

THE MAN WHO MADE ELVIS LAUGH

by

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Based On The Book "The Warm Up" by Sammy Shore

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FADE IN:

EXT. MASQUERS COMEDY CLUB, LOS ANGELES -- NIGHT

This is where old comics go to die. Flanked by a pornographic equipment store and a HOOKER, time has left a fossil.

A BLUE HONDA CIVIC SCREECHES to a halt, almost killing the VALET. A HANDICAP AIR FRESHENER dangles from the rear view.

VALET

Sir, are you alright?

SAMMY SHORE (70, but spry) in dark glasses, with curly silver locks under a black baseball cap gets out with some effort.

SAMMY

Jesus christ, they used *that* picture.

On the Marquee is a very stupid looking picture of Sammy. He hands his keys to the valet and grabs his wheelee suitcase.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Forty years ago I wouldn't have stopped to look at this place - now I'm headlining it.

SAMMY

(to Valet)

Keep it close.

INT. MASQUERS -- MOMENTS LATER

Red velvet walls, pictures of 1930's movie stars and a room full of small round tables. A CROWD OF GERIATRICALS decked in gaudy gold jewelry and sequined shirts populate the dimly lit nightclub, many, wearing dentures. Sammy wheels his suitcase into the back where a guy holding a video camera, DAVID (27) is video taping - apparently nothing.

SAMMY

What are you filming? A chair?

DAVID

This place is great. I mean the atmosphere is really... old.

SAMMY (V.O.)

David was a kid from film school doing a documentary on what it was like to be too old, too tired and too stupid to quit comedy.

DAVID

Hey Sammy, you want me to get some shots of the crowd?

The place is half empty.

SAMMY

Yeah, sure get the crowd. Make sure you get that lady with all the mascara. If things don't go well we can rob her and pawn her jewelry.

DAVID

I'm feelin' it.

GUS(50's, manager)gives Sammy shit from behind the bar.

GUS

You're late!

SAMMY

For what? Where's Phil? He should be on now?

GUS

Phil's in the hospital.

SAMMY

What do you mean the hospital?

GUS

He was bangin' that young wife of his and he had a stroke.

SAMMY

Jesus, I hope nobody got hurt.

GUS

He needs to stop with all that Viagra. A man his age doesn't need to have an orgy.

SAMMY

Phil's my age... What orgy?

GUS

There was some hooker involved. Look, I need you to do the whole night.

SAMMY

I can't do the whole night Gus, I...

GUS

Who's that kid with the video?

SAMMY

Don't worry about him. He's with me.

GUS

Yeah, well if he bugs one more person with that goddamn camera I'm throwing him out.

SAMMY

Gus, I can't do the whole night - I have to meet my son and I was only planning on doing the one set like we discussed...

GUS

Listen, Sammy, you do good tonight and I'll have you back next week.

Dishes CRASH in the back kitchen.

SAMMY

You still gonna be open next week?

Gus grabs a towel and rushes to the back, now pissed.

GUS

Don't take too long. You're late as it is.

BACKSTAGE -

Sammy pulls an OLD TRUMPET from his suitcase. He spies David videotaping the geriatric crowd.

SAMMY (V.O.)

These kids'll make a movie about anything these days. Eating dirt becomes a hit TV show. Doing chores is big time entertainment. Crowd? Where were they when there really was a crowd? More people show up to a funeral than this.

Sammy's hand starts to shake. Sweat forms on his brow.

FRONT OF STAGE -

The lights go down - a nervous MC steps up to the mic.

MC

...And we are out of the Halibut, but there is still some of the prime rib special for \$12.95... So let's have a big round of applause - Ladies and gentlemen, Sammy Shore.

Scattered APPLAUSE -

A spotlight centers on Sammy as he grabs the mic.

SAMMY

Everyone get that? The prime rib special is only \$12.95 marked down from yesterday when it was \$19.95. How are you sir...

Sammy fucks with the audience a bit then goes into his "GETTING OLD" routine with confidence that comes years of performing. A 70 year old man transforms into a 50 year old spitfire before our eyes. The crowd quickly warms up to his endearing charm and it is clear that he is in his element.

Sammy pulls out his beaten up OLD TRUMPET.

SAMMY

I used to take trumpet lessons when I was a kid. And if you don't mind I'd like to play something for you all - to help digest your discounted food.

Sammy blows the trumpet - totally off key - the crowd laughs.

SAMMY

My father used to love listening to me play my trumpet. This one was his favorite...

He blows again, off key and people are hysterical.

A SMALL OLD MAN, about 5 feet tall, dressed in a tweed suit, skirts the shadows at the back of the room. The man is SAMMY's FATHER, HYMAN - only he's been dead for over 50 years and the sight of this ghost stops Sammy cold.

Sweating and out of breath, Sammy tries to see through the blinding lights - but can't make out the face.

HYMAN'S VOICE

Samelah, my Samelah...

David pulls the video camera away - something's wrong.

SAMMY

My father... My...

Sammy stammers and falls to the floor flat on his face. The crowd GASPS. David rushes the stage.

PEOPLE looking over Sammy.

RANDOM VOICES

Is he dead? He looks dead. Somebody get a doctor. Keep it rolling, maybe this is part of his act...

GUS

That's it! I've had it with these old timers. Ronda! Call the ambulance, we've got another one!

Commotion. PARAMEDICS rush in and hover over him asking questions he can't answer while jamming IV's into his veins.

SAMMY (V.O.)

My agent wanted more action on my reel and now he's got it... Sixty years of comedy and I end up here, flat on my back at Masquers. Is this where old comics go to die...

TIME CUT TO:

INT. 936 NORTH WELLS ST. APARTMENT, CHICAGO - 1943 -- DAY

SAMMY (9) runs upstairs holding his TRUMPET in his hands.

IN THE LIVING ROOM -

Waiting patiently is Sammy's FAMILY - his MOTHER, LENA (short, round jewish), his two older brothers BERNARD(27) and PHIL(21), and his FATHER, HYMAN (5' tall, rail thin).

LENA

Sammy's here! Everyone sit down. Sit down. Sammy's going to play a song.

HYMAN

Finally I get to hear what two dollars a week in trumpet lessons is buying me.

Sammy pulls out his sheet music and plays "A TISKET A TASKET".

As he finishes the painful last notes, everyone applauds except Hyman - who gets up.

HYMAN

For this you made me close the store? Sammy... You STINK!

Hyman storms out as Lena walks over and grabs Sammy by the chin, stroking his long curly locks.

LENA

You were wonderful. Just like Henny James.

SAMMY (V.O.)

My descent to mediocrity started when I was very young...

INT. THE FLAMINGO, LAS VEGAS - 1969 -- NIGHT

SAMMY SHORE (42) is on stage to a PACKED ROOM full of swanky players. Sammy riffs on the crowd doing his famous "Brother Sam - Preacher routine" like a man in his prime.

SAMMY

Can I get an Amen...

AMEN!

SAMMY

Can I get a Hallelujah!

HALLELUJAH!

SAMMY

Do you wanna be saved!

YEAH!

SAMMY

Then jump! Jump up here and gimme
your money!

NO!

SAMMY

Then go to hell!

The BAND starts playing as Sammy takes a bow.

SAMMY

(ad-libs jokes about
Tom Jones)

...Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to
introduce you to the man with the
finest collection of ladies
undergarments this side of Paris,
Mr. Tom Jones...

TOM JONES walks out from the side of the stage LAUGHING his
ass off and gives Sammy a big hug.

TOM JONES

(laughing)

You are one funny son of a bitch!

Sammy grabs him and kisses Tom on the lips. The crowd goes
crazy. Tom turns RED. Sammy bows and walks off.

TOM JONES (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, lets hear it
for Sammy Shore.

BACKSTAGE -

Sammy is greeted with hugs and handshakes from IMPORTANT
LOOKING PEOPLE as he makes his way to -

HIS DRESSING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy is on the phone with a towel around his neck. He pours
himself a glass of J&B Scotch as he talks.

SAMMY

(in Phone)

I can't come home tonight, Alex wants
me here 'til monday. They want me
opening for Tom for another three
weeks... I know it's fantastic. Put
Pauly on... Hey Pauly...

A KNOCK on the door. Sammy BABY-TALKS to his son over the
phone as he answers the door.

Standing there is BILL MILLER (50) the Entertainment Director
of the Flamingo Hotel.

BILL

Brother Sam! I'd like to introduce
you to someone...

SAMMY

Hey Bill...

(in phone)

Ok Pauly, put mommy back on the
phone... just a sec, Bill... Good
crowd tonight...

(in phone)

...Mitzi?

A fat man wearing a straw hat and chomping a cigar enters
and sizes up the room. This man is COLONEL PARKER (60, 5'9"
225) - behind him in dark glasses is ELVIS PRESLEY (34).

BILL

Elvis and the Colonel would like to
meet you. They just caught your
show.

SAMMY

(dumbstruck)

Hold on a second, Mitzi...

CLICK - hangs up phone.

COLONEL

Brother Sam! You are one funny
somebitch!

Colonel grabs Sammy's hand and shakes it. His southern drawl
is almost too much.

COLONEL

I like that black preacher thing you do. Reminds me of back home. Shake hands with Elvis...

Sammy and Elvis shake hands. Elvis smiles like a kid.

ELVIS

Really liked your show Sammy.

SAMMY

It's an honor to meet you.

BILL

How would you like to do the warm up for Elvis at the new International Hotel in three weeks? Elvis and the Colonel would love to have you in the show.

SAMMY

You want me to open for Elvis?

BILL

We all agreed you'd work very well with Elvis. What do you say?

Shock.

SAMMY

I'd be honored and thrilled to share the same stage with...

BILL

Great! I'll call your agents tomorrow and work out the details.

Bill ends the deal and shuttles Elvis and the Colonel out.

COLONEL

Goddamn good news!
(mimics Sammy's act)
Can I get a hallelujah!

Sammy squeaks out:

SAMMY

Hallelujah...

Elvis grabs Sammy's hand shakes it.

ELVIS

(laughing)
That cracks me up brother Sam. Good to have you on board.

Sammy stares at The King's hand - his jewels - his perfect skin. Bill winks at Sammy as they exit to SCREAMS of fans.

Sammy slumps into the couch, taking in what just happened.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Was I dead? Was this heaven? It took me a minute to remember who I was and that I just hung up on my wife and son.

Sammy grabs the phone - starts to dial - then stops.

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was too easy. Nothing like this ever happens to me. Then I remembered a conversation I had with Bill and Alex Shoofey - the entertainment director of The International - a few weeks ago.

INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL -- NIGHT

Superimposed title: *A Few Weeks Ago*

Sammy, hyped from having just come off the stage, wades through the crowd and goes straight for the BAR. Tom Jones and his band are rocking on stage in the background.

AT THE BACK BAR -

Sammy slides up next to JOYCE (24, dishy blonde) and pretends that he doesn't notice her or her FRIENDS.

Sammy pounds the bar with his fist.

SAMMY

J&B and water. Double.

He turns and looks the buxom blonde up and down.

SAMMY

Triple.

(to Joyce)

I had no idea the Miss America competition was here tonight.

JOYCE

Are you that comedian who was just on stage?

SAMMY

Comedian? Where? I thought this place was restricted.

JOYCE

It was you.

SAMMY

You got me. Now where do you want to take me?

He grabs her hand and kisses it.

JOYCE

I don't think it's right to make fun of Jesus. He died for our sins...

SAMMY

My dear, dear girl... When did you escape from the convent?

JOYCE

Oh I'm not from a convent...

SAMMY

You're not?

JOYCE

No. I'm from Texas.

BILL MILLER - the Entertainment Director of the Flamingo Hotel grabs Sammy.

BILL

Sammy, fantastic job tonight.

SAMMY

Thanks. I was just discussing the religious nature of my work with...

JOYCE

Joyce.

BILL

Ah...

SAMMY

Joyce just escaped from a convent in Texas.

Sammy winks at her. Bill smiles at the Texas Beauty and shakes her hand.

BIIL

I hope you and your friends are enjoying the show.

JOYCE

Oh, yeah. I love Tom Jones. He's a dream.

SAMMY

Joyce and I are going to perform scenes from the Old Testament later on...

(to Bill)

You still keep a Bible in the nightstand drawer in this joint, right?

BILL

Of course. Jesus is our friend.

SAMMY

That's room 519.

Bill calls the BARTENDER.

BILL

Mickey, a round of drinks...

(to Joyce)

You don't mind if I borrow Sammy for a bit? I promise to bring him right back.

(beat)

Let's take a ride.

INT. FLAMINGO - CASINO FLOOR

Bill and Sammy, drink in hand, navigate the bustling casino.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Typically when someone with as much pull as Bill asks you to take ride - it means you're in deep shit. But this was the good times. 1969 in Las Vegas. All my years of struggling were starting to pay off.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP -- NIGHT

Bill and Sammy get into a LIMO and drive out of the Flamingo.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Everywhere you went you could feel the electric pulse of a city on the brink of reinventing itself.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP (GLAMOUR MONTAGE) -- NIGHT

Sammy's POV of the glittering neon metropolis.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Anyone who was anyone were here in Vegas. This is before the corporations turned it into Disneyland and right at the beginning of the end of the Mafia.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()

It was the time of the entertainer. The world looked to Las Vegas and saw the American dream played out in technicolor slot machines, night after night. Don Rickels, Woody Allen and Pat Cooper were working along side giants like Bill Cosby, Sammy Davis Jr., and Dean Martin. This was the time of the Lounge act - when big time entertainers shared an intimacy with the audience that doesn't exist today.

IN THE LIMO -

Bill introduces ALEX SHOOFEY (40) to Sammy. He points to a massive hotel that is in construction: THE INTERNATIONAL. Small by today's standards but impressive none the less - The International Hotel is now the Las Vegas Hilton.

ALEX

That's The International. My new baby. Gonna be the biggest property in the world when we finish it.

SAMMY

You sure its big enough? There's still some patches of desert you can build on...

ALEX

A thousand rooms. I think that's big enough...

SAMMY (V.O.)

A Thousand rooms! It sounded ridiculous at the time...

SAMMY

How you gonna fill a thousand rooms?

ALEX

Oh, we're not too worried about that. How's your wife... Mitzi?

SAMMY

My wife? How could you bring up family at a time like this.

BILL

Just wondering how she feels about you being away for so long.

SAMMY

She's used to it. As long as I send the checks to the right address...

ALEX

She doesn't mind you being away?

SAMMY

I hope your not asking me to quit my day job and help you finish building your hotel. I become violently ill at the thought of manual labor. A thousand rooms...

Alex and Bill smile at Sammy and refills his glass with J&B.

SAMMY (V.O.)

They were sizing me up. Shoofey was doing what any successful business man does before making a deal, he was stacking the deck in his favor. What I didn't know then but soon found out was that Colonel Tom Parker was into Bill and his associates for several million dollars. Colonel was a gamblin' man, and Elvis was the cash register. Only Elvis in 1969 was a *has-been* - out of the spotlight for 12 years - eclipsed by the British Invasion and the Summer of Love - The Colonel still spent like the money kept rolling in. Shoofey's plan was to sign Elvis to an exclusive contract at his new hotel - for five years - forgiving The Colonel of his gambling debts. Of course all this had to happen like The Colonel came up with the idea - and why not? Elvis was ready for re-invention. The nostalgia craze was just coming in. Alex knew they needed someone young, and edgy that The Colonel approved to open for Elvis. He also knew that whoever he picked could not take attention from the King. I was the safest bet. A perpetual up and comer - but with legs that could stand the pressure. Bill and Alex knew that if they primed me just right - I would impress Elvis and the Colonel just enough for him to have his deal.

INT. DR. EARL WOODS OFFICE, BEVERLY HILLS -- MORNING

DR. EARL WOODS (45, tall, black & handsome) sits behind his desk opening his mail as Sammy paces around the office.

SAMMY

I mean I'm I'm I'm standing there like a paraplegic shaking hands with

SAMMY

Elvis. I almost threw up. Right there. It took all of my strength not to vomit all over the King... Are you listening to me, Earl?

Earl seems unfazed - he's heard this all before.

EARL

Bills, bills and bills... What kind of shoes was he wearing?

SAMMY

What kind of... What am I, a cobbler?

EARL

It's just a question...

SAMMY

I couldn't see his shoes - a diamond ring the size of my fist was blocking the view.

Earl peers over his READING GLASSES.

EARL

Your very tense.

SAMMY

Elvis had Beatle boots and the Colonel was wearing high heels... Happy?

EARL

You need to learn to relax, Sammy. Enjoy the little things. It's the little things in life we remember and make us who we are.

SAMMY

This is what I pay you \$25 an hour for. "Relax, your tense." Christ, Earl - I knew that when I got up this morning.

EARL

I'm your friend Sam. We're just having a conversation.

SAMMY

Conversation. Uh huh...

Sammy grabs the mail off Earl's desk and rips it into little pieces.

EARL

Why did you do that.

Sammy turns to walk out.

