

"THE HUDSUCKER PROXY"

Written by

Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, and Sam Raimi

September 1992 Draft

BLACK

No image. A bleak WIND MOANS. HOLD.

With a STINGING CHORD we --

CUT TO:

CITY SKYLINE - NIGHT (CIRCA 1958)

Lights twinkle. Snow falls. The WIND MOANS.

After a beat, the voice of an elderly black man:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The's right... New York.

We are TRACKING HIGH THROUGH the night sky. From the streets far below we hear the sounds of TRAFFIC muffled by the falling snow, and the DISTANT sound of many VOICES SINGING.

We are DRIFTING AMONG the buildings; the tops of skyscrapers slip by left and right.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's 1958 -- anyway, for a few mo' minutes it is. Come midnight it's gonna be 1959. A whole 'nother feelin'. The New Year. The future...

The SINGING, a little MORE AUDIBLE, but still not close, is "Auld Lang Syne."

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Yeah ole daddy Earth fixin' to start one mo' trip 'round the sun, an' evvybody hopin' this ride 'round be a little mo' giddy, a little mo' gay...

We are MOVING IN TOWARDS a particular skyscraper. At its top is a large illuminated clock.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Yep...

We hear a SERIES OF POPPING sounds.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...All over town champagne corks is
a-poppin'.

A big band WALTZ MIXES UP on the track.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Over in the Waldorf the big shots
is dancin' to the strains of Guy
Lombardo... Down in Times Square the
little folks is a-watchin' and a-
waitin' fo' that big ball to drop...

The LOMBARDO MUSIC gives way to the CHANTING of a distant
CROWD: "Sixty! Fifty-nine! Fifty-eight!"

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...They all tryin' to catch holt a
one moment of time...

The CHANTING has MIXED back DOWN AGAIN TO leave only the
WIND. Still TRACKING IN TOWARD the top of the skyscraper, we
begin to hear the TICK of its enormous CLOCK. The clock reads
a minute to twelve. Above it, in neon, a company's name:
"HUDSUCKER INDUSTRIES." Below it, in neon, the company's
motto: "THE FUTURE IS NOW."

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...to be able to say -- 'Right now!
This is it! I got it!' 'Course by
then it'll be past.
(more cheerfully)
But they all happy, evvybody havin'
a good time.

We are MOVING IN ON a darkened penthouse window next to the
clock. The window starts to open.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Well, almost evvybody. They's a
few lost souls floatin' 'round out
there...

A young man is crawling out of the window onto the ledge.
With the opening of the window, "AULD LANG SYNE" filters out
with greater volume.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...This one's Norville Barnes.

The man gingerly straightens up on the ledge. He is perhaps
in his late twenties. He wears a leather apron. Printed on
the apron: "HUDSUCKER MAIL ROOM/The Future is Now."

He looks with nervous determination into the void.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Let's move in for a closer look.

The CAMERA obliges. We TRACK IN SLOWLY, ENDING VERY CLOSE.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...That office he jes stepped out of
is the office of the president of
Hudsucker Industries. It's his
office...

Norville sways in anguish as the TICKING of the CLOCK grows
louder and the WIND blows in his face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...How'd he get so high? An' why is
he feelin' so low? Is he really gonna
do it -- is Norville really gonna
jelly up the sidewalk?

Norville is tensing his body, peering out over the ledge,
preparing to make a swan dive into oblivion -- but the
CAMERA'S continued MOVEMENT is LOSING him FROM FRAME.

We are MOVING IN ON the enormous CLOCK, whose MECHANICAL
THRUM becomes very loud indeed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...Well the future, that's something
you can't never tell about...

The second hand of the clock is nearing the twelve -- bare
seconds to midnight. Distant CHANTING from Times Square MIXES
UP: "Nine! Eight! Seven!"

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...But the past... That's another
story...

OVER BLACK

The HUM of the CLOCK SINKS UNDER the HISS of an AIRBRAKE and
GRINDING GEARS as we...

CUT TO:

DESTINATION DISPLAY

On the front of a bus just rocking to a halt. The display
says "MUNCIE-NEW YORK."

LINE OF BAGS

is being set out on the pavement. A man with the cuffs of a
redcap uniform swings one into the f.g.:

It has a sticker on it: CLASS OF '58, and below an
illustration of crossed right and left hands, their thumbs
hooked and fingers spread like wings: MUNCIE COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

After a beat the hand of its claimant ENTERS to pick it up.

DISSOLVE TO:

STREET

FOLLOWING the bag as its owner carries it down the street. He pauses, sets it down.

YOUNG MAN

Fresh-faced, eager -- NORVILLE BARNES. He is gazing off at:

WESSELS EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

The sign is over a ground floor office; an exterior clock shows 9:00. A curtain is just being pulled open in its picture window to reveal a great job board. It is like the departures board in a great train station, with each of its individual entries flipping over occasionally to reveal a new opportunity. On offer are jobs like: PASTRY CHEF, STEAMFITTER, LAY-OUT MAN, GRAVEDIGGER, etc.

REVERSE

On the small crowd gathered to, like Norville, watch the board -- men in search of jobs, of various classes and vocations, but alike in their intent gaze, their hands dug into their pockets, their hats pushed back on their heads, bobbing occasionally to get a better view of the chattering board. Men occasionally head for the office as they see a prospect they like.

Norville stands pat, watching.

HIS POV

An entry flips over to reveal EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT.

NORVILLE

He brightens.

BOARD

We PAN ALONG the executive entry to EXPERIENCE REQUIRED.

NORVILLE

He frowns.

Around him, the crowd is thinning out as men trot in to apply for their respective jobs.

We see other entries: JUNIOR EXECUTIVE. PAN TO EXPERIENCE ONLY. EXECUTIVE MANAGER... MUST HAVE EXPERIENCE. BUSINESSMAN... EXPERIENCED.

The CROSS-CUTTING ENDS in a wash of SUPER-IMPOSITIONS PANNING OVER Norville, now alone on the sidewalk:

EXPERIENCED ONLY... EXPERIENCED... EXPERIENCED...
EXPERIENCED...

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT - EXECUTIVE

A middle-aged, mousy-looking man in a conservative suit and wire-rimmed spectacles is addressing his remarks to someone O.S. Behind the Executive we see only the skyline of New York City.

EXECUTIVE

-- So in the third quarter we saw no signs of weakening. We're up 18 percent over last year's third quarter gross and, needless to say, that's a new record...

TRACKING

DOWN the LENGTH OF the board room table. Executives line either side. We are APPROACHING the man at the far end of the table, to whom the report is being directed.

He is late middle-aged, dressed expensively but conservatively, his attention smilingly fixed on the Executive who drones on.

EXECUTIVE

...The competition continues to flag and we continue to take up the slack. Market share in most divisions is increasing and we've opened seven new regional offices...

The TRACK has ENDED IN a CLOSEUP of the man at the end of the table, who still smiles benignantly at the droning Executive. The smile is serene, almost otherworldly.

This is WARING HUDSUCKER.

REPORTING EXECUTIVE

He drones on.

EXECUTIVE

...Our international division has also shown vigorous upward movement in the past six months and we're looking at some exciting things in R&D...

The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS OFF the droning Executive as the big man's attention apparently wanders; we FRAME UP ON the picture window skyline of New York.

EXECUTIVE (V.O.)

Sub-franchising. Don't talk to me

about sub-franchising; we're making
so much money in sub-franchising it
isn't even funny.

FOLDED-BACK WANT ADS

A hand with pencil goes down a list of positions, ticking
each one: STREETSWEEPER -- EXPERIENCED; LINOTYPE MAN --
EXPERIENCED; CANTOR (REFORM) -- EXPERIENCED; SPARRING PARTNER --
EXPERIENCED.

WIDER

Norville, sitting at a coffeeshop counter, sets the pencil
down. His chin is sunk disconsolately into his palm.

His hat is pushed back dejectedly on his head. He idly stirs
his coffee with his spoon.

He takes one last gulp of the coffee, then sets the cup down
on the want ads, stands, and digs into his pocket for change,
turning it inside-out.

CLOSE ON COUNTER

As Norville puts all his change on the counter. His hand
hesitates; he takes a little of it back. He LEAVES FRAME.

A waitress's hand ENTERS from the far side of the counter.
She clears away the saucer, then the cup -- which has been
resting on the want ads. It leaves a perfect brown circle
around one entry:

THE FUTURE IS NOW.
Start building yours at Hudsucker Industries.
Low pay. Long Hours.
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY.
Apply Personnel, 285 Madison Avenue.

As we hear the COFFEESHOP DOOR OPENING O.S., a draft wafts
the sheet of newspaper off the counter and OUT OF FRAME.

NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE

Again LOOKING THROUGH the WINDOW as, O.S., the reporting
Executive drones on.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)
...Our owned-and-operateds are
performing far above expectations
both here and abroad, and the Federal
Tax Act of 1958 is giving us a swell
writeoff on our plant and heavies...

WARING HUDSUCKER

looks dreamily out the window. His attention returns to the
droning Executive and the benignant smile returns to his
lips.

EXECUTIVE

...The news in the money market isn't good -- it's excellent...

CUT TO:

NORVILLE'S BACK

He walks dejectedly down the street, hands shoved into his pockets.

A sheet of newspaper eddies INTO FRAME. The wind tosses it this way and that.

Slap! -- It plasters against another pedestrian, who bats it away.

The newspaper eddies around some more, then plasters against Norville.

He peels it off and is about to toss it away but stops, noticing something.

NEWSPAPER SCRAP

It is a section of the want ads. One entry is perfectly circled by a coffee stain.

BACK TO NORVILLE

He looks up from the paper. There is purpose in his gaze. Wind whips his hair.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT - WARING HUDSUCKER

As the Executive drones on, O.S., Hudsucker is carefully winding his wristwatch.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...Our nominees and assigns continue to multiply and expand extending our influence regionally, nationally and globally. So, third quarter and year-to-date, we've set a new record for sales...

Hudsucker looks up from his watch, smiles, runs his palms back over his fringe of hair.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...new record in gross...

Hudsucker pulls his sleeve cuffs to expose just the right amount under the suit.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...new record in pre-tax earnings...

Hudsucker takes one puff from his cigar and carefully sets it in his ashtray.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...new record in after-tax profit...

He deliberately unstraps his wristwatch and looks at its face.

The sweep second hand is starting the last revolution that will end at precisely noon.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...and our stock has split twice this year...

Hudsucker lays the watch carefully on the table.

EXECUTIVE (O.S.)

...In short...

Savoring a pause, the Executive looks around the board table.

EXECUTIVE

...we're loaded.

This draws an appreciative chuckle from the board. It is cut off by:

HUDSUCKER

Ahem...

The board turns expectantly to Hudsucker, who sits in the f.g. Beyond him is the length of the board table and the large picture window. He rises to his feet, slowly and deliberately, and rubs his palms together.

He swings his chair out.

He steps up onto the chair.

The board stares.

He steps up from the chair onto the board table.

The heads of the board members swing up in unison.

Hudsucker is FRAMED FROM MID-TORSO DOWN. He shakes the tension loose from each leg, then waggles both arms dangling at his sides, like an athlete preparing for a sprint.

EXECUTIVE

...Mr. Hudsucker?

CLOSE ON WANT ADS

THE CIRCLED AD

THE FUTURE IS NOW.
Start building yours at Hudsucker Industries.
Low pay. Long Hours.
NO EXPERIENCED NECESSARY.
Apply Personnel, 285 Madison Avenue.

The hand holding the paper DROPS AWAY and we TILT UP, as Norville walks AWAY FROM us into the b.g., towards the office building across the street. Its street number tops its imposing entryway in large gilt letters: 285.

We continue TILTING UP the length of the skyscraper, to reveal a huge clock capping its facade. Above the clock is the identification "HUDSUCKER INDUSTRIES." Below the clock is the motto "THE FUTURE IS NOW."

The huge clock's sweep second hand is just approaching the position that will make the time 12:00 sharp.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the second hand hits the twelve, the CLOCK TOLLS, the board room WINDOW SHATTERS and Waring Hudsucker comes flying out.

HUDSUCKER
Aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh...

SECRETARIAL AREA

Somewhere in the Hudsucker Building. A secretary sits typing next to an open window, finished pages sitting stacked beside her. As we hear ANOTHER TOLL of the CLOCK.

HUDSUCKER
...aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh...

As Hudsucker shoots past the window, his draft sends the stack of papers wafting this way and that. As the secretary turns to look out the window, FREEZE FRAME (wafting papers have their motion arrested) and SUPER A TITLE.

TRACKING

WITH Hudsucker, the building slipping by behind him. As he yells he calmly runs his palms back over his fringe of hair. The CLOCK TOLLS.

FREEZE FRAME and SUPER A TITLE.

HOT DOG VENDOR

on the street, handing a steaming frank to a customer who is handing him some change. As we hear the APPROACHING HUDSUCKER, both men look up. As the CLOCK TOLLS:

FREEZE FRAME and SUPER A TITLE.

PASSERBY ON SIDEWALK

The man, wearing a fedora, is in the f.g. of an EXTREME LOW ANGLE whose b.g. is the bottom three or four stories of the Hudsucker Building.

The passerby reacts to the approaching yell, looking up just as Hudsucker ENTERS FRAME.

FREEZE FRAME to suspend Hudsucker a good twenty feet above the sidewalk, arms and legs splayed, comically arrested. The passerby is frozen in an attitude of surprise and disbelief.

SUPER the title of the film: THE HUDSUCKER PROXY.

UNFREEZE to send Hudsucker plummeting THROUGH the FRAME to his rendezvous with the sidewalk, BELOW FRAME.

DUTCH ANGLE

The Hudsucker Building lists up into the distance. A woman in a fancy fruited hat with a black veil rises INTO FRAME AT an OPPOSING SLANT. Looking down at the sidewalk, she sends two dismayed hands to her cheek and screeeeeeeeams.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

EXT. TOP FLOOR

With the LAST TOLL of the CLOCK punctuating the CUT, we are FLOATING IN TOWARDS the shattered board room window.

The woman's SCREAM on the street below is FAINT, ECHOING, MIXING INTO the sound of an APPROACHING SIREN.

THROUGH the window we see the BOARD MEMBERS still sitting around the table, paralyzed in attitudes of horror and disbelief. All stare at the shattered window in the f.g.

At the far end of the table, Hudsucker's chair is empty and oddly askew. His cigar still smokes in its ashtray.

There are dust footprints down the middle of the long oak table.

One Executive sits with a pluming cigarette held halfway to his mouth; another holds a carafe suspended on its way to his water glass; another holds his spectacles inches from his nose.

We hear only the HUM of the HUDSUCKER CLOCK.

SID MUSSBURGER ENTERS FRAME at the window. He is a tall middle-aged executive with lean and rugged good looks and a commanding presence.

He knocks a last piece of glass out of the sill with his knuckle, looks out, grunts, and draws his head back in.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS him INTO the room. The other board members' heads swivel to watch him, all staring, searching desperately for some hint as to the fate of their fallen leader. Apparently, some absurd hope still lingers.

Mussburger perches on the board table by his own chair.

He reaches over to pluck the smoking cigar from the suicide's ashtray.

MUSSBURGER

Pity to waste a whole Monte Cristo.

The other board members unfreeze, their worst fears confirmed.

AN EXECUTIVE

He could've opened the window.

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

Waring Hudsucker never did anything the easy way.

ADDISON

My God, why?! Why did he do it?! Things were going so well!

MUSSBURGER

What am I a headshrinker? Maybe the man was unhappy.

ADDISON

He didn't look unhappy!

EXECUTIVE

Yeah, well, he didn't look rich.

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

Waring Hudsucker was never an easy man to figure out.

(reminiscing)

He built this company with his bare hands. Every step he took was a step up. Except of course this last one.

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure, he was a swell guy, but when the president, chairman of the board and holder of eighty-seven percent of the company's stock drops forty-four floors --

PRECISE EXECUTIVE

Forty-five --

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

Counting the mezzanine --

MUSSBURGER

-- Then the company has a problem.

Stillson, what exactly is the disposition of Waring's stock?

STILLSON

Well, as you know, Hud left no will and had no family. The company bylaws are quite clear in that event. His entire portfolio will be converted to common stock and will be sold over the counter as of the first of the fiscal year following his demise.

MUSSBURGER

Meaning?

STILLSON

Meaning simply that Waring's stock, and control of the company, will be available to the public on January first.

MUSSBURGER

You mean to tell me that any slob in a smelly T-shirt will be able to buy Hudsucker stock?

Stillson shrugs.

STILLSON

The company bylaws are quite clear.

ADDISON

My God! You're animals! How can you discuss his stock when the man has just leapt forty-five floors --

PRECISE EXECUTIVE

Forty-four --

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

-- Not counting the mezzanine.

MUSSBURGER

Quit showboating, Addison, the man is gone. The question now is whether we're going to let John Q. Public waltz in and buy 87 percent of our company.

PIPE-SMOKING EXECUTIVE

What're you suggesting, Sidney? Certainly we can't afford to buy a controlling interest.

MUSSBURGER

Not while the stock is this strong. How long before Hud's paper hits the market?

STILLSON

January first.

AN EXECUTIVE

Thirty days.

ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

Four weeks.

ADDISON

A month at the most.

MUSSBURGER

One month to make the blue-chip investment of the century look like a round-trip ticket on the Titanic.

AN EXECUTIVE

We play up the fact that Hud is dead.

ALL

(in unison)

Long live the Hud!!

ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

We depress the stock --

YET ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

-- to the point where we can buy fifty-percent.

PRECISE EXECUTIVE

Fifty-one.

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

Not counting the mezzanine.

CAUTIOUS EXECUTIVE

It could work.

OPTIMISTIC EXECUTIVE

It should work.

PRACTICAL EXECUTIVE

It would work.

MUSSBURGER

(at ticker tape machine)

It's working already. Waring Hudsucker is abstract art on Madison Avenue. All we need now is a new president who will inspire real panic in our stockholders.

ENTHUSIASTIC EXECUTIVE

Yeah, a puppet!

ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

A proxy!

YET ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

A pawn!

Mussburger strides across the room from the still CHATTERING TICKER TAPE MACHINE and lowers himself into Waring Hudsucker's chair. He takes a last puff from his cigar and slowly exhales a cloud of smoke.

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure. Some jerk we can really push around.

CUT TO:

SWINGING STEEL DOORS

that read, "MAILROOM." They burst open as Norville, who wears a mail clerk's leather apron, imprinted: HUDSUCKER MAILROOM/The Future is Now. The hellish mailroom is criss-crossed by pipes that emit HISSING jets of STEAM.

As he wheels a piled-high mail cart down the aisle, Norville is accompanied by an orientation AGENT who bellows at him over the clamor and roar of many men laboring in the bowels of a great corporation.

AGENT

You punch in at 8:30 every morning except you punch in at 7:30 following a business holiday unless it's a Monday and then you punch in at eight o'clock! You punch in at 7:45 whenever we work extended day and you punch out at the regular time unless you've worked through lunch!

NORVILLE

What's exte --

AGENT

Punch in late and they dock ya!

People on either side bellow at Norville and stuff envelopes and packages under his elbows, into his pockets, under his chin, between his clenched teeth, etc.

FIRST SCREAMER

This goes to seven! Mr. Mutuszak!
Urgent!

AGENT

Incoming articles, get a voucher!
Outgoing articles, provide a voucher!
Move any article without a voucher
and they dock ya!

SECOND SCREAMER

Take this up to the secretarial pool

on three! Right away! Don't break it!

AGENT

Letter size a green voucher! Folder size a yellow voucher! Parcel size a maroon voucher!

THIRD SCREAMER

This one's for Morgatross! Chop chop!

AGENT

Wrong color voucher and they dock ya! Six-seven-eight-seven-zero-four-niner-alpha-slash-six! That is your employee number! It will not be repeated! Without your employee number you cannot cash your paycheck!

