda, he's waiting for us
in a room on the twelfth floor?

DUKE
Lacerda?

DUKE (V.O.)
I couldn't remember. The name rang a

bell, but I couldn't concentrate.
Terrible things were happening all
around us...

DUKE is staring – RAPT – TERRIFIED. BLOOD FLOWS FREELY
onto the floor. DUKE keeps his voice low.

DUKE

Order some golf shoes. Otherwise,
we'll never get out of this place
alive. It's impossible to walk in
this muck – no footing at all...

DUKE looks up – GONZO has disappeared.

DUKE looks around him – the entire room has TRANSFORMED
into a ROOM FILLED WITH REPTILES IN CLOTHES, DRINKING AND
GNAWING AT ONE ANOTHER.

DUKE (V.O.)

I was right in the middle of a fucking
reptile zoo. And somebody was giving
booze to these goddamn things! It
won't be long before they tear us to
shreds!

GONZO IS SUDDENLY BACK – AT DUKE'S SHOULDER.

GONZO

If you think we're in trouble now
wait until you see what's happening
in the elevators.

GONZO removes his sunshades and we see he's been crying...
as he speaks he seems to be floating. Duke struggles to keep
him in his line of vision.

GONZO

I just went upstairs to see this man
Lacerda. I told him I knew what he
was up to...

(GONZO rallies –
turns fierce)

He says he's a photographer! But
when I mentioned Savage Henry he
freaked! He knows we're onto him!

DUKE

But what about our room? And the
golf shoes?

A GROUP OF REPTILES AT A TABLE ACROSS THE ROOM stares at them, BLOOD DRIPPING FROM THEIR FANGS.

DUKE

(grabbing GONZO trying to hold him still)

Holy shit! Look at that bunch over there! They've spotted us!

Cut to wider shot – DUKE is holding on to a man standing next to him at the bar. The room has returned to normality.

GONZO is sitting in his original position.

GONZO

(downs his drink – gets up)

That's the press table. Where you have to sign in for our credentials. Shit, let's get it over with. You handle that, and I'll check on the room.

DUKE

No, no. Don't leave me!

Black screen.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - DUSK

A TELEVISION shows the NIGHTLY NEWS. A BUDDHIST MONK, protesting the war, sets himself on fire. A very nervous BELL BOY is laying out GONZO's order. A marlin spike is on the floor next to DUKE.

BELL BOY

Four club sandwiches, four shrimp cocktails.

DUKE

There's a big... machine in the sky... some kind of electric snake...

DUKE is curled by the window – MESMERIZED by an unseen neon sign outside the window. His eyes fill with a million colored lights.

BELL BOY

...a quart of rum...

DUKE
...coming straight at us.

GONZO
Shoot it.

DUKE
Not yet. I want to study its habits.

BELL BOY
...and nine fresh grapefruit.

GONZO
Vitamin C. We'll need all we can
get.

GONZO sees the BELL BOY out the door – turns and lays into
DUKE.

GONZO
Look, you've got to stop this talk
about snakes and leeches and lizards
and that stuff. It's making me sick!

DUKE stares – hears the drone of B52 BOMBERS...

On TV: The LAOS INVASION – A SERIES OF HORRIFYING
DISASTERS – EXPLOSIONS AND TWISTED WRECKAGE.

Newsreel footage of MAI LAI MASSACRE and the LIEUTENANT CALLEY
court-martial.

DUKE
What are you talking about?

GONZO
You bastard! They'll never let us
back in that place. I leave you alone
for three minutes and you start waving
that goddamn marlin spike around –
yelling about reptiles! You scared
the shit out of those people! They
were ready to call the cops. Hell,
the only reason they gave us press
passes was to get you out of there...

A knock at the door. DUKE and GONZO break out in a sweat.

DUKE

Oh my God! Who's that?!

GONZO STICKS HIS GUN IN HIS WAISTBAND – opens the door to LACERDA –

BOUNCING WITH PUPPY DOG ENTHUSIASM. GONZO stares at a man he instantly hates – watches him with deep suspicion.

LACERDA

Duke? I'm Lacerda your photographer.
Got your press passes? Good, good.
Too bad you missed the bikes checking in. My, what a sight!

DUKE watches the B-52S DROP THEIR BOMB LOADS.

Looking down to the thick, patterned carpet, DUKE sees the BOMBS EXPLODE like vicious flowers.

DUKE looks up: LACERDA is a war photographer – bruised, filthy and blood spattered. LACERDA approaches him – talking a foreign language.

LACERDA

Husquavarnas. Yamahas. Kawaskis.
Maicos. Pursang. Swedish Fireballs.
Couple of Triumphs, here and there a
CZ. All very fast. What a race it's
gonna be.

DUKE screws up his eyes – WILLS NORMALITY BACK. LACERDA is now just a keen photographer.

LACERDA

Well, we start at dawn. Get a good
night's sleep. I know I will.

And with a cheerful wave, he's gone. DUKE is in shock.

DUKE

(weakly)
That's good...

GONZO

I think he's lying to us. I could
see it in his eyes.

DUKE

(even weaker)

They'll probably have a big net for us when we show up.

DUKE's attention returns to the devastation on the TV...

GONZO

Turn that shit off!

GONZO kills the TV.

Black screen.

DUKE (V.O.)

Never lose sight of the primary responsibility. Cover the story. But what was the story? Nobody had bothered to say.

EXT. DESERT - DAWN

Against A BIG ORANGE SUN, on a concrete slab, MEN FIRE SHOTGUNS into the dawn sky. Clay pigeons shatter. The Mint Gun Club.

Next to them, MOTORCYCLES REV – preparing for the MINT 400 RACE: A hundred BIKERS, MECHANICS and assorted MOTORSPORT TYPES milling around in the pit area; taping headlights, topping off oil in the forks, last minute bolt tightening.

DUKE wanders through.

DUKE (V.O.)

The racers were ready at dawn. Very tense. But the race didn't start until nine so we had three long hours to kill.

A sign by a long trestle table: "KOFFEE & DONUTS." DUKE walks past – ignoring the SMILING LADY behind the stall.

DUKE (V.O.)

Those of us who had been up all night were in no mood for coffee and donuts. We wanted strong drink. We were, after all, the Absolute Cream of the National Sporting Press and we were gathered here, in Las Vegas, for a very special assignment. And when it comes to things like this you don't fool around.

INT. RACE BAR TENT - DAY

A real pit of iniquity. Slot Machines. Crap tables. Smoke. Drunken shouting. The absolute cream of the NATIONAL SPORTING PRESS.

DUKE is at the bar, engaged in drunken conversation with a LIFE REPORTER... showing him his notebook.

DUKE

See... "Kill the body and the head will die"... the Frazier/Ali fight...

MAGAZINE REPORTER

A proper end to the 60's... Ali beaten by a human hamburger!

DUKE

And both Kennedy's murdered by mutants.

A SHOUT goes up from outside. The sound of engines revving.

REPORTER

That's it! They're starting!

In a sudden rush the PRESS CROWD make for the door taking DUKE with them.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

MOTORCYCLES REV – tension builds...

A flag goes down. The CROWD cheers. The MOTORCYCLES ROAR AWAY. A great cloud of dust goes up – obscuring the RACERS as they disappear into the desert...

A moment...

REPORTER

Well, that's that. They'll be back in an hour or so. Let's go back to the bar.

The CROWD turns and streams back into the tent.

INT. RACE BAR TENT - DAY

DUKE heads for the bar along with the REST. It's packed.

Drinks are ordered.

A shout from outside the tent goes up:

VOICE OFF
Group 2!

The CROWD rushes for the door. DUKE gets swept along.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

MOTORCYCLES REV. A flag goes down. The CROWD cheers. The MOTORCYCLES ROAR AWAY. Another great cloud of dust goes up...

The CROWD head back for the bar.

INT. RACE BAR TENT - DAY

The CROWD surge back to the bar.

VOICE OFF
Group 3!

This time DUKE fights his way free of the CROWD.

DUKE (V.O.)
There was something like 190 more bikes waiting to start. They were due to go off 10 at a time every 2 minutes.

DUKE hits the bar.

DUKE
Beer!

A middle-aged HOODLUM in a T-shirt booms up to the bar.

HOODLUM
God damn! What day is this – Saturday?

DUKE
More like Sunday.

HOODLUM
Hah! That's a bitch, ain't it? Last night I was home in Long Beach and somebody said they were runnin' the

Mint 400 today, so I says to my old lady, "Man, I'm goin'." So she gives me a lot of crap about it, so I start slappin' her around, and the next thing you know two guys I never seen before are beating me stupid.

VOICE OFF

Group 4!

Outside, another batch of motorcycles roar away – kicking up more clouds of dust.

HOODLUM

Then they gave me ten bucks, put me on a bus, and when I woke up here I was in downtown Vegas, and for a minute all I could think was, "O Jesus, who's divorcing me this time?" But then I remembered, by God! I was here for the Mint 400. And, man, I tell you, it's wonderful to be here. Just wonderful to be here with you people.

A silence. A MAGAZINE REPORTER lunges across the bar – grabs the BARTENDER.

MAGAZINE REPORTER

Senzaman wassyneeds!

DUKE

(smacks the bar with his palm)

Hell yes! Bring us ten!

VOICE OFF

Group 5!

MAGAZINE REPORTER

(screams)

I'll back it!

(slides off his stool to the floor)

Outside, motorcycles roar away. The dust cloud billows into the tent – getting denser.

MAGAZINE REPORTER

(on the floor)

This is a magic moment in sport! It may never come again! I once did the Triple Crown, but it was nothing like this.

A FROG-EYED WOMAN claws at the MAGAZINE REPORTER, tries to haul him up.

FROG-EYED WOMAN

Please stand up! You're a correspondent for a major national magazine who's name we can't get clearance for! Please! You'd be a very handsome man if you'd just stand up!

MAGAZINE REPORTER

Listen, madam. I'm damn near intolerably handsome down here where I am. You'd go crazy if I stood up!

A feverishly eager LACERDA appears out of the dust cloud, 3 cameras slung round his neck.

LACERDA

Club soda, please.

FROG-EYED WOMAN

(to MAGAZINE REPORTER)

Please! I love Life!

LACERDA

(to DUKE)

Man, it's great out there!

DUKE

Lunatics.

LACERDA grins.

VOICE OFF

Group 6!

LACERDA

Meet you outside!

LACERDA downs his drink – hurries out through the crowd and out into the cloud of dust.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Nothing. Except for a THICK CLOUD OF DUST.

Barely visible, a motorcycle comes speeding into the pits.

The RIDER staggers off his bike. The PIT CREW gas it up and sends it back with a FRESH RIDER.

DUKE watches him disappear back into the dust cloud.

DUKE (V.O.)

By 10 they were spread out all over the course. It was no longer a race, now it was an Endurance Contest. The idea of trying to "cover this race" in any conventional press sense was absurd.

A HORN HONKS. A shiny BLACK BRONCO with DRIVER. LACERDA hangs out of the window.

LACERDA

It's great, isn't it?! Jump in!

DUKE gets into the Bronco and they head into the DUST CLOUD.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

IN THE BRONCO.

DUKE hangs on with his beer. Nothing all around but the HUGE IMPENETRABLE CLOUD OF DUST. LACERDA snaps madly away at nothing at all!

LACERDA

I'll just keep trying different combos of film and lenses till I find one that works in this dust!

The SOUND OF MOTORCYCLES RACING...

We hear music and voices singing:

BATTLE HYMN

"...As we go marching on When I reach my final campground, in that land beyond the sun, And the Great Commander asks me..." [What did he ask you, Rusty?] "Did you fight or did you run?"

A moment later, the Bronco races out of the dust. DUKE coughs, chokes, drinks beer.

BATTLE HYMN

(continuing)

[And what did you tell them, Rusty?]

"We responded to their rifle fire with everything we had..."

The sound of gun shots...

A DUNE BUGGY races toward them, loaded down with THREE RETIRED PETTY OFFICERS, DRUNK AS HELL. The radio blares:

"THE BATTLE HYMN OF LIEUTENANT CALLEY."

The dune buggy is COVERED WITH OMINOUS SYMBOLS: SCREAMING EAGLES CARRYING AMERICAN FLAGS IN THEIR CLAWS. A slant-

eyed

Snake being chopped to bits by a buzz-saw made of stars and stripes. A MACHINE GUN MOUNT on the passenger side. They yell over the roaring engines.

DUNE BUGGY DRIVER

Where's the damn race?

DUKE

Beats me. We're just good patriotic Americans like yourself.

DUKE gives DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2 A NICE BIG GRIN. In response, the PASSENGER #2 narrows his eyes – tightens his grip on an automatic weapon.

DUNE BUGGY DRIVER

(suspiciously)

What outfit you fellas with?

DUKE

The sporting press. We're friendlies. Hired geeks.

The DRIVER and DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2 exchange looks.

DUKE

If you want a good chase, you should get after that skunk from CBS News up ahead in the black jeep. He's the man responsible for that book, THE

SELLING OF THE PENTAGON.

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #1
HOT DAMN!

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2
A black jeep, you say?

And they ROAR away.

DUKE
Take me back to the pits.

LACERDA
No, no – we have to go on. We need
total coverage.

DUKE gets out of the Bronco.

DUKE
You're fired.

After a moment's hesitation, LACERDA and the BRONCO driver
roar away leaving DUKE alone in the cloud of dust.

DUKE (V.O.)
It was time. I felt, for an Agonizing
Reappraisal of the whole scene. The
race was definitely under way. I had
witnessed the start; I was sure of
that much. But what now?