SAMMY

We're friends, Earl. I did you a favor. Don't worry, they'll send more next month.

EARL

(as Sammy leaves)

Send Mitzi my love. And enjoy the moment.. You won one!

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS -- DAY

Sammy drives his brand new 1969 JAGUAR XKE CONVERTIBLE.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Earl was my best friend. He had listened to me rant and rave for years. We met after a show at the bar and had drinks - the next thing I know I'm his patient. He was at every show, always listening to me, calming me. But I needed more than Earl could give. This was war. My life, my future, my whole career was on the line.

EXT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, 8826 CLIFTON WAY, BEVERLY HILLS -- DAY

Sammy pulls the Jaguar into his driveway. The modest but impressive house is perfectly situated in the high rent area.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was making good money in Vegas at the time. First \$2500 a week opening for Trini Lopez at the Riviera in 1968 and was renting a house in Beverly Hills for \$275/month. In 1969 I was making \$3500 a week opening up for Tom Jones at the Flamingo. Professionally life was good. Personally I was an absolute wreck.

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

MITZI (30's) holds BABY PAULY in her arms as Sammy enters the house and goes right for the refrigerator.

MITZI

Tom Illius from William Morris called. He said I should talk to you about going to the show...

SAMMY

Where's the non-fat milk?

Sammy ignores her and pokes around inside the fridge.

MITZI

Did you hear me? Your agent called
and wants you to call him...

SAMMY

...All I ask for is you keep non fat
milk in the house and that's too
much...

She hands Pauly over to Sammy.

MITZI

I was going to the store to get your
milk but then Peter fell on his bike
and had to get stitches.

SAMMY

Is he OK?

PETER (5) walks in with a bandage on his knee.

PETER

Hey dad.

SAMMY

What happened to you?

PETER

I fell. It was nothing. Can I have
an apple?

SAMMY

Sure.

Peter grabs an apple and walks out.

Sammy looks outside at the pool - which is covered in leaves.

SAMMY

Why is the pool full of leaves?

MITZI

Tom said he could arrange for me to
be at the opening... and meet Elvis.

SAMMY

Oh Tom said he could, huh...

MITZI

He said it was up to you.

SAMMY

You know how I feel about you coming
to my shows. It's work...

MITZI

It's one show, Sammy...

SAMMY

Possibly my last. You know the pressure I'm on for this one show?

MITZI

Give me a break. You don't want me to be there just say it.

SAMMY

I don't want you to be there.

MITZI

Fine.

Mitzi grabs her car keys and storms out.

IN THE LIVING ROOM -

Sammy still holding Pauly, accosts Mitzi.

SAMMY

Mitzi, why is the pool full of leaves? I'm gone for a week and when I come home - the whole place is a wreck.

MITZI

I'm going to get your fat free milk. Don't worry - as soon as I get back I'll go out and skim the leaves off the goddamn pool. Anything else?

SAMMY

Mitzi, you know I love you. I'm just... I don't know what I am. I'm a wreck. If you want to come to the show, come to the show.

MITZI

Some people like it when they share their lives with each other. It's comforting, you know, to have a familiar face out there. Someone real. Not part of the act.

SAMMY

What are you saying?

MITZI

I guess I just wish I was that someone in your life.

SAMMY

Look, I'll talk to Tom and work things out.

SAMMY

He's the one who told me it would be impossible to get anyone in to see the...

MITZI

Forget it. I wouldn't go now.

SAMMY

Jesus Christ, what do you mean you won't go? I just told you you could go. Go... meet Elvis. Why not - everyone else in the world is going to be there... what's one more person? Pile it on.

MITZI

Yeah, one more person.

Mitzi leaves. Sammy watches her through the window.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I know what you're thinking... I didn't want her to go because there was another woman... Right? Well wrong. There's always another woman - whether you're opening for Elvis or playing some dive in Toluca Lake. The truth is Mitzi was my toughest critic. She was ruthless. And she had a great head for comedy - She didn't become the "Queen Of Comedy" running the Comedy Store in Hollywood by accident. But that's later. Now - she's my wife, my toughest critic, and knowing that she would be out there in the audience on the biggest night of my career -

INT. FRANK & MUSSO GRILL, HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Sammy watches Earl devour a steak.

SAMMY

I just want this to be over with already.

EARL

It'll be over before you know it. I'm telling you, enjoy the ride. It's not a competition...

MILTON BERLE walks over and pats Sammy on the shoulder.

MILTON

I heard the unfortunate news and I just came over to give my condolences.

MILTON
 Congratulations Sammy.

Berle shakes Sammy's hand and looks at Earl.

MILTON
 What is he nervous? What's he got
 to be nervous about? Opening for
 Elvis... and all the while I thought
 I was the king.

SAMMY
 Thank you. Thank you.

MILTON
 Knock 'em dead kid.

Berle and his ENTOURAGE leave gracefully.

SAMMY
 You see what I mean? It is a
 competition. Endless competition.

EARL
 What are you talking about?

SAMMY
 That little dig... Subtle, but
 effective.

EARL
 Uncle Milty did not make a dig at
 you. Sorry, but I was right here.
 The man just congratulated you and
 wished you success...

SAMMY
 He came over to see me squirm under
 pressure. Don't you see what's
 happening here?

EARL
 I see you acting like a paranoid
 maniac. Somebody should lock you
 up?

SAMMY
 I don't even know why they picked
 me. Then there's this thing with
 Mitzi. She's driving me crazy.
 Christ she makes me feel guilty about
 every little goddamn thing...

EARL
 You must be a joy to be married to.

SAMMY

I don't believe you're a doctor.

EARL

I'm your friend.

SAMMY

I'll remember that the next time I get your bill.

EARL

That's funny. See, I'm glad you can see the humor in your situation. Have you tried telling her how you feel?

SAMMY

She hears what she wants to hear...

EARL

She hears what you tell her. She believes what you show her.

SAMMY

What does that mean?

EARL

It means actions are louder than words. When was the last time you really showed her that you cared? Went out of your way and did something selfless just for her benefit?

SAMMY

Alright, Earl, now you're just pissing me off. Trying to turn this thing around and make it seem like it's all me.

Sammy gets up and throws cash on the table.

EARL

Sit down. Sit down, Come on. This is good. You are letting out your anger and that's healthy...

Sammy sits, calls the WAITER.

SAMMY

Waiter! Double J&B and water.

EARL

I got to say - that on stage you are one funny ass motherfucker. But off stage... it pains me to know that you drive a car...

SAMMY

Seriously Earl. She's driving me nuts.

EARL

You need to tell her exactly how you feel. Exactly.

SAMMY

That'll go over good. "Hey honey, you know you really make me a nervous wreck whenever you are around - your driving me to drink because you're so critical of my every move - But baby, I love you..."

Sammy smiles as his drink is placed in front of him.

EARL

If that's the way you feel Sammy, then why did you marry her?

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. COPACABANA NIGHT CLUB, NEW YORK - 1956 -- DAY

A drizzly day in the Big Apple. Sammy and Mitzi RUN through the rain into the Copa. On the marquee: KAYE STEVENS with Sammy Shore

INT. COPACABANA NIGHT CLUB, NEW YORK

Band Rehearsal. Sammy shakes off the rain and hands out wet sheet music to the BAND preparing to run through his routine.

SAMMY

I know it's a little wet, but see what you can do...

The band looks at him like he's a nut. He is.

SAMMY

Mitzi, let me get a towel...

Goes to the bar -

SAMMY

Can I get a towel or something.

The BARTENDER hands him a filthy wet bar towel.

SAMMY

Thanks. How about something with a little vermouth.

BARTENDER

Dry towels in the back.

Sammy smiles - heads off to the back. Mitzi sits at the bar, dripping.

BARTENDER

Here... This came this morning.

Bartender tosses a LETTER on the bar. It is addressed to Sammy Shore. She opens it and the blood drains from her face. She quickly hides it as Sammy returns with dry towels.

SAMMY

Here ya go Mitz. Why don't you go in the back, there's some food and stuff...

Sammy pops a towel over his head and rushes over to the band.

BACKSTAGE -

Mitzi watches as Sammy makes the band and staff LAUGH - She turns away reading the letter.

KAYE STEVENS (21, blonde) walks by - Mitzi hides the letter.

KAYE

He's funny. Your lucky. I'd rather have someone fun to be around than some gorgeous thing.

Kaye smiles and passes by.

CUT TO:

SAMMY REHEARSING THE BAND - as Mitzi grabs her coat and heads for the door. He stops the band and rushes to her.

AT THE COATCHECK -

Mitzi avoids eye contact.

SAMMY

Hey, where you going?

MITZI

Home.

SAMMY

Chicago?

Mitzi opens the letter and starts reading -- LOUD.

MITZI

(voice getting louder)

Dear Sammy, I had a wonderful time with you after the show in Detroit. You made me feel special like I was the only girl in the world...

Everyone watches. She glares at him.

SAMMY

Mitzi I'm... I don't know what to say...

She throws the letter in his face and bolts out.

EXT. COPACABANA - RAINING

Sammy runs after her but she hops in a CAB and is gone.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Mitzi packs her suitcase as Sammy rushes in out of breath.

SAMMY

Mitzi - thank God your here. I ran all the way... fifteen blocks...

She ignores him preparing to leave.

SAMMY

Look I don't know anything about that girl. I swear on my mother, listen to me. This type of thing happens all the time in this business. It's entrapment...

MITZI

I'm pregnant.

GULP.

INT. COPACABANA -- NIGHT

Sammy BOMBS on stage. In his hands he holds his TRUMPET.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was a nuclear dud. Who could perform under that pressure? This became a major theme in my life: every break I got was embroiled with major personal crisis.

CLOSE SHOT of Sammy's father, HYMAN Staring into camera:

HYMAN

You stink!

EXT. 936 NORTH WELLS ST. APARTMENT, CHICAGO - 1943 -- DAY

MONTAGE of apartment, family, and boarding house.

SAMMY (V.O.)

My father owned a used furniture store and boarding house near the

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
 north side of Chicago - the Watts of
 that era. There were twenty four
 rooms and my father made sure they
 were always rented. He had three
 dollar rooms, four dollar rooms and
 five dollar rooms. They were all
 the same rooms, just depended on if
 you had three four or five dollars.
 My parents slept in the dining room
 because my father wanted to have
 another room to rent.

INT. FURNITURE STORE, CHICAGO - 1943 -- DAY

Sammy (9) holds his trumpet as Hyman yells and screams at
 the top of his lungs. MAJOR(40's black, kind) stops sweeping
 up the shop and watches from behind the endless piles of
 used furniture.

HYMAN

Two dollars! And what do I get for
 my money? You think you can play
 this trumpet? I should do better
 taking my two dollars a week and
 throwing it out into the street!
 Here! Rob me. Everybody is robbing
 me!

Sammy takes the two dollars and watches his father move on
 to abuse his mother Lena.

ANGLE ON -

Hyman verbally abusing his wife over a sandwich.

SAMMY (V.O.)

As long as my mother was around, I
 was safe. She was my protector, my
 inspiration, my trump card against
 the tyrant that was my father. At
 five feet tall, 138 lbs., Hyman Shore
 would sit all day in his used
 furniture store screaming at the top
 of his lungs...

Hyman in furniture store screaming at the newspaper.

HYMAN

Goddamn sonsobitches! Bastards!
 Fucks!

SAMMY (V.O.)

Only there was never any one around
 but us.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
 I spent my life trying to win the
 affections of a man who was incapable
 of showing any emotion but disgust.

Hyman installs a large PAY PHONE in their house.

HYMAN
 You want to make calls - good - now
 you can pay to make calls. All of
 you! Sonsobitches...

Sammy (9) looks guilty , holding his Two dollars as MAJOR
 bends down over his broom and grabs Sammy's trumpet.

MAJOR
 Oh this is a nice one you got here,
 Sammy. You keep it up no matter
 what. The music is in your heart -
 you just got to learn to let it out.

Hyman barges in.

HYMAN
 I pay you to stand around talking to
 my idiot son?! Come on, we're closing
 up...

Hyman pulls down the gate as a SIX FOOT TWO MAN enters.

HYMAN
 We're closed mister.

The THUG walks into the middle of the store and we see he's
 WEARING A MASK and holding a GUN.

HYMAN
 I'm serious. Take a walk. Everything
 is sold out! Come back tomorrow,
 we're having a sale...

THUG
 This is a stick up! Give me all
 your money or I'll blow your brains
 out!

Sammy and Major are scared stiff.

HYMAN
 (laughs)
 Brains out? Who's got brains? You
 want money. Idiot! You see any
 customers around here? You want to
 hold up somebody - go hold up Marshall
 Fields, they got all the money! Now
 get the hell out of here before I
 call my son who's a cop!

Hyman knocks the gun to the floor, grabs the broom out of Major's hands and hits the Thug over the head with it.

HYMAN

Shoo!

The Thug, dumbfounded, pulls his mask off and stares as Hyman starts sweeping. Hyman sweeps the GUN across the floor to the door.

The Thug picks up the gun as Hyman grabs him -

HYMAN

Listen Mister, before you go, you be interested in some nine by twelve linoleum?

SAMMY (V.O.)

So naturally I became a comic. I was already used to the abuse...

INT. LAKE CLUB, SRINGFIELD ILLINOIS - 1949

Sammy performing - but his stuff is just not good.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was 22 when I decided to give up all hope and throw myself into a life of comedy. I booked a week at The Lake Club - where I learned my first lesson in entertainment...

Polite "I feel sorry for you" applause.

BACK OFFICE -

HUGO (club owner) can't even look at Sammy as he enters the office high off the rush of performing.

SAMMY

That was incredible. You hear that crowd?

HUGO

You think you were funny?

Hands Sammy a check. Sammy's eyes go wide.

SAMMY

Thanks Hugo!

Hugo opens a desk drawer and pulls out a GUN.

HUGO

Tear up that check.

CLICK.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Lesson #1: Entertainers must be entertaining. As Zen as this sounds you'd be surprised just how difficult to grasp this precept actually is.

INT. SAMMY'S ROOM -- DAY

Sammy with an open notebook in front of him, daydreaming out the window, as the BOOMING VOICE of his FATHER berating his MOTHER is heard through the walls.

HYMAN (O.S.)

You call this a meal, I want a hot goddamn meal from you!

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was funny enough to be the class clown in school and the jester in my family, but getting cash for laughs is the name of the game - and though it sounds great - it really is all about the grind. Comedy ain't made on the stage. It's created in the gut wrenching day to day scribbling of ideas onto paper - working them into punch lines - over and over - day after day - grind after lousy goddamn grind. You think it will be easier to do than say, going to college - but the truth is - it's HARDER. It only looks easy from the outside. College gives you four years of hard work and a safety net - comedy gives you a rope and a lifetime of ways to hang yourself with it.

AUGUST 1949, OAKTON MANOR RESORT, WISCONSIN

Sammy performs to the shuffleboard crowd.

SAMMY (V.O.)

A few months later, I got my first real job in show business at the Oakton Manor Resort in Wisconsin, about 90 miles north of Chicago. This was the mid-west's answer to the Catskills: rich, plump, American's gorging themselves in the afterglow of the post World War Two American dream.

Sammy gets a mild reception, some laughs, but overall he is nervous and average, under confident and just not that funny.

INT. FOOD COURT -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy walks through the buffet as an OFFICE BOY rushes up.

OFFICE BOY

Sammy, Mr. Scheinman wants a word
with you.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE OF SID SCHEINMAN'S OFFICE

Sammy walks past the hustle and bustle of Sid Scheinman's
tightly run STAFF. He nervously stops a MAID.

SAMMY

Sid Scheinman's office?

MAID

Oh... around the hall to the left.

She looks at him like a condemned man.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I thought I was getting fired. All
summer long I was hearing about this
new comic named Shecky Green, who
was supposedly cracking them up and
down the North Side of Chicago.

SHECKY GREENE (27 - bold, cocky, a ball of energy) is walking
backwards towards Sammy.

SHECKY

(talking to staffer)

He can shove it up his ass... That's
what I think... telling me about
funny...

Sammy tries to avoid Shecky's angular backwards walk, but
collision is imminent.

SAMMY

What the hell...

SHECKY

(turns around)

Jesus Christ, watch where you're
going!

SAMMY

You ran into me pal.

Shecky touches Sammy's SWEATER.

SHECKY

(smiles)

Shit your right. And when your right
your right. No hard feelings?

SHECKY

Say you know where this Sid Scheinhoffer character is supposed to be?

SAMMY

Follow me, I'm going there myself.

SHECKY

Thanks kid. Love the sweater. Looks like a Hudson seat cover.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Shecky was cocky, confidant and funny as hell. I was out of my league.

INT. SID SCHEINMAN'S OFFICE

SID SCHEINMAN (50's balding, hard ass) stands behind his massive desk looking down on the pool below. Sammy stands at attention, like he's been handed a death sentence, while Shecky acts like he owns the place.

SHECKY

No way man... I work alone.

SID

It'll be like Martin and Lewis...

