

SOMEBODY TO LOVE
(The Freddy Mercury Story)

An original screenplay by
Michael Cunningham

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BLACK SCREEN

The Queen song, "We Will Rock You," starts up instantly. It's loud, assaultive, and infectious. The screen remains black through the song's first twelve seconds, which is a series of tribal-sounding hand claps. With the opening lyrics we see a tumble of images, some of which will recur later in the movie, some of which will not (the dates aren't shown on screen, merely implied by what people are wearing):

INT. FREDDIE MERCURY'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Buddy you're a boy, make a big
noise playing in the street, gonna
be a big man some day.

A pale, slender, masculine hand, the left hand, lies palm down on a white marble tabletop. It's a strong and slightly odd image, a stark contrast to the blank black screen. The man's right hand begins expertly brushing black nail polish onto the index finger of the recumbent left hand.

INT. WEMBLEY STADIUM, 1985 - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

You got mud on your face, you big
disgrace, kicking your can all over
the place.

A crowd of fans sways ecstatically to the music we're hearing.

INT. WILD PARTY IN 1981 - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)

Singing we will, we will rock you.
We will

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN (whose name, as we will learn, is CHRISTINE CARRINGTON) stands posing for an unseen photographer with a fabulously dressed DRAG QUEEN. They're in the middle of a huge, raucous party. The young woman wears a slinky black evening gown, and the drag queen is white white white - big white wig, white dress, pale make-up. For the off screen photographer, the woman kisses the drag queen on the cheek. The drag queen smiles, then takes the woman's face in one beringed hand and kisses her, deeply and passionately, on the mouth. The woman lustily returns the kiss.

EXT. AN EMPTY STREET IN LONDON - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
we will rock you.

A riderless white horse gallops along a deserted nocturnal street.

EXT. A STREET IN ZANZIBAR, 1952 - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Buddy you're a young man,

A LITTLE PERSIAN BOY (FREDDIE AS A CHILD) stands beside his MOTHER and FATHER at a street festival, laughing delightedly at a CLOWN who bears a vague resemblance to the drag queen we've just seen.

INT. HEAVEN, A GAY CLUB IN LONDON, 1983 - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
hard man,

Two YOUNG GO-GO BOYS dance on a platform amid flashing lights, before a frenzied crowd of men.

INT. A ROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
shouting in the street,

A magnificent antique vase falls to a hardwood floor, shatters.

EXT. A GARDEN IN LONDON, 1991 - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
gonna take on the world some day.

A STURDY DARK-HAIRED MAN (JIM HUTTON), all muddy from gardening, walks away from the camera bearing a huge armful of dead branches he's pruned from the trees.

INT. A STAGE IN AN OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
You got blood on your face,

In a lavish production of *La Traviata*, the great diva Montserrat Caballe, wearing a lavish gown, sings "Sempre Libera." (We only see this, we don't hear the Verdi.)

EXT. A GARDEN IN LONDON - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
You big disgrace, waving your banner

A pair of ruddy male hands gently lay a dead koi onto a swatch of emerald-green grass. The koi is magnificent - bright gold, over two feet long. Almost lovingly, the hand slips a knife blade into the fish's belly and makes a single deft slit from head to tail.

INT. A JEWELER'S COUNTER - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
All over the place.

Another male hand, paler and more delicate, spills rubies onto black velvet. It's almost as if we're seeing the fish's spilled guts, and finding that they're brilliant red gems.

EXT. A CEMETERY - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
We will, we will rock you.

Christine stands in a cemetery, dressed in black, holding a bouquet of red roses. She's quite mysterious-looking, solemn, like the Queen of the Night in Mozart's "Magic Flute." We can't tell it's a cemetery - we only see this beautiful woman standing against the sky, holding a bouquet of roses.

INT. A ROOM SOMEWHERE - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Sing it!

We see a door in a wall painted saffron. The door - a perfectly ordinary-looking door, possibly a closet door - swings open and releases the blinding silver light that has clearly been shut away.

EXT. OUTSIDE A HOTEL - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
We will we will rock you.

A group of YOUNG, NAKED MEN, seen from above, stands in the street outside a hotel, holding up a sign that says, "Welcome, Freddie."

INT. RECORDING STUDIO IN LONDON - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Buddy you're an old man, poor man,
pleading with your eyes,

Three STUDLY YOUNG ROCK N' ROLLERS - BRIAN MAY, ROGER TAYLOR, AND JOHN DEACON - lay down the instrumental for what we're hearing amid a cloud of cigarette smoke.

INT. WEMBLEY STADUIM, 1985 - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
gonna make you some peace some day,
you got mud on your face, big
disgrace, somebody better put you
back into your place.

Freddie, Brian, Roger, and John are on stage, singing the passage of "We Will Rock You" that we're hearing. We see them from a distance, as would fans seated in the very last rows - their features are indistinct. Freddie stands at the front, glittery with sweat, singing at the top of his voice.

EXT. BALCONY OVERLOOKING A LAKE IN MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
We will, we will

We are on a balcony that looks out onto a tranquil deep-blue lake, with mountains beyond. A vase containing a single white orchid stands on a table in front of the balcony's railing. It's the very embodiment of calm and beauty; it resembles David Hockney's "Mt. Fuji and Flowers."

We do notice, however, that alongside the vase is a mirror, with lines of cocaine neatly laid out on it. It almost seems an inevitable part of this serene composition.

INT. A CAR - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Rock you.

From the back seat of a car, we see WORSHIPFUL YOUNG FANS clamoring ecstatically at the windows.

INT. A BARBERSHOP - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Sing it!

A pair of scissors cuts off a strand of dark hair.

INT. A BEDROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
We will, we will, rock you.

Christine, wearing only panties and a t-shirt, turns in a fury and says something we can't hear.

EXT. LAKE IN MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
Everybody, we will, we will rock
you.

We see, reflected in the nocturnal water, the statue of Freddie that stands beside the lake. It's quite recognizable but wavery, skimming over the black water. After a moment a NAKED BOY dives in, right into the place in the water where the reflection shimmers. It happens so quickly we barely register the fact that it's a boy at all -- we only understand that someone has jumped into the water and scattered the image.

EXT. A STARRY, NOCTURNAL SKY - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
We will, we will rock you.

An enormous black gondola sails across a starry sky. At the prow of the gondola stands A BEAUTIFUL, JUNO-ESQUE WOMAN IN A RED GOWN.

She's Freddie's idealized image of Violetta, the tragic prostitute in "La Traviata." Behind her: several BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BOYS wearing only loincloths and white wings, a MUSCULAR MAN IN LEATHER PANTS AND HARNESS, a SLENDER YOUNG WOMAN playing a violin, and an INDIAN MAN, juggling.

INT. A BEDROOM - NIGHT

QUEEN (SINGING)
All right!

Two male torsos, seen very close up, writhe passionately together.

INT. FREDDIE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

During the song's closing instrumental, we return to the graceful hand on the marble tabletop. Its last nail is being painted. All the nails of his left hand are now a sleek, glossy black. Just before the song ends we see Freddie looking into a mirror. Freddie is an angular, intense-looking man in his late thirties. He all but crackles with life and will, the way certain screen goddesses of the forties did. He has short black hair and a mustache. He raises his left hand, the fingernails of which are gorgeously black.

Freddie smiles into the mirror, showing a set of magnificent, if problematic, buck teeth. He quickly revises the smile, does it closed-lipped.

It is 1985.

The song ends. Freddie takes up a bottle of nail polish remover, and sets about taking the polish back off of his nails. As he does so PETER FREESTONE, one of Freddie's closest friends, appears in the mirror behind Freddie. Peter is a big friendly mustached man, with something of the aspect of a child grown to middle age.

FREDDIE
Hello, Phoebe.

PETER
The car's waiting.

FREDDIE
Right.

Freddie picks up a very elegant jade coke bottle, snorts a quick one with a jade spoon, hands it to Peter. Peter declines.

EXT. GARDEN LODGE, FREDDIE'S HOUSE IN LONDON - DAY

We hear Queen singing "Another One Bites the Dust."

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)

Oh! Let's go! Steve walks warily
down the street with his brim
pulled way down low, ain't no sound
but the sound of his feet, machine
guns ready to go.

From the p.o.v. of the street, we take in Freddie's house, Garden Lodge. It's a Great English Beauty, surrounded by gardens. We see Freddie get into the back seat of a black limo, with a DRIVER at the wheel.

We pull back to see the gates in the wall that surrounds Freddie's compound. At least A DOZEN FANS, many of them YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN VERY UP-TO-THE-SECOND MID-EIGHTIES CLOTHES, clamor around the car. We see that the wall is covered in graffiti, various declarations of love for Freddie.

The limo pulls out of the gates. The fans go crazy. A YOUNG MAN hurls himself forward, presses his face to the passenger window.

INT. THE LIMOSINE - DAY

Freddie, ensconced in the back seat, leans forward and kisses the young man through the window glass. The young man presses his tongue to the window glass and Freddie, a wild thing indeed, answers with his own tongue, from his side of the glass.

The DRIVER glances back at the shenanigans, steps on the gas and the limo pulls away.

EXT. FREDDIE'S STREET IN LONDON - DAY

We watch the limosine cruise down the street, as Freddie's elated fans bid him farewell. The young man who received the kiss through the glass, however, keeps running alongside the car.

As will often be the case, we continue to hear Queen singing, off-screen, as we hear dialog. The dialog should of course be audible, but it's meant as a counterpoint of sorts to the music, like the chorus in an opera.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
Are you ready, hey, are you ready
for this? Are you hanging on the
edge of your seat? Out of the
doorway the bullets rip, to the
sound of the beat, yeah.

The young man, who's been falling steadily behind the car,
finally stops running and drops to his knees in supplication
to his vanishing idol.

As the young guy collapses, we reach the moment in the song
when Queen sings:

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
Another one bites the dust,

We get the implication. The song continues as Freddie and
the driver speak.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)
another one bites the dust. And
another one's gone and another
one's gone, another one bites the
dust, hey. Hey, I'm gonna get you
too, another one bites the dust.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
Is that boy all right, do you
think?

DRIVER (O.S.)
He's fine. Must drive you nuts.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
No. Imagine the day when we pull
out and nobody's there.

The limosine drives on, out of our view.

EXT. A REHEARSAL HALL IN LONDON, 1985 - DAY

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
How do you think I'm going to get
along without you when you're gone.
You took me for everything that I
had and kicked me out on my own.

The limo pulls up, and Freddie emerges into another minor sea
of fans. We watch the driver escort Freddie through.

They've worked up a good act, the two of them - Freddie makes as if he'd love to spend the whole day with his fans, but his driver/bodyguard simply won't allow it.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE IN LONDON, 1985 - DAY

An hour or so later. Freddie and the other members of the band - Roger, Brian, and John - are rehearsing for the Live Aid concert. The ashtrays are brimming over, there are many empty cups that once held tea or coffee.

They're rehearsing "Radio Ga-Ga." Freddie is singing:

FREDDIE (SINGING)
Radio I'd sit alone and watch your
light, my only friend through
teenage nights--

He stops.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
No good.

BRIAN
Sounded all right to me.

FREDDIE
Cheesy, all lounge lizard. My
fault. Start again.

The band starts it from the top.

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)
Radio I'd sit alone and watch your
light, my only friend through
teenage nights, and everything I
had to know, I heard it on my
radio.

He stops again.

ROGER
What's wrong this time?

FREDDIE
No soul. Girls playing jacks sing
like this.

ROGER
How about if we go on to "Hammer?"

FREDDIE

No. "Ga-Ga" still sounds like
crap.

Clearly, Roger, Brian, and John are becoming exhausted.

BRIAN

This isn't like you, Freddie.

JOHN

It's just--

Freddie finishes the phrase along with him. Clearly, this has been said before.

JOHN AND FREDDIE (IN UNISON)

--a benefit.

ROGER

There's more than a dozen other bands.

FREDDIE

Boys, do we need to have the talk again?

BRIAN

No!

ROGER

To be perfectly frank, the rest of us think we're doing all right.

There is a terrible silence. We understand that Freddie has an enormous and volatile temper, and is struggling not to give in to it. After a moment, trembling with the effort at control, he speaks in a calm voice.

FREDDIE

Then you're fools.

ROGER

Bit harsh.

FREDDIE

Every ten minutes, somebody becomes the new big thing. And really, there's only a few.

At that, the rest of the band joins in. They've heard this before, too.

FREDDIE, BRIAN, ROGER, AND JOHN (IN
UNISON)

Elvis. Hendrix. John Lennon.

Roger continues, alone.

ROGER
Led Zeppelin.

Freddie shoots him another Look. *Led Zeppelin?*

BRIAN
Heavy company.

INT. YOUNG FREDDIE'S FLAT IN FELTHAM, 1971 - DAY

Although we continue to hear the dialog in the rehearsal space, we see the 20-year-old Freddie, with beautiful long hair, getting dressed in the morning in his shabby flat in 1971, smoking a cigarette and listening with great intensity to the radio, which is playing Jimi Hendrix doing "All Along the Watchtower." Freddie at this age is long-haired, lithe, androgynous; pale and beautiful as a Fra Angelica.

Freddie pauses in front of a mirror, does a Hendrix move, smiles open-mouthed and quickly hides his buck teeth, as we saw him do earlier and, as we understand, he will do all his life.

JOHN
We're still selling.

BRIAN (O.S.)
We're just saying, there's a new
album. These are our standards.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
And we're going to do them more
powerfully and beautifully than we
ever have before. We are going to
send these songs spiraling up out
of Wembley Stadium and into space
so the aliens pay fucking
attention.

INT. A STUDIO IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ART, 1971 - DAY

A short while later. We see Freddie at 20, sitting among a BODY OF FELLOW ART STUDENTS, drawing A NUDE MALE MODEL. The model is an unprepossessing, middle-aged man.

We pass behind the students, get quick glimpses of their variously competent and incompetent attempts to render the man realistically. Then we get to Freddie's drawing. Freddie, who is clearly able to draw, has made the naked man into a god -- handsome, muscular, broad-shouldered. Freddie has managed to render the model as he would, in fact, be if he were younger and in better condition. What Freddie is drawing is not so much a fantasy as an improvement on reality.

We continue to hear the dialog in the rehearsal studio.

ROGER (O.S.)
Fine. We'll do it for the aliens.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
All right, then. Again.

The band starts up once again.

FREDDIE (O.S., CONT'D, SINGING)
Radio I'd sit alone and watch your
light, my only friend through
teenage nights--

EXT. KENSINGTON MARKET IN LONDON, 1971 - DAY

The off-screen dialog ends, and we're fully in the scene.

An hour later. It's a bustling street market on a cloudy afternoon in 1971, an acid dream mixed with a bazaar in Marrakesh. The stalls sell all manner of treasures: brilliant Indian tapestries, peacock feathers, elaborately embroidered vests and jackets, lavish strands of beads. The crowd of people who browse the bazaar are like visitors from a brighter, more beautiful planet, with untamed riots of hair, extravagant hats, bangles, seven-league boots. It's a Rousseau jungle; it's the cover of the Sgt. Pepper's album.