EXT. LAS VEGAS STREETS - NIGHT

MUSIC PUMPS OUT. CRUISING IN THE RED SHARK IN VEGAS. THE SKY
SWIRLS WITH MILLIONS OF NEON LIGHTS CHASING EACH OTHER IN
BAROQUE PATTERNS ACROSS GIGANTIC HOTEL SIGNS. PSYCHEDELIC
LIGHT SHOWS TO LURE AND DERANGE THE INNOCENT. CITY OF LOST
SOULS.

DUKE
Turn up the radio! Turn up the tape
machine! Roll the windows down. Let's
taste this cool desert wind! Aaah,
yes! This is what it's all about!

DUKE, beer in hand, drives – a big smile for the world.

GONZO scans The Vegas Visitor.

DUKE

Total control now. Tooling along the main drag on a Saturday night in Vegas, two good old boys in a fire apple red convertible... stoned, ripped, twisted... Good people!

GONZO

How about "Nickel Nick's Slot Arcade?" "Hot Slots," that sounds heavy. Twenty-nine cent hotdogs...

DUKE

Look, what are we doing here? Are we here to entertain ourselves, or to do the job?

GONZO

To do the job, of course. Here we go... a Crab Louie and quart of muscatel for twenty dollars!

The Shark hits a bump.

GONZO

As your attorney I advise you to drive over to the Tropicana and pick up on Guy Lombardo. He's in the Blue Room with his Royal Canadians.

They hit another bump.

DUKE

Why?

GONZO

Why what?

CUT to wide shot. They are DRIVING AROUND IN CIRCLES in a large casino parking lot, bumping over the dividers.

DUKE

Why should I pay out my hard-earned dollars to watch a fucking corpse. I don't know about you, but in my line of business it's important to be Hep.

EXT. DESERT ROOM HOTEL - NIGHT

TWO BIG SCREAMING FACES.

DOORMAN #1

What the hell are you doing?!

DOORMAN #2

You can't park here!

DUKE

Why not? Is this not a reasonable place to park?

Reveal the RED SHARK parked on the sidewalk in front of the Desert Inn. TWO DOORMEN loom over the car hood. The MARQUEE says: TONIGHT. DEBBIE REYNOLDS.

GONZO leaps from the car, waving a five-dollar bill at the DOORMAN.

GONZO

We want this car parked! We drove all the way from L.A. for this show. We're friends of Debbie's.

A pause, then... the DOORMAN pockets the bill, hands them a parking stub. DUKE and GONZO hurry into the hotel.

INT. DESERT FROM HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO walk through the lobby. Black, mirrored, sleek, classy.

DUKE

Holy shit! They almost had us there! That was quick thinking.

GONZO

What do you expect? I'm your attorney. You owe me five bucks. I want it now.

DUKE shrugs and hands over the \$5.

DUKE (V.O.)

This was Bob Hope's turf. Frank Sinatra's. Spiro Agnew's. It seemed inappropriate to be haggling about nickel/dime bribes for the parking lot attendant.

A WINE-COLORED TUXEDO stops them at the entrance to the ballroom.

WINE-COLORED TUXEDO

Sorry, full house.

GONZO

Goddamnit, we drove all the way from L.A.

WINE-COLORED TUXEDO

I said there are no seats left... at any price.

GONZO

Fuck seats! We're old friends of Debbie's. I used to romp with her.

GONZO and the WINE-COLORED TUXEDO get into an ugly arm-waving negotiation.

DUKE (V.O.)

After a lot of bad noise, he let us in for nothing provided we would stand quietly at the back and not smoke.

As DUKE and GONZO disappear through the door we can hear the orchestra blasting out a HIGHLY BLANDIZED "SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND."

A beat.

The door flies open and BOUNCERS manhandle DUKE and GONZO out. Despite the rough treatment they're both SCREECHING WITH LAUGHTER.

GONZO

Jesus creeping shit!

DUKE

(tears streaming)

Did the mescaline just kick in? Or was that Debbie Reynolds in a silver Afro wig?!

GONZO

(in hysteria)

We wandered into a fucking time capsule!

EXT. LAS VEGAS STREETS - NIGHT

DUKE DRIVES FAST into the night. They're both LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY.

DUKE
(in hysteria)
We wandered into a fucking time capsule!

THEN... GONZO finds a TINY TEAR IN HIS JACKET...

GONZO
What's this?...

GONZO is instantly MOROSE.

GONZO
That scum...

GONZO twists round in the car – SCREAMS back into the night.

GONZO
SCUM! I know where you live! I'll find you and burn down your fucking house!

EXT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS - NIGHT

A hundred foot high neon clown: BAZOOKO CIRCUS.

The RED SHARK pulls up beneath the sign.

DUKE
This is the place. They'll never fuck with us here.

GONZO
Where's the ether? This mescaline isn't working.

EXT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS CASINO - NIGHT

Into the GLARING, CHASING LIGHTS of the entrance canopy steps DUKE in EC/U holding a KLEENEX SOAKED IN ETHER TO HIS NOSE.

DUKE
Ah, devil ether. It makes you behave like the village drunkard in some

early Irish novel... total loss of
all basic motor skills; blurred
vision, no balance, numb tongue –
(throws away kleenex)

The mind recoils in horror, unable
to communicate with the spinal column.
Which is interesting, because you
can actually watch yourself behaving
in this terrible way, but you can't
control it.

DUKE and GONZO approach the entrance with elaborate care-
taking one step at a time – trying to keep ahead of the
drug.

DUKE (V.O.)

You approach the turnstiles and know
that when you get there, you have to
give the man two dollars or he won't
let you inside... but when you get
there, everything goes wrong.

THE ETHER KICKS IN:

DUKE and GONZO BOUNCE off the walls, CRASH into OLD LADIES,
GIGGLE HELPLESSLY as they try to pay – HANDS FLAPPING
CRAZILY, unable to get money out of their pockets.

DUKE (V.O.)

Some angry Rotarian shoves you and
you think: What's happening here?
What's going on? Then you hear
yourself mumbling.

DUKE

(mumbling)

Dogs fucked the Pope, no fault of
mine. Watch out!... Why money? My
name is Brinks; I was born... Born?

GONZO

Get sheep over side... women and
children to armored car... orders
from Captain Zeep.

The ATTENDANTS indulgently escort them through the TURNSTILES.

DUKE (V.O.)

Ether is the perfect drug for Las
Vegas. In this town they love a drunk.

Fresh meat. So they put us through
the turnstiles and turned us loose
inside.

INT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS CASINO - NIGHT

Flames shoot up from below the casino. Above, a HIGH WIRE
ACT with FOUR MUZZLED WOLVERINES, SIX NYMPHET SISTERS FROM
SAN DIEGO, TWO SILVER PAINTED POLACK BROTHERS, and THREE
KOREAN KITTENS.

The WOLVERINE chases a NYMPHET through the air. TWO POLACKS
swing at it from opposite sides and they are instantly locked
in a death battle.

All plummet to the nets suspended over the GAMBLING TABLES
and SLOT MACHINES. No one looks up. The GAMBLERS REMAIN INTENT
ON THE SPINNING ROULETTE WHEEL, THE TURN OF THE CARD, THE
ROLL OF A DICE.

DUKE (V.O.)

Bazooko Circus is what the whole hep
world would be doing Saturday night
if the Nazis had won the war. This
was the Sixth Reich.

Something causes DUKE to look down. A dwarf carrying drinks
on a tray is tugging DUKE's pants leg trying to get him to
move out of the way.

DUKE (V.O.)

A drug person can learn to cope with
things like seeing their dead
grandmother crawling up their leg
with a knife in her teeth but, nobody
should be asked to handle this trip.

GONZO and DUKE go upstairs walking past funhouse booths.

One of them is manned by an orangutan in costume. A FAIRGROUND
BARKER grabs DUKE.

FAIRGROUND BARKER

Stand in front of this fantastic
machine, my friend. For just 99 cents
your likeness will appear 200 hundred
feet tall on a screen above downtown
Las Vegas.

On a TV monitor a 200 FOOT HIGH DRUNKARD looms over the Las

Vegas skyline screaming OBSCENITIES.

FAIRGROUND BARKER

99 cents more for a voice message.
Say whatever you want, fella. They'll
hear you, don't worry about that.
Remember, you'll be 200 feet tall!

ANOTHER BARKER

Step right up! Shoot the pasties off
the nipples of this ten-foot bull-
dyke and win a cotton candy goat!

INT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS REVOLVING MERRY-GO-ROUND BAR -
NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO sit on the revolving platform. GONZO stares –
glassy eyed – coming apart.

GONZO

I hate to say this, but this place
is getting to me. I think I'm getting
The Fear.

DUKE

Nonsense. We came here to find the
American Dream, and now we're right
in the vortex you want to quit. You
must realize that we've found the
Main Nerve.

GONZO

That's what gives me The Fear.

DUKE

Look over there. Two women fucking a
Polar Bear.

GONZO

Please, don't tell me those things...
Not now.

(signals the waitress
for two Wild Turkeys)

This is my last drink. How much money
can you lend me?

DUKE

Not much. Why?

GONZO

I have to go.

DUKE
GO?

GONZO
Yes. Leave the country. Tonight.

DUKE
Calm down. You'll be straight in a few hours.

GONZO
No. This is serious. One more hour in this town and I'll kill somebody!

DUKE
OK. I'll lend you some money. Let's go outside and see how much we have left.

GONZO
Can we make it?

DUKE
That depends on how many people we fuck with between here and the door.

GONZO
I want to leave fast.

DUKE
OK. Lets pay this bill and get up very slowly. It's going to be a long walk.

(signals waitress who comes over)

GONZO
(suddenly to waitress)
Do they pay you to screw that bear?

WAITRESS
What?

DUKE
He's just kidding.
(to GONZO)
Come on, Doc – lets go downstairs and gamble.

GONZO trembles with fear – walks to the edge of the turntable.

GONZO

When does this thing stop?

DUKE

It won't stop. It's not ever going to stop.

DUKE carefully steps off the turntable.

GONZO, eyes staring blindly ahead, squinting in fear and confusion, rooted to the spot, is carried away.

DUKE

Don't move you'll come around.

DUKE reaches out to grab GONZO, who jumps back – keeps going around.

The BARTENDER narrows his eyes at them.

DUKE steps onto the merry-go-round – hurries round the bar – approaching GONZO from the blind side and shoves GONZO from behind. GONZO goes down with a hellish scream.

DUKE approaches him with his hands in the air. Smiling.

DUKE

You fell. Let's go.

GONZO refuses to move and stands tense, fists clenched, looking for somebody to hit... an old woman perhaps?

DUKE

OK. You stay here and go to jail. I'm leaving.

DUKE walks fast towards the stairs. GONZO catches up with him.

GONZO

Did you see that? Some sonofabitch kicked me in the back.

DUKE

Probably the bartender. He wanted to stomp you for what you said to the

waitress.

GONZO

Good God! Let's get out of here!
Where's the elevator?

DUKE

(turning him in the
opposite direction)

Don't go near that elevator. That's
just what they want us to do... trap
us in a steel box and take us down
to the basement.

EXT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS CASINO - NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO stumble out of the entrance.

DUKE

Don't run. They'd like any excuse to
shoot us.

GONZO

(in an extended fall)

You drive! I think there's something
wrong with me.

INT. MINT HOTEL CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THEIR SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE AND GONZO RUN MADLY DOWN THE CORRIDOR... DUKE TAKING
CARE NOT TO STEP ON THE PATTERNED PART OF THE CARPET.

GONZO STRUGGLES with the key in the lock.

GONZO

Those bastards have changed the lock
on us. They probably searched the
room. Jesus, we're finished!

The door SUDDENLY SWINGS OPEN. DUKE AND GONZO fall inside.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

GONZO

Bolt everything! Use all chains!

DUKE locks the door. The suite is crowded with ROOM SERVICE
GOODIES. DUKE turns to see GONZO staring at two hotel room
keys. EVERYTHING STOPS.

GONZO

Where did this one come from?

DUKE snatches a key.

DUKE

That's Lacerda's room.

GONZO smiles a slow smile...

GONZO

Yeah... I thought we might need it...

DUKE

What for?

GONZO snatches the key back.

GONZO

Let's go up there and blast him out of bed with the fire hose.

DUKE

No, we should leave the poor bastard alone. I get the feeling that he's avoiding us for some reason.

GONZO

Don't kid yourself. That Portuguese son of a bitch is dangerous. He's watching us like a hawk.

DUKE

He told me he was turning in early...

GONZO utters an anguished cry – slaps the wall with both hands.

GONZO

That dirty bastard! I knew it! He's got hold of my woman!

DUKE

(laughing)

That little blonde groupie with the film crew? You think he sodomized her?

GONZO

That's right, laugh about it! You

goddamn honkies are all the same!

GONZO SLASHES A GRAPEFRUIT with a HUGE RAZOR SHARP HUNTING KNIFE. DUKE blanches.

DUKE

Where'd you get that knife?

GONZO SLICES THE GRAPEFRUIT – MANIACAL.

GONZO

Room service sent it up. I wanted something to cut the limes.

GONZO SLICES THE GRAPEFRUIT – INTO EIGHTHS!

DUKE

What limes?

GONZO SLICES – SIXTEENTHS!

GONZO

They didn't have any. They don't grow in the desert.

SLICE! SLICE! SLICE!

GONZO

That dirty toad bastard! I knew I should have taken him out when I had the chance. Now he has her.

SLICE! SLICE! SLICE! GONZO SLASHES INSANELY!

DUKE watches – straight-faced.

DUKE

I remember the girl. We'd had a problem with her in the elevator a few hours earlier: my attention had made a fool of himself.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

An elevator door opens to reveal the SMILING FACES OF LACERDA, THE BLONDE TV REPORTER AND HER CREW.

DUKE and GONZO stagger in.