SHECKY

Martin and Lewis...

Shecky looks at Sammy - stiff as a board.

SHECKY

Are you kidding me?!

SID

I've seen both your acts and I'm telling you this is what I want.

Sid turns away from the window and stares at Shecky.

SID

Sammy, what do you think?

SAMMY

I guess it's alright with me.

SHECKY

It's alright with him? Well it ain't alright with me. No way am I pairing up with some nobody just because you want some Laurel & Hardy routine. I'm Shecky Greene. I work alone.

SID

Sammy, would you excuse us for a moment.

Sid and Shecky stare each other down. Two mighty ego's.

IN THE HALL --

Sammy can hear the fireworks inside the office.

SAMMY (V.O.)

What balls! To get in Sid Scheinman's face like that. I knew no matter what happened I would never have the guts to stand up for myself the way Shecky did. If I'd have done that - my ass would be out the door in two seconds. Shecky could get away with it. With him you almost expected it. He was larger than life.

Shecky bolts out of the office, stares at Sammy and lights up a cigarette.

SHECKY

All right kid. I'll let you ride my coattails.

He takes off blowing a puff of smoke like the Jewish James Dean of Comedy.

CUT TO:

INT. OAKTON MANOR STAGE -- NIGHT

Shecky and Sammy are a SMASH. Sid watches from the balcony with a wry look on his face. Their act consists of musical numbers and performances similar to the comedy of Martin and Lewis. They have the crowd dialed in. Standing ovation.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Shecky was what you call a "natural". The type of guy who can walk into a room and turn it upside down. He never rehearsed and no matter what people threw at him, he always seemed to have the best comeback - making you feel like you were watching Babe Ruth, or Michael Jordan. I, however, was dependent on rehearsals and writing my material.

INT. SAMMY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Sammy sits at a desk scribbling notes - thinking of jokes - crossing out lines - mouthing new material, pacing, looking

in a mirror dissatisfied with his facial expressions, working hard - doing the silent grunt work of comedy: the writing.

SAMMY (V.O.)

This is the part of comedy that no one sees. The prep work, the writing, - re-writing, fine tuning, working the timing, grueling hours spent alone in a room struggling with average material you know has potential but - how to find that goddamn punch line. The best comedians make it look easy. Like they're pulling jokes out of thin air. Shecky could do that. He could riff on nothing. Make you feel like the jokes were just hanging there waiting to be picked like fruit on a tree. The rest of us, the mortals, well this was our fate...

A pile of crumpled paper overtakes the room.

INT. OAKTON LODGE, BAND REHEARSAL -- DAY

MANUELO (band leader) and Shecky are having a BRAWL in front of the BAND as Sammy walks in, late for rehearsal.

SHECKY

(insulting Manuело)

And who ever told you you could play?
My dog has more talent than you...

SAMMY

What the hell is going on?

Sammy looks at the BAND - they roll their eyes.

MANUELO

You are an arrogant son of a bitch!

Manuело grabs his sheet music and throws it in Shecky's face - Sammy gets between them.

SHECKY

That's it, man. Over.

SAMMY

What the hell are you doing?

SHECKY

That little Spanish prick has fucked up the music every night! He thinks it's funny!

SAMMY

Shecky, why are you doing this... we go on in like an hour.

SHECKY
 YOU go on. I quit. You can take
 this resort with all these fat balding
 fucks and shove it up your ass!

Shecky grabs his coat and bolts out. Sammy turns to Manuelo.

SAMMY
 Manuelo.

MANUELO
 I refuse to work with him.

LATER - ON STAGE

Sammy goes on solo. The room is packed as usual. From the shadows - SHECKY watches Sammy perform some new material and kills without him, ending the show to rousing APPLAUSE.

BACK STAGE -

Sammy grabs some water as Shecky pulls him aside.

SAMMY
 Shecky...

SHECKY
 You're really good. Where'd you get
 that material?

SAMMY
 That was the stuff I was doing before
 you came... and some new stuff I've
 been working on.

Shecky looks Sammy up and down, sizing him up.

SHECKY
 Let's go do our opening number.

ON STAGE -

Sammy & Shecky go out and start singing. Sammy jumps on a table wearing nothing but a towel around his groin and a fright wig, chewing on a head of lettuce. The crowd ROARS.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 Our partnership known as Shecky Greene
 and Sammy Shore lasts for one year.
 Martin and Lewis we are not. Working
 with Shecky for me is horrendous. He
 is so talented, so spontaneous, and
 so fucking funny. My jealousy mounts.
 How can one man have so much talent?
 How can I keep up with this monster?
 And sooner or later Shecky's ego got
 in the way of us.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
 We were playing at a dive in New
 York where we were supposed to be
 the next big thing.

INT. THE RATHSKELLAR, NYC - 1950

Sammy and Shecky play to a numb New York crowd. Same act -
 no response.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 Who knew New Yorkers wouldn't be
 interested in seeing a half naked
 man jumping on tables eating a head
 of lettuce? We were the Hindenburg
 of comedy - down in flames in one
 night.

LATER - OUTSIDE THE CLUB - NIGHT

Shecky and Sammy argue - blaming each other for their failure.
 Shecky and Sammy split.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 After Shecky told us all to go fuck
 ourselves - The same lady who brought
 us to New York, teamed me up with
 another comic, Joe Silver. But this
 was doomed from the start.

INT. RATHSKELLAR COMEDY CLUB

Sammy on stage with and older comedian, JOE SILVER (40).
 moderate polite response.

INT. COFFEE SHOP, BLEEKER STREET, NYC -- MORNING

Sammy writing in his notebook book as Joe enters.

JOE
 I'm glad we could meet. What's
 that...

SAMMY
 Oh, I'm just working on some new
 stuff. Nothing really.

JOE
 (waits)
 Sammy, I hate to do this to ya, you're
 a nice kid. But I think I gotta
 move on.

Sammy nods, closes his book.

JOE
 You understand.

JOE

I'm too old for you, I need someone
closer in age - more off the cuff...

SAMMY

No, I get it. It's cool Joe.

JOE

(reluctantly)

Look... I'm pairing up with Shecky
Greene. I thought you oughtta know.

It takes a minute to sink in - Sammy is crushed.

JOE

I gotta do what's best for my career.
You understand, right?

Sammy gets up. He can't look Joe in the eyes.

SAMMY

Shecky's good, you guys'll do well
together.

JOE

Sammy, come on. This is just
business. You're a professional...

SAMMY

I get it. Good luck Joe.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE -- DAY

Sammy walks out of the cafe and into the bustling city.

SAMMY (V.O.)

And that was the way things went.
For ten years Shecky became the monkey
on my back. We performed in the
same circuits, knew the same people
and loved the same mid-western crowds.

INT. BACK ROOM, MIDWEST STRIP CLUB - 1955

A GREASY CLUB OWNER counts money in front of Sammy in the
back room as TOPLESS GIRLS giggle and run off the stage.

CLUB OWNER

You ever hear of this Shecky Greene?
He was here last week and killed
them...

SAMMY

Shecky who?

CLUB OWNER

Funny as all hell.

CLUB OWNER

You ought to check him out. Maybe
you two could hook up or something...

He tosses cash on the table in front of Sammy.

ANGLE ON -

Tires spinning out laying rubber on the road. Sammy jams his
LATE MODEL FORD into drive and speeds off.

1950'S MIDWESTERN COMEDY CLUB MONTAGE -

Various shots of Sammy traveling throughout the Mid-Western
U.S. - working comedy clubs - playing dive after dive.

SAMMY (V.O.)

1955 was a great year for nightclubs.
I was playing all over the country
to packed houses. It was the hip
thing for people to go out and spend
all that newfound disposable income
on entertainment. It was the year I
was introduced to the second plague
of my adult life - women.

INT. ABE'S COLONY CLUB - DALLAS, TEXAS - 1955

JACK RUBY (yes, the one and only) walks over to Sammy after
his set and buys him a scotch.

JACK

Goddamn that was great. What'll you
have?

SAMMY

JB water.

JACK

Two. C'mon with me. Let us retreat
to my other, more sophisticated,
place of business.

The men get up, drinks in hand and walk outside

NEXT DOOR - to Jack's strip club: The CARNIVAL CLUB.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I'm such a rarity in Texas, a Jewish
emcee working a strip club owned by
a Jew. Only the Jew who owns this
strip club is none other than Jack
Ruby. Jack loved me. And he always
tried to hook me up with one of his
strippers. We had one thing in
common: we loved big tits.

INT. CARNIVAL CLUB -- NIGHT

Sammy is EMCEE, working the crowd as a BUXOM NORDIC BEAUTY walks on stage, interrupting his act and gives him the V.I.P. treatment. The crowd of HORNY GUYS STAND UP AND CHEER throwing dollar bills on the stage. Sammy turns red.

INT. MOTEL BEDROOM

Sammy and the NORDIC BEAUTY having sex. This is funny since she is twice his size.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I liked the Viking type. Don't know why, probably a mother thing, though my mother was the farthest thing from a Viking being a short, Russian Jew. It comes as a shock a few years later when I hear that my friend Jack shot Lee Harvey Oswald in cold blood.

CUT TO:

STOCK FOOTAGE OF JACK RUBY SHOOTING LEE HARVEY OSWALD

INT. DINER -- 4:30 AM

Sammy and Jack eating after a night of work. Sammy studies Jack's face.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Jack is so American. So proud to be living in this country. In all the months I knew him he never said a derogatory word about anyone or anything. All I can think of are the many nights we spent talking about his heroes, like Truman and Roosevelt, and his utter humility - how lucky it was for saps like us to have the opportunities of being an American.

INT. PREVIEW LOUNGE, NEW ORLEANS - 1957

Sammy performing with AL HIRT and his BAND. Both men have trumpets and they are slaughtering the DIXIELAND CROWD.

AFTER THE SHOW -

A very happy BILL GRUBER (manager) counts his cash with Sammy slumped on a couch - a towel draped over his head.

BILL

I just don't know who to bring in after you leave.

BILL

No one else can do the job here...
Paul Marr, the guy from Chicago told
me about a comic named Shecky Greene.
He said you knew the guy...

Sammy pulls the towel over his face.

SAMMY

Yeah, I know him.

BILL

Well?

Sammy stares up the ceiling covered with greasy mirrored
tiles. The image distorts his face - pulling it apart.

SAMMY

He's really funny. Book him.

SAMMY (V.O.)

That was that. I never did well in
that club again. How could I follow
Shecky? He moved in and stole the
show. He was the monkey who became
the gorilla on my back.

EXT. PINE POINT RESORT, ELKHART LAKE, WISCONSIN - 1959

Very non - threatening old time resort. Sammy plays to the
tender crowd and notices MITZI in the audience.

SAMMY (V.O.)

So I did the noble thing: I went
home. I was comfortable in Wisconsin.
People knew me. Everyone loved my
material. I was coasting, far away
from the shadow of Shecky.

After his ovation - Sammy smiles at Mitzi and she blushes.

EXT. CABIN BY THE LAKE -- DAY

Sammy and Mitzi sneak around making sure the coast is clear.
Mitzi giggles at Sammy - who pretends to be a Spy.

SAMMY

If they catch us - you know they'll
kill us.

MITZI

You're crazy.

Sammy dangles a key in front of her.

MITZI

Where did you get that?

SAMMY

If I tell you, I'll have to kill you. And I don't want to make love to a corpse. Not after what happened last time...

INT. CABIN BY THE LAKE -- DAY

Mitzi and Sammy sneak into the cabin and have sex.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I had been balling Mitzi all summer. She was nice and comfortable to be with, Jewish, patient, understanding. If I killed, she thought I was great, if I bombed, she still thought I was great. Mitzi was a replacement for my mother. And I really, really LIKED her.

INT. 936 NORTH WELLS ST. APARTMENT, CHICAGO - 1959

Mitzi carries her suitcases up the staircase, past the huge pay phone into Sammy's room. Lena and Hyman peer down the hallway with a look of horror and confusion.

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was supposed to be just for the summer. Before I met Mitzi I was seeing a Texas girl named Phyllis, who I was crazy for.

INSERT SILENT SUPER 8 FILM SHOTS OF PHYLLIS & SAMMY

SAMMY (V.O.)

Built like a brick shithouse, with a beautiful face and a thick Texas accent that I was a sucker for. Only Phyllis told me a month earlier that she was confused.

BACK IN SAMMY'S ROOM -

Sammy heads off Mitzi and quickly grabs every picture of Phyllis he can find and stuffs them under his mattress as Mitzi unpacks her bags.

LATER THAT NIGHT IN BED -

Sammy stares out the window with Mitzi fast asleep beside him - cramped in his twin bed.

SAMMY (V.O.)

But, If I'm going to be 100% honest, and that is what one should be when dying of a heart attack reflecting on one's life, truth of the matter

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
is that I just didn't love her. She
was easy.

Sammy gets up. Sneaks out of bed.

DOWN THE HALL -

Sammy grabs the phone - 2:30 am - inserts change - Dials.

LONG SHOT - Sammy hunched over - whispering in the dark.

SAMMY
(in phone)
I know. I miss you too. I can't
right now. Phyllis, I love you too.

Mitzi creeps up behind him. Busted.

MITZI
You love who?

Sammy hangs up.

SAMMY
No one.

MITZI
I heard everything you said to that
girl. Who was she?
(beat)
I thought you wanted to be with me.

Speechless. Mitzi starts to cry.

SAMMY (V.O.)
I didn't know what to say to her. My
heart just didn't feel the same way.
What was I thinking? Letting this
girl I was banging come to live with
me?

MITZI
Why are you doing this to me? After
all I've done for you.

Mitzi runs into the bedroom and SLAMS the door. Now the house
is awake.

HYMAN (O.S.)
Samelah! What the fuck is all that
noise!

Sammy rolls his eyes.

IN THE BEDROOM -

Mitzi is curled in a ball on the mattress.

SAMMY (V.O.)

With every sob I feel my knees get weaker and weaker. I'll say anything to stop her crying. Before I know it, Phyllis is out of my head and all I can hear are the cries of a person in pain in front of me, needing me. I have the power to end the pain, be the hero - And I know what that means: If I cave in now, I'm committing myself to this woman.

He caves.

SAMMY

I love you Mitzi.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT ON - THE LETTER - OUTSIDE THE COPA - IN THE RAIN

Sammy stares at the letter and sees it is signed PHYLLIS. Rain smears the ink of her name until it is unintelligible.

ANGLE ON -

A RABBI'S FOOT STOMPS DOWN breaking a glass

RABBI

Mahzeltov!

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION -- DAY

Mitzi and Sammy's wedding.

SAMMY (V.O.)

But Mitzi and I did have a few good years...

INT. HOSPITAL

Mitzi going into labor. Sammy Paces in the waiting room biting his fingers.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Scott was our first born. Then Sandy, Peter and Pauly...

INSERT SHOTS - FAMILY MOVIE MONTAGE

SAMMY (V.O.)

We had our family unit. I was still playing the circuit - making enough to send home.

INT. BON SOIR NIGHTCLUB, GREENWICH VILLAGE - 1963

Sammy opening for BARBRA STREISAND (19). 200 PEOPLE are crammed in, watching as Barbra Streisand performs "Happy Days Are Here Again". Sammy watches from the bar, nursing a glass of J&B.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Barbara Streisand was another example of raw, unbelievable talent. Here was this small Jewish girl with big doe eyes and a voice that could melt grown men's wills to live. She made everything look easy. Whatever "it" is - she had it. A blind deaf idiot could tell that she was going to be a big star.

Barbara finishes her set to ROUSING APPLAUSE.

MARTY ERLICHMAN, Barbara's manager, approaches Sammy.

MARTY

What do you think?

SAMMY

I think I'm in love.

MARTY

Sullivan is coming down tonight to catch the next set. I need you to cut a few minutes off your act.

Sammy watches IN THE MIRROR as Barbara steps off stage and is whisked away in a sea of adoration.

SAMMY ON STAGE -- LATER

Finishing his act to the ROAR of the crowd.

SAMMY

And I'd like to introduce you to the next big star, Barbara Streisand.

Sammy walks off stage as the band starts to PLAY. He wades through the sea of people all staring at Barbara.

AT THE BAR -

Marty nods to Sammy.

MARTY

You were funny.

SAMMY

Was I really that good?

MARTY

Maybe I can see if Sullivan wants to use you - I saw him smirking the whole time behind the curtain.

ED SULLIVAN approaches and puts his arm around Sammy.

SULLIVAN

You're a funny kid, Sammy. Have your agent call me. I'd like to use you on my show.

SAMMY

(shock)

Thank you Mr. Sullivan.

Ed shakes Sammy's hand, but the moment is quickly eclipsed as Barbara starts to sing.

INT. BACKSTAGE, ED SULLIVAN SHOW - 1963

Sammy is a wreck, pacing like an animal. On the MONITOR - Barbara Streisand is singing her heart out as an ASSISTANT enters.