FOURTH SCREAMER

This goes up to twenty-seven! If there's no one there bring it down to eighteen! Have 'em sign the waiver! DON'T COME BACK DOWN HERE WITHOUT A SIGNED WAIVER!!

AGENT

Inter-office mail is code 37! INTRA-office mail is 37-dash-3! Outside mail is 3-dash 37! Code it wrong and they dock ya!

FIFTH SCREAMER

I was supposed to have this on twenty-eight ten minutes ago! Cover for me!

AGENT

This has been your orientation! Is there anything you do not understand? Is there anything you understand only partially? If you have not been fully oriented -- if there is something you do not understand in all of its particulars you must file a complaint with personnel! File a faulty complaint... and they dock ya!

CUT TO:

NORVILLE

standing in front of a shelf of cubbyholes. As we FOLLOW his hand drawing an 8 X 10 envelope across the line of alphabetized mail slots. The envelope is addressed to Max Kloppitt, Jr.

NORVILLE

(muttering to himself)

...Bring it down to fif(?)...
fifteen... sign the voucher, uh,
waiver... cover for Mr. Anatole...
he's a swell guy... Morgatross...
He was on, uh...

He is COASTING ACROSS the "K" mail slots, finally COMES TO Max Kloppitt, Sr. His hand moves to the next slot, Max Kloppitt, Jr. This slot is half the size of all the others. The envelope will not fit in.

He frowns.

He is about to fold the envelope, but notices something stamped in red on its face. DO NOT FOLD.

Norville frowns. As he stares at the envelope, we see envelopes swishing across the f.g., whipping one by one in rapid succession, left to right.

CLOSEUP - ANCIENT SORTER

An old man sitting at the adjacent shelf, sorting mail.

Without ever even looking up, with a constant high-speed back and forth flicking of his right hand, he is whisking pieces of mail one by one out of the pile of mail in his left hand.

ANCIENT SORTER'S SHELF

As his letters fly furiously but neatly into their mail slots.

NORVILLE

He raises his voice over the mailroom din:

NORVILLE

Say, what do you do when the envelope
is too big for the slot?

The ANCIENT SORTER considers this as he continues whisking his mail.

ANCIENT SORTER

Well... if ya fold 'em, they fire
ya...

Whisk. Whisk. Whisk.

ANCIENT SORTER

...I usually throw 'em out.

Norville takes out a pencil and writes on the face of the envelope:

INSERT - LETTER

Dear Mr. Kloppit, Please give this letter to your son. Thank

you, Norville Barnes.

After a moment he adds:

Your friend in the mailroom.

BACK TO SCENE

NORVILLE
(talking as he writes)
Just got hired today!

ANCIENT SORTER
Terrific.

NORVILLE
Ya know, entry level!

ANCIENT SORTER
Tell me about it.

NORVILLE
I got big ideas, though!

ANCIENT SORTER
I'm sure you do.

NORVILLE
For instance, take a look at this
sweet baby...

Norville is taking an envelope from his pocket and handing it to the Ancient Sorter.

NORVILLE
...you look like you can keep a
secret...

The Ancient Sorter is pulling a ragged piece of paper from the envelope. On the paper is a crudely-drawn circle.

NORVILLE
...Something I developed myself.
Yessir, this is my ticket upstairs.

The Ancient Sorter looks questioningly from the circle to Norville.

NORVILLE
(explains)
...You know, for kids!

The Ancient Sorter nods with feigned understanding as Norville takes the paper back.

ANCIENT SORTER
Terrific.

NORVILLE

So ya see, I won't be in the mailroom long.

ANCIENT SORTER
(deadpan)
Nooo, I don't guess you will be.

He resumes his sorting.

NORVILLE
How long've you been down here?

ANCIENT SORTER
Forty-eight years...

Whisk. Whisk.

ANCIENT SORTER
...Next year they move me up to parcels...

Whisk. Whisk. Whisk.

ANCIENT SORTER
...If I'm lucky.

A BELL CLANGS.

The PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM SPUTTERS to life.

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM (V.O.)
Attention Hudsucker employees. We regretfully announce that at 12:01 this afternoon, Hudsucker time, Waring Hudsucker, Founder, President, and Chairman of the Board of Hudsucker Industries, merged with the infinite. To mark this occasion of corporate loss, we ask that all employees observe a moment of silent contemplation.

All HUBBUB ABRUPTLY STOPS and the sounds of HEAVY MACHINERY, HISSING STEAM PIPES, and GENERATORS WIND DOWN TO leave total SILENCE. After a moment:

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM (V.O.)
...Thank you for your kind attention. This moment has been duly-noted on your time cards and will be deducted from your pay. That is all.

The MACHINERY GROANS back INTO ACTION and the people return to their jobs just as:

A STEAM WHISTLE SCREECHES.

ALARM BELLS go OFF.

From the PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM:

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM (V.O.)
'Blue letter! Blue letter!'

The mail room is thrown into pandemonium.

VARIOUS VOICES
Blue letter...! It's a blue letter...!
They're bringing down a blue letter!

One MAN spins to face the CAMERA, his hands pressed over his ears. STEAM JETS and HISSES behind him.

MAN
Blue letter!!

Animated for the first time:

ANCIENT SORTER
Jumpin' Jehosephat, a blue letter!

Mail carts and other paraphernalia are abruptly swept out of the crowded aisle to form a clear path running down to an elevator in the b.g.

With a SIREN SOUND, a light above the elevator goes on.

The elevator door sweeps open. It reveals a wall into which a four-foot high hinged door is set.

This door swings open and an old dwarf emerges: Old man HUTCHINSON, the boss of the mailroom. He emerges from the blinding light of the interior of the elevator.

He is holding aloft a letter.

He takes loping drawf strides down the aisle.

CLOSEUP - LETTER

TRACKING ON letter as Hutchinson bears it along. In the b.g., the faces that the letter passes are agog.

CROSSCUT the approaching blue letter WITH: Norville and the Ancient Sorter.

BACK TO SCENE

The Ancient Sorter is leaning over to whisper into Norville's ear.

ANCIENT SORTER
It's a blue letter... top, top
level... confidential communication
between the brass... usually bad
news... they hate blue letters
upstairs... Hate 'em!

Norville gulps.

HUTCHINSON

You!

Norville looks over his shoulder, but the Ancient Sorter has disappeared.

HUTCHINSON

...Yeah, you! Barnes!

As he points, the people around Norville shrink away.

HUTCHINSON

...You don't look busy! Think you can handle a blue letter?

(laughs sadistically)

...This letter was sent down this morning by the big guy himself! 'At's right, Waring Hudsucker! It's addressed to Sid Mussburger! Hudsucker's right-hand man! It's a blue letter! That means you put it right in Mussburger's hand. No secretaries! No receptionists! No colleagues! No excuses!

DRAMATIC TRACK IN ON Norville. As Hutchinson talks, he thrusts the blue letter into Norville's face. Norville looks at it with terrific apprehension. As Hutchinson's speech ends, we are TIGHT ON Norville's sweating face.

COMPLEMENTARY TIGHT DUTCH ANGLE ON HUTCHINSON

We can see the veins in his eyes, the veins in his nose, the hairs in his ears.

HUTCHINSON

Mussburger!!

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR DOORS

ROCKETING OPEN. We MOVE IN ON the young elevator operator who leers INTO CAMERA. He wears a brass-buttoned uniform, white gloves and a pillbox hat. The name BUZZ is stitched onto his breast pocket.

As Norville enters the elevators:

BUZZ

Hiya, buddy! The name is Buzz, I got the fuzz...

He lifts his pillbox hat to reveal a white crewcut, then lets the elastic chin strap snap the cap back down onto his head.

BUZZ

...I make the elevator do what she
duzz!

He holds out his hand but as Norville reaches to shake it he
snaps it away and pats down his crewcut:

BUZZ

...Hang it up to dry.

He cackles and powers the ELEVATOR into GEAR. Norville's
knees buckle under a huge upward surge; Buzz is accustomed
to it.

BUZZ

...What's your pleasure, buddy?

NORVILLE

(regaining his balance)
Forty-fourth floor, and it's very --

BUZZ

Forty-four, the top brass floor say,
buddy! What takes fifty years to get
up to the top floor and thirty seconds
to get down?

NORVILLE

I --

BUZZ

Waring Hudsucker! Na-ha-ha-ha-ha!
Say, buddy!

With a powerful DOWN-SHIFTING SOUND, Buzz brakes the elevator
to a sharp halt. Norville continues upward with the inertia,
painfully smacking his head against a corner of the elevator.

Buzz opens the door and a couple of people enter.

BUZZ

Mr. Kline, up to nine. Mrs. Dell,
personnel. Mr. Levin, thirty-seven.

MR. LEVIN

Thirty-six.

BUZZ

Walk down. Ladies and gentlemen,
step to the rear; here comes
gargantuan Mr. Grier.

An obese MAN enters, smoking a cigar:

FAT MAN

Buzz.

Buzz has already thrown the doors shut and sent the elevator
into its power-rise. Norville, bracing himself now, sinks

only a little under the G-force.

BUZZ

Say, buddy! Who's the most liquid
businessman on the street?

NORVILLE

Well, I --

BUZZ

Waring Hudsucker! Na-ha-ha-ha-ha!
Say, buddy! When is the sidewalk
fully dressed? When it's 'wearing'
Hudsucker! Na-ha-ha-ha!

He turns to look at Norville.

BUZZ

...Ya get it, buddy, it's a pun,
it's a knee-slapper, it's a play on
Jesus, Joseph and Mary, is that a
blue letter?!

All heads in the elevator turn, aghast, to look, and those
near Norville shrink away.

BUZZ

...Cripes a'mighty, whyn't ya tell a
guy?! Hold on, folks, we're express
to the top floor!

The ELEVATOR SCREAMS into overdrive and we:

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR DOORS

Sweeping open. Norville staggers out.

BUZZ

(hissing)
Good luck, buddy!

The door sweeps shut. Norville looks nervously around.

Behind him the elevator doors suddenly open again.

BUZZ

-- You'll need it!

The elevator doors slam shut and we hear its ENGINES SCREAM
as it power-dives away.

Norville turns toward the executive offices.

Plush, thick-carpeted silence.

Norville starts walking.

A SCRAPING SOUND stands out in the high-powered executive quiet. Norville looks to one side.

A workman in painter's overalls squats in front of a pair of heavy oak doors. With a razor blade he is scraping off the name "WARING HUDSUCKER."

NORVILLE

...Mr. Mussburger's office?

The scraper looks sullenly over his shoulder at Norville.

With a jerk of his thumb he indicates the direction.

Norville enters the adjacent office.

OUTER OFFICE

Two secretaries are in Mussburger's outer reception office. The first is a filing secretary who stands frozen in the f.g., her hand poised over an open drawer to deposit a folder, as she stares at Norville with an amused and supercilious sneer which stays pasted on throughout.

The second secretary -- the RECEPTIONIST -- is seated behind a desk in the b.g. that flanks the door to Mussburger's private office. The Receptionist sits with her hands clasped on the desk, staring at Norville with the hunch-shouldered down-from-under look of a patient vulture.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

NORVILLE

Uhh, no, I --

The filing secretary sneers.

RECEPTIONIST

Shall we look in the book, hmmmmmmmmmm?

She opens an enormous leather-bound book with yellowed crinkly pages.

NORVILLE

No, ma'am, ya see, I wouldn't be in the --

RECEPTIONIST

We don't seem to be in the boook.

Norville is groping in his apron pocket.

NORVILLE

No, ma'am, ya see I don't have an --

RECEPTIONIST

If we had an appointment we'd be in the boook.

NORVILLE

I know but ya see I have this --
here it is, this letter --

A low, unearthly WAIL fills the room, the sound of a million souls moaning in purgatory.

The Receptionist looks up.

FAST TRACK IN ON SNEERING FILE SECRETARY

who is no longer sneering. Her mouth is stretched wide as she wails and her finger points...

FAST TRACK IN ON BLUE LETTER

that Norville holds innocently at his side.

BACK TO TRACK IN ON WAILING SECRETARY

As her wail becomes deafening and we TRACK INTO her mouth and the SCREEN GOES BLACK and:

CLICK

The blackness and the wailing are both cut short by the sound of a DOOR OPENING. We are:

INT. MUSSBURGER'S OFFICE

its door swinging open to admit Norville.

In the b.g., in the outer office, we can see the filing secretary leaning back motionless in a chair with a damp rag draped across her forehead. The Receptionist is fanning her with a towel.

The door closes behind Norville.

We hear a rhythmic CLICK-CLICK-CLICK and the HUM of VENTILATION.

NORVILLE'S POV

Across miles of carpet is a huge executive desk, behind which is a large executive chair facing the window. From above the back of the chair cigar smoke wreathes up. A telephone cord snakes around to the man sitting in the chair, hidden from us. On the desktop is a perpetual motion machine of large swinging ball bearings. Click-click-click.

A TICKERTAPE MACHINE occasionally BURPS information in the far corner of the office.

A huge MECHANICAL ARM -- the sweep second hand of the Hudsucker clock on the facade of the building -- RUMBLES by immediately outside the window, describing an arc that throws a moving shadow across the office.

His BACK TO us, into the phone:

MUSSBURGER

-- Sure sure, Parkinson's stupid but
he's ambitious, too hard to control...

He swivels around to face Norville, who stands deferentially at the door. Still listening at the phone, Mussburger waves Norville forward.

MUSSBURGER

...No! Not McClanahan; sure he bungled
the Teleyard merger, but that means
he's got something to prove...

He covers the mouth piece.

MUSSBURGER

...Who let you in?

NORVILLE

I --

Into the phone:

MUSSBURGER

Atwater? Tremendous. Except I fired
him last week --

The INTERCOM BUZZES fiercely.

VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Bumstead is waiting downstairs.

Mussburger hits the intercom.

MUSSBURGER

Tell him I'll be right there...
(looks at Norville)
Well, what is it?

NORVILLE

I --

But Mussburger is listening to the TINNY VOICE issuing from the PHONE.

MUSSBURGER

You, maybe you're the company's
biggest moron. We can't use Morris,
he's been with us too long, he's a
nice guy, too many friends. Matter
of fact, why don't you fire him. No --
scratch that; I'll fire him.
(looks up at Norville)
...Make it fast, make it fast.

NORVILLE

You --

The INTERCOM SQUAWKS.

VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Bumstead is getting very --

MUSSBURGER

I'll be right there. Give him a magazine.

(to Norville)

...What're you, a mute?

The second PHONE on Mussburger's desk RINGS.

MUSSBURGER

...Yeah, how's the stock doing?

...Bad, huh? Well it's not bad enough.

(into the first phone)

...Look, chump, either you find me a grade A ding-dong or you can tender your key to the executive washroom.

(into the second phone)

And that goes double for you.

(into the first phone)

Ear-clay?

(into both phones)

Ood-gay!

(slams down both phones, looks at Norville)

This better be good. I'm in a bad mood.

Norville clears his throat.

NORVILLE

Well, sir. I've got something for you from the mailroom, but first if I could just take a minute or so from your very busy time...

He reaches into his mailroom apron and hands a scrap of paper across the desk to Mussburger, who stares, frozen, at Norville, making no move to take the paper.

NORVILLE

...to show you a, uh...

Norville, undaunted, holds up the paper since Mussburger will not take it. Mussburger doesn't even look at it; his eyes are locked on Norville's. Mussburger smolders.

NORVILLE

...a little something I've been working on for the last two or three years...

Mussburger's burning eyes finally shift momentarily to look

at the crudely drawn circle; he looks back incredulously at Norville.

NORVILLE

...You know, for kids! Which is perfect for Hudsucker -- not that I claim to be any great genius; like they say, inspiration is 99 percent perspiration, and in my case I'd say it's at least twice that, but I gotta tell ya, Mr. Mussburger, sir, this sweet baby --

MUSSBURGER

Wait a minute!

Sudden quiet.

With one last click the perpetual motion ball bearings abruptly stop.

As Mussburger's eyes burn in on him, Norville stands mute and paralyzed.

His eyes locked on Norville's, Mussburger circles the desk. He stands toe-to-toe with Norville.

He thrusts his face into Norville's, whose head moves reflexively back. Mussburger's nose is almost touching Norville's, his eyes are burning, searching, studying, evaluating.

Finally he draws his head back.

MUSSBURGER

Hmmm...

With one hand he thrusts his cigar into Norville's gaping mouth. With his other hand he raises Norville's chin so that his teeth clench it.

MUSSBURGER

Umm-hmm...

He steps back, eyes still on Norville.

He jerks his thumb over his shoulder, indicating his chair behind the desk.

MUSSBURGER

Siddown.

Norville, his lips puckered around the unaccustomed cigar, looks bemusedly from the chair to Mussburger.

MUSSBURGER

...Go ahead. Try it on.

Norville obeys, reluctantly, stiffly.

MUSSBURGER

...Put your feet up.

Norville is again reluctant.

MUSSBURGER

...Go ahead.

Norville obeys. Mussburger studies.

MUSSBURGER

Hmmmm... Let's get to know one
another, shall we?

Norville's eyes squint against the cigar smoke wreathing
from between his teeth. Mussburger seems to relax.

MUSSBURGER

...Let's chat!
(beams)
...Man to man!

Norville beams.

MUSSBURGER

...You weren't blessed with much...

He waves vaguely towards his head and searches for a
euphemism.

MUSSBURGER

...education, were you?

NORVILLE

Well, I'm a college graduate --

MUSSBURGER

All right, but you didn't excel in
your studies...?

NORVILLE

Well, I made the dean's list.

MUSSBURGER

(worried)
Hmmm.

Norville sputters out some more cigar smoke.

NORVILLE

At the Muncie College of Business
Administration.

MUSSBURGER

(relieved)
Sure, sure. And did your classmates
there call you 'jerk' or...
(searches again)

... 'schmoe'?

Norville shakes his head.

MUSSBURGER

... 'Shnook'? 'Dope'? 'Dipstick'?
'Lamebrain'?

NORVILLE

No, sir.

MUSSBURGER

Not even behind your back?

NORVILLE

Sir! They voted me most likely to
succeed!

MUSSBURGER

(curtly)
You're fired.

NORVILLE

But, sir! --

MUSSBURGER

Get your feet off that desk.

As he struggles to comply:

NORVILLE

But --

MUSSBURGER

Get out of my sight.

Norville, squinting against the cigar smoke, pulls the cigar out of his mouth as he doubles forward, feet still up, groping for a place to set down the cigar. He sets it blindly on a loose stack of papers.

MUSSBURGER

My God! The Bumstead contracts!!

NORVILLE

Oh my God, sir!

The top page radiates a circle of incipient flame from the cigar's live end.

MUSSBURGER

You nitwit! I worked for three years
on this deal!

NORVILLE

Oh my God, sir!

Norville runs across the office to a large water cooler.

MUSSBURGER

I'll take care of it. Just get out!

Mussburger plucks the cigar off the contract and tosses it into a wastebasket. He pats the fingertips of one hand against his tongue and then efficiently pats out the crinkling orange circle on the top sheet of the contract.

At the other end of the office, Norville is wrapping his arms around the glass water tank, which he pulls off its base. He runs back across the vast expanse of office toward the desk, hugging the water tank whose WATER GLOOB-GLOOBS out its open bottom and splashes down onto his pumping knees.

As he reaches the desk, the near-empty tank is now light enough for him to hoist with one arm, which he does, and cups his other hand under it to catch its last glub of water. He tosses the TANK to the floor where --

CRASH -- it SHATTERS, and stands looking about for a place to dump his handful of water.

MUSSBURGER

Why you nitwit. You almost destroyed
the most sensitive deal of my career!

NORVILLE

Oh my God, sir!

He is reacting to the wastebasket on his side of the desk, which Mussburger cannot see.

It is sprouting flame, at which Norville ineffectually flecks his remaining drops of water.

MUSSBURGER

Now out of here! Out!