LACERDA drops his smile. He's standing beside the BLONDE TV

REPORTER. A trembling GONZO moonily turns his eyes onto her.

BLONDE TV REPORTER

(to Gonzo)

You must be a rider. What class are you in?

GONZO

Class? What the fuck do you mean?

BLONDE TV REPORTER

What do you ride? We're filming the race for a TV series – maybe we can use you.

GONZO

Use me?

DUKE (V.O.)

Mother of God, I thought. Here it comes.

GONZO is TREMBLING BADLY. There's a moment of uncomfortable silence.

GONZO

(suddenly shouting)

I ride the BIG ONES! The really BIG fuckers!

GONZO shows his teeth to LACERDA. DUKE laughs trying to defuse the scene.

DUKE

The Vincent Black Shadow. We're with the Factory Team.

TV CAMERAMAN

Bullshit.

GONZO stills – becomes dangerous – zeros in on the TV CAMERAMAN – groin to groin...

GONZO

Wait a minute, pardon me lady, but I think there's some kind of ignorant chicken-sucker in this car who needs his face cut open. You cheap honky faggots! Which one of you wants to get cut?!

DEAD SILENCE.

Ding! The elevator door opens, but nobody moves. The door closes.

Next floor. Ding! The door opens again. A middle-aged couple start to get in. Change their minds. The door closes.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

DUKE and GONZO run down the corridor. GONZO LAUGHS WILDLY.

GONZO
Spooked! They were spooked! Like
rats in a death cage!

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - DAY

DUKE and GONZO CRASH into their hotel suite – BOLT THE DOOR.

GONZO stops laughing.

GONZO
Goddamn. It's serious now. That girl
understood. She fell in love with
me.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

SLICE! SLICE! SLICE! GONZO with the BIG HUNTING KNIFE –
sliced grapefruit segments everywhere.

GONZO
Let's go up there and castrate that
fucker!

GONZO pauses – A MAD THOUGHT – turns to DUKE.

GONZO
(squinting suspiciously)
Have you made a deal with him? Did
you put him on to her?

DUKE
(backing slowly towards
the door)
Look you better put that blade away

and get your head straight. I have to put the car in the lot.

DUKE (V.O.)

One of the things you learn, after years of dealing with drug people, is that you can turn your back on a person, but never turn your back on a drug. Especially when it's waving a razor-sharp hunting knife in your eyes.

INT. CASINO/LOBBY MINT HOTEL

The MAGAZINE REPORTER is on the telephone.

MAGAZINE REPORTER

Las Vegas at dawn. The racers are still asleep, the dust is still on the desert, fifty thousand dollars in prize money, slumbers darkly in the office safe at Del Webb's fabulous Mint Hotel...

DUKE walks past the REPORTER – into THE CASINO, THE SAD, MEAGER CROWDS AROUND THE CRAP TABLES. No joy. DUKE watches.

DUKE (V.O.)

Who are these people? These faces! Where do they come from? They look like caricatures of used car dealers from Dallas. And, sweet Jesus, there are a hell of a lot of them at four-thirty on a Monday morning. Still humping the American dream, that vision of the big winner somehow emerging from the last minute predawn chaos of a stale Vegas casino.

DUKE stops at the Money Wheel, puts down a two dollar bill on a number, the wheel turns, he loses.

DUKE

You bastards!

DUKE (V.O.)

No. Calm down. Learn to ENJOY losing.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE walks back into the room. We hear the LOUD STRAINS OF THREE DOG NIGHT'S "JOY TO THE WORLD."

He walks to the bathroom and opens the door.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Submerged in green water, GONZO WALLOWS in the steaming tub.

Soap labels and grapefruit rinds float on the surface. A large empty pack of Neutrogena soap lies on the floor. The shower is on – the tub overflowing. THE TAPE RECORDER PLAYS, from where it's plugged into the razor socket over the sink.

DUKE turns off the shower – notices a HUGE HUNK OF CHEWED UP WHITE BLOTTER.

DUKE

You ate ALL THIS ACID?

No answer.

DUKE

(turning down the volume)

You evil son of a bitch. You better hope there's some Thorazine in that bag, because if there's not, you're in bad trouble.

GONZO

Music! Turn it up. Put that tape on.

DUKE

What tape?

GONZO

Jefferson Airplane. "White Rabbit." I want a rising sound.

DUKE

You're doomed. I'm leaving here in two hours and then they're going to come up here and beat the mortal shit out of you with big saps. Right there in that tub.

GONZO

I dig my own graves. Green water and the White Rabbit. Put it on.

DUKE

OK. But do me one last favor, will you. Can you give me two hours? That's all I ask – just two hours to sleep before tomorrow. I suspect it's going to be a very difficult day.

He switches on the tape. "WHITE RABBIT" begins to build.

GONZO

(coolly)

Of course, I'm your attorney, I'll give you all the time you need, at my normal rates: \$45 an hour – but you'll be wanting a cushion, so, why don't you just lay one of those \$100 bills down there beside the radio, and fuck off?

DUKE

How about a check?

GONZO

Whatever's right.

DUKE moves the radio as far from the tub as he can and leaves, closing the door behind him.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE goes across to the sofa and crashes – exhausted.

Suddenly a great ripping and crashing noise in the bathroom.

GONZO (O.S.)

Help! You bastard! I need help!

DUKE JUMPS up – crosses to the bathroom door, muttering.

DUKE

Shit, he's killing himself!

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

DUKE RUSHES IN. GONZO flails – trying to reach the radio with the shower curtain pole which he has ripped from its mounts.

GONZO

(snarling)
I want that fucking radio!

DUKE GRABS THE RADIO.

DUKE
Don't touch it! Get back in that
tub!

GONZO
Back the tape up. I need it again!
Let it roll! Just as high as the
fucker can go! And when it comes to
that fantastic note where the rabbit
bites its own head off, I want you
to THROW THAT FUCKING RADIO INTO THE
TUB WITH ME!

DUKE stares down at GONZO.

DUKE
Not me. It would blast you through
the wall – stone dead in ten seconds
and they'd make me explain it!

GONZO
BULLSHIT! Don't make me use this.

HIS ARM LASHES OUT OF THE WATER, HOLDING THE KNIFE.

DUKE
Jesus.

GONZO
Do it! I want to get HIGHER!

DUKE considers this. He's had enough.

DUKE
Okay. You're right. This is probably
the only solution.
(holds the PLUGGED IN
TAPE/RADIO over the
tub)
Let me make sure I have it all lined
up. You want me to throw this thing
into the tub when "WHITE RABBIT"
peaks. Is that it?

GONZO falls back into the water, smiling gratefully.

GONZO

Fuck yes. I was beginning to think I was going to have to go out and get one of the goddamn maids to do it.

DUKE

Are you ready?

He switches "WHITE RABBIT" back on. GONZO HOWLS AND MOANS AND THRASHES TO THE MUSIC, straining to get over the top.

Meanwhile, DUKE picks up a grapefruit from the sink – a good two-pounder, he gets a grip on it... and when "WHITE RABBIT" peaks... HE HURLS IT INTO THE TUB LIKE A CANNONBALL.

GONZO SCREAMS CRAZILY, THRASHING AND CHURNING – CAUSING A TIDAL WAVE.

DUKE JERKS THE RADIO CABLE OUT OF THE SOCKET – SLAMS OUT OF THE BATHROOM.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE slumps onto the sofa.

SILENCE.

GONZO RIPS OPEN THE BATHROOM DOOR, his eyes unfocused. HE WAVES THE RAZOR SHARP BLADE out in front of him – LUNGES at DUKE. DUKE WHIPS OUT A CAN OF MACE.

DUKE

MACE! YOU WANT THIS?

GONZO stops – hisses.

GONZO

You bastard! You'd do that, wouldn't you?

DUKE

(laughs)

Why worry? You'll like it. Nothing in the world like a Mace high. Forty-five minutes on your knees with the dry heaves...

GONZO

You cheap honky sonofabitch...

DUKE

Why not? Hell, just a minute ago, you were asking me to kill you! And now you want to kill me! What I should do, goddamnit, is call the police!

GONZO

The cops?

DUKE

There's no choice. I wouldn't dare go to sleep with you wandering around with a head full of acid and wanting to slice me up with that goddamn knife!

GONZO

(mumbles)

Who said anything about slicing you up? I just wanted to carve a little Z on your forehead. Nothing serious.

GONZO shrugs and reaches for a cigarette on top of the TV set.

DUKE

(menaces him with the MACE)

Get back in that tub. Eat some reds and try to calm down. Smoke some grass, shoot some smack – shit, do whatever you have to do, but let me get some rest.

GONZO turns toward the bathroom – suddenly sad.

GONZO

Hell, yes. You really need some sleep. You have to work. Goddamn. What a bummer. Try to rest. Don't let me keep you up.

GONZO shuffles back into the bathroom. DUKE wedges a chair up against the bathroom doorknob and puts the mace can next to the clock.

DUKE turns on the TV. WHITE NOISE FILLS THE ROOM. He collapses

onto the sofa and lights up his lightbulb as pipe.

DUKE

Ignore the nightmare in the bathroom.
Just another ugly refugee from the
Love Generation.

The WHITE NOISE snow storm on the TV is reflected in his face. The camera pulls back revealing THE ENTIRE WALL BEHIND HIM TO BE SWIRLING WITH THE FIZZING SNOWSTORM PATTERN.

DUKE (V.O.)

My attorney had never been able to
accept the notion – often espoused
by former drug abusers – that you
can get a lot higher without drugs
than with them. And neither have I,
for that matter.

The pattern on the wall changes to A 60'S VISCOUS OIL LIGHTSHOW PATTERN. With DUKE still sitting in the foreground, the projected image widens to reveal the interior of A HAIGHT ASHBURY DANCE HALL full of DANCING PROTO-HIPPIES.

INT. MATRIX CLUB - NIGHT

A slightly YOUNGER DUKE moves through the throng. All the action is in a DREAMLIKE SLOW-MOTION.

DUKE (V.O.)

I recall one night in the Matrix.
There I was – a victim of the Drug
Explosion. A natural street freak,
just eating whatever came by.

A ROAD-PERSON with a big pack on his back is shouting. The sound of his voice, like his movements, is in slow-motion.

ROAD-PERSON

Anybody want some L... S... D...? I
got all the makin's right here. All
I need is a place to cook.

The camera pushes right into the ROAD-PERSON's mouth.

INT. MATRIX MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Still in slow motion, the YOUNGER DUKE is trying to eat a HUGE SPANSULE OF ACID. With difficulty.

DUKE (V.O.)

I decided to eat only half at first.
Good thinking. But I spilled the
rest on the sleeve of my red Pendleton
shirt.

DUKE stares at his sleeve, uncertain what to do. C/U of the
door to the men's room as a MUSICIAN enters speaking in slow-
motion.

MUSICIAN

What's the trouble?

DUKE

(also in slow-motion)

Well, all this white stuff on my
sleeve is LSD.

The MUSICIAN approaches and looks down at DUKE'S arm. A long
pause.

Cut back to tight shot of door as it opens and a very clean-
cut, PREPPY, STOCKBROKER TYPE enters. He freezes in horror.
We cut to his POV. DUKE is standing in the middle of the
men's room with the MUSICIAN hunkered down at his side...
sucking on his sleeve. A very gross tableau. The STOCKBROKER
slowly eases out of the room.

DUKE (V.O.)

With a bit of luck his life was ruined –
forever thinking that just behind
some narrow door in all his favorite
bars, men in red Pendleton shirts
are getting incredible kicks from
things he'll never know.

INT. A BAR - YEARS LATER - NIGHT

The STOCKBROKER LOOKING CONSIDERABLY OLDER sits looking lost,
confused, a nervous wreck. The image flares out in a TV white
noise snowstorm.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE sits staring at the TV.

DUKE (V.O.)

Strange memories on this nervous
night in Las Vegas.
(he gets up, pours

himself a drink)
Has it been five years? Six? It seems like a lifetime – the kind of peak that never comes again. San Francisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be a part of. But no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world. Whatever it meant.

DUKE throws open the curtains. Light streams in.

EXT. 1965 STOCK FOOTAGE

We are in SAN FRANCISCO. IMAGES OF THE TIME FLOOD IN.

DUKE (V.O.)

There was madness in any direction, at any hour... You could strike sparks anywhere. There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning. And that, I think, was the handle – that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of old and evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave...

DUKE'S FACE IS SUFFUSED WITH A SADNESS AND SERENITY WE HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

DUKE (V.O.)

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look west, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.

The memories dissolve into the night skyline of Vegas.

Suddenly towering over the casinos is a 200 foot high Nazi shouting "WOODSTOCK ,BER ALLES!"

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE closes the curtain. The room is in darkness again.

INT. MINT HOTEL SUITE - DAWN

A harsh door buzzer. DUKE jerks awake. Alone. Looking like shit. Around him is the wreckage of their stay.

DUKE (V.O.)

The decision to flee came suddenly.
Or maybe not.

DUKE opens the door to a BELL BOY with a trolley load of fruit, drinks and flowers... and a smile.

BELL BOY

Room service!

The BELL BOY wheels the trolley across the room – already stacked with EVEN MORE BOXES OF GOODIES.

DUKE (V.O.)

Maybe I'd planned it all along –
subconsciously waiting for the right
moment. The bill was a factor, I
think. Because I had no money to pay
for it.

DUKE slams the door – starts FRANTICALLY PACKING.

DUKE (V.O.)

Our room service tabs had been running
somewhere between \$29 and \$36 per
hour, for forty-eight consecutive
hours. Incredible. How could it
happen?

DUKE sees the DISCARDED WRAPPINGS OF EXPENSIVE, HAND TOOLED LUGGAGE. A sudden thought. He rushes to GONZO's room – empty. His plastic briefcase remains on the bed...