Instead of rock or pop music, however, what we hear under the scene is "Quando m'en vo," from Act II of Puccini's "La Boheme."

EXT. FREDDIE AND ROGER'S BOOTH AT KENSINGTON MARKET - DAY

Freddie, bearing two steaming cups of tea, approaches a stall in the market. Roger, early twenties, is minding the stall while Freddie went off for tea. The stall is all glorious vintage - Victorian jackets, sumptuous tweed overcoats, silk Hawaiian shirts.

Roger has just sold a particularly beautiful maroon velvet coat to a YOUNG MAN WITH A LONG BRAID. Roger's got the money in his hand.

ROGER
Wear it well, my boy.

The young man leaves with the coat. Roger is happily pocketing the money when Freddie appears, holding two steaming cups of tea.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Just made a sale. I can charm them too, you know.

FREDDIE
What did you sell?

ROGER
Maroon velvet coat.

FREDDIE
Darling, that was my coat.

Freddie looks wistfully at the departing young customer.

ROGER
Shall I go after him?

FREDDIE
Absolutely not. Hope you got a good price for it.

ROGER
Band's getting together at four.

FREDDIE
I'll be there.

EXT. A STREET IN LONDON, 1971 - DAY

Later that day. Freddie is bopping along like a hybrid of a satyr and an Edwardian dandy. He turns heads, causes a stir. He appears to be hearing a Queen song that won't, in fact, be written for years, but even now, it's hanging in the air over his head. As we watch him sashay along, we hear Queen singing "Seven Seas of Rhye."

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
Fear me you lords and lady
preachers, I descend upon your
earth from the skies, I command
your very souls, you unbelievers.
(MORE)

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING) (cont'd)
Bring before me what is mine, the
seven seas of Rhye.

Freddie is, at this moment, the living embodiment of youth, beauty, and optimism.

INT. A LOFT IN LONDON, 1971 - DAY

The band is rehearsing in Brian May's loft in Feltham. It's Brian on guitar, John on bass, Roger on drums, and Freddie doing vocals. They're finishing up "Keep Yourself Alive."

FREDDIE (SINGING)
Keep yourself alive, keep yourself
alive. All you people, keep
yourself alive. Take you all your
time and money, honey, you'll
survive.

Freddie is singing his heart out, but his voice is out of control. At the end of the song, it's only Freddie who looks pleased.

Brian lights up a joint.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I've been thinking. Smile's a shit
name for a band, right?

Brian passes the joint to Roger.

JOHN
Total shit.

FREDDIE
Queen.

ROGER
What?

FREDDIE
I think we should call ourselves
Queen.

Brian, Roger, and John look at each other uncertainly.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
It's short. It's memorable. It's
royal.

JOHN
It's-

FREDDIE
Let it settle in.

He goes off toward the bathroom.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to freshen up, and then
we'll rehearse the damned song a
hundred more times.

When Freddie is out of earshot, Brian says softly to the
others:

BRIAN
Can't hardly sing, and he wants to
rename the fucking band.

EXT. STREET IN FELTHAM - NIGHT

The boys have broken for the night. They've been rehearsing
for hours, and are clearly fagged out. Well, Brian, Roger,
and John are tired. Freddie remains ebullient.

BRIAN
See you tomorrow, then.

FREDDIE
How's nine o'clock? Give us a few
hours before we open the stall.

ROGER
In the morning?

FREDDIE
There are two nine o'clocks every
day. I'll bet you didn't know
that.

ROGER
Eleven.

FREDDIE
Ten. Final offer.

He takes off down the road. As he goes he calls back:

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Real ten, not diva ten.

The three others stand watching Freddie depart. What,
exactly, have they gotten themselves into?

EXT. ROOFTOP IN LONDON - NIGHT

Later that night. Freddie has gone up to the roof of his apartment building. He stands at the edge of the roof, with the lights of London below. He's singing "Keep Yourself Alive", a capella.

FREDDIE (SINGING)

Well they say your folks are
telling you to be a superstar, but
I tell you just be satisfied to
stay right where you are.

He goes screechy on a note, stops, tries again. It's better the second time. He stands there as if singing the song to the entire city of London.

Looking out over London, we see it through Freddie's eyes. The buildings become more brilliantly lit. The stars blaze at triple their ordinary intensity. As Freddie, and we, look up to the constellations, the black gondola we saw in the opening montage sails by overhead. It's Freddie's Ship of Dreams. Violetta retains her position at the prow, but some of the OTHER PASSENGERS have changed. JIMI HENDRIX is on board now, instead of the young woman with the violin. The beautiful winged boys have shed their wings, and wear gold crowns and red velvet robes.

Freddie watches it sail by, and keeps on singing in an ever-stronger voice.

FREDDIE (SINGING)

Keep yourself alive, keep yourself
alive. It'll take you all your
time and money, honey, you'll
survive.

INT. HIGH TEA, A CAFE ON KENSINGTON HIGH STREET, LONDON, 1971
- DAY

The next day. High Tea, a cafe, is dimly lit, paneled in dark mahogany, furnished with Art Deco fixtures combined with Victorian couches and tables. It's a little like an opium den out of Blade Runner.

In addition to the regular tables, there's a stretch of floor that's just strewn with pillows, attended by low, Moorish tables. Roger and Freddie lounge together on two of the pillows, along with several other RESPLENDENTLY DRESSED HIPSTERS and a RAGGED HOMELESS MAN, whose presence causes no one any visible concern.

The song of the moment, being piped in through a very good sound system: The Rolling Stones singing "Ruby Tuesday."

Freddie and Roger are passing a joint.

FREDDIE

We're going to be the biggest stars in the world, you know.

ROGER

Right. Maybe soon we'll be ready to play in a pub somewhere.

FREDDIE

I think we're ready to cut a record.

ROGER

Absolutely. First thing tomorrow.

FREDDIE

Why not? We're brilliant.

ROGER

You have no sense of reality whatsoever. I mean that as a compliment.

Christine Carrington sails in, settles gracefully next to Roger. She is unutterably beautiful, in a way that's both idiosyncratic and classical. Think Julie Christie in Darling, or Jeanne Moreau in Jules and Jim.

CHRISTINE

Hello, lovely. What a nice surprise.

Roger kisses her affectionately on the cheek. We get the impression that they're former lovers, still on friendly terms. Roger hands her the joint. She accepts it, takes a quick, expert toke.

ROGER

Christine, this is Freddie-

As he says "Bulsara," Freddie leans in and overrides him.

FREDDIE

Mercury. Freddie Mercury. Pleased to meet you.

He extends a graceful hand, resplendent with black nail polish. Christine takes it.

CHRISTINE
Pleased to meet you.

ROGER
Freddie's our lead singer.

FREDDIE
Darling, what do you think of
Queen?

CHRISTINE
Hm?

FREDDIE
As a name for our band.

CHRISTINE
I like it.

FREDDIE
It's memorable. It's royal.
Right?

CHRISTINE
Absolutely.

ROGER
Get you some tea, love?

She rises.

CHRISTINE
No, I've had mine, I'm off to work.

ROGER
See you tonight.

She looks with great amusement back at Freddie.

CHRISTINE
Love your nails. Love your hair.

FREDDIE
Love your nails. Love your hair.

She departs.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
She's fantastic.

ROGER
Freddie Mercury?

FREDDIE
It's better, don't you think?

ROGER
Matter of fact, I do.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM, 1985 - NIGHT

Back to 1985. Freddie's living room at Garden Lodge is done in what can only be called High Splendid. Or, if you prefer, Rich in the Eighties. It's a hybrid of Halston white ultra-suede and a Sultan's tent. Big deep sofas, vases that cost more than new cars, pillows everywhere. It is not, however, chilly or forbidding, as grand rooms can be. It looks quite comfortable.

It's around midnight, after a long day of rehearsal. Freddie is hanging out at home with a few FRIENDS: Peter Freestone, who we've already met, as well as JOE FANELLI and PETER STRAKER. Both Peter Freestone and Joe Fanelli live at Garden Lodge, and are a slightly odd combination of family members and staff. You could even call them wives. They keep the place together, cook, etc. Peter, as we know, has been given the nickname "Phoebe," Joe is known as "Liza," and Freddie is occasionally referred to as "Melina" (for the mercurial Greek actress Melina Mercuri). Peter seems somehow to have escaped a nickname entirely.

The four being gay men, and this being 1985, they look vaguely similar. All have short hair, and all but Peter sport big mustaches. Though "butch" is not the word that comes to mind in describing them, their dress is distinctly butch -- t-shirts or polo shirts, jeans, and work boots.

Note -- while we will be seeing Freddie at various times in his life, he has, essentially, two main "looks" -- the willowy, long-haired androgyny of his youth, and his "manly" mode, the aforementioned short hair, mustache, and simple, utilitarian clothes.

Freddie and the others are lounging around on the big, comfortable sofas. The coffee table is littered with champagne and vodka bottles, overflowing ashtrays, and lines of cocaine.

On the stereo, Freddie is playing Caballe singing the aria "Casta Diva," ("Chaste Goddess") from the first act of Bellini's "Norma," in which Norma, the rejected lover, sings to the goddess of the moon.

FREDDIE

The boys think I'm working them too hard.

JOE

You are, Melina. The words, "Get over it, Mary" frankly come to mind.

FREDDIE

You're just a fucking laundress, Liza, you know nothing of the responsibilities involved in being an internationally revered diva.

They all laugh, Freddie harder than anyone. Then, rather abruptly, Freddie gets serious.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Darlings, do you understand that we're fading? I can't seem to get the band to see it.

PETER STRAKER

What exactly do you expect them to see? The albums are selling.

FREDDIE

Not like they were.

PETER STRAKER

There are masses of fans outside your gate right now. In the rain.

FREDDIE

It's not just decent sales and a few hundred insane fans. We're starting to slip. I can feel it.

PETER STRAKER

There are bound to be highs and lows.

FREDDIE

And if you're low too long you become a joke, you become some band somebody's parents listen to, and you can't come back from that. Millions of people are going to be watching this concert.

PETER FREESTONE

Can we please talk about something important? What are you wearing?

FREDDIE

Jeans and a tank.

PETER FREESTONE

I can't help but be the tiniest bit disappointed.

FREDDIE

All right, a leather arm band, then. Just for you.

PETER FREESTONE

Charmed.

Freddie frowns, gets up and moves a quite valuable-looking Chinese vase from one shelf to another.

FREDDIE

Liza, dear, the light misses it over there. Remember?

JOE (TO PETER FREESTONE)

I win.

FREDDIE

What?

JOE

We had a bet.

PETER FREESTONE

It took him half an hour to notice.

JOE

Immaterial. Pay up.

Freddie laughs. He doesn't mind a joke at his expense. Well, sometimes he doesn't.

PETER STRAKER

Where's Christine tonight?

Joe and Peter Freestone shoot him cautionary looks. Not a good subject. Freddie stops laughing.

FREDDIE

Fuck if I know.

INT. THE BAR AREA OF A PUB IN LONDON, 1971 - NIGHT

We return to the young Freddie, who has just met Christine. Like much of London in 1971, the pub is a curious mix of the old (ancient men dressed in tweed, slumped dejectedly over their pints) and the new (young, wild-haired men and women dressed in thrift-shop splendor, celebrating themselves). The jukebox blasts out Smokey Robinson's "Tears of a Clown."

Freddie is at the bar, buying drinks. He's getting cruised by a SOMEWHAT OLDER, DARK-HAIRED MAN. The guy is a little rough-looking -- long straggly hair and stubble, grimy leather jacket.

OLDER MAN

Hello.

FREDDIE

Hello.

OLDER MAN

Do you know that you're the sexiest thing here?

Freddie pauses in mock concentration.

FREDDIE

Hm. Yes, I do.

They both laugh. The older man nods questioningly in the direction of the exit.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Sorry. With friends.

By then, the barkeep has given him his drinks -- five pints. Freddie gathers them up with both hands, smiles at the older man and, somehow managing to carry five pints, turns away from the bar.

INT. SEATING AREA OF A PUB IN LONDON, 1971 - NIGHT

Freddie brings the pints to a table where Roger, Brian, Christine and her friend ROXANNE are seated. Roxanne, like Christine, is a great young beauty, blond and bright, fantastically dressed.

ROGER

Mister Mercury!

BRIAN

I've changed mine too. I'm Brian
Mars now.

ROGER

And I am to be known simply as
Uranus.

Freddie laughs along. In so doing, he glances at the guy at
the bar, who smiles and winks at him. Freddie winks back.

Surreptitiously, barely audible to the others, Freddie taps
his fingers on the tabletop and sings a few lines from a song
he'll write in the future, "Killer Queen." When he runs out
of lyrics, he hums the very rudimentary tune.

FREDDIE (SINGING SOFTLY)

She's a killer queen. Gunpowder,
gelatine, hm hm hm hm hm hm hm.

The others pay him no mind. Christine speaks over Freddie's
quiet little song.

CHRISTINE

I want to change my name, too.

Freddie stops singing, looks at her with interest.

FREDDIE

You're the Killer Queen.

CHRISTINE

I beg your pardon.

FREDDIE

I mean it in the best sense.
You're a girl with gunpowder.
You're not all frilly and nervous.

She is clearly amused.

CHRISTINE

I'd been thinking more along the
lines of an exotic flower, frankly.
Or some distant moon.

FREDDIE

You and I know better.

Christine shrugs. Maybe, in fact, they do.

INT. LADIES ROOM AT THE PUB, 1971 - NIGHT

Christine has gone to the ladies', is standing at the sink checking her make-up in the mirror. Freddie barges in.

CHRISTINE

Hello.

Freddie takes out a coke vial and a spoon, scoops some out for her. She inhales it.

FREDDIE

Killer Queen.

CHRISTINE

Stop that. Really.

FREDDIE

Killers never think they are.

He takes a spoonful of cocaine for himself.

CHRISTINE

Darling, I hate to disappoint you, but really, I'm just an ordinary girl.

He puts a finger to her lips.

FREDDIE

No. You're brand new. There's never been anyone like you.

As he looks at her, Christine takes on a glow, a little like an angel by Raphael. She's incandescent; her skin is an impossibly delicate shade of pinkish white. Freddie kisses her.

INT. THE BEDROOM OF FREDDIE'S FLAT IN FELTHAM, 1971 - NIGHT

Later that night. Freddie and Christine lie naked together amid a tangle of sheets. They've clearly been making love.

CHRISTINE

What were you like when you were a little boy?