Norville is already running to the window, which he runs both palms over, desperately seeking a way to open it.

MUSSBURGER

Not that way! Through the door!

NORVILLE

But, sir!

The windows do not open. Norville furiously stomps on the flames in the wastebasket and -- his foot sticks.

Further stomping only makes the flaming wastebasket roar up and down with his foot.

MUSSBURGER

Right away, buster! Out of my office!

Norville has dropped to the floor, trying to wrench the flaming wastebasket off his leg.

MUSSBURGER

Up on your feet! We don't crawl at
Hudsucker Industries!

NORVILLE

Sir, my leg is on fire!

Norville finally succeeds in getting the flaming wastebasket
off his foot. Now the problem is what to do with it.

MUSSBURGER

Get out of this office, you dithering
nincompoop!

Norville picks up the flaming trash receptacle.

NORVILLE

Oh my God, sir!

He winds up and throws it through the closed window.

The GLASS SHATTERS and the flaming basket plummets to
oblivion.

With the picture window broken a FEROCIOUS DRAFT ROARS through
the penthouse office.

CLOSE SHOT - BUMSTEAD CONTRACTS

On the desk. The pages are sucked away by the draft.

MUSSBURGER

My God! The Bumstead contracts!

NORVILLE

Oh my God, sir!

Mussburger lunges for the contracts as they are sucked out
the window.

He runs, jumps onto the sill, grabs -- his fist clenches
around one wafting page -- he is about to fall --

MUSSBURGER

Eeeeeaaaaahhhhh!

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE WAITING ROOM

BUMSTEAD, a short, fat, heavily perspiring executive, is
screaming at an O.S. secretary. He holds a pot of coffee in
one hand and a copy of Boy's Life in the other.

BUMSTEAD

No magazine. No coffee. Mussburger!
I wanna see Mussburger! Or did he
jump out a window too?!

In the window behind him we see loose sheets of paper fluttering down.

CUT TO:

NORVILLE

Desperately hanging onto Mussburger by his legs.

NORVILLE

Don't worry, Mr. Mussburger! I gotcha.
I gotcha by your pants!

Mussburger's screaming abruptly stops.

CLOSEUP - MUSSBURGER'S HORROR-STRICKEN FACE REMEMBERING (THE SCREEN GOES WATERY):

MUSSBURGER

is in a basement tailor shop. LUIGI, an old Italian tailor, is just running his tape up Mussburger's inseam.

LUIGI

Meester Moosaburger, I give-a you pants a nice-a dooble stitch. Make 'em strong, and they look-a real sharp.

MUSSBURGER

(barking)
No! Single stitch is fine.

LUIGI

(begging)
But please-a, Meester Moosaburger, the dooble stitch she last-a forever --

MUSSBURGER

Why on earth would I need a double stitch? To pad your bill? Single stitch is fine!

CUT BACK TO:

CLOSEUP OF PANICKED MUSSBURGER

MUSSBURGER

Damn!

We hear a LOUD TEARING sound O.S. Mussburger drops a few inches.

QUICK WIPE TO:

LUIGI AT HIS SEWING MACHINE

LUIGI

(musing to himself)

What the heck. Meester Moosaburger
such a nice-a guy, I give him dooble
steech-a anyway. Assa some-a strong-
a steech-a, you bet!

BACK TO MUSSBURGER'S PANTS

The tearing fabric abruptly catches and stops; the rest of
the pants hold intact.

MUSSBURGER

sighs with relief.

He looks up.

NORVILLE

Norville's arms are wrapped around Mussburger's ankles; the
heels of Mussburger's shoes are digging into his face.

MUSSBURGER

Looking. Thinking.

NORVILLE

Struggling to hold on.

MUSSBURGER

Calm. Contemplating.

MUSSBURGER

Hmmm...

He absently removes a cigar from his breast pocket and sticks
it in his mouth. He holds his lighter under the cigar, not
noticing that the flame is pointing the wrong way.

He looks at Norville.

NORVILLE

His face drawn with effort, still struggling to hang on.

A PULL BACK FROM the EXTREME CLOSE SHOT REVEALS, however,
that Norville's arms are now wrapped around -- emptiness.

Mussburger's legs are gone.

Norville throws his head back and laughs, it seems, insanely --
but CONTINUED PULL BACK REVEALS that Norville is merely
pantomiming the adventure for the benefit of the board
members, including Mussburger. They stand around Mussburger's
office, laughing gaily. All safe now, no harm done. This
inaugurates:

LAUGHING MONTAGE

Montage silent but for MUSIC.

A) Norville is entertaining the board with his depiction of the near-disaster. Mussburger is slapping him merrily on the back.

B) CLOSE SHOT - Board member laughing.

C) Another board member. Laughing.

D) Mussburger. Laughing.

E) Norville laughing.

F) FREEZE FRAME ON Norville's laughing face.

ANGLE

PULL BACK to reveal that the frozen picture is the newspaper photo on the front page of the Manhattan Argus.

Its headline reads: UNTRIED YOUTH TO HELM HUDSUCKER.

The subhead reads: Stockholders Wary. The sub-subhead reads: Meteoric Rise From Mailroom.

The article is under the byline of Amy Archer.

CONTINUED PULL BACK REVEALS that we are looking at the newspaper OVER someone's SHOULDER. The person swivels around and away -- his face now TO us, we see that it is Norville looking at the newspaper. He throws his head back and laughs merrily.

As he laughs -- thwock -- a steaming towel is thrown onto his face and he continues to swivel. CONTINUED PULL BACK REVEALS that he is in a barber chair.

His head drops back and OUT OF FRAME as the swiveling chair is cranked down, but immediately -- still spinning --

-- his head reappears as the chair is cranked up again.

Still laughing, Norville is now freshly shaven and has a slicked-back haircut, heavy with pomade.

FREEZE ON Norville's laughing face.

ANGLE

PULL BACK to reveal it is another front page photo next to the headline: Hud Board To Street: GIVE MAN FROM MUNCIE A CHANCE. Subhead: Has Fresh Ideas.

CONTINUED PULL BACK REVEALS that the paper is lying on a chair. Norville's mailroom apron is tossed onto the chair to cover it.

PAN TO where the apron was tossed from. Norville stands on a tailor's stage, laughing, as the tailor, also laughing, takes his measurements. Norville in shirtsleeves, boxer shorts, hose stockings and garters.

The tailor rises, laughing merrily, throwing up his arms and spreading them wide with hands stretching the measuring tape.

Norville laughs merrily and also throws his arms up wide.

BOARD MEMBER

laughs merrily, his arms thrown wide, tickertape stretching between his hands. He joyously tosses away the tickertape.

FLOOR

where the tickertape lands on a pile of previously discharged tape.

PAN UP to reveal that the tickertape continues to burp its disastrous tale of good news for the board.

PAN UP FURTHER to reveal that the machine is in Mussburger's office. At the far end of the room, behind his desk, Mussburger laughs as he looks at a newspaper.

TRACK IN TOWARDS him.

On his desk the perpetual ballbearings swing; outside his window the sweep second hand of the Hudsucker clock rumbles by, sweeping a shadow across the floor. Evil prevails.

As Mussburger opens the newspaper, the CONTINUED TRACK IN shows its front page headline: HUD STOCK DIPS. Subhead: Just Good Is He?

TRACK IN ON the front page photo: Norville laughing, his chin propped in his hand.

PHOTOGRAPH

COMES TO LIFE and Norville unfreezes, laughing.

We are now TRACKING BACK FROM him. He sits behind a huge oak desk, newly coifed and tailored.

The brass plaque on the desk confirms that he is in the OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

TRACK BACK CONTINUES THROUGH the large elegant office, leaving Norville looking quite small IN LONG SHOT.

His LAUGHTER ECHOES in the bright bare office.

Norville's laughter is just winding down, leaving him exhausted, as if he has been laughing nonstop for several days. He finally sighs and wipes a tear from his eye.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

NEW YORK SKYLINE - DAY

In the skyline we can see the Hudsucker building topped by the Hudsucker clock.

A cigar ENTERS FRAME in the f.g., then the face of the man smoking it. Staring contemplatively at the Hudsucker building, he takes a puff from the cigar and then plucks it from his mouth and waves it, as if painting a headline.

EDITOR

'The Einstein of Enterprise.' 'The Edison of Industry.' 'The Billion-Dollar Cranium'... 'Idea Man'!

(exploding)

And not one of you mugs has given me a story on him!!

REVERSE

shows the Editors glassed-in office filled with REPORTERS for the staff meeting. Although they listen quietly, they are more bored than attentive.

THROUGH the glass walls we can see the furious activity of an army of reporters, editors, and copy boys waging the never-ending battle to put out a quality daily newspaper.

The Editor slams a newspaper down onto his desk in disgust.

EDITOR

Facts, figures, charts! They never sold a newspaper! I read this morning's edition of the Argus and let me tell you something: I'd wrap a fish in it! I'd use it as kindling! Hell, I'd even train my poodle with it if he wasn't a French poodle and more partial to the pages of Paree Soir! But I sure wouldn't shell out a hard-earned nickel to read the dadblamed thing!

REPORTER

Come on, chief, give us a break.

EDITOR

Suuuure, Tibbs, take a break! Go to Florida! Lie in the sun! Wait for a coconut to drop, file a story on it -- it'll be more of a grabber than your piece on the commie grain surplus! The human angle! That's what sells papers! We need a front page with heart and the whole idea of the 'Idea

Man' idea can put it there!

REPORTER #2

Chief, if we had more access --

EDITOR

Yeah, and if a frog had wings he wouldn't bump his ass a-hoppin'! I don't want excuses, I want results!

Whack! --

Without even looking in its direction, the Editor has slammed down the lid of the cigar box on his desk, towards which one Reporter's hand had been idly reaching.

The Reporter jerks his fingers away as the Editor spares the briefest moment to glare at him.

EDITOR

I wanna know what makes the Idea Man tick! Where is he from? Where is he going? I wanna know everything about this guy! Has he got a girl? Has he got parents?

REPORTER #3

Everybody has parents.

EDITOR

All right, how many? How 'bout it, Parkinson, you've been awful quiet over there.

PARKINSON

Uhhh...

REPORTER NEXT TO HIM

Still waters run deep, chief.

EDITOR

The only thing that runs deep with Parkinson is the holes in his ears. Yes, the Idea Man! What're his hopes and dreams, his desires and aspirations? Does he think all the time or does he set aside a certain portion of the day? How tall is he and what's his shoe size? Where does he sleep and what does he eat for breakfast? Does he put jam on his toast or doesn't he put jam on his toast, and if not why not and since when?

He thrust his face into that of the Reporter.

EDITOR

...Well?!!

No answer.

EDITOR

...Ahh, you're useless. Yes, Idea Man! Creator! Innovator! Cerebrator! Tycoon!--

WOMAN (O.S.)

Fake.

EDITOR

Huhh!!

WOMAN

Star reporter AMY ARCHER -- attractive, smartly-dressed.

AMY

I tell ya the guy's a phony.

EDITOR

Phony, huh?

AMY

As a three-dollar bill.

EDITOR

Sez who?

AMY

Sez me! Amy Archer. Why is he an Idea Man -- because Hudsucker says he is? What're his ideas? Why won't they let anyone interview him?...

One Reporter is leaning into another to keep his voice low:

REPORTER

Five bucks says she mentions her Pulitzer.

OTHER REPORTER

Again? You're on.

AMY

(as she picks up the morning paper)

...And just take a look at the mug on this guy -- the jutting eyebrows, the simian forehead, the idiotic grin. Why he has a face only a mother could love --

Whack! The Editor has slammed down the cigar box lid again but: Amy, smiling, raises a cigar INTO FRAME having beaten him.

She tosses it to the Reporter who failed to get one.

AMY

...On payday! The only story here is how this guy made a monkey out of you, Al.

EDITOR

Yeah, well, monkey or not I'm still editor of this rag. Amy, I thought you were doing that piece on the F.B.I. -- J. Edgar Hoover: When Will He Marry?

AMY

I filed it yesterday.

EDITOR

Well, do a follow-up: Hoover: Hero or Mama's Boy? The rest of you bums get up off your brains and get me that Idea Man story!

REPORTERS

All right, chief... We'll do our best, chief... I'll give it a shot, chief...

AMY

(at the door)

Al, he's the bunk.

Slam!

One of the wagering Reporters grins at the other, who is taking out a five dollar bill.

The door bursts open and Amy sticks her head in.

AMY

I'll stake my Pulitzer on it!

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR DOORS

Sweeping open to reveal the leering face of Buzz, the elevator gnat.

BUZZ

Say, buddy! Where'd ya get the new duds?

Norville is entering the elevator in his new executive outfit.

BUZZ

...and say, buddy! How'd old bucketbutt like his blue letter? Na-ha-ha-ha-ha! Did he bust a gut? Did he die? Did he -- Well, hello,

Mr. Mussburger, sir...

Buzz is instant decorum as Mussburger enters the elevator.

BUZZ

...How're you this fine morning,
sir?

Norville has been worriedly patting at his pockets since the mention of the blue letter.

NORVILLE

That reminds me, Mr. Mu... uh, Sid.
I never did give you that--

MUSSBURGER

(to Buzz)
Lobby. We haven't got all day.

BUZZ

Right away, Mr. Mussburger sir.

As he talks, Mussburger pats at his suit pocket, takes out a cigar, inspects it.

MUSSBURGER

Well I'm starved. I understand it'll
be quite an affair this afternoon,
and the executive roast tom turkey
at the Bohemian Grove redefines the
word superb.

He puts the cigar in his mouth and Buzz's hand is right there with a lighter.

BUZZ

My pleasure, sir.

NORVILLE

Roast tom turkey. Gee, I'm hungry
too --

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure...

The elevator doors open.

BUZZ

It's been a pleasure serving you,
Mr. Mussburger.

Buzz turns to Norville. He is puzzled but trying to hide it:

BUZZ

...and it's been a pleasure serving
you too, uh... buddy.

MR. MUSSBURGER

is already striding through the lobby; Norville has to lope to catch up.

NORVILLE

Say, Mr. Muss -- uh, Sid! Shouldn't we be a little bit concerned with the downward spiral of our stock these last few days? I mean, you're the expert, but at the Muncie College of Business Administration they told us --

Mussburger gives an artificially hearty laugh and claps Norville on the shoulder.

MUSSBURGER

Relax, Norville. It's only natural in a period of transition for the more nervous element to run for cover.

NORVILLE

Okay, Sid. Like I said, you're the expert, but --

EXT. SIDEWALK

Norville is still loping behind Mussburger, trying to keep up with his long strides.

NORVILLE

...You don't happen to remember the plan I outlined to you the day I set fire to your off -- uh, the day I was promoted?

MUSSBURGER

I do remember and I was impressed. Anyway, that's all forgotten now. Driver!

NORVILLE

Thank you, Sid, but the reason I mention it is, it would require such a small capital investment -- again, you're the expert here --

MUSSBURGER

Damnit, where's my car!

NORVILLE

-- But there's such an enormous potential profit-wise given the demographics -- baby boom -- discretionary income in the burgeoning middle class --

A black limousine pulls up to the curb.

MUSSBURGER

Finally.

NORVILLE

-- So if you think it's appropriate,
I'd like to bounce the idea off a
few people at lunch --

Mussburger is getting into the back seat --

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure, tell whoever you want...

And, to Norville's surprise, slamming the door shut behind him.

MUSSBURGER

...And I'd like to hear more about
it at some point, too.

SCREEEECH -- the CAR pulls away. Norville is left talking to himself on the empty sidewalk.

NORVILLE

But, Sid, I thought you and I were...

DOORMAN

Say, bud, could you keep the sidewalk
clear here?

NORVILLE

But I'm the president of this --
aww, forget it.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP

A cheap coffee shop a half-flight down from the street.

We are LOOKING ACROSS an elbow of the coffee shop counter.
In the middle b.g., Norville sits dejectedly stirring a cup
of coffee.

Behind him, THROUGH the window wells, we see the back and
forth feet of pedestrians bustling by on the sidewalk.

In the extreme f.g. sit two steaming mugs of coffee.

They belong to two VETERANS of the coffee shop, who, from
O.S., narrate the scene.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)

I got gas, Bennie.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)

Yeah, tell me about it.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)

No kiddin', Bennie. I got gas.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
Ya get the special?

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
Fah from it...

He gives a low whistle under his breath as a woman enters from the street and hesitates by the door, looking around. Still attractive but looking somewhat down-at-the-heels, it is Amy Archer.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
...Enter the dame.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
There's one in every story.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
Ten bucks says she's looking for a handout.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
Twenty bucks says not here she don't find one.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
She's looking for her mark.

The woman's eyes settle on Norville, and she heads for the empty stool next to his.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
She finds him.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
She sits down.

The woman says something to the counter waitress, who exits.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
...andawduhs a light lunch.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
She looks in her purse...

She is holding her wallet upside down.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
...No money.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
The mark notices.

Beat. Norville, however, is not noticing: He is staring intently at his coffee spoon, his hat pushed back on his head, his other hand propping up a cheekbone; the woman's presence does not seem to have registered yet.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
...He's not noticing, Benny.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
Maybe he's wise.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
He don't look wise.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
Plan two: Here come the waterworks.

The woman starts crying.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
Yellowstone.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
Old Faithful.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
Hello, Niagara.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
He notices.

As the woman cries, she accidentally-on-purpose jostles Norville and he finally does indeed notice.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
He's concerned.

The woman mouths words at Norville who reacts sympathetically and waves his hands at the waitress.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
She explains her perdicament, and...

VETERAN #1 & #2 (O.S.)
(in unison)
...entuh the light lunch.

The waitress is entering to set a plate in front of the woman.

The woman continues to talk to Norville, smiling wanly at him.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
She's got other problems, of course...

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
...Her mother needs an operation...

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
...adenoids.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
No, Bennie: Lumbago.

Veteran #1's enunciation of "lumbago" falls into perfect sync with the woman's moving lips.

Norville is listening sympathetically, but he suddenly notices his watch.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
(alarmed)
She's losing him, Bennie.

Norville is rising to his feet.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
Maybe he's wise.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
He don't look wise.

As Norville turns to leave:

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
How does she pull this out?

She puts the back of her hand dramatically to her forehead.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
(disbelieving)
She isn't!

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
(thrilled)
She is!

And indeed she does: Faint dead away, falling backwards on the stool, so that Norville has no choice but to catch her.

Norville holds her awkwardly, looking around for help.

VETERAN #1 (O.S.)
She's good, Bennie.

VETERAN #2 (O.S.)
She's damn good, Lou.

A WAITRESS enters extreme f.g. to BLOCK OUR VIEW of the swooned woman and the embarrassed Norville. The Waitress is FACING the CAMERA and the two O.S. Veterans; the CROPPING gives us only her torso and the steaming pot of coffee she holds.

WAITRESS
(bored, nasal voice)
Can I get you boys anything else?

REVERSE ANGLE

Back of the Waitress's torso in f.g.; on either side beyond her, the two Veterans are looking up at her O.S. face. They sport extremely bored expressions, topped by "cabbie" caps.

VETERAN #1

Bromo.

Beat.

VETERAN #2

...Bromo.

INT. NORVILLE'S OFFICE

Looking at its frosted-glass door; the sign painter is just finishing lettering in: NORVILLE BARNES, President.

The sign painter makes way as we see Norville's shadow approaching; even from inside the room we can hear that he is WHEEZING HEAVILY. He is apparently carrying the girl, cradled in his arms. He tries to reach down to get the doorknob; can't manage it; turns to press his back against the door and get the knob with his other hand.

The door opens as Norville swings around to enter. He is wheezing like a gas pipe about to explode.

He swings around to kick the door shut. We see that the lettering on the door is now terribly smudged; we also see, in wet ink, on the seat of Norville's pants: senraB ellivroN tnediserP.