DUKE (V.O.)

But by the time I asked this question,
there was no one around to answer.

DUKE opens the briefcase – finds the .357 MAGNUM inside.

DUKE (V.O.)

My attorney was gone. He must have

sensed trouble.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - DAY

GONZO WAVES GOODBYE as he boards an airplane with a set of brand-new fine cowhide luggage.

DUKE (V.O.)

Panic.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE HOTEL SUITE - DAY

DUKE emerges with his bag and Gonzo's plastic briefcase – leaves the DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door – checks both ways, then hurries away down the corridor.

DUKE (V.O.)

It crept up my spine like first rising vibes of an acid frenzy. All these horrible realities began to dawn on me.

INT. MINT HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY

An anxiety ridden DUKE watches the floor numbers as the elevator descends. He searches his pockets...

DUKE (V.O.)

Here I was, alone in Las Vegas, with this goddamned incredibly expensive car, completely twisted on drugs, no cash, no story for the magazine. And on top of everything else I had a gigantic goddamn hotel bill to deal with.

DUKE finds a last crumpled \$5 bill.

The door opens. A SECURITY GUARD enters with an OLD LADY IN HANDCUFFS.

DUKE hides the bill – crams back into the corner. Doors close.

DUKE (V.O.)

I didn't even know who had won the race. Maybe nobody.

INT. MINT HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

DUKE hurries out of the elevator – eyes on a hovering MANAGER. Past the curious look of the reception CLERK.

DUKE
(muttering to himself)
How would Horatio Alger have handled
this situation?

EXT. MINT HOTEL - DAY

Motoring, DUKE gives his \$5 bill to the HOTEL FRONT DOORMAN with a smile. The DOORMAN blows a frantic whistle and waves at the CAR BOY.

DUKE
Stay calm. Stay calm. I'm a relatively
respectable citizen – a multiple
felon, perhaps, but certainly not
dangerous.

The CAR BOY pulls up with a screech. DUKE jumps in. The back seat is stacked with bars of Neutrogena, piles of Mint 400 t-shirts, boxes of grapefruit.

DUKE (V.O.)
Luckily, I had taken the soap and
grapefruit and other luggage out to
the car a few hours earlier. Now it
was only a matter of slipping the
noose...

DUKE shifts into drive. Deliverance!

CLERK'S VOICE
MR. DUKE!

DUKE freezes.

CLERK'S VOICE
Mr. Duke! We've been looking for
you!

DUKE (V.O.)
The game was up! They had me.

DUKE
(to himself)
Well, why not? Many fine books have

been written in prison.

Resigned, DUKE turns off the ignition. A young CLERK arrives breathlessly with a smile and a YELLOW LETTER IN HIS HAND.

CLERK

Sir?

(thrusts out a TELEGRAM)

This telegram came for you. Actually, it isn't for you. It's for somebody named Thompson, but it says 'care of Raoul Duke'. Does that make sense?

DUKE

(barely able to speak)

Yes... It makes sense.

DUKE stuffs the telegram into his top pocket.

The CLERK peers into the car – sees part of the enormous stash inside.

CLERK

I checked the register for this man Thompson. We don't show him but I figured he might be part of your team.

DUKE

He is. Don't worry, I'll get it to him.

He fires up the engine – eases the RED SHARK into low gear.

SECURITY GUARDS are looking across – sharing a quiet word or two.

CLERK

What confused us was Dr. Gonzo's signature on the telegram from Los Angeles. When we knew he was right here in the hotel.

DUKE

You did the right thing. Never try to understand a press message. About half the time we use codes – especially with Dr. Gonzo.

CLERK

Tell me. When will the doctor be awake?

DUKE
(tenses)
Awake? What do you mean?

DUKE's eyes are on the SECURITY GUARDS – moving closer.

CLERK
(uncomfortably)
Well... the manager, Mr. Heem, would like to meet him. Nothing unusual. Mr. Heem likes to meet all our large accounts... put them on a personal basis... just a chat and a handshake, you understand.

DUKE
Of course. But if I were you, I'd leave the Doctor alone until after he's eaten breakfast. He's a very crude man.

DUKE edges the car forward, but is stopped by the CLERK.

CLERK
But he will be available? Perhaps later this morning?

DUKE
Look. That telegram was all scrambled. It was actually from Thompson, not to him. Western Union must have gotten the names reversed. I have to get going. I have to get out to the track.

CLERK
There's no hurry! The race is over!

DUKE
(taking off)
Not for me.

He waves the CLERK off the car – roars away.

CLERK
Let's have lunch!

DUKE

Righto!

EXT. ROAD OUT OF VEGAS - DAY

DUKE drives the RED SHARK out of Vegas.

A "YOU ARE LEAVING LAS VEGAS" sign flashes past.

Bob Dylan plays: "Memphis Blues Again – "Aaww, Mama, can this really be the end...?"

A sign: LOS ANGELES – 400 miles.

DUKE (V.O.)

Jesus, bad waves of paranoia, madness, fear and loathing – intolerable vibrations in this place. Get out! The weasels were closing in. I could smell the ugly brutes. Flee!

DUKE drives fast.

DUKE (V.O.)

Do me one last favor Lord: just give me five more high-speed hours before you bring the hammer down; just let me get rid of this goddamn car and off of this horrible desert.

A sign flashes "YOU CAN RUN BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE."

A patrol car pulls out behind him, lights flashing.

DUKE (V.O.)

You evil bastard! This is your work! You'd better take care of me, Lord... because if you don't you're going to have me on your hands.

The patrol car screams after the RED SHARK.

DUKE (V.O.)

Few people understand the psychology of dealing with a Highway Traffic Cop. Your normal speeder will panic and immediately pull over to the side. This is wrong.

DUKE floors the gas pedal.

DUKE (V.O.)

It arouses contempt in the cop heart.

THE SPEEDOMETER CLIMBS STEADILY.

DUKE

Make the bastard chase you. He will follow. But he won't know what to make of your blinker signal that says you're about to turn right.

DUKE signals right. The RED SHARK screams at 120 mph.

DUKE

This is to let him know you're looking for a proper place to pull off and talk.

AN EXIT OFF RAMP: MAX SPEED 25.

DUKE hits the brakes. The COP brakes.

DUKE (V.O.)

It will take him a moment to realize that he is about to make 180 degree turn at speed... but you will be ready for it, braced for the G's and the fast heel toe work.

The patrol car spins and fishtails crazily out of control.

EXT. SCENIC PICNIC AREA - DAY

The patrol car comes skidding around the corner. DUKE stands beside the RED SHARK, completely relaxed and smiling.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN gets out of the car, screaming.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN

Just what the FUCK did you think you were doing?!

DUKE smiles.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN

May I see your license.

DUKE

Of course, officer.

DUKE reaches for it. And BOTH MEN look down at a beer can – which DUKE had, somehow, forgotten was in his hand.

DUKE (V.O.)
I knew I was fucked.

The COP relaxes – actually smiles... He reaches out for DUKE's wallet, then holds out his other hand for the beer.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Could I have that, please?

DUKE
Why not? It was getting warm anyway.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN takes it, pours out the beer – glances in the back seat of the RED SHARK. Amongst the bars of soap... A case of warm beer. DUKE smiles back at him.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
You realize...

DUKE
Yeah. I know. I'm guilty. I understand that. I knew it was a crime but I did it anyway. Shit, why argue? I'm a fucking criminal.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
That's a strange attitude.

He looks at DUKE thoughtfully.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
You know – I get the feeling you could use a nap. There's a rest area up ahead. Why don't you pull over and sleep a few hours?

DUKE
A nap won't help. I've been awake for too long – three or four nights. I can't even remember. If I go to sleep now, I'm dead for twenty hours.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN smiles.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Okay. Here's how it is. What goes into my book, as of noon, is that I

apprehended you... for driving too fast, and advised you to proceed no further than the next rest area... your stated destination, right? Where you plan to take a long nap. Do I make myself clear?

DUKE

How far is Baker? I was hoping to stop there for lunch.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN

Not my jurisdiction. The city limits are two point two miles beyond the rest area. Can you make it that far?

DUKE

I'll try. I've been wanting to go to Baker for a long time. I've heard a lot about it.

The PATROLMAN holds the door for DUKE who gets in.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN

Excellent seafood. With a mind like yours, you'll probably want to try the land-crab. Try the Majestic Diner.

The PATROLMAN slams the door shut.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

DUKE drives away – teeth gritted.

DUKE (V.O.)

I felt raped. The Pig had done me on all fronts, and now he was going off to chuckle about it – on the west side of town, waiting for me to make a run for L.A.

DUKE drives past the rest area to an intersection where he signals to turn right into Baker. As he approaches the turn he sees the HITCHHIKER! As DUKE slows to make the turn their eyes meet. DUKE is about to wave – but the HITCHHIKER drops his thumb.

DUKE

Great Jesus, it's him.

DUKE, spooked, SPINS THE RED SHARK round – ROARS BACK THE WAY HE CAME.

EXT. BAKER TRUCK STOP - DAY

DUKE on the public phone booth – screaming.

DUKE

They've nailed me! I'm trapped in some stinking desert crossroads called Baker. I don't have much time. The fuckers are closing in. They'll hunt me down like a beast!

INT. GONZO'S OFFICE - DAY

GONZO sits surrounded by legal papers and law books. Mexican Day of the Dead masks hang from the walls – flame-red demons.

GONZO

Who? You sound a little paranoid.

EXT. BAKER TRUCK STOP - DAY

DUKE screams – sweat pouring.

DUKE

You bastard! I need a lawyer immediately!

INT. GONZO'S OFFICE - DAY

GONZO

What are you doing in Baker? Didn't you get my telegram?

EXT. BAKER TRUCK STOP - DAY

DUKE

What? Fuck telegrams. I'm in trouble. You worthless bastard. I'll cripple your ass for this! All that shit in the car is yours! You understand that? When I finish testifying out here you'll be disbarred!

INT. GONZO'S OFFICE - DAY

GONZO

You're supposed to be in Vegas. We

have a suite at the Flamingo. I was just about to leave for the airport.

INT. BAKER TRUCK STOP - DAY

DUKE pulls out the telegram from his top pocket.

GONZO'S VOICE

You brainless scumbag! You're supposed to be covering the National District Attorney's conference! I made all the reservations... rented a white Cadillac convertible... the whole thing is arranged! What the hell are you doing out there in the middle of the fucking desert?

DUKE stares at the telegram.

DUKE

Never mind. It's all a big joke. I'm actually sitting beside the pool at the Flamingo. I'm talking from a portable phone. Some dwarf brought it out from the casino. I have total credit! Can you grasp that?

(shouts)

Don't come anywhere near this place! Foreigners aren't welcome here!

DUKE, breathing heavily, hangs up phone.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

C/U of .357 Magnum cylinder being spun.

DUKE (V.O.)

Well. This is how the world works.

C/U An IGUANA basks in the sun.

DUKE (V.O.)

All energy flows according to the whims of the Great Magnet.

C/U Barrel of the gun. It fires. An explosion of desert dirt.

DUKE (V.O.)

What a fool I was to defy Him.

The IGUANA sits unfazed.

DUKE (V.O.)

Never cross the Great Magnet. I understood this now...

(another blast from the gun)

...and with understanding came a sense of almost terminal relief.

DUKE stands alone in the vast desert firing at nothing, the thuds of the explosions echo away.

EXT. ROAD INTO VEGAS - DAY

The RED SHARK driving back towards Las Vegas.

DUKE (V.O.)

I had to get rid of The Shark. Too many people might recognize it... especially the Vegas Police.

(tight C/U of DUKE)

Luckily, my credit card was still technically valid.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

DUKE, now driving a white Cadillac Coupe de Ville – THE WHITE WHALE.

DUKE pushes buttons – lowers the top.

DUKE (V.O.)

This was a superior machine – ten grand worth of gimmicks and high price special effects. The rear windows leapt up with a touch like frogs in a dynamited pond. The dashboard was full of esoteric lights and dials and meters that I would never understand.

EXT. FLAMINGO HOTEL - AFTERNOON

A GIANT SIGN: THE FLAMINGO WELCOMES THE NATIONAL DA'S CONFERENCE ON NARCOTICS & DANGEROUS DRUGS.

DUKE (V.O.)

If the Pigs were gathering in Vegas, I felt the Drug Culture should be

represented as well... and there was a certain bent appeal in the notion of running a savage burn on one Las Vegas hotel and then just wheeling across town and checking into another.

The WHITE WHALE turns into a VIP parking slot, immediately attended by impressed MINIONS.

DUKE (V.O.)

Me and a thousand ranking cops from all over America. Why not? Move confidently into their midst.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL LOBBY - AFTERNOON

DUKE enters – old Levis, grubby sneakers, 10 peso Acapulco shirt coming apart at the seams, 3 day growth, eyes hidden behind mirror shades. He heads for the check-in line.

DUKE (V.O.)

My arrival was badly timed.

THE PLACE IS FULL OF COPS. 200 of them, on vacation, all dressed in cut price Vegas casuals: plaid Bermuda shorts, Arnie Palmer golf shirts, and rubberized beach sandals.

Ahead of DUKE – A POLICE CHIEF argues with the DESK CLERK. The POLICE CHIEF'S AGNEW STYLE WIFE stands to the side, weeping. The POLICE CHIEF'S FRIENDS stand uneasily around.

POLICE CHIEF

What do you mean I'm too late to register? I'm a police chief. From Michigan. Look, fella, I told you.

(waves a POSTCARD)

I have a postcard here that says I have reservations in this hotel.

CLERK

(prissily)

I'm sorry, sir. You're on the "late list." Your reservations were transferred to the... ah... Moonlight Motel, which is out on Paradise Boulevard...