EXT. SCHOOLYARD OF A BOYS' SCHOOL IN INDIA - DAY

We briefly see the 11-YEAR-OLD FREDDIE, in a school uniform, lined up with the OTHER BOYS under the stern eye of an ELDERLY PROFESSOR, who marches the boys inside. As they go we notice that Freddie, in marked contrast to the other boys, has pomaded his hair and has tied a pale orange ribbon, like a wispy little necktie, around the collar of his starched white shirt.

INT. FREDDIE'S BEDROOM IN FELTHAM, 1971 - NIGHT

Freddie ignores the question, runs a finger along Christine's bare hip.

FREDDIE

Did you know you have six freckles right here that are exactly the shape of Casseopeia?

CHRISTINE

I don't like my freckles all that much.

FREDDIE

You should. I wonder if you have other constellations somewhere?

He looks avidly over her naked body.

CHRISTINE

I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

FREDDIE

Famished. They sell truly appalling fish and chips on the corner.

CHRISTINE

Perfect.

Freddie jumps out of bed naked, picks up his own ruffled Edwardian shirt from the floor.

FREDDIE

Wear this.

CHRISTINE

It's lovely.

FREDDIE

Other people's clothes are always sexier, don't you think?

As he speaks, he ties Christine's silk scarf around his neck.

CHRISTINE

Depends on the person.

EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF A CHIPS SHOP IN FELTHAM, 1971 - NIGHT

Freddie and Christine stand together under the awning of the appalling chips shop, sheltered from the drizzle. They are eating fish and chips from paper cones, laughing, though we can't hear them. Freddie is wearing Christine's scarf and her wispy blouse, unbuttoned. Christine wears Freddie's white shirt as if it were a dress. They are rumpled and sexy-looking.

FREDDIE

Can I tell you something?

CHRISTINE

Anything.

We move away from Freddie and Christine and see, very briefly, a montage of several concerts that lie ahead, in Freddie's future. They are sequential. They also become slightly more outlandish and fabulous each time.

In each very short shot, we see Freddie appearing on stage, not yet singing. Over it all we hear Queen singing the opening of "Sheer Heart Attack." We also continue to hear Freddie's and Christine's conversation.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)

Well you're just 17 and all you wanna do is disappear, you know what I mean there's a lot of space between your ears, the way that you touch don't feel nothin', hey hey hey hey, it was the DNA. Hey hey hey hey, that made me this way. Do you know, do you know, do you know, just how I feel? Do you know, do you know, do you know just how I feel? Sheer heart attack. Sheer heart attack.

INT. CONCERT STAGE - NIGHT

Freddie bounds on stage, lithe and long-haired, wearing a tight, all-black outfit -- tight black shirt, black bell bottoms, high-heeled black boots.

INT. CONCERT STAGE - NIGHT

Freddie, still long-haired, is being lifted by MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL BALLET. Freddie wears a skin-tight silver lame jumpsuit, which is open nearly to the navel, revealing his chest.

INT. CONCERT STAGE - NIGHT

Freddie, now mustached and short-haired, strides out on stage -- his walk has become more masculine -- in a slightly exaggerated, rock n' roll version of biker gear -- studded black leather jacket, leather cap.

INT. CONCERT STAGE - NIGHT

Freddie walks triumphantly out on stage in his famous gold crown and ermine-trimmed red robe.

During the music and the montage of Freddie on various stages, we hear Freddie and Christine continue to converse.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
My band is going to be huge.

Christine laughs. It's so presumptuous as to be rather charming.

CHRISTINE (O.S.)
I suspect it is.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
Really and truly. I can feel it.
Don't you think we know our own
destinies?

CHRISTINE (O.S.)
Frankly, I'm not quite so certain
about mine.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
I can tell you your immediate
destiny.

CHRISTINE (O.S.)

Please do.

FREDDIE (O.S.)

You and I are going to slip in the side door at Covent Garden.
Caballe is doing "La Traviata" tonight.

As the first verse of "Sheer Heart Attack" ends, we see Freddie and Christina rush off.

INT. THE OPERA AT COVENT GARDEN, 1971 - NIGHT

Freddie and Christine have, in fact, snuck into the opera at Covent Garden. It's Monserrat Caballe in "La Traviata." Freddie and Christine are in the standing room section. Caballe is singing her Act I aria, "Sempre Libera," in which Violetta announces her determination to be free of all romantic entanglements. There is no mistaking certain similarities between the splendor of the opera and the splendor of the costumes we've just seen Freddie wearing.

Violetta's aria, is sung, of course, in Italian, and since Christine neither knows "La Traviata" nor speaks Italian, she's unaware of any implied omen regarding her future with Freddie.

Freddie is not only watching raptly, he's actually mouthing the lyrics along with Caballe. Christine glances from the stage to Freddie, and back again. She's charmed and slightly unnerved by Freddie's absorption.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE OPERA AT COVENT GARDEN - NIGHT

Freddie and Christine are leaving the opera, among a crowd of OPERA LOVERS, most of whom are considerably older and more conservatively dressed.

FREDDIE

There are no words.

Christine kisses him, passionately. She may not quite share his belief that there are no words, but she knows better than to try to say anything at this moment.

EXT. HYDE PARK - NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie stands at the base of the Albert Memorial. Christine stands directly in front of him, an audience of one.

Freddie sings the opening line of "Keep Yourself Alive."

FREDDIE (SINGING)

I was told a million times, of all
the troubles in my way, how I had
to keep on trying, little better
every day.

His voice is almost impossibly clear and sweet in the silent night air of the park. The vast, elaborate beauty of the Albert Memorial looms over Freddie like his own grandest dreams come true.

CHRISTINE

Lovely.

Freddie jumps down from the base of the statue, stands before Christine.

FREDDIE

You know the only thing worse than
being a pop singer with operatic
ambitions?

CHRISTINE

What?

FREDDIE

Having to stand in a cold park
listening to one. Come on, let's
go find a drink.

This is typical Freddie -- grand one moment, self-deprecating the next. He takes Christine's hand, and they run together out of the park.

INT. A PUB IN LONDON, 1971 -- NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie and Christine are sitting at a table having a drink in an ordinary pub, nothing fabulous about it. ELDERLY REGULARS hunch over their pints at the bar, a few YOUNGER GUYS watch football on the TV over the bar, and several other tables are occupied by VARIOUS DRINKERS, MEN AND WOMEN, none of them particularly young or prosperous looking.

FREDDIE

It's all opera.

CHRISTINE

The whole world?

FREDDIE

Yes! Everyone's walking around all the time singing arias.

As Freddie delivers that speech, the men seated at the bar start, very softly, to hum. It's a rudimentary version of what will be the opening of "Bohemian Rhapsody."

CHRISTINE

Their own private arias.

FREDDIE

Exactly. Everybody's a hero. Everybody's Violetta or Tosca or Otello.

As Freddie and Christine speak, other patrons of the pub start singing, as the men on the bar stools continue to hum. It's NOT "Bohemian Rhapsody" -- it's a very early version of what will BECOME "Bohemian Rhapsody." At the moment it's part "Bohemian Rhapsody" and part "La Traviata."

YOUNG MEN WATCHING FOOTBALL

Only win! Only win! Only win!
Only win! Only win! Only win!

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I gave it to the wrong one, I gave it to the wrong one. I thought there'd be more to give.

THIN YOUNG MAN

I want to eat and eat and eat and eat and eat and eat and eat.

OLD MAN

A bit of grass. A bit of grass and a chair to sit in. A bit of grass and a chair to sit in and a view of water.

OLD WOMAN

It was there and then it was gone. I can't imagine where it went. I shall have to search harder this time.

Freddie's and Christine's conversation continues.

CHRISTINE

So grand?

FREDDIE

Oh, well, all right, there's comic opera too. There's Falstaff and Figaro.

At that, the patrons of the bar stop singing and are exactly as they were. Clearly, this has only been visible and audible to Freddie -- Christine hasn't noticed a thing.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM, 1985 - NIGHT

We're back with Freddie, Joe, Peter Freestone and Peter Straker. "Norma" continues to play in the background.

JOE

Are you and Christine having a period?

FREDDIE

Fuck off, Liza.

PETER FREESTONE

Touchy.

FREDDIE

Let's go out.

PETER STRAKER

Where do you want to go?

FREDDIE

Someplace filthy.

INT. A PARTY IN LONDON, 1972 - NIGHT

We find ourselves at a party. It's a rather low-key affair -- there are only about 15 or 20 PEOPLE, including Roger and Brian (John has not come) -- but it is at the same time the very embodiment of the sort of cool hedonism most of us only imagine must exist, well, somewhere, for someone.

Everyone is young, healthy, sexy, and beautifully dressed. There are hundreds of candles, vast arrangements of flowers, big modern sofas that practically ask to be the sites of sexual maneuvers.

The music is David Bowie's "Rock n' Roll Suicide."

INT. A BEDROOM IN THE FLAT WHERE THE PARTY IS BEING HELD - NIGHT

Freddie and a HANDSOME DARK-HAIRED BOY have snuck into the bedroom to do a few lines of coke. They sit close together on the bed, passing the vial back and forth.

FREDDIE

What's your favorite opera?

BOY

Don't know much about it, really.

FREDDIE

Neither do I.

He leans in and kisses the boy. They make out until Christine enters, unexpectedly.

CHRISTINE

Sorry, I thought it was the loo...
oh.

FREDDIE (TO THE BOY)

It's my girlfriend.

BOY

Oh.

FREDDIE

Christine, this is... sorry.

BOY

Eddie.

CHRISTINE

Nice to meet you, Eddie.

BOY

I'm going to go get a drink.

CHRISTINE

No, stay.

But Eddie is out of there. Freddie looks at Christine, smiles, shrugs, and pats the spot on the mattress that the boy has just vacated. She comes and sits beside Freddie on the bed.

He offers her the coke vial, which she accepts. He puts an arm around her shoulders, kisses her tenderly on her forehead.

INT. THE BATHROOM OF A FLAT IN KENSINGTON, 1974 - NIGHT

Two years later. Freddie and Christine have moved in together. Freddie is lying luxuriously in the bathtub of a perfectly nice but not particularly ostentatious bathroom.

Balanced on the sink, a tape player plays "Don Giovanni, Cenar Teco M'invitasti," the final scene in Mozart's opera "Don Giovanni," in which Don Giovanni is dragged down to hell. In its force and drama, it ever so slightly resembles "Bohemian Rhapsody."

Christine enters.

CHRISTINE
You look like Ophelia.

FREDDIE
Precisely my intention.

She comes and sits on the edge of the tub.

CHRISTINE
Pensive?

FREDDIE
Mozart started when he was 6. He was dead at 35.

CHRISTINE
Darling, are you upset because you're not Mozart?

FREDDIE
Course not.

CHRISTINE
Come on, little one.

FREDDIE
We're not even the fucking Beatles.

CHRISTINE
Stop this.

Freddie flashes her a big, fake grin. He's in no mood. But even now, even with Christine, he quickly revises the grin to conceal his teeth. His voice drips with sarcasm.

FREDDIE

Right, nothing to worry about, just do your little bit of work and then die peacefully.

CHRISTINE

There's a large, fertile realm between impossible perfection and abject failure.

Freddie drops his sarcastic grin. Christine is the only one he believes on this (and many) subjects; the only one he trusts.

FREDDIE

I know.

Christine starts to take her blouse off.

CHRISTINE

Shall I get in the tub with you?

FREDDIE

Actually, I'd like to be alone for a while. Do you mind?

We can tell from her face that she does mind, slightly, but knows better than to say anything.

CHRISTINE

Not at all.

She touches his face with tenderness, and he looks at her gratefully.

After a moment, she withdraws. Freddie closes his eyes and listens with great intensity to "Don Giovanni."

INT. A FLAT IN KENSINGTON, 1974 - NIGHT

Later that night. We see Freddie and Christine in the living room of their quite presentable flat. It's prosperous-looking but not rich rich. It's all very rock n' roll flea market -- overlapping, and beautifully worn, Oriental rugs on the floor; thriving plants; a magnificent sofa upholstered in leopard print.

Christine sits on the sofa, leafing through a magazine. Freddie is at the piano, noodling around. We recognize a few bars of "Bohemian Rhapsody."

FREDDIE (SINGING)
Easy come, easy go--

Restlessly, he gets up and strides to the window, which overlooks a common garden in the back of the building. It's raining.

Standing outside, in the rain, in the middle of the garden, is the apparitional figure of Freddie as a boy, the same boy we saw earlier, lined up with the others at school. He's barely visible in the dark. He stands there stoically, looking up at his older self who's standing at a lighted window, looking down at him.

Freddie sings, very softly, to himself.

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)
I'm just a poor boy, from a poor
family--

For a few moments, we watch Freddie hum this strange new tune to the ghost of his boyhood self. Then, continuing to hear Freddie's voice singing the new song, we see a couple of other scenes.

We also hear, off screen, a conversation between Freddie and JOHN REID, QUEEN'S MANAGER. This is, of course, a lot of sound going on simultaneously -- it should be layered, like an opera, so that Freddie's a capella singing is a background to the off-screen argument he's having with John Reid.

INT. ZANDRA RHODES' ATELIER IN LONDON, 1975 - DAY

FREDDIE (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)
because I'm easy come, easy go,
little high, a little low,

JOHN REID (O.S.)
No radio's going to play it.

FREDDIE (O.S.)
They'll play it.

Freddie and the other members of Queen are being fitted by ZANDRA RHODES, a pink-haired gypsy goddess in her Scheherazade-like atelier, which is all beaded curtains, swatches of brilliant fabric, and vases full of peacock feathers. She's making them white silk pajama-ish outfits.

INT. LONDON CONCERT HALL, 1975 - DAY

FREDDIE (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)
any way the wind blows, doesn't
really matter to me.

JOHN REID (O.S.)
It's seven minutes long!

FREDDIE (O.S.)
It's brilliant. They'll play it.

Freddie and the boys are doing a sound check, surrounded by
TECHNICIANS.

INT. BACKSTAGE AT A LONDON CONCERT HALL, 1975 - NIGHT

Several months later. Freddie and the other members of the band are about to go on stage to perform "Bohemian Rhapsody," which has just come out on their new album. They are dressed in the white satin outfits we saw them being fitted for. They're clearly a little nervous, though Freddie is making the most convincing show of bravado. They pass around a vial of cocaine.

FREDDIE
We're pure manifestations of
heavenly light, correct?

BRIAN
Fuck off.

Freddie kisses him on the forehead.

FREDDIE
That's the spirit.

He takes a last hit from the vial, and they all head off for the stage.

INT. LONDON CONCERT HALL, 1975 - NIGHT

We see the stage from the audience's p.o.v. The house is packed, and people are psyched up. Queen strides on stage, to an avalanche of ovations. They start immediately in on "Bohemian Rhapsody." With the opening chords, an accompanying video is projected onto a giant screen behind them. Parts of the video precisely match the actual, live band on stage.

We understand (or do not quite understand) that Queen is one of the first rock bands to project an image, and then imitate its own image.

We spend a few minutes with the boys, the audience, and the music.