Weakly, still cradled in Norville's arms:

AMY

I'm sorry we had to take the stairs.
It was just that horrible little
elevator boy...

NORVILLE

Not at all. You're light as a feather.

AMY

(pointing languorously)
The couch, please.

Still wheezing horribly, Norville staggers over to the couch and deposits her gently on it. He straightens up and looks at her.

NORVILLE'S POV

She is smiling wanly AT the CAMERA. The entire IMAGE PULSATES as the blood pounds behind Norville's eyeballs.

We hear the LOUD, RASPING of his BREATH, resonating inside his head. Amy is talking but her voice is barely audible, as if coming from a long way away.

BACK TO SCENE

NORVILLE

Just a minute.

He perches drunkenly on the edge of the couch and puts his head between his knees, still fighting for breath.

AMY

I don't know what came over me. I suppose it was the shock of eating after so long without; the enzymes kicking in after so long, or whatever. But then you couldn't possibly know what it is to be tired and hungry...

Speaking into his knees as he wheezes:

NORVILLE

Hungry, anyway.

AMY

I don't want to bore you with all the sordid details of my life; it's not a happy story...

Norville rises and starts putting throw pillows behind her head.

AMY

...Suffice it to say that I'm jobless -- though not for want of trying, that I'm friendless, with no one to -- thank you -- take care of me; and that had you not come along at just exactly the moment that you did --

She screams, staring down at the couch.

Norville jumps, startled, then looks where she is looking.

On the white sofa cushion where he had been sitting is printed, in wet ink, right side around: NORVILLE BARNES, President.

AMY

Norville, I didn't know you were president here!

Norville stares dumbfounded at the sofa cushion. When the nickel finally drops, he spins around to try to look at the seat of his pants.

Distracted but still modest:

NORVILLE

Oh, it's nothing really. Just determination and hard work...

He unbuckles his trousers.

NORVILLE

...Of course, when I started in the mailroom last Tuesday I thought it might take more time --

Buzz enters holding a brown paper bag.

BUZZ

Say, buddy, here's the whiskey you asked f --

He freezes, taking in the scene: Amy reclining on the couch; Norville standing in front of her with his pants around his ankles, still breathing heavily; the bottle of whiskey in his own hand.

NORVILLE

(flustered)

Thank you, Buzz, just leave it on the desk.

Leering:

BUZZ

Happy days, buddy...

As he turns to leave:

BUZZ

...and I'll tell your secretary you're not to be disturbed. Yowzuh!!

He snaps the elastic strap under his chin.

After the doors shut behind Buzz:

AMY

(shuddering)

What a horrible little person.

NORVILLE

Oh, Buzz is pretty harmless, really --

AMY

At any rate I arrived in town not ten days ago, full of dreams and aspirations, anxious to make my way in the world --

Norville pours a glass of whiskey and brings it over to her.

AMY

A little naive perhaps but -- thank you -- armed with determination, a solid work ethic, and an indomitable belief in the future --

NORVILLE

I myself --

He crosses back to the desk.

AMY

Only to have that belief, that
unsullied optimism, dashed against
the marble and mortar of the modern
work place --

Norville takes a cigarette from a large wood cigarette box
on the desk and sticks it in his mouth.

NORVILLE

Cigarette?

AMY

No thank you. Seek and ye shall find,
work and ye shall prosper -- these
were the watch words of my education,
the ethics of my tender years --

OVER NORVILLE'S SHOULDER

He has been pushing the box towards her. The box tilts lazily
forward and then disappears over the far lip of the desk. We
hear the THUD of the BOX landing amid the pitter-patter of
cigarettes raining onto the carpet.

Amy's brow crinkles. Continuing:

AMY

-- these were the values that were
instilled in me while I was growing
up in a little town you've probably
never heard of --

NORVILLE

Mind if I join you?

He is pouring himself a drink.

AMY

Be my guest. A little town you've
probably --

He tosses back his drink, gags, looks at Amy with his eyes
bulging.

HIS POV

Once again her IMAGE PULSATES. There is a ROARING SOUND and
an AIRY STEAM WHISTLE as she silently moves her lips.

NORVILLE

He waves his arms and talks with a
thick rasp as he staggers to his
feet.

NORVILLE

Excuse me -- I -- executive

washroom...

He staggers out a side door.

On his exit Amy leaps to her feet and scurries over to his desk. At the top of her voice:

AMY

Are you all right?...

She throws open the top desk drawer. Inside two lonely lead pencils roll through the otherwise empty drawer.

Amy expertly flips a cigarette into her mouth and strikes a match off the desktop.

AMY

...Is it your lunch? The chicken a
la king?

From the washroom:

NORVILLE (O.S.)

No, I --

Amy throws open another drawer, empty except for an appointment book. As she hurriedly flips through page after blank page an arctic WIND WHISTLES emptiness. One page only has a notation: 11:45. Address Wilkie Grammar School Junior Achievers Club.

AMY

Is the a la king repeating on you?

Amy shoves the appointment book back into the drawer.

NORVILLE (O.S.)

...I'm fine, I... You were saying?

She mutters:

AMY

Values... watchwords... uh, tender
years...

(aloud)

-- A little town you've probably
never heard of...

She hastily stubs out her cigarette and waves her hand to disperse the smoke.

AMY

...Muncie, Indiana.

She scurries back across the room as we hear the FAUCET BEING TURNED OFF: she re-strikes her languid pose on the couch just as the washroom door opens.

Norville gapes, one hand pressing a dripping rag to his

forehead.

NORVILLE
You're from Muncie?!

AMY
Why yes, do you know it?

Norville starts making pumping motions with his fists and loud syncopated grunting noises. Amy gapes at him.

He starts singing, off-key:

NORVILLE
'Fight on fight on dear old Muncie
Fight on -- Hoist the gold and blue
You'll be tattered, torn and hurtin'
Once 'The Munce' is done with you!'

Amy lamely fakes singing along, coming in louder on the last, obvious rhyme. Norville jumps an octave on it; she quickly follows suit, also pumping her fists.

As Norville crosses his hands and locks thumbs in front of his nose to make bird wings of his extended fingers:

NORVILLE
...Gooooooooo Eagles!

Amy awkwardly imitates.

Norville excitedly sits behind his desk.

NORVILLE
...A Muncie girl! Talk about the
cat's pyjamas! Tell you what, Amy.
I'm gonna cancel the rest of my
appointments this afternoon and get
you a job here at the Hud.

AMY
Oh, no, really, I --

NORVILLE
Don't bother to thank me, it's the
easiest thing in the world. Matter
of fact, I know where a vacancy just
came up.

He hits the intercom.

NORVILLE
...Mail room.

To Amy:

NORVILLE
...This'll only take a moment.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Yeah?

NORVILLE

Good afternoon to ya, this is Norville Barnes --

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Barnes! Where the hell have you been!
And where's my voucher?!

Norville thumps at his pockets.

NORVILLE

...Well, I'm not sure where I --

INTERCOM (V.O.)

I need that voucher! I told you a week ago it was important!

NORVILLE

But look, I'm president of the company now and I --

INTERCOM (V.O.)

I don't care if you're president of the company! I need that voucher!
Now!

CLICK. The intercom goes dead.

NORVILLE

Oh, of all the foolish... Listen, do you take shorthand? Are you familiar with the mimeograph machine?

AMY

Of course -- I went to the Muncie, uh, Secretarial Polytechnic!

Norville excitedly smacks a fist into a palm.

NORVILLE

-- A Muncie girl! Can you beat that!

AMY

Well, I just don't know how to thank you, Mr. Barnes --

NORVILLE

Please! Norville!

As he reaches to shake:

NORVILLE

...It's my pleasure!

She reaches for his hand but Norville snatches it away and, winking at her, hooks thumbs in front of his nose and makes

wings of his fingers.

NORVILLE

...Goooooooo Eagles!

AMY

likewise hooks her thumbs in front of her nose, makes wings, and, winking back:

AMY

Goooooooooooo Eagles!

But we PULL BACK to reveal that the girl is now in a newspaper office, demonstrating the fight sign to SMITTY, a reporter wearing a fedora with a bent-back brim. Smitty howls with laughter.

SMITTY

(wheezing)

...Once 'The Munce'... Holy...

Amy sits down behind a typewriter and, as she starts typing at 80 words per minute:

AMY

And is this guy from chumpsville?!
I pulled the old mother routine --

SMITTY

Adenoids?

AMY

Lumbago.

Behind her an ancient man wearing an inksman's visor and sleeve garters toils over a large checkerboarded surface over which he shuffles letter blocks and black spaces.

Smitty gives a low whistle.

SMITTY

That gag's got whiskers on it!

The PHONE RINGS and Smitty reaches for it.

AMY

I'm telling you, Smitty, the board of Hudsucker is up to something --

SMITTY

(into phone)

Yeah.

ANCIENT PUZZLER

Say, Amy, what's a six-letter word
for an affliction of the hypothalamus?

Without a break in her typing:

AMY

-- And it's a cinch -- Goiter --
it's a cinch this guy isn't in on
it. How much time to make the Late
Final?

Smitty holds the phone away from his ear.

SMITTY

Chief.

Still typing, Amy whistles and nods to her shoulder.

Smitty tucks the phone into it as she continues typing.

AMY

Hiya, Chief, just the person I wanted
to apologize to...

Smitty is looking at his watch.

SMITTY

About seven minutes.

AMY

(still typing)

Yeah, I was all wet about your idea
man... Well, thanks for being so
generous... It is human, and you are
divine... No, he's no faker. He's
the 100% real McCoy beware-of-
imitations genuine article: the guy
is a real moron --

To the Ancient Puzzler:

AMY

-- as in a five-letter word for
imbecile --

Back into phone:

AMY

-- as pure a specimen as I've ever
run across... Am I sure he's a nitwit?
Heck, if working at the Argus doesn't
make me an expert then my name isn't
Amy Archer and I've never won the
Pulitzer Prize...

Her eyes narrow.

AMY

...In 1957... My series on the
reunited triplets -- come on down
here, hammerhead, and I'll show it
to ya...

ANCIENT PUZZLER

Amy, what's a three-letter word for a flightless bird?

AMY

Not now, Morris, I'm busy -- That's right, I said hammerhead, as in a ten-letter word for a smug bullying self-important newspaperman --

To Morris:

AMY

-- Gnu --

Into phone:

AMY

-- who couldn't find --

To Morris:

AMY

-- That's G-N-U --

Into phone:

AMY

-- couldn't find the Empire State Building with a compass, a road map and a native guide.

To Morris:

AMY

-- or emu.

She slams down the phone. To Smitty:

AMY

...And that's just the potatoes, Smitty, here comes the gravy: The chump really likes me. A Muncie girl!

Smitty bursts out laughing.

SMITTY

Better off falling for a rattlesnake.

As she continues to type:

AMY

I'm tellin' ya, this guy's just the patsy and I'm gonna find out what for. There's a real story, Smitty, some kind of plot, a setup, a cabal, a -- oh, and say, did I tell ya?!

SMITTY

He didn't offer you money.

AMY

A sawbuck!

SMITTY

Ten dollars? Let's grab a highball!

AMY

On Norville Barnes!

She rips the page out of the typewriter, swivels in her chair to FACE CAMERA as we TRACK IN CLOSE and she hollers:

AMY

...Copy!

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

PRESSES

rolling, churning out great quantities of newsprint.

Papers piling up one on top of the other, very many, very quickly.

DELIVERY MAN

throwing a baled stack of papers off the back of his truck.

BALED PAPER

rolling into the f.g. A hand ENTERS FRAME to snip its wires and wipe off the top paper.

PAPER BOY

wearing an apron and a little paper boy cap, mouthing "Extra! Extra!" as he holds one of the papers aloft.

PAN UP his arm TO the newspaper and, BEYOND it, the towering Hudsucker Building.

All of the above --

DISSOLVING WITH:

NEWSPAPER

spinning TOWARDS the CAMERA and STOPPING FULL FRAME.

Its headline, over a picture of Norville smiling, is "IMBECILE HEADS HUDSUCKER." The subheadline: "Not a Brain in his Head."

ANOTHER ANGLE - NEWSPAPER

is angrily slammed down to reveal that Norville has been reading the inside.

His face twisting with fury, he leans forward and hits the intercom.

NORVILLE

Miss Smith, can you come in please to take a letter...

Muttering to himself:

NORVILLE

...of all the cockamamie...

Amy is bustling in holding a steno pad and a pencil.

As she seats herself in front of his desk, he rises to pace behind it.

NORVILLE

...Did you happen to see the front page of today's Manhattan Argus?

AMY

Well, I... didn't bother to read the article. I didn't think the picture did you justice.

NORVILLE

The picture was fine! It's what that knuckle-headed dame wrote underneath! Of all the irresponsible... Amy, take this down: Dear Miss Archer. I call you 'Miss' because you seem to have 'missed' the boat completely on this one! How on earth would you know whether I'm an imbecile when you don't even have the guts to come in here and interview me man to man! No, change 'guts' to 'courage.' No, make it 'common decency.' These wild speculations about my intelligence --

AMY

-- or lack thereof?

NORVILLE

(nodding)

-- these preposterous inventions, would be better suited to the pages of Amazing Tales Magazine. If the editors of the Manhattan Argus see fit to publish the rantings of a disordered mind, perhaps they will see fit to publish this letter! But I doubt it. I most seriously doubt it. As I doubt also that you could find a home at Amazing Tales, a periodical which I have enjoyed for many years. Yours sincerely, et cetera.

He drifts into thought.

AMY

Is that all, Mr. Barnes?

NORVILLE

...Well, you know me, Amy, at least better than that that dame does. Do you think I'm an imbecile?

AMY

I'm sure I --

NORVILLE

Go on, tell the truth; I trust you and I put a lot of stock in your opinion.

AMY

Well, I --

NORVILLE

Oh sure, you're biased -- you're a fellow Muncian. But would an imbecile come up with this?

He whips the cover sheet off a display pad resting on an easel to reveal a large piece of graph paper with a circle rendered onto it.

Amy looks, puzzled, from the circle to Norville's proudly beaming face.

NORVILLE

...I designed it myself and this is just the sweet baby that can put Hudsucker right back on top.

Amy is bewildered. Norville explains:

NORVILLE

...You know! For kids!

AMY

...Why don't I just type this up...

NORVILLE

Aww, naw, Amy, that won't be necessary. I shouldn't send it; she's just doing her job, I guess.

AMY

Well, I don't know; maybe she does deserve it. Maybe she should've come in to face you man to man.

NORVILLE

Well, she probably had a deadline...

AMY

Sure, but -- she could still have gotten your side for the record!

NORVILLE

Well, it's done now -- what's the use of grouching about it. Forget the letter, Amy, I just had to blow off some steam...

She gets up to leave, and is heading for the door when Norville adds:

NORVILLE

...She's probably just a little confused.

Amy turns at the door.

AMY

Confused?

NORVILLE

Yeah, you know, probably one of these fast-talking career gals, thinks she's one of the boys. Probably is one of the boys, if you know what I mean.

AMY

(through clenched teeth)

I'm quite sure I don't know what you mean.

NORVILLE

Yeah, you know. Suffers from one of these complexes they have nowadays. Seems pretty obvious, doesn't it? She's probably very unattractive and bitter about it.

AMY

Oh, is that it!

NORVILLE

Yeah, you know. Probably dresses in men's clothing, swaps drinks with the guys at the local watering hole, and hobnobs with some smooth talking heel in the newsroom named Biff or Smoocher or...

AMY

Smitty.

NORVILLE

Exactly. And I bet she's ugly.

Real ugly. Otherwise, why wouldn't they print her picture next to her byline?

AMY

Maybe she puts her work ahead of her personal appearance.

NORVILLE

I bet that's exactly what she tells herself! But you and I both know she's just a dried-up bitter old maid. Say, how about you and I grab a little dinner and a show after work? I was thinking maybe The King and I --

Whap! Amy slaps him.

He stares.

NORVILLE

...How about Oklahoma?

As she stalks out of the office:

AMY

Norville Barnes, you don't know a thing about that woman! You don't know who she really is! And only a numbskull thinks he knows things about things he knows nothing about!

He stares, rubbing his cheek.

NORVILLE

Say, what gives?

WHISTLE

SHRIEKING.

SWISH PAN TO:

CLOCK

Reading five o'clock.

SWISH PAN TO:

WORKERS

Rising from their desks, collecting personal effects, putting on their hats and coats.

TIME CLOCK

Busy hands punch out.

INT. EMPTY HALLWAY

Of the executive floor. A security man walks down the hall, whistling, swinging a ring of keys. After he passes the door to the ladies' room it opens, Amy peeks out, emerges, goes into Norville's office.

INT. NORVILLE'S OFFICE

She goes to the desk, takes out the appointment book, flips through it.

BOOK

Still empty except for the one date with the Wilkie Grammer School Junior Achievers Club, which now has a red line drawn across it with the notation CANCELED.

AMY

looks around the office -- notices something.

DOOR

Set into the wall to one side it is topped by a small plaque: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

Amy tries the knob, which turns, and enters.

INT. ROOM

It is big and dim, several stories high, with spiral staircases reaching into, and catwalks criss-crossing, the gloom above. It is filled with contraptions -- works, cogs, gears. There is no window, but on what would be the window wall there is an enormous iron ring with a metal rod sweeping an interior circle. It is the backside of the great Hudsucker clock.

Amy gazes about. She crosses to a door opposite the one she entered from.

She stoops to peek through its keyhole.

HER POV

We are LOOKING INTO Sidney J. Mussburger's office.

Mussburger sits at his desk barking into a Dictaphone.

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK -- the PERPETUAL MOTION BALLS on his desk are going full-tilt; THRUMMMMMMM -- the CLOCK'S exterior second hand sweeps a shadow across the office.

Mussburger, it seems, never sleeps.

MUSSBURGER

Memo. From the desk of Sidney J.
Mussburger. Executive order number

530 slash A49. To: Director of the Jacksonville Facility. Copies to: Legal Affairs, Business Affairs, Central Files. Re: Movement of Raw Materials from the Huron Facility. Due to unfavorable news in the slag markets, Jacksonville inventory must be reduced by 15 percent with overflow diverted to the Waukegan Stamping Facility. Memo. From the desk of Sidney J. Mussburger. Executive order number 530 slash A50. To: Director of --

BACK TO SCENE

VOICE (O.S.)

Watchoo doin' down they, Miss Archuh?

AMY

Huh?!

She straightens and turns.

Facing her is a very old BLACK MAN in a janitor's jumpsuit with HUDSUCKER INDUSTRIES/The Future Is Now emblazoned across it. We might recognize his voice as that of the narrator who opened the movie.

AMY

Who are you? How did you know who I am?

MOSES (BLACK MAN)

Ah guess ole Moses knows jes about ever'thing, leastways if it concerns Hudsuckuh.

AMY

But -- who are you -- what d'you do here?

MOSES

Ah keeps the ol' circle turning -- this ol' clock needs plenty o' care. Time is money, Miss Archuh, and money -- it drives that ol' global economy and keeps big Daddy Earth a-spinnin' on 'roun'. Ya see, without that capital fo'mation --

AMY

Yeah, yeah. Say, you won't tell anyone about me, will you?

MOSES

I don't tell no one nothin' lessen they ask. Thatches ain't ole Moses' way.

AMY

So if you know everything about Hudsucker, tell me why the Board decided to make Norville Barnes president.

MOSES

Well, that even surprised ole Moses at fust. I didn't think the Board was that smart.

AMY

That smart?!

MOSES

But then I figured it out: they did it 'cause they figured young Norville for an imbecile. Like some othuh people ah know.

AMY

Why on earth would they want a nitwit to be president?

MOSES

'Cause they's little pigglies! They's tryin' to inspire panic, make that stock git cheap so's they can snitch it all up fo' themselves! But Norville, he's got some tricks up his sleeve, he does...

He draws a circle with his finger in the air.