POLICE CHIEF

I've already paid for my goddamn room!

CLERK

It's actually a very fine place of lodging and only sixteen blocks from here, with its own pool and...

POLICE CHIEF

You dirty little faggot! Call the manager! I'm tired of listening to this dogshit!

FRIENDS restrain the POLICE CHIEF.

CLERK

(solicitously)

I'm so sorry, sir. May I call you a cab?

The POLICE CHIEF's screamed insults fade away...

DUKE

Of course, I could hear what the Clerk was really saying...

CLERK

(IN DUKE'S IMAGINATION)

Listen, you fuzzy little shithead – I've been fucked around, in my time, by a fairly good cross-section of mean-tempered rule-crazy cops and now it's MY turn. "Fuck you, officer, I'm in charge here, and I'm telling you we don't have room for you."

DUKE steps to the desk, around the raging POLICE CHIEF.

DUKE

Say. I hate to interrupt, but I wonder if maybe I could just sort of slide through and get out of your way. Name's Raoul Duke – Raoul Duke. My attorney made the reservation.

DUKE snaps a credit card down onto the counter. EVERYONE goes silent. The POLICE CHIEF GROUP stares at him like he was some kid of water rat crawling up to the desk. The CLERK hits the bell for the BELLBOY.

CLERK

Certainly, Mr. Duke!

DUKE

My bags are out there in that white Cadillac convertible. Can you have someone drive it around to the room?

ALL EYES turn to the gleaming WHITE WHALE.

DUKE

Oh, and could I get a quart of Wild Turkey, two fifths of Baccardi, and a night's worth of ice delivered to my room, please?

CLERK

Don't worry about a thing, sir. Just enjoy your stay.

DUKE

Well, thank you.

DUKE gives the POLICE CHIEF a polite smile – crosses to the elevator – turns to face the GAWPING COPS – pops a can of beer and toasts them. The doors close.

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE SUITE - DAY

DUKE rams the key home – swings the door open.

DUKE

Ah, home at last!

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - AFTERNOON

DUKE enters. The door hits something with a thud.

A 16-year-old GIRL with the aura of an angry Pit Bull.

GONZO stands in the bathroom doorway – stark naked with a drug-addled grin on his face.

DUKE

You degenerate pig!

GONZO

It can't be helped. This is Lucy.
(laughing distractedly)
You know – like "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds."

LUCY eyes DUKE venomously.

GONZO

Lucy! Lucy, be cool, goddamnit!
Remember what happened at the airport!
No more of that, okay?

LUCY keeps her eyes on DUKE. GONZO idles over and puts his arm round her shoulder.

GONZO

Lucy... this is my client. This is
Mr. Duke, the famous journalist.
He's paying for this suite, Lucy.
He's on our side.

DUKE flops onto the sofa.

GONZO

Mr. Duke is my friend. He loves
artists.

DUKE notices for the first time that the room is full of artwork. Maybe 40 or 50 portraits, some in oil, some in charcoal, all more or less the same size and same face.

GONZO

Lucy paints portraits of Barbra
Streisand.

LUCY

I drew these from TV.

GONZO

Fantastic. She came all the way down
here from Montana just to give these
portraits to Barbra. We're going
over to the Americana Hotel tonight
to meet her backstage...

DUKE's voice rises above GONZO.

DUKE (V.O.)

I desperately needed peace, rest,
sanctuary. I hadn't counted on this.
Finding my attorney on acid and locked
into some kind of preternatural
courtship.

DUKE

Well, I guess they brought the car
round by now. LET'S GET THE STUFF
OUT OF THE TRUNK.

DUKE fixes GONZO hard.

GONZO
Absolutely, LET'S GET THE STUFF.
(to LUCY)
Now, we'll be right back. Don't answer
the phone if it rings.

LUCY
(makes one-fingered
Jesus freak sign)
God bless.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE SUITE - DAY

DUKE collars GONZO – serious.

DUKE
WELL? What are your plans?

GONZO
Plans?

DUKE
Lucy.

GONZO
(struggling to focus)
Shit. I met her on the plane and I
had all that acid.
(he shrugs)
You know, those little blue barrels.
I gave her a cap before I realized...
she's a religious freak... Jesus,
she's never even had a drink.

DUKE
Well... It'll probably work out. We
can keep her loaded and peddle her
ass at the drug convention.

GONZO stares uneasily at DUKE.

GONZO
Listen, she's running away from home
for something like the fifth time in

six months. It's terrible.

DUKE

She's perfect for this gig. These cops will go fifty bucks a head to beat her into submission and then gang fuck her. We can set her up in one of these back street motels, hang pictures of Jesus all over the room, then turn these pigs loose on her... Hell she's strong; she'll hold her own.

GONZO's face twitches badly.

GONZO

Jesus Christ. I knew you were sick but I never expected to hear you actually say that kind of stuff.

DUKE

It's straight economics. This girl is a god-send. Shit, she can make us a grand a day.

GONZO

NO! Stop talking like that.

DUKE

I figure she can do about four at a time. Christ, if we keep her full of acid that's more like two grand a day. Maybe three.

GONZO

You filthy bastard. I should cave your fucking head in.

DUKE

In a few hours, she'll probably be sane enough to work herself into a towering Jesus-based rage at the hazy recollection of being seduced by some kind of cruel Samoan who fed her liquor and LSD, dragged her to a Vegas hotel room and savagely penetrated every orifice in her body with his throbbing, uncircumcised member.

GONZO starts crying.

GONZO

NO! I felt sorry for the girl, I wanted to help her!

DUKE

You'll go straight to the gas chamber. And even if you manage to beat that, they'll send you back to Nevada for Rape and Consensual Sodomy. She's got to go.

Pause.

GONZO

Shit, it doesn't pay to try to help somebody these days.

A silence.

DUKE (V.O.)

The only alternative was to take her out to the desert and feed her remains to the lizards. But, it seemed a bit heavy for the thing we were trying to protect: My attorney.

GONZO

We have to cut her loose. She's got two hundred dollars. And we can always call the cops up there in Montana, where she lives, and turn her in.

DUKE

What?... What kind of goddamn monster are you?

GONZO

It just occurred to me, that she has no witnesses. Anything that she says about us is completely worthless.

DUKE

Us?

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - SUNSET

DUKE is speaking into the phone in hushed tones.

DUKE

Hotel Americana? I need a reservation.
For my niece. Listen, I need her
treated very gently. She's an artist,
and might seem a trifle highstrung...

In the background GONZO helps LUCY and her paintings out the door.

GONZO

Okay, Lucy, it's time to go meet
Barbra...

DUKE (V.O.)

I felt like a Nazi, but it had to be
done.

EXT. ON THE STREETS - A CAB STAND - DUSK

The WHITE WHALE pulls up – DUKE at the wheel. GONZO helps
LUCY and her paintings from the car.

DUKE (V.O.)

Lucy was a potentially fatal millstone
on both our necks. There was
absolutely no choice but to cut her
adrift and hope her memory was fucked.

GONZO unrolls a couple of bills – pays off a CAB DRIVER –
waves to LUCY in the back with her paintings. She's starting
to come down...

GONZO gets back in the WHITE WHALE and slaps his hands
together as if washing his hands of the situation.

GONZO

Well that's that. Take off slowly.
Don't attract attention.

They pull out into traffic.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STREETS - DUSK

GONZO

I gave the cabbie an extra ten bucks
to make sure she gets there safe.
Also, I told him I'd be there myself
in an hour, and if she wasn't, I'd
come back out here and rip his lungs
out.

DUKE

That's good. You can't be subtle in this town.

GONZO

As your attorney, I advise you to tell me where you put the goddamn mescaline.

DUKE

Maybe we should take it easy tonight.

GONZO

Right. Let's find a good seafood restaurant and eat some red salmon. I feel a powerful lust for red salmon...

The electric WHITE WHALE heads off down the Strip. The sun's going down behind the scrub hills, a good Kristofferson tune croaks on the radio in the warm dusk.

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING

GONZO throws up in the toilet bowl.

In the background, DUKE opens curtains. Daylight blinds him.

DUKE

Come on, we're going to be late.

GONZO looks up at his sick reflection – wipes his mouth with a towel.

GONZO

This goddamn mescaline. Why the fuck can't they make it a little less pure? Maybe mix it up with Roloids or something.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

(crackling and booming over the lousy sound system)

On behalf of the prosecuting attorneys of this county, I welcome you to the Third National DA's Conference on

Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

The EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – well groomed, GOP businessman type – speaks from the podium. A banner behind him reads:

NATIONAL DA'S CONVENTION 1971. "If You Don't Know, Come To Learn... If You Know, Come To Teach."

A BIG MIXED CROWD: TOP LEVEL STRAIGHT COPS, UNDERCOVER NARCS AND OTHER TWILIGHT TYPES – beards, mustaches and super-Mod dress. Just because you're a cop, doesn't mean you can't be WITH IT! However, for every URBAN-HIPSTER there are around 20 REDNECKS.

A dozen big, low-fidelity speakers mounted on steel poles distort and feed back the EXECUTIVE's voice through the room.

At the back, under a loudspeaker, sits DUKE – \$40 FBI wingtips, a Pat Boone madras sportcoat, and an official name tag: RAOUL DUKE, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, L.A.

GONZO sits beside him. His name tag: DR. GONZO. EXPERT, CRIMINAL DRUG ANALYSIS. He's nervous – close to the edge.

GONZO

(lowers his voice)

I saw these bastards in Easy Rider,
but I didn't believe they were real.
Not like this. Not hundreds of them!

DUKE

They're actually nice people when
you get to know them.

GONZO

Man, I know these people in my goddamn
blood!

DUKE

Don't mention that word around here.
You'll get them excited.

GONZO

This is a fucking nightmare.

DUKE

Right. Sure as hell some dope-dealing
bomb freak is going to recognize you
and put the word out that you're
partying with a thousand cops.

COP IN BACK
SSSSHHH!

DR. BLUMQUIST – a "drug expert" – takes the stage.

DR. BLUMQUIST
We must come to terms with the Drug
Culture in the country... country...
country...

The sound systems echoes.

DR. BLUMQUIST
The reefer butt is called a "roach,"
because it resembles a cockroach...
cockroach... cockroach...

GONZO
(whispers)
What the fuck are these people talking
about? You'd have to be crazy on
acid to think a joint looked like a
goddamn cockroach!

DUKE (V.O.)
It was clear that we had stumbled
into a prehistoric gathering.

DR. BLUMQUIST
Now, there are four states of being
in the cannabis, or marijuana,
society: Cool, Groovy, Hip, and
Square. The square is seldom if ever
cool. He is not "with it," that is,
he doesn't know "what's happening."
But if he manages to figure it out,
he moves up a notch to "hip."

DUKE and GONZO listen in disbelief.

DR. BLUMQUIST
And if he can bring himself to approve
of what is happening, he becomes
"groovy." After that, with much luck
and perseverance, he can rise to the
rank of "cool." A cool guy... cool
guy... cool guy...

COP IN BACK

Dr. Bloomquist, do you think the anthropologist, Margaret Mead's strange behavior of late might possibly be explained by a private marijuana addiction?

DR. BLUMQUIST

I really don't know, but at her age, if she did smoke grass, she'd have one hell of a trip!

Roars of laughter.

GONZO

I know a hell of a lot better ways to waste my time than listening to this bullshit.

He stands, knocking the ashtray off his chair arm, and plunges down the aisle to the door.

COP IN BACK

Down in front!

GONZO

Fuck you! I have to get out! I don't belong here!

COP IN BACK

Good riddance!

He stumbles from the room. DUKE turns his attention back to the stage.

The lights go down. A black & white film – REEFER MADNESS! – illustrates his now evangelical talk.

FILM NARRATOR

KNOW YOUR DOPE FIEND! YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT! You will not be able to see his eyes because of Tea-Shades, but his knuckles will be white from inner tension...

DUKE turns his attention to a 340 pound TEXAN POLICE CHIEF who necks with his 290 pound WIFE beside him.

FILM NARRATOR

...and his pants will be crusted with semen from constantly jacking

off when he can't find a rape
victim...

DUKE gazes at the TEXAN and his WIFE. – Feigning sickness,
he gets up, hand over mouth.

DUKE
Pardon me, I feel sick.

FILM NARRATOR
He will stagger and babble when
questioned. He will not respect your
badge. The Dope Fiend fears nothing.
He will attack, for no reason, with
every weapon at his command –
including yours...

DUKE heads for the exit.

DUKE
Sorry, sick... Beg pardon! Feeling
sick...

FILM NARRATOR
BEWARE. Any officer apprehending a
suspected marijuana addict should
use all necessary force immediately.
One stitch in time [on him] will
usually save nine on you.

DUKE CRASHES OUT THROUGH THE DOOR.

INT. CASINO BAR - DAY

DUKE sees GONZO at the bar – talking to a SPORTY LOOKING
COP about 40 whose name tag identifies him as a DISTRICT
ATTORNEY FROM GEORGIA.

DA
I'm a whiskey man myself. We don't
have much trouble from drugs where I
come from...

GONZO
You will. One of these nights you'll
wake up and find a junkie tearing
your bedroom apart.

DA
Naw!

GONZO

They'll climb right into your bedroom and sit on your chest with big Bowie knives. They might even sit on your wife's chest. Put the blade right down on her throat.

DA

Not down in my parts.

DUKE joins them.

DUKE

(to WAITRESS)

Rum and ice, please.

DA

(looks at DUKE'S NAME

TAG)

You're another one of these California boys. Your friend here's been tellin' us about dope fiends.

DUKE

They're everywhere. Nobody's safe. And sure as hell not in the South. They like warm weather... You'd never believe it. In L.A. it's out of control. First it was drugs, now it's witchcraft.