First we focus on the band, singing the first verse under their own titanic, projected images. The boys, high on themselves, their genius, and of course a few chemical substances, are giving a brilliant performance.

QUEEN (SINGING)

Is this the real life, is this just
fantasy - caught in a landslide -
no escape from reality. Open your
eyes, look up to the skies and see -
I'm just a poor boy, I need no
sympathy - because I'm easy come,
easy go, little high, a little low,
any way the wind blows, doesn't
really matter to me. To me.

We pan over the audience. They're going crazy, though we can see that at least a few members don't quite know what to make of this strange new song.

QUEEN (CONT'D, SINGING)

Momma, just killed a man, put a gun
against his head, pulled my
trigger, now he's dead. Momma,
life had just begun, but now I've
gone and thrown it all away.
Momma, ooo, didn't mean to make you
cry - if I'm not back again this
time tomorrow, carry on, carry on,
as if nothing really matters.

We return to the boys on stage.

QUEEN (CONT'D, SINGING)

Too late, my time has come. Sends
shivers down my spine, body's
aching all the time. Goodbye,
everybody, I've got to go - gotta
leave you all behind and face the
truth. Momma, ooo, (any way the
wind blows) I don't want to die, I
sometimes wish I'd never been born
at all --

INT. A PARTY IN A COUNTRY HOUSE, 1979 - NIGHT

We continue to hear "Bohemian Rhapsody," but now it's four years later and we're in the middle of an enormous, wild party, being held in a grand, gilded hall. In a sense, the party is opera, is the embodiment of the song.

I mean, it's an enormous and wild party, and the theme is drag. There are HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE, all of them cross-dressed. While a handful have gone for realness, the vast majority have been more creative. MEN are dressed as Cleopatra or Carmen Miranda or hula girls, with grass skirts and coconut-shell brassieres, or in some cases they've just thrown something fabulous together, a la the Cockettes of San Francisco - beards and tiaras and ancient ball gowns, say, or pink beehive wigs and ratty old mink coats. One particularly inventive GUY has dressed up as the Virgin Mary and strung himself with Christmas lights, powered by a small generator attached to his back. ANOTHER is Bette Davis in black and white - black and white and grey outfit, white pancake and black lipstick.

As we survey the party, the live performance of "Bohemian Rhapsody" goes on off-screen.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)

I see a little silhouetto of a man,
Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you
do the fandango? Thunderbolt and
lightning, very very frightening me.
Galileo, Galileo, Galileo, Galileo,
Galileo Figaro-Magnifico.

Although the men outnumber the women by about six to one, the women have done well, too. There's a brigade of businessmen in suits and mustaches, an admiral, and four women dressed as the Rolling Stones, among others.

Prominent among the party-goers is a HANDSOME YOUNG BLACK MAN, naked except for an enormous blond Lady Godiva wig, riding a white horse through the crowd.

In the spirit of opera, there's a lot going on here above and beyond the costumes. Innumerable stories of love and lust are being played out. We see TWO MEN kissing and, a few yards away, ANOTHER TWO MEN arguing with equal passion. We see a GROUP OF FRIENDS laughing hysterically together, while a LONE WOMAN looks enviously on.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

I'm just a poor boy, nobody loves
me - He's just a poor boy from a
poor family - spare him his life
from this monstrosity.

All these dramas-within-the-drama should register subliminally, as we survey the party and listen to the music. The general atmosphere, by the way, is fabulous and celebratory -- there's no element of Max Ernst or Cabaret or any such dark decadence. Things may take a dark-ish turn in later years, but tonight it's a great celebration of life, love, and drag.

Between the concert and the overview of the party, we will hear "Bohemian Rhapsody" in its entirety, which, as we all know, takes just under seven minutes.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

Easy come, easy go - will you let
me go - Bismillah! no, we will not
let you go - let him go -
Bismillah! we will not let you go -
let him go - Bismillah! we will not
let you go - let me go.

As the song progresses we zero in on Freddie, who is mingling ecstatically and is not in drag. He's wearing jeans and a Hawaiian shirt.

Freddie's hair is shorter. It's not as short as it will be by 1985, but he's no longer sporting the long, flowing locks. His hair right now is a bit Duran Duran-ish (though Freddie would probably grimace at the comparison).

He stands drinking champagne with Brian (who is dressed as a girl vampire) and SEVERAL OTHERS, including a MUSTACHED MAN dressed as a geisha and A VERY LARGE WOMAN, topless, in jeans, tool belt, and hardhat.

We will hear the following dialog under "Bohemian Rhapsody." It doesn't really matter if we can't quite hear what's being said - we get the picture.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

Will not let you go - let me go -
no no no no no no - Oh Momma
mia, Momma mia, Momma mia let me
go.

FREDDIE

No, there's no contradiction at all. Pop music is the opera of the twentieth century.

They are approached by a BEAUTIFUL BLOND BOY wearing nothing but angel's wings and a tiny silver skirt.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me, for me.

BLOND BOY

Hello, Freddie.

FREDDIE

Hello.

BLOND BOY

I've finally had enough drinks to introduce myself.

FREDDIE

Please, don't tell me your name.
Angels have no names.

BLOND BOY

It's a great song.

He gestures into the air, referring to "Bohemian Rhapsody," which is blaring over the noise of the revelers.

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye. So you think you can love me and leave me to die --

FREDDIE

Thank you.

BLOND BOY

Can I ask you what it means?

FREDDIE

Fuck if I know.

INT. BOARDING SCHOOL IN INDIA, 1954 - DAY

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)

Oh, baby - can't do this to me baby - just gotta get out, just gotta get right out of here.

Ten-year-old Freddie sits at a desk in a classroom. As the teacher drones on, Freddie surreptitiously draws a magnificent woman, a fantasy princess-warrior, with an elaborate headdress, a spear, and a flowing gown.

EXT. TERRACE OUTSIDE THE PARTY, 1979 - NIGHT

QUEEN (CONT'D, O.S., SINGING)
Nothing really matters, anyone can
see, nothing really matters,
nothing really matters, to me. Any
way the wind blows --

Freddie and the blond boy stand at the railing, kissing under the stars. They are fantastic-looking, almost mythic - the big dark man holding the little blond angel in his arms.

At that moment, "Bohemian Rhapsody" ends. We hear Freddie sing, "...nothing really matters to me," followed by the closing instrumental, and the fade-out.

Christine comes out onto the terrace. She's wearing a deep burgundy monk's robe, which fits her perfectly. Freddie catches sight of her over the blond boy's head.

FREDDIE
Hello.

It's clear from this casual exchange that there's nothing particularly upsetting to either of them about the situation. The boy, however, is nonplussed. He breaks away from Freddie.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Christine, this is my guardian
angel. Angel, this is Christine.

CHRISTINE
Pleased to meet you.

Christine comes and stands beside them, looking out at the stars.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D, TO THE BOY)
You're a lovely one.

Freddie takes her in his arms, holds her tenderly.

FREDDIE
Beauty, beauty, it's everywhere.
Are you having a good time?

CHRISTINE
Absolutely.

He kisses her. We pull back to see the three of them -- Freddie, Christine, and a blond boy-angel. The boy stands slightly apart from the embracing man and woman. They look almost classical, like figures in a Medieval altar painting of an Annunciation.

INT. THE PARTY - NIGHT

Freddie has gone back in. The little angel is nowhere in sight. Freddie is surrounded by COSTUMED ADMIRERS, and we can tell that he's gotten pretty high. The song is now "Killer Queen."

Freddie is passing a cocaine bottle around.

FREDDIE

I think queens should be killers, don't you? The more flamboyant you are, the more you're a hero. Any coward can be conventional. A big tall bloke striding through Sloan Square in a beaded dress and high heels - he's the true heir to the great warriors. He's risking his life. He's Alexander the fucking Great.

The black man in the Lady Godiva wig strides by on horseback. Freddie jumps up behind him, onto the horse.

FREDDIE (CONT'D, TO THE RIDER)
And here's my Alexander now! Let's go for a gallop, shall we?

The rider nods, steers the horse through the crowd and out onto the terrace.

EXT. TERRACE OUTSIDE THE PARTY - NIGHT

The horse, with its two riders, clops out onto the terrace.

FREDDIE
Do you think he can jump?

BLACK MAN
We'll see.

He spurs the horse forward. It clears the railing easily, lands on the lawn, and gallups forward. The horse carries Freddie and the black man out across the dark grass.

EXT. A STAND OF WOODS ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE LAWN - NIGHT

The horse idles at the base of a big tree. Freddie and the black man are in the tree, ten feet up, splayed rather carefully on a broad limb, kissing. The man's enormous blond wig is spread over both of them, like a blanket.

Once again, we see the scene in heightened, Freddie-esque style. The leaves of the tree are silver, studded here and there with diamonds.

FREDDIE

All the tea and biscuits and sensible shoes are falling down around us, all that *how'd you do* and *how dare you is over*.

BLACK MAN

Do you think?

FREDDIE

We're the new Adam and Eve.

BLACK MAN

So. I'm Eve?

FREDDIE

For a while. Then I get to be Eve.

They kiss. As they do so, we hear Freddie, noodling around on a piano several years in the past, trying out an early version of "Somebody to Love."

FREDDIE (O.S., SINGING)

Somebody, somebody, can anybody find me somebody to love?

INT. FREDDIE'S HOTEL BEDROOM, 1979 - DAY

After the party. Freddie is in bed with Christine. They've just finished making love, and Freddie is doing Christine's nails.

CHRISTINE

Sometimes I flirt shamelessly with some poor fuck.

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (cont'd)
I have no intention of delivering,
I'm just feeling a little old and
unattractive that day, and I need a
lift.

FREDDIE
How do you win at this game?

CHRISTINE
I suppose you win if you tell the
most embarrassing and revealing
thing.

FREDDIE
I don't see the point.

CHRISTINE
Darling, there's not really a
winner and it doesn't exactly have
a point. We're playing Secrets
because, well, you and I seem to
give just about everything else
we've got to just about anybody
within the first hour of meeting
them.

FREDDIE
Maybe you do.

CHRISTINE
Come on.

FREDDIE
Hm. All right. I'm horribly vain.
I spend masses of money. I love
men and I love you. I drink like
mad. I take a considerable number
of drugs, and wish I could
accommodate more.

CHRISTINE
But those aren't secrets.

FREDDIE
What, then?

CHRISTINE
I can't tell you. I couldn't know,
could I?

Freddie pauses, considering.

FREDDIE

How's this? I invented a person called Freddie Mercury, and it turned out he could sing better than that other person could. He actually had a better voice.

CHRISTINE

That's not a secret, either.

FREDDIE

It's not?

CHRISTINE

Not to me.

FREDDIE

Oh. Well.

CHRISTINE

Perhaps it's just not your game.

Freddie glares at her. He never loses a game.

FREDDIE

I worry that I'm just a dull little man who can't possibly live up to all this.

He makes a sweeping gesture that takes in the whole luxurious room. Christine looks at him skeptically.

CHRISTINE

Is that really true?

FREDDIE

Well, no. Not really.

They both laugh. It's a complicated moment, because they both know that what Freddie has just said is both true and untrue.

Freddie takes up the brush and resumes painting Christine's fingernails.

CHRISTINE

Freddie?

FREDDIE

Hm?

CHRISTINE

What would you think about having a baby?

FREDDIE

Boiled, or fried?

CHRISTINE

I'd do everything. You could be its father. You could be its uncle. You could if you like never lay eyes on it.

FREDDIE

Oh, darling, I don't think so.

Christine shakes her head bemusedly.

CHRISTINE

I didn't think so, either.

There is a pause. Will they pursue the subject in more depth? Freddie decides that they will not.

FREDDIE

Tomorrow, let's go to the Victoria and Albert.

CHRISTINE

Just us?

FREDDIE

Mm-hm. Let's go to the museum, and go shopping, and have dinner someplace nice.

CHRISTINE

I'd like that.

INT. CARTIER JEWELERS, LONDON, 1979 - DAY

The next day. Freddie, with Christine in tow, is ploughing through Cartier. He picks up a pair of very extravagant ruby pendant earrings from the velvet swatch on which a CLERK has displayed them. He holds them up to Christine's ears.

FREDDIE

These are yours.

CHRISTINE

They're too much, Freddie.

FREDDIE

No such thing. Let's get something for Phoebe and Joe, I've been putting them through hell lately.

Christine discreetly puts the earrings back onto the velvet swatch. Freddie has moved on.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Look at these watches. D'you think this one would suit Phoebe?

CHRISTINE

It's a little masculine.

FREDDIE

Right. Maybe we should look at some tiaras.

INT. FREDDIE'S KITCHEN, 1979 -- NIGHT

Later that week. Freddie is in the kitchen with Peter Freestone, looking over the elaborate East Asian dinner Peter has made.

FREDDIE

Mm-hm, mm-hm.

PETER FREESTONE

Credible enough?

FREDDIE

The nan's funny-looking. It should be charred.

PETER FREESTONE

My apologies.

FREDDIE

D'you like your necklace?

Peter fingers a heavy gold chain he's wearing around his neck, which Freddie bought for him at Cartier.

PETER FREESTONE

It's a little gaudy.

FREDDIE

Fuck off.

They both laugh. The doorbell chimes.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
They're here.

Peter bows comically, and slips out the back door.

INT. FOYER OF FREDDIE'S HOUSE, 1979 -- NIGHT

Freddie enters from the kitchen just in time to find Christine welcoming his PARENTS, BOMI and JUR BULSARA. The Bulsaras live in London now, and wear Western clothes. They are the very embodiment of upper-middle-class rectitude. Although rather aggressively normal-looking, they're quite charming -- not at all stiff or disapproving.

We notice that Christine is wearing the ruby earrings that Freddie clearly insisted on buying for her.

Freddie embraces his mother, and then his father. Christine stands smilingly, obligingly to one side.

INT. FREDDIE'S DINING ROOM, 1979 - NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie is sitting at the table with his parents.

BOMI
Farrokh, we're afraid you're working too hard.

FREDDIE
It's your duty to think that.

Christine enters, carrying a big bowl of lentils. Jur jumps up.

JUR
Let me help..

CHRISTINE
If you'd just pop into the kitchen and get the nan?

JUR
Of course.

She exits.

BOMI
Did Farrokh teach you to cook this way?

Christine sneaks a sly glance at Freddie.

CHRISTINE
Farrokh has taught me all kinds of things.

Jur returns from the kitchen with the nan.

JUR
Don't make me bring up marriage again. I'm becoming exhausted.

FREDDIE
Fine. We won't bring it up.

BOMI
We're not so old-fashioned.

FREDDIE
I know you're not.

JUR
We don't insist on a Persian girl.
We love Christine.

FREDDIE (TO CHRISTINE)
They love you.

CHRISTINE
And I love them.

FREDDIE
We all love each other, and that's the end of the subject.

JUR
You know I have to nag you sometimes, don't you?