MOSES

...you know, fo' kids? Yeah, he's a smart one, that Norville, heh-heh, he's a caution. Wal, some folks is square, an' some is hip --

To punctuate, he gives a little jerk of his hips.

MOSES

...But I guess you don't really know him any better than that board does, do ya, Miss Archuh?

AMY

Well, maybe I --

MOSES

An' only some kind a knucklehead thinks she knows things 'bout things she, uh -- when she don't, uh -- How'd that go?

AMY

(bristling)

It's hardly the same --

MOSES

Why you don't even know y'own self --
you ain't exactly the genuine article
are you, Miss Archuh?

AMY

Well, in connection with my job,
sometimes I have to go undercover as
it were --

MOSES

I don't mean that! Why you pretendin'
to be such a hard ol' sourpuss! Ain't
never gonna make you happy! Never
made Warin' happy.

AMY

(uncomfortably)
I'm happy enough.

MOSES

(chuckles)
Okay, Miss Archuh.
(turns and walks away)
...I got gears to see to.

AMY

(calls after him)
I'm plenty happy!

She is answered only by WHIRRING MACHINERY.

MOSES

Elsewhere in the great room, he is hunkered down next to a
catchment which he buffs with a greasy rag. Amy's VOICE ECHOES
UP:

AMY (O.S.)

...Hello?

MOSES

(muttering to himself)
Them po' young folks. Looks like
Norville's in fo' the same kind o'
heartache ol' Warin' had. But then,
she never axed me 'bout dat...

As OMINOUS MUSIC SWELLS, we --

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE

He slams down a typescript.

CHIEF

I can't print this!

AMY

Why not, it's all true! The board is using this poor guy! They're depressing the stock so they can buy it cheap!

CHIEF

It's pure speculation! Why, they'd have my butt in a satchel!

SMITTY

(chuckling)

Ol' satchel-butt...

AMY

I know they're gonna buy that stock --

CHIEF

You don't know anything! Fact is they haven't bought it! The stock is cheap, Archer! What're they waiting for?

AMY

I don't know...

SMITTY

Amy's hunches are usually pretty good, Chief.

CHIEF

You don't accuse someone of stock manipulation on a hunch, Ignatz! The readers of the Manhattan Argus aren't interested in sensationalism, gossip and unsupported speculation. Facts, figures -- those are the tools of the newspaper trade! Why it's almost as if you're trying to take the heat off this Barnes numbskull -- like you've gone all soft on him!

SMITTY

Come on, Chief, that's a low blow. Archer's not gonna go goey for a corn-fed idiot.

CHIEF

All right, I was out of line. But you're out of line with this stock swindle story. Gimme some more of that Moron-from-Sheboygan stuff --

AMY

Muncie.

CHIEF

Whatever. That's what sells
newspapers.

AMY

I've got an even hotter story --
The Sap from the City Desk.

CHIEF

Watch it, Archer --

AMY

It's about a dimwitted editor who --

SMITTY

Easy, Amy...

He gives her a companionable goose.

SMITTY

...Let's grab a highball and calm
down.

She whirls and slaps him.

AMY

Back off -- smoocher!

Smitty rubs his cheek, staring as she storms off.

SMITTY

(angry)

Say, what gives?

ENGRAVED INVITATION

IT READS:

Sidney J. Mussburger President Norville Barnes and The Board
of Hudsucker Industries CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO The Annual
Fancy-Dress Hudsucker Christmas Gala Music, Dancing,
Refreshments (Dainties) Formal Evening Attire de Rigueur.

The MUSIC OVER the invitation -- "WE WISH YOU A MERRY
CHRISTMAS" -- SEGUES INTO the dance music of the Hudsucker
Chamber Orchestra.

DANCING COUPLES

FILL the SCREEN; we GLIDE AMONG them and FINALLY COME to
follow one couple: Norville and MRS. MUSSBURGER, a large
middle-aged woman of the Margaret Dumont-mold in an
elaborately flowered and old-fashioned evening gown, low-cut
in spite of her overly-heavy figure. She wears a large
flowered hat with a rolled-up veil.

MRS. MUSSBURGER

-- So we'd gone out to the Hamptons

and the garden was in positive ruins!

NORVILLE

That must have been quite a disappointment, Mrs. Mussburger.

MRS. MUSSBURGER

Disappointment? J'etais destroyee! I was in bed for a week! Positively sick with fury! I called in the gardener and said, 'Monsieur Gonzalez, either those azaleas come up next spring or you are terminee!

She throws her head back and roars with laughter.

ANGLE - THEIR FEET

As the large woman leans back to laugh, her feet stay planted on the ground and Norville's rise to be dragged with his toes scraping the floor through the continuing dance.

MRS. MUSSBURGER

I'm brushing up on my French with the most charming man, Pierre of Fifth Avenue. Do you know him?

NORVILLE

I haven't had --

MRS. MUSSBURGER

Sidney and I are planning a trip to Paris and points continental -- Aren't we, dear?

Mussburger has ENTERED FRAME.

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure. I'm going to borrow Norville for a while, if you don't mind, dear.

MIXING DOWN as they leave her:

MRS. MUSSBURGER

Well, frankly, I...

NORVILLE

You have a charming wife, Mr. Muss -- uh, Sid.

MUSSBURGER

So they tell me. Norville, let me shepherd you through some of the introductions here. Try not to talk too much; some of our biggest stockholders are, uh -- scratch that: Say whatever you want.

ENTRYWAY

As Amy enters in a simple yet stunning evening gown. She looks around the room, then starts across the crowded floor towards the punch bowl.

NORVILLE

As Mussburger introduces him to a tall, imposing BUSINESSMAN in a tuxedo and a ten-gallon hat.

MUSSBURGER

Norville Barnes, allow me to introduce Mr. Zebulon Cardozo, one of Hudsucker Industries largest and most loyal stockholders.

Ignoring Norville's proffered hand:

CARDOZO (BUSINESSMAN)

Dammit boy, what's this I hear about you bein' an embecile? What the hell is ailin' ya?! A week ago my stock was worth twice what it is now! I'm considering dumping the whole shootin' match, unless I see some vast improvement! Dammit, boy, It's a range war! Either you pull our wagons into a circle or I'm pullin' out of the wagon train!

Norville gives him a forced but hearty laugh of reassurance.

NORVILLE

No need for concern, sir; it's only natural in a period of transition for the more timid element to run for cover --

CARDOZO

So I'm yella, am I?!!

He starts peeling off his tuxedo jacket:

CARDOZO

...We'll see who's yella!!

His WIFE, a small wiry woman, steps in as Mussburger starts dragging Norville away.

MRS. CARDOZO

Zebulon, you mind now and quit bein' sech an ole grizzly.

As he reluctantly starts shrugging back into the jacket:

CARDOZO

Aww, I wasn't gonna hurt the boy, Lorelei...

MUSSBURGER AND NORVILLE

As they make their way through the room Norville is mopping at his brow with a handkerchief.

NORVILLE

I'm sorry, Sid, I thought maybe if I showed him the long view we might --

Thump! Dabbing at his brow, Norville has walked square into the back of a debonaire man holding a martini.

The drink sloshes and the man turns testily to face him.

MUSSBURGER

Norville, this is Thorstensen
Finlandsen, who heads a radical
splinter group of disgruntled
investors.

Norville nervously pumps Findlandsen's hand.

NORVILLE

Hello, Mr. Finlandsen, so sorry to
meet you -- uh, happy to walk into y --
uh, pleased to make your --

Findlandsen raises his hand to look quizzically at Norville's handkerchief which he now holds himself, apparently having been given it during the handshake.

He hands it back to Norville.

NORVILLE

Thank you, sir...

He stuffs it nervously into his outside breast pocket as Findlandsen stares at him. Mussburger stands watching in the executive at-ease, hands dug into his pockets.

NORVILLE

...I understand your concern about
the down-ward, you know, but I think
you'll find under our strong new
leadership...

As Norville's hand drops from his breast pocket the handkerchief, perhaps caught on his sleeve, whips out of the pocket and follows his hand down.

Findlandsen looks down and Norville follows his look, and stoops BELOW FRAME to retrieve the hanky.

Findlandsen leans quizzically forward and peers down at Norville, who continues, O.S.

NORVILLE (O.S.)

We anticipate, in short order, an

upward...

In rapid fire, Norville straightens up into -- crunch -- Findlandsen, whose head snaps back, eyes rolling, a hand pressed to his nose, drink sloshing; Norville, one hand pressed to the back of his own head and the other wildly waving his hanky for balance, takes a staggering step forward onto the toe of an elegantly-gowned MRS. FINDLANDSEN.

MRS. FINDLANDSEN

Ahhh!

There is a drum roll and, as the lights dim:

EMCEE

grabs the large old-fashioned microphone in front of the band and grins.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished members of the Hudsucker board. I give you the king of swing, the rajah of romance, the incredible, the unforgettable Mister Vic... Tenetta!

Vic Tenetta takes the microphone from the Emcee who backs away, applauding as Tenetta starts to croon. He wears a white dinner jacket. His jet black hair sweeps out over his forehead in a roguishly pompadoured mat; one forelock droops and bounces across his forehead.

CUT TO:

SEVERAL BOARD MEMBERS

Clustered in a dim corner of the room, smoking cigars.

In the b.g., brilliantly spotlit, Vic Tenetta continues his song.

As Mussburger joins them:

EXECUTIVE #1

How's it going, Mr. Mussburger?

MUSSBURGER

Bad.

EXECUTIVE #2

Good.

MUSSBURGER

But not bad enough.

EXECUTIVE #3

Too bad.

MUSSBURGER

It could be better, it could be worse.

ALL THREE EXECUTIVES

Hmmmmmm.

MUSSBURGER

The stock's got to drop another five points if we expect to get controlling interest. Norville tells me he's got some hot idea. Can't be good.

EXECUTIVE #1

Then it can't be bad!

EXECUTIVE #2

Couldn't be better if it couldn't be worse.

ALL

Hmmmmmm.

EXT. PENTHOUSE - TERRACE

where the PARTY NOISE is DISTANT, TENETTA'S SONG just FILTERING OUT.

We are on a FULL SHOT of the back of a man who stands facing the twinkling cityscape, but in an odd, leanedback posture, with one hand reaching up to his hidden face, his other hand pressed against the small of his back, like a man with a stiff neck tossing back a drink.

REVERSE

Amy, having just emerged onto the terrace, squints at him.

AMY

...Norville?

He turns and we see that it is indeed Norville, holding a dripping icepack against one eye.

AMY

...What happened?

NORVILLE

Oh. Nothing, really, just... the more timid investors are no longer running for cover.

AMY

Let me look.

He does.

NORVILLE

Sid found me the icepack.

AMY

Let me hold it, or you'll have a
real shiner.

NORVILLE

Thanks. People seem to be pretty hot
over this imbecile story.

AMY

...I'm sorry.

NORVILLE

Oh, it isn't your fault, Amy.
You're the one person who's been
standing by me through all this.

As she rolls the pack gently across his eye:

AMY

Norville... there's something I have
to tell you. You see, I'm not really
a secretary.

NORVILLE

I know that, Amy.

AMY

...You do?

NORVILLE

I understand that you're not very
skilled yet in the secretarial arts.
I'm not that skilled as president.
Oh sure, I put up a big front --
(massages his eye)
-- not that everyone's buying it.

AMY

I believe in you, Norville --
At least I believe in your...
intentions --

NORVILLE

Oh, I don't blame them, really. I
guess I have sort of made a mess of
things. These folks have to protect
their investment. Most of them are
very nice people --

AMY

Norville, you can't trust people
here like you did in Muncie...

They gaze out at the city.

AMY

...Certain people are --

NORVILLE

Didja ever go to the top of old man

Larson's feed tower and look out
over the town?

AMY

...Huh?

NORVILLE

You know, on farm route 17.

AMY

Oh yes! In Muncie!

NORVILLE

No! In Vidalia! Farm Route 17!

AMY

Uh -- Yes. Seventeen. Yes, I -- well
no, I -- I never really... There's a
place I go now, the cutest little
place near my apartment in Greenwich
Village. It's called Ann's 440. It's
a beatnik bar.

NORVILLE

You don't say.

AMY

Yes, you can get carrot juice or
Italian coffee, and the people there --
well, none of them quite fit in.
You'd love it -- why don't you come
there with me -- they're having a
marathon poetry reading on New Year's
Eve. I go every year.

NORVILLE

(puzzled)

Every year?

AMY

Well -- this year -- if it's good I
plan to make it a tradition. Uh, my
it certainly is beautiful --

She nods out at the city to avoid Norville's quizzical look.

AMY

...The people look like ants.

NORVILLE

Well, the Hindus say -- and the
beatniks also -- that in the next
life some of us will come back as
ants. Some will be butterflies.
Others will be elephants or creatures
of the sea.

AMY

What a beautiful thought.

NORVILLE

What do you think you were in your previous life, Amy?

AMY

Oh, I don't know. Maybe I was just a fast-talking career gal who thought she was one of the boys --

NORVILLE

Oh no, Amy, pardon me for saying so but I find that very farfetched.

AMY

Norville, there really is something I have to tell you --

NORVILLE

That kind of person would come back as a wildebeest, or a warthog. No, I think it more likely that you were a gazelle, with long, graceful legs, gamboling through the underbrush. Perhaps we met once, a chance encounter in a forest glade. I must have been an antelope or an ibex. What times we must have had -- foraging together for sustenance, picking the grubs and burrs from one another's coats. Or perhaps we simply touched our horns briefly and went our separate ways...

AMY

I wish it were that simple, Norville. I wish I was still a gazelle, and you were an antelope or an ibex.

NORVILLE

Well, can I at least call you deer? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Seriously, Amy, the whole thing is what your beatnik friends call 'karma' -- the great circle of life, death and rebirth.

Morosely:

AMY

Yeah, I think I've heard of that. What goes around comes around.

NORVILLE

That's it. A great wheel that gives us each what we deserve...

He slaps his fist into his palm.

NORVILLE

...Tomorrow's my big presentation to the board. I've gotta show Sidney and the guys that I deserve all their confidence!

Sadly:

AMY

Oh, Norville --

NORVILLE

Kiss me once, Amy! Kiss me once for luck!

AMY

Sure, Norville, sure...

She gives him a peck. They look at each other.

AMY

...Oh, Norville!

She embraces him. They kiss again.

Norville's eyes widen.

VIC TENETTA

Crooning the end of his song.

DANCING COUPLES

Turn to the bandstand and applaud.

NORVILLE AND AMY

In the midst of a passionate kiss.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

DOUBLE OAK DOORS

Labeled "Executive Conference Room." A secretary is hanging up a sign that reads: "Quiet Please! Board Meeting in Session."

INT. BOARDROOM - CLOSE ON NORVILLE

Chest and up. His upper torso is swaying, his shoulders rhythmically rolling as he talks. We hear a WHOOSH WHOOSH sound from O.S.

NORVILLE

-- So we have economy, simplicity, low production cost and the potential for mass appeal, and all that spells out great profitability...

CLOSE ON MUSSBURGER

Staring. Holding a just-lighted but forgotten cigar in one hand, and a still burning match in the other.

NORVILLE (O.S.)

...I had the boys down at R & D throw together this prototype so that our discussion here could have some focus...

BOARD

Staring, mouths hanging open, in arrested motion much like when Waring Hudsucker jumped out the window at the previous board meeting.

NORVILLE (O.S.)

...and to give you gentlemen of the Board a first-hand look at just how exciting this gizmo is...

WIDER ON NORVILLE

Still gyrating. We now see that he has accelerated the hula hoop around his waist to quite a good speed.

NORVILLE

...It's fun, it's healthy, it's good exercise; kids'll just love it, and we put a little sand inside to make the whole experience more pleasant. And the great part is we won't have to charge an arm and a leg!

Mussburger's forgotten match has burned down to his fingertips. With a wince, he shakes it out.

The Board is staring.

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

Yeah but... What is it?

EXECUTIVE #2

Does it have rules?

EXECUTIVE #3

Can more than one play?

EXECUTIVE #4

(to #3)

What makes you think it's a game?

EXECUTIVE #3

Is it a game?

EXECUTIVE #5

Will it break?

EXECUTIVE #6

It better break eventually!

EXECUTIVE #2

Is there an object?

EXECUTIVE #3

Are you supposed to make it fly off?

EXECUTIVE #5

Does it come with batteries?

EXECUTIVE #4

Could we charge extra for them?

EXECUTIVE #7

Is it safe for toddlers?

EXECUTIVE #3

How can you tell when you're done?

EXECUTIVE #2

How do you make it stop?

EXECUTIVE #1

Is that a girl's model or a boy's?

EXECUTIVE #3

Can a parent assemble it??

EXECUTIVE #7

What if you get tired before it's done?

EXECUTIVE #6

Is there a larger model for the obese?

EXECUTIVE #4

Can you do it around your neck?

ELDERLY EXECUTIVE

And finally... what is it?

NORVILLE

You know, for kids! It's... it's ... well, it's...

MUSSBURGER

It's brilliant.

The Board looks at Mussburger.

MUSSBURGER

...It's genius. It's just exactly what Hudsucker needs at this juncture. Sure, sure, a blind man could tell you that there's an enormous demand for this, uh...

He smiles weakly at Norville.

MUSSBURGER

...Congratulations, kid, you've really outdone yourself. Reinvented the wheel. I'm going to recommend to the Board that we proceed immediately with this, uh... with the, uh... that the dingus be mass-produced with all deliberate speed. Of course, as president of the company the ultimate decision is yours.

NORVILLE

Well... I'm for it...

As furiously BUSY MUSIC STARTS:

CUT TO:

TELETYPE

Furiously PRINTING out "EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE #37451-JL7.

A hand ENTERS FRAME and rips the directive from the teletype, then hurriedly rolls it into a cylinder and slips it into a cylindrical metal capsule.

The capsule is popped into a pneumatic tube.

ANGLE - LENGTH OF PNEUMATIC PIPING

somewhere in the labyrinthine substructure of the Hudsucker Building. We hear a MISSILE furiously HURTLING towards us, inside the pipe, and ROCKETING by.

ANGLE ON ANOTHER LENGTH OF PIPING

Once again we hear the CAPSULE APPROACH and ROCKET past.

BLINDING RED LIGHTS

as a SIREN BLARES. On a huge board that says HUDSUCKER DESIGN DEPARTMENT, flashing red letters announce: INCOMING DIRECTIVE!

The pneumatic tube spout shoots out a cylinder, and a hand eagerly picks it up and yanks it OUT OF FRAME.

A technician in white laboratory smock is reading the directive as several other white-jacketed technicians crowd their heads around his shoulders, also reading.

All of their eye and head motions synchronize as they eagerly read, devouring the document line by line.

A large sheet of graph paper is whipped down on top of a drafting table. Under the caption OVERHEAD ANGLE is a perfect circle. Under the caption HORIZONTAL is a horizontal line.

Under the caption VERTICAL SIDE ANGLE is a vertical line.

EXTREME LOW ANGLE - SEVERAL TECHNICIANS

looking thoughtfully down at the rendering. The head technician is stroking his beard and nodding.

CUT TO:

RENDERING

as a hand ENTERS FRAME and stamps the drawing approved.

CUT TO:

TWO MORE LENGTHS OF PNEUMATIC PIPE

as we hear the CYLINDER ROCKETING by.

SWISH PAN TO:

FROSTED DOUBLE GLASS DOORS

Lettered on the frosted glass is: "ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT Creative Bullpen." In sharp silhouette on the frosted glass we can see the three admen working inside.

Two pace back and forth, smoking cigarettes, as they toss out ideas. The third sits slumped in front of a silhouette typewriter, his head resting on one hand, his other hand resting on a half-empty bottle of whiskey.

In the f.g., outside the frosted glass and so not in silhouette, sits a bored secretary reading War and Peace, Volume One.

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

We'll call it the Flying Donut!

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)

The Dancing Dingus!