ASSISTANT

It won't be long now Mr. Shore. Mr. Sullivan is going to run some film clips of Charles Laughton - you know he died today - and Mr. Sullivan wants to pay tribute to him.

ANGLE ON -

A somber and touching montage of Charles Laughton film clips - ending with his famous "Hunchback Of Notre Dame".

Sammy is sweating bullets. He grabs a PRODUCER.

SAMMY

I'm going to follow this?!

PRODUCER

Who are you?

SAMMY

I'm the comedian, Sammy Shore...

Looks down at his schedule.

PRODUCER

Yes... Right after the Laughton tribute... here.

SAMMY

No no no there must be some mistake, you see I can't go on after this.

SAMMY

This is gut wrenching. I mean look at the audience they're practically in tears...

The studio audience - half of them, indeed in tears.

ASSISTANT

They're ready for you Mr. Shore.

SAMMY

This is impossible... How am I going to follow that!

An assistant grabs Sammy and pulls him to his mark.

Ed walks over to Sammy.

SULLIVAN

Terrible news about Charles.

SAMMY

Yeah. Terrible.

ANGLE ON -

Sammy's PARENTS and family watching the Laughton tribute on their TV at their home.

LENA

Hurry up Hymie, Sammy's next.

ON TV - the tribute ends and Ed Sullivan fills the screen.

SULLIVAN

(on Screen)

That was a beautiful tribute to our dear departed friend Charles Laughton, we'll miss him. My next guest is funny and I know you'll like him - Mr. SANDY SHORE...

HYMAN

Sandy Shore? Who the hell is Sandy Shore?

ANGLE ON - SAMMY on SULLIVAN

Sammy performs his act - but it's subdued - tense and ultimately - CUT SHORT.

ANGLE ON -

Sammy's parents as Sammy's act ENDS mid sentence and cuts to commercial.

HYMAN

What the hell happened?

Hyman gets up and bangs the TV.

HYMAN

He was robbed. That sonofabitch Ed
Sullivan robbed Sammy!

AT THE STUDIO -

Sammy stands on his mark despondent as the CREW scurry around.

ED

Sorry Sammy, we'll get 'em next time.

Ed disappears amidst a bevy of PRODUCERS.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. BARSTOW DESERT, DRIVING JAGUAR XKE - 1969 -- DUSK

Sammy hauls ass in his XKE passing a massive billboard: ELVIS
IS COMING - OPENING THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - JULY 31'st

SAMMY (V.O.)

Driving eighty miles an hour I could
get from L.A. to Las Vegas in just
over four hours.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP -- NIGHT

Sammy arrives at the International Hotel and sees the marquee:
Big bold letters: ELVIS

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was already nauseous from anxiety
and I hadn't even checked in.

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- NIGHT

Sammy pulls into the valet where a car hop, JIMMY (20) opens
the door.

JIMMY

Hi Sammy, just getting in? Remember
me from the Flamingo? Jimmy.. used
to be a bellboy there.

SAMMY

Oh yeah, how are things at the new
place?

JIMMY

Everyone's real excited. People are
calling from all over the world just
to get a room.

JIMMY

We're booked solid - get this - the king of England can't even get a room!

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- NIGHT

Sammy enters the palatial casino. Elvis mania has taken over. DEALERS in fake pompadours, IMPERSONATORS everywhere, the entire STAFF wearing ELVIS buttons.

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was clear that the King indeed had checked in and somehow found a room. Maybe not the King of England, but certainly the King of Entertainment. My name however, was nowhere to be seen. As my stomach flipped and butterfly's swam through my intestines, I wanted badly to hide - but I also wanted recognition.

AT THE FRONT DESK -

A VERY PRETTY GIRL at the counter barely looks up at him.

SAMMY

Hello. I'm Sammy Shore.

GIRL

One minute sir.

Sammy hesitates, then lays down his trump card.

SAMMY

(meek)

I'm opening for Elvis...

Kapow.

GIRL

Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Shore I didn't recognize you. I'm new here.

(giggles)

You have a suit on the top floor, right down from Elvis. Mr. Shoofey made it personally for you.

IN THE ELEVATOR -

This is the V.I.P. elevator: Floors 16 - 30. Sammy gets the *once over* as he pushes the button for FLOOR 30. No one in the cramped elevator is going above floor 19.

TOP FLOOR HALLWAY -

Sammy gets out of the elevator alone and is in the lap of luxury - original paintings, vibrant colors, yada yada yada...

He finds the big double doors to his room - 3016-18.

INT. ROOM 3016-18 -- NIGHT

Sammy gazes at the vulgar indulgence that is his room. Circular bed, mirrored ceiling, the whole shebang.

A HUGE PICTURE WINDOW looks out over the entire strip.

ON THE BALCONY -

Sammy takes in the bustle of midnight on the Las Vegas Strip.

SAMMY (V.O.)

This was as close to the top of the world I had ever been. I could see every hotel, Dean Martin at the Riviera - Lido De Paris at the Stardust. But this was the place where all eyes were on. Elvis hit this town like a nuclear bomb - and I was part of it. Yet somehow I felt like an outsider - even more outside than the people down below staring up at me trying to get a peek into this secret world of opulence and privilege.

A KNOCK on the door.

A BELLHOP enters with a vase of ROSES placing them on the table.

BELLHOP

Mr. Shoofey sent these for you. You are right next door to Elvis, Mr. Shore.

Sammy hears the muffled sounds of Elvis and his entourage through the walls.

BELLHOP

Mr. Shoofey made reservations for you and your wife at his table for dinner tomorrow night before the show...

SAMMY

My wife?

BELLHOP

Is there a problem?

SAMMY

Oh um, no, I mean well she couldn't make it. I mean... she might not make it. Sick. She's sick. But if she can make it...

BELLHOP

I'll keep the reservations open for her. Just in case.

CUT TO:

SAMMY GETS ON THE PHONE -

No answer. The machine goes off.

SAMMY

Mitzi - if you get this message, call me here at the International Hotel room 3016.

CUT TO:

SAMMY GRABS A BOTTLE OF J&B -

Slams some ice in a glass and pours himself a drink.

TIME LAPSE DISSOLVE ON J&B BOTTLE by phone as the liquid slowly diminishes.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I finally passed out around 4:30.

CUT TO:

MORNING - SAMMY PASSED OUT ON THE BED BY RINGING PHONE

He jumps up still dressed in his clothes from the night before.

SAMMY

(grabs phone)

Hello? Jesus what time is it? I'm on my way.

Hangs up. Lies back down.

SAMMY

Fuck.

SAMMY TAKES A SHOWER

GETS DRESSED

DOWNNS A HANDFUL OF ASPIRIN

RUSHES OUT OF THE ROOM

RUSHES BACK IN THE ROOM - GRABS TRUMPET CASE & RUSHES OUT
 RUSHES BACK IN THE ROOM - GRABS ASPIRIN BOTTLE & RUSHES OUT
 INT. CASINO SHOWROOM FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy approaches the back stage doors stopped by a SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD

I'm sorry sir, but no one is allowed in here now.

SAMMY

I'm Sammy Shore. I'm in the show.

SECURITY GUARD

Who?

SAMMY

Sammy Shore!

SECURITY GUARD

I'll have to check. Stay here.

He takes off. Sammy stands there watching the mayhem of the CASINO FLOOR.

SAMMY (V.O.)

If last night's mood was electric, then today the mood was unbearable. 9:30 in the morning and the place felt like New Years Eve in Times Square. Did Mitzi get my message. Why didn't she call? I wanted desperately to hear her voice, to apologize for being such a prick. Surely she got the message. But still she didn't call. As I waited there like a schmuck for the Security Guard to figure out that I really was part of the show - I told myself that this was it, my last show - after this Elvis fiasco I was going to settle down, find a job selling shoes, or insurance, or wallpaper and stay at home with my family, like Father Know's Best. This was a promise I was determined to keep. This was not a healthy lifestyle, I told myself. It was abundantly clear that my constitution for these kind of events was weak. Better to leave these insane surroundings for a purer life. Maybe even go back to study the Torah...

The security guard returns.

SECURITY GUARD

I'm sorry Mr. Shore, I didn't recognize you. Go right in.

SAMMY

Hey that's OK, I mean how long have I had my face on all those Wheaties boxes?

INT. INTERNATIONAL SHOWROOM - REHEARSAL

Sammy walks into the 2500 seat room toward the huge stage where ELVIS and his BAND are rehearsing "LOVE ME TENDER"

Elvis is wearing a black beaded jumpsuit and dark glasses. He turns - recognizes Sammy and stops the song.

ELVIS

Sammy! Hey Brother Sam gimme an Amen!

ELVIS JUMPS OFF THE STAGE - and throws his arms around Sammy, nearly choking him.

ELVIS

Damn good to see you. How you like that room. Big enough for ya...

SAMMY

Oh it's terrific. I'm just amazed...

COLONEL (O.S.)

Hey Boy! Come on down here. I want to talk to you

Colonel Parker and a few members of the MEMPHIS MAFIA enter and drag Sammy away from Elvis.

ELVIS

See you later Sammy!

Colonel puts his arm around Sammy and walks him toward the center of the empty auditorium - out of earshot from ELVIS.

COLONEL

How you like that bungalow?

SAMMY

This is all just too much... I'm real excited.

COLONEL

I know you are... I know you are.

COLONEL

Now listen boy, I want you to do
twenty - two minutes tonight, ya
hear?

SAMMY

I want to tell you Colonel, I really
appreciate this. I mean I just can't
believe it's happening...

COLONEL

Let's cut the bullshit son. This is
the big leagues. Now you're a funny
little Jew, I'll give you that, but
you done spent your whole life staring
in, on the fringe - wondering why so
many gone so far - while you're
spinning your wheels going nowhere
fast.

Sammy is paralyzed. The \$50,000 worth of jewelry on Colonel
Parker's right hand does nothing to alleviate his disbelief.

COLONEL

You are here because I like you.
Elvis likes you. But what Elvis
likes and don't like don't mean shit.
I put you here and I can take you
out. I've seen your act - good and
bad. Whether you want to be good
tonight in front of Elvis and everyone
else in the world is up to you. But
make no worry... there's one star in
this show...

He nods to Elvis goofing around on stage with his band.

COLONEL

And you and everybody else in here
is just the hired help. So be funny
Brother Sam. Be funny...

Colonel pats him on the cheek and walks off.

COLONEL

(walking away)

Make me proud - make Elvis proud and
you'll see just what it means to be
in the service of the King! A lot
of people gonna be here tonight... A
LOTTA people!

ELVIS

(from stage)

See you Brother Sam!

JOE ESPOSITO (Elvis' Road Manager pats Sammy on the shoulder.

JOE

Have a nice conversation with the Colonel?

Sammy can't move. Joe and the BOYS giggle -

JOE

Does that to everybody. You'll be alright.

INT. ROOM 3016-18 -- LATER

Sammy dials the phone and tries Mitzi again. The machine goes off. He slams the phone down.

SAMMY

Son of a bitch!

The bar is full - all signs of last night's binge replenished.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I left the room in shambles and like magic - I return to find the stocks replenished, the bed made and my tuxedo hanging in my closet freshly pressed. Common sense told me not to go for the bar. I had a few hours before showtime - if I could just get in touch with Mitzi she could haul ass out of LA and be here just in time to catch my act.

Sammy looks outside at A MOB SCENE accumulating on the strip.

SAMMY (V.O.)

What if I just jumped? Would anybody notice? Would anybody care? My name was so small on the marquee compared to those five giant letters that spelled ELVIS. Earlier I had learned that Elvis never used an opening comedian before - I would be the first. More pressure. But to Elvis this was all normal. He seemed excited, giddy. Clearly I should jump.

SAMMY GRABS THE BOTTLE OF J&B

Slams ice into a glass and pours out a hefty sized drink.

COMMOTION in the HALL - ELVIS and his ENTOURAGE clearly. The muffles sound does not mask that indistinguishable voice.

BANG BANG BANG!

ELVIS throws open the door to Sammy's room and pops in with PRISCILLA on his arm. An ENTOURAGE of people behind him.

ELVIS
I sure do hope you don't have any girls up in here!

SAMMY
Elvis!

ELVIS
(to Priscilla)
Now honey, I don't want you to be offended by this man here.

PRISCILLA
Hi Sammy, I love your act.

Sammy shakes hands with Priscilla Presley.

SAMMY
I know this guy all my life and NOW he brings you in here to meet me!

Sammy grabs Priscilla and hugs her - UNHEARD OF!

ELVIS
You really crack me up Sammy! Hey - that's a great idea! Come on out here...

Elvis grabs Sammy and Priscilla and drags them -

IN THE HALLWAY -

Where a bevy of PHOTOGRAPHERS start snapping away as Elvis stands between the two of them, his arms around each of them.

ELVIS
I want all of you to meet my newest family member, Sammy Shore. Hey Eddie, get a good one for Time. And don't be stingy with the copies. I want a nice one of us to put on my mantelpiece in Graceland.

EDDIE (photographer) obediently steps up and does his ass kissing best for the King.

EDDIE
Alright Sammy, lets do one for Time Magazine...

SNAP SNAP SNAP!

EDDIE
...And one for Graceland.

Sammy, seeing his opportunity - jumps on top of it.

SAMMY

(acts like a southern
starlet)

And how 'bout one like this... And a
few like this... And one of me over
here like this...

Sammy lies down on the ground posing - Elvis loves it.

SNAP SNAP SNAP!

As the photo session ends - Sammy is bombarded by reporters
shaking his hand and asking him questions -

SAMMY (V.O.)

This was madness. Everyone wanted
to be close to Elvis and people did
whatever he asked - no questions. To
me, the attention was a pleasant
diversion from the reality of my
life. For Elvis - it was Tuesday.

Sammy watches as Priscilla is conveniently taken to one room
on the LEFT and Elvis is taken to another ON THE RIGHT
followed by a MAN HOLDING A MEDICAL BAG.

INT. BACK STAGE HALLWAY -- LATER

Sammy walks with his trumpet case and a tuxedo bag past the
COMMOTION of Elvis' dressing room. An ASSISTANT leads him
to his dressing room.

INT. SAMMY'S DRESSING ROOM

Sammy enters the massive room - again shocked at the
treatment. ASSISTANTS grab his tuxedo bag and unpack his
clothes.

ASSISTANT

One hour 'til showtime Mr. Shore.

SAMMY

Is there a phone in here.

GRABS THE PHONE -

Sammy dials Mitzi - RINGING.

MITZI

Hello?

SAMMY

Where the hell have you been? Didn't
you get my messages!

MITZI

I've been trying to call your room since last night - there's some kind of phone restriction to anyone on your floor.

SAMMY

You're shitting me?

MITZI

Sammy, are you OK?

SAMMY

I miss you. I mean - you should see this place. I'm on the top floor next to Elvis. It's insanity... I want you to come out.

MITZI

Don't be stupid, Sammy. I'll never make it.

SAMMY

I don't care - I want you here.

MITZI

There's a line of cars all the way from L.A. to Las Vegas - it's all over the news...

SAMMY

Listen to me - take the kids to your mother's and get out here. Alex Shoofey - president of the International Hotel commanded me to get you out here - for dinner - so get your ass out here...

MITZI

I don't know Sammy. It's late.

SAMMY

(beat)

I love you... be safe. Bye.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mitzi would definitely miss the show - but that was just fine by me. Call me sick, but somehow the thought of Mitzi on her way - fighting nine hours of bumper to bumper traffic in the high desert - just seemed to comfort me.

CUT TO:

SAMMY FUTZING WITH HIS TIE - An assistant peers in

ASSISTANT

Ten minutes to showtime Mr. Shore,
and there is someone out here who
says he knows you...

DR. EARL WOODS walks in

SAMMY

Earl! Jesus come in!

EARL

Hey Sammy, how you feeling?

SAMMY

I'm scared shitless Earl.

Sammy gives up trying to tie his bow tie. Earl takes over.

ASSISTANT

Ten minutes! Everybody...

SAMMY

Holy Fuck. I just can't do it. If
you only knew.

EARL

Knew what? This is it - what you've
been waiting your whole life for.

SAMMY

That's good, pile it on. There's
not enough pressure...

EARL

What's this bullshit I'm hearing?
You're here in the biggest casino in
the world - opening for the biggest
Star in the world - Why? Because
you've earned it. And you're gonna
do fine.

SAMMY

Fine isn't what I need. I'm fucked
with fine. I need hot goddamn shit
that kills people. I need to
slaughter every goddamn one of them
from the moment I get out there.

EARL

Jesus Sammy are you alright?

Notices the half empty bottle of J&B.

STAGEHAND

Five Minutes!

Earl helps Sammy with his tuxedo jacket - smoothes the collar.

SAMMY

It's good that you're here.

EARL

Go kill 'em.

STAGEHAND

Mr. Shore - it's time.

INT. INTERNATIONAL SHOWROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The place is packed - but you knew that.

The lights go down - DRUM ROLL

ANNOUNCER

And now ladies and gentlemen, the
International Hotel and Casino proudly
presents... the comedy star of our
show, Sammy Shore!