FREDDIE
Yes, darling, I do. Sorry about the nan.

BOMI
It's fine.

FREDDIE
It's not Christine's fault. I made it.

JUR
You have to cook it a little longer.

Freddie is struggling not to let on how upset he is.

FREDDIE
They're just blobs of dough.

BOMI
Farrokh, we heard your new song on
the radio.

JUR (TO CHRISTINE)
We're obliged to find his music
appalling.

BOMI
We are not.

CHRISTINE
And do you?

JUR
Frankly, no. We love Farrokh's
music.

BOMI
Speak for yourself. I feel no
obligation. All on my own, I'm
appalled by Farrokh's music.

JUR
Only some of it.

Freddie jumps up, picks up the platter full of nan.

FREDDIE
I'm just going to get rid of this.

JUR
You don't have to--

But he's gone. Off into the kitchen, to dispose of the
offending, undercooked nan.

CHRISTINE
Has he always been like this?

BOMI
Always.

They laugh. We have a fleeting sense of the family Freddie
would, in fact, create, if he were a different sort of
person.

INT. A GAY PUB IN LONDON, 1985 -- NIGHT

Under the scene, we hear Queen singing "Fat-Bottomed Girls."

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
 Oooh you gonna take me home
 tonight, oooh, down beside that red
 firelight; oooh you gonna let it
 all hang out. Fat-bottomed girls
 you make the rockin' world go
 round.

Freddie, Joe, and the two Peters are having drinks at a small pub on the outskirts, laughing away over a private joke. The place is semi-full of men, some younger and more attractive than others. Freddie catches the eye of the man we've seen briefly in the opening montage: Jim Hutton. Jim is hot more than he is handsome -- he's stocky, studly, very sexual. Freddie smiles at him. Jim just nods, and turns to speak to THE MAN STANDING BESIDE HIM.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE GAY PUB IN LONDON, 1985 -- NIGHT

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
 Hey, I was just a skinny lad, never
 knew no good from bad, but I knew
 life before I left my nursery.
 Left alone with big fat Fanny, she
 was such a naughty nanny! Hey big
 woman you made a bad boy out of me!

Freddie and the others are leaving. Freddie has come out first. He looks up at the sky and sees, once again, fleetingly, the Dream Ship. The boys are no longer on board, but the bare-chested man in the leather harness has been joined by SEVERAL OTHER MEN who are similarly dressed. Hendrix is still on board, and he's been joined by MICK JAGGER and DAVID BOWIE.

The men in leather look down at Freddie with particular intensity.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE THE REHEARSAL SPACE IN LONDON, 1985 - DAY

The morning of the next day. Freddie's limosine pulls up. A FEW DOZEN PEOPLE are gathered on the sidewalk, waiting anxiously. When the DRIVER opens the back door and Freddie steps out, the crowd goes crazy.

YOUNG WOMAN

Freddie!

YOUNG MAN

Freddie. Look over here.

He snaps a picture.

A YOUNG BOY ALL DONE UP IN GLITTER-GLAM - a sort of Freddie-manque - barrels forward and locks Freddie in an embrace. The driver immediately pulls him away.

GLITTER BOY

Oh my god. I can smell you.

FREDDIE

Should have showered, hm?

Freddie is clearly exhausted by all this, but determined not to let it show. These are his fans - he'd never treat them badly.

GLITTER BOY

I love you.

FREDDIE

Love you too, darling. Got to rehearse now.

GLITTER BOY

Look.

He tears open his shirt and reveals a big tattoo of Freddie, emblazoned across his scrawny chest.

FREDDIE

Oh, my dear, you may think better of that when you're eighty.

GLITTER BOY

Never. You're my soul mate.

FREDDIE

Well, if you change your mind one day it shouldn't be too much trouble to have it done over as Liza Minelli.

The boy, overcome, snatches the silk scarf from Freddie's neck.

GLITTER BOY

I have to have this. Please.

FREDDIE

All yours.

The boy breaks down weeping. The driver ushers Freddie through the crowd and into the building.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE IN LONDON, 1985 -- DAY

Freddie enters. The other three band members are already there, sipping tea and smoking their morning cigarettes.

Freddie stands in the doorway with his hands planted exaggeratedly on his hips.

FREDDIE

All right, then. The bitch is back.

Brian, Roger, and John groan, and take their places.

BRIAN

Just tell me one thing.

FREDDIE

What?

BRIAN

Who are you, and what have you done with Freddie?

They all laugh.

INT. FREDDIE'S BATHROOM, 1985 -- NIGHT

Later that night. Freddie stands naked before the full-length mirror in his extremely large and well-equipped bathroom.

FREDDIE

Who are you, and what have you done with Freddie?

He returns his attention to a small purple bruise at the top of his right thigh. It is, in fact, a Karposi's sarcoma lesion. Freddie presses experimentally on the spot with a fingertip. He's clearly worried, but hopeful that it's just an ordinary bruise.

INT. A FASHIONABLE LONDON RESTAURANT, 1985 - NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie and Christine are having dinner in a very *haute* restaurant.

FREDDIE

I'm afraid it's hopeless. The band has lost something.

CHRISTINE

What?

FREDDIE

Maybe we're just not as young and stupid as we used to be.

CHRISTINE

You're still young enough, and you're quite sufficiently stupid.

They laugh.

FREDDIE

Do you want to play secrets?

CHRISTINE

All right.

FREDDIE

I think about us moving off to a house somewhere. You and me.

CHRISTINE

You do not.

FREDDIE

Oh, we'd have parties, there'd be the odd dungeon master and rugby team staying over.

CHRISTINE

But it would be us. It'd be you and me. Place in the country, dogs and gardens.

FREDDIE

I can't be an aging rock star in decline. I can't.

CHRISTINE

So you'd retire with the old lady.

FREDDIE

Fuck off.

CHRISTINE

The Marquis de Sade had a wife,
didn't he?

FREDDIE

I am hardly the Marquis de Sade.
Okay, your turn.

Christine hesitates.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Come on. A secret.

CHRISTINE

I've been thinking about the same
thing.

FREDDIE

You have?

CHRISTINE

More or less. Us going off
somewhere. That part.

Oddly, this feels awkward, to both of them. They laugh
nervously, and return to their dinners.

INT. GAY PUB IN LONDON - NIGHT

Later that same night. We see Freddie back in the same gay
pub in which we saw him earlier. He's alone this time. He
strides confidently up to Jim Hutton, with whom he had an
unsuccessful flirtation the first time.

The music: The opening instrumental of The Pet Shop Boys' "I
Want a Lover."

FREDDIE

You don't have to fall in love with
me, you know. All you have to do
is smile back.

JIM

I don't really have to do anything,
do I?

Freddie rears back, amused.

FREDDIE

No, you don't. I'm Freddie. You don't have to tell me your name.

JIM

Jim.

FREDDIE

It's a pleasure, Jim.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE GAY BAR - NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie and Jim emerge from the bar. We can tell from their gaits that they've had a drink or two or three.

FREDDIE

I've got a car --

JIM

I can't leave my bike here, can I?

He leads Freddie over to his very sexy black Ducati. Jim gets on, and Freddie, who could scarcely be more thrilled, climbs on in back of him. They roar off. Helmets? Nope.

They zoom through the mostly empty streets. Freddie, clinging to Jim's broad back, can actually see the wind blowing around him -- it's studded with a fine, glittery dust. He imagines, in doorways and alleys, men in dark clothes, all kissing passionately.

We hear Freddie at the piano in the future, trying out a verse of "Princes of the Universe."

FREDDIE (O.S., SINGING)

Here we are, born to be kings,
we're the princes of the universe.
Here we belong, fighting to
survive, in a world with the
darkest powers.

INT. FOYER OF FREDDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Freddie has opened the door and let Jim in. Jim was clearly not expecting this sort of opulence.

JIM

Shit.

Freddie grabs him, kisses him. Jim pulls away for a moment.

JIM (CONT'D)
Never know who you're gonna meet in
a bar, do you?

FREDDIE
Forget about who I am.

From the blank look on Jim's face, it begins to dawn on Freddie that this guy may actually not know who he is.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I have a band called Queen.

JIM
Oh, right. I've heard you. On the
radio.

FREDDIE
But you don't give a shit, do you?

JIM
I don't know music, really.

Freddie is turned on by this. He presses his mouth hungrily to Jim's.

EXT. A STRANGE HOUSE - NIGHT

We are in Freddie's dream. We hear a distant piano playing "Save Me." No lyrics, just the tune.

Freddie is walking through a dark house, which is vast and seemingly empty. He comes to a wall with a single door in it. He opens the door. A blinding silver light bursts out. Freddie is at once ecstatic and terrified. It's clear that the light is going to absorb him. It's not clear whether the experience will be fabulous or excruciating--

INT. FREDDIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The next morning. Freddie wakes up, sees that he's in bed with Jim, who's already awake.

FREDDIE
Good morning.

They kiss.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Is it hard, being such a sexy
bastard? Does the responsibility
weigh heavily on you sometimes?

JIM
Silly thing to say.

FREDDIE
I only say silly things.

Peter enters, with a cup of tea.

PETER
Oh, hello.

FREDDIE
Phoebe, this is Jim.

PETER
Pleasure, Jim. I'll go get another
cup.

FREDDIE
Jim is a barber.

PETER
Perhaps he could give you a little
trim, then.

He exits.

JIM
Who's that?

FREDDIE
Old friend. He helps out around
the house.

JIM
Funny, that he just walks in like
that.

FREDDIE
Darling, there's nothing he hasn't
seen.

He kisses Jim, and they start making love. The camera pulls
slowly away and out of the bedroom--

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALL OF FREDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

We can hear the sounds of Freddie's and Jim's passion, but gradually the song "Somebody to Love" comes up and begins to drown them out. As we hear the song, we begin to move through the rooms of Freddie's house.

QUEEN (SINGING)

Can anybody find me somebody to love? Each morning I get up I die a little, can barely stand on my feet.

We go along the hallway, down the sweeping staircase, and into the grand foyer.

As we hear Queen singing "Somebody to Love," we move alternately through London and through the rooms of Freddie's house.

It is, for lack of a better phrase, A Montage of Lovers and Precious Objects.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE GARDEN LODGE, FREDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Take a look in the mirror and cry, Lord what you're doing to me. I've spent all my years believing in you, but I just can't get no relief, Lord.

From the street, we see the wall that surrounds Freddie's house, scrawled with graffiti-ed testaments of love and devotion to Freddie. TWO YOUNG FANS - A SCRUFFY TEEN-AGED BOY AND GIRL - sit propped against the wall, sweetly asleep on each other's shoulders. They've been there for hours, hoping to catch a glimpse of Freddie when he leaves in the morning.

INT. CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Christine is alone in her bed. She's awake. She looks troubled, as if she hasn't slept well.

INT. ROGER TAYLOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
Somebody, somebody, can anybody
find me somebody to love?

We see Roger in bed, kissing the lovely neck of the YOUNG, SLUMBERING GIRL beside him. She wakes up, smiles, kisses him.

INT. BRIAN MAY'S BEDROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Brian is also in bed, but he's having tea with his WIFE CRISSY and conversing earnestly with their TWO CHILDREN - JIMMY, age 7, and LOUISA, 4.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM OF FREDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
I work hard every day of my life, I
work till I ache my bones. At the
end I take home my hard-earned pay
all on my own.

We return to Freddie's house, move through the empty living room. We take in Freddie's vast collection of treasures - his porcelains, his paintings.

EXT. A STREET IN LONDON - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)
I get down on my knees and I start
to pray, till the tears run down
from my eyes, Lord, somebody,
somebody, can anybody find me
somebody to love?

We see the early risers on a London weekday: AN ELDERLY COUPLE helping each other along, a YOUNG MOTHER AND FATHER pushing a stroller, a TRIO OF YOUNG CLUB KIDS all holding hands on their way home, an OLD DRUNKEN WOMAN and HER EQUIALLY DRUNKEN WOMAN FRIEND wobbling through traffic.

INT. KITCHEN OF JOHN DEACON'S HOUSE - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Every day I try and I try and I
try, but everybody wants to put me
down, they say I'm crazy,

John and his WIFE VERONICA are having a rather chaotic breakfast with their FOUR CHILDREN - ROBERT, age 10, LAURA, age 8, MICHAEL, age 7, and JOSHUA, 2. They're not exactly miserable, but we are reminded that a family can involve a certain amount of noise, tears, spilled juice, and etc.

INT. FREDDIE'S DINING ROOM - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

They say I got a lot of water in my
brain, got no common sense, he's
got nobody left to believe in, Yeah
yeah yeah yeah.

We move into the dining room. Again, richness everywhere. A table that seats twelve easily. Silver and china in a glassed breakfront.

EXT. A SECOND STREET IN LONDON - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Oh Lord, somebody, somebody, can
anybody find me somebody to love?

This is, as it happens, the street on which Christine lives, though that's not made explicit. It's an out-of-the-way street, empty at this hour except for A RAGGED, DERANGED WOMAN who is singing, quite loudly, a song we can't hear.

INT. KITCHEN OF CHRISTINE'S FLAT - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

Got no feel, I got no rhythm, I
just keep losing my beat, I'm okay,
all right, ain't gonna face no
defeat.

Christine, out of bed now, looking sleep-dissheveled but beautiful in a silk kimono (very much like the ones Freddie wears) stands at the stove waiting for the tea kettle, which is on the verge of boiling.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO FREDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

QUEEN (SINGING)

I just gotta get out of this prison
cell, some day I'm gonna be free,
Lord, find me somebody to love.
Can anybody find me somebody to
love?

We see Freddie in a kimono, bidding goodbye to Jim. They kiss passionately. We understand that this might turn out to be more than a one-night thing.

FREDDIE

Would you be horrified if I called
you?

JIM

I don't mind.

He jumps onto his Ducati, and zooms away. Freddie, smitten, watches him go.

EXT. FREDDIE'S KOI POND - DAY

Later that morning. Freddie, dressed now, stands beside an ASIAN MAN, who is crouched over the koi pond. The man is examining a dead koi, the big golden one we saw in the opening montage.

FREDDIE

He was my favorite.

ASIAN MAN

It's strange. I can't see
anything.

FREDDIE

He's the third one.

ASIAN MAN

Let's see what we can find.

He takes a knife and, adroitly, slits the fish along its belly. Freddie turns away.

FREDDIE

He was the biggest and most
beautiful.

INT. A FABULOUS SHOP IN LONDON - DAY

Later the same day. Freddie and Christine are in a boutique that positively radiates cool abundance. It's Goth-rocker-pirate, very much along the lines of early Vivienne Westwood.

Christine stands in front of a mirror, wearing a fantastic black lace dress that's full of pleats and scallops. Freddie stands behind her, adjusting the dress.

CHRISTINE
Do you think?

A very eager-looking YOUNG SALESGIRL stands nearby. She is dressed, more or less, as a female Iggy Pop.