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

The Jerky Circle!

SWISH PAN TO:

PNEUMATIC PIPING

With the cylinder rocketing by.

SWISH PAN TO:

"ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT" WALL PLAQUE

CUT TO:

HUGE POSTER

Up on the wall of the accounting floor is an enormous reproduction of the design department's rendering of the hula hoop. Over the poster is an enormous banner: "WHAT WILL THIS COST?"

PAN FROM the poster TO a HIGH ANGLE SHOT of a floor full of accountants sitting at their rows and rows of desks; all are looking up at the wall poster as they operate their manual adding machines to the same beat.

All accountants wear identical vests, shirtsleeves, garters, visors and spectacles.

The head accountant stands in front of the room overseeing their efforts. He wears a full three-piece suit, a visor and a pince-nez.

CUT TO:

HUGE BOOK

Being dropped onto a desk. Its cover reads: SUMMARY OF COST ANALYSIS.

The book is opened and its pages, filled with rows of numbers, are flipped to the last page where we QUICKLY PAN DOWN TO the bottom line: Unit Cost... \$0.59 Suggested Retail... \$0.79

CUT TO:

EXECUTIVE

Looking down at the book as the head accountant hovers over his shoulder, waiting for his reaction.

The executive grimly shakes his head.

BACK TO BOOK

As the accountant's hand ENTERS FRAME to scratch in "\$1" in front of the suggested retail of \$0.79.

A hand ENTERS FRAME to stamp the bottom line: APPROVED.

CUT TO:

ROCKETING PNEUMATIC PIPES

CUT TO:

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT CREATIVE BULLPEN

The secretary in the f.g. is now reading War and Peace, Volume Two.

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)
Something short.

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)

Sharp.

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

Snappy.

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)

With a little jazz.

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

The Shazzammeter!

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)

The Hipster!

Drawing a circle in the air:

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

The Daddy-Oh!

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)

The Circle-o'-Gaiety!

CUT TO:

ROCKETING PIPES

CUT TO:

MEN

in asbestos suits throwing down their visors as they scurry and dive for cover behind banks of sandbags. A fierce EXPLOSION harshly illuminates the sandbags. As the EXPLOSION SUBSIDES:

The workmen cautiously peek out over the sandbags, then flip back their visors and rise to their feet.

THEIR POV

Bouncing among the flaming debris of the explosion is a hula hoop, still intact.

CUT TO:

ROCKETING PIPES

CUT TO:

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT CREATIVE BULLPEN

The secretary in the f.g. is now reading Anna Karenina.

The silhouetted ad men, frustrated and hoarse, are still at it.

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)

The Hoopsucker!

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)
The Hudswinger!

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)
The Hoop-dee-doo!

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)
The Hudsucker Hoop!

The third ad man, slouched motionless at the typewriter up until now, finally raises his head.

AD MAN #3 (O.S.)
Fellas. Fellas!

AD MAN #1 (O.S.)
Ya got somethin'?

AD MAN #2 (O.S.)
Ya got somethin'?!

AD MAN #3 (O.S.)
Fellas! I got somethin'!

CUT TO:

PIECE OF ART PAPER

Printed at the top: Hudsucker Industries Proudly Presents

PAN DOWN to reveal: THE HULA HOOP

PAN DOWN to reveal:

An artist's hand working in fast motion to render the hula hoop logo: A grinning, healthy 1950s boy with a spray of freckles, one fist thrown forward, the other behind, as if doing an athletic frug, a hula hoop spinning with action lines around his waist.

In seconds the artist has completed the logo and now, also in fast motion, he writes the slogan on either side of the boy: "You know... For Kids!"

As the page is ripped off the art pad:

MATCH CUT TO:

PAGE

being carried away in a continuous motion by an engineer who looks at it, nodding. We see that we are now in an enormous plant area. The engineer, grimy from his labors in this sweaty industrial realm, reaches up to pull an enormous lever.

CUT TO:

MACHINES

GRINDING into motion.

CUT TO:

DONUT SPOUT

As it begins to spit hula hoops in massive numbers.

The hoops are spit onto a long metal arm where they rest, hanging.

A bale of hula hoops is loaded into a Hudsucker truck to complete its load. The truck door is slammed shut.

IRON GRILL

is thrown up to reveal the display window of a shop just opening for the day.

In the window is an enormous hula hoop display, with various hoops strung up on wire in front of a large cardboard diorama -- "You know... for Kids!"

Reflected in the display window we see crowds of people scurrying by, indifferent to the display. Inside the shop we see the proprietor by the cash register, his chin propped glumly in his hands.

INT. NORVILLE'S OFFICE

Norville sits anxiously awaiting the verdict of Amy who sits hunched over the ticker-tape machine, studying the emerging tape. Amy finally looks up at Norville and sadly shakes her head.

BACK TO SHOP WINDOW

Crowds still scurry indifferently by. The shopkeeper stands idly in his doorway, smoking a cigarette.

We TRACK IN ON the cardboard display. The displayed price of \$1.79 has been crossed out. Underneath it, inked in: "Reduced: \$1.59."

INT. NORVILLE'S OFFICE

Norville is nervously pacing. Amy still studies the ticker-tape. Once again she is forced to shake her head sadly.

BACK TO SHOP'S PRICE DISPLAY

The old \$1.59 is suddenly covered as the hand ENTERS FRAME to slap on a sticker: \$1.49. A beat. The hand ENTERS FRAME to slap on a new sticker: \$1.29. Then in rapid-fire succession: \$0.99. \$0.79. \$0.49. Two for \$0.25. Free with any purchase.

ALLEY BEHIND SHOP

where garbage and garbage cans sit waiting for collection:

Hands appear at the back door of a shop hurling a clutch of hoops towards the trash heap. One errant hoop rolls towards the mouth of the alley.

The mouth of the alley. The escaped hula hoop emerges and starts rolling down the street.

HULA HOOP

It rolls across the street. CARS VIOLENTLY BRAKE to avoid it.

It rounds a corner and rolls up to a little boy, rolls in a circle around him, and finally wobbles to the pavement.

The little boy looks at it, steps inside it, raises it to his hips and starts hula hooping. Somewhere a BELL is RINGING.

INT. NEARBY SCHOOLHOUSE

where the BELL is RINGING, the front doors fly open and hundreds of schoolchildren run out, screaming, heading home, but all in a dense pack.

The screaming pack of schoolchildren round a corner and -- stop short, their screams abruptly halting.

They are staring, fascinated, at the hula-hooping youngster.

The children are dumbfounded. It is a moment the likes of which they have never dreamed.

CUT TO:

SCREAMING PACK

once again running, maniacal, possessed. We don't know where they are running, but we can guess.

CUT TO:

STORE

Jam-packed with screaming children, grabbing hula hoops off the shelves.

BACK TO NORVILLE'S OFFICE

Norville sits slumped behind his desk, his head resting on the desktop, utterly dejected.

Suddenly the TICKER-TAPE HUMS to life and starts spitting tape. Amy looks at it with mounting excitement. Finally she looks breathlessly up:

AMY

...Norville!

Norville lifts his head from the desktop. A piece of scrap paper is sticking to his cheek. Dramatic FANFARE MUSIC STARTS TO SWELL.

We HOLD ON Norville's expectant face. We HOLD. The MUSIC BUILDS. We HOLD. We:

CUT TO:

NEWSREEL TITLE

We can see the "Tidbits of Time" logo as a solemn-voiced announcer intones:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Rockwell News presents... 'Tidbits of Time!' World news in pictures, we kid you not.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Picture dissolves to a pan up the Hudsucker Building.

Cut to candid film of Norville getting out of a car, noticing the camera, grinning and waving as he walks, and taking a pratfall.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...What began as the brainchild of this Madison Avenue whiz kid is now a craze sweeping the nation. The 'hula hoop,' product of Hudsucker Industries, is a recreational device that some experts predict may eclipse the television as a means of entertainment...

ANOTHER ANGLE

A television sits against a neutral b.g. A hula hoop rolls into frame and bumps the TV, pushing it out of frame.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...This dancing dingus of delight, this jerky circle of gaiety, is proving to be the toy of choice of most American youngsters. -- Whoa-ho! Did I say youngsters?! Here's mom, taking a break from her household chores...

ANOTHER ANGLE

A woman switches off her vacuum cleaner, takes a hula hoop that is conveniently leaning against a nearby wall, and starts hula hooping.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and even dad is 'swinging' into the act!

ANOTHER ANGLE

In the office, dad, smoking a pipe, is also hula hooping.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and so the congratulations pour in for up-and-comer Norville Barnes, inventor of the hoop -- including one very special call!

ANOTHER ANGLE

In jerky cinema-verite footage, a woman is excitedly sticking her head in Norville's door.

WOMAN (V.O.)

He's on! He's on the line!

Swish over to Norville, agog, who picks up his phone and, voice breaking:

NORVILLE (V.O.)

...Hello?

CRACKLING VOICE (V.O.)

Hello, Norville. This is the President...

A half-wipe leaves a split screen with half of the screen remaining Norville, the other half becoming a still of Ike standing in a tank turret, pointing commandingly.

Under the photo: VOICE OF GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.

NORVILLE (V.O.)

Oh my God, sir!

IKE (V.O.)

...I just wanted to congratulate you. I'm very proud of you, Norville...

NORVILLE (V.O.)

Oh my God, sir!

IKE (V.O.)

...Mrs. Eisenhower is very proud of you. The American people are very proud of you.

Flash bulb explosion effects a...

CUT TO:

NORVILLE

Facing a battery of REPORTERS at a news conference.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Barnes, how'd ya come up with
the idea for the hula hoop?

Norville is holding one hand up to shield his eyes from the
unaccustomed light. Amy stands next to him, beaming.

NORVILLE

Well, it was no great idea, really.
A thing like this, it takes a whole
company to put it together, and I'm
just grateful for the opportunity --

REPORTER #2

Mr. Barnes, did you have any idea
there'd be such a huge response?

NORVILLE

Well, frankly, I don't think anybody
expected this much hoopla --

He is surprised by a burst of laughter.

REPORTER #3

'Hoopla on the hula hoop' -- can we
quote you on that, Mr. Barnes?

NORVILLE

Well sure, I guess --

REPORTER #4

Mr. Barnes, are you thinking of giving
yourself a nice fat raise?

NORVILLE

Ha-ha-ha-ha. Come on, guys...

Flash bulb explosion effects a...

CUT TO:

NEWSREEL

A scientist with a Van Dyke beard, wearing a laboratory smock,
is facing the camera. Behind him we see other scientists
studying a hoop that has been hooked up to a gyroscopic-
looking device that analyzes its various movements and
properties.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

What scientific principle explains
the mind-bending motion of this
whipping wheel of wonder?

A title supered over the Scientist's chest identifies him as
Professor Erwin Schweide.

SCIENTIST (V.O.)

Ze dinkus is kvite zimple, really.
It operates on ze same principle zat
keeps ze earth spinning 'round ze
sun, and zat keeps you from flying
off ze earth into ze coldest reaches
of outer space vere you vood die
like a miserable shvine! Yes, ze
principle is ze same, except for ze
piece of grrrit zey put in to make
ze whole experience more pleasant --

TRACKING IN TO:

INT. NORVILLE'S OFFICE

The mean laugh. Norville, behind his desk in LONG SHOT,
laughing, as we begin to TRACK IN. There is something
disconcerting about his laugh -- it is harder, more
businesslike, colder than the dopey laugh that accompanied
his elevation to the presidency. Or perhaps it is only our
imagination, for while still some distance away from him:

Flash bulb explosion effects a...

CUT BACK TO:

NEWS CONFERENCE

Newsmen follow Norville as he walks through the lobby of the
Hudsucker Building.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Barnes, did the board consider
you an 'idea man' when they promoted
you from the mail room?

NORVILLE

Well, I guess so -- I don't think
they promoted me because they thought
I was a jerk.

REPORTER #2

Mr. Barnes, what's the next big idea
for you and Hudsucker Industries?

NORVILLE

Jeez, I don't know. An idea like
this sweet baby doesn't just come
overnight...

REPORTER

Mr. Barnes, are you --

NORVILLE

-- Although I'll tell you one thing:
I certainly didn't expect all this
'hoopla'!

This TIRED old joke brings some polite laughter.

Norville is smiling as he enters the elevator. As its doors start to close, leaving Amy behind:

NORVILLE

...And you can quote me on that!

Flash bulb explosion effects a...

CUT BACK TO:

NEWSREEL

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Yes, it's hula hula everywhere! From
the cocktail parties of the Park
Avenue smart set...

ANOTHER ANGLE

A group of people in formal evening wear are sipping highballs and chatting as they keep hoops in motion 'round their waists.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...to sweethearts who want to be
married in the 'swing' of things...

ANOTHER ANGLE

A young couple stands before the altar hula hooping.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...To our friend the Negro, in the
heart of the dark continent.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Pan down from elephant to two natives hula hooping as they grin into the newsreel camera.

TRACKING IN ON:

ANOTHER ANGLE

The mean laugh. Yes, as we draw closer, it seems clear that his laugh is colder than before.

Flash bulb explosion effects a...

CUT TO:

NORVILLE

Sitting in a barber chair, face lathered up, as Reporters crowd in.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Barnes, Mr. Barnes, Rumpus

magazine has called you the most eligible bachelor of the year, and the society pages have been linking you with high-fashion model Za-Za. Would you care to comment?

A burning cigar emerges from the lather around Norville's face. It waggles as he talks.

NORVILLE

There's no truth to the rumors; we're just dear friends...

He looks to one side.

NORVILLE

...Isn't that right, Za-Za?

SWISH PAN TO:

ZA-ZA. Standing nearby. Every man's dream, in a tarty sort of way.

ZA-ZA

(sexily)

Gr-r-r-r-r-r-oww!

The newsmen react.

REPORTER #2

Ho-leeee!

REPORTER #3

Mr. Barnes, whither Hudsucker?
Whither Norville Barnes?

REPORTER #4

How do you respond to the charges that you're out of ideas? Has Norville Barnes run dry?

The barber is periodically pinching Norville's nose to shave under it; as he alternately pinches and releases, Norville's voice breaks from nasal to normal and back.

NORVILLE

Not at all. Why, just this week I came up with several new sweet ideas. A larger model hula hoop for the portly. A battery option for the lazy and handicapped. A model with more sand for hard-of-hearing. I'm earning my keep.

REPORTER #5

Speaking of that, Mr. Barnes, do you expect to get a raise?

NORVILLE

Well, by anyone's account I've saved
Hudsucker Industries; our stock is
worth more than it's ever been. So,
yes, I expect to be compensated for
that.

END TRACK IN ON:

ANOTHER ANGLE

The mean laugh. FURTHER TRACK IN ON Norville ENDS in CLOSE
SHOT, his hands clasped on the desktop in front of him, as
he finishes his hard, square-jawed, man-on-top laugh, gazing
flintily INTO the CAMERA.

NORVILLE

-- ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

PULL BACK FROM:

WEEPING EXECUTIVE

The PULL BACK FROM a blubbering executive REVEALS that we
are at a Board meeting. All of the Board members sit around
the table except for Mussburger, who, a towel around his
waist, is receiving a chop-pity-chop massage on a padded table
from a muscular man in a bulging T-shirt.

MUSSBURGER

Pull yourself together, Addison.

Addison snuffles.

ADDISON

Nobody told me! Nobody told me!
You sold all of our stock?

MUSSBURGER

We dumped the whole load. Now quit
showboating, Addison --

ADDISON

I had twenty thousand shares! I'd be
a millionaire now!

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure, we'd all be millionaires.
There's no point in looking back. At
the time, Stilson thought dumping
our position would panic the market,
further depress the stock -- then
we'd buy it all back, and more of
course, once it got cheap --

ADDISON

Cheap! Cheap! It's never been more
valuable! And I'm ruined! Ruined!

He climbs up onto the board table.

ADDISON

I'm getting off this merry-go-round!

EXECUTIVE

Addison!

ANOTHER EXECUTIVE

Myron!

ADDISON

Aaaaahhh!

He runs down the length of the table and hurls himself toward the window and:

Thwok!

CUT TO:

MUSSBURGER'S OFFICE - ANGLE FROM OUTSIDE

LOOKING IN, as Addison flattens against the f.g. glass, his face squashing, his outflung hands likewise.

All stare in horror for a long silent beat.

With the sound of a SQUEEGEE being drawn across glass, Addison, still frozen, slides down the window, hits the floor, and falls stiffly back like a fallen tree.

Mussburger sits up and sticks a cigar into his mouth.

MUSSBURGER

Plexiglas. Had it installed last week.

EXECUTIVE

...Myron?

MUSSBURGER

All right, so the kid caught a wave. So right now he and his dingus are on top. Well, this too shall pass. Myrtle J. Mussburger didn't raise her boy to go knockkneed at the first sign of adversity. I say, we made this kid and we can break him. I say, the higher he climbs, the harder he drops. I say, yes, the kid has a future, and in it I see shame, dishonor, ignominy and disgrace.

Sure, sure, the wheel turns, the music plays, and our spin ain't over yet.

NORVILLE'S OFFICE

A small chamber orchestra, the musicians in tails, sit playing

"Eine Kleine Nachtmusik". Norville, eyes closed, reclines in his desk chair, one uniformed woman stooping in front of him, manicuring his nails, another, behind, massaging his temples. A tailor is pinning up his pant cuffs.

A French sculptor wearing a white smock, a beret, and a goatee squints at Norville and chisels at a block of marble with a stone chisel and hammer.

A GOON sits off to one side, hat insolently atop his head, reading the funny papers.

At length Norville stirs, opens his eyes, sits bolt upright, batting away the hands of the manicurist and temple-massager.

NORVILLE

Hold it!...

The musicians' playing dribbles away to silence.

NORVILLE

...Nobody move, nobody breathe...

All sit frozen. You could hear a pin drop.

NORVILLE

...An idea... is coming...

Eyes narrowed, he gazes off into space, squinting for his idea.

CLOSE ON TAILOR'S KIT

A straight pin is rolling across the top -- it drops off --

EXTREME CLOSE ON FLOOR

Where the PIN -- PING! -- hits.

NORVILLE

Deflates. He glares at the tailor.

NORVILLE

It's gone now.

The musicians resume playing. Everyone else resumes work. The INTERCOM BUZZES and a female voice announces:

FEMALE (V.O.)

Miss Amy here to see you.

Norville leans forward to hit his intercom.

NORVILLE

Is she in the book? --

The door bursts open and Amy storms in.

AMY

For Pete's sake, Norville!

NORVILLE

Oh! Hello, Amy -- was it -- I thought she said, Mamie --

AMY

Never mind about that...

She shakes a piece of paper at Norville.

AMY

...You know what those nincompoops in the boardroom are doing?

NORVILLE

Well, I wouldn't call them nincom --

AMY

They're going to discharge eight percent of the work force here at Hudsucker. Why, in New York alone that means eighteen hundred people out of work, people with wives and children and families --

NORVILLE

Well yes, we're pruning away some of the dead wood, but if --

AMY

You mean you know about this?

NORVILLE

Know about it? You think the Board would do anything like this without my authorization? No, this was my idea from the start.

AMY

Your i --

NORVILLE

We have to be realistic, Amy. You know things have slowed down a little here at Hudsucker --

AMY

You're awful kind to yourself, Norville Barnes -- the fact is you've slowed down, sitting up here like a sultan, not doing a lick of work! Why you know it's ideas that are the lifeblood of industry and you haven't come up with one since the hoop and the reason's plain to see! You've forgotten what made your ideas exciting for you in the first place -- it wasn't for the fame and the wealth

and the mindless adulation of --
would you get out of here?!

This was addressed to the chamber orchestra, whose playing dribbles off. They look inquisitively at Norville, then rise to pack up their instruments and sheepishly leave the office.