ON STAGE -

The Curtains go up.

Sammy walks out to the APPLAUSE of 3000 people - who are not
just people - they are Studio Heads, Record Producers, Actors,
Politicians and Royalty.

Sammy slowly walks over to the microphone, sweat pouring
down his face - trying to smile.

In the front tables are LIZ TAYLOR and RICHARD BURTON, then
SAMMY DAVIS, TOM JONES, and RAQUEL WELCH. JOHNNY CARSON, ED
MCMAHON and their WIVES sit at a table to the left. And
that's just who we SEE. It is a bizarre and surreal moment.

Sammy grabs the microphone: BUT NO SOUND COMES OUT.

He hits the mic. Nothing.

He shouts at the top of his lungs:

SAMMY

(top of his lungs)

THEY SPEND FIFTY-THREE MILLION BUCKS
TO BUILD THIS JOINT - AND NINE DOLLARS
ON A MICROPHONE!

The audience starts to break up.

Sammy twirls the mic and hands it off to a STAGEHAND.

SAMMY

Hi. Want some licorice?

Tense Giggles.

He takes the new microphone - but PRETENDS THIS ONE IS OFF TOO - mouthing the words with no sound coming out.

Liz Taylor is LAUGHING. The audience cracks up. Sammy continues across the stage with his silent act - then:

SAMMY

Well, now I really don't know what to say - I forgot my act folks!

Six hundred people in the balcony start laughing their asses off as Sammy goes into his act.

SAMMY

What a hotel. Have you noticed the eternal flame in the front? That's the Tomb of the Unknown Gambler.

Applause - laughter. Now he's rolling...

SAMMY

It's really nice to be here at The International - They really treat you fantastic - they sent a Rolls Royce to pick me up at the airport, which is silly... because I came by Greyhound bus...

(CUT)

...The room they gave me is unbelievable... I don't have a Gideon Bible... they got Charleton Heston on a chain...

(CUT)

...Did you know they have a youth hotel? Only hotel with a sandbox and a pit boss...

(CUT)

...How do you like the bright lights in the casino? It's like an operating room - they remove everything...

(CUT)

...I just finished working for Tom Jones... I remember one night he had a bad throat - his FLY went out and did two shows...

(CUT)

...People ask me: "what's it like working for Elvis?" All the girls trying to sneak down to his dressing room past the guards. I said, "Elvis, what's with all the guards? Why don't you go where the girls won't bother you. He said, "Where?" I said - In my dressing room...

(CUT)

...But Elvis is the greatest... This afternoon his manager, Colonel Tom

SAMMY

Parker, walked over to me and said,
 "Boy you're good. I like your kind
 of humor." I said, "Gee thanks,
 Colonel, and I like your chicken..."
 He said, "Well then, lick my fingers
 boy..."

Sammy goes into his *Preacher* bit. The whole crowd hollering
 along with him: "AMEN - Hallelujah!"

He points up to the balcony -

SAMMY

You people up there wanna be saved?

YEAH!

SAMMY

You people over *they-ah!* Do YOU
 wanna be saved?

YEAH!

SAMMY

Then jump! Jump you mothers! Jump!

SCREAMING LAUGHTER. Sammy jumps off the stage into the
 audience - his TAMBOURINE in hand - hitting people on the
 head with it.

SAMMY

Come with me, walk with me, Reach
 out for me, touch me... not YOU boy,
 but you! Yes touch me baby puh-LEEZE!

He jumps back on the stage -

SAMMY

Are you ready to be saved?

YEAH!

SAMMY

Are you ready to be healed?

YEAH!

SAMMY

Will you give me your money?

NO!

SAMMY

Will you *pleeeeee* give me your money?

NO!

SAMMY

Then GO TO HELL!

He finishes to a rousing ovation and the ORCHESTRA playing "Bringing In The Sheaves".

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was over - I had done the impossible. I couldn't remember which side of the stage I was supposed to exit from - so I just went towards the side that looked the most familiar - where Elvis and his entourage was waiting. This was wrong. But I figured I done so well, what could they do to me?

OFFSTAGE -

Elvis and his entourage watch as Sammy takes his bows and approaches - extending his hand to Elvis.

SAMMY

They're ready for you Elvis.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Instinctively I reached out and shook his hand and I couldn't believe it. The King had sweaty palms. Here was the biggest performer in the world as nervous as I was!

Elvis just nods, nervous.

SAMMY (V.O.)

He didn't say a word - I could tell he was in his game face - and probably didn't even know I had noticed at all.

Sammy is shuttled backstage past the ENTOURAGE where Colonel Parker grabs him away from the gathering throng.

COLONEL

You did good Brother Sam. Real good. We want you to come on tour with us after this run here. Ten cities in two weeks. And one of them dates will be the Forum in L.A. how you like that boy?

SAMMY

I'd love it. Thank you.

COLONEL

Just remember who pays the bills, Jewboy. Welcome to the family.

The band starts the opening number as Elvis hits the stage and the place goes *batshit*. Whatever applause the crowd had for Sammy is NOTHING compared to the DEAFENING WALL OF SCREAMS that they are producing now.

BACKSTAGE -

SLOW DOLLY IN ON - Sammy watching Elvis from behind curtain

SAMMY (V.O.)

I had done it. Whatever "it" was - that unattainable sense of success that eluded me for so long now seemed within reach. I stood there and watched Elvis perform - knowing that my little routine was still nothing compared to the greatness of what Elvis was giving them. But they *laughed*. And for a brief 22 minutes, *I had them*. I didn't just dodge a curve ball thrown at my head - I hit the fucker out of the park. I knew I'd never be half of what Elvis was - a superstar - a phenomenon - an enigma - but as long as I did my little dance and played it straight - just like The Colonel liked it - I was home, part of the Circus. The little Jewboy that could.

DOLLY ENDS - TIGHT on SAMMY'S FACE

SCREAMS OF THE CROWD turn into the sound of a JETLINER which turns into the opening beat of *BACK IN THE USSR* by The Beatles

FLASH CUTS of ELVIS on stage shaking his Pelvis

TRAVELING ON TOUR WITH ELVIS MONTAGE -

BACK IN THE USSR blares as the montage of airplane - travel - loading - eating - shuttling to and from arenas across the country.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mitzi drove out the next day and met Elvis and The Colonel. The rest of that week opening for Elvis at The International is a blur. Success is too mild a word for the mania the new Elvis inflicted upon the people of Las Vegas. We finished out the week and went right into Elvis' first national tour in over twelve years.

EXT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT, LAS VEGAS -- DAY

ELVIS' 2 PRIVATE JETS - are parked on the private runway as the Elvis Circus boards them. [NOTE: EVERYWHERE ELVIS GOES IS A FUCKING CIRCUS - SO - UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED - I'LL OMIT THE OBVIOUS ENTOURAGE/CROWD MAYHEM -- RESUME FLIGHT]

SAMMY (V.O.)

The first stop on the tour was Tampa Florida - we had two private jets, one for Elvis and his people, the other for Colonel and his - I went with The Colonel.

INT. PLANE -- DAY

Colonel Parker sits next to TOM DISKIN - his assistant as Sammy walks on the plane.

COLONEL

I hope you got your trumpet boy.

SAMMY

Why? Didn't you bring yours?

Tom laughs. Sammy lifts up his case.

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was clear that I was to be the Colonel's clown.

EXT. TAMPA AIRPORT -- AFTERNOON

The planes, parked side by side on the tarmac, are surrounded by screaming FANS as a RED CARPET is rolled out to them.

INSIDE THE PLANE -

Colonel Parker orders Sammy like a carnival barker.

COLONEL

Let 'em know were here boy! Give em a good show!

The hull doors swing open and Sammy starts BLOWING.

OUTSIDE -

Elvis exits his plane and smiles when he sees Sammy making a fool of himself.

INT. TAMPA HILTON -- MOMENTS LATER

The Circus has arrived - with Sammy and his trumpet blowing loud and proud as the Elvis machine takes over the hotel.

COLONEL

Elvis and the Colonel have arrived!

SAMMY (V.O.)

The colonel wanted it big - so I gave him big. He'd wind up his Sammy toy and let me run wild.

TOP FLOOR AT HILTON -

Elvis has his arm around Sammy walking down the hall.

ELVIS

Are we having fun yet or what?

SAMMY

Fun? I past fun and moved into stupidity four hours ago...

ELVIS

Damn Sammy, I missed having you around. You should fly with me next time. Why don't you come on into our room and hang for a bit.

SAMMY

Yeah, great. Lemme just put my stuff away.

ELVIS

Alright man. Don't bother knockin' just come right in...

Sammy watches as ELVIS follows a MAN WITH A DOCTOR'S BAG into his room.

The colonel WHACKS Sammy with his cane - as if to draw his attention away from watching Elvis.

COLONEL

Why don't you give Elvis a break for a while. Let him relax...

Colonel pulls out a WAD OF HUNDREDS and peels some off.

COLONEL

See if you can't run downstairs and pick me up a few boxes of cigars, would you Sammy?

Sammy smiles, but this is humiliating.

SAMMY

Colonel, I don't...

Colonel stuffs the cash in Sammy's pocket and moves on.

COLONEL

...Don't worry about bringin' me the change. I'm not a cruel man, Sammy.

Sammy takes the money and throws it on the ground.

INT. CIGAR STORE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy runs in and tries to pay for the cigars.

CASHIER

Didn't I see you with Elvis just five minutes ago?

SAMMY

Yeah. How much?

CASHIER

Elvis gonna smoke all of these himself?

SAMMY

Let me tell you something about Elvis -
(brings him in close)
The man goes through a box of these things a day... A DAY. He's hooked.

The man closes the register and gives Sammy back his hundreds.

AT THE ELEVATOR -

Sammy smiles counting the three hundred bucks he just made, the cigar boxes tucked under his arm.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I felt bad - so I sent the guys at the cigar store free tickets to the show. I was the Colonel's bitch. Still - it beat working for a living.

DING!

INT. TAMPA CIVIC CENTER - BACKSTAGE

Sammy walks off stage a rousing success as Elvis high fives him. Things are becoming routine. Sammy jokes with the girls in the show - grabbing their asses as he passes by - all normal fun for performers - tension breakers.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The Colonel never watched Elvis work. He was busy performing his own particular show which started as soon as Elvis hit the stage.

ANGLE ON - BLACK BRIEFCASE TOTED DOWN BACKSTAGE HALL

Tom Diskin and the Colonel approach SEVERAL BURLY GUYS - THE MEMPHIS MAFIA (*heretofore written as MM*) who are standing at the end of a long tunnel in front of -

THE ARENA PROMOTER'S OFFICE -

SAMMY (V.O.)

This performance involved having his assistant Tom Diskin take out a special black briefcase - and with the aid of and some oversized gorilla's known as "The Memphis Mafia" - they would assault the Arena promoter's office and count the evenings take.

Colonel supervises with his stopwatch as Tom counts the receipts. Elvis' voice echoes through the underground tunnel.

SAMMY (V.O.)

He timed it so that when Elvis was on his last number - his medley of *Dixie* into *Battle Hymn of the Republic* - he had ten minutes to move out fast - like he was holding up a bank.

EXT. BACK OF ARENA -- NIGHT

Two LIMO's pull up as close to backstage as possible.

ELVIS - walks offstage without taking a bow and is taken immediately - with a TOWEL OVER HIS HEAD - out the back -

SAMMY (V.O.)

Elvis would finish his set - walk off the stage without taking a bow - pop right into a limo out back that was ready to go - and then speed off listening to his cronies tell him how great he was while they wiped him down.

INTO THE LIMO -

Where his CRONIES wipe him down as it TEARS OFF.

CRONIES

You were great Elvis... fantastic.

ELVIS

(innocently, smiling)
That was pretty darn good...

CRONIES

Unbelievable, man, un-be-fucking-lievable...

ELVIS

(joking)

Watch your mouth there boy...

BACK AT THE ARENA

Sammy holds open the door of the second limo as Colonel and Tom and finally Sammy get in.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I would have the door open at the other limo which the Colonel and Tom and whoever else was with them would get in.

INT. SECOND LIMO -- NIGHT

Sammy watches as Colonel Parker opens up the bag and reveals a \$250,000 pile of cash.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The people in the hall would still be screaming, but we were already on our way back to the hotel, following our police escort, the Colonel with as much as a quarter million dollars in cash sitting on his lap.

The POLICE ESCORT flash their lights.

SAMMY (V.O.)

When I came off the stage and shook Elvis' hand that first night. I had no idea...

TIME CUT BACK TO:

ELVIS ON STAGE - OPENING NIGHT INTERNATIONAL HOTEL SHOW

Sammy watches from behind the curtain

SAMMY (V.O.)

I couldn't understand why such a big star would be so fearful. But seeing him there - stiff and afraid was a revelation - No one could do what he did - It was him and him alone - nothing else - not the girls the money the reputation or the power. I just stood there and watched entertainment history being made.

DRUM ROLL - Music Starts

ELVIS walks out on stage and he WAITS

The crowd goes on their feet. Elvis grabs the mic...

SAMMY (V.O.)

Elvis strode out like a black stallion -
it was as if Jesus had come to save
the world. The King had arrived.

And then he HITS THEM WITH IT - FULL PELVIS.

DOWN IN SAMMY'S DRESSING ROOM -

Sammy and Earl toast to the success dancing around like kids.

SAMMY

Can you believe I pulled that off?!

EARL

That thing with the mic, was that
part of the act?

SAMMY

Of course not - that's why it worked!

A knock on the door reveals an important looking guy in a
suit: ABE LASTFOGEL (40's).

ABE

Sammy Shore, Abe Lastfogel, president
of William Morris Agency. I just
want to be the first to tell you
that was an electrifying performance
out there. Who's your agent ?

SAMMY

I'm with Tom Illius...

ABE

Good. Well you just got bumped to
the top of Tom's people to do list.
When you get back to L.A. we'll all
sit down and discuss the future of
Sammy Shore. Congratulations.

INT. THE FORUM - LOS ANGELES -- NIGHT

Twenty thousand people. Sammy walks on stage dribbling a
basketball with the band playing "SWEET GEORGIA BROWN".

He dribbles all the way up to the mic and then stops -

SAMMY

Say... What time do the Knicks show
up?

BACKSTAGE - Elvis is dressed in his white cape jumpsuit
cracking up.

AFTER HIS ROUTINE - Sammy comes off stage and shakes Elvis'
hand

OUT BEHIND THE FORUM -

The Limo escape routine is in motion only this time Elvis grabs Sammy and drags him into his Limo.

INSIDE ELVIS' LIMO -

There are FOUR BEAUTIFUL GIRLS waiting for the King and his court.

Sammy's mouth is wide open as Elvis makes himself comfy between two girls.

ELVIS
 (mimicking The Colonel)
 I hope you brought your bugle...
 BOY!

The Limo Speeds off.

INT. RANDOM HOTEL ROOM -- 7 AM

BANG BANG BANG! The door flies open and The Colonel stands there screaming like a drill Sergeant.

COLONEL
 Let's move it boy, get the show on
 the road! Where's that trumpet when
 you need one.

Sammy jumps up next to a WOMAN and a bottle of J&B. All we see are her legs.

A tired BAND MEMBER walks by and sticks his head in.

BAND MEMBER
 Sammy, if I hear you play one note
 on that bugle - I'm gonna kill you.

Sammy incoherently salutes him in agreement.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 I was a professional entertainer at
 the top of my career making Ten
 Thousand dollars a week, yet I was
 treated like the shoe shine boy.

BACK ON THE PLANE -

The Colonel greedily takes a bag full of goodies from Sammy as he boards the plane - wiped out - from touring.

COLONEL
 What'd you get me? Goddamn cheap
 ass hotel sonsobitches! A banana?

SAMMY (V.O.)

The Colonel's instructions to me were clear: "Take everything you can handle Jew Boy". On top of that he had me wheedling food out of the hotel managers and schlepping it back to him...

INT. HOTEL MANAGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sammy politely talks to the MANAGER and his ASSISTANTS - who are as shocked hearing what he is saying as he is saying it.

SAMMY

The Colonel asked me to tell you how much he and Elvis have enjoyed staying here at your hotel... And the Colonel wants to know if you could pack some lunches and drinks for Elvis and the boys?

(beat)

He'd really appreciate it.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The Colonel wanted it all - and every city it was the same. Ten G's a week and I'm carrying the fat fuck's bags.

INSIDE THE COLONEL'S PLANE -

Sammy stares out the window biting his fingers. A bottle of J&B open on his table.

SAMMY (V.O.)

What would happen if I just stood up for myself and reminded him that I was being paid to perform on stage and not be a gofer? Would he fire me? I was doing too well every night - and Elvis loved me. Shecky...? He'd tell the old man to go fuck himself. And that shit about calling me "Jewboy"? Was that for real? I hadn't stepped inside a synagogue since my wedding.