SALESGIRL
It's stunning.

Christine fusses with the dress's neckline.

CHRISTINE
Am I getting a little old for this
much cleavage?

FREDDIE
Absolutely not. Let's look at
shoes.

He and Christine, trailed by the salesgirl, work their way through the boutique. Freddie pauses periodically to finger a scarf, or the sleeve of a blouse.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
I met the most amazing man last
night.

CHRISTINE
Did you, now?

She continues to worry over the neckline of the dress she's got on -- she tries to adjust it, make it a bit less revealing.

FREDDIE
He's barely even heard of me. He's
a barber.

CHRISTINE
I can understand the attraction.

FREDDIE

I think I'd like to see this one again.

CHRISTINE

Really?

FREDDIE

Mm. He's sweet, he's sexy--

Suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, Christine takes in both hands the bodice of the dress she's wearing, and rips it. It's very thin and gauzy -- it rips right down to the waist.

FREDDIE

Darling--

CHRISTINE

I don't see other men. You know that, don't you?

The shop girl hesitates, then beats a hasty retreat.

FREDDIE

You can see as many other men as you like.

CHRISTINE

Did you think that I might not want to hear the details of some idiot you fucked the day after we'd talked about getting a house together? Did that possibility occur to you?

She turns and goes back toward the dressing room. Freddie follows her.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I'm going to have to pay for the fucking dress.

FREDDIE

I don't love these wankers, I have it off with them.

Christine reaches the back of the store, pulls the dress off. It rips further.

CHRISTINE

Where are my clothes? Where did I leave them?

FREDDIE
You're the one I love.

CHRISTINE
You have no idea how cold you are.

FREDDIE
I'm not cold.

CHRISTINE
You have no idea how cruel and
selfish. You don't really give a
shit about anybody.

FREDDIE
That's not true.

Just as suddenly as the fit took Christine, it leaves her. Flushed, as if she's just run a considerable distance, she looks levelly at Freddie.

CHRISTINE
I know.

Freddie takes her in his arms.

FREDDIE
We agreed there'd be dungeon
masters and rugby teams.

CHRISTINE
Don't pay any attention to me. You
have enough on your mind right now.

FREDDIE
I want you to be happy.

CHRISTINE
Of course you do. And I do my
best, really.

FREDDIE
Let's go look at shoes, shall we?

CHRISTINE
Fine. Yes. Let's look at shoes.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM, 1985 - NIGHT

That night. Freddie has curled up on one of the deep sofas, covered himself with a blanket, and is listening to the Act III aria "Nessum dorma" from Puccini's "Turandot." We can see from Freddie's face that he's troubled, lonely, confused, and is taking whatever consolation he can in this immortal music.

INT. A FANCY LONDON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Later that night. Freddie is having dinner, in a very chic restaurant, with a crew of friends: the other members of Queen, Christine, and a few NEW PEOPLE: A ROCKER WHO LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE ELTON JOHN, A BEAUTIFUL BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN OF INDETERMINATE AGE, A PAIR OF IMPOSSIBLY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BOYS WHO MIGHT HAVE COME AS THE GUESTS OF THE MAN WHO RESEMBLES ELTON JOHN.

Under the scene, we hear Queen doing "Play the Game."

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
Open up your mind and let me step
inside, rest your weary head and
let your heart decide

Freddie leans in toward Christine, whispers conspiratorially.

FREDDIE
Love the shoes.

CHRISTINE
You can't even see them.

FREDDIE
Noticed them on the way in.
Remember who you're talking to.

They laugh briefly together. They are, no denying it, a good match, and in a different world -- the world Freddie would prefer -- they could go on forever as a sort of hybrid of best friends and husband and wife.

We tune in on an ongoing conversation between Brian and the black-haired woman.

BRIAN
--been working on a new song and I
think it's, well, not bad.

Although we continue to hear the dialog and the music, we leave Freddie and co. and swing around the restaurant, which is full of THE COOLEST OF THE COOL - YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE. It's the epitome of style and posh.

Again, we see that everyone is living his or her own private opera. At one table, A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN complains to her date, A RAPT-LOOKING OLDER MAN. At another, TWO MIDDLE-AGED COUPLES are clearly in the middle of an awkward interlude, in which the WIFE of one MAN flirts flagrantly with the HUSBAND of the other WOMAN. At yet another table, A LOVELY YOUNG COUPLE holds hands and holds a whispered conversation -- they are clearly, at the moment, in love and untroubled. A well-dressed SINGLE WOMAN is waiting, with clear impatience, for her date to arrive. We notice TWO WAITERS sneak a quick kiss on their way back to the kitchen.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
 its so easy when you know the
 rules, it's so easy, all you have
 to do is fall in love. Play the
 game, everybody play the game of
 love.

We hear the black-haired woman speak in a loud, strong voice. She's a Big Thinker.

BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN (O.S., TO FREDDIE)
 But good versus bad isn't really
 the question, is it?

BRIAN (O.S.)
 What's that?

BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN (O.S.)
 The question is, popular versus
 unpopular. If a song is crap but
 it's a hit, it's good. If it's
 brilliant but nobody likes it, it's
 bad.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
 When you're feeling down and your
 resistance is low, light another
 cigarette and let yourself go.
 This is your life, don't play hard
 to get, it's a free world, all you
 have to do is fall in love. Play
 the game, everyone play the game of
 love.

FREDDIE (O.S.)

I like to think our fans can tell
brilliance from crap.

BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN (O.S.)

That's not the point. What I'm
saying is, it's a new system of
values. That's what's
revolutionary about it. Popular
equals good.

FREDDIE (O.S.)

Opera was popular in its day.
People flocked to see Verdi and
Puccini.

BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN (O.S.)

This is an entirely different
phenomenon. This is consumer
culture. It brings up profound
questions. What about Joyce? What
about Pollack? Should they be
considered great if they're
incomprehensible to almost
everybody?

We return to Freddie's table.

FREDDIE

Artists are always ahead of their
time.

BLACK-HAIRED WOMAN

You don't really understand what
I'm saying.

FREDDIE

Maybe not. 'Scuse me a second.

He gets up from the table. One of the beautiful young boys
looks at him questioningly. He's clearly wondering: cocaine
time?

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Just going for a piss, love.

INT. RESTAURANT IN LONDON - NIGHT

We follow Freddie through the back of the restaurant (and
notice how aware everyone is of who he is). We follow him
past the bathrooms and out the restaurant's back door.

EXT. A STREET IN LONDON - NIGHT

Freddie has slipped down the alley behind the restaurant, and found a pay phone. Very briefly, a parade from Persia passes by on the cross street. It's the parade we saw in the opening montage: JUGGLERS, CLOWNS, ACROBATS.

Freddie drops a coin into the pay phone, and dials.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET IN LONDON - NIGHT

An hour later. This street is in a remote, dark-ish area. Freddie, having called Jim and arranged it, gets out of his chauffeur-driven car and strides happily up to Jim, who is leaning against his Ducati, waiting.

They kiss. Then Freddie impatiently waves the driver away. The car pulls off.

FREDDIE

God, I'm glad to see you.

JIM

Mm.

FREDDIE

Do you know what I'd like to do?

JIM

I know what I'd like to do.

They kiss again. After a moment, Freddie breaks off the kiss.

FREDDIE

Oh, we'll do that, don't you worry.
But I want to have a drink or two
at the sleaziest bar you know.

JIM

And what makes you think I know any
sleazy bars?

FREDDIE

Oh, please.

JIM

All right. Come on, then.

He gets onto his bike. Freddie, happily, jumps on behind him, and they roar off.

INT. AN S&M BAR IN LONDON - NIGHT

Under the action, we hear Queen's duet with David Bowie, "Under Pressure."

QUEEN AND DAVID BOWIE (O.S., SINGING)

Pressure, pushing down on me,
pressing down on you no man ask
for. Under pressure that burns a
building down, splits a family in
two, puts people on streets.

Jim has taken Freddie to a very sleazy bar indeed. It's a dungeon-ish, S&M place, and its predominant clientele is MEN OF A CERTAIN AGE, wearing leather chaps, motorcycle caps, harnesses, and related gear. It's one of the (many) corners of the world in which one particular, and rather eccentric, notion of sexiness prevails, and beauty in all its other forms is banished.

Freddie and Jim are having a drink at the bar. Jim and Freddie don't really fit in here, though they have the requisite short hair and mustaches. Jim is a bit more passable, in a tight black t-shirt, but Freddie, in the big-collared silk shirt he wore to dinner, looks a bit like an orchid in a slag heap.

QUEEN AND DAVID BOWIE (CONT'D, O.S.,
SINGING)

It's the terror of knowing what
this world is about, watching some
good friends screaming, get me out!
Tomorrow takes me higher, pressure
on people, people on the streets.

A BIG BRUISER, mid-forties, hairy and shirtless, bumps up rather hard against Freddie as he leans in to order a drink. Freddie looks at the man, not in irritation but just to acknowledge the physical contact. The man fixes on Freddie a look of pure disdain, then orders his drink.

INT. FREDDIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later, Freddie and Jim are in Freddie's bed together, clearly having a very good time. We circle the bed slowly. As we do, we hear the sounds of their lovemaking.

EXT. FREDDIE'S GARDEN - DAY

It's early morning of the next day. Freddie and Jim are sitting together beside Freddie's koi pond, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes. Both are wearing silk kimonos of Freddie's.

FREDDIE

Experience indicates that once you actually start talking to a big sexy fuck like you, that's the end of all attraction. I've decided to take the chance.

JIM

Go on.

FREDDIE

Lately I feel like I can't stand attention and I can't stand it when nobody recognizes me, either. Don't know what to do about that, really.

Jim stands up.

JIM

Okay, that's it. So long.

Freddie looks at him uncertainly. Jim laughs, and sits down again, close to Freddie.

JIM (CONT'D)

You really think I'd hear a little thing like that and not want to fuck you anymore?

Freddie rolls his eyes.

FREDDIE

Which would not be a surprising sentiment coming from a fifteen-year-old girl. I know. Now you have to tell me something.

JIM

Do I?

FREDDIE

It can be a tiny one.

JIM

Hm. Okay. I piss in the shower.

FREDDIE

That's the worst, most
insignificant secret I've ever
heard.

JIM

You said it could be a small one.

FREDDIE

I didn't mean microscopic.

They laugh, and exchange a quick kiss.

JIM

I like your pond.

FREDDIE

Is that supposed to be another
secret?

JIM

No. I like your fish pond.

Freddie looks mournfully at the fish swimming idly by. What
strange disease is killing them?

FREDDIE

All right, then. Back to bed for
half an hour.

JIM

Right.

He stands. He and Freddie walk back toward the house. A
little tentatively, Freddie slips his hand into Jim's. Jim
does not withdraw his hand.

FREDDIE

We're doing a concert at Wembley
tomorrow. Would you like to come?

JIM

Sorry. Got to work.

FREDDIE

Want to take the day off?

JIM

Can't.

Freddie, unsure about whether to be charmed or insulted, raises Jim's hand to his lip and kisses it.

INT. HALLWAY OF A LONDON APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Two hours later. Freddie, having said goodbye to Jim and gotten dressed, has stopped by Christine's place on his way to rehearsal. He walks down her hallway, singing softly the opening lines of "Hammer to Fall."

FREDDIE (SINGING)
Where we stand, or where we fall,
history won't care at all.

He lets himself in. He has his own key.

INT. CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Christine is still asleep. Her bedroom is a fabulous girl-bower - big bed with white linens, comfy chairs upholstered in silk, cream-colored walls. It has a slightly shrine-ish aspect.

Freddie enters, and jumps into bed with Christine. She awakens. She's wearing a big white t-shirt, and panties.

FREDDIE
Morning, love.

CHRISTINE
Good morning.

Freddie kisses her, quite romantically, and then pulls the jade coke vial out of his pocket.

FREDDIE
A bit of breakfast?

Christine looks skeptically at him, but does, in fact, snort up the spoonful of coke he's offered her. He does a spoonful himself, hops up on top of her, starts getting playfully sexual.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Hello, there, beautiful creature.

CHRISTINE
What happened to you last night?

FREDDIE

Nipped off with the barber. Just
couldn't take all the palaver,
y'know?

As if gripped by a sudden panic, Christine pitches him off
and jumps out of bed.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey, love--

Christine stands staring at him.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Come on.

Freddie gets up. She literally runs away from him, out of
the room.

INT. CHRISTINE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Christine walks swiftly into her living room, followed by
Freddie. We see that Christine is still living in the flat
she and Freddie shared years ago, and that she hasn't changed
the living room at all. Same old rugs, same leopard-print
sofa.

FREDDIE

Darling--

Christine stands in the middle of the room, fearfully, almost
as if she were confronting a thief who'd just broken in.

CHRISTINE

What have I done?

FREDDIE

Nothing.

She emits a hysterical whoop of laughter.

CHRISTINE

That's exactly right.

FREDDIE

Don't be melodramatic--

He looks at her with a mix of confusion and love. We enter
his p.o.v.

INT. THE STAGE AT COVENT GARDEN OPERA HOUSE - DAY

Although Christine and Freddie remain exactly where they were in the previous scene, we are transported to an opera stage, where an opera-sized version of Christine's living room has been constructed.

Under the dialog, we hear Queen doing "I Want It All." The following occupies a strange zone between opera and schlock.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
I want it all I want it all I want
it all and I want it now.
Adventure seeker on an empty
street, just an alley creeper light
on his feet, a young fighter
screaming with no time for doubt,
with the pain and anger he can't
see a way out. It ain't much I'm
asking I heard him say. Gotta find
me a future move out of my way. I
want it all I want it all I want it
all and I want it now. I want it
all I want it all I want it all and
I want it now.

CHRISTINE
I need to be free.

FREDDIE
Hard to imagine how anyone could be
freer.

CHRISTINE
Then I need to be less free. Fine.

FREDDIE
We could fix you up a jail cell, if
you like.

Christine speaks with an exhausted calm.

CHRISTINE
Freddie, I'm actually not the girl
you need me to be. As it turns
out, I'm really rather ordinary.

A charged, silent moment passes between them.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
Listen all you people come gather
round, I gotta get me a game plan
gotta shake you to the ground.
Just give me what I know is mine,
people do you hear me just give me
the sign.

FREDDIE
You're not. You're having a spell
right now.

CHRISTINE
It'd be better if you'd never
mentioned that goddamned house in
the country.

FREDDIE
We can have a house in the country.
We can have a baby.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
It ain't much I'm asking if you
want the truth, here's to the
future for the dreams of youth. I
want it all I want it all I want it
all and I want it now. I want it
all (yes I want it all) I want it
all I want it all I want it all and
I want it now.

CHRISTINE
Which you'd do because I want it.

FREDDIE
What's wrong with that?

Christine laughs again. Her laughter is taking on an
increasingly hysterical edge.