AMY

...I've been watching you, Norville Barnes, even though you've been trying to avoid me --

NORVILLE

Now, Aim --

AMY

Shutup! -- and don't think I haven't noticed how you've changed. I used to think you were a swell guy -- well, to be honest I thought you were an imbecile --

NORVILLE

Now, Aim --

AMY

Shutup! -- but then I figured out you were a swell guy, a little slow maybe, but a swell guy! Well, maybe you're not so slow, but you're not so swell either and it looks like you're an imbecile after --

NORVILLE

Now, Aim --

AMY

Shutup! -- after all! You haven't talked to me for a week and now I'm going to say my piece. I've got a prediction for you, Norville Barnes: I predict that since you've decided to dedicate yourself to greed and sloth and everything bad, you're going to lose all the good things that your good ideas brought you. You're going to throw them all away chasing after money and ease and the respect of a Board that wouldn't give you the time of day if you... if you...

NORVILLE

Worked in a watch factory?

The Goon looks up from his funnies.

GOON

Huh-huh-huh!

AMY

(to the Goon)

Shutup!

(to Norville)

Exactly! Don't you remember how you used to feel about the hoop? You told me you were gonna bring a smile to the hips of everyone in America, regardless of race, creed or color. Finally there'd be a thingamajig that would bring everyone together -- even if it kept 'em apart, spacially -- you know, for kids? Your words, Norville, not mine. I used to love Norville Barnes -- yes, love him! -- when he was just a swell kid with hot ideas who was in over his head, but now your head is too big to be in over!

NORVILLE

Now, Amy --

AMY

Consider this my resignation --

Thwock -- She slaps him.

The bodyguard is on his feet.

GOON

Hey!!

Crack -- Amy kicks him hard in the shin.

GOON

...Awooooo!

AMY

-- Effective immediately!!

She strides to the door, leaving Norville rubbing his cheek and the Goon hopping around on one leg.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

CLOSE SHOT - PICTURE OF AMY

PULL BACK SHOWS it to be her identification in her Hudsucker personnel file.

A hand brings INTO FRAME another picture of her -- this one a newspaper clipping. She stands on a podium accepting an award; standing behind her are middle-aged identical triplets. The caption says, "Amy Archer of the Manhattan Argus Receives Pulitzer Prize."

WIDER ANGLE

We are in Mussburger's office. Mussburger is seated at his desk looking at the file picture and clipping; the sign letterer/scraper is leaning over his shoulder, having just put them down.

MUSSBURGER

Hmmm... Thank you, Aloysius. This may be useful.

Aloysius nods wordlessly and turns to leave.

As we TRACK IN ON the picture of Amy, we:

FADE OUT:

FADE UP TO:

PERFECT WHITE

After a beat, a woman ENTERS against the unblemished white background, dressed in a flowing white dance robe, trailing a long, diaphanous veil. She performs a flowingly sensuous dance moderne; the MUSIC is a sensuous saxophone solo with lasciviously bending blue notes.

After the woman has been dancing for several beats Norville enters, dancing after her, pursuing her. He is wearing a coatless suit, his sleeves rolled up, his thin tie loosened.

The woman dances around him, letting her diaphanous veil trail sinuously around his body.

We hear an ECHOING voice:

VOICE (O.S.)

Buddy... Say, buddy...

CLOSE SHOT - NORVILLE

Sitting in his desk chair, sheened with sweat, eyes closed, licking his lips.

CLOSER NOW:

VOICE (O.S.)

Buddy... Ya busy?

NORVILLE

Huh-whuh?

He opens his eyes and looks stuporously about.

Buzz is grinning down at him in his little pillbox elevator cap.

BUZZ

Looks like ya nodded off there, buddy!
Say, ya got a minute?

Norville clears his throat.

NORVILLE

Oh, uh... Buzz... Is it important?

BUZZ

I like to think so! It's this little
idea I been working on!

He turns an easel to face the desk.

BUZZ

...Ya see, I don't intend to be an
elevator boy forever! Take a look at
this sweet baby!

The easel displays an oversized sheet of graph paper.

Onto it has been rendered a top view, which is a perfect
circle, and a side view, which is a vertical line.

Norville gazes stupidly at the circle.

BUZZ

...Ya get it, buddy? Incredibly
convenient, isn't it? Ya see --

He produces a tall glass of lemonade with a straw sitting in
it.

BUZZ

-- this is how it works, it's these
little ridges on the side that give
it its whammy! See, ya don't have to
drink like this anymore --

He holds his head over the glass to drink from the vertical
straw.

BUZZ

-- Now you can drink like this --

He bends the straw to drink from it at the horizontal.

BUZZ

...I call it the Buzz-Sucker, get
it, buddy? -- After me! Buzz! Why,
people are just dyin' for a product
like this, and the great thing is we
won't have to charge an arm and a --

Norville, who has been stewing, finally barks:

NORVILLE

Wait a minute!

He grabs the lemonade glass, looks at it, sneering.

NORVILLE

...Why, this is worthless.

BUZZ

Huh?! But, buddy --

Norville yanks the straw out and crumples it up.

NORVILLE

This is the most idiotic thing I've ever seen in my life!

BUZZ

Yeah, but, buddy --

NORVILLE

Nobody wants a hare-brained product like this! Ya see, Buzz, it lacks the creative spark, the unalloyed genius that made, uh...

He pauses to belch.

NORVILLE

...say, the hula hoop such a success.

BUZZ

But, buddy --

NORVILLE

And what do you mean barging in here and taking up my valuable time! I've got a company to run here --

BUZZ

But, buddy, you were --

NORVILLE

-- I can't have every deadbeat on the Hudsucker payroll pestering me with their idiotic brainwaves!

BUZZ

Geez, I'm sorry, buddy --

NORVILLE

An example must be made!

Buzz looks over his shoulder, turns back to Norville.

BUZZ

Wuddya mean, buddy?

NORVILLE

Fired! You're fired! Is that plain enough for you, buster!

Buzz's jaw drops. His elastic chin strap snaps under the pressure.

BUZZ

Awwww, buddy --

NORVILLE

And don't call me buddy! Out of here!
Out!

Buzz sinks to his knees, weeping. He clutches pathetically at Norville's pants legs.

BUZZ

Aw, please, sir -- this job, it's
all I got!

NORVILLE

Get up!

BUZZ

I understand if ya don't like the
Buzz-Sucker! Just lemme keep my job,
I'm prayin' to ya!

NORVILLE

We don't crawl at Hudsucker
Industries! Get out of my office!
Leave your uniform in the locker
room!

Buzz stumbles away, still weeping.

BUZZ

I'm sorry, buddy... I'm sorry...

NORVILLE

Buzz... off! Ha-ha-ha-ha!

As we TRACK IN ON Norville, laughing, there is a low, unearthy RUMBLE, and his face seems to DISSOLVE INTO:

FLAMES

We PULL BACK FROM the flame of Sid Mussburger's oversized lighter as he finishes lighting a cigar.

He is sitting alone in the boardroom, but its door swings open and Norville enters wearing plaid knickers, a little cap, and a knit shirt that shows his waist starting to bulge. He has a full golf bag over his shoulder.

NORVILLE

Sorry I'm late, Sid. That back nine
at Riverdale is really murder.

MUSSBURGER

Sure, sure, it's a tough course.
Well thanks for coming, kid. I thought

the board room would be a swell place to chat undisturbed -- it seems we're having some security problems here at the Hud.

NORVILLE

Ya don't say.

MUSSBURGER

Mm. Ordinarily I wouldn't bother you with it, but -- this is embarrassing, kid -- it seems to concern you directly.

NORVILLE

How's that, Sid?

MUSSBURGER

It's not important in itself -- some elevator boy you fired came to me claiming you'd stolen the idea for the, uh, the hoop dingus from him --

NORVILLE

Huh?! He -- no, I -- he's just -- maybe I was a little rough on the boy, ya see I --

MUSSBURGER

Ah forget it, kid, ya don't have to explain to me. He's a little person. He's nothing. Like I say, ordinarily it would just be a nuisance. But it seems -- well, there was a spy in the company...

He is shoving a file towards Norville, who opens it.

MUSSBURGER

...Sure, sure, we tried to kill the story. But her newspaper won't play ball... Looks like her story's coming out...

We TRACK DOWN the length of the board room table TOWARD Norville, who stares horrified at the file.

MUSSBURGER

...See, kid, the problem the Board'll have... you hired this woman. Kept her on, while she made a chump out of you. Serious error of judgment... I mean, business is war, kid -- ya take no prisoners, ya get no second chances. And a boner like this... I'm afraid when the Board meets, after New Year's, your position... well, it looks like you're finished...

stick a fork in ya, you're done...
washed up...

We LOSE Mussburger FROM FRAME as we TIGHTEN FURTHER ON
Norville, Mussburger continuing off:

MUSSBURGER (O.S.)
...I'm sorry, kid. I understand this
dolly who betrayed you, she used to
be a friend of yours...

Norville is slowly dragging the golf cap off his head.

MUSSBURGER (O.S.)
...And this elevator dope used to be
a friend, too...

Norville stares, perfectly still.

MUSSBURGER (O.S.)
...Well, they've got your throat
pretty well slit. And when you're
dead, ya stay dead. Ya don't believe
me, ask Waring Hudsucker... Yeah,
looks like curtains. Well,
condolences, kid...

Norville's IMAGE TURNS TO:

BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGE OF NORVILLE

We PULL BACK to show that it is on the front page of the
Manhattan Argus.

The headline, in screaming nine-point type:

FAKE!

Next to the picture of Norville is the subhead: Idea Man a
Fraud.

Next to the sub-subhead is a picture of Buzz in his elevator-
operator's pillbox hat: Stole Hoop Idea from Genius Elevator
Jockey Clarence "Buzz" Gunderson.

AMY (O.S.)
You can't print that!

CHIEF
He grins wolfishly.

CHIEF
We are printing it! She's hittin'
the streets this evening --

SWISH PAN TO:

SMITTY
-- and she's dynamite!

AMY

But, Al, it's the bunk! Norville showed me his design for the whatsit the day I met him! Why Buzz couldn't have invented it -- look at the man -- he's an imbecile!

CHIEF

Archer, you're a broken record. Fact is Gunderson did design it -- apparently he's some kind of prodigy --

AMY

Says who?!

SMITTY

You're not the only one with sources, Amy --

CHIEF

Smith has a source on the Hud board -- very senior, very hushhush --

AMY

Yeah, and I'll bet his initials are Sidney J. Mussburger!

SMITTY

You've lost it, Aim. You've gone soft by the looks of it -- soft on the dummy from Dubuque --

AMY

Muncie!

CHIEF

Whatever! It's no dig on you, Archer, but this story is hot and you're no longer on top of it. Why, it's the scoop of the century -- the other papers won't have the Gunderson dope 'til tomorrow -- The Allemeinischer Zeitung, Le Figaro, they'll be choking on our dust come mornin' --

AMY

You're fools, both of you! It's obvious they're out to crucify Norville! They're trying to destroy him!

CHIEF

(gently)

Amy -- take a break. You've worked hard on this story -- heck, you broke it for us! But it's passed you by and Smith here has taken up the slack.

She is near tears.

AMY

You want slack, I'll give you slack.
You're not putting me out to pasture,
Al, I quit! Consider this my
resignation --

She turns to Smitty --

AMY

-- effective immediately!

-- and swings -- but he catches her before contact, holds
her by the wrist, and sneers:

SMITTY

...Soft.

Amy swings her free arm to -- thwack -- blindside his other
cheek.

NORVILLE

In flickering black-and-white, he is lying on a couch that
has been brought into his office, gazing listlessly at a
bend straw, being interviewed by someone O.S. The footage is
rough, taking a moment to find focus; the sound is TINNY.

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.)

Dell me vat is first zing droppensie
head ven I menzhon ze vord... Zex?

NORVILLE (V.O.)

(listlessly)
Aww, what's the difference.

BOARD MEMBER

Sitting in a darkened board room, gazing off at a screen
that sends flickering light onto his face.

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.)

Und ven I zpeak of authority?

NORVILLE (V.O.)

Awww, I dunno.

BACK TO SCREEN

GERMAN VOICE (V.O.)

Eggzplain please ze zignifikanz of
ze straw.

NORVILLE (V.O.)

Nuthin', really.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A shadow is thrown across the screen as a figure steps into the beam. He throws the sharp silhouette of a strict Freudian ANALYST: Van Dyke beard, pince-nez with chain trailing down to his vest, one thumb hooked into the vest, the other hand holding a cigar wreathing smoke, which he waves for emphasis.

ANALYST

Patient displayed listlessness,
apathy, gloomy indifference und was
blue und mopey.

The image on screen cuts to four inkblots. The Analyst sweeps in a pointer and thwoks each image as he comments on it.

ANALYST

...Ven asked vut four Rhorschach
stains represented, patient replied,
'Nussink much,' 'I don't know,' 'Chust
a blotch,' und 'Sure beats me.'

ANOTHER ANGLE

The image onscreen cuts to a close shot of Norville on the couch, mouth listlessly agape.

ANALYST

...Patient shows no ambition, no get-
up-und-go, no vim. He is riding ze
grand loopen-ze-loop --

Image cuts to a sine wave on a graph, the top of which is labeled "Euphoria," the bottom of which is labeled "Despair," and a reference line through the middle labeled "Normal." There is an X on the declining side of the wave, near but not yet at the bottom, which is labeled "Patient."

ANALYST

-- zat goes from ze peak of delusional
gaiety to ze trrrroff of dezpair.
Patient is now near -- but not yet
at! -- ze lowest point; ven he
reachensies bottom he may errrrrupt
und pose danger to himself und uzzers.

MUSSBURGER

Casually puffing on a cigar.

MUSSBURGER

Diagnosis, Dr. Bromfenbrenner?

BROMFENBRENNER (ANALYST)

Patient is eine manic-depressive
paranoid type B, mit acute schizoid
tendencies.

MUSSBURGER

So patient is...?

He interrogatively twirls a finger 'round his temple.

BROMFENBRENNER

Prezizely. Knots.

The board murmurs.

MUSSBURGER

Prescription?

BROMFENBRENNER

Sree sinks! Kommitment.
Electroconfulsif therapy. Maintenance
in eine zecure wazility.

As he scores each point it is illustrated on the screen behind him: A patient is forced into a straitjacket by two brawny, unshaven attendants; electricity arcs between two leads on a wire cap being wielded by a technician; and lastly, a steel-barred door is slammed shut behind a stooped and broken patient who is led, shuffling, away.

Here the FILM runs out, CHATTERING, and the screen goes white.

The projector is shut off and the lights go on.

The board politely applauds.

INT. BAR - CLOSE ON BARMAN

He has a Vandyke beard and wears a cut-off sweatshirt and dungarees and dark glasses, and has the phone wedged into his shoulder as he tears open a large cardboard box.

BARMAN

Yeah, just get down here -- he says
he's a friend of yours... He won't
say, but man, is he from squaresville.

He hangs up and we HINGE WITH him to bring the length of the bar into view. Norville dishevelled, is on the other side bellowing.

NORVILLE

I want a martini! It's New Year's
Eve and I want a Martini!

BARMAN

Daddy, it's like I been tellin' ya --

NORVILLE

I thought you served misfits here!

The barman is taking rolled-up blow-beepers out of the cardboard box and loading them into tumblers to set along the bar.

BARMAN

Yeah, daddy, that's a roger, but we

don't sell alcohol.

NORVILLE

What kind of bar is it if ya can't
get a martini?!

BARMAN

It's a juice and coffee bar, man,
like I been tellin' ya --

NORVILLE

I want a martini! On this bar, right
now! I've had a martini in every bar
on the way down here, and I'm not
about to --

BARMAN

Martinis are for squares, man.

Suddenly enraged:

NORVILLE

What'd you call me?!

He starts awkwardly peeling off his suit coat.

NORVILLE

...You son of a --

AMY (O.S.)

Norville!

NORVILLE

Huh?!

He looks stupidly about, the shoulders of his coat down around
his elbows. He sees Amy rushing up.

NORVILLE

...Oh, it's you! Lookin' for a nitwit
to buy your lunch?!

AMY

Oh Norville, I --

Norville's attention has already left her. He looks for the
missing bartender.

NORVILLE

(swaying)

Barman! Set'm up, fella!

AMY

Norville, I'm sorry, I... I tried to
tell you... so many times... It's
hard to admit when you've been wrong.
If you could just... find it in your
heart to -- to give me another chance --

NORVILLE

Hey! Where's that martini?!

AMY

Just give me another chance, Norville --
I can help you fight this thing. I
know this last story was a lie! We
can prove it! We can --

NORVILLE

Aww, what's the difference. I'm all
washed up... When you're dead, ya
stay dead... Hey, fella!

AMY

Well that just about does it! I've
seen Norville Barnes, the young man
in a big hurry, and I've seen Norville
Barnes the self-important heel, but
I've never seen Norville Barnes the
quitter, and I don't like it!

She starts pumping her arms, slowly chanting.

AMY

...Fight on, fight on, dear old
Muncie.

She steps back off the stool. Norville watches her dully,
his head swaying.

AMY

...Fight on, hoist the gold and blue;
You'll be tattered, torn and hurtin'
Once 'The Munce' is done with you!
Goooooo Eagles!

She looks hopefully for some effect, but after staring at
her for a slack-jawed beat Norville can only bring out:

NORVILLE

You lied to me! I can't believe you
lied to me! a Muncie girl!

He lurches off his stool toward the door. Watching him,
despair fights with confusion on Amy's face.

AMY

But Norville... I...

She realizes that, though shattered, he is still the simple
innocent she loved --

AMY

... Oh, Norville!

-- and bursts into tears.

Two loud REVELERS reel INTO FRAME, one of them uncurling a

blow-beeper at the weeping Amy.

REVELER #1
Happy Newby-Newby-New!

REVELER #2
1959 we dig you the most!

EXT. ANNE'S

As Norville exits. It is night, snowing.

We PAN WITH Norville OFF the bar facade and, ENDING the PAN in the f.g.:

NEWSPAPER

WIPES UP INTO FRAME. Next to a picture of Norville is the headline "MUNCIE MENTAL CASE." The subhead: "Hud Chief to Tend Daisies." Sub-subhead: "Headshrinker Calls Him Walking Time Bomb."

NEWSIE (O.S.)
Extra! Extra! New Year's Eve Edition!

Norville's hand ENTERS FRAME to push the newspaper away and leave us looking up the empty street. Norville's back ENTERS as he stumbles off alone up the street, pulling up his coat collar as he recedes, the NEWSIE's VOICE continuing:

NEWSIE (O.S.)
...Ring out the old! Ring in the new!

CLOSE ON NORVILLE

trudging. VOICES WELL UP, ECHOING. A face looms with each voice, hellishly lit, superimposed over the walking Norville:

VOICES (V.O.)
...You're not so slow but you're not so swell either and it looks like you're an imbecile after all...
Noooo, I don't guess you will be here long... Sure, sure, but even there they called you dipstick... lamebrain... dope... schmoe... And is this sap from chumpsville?!...
imbecile after all... Norville, you let me down... You let Mrs. Eisenhower down... You let the American people down... imbecile after all...
imbecile... I predict you're going to lose all the good things your ideas brought you... Please, buddy...!
When you're dead, ya stay dead...
Sure, sure, the kid's screwy -- it's official...

This last voice and supered face is Mussburger's.

Norville DISSOLVES away to leave us ON Sidney in the:

INT. BOARDROOM

Hellishly bottom-lit board members sit around the table, conical New Year's hats on their heads. Mussburger, the only one not wearing a cap, waves his cigar as he continues to talk:

MUSSBURGER

...The barred-window boys are out looking for him now, and we'll see how Wall Street likes the news that the President of Hudsucker Industries is headed for the booby-hatch. Why, when the doc gets through with him he'll need diapers and a dribble cup...

The board murmurs appreciatively.