EXT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT, LAS VEGAS -- NIGHT

The Elvis jets park on the tarmac and with no crowd in sight everyone shuttles into limousines.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- DAY

Colonel and the MM walk through the casino as the staff and pit bosses all stand at attention.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The Colonel had the entire staff of the International Hotel in fear ever time he came to town. He demanded the entire top floor be at his disposal and it was not uncommon for him to call the management and ask for the important necessities of life - like changing the carpeting of his room - or asking for new bathroom fixtures to be installed.

INT. INTERNATIONAL CASINO - ROULETTE TABLE

Colonel Parker playing high stakes roulette with a table full of onlookers. One of them is a WOMAN WITH A CANE - his wife.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The Colonel had a semi-invalid wife who came to Vegas now and then to watch Elvis and spend some time with her husband.

BACK STAGE -

MRS. PARKER watches from her table as Elvis performs. Sammy walks by and she reaches out touching his arm.

MRS.PARKER

How are you Sammy?

SAMMY

I'm fine Mrs. Parker how are you?

MRS.PARKER

I really liked your show.

SAMMY

Thank You.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She had crippling arthritis and could hardly walk. The Colonel and her had been married along time.

BACK AT THE ROULETTE TABLE -

Mrs. Parker watches in silence and the Colonel covers the whole board with chips.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I watched them spend entire nights together at the Roulette table with her just sitting there watching.

INT. ELVIS' HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Sammy sits with Elvis as a DOCTOR mixes up and injects him with a hypodermic needle.

SAMMY

B what?

ELVIS

B-12.

SAMMY

B-12? Why not B-9 or B4 or B a good boy Elvis and take your vitamins rectally, like a normal boy?

ELVIS

You goofball. Don't you know what's good for ya?

SAMMY

I know that since I was this big I been scared of needles. And now that I'm twice as big - I'm twice as scared...

Elvis throws a pillow at Sammy's head.

DOCTOR

It's a perfectly safe and painless way to keep your body healthy - especially under such stress.

SAMMY

What stress? You worried that the line of girls downstairs don't go twice around the block like it used to? Trust me once around is plenty!

ELVIS

Man, I can't believe you were actually in the army.

SAMMY

Neither can the German's.

The Doctor finishes and packs up his things. He picks up a half empty bottle of J&B scotch next to Sammy and makes a face as he walks out.

ELVIS

Don't worry Sammy. No one's making you take a needle. Thanks Doc.

Sammy has on Elvis' black cape and is jumping around the room strumming a guitar making fun of Elvis.

SAMMY

(mumbling)

Tuh-reat me like a fooool - Treat me
mean and Cruel... Teddy bear.

Elvis laughs. He grabs the guitar out of Sammy's hands and starts strumming a few chords.

SAMMY

That beautiful, Elvis what is it?

ELVIS

Just some chords. Only takes three.

SAMMY

Oh, is that the secret - huh, let me
write that down...

Pretends to write on hand. Elvis starts to ZONE OUT.

ELVIS

You know I envy you. You got real
talent.

SAMMY

Gee. Thanks, man. You know one day
some of what I got might just rub
off on you and who knows - you could
be a short Jewish Comic who has to
work to get laid.

Elvis smiles. Sammy notices he's zoning.

ELVIS

I'm tired, man. Sometimes this whole
dang trip wipes me out.

SAMMY

Well, any time you wanna trade places -
I'll be the tall Christian who carries
a Bible and wiggles his hips to slay
the ladies...

Elvis sinks into the couch

ELVIS

You're the only man who can make me
laugh, Brother Sam. You're OK.
You're *Taking Care Of Business*...

Sammy watches as Elvis fades out.

SAMMY (V.O.)

There's been a lot said about Elvis -
but the one thing I knew because I
lived it was that the man was nothing

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
 if not generous from the bottom of
 his heart.

INT. SAMMY'S HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

A PORTER hands a wrapped package to Sammy. He opens it and pulls out a solid GOLD NECKLACE with the letters T.C.B. engraved on it.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 The next day I received a package
 from Elvis - a solid gold necklace
 with the letters TCB engraved.
 "Taking Care of Business".

Sammy walks over to the mirror and fastens it around his neck.

SAMMY
 Ho-ly shit.

INT. INTERNATIONAL SHOWROOM

Sammy is on stage at the end of his Preacher act.

SAMMY
 Do you wanna be saved!

YEAH!

SAMMY
 Do you wanna be saved!

YEAH!

SAMMY
 Then Jump! Jump you mothers! Jump!

And off the side of the top balcony a WOMAN SCREAMS!

The music STOPS.

And a Person JUMPS.

Sammy watches from the stage in horror as the black figure of a man falls from the top of the balcony.

Sammy can't breathe -

SAMMY
 No. It's supposed to be a joke...

And then -

IT BOUNCES BACK UP. It is a DUMMY dressed in a suit on a rope held by the CREW.

Sammy looks to the side of the stage and sees ELVIS and the MM rolling over each other in hysterics.

Sammy can't move.

Elvis walks out onto the stage - puts his arm around Sammy.

ELVIS

You know how to make me laugh Brother Sam.

The audience whistles and cheers.

EXT. RIVIERA CASINO - LAS VEGAS STRIP -- DAY

Sammy walks into the casino past a small sign that advertises SHECKY GREENE performing in the lounge.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I heard my old partner Shecky Greene was playing in the lounge at the Riviera - so I decided to go and see if I could hook up with him.

INT. RIVIERA CASINO -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy walks past the craps tables where he spies SHECKY playing with a full table of ONLOOKERS.

SAMMY

Hey Shecky, how ya doing?

SHECKY

How'm I doin' ?

Shecky does a mock double take.

SHECKY

Hey folks look whose here it's Sammy Shore in person! He's a star now - working with Elvis...

SAMMY

I came by to see your show. To see you...

Shecky spins around and throws the dice at Sammy's head-

SHECKY

You son of a bitch! You been in town a month and just NOW you make time to see my show?

Shecky lunges at Sammy and a BRAWL ensues -

SECURITY GUARDS rush in to pull the men apart.

SAMMY

What the fuck is wrong with you! I haven't seen my wife and kids in a month! Who the fuck do you think you are?

Shecky lunges again this time knocking over the craps table

SHECKY

(psycho)

Big shot Sammy Shore - look at that gold chain and fancy crap around your neck! I know where you came from Shore... I was with you when we were 21 years old and worked every stinkin' dive from New York to L.A. Now your Elvis' guy and you think your hot shit and you forget your friends.

It takes four security guards to hold Shecky back until finally he stops.

SHECKY

Fuck you Shore.

As SECURITY drags Shecky away he gives Sammy the finger.

SECURITY GUARD

Do you want to press charges, sir?
Sir?

Sammy walks out.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT -- EVENING

ALEX SHOOFEY and Sammy sit at his back table after dinner.

ALEX

This run with Elvis has been phenomenal. But you need to think about the future. What happens to Sammy Shore when Elvis goes back to Graceland for three months and there are no limo's or jets or screaming fans...

SAMMY

I tell you what happens, I pass out, that's what happens.

ALEX

It's tough. Trying to juggle it all.

SAMMY

I haven't seen my wife and kids in a month. It actually feels like a lifetime.

ALEX

Think about the lounge. You can have your own show - it's written into your contract with Elvis that you can work the lounge four weeks a year - at your discretion.

SAMMY

You want me to go straight from Elvis to working the lounge?

ALEX

It would be your own show. Your name up there. When Elvis comes back - you pick back up with him. Think about it.

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, BEVERLY HILLS -- DAY

Sammy grabs his non fat milk from the fridge and makes himself a bowl of cereal.

MITZI

You're not a lounge performer.

SAMMY

What do you mean I'm not a lounge performer? What do you know about it?

MITZI

You asked.

SAMMY

I didn't ask. I'm telling you - Shoofey offered me the lounge - it's mine if I want it.

MITZI

Did you talk to Elvis about it?

SAMMY

What Elvis? The Colonel - The Colonel is the one who tells everyone where to eat, sleep, shit, fuck, puss...

MITZI

Fuck puss?

Sammy points the the KIDS running around.

MITZI
Oh. Fick, Puss...

She pulls a 'maybe' face.

SAMMY
Anyway - I told him I'd think about
it.

MITZI
I was hoping that we could spend
some time together - just the two of
us... kind of celebrate.

SAMMY
I can't go anywhere - I have meetings
lined up all week - Abe says now is
the time to get out there and be
visible...

MITZI
You're gonna burn yourself out, Sammy.
Even Elvis takes a break.

SAMMY
He can afford it!

Mitzi moves in and grabs Sammy around the waist - which puts
him on edge.

SAMMY
What are you doing? I'm trying to
eat.

Sammy pushes her away - shutting her down.

MITZI
You need help. This isn't normal.

Dejected, Mitzi walks out. Sammy eats his cereal and watches
his kids play in the immaculate pool out back.

SAMMY (V.O.)
I knew what she wanted and I just
couldn't give it to her. How could
I - when I was banging two girls a
day for the last month. My dick was
ready to fall off.

SAMMY'S "WORKING THE ROUNDS IN L.A." MONTAGE -

EXT. WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY -- DAY

Sammy pulls up in the Jaguar. Enters. Does the rounds.

SAMMY (V.O.)
Suddenly, I'm hot shit.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()

The phone rang non stop - the offers came in. Meetings were took and everybody was sure that I was gonna be the next big thing.

INT. WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY -- DAY

Sammy shakes hands with his agent TOM ILLIUS and the president of William Morris, Abe Lastfogel.

ABE

We've got some fantastic ideas of what to do with you here in town...

SAMMY

Great.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I took every meeting... went on every audition, talked to every movie and TV producer who returned my calls...

SAMMY

Gee, I don't know guys...

TOM

This is what everybody is doing...

[*Something stupid*] they are trying to get him to do.

INT. CAPITOL RECORDS -- DAY

Sammy in a recording booth over dubbing for his comedy record.

INT. PARAMOUNT MOVIE STUDIOS -- DAY

Sammy goes on an audition where he films a pilot for TV.

INT. RECORD STORE -- DAY

Sammy's comedy record comes out - he buys a copy.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I took every offer that came my way - I was the nice guy - I wasn't gonna be the guy who needed to change the color of the sky just because I got bored of blue.

INT. WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY -- DAY

Sammy with Tom and Abe - Again.

SAMMY

Gee, I don't know guys...

TOM

This is what everybody is doing...
Trust us.

SAMMY (V.O.)

And I did trust them. This was the president of the William Morris Agency - if I couldn't trust him - what kind of world were we living in?

[Another stupid thing] they are trying to get him to do.

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sammy is pacing around his study - working out new material. Scratching out things in his notebook.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I shot three pilots that never got picked up and went out for umpteen commercials and movie roles. Of which, none of them brought me anything but paranoia and despair.

The KIDS are making noise in the other room.

SAMMY

Jesus Christ Mitzi - can you shut those kids up for half a goddamn second!

Sammy - frustrated - bolts out of the house.

INT. JAGUAR XKE (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Sammy drives down the Sunset Strip with the top down.

SAMMY (V.O.)

After a month and a half with Elvis - I was a certified attention junky. I had to get back on stage. I missed the mayhem - the endless applause and adoration.

INT. DR. EARL WOODS HOUSE, BEVERLY HILLS -- NIGHT

Earl closes the door to his study. Sammy is playing with Earl's family CAT - making *cat sounds*.

Earl pours two glasses of J&B.

EARL

What are you worried about?

SAMMY

Getting fired.

SAMMY

I want to go out and work, but I don't want to jeopardize my gig with Elvis.

EARL

Well Elvis doesn't start for another two months...

SAMMY

I know, but I've got this feeling...

EARL

Look, Sammy, The Colonel is a business man, right?

Sammy answers in his CAT VOICE.

EARL

So call him up and talk... *Business.*

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Sammy on the phone to Colonel Parker.

SAMMY

Colonel Parker? Hey It's Sammy Shore.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONTIER HOTEL - MAIN ROOM -- NIGHT

Sammy opening for DIANA ROSS.

SAMMY (V.O.)

"Take the money and run..." The Colonel said. He told me I had a lifetime contract with Elvis and that he looked forward to me starting again in January. The Frontier offered me \$7500 a week to open for Diana Ross - who had just left *The Supremes* for a solo career. It wasn't Elvis - but it got me back in Vegas where I felt normal - and was just enough to try out my new stuff before a new crowd...

Sammy Ad Libs jokes about Elvis and Colonel.

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- NIGHT

The Elvis circus is back in town. Sammy walks like he is part of the entourage - not just the class clown.

SAMMY (V.O.)

1970 was a huge year for me.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()

I played all over the world with Elvis and somehow managed to keep my marriage together with spit and tape - largely due to Mitzi's uncanny ability to endure my aggregious abuse of our vows.

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, 8826 CLIFTON WAY, BEVERLY HILLS -- MORNING

Mitzi hangs up the phone and watches on TV as News of ELVIS in Vegas is the top story. She turns the channel.

SAMMY'S DRESSING ROOM - AFTER THE SHOW

Sammy keeps his door open as girls line up outside to see Elvis. And of course - GIRLS peer in -

GIRL

Hey, aren't you that guy?

SAMMY

That's me.

GIRL 2

No - he's just the comedian. He's not the guy.

GIRL

Can you get us in to see Elvis?

SAMMY

Is he here?!

GIRL 2

Don't play dumb. I saw you on stage - you know Elvis.

SAMMY

I don't know what you are talking about - I'm the janitor.

The girls close the door, lock it and jump on Sammy.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I didn't even have to try any more. What kinds of girls were these that would just get naked and let a complete stranger take advantage of them at the mere thought of me somehow taking them to see Elvis? Where were they when I was a kid?

INT. SAMMY'S VEGAS APARTMENT -- DAY

Sammy walks into his plush Las Vegas love shack. He walks in with a FRIEND and TWO SHOWGIRLS.

SAMMY

Watch this.

Sammy hits a switch - the lights go out as a LAVA LAMP goes on swirling hippie pshychedelia around the room.

He grabs his bottle of J&B.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I got my own apartment in Vegas right off the Strip. I can honestly say that much of that time is lost in a drunken blur of sex, drugs, and for me, booze.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - SHOWROOM - 1971

ELVIS - slightly bloated - fucks around with his band on stage - spitting water at them - throws stuff...

SAMMY (V.O.)

By the time 1971 came around things became routine. Elvis was phoning it in - sleepwalking through his set - Stopping between songs - yakking it up with some 'inside' joke that nobody but the fifteen people on stage understood.

ELVIS' DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Sammy walks by looking wiped out and peers in to find the room empty. He sees one of Elvis' GIANT RINGS sitting among the refuse on the counter. He walks in and picks it up.

ELVIS

Brother Sam.

Sammy jumps - and turns around to find a chunky, pallid looking Elvis - alone sitting in the corner in the dark.

SAMMY

(nervous)

Elvis - I thought you'd left. I... just came by to see you and I saw your ring here. I thought I'd bring it to you...

ELVIS

Can I get you some water?

SAMMY

A corned beef on rye would be nice...

Elvis doesn't laugh.

ELVIS

Water's over there. I love that stuff. It's good for ya.

SAMMY

Makes a healthy cocktail.

Sammy grabs a bottle of Mountain Spring water and offers it to Elvis - who waves it off - already holding one.

ELVIS

You don't mind if I just sit here do ya?

SAMMY

No, I don't mind. How are things going?

ELVIS

Not too good. I just had to get away from all that bullshit. I can't be alone for a minute, I go to take a pee, someone's there watching me. I don't know what's happening to me Sammy. Every night I go out there - I'm either bored or scared... like maybe the people won't dig my music anymore, that this will all end. Sometimes I wish it would end...

SAMMY

You ever thought of taking a vacation?

ELVIS

I need a vacation. An Elvis vacation. When I'm home I don't know what to do with myself - Maybe the guys'll come over and play ping pong - or watch TV - but we can't just go shopping or take a walk. I miss takin' walks with my momma. Heck, I can't take my wife to the movies without causing a national panic.

Sammy doesn't know what to say.

ELVIS

And that old son of a bitch - he owes so much money - he'll have me working 'til I'm in the grave. They own him - and now they're trying to own me.

A KNOCK on the door.

VOICE

Sammy - is Elvis in there?

ELVIS

Yeah - Just a minute.

Elvis gets up. He takes the ring off the dresser and puts it in Sammy's hand.

ELVIS

I know you'd never hurt me Brother Sam. I know it.

SAMMY

It feels like we're brothers.

ELVIS

Amen.

Elvis shrugs his shoulders and becomes ELVIS again as he walks out the door.

Sammy stares down at the \$20,000 ring in his hand.

SAMMY (V.O.)

There was no end to the generosity Elvis bestowed on the people he loved. It was amazing to be around a person that was so talented and powerful - yet so frail and vulnerable- without a cynical bone in his body. Why didn't he fire The Colonel? Surely he understood the man was wearing him out. No Elvis was too loyal, too honest, and innocent to betray a friend.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - LOUNGE -- NIGHT

REDD FOXX (the one and only) is doing his lounge act. The smaller more intimate room full of tables - seats about 300. Tucked in the back - are Elvis, The Colonel, Sammy and some other MM cronies.