DA

Witchcraft? Shit, you can't mean it!

The BARTENDER cleans his glasses, one ear straining for the conversation.

GONZO

Read the newspapers.

DUKE

Man, you don't know trouble until you have to face down a bunch of these addicts gone crazy for human sacrifice!

DA

Naw! That's science fiction stuff!

DUKE

Not where we operate.

GONZO

Hell, in Malibu alone, these goddamn Satan worshippers kill six or eight people every day. All they want is the blood. They'll take people right off the street if they have to.

DUKE

Just the other day we had a case where they grabbed a girl right out of a McDonald's hamburger stand. She was a waitress, about sixteen years old... with a lot of people watching, too!

The BARTENDER keeps cleaning the same glass – more and more furiously.

DA

What happened? What did they do to her?

GONZO

Do? Jesus Christ, man. They chopped her goddamn head off right there in the parking lot! Then they cut all kinds of holes in her head and sucked out the blood!

DA

(DA ad-libs a summation of the crime)

And nobody did anything?

DUKE

What could they do? The guy that took the head was about six-seven, and maybe three-hundred pounds. He was packing two Lugers, and the others had M-16s.

GONZO

They just ran back out into Death Valley – you know, where Manson turned up...

DUKE

Like big lizards.

GONZO

...and every one of them stacked
naked...

DA

Naked!?

DUKE

Naked.

GONZO

Yeh, naked!... except for the weapons.

DUKE

They were all veterans.

DA

Veterans?!?!?

Agog with the horrors of the story, the BARTENDER polishes
the glass – faster and faster...

GONZO

Yeh. The big guy used to be a major
in the Marines.

DA

A major!

GONZO

We know where he lives, but we can't
get near the house.

DA

Naw! Not a major.

GONZO

He wanted the pineal gland.

DA

Really?

GONZO

That's how he got so big. When he
quit the Marines he was just a little
guy.

DUKE

Usually, it's whole families. During the night. Most of them don't even wake up until they feel their heads going – and then, of course, it's too late.

The glass smashes in the BARTENDER's hand.

DUKE

Happens every day.

DUKE turns to a WAITRESS with a warm smile.

DUKE

Three more rums. Plenty of ice. Maybe a handful of lime chunks.

WAITRESS

Are you guys with the police convention upstairs?

DA

We sure are, Miss.

WAITRESS

I thought so. I never heard that kind of talk around here before. Jesus Christ! How do you guys stand that kind of work?

GONZO

(grinning)

We like it. It's groovy.

The WAITRESS stares – sickened – at GONZO.

DUKE

What's wrong with you? Hell, somebody has to do it.

GONZO

Hurry up with those drinks. We're thirsty. Only two rums. Make mine a Bloody Mary.

DA

(whacks his fist on the bar)

Hell, I really hate to hear this. Because everything that happens in

California seems to get down our way, sooner or later. Mostly Atlanta. But that was back when the goddamn bastards were peaceful. All we had to do was to keep 'em under surveillance. They didn't roam around much... But now Jesus, it seems nobody's safe.

GONZO

(with a conspiratorial nod)

You're going to need to take the bull by the horns – go to the mat with this scum.

DA

What do you mean by that?

GONZO

You know what I mean. We've done it before and we can damn well do it again!

DUKE

Cut their goddamn heads off. Every one of them. That's what we're doing in California.

DA

(stupefied)

WHAT?

GONZO

Sure. It's all on the Q.T., but everybody who matters is with us all the way down the line.

DUKE

We keep it quiet. It's not the kind of thing you'd want to talk about upstairs. Not with the press around.

DA

(recovering slightly)

Hell, no. We'd never hear the goddamn end of it.

DUKE

Dobermans don't talk.

DA
What?

GONZO
Sometimes it's easier to just rip
out the backstraps.

DUKE
They'll fight like hell if you try
to take the head without the dogs.

DA
God almighty!
(muttering in a daze)
I don't think I should tell my wife
about this. She'd never understand.
You know how women are.

DUKE gives the DA a brotherly slap on the back.

DUKE
Just be thankful your heart is young
and strong.

DUKE and GONZO leave the stunned DA – staring into the
swirling ice in drink.

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - DAY

DUKE and GONZO fall into the suite in fits of laughter.

GONZO feels the nausea rise suddenly – heads for the
bathroom. Immediate sounds of retching.

The phone message light is blinking. DUKE opens a beer, picks
up the phone.

DUKE
What's the message? My light is
blinking.

CLERK (V.O.)
Ah, yes. Mr. Duke? You have one
message: "Call Lucy at the Americana
Hotel, room 1600."

DUKE
Holy shit!

DUKE slams the phone down. GONZO emerges from the bathroom – looking like death.

DUKE
Lucy called.

GONZO sags visibly – like an animal taking a bullet.

GONZO
What?

The telephone rings. DUKE answers.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL - RECEPTION - DAY

A worried CLERK speaks in to the phone.

CLERK
Mr. Duke? Hello, Mr. Duke, I'm sorry we were cut off a moment ago... I thought I should call again, because I was wondering...

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - DAY

DUKE
WHAT?
(hand over the PHONE)
What was that crazy bitch said to him?
(screams)
There's a war on, man! People are being killed!

CLERK
Killed?

DUKE
IN VIETNAM! ON THE GODDAMN TELEVISION!

CLERK
Oh... yes... yes... This terrible war. When will it end?

DUKE
Tell me. What do you want?

In the background GONZO is upturning a sofa to retrieve his stash from the lining.

CLERK

The woman who left that message for you sounded very disturbed. I think she was crying...

DUKE

Crying? Why was she crying?

CLERK

Well, uh. She didn't say Mr. Duke. But since I know you're here with the Police Convention...

DUKE

Look, you want to be gentle with that woman if she ever calls again. We're watching her very carefully... this woman has been into laudanum. It's a controlled experiment, but I suspect we'll need your cooperation before this thing is over.

CLERK

(hesitantly)

Well, certainly... We're always happy to cooperate with the police...

DUKE

Don't worry. You're protected. Just treat this poor woman like you'd treat any other human being in trouble.

CLERK

What? Ah... yes, yes, I see what you mean... Yes... so, you'll be responsible then?

DUKE

Of course. And now I have to get back to the news. Send up some ice.

He hangs up. GONZO zaps TV channels – commercials.

GONZO

Good work. They'll treat us like goddamn lepers after that.

DUKE

(slowly, carefully)

Lucy is looking for you.

GONZO

(laughing)

No, she's looking for you.

DUKE

Me?

GONZO

She really flipped over you. The only way I could get rid of her was by saying you were taking me out to the desert for a showdown – that you wanted me out of the way so you could have her all to yourself.

(laughing again)

I guess she figures you won. That phone message wasn't for me, was it?

A look of stunned realization from DUKE...

INT. FANTASY COURT ROOM - DAY

LUCY is on the witness stand.

LUCY

Yessir, those two men in the dock are the ones who gave me the LSD and took me to the hotel.

A doomed DUKE and GONZO await their fate.

LUCY

I don't know for sure what they done to me, but I remember it was horrible.

JUDGE

Twenty years... and Double Castration!

The JUDGE bangs his gavel.

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - DAY

DUKE is madly stuffing his suitcase.

GONZO

Wait! You can't leave me alone in this snake pit. This room is in my name.

DUKE KEEPS PACKING. GONZO is looking worried.

GONZO

OK, goddamnit!... Look... I'll call her. I'll get her off our backs. You're right. She's my problem.

DUKE

It's gone too far.

GONZO

Relax. Let me handle this.

(dials the PHONE,
snaps angrily at
DUKE)

You'd make a piss-poor lawyer...
Room 1600, please.

(to DUKE)

As your attorney, I advise you not
to worry.

(nods towards bathroom)

Take a hit out of that little brown
bottle in my shaving kit.

DUKE goes in the bathroom. He finds a little bottle – a label: "DRINK ME."

DUKE

What is this?

GONZO

You won't need much. Just a little
tiny taste, that stuff makes pure
mescaline seem like ginger-beer.
Adrenochrome.

DUKE stares wonderingly at the bottle.

DUKE

Adrenochrome...

GONZO

(into PHONE)

Hi, Lucy? Yeah, it's me. I got your
message... what? Hell, no, I taught
the bastard a lesson he'll never
forget... what? No, not dead, but
he won't be bothering anybody for a
while. Yeah. I left him out there, I

stomped him, then pulled all his teeth out...

DUKE (V.O.)

I remember thinking, "Jesus, what a terrible thing to lay on somebody with a head full of acid."

DUKE dips a match head into the brown bottle – studies it – TASTES IT – NOTHING – TASTES SOME MORE...

GONZO

(to PHONE)

But here's the problem. That bastard cashed a bad check downstairs and gave you as a reference. They'll be looking for both of you. Yeah, I know, but you can't judge a book by its cover, Lucy. Some people are just basically rotten... Anyway, the last thing you want to do is call this hotel again; they'll trace the call and put you straight behind bars... no, I'm moving to the Tropicana right away. I have to go, they've got the phone tapped. Yeah, I know, it was horrible, but it's all over now... OH MY GOD! THEY'RE KICKING THE DOOR DOWN!

(throws the PHONE down; shouts)

No! Get away from me! I'm innocent! It was Duke! I swear to God!

(stomps the PHONE; moans)

No, I don't know where she is. You'll never catch Lucy! She's gone! I swear, I don't know where she is! DON'T PUT THAT THING ON ME!

(slams the PHONE down)

GONZO sits back in his chair... watching MISSION IMPOSSIBLE.

GONZO

Well. That's that. She's probably stuffing herself down the incinerator about now. That's the last we should be hearing from Lucy.

(fumbling with the hash pipe)

Where's the opium?

DUKE stares at the back of GONZO's neck. SOMETHING VERY STRANGE IS HAPPENING TO HIM...

DUKE (V.O.)

I remember slumping on the bed, his performance had given me a bad jolt. For a moment I thought his mind had snapped – that he actually believed he was being attacked by invisible enemies. But the room was quiet again.

DUKE CLUTCHES THE BROWN BOTTLE.

DUKE

Where'd you get this?

GONZO

Never mind, it's absolutely pure.

DUKE

Jesus... what kind of monster client have you picked up this time? There's only one source for this stuff – the adrenaline gland from a living human body!

GONZO turns to smile at DUKE.

GONZO

I know, but the guy didn't have any cash to pay me. He's one of these Satanism freaks. He offered me human blood – said it would take me higher than I've ever been in my life.

(laughs – struts
round DUKE – eyes
bright with
expectation)

I thought he was kidding, so I told him I'd just as soon have an ounce or so of pure adrenochrome – or maybe just a fresh adrenaline gland to chew on.

DUKE (V.O.)

I could already feel the stuff working on me – the first wave felt like a combination of mescaline and

methedrine – maybe I should take a swim, I thought...

DUKE sees that GONZO is TOYING WITH HIS HUNTING KNIFE...

GONZO

Yeah, they nailed this guy for child molesting. He swore he didn't do it. "Why should I fuck with children?" he says. "They're too small." Christ, werewolf is entitled to legal counsel. I didn't dare turn the creep down. He might have picked up a letter opener and gone after my pineal gland!

GONZO JABS WITH THE RAZOR BRIGHT KNIFE. DUKE'S BODY IS GOING RIGID – HE SPEAKS THROUGH GRITTED TEETH.

DUKE

Why not? We should get some of that. Just eat a big handful and see what happens.

GONZO

Some of what?

DUKE

(spitting words)
Extract of pineal!

GONZO

(staring at Duke with a strange smile)
Sure. That's a good idea. One whiff of that shit would turn you into something out of a goddamn medical encyclopedia.

GONZO GROWS HORNS –
HIS FACE BECOMES A MEXICAN DEMON MASK.

GONZO

Man, your head would swell up like a watermelon, you'd probably gain about a hundred pounds in two hours...

A CLOVEN HOOF BURSTS THROUGH GONZO'S SHOE.

DUKE

Right!

GONZO

...grow claws... bleeding warts.

GONZO'S CHEST EXPANDS – BONY RIBS BURSTING HIS SHIRT.

DUKE

Yes!

GONZO

...then you'd notice about six huge
hairy tits swelling up on your back...

A TAIL LASHES, HOOFS STRIKE THE FLOOR. GONZO TOWERS – A
FLAME RED DEMON!

DUKE

Fantastic!

DUKE is now so wired that his hands are CLAWING UNCONTROLLABLY
at the bedspread, JERKING IT RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER HIM. His
heels are dug into the mattress with both KNEES LOCKED,
EYEBALLS SWELLING.

GONZO-DEMON LOOMS AGAINST THE CEILING.

GONZO

you'd go blind... your body would
turn to wax... they'd have to put
you in a wheelbarrow and...

GONZO'S VOICE FADES AWAY – DUKE'S frenzied gaze reveals

GONZO REVERTED TO NORMAL HUMAN SHAPE AND SIZE.

GONZO

Man I'll try about anything; but I'd
never touch a pineal gland.

DUKE

FINISH THE FUCKING STORY! What
happened?! What about the glands?

GONZO, a small smile on his lips, backs away warily... towards
the TV – NOW A HUNDRED FEET AWAY IN THE DISTANCE...

GONZO

Jesus, that stuff got right on top
of you, didn't it.

VEINS stand out on DUKE's forehead. He is purplish-red.

OVER THE TOP! Too late, he realizes he is NEAR DEATH!

DUKE

Maybe you could just... shove me
into the pool, or something...

GONZO shakes his head disgustedly.

GONZO

If I put you in the pool right now,
you'd sink like a goddamn stone. You
took too much. Jesus, look at your
face, you're about to explode.