CHRISTINE
Nothing's wrong with it. It's the
kindest thing anyone's ever offered
me.

Freddie is so frustrated he's close to tears.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)
I'm a man with a one-track mind, so
much to do in one life time.
(MORE)

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING) (cont'd)
Not a man for compromise and
where's and why's and living lies,
so I'm living it all, and I'm
giving it all. Yeah yeah yeah yeah
yeah. I want it all all all all
all.

FREDDIE
What do you want?

CHRISTINE
I can't have what I want.

FREDDIE
Of course you can.

All the hysteria goes abruptly out of her voice. She becomes quite calm, and serious. He tries to embrace her. She backs away.

CHRISTINE
You know what I truly can't stand?
You know what's actually
unbearable?

FREDDIE
No.

CHRISTINE
This is opera to you. This is part
of your big life.

Freddie, exasperated, throws up his hands.

FREDDIE
This is my life.

CHRISTINE
I need you to go now.

FREDDIE
Darling--

CHRISTINE
No. Really. Go.

After a helpless pause, Freddie leaves the stage.

INT. CHRISTINE'S LIVING ROOM, 1985 - DAY

The moment Freddie exits, we return to Christine's actual living room. She stands there alone as we hear the rest of the song.

QUEEN (O.S., SINGING)

It ain't much I'm asking if you
want the truth, here's to the
future, hear the cry of youth. I
want it all I want it all I want it
all and I want it now. I want it
all I want it all I want it all and
I want it now.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE IN LONDON - DAY

Freddie and the band are working on "Crazy Little Thing
Called Love."

FREDDIE (SINGING)

This thing called love, I must get
round to it, I ain't ready, crazy
little thing called love--

He stops singing.

BRIAN

What's wrong this time?

FREDDIE

I don't know.

ROGER

Freddie--

FREDDIE

What?

ROGER

You can only do the best you can.

FREDDIE

No. I can do better.

BRIAN

You've gone fucking nuts.

FREDDIE

We don't have much time.

He starts singing again. Wearily, the band backs him up.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

That night. Freddie and Jim are getting cozy by the
fireplace, drinking cognac and smoking cigarettes.

FREDDIE

Good to have a quiet one at home
every now and then, don't you
think?

JIM

I don't mind.

Freddie walks his fingertips along Jim's big chest. Freddie is clearly agitated, looking for a fight.

FREDDIE

I'm glad you don't mind.

Jim nestles his head affectionately and erotically into Freddie's armpit. Freddie, however, isn't having it.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Just for future reference, Jim,
dear, maybe you could tell me what
it is that you do mind.

Jim is clearly confused.

JIM

Eh?

FREDDIE

What do you feel passionate about?

JIM

I'd think you'd know --

FREDDIE

I don't mean shagging and boozing
and giving haircuts. Is there any
art you give a shit about? Have
you ever read a book?

JIM

Hey, now --

But Freddie is on a tear. He jumps up.

FREDDIE

Do you have any opinions, about
anything? Do you care about me?

Jim gets up. He's not one for a scene.

JIM

I should be going.

FREDDIE

That's your response.

JIM

That's pretty much it.

FREDDIE

Why do you get up in the mornings?
What moves you through the days?

JIM

See you.

FREDDIE

Right. Fuck off.

Okay, Jim has had it. Rather than run off, however, he stands up to Freddie.

JIM

I'm not a fool, you know.

FREDDIE

No one said you were.

JIM

When you tell your friends, Jim is a barber, you think I don't know what you mean?

FREDDIE

I mean that you're a barber. Have I been misled?

JIM

Least I'm a real barber.

FREDDIE

Meaning?

JIM

Hutton is my real name. I don't sashay around like something out of the Arabian Nights.

Freddie is flustered, which is, needless to say, rare for him. This is the Unbroachable - no one close to him has ever dared bring it up.

FREDDIE

Maybe a bit of sashay would do you good.

JIM

I know what you think. You think you're grand and I'm trade. And it's crap. You know it's crap.

FREDDIE

Do you understand that I'm good at something? I do something extremely difficult and I do it very, very well and it matters a great deal to some people. Does that mean anything at all to you?

JIM

You think the fake name and the money and all make you some kind of aristocrat.

FREDDIE

And you, my dear, cut hair.

JIM

You're not even English. You're just somebody made up.

With that, Freddie picks up a vase that cost about as much as a BMW, and prepares to smash it on the floor. But he stops himself.

FREDDIE

You're not going to make me break this.

JIM

Means more to you than I do, don't it?

Freddie speaks with icy, quivering control.

FREDDIE

That's cheap and stupid.

JIM

I may be cheap but I ain't stupid.

FREDDIE

I'm not playing this scene. Not with you.

JIM

You don't think I'm worth it.

Freddie doesn't answer. The two men stand for a moment, glowering at each other like gladiators who've reached a temporary stalemate. Jim turns and leaves.

We linger briefly on Freddie, flushed and panting with rage, still holding the vase.

INT. WEMBLEY STADIUM - DAY

The next day - Live Aid 1985. We see Freddie on stage, bathed in sweat, in essentially the same stance - impassioned, his blood racing. Queen is in the middle of its set. Freddie is now wearing a white tank top, faded jeans, and has a studded black leather armband on one upper arm. He stands before a vast, ecstatic crowd.

We understand that his fight with Jim last night has helped fuel his performance today.

FREDDIE

This next song is only dedicated to the beautiful people here tonight. Which means all of you. Thank you for coming, and making this a great occasion.

With that, he launches into a truly immortal rendition of "Somebody to Love." We will see the number in its entirety (all three and a half minutes of it).

FREDDIE (SINGING)

I ain't ready. Crazy little thing called love. It cries in a cradle at night, it swings, it jives, it shakes all over like a jelly fish, I kinda like it, crazy little thing called love.

He is delivering a truly immortal rendition of "Somebody to Love." We will see the number in its entirety (all three and a half minutes of it).

However, as Freddie sings, we cut once to Jim and once to Christine, neither of whom is at Wembley Stadium.

INT. BARBER SHOP AT THE SAVOY HOTEL - DAY

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)

There goes my baby, she knows how to rock n' roll, she drives me crazy,

We see Jim finishing up a customer, a red-faced, portly gentleman getting his remaining hairs trimmed. He is practically a member of a different species from Freddie.

INT. WEMBLEY STADUIM - DAY

Back to Freddie and the band, on stage.

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)

She gives me hot and cold fever,
then she leaves me in a cool cool
sweat. I gotta be cool, relax, get
hip, get on my tracks, take a back
seat, hitch hike, and take a long
ride on my motor bike, until I'm
ready, crazy little thing called
love.

INT. CHRISTINE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)

Hitch hike, and take a long ride on
my motor bike, until I'm ready,
crazy little thing called love.

Christine sits on her sofa, watching Freddie on television with a mix of sorrow and pride.

INT. WEMBLEY STADUIM - DAY

We return to the concert, and remain there until the song is finished.

FREDDIE (CONT'D, SINGING)

This thing called love, I just
can't handle it, this thing, called
love, I must get round to it, I
ain't ready, crazy little thing
called love, crazy little thing
called love.

The number ends with Freddie raising his guitar as if to smash it, and instead slinging it over his back and raising his fist in triumph.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

After the concert. Freddie, the other members of the band, Peter, and roughly 50 GUESTS are celebrating back at Freddie's place. Some of them we recognize - the Elton John-ish man and the dark-haired woman from dinner a few nights earlier - and some are new to us. They range from a NUMBER OF ATTRACTIVE MEN to a LESSER NUMBER OF LESS ATTRACTIVE MEN - all old friends of Freddie's - to people who might be, or at any rate closely resemble, celebrities of the time - David Bowie, Mick Jagger.

Neither Jim nor Christine is present, however.

It's a wild celebration. No need to go into detail about the champagne, coke, joints, and etc.

The Elton John-like guy is making a toast to Freddie.

ELTON JOHN-ish GUY

We did in fact see history being made today. If there was any doubt that Freddie Mercury is the greatest front man who ever lived, I hereby declare those doubts put to rest.

There is much cheering and raising of glasses. Two of the young studs lift Freddie and hold him aloft on their shoulders, like athletes celebrating a touchdown.

FREDDIE

Thank you. But as I hope you know, I don't even write most of the good stuff. May I propose a toast and a ten-minute ovation for three heroes and legends of rock n' roll - Brian May, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon.

More cheers, applause, and raising of glasses. Brian, Roger, and John are all lifted up, though some of the lifters are either women or skinny men. Brian, lifted by a particularly ambitious but under-qualified pair, falls, but is caught by the crowd. People lift him collectively, on his back, and pass him forward to Freddie.

BRIAN (TO FREDDIE)

Did it.

FREDDIE

Did.

Freddie lifts his champagne glass to Brian.

INT. BATHROOM AT FREDDIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A short while later. Freddie sits on the closed toilet seat with one pants leg rolled up, looking at his shin. It bears another Karposi's sarcoma lesion.

The door opens halfway. It's Peter.

PETER

Whoops.

FREDDIE

Just me, Phoebe.

Peter enters. Freddie quickly pulls his pants leg back down, takes out the coke vial, gives it to Peter, who helps himself.

PETER

You were good, you know.

FREDDIE

I do know.

Freddie lights a cigarette. He and Peter pass the cigarette and the coke vial back and forth, simultaneously, as they talk.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Phoebe, would you say that you're happy?

PETER

More or less.

FREDDIE

I know I can be horrible sometimes.

PETER

Only sometimes.

FREDDIE

I hope I've made you at least a little bit happy.

PETER

What's going on, Melina?

FREDDIE

Post-concert, you know how I am.
Drama queen, going all sentimental.

Peter hesitates. Then he puts a hand, very gently, on the back of Freddie's head.

PETER

Darling, you've got it, haven't you?

FREDDIE

Got what?

PETER

Don't fuck with your auntie.

Freddie jumps away from Peter, in a fit of rage and panic.

FREDDIE

I'm perfectly fine.

PETER

You should see a doctor.

Freddie looks like a cornered animal.

FREDDIE

I'm perfect.

Reflexively, he puts his hand to his mouth, as if to cover his teeth.

Peter tosses the cigarette into the sink.

PETER

For one thing, I suspect you need to stop smoking.

FREDDIE

Fuck off.

He lights another cigarette.

PETER

I'll do whatever you need me to.
You know that.

Freddie hesitates. His rage and panic start to slip away.

FREDDIE

Are you all right?

PETER
Do you mean, have I got it? I
don't think so.

FREDDIE
Don't say anything. To anybody.
Promise me you won't say anything.

PETER
Not if you don't want me to.

FREDDIE
Because I think I can stand
being... having this. But I don't
think I could stand being treated
like someone who's sick.

They stand there together, briefly, in silence. After a
moment, Freddie smiles (closed-lipped, of course).

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Actually, y'know, I came in here to
take a shit.

With that, he drops his pants and raises the toilet seat.

PETER
There are levels of intimacy to
which I don't aspire, thank you.

He exits.

INT. JIM HUTTON'S FLAT - NIGHT

It's very late that same night. Jim, wearing only briefs,
sleepily crosses his modest living room in response to a
knock at his door. He opens the door. It's Freddie, still
wearing the clothes we saw him in at the post-concert party.

FREDDIE
Sorry, sorry, sorry.

JIM
Come on in.

Freddie sweeps in, kisses him deeply. Freddie is quite high.

FREDDIE
I'm a miserable human being.

JIM
I've had worse.

Jim turns and walks in the direction of the bedroom. Freddie follows, undressing as he goes.

INT. JIM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom, like the living room, is spare and masculine-ly under-decorated and very, very neat. Jim gets back into bed. Freddie continues undressing.

JIM
How'd it go?

FREDDIE
It went quite well, thank you. How was your day?

JIM
The usual.

Freddie, naked now, gets into bed beside Jim.

FREDDIE
Do you like cutting people's hair?

JIM
It's all right.

FREDDIE
Tell me about the most remarkable head of hair you've ever encountered.

JIM
Now you're being silly.

FREDDIE
I am.

JIM
Go to sleep. It's late.

FREDDIE
Mm-hm.

Jim nestles into the nape of Freddie's neck and is almost instantly back in the land of nod. Freddie, blazing on coke, lies awake, holding Jim, stroking his hair. Freddie speaks softly to the slumbering Jim, knowing he can't be heard.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You were awfully harsh, you know. Of course it's all made up, I never tried to hide that. But we can make things up, don't you think? I think we can. If we make things up and believe in them enough, they become real. Real enough. Because you know, Jim darling, it has always been my conviction that a life of straightforward reality is really just a terrible failure of imagination.

Jim snores on. Freddie, wide awake, holds him and looks up at the ceiling.

INT. THE BULSARA HOUSE IN PERSIA, 1952 - DAY

It's the day in Freddie's childhood that we saw in the opening montage - that brief moment in which the very young Freddie laughed delightedly at a clown in a parade. At this moment, his family is about to leave for the parade.

Freddie, aka Farrokh, age six, stands in his parents' nicely furnished, comfortable-looking bedrooom. The radio plays Bill Haley and the Saddlemen, singing "Rock the Joint."

Freddie has tied a sheet around his shoulders, as if it were a cape, and is practicing a few moves in front of his parents' full-length mirror.

Bomi, Freddie's father, enters. This is a younger Bomi, a handsome, well-dressed man in his early thirties, who looks very much like the man little Freddie, aka Farrokh, will grow into.

Freddie doesn't notice his father. He's lost in the music, and his own ability to swing those little hips of his.

After a moment, Bomi squats beside little Freddie. It's clear that he loves his son, and that he is not in any way put off by Freddie's desire to put on a costume and dance.

BOMI
Farrokh, it's time to go.

SIX-YEAR-OLD FREDDIE
One more minute.

BOMI
Your mother is waiting.

SIX-YEAR-OLD FREDDIE
Till the end of this song.

BOMI
All right. Until the end of this
song.

He strokes his son's hair, stands, and exits. Freddie continues dancing, and in a moment, the song in fact does end. We hear the voice of a DISC JOCKEY.

DISC JOCKEY
That was Bill Haley and the
Saddlemen, singing "Rock the
Joint." Next up, the Dominoes and
"Have Mercy Baby."

Freddie is obviously enchanted by the prospect. The radio plays the opening bars of "Have Mercy Baby," and Freddie starts dancing again.

From off-screen, we hear his father's voice.

BOMI (O.S.)
Farrokh. Now.

Reluctantly, little Freddie turns away from the mirror, turns off the radio, and exits, still wearing his homemade cape. We watch him go down a long, dark hall. We continue seeing the dark, empty hall after little Freddie has passed out of our sight.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE CHRISTINE'S BUILDING - DAY

The next day. Freddie, all shaved and showered, is standing outside Christine's building. At the moment, two TEENAGE GIRLS are standing awe-struck before him.

GIRL #1
I can't believe it's you!

FREDDIE
I can't believe it's me either,
love.

GIRL #2
Would you sign something?