REDD FOXX

(ad lib Redd Foxx performance)

...So I told that motherfucker to go fuck off...

SAMMY (V.O.)

Redd Foxx was another performer that Elvis and I both loved. A truly funny man that could do something that Elvis could never do - tell the audience to go fuck themselves. Nice guys who were trapped into being nice - dependent on their mothers - like me and Elvis both were - well that was unheard of.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()

For this innate ability Redd received thousands of dollars in gold and jewelry - Elvis' way of saying thank you, I appreciate the effort.

ELVIS ON STAGE - INTERNATIONAL

SAMMY DAVIS JR. sits in the first table. Elvis - mid song pulls a BLACK SAPPHIRE RING off his pinky and hands it to him with a wink.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Elvis admired performers who had struggled to make it to the top. So one night - when Sammy David Jr. was sitting ringside enjoying the show - Elvis took off his black sapphire star ring and gave it to him. The ring cost \$50,000.

EXT. 1375 DOHENY, BEVERLY HILLS -- MORNING

Sammy and Mitzi move in to their new house.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I finally could afford to buy a house in Beverly Hills. It seemed that every thing I did hinged on the fact that somehow I was associated with Elvis. Even our realtor gave me a deal - just because of who I worked for. I was wondering if I was really any good at anything I did - or did people just leech after me because I was one step away from The King?

REALTOR takes pictures of the house and his kids.

Young Pauly chases his SISTER around the yard making weird sounds like a *dying seal fucking a police siren*.

PAULY

(running by)

Listen to this dad... ewewewewewe...

SAMMY

(exasperated)

Pauly stop it with that stupid goddamn noise - the neighbors are gonna think you're retarded!

MITZI

He's just being a kid Sammy. Lighten up!

SAMMY

Well why does he have to do that in
front of people...

Sammy watches as a NEIGHBOR WITH A HOSE STARES at him like:
"Oh shit - look what just moved in next door..."

Pauly continues to run amok chasing his SISTER making the
noise that will eventually become his trademark *WEEZE*.

INT. SAMMY'S DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Sammy pounds a glass of J&B

ASSISTANT

It's time Mr. Shore

ON STAGE -- LATER

Sammy at the end of his routine - takes a bow - walks off -
SIDE STAGE - shakes hands with - a frantic JOE ESPOSITO -

JOE

You need to go back out there...

SAMMY

What?

JOE

There's a sniper in the audience and
Elvis is afraid to go on.

SAMMY

What?!

JOE

The cops are on their way and we
don't want to alarm the audience.
It'll be a mob scene. So just go
out and do what you can...

Joe turns Sammy around like a little kid - grabs him by the
seat of his pants and pushes him back out onto the stage.

ON STAGE -

Sammy starts moving. Looking around. Confusion.

SAMMY

Well guess what folks?

Moving - looking.

SAMMY

You're not going to believe this
but...

Sammy starts acting like he's James Bond - turning and posturing fast for the crowd.

SAMMY

I've just been informed that there is a sniper here in the audience tonight...

BOOM! Sammy hits the deck. People start laughing AT HIM.

The drummer CRACKS his SNARE. Sounds like bullets.

Sammy ducks.

SAMMY

Jesus Christ, hey mister sniper - don't shoot me - Elvis is in the back eating five hamburgers and a pizza - wait for him he'll be a better target.

CRACK!

SAMMY

Again with the drummer - what's with you guys? Isn't the pot I bought good enough for you?

Now the *band* is cracking up - making zippy bullet SOUNDS with their instruments.

Sammy stammers and stalls - not knowing what to do.

Joe calls him from the side giving him the cut signal.

JOE

Sammy, it's cool - the cops caught the guy...

Sammy stands there - alone - in front of 2500 people laughing - AT HIM. He walks off.

BACKSTAGE -

Elvis approaches Sammy, laughing his ass off.

ELVIS

Thanks for dancin' like a chicken Brother Sammy. God you make me laugh.

The entire backstage CREW is laughing at Sammy.

INT. SAMMY'S VEGAS APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Sammy SLAMS the door open and pours himself a huge glass of J&B. Dr. Earl enters, composed and watches as Sammy starts raving.

SAMMY

They fucking want to kill me. I mean Jesus Christ Earl, a fucking sniper. What the fuck is wrong with these people? I'm out there tap dancing and it's never enough...

Sammy has the shakes.

EARL

Calm down Sammy calm down.

Earl closes the curtains and dims the lights. He walks over to Sammy and takes the drink out of his hand.

SAMMY

They keep telling me they're my friends... With friends like these...

EARL

They are your friends.

Earl downs his drink and sits on the couch next to Sammy.

EARL

I'm your friend, Sammy.

SAMMY

It's fucked. The whole thing is fucked...

Earl starts taking off Sammy's tie and unbuttons his tuxedo collar...

EARL

We've been friends a long time. I remember the first show I saw you at - playing some dive in Santa Monica...

Sammy puts his hand over his eyes and sinks into the couch, unaware that Earl is staring at him with loving eyes...

SAMMY

I'm a fool.

Sammy is wasted - and Earl knows it. He starts to take off Sammy's shoes and casually slips his hand UP SAMMY'S THIGH.

Sammy shoves his hand away - sobering up INSTANTLY.

EARL

Sammy...

SAMMY

What the fuck you doing Earl?

EARL

Sammy I wanted to...

SAMMY

Get out.

Earl smiles, embarrassed, tries to make light of his actions

SAMMY

Get the fuck out of here Earl.

Sammy slaps him away. Earl - much bigger than Sammy - just deflects the hits with his arms up.

EARL

Alright , alright...

Sammy stares at him.

SAMMY

Get the fuck OUT.

Earl takes one last look - and leaves.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - CONTINENTAL RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Alex Shoofey, Sammy and Mitzi are having dinner.

ALEX

Fifteen Thousand a week. We'd bill it with your name on it. Hire a band...

SAMMY

Maybe the Inspirations - They've been backing me up for years now...

ALEX

It's time to make a move. Things are changing around here. You can't rely on Elvis forever you know...

SAMMY

Alex, are you trying to tell me something...

Alex sits back - smiling like the Cheshire Cat.

ALEX

(to Mitzi)

What do you think?

Mitzi is quiet. Sammy knows what she thinks.

SAMMY

She's with me.

She smiles - he clutches her leg under the table.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - CASINO

Alex Shoofey talks with BARRON HILTON as they walk through the casino floor.

ALEX

I'm telling you the man is by far
your best customer... easy million
dollars a year...

They spy across the room COLONEL PARKER at the roulette table.

ALEX

Clockwork.

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL - LOBBY -- DAY

Alex Shoofey and BARRON HILTON shake hands as the PAPPARAZI snap away.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Hilton bought the International Hotel
in 1972. That was the year I finally
took Alex's offer to do the lounge
show - against Mitzi's feeling that
I really wasn't a lounge performer.
Her lack of confidence in me really
pissed me off and I was determined
to prove her wrong.

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, 1325 DOHENY, BEVERLY HILLS -- DAY

Sammy and Mitzi argue

MITZI

You're not a lounge performer. You
need written material. All that off
the cuff interaction with the crowd -
it's not you.

SAMMY

You would know? Where were you when
I walked out on stage for the biggest
show of my life and the mic was off?
Huh? Or all the times I worked the
crowds from in the audience...

MITZI

I'm just saying, the lounge is a
different style. It's all ad-lib.

SAMMY

You don't think I can cut it on my
own - is that it?

MITZI

I think you should ride this Elvis thing out until it ends.

SAMMY

Yeah, well I'm sick of being a doughnut boy.

MITZI

You better go talk to The Colonel and ask him. Just in case.

Sammy grabs his coat and bolts out.

INT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT -

A HUGE BILLBOARD with SAMMY'S FACE that reads: *Brother Sam Is Going To Heal You! At The International.*

SAMMY (V.O.)

I didn't listen. I took the deal without first talking to the Colonel, and within days they were renovating the lounge..

INT. INTERNATIONAL LOUNGE -- DAY

WORKERS renovating the area raising a revival tent: Redecorating.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was going to do the best part of my show the preacher - and expand that into a forty five minute routine. Of course taking a five minute bit and turning it into a full show took lots of work.

INT. SAMMY'S STUDY -- NIGHT

Sammy works on material through the night.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I kept putting off talking to the Colonel until a week before the show.

INT. STEAM ROOM

Sammy walks in wrapped in a towel and sits by the Colonel. The Colonel doesn't look at Sammy.

COLONEL

I see you got yourself a revival show going on down *theyah*... Everybody scurrying around getting things ready.

SAMMY

Alex offered me the lounge. Said I had the option in my contract of playing it four weeks a year - outside of the Elvis shows...

COLONEL

Is he paying more money than in the main room?

SAMMY

Oh yeah. A lot more.

COLONEL

Well good luck, Brother Sam.

Sammy doesn't speak.

INT. INTERNATIONAL LOUNGE - REVIVAL SHOW

Sammy's new act starts out strong -

As the time goes by - the Preacher act starts to wear -

HALF AN HOUR IN -

It is just annoying.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LEFT

Sammy is fucking dying out there

AS THE FINAL MUSIC BEGINS -

Sammy takes a bow and BOLTS backstage where Mitzi tries to comfort him.

SAMMY

Just leave me alone.

IN HIS DRESSING ROOM -

Sammy grabs the bottle of J&B and starts chugging it. Mitzi walks in.

SAMMY

Get out... just let me be alone...

MITZI

The show was great Sammy.

SAMMY

Don't patronize me, Mitzi.

MITZI

I'm not. It was really good.

SAMMY
 (explodes)
 Fuck you!

He becomes savage. Kicks the chair over and smashes a lamp.

MITZI
 ...I'm leaving you.

SAMMY
 ...I don't want to hear it, any of
 it...

MITZI
 I'm leaving you, Sammy.

He stops.

MITZI
 I'm leaving you.

There are tears in her eyes as she stands there, shaking.

Sammy goes to her - on his knees - stuffs his face in her.
 He begins crying.

SAMMY
 Don't leave me Mitzi. Don't leave.

She puts her hand on his head. Alex Shoofey walks in.

ALEX
 Sammy... is everything OK?

Mitzi nods. Alex closes the door leaving them in privacy.

INT. INTERNATIONAL LOUNGE - REVIVAL SHOW -- CONTINUOUS

Closing performance -

SAMMY (V.O.)
 My show lasted two weeks.

Alex Shoofey avoids Sammy after the show - a not so subtle
 indicator of his disappointment.

SAMMY
 (to fans)
 Thank you... Thank you...

EXT. INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- DAY

The Elvis circus is back.

INT. TOP FLOOR INTERNATIONAL HOTEL -- DAY

Sammy arrives glad to be back with the 'family' - yukking it up with the BAND GUYS. Joe Esposito pulls Sammy away.

JOE

Sammy...

INT. COLONELS ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy enters and Joe closes the door leaving him alone with the Colonel.

COLONEL

Brother Sam.

SAMMY

Hey Colonel.

COLONEL

What brings you here?

SAMMY

I... I don't understand what you mean?

COLONEL

You don't know what I mean? Smart ass Jewboy like yourself don't know when the fire done left the kitchen.

Tries to smile - all he can get out is:

SAMMY

Huh...

COLONEL

Alright then I'll spell it for ya - Elvis don't need no two bit traitor working in his show. You been replaced, boy. Your services are no longer required here.

TWO BURLY MM THUGS enter the room from behind the Colonel and pick Sammy up - carrying him out.

SAMMY

Colonel, I don't...

COLONEL

So long Brother Sammy. Hallelujah!

IN THE HALL -

The Thugs Carry Sammy past the entire Band and crew - everyone is there watching but Elvis.

THEY throw him in the elevator - followed by his trumpet and suit case.

DING.

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE LOBBY -

The elevator opens as Sammy tries to compose himself with the LOBBY CROWD gawking.

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Shore... would you follow me please.

Sammy gets up and follows the GUARD.

INT. ALEX SHOOFY'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy pleads his case to an indifferent Alex.

ALEX

There's nothing I can do Sam.
Nothing.

SAMMY

Talk to The Colonel - tell him that it was in the contract!

ALEX

The Colonel doesn't give a shit about a contract - hell that fat fuck can't read.

SAMMY

Alex, I'm sorry about the Lounge act - I did my best - I really did.

ALEX

I know you did Sammy. I know you did. It just didn't happen.

Alex taps Sammy on the shoulder.

SAMMY

Next time Brother Sam. Next time.

And with a big PR smile he shows Sammy the door.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP -- DUSK

A very cool montage of all the lights flickering on at each hotel along the strip. Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut...

SAMMY (V.O.)

I won't bore you with the gory details of what happened next... Well, OK...

INT. SAMMY'S VEGAS APARTMENT -- EVENING

Sammy drinks himself stupid. He stands naked with a bottle in front of his picture window that faces the Strip.

WALKS ONTO THE BALCONY -

Naked - holding his J&B bottle in one hand and his dick in the other - taking a piss on the street below.

SAMMY

Fuck You. Fuck You.

A GUY BELOW looks up, rubbing the piss out of his eyes.

GUY

Hey Fuck You! You asshole. I'm gonna kick your ass.

SAMMY

Fuck You!

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Sammy is taken - naked - wrapped in a blanket - and stuffed into a POLICE CAR.

GUY

Fuck You, you fucking prick. I'm gonna find out who you are and take a shit on your head!

COP

Shut up!

INT. JAIL CELL -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy is tossed in jail.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I didn't like that apartment anyway. Two hundred dollars for a lousy one bedroom.

A DRUNK lying on the floor at the back of the cell mumbles:

DRUNK

Can I get an Amen...

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. THE COMEDY STORE - SUNSET STRIP - 1972 -- DAY

Sammy stares up at the new sign with Mitzi and their new partner RUDY DELUCA.

SAMMY

What do you think?

RUDY

I like it. I think this is gonna work.

Sammy - unsure- takes another look.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mitzi came up with the name after Frank Sennes asked me to take the side room of his night club Ciro's and turn it into a comedy room. He wanted to call it The Sammy Shore Room. For once - I listened to Mitzi - and it proved to be the smartest decision I could make.

MITZI

You don't need your name plastered on everything Sammy...

She walks into the Comedy Store as Rudy laughs at Sammy.

RUDY

Listen to your wife - she's going places.

INT. SCANDIA RESTAURANT - SUNSET STRIP -- DAY

Sammy and FRANK SENNE'S have lunch at the trendy eatery.

FRANK

The room is small...

SAMMY

What would I do there, Frank?

FRANK

What else - open up a comedy joint. Invite your friends - all the people you know in the business. I won't charge you any rent - well - until you start making some money. It's all free. Just go and have some fun with it.

Sammy contemplates this. Frank hits him on the forehead with a spoon.

FRANK

Are you stupid? I'm giving you a free nightclub on the Sunset Strip.

INT. COMEDY STORE -- NIGHT

The small, smoke filled room is PACKED. Sammy gets on stage.

SAMMY

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,
welcome to the Comedy Store. I'm
Sammy Shore, maybe you've seen me on
the cover of *Watchtower*.

PANNING SHOTS OF THE CROWD -

SAMMY (V.O.)

The place was the talk of the town -
a nightclub solely for comedians.
Talent scouts for Johnny Carson,
Merv Griffin and Mike Douglas were
there regularly.

MONTAGE OF YOUNG COMEDIANS PLAYING COMEDY STORE -

Whoopie Goldberg, David Letterman, Robin Williams... all
just before they get famous.

A YOUNG JAY LENO performs to the sparse crowd of about 20
people. Sammy, Rudy and Mitzi watch from the back.

SAMMY

Whose this guy?

RUDY

His name is Jay Leno...

Sammy shrugs.

SAMMY

It's too bad. He's funny, but he'll
never make it with that honker of a
chin.

CUT TO:

A YOUNG FREDDY PRINZE ON STAGE --

SAMMY (V.O.)

I got a call from a TV producer to
schedule one of the new comics we
had so the brass could see him - a
kid named Freddy Prinze. The rest is
history.

IN THE OFFICE - Mitzi sits handling the phones and scheduling
comedians on a massive calendar.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The comedy store was handed to me,
but I was too self absorbed to be

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
 content. I craved the attention and
 hungered for the big crowd.

INT. HORN CLUB - SANTA MONICA -- NIGHT

Sammy on stage to the casual room.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 I booked myself wherever I could -
 Mitzi and Rudy seemed to be able to
 handle the club. In fact I think
 Mitzi enjoyed it. And that freed me
 up to do my thing...

EXT. COMEDY STORE -- NIGHT

Sammy pulls up in the now - slightly dented JAGUAR XKE. He
 gets out looking disheveled and hung over.

RUDY
 That's it, Sammy, I can't take it
 any more.

SAMMY
 What's wrong?

RUDY
 I'm supposed to be your partner -
 well then why is this bitch running
 the show?