GONZO sits back down... watching the TV.

GONZO

Don't try and fight it, or you'll
get brain bubbles. Strokes, aneurysms.
You'll just wither up and die.

DUKE FALLS TO THE GROUND, WRITHING, CATATONIC, SINKING INTO
PARALYSIS.

AND THE SOUND, SUDDENLY AND STRANGELY, OF THE VOICE OF RICHARD
NIXON AND HIS DISTORTED FACE ON THE TV SCREEN.

NIXON

Sacrifice... sacrifice... sacrifice...

DUKE PASSES OUT.

BLACK SCREEN

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Darkness. Insanely, somewhere NILSSON plays – "Put the lime
in the coconut and mix em all up..."

DUKE (V.O.)

What kind of rat-bastard psychotic
would play that song – right now,
at this moment?

DUKE opens his eyes and the hotel suite rushes in. He lies,
awkwardly twisted – unable to move. He could have been there
days – months.

DUKE (V.O.)

When I came to the general back alley
ambiance of the suite was so rotten,
so incredibly foul. How long had I
been lying there? Hours? Days? Months?
All these signs of violence. What
had happened?

DUKE moves his eyes – taking in his surroundings: Like THE
SIGHT OF SOME DISASTROUS ZOOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT involving
whisky and gorillas. Blue and red Christmas tree lights
replace lightbulbs, used towels hanging everywhere,
pornographic pictures ripped out of a magazine are plastered
on a shattered mirror.

DUKE (V.O.)

There was evidence in this room of
excessive consumption of almost every
type of drug known to civilized man
since 1544 AD.

DUKE manages to move – stiffly gets to his bare feet –
HOBBLES ROUND THE TRASHED ROOM like a newly risen ape.

DUKE (V.O.)

But what kind of addict would need
all these coconut husks and crushed
honeydew rinds? Would the presence
of junkies account for all these
uneaten french fries? These puddles
of glazed ketchup on the bureau?
Maybe so, but then why all this booze?
And these crude pornographic photos
smeared with mustard that had dried
to a hard yellow crust...

DUKE peers into Gonzo's room – HIS BED LIKE A BURNED OUT
RAT'S NEST – blackened springs and wires.

DUKE (V.O.)

These were not the hoof prints of
your normal god-fearing junkie. It
was too savage, too aggressive.

QUICK FLASHBACK:

GONZO SMASHES THE TEN FOOT MIRROR WITH A HAMMER:

BACK IN THE ROOM:

DUKE stares at the smashed mirror.

DUKE (V.O.)
Grim memories and bad flashbacks.

In the bathroom, DUKE'S unlaced boots CRUSH BROKEN GLASS IN VOMIT AND GRAPEFRUIT RINDS.

DUKE unzips and pisses. THERE IN THE TOILET BOWL IS THE MAGNUM .357!

DUKE (V.O.)
Something ugly had happened. I was sure of it...

DUKE stares at the golden stream SPLASHING ON THE GUN.

The SOUNDS OF VOMITING come from a closet near the front door.

DUKE looks into the room. He sees GONZO's ass sticking out of the closet. He opens his mouth to speak when, IN THE SMASHED MIRROR HE SEES THE FRAGMENTED REFLECTION OF HIMSELF... sleeping on the sofa.

The ominous SOUND OF A KEY TURNING in the room lock.

A hellish scream wakes up the SLEEPING DUKE. He sees GONZO grappling naked with the maid – gun to her head. GONZO is muffling her screams with an ice bag.

MAID
Please... please... I'm only the maid. I didn't mean nothin!...

DUKE
(jumps up from the bed, flashing his press badge)
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

GONZO
(to DUKE)
She must have used a pass key. I was polishing my shoes in the closet when I noticed her sneaking in – so I took her.

DUKE shakes his head.

DUKE

(barks at the MAID)

What made you do it? Who paid you off?

MAID

Nobody. I'm the maid!

GONZO

You're lying! You were after the evidence. Who put you up to this – the manager?

MAID

I don't know what you're talking about!

GONZO

Bullshit! You're just as much a part of it as they are!

MAID

Part of what?

DUKE

The dope ring. You must know what's going on in this hotel. Why do you think we're here?

MAID

(blubbing)

I know you're cops, but I thought you were just here for that convention. I swear! All I wanted to do was clean up the room. I don't know anything about dope!

GONZO laughs.

GONZO

Come on, baby don't try to tell us you never heard of the Grange Gorman.

MAID

No! No! I swear to Jesus I never heard of that stuff!

DUKE

Maybe she's telling the truth. Maybe she's not part of it.

MAID

No! I swear I'm not!

GONZO

(long pause)

In that case, maybe she can help.

MAID

Yes! I'll help you all you need! I hate dope!

DUKE

So do we, lady.

GONZO

(helping her up)

I think we should put her on the payroll. See what she comes up with.

DUKE

Do you think you can handle it?

MAID

What?

GONZO

One phone call every day. Just tell us what you've seen. Don't worry if it doesn't add up, that's our problem.

GONZO hustles the MAID to the door.

MAID

You'd pay me for that?

DUKE

You're damn right. But the first time you say anything about this, to anybody – you'll go straight to prison for the rest of your life. What's your name?

MAID

Alice. Just ring Linen Service and ask for Alice.

GONZO

Alright, Alice... you'll be contacted by Inspector Rock. Arthur Rock. He'll

be posing as a politician.

DUKE

Inspector Rock will pay you. In cash.
A thousand dollars on the ninth of
every month.

MAID

Oh Lord! I'd do just about anything
for that!

GONZO

You and a lot of other people.

DUKE

The password is: "One Hand Washes
The Other." The minute you hear that,
you say "I fear nothing."

MAID

I fear nothing.

She repeats the password several times while they listen to
make sure she has it right.

GONZO

Oh, and don't bother to make up the
room. That way we won't have to risk
another of these little incidents,
will we?

MAID

Whatever you say, gentlemen. I can't
tell you how sorry I am about what
happened...

GONZO

Don't worry, it's all over now. Thank
God for the decent people.

She smiles, repeating to herself "One Hand Washes The Other"
as GONZO hangs the DO NOT DISTURB sign and shuts the door.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

A grimy tape runs through a grunged-up portable tape recorder.

GONZO ON TAPE

...Thank God for the decent people.

DUKE sits in the middle of the wrecked suite with his mangled tape recorder in front of him.

DUKE
Memories of that night are extremely hazy...

DUKE fast forwards through the tape – SEARCHING: "Awwww, mama... can this really... be the end...?"

EXT. SAFEWAY SUPERMARKET - DAY

The WHITE WHALE waits – gleaming – beautiful.

DUKE (V.O.)
There is a definite obligation, when you boom around Vegas in a white Coupe de Ville, to maintain a certain style.

DUKE and GONZO burst out of the supermarket riding a shopping basket loaded with COCONUTS, GRAPEFRUIT and TEQUILA. They send DEFEATED SHOPPERS sprawling.

The trolley collides into the WHITE WHALE. SHOPPERS gather at the supermarket entrance to watch – baskets loaded with junk, SCREAMING KIDS and EMPTY WALLETS.

DUKE switches on the music: JUMPING JACK FLASH. He selects a coconut – ceremonially balances it on the hood. GONZO pulls out a silver claw-hammer. A sly look at the gathering CROWD... then he smashes the hammer down on the coconut!

A GASP from the surly SHOPPERS.

DUKE places another coconut. SMASH! Milk and white meat flies everywhere.

SHOPPER #1
Hey! Is that your car?

DUKE
Sure is.

SMASH! Coconut fragments fly.

DUKE
Any of you folks want the milk? We're after the meat. This is honest coconut essence. Real meat.

SMASH!

SHOPPER #2

Meat, hell! Look what you're doing to that car!

GONZO

Fuck the car. They should make these things with a goddamn FM radio.

SMASH!

DUKE

Yeh... This foreign made crap – is sucking our dollar balance dry!

SHOPPER #3

Someone should stop them!

SMASH!

DUKE

You poor fools don't understand, do you? This car is the property of the World Bank! That money goes to ITALY!

SHOPPER #3

Somebody should call the police!

GONZO

Police? Are you people crazy?

GONZO confronts the CROWD, hammer in one hand, a coconut in the other.

GONZO

You folks every heard of ole Patrick Henry? Know what he said?!

Silence – the CROWD uncomprehending of this STONE DEGENERATE.

GONZO

(ROARS)

GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!

GONZO brings the hammer down on the hood. CLANG!

A gasp from the CROWD. Getting ugly.

GONZO
In Samoa we LOVE THE CONSTITUTION!

SHOPPER #3
Bullshit.

The CROWD move in.

SHOPPER #1
Call the goddamn police!

GONZO SWINGS THE HAMMER. CLANG!

SHOPPER #4
Look what they've done to that
beautiful car!

DUKE jumps in behind the wheel.

DUKE
This crowd is not rational. They
can't relate to us. Let's go!

A final CLANG! GONZO jumps in.

DUKE floors the accelerator – screams at the CROWD.

DUKE
You people voted for Hubert Humphrey!
You killed Jesus!

They swerve round and through the CROWD.

DUKE (V.O.)
The crowd broke ranks. Nobody wants
to be run over by a Coupe de Ville.

INT. HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE FAST-FORWARDS... PLAYS THE TAPE...

VOICE ON TAPE
You found the American Dream? In
this town?

DUKE ON TAPE
We're sitting on the main nerve right
now...

INT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS REVOLVING MERRY-GO-ROUND BAR -

NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO (wearing a single black glove) talk conspiratorially to a 3RD MAN. A PLACID ORANGUTAN in a bow tie sits next to him. THE BAR IS REVOLVING FASTER THAN NORMAL. DUKE IS INSANELY TALKATIVE – WIRED!

DUKE

The manager told me a story about the owner of this place... about how he always wanted to run away and join the circus when he was a kid. Well, now the bastard has his own circus, and a license to steal, too.

3RD MAN

You're right – he's the model.

DUKE

Absolutely! Pure Horatio Alger...
Say...

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE playing the tape.

DUKE ON TAPE

...how much do you think he'd take for the ape?

DUKE fast-forwards again – searching... TRAFFIC NOISES.

SCREECH OF BRAKES.

VOICE ON TAPE

Holy God!...

A TERRIBLE GRINDING NOISE.

EXT. CAR RENTAL AGENCY - NIGHT

RENTAL AGENT

Holy God!, how did this happen?

DUKE

They beat the shit out of it.

RENTAL AGENT

The top's completely jammed!

The CAR RENTAL AGENT wrestles with the trashed car.

DUKE

Yeah, something's wrong with the motor...

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE ON TAPE

...The generator light's been on red ever since I drove the thing into Lake Mead on a water test...

A HUGE SPLASH...

The tape's gone too far.

DUKE

No, no. Shit...

DUKE races the tape BACKWARDS... Then, SIRENS HOWL.

DUKE ON TAPE

Where's the ape? I'm ready to write a check.

INT. BAZOOKO CIRCUS BAR - NIGHT

DUKE is standing in the middle of A SEMI-DESTROYED BAZOOKO CIRCUS REVOLVING BAR. Mirrors are broken. People are recovering from some kind of battle. THE BAR SPINS MADLY.

DUKE IS INSANELY WIRED.

3RD MAN

Forget it, he just attacked an old man... he took a bite out of the bartender's head! The cops took the ape away.

DUKE

Goddamnit! What's the bail? I want that ape! I've already reserved two first-class seats on the plane.

DUKE (V.O.)

There was every reason to believe that we had been heading for trouble, that we'd pushed our luck a bit far...

INT. WHITE WHALE ON THE STREETS OF LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

GONZO SCREAMS ABUSE out of the window at a Ford alongside the VOMIT STREAKED WHITE WHALE. DUKE MAKES A SUPERHUMAN EFFORT TO STAY ON THE ROAD.

GONZO

Hey there! You folks want to buy some heroin?

In the Ford: TWO COUPLES – MIDDLE-AGED AMERICAN FACES FROZEN IN SHOCK – stare straight ahead. GONZO leans out – close to them.

GONZO

Hey, honkies! Goddamnit, I'm serious. I want to sell you some pure fucking smack!

No reaction.

GONZO

Cheap heroin! This is the real stuff! You won't get hooked. I just got back from Vietnam! This is scag, folks. Pure scag!

The lights change. The Ford bolts. DUKE keeps pace with them.

GONZO

Shoot! Fuck! Scag! Blood! Heroin! Rape! Cheap! Communist! Jab it right in your fucking eyeballs!

The MAN IN THE BACK SEAT suddenly loses control – enraged, lunges against the glass, trying to get at GONZO.

MAN IN CAR

You dirty bastards! Pull over and I'll kill you! God damn you! You bastards!

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

BACK IN THE SUITE:

THE TAPES RUNS:

MAN IN CAR ON TAPE

You dirty bastards!

An ugly squeal of brakes.

GONZO ON TAPE

Shit, he was trying to bite me! I
shoulda maced the fucker!

DUKE fast forwards the tape. The TAPE MANGLES – the sounds
ski to a halt...

DUKE grabs the nearest tool – uses it to hook out the tape,
then realizes... IT'S GONZO'S RAZOR-SHARP FOLDING KNIFE... A
CHILLING MOMENT...

DUKE turns the knife over... THERE'S A DRIED CRIMSON SPOT ON
THE BLADE... OR IS IT DRIED MASHED POTATOES?

READ ON TO FIND OUT!

DUKE

(remembering)
Back door beauty!

DUKE (V.O.)

The mentality of Las Vegas is so
grossly atavistic that a really
massive crime often slips by
unrecognized.

DUKE SCRAPS A LITTLE OF THE CRUST – TASTES IT...

DUKE (V.O.)