MUSSBURGER

...Let me remind you that our secret post-New Year's party will be held in the office of the President shortly after midnight tonight. Remember, it's strictly stag, so leave the wives at home; we'll be showing some films and, yes, gentlemen, there will be exotic dancers.

Louder murmuring. One board member leers, a trace of spittle at the corner of his mouth.

MUSSBURGER

Well, if that's all...

With an unnatural rumble he straightens his papers and we...

JUMP UP TO:

HIGH NIGHTMARISH DUTCH ANGLE

of the assembled around the table.

ALL

Long live the Hud!

NORVILLE

Norville trudges on, faster, sweatier.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ring out the old! Ring in the new...!

People come and go, laughing, talking, blowing noisemakers, making merry.

VOICE (O.S.)
...Ring out the old! Ring in the
new! Ring out the --

Thoomp!! Norville has run into someone. He looks up, dazed.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, watch where you're -- Say, buddy!

It is Buzz, the elevator boy, dressed in an ill-fitting tuxedo and a conical party hat. Za-Za is on his arm, towering over him, leering at Norville.

NORVILLE
-- Uh... Buzz, I'm sorry, I -- Buzz,
you gotta forgive me! I shouldn't a
fired you, I didn't know what I was
doing! I was a little funny in the
head, I --

BUZZ
Aw, buddy, I don't care about that.

Norville is stunned.

NORVILLE
...You don't?

BUZZ
Nah, that's all forgotten.

NORVILLE
...It is?

BUZZ
Sure, Mr. Muss -- uh, Sid said I
could have the job back.

NORVILLE
Absolutely, Buzz, I'm glad he --

BUZZ
But he told me you stole that swell
hoop idea from me. What gives!

NORVILLE
But, Buzz --

BUZZ
Say, that was a swell idea!

NORVILLE
But, Buzz, you know I never --

BUZZ
And Sid says you stole it!

NORVILLE

But Buzz --

ZA-ZA

Well wuddya waiting for, Clarence --
? Pop him one!

Boffo!

Buzz swings and Norville hits the snow hard.

BUZZ

Think about that, idea man!!

Norville groggily raises his head.

PASSERBY

Say, isn't he that lunatic?

Norville looks dopily up at the people in furs and party hats starting to gather.

VOICES

...that big-shot faker... the Wall
Street fraud guy... nuttier than a
fruitcake... they say he's a menace...
wuddya waitin' for, call a cop!...

We hear SIRENS.

Norville staggers to his feet. The crowd cringes.

VOICES

...He's on his feet... We can take
him!

Norville bursts through the crowd, running.

Buzz starts giving chase, followed by the braver souls,
followed by the entire mob.

NORVILLE

runs, gasping, turning a corner.

VOICES

...Down here! He went down here!

Behind Norville, the crowd rounds the corner, led by Buzz.

A VAN is SCREECHING to a halt and out jump two burly unshaven men in white, one of them holding open a straitjacket, the other carrying a large butterfly net. They join in the chase.

Norville turns down an alley. A DRUNK drooping off a lamppost gaily waves a bottle at him.

DRUNK

Ring out the old! Ring in the new!

The crowd is running past the mouth of the alley, missing the turn-off.

LIMESTONE FLOOR

Norville, gasping, crashes down INTO FRAME, his hands breaking his fall against the limestone. The CAMERA SPINS NINETY DEGREES to reveal that it is not floor but wall he has run into and is now leaning against. Norville looks up, sweating, gasping.

HIS POV

The massive Hudsucker Building looms dizzily up towards the stars, capped by the huge Hudsucker Clock.

DISTANT VOICES (O.S.)

Ring out the old! Ring in the new!

HUDESUCKER LOBBY

Norville staggers in. A gust of icy air that comes in with him flaps a dropcloth off a huge shape that dominates the lobby:

It is the heroic statue of Norville that we earlier saw him posing for.

Norville reels over to it, stares dumbly.

STATUE

Mutely -- mockingly -- dignified.

NORVILLE

He staggers off to the elevators.

MUSSBURGER'S OFFICE

We are TRACKING ACROSS the office TOWARD Mussburger, his feet up on his desk, laughing demonically, smoking his cigar. CLICK-CLICK-CLICK-CLICK -- the PERPETUAL MOTION BALLS swing on his desk; THRUMMMMM -- the SWEEP SECOND HAND of the clock, illuminated now, casts a moving shadow that rolls across the floor. Evil prevails.

A piece of paper and a pencil lie on his desk; as we APPROACH WE PAN DOWN and SWING AROUND to read it, LOSING Mussburger but still hearing his LAUGHTER.

MOVING IN ON THE PAPER:

Mussucker Industries. Hudberger Industries. Sidsucker Industries. This last alternative has been circled in red. Below it has been scribbled:

Sidney J. Mussburger, President.

Evil LAUGHTER. Sweeping shadows.

CUT TO:

NORVILLE'S OFFICE DOOR

We are TRACKING IN TOWARD the back of Aloysius, the sign painter, who is stooped in front of the door. He looks back over his shoulder, leering PAST the CAMERA, to reveal his work: Under PRESIDENT Norville's name has been scraped away, and painted in is SIDNEY J. MUSSBUR...

NORVILLE

He pushes past the sign painter.

INT. OFFICE

Dark and empty. Norville is peeling off his coat as he staggers over to the closet.

We can hear DISTANT REVELRY and the STRAINS of "AULD LANG SYNE."

Norville has pulled his old mailroom apron from the closet and is putting it on: HUDSUCKER MAIL ROOM/The Future Is Now.

Norville looks at the door.

THROUGH the glass we see the tail of the last R of "Mussburger" being painted into place.

Norville throws open the window.

WIND WHISTLES.

He climbs out.

LEDGE

Norville, back against the wall, looks cautiously down.

We hear DISTANT CHANTING:

VOICES (V.O.)

Ten... nine... eight... seven...

HIS POV

A sickening drop. Receding snowflakes. On the street far, far below, a lone car's headlights cut through the falling snow.

VOICES (V.O.)

Six... five... four...

WIDER ON NORVILLE

We are FLOATING IN; it is the SHOT with which the movie began.

The sweep second hand of the Hudsucker Clock is approaching the 12 of midnight, the New Year. In sync with the clock the CHANTING continues:

VOICES (V.O.)

Three... two...

We have COME IN CLOSE ON Norville. A lone tear runs down his cheek.

VOICES (V.O.)

...One...

BONG! The toll is right at Norville's ear. Startled, he reaches up to press hands against his ears. Distantly:

VOICES (V.O.)

Happy New Year!

BONG!!

He can't stand it. Whimpering, hands to his ears, he edges his way back toward the window.

HIS POV

The open window at a steep angle. Someone inside slides it shut.

BACK TO SCENE

Norville waves.

NORVILLE

No --

BONG!!

His gesticulation and a shuffle step upset his balance -- he trips -- falls -- catches the ledge --

NORVILLE

-- No, please!

He is hanging onto the icy ledge by his fingertips. His feet dangle away. Snow falls.

HIS POV

Looking STEEPLY UP.

CLOCK

Its second hand is making its descent.

NORVILLE

Falling.

MUSSBURGER

Laughing.

SECOND HAND

Descending.

NORVILLE

Falling, turning lazily in the air -- and suddenly, with a great moaning sound -- he stops, suspended in mid-air, head down, feet in the air.

It is much like the freeze frame on Waring Hudsucker that the title of the film was supered over.

He waves his arms, to no effect, looks around.

PEOPLE IN STREET

Frozen in attitudes of laughter, celebration. Snow sifts silently down around their motionless bodies.

MUSSBURGER

In his office, frozen with an idiotic laugh pasted to his face.

HIS PERPETUAL MOTION BALLS

Frozen, one ball swung out but suspended, hanging at the apex of its arc. Outside the great arched window, snow falls.

NORVILLE

He alone can move, but doesn't fall. He looks awkwardly about, his body in a dive-bomber attitude, canted steeply down.

EXT. HUDSUCKER CLOCK

Its sweep second hand is arrested on its downward sweep.

WHINING NOISES emanate from within.

CLOSE SHOT - GREAT GEAR

The broom handle has been jammed between two cogs, stopping them. We PULL BACK ALONG the handle to reveal Moses, who has thrust it there, and who now TURNS back over his shoulder to address the CAMERA.

MOSES

Strictly speakin', I'm never spozed to do this but... have you got a better idea?

NORVILLE

Twisting back to look up over his shoulder; there is a DISTANT -- very distant -- SINGING.

HIS POV

Looking up the length of the Hudsucker Building. Someone or something wrapped in white is flying toward us, coming down from the stars.

We can make out a male voice, accompanied by STRUMMING:

VOICE (V.O.)

She'll be comin' around the mountain
when she comes, She'll be comin'
around the mountain when she comes...

NORVILLE

He gapes.

ANGEL

-- For it is an Angel, arrives. He is a balding man, wearing rimless glasses, in a white robe, large feathery wings sprouting from his back and beating heavily until he comes to rest, in midair. He puts aside the harp he has been strumming on a nearby windowsill.

ANGEL

Love that tune. How ya doin', kid?

NORVILLE

Mr... Mr. Hudsucker?

HUDSUCKER (ANGEL)

Ta-daaaa!

Presenting himself, he spreads his arms and stamps his forward foot, forgetting that there is nothing beneath his foot to stamp. He lurches forward, momentarily losing his balance.

HUDSUCKER

...Wooooo!

He rights himself. The halo spinning lazily over his head has been jarred askew. With a flick of his forefinger he rights it.

HUDSUCKER

...How d'ya like this thing? They're
all wearin' em upstairs now.

He blows a dismissive raspberry.

HUDSUCKER

...It's a fad.

He pats at his robe, produces a white cigar.

HUDSUCKER

...Anyway. I hear you've been having,
uh...

He casually flicks his thumb out of his fist, lighting it.
He lights the cigar off his thumb, takes a puff.

HUDSUCKER

...Been having some problems with
the board. The more things change,
know what Iyayayeeeeeee...

Pain reminds him that he has forgotten to extinguish his
flaming thumb, which he now waves frantically about.

HUDSUCKER

...Jesus Christopher -- That smarts...
Where was I? Oh yeah, the board. I
guess Sidney's been puttin' the screws
to ya, huh, Norman?

NORVILLE

Norville.

HUDSUCKER

Mm. Well, say what you like about
the man's ethics, he's a balls-to-
the-wall businessman. Beat ya any
way he can. Straight for the jugular.
Very effective.

NORVILLE

Yes sir...

HUDSUCKER

Anyway. Any particular reason you
didn't give him my Blue Letter? I
mean, Jesus, Norman, just a dying
man's last words and wishes, no big
deal.

NORVILLE

Huh? Oh, geez, Mr. Hudsucker, I
apologize, there was an awful lot of
excitement and I guess I must've
mislaidd --

HUDSUCKER

It's sittin' in your apron pocket,
right where you left it. Imbecile.

Norville reaches in and -- pulls out the wrinkled Blue Letter.

NORVILLE

Oh, geez.

HUDSUCKER

Failure to deliver a Blue Letter is
grounds for dismissal.

NORVILLE

Geez, I --

HUDSUCKER

Ah, it's New Year's, I'm not gonna add to your woes. I'm just saying.

NORVILLE

Yessir.

HUDSUCKER

Well, why don't ya read it.

NORVILLE

Sir?

HUDSUCKER

Yeah, go ahead. Might learn somethin'.

NORVILLE

Yes sir...

He tears open the envelope, reads:

NORVILLE

'From the desk of Waring Hudsucker. To. Sidney J. Mussburger. Regarding. My demise. Dear Sid. By the time you read this, I will have joined the organization upstairs -- an exciting new beginning. I will retain fond memories of the many years you and I --
,

HUDSUCKER

Yeah, yeah, it's the standard resignation boilerplate -- go down to the second paragraph.

NORVILLE

'Many years, uh... I know that you will be wondering why I have decided to move on, ending my tenure at Hudsucker, and here on Earth. You will be thinking, Why now, when things are going so well? Granted, from the standpoint of our balance sheet and financials, sure, sure, we're doing fine. However, Sid. These things have long since ceased to give me pleasure. I look at myself now and no longer see the idealistic young man who started this company. Now I see only an empty shell whom others call a 'success.' How has this come to pass? When and why did I trade all of my hopes, dreams and aspirations, for the emptiness of

power and wealth? What the heck have
I done?

As Norville reads Hudsucker casually examines his fingernails,
then pats down a yawn.

NORVILLE

'...Looking back now, Sid, I see
that I allowed time and age to corrupt
my dreams. Instead of fiercely
guarding what was timeless inside of
myself, I let the hubbub of earthly
commerce erode my character, and
dissolve my better self. How is it
that some manage to preserve
themselves where I have failed?
Sidney, I do not know. Perhaps if
others love you, you may more securely
love yourself -- but I am alone. I
loved a woman once, Sid, as you well
know -- a beautiful, vibrant lady,
an angel who in her wisdom saw fit
to choose you instead of I...'

Norville is interrupted by loud blubbering. He looks up.

Hudsucker is weeping loudly into a white handkerchief.

He sniffs at his nose, gives it a loud honk, and urgently
quavers in a voice strangled with emotion:

HUDSUCKER

Skip this part...

He waves his hankie in get-on-with-it circles.

HUDSUCKER

...Last paragraph, last paragraph.

Norville looks down the page.

NORVILLE

'...And so, Sid, the future does not
belong to such as I -- nor even you.
We have made our compromises with
time. The future belongs to the young,
who may more energetically wage the
battle against corruption.
Accordingly, in the spirit of hope,
and the ringing in of the new, I
hereby bequeath my entire interest
in the company, and my seat on the
board, to whomever is Hudsucker's
most recent employee at the time of
my demise. I know this will disappoint
you -- you, Sid, who have served so
diligently and for so long. But --'

HUDSUCKER

-- tough titty toenails!

He roars with laughter.

HUDSUCKER

...That'll show the bastard!

He merrily wipes his eyes.

HUDSUCKER

...Yeah, go ahead.

NORVILLE

'...But Sid, let me urge you to work closely with the new president, and to keep giving Hudsucker Industries all your energies -- but not your soul. For while we must strive for success, we must not worship it. Long live the Hud. Waring Hudsucker...'

Norville gives a musingly appreciative nod.

HUDSUCKER

...Geez.

Pleased with himself:

HUDSUCKER

Yup. It's all there. Well, see that it gets delivered in the morning.

Hudsucker picks up his lyre and heads back up toward the stars.

HUDSUCKER

Sheeel beeee...

MUSSBURGER'S OFFICE

Mussburger still sits frozen in his chair. Outside the great arched window Hudsucker rises, through the falling snow, on his way back to the heavens.

HUDSUCKER

...Ridin' six white horses, She'll be ridin' six white horses She'll be ridin' six white horses When she comes...

We hear a great WRENCHING SOUND from the GEAR ROOM next door.

GEAR ROOM

Moses pries the broom handle loose from the Great Gear.

With a LOW MOAN the CLOCKWORKS start to shudder and turn --

SWEEP SECOND HAND

Lurching forward --

PERPETUAL MOTION BALL

Swinging down --

EXT. PAVEMENT

As Norville falls the last few feet and lands on his face with one last mighty BONG of the HUDSUCKER CLOCK.

BOOM DOWN

FROM a tavern sign that says ANN'S 440, DOWN TO the front door, which Norville is entering.

INT. ANN'S

Sitting halfway down the bar is Amy, staring morosely into a coffee cup. AT the CUT we are TRACKING BACK, PULLING AWAY FROM her.

Norville enters, comes up next to her and makes the Go Eagles sign, hooking his thumbs in front of his nose and spreading his fingers.

Two familiar voices narrate the scene, sounding a little tipsy:

LOU (O.S.)

What the heck's he doin', Benny?

Amy looks at Norville, startled. After a moment she reciprocates the sign.

BENNY (O.S.)

What the heck's she doin', Lou?

LOU (O.S.)

What the heck they doin'?

Norville and Amy embrace.

BENNY (O.S.)

You know what they're doin' now,
Lou.

LOU (O.S.)

This I know, Benny.

BENNY (O.S.)

This you're familia' with.

Our PULL BACK ENDS LOOKING ACROSS an elbow of the bar, TOWARDS Norville and Amy, now in WIDE SHOT. Resting on the bar in the extreme f.g. are two champagne glasses, half-full of fizzing champagne.

Norville and Amy kiss.

LOU (O.S.)

...Geez.

BENNY (O.S.)

...Geez.

We hear LABORED, RASPY BREATHING.

LOU (O.S.)

...Y'all right, Benny?

In a quavering voice:

BENNY (O.S.)

...Yeah, I'm... It's just... It's beautiful, Lou!

Lou also is beginning to sound choked up:

LOU (O.S.)

It is beautiful, Benny.

Almost weeping as Norville and Amy continue their embrace:

BENNY (O.S.)

...It's the most beautiful t'ing I ever saw.

LOU (O.S.)

It's the most beautiful t'ing I ever saw.

A BARTENDER ENTERS to BLOCK our VIEW of Norville and Amy.

He is youngish, with a beat goatee, wearing dungarees and a sweatshirt with cut-off sleeves. He looks to either side at Benny and Lou.

BARTENDER

You cats comin' from a party?

BENNY

Cabbies' affair.

LOU

Hacks' New Year's gala.

BARTENDER

Crazy. Get you anything else? Sangria?
Carrot juice? Herbal tea?

REVERSE ANGLE

We see Benny and Lou are sitting side by side at the bar.

Lou wears a fake wispy beard and white eyebrows and a long

flowing robe; he holds a fake scythe. On the bar next to him sits a large hourglass.

LOU

Bromo.

Benny is wearing nothing but an oversized diaper, a baby bonnett and a sash across his hairy chest and thick belly that says "1959."

He chucks himself in the heart, cocks his head and sucks in air, then blows it back out.

BENNY

...Bromo.

BLUE LETTER

Lying on the boardroom table. As a hand enters to lay a wristwatch on the table next to it, we hear the voice of Moses, the old maintenance man.

MOSES (V.O.)

And so began 1959. The new year...

The hand reenters to lay down a wallet, and then to deposit a burning cigar in an ashtray.

MOSES (V.O.)

...And the start of a new business cycle. When he learned that Norville owned the comp'ny, ol' Sidney was upset at first.

We TILT UP to show that Mussburger is walking toward the boardroom window. Board members silently remonstrate with him as he tries to wrench it open.

MOSES (V.O.)

...It's a good thing Doc Bromfenbrenner was there...

Doctor Bromfenbrenner stands to one side watching, brow furrowed, a pencil pressed to his lips.

MOSES (V.O.)

...'cause he was able to keep Sidney from harmin' his ol' self.

We...

CUT TO:

BARRED DOOR

being slammed behind Sidney who, straight-jacketed, is puffing on a cigar as he is led away.

MOSES (V.O.)

...Now Norville, he went on an' ruled
with wisdom and compassion...

BOARDROOM

Again. Norville is eagerly pointing at a design he has up on an easel: Under the heading BRAND NEW is a large circle. The side view is a flat line.

MOSES (V.O.)
...and started dreamin' up them
excitin' new ideas again. You know,
for kids!

The board members look at the design, puzzled.

Norville takes a drop cloth off of a piece of plastic on a pedestal. He has the board's complete attention.

MOSES (V.O.)
...An' that's the story of how
Norville Barnes climbed away up to
the forty-fourth floor of the
Hudsucker Buildin'...

He picks up the plastic disc and as he sails it we...

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE

As it floats out the boardroom window.

MOSES (V.O.)
...an' then fell all the way down,
but didn't quite squish hisself.

We BOOM UP, AWAY FROM the boardroom, to the great Hudsucker Clock.

MOSES (V.O.)
...Ya know, they say there was a man
who jumped from the fortyfifth
floor... but that's another story.
Heh-heh-heh! Ya-heh-heh-heh!

We FADE OUT on the clock as Moses' LAUGHTER grows distant and END MUSIC SWELLS.

THE END