SAMMY
 Don't call my wife a bitch. Rudy
 calm down...

RUDY
 What do you know? You're not even
 here...

The fight devolves into a name calling match in front of the
 Comedy Store. Rudy gets in Sammy's face - as Sammy just
 rubs his eyes and takes it - blocking out the sound.

SAMMY (V.O.)
 Rudy was mad at the fact that I let
 him down. And he was right - He
 didn't become partners with my wife.
 Why should he have to put up with
 her making the business decisions?
 In the end it turned out she was
 right - but that didn't matter at
 the time. Once again I couldn't
 even stand up for myself. I just
 stood there - and took it.

Rudy finishes his barrage of obscenities. A crowd has gathered.

RUDY

Fuck this shit. Take your Comedy club and your wife - and stick it up your ass!

He storms off.

SAMMY

Yeah, OK, Rudy, bye now.

Sammy rubs his eyes.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I don't even remember what the fight was about.

INT. ABC TELEVISION STUDIO -- DAY

Sammy is on camera in the middle of his own TV special.

SAMMY (V.O.)

A producer from the Johnny Carson show who caught my act at The Comedy Store got me to host a late night talk show pilot. So for the next three weeks we rehearsed and hired writers and filmed...

CUT TO:

INT. ABC BOARD ROOM -- LATER

ABC BRASS sit around a table watching the finished show on tape - taking notes and studying the performance.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, 1325 DOHENY, BEVERLY HILLS -- NIGHT

Sammy listens on the phone as he gets word.

SAMMY

Yeah... I understand.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I thought it was a smash. But the ABC Brass didn't buy it.

Sammy Hangs up and pours himself a glass of J&B.

SAMMY (V.O.)

And for the first time I knew - it wasn't the writing, or the people, or the sets... It was me.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()

I just didn't have the personality to carry a full network show. How could I? I was drinking like a fiend, nervous about every goddamn thing... Mitzi and I stopped sleeping together months ago...

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE -- DAY

Mitzi talks to a therapist.

MITZI

I don't know what I should do. I care so much about him, but I get nothing in return.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She asked for a trial separation - which was weird because - I was still at the house all the time - only now I went to an apartment down the street to go to bed. Then I'd come back the next day to be with the kids...

EXT. SAMMY'S HOUSE, 1325 DOHENY, BEVERLY HILLS -- MORNING

Sammy pulls up in his XKE and walks slowly to the house.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I still asked her for advice. I had a new agent at William Morris and he got me an offer to do 12 Weeks at the Lounge at the Hilton.

INT. COMEDY STORE -- DAY

Mitzi does the books as the STAFF cleans up last nights mess.

SAMMY

This could be it. This gets me right back in Vegas...

MITZI

In the same situation that got you kicked out of Vegas... Sammy you're not a lounge performer.

SAMMY

But this is a small lounge...

MITZI

And Caesar was killed with a dagger - not a sword... You're not an ad-libber like Don Rickels or Shecky... You do a good act - but only when it's right for you.

SAMMY (V.O.)

She brought up Shecky and I wanted to fucking kill her.

MITZI

Go do whatever you want to do - you will anyway. I'd hate to see you go back to Vegas and not do well. It'd take you another five years just to bounce back.

Steaming rage.

INT. HILTON - VESTAL VIRGIN ROOM - LAS VEGAS -- NIGHT

The pretentious all silver and pink decor is punctuated by a massive grand piano at the center of the room. Sammy walks in and hands BIM (Japanese piano player) his sheet music.

SAMMY

Hello, I'm Sammy.

BIM

You, want me to play *this*...?

Bim looks condescendingly at Sammy's music.

SAMMY

Yeah. You are the piano player right?

BIM

Yes. This is funny?

SAMMY

Yes, funny, ha ha.

BIM

Funny ha ha?

SAMMY

Funny, ha ha.

BIM

I see.

SAMMY

Good.

SAMMY (V.O.)

It was clear he didn't. And neither did anybody else...

LATER THAT NIGHT -

The crowd give a moderate reception to Sammy. Bim is stiff and Sammy's act is again - average.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I was busting my ass to get laughs from the fifteen hookers that worked the Hilton Lounge and nobody I knew came to see me. Baron Hilton had fired Alex Shoofey and was changing the hotel into some generic chain hotel a copy of his autobiography in every room.

INT. HILTON MAIN FOYER -- DAY

The Elvis circus arrives while Sammy is playing in the small lounge. No one pays him any attention.

SAMMY (V.O.)

To make matters worse - two weeks later Elvis came to town and played in the main room just like he always did. None of my so called friends from the Elvis show came to see me - they could'a cared less. I finished up my four weeks and got the hell out of there.

EXT. LAX -- MORNING

Sammy arrives at LAX and takes a cab.

SAMMY (V.O.)

This time there was no one to greet me at the Airport.

EXT. COMEDY STORE -- EVENING

Sammy pulls up in his XKE to see a HUGE LINE snaking around the block.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I dumped my bags off at my apartment and headed straight for The Comedy Store. The line was around the block.

AT THE DOOR -

A BOUNCER stops Sammy from entering his club.

BOUNCER

What do you think you're doing ?

SAMMY

I'm the owner.

BOUNCER

Yeah, well I'm the doorman and the line stars down there.

SAMMY
Get Mitzi. Right now.

A BARTENDER from inside comes to Sammy's rescue -

BARTENDER
Sammy, hey...
(to bouncer)
This is Sammy Shore - Mitzi's wife...
er, husband...

INT. COMEDY STORE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy cuts the crowd - it is WALL TO WALL. He sees Mitzi
pounding away at the register and approaches her.

SAMMY
Hi Mitzi.

MITZI
Oh Hi Sammy, when did you get back?

KIP, a young comedian cuts in front of Sammy.

KIP
Hey Mitzi baby, what time do I go
on?

MITZI
Nine - thirty Kip. Sharp.

Kip smiles and bounces off.

KIP
Thanks, love ya baby...

MITZI
Yeah yeah yeah... Sammy, do you mind
waiting in the back, I mean your
crowding me here and the Fire
Marshall's been breaking my balls
about people crowding the exits...
Thanks.

She looks him in the eyes with a big PR smile.

AT THE BAR -

Sammy nurses a tall glass of scotch. He is invisible.

SAMMY (V.O.)
When did she grow iron balls? The
place was packed on a Monday night.
A Monday night!

TIME DISSOLVE - of Sammy drinking at the bar.

Now it is midnight and Sammy is shitfaced. The place is still packed as Sammy drags his ass off the barstool and

FORCES HIS WAY ONTO THE STAGE -

The EMCEE turns around and sees who it is. He knows Sammy -

EMCEE

Ladies and Gentlemen, Sammy Shore...

MITZI stops counting money.

SAMMY

Hey everybody, it' since to be back.

Applause and laughter.

VOICES

Hey Sammy! Do the Black Leopard bit!

Sammy goes into his "Black Leopard Routine": prowling around the stage staring at the audience like a cat:

SAMMY

Whatcha' lookin' at boy? Ever seen a black leopard before? Ya like my coat? It's mohair...

VOICES

Do Brother Sam!

Sammy goes into his routine a bit - getting laughs and cheers from the young crowd -- and then SEES from the stage: MITZI with her arms folded in the back - NOT PLEASED.

SAMMY

Thank you everybody.

Sammy walks off stage to pats on the back and kudos.

AT THE BAR -- AFTER HOURS

Mitzi counts the cash as Sammy approaches - drink in hand. The staff and a few people, comedians and friends, are milling around, as they always do, at the end of the night.

SAMMY

Hey Mitzi... they really loved me, huh?

MITZI

What's a matter Sammy, don't you work enough? Two young comedians couldn't go on tonight on because you needed to hog the spotlight. Don't you remember what it was like?

SAMMY
Hey wait a second...

MITZI
No, let me finish. I was supposed to run the club when you were out of town - and I can't tell you how great it was when you were gone.

SAMMY
Well I'm back, so what's the problem?

MITZI
You. You're the problem.

Sammy smiles. Leans back and yells to the bartender.

SAMMY
Pour me another one Ron! A round of drinks on the house!

Mitzi goes back to counting cash.

MITZI
Fucking drunk.

SAMMY
What did you say?

MITZI
You heard me. Why don't you go sink down to the bottom of a bottle and drown... let the adult run the club. And don't worry, I'll be sure to put you *highness* on the schedule whenever you want, you egomaniac. Since you've been gone - I've *doubled the take*. *That* should make you happy...

She shoves a fist full of cash in his face. Sammy Explodes.

SAMMY
You fucking *bitch!*

He grabs the money out of her hands.

SAMMY
Who the fuck do you think you are, talking to me like that?!

Sammy slaps her across the face - money flies everywhere.

TWO YOUNG COMEDIANS grab Sammy and pull him off Mitzi.

SAMMY
Get your fucking hands off of me.

They pin him down.

SAMMY

(to Mitzi)

I'm warning you - get out of my club.
Get out of MY **CLUB**.

MITZI

You're old. You're a has been. And
nobody wants you!

Mitzi spits in his face and runs down the stairs hysterical.

He shakes the guys off - they let Sammy go. Nobody moves.

SAMMY

(under his breath)

Get the fuck out. Everybody get
out.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. AMBULANCE (MOVING)- PRESENT DAY -- NIGHT

Wet streets, SIREN, lights flashing, just like in the movies.

INT. AMBULANCE (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

David, sits with a PARAMEDIC and an unconscious SAMMY - lying
there with an oxygen mask over his mouth.

DAVID

Is he dead?

PARAMEDIC

Almost.

DAVID

Damn.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM, CEDARS SINAI -- MOMENTS LATER

Sammy is unloaded and taken into the ICU.

DOCTOR

What happened?

DAVID

He collapsed. He was on stage and
then he just...

DOCTOR

What was it a wedding? These old
guys know how to drink and dance on
tables.

DAVID

No... no he's an old time comedian.
That's Sammy Shore. Used to open
for Elvis.

Doctor finishes his assessment.

DOCTOR

Alright - get this man into ICU put
him on 50mm of [*insert drug here*]
and prep him for bypass surgery.
Who are you?

DAVID

I'm the videographer.

DOCTOR

Who is he?

DAVID

Sammy Shore. Pauly Shore's father...

The Doctor knows who Pauly is.

DOCTOR

You know how to get in touch with
his family?

DAVID

Not really. I just have his cell
phone. Look, doc is he gonna be
alright.

DOCTOR

If he can survive 40 years of comedy,
a little bypass surgery ain't gonna
hurt him none.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Sammy is still unconscious - having just finished his surgery
and is recovering in his room. We can see that a PACEMAKER
has been installed from the wires coming out of his chest.

SAMMY (V.O.)

I gave her everything...

DOINK DOINK

INT. L.A. SUPERIOR COURT -- 1974 - MORNING

Sammy sits across from his LAWYER.

LAWYER

Are you uh... sure that this is what
you want to do, Sammy?

SAMMY

Do it.

The Lawyer turns away and faces the JUDGE forcing a smile.
The GAVEL comes down and we -

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. COUNTY COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Sammy walks out of the court and gets in his faded Jaguar XKE.

SAMMY (V.O.)

The house, the Comedy Store, I just gave it to Mitzi. Everyone thought I was nuts. Even I thought it was nuts... but I knew it was the right thing to do. For me.

MONTAGE OF COMEDY STORE SUCCESSES

SAMMY (V.O.)

Mitzi became the Queen of comedy playing den mother to all the up and coming comedians of the 70's and 80's. She eventually bought the whole building and with her innovations and good horse sense - changed the face of comedy clubs as we know them today.

INT. COMEDY STORE -- NIGHT

Sammy goes on at the comedy store.

SAMMY

Thank you....

SAMMY (V.O.)

And eventually she forgave me and put me back on the schedule - always giving me shit whenever I went too long...

MITZI GIVES SAMMY SHIT FOR GOING TOO LONG

INT. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETING -- DAY

Sammy sits and listens to the stories of the group.

SAMMY (V.O.)

And did I eventually go to Alcoholics Anonymous...? what are you kidding me? Anybody whose anybody in this business eventually goes to Alcoholics Anonymous.

SAMMY (V.O.) ()
That's where half the meetings and
deals are done in this town!

GUYS taking meetings talking about deals...

INT. HARRAH'S CASINO - RENO - 1977 -- NIGHT

Sammy opening for TONY ORLANDO. Tony is on stage singing in that deep velvet voice that sold a million records. Sammy and the entire CROWD watch as - slowly - the crowd's attention is drawn - one by one - away from Tony -

SAMMY (V.O.)
I remember being at Harrah's in Reno
opening for Tony Orlando when word
came down that Elvis was found dead...

The BARTENDER turns up the TV. Everything stops.

NEWS ANNOUNCES THE DEATH OF ELVIS.

Sammy in shock.

SAMMY (V.O.)
My friend. A man who never said a
bad thing about another human being
as long as I knew him was dead. And
what horrible stories. How he looked,
how they found him. That wasn't the
man I knew.

Tony walks over and puts his arm around Sammy.

TONY
Gee, Sammy, I don't know what to
say. I'm sorry.

SAMMY
Thanks Tony.

Tears well up in Sammy's eyes - and he has to turn away.

Close shot on B&W ELVIS FOOTAGE from 1955 - at his BEST

SAMMY (V.O.)
He was my friend.

CUT TO:

LAS VEGAS - HOTEL LOUNGE - PRESENT DAY

Sammy (70's) ON STAGE - in his trademark all black outfit, dark glasses - with a black baseball cap perched on top of a head of silver curls - REVEALS that he's been telling us his story from the stage *all along*.

SAMMY

If I'd had this pacemaker installed back when I heard that Elvis died It would have stopped.

Laughs.

SAMMY

Through all my life I wondered what it was that made other people get famous - while I had to struggle so hard. After I had my heart attack a few years ago - I realized the one thing I was gonna do was not act like an old fart and deprive myself of what I like to do - be on stage.

INT. FRIAR'S CLUB SAMMY SHORE ROAST - 1984

The comedians have gathered to roast Sammy Shore at the infamous Friar's club.

SAMMY (V.O.)

In 1984 I was roasted at the Friar's Club in Beverly Hills. For me - it meant I found myself.

BACKSTAGE -

Sammy and Milton Berle are getting dressed, wrapped in towels at the mirror shaving.

MILTON

Sammy, Sammy darling... Now that you've come to this wonderful time of your life I do believe it's time you knew the facts...

The other guys start to giggle.

SAMMY

And what are the facts?

MILTON

Am I not the King?

Milton unwraps his famously large PENIS - while everyone cracks up. He covers it back up.

SAMMY

Milton, if your the king then I'm a Pauper...

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS DURING THE ROAST

SAMMY (V.O.)

Slowly but surely time catches up to all of us. And when the last of us old time comedians is finally taken to meet the maker, all that'll be left is the echoes of the laughter and the memories of the moments.

A picture of Sammy and Milton Berle fills the screen - Then Milton Berle's face fades from the image leaving Sammy alone.

CUT TO:

PAULY SHORE ON MTV

SAMMY (V.O.)

My son Paul finally figured out how to turn being an annoying kid into being an annoying adult... And MTV paid him and made him a movie star for it.

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE -- PRESENT

Sammy grabs a glass of water and rubs the sweat off his brow.

SAMMY

In 1997 I went on tour with my son Pauly - and I worked for him on the road... It was great... And people say the elderly shouldn't drive...
(beat)
God it's hot in here...

He takes off his hat which is attached to a WIG - revealing his shiny bald head underneath. The audience goes wild.

SAMMY

What? Oh you didn't know?

He puts the hat/wig on the mic stand and smiles.

SAMMY

This lady here thought I was going to have another heart attack. I'd like to - but I've got to save something for the 9 O'clock show...

Tight on Sammy - working the stage

SAMMY

The night I had my heart attack - I thought I saw my father - For real - walking in his tweed suit - in the shadows of the back wall - And I just froze up. I stood there. Couldn't breathe.

SAMMY

Hyman Shore died before my time with Elvis. He hadn't seen any of the successes, the big failures and little achievements that I made. Think about it - over fifty years ago - and there he was staring at me plain as day. Silent - waiting - glaring at me as I tried to catch my breath...

He pauses, the entire crowd wrapped in his hand.

SAMMY

And what gave me the heart attack wasn't that I saw a ghost - or that I never really told him that I loved him. He wouldn't have know what to say to that anyway - it'd just confuse his mind... We didn't have the W.B. to tell us how to be sensitive back then...

Laughs.

SAMMY

...No what gave me the heart attack - what scared me the most - out of anything in the world - was the thought that he had come back from the dead - not to guide me on my way to the pearly gates of heaven - but that he'd walk up to me at the front of the stag and say: "Sammy - bigshot - When you gonna pay me back for all those goddamn trumpet lessons?!"

Pulls out the trumpet and Blows off key.

Fade out.

BACK IN THE USSR - by The Beatles

"You don't know how lucky you are boys, back in the USSR..."