The possibility of physical and mental
collapse is very real... No sympathy
for the devil; keep that in mind.
Buy the ticket, take the ride...

HE HEARS THE SOUNDS OF SOMEONE BEHIND BEATEN UP...

VOICE OFF

Shit! Faggot! Bastard!

EXT. NORTH STAR COFFEE LOUNGE - NIGHT

WHACK! SHADOWY FIGURES beat up a MAN – give him A GOOD
KICKING. BRUTAL AND UGLY.

DUKE (V.O.)

North Vegas is where you go when

you've fucked up once too often on
The Strip and when you're not even
welcome in the cut-rate Downtown
places.

PAN to reveal a seedy diner – THE NORTH STAR CAFE in the
background. Through the window – DUKE and GONZO sit at the
counter.

INT. NORTH STAR COFFEE LOUNGE - NIGHT

DUKE (V.O.)

The North Star Coffee Lounge seemed
like a fairly safe haven from our
storms. No hassles, no talk. Just a
place to rest and regroup. I wasn't
even hungry.

GONZO stuffs a hamburger down PAYING NO ATTENTION TO THE
BEATING going on outside the window. Duke reads a newspaper.

DUKE (V.O.)

There was nothing in the atmosphere
of the North Star to put me on my
guard...

GONZO

(to WAITRESS)

Two glasses of ice water with ice.

The WAITRESS brings the ice water.

DUKE (V.O.)

She looked like a burnt out caricature
of Jane Russell. She was definitely
in charge here...

GONZO gulps down his glass of water and hands her a napkin.

DUKE (V.O.)

He did it very casually, but I knew
that our peace was about to be
shattered.

DUKE

What was that?

GONZO shrugs.

The WAITRESS stands at the end of the counter with her back

to them while she ponders the napkin... She turns.

WAITRESS

What is this?

GONZO

A napkin.

THE WAITRESS slams the napkin down on the counter.

WAITRESS

Don't give me that bullshit! I know what it means! You goddamn fat pimp bastard.

GONZO

That's the name of a horse I used to own. What's wrong with you?

WAITRESS

You sonofabitch! I take a lot of shit in this place, but I sure as hell don't have to take it off a SPIC PIMP!

GONZO GOES VERY VERY STILL AT THIS...

DUKE (V.O.)

Jesus. I thought, what's happening?

DUKE picks up the napkin. On it is printed in careful red letters: "BACK DOOR BEAUTY?"

DUKE (V.O.)

The question mark was emphasized.

WAITRESS

(screams)

Pay your bill and get the hell out!
You want me to call the cops?

GONZO

Spic pimp?

GONZO's hand goes inside his shirt. He PULLS OUT THE RAZOR-SHARP HUNTING KNIFE.

GONZO KEEPS HIS EYES ON THE WAITRESS. He walks about six feet down the aisle and lifts the receiver of the pay phone.

He SLICES IT OFF, then brings the receiver back to his stool and sits down.

DUKE (V.O.)

I was stupid with shock – not knowing whether to run or start laughing.

GONZO

(casual)

How much is the lemon meringue pie?

DUKE (V.O.)

Her eyes were turgid with fear, but her brain was functioning on some basic motor survival level.

WAITRESS

(blurting – on automatic)

Thirty-five cents!

GONZO

(laughing)

I mean the whole pie.

The WAITRESS MOANS. GONZO places a \$5 BILL on the counter.

GONZO

Let's say five dollars. Okay?

GONZO walks round the counter TAKING THE PIE OUT OF THE DISPLAY CASE.

DUKE (V.O.)

The sight of the blade had triggered bad memories. The glazed look in her eyes said her throat had been cut. She was still in the grip of paralysis when we left.

DUKE IS ROOTED TO THE SPOT.

GONZO urges him out the door. The camera retreats with them.

The WAITRESS STANDS THERE – PETRIFIED. Alone in a lousy bar at night.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

DUKE's face as he stares at the knife – remembering...

GONZO

Drive! Drive! Drive! We have fifteen fucking minutes to get me on that plane!

EXT. ROAD ON OUTSKIRTS OF LAS VEGAS - DAY

The WHITE WHALE, looking like shit – it's TOP HALF UP, TORN, SLAPPING IN THE WIND – ROARS THROUGH AN INTERSECTION as the light turns red.

DR. GONZO FRANTICALLY PAWS OVER A MAP.

DUKE drives – SILENT AND FURIOUS – sick to his stomach with the PSYCHOTIC GONZO.

GONZO

What are you doing? You were supposed to turn back there!

DUKE (V.O.)

We had abused every rule that Vegas lived by – burning the locals, abusing the tourists, terrifying the help. The only chance now, I felt, was the possibility that we'd gone to such excess that nobody in the position to bring the hammer down on us could possibility believe it.

DUKE suddenly SLAMS ON THE BRAKES.

GONZO

Jesus Christ!!!

There, crossing the road in front of them, is LUCY – her paintings under her arm – looking lost. SHE LOOKS UP WITH A VAGUE SENSE OF RECOGNITION...

DUKE throws the car into a SKIDDING REVERSE TURN AND ROARS OFF.

EXT. DESERT ROAD OUTSIDE LAS VEGAS - DAY

THE WHITE WHALE TEARS DOWN THE DESERTED FREEWAY. GONZO looks wildly around.

GONZO

Goddamnit! We're lost! What are we doing out here on this godforsaken road?

GONZO sees that THEY'RE RUNNING PARALLEL WITH THE AIRPORT RUNWAY.

GONZO

The airport is over there!

DUKE

Never missed a plane yet.

DUKE HITS THE BRAKES and wrenches the wheel – takes the WHALE down into the grassy freeway divider. WHEELS CHURNING, HE MAKES IT UP THE OPPOSITE BANK, nose of the car straight up, then BOUNCES ONTO THE FREEWAY and keeps going right OVER A FENCE, dragging it through a cactus field and onto the RUNWAY.

GONZO is FROZEN WITH FEAR – GRIPPING THE DASHBOARD. He throws a worried look at DUKE.

DUKE

I'll drop you right next to the plane.

They SPEED UNDER A PARKED AIRPLANE, SHOUTING ABOVE THE JET ENGINE SCREAM.

GONZO

No! I can't get out! They'll crucify me. I'll have to take the blame!

DUKE

(irritatedly)

Ridiculous! Just say you were hitchhiking to the airport and I picked you up. You never saw me before. Shit, this town is full of white Cadillac convertibles. I plan to go through there so fast that nobody will even glimpse the goddamn license plate. You ready?

GONZO

Why not? But for Christ's sake, just do it fast!

EXT. AT THE AIRPLANE - DAY

DUKE SCREECHES UP in front of the DESERT AIR 727. GONZO JUMPS OUT – HEADS FOR THE PLANE.

DUKE watches him go – RELENTS.

DUKE
Hey!

GONZO stops – turns.

DUKE
Don't take any guff from those swine.
Remember, if you have any trouble
you can always send a telegram to
the Right People.

GONZO
Yeah... Explaining my Position. Some
asshole wrote a poem about that
once...

GONZO pauses.

GONZO
Probably good advice, if you have
shit for brains.

GONZO turns and RACES TOWARDS THE STEPS JUST AS HE IS ABOUT TO ENTER THE PLANE HE PAUSES AND LOOKS BACK... SMILES... AND LEANS FORWARD AND VOMITS.

DUKE (V.O.)
There he goes – one of God's own
prototypes – a high powered mutant
of some kind never even considered
for mass production. Too weird to
live and too rare to die.

DUKE watches for a second then ROARS AWAY. PULL BACK WITH THE WHITE SHARK – LEAVING THE AIRPLANE FAR BEHIND.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE/APOCALYPSE - NIGHT

On the TV an airplane soars thru the sky. Pull back to find DUKE barricaded in GONZO'S BEDROOM. He is typing on his typewriter.

DUKE (V.O.)
We are all wired into a survival

trip now. No more of the speed that fueled that 60's. That was the fatal flaw in Tim Leary's trip. He crashed around America selling "consciousness expansion" without ever giving a thought to the grim meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took him seriously...

DUKE records like A WAR CORRESPONDENT. The CAMERA slowly rises – DUKE alone in the room with the TV SPEWING OUT IMAGES OF WARS AND CIVIL UNREST OF THE 90'S.

DUKE (V.O.)

All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three bucks a hit. But their loss and failure is ours too. What Leary took down with him was the central illusion of a whole life-style that he helped create...

RISING HIGHER –
THE WALLS OF THE ROOM APPEAR TO BE 20 TO 30 FEET HIGH. DUKE SEEMS TO BE AT THE BOTTOM OF A WELL... THE CAMERA RISES UP THROUGH BROKEN TIMBERS...

DUKE (V.O.)

...a generation of permanent cripples, failed seekers, who never understood the essential old-mystic fallacy of the Acid Culture: the desperate assumption that somebody... or at least some force – is tending the light at the end of the tunnel.

HIGHER STILL – DUKE ALONE IN THE ROOM – AN ISOLATED BOX SURROUNDED BY THE TWISTED METAL AND RUBBLE AND SMASHED NEON SIGNS OF THE DEAD CITY –
A BLASTED LANDSCAPE WITHOUT LIGHT –
SHARDS OF A CIVILIZATION.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

A BURNING FLARED-
OUT SUN. The camera pans down to DUKE DRIVING THE WRECKED WHALE. A piece of the fence flies out of the back seat as he takes a bump.

DUKE

There was only one road back to L.A.
US Interstate 15, just a flat-out
high speed burn through Baker and
Barstow and Berdoo, then on to the
Hollywood Freeway straight into
frantic oblivion: safety, obscurity,
just another freak in the Freak
Kingdom.

DUKE sees THE HARDWARE BARN, A RUSTIC OLD FARM BUILDING facing
the road with a single gas pump outside and a neon sign that
flashes beer.

DUKE

Ahhh. Wonderful.

DUKE PULLS OFF THE ROAD and parks. Gets out and walks in.

INT. HARDWARE BARN - BAKER, CALIFORNIA - DAY

DUKE enters the DARK, CLUTTERED INTERIOR. Scattered all about
the store are BITS OF AMERICANA... OLD BARRELS, WAGON WHEELS,
WOODEN YOKES. A STUFFED HORSE HANGS FROM THE RAFTERS. The
sunlight shafts through high windows. AN OLD MAN is repairing
an iron pot-bellied stove near the wooden bar. A NORMAN
ROCKWELL PAINTING... ONLY REAL.

PROPRIETOR

What'll you have?

DUKE can't quite believe this place – too good to be true.

DUKE

(doubtfully)

Ballantine Ale...?

THE PROPRIETOR serves the ale up ice cold. DUKE SMILES AND
RELAXES.

DUKE

Hard to find it served like this
anymore.

As he drinks, DUKE toys with a rack of key chains – LITTLE
AMERICAN ICONS... A REMINGTON COWBOY, A BUGS BUNNY, A TWEETY
PIE, BETTY BOOP, A BASEBALL PLAYER. The logo on the rack
reads: AMERICAN DREAM KEY RINGS.

PROPRIETOR

Where ya comin' from, young man?

DUKE

Las Vegas.

PROPRIETOR

A great town, that Vegas. I bet you had good luck there. You're the type.

DUKE

I know. I'm a triple Scorpio.

PROPRIETOR

(trustingly)

That's a fine combination. You can't lose.

A LOVELY GIRL appears. Seeing DUKE, she smiles. CAN THIS REALLY BE HIS LUCKY DAY? She approaches him... and...

KISSES THE PROPRIETOR.

DUKE

(caught off guard...
muttering)

Oh, my God!...

PROPRIETOR

(not understanding)

This is my granddaughter...

DUKE

(recovering)

Don't worry...

(leans forward in
confidence)

...and I'm actually the District
Attorney from Ignoto County.

(winks)

Just another good American like
yourself.

A MOMENT. THE PROPRIETOR'S SMILE DISAPPEARS.

Wordlessly the PROPRIETOR and his GRANDDAUGHTER go to the back of the store – GET ON WITH THEIR WORK – IGNORING DUKE.

WHO FEELS ASHAMED.

DUKE puts some money down on the bar and SLOWLY LEAVES.

EXT. HARDWARE BARN - DAY

A CHASTENED DUKE approaches the vomit streaked WHITE WHALE.

Gets in – sits there – deflated – miserable...

A state bus draws up across from the Hardware Barn.

Somberly, DUKE watches as TWO YOUNG MARINES with duffel bags step off – chatting like TRUE BROTHERS...

DUKE switches on the ignition. Something rolls off the trembling dash... DUKE catches it...

ONE SINGLE BEAUTIFUL AMYL CAPSULE...

DUKE CRACKS THE AMYL – INHALES. THE RUSH MAKES HIM GASP -
TEETH BARED LIKE A MADMAN.

DUKE
HOLY SHIT!!!

DUKE GUNS THE ENGINE with a laugh – leans out – YELLS AT
THE MARINES.

DUKE
GOD'S MERCY ON YOU SWINE!

DUKE ROARS AWAY. AN AMERICAN FLAG FLIES UP FROM THE DEBRIS
IN THE BACK SEAT, MADLY UNFURLING ITSELF AS IT SNAGS ON THE
CONVERTIBLE-TOP FRAME OF THE TRASHED WHITE WHALE!

AAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

The TWO MARINES look after him CONFUSED.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY

DUKE drives fast – TEETH GRITTED IN FROZEN ECSTASY!!

DUKE CRANKS UP THE TAPE RECORDER.

DUKE (V.O.)
My heart was filled with joy. I felt
like a monster reincarnation of
Horatio Alger... a man on the move...

and just sick enough to be totally
confident.

The WHITE WHALE WIPES THE SCREEN BLACK.

AAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHH!!!!!!!

THE END