She rummages in her purse. Her friend does likewise.

GIRL #1
I think I have a pen.

GIRL #2
Sign my face. Write all over me.

At that moment, Christine emerges. She looks long and hard at Freddie.

CHRISTINE (TO FREDDIE)
Now who's being melodramatic?

FREDDIE
If I'd called, would you have wanted to see me?

GIRL #1
Who's she?

GIRL #2
I don't think she's anybody.

Christine starts walking off down the street. Freddie walks alongside her, with the two girls in direct pursuit.

CHRISTINE
No. Yes. Honestly, I have no idea. You were fantastic yesterday.

FREDDIE
Was, wasn't I?

As Christine and Freddie talk to each other, the two girls keep up a running dialog of their own.

GIRL #1
I don't have a pen. I have a lipstick.

GIRL #2
Oh, write on us in lipstick.

As this strange entourage moves down the street, they attract attention. A MIDDLE-AGED COUPLE, rather conservatively dressed, fall in. They speak to the two girls.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Is that who I think it is?

GIRL #2
It is.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
He's a little thing, isn't he?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

They're always smaller than you expect them to be.

GIRL #1

He's got a bit of an attitude, actually.

This, however, is background noise. Our main concern is with Freddie and Christine.

CHRISTINE

The boys must be thrilled.

FREDDIE

I feel empty and lost without you.

Although Freddie is no stranger to true feeling, this statement is unusually simple and direct for him. Both he and Christine register that.

CHRISTINE

You'll recover.

FREDDIE

I don't think I will.

As they progress down the street, yet another FAN falls in, this time a COOL-LOOKING MAN IN HIS EARLY 20S.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, my god. It can't be.

He falls in stride next to Freddie. It's Christine on Freddie's right and this stranger on his left.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

I just want to tell you how much I love you.

Christine's resolve is starting to fail her. She does, in fact, believe that Freddie can't quite live without her, but at the same time she knows she can't continue as she has.

CHRISTINE

So do you want to give it all up and be just us?

FREDDIE

Yes.

They pause, and both start laughing. They know how impossible that would be.

YOUNG MAN
I don't mean to intrude.

And yet, he doesn't give up, either.

FREDDIE
Can't we figure something out?

CHRISTINE
Not right now. Freddie, if I could do this for you, I would. I mean, if I could do it and feel as if I had, I don't know, any sort of real life--

One of the teenage girls, seeing herself outflanked, has picked up speed and is competing with the young man for Freddie's attention.

GIRL #1
You're so beautiful. I'm sorry, I just need to tell you that.

Christine, frustrated almost to the point of hysteria, hails a passing cab, which pulls over for her. She opens the door.

FREDDIE
You're the only one. You're my muse. You're my life.

Christine trembles on the brink of really and truly losing control. It's too much, and it's too strange -- the fact that her true love is a gay man, the yammering crowd that surrounds him.

CHRISTINE
And, all right, fuck you, you're mine too.

Tenderly, Freddie touches her face.

FREDDIE
Call me when you can.

Christine nods. She's managing not to cry.

CHRISTINE
I don't want you to be alone.

FREDDIE
I'm never alone.

They stand there together for a moment. Freddie almost asks to get in the cab with her, but knows it's time to let her go.

Christine gets into the cab. As the cab pulls away, Freddie is left standing on the sidewalk with his little legion of fans.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Was that Marianne Faithfull?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Marianne Faithfull is much prettier
than that.

GIRL #1
Will you write something on us now?

Along with Freddie, we watch Christine's cab disappear into traffic.

We go in close on Freddie's face. We have not, until this moment, seen such depths of sorrow in him. He is, in fact, watching the love of his life drive away, and at the same time he knows there's no way for them to be happy together -- neither could possibly live in a way that would please the other. Something subtle but essential collapses, just under the surface of Freddie's skin. He is, in a sense, growing up right before our eyes -- he fully understands, for the first time, that a certain degree of loss is inevitable in a life -- that we may "want it all," but no one ever gets it all.

INT. FREDDIE'S DRESSING ROOM, 1987 - NIGHT

Two years later. We remain focused on Freddie's face -- his expression has not changed significantly. He is now, however, becoming visibly ill. He sits before a mirror. His face is gaunt and drawn. We watch as he expertly applies foundation, and a touch of rouge.

While Freddie applies his make-up, we hear Maria Callas singing "Vissi d'arte" ("I Have Lived for Art") from Act II of Puccini's "Tosca."

EXT. A PARTY IN SWITZERLAND, 1988 - NIGHT

We continue to hear Callas singing the aria from "Tosca" as we survey a big, raucous party.

It's a Hat Party. All wearing extravagant hats, a VAST CROWD OF GUESTS is gathered on a beautiful terrace overlooking a lake. The terrace is strung with paper lanterns -- it's quite lovely. Some of the guests are people we've seen before - Joe Fanelli, the Elton John-like guy among them. It's also clear that a certain number of NEW, BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MEN are being continually added to the ongoing party.

As we survey the party and hear Callas' voice, however, we know something most of these people don't -- that many of them are infected; that many will die in the coming years; that the party, in a sense, is over.

INT. FREDDIE'S BEDROOM IN SWITZERLAND, 1988 - NIGHT

Callas' aria continues through this scene.

Freddie stands at the window of his upstairs bedroom, watching the party unfold below.

Peter Freestone enters. He's wearing an enormous woman's straw hat covered in artificial flowers, hovered over by two artificial birds and a swarm of artificial bees.

PETER FREESTONE
Party's in full swing.

FREDDIE
And it's time to join it.

Peter comes and stands close to him.

PETER FREESTONE
You don't have to do anything you
don't want to do.

FREDDIE
I love parties.

PETER FREESTONE
I know.

FREDDIE
Got me hat?

PETER FREESTONE
I most certainly do.

Peter takes from the bureau a gigantic version of the Mad Hatter's hat in Alice in Wonderland. He puts it on Freddie's head.

FREDDIE

How do I look?

Peter scrutinizes him, dabs a little at his make-up.

PETER FREESTONE

Splendid.

FREDDIE

All right, then. Let the wild
debacle begin.

They leave the room, ready to join the party. The aria ends.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM IN SWITZERLAND, 1988 - NIGHT

Freddie makes his entrance at the party, followed by Peter. The GUESTS fall back -- the great man has arrived. A BEAUTIFUL BOY (yes, another one) puts a glass of champagne into Freddie's hand. Freddie raises the glass in a toast, forges on into the party with a great show of glee, but we can see the strain on his face. He's a bit like someone who has just run a considerable distance, but is compelled to pretend that he's neither tired nor winded.

The Queen song "Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy" is playing on the hotel's sound system.

EXT. OUTSIDE A LONDON RECORDING STUDIO, 1990 - DAY

We go another two years into the future. Freddie is leaving the studio, with the other band members behind him. A BODYGUARD is helping them get through the usual mob of FANS and REPORTERS.

Freddie has deteriorated considerably. He's lost a lot of weight. His face is now quite gaunt and hollow. He wears heavy make-up.

A YOUNG MAN, all in black leather, lunges at Freddie. The bodyguard blocks him.

YOUNG MAN

You saved my life! I have to tell
you that!

As the bodyguard is occupied by the young man, an AGGRESSIVE YOUNG WOMAN REPORTER takes advantage of the brief opening, and works her way to Freddie's side.

REPORTER
Freddie, a quick question.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
I was going to off myself! Your
music made me change my mind! I
want to sing to you now!

The rather deranged young man starts singing "Amazing Grace." He has a surprisingly good voice. He continues singing the hymn as the reporter confronts Freddie.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D, SINGING)
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me. I
once was lost, but now I'm found,
was blind but now I see.

REPORTER
There are rumors about your health.

FREDDIE
Never felt better, love.

REPORTER
You don't look all that well,
frankly.

FREDDIE
That's because I have crazy people
singing hymns to me and rude people
asking me nosy questions.

With that, the bodyguard hustles her away and gets Freddie into his car. We linger a moment with the crowd on the street, as the big black car pulls away. The young man keeps singing.

YOUNG MAN (SINGING)
T'was grace that taught my heart to
fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

INT. FREDDIE'S LIVING ROOM, 1991 - DAY

A year later. Freddie, looking quite wasted and extremely ill, lies propped on pillows on one of his enormous white sofas. He's wearing a robe. Two of his cats lie beside him.

Christine sits on the sofa beside him. Her 2-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER is seated on the floor, stroking a third cat.

CHRISTINE

Are you taking care of yourself?

FREDDIE

It's just exhaustion, dear. And a touch of the flu.

Jim enters. He's six years older too, of course, but his manner and mode of dress haven't changed. He coolly addresses Christine.

JIM

Hello, Christine.

CHRISTINE

Hello.

Jim goes to Freddie, puts a hand tenderly on his cadaverously thin face.

JIM

You all right?

FREDDIE

Perfect.

JIM

The sun's in your eyes.

He goes to the window and draws the white drapes. After a moment, he leaves.

FREDDIE

How's what's his name?

CHRISTINE

Daryl. My boyfriend's name is Daryl. He's quite well, thank you.

FREDDIE

Good.

He looks nervously over at Christine's daughter.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, mustn't be too rough with the kitty.

CHRISTINE

I should take her home. We're approaching the cranky hour.

FREDDIE

Darling, the band is slipping a bit. Don't you think?

CHRISTINE

Not really.

FREDDIE

I've been thinking. I want to start working with a ballet corps. And, you know, I'd love to write a proper opera. I'd like to try and sing opera, actually.

CHRISTINE

Why not?

FREDDIE

Thanks for stopping by.

CHRISTINE

Freddie?

FREDDIE

Mm?

Christine intimately, if nervously, fingers the lapel of his robe.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You're not about to make some kind of speech, are you?

CHRISTINE

No!

FREDDIE

Bye, then. See you tomorrow.

CHRISTINE

See you tomorrow.

They remain silent for a while. They both know -- they're married for life, whatever remains of it. There's everything, and nothing, to say. After a while, Christine leans in and kisses him, lingeringly, on his lips.

FREDDIE

Darling?

CHRISTINE

What?

FREDDIE

I'm not going to have to decline.
There's that to be thankful for.

CHRISTINE

You've been loved, you know.
You've been adored.

FREDDIE

Oh, please. Not a speech.

CHRISTINE

All right. No speech.

FREDDIE

See you tomorrow.

CHRISTINE

Mm-hm.

She gathers up her child, pauses to look at Freddie, and leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE FREDDIE'S HOUSE IN LONDON - NIGHT

Several weeks later. Freddie stands, looking ethereal in white pajamas, on the patio, looking out at the night. The stereo is on inside the house -- we hear "Prendi, Quest'e L'immagine," the final aria of "La Traviata."

We can tell from Freddie's face that he's not entirely in his right mind. He looks unusually peaceful and optimistic; a strange light shines in his eyes.

Jim comes out of the house and goes to Freddie.

JIM

There you are.

FREDDIE

Bit of night air.

JIM

Come back in.

FREDDIE

Can I tell you a secret?

JIM

Sure.

FREDDIE

It's all a vast and fabulous invention. Nobody's real. There's no Jim Hutton. There's no Christine Carrington. We've all made ourselves up. And it's wonderful. It's opera. We're all just dreams we're having. And then, sooner or later, we wake up. Do you know what I mean?

JIM

Not exactly.

A look of sorrow comes over Freddie's face.

FREDDIE

That's all right. Now you tell me one.

JIM

A secret?

FREDDIE

Mm-hm.

JIM

I love you.

FREDDIE

That's not a secret.

JIM

Never said it before, have I?

FREDDIE

Well, then, it'll have to do.

Freddie lets Jim put a muscular arm over his skeletal shoulders. He nestles in, closer to the warmth of Jim's body. There is, at the end, this simple comfort -- the love of a decent man. Freddie might have hoped for more -- much more -- but there's no denying that he's gotten this, and that it's far from insignificant.

For the last time, the dream ship hoves into view. It's more crowded than we've seen it before. Violetta is still on board, as are Hendrix, Jagger, the leather guys, and a few of the boys, back in their angel wings. There is also now a BIG BLACK WOMAN in a leopard cape, flanked by Freddie's parents.

The ship is lower in the sky than we've seen it before -- it appears to be preparing to land. The last lines of "La Traviata," sung heartbreakingly by Caballe, swell.

Jim speaks to Freddie with a softness and tenderness of which we weren't quite sure he was capable.

JIM

Come on in, now.

FREDDIE

No, I'm better. I feel fantastic.

Those who know "La Traviata" will know that Freddie's line coincides with Violetta's last line, in which she declares herself healed, just before she collapses in death.

Freddie smiles ecstatically.

EXT. A STREET IN LONDON, 1979 - DAY

Freddie is walking along by himself, happy and free. He looks fantastic. He's singing a snatch of "Don't Stop Me Now."

FREDDIE (SINGING)

I'm a shooting star leaping through the skies, like a tiger defying the laws of gravity, I'm a racing car passing by like Lady Godiva, I'm gonna go go go, there's no stopping me.

We watch him move on down the street. It's a day in his life, neither more nor less than that. The life of London teems around him -- YOUNG ROCKERS, OLD LADIES, a DIGNIFIED MAN walking a pair of dachshunds. It is, in a certain sense, one of the greatest miracles granted any living being -- the chance to walk down a street, singing, with a seemingly endless future still ahead.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE IN LONDON, 1985 - DAY

We return, one last time, to Freddie and the band rehearsing for Live Aid. They're in the middle of an argument.

BRIAN

They're just pop songs, Freddie.

FREDDIE

No. No no no no no. They're arias
about love and loss and triumph.
If we do them right, if we don't
lose faith, they'll be sung
forever.

ROGER

Get a load of him.

Freddie pauses, laughs.

BRIAN

On his high horse.

They all have a good laugh together.

FREDDIE

I know, I know. All right. Again.

INT. WEMBLEY STADIUM, 1985 -- DAY

We see Freddie and the band back at Live Aid, delivering their greatest performance. At the moment, they're doing "We Are the Champions," a song that will, in fact, quite likely be sung forever.

QUEEN (SINGING)

I've paid my dues, time after time.
I've done my sentence, but
committed no crime. And bad
mistakes, I've made a few, I've had
my share of sand kicked in my face,
but I've come through. We are the
champions, my friends, and we'll
keep on fighting till the end. We
are the champions, we are the
champions, no time for losers
'cause we are the champions - of
the world. I've taken my bows, and
my curtain calls. You brought me
fame and fortune and everything
that goes with it, I thank you all.
But it's been no bed of roses, no
pleasure cruise. I consider it a
challenge before the whole human
race, and I ain't gonna lose. We
are the champions, my friends. And
we'll keep on fighting till the
end.

(MORE)

QUEEN (SINGING) (cont'd)
We are the champions, we are the
champions, no time for losers,
'cause we are the champions - of
the world.

Midway through the song, the closing credits begin to